

The Geopolitics of History in Latvian-Russian Relations

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History is the most dangerous product evolved from the chemistry of the intellect. Its properties are well known. It causes dreams, it intoxicates whole peoples, gives them false memories, quickens their reflexes, keeps their old wounds open, torments them in their repose, leads them into delusions either of grandeur or persecution, and makes nations bitter, arrogant, insufferable and vain.

Paul Valery

History, Memory and Latvian Foreign Policy

Nils Muižnieks

Introduction

Issues of history and memory loom large on the agenda of Latvian-Russian interstate relations. Latvian officials have often accused Russia of trying to “whitewash” the past, particularly Stalinist repressions and the forcible annexation of Latvia. For their part, in both bilateral relations and multilateral fora, Russian officials have regularly accused their Latvian counterparts of “revising” history, even “glorifying” or “rehabilitating” Nazism. Why do these issues continue to complicate relations? What lies behind the constant invocation of the past? Is reference to long-ago events merely an ideological ploy, a mask for the pursuit of other political or economic interests? Is there a possibility of a truce in these “memory wars”?

In order to answer these questions, it is necessary to clarify some of the conceptual issues at stake and to explore the links between history, memory and foreign policy. Here, the focus will be on the role of the past in Latvian foreign policy with particular reference to Latvia’s relations with Russia. Other authors have examined how the “geopolitics of history” have played out in Russia’s relations with countries such as Finland,¹ Poland² and Georgia.³ In Baltic-Russian relations, the symbolic role of May 9 and its link to identity politics has been examined in some detail.⁴ Moreover, the “Bronze Soldier crisis” in Estonia prompted a flurry of studies examining the issue of history in relations between Russians and Estonians within

¹ See Vihavainen, T. (2006), “Does History Play a Role in Finnish-Russian Relations?,” in Hanna Smith, ed., *The Two-Level Game: Russia’s Relations with Great Britain, Finland and the European Union*. Helsinki: Aleksanteri Paper 2: 2006, pp. 27-48.

² See Sanford, G. (2005), *Katyn and the Soviet Massacre of 1940: Truth, Justice and Memory*. London: Routledge, esp. pp. 226-232.

³ See Wertsch, J.V. and Kuramidze, Z. (2009), “Spinning the Past: Russian and Georgian Accounts of the War of August 2008,” *Memory Studies* Vol. 2(3), pp. 377-391.

⁴ See Onken, E.-C. (2007), “The Baltic States and Moscow’s 9 May Commemoration: Analysing Memory Politics in Europe,” *Europe-Asia Studies* Vol. 59, No. 1, January, pp. 23-46.

Estonia and in Estonia's relations with Russia.⁵ However, surprisingly few scholars have analyzed the Latvian-Russian case in any detail.

Studying the Politics of History and Memory

The first conceptual task involves clarifying whether the issue at hand is one of history, memory or both. Kansteiner has provided a useful outline of the main differences between the two. History is ostensibly the search for an "objective" rendering of the past in which the author maintains emotional distance from the subject matter, demonstrating an ability to examine events from various perspectives and an awareness and acceptance of complexity and indeterminacy. Memory, on the other hand, is a narrative with a systematic link to current cultural discourse. Memory maintains a group's identity, it simplifies past events, presenting them from one perspective. As opposed to history, memory has an aversion to indeterminacy and shades of gray.⁶ Seen in this light, the invocation of the past in relations between states is more often memory politics than history politics, though the two often overlap. Memory politics is intimately linked with identity politics, and collective memory and identity are "mutually constitutive."⁷

An important methodological issue in analyzing the politics of the past is that of individualism versus collectivism.⁸ An individualistic approach would focus on individual memories, which can be "collected" for analysis through methods such as sociological surveys. Individuals often jointly carry out public remembrance rituals to draw attention to their personal ordeals, to commemorate victims or to celebrate past victories or mourn past tragedies. The various "calendar demonstrations" during the Baltic

⁵ For an analysis pre-dating the Bronze Soldier Crisis, see Bruggemann, K. (2007), "Estonia and Its Escape from the East: The Relevance of the Past in Estonian-Russian Relations," in Tsypylma Darieva and Wolfgang Kaschuba, eds., *Representations of the Margins of Europe: Politics and Identities in the Baltic and South Caucasian States*. Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, pp. 139-165. On the Bronze Soldier Crisis, see Bruggeman, K. and Kasekamp, A. (2009), "Identity Politics and Contested Histories in Divided Societies: the Case of the Estonian War Monuments," in Eiki Berg and Piret Ehin, eds., *Identity and Foreign Policy: Baltic-Russian Relations and European Integration*. Surrey: Ashgate, pp. 51-64; Bruggeman, K. and Kasekamp, A., "The Politics of History and the 'War of Monuments' in Estonia," *Nationalities Papers*, Vol. 36, No. 3, July 2008, pp. 425-448; Kadri Liik, "The 'Bronze Year' of Estonia-Russia Relations," *Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Yearbook 2007*, Tallinn: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Estonia, pp. 71-6, available at http://web-static.vm.ee/static/failid/053/Kadri_Liik.pdf, and Poleschuk, V. (2009) *The War of Monuments in Estonia: the Challenges of History and the Minority Population*, Report from the Aland Islands Peace Institute, No. 1; and Wertsch, J.V. (2008), "Collective Memory and Narrative Templates," *Social Research*, Spring, Vol. 75, Issue 1, pp. 133-158.

⁶ Kansteiner, W. (2002), "Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies," *History and Theory* 41 (May 2002), pp. 179-197.

⁷ Muller, J.-W. (2002), "Introduction: The Power of Memory, the Memory of Power and the Power Over Memory," in Muller, J. W., ed., *Memory & Power in Post-War Europe: Studies in the Presence of the Past*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 21.

⁸ The discussion here relies on the useful work of Olick, J.K. (1999), "Collective Memory: The Two Cultures," *Sociological Theory* Vol. 17, No. 3 (November 1999), pp. 333-348.

independence struggles in the late 1980s marking key dates in Baltic history (e.g., the first declarations of independence, the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, Stalinist deportations, etc.) are prime examples of such rituals, many of which continue to be commemorated today.⁹ Those preferring collectivist approaches, in turn, argue that individuals have memories of events they have not personally experienced and that group behaviour differs from individual behaviour. Moreover, as many researchers have demonstrated, museums, archives, and historiography all function as institutions for memory collectivization. This is not to suggest that social or collective memories are divorced from individual memories. Indeed, though analytically distinct, individual and collective or “social” memory are often closely related.

This leads to the question of whether nations or other collectivities have memories in the same way individuals do. Here, assumptions of homogeneity within larger groups are regularly undermined by the struggle of various previously excluded or marginalized groups (e.g., women, minorities, immigrants, etc.) to have their role in history and collective memory – their “story” – recognized and assigned positive value. As in most human endeavours, often some people and groups (and their memories) are “more equal” than others. Moreover, scholars have pointed to the impossibility of transferring psychiatric metaphors from the individual to the group level (e.g., when discussing “repressed memories”). Memories change; what is more, they can be politically manipulated to serve various purposes. This suggests that a fruitful line of inquiry is to investigate communication about the past to seek to identify who is invoking the past and for what purposes.¹⁰

Students of discourse have suggested that politicians and other “symbolic elites” (e.g., journalists, academics) are the key actors in constructing and manipulating social memory. Analysts have pointed out that history has various uses and actors have varied motivations in invoking the past. These include the moral (to renew, rehabilitate, reconcile); the scientific (to verify, interpret); the commercial (to earn a profit); the existential (to root/create identity); the ideological (to legitimate, justify, mask) and the political (as weapons in the struggle for power, resources or status).¹¹ Here, we will primarily be concerned with the existential, ideological and political uses of the past.

⁹ For a comprehensive analysis of such rituals in contemporary Latvia, see Zepa, B. ed. (2008), *Mēs. Valsts. Svētki. Valsts svētku svinēšanas socioloģiska izpēte*. Riga: Baltic Institute of Social Sciences.

¹⁰ See Kansteiner (2002), “Finding Meaning in Memory,” Olick (1999), “Collective Memory,” and Wertsch, J. (2008), “Blank Spots in Collective Memory: A Case Study of Russia,” *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 617, pp. 58-71

¹¹ See Segesten, A.D. (2002), “The Holocaust and International Norm Socialization: The Case of Norm Socialization in Romania,” *CFE Working Paper Series*, No. 38. Centre for European Studies at Lund University, p. 10.

History, Memory and Foreign Policy

The role of history and/or memory in foreign policy has received increasing attention from students of international affairs. While the realist and neo-realist schools of international relations generally relegated the invocation of the past to the role of window-dressing for “hard interests”, others have seen memory as more important, even as a kind of “symbolic power,” influencing the construction and legitimation of foreign policy.¹² Invocation of a “glorious” past (e.g., Russia and celebrations of the victory in World War II) in international relations can also be seen in terms of efforts to harness memory as a form of “soft power.”¹³

In the constructivist school, memory is seen as intimately linked to identity, which in turn is seen as not only reflecting interests, but also in shaping or even determining them. Wendt has argued that social structures, including international structures, are “inseparable from the reasons and self-understandings that agents bring to their actions.”¹⁴ Hall has taken the argument the furthest, asserting that “change in the international system occurs with changes in the collective identity of crucial social actors who collectively constitute the units from which the system is comprised.”¹⁵ Muller has suggested that memory can usefully be integrated in international relations inquiry in two ways: as a part of political culture “which in turn is constitutive of the ‘identity’ and ‘interests’ of states” and as the “cultural and, so to speak, ‘mnemonic’ context of decision-making.”¹⁶

Ehin and Berg have sought to use an identity-based explanation to explain the poor state of Baltic-Russian relations, arguing that the “national identity constructions of the Baltic states and Russia, together with the historical narrative they are based upon, are incompatible, and indeed, antagonistic.”¹⁷ The chapters below seek to explore these historical narratives in various contexts: within Russia as regards Latvia, within Latvia as regards Russia, in bilateral Latvian-Russian relations and in international bodies. At the same time, it is necessary to keep in mind the “hard interests” – whether military, political, economic or other – that are at play and to examine how memory politics seeps into foreign policy to reinforce or contradict those interests.

As in international relations more generally, one can distinguish between various levels of analysis in memory politics – the individual, local, national, bilateral, European and global.¹⁸ At the individual level, memory

¹² See Muller (2002), “Introduction,” in *Memory & Power in Post-War Europe*, p. 25.

¹³ See Nye, J. S. (2004), *Soft Power: the Means to Success in World Politics*. New York: Public Affairs.

¹⁴ Wendt, A. (1987), “The Agent-Structure Problem in International Relations Theory,” *International Organization* 41 (3) (1987), p. 359.

¹⁵ Hall, R.B. (1999), *National Collective Identity: Social Constructs and International Systems*. New York: Columbia University Press, p. 28.

¹⁶ Muller (2002), “Introduction,” in *Memory & Power in Post-War Europe*, p. 30.

¹⁷ Ehin, P. and Berg, E. (2009) “Incompatible Identities? Baltic-Russian Relations and the EU as an Arena for Identity Conflict,” in Berg and Ehin, eds., *Identity and Foreign Policy*, p. 9.

¹⁸ On levels of analysis in memory politics, see Onken (2007), “The Baltic States and Moscow’s 9 May Commemoration,” pp. 24-6.

can shape individual decision-making, and politicians can deploy their own personal history as a resource in foreign affairs. A good example of this in Latvia is the case of Sandra Kalniete, currently a member of the European Parliament, previously foreign minister and commissioner in the European Commission. Kalniete's personal memoir of growing up in Siberian exile, entitled "With Dance Shoes in Siberian Snows", has been translated into numerous languages and has helped her to promote Latvian history in the international arena.¹⁹

At the local level, cities can engage in their own international memory politics through, for example, building, destroying or moving monuments that have international significance. Moreover, cities can use the past for commercial purposes for attracting foreign tourists. In Latvia, the local authorities of the seaside resort of Jūrmala have resurrected a popular Soviet-era music festival entitled "New Wave" to entice nostalgic Russian tycoons and politicians to come to Latvia.²⁰ Below and in subsequent chapters, the focus is primarily on the uses (and abuses) of history and memory at the bilateral and European levels. However, it should also be noted that Russia has taken the politics of history to global fora, such as the United Nations, as well.²¹

The Latvian Context: Politically Salient History and Memory

In order to understand which aspects of the past are most politically salient in Latvia, sociological surveys provide a good initial indication. According to the framework outlined above, this is "collected" memory. In a representative survey conducted in 1993, ethnic Latvians were asked whether they or any member of their family had "suffered" under the Soviets, the Nazis, neither or both. "Suffered" was defined as having someone in the family deported, executed or imprisoned. The answers were illuminating: 32% claimed to have suffered at the hands of the Soviets, 6% at the hands of the Nazis, 5% from both and 56% from neither.²² These figures demonstrate why, for most Latvians, Soviet rule was far worse than Nazi rule, an attitude which runs counter to that predominating in contemporary Russia and Western Europe. It is also the backdrop for the narrative of suffering outlined below.

A more recent survey asked both Latvians and Russians in Latvia "Which 20th century historical events are you most proud of?"²³ There

¹⁹ Kalniete, S. (2006), *With Dance Shoes in Siberian Snows*. Trans. Margita Gailitis. Riga: The Latvian Occupation Museum Association.

²⁰ See Doronenkova, K. (2008), "Latvia's Culture in Russia's Media," in Nils Muižnieks, ed., *Manufacturing Enemy Images? Russian Media Portrayal of Latvia*. Riga: University of Latvia Press, p. 122.

²¹ See Reire, G. (2008) "Latvia and Russia in the United Nations: The Human Rights Card," in Žaneta Ozoliņa, ed., *Latvia-Russia-X*. Riga: Zinātne, pp. 58-86.

²² Rose, R. and Maley, W. (1994), *Nationalities in the Baltic States: A Survey Study*, Studies in Public Policy Number 222. Glasgow: University of Strathclyde, p. 59.

²³ See Appendix, Rozenvalds, J. and Ijabs, I., ed. (2010), *Latvia Human Development Report 2008/2009: Accountability and Responsibility*. Riga: University of Latvia Press, pp. 197-8.

were significant differences by ethnicity. The top three answers for ethnic Latvians were “the period of Awakening (the Baltic Way demonstration, barricades, etc.)” (45.7%), “the renewal of Latvian state independence” (40.3%) and “the creation of a democratic Latvia in 1918” (39.7%). Russians, for their part, named the following: “I am not proud of anything” (23.8%), “difficult to say/no answer” (20.8%) and “the struggles of Latvian soldiers in the Red Army against Nazi Germany’s army” (19.4%). Within Latvia, the lack of pride towards any Latvian historical event among Russian-speakers in Latvia is symptomatic of a larger integration problem.²⁴ Differences in ethnic Latvian and ethnic Russian conceptions of the past are echoed in inter-state relations between Latvia and Russia and vice versa.

The same survey also asked Latvians and Russians “Which 20th century events in Latvian history are you most ashamed of?” The top three answers for Latvians were “Latvian participation in the USSR repressions” (32.7%), “Latvian participation in the Holocaust” (26.5%) and “I am not ashamed of anything” (26.5%). For Russian respondents, the top answers were “I am not ashamed of anything” (28.9%), “difficult to say/no answer” (24.2%) and “Latvian participation in the Holocaust” (21.8%).

As noted above, “collected” individual memory and a broader collective or social memory might differ, though they are often related. In seeking to identify a broader collective social memory, students of identity politics seek to discern a “grand narrative,” a story about oneself that people like to tell themselves and others. Here, various methods can be used, including analysis of school history textbooks, discourse analysis of political speech, the media, popular culture and others.

Several scholars have identified a Baltic grand narrative, though the story in each Baltic state undoubtedly has specific features as well. As Zelče has written, “the collective memory of Latvians in the 1990s and their construction of history was completely dominated by remembrance of the victims of the Soviet regime.”²⁵ Budryte also stresses the aspect of victimhood, but argues that the Baltic story is one of “displacement and resistance.”²⁶ Suffering, in Baltic social memory, is primarily linked with the Soviet deportations of 1941 and 1949. Resistance, on the other hand, is more diffuse, at least in Latvian public discourse.

In Latvia resistance has been associated not only with the struggle of the Latvian Riflemen against the Bolshevik army and Baltic German elites

²⁴ See Muižnieks, N., ed. (2010), *How Integrated is Latvian Society? An Audit of Achievements, Failures and Challenges*. Riga: University of Latvia Press.

²⁵ Zelče, V. (2010), “History – Responsibility – Memory: Latvia’s Case,” in Juris Rozenvalds and Ivars Ijabs, eds., *Latvia Human Development Report 2008/2009: Accountability and Responsibility*. Riga: University of Latvia Press, 2010, p. 46.

²⁶ Budryte, D. (2002), “Coming to Terms with the Past: Memories of Displacement and Resistance in the Baltic States,” in Kenneth Christie and Robert Cribb, eds., *Historical Injustice and Democratic Transition in Eastern Asia and Northern Europe: Ghosts at the Table of Democracy*. London: Routledge, pp. 118-138.

in World War I, but also with Latvians fighting in the Latvian Waffen SS Legion on Nazi Germany's side on the Eastern front in World War II, post-war partisans called "forest brethren," and the non-violent resistance leading to independence in 1991.²⁷ Thus, for example, in the 2008 survey mentioned above, 29.5% of Latvians were proud of the role of their countrymen in World War I, naming the "Riflemen struggles, the Christmas battle, in Nāves Island, Tīreļa marsh, etc." While only 5.4% were proud of "The struggle of the Latvian SS Legion against the Red Army," a number of prominent Latvian political figures have sought to glorify the Legion, depicting its members as "fighters against Bolshevism." 8.8% of Latvians were proud of "the struggles of the National partisans and the resistance movement" after World War II.

Ehin and Berg have supplemented Zelče and Budryte by pointing out that another part of the Baltic grand narrative is that of legal continuity during 50 years of Soviet occupation.²⁸ Indeed, the doctrine of legal continuity is the bedrock of Baltic independence, the core "legitimizing myth" of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. According to this doctrine, the Baltic states may have ceased to exist *de facto* during Soviet rule, but they continued to exist *de jure*, as reflected in the non-recognition of many Western countries of the legitimacy of Soviet rule.²⁹ Thus, as the Soviet Union was collapsing, Latvia and its Baltic neighbours claimed not to be separating from the Soviet Union to create new states, but rather to be "restoring" independence that was illegally suspended. Latvia also "restored" the 1922 Constitution, the Civil Law, property rights, Latvian citizenship and more. This narrative of suffering, resistance and restored independence after Soviet occupation has a number of foreign policy implications for Latvia and the other Baltic states.

Foreign Policy Implications of the Latvian "Grand Narrative" in the West

The Latvian (and Baltic) narrative of restoration and occupation had a number of benefits on the road to independence and afterwards. In legal and diplomatic terms, the Baltic states were treated by Western countries as a "case apart," with special treatment often deriving from the non-recognition of the Soviet annexation. Though unable to receive international recognition from many countries before the collapse of the Soviet Union, delegations from the Latvian, Estonian and Lithuanian independence movements were received in various European and North American capitals and were allowed

²⁷ For an exhaustive analysis of non-violent resistance, see Jundzis, T., ed. (2009), *Regaining Independence: Non-Violent Resistance in Latvia, 1945-1991*. Riga: Latvian Academy of Sciences.

²⁸ Ehin and Berg (2009), "Incompatible Identities?," in *Identity and Foreign Policy*, p. 9.

²⁹ For an early analysis, see Hough, W.J.H. (1985), "The Annexation of the Baltic States and Its Effect on the Development of Law Prohibiting Forcible Seizure of Territory," *New York Law School Journal of International and Comparative Law* Vol. 6, No. 2, Winter, pp. 301-533.

to participate in meetings of some European or international organizations even before *de facto* independence. Immediately after the failed *putsch* in August 1991, when the Baltic governments gained full control over their borders and territories, broad international recognition followed quickly.³⁰

Another benefit linked with the doctrine of “legal restorationism” was that it strengthened Latvian and Baltic claims to the property, gold and bank deposits in the West dating from the interwar years. For example, Latvia had significant gold deposits (about 6554 kilograms) in London upon the outbreak of World War II. During the Cold War, the British government used Baltic gold to compensate the property claims of British citizens and companies, as well as those of the Soviet Union. However, in 1993, Latvia and Great Britain signed a treaty whereby the British government transferred to the Bank of Latvia 210,719,919 ounces of gold.³¹ In the United States, the interwar Latvian Legation operated throughout the post-war period, using the interest earned from non-sovereign Latvian government deposits held by US banks. The legation assisted the independence movements and eventually formed the basis for the restored Latvian state’s embassy.³²

The narrative of suffering has also had certain foreign policy benefits. For example, in relations with Sweden, one of Latvia’s most important political and economic partners, Latvian interlocutors in the 1990s were quick to play on the guilt of their Swedish colleagues by reminding them of Sweden’s recognition of the Soviet annexation, as well as the post-war deportation of Latvian Legionnaires back to the Soviet Union and the Gulag.³³ Latvians, along with the other Balts and East Europeans, regularly invoked memories of betrayal by Western Europe to enhance their accession prospects to the European Union and NATO.³⁴

However, the Baltic grand narrative has had not only advantages, but also significant drawbacks in the foreign policy arena in both the West and the East. As Onken has pointed out, the Baltic narrative of suffering collided with the dominant “memory regime” of the European Union and NATO, which was centred on the Holocaust as the “singular act of barbarism.”³⁵ One

³⁰ On the struggle for international recognition, see Jundzis (2009), *Regaining Independence*, pp. 501-511; see also Ritenis, J. (1999), *Diplomātiskā cīņa par Latvijas Republikas suverenitātes atjaunošanu*. Riga: Fonds Latvijas Vēsture.

³¹ See the interview with head of the president’s historical commission Antonijs Zunda by Viesturs Sprūde, “Latvijas zelts un britu spiegi,” *Latvijas Avīze*, 4 October 2004; regarding Latvian gold and property claims, see also the series of articles and documents compiled by Jānis Riekstiņš, “Par Latvijas zeltu un citām vērtībām,” *Latvijas vēstnesis* 27 February 2002, No. 32, 7 March 2002, No. 37, 26 March 2002, No. 47, and 27 March 2002, No. 48.

³² See Auers, D. (2008), “Salmon, Rissoles, and Smoked Eel: the Latvian Legation in the Cold War,” in Daunis Auers, ed., *Latvia and the USA: From Captive Nation to Strategic Partner*. Riga: University of Latvia Academic Press, pp. 51-60.

³³ For an insider’s account that relates a number of such episodes, see the memoir by Swedish diplomat Lars Freden (2007), *Baltijas brīvības ceļš un Zviedrijas diplomātija 1989-1991*. Trans. Aija Dvinska. Riga: Atēna, esp. pp. 18-19, 164-5.

³⁴ Muller (2002), “Introduction,” in *Memory & Power in Post-War Europe*, p. 10.

³⁵ Onken (2007), “The Baltic States and Moscow’s 9 May Commemoration,” pp. 30-1.

of the unofficial criteria for NATO membership in the late 1990s and early 2000s was a demonstrated ability to come to terms with Baltic collaboration with the Nazis in the Holocaust through including the relevant materials in the history curriculum, conducting historical research, and making the appropriate political gestures and statements.³⁶ For the Latvian political elite, acknowledging the victim status of Jews was quite difficult as it ran counter to the prevalent social memory of Latvian victimhood. However, with significant prodding from Western partners, such a shift in attitudes and behaviours came about in Latvia.³⁷

The Baltic narrative of resistance and heroism has also generated foreign policy problems in the West, particularly when certain Balts have sought to portray as heroes not only post-war anti-Soviet partisans or *perestroika* era independence activists, but those Latvian soldiers who fought in the Waffen SS Legion. The Legion was created (mostly through forced conscription, partly with volunteers) in 1943 by the occupying Nazi forces to serve in combat on the eastern Front. While Russia and some Western observers have perceived the Legion and its defenders as Nazis, most Latvians have tended to see them as victims, but some (5.4% of Latvians, according to the survey mentioned above) have seen them as anti-Bolshevik heroes and a source of national pride.³⁸ Those members of the Latvian foreign policy establishment who sought to explain to Western colleagues the differences between the Latvian Legion and regular SS units or to convince them of the contribution to western security of Latvian soldiers fighting the Soviet Union – the West's wartime ally – in the ranks of Nazi Germany's army soon discovered the difficulty of this task.

Foreign Policy Implications of the Latvian "Grand Narrative" in the East

If Latvian individual and social memories created occasional problems for Latvian foreign policy in the West, they created a slew of insoluble dilemmas in the East. "Collected" Russian memory and attitudes towards history diverge significantly from those in the Baltic, sometimes coming into outright conflict with them. Thus, for example, while many Balts attribute the personal suffering of their families to Stalin's regime, survey research

³⁶ Significantly, the home page of the Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs features an electronic publication entitled *Latvia: A Reliable Partner in NATO*, which has a separate section "Evaluation of History." See <http://www.am.gov.lv/data/file/e/Books/Latvia%20in%20Facts/evaluation.PDF>.

³⁷ For an analysis and overview, see Zelče (2010), "History – Responsibility- Memory: Latvia's Case," in *Latvia Human Development Report*, pp. 48-53.

³⁸ For a useful collection of documents by the preeminent scholar on the Holocaust in Latvia, see Ezerģailis, A., ed. (1997), *The Latvian Legion: Heroes, Nazis or Victims? A Collection of Documents from OSS War-Crimes Investigation Files, 1945-1950*. Riga: the Historical Institute of Latvia.

has shown that many Russians in contemporary Russia hold ambivalent or even positive views of Stalin.³⁹ The end of World War II was a catastrophe for the Balts, marking the loss of independence, the resumption of Stalinist repression, personal and property loss and trauma. For many Russians in Russia, World War II (the “Great Patriotic War”) was the best time in otherwise dreary Soviet lives, the great Victory was a vindication of all the hardship under Stalin and the symbolic beginning of the Soviet Union’s great power status, a source of no small satisfaction for many Russians.⁴⁰

Diverging individual memories are reinforced by antagonistic “grand narratives.” After studying Russian textbooks, Wertsch has identified the Russian “grand narrative” as being the “expulsion of foreign enemies.”⁴¹ Dmitry Trenin, one of Russia’s best known political scientists, concurs, arguing that over the centuries, Russia developed a “‘defender complex,’ that of a nation shielding the West from common enemies” and that “Russia has been as much of a defender as an attacker.”⁴² Given this complex and the “story” of foreign invasion (e.g., in 1814, 1941), it is not surprising that the Russian political elite is taken aback by Baltic reminders of past Soviet/Russian aggression – the idea of Russia as aggressor is foreign to Russian self-understanding.

While the Russian self-understanding conflicts with Baltic perceptions, the Baltic narrative of “restorationism” and “occupation” is seen by the Russian elite as a source of many of the problems in Russian-Latvian relations. For one, the status of post-war Russian-speaking settlers has been largely determined by legal “restorationism” in Latvia and Estonia. As noted above, Estonia and Latvia not only restored independence, but also citizenship to those who had it before World War II and their direct descendants. This left many hundreds of thousands of Russian-speaking settlers (in Latvia, 740,000 in 1995) without citizenship. Russian legal scholars and politicians have portrayed the doctrine of legal restoration and claims of “occupation” as a pretext for “discrimination” and the alleged violation of the human rights of Russian-speakers.⁴³

“Restorationism,” at least in Estonia and Latvia, has also made reaching a border agreement with Russia exceedingly difficult. As is well known, the *de facto* borders of Latvia do not correspond with the interwar borders agreed

³⁹ See Mendelson, S.E. and Gerber, T.P. (2006), “Failing the Stalin Test,” *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 85, Issue 1, January/February, pp. 2-8.

⁴⁰ For an insightful early analysis, see Smith, H. (1973), *The Russians*. London: Sphere Books, Ltd., especially chapter XII “Patriotism: World War II Was Only Yesterday,” pp. 369-397. For a more recent treatment, see Weiner, A. (2001), “In the Long Shadow of War: The Second World War and the Soviet and Post-Soviet World,” *Diplomatic History* Vol. 25, No. 3, Summer, pp. 443-456.

⁴¹ Wertsch, J. (2008), “Blank Spots in Collective Memory,” *The ANNALS*, pp. 66-8.

⁴² Trenin, D.V. (2007), *Getting Russia Right*. Moscow: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, p. 55.

⁴³ Chernichenko, S. (2004), “Ob ‘okupatsii’ pribaltiki i narushenii prav russkoyazychnogo naseleniya,” *Mezhdunarodnaya zhizn’* 8, 31, pp. 212-225.

upon in a Peace Treaty with Soviet Russia in 1920, as Russia annexed the Abrene district from Latvia. Throughout the 1990s, the Latvian authorities insisted on basing a border agreement on the 1920 Peace Treaty and leaving the door open to revisit the issue of the lost territory or compensation for it at some time in the future. When Latvia attached a unilateral declaration to a 2005 law on ratification of a border treaty referring to the 1920 treaty, Russia angrily torpedoed the whole agreement. Politically, it was very difficult for the Latvian political elite to renounce all claims to Abrene, as this appeared to run counter to the grand narrative of restoration. It was only when the Constitutional Court engaged in some legal acrobatics and ruled that Abrene had not been a traditional part of core Latvian territory and that legal continuity was not at risk that the issue was resolved within Latvia and the border treaty could enter into force.⁴⁴

The doctrine of restoration, together with the history of individual suffering, also means that it is very difficult for the Latvian authorities to renounce the possibility of pushing for some form of compensation from Russia for losses inflicted upon Latvia during Soviet rule. The on-again, off-again official Latvian efforts to calculate the bill for the occupation (see the chapter by Ivars Ijabs below) echo the dilemmas inherent in the border issue – if Latvia renounced all claims, would it not be renouncing its history? According to some Latvian diplomats close to Russian affairs, a major barrier to official Russia moving towards any recognition of the Soviet occupation is the fear that this could open the floodgates of individual Latvian compensation claims. Here, Russian identity constructions based on a denial of Soviet aggression and infliction of loss on Latvia and its Baltic neighbours are reinforced by material interests.

The Structure of This Book

The border issue, the status of post-war settlers and the spectre of possible compensation claims have been among the most fraught issues in Latvian-Russian interstate relations. However, the “geopolitics of history” includes many other aspects of Latvian-Russian relations as well. This book brings together political scientists and communications studies experts to take a broad look at Latvian-Russian memory politics.

The first part of this book seeks to explore in greater detail how Latvia is constructed in Russia’s historical narrative through the words and actions

⁴⁴ For analyses of the border issue, see Rostoks, T. (2006), “The Border Issue,” in Nils Muižnieks, ed., *Latvian-Russian Relations: Domestic and International Dimensions*. Riga: University of Latvia Press, pp. 131-9; Rikveilis, A. (2008), “The Interstate Border and Latvian-Russian Relations: The Past as an Impediment to Bilateral Cooperation,” in Ozoliņa, Ž. ed., *Latvia-Russia-X*, pp. 284-331. For the ruling of the Constitutional Court, see Latvijas Republikas Satversmes Tiesa (2007), “Spriedums Latvijas Republikas vārdā Rīgā 2007. gada 29. novembrī lietā Nr.1 2007-10-0102,” available at http://www.satv.tiesa.gov.lv/upload/2007_10_0102_Robezligums.htm.

of Russia's authorities, historians, textbook writers and documentary film-makers. Kristīne Doronņkova analyzes the evolution of official Russian stances on history issues with special reference to Latvia. Vita Zelče examines in depth recent Russian historiography and portrayal of Latvia and/or the Baltic. Solvita Denisa-Liepniece dissects methodological guidelines for Russian history teachers, as well as history textbooks to identify the Latvian role in the narrative that is used to socialize schoolchildren in Russia. Dmitrijs Petrenko investigates discourse about Latvia in several recent Russian documentary films that had huge audiences in Russia.

The second part of the book focuses on comparisons between Latvia and Russia and "dialogues" about the past between the two. Klinta Ločmele, Olga Procevska and Vita Zelče compare World War II commemorative practices in Latvia and Russia. Ojārs Skudra presents a study on how Latvian-Russian interstate disagreements over the past have found echo in local Latvian and Russian-language media. Ivars Ijabs traces the evolution of the issue of compensations in Latvian-Russian relations since 1991. Toms Rostoks and Nils Muižnieks each analyze Latvian-Russian "dialogues" about the past in different European institutions – the former in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the European Parliament, the latter in the work of the European Court of Human Rights.

Many of the chapters in this book were presented before an international conference "Twenty Years After the Fall of the Berlin Wall: The Politics of Memory and Democratization in Europe" organized in Riga September 10-13, 2009, by the *Konrad Adenauer Stiftung*, the *Baltisch-Deutsches Hochschulkontor* and the Advanced Social and Political Research Institute at the University of Latvia. The preparation and publication of this book were generously supported by the University of Latvia and the *Baltisch-Deutsches Hochschulkontor*.

Part I:

Latvia in Russia's Historical Narrative

Official Russian Perspectives on the Historical Legacy: A Brief Introduction

Kristīne Doroņenkova

“I can repeat that some of our historical heritage is very complex, but we wouldn’t like to see it additionally politicized”.¹

“...These problems are many, but there are also positive tendencies that are increasingly visible.”²

Introduction

Russia, as self-proclaimed heir of the Soviet Union, its erstwhile strategic interests and zones of influence, also inherited an uneasy legacy. According to Vladimir Putin this was “because many problems were not apparent in the days when we all were one country; they were not visible...” Acknowledging the complexity of this heritage, and with particular reference to the Baltic states, Ukraine and Georgia, he stressed that Russia would not like to see this chapter additionally politicized. “Instead, we would like to see the agreements reached being honoured, for example, our agreement with your government on the border.”³ The statement presents a very positive and accommodative outlook; however, to reach agreements with Russia on certain issues, particularly the so called politicized ones, has never been easy.

The border agreement between Russia and Latvia cited here is an example of how history was, is and will probably remain one of the tools used by politicians in the pursuit of their national interests. Such methods

¹ Vladimir Putin in response to the question by a journalist: When will Russia adopt the kind of policies that will foster friendship with neighbouring countries, such as Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Georgia and Ukraine? “Briefing for Journalists at the International Press Centre by former President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin,” July 17, 2006, Strelna, St. Petersburg, Russia, available at http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2006/07/17/0913_type82914type82915_108905.shtml.

² Vladimir Putin on Latvian-Russian relations. “Opening remarks by Vladimir Putin, Former President of the Russian Federation, Beginning of Meeting with Latvian Prime Minister Aigars Kalvitis,” March 28, 2007, Novo-Ogaryovo, http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2007/03/28/1958_type82914_121021.shtml.

³ Vladimir Putin, “Briefing for Journalists at the International Press Centre by former President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin,” July 17, 2006, Strelna, St. Petersburg, Russia, http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2006/07/17/0913_type82914type82915_108905.shtml.

are not something unique to Russia; it is in the nature of politics to turn apparently benign matters into useful means for achieving goals. Why not history and its heritage; particularly when there are no agreed viewpoints on the same historical precedents? Latvia and Russia are not free from this dialectic that continues to influence the relations between the countries. However, World War II and the geographic and political dispensation that followed in its wake are issues of particular disagreement.

This chapter examines the official Russian position on issues of history that continue to affect Russian relations with Latvia. It will examine both official documents and public statements made by the Russian President, the Prime Minister, members of Parliament and also the Moscow City Council. The latter is included because of the influence it wields in Russian foreign policy, an aspect rather unique to Russian politics.

Views from the Kremlin

The major concern of the Kremlin (and the Russian Duma) in the domain of historical issues is the Second World War, or the “Great Patriotic War” as it is referred to in Russia. Differences in the perception of the outcome of the war have become a significant political and social psychological issue, one that continues to influence relations between Latvia and Russia. In Russia the Latvian approach is often referred to as “selective” – an effort to reinterpret, rewrite or escape from history:

We are worried in general by the tendency to take a selective approach to our common history. We should not forget that Europe’s prosperity and in some cases the very existence of individual countries were made possible only through the enormous sacrifices of the peoples of the Soviet Union and other European peoples. In this respect, the victory over Nazism is our common moral and spiritual heritage and we consider completely unacceptable any attempts to desecrate the memory of this victory and the good name of the hero-liberators.⁴

History has often crossed paths with human rights. This crossroads is another issue of Russian concern:

We continue to be concerned about the situation with the rights of our compatriots in Latvia and Estonia. We consider the soft line taken towards attempts to make heroes of Nazi collaborators and revise pages in Europe’s twentieth-century history unacceptable. We discussed this and met with full understanding on these issues.⁵

⁴ President of the Russian Federation Dmitry Medvedev, Joint Press Conference following the Russia-European Union Summit, June 27, 2008, Khanty-Mansiysk, Russia, available at http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2008/06/27/2114_type82914type82915_203194.shtml.

⁵ Ibid.

The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact – “A Personal Affair of Stalin and Hitler”

The opinion of Russian officials, including the President and members of the Parliament, on the occupation of Latvia and the other Baltic states by the Soviet Union in 1940 is well-known. The short and probably most precise way of defining it is “denial.” The secret protocol between Hitler’s Germany and Stalin’s Russia is acknowledged for its deceit and machinations; Russia’s own position is clearly reflected in the following statement of then Russian president Vladimir Putin:

Please take a look at the resolution passed by the Congress of People’s Deputies in 1989, where it is written black on white that the Congress of People’s Deputies denounces the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and considers it legally invalid. It did not reflect the opinion of the Soviet people but was the personal affair of Stalin and Hitler... How can we be more clear and precise on this point? Or would you rather that we repeated these words every year? What do you think, what more can we say? We think that this question is closed. I will not come back to it. We expressed our view once and that is enough.⁶

This statement reflects the selectivity of the Russian official position towards historical facts, particularly when Russia claims as its inheritance all the other international treaties and pacts signed by the Soviet Union. Stalin and Hitler were not heads of private companies, but heads of two sovereign states; they represented their governments and were authorized to sign binding treaties. The current approach towards the secret protocol conveniently reflects Russia’s denial of the occupation of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. This position has remained in force.

The Russian president very conveniently names the annexation of the Baltic states in terms of “absorption” without being very specific on the process of how this fact came about and how Latvia became a part of the territory of the Soviet Union.

If the Baltic States had already been absorbed into the Soviet Union in 1939, then the Soviet Union could not occupy them in 1945 because they had already become part of its territory. I perhaps did not study terribly well at university (because I spent my free time drinking beer), but I do remember some of all this. We had good teachers.⁷

⁶ Vladimir Putin answering a question of Estonian radio: “...why is it so hard for you to say, “Sorry for the occupation”? If you were to say these words, we would all be able to live together so much easier.” Press Statement and Responses to Questions Following the Russia-European Union Summit, May 10, 2005, Great Kremlin Palace, Moscow, available at http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2005/05/10/2030_type82914type82915_88025.shtml.

⁷ Ibid.

Putin offers his own views on the events that led to the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact:

Now, on the subject of occupation. As I see it, in 1918, Russia and Germany concluded a deal that was sealed in the Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty, under which Russia handed over part of its territories to German control... In 1939, Russia and Germany concluded another deal and Germany handed these territories back to Russia. In 1939, they were absorbed into the Soviet Union. Let us not talk now about whether this was good or bad. This is part of history. I think that this was a deal, and small countries and small nations were the bargaining chips in this deal. Regrettably, such was the reality of those times, just as there was the reality of European countries' colonial past, or the use of slave labour in the United States. But today, are we, day after day, to allow the ghosts of the past to seize us by the hands and prevent us from moving forward?⁸

Here, we see the indirect denial of the fact that Latvia and the other Baltic states were indeed independent and the construction of a narrative that the Baltic was handed to Germany as a part of a deal in 1918 and then returned to the “old master” twenty-one years later. Putin conveniently forgets that Baltic states were sovereign countries, independent subjects of international law and members of the League of Nations. The reality of the European colonial past and the use of slave labour in the United States were painful chapters in the history of western civilization. However, these were accepted, admitted and debated as shameful lessons. Russia itself has come to recognize some of the mistakes of the past, a trend that holds some promise that history might play a decreasing role in determining Latvian-Russian relations.

Countering “Falsification”

On 15 May 2009, just a few days after celebrating another anniversary of the victorious end of the Great Patriotic War, President Medvedev issued a decree setting up a “Presidential Commission of the Russian Federation to Counter Attempts to Falsify History to the Detriment of Russia’s Interests” (hereafter referred to as the commission). Its official purpose was to analyze information on the falsification of historic facts to the detriment of the international prestige of Russia and to prepare a strategy to counter such attempts. The commission was also to offer advice to Russia’s President on these issues.⁹ The commission is headed by the President’s chief of staff,

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ For a full text of the decree and the remit and membership, see <http://archive.kremlin.ru/articles/216485.shtml> and <http://www.rg.ru/2009/05/20/komissia-dok.html>.

Sergey Naryshkin, and comprises members of public institutions, including the State Duma, various ministries and other administrative bodies, as well as the armed forces and the FSB. Notably, among 28 members, there are only three professional historians. As Russian historian Roy Medvedev noted shortly after the commission was established, the membership shocked him, given the modest numbers of historians and, in his opinion, "even they are not recognized among professionals."¹⁰ The politicization of the membership of the commission indeed evokes doubts about its impartiality, particularly given its tasks of developing strategy and advising the President.

President Medvedev himself had earlier expressed concern about efforts to "rewrite" the history of World War II, with particular reference to the Baltic states.¹¹ The role of Russia in the war is a sensitive issue not only politically, but also emotionally and psycho-socially for nearly all of its citizens. Interestingly, the president himself does not chair the commission as he does, for example, in the case of the Commission on Issues of Military-Technical Cooperation between the Russian Federation and Foreign Countries or the Commission on the Modernization and Technological Development of Russia's Economy.

Outside Russia, the commission's findings are unlikely to be respected as findings of historic research and therefore would hardly affect the international prestige or interests of the Baltic states in general and Latvia in particular. In fact, the Baltic states were not the subject of discussion during the first three meetings of the commission. Though one of the meetings touched upon issues related to the role of Russia in World War II, Latvia, Estonia or Lithuania were not discussed. In fact, until this writing (September 2010), the commission was more focused on discussing domestic matters, such as history teaching in Russian schools or issues related to archiving historical records.¹²

State Duma of the Russian Federation

While Russian parliamentarians have frequently discussed issues of human rights in Latvia, the second most common subject is history. Again, the only historical issue occupying the minds of parliamentarians with regard to Latvia is World War II. The Duma has regularly criticized Latvia for the annual 16 March commemoration, calling it a celebration of the

¹⁰ *Kommersant*, No. 88 (4143), 20 May 2009, available at <http://kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=1172794>.

¹¹ See, for example, <http://www.rian.ru/society/20090519/171517015.html>.

¹² <http://state.kremlin.ru/commission/21/news>.

remembrance day of the Latvian Legion of the “Waffen SS.”¹³ The simplified and one sided approach to Latvian history is not surprising, as it serves to maintain a negative image of Latvia both inside and outside Russia. Sometimes historic issues are indirectly invoked in discussing the status of “Russian-speakers” in Latvia, for example, comparing the status of Germans and Russians,¹⁴ as if the battles of World War II were still taking place on the territory of modern Latvia.

The critical line adopted by the State Duma has been carefully followed since the 1990s, reaching a peak in 1998 and 1999. Russia was always quick to respond to events taking place in Latvia, regardless whether it was the annual gathering on 16 March¹⁵ or an official statement or legislation adopted in Latvia.¹⁶ The response invariably referred to international conventions and agreements and usually included a request to the President to impose economic sanctions against Latvia. The statement of the State Duma on 4 October 1996 in connection with the “so called declaration of occupation of Latvia”¹⁷ adopted by the Latvian parliament on 22 August 1996 is a good example. The adoption of this declaration is referred to as an act of provocation that, according to Russian parliamentarians, is biased and wrongly reflects the history of the relationship between Latvia and Russia after 1918. The whole act of occupation is cynically referred to as an act of good will of Latvia’s people communicated through the request of the Latvian parliament handed to the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union on 21 July 1940 to incorporate Latvia into the USSR. The major reason for the negative reaction is that the very fact of occupation undermines the narrative of the Soviet Union in World War II as a liberator. This narrative is beyond dispute in Russia.

The sharp reaction of Russia to legal proceedings against veterans of the Soviet army living in Latvia should also be seen in the context of the

¹³ See, e.g., O.Yu. Berezenkin, “Duma i TV, Po materialam informatsionnikh i analiticheskikh programm “Pervyi kanal”, “Rossiya,” Upravlenie po svyazam s obshchestvennost’yu i vzaïmodeïstviyu co CMI, IAB 2004. g., No. 3 1-26 marta, available at <http://wbase.duma.gov.ru:8080/law?d&nd=981601099&c=%CB%E0%F2%E2%E8%FF&src=fa>.

¹⁴ “Vystuplenie Bolkha V.A., rukovoditlya Departamenta immigratsionnogo kontrolya migratsionnoi sluzhby MVD RF, Av. 2002. g., Vypusk 18, available at <http://wbase.duma.gov.ru:8080/law?d&nd=981600651&c=%CB%E0%F2%E2%E8%FF&src=fa>.

¹⁵ See, for example, Appeal of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of Russian Federation ‘To the members of the Saeima of the Republic of Latvia in connection with the organisation in Riga of the march of the veterans of the Latvian legion of SS’, N 3788-II GD, adopted on 18 March 1999, available at <http://www.pravoteka.ru/pst/164/81704.html>.

¹⁶ See, for example, Statement the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of Russian Federation ‘On disregarding the outcomes of the World War II by the leadership of the Republic of Latvia’, N 2735-II GD, adopted on 2 July 1998, available at <http://wbase.duma.gov.ru/ntc/vdoc.asp?kl=4929>.

¹⁷ “Statement of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation in connection with the adoption by the Saeima of the Republic of Latvia of the so called declaration on the occupation of Latvia,” N 652-II GD, adopted on 4 October 1996, available at <http://wbase.duma.gov.ru/ntc/vdoc.asp?kl=2566>.

narrative of the Soviet Union as a liberator.¹⁸ The status of liberators runs completely counter to being prosecuted for genocide or war crimes by “the liberated.” By prosecuting red partisan Vasily Kononov (see the chapter by Nils Muižnieks below), Latvia “demonstrated support for fascism.” This position denies the right of a small nation to choose a course distinct from the main protagonists of that war.

After targeting Latvia with numerous statements at the end of 1990s, the State Duma paid less attention to Latvia at the beginning of the 2000s with the exception of annual statements on discrimination of the rights of the Russian-speaking population in Latvia in e.g. 2002, 2003 and 2004. There were one or two statements against “eulogizing Nazism” collectively targeting the Baltic states, but nothing new from the previous statements.¹⁹ One statement worth mentioning did not target Latvia directly. On 2 July 2008 the State Duma adopted a statement “on action of the authorities of the Republic of Lithuania directed towards worsening of the Russian-Lithuanian relationship.”²⁰ This was a reaction against a number of events, including a Law adopted in 2000 that includes claims against Russia for losses in connection with the occupation of 1940-1993.²¹ Even more interesting is the fact that there was no blunt denial of the fact of occupation as in the statements adopted a decade or so earlier. The pre- and post-war events in the history of Lithuania (read also Latvia and Estonia) were referred to as “at large unequivocal.” The fact that the intended bill “On Counteracting the Rehabilitation of Nazism, Nazi Criminals and Their Accomplices in New Independent States on the Territory of the Former USSR”²² was never adopted is also significant.

¹⁸ See, e.g., *Postanovlenie GD FSRF* of 02.09.1998 No 2908-II GD, “O Zayavlenii Gosudarstvennoi Dumy Federal’nogo Sobraniya Rossiskoi Federatsii ‘V Svyazi s arestom pravookhanitel’nymi organami Latviiskoi Respubliki polkovnika V.M. Kononova kak byvshego komandira partizanskogo otryada, borovshegosa s fashizmom v gody Vtoroi mirovoi voiny”; *Postanovlenie GD FS RF* of 25.0.2001 N. 1092 –Sh GD “O Zayavlenii Gosudarstvennoi Dumy Federal’nogo Sobraniya Rossiskoi Federatsii “O prodolzhenii presledovaniya vlastyami Latviiskoi Respubliki byvshego komandira partizanskogo otryada V.M. Kononova”; *Postanovlenie GD FSRF* of 22.06.2001 No 1685-III GD, “Ob obrashchenii Gosudarstvennoi Dumy Federal’nogo Sobraniya Rossiskoi Federatsii “K deputatam seima Latviiskoi Respubliki o sodeistvii v osvobozhdenii iz zaklyucheniya M. Farbtukha.”

¹⁹ See Statement of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation ‘On the necessity to stand against the heroization of Nazism’, N 812-IV GD, adopted on 7 July 2004, <http://www.duma.gov.ru/>.

²⁰ Statement of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation ‘On action of the authorities of the Republic of Lithuania directed towards worsening of Russian-Lithuanian relationship’, adopted on 2 July 2008, <http://www.duma.gov.ru/>. Other statements related to the same issue are “Zayavlenie Gosudarstvennoi Dumy v svyazi s ratifikatsiei Dogovora mezhdru Rossiskoi Federatsii i Litovskoi Respublikoi o rossisko-litovskoi gosudarstvennoi granitse i Dogovora mezhdru Rossiskoi Federatsii i Litovskoi Respubliki o razgranichenii isklyuchitel’noi ekonomicheskoi zony o kontinental’noi shelfa v Baltiiskom more,” N 4036-Sh GD, adopted on 21 May 2003, <http://www.duma.gov.ru/>.

²¹ Lithuania regained independence in 1991, but the Russian army left the country only in 1993.

²² State Duma member Konstantin Zatulin had been assigned the task on 11 December 2008 of drafting this bill, but it had never reached the stage of law.

Moscow City Government

The Moscow City Government often works in close cooperation with the Kremlin and the Russian Parliament. The Moscow City Government and Moscow's Mayor in particular have taken an active position on international affairs and it was probably not a coincidence that Moscow's 'embassy' in Riga, the *Dom Moskvy*, was opened in the very beginning of the 2000s, when Russia began a more open and inclusive foreign policy. It was also the time when the Government of Russia adopted its first mid-term programme for the support of compatriots abroad and started providing scholarships for the representatives of the CIS and the Baltic states.

On the eve of the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II, the deputies of the Moscow City Duma made an appeal to the Russian President to defend the participants of the Great Patriotic War residing in Latvia. The appeal claimed that today in Latvia everything is done to twist the meaning of Victory Day, to insult the memory of those who gave their lives and to humiliate those participants who survived the war.²³ Interestingly enough, as evident from another official document adopted by the Moscow Government, the circle of individuals referred to as participants of the Great Patriotic War includes also those who took part in combat operations of "elimination of the nationalistic underground" on the territory of Latvia (as well as Lithuania, Estonia, Ukraine and Belarus) during the period from 1 January 1944 to 31 January 1951.²⁴

Promising Future?

Centuries of co-existence, geographical proximity, and a considerable period of joint history have shaped relations between Latvia and Russia. This can provide a point of departure for dialogue. As Putin himself has noted,

And as to neighbours, you know that you do not choose your neighbours. We have lived together for centuries, if not for millennia, and we will continue to live together. Despite the difficulty of neighbour relations and the fact that our interests are sometimes exclusive, we are going to look for solutions. I am confident that we will find them.²⁵

²³ See "Vechernaya Moskva," 17.02.2005, p. 3.

²⁴ Pravitel'stvo Moskvy, "Rasporyazhenie, 4 February 2004, No. 130-RP, "O realizatsii dopol'nitel'nykh l'got uchastnikam i invalidam Velikoi Otechestvennoi voimy po oplate zhilishchno-komunal'nykh uslug s 1 yanvarya 2004. goda, <http://www.mos.ru/wps/portal!/ut/p/c1/04>.

²⁵ Vladimir Putin answering a journalist's question on what concrete steps he was planning to improve Russia's relationship with direct neighbours, with Poland and the Baltic states? "Press Statement and Answers to Questions During the Joint Press Conference with President of the European Commission Jose Manuel Barroso and German Chancellor Angela Merkel Following the Russia-European Union Summit Meeting," May 18, 2007, Samara, Russia, available at http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2007/05/18/2256_type82914type82915_129689.shtml.

There are some signs that a forward-looking Russia might be slowly emerging. For example, President Medvedev made an address to the Russian Federal Assembly where he said that the “prestige of the Fatherland and national welfare cannot be endlessly measured by the achievements of the past...”²⁶ This was part of a campaign launched by the President to develop a new political strategy with the motto: “Russia ahead!”²⁷ It underlines the vision of Russia as a modernized, forward looking global player, driven not by nostalgia, but instead by the pragmatic realities of today.²⁸ Relations with other countries are supposed to be built in a way to support the multi-level modernization announced by Medvedev, who also states that for this purpose the country’s foreign policy should first and foremost be pragmatic. As Medvedev puts it, “we should be able to make our partners interested, to make them involved in joint activities.” But most important is the following sentence, in which he says that “if we shall change something in ourselves, discard prejudices and illusions – we shall do so.”²⁹ If this approach prevails, we may well see the diminishing of the historical dimension in current inter-state relationships.

There are “great victories” and “tragic mistakes”³⁰ in Russia’s history. It is doubtful that annexation of Latvia by the Soviet Union in 1940 will ever be viewed in Russia as a “tragic mistake,” but it may neither be regarded as a “great victory” to be proud of. Until recently, this was regarded in Russia as an issue of “wrong interpretation and political speculations.” In the aforementioned speech, the Russian president was critical about a true hero and role model for modernization for most Russians – Tsar Peter the Great. Any criticism of this historical personality, to whom monuments are placed all over Russia, is unusual. This suggests that there are no sealed books that cannot be revisited and reinterpreted even in Russia.

Conclusion

History, or rather differences in interpreting the events on the eve of World War II and the tragic consequences for Latvia, has served as a constraint to building a constructive relationship between neighbours. Indeed, until recently it was clear that “historical” disagreements made it extremely hard to reach accord with Russia because of linkages to highly

²⁶ President’s address to the Russian Federal Assembly, 12 November 2009, <http://news.kremlin.ru/transcripts/5979>.

²⁷ See the article by Dmitry Medvedev ‘Rossiya vpered’, <http://news.kremlin.ru/transcripts/5413>, 10 September 2009.

²⁸ It is worth noting that the change in rhetoric is apparent if one compares the President’s address to the Russian Federal Assembly in 2008 that was much more defensive in terms of Russia’s position vis-à-vis the rest of the world that can be partially explained by the recent military conflict in South Ossetia and the global economic crisis.

²⁹ Dmitry Medvedev ‘Rossiya vpered’, <http://news.kremlin.ru/transcripts/5413>, 10 September 2009.

³⁰ Ibid.

politicized interpretations of the past. Denial of the very fact of annexation of the Baltic states was clearly the predominant official stance until recently. Some changes have taken place and are reflected in official documents and statements. It is not recognition, but it is not denial either. Carefully worded phrases are, however, less aggressive and much less ironic than those that we were used in the past. It should be also taken into account that recognition of occupation is closely related to the whole issue of the mission and role of Russia in World War II. The Great Patriotic War is a holy subject to any Russian, where the self-conception is as liberator. Any suggestion from Latvia that Russia was an aggressor and thus at fault, will perhaps be rejected permanently. This position is and will be defended at all levels, by the President, his Commission or local officials. But the very mention of "tragic mistakes," even if they are left undefined, is a sign of a hope that a change in the official position towards history in Russia is possible.

Latvia and the Baltic in Russian Historiography

Vita Zelče

Introduction

Knowledge of history and the use of history in politics, culture and the value system, as well as in everyday life and the entertainment world are significant for Russia's identity. The reasons for this may be sought in the country's complicated and eventful past, as well as in state policy and traditional state-society relations. What is more, history and the writing of it in Russia have distinctive features shaped by the long experience of totalitarianism and the current active history policy implemented by the Russian state. This sets Russia apart from Western countries, where historical research, history writing and the social role of history developed differently.

The use of history and understandings of its meaning are diverse. It is often seen as providing lessons for the present, serving as a mirror for the future, showing a collection of development alternatives, testifying to the unsteady and changing nature of life, as well as reminding us of the baseness and moral unacceptability of much of human behaviour.¹ Assessing the uses of history, John Tosh has stressed that knowledge of history is an essential bulwark of a democratic society. Learning history and historical inquiry ensure the rational evaluation of events and arguments, which create the preconditions for the existence of a democratic discourse. This, in turn, influences the quality of political, economic and social life, as well as the ability of people to arrive at judgements based on knowledge and information, their involvement in public discourse, and their social and political choices. Thus, in a democratic society, history is a resource for civic education.²

In Russia and other East European countries with a lengthy experience of totalitarianism, history was long an instrument of power used by the authorities. This determined the role of history in state policy and in society, the aims and opportunities of history writing, and its traditions. While knowledge of history, or more precisely, its reawakening initiated

¹ Tosh, J. (2010), *The Pursuit of History. Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of Modern History*. 5th ed. Harlow; etc.: Pearson, pp. 29–38.

² Tosh, J. (2008), *Why History Matters*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 120–121.

many processes that contributed to the collapse of the Soviet Union, history writing and knowledge did not immediately shift towards reflecting democratic values. History as an academic discipline in Russia and other post-communist countries has developed with great difficulties and in a contradictory fashion. It has often lacked intellectual independence and attained a high level of politicization. The purpose of this chapter is to explore the development of historical science in contemporary Russia and the topic of Latvia therein. The analysis is divided into two parts. The first part investigates history as an academic discipline in Russia since the creation of the Soviet order, and the second part focuses on Latvia and the Baltic in history writing on the 20th century in Russia.

Captives of Totalitarianism

The shadow of totalitarianism can still be observed in Russian history writing. Thus, it is worth looking back at its creation. In seizing power, the Bolsheviks implemented a fundamental reordering of all realms of life, which meant renunciation of all previous social, scientific, cultural and education development. The new authorities proclaimed themselves the “state of the workers” and the first “socialist society” in the history of humanity. The previous school of history, including Russian national history, was deemed to be non-class or anti-proletarian. As Mikhail Heller and Alexander Nekrich have stressed, after the October *putsch*, there was not only a nationalization of all the means of production, but of all realms of life, first of all, of memory and history. In the Soviet Union, history became a servant of the state in the most pronounced, conscious and systematic way.³ The totalitarian regimes did not stand on ceremony with either the past or its researchers.

Soviet historiography is characterized by several stages which were determined by changes in ideological formulation and state policy. In the first decade of Soviet rule, the institutionalization of history writing loyal to the regime began, the Marxist approach was consolidated, but it was not yet an absolute, as there were still debates and investigations. In the 1930s a total and rigid subordination of history to the needs of the state took place. The state provided a strict framework for telling history, and through decrees, decisions and ideological campaigns, it organized the writing of history and its functioning in the public space. A change in cadres was carried out in scientific exhibitions, universities and schools, and the writing of history began to be more and more divorced from the study of history at universities. Scientific institutions that were ideologically unacceptable to the Soviet authorities were closed and new ones were created which were basically factories for the creation of Communist Party

³ Heller, M., Nekrich, A. M. (1986), *Utopia in Power: The History of the Soviet Union from 1917 to the Present*. New York: Summit Books, p. 9.

and Soviet ideology. Those working in the realm of history were heavily hit by repressions. Already at the end of the 1920s the first arrests of historians took place in Leningrad, and they continued throughout the decade in the whole country. In 1934, the previously leading historical school of Mikhail Pokrovsky was declared anti-Marxist and arrests of its supporters began. The same fate befell Sergey Platonov and representatives of other leading schools of history.⁴ In the 1930s many people working in the field of history (researchers, lecturers, museum and cultural workers, teachers, textbook authors) were killed or sent to the Gulag not only for petty expressions of disloyalty to the regime, but also for petty (and sometimes imaginary) departures from the ideological positions of the power elite. Those who survived were forced to undergo a humiliating process of “re-education.”⁵ This experience led to the appearance of enormous self-censorship in history writing, constant fear for oneself and one’s relatives, and led to the virtual enslavement of historians to denial in life and work. The practice of fear and wariness established in these years, obsequiousness to the authorities, and the subordination of science to ideology became the norm in writing history subsequently as well.

The approach to Soviet history was also influenced by changes in nationality policy, where Russian nationalism and Russian superiority in the world revolutionary movement gained priority after the beginning of the 1930s. The task of history was to promote patriotism and social cohesion in one’s “socialist fatherland.” This policy was also manifested in textbooks commissioned by the state. The new school of “national” history was linked to the work of Boris Grekov. As Aleksandr Barsenkov and Aleksandr Vdovin note, the main difference from the previous school was “the place and role of the Russian people in the interpretation of national and world history,” assigning it not only the status of “great,” “first among equals,” but also “elder brother” among Soviet peoples. In the new history books, the Soviet period was treated in context with the general development of Russian statehood, praising not only the achievements of socialism, but also the expansion of ancient Russia. This “state patriotic notion of the history of the fatherland” was brought to life in the propaganda of that era as well, in mass patriotic education, cinema, and in many commemorative events of historical persons and events.⁶ Heller and Nekrich summarize that “Soviet history, as cooked to taste by Stalin, took the form of a monstrous mixture of nationalism and Marxism.”⁷

⁴ Volobuev, O., Kuleshov, S. (1989), “Istoriya po-stalinski,” in Senokosov, Y., ed., *Surovaya drama naroda*. Moscow: Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, pp. 312–321; Khodyakov, M., ed. (2008), *Noveishaya istoriya Rossii, 1914–2008*. 3rd ed. Moscow: Vyshchee obrazovanie, p. 235.

⁵ Maslov, N. (1989), “Kratkii kurs istorii VKP(b)” – entsiklopediya kul'ta lichnosti Stalina,” in Senokosov, Y., ed., *Surovaya drama naroda*, p. 336.

⁶ Barsenkov, A., Vdovin, A. (2010), *Istoriya Rossii, 1917–2009*. 3rd ed. Moscow: Aspekt Press, pp. 254–259.

⁷ Heller, Nekrich, (1986), *Utopia in Power*, p. 295.

The canonic history text became the 1938 *Short History Course of the All-Union Communist Party (of Bolsheviks) (VK(b)P)* edited by Stalin which created a monolithic notion of the history of the ruling party and which was applied or forced upon the history of the state.⁸ In fact, Evgeny Dobrenko indicates that this history book created a master-plot for all of Soviet culture.⁹ Mihail Glovinsky, in turn, argues that the *Short Course* was a weapon of tyrannical power, the only version of history which not only displaced other versions, but excluded their possibility altogether. History was presented as the triumph of right over wrong in all realms of life, thereby assuming the meaning of a mythical tale. The significance of this book was all the greater in that it established a manner of presenting history, the Marxist discourse in the USSR (or “I know better”).¹⁰ The new concept of Soviet history also established a wide range of deceit in facts, data, the inclusion or exclusion of events and people in history in order to be in line with the latest decisions of the authorities. This practice was widely used in subsequent years and became the norm in Soviet historical research.¹¹

During World War II the emphasis on national patriotic themes and struggles for national liberation intensified, and tsarist-era leaders were positively evaluated not only for their organizational talents and role in shaping the state, but also as positive prototypes of Stalin. The task of history during the war was to be an instrument for promoting patriotism among the public. After the war ideological and repressive pressure was renewed, thereby sweeping away the independent thinking, hopes for creative freedom, and belief in the possibility of cooperation with the West characteristic of the new generation of historians who had entered the scientific field predominantly from the front.¹²

Historians Galina Naumova and Alla Shiklo call the period after Stalin’s death and the 20th Congress of the CPSU a favourable time for historian’s work. Of course, Stalinist repressions had ended, various history texts and monographs were published, and greater freedom of interpretation of historical events was permitted. However, history writing remained politically and ideologically engaged and evaluations of the past could not diverge from the stances of the power elite.¹³ The falsification of history continued as well, and facts that were disliked by the authorities became “blank spaces.” The historian working in Latvia Vassily Dorošenko (Doroshenko) has written

⁸ Naumova, G., Shiklo, A. (2008), *Istoriografiya istorii Rossii*. Moscow: Akademiya, pp. 349–351. In the period from 1938 to 1953, the *Short Course* had 301 editions in 67 languages with a print run of 42,816,000.

⁹ Dobrenko, E. (2000), “Mezhdu istoriei i proshlom: Pisatel’ Stalin i literaturnye istoki sovetskogo diskursa,” in Gunter, H., Dobrenko, E., eds., *Sotsrealisticheskii kanon*. Sankt-Peterburg: Akademicheskii Projekt, pp. 659–671.

¹⁰ See Glovin’skii, M. (1996), “Ne puskat’ proshlogo na samotek’: “Kratkii kurs VKP(b)” kak mificheskoe skazanie,” *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, 22, pp. 142–160.

¹¹ Heller, Nekrich (1986), *Utopia in Power*, p. 300.

¹² Naumova, Shiklo (2008), *Istoriografiya istorii Rossii*, pp. 352–357.

¹³ *Ibid*, pp. 359–360.

bitterly about this time: "The vileness, servility and hypocrisy of 'the history of Soviet society' did not evoke doubt among anyone, I think." But it also presented historians the individual opportunity of selling themselves in exchange for a career, an apartment or other benefits.¹⁴ Naumova and Shiklo stress that historians were a part of Soviet society and the majority sincerely believed in the ideals of socialism and were convinced followers of the Marxist-Leninist approach.¹⁵

In the post-war years, the number of people with a history education in the Soviet Union grew rapidly. This was furthered by the confluence of history and ideology, and the historian was simultaneously also an ideological worker. In the 1960s and 1970s the broad and multifaceted infrastructure of Soviet historical science was fully developed and comprised many research and teaching institutions, the training of researchers, periodical publications, procedures for publishing and reviewing works, and publishing houses, all of which persisted until the collapse of the Soviet Union.¹⁶ What is more, the Soviet leadership was concerned about assuring the Soviet Union the status of a "great historiographical superpower," particularly in competition with the United States and France. Not only did the state fund research on national history, but also inquiry into the most varied problems of the past in various areas of the world, of course, in the framework of Marxism and the aforementioned "I know better" approach. The duty of the historian was also to engage in perpetual struggle with "bourgeois science" or "bourgeois falsifiers." The primary target audience and the highest jury for historians were the authorities. The historian Pavl Uvarov has noted the specific nature of his profession in the Soviet period: "The link with the authorities, the understanding of what they need, the proclivity to show that you are better than others, because you are involved in their secrets – that was the main resource of the Soviet historian and about this an uncompromising struggle was waged."¹⁷ Historians were members of the guild of those keeping the secrets of Soviet power.

The daily life of a Soviet person, in which history had a continual place through teaching in school and a presence in various mediated forms, had to a large extent acquired the inertia of a routinized performance. The thematic planning of the work of a Soviet historian was determined by the calendar of historical events to be celebrated in the Soviet Union. History institutions devoted several years of work to every significant anniversary throughout the territory of the USSR. As a result, a huge amount of history literature was created. For example, in 1970, most history institutions and their staff organized their work around the 100th anniversary of Lenin's birth.¹⁸

¹⁴ Dorošenko, V. (2001), "Piezīmes," *Latvijas Arhīvi*, 4, p. 102.

¹⁵ Naumova, Shiklo (2008), *Istoriografiya istorii Rossii*, p. 434.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 359–368.

¹⁷ Kobrin, K. (2007), "Svoboda u istorikov poka est'. Vo vsyakom sluchae – est' ot chego bezhat'. Beseda Kirilla Kobrina s Pavlom Uvarovym," *Neprikosnovemyi zapas*, 55(5), pp. 34–37.

¹⁸ Naumova, Shiklo (2008), *Istoriografiya istorii Rossii*, p. 365.

Until Gorbachev's declared policy of *glasnost'* historical research retained an incredibly high level of politicization, ideologization and overt servility to the authorities. Soviet historians created a victorious discourse of their country's unreal past. Moreover, as James Wertsch has stressed, history, even when one version displaced another, remained invariably univocal.¹⁹ Historian and Gorbachev advisor Aleksandr Yakovlev sees as the result of this mono-ideology

a Soviet people, namely, a people with a collectivized conscience. Since for the majority it meant nothing to applaud an execution, or demand death for yesterday's friends and drinking buddies, or to abuse Pasternak and Brodsky, whose books they had not even seen, or to declare Solzhenitsyn a "traitor" or to engage in other similar baseness.²⁰

In serving the authorities, Soviet history had also served to corrode humane cultural and moral values at both the macro and micro levels.

In the interest of fairness, it should also be added that some lasting value was also created during the Soviet era. This was primarily true in archival research, making public previously unknown data on the past, archaeological and ethnographic research, study of the middle ages and more ancient times, factually rich monographs on economic life and various social groups. Soviet ideological strictures were more superficial on research dealing with pre-modern times, while those dealing with the modern era had to justify the communist ascension to power and its subsequent legitimacy and to create a chronicle of the achievements of socialism.

***Perestroika* and History**

A rapid and cardinal shift in the writing of history and its relations with society took place during *perestroika* as a result of the policy of *glasnost'*. A revision of USSR history served well as a tangible public demonstration of *glasnost'*. The first stage began in 1987 with revelations about the Stalinist era and the creation of a new discourse. The authorities elaborated the approach to the revision of history altogether clearly at a joint meeting of the CPSU Central Committee, the USSR Supreme Soviet and the RSFSR Supreme Soviet on 2 November 1987 to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the October Socialist Revolution. Gorbachev particularly stressed the demand of the authorities to not change the basic postulates of USSR history: "October really was the "starring hour" of humanity," "its bright dawn," and "we have

¹⁹ Wertsh, J. V. (2002), *Voices of Collective Remembering*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 72–86.

²⁰ Yakovlev, A. (2003), *Sumerki*. Moscow: Materik, p. 595.

one history, which is irreversible.”²¹ Speaking about the rationale for revising history, he indicated:

Finally, we must honestly evaluate [...] our historical periods right now, when restructuring has begun – this is necessary not to settle political accounts, or as they say, to cause pain in our hearts, but to appropriately evaluate all the heroism that has been in the past and to gain lessons from mistakes and shortcomings.²²

Historical inquiry was declared to be part of restructuring. The state and party leadership encouraged the media, creative people (without whom “no steps forward are possible”), and propagandists to work so as “to create a new atmosphere, to free people’s minds.”²³ In the all-Union public sphere, a turning point in the interpretation of Soviet history came when a mass audience saw Tengiz Abuladze’s movie “Repentance” (*Pokayanie*, 1984), Anatoly Rybakov’s novel *Children of the Arbat* (*Deti Arbata*) was published, and the press began to publish analyses and memoirs about the Stalin era.²⁴

The history of the USSR became an important item on the agenda of the media. There was a torrent of previously concealed information about aspects of the Soviet past that had been hushed up. The economist Otto Latsis writes that “the first years of perestroika were a period of tense interest in history, almost a schizophrenic turn when our problems of the past ended up at the centre of public attention,” and they were so heatedly debated, as if it were still possible to take decisions that would affect the resolution of past events.²⁵ The deconstruction of the earlier narrative of Soviet history became the litmus test for *glasnost’*. In 1988, with *glasnost’* gathering steam, these processes acquired enormous power. Yuri Afanas’ev has written that *glasnost’* almost became a river that in a moment flowed over the permitted banks, turned into a flood, and created the free flow of information. Behind Stalinist repressions people perceived the criminality of Leninism, and more fundamentally, of the entire Soviet regime. Thus, the Communist Party and the regime lost its legitimacy, and official communist doctrine transformed to lies for millions of people in a few days.²⁶

Thus, the course of *glasnost’*, which was initially aimed at revitalizing the Soviet system, had the contrary effect, according to historian Martin

²¹ Gorbačovs, M. (1987), *Oktobris un pārkārtošanās: Revolūcija turpinās. Referāts Lielās Oktobra sociālistiskās revolūcijas 70. gadadienai veltītajā PSKP Centrālās komitejas, PSRS Augstākās padomes un KPFSR Augstākās padomes kopīgajā svinīgajā sēdē Kremļa Kongresa pīlī 1987. gada 2. novembrī*. Rīga: Avots, pp. 3 and 5.

²² Ibid, p. 12.

²³ Ibid, p. 15.

²⁴ Malia, M. (1996), *The Soviet Tragedy: A History of Socialism in Russia, 1917–1991*. New York: The Free Press, pp. 422–423.

²⁵ Latsis, O. (2001), *Tchatel’no splanirovannoe samoubištvo*. Moscow: Moskovskaya shkola politicheskikh issledovanii, p. 213.

²⁶ Afanas’ev, Y. (2001), *Opasnaya Rossiya. Traditsii, samovlast’ya, segodnya*. Moscow: Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi gumanitarnyi universitet, p. 305.

Malia. Openness compromised the myths that were at the basis of the Soviet system. It had been given a limited task – to fill in the “blank spots” in the history of the Stalin era, but openness transformed into an avalanche of revelations, which not only destroyed myths about the Stalin and Brezhnev years, but discredited Marxist economic theory and Lenin’s activities. Malia stresses that in two years’ time, *glasnost*’ destroyed the ideological work of 70 years. Each new unmasking of a past crime or catastrophe did not encourage people to work for the benefit of *perestroika*, but generated disappointment in the holiness of the Soviet order. The loss of legitimacy was decisive in the collapse of the Soviet system, because its surrealistic structures could not survive if the truth were not hidden. Thus, Malia surmises, a regime created by ideology began to perish as soon as the ideology evaporated.²⁷

The collapse of the Soviet Union also meant the end of the previous Soviet school of history. National schools of history emerged in the post-Soviet space, including in the Russian Federation. Historians who renounced their Marxist view of history were diverse in their political convictions and professional capabilities. Moreover, many amateur historians also began to engage in history writing. The main trend became the so-called struggle against old stereotypes, sensationalism, a radical shift in evaluations (from positive to negative and vice versa). This was in fact the end of the science of Soviet history.²⁸ A crisis erupted in history teaching as well. In 1988 the history final examination in schools was cancelled, the teaching programme was deemed useless, and a new competition for drafting a textbook was announced.²⁹ Similar processes took place in universities, where, for example, departments with ideological names changed to more neutral appellations and curricula changed as well. History written in the West became accessible, and various foreign organizations and foundations began to operate in Russia in the 1980s.³⁰

In relations between the past and the public, a decisive role was played by social memory and its practices. If, during the Soviet era, no manifestations of social memory were permitted that did not correspond to the version of history accepted by the authorities, during *glasnost*’ many memory preservation communities began to emerge. These brought to the public agenda historical injustices, particularly commemoration of the victims of Stalinist repression. The most influential was the *Memorial* society, whose independent and powerful voice promoted democratic transformation in the

²⁷ Malia (1996), *The Soviet Tragedy*, pp. 435, 436, 443.

²⁸ Naumova, Shiklo (2008), *Istoriografiya istorii Rossii*, pp. 442–443.

²⁹ Aimermaher, K., Bordyugov, G. (2002), “Istoriya s uchebnikom istorii,” in Aimermaher, K., Bordyugov, G., eds., *Istoriki chitayut uchebniki istorii*. Moscow: AIRO-XX, p. 8.

³⁰ Naumova, Shiklo (2008), *Istoriografiya istorii Rossii*, pp. 438–440.

1980s, as well as the rehabilitation and commemoration of those who had been repressed.³¹

The newly acquired historical knowledge and the awakening of social memory changed state-society relations. Since 1990 the basic historical myths of the Soviet Union experienced a dramatic decay. In the public sphere, the extensive and chaotic reformulation of the past deepened the chasm between the authorities and the public and left the political elite without a coherent ideology.³² During the campaign to fill in history's "blank spots" Soviet society was most shocked by the scale of Stalinist repression, the criminal decisions of the Communist Party and the Soviet leadership, the violent suppression of public protest during the Khrushchev years, the corruption of the administration and high security officials during the years of stagnation, the unnecessary and foolish loss of life during the Great Fatherland War, the existence of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, the expansion of the Soviet Union through military force, in particular, the involuntary inclusion of the Baltic states.

The sociologist Lev Gudkov has noted that as a result of the unmasking of the history of the Soviet regime, more than half of the inhabitants thought that the Soviet past had brought them only poverty, suffering, and mass terror. Without the means to interpret the past, mass consciousness develops low self-esteem, collective disorientation, masochism, and resentment.³³ This meant the decay of the old story of the history of the USSR shaped by the matrix of Soviet power and the emergence of new discursive practices and a different use of history in daily life.

Russia's History in the 1990s

August 1991 may formally be seen as a turning point in the writing of Russia's history. Naumova and Shiklo write that

the collapse of the USSR also led to the disintegration of Soviet historical science in both a direct and figurative way; historians who had earlier belonged to the united international Soviet school now became oriented towards various state and national interests and traditions.

They stress that as Soviet historical science ceased to exist, on its ruins emerged the historical schools of the new states, including that of the Russian Federation.³⁴

³¹ See Smith, K. E. (1996), *Remembering Stalin's Victims: Popular Memory and the End of the USSR*. Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press.

³² Sherlock, T. (2007), *Historical Narratives in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Russia. Destroying the Settled Past, Creating an Uncertain Future*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 122-123.

³³ Gudkov, L. (2004), *Negativnaya identichnost'. Stan'i: 1997–2002*. Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie; "VCIOM-A", p. 147.

³⁴ Naumova, Shiklo (2008), *Istoriografiya istorii Rossii*, p. 439.

Enormous confusion reigned in Russia's school of history. Some of the reasons for this lay in the swift collapse of the profession of Soviet historian. The historian's functions as herald of the story of the past were almost completely appropriated by journalists, writers, and various other professionals. The routinized unanimity of the story of the past was lost, and, for historians and history consumers who had long lived in an undemocratic system, it was difficult not only to find one's bearings in the pluralism of the past, but also to get accustomed to and reconcile oneself with its existence. Moreover, the level of public trust was low towards historians who had worked during the Soviet period in scientific institutions and whose publications were replete with falsifications and servility to the authorities. Some historians who had worked during the Soviet period ceased their activities in this field for ethical reasons and changed professions or retired.

The beginning of the 1990s witnessed a rapid decrease in funding for science, particularly for fundamental research, which decreased by a factor of five from 1991 through 1995. This also led to the rapid fall in the social prestige of the scientist, which had been quite high in the Soviet era.³⁵ The situation was not improved with the creation of a Russian fund for fundamental research by presidential decree on 27 April 1992 or the Russian humanitarian science fund in 1993. They were meant to support research projects chosen on a competitive basis, but in practice, they served as a supplementary subsidy to existing scientific institutions. A federal law adopted in 1996 envisaged that 4% of the federal budget should be allocated to science each year, but it was not implemented.³⁶ The number of researchers working in the humanities declined, reaching its lowest point in 1999, when only about 9,000 persons were employed in this realm with only slightly more than one half in historical research.³⁷

Already at the end of the 1980s various foreign organizations and foundations, particularly from the United States, began to work in Russia, offering grants to scientists for conducting research in Russia and abroad. Particularly significant were the activities of the Open Society Institute, among whose goals was to renew humanitarian education. Western foundations offered support to Russian scientists to attend foreign conferences, books and periodicals for libraries, support for the development of new universities and teaching programmes, the preparation of new textbooks, and teacher training. These foundations were also targets of some criticism for "twisting" people's thinking, "destroying the Russian mentality", promoting the "degradation" of youth, etc. Western support

³⁵ Naumova, Shiklo, (2008), *Istoriografiya istorii Rossii*, pp. 442-443; Saharov, A., Bohanov, A., Shestakov, V. (2008). *Istoriya Rossii s drevneishih vremen do nashih dnei*. Moscow: Prospekt. Vol. 2, p. 685.

³⁶ Bezborodov, A., Eliseeva, N., Krasovitskaya, T., Pavlenko, O. (2010), *Istoriya Rossii v noveishee vremya*. Moscow: Prospekt, pp. 314-315.

³⁷ Poletaev, A. (2008), *Obshchestvennye i gumanitarnye nauki v Rossii v 1998-2007 gg.: kolichestvennye kharakteristiki*. Preprint WP6/2008/07. Moscow: GU VShE, pp. 18, 27.

promoted the acquisition of new theoretical approaches and methodologies in research, which later turned into modern, high quality research, including the rapid development of social history in Russia. The expansion of access to Russian archives promoted the activities of Western historians and many new studies appeared on the Soviet Union based on archival materials, particularly on the Stalin era, the repression, the Gulag and social history.³⁸ The work of Western historians had a positive impact on Russia's academic history school, and one could observe the mutual enrichment process. Since the end of the 1990s, more and more works by Western historians have been translated into Russian, while the work of Russian historians has appeared in Western anthologies.

In characterizing Russia's post-Soviet historiography of the 1990s, Uvarov notes that the decade as a whole should be seen as one of

real polycentrism, stormy eclecticism, an accelerated search for one saving lesson. Here, one also has 'the invasion of the terminator into Russia'- getting acquainted with Western Russian studies and attempts to reconstruct a national pantheon of scientists and hunt for a new paradigm.³⁹

This period can also be described as one of revising Russia's history. In rewriting history after the collapse of the Soviet Union, new information had to be included. Schools needed new textbooks as quickly as possible and it is there that the new Russian historical narrative and its changes are most clearly reflected.

Along with reissues of pre-Soviet era books and the publication of memoirs, school textbooks can be seen as the most significant historical literature output of the 1990s. Comparing Soviet and post-Soviet textbooks, Wertsch points out that the relation between the two can be described with Bakhtin's term "hidden dialogicality," as the new post-Soviet narrative developed as an answer or, more precisely, as various answers to earlier Soviet narratives.⁴⁰ Catherine Merridale suggests that history books and teaching programmes in the 1990s were full of contradictions and that the "battle lines between conservatives and reformers are all too clear."⁴¹ However, overall this was not a topical issue in either the political or social sense, as history in schools, universities and in science had become of secondary importance.

³⁸ Kotkin, S. (2002), "The State – Is It Us? Memories, Archives, and Kremlinologists," *The Russian Review*, 61, pp. 35–51; Fitzpatrick, S. (2007), "The Soviet Union in the Twenty-First Century," *Journal of European Studies*, 37, pp. 52–57.

³⁹ Kobrin, K. (2007), "Svoboda u istorikov poka est'. Vo vsyakom sluchae – est' ot chego bezhat'. Beseda Kirilla Kobrina s Pavlom Uvarovym," p. 47.

⁴⁰ Wertsh, D. (1999), "Revising Russian History," *Written Communication*, 16(3), pp. 290–292.

⁴¹ Merridale, C. (2003), "Redesigning History in Contemporary Russia," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 38(1), p. 21.

The 1990s were a complicated time in Russia not only in historical research and public representation, but also in relations with society. This era is linked to the development and culmination of a negative identity and a moral crisis among the majority of society, when understandings of good and evil, duty and honour became uncertain, when feelings of shame, compassion, comradeship and friendship began to fade, and when fear spread about the unclear future. Society lacked common ideals, and knowledge of the past could not help create them.⁴² In assessing the psychological mood of the Russian people in the first half of the 1990s, one could compare it to “a group of alpine climbers caught in an avalanche and rapidly falling into an abyss.”⁴³ There was a turn away from history, which had only generated national shame. In the second half of the 1990s, nostalgia grew for the period before perestroika. In a survey conducted in 1999, 58% of respondents claimed that they wanted everything in the country to be as it was in 1985.⁴⁴

History and History in Politics

The beginning of the 21st century is considered a new period in the writing of Russia’s history and in relations between history and society. In February 2001 the Russian government adopted a new state programme on “The Patriotic Education of Citizens of the Russian Federation 2001–2005.” When this programme concluded, another followed in which a major educational role was assigned to the pages of the pre-Revolutionary and the Soviet past. The programme urged delving into history and seeking for positive aspects in it which could serve as a basis for the patriotic education of the public.⁴⁵ Commenting on the new programme, the representatives of the President’s administration stressed that the Soviet period does not merit general condemnation and that its heritage should not be forgotten. In the public sphere, a symbol of this shift in emphasis is considered Moscow mayor Yuri Luzhkov’s proposal in September 2002 to restore in Lyubyanka Square the monument to Felikss Dzerzhinsky which had been toppled in a 1991 anti-communist demonstration. That was also a signal of the beginning of a broad, more positive re-evaluation of the Soviet past.⁴⁶

⁴² Barsenkov, Vdovin (2010), *Istoriya Rossii, 1917–2009*, pp. 750–751. In 1996 President Yeltsin urged the creation of a national ideology suitable for modern Russia, thereby seeking an exit from the identity crisis. However, the bases for the new ideology were not yet sought in Russian history. See Smith, K. E. (2002), *Mythmaking in the New Russia. Politics and Memory during the Yeltsin Era*. Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, pp. 158–172.

⁴³ Zubov, A., ed., (2009), *Istoriya Rossii. XX vek: 1939–2007*. Moscow: Actrel’; AST, p. 711.

⁴⁴ Levada, Y. (2006), *Ishchem cheloveka. Sotsiologicheskie ocherki, 2000–2005*. Moscow: Novoe izdatel’stvo, p. 140.

⁴⁵ State programme “Patrioticheskoe vospitanie grazhdan Rossiiskoi Federatsii na 2001–2005 gody” available at http://www.rg.ru/oficial/doc/postan_rf/122_1.shtm. State programme “Patrioticheskoe vospitanie grazhdan Rossiiskoi Federatsii na 2006–2010 gody” available at http://www.rg.ru/oficial/doc/postan_rf/122_1.shtm.

⁴⁶ Sherlock (2007), *Historical Narratives in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Russia*, p. 150.

Historian Vdovin dates the new phase in the authorities' relations with history, scientific literature and textbooks to 27 November 2003, when President Putin met with history researchers in the state library and elaborated his demands for the content of history textbooks. Putin asserted that

contemporary textbooks for schools and universities do not need to become new battlefields for political and ideological struggles, these books have to tell historical facts, they should inculcate pride in one's history, in one's country. The whole time historians have been underlining the negative, as their task was to destroy the former system; now we have a different, creative task.⁴⁷

During the Putin administration Russia's national narrative linked tsarism, the Soviet and post-Soviet periods stressing a common theme – the mightiness of a great power.⁴⁸

The significance of the positive discourse on the Soviet period in Russia's history policy is demonstrated by Putin's speech in the Federal Chamber in 2005: "First, it must be recognized that the collapse of the Soviet Union was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century."⁴⁹ Journalist Edward Lucas has written that "The Kremlin is spearheading a new approach to the past that glorifies the Soviet Union, denigrates the west and portrays the Yeltsin years as a period of disgraceful weakness and chaos from which Russia has now been rescued."⁵⁰ The quintessence of Putin's approach to history teaching and "patriotic education" became Fillipov's 2007 methodology book for history teachers "Russia's recent history, 1945-2006," which undoubtedly was highly evaluated by the president. In the introduction, the particular significance of the Soviet period in Russia's history was underlined:

The post-war history of the USSR had an important special feature – in the period 1945-1991 Moscow was not only the capital of a country, but of an entire world system, that included in its own orbit and in that of its interests dozens of countries. [...] The Soviet Union was not a democracy, but for millions of people all over the world it was a reference point and example of a better, more just society.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Vdovin, A. (2009), "Noveishaya istoriya Rossii s pozitsii natsional'no-gosudarstvennogo patriotizma," *Slovo* available at <http://www.portal-slovo.ru/history/41326.php>.

⁴⁸ Sherlock (2007), *Historical Narratives in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Russia*, pp. 161–165.

⁴⁹ Putin, V. (2005, 25 aprelya), "Poslanie Federal'nomu Sobraniyu Rossiiskoi Federatsii," available at http://archive.kremlin.ru/appears/2005/04/25/1223_type63372type63374type82634_87049.shtml.

⁵⁰ Lucas, E. (2008), *The New Cold War: How the Kremlin Menaces both Russia and the West*. London: Bloomsbury, p. 141.

⁵¹ Fillipov, A. (2007), *Noveishaya istoriya Rossii. 1945–2006 gg. Kniga dlya uchitelya*. Moscow: Prosveshchenie, p. 6. In subsequent years this book was reissued. In 2009 the third edition was published covering history from 1945 to 2008. In the third edition, the number of authors expanded as well, with Fillipov being joined by A. Utkin, S. Alekseyev, D. Volodihin, O. Gaman-Golutvina, P. Danilin, G. Yeliseyev, I. Semenko and A. Shadrin.

In 2008 history teachers were presented with a framework for Russian history for 1900 to 1945 which justified the repression of the Stalin regime as a rational endeavour evoked by his role as “defender of the nation,” “advocate of industrialization,” “national leader” and the concrete historical situation. By the same token, the occupation of the Baltic states, Finland, Poland and Bessarabia is treated as action against territories that previously belonged to “our country” and the creation of “security zone.”⁵² Historical revisionism was supposed to create patriotism, which was supposed to generate support for the Kremlin leadership and its policy. During the Putin administration, just as during the Soviet era, history had again become an active instrument of politics and ideology.

The shift in history policy influenced historical research and writing in scientific institutions as well. After 2000 state funding for science increased, as did the number of researchers working in state funded scientific institutions. From 2000 to 2007 the number of scientists working in the humanities increased by 70%. For example, in 2007, almost 7000 researchers worked in historical science.⁵³ The main research centres are the Russian Academy of Sciences and its regional affiliates with many institutes under its auspices dealing with Russian and foreign history. Research is also conducted in universities and their institutes, as well as other institutions of higher education. Among historians, the greatest achievement is considered research on Stalinism, as a result of which many previously unknown or hidden facts have entered circulation, and a deeper understanding of the model of Soviet totalitarianism.⁵⁴

One of the most significant problems in historical research in Russia is considered its weak position in world historiography, particularly historical methodology. The reason for this is poor recognition in the West for the work of Russian historians and the small number of publications in foreign languages.⁵⁵ Historians are also professionally weakened by unstable traditions, the breach in generational continuity, and the low level of funding as compared to that for the humanities in the West. Historian Sergey Karpov also mentions as a problem differences in historical interpretation between historians in Russia and neighbouring countries. In his opinion, the solution to this problem lies in dialogue, decoupling

⁵² “O kontseptsii kursa istorii Rossii 1900–1945 gg.,” available at http://prosv.ru/umk/ist-obsh/info.aspx?ob_no=15378 For various views on these documents, see <http://liberty.ru/Themes/Liberaly-ustroili-isteriku-vokrug-uchebnika-istorii-kotorogo-ne-chitali>.

⁵³ For data on the number of researchers, see Poletaev, A. (2008), *Obshchestvennye i gumanitarnye nauki v Rossii v 1998–2007 gg.: kolichestvennye kharakteristiki*. Preprint WP6/2008/07. pp. 18–28.

⁵⁴ Simoyan, N., ed., (2007), *Istoriografiya stalinizma*. Moskva: ROSSPEN.

⁵⁵ For an analysis of trends in the number of publications abroad by Russian researchers in the humanities, see Savel'eva, I., Poletaev, A. (2009), “Zarubezhnie publikatsii Rossiiskikh gumanitariyev: sotsiometricheskii analiz,” *Voprosy obrazovaniya*, 4, pp. 199–217.

history from political projects, and renouncing politicized lies.⁵⁶ Karpov, however, directs this criticism not towards Russian historians, but towards those in neighbouring countries.

In recent years, the academic freedom of historians has become a debatable issue. Uvarov notes that in the first decade of this century research in Russia has witnessed a "period of consolidation, a rapid change in the rules of the game, efforts to assign the term 'historical memory' a sense of usability." He also indicates that a significant portion of historians are not against "ideological dependence" and they are ready to "swing to the line," though the authorities do not always clearly draw that line. Paraphrasing Fromm, Uvarov ironizes that historians in Russia have freedom at least to the extent that it is possible to escape from it.⁵⁷

Overall, the influence of historical science on Russian society is insignificant. A much more important instrument of ideologized history in the hands of the authorities is popular culture and show-like mass commemoration events. Over the last decade, far more television series, films (see the chapter by Dmitrijs Petrenko), and documentaries for a mass audience have been devoted to the past, as has mass edition popular historical literature. This output, which has entertainment functions, also disseminates the national ideology cultivated by the authorities, which recruits popular support to the masters of the Kremlin.

In recent years, Russian history policy has experienced many zig zags which have generated uncertainty. At the beginning of 2009, President Medvedev harshly warned that he would not permit the "distortion" of World War II history,⁵⁸ and on 15 May issued a decree creating a Presidential Commission of the Russian Federation to Counter Attempts to Falsify History to the Detriment of Russia's Interests.⁵⁹ This quickly gained the nickname of the "Ministry of Truth." The creation of the commission raised the issue of Russia's history policy being directed against neighbouring countries, first of all, the Baltic states, Ukraine, Poland, and Georgia, which have been accused of falsifying Russian history and rewriting history. In 2010, Russian leaders made several contradictory announcements which signalled the existence of two history policies. The first one addressed Russia's inhabitants and put the glory of the past at the basis of national ideology, stressing in particular the victory in World War II. The second is addressed to the West and includes the first tentative recognition of

⁵⁶ Karpov, S. (2009), "Istoricheskaya nauka na sovremennom etape: sostoyanie i perspektivy razvitiya," *Novaya i noveishaya istoriya*, 5, available at <http://www.hist.msu.ru/Science/History/karpov2009.htm>.

⁵⁷ Kobrin, K. (2007), "Svoboda u istorikov poka est'. Vo vsyakom sluchae – est' ot chego bezhat' Beseda Kirilla Kobrina s Pavlom Uvarovym," p. 47.

⁵⁸ See Kasparāns, Ģ. (2009), "Medvedevs brīdina "nekropļot" Otrā pasaules kara vēsturi," *Diena*. 27 January.

⁵⁹ "Ukaz Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii ot 15 maya 2009 g. N. 549 "O Komissii pri Prezidente Rossiiskoi Federatsii po protivodeistviyu popytkam fal'sifikatsii istorii v ushcherb interesam Rossii," available at <http://www.rg.ru/2009/05/20/komissia-dok.html>.

transgressions towards Poland and the suggestion of the possibility of cooperation in explaining the past.

Latvia and the Baltic in Russian History

In the enormous store of scientific and popular literature, as well as media production devoted to Russia's past, little attention is paid to the history of the Baltic states. However, interest in the past of these lands and the evaluation thereof is stable. In explaining the particular attitude towards these countries, historian Elena Zubkova writes:

'The Baltic.' For a person who lived Soviet history as a part of their personal life, this word has a particular meaning. 'The Soviet West' was a name that became common when speaking about Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania, when they were part of the USSR. The Baltic was simultaneously the showcase of Soviet life and one of the least Soviet regions of the country. In all senses of the word, it was more than just geography.⁶⁰

To a large extent, memories of the Soviet Baltic also evoke questions among many former Soviet citizens about why these lands are no longer part of Russia or the CIS and what were the reasons for them to depart so swiftly and desire to live an independent life.

In the Soviet period, research and history writing on the past of the Baltic states in the frame of Soviet history was delegated to the republics themselves. The Soviet Union had a unified system of science, and each Union republic had its own academy of sciences with institutes of history. In Latvia, a Soviet-type history institute was created in the Academy of Sciences in 1946, in Estonia in 1947,⁶¹ while in Lithuania it was formed as early as 1941, but renewed its work in 1945. At the same time, the party history of the republican communist parties was investigated at the local communist party history institutes. These research institutions rewrote the previously existing historical narratives, portraying the past as a difficult path, covered with various obstacles, towards a happy life in the Soviet Union. The story of Soviet history was a total panegyric to Soviet achievements. In creating and monitoring Baltic Soviet history, the regime was not sparing in its use of repression towards history writers and consumers, but granted privileges for faithful service to the authorities. Regarding Latvia's historical research, historian Irēna Šneidere has written: "Strict control and the imposition of communist ideology in Soviet historiography falsified Latvian history, facts and phenomena undesired by the regime were concealed, bald lies became

⁶⁰ Zubkova, E. (2008), *Pribaltika i Kreml'. 1940–1953*. Moscow: ROSSPEN; Fond Pervogo Prezidenta Rossii B. N. El'tsina, p. 3.

⁶¹ On history in Estonia during the Stalin era, see Viires, A. (2006), "Istoriya Estonii v stalinskikh tiskakh," *Tuna*, 5, pp. 157–172.

the basis for concepts of history.”⁶² For the most part, history institutes in Moscow coordinated the writing of the history of the Baltic Soviet republics when sizeable history books were created on certain topics significant for the entire Baltic.⁶³

The end of the Soviet school of history was marked during *perestroika* by the appearance in the public sphere of detailed information on transgressions against the Baltic peoples and the destruction of their countries through occupation.⁶⁴ History became one of the main instruments for political mobilization in the struggle for Baltic independence. Political scientist Thomas Sherlock argues that the message in the public sphere about the historical offences committed against the Baltic peoples (the illegal incorporation into the USSR in 1940, repressions, nationality policies) justified Baltic separatism in the view of the other republics. In his opinion, historical revelations about the offences of the Soviet regime against the Balts and condemnation of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact played a critical role in the public delegitimization of Soviet mythology and furthered the awakening of national consciousness in other Soviet republics as well.⁶⁵

The reference point for the illegal incorporation of the Baltic states into the Soviet Union was the secret protocols of the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. Debates about their existence, admissions about historical falsifications, the evaluation of the pact and its consequences created the legal and moral basis for the parting of ways between the Baltic states and the Soviet

⁶² Šneidere, I. (2008), “Vēstures zinātne un komunistiskā ideoloģija padomju Latvijā (1944 – 1991): daži aspekti,” in Bleiere, D., Karlsona, A., eds., *Letonikas otrais kongress. Vēsture un identitāte. Kongresa referāti*. Rīga: Zinātne, p. 133. For evaluations of Latvian Soviet historical research, see Strods, H. (1991), “Latvijas vēstures zinātne (1945–1990),” *Latvijas Vēsture*, 1, pp. 3–6; Ivanovs, A. (2003), “Latvijas PSR historiogrāfija (konceptuāls pārskats),” *Latvijas Vēsture*, 2, pp. 75–83; Ivanovs, A. (2003), “Vēstures zinātne kā padomju politikas instruments: historiogrāfijas konceptuālais līmenis,” in Šķiņķe, I., ed., *Latvijas Vēsturnieku komisijas raksti*. 9. sēj.: *Padomju okupācijas režīms Baltijā 1944.–1959. gadā: Politika un tās sekas. Starptautiskās konferences materiāli, 2002. gada 13.–14. jūnijs, Rīga*. Rīga: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds, pp. 59–70; Ivanovs, A. (2004), “Latvijas sovetizācija 1944.–1956. gadā Latvijas padomju historiogrāfijas skatījumā,” in Ērglis, Dz., ed., *Latvijas Vēsturnieku komisijas raksti*. 13. sēj.: *Totalitārie okupācijas režīmi Latvijā 1940.–1964. gadā. Latvijas Vēsturnieku komisijas 2003. gada pētījumi*. Rīga: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds, pp. 389.–426; Ivanovs, A. (2005), “Okupācijas varu maiņa Latvijā 1940.–1945. gadā Latvijas historiogrāfijā,” in Ērglis, Dz., ed., *Latvijas Vēsturnieku komisijas raksti*. 16. sēj.: *Okupētā Latvija 20. gadsimta 40. gados. Latvijas Vēsturnieku komisijas 2004. gada pētījumi*. Rīga: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds, pp. 11–72; Ivanovs, A. (2007), “Padomju politika Latvijā 20. gadsimta 50. gadu otrajā pusē–80. gadu vidū: izpētes gaita, rezultāti un turpmākā perspektīva (historiogrāfisks apskats),” in Viksne, R., ed., *Latvijas Vēsturnieku komisijas raksti*. 21. sēj.: *Latvijas vēsture 20. gadsimta 40.–90. gados. Latvijas Vēsturnieku komisijas 2006. gada pētījumi*. Rīga: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds, pp. 305–355.

⁶³ See, e.g., Minc, I., Drizul, A., Zhyagzhda, Y., Maamyagi, V., eds. (1967), *Bor'ba za sovetskuyu vlast' v Pribaltike*. Moscow: Nauka; Minc, I., ed. (1978), *Sotsialisticheskie revolyutsii 1940 g. v Litve, Latvii i Estonii. Vostanovlenie Sovetskoi vlasti*. Moscow: Nauka.

⁶⁴ See Zelče, V. (2009), “History – Responsibility – Memory: Latvia's Case,” in Rozenvalds, J., Ijabs, I., eds., *Latvia Human Development Report 2008/2009: Accountability and Responsibility*, pp. 45–46.

⁶⁵ See Scherlock, T. (2007), *Historical Narratives in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Russia*, pp. 147–148.

Union. Historian Yuri Afanas'yev has noted that the difficult path of the USSR people's deputies towards recognizing the pact illustrated the extent to which the consciousness of Soviet people had been deformed by Soviet history books, films and the official version of history.⁶⁶

The erosion of Baltic Soviet historiography took place as early as the end of the 1980s, and a national school emerged based on historiographical approaches from the pre-war era and the exile community. The "blank spots" in history were filled and previously unresearched topics were mastered. Analyzing Latvian historiography in the last years of the Soviet period, historian Aleksandr Ivanov has concluded that "by about 1990 the broad contours of the conceptual frame for researching Latvia's recent history had developed, as had a system for interpreting the most important historical events. To a large extent this was accepted in Latvia's national historiography after the regaining of independence."⁶⁷ Since 1991 the development of the historical school of the Baltic states and the creation of a new narrative has taken place similarly to that in other post-Soviet countries. This period was marked by a professional crisis and transformation among historians, scanty funding, and the search for a new identity.

In the Absence of Interest

In the 1990s there was virtually no interest among Russian historical researchers in the history of the Baltic states. The distance between the Baltic and Russian schools of history increased, and a border emerged that neither side wished to cross.

In creating new world and national history narratives for use as educational materials, Russia's historians had to define the geopolitics of the Baltic past. The Baltic states were not examined in the context of European history, but as part of Russia's historical narrative. Examining textbooks – the most significant part of historical literature produced in the 1990s, historian Boris Sokolov has concluded that a common image of Latvia's, Lithuania's and Estonia's history has not emerged. It is revealed in a distinctly fragmentary manner, entire centuries have disappeared from Baltic history and entire decades from the 20th century. What is more, in the presentation of these states' historical material there were no fundamental changes from 1991 through 2001. Sokolov finds a discontinuity with the Soviet tradition, which has happened primarily in treatment of the events of 1939 and 1940. However, evaluation of these events was influenced less

⁶⁶ Lindpere, H. (2009), *Pakt Molotova-Ribbentropa. Trudnoe priznanie*. Tallin: Estonian Foreign Policy Institute, pp. 109–110.

⁶⁷ Ivanovs, A. (2009), "Latvijas PSR historiogrāfija Latvijas valstiskās neatkarības atjaunošanas posmā: 1987–1990," in Ērglis, Dz., ed., *Latvijas Vēsturnieku komisijas raksti. 25. sēj.: Okupācijas režīmi Baltijas valstīs. Latvijas Vēsturnieku komisijas 2008. gada pētījumi un starptautiskās konferences "Okupācijas režīmi Baltijas valstīs (1940–1990): izpētes rezultāti un problēmas" materiāli, 2008. gada 30.–31. oktobris, Rīga*. Rīga: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds, p. 400.

by the date of publication, and more by whether the author belonged to the “democratic” or “patriotic” camp. The former admit that the incorporation of the Baltic states was not voluntary, but the latter justify Soviet action with reference to geopolitical interests. One of the reasons for historians avoiding discussion of the reasons behind the incorporation of the Baltic states was probably the fear of weakening Russia’s position in defence of the rights of Russian-speakers in Latvia and Estonia. Moreover, the material included in the textbook on Latvians, Estonians, and Lithuanians is so scanty that it is impossible to form some kind of a definite impression. Sokolov concludes that the simplistic and monotonous reflection of Baltic history testifies to the crisis plaguing Russian historical research at the time, as historians were not able to develop a concrete stance or to employ new theoretical approaches or methodologies. This also suggests that “historians and society as well have not yet completely settled accounts with the totalitarian past and renounced many imperialistic stereotypes.”⁶⁸

Similar trends can be detected in the encyclopaedia of 20th century history prepared by the General History Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences at the beginning of the decade. It offers a well-written overview of facts, but gives no evaluation. What is more, it does not discover a way to explain the elimination of these countries through occupation.⁶⁹

The 1990s passed in silence. Analyzing Russian historical literature devoted to the Baltic for the important period covering 1939–1945, Sokolov noted in 2005 that the only two monographs devoted to the topic were published over an interval of 15 years.⁷⁰ The lack of interest and silence regarding the “blank spots” in Baltic history promoted, even sparked dislike and resentment towards the states that had regained independence, and this began to resonate openly in the next decade.

The Complicated Decade

With the beginning of the 21st century, Russian history research and writing was marked by changes and the growing wave of historical literature began to touch upon the Baltic past as well. It should immediately be noted

⁶⁸ Sokolov, B. (2003), “Strani Baltii v Rossiiskikh uchebnikakh istorii,” in Bomsdorf, F., Bordyugov, G., eds., *Rossiya i strani baltii, Tsentral’noi i Vostochnoi Evrope, Yuzhnogo Kavkaza, Tsentral’noi Azii: Starye i novye obrazy v sovremennykh uchebnikakh istorii*. Moscow: Fond Fridriha Naumanna; AIRO-XX. pp. 177–219.

⁶⁹ Nazarova, E. (2001), “Latviya,” in Shubin, A., ed., *XX vek. Kratkaya istoricheskaya enciklopediya v dvukh tomakh. Yavleniya beka. Strani. Lyudi. T. 1*. Moscow: Nauka, pp. 422–435; Kukushinna, I. (2001), “Litva,” *XX vek. Kratkaya istoricheskaya entsiklopediya v dvukh tomakh. Yavleniya veka. Strani. Lyudi. T. 1*. pp. 435–441; Roginsky, V. (2001), “Estoniya,” *XX vek. Kratkaya istoricheskaya entsiklopediya v dvukh tomakh. Yavleniya veka. Strani. Lyudi. T. 1*. pp. 458–463.

⁷⁰ Sokolov, B. (2005), “The Baltic States in 1939–1945 in Russian Historiography: Counter-nationalism,” in Ērglis, Dz., ed., *Totalitārie režīmi Baltijā: Izpētes rezultāti un problēmas. Starptautiskās konferences materiāli. 2004.gada 3.–4. Jūnijs, Rīga*. Rīga: Latvijas vēstures institūts, pp. 92–97.

that this decade did not see much Russian interest in Latvian, Lithuanian or Estonian history. However, the overall picture is not uniform. The topic of Baltic history was included in university textbooks, new monographs by academic professionals were published, and a negative discourse about the Baltic past became a part of Russian history policy.

Academic History

Academic history writing on the Baltic states in Russia took place primarily in the structures of the Academy of Sciences. In 2000 the General History Institute at the Academy began a book series entitled "Russia and the Baltic" (*Rossiia i Baltiia*) whose editor-in-chief was academician Aleksandr Chubar'yan, with Elena Nazarova in charge of compiling each volume. In 2008 the fifth, and for the time being, final volume was published. The notion behind the series was to provide representation of articles by historians in all three Baltic states and Russia. The series avoids raising the most controversial topics of the past and the main focus is on contact between countries in the past, primarily in the positive sense. It appears that the main purpose of the series was to maintain cooperation among historians. Another cooperation project between the General History Institute and Latvian historians was a 2009 volume on the multinational intelligentsia in the Russian Empire in the 19th and early 20th centuries, which includes research on the activities of educated Latvians and Baltic Germans in Russia and the Russian intelligentsia in the Baltic.⁷¹

Several monographs have also appeared. These are individual research projects by historians working on topics in the Baltic region, the appearance of which suggests that a post-Soviet generation of historical researchers has emerged. However, their number is small. Below, I list what in my opinion are the most valuable publications.

In Moscow in 2002 research by Svetlana Ryzhakova on the language of ornaments in Latvian culture was published under the auspices of the Russian Academy of Sciences Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology. It not only analyzes the symbols themselves, but their use in culture and everyday life in the 20th century. The research demonstrates deep respect towards the subject and analyzes a wide range of sources.⁷² Among the most significant scientific monographs devoted to Baltic history is a work by Natal'ya Andreyeva of the Russian Academy of Sciences St. Petersburg history institute on Baltic Germans and their role in Russian politics at the beginning of the 20th century. This work belongs to literature on the so-called Baltic question (*Ostzeiskii vopros*) in the Russian Empire which

⁷¹ Gavrilin, A., Komorov, A., Nazarova, E., Mihailova, Y., eds. (2009), *Intelligentsiya v mnogonatsional'noi imperii: russkie, latyshi, nentsy. XIX–nachalo XX v.* Moscow: IVI RAN.

⁷² Ryzhakova, S. (2002), *Yazyk ornamenta v latyshskoi kul'ture*. Moscow: Indrik. In 2002 Ryzhakova received the Great Folk Award of Latvia for this research.

was intensively investigated during the Soviet period and was an area of cooperation between Baltic and Russian historians.⁷³

The topic of Latvia is one of the main interests of Maxim Krichanov, researcher in the Faculty of International Relations at Voronezh State University. His dissertation, which later came out as a book, was devoted to the Latvian national movements in the 19th and early 20th centuries. It traces the social changes that took place in Latvian society, modernization, the nationalist movement and its role. The author concludes that the Latvian national movement was an inevitable phenomenon of the time that sprang from modernization and resulted in the creation of a national state.⁷⁴

In 2008 Elena Zubkova, a researcher at the Russian Academy of Sciences Russian History Institute, published a monograph on the Kremlin's Baltic policy in implementing the annexation, incorporation and Sovietization of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia from 1940 to 1953. This book has been well received in the Baltic states due to its wide range of sources, in particular use of Russian archival documents, as well as its depth of analysis.⁷⁵

The aforementioned publications are free of any ideological slant and reflect high academic standards and an ethical approach. Currently, a school of research on Baltic history has not yet emerged in Russia. To a large extent, a coordinating role in the study of the region is played by the Baltic states themselves, as all the aforementioned researchers have participated in conferences in Latvia.

University Textbooks and Grand Historical Narratives

In the middle of the 2000s a boom began in the publication of university history textbooks. Lecturers in Moscow and elsewhere in Russia prepared textbooks for students acquiring the speciality "History 020700". Just as in school textbooks in the 1990s, the history of the Baltic states in these texts was portrayed in the context of Russian history, not the grand narrative of European history.⁷⁶ In certain universities Baltic history was included in special courses on the history of small and medium sized states.⁷⁷

⁷³ Andreyeva, N. (2008), *Pribaltiiskie nemtsi Rossiiskaya pravitel'stvennaya politika v nachale XX veka*. Sankt-Peterburg: Mip'.

⁷⁴ Kirchanov, M. (2009), *Zemnieki, latvieši, pilsoņi! Identičnost', natsionalizm i modernizatsiya v Latvii*. Voronezh: Nauchnaya kniga.

⁷⁵ Zubkova, E. (2008), *Pribaltika i Krem!'. 1940–1953*. For reviews, see that of Heinrihs Strods in *Latvijas Vēsture*, 2008, 4, pp. 119–122, and Gatis Krūmiņš in *Latvijas Vēstures Institūta Žurnāls*, 2009, 2, pp. 198–201.

⁷⁶ See, e.g., Yaz'kov, E., ed., (2004), *Istoriya noveishego vremeni stran Evropy i Ameriki, 1918–1945*. Moscow: Prostor; Yaz'kov, E., ed., (2003), *Istoriya noveishego vremeni stran Evropy i Ameriki, 1945–2000*. Moscow: Prostor; Yaz'kov, E. (2006), *Istoriya stran Evropy i Ameriki v noveishee vremya (1918–1945). Kurs lekcii*. Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Moskovskogo universiteta.

⁷⁷ See, e.g., the teaching materials published by St. Petersburg State University Kuz'min, Y., Novikova, I. (2005), *Noveishaya istoriya malykh i srednikh stran Evropy. Uchebno-metodicheskoe posobie*. Sankt-Peterburg: Izdatel'stvo Sankt-Peterburgskogo universiteta.

These university textbooks mentioned the Baltic states only with regard to their contacts with Russia. A history of Russia written by Moscow State University professors Aleksandr Barsenkov and Aleksandr Vdovin (3rd edition published in 2010) and a textbook edited by Mikhail Hodyakov of St. Petersburg State University (3rd edition in 2008) mentions Baltic history only a few times. The Baltic states are mentioned in the context of Soviet Russia's peace treaties, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, the expansion of Soviet territory in 1940, and the birth of nationalism in the Baltic, which furthered the disintegration of the Soviet Union. In all these cases, the actions of the USSR are justified.⁷⁸

Similar treatment of the Baltic past in 20th century Russian history can be found in the two volume history book put out in 2009 by A. Zubov, which has a team of 40 historians among the authors.⁷⁹ This publication is one of the most significant compilations of the Russian historical narrative, and pays relatively much attention to the topic "the Baltic Territories During the Civil War." It questions the legitimacy of the peace treaties between Soviet Russia and the Baltic states, indicating that they were signed by subjects that were not completely legal from the point of view of international law – namely, the Baltic peoples, who had gained political power as a result of "war events and political insurrection," and the Bolsheviks, who had seized power in a violent way.⁸⁰ The secret protocols of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact are called the treaty's "most important and cynical part."⁸¹ The description of the events of 1940 is also harsh, as Soviet actions are deemed illegal and the various measures of Sovietization, including violence, are presented as having created opposition to Soviet rule.⁸² In the overall picture of Russian history, the Baltic appears mainly as a detail, a small episode in Russia's foreign policy.

Politicized History Projects

20th century Baltic history has received the most attention in Russia in books which can be described as politicized history projects. The task of these publications is to create an unambiguously negative discourse about the past of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. These books are also united by another common feature – expressive covers with horrible, condemnatory or other images evoking negative emotions, as well as cheap paper and a low price. Some of these works lack lists of sources or bibliographies; others use primarily Soviet era Russian language sources. The target audience for these

⁷⁸ See Khodyakov, M., ed., (2008), *Noveishaya istoriya Rossii, 1914–2008*. S. 185, 242–246, 390–392; Barsenkov, A., Vdovin, A. (2010), *Istoriya Rossii, 1917–2009*. pp. 195, 270–274, 616–617 .

⁷⁹ Zubov, A., ed. (2009), *Istoriya Rossii. XX vek: 1894–1939*. Moscow: Astrel', AST.; Zubov, A., ed. (2009), *Istoriya Rossii. XX vek: 1939–2007*. Moscow: Astrel', AST.

⁸⁰ Zubov, A., ed. (2009), *Istoriya Rossii. XX vek: 1894–1939*. pp. 657– 664. It should be noted that there is also a brief overview of the life of Kārlis Ulmanis, indicating that he died in exile in Krasnovodsk on 20 September 1942.

⁸¹ Zubov, A., ed., (2009), *Istoriya Rossii. XX vek: 1939–2007*. p. 10.

⁸² *Ibid*, pp. 16–18.

books is not people well-versed in history, as their level of politicization and use of falsifications is evident. This literature, which can be partially considered as belonging to the genre of entertainment, can also serve as a catalyst of social memory and creator of public consciousness.

A torrent of politicized history books on the Baltic began in 2004, when Mikhail Krysin's book *The Baltic Between Hitler and Stalin* came out in glossy covers with an expressive photograph of Hitler against the background of the Estonian capital Tallinn. The author sets himself the task of unmasking the historical myths of the Baltic states. In his opinion, when the Balts became involved in Nazi Germany's military units during World War II, they did not harbour ideas of national independence, but served German fascism with all their hearts and souls. To demonstrate this thesis, Krysin portrays inter-war Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia as poor countries obsessed with nationalism. He admits that the liquidation of Baltic statehood did violate certain international norms, but the central message of the discourse is to justify this. What is more, with regard to the Soviet Union, these "bourgeois countries" had implemented a traitorous policy, so the liquidation of their statehood by the USSR was a correct, even just course. The author's selection of historical facts, interpretation, language and emotional code all suggest that the inhabitants of these countries do not deserve their own states and that, from a moral point of view, their inclusion into the USSR was the best solution. In Krysin's view, a confirmation of this is the rebirth of nationalism in the Baltic, inter-ethnic incitement of hatred, and the "rebirth of the same collaborationism and SS Legion ideology" of the Nazi era.⁸³ Latvian historian Henrihs Strods has noted that Krysin, "with a delay of several decades, continues to tell the same myths peddled by CPSU political agitators."⁸⁴ To a large extent, the book continues the Soviet historical tradition of "I know better" and is an example of the rebirth of the Soviet school of history in contemporary Russia.

In subsequent years, other books by Krysin appeared which continued to develop the notion of the Baltic as fascistic states. In his opinion, fascism is not just history, but remains characteristic of the Baltic today and manifests itself as the division of people along ethnic lines into "citizens" and "non-citizens." Krysin stresses that "Baltic fascism is still alive." After describing the horror of World War II in Baltic history, he stresses that the years within the Soviet Union were the best in their history. However, this is not admitted now and these countries continue to build their states "on the ideology of their Nazi predecessors."⁸⁵

⁸³ Krysin, M. (2004), *Pribaltika mezhdu Stalinyim i Gitlerom*. Moscow: Veche.

⁸⁴ Strods, H. (2004), "Ministrijai un zinātnei," *Latvijas Vēsture*, 4, p.109.

⁸⁵ See: Krysin, M. (2006), *Latyšskii legion SS: Vchera i segodnya*. Moscow: Veche; Krysin, M. (2007), *Pribaltiiskii fashizm: Istoriya i sovremennost'*. Moscow: Veche. Krysin's books were also used to create the filmas "Natsism po-pribaltiiski" analyzed in the chapter by Dmitrijs Petrenko.

Justification of the incorporation of the Baltic states can also be found in the history textbook on interwar Baltic history, which was written by Aleksandr Chapenko, a lecturer at Murmansk State Pedagogical Institute.⁸⁶

The Baltic states in World War II are portrayed as the bridgehead of death, villainous and fascist lands. This scientific frame is created by publications compiling historical documents. It should be noted that in the Soviet period a common method of historical falsification was issuing compilations containing specially selected documents whose task was to prove a certain ideological postulate. At the same time, documents that ran counter to the main thesis were not included or even mentioned. In 2006 several collections of documents came out with names like "Latvia in the Yoke of Fascism," "The Tragedy of Lithuania," and "Estonia: The Bloody Tracks of Nazism." The task of these compilations was to prove that the Baltic states, especially their official circles, cultivate a mendacious history, and to offer "the truth".⁸⁷

After the "Bronze Soldier" events in Tallinn in 2007 and the appearance of the film "The Soviet Story," portrayal of the Baltic states as fascist countries continued in history books, and these events were also included in the store of interpretations about the past. The work of Yuri Yemel'yanov, published in the series "Threats to Russia," presents a discourse of deep Baltic ingratitude to Russia. The author enthusiastically relates the many bad periods in the life of these countries, which have in common the fact that then, they were not part of Russia. Transgressions against the Baltic states in the Soviet period are compared to those elsewhere in the world, against the background of which the suffering of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia look completely negligible.⁸⁸

Compilations of documents also continued to be issued with the aim of justifying the inclusion of the Baltic states into the Soviet Union, creating a discourse of annexation as the best possible scenario.⁸⁹ Aleksandr Dyukov seeks to present Estonian criticism about the inhumanity of Soviet repression

⁸⁶ Chapenko, A. (2008), *Istoriya stran Baltii (Estoniya, Latviya, Litva) v pervyi period nezavisimosti i gody vtoroi mirovoi voiny*. Murmansk: MGPU. See the review by Juris Ciganovs in *Latvijas Vēstures Institūta Žurnāls*, 2009, 1, pp. 193–196. Chapenko's dissertation was devoted to the Russian anti-Bolshevik movement in Latvia in 1918–19, which has also been issued as a book. This book is valuable due to its use of archival materials, which provide rich new detail on the war of independence. See Chapenko, A. (2006), *Istoriya russkogo antibol'shevistskogo dvizheniya na territorii Latvii v 1918–1919 gg.* Murmansk: MGPU.

⁸⁷ See *Latviya pod igom natsizma: sbornik arhivnykh dokumentov*. Moscow: Evropa, 2006; *Tragediya Litvy: 1941 – 1944 gody. Sbornik arhivnykh dokumentov*. Moscow: Evropa, 2006; *Estoniya. Krovavyi sled natsizma. 1941–1944. Sbornik arhivnykh dokumentov*. Moscow: Evropa, 2006.

⁸⁸ Emel'yanov, Y. (2007). *Pribaltika. Pochemu oni ne lyubyat Bronzovogo soldata?* Moscow: Izdatel' Bystrov".

⁸⁹ See, e.g., Bylinin, V., Krysin, M., Kuchkov, G., Yampol'skii, V., eds. (2009), *Pribaltika. Pod znakom svastiki (1941–1945)*. Moscow: Ob'edinennaya redaktsiya MVD Rossii; Assotsiatsiya "Voennaya kniga" – "Kychkovo pole"; Sockov, L., ed. (2009), *Pribaltika i geopolitika. 1935–1945. gg. Passekrechennyye dokumenty sluzhby vneshnei razvedki Rossiskoi Federatsii*. Moscow: RIPOL Klassik.

as a myth which merits debunking. In his opinion, repressions affected 4-5% of Estonia's population, while Estonians had unjustifiably exaggerated the figures and constructed a mendacious "myth of genocide."⁹⁰

Another aim of politicized history projects is to generate doubts about the existence of the secret protocols to the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, and (if they existed), about their evil. In 2009, on the 70th anniversary of the pact, a series of books entitled "Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact Myths" was published in which the books by Arsen Martirosyan justify Stalin's action in signing the treaty.⁹¹ At the same time, in the series "Sensations of History" the book by Aleksei Kungurov seeks to debunk the so-called Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact myth and place the blame for creating it on American secret services, who used it to promote the collapse of the Soviet Union.⁹²

Since 2008 the most active participant in politicized history projects has been the fund "Historical Memory" (*Istoricheskaya pamyat'*), which calls itself a non-commercial organization with the aim of promoting "objective research" on topical issues in Russian and East European 20th century history, to develop historical research, publish previously secret historical documents, popularize historical facts, struggle against historical falsifications, myths and legends.⁹³ At the top of the agenda of the fund is Ukrainian and Baltic history, or more to the point, creating a negative discourse about these countries. Latvia's past is touched upon in a compilation of documents about the activities of Latvian police battalions in Belarus,⁹⁴ in Dyukov's book which seeks to debunk the "myth" of Soviet repression against Balts who had served in the Nazi army,⁹⁵ as well as in Lyudmila Vorob'yeva's two volume book on Latvian history from the beginning of the 20th century to its incorporation into the Soviet Union at the end of World War II.⁹⁶ She describes her own motivation in writing the book as follows:

The numerically small Baltic peoples received their independence twice from Russia in strategically important territories for which our country has fought for centuries with the Livonian Order,

⁹⁰ Dyukov, A. (2007), *Mif o genocide. Repressii sovetskikh vlastei v Estonii (1940–1953)*. Moscow: Aleksei Yakovlev.

⁹¹ Martirosyan, A. (2009), *Kto protoril dorogu k paktu?* Moscow: Veche; Martirosyan, A. (2009), *Nakanune 23 avgusta 1939 g.* Moscow: Veche.

⁹² Kungurov, A. (2009), *Sekretnye protokly ili kto poddelal pakt Molotova-Ribbentropa*. Moscow: EKSMO; Algoritm.

⁹³ On the broad activities of the fund, its projects and publication, see <http://www.historyfoundation.ru/>.

⁹⁴ Dyukov, A., Simindei, V. (2009), "Unichtozhit' kak mozho bol'she...": *Latviiskie kollaboratsionistskie formirovaniya na territorii Belorussii, 1941–1944. Sbornik dokumentov*. Moscow: Fond "Istoricheskaya pamyat'".

⁹⁵ Dyukov, A. (2009), *Milost' k padshim. Sovetskie repressii protiv natsistskikh posobnikov v Pribaltike*. Moscow: Fond "Istoricheskaya pamyat'".

⁹⁶ Vorob'yeva, L. (2009), *Istoriya Latvii ot Rossiiskoi imperii k SSSR. Kn. 1*. Moscow: Fond "Istoricheskaya pamyat'"; Rossiiskii institut strategicheskikh issledovani; Vorob'eva, L. (2010). *Istoriya Latvii ot Rossiiskoi imperii k SSSR. Kn. 2*. Moscow: Fond "Istoricheskaya pamyat'"; Rossiiskii institut strategicheskikh issledovani.

Poland, Sweden and Germany. Both times these little countries, led by a handful of power hungry nationalists, went over to the camp of Russia's enemies, creating serious threats to her security.⁹⁷

This book presents Latvia in an unfriendly, occasionally openly arrogant and hateful manner. In the introduction, the author stresses that the task of her story is to provide information on Latvian history which is currently concealed or falsified by Latvian politicians and official historians and to unmask the "rhetoric of occupation." For example, the book suggests that in 1940 the main reason for the removal of Ulmanis' government was the "growing dissatisfaction of the masses with the regime's domestic and foreign policy, as well as the approaching economic catastrophe." "The Soviet occupation," in Vorob'yeva's view, is a "myth." The author does acknowledge as just the criticism that the Latvian people suffered seriously in unjust and illegal repression, but one should not "forget about Ulmanis' repressions, which were aimed against leftist forces." She stresses that the majority of Latvia's inhabitants were for their country's incorporation into the USSR and proof of that is the fact that the 1946 elections to the USSR Supreme Soviet took place successfully. Thus, assertions about the "occupation" are unjustified.

The fund has also published Dyukov's book "Mechanism of Lies" about the Latvian documentary film "The Soviet Story." Dyukov stresses that the film is pure propaganda that falsifies history and the anti-Russian domestic and foreign policy of the Latvian government.⁹⁸ Among the publications of the fund is a visually expressive and richly illustrated book about the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact in questions and answers.⁹⁹ Representatives of the fund actively organize conferences and exhibitions and participate in the creation of social memory.

In terms of content and political orientation, similar to the fund's work is that of the Russian Academy of Sciences Institute for Sociopolitical Research, whose declared aim is to struggle against historical falsifications about the incorporation of the Baltic states into the USSR, which was promoted first of all by politicians in the Baltic states.¹⁰⁰

One of the newest trends in politicized history projects is the creation of a positive discourse of the Baltic states as belonging to the Soviet Union. This can be observed in Andrei Petrenko's book on the Baltic divisions which

⁹⁷ Vorob'yeva, L. (2009), *Istoriya Latvii ot Rossiiskoi imperii k SSSR. Kn. 1.* p. 9.

⁹⁸ Dyukov, A. (2008), "The Soviet Story". *Mehanizm lzhi. Forgery Tissue.* Moscow: Fond "Istoricheskaya pamyat".

⁹⁹ Dyukov, A. (2009), "Pakt Molotova-Ribbentropa" v voprosakh i otvetakh. Moscow: Fond "Istoricheskaya pamyat".

¹⁰⁰ See: Sazanov, A. (2009), "Sovetskaya okupatsiya" Pribaltiki v arhivnykh dokumentakh. Moscow: ISPI RAN; Kapto, A. (2009), *Pakt Molotova-Ribbentropa: mistifikatsii ili real'nost'.* Moscow: ISPI RAN.

fought on the Soviet side in World II,¹⁰¹ as well as Ilya Moshchansky's work on the "liberation" of "our Baltic."¹⁰² Both authors stress that currently there is much talk about the Baltic states as allies of the Nazis, while the topic of their links to the Soviet Union during World War II has been neglected.

The positive discourse of the Baltic states as a part of the Soviet Union includes also the aforementioned portrayal of them as enjoying a particularly good life within the Soviet state. This approach is used in the report by a group of historians on "myths" to be found in school textbooks in the Baltic and Central Asian countries about the history of these countries within the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. The authors of the report stress that the textbooks reflect the myth created by nationalistic historiography in the Baltic states about the highly developed economies during the independence years in the 1920s and 1930s to convince schoolchildren that the Baltic peoples were "exploited" by the USSR by having their products exported to other republics, while the group's analysis comes to the opposite conclusion.¹⁰³ The report concludes: "Latvia, Estonia and particularly Lithuania within the USSR attained excellent results in economic and social development, enjoyed guarantees against the direct impact of global economic disturbances, and were ensured unfettered use of all manner of state resources, which often allowed them to economize their own resources, etc."¹⁰⁴ The authors express the conviction that they have completely succeeded in unmasking the mythology of the economic history of these post-Soviet states. Debunking the historical conception of the occupation of the Baltic states and their illegal incorporation as a historical falsification and myth is also the main goal of other publications. Director of the Russian Academy of Sciences Institute of Sociopolitical Institute Director Gennady Osipov stresses in the introduction to the "Baltic 'Soviet Occupation' archive documents" that the Baltic peoples had "an absolutely equal situation to that of other republican peoples in the Soviet Union's family," therefore it is altogether impossible to speak about a "Soviet occupation."¹⁰⁵ The argument that Latvians, Lithuanians and Estonians were officially viewed as Soviet peoples, not the inhabitants of occupied

¹⁰¹ Petrenko, A. (2010), *Pribaltiiskie divizii Stalina*. Moscow: Veche. It should be noted that this author issued a much smaller book on the same topic in 2005. See Petrenko, A. (2005), *Pribaltika protiv fashizma. Sovetskie pribaltiiskie divizii v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine*. Moscow: Evropa.

¹⁰² Moshchanskii, I. (2010), *Nasha Pribaltika. Osvobozhdenie Pribaltiiskikh respublik SSSR*. Moscow: Veche. It is possible that the word "Baltic" is in the title for commercial reasons, as only about ¼ of the book is devoted to the liberation of the Baltic and the lon's share to other military operations..

¹⁰³ Danilov, A., Phillipov, A., eds, (2010), *Pribaltika i Srednyaya Aziya v sostave Rossiskoi imperii i SSSR: Mify sovremennykh uchebnikov postsovetskih stran i real'nost' social'no-ekonomicheskikh nodschetov*, p. 5, available at http://nlvp.ru/reports/Middle_Asia_Pribalty_History_for_www_02.pdf.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 105.

¹⁰⁵ Osipov, G. (2009). "Vmesto predislobiya. K chitatel'nyam," in Sazanov, A., "Sovetskaya okupatsiya" *Pribaltiki v arhivnykh dokumentakh*, p. 4.

territories, fits well into the procrustean bed of politicized history projects aiming to charge Baltic and other Western politicians and historians in the falsification of Soviet/Russian history.

Conclusion

The politicization of history writing on the Baltic states to purposefully create a negative discourse about them and its integration into social memory is part of Russia's history policy. What is more, this policy is being implemented rather successfully, to a large extent thanks to lingering strong Soviet practices of writing and using history. Reading recent politicized histories of the Baltic states, one gets a sense of *déjà vu*, that Soviet totalitarian history remains alive.

In most books, the Baltic states have acquired the image of historical villain, and sociological surveys suggest that the number of Russians who think that the Soviet Union occupied the Baltic has decreased. As Sokolov has suggested, the authorities have received public criticism for insufficient commitment to the implementation of imperial policy in relations with the Baltic. The reasons for this lie in active state propaganda and the widespread nostalgia for the great power Soviet Union and the stability of that time.¹⁰⁶ Thus, new "blank spots" are created in social memory which lessen the potential of historical knowledge to serve as a resource for a democratic and civic order in Russia.

¹⁰⁶ Sokolov, B. (2008), "The Baltic States during the Second World War in the Public Opinion of Modern Russia," in Ērglis, Dz., ed., *History of the Baltic Region of the 1940s–1980s. Research of the Commission of the Historians of Latvia, 2007 and Proceedings of an International Conference "Baltic during the Second World War (1939 – 1945)", 6–7 November 2007, Riga*. Riga: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds, pp. 432–439.

From Imperial Backwater to Showcase of Socialism: Latvia in Russia's School Textbooks

Solvita Denisa-Liepniece

Introduction

At the beginning of each school textbook one can find an inscription saying “approved,” “recommended” or “permitted” by the Ministry of Education. This is a signal to teachers not only that a textbook is in line with the curriculum, but also that the ruling elite has given its blessing for the teaching material to be used by pupils. This chapter examines both published and electronic teaching materials which has been recommended, approved or permitted for educational purposes in Russia. Moreover, this chapter also analyzes so-called “textbooks for teachers” – methodological handbooks and teaching programmes approved at the federal level, as well as centralized examination tasks. The focus is on identifying the portrayal of Latvia over time via analysis of the following designations: 1) *Pribaltika* (the Baltic provinces); 2) former USSR republics; and 3) Latvians and important events linked to Latvia.

Constructing the Past: Theory and Methodology

This chapter approaches textbooks as a form of political communication. Here, the focus will be on the content of this communication, not its effects or the production process. Early on, these issues were the focal point for researchers studying propaganda. Already in 1929, Edward Bernay in his work “Propaganda” drew parallels between the work of teachers and propagandists: “The teaching profession, as such, has the right to carry on a very definite propaganda with a view to enlightening the public and asserting its intimate relation to the society which it serves.”¹ A few years later, Adolph Hitler wrote in *Mein Kampf* that education must serve the state and the nation.² In later years, the focus of research shifted from education as propaganda to propaganda within education itself.

¹ Bernay, E. (1928). *Propaganda*. New York: Horace Liverlight, p. 123.

² Hitler, A. (1933), *My Struggle*. London: Hurst & Blackett.

James Sproule examines the education system as a channel for propaganda. In analyzing textbooks, he speaks of the existence of "school censorship."³ Sproule broadens the role of the teacher to that of a "gatekeeper," noting that objective discussion of any socially controversial topic in a teaching programme becomes impossible.⁴ The best way to avoid the impact of propaganda, it is held, is involving a wide circle of people in preparing textbooks. This conclusion is relevant in the context of history teaching in Russia, including the possible shift to a single textbook.

The sociologist Anthony Smith has stressed the role of the education system alongside that of mass communication in constructing national identity.⁵ In his conception, historical memories and myths have a similar role in national identity to that of (historical) territory, mass culture, common rights and responsibilities and the economy. Moreover, as shall be demonstrated below, in Russia's textbooks historical periods are regarded by topic including overviews of mass culture and economic and legal processes, making the textbooks "histories of the nation."

Despite the clear division between history and collective memory drawn by Maurice Halbwachs, one of the main ways to learn about collective memory is to view history as the recording of data and places to avoid social bias. More recently, this approach has been largely discarded.⁶ If history is objective, social memory is subjective, localized, and based on the group's view. In the first half of the 20th century, Halbwachs wrote that any social group creates an image of its past in accordance with current requirements and notions. In line with this position, after one analyzes teaching programmes, textbooks and teaching materials, one concludes that it is not "history" that is being taught in schools, but "collective memory."

Martin Heisler links the "rewriting" of history with positive self-identification. Here, one encounters history politics as a form of identity politics. As Heisler writes about history modification, "A collectivity's response – through its public authorities, social or political elites, and educational system – to "news" of gross violations by its members can profoundly affect its domestic politics and international relations."⁷

Discourse in history teaching materials is linked to discourses in the media. As critical discourse theory suggests, the ruling elite in many ways controls academic discourse. Joseph Zajda employs critical discourse analysis to dissect Russian history textbooks using Foucault's notions about discourse

³ Sproule, J. (1994), *Channels of Propaganda*. Bloomington: Edinfo Press, p. 207.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

⁵ Smith, A. (1991), *National Identity*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

⁶ Halbwachs, M. (1980), *The Collective Memory*. London: Harper and Row, pp. 50-60.

⁷ Heisler, M. (2008), "Challenged Histories and Collective Self-Concepts: Politics in History, Memory, and Time". *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 617, pp. 199- 211.

and Fairclough's tripartite analysis of texts, discourse and social practice.⁸ Thompson, for his part, stresses five mechanisms or operational modes of ideology:

1. Legitimization – affirming one's expertise before a concrete audience;
2. Dissimulation – passing over in silence or concealing with the aid of metaphor;
3. Unification – stressing the collective “we” and “our goals,” speaking on behalf of many;
4. Fragmentation – juxtaposing “them” and “us”;
5. Reification/naturalization – everything happens naturally, without human agency.⁹

Of course, it is necessary to be aware of the potential for various interpretations of the meaning of texts. Despite the often criticized “hybridization” of critical discourse analysis, use of Fairclough's approach for investigating academic discourse is quite common.¹⁰

Research on school textbooks has been at the centre of much recent scholarly work. This is particularly evident in countries of the former socialist bloc, where many new textbooks appeared during the transitional period. Russian school textbooks have been critically analyzed by Zajda¹¹ and Wertsch,¹² while Mendeloff has focussed on portrayal of the Soviet annexation of the Baltic states.¹³ Russian scholars, for their part, have turned their sights on the portrayal of Russia in history textbooks in other countries. One of the latest such works was written by researchers who are also actively involved in drafting teaching materials.¹⁴

This chapter complements a previous study by the author on Russian media portrayal of Latvian history.¹⁵ Here, the focus is on portrayal of

⁸ Zajda, J. (2007), “The New History School Textbooks in the Russian Federation: 1992-2004,” *Compare: A Journal of Comparative Education* 37(3), pp. 291-306; J. Zajda (n.d.), *History, Ideology and Citizenship: New History Textbooks in Russia*, available at <http://www.aare.edu.au/04pap/zaj04757.pdf>. Michel Foucault (1984), “The Order of Discourse.” In M. Shapiro (ed.), *Language and Politics*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell. N. Fairclough (1995). *Critical Discourse Analysis*. London: Longman.

⁹ Thompson, J. (1990), *Ideology and Modern Culture*. Cambridge: Polity Press, p. 59.

¹⁰ O'Garro, G., Rogers, R., Malancharuvil-Berkes, E., Mosley, M., Hui, D., (2005), “Critical Discourse Analysis in Education: A Review of the Literature,” *Review of Educational Research*, 75, pp. 365-416.

¹¹ See the sources cited in footnote 8 above.

¹² Wertsch, J. (1999), “Revising Russian History,” *Written Communication* 16(3), pp. 267-295; James Wertsch (2002), *Voices of Collective Remembering*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

¹³ Mendeloff, D. (2000), “Causes and Consequences of Historical Amnesia: The Annexation of the Baltic States in Post-Soviet Russian Popular History and Political Memory” in Christie, K., Cribb, R. (eds.), *Historical Injustice and Democratic Transition in Eastern Asia and Northern Europe: Ghosts at the Table of Democracy*. London: Routledge, pp. 79 – 117.

¹⁴ Danilov, A. and Fillipov, A., eds., (2009), *Osveshchenie obschei istorii Rossii i narodov postsovetiskih stran b shkolnikh uchebnikakh istorii novykh nezavisimikh gosudarstv*. Moscow.

¹⁵ Denis, S. (2008), “The Story with History,” in Muižnieks, N. (ed.) *Manufacturing Enemy Images? Russian Media Portrayal of Latvia*. Riga: Academic Press of the University of Latvia, pp. 79-107.

Latvia and events linked to Latvia in the 20th century in textbooks and other academic literature which is intended for use by history teachers in Russia. The vast scope of the topic means that the analysis is suggestive, rather than exhaustive.

The Task of History Teachers: Patriotic Education

“The nature of the new policy became clear on 2 December 2003, when education minister Vladimir Fillipov removed Igor Doluchkov’s book from the list of books recommended to pupils.”¹⁶

Methodological guides and programmes for teachers are as interesting as textbooks for the purposes of this chapter, as it is the former materials that indicate the guidelines followed in textbooks. Analysis suggests that methodological materials are “stable,” that is, they are repeatedly issued and supplemented. Significantly, the authors of such materials in one publication describe the importance of a unified line to help teachers remain oriented in the new interpretations and opinions that have appeared over the last two decades.¹⁷

On the road to a united textbook, the authors set as one of the programme’s main goals *formulating teaching topics, avoiding open expressions that have no alternative*.¹⁸ At the same time, teachers are given to understand which topics are “forbidden.” The image of the “communicator” behind this position becomes clear. Here, one is dealing with a new state project about direct transformation of history teaching material. The goal of education here is not only knowledge about facts, but also interpretations that permit implementing “one’s civil rights and individual views.” Such observations are evident in, for example, Fillipov’s book *Russian History 1945-2008. Book for Teachers*: “The Soviet Union was not a democracy, but it was an example of a good and just society and a reference point for millions of people throughout the world.”¹⁹

On the one hand, a discourse of “non-democracy” is offered, on the other – one of “uncondemnability.” A similar message is included in the explanatory note for the 11th grade programme prepared by E. Vzyazemsky and O. Strelova. The authors themselves highlight their intent: “For youth to make a conscious choice towards becoming a Russian citizen who knows and understands where lie Russia’s national interests, as well as those of a

¹⁶ Sokolovs, N. (2008), “Bez surka, ili Kratkaya istoriya kolobrashcheniua rossiskikh uchebnikob istorii,” *Polit.ru*, 15 October 2008, available at <http://www.polit.ru/analytics/2008/10/15/history.html>.

¹⁷ Fillipov, A., ed., (2008), *Istoriya Rossii 1945-2008. Kniga dlya uchitelei*. Moscow: Prosveshchenie, p. 4.

¹⁸ From the presentation of the project, Prosveshchenie Publishing House, available at <http://www.prosv.ru/ist-obsh/Attachment.aspx?Id=7089>.

¹⁹ Fillipov, A., ed., (2008), *Istoriya Rossii 1945-2008*, p. 6.

contemporary citizen.”²⁰ Indeed, the main pedagogical task is clear: “The methodological basis of this course is the latest insights of Russian scientists: the evaluation of our history taking into account the task of defending and strengthening the sovereignty of the state and nurturing Russian citizens who are patriots.”²¹

At the same time, in the official history programme distributed by the Russian ministry of science and education, the word “patriotism” does not appear. On the contrary, it offers “neutral” analysis and urges the development of critical thinking:

Thus, education about history assumes a special role in the self-identification process of youth, i.e. awareness of oneself as a historically created representative of civil, ethnocultural and confessional society. The possibility is ensured of critically perceiving the surrounding social reality, promoting the determination of one’s position vis-à-vis various phenomena of public life and permitting the modelling of one’s behaviour in various situations.²²

Ostensible neutrality is preserved further, when the discussion turns to the tasks of the history teacher: “historical inquiry to implement the following tasks:

- ◆ Nurturing citizenship and national identity, development of a worldly conviction based on historically created cultural, religious and ethnonational traditions, morality and social mores, ideological doctrines;
- ◆ Systematic exploration of the history of humanity, the place and role of Russia in the general formulation of global historical processes;
- ◆ The ability to find, systematize and analyze historical information in an integrated way;
- ◆ Formulation of historical thought – the ability to see processes and phenomena taking into consideration historical contingency, linking various interpretations and evaluations of historical events and people, determining one’s own opinion with regard to contentious issues about current life and history.”²³

A testament to the special role assigned to history is provided by the formulation of historian A. Danilov regarding an increase in the number of lessons devoted to 20th and 21st century Russian history.²⁴ In addition

²⁰ Vzyazemsky, E. and Strelova, O. (2008), *Istoriya Rossii 1947-2007. Programma obshcheobrazovatel'nikh uchrezhdeniy. 11. klass.* Moscow: Prosveshchenie, p. 3.

²¹ Ibid, p. 4.

²² *Primernaya programma srednogo (polnogo) obshchego obrazovaniya na bazovom urovne po istorii* (2004), Explanatory note of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation, p. 1, available at http://window.edu.ru/window/library?p_rid=37208.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Danilov, A. (2008), *Istoriya Rossii 1900-1945. Metodicheskoe posobie. 11. klass.* Moscow: Prosveshchenie, p. 3.

to increasing the number of lessons, Danilov offers a structure for history textbooks, thereby sketching in the transition to a unified textbook:

This is why in our textbook a central place is occupied not only by the message about the central facts, but also by a greater illustration of the internal interplay and linkages between us and that which took place in the 20th century.²⁵

It is difficult to determine precisely when discussion about a unified textbook began. It is possible to trace certain proposals to 2001, when Russian President Vladimir Putin suggested creating a unified history book for Europe about “common history.”²⁶ Two years later information appeared in the mass media about the banning of A. Dolutskov’s textbook *Otechestvennaya istoriya* (History of the Fatherland).²⁷ At the beginning of 2004, information appeared about the revision of textbooks already issued. Various media outlets wrote about the results of the review of textbooks (not only in history) and some 80% of all textbooks were to be reviewed. Several years later discussion renewed about a unified textbook.²⁸ The example most frequently cited was Fillipov’s book *Russia’s Latest History 1945-2006*, which generated a scandal in both Russian and Western media about historical interpretation of the roles of the USSR and Stalin, as well as evaluations of contemporary Russia.²⁹

Latvia in Ministry Programmes and Guidelines for Teachers

The analysis below proceeds according to thematic blocs in which a direct link to Latvia or *Pribaltika*, as the Baltic states are called, can be identified. The following topics can be distinguished: the Brest peace accord, the Treaty of Riga, the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, Latvia’s entry into the USSR, World War II, the post-war years and the collapse of the USSR. Further, there is a summary of the “vectors” within these themes that are intended for teachers.

²⁵ Ibid, p. 4.

²⁶ “Prezident Rossii predlozhit napisat’ edinye dlya Evropy uchebnik,” *Delovaya gazeta* 26 February 2001, available at http://www.businesspress.ru/newspaper/article_mId_33_aId_55635.html.

²⁷ “Ministr obrazovaniya trebuet zapretit’ uchebnik po istorii dlya starshikh klassov. Za smushchayushchie umy voprosy,” *Ezhednevnyi informatsionno-analitichesky zhurnal GlobalRus.ru*, 27 November 2003, available at <http://www.globalrus.ru/news/135463/>.

²⁸ Lemutkina, M. “Edinyi gosudarstvennyi uchebniki,” *Dni.ru*, 22 August 2007, available at http://www.gazeta.ru/education/2007/08/22_a_2080146.shtml.

²⁹ See Halpy, T. “Textbooks rewrite history to fit Putin’s vision,” *The Times*, 30 July 2007; Matthews, O. “Back to the USSR,” *Newsweek*, 20 August 2007, available at <http://www.newsweek.com/id/32352>; and “Sostavlen uchebnik po noveishei istorii Rossii,” *Moskovsky komsomolets*, 23 October 2007, available at <http://www.mk.ru/blogs/MK/2007/10/23/srochno/319940/>; Kachurovskaya, A. “Istorichesky pripadok,” *Vlast’* 27 (731) 2007, available at <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc-y.aspx?DocsID=782464>; and “Shkolnikam budut prepodavat’ Noveishuyu istoriyu po skandal’nomu uchebniku Aleksandra Fillipova,” *Ekho Moskvy*, 25 ecvember 2007., available at <http://echo.msk.ru/news/414614.html>.

Latvia before World War II is mentioned in history textbooks in the context of the Brest Peace and the Treaty of Rīga. No instructions to teachers regarding these topics can be identified. In Danilov's book, only a few sentences about the Brest Peace appear in the chronological appendix, though later the author revisits the issue, expressing an everyday view on "national shame."³⁰ The author ignores the Latvian Riflemen, though there is discussion of the formation of the Red Army. Latvia is not mentioned in relation to the creation of an independent state, though Poland, Finland, and Ukraine merit mention.³¹ Altogether the authors pay almost no attention to these events, suggesting their irrelevance for teachers in preparing their lesson plans.

In portrayal of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, the most characteristic element is the attention given to the secret protocols. Thus, Danilov offers to history teachers the texts of the non-aggression pact between the USSR and Germany, as well as those of the secret protocols.³² In this regard, the most important elements are the author's comments, which are published under the heading "methodological commentary":

In evaluating the signing of the non-aggression pact with Germany, **it should be underlined that the alternative** could have become a similar pact between Germany and England, which, in essence, would mean Western unification against the USSR. **The thesis of the Pact's critics, who condemn the "indifference" of this decision towards the fates of the states and peoples mentioned in the secret protocols, is rather easily disproved** with the same kind of manipulation of the fates of small states on the part of "democratic" England and France, alongside Germany (the Munich agreement and others). **Here it should be underscored** that the significance of the document is hidden elsewhere – the USSR together with other European great powers began to participate in deciding the fate of Europe.³³

Thus, employing the ideological mode of "fragmentation," the author alienates the alternative views of those actors defined as "the Pact's critics." At the same time, through dissimulation the position of the critics appears indirectly through mention of "the fates of small states." The phrases "it should be underlined" or "it should be underscored" are used to assert dominance. Legitimization of the USSR takes place at the expense of other European great powers. An analysis of this position not only points to the discursive struggle, but also demonstrates the "correct" line of thought, as "methodological commentary" becomes "ideological commentary."

³⁰ Danilov (2008), *Istoriya Rossii 1900-1945. Metodicheskoe posobie. 11. klass*, p. 89.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 169.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

In the thematic bloc entitled "Soviet Society from 1922 to 1941" in the programme approved by the Russian Ministry of Education and Science, the last point reads: "The territory of the Soviet Union expanded."³⁴ A more detailed elaboration can be found in Danilov's book, which legitimizes the presence of the USSR on Latvian territory. He writes that these territories had previously been part of "our" country. The use of the word "our" has the effect of unification.³⁵ It is noteworthy that in another teacher's aide the same author ignores the events of 1940 altogether, with one topic devoted to 1939 and the next starting in 1941.³⁶

Further, the discourse is finalized in the text with regard to the events of 1940: in the summer of that year Latvia (and other countries) was "received" in the USSR. The word "received" has a voluntary connotation and to some extent even implies the "desire to be received." There are no details whatsoever in Danilov's works about the modalities of this "reception."

Latvia and the Latvian SSR receive virtually no attention in discussion about the war years. In methodological materials, Latvia appears only after May 1945. Vzyazemsky's and Strelov's teaching programme has the topic "The Soviet Union's domestic politics in the post-war years." One of the issues examined under this heading is an analysis of the reasons for the growth in national movements in the Western USSR and the struggle against them, as well as the hierarchy of peoples in the USSR.³⁷ A similar point can be found in Danilov's programme: "Reasons for the growth of national movements in the post-war years and the struggle against them. The hierarchy of USSR peoples in the post-war period. Particularities of the national policy from 1945 to 1953. Stalin's death and the reaction of Soviet society to it."³⁸

In Fillipov's materials in the section on national policy in the post-war years there is some information on the "forest brethren" and cooperation with the fascist army. Fillipov begins the story of Russia's history from 1945 mentioning Latvia for the first time.³⁹ In Fillipov's work, there is a separate reference to "how it was." Here, one encounters intertextuality with support and adoption of the discourse of "banditry" when discussing resistance. This section has statistics under a noteworthy heading: *Operative*

³⁴ *Primernaya programma srednogo (polnogo) obshchego obrazovaniya na bazovom urovne po istorii* (2004), p. 7.

³⁵ Danilov (2008), *Istoriya Rossii*, p.173.

³⁶ Danilov, A. (2008), *Programma k kursu "Istoriya Rossii" dlya 10-11 klassa*. Moscow: Prosveshchenie, p. 16.

³⁷ Vzyazemsky, E. and Strelova, O. (2008). *Istoriya Rossii 1947-2007. Programma obshcheobrazovatel'ny uchrezhdeniy 11 klass*. Moscow: Prosveshchenie, p. 9.

³⁸ Danilov, A. (2008), *Programma k kursu "Istoriya Rossii" dlya 10-11 klassa*. Moscow: Prosveshchenie, p. 18.

³⁹ Fillipov, A., ed., (2008), *Istoriya Rossii 1945-2008. Kniga dlya uchtelya*. Moscow: Prosveshchenie, p. 45.

Overview of the USSR Interior Ministry's Main Administration for the Struggle against Banditry, 2 January 1947:

On 30 December 1946 6 operations were implemented as a result of which one bandit was killed, one was arrested, another bandit and a participant were arrested, 2 bandits and 7 legionnaires arrived and admitted their guilt.⁴⁰

Further Phillipov notes the unwillingness of the Western great powers to recognize "the Baltic states as a part of the USSR." However, in the period 1947-1948 this "problem" was resolved.

In the discussion about the end of mass repressions after Stalin's death, Latvia is also mentioned, as are the review of arrests and the advancement of national cadres into positions of power.⁴¹ Here, the ideological mode of unification can be observed most distinctly, as "Soviet society" is mentioned without distinguishing between different peoples within it. Moreover, in some places concealment is evident as well, though one could argue that the course is aimed specifically at Russian history.

It is interesting to follow how the presence of the Baltic states in the Soviet Union is described. Semantic separation of the Baltic states from "Soviet society" takes place to show the USSR as a force which generated a "development push" in the Baltic region: "already by 1950 industrial production in Latvia and Estonia exceeded the pre-war level three times."⁴² Latvia and Lithuania later are mentioned as highly developed agricultural, manufacturing and cultural centres.⁴³ The presence of the USSR is presented as the main factor promoting development. Phillipov offers a discourse that places the Baltic states in a privileged position, calling the situation in the Baltic states a "showcase of socialism."⁴⁴ The chain of success follows – the necessity of maintaining links with other USSR regions is related to the market for products manufactured in Latvia.

The collapse of the Soviet Union is covered in the Ministry of Education and Science school programme under the heading "Soviet society from 1985-1991." It is recommended that not more than four hours be devoted to this topic. Sections of particular interest to our concerns are: "The growth of national movements in Soviet republics and the policy of the USSR leadership. The sovereignty declarations of the Soviet republics. The events of August 1991. Reasons for the collapse of the USSR."⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 54.

⁴¹ Ibid, p. 130.

⁴² Ibid, p. 46.

⁴³ Ibid, p. 133.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ *Primernaya programma srednego (polnogo) obshchego obrazovaniya na bazovom urovne po istorii* (2004), *Poyasnitel'naya zapiska*, p. 7.

The thematic plan published on the home page of the Russian Ministry of Education and Science is formulated in the following way: "Topic 4: Perestroika (1985-1991) [...] How can the national and federal policy of the USSR be evaluated? How can one explain the escalation of nationalism and separatism in Soviet and autonomous republics at the end of the 1980s? 4. Why could the leadership of the USSR not find an effective response to the challenges of separatism?"⁴⁶

In Vzyazemsky's and Strelova's programme the collapse of the USSR is termed "separatism,"⁴⁷ while the end of perestroika is called a crisis. The authors use such terms as "superpower" (*sverkhderzhava*) and state collapse. With regard to the restoration of independence, greater attention is paid to Lithuania, while Latvia is mentioned only in passing.

For the purposes of this analysis, portrayal of the Soviet Union without mentioning the republics is significant. Speaking of the Soviet period, the story of Russia which began in the beginning of the 20th century is replaced by the story of Soviet society. An identity is created based on glorification of this regime and juxtaposition with other countries. Russians and Soviet society are indirectly equated, and a clear evaluation of the rise and fall of the USSR is provided. Similar to classical literary works, teachers are immediately urged to divide the cast of characters into political heroes and anti-heroes.

The results of centralized state examinations in 2008 pointed to weak knowledge of recent history among Russian schoolchildren: "the greatest problems arise and the weakest knowledge is demonstrated about issues related to cultural history, public opinion, the history of political parties and movements, as well as domestic politics in the second half of the 20th century. Notwithstanding some improvements in indicators, the task of effectively researching this part of the history programme remains topical."⁴⁸ This suggests that the discourses which appear in the "recommended" goals for teachers will strengthen.

It should be noted that the Russian Federation has what is called a "School Textbook Social State Expert Opinion Centre," which engages in a form of academic censorship. The organization's home page contains children's letters praising the educational programme and illustrating the ostensible nature of the teacher-student relationship. Thus, Yuliya Chupakova, an 11th grader from Krasnodar region, is attributed the following:

⁴⁶ *Tematicheskoe planirovanie po istorii*, available at http://history.standart.edu.ru/info.aspx?ob_no=11629.

⁴⁷ Vzyazemsky, E. and Strelova, O. (2008), *Istoriya Rossii 1947-2007. Programmy obshche-obrazovatel'nikh uchrezhdeniy. 11. klass*. Moscow: Prosveshchenie, p. 17.

⁴⁸ *Metodicheskoe pis'mo Ob izpol'zovanii rezul'tatov edinogo gosudarstvennogo ekzamina 2008 goda v prepodavanii istorii Rossii v obrazovatel'nikh uchrezhdeniyakh srednego (polnogo) obshchego obrazovaniya*, available at http://window.edu.ru/window_catalog/files/r59250/ist%20mp%20EGE%202009.pdf

Honourable Russian history and social science textbook authors! I would like to express by enthusiasm about your textbooks. Books such as *Social sciences – the Global World in the 21st century* and *Russia's History 1945-2007* have not existed throughout my schooling years. They are unique. Learning from them, I can imagine our country's development path more clearly, principles of global thinking, as well as challenges and tasks. Thanks to these books, I have begun to see the world from a different perspective. I am proud that we, the graduates of 2008, became the first to learn the truth from your books. I think that these textbooks will have an impact on youth and help it to see the world in a new way.⁴⁹

In this letter, one can observe the process of constructing a national identity with the assistance of historical memory in the education process.

Latvia in History Textbooks for Children

Latvia as an entity distinct from Estonia and Lithuania is mentioned relatively rarely in Russian history textbooks for children. Most common is the geographical name *Pribaltika*, which was popular during the Soviet period. Before Latvia and its neighbours were called the showcase of socialism, they were viewed as the periphery or as a territory within the Russian Empire.

Latvia before World War II

Some authors ignore Latvian participation in the Bolshevik Revolution while others almost exaggerate the Latvian role. In their textbook, Levandovsky and Shchetinin describe political unrest in Russia, noting that "the same evening an ultraradical group from the party committee (*Lācis, Nevsky, Podvoysky, Smilga, etc.*) on the other side decided to support a mass protest, bringing them out on the July 4 Street and ensuring the demonstrators with military assistance."⁵⁰ Several of the persons mentioned are of Latvian background, but this fact is not noted, nor are the Latvian Riflemen mentioned. They have disappeared from the active discourse in some cases, which is in striking contrast to Soviet era discourse and current Russian media discourse.

In contrast to Levandovsky and Shchetinin, Pon'ka and Savrusheva describe the Red Army as if it consisted solely of Latvian Riflemen:

The only fragment of the Tsarist army which had maintained a fighting spirit and discipline and was on the side of the new authorities were the Latvian Riflemen regiments. The Latvian

⁴⁹ Available at http://history.standart.edu.ru/info.aspx?ob_no=16077.

⁵⁰ Levandovsky, A. and Shchetinov, Yu. (2002), *Rossiya v XX veke*. Moscow: Prosveshchenie, p. 104..

national war units were created in the summer of 1915, when the German military attacked *Pribaltika*. 60% of the Latvian Rifleman regiments consisted of workers and peasants, which determined their **strong revolutionary spirit and support for Soviet power**. Already a month after the October Revolution the Bolsheviks transferred the Latvian Rifleman regiment from the Northern Front to Petrograd to provide support to maintaining revolutionary order. Latvian Rifleman protected Soviet power in Smolny, accompanied the Soviet government's train from Petrograd to Moscow in March 1918 and guarded Moscow's Kremlin.⁵¹

It should be noted that in the works by other authors, the role of the Latvian Rifleman is not treated separately and is even in some ways belittled, with the Latvians being assigned to other groups and mentioned in a section entitled "interesting": "It is interesting that on the side of the Red Army fought citizens of other countries (Latvians, Chinese, Finns, etc.). In 1920 these units had about 250,000 people."⁵²

Explaining the reasons for a "revolutionary spirit" here seems unnecessary, which allows avoiding interpretation. At the same time, one notes a discourse of "national passiveness" regarding countries which later became independent: "Only some of them in an experimental fashion openly proposed demands for the autonomy of their regions within the Russian state. For the time being, **national leaders** did not dare to demand anything more."⁵³

A broad trend in portraying the events of the revolutionary period is the unification of the state, i.e. the united empire discourse. This is noticeable also in the rare notes about what made independence possible. At the same time, the Brest-Litovsk Treaty is treated in depth:

At this stage in the negotiations the German delegation referred to the Declaration on the Rights of the Peoples of Russia proclaimed by the Soviet authorities, which granted **each nation of the former Russian Empire the right to self-determination**. The Germans thought that this document created the basis for independent states in the *Pribaltika*, as well as the separation of Ukraine and many other territories. A truce was signed, but the head of the Russian delegation Trotsky went to Petrograd to discuss the conditions of the treaty. Lenin insisted on peace under any conditions.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Pon'ka, T. and Savrusheva, V., *Otechestvennaya Istorija*, available at <http://www.ido.rudn.ru/ffec/hist-index.html>.

⁵² Bayeva, E., Dyachenko, E., Kuzmina, O., Ushakov, Yu., Chepagina, N., Shaposhnik, V., Shaskol'naya, E., *Istorija Rossii. Elektronnyi uchebnik po discipline "Otechestvennaya istoriya*, available at http://de.ifmo.ru/bk_netra/start.php?bn=16.

⁵³ Levandovsky and Shchetinov (2002), *Rossiya v XX veke*, p. 93.

⁵⁴ Bayeva, E., Dyachenko, E., Kuzmina, O., Ushakov, Yu., Chepagina, N., Shaposhnik, V., Shaskol'naya, E., *Istorija Rossii. Elektronnyi uchebnik po discipline "Otechestvennaya istoriya*, available at http://de.ifmo.ru/bk_netra/start.php?bn=16.

The table below illustrates the trend in various textbooks towards showing the “inherited nature” of history and the link with Russia:

The Revolutionary Period in Russian History Textbooks, by Author

Ostrovsky	Levandovsky and Shchetinov	Bayeva, Dyachenko, Kuzmina, Ushakov, Chepagina, Shaposhnik and Shaskol'naya
<p>“Thanks to the intervention of the Red Army, Soviet republics were created in Belorussia, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.”⁵⁵</p>	<p>“On 23 February Soviet power received a new German ultimatum. In addition to the lost occupied territories, Russia would have to give up Estonia and Latvia, withdraw its army from Finland and Ukraine [...] Altogether Russia would have to give up 780,000 square meters of land and 56 million people (a third of the inhabitants of the former Russian Empire, including 40% of manufacturing workers). Almost a third of the country’s railway network was located there, more than 70% of the cast iron and steel was poured there, and 89% of coal.”⁵⁶</p> <p>“In Poland, <i>Pribaltika</i>, Belorussia and Ukraine bourgeois national governments appeared which immediately sided with the Entente.”⁵⁷</p> <p>“Undoubtedly, at the centre of Moscow’s diplomatic efforts were the new bourgeois <i>Pribaltika</i> republics. In the end, they were successfully protected from direct influence of the Entente, thereby breaking the foreign policy isolation of the new Russia. In August 1919 the Bolshevik government demonstrated a readiness to recognize the independence of these countries, soon signing peace treaties with them: in February 1920 with Estonia, in July with Lithuania, in August with Latvia and in October with Finland.”⁵⁸</p>	<p>“A particular event linked with foreign intervention is the Soviet-Polish war of 1920, during which the Soviet side tried to promote the worldwide socialist revolutionary process with the entry of the Red Army into European countries. As a result of this process the Peace Treaty of Riga was signed which determined the new borders of Poland, thereby restoring Poland’s independence, as well as together with Russia creating the opportunity for Lithuania’s, Latvia’s and Estonia’s independence.”⁵⁹</p>

⁵⁵ Ostrovsky, V. (2004), *Istoriya Rossii XX veka. 9. klass.*. Moscow: Izdatel'stvo AST, p. 111.

⁵⁶ Levandovsky and Shchetinov (2002), *Rossiya v XX veke*, p. 141.

⁵⁷ Levandovsky and Shchetinov (2002), *Rossiya v XX veke*, p. 45.

⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 164.

⁵⁹ Bayeva, E., Dyachenko, E., Kuzmina, O., Ushakov, Yu., Chepagina, N., Shaposhnik, V., Shaskol'naya, E., *Istoriya Rossii. Elektronnyi uchebnik po discipline "Otechestvennaya istoriya*, available at http://de.ifmo.ru/bk_netra/start.php?bn=16.

The authors describe the civil war in an emotional way as a “tragic period” and mention the “national borderlands,” including Latvia, which help to create the image of an indivisible, historically justified empire: “Significant problems were created for the new authorities by the so-called national borderlands (Ukraine, Finland, etc.), many of which did not in fact recognize the authority of the provisional government.”⁶⁰ In most cases during this period Latvia is not treated as a distinct entity and is mentioned only in passing. For example, Levandovsky and Shchetinov’s work mentioned “in October 1917 Soviet power in Estonia, the non-occupied part of Latvia, Belorussia, as well as Baku (where it survived until August 1918).”⁶¹

Other authors also describe the victory of Soviet power. Pon’ka and Savrusheva, for instance, mentioning a source about the division of Latvia, introduce the presence of Latvia and the Latvian SSR simultaneously:

On 26 October 1917 the Bolsheviks adopted the Decree on Peace. Afterwards they announced the disbandment of the 5 million strong czar’s army. The old army ceased to exist [...] The difficult situation required the centralization of all the Soviet republics defence. On 1 July 1919 the VTSIK adopted a decree about the unification of the war and economic power of the RSFSR, the Latvian SSR, the Ukrainian SSR, the Lithuanian SSR and the Belorussian SSR [...] Thus, Soviet power prevailed in the former territory of the Russian Empire (except for Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Finland).⁶²

The discourse of war and military cooperation between states is illustrated in Levandovsky and Shchetinov’s works as a geopolitical game. The authors thereby underline the “inertia” of the development of interrelations between these territories: “in June 1919 the Soviet republics that existed at that time – Russia, Ukraine, Belorussia, Lithuania and Latvia – created a war union, which envisaged a united military leadership and management of finances, manufacturing and transport.”⁶³

The next time Latvia and the Baltic states are mentioned in most works is almost 20 years later. Latvia during the inter-war period is almost non-existent in history textbooks. In an electronic textbook special attention is given to international relations before World War II. The text creates a bridge of sorts between pre-World War II international relations and subsequent events:

The Soviet Union signed non-aggression pacts with Finland, Latvia, Estonia, Poland and France. After Hitler was approved as German chancellor in 1933, Soviet-German relations, which had developed

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Levandovsky and Shchetinov (2002), *Rossiia v XX veke*, p120.

⁶² Pon’ka, T. and Savrusheva, V. *Otechestvoennaya Istoriya*, available at <http://www.ido.rudn.ru/ffec/hist-index.html>.

⁶³ Levandovsky and Shchetinov (2002), *Rossiia v XX veke*, p. 151.

in the 1920s, began to deteriorate rapidly. In June 1933 the USSR announced the suspension of military cooperation between the two states. In October of that same year Germany recalled its representatives from the Geneva disarmament conference and then withdrew from the League of Nations. Until the end of 1933 the national socialist regime in Germany had already been created; however only in the 7th Komintern Congress in 1935 was fascism officially recognized as enemy number one.⁶⁴

The position towards Latvia becomes topical once again right before World War II. It should be noted that it is precisely this period, examined later, that is the most controversial between Latvia and Russia. The perspective towards the events of those years diverges in media discourse, in the public sphere and in the political agenda.

Attaching Pribaltika

The signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact and its secret protocols is discussed in school textbooks, but the perspectives are varied and a unified stance does not exist. However, some predominant trends can be identified and there are some texts that stand out against the common background of the discourse of the expansion of the USSR. The authors of the electronic textbook *A History of the Fatherland* Pon'ka and Savrusheva justify the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact in the following manner:

In signing a non-aggression treaty with Germany, the Soviet leadership did not harbour any illusions. The government understood that the treaty did not "protect" the USSR from fascist aggression. The main gain from this treaty was a strategic breathing space that the USSR received in the West and the East.⁶⁵

Further in the textbook this discourse dissonates with that of insufficient preparation for the war. Despite mention of the secret protocols, they are not characterized as a gain, as the gain is the "breathing space." If most authors note that the secret protocols remained secret until the collapse of the Soviet Union, Pon'ka and Savrusheva disregard this, merely noting that the protocols speak of a division of "spheres of influence." A separate subsection is devoted to the topic "Attaching *Pribaltika*," which is reflected here in full:

At the end of the 1930s only Estonia of the Baltic states retained an independent political system. In September-October 1939 after the

⁶⁴ Bayeva, E., Dyachenko, E., Kuzmina, O., Ushakov, Yu., Chepagina, N., Shaposhnik, V., Shaskol'naya, E., *Istoriya Rossii. Elektronnyi uchebnyk po discipline "Otechestvennaya istoriya*, available at http://de.ifmo.ru/bk_netra/start.php?bn=16.

⁶⁵ Pon'ka, T. and Savrusheva, V. *Otechestvennaya Istoriya*, available at <http://www.ido.rudn.ru/ffec/hist-index.html>.

request of the USSR these countries concluded “mutual assistance treaties.” Red Army units entered *Pribaltika*. Soldiers were greeted with bread and salt, and flowers. In the summer of 1940 the Soviet government requested the resignation of the governments and the entry of additional soldiers. The Baltic states had to accept all conditions. After three months parliamentary elections took place in all three countries. As soon as the elections took place, in the first meeting unanimous decisions were taken to join the Soviet Union. Socialist transformation began in *Pribaltika* which was accompanied by the arrest and deportation of significant parts of the population to distant regions of the USSR. *War with Finland and the sovietization of the Pribaltika was contrary to the norms of international law, but it was engendered by efforts to create more favourable circumstances for the defence of the USSR from growing threats from the side of Germany.*

During this time Germany destroyed Poland in one month, then occupied Denmark, Holland and Belgium, invaded Norway and in May 1940 attacked France. After 44 days – on 22 June 1940 France capitulated. German air attacks against England began. But thanks to the fact that England is an island, Germany was not able to achieve its capitulation. Then the German leadership began to discuss the prospects of war against the USSR. At a meeting in the main headquarters on 31 July 1940 A. Hitler set the overall goals and the deadline for implementation: “Russia must be liquidated. The deadline is spring 1941.” In December 1940 the German military leadership had several different plans to carry out the war against the USSR. A. Hitler stopped with the plan about a lightning fast war. It received the code name “Operation Barbarossa.” The German military leadership thought the Red Army would be able to fight back only in the first hours of war in the borderlands. Farther into the territory of the USSR would be a victory march. “Speed! No delay! An operation without a halt is necessary!” These were the instructions received by German soldiers. By the time winter arrived in 1941 Operation Barbarossa had to be implemented. In 1941 the Soviet Union remained alone, without allies, which, by the way, in the history of the fatherland, has not been a rarity.⁶⁶

There is an evident contradiction between joyfully greeting the Soviet army with bread, salt and flowers and the interpretation of the authors with its peculiar ideological vector which specifies the “correct” understanding of events. At the same time, the description of the meeting in the text itself conflicts with the subsequent mention of the interference of the USSR. It should be noted that mention of the deportations following incorporation

⁶⁶ Ibid. The italicized text is highlighted in the original.

of the Baltic states into the USSR is rare. Particular attention should be given to the part of the text which notes the illegitimacy and illegality of the events, which contrasts with the discourse in other teaching materials. At the same time, the authors provide a “justification” for such Soviet action. The discourse mentioned above about the “lack of choice” or the only correct solution is strengthened. This is illustrated by a phrase common in Russia that “victors are not punished.” This is the main rationale, as victory is portrayed as requiring such actions.

Now, let us turn to portrayal of the same events in other textbooks. Without entering into intricacies of law and ignoring the “secrecy” of the secret protocols, Levandovsky and Shchetinov’s book has a sub-section entitled “The Accession of *Pribaltika*”:

In August 1939 Stalin had made his choice. On 23 August, when war discussions with England and France were still dragging on sluggishly, Molotov and German foreign minister Ribbentrop signed a non-aggression pact in Moscow and a secret protocol about the division of spheres of influence in Eastern Europe. According to this, Berlin recognized the *Pribaltika* republics, Finland, eastern Poland and Bessarabia as the sphere of influence of the Soviet Union. A week after the pact was signed Germany attacked Poland. England and France, which had suffered failure in secret and clear efforts to deal with Hitler at the expense of the USSR, announced military support for Warsaw. World War II began. The USSR officially announced that it would be neutral towards the combatant sides.⁶⁷

When writing about the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, the authors of the electronic textbook *History of the Fatherland* run counter to the official Soviet-era discourse. This is how they describe geopolitical manipulations:

The arrival of Ribbentrop in Moscow, which was to have taken place on 26 August, was hastened following Hitler’s request. Late in the evening of 23 August the Soviet-German non-aggression pact was signed and it was to last for 10 years. It entered into force immediately. A secret protocol was attached to the treaty, the existence of which was denied by the USSR until summer 1989. According to this document, certain zones of influence were determined in Eastern Europe. Estonia, Latvia, Finland and Bessarabia fell into the Soviet sphere, while Lithuania fell into the German sphere. There was nothing about Poland’s fate in the protocol, though the Ukrainian and Belorussian territories which were located within it according to the Riga Treaty of 1921, would go over to the USSR.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Levandovsky and Shchetinov (2002), *Rossiya v XX veke*, pp. 228–229.

⁶⁸ Bayeva, E., Dyachenko, E., Kuzmina, O., Ushakov, Yu., Chepagina, N., Shaposhnik, V., Shaskol’naya, E., *Istoriya Rossii. Elektronnyi uchebnik po discipline “Otechestvennaya istoriya*, available at http://de.ifmo.ru/bk_netra/start.php?bn=16.

Textbook author V. Ostrovsky cites Stalin to emphasize the Soviet Union's lack of choice in negotiating with Hitler's Germany, thereby providing historical justification for Stalin's acts. Thus, the voluntary nature of the signing of the pact was "conditional," and the pact is portrayed as forced. In the following excerpt from the textbook, the assistance of intertextuality helps to see the aforementioned legitimacy:

On 19 August a meeting of the Politburo of the Communist Party took place during which Stalin spoke: "The issue of war or peace is entering a critical phase for us. If we sign a treaty of mutual assistance with France or Great Britain, Germany will renounce Poland and begin to seek a *modus vivendi* with the Western great powers. War will be prevented, but the character of subsequent events can become dangerous for the USSR. If we accept Germany's offer of signing a non-aggression pact, it will, of course, attack Poland, and the involvement of France and England in this war becomes inevitable. Western Europe will encounter serious unrest and disorder. In such circumstances we will have many opportunities to not get involved in the conflict and we will be able to hope for an involvement in the war which is advantageous to us."⁶⁹

Writing about the secret protocols, Ostrovsky notes that for a long time "our society did not know that attached to the treaty were secret protocols with which Germany and the USSR divided spheres of influence in Eastern Europe: Germany renounced ambitions to Ukraine, the *Pribaltika* as well as plans to plunder South-eastern and Eastern Europe, which could have become dangerous for the USSR." Significantly, the author draws attention to propaganda in the media. One paragraph concentrates information on the "mutual assistance treaties" signed with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania:

But in 1940, blaming the *Pribaltika* states for violating these treaties, the Soviet government brought its military forces into them. Immediately afterwards the pro-communist government that had come to power turned with a request for these countries to be admitted to the Soviet Union.⁷⁰

Here, one can observe a particular kind of struggle between discourses. On the one hand, one sees the emphasis on the tactics hidden from society, on the other – legitimization of the actions of the USSR and the "voluntary" requests of the pro-communist governments to join the USSR. In the textbook by Levandovsky and Shchetinov, they note that the eastern part of Poland was joined to the USSR, which "was against international legal

⁶⁹ Ostrovsky, V. (2004), *Istoriya Rossii XX veka. 9. klass.*, Moscow: Izdatel'stvo AST, p. 187.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 189.

norms in force at the time." After describing events in eastern Poland, the authors address events in the Baltic:

Then came the turn of the *Pribaltika* states. In September-October 1939 Stalin's government imposed mutual assistance treaties in which they offered the USSR their military bases. The next year, accusing the Baltic states of violating these treaties, Moscow demanded that coalition people's governments be created there which would be controlled by persons authorized by Moscow and supported by the Red Army. Soon elections to the parliaments of Latvia and Lithuania and to the state council of Estonia took place. Only those candidates that had been nominated by the local communist parties and which had been checked by Soviet special services participated. Parliaments elected in this manner turned with a request to have their countries accepted into the USSR. At the end of August 1940 these requests were satisfied and three new socialist republics were added to the USSR.⁷¹

In this text, the USSR is portrayed as an aggressor through the terms "imposed" and "accused." But international law is not violated, as Soviet expansion resulted from "requests" to join the USSR.

The authors of the electronic textbook offer a softer discourse which examines the benefits to the Baltic states of cooperation with the USSR. Among other benefits, the author's stress Lithuania's reacquisition of Vilnius. Advantages were also ostensibly present through military assistance. At the same time, the main factor mentioned which brought about accession to the USSR was victory over Germany. The Soviet role is depicted as passive, as a policy of non-interference at the beginning of the war:

At the same time, a process began to sign mutual assistance treaties between the USSR and the *Pribaltika* countries: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. In accordance with these documents, the Soviet Union acquired navy ports on the territory of Estonia and Latvia, while 20,000 soldiers were brought into Lithuania, which had lost Vilnius to Poland in 1920. From the Soviet side it was planned to provide war materiel on advantageous terms. In the beginning the Soviet Union adhered to a policy of not interfering in the domestic affairs of the *Pribaltika* countries, as they had friendly relations with France and Great Britain. But in the summer of 1940, in connection with the achievements of the German army (the occupation of Denmark, Norway, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg), the situation changed. It was necessary to tend to the strengthening of the western border, which according to Stalin's understanding, meant attaching the new territories and stationing a significant military contingent there. Pro-Soviet governments were created in the *Pribaltika* countries and in the summer of 1940 the parliaments of Lithuania and Latvia and the state council of Estonia adopted declarations on the accession

⁷¹ Levandovsky and Shchetinov (2002), *Rossiya v XX veke*, p. 230.

to state power and these countries into the USSR. At the beginning of August, the Supreme Soviet finalized the entry into the Union as allied republics.⁷²

What transpired later in the *Pribaltika* is virtually ignored. The primary focus of attention is on Soviet relations with Germany. At the same time, it should be noted that the electronic textbook mentioned above speaks about deportations, mentioning other nationalities, but not Latvians or Latvia separately:

At the same time, the state did not ease the power of the repressive machine. In 1941 entire peoples were deported (transferred) on the basis of suspicions about collective treason. In August 1941 900,000 Germans who lived in the USSR were subject to this procedure; in liberating Soviet territories in 1943-1944 there were mass deportations of peoples such as the Karachayev, Kalmyks, Chechens, Ingush, Crimean Tatars and **a number of other peoples**.⁷³

With regard to deportations and repressions against alleged "collaborationism", Ostrovsky also concentrates on the Caucasus and Crimea regions. Vlasov write about whole battalions that cooperated with the German army, such as 13 Georgian, 26 Turkistan, 15 Azerbaijani, but the Baltic is not mentioned.

The "Great Fatherland War" and the Post-War Years

With regard to the war, and of course, victory, Russia or the Russian people, of course, predominate. While Ukraine and Belorussia merit mention, Latvia or Soviet Latvia gets little mention during this period. If Latvia or the Baltic states do get mentioned, it is in relation to support for the German military which is the basic discourse that appears in textbooks. Support for Germany is not portrayed as a result of Soviet action or some sort of deficiency, but as Germany's tactics:

Our policy in relation to the peoples that inhabit the vastness of Russia, said Hitler, must be based on promoting any form of contradiction or division. The Nazi leadership demanded of the occupied administrations that contradictions between Lithuanians, Estonians, Latvians and Russians, between Ukrainians and Russians in the South, etc. be used in Germany's interests. [...] In Pribaltika profascist organizations were created (defence battalions in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, as well as Belorussian blood defence).⁷⁴

⁷² Bayeva, E., Dyachenko, E., Kuzmina, O., Ushakov, Yu., Chepagina, N., Shaposhnik, V., Shaskol'naya, E., *Istoriya Rossii. Elektronnyi uchebnyk po discipline "Otechestvennaya istoriya*, available at http://de.ifmo.ru/bk_netra/start.php?bn=16.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Levandovsky and Shchetinov (2002), *Rossiia v XX veke*, p. 244.

The key actor in the text above is Germany. The situation described suggests that there was freedom of choice, but it is only Ukraine that is mentioned specifically in the context of “voluntary” involvement in military formations. The situation in the Baltic states is not examined in any detail. It should be noted that support for Germany is not highlighted as a characteristic typical of the Baltic states alone. To enhance the aura of legitimacy, some authors use reference to intertextuality with foreign historians:

Referring to data of foreign historians, altogether one million Soviet citizens cooperated with the German fascist invaders. That is not comparable to the number of people who did not bow their heads before the occupants and kept true to the oath and duty before the Motherland to fight to the death.⁷⁵

The appearance of the “Generalplan Ost” in textbooks is also significant. This description denigrates Latvian independence from the USSR as a goal of the freedom movement. Thus, even the smallest opportunity for the appearance of a discourse about the Latvian freedom movement opposing Soviet rule is denied:

In accordance with the fascistic leadership’s intention, Germany’s invasion of the USSR was not a normal war. The Generalplan Ost, which had been prepared in a timely manner, envisaged the complete liquidation of the Soviet state, the transfer of inhabitants to Siberia from Western Ukraine, Belorussia, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, the germanization of those who remained, and the physical annihilation of 5-6 million Jews and 30 million Russians. [...] Everywhere local police forces were introduced composed of those people who had gone over to the German side. In the occupied territories, a systematic policy of economic plunder and merciless terror were implemented, the part of the population capable of work was sent to Germany (in accordance with German statistics – more than 4.2 million people).⁷⁶

Levandovsky and Shchetinov note that in some occupied territories private property was restored. Here Latvia is a part of *Pribaltika*. Thus, here we have the coexistence of a discourse of terror and one of renewal.

The Post-War Years: From Repression to “Showcase of Socialism”

As with the “Victory,” so with the post-war years textbooks treat Russia and USSR as the same thing and only rarely are other republics highlighted. Several authors stress the importance of the Stalin’s speech of 24 May 1945,⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid, pp. 244-245.

⁷⁷ Stalin, J. (1948), *O Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine Sovetskogo soyuza*. 5th ed. Moscow, pp. 196-197.

which reaffirms the victory as belonging to a particular people, thereby diminishing the role of other participants:

Our government has made a few errors. There have been moments of despair, when in 1941-1942, our army retreated and abandoned our native lands and cities in Ukraine, Belorussia, Moldavia, the Leningrad region, the *Pribaltika*, the Karelian-Finnish republic. It abandoned them, as there was no other alternative. Any other people could tell their government: you did not justify our hopes, go away, we will appoint another government which will make peace with Germany and ensure peace for us. But the Russian people were not for this, because they believed in the correctness of the government's policy and were ready to sacrifice much to ensure the ruin of Germany. [...] Thanks to her, to the Russian people for this trust. To the health of the Russian people! (Tumultuous, long applause).⁷⁸

This discourse is affirmed and reinforced by the textbook authors when they enumerate the reasons behind the victory. The authors mention six reasons for the victory, including the support of the Church, the activities of partisans and underground fighters, as well as the merits of the army command and Stalin. Also noted is the contribution of patriots who helped strengthen the fighting spirit with culture. The first reason, mentioned, however, is the following:

One of the main reasons for the victory of the Soviet people over fascist Germany was the moral and political unity of the multinational state. The hopes Hitler's strategists placed on the weakness of the state, on the isolation of communists from the people, on conflict between workers and peasants, and lastly, on the breakdown of the multinational state were not justified. In the war years all segments of society united with the leadership of the state and the communist party. All USSR peoples saw the danger coming towards them as common and deadly. The war had the character of the fatherland. The multimillion and multinational state was united by the slogan "All to the front, all to victory!"

This reason makes the unity of the "Soviet people" legitimate and denies the possibility of pluralism. Anti-Soviet sentiment is disclaimed, and the unification of nationality takes place in the interests of the supranational state.

In writing about the Soviet people in the post-war years, the only case in which individual peoples are highlighted concerns repressions. Ostrovsky's textbook has the following information in the section on "Strengthening of the totalitarian regime, a new wave of terror": "In the territories joined in

⁷⁸ Pon'ka, T. and Savrusheva, V. *Otechestvennaya Istoriya*, available at <http://www.ido.rudn.ru/ffec/hist-index.html>.

1939 and 1940 in the *Pribaltika*, in Western Ukraine, Western Belorussia and Moldavia socialist transformation began, as a result of which, based on a directive of the Interior Ministry, *kulaks*, “bandits” and “nationalist” families were deported.”⁷⁹ In describing deportations and repression, the *Pribaltika* is often mentioned for 1939-1940, but often left out in the post-war years. This is based on the discourse of “bandits” and “nationalists,” which in the book cited above, are used in inverted commas. Other authors devoted more attention to the sentiments of insurgents and the reasons for anti-Soviet mobilization:

Levandovsky and Shchetinov	Bayeva, Dyachenko, Kuzmina, Ushakov, Chepagina, Shaposhnik, Shaskol'naya
<p><i>The situation worsened in the form of an open armed resistance against Soviet power, which took place in the recently incorporated Pribaltika republics and the Western regions of Ukraine and Belorussia. The anti-government partisan movement enticed into its ranks tens of thousands of fighters: convinced nationalists, who relied on the support of Western special services, as well as simple people, many of whom had suffered from the new regime and lost their homes, property, and relatives.</i>⁸⁰</p>	<p><i>Along with war veterans' suspicions were also aroused by those inhabitants who lived in territories that were briefly occupied, as well as Soviet repatriates (war prisoners and people who returned from Europe and who had been sent to forced labour in Germany). They were carefully checked by the NKVD and SMERSH. Most of the people in German concentration camps ended up in analogous institutions in the Gulag system.</i>⁸¹</p>

For this time period, the authors devote much attention to post-war recovery. The dominant trend is the description of growth and welfare which the Soviet Union experienced in the post-war years. Those states that ceased to exist with the signing of the secret protocol of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact received special mention:

The economic structure of the *Pribaltika*, Moldavia, and Western Ukraine and Belorussia, which were part of the USSR at the beginning of the war, changed at the root. They went from being agrarian to industrial. New manufacturing sectors were created there: metalworking, machine-building, electronics, and shale-chemical.⁸²

This is an image of a benevolent Soviet power with a positive impact on these territories. At the same time, the previous regimes are implied to have been unable to give the necessary developmental push for these territories.

⁷⁹ Ostrovsky (2004), *Istoriya Rossii XX veka*. 9. klass, p. 243.

⁸⁰ Levandovsky and Shchetinov (2002), *Rossiya v XX veke*, pp. 273-274.

⁸¹ Bayeva, E., Dyachenko, E., Kuzmina, O., Ushakov, Yu., Chepagina, N., Shaposhnik, V., Shaskol'naya, E., *Istoriya Rossii. Elektronnyi uchebnik po discipline "Otechestvennaya istoriya*, available at http://de.ifmo.ru/bk_netra/start.php?bn=16.

⁸² Levandovsky and Shchetinov (2002), *Rossiya v XX veke*, p. 269.

A subtle juxtaposition is also thereby created, in which the attention given to the periphery in the post-war period demonstrates the development level of the Soviet Union before the war. This is reinforced with the use of statistics, as well as a description of the national economic idea, which in the views of the authors, was dominant:

Overall during the fourth 5-year plan (1946-1950) 6200 large enterprises were restored or created. Industrial production increased significantly in the 1950's as well, exceeding pre-war indicators by 73% (by a factor of two to three in the *Pribaltika* republics, Moldavia, and the Western regions of Belorussia and Ukraine).⁸³

The authors mention competing discourses as well, elaborating an alternative perspective on the statistics with regard to concrete countries, as well as, for example, the use of prisoners of war as labour or war plunder.

The overall trend for this period is to mention Latvia primarily with regard to negative events, such as those who did not support the Red Army. There is almost no effort to separate people into those who supported Germany vis-à-vis those who did not support either side. Positive features that made Latvia into a "showcase of socialism," are all linked to the Soviet regime and Latvia's becoming part of the USSR after the war. No other scenario is permitted and the emphasis is on Latvia as an agrarian and little developed periphery before 1940.

The Collapse of the USSR

Though textbooks differ drastically in the amount of attention they devote to the collapse of the USSR, they are united in a general sense of nostalgia. Various authors attribute different amounts of blame to the Baltic states from being among the main reason for the collapse or one of the main reasons. Illustrative is Pon'ka's and Savrusheva's approach:

In 1989-1990 separatist hotspots emerged in *Pribaltika* and Georgia. The popular fronts in *Pribaltika*, which were created as organizations to support perestroika, transformed into independence movements. Lithuania began to play the lead role in the movement to break away from the USSR [...] At the beginning of 1991, events took place in *Pribaltika* which gave among the most noticeable blows to the USSR as a commonwealth of peoples. On 12 January in 1991 in the capital of Lithuania in Vilnius, the army, which had been brought to a state of hatred, opened fire on demonstrators who had occupied the local television [...] On 20 January in Riga OMON units went on the attack against the Interior Ministry building. Just as in Vilnius, there were deaths and injuries. On 22 January Gorbachev appeared on television with an announcement about the illegal activities of *Pribaltika's*

⁸³ Ibid, pp. 269-270.

institutions. In response demands for Gorbachev's resignation and independence followed.⁸⁴

In this excerpt one sees a clear link between the victim and the aggressor. The aggressors, which were the ostensible reason for the events, are the separatist movements, and their activity is described as a reason for the collapse of the system. It is significant that this system is not presented to students as a political or economic system, but as a commonwealth of peoples, as if the whole union were held together by friendship between peoples. The army is reflected as an independent force which took decisions autonomously. Above, it is portrayed not as an aggressor, but as a victim (the description is in the passive construction). One also notes the rebuttal of the discourse that suggests that the inability of the USSR to survive was due to political or economic reasons, though this is not a universal trend in the textbooks analyzed.

Levandovsky and Shchetinov suggest that the main reason for the collapse was a crisis in the communist party and the Baltic states are in the vanguard of change. The authors provide their version of the reasons behind the Soviet collapse which places Russia in the position of a victim:

Of decisive significance in the "parade of sovereignties" and "war of laws" that began was the circumstance that republican elites were successful for a moment in linking their interests with those of a wide range of inhabitants who expressed dissatisfaction with the existing form of mutual [federal] relations.⁸⁵

Later, the authors describe how, over several decades,

The centre transferred material and financial resources from Russia to the national republics, trying in some cases to accelerate the development of other regions, and in other cases to "pacify" with a higher (than the union average) standard of living for people who were forcibly incorporated into the Soviet empire.⁸⁶

As the authors note, such a "donor" policy did not have the desired result. With regard to the collapse of the USSR, *Pribaltika* predominates in the discourse, though various authors mention other republics as well, including Azerbaijan, Moldavia and Georgia. Other authors clearly delineate a bloc of republics that are juxtaposed to others in the USSR: "The *Pribaltika* republics and Georgia welcomed the collapse."⁸⁷ Nostalgia for the USSR, which was

⁸⁴ Pon'ka, T. and Savrusheva, V. *Otechestvennaya Istoriya*, available at <http://www.ido.rudn.ru/ffec/hist-index.html>.

⁸⁵ Levandovsky and Shchetinov (2002), *Rossiya v XX veke*, p. 317.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, p. 318.

⁸⁷ Bayeva, E., Dyachenko, E., Kuzmina, O., Ushakov, Yu., Chepagina, N., Shaposhnik, V., Shaskol'naya, E., *Istoriya Rossii. Elektronnyi uchebnik po discipline "Otechestvennaya istoriya*, available at http://de.ifmo.ru/bk_netra/start.php?bn=16.

a great power at the peak of development, is evident in all the textbooks. Treatment of post-Soviet Russian history does not touch upon Latvia at all.

The Examinations

The state can influence the knowledge and attitudes of schoolchildren not only through textbooks and teachers' guidelines, but also through examinations. The history examination can be seen as an examination of patriotism. The mass media as "supplementary didactic material" also creates Latvia's image and serves as an additional basis for the ideology of defence in the growing struggle of discourses.⁸⁸ One sees the interplay of discourses in the two main channels of socialization – the media and academic discourse – in constructing national identity.

The main function of textbooks is the legitimization of interpretations and facts, while these are reinforced in media discourse, where the same interpretations are expressed in a more emotional fashion. Occasionally, academic and media discourses conflict. For instance, in academic discourse, Latvia's incorporation and presence in the USSR is characterized as illegitimate, while textbooks have no unified interpretation. Diversity in media discourses is also present, though attempts to challenge the dominant interpretation invariably fail. For example, discussions of the events of 1939-1940 are appended to the discourse of the "Great Fatherland War and Victory over Fascism". Moreover, the pre-war invader is transformed into the post-war liberator.

This chapter points to the Russian state's attempts to influence academic discourse through guidelines to teachers aiming to nurture patriotism among schoolchildren. If proposals to introduce a unified textbook evoked opposition within Russia itself and international criticism, a "unified" examination can replace a unified textbook to test progress in nurturing patriotism.

Below are reproduced some questions from the draft examination.⁸⁹ While most of the questions have to do with facts, others have to do with interpretations as well, for example:

V29

The "parade of sovereignties" in the USSR in the beginning of the 1990s was linked to:

- 1) *The demands of the autonomies to preserve the USSR Constitution;*
- 2) *The improvement of the economic situation in the republics;*
- 3) *The unwillingness of the republics to implement radical economic reforms;*
- 4) *The promises of the presidents of the USSR and Russia to offer the autonomies the maximum authority.*

⁸⁸ See Denis, "The Story with History," in Muižnieks, ed., *Manufacturing Enemy Images*.

⁸⁹ Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation (2003), *Edinyi gosudarstvennyie ekzamen 2003. Ekzamenatsionnyie voprosy Istorija 11 klass. Variant 151*.

There is also a focus on dates:

V7

Connect the dates with domestic political events:

Dates: Events:

- 1) 1922 A) *Signing of the Rapallo Pact with Germany*
- 2) 1924 B) *Non-aggression treaty with Germany signed*
- 3) 1934 V) *Brest Peace Treaty signed with Germany*
- 4) 1939 G) *Entry into the League of Nations*
- D) *The "diplomatic recognition line" of the USSR*

V11

Put the following events in chronological order: [...]

- A) *Participation of Soviet representatives at the Geneva conference;*
- B) *Expulsion of the USSR from the League of Nations;*
- V) *Signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact;*
- G) *Participation of Soviet volunteers in the Spanish civil war.*

Some of the phrasing of the questions dealing with 1939-1940 reveals bias. This can be seen in the following example which mentions the Baltic states:

V7

Match the dates with the events:

Dates: Event:

- 1922 A) *The creation of the USSR*
- 1934 B) *Approval of the Second USSR Constitution*
- 1936 V) *The withdrawal of the Lithuanian SSR from the USSR*
- 1940 G) *The entry of the USSR into the League of Nations*
- D) *The creation of the Estonian SSR*

It should be noted that there are not many examination questions directly pertinent to the concerns of this chapter. However, each year schoolchildren are tested on these topics.

The works covered in this overview are only the visible part of the iceberg. Review of the most recent textbooks published in Russia is also necessary. If Latvia can identify the most acceptable researchers and textbooks, it could popularize them in the media and promote the development of a debate on the teaching of Latvian history in Russia and among Russian-speakers in Latvia.

Though textbooks are part of domestic discourse, they can also be considered foreign policy signals. Latvia is not only a crucial "other" for

Russia, but also continues to be perceived and constructed as a part of the "self in the past." Latvia is projected as a quasi-Western country, but it is "our West," not "yours." The construction of Latvia is also linked to historical trauma, as an element causing suffering and not appreciating the positive legacy of the past.

The Interpretation of Latvian History in Russian Documentary Films: The Struggle for Historical Justice

Dmitrijs Petrenko

How to understand and interpret historical events has always been one of the most controversial issues in Latvian-Russian relations. On other issues, after complicated negotiations and diplomacy, both states could come to some sort of agreement. Finding common ground on history has been virtually impossible. Over time, the only thing that has changed is the tactics about how to speak of these matters in public, ranging from loud accusations of lies to simply remaining silent. However, the current political agenda requires both sides to weigh in on history (which is predominantly composed of events around World War I and II and the period of occupation). There is a whole range of events that demand taking a stand on the past, for instance, marking Victory Day, deciding whether the Baltic presidents should go to Moscow on this day, court cases surrounding war crimes, and more.

History issues in Latvian-Russian relations have their own history which is composed of public condemnations, announcements by each side, and regular media attention to this issue. Documentary films are also one genre that contributes to writing this history. The films that are analyzed in this chapter had broad repercussions, particularly in Latvia. Latvia's media and public intellectuals discussed the veracity of the films, as well as the morality of the interpretations of various facts and events. This chapter analyzes four documentary films made in Russia about Latvian history: *Executioners: The Truth about the Latvian Riflemen* [*Karately: Pravda o latyshkikh strelkakh*] (2007); *Baltic Nazism* [*Natsizm po pribaltiskii*] (2007); *The Baltic: History of an Occupation* [*Pribaltika: Istoriya odnoi okupatsii*] (2009); and *To Hurt the Queen: Vija Artmane* [*Obidet' korolevy. Viya Artmane*] (2007).

Constructing Documentalism and Historical Memory

One of the most important theoretical and methodological issues regarding the analysis of documentary films is the issue of the extent to which a television product built primarily on true elements reflects reality. In other words, should we treat documentary materials as a reflection of the truth, and thus, as a serious historical source?

The fact that television often creates its material from true life sources strengthens the idea that television mediates cultural experience, as well as being an experience in itself. As Graem Burton indicates, television shows viewers real people, real places, real events, and real opinions that people would not have otherwise seen and heard. On the other hand, "this document material is edited and shaped to particular modes of representation. It is another reality moulded from the real. It has realism because of its evident origins in actuality. It even has credibility because of this. But it is not the original experience."¹

The second aspect of the issue touches upon the problem of constructing reality. Many researchers on television agree that in analyzing a television product, it is worthwhile to speak not of a deformed or twisted reality, but of a reconstructed reality that media inevitably create, as pictures and images shown by television are both symbolic and representational. The camera films and broadcasts moving pictures that represent people, places and events that symbolize ideas, values, actions and other notions. At the same time, people may think they are seeing something firsthand, though this is not the case. What they see is a picture that someone has already selected, created or recorded. Thus, it must be understood that images are constructed to immortalize the illusion that what we see is natural and credible.² Representation in television is usually seen as the appropriation of the real world. In short, what the television viewer sees is perceived as reality.

This points to another theoretical problem which can be characterized as the "truth" context as an ideological category in the analysis of documentary films. The illusion of realism and the construction of this illusion is an ideological issue. Thus, according to discourse and ideology researcher Fairclough, a documentary "will typically adopt a particular point of view on its topic and use rhetorical devices to persuade audiences to see things that way too."³ John Fiske has argued that ideology in television is created through codes, which he defines as a rule-governed system of signs, whose rules and conventions are shared amongst members of a culture and which are used to generate and circulate meanings in and for that culture.⁴ Claiming that "reality" is always coded, Fiske uses a system of codes in which he has placed ideology as the highest level code. First level reality codes (such as appearance, clothing, make-up, environment, behaviour, etc.) are encoded electronically in technical codes, which he calls "representational" codes (camera, lighting, editing, music, sound). These second level codes, for their part, transmit the conventional representational codes, which shape the representation of, for example, narrative, conflict, character, action, etc. Finally, these codes are organized into coherence and social acceptability

¹ Burton, G. (2000), *Talking Television*. London: Arnold, p. 152.

² O'Donnell, V. (2007), *Television Criticism*. London: Sage Publications, pp. 168 – 169.

³ Fairclough, N. (1995), *Media Discourse*. London: Arnold, p. 45.

⁴ Fiske, J. (2002), *Television Culture*. London: Routledge, p. 4.

by the ideological codes (individualism, patriarchy, race, class, materialism, capitalism, etc.).⁵

This approach to analyzing television language relates to the widely used semiotic approach, which is predominantly interested in such conventions as codes, which govern how signs are used in conventional ways to represent or denote believable worlds.⁶ The language of television uses such signs as speech, ambient noises of a represented environment or the music accompanying a visual sequence. In this chapter, I analyze the television product as a television text which incorporates not only audiovisual signs, but a network of meaningful signs that can be analyzed and interpreted.

If we assume that memory is culturally constructed, then memory operates with the help of representation. Of course, our memory comes from our own mediated and unmediated experience, but there is also a continuity of representation which our memory includes.⁷ Television researcher Victoria O'Donnell asserts that collective memory is memory that allows the same event to be remembered by different people who do not know one another: "Societies share collective or public memories with ceremonies, rituals and television images. Television delivers and creates history through representation in news and drama. Television is an external vessel of recollection, for it delivers and creates history as news."⁸ Despite the fact that historical documentaries use reality as a basis (including real participants in the events and experts), should be seen as made up. Christina Lee, speaking about film and history, suggest that films attribute a particular meaning to time, which becomes visible. We observe not the filming of history, "but history in the very process of its remaking."⁹

Visual media are a legitimate way of doing history – of representing, interpreting, thinking about and making meaning from the traces of the past. Robert A. Rosenstone, in the introduction to the book *Revisioning History: Film and the Construction of a New Past*, asserts that visual media have become the main carriers of historical messages in our culture. Until recently, historical films were not perceived seriously as a legitimate way of constructing the past, but as reflections about political and social concerns at the time they were made (meaning that historical content was not taken into serious consideration), or as a filmed book, which presumes that the film should convey information similar to that which the viewer could receive by reading the book.¹⁰ But Rosenstone suggests that in analyzing historical

⁵ Ibid, p. 5.

⁶ Bignell, J. (2008), *An Introduction to Television Studies*. London: Routledge, pp. 88 – 99.

⁷ O'Donnell, V. (2007), *Television Criticism*. London: Sage Publications, p. 176.

⁸ Ibid, 177.

⁹ Lee, C., ed., (2008), *Violating time. History, Memory and Nostalgia in Cinema*. New York: Continuum, p. 2.

¹⁰ Rosenstone, R., (1995), *Revisioning History. Film and the Construction of a New Past*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, p. 3.

documentary films we must reckon with the fact that history as we practice it today is no more than a convention or a series of conventions by which we make meaning from the remains of the past. This means that we must dispense with comparing history in the film with history on paper, and rather focus on a wider sphere of the past and present where both histories are located and to which both refer. This is why Rosenstone urges seeking answers to other questions: how does the film construct the historical world? What are the rule, codes and strategies with which the film brings the past to life? What does this historical construction mean to us? In his opinion, only by answering these questions can we consider what the film does to history that cannot be done through the written word and what are the relations between the historical world on the screen and that on paper.

The goal of historical documentary films is not to entertain the public or earn money, but to understand the legacy of the past. Thus, it is no coincidence that such films often derive from communities that have a great need for historical ties, for example, post-colonial nations, long-established countries where political systems are in upheaval, societies recovering from totalitarian regimes, minorities involved in the search to recapture or create viable heritages. It must also be understood that historical films are history as vision: "Both historians and filmmakers approach the materials of the past with one major similarity. Both possess attitudes, assumptions, and beliefs – entire value systems – that colour everything they express and underlie the interpretations by which they organize and give meaning to the traces of the past. Such interpretations may be seen as at once the most important and the most fictional part of history."¹¹

Rosenstone indicates that, according to academic standards, all historical films are laced with fiction. In a dramatic work, it is always necessary to devise an incident, plot and character (even historical characters, if they are played by actors, become fictional). In this sense documentary films are closer to the facts, but fiction almost always enters in great quantities – the most evident example is the use of general illustrative material to depict an event unrelated to the illustrative material. To explain the meaning of the past, films create proximate characters, situations, images and metaphors. Hence, the issue is not how the screen conveys information, but how films create and interpret a meaningful and useful history.¹²

The Latvian Riflemen: A Story of Executioners

The documentary film *Executioners: The Truth about the Latvian Riflemen* was commissioned by Russian television's *Telekanal Rossiya* in 2007 and shown on this same channel. Based on various documentary testimony,

¹¹ Ibid, p. 6.

¹² Ibid, p. 7.

expert opinions and other materials, the authors of the film attempt to address the question of the role played in Russian and Soviet history by the Latvian riflemen.

The film begins with an intermezzo: against the background of a black-and-white image of the Kremlin the viewer hears loud shots. Someone is shooting at crows sitting in a tree by the Kremlin gates. The narrator's voice explains that it is the Latvian riflemen shooting. From the context, it can be understood that this was the way that the Latvian riflemen enjoyed themselves, while also training for accuracy. This intermezzo is important in a textual sense, as it begins the topic of the particular character and professional abilities of the Latvian riflemen, which later becomes one of the leitmotifs of the film, but also in a semiotic sense – black crows in black trees and loud shots embody something mystical and at the same time cruel. This fragment also introduces the most important principles for creating the film and the ways in which the authors construct reality: in one fragment lasting less than a minute, one can see the use of documentary video clips (real archive materials), as well as the reconstruction of events with stylized techniques (the clips are filmed specially for the film and stylized in line with archive materials), the use of clips from cinema (fiction), as well as the use of documentary photograph images.

The film's authors chose not to reference the use of documentary sequences (only from the final credits can one understand that certain fragments were taken from various historical archives); the same holds true for photo images. Hence, the film's authors freely use documentary sequences to illustrate various narratives, even if the legitimacy of using certain fragments is doubtful. By the same token, combining documentary sequences and photographic images with reconstruction (in these excerpts the authors do not reveal to viewers that it is a reconstruction, not a documentary fragment) permits masking the reconstructed events more successfully, producing a more credible effect that all that is seen is a true depiction of reality.

In general, the film's overall task is to prove that Latvian riflemen participated in the strengthening of Soviet power and did not fight for a free and independent fatherland – Latvia. To demonstrate this thesis, the film's authors use several strategies. First, Latvian riflemen as a separate discursive category are divided from other soldiers. Then, this category is assigned autonomy (in motivation and at the level of activity: justifying and explaining the riflemen's support for the Bolsheviks) and later inserted in the context of Latvian history to demonstrate contradictions with the official Latvian interpretation of history. To highlight the riflemen as a separate discursive category, the film's authors describe their uniqueness at the personal level, and with regard to their professionalism. The riflemen are described with the following labels: "stubborn Latvians"; "shooting – their favourite pastime"; "only Lenin could calm them"; "they fought

tenaciously”, etc. The fact that Latvian riflemen guarded Lenin (which was his own wish) and other leaders is stressed numerous times in the film.

Often, the particular qualities of the riflemen are linked to their ethnicity and national traditions. The film cites Mikhail Litvinov, who appears in the film as a Russian historian and writer: “When Latvians begin to do something, they do it like industrious peasants, who till the land: as long as the whole field is not ploughed, they do not stop. Until the operation is finished, they will not cease.” The Russian historian Natalya Narochitskaya comments on the particular cruelty of the riflemen: “Everyone was afraid [of the Latvian riflemen]. No tears could invoke their compassion. They could rip a baby from his mother’s breast.” In describing the shooting of the tsar’s family, the film asserts that many soldiers refused to shoot, but the Latvians agreed to do it. The narrator demonstrates how cruelly the riflemen acted: “The servant arose. She succeeded in covering herself with a cushion: the bullets did not get through the feathers. The Latvians were out of bullets. Then two climbed over the bodies, went up to her, and stabbed her with bayonets.”

In the excerpt on the shooting of the tsar’s family, the authors cite memoirs left by a soldier witness. This excerpt is one of the most interesting in the film from an audiovisual perspective, as the authors use the language of television to attempt to convince viewers about the participation of the Latvian riflemen in the shooting. In citing the testimony, the word “Latvians” in the document becomes red and becomes underlined. The music used repeats the emphasis: a nostalgic melody is used in the background when showing a picture of the tsar’s family and an aggressive, rhythmic melody is used in the background to the story of the riflemen. The excerpt about shooting the tsar’s family is supplemented by shifting frames: there are loud shots in the background and each shot is illustrated by a close-up of a member of the tsar’s family, which is succeeded by a frame with a revolver.

This fragment is concluded by an intermezzo that appears repeatedly in the film: the viewer sees a frame in which soldiers are marching, but the background music is a cheerful song in Latvian sung by children. Thus, the authors attempt to strengthen the effect that attempts to convince viewers of the levity with which Latvian riflemen carried out their military task. This can also be read as an ironic note about how simply the riflemen tried to distance themselves later from these crimes (in the interpretation of the film’s authors).

One of the central questions the film’s creators seek to answer in constructing the Latvian riflemen is why they supported the Bolsheviks. First the film provides a brief explanation from Latvian historian Valdis Bērziņš, who states that the “Latvian riflemen, believing in the Bolsheviks, were caught in the whirlwind of the civil war.” Without delving into the rather complex issue of the motivations of the riflemen, which is an issue surrounded by political mythology, the film merely suggest to viewers that

there was a motivation and that it was very clear to the riflemen themselves. In the words of Litvinov, the film formulates it thus:

The Latvians clearly knew that they are going to war for some very concrete ideals. These ideas were very simple and were very clear to them. Those who were against these ideals were mercilessly punished, killed and repressed.

In avoiding specifying the motives, the film offers several other explanations: the tsar's betrayal after which the Latvian riflemen had nowhere to go. Undeniably, all these explanations are an attempt to become involved in a dialogue outside the film – a dialogue which is taking place not between historians, but on a broader political plane. The film's authors use the circumstances mentioned above to bring the viewer to their main point – the Latvian riflemen had no ideological ideas about their fatherland's independence.

To strengthen this thesis, the film first tells a separate story about Rūdolfs Bangerskis, who in 1915 announced that "Germany's victory would mean the spiritual death of Latvia." After 25 years he would become "the first SS general in the Hitlerite occupation time in Latvia." Secondly, the film stresses that the Latvian riflemen became the first mercenaries in the army, as they, contrary to other soldiers, were regularly paid their wages ("They were prepared to participate in all operations in which money was paid"). The Russian historian Natalya Narochnitskaya reinforces this view:

The Latvian riflemen were mercenaries for the Bolsheviks, of course. The cruelty, indifference and cold-bloodedness with which they fulfilled the functions of executioners... that's why they took them. And that characterized them as mercenaries.

Thirdly, the film asserts that the potential embodied in the Latvian riflemen was used on various fronts: even knowing that Latvia was in danger, the Latvians were ready to go to war elsewhere. Fourthly, the film's authors stress the fact that the Latvian riflemen operated as a national unit, not as part of the larger Russian army ("Latvian officers commanded in the Latvian language"), so they themselves bore the burden of responsibility. Fifthly, the Latvian riflemen were those who looted the peaceful civilians who were peasants, because "Russian soldiers who were of peasant origin could not shoot at peasants; the Latvians were very useful here."

This line of argumentation permits the film's authors to arrive at their main conclusion, which is that it was precisely thanks to the Latvian riflemen that Soviet power was possible:

Latvian historians always talk about the events of December 1918 and January 1919 as the invasion of Russian soldiers into independent Latvia. But they were riflemen returning to their native land.

The film indicates that the Latvian share was not proportional; moreover, Latvians occupied many high posts.

As an additional argument for conscious Latvian participation in strengthening Soviet power the authors mention the lightning attack of Zimny, which destroyed the final chance for bloodless development in Russian history, as the soldiers of the Tukums unit shot dead peaceful demonstrators. This is why during the film's finale one hears the thesis summarized as an adage which is "still alive": "Do not search for an executioner, but search for a Latvian."

The Latvian Legionnaires: Fascists and Nationalists

The documentary film *Baltic Nazism (Natsizm po-pribaltiski)* was shown on Russian television channel *TV-Tsentr*, which commissioned it. The genre is historical documentary. The film is about the interwar period and the events of World War II, drawing attention to relations between Latvia and the Soviet Union and stressing the role of the Latvian legionnaires in historical events.

The film's basic goal is to prove that the Latvian legionnaires were co-responsible for Nazi crimes, as well as to demonstrate Latvia's unwillingness to recognize this. The legionnaires are construed as supporters of Hitler's ideas, as fascists and nationalists. In offering such a construction of reality, the film undeniably uses as a basis the interpretation of events that is on offer in the public sphere in Latvia to disprove them. The film is also an interesting subject of analysis because here, too, historical clips are used very freely, without explanation of what is being offered to the viewer, which period of time and which place they refer to. Secondly, the film relies primarily on the opinions of experts (written testimony and other documentary sources are used very rarely), and often politicians and other officials are used in the role of experts, which strengthens the impression that the film should be perceived as an answer to the official Latvian interpretation of history.

To make interwar events topical, at the beginning of the film the authors show archive clips depicting German soldiers marching and shooting at people. These are followed by contemporary footage of March 16 (legionnaire day) events in Latvia, where people in war-era uniforms (in the film they are called "radicals" and "Waffen SS soldiers") march to the Freedom Monument, while "representatives of the "antifascist" movement in prisoner's garb try to disturb them with shouts of "Fascism will not go through!" The footage of these events is very recognizable, as they have been replayed on Russian television repeatedly in reporting on 16 March events.

The first argument used by the film to prove the thesis mentioned above is presented through a question – could Latvia have maintained

it's independence in 1940? The film's authors construct the answer to this question, arguing that independence would not have been possible. The film constructs this thesis with the help of two quotations. Latvian historian Antonijs Zunda asserts that the occupation was Germany and the USSR's "cynical and illegal decision to arrange the fate of Eastern Europe." He is answered by Konstantin Kosachev, the head of the committee on international affairs in the Russian Duma, who appears in the film in the role of an expert: "Truthfully, the Baltic states had no choice whether to preserve independence or lose it. They had the choice of losing it to the Soviet Union or to Germany." The quote begins with the word "truthfully," which places the speaker in the most advantageous position, as if he were summarizing the outcome of a disagreement. This is reinforced by the effect of a kind of montage called "shifted splicing," in which the viewer still hears the message from the previous speaker, while a new speaker enters the picture, and appears to have heard the message to the end and then offers his message, thereby creating the effect of a more direct opposition.

At the same time, the film mentions the experience of Finland, which chose "military resistance" which "was not chosen by the inhabitants of the Baltic states." In one sense, mention of Finnish experience appears to be in logical contradiction to the previous assertion that there had only been the choice of which side to abdicate one's independence. On the other hand, this argument is necessary for the film's authors to strengthen the thesis that the entry of Soviet military was Latvia's conscious choice. Member of the Latvian parliament Juris Dobelis is cited to help convince the viewer that Latvia has no argument against such an interpretation: "We can talk about it for a long time. But history is the way it is. All has ended."

At the level of the text, the entry of the Soviet army into the Baltic states is characterized as "introduction," as this word has the connotation of necessity or inevitability. The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact is also interpreted as a necessity, as the "answer of Germany and the USSR to the attempt to fuel conflict between these countries."

The film's construction of the entry of the Soviet military into the Baltic states merits separate analysis, as this event is presented as altogether positive in terms of the outcome (the USSR thereby saved the Baltic states from German occupation, which, as later demonstrated in the film, would have been more horrible), as well as with regard to the attitudes of the inhabitants. Firstly, in constructing this event, the film's authors use the assertion that the inhabitants of the Baltic states not only awaited the arrival of Soviet troops, but were also quite happy about it. The film quotes Viktors Kalnbērzs (in the film, he is presented as an academician and "hero of socialist labour"), who states that Latvia's inhabitants greeted Soviet soldiers "with flowers." As proof of this, he mentions that he has many photographic documents and that "this is a fact."

Secondly, the entry of the Soviet military is constructed as an event which was not very significant in terms of domestic politics, as the introduction of soldiers in and of itself did not have serious consequences:

This event did not change the political order of the Baltic states. The states preserved an army, police, government and parliament. Despite this, the theme of occupation is frequently discussed by the Baltic states and their new partners.

The visual message reinforces this textual message: archival footage is shown of soldiers entering Lithuania, smiling people delighting in them; merry, light music is being played by young girls, juxtaposing such narrative structures as masculine and feminine, creating the semantic pair – “weak and unprotected” vis-à-vis the “strong saviour.”

The film undeniably tries to use the image of “saviour” to strengthen the argument that the introduction of troops was the only sensible opportunity and was not an “occupation.” This is why at the level of texts the film also states that the Baltic states “joined” the USSR. Two Latvian politicians appear in the role of experts. Alfrēds Rubiks (former hardline Communist Party leader) claims that everything took place legally: “The parliament was elected and then adopted a decision to join the Soviet Union.” Nikolajs Kabanovs states that “... an occupation can only take place in circumstances of war. In June 1940 Latvia was not at war with the Soviet Union.”

Another central theme that helps the film’s authors prove their point is the June 1941 deportations. Since the deportations are often mentioned as the most tragic consequences of the occupation in the Latvian public sphere, the film’s authors seek to disprove this by offering their own interpretation of these events. The deportations are constructed as a means to help preserve peace and avoid bloody conflicts. Those who were deported are depicted as “active opponents of the Baltic states joining the USSR,” and many of them are called “active participants in armed insurrection.”

To construct the occupation as a positive and unavoidable event, the film uses the construction of Germany as an opposite pole. Germany and the German armed forces are labelled as absolute evils. The film’s authors use both text (“warriors against peaceful inhabitants”), as well as audiovisual techniques: the narrator’s intonation is rather ironic when he speaks about the Latvian legionnaires, but it quickly shifts to warm and tragic when speaking about Soviet soldiers.

At the narrative level polar structures are used to strengthen the emotional content. Stories about the crimes of the legionnaires are united in one episode with the story of the blockade of Leningrad and people dying of hunger, who symbolize the suffering of the Soviet soldier and permit the film’s authors to speak of them as heroes.

The construction of Germany is as an opposite pole to the Soviet Union. If the latter is the saviour, the former is the criminal. This is why the film can

assert that if Latvia did not become part of the USSR, it would be destined to disappear altogether, as the Germans have created Ostland and there are no plans envisaging Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia as separate countries:

The people who lived in these countries were to be sent to Siberia, killed or used in these territories as a labour force.

Nazi race theory did not consider the inhabitants of the Baltic states as wholesome from a race point of view. If we turn to Hitler's racial scientists, we can conclude that they considered Estonians to be slightly higher than the Latvians. In this scale, the Lithuanians were a little higher than the Belarusians, but lower than the Latvians.

All of these arguments are directed to proving the thesis that the USSR was a saviour and demonstrating that the Latvians who fought as legionnaires served Hitler, thus, absolute evil. Here, too, the argument that the Latvian legionnaires were fighting for Latvian independence is disproved.

The film's authors devote special attention to the issue of whom the Latvian legion swore an oath to. Firstly, this is necessary to show that the Latvian legion should be equated with Hitler's army. This fragment of the film is built as a dialogue between supporters and opponents of the legionnaires (which can be symbolically perceived as the dispute between Latvia and Russia). The film gives the floor to one former legionnaire who evasively (with pauses, unconvincingly) says that the oath was "to Germany... to the German military in the struggle against the communists." An off-screen voice then cites the text of the oath:

Here is the text of the oath. The soldiers promise unlimited obedience to the commander of the German military in the struggle against the Bolsheviks. And for this promise they are ready to give their life.

Immediately afterwards comes a commentary from Latvian parliamentary deputy Juris Dobelis, who is not capable of disproving the substance of this argument:

That is a formality. The main thing was the struggle against the reds. Russia and Germany were two warring sides. And we had to choose one. And we did.

Similarly, the film cites the leader of "All for Latvia" Raivis Dzintars, who bases his position on the assertion that "it was not so":

Yes, I know to whom they swore an oath. They themselves were uncomfortable that they had to put up with it. And they had no hatred towards the Jews. And no fascist thinking. They simply didn't.

In constructing this narrative equating the legionnaires to Hitler's army, the theme of the Holocaust is used as well. The film portrays the Latvian

legionnaires as co-responsible for the Holocaust and does so through another construction – contemporary Latvia is trying to avoid responsibility for the Holocaust.

This construction is created with the help of a narrative in which a representative of the Jewish community tells that he has written about the Holocaust in Latvia. But he had to create a museum as well, as “not everybody reads the book. It sits on the shelf.” This is a striking metaphor for the indifference of the state, the desire to not return to the theme of the Holocaust which in the film’s interpretation characterizes Latvia today.

The end of the film is devoted to demonstrating that the ideas of the legionnaires (which in the film’s interpretation are fascism and nationalism) are topical and have support in Latvia today. In one of the last scenes in the film, Russian politician Konstantin Kosachev summarizes:

They have brought this nationalistic idea if not to absolutism, then at least it is supported by the majority of parties represented in the parliament. The idea is popular and has begun to affect the minds of citizens. If every day their own politicians say – as long as we do not make Russia confess its sins, we will not attain historical justice, as long as we do not punish the guilty ones, we will not be able to live peacefully. Of course, people believe it.

This citation is an example of how the film constructs the link between historical events and the present, making the events topical, as well as constructing Latvia’s image. The visual materials serve this purpose as well by combining historical footage with contemporary events.

Deconstructing Occupation: “Latvians Should Bow All the Way to the Ground”

The authors of the documentary film *History of an Occupation (Istoriya odnoi okupatsii)* treat one of the most controversial historical issues which is regularly articulated in the public sphere in the context of Latvian-Russian relations: what it meant to the Baltic states to be in the USSR after World War II, how that influenced the state order, the political system, as well as the life stories of citizens. The film is constructed similarly to the films already analyzed insofar as the point of reference is the official Latvian interpretation of history (formed by the public discourses of Latvia’s officials on this issue) and deconstructing it with the assistance of various discursive strategies.

This is the most visually powerful film from the perspective of persuasive communication, as audiovisual codes are used to stress the film’s main point – to prove that the period of occupation was a better time for Latvia in economic, political and human terms than the interwar or current period of independence.

Audiovisual techniques are used to construct a contrast between life today in the Baltic states and life as part of the USSR. The beginning of the film shows a demonstration in Vilnius, Lithuania in 2009, where the police do not allow the demonstrators to yell out their demands, which are formulated in the film's narrative as "bread and work." Violence against people, blood and injuries are shown. Immediately afterwards, a video story about life in the USSR follows: peaceful scenes, happy people walking on well-maintained streets, monuments. In the background, music plays, creating a nostalgic feeling.

This construction is bolstered by discursive techniques as well. An off-screen voice comments: "[in Soviet times] people were more or less sure about tomorrow. Today, there is no such certainty." This statement becomes the leitmotif of the film and forms the structure of the film, the essence of which is a comparison of life in the Baltic states during the Soviet era (Latvia is the core example) and the years of independence.

To prove the thesis that life in the USSR was fuller, more successful and happier, the film employs three constructions: 1) the already mentioned statement that life during the occupation was more secure, that people had certainty about tomorrow which nobody has now (the film uses the word "occupation" with irony, suggesting that this terminology is used only by the Baltic states); 2) the Baltic states were always particularly privileged in the USSR; 3) Russia has invested a lot in the economy of the Baltic states without asking for or receiving anything in return.

In creating the assertion that the Baltic states were privileged among Soviet republics, the authors of the film mention accents: "The Baltic states always had a special tab. Even the Baltic accent was more pleasant to Russian ears than the accents of the Caucasus or Asia." The line of argument about Russian investments is developed through a story about supply norms which were allegedly higher in the Baltic, despite the fact that the "payback" was smaller: "They should bow to the ground. To the Soviet Union, and to Russians first of all. Because the Soviet Union and Russia tore off the last piece from itself to give it [to the Baltic states]." The film uses visually powerful symbols to support its thesis. One of the symbols is Latvia's State Electrotechnical Factory (the Latvian acronym is VEF), which has several different connotations: it symbolizes the Soviet Union's economic power, as well as independent Latvia's blind desire to free itself from the Soviet heritage.

The story of the destroyed VEF factory helps the film's authors prove the aforementioned thesis about the worsening economic situation after the collapse of the USSR. The message of the film is created through video shots showing the early warning radar station at Skrudunda, Latvia, and other Soviet era buildings being blown up. This is followed by the narrator's commentary that Latvia is trying to free itself from Soviet era monsters (for political reasons) and that industry has fallen catastrophically. The message

of VEF is created according to the principle of contrasts based on emotional visual material. Thus, telling about what is left of VEF today, the film shows deserted, demolished buildings, which stand empty and unused. This is followed by commentary: "In the Soviet era here were factory buildings with painted facades and clean windows. This territory even had parks with fountains and gazebos. And life swirled all around."

Immediately afterwards archival video footage is shown about the period when the factory was still actively operating: happy people working with joy. A lot of attention is devoted to the cafeteria; the food prepared for factory workers is described, as is the automated food preparation system. The story about food also symbolizes wealth, stressing that the basic needs of Soviet workers were satisfied.

The culmination of the story is a "return" to contemporary times: the film's author enters the factory through a broken window, commenting that the foyer had earlier been there. When the narrator gets to the room that had earlier been the cafeteria (now the room is destroyed), he finds a wrinkled colourful napkin on the floor which is "all that is left of former glory." This visually powerful moment symbolizes the conclusion that for political reasons (disgust with all that was created during the Soviet era), everything beautiful and great is sacrificed.

This story is reinforced by the comment of Latvian composer and politician Raimonds Pauls, who is very popular in Russia, when he says with regret that in independent Latvia much from the Soviet era in independent Latvia is lost. It should be noted that after a media uproar in Latvia Pauls and other Latvian public figures who participated in the film claimed that they did not know the true aim of the film.

The message that independence means economic ruin for Latvia is supplemented with the argument that, without Russia's support, Latvia cannot survive successfully. The story about VEF is continued by a similar story about the Riga Freight-Car Company (Latvian acronym – RVR), which according to the film, was at one point better than the Swedes and Germans. "It was only due to a miracle that it was not plundered" in independent Latvia:

It could not continue production in Latvia. Economic contacts with Russia had been lost. There was a shortage of raw materials. There was also nowhere to sell the production. But it was not only that. The factories were sold and plundered.

A similar method is used to construct the story about Latvia's resort town Jūrmala. Audiovisual techniques are used to demonstrate that the Soviet period meant development for Jūrmala, but independence meant ruin: "The pearl of the Baltic. A paradise on the coast of the Gulf of Riga. Today only the memories are left." The film creates a dichotomy between the Soviet era (happiness, success) and the independence years (misfortune,

ruin) comparing life in the USSR and the pre-war Republic of Latvia. This comparison begins with the assertion that Latvians cannot be considered a nation, as only a people who have created a state, such as the Lithuanians, can be considered a nation.

This construction is necessary for the film's authors to demonstrate the absurdity of the interwar Republic of Latvia from the very beginning. This message is supplemented with the argument that until 1940 Latvia did not achieve anything compared to the Soviet period. This can be considered a discursive answer to Latvia's public attempts to glorify the system and achievements of the interwar republic: "We have data about how Latvians were in 1940. And about what they became in the Soviet years. It is like heaven and earth." This is then supplemented with an explanation of Soviet Russian policy in which the authors claim that, contrary to other empires which sought to remove the riches from subordinated lands, Russia invested in them. These investments were not only in the economy, but also in culture:

Soviet culture and art were like an information bridge which permitted people to become not only stars at the Soviet level, but at the global level as well. Many Latvians, Lithuanians and Estonians used this opportunity.

Thus, the Soviet Union is constructed as a multicultural system which did not seek to destroy national cultures, but allowed them to develop. This argument is broadened to the point where it is precisely the independent states that are unwilling and unable to support their cultures. As an example, the film claims that after the collapse of the USSR national cultures in the Baltic states were displaced by the "Mickey Mouse and Hollywood" culture.

The film's authors also seek to demonstrate that the change in Latvia's political system has not meant a higher quality of life and that the transition to democracy was a pretense. The film's message is created in such a manner so as to demonstrate the shortcomings of democracy as a testament that such a political system and culture are not better than that in the authoritarian Soviet Union. This message is based on two examples: 1) disappointment experienced by a person who got involved in politics guided by good intentions; and 2) the attitude towards non-Latvians. The goal of both examples is to demonstrate that democracy in practice runs in a faulty manner.

The first example is shown through the narrative of Latvian hockey player Helmutis Balderis, who, after becoming a parliamentary deputy, concluded that the party needed him because of his popularity and that he was used to mask "the party's true interests." This story is supplemented by the narrator's comments on the economic crisis in Latvia: about the "wrong" tax policy ("when other countries lowered their taxes, Latvia raised them") and that, in contrast to other countries, Latvia is not promoting consumption, but trying to brake it.

A second example used to show the faults of democracy is based on the message that the rights of non-Latvians are restricted in Latvia. Latvians are called the “masters” who “took away citizenship and the right to vote” of others. This message is reinforced through visual materials in which Soviet era monuments are dismantled and the police do not let people protest.

This message leads to the next, which can be interpreted thus: participation in the European Union, in comparison with the USSR, is the real occupation for Latvia. This thesis is elaborated based on assertions that the European Union imposed stringent restrictions on the state (first of all, economic) and tried to regulate state decisions to the maximum, while Latvia does not know how to defend its interests and oppose EU decision-makers, meaning the only option is to accept all decisions even if they are not in the interests of the people. This is punctuated by the opinion of Raimonds Pauls: “We have to reckon with the European Union. We cannot produce all we want to and all we can. There are quotas.”

A powerful symbol of subordination to the decisions of the EU is the Ignalina nuclear power station in Lithuania, which is used in the film to demonstrate that Brussels is forcing a country (in this case, Lithuania) to act “contrary to its interests.” The narrative about the closing of Ignalina is created as a testament to the “strong economic lobby which exists in the European Union.” This narrative also has an ethnic dimension: at the beginning of the story it is mentioned that $\frac{3}{4}$ of residents of the town of Visagina (the location of the nuclear power station) are Russian-speaking specialists and their families. Thus, this detail sends the message that the closing of the station was directed against Russian-speakers.

Another example that reinforces the construction of “the European Union as oppressor” is Latvian farmers and the situation in agriculture after Latvia’s entry in the EU. The farmers are portrayed as victims of EU policy who can only protest against unjust policy without changing it. This is well put by a farmer, who is cited in the film as saying:

[Before joining the EU] there was great enthusiasm. Build new farms, run them, modernize, develop! And what came later? We did all that. And now we are screwed!

A Political Victim

The subject of *To Hurt a Queen: Vija Artmane* [*Obidet’ korolevy. Viya Artmane*] is the Latvian theatre and cinema actress Vija Artmane, who was popular in both the USSR and Latvia. The idea of the film is to show through Artmane’s life story that the value system in Latvia changed with the collapse of the USSR. Artmane’s image is used to show how a once beloved and respected actress becomes poor, lonely, and unneeded, which is explained through the Latvian political elite’s inability to accept the actress’ popularity in the Soviet

era. The film constructs an image of Artmane as an actress who was much beloved by Soviet people and the state, but who is suffering (the film was made when she was still alive), because the powers that be cannot accept anything that was accepted in the Soviet era. The life story of the actress becomes a symbol of value being stripped from a person's accomplishments and life because that life does not fit into the writing of political history.

In the construction of this message, the film's authors use powerful audiovisual codes, symbols and metaphors. The film's main idea is articulated directly through text as well:

The time of trials began for Artmane immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union. All of her titles were taken from her. Too many people were annoyed by her love for Russia.

The film uses fragments from the movie "Theatre" in which Artmane plays the main role of Julie Lambert. The film uses not only footage from "Theatre" to demonstrate the talent of Artmane, but also to make a metaphorical point – "theatre" depicts the world of the stage (doting fans, applause, Artmane as the "first sex symbol in the USSR") which is juxtaposed to Artmane's life beyond the stage (loneliness, poverty, exclusion). This contrast is created in which the life of the theatre means the past, hence, the Soviet Union, which for the actress meant accomplishments and love. But life outside the theatre symbolizes life in independent Latvia and all the failures associated with it.

A household dispute surrounding the actress's apartment is used by the film's authors to create a political context for the actress' life story. The film's authors explain through the worsening of Latvian-Russian relations the fact that Artmane had her apartment "taken away." Afterwards, she "had to leave the stage." Thus, the viewer is meant to understand that the actress' career was ruined because of the political context.

This attitude towards the actress is also explained with reference to the fact that she had converted to Orthodoxy. Orthodoxy here symbolizes the actress' attachment to Russia and Russians and her ostensible partial renunciation of her Latvian identity:

Today Latvians do not like to remember that in 2003 Artmane converted to Orthodoxy. In her christening she was given the name Yelizaveta. Possibly, here a role was played by resentment towards those who in her native land turned their backs on her, not forgiving her close relations with the Soviet authorities.

The actress's image in the film transforms from being a good mother, worker and simple farmer into political categories. To justify the film's main idea, the authors also create an image of the actress as a Soviet politician. Footage is shown of a concert for the Communist Party leadership in which Artmane recites a poem praising the USSR for the friendship of peoples,

thereby showing the actress as loyal to the Soviet authorities. This loyalty is commented upon by the Latvian actor Pēteris Gaudiņš:

There was a time when she went along with the party line. Well, what does that mean? They needed a popular face, that's why they pushed her. Further and further. Then I think a moment came in Latvia when she became part of the *nomenklatura*, not an actress [...] In the Soviet period she was... well, let's say, a court actress. She was. She was given medals, invited to congresses. She has shown up next to various general secretaries.

In the story of the Soviet period, Vija Artmane is portrayed as a successful actress and public figure who is respected and loved. In an excerpt about the actress' 50th birthday celebrated in Riga in 1979, the film uses archival footage in which the actress is led along the central boulevard in Riga and people greet her with flowers. The film states that many were jealous of her popularity and the love of the people.

This period in the actress' life is juxtaposed with the next period, which takes place in independent Latvia:

It is difficult to believe that in the Daile theatre, where not long ago she was respected, there is not a single portrait of her. Vija left the theatre herself. Illness had a part in it, but so did her feeling that she was not needed. Then nobody was jealous anymore.

The actress' hats become the symbol of forgetting. In the beginning Vija Artmane is portrayed wearing beautiful large hats, but when the story turns to the unfortunate period in her life, hats assume a different meaning:

Now her hats are in the closet. The actress no longer has anywhere to wear them. For 50 years she walked along the corridors of her native theatre. Once she could come here at any time: she was awaited by fans everywhere.

The visual material and montage helps to create a mood of forgetting and abandonment. An excerpt from the film "Theatre" in which the curtain is closed is followed by an empty theatre hall which symbolically signifies the theatre's renunciation of the actress. Here, the theatre itself symbolizes the people and the state. This is followed by Artmane's own story about how the local authorities tried to take away her house:

I asked how much you were paid to do this. But they answer – we will punish you if you offend our free Latvia's city council. A lawyer came and showed me the door. I left and never returned. I also gathered my belongings. I thought that someone would take care of me, as I still needed to act for a couple of years.

In this excerpt Artmane contextualizes her situation at a political level, explaining everything with reference to the change of regime in Latvia. This is seconded by Artmane's colleagues from Russia who are interviewed in the film. The film conveys the views of the artistic director of Russia's Maly Theatre Yuri Solomin: "It's not jealousy. It's revenge. The fact that she represented not only Latvia, but also a huge country... That is what they are getting revenge about, I think."

At the end of the film two symbolic fragments are shown. One story is that even living in her little house, the local authorities do not leave Artmane alone, as they want to broaden the path "to the windows of the queen." The other story is about the filming of the movie "Katafalks" (Catafalque), in which Artmane's role relates to her life story: she plays a woman who once had beauty and power, but lost it all: "as if she felt that the same things awaited her."

Conclusions

Visual media have become important "vessels of history" in society. As they are part of mass culture, they can speak to a larger audience than scientific literature which analyzes historical issues. This is why it is important to recognize that often, understanding of historical events and the construction of historical memory takes place with the assistance of the mass media.

The documentary films analyzed in this chapter were created with the goal of airing them on television to as large an audience as possible. This orientation to the masses through television, as well as the genre itself set the parameters for the creators of the films: the events reflected in the films are simplified and the techniques and audiovisual effects are for the most part borrowed from mass culture. At the same time, the construction of the ideological level is formed by the context of Latvian-Russian relations, in which the interpretation of historical events (as well as the interpretation of current events rooted in the historical past) has always diverged. In the public sphere these differences in understanding have heretofore been mutually exclusive. Historical interpretations have been labelled "Latvia's position" and "Russia's position." There are also attempts in the public sphere to "struggle" for "the only correct" interpretation, which undeniably, does not promote inter-state dialogue on this issue.

An analysis of the films shows that through various techniques of constructing media reality ideological messages can be created, and these techniques can be used to bolster ideological positions. Montage has great significance in documentary film, as video materials for the most part replace written historical sources. These video materials include archival footage (often with attribution or references), as well as stylized reconstruction and footage from feature films. Montage can also help create the message and

play with contrasts (introducing dichotomous narrative structures: good/evil, true/false, hero/traitor, etc.). At the same time, creation of the ideology of the narrative is assisted by experts who are brought in, who often replace written sources with their hypothetical assertions which are presented not as hypotheses, but as empirical conclusions.

Thus, it is possible to surmise that the issue of how true and documentary the films are is an important, but to a certain extent illegitimate issue, if we are speaking about science. As it is scientifically correct to assume that any construction of reality in the media is only a construction. From this derive several premises, the most important of which is that an "objective" reflection of events is not possible in cases where one is speaking about the subjective selection and montage of information and visual material. Thus, from the perspective of research, it is more appropriate to pose the question of how this reality is created: which discursive and audiovisual strategies are used and how the reflection of historical events is linked with current events. I believe that such a formulation will help not only in developing research on Latvian-Russian relations, but can also point the way towards dialogue about diverging historical interpretations, because history as a political topic is used mainly not to clarify past realities but to influence the politics of the moment.

Part II:

Russian-Latvian Comparisons and “Dialogues”

Celebrations, Commemorative Dates and Related Rituals: Soviet Experience, its Transformation and Contemporary Victory Day Celebrations in Russia and Latvia

Klinta Ločmele, Olga Procevska, Vita Zelče

The list of state and professional celebrations and dates when the military is celebrated and commemorated in the Russian Federation is quite long, with more than 100 events in all.¹ Their historical origins differ. There are celebrations that were established during the Soviet era, while others even date back to the Russian Empire. There are days when the Soviet Union's military achievements and units are celebrated. There is a day to commemorate the sovereignty of the Russian Federation, and there are a few dates for grief and commemoration of the war dead. Russia's official calendar of national holidays lists eight celebrations – the New Year (January 1-5), Orthodox Christmas (January 7), Defence of the Fatherland Day (February 23), International Women's Day (March 8), Labour or Spring Day (May 1), Victory Day (May 9), Russian Day (June 12), and National Unity Day (November 4). The status of a date of commemoration has been given to Student Day (January 25) and Cosmonautics Day (April 12). Commemorative days include the day when the Great War of the Fatherland Began in 1941 (June 22), a date to commemorate partisans and underground activists (June 29), a date related to solidarity in the struggle against terrorism (September 3), the date of the October Revolution in 1917 (November 7), a date to commemorate the heroes of the fatherland (December 9), and Constitution Day for the Russian Federation (December 12).² The list of celebrations and commemorative days, moreover, is adjusted from time to time. In April 2009, for instance, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev signed a law which placed the day when partisans and underground activists are commemorated on the official list of commemorative days, starting in 2010.³

¹ See: <http://base.consultant.ru/cons/cgi/online.cgi?req=doc;base=LAW;n=19238>.

² Rossiiskaya Federatsiya, Federal'nyi zakon o vnesenii izmeneniya v stat'yu 1.1. federal'nogo zakona "O dnyakh voinskoi slavy i pamyatnykh datakh Rossii," 10 aprelya 2009 goda.

³ June 29 was chosen as the date to commemorate partisans and underground activists because it was on that date in 1941 that the Council of People's Commissars of the Soviet Union and the KGB decided to establish groups of partisans and saboteurs in territories that were occupied by the Nazis.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia, like other former Soviet republics, has undergone a substantial transformation in its calendar of commemoration, the related rituals and the meanings thereof. The purpose of this chapter is to review celebrations, dates of commemoration and related rituals in Russia, both from the historical perspective and from their meaning today. The goal of this chapter is to review Russian government policies vis-à-vis national holidays and commemorations, as well as the effects these policies have on Latvia.

Celebration of holidays and observation of dates of commemoration are a part of social order. Durkheim noted at one point that holidays and rituals, which can be seen as cults, are not just systems of practices. Instead, they are systems of ideas which reflect the surrounding world. Durkheim argues that rituals are a way in which social groups can periodically reaffirm and reconfirm their existence.⁴ Holidays also interrupt the everyday social routines of individuals. Amitai Etzioni, for his part, argues that

profane (secular), routine, daily life, the conduct of instrumental activities at work, and carrying out household chores, tend to weaken shared commitments to beliefs and social bonds, and to enhance centrifugal individualism. For societies to survive these centrifugal, individualistic tendencies, they must continuously 'recreate' themselves by shoring up commitments to one shared ('common') set of beliefs and practices.⁵

On holidays, people get together (directly and indirectly) to celebrate their linkages, relationships, ideals and moral principles while feeling and attaching a new and reborn strength to the existing social order. The foundation for the rituals is a set of basic cognitive categories and logic which, whether consciously or unconsciously, create and disseminate definitions of reality, models of thought and evaluations, and new emotional solidarity.⁶ Holidays are "invented" so as to create social cohesion, to establish and legitimize institutions of power and authorities, as well as to ensure the improvement of value systems and conventions of behaviour.⁷

Politics is a sphere in which rituals and symbols are particularly important. The political elite uses them to legitimize their power. That's why, according to David Kertzer, it is important in terms of understanding political processes to comprehend the fact that political actors intentionally or unintentionally manipulate symbols and that this symbolism is linked to the material basis of political power. The practice of rituals is the main

⁴ Durkheim, É. (2001), *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 287.

⁵ Etzioni, A. (2000), "Toward a theory of public ritual", *Sociological Theory*, 18(1), p. 45.

⁶ Rothenbuhler, E. W. (1998), *Ritual Communication: From Everyday Conversation to Mediated Ceremony*. Thousands Oaks: Sage Publications, pp. 41–42.

⁷ Hobsbawm, E. (1983), "Introduction: Inventing Traditions," in Hobsbawm, E., Ranger, T., eds., *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 9.

resource for the dissemination of political myths.⁸ Radical changes in a political system – a revolution, for instance – will always mean changes in the country's symbolic system. Old systems are expunged and new ones are introduced. The new symbols represent the new ideology and the political force that has taken power. They become identifiers of the new system.⁹ Holidays, dates of commemoration, rituals and symbols and the shifting meaning thereof are all aspects which characterize present-day Russia.

The Soviet Era

When the Soviet state was established, a new and so-called revolutionary calendar of holidays was established.¹⁰ This included politically based days off from work, as well as a set of national holidays. According to Karen Petrone, the leaders of the Soviet state understood the importance of celebration culture. The new calendar of holidays included pre-revolutionary Socialist holidays such as May 1 and International Women's Day. Also included on the calendar were things that were important in the history of the Soviet state – the October Revolution and then, later, the date when Lenin died.¹¹ Cristel Lane points out that the system of Soviet rituals was an effective way by which the political elite could manage culture and force certain norms and values onto society. This also served to legitimize the interpretation of those norms and values within the framework of Marxism-Leninism.¹² Malte Rolf adds that mass celebrations in the Soviet Union were of particular importance. Because of this, the Soviet state could be called not just a "propaganda state," but also a "dictatorship of staging."¹³ Holidays in the Soviet Union are typically seen as a "universal artwork," particularly because they were celebrated throughout the Soviet state on the basis of a single scenario drafted by the Communist Party. The point to this universal celebration was to ensure that all of the people who were involved in "building Communism" during working days turned into one enormous and solemnizing community during celebrations. What's more, the organization

⁸ Kertzer, D. I. (1988), *Ritual, Politics & Power*. New Haven; London: Yale University Press, pp. 1–13.

⁹ Mach, Z. (1993), *Symbol, Conflict and Identity. Essays in Political Anthropology*. Albany: State University of New York, p. 106.

¹⁰ See Lane, C. (1981), *The Rites of Rulers. Ritual in Industrial Society – the Soviet Case*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 153–183; Glebkin, V. (1998), *Ritual v sovetskoi kul'ture*. Moskva: Yanus-K, pp. 74–77; Dobrenko, E. (2002), "Krasnyi den' kalendarya: Sovetskii chelovek mezhdru vremenem i istoriei," in Balina, M., Dobrenko, E., Murashov, Y., eds., *Sovetskoe bogatstvo. Stat'i o kulture, literature i kino*. Sankt-Peterburg: Akademicheskii projekt, pp. 97–123.

¹¹ Petrone, K. (2000), *Life has Become More Joyous, Comrades. Celebration in the Time of Stalin*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, p. 13.

¹² Lane, C. (1981), *The Rites of Rulers. Ritual in Industrial Society – the Soviet Case*, p. 25.

¹³ Rolf, M. (2009), *Sovetskie massovye prazdniki*. Moskva: ROSSPEN, p. 7.

and celebration of holidays consolidated all of the areas of art in the country, as well as all institutions and the mass media.¹⁴

The main form of Soviet mass celebrations was demonstrations that represented Soviet society, particularly its collectiveness in workplaces and the army, and emphasized unity between society and the state. One must also mention dramatic mass performances – concerts and gymnastics. Another component and characteristic of holidays was a wealth of ideological decorations in the public space.¹⁵

The canon of Soviet celebrations was established during the Stalinist period in the 1930s. That was the era when Soviet mass celebrations flourished, and these were used to introduce Stalinist political discourse in social discourse, as well as to shape the identity of Soviet people. These reflected the official hierarchy of Soviet society (the Communist Party – working people – farmers – the intelligentsia) and the emergence of a new political elite.¹⁶ An important aspect of Stalinist celebrations, according to Rolf, was to educate society. He believes that unlike Fascist and National Socialist mass celebrations, Soviet events had a distinctly didactic meaning. The job was to (re)train Soviet people to create a new type of Soviet people.¹⁷ Another specific aspect of the mission of Soviet celebrations was “internal Sovietization” in the USSR. Celebrations served as a channel for the standardized Soviet culture – something which connected the metropolises of the country with many provincial towns and villages. Celebrations and their intensity were a fundamentally important part of performance of Soviet achievements.¹⁸ They served to monitor the loyalty of local residents and to offer a public demonstration of the legitimacy of the regime.

The scope of mass celebrations was diminished very severely during World War II, but as soon as the war was over, the pre-war traditions of the Soviet Union were restored. Pompous celebrations of November 7 and May 1 were reinstated. The main ritual of the Soviet Union as a country and a superpower was the military parade that was held in Red Square each year on November 7. The process also involved a celebration of the Soviet victory in the Great Fatherland War, which represented a certain breaking point in terms of the war and demonstrated Stalin's participation therein. Thus, the anniversary of the October Revolution took on a double burden of mythology and ideology. It represented the date when the Soviet state was established, but it was also a special day in terms of the Soviet victory

¹⁴ Ibid, pp. 127–128.

¹⁵ Lane, C. (1981), *The Rites of Rulers*, pp. 156–158; Hoffman, D. L. (2003), *Stalinist Values. The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity*. Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, pp. 169–171.

¹⁶ See: Petrone, K. (2000), *Life has Become More Joyous, Comrades. Celebration in the Time of Stalin*, pp. 203–210. For more about the beginnings of Soviet festivals and celebrations, see Malysheva, S. (2005), *Sovetskaya prazdnichnaya kul'tura v provintsii: Prostranstvo, simoly, istoricheskie mify (1917–1927)*. Kazan': Ruten.

¹⁷ Rolf, M. (2009), *Sovetskie massovyie prazdniki*, p. 325.

¹⁸ Ibid, pp. 252–275.

in World War II.¹⁹ After Stalin's death, the culture of Soviet celebrations continued to exist, and in fact it was expanded. New days were added to the calendar of holidays, particularly in terms of the celebration of many different professions. The process of de-Stalinization, of course, changed symbols, and they were cleansed of Stalinism and replaced at the symbolic level by the cult of Lenin.²⁰ Still, the major staging of holidays continued, and this was an annual component of life in the Soviet Union. The army and masses of civilians continued to march along the mausoleum in Red Square. On top of the mausoleum were Soviet leaders such as Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Andropov, Chernenko and Gorbachev, each of them at the apex of power and sending greetings to the people of the Soviet Union. All of these celebrations were also held at a lower level but on the basis of the same standardized scenarios throughout the Soviet Union and particularly in the capital cities of the union republics and in other larger cities. During the entire existence of the Soviet Union, mass celebrations were an enormously important medium of power – one that ensured the representation of the greatness of the regime at the highest level.²¹

Soviet life was imbued not just with active or passive participation in mass rituals on national holidays or professional celebrations, but also with Sovietized rituals related to the cycle of life. These were rituals which replaced earlier religious practices in terms of giving names to infants, celebrating maturity, wedding and funeral rituals, as well as the celebration of the New Year. There were also rituals of initiation in the social and political collectives – admitting children to the Pioneers, celebrations of the first day of school, celebrations of graduation, anniversaries in working life, etc. International Women's Day on March 8 became a popular holiday. Once it was announced as a day off, the process was privatized.

Great intellectual and creative resources were invested in Soviet celebratory rituals. That gave them content and emotions, and they became a true part of Soviet life. These were important events in the individual lives of Soviet citizens and in the history of collectives.²² Ideologists in the Soviet Union always bragged about the fact that the involvement of people in everyday Soviet rituals was exactly what made clear one of the most expressive forms of public Sovietization and the celebration of the new "Soviet man" which also included affirming the achievements of his way of life.²³

¹⁹ Ibid, pp. 332–341.

²⁰ See: Tumarkin, N. (1997), *Lenin Lives! The Lenin Cult in Soviet Russia*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

²¹ Rolf, M. (2009), *Sovetskie massovye prazdniki*, pp. 328–351.

²² Lane, C. (1981), *The Rites of Rulers*, pp. 67–129.

²³ See Kampars, P., Zakovich, N. (1967), *Sovetskaya grazhdanskaya obryadnost'*. Moskva: Mysl'; Brudnyi, V. (1968), *Obryady vchera i segodnya*. Moskva: Nauka; Belousov, Y. (1974), *Prazdniki starye i novye*. Alma-Ata: Kazakhstan; Ugrinovich, D. (1975), *Obryady za i protiv*. Moskva: Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury.

During the latter half of the 1940s, the Soviet Union began to export its calendar of celebrations and the related drama to occupied territories and the Eastern European countries that were subjected to Soviet influence.²⁴ In Latvia, the Soviet calendar of holidays and related rituals were introduced in 1940 when it, like other countries cited in the secret protocols of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, was absorbed into the USSR. After the Soviet Union won World War II, all of this was reinstated, and Latvia was once again a part of the Soviet empire. The calendar and the celebrations were an important instrument of Sovietization.²⁵ As was the case throughout the Soviet Union, people in Soviet Latvia took part in celebrations by marching in parades, organizing mass events and decorating the public space. Rituals of Soviet life and work were also introduced.²⁶ All of this served as a public indicator of the loyalty of Latvian people toward the Soviet Union, making it clear that they were being absorbed into the socialist system.

Victory Day

May 9, which is the date when the Soviet Union celebrated its victory in the Great Fatherland War, was nothing simple, according to researcher Nina Tumarkin. Instead it was subject to manipulation by the regime.²⁷ Victory Day was initially a celebration for the people of the Soviet Union who had won the war. In the public arena, this inevitably involved praise for Stalin. The regime was afraid of creating a national holiday on May 9, thus accepting the heroism of the people and allowing them to share the status of victors with Stalin. In 1946, it was decided that May 9 would be an ordinary working day on the Soviet calendar.²⁸ In the post-war Soviet Union, the trauma of war was healed by forgetting. A new and influential group of middle-class managers loyal to the regime was created, and embourgeoisement of middle-level society within the framework of totalitarian terror took place.²⁹

²⁴ Rolf, M. (2009), *Sovetskie massovye prazdniki*, pp. 327–341; Lane, C. (1981), *The Rites of Rulers. Ritual in Industrial Society – the Soviet Case*, pp. 181–182.

²⁵ Zelče, V. (2007), “Die ersten sowjetischen Zeitdokumente der Nachkriegszeit: Kalender für das Jahr 1945,” *Forschungen zur baltischen Geschichte*, 2, pp. 159–172.

²⁶ Serdants, A. (1958), *Sadžīvei jaunas tradīcijas*. Rīga: Latvijas Valsts izdevniecība; Andersons, J., Sāre, M. (1960), *Padomju sadzīves tradīcijas*. Rīga: Latvijas Valsts izdevniecība; Gerodņiks, G. (1965), *Pa jauno tradīciju takām*. Rīga; Liesma; Cimermanis, S., ed., (1987), *Sociālistiskie svētki un ieražas*. Rīga: Zinātne.

²⁷ See Tumarkin, N. (1994), *The Living & the Dead. The Rise and Fall of the Cult of World War II in Russia*. New York: BasicBooks.

²⁸ Gudkov, L. (2005), ““Pamyat” o voine i massovaya identichnost’ rossiyan,” in Gabovich, M., ed., *Pamyat’ o voine 60 let spustya: Rossiya, Germaniya, Evropa*. Moskva: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, p. 91.

²⁹ Tumarkin, N. (1994), *The Living & the Dead. The Rise and Fall of the Cult of World War II in Russia*, pp. 99–100; Hosking, G. (2006), *Rulers and Victims. The Russians in the Soviet Union*. Cambridge; London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, pp. 224–227, 242–244. See also Dunham, V. S. (1990), *In Stalin’s Time. Middleclass Values in Soviet Fiction*. 2nd ed. Durham; London: Duke University Press.

Victory celebrations in the Soviet Union became a part of the overall range of national holidays. This remained true after Stalin's death, as well. During Khrushchev's period in power, Victory Day celebrations were not seen as anything comfortable. That was first of all because the war was closely linked to Stalin. Later, it was a matter of domestic politics, because the governing elite feared for its positions and tried to reduce the authority of former military leaders and soldiers in society. For that reason, the 10th anniversary of the victory in 1955 went all but unnoticed insofar as the public arena was concerned.³⁰

New traditions related to the memory of victory began to be established approximately 15 years after the war. A new generation of people who had never gone to war had grown up. These were people who were far more ready and eager to accept the polished version of war and heroism that was created by the regime. There was also an official and demonstrative culture of honouring "veterans," with a lyrical tone that was full of pathos in describing the war and the rituals organized by the state. There was a successful stereotyping of collective experience, and this brought together the things that the regime and individuals said and wrote in terms of style, terminology and the system of morals and values. People learned to speak the language of the "high collective feelings" of Soviet power, according to Lev Gudkov.³¹

Victory Day gained value on the calendar of Soviet celebrations in the mid-1960s, when Brezhnev replaced Khrushchev at the top of the power structure. On April 26, 1965, the Presidium of the Soviet Supreme Council declared that May 9 would henceforth be a day off for the Soviet people. Many things were done to attach special meaning to the day. Books were published about the war, movies were produced, a new rouble coin was produced with the image of a memorial to soldiers and liberators at the Treptov Park in Berlin, and sacralization of the environment began by giving cities titles of "heroic cities" and establishing eternal flames therein. The grave of the unknown soldier alongside the walls of the Kremlin became a sacred place of national importance. Honouring of those who took part in the war began via events of different scope. On the 20th anniversary of Victory Day, a parade was held in Red Square, and the tradition of a moment of silence was instituted. In 1965, the celebration of Victory Day was a useful event for the new Soviet regime so that it could strengthen its authority after the fairly unclear way in which Khrushchev was sacked.³²

³⁰ Andreev, D., Bordyagov, G. (2005). *Prostranstvo pamyati: Velikaya Pobeda i vlast'*. Moskva: AIRO, pp. 15–19.

³¹ Gudkov, L. (2004). *Negativnaya identichnost'. Stat'i: 1997–2002*. Moskva: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie; "VCIOM-A", p. 36.

³² Andreev, D., Bordyagov, G. (2005), *Prostranstvo pamyati: Velikaya Pobeda i vlast'*, pp. 20–29.

On May 9, 1965, a massive military parade was held in Red Square, with the power elite and foreign diplomats standing on top of the mausoleum to review the event. According to Gudkov, the celebration of the 20th anniversary of Victory Day gradually turned into the only rationale to legitimize the Soviet system. The dominant official discourse insisted that it was precisely because of the victory that it was worth establishing the Soviet state and “building” Socialism. Victory as a symbol was also used to justify what the governing regime did – maintaining a huge army, supporting the “Socialist camp” of countries, militarizing the national economy and engaging in a nuclear arms race. In the public space Soviet anti-Fascism served as an antithesis to Western capitalism and liberalism.³³

The celebration of Victory Day continued during subsequent years. The subject of the war took on a great role and importance in cinema, literature, history lessons at school, the mass media, and the arts. Still, the 1965 celebration was probably never overcome in terms of its pompousness and detail. The ritual of the celebration gradually took on a very thorough sense of routine. Each year the same things happened – ceremonial meetings, speeches, lectures, receptions and fireworks. The social status of disabled soldiers and veterans of the Great Fatherland War improved. The meaning of this was strengthened even more by the intensive public representation of Brezhnev, the general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, as a participant in the war.

The 40th anniversary of the Soviet victory in 1985 was also particularly extensive. It may be that this was aimed at addressing concerns about instability and many domestic problems. Tumarkin has written with a great sense of irony that the celebration was “the USSR’s final flamboyant, tastelessly orchestrated mega-holiday celebration, replete with billboards splattered with self-congratulatory slogans, posters of idealized soldiers, [and] a military parade in Red Square.”³⁴ According to Andreev and Bordyagov, the sense of approaching change was already felt during the 40th anniversary. A unique element in this was the expectation of Gorbachev’s anti-alcoholism campaign, which led to a true boom in the purchase of alcoholic beverages. The celebration of the 40th anniversary of the end of the war must be seen as a traditional Soviet celebration.³⁵ The next major anniversary, in 1990, occurred in the context of the rethinking of Soviet history and the filling in of “blank spots” therein. This fragmented the monumental nature of the victory, and alongside the official discourse of victory, there was now a true sense of the tragic nature and evil of Stalin’s regime.

³³ Gudkov (2004), *Negativnaya identichnost’*, p. 37.

³⁴ Tumarkin, N. (1995), “The War of Remembrance,” in Stites, R., ed., *Culture and Entertainment in Wartime Russia*. Bloomington; Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, p. 198.

³⁵ Andreev, D., Bordyagov, G. (2005), *Prostranstvo pamyati: Velikaya Pobeda i vlast’*, pp. 32–37.

Traditions related to Victory Day in Latvia

As one of the Soviet republics, Latvia was a place where Victory Day was celebrated in accordance with the Soviet calendar of holidays. The basic scenario and scope of the process was dictated by the regime. At the same time, however, there were certain specific elements which related to the war in Latvia and the involvement of local residents in the armies of both sides in the war.³⁶ The war was not Latvia's war. Latvia was simply an arena for battles, a territory that was conquered, and a place where people were murdered. Several hundred thousand residents of Latvia perished during the war. The Sovietization of Latvia also included a destruction of memorials to those who fought against the Soviet Union. Graves were vandalized, and no commemoration of such individuals was permitted.

The only remaining part of the memorial landscape in Latvia was the cemeteries of the brethren of the victorious Soviet Army. Such cemeteries were established beginning in the latter half of the 1940s. Documents from the Latvian National Archive indicate that since 1944, different institutions in the Soviet Latvian government and the local Communist Party began to engage in secret correspondence about the installation of cemeteries for Soviet soldiers. The process was slow. Most of the graves of Soviet soldiers were in places entirely inappropriate for public events – the yards of homes, gardens, meadows and wetlands. Many of those who fell during the war had to be reburied. Local executive committees asked for an extension in the deadline for creating the cemeteries again and again up until the early 1950s. The main reason for this was that towns and parishes lacked the resources that were needed for the process. Most men were in the military or in filtration or prison camps in the Soviet Union.³⁷ When it came to the burial or reburial of the Soviet war dead and to the installation of cemeteries of the brethren, fairly substantial amounts of money were provided by the regime. Several thick files of documents at the National Archive are full of budgets, lists, cost calculations, and documents about what was done and what remained to be done.

The work of establishing cemeteries of the brethren continued until 1951. Standardized obelisks were installed in many places.³⁸ There were edges to the graves that were made of wood or cement, and the names and surnames of those who had fallen were engraved on them.³⁹ Cemeteries of the brethren in Soviet Latvia were often placed in unusual places – alongside institutions,

³⁶ About Victory day in Latvia see Zelče, V. (2010). "Uzvaras svētki padomju Latvijā," available at <http://szf.lu.lv/lat/petnieciba/petnieciba-szf-nodallas/komunikacijas-studiju-nodala-1/pagatnes-pelni-jeb-latvijas-otra-pasaules-kara-sociala-atmina-un-identitate/uzvaras-svetki-padomju-latvija/>.

³⁷ State Archives of Latvia, 270, 1c, 155, p. 32.

³⁸ Ibid, pp. 46–49.

³⁹ Strautmanis, I., Asaris, G. (1986), *Padomju Latvijas memoriālie ansambļi*. Rīga: Zinātne, pp. 12–14.

stores, schools, road crossings and churches. These were all places with much traffic. Local executive committees, major companies, schools and, beginning in the late 1940s, kolkhozes were given responsibility for taking care of the cemeteries of the brethren. During the next several years, work on those cemeteries continued throughout Latvia.

The cemeteries where Soviet soldiers were buried became memorial places to commemorate the conclusion of World War II on the level of local communities. On Victory Day, there were always marches to the local cemetery of the brethren, and meetings were held at the final destination. The way in which people lived and survived in the Soviet Union taught them to subject themselves to the rules of life which the regime proposed. Participation in Soviet rituals was a part of the mix.

When Victory Day was proclaimed to be an official holiday in 1965, its importance in the culture of rituals in the Soviet Union increased, and that of course meant that the celebrations became more extensive in Soviet Latvia, too. There were major meetings, parades, concerts and the laying down of flowers at monuments. The subject of Victory Day also took on new importance in the area of culture. Many writers, musicians, artists, historians and others devoted their work to the subject. Campaigns to clean up and improve the Soviet cemeteries of the brethren were launched with new eagerness. Many monuments were replaced, and several of the cemeteries became outstanding artistic memorials. In the 1980s, there were 344 cemeteries of the brethren in Soviet Latvia which related to the Great Fatherland War.⁴⁰ In 1975, it was decided to build a Victory Monument in Riga. It was unveiled on November 5, 1985, and was to become the main symbol of the war, the special nature of the Soviet people, and the victory which the USSR had achieved in the Great Fatherland War.⁴¹

As noted, celebrations of Victory Day were a part of the Sovietization of Latvia and a certain measuring stick as to what was happening. Stalinist mass repressions and the everyday personnel and economic policies which prevailed in Latvia effectively established the Soviet way of life. For many people in Latvia, participation in the celebrations was an annual routine. People joked that the process was "mandatorily voluntary," while for others it really was a celebration. It is also true that the ethnic and social structure of the Latvian population changed over the years. The number of people who immigrated from other Soviet republics, and particularly Russia, increased. These people had different social memories, knew nothing about Latvian history, and felt that the victory of the Soviet Union in the

⁴⁰ Jērāns, P., ed., (1982), *Latvijas padomju enciklopēdija*. Rīga: Galvenā enciklopēdijas redakcija, vol. 5.2, p. 110; Klints, O., ed., (1984), *Latvijas PSR vēstures un kultūras pieminekļu saraksts*. Rīga: Avots, pp. 89–166.

⁴¹ For more detail about monuments of war cemeteries, see Strautmanis, I., Asaris, G. (1986), *Padomju Latvijas memoriālie ansambļi*, pp. 54–123; Shendik, V. (1975), *Pamyat' geroev bessmertna*. Rīga: Liesma; Strautmane, G., Melgalvis, O., Rencis, R. (1980), *Piemīņa*. Rīga: Avots, pp. 75–160.

Great Fatherland War was the greatest celebration of the year – one which established the foundation for the whole purpose of the Soviet state. There were no alternative views of history of which these people were aware.⁴²

The job for the Soviet education system, in turn, was to destroy the social memory of the pre-occupation period and to train young people to subscribe to the view about the past that was dictated by Soviet ideology. Many events at schools related to the commemoration of the victory. Sports competitions, hikes, voluntary clean up work and the planting of gardens were all part of the process. Regional researchers at schools became active in the latter half of the 1960s. Schoolchildren were taken on hikes along the “battle paths of warriors in the Great Fatherland War,” and museums in praise of battles were installed at schools. War veterans were regularly honoured guests at these events. On the evening of May 8, schoolchildren and representatives of the governing structures and major enterprises of each town or village took part in a torchlight parade to the local cemetery of the brethren. The relationship between schoolchildren and students to the war, its history and the victory was based on games. At many events “patriotic Soviet training” was supplemented with entertainment to attract a wide range of participants.⁴³ The content and ideological quality of these events depended on the attitudes of organizers. Often the events were nothing more than a formality, organized so as to file reports under the Soviet framework, not to really remember the war. At the same time, however, events dedicated to Victory Day often involved good work that was full of humanity. Schools in Soviet Latvia sent students and staff to seek out the relatives of Soviet soldiers who were buried in local cemeteries. They offered moral support by sending letters, photographs and, sometimes, fistfuls of sand from the relevant grave. Relatives were invited to come for a visit, and accommodations were provided for them. Thus, many Latvian schools, teachers and students helped people to find out where their loved ones were buried, thus earning the great thanks of people from Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and other Soviet republics.

Between 70,000 and 85,000 people from Latvia went to war in the Red Army during World War II, the majority of them in the 130th Latvian Riflemen’s Corps.⁴⁴ May 9 was an important day for them, because it was on that day that the war ended. The commemoration of soldiers from Latvia was substantially affected by changing Soviet politics. This culture of commemoration emerged after 1956, when the fame of the Latvian riflemen’s division of the 43rd Guard was liquidated out of fear in Moscow

⁴² See: Zelče, V. (2009), “History – Responsibility – Memory: Latvia’s Case,” in Rozenvalds, J., Ijabs, I., eds., *Latvia Human Development Report: Accountability and Responsibility 2008/2009*. Rīga: LU ASPRI, pp. 46–48.

⁴³ Špona, A. (1972), “*Vienmēr gatavs!*” *Latvijas pionieru kustības rašanās un izaugsme*. Rīga: Liesma, pp. 169–171.

⁴⁴ Bleiere, D., Butulis, I., Feldmanis, I., Stranga, A., Zunda, A. (2006), *History of Latvia in the 20th Century*. Rīga: Jumava, p. 329.

about the efforts of the Soviet republics to seek greater autonomy. Former soldiers began to gather for annual commemorative events, but this was banned after so-called national Communists were destroyed by the elite of the Latvian Communist Party in 1959. People gathering to remember the war were dubbed “bourgeois nationalists.” The culture of commemoration would not reappear until 1965. On the one hand, commemoration of the work of the 130th Latvian Riflemen’s Corps became a part of the overall commemoration of the Soviet victory in World War II, but on the other hand, certain national specifics were maintained – discourse about battles related to returning to one’s fatherland, the special solidarity that was based on the Latvian language, memories about pre-Soviet Latvia, experiences in the Soviet Union (including repression of Latvians in Russia in the latter half of the 1930s), and the motivation and origins of collaboration with the Soviet regime. The culture of commemorating the 130th Latvian Riflemen’s Corps included annual meetings of front line soldiers and partisans, trips to battle locations and cemeteries of the brethren in Russia, memorial events at the Cemetery of the Brethren in Riga, and the reburial in Soviet Latvia of the remains of many Latvians who had been buried in Russia. Former front line soldiers visited schools, took part in events for pioneers who were known as “red scouts,” established a choir of Latvian soldiers, and published memoirs and books devoted to the memory of fallen comrades.

It is presumable that many people in Soviet Latvia enjoyed May 9 simply because it was a day off in the springtime. Many people, particularly those who lived in the countryside, did not take part in any official Victory Day events, perhaps only watching them on television. What’s more, a day off in the countryside was of good use for people to work in their gardens. If it was sunny outside on May 9, people in the Soviet Latvian countryside planted potatoes in their gardens. There were big sacks of potato seed, boxes at the edges of gardens, people planting the potatoes, and tractors which emitted smoke and made a lot of noise in creating or filling in the rows of potatoes. This process was associated with the sense of a job well done, with people knowing that they would have their “own potatoes” for the winter in spite of the food shortage that prevailed in the Soviet Union. The bottom line is that celebrations of Victory Day in Latvia lacked homogeneity.

Celebrations During the Post-Soviet Era

The collapse of the Soviet Union obviously was accompanied by a “revolution in rituals and symbols.” The calendar of state holidays was reformed in Russia and in the other former Soviet republics. According to Rolf, the tradition of celebratory culture in Russia was very powerful. The new regime was afraid to fully break the link with celebrations of the Soviet past. Until 2005, November 7 remained on the calendar under the title of “a day of unity and harmony.” May 1 and May 9 remained national holidays.

International Women's Day on March 8 and many professional celebrations remained popular, as did the "Christmas" celebration that was always held during the Soviet era on New Year's Eve.

In comparison to these Soviet celebrations, new holidays in Russia were more humble. Major celebratory rituals were not organized on Independence Day on June 12, Constitution Day on December 12, or the Flag Day of the Russian Federation on August 22. The excuse was that the new celebrations were held at times that were "inconvenient" – during the summer holidays, when many people were on holiday, as well as during the coldest part of winter. Still, these new state holidays were mostly perceived as "artificial political constructs."⁴⁵

The form of public celebrations and commemorations also changed. Soviet-type mass demonstrations were not acceptable in the 1990s, because they did not fit in with the way in which liberals who were in power in Moscow communicated with the country's residents. Events attracted a limited number of people, and in most of the new countries national holidays involved official speeches and passive audiences watching them on television or listening to them on the radio.⁴⁶ A sociological study conducted in 1997 showed that most respondents perceived official state holidays as nothing more than a day off and an opportunity to relax, as opposed to something with respect to which political culture should be considered. Asked about Independence Day on June 12, for instance, 75% of respondents declared it to be "an additional day off," and only 14% cited its political meaning.⁴⁷

Attitudes toward national holidays were affected by the self-identification of the Russian people at that time. The collapse of the Soviet system meant a relaxation in the links between local residents and their country, and this meant a shift in values and authority. Studies from the early 1990s show that more than half of respondents felt that when the Communists took power, the history of the country began to be unsuccessful, because the regime offered people nothing but poverty, suffering and mass terror. Gudkov insists that when Russians no longer had any resources to interpret the past and no guideposts to deal with the future, they found that they had no way to articulate their interests. Mass consciousness underwent collective disorientation, masochism, offence and a low level of collective self-esteem.⁴⁸ According to Nancy Ries, the feeling of being part of a nation was simply washed away.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Rolf, M. (2009), *Sovetskie massovye prazdniki*, pp. 351–354.

⁴⁶ Smith, K. E. (2002), *Mythmaking in the New Russia. Politics & Memory During the Yeltsin Era*. Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, p. 99.

⁴⁷ Petrova, A., Klimova, S. (1999). *Kazhd'i prazdnik – eto dopolnitel'nyi v'hodnoi. Otchet*. See: http://bd.fom.ru/report/cat/job_and_leis/lei_/of19972704.

⁴⁸ Gudkov, L. (2004), *Negativnaya identichnost'*, p. 147.

⁴⁹ Ries, N. (1997), *Russian Talk. Culture and Conversation During Perestroika*. Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, p. 162.

A study conducted in the spring of 1998 asked people to list the celebrations that were most important to them, and majorities mentioned apolitical and non-historical holidays and celebrations – the New Year (88%), their own birthday (74%), Easter (65%), Women's Day on March 8 (63%), and their children's birthdays (59%).⁵⁰ Another survey conducted in Russia in 2000 came up with very much the same results.⁵¹ The oldest history-related celebration in 1998 was Victory Day (48%), while only a few respondents said that they celebrated the political holidays that had been established recently – 10% cited Independence Day, while only 9% mentioned Constitution Day.⁵²

By the latter half of the 1990s, mass consciousness in Russia had undergone trauma, and many people admitted that while the Soviet system itself was not bad, evil was caused by the fact that the wrong people were in positions of power. Disappointment in these leaders strengthened alienation from the state and created fears about the future, as well as about external threats.⁵³ The mood of many local residents served the interests of the new ideology of the Putin regime – an ideology which sought to promote the prestige of the governing regime and within which history, national holidays and commemorations all became a source for national self-esteem.

Sociological surveys that were conducted during the first decade of the 21st century showed that 41% of Russia's residents considered the Soviet victory in World War II to be a reason to be proud of their country.⁵⁴ The prestige of this holiday increased rapidly during the next several years. A 2004 study found that 72% of respondents declared Victory Day to be an important holiday for them.⁵⁵ In April 2005, 71% of respondents said that they themselves celebrated Victory Day.⁵⁶

The celebration of the 60th anniversary of Victory Day in Russia in 2005 was the largest national and popular holiday since the collapse of the Soviet Union. This confirmed the success of the patriotic ideology of the Putin administration, which brought the people of Russia into a system of unified patriotism, and the celebration was of particular importance when it comes to social memory. The victory was first and foremost linked to patriotism and heroism.⁵⁷ Gudkov has written that the war was turned into an arena

⁵⁰ *Kakie prazdniki v' ob'chno prazdnue v techenie goda? 29.04.1998. Otchet. Opros naseleniya.* See http://bd.fom.ru/report/cat/job_and_leis/lei_/t8035415.

⁵¹ Petrova, A. (2000), *Kakoi prazdnik u nas glavnyi? 19.04.2000. Otchet.* See http://bd.fom.ru/report/cat/job_and_leis/lei_/of001604.

⁵² *Kakie prazdniki v' ob'chno prazdnue v techenie goda? 29.04.1998. Otchet. Opros naseleniya.*

⁵³ Gudkov, L. (2004), *Negativnaya identichnost'*, pp. 149–153.

⁵⁴ *Rossiya: s chem gordimsya, chego st'dimsya? 14.02.2002. Otchet. Opros naseleniya.* See http://bd.fom.ru/report/cat/socium/hist_ro/dd020627.

⁵⁵ Petrova, A. (2004), *Prazdniki lyubim'e i ne ochen'.* 14.10.2004. *Otchet.* See http://bd.fom.ru/report/cat/job_and_leis/lei_/of044006.

⁵⁶ *Prazdniki: monitoring.* 28.04.2005. *Otchet.* See: http://bd.fom.ru/report/cat/job_and_leis/lei_/of051702.

⁵⁷ Saraliev, Z., Balabanov, S. (2005), "K 60-letiyu Pobed'. Otechestvennaya voyna v pamyati trekh pokolenii," *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniia*, 11, pp. 29–36. See also Afanas'eva, A., Merkushev, V. (2005), "K 60-letiyu Pobed'. Velikaya Otechestvennaya voyna v istoricheskoi pamyati rossiyan," *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniia*, 5, pp. 11–22.

of meaning in Russia – one which reflected the most important subjects of the present day. The commemorative rituals were examples of group and national solidarity. War and its victims, insofar as the Russian public was concerned, awarded sacredness not just to the army, but also to the “vertical” constitution of the society, making it possible to mobilize people so that they obeyed commands from the top of the hierarchical social order.⁵⁸

Research shows that Victory Day celebrations in Russia have increasingly been losing their commemorative dimension and turning into a joyous celebration in which popular culture plays a great role. If we compare two studies that were conducted in Russia by the Levada Centre (in 2005 and 2010), we see that over the course of four years, the number of people who see Victory Day as a celebration for war veterans declined, while the number of people who see the day as a “national celebration for citizens of Russia and other former Soviet countries” increased. A far greater percentage of respondents in 2010 said that the most appropriate way to celebrate the event is parades, marches, fireworks and parties, with less support for practices such as aid to war veterans or attempts to strengthen peace in the world.⁵⁹

At the same time, however, a sociological study conducted on the eve of the 65th anniversary of Victory Day found that 92% of Russian residents regarded May 9 to be an important day, and fully 96% said that it is the duty of the state to uphold memories about the Great Fatherland War and the victory.⁶⁰ Victory Day celebrations, in other words, are now the main ritual in Russia which is supposed to ensure the unity of the state and the people, as well as the solidarity and identity of Russians who live in Russia and elsewhere.

Latvia and Russia’s Celebrations

When Latvia was recovering its independent statehood, an important component therein was the restoration of pre-Soviet symbols, celebrations and commemorations, as well as the enshrinement of the victims of the Soviet occupation and their memory.⁶¹ The Soviet calendar of celebrations was suddenly gone. In its place there was a calendar of celebrations and dates of commemoration that were specific to the Republic of Latvia.⁶² November 18, the date on which the Republic of Latvia was proclaimed in 1918, became the central focus of national holidays.⁶³

⁵⁸ Gudkov, L. (2005), ““Pamyā” o voine i massovaya identichnost’ rossiyan,” pp. 99–103.

⁵⁹ *K 65-letiyu pobed’ v Velikoī Otechestvennoī voine. 01.04.2010.* See <http://www.levada.ru/press/2010040102.html>.

⁶⁰ *65-ya godovshchina VOV. Polozhenie veteranov. 22.04.2010. Opros naseleniya.* See http://bd.fom.ru/report/cat/job_and_leis/lei_/vict_day/d101513.

⁶¹ See Stradiņš, J. (1992), *Trešā atmoda: Raksti un runas 1988.–1990. gadā Latvijā un par Latviju.* Rīga: Zinātne, pp. 112–202.

⁶² Skangale, L. (2008), *Latvijas valsts svētku, atceres un atzīmējamās dienas.* Rīga: Zvaigzne.

⁶³ For more detail about the Proclamation of Latvia day, see Zepa, B. (ed.) (2008), *Mēs. Svētki. Valsts. Valsts svētku svinēšanas socioloģiskā izpēte.* Rīga: Baltic Institute of Social Sciences.

The new calendar of holidays and dates of commemoration in Latvia, however, was alien to many Russian-speakers who arrived in the republic during the years of the Soviet occupation. This was seen by them as a register of historical events and celebrations that was used by “strangers.” Russians and Latvians in Latvia are split less by ethnic culture, language and specific characteristics than by ideas about the history of the 20th century, particularly in terms of events in 1939 and 1940, during World War II, and during the Soviet occupation. Latvians see this era as one in which great offences were committed, while those who arrived in Latvia from other Soviet republics after the war consider it to be a period of Soviet triumphs and achievements. Ilga Apine argues that for many Russians in Latvia, it is psychologically difficult to accept the fact of Latvia’s occupation, because that admission would force them to take on some of the responsibility for the occupation and Soviet crimes.⁶⁴ Latvia’s Russian-speaking community is a community of collective memory, and according to Deniss Hanovs and Irina Vinnika, it has a tendency towards self-isolation from the community of Latvian memories and culture and maintaining political links to the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation.⁶⁵

For some Russian-speakers in Latvia, ideas about the history of the 20th century are influenced mostly by messages and evaluations from Russia. This is true because Latvia is in the Russian media space, particularly in terms of television broadcasts.⁶⁶ Leo Dribins has written that the thoughts of Russian-speaking residents in Latvia are influenced by the rebirth of Russian nationalism and the concept of history which centres on pride about the role which Russia and Russians have performed in the history of humanity, not least in terms of the Soviet victory in the Great Fatherland War. The arrival of the Soviet military in Central and Eastern Europe in 1944 and 1945, according to contemporary Russian thinking, was simply a mission aimed at liberating the people of Europe. This idea has taken root among Russian-speakers in Latvia when it comes to history, and that allows them to ignore the fact of the Soviet occupation and the offences that were committed against Latvians during that period.⁶⁷

There were many battles on Latvian territory during World War II, and the result is that there are also many places of commemoration and

⁶⁴ Apine, I., Volkovs, V. (2007), *Latvijas krievu identitāte: vēsturisks un socioloģisks apcerējums*. Rīga: LU Filozofijas un socioloģijas institūts, p. 94.

⁶⁵ Hanovs, D., Vinnika, I. (2005), “Krievvalodīgie Latvijā: diasporas kultūras atmiņas saturs un veidošanas tehnoloģijas,” in Ozoliņa, Ž., ed., *Expanding Borders: Communities and Identities. Proceedings of an International Conference, Riga, November 9–12, 2005*. Rīga: LU Akadēmiskais apgāds, p. 188.

⁶⁶ See: Pelnēns, G., ed., (2010), *The “Humanitarian Dimension” of Russia Foreign Policy Toward Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, and the Baltic States*. 2nd ed. Rīga: CEEPS, pp. 182–192.

⁶⁷ Dribins, L. (2007), “Latvijas vēstures faktors sabiedrības integrācijas procesā,” in Dribins, L., ed., *Pretestība sabiedrības integrācijai: cēloņi un sekas*. Rīga: LU Filozofijas un socioloģijas institūts, p. 45.

cemeteries for soldiers. Relations between Latvia and Russia when it comes to cemeteries of the brethren is affected by a law on an agreement between the two countries as to the status of Latvian burial sites in Russia and Russian burial sites in Latvia. This law has been in effect since July 31, 2008.⁶⁸ The agreement between the two governments on this subject was signed in Riga on December 18, 2007. The stated purpose of the agreement was to “ensure the right of eternal peace for soldiers and civilians who fell or died during World War I and the subsequent military operations (1914–1921) and World War II, as well as the victims of repressions, focusing in particular on the Geneva Convention of August 12, 1949, focused on the protection of war victims and the rules of the additional protocol that was attached to that convention on June 8, 1977.”⁶⁹ The Russian embassy in Latvia and the country’s local governments have taken over responsibility for the cemeteries of the brethren in Latvia.

The graves of Soviet soldiers represent “sites of memory” for the Russian-speaking community in Latvia – a place which reflects ideas about the community’s heroic past. This is something which can also be used for political purposes. Analysis of Russian language newspapers in Latvia shows that the political potential of the Victory Day celebrations was discovered in the latter half of the 1990s. Government officials from Commonwealth of Independent States countries and pro-Russian politicians from Latvia began to appear in increasing numbers at the Victory Monument in Riga and at other locations dedicated to the commemoration of the war. Beginning with the 7th parliamentary election in 2002, the For Human Rights in a United Latvia party (PCTVL) took on the role of the main organizer of celebrations during the holiday. The party also made intensive use of May 9 to convince and attract voters. Later, the influence of PCTVL gradually diminished thanks to the increasing weight of the Concord Centre (SC) alliance in the political arena, and that also meant a change in the role of the two political forces when it came to organizing Victory Day celebrations. On the 65th anniversary of Victory Day in 2010, indeed, one of the most visible organizers of the event was the “9 May” organization that was established and supported by Concord Centre. It has declared that its primary focus is taking care of the veterans of World War II.⁷⁰

Tensions related to the celebration of Victory Day have increased as time has gone by. Since 2005, there have been discursive or physical conflicts

⁶⁸ Latvijas Republikas Saeima, (2008. 17. jūl.), Likums “Par Latvijas Republikas valdības un Krievijas Federācijas valdības vienošanos par Latvijas apbedījumu statusu Krievijas Federācijas teritorijā un Krievijas apbedījumu statusu Latvijas Republikas teritorijā”. *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, 2008, 30. jūl.

⁶⁹ Latvijas Republikas Saeima, (2008. 17. jūl.). Likums “Par Latvijas Republikas valdības un Krievijas Federācijas valdības vienošanos par Latvijas apbedījumu statusu Krievijas Federācijas teritorijā un Krievijas apbedījumu statusu Latvijas Republikas teritorijā”. *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, 2008, 30. jūl.

⁷⁰ See <http://www.9may.lv/ru/about/>.

or expectations thereof that have become just as natural a component of the event as the songs of soldiers or the red flags that are carried. The most intense conflict occurred in 2007. It is possible that the catalyst for the shift from verbal battles to fistfights was a set of events in the capital city of neighbouring Estonia, Tallinn, where mass riots occurred after it was decided to move a monument dedicated to Soviet soldiers, popularly known as the Bronze Soldier or Bronze Alyosha. Over the course of just a few days, there was an absolute collapse of any illusion as to the mutual integration of Russian-speakers and Estonians. Instead, light was shed on implacable contradictions in the understanding of history and in the identities of the two communities.⁷¹ It must also be noted that in recent years, the politicization of Victory Day has reached the frontier zone between Latvia and Russia, where participants in May 9 events have received the same banners decorated with the logos and slogans of Concord Centre and PCTVL that are distributed to people in Riga.⁷²

Ever since 2000, the celebration of May 9 has irreversibly shifted from a worship of military veterans toward an organized event of political entertainment and communication for the masses.⁷³ In 2003, when Latvia instituted reforms at minority-language schools, the aim of which was to enhance the importance of learning the Latvian language, there were protests against the reforms, and the Victory Monument in Riga and similar memorials in major Latvian towns became a symbolic focus for the institutionalization of the political activities of the Russian community, according to Hanovs and Vinnika.⁷⁴ Over subsequent years, too, memorials to the Soviet victory have served this particular purpose.

During the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the victory in the Great Fatherland War in Riga and other towns with large Russian-speaking communities in 2005, the number of participants increased substantially, and the format was changed. Victory Day celebrations increasingly moved away from their initial purpose, and the main heroes and rituals of the celebration also changed. Speeches, petition campaigns and resolutions on May 9 each year speak to the issues of Russian-speakers that are on the agenda at that particular time, as well as ones that have been “painful” for

⁷¹ See Lehti, M., Jutila, M., Jokisipila, M. (2008), “Never-Ending Second World War: Public Performances of National Dignity and the Drama of the Bronze Soldier,” *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 39(4), pp. 393–418.

⁷² Ločmele, K. (2010), “Novērojums: 8./9. maijs Balvu apkaimē (Baltinavas novadā un Balvu pilsētā)”. See <http://szf.lu.lv/lat/petnieciba/petnieciba-szf-nodalas/komunikācijas-studiju-nodala-1/pagatnes-pelni-jeb-latvijas-otra-pasaules-kara-sociala-atmina-un-identitate/noverojums-89-maijs-balvu-apkaime-baltinavas-novada-un-balvu-pilseta/>.

⁷³ Procevska, O. (2010), “Devītā maija reprezentācija Latvijas krievvalodīgajā presē (1990–2009)”. See <http://szf.lu.lv/lat/petnieciba/petnieciba-szf-nodalas/komunikācijas-studiju-nodala-1/pagatnes-pelni-jeb-latvijas-otra-pasaules-kara-sociala-atmina-un-identitate/devita-maija-reprezentacija-latvijas-krievvalodigaja-prese-19902009/>.

⁷⁴ Hanovs, D., Vinnika, I. (2005), “Krievvalodīgie Latvijā: diasporas kultūras atmiņas saturs un veidošanas tehnoloģijas,” p. 190.

them for a longer period of time. This allows people who come together for the event to find support and to reach agreement on the idea that Latvia discriminates against them or unfairly violates the traditions of the USSR. This applies to issues such as the fact that Victory Day is not an official holiday in Latvia, the fact of granting or failing to grant citizenship to Russian-speakers, and the introduction of lessons taught in Latvian at minority high schools.⁷⁵ The scope and commercialization of the celebrations have expanded. Popular performers appear on stage, pop culture is used, and there are fireworks and outdoor decorations. Indeed, Victory Day celebrations started to resemble an open-air festival. Where once the event was focused on the victory in the war and the commemoration of those who fell in battle, it is now increasingly a process in Latvia whereby the community of former Soviet citizens (Russians) can come together once again and identify a mechanism for keeping their identity together. Of importance here is not so much reference to specific events in history, as the establishment and use of related myths.⁷⁶ One event which relates to this mythology and symbolism is Soviet Army Day on February 23. Veterans and their relatives are invited to the Moscow Culture and Business Centre in Riga for ceremonial speeches in Russian and the songs of the soldiers of the Red Army. This allows participants to sink back into a past which ended more than 20 years ago.

Interviews with veterans from the 130th Latvian Riflemen's Corps show that they do not all agree on whether they should take part in Victory Day celebrations on May 9, commemorate victims of World War II on May 8 at the Cemetery of the Brethren in Riga, or attend both events. Ever since 1958, it has been traditional for former riflemen to gather at a cemetery of the brethren in the town of Vietalva to commemorate Red Army soldiers,⁷⁷ recall their youth and feel a sense of solidarity among themselves, but this tradition, which may be stronger than others, has been diminishing because of the increasingly small number of veterans from the corps who are still alive.⁷⁸

The celebration of Soviet Victory Day still remains the main symbolic conflict between Latvia and Russia, as well as between the Latvian and Russian-speaking community in Latvia. This conflict is rooted not just in different approaches toward history and the culture of commemoration, but

⁷⁵ Ločmele, K. (2010), "8./9. maija reprezentācija latviešu presē (1991–2009)," available at <http://szf.lu.lv/lat/petnieciba/petnieciba-szf-nodalas/komunikācijas-studiju-nodala-1/pagatnes-peļni-jeb-latvijas-otra-pasaules-kara-sociala-atmina-un-identitate/89-maija-representacija-latviesu-prese-19912009/>.

⁷⁶ See: Procevska, O. (2010), "Devītā maija reprezentācija Latvijas krievvalodīgajā presē (1990–2009)".

⁷⁷ Spura, I. (1982), "Ceļš atkal ved uz Vietalvu," *Padomju Jaunatne*. 27 August.

⁷⁸ For example, an interview with veteran of the 130th Latvian Riflemen's Corps Inese Spura. Riga, March 31, 2010; Observation in war cemetery in Vietalva. August 7, 2010.

also in the fact that some members of the Russian-speaking community have a desire to live in and belong to Russia in symbolic terms.

Conclusion

Russia has inherited the practice of colourful and pompous celebrations of holidays from the USSR. Celebrations of these events in the neighbouring country find reflection in Latvia and become partly Russian and partly local in nature. The relationship of the celebrants as a large social group toward Latvia and its history is of particular importance here.

Celebrations are a way in which Russia can, without much effort or the need for additional resources, influence the mood of the people of Latvia. This occurs in large part not just thanks to the popularity of the Russian news media among Russian-speakers in Latvia, but also thanks to rituals that were established during the Soviet period. These rituals remain so powerful in their post-Soviet format that for many people, they overshadow celebrations which are related to the statehood of Latvia itself. A study conducted in April 2010, for instance, showed that the same number of people (21% of respondents) believe that the main celebrations in May are Victory Day and the anniversary of the proclamation of Latvia's restored independence on May 4.⁷⁹ Celebrations related to World War II indicate that Latvians and one segment of the Russian-speaking community have different ways of defining themselves and their past, and the fact is that communications between these communities are complicated.

It is likely that celebrations of Victory Day and the communities of those who do and do not celebrate the event will undergo change in the more distant future, but in the near term, these celebrations will remain more or less unchanged in terms of their format. The entertainment dimension of the process may expand, and there may also be greater politicization during periods of intensive domestic political activity, such as years when parliamentary and local government elections take place.

⁷⁹ LTV ziņas, (2010), "Lielākā daļa aptaujāto nezina, kas tiek svinēts 4.maijā," *LTV Ziņu dienests*, available at <http://www.ltvzinas.lv/?n=zinas&id=1279>.



*A procession of schoolchildren to the cemetery of the brethren, 1960's.
Private collection of Inese Spura*



*A Latvian SSR "red scout" event, 1960's.
Private collection of Inese Spura*



*A commemoration of the 130th Latvian riflemen corps in Vietalva, Latvia, 1970's.
Private collection of Inese Spura*



*Veterans of the the 130th Latvian riflemen's corps participating in a riflemen's choir
at a commemorative event of the Battle of Moscow in Norofominsk, late 1980's.
Private collection of Inese Spura*



*A concert devoted to Soviet army day in the House of Moscow in Riga, 23 February 2010.
Photo: Olga Procevska*



*Veterans of the 130th Latvian riflemen's corps and Riga Mayor Nils Ušakovs lay flowers
at the Riga cemetery of the brethren on the remembrance day for the end of World War II,
8 May 2010.
Photo: Klinta Ločmele*



*Veterans of the 130th Latvian riflemen's corps lay flowers on the graves of comrades who fell in Russia and were reburied in the Riga cemetery of the brethren, 8 May 2010.
Photo: Klinta Ločmele*



*Latvian President Valdis Zatlers, chairperson of the Latvian Parliament Solvita Āboltiņa and Prime Minister Valdis Dombrovskis at the event commemorating the end of World WarII at the Riga cemetery of the brethren, 8 May 2010.
Photo: Klinta Ločmele*



*Celebrations commemorating the victory of the USSR in the Great Fatherland War at the Victory Monument and Victory Park in Riga, 9 May 2010.
Photo: Klinta Ločmele*



Celebrations commemorating the victory of the USSR in the Great Fatherland War at the Victory Monument and Victory Park in Riga, 9 May 2010.

Photo: Klinta Ločmele



Celebrations commemorating the victory of the USSR in the Great Fatherland War at the Victory Monument and Victory Park in Riga, 9 May 2010.

Photo: Vita Zelče



A car in Riga with a dedication to the victory of the USSR in the Great Fatherland War, 9 May 2010.

Photo: Vita Zelče



*Flowers at the Victory Monument in Riga after the celebrations of 9 May, 13 May 2010.
Photo: Vita Zelče*



*Flowers at the Victory Monument in Riga after the celebrations of 9 May, 13 May 2010.
Photo: Vita Zelče*



Veterans of the 130th Latvian riflemen's corps, representatives of the embassy of the Russian Federation and the Latvian Socialist Party at the annual commemorative event of the 130th Latvian riflemen's corps in the cemetery of the brethren in Vietalva, Latvia, 3 August 2010.

Photo: Olga Procevska



Annual commemorative event of the 130th Latvian riflemen's corps in the cemetery of the brethren in Vietalva, Latvia, 3 August 2010.

Photo: Olga Procevska

Historical Themes and Concepts in the Newspapers *Diena* and *Vesti Segodnya* in 2009

Ojārs Skudra

The Foundations of Social Memory

In the 1980s and 1990s, the German scholars Jan and Aleida Assmann developed a theory of cultural memory largely based on the work of French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945), who was one of the founders of research on social memory.¹ Memory exists not just in individuals, but mostly among them and is mainly a social phenomenon. Aleida Assmann has rejected a simple binary opposition between individual and collective memory, replacing it with four formations of memory which differ in terms of space and time, the size of the group, and their stability or lack thereof: the memory of the individual, a social group, a collective, and a culture. Episodic and individual memories are based on four main elements: 1) they are based on an individual's perspective and, are therefore, irreplaceable and non-transferable; 2) they do not exist in isolation and are instead networked with the memories of others; 3) memories are fragmentary and gain form, structure and stability only when they are told; 4) memories are ethereal, and over the course of one's life, the structure of their importance and the way in which they are evaluated will change.² Even those memories that are a part of repeated stories and that are best preserved have strict time limitations, because once the person who has a memory passes away, the memories disappear, too. Memory, like language, is absorbed by the individual from the outside, and language is an important pillar of support for it. For that reason, "communicative memory ... emerges in an environment of spatial proximity, regular interaction, forms of life that are held in common, and experiences that are shared."³

Personal memories exist in a specific horizon of time that is determined by the replacement of generations. After 80 to 100 years, there is a substantial

¹ Assmann, A., Assmann, J. (1994), "Das Gestern im Heute. Medien und soziales Gedächtnis," in Merten, K., Schmidt, S.J., Weischenberg, S., eds., *Die Wirklichkeit der Medien. Eine Einführung in die Kommunikationswissenschaft*. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, pp. 114-140.

² Assmann, A. "Von individuellen zu kollektiven Konstruktionen von Vergangenheit," available at <http://www.univie.ac.at/zeitgeschichte/veranstaltungen/a-05-06-3.rtf>

³ Assmann, A. (2006), *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit. Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik*. München: Verlag C.H.Beck oHG, p. 25.

shift, but during that time, different generations co-exist, and exchanges among them which occur at a personal level shape the individual's set of experiences, commemoration and narrative.

At the forefront in the theory of the Assmanns is the cultural aspect of how memory is shaped. Here, "culture is understood as an historically shifting linkage among communication, memory and the media."⁴ Culture fulfils two missions. One is the process of co-ordination which makes communication possible by creating simultaneity. This requires "the establishment of a system of symbolic signs, as well as the technical and conceptual adaptation of the common horizon of life in a way which allows participants in culture to encounter and understand one another."⁵ The second task for culture is to ensure continuity by establishing conditions so that each individual person and generation do not have to start from scratch every time.

The Assmanns agree with the semiotician Yuri Lotmann, who has "defined culture as a group memory that cannot be inherited."⁶ As beings who process information, people have the ability to create symbols. "It is at the level of symbols that programmes of memory emerge. These are based not in genes, but in sociality. The symbolical ability is a function of the social dimension."⁷ The Assmanns replace tradition with memory so as to approach the issue of how and with what purpose a community transfers necessary knowledge from one generation to the next.

The Assmanns agree with the central thesis of Maurice Halbwachs – that there is no memory that is not social. They argue that the results of Halbwachs' studies of memory can be summarized into three major concepts:⁸

- ◆ The social genesis of memory: it emerges from a community of people and allows the community to be established. Individual memory is a part of group memory, and it represents a crossroads for various social memories;
- ◆ Reconstructivity: social memory is reconstructive in that it maintains those aspects of the past which the community can reconstruct in any era with its relevant frameworks of reference. To remember means to attach meaning to experience in a framework. To forget means to break down the framework of the concept;
- ◆ Memory vis-à-vis history: collective memory is arranged on the basis of continuity and new recognizability. This memory is "populated," and in contrast to it, there is history, which is not populated and is not linked to group identity. The memories of parties often exist in the plural, while history exists in the singular.

⁴ Assmann, A., Assmann, J. (1994), "Das Gestern im Heute," p. 114.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid, p. 116.

⁷ Ibid., p. 117.

⁸ Ibid., p. 118.

The Formations of Social Memory

Ethnologists and representatives of what is known as “oral history” have found that social memory is comparatively brief in the absence of writing. Oral heritage usually exists at two levels. One deals with the recent past. The other speaks to origins, gods and heroes. The Assmanns argue that they should be described as communicative memory and as cultural memory respectively. Communicative memory is biologically limited. Memory that is created by culture, in turn, is based on external media such as texts, images, monuments and rituals. It is long-term, potentially with a horizon of time that stretches across the centuries. Jan Assmann has laid out the differences in the following table:⁹

	Communicative memory	Cultural memory
Content	In the framework of individual biographies of historical experience	Mythical antiquity, events in the absolute past
Form	Informal, not shaped very much, with natural origins, emerging in interaction on an everyday basis	A high level of form, with ceremonial communications and celebrations
Media	Living memories in organic memories, experiences and stories	Strict objectification, traditional and symbolic coding and presentation in words, images, dance, etc.
Time structure	80-100 years, the present being related to a shifting time horizon of three or four generations	The absolute past of mystic antiquity
Bearers	Non-specific, witnesses to the era which relates to the memories	Specialized bearers of tradition

The transfer from communicative memory to cultural memory is ensured by the media. The Assmanns point to documents as first-level media and monuments as second-level media. Documents are based on codification and storage of information, while monuments are based on codification, maintenance, “plus a value of remembering that is socially determined and practiced.”¹⁰ Communicative memory is circulated in everyday life situations. Cultural memory is not. Collective identity exists as a process of communal belonging that has become reflexive. Exactly the same is true with cultural identity. Collective identity would be unimaginable without joint knowledge and joint memories that are handed down thanks to joint language or a joint system of symbols. “Anything can become a sign which codifies commonality,” argues Jan Assmann, pointing toward words, sentences, texts, rituals, dances, ornaments, apparel, tattoos, eating and drinking, monuments, images, landscapes, road signs and border signs.¹¹ He calls this set of symbolically

⁹ Assmann, J. (2007), *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*. 6. Auflage. München: Verlag C.H.Beck oHG, p.56.

¹⁰ Assmann, A., Assmann, J. (1994), “Das Gestern im Heute,” p.121.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 139.

transferred commonality “culture” or “the formation of culture.” “The formation of culture is a medium which helps to create collective identity and then preserve it across generations.”¹² When it comes to minorities, Jan Assmann speaks of the concept of counter-identity, which is “established and preserved against the dominant culture.”¹³ Assmann links the existence of ethnic identity to cultural memory and the form of its organization.¹⁴

Aleida Assmann suggests that there are three different types of human memory or levels of memory. The first is the *biological* level which, just like memory, depends on the human body, brain and central nervous system. The second level is the *social* level, where the main thing is the communicative network and, accordingly, a social construct that is established and maintained thanks to contacts and language between people. At the third level – the *cultural* level – the central role is played by the symbolic media as bearers, and this establishes a “collective symbolic construct” which, “when it is in movement, is upheld by social communications and revitalizes and adds new elements with the help of individual memories.”¹⁵ Memory is established on the basis of the interaction of the three components which must work together – the bearer, the environment, and the support structure.¹⁶

Dimension:	Neuronal memory	Social memory	Cultural memory
Bearer:	Individual brain	Social communication	Symbolic media
Environment:	Social communication	Individual brain	Social communication
Support structure:	Symbolic media	Symbolic media	Individual memory

Cultures, nations, states, churches and companies have no memory, but they “create” a memory for themselves with the help of memorial signs and symbols. Via this memory, institutions and corporations simultaneously “create” an identity for themselves. In a narrower sense, collective memory can be defined only in the context of memory-related information which exists together with powerful links of loyalty and also creates a strongly homogeneous we-identity. According to Aleida Assmann, “that particularly relates to ‘national’ memory, which is a form of ‘official’ or ‘political’ memory.”¹⁷ She has proposed the following classification of **memory formations**:¹⁸

Basis:	Biologically differentiated		Symbolically differentiated	
Processing:	Neuronal	Communicative	Collective	Individual
Formation of memory:	Individual memory	Social memory	Political memory	Cultural memory

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid, p. 154.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 160.

¹⁵ Assmann, A. (2006), *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit*, p. 33.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 36.

¹⁸ Ibid.

In order to describe the dynamic of cultural memory more precisely, Assmann differentiates between “accumulative memory” and “functional memory,” adding that the boundary between them is not hermetic and that they are to be linked with that which is remembered and that which is forgotten, with that which is known and that which is unknown, and with that which is manifest and that which is latent.

Cultural memory¹⁹

Functional memory	Accumulative memory
Ways of ensuring repetition (symbolic practices)	Forms of ensuring durability (material representations)
Traditions	Books, images, films
Ritual	Libraries
Canonization or artefacts	Museums
	Archives

Changes in the Structure of Social Memory and the Evolution of the Media

The Assmanns have produced a table which helps to explain stages in the development of media technologies and related changes in social memory.²⁰

	Orality	Literacy	Print	Electronics
Organization of knowledge	Closed structure, an absolute past	Open structure, comprehension of history	An increased explosion of knowledge, new areas of science	Breaking down of educational canons, computer-based thinking that is free of language, secondary illiteracy
Medium (codification and storage)	Media that are bodily and ethereal, multi-mediality	Separation of the medium and the bearer, autonomous existence of text, visual elements become unilateral	Increased abstraction of signs, standardization	Return of the voice, machine-related re-sensualization which avoids the code of signs, processing of text
Forms, circulation of communication	Rituals of joint participation, limited access	Reciting and reading, transparency of space and time	Reading alone and mass culture as the public element	Interaction in the network, globalization

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 58.

²⁰ Assmann, A., Assmann, J. (1994), “Das Gestern im Heute,” p. 131.

The Assmanns describe the linkage between social memory and the stages of media revolution with the following table:²¹

	Oral tradition	Writing	Electronics
Codification	Symbolic codes	Alphabet, verbal codes	Non-verbal codes, artificial languages
Storage	Limited by human memory	Filtration of language in texts	Unfiltered and unlimited opportunities for documentation
Circulation	Celebrations	Books	The audio-visual media

Communication in oral culture is based on memory, while in the culture of books, it is based on language. Both limitations or formations continue to exist in the electronic era, too, but they have lost their dominance in the process of shaping culture. Accordingly, electronic culture is losing the anthropomorphic and anthropocentric contours that existed in the past. That is why the media and the institutions which circulate information have taken on a new and central meaning. "They organize and distribute knowledge in a communications society."²² The Assmanns argue that these changes may have endangered the "culture of commemoration" in the East and the West in the past, because commemoration was repressed in Stalinist countries and largely ignored in democratic ones.

The aim of the present chapter is to use the Assmanns' concepts to conduct a content analysis of articles devoted to subjects of history in the newspapers *Diena* and *Vesti Segodnya* (VS) in 2009. These are among the most widely read of Latvia's newspapers. While *Diena* was long considered the "newspaper of record," VS is the most widely read Russian-language newspaper, which often echoes the positions of officialdom in Russia.

Articles in *Diena* Devoted to Aspects and Concepts about History

There were 159 articles and commentaries in *Diena* in 2009 that were devoted to history. Five of these were written by historians – Erwin Oberländer, Andrievs Ezergailis, Gatis Krūmiņš (2) and Vita Zelče. Another publication devoted to history that involved a historian was an interview with the British historian Norman Davies. It is possible to describe the set of articles in *Diena* with the help of the following table:

Subject matter	No. (% of all)
Aspects of Latvia's cultural history from the present-day perspective	36 (22.64%)
Aspects of commemoration and memory in the public and political world of the restored Republic of Latvia	20 (12.57%)
Policies related to the history of the Russian Federation	18 (11.32%)

²¹ Ibid, p. 139.

²² Ibid.

Subject matter	No. (% of all)
The history of the USSR	17 (10.69%)
Events in the post-Soviet (CIS) world	17 (10.69%)
The history of the Russian Empire	12 (7.54%)
Various subjects related to the history of (Western) Europe	12 (7.54%)
The Third National Awakening	8 (5.03%)
The history of the Republic of Latvia (1918-1940)	5 (3.14%)
The Holocaust	4 (2.51%)
Aspects of the history of the restored Republic of Lithuania	3 (1.88%)

Among the texts from historians, of particular importance is an article produced by the German historian Erwin Oberländer, "Conflicting Cultural Memories about the Occupation of the Baltic States." In the context of Aleida Assmann's theoretical positions, Oberländer believes that the process whereby the Russian nation emerged is consciously being turned into a myth by that country's political elite: "The myth of the Great Fatherland War in the modern-Day Russian Federation is one of the most important pillars for a sense of national identity."²³ That stands in opposition to the desire of most of the governments and historians in Eastern and Central Europe to conduct a critical review of the "role of the Stalinist Soviet Union," as well as to "Western interpretations of the war and the post-war period," where a thesis that was held in common was that "there was only one occupying regime," i.e., that of Nazi Germany. At the same time,

the peoples of Eastern and Central Europe had very different memories about the war and the post-war period. The true turning point for them was 1940, when they lost their sovereignty, and not 1944/1945, which simply involved the replacement of one occupying regime with another. In no sense at all did this mean true liberation. Instead, it meant terror, deportations, and the Gulag.²⁴

The nations of this region "had to survive both murderous systems, and their experience taught them that the Soviet regime was no less criminal and traumatic than the Nazi regime."²⁵ There is an active process of shaping political or national memories in the region, one in which national historiographies are of active importance. Oberländer argues that "in Latvia, too, scholars and the media have long since reviewed and re-evaluated collaborationism, resistance and the Holocaust, and the results of this at least exclude any generalized evaluation."²⁶ He believes that "the culture

²³ Oberlenders, E. (2009), "Baltijas valstu okupācijas konfliktējošās kultūras atmiņas," *Diena*, 17 January 2009, p. 12.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

of memory in Latvia probably doesn't coincide with the culture of memory in Russia, and it only partly coincides with the culture of memory in the West."²⁷

In German, there is a precise conceptual difference between memory (*Gedächtnis*) and commemoration (*Erinnerung*). Secondly, this division of terms is also important in terms of the difference between the culture of commemoration and memory (*erinnerungskultur*), which Aleida Assmann links to the forms and media of cultural mnemonics, and the politics of history (*Geschichtspolitik*), which she links more to the violent, decreed and homogenized form of politics and commemoration.²⁸ Oberländer links the term "culture of commemoration" to individual memories, as well as to communicative, national or political memories in which civil society plays an important role. It is only in this context that we can understand Oberländer's diplomatic statement that

the results of historiography should adjust memories, but under the pressure of public opinion, there is the risk that historiography might easily yield before collective memory – something that would facilitate the emergence of myths, as opposed to any critical examination.²⁹

Oberländer has formulated a number of questions about future directions and goals in research. Of greatest importance to the historian is the issue of

how historiography can, over the long term, promote the integration of all of the different strata of local residents in the multinational country that is Latvia. Should the culture of memory largely be ethnic, i.e., Latvian, or should it be focused more on the Latvian state, thus allowing members of other nationalities who live here to identify themselves with the country? Should people be prepared to be tolerant toward completely different cultures of memory?³⁰

After calling for "greater precision" with respect to the terms "occupation" and "totalitarian regime," both of which have been used by Latvian historians to "describe the Soviet period," Oberländer poses a rhetorical question: "Is it really true that Latvia was governed for 47 years by a 'Soviet regime without any Latvians'?" He believes that "it is highly questionable" whether "the adaptation of broad circles of Latvian society could, at the end of the day, be described as collaboration with the occupying regime."³¹ Therefore, "new and precise terminology and explanations are needed." Oberländer argues that there are three factors that would lead to a

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Assmann, A. (2006), *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit*, p. 274.

²⁹ Oberländers, E. (2009), "Baltijas valstu okupācijas konfliktējošās kultūras atmiņas," *Diena*, 17 January 2009, p. 12.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

successful resolution of these complicated tasks. First, there is the attitude of Russia, where “the culture of memory right now is focused more on keeping Russians in Latvia from taking an independent stand as Latvian citizens of Russian origin.” Second, there is “a long-lasting and direct dialogue” among the “intellectuals and historians of different ethnic groups” in Latvia. Third, there is the matter of studying “everyday history,” because “that would certainly shed light on a larger set of views than would be the case if major political events were to be remembered.”³² Historians themselves will make sure that “historiography does not remain a servant for the sometimes very unilateral collective memory, instead setting standards itself which relate to a balanced culture of memory.”³³

The other publications by historians relate to some of the specific issues or problems that were addressed by Oberländer. Andrievs Ezergailis, for instance, published an essay-like review of a book that was published by the Šamir publishing house in Rīga in 2008 – “The Destruction of Jews in Latvia, 1941-1945: A Cycle of Lectures.” The editor of the book was Rabbi Menachem Barkahan.³⁴ Ezergailis does point out that “the interaction of Nazism with Marxist ideologies, including the hybrid nature of the Soviet Union – an interaction under the influence of which many citizens of Latvia still live – is no secret,” but he does not draw direct parallels between Nazism and Stalinism, in part because he limited his review “exclusively to Hitlerism.”³⁵ The main complaint which the historian has made vis-à-vis the authors of the book is that they proved unable to overcome Hitler’s “thesis of universal antisemitism,” which led them to a situation in which

many post-Holocaust historians, including the authors of the ‘lectures’ that are reviewed here, have found it hard to say that Nazi Germany was a unique political and ideological structure. Nowhere other than in Germany did the apparatus of the state and the structures of the military prepare gradually and relentlessly for the destruction of the Jews.³⁶

Admitting that “the best thing about this volume are the fragments of memories that are often tempting, [...] as well as the range of photographs, many of which have been published for the first time,” Ezergailis nevertheless argues that the book is “amateurish, episodic and informal,” in part because “a citizen of the European Union will possess a minimal and very chaotic sense of the Holocaust in Latvia’s small towns.”³⁷

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ezergailis, A. (2009), “Atgriešanās pie baltajiem plankumiem,” *Diena*, 31 January 2009, pp. 12–13.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

In response to the review, Rabbi Barkahan argued that the aim was not to study "antisemitism in the world." Instead it was a "much less noble goal – to offer a general description to a wide range of readers as to what really happened to Jews in Latvia during the years of World War II."³⁸ The rabbi admits that the book is based on "the memories of survivors, without which the events cannot be restored, because otherwise all that we have are abstract schemes."³⁹ One must agree with Barkahan, because the book essentially dealt with the fact that a study of the communicative memory of individuals, societies and generations can serve as valuable material for historians, because this lays bare the emotional, memorial and ethical aspects of historical events.

In his commentary, which was devoted to the role of pre-war Latvian President Kārlis Ulmanis in the events of 1940, historian Gatis Krūmiņš made direct reference to Oberländer's text. He argues that Oberländer's thesis about the way in which public pressure affects historiography and forces it to yield before "collective memory" and "the creation of myths" represents "a precise description of the current situation in Latvia."⁴⁰ Krūmiņš believes that "there has been no complete evaluation of the high level of cooperation between Ulmanis and the elite members of the Latvian civil service with the occupants,"⁴¹ which means that "we are still not prepared to admit that there was extensive cooperation between citizens of Latvia with the Soviet and the Nazi occupying regime. If Norwegians know who Knut Hamsun was, then we still do not really know who Vilis Lācis was."⁴² Krūmiņš wrote about the subject of Ulmanis' role in 1940 once again in September 2009, when the Latvian National Theatre presented a musical called "Leader" in which Ulmanis was the chief character. Krūmiņš wrote that "Ulmanis asked for a pension from the occupying power, and as we can judge from his application, he admitted that his sacking was legal."⁴³ After posing the rhetorical question of whether "Kārlis Ulmanis, as a private individual, recognized Latvia's annexation," the historian concludes with the reminder that "the authoritarian leaders of Estonia and Lithuania did not partner with the occupant regime like Ulmanis did."⁴⁴ The same issue of *Diena* also contained a commentary from journalist Pauls Raudseps on the musical, in which he wrote that it represented "a falsification of history with a poorly hidden subtext that played on the lack of information of the audience and manipulated with its emotions." The "culmination of the show," he added, was "hatred toward democracy."⁴⁵

³⁸ Barkahans, M. (2009), "Nevaru piekrist Ezergailim," *Diena*, 12 February 2009, p. 13.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Krūmiņš, G. (2009), "1940. gads Latvijā. Pateiktais un nepateiktais," *Diena*, 28 February 2009, p. 12.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid, p. 13.

⁴³ Krūmiņš, G. (2009), "Vai Ulmanis atzina Latvijas aneksiju?," *Diena*, 18 September 2009, p. 9.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Raudseps, P. (2009), "Gumijas Vadonis," *Diena*, 18 September 2009, p. 2.

Professor Vita Zelče contributed an article that was devoted to Russia's specific approach and attitude toward the politics of history. She was reviewing a 2009 textbook for the 11th grade published in Moscow on the subject of 'Russian History: 20th Century and Early 21st Century.' Zelče wrote that "the new concept about history in Russia has convincingly granted the main heroic role of history to the regime" – something which with the aid of history textbooks seeks to "create pride about Russia, the things that its governments (particularly the Soviet government) did, and the ability of those governments always to be the winner."⁴⁶ She also writes that "Baltic history has been given a very negligible role to play in this textbook," adding that "the Baltic states, since their establishment in 1918, are not presented as sovereign neighbouring countries, but instead as a component of the Russian Empire."⁴⁷ Writing about events in 1939 and 1940, the authors of the textbook not only refuse to use the term "occupation," but also "fail to include the fact of the entrance of the Red Army into the Baltic states in June 1940, thus suggesting that these lands became a part of the Soviet Union in a peaceful or even favourable way, because there was simply no presence of violence or aggression in this event."⁴⁸ True, the authors of the textbook did admit to "terror and the mass deportation of people to Siberia," but Zelče argues that the conceptual approach which is taken "excludes Russia's responsibility for the liquidation of the sovereignty of the Baltic states and for the destinies of their citizens from the future agenda of history."⁴⁹

The British historian Norman Davies visited Riga to present a Latvian translation of his book *Europe*. He believes that "the historian is always political" and that "history is always political."⁵⁰ During the interview, Davies touches upon the issue of comparing Stalinism and Nazism. He believes that "both Stalin and Hitler were mass murderers who used murder as an instrument of national policy," but "they did not attack the same people, and they used different methods."⁵¹ According to Davies, the problem is that "the most fundamental representatives of the study of the Holocaust do not want to cite the crimes of Stalin alongside the Holocaust, because they believe that this reduces the meaning of the Holocaust" – this even though "Stalin's crimes were even greater, because he lived longer and ruled the largest country in the world."⁵² The most important statement by Davies is that for a long time in the West, Eastern Europe was, in mental terms "in the same category as the residents of colonies in the Middle East and even further." What's more, "other European empires had colonies right

⁴⁶ Zelče, V. (2009), "Vēstures pārrakstīšana," *Diena*, 14 March 2009, p. 11.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Gailītis, V. (2009), "Atpaliekot no realitātes," *Diena*, 13 November 2009, p. 10.

⁵¹ Ibid, p. 11.

⁵² Ibid.

here – Latvia was a colony of Russia. No one called it a colony, but they treated it exactly like a colony.”⁵³

In chronological terms, the first were a few texts about “events to commemorate the Latvian Legion,” which occurred on March 16, 2009. *Diena* wrote that this year, “the events were more peaceful in Riga than in other years” and that “official events were banned for the first time since 2006.”⁵⁴ The paper wrote about protesters, indirectly pointing to the very opposite positions that are taken vis-à-vis history. The emphasis was on the activities of the Latvian Anti-Fascist Committee (LAK), the Rodina association and the political party PCTVL (For Human Rights in a United Latvia), whose members expressed dissatisfaction about the idea that “the police were protecting a Nazi march” and did not permit pickets against it, also writing about the involvement of European Parliament member Tatjana Ždanoka (PCTVL) in the activities: “She stood before the cameras of several television companies, including Russian ones, to denounce what the police did.”⁵⁵ Adding his voice to Ždanoka’s statement was Johan Beckman from the Finnish Anti-Fascist Committee, who attended a conference called “A Future Without Nazism” and said that there is apartheid against Russian speakers in Latvia and Estonia.⁵⁶ On the front page of the newspaper was a photograph and a headline: “Organized Police Action Halts Provocateurs.” This indicates that the paper found aspects of public order and security to be more important than the historical aspect of the commemorative event.

On March 25, 2009, *Diena* published a series of articles to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Soviet deportations of 1949. Journalist Askolds Rodins wrote a commentary stressing the fact that the deportation was well planned and prepared in all three Baltic states simultaneously: “The people who were deported were ‘untrustworthy in terms of class’ or inconvenient or even harmful to the Soviet regime. Some were national partisans who still believed that independence could soon be restored. After the deportations, opposition to the establishment of kolkhozes soon disappeared.”⁵⁷ According to Rodins, “the majority of people in Russia, as opposed to the majority of people in Latvia, provide no denial of the Soviet regime, and so their conception of the crimes which the Soviet regime committed is more ‘understanding.’” He added that “we must clearly understand that a similar position is taken by some residents of Latvia – those who live in the ‘more understanding’ information space of official Russia.”⁵⁸ Rodins believes that the “historical memories of the people” with respect to the deportations should not be “swept away with the broom of pragmatism.” In this, he was making reference to the improvement of relations between Latvia and Russia.

⁵³ Ibid, p. 10.

⁵⁴ Leitāns, I. (2009), “Bažas mobilizēja dienestus,” *Diena*, 17 March 2009, p. 3.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Rodins, A. (2009), “Piemīņas diena,” *Diena*, 25 March 2009, p. 2.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

Sandra Kalniete, a member of parliament, published a commentary called "Unmasking is Irreversible," expressing the belief that "the process of unmasking and 'making more European' the crimes of Communism has become irreversible," because "civil servants and MPs at the European Commission and the European Parliament have come to understand that they will not be able to avoid the demands from Eastern Europe and the Baltic states for historical justice and the unmasking of the crimes of communism. They understand that this demand is justified, so there is no option but to find out what actually happened behind the Iron Curtain."⁵⁹

Also fitting into this set of texts is an article about a radio theatre performance based on the memories of actor Kaspars Pūce about his childhood in Siberia. Pūce, according to the article, "has no doubt but that the sufferings of the victims of the totalitarian regime must be remembered."⁶⁰ The dominant approach is one in which the views and traumas of the victims of the Stalinist regime mean the desire to link these memories to political or national memory.

The paper devoted a bit more attention to the "traditional celebration of Victory Day in Riga at the Victory Monument" – an event which "clearly occurred under the sign of the upcoming local government and European Parliament election."⁶¹ On May 8, *Diena* published an editorial called "The Risk of May 9: A Barbed Wire Wreath at the Victory Monument." In it, the paper reported on the "radically nationalist Association of the National Forces of the Fatherland (NSS) and its co-chairman, Viktors Birze," who said that his goal is to "show to the public that May 9 is not a unilaterally perceived day in Latvia; for a majority of society, it has to do with destruction, mass terror, murders and national oppression for 50 years."⁶² The paper wrote that the NSS had cancelled its initial plan to "organize a process of explaining history to tourists in the context of whether the Red Army was a liberator or a set of war criminals," but "the 9.maijs.lv organisation was established by the leader of the Concord Centre alliance, Nils Ušakovs," who asked the police to prevent possible provocations because "there will be at least 5,000 people there with a very different understanding" of the meaning of May 9, 1945, in the history of Latvia.⁶³

This very different understanding of history was also cited as a problem in a commentary written in the May 9 issue of *Diena* by Raudseps. He wrote that

for many Russians, victory in the Great Fatherland War is one of the few political events about which they can be proud. (For the Putin regime, in turn the pompous celebration of May 9 makes it possible

⁵⁹ Kalniete, S. (2009), "Atmaskošana ir neatgriezeniska," *Diena*, 25 March 2009, p. 13.

⁶⁰ Adamaite, U. (2009), "Mēs taču dzīvojam!," *Diena*, 25 March 2009, p. 12.

⁶¹ Leitāns, I. (2009), "9. maiju izmanto aģitācijai," *Diena*, 11 May 2009, p. 12.

⁶² Leitāns, I. (2009), "9.maija risks – drāšu vainags pie Uzvaras monumenta," *Diena*, 8 May 2009, p. 5.

⁶³ Ibid.

to continue with the rehabilitation of the ambitions of the Soviet era and imperial Russia.) For Latvians, of course, May 9 means the restoration of the Soviet occupation. It is not possible to find a middle ground or compromise between these two different opinions about May 9, and there are also politicians whose interests are served by the exacerbation of these differences.⁶⁴

Raudseps added that “the battle of symbols which has been limited in time and space before is expanding.”⁶⁵

A few days later the paper wrote that “even though the 9.maijs.lv organization and Nils Ušakovs, as leader of the Concord Centre alliance, claimed to *Diena* that the event had nothing to do with politics, but instead was meant to thank people who took part in the destruction of Nazism, the fact is that the leader of the Concord Centre list for the European Parliament, Alfrēds Rubiks, announced that ‘this is a political celebration, because victory in World War II was achieved via a political, armed and ideological battle’.”⁶⁶ This is more than a discussion about which memories should be included in Latvia’s political memory. Thus, *Diena* also reported that the police “arrested six right wing and five left-wing radicals, including the leader of the National Bolsheviks, Vladimir Linderman,” who, along with his comrades, “arrived at the event with flags bearing the hammer and sickle, which is a banned symbol in Latvia, and ignored requests from the organizers of the event to take the flags away.”⁶⁷

Another set of typical texts in this regard was published in the newspaper by its long-standing editor, Sarmīte Ēlerte, by the poet Jānis Peters, and by the political scientist Vita Matīsa. *Diena* published the speeches which Peters and Ēlerte delivered at a 2008 symposium dedicated to the 20th anniversary of an important meeting of the Latvian creative unions. Peters said that “we had hoped that the meeting on June 1 and June 2 would be the first official protest against national nihilism, the Russification of Latvians, and the humiliation of the republic for nearly 50 years of history.”⁶⁸ Peters argues that “after 20 years, we see” that the plenary session meant “the beginning of another fundamentally new process – the restoration of the statehood of the Baltic Republics.”⁶⁹ He particularly makes note of Mavriks Vulfsons, who delivered the “first speech from an official and open stage in the entire Soviet Union about the unlawful nature of the 1939 treaty between Germany and the USSR and its secret protocols.” He also points to an announcement from a group of US members of Congress in August 1988 to say that they “supported the professor’s views as to the events of

⁶⁴ Raudseps, P. (2009), “Pieminekļi un procenti,” *Diena*, 9 May 2009, p. 2.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Leitāns, I. (2009), “9. maiju izmanto aģitācijai,” *Diena*, 11 May 2009, p. 3.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Peters, J. (2009), “Patiesības atgriešanās,” *Diena*, 4 April 2009, p. 11.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

1940 in the Baltic states.”⁷⁰ Finally, Peters quoted Professor Jānis Stradiņš as saying that “everything rises upward during a revolution. We are showing that Latvia is not a territory, it is a republic with its nation, its statehood and its history. For a very long time, Latvians have been persecuted by the curse of no history. Now, however, this nation is rising again.”⁷¹ To cite Aleida Assmann, this meant work on “reinventing the nation.”

Ēlerte’s interpretation of the plenary session was radically different. She argues that “the culmination of the meeting, which many people recall, was the keyword which Mavriks Vulfsons used to describe the past – ‘occupation’,” because “it was specifically the fact that he cited the occupation that was the great magnet which rearranged Latvia’s past, present, facts, emotions and words in a proper and understandable way. Later that word became the doctrinal legal foundation for the restored Republic of Latvia.”⁷²

Political scientist Vita Matīsa, for her part, noted that “Latvia has a very short historical memory. People do not remember what happened 10, let alone 50 years ago. In historical memory, however, facts are just the first step. Interpretation is the second one. The things that can be learned from facts and interpretation are the third thing. What do Latvians usually do? They take a single fact out of context and look for the side to support. Both Latvians and Russians use Latvia’s history not to understand and to avoid mistakes, but instead to preen their feathers today.”⁷³

The speech Peters wrote for a meeting of the creative unions on June 1, 2009, but did not deliver, is interesting with its indirect discussion of social memory: “21 years have passed, and as I read the compendium of materials from the plenary session that was published very quickly by émigré Latvians at that time, I have to note that many of the 70 orators who took part in the grandiose meeting have passed away. It turns out, however, that the links among generations, no matter how brittle they are, cannot be broken.”⁷⁴

The sketch that he presents with respect to the situation in society that existed 21 years ago is very “spatial”:

In 1988, problems included (Bolshevik) totalitarianism that emerged from (Communist) authoritarianism, censorship, a flooded Latvian nation (just like the Staburags cliff), abnormal industrialization, the open and hidden struggle against language and nationalist ideas, a failure to take the ecological situation into account, the turning of young people into military servants in alien territories, a closed border, fraudulent history, national nihilism, and the idea that Latvian linguists were bourgeois, nationalist and followers of Jānis Endzelīns.⁷⁵

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ēlerte, S. (2009), “Atmodas vārdā,” *Diena*, 30 May 2009, p. 11.

⁷³ Ibid, p. 13.

⁷⁴ Peters J. (2009), “Kā atminēt Brīvās un Neatkarīgās mīklu?,” *Diena*, 20 June 2009, p. 11.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

He adds with some resignation that “comparisons to the Soviet era are non-existent today,” but “we cannot guess the secret behind our problems and catastrophe in the Free and Independent status.”⁷⁶

In an interview, Peters devoted a great deal of attention to history. He said that the “greatest shortcoming” is the fact that “events in Latvia are not viewed in the context of the development of the USSR and the world.”⁷⁷ Peters argued that “in the memoirs which he released in 1995, Gorbachev went so far as to admit that the absorption of the Baltic states into the Soviet Union occurred ‘as the result of an actual occupation by the Red Army,’” while in Yakovlev’s book “Twilight,” Lenin is described as “the world’s first fascist.”⁷⁸ According to the poet and public activist, “we knew about history. *Ogonyok* printed what it could about the repressions of the Stalin era. This was shock therapy for the Soviet people. The ‘Soviet story’ now is different than that which was said back then, and it is now being distributed in millions of copies.”⁷⁹ After saying that “we are still fighting World War II and believing that only the soldiers of one or the other side must be presented,” Peters was asked whether this was normal and answered no, because “the people are still traumatized. This is an awful trauma, and each person has the right to scream about his or her pain. If that continues endlessly, however, then the soul of the people becomes sick. Any exaggerated emotions are negative.”⁸⁰ Peters’ thoughts about history were summarized as follows:

For that reason, I want to tell historians that they must evaluate the era. Sometimes it seems that they do not differentiate between things that happened during Stalin’s rule and Gorbachev’s, but the difference is enormous. People changed. We cannot say that both Gorbachev and Stalin were terrible Communists. Gorbachev was born in 1931, he did not fight in the war. He was different than a commissar who deported people in 1937. I am not a supporter of Communism, but there are aspects of all of this that have not been researched properly.⁸¹

Diena published another series of articles on the 20th anniversary of the Baltic Way demonstration. In a commentary, Rodins noted that the demonstration has been “listed on the UNESCO World Memory register,” also pointing to the reason for the demonstration. It was organized in the context of the 50th anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, which contained secret protocols that transferred control of the Baltic states “to Stalin’s regime,” which meant that “their occupation and incorporation into the USSR was just a matter of time.”⁸² Rodins also discussed “the so-called

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Radzobe, Z. (2009), “Vai nu gremdē vai cildina par daudz,” *Diena*, 3 July 2009, p. 10.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid, p. 11.

⁸² Rodins, A. (2009), “Pēc divdesmit gadiem,” *Diena*, 22 August 2009, p. 2.

youth discussion about this subject" that occurred at the House of Moscow in Riga: "The 'driving force' behind the discussion was MP Nikolajs Kabanovs (Concord Centre), and so it is no surprise that the dominant view was one which has gained great currency in Russia in recent years – that the pact was a necessity which was dictated by specific historical circumstances."⁸³ This was one of the few times that *Diena* mentioned Kabanovs, who also is an active author for *Vesti Segodnya* and takes part in public discourse about Latvian history.

The same issue of *Diena* also contained an article by Ināra Egle about the demonstration and the role of Sandra Kalniete therein. Two other texts can be described on the basis of a chapter title in Aleida Assmann's book, "Staged History for Museums and the Media," because they describe the "multimedia programme 'The Latvian People's Front: Living History,'" as well as the "Garden of Destiny" that is being built on Koknese Island and will be a "bridge from the difficult past of the Latvian people in the 20th century to the future."⁸⁴ The building that is being erected on the island "will include an unprecedented database of archival materials from Latvia and from émigré countries about our nation's destiny in wars, under occupation and in exile."⁸⁵ The artist Jānis Mitrēvics focuses on "the ability to enshrine history much sooner, while the 'exhibit' is still right alongside us, and the memories of contemporaries are of incomparable value as a primary source of information, as opposed to research projects in this area. That is true even if these memories have already been covered with private mythology and interpretation."⁸⁶

Diena has also been a careful monitor of history policy in Russia. The first serious changes in this regard occurred in May 2009, when President Medvedev signed a decree on a "Presidential Commission of the Russian Federation to Counter Attempts to Falsify History to the Detriment of Russia's Interests." This was discussed by Rodins in a commentary: "There are pages in each country's history which it would probably like to expunge. Each country's history involves events that can be interpreted in different ways in terms of meaning and consequences. Russia has now announced at the presidential level that it wants to see only one interpretation of historical facts – that which is accepted by the regime at the Kremlin."⁸⁷ The establishment of the commission, according to Rodins,

is targeted first and foremost toward the honest historians and journalists in Russia who cannot accept the gradual and quiet rehabilitation of Stalin's bloody regime which began during the

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Krastiņa, I. (2009), "Likteņdārzs būs gan piemiņas vieta, gan tūrisma centrs," *Diena*, 22 August 2009, p. 4.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Rodins, A. (2009), "Totalitārisma iezīme," *Diena*, 21 May 2009, p. 2.

second presidency of Vladimir Putin. That is truly a heavy blow for them. There is still some distance before totalitarianism – the full control of human lives – is reinstated, but a small step toward it has been taken.⁸⁸

Rodins also pointed out that the Russian Parliament was considering a draft law “which has a title that reflects its essence: ‘On Opposition to the Rehabilitation of Nazism, Nazi Criminals and Their Fellow Participants in the Newly Independent States of the Former USSR.’ The draft law speaks to fines and prison sentences for individuals, including foreigners, as well as sanctions against the ‘guilty countries.’ The main author of the draft law has stated clearly that the focus is on Ukraine, Latvia and Estonia.”⁸⁹

In late August, *Diena* informed its readers about an interview which Russian President Medvedev had granted to Russian Television. In it, he “once again denounced the attempts of certain countries to ‘rewrite’ the history of the war and to compare Stalin’s regime to that of Nazi Germany,” adding that “regression is being seen in the evaluation of historical events, because new countries which are only just establishing their national identity are endangering existing ideas about history.”⁹⁰

A few days later, the paper published a commentary by Raudseps in which he discussed how extensively the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was discussed in Russia on the 70th anniversary of its signing, concluding that “now, less than 20 years after the collapse of the USSR, Russia is rehabilitating this agreement as part of a broader effort to raise Russia’s imperialist interests above everything else as the governing ideology of the regime of Prime Minister Vladimir Putin.”⁹¹

In late October, *Diena* published a report to say that on his video blog, President Medvedev had discussed a date on which the victims of political repressions were commemorated and said that “the murder of millions of people during the rule of Soviet dictator Josef Stalin cannot be excused.” He denounced efforts to “rehabilitate those who were responsible for destroying their own people” and added that the repressions of the 1930s were “one of the greatest tragedies in the history of Russia.”⁹²

At the end of the year, President Medvedev called for “an overcoming of frameworks of ‘ideological stereotypes’ in relations with the Baltic states, because dialogue would be the best solution.” At the same time, he reminded everyone that “the ‘breaking up’ of history and ‘the revisiting of obvious historical facts’ is a very dangerous trend.”⁹³ Medvedev promised to

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Kasparāns, Ģ. (2009), “Medvedevs saniknots par nacistu ‘slavināšanu’ Baltijā,” *Diena*, 31 August 2009, p. 7.

⁹¹ Raudseps, P. (2009), “Pakta rehabilitācija,” *Diena*, 3 September 2009, p. 2.

⁹² “Medvedevs aicina neaizmirst,” *Diena*, 31 October 2009, p. 9.

⁹³ Andersone, D. Kasparāns Ģ. (2009), “Kremļa maigums varot būt mānīgs,” *Diena*, 10 December 2009, p. 5.

support “the Russian press abroad,” arguing that this does not represent an interference in the internal affairs of other countries, because “all countries are interested in the preservation of their ‘language space’.”⁹⁴

Diena has also written about the subject of the cultural canon. Peters expressed his unhappiness about the fact that “the dedication of the outstanding national poet Jānis Akurāters to the victims of 1905, ‘With Battle Cries on Their Lips,’ was turned into a ‘Soviet’ song on Radio Latvia” and posed this rhetorical question: “Is ‘With Battle Cries on Their Lips’ not a ‘canon’ of its own genre?”⁹⁵ The poet argued that “there has been a shift in emphasis toward a slavish denial of one’s self and toward a loss of history in the huge market.” He called on readers not to forget that “Jānis Akurāters, Edvarts Virza, Linards Laicens and Leons Paegle have, at the end of the day, been a part of our history. Each of them, of course, had his own political views and his own brilliance as an artist or artistic talents. Our duty is not to leave all of this in the dark, where paving stones fly through the air with battle cries and swear words.”⁹⁶ Peters also touched indirectly on the linkage between the canon and time and cultural identity.

Assmann believes that “each era has its own canon”⁹⁷ – one which becomes important when there is a lack of orientation in situations where complexity is exacerbated. This is something that applies to Latvia. A canon is seen as “a strategy for the survival of cultural identity” and is defined as “a principle for the establishment and stabilization of cultural identity which at the same time is also the basis for individual identity.”⁹⁸ Of key importance here is Jan Assmann’s point that “several forms of re-canonization have been experienced in the 20th century.” He speaks to political canons “under the sign of nationalist-fascist and Marxist-Leninist formulas for unity,” to the “restoration in the post-war era of anti-Communist and anti-nationalist Roman and Western European ideas,” to religious and secular fundamentalism, as well as counter-canonization which has served the interests of specific counter-identities and counter-histories (feminism, black studies and “related directions”).⁹⁹

From this perspective, the Latvian Cultural Canon described in *Diena* by Undīne Adamaite seems to ignore the different eras that have existed. The process for establishing the canon began in 2007, she wrote, but “experts in each sector put together their lists on the basis of very different principles.”¹⁰⁰ Adamaite pointed out that “the canon, as has been the case in other European countries, has been set up as a list of the most

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Peters, J. (2009), “Ar kaujas saucieniem pret sevi,” *Diena*, 2 February 2009, p. 13.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Assmann, J. (2007), *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, p. 121.

⁹⁸ Ibid, p. 127.

⁹⁹ Ibid, p. 129.

¹⁰⁰ Adamaite, U. (2009), “Piemini kultūru!” *Diena*, 12 March 2009, p. 6.

outstanding and distinguished artworks and cultural values so as to reflect the nation's most important achievements in culture over the course of all time. The purpose is to promote a sense of belonging in the nation and the process of common cultural memory."¹⁰¹ The author also argued that "the unique aspect of the Latvian Cultural Canon in the context of what other European countries have done is that a list of Latvian traditions has been included. Among the cultural values that are cited are rye bread and the tradition of tending to gravesites."¹⁰² Adamaite went on to argue that "the high purpose of the canon" could be seen in "the attempt to bring forward a discussion about the level of cultural education – something which quite often gives reason to think about cultural illiteracy."¹⁰³ The sub-headline to her article read "Latvian Cultural Canon Prepared as Sign of National Belonging and Cultural Memory." She spoke to the painter Džemma Skulme and the philosopher Artis Svece, both of whom were rather sceptical about the whole matter. Skulme said that "if that kind of list was necessary in the first place, then it should have been far more extensive, and it should have been put together in a completely different way." Svece, for his part, argued that "the canon reflects the views of the public, and particularly of experts, vis-à-vis the idea of a 'cultural canon' as such, and that is an idea not from the 21st, but instead from the 19th century. That is why people apparently wanted to include 'classical' elements of Latvian culture on the list, but also to look for less known or forgotten, but also 'valuable' items, no matter what that word means."¹⁰⁴ The authors of the list did not separate out tradition, classical culture, and the canon itself as elements which structure cultural memory.

To conclude this section, let us take a brief look at a Latvian National Theatre production called *Lācis* about the author and Soviet-era official Vilis Lācis. Writing in *Diena*, Zane Radzobe had this to say about the play: "It does appear that an evil eye has been cast upon the view of history at the National Theatre. Māra Zālīte's *Lācis*, as directed by Indra Roga, does not present any vivid qualities of ideology or professionalism. To put it more harshly – the production lacks these. Still, the work has been done in a purposeful way, and that does lead one to pose certain questions – not about Vilis Lācis or the history of Latvia, but instead about those who put this production together."¹⁰⁵ It is worth recalling Oberländer's thesis that "broad circles" of people in Latvia "adapted" to the existing situation beginning in the late 1950s.

In lieu of a conclusion for this section, the author offers his views of historical generations in Latvia during the 20th century. As inspiration for

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Radzobe, Z. (2009), "Neatbildēts jautājums," *Diena*, 27 November 2009, p. 12.

official history policies in Russia, as well as against journalists and politicians from the Russian minority in Latvia.

Articles Devoted to the Subjects and Concepts of History in *Vesti Segodniya*

A total of 552 articles and commentaries were identified in *Vesti Segodniya* (VS). These focused on very different aspects of history, and it is even more difficult than with respect to *Diena* to divide these up into specific thematic categories. Regardless, the author would like to offer the following table centred on articles about history in the paper. This list shows clearly how intensively the newspaper offers materials to its readers to create a political identity similar in content to the historical memory pushed by Russia. That does not mean that VS does not have its own “ideological” line.

Publications in <i>Vesti Segodniya</i> devoted to aspects and concepts of history	Number and percentage of publications
Events in the restored Republic of Latvia	126 (22.82%)
The 65 th anniversary of Latvia's liberation from “fascism”	90 (16.30%)
The historical policies of the Russian Federation	74 (13.40%)
The history of the USSR	65 (11.77%)
Aspects of the history of Western Europe, Central Europe and other countries	62 (11.23%)
The history of the Russian Empire	55 (9.96%)
“(Neo)Nazism” and members of the Latvian Legion	32 (5.79%)
The Republic of Latvia (1918-1940)	19 (3.44%)
Stalinism	17 (3.07%)
The Holocaust	5 (0.9%)

The analysis here is divided into two major blocs: First, there are those VS publications which can basically mark out the newspaper's thinking or its conceptual position. There were 49 articles by Nikolajs Kabanovs (b. 1970), a journalist and parliamentarian from Concord Centre, in which he presents his conceptual views about different aspects of Latvian history and Russian history policy.

From January 2009 until May 2010, *Vesti Segodniya* took part in a “programme of events” aimed at “commemorating the 65th anniversary of Latvia's liberation from fascism.”¹⁰⁸ The programme was presented in late January in 2009 at the House of Moscow, and one of the “main ideological missions of this project” was to “oppose any changing of history that is defended by official Latvian government institutions, the historians of

¹⁰⁸ Chuyanova, E. (2009), “Salaspilskaya tufel'ka,” *Vesti Segodniya* (hereafter, simply VS), 29 January 2009, p. 3.

court, and some members of Latvian society.”¹⁰⁹ The changes to which the paper was referring related to the idea that “Latvia is trying to show that ‘peaceful residents’, police officers and SS legionnaires who took weapons in hand fought against Soviet occupants in favour of Latvia’s independence.”¹¹⁰ More specifically, the paper argued that “the latest Latvian version of history is consistently and with harmony being promoted by local historians, politicians, functionaries and the Latvian mass media.”¹¹¹ There were “groups to investigate fascist crimes and to collect historical information” in 12 Latvian cities in order to help with the programme. There were also NGOs such as the Association of Battlers against the Hitler Coalition, the Russian Association in Latvia, the Union of Citizens and Non-Citizens, the Baltic Centre for Historical, Social and Political Research, the Association of Military Pensioners, and the Rodina Association. There were also historians, regional researchers and other private individuals. The Russian and Belarusian ambassadors to Latvia took part in individual events related to the programme in Jelgava and Riga, although the Russian ambassador was far more active in this regard. Officials and historians from the Russian Federation were also active in pursuing this conceptual line, both in direct and indirect ways. They were regularly given voice in the columns of *VS*.

Among the core positions in the texts is the idea that the Baltic states had a special status in the Russian Empire “during the first quarter of the 19th century” and, later, “as part of the Soviet Union.”¹¹² In November 2009, the Latvian Institute for European Research organized a roundtable discussion at which it was claimed that “the Soviet empire collapsed, and discrimination of the national peripheries ended” – something that “was positive,” Because the republics received “enormous investments, and Latvia was no exception.”¹¹³ Contrasts to this position are seen in articles about the failures of the restored Republic of Latvia in terms of economic development. Of particular importance here were five reports published in *VS* in October 2009 with respect to an article published on the Delfi.lv portal by A. Komarovsky. Journalist N. Sevidova, who authored the five articles, insisted that “Latvia’s economic development down the pro-Western and liberal road” led her to conclude that “only a focus on Russia can save Latvia as a country.”¹¹⁴ A similar idea was expressed by the journalist E. Elydarov, who wrote that “during the last 20 years of free and democratic life, Latvia has lost more people than during the years of repression.”¹¹⁵

VS rejects the idea that the Soviet Union occupied Latvia in 1940. It was in this context that a Russian film called “The Baltic: The History of an

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Sevidova, N. (2009), “Advokat dlya ‘spetsialista po sardinam,’” *VS*, 17 January 2009, p. 4.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Chuyanova, E. (2009), “Deputat Latsis i batraki,” *VS*, 12 February 2009, p.4.

¹¹³ Sevidova, N. (2009), “A stena to ostalis’!,” *VS*, 24 November 2009, p. 4.

¹¹⁴ Sevidova, N. (2009), “My 18 let unichtozhili svoyu ekonomiku,” *VS*, 6 October 2009, p. 5.

¹¹⁵ El’darov, E. (2009), “Nuzhen li nam svoi Nyurnberg?,” *VS*, 21 October 2009, p. 4.

'Occupation'" was shown in Riga in the presence of a member of the Russian Parliament, V. Medinsky. The Russian politician visited *VS* to announce that "the Soviet Union did not occupy Latvia in 1940," because "there were no commanders. From the legal perspective, the term 'occupation' cannot be used by definition with respect to the Baltic states."¹¹⁶ In parallel to the campaign to celebrate the "65th anniversary of the liberation," there were attempts to explain why the doctrine of occupation had been accepted in Latvian political opinion and why it dominated Latvian historiography, official policies vis-à-vis history, and political memory.

The most radical version was proposed by the journalist S. Tishchenko, who wrote: "Neo-Nazism is marching slowly, but convincingly through Latvia. Actually, the word 'neo' can be taken away without any concern. It is Nazis. The only thing is that it is shyly known as nationalism here in our country for the time being."¹¹⁷ The same thought was expressed in a slightly more subtle way and in a different context by the social psychologist A. Sobolyeva after she returned from the "London Forum of Leftists": "Sadly, there is no guarantee that there will be visible defenders of democracy in our country, or that the people will have the energy that is necessary to block the development of 'brown ideas'."¹¹⁸ Such extremist views are not typical of *VS*. The paper usually limits itself to linking the subject of "(neo)Nazism" to anything that has to do with the Latvian Legion and its supporters and defenders.

Another subject involves Latvia's ethnic minorities. On May 8, for instance, *VS* reported on a compendium of papers that had been presented at the headquarters of the RIA Novosti press centre – "Ethnocracy in Present-Day Europe: Violations of National Minority Rights in Estonia and Latvia." Published by the "Historical Memory" foundation in Russia, the compendium was "devoted to the results of the five years that these countries have been in the EU."¹¹⁹ The same issue of the newspaper contained information about an attempt by "Finnish anti-fascists" to block the presentation of the "Latvian film" *The Soviet Story*. They, together with related "night patrols" from Estonia, organized noisy picket lines which, "luckily, coincided with a visit to Helsinki by Russian President Dmitry Medvedev."¹²⁰ Here we see the idea of providing information about negative publicity about Latvia in the Western media and of facilitating that process if at all possible. When a Belgian journalist who had written some of the stories of that type visited Latvia, Elydarov expressed the hope that "similar publications in the Western media will not, of course, change our official historical course right

¹¹⁶ Elkin, A. (2009), "Mne sovetovali v Latviyu ne ekhat'!", *VS*, 15 April 2009, p..2.

¹¹⁷ Tyshchenko, S. (2009), "Molchalivoe soglasie bol'shinstva," *VS*, 5 May 2009, p. 3.

¹¹⁸ "S Annoi Sobolevoi obshchalas' Nat'l'ya Sevidova: Dvadsat' poteryanikh let," *VS*, 3 November 2009, p..5.

¹¹⁹ "Bez pieteta," *VS*, 8 May 2009, p. 1.

¹²⁰ Slyusereva, E. (2009), "Latviskii fil'm vne zakona," *VS*, 8 May 2009, p. 2.

away, but sooner or later the authors of this new reading of history will be forced to adjust their policies."¹²¹

VS, of course, does not ignore attempts to "build bridges" between journalists in Latvia and Russia. One such attempt was a debate organized in April 2009 by the Baltic Forum on the subject "The Cultural and Information Space of Russia and the Baltic States: What Brings Us Together?" However, the paper is more interested in differences between Latvia and Russia. In late June, for instance, a video conference was set up between Moscow and Riga, during which "public activists" in Moscow talked about a report "on violations of the rights of Russian speakers in Latvia and Estonia." One of them was V. Simindei, described as a man who "was born in Riga and speaks the Latvian language freely." He is a journalist and promised help in attracting Russian specialists and promoting the activities of the Russian Foreign Ministry. *VS* reported on a statement from the director of the Institute for European Research, A. Gaponenko: "Manipulation of local residents is occurring under the framework of the Anglo-Saxon concept. Individual historical facts which attract attention are placed into Latvian consciousness with forces such as 'occupation-Legionnaires-heroes'."¹²²

The promised assistance came in early September, when the "Historical Memory" foundation in Moscow released "a unique compendium of documents" about the history of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. There was another book about "violations of the rights of national minorities in Latvia and Estonia." Also, the "well known Russian historian" A. Dyukov and Simindei released the book "Destroy as Many as Possible" which, according to Simindei, was devoted to "the participation of Latvian collaborationists in punitive activities outside of Latvia" during World War II.¹²³

These and many other articles in *VS* show that there is an active attempt at prohibiting the emergence of political memories among Russians in Latvia that would not be in line with the political memory of the Russian Federation. On October 13, 2009, for instance, *VS* published an editorial under the headline "Red Flag Over Riga," which confirmed the desire to preserve unified political memories across generations: "Today these are celebrations for us and them. We remember. We honour our fathers, grandfathers and great-grandfathers. Their heroism has not been forgotten. It will always be with us – forever and ever."¹²⁴

In an article about the laying down of flowers on October 13 at the "Monument to Liberators" in Riga, *VS* quoted Russian historian A. Veshnyakov that the fact that "for the first time since the beginning of Latvia's independence," flowers were also laid down by Riga Mayor Nils

¹²¹ El'darov, E. (2009), "Bel'giets v Muzee okkupatsii, ili 'Opasnye' nablyudeniya inostrantsa," *VS*, 27 October 2009, p. 4.

¹²² Slyusereva, E. (2009), "Vtoroi front nam ne nuzhen," *VS*, 29 June 2009, p. 5.

¹²³ Elkin, A. (2009), "Nuzhno unichtozhat' vsekh!," *VS*, 3 September 2009, p. 6.

¹²⁴ "Krasnyi flag nad Rigoi," *VS*, 13 October 2009, p. 1.

Ušakovs. "This was very important," according to Veshnyakov, because it meant that "times are changing, and the public mood is also changing."¹²⁵ Ušakovs himself told *VS* that "I also laid down flowers at the monument when I was a student, when I was working as a journalist, and when I entered politics. No one should think that my views have changed. I congratulate veterans on their victory."¹²⁶ True, a week later Ušakovs visited the Latvian Occupation Museum to announce that "the crimes of Stalin cannot be transferred to ordinary people" and to confirm once again "that I will visit the Monument of Liberators each year on October 13 and May 9 as mayor of Riga and as an ordinary citizen of Latvia and a patriot of my country."¹²⁷ Here it must be added that for some reason, Ušakovs did not lay down flowers at the monument in Pārdaugava in October 2010, but he told *VS* that he would continue to celebrate May 9 and October 13.

The local Russian historian I. Gusev, like A. Gaponyenko, has looked for the "roots" of the problem in the West, but in the far more distant past. In early September, *VS* informed its readers about a "documentary film called 'Russians in Latvia: Ten Centuries of History'." Gusev expressed the view that "the ancestors of the Latvians and the Russians were in no sense separate," and their "relationship" was interrupted when "the Crusaders arrived in the Baltic lands." That was because "it was right at that time that the Baltic territories were pushed into the cultural and mental field of the West."¹²⁸

There is also another aspect of the "problem" of Russian influence which has to do with the collapse of the USSR. Journalist K. Gaivoronsky: "The detonator for the Soviet collapse was the 'successfully conquered' Baltic region and the Lvov District in 1939 and 1940. What's more, the Baltic states, given their weight class, cannot cause any substantial harm to Russia, but the situation in Ukraine, where the western districts are 'poisoned,' is quite different."¹²⁹ An illustration attached to the article showed a Soviet postage stamp dedicated to September 17, 1939, and the article itself ended with the journalist's conclusion that "the new boundary of the USSR turned into a big problem for the country."¹³⁰ This article stands in contrast to another one the same journalist published on August 13 – "The Fateful Mistake of the General Secretary." In it, he revisited the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and declared it to be one of Stalin's "most serious strategic mistakes." That was not because the borders were "pushed" to the West or because, in May 39, 1939, the "pro-Western" Litvinov was replaced with Molotov – something which "the Germans perceived as a signal to launch negotiations."¹³¹ The

¹²⁵ Maiden, I. (2009), "65-ya osen' bez voyny!," *VS*, 14 October 2009, p. 2.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ Chuyanova, E. (2009), "Gei, balto-slavyane!," *VS*, 7 September 2009, p. 5.

¹²⁹ Gaivoronsky, K. (2009), "Troyansky kon' dlya SSSR," *VS*, 17 September 2009, p.6.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ Gaivoronsky, K. (2009), "Rokovoi proshchet genseka," *VS*, 13 August 2009, p.5.

main mistake was that Stalin did not manage to ensure that “at first the Germans went to war against the British and the French,” so that the USSR could enter the war “in 1942 or 1943, or so” and then ensure that “it would receive all of Eastern Europe on a plate without any particular sacrifices.”¹³² Stalin “lost the chess game with Europe between 1939 and 1941” because “the pact proved to be a mistake.” Unlike the Russian Empire in advance of World War I, however, the “Soviet leader” managed to “create a country” which “repulsed the German invasion.”¹³³

The issue of the East and the West was also addressed clearly in an article by N. Sevidova, which was devoted to “a roundtable of public researchers from Latvia and Russia” who, in the latter half of October,” attended a conference in Riga on the subject “The Historical Policies of the Baltic States and Russia: Finding a Way to Ease the Tensions.” Quoting the Latvian President’s advisor on historical issues, Antonijs Zunda, the journalist wrote, for the first time in the columns of *VS*, about “three periods with respect to the evaluation of which public opinion and academic circles in the two countries differ substantially:

- 1) Were the Baltic states occupied in 1939-1940;
- 2) World War II and the voluntary SS legion of the Latvians;
- 3) The post-war history of Latvia: Liberation or a new occupation?”¹³⁴

Sevidova mentions a suggestion from Kārlis Daukšts that colleagues in Latvia “reject stereotypes about Russia, the Russians and Stalin,” as well as a suggestion from Antonijs Zunda “to view these events with the eyes of the Baltic peoples” – something that would mean “closer positions.”¹³⁵ Participants at the meeting agreed on one thing – “historians in both countries must work together, compare two cultures of memory, compare history textbooks at schools, organize joint master classes for teachers, and organize meetings of this kind more often.”¹³⁶ Sevidova also mentioned that “if there were alternative positions,” then “that would truly be interesting.” She added that this has not happened because “the only persons invited to take part from Russia were those who represented the so-called Western direction. The second wing of historical thought – the one that is Slavophile – was not represented at all.”¹³⁷ The sympathies of the staff at *VS* belong specifically to that wing of historical thought.

Several articles toward the end of the year, however, indicated that *VS* must deal with the fact that in Russia itself, there is no real clarity as to the emphasis that must be placed on official policies related to history and historical memory. First *VS* wrote about a discussion that was held at the

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Sevidova, N. (2009), “Opasnyi produkt,” *VS*, 26 October 2009, p. 4.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

offices of the newspaper *Parlamentskaya gazeta* in Moscow on the subject "Views About European History: Challenges and Threats for Russia." Taking part in the discussion were two members of the Russian Duma G. Gudkov and V. Zhirinovskiy, along with "representatives of the Russian speaking diaspora in the Baltic states." According to the journalist S. Malakhovskiy, one of the solutions to the problem which was described as the meeting as a 'major falsification of history based on the opening of unknown pages,' would be "systematic counter-propaganda at the national level."¹³⁸ On November 19, Malakhovskiy published a broader review of the discussion – one which took up an entire page of the newspaper. Malakhovskiy wrote about the view of Zhirinovskiy that "May 9 is a holy celebration, but it cannot be used to lift up the country in spiritual terms."¹³⁹ Gudkov, who is deputy chairman of the Duma on security issues, was quoted as saying that "falsification of history promotes our (i.e., Russia's – author) weakness" and that "Russia's foreign policy is very poor in terms of information."¹⁴⁰

Dyukov, for his part, argues that "Russia has not yet comprehended its national identity."¹⁴¹ He goes on to say that Russia's "national identity" is hung on just one "nail" – the commemoration of the Great Fatherland War, which brings society together and serves as a "foundation for consensus."¹⁴² He also believes that Russia's "opponents are systematically working to shake up this nail" in the sense that there is "a whole range of people" who are "officially Russian historians, but actually they are Russian speaking historians from Poland and Japan who express concepts that have been formulated in those countries and are being propagandized very actively."¹⁴³ The head of research for the "Historical Memory" foundation, Simindei, has complained that in relation to small countries, Russia has only "individual experts," as opposed to a "Baltic research institute" or a "Baltic department at the Foreign Ministry."¹⁴⁴

Malakhovskiy drew several important conclusions from things that he heard in Moscow. All of the participants in the discussion agreed that "Russia may lose the Russian diaspora abroad" – a diaspora which it needs as "fresh blood" which can serve Russia's "rebirth."¹⁴⁵ A second conclusion was that "Russia today lacks an ideological platform upon the basis of which counter-propaganda could be organized."¹⁴⁶ The journalist does not feel that there is "an axis of ideas or a platform" in Russia which could be used to "develop and implement" counter-propaganda. He added that "this platform

¹³⁸ Malakhovskiy, S. (2009), "Volfovich v gneve," *VS*, 10 November 2009, p. 4.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ Malakhovskiy, S. (2009), "Rossiya protiv sebya?," *VS*, 19 November 2009, p. 6.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

is only now being established” and that problems at this time “are so harsh that the situation may soon become irreversible.”¹⁴⁷

In February 2009, Kabanov wrote that “the main integrative vertical for Russia’s political project in the 21st century is the Victory of 1945.”¹⁴⁸ Latvia, he argued, has a “cycle of quasi-sovereign existence,” which is closely linked to “historical falsification.” “Positive energy,” the author argued, is absolutely necessary in this regard, and “only the Victory” can provide it.¹⁴⁹ In late February, Kabanov took part in a discussion of the theme “The History of the Awakening in Latvia (1988-1991),” which was held at the Moscow office of the “Historical Memory” foundation. The discussion centred on “the phenomenon of national awakening,” reviewing it “in the context of forming new historical mythology.”¹⁵⁰ Kabanov pointed to the head of the foundation, Dyukov, as someone who “recently unmasked the masterpiece of ‘black propaganda’ that was the film *The Soviet Story*.”¹⁵¹

Another historian, A. Petrenko, who is described as a “veteran of Soviet diplomacy,” argued at the discussion that “regimes which fly the battle flag against Russian ‘occupants’ have taken root in Latvia and Estonia” and that they are not only rewriting textbooks, but also, “since the time of the National Awakening, have engaged in total war against the memory of the majority of their population.” This meant an effort “to take away the memory of the Baltic peoples about their own lives and careers in the Soviet era.”¹⁵² Dyukov, for his part, whined about the fact that Russia’s academic institutions have “a sufficiently serious layer of people” who “are sitting on a needle,” and so there is no hope that they will take part in the “battle against revisionists.” On the contrary, these historians even take part in “openly anti-Russian and pseudo-historical projects,” Dyukov went on, adding with regret that there are also “many historians who are, in general terms, good people,” but they “try to distance themselves from everything that has to do with politics.”¹⁵³

Kabanov concluded his thoughts with the question of whether there could be “joint interpretations of Latvia’s history in the USSR, if not from 1940, then from 1990.” He said that he is prepared to look at “aspects of our common history that were positive, not painful” – aspects such as sports, “the construction of factories and ports in Latvia between the 1950s and the 1980s,” and the phenomenon of films from the Riga Film Studio, because then, “we will move from the individual to the general and understand that the science of history is not limited to the battlefield of propaganda.”¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Kabanov, N. (2009), “Energiya Pobedy,” *VS*, 19 February 2009, p. 4.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

Foreshadowing the analysis of this matter by a little bit, one can find that Kabanov's own contributions to the newspaper can be linked most directly to the aforementioned job of counter-propaganda.

A visible example of this is an article Kabanov published on March 25, 2009, under the headline "Sad Memory." In it, the author wrote with much cynicism that "the 'privatization' of repressions in the post-Soviet era has become a style of the countries that were newly established."¹⁵⁵ He categorically rejects the word "genocide" in relation to the repressions, arguing that "it was no accident that after the deportations, the 'partisans' completely lost their foundations."¹⁵⁶

Shortly before the 2009 European Parliament election in which Kabanov was a candidate but did not win office, he published an article called "Russia is Behind Us, But Latvia is Our Country." To it, he attached a photograph of himself standing in Red Square in Moscow. In the article itself, he argued that "the separation is seen not so much on the basis of the ethnic or linguistic principle as it is on the basis of attitudes toward Russia's past and present," adding that "artificial contrasts between that which is 'Russian' (in the sense of the Russian state – author) and that which applies to 'Russian speakers' is not for us."¹⁵⁷ Shortly before the aforementioned European Parliament election, Kabanov published an interview with Dyukov under the title "Information Wars." He described the man as "a principled opponent to Latvia's official historiography." Dyukov told Kabanov that "the falsification of history has become a political instrument that has been consistently used against Russia." At the same time, however, he also claimed that "Russia has never denied and will not deny the tragic pages of our common history and that of Eastern European countries." He also promised to oppose "open falsification."¹⁵⁸

One of the most important theses for Kabanov and for *VS* was formulated in an article that he devoted to "the fateful mistake of [Latvian Popular Front leader] Dainis Īvāns & Co." He wrote that "in geographic and historical terms, we are a separate territory from the West and from Russia. Presumably, the overall consensus can be related to the fact that national reintegration (not in the economic or humanitarian) sense with our big eastern neighbour is not possible in the foreseeable future. If only because Russia does not need this, given that it, as Chancellor Gorchakov put it 150 years ago, 'does not get angry and concentrates instead'."¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁵ Kabanov, N. (2009), "Pechal'naya pamyat'," *VS*, 25 March 2009, p. 2.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ Kabanov, N. (2009), "Za nami Rus'! A Latvija – nasha strana," *VS*, 25 May 2009, p. 4.

¹⁵⁸ Kabanov, N. (2009), "Na ostrie istorii. "Nuzhno, chtoby protivnik ponimal..." *VS*, 1 June 2009, p. 9.

¹⁵⁹ Kabanov, N. (2009), "Da, my natsionalisty. Latviiskie! O rokovikh oshibkakh Dainisa Ivansa i Ko.," *VS*, 8 July 2009, p. 3.

This understanding of Latvia's statehood and sovereignty, of course, makes it impossible to allow that there could be a different understanding of this history. Otherwise it is hard to understand Kabanov's categorical statement that "I refuse to understand why it is acceptable in our country to compare Stalinism and Hitlerism."¹⁶⁰ It does have to be added here that similar thoughts have been expressed by the vice president of the Global Congress of Russian Speaking Jews, V. Engels, who argues that "attempts to equate Communism and Nazism can be explained with the desire to justify complaints about Russia."¹⁶¹ One has to agree that the comparison of Nazism (Hitlerism) and Stalinism is more precise and more in line with historical truth. In this context, one must mention an idea expressed by the president of the International Association of the History of Ghettos and Genocide Against Jews," L. Koval: "It is never too late to publish an historically precise programme of enlightenment with respect to the tragedy of the Holocaust and the role performed therein by the Legionnaires."¹⁶²

Other articles printed by Kabanov are very clearly aimed at advertising Russia's "Historical Memory" foundation and its director, Dyukov. On August 21, for instance, Kabanov advertised three books that were published by the foundation. One was published by the Historical Prospect foundation of Natalya Narochnitskaya. He also publicized an upcoming and "much awaited compendium" dedicated to "collaborationists from Latvia in the territory of Belarus." He also pointed to a collection of documents, "The Baltic States and Geopolitics," which was published by the Moscow Institute of International Relations and the Russian Espionage Service.¹⁶³ All of these books are related to the 70th anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and World War II. The only interesting bit of news presented in the semi-sensational style of *VS* was that Dyukov visited the Occupation Museum, where he bought "Latvian history books."¹⁶⁴

In relation to these articles, one must mention an interview that was published in the newspaper *Latvijas Avīze* on July 23, 2010, with the director of the Latvian Bureau to Protect the Constitution (SAB), Jānis Kažociņš. He was asked about the fact that "in 2009, several purposefully written and tendentious books were published in Russia – ones that related to events in 1939 and 1945 and supported Russia's official understanding of history." The journalist also said that the basic idea of these books was that "the Americans and British cheated you then, so be prepared for the same to happen today." Kažociņš responded with this statement: "You are mostly talking about books from Dyukov's 'Historical Memory' foundation. These are of interest

¹⁶⁰ Kabanov, N. (2009), "Pinchet ne krasibshe Yaruselskogo," *VS*, 15 August 2009, p. 3.

¹⁶¹ Sevidova, N. (2009), "Valery Engel': Nel'z'ya sravnivat' pechi Osventsima i GULAG," *VS*, 26 November 2009, p.5.

¹⁶² Koval', L. (2009), "Chto dal'she?," *VS*, 4 December 2009, p. 7

¹⁶³ Kabanov, N. (2009), "Yavlenie Dyukova Latvii," *VS*, 21 August 2009, pp. 1, 3.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

to our bureau, too. Please remember that we can access documents from the archives of Russia's espionage services only with the permission of the Federal Security Service. In terms of the terminology of Soviet-era security services, such processes would be called 'active measures.' I do not want to speak publicly about this matter to any greater extent."¹⁶⁵

In the first October issue of *VS*, Kabanov published an article about something said by Latvian President Valdis Zatlers – that “May 9 will not be a holiday in Latvia.” Kabanov quoted Zatlers as saying that in 1945, the Nazi occupation regime in Latvia was replaced by “the totalitarian Soviet regime,” which meant “suffering for every Latvian family, and family memories are transferred from generation to generation.”¹⁶⁶ A certain shift in the ideological positions of Kabanov can be seen in an article devoted to an “international scholarly conference” in Pskov on the subject “Russia and Europe in 1939. The Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact: A Forced Compromise or a Long-term Strategy?” Along with Kabanov, Latvia was represented at this conference by O. Puhlyak, I. Gusev and D. Olyekhnovich. The head of the “Russian World” foundation, V. Nikonov, told the conference that “the Great War of the Fatherland is still a factor of spiritual consolidation in Russia.”¹⁶⁷ It is important in this context that Kabanov did point out the fact that the Lithuanian historian L. Truskas feels that the “fact of the occupation” of 1940 “is indisputable” and that it is not at all necessary to agree with “ideological positions and doctrines to establish contacts at a high professional level.”¹⁶⁸

Very different thoughts, however, were expressed by Kabanov when he wrote a metaphorical article titled “Riga’s Imperialistic Verticals.” He looked at the roofs of Riga, stopping at the cupola of the Riga Orthodox Cathedral on Brīvības Street, the “Stalinist high-rise” that is the Latvian Academy of Sciences, and the Latvian Television tower on Zaķusala Island. Kabanov wrote that these buildings establish “well-known unity. The buildings are so dissimilar in functional meaning, but they all represent the style of great imperialism.”¹⁶⁹ Kabanov looked through the lens of imperialism one more time in an article about a book written by the political scientist L. Vorobyeva and published jointly by the “Historical Memory” foundation and the Russian Institute of Strategic Research, “The History of Latvia From the Russian Empire to the USSR.” The central element to Kabanov’s article about the book is a quote from the author to the effect that “the idea of so-called ‘statehood’ for Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia was prepared and matured by special sub-units of German headquarters during the years of World War

¹⁶⁵ Mūrniece, I. (2010), “Nav tā, ka spiegijs tikai uzcienā ar kūciņām,” *Latvijas Avīze*, 23 July 2009, p. 7.

¹⁶⁶ Kabanov, N. (2009), “Zatlers: ‘9 maya v Latvii prazdnikom ne budet!’,” *VS*, 1 October 2009, p. 4.

¹⁶⁷ Kabanov, N. (2009), “Khranit’ vechno,” *VS*, 12 October 2009, p. 4.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Kabanov, N. (2009), “Imperskie vertikaly Rigi,” *VS*, 24 November 2009, p. 2.

this process – priests, professors, PR specialists, politicians, poets and publicists,”¹⁷⁴ because “as members of the interpretative elite (*Deutungselite*) acting mostly (but not always) outside the formal political apparatus, they have a significant share in the reification of memory and meaning in the public-political space.”¹⁷⁵ Here, one can agree with the conclusion of German researcher Eva-Clarita Onken – that “the more obvious ethno-cultural memory divisions that dominate the discussion of social memory and politics in Latvia and Estonia have largely prevented academics from looking more closely into which other groups in society feel a lack of recognition or representation and what effects this has on the political, democratic culture.”¹⁷⁶

Direct dialogue between Latvian and Russian historians can be seen only in exceptional cases. This is partly because the Latvian and Russian media must still engage in important but asymmetrical work that is an important resource in shaping identity – demystification of Stalinist totalitarianism among Russians and Russian-speakers, research into the adaptation of “Soviet man,” and explication of the results of that research to Latvian audiences. That is because the Soviet regime did not exist without the participation of Latvians.

When the Latvian media pursue their memory policy, they must understand that one of the obstacles to an inclusive national or political memory has been the fact that Russian-speakers in Latvia have basically been offered two basic strategies – assimilation or marginalization. Analysis of the articles that were published in *VS* speak more in favour of the idea that most Russian-speakers have chosen the strategy of a counter-identity. It is important to make sure that Russia cannot make selfish use of these processes in the interest of its external cultural and information policies, to say nothing of groups of political influence.

Eva-Clarita Onken argues that many researchers “rightfully point out [that] the political memory that has been constructed and institutionalized in the Baltic states is characterized by a strong narrative of national, collective victimhood. The ‘perpetrator’ or simply the (evil) ‘other’ is, in most cases, Russia, against which Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian national self-perception is formed. [...] There arises, however, a significant tension within a state that, on the one hand, adheres to the ideas of an open society and pluralism and yet, on the other, bases much of its claim to legitimacy on a national narrative of the past (or political memory) that is fundamentally constituted by collective (ethnic) categories not shared by large parts of society.”¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁴ Onken, E.C. (2010), “Memory and Democratic Pluralism in the Baltic States – Rethinking the Relationship,” *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 41:3, p. 291.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p. 284.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p. 290.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 285-286.

The analysis of *Diena* and *Vesti Segodnya* makes it possible to object to this conclusion. The real problem is comparing the crimes of Nazism and Stalinism and declaring these to be "equal." This is something Russia's official historical policies do not want to permit, and the same is true with journalists and politicians in Latvia who serve Russia's interests. In part, this is an issue of a replacement of historical generations, something gradually moving toward its natural solution.

There is also a second objection. As long as Russia does everything possible to use Russian NGOs, political organizations and the media in ensuring that this segment of the Latvian population supports and represents Russia's official historical policies and political memory, it will not be possible to say that these groups of residents are part of an open society or supporters of pluralism in words and, especially, deeds.

It is clear that the generations which will be most important are those born between 1970 and 1990. This means that the generations of post-war immigrants and their memories are gradually disappearing from the stage. The possible changes that this replacement of generations might bring have been addressed by Latvian MP I. Pimenov (Concord Centre) in an interview to *VS* after the 2010 election. Pimenov said that Russians should "internally accept" the fact that the Latvian language is being supported by legislative means, that "we must recognize previous generations for the enormous sacrifices that they bore in the battle against tyranny – Fascism and Stalinism," that "there should be public expressions of respect for those generations" which suffered so that there could be "freedom and democracy in Europe," and that "there must be compassion for the victims of totalitarian regimes in Latvia, which applies both to Hitlerism and Stalinism."¹⁷⁸ "If we do not say that," concluded Pimenov, "then we will not be able to unify the nation," because "the reproduction of the biases of our great grandmothers and great grandfathers is continuing," and it will not be possible to "stop the wind of the sails of Latvian xenophobia."¹⁷⁹ To what extent do these statements by Pimenov represent the views of his colleagues in Concord Centre? Is it true that the driving forces behind the thoughts of Russian politicians in Latvia are found in Moscow? One factor will be whether Concord Centre is ever given a role in the governing coalition during the current session of Parliament. That will not be possible if the party continues to refuse to view Latvian history via the identity of European Russians in Latvia.

¹⁷⁸ Sevidova, N. (2010), "Ryadom, no porozn'," *VS*, 15 October 2010, p. 4.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

The Issue of Compensations in Latvian–Russian Relations¹

Ivars Ijabs

Introduction

The question whether Russia should pay Latvia compensations for the damage caused by the Soviet regime is an integral part of the memory politics in both countries. The possibility of material restitution, which would go beyond a purely ideological controversy about the Soviet occupation, provokes strong feelings both among would-be receivers and would-be donors. During the last twenty years these feelings have often been provoked with political declarations, public statements of politicians and government officials. There has been much less real action, calculations and legally formulated demands. The issue of compensations seems to be one of the bargaining chips in a broader political game between Latvia and Russia, rather than a principled position of the Latvian government. Although some Latvian legal scholars have called for consistent and principled action in this direction,² the political elite has been rather reluctant to pursue this goal seriously. The compensation issue has often been raised by Latvian right-wing politicians, who regard it as a good opportunity to demonstrate their steadfastness *vis-à-vis* Russia. However, other issues, like European Union accession and the Latvian-Russian border treaty, have often overshadowed the compensation issue, so no legally binding steps have been taken until now.

Russia has never seriously discussed the possibility of paying compensations to the Baltic countries. Whenever the Latvian side has raised this issue, the Russian reaction has been very harsh, not to say aggressive. Of course, even a symbolic compensation would challenge Russia's official interpretation of 20th century history. It would put "victorious" Russia on the same level with Germany, which was forced to pay compensation to the victims of the Nazi regime. At the same time, more than pure symbolism might be at stake for Russia. If Russia started to pay compensations to the

¹ The author wants to express his gratitude to Mr. Edmunds Stankēvičs of the Society of the Research of the Occupation of Latvia, and to Ms. Ieva Strode of the marketing and public opinion research centre SKDS for their kind help in preparing this research.

² See Ziemele, I. (2002), "Pagātnes gūstā ar skatu uz nākotni," *Diena*, May 18, 2002.

Baltic countries, serious material interests of the country would be affected. This in turn might affect the fragile social balance in the country. The present Russian elite builds its legitimacy not only on post-Soviet grandeur and enemy images of the West, but also on modest social welfare available to citizens. So, it is quite probable that Russia does not recognize the fact of occupation of the Baltic countries in order to avoid paying compensation.

Both Latvian and Russian politicians use the compensation issue for domestic political purposes. Since the issue affects material interests and concerns the recent past, it seems to be of interest to the public. Unfortunately, there are no reliable data available on what Russian citizens think about paying compensation. The ethnic cleavage in Latvia can be observed in attitudes towards the compensation issue (see Table 1). Most ethnic Russians living in Latvia see compensation claims as unfounded – presumably not only for personal and biographical reasons, but also because of the influence of Russia’s media. While sceptical about the possibility of receiving compensation, many Latvians want to maintain the claim despite not receiving the compensation itself. A similar percentage (around 20%) of both ethnic groups hold a pragmatic view that, since Russia is not going to pay the compensation, there is no reason to demand it.

Table 1, Should Latvia demand compensations from Russia for damages caused by the occupation? (%)

	Ethnic Latvians	Ethnic Russians	Average
Yes, Russia will pay sooner or later	16.7	2.8	10.7
Yes, even though Russia won't pay it	32.0	7.0	21.5
No, Russia won't pay it anyway	24.3	20.0	23.0
No, the claim is unfounded	13.2	48.5	28.2
N/A	13.9	21.7	16.5

Source: SKDS, 2009

Historical and Legal Background

A deeper disagreement about the legal status of Latvia and the Russian Federation underlies the controversies surrounding the compensation issue. This disagreement is rooted in different interpretations of 20th century history that still determine the relationship between the two countries. The compensation issue both reflects and reinforces these conflicting interpretations.

The constitutional doctrine of the Republic of Latvia is based on the recognition of the loss of independence as a result of the Soviet occupation of 17 June 1940. This event was followed by Latvia’s annexation and incorporation into the USSR. The country’s economy was subjected to forced collectivization; great numbers of Latvian citizens were victims of

repressions, including mass deportations, imprisonment and executions; the country was subjected to massive immigration from other Soviet republics, mainly Russia, Belarus and Ukraine. However, since the actions committed by the Soviet Union cannot be regarded as legal, Latvian statehood continued to exist, although the country's independence was extinguished by the occupation.

On 4 May 1990 the Supreme Council of the Latvian SSR restored sovereignty by adopting the Declaration of Independence, which reinstated the country's 1922 constitution (*Satversme*), albeit in a limited way. After the failed *coup d'état* of August 1991 Latvia seized the opportunity to restore its full independence, which was later recognized by the USSR, the US and other major countries. Today's Latvia cannot be regarded as a Soviet successor state, since its incorporation in the USSR was illegal from the very beginning. On the contrary, it is the continuation of the pre-war independent Republic of Latvia, which was illegally occupied by Soviet forces and forcibly incorporated into the USSR. All actions of the Soviet administration resulting from this breach of legality are considered illegal themselves.³ Therefore the country which regards itself as a successor state of the USSR (i.e., Russia) must bear the full responsibility for Soviet crimes against Latvia. These consequences should include the *restitution ad integrum* of the damaged property and lost income, as well as compensations for unlawful repressions against Latvian citizens.

The position of the Russian Federation differs from the Latvian perspective on several significant points. First, it is a strict policy of not recognizing the occupation of Latvia and the two other Baltic states. Although most Russian politicians and legal scholars don't speak of "voluntary" accession of Latvia to Stalin's USSR, they also deny that the occupation has taken place. The recognition of occupation would mean that the USSR has committed an act of aggression, which could be treated as an international crime. This position is clearly unacceptable for Russia, and it obviously will remain so in the nearest future. In most cases Latvia's statements about the occupation are not seen in Russia as the expression of the country's legal position *per se*. They are seen as an excuse for Latvia's "discriminatory" policies towards non-citizens and Russian speakers, regarded by Russia as the "greatest problem" in its relations with Latvia.⁴

Second, Russia has chosen a piecemeal approach towards its status as the successor state of the USSR. On the one hand, the continuity of the Soviet Union is one of the cornerstones of the international position of Russia. It is clearly represented in its inheritance of the Soviet seat in the UN General

³ See Ziemele, I. (2005), *State Continuity and Nationality: the Baltic States and Russia. Past, Present and Future as Defined by International Law*. Leiden, Boston: Martinus Nijhoff, pp. 31-36.

⁴ According to the information on the official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, see <http://www.mid.ru/ns-reuro.nsf/348bd0da1d5a7185432569e700419c7a/f6c78dadede6ef35143256db1004ee8ff?OpenDocument>.

Assembly and the Security Council. On the other hand, Russia does not want to bear full responsibility for the actions of the Soviet Union. These include, *inter alia*, the occupation of the Baltic states and unlawful repressions toward their peoples.

Although most Western legal scholars seem to agree on the issue of occupation, Russia has a different approach to this subject. Russia's first line of argumentation is that there was no state of war between Latvia and the USSR in 1940. Soviet forces marched into the country with the agreement of its government, although this agreement had been forced upon it by a Soviet ultimatum. The following annexation was, however, not regarded an international crime before World War II. Therefore it is impossible to condemn it now. Moreover, the annexation was later recognized by many Western countries, except the US and United Kingdom. Russia's second line of argumentation is that a situation in which most ruling positions in the Baltic republics were filled by native inhabitants of these countries cannot be considered an occupation. Therefore, according to the official position of Russia, the annexation of Latvia to the USSR was legally sound and justified. Moreover, the secession of the Baltic Republics from the USSR in 1990-91 did not proceed in accordance with existing Soviet legislation; therefore Baltic independence can even be treated as illegal.⁵

Early Calculations: 1990-91

The first attempt to calculate the damage done to Latvia by the Soviet occupation took place in 1990, when the USSR still existed. The pro-democratic government of the Latvian SSR, headed by Vilnis Briesis, commissioned the Economic Reform Commission of the Council of Ministers with the task of producing a calculation about the mutual economic accounts between Latvia and the USSR during the years of Soviet rule.⁶ Research was conducted by economist and statistician Modris Šmulders based on data from the Latvian State Committee on Statistics, Latvia's largest archives, the Ministry of Finance and other sources.⁷

Šmulders' calculations include the property nationalized in the 1940s; financial accounts with the USSR, as well as the exchange of goods and services in the entire post-war period; losses suffered by Latvia's residents

⁵ Chernichenko, S. (2004), "Baltic "Occupation" and the Violation of the Rights of Russian Speakers," *Russian Journal of World Politics, Diplomacy and International Relations*, No, 5 Vol, 50, pp. 115-24.

⁶ "LPSR MP rīkojums Nr. 90-r par Latvijas un PSRS savstarpējo tautsaimniecisko attiecību (ekonomisko norēķinu bilances) grāmatu," in Upmalis, I., Tilgass, Ē., Dinevičs, J., Gorunovs, A. (2006), *Latvija – PSRS karabāze. 1939-1998: materiāli un dokumenti par Padomju armijas atrašanos Latvijā un tās izvešanu*. Rīga: Zelta grauds, p. 315.

⁷ Šmulders, M. (1990), *Who Owes Whom? Mutual Economic Accounts Between Latvia and the USSR, 1940-1990*. Riga: The Economic Reform Commission of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia; the Latvian state committee on statistics, the Latvian Association of Scientists.

as a result of the Stalin regime's policies of terror and deportation; and a comparison between the developmental levels of Latvia, the USSR and other nations currently and in the pre-war period. Šmulders' work tries to provide an all-encompassing overview of Latvian–Soviet economic relations. It goes as far back as the conditions of the peace treaty from 1920, which obliged Soviet Russia to return property taken from Latvia during the First World War. This task was never accomplished, and Latvia suffered losses of 310 million gold roubles.⁸

The main damage, however, was done after the Soviet occupation. According to Šmulders, Latvia consistently subsidized the rest of the USSR in all significant branches of the economy: finance, agriculture, consumer goods, and others. Soviet centralized investments in Latvian industry and infrastructure were rather small compared to the outflow of money and resources to the rest of the USSR. Šmulders also calculated the damage done to the population by Stalinist policies. Latvia lost 355,000 people (including those who fled to the West), and was subjected to a massive inflow of migrants. This damage is assessed by Šmulders to be 10.5 billion roubles. The overall cost of the occupation is estimated at 39.5 billion roubles.⁹ This sum doesn't include the cost of imposition on Latvia of an inefficient model of a planned economy, which made the country backward in comparison with other similar pre-war economies of the region, e.g., Finland.

Šmulders' work is not fully comprehensive. There is no list of sources and not much attention is devoted to methodology. The author admits this himself in the preface, stating that "a more extensive overview of Latvian and Soviet economic relations will be published at the end of 1990,"¹⁰ but this never happened. The main aim of this publication was not to demand compensations from Russia. In the early 1990s this seemed quite unrealistic, and Šmulders himself recognized that. The main intention of the research was to refute the notion that Latvia and the two other Baltic republics were subsidized by the rest of USSR and therefore indebted to it themselves. This argument was often used by conservative Soviet politicians against the possibility of the Baltic republics leaving the Union, which was increasingly seen as the main political goal by these countries themselves.¹¹ Therefore it was important to show that all Soviet claims about the "indebtedness" of the Balts to the USSR were unfounded, and that the Soviet Union had big debts to the Baltic republics itself. Even companies formally owned by the Union (not by the Latvian SSR) were built with local funding.

Despite the fact that this research was published in different circumstances and with slightly different aims, Šmulders' little booklet

⁸ Ibid, p. 5.

⁹ Ibid, pp.34-5.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 4.

¹¹ "Kak nam obnovlyat' nash soyuz – obshchimi usilyami ili kazhdy budet "sam za sebya"? Intervyu s chlenom Politburo CK KPSS Y.D. Maslyuikovym," *Izvestiya*, March 10, 1990.

plays a role in today's memory politics in Latvia. It still provides the only calculation of the damage incurred by the Soviet occupation to Latvia. As such, it is often quoted as a useful source for further investigation, and also as a symbol of the struggle for justice with the former oppressor, Russia. A new commission, created in 2005 by the Latvian government for the calculation of the damage done by the Soviet occupation, relies extensively on this work (Šmulders himself died in 1994). It was often referred to also during the long and complicated process of the withdrawal of Russian troops.

The Russian Troop Withdrawal and the Compensation Issue: 1991-1996

During the period immediately after the restoration of independence, the compensation issue was discussed mainly in the context of the withdrawal of the Russian armed forces. The troop withdrawal was the main issue in Latvian-Russian relations during this period and ended successfully in August 1994. By this time all Russian troops had left Latvia, with the exception of the 800 people staff of Skrunda early warning radar base in western Latvia (operational until 1998) and a significant number of retired military officers, who were allowed to stay in Latvia.

During the bilateral talks on troop withdrawal (1992-1994) Russia wanted to prolong its military presence in Latvia. The compensation issue was used as one of the main pretexts for delaying the withdrawal and engaging in lengthy discussions. Latvian politicians, on the other hand, were completely conscious of the threat posed to the newly-independent state's sovereignty by the presence of foreign military forces on its soil. One additional reason for a swift withdrawal was the ecological damage: the commission of the Latvian government calculated the damage caused by the presence of the Soviet army to the environment of Latvia at 13.5 billion roubles.

During the process of negotiations the compensation issue was raised mostly by the Russian side. It was done in two forms. First, Russia suggested that Latvia had to compensate property and investments of the withdrawing Russian army. Second, Russia wanted Latvia to officially waive all future claims to compensations for the damage done to the country by Soviet rule. These claims weren't included in the final version of the Latvian-Russian Treaty on the Full Withdrawal of the Armed Forces of Russian Federation from the Republic of Latvia, signed in 30 April 1994. However, they played a significant role in the negotiations. On 27 January 1992 President of the Russian Federation Boris Yeltsin passed the decree on the Transition of the Northwestern Group of Armed Forces and of the Baltic Fleet under the Jurisdiction of the Russian Federation.¹² It was the first document from the

¹² "Ukaz Prezidenta Rossiskoi Federatsii o perekhode Svero-zapadnoi gruppy voisk i Batliiskogo flota pod yurisdiktsiyu Rossiskoi Federatsii," in Upmalis et al., (2006) *Latvija – PSRS karabāze*, pp. 315, 318.

Russian side explicitly stating the intention to withdraw its armed forces from the Baltic states.

On February 1, official talks between Latvia and Russia were opened in Riga by the Vice-Prime minister of Russia, Sergei Shakrai, and the State Minister of Latvia, Jānis Dinevičs. Also the actual withdrawal of forces began at about the same time. Nevertheless, the Russian position changed swiftly. In 10 July Yeltsin signed the Helsinki Summit Declaration of the Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe (now – OSCE), which mentioned explicitly the need for “the early, orderly and complete withdrawal of such foreign troops from the territories of the Baltic states.”¹³ One month later, however, Russian foreign minister Andrei Kozyrev presented all three Baltic governments with conditions for the withdrawal of troops. These included not only providing all ethnic Russians with “equal rights and dignity,” especially regarding citizenship and language rights, but also waiving all possible claims to territories and compensation for the damage caused by the Soviet occupation. Kozyrev’s proposal included also the demand for compensation for the real estate lost by the Russian military due to withdrawal from the Baltic states, including for all premises built for the army since 1940.¹⁴ This proposal was met by indignation in Latvia. The Latvian answer mentioned the peace treaty of 1920 as the legal basis for Latvian–Russian relations, and warned that any actions by Russia “that resemble the revival of Russian imperial ambitions [...] may seriously complicate the development of good neighbourly relations.”¹⁵

In the meantime the Baltic states secured backing from the international community. In 25 November 1992 the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution on “Complete withdrawal of foreign military forces from the territories of the Baltic states,” which urged Russia to withdraw and expressed a concern about “the continuing absence of any agreements for the complete withdrawal of foreign military forces from the territories of Estonia and Latvia.”¹⁶

The compensation demands were taken seriously by the Latvian side. The Latvian delegation prepared documents that showed the groundless nature of such claims. The data presented to the Russian delegation was based on Šmulders’ research, as well as on other calculations, for example the capital investments of the Latvian SSR in Soviet army facilities (around 23 million roubles), as well as Latvian investments in other Soviet republics (316.9 million roubles). According to Jānis Dinevičs, after receiving these calculations the Russian delegation realized that the compensation for

¹³ Point 15, CSCE Helsinki Summit declaration “The Challenges of Change,” http://www.osce.org/documents/mcs/1992/07/4048_en.pdf.

¹⁴ Kozyrev’s proposals, which were submitted to the Baltic foreign ministers in Moscow on 6 August 1992, are reproduced in Upmalis et al, (2006), *Latvija – PSRS karabāze*, pp. 326-328.

¹⁵ The answer of the Latvian delegation to Kozyrev’s proposals is reproduced in *Ibid*, pp. 329-30.

¹⁶ Available at <http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/resolutions/47/21GA1992.html>.

premises had become improbable.¹⁷ However, the compensation issue remained on the table during the subsequent negotiations as well. The final deal was struck in early 1994. The Russian–Latvian treaty on withdrawal of troops did not include any specific provisions for compensations. It only stated that Russia is entitled to receive a “just compensation” for the immovable property, built or acquired by the armed forces of Russian Federation.¹⁸ This formulation doesn’t include property built by and for the Soviet army during the occupation period.

International factors played a significant role in the abandonment of compensation claims by Russia and the successful conclusion of the withdrawal negotiations. The deal was to a large extent mediated by the US administration, especially by US President Bill Clinton, who personally helped to broker the deal with his Russian counterpart, Boris Yeltsin. The US also agreed to sponsor significant sums to Russia for officer housing in support for troop withdrawals from Latvia and Estonia.¹⁹ It played a very positive role in the abandonment of compensation demands, since the bad living conditions of the military had been a significant source of social pressure in Russia.

During this early post-Soviet period, the compensation issue was embedded in the process of both Latvia and Russia searching for their new identities in the international system. Latvia wanted to re-establish its full sovereignty; Russia wanted to be recognized as an influential player in European politics. The compensation issue was used as a bargaining chip to achieve these aims. Latvia was successful in mobilizing international support which allowed it to regain full control over its territory without paying any significant compensation. Russia, on the other hand, was still struggling for its international position. Hence, it had to face further compensation demands from the Baltic countries after the withdrawal of forces.

In January 1996, when Russia was going to become a member of the Council of Europe, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted Opinion No. 193 on Russia’s membership. According to this document, Russia agreed to “assist persons formerly deported from the occupied Baltic states or the descendants of deportees to return home according to special repatriation and compensation programs which must be worked out.”²⁰ Russia not only recognized the fact of occupation here. It is also the only written document where Russia agrees to compensate the damage

¹⁷ Dinevičs J. (2006), “Latvijas un Krievijas delegāciju sarunas par armijas izvešanu,” in Upmalis et al., *Latvija – PSRS karabāze*, pp.105-19, p. 110.

¹⁸ Available at <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=58916&from=off>, clause 7, part 5.

¹⁹ In 1993 at the Vancouver summit Bill Clinton announced the Russian Officer Housing Resettlement program. See Siliņš I. (2008), “Rīga Journal,” in Auers D., ed., *Latvia and the USA. From Captive Nation to Strategic Partner*. Riga: Academic Press of the University of Latvia, pp. 147-61, p. 156.

²⁰ Available at <http://assembly.coe.int/Documents/AdoptedText/ta96/eopi193.htm#1>, article 7, point xii.

caused by the Soviet occupation. The context is important here. All three Baltic countries were admitted to the Council of Europe earlier. For Russia, membership was very desirable from the point of view of its international standing and influence. However, its membership application was suspended on 2 February 1995 because of the grave human rights violations in Chechnya. When it resumed the accession procedure on September 27, 1995, Russia was clearly committed to getting membership, even at the price of some non-binding promises toward the Baltic states. Russia was admitted to the Council of Europe on 28 February 1996. The promise to compensate the victims of deportations, however, was never fulfilled.

The Lithuanian Law and Baltic Cooperation

On 22 August 1996 the Latvian parliament adopted the Declaration on the Occupation of Latvia, which asked all states of the world to acknowledge the fact of the occupation, as well as to “help Latvia to overcome the results of the occupation by providing political and economical assistance.”²¹ On 12 September of the same year five parliamentarians submitted an official query to the government, asking what had been done in order to make Russia pay compensations. The answer of the government was rather evasive: Latvia wanted to maintain the claim in intergovernmental talks, but Russia tended to ignore it, therefore it was not reasonable to press the claims, as no indisputable data were available.²²

During 1996–2000 the issue of compensations was rarely mentioned in political debates. During this period Latvia tried hard to prepare the ground for its future membership in Western organizations, in particular the European Union and NATO. Relations with Russia were seen by many Western actors as a litmus test of political maturity for Latvia. Moreover, Latvia’s international prestige was impaired by the citizenship and language issues, constantly raised by Russia in various international forums. Compensation claims did not serve well in a situation when Latvia wanted to present itself to the world as a civilized, European and forward-looking nation.

However, the issue of compensations became topical in Latvia again after 13 June 2000, when the Lithuanian Parliament adopted a *Law on Compensation of Damages Resulting from the Occupation by the USSR*. One of the reasons for adopting this law was probably the forthcoming parliamentary elections, whereby the conservative nationalist government, led by Andrius Kubilius, wanted to mobilize its waning electorate. The law obligated the Lithuanian

²¹ “Deklarācija par Latvijas okupāciju,” available at <http://vip.latnet.lv/LPRA/deklaracija.html>.

²² Available at http://www.saeima.lv/steno/st_96/sa1209.html; see also Jemberga S. (1996), “Latvija vēlas apspriest ar Krieviju jautājumu par PSRS okupācijas laika nodarīto zaudējumu kompensāciju,” BNS news portal, 13 September 1996, available at http://news.lv/BNS/1996-09-13/LATVIJA_VELAS_APSPRIEST_AR_KRIEVIJU_JAUTAJUMU_PAR_PSR_S_OKUPACIJAS_LAIKA_NODARITO_ZAUDEJUMU_KOMPENSAC.

government to form a delegation, to calculate the damages, and to submit a written estimate to the Russian authorities as early as 1 November 2000.

The Lithuanian initiative had a loud echo in Latvia. Three days later, at the meeting of the Baltic Council of Ministers in Pärnu, all three Baltic heads of government, including Latvian Prime Minister Andris Bērziņš, expressed their confidence that Baltic compensation claims to Russia were well-founded.²³ Among the Latvian political elite, however, the reaction to the Lithuanian law and possible Latvian action was far from unanimous. Latvian President Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga, when asked by a journalist, gave a rather cautious answer about possible compensation claims. Such a step would significantly aggravate relations with Russia. Moreover, it was clear that Russia would not pay anything, since it does not recognize the fact of occupation. However, Vīķe-Freiberga encouraged further research and analysis of the damage caused by the occupation, which could eventually end up in a comprehensive publication regardless of whether compensations were demanded or not.²⁴ Other politicians were more outspoken. Long-time foreign minister and one of the leading architects of the Latvian–Russian relations Valdis Birkavs openly stated that compensation demands were the wrong way to achieve “well-ordered relations with Russia.”²⁵

It seems that in 2000 the Latvian ruling elite hoped for significant improvements in relations with the new Russian administration, headed by Vladimir Putin. Although proposals to follow the Lithuanian example were voiced by journalists and parliamentarians, most decision-makers met them with caution and scepticism. The “inappropriateness” of compensation claims during a “period of improvement” in bilateral relations was mentioned.

Nevertheless, nationalist forces in the parliament revived the compensation issue a few months later, in October 2000. Eleven deputies of the pro-government nationalist party “TB/LNNK” submitted a draft law “On the Compensation of Damage Caused by the Occupation of the USSR.” This proposal obliged the government to form a delegation, to inform the Russian side about the claims, to seek the support of international organizations, as well as to create a special foundation “in order to compensate Latvian people for deportations, forced labour, illegal arrests and executions, for repressions of the occupation regime, for lost and damaged property.”²⁶ The Lithuanian law clearly served as a model for this initiative. The law had the same structure and the wording was often identical.²⁷ Nevertheless the law was

²³ “Kompensācijas ir pamatotas,” *Lauku avīze*, 17 June 2000.

²⁴ “Prezidentes viedoklis,” *Jaunā avīze*, 29 June 2000; Ločmele N. “Prezidente: Latvijai jāstāda okupācijas zaudējumu bilance,” *Diena*, 29 June 2000.

²⁵ Sizova J. “Birkavs apšaubā okupācijas kompensācijas pieprasīšanas lietderību no Krievijas,” BNS news portal, 2 July 2000. Available at http://news.lv/BNS/2000-07-02/Birkavs_apsauba_okupācijas_komp?nsācijas_pi?prasisanas_li?td?ribu_no_Kri?vijas.

²⁶ Available at <http://www.saeima.lv/saeima7/reg.likprj>.

²⁷ On the Lithuanian law, see Žalimas D. (2003), “Commentary to the Law of the Republic of Lithuania on Compensation of Damage Resulting from the Occupation of the USSR,” In Ziemele I. (ed.), *Baltic Yearbook of International Law*, pp. 97-164.

rejected at the plenary session of 12 October, as only 14 MPs supported it. A majority of 56 abstained although the legislation was initiated by a party included in the ruling coalition. One can assume that the initiative of the “TB/LNNK” was simply an attempt to attract public attention: a majority was deliberately not secured, and no immediate reactions followed the failure. When asked about the causes of withholding their support, most deputies referred to the low quality of the proposed legislation, the hopelessness of such an enterprise, the steadfastness of the Russian position, the need to coordinate the actions of all three Baltic states, and other reasons.²⁸ However, it became clear that the compensation issue, although often invoked in domestic politics, was not supported by the whole Latvian ruling elite, especially when it came to legally binding steps *vis-à-vis* Russia.

The context for Baltic cooperation changed in 2000 after the parliamentary elections of 2 October, when Algirdas Brazauskas’ Social Democratic Union won the elections in Lithuania, and the centre of political gravity moved significantly to the left. Although Lithuania was the first Baltic country to adopt legislation about compensations, its new elite did not support pressing the issue either at home or on the international level. The Baltic Assembly, the inter-parliamentary consultative organization of all three Baltic states, negotiated a joint declaration about compensations at its 17th session, which took place on 7–9 December 2000, in Vilnius. The proposed declaration was not adopted mainly due to Lithuanian objections – most Latvian and Estonian delegates voted for it. The Baltic Assembly returned to this issue four years later, in December 2004, this time successfully. The political context, however, was rather different.

Russian Reactions

The first reactions of Russia towards Baltic compensation claims were rather lukewarm. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation issued a memorandum in 2000 regarding the Lithuanian law, claiming that all compensation demands are unfounded and the occupation of the Baltic countries never took place. Some Russian media expressed astonishment about the insolence of the Balts. Russian diplomats, including the ambassador to Latvia, Igor Studennikov, emphasized the futility of all compensation claims.²⁹ Nevertheless the question of compensations was not among the priorities of Latvian–Russian relations during this time.

A new development was initiated in 2003 by Russian ultra-nationalist politician and *Duma* member Viktor Alksnis. Being of Latvian descent, he at the same time was one of the most active opponents of the breakdown of the Soviet Union, and, especially, of the newly independent Baltic countries.

²⁸ Kuzmina I., “Latviskā atturēšanās...” *Lauku avīze*, 17 October 2000.

²⁹ “Vēstnieks: Krievija neatbild par padomju režīma izdarītajiem cilvēktiesību pārkāpumiem,” *BNS News Portal*, 6 September 2002.

Being an independent deputy without a clear party affiliation, Alksnis often used opportunities to criticize the ethnic and citizenship policies of the Baltic countries. In 15 January 2003 he attacked the Lithuanian compensation law, as well as the most recent pronouncements of the Estonian Foreign minister Kristina Ojuland, who on 5 December 2002 encouraged similar actions in her speech before the Estonian parliament. Alksnis used the well-known argument about “great Soviet investments” in the Baltic republics and proposed the Duma to obligate the government to prepare Russia’s own calculations against Baltic claims. Alksnis was not particularly aggressive in his demands, admitting that “we don’t have to make any claims to them right now.”³⁰ Nevertheless the *Duma*, dominated by the pro-government group “Unity” (the future “United Russia”), rejected Alksnis’ initiative. This failure, however, didn’t stop him. A month later, Alksnis and 104 other Duma members (including such prominent figures as Vladimir Zhirinovskiy and Gennady Zyuganov) submitted an inquiry to the Accountants Chamber of the Russian Federation. It obliged this chief accountant institution to prepare reliable calculations of Soviet investments in the Baltic republics and the Baltic “debt” to Russia.³¹

Further developments on these issues took place when the Baltic states had already been admitted to EU and NATO. The course of events seems to suggest that both sides, Latvia and Russia, had rather different expectations from the dual enlargement. Latvia hoped that its membership would increase international support for its claims against Russia, including compensation claims. The Russian side, on the contrary, expected that the accession of the Baltic countries would lead to increasing pressure from the EU and NATO to abandon these claims in the name of good relations with Russia. Neither was the case.

In Estonia, the Estonian State Commission on Examination of the Policies of Repression (IVKRPI) established by the parliament in 1992, completed its work in 2004. Its goal had been to produce a scientifically reliable report on damages caused by the Soviet occupation. In 2004, it published *The White Book*, which provides a well-documented basis for dealings with Russia about the Soviet past.³² Around the same time in Latvia, the issue of compensations was revived in Latvia.

In August 2004 five Latvian right-wing MPs proposed a legislative initiative about the denunciation of Soviet crimes.³³ The proposed declaration, which ultimately failed to get parliamentary support, demanded not only compensation for communist crimes, but also the “decolonization”

³⁰ Available at: <http://wbase.duma.gov.ru/steno/nph-sdb.exe>, 15 January 2003.

³¹ Available at: <http://v-alksnis.livejournal.com/39320.html#cutid1>.

³² The Estonian State Commission on Examination of the Policies of Repression (2005), *The White Book— losses inflicted on the Estonian nation by the occupation regimes*. Tallinn: Estonian Encyclopedia Publishers.

³³ Jemberga S., “Atdzimst ideja prasīt kompensāciju,” *Diena*, 4 August 2004.

of the country, that is the repatriation of former Soviet citizens still living in the country. Russian politicians reacted to the proposed declaration immediately. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement denouncing all compensation claims as unfounded. Mikhail Margelov, the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Federation Council, jokingly compared Latvian claims with possible claims of the US to the Scandinavian vikings and suggested that Russia in its turn should demand compensation for the deeds of Latvian Red Riflemen, who supported Lenin and fought on the Bolshevik side during the Russian Civil war of 1918-1920.³⁴ More importantly, on 30 September 2004 the Accountants Chamber produced a report stating that there were “unsolved questions” both about the Baltic share in the former Soviet debt (which supposedly came to 3.06 billion US dollars) and about the compensations due to Russia for the property of the former USSR left in the Baltic countries.³⁵

Needless to say, the statement of the Accountants Chamber produced a lot of negative reactions the Baltic countries. Latvian public opinion did not see the Russian report as an answer to the Balts’ own compensation claims, but rather as a new expression of Russia’s arrogance towards its former colonies.³⁶ Latvian President Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga, who had previously been rather sceptical about the whole compensation issue, this time urged those Latvian citizens who had suffered from Soviet repressions to demand compensation from Russia individually.³⁷ Foreign Minister Artis Pabriks even promised state support for those victims of Soviet repressions who would decide to sue Russia in the European Court of Human Rights (these promises, however, never took any concrete shape).³⁸ Finally, on 19 December 2004, the Baltic Assembly adopted a Resolution urging the governments “to initiate negotiations with Russia and Germany on compensating damage caused by the occupations.”³⁹ These activities led to even more indignation in Russia. The official reactions were rather moderate. However, talk of the “shameless Balts” received ever more attention in the Russian public discussion. Even such seemingly unrelated politicians as the governor of Kemerovo oblast’ in Siberia, Aman Tuleev, found it necessary to express his negative views on the Baltic compensation demands.⁴⁰

³⁴ Lyashenko, A. “Latviya: deportirovat’ ‘okkupantov!’” *Krasnaya zvezda*, 13 August 2004.

³⁵ “Mezhdru Rossiei i stranami Baltii do sikh por ne resheny finansovoye i imushchestvennyye problemy,” available at <http://www.ach.gov.ru/ru/news/archive/389/>.

³⁶ See, e.g., Volkinšteine Z., “Krievija no Baltijas valstīm pieprasa trīs miljardus dolāru,” *Vakara Ziņas*, 4 October 2004.

³⁷ Fridrihsone M., “Aicina aplēst kompensāciju,” *Dienas Bizness*, 15 October 2004.

³⁸ “Pabriks: valsts varētu atbalstīt okupācijas režīmu represēto indivīdu prasības starptautiskās tiesās,” *LETA news portal*, 22 December 2004.

³⁹ Available at: <http://www.baltasam.org/?DocID=256>.

⁴⁰ Tuleyev, A., “Novaya nota v starikh perpevakh. Eshcho raz k voprosu o kompensatsii za ‘okupatsiyu,’” *Versiya*, 41, October 25, 2004, p. 10.

The Border Treaty and the Compensation Commission

At the end of 2004 the Latvian government openly declared that its priority in relations with Russia was not compensation claims. The Speaker of Parliament Indulis Emsis of the ruling Union of Greens and Farmers openly declared that the issue of compensations “has no prospects.”⁴¹ In short, the priority of the Latvian government of that time was the border treaty. The Latvian–Russian border treaty was initialized as early as 1997. However, mainly due to the reluctance of the Kremlin, the treaty remained unsigned and unratified until 2007.⁴² In late 2004 there were signs from the Russian side that the treaty could be signed in Moscow on 10 May 2005. That was a desirable prospect for Latvia because of the interest of the EU in this problem. Thus, one can understand why the compensation issue was not discussed much in early 2005. Although the government of Aigars Kalvītis had no support from the more nationalist oriented groups of the political elite in questions related to Latvian–Russian relations, his government was strongly oriented towards the signing of the treaty.

However, the situation changed drastically on 26 April 2005, when the Latvian government decided to attach to the border treaty a unilateral declaration. It declared the treaty a purely technical document, the signing of which did not mean that Latvia waives its claims to the Abrene district, lost by Latvia since the second Soviet occupation of 1944. This document also contained implicit indication of compensation claims, since it stated that Latvia “doesn’t link the signing of the agreement with the much broader question of the elimination of the consequences of the illegal occupation.”⁴³ As might have been predicted, the Russian side refused to sign the agreement with such a declaration that included implicit territorial claims. Vladimir Putin stated that Russia is ready to sign the agreement if Latvia (as well as Estonia) gave up their “stupid territorial claims.”⁴⁴ Latvia, however, refused to recall its unilateral declaration.

On 7 May the US President George W. Bush visited Riga, where he gave a speech explicitly mentioning the Soviet occupation of the Baltic countries and its grim consequences.⁴⁵ Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga went to Moscow on 9 May; however, the border agreement was not signed there. Hopes to sign the border agreement had evaporated, but Latvia received the symbolic confirmation of Western support for its policy. This was a moment when

⁴¹ “Emsis neatbalsta kompensāciju prasīšanu Krievijai,” *LETA news agency*, 15 October 2004.

⁴² See Rostoks T. (2006), “The Border Issue,” in Muižnieks N. (ed.) *Latvian–Russian Relations: Domestic and International Dimensions*. Riga: University of Latvia Press, pp. 131–9.

⁴³ Quoted in “Krievija prasa Latvijai atteikties no robežlīgumam pievienotās deklarācijas,” *Lea-Itar Tass*, 29 April 2005.

⁴⁴ “Putin prizval strany Baltii otkazatsya ot ‘duratskikh trebovany,’” *Grani.ru*, 10 May 2005, available at <http://www.grani.ru/Politics/World/Europe/m.89032.html>.

⁴⁵ George W. Bush, “Remarks in Riga,” 7 May 2005, available at: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=73632&st=Riga&st1>.

the compensation issue returned triumphantly to the Latvian political scene as an expression of Latvian indignation for the unsigned border treaty. On May 12 parliament was supposed to vote on the new EU Constitution, as well as some minor questions. However, the “Declaration on Condemnation of the Totalitarian Communist Occupation Regime Implemented in Latvia by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics” was suddenly included on the agenda and swiftly adopted. This document envisaged the creation of an expert commission to calculate the loss and damages inflicted by the Soviet regime. It also obliged the government “to continue maintaining claims against the Russian Federation regarding compensations for loss and damages caused to the Latvian state and its population during the occupation.”⁴⁶ As the last from the Baltic countries, Latvia had finally expressed its compensation claims in legislative form.

The commission was created in 5 August 2005, and it originally included 18 people – mainly public servants, but also some lawyers and historians. The commission was led by a public servant, Edmunds Stankēvičs, who at the same time served as a high-ranking official in the State Chancellery. During the following three and a half years it commissioned and financed 25 research projects on the damage caused by the Soviet occupation. They mainly dealt with three areas: damages done to the Latvian economy, demographic damages, and damages to the Latvian environment. The research was carried out by professional scientists – economists, demographers, historians, statisticians, archival specialists, and others. A lot of attention was devoted to methodological problems. Along with the three main topics the commission sponsored several other investigations concerning the consequences of the Soviet occupation of Latvia, for example, the fate of Latvian archives transported to Russia, damage done to Latvian religious confessions, to the Latvian cultural heritage, and others. The commission came to the conclusion that due to the Soviet occupation Latvia lost about 123 billion Lats of national income, if compared to Finland. Soviet policies have also caused a loss of at least 21 million men-years. The environment of Latvia has suffered damage of at least 365 million Lats.⁴⁷

The reaction of Russia, as well as of most Latvian Russian-speaking politicians and media, towards the declaration and the activities of the commission was negative. The main arguments remained the same: Russia is not responsible for Stalin’s crimes; the occupation of Latvia has never

⁴⁶ The Saeima of the Republic of Latvia, ‘The Declaration on Condemnation of the Totalitarian Communist Occupation Regime Implemented in Latvia by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics’, available at http://www.saeima.lv/Lapas/Deklaracija_an.htm.

⁴⁷ “Informatīvais ziņojums par Ministru kabineta izveidotās Komisijas PSRS totalitārā komunistiskā okupācijas režīma upuru skaita un masu kapu vietu noteikšanai, informācijas par represijām un masveida deportācijām apkopošanai un Latvijas valstij un tās iedzīvotājiem nodarīto zaudējumu aprēķināšanai darbību laikā no 2005.gada 5.augusta līdz 2009.gada 1.augustam.” Available at <http://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/vk/starpinstitucijas-sanaksmes-komisijas/komisija-psrs-okupācijas-rezīma/>.

taken place; Latvia itself is indebted for large Soviet investments. A Russian-speaking MP from the left-wing party *For Human Rights in United Latvia*, Jakovs Pliners stated that demanding compensations for communist crimes from Russia would also imply claims to Germany, where Karl Marx was born, to Georgia, where Stalin was born, and to Latvia itself, where the renowned communist Pēteris Stučka was born.⁴⁸ As for official relations with the Kremlin, although the Declaration obliged the government “to sign a special agreement between the Republic of Latvia and the Russian Federation which will specify mutual liabilities in covering material expenses,” nothing was done to fulfil this obligation.

The Russian leadership did not want to escalate the situation with harsh reactions to Latvian claims because of the unsolved border issue, which also damaged Russia’s international reputation. The reaction followed later, after Vladimir Putin in early March 2006 had visited Budapest and Prague, where he recognized Russia’s “moral responsibility” for the Soviet invasions of 1956 and 1968. Soon after that the counsellor of the Russian President, Igor’ Pavlovsky, stated frankly that if the Baltic countries wanted to receive Russia’s apologies, like Czech Republic and Hungary received them, they have to waive all compensation claims.⁴⁹ Russia’s recognition of its moral responsibility is thus offered as a sort of reward for the abandonment of claims for material compensation.

However, the Latvian elite has not been active in maintaining the pressure on Russia about compensations. After the 2006 Saeima elections the main protagonist of the compensation issue, Aleksandrs Kiršteins, was not re-elected into the parliament. A few right-wing politicians expressed their interest about the work of the Commission, which meanwhile continued. Nevertheless, the border agreement and the intensification of economic cooperation dominated the agenda of Latvian–Russian relations. Finally, in 16 June 2009 the Latvian parliament suspended the work of the Commission, ostensibly because of austerity arising from the severe economic crisis. Although about half a million lats have already been spent on the commission, its future remains unclear. In December 2009 the former members of the Commission – scientists, officials, politicians and lawyers – founded a non-governmental organization, the Society for Research on the Occupation of Latvia, which is supposed to continue the work of the Commission, albeit on voluntary basis and without public funding. The political support for their activities remains rather moderate; and to what results these activities will lead, remains to be seen.

⁴⁸ Kazakov, K. “Latviya trebuyet ot Rossii moral’noi i material’noikompensatsii,” *gzt.ru* news portal, 12 May 2005. Available at: <http://www.gzt.ru/topnews/politics/50560.html>.

⁴⁹ “Krievija: neceriet uz kompensāciju,” *Diena*, 25 March 2005.

Debating 20th Century History in Europe: The European Parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe Compared

Toms Rostoks

Latvia and Russia have taken their disagreements over history to regional and international organizations, and this chapter examines two European fora that have weighed in on historical issues: the European Parliament (EP) and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). The time-frame of analysis is from July 2004 until June 2009. In one forum, the PACE, both Latvia and Russia are members, and disagreements over history can be discussed in an open manner with both sides present. Discussions about issues pertaining to history in the PACE are often echoed in another Council of Europe organ, the European Court of Human Rights (see the chapter by Nils Muižnieks). In another European body, the EP, only Latvia is a member, and Latvian representatives to this body have sought to direct its agenda towards historical issues of concern to Latvia as a way of garnering support in its memory battles with Russia. Some of the debates concern issues directly linked to the Soviet past, others raise concerns over Stalinism as compared to Nazism, and the commemoration of uprisings against communist regimes in countries such as Hungary and Poland.

The analysis below uses both quantitative and qualitative analysis to shed light on debates over history and the emerging collective memory that is being shaped in pan-European parliamentary organizations. Latvian-Russian disagreements over history are part of this process. However, Latvia is but one of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) that has brought its grievances over 20th century history to pan-European organizations, therefore the main focus in this chapter is on debates over history in both parliamentary fora and the main narratives developed during debates, while also paying attention to Latvia's and Russia's perspectives on history as expressed by parliamentarians from both countries.

This chapter is based on the assumption that organizations wielding political power in general and parliamentary organizations in particular are important players when it comes to shaping collective memory in Europe. Jan-Werner Müller writes:

collective memory is always the outcome of a series of ongoing intellectual and political negotiations; it is never a unitary collective

mental act. However, precisely because collective memory is not a property, but an ongoing process, it is also above all collective or national memory which is most susceptible to be influenced by politicians, journalists and historians.¹

Europe has entered a period of readjustment or recalibration of collective memories about the 20th century both in East and West, and institutions vested with political power will influence this process. By analyzing the places where this emerging collective memory is being shaped, it becomes possible to understand what form it is taking and whether a common historical narrative is possible at all.

Memory matters in CEE, and history has become a battleground. This is confirmed by controversial views regarding the beginning and the results of World War II, production of documentaries such as “The Soviet Story”, the removal of the Bronze Soldier monument in downtown Tallinn in Spring 2007, and continuous debates on history and memory that are spurred periodically on important dates of remembrance.² These events set the context for analysis because in 2004 eight CEE countries completed their return to Europe and three years later they were joined by Romania and Bulgaria. The EP became a place for debates on history and memory and this debate was shaped by newcomer MEPs from the CEE countries.

Both parliamentary fora are remarkably different in terms of composition, therefore the author expected to uncover differences in the way history and memory are debated and shaped in the EP and the PACE. While the EU is a forum of (presumably) like-minded countries united by common values, the PACE is a kaleidoscope of 47 European member states. Thus, debates in the PACE were expected to be more controversial, but less disagreement on history and memory was expected in the EP. It seemed likely that the debates in the EP would display signs of a learning process and the gap between MEPs would narrow, while more open contestation on history and a wider gap between competing views could be expected in the PACE.

This chapter is structured in the following way. The first section explains methodological premises. The second section provides an overview of the quantitative aspects of debates in both parliamentary settings. The subsequent sections deal with qualitative analysis, while comparing debates on history in the EP and the PACE. The third section focuses on debates regarding condemnation of totalitarian regimes. The fourth section discusses the possibility of developing a common interpretation of European history.

¹ Müller, J.W. “Introduction: the power of memory, the memory of power and the power over memory,” in Müller, J.W. (ed.), *Memory and Power in Post-War Europe. Studies in the Presence of the Past*. Cambridge University Press, 2002. p. 21.

² One could also mention several books on the subject of 20th century history that have been produced with direct involvement of MEPs, for example, Swoboda, H., Wiersma, J.M. (eds.), *Politics of the Past: The Use and Abuse of History*. Brussels: Socialist Group in the European Parliament, 2009.

The fifth section analyzes whether debates on Europe's 20th century history have resulted in self-reflection and readjustment of history perceptions in Western European countries. The sixth section mainly looks at the EP debates aimed at commemorating the 1956 Hungarian uprising and Solidarity movement and singles out the main narratives related to these events. The main findings are summarized in the concluding section, and there is evidence that the opinion gap is much wider in the case of the PACE (with Latvian and Russian parliamentarians being in opposite camps), while debates in the EP reflect a tendency that MEPs were developing a common interpretation of Europe's 20th century history, thus effectively closing the existing opinion gap.

Methodological Considerations

The aim of this chapter is to discover by whom history was debated and which narratives were present in the EP and the PACE debates, therefore it contains both quantitative and qualitative elements. On the quantitative side, this chapter analyzes participation in parliamentary debates by representatives from the EP and PACE member states. In other words, who are the actors that are compared and on what criteria? Technically, MEPs are elected from the EU member states, but are expected to pursue common European objectives. Their affiliation to a particular political group is expected to be more important than nationality. To some extent, this may be the case because on all occasions debates were opened by speakers representing the views of all political groups. Only later could individual MEPs express their individual opinions. However, affiliation with a particular political group is a poor predictor when it comes to debates on history and memory because being from the group of the CEE countries is a more important factor.

Also, comparison between the EP and the PACE would not be possible if affiliation with political groups would be a major indicator. First, parliamentarians in the PACE tend to represent the views of their countries, as they are simultaneously members of their respective national parliaments. The link between national and pan-European settings is much stronger in the PACE than in the case of the EP. Second, comparison between political groups would be hampered by the fact that political groups in the EP do not coincide with those of the PACE. Political groups in the PACE are much looser than in the EP, frequently combining parliamentarians who can hardly be considered to share similar political views. As a consequence, national representation is taken as a point of departure because it would make comparison between various groups of countries (for example, between Western Europe and the CEE countries) possible.

What is being compared? This question relates to the substance of debates that were held in the EP and the PACE. This chapter covers a five-year period

from July 2004 until June 2009, and the period for analysis was chosen according to the work schedule of the EP. EP elections were held for the first time in 25 countries simultaneously in June 2004, while the composition of the PACE was constantly changing throughout the period under study because elections were periodically held in member states of the Council of Europe according to national procedures, and representation in the PACE changed depending on the outcome of elections. Twelve important debates on issues directly related to 20th century history were held in both pan-European parliamentary organizations. Seven debates were held in the EP, and five debates occurred in the PACE. For a complete list of debate topics see Table 1.

Table 1, List of 20th century history debates in the EP and the PACE in chronological order, July 2004 – June 2009

Debates in the European Parliament	Debates in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The future of Europe sixty years after the Second World War, 11 May 2005 2. The Balkans: 10 years after Srebrenica, 6 July 2005 3. 25th anniversary of Solidarity and its message for Europe, 26 September, 2005 4. Commemoration of the 1956 Hungarian uprising, 24 October 2006 5. Proposed hearing of the Commission on crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes committed by totalitarian regimes, 8 April 2008 6. Commemoration of the Holodomor, the Ukraine artificial famine (1932-1933), 22 October 2008 7. European conscience and totalitarianism, 25 March 2009 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establishment of a European remembrance centre for victims of forced population movements and ethnic cleansing, 27 January 2005 2. Need for international condemnation of crimes of totalitarian communist regimes, 25 January 2006 3. Combating the resurgence of Nazi ideology, 12 April 2006 4. Attitude to memorials exposed to different historical interpretations in Council of Europe member states, 29 January 2009 5. History teaching in conflict and post-conflict areas, 26 June 2009

Three important qualifications should be mentioned with regard to the selection of cases. First, only debates in the EP and the PACE are analyzed in this chapter. Recommendations, resolutions (adopted or rejected as a consequence of debates) and produced reports are not taken into account as this would lead into areas unrelated to historical narratives voiced in both parliamentary organizations.

Second, issues of history may have come up also in parliamentary debates other than the twelve that were included in the sample. In fact, it can be argued that in the case of the PACE, history permeates a large number of debates that do not deal with history explicitly. History comes up during debates in various forms and contexts.³ However, due to the restricted focus

³ Interview with member of the Latvian Parliament Boriss Cilevics, an active member of the Latvian delegation in the PACE. 14.08.2009.

of this chapter, only debates dealing explicitly with 20th century European history were included, the debates related to World War II being the focal point of this study. Debates on history and memory form only a small part of the overall agenda of the EP and PACE, but usually these debates are emotional because history and memory are closely related with such concepts as justice, identity, legitimacy, remembrance, etc.

Third, both pan-European parliamentary organizations work under time constraints, and only limited time can be devoted to debate issues of history and memory. As a consequence, not everyone who wanted to participate in a particular debate could express his/her opinion because of the limited time allocated for each debate. For example, it was mentioned at the beginning of the debate in the PACE on the need for international condemnation of totalitarian communist regimes that there were 63 names on the list of speakers. However, there was enough time to give the floor to only 29 parliamentarians. Although a considerable number of views and opinions could not be included into the analysis, the total number of speakers who expressed their views during debates on history and memory was quite high – 106 speakers in the PACE debates and 155 speakers in the EP debates – enough for the purposes of this particular research.

On the qualitative side, this chapter seeks to identify the narratives about Europe's past told in both parliamentary organizations, to ascertain which narratives gained acceptance or rejection, and who was behind these narratives. As the composition of both parliamentary organizations is quite different, it can be expected that debates in both settings are different as well. Wider representation in the PACE may stimulate debate over history because every member state has its own contentious issues that it would like discussed, but a wider set of participants can also hamper debates because some member states may want to block discussions on certain sensitive history-related issues. Wide differences in opinion may also impede such debates. Less disagreement is expected in the EP where the number of member states is considerably smaller and member states are more like-minded. Both parliamentary organizations will be compared according to the gap of opinions that appeared during debates on history. The initial proposition is that debates in the PACE will be more controversial and that, accordingly, the gap between opinions represented during debates will be wider.

The following sections also look at self-perceptions of parliamentarians with regard to history. Are politicians entitled to participate in the process of developing collective memory? What are the reasons for politicians to speak out about history? What are the aims of politicians when they discuss past events? The following sections will deal with these questions, but the next section will reveal some quantitative aspects of debates over history in the EP and the PACE.

Who Is Haunted By History?

A large number of parliamentarians participated in the twelve abovementioned debates in the EP and PACE. Who are they? Statistical data show that debates on history in both parliamentary organizations in the period between July 2004 and June 2009 have been dominated by the CEE countries. From 106 speakers in the PACE 76 were from the group of the CEE countries.⁴ The countries most frequently represented during debates were the Russian Federation (13 interventions, including 1 rapporteur), Sweden (10 interventions, including 3 rapporteurs), France (9 interventions), Estonia (8 interventions) and Turkey (7 interventions). A number of countries from Western Europe were not represented during debates over history at all, with Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Italy and Norway being the most prominent examples. Latvia was represented during debates with 2 interventions. Although the decision to participate in debates is an individual one, this is a reflection of the fact that Latvian parliamentarians view the PACE (and the Council of Europe in general) as an international organization far less important than the EP (and EU in general).

The situation is somewhat similar in the EP. The CEE countries accounted for 82 speeches in the EP during debates on history out of the total of 155 speeches. Only 64 speeches were delivered by MEPs elected from West European countries, and 9 were delivered by representatives of the European Commission and Presidency. It seems that some MEPs from the CEE countries⁵ had chosen the EP as the battleground for debating history, and Poland was the absolute leader in terms of the number of speeches delivered by its MEPs with 38 speeches. Poland was followed by Germany (12 speeches), the Netherlands (10 speeches), Hungary (9 speeches), France and Latvia (8 speeches each) and the United Kingdom (7 speeches).

Does that mean that Western European countries are not interested in debating history? Although history and collective memory are not among the most contentious issues in Western Europe and thus do not attract much public attention, it would be wrong to conclude that the West has escaped the grip of history. Most of the debates on history in both parliamentary organizations were held on issues where representatives from the CEE countries can claim legitimate first-hand expertise. The EP held debates on the Solidarity movement and its message for Europe, on the Hungarian uprising of 1956, on the Holodomor, and on totalitarianism. MEPs from the CEE countries put these topics on the agenda of the EP, and it is hardly a

⁴ This group of countries includes Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, FYROM, Turkey and Ukraine.

⁵ This group of countries include Bulgaria (since January 2007), Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania (since January 2007), Slovak Republic and Slovenia.

surprise that parliamentarians from these countries were most active during debates. Debate topics were formulated somewhat more broadly in the PACE, but they were still largely about forced population movements, ethnic cleansing, condemnation of crimes of totalitarian communist regimes, history teaching in conflict and post-conflict areas etc. Understandably, these themes did not attract as much interest on the part of the parliamentarians from Western Europe. It should be mentioned, however, that history may have a comeback also in some Western European countries, and Germany is particularly vulnerable to such a probability. Empirical evidence supports the initial proposition that history and memory issues are most passionately debated by representatives from the CEE countries.

Condemning Crimes Committed By Totalitarian Regimes

Debates on history and memory in the EP and the PACE were dominated by the controversial issue of condemnation of totalitarian regimes. Some debates tackled this issue explicitly, but the contentious legacy of totalitarian Nazi and Communist regimes was present at least indirectly every time 20th century history was on the agenda. Totalitarian regimes have had a major impact on all of Europe for most of the 20th century. However, while Nazi Germany was defeated during the Second World War and condemned afterwards, the Communist Soviet Union continued to exist for another 45 years, and its impact on the societies under its control was less well-known. The legacy of the Soviet Union is also a thorny issue in relations between Latvia and Russia. There are wide disagreements on the impact and consequences of Soviet policies on Latvia. The annexation of Latvia in June 1940 is also a contested issue that besets bilateral relations. History looms large over Latvian-Russian relations, and there is no evidence that both countries will be able to agree on a common interpretation of 20th century history.

For the first time during the period under investigation in this chapter, the issue of condemning totalitarian regimes surfaced in the EP during the debates on the future of Europe after World War II. Daniel Marc Cohn-Bendit spoke about the “anti-totalitarian obligation” of the EP.⁶ Jozsef Szajer referred to the Soviet Union as an “evil dictatorship,”⁷ and Ģirts Valdis Kristovskis expressed dissatisfaction that historical truth about the Communist regime in the Soviet Union had not yet been established and that “the disowning of historical truth, the deliberate upholding of the crimes of the Communist

⁶ Daniel Marc Cohn-Bendit, “The future of Europe sixty years after the Second World War,” European Parliament, 11 May 2005. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20050511+ITEM-016+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

⁷ Jozsef Szajer, “The future of Europe sixty years after the Second World War,” European Parliament, 11 May 2005. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20050511+ITEM-016+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

regime, is humiliating."⁸ The president of the European Commission hinted at the contradictory outcome of World War II by saying:

for millions, true freedom was only to come with the fall of the Berlin Wall, not the end of the Second World War. After 1945 they lost their liberties and opportunities almost as soon as they had regained them. In some cases they lost political control of their countries; in others, they lost their independence.⁹

There were signs that this was just the beginning of the EP debates on condemnation of totalitarian regimes.

Debates on the legacy of the Solidarity movement and the commemoration of the 1956 Hungarian uprising touched upon the crimes of totalitarian regimes, but the first real debate aimed explicitly at condemning totalitarian regimes took place in the EP on 8 April 2008, in a hearing organized for the Commission on crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes committed by totalitarian regimes.

One narrative reflected in this debate was that European countries should distance themselves from the totalitarian past. This was in stark contrast with Russia that, allegedly, was not distancing itself from past wrongdoings. Vytautas Landsbergis was of the opinion that

as far as the crimes committed in the Stalinist past of the USSR are concerned, instead of distancing themselves with proper condemnation of gross crimes against humanity, war crimes and other wrongdoings, Russia's ruling elite is not following the good example of denazified Germany.¹⁰

In order to distance themselves from the past, countries should first acknowledge their past wrongdoings and not be afraid to face the darkest chapters of history. When referring to discussions on ways the member states of the EU were coping with the legacy of totalitarian crimes, Vice-President of the European Commission Jacques Barrot said that "it emerged from the debates that establishing the truth is a prerequisite for reconciliation."¹¹

⁸ Girts Valdis Kristovskis, "The future of Europe sixty years after the Second World War," European Parliament, 11 May 2005. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20050511+ITEM-016+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

⁹ Jose Manuel Barroso, "The future of Europe sixty years after the Second World War," European Parliament, 11 May 2005. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20050511+ITEM-016+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

¹⁰ Vytautas Landsbergis, "Proposed hearing of the Commission on crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes committed by totalitarian regimes," European Parliament, 8 April 2008. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20080421+ITEM-015+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

¹¹ Jacques Barrot, "Proposed hearing of the Commission on crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes committed by totalitarian regimes," European Parliament, 08 April 2008. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20080421+ITEM-015+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

Effectively, that would mean agreeing on “the historical truth”¹² and guarding “against any form of revisionism, any historical untruth.”¹³ For the truth to prevail, public awareness about crimes committed by the totalitarian regimes had to be improved. Katrin Saks mentioned in her written statement that “although nearly all westerners are aware of the concentration camps of Nazi Germany, most of them have heard nothing about the gulags.” She referred to a survey that was recently conducted in Sweden among 15-20 year-olds that “showed that their basic knowledge of communism is very poor, almost non-existent. A study showed that 90% of Swedes have never heard of the gulags, while 95% knew what Auschwitz was.”¹⁴ If MEPs were to condemn crimes committed by totalitarian regimes, Europeans first had to learn about those crimes. Only recognition and condemnation of these crimes might lead to reconciliation.

However, it would be wrong to assume that all speakers were united in condemning crimes of totalitarian regimes. Slavi Binev believed that other crimes such as “the atrocious assaults against the human rights of the Bulgarian and the Armenian people by the Ottoman Empire”¹⁵ should also be talked about and that discussions should not focus solely on crimes committed by the Soviet Union. Francis Wurtz claimed that Nazism should not be trivialized by putting it in the same category with Stalinism.¹⁶ Jan Marinus Wiersma extended a word of caution against politicizing the debate on crimes of totalitarian regimes. He warned MEPs against falling into the trap of being selective. He was in favour of dealing with history in a delicate manner, and it was clear to him that reaching a common position would be impossible. However, Mr. Wiersma thought that it was essential to ensure that “our discussion is based on correct information.”¹⁷

¹² Katrin Saks, “Proposed hearing of the Commission on crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes committed by totalitarian regimes,” European Parliament, 8 April 2008. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20080421+ITEM-015+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

¹³ Jacques Barrot, “Proposed hearing of the Commission on crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes committed by totalitarian regimes,” European Parliament, 8 April 2008. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20080421+ITEM-015+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

¹⁴ Katrin Saks, “Proposed hearing of the Commission on crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes committed by totalitarian regimes,” European Parliament, 8 April 2008. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20080421+ITEM-015+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

¹⁵ Slavi Binev, “Proposed hearing of the Commission on crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes committed by totalitarian regimes,” European Parliament, 8 April 2008. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20080421+ITEM-015+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

¹⁶ Francis Wurtz, “Proposed hearing of the Commission on crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes committed by totalitarian regimes,” European Parliament, 8 April 2008. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20080421+ITEM-015+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

¹⁷ Jan Marinus Wiersma, “Proposed hearing of the Commission on crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes committed by totalitarian regimes,” European Parliament, 8 April 2008. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20080421+ITEM-015+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

An important debate took place in the EP on 22 October 2008 when MEPs commemorated the Holodomor (the artificial famine in Ukraine) that occurred in 1932-1933. This was an important debate not only because of its subject, but also because it was organized halfway between April 2008 (when in-depth debate was held for the first time on crimes committed by totalitarian regimes) and March 2009 (when debate on European conscience and totalitarianism was held). The debate on the Holodomor added weight to the argument that totalitarian regimes in general and the Soviet Union in particular had committed atrocious crimes against humanity. Rebecca Harms noted that “not all chapters in the history of eastern and western Europe in the last century are equally common knowledge” and that publics in Western Europe lacked knowledge about some of the worst chapters of Europe’s history.¹⁸ She admitted that even among the MEPs knowledge about the Holodomor was quite incomplete. When questioned, most Members admitted to having no idea as to what Holodomor actually means and what it stands for.¹⁹ Thus, parliamentary debates performed an educational function, facilitating the learning process about crimes committed by totalitarian regimes. However, there was considerable disagreement over the question whether the Holodomor was a crime aimed exclusively at Ukrainians or other nationalities as well.²⁰ Thus, the emphasis was on crimes committed by the Soviet Union because these were less well-known in Western Europe.

The process of debating history in the EP culminated on 25 March 2009 when a debate on European conscience and totalitarianism was held.

¹⁸ A similar argument was voiced during the PACE debate on the need for international condemnation of totalitarian communist regimes. Marko Mikhelson said that “A united, civilised and peaceful Europe cannot be founded on the erasure of memory. Unfortunately, public awareness of the crimes of communist regimes remains minimal, and we have even witnessed that limited awareness here. Activities such as organising international conferences and erecting memorials and museums are vital steps on the way.” It means that improvements in educating the public about crimes of totalitarian regimes can only be achieved if public awareness is raised. Marko Mikhelson, “Need for international condemnation of crimes of totalitarian communist regimes,” Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 25 January 2006. <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/Records/2006/E/0601251500E.htm>.

¹⁹ Rebecca Harms, “Commemoration of the Holodomor, the Ukraine artificial famine (1932-1933),” European Parliament, 22 October 2008. Also, Grazyna Staniszevska said during debates that “the Holodomor, or the great famine, is an event in history that is still practically unknown in many countries of Western Europe.” Grazyna Staniszevska, “Commemoration of the Holodomor, the Ukraine artificial famine (1932-1933),” European Parliament, 22 October 2008. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20081022+ITEM-014+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

²⁰ For example, Csabab Sandor Tabajdi said that “for the most part those who died were Ukrainians, but not exclusively Ukrainians. ...there were also Romanians, Russians, Jews and other groups who died. ...it was the peasantry that they sought to exterminate.” Istvan Szent-Ivanyi disagreed with that and claimed that “the plan was not only to collectivise agriculture forcibly that was one of the aims – but equally to break Ukrainian national self-awareness and destroy the institutions of national identity.” Csabab Sandor Tabajdi and Istvan Szent-Ivanyi, “Commemoration of the Holodomor, the Ukraine artificial famine (1932-1933),” European Parliament, 22 October 2008. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20081022+ITEM-014+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

It was mentioned during previous debates that “there cannot be first-class Nazi victims or second-class victims of Communism just because Europe still lacks an integrated approach to all totalitarian regimes.”²¹ Although the debate was formally aimed at condemning all such regimes, in practice it was driven by the MEPs from the new member states who wanted to make the point that the Nazi and Communist regimes were similar. The only reason why crimes committed by the Communist regimes were not widely known was that “history was written by the victors.”²²

Why was it necessary to condemn totalitarian regimes and totalitarian Communist regimes in particular? Some of the arguments, such as the necessity to raise public awareness about such crimes, were already mentioned. However, the main argument was about achieving greater integration in the EU. European integration is a multifaceted phenomenon, and it surfaced during the debates that the integration process did not stop with the accession of the candidate countries to the EU. It was pointed out that agreeing on a common interpretation of history was an important aspect of European integration and that unity between East and West could not be achieved without moving towards a common interpretation of 20th century history in Europe. This was stated most clearly by member of the European Commission Jan Figel, who said that European integration is a process “which is not just economic but of course also has cultural and historical ramifications.”²³ Jana Hybaskova who spoke on behalf of the PPE-DE group said during the debate that “Europe will not be united as long as West and East do not agree to joint studies, recognition, dialogue and understanding of the shared history of Fascism, Communism and Nazism.”²⁴ Although Jan Marinus Wiersma was in favour of leaving it up to historians to decide on how precisely history should be interpreted, he was also of an opinion that “reunification of our memories”²⁵ between CEE countries and Western Europe was not yet achieved.

Condemning totalitarian regimes was also seen as necessary for other reasons. Some perceived it as a moral obligation. Failure to fulfil

²¹ Tunne Kelam, “Commemoration of the Holodomor, the Ukraine artificial famine (1932-1933),” European Parliament, 22 October 2008. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20081022+ITEM-014+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

²² Ljudmila Novak, “European conscience and totalitarianism,” European Parliament, 25 March 2009. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20090325+ITEM-010+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

²³ Jan Figel, “European conscience and totalitarianism,” European Parliament, 25 March 2009. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20090325+ITEM-010+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

²⁴ Jana Hybaskova, “European conscience and totalitarianism,” European Parliament, 25 March 2009. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20090325+ITEM-010+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

²⁵ Jan Marinus Wiersma, “European conscience and totalitarianism,” European Parliament, 25 March 2009. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20090325+ITEM-010+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

this obligation might lead to Europe's moral decline because it would be hypocritical to condemn crimes committed by the Nazi regime, while neglecting crimes committed by Communist regimes. Vytautas Landsbergis said that

We should do everything we can to halt Europe's moral decline. ... negligence of crimes of Communist totalitarianism brings with it an appeasement of all neo-Nazis in Germany, Russia or anywhere: any of them could ask, if the Soviets are forgiven, then why should not our ancestors also be forgiven?²⁶

In other words, crimes of Communist regimes could not be neglected for moral reasons.

Another line of argument was that in order to avoid falling again into the trap of totalitarianism in the future, the truth about such crimes should be known as widely as possible. Knowing the truth about Communist totalitarian regimes would be a precondition for avoiding their resurgence in the future. Istvan Szent-Ivanyi said that "we can only escape the errors and sins of the past if we familiarize ourselves with the past, if we process the past. Pacification is not possible without processing the past and acknowledging the truth."²⁷ The usage of the "Never again!" narrative was quite frequent during debates in the EP, but even more so in the PACE.

Was Communism as an ideology or only Communist totalitarian regimes being condemned? Although debate was held on the draft resolution aimed at reconfirming the EP's stand against all versions of totalitarian regimes, some MEPs had concerns about the subject of condemnation. For example, members of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left group expressed indignation over the fact that Communism was being equalized with Nazism. From their point of view, condemnation of Communist totalitarian regimes might have undesirable consequences for Communist parties that were still active in the EU member states. Vladimir Remek was against placing Communists in the same basket together with Nazis and was outraged that "they are perhaps simply trying to lump me together with the Nazis."²⁸ Athanasios Pafilis was even blunter when he said that "It is an insult to the memory of twenty million Soviets who sacrificed their lives to conquer Fascism. This vulgar anti-Communism is targeted not so much

²⁶ Vytautas Landsbergis, "European conscience and totalitarianism," European Parliament, 25 March 2009. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20090325+ITEM-010+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

²⁷ Istvan Szent-Ivanyi, "European conscience and totalitarianism," European Parliament, 25 March 2009. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20090325+ITEM-010+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

²⁸ Vladimir Remek, "European conscience and totalitarianism," European Parliament, 25 March 2009. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20090325+ITEM-010+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

at the past; it is targeted mainly at the present and at the future.”²⁹ Such statements are evidence that almost all speakers were united in favour of condemning crimes committed by totalitarian regimes in principle, but some were afraid about the political ramifications of adopting such a resolution for leftist and Communist parties in Europe. This argument was evident also in the discussions on totalitarian regimes in the PACE.

Although in the PACE two debates held in 2006 dealt explicitly with totalitarian regimes, discussions about the origins and results of World War II were intense already during the debate on Establishment of a European remembrance centre for victims of forced population movements and ethnic cleansing that was held on 27 January 2005. A number of parliamentarians used this debate to emphasize that Communist regimes had committed atrocious crimes. Andres Herkel stressed that “atrocities committed by the Nazi regime and similar atrocities committed by Stalin’s communist regime must be handled in a similar way.”³⁰ Boris Oliynyk said that “the remembrance centre would ensure that the forced population movements, including Stalin’s deportation of Poles and ethnic cleansing during past conflicts, would not be forgotten.”³¹ Condemnation of totalitarian Communist regimes certainly was on the agenda of the PACE already in 2005, and it was only a matter of time for this issue to be dealt with directly.

That moment came on 25 January 2006 when the PACE tried to pass a resolution in order to condemn crimes of totalitarian Communist regimes. This was by far the most important debate on history that was held in the PACE from July 2004 until June 2009 because there were 63 names on the list of speakers. Other debates did not attract that much attention from parliamentarians. Goran Lindblad (rapporteur) outlined three reasons for condemning totalitarian Communist regimes:

The first is for the sake of the general perception. ... Secondly, for as long as victims of communist regimes, and their relatives, are alive, there is a chance to give them moral restitution. Last but not least, people must be reminded that communist regimes are still active in some countries of the world.³²

²⁹ Athanasios Pafilis, “European conscience and totalitarianism,” European Parliament, 25 March 2009. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20090325+ITEM-010+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

³⁰ Andres Herkel, “Establishment of a European remembrance centre for victims of forced population movements and ethnic cleansing,” Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 27 January 2005. <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/Records/2005/E/0501271500E.htm#5>.

³¹ Boris Oliynyk, “Establishment of a European remembrance centre for victims of forced population movements and ethnic cleansing,” Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 27 January 2005. <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/Records/2005/E/0501271500E.htm#5>.

³² Goran Lindblad, “Need for international condemnation of crimes of totalitarian communist regimes,” Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 25 January 2006. <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/Records/2006/E/0601251500E.htm>.

Thus, the purposes of condemnation – raising public awareness, providing moral satisfaction for victims, denouncing the still remaining communist regimes – were laid out clearly.

Those who were in favour of condemning totalitarian communist regimes stressed that “Communist crimes had been as bad as those of Nazism”³³ and therefore had to be disapproved of. The European public should be informed about these crimes and, as Ivo Lozancic said, it was necessary “to launch a national awareness campaign about crimes committed in the name of communist ideology, including the revision of school books.”³⁴ Concerns about the younger generation were especially evident during the debate. Nadezhda Mikhailova claimed that “today’s debate is sending an important message to the new generations and trying to keep them away from a sort of nostalgia for communism.”³⁵ If return of totalitarian Communist regimes was to be prevented, the younger generation had to be educated about the crimes committed by these regimes.

There were some similarities between debates on condemnation of totalitarian regimes that were held in the EP and the PACE. A number of speakers during debates in the PACE argued that condemnation of crimes of totalitarian Communist regimes would, in fact, lead to condemnation of Communism as an ideology. Some parliamentarians noticed that the report and a number of speakers did not make any distinction between Communism as an ideology and totalitarian Communist regimes that have committed crimes. Mats Einarsson said that “it [the report] uses the atrocities of the past as a tool to attack, marginalize and even pave the way for the criminalization of an ideology and political current, the ideals of which are the opposite of these crimes.”³⁶ Lluís Maria de Puig agreed with Mats Einarsson and said that the report needed to be amended so that it did not “give rise to confusion between the crimes and the ideology.”³⁷

Russian parliamentarians (except for Vladimir Zhirinovskiy who was very critical of totalitarian Communist regimes) were even blunter. Konstantin Kosachev said that the report was artificially manipulated “in order to

³³ Bernard Schreiner, “Need for international condemnation of crimes of totalitarian communist regimes,” Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 25 January 2006. <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/Records/2006/E/0601251500E.htm>.

³⁴ Ivo Lozancic, “Need for international condemnation of crimes of totalitarian communist regimes,” Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 25 January 2006. <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/Records/2006/E/0601251500E.htm>.

³⁵ Nadezhda Mikhailova, “Need for international condemnation of crimes of totalitarian communist regimes,” Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 25 January 2006. <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/Records/2006/E/0601251500E.htm>.

³⁶ Mats Einarsson, “Need for international condemnation of crimes of totalitarian communist regimes,” Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 25 January 2006. <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/Records/2006/E/0601251500E.htm>.

³⁷ Lluís Maria de Puig, “Need for international condemnation of crimes of totalitarian communist regimes,” Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 25 January 2006. <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/Records/2006/E/0601251500E.htm>.

condemn only Communism,"³⁸ but the leader of the Russian Communist party Gennady Zyuganov apparently thought that the report was aimed at condemning all communists and warned the PACE against becoming engaged in anti-communism that he called "the basic stupidity of the 20th century."³⁹ However, some of the speakers regretted that Mr. Zyuganov had not managed to distance himself and the party he represents from crimes that Communists committed during the Soviet era. Giorgi Bokeria said that "not a single word was said by the leader of the Russian Communist Party to condemn the crimes that were perpetrated, as its members would say, in the name of communism."⁴⁰ It was mentioned during other discussions that Communist and Leftist parties had difficulties condemning crimes of totalitarian Communist regimes, while there were no such difficulties when crimes of Nazi and Fascist regimes had to be denounced.

Another issue that emerged during debates was that Eastern Europe has been separated from Western Europe for a considerable time, and therefore Western Europe had difficulties grasping the scope of crimes committed by totalitarian regimes. Filip Kaczmarek said that

Many Europeans simply do not know what life was like under totalitarian systems, and someone who does not understand totalitarianism has a natural tendency to disregard crimes committed under such systems, seeing them instead as events which took place in the course of history.⁴¹

Because many MEPs lacked first-hand experience of life under totalitarian regimes, it was difficult for them to condemn such regimes.

Some argued that it was necessary to condemn only those regimes and ideologies that presented a real threat to Europe. Theodoros Pangalos was of an opinion that Communism was "dead and gone," therefore there was no point in condemning totalitarian Communist regimes. Mr. Pangalos thought that the real threat was posed by the extreme right that bred on Europe's contemporary problems such as immigration, unemployment and poverty.⁴²

³⁸ Konstantin Kosachev, "Need for international condemnation of crimes of totalitarian communist regimes," Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 25 January 2006. <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/Records/2006/E/0601251500E.htm>.

³⁹ Gennady Zyuganov, "Need for international condemnation of crimes of totalitarian communist regimes," Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 25 January 2006. <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/Records/2006/E/0601251500E.htm>.

⁴⁰ Giorgi Bokeria, "Need for international condemnation of crimes of totalitarian communist regimes," Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 25 January 2006. <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/Records/2006/E/0601251500E.htm>.

⁴¹ Filip Kaczmarek, "European conscience and totalitarianism," European Parliament, 25 March 2009. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20090325+ITEM-010+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

⁴² Theodoros Pangalos, "Need for international condemnation of crimes of totalitarian communist regimes," Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 25 January 2006. <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/Records/2006/E/0601251500E.htm>.

Accordingly, condemnation of Nazi ideology was more urgent because Communism was not a threat to European countries.

The debate on the resurgence of Nazi ideology in the PACE was much less controversial because a Europe-wide consensus on this totalitarian ideology had already developed. All speakers were of an opinion that this political ideology should be prevented from becoming relevant again, and condemning the resurgence of Nazi ideology was not contentious. However, the debate touched upon several controversial issues. First, there was considerable disagreement on the issue which countries are most vulnerable to a resurgence of Nazi ideology. Second, parliamentarians tried to single out the main reasons for the comeback of Nazism. Third, practical measures for countering the resurgence of Nazism were debated.

Mikhail Margelov (rapporteur) stressed that the revival of “Nazi elements” and the “neo-Nazi underground” was very alarming. Mr. Margelov said that “young people march side by side with SS veterans along the streets of some European capitals, and coloured people are murdered in St. Petersburg and Voronezh in Russia.”⁴³ It was mentioned that no country in Europe was immune to the resurgence of Nazism and that urgent action needed to be taken in order to challenge the spread of Nazi ideology. Russia was mentioned as one of the countries that were vulnerable to Nazi ideas, but attention was paid also to the Baltic states where, allegedly, Nazism had taken root. Vera Oskina found it surprising that “in the list of countries where xenophobia was deemed to be rife there was no mention of either Latvia or Estonia.”⁴⁴ In order to refute such suspicions, Andris Bērziņš, a parliamentarian from Latvia, tried to reassure the PACE that “there was no laissez-faire attitude in Riga.”⁴⁵ Other speakers pointed to Russia as one of the countries that, paradoxically, seemed to be vulnerable to a resurgence of Nazi ideology. Aydin Mirzazada pointed out that “there had been a number of instances recently in Russia when there had been problems with Azeris who were being attacked, both physically and by the media.”⁴⁶ She was of the opinion that the Russian government did not do enough to combat such incidents. Debate on the resurgence of Nazi ideology turned into a battle between Russia and the former Soviet republics on the issue of which was most vulnerable to a resurgence of Nazi ideology – Russia or its neighbours.

⁴³ Mikhail Margelov, “Combating the resurgence of Nazi ideology,” Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 12 April 2006. <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/Records/2006/E/0604121500E.htm>.

⁴⁴ Vera Oskina, “Combating the resurgence of Nazi ideology,” Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 12 April 2006. <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/Records/2006/E/0604121500E.htm>.

⁴⁵ Andris Bērziņš, “Combating the resurgence of Nazi ideology,” Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 12 April 2006. <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/Records/2006/E/0604121500E.htm>.

⁴⁶ Aydin Mirzazada, “Combating the resurgence of Nazi ideology,” Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 12 April 2006. <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/Records/2006/E/0604121500E.htm>.

Most speakers were of the opinion that the Nazis were mainly “exploiting the anguish of the unemployed and impoverished.”⁴⁷ Konstantinos Vrettos even drew some parallels between the situation in Europe in the 1930s and in the beginning of the 21st century. He argued that “the situation today has something in common with that in Europe in the late 1920s and the 1930s – high unemployment, particularly among people under 30”.⁴⁸ However, other explanations for the resurgence of Nazi ideology in Europe were put forward as well. Mats Einarsson blamed “acceptance of xenophobic ideas by traditional parties and governments”⁴⁹ that led to abortive policies. Marko Mikhelson named lack of interest in history,⁵⁰ but Emanuelis Zingeris stated that the resurgence of Nazism in CEE countries was only possible because of the lack of genuine anti-Nazi feeling. He said that “Joseph Stalin’s horrible regime blocked the authentic anti-Nazi feelings in middle Europe by artificial anti-Nazi propaganda” and that there was an urgent need to create such “authentic anti-Nazi feeling” in CEE countries.⁵¹ Morten Messerschmidt said that there was a tendency “of the left wing in particular to abuse the terms “fascism” and “Nazism” in condemning any of their many opponents.” As a result, “these sick ideologies” looked less harmful.⁵² It seems that although the parliamentarians were united against the resurgence of Nazi ideology, there was little agreement on the causes of this phenomenon and countries which were vulnerable to its revival.

There was, however, little disagreement with regard to what should be done to halt the spread of Nazi ideology in Europe. Mikhail Margelov suggested that the Assembly had to initiate “the convocation of an international conference on combating the resurrection of Nazi ideology.”⁵³ Parliamentarians, members of government, experts and public figures were expected to take part in the conference. Mats Einarsson expressed his conviction that organizing a conference would not be enough and that

⁴⁷ Thodoros Pangalos, “Combating the resurgence of Nazi ideology,” Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 12 April 2006. <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/Records/2006/E/0604121500E.htm>.

⁴⁸ Konstantinos Vrettos, “Combating the resurgence of Nazi ideology,” Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 12 April 2006. <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/Records/2006/E/0604121500E.htm>.

⁴⁹ Mats Einarsson, “Combating the resurgence of Nazi ideology,” Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 12 April 2006. <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/Records/2006/E/0604121500E.htm>.

⁵⁰ Marko Mikhelson, “Combating the resurgence of Nazi ideology,” Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 12 April 2006. <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/Records/2006/E/0604121500E.htm>.

⁵¹ Emanuelis Zingeris, “Combating the resurgence of Nazi ideology,” Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 12 April 2006. <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/Records/2006/E/0604121500E.htm>.

⁵² Morten Messerschmidt, “Combating the resurgence of Nazi ideology,” Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 12 April 2006. <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/Records/2006/E/0604121500E.htm>.

⁵³ Mikhail Margelov, “Combating the resurgence of Nazi ideology,” Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 12 April 2006. <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/Records/2006/E/0604121500E.htm>.

“it was necessary to act now and to wait for the outcome of some future conference.”⁵⁴ Charles Goerens stated that it was necessary to do more in terms of remembering the Holocaust and that this wasn’t done well enough in schools.⁵⁵ This idea was supported by Marko Mikhelson who said that it was “absolutely necessary to launch a Europe-wide awareness campaign” and that “only by making people aware once again of atrocities and crimes” it was possible to prevent their repetition in Europe.⁵⁶

Is an Integrated History of Europe Possible?

Contentious debates on the totalitarian legacy of Europe were an indication that establishing a common interpretation of 20th century history in Europe was difficult. But what did parliamentarians think about the possibility of moving toward a common interpretation of history? One of the narratives that surfaced during discussions in the EP was that Europe should get rid of the idea that there were two histories of Europe after the Second World War. Creation of a common history would mean merging the histories of Western and Eastern Europe together. That would not be possible without the willingness of both sides to work towards achieving this goal. Jozsef Szajer claimed that “our history is your history too,” and expressed his dissatisfaction that “we, the nations freed from Soviet occupation a decade ago, find no compassion when it comes to our recent history.”⁵⁷ Perhaps this can be explained by looking at the enlargement process. CEE countries had to adopt EU legislation and the EU’s internal working procedures. This model was quite successful in the case of formal integration, but integration is a process through which several parts come together and form a new whole, therefore mutual adjustment is necessary, even if it is asymmetrical. Western Europe sought to avoid adjustment during the pre-accession period, but after 2004 CEE countries increasingly stressed its necessity. Thus, adjustment in terms of interpretation of history came to be seen as an important aspect of Western Europe’s adaptation to the accession of new member states to the EU.

Opinions on whether it is possible and desirable to establish historical truth about the events of the 20th century were different in the EP and the

⁵⁴ Mats Einarsson, “Combating the resurgence of Nazi ideology,” Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 12 April 2006. <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/Records/2006/E/0604121500E.htm>.

⁵⁵ Charles Goerens, “Combating the resurgence of Nazi ideology,” Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 12 April 2006. <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/Records/2006/E/0604121500E.htm>.

⁵⁶ Marko Mikhelson, “Combating the resurgence of Nazi ideology,” Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 12 April 2006. <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/Records/2006/E/0604121500E.htm>.

⁵⁷ Jozsef Szajer, “The future of Europe sixty years after the Second World war,” European Parliament, 11 May 2005. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20050511+ITEM-016+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

PACE, and a number of narratives were present during debates. In the EP the variety of opinions with regard to establishing historical truth ranged from the conviction of some MEPs that the truth should be established and that politicians have an important role to play in this respect, until the assumption that establishing historical truth is desirable (but a common interpretation of history is impossible to achieve) and that politicians have to be very careful in order to avoid being selective and exerting too much influence on historical narratives. The Vice-President of the Commission Jacques Barrot expressed the former view when he said that “we want the truth, we want the whole truth, and if the Commission opened the debate it is precisely because we want to get to the bottom of the truth.”⁵⁸ Miguel Angel Martinez Martinez was of a similar opinion when he said that “it is only by knowing the truth, the whole truth, that we can move forward.”⁵⁹ Although a majority of speakers in the EP were in favour of discovering historical truth and then working towards establishing it as the dominant historical narrative, Jan Marinus Wiersma represented the camp of those who were against politicization of history. He said that “we [PSE] are concerned at the growing number of party-political interpretations of the past.”⁶⁰ In other words, debates should be based on scientific facts, and politicians should refrain from being selective with regard to particular historical narratives that they either like or dislike.

The gap between opinions in the PACE was wider than in the EP. Most clearly these views were stated during the debate on Establishment of a European remembrance centre for victims of forced population movements and ethnic cleansing that was held on 27 January 2005. The majority of speakers were of the opinion that truth should be found through impartial scientific studies. Mats Einarsson (rapporteur) stated that “the centre should convey impartial historical knowledge and develop didactic material for discussions in schools and other institutions.”⁶¹ Other parliamentarians echoed this conviction. Ibrahim Ozal said that “the impartial study of history

⁵⁸ Jacques Barrot, “Proposed hearing of the Commission on crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes committed by totalitarian regimes,” European Parliament, 8 April 2008. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20080421+ITEM-015+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

⁵⁹ Miguel Angel Martinez Martinez, “Proposed hearing of the Commission on crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes committed by totalitarian regimes,” European Parliament, 8 April 2008. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20080421+ITEM-015+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

⁶⁰ Jan Marinus Wiersma, “Proposed hearing of the Commission on crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes committed by totalitarian regimes,” European Parliament, 8 April 2008. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20080421+ITEM-015+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

⁶¹ Mats Einarsson, “Establishment of a European remembrance centre for victims of forced population movements and ethnic cleansing,” Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 27 January 2005. <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/Records/2005/E/0501271500E.htm#5>.

will certainly contribute to the creation of a common European memory.”⁶² Tiny Kox was of the opinion that reconciliation can be achieved through “impartial studies of history,” and such studies could lead “to the creation of a common European history.”⁶³ Impartiality was stressed more in the PACE than in the EP, and Yves Pozzo di Borgo even stated that “historians, not politicians, were the best equipped to assist the collective memory.”⁶⁴

Although in many respects opinions in the EP and PACE were similar – most speakers recognized that better knowledge of history should lead to reconciliation and a common European history – the difference was to be found in the attitude of the Russian delegation. Konstantin Kosachev argued that “the establishment of a European remembrance centre might ... exacerbate hostilities rather than engender reconciliation.”⁶⁵ Vera Oskina was of a similar opinion. She said that such a centre would only create tension between nations because it was doubtful whether this centre would be able to tell the history of Europe without distortions.⁶⁶ The study of history might lead to more rather than less conflict, therefore history should not be revised, and European nations should be more concerned about the future than the past. For this reason, Konstantin Kosachev and Vera Oskina were opposed to the establishment of the European remembrance centre. Nonetheless, such a stance was resisted by other parliamentarians. For example, Mats Einarsson agreed with Konstantin Kosachev that “history is very dangerous” and that it can be “a lethal weapon.” However, Mats Einarsson was convinced that the answer to this risk was “not to avoid or deny history, but to deal with it in an open, democratic and multinational context.”⁶⁷

There are two related issues that surfaced during debates in the EP and PACE. First, a number of speakers in both parliamentary organizations

⁶² Ibrahim Ozal, “Establishment of a European remembrance centre for victims of forced population movements and ethnic cleansing,” Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 27 January 2005. <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/Records/2005/E/0501271500E.htm#5>.

⁶³ Tiny Kox, “Establishment of a European remembrance centre for victims of forced population movements and ethnic cleansing,” Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 27 January 2005. <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/Records/2005/E/0501271500E.htm#5>.

⁶⁴ Yves Pozzo di Borgo, “Establishment of a European remembrance centre for victims of forced population movements and ethnic cleansing,” Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 27 January 2005. <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/Records/2005/E/0501271500E.htm#5>.

⁶⁵ Konstantin Kosachev, “Establishment of a European remembrance centre for victims of forced population movements and ethnic cleansing,” Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 27 January 2005. <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/Records/2005/E/0501271500E.htm#5>.

⁶⁶ Vera Oskina, “Establishment of a European remembrance centre for victims of forced population movements and ethnic cleansing,” Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 27 January 2005. <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/Records/2005/E/0501271500E.htm#5>.

⁶⁷ Mats Einarsson, “Establishment of a European remembrance centre for victims of forced population movements and ethnic cleansing,” Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 27 January 2005. <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/Records/2005/E/0501271500E.htm#5>.

mentioned that it was virtually impossible to gather evidence on crimes that were committed by the Communist regime in the Soviet Union and several other post-communist countries because the archives were not made accessible to public. MEP Istvan Szent Ivanyi expressed dissatisfaction that there was not “complete access to the archives of the secret services of the oppressive Communist regimes.” He thought that it was “outrageous that people cannot get to know their own past.”⁶⁸ Zita Plestinska was even blunter when she said that “Stalin’s regime ripped out many pages from the annals of European history and your duty is therefore to open archives in the former Soviet Union and to replace those missing pages,”⁶⁹ while Ljudmila Novak saw a role for the EU to play in finding out what happened under totalitarian Communist regimes. She said that “the European Union must call upon all of the countries which were previously ruled by Communist regimes to enable their historians to carry out research and include the whole truth about the post-war era in school textbooks.”⁷⁰

Second, one might get an impression from debates that parliamentarians from the CEE countries were eager to politicize history and influence the findings of historians. Although to some extent this might be the case, this has an explanation that, according to their perception, Western countries were not sensitive to their interpretations of history, archives in some European countries were not made accessible to the public, and multiple perspectives on historical events – the perspective offered by some Western experts – was simply not acceptable. When the debate was held in the PACE on History teaching in conflict and post-conflict areas on 26 June 2009 and Cecilia Keaveney (rapporteur) suggested that a “multiple perspective” approach should be adopted when teaching history in conflict and post-conflict areas, Zaruhi Postanjan made a comment that

rejection of a ‘single truth’ is ... the triumph of historical revisionists and sham scholars who have used that sentence almost verbatim to corrupt reality itself, to deny the facts of the Jewish Holocaust and the Armenian genocide, and many of the undisputed, uncontroversial tragedies of our history.⁷¹

A similar comment was made during the debate in the EP by member of the Commission Jan Figel who said that “the denial of these crimes

⁶⁸ Istvan Szent Ivanyi, “European conscience and totalitarianism,” European Parliament, 25 March 2009. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20090325+ITEM-010+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

⁶⁹ Zita Plestinska, “European conscience and totalitarianism,” European Parliament, 25 March 2009. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20090325+ITEM-010+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

⁷⁰ Ljudmila Novak, “European conscience and totalitarianism,” European Parliament, 25 March 2009. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20090325+ITEM-010+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

⁷¹ Zaruhi Postanjan, “History teaching in conflict and post-conflict areas,” Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 26 June 2009. <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/Records/2009/E/0906261000E.htm>.

actually amounts to a relativization not only of the truth but also of ethics and morality, leading to further and further problems and to the idea that eliminating people means eliminating the problem."⁷² Parliamentarians from the CEE countries were ready to accept various interpretations of history, but it was too difficult to accept different views once the range of different opinions and interpretations widens. A multiple perspectives approach may be useful, but it can be employed only when basic historical data that these interpretations rely upon are correct. Also, it is not possible to employ a multiple perspective when access to historical archives is denied in some countries. Conflict resolution cannot be based on concealing information.

Is the Story Only About CEE Countries?

The debates on 20th century history in the EP and the PACE were mostly a battle about the history of the CEE countries. However, readjustment of interpretations of history in the CEE countries and moving towards a common European history does create some pressure to revise the history of the EU and West European countries as well. Two noteworthy narratives surfaced during debates in the EP and to a lesser extent also in the PACE.

The first narrative critically evaluates the role of Europe during the Cold War. It was claimed during debates that the EU is a guarantee of security, peace and prosperity in Europe,⁷³ but some parliamentarians mentioned that the success of the EU during this period was clearly overstated. Maciej Marian Giertych stressed that the United States played a far more significant role in bringing down the Soviet Union. He said that "the only help we received from the rest of the world in this process came by way of the arms race, which was won over time by the USA, and, in particular, through the success of Reagan's 'Star Wars' programme, which weakened the Soviet Union."⁷⁴ Jana Bobosikova expressed her opinion that the EU played a minor role during the Cold War and could not claim credit for the peaceful revolutions that took place in CEE countries at the end of 1980s. She said that

Peace in Europe can just as well be attributed to the presence of American troops on European soil, and prosperity can be explained

⁷² Jan Figel, "European conscience and totalitarianism," European Parliament, 25 March 2009. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20090325+ITEM-010+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

⁷³ For example, member of the Commission Olli Rehn referred to the EU during the debate on the "Balkans: 10 years after Srebrenica" as "the greatest peace and reconciliation project." It is no wonder that some parliamentarians were tempted to question the role of the EU in securing peace in Europe.

⁷⁴ Maciej Marian Giertych, "The future of Europe sixty years after the Second World War," European Parliament, 11 May 2005. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20050511+ITEM-016+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

by economic growth in Asia and the United States and the increase in global trade. As far as freedom is concerned, revolutions took place in a number of European countries, including my own, without any help from Brussels.⁷⁵

This was a powerful reminder that parliamentarians from the CEE countries were quite critical with regard to the EU's ability to act as a guarantor of peace and security on the continent and facilitate change in its neighbourhood.

It may be the case that the EU indeed "stands for everything that is the opposite of totalitarianism" (as Alexander Vondra put it),⁷⁶ but West European countries were not very successful in challenging totalitarianism and dictatorships at their borders. When events in Srebrenica were commemorated, Daniel Marc Cohn-Bendit admitted that "for a long time, we in Europe have been onlookers."⁷⁷ Although mostly this narrative appeared during debates in the EP, some elements of this narrative appeared also in the PACE debates. When the debate on the Need for international condemnation of crimes of totalitarian communist regimes was held, Miroslav Benes stated that "none of the Council of Europe resolutions helped us in former socialist – or, if you like, communist – countries. The military steps taken by Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher finally brought us the possibility of our current freedom."⁷⁸

The second narrative focused on the performance of West European politicians when they were confronted with totalitarian regimes. Some speakers stressed that history should also be reassessed in Western Europe where some politicians and political parties were happy to maintain good relations with the Soviet Union. Philip Claeys said that the new Eastern European "dictatorships could count on the active support and sympathy of so many Western European politicians, media, intellectuals and many others, some of whom, in fact, appeared to be on the payroll of the Soviet secret services."⁷⁹ During the debate "Commemoration of the 1956 Hungarian

⁷⁵ Jana Bobosikova, "The future of Europe sixty years after the Second World War," European Parliament, 11 May 2005. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20050511+ITEM-016+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

⁷⁶ Alexander Vondra (President-in-Office of the Council), "European conscience and totalitarianism," European Parliament, 25 March 2009. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20090325+ITEM-010+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

⁷⁷ Daniel Marc Cohn-Bendit, "Balkans: 10 years after Srebrenica," European Parliament, 06 July, 2005. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20050706+ITEM-026+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

⁷⁸ Miroslav Benes, "Need for international condemnation of crimes of totalitarian communist regimes," Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 25 January 2006. <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/Records/2006/E/0601251500E.htm>.

⁷⁹ Philip Claeys, "The future of Europe sixty years after the Second World War," European Parliament, 11 May 2005. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20050511+ITEM-016+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

uprising” Italian MEP Luca Romagnoli made a critical comment about political leaders of his own country. He said that

The current President of the Italian Republic, Giorgio Napolitano, appeared in the newspaper *L'Unità* condemning the revolutionaries as thugs and disreputable troublemakers. Fifty years later ... he does not retract this statement, but merely explains ... that in those years the Italian Communist Party and all European socialism was inseparable from the fortunes of the socialist bloc, led by the USSR.

Mr. Romagnoli stressed that the EP should “strongly condemn those who, at the time, enthusiastically chose to support the invasion, in the name of communist and socialist internationalism.”⁸⁰ Although this narrative was far from dominant during the debates, it is nonetheless important that some MEPs brought up a self-critical perspective.

Rediscovering European Values in the CEE Countries

This section looks at the issue of using the past as an inspiration for the future of Europe and seeks to understand whether 20th century history has only been told in terms of conflict or has it also been embraced as a source for hope. Such narratives of hope and inspiration were developed in the EP during two debates – the 25th anniversary of Solidarity and its message for Europe and Commemoration of the 1956 Hungarian uprising – while such narratives were not visible during debates on history that were held in the PACE. The reason is that the EP hosts a smaller group of like-minded countries that have managed to settle their historical disputes, while there are plenty of disputes over 20th century history among the PACE member states. Most likely, any attempt to celebrate resistance in the CEE countries against the Soviet Union would have provoked bitter rows among parliamentarians in the PACE. Thus, this section focuses only on commemoration debates in the EP, because history was not used as a source of inspiration during debates in the PACE. This difference between the two parliamentary organizations reflects dissimilarities of their member states in terms of interpretations of 20th century history.

Several important narratives appeared during debates on Solidarity and the Hungarian uprising. First, there was a narrative that these events were important for all of Europe and that they had far reaching consequences. Also, these debates firmly established that there was resistance in the CEE countries against oppressive regimes that were forced upon Hungary and Poland. Milan Horacek said that Solidarity was a “great triumph” and that

⁸⁰ Luca Romagnoli, “Commemoration of the 1956 Hungarian uprising,” European Parliament, 24 October, 2006. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20061024+ITEM-004+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

“without Solidarity, the Berlin Wall would not have fallen.”⁸¹ Anna Ibrisagic stated that “the first stone to fall from the Berlin Wall fell not in Berlin but in Gdansk,”⁸² and Ryszard Czarnecki remarked that “Solidarity was a crucial turning point in our common European 20th century history.”⁸³ Bronislaw Geremek said that it was his belief that “the unification of Europe began at Gdansk, that East and West came together as a result of the movement started by the Gdansk shipyard workers.”⁸⁴ Referring to the Hungarian uprising, Josep Borrell Fontelles said that “it was ... the first chink in the armour of the Soviet system – a chink that would grow and would lead to the fall of the Berlin Wall”.⁸⁵ Thus, both the Hungarian uprising and the Solidarity movement in Poland emerged during debates as major events with far reaching consequences for the whole group of CEE countries and beyond.⁸⁶ It was argued by many that the unification of Europe began in the CEE countries, and this process was made possible because societies in these countries rejected the model of society that was forced upon them.

Second, a narrative was developed that the Hungarian uprising and Solidarity were two examples of popular movements that Europe could be proud of and that the values that these movements represented were still relevant. Member of the Commission Charlie McCreevy said that “freedom was what Solidarność fought for and it is today also closely associated with solidarity as a fundamental value shared by Europeans.” He went on to say that “there is no Europe without solidarity.”⁸⁷ Jozef Pinior expressed

⁸¹ Milan Horacek, “25th anniversary of Solidarity and its message for Europe,” European Parliament, 26 September, 2005. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20050926+ITEM-013+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

⁸² Anna Ibrisagic, “25th anniversary of Solidarity and its message for Europe,” European Parliament, 26 September, 2005. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20050926+ITEM-013+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

⁸³ Ryszard Czarnecki, “25th anniversary of Solidarity and its message for Europe,” European Parliament, 26 September, 2005. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20050926+ITEM-013+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

⁸⁴ Bronislaw Geremek, “25th anniversary of Solidarity and its message for Europe,” European Parliament, 26 September, 2005. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20050926+ITEM-013+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

⁸⁵ Josep Borrell Fontelles, “Commemoration of the 1956 Hungarian uprising,” European Parliament, 24 October, 2006. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20061024+ITEM-004+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

⁸⁶ In a similar vein Johannes Blokland spoke about the importance of the Hungarian uprising. He said that “the historical significance of Budapest 1956 is much more than local or national.” Commemoration of the 1956 Hungarian uprising. European Parliament, 24 October, 2006. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20061024+ITEM-004+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

⁸⁷ Charlie McCreevy, “25th anniversary of Solidarity and its message for Europe,” European Parliament, 26 September, 2005. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20050926+ITEM-013+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

an opinion that "Solidarity's programme can still serve as an inspiration at global level and also at European level, as Europe tackles the challenge of creating an effective economy and a just society."⁸⁸ Several speakers, for example, Alojz Peterle, saw Solidarity as "an inspiration, a concept, and a much needed way forward" that was crucial for Europe's development.⁸⁹ Bronislaw Geremek thought that Solidarity was "Poland's contribution to the idea of Europe."⁹⁰ Martin Schultz, in turn, emphasized that "the courage shown by these men and women [during the 1956 Hungarian uprising] is worthy of our admiration" and it was also "part of the heritage of Europe."⁹¹ Values represented by the Solidarity movement and the Hungarian uprising were seen as truly European and as a valuable contribution to a united Europe. An important component of this narrative was its emphasis on the fact that European values were present also in the CEE countries even up to the point that people were prepared to make sacrifices in order to be able to live according to them. In later years, these values effectively contributed to the fall of the Berlin wall.

During the debates in the EP on the Hungarian uprising and Solidarity movement,⁹² some bitter remarks were expressed, but, in general, the atmosphere was very optimistic. Solidarity was mentioned as "a shining European example,"⁹³ and it was claimed that "Solidarity's story inspires optimism and confidence."⁹⁴ The narrative of positive change dominated

⁸⁸ Jozef Piniór, "25th anniversary of Solidarity and its message for Europe," European Parliament, 26 September 2005. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20050926+ITEM-013+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

⁸⁹ Alojz Peterle, "25th anniversary of Solidarity and its message for Europe," European Parliament, 26 September 2005. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20050926+ITEM-013+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

⁹⁰ Bronislaw Geremek, "25th anniversary of Solidarity and its message for Europe," European Parliament, 26 September, 2005. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20050926+ITEM-013+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

⁹¹ Martin Schultz, "Commemoration of the 1956 Hungarian uprising," European Parliament, 24 October 2006. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20061024+ITEM-004+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

⁹² For example, Bronislaw Geremek developed a narrative that Europe was helpless when facing injustices committed by the Soviet Union in the CEE countries. He said that "we must not forget that Europe, faced with the drama of 1956, certainly expressed its indignation, but remained silent and impotent." And Josep Borrell Fontelles admitted that the uprising was "an indescribable tragedy for the Hungarian people." "Commemoration of the 1956 Hungarian uprising," European Parliament, 24 October, 2006. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20061024+ITEM-004+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

⁹³ Jan Marinus Wiersma, "25th anniversary of Solidarity and its message for Europe," European Parliament, 26 September 2005. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20050926+ITEM-013+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

⁹⁴ Filip Andrzej Kaczmarek, "25th anniversary of Solidarity and its message for Europe," European Parliament, 26 September 2005. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20050926+ITEM-013+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

during debates, and it was most eloquently put by Hans-Gert Poettering who said that “it will always be the miracle of my generation” that “we have with us in this House freely-elected Hungarian MEPs.”⁹⁵ Overall, MEPs agreed that positive change was possible and that there were several examples in the history of Europe that inspired hope and confidence.

Conclusions

The aim of this chapter was to compare debates on 20th century history in the EP and the PACE, while also looking at positions held by Latvian and Russian parliamentarians. One can conclude that, although the topics of debates in both parliamentary organizations were sometimes similar, the content of the debates differed significantly. Two conclusions stand out from the above analysis. First, the composition of both parliamentary organizations matters a great deal. Member states of the PACE have not settled their disputes on 20th century history, therefore, when it comes to history, these countries are trapped. On the one hand, history has become a dividing force and its impact needs to be tamed. But, on the other hand, because of fundamentally different interpretations of 20th century history PACE member states have difficulties debating history and coming to conclusions that all parties can agree upon. As a consequence, there is a tendency to develop narratives that politicians should not address history and that history should be debated by historians, not politicians. However, even this narrative is problematic because some participants in the PACE were in favour of leaving history as it was. This narrative was developed by Russian parliamentarians who argued that debating history may result in renewed conflicts. Countries should refrain from revising history and should move forward. Thus, it is no wonder that Latvian and Russian parliamentarians frequently found themselves in opposite camps. Most Latvian parliamentarians propagated that the past should be debated and that moving towards a common interpretation of 20th century history is both desirable and feasible, while Russian parliamentarians held to the opinion that history should not be revised.

Second, the gap between opinions in the PACE was wider than in the EP, and this means that both parliamentary organizations are very different in terms of their dynamics. The opinion gap is rather narrow in the case of the EP because it is an organization of like-minded countries. During debates MEPs were moving towards a common interpretation of European history, and there was not much disagreement on 20th century history. The situation was different in the PACE. The gap between opinions was wide,

⁹⁵ Hans-Gert Poettering, “Commemoration of the 1956 Hungarian uprising,” European Parliament, 24 October 2006. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20061024+ITEM-004+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

and there was no evidence that this gap was becoming more narrow. With countries as diverse as Turkey, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Russia, Greece, Cyprus, Poland and the Baltic states being part of the same parliamentary organization, it was difficult to see how they could move towards a common interpretation of history. It may become possible, however, if member states of the EU agree on a common interpretation of history and manage to exert a pacifying influence on countries in their neighbourhood. Although this is a necessary precondition, it may be insufficient because the ability of history to evoke passions may turn out to be stronger than the taming effect of integration.

Latvian-Russian Memory Battles at the European Court of Human Rights

Nils Muižnieks¹

Introduction

Throughout the 1990s, Latvia and Russia sparred over their respective interpretations of the past in various regional and international organizations such as the United Nations (UN), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe, particularly the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE).² More recently, Latvia and Russia have begun to wage their memory battles in a new arena – the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). These battles have both political and legal significance. What the court considers to be historical fact is more difficult for either side to contest at the political level, while the court's interpretations of historical context also carry considerable legal weight, as both sides have accepted the jurisdiction of the ECHR and must implement its judgments.

This chapter examines these “memory battles,” which revolve around a number of cases in which Latvia is a respondent government. In several of these cases, Russia has participated as a third party, while in others Russian officials and media outlets have actively commented on the proceedings and the outcome. All of the cases involve dealing with the legacy of the Soviet past – crimes committed in the name of the Soviet regime by KGB, Communist Party or military personnel, the status in independent Latvia of persons linked to the various organs of Soviet power, and the inherited responsibilities of Russia and Latvia.

¹ The author would like to extend his gratitude to Vladimirs Trojanskis for outstanding research assistance and to Inga Reine, the Representative of the Latvian Government Before International Human Rights Organizations, and her staff for providing access to case files and sharing their insights.

² For memory battles at the UN, see Reire, G. (2008), “Latvia and Russia in the United Nations: the Human Rights Card” in Ozoliņa, Žaneta ed., *Latvia-Russia-X*. Riga: SAK, pp. 72-75; for analysis of Russia's activities against Latvia linking the “compatriots” issue with “rewriting history” and the alleged “rebirth of fascism”, see Muižnieks, N. (2006), “Russian Policy Towards ‘Compatriots’ in Latvia,” in Muižnieks, Nils, ed., *Latvian-Russian Relations: Domestic and International Dimensions*. Riga: University of Latvia Press, pp.121-125; for analysis of recent Latvian-Russian history debates in the PACE, see Toms Rostoks' chapter in this volume.

Latvia is not Russia's only "sparring partner" at the court, but possibly its most frequent one on issues pertaining to the past. As noted below, on one occasion, Lithuania has also participated in a supporting role in a Latvian case of particular interest to Russia, thereby prompting a Russian foreign ministry spokesman to condemn the "course of the Baltic states on speeding up the revision of the outcome of World War II."³ Russia has also harshly criticized the Court for acting in a "politicized" manner when it ruled as inadmissible a complaint from a former KGB official in Estonia who sought to challenge the legality of his conviction by Estonian courts for crimes against humanity for his participation in deporting civilians to the Gulag.⁴ Moreover, Russia has harshly criticized the Court for its "politicized" ruling in the *Ilascu and others v. Moldova and Russia* case, in which the court made reference to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact leading to Bessarabia being "taken" from Romania by the USSR.⁵

Lithuania, Estonia and Moldova have only occasionally joined the "ring" in Strasbourg to spar with Russia about the past. However, cases from Latvia which give rise to analysis of certain historical facts or the relevance of the historical context have evoked the most frequent incensed commentary from Russia. This chapter analyzes memory politics surrounding the following cases: *Kononov v. Latvia*, *Slivenko v. Latvia*, *Sisojeva and others v. Latvia*, *Ždanoka v. Latvia*, *Larionovs v. Latvia*, *Tess v. Latvia*, *Ādamsons v. Latvia* and *Andrejeva v. Latvia*.

The primary source of empirical material for this chapter is unpublished case materials, including the various "memorials" (memoranda), "observations," "additional observations," "talking points" and supporting documentation provided to the court by the Latvian government, the Russian government, and the complainants and their legal counsel, all of which was made available to the author at the office of the Representative of the Latvian Government before International Human Rights Organizations. The analysis is also based on court judgments themselves and official pronouncements about them by representatives of the Latvian and Russian governments.

³ The text of the briefing by Russian MFA Spokesman Andrei Nesterenko on May 28, 2009, is available at http://www.mid.ru/Brp_4.nsf/arh/9699CFEF50C2104AC32575D90037EC38.

⁴ The text of the decision of the ECHR as to the admissibility of the case *Penart v. Estonia* of 24 January 2006 is available on the ECHR database at <http://cmiskp.echr.coe.int>. For the Russian MFA statement calling the Penart case, among others, "politicized," see "Russian MFA Information and Press Department Commentary Regarding Examination in European Court of Human Rights of the Sysoyevs vs. Latvia Case" of 9 June 2006, available at http://www.mid.ru/Brp_4.nsf/arh/BB84499C98376C7BC3257188004F3AA6?OpenDocument. A case similar to that of *Penart v. Estonia* is *Kolk and Kislyiy v. Estonia*, also ruled inadmissible by the court on 17 January 2006.

⁵ See the judgment of the ECHR in *Ilascu and others v. Moldova and Russia* of 8 July 2004, available at <http://cmiskp.echr.coe.int>. For official Russian commentary, see "Statement by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Concerning the Ruling of the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg on the 'Case of Ilascu'" of 8 July 2004, available at http://www.mid.ru/Brp_4.nsf/arh/AEDAEA734E366074C3256ECB0054ED80?OpenDocument.

While the Latvian media have not devoted much coverage to the cases in question, Russia's media have made several of the applicants from Latvia into heroes. Below, Russian media coverage will be mentioned only in passing, as a recent study analyzed in some detail media portrayal of a number of the cases investigated here.⁶ In that study Dmitrijs Petrenko found that the Russian media portrayed military and KGB veterans in Latvia involved in various legal proceedings as an important subgroup of "compatriots" abroad under threat in Latvia, where the authorities are "inhumane" and "vengeful." The plight of these individuals is portrayed as being typical of that of Russians in Latvia in general.⁷ At the same time, Solvita Denis found that the Russian media portrayed the trials as part of a broader trend of Latvia "rewriting history" and "attacking" sacred "truths" and Russia on issues of historical interpretation.⁸ Russia has sought to defend itself and some of its heroes from these attacks at the ECHR by becoming a third party to the legal proceedings. For Russia to participate as a third party in the proceedings, the applicant has to be a citizen of Russia.

Kononov v. Latvia

The single case that has evoked the most political and media attention in Russia is that of *Kononov v. Latvia*, the case of a former "red partisan" commander convicted in Latvia for war crimes committed in Nazi-occupied Latvia for his role in a 1944 partisan mission that brutally killed a number of individuals, including a pregnant woman. The ECHR first passed judgment on the case on 24 July 2008, but the case was subsequently referred to the court's Grand Chamber, which issued a final judgment on 17 May 2010. According to Article 43 of the European Convention on Human Rights, referral of a case to the Grand Chamber takes place in "exceptional cases" giving rise to a "serious question affecting the interpretation or application of the Convention or the protocols thereto, or a serious issue of general importance." *Kononov v. Latvia* is only one of several "exceptional" cases from Latvia to be referred to the Grand Chamber, attesting to the complexity and path-breaking nature of these cases in the court's practice.

Kononov's case raises a number of thorny questions related to history, accountability and law: can and should an individual who fought on the side of the Allies be tried for war crimes? Does it matter which ideology an individual claimed to be fighting for when determining criminal liability? What was the legal status of Latvia in 1944 at the time the events in question took place? Inga Reine, the Representative of the Latvian Government

⁶ See Petrenko, D. (2008) "How Does the Russian Community Live in Latvia?" and Denis, S. (2008) "The Story with History," both in Muižnieks, Nils, ed., *Manufacturing Enemy Images? Russian Media Portrayal of Latvia*. Riga: University of Latvia Press, pp. 45-78 and 79-108, respectively.

⁷ Ibid, pp. 64-70.

⁸ Ibid, pp. 97-105.

Before International Human Rights Organizations, has suggested that the case presented the court with the opportunity to decide “whether a person’s combat on the side of the Allies during World War II in and of itself justifies any crimes that were committed in that period.” Moreover, Reine has suggested that a judgment in favour of the Latvian authorities would be tantamount to the court saying that “the Red Army is not as ideal as Russia makes it out to be. Of course, this will raise the issue of other possible crimes committed by the Red Army.”⁹

Russia has indicated the importance it attaches to the case in a number of ways. Even when the case was being tried in Latvian courts, the Russian authorities and the Russian media paid it particular attention, with the lower house of the Russian Duma and the Federation Council passing declarations in support of Kononov in 1998,¹⁰ 2000,¹¹ and 2001.¹² In 2000 President Putin urged Latvian President Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga to intervene in the case,¹³ and in 2003, sent a personal greeting to Kononov on the latter’s 80th birthday.¹⁴ Around the time Kononov had exhausted the appeals process in Latvia, he gave up his Latvian citizenship and acquired Russian citizenship, paving the way for Russia’s participation in the Strasbourg proceedings. In a submission to the ECHR in 2008, Russia’s representative at the court Milinchuk noted that “the judgment of the European Court on the case of *Kononov v. Latvia* will be of paramount importance for the interpretation of international humanitarian law as well as of a great political significance in the light of estimation of Second World War results.”¹⁵ The Moscow City Council, which often works hand-in-hand with the Russian government, helped provide funding to pay Kononov’s legal expenses.

The broader importance of the case was also demonstrated by the participation of Lithuania in the case as a third party in the proceedings

⁹ Author’s interview with Inga Reine, Riga, 2 August 2009.

¹⁰ “Zayavlenie Gosudarstvennoy dumy v svyazi s arestom pravookhranitel’nymi organami Latviyskoy Respubliki polkovnika V.M. Kononova kak byvshego komandira partizanskogo otryada, borovshegosya s fashizmom v gody Vtoroy mirovoy voiny,” *Rossiskaya gazeta* No. 173, 9 September 1998.

¹¹ “Zayavlenie Gosudarstvennoy dumy federal’nogo sobraniya Rossiskoy Federatsii v svyazi s vynesseniem Rizhskim okruzhnym sudom obvinitel’noga prigovora po delu V.M. Kononova kak byvshego komandira partizanskogo otryada, borovshegosya s fashizmom v gody Vtoroy mirovoy voiny,” *Postanovlenie GD RF*, 28 January 2000.

¹² “Zayavlenie Gosudarstvennoy dumy federal’nogo sobraniya Rossiskoy Federatsii o prodolzhenii presledovaniya vlastyami Latviyskoy Respubliki byvshego komandira partizanskogo otryada V.M. Kononova,” *Postanovlenie GD RF*, 25 January 2001.

¹³ See Soobschenie press-sluzhby prezidenta Rossiskoy Federatsii, “Acting President Vladimir Putin sent a letter to President Vaira Vike-Freiberga of Latvia in protest against Latvian court sentencing a former Soviet partisan, Vasily Kononov,” 18 February 2000, available at <http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/text/news/2000/02/123972.shtml>.

¹⁴ See the item entitled “Vladimir Putin pozdravil s 80-letiem zhitelya Latvii, veterana-antifashista Vasiliya Kononova, presleduyemogo Latviiskim pravosudiem,” dated 2 January 2003 on the official site of the President of the Russian Federation at www.kremlin.ru/text/news/2003/01/39177.shtml.

¹⁵ Representative of the Russian Federation at the ECHR V. Milinchuk, “Further observations on *Kononov v. Latvia*,” 21 February 2008.

before the Grand Chamber. As noted in the Lithuanian government's request to participate, "the case at issue raised serious questions of evaluation of the historical and legal circumstances related to the Second World War events which are relevant to all the Baltic states."¹⁶

The various parties to the proceedings disagreed over how Latvia came to be a part of the USSR, the status of Latvia during World War II, and the status of Mr. Kononov during the war. In his application to the court, Kononov made reference to Latvia's "request" to join the USSR of 21 July 1940 and claimed that he, "like all those citizens who remained living on the territory of Latvia, became a citizen of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and thus, I came under the jurisdiction of the USSR."¹⁷ The representative of the Latvian government reminded the court of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and its secret protocols, as a result of which Latvia and the other Baltic states were "'forcibly annexed' ('occupied') by the Soviet Union in June 1940" and noted that until 1991 the "Latvian authorities were effectively prevented from exercising their sovereign powers."¹⁸ The Russian government, for its part, alleged the "voluntary nature of Latvia's joining the USSR" and strongly objected to the "so-called 'double occupation' concept."¹⁹

For the Russian Government, Kononov was "an antifascist partisan who during the Second World War fought on the side of the anti-Hitler coalition of the allies."²⁰ From the point of view of the Latvian government, "He was not tried for what the Red Army or the Soviet Union did in general. He was tried for what he personally and the men under his command did. It didn't matter under which authority the crime was committed."²¹ While Kononov stressed his loyalty to the USSR, the Lithuanian government added that "under international law the population of the Baltic states retained their Baltic nationality, therefore had no duty of allegiance to any of the occupants."²²

In its initial ruling of 24 July 2008, the Court skirted the issue of how Latvia came to be part of the Soviet Union, noting under the Chapter entitled "Facts": "On 22 June 1941 Nazi Germany attacked the Soviet Union,

¹⁶ Agent of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania to the ECHR Elvyra Baltutyte, "Request of Lithuania to the ECHR to intervene as a third party to the case *Kononov v. Latvia*," 3 April 2009.

¹⁷ Para. 14, "Application of Vasilij Kononov v. Latvia to the ECHR," 19 August 2004, received by the ECHR on 30 August 2004.

¹⁸ "Additional observations of the Government of the Republic of Latvia," 7 March 2008, §12 and 14, respectively. Bold in the original.

¹⁹ Representative of the Russian Federation at the ECHR V. Milinchuk, "Further Observations on *Kononov v. Latvia*," 21 February 2008, Chapter 3, page 15, and §3, page 4, respectively. Bold in the original.

²⁰ "Request of Representative of the Russian Federation at the ECHR Pavel Laptev to the ECHR to apply Rule 41 of the Rules of the Court (case priority) in *Kononov v. Latvia* on medical grounds," 20 March 2007.

²¹ Inga Reine, "Speech before the Grand Chamber," 20 May 2009, §19.

²² "Submission of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania to the Grand Chamber of the ECHR intervening in the case *Kononov v. Latvia*," 6 May 2009, §24.

of which Latvian territory formed a part.”²³ Further, “the Court notes, lastly, that the parties and the third-party intervener attach considerable importance to certain questions of a general nature, in particular whether Latvia’s incorporation into the Soviet Union in 1940 was lawful under public international law and constitutional law [...] In this connection, the Court reiterates that it will abstain, as far as possible from pronouncing on matters of purely historical fact.”²⁴ In a closely contested ruling of four votes to three, the Court found a violation of Article 7 (No punishment without law) of the Convention and awarded Kononov €30,000 in damages.

In its request for the case to be referred to the Grand Chamber following the ruling, the Latvian government noted that “The Chamber refused to take into account the fact that in 1940 Latvia was occupied by the USSR.”²⁵ The Latvian government could take heart from the dissenting opinions of several judges, who appeared to vindicate the Latvian stance. A joint dissenting opinion of three judges asks rhetorically, “Why should criminal responsibility depend on which side those guilty of war crimes were fighting on?”²⁶ Another dissenting opinion noted that “in the period 1940-1991 Latvia was a victim of hostile occupation by foreign powers [...] The aim of the Soviet Union was not to ‘liberate’ Latvia from Nazi Germany and re-establish the country as an independent sovereign State, but to regain control over Latvia as one of the Soviet Socialist Republics.”²⁷ The judgment of the Grand Chamber was assigned great importance by both the Latvian and Russian governments.

Subsequent to the Court’s initial ruling, both Latvia and Russia continued their battle over Kononov in various fora. The chairman of the European Court of Human Rights Jean Paul Costa, accompanied by Latvia’s judge Ineta Ziemele and the court’s deputy registrar, visited Latvia in April 2009 to “promote dialogue with Constitutional and Supreme Courts.” Costa met with members of the judiciary, as well as Latvia’s President, Prime Minister, Minister of Justice and other high officials, while also visiting the Occupation Museum. According to media reports, Prime Minister Valdis Dombrovskis urged the representatives of Court to pay greater attention to Latvia’s historical situation in various cases before the court.²⁸

Russia, in turn, launched a campaign in France and elsewhere seeking to defend Kononov, question the neutrality of the president of

²³ “Judgment of the ECHR on Case of Kononov v. Latvia” 24 July 2008, “Facts”, p. 2, § 9.

²⁴ Ibid “The Court’s Assessment,” pp. 4-2, § 112.

²⁵ “Request of the Government of the Republic of Latvia to refer the case to the Grand Chamber,” 24 October 2008, §15.

²⁶ “Joint Dissenting Opinion of Judges Fura-Sandstrom, David Thor Bjorgvinsson, and Ziemele” to the judgment in the *Case of Kononov v. Latvia*, 24 July 2008.

²⁷ “Dissenting Opinion of Judge David Thor Bjorgvinsson” to the judgment in the *Case of Kononov v. Latvia*, 24 July 2008.

²⁸ See Mūrniece, I. (2009), “Eiropas Cilvēktiesību tiesas priekšsēdētājs Latvijā,” *Latvijas Avīze*, 15 April 2009.

the court, and threaten the court with strong political consequences in the event of a “wrong” decision on Kononov. In October 2009, a fringe left French newspaper printed a “dossier” on “The Incredible Case of Vassili Makarovitch Kononov” and an open letter signed by three French law professors criticizing Costa for his Latvian visit.²⁹ On 10 November 2009, the same open letter appeared in *Le Monde* as a half-page paid advertisement. In early November Russian deputy foreign minister Grigory Karasin, attending the European Russian Forum in Brussels, urged the Court “not to permit an unjust attitude” towards Kononov.³⁰ On 2 December 2009, the Paris office of Russia’s public diplomacy efforts, the “Institute for Democracy and Cooperation,” organized a roundtable on war crimes and human rights entitled “Was the Nuremberg Tribunal Mistaken?” with the participation of Kononov’s lawyer and a Sorbonne history professor.³¹ As the date of the Grand Chamber’s ruling approached, head of the Russian Duma’s international affairs committee Konstantin Kosachev warned that a ruling against Kononov would be a “catastrophe in our relations with the court.”³²

On 17 May 2010 the Grand Chamber issued its judgment, finding no violation of the Convention in Latvia’s prosecution of Kononov.³³ The ruling itself sought to skirt controversial historical issues, merely noting under “the Facts” that “In August 1940 Latvia became part of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.” The judgment reiterated “the observations of the parties and third parties to the Grand Chamber” regarding Latvian history, but stressed in § 210 that “The Grand Chamber considers (as did the Chamber, at § 112 of its judgment) that it is not its role to pronounce on the question of the lawfulness of Latvia’s incorporation into the USSR, and in any event in the present case, it is not necessary to do so.”

The Latvian Foreign Ministry was restrained in its response, announcing that the “ECHR judgment in the Kononov case confirms the generally recognized principle of international law that responsibility for the committed war crimes shall be individual and effective, and that such crimes may not be justified by the perpetrator's belonging to a certain state, political, ideological or other group.”³⁴ However, in a separate statement the Foreign Ministry also condemned “attempts by representatives of the

²⁹ See *Bastille-Republique-Nations* 6 October 2009.

³⁰ See Zvirbulis, G. (2009), “AM: Krievijas politiķi cenšas ietekmēt tiesu,” *Latvijas Avīze*, 13 November 2009.

³¹ For a brief Russian-language overview of the seminar, see <http://www.idc-europe.org/ru/showerInformation.asp?Identificateur=17>.

³² For the Latvian news item citing *Interfax*, see “Kosačevs: Kononovam zaudējot, Krievijas un ECT attiecībās sāksies krīze,” *Delfi.lv*, 5 May 2010, available at www.delfi.lv/archive/print.php?id=31684575.

³³ Grand Chamber Judgment in the Case of Kononov v. Latvia (Application no. 3637604), 17 May 2010.

³⁴ For the text of the statement, see <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/en/news/press-releases/2010/may/17-05/>.

Russian Federation to exercise pressure on the European Court of Human Rights.”³⁵

The Russian Foreign Ministry, for its part, called the judgment a “dangerous precedent”, “an attempt to cast doubt on a whole range of key political and legal principles which were created as a result of World War II [...] including calling to account Nazi war criminals.” In Russia’s view, the Kononov judgment will bring “serious damage to the authority of the Council of Europe” and lead Russia to review its “further relations with the Court, and with the Council of Europe as a whole.”³⁶ In subsequent days, various youth groups with close ties to the Russian government (“Nashi” and the youth organization of the United Russia political party “Molodaya gvardiya”) organized demonstrations in St. Petersburg and Moscow condemning the Strasbourg Court, while a small picket took place in Latvia as well.³⁷ It appears that the Kononov case is likely to have a greater negative impact on Russia’s relations with the Strasbourg Court than with Latvia.

Slivenko v. Latvia and Sisoyeva and others v. Latvia

Two other cases in which Russia has taken part in the proceedings against Latvia as a third party – *Slivenko v. Latvia* and *Sisoyeva v. Latvia* – involved the families of former Soviet military personnel who had been stationed in Latvia during the Soviet era and sought to maintain residence in Latvia after independence. The latter case was reviewed by the Grand Chamber. In the view of the Latvian authorities, the individuals in question were subject to the terms of the Latvian-Russian troop withdrawal agreement of 1994 and had to leave the country. The applicants and the Russian authorities hotly contested this stance and sought to portray the efforts of the Latvian authorities to deport them as part of a policy of “ethnic and language ‘cleansing,’” a “‘medieval’ state policy of xenophobia,”³⁸ and part of a “campaign launched in Latvia to exert pressure upon ethnically unwanted persons to compel them out of the country.”³⁹

Both cases gave rise to controversial issues concerning the past. Here, a core point of contention was the circumstances under which persons arrived

³⁵ For the text of the statement, see <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/en/news/press-releases/2010/may/17-05-02/>.

³⁶ The statement, labelled “Zayavlenie MID Rosii v svyazi s oglaseniem 17 maya s.g. postanovleniya Bol’shoi palaty Evropeyskogo Suda po pravam cheloveka po delu V.M. Kononova,” is available at www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/76B3CABB18AE11CCC3257726003B6824,

³⁷ See “Vairāki kustības “Vienota Latvija” pārstāvji pie Francijas vēstniecības pikētē Kononova aizstāvībai,” LETA, 21 May 2010.

³⁸ “Memorandum of the Representative of the Russian Federation Pavel Laptev in the European Court of Rights Application No. 48321/99,” 2 June 2001, Annex 1, page 7.

³⁹ “Letter of Representative of the Russian Federation to the ECHR Pavel Laptev to ECHR registrar Paul Mahoney regarding the Slivenko case,” 20 June 2002, §1.

on the territory of Latvia during the Soviet period, especially those persons in some way linked to the Soviet military. Differences on this question were also linked to different stances on Latvia's status within the Soviet Union, how Latvia came to be a part of the Soviet Union, and how it became independent in 1991.

For the Latvian government, "persons like Mr. Nikolay Slivenko were the members of the occupational army" and "occupational forces must leave occupied territory after the end of occupation."⁴⁰ "The residence of the applicants in the territory of Latvia was never accepted by the Republic of Latvia since at the time of the arrival of the applicants the Republic of Latvia was under the occupation of the former Soviet Union." The representative of Latvia claimed that there was a "justified fear that prolonged stay of ex-Soviet soldiers and their families in Latvia, would [...] destabilize the recently established Latvian democracy."⁴¹

The applicants themselves, however, stressed that the military service of other members of their family was irrelevant, that they were "not immigrants," but "all citizens of the USSR".⁴² The Russian government, for its part, found the assertion that the Soviet army was an "army of occupation" "an insult of Russia."⁴³ As to the allegation that such persons posed a potential security threat to Latvia, the court noted the argument of the applicants in the Sisoyeva case that in 1990-1991 "almost the entire non-Latvian Russophone population of Latvia was on the side of the Latvians"⁴⁴ – an assertion contradicted by survey data at the time, the results of the March 1991 referendum and an analysis of the pro-Soviet movement, which was closely linked with the Soviet military.⁴⁵

Again, the issue of how to characterize Latvia's entry into and exit from the Soviet Union was hotly contested, especially in the Slivenko case. The Latvian government, for its part, reiterated its view concerning the occupation of Latvia, the continued existence of Latvia *de jure* under international law throughout the occupation, and the *de facto* restoration of that independence in 1991.⁴⁶ The Russian authorities argued that "the thesis

⁴⁰ "Letter of State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia to registrar of the court Erik Fribergh" commenting on the admissibility of the Slivenko application, 18 April 2000, §2.

⁴¹ "Notes for Oral Submissions" submitted by Kristina Maļinovska, the agent of the government of Latvia, during the hearing in the Slivenko case, 14 November 2001.

⁴² "Zamechaniya ot Svetlany Sysoyevoy i eyo sem'i na pis'mennyye zamechaniya pravitel'stva Latvii," 22 March 2001, §28.

⁴³ "Memorandum of the Representative of the Russian Federation Pavel Laptev in the European Court of Rights Application No. 48321/99," 2 June 2001, Annex 1, p. 5.

⁴⁴ "Position des representants des requerants," 24 May 2006, §46.

⁴⁵ See, e.g., Muiznieks, Nils (1990), "The Pro-Soviet Movement in Latvia," *Report on the USSR* 2, No. 34 (August 24, 1990), pp. 20-1.

⁴⁶ "Memorial of the Government of the Republic of Latvia on Tatyana Slivenko and others v. Latvia," sent to the ECHR on 28 September 2001, §25-6; "Notes for Oral Submissions" submitted by Kristine Maļinovska during the hearing on 14 November 2001.

concerning ‘Soviet occupation’ has to be repulsed”, it “has to be dismissed as manifestly wire-drawn (*sic!*) and having nothing in common neither with this concrete case nor with the competence of the European Court of Human Rights.”⁴⁷ In the Russian view, “what concerns Latvia’s secession from the USSR, it should be noted that Russia was among the first states to recognize the independence of Latvia.”⁴⁸

In the rulings in both cases, the Court gave a rather anodyne rendering of Latvian history, avoiding almost any comment on the issue. In the Sisojeva case, the Court noted that: “The first two applicants entered Latvian territory in 1969 and 1968 respectively, when the territory formed part of the Soviet Union.”⁴⁹ In the Slivenko case, the Court merely noted that “Latvia regained independence from the USSR in 1991.”⁵⁰ While the Court did not find any substantial violation of the applicant’s rights in the Sisojeva case, it ruled partially in favour of the applicant in the Slivenko case. This led the Russian authorities to criticize harshly the former judgment, calling it an example of “an attempt to lower the bar of requirements to Latvia” and a “politicized” decision.⁵¹

A separate dissenting opinion by Judge Maruste in the Slivenko case largely echoed Latvia’s stance on history:

It is well known and recognized in international law that the Baltic states, including Latvia, lost their independence on the basis of the “Hitler-Stalin Pact” between Nazi Germany and the USSR [...] The result of this secret agreement was that Eastern Europe was divided into two spheres of influence, leaving the Baltic states, including Latvia, in the Soviet Union’s sphere of influence.[...] The above named actions by the Soviet Union were not recognized by a majority of the international democratic community, including the European Parliament and the Council of Europe. [...] Consequently, the restoration of the independence of the Baltic states on the basis of legal continuity and the withdrawal of the Soviet-Russian troops has to be regarded as redress of an historical injustice.⁵²

It was not until the *Ždanoka v. Latvia* case that this latter view was confirmed by the Court as the “Facts”.

⁴⁷ “Letter of Pavel Laptev, Representative of the Russian Federation at the ECHR, to Paul Mahoney, registrar,” 8 January 2002.

⁴⁸ “Additional memorandum to the Questions Posed by the ECHR by Representative of the Russian Federation to the ECHR,” 2 November 2001, p. 6.

⁴⁹ “Judgment of the [Grand Chamber of] the ECHR on the Case of Sisojeva and others v. Latvia,” 15 January 2007, §17.

⁵⁰ “Judgment of the ECHR on the Case of *Slivenko v. Latvia*,” 9 October 2003, §17.

⁵¹ “Russian MFA Information and Press Department Commentary Regarding Examination in European Court of Human Rights of the Sysoyevs vs. Latvia Case,” 9 June 2006, available at http://www.mid.ru/Brp_4.nsf/arh/BB84499C98376C7BC3257188004F3AA6.

⁵² “Separate dissenting opinion of Judge Maruste” to the Judgment of the ECHR on the Case of *Slivenko v. Latvia*,” 9 October 2003.

Larionovs v. Latvia and Tess v. Latvia

A number of Latvian cases before the Court have involved former KGB officials who had been tried in Latvia for crimes against humanity for their part in the post-war deportations of civilians to Siberia. The cases raised questions about the proper characterization of Stalinist mass deportations, their link with World War II, the way in which Latvia lost its independence and the nature of the post-war national partisan movement.

Nikolajs Tess had been tried in Latvia for signing an order to deport 42 *kulak* or “rich peasant” families to Siberia in 1949. Nikolajs Larionovs had been tried in Latvia for signing the deportation orders for 150 families. While these individuals sought to challenge the legality of their convictions in Latvian courts before the Strasbourg court, Russia championed their cause and portrayed them as World War II heroes facing political persecution. In the middle of the domestic proceedings against Larionovs, a representative of the Russian Foreign Ministry linked the outcome of this and similar cases with broader Latvian-Russian relations:

If Latvia is really interested in the formation of an image of a democratic country and in good neighbourly relations with Russia, its authorities should not settle accounts with fighters against fascism, but seriously occupy itself with finding former Nazi criminals and look to their current ideological successors.⁵³

After a Latvian court found Larionovs guilty, the Russian Foreign Ministry gave its version of the historical context:

the court found him guilty of ‘genocide against the Latvian people,’ an act Larionov had allegedly committed by ‘drawing up lists of persons’ in the course of the measures being carried out by the law enforcement agencies of the Latvian SSR in the 40s of the last century as part of the struggle against Nazi accomplices, robbers, murderers and bandits from the criminal confederacy of so-called ‘forest brethren’.⁵⁴

Similarly, in the opinion of the Russian Foreign Ministry, the Tess case was “fabricated” and “politically induced.”⁵⁵

⁵³ “Otvét zamestitelya ofitsial’nogo predstavitel’ya MID Rossii na vopros rossiiskikh SMI v svyazi s sudom v Latvii nad N. Larinovym,” 12 September 2002, printed in *Diplomaticheskyy vestnik* 1 October 2002, No. 10, 103-4.

⁵⁴ “Russian MFA Information and Press Department Commentary Regarding a Media Question About Passing by a Latvian Court of Sentence upon Great Patriotic War Veteran Nikolai Larionov,” 2 October 2003, available at http://www.mid.ru/Brp_4.nsf/arh/431BD4ADF635D01B43256DB4002F3D1E.

⁵⁵ “Russian MFA Information and Press Department Commentary Regarding a Media Question About Latvian Supreme Court Decision on Great Patriotic War Veteran Nikolai Tess,” 18 November 2004, available at http://www.mid.ru/Brp_4.nsf/arh/3D7BD619400D9DC0C3256F510041C8C5.

In identical submissions to the European Court, both Larionovs and Tess sought to portray themselves as faithful servants of a benign Soviet power. They each claimed the Latvian authorities had pursued them “with the aim of exacting revenge on me for service in good conscience in the organs of Soviet power and administration and my participation in the battle with fascism in the second World War in the ranks of the Red Army.”⁵⁶

In its submissions to the Court, the Latvian government stressed the applicant’s personal participation in the deportations and the historical context – the Nazi-Soviet division of Europe into spheres of influence, the subsequent occupation of Latvia, and the mass Soviet repression following the onset of occupation in both 1941 and 1944.⁵⁷ The Latvian government stressed in the Tess case that “The outcome of the Second World War for the Baltic states was different from that of the states in Western Europe, since Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian pre-war independence and state systems were not restored.” Moreover, the Latvian government stressed the mass nature of the terror:

in total, during the period of time from 1944 to 1953 **more than 120,000 persons became victims of Soviet political terror**, of them 70,000 were arrested and sent to GULAG concentration camps, more than 40,000 were deported to “special settlements” in Siberia (the victims of mass deportations of March 25, 1949), and 2,500 were executed without trial as national partisans and their supporters.⁵⁸

The Latvian authorities noted that resistance to the terror was justified, and “national partisans, or as they are referred to by the Soviet propaganda and the applicant’s representative – “bandits” – were in fact anti-Soviet fighters, hoping that Western powers eventually will see to the restoration of the Republic of Latvia.”⁵⁹

Tess challenged the legitimacy of the proceedings against him in Latvia by pointing to the lack of a legal decision on the Soviet annexation and occupation: “the very fact of an international crime perpetrated in the form of occupation and aggression towards Latvia from the side of the USSR, of which I was an official, has not been the subject of legal proceedings in a court in Latvia, nor in a competent international criminal court.”⁶⁰ The deportations, in the view of the applicants, were justified, and their goal was to “deny a material base to the armed detachments of the “forest brethren” who terrorized the population in Latvia after the war and systematically

⁵⁶ “Zhaloba Nikolaya Larionova v Evropeyskiy Sud po Pravam Cheloveka,” 28 February 2005, §14 ; “Zhaloba Nikolaya Tessa v Evropeyskiy Sud po Pravam Cheloveka,” 30 March 2005, §14.

⁵⁷ “Memorial of the Government of the Republic of Latvia,” 19 May 2008, § 4, 5, 6, 11.

⁵⁸ “Additional observations of the Government of the Republic of Latvia,” 24 October 2008, § 6 and 7.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, § 20.

⁶⁰ “Zhaloba Nikolaya Tessa v Evropeyskiy Sud po Pravam Cheloveka,” 30 March 2005, § 15.

attacked the representatives of state authority and the citizens recognizing that state authority." According to Tess' counsel, this resistance practiced "banditry" and "was made possible thanks to the material aid the "forest brethren" received from their sympathizers among certain well-to-do peasants (*kulaks*)."⁶¹

In both cases, the Court sought to avoid detailed comment on the historical context. In the decision on the partial admissibility of the Larionovs' application, the Court noted under the "Facts": "after the annexation of Latvia by the USSR in summer 1940" and in neutral language "the deportation of Baltic peasants of 25 March 1949."⁶²

Ždanoka v. Latvia

The *Ždanoka v. Latvia* case can be considered Latvia's greatest victory to date in the memory battles before the Court. As will be seen below, Latvia succeeded in its effort to get the Court to recognize certain historical events as "Facts" relevant to an interpretation of the Convention. By the same token, the Court's judgment, again in the Grand Chamber, can be viewed as a critical turning point in Russia's increasingly critical stance towards the Court.

The applicant, Tatyana Ždanoka, has been a key opposition figure in Latvia – one of the former leaders of the pro-Soviet Communist Party before independence, a leader of a post-independence political party that has, since the early 1990s sought to involve Russia in defense of "compatriots" in Latvia, a figure favoured by Russia to represent Russian-speakers in Latvia, and currently, a member of the European Parliament. After independence, Ždanoka was one of the few individuals barred from running for local or national office because of her role in the pro-Moscow wing of the Communist Party of Latvia (CPL) which supported a bloody crackdown in Latvia in January 1991 and the imposition of presidential rule during the failed *putsch* of August 1991.

Ždanoka sought to challenge before the Court the electoral restrictions imposed on her within Latvia because of her activities in 1990-1991. In doing so, she presented the Court with her own particular version of history and law – that the period from Latvia's declaration of independence on 4 May 1990 through the failed *putsch* was characterized by "dual power," that the referendum on independence of March 1991 was only "an advisory poll," that the CPL was "in favour of democracy," and that the USSR law on secession was of relevance to Latvia.⁶³ When the Latvian government

⁶¹ "Observations sur le memoire du Gouvernement du 19 Mai 2008 », 27 July 2008, §9.

⁶² "Decision partielle sur la recevabilite de Cour Europeene des Droits de l'Homme," 4 January 2008, § 1 and 2.

⁶³ "Reply of the applicant as to admissibility and merits in response to the memorial of the Government of Latvia," 6 December 2001, transmitted by the ECHR to Latvia on 5 March 2002, §6, 10, 52, 60.

provided the Court with a detailed account of the independence struggle supported by 26 scholarly annexes,⁶⁴ Ždanoka beat a retreat, her legal counsel suggesting to the Court that “The Applicant does not wish to enter into a detailed discussion of the history of events in 1990-1991. These are in any event of limited relevance to her case.”⁶⁵ In its initial ruling, the Court found a violation and sought to avoid weighing in on issues of history. However, the Court’s stance evolved considerably when the case made its way through the Grand Chamber.

In its request to have the case referred to the Grand Chamber, the Latvian government pointed to the salience of the

generally important historical and political context of the present case in view of the fact that the restrictions concerned were applied in the society, which had to undergo a gradual transformation from totalitarian to democratic regime, and which had to eliminate the consequences of internationally recognized illegal occupation and annexation by the Soviet Union.⁶⁶

The Government sought to place the case in the broader context of “coming to terms with the past”: “The Government particularly emphasizes that *adequate “evaluation of the past” and, accordingly, the choice of appropriate measures for dismantling the heritage of former totalitarian regime, is possible only after the lapse of a certain period of time...*”⁶⁷

In a document submitted to the Court, Ždanoka’s counsel sought to steer it away from the historical issues raised by the Latvian government: “the Grand Chamber is not the appropriate forum in which to re-open these issues, which will ultimately be decided by historians and by public opinion.”⁶⁸ The representative of the Latvian government, for her part, stressed the importance of that historical context in evaluating the case: “The underlying issue in the present case is finding the most appropriate legal means for dismantling the totalitarian regime that ruled a very large part of Europe for almost 50 years, as well as preventing the history from repeating itself.”⁶⁹

⁶⁴ “Reply of the government of the Republic of Latvia to the questions on the merits of the case concerning the hearing to be held on May 15,2003”, Letter of Latvia to the ECHR dated 24 April 2003.

⁶⁵ “Applicant’s observations on the documents submitted by the respondent government before and after the hearing of 15 May 2003, and further submissions as to just satisfaction.” §62.

⁶⁶ “Request of the government of the Republic of Latvia to refer the case to the Grand Chamber,” submitted 17 September 2004, §3.

⁶⁷ Ibid, § 30. Emphasis in the original.

⁶⁸ “Memorial of the Applicant” to the Grand Chamber, transmitted by a letter dated 8 March 2005 to Latvia, §9.

⁶⁹ “Talking points” before the Grand Chamber, Inga Reine, Latvian government agent, n.d., §5.

In its judgment, the Grand Chamber departed from its previous practice of avoiding significant commentary on historical issues and laid out in great detail under the heading "Facts" how Latvia came to be a part of the Soviet Union and the events of 1990 and 1991, mentioning the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and its secret protocols, Soviet ultimatums to the interwar Latvian government, and the invasion and annexation of Latvia.⁷⁰ Then, the Court drew an explicit link between the Soviet annexation and the Communist Party:

Latvia, together with the other Baltic states, lost its independence in 1940 in the aftermath of the partition of Central and Eastern Europe agreed by Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Soviet Union by way of the secret protocol to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, an agreement contrary to the generally recognized principles of international law. The ensuing annexation of Latvia by the Soviet Union was orchestrated and conducted under the authority of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.⁷¹

The Court ruled that no violation of Ždanoka's rights had taken place and that the Latvian authorities were better placed than the Court to assess the measures needed to safeguard the democratic order.

The outcome was hailed by the Latvian Government. As noted in a statement by the Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "An important element in the recognition of the fact of Latvia's occupation is the Court's recognition of the historical context of Latvia's state development, that Latvia and the other Baltic states lost their independence in 1940 after the division of Central and Eastern Europe according to the secret protocols of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact [...] With this opinion the Court rejects assertions that Latvia entered the USSR in accordance with the legal norms of that era."⁷² Inga Reine, Latvia's representative, subsequently assessed the importance of the case: "the judgment is important because the occupation by the USSR appears in the introduction of the judgment as an unassailable fact[...] To challenge this is incredibly difficult, as one cannot say that the judges are politicized. All 46 judges cannot be politicized."⁷³

The Russian authorities in turn, were incensed. A representative of the Russian Foreign Ministry assessed it as tantamount to "a justification by the European Court of Human Rights of the discriminatory and antidemocratic legislation of a member-state of the Council of Europe and the European

⁷⁰ On the Pact, see §12-13, on the events of January and March 1990, see §20-24, on the events of August and September 1991, see § 25-29, "Grand Chamber judgment, Case of Ždanoka v. Latvia," (Application no. 58278/00), 16 March 2006.

⁷¹ Ibid §119.

⁷² See the statement of the Latvian MFA entitled in Latvian "Latvija uzvar Eiropas Cilvēktiesību tiesas Lielās palātas lietā "Tatjana Ždanoka pret Latviju," 17 March 2006, available at www.mfa.gov.lv/lv/Jaunumi/pazinojumi/Presei/2006/marts/17-1/?print=on.

⁷³ Author's interview with Inga Reine, Riga, 2 August 2009.

Union.” More relevant to the concerns of this chapter, the representative noted that the Court “used as would-be legal arguments terminology and conclusions that go counter to (“*vrazrez*”) the historical facts.”⁷⁴ Subsequently, in discussing their growing dissatisfaction with the “politically motivated” decisions of the Court, Russian politicians and officials would regularly mention the Ždanoka judgment along with the Ilascu judgment.⁷⁵ The Latvian authorities, for their part, could in many subsequent cases involving issues related to history merely point to the historical facts as laid out in the Ždanoka decision.

Ādamsons v. Latvia

The Court has adjudicated another case in some ways similar to Ždanoka’s and come to a different conclusion. During the Soviet era, the applicant Jānis Ādamsons had been a member of the Soviet border guards, which were subordinated to the KGB. After the fall of the Soviet Union, Ādamsons left the Russian security services of his own volition in June 1992, moved to Latvia and entered politics. In November 1994, he became Minister of the Interior and in October 1995 and 1998, he was twice elected to the Latvian parliament. However, the Latvian Central Election Commission barred Ādamsons from running for parliament in 2002, claiming that, as a former agent of the KGB, he was disqualified. Ādamsons claimed that he was not a “former KGB agent” but a former “agent of the border guard forces of the KGB.”

In a submission to the Court, the Latvian Government argued that “the restriction imposed on the staff employees’ of the KGB right to stand for election in the parliament of the newly established democratic and independent state pursues the aim of protecting national security of that state.”⁷⁶ The Latvian Government also stressed to the Court that the case should be viewed “in the larger context of the process of lustration that has taken places in all post-communist states in Central and Eastern Europe after their return to democracy (and, in the case of the Baltic states, after their restoration of independence).”⁷⁷ In a request to refer the case to the Grand Chamber, the Government used the opportunity to “once again draw the attention of the Court to the historical and political background of the present case. Latvia, together with the Baltic states, lost its independence

⁷⁴ “Otvēt ofitsial’nogo predstavatelya MID Rossii M.L. Manyina na vopros ITAR-TASS v svyazi s peresmotrom Evropeiskim Sudom po pravam cheloveka (ESPCh) resheniya po delu “T. Zhdanok protiv Latvii,” 22 March 2006, available at http://www.mid.ru/Brp_4.nsf/arh/96D6A1669EFA7125C3257139003616D7.

⁷⁵ See, e.g., the interview with Konstantin Kosachev, head of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the State Duma, to Russian television of 4 October 2007, available at vwww.russia.today.ru/Interview/2007-10-04/Interview_with_Konstantin_Kosachev.

⁷⁶ “Memorial of the Government of the Republic of Latvia,” 16 April 2004, §117.

⁷⁷ Arret “Affaire Ādamsons c. Lettonie”, Requete No. 3669/03, 1 December 2008, §96.

in 1940 in the aftermath of the partition of Central and Eastern Europe by Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Soviet Union by way of the secret protocol to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact [...]"⁷⁸

The Court did acknowledge that "nobody contests that the KGB, the principal organ of state security in the former USSR, played an active role in the maintenance of the totalitarian regime and in the struggle against all political opposition to this regime."⁷⁹ Moreover, the Court claimed to "take into consideration the particular socio-historical context in which the current case was embedded [...], and citing the Ždanoka case, noted that "during almost a half century, Latvia had been annexed by the Soviet Union and lived under a totalitarian communist regime."⁸⁰ However, pointing to the imprecise provisions in Latvian law banning former KGB agents from running for office, the Court underlined that "the current case is fundamentally different from the Ždanoka case."⁸¹ The Court found in favour of Ādamsons, ruling that Latvia had violated Article 3 of Protocol 1 to the Convention (Right to free elections).

While the Latvian government could draw satisfaction from reference to the historical facts as laid out in the Ždanoka ruling, it is striking that the Court deemed the Latvian government better placed to evaluate national security risks than itself in Ždanoka's case, but not in Ādamsons' case. The Court also found it unnecessary to lay out the historical background in any significant detail. As noted by Judge Garlicki in a partially dissenting opinion in the Ādamsons' case, "we are experts in law and legality, not in politics and history, and we should not venture into the latter two domains unless absolutely necessary."⁸²

Andrejeva v. Latvia

Another case that involved untangling the legacy of the past was *Andrejeva v. Latvia*, in which the applicant challenged Latvian legislative provisions regarding pensions for non-citizens. In calculating a pension, the Latvian authorities take into consideration time worked outside Latvia in the case of citizens, but not for non-citizens. Once a non-citizen naturalizes and becomes a Latvian citizen, time worked outside of Latvia is considered in pension calculations. According to figures provided by the Latvian Government, as of the beginning of 2009, the provision affected some 17,104 pensioners.⁸³

⁷⁸ "Request of the Government of the Republic of Latvia to refer the case to the Grand Chamber," 24 September 2008, §37.

⁷⁹ Arret "Affaire Ādamsons c. Lettonie", Requete No. 3669/03, 1 December 2008, para. 120. All translations from the French are my own.

⁸⁰ Ibid, §122.

⁸¹ Ibid, § 124.

⁸² Ibid, "Opinion concordante du Juge Garlicki a laquelle se rallient les Juges Zupančič et Gyuluman," §4.

⁸³ Case of *Andrejeva v. Latvia*, Application no. 55707/00, Grand Chamber judgment, 18 February 2009, §73.

While the Court gave notice of the application to the Governments of Ukraine and the Russian Federation, neither state submitted any observations. Interestingly, during the proceedings in the Andrejeva case, the Latvian and Russian governments reached agreement on a treaty regulating cooperation in the field of social security and the Latvian agreed to pay the difference between citizen and non-citizen pensions. However, while both sides signed the treaty in October 2008, a year later it had not yet entered into force.⁸⁴

Andrejeva was born in the territory of present-day Kazakhstan, moved to Latvia in 1954, then worked for many years in a state enterprise in Latvia with a head office in Kiev. She retired in 1997, after Latvia had regained its independence. In her application to the Court, she gave an interesting interpretation of Latvia's status within the Soviet Union: "Latvia, Ukraine and Russia during the period in dispute [1973-1990] were self-governing units in the ranks of the USSR."⁸⁵ In a word, Andrejeva held Latvia responsible for her pension.

In a submission to the Court, the Government argued that Andrejeva's "expectations remained valid only within the context of one state – the USSR, and may not be extended to Latvia as an independent state, which is neither a successor state of the USSR, nor continues its legal personality."⁸⁶ Latvia's representative further argued before the Court that the issue was "determining the successor state (or the state continuing legal personality) of the former USSR" and reminded the Court of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact and the forcible incorporation of Latvia into the Soviet Union.⁸⁷

In its ruling, the Court noted that despite Andrejeva's non-citizen status, Latvia was "the only State with which she has any stable legal ties and thus the only State, which, objectively can assume responsibility for her in terms of social security."⁸⁸ The Court refrained from any mention of Latvia's history and the issue of legal continuity and found a violation of Article 14 (Prohibition of Discrimination) in conjunction with Article 1 of protocol 1 (Protection of Property) and a violation of Article 6 paragraph 1 (Right to a fair trial) of the Convention.

In a dissenting opinion, Judge Ziemele stressed the importance of the historical context, which the Court had ignored. In her view, "the States responsible for this pension period are the Soviet Union and its successor, the Russian Federation, which collected the pension payments." "Latvia," she stressed, "was not a successor State to the ex-USSR. It was a State identical to

⁸⁴ For a text of the treaty, see *Latvijas vēstnesis* (Government Herald), no. 164, 22 October 2008.

⁸⁵ "Zamechaniya Andreyevoy na poyasneniya pravitel'stva Latviiskoy Respubliki," 5 October 2001, §1. Translation from the Russian is mine.

⁸⁶ "Memorial of the Government of the Republic of Latvia," 20 October 2006, §23.

⁸⁷ "Speech of the Agent of the Republic of Latvia Inga Reine before the Grand Chamber of the ECHR" 25 June 2008, §16.

⁸⁸ Case of Andrejeva v. Latvia, Application no. 55707/00, Grand Chamber judgment, 18 February 2009, §88.

that occupied by the Soviet Union in 1940.” “It is a striking feature of this judgment that it chooses to ignore the context of the demise of the Soviet Union and the special status of the Baltic states in international law, namely their long but ultimately unsuccessful occupation.”⁸⁹

Conclusion

There are inherent limits to Russia’s participation in proceedings before the Strasbourg Court as a third party, and thus, to Russia’s “dialogue” with Latvia before the Court about issues pertaining to the past. Russia can participate in proceedings as a third party if the applicant is a citizen of Russia, which is not that common in Latvia. In early 2009, 30,718 citizens of Russia were registered as living in Latvia.⁹⁰ Moreover, as in the Andrejeva case, the Court may ask Russia to submit its observations on the case – an opportunity that Russia has not always taken.

Latvia has sought successfully to have the Court enshrine the Soviet occupation and the legal continuity of Latvia’s *de jure* existence as unassailable facts, as well as (somewhat less successfully) recognize that individuals serving in the Soviet army, KGB and the pro-Soviet wing of the Communist Party of Latvia may be tried for past crimes and may continue to pose a security threat to Latvia. Russia, for its part, has viewed most efforts by Latvia to mention history and the Court’s attempts to assess its relevance as pure politics, not law. However, this has not prevented Russia from seeking to convince the Court of its particular view of history – the “sacred” role of the USSR and the Red Army in the war against Nazi Germany, the “heroic” nature of KGB personnel engaged in post-war repressions against civilians and the illegitimacy of any resistance. Several applicants and representatives of Russia have sought to convince the Court of the allegedly “voluntary” nature of Latvia’s joining the Soviet Union. Moreover, they have portrayed as illegitimate not only restrictions on former officials linked with the Soviet regime, but also Latvian citizenship policy in general. At the extreme, Russia has sought to convince the Court that Latvia was pursuing a policy of ethnic cleansing against Russians.

In reviewing the cases giving rise to “memory battles,” one is struck by a number of features. Firstly, with the notable exception of the Ždanoka case, the Court has sought to avoid detailed discussion of the manner in which Latvia lost its independence and the legality and legal implications thereof. Secondly, the Court has demonstrated a certain inconsistency in the degree to which it has judged itself or Latvia as being better placed to evaluate restrictions imposed in the name of national security based on lingering

⁸⁹ Ibid, “Partly dissenting opinion of Judge Ziemele,” § 2, 15, 16.

⁹⁰ Statistics from the Population register, available on the home page of the Citizenship and Migration Affairs Board at http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/statistika/dokuments/ISVP_Latvija_pec_VPD.pdf.

threats from former Communists, military personnel or KGB officials. The most likely explanation for this apparent inconsistency is the changing composition of the group of judges examining different cases. Thirdly, one is struck by the regular insistence of Latvia on the relevance of the historical context and the issue of legal continuity. As Inga Reine, the Representative of the Latvian Government Before International Human Rights Organizations, has remarked, "Practically every case that goes to the Court for adjudication features either historical issues, or political issues, or the issue of state continuity. These cases are complex for the court, as it cannot copy and paste from its previous judgments."⁹¹

In a certain sense, the European Court has been forced into a situation with which its judges appear quite uncomfortable. The more the Court specifically mentions history, the more it can be accused of straying from the legal particulars. However, to fully understand and fairly adjudicate many cases from Latvia and elsewhere in the post-communist world, knowledge of history and due regard to the historical context is virtually unavoidable. Interestingly, Inga Reine has stressed that she does not view the Court as a battlefield on historical issues, that "the less we involve history into the cases, the better [...] We have enough cases which are possible to adjudicate independently of historical events and we can appeal solely to legal arguments."⁹² This conviction notwithstanding, it appears likely that Latvia will continue to invoke history before the Court and Russia will protest the irrelevance of history or the significance of its own version of history. At the very least, Latvian cases will serve to enlighten the judges and those who read and analyze their judgments about the complexities of history and the power of memory in Central and Eastern Europe.

⁹¹ Author's interview with Inga Reine, Riga, 2 August 2009.

⁹² Ibid.

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