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## **L'Etat, c'est pas moi**

### **Reframing citizenship(s) in the Baltic republics**

Danjoux, Olivier

2002

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*Citation for published version (APA):*

Danjoux, O. (2002). *L'Etat, c'est pas moi: Reframing citizenship(s) in the Baltic republics*. Department of Political Science, Lund University.

*Total number of authors:*

1

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# **L'ETAT, C'EST PAS MOI**

**Reframing Citizenship(s) in the Baltic Republics**

**Olivier Danjoux**

L'ETAT, C'EST PAS MOI



*L'ETAT, C'EST PAS MOI*

Reframing Citizenship(s) in the Baltic Republics

Olivier Danjoux

© 2002 Olivier Danjoux  
ISBN 91-88306-61-5  
ISSN 0460-0037

Layout by PROSE DESIGN & GRAFIK  
Printed by Studentlitteratur  
Lund 2002

Distribution:  
Department of Political Science  
Lund University  
Box 52  
SE-22100 Lund  
<http://www.svet.lu.se/lps/lps.html>

This book is dedicated to the memory of Juris Podnieks. It is also dedicated to people I might not have met without him, namely Giedre Bieliauskaite, Greta Burovaite-Maindron, Marius Sulcys (wherever he is now), Tiina Meri, Erika Sausverde, Vytas Karpus, Fabricijus Mendronaitis, Erika Ellamaa, Pascal de Rauglaudre (in memory of Paris, Illinois), Susanne Karlsson and Vytas Backis, not to forget the best pair of friends I could have dreamt of, namely Thierry Gilles and Anna Stellingner.

Last but not least, I especially dedicate this book to the most precious ones of all, namely Charlotta, who knows why, and Liv, who couldn't care less.





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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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I shamelessly stole the phrase “l’Etat, c’est pas moi” from Boris Vian (1920-1959). It is the reason why this dissertation’s title is so good. As far as the remainder of the book is concerned, let the reader be the judge. It is no longer truly mine.

Lest I scare non-Francophone readers away in an unconscious fit of genetically-induced arrogance (and who would want to do that in these days of full-blown multicultural awareness), I hasten to point out that Vian’s phrase roughly means “I am not the state”. It is a deliberate misquotation of the Sun King, the greatest and longest-lived of France’s numbered Louis, the supremely powerful midget who allegedly contended that he and the state were one and only thing (“L’Etat, c’est moi”). Indeed, many in those days seemed to believe that too. Obviously, Vian had a more sober perception of both himself and the state, in tune with the democratic condition of the XXth century citizen he was. Political theory can tell us a thing or two about that evolution.

There are worse environments to write a dissertation in than the department of political science at Lund University. Over the years, the vague research idea I initially had turned into...well, whatever it is you are holding in your hands. As a glance at the bibliography will reveal, this book contains French, American, Canadian, Scandinavian and Baltic academic influences—an intellectual smörgåsbord if you will. I do not apologize for it. The reader might find his grain of truth in it, here or there. What a long, strange trip it has been.

Here, I want to take the opportunity to thank my adviser Håkan Magnusson who, throughout the years, constantly succeeded in striking a balance between guidance and autonomy. In so doing, he helped me to get things done more than he certainly imagines. As an adviser, Håkan has the precious gift of being able to take a PhD candidate seriously without ever making more fuss than what is exactly necessary. The conditions and atmosphere in which I had the good fortune to work are very much to put to his credit.

I also thank Lennart Lundquist for his National Seminar, this privileged field—or should I say battlefield—for sending out academic trial balloons. Some of mine did burst shortly after takeoff, but at least, when leaving the seminar, I knew why. Thank you to all the persons who discussed my successive papers, be it in Lund or at various academic venues in Umeå, Göteborg, Stockholm, Copenhagen and Oslo, as well as at the Conference of the Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies in Bloomington in 1998.

I am grateful to Rupert Wilkinson and Kristina Stefansson, who kindly helped me proof-read the final text, to Alexander Pereswetoff-Morath for his welcome help with Russian military terminology, and to Mikael Sundström, who did a brilliant job of laying out this behemoth of a manuscript. Special thanks to Bo Petersson and Astrid Hedin, who took the time to scrutinize each and every little corner in my manuscript at my final seminar, and in so doing taught me quite a lot about what I thought I knew about it. Needless to say, I bear full responsibility for any errors and weaknesses in the final product. Thank you, too, to the fellow PhD candidates in Lund who, over the years, created the social environment and intellectual feedback without which dissertation-writing might soon become an unbearably tedious affair. Nobody named, nobody forgotten. I already miss these icy winter Saturdays at Ribban.

My various stays in the Baltic countries would not have taken place without the financial support of the Swedish Institute and of the Alfons Berzins Fund, nor without Boel Billgren's dedication to the development of exchanges between Lund and universities in Central and Eastern Europe. I also thank Algis Lipinaitis, from the foreign students' office at Vilnius University, and Egidijus Kuris, then-headmaster of the Institute of International Relations and Political Science in Vilnius, for making my first and so decisive stay in Lithuania in 1995 possible.

Katrina Kosa, Danute Karaluniene and Marju Lauristin kindly helped me meet highly interesting persons in Riga, Vilnius and Tallinn. Special thanks to Peeter Vihalemm for letting me know about Triin Vihalemm's doctoral defence when I happened to be in Tartu at the right time, and to Gintaras Morkunas in Vilnius for stepping in as a (frighteningly good) interpreter at short notice whenever needed. Sigute Radzeviciene, Kertu Kaera, Pille-Maj Laas and Aino Laagus in Lund, Birute Klaas in Tartu, and all the teaching staff of the Department of Lithuanian at Vilnius Uni-



versity spared no effort in order to try and guide me through the beautiful intricacies of their respective mother tongues. To all, for your dedication and enthusiasm, and even more for your patience, thank you.

Two more things about why this dissertation exists at all. This book is partly governed by a sense of urgency. That might come as a surprize, given the undecent length of time I took to write it. But things, especially unpleasant ones, get easily considered impossible or anachronistic until the day they actually happen. Today, given the volatility of Russian domestic politics and the imperial nostalgia among the country's top brass, it is not wholly unreasonable to surmise that Latvians, Estonians and Lithuanians remain free only as long as Vladimir Putin's humanist values continue to get the best of him. Thus, as social scientists, we might as well try and understand what is happening in the Baltic countries before Russian troops march back in under whatever pretext, seal the borders, and all we are left with is USA for Baltica concerts. The world might have changed radically since (here, fill in with something like "the fall of the Berlin Wall" or "9/11"), but the idea of change is as old as the day people started to reflect about such things. Despite Russia's current weakness, it is still not a heap of stones lost in the third world which you can bomb at whim and get away with it.

Fortunately, less pessimistic impulses informed the writing of this book as well. Today, the Baltic states do not have the international media exposure they enjoyed during their independence drive in the second half of the 1980s. As TV crew magnets and academic topics, they are no longer, say, quite as sexy as they once used to. I think it makes them even more attractive—warts and all. If you want to understand something at all, it is not all that bad to get back to the scene long after the party is over. The spark which started it all, as far as I'm concerned, is a film, namely *Is it easy to be young?*, by the late Latvian filmmaker Juris Podnieks. That documentary was shot in Riga in the late 1980s. It is one of these ground-breaking *Glasnost*-time works which drew crowds of spectators all over the Soviet Union. The actors in Podnieks's film played their own roles — the roles of ordinary people in an extraordinary city in an immense country which no longer exists. And they were Latvians. Something hardly heard of for me at that time, and definitely worth looking at.

I am still looking. I never got over *Is it easy to be young?*. He who can produce a truly rational motive behind his choice of dissertation topic cast me the first stone.

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# INTRODUCTION

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## Understanding Citizenship

### **Research Problems of the Study**

Evolution towards democracy is the consequence of an infinity of small events whose intelligibility we can only perceive in retrospect. The Baltic countries of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia recovered de facto independence over a decade ago and now are well on the way to become fully-fledged members of the family of democratic European states. Their return to independence raised fundamental questions about continuity and change in political values and behaviour. Central to these questions is the notion of citizenship. It quickly became salient on the field, when Baltic peoples had to ask themselves who would constitute the respective citizenries in their “reborn” states. The interest of the notion for political theory, notably theory pertaining to issues of democratisation, appears with increasing clarity today as well.

This thesis has both empirical and theoretical ambitions. At the empirical level, it aims at enriching the knowledge and understanding of the political and social developments that have been taking place in the countries of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. At the theoretical level, it aims at assessing how the theories of citizenship that dominate the social sciences today can be used for analytical purposes and account for democratic developments occurring in post-communist contexts, outside of the part of the world these theories originate in and directly apply to, namely North America and Western Europe.

This thesis situates itself in a theoretical perspective that grants both an analytical and a normative value to the notion of citizenship. It takes citizenship both as a *condition* of democracy and as an *indicator* of the quality of democracy in a society. It rests upon a definition borrowed

from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, which describes citizenship as a “relationship between an individual and a state in which an individual owes allegiance to that state and in turn is entitled to its protection”.

## **Citizenship as a Theoretical Object**

The definition of citizenship above might sound minimal. Indeed, it is. I view it nonetheless as a useful starting point, because, as our theoretical discussion will quickly make it plain, there is not *one* theory of citizenship. Citizenship is not by itself a theory, in the sense of a homogenous body of systematically related generalisations that aim at explaining. In some cases, the notion of citizenship gets—implicitly or explicitly—built into larger democratic theory as one of democracy’s component parts. In other cases, citizenship constitutes by itself the central object of theoretical endeavours. Quite often, these endeavours have normative ambitions, notably the ambition to show that the conceptions of citizenship which inform and organise modern democratic societies ought to be corrected or enriched in a particular way.

Either way, citizenship is a highly fragmented theoretical object. Whence, I think, the interest of the definition above. It has the advantage of emphasizing the individual level of citizenship, which is the smallest common denominator of the existing conceptions (these conceptions start to differ, of course, as soon as they begin to inquire in how citizen A does or should relate to citizen B, and how both of them do or should collectively relate to other citizens and to the state). So far, we can retain the basic idea that, whatever the theoretical framework in which we place it, citizenship is both a *status* and an *activity*: it tells you (partly) who you are, and it also determines to a large extent what you have the right to do. It links you to a state, and grants you a set of rights and duties by virtue of that linking. By distinguishing the citizen from the foreigner, the consumer and the subject of authoritarian regimes, we can devise a minimal definition of the citizen as “the recognised and potentially active member of a political community, defined by a territory, and where there is a minimal degree of power-sharing between members” (Duchesne 1997:15—my translation).

## **Citizenship as a Normative Object**

Regardless of theoretical basis, notions of what citizenship is always get informed by and intertwined with prior ideas about what citizenship ought to be. Like “civil society” or “democracy”, citizenship does not give us a value-neutral prism through which we can behold the world out there. It is itself an object of investigation saturated with ideological significance. A gap hovers between norms (or values, or ideals) and the messiness of their implementation in real life by human beings.

## **Citizenship as an Analytical Object**

Another gap exists between the scope of theory and the scope of empirical evidence: democratic theory is a macrotheory fed by microevidence (Sartori 1987). We have a large—indeed, everincreasing—body of knowledge about what different schools of thought view as politically and morally desirable, but we still know rather little about the way ordinary citizens experience their citizenship in a given country at a given moment. Empirical studies of how citizens experience their citizenship remain surprisingly scarce (Lane’s 1965 article was something of a breakthrough). Those that exist are disturbing, for they blur the clear-cut typologies that social scientists, present company included, cannot quite do without.

Theoretical perspectives on citizenship tend to rest on a number of basic dichotomies—like citizenship and nationality, rights and duties, freedom and equality, private and public, rationality and affects, etc—and this one hardly represents an exception. But what should be borne in mind is that citizenship is bound to remain imperfect, unfinished. It is a process rather than a state of things. Concretely, it gets constructed on the field, by social actors, with many contradictions which political theory cannot iron out. At least, it supposes that a certain degree of agreement has been reached on the question of knowing what the *civitas* should be. The spontaneous answer to that question tends to be “the state”, but the state’s legitimacy is not self-proclaimed (Poche 1992).

## Why the Baltic States (and Why the Three of Them)?

Because of the bumblebee. The Baltic states have their attractions. They are theoretically untidy. In *Latvia in Transition*, Dreifelds (1996:6) stresses that “the Baltic republics represent unique hybrids among former communist states, differentiated from Eastern Europe on the one hand and the remaining former Soviet republics on the other”. In *Years of Dependence*, Misiunas and Taagepera (1983:261) draw a parallel between these countries and the bumblebee which, according to the laws of aerodynamics, should not be able to fly, “but does so anyway, too ignorant to know any better”.

Predictions of the imminent and welcome demise of nationhood, especially for “small nations”, have been with us for decades. By many standards of the contemporary social sciences, from monetarist economics to cultural studies, the national entities called Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia are irrelevant at best and dangerous at worst. The idea is not new. In the years after World War I, a French journalist touring the region wondered how such “tiny, primitive” countries ever could be thought to serve as a *cordon sanitaire* against Russian bolshevism (Kerillis 1930:294). Later, in Soviet times, the official rationale claimed that in the future, the Russian language would be victorious, and everybody would go over to a superior, post-national degree of consciousness (Milosz 1953). Later yet, in the second half of the 1980s, Balts asserted their right to self-determination, which was fine. However, when winning independence in 1990-1991, they put the category “nation” before other categories that had more the favour of the day, like “race”, “gender”, “region” or “global so-and-so”. Not knowing or caring much about all the above, they keep going. This thesis originates partly in an intuition that the Baltic countries, given their historical experience, constitute a kind of litmus test of national sovereignty and citizenship.

When talking about “Baltic states”, I use a category that refers first and foremost to a shared historical experience, and a generally unhappy one at that. Western observers, present company included, were by and large spared that historical experience. Thus they will use the label “Baltic” with an ease generally not shared by their (here we go) Baltic interlocutors, keen as they are to bring up the contrasts between the three peoples. Not until the time of the Second World War—more precisely 1944, when the Soviet Army regained control of these three countries,

while Finland escaped—can we label the three countries as some kind of historical unit, without adding or subtracting a part. Still today, the word “Baltic” means different things to different people and in different contexts. In geography, Estonians do not say “Baltic sea”, but, literally, “Western sea” (*läänemeri*), while the terms used by Latvians (*baltijas jura*) and Lithuanians (*baltijos jura*) actually designate a “white sea”. In linguistics (Sabaliauskas 1993), only Latvians and Lithuanians deserve the label “Baltic”. Estonian belongs to the Finno-Ugric family of languages and differs completely from the other two, give or take a few loanwords in Latvian.

Thus, the specifically political sense in which I use the term happens to be the only meaning of the word which the inhabitants of these states do share. “Baltic states” is *baltimaad* in Estonian, *baltijos valstybes* in Lithuanian and *baltu valsts* in Latvian. Generally, Latvians sound more comfortable with the notion of Baltic commonality than Lithuanians, who have many ties to Central Europe via Poland, and than Estonians who, with former foreign minister Ilves at the forefront, have grown fond of emphasising the Nordic or Scandinavian dimension of their identity, a dimension unmarred by Sovietness and therefore more attractive than the Baltic one.

By employing the same concept of citizenship to approach these three societies, I imply that they have several features in common. The historical links built against adversity are not likely to disappear altogether. Recent experience shows that when the stakes look high enough (for instance, in their relations with Russia or the European Union), the three countries still tend to bind together. They might receive plenty of new opportunities of doing so in the future as well. They share some assets and problems. Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia have secured their legal independence, but their sociological “stateness” remains to be established (Brubaker 1996a), and that in a context where the economic, social and political problems are greater than in the time of the first independence, before 1940 (Smith et al 1996).

This being put, does citizenship work the same way in the three Baltic states? Yes—and no. There is a case for bringing out the similarities and the differences between the three. Quite a few of my non-Baltic interlocutors, when told that I was doing research on and in the Baltics, deducted that I was going to Estonia. Yet the area is not Estonia writ large. Latvia is not a slightly poorer, slightly more authoritarian version of its northern

neighbour. Lithuania is yet something else: with its comparatively homogeneous population and open citizenship law, it presents a living challenge to the perception that problems of citizenship in post-communist countries boil down to inadequate relationships between an ethnic majority and one or several ethnic minorities. No Baltic country is more “typical” than the other two. Each follows its own path in state- and nation-building, and each deserves understanding on its own terms.

## Why Citizenship?

Because it has been relatively neglected in transition theories in general, and its theoretical relevance is getting salient. And because, as already suggested, the focus has partly been misplaced: when the question of citizenship in the Baltic countries has been treated at all, approaches have been quantitative, or we could say horizontal (the question of *who* may/should/must become a citizen) rather than qualitative and vertical (the question of knowing *what* “being a citizen of Estonia/Latvia/Lithuania” may actually mean to people whose lives so far had rested upon radically different premises).

The present discussion situates itself in a context dominated by the post-1989 ideological victory of political liberalism. For all the possible shortcomings of liberalism as a principle of collective organisation, life in a liberal society is more attractive than life in an illiberal one. Illiberal regimes become increasingly forced to justify themselves in liberalism’s own terms (whence their search for ways out of them, for instance through references to “values” which, so they claim, are inimical to liberal freedoms).

What I mean here by “liberal” relates to the classic notion of political liberalism, rather than to the more recent, and more specifically North American use of the word. In the United States, the word “liberal” has increasingly come to mean the opposite of “conservative”. American “liberals” are what Europeans would call social democrats, or socialists.<sup>1</sup> Although they are not politically organised within a party, they exert an important influence in the written press and in the academia. In Eu-

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<sup>1</sup> Not to forget the ill-defined but vocal group of people whom O’Rourke calls the “Think-globally-act-locally crowd”.



rope, the word “liberal” gets more seldom used, but remains closer to its etymology. It designates the opposite of a socialist and applies to someone who favours minimal governmental intervention in society’s affairs. European “liberals” are organised in centre-right political parties in quite a lot of countries.

The notion of citizenship is not central in classic liberalism. Yet, the need for it has not disappeared. Historically and philosophically, modern citizenship is linked to the apparition of the rule of law, which is a way of defining and regulating power, and whose development entailed the establishment of state sovereignty.<sup>2</sup> Even if nationality and citizenship are legally indissociable in certain countries, they differ from each other. Citizenship implies sovereignty, whereas nationality does not. The concept of citizenship overlaps partly with, but is somewhat narrower than the concept of nationality, which is rather fuzzy. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* defines nationality as “in law, membership in a nation or sovereign state”. Nationality is about belonging to a national state (or quasi-state, or potential state), but it is citizenship, not nationality, that grounds the right to participate, directly or not, in the managing of society (Touraine 1994).

The ideological victory of political liberalism bears the risk of complacency. It fuels the feeling that the victory of the West in the Cold War, the phenomenon of economic globalisation, and the diffusion of liberal values are one and only thing. The widespread idea that “the world is crossed by the conflicting pulls of globalism and tribalism” (Huntington 1993) is both simplistic and attractive. It rests upon an implicit identification: on one side, global = universal = rational; on the other side, tribal = local = irrational. Those who promote that perception, of course, leave little doubt about what side of the fence they believe they are standing on. If what is not globalism is, by definition, tribalism, then intermediate historical constructions, neither “global” nor “tribal”, like nations, cannot be theoretically accommodated, let alone condoned.

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<sup>2</sup> “One of the basic principles of international law has always been that of state sovereignty, which reserves all states the right to take in a particular situation any measures they see necessary, provided that those measures do not violate the rights of other states and are not prohibited under international law or any other grounds” (Öst 1993)

If we buy into the vision above, then we no longer can understand why people like, precisely, Lithuanians, Latvians or Estonians desire something as old hat as sovereign states. Yet, they visibly do, and quite a few others with them. Bringing citizenship into debates about post-communist democratisations has the advantage of making the notions of state and nation central in them. As opposed to ancient democracies, modern democracies cannot be stateless (Sartori 1987).

The equation “the world = globalism + tribalism” also bears with it the implicit idea that anything that risks to rub the current world order should get mentally rejected into the sphere of tribalism, that is, of the irrational. Citizenship makes a poor fit with that paradigm. It is incompatible with the idealization of the society one is living in. It has subversive potential. There is something inherently conservative in the theoretical downplaying of citizenship.

Finding such a downplaying in texts by Huntington hardly comes as a surprise. However, the notion of citizenship is not central in the writings of more progressive social scientists either (such as American “liberals”, precisely). Politics—both political debates in society at large, and political science as one of the social sciences—oscillate between the justification of the social order and its condemnation. Today, the civic ideology of the Enlightenment has lost much of its appeal. Hopes for a system of civic values that would transcend particularisms of class, nationality, religion or race no longer carry much conviction (Lasch 1995). Discussion on rights—especially differentiated rights—gain the upper hand at the expense of the other side of citizenship, namely common duties. Social sciences tend increasingly to denounce the *breaches* in the proclaimed civic values rather than analyse the concrete *effects* of the principle of citizenship. Social scientists will rather study cleavages within national communities than the national communities that get created *in spite of* cleavages. One currently witnesses how the notion of “people” is almost completely vanishing from current social science writing (not as in “people are strange”, but as in “the American people”, ie the *unum* arisen from the *pluribus*), while notions of “ethnic groups” or of “civil society” are much more in favour.

There is also a rise in victimisation discourses (Hughes 1993; Lasch 1995), particularly in countries of common law, where laws are perceived as temporary *ex post* compromises between different interests rather than as *a priori* universal propositions. At the same time, traditional mediating

instruments, like political parties or unions, are weakened (Bruckner 1995). Conflict becomes less politicised. It becomes juridicised instead, which creates at least two problems.

The first problem is analytical. As soon as we leave the field of political doctrines and enter that of social relations, borders become blurred. There is no perfect match between the philosophy of liberalism and its historical incarnations. If we look at how people construct their own representations of politics or religion, for example, the border between politics and religion becomes unclear. So does the border between private and public. The liberal rationale stresses that, if freedom is to be infringed, the burden of proof rests with the infringer. That rationale, although fundamentally healthy, easily turns into a feeling that we must strive towards the maximum granting of rights, *here and now*, to as many legal subjects as possible, and that anything short of that ideal amounts to an anachronism, a scandal or an anomaly requiring either redress or justification in liberalism's own terms (Donegani & Sadoun 1996).

At that point, mismatches between theory and practice quickly become visible. A huge gap often hovers between what the law says and what individuals actually experience. Democracy does not boil down to the smooth interplay of conscious subjects exercising their rights in a material and cultural void. Focusing on *rights* while neglecting other dimensions of social life breeds the illusion that if we can figure out a just and practicable array of collective rights at the sub-state level, then the rest of social relations will somehow follow suit, and become pacified and stabilised. That is patently untrue. There is no obvious correlation between the range of sub-state rights granted to a particular group and that group's loyalty toward the larger polity.<sup>3</sup> And not all the members of that group may want their sub-state identity to gain legal status.

The other problem with the juridicisation of social issues belongs rather in the sphere of ethics. If we adopt uncritically the liberal vision of

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<sup>3</sup> Examples abound. Spain, for instance, became democratic and decentralised after Franco's death, but Basque autonomists resort to terrorism, while Catalans do not. Belgium has become one of the most decentralised countries in Europe in its effort to accommodate its linguistic diversity, but projects of Flemish independence keep gaining ground. More inhabitants of Quebec voted for sovereignty in 1995 than in 1980, although they had enjoyed 15 more years of official Canadian bilingualism by then.

society as the temporary result of ongoing legally entrenched agreements between different legal subjects, it can lead to the feeling that any reference to a common good is biased and thus unacceptable. Then what is today broadly designated as civil society becomes self-referential.

That is not less dangerous than a self-referential state. Systematically taking the side of particularity against the general entails privation of the theoretical tools that explain why tolerance and communication are necessary (Cohen & Arato 1993). What can ensue is an extreme relativism, in which nothing prevents people from trying to maximize their power. It can lead, if not to state terror, then to different instances of civil violence, to “culture wars”, or in any case to an inordinate increase of the power of lawyers catering to private interests at the expense of elected policy-makers. Take Kymlicka’s contention that “liberals have no automatic right to impose their views to illiberal minorities” (1995:171). That is consistent with the liberal notion of law as the expression of interests (whence the possibility to rhetorically conflate “laws” with “views”). But it is also compatible with a rejection of the notion of the law as the smallest common denominator, and thus lead to social violence, which negates citizenship. If liberal majorities indeed have no right to impose “their views” on illiberal ones, then the usefulness of a national constitution, for instance, or of universal education, comes seriously into question.

This is precisely where the idea of citizenship becomes normatively precious again. A robust conception of citizenship supposes that democratic laws (not identified as the views of the majority, but as instruments of the common good) *do* impose themselves on individuals, regardless of membership in a majority or a minority, and regardless of individual views. I might harbour the view that there are too many women in the academia but in a democratic society, that *view* should not give me the *right* to prevent my daughter from studying if she wishes to. My possible belonging in a majority or a minority ought to be irrelevant in that respect.

Citizenship implies, precisely, accepting the idea that laws are less the reflection of the views of the majority than instruments of the common good, albeit imperfect ones. Democracy is not compatible with the rejection of minorities, but not with the rejection of the majority by the minority either (Touraine 1994). It hinges on the convertibility of majorities into minorities (Sartori 1987), and on trust in the vote of the majority. It supposes the construction of a political public space, which

is *par excellence* the field (and even the battlefield) of citizenship. That space ought to be distinct from the state (which implies, for instance, that nobody *owns* power), but it also ought to be distinct from social space, because social space consists of an infinity of individual and collective stories which cannot be reduced to a single principle of definition (Fraise 1991).

Of course, the notion of political public space is not unequivocally fruitful: with its emphasis on the need to put aside differences in order to speak as equals, it may cover practices of discrimination and make it hard to thematize differences as the possible objects of politics instead of as obstacles to be overcome (Calhoun 1994a). However, at the same time, the notion of political public space where people meet as equals also makes the criticism of discriminatory practices both possible and legitimate.

## **Empirical background: a Short Reminder**

### **Return to Independence**

The Soviet Union annexed the Baltic countries in August 1940 as a consequence of the 1939 German–Soviet pact, and in violation of all the treaties existing between the USSR and the states of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia (Feldmans 1946; Kherad 1992). Feelings of alienation toward the Soviet system persisted among Balts throughout the whole 1940–1990 period. In the second half of the 1980s, according to the principle *ex injura non jus aritur*, the Baltic Soviet republics did not seek secession from the USSR, but the restoration of independence (Landsbergis 1990; Petrauskas 1997). Baltic legalism proved a powerful weapon against a regime whose justification rested on the fiction that the triple Baltic entry into the USSR in 1940 had been both voluntary and beneficial. The Soviet political system, which had every appearance of potency in 1985, became increasingly ineffective and finally disintegrated by late 1991. Gorbachev wrongly believed that it was possible to liberalize elements of the system without it collapsing (Karklins 1994b). Baltic popular movements played a key role in the process of Soviet disintegration (Muiznieks 1995).

Baltic developments in the last ten years have been dominated by controversies about the status of the (mostly) Russian-speaking persons who, after World War Two, migrated from other parts of the Soviet Union to the Soviet Baltic republics. When wrestling independence from Moscow, Baltic leaders had to consider the question of the loyalty of these Russian-speakers toward the reborn states. Today there is still no true agreement as to where their political sympathies actually lay in the late Gorbachev era. What is clear, at least, is that far from all were looking forward to independence prospects, and that many resisted, actively or passively, the break-up of the Soviet Union.<sup>4</sup> Several Russian organisations demanded the granting of immediate and unconditional citizenship in states whose right to exist they were constantly challenging.

In Lithuania, the local Russian speakers' attitudes towards independence have drawn less attention than in the other two republics. Given their lesser demographic weight (about 9 % of the country's population), they were considered as less potentially dangerous than the larger Russian-speaking populations in Latvia and Estonia (Kasatkina 1996). Lithuania's citizenship law was passed on 5 December 1991. It replaced the previous citizenship law of 3 November 1989, under which residents of Lithuania, regardless of ethnicity, language or religion, were given two years to decide whether they wanted to become Lithuanian citizens. About

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4 Data published by Stepan (1994) suggests that in the summer of 1990, over a third (37 %) of Estonia's "ethnic Russians" viewed themselves primarily as "members of the republic of Estonia", but other data gathered in March 1991 yields lower figures (Levada 1993). Neither do we know exactly how many "Russians" voted for or against independence when the Baltics held referenda on the issue in 1991. In Estonia, available data suggests that no more than 25 % of non-Estonians voted for independence at the referendum held on 3 March 1991 (Vetik 1993). Three factors seem to have influenced support for independence: knowledge of the Estonian language, number of years spent in Estonia, and a perception that the standard of living in Estonia was higher than in other parts of the USSR. In Latvia, surveys conducted in 1989, 1990 and 1991 showed that, while the proportion of Latvians supporting independence increased from 54 % to 94 % in less than two years, the proportion of non-Latvians who did so, starting at 9 % in 1989, still did not exceed 38 % in 1991 (Karklins 1994a). In the referendum that was held on March 17, 1991, 476 000 residents of what was still the Latvian SSR (on a population of 2.6 million) voted in favour of the maintenance of the USSR. Depending on methods of calculation, the proportion of Russian-speakers who voted for independence seems to hover between 15 % and 33 % (Kolstø 1993).

90 % of the permanent residents chose Lithuanian citizenship during that period (Barrington 1995b; Petrauskas 1997). Today, the question is a non-issue. Kasatkina (1996) suggests that the country's inclusive citizenship law has lessened the psychological tension around the whole process of restoration of independence. According to her, "the democratic spirit of the law has a positive influence for (... ) the will to become a citizen of Lithuania" (art.cit 135).

Unlike Lithuania, both Estonia and Latvia started to shape their citizenship policy only *after* recovering independence. Estonia's current law on citizenship has been in effect since 1 April 1995. Until then, the matter was governed by a 1992 resolution that re-enacted the 1938 Estonian law on citizenship (Barrington 1995b). The current Latvian law on citizenship was adopted on 25 July 1994.

The Estonian law and Latvian law are comparable. Both state that citizens of either country are persons who were citizens on 17 June 1940 and their descendents. Persons who established themselves in Estonia or Latvia during the Soviet period and their descendents do not become automatically citizens. They have to go through a process of naturalisation that comprises a residence requirement and a language requirement (Endzins 1997). Major hurdles for naturalisation, like quotas or naturalisation windows in Latvia, have been removed after pressure from the OSCE (Zaagman 1999). Access to citizenship for children born after 1991 was eased recently. After several years of uncertainty, the rules of the game have become both clearer and more lenient.

The three Baltic countries also provide some degree of group-based rights and preferential treatment to various minorities (Dribins 1996; Lakis 1995; Vebers 1997), but none provides *political* autonomy to ethnic groups, and none accepts dual citizenship as a rule (Kolstø 1993).

## **Russian Reactions**

The issue of Baltic citizenships has been a windfall for those among Russian politicians who, beside some difficulty (sincere or not) to stomach the existence of independent Baltic states, have used the issue for political gain. Moscow Mayor Luzhkov or former foreign minister Kozyrev rank among these. The fall of the Soviet Union means a shrinking of Russia's influence in Europe on a scale not seen since the XVIIIth

century. Several groups in Russian politics are determined to reverse the political changes of the recent years and re-establish the empire. Kolstø (1993) calls them Empire restorers, whereas other authors talk about Empire-savers. These terms are neutral on the right-left scale, for the category includes both communists and far-right politicians like Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, who would like to establish a single unitary Baltic *gubernia*. As early as 1992, a number of key Russian figures began to take the moral high ground (which Balts themselves had enjoyed as long as they were unfree) and adopted the kind of victimisation discourse that cuts ice in the West.

The Russian government's strategy aims at keeping influence in the "near abroad". The issue of the treatment of Baltic Russians has been instrumentalised to that end. The official Russian bottom line is that anything short of the zero option is unacceptable: all residents should be granted unconditional and immediate citizenship (Gwiazda 1994). As early as 1992, Vitali Trofimov, a legal expert at the Russian foreign ministry, wrote an article in a Russian foreign policy journal that described the human rights issue as "[our] most powerful weapon".<sup>5</sup> The Russian strategy, as spelled out by S.A.Karaganov in his keynote presentation at Moscow's International Relations Institute (Ainso 1997), can be summarised in three points:

- 1 Russians in the near abroad should stay there and be used as leverage by Russia;
- 2 Russia should invest in the near abroad;
- 3 Russia should promote the use of the Russian language in the near abroad.

In early 1994, the Russian foreign ministry prepared a programme<sup>6</sup> calling for the institutionalisation of dual citizenship, "the consolidation of the Russian communities in the countries of the near abroad", and "the creation under various names of ostensibly non-political associations of Russian citizens or simply Russians".

On 11 August 1994, the Russian government adopted a directive in that sense, and a resolution,<sup>7</sup> in which the following principles are laid

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5 *The Baltic Independent*, February 12, 1993.

6 *The Baltic Observer*, March 31, 1994.

7 Resolution 1064 of the Russian government, August 31, 1994, quoted in Hallik (1998b).



out: the Russian government wants the Russian diaspora to stay where it is instead of coming back to Russia; people of Russian origin should be allowed to stay in the country where they are born or have lived for many years, and be able to acquire citizenship without conditions; Russian should be legalised as official language. The text also advocates “mutually profitable” cooperation with Baltic companies where Russians predominate.

Consequently, Russia has been pressing for dual citizenship arrangements. Today, in Estonia, there are more “new” Russian citizens than persons who have received Estonian citizenship through naturalisation. So far that policy has been less effective in Latvia.

Russia has also systematically criticised Baltic legislators’ language policies,<sup>8</sup> while always stopping short of spelling out what treatment of Baltic Russians would constitute the condition for it *not* to apply pressure on that department. That ambiguity is of course entertained for tactical reasons, but it roots itself in Russian uncertainties about the legitimacy of Baltic independences.<sup>9</sup> Relations between the newly independent republics and Russia are impeded by the absence of basic treaty. Baltic leaders may be more willing to consider easing citizenship requirements for Russian-speakers once Russia has signed such a treaty. The problem is that Russia makes such improvements a precondition for an agreement. Baltic leaders, who do not want to give the impression of caving in to Russian demands, are left in a bind.

To sum it up, we see that Russia demands that Baltic Russians automatically become citizens in states whose right to exist it challenges. Logically inconsistent as that position is, it works as a foreign policy in-

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8 One example among many being the reaction at Latvia’s language law, passed on 9 December 1999. The law received support from the OSCE, the Council of Europe, and EU Commissioner for Enlargement Günther Verheugen. However, the Russian Foreign Ministry criticised it, and even asked the EU not to consider Latvia’s membership bid: “We call on our European partners, who are now contemplating inviting Latvia to talks, to give another thought to the question whether the move is appropriate.” RFE/RL Newline December 13, 1999.

9 According to the Estonian daily *Postimees*, for instance, on January 8, 1998, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Aleksandr Avdeev sent an official note to the Russian Duma negating that the Soviet Union forcefully annexed the Baltic states in 1940. The Russian Foreign Ministry then declined to comment whether Avdeev’s letter existed at all, claiming that “such information is confidential” (RFE/RL Newline, January 20–21 and 23, 1998).

strument,, for it enables Russia to manufacture grievances at will. That constation does little to alleviate Baltic fears that Russia's ultimate goal is reintegration of the Baltic states into a reborn Soviet Union (Zaagman 1999). If the country wants to throw its weight around in the region, it will do so *regardless of the status of the Baltic Russian-speakers*. To the extent that one can discern continuity in Russian foreign policy since the beginning of the 1990s, it seems clear at this juncture that Russia's leaders are *not* interested in promoting the integration of Russian-speakers into the larger Baltic societies. They are interested in hindering it.<sup>10</sup>

### **The Eyes of the World**

In 1993, Balts began to lose the propaganda war. So far, the question of the Russian-speakers in the Baltic states has generally been framed as a human rights issue. Beside Russian politicians, the Latvian and Estonian citizenship laws have attracted the interest of social scientists in Western Europe and North America. The debate generally hovers around the moral standing of the Baltic citizenship laws, often found wanting (Poulsen 1994; Stepan 1994; Chinn & Truex 1996; Reinikainen 1999, among others). Scandinavian academics and journalists have been vocal in couching the issue in moral terms ("The closure of citizenship", Reinikainen writes at the outset, "is a moral issue").

A red thread runs through many writings: it is the notion that the decision of the Estonian and Latvian authorities *not* to grant immediate, unconditional citizenship to all residents amounts to an injustice that should be done away with.<sup>11</sup> Western media have also played their part

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10 On Christmas Eve 2001, in a show broadcast on all the state TV and radio channels, Russia's president Vladimir Putin urged Baltic Russians to demand official status for their language as well as quotas of representation in Baltic government bodies (*The Baltic Times*, January 10, 2002), *The Wall Street Journal Europe*, which reported that fact in its January 4, 2002 edition, suggests that Putin's declaration is part and parcel of the wider Russian foreign policy strategy that aims at dissuading NATO leaders from admitting the Baltic states as members. Heightened ethnic tension in the Baltics might play into Russia's hand in that context.

11 Reinikainen (1999:162) concludes explicitly that Estonian authorities never should have formulated such requirements for the naturalisation of Soviet era migrants and their descendants in the first place.

in entrenching the perception that, in Estonia and Latvia, the distinction between citizens and non-citizens results from arbitrary lawmaking. The media have further distorted that perception with the habit of implicitly conflating the cleavage “citizens/non-citizens” with the cleavage “Balts/Russians”, as if the two overlapped perfectly (they don’t).

As a consequence, native Baltic social scientists, or Western scholars of Baltic origin, tend to find themselves cornered in a position of defence.<sup>12</sup> They often give the impression of trying to explain, and thereby, so they hope, justify, these citizenship laws to outsiders who, in their turn, do not always sound overly eager to listen to stories of past afflictions.

## Argument of the Thesis

The basic characteristics of citizenship we need to retain at this point are the following. Firstly, citizenship has both an *horizontal* dimension (relations between citizens) and a *vertical* dimension (relations between each citizen and the state). Secondly, citizenship is by definition a *compromise*, and a compromise less between antagonist fields than between fields of a different nature.

My core empirical argument is simple: *in the Baltic countries, the horizontal dimension of citizenship is less problematic than its vertical dimension*. I could also say that the question *what* (ie, the vertical link between each individual and the state, mediated by political institutions) makes Baltic citizenships more fragile so far than the question *who* (ie, the horizontal relations between ethnic groups within civil society). Post-independence reforms have unleashed social transformations that leave nobody unaffected. Without anticipating on later developments, suffice it to say here that *what is at stake in the Baltic countries is less the ways and means of accommodating ethnic diversity than the passage from essentialising self-representations of society to accepting political conflict as legitimate and inherent in a modern democratic society*.

My central theoretical argument, then, is that the conceptions of citizenship which dominate the social sciences today cannot by themselves account for the democratic development of societies which ex-

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12 Among others, see Vetik 1993; Dreifelds 1996.

perienced communism, and ought to be enriched with a theoretically grounded knowledge of the specific nature of that experience. The central argument of this thesis is thus in line with Linz & Stepan's (1997): "when thinking about transitions to democracy, we tend to assume that what is challenged is the nondemocratic regime, and that with democracy a new legitimate system is established. However, in many countries, the crisis of the nondemocratic regime is also intermixed with profound differences about what should actually constitute "the state"... The new literature on democratic transitions did not give much thought or attention to this stateness problem, because most of it focused on transitions in Southern Europe or Latin America, where the challenge of competing nationalisms within one territorial state was on the whole not a salient issue."

Two reservations are in order here. Firstly, I do not know if the citizenship laws of Latvia and Estonia are *just*. At this point, the reader will have understood that that debate is not going to be central here. In any case, I am at a loss to say whether or not the Estonian or Latvian governments *should* have granted unconditional citizenship to all their residents from day one.<sup>13</sup> Citizenship is not only a moral category, and

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13 Although some Russian politicians have gone out of their way to hammer the idea that the general treatment of the Baltic Russians is tantamount to ethnic cleansing (then-foreign minister Kozyrev said it in so many words in 1993), what corresponds to the heading of "interethnic violence" has not taken place in the Baltic countries, be it before or after the reestablishment of independence. The OSCE does not share Russia's assessment of the situation as one of massive human rights abuse (Zaagman 1999). The OSCE's High Commissioner Max van der Stoep has regularly mentioned that there is no systematic discrimination of non-Baltic populations in the Baltic states, and virtually no incidents linked to interethnic violence. It is safer to be Russian in Riga than a black African in certain towns of Western Europe or anybody in Corsica or Northern Ireland. The Estonian and Latvian citizenship laws are no legal ugly ducklings, anachronistic incarnations of ethnic bloody-mindedness in a caring world of all-out civic generosity. They are not stricter than the citizenship legislations of countries like the United States, the Netherlands, Canada or France. They are less strict than the citizenship laws of Germany or Switzerland. The residence requirements are lenient and, in any case, they have not been instrumental in excluding the bulk of Soviet-era migrants from citizenship (Lieven 1994). The language requirements have drawn more criticism, but such requirements exist in the citizenship legislations of the great majority of states in Western Europe and North America. In democratic countries, expecting future citizens to show a minimal command of the country's official language is not considered as unreasonable.

the “closure of citizenship” is not only a “moral issue”. Concretely, citizenship never gets granted without conditions. No state has ever constituted its citizenry on the basis that everybody happening to live on its territory at a given time would automatically become a citizen. Conceptually, as we shall see, the very idea of citizenship implies a degree of closure. To imply that citizenship could exist without closure is a logical fallacy. A fully open citizenship is a contradiction in terms.

Secondly, I am not even sure—and I know I am treading on thin ice here—that the intricate question of the position of the Russian-speakers in the Baltics is best understood as a *human rights* issue, although it has almost exclusively been framed that way in the West. Debating what rights should be given to whom without knowing how and by whom rights are to be implemented is putting the cart before the horse.<sup>14</sup> There is more to citizenship than the couple human rights + free market (Taguieff 2001). Lieven (1994:380) warns that “with human rights as the bottom line, there is a tendency to underrate the dangerous potential of quieter and less conspicuous factors. There is a tendency also to miss the point which is, for the West, not whether the Baltic states do or do not match up to some abstract standard of human rights, but how a regional crisis can be averted”. The *Forced Migration Monitor* of January 1997 emphasizes that “the future of Russian speakers in the Baltics may not involve human rights as much as managing the consequences of migration and state building”.

These two reservations being made, I add that an increasing flora of writings exist whose authors take distance from the denunciation/defence

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14 For instance, when wondering why Gorbachev’s reforms went astray, Popper (1992: 63) suggested that the USSR needed rule of law sooner than it needed a market economy. He rightly stressed that the difference between a laissez-faire state and an interventionist state is negligible in comparison with the gap that exists between a society endowed with a functioning state of law and a society deprived of it. He puts forth a simple but effective definition of the state of law: it consists in eliminating violence (“The freedom of my fists stops where others’ right to defend their noses begins”). It also supposes that there is a difference between buying and stealing (Liehm 1998). Before opening a stock exchange in Moscow, Popper claims, it would have been wiser to put in order a functioning array of courts headed by judges selected for competence, not Party credentials. What the USSR got instead was a market economy without a legal frame (Sviridova 1998). The question of the political independence of the courts has not been solved yet in the Baltic countries either (interview Nutt 1999).

approach, and instead focus on the concrete social effects of Baltic citizenship laws and on the development of citizenship in the Baltic countries (for instance Kolstø 1993; 1996a; 1996b). It is the orientation I choose, for the following reasons.

To begin with, I think we should stop setting majority power and minority rights against each other almost as a theoretical and normative matter of course. In the Baltic countries, who is a majority and who is a minority is not always clear (Gwiazda 1994). Geographically, many members of minorities in the Baltics live in settings where they actually constitute majorities, and vice-versa. Politically, positions have been reversed since the end of Soviet times. Russian-speakers have to get used to being minorities in relatively small states after having been the majority in an immense one, which some find humiliating. Balts have to get used to being majorities within “their” sovereign states, which is more flattering, but not necessarily easier.

Moreover, beyond the dialectics of the relation between majority and minority, all the people mentioned here, save the youngest, were Soviet citizens for a part of their lives. In other words, they lived in a country hallmarked by a very specific conception of citizenship. That conception rested upon the postulate of a perfect fusion between reality and representation. The ideology of the Soviet state, symbolised by the transcendental role of the Party, entailed an absolute rationalisation of citizenship. With independence, that conception gave way to another one more in tune with democratic tenets. Approaching it requires both, as Verdery (1996:10) puts it, “a theoretically grounded understanding of the system that has crumbled, and an ethnographic sensitivity to the particulars of what is emerging from its ruins”. Both on paper and in practice, Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian citizenships are informed by a conscious rejection of the Soviet experience, but in other instances, as we shall see, they are also a product of the Soviet system. It is not a question of high or low degree of political maturity. Even forces that are fighting against a system are shaped by that system.

## **Structure of the Thesis**

As suggested above, this thesis deals both with a highly fragmented theoretical object applied onto an empirical object which is itself specific. It is the reason why an overview of the main theories of citizenship

delineating the field today is both necessary and insufficient. We shall have to construct our own “tool”. This thesis situates itself at the intersection between political science, history and anthropology, with the latter two informing the first one, in the hope of making the whole line of reasoning both richer and more dynamic.

This study is divided in seven chapters. Very briefly said, the first three chapters lay out the theoretical basis of the study, while the remaining four constitute the analytical part. I could characterize the theoretical part roughly by saying that chapter I addresses the question *where* (ie, “where” I have been writing from, to use an interjection long cherished by French post-structuralists), chapter II is about *what* I am looking for (and why), and chapter III explains *how* I intend to look for it. The theory-weary reader thus may skip chapters II and III and go directly to chapter IV, which is the one with the strongest historical orientation. Chapters V, VI and VII address Baltic citizenships today from different, complementary angles.

Chapter I (The context of the study: metatheoretical and perspectives on post-communism) does not deal with citizenship *per se*. Its aim is to introduce the reader to the academic perspectives on post-communism that have been developed since the fall of communism in Europe. The notion of citizenship has not been prominent in them. Overviewing these perspectives has the interest of linking this study to the specific field of “transition studies”.

Chapter II (The genesis and evolution of the concept of citizenship) takes distance from the empirical object of our study. It focuses on the concept of citizenship itself, and on its relation to individual and collective identity. I review the three major theories of citizenship which I found to be dominating today, ie republican, liberal and cultural citizenships. The first part of the chapter is devoted to the evolution of republican and liberal citizenships. It situates itself rather in the field of the history of political ideas. The second part of the chapter is longer, given that it is intended as a critical overview of the conception of citizenship (cultural citizenship) which is both the most recent of the three and the one which, today, nourishes most debates. In so doing, I take the opportunity to discuss two of the concepts which are ubiquitous in current political theorising, namely culture and ethnicity. I argue that the concept of culture which informs the notion of cultural citizenship does not

adequately account for the role of “culture” in communist and post-communist contexts. I find the concept of ethnicity to be possibly more useful, albeit with serious reservations.

Chapter III (Experiencing citizenship) takes the opposite perspective. It is intended to complement chapter II, by approaching citizenship the other way round. The theories of citizenship reviewed in the previous chapter start from prior philosophical conceptions of the political community in order to define what “being a citizen” means and/or ought to mean. Here, I rather start at the level of the individual citizen in order to figure out how he can, concretely, experience and exercise his role of citizen, and how that, in turn, can influence the general conception of citizenship which, at a given time, dominates society. The theoretical bedrock I use here is a two-dimensional model of citizenship, called the Legacy and the Scruples. With that model as a red thread, I discuss how citizenship “works” at the micro- and macrolevels. I draw insights from anthropology and linguistics. I find the notions of exogamy and language to be useful analytical tools for approaching citizenship. They allow us to take some necessary distance from the concept of ethnicity discussed in the previous chapter. Still in the purpose of understanding how citizenship can be experienced at the individual level, I also discuss how it relates to and gets informed by people’s experiences of time and of space. I highlight the role of urbanity and nationhood, and argue that the city and the nation remain privileged civic fora. Finally, I discuss how citizenship relates to notions of political consensus and conflict, and argue, in line with van Gunsteren’s ideas, that consensus should not be seen as a precondition of democracy. The elements of this chapter thus form the component parts of the theoretical “citizenship” object which I apply onto our object of analytical investigation.

Chapter IV (Being a citizen in the Soviet Baltic Republics 1940–1990) discusses the historical evolution of citizenship in the Baltic republics before and especially during the Soviet period. That evolution is approached with the help of some of the instruments devised in chapter III, notably language, time, urbanity and nationhood. The notion of totalitarianism is discussed and adopted as a valid theoretical “horizon”. In the course of the discussion, I also argue that the conception of culture which dominates theories of cultural citizenship is of little use to understand the working of citizenship in a totalitarian system.



Chapter V (Recreating states) lays out the legal basis of the reframing of citizenship in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. It highlights the continuities and the ruptures between the Baltic states as they exist today, the Soviet republics of the same names, and the pre-1940 Baltic states, as well as the way the dialectics of state rupture/state continuity influence the post-Soviet redefinitions of the three respective Baltic citizenries.

Chapter VI (The horizontal dimension of citizenship) focuses on the question of, roughly said, *who* the citizens (and non-citizens) of the Baltic countries are. With the help of tools devised in chapter III, notably exogamy and language, it highlights the ways citizens relate to each other, both as individuals and as groups. I find a certain gap between purely discursive practices and concrete patterns of behaviour. Notably, Estonian society is found to be the most strongly differentiated of the three, although mutual animosities at a purely rhetorical level tend to be stronger in Latvia and in Lithuania.

Finally, chapter VII (The vertical dimension of citizenship) focuses on the question *what*—ie, what can “being a citizen of Estonia/Latvia/Lithuania” mean, given the ways and channels by which citizenship gets concretely exercised in these countries. It is what I call the vertical dimension of citizenship. I find it to be more problematic than the horizontal one. The notions of time, urbanity, consensus and conflict as discussed in chapter III come into use here.

## A Note on Sources

Tökés (2000) wrote a good synthetic overview of the kind of Western political science literature which the fall of communism yielded.<sup>15</sup> However, while I agree with his breakdown in four categories, I do not find it decisively helpful as far as the specific Baltic cases are concerned. The

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15 Tökés’s four categories are: (1) synthetic overviews of global democratisation trends, like Huntington’s *Third Wave*; (2) transitology studies that liken the Soviet and East European changes with those which took place in Latin America and Southern Europe, a classic example of which being O’Donnell & Schmitter’s *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule*; (3) comparative studies by authors with an established interest in the study of communism; and (4) more recent writings by social scientists with direct experience of and academic backgrounds in Soviet and East European studies.

relative paucity of political science writings about these countries can be linked to their relatively small size (about eight million inhabitants taken together), but it is also due to the specificity of their historical experience.

As long as the USSR existed, given the enormous difficulties of doing field research in an area of such strategic-military interest, and given sovietologists' tendency to view developments throughout the USSR as, somehow, extensions of those taking place in Russia, the Baltic republics were little more than footnotes in sovietology. Given that they had not even retained the modicum of sovereignty which people's democracies had, they did not fall into that category either, could not be studied alongside Poland or Hungary as a matter of course, and therefore remained mostly outside the field of study pertaining to them. Baltic émigré circles did publish actively on the topic (Küng 1973; Landsmanis 1976), and Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago* mentions the fate of the Balts in several instances, but it is only fair to say that there was, in general, little public and academic interest about these countries in the West between the end of the Second world war and the late 1980s. Besides, the question of the 1940 annexation still carried enough moral guilt and political load to encourage Western policymakers to see through their fingers and to maintain the lid on the whole issue.

In that context, von Rauch (1974)'s *Years of Independence 1917-1940* came as a breakthrough and a milestone in the study of the interwar period. Nine years later, Misiunas & Taagepera (1983)'s *Years of Dependence* picked up where von Rauch stopped, and covered the Soviet period until 1980 (an updated 1993 version includes the 1980 decade). Both books remain indispensable, for their intrinsic qualities and because there is next to nothing on the market to compare them with. Lieven's *The Baltic Revolution* (1994) comes as a rich and now classic complement about the return to independence itself. Besides the Von Rauch/Misiunas & Taagepera/Lieven "holy trinity" named above, a number of country-specific studies exist. Some are strictly historical (Raun 1990; Plakans 1995) while other adopt more specifically sociological (Lauristin & Vihalemm 1997) or politological (Karklins 1994a; Dreifelds 1996) perspectives. The Baltic countries have also drawn the interest of several academic journals active in different branches of the social sciences.

Gone the USSR with its forbidden zones and sibylline visa rules, con-

ducting field research in the Baltic area has become easier. However, as we shall see, these countries remain hard to squeeze into the paradigms dominating the social sciences today, all of which come from the West. In that context, I view it as indispensable to contrast what Westerners say about the Balts with what the Balts say about themselves. In other words, we have to *let the actors talk*. It is not always easy, as I quickly found out once I moved out to Lithuania in the winter of 1995.

Field research implies trying to find correspondences between what you read, what you see, and what you hear. My experience in the Baltics is that the three seldom overlap. What I met was *people*. I met people behind desks who behaved as the apparatchiki they once were; other people behind other desks who had been apparatchiki too, but behaved differently; free market enthusiasts who disliked me for making more money than they did, reminding me of what Zinoviev wrote in 1991 about yuppie wannabes; unclassifiable Estonian patriots who had not heard about deconstruction and *the death of the great narratives* (and therefore believed Estonia existed, as opposed to us who know better), but who did not buy into *primordialist identity discourses* either (they expressed no hatred of Russians and even showed a keen interest in classic Russian culture); people saying they were Russians but carried Lithuanian passports and even lived in the traditional hotbed of Lithuanian nationalism (the city of Kaunas), visibly feeling at home there; little old ladies who had outlived several dictators and weren't impressed; decent, honest, hard-working former members of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union; optimistic Latvians; and quite a lot of other theoretically untidy characters.

Anyone interested in Central and Eastern Europe soon realizes that there is a strong imbalance in secondary sources. While Western scholarly publications are plentiful and immediately accessible, Eastern publications are often short on resources. Getting your hands on them presupposes quite a helping of traveling, patience and, if I may say so, luck. But the nice thing about source-hunting in the Baltics is that, while you cannot always find what you wanted, sooner or later you run across a domestic gem you had never heard about (I emphatically include Elmars Vebers's *Civic Consciousness* and Mati Heidmets's *Russian question and Estonian choices* in that category). Quite a lot of Baltic sources, be it scholarly essays or newspaper articles, never get translated into any "big" language,

and therefore stand little chance of attracting the international attention they deserve. With time, I managed to patch together a working knowledge of the Baltic languages which, although remote from any fluency worth that fine name, allows me to, at least, get the general idea of a text, and then decide whether or not I should investigate further into it. The flip side of the coin is that I know neither Russian nor Polish.

When it comes to primary sources, you run into other problems. First, in order to start getting a grasp of things, you need to navigate between the twin pitfalls of enchantment (acting as a tourist) and indignation (acting as a missionary), and should stay there long enough for your daily life to become just that.

Secondly, being a Westerner in the Baltics is not culturally neutral, be it in the way you perceive people or in the way people perceive you. The particular nature of the Baltic historical experience—basically: they once lived under communism, we never did—is a reality seldom forgotten. It appears in an infinity of incarnations, and serves as a healthy warning against ethnocentrism, historical determinism, and the combination of the two which consists in viewing these countries as, somehow, inferior imitations of the West, desperate to catch up with it the way you go from A to B. At the same time, one meets people whose daily lives indeed *are* largely permeated by the political, economic and even aesthetic presence of the West, and whose governments constantly seek approval of the West in their policy-making. In such an ambiguous context, you have to do your best to avoid appearing either as a clown (the naive Westerner who speaks with a flawed grammar and asks weird questions) or as a would-be expert (the arrogant Westerner who never had to wait in line for a bottle of milk but will teach his little Baltic brothers what freedom and democracy are all about). Sometimes the line between these two unpleasant and fruitless roles is extremely thin.

## **A Coda on Vocabulary**

In this book, I say *the East* as a shorthand way of saying “the part of Europe that from 1917 (or 1945-7) to 1989-1990 lived under the political and social system called real existing socialism”. Although it reeks a bit of Cold War rhetoric, the expression remains useful. It is a descriptive label, not a conceptual one, because the theoretical opposition between

East and West is not watertight: as Rubavicius (1994) rightly stresses, the communist ideology was born in the West, not in the East. It is a product of Western culture. The places where that ideology actually got implemented were not predetermined to undergo that experience. Thus I take “the East” as a value-free way of naming the area of Europe which, historically, did experience communism.

I thus include Russia in “the East” and in “Central and Eastern Europe”. Purists will object that not all of Russia is in Europe. I will object to their objection by replying that nobody knows where “Europe” ends *anyway*, tactically hiding myself behind Timothy Garton Ash who, at some point in the 1990s, gave the brightest—and shortest—answer to a host of excruciating debates on just-where-does-Europe-end-exactly: Europe does not end, Garton Ash wrote somewhere, it fades away. In any case, from the end of the Second World War to 1990, Tallinn, Vilnius and Riga were politically closer to Vladivostok than to Helsinki. That’s about half a human life, and it wasn’t that long ago.

The expression “the East” also comes as a useful reminder that the post-1989 transformations have not necessarily led to greater understanding and homogeneity between East and West. The “East European” identity was certainly rejected by these societies as long as they were subject to Soviet rule, but, as Sampson (1998) argues, a new, more substantive East European identity is now emerging on the ruins of the previous one, this time dominated not by these societies’ isolation from the West, but by their permanent contact with it: the key feature of that new East European identity-in-the-making is the “total presence of the West, and a Western European agenda, in the life of the East” (Sampson art.cit:152).

Secondly, I use *communism* as a shorthand way to qualify the mode of political and social organisation that hallmarked—here it comes—the East, beyond national differences. My credentials in Marxism do not warrant a decision from me on whether that system ought to be strictly seen as “communism”, “socialism”, “bureaucratic collectivism”, or other denominations.

Finally, I retain the expression *post-communism* which, although ambiguous, remains indispensable. It was coined by Brzezinski in 1989 in order to describe an evolutionary step between communism and Western-style democracy.

The expression post-communism can create a logical problem, given that it can get used in two ways (Saulauskas 1994). Either it can be used in a teleological sense (we postulate that the countries that left communism behind are heading toward Western-style democracy, and post-communism is a purely *transitory* stage), or it can be used in a value-neutral sense (we acknowledge that these countries are leaving communism behind, but we also acknowledge that *we do not know* where they are heading to, whereby post-communism is *sui generis* and may reproduce itself). Somehow we have to choose between the two options, if only because the difficulty of knowing whether or not post-communism is an inherently novel phenomenon actually *increases* with time: it is more complicated now than in 1989 to separate the problems of state-building in post-communist countries from those faced by modern societies in general (Poviliunas 1994). Are they specific problems, or similar problems that only happen to look more acute given that these countries are still relatively poor?

If we take post-communism as a transitory stage, then democracy in post-communism, and the notion of citizenship that belongs in it, becomes just as transitory: it is a temporarily incomplete, not-yet-quite-mature brand of citizenship. When the process is completed, we will have no more reason to view it as “post-communist” than we call Italian citizenship “post-fascist” or German citizenship “post-nazi”. Conversely, if we take post-communism as a *sui generis* formation, then we agree that the historical fact of communism does make a difference for democracy-building, and we acknowledge that citizenship within post-communism can take specific forms. That second approach is the one I advocate. Likewise, I refrain from using the word *transitions* and prefer *transformations* instead.

In so doing, I do not underestimate the significance of post-communist countries’ desire to claim the title of democracy. Nodia (1996) rightly stresses that “no matter how genuine the democratic convictions of leading political actors are, at least they recognize that there is nothing else to make a transition to (...) Most postcommunist transitions are transitions from something that was definitely not democratic to something that is, or tries to be, or at least pretends to be democracy”.

At the same time, I agree with Nodia (1996:17) that “what is unique about post-communist transitions is that they are transitions from com-

munism”. The post-1989 political reframing of that part of Europe is far from over (Rupnik 1998). No matter how tempting it is today to view European communism as an anomaly, it would be misleading to conceptualize it as parenthesis or a deviation. The “anomaly” lasted several decades. It is part and parcel of European history in the XXth century. Neither communism nor its failure were inevitable. Both derived from series of decisions made by human beings. It is an historical experience Western Europe did not go through, and it seems reasonable to assume that that experience shaped the societies subjected to it in a specific fashion. Post-communist countries are not those of 1940 merely altered by “normal” processes of modernisation (Dreifelds 1996). Post-communism should be understood as a specific social phenomenon likely to endure and to continue to shape the ways and forms of Baltic societies (Saulauskas 1994).

Thus the “post-” of post-communism does not necessarily mean “not”. Communism might be the experience *against which* one acts, but it is also the experience *out of which* one acts.

One frequent misconception, for instance, is that the Soviet state suppressed national identifications, whereas it actually reframed them, constitutionally enshrined them, and used them for the furtherance of its authority. A major resource in the current Baltic democratising efforts is the pre-1940 historical memory of independent statehood. That legacy gives the Baltic states a unique status among former Soviet republics. However, not only cannot the pre-1940 past be resurrected, but the knowledge derived from that past is not a well-defined, homogeneous whole which it would suffice to apply to reality in order to erase the effects of communist era (Kolstø 1996a; Moisi & Rupnik 1991). The USSR recognised Baltic independences in September 1991, but there was never a “year zero”. The same people kept on living.





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# CHAPTER I

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## The Context of the Study: Meta-theoretical Perspectives on Post-communism

### **Introduction: Who is Talking?**

At some point in the second half of the 1980s, the “other Europe” became fascinating for a while—another Europe, mirroring the West though not really, so *décalée* that somehow it became *in*. There would be a lot for anthropologists to write about how an horror on wheels like the Trabant ever could become a cult object, or how it ever could be *cool* for a summer or two to wear insignia of an army which, indeed, had maintained millions of Europeans under the boot for decades. The Rumanian writer Mircea Dinescu (1989) perceived it well, a few months before the revolution of December 1989: “the East”, he said, “is an exotic society. There is indeed something macabrously fabulous with people who cannot hang themselves for want of rope and soap; with border guards who point their weapons to the inside of the country; with wheat that grows on TV and rots in the fields”.

Beside aesthetic excitement, the overall misfortune of the East provided moral satisfaction as well. In 1990, Žižek explained that “what fascinates the Western gaze is the reinvention of democracy. Eastern Europe functions for the West as its ego ideal: the point from which the West sees itself in a likeable, idealised form, as worthy of love. The real object of fascination for the West is thus the gaze, namely the supposedly naive gaze by means of which Eastern Europe stares back at the West, fascinated by its democracy”.

There was certainly some endearing naivety in the way peoples of Central and Eastern Europe “discovered” the democratic toys (elections, campaigns, parties, etc) which Western citizens are said to be increasingly

tired of. But the mutual fascination between West and East could not be a fascination between equals. Fascination led to subsequent irritation, which can make understanding difficult. In order to understand our own ambiguities towards post-communist countries, it may be useful to look at how our knowledge about them is produced.

## **I - The Material and Ideological Conditions of Production of Knowledge on Post-communism**

### **A - The Knowledge-Producers**

The West, not the East, is the place where most knowledge about the East is produced. The relationship between the production of knowledge in the West and the production of knowledge in the East is dominated by an unequal distribution of symbolic and financial power.

No matter how the word might cause knee-jerk rejection, there is a clear *colonial* aspect in the democratic teleology actually at work. It is essential to acknowledge the colonial dimension—neither “good” nor “bad”—of the relationship between West and East. Their relationship could not be anything else but unbalanced: it is the East that tries to become like the West, not the other way round (Frybes 1998a). Like all colonial relationships, the relation between the West and the East causes both satisfaction and resentment among the colonised. On the one hand, colonisation can bring tangible benefits. These benefits are the object of a fierce competition among actors (Sampson 1998). On the other hand, the colonised learn to view themselves with the eyes of those who colonize them, which might in turn teach them to see their humiliating reality as if it were a visitation of fate.

#### *1 – Journalists*

Western knowledge of the East more or less hinges on journalistic reports. Journalists have their own agendas, their own resources and their own constraints. They also have their own categories of perception. In his pamphlet about TV, Bourdieu (1996:20) claims that “journalists are interested in what is exceptional for them... Daily life in a suburb is of no interest to anybody. Should journalists become interested in what is

really happening in the suburbs, and should they try to show it, then their task would be extremely difficult... It is hard to express banality... It is the problem of sociologists: make the ordinary extraordinary; describe the ordinary so that people understand how extraordinary it is". In 1990, Champagne (in Bourdieu 1993:61) analyzed how French journalists, reporting from "troubled" suburbs, picked up some highly specific aspects of life in the suburbs, and thereby created and conveyed an extremely simple picture of a very complex social reality. Thus, "social problems become visible only when the media talk about them. However, they are not reducible to the problems constituted by the media". In the stultifying atmosphere of the Czechoslovakia of the 1970s, Havel was wondering how one could describe a society where nothing happened, and explain to outsiders why this nothingness was, precisely, society's most serious problem.

According to CNN director Ted Turner, "the more complex the piece of information, the weaker the audience" (in Halimi 1998). In other words, CNN or *Newsweek* will not report on how Latvians and Russians are *not* killing each other on the streets of Riga, although that is interesting too. If it doesn't bleed, it doesn't lead. Should the situation in Latvia deteriorate now, then Western journalists would instantly be there and transmit their perceptions to the rest of the world. If we are to believe Lieven (1994), this is where the shoe pinches, because "for a hundred years and more, Western journalists have swung between two contradictory stereotypes of Eastern European nations... The first stereotype is that of gallant little freedom-loving peoples fighting against wicked empire for the sake of independence and liberal democracy. The second is horrid little anti-semitic peasants, trying to involve us in their vicious tribal squabbles".

Incidentally, Lieven is a journalist himself—and an excellent one. He wrote what I think remains the best account of the Baltics' drive to independence. Thus I am not implying that the information journalists transmit is necessarily false or misleading. I am suggesting that journalists work in conditions which are specific to their profession, and that it is important to be aware of these conditions when trying to turn information into knowledge.

A key problem in the Baltic cases is that knowledge of Russian is much more widespread than knowledge of the Baltic languages. When mentioned at all, the latter tend to be deemed—or doomed?—as "extremely esoteric" (Gray 1996), as if that were an inherent quality that would set

them apart from other languages.<sup>1</sup> As a result, many Western journalists will report about political developments in the Baltic area based solely on what they have read in the Russian-language press (Vebers 1997).<sup>2</sup> The tone and the content of that press often differ from those of Baltic-language newspapers. There can even be differences between the Russian version and the Baltic version of the same newspaper. Kolstø (1995:137) notices that “only a fraction of the articles written in Estonian and Latvian on the ethnic question are translated into Russian, and vice-versa. Very often journalists try to boost the sales of their papers by translating the most inflammatory material, while calls for moderation are deemed too boring to be reprinted”.

## 2 – *Scholars*

How do scholars fare in that context? Possibly better, or so we scholars like to believe. We can ponder “Whither Latvia?” without having ever set foot in that country. That is (or ought to be) more difficult for a journalist worth his salt. But in the academia as well as in journalistic, knowledge of Western languages is much more widespread in the East than the other way around. Book translations go mostly one way – eastward. Conformism and deadline stress are no unknown phenomena in the academe either.

The sociology of transitology remains to be written. A remarkable attempt at it is by Csepeli et.al (1996), who describe vividly how Western social researchers, caught off guard by the-fall-of-the-Berlin-Wall, switched their research agendas and started producing “massive quantitative data, producing statistics that could be analyzed in the computer-driven social science research facilities in the West” (art.cit 491).

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1 The 1990 edition of the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* defines esoteric as “unusual, secret or mysterious and known by only a few people”. While no one in his right mind considers the Baltic languages as world languages, there is a difference between acknowledging the limited geographical range (and genuine linguistic specificity) of these languages, and implicitly condoning claims as to their irrelevance even in the places where they are actually spoken. Globalisation notwithstanding, people still live in places. There is nothing unusual or secret about Estonian if you happen to live in Estonia, no matter how many people turn out to speak that language at the planet level.

2 See also *The Baltic Independent*, October 29, 1993.

In the process, native social scientists often got relegated to roles of data collectors and data suppliers. Their material situation is different. Due to the asymmetry of the distribution of symbolic and financial power mentioned above, many face understandable difficulties of adjustment, give or take a few prodigal sons achieving positions in the West and hardly willing to return to the “conservative, provincialist, rigid and technically backward research communities” they escaped from (Csepeli et.al, 1996:495). Tamas (1999:64) emphasizes that “the role assigned to East Europeans in the retelling of their own story is bearing witness. [Their] job is to furnish anecdotal evidence, the raw material of the analysis supplied by Westerners”.

Intellectually, the perspective differs as well. Kapuscinski (1995:109) captured the gap vividly: “The Western democrat and the Moscow democrat are possessed of two entirely different mindsets. The mind of the Western democrat roams freely among the problems of the contemporary world, [while] only one thing interests the Moscow democrat: how to defeat communism... As he does so he becomes for a second time communism’s victim: the first time he was a victim by force, imprisoned by the system, and now he has become a victim voluntarily, for he has allowed himself to be imprisoned in the web of communism’s problems”.

That double gap, the material one and the intellectual one, makes communication difficult. Seemingly plain words can be hard to translate, and even when they are not, they still conjure up different things to different people. An expression like “free media” might be hard to assimilate to someone whose life so far unfolded itself in a society devoid of free media. “KGB” might not conjure up so much to someone who never actually had to deal with it. All these gaps have to be filled with whatever images are available.

Once semantic mismatches are dealt with, differences in style make themselves felt. As Csepeli et.al. (1996:502) put it, “figurative and metaphorical terms characterised by a peculiar sort of obscurity and vagueness full of historical and cultural associations, which are so rampant in Eastern social science writings, make Eastern communications about society impenetrable to Western scholars who would be eager to listen and understand”. Which leads us to the question of content: “If East European social scientists claimed original ideas in the research process, particularly if the ideas emphasised the differences or historical peculiarities

of particular countries in the region, Westerners assumed that Easterners did not understand Western models that require generalising about all those “small countries”. If Easterners revealed their generally superior knowledge of the history of social and political thought, the history of the region, or the markers of contemporary culture, Westerners wondered where their hypotheses were” (Csepeli et al, art.cit 498).

## **B – The End of History and the New Barbarians**

The democratic project is central to the relationship between East and West. The European revolutions of 1988-1991 were self-limited. They did not bring fundamentally new ideas to the forefront. They stressed the theme of a return to democracy (Cohen & Arato 1993). It is not only the West that tried to impose its model: it is also the East that recognised the centrality of the Western democratic project and wanted to participate in it. The victory of the West gave a new lease of life to the Hegelian notion of *end of history*, popularised by a 1990 article by Fukuyama. It also nourished a debate about where the world’s future fault lines would lie after the Soviets had thrown in the towel. Shortly thereafter, Huntington’s highly influential notion of *dash of civilisations* came in handy to formulate Western fears. Both theories quickly gained an enormous influence in the 1990s, which is why a word on them is warranted here.

Research programs designed in the West are constructed according to Western paradigms of social thought, which are not independent from certain constraints extant in the academic field. The theoretical and empirical directions our knowledge is based on are decided through “social cooperation, competition, the search for personal prestige and political decisions” (Eriksen 2001:37).

Other constraints derive from the links between financing and ideology. It is hardly ever noticed, for instance, that both Fukuyama and Huntington, different as they seem, are financed by the Olin Foundation, whose objective is to “provide support for projects that reflect or are intended to strengthen the economic, political and cultural institutions upon which the American heritage of constitutional government is based” (George 1996).

Others constraints come from the lure of fashion. In the brave new world of scholarships of the 1990s, it did not hurt if your grant proposal included the word “global”, while “class” was a non-starter.

Fukuyama's and Huntington's theories, although superficially at odds, complete much more than they contradict each other. When combined, they form an attractive functional totality, which both comforts and warns: on the one hand, even in these uncertain post-Cold War times, it is still *right* to be Western, Christian, rich and free—in fact it has never been righter (Fukuyama). On the other hand, the Others will never be like us, and dislike us for that (Huntington).

Thus, the whole world might be open, but a clear division of roles exists. If history and the great debates *are* indeed over, then there can be no doubt as to who has the right to enlighten the rest of the world, whose ontological status becomes that of a permanent source of moral indignation and/or touristic excitement, if not plain indifference altogether. Naturally, the picturesque Other always risks troubling the status quo. Whence an increasing tendency to portray troublemakers not as *adversaries*, but as *criminals* whom it is legitimate to take to court and punish. Whence, too, an inordinate use of the word “genocide”, and an increasing tendency to compare the most unruly bullies to Adolf Hitler, whose name has become a shorthand way to suggest full-sized, purebred evil (Lebiez 1991).

In the process, plagues tend to get rejected outside the sphere of history and sent back into the natural order of things. Violence or poverty are no longer seen as the result of political, economic and social factors situated in a history. They are made literally a-historical (Galeano 1996). As a result, most of the time the noble savage is mediatically portrayed as either a terrorist or as destitute. Our current perception of the wretched of the Earth resembles the fascination of the saints for the sinners (Bruckner 1990). They scare us or move us, but we can choose to ignore their plight as such, and aesthetize it instead. Seen from afar, violence and misery can be beautiful.<sup>3</sup>

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3 According to O'Rourke (1995:67), “somewhere in the psychic basement of the sob-sister sorority house, in the darkest recesses of the bleeding heart, starving children are cute. Note the big Muppet Baby eyes, the etiolated features as unthreatening as Michael Jackson's were before the molestation charges, the elfin incorporeity of the bodies. Steven Spielberg's E.T. owes a lot to the Biafran-Bangladeshi-Ethiopian model of adorable suffering”. Before waving that away as the rantings of a cynical gonzo journalist desperate for good copy (although it may be that, too), notice that the 1997 World Press prize went to the picture of a Piety-like, *crying* Algerian woman. (this note continues on the next page).

One could of course object that the end of history is actually a metaphor and that, therefore, it does not really mean what it says (all right, but then, what *does* it mean?). As a matter of fact, the notion of end of history had been put to use several times before. For instance, one of the tenets of Soviet propaganda was that, in the USSR, the national question had been solved for the ages to come. Not long before, certain German intellectuals perceived the Bismarckian empire as the necessary conclusion of a universal process (Lebiez 1990). After Bismarck and Stalin, the theme of the end of history surfaced again in the West at the end of the 1950s, under the guise of the “end of ideologies”. When the idea surfaced again in the late 1980s, it was indeed rusted to the core, but since it had been gathering dust long enough, Fukuyama’s new coat of paint gave it the attractive shine of a theoretical breakthrough. Pondering on the notion’s new lease of life in the 1990s, Birnbaum (1995:261) finds it surprising that so much reverence ever could be given to “such a contestable platitude, tainted as it is by an unwavering evolutionism, a naive vision of the reality Western societies, and a deep ethnocentrism we thought was out of date”. Another objection could be that doom-sayings à la Huntington are made of the same millenaristic stuff—and therefore head toward the same sorry fate—as Sartre’s famous claim, made before a Prague audience in 1963, that Marxism was the unsurpassable horizon of mankind (Moïsi & Rupnik 1991).

Yet Fukuyama’s and Huntington’s rationale are more subtle than meets the eye. Both provide ideological arguments that reject the legitimacy of any conflict rooted in a history. In the early 1990s already, Baudrillard (1992) spotted in Western societies a creeping feeling that history was a gigantic *scandal*, in which everything negative had to get laundered the way dirty money is. Beyond the postmodernist’s irony, he definitely had a point. Even considering the hypothesis that history *might* have come to an end in 1989 is enough to lock the Others in a disastrous alternative:

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(continued) The information conveyed by that celebrated picture is, exactly, zero: it tells us nothing about the place, the time and the reason of that woman’s suffering, and everything about the West’s need for credible enemies. The timelessness and, indeed, religiosity of that picture illustrate that certain parts of the world occupy the paradigmatic status of, not only the backward Other, but the Other backward by definition, and for all the times to come (Mahmood 1996).



if history is indeed over, they are not supposed to question the aspects of the international order of which they suffer; conversely, if history continues, they are doomed to be late in comparison to us who will always be the avant-garde. In both cases, they remain dangerous for us because of their relative poverty and their relative lack of political maturity (Lebiez 1991). At this point, the theme of the clash of civilisations takes the lead. It becomes instrumental in “explaining” that, somehow, Koreans or Tunisians will always suffer from a fatal, almost genetic incapacity to establish and consolidate that democratic system otherwise extoled as history’s *ultima ratio*. The circle is closed.

The inordinate echo met by Fukuyama’s and Huntington’s ideas vindicates Bruckner’s (1990:96) claim that the fetishisation of Western democracy *as it stands today* has become an ideology—and a very solid one, given that it feeds on the illusion of having won over all ideologies.

The perception of Western democracies as *fragile perfection* gives them an aura of timelessness (Debord 1988). That is, of course, a fallacy, but that fallacy is convenient for whoever is in charge and knows how to stay there: history’s field is the memorable, the events which happened and whose consequences are still felt. Therefore, history gives some knowledge about what lasts and what does not. As such, it enables us to put new things in perspective and to judge what is new about them. Since history enables to measure novelty, comparison with the past is potentially subversive. Logically, then, when what exists here and now is claimed to be only marginally imperfect, whoever makes that claim has an interest in suppressing means of comparison with past things.

By which we see how old hat the notion of end of history actually is. It ensures a pleasant rest for anyone in power (Debord 1988). Nothing is more comfortable for power—any power—than to look *natural*. The contingent gets turned into the necessary, the fact into the norm. The proclamation of history’s end implies logically that an end has also come to history’s interpretation as a conditioning factor for further historical movement. The formula of the “end of history” turns the current state of things into something fixed and eternal (Diner 1990). It is a philosophical construction in which Balts do not easily fit.

## II – The East on the Tightrope between History and Nature

### A - The De-historicisation of the East

The notion of end of history, identified with the ideological victory of the West, and the notion of clash of civilisations, influence how we perceive the East. Their double echo has given a new lease of life to the classic colonial notion of *peoples without history*, according to which some peoples are “without history” but might be saved, provided they give up their archaic idiosyncrasies (Rufin 1991).

The idea is not new. In the years after the First World War, H.G Wells described the pregnancy of the “supposed antithesis between the scientist trying to planify a world state and the reactionary trying to resurrect an irrational past. On one side, you have science, order, progress, internationalism, airplanes, reality, hygiene. On the other hand, you have war, nationalism, religion, monarchy, peasants, teachers of ancient Greek, and horses” (in Finkielkraut 1996:110). The myth of the “noble savage” was thus linked to a strict hierarchy: there was no doubt as to who was superior to whom (Steiner 1997).

So it is today. The unconscious notion that “we” have nothing to learn from “them” is so powerful that one has to look long and hard in democratic theory to find the simple hypothesis that issues of democracy in Eastern Europe, Africa, South America or Asia *might* shed some light on the West’s own problems. It is tempting to forget that it took the West several centuries to become somewhat democratic, that the delivery was not painless, that the outcome is not beyond criticism, and that the first condition of democracy is to remain imperfect. There was no normal, inevitable evolution towards democracy for the West—not any more than other countries are doomed to be authoritarian (Touraine 1994).

The West’s difficulty in understanding developments in Eastern Europe is linked to its mental distance from its own past. It seems that when looking outside, the Western world sees the nightmare of its own democratic genesis—hardly a gainly sight, for the repetition is just as tragic as the original. As Bruckner (1990:168) aptly puts it, “history looks like nothing but the tumultuous process by which foreign peoples are trying to catch up with us. Whatever they are running after, we already have it”.

Post-communist Europe bears a kind of historical weightiness which

does not easily fit into Western perceptions. The region is collectively regarded as a historical laggard, which owes its position on the periphery of European modernity to the weakness of certain social strata, to statism and to nationalism (Kovrig 1995). The paradox of Central Europe, Moïsi and Rupnik (1991:31) write, is “the gap between an adherence to Western ideas and values, and a handicap derived from socio-economic conditions and ethnic fragmentation”. The region’s marginality only got reinforced by the isolation which the Soviet hegemony forced it into after World War II. After the heyday of 1989, it became apparent that *something* in the East’s historical development had stopped in the 1940s. Metaphors like “freezer” or “pressure cooker” gained currency. Habermas talked about a *nachholende Revolution*, a revolution that is somehow flowing backward in order to catch up with developments previously missed out on.

Post-communism may be a return to pre-communism, but it is not only that—far from it. Part of the historical weightiness of the East is in the eyes of the beholders. It is reductionist to depict Eastern Europe as one swamp of political primitivism. Just like in Western Europe, many different political cultures coexist in the area, more or less close to the ideal-types of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* (Kovrig 1995). The common reference to communism, if uncritically taken, leads the observer to neglect the national identities of the region (Wolton 1993).

Some Western social scientists and journalists, left-wing or right-wing, seem to have trouble accepting the idea that East European societies are historical societies at all. Still unable to stomach the fall of communism in Europe, Hobsbawm announced in 1996 that it was *too late* for Estonians to turn their vernacular into an all-purpose language (it is already). A few years earlier, and at the other end of the ideological spectrum, Huntington claimed, in his already mentioned article on the clash of civilisations, that “a Russian” *could not* become “an Estonian”, without problematising any of these categories. Thereby, he indicated that nationhood was a purely genetic affair, and rejected any attempts to conceptualize an Estonian nation that could accommodate both Estonians and Russians. Thus, Estonia appears as either “too late” in history (Hobsbawm’s version) or “outside” of history (Huntington’s version). Both globalised and tribalised, neither fish nor fowl, *the East does not fit in*.

The naturalisation of the East, as opposed to its historicisation, thus remains a permanent intellectual temptation. It looms in the often encountered metaphors about powder kegs, Babel towers, Minerva’s owls

and Pandorean boxes, in the comments about the “age-old” animosities in the Balkans, or in hints to the Russians’ “timeless” submissiveness to authority. It appears in the spontaneous tendency of the media and the academia to overlook the positive aspects of East European nationalisms and to present them as inherently regressive phenomena instead. We also find the naturalisation of the East in the almost systematic presentation of social tensions through the prism of ethnicity, although these tensions can also be reactions against very concrete processes of plundering and impoverishment.

Not only do such mental attitudes hinder understanding, but they also imply that any social movement or political actor in the East that does refer to a specific aspect of the national past is, in the last analysis, informed by irrational perceptions. Rather than brooding on old afflictions, the only “healthy” attitude becomes amnesia.

That preliminary overview leaves us with a feeling that Western media and social theories do not look very well-equipped to understand why such improbable entities as the Baltic states can exist at all on the world map. Historically, the existence of three sovereign Baltic states is still an exception rather than a rule. There still seems to be a more or less conscious difficulty not to consider the Baltic countries as, somehow, living anachronisms. As late as 1999, peace researcher Wilhelm Agrell wrote in *Östersjöns Värld* (#6) that “the Baltic states are actually historical reminiscences, which reemerged by virtue of the fall of the Soviet Union”. Why “actually”? Why “reminiscences”, given that these states had existed as independent states for almost a decade at the time of Agrell’s writing? And why “by virtue of the fall of the Soviet Union”, as if the fall came first and Baltic independences later, when it actually went the other way around?

## **B – To Describe and to Judge**

### *1 – The Difficulties of Description*

The usefulness of “native” writings becomes clear when we realize how difficult it is to even *describe* societies in post-communist Europe. “Until very recently”, wrote *Newsweek* editorialist Meg Greenfield in the October 25, 1993 issue, “everybody thought the name Bosnia-Herzegovina was a joke” (in Finkielkraut 1996). Everybody. A joke. Here, “every-

body” means everybody who *matters*, and Greenfield acknowledges candidly that this privileged group, by definition, does *not* include the inhabitants of Bosnia-Herzegovina—although these people must have known that, indeed, they were living in a place called Bosnia-Herzegovina, no more nor less of a joke than places with serious names, like Middlesex.

The area which became suddenly alive in 1989 was unintelligible for most Western journalists and social scientists. Whence the West’s spontaneous designation of unpredicted nationalist phenomena in the East as *tribal*, which is another way of saying irrational. Perceptions of what used to be called Eastern Europe got replaced with visions of a hodgepodge of, as Finkelkraut (1996:139) nicely puts it, “yelling and unpronounceable nations, each with its singular historical memory, its weird coat of arms and its brand new old flag (...). Today we are still stumbling in the phonetical pitfall which unexpectedly replaced the unfortunate, homogeneous and so convenient area we used to call Eastern Europe”.

Regarding the Baltics, it is a telling fact that much more research and media coverage has been devoted to Estonia and Latvia than to Lithuania. Symptomatically, Linz and Stepan’s widely used textbook on “transition studies” (1996) scrutinizes Estonia and Latvia in a single country chapter, and it leaves aside Lithuania. Sizeable Russian-speaking minorities live in the former two countries, not in Lithuania. As a result, Estonia and Latvia offer from the start a convenient societal cleavage, whereas Lithuanian society becomes automatically much more difficult to describe and to judge. Cleavages in Lithuania have to be found somewhere else than in the Balt/Russian dichotomy. One cannot immediately visualize who might oppress whom—definitely a problem in an age when the quest for collective victims has become a major motive in the public debate. By the same token, the Lithuanians’ national identity is spontaneously perceived as less problematic than Estonian or Latvian identities—which it is not.

## 2 – *The Pervasiveness of Judgement*

Post-communist countries are considered more or less salvable, provided they show a willingness and a capacity to adjust. Progress is conditional, for we remain the ones with a permanent right to judge. It is not easy. The East displays an annoying absence of moral clarity. Regarding, for

instance, the controversy on whether or not Estonia's Russian-speakers ought to be granted immediate citizenship, there is a strong moral case to be made for both sides (Reinikainen 1999). But judge we do, for different kinds of reasons.

Some reasons are strategic. Firstly, the distribution of the rewards of Westernisation hinges on how the major Western decision-makers judge developments in the East. Thus, for instance, the former people's democracies and the Baltic countries must permanently prove their capacity to adjust to EU norms (Frybes 1998; Sampson 1998). Secondly, Russia remains fearsome, and the West needs stable buffer states (Rufin 1991). Less attention would have been given to Baltic Russians if they were not, precisely, *Russians*. As early as 1993, the *New York Times* began to write about "the harassment of Russian troops still in the Baltics", although not a single case of violence against them was reported during their grudging withdrawal from an area they had been occupying for decades. In the same vein and at about the same time, personalities like Fukuyama, Richard Nixon and Jimmy Carter, different in ideological outlook but united by their fear of Russia, asked the United States to intervene to "protect Russian-speakers from discrimination in the Baltic states".<sup>4</sup>

Other reasons are symbolic. The crumbling of the Soviet monolith leaves Westerners orphans of a gratifying antithesis. Through their highly proclaimed antagonism, the East and the West "covered" the planet the way two competing trademarks cover a market. There was something fearsome but comfortable in the Soviet Union's outspoken rejection of liberal democracy: the East-West gap separated good from evil. In the 1970s-1980s, commonplace images of the Soviet Union in the West depicted a crippled and dangerous colossus, to be mocked and feared alike. No matter how much "the Russians" were rolling themselves in corruption and drunkenness, they remained a permanent threat. Rotten to the core, the corpse was, like its gerontocratic leaders, still alive (Bruckner 1990). The vanishing of that threat has been a symbolic disaster for the West. In order to know who we are, we need an enemy—at the very least a symbolic one

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4 *The Baltic Independent*, January 15, 1993.

(Debord 1988).<sup>5</sup> In the post-communist context, one still tends to look for “the functional equivalents of the categories of reformists versus hardliners, or regime versus opposition, which serve understanding (and misunderstanding) the past” (Garton Ash 1991:267). It is tempting to try and figure out who to support and who to blame.

The point for the West is not always to know what is actually happening in these countries. The point is also to create and re-create the fairy tale about Good versus Evil thanks to which, long after the-fall-of-the-Wall, we are still the good guys. Both journalists and scholars play a key role in that creation. The written press, for instance, regularly hurls accusations of institutionalised anti-semitism at Latvia.<sup>6</sup> In the name of “exporting democracy”, we take our pick, and off we go to enlighten the great unwashed in the East.

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5 In 1988, G.Arbatov, head of the Institute of North American Studies at the Soviet Academy of Sciences, had a powerful intuition when he said to an American audience: “We are doing something terrible to you: we are depriving you of an enemy” (in Bruckner 1990:26).

6 One of the first such attacks, as far as I know, is *Life*'s 1992 article that claimed that intimidation by the reformed paramilitary *Aizsargi* (Defenders) and *Zemessardze* (Home Guard) had forced 15 000 Jews to leave Latvia the year before (*The Baltic Independent*, December 18, 1992). The claim, it turned out, was pure fantasy. Yet it set a trend. Western newspapers make outraged noises every time they rediscover that, during World War Two, some people in the doubly occupied Baltic states chose between two evils, fought on the German side against the Soviet army, and do not display the appropriate amount of guilt about it today (for an overview of these controversies, see Mel Huang, “Latvia’s marching season”, *Central Europe Review*, vol 0, nr 25, March 26, 1999). In the same vein, some critics have picked on certain Lithuanian traditions like the Fagin-like masks of Shrove Tuesday as expressions of rabid antisemitism. According to Jarvis (1994:18), “that these national celebrations are seen as being far more primitive by Western television audiences than anything Haiti can offer will astonish Lithuanians. After decades of repression from Moscow comes censorship from the West, so that Lithuanian national culture can be tailor-made for exporting to all those interested in “world culture””. However my own, subjective experience of Lithuanians is that, although they deserve a variety of labels, blissful submissiveness does not precisely rank among these. Not even Stalin could repackage the Lithuanian bunch to suit his purposes. I think they still have a long way to go before they can market themselves easily in the global village. When it comes to global hipness potential, the average Lithuanian politician is still a far cry from Vaclav Havel, and so far no Lithuanian *Buena Vista Social Club* has loomed up above the horizon either.

The bottom line is also, clearly, to keep the wheel of social sciences turning. A vocal proportion of Western scholars is more interested in building moral-theoretical prescriptions about the East than in reporting from it in the first place. Vetik's (1993:271) diagnosis still holds true today: "There is a considerable literature dealing with ethnic problems in times of fundamental change in society. However, as the phenomenon itself is new, specific theory about the ethnic processes within the post-communist world is comparatively vague". Consequently, "the complexity of the social world is reduced to one aspect of it, all phenomena are to be seen through it. Actors of this level are regarded as carriers of good and evil. Politics is a battle between the two. The good will inevitably win. The solution to ethnic problems is more or less automatic once the evil can be eliminated" (Vetik 1993:279).<sup>7</sup>

In the introduction of *Multicultural Citizenship*, Kymlicka (1995:5) gives away such motivations: starting from the observation that "disputes over local autonomy, the drawing of boundaries, language rights, and naturalisation policy have engulfed much of the region (NB the East) in violent conflict", he concludes that post-communist Europe is a "painfully clear" illustration of the necessity for a theory of minority rights.

That makes sense from the point of view of social science writing. Yet, the construction of such a theory interests, first of all, social scientists, rather than policy-makers, who have other priorities than the theoretical coherence of their decisions, and the people about whom theory shall be written. The premises are false. It is quite simply not true that most of post-communist Europe is in violent conflict. The area is not Sarajevo's Sniper Alley writ large, any more than everybody is starving to death in Africa. The overwhelming majority of the inhabitants of post-communist Europe are living in peace. They are certainly struggling with

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7 Gray, for instance, is representative when he concludes his article by stating that the Baltic states "will have to be open to the economic needs and cultural sensitivities [of Russia]. That demands an identity that is inclusive and a new cosmopolitanism open to Eastern as well as Western influences" (Gray 1996:89). Beside the haziness of the cure ("new cosmopolitanism"?), what gets neglected here is that Balts already have an immense experience of "Eastern influences", and that the interest of being sovereign lies precisely in being allowed to decide which influences one likes best, and then try to act accordingly.



serious problems—like pollution, tax evasion, brain drain, or the worsening poverty of certain regions—but these problems do not boil down to minority issues.<sup>8</sup>

The management of human differences might not be plain sailing in all places and at all times, and nobody contends it is, but one would be hard put to find a correlation between ethnic homogeneity, on the one hand, and democracy and prosperity, on the other hand. Belarus is ethnically more homogeneous than Estonia. It is also a poor country with a dictatorship, a citizenry frightened into submissiveness, and a disastrous public health record because of Chernobyl's radioactive fallout (Abrahamsson 1999; Alexievitch 1997). By contrast, Estonia has next to 40 % of Russophones *and* free and fair elections, a buoyant written press, and the highest GDP per capita of all post-Soviet states. There is no convincing evidence to support the contention that ethnic diversity is *the* major problem of Central and Eastern Europe today. Where minority problems do exist, political theory as such cannot do much to improve the situation if political will and diplomatic pressure do not relay it. No amount of political theory is going to make the denizens of Minsk or Bucharest freer, wealthier and healthier than they are today.

### **C - The Diagnosis on Post-communism**

The body of knowledge on post-communism that has been constructed becomes more and more heterogeneous and it might be getting more, not less, difficult to draw an overall picture of the region. In 1994 already, Kolankiewicz noticed the existence of a “growing uncertainty not just of the goals and the means but also of the conditions extant in the societies undergoing the post-communist transformation”.

A misleading way for us to accommodate that uncertainty would be to contend that, firstly, nothing has really changed (“they” have always been corrupt and hateful anyway), and that, secondly, the ugly features

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<sup>8</sup> In 1992, New Democracies Barometer surveys in seven post-communist countries found that an average of 40 % were concerned that ethnic minorities could be a threat to order. By 1998, the proportion expressing anxiety had fallen to 25 % (Rose 1999).

of national political cultures are more dangerous now than the status quo ante, which at least had the advantage of stability. There is little evidence to support that rationale. No matter how much Western media and academy entertain perceptions of the East as an ethnic powder keg, the breakup of multinational communist regimes has created successor states that are more homogeneous. Not only did East Europeans eventually topple dictatorships whose removal looked like a remote possibility, but they did so with a remarkable lack of violence. The upheavals in the East were a series of political revolutions that transformed the existing order decisively and irreversibly (Tismaneanu 1999:66).

The expression “democratic transition” gives the impression that both the *temporality* and the *outcome* of post-communism are more or less given. They are not. There is no guarantee that formerly communist countries will “work” in ways which we in the West can explain with our references. Life in a communist society remains hard for outsiders to imagine—present company included. So are the ways it has influenced people’s perspectives. For all intents and purposes, post-communism has turned out to be, if not a *sui generis* system, then, at least, more than a transitional stage from A to B. It is what Schöpflin (1994) calls something semi-permanent, which is an elegant way of squaring the circle: without major transformation in the foreseeable future, but subject to inner changes.

Several authors concur with Schöpflin. Misztal (1996), for instance, notes the decline of the belief that a simple application of the Western model is going to solve problems. In studying, for instance, Poland’s political culture in 1989, it was already difficult to determine whether and to what extent the values possessed by the citizenry were the outcome of communist political socialisation efforts, or were the result of decades of rejection of these efforts (Volgyes 1995). In studying it in 1999, we have to add to this ambiguity the hypothesis that these values have been influenced by the post-1989 transition process itself. Misztal (1996) contends that post-communist economies and societies now find themselves in a state of liminality (everything may happen yet little can be done). “Markets in Eastern Europe in their incompleteness are mistakenly conceived of as institutions progressing toward a final completion when they might be better thought of as a set of perplexing controversies, a mixture of economic rationality and irrationality” (Csepeli et al 1996:506).

## *1 – The Persistence of Democratic Commitment*

By any account—freedom of expression, of association, of travel, etc—people living in most post-communist countries are freer now than they were during communist times. According to the 1998 Freedom House review, there are growing signs of a deepening chasm in East-Central Europe and the former USSR (Karatnycky 1999). Progress toward the emergence of open societies has stalled or failed in the countries of the former USSR save the Baltic states. In most former people’s democracies and in the Baltic states, although there are nuances between them, democracy prevails.

Overall democratic commitment remained high throughout the 1990s. The regimes that exist today in Central and Eastern Europe are not uniformly popular, but public opinion surveys show that democracy is widely considered as preferable to any of its alternatives (Rose 1996). Whatever the hardships of the transition, the passage of time has not made communism appear more attractive in the region (Rose 1997a). The new system of government is endorsed by majority. Demand for undemocratic rule exists, but it is low. Antidemocratic parties do exist, but they tend to win few votes, and they are less powerful than their West European counterparts. If the extreme-right ever secured strongholds in Europe in the 1990s, it did in Austria, France, Italy and Belgium.

## *2 – The Idealisation of Civil Society*

In the transitology of post-communism, civil society has been more discussed than anything else (Miształ 1996). What fell in 1989 were first and foremost communist regimes. They fell because they had not succeeded in hegemonising their societies, or at least not as much as we believed they had (Balibar 1992). A civil society of sorts, albeit a weak one, had survived (Di Palma 1991; Siklova 1996). Through some kind of vital reaction of self-preservation, civil society somehow had reorganised itself underneath or beside the hegemonic political and social institutions of the Party. The continued vitality of civil society confirmed what East European “dissidents ” were writing in the 1970s, although their theses were met with considerable criticism in the West then. In 1989, we felt we had to concur with them, and we also began to see civil society as the fountainhead of virtue. “After decades of neglect, social scientists on

both sides of the old Iron Curtain rediscovered the notion of civil society. Despite serious difficulties with conceptualisation, the idea took off with unprecedented speed and soon became accepted as the key to solving East Central Europe's problems with the democratisation process" (Korbonski 1995:298). "Academic literature and Western state aid programmes became suffused with the theme of the rebirth of civil society in the Eastern bloc" (Tempest 1998:133)

The diagnosis on post-communist civil societies is more cautious now than in 1989, both among East European writers and outside observers. Some authors pointed that "the myth of civil society was self-idealisation in times of revolutionary euphoria" (Miształ 1996:130). There is now a growing agreement that the theme of the resurgence of civil society was overstated, even if it retains some normative validity (Tempest 1998:134). Concretely, the constraints under which civil societies had to live under communism prevented their flourishing. Di Palma (1991) sees these societies as "hybrid, largely unfinished civil societies". Smolar (1996:34) has the impression that society today is no less—and perhaps even more—atomised than it was in the final years of communism. According to Rose, the societal legacy of communism is a "negative social capital". Klima (1994) criticizes the new Czech elites, obsessed by money and publicity. Havel (1994) draws a rather negative picture of Czech society, which he views as imbued with indifference to the fate of other human beings and lack of respect for the law. For Havel, civil society has not learnt to be civic.

Obviously, civil society is not an unequivocal resource in democracy-building. Interestingly, there seems to be no clear relation between the relative degree of freedom enjoyed by society under communism and the diagnosis that is drawn today. In other words, how civil societies looked under communism does not tell us too much about their current state. In Hungary—an easy-going communist barrack if there ever was one—Hann finds "little evidence to support the notion that a more effective civil society has been able to develop in recent years" (in Tempest 1998:137). In Poland, "the associations which 15 years ago formed an embryonic civil society have been either swept into the dustbin of history or are the pale shadows of their former selves" (Korbonski 1995:300). Although Poland has an "impressive proliferation of political parties and voluntary associations, the public values of tolerance, mutual respect and compromise [are] largely absent" (ibid.).

### *3 – The Psychological Legacy of Communism*

A major psychological legacy is that legality does not seem to be seen as an autonomous sphere. Volgyes (1995) detects a fundamental conviction that the laws are designed not for a national purpose in which the citizenry has a stake, but as a tool to enforce compliance for the sake of the interests of a happy few. Nodia (1996) notices the absence of the notion of “common good”.

Behavioural patterns are still marked by attempts to outwit or “beat the system” (Sztompka 1993). They reveal a reluctance to take responsible decisions, and distrust for anybody who does. Significantly, tax evasion is endemic. It fuels a vicious circle: tax evasion impoverishes the state, the impoverishment of the state limits its ability to implement decisions, state ineffectivity encourages distrust of the state, which in turn encourages tax evasion. It seems, then, that the weakness of post-communist democracy is not so much the “apathy” of civil society than its interaction with the political sphere.

## **Conclusion: Bringing Citizenship Back in**

It is commonly acknowledged now that the prevailing theories of social movements and social mobilisation left us unprepared for the wave of protest mobilisation in Eastern Europe. The 1989 revolutions made without revolutionary theory or elaborated normative arguments regarding who would be responsible of what, how, and with what objectives (Offe 1992). As late as 1988, the president of the Latvian Writers’ Union put it frankly: “We have no blueprint. What’s worse, we do not even have fundamental scientific data about the social system we are restructuring. The research has to be conducted parallel with restructuration”.<sup>9</sup>

In the absence of thought-out revolutionary theories, the first task of social scientists is to understand in retrospect what actually happened (Offe 1992). DiPalma (1991:79) suggests that we are especially seduced by the theories that stress continuity rather than change. However, according to him, “large scale social change occurs typically as the result

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<sup>9</sup> *Sovetskaya Molodezh*, September 6, 1988.

of a unique constellation of highly disparate events and is therefore amenable to paradigmatic thinking only in a very special sense". Whence our search for metaphors, and the success enjoyed by some of them. But their relevance is context-bound. Exporting democracy sounds fine, but "the literal transplanting of institutions, like literal translations, is not likely to be satisfactory" (Laponce & St Jacques 1997:234).

The notion of citizenship has not been central in studies of the democratisation of former communist countries. The teleology of democracy-building formulated since the early 1990s rests upon a neo-liberal vision of spontaneous social reconstruction, and describes the transformation of economies and societies in largely technical terms (Smolar 1996). It advocates the fastest possible abandonment of all aspects of state socialism and its replacement by neo-liberal democracy, with the least possible role for the state compatible with free markets and private ownership and exploitation of capital. At the same time, capitalism is a political project, depending on visible and defensible decisions taken at the top (Offe 1992). That policy bears various names: shock treatment, radical economic reform, shock therapy, et caetera. It has been carried out more or less thoroughly by national governments, under the supervision of international agencies such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (Gowan 1995). Thus, it is almost trivial to note that the transition is from state socialism to capitalism.

However, Offe (1992:933) noticed that "we cannot even assume seriously that there is a general consensus in favour of capitalism as structure and as process, compared with the prosperity which is the presumed result of both". Transition from communism implies both political and economic transformations, which people experience in various ways. According to Offe (1994), "never before had a complete social system broken down and left such disorientation behind it: down the drain went personal relationships (including the discovery that your best friend spied on you), identification to the workplace (where, in a context of weak horizontal mobility, you spent your whole life), and balance in the family (due to decreasing female employment, massive male unemployment)". More than a decade after the fall of communism in Europe, what kind of capitalism is turning out is still very much open to question. In that context, there is room for an approach based on citizenship.

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## CHAPTER II

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### The Genesis and Evolution of the Concept of Citizenship

While the previous chapter laid out the terms of the current debate about post-communism and the countries which are experiencing it, this chapter shifts the focus onto a more strictly theoretical level. With a view to explore the links between citizenship and identity, it presents an overview of the three major theories of citizenship which inform and organize the field in which discussions on citizenship are unfolding themselves in North America and Western Europe. That overview leads to a critical discussion of the theory of cultural citizenship, which is both the most recent and the most actively debated among the three today.

#### **Introduction: Citizenship and Identity**

Citizenship rests upon legal grounds defining one's rights and duties, but it also partakes of identity, of membership. It is a legal artefact with many concrete effects. It confers a particular identity on people (Nauta 1992; Turner 1997), because it relates to fundamental values of inclusion and exclusion.

Citizenship is informed by, and in turn influences perceptions of human differences. These perceptions can stress either the universal dimension of identity (universalism) or its particular dimension (differentialism). Universalism rests upon the notion of the fundamental unity of mankind. That notion is of recent vintage and of limited expansion, and it might not last for ever (Lévi-Strauss 1952). Differentialism is nourished by the perception that mankind displays a fundamental diversity.

What interests us here is that both dimensions, the universal and the particular, exist within identity. Modernity has led to the weakening of

all-encompassing identity schemes. Identity can neither be considered as naturally given or as the pure product of acts of individual will (Calhoun 1994b).

Processes of identification are shaped by a dialectic between the particular and the universal. The idea of a “pure” particularism is intellectually absurd. No particularity exists independently of a context. Since identity necessarily exists in relation to a wider context, any particular identity carries with it a universal dimension. Therefore, we have to accept that universality cannot exist apart from the particular. There is no simple sameness unmarked by difference, but likewise no distinction not dependent on some background of common recognition (Calhoun 1994b). The universal cannot be apprehended apart from a particularity—*any* particularity—while being at the same time irreducible to *one* given particularity. That paradox cannot be solved. It is a precondition of democracy. Democracy is possible only if one acknowledges that a combination of universality and particularity exists in anyone else (Touraine 1994).

That, however, is only a principle whose implementation is context-bound. Human diversity exceeds anything we will ever be able to know about it (Lévi-Strauss 1952). Human societies are permanently criss-crossed by trends pulling in opposite directions. Some safeguard and even reinforce particularisms, while others favour convergences and affinities. Human diversity, then, changes permanently, and not in a linear fashion. The way human differences are conceived of in a certain society at certain time is inherently linked to the creation, the upholding and the modification of social hierarchies (Laponce 1984). These phenomena are the fruit of cooperation or, in other cases, of conflicts between actors, whose interaction yields *something* like a society, or a community, or a nation—in any case, a unit, something *relatively* stable in time and space, though by no means eternal. Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia are precisely such units.

## **I – The Tension between Republican Citizenship and Liberal Citizenship**

We can link the relative lack of conspicuousness of citizenship in transitology to the fact that the notion of citizenship is not central in modern politi-



cal theory in general. It roots itself in a republican philosophy which, during the XIXth and XXth centuries, remained in the shadow of a liberal philosophy emphasising civil societies, market economy, and individual rights.

## **A – The Incremental Extension of Citizenship**

Republican thought is older than liberal thought. The moment of rupture between them was due to a deepening of the differences in their respective conceptions of state sovereignty and rule of law. The republic is not the revolution. Nor is it the liberal notion of a society emancipated from the state, or the romantic notion of organic community. Its origins are in the Greek and Roman republics and in the city-states of the Renaissance.

### *1 – The Citizen of the Antiquity*

According to Aristotles, only the community that seeked the general interest deserved to be called a *politeia*, a republic. There were two categories of communitis: either they were republics, or they were empires based on despotism. In comparison with the modern citizen, the citizen of Athens or Rome has fewer partners and more power. Being a citizen meant that one was a full-fledged member of the city. The citizen, said Aristotles, is the one who is able to govern and to be governed. In the absence of conceptual and practical distinction between “society” and “state”, the citizen took a direct part in the management of common concerns. The “civil society” was directly a political society. The “state” was not a legal subject—only citizens were. That meant that the citizen was both the source of authority and the executioner of authority. That also implied that public rights and private rights were one and only thing. In other words, the citizen acted in a context devoid of any legal definition of human beings, whereby the status of individuals was hallmarked by the inequality of persons, which made slavery acceptable as a matter of course. Slaves were not humans, but things. Herein lies the major philosophical incompatibility between ancient conceptions citizenship and modern representations of human beings.

## 2 – *The Separation of Politics from Religion and Nature*

Modern citizenship was formulated by Machiavelli, Hobbes, and more seldom named authors, as part of the Renaissance's more general movement of separation of politics from morals—that is, the separation of theology with everything else. As soon as 1375, Ibn Khaldun thought that history could become a science only if society understood that it is not grounded in an order external to itself. The principles of modern citizenship could only be born in a society that understands that it is no longer governed by divine will, and thereby starts questioning its own norms (Bonfils-Mabillon & Etienne 1998). Under the Renaissance, several writers rediscovered the ancient notion of citizenship, but they reformulated it in accordance with a new context hallmarked by the development of monotheism in Western Europe. The basis of that modern citizenship is the separation of the political order from the religious order, and the linking of citizenship with state sovereignty.

Sovereignty is by excellence a *profane* principle of power. It supposes that the political expresses nothing but itself: the principle of regulation of power is not grounded in divine norms nor in “nature”. Historically, the development of the sovereign state has been linked to the revindication of freedom of creed. Given that power became profane, then the principle *cujus regio, ejus religio* was no longer valid. Thus, citizenship entails a certain secularisation of the political order (Gauchet 1998). Sovereignty is also a principle of intern *pacification*. War is ostracised from the domestic political game. As opposed to the *imperium*, state sovereignty implies that the range of the sovereign's power is spatially limited. Power is, ultimately, civilian power.

Sovereignty also implies that power does not belong to anybody, whereby it is a principle of *depersonalisation* of power, as opposed to the *dominium*, the fiefdom. Civilian power supposes a legal unification of the public space. It entails that the ruler himself be subjected to the rule of law. He is not above it, be it by virtue of his strength, birth or wealth. In the empire or the fiefdom, power implies domination of human beings: there is no normative “outside”, no specifically legal framework to which people can refer to in order to limit domination. In the empire or the fiefdom, power is not only personalised: power is persons, whereby persons without power are, logically, goods. State sovereignty, then, supposes a legal recognition of per-

sons as persons (not as slaves or as things), which is the indispensable basis of the development of law-based relations between people. Rousseau makes of lawlessness the hallmark of tyranny, while the republic is a state ruled by laws. As Debray (1993:65) notices, “nobody has ever seen as state (...). It is not a thing (...), but a relation between men which disconnects the right to rule from the personality of the ruler”.

### *3 – The Rupture between Republican and Liberal Citizenship*

Writers like Hobbes or Rousseau focused a lot on the question of the decision, the act of will by which a people gets born.

Central to their theories was the idea of a founding pact by which individuals voluntarily transferred their autonomy to a higher, collective principle of organisation (the Leviathan for Hobbes, the general will for Rousseau). That pact is located in and justified by the perspective of the construction of the polity. Republican citizenship is intimately linked to a contract: the founding of the polity is the fruit of the free decision of the citizens.

That notion drew criticism. Liberal writers insisted that the Cartesian subject, unbound by prior determinations, and disconnected from nature, quite simply did not exist. Hopes of a universal republic are bound to bump against historical constructions and therefore cannot but fail. The polity cannot be the embodiment of an abstract will. It should not contradict the fundamental determinations of human life, and take human rights, not only civic rights, into account.

The doctrine of modern citizenship was elaborated in the XVIIIth century, and got entrenched in history by the American and the French revolutions. Problems linked to state- and government building appeared immediately, whereby a fundamental difference was created between the American and French republics on the one hand, and the United Kingdom on the other hand. The former were born through a rupture, while the latter developed incrementally. British authors have been the most prominent critics of the notion that a democratic order could be created by rupture. They have constantly emphasised the supremacy of rule of law over political power, and the need for state sovereignty to make compromise with individual rights, human rights and the rights of the citizen.

Consequently, in the decades after the American and French revolutions, the notion of citizenship became increasingly torn between a republican conception and a liberal conception. Taking issue with the republican vision of citizenship as the primary source of rights and identity, liberal writers stress that a man is more than just a citizen, and that citizenship is not all there is to one's legal status and individual identity.

Another critique of republicanism's abstraction came from the quarters of romanticism, which in the XIXth century stressed that no society begins with a voluntaristic contract between citizens. It originates in a history and is perpetuated by transmission from generation to generation. Society precedes citizenship like the past precedes the present. The contract, if there is any, can only happen *later*.

We see that the stress on continuity is common to romanticism and liberalism. That makes them different from republicanism, which is grounded in a rupture. What deserves mentioning here is that both liberalism and republicanism rest upon metaphysical postulates about the relation between the particular and the universal. In other words, they were not constructed through empirical observation. Both models of citizenship, the republican and the liberal, have theoretical limits, and practical problems arise if one starts considering any of them as a blueprint for governance.

Thus it would be pointless to try and prove that republican citizenship is "right" or "true" while liberal citizenship is "wrong" or "false", or vice-versa. They are not each other's logical mirror-image. They are not *anti-theoretical* to each other, they are *different* from each other. They do not find themselves on the same logical plane. The theory of the *res publica* is rather interested in the object of power (the common good). It deals explicitly with it. By contrast, liberal democratic theory is rather interested in the titular of the exercise of power and in the means of that exercise. The *res publica* addresses the question "What?", while liberal democracy tries rather to answer the question "Who?" and the question "How?" (Kriegel 1994). Liberal citizenship and republican citizenship are informed by different philosophical perspectives. Their duality organizes the field in which different theories of citizenship still evolve today.

## **B – Two Portraits of Citizens**

Modern political thought is dominated by two different portraits of the citizen (Nauta 1992): there is the *bourgeois* and the *citoyen*, the man who takes care of his own interest, and the man who serves the interest of the community. The bourgeois's conception of the good life rests upon the possibility to make individual choices among a maximum of options. His preferred setting of the good life is the market. Citizenship for him is a set of rights more or less actively enjoyed. It constitutes life's outer frame, not its core. The citizen's conception of the good life hinges on the right and duty to debate and decide. His preferred setting for the good life is the forum, the political community. Citizenship for him is a responsibility, a burden proudly assumed. It makes life's core.

Republican citizenship and liberal citizenship are informed by very different conceptions of the relation between unity and difference. However, both ideal-types are located in the city, taken as either a market place or a forum. Both "places" are spaces in which a specific kind of rationality is implemented. Interests and debates are managed according to certain rules, written and unwritten, whose objective is to exclude violence from the game. To be a citizen, be it a republican or liberal one, is first and foremost to accept a certain language of civil intercourse (Mouffe 1992). Be it on the market or on the forum, citizenship is essentially a principle of pacification.

### *1 – Republican Rationalism and the Citizen's Identity*

The republican conception of citizenship goes from the rational toward the real. It entails a certain conception of rationality and of human perfectibility. As Sartori (1987) puts it, rational democracies are constructed deductively from premise to consequences. At the core of republican citizenship lies the postulate that the particular and the universal are a priori reconciled within national sovereignty. In the republic, citizenship is the core of identity, while at the same time abstracting identity.

That has consequences both at an individual and a collective level. At the individual level, republican citizenship is inseparable from the modern philosophy of the subject, which roots itself in a radical, Cartesian separation of nature and culture (Kriegel 1994; 1998). Republican citizen-

ship is governed by a rationalistic and even functionalistic idea of social life. Through participation, the individual dominates passions and interests, and becomes able to act rationally. Individuation supposes socialisation (Touraine 1994). “By discussing, deliberating and interacting, the participants are behaving rationally, guided by the principle of reason, contrary to the tradition of the church and the village” (Nauta 1992:26).

At the collective level, republican socialisation supposes a certain uprooting of the individual (Ferry 1992). There is a synthesis of particularisms within rationality. Republican abstraction means that the real is normatively subordinated to the rational. A republican legal system is not based on customs, contracts or judicial review, but on the notion of the universality of law. The rationalisation of social space takes place through the normative separation of social space from cultural idiosyncrasies (Ferry 1992a).

In other words, within republican citizenship, the practice is not the norm. De facto differences do exist, like anywhere else, but they are deemed irrelevant, legally at least. They are rejected into the private sphere, outside of the public sphere. As such, the private is outside of collective responsibility. It is a-political, or pre-political. Thus, the private and the public are kept normatively separated, with the latter gaining the upper hand. A normative difference is made between society and polity, population and people, poll and vote, child and pupil, moralism and civicness. A republican school is not *multiethnic*, but *transethnic* (Redeker 1994): it is not a public service—let alone a private one—but a political institution. Republican citizenship is concerned with the state rather than with government, let alone governments, which are fluid and changing occurrences (Sartori 1987).

Historically, the application of republican citizenship has often been linked to Roman law countries, though not exclusively. France is a school example of both the power and the limits of republican citizenship. The French republic has a founding myth (the rational reunion of its particularity with the universal) as a legitimacy base and as a chronological starting point. The idea of a universal man, defined in the XVIIIth century, did not result from empirical observation: beyond the Ile-de-France (the Paris region), no unity of language or way of life was observable (Todd 1994). The 1789 Revolution projected its universalistic postulates onto a country that was objectively heterogeneous, and that has had enormous concrete consequences.

Legally, the republican rationale appears in the current constitution, for which the republic is “one and indivisible”, and in French legislation, which for instance ignores religious categories, and for which the individual, or the group, is the only legal subject.

Symptomatically, the word “people” is a singular in French whereas it is a plural in English. The *peuple* is not the reflection of society, but its abstraction.

The problem of the relation between the whole and the parts is partly alleviated through the principle of *laïcité* (which entails that the state is neither religious nor atheist: it is neutral towards religion) (Gauchet 1998), and through a certain *de facto* tolerance today for minority languages: there is no systematic legal support for them, but no more repression either, for the simple reason that linguistic homogenisation has gone so far that minority languages no longer seem to represent a serious challenge for the dominant one (Todorov 1996b). As Laponce puts it, the state can afford the pleasure of being generous after having had the pleasure of conquering. Still, there is no hierarchy of legal distinctions (Lochak 1996). The French legal system rests upon the republican notion of equality before the Law (in the singular), not on the liberal conception of laws (in the plural) as expression of particular interests. The legal, collective recognition of minorities is rejected. On a philosophical plane, the republican conception of citizenship does not “see” minorities.

A classic problem of republican polity is that it tends to favour the majority against the minority. If the republican postulate of *a priori* reconciliation between the particular and the universal is developed to the extreme, it can lead to the claim that any later assertion of particularism can be damageable for the collectivity and thus should be repressed. Then the political, and thus, primarily, the state becomes self-referential. It can lead to state terror or to ethnocide (Ferry 1992a). In France, the egalitarian/universalistic model of citizenship was diffused from the center toward the periphery. That entailed the destruction, or at the very least the weakening, of local languages and cultures. Nation-building entailed self-colonisation (Lebesque 1969).

The republican ideal is that of a homogeneous and centralised polity. Ideally, instructions from the center are transmitted without friction and applied without alteration in all points, while all peripheral points have equal access to the center. Conversely, the private can be spread out between an infinity of heterogeneous spaces (Baechler 1994).

Within the republican paradigm, the non-recognition of minorities is not a temporary anomaly that should and will be remedied, but rather a logical consequence of the postulate that the particular and the universal have already been reconciled within national sovereignty. That postulate is both arbitrary and fruitful, so disentangling its positive effects from its negative ones looks like a hopeless enterprise. This is the reason why it is rejected *en bloc* by liberal theory. The liberal critique of republican thought is a reaction against that law-based abstraction and against the dangers of the excessive power of the state on civil society (Kriegel 1997).

## 2 – Liberal Pragmatism and the Citizen’s Identity

Liberal citizenship goes the other way round. It starts from the real and goes to the rational. The rupture with God is less robust than in republicanism. Liberal thought accommodates the notion that the head of state also can head the national church, whereas that idea is alien to republicanism.

Liberal thought takes more distance from the Cartesian philosophy of the subject than republican thought does. It does not contain the radical rupture between nature and culture which is central to republicanism (Ferry 1992b). In other words, liberal thought is more comfortable than republican thought with the idea of a continuity, rather than a rupture, between the world of humans and that of animals and plants. A positive consequence of that postulate is that liberalism makes it possible to debate, for instance, whether or not animals or even trees should have rights. Strikingly, the current phenomenon of deep ecology and “earth nationalism” (Deudney 1996) had its breakthrough in countries dominated by a liberal conception of citizenship, such as Canada or Australia. A negative logical consequence of that postulate is that it may justify the notion that some human beings are closer to animality or “nature” than others—a theory no longer commonplace in anthropology (Eriksen 2001)—which in turn justifies that their legal status be different. Australian aborigines, for instance, were not recognised as Australian citizens until the 1960s.

As opposed to republicanism, liberal thought tends to see citizenship as an identity among others: the particular and the universal are not seen as reconciled a priori within citizenship. The liberal theory of democracy is a theory on the ways and means of government, hardly a theory on its ultimate principles and premises (Sartori 1987). The liberal tradition views the role



of the citizen in an individualistic and instrumentalist way (Habermas 1992). The general interest is the unintended result of a set of individual actions, which are themselves guided by self-interest. As Adam Smith famously put it, it is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. Ultimate ends partake of the private sphere. Truth does not preexist to interlocution but depends on it. Here, citizenship is conceived of as one's affiliation to an organisation which gives a legal status.

Liberal citizenship hallmarks countries of common law. Symptomatically, British constitutional texts do not recognize any such entity as “the people” as having a constitutional status. In British common-law usage or nationality legislation, the word “subject” is used in preference to “citizen”, although the British constitutional monarchy has now lost its former political powers. Within liberal citizenship, the legal subject is the individual but also, in certain cases, the group. By their definition of certain groups as legal subjects, British, Canadian and Australian legislations are examples of codification of liberal thought.

Liberal citizenship, thus, looks as a whole less state-related—and possibly less substantial—but more flexible than republican citizenship. Although liberal theory acknowledges that, historically, there has been a link between the establishment of nation-states in Europe and the birth of the citizen, it sees that link as a functional rather than conceptual one (Habermas 1992). Consequently, it is more able to conceptualize sub-state groups than republican citizenship is, for the simple reason that citizenship is not central to the liberal citizen's identity. As opposed to republicanism, liberal thought rather easily accommodates conceptual and legal differences between citizenship and nationality.

At the collective level, liberalism acknowledges society's pluralism. Liberalism views divisions, separations, differences as the guarantees of the open functioning of society (Donegani & Sadoun 1996). It acknowledges that different identities coexist, and that these identities can give birth to different interests. An endless negotiation ensues, whereby in my quality of individual and member of a group, I ask for recognition from the others and I grant them (or do not grant them) my own recognition (Todorov 1996b). Here, it is no longer an a priori conception of universal rationality that shapes and constraints interests, but rather interests themselves that compete with each other, according to a common code of good behavior.

In the liberal perspective, individual persons remain external to the state. Through a number of civic acts (voting, paying taxes), they give the state the means to exist, while deriving a number of benefits from its existence. Citizens are not fundamentally different from private persons who defend their pre-political interests against the state (Habermas 1992). The outcome of that competition is a compromise, a consensus, a protocol which is, by definition, renegotiable ad infinitum. Liberal citizenship is consistent with the idea that law protects interests rather than values. It is more interested in laws than in the Law. Within the liberal conception of citizenship, the political society is not an organic unit, but rather the result of a procedure.

## **II – The Range and Limits of the Notion of Cultural Citizenship**

### **A – The Communitarian Critique of the Liberal and Republican Conceptions of Citizenship**

#### *1 – The Limits of Traditional Citizenship*

We are now reaching the end of the presentation of the republican and liberal conceptions of citizenship, which formed the first, shortest part of this chapter. Both conceptions of citizenship constitute what I call above “traditional citizenship”.

Traditional citizenship as presented has limits whose analysis fuels a rich debate. Isaiah Berlin’s classic distinction between negative freedom (“freedom from”) and positive freedom (“freedom to”) overlaps with the distinction between liberalism and republicanism. Each in its own way, these conceptions put the focus on individuals, without paying much attention to the functioning of collective identities.

Communitarians have directed their criticism against both conceptions’ level of abstraction and alleged incapacity to deal with de facto discriminations. The roles and representations which people associate with the whole idea of citizenship are more complex and less abstract than “pure” intellectual conceptions of citizenship have it. Especially the liberal perspective has become the target of communitarian critics. They stress that,

beyond the ideal vision of free and rational individuals, certain identities remain by and large given (man/woman, black/white, able-bodied or not, etc). Although different people experience these identities differently, it does not sound unreasonable to assume that the structuration of someone's identity has a bearing on that person's choices and preferences.

Communitarians also criticise the idea that the state ever can be the value-neutral, purely pragmatic instrument postulated, so they claim, by classical liberalism. They will emphasize, for instance, that you need to speak English in order to become an American citizen, and that it shows that the existence of shared democratic values by itself does not create a shared national identity. Another favourite example of communitarians is Quebec, where sovereigntist ideas show no sign of abating with time despite the fact that values and ways of life grow increasingly similar on both side of Canada's linguistic barrier.

In the contemporary era, there has been a general movement of extension of citizenship on the basis of communitarian critiques. The process of extension of citizenship can be seen as the progressive expansion of the political community and extension of participation in the nation-state (Pakulski 1997). While the legal rights and obligations have been put together historically as sets of social institutions, such as the jury system, parliaments, and welfare states (Turner 1997), recent theories of citizenship emphasize a new extension of the notion of citizenship.

There is an increased stress on the identity-creating role of citizenship. There is also an active discussion around the notion of cultural citizenship, linked to the recognition of identities within citizenship, and around cultural rights. Pakulski (1997), for instance, distinguishes three substreams within claims to cultural citizenship: the right to symbolic presence and visibility (against marginalisation); the right to dignifying representation (against stigmatisation); the right to propagation of identity and maintenance of lifestyles (against assimilation).

The legal order is the array of rules, laws and institutions which provide the framework of public and private life. It is that order which, first and foremost, has to be subjected to the principle of equality. Social life takes place within that framework, but it is far from being reduced to it. Its principle is not equality (in the sense of sameness), but rather freedom and recognition (we are different, better or worse, superior in some respects, inferior in others) (Todorov 1996a). Then the question of the

status of groups within a state becomes: do they partake in the legal order or in the social order? Cultural differences are a social given, whereas civic equality is an ideal inscribed in the legal system (ibid.). In order to ensure equality, differences sometimes have to become legal objects themselves. A paradox ensues: in order to guarantee the right to benign indifference which is at the root of a democratic society, one has to begin by designating those who are different and who, for that reason, are or can be discriminated against. At the risk of reification, one has to choose the categories which are entitled to protection (Lochak 1996).

These questions have been fueling an enormous body of literature in the last thirty years. The border between liberalism and communitarianism is not watertight. Although it might sound as an anathema to some, I think it is justified to consider communitarianism as a specific ramification of liberalism rather than as a wholly new conception of citizenship. Given that liberalism, more than republicanism, gives tools that enable to accommodate pluralism, its communitarian critique itself is partly informed by liberal conceptions, even if it has more prescriptive ambitions. It often tries to show that what used to be unthinkable (like the granting of certain rights) ought to become accepted and even obvious (Ferry 1992b).

## 2 – *The Emphasis on “Ethnicity” and “Culture”*

Together with the communitarian critique of the traditional conceptions of citizenship, the notions of cultural/multicultural citizenship have become highly visible today.

They get used in different acceptations. They refer to the *perception* that more and more different cultures coexist within modern states. They also refer to the *policies* which states implement in order to manage and accommodate that diversity. They also nourish an *ideology* according to which cultural identities can and should become politically mobilised, thereby laying down the foundations of a new political public space characterised by the dialogue between cultures. That ideology entails the establishment of a differentiated citizenship based upon a double system of rights, i e, general individual rights applying to all citizens, and specific collective rights applying to certain sub-state groups.

Policies of multiculturalism now occupy a central place in the public life of Australia, Canada and the United States (Hughes 1993; Schlesinger 1998). They are becoming increasingly discussed in several European countries as well. There is today a growing awareness of the intrinsic value of cultural diversity, seen not only as an inevitable fact but also, and chiefly, as a positive norm.

Whence the idea, central to liberal cultural theory, that different cultures can and should engage into a struggle—non-violent and legalistic—for political recognition. Modern liberal writers like Taylor or Kymlicka see a positive correlation between the state's willingness and capacity to accommodate different cultures and its democratic credentials. They endeavour to demonstrate that liberal thought, traditionally focusing on individuals, ought to be completed and corrected by a theory of group rights, and that such rights, in turn, are not inconsistent with the major tenets of liberalism.<sup>1</sup>

The notion that cultural diversity should be celebrated rather than deplored has become pervasive. That attitude is well summed up by Kymlicka (1995:121): "Liberals extol the virtue of having a diversity of lifestyles within a culture, so presumably they also endorse the additional diversity which comes from having two or more cultures in the same country". Although Kymlicka acknowledges that the goodness of diversity is by itself a weak case for special rights, he does not question the psychological value of cultural diversity: "Surely intercultural diversity contributes to the richness of people's lives, as well as intracultural diversity" (ibid.). Karklins (1994a) formulates the equation even more succinctly and talks about "diversity as enrichment". Thus, cultural differences are seen as good in themselves, and their promotion of cultural differences is presented as a means to an end (enrichment).

Beside celebration, the notion of domination appears like a red thread throughout liberal cultural theory. A claim frequently made is that the conflation of nationality and citizenship (itself a product of the nation-

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1 "Do most people need a secure cultural context to give meaning and guidance to their choices in life? If so, then a secure cultural context also ranks among the primary goods, basic to most people's prospects for living what they can identify as a good life. And liberal democratic states are obligated to help disadvantaged groups preserve their culture against intrusions by majoritarian or "mass" cultures". (Taylor 1994)

state) is tantamount to racism, and that a liberal state should reject that conflation: “The fact that there still exists this automatic assumption about the overlap between the boundaries of the state citizens and “the nation”, is one of the naturalising effects of the hegemony of one collectivity and its access to the ideological apparatuses of both state and civil society. This constructs minorities into assumed deviants of “the normal” and excludes them from important power resources. Deconstructing this is crucial to tackling racism” (Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1992:21-22). The idea here is that racism—in the broad sense of prejudice toward a group and subsequent discrimination of that group—is the spontaneous (conscious or not) attitude of the dominant, whereas the racism of the dominated is a defensive one.<sup>2</sup>

## **B – An Argument against Cultural Citizenship**

### *1 – The Analytical Limits of “Cultures”*

#### a – Culture as Therapy

The notion of “diversity as enrichment” is a *reductio ad absurdum*. On the one hand, it looks reasonable to assume that cultural monolithism (or non-diversity) tends to impede cultural flourishing: in society as in farming, monoculture tends to work poorly, and the worst thing that can happen to a human being, writes Lévi-Strauss (1952), is to be alone. On the other hand, it seems hard to give empirical evidence to sustain the idea that cultural diversity *has* to be enriching. How do we measure a person’s inner richness? How do we *really* know that the life of a Greek peasant is less *rich* than the life of a Swedish globetrotter? Being ourselves embedded in cultures, we have no a-cultural or metacultural means to judge the intrinsic value of cultural diversity.

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2 “Racism and the racial stereotypes it spawns are subtly interwoven in the fabric of Western society”. Given that racism is “power over”, then “no person of color can be a racist as long as white people maintain power” claims Amoja Three Rivers, co-founder of the *Accessible African Herstory Project*, in *Cultural Etiquette: A Guide for the Well-Intended*.

What we know, however, is that there are situations where cultural differences are perceived as positive, and situations where they are not. Cultures differ in different ways. The joyful mingling of people eating “ethnic” food at Malmö festival and the introduction of Russian-language street signs in Tallinn after World War II are two *very* different incarnations of cultural diversity. Cultural diversity is always context-bound. Perceptions of cultural diversity may be informed by prejudice or mutual ignorance, but they also hinge on perceptions of good and evil, which is not the same thing (Todorov 1996a).

Recognition does not proceed without judgement. Neglecting that, we are led to defend cultural practices because they happen to be just that—cultural practices. That makes little sense, unless we find it well and fine to lynch Blacks or circumcise six-year-old girls—all cultural practices in their own right, like the painting of Easter eggs. Cultural diversity is good in many cases, but the claim of its *inherent* goodness cannot be anything else than an ideological postulate.

That gets seldom acknowledged. Theories of multiculturalism take pains to either instill or hammer the notion that, *somehow*, cultural diversity is good for you. That has the effect of a priori disqualifying any position which does not consider such a celebratory enterprise as an incontestable necessity.

There is something deeply *therapeutic* about the way theories of multiculturalism conceive of culture. In so doing they fulfill a psychological need: according to Lasch (1995:213), there is now “a universal concern with the self—with self-fulfillment, and more recently with self-esteem”, and “the dominant brand of liberalism entails the plea that politics and therapy are indistinguishable” (Lasch op.cit 208). The multicultural project belongs fully in the culture of narcissism described by Lasch in his ground-breaking book of the same name. It also fits into Bruckner’s (2000) notion of *duty of happiness*, and into Muray’s notion of *hyperfestive civilisation*: a society where “celebration no longer comes as an opposition or a contradiction to daily life; it becomes daily life itself, all of it and nothing but. You can no longer tell them apart from each other” (Muray 1999:11). The categorical imperative of celebration always gets interwoven with intuitively attractive notions like recognition or self-esteem.

That comes in handy to avoid having to wonder on what basis exactly modern societies should have become reconciled with themselves—whereby the possibility of satire and derision of the multicultural project itself becomes ruled out from the start. If one no longer needs wondering *why* so many people suddenly should proclaim their collective prides in the face of one another, and *why* these prides should be entrenched in law, then there is no longer any possibility to criticise the idea that the shortcomings of existing legislation can only be remedied by *even more* legislation (Muray 1999). Endless legal fine-tuning, along the cohort of villains and victims it inevitably creates, is the continuation of celebration by other means.

But certainly cultural diversity does exist? And in a democracy, citizens—including citizens with different cultural identities—certainly need to recognize themselves as equals in the way they are treated in politics. Whence the interest of debating the relation between traditional human rights principles and minority rights. It is only fair to say that Kymlicka (1995) does make a powerful argument as to why group-differentiated rights are legitimate within a liberal paradigm. But I think the key problem with his argument is that it is too general not to rest upon fragile empirical grounds. That is symptomatic of cultural theory at large. Most of the literature on cultural diversity has been produced by sociologists or political scientists, not social anthropologists (Banks 1996; Knauff 1996). Consequently, academic debates on cultural diversity revolve around the ways and means to *accommodate* diversity in a just fashion, much more than they try to describe and explain what that diversity actually *consists of* in the first place. A vocal part of the academia seems more interested in theorising about cultural *difference* than in describing and explaining cultural *differences*. This is where the shoe pinches.

#### b – The Cumbersome Diversity of “Diversity”

Judgements on cultural diversity hinge directly on how we perceive that diversity in a certain context, and how we perceive it depends in turn on how we measure it. In order to measure diversity, we need analytical instruments. Without them, not only do we get lost in space and cannot map out cultural diversity *here and now*, but we also lose the sense of



time. Theory often gives the impression that countries have somehow become more “culturally diverse” than they used to be. Witness claims like, for instance, the one opening the back cover in Modood & Werbner (1997): “Europe has become a novel experiment in multiple, tiered and mediated multiculturalisms”. That sentence sounds straightforward enough. But it does not mean anything, because by any standards of language, religion, lifestyle or artistic creation, Europe has never been a cultural monolith. In the same vein, notice that the first sentence of *Multicultural Citizenship* reads “Most countries today are culturally diverse” because “according to a recent estimate, the world’s 184 independent states contain over 600 living languages groups, and 5000 ethnic groups. Very few countries can be said to share the same language, or belong to the same ethnonational group” (Kymlicka 1995).

As such, these figures do not prove much. We have no right to say that country X is more (or less) “culturally diverse” today than it was yesterday—let alone view that diversity as a *problem*—before having demonstrated that such is actually the case, *and demonstrated it without resorting to the false equation “one ethnic group = one culture”*.

The diversity of cultures is behind us, before us and around us. Unless we live alone on a desert island, diversity is a inescapable condition of human life (Lévi-Strauss 1952). By definition, cultural differences within a country are innumerable. In other words, *every* country has *always* been “culturally diverse”. Throughout history, different cultural traits become more or less salient and significant, socially and politically (Schnapper 1994). Citizenship supposes that that diversity can be transcended by a common political project. Sometimes the project by and large succeeds, in spite of what an outside observer may see as unsurmountable cultural differences—witness the United States, Germany, Spain, France or Switzerland. Sometimes the political project fails, although differences between groups look can paper-thin to the outsider—witness the divorce between such apparently similar people as Swedes and Norwegians in 1905.

Unsubstantiated claims to the effect that “most countries today” have somehow become *more* culturally diverse are inherently a-historical. They rest upon a fallacy of timelessness. Cultural diversity is not an essential object out there, grown big with time, and screaming for us to recognize it. It is context-bound, embedded in interactions between people in given

situations. Before trying to figure out means to, as the catch phrase goes, accommodate cultural diversity, we need to map out how, why, where, when and to whom *certain* cultural differences do make a difference.

Proponents of multiculturalism usually circumvent that requirement by, like the French say, trying to drown the fish. The a priori (rather than ex post, which would be more logical) multiplication of “cultural differences” enables one to evolve within the confines of a comfortable tautology: cultural diversity is itself diverse, period, and it is by definition a *problem* requiring a *solution* which must be formulated in terms of *rights*.

With such a starting point in the background, one will then gleefully set out and look for who has been collectively oppressed and should seek redress. For Iris Marion Young (1995) for instance, cultural differences deserving “attention” and (notice!) “possible representation” include “phenomena of language, speaking style of dialect, body comportment, gesture, social practices, values, group-specific socialisation and so on”. The key words in Young’s sentence are, of course, “and so on”. Obviously, the point for her is not to try and map out cultural cleavages existing in a given society at a given time. Young’s point is rather to accumulate theoretical criteria of “cultural difference” *from the start*, to such an extent that they will embrace everything and anything.

Such a theoretical bedrock makes it easy to “prove” that modern society consists of a kaleidoscope of ruptures between mutually oppressive micro-units, to denounce the unifying rhetoric of citizenship as a lie, and to deconstruct any historical collectivity all the way down to that ultimate of all minorities—the self (which takes us right back to what Lasch wrote about the therapeutic ambitions of current liberal theorising). And behold the glorious prospect of a Parliament in which “body comportment” would be represented.

### c – Who Does Whom in?

The same line of criticism can be applied to the other side of multicultural theory’s coin, namely its insistence on issues of domination, and on how the dominant construct the dominated into deviants from the norm. The unequal interplay between hegemonizers and deviants takes place, for instance, in the field of language. The argument goes thus: “If a specific

language is used in public life and education (and unless this language is Esperanto), it is the language of one group. Intriguingly, members of the dominant language group typically deny that this is a form of cultural dominance” (Karklins 1994a).

That statement can be criticised on several accounts. To begin with, the hypothesis of the remedial use of a “neutral” language does not hold. Esperanto would not be the language of “a group”, but there would still be people who, due to better access to educational and/or intellectual resources, master Esperanto better than others. The relation between the dominant and the dominated, the hegemonic and the hegemonised, is not unequivocal. Since it is reasonable to assume that majorities can more easily oppress minorities than vice-versa, the analytical assumption tends to be in favor of minorities from the start. By extension, there is an implicit assumption that belonging to a minority is problematic, whereas identity processes and identity maintenance are unproblematic in dominant groups (Eriksen 1993a).

It does not have to be so. The strong/weak relation often works as a *malentendu opératoire* (Bayart 1996), an operative misunderstanding, to whose complexity no single metaphor can do justice.<sup>3</sup> To be a member of a dominant culture does not exclude interest or solidarity for a dominated culture, or vice-versa. To be dominated by a culture supposes that one integrates certain aspects of that culture. This is the reason why phenomena of cultural dominance are far from being “typically denied”. There are examples of dominance that are loudly defended by the dominant, and even by the dominated. When cultural dominance is successful, it leads the dominated to look at themselves with the eyes of the dominating. Not only do the dominated begin to live with the awareness of their own inferiority, but they even defend it as something good. Such attitudes exist regardless of the “democratic” or “undemocratic”, “modern” or “archaic” character of the polity one is living in.

During modern colonisation for instance, the relations between colonisers and colonised were always ambiguous. Colonisers never were abstract

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3 “The relation between cultures never boils down to the hegemony of the strong on the weak; there is also what you may call the strength of the weak. In most cases, the winning side needs the losing side. Need entails dependency” (Todorov 1996b:299).

agents, mechanically carrying out a thought-out plan, but rather flesh-and-blood people with their representations, ambitions and dreams. Likewise, the colonised never were a homogeneous category who considered colonisers with nothing else than fear and loathing. Those of them who collaborated with the masters were not only catering to material interests, but also embodied ideals, norms and lifestyles (Bayart 1996).

Mutual hatred is not a historical given. *Time's* literary critic Robert Hughes (1993:92) stresses that “the particular feeds on the general, and vogue-words like Anglocentrism and Eurocentrism are wretchedly crude devices for describing the complex, eclectic processes by which the individual imagination and a common culture form one another, reciprocally, with much feedback and many cancellations, through the medium of language”. Therefore, he rejects as absurdly limiting “the idea that the ex-colonial must reject the arts of the ex-colonist in the interest of political change”. Memmi (1996), a Tunisian author, notices that in former English and French colonies, much of the literary production is still in the language of the colonizer. Throughout its history, Lithuania often got dominated by Poland or Russia, but Vytautas Landsbergis is both the man who gave a face to modern Lithuanian nationalism *and* an excellent, trilingual connoisseur of classic Polish and Russian cultures. That does not have to be seen as a contradiction.

## 2 – *The Ethical Danger of “Cultures”*

### a – The Transformation of “Cultures” into Legal Categories

Culture is not a *good* that gets evenly divided up between different social groups who thereby “create” or “defend” their respective “cultures”. A culture is not a stable, closed corpus of representations, beliefs and symbols that would unavoidably yield the same opinions or attitudes. Any culture finds itself in a state of interaction with its environment. Cultures are constantly (re)created through countless phenomena of hybridisation.

The crux of the matter for us here is that *intercultural encounters do not take place between cultures, but between individuals*. Such encounters are bound to be more complex than the morally satisfying theorem “group A oppresses group B”, even if patterns of domination remain visible at

a general level. Reading a society is like “scanning a mosaic. If you only look at the big picture, you do not see its parts—the distinct glass tiles, each a different color. If you concentrate only on the tiles, you cannot see the picture” (Hughes 1993:14).

Cultural identity formation results from mechanisms which are far from being always conscious or voluntary. Although notions of choice and freedom are common in actor-centered accounts of social life, far from all action gets chosen in a conscious way (Eriksen 2001:91). No amount of official classification and social engineering can reflect the complexity of individual identity formation. Neither can policy-makers entrench among the already-existing citizenry the idea that, somehow, society is a blank page destined to be colored by new impulses. People do not live in a void. Eriksen (1993a) stresses that a Turk who has lived a year in Scandinavia no longer has “his culture” intact. After a generation, unless very special circumstances make themselves felt, original cultural patterns have been even more reframed.

Besides, legally defined “cultures” are cultural artefacts themselves.<sup>4</sup> Nothing is less neutral than the devising of “ethnic categories” in a population census (Laponce 1984; Hollinger 1995). Official categories vary, and so do perceptions. Categories seen as pejorative can become attractive if the social and political context is changing.

What remains constant is the difficulty of being agnostic. If groups have a legal status, then it is hard for me *not* to belong. When ethnic diversity is positively encouraged, citizens are not only given the right to “have a culture”, but in many cases they are positively forced to adorn themselves with an ethnic label whether they want it or not (Eriksen 1993a). The

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4 In the United States for instance, on application forms and questionnaires, individuals are routinely invited to declare themselves to be one of the following: Euro-American, Asian American, African America, Hispanic and Indigeneous peoples. Hollinger (1995) calls it the ethno-racial pentagon. He notices that it is, before all, “a remarkable historical artifact, distinctive to the contemporary United States”. In Yugoslavia, the “Muslim” category was created by Tito in the 1960s. Thirty years later, in a TV programme on the French-German channel *Arte*, Huntington doctly explained the unleashing of the war in Bosnia by pointing to the Muslims’ dynamic demography, due to which Serbs had begun to fear Muslim fundamentalism.

irony of the legal recognition of *groups* is that it encloses *individuals* unto themselves (Todorov 1996:305).

The irony turns to danger when such categorisation gets used in order to “explain” attitudes and behaviour. If we expect the members of group X to think and act in a particular way—and such assumptions always loom behind categorisations—then the concrete heterogeneity of the group becomes synonymous with *anomie* (normlessness) or alienation (Bayart 1996). “Deviant” people—and there are inevitably plenty of them—do not fit in.

That creates, of course, a serious ethical problem. Unless we reject the notion of free will, we have to accept that part of human identity remains indeterminate and lies beyond the reach of any picture, stereotype or ideal-type we can construct of it. None of the “cultural identities” we ascribe to a person exhausts that person’s array of possible identifications. Nobody is reducible to a culture, or even several of them. We cannot consider that the “culture” we think we can spot in somebody determines that person’s actions. We cannot even postulate that that “culture” exists as a tangible totality (Bayart 1996). A conception that sees the person as being determined by his “culture” contradicts the ideal of free will. It thereby denies, or at least sidesteps the ethical validity of the distinction between culture and nature, between situation and determination. The notion of culture gets partly or totally thrown back into the sphere of nature, which in turn lays down the philosophical foundations of a culturalisation of the notion of race.

#### b – The Naturalisation of “Culture”

If we consider that a person is not only situated in “a culture”, but also determined by it, then it leads to the conclusion that culture is reproduced from parent to child. The defence of cultural differences, then, leads to a genealogical—in other words, race-based—conception of culture and cultural transmission. That conception leads logically to a rejection of mixed individuals: they do not fit in. Significantly, they are rejected both by the dominant and by the dominated. Todorov (1996a) notices, for instance, that transracial adoption is systematically discouraged in the United States, *including by black social workers*, who fret at the perspective

of black children raised with “white minds”. It is the logic of the ghetto.<sup>5</sup> The recognition of cultural differences in their essence of differences nourishes and legitimizes mixophobia.

Obviously, the culturalisation of race (or the racialisation of culture) may belong in the liberal conception of culture, but it does not by itself produce liberal ideology. The belief that differences of *culture* are differences of *nature* fuels a number of ideologies, liberal or not, that all insist on diversity. The essentialisation of cultural diversity provides ready-made legitimation to a new sort of dogmatism, in which minorities and academics alike take shelter behind a set of beliefs—liberal and illiberal—impervious to rational discussion (Lasch 1995). Part of the academe would like to endow inevitable internal differences in a society—of gender, race or sexual pattern—with the character of cultures, which may reasonably be discussed, but even with the character of *nationhood* (Hughes 1993), which makes sense only if we overstretch “nationhood” so much that it will embrace any kind of feeling of commonality, whereupon we must wonder why we should keep using the term “nation” at all. Conceptual haziness around “nation” has become such that it is now possible to say straight-faced that women or political scientists can be considered as nations (Sylvester 1997).

That kind of hip cultural critique is a windfall for conservative writers who will gleefully attack it as immoral or unpatriotic. Both sides entrap each other, indeed they *feed* on each other, because they rest on the same premises (only their conclusions differ). Waxing lyrical about “diversity” and fretting about “the ethnics” are both sides of the same coin.

The contemporary celebration of “cultures” contains a clear dimension of mistrust. It is first and foremost a way to take distance from people seen as different. It is a product of differentialist thinking. Distancing oneself is a logical mental reaction to one’s belief in irreducible differences

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5 Pétonnet (1986:203), an anthropologist, concludes her fieldwork among the Black inhabitants of Philadelphia with this observation: “In the last analysis, *the ghetto is nothing else than the interdiction of exogamy into the other color category. The existence of mixed people is never taken into account.* The question of color is never formulated in terms other than those of a black-white dichotomy. That dichotomy creates an insurmountable clash between the notion of color and the notion of culture” (my translation and emphasis).

between human beings. That belief breeds anxiousness, for it implies the isolation of each individual unto himself (Todd 1994). Within such a mindset, it feels intuitively safe to try and categorize differences *first* in order to either accepted or reject them *then*.

Whereby we see that there is nothing specifically right-wing or left-wing, conservative or progressive, about the culturalisation of race (Todorov 1996a). From the postulate that cultural differences are irreducible, one can derive discourses that are either heterophile (cultural differences are precious) or heterophobic (cultural differences are dangerous). The heterophile discourse hallmarks liberal theories of multiculturalism (let our mutual differences enrich us all). The heterophobic discourse characterizes theories from the New Right (let us not force the Other to learn our values, and by all means let us protect ourselves against his).<sup>6</sup>

There is no need to refer explicitly to racial, biological categories for race-based categorisations to function. All it takes is (1) the conflation of “cultures” with “ethnic groups” or “races”; (2) the idea that cultures are somehow more genuine, more real than, for instance, nations or social classes; and (3) the use of buzzwords like “respecting differences”.

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6 Consider these two quotes:

“The assimilationist project has collapsed in the face of the greater cultural distance of the migrants, their much more obvious ethnic distinctiveness, their significant numbers and their organisation in family groups and ethnic communities that claim their own cultural identity and promote the preservation of links with their countries of origin”.

“Beside the external factors [that undermine the nation-state], there are internal factors. They are linked to the ethnic, religious, cultural, social or economic homogeneity of human communities”.

The first quote is by Umberto Melotti (liberal social scientist) (1997). The second quote is by Jean-Marie Le Pen (neofascist politician) (in Aubry & Duhamel 1995). They are disturbingly similar. Both assume that one’s cultural reach is fixed and determined forever by whatever slot one is born and raised in. They also share an ontological rejection of the ideal-type of the nation-state. Such themes are the staple diet of New Right writings. “I am not a Jacobin, I do not believe in assimilation. The dream of a melting-pot as conceived by Israël Zangwill has failed in the US as well (...). It is better to approach the problem from an organic, communitarian point of view” wrote De Benoist (in Guillebaud 1996), the chief theoretician of the French New Right. In France, with the vanishing of the extreme-left in the late 1970s, differentialist theories found shelter in New Right publications, notably the journal *Éléments*. A few years later, the American left-wing journal *Telos* devoted a complete issue to the writings of De Benoist.



The combination of the three makes it possible to present mixophobia in a socially acceptable way.<sup>7</sup>

Somewhere in the process, the notion of “culture” gets watered down to the point of meaninglessness. It loses whatever stable meaning it has ever had, which in turn justifies its conflation with race. That legitimises the disastrous perception that people not only *have* cultures but, somehow, *are* cultures. The nonsensical, and genuinely *racist*, idea that a necessary link exists between a person’s physical attributes and that person’s culture becomes commonly accepted as a matter of course, albeit in a fun, friendly, Benetton-ad way, which makes the whole thing even more pernicious. The circle is closed.

Mixophobia actually looms in the word “multiculturalism” itself, which lends credence to the strange idea that one can *count* how many cultures there are in a given country. That ought to be a frightening prospect for any democratically-minded person. Mixophobia also appears in postulates that unsurmountable cultural differences exist between locals and non-locals, nationals and immigrants, Europeans and non-Europeans. Each time, the arbitrary categorisation of the different Other takes place in the name of the respect of his difference. The process is triggered as soon as the possibility of definitions is established (Chebel d’Appollonia 1996; Taguieff 1991).<sup>8</sup>

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7 Symptomatically, when the 1998 World Cup of soccer was in full swing, the French team was often called “multicultural” in the media, which nevertheless would hardly mention anything about each player’s truly *cultural* background, in terms of upbringing, instruction, values, or behaviour. Clearly, that was not the point. The point was that these men were *visibly* diverse (their skin colours ranged from very light to very dark). Therefore, they *had* to be *culturally* diverse, or at least they had to be diverse in a more fundamental way than the players of more physically homogeneous teams were.

8 Even in the most minority-friendly societies, there can be quite a lot of people who do *not* want to be systemetically and legally identified as members of minorities. For instance, one of the most virulent charges against Canadian multiculturalism comes from a Canadian of Hindi origin, who grew up in Trinidad and settled down in Toronto when he was 18. Bissoondath (1994) claims that the insertion of migrants into Canadian society is made more difficult by the multicultural rhetoric, for that rhetoric blurs the specifically *Canadian* references which migrants expect and, indeed, need to relate to in order to define their relation to Canada. He also draws attention to the fact that, among Canadians, the newly migrated ones are often those who express most attachment to the federal institutions and to the symbols of the pan-Canadian nationalism than developed itself in the latest decades. In the same vein, Modood (1997) stresses that in the United Kingdom, it is actually the minorities who show the greatest need of political and psychological clarity regarding the common national framework and symbols.

The conclusion we can draw here is that *the collective right to “have a culture” may be compatible with democratic citizenship, but only as long as that right remains secondary to the fundamental individual right not to be identified as belonging to “a culture”*. We can draw a parallel with religious freedom: it certainly supposes the right to believe in whatever god you want, but more fundamentally, it implies the right not to believe in any god at all.

## **C - So What?**

What does the above discussion tell us about how to handle questions of citizenship in the Baltic countries? Quite a lot, actually. Too much should not be made of the increased visibility of the notion of “cultural diversity” in contemporary political science theory. That notion is itself a social and cultural construction. It can give us a framework, but it can also become a smokescreen.

In part I, we discussed how journalists and academics produce knowledge about the East. Here, we need to distinguish between the mostly North American doctrinal sources of cultural citizenship and the conditions of their transfer into a European context.

Theories of cultural citizenship are mostly situated in North American history and society, whose specificities they reflect. To a European reader, the rhetoric of multiculturalism is as much rooted in a North American context as it is in ideas and scientific debates about ethnicity.

Some authors go so far as to draw parallels between the religious differentialism of the first puritan settlers, and liberal cultural theory’s everincreasing fine-tuning and endless permutations of the possible categories of identity that can be discussed. As Hughes (1993:17) puts it, “never before in history were so many acronyms pursuing identity”. According to Todd (1994), the current fad of multiculturalism suggests that American society has gone through a long ideological cycle, from the puritanism of the early settlers to today’s ethnic differentialism. The former rested upon a simple dichotomy (the Chosen and the Wretched), while the latter multiplies criteria of difference (blacks/whites, gays/straights, Anglos/Hispanics etc) and even the distinctions within them. Pu-

ritanism and multiculturalism seem to share an irrepressible need to categorize differences *first* in order to either celebrate or reject them *then*.<sup>9</sup>

Of course, to accept uncritically the idea of an express line from puritanism to multiculturalism would be to give in to culturalism itself. But neither do we need to accept as such the vision of an increasingly fragmented American society as it appears in discourses on multiculturalism. The United States also remains “one nation, after all”, as American sociologist Alan Wolfe finds. The widespread idea that American society is becoming torn by “culture wars” should be put to scrutiny. For one thing, that perception is the product of an academic life that has become increasingly fragmented itself, and where preoccupations about cultural diversity rank higher than among Americans at large. Campus quarrels masquerade easily into conceptual breakthroughs (and let us hasten to add that no country has a monopoly on that).

Theories of multiculturalism have left their North American cradle and draw increasing attention in Europe as well. The demise of Marxism as the source of inspiration of an alternative social reality has weakened its status in the social sciences as well, whence the decline of “class” as a category of analysis, and the concomitant reinvestment of academic interest—Bourdieu (1998) says libido—into “cultures”, notably “minority cultures”, which seem to have collectively replaced the proletariat as the moral spearhead and salvation incarnate of mankind.

There are several reasons to it. All are somehow linked to the intellectual and moral seduction which the whole notion of diversity exerts. Given the difficulty of explaining—let alone eradicating—phenomena like violence, poverty or urban decay, then it becomes tempting, and morally gratifying, to develop a theory which takes cultural diversity as *the* central aspect of modern democratic societies, and policies of multiculturalism as the cure to these societies’ ills. Of course, it takes a solid dose of faith in

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9 According to Hughes (who is himself Australian), “there has always been a friction between the remains of the Puritan ideology of a hierarchy of the virtuous under the immutable eye of God, and the later, revolutionary, 18th-century American conception of continuous secular development towards equality of rights which were inherent in men and not only granted by government. This friction never seems to vanish; we still feel it today” (Hughes 1993:11).

that credo to imagine, for instance, that “diversity” (rather than, say, structural unemployment or police brutality) is the most serious problem which the Black dwellers of Southcentral Los Angeles face in their daily lives.<sup>10</sup> But mapping out hard facts takes time, and anyone trying to explain them risks to obtain depressing results. With some reason, not every academic wants to follow Wacquant’s example and settle down in Chicago’s South Side in order to understand what is actually happening there. Brandishing cultural diversity instead promises a more immediate payoff in terms of time and moral satisfaction.<sup>11</sup> Regarding policy-makers, it is easier for them to grant cultural rights to arbitrarily-defined groups than to make sure every real, flesh-and-blood individual lives in decent conditions of income, health and safety. Besides, you can easily combine “diversity” with highly trendy preoccupations like spiritual quest.<sup>12</sup> And, last but not least, the notion is immensely media-friendly.

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10 In his extraordinary monograph on Los Angeles *City of Quartz*, Davis (2000) vividly explains how the Los Angeles Police Department systematically and physically prevent young blacks from entering an increasing amount of public places, whereby a widening proportion of the city’s territory becomes de facto off limits to them.

11 “Diversity ” pays off in a literal sense as well. Paradigms of social thought do not evolve in a material void. Wheels have to turn. The notion of cultural diversity has vastly spilled over the academic world where it still could be taken with a grain of salt, and has become the buzzword *cum* bread-and-butter of a plethora of trial lawyers, literary critics, activists, music producers, psychologists, multicultural training facilitators, professional busibodies, and outright cranks. There is money to be made out of instilling “sensitivity” about skin colour, gender, age, physical ability, sexual proclivities and what-not to people so far unaware that we all *must* care about these things. I recently discovered the existence of “diversity consultants” who market their “diversity career” in on-line “diversity stores”, in which managers anxious to do the right thing are warmly encouraged to order self-help books touted about as “essential to their strategic diversity planning” (I’m only quoting).

12 One recent catalogue from SAGE Publications includes a book that explains seriously that “integrating spiritual values in multicultural counselling and exploring spirituality from multicultural perspectives are synergistic and mutually reciprocal processes”. Whereby, beneath their mealy rhetoric (“mutually reciprocal”), the people from SAGE unwillingly give away the authoritarian twist of the ideology of multiculturalism: in a multicultural environment in SAGE’s sense, the possibility of skepticism, irony or even plain indifference (in the present case, indifference towards spirituality) gets ruled out. *We no longer have the choice not to care.*

Its popularity reflects the major role of North American universities in the production of social sciences, but it also reflects the tendency, visible both among North American and European elites, to think of themselves as cosmopolitan, which is no novelty. Taguieff (1996) reminds us that elites (cultural, financial, diplomatic) have not awaited the end of the XXth century to view the transition to post-nationality as an obvious proposition. Today, the educated, urban middle- and upper-middle classes that form the bulk of the West's knowledge-producing elites are especially likely to be attracted by the idea of cultural diversity, which conjures up "the agreeable image of a global bazaar in which exotic cuisines, exotic styles of dress, exotic music, exotic tribal customs can be savored" (Lasch 1995:6) at whim and without compulsory personal commitment.<sup>13</sup> *Toujours Provence*, indeed.

Then of course, when it comes to serious things, the academic and mediatic peans exalting cultural diversity leave little doubt as to where legitimate enlightenment shall continue to come from. "Diversity" remains "enriching" only within the limits set out by the celebrators, who in so doing automatically construct themselves as the sole repositories of normality. By essence, the multicultural project implies that the celebrated ones remain content with being objects of celebration.

Tellingly, collective manifestations taking place in the name of multiculturalism often rest upon cultural forms based on non-verbal communication. Cultural diversity is first and foremost something you are supposed to *participate* in, on an enthusiastic rather than reflexive mode, and at the same time as the greatest possible amount of people. In that context, not needing words is an advantage (Muray 1999). Food, music and Malmö festival are marvellous devices to promote the idea that cultural diversity is, by definition, *fun* (Muray 1991), and that the solutions to its problems are naturally uncontroversial (or would be, if it weren't for the malevolence or ignorance of hate-

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13 There is more than a coincidence between the upsurge of academic interest in "ethnicity" or "cultural studies" in the 1990s and the coming of age of a new meritocracy in America, that is, as Brooks (2000) calls them in his study, the Bobos, the bourgeois bohemians, the educated elite who have "wed the bourgeois world of capitalist enterprise to the hippie values of the bohemian counterculture".

mongers).<sup>14</sup> These cultural forms emphasise togetherness, feelings and emotions—all things with which you cannot argue. Verbal communication, by contrast, is linked to individual rationality. It always entails the risk of dissent and misunderstanding.

The above need not be a problem for the social sciences. But that suggests that the adaptation of North American and European debates on cultural citizenship to the Baltic context cannot be straightforward. A number of mismatches can occur.

### 1 – *The Power of Guilt*

Some mismatches are linked to the role of guilt. The whole field of “cultural studies” sounds largely permeated by the guilt that the white, protestant settler societies of North America and the South Pacific derive from the awareness of having been built on the plight of their native inhabitants. Among them, the American guilt is made worse by the memory of Black slavery. Repentance has become a dominant motive in the political and social debates of these societies. One seeks to figure out who has been the victim of what, and who should collectively apologize to whom. That effort takes many guises, from legal suits about territorial rights to aesthetic fads like the idealisation of Aborigine athletes at the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney. The celebration of diversity is first and foremost an immense act of collective contrition from people who grant themselves the pleasure of being generous after having had the pleasure of being dominant, in the hope of securing—cherry on top—the forgiveness of their victims and the comfort of their souls by the same token.

That effort has its own justifications. Its generalisation suggests that it fulfills a genuine collective need. But what I want to stress here is that,

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14 I take the word *fun* in Bruckner’s (2000:113) sense, as “an instrument of selection with which we can, within daily life, isolate a pure kernel of pleasure, neither too strong nor too weak, and devoid of any negative consequences for us.” In that sense, everything can become *fun*, be it a journey, a relationship, a religion or a political engagement, as long as you don’t get your fingers burnt. “The *fun*”, Bruckner says, “erects discreet walls and creates an aseptic atmosphere in which I can enjoy the world without granting it the right to hurt or punish me”.

no matter how painful the building of European nations has been, European nationhoods are by and large bereft of such a dimension of original sin. First, as opposed to the United States, European nations have not been constructed on the basis of a geographical and moral/religious rupture. Whatever ruptures did take place, like the foundation of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1949 or the French Revolution, were informed by the rejection of certain aspects of the national past, not by the ambition to build a City on the Hill beyond the ocean.

Secondly, as opposed to all the white settler societies of North America and the South Pacific, European societies are dominated by—for lack of a better word—their own “natives”. They will likely remain so for a long time to come, xenophobic noises notwithstanding. Even the European minority populations that attract the interest of ethnicity theorists are often largely incorporated into the state’s political and economic structures, and they are no more nor less indigeneous than the majority (Banks 1996). One would be hard put to draw a line between native Scots and non-native Brits, or between native Occitans and non-native French. Some inhabitants of Europe *do* come from other parts of the world, but their relation to their host countries cannot be conceptualised in the same terms either, because European societies have never seen themselves as settler societies from the start.

Consequently, as a motivation for debate and action, guilt cannot function in Europe exactly the way it does in the settler societies of North America and the South Pacific. As far as the Baltic countries are concerned, my personal experience is even that, if there are such things as three Baltic “national characters”, they most emphatically do *not* include the feeling that there was something inherently sinful in the birth of the nation. Quite the opposite: one rather hears claims that Baltic nations sacrificed themselves for the West and thus enjoy a moral edge over it. Wishing away the Baltic peoples’ historical experience won’t do. As opposed to what has taken place in Canada or the Netherlands, the “diversity” now extant in the Baltic states has never come from a conscious and voluntary choice of Baltic voters over the decades. As a whole, the historical experience linked to that “diversity” has not been a very happy one. And many Balts may find the distinction between Soviet and Russ-

ian mostly rhetorical. If the words “Russia” or “Russians” do elicit a variety of reactions among Balts, feelings of historical guilt do not precisely rank high among them.

## 2 – Translation, Treason

Other potential mismatches derive from differences between how theories of multiculturalism relate to the word “culture”, and how inhabitants of Central and Eastern Europe do. Words do not travel lightly. We have to make our way through a complex overlap between analytical terms which are intended to be universally applicable, and everyday or folk terms which are bounded by their cultural context (Banks 1996). Since analytical terms are bounded by their context as well, it is important to distinguish between categories of analysis and categories of practice, and to remain aware of which is which.

Culture is a thorny concept (Eriksen 2001). Theories of multiculturalism are informed by a specific conception of culture that inches towards a notion of “societal culture”. It includes both the idea of way of life and the notion of visions, values and ideas, and their political relevance. The following lines by Iris Marion Young (1995:183) provide us with a good synthesis of that conception: “People necessarily and properly consider public issues in terms influenced by their situated experience and perception of social relations. Different social groups have different needs, cultures, histories, experiences and perceptions of social relations which influence their interpretation of the meaning and consequences of policy proposals and influence the form of their political reasoning”.

That conception differs strongly from the German word *Kultur*, most famously analysed by Elias in *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation* and Dumont in *Essais sur l'individualisme*. Elias shows how the German middle-class identified *Zivilisation* with politeness and civilised social behaviour (ie, the opposite of barbarity), while it saw *Kultur* as belonging in the realm of *das rein Geistige*, ie, the purely spiritual realm of genius and creativity (Donskis 1998).

The French word *culture* is different as well. It is closer to the XIXth acception of the term, which English tends to render as “high culture”, works of the human mind. That conception is closer to the Latin ety-



mology, in which “culture” is actually a verb (*colere*), not a substantive: it is something you “cultivate”, something you *do*, rather than something you *have*, let alone *are*. The French word is informed further by a conception of culture which, in line with the rationalism of the Enlightenment, makes a robust distinction between culture and nature: man differs from animals by his rational capacity to tear himself from ignorance, superstition and natural embeddedness (whereby situations do not become determinations) and to transmit his experiences to future generations (Ferry 1992b).

In general, theories of multiculturalism pay little attention, if any, to the conception of culture-as-rationality, which might sound too strongly linked to classic republicanism. They also tend to overlook the conception of culture as “high culture”, whose relation to democracy is not clear. Humanities do not necessarily instill faith in democratic values.<sup>15</sup> Literature and arts in general are not “a nice normalising course of treatment whose purpose is to guide and cuff us into becoming better citizens of whatever republic we are reading in” (Hughes 1993). It is pointless to try and judge them in terms of liberal virtues.<sup>16</sup> There is no clear link

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15 Historically, one would be hard put to establish a correlation between the liberal character of societies and periods of cultural flourishing. Socially, that kind of “culture” tends to be private and isolated rather than public and collective. It finds in itself its own justification (Fumaroli 1992:133). Ethically, the status of high culture is depressingly ambiguous. A large part of the European intelligentsia has had a liking for fascism and Stalinism. George Steiner (1973:40) finds it “derisory to try and build a theory of culture that does not take into account the terror mechanisms which led seventy million people to death in Europe and in Russia in the first half of the twentieth century”.

16 That remains a permanent temptation, though. But viewing cultural works as possible instruments of social therapy gets us promptly enmeshed in quicksands of confusions between the *identity* of creators, the *identity* of consumers, the *meaning* of cultural works, and the *function* of cultural works (Schneider 1993). The classic notion of culture supposed a distinction between reality and representation, or between works of art and the artist’s life. The notion of culture-as-therapy blurs that distinction, which in turn justifies measures like the implementation of racial quotas in certain Hollywood blockbusters—the rationale being here that seeing Mel Gibson with a black colleague in *Lethal Weapon IV* has edifying virtues on people, and thereby contributes to make the spectators, the film, America and the world better. What gets neglected here, of course, is that *Lethal Weapon IV* has no bearing whatsoever on the concrete life circumstances of black Americans.

between cultural level and moral conscience, let alone democratic credentials (Bruckner 1990; Kallifatides 1996).

A gap between theory and practice opens itself here, because the conception of “culture” underlying contemporary theories of cultural citizenship is not strongly anchored in the languages currently used in the Baltic states. Instead, these languages are informed by conceptions of culture that hover closer to the German conception (culture as *Bildung*) and to the French conception (culture as works of the human mind). In Russian, “culture” is first and foremost “high culture”. The Russian adverb *kulturna*, like the Latvian *kulturali*, means more or less “in a civilised manner”, while the adjective *kulturny* rather describes somebody who is “cultivated”. Lithuanian distinguishes between *kultura* (close to “high culture”) and *išsilavinimas* (meaning rather instruction, erudition). Estonian makes a comparable distinction between *kultuur* and *haritus*.

The conception of culture as “way of life”, or “values, visions and ideas”, which is the bedrock of theories of cultural citizenship, is not dominant in the Baltic states. Rather, the conception of culture as *Bildung* or “high culture” has been highly instrumental in the construction of Baltic nationhoods. It was also operative in mental resistance to communism during Soviet times as we shall see in Chapter IV. Gellner’s works on nationalism show that the Central and Eastern European nations created in the XIXth century were not created in order to protect “ways of life”. They were created through the construction and diffusion of a “high culture”, first and foremost by means of a national language. When Anderson (1991:71) depicts a “golden age of vernacularising lexicographers, grammarians, philologists and litterateurs”, he describes a literary awakening in which culture differs a lot from the sort of “culture” we think of when we talk about cultural diversity.

Our categories of analysis are not necessarily categories of practice. That does not only apply to “culture”. If I read or write in my mother tongue, the word *ethnique* is so rarely used in it that I may not even have to debunk it in the first place. Likewise, “community” looks straightforward enough in English, and gets easily used in everyday speech, but it is a notoriously hard nut for translators to crack, and it would be misleading to believe that Vilnius consists of “communities” the way Los Angeles,

California does.<sup>17</sup> I hardly dare think of my perplexity if I had to lecture on “gender” to an Estonian audience, whose language is so perfectly non-gendered that it has the same word (*tema*) for “he” and “she” (and even for “it”, which suggests a commendable lack of sexism as well). And when all is said and done, we still cannot assume that the words “cultural diversity” will ring the same way to a Canadian academic enjoying sushi in Toronto and to a Latvian housewife who, in Soviet days, got yelled at in the stores because she spoke bad Russian. Latvia is indeed “culturally diverse”, but saying that does not make our knowledge about Latvian society advance an inch. All the inhabitants of the former Soviet Union have been receiving whatever “culture” they got, through (depending on people’s dates of birth) the pre-Soviet, Soviet and post-Soviet system of education, cultural establishments and mass media—not to mention the people who currently live there but were not born in the USSR. Cleavages within that “culture” are anybody’s guess. If we set out to find “diversity”, we will find it. But we cannot postulate that, all other things being equal, we can apply the same categories to Latvia’s diversity as to that of, say, Ontario. It is rather something that we have to demonstrate, because “all other things” are seldom equal.

### 3 – *The Confusion between Culture and Ethnicity*

Another example of potential mismatch derives from how the frequent use of the vocabulary of “culture and “ethnicity” tends to inject primordialism in the notion of culture.

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17 “Community” lacks satisfying equivalents in French and German. *Communauté* does not always work, and *Gemeinschaft* gets quickly problematic too (“Schon die Übersetzung des Begriffs “community” in “Gemeinschaft” ist problematisch, da in Nordamerika mit “community” völlig andersartige Traditionen und sozialkulturelle Verhältnisse erfasst werden. Kommt hinzu, dass in Deutschland der Begriff der Gemeinschaft diskreditiert ist und negative Assoziationen weckt” (Rieger 1993)). In *City of Quartz*, Davis (2000) stresses that the notion of “community” in Los Angeles refers first and foremost to a neighbourhood that is homogeneous in terms of *race*, *class* and, above all, *property value*. He emphasizes that the most powerful social movement in Southern California today is that of well-off property owners set on upholding the reputation and value of their neighbourhood. It is a minority seldom focused on in cultural theory.

Broadly, two conceptions of ethnicity exist. The first conception, the *primordialist* one, views ethnicity and ethnicity-induced patterns of behaviour as essential aspects of human nature. The need for ethnic identity is somehow in our genes, like sleep or hunger. In other words, the primordialist conception of ethnicity calls for a sociobiological approach of ethnic phenomena. The theories of Van den Berghe, for instance, rest upon the notion of family nepotism: according to him, individuals have a natural tendency to favor their relatives, which leads them to behave in an egocentric and ethnocentric fashion. Society and culture are but the results of the sum of genetically induced individual behaviours. Likewise, Geertz claims that the primordial links of ethnicity have a natural origin rather than a social one. According to him, the chief aspect of ethnicity is people's desire to belong to no other ethnic group than their own. That school of thought has been amply criticised. It has been noticed, for instance, that Van den Berghe is unable to produce much in the way of evidence. All in all, the primordialist conception of ethnicity does not retain much of a following today.

The second conception of ethnicity hallmarks *constructivist* theories of ethnicity. These theories share the idea that ethnicity is not a given, but a result of social and political processes. Lomaniene (1994:25) gives a good minimal definition of constructed ethnicity: "the particular form used by a group of people, called ethnic community, for communication in the broadest sense of the word, elaborated in the long run of shared history". From that starting point, constructivist theories approach ethnicity from a variety of perspectives. Some insist on the objective aspects of ethnicity (how ethnicity works), others on its subjective aspects (why it works). Certain focus on changes in ethnicity. Others are more static and focus on ethnicity in a certain time and a certain place.

We should retain from constructivist theories the necessity to make a robust distinction between *ethnicity* and *culture*. Cultural difference between two groups is not the decisive feature of ethnicity (Eriksen 1993). Cultural boundaries are not clear-cut, nor do they necessarily correspond with "ethnic" boundaries. Ethnicity is essentially an aspect of a relationship, not the property of a group. Ethnicity is based on a systematic distinction between Them and Us. If there is no such distinction, there is no ethnicity (Eriksen op.cit).

In practice, the distinction is not that clear-cut and binary. People tend rather to think in terms of "more alike" and "less alike", according to

different criteria of difference and similarity (Banks 1996; Eriksen 1993). Ethnicity is constituted through social contact. It entails the establishment of both Us-Them contrasts (dichotomisation) and a shared field for interethnic discourse and interaction (complementarisation) (Eriksen op.cit). Only in so far as cultural differences are perceived as being important, and are made socially relevant, do social relationships have an ethnic element. *Only when cultural differences make a social difference do they contribute to the creation of ethnicity.* They do not *have* to make a difference. In other words, there are many situations in which ethnicity does not “happen”. When and how ethnic identities become relevant is not governed by any kind of theoretically or morally consistent necessity. It is first and foremost an empirical question (Eriksen op.cit).

This having been said, we understand more easily why the “ethnic diversity” of Central and Eastern Europe sometimes gets misunderstood. Before 1940, the word “race” did not have the suspect overtones it has today. Several ethnologists in the 1920s and 1930s set out to describe the specifically physical traits that characterised the different populations of the area. All point to the conclusion that physical differences between Central European populations are either inexistent or negligible, including in instances where some distance would be expected, like for instance between Rumanians and Hungarians. When it comes to physical characteristics, what plays a role is not (no matter how we define them) “ethnicity” or “culture” but, quite simply, geography: one tends to look like one’s closest neighbours, regardless of the place where the state border happens to be at a given time (Michel 1995). Political borders within Central Europe have shifted considerably in the last centuries. As Applebaum (1994) aptly puts it in her beautiful introduction to *Between East and West*, “For a thousand years, the geography of the borderlands dictated their fate (...). Even now, a spy running from Warsaw to Kiev would find nothing natural to obstruct him (...). The invasions came and subsided, each time leaving traces: ideas about architecture and literature and religion, words and idioms, boys with black eyes or girls with blond hair”. Add a few centuries of intergroup marriages, successive policies of russification, germanisation or other -isations, and you arrive to the fairly straightforward conclusion that the notions of, for instance, Lithuanian or Polish *races* do not make sense.

Yet, the implicit racialisation of these and other national categories appears like a red thread in all the writings that make a systematic,

uncritical use of the adjective “ethnic”. This is because the fundamental distinction between primordialism and constructivism often gets overlooked, at the expense of constructivism. The notion of ethnicity, popularised in 1963 by Glazer and Moynihan, quickly reached outside the province of academe and began living a life on its own, most conspicuously in the world of media and entertainment. Banks (1996:161) notices for instance that in Britain, although “the term *ethnic* is not so frequently used in popular speech and the term *ethnicity* hardly at all”, journalists nevertheless “tend to use the words *race* and *ethnic* fairly interchangeably” (op.cit:163). The expression *ethnic group* seems to have become the politically correct way of saying *race*, and a rhetorical buzzword that injects the idea of absolute, timeless differences between people (Allmang 1999). During the war in Bosnia, the phrase *ethnic cleansing*, “employed by all parties in the conflict, and reported as such by the media, progressed from being a shocking new term requiring a definition to being an accepted fact” (Banks 1996:170-1). Likewise, although phrases like *ethnic food* or *ethnic music* are nonsensical and even a contradiction in terms, they have popularized an acceptance of “ethnic” in which the term becomes an “all-purpose adjective to mean exotically different” (Banks op.cit:162).

All the above terms rest on primordialist conceptions of ethnicity that seldom get acknowledged. The same happens in academic writing. Wilson (1996), for example, ignores the distinction between primordialism and constructivism when he states that “ethnic clashes are the cause of several full-scale civil wars in the former Yugoslavia, some of the former USSR republics, and African countries such as Liberia, Rwanda and Angola. Ethnic conflicts are the source of terrorism and near civil wars in Northern Ireland, Lebanon, Israel and India. They fuel separatist feelings in Quebec, Corsica and Scotland”.

Notice, first, the flexibility of a conception of ethnicity that enables to lump such widely differing societies together. Notice, more significantly, how Wilson makes of ethnicity the explicit *source* of conflict. That idea is widespread. Kymlicka (1995) opens *Multicultural citizenship* with the claim that “5 000 ethnic groups” currently live in the world’s 180-odd states, and that these groups “increasingly clash” over a range of issues, to the point that “ethno-cultural conflicts have become the most common source of political violence in the world”. When Kymlicka adds

that “finding morally defensible and politically viable answers” to these problems is “the greatest challenge facing democracy today”, he is not only pleading for his own chapel (who doesn’t?). He also suggests that the disputation is over: the world is fraught with primordial ethnic conflict, “ethnic groups lie in wait for one another, nourishing age-old hatreds and restrained only by powerful states. Remove the lid, and the cauldron cauldron boils over” (Bowen 1996).

The phrase “ethnic conflict” has become “a shorthand way to speak about any and all violent confrontations between groups of people living in the same country”, which has the effect of categorising these confrontations as facts of nature (Bowen 1996). It entrenches the idea that there is something inevitable about the mutual animosity displayed by certain groups.<sup>18</sup> Yet, both empirical evidence and elementary anthropology contradict the claim that ethnicity *causes* conflict (Lebiez 1991; Bayart 1996). There are certainly examples of conflicts whose protagonists claim to know who they are, who they are killing, and that this by itself justifies the killing. However, in the last analysis, as Bowen (1996) stresses it, “it is fear and hate generated from the top, and not ethnic differences, that finally push people to commit acts of violence” (see also Bayart 1996). It was widely believed in France until not long ago that Germans had a natural urge to agress their neighbours. If we take the few dozens of—let us call them so for the sake of the discussion—“ethnic conflicts” happening in the world today, and compare that figure with Kymlicka’s “5000 ethnic groups” currently living on the planet, we realize that, in their immense majority, “ethnic groups” do *not* naturally clash with each other—which suggests that when they actually do, it is not a visitation of fate. Should the Russian army try to invade the Baltic states again, the ensuing violence would most emphatically *not* be an “ethnic conflict”, although many media would promptly call it that way.

That being said, we can, of course, use “ethnic” as a shortcut. When

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18 Witness, for instance, the still widespread idea that ethnicity enables us to approach the “true” essence of African societies, while notions of nation or state, generally dismissed as superficial leftovers from colonisation, do not. And yet, research on pre-colonial Africa suggests with increasing clarity that many of the current African “ethnic groups” had no equivalent before the colonial era, and actually result from classifications done by colonial administrations themselves (Bayart 1996).

looking at today's Latvia for instance, we can use *ethnic Russian* as a shorthand way to categorize a person who, in Soviet times, was officially classified as a *Soviet citizen of Russian nationality*. However, labelling them "ethnic Russians" tells us nothing about these persons' current political status: they may be Latvian citizens, Russian citizens, citizens of other states, or permanent resident non-citizens of Latvia (also a legal category). Neither is the "russianness" of Latvia's "ethnic Russians" an immutable social given, let alone an essential quality, or a principle of explanation. Some got classified as "Russians" by the Soviet regime although they saw themselves as something else (Latvians for instance, albeit Latvians afraid of emphasising their latvianness). Or they may see themselves as "Russians", but of a specific kind, different from Russia's Russians. Likewise, in neighbouring Lithuania, during the last Soviet census (in 1989), 2 % of the officially registered "Russians" indicated, not Russian, but Lithuanian as their mother tongue (Kolstø 1996a). Who are they? The expression "ethnic Russians" injects primordialism where there should be none, and entrenches the false perception that the question of the construction of the identity of these "Russians" has already been solved, whereas it is an ongoing process.

The same kind of reasoning can be applied to other groups too. In its 1997 edition, the *UN Report on Human Development in Latvia* stresses that, even today, "quite often [registered] ethnicity does not coincide with other ethno-demographic indicators, particularly native language. According to the 1989 census (where ethnicity was not recorded from passport entries but was self-reported by respondents), the native language of 10,1 % of the population of Latvia was different from their ethnicity" (UNDP 1997:50).

Comparable observations can be made about Estonia and Lithuania. The "ethnic" aspect of, for example, the "ethnic Poles" living in Vilnius is neither an essential quality (they would be "ethnic" the way they have two eyes) nor a sufficient explanatory principle of political behaviour ("ethnics" are mostly supposed to be oppressed when they have little power, and to oppress when they have lots of it). We may certainly ponder on whether or not the *ethnic Polish community of Lithuania* is treated justly by the Lithuanian state, but only after we have made it clear that these persons are not unequivocally *Polish*, do not necessarily constitute a *community*, have not always been of Lithuania, and that *Lithuania* itself is not an unproblematic word.



Primordialism also appears, for instance, in the post-1989 academic rediscovery of religious cleavages as explanatory factors in politics. For instance, Russian orthodoxy is at times put forth as a reason why Russians would be democratically unfit, whereas Balts allegedly enjoy better democratic potential by virtue of their belonging in Western Christendom. Yet, Lomaniene (1994:25) stresses that Russians deported to Lithuania by the Czar in the XIXth century are people of a different culture than Russia's Russians.<sup>19</sup> It would be impossible, and indeed pointless, to decide where these Russians' "russianness" stops and where their "lithuanian-ness" begins.

Another example is how Lithuanian catholicism has been used as a means of explaining why Soviet communism did not catch on in Lithuania. The trouble with such explanations is that they artificially homogenise heterogeneous units and ascribe them a necessary political meaning. Lithuanian catholicism is both a relatively new phenomenon (domestic paganism was alive and well in Lithuania as late as the XVIIIth century) and an heterogeneous, syncretic faith informing a wide array of cultural practices, none of which *by itself* leads to adopting or rejecting specific political values (Greimas & Zukas, 1993). "Traditional Lithuanian culture", like other "traditional cultures", is compatible with an infinity of kinds of political organisation. None of the codifications of Lithuanian culture, Latvian culture and Estonian culture excludes democratic or undemocratic expressions. Rather than explaining, these cultures demand themselves to be explained. The types of political regimes Balts live under are historically contingent, not culturally necessary.

Now what? At this point, it is hard to escape the impression that the word "ethnic" often creates more problems than it solves, both as a category of analysis and as a category of practice. Unfortunately, the notion has become more or less, as the hideous French neologism has it, *incontournable* in much recent scholarship about the part of the world I am interested in. It is hard to talk about such things without using the vocabulary that dominates the social sciences today and somehow ma-

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19 "Even when they sustain the main ethnic symbols of their culture for the most important events, they change in the very simple details of everyday behavior (...). Nobody can decide whether it's good or bad. That's just the way it is".

king propaganda for it. In some concrete instances, cultural differences do make a difference, but at least, let us not mix up the word with the thing, the label with the object, the cause with the effect.

As such, a catch-all expression like “ethnic diversity” does not mean anything unless we explain what that specific diversity consists of. In any case one cannot reason as if citizens were according to “their” cultural corpus only, nor as if they were blank pages. Human beings are flexible, but not infinitely. We need to reject both primordialism (explaining political practices by referring to allegedly immutable cultural factors—an explanation from below) and utilitarianism (explaining political practices by referring to the manipulation of emotions—an explanation from above) (Bayart 1996). Neither primordialism nor utilitarianism can easily accommodate the interplay of individual fears, ignorance, preferences, calculations, desires and generousities. Nobody is “ethnic” by virtue of intern properties, and nobody *is* a “majority” or a “minority” either, let alone a “culture”. People have multiple, incomplete and fragmented identities, on which society acts not only as a constraint, but also as a resource. Studies of identity involve categorisations of individuals who *putatively*—not all the time, not everywhere—share a given identity. Designations of identity are acts of power: by definition, the one who designates is superior to the one who gets designated. When making use of these designations, let us at least be aware of who created them (be it policy-makers, legislators, scholars or others), and why.

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## CHAPTER III

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### Experiencing Citizenship

As we saw in the preceding chapter, citizenship—be it in its republican, liberal or cultural conceptions—has elements of permanence, but also elements of creation. Both in theories and on the field, it results from the synthesis of heterogeneous elements, new and old. The actual practices through which people experience and exercise citizenship are ambivalent. They do not boil down to a question of high or low political maturity. Far from being “disenchanted”, modern polities contain an array of rites that give content and meaning to the imagined community (like the act of voting, which formulates the identity of the citizen). Civic virtues do not exist in a void. Their good use implies that they are linked to strong social and affective identifications (Taguieff 1996).

The question, therefore, is not so much whether democratic citizenship suits “post-communism” (see chapter I) or “Baltic cultures” (see chapter II), than how Latvians, Estonians and Lithuanians adapt it, reformulate it, with innovations and cancellations, on a path bound to be more complex than a straight line from A to B. These societies are transforming themselves very quickly, and not in a homogeneous way, so our evidence is often contradictory (Volgyes 1995). Baltic societies are anything but “apathetic”. We need to look at the concrete operations by which social actors conflictually produce their history, by defining themselves both in relation to their perception of the past and their conception of the future.

In this chapter, we take some distance from the three major theories of citizenship discussed in the previous chapter, and focus instead on how citizenship can get concretely exercised and experienced. At this point, we realize that, although we may continue to draw insights from already-existing theories, there is hardly a synthesis to reconcile these conceptions and provide us with a ready-made array of component parts whose ad-

dition would result in an ideal, “already-there” citizenship, the way a combination of bricks and cement yields a wall. But at least we can find a red thread to organize our theoretical object. In the present case, the red thread is the theory of the relationship between citizenship and identity built by Duchesne (1997). She conducted non-directive interviews with 38 persons, aged between 19 and 69, residing in Paris and around it. The fields of representations of each person were then analyzed and classified according to a two-dimensional matrix, which then yielded two models of citizenship, called the Legacy and the Scruples (*l'héritage et les scrupules*).

These models can be shortly described as follows. The Legacy model gives a central role to representations of national history. In the Legacy, the citizen is the historically- situated and -aware individual. The feeling of belonging is seen as natural, as given. The political community is organic rather than contractual. The link between the individual and the nation is not unlike a family link. Civicness is a duty. The Scruples model derives from a more individualistic vision of the world. In the Scruples, the citizen is the part of the individual that turns itself toward the collectivity. The Scruples rest upon an opposition between the individual and the collective dimension of human existence, between one’s “essential” dimension (being human) and one’s social dimension, which entails dependence and thus tends to negate one’s individuality. Civicness, here, is a matter of choice. It entails a challenge: through political participation, the citizen tries to “enter” the polity and to contribute to its transformation. At the same time, in so doing, the citizen risks losing his/her capacity to remain autonomous and open to others. For the Scruples, the links between citizens are contingent, constructed and fragile.

Tempting as it looks, we should not perceive the Legacy as identity-bound and primordialist, and the Scruples as rational and artificial. *Both models generate identity, and both have a certain rationality.* They inform and organize the process by which the individual constructs himself in relation to other individuals and groups. They address the individual’s need to give meaning and permanence to his existence. The Legacy and the Scruples are simultaneously antagonistic and complementary. Neither can, on its own, generate the meaningfulness and the permanence of being that people seek. Consequently, the individual is led to draw resources both from the Legacy and the Scruples. *No individual participates of one model only.*

Of course, the conciliation of these two visions generates logical problems, to which there is, by definition, no fully satisfying solution. However, the contradictions of citizenship need not be seen as anomalies. Citizenship is context-bound, and neither political theories nor ideologies are able to offer the definitive answer to the problem of the links between the individual and the collectivity. Like democracy or nationhood, citizenship is rooted partly in ideals that cannot be realised fully except in totalitarian thought. Consequently, public space is never defined once and for all in law. It is a dynamic field. There is presumption of public space each time something is taken away from private exchange and becomes opened to all: the polity no longer given (Fraisie 1991). The theory of the Legacy and Scruples has the advantage of focusing on individual experiences of citizenship while giving some theoretical latitude as to the levels at which these experiences take place. As said in the introduction of this thesis as well as at the beginning of chapter II, citizenship as well as identity are processes rather than states of things. They are, first and foremost, something which *happens*. In this chapter we shall look at the micro- and macrolevels at which citizenship “happens”

## **I – Microlevel**

The relationship between two persons is both “the smallest building-block of society” (Eriksen 2001:49) and “the smallest possible setting of citizen action” (van Gunsteren 1998:39). As mentioned in Chapter II, citizenship is a means of organizing plurality. However, as our theoretical overview made it plain, conceptions of citizenship—republican, liberal or cultural—generally start at the level of the group rather than at the level of the individual. As van Gunsteren (*ibid.*) rightly mentions, they “begin by observing that there are different groups and categories of people in society: races, classes, genders, nations, religions, professions, political parties”.

And yet there is a case for starting at a very basic microlevel, namely what van Gunsteren (*ibid.*) calls “the experience of plurality of minimally two individuals whose paths in life cross”. As we saw at the beginning of Chapter II, citizenship is related to identity, and therefore to human activity. What citizenship means for individuals depends on how they are willing and able to exercise it. In thinking of how people enter the

public sphere and participate as citizens, we cannot consider them as “fully formed subjects with settled identities and capacities” (Calhoun 1994b:23). Identity is always project, not settled accomplishment (Calhoun op.cit 27).

As we saw in the preceding chapter, citizenship is not all there is to identity, but it cannot be seen as an identity among others either. Citizenship supposes that the individual has, if need be, the possibility of taking a meta-position allowing him to move in and out of identities, or between different identity levels, without getting trapped in any of them (we saw that therein laid the central weakness of the conception of cultural citizenship). Citizenship is intimately linked with the individual capacity to, if not reject, at least take some distance from the givens which exist in every society (van Gunsteren 1998). Among these social givens are notions pertaining to marriage and to language, which we now shall examine in turn.

## **A – Assimilation Versus Segregation**

The question of the emergence of the state lies at the core of the preoccupations of both political philosophy and anthropology. The latter tends to stress that political power is something that has emerged incrementally, rather than something that was created (Abélès 1990). In contrast with political philosophy, to which notions of pact, of covenant, of *rupture* with prepolitical forms are so central, political anthropology stresses fundamental *continuities*, for instance the one between power within family structures and power within states.<sup>1</sup>

The acquisition of attitudes and behaviour of the host culture is the process commonly known as assimilation (Banks 1996). Current discussions of national identities often contain a normative rejection of assimilation, and a concomitant defence of integration instead: while the idea of assimilation entails that individuals somehow “give up” their identities in order to enter the larger polity, the idea of integration supposes a

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1 In the 1920s for instance, one of the founding fathers of the discipline, Malinovski, turned the myth of the noble savage upside down and denounced the “false archaism” that governed that notion. Political anthropology insists that specifically political forms of organisation exist in “primitive” societies, and in turn that “modern” societies are still imbued with premodern traits.

greater tolerance towards non-mainstream collective identities, and postulates that people can and should be able to enter the polity while keeping as much of their identity as they see fit. Eriksen (1993b:335) defines integration as "*deltakelse i felleskapets institusjoner, kombinert med opprettholdelse av gruppidentitet og kulturelt særpreg*". Integration thus emphasizes the inherent value of *choice*, while assimilation tends to ignore it.

However, the increased stress on integration at the expense of assimilation tells us little about the way people actually relate to each other in the wider society. Phenomena of group aggregation or group disaggregation are only partly informed by conscious motives, let alone ideologically or morally consistent ones. There is no given link between, on the one hand, ideological proclamations of tolerance of human diversity and, on the other hand, actual acceptance of human differences. Conscious representations can contradict deeply-held values or concrete social behaviour. Individual identity formation obeys processes that are only partly voluntary and which are too complex to fit under a single heading. Neither is it possible to fine-tune such processes from the top. Consequently, policy-making in that domain acts rather at the margins, and is not likely to be effective if it finds no relay in society at large. Referring to Elster, Taguieff (1996) suggests that wanting to carry out integration is like wanting to sleep, wanting to be free, or wanting to forget. Integration can only succeed as the secondary and temporary outcome of actions aimed at other ends.

### *1 – Exogamy*

The study of kinship is a major topic in anthropology (Eriksen 2001). Human societies are permanently criss-crossed by processes of unification and processes of fragmentation, and these processes are mostly singular. The "integration" of Cubans in Miami is not the same thing as the "integration" of Sri Lankans in Oslo.

Anthropologists generally consider that the rate of exogamy (defined as the percentage of marital unions entered by migrants, their children and grandchildren, with members of the host society) is a good indicator of assimilation or segregation. Above a certain rate, exogamy leads to a dilution of the immigrant population into the host society. Under that rate, endogamy remains predominant, which in turn consolidates the group in an enclave (Todd 1994).

In a sense, all human groups are both endogamous and exogamous to varying degrees (Eriksen 2001). All have conceptions about what kind of people it is “more OK” or “less OK” to marry. These conceptions evolve slowly. They continue to have effects in societies which have gone through processes of modernization (Eriksen 2001). Phenomena like intergroup marriage or language shifts evolve over generations, not years, electoral mandates or academic fashions. Taking them seriously enables us to take some welcome distance from discursive practices or ideological shifts. Rather than focusing on what people *say* they are, such indicators give us an idea about what people actually *do*.

In the long run, the evolution of intergroup marriage tends to evolve toward either assimilation or segregation. In other words, when it comes to exogamy, as opposed to one of the major tenets of cultural studies, *there is no stable “third way” between assimilation and segregation*. Balanced situations tend to be temporary.

That does not entail that we should dismiss the notion of integration altogether. As the third “type” of relationship between majority and minority alongside assimilation and segregation, integration refers to participation in the shared institutions of society, combined with a *certain* maintenance of group identity and *some* degree of cultural distinctiveness (Eriksen 2001). In most empirical cases, we find a context-varying combination of assimilation, segregation and integration. Thereby, we can retain integration as one of the general sociological concepts that, like “identity”, one has to adopt as a “horizon”, a kind of “virtuality to which we have to refer in order to explain certain things” (Lévi-Strauss 1977:132).<sup>2</sup> But that should not hide the fact that, in the long run, the difference between integration and assimilation always risks to become paper-thin: quite often, when assimilation is not taking place, what happens is less “integration” than segregation pure and simple.

That can be illustrated by two different examples, the American and the French one.

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<sup>2</sup> The notion of integration gets widely used in the country reports published by the United Nations. “The strengthening of common values and interests is commonly known as integration. The political, cultural or social integration of society occurs when various groups discover common values and interests over time” (UNDP 1997:48).



## a – Inevitable Race, Optional Ethnicity

Shaped by an immense migration, the American nation illustrates how host societies tend to impose their own anthropological conceptions to newcomers. Most Americans are of mixed national origins, but that diversity has not prevented the flourishing of a homogeneous and uniquely powerful mainstream culture. The cultural assimilation of migrants into the mainstream of American society has been linked to their fusion through wedding. If we stick to a number of elementary anthropological variables measuring human relations, like neighbourhood, schooling or, precisely, intergroup marriage, then the only tangible cleavage in American society is not cultural, but racial: it is the one between blacks and whites (Todd 1994).

As early as 1936, Warner published a study of race relations in the United States, in which he contended that there was an unbridgeable “caste” barrier between black and white Americans. That barrier was such that no matter how “assimilated” individual blacks became, their status would never be comparable to whites (Banks 1996).<sup>3</sup> Until the Second World War, the borders of marital segregation were between whites and other groups. Not unfrequently, it was couched in law. Marriage between whites and blacks (or native Indians) was explicitly forbidden in several states. Marriage between whites and Asians was taboo as well, and got likewise ruled out in several states, like California (Schnapper 1998). In 1967, the Supreme Court also declared that legislation against interracial marriage was unconstitutional (in 1966, nineteen states still had such legislation). At the conscious level at least, universalism was on the rise (Todd 1994).

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3 In 1896, in *Plessy vs Ferguson*, the Supreme Court ratified the idea of two communities “separate but equal”. At the same time, in the years 1870-1900, the educational level of blacks increased. The proportion of literate blacks went from 20 % to 55 %, which was more than the Italian migrants who came to the USA in 1900-1914 could claim. Interestingly, after some hesitation, these Italian migrants were officially registered as white. In so doing, WASPs decided to consider as “like them” a group that was educationally more *unlike* them than blacks indeed were. It meant that the criterion of *physical* difference became dissociated from the criterion of *cultural* difference. The notion of difference took its ultimate signification: from then on, it became clear that, in order to be considered as ordinary people, it would not be enough for blacks to show that they could become “civilised” – for instance by becoming literate (Todd 1994).

Today, natives and Asians have incrementally been redefined as full-fledged members of the American society. Marriage between them and whites is no longer the taboo it once was. The 1990 census shows for instance that 54 % of native Indian women are married to white men. However, unions between blacks and *anybody else* remain exceptional. In 1992, 4,6 % of black men and 2,3 % of black women were married with non-blacks. The proportion of black men married to white women was 4,6 %, whereas the opposite figure – black women married to white men was only 1,2 %. The remaining 98,8 % of black women was evenly divided between those with a black partner and the single mothers (Todd 1994).

The evolution since 1945 has created a new historical situation for black Americans. In the 1990s, about 80 % of them had at least a secondary education. Given their relatively high level of education, they live in the full awareness of their own alienation in a society that continues to define them as both different and inferior. The persistence of residential and social segregation in a context of rising education has led to a destruction of black families. Since the family is the first social context in which personality is formed, its destruction furthers the flourishing of a number of specific social pathologies, such as aggressive and/or self-destructive patterns of behavior (Wacquant 1993). At that point, the stage is set for racist ideologists who take these pathologies as proof positive that blacks *are* different. The vicious circle is closed: *the a priori definition of blacks as different has produced specific patterns of behaviour that justify the perception of blacks as different* (Todd 1994).

It is interesting to compare the *permanent* locking of black Americans in their physical difference with the mostly *optional* aspect of the “ethnic” identity of other Americans. Since the 1960s, the universe of nonblack Americans seems to aspire to fragmentation.<sup>4</sup> The desire of difference uses classic ethnic categories, but it even goes beyond them, for gender or even sexual preference have become used as criteria with which specific human groups can be defined.

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4 In 1963, Glazer and Moynihan published *Beyond the Melting Pot*, which develops the theme of the resilience of the original cultures of Americans. They document how groups such as the Irish or the Italians in New York have continued to manifest an “ethnic” identity. The Melting Pot, according to them, had never taken place. Glazer and Moynihan’s book unleashed the still ongoing debate on ethnicity.

However, if we take a step away from expressions of identity (ie, what people say they are) and look at patterns of values and behaviour instead (ie, what people actually do), then only little evidence supports the contention that the cultures of origin somehow “survive” in the American context. Even those migrants who adhere to the vision of multiculturalism actually refer to stereotypes built *by* and *within* American society in order to define their own ethnicity.<sup>5</sup> Most of the useful “ethnic” traits are actually culinary traditions. This kind of categorisation makes “ethnic identity” innocuous, optional, and therefore comfortable—a far cry from blackness. Nonblack Americans can choose to stress their ethnic origins or not. Black Americans cannot choose to become nonblacks, and they can hardly ever expect to be seen as, quite simply, *Americans*.

#### b – Collective Rejection, Individual Acceptation

The domination of the republican notion of citizenship in France has had far-reaching consequences on how immigrants are integrated into the mainstream society. The 1980s saw the rise of immigration as a central theme of the political debate. The Muslim (especially in his North African incarnation of *Maghrébin*) eventually came to embody the ideal-type of the Foreigner, whose religion is perceived both as an obstacle to cultural integration and as a danger for the host society (Taguieff 1993; Todd 1994). Polls agree on the overall aggressivity of the French population against the Maghrébin group.

At the same time, marrying a Maghrébin(e) is not a taboo. The rate

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5 In *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America 1918-1922*, for instance, Thomas and Zaniecki studied how Polish migrants sought to make sense of their experience by recreating their group identity. The authors conducted field research both in Poland and in the USA. They describe “the formation of a coherent group out of originally incoherent elements, the creation of a society which in structure and prevalent attitudes is neither Polish nor American but constitutes a specifically new product whose raw materials have been partly drawn from Polish traditions, partly from the new conditions in which these immigrants live, and partly from American social values as immigrants see and interpret them” (1984:240). The authors state that with the passage of time, the Polish migrants acquire more and more *American* attitudes with each generation.

of exogamy of the Maghrébins (both men and women) who live in France is above 20 %. By most standards of measure—marriage, schooling, language abilities—the assimilation of the Maghrébins is not slowing down, but accelerating.

Interestingly, the strongholds of the xenophobic far right in France (for instance, Provence or the Paris region) are also the regions where the rates of intergroup marriages are the highest. In other words, a relative hostility against *groups* coexists with a relative openness towards *persons*. That contradiction is not an anomaly, but the logical expression an anthropological system which is majoritarily universalistic: there is an outspoken hostility towards the *group* that is put down as culturally different and inferior, but there is also a difficulty to consider an *individual* from that group as, by essence, a bearer of his/her culture, provided s/he has demonstrated a will to integrate into the mainstream culture, and readiness to marry somebody from the host society is a good indicator of a person's actual or potential integration into that society.

Consequently, the Maghrébins in France face contradictory messages, which makes their situation uncomfortable. The first kind of message is collective and negative: the host society generally rejects the perpetuation of a Maghrébin culture in France. The second kind of pressure is individual and positive: individuals are not “locked” in their culture of origin and are accepted as marital partners. Symptomatically, the family structures of the Maghrébins have entered a process of disintegration. Belonging themselves to a system (Arab and muslim) which is universalistic, the *Maghrébin* parents have no serious argument to put forth against a child who wants to marry outside the group (Todd 1994).

As a result, individual trajectories vary increasingly, and migrant groups become less, not more, homogeneous. According to research conducted by the National Institute of Demographic Studies (INED), the Algerians are the ones whose daily life resembles most that of the “native” French, be it in language, schooling and religious practice. The far right's xenophobic vision of “the Muslims” as an immutable, self-ghettoized entity is wrong (Wihtol de Wenden 1996:160). Although deep and often painful cultural adjustments, at times linked to violence, are taking place, no evidence substantiates the hypothesis of irreducible cultural differences between groups.

## 2 – So What?

These two examples show that by and large, host societies succeed in imposing their conception of the dialectic between unity and diversity to newcomers.

Whether these conceptions stress similarities between people or differences between people, they have a powerful effect on how newcomers are perceived and in turn perceive their host society. Unless they make a conscious decision of living in isolation from the wider society—and most people do not—newcomers cannot do much to resist such anthropological patterns.

That might not be very visible regarding the first generation of migrants, but things change once the generation born or at least raised in the host country reaches adult age. If the host society tends to view marriage with people from that particular group as a taboo—regardless of conscious, formalised perceptions which may well sound open and positive—then that group is likely to consolidate itself as a separate unit, which will favour segregation. Conversely, a host society that tends to accept marriage with persons from a particular group—here again, regardless of possible manifestations of hostility against that group *qua* group—will favour assimilation (Todd 1994).

In the Baltic countries, intergroup marriage is a particularly interesting indicator. It enables us to avoid confusing between legal categories and cultural categories. Nobody could draw clear lines between “cultures” in the Baltic area, but there is evidence that rates of exogamy vary greatly between legally-defined groups. That can give us indications on how different groups relate both to each other and to the national society at large, without having us take stands about people’s “cultures”. Moreover, there are great differences between the three Baltic countries.

## **B – Bringing Language Back In**

Another field relevant to citizenship is language. It tends to remain in the shadow of “cultures” within contemporary debates on citizenship.

Between 4500 and 6000 languages are spoken in the world today (Hagège 1985). Throughout history, that diversity has been seen as a blessing by some and as a curse by others. There is a general tendency to downplay the role of language in social theory, either by viewing it as irrelevant (neo-liberalism, neo-Marxism) or as a simple chapter within the much wider field of cultural studies. Linguistic diversity makes a poor

fit with neo-liberalism, for it is a potential hinder to free flows of goods, capital and people. Marxism has trouble accommodating it too, since linguistic cleavages transcend class differences. Likewise, and maybe ironically, it also fits poorly into theories of multiculturalism.

But linguistic cleavages are relevant to citizenship, because they are politically dangerous.

### *1 – Downplaying Language*

There are different ways to downplay the role of language in society.

The first way is to postulate that language determines us to such an extent that there is nothing beyond it, whereby the question of language's link with culture becomes itself irrelevant. The basic idea here is that language determines and even "eats up" culture, to the point that culture itself becomes a fallacious notion. That postulate reflects the influence of post-structural literary criticism on social sciences. Its central notion is that the "subject" (the "I" of any text) is an illusion: all there is is language, there is nothing beyond it ("Language is fascist", claimed Barthes, who himself was good at using it). Relations of power are embedded in it, whence the need to deconstruct, layer after layer, these relations of power.

The other way to downplay the role of language in society is the opposite: it consists in conceptually disconnecting language and culture, which has the effect of presenting language as culturally irrelevant. That postulate is shared by neo-liberalism and neo-Marxism. Both emphasize the decisive importance of economic factors at the expense of others. Within neo-liberalism, supply-side economic theory can be applied to languages as if languages were goods. The *Wall Street Journal*, for instance, calls in Adam Smith in order to buttress its claim that "the evolution of language is the perfect example of spontaneous action that escapes regulation. The result is a beautiful array of words and concepts created by an invisible hand" (in Cassen 1994). The WSJ's premise here is that, like markets, languages evolve "naturally". The deduction is that any public intervention in the field of language should be rejected. That rationale thus has the effect of questioning the right to legislate in the field of language. Free exchange, here, is given the status of a moral norm, resistance to which needs justification in neo-liberalism's own terms.

Ironically, that vision of language-as-commodity can also be combined with neo-Marxist views. Hobsbawm, for instance, in his already-mentio-

ned dismissal of Estonian as a potential all-purpose language (see Chapter I), combines mistrust against any assertion of linguistic specificity with all-out linguistic Darwinism. Like in the neo-liberal discourse, the question of the link between language and culture gets a priori dismissed as irrelevant.

## 2 – Reevaluating Language

### a – Why Language is Not a Despot

Post-structuralism emphasises the power relations which get embedded in language, but the extension of literary criticism into social sciences does not necessarily include knowledge about historical specificities. Csepeli et.al (1996:496) mention how poorly the Western infatuation with post-structuralism fits East European social processes: “The young scholars, economists, sociologists and historians had to realize upon coming home that there is no gender issue, gay rights are unheard of, there are no controversies stemming from competing multicultural constructions of reality, and there are no fields and laboratories to test sophisticated loglinear models of social reality”.

That, of course, is no longer quite true: the general effort of “catching up with the West” includes logically a discovery of post-structuralism. It might, however, fail to seduce people who have a first-hand experience of what happens when the notions of truth versus lie disappear and all remains is language games. Rubavicius, who is Lithuanian, expresses something of the East’s historical experience when he warns that “the deconstruction of truth and human values is useful for those who know how to take advantage of the instinct of bellicose enthusiasm for their own benefit. Such people”, he adds, “come to power”.

East European dissident writers illustrate that that there *is* a difference between truth and lie, and that not everything about oppression boils down to linguistic structures. Havel explains that the logic of totalitarianism implies, precisely, the vanishing of the difference between truth and lie. Bayard (1992) expresses skepticism about the receptivity of the Czech citizenry to pleas for exploring cultural relativism in the wake of the master narratives’ demise. She suggests that a polity might needs to practice democracy for a while before engaging into a cautious deconstruction of its rewards. Western writers who deconstruct the oppressive

structures embedded in *Huckleberry Finn* do not risk anything save their time and reputation. Havel did spend years in jail for criticising the system. The East Germans who tried to cross the Berlin Wall were not shot at by *texts* but by real border guards using real weapons. Conversely, texts were what East German rulers used in order to try and persuade their citizens that border guards actually protected them, which was possibly a *narrative*, but more importantly a *lie*. There seem to be some differences between democracy and non-democracy when it comes to discipline and punishment.<sup>6</sup>

## b – Why Language is Not a Commodity

The neo-liberal postulate on language supposes a situation of pure and perfect competition. The trouble is that it is a purely theoretical premise: language, by definition, supposes a measure of fixity. In the absence of norm, whatever its source, then the use of language does indeed become entirely determined by the “invisible hand” of interaction between persons, which leads to linguistic instability and fragmentation.<sup>7</sup> If everything about language were flowing, communication would be impossible.

The creation of norms uses various channels, from votes in Parliament to the creation of academies or the publication of dictionaries. In 1828 for instance, Webster fixed the orthographic norms of American English. Language norms are created either by public actors or private actors, but the cleavage between them is not watertight. Support or benign neglect from public authorities can help private actions to succeed, or even relay them (Hagège 1985).

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6 Revel (1992) recalls how, in 1977, Foucault, Raymond Aron, Vladimir Bukowski, Ionesco and others met in Unesco’s Paris headquarters for a debate about lunatic asylums in the USSR. After a while, Foucault lost his temper and began fulminating about the “Western Gulag”, supposed to be just as bad as the Gulag *tout court*.

7 The Carelian language, for instance, is a school case of a language which evolved “spontaneously”. There never was a sovereign Carelian state. People speaking that language live astride what is today the Finnish-Russian border. Efforts towards standardisation remained sporadic and short-lived, and could not hinder significantly the assimilation of Carelian-speakers into the wider Russian context (they were 253 000 in 1939, and less than 140 000 in 1979) (Hagège 1985; Uibopuu 1988).



The neo-liberal questioning of any public intervention rests upon the strange premise that what is “natural” is morally superior to what is not. The bottom line is that private activity must remain out of reach while any public voluntarism is a priori suspect.

Yet, public intervention in language is not an exception, rather a rule. In 1994, out of (then) 172 sovereign states, about 120 had linguistic clauses in their constitutions. Out of 92 non-sovereign entities, as many as 85 did, including 33 of the 50 US states. It is not insignificant for a language to receive an official status. It gives it more international visibility than non-official languages ever can enjoy. Language laws are not an unprecedented intrusion in a field where a state of nature is supposed to reign (Cassen 1994).

Be it in their neo-Marxist or neo-liberal guise, visions of language-as-commodity often refer to the biblical myth of the Babel tower (linguistic diversity is a curse) and to the literary myth of Orwell’s 1984 (regulation = Big Brother). They also defend, explicitly or not, the equation global = universal = rational, according to which any language below “world languages” is by definition tribal, unable to express anything universal.

That perception makes sense only if we accept to fully disconnect language from culture, a point indeed made by certain anthropologists. Gell (1996:165), for instance, has trouble to stomach—of all peoples—the existence of the Dutch: “I trust I shall cause no offence to Dutch people in remarking that the Dutch language is by all accounts a complete joke, despised even by those who speak it, a language in which nothing significant has ever been or ever will be said. Now it would clearly be a travesty of culture-historical justice to identify Dutch culture, in any way, with the Dutch language (...). The Dutch verbal language has nothing to do with anything important about Dutch culture and is, I believe, destined to be abandoned altogether in the none-too distant future”. All the ingredients are here. Notice the boiling down of cultural identity to a question of self-esteem (“offence”), the fallacy of timelessness (“ever”), the confusion between a language’s geography and its depth (“nothing significant”) and, last but not least, the millenaristic longing for post-Babelian times, free at last from all those useless languages where a handful would do just as well.

The underlying logic of Gell’s statement is, thus, a *naturalisation of Dutch culture*. If we follow his rationale, we must accept there are certain particular

identities from which it is by definition impossible to express anything rational. No society can survive without a self-awareness which, by definition, gets constructed by means of language. Consequently, if the Dutch cannot ever express anything “significant” in their own language, then they cannot even reason about themselves, and thereby their history is nothing but a fact of nature. Dutch culture is no longer a *culture*, but a *folklore*.

In order to understand the difference between culture and folklore, we need to resort to the distinction between language and speech. The former is an instrument of the latter. The speech is both reception and action: it is both “behind” us (language constrains us by its rules) and “ahead” of us (language receives meaning through an articulation aiming at a truth) (Lenoble 1992). A speech which is no longer a combination of action and reception—for instance, a speech which becomes nothing but reception—loses its meaning and becomes marginalised, a *patois*, something which no longer partakes of culture but of, precisely, folklore.

The chief characteristic of folklore is that it does not express anything beyond itself. Externally, it offers the spectacle of an untranslated and superficial ritual, which may give some aesthetic pleasure to the non-initiated, but certainly not meaning (Lebesque 1969). Somewhat awkwardly, we can say that a culture becomes a folklore when it is denied the possibility to *mean* anything. Another way to put it is to say that a folklore is a culture bereft of its potentially universal—and therefore potentially subversive—dimension. Typically, it is a culture reduced to a museum, or to a festival, which is the same thing—in any case nothing that can or should be taken seriously. We are right in XIXth-century colonial thought. If we follow Gell’s reasoning, the Dutch cannot be a historical people. They are condemned to remain in a limbo, drifting, on the other side of the mirror.

That gives us a hint of why the conception of language as commodity does not hold. If we buy into the conceptual disconnection between language and culture, then there is no cultural filter between language and the world around us, and language is but a faithful photograph of our reality. Yet, constructing sentences is not like watching a picture of objects. If that were the case, then no thought would be possible. The world does not create thoughts about itself. Human beings do. Words are not pure “labels” whose collection would turn language into a stock-list of visible goods (Hagège 1985).

Consequently, languages cannot realistically be reduced to their instru-

mental function. They play a fundamental role in identity. Linguistic structures influence the way we think, although how exactly they do it remains in part mysterious (Hagège 1985). The child who learns to speak discovers a world which has already been categorised by language, which in turn shapes his representations. Languages differ not so much in what they can or cannot express than in what they *force* you to express (for instance, the difference in Swedish between “*jag var*” and “*jag har varit*” or the distinction in English between “his” and “her”).

If languages were culturally irrelevant, pure natural resources, then we could safely predict that Esperanto or other instrumental idioms will soon take over. All available evidence points to the opposite. There is no Esperanto literature, philosophy or science. Historically, in Europe, there is a even a striking coincidence between, on the one hand, the demise of Latin as the unique language of scholarship, and the flourishing of science from the XVIIIth century onwards. Latin used to be not only the language in which teaching was done, but also the only language taught at all (Anderson 1991). When the power of the catholic Church and its self-proclaimed monopoly on higher truths became questioned, Latin was increasingly forced “to mingle on equal ontological footing with a motley plebeian crowd of vernacular rivals” (Anderson op.cit 71) like German, English, Italian or French. Obviously, when it comes to the development of science, the contention that universal things can be said in vernacular languages has been nothing short of fruitful.

That gets lots sight of when Hobsbawm, for instance, derides even the possibility for Estonian biologists to publish in their language if they so wish. Any thought gets born in a particular time and place, and is in a way “tribal”. Yet, its meaning can be universal (Todorov 1996a). As the Portuguese writer Torga puts it, “the universal is the local minus the walls” (in Guillebaud 1996:116). Languages are places of creativity, imagination and desire. To reduce language to a pure instrument “stapled” onto the life of societies, be it in the name of the class struggle or the free market, is to miss the point. In 1950, even Stalin eventually acknowledged that language was *not* a superstructure covering a social infrastructure.<sup>8</sup> Languages are

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<sup>8</sup> He thereby put an end to the 16-year long reign of linguist N.I.Marr, whose claim to the opposite effect had been the official truth of the regime since 1932 (Hagège 1985).

indispensable to communication, but communication is not all there is to them. *That is the central paradox of communication: it supposes a common instrument, but it only succeeds within singular, socially-embedded experiences* (Bourdieu 1982).

### 3 – Managing Linguistic Cleavages

#### a – The Role of Individuals

Language differences are rarely discussed as such in contemporary cultural theory, possibly because linguistic diversity and cultural diversity are not quite the same thing. Differences between languages are more watertight, more perceptible and more disturbing than differences between cultures. Language barriers appear with a certain brutality. Either we know a language or we don't. If we don't, we can try to guess, but the result depends on linguistic proximity.

The mother tongue is the language learnt spontaneously by a child in the first years of his life. Emotional attachment to mother tongue comes from the fact that there is no other language which we master quite as well (Söhrman 1997). The mastering of the mother tongue is a condition of psychological stability. It is possible to learn another language as perfectly, but not, as a rule, after the age of 13-14, although exceptions exist. Generally, languages learnt after childhood are better understood than spoken (Hagège 1985).

In other words, human beings do not have an unlimited capacity and willingness to learn other languages (Laponce 1993). It is indeed possible to learn several languages, but human beings do not “have” two languages the way they have two arms. The human brain's tendency towards monolingualism never disappears – witness cases of ill elderly people spontaneously switching back to their mother tongue (Laponce 1984).

Bilingualism is not an obstacle to intellectual development, quite the opposite, but it does contain a hierarchy. Most bilingual persons have one dominant language and one dominated language. The growing inequality between languages appears in tests in which respondents had to answer questions of increasing difficulty. These tests show that somebody's bilingualism, perfect as it may sound, bears intellectual costs in terms of memory and time of reaction.

As a rule, for a person to become and to remain bilingual, the social benefits derived from bilingualism have to be higher than the intellectual costs. As a social context, multiculturalism is more “passive” than bi- or multilingualism. The former gives some latitude to the individual (cultural differences do not make interaction between persons impossible) while the latter tends to imply more personal effort (interaction cannot make do without at least a common language unless it remains very limited). As a result, contacts between languages tend to create more personal and political problems than contacts between cultures.

The above seems to contradict the observation that most countries and communities are not unilingual indeed. But what does “bilingual country” mean? Does it mean that both languages have an equal legal standing? Does it mean that its inhabitants are bilingual (and who, in particular?)

We have to differentiate between bilingual persons living in bilingual environments and those living in monolingual environments. We also have to distinguish between purely instrumental bilingualisms, and bilingualisms with deeper cultural implications. Any language is open to anybody willing to learn it, but bilingualism hinges on questions of prestige and power as well, whereby the two categories of linguistic majority versus minority are not always, or not only, a matter of arithmetics (Söhrman 1997). The arithmetic minority can perceive itself (and be perceived) as a majority. Members of language minorities tend to be more bilingual than members of language majorities, and more aware of their being a minority than the others are aware of being a majority. Cases of symmetrical bilingualism are rare. Even in officially bilingual states, one language tends to dominate the other. In the case of Finland, Swedish used to dominate Finnish, and today it is the other way round, but there is almost always *a* dominant language. Balanced situations are exceptional. Therefore, “accommodating languages” is bound to be a difficult exercise in policy-making.

#### b – Language within Republican and Liberal Citizenships

In republican citizenship, citizenship and nationality are conceptually connected. Thus, republican citizenship gives no normative weight to cultural idiosyncrasies. It tends to be unable to accommodate or, actually, to even “see” linguistic diversity. Since it rests upon the idea that the

universal and the particular have been already reconciled within sovereignty thanks to the fruitful use of human reason couched in a particular language, republican citizenship is uncomfortable with the idea that sub-state languages also may help one formulate the universal. Local dialects in France, for instance, were not eradicated in the name of a proudly assumed linguistic Darwinism emphasising the natural fading away of inherently primitive lingo. They were eradicated in the name of rationality: citizenship supposed equality before the law, and equality before the law supposed equality of language. In a republican polity, the dominant language is not conceptualised as that *of a majority*. It is conceptualised as that of, literally, *everybody*.

Therefore, the republican conception of language is by and large guilt-free. In France, if Breton schoolchildren were punished for using that language in school up until the 1950s, it was openly rationalised by the French state as being for the Bretons' own sake. Republican citizenship tends to either repress or ignore linguistic cleavages in the hope that, in the long run, phenomena of linguistic assimilation will somehow occur. They often do.

In liberal citizenship, citizenship and nationality are conceptually disconnected. Thus, liberal citizenship is more able to accommodate linguistic diversity in society, at least in the short run. But it is also uncomfortable with the idea that linguistic identity—even *that of the majority* – can become politicised *at all*. Canada offers an excellent example of both the power and the limits of liberal citizenship. The Canadian state actively promotes multiculturalism but it remains unable to satisfy the only cultural group whose claims are (1) based on language and (2) avowedly political. Since liberal citizenship tends to view as irrelevant and potentially dangerous the very question of the once-and-for-all reconciliation of the particular and the universal, it is uncomfortable with the idea that a language can make a claim to sovereignty, that is, lay claim on something universal.

### c – The Ambiguous Role of Institutions

Languages are created, used and abandoned (Söhrman 1997). The death of a language is not a biological fact, but a cultural fact. Increased communication leads to the diffusion of the languages which have power (money, weapons, technology, ideology) (Hagège 1985). Bourdieu (1982)

introduces the notion of *linguistic market*: we can only save the value of linguistic competence if we save the linguistic market as a whole, that is, the whole array of political and social conditions of the production of language. The most privileged instrument of linguistic production is the state. An official language is the language which, within the territorial limits of the political unit, imposes itself as the only legitimate to the inhabitants, especially in official situations and official spaces (Bourdieu op.cit 27).

Concretely, institutional solutions to bilingualism are manifold, and various legal-geographical configurations exist. They are influenced by factors like the degree of geographical overlap of minority and majority, the level of population balance, and the rate of endogamy of the minority population (Laponce 1993). Other factors come into play, for instance, the presence or the absence of a linguistic kin state; whether or not the minority language territory comprises a symbolic center (often, a major town) which people can relate to; whether linguistic borders are rather watertight, or rather porous.

As a rule, peace among languages requires that they have each a niche. It can be a functional niche, by which each language will be used in a specific sphere of life. That phenomenon is known as diglossia. It frequently occurs in colonial situations. It tends to be compatible with a legal approach emphasising *individual* language rights. Diglossia, however, is rarely stable over a time span of two generations. It tends to be an intermediary stage that leads newcomers from one type of unilingualism to another (Laponce 1984; Söhrman 1997).

In the absence of diglossia, each language tries to cover all spheres of life. Creating functional niches then becomes difficult, so geographical niches can be a solution. In that case, “the lesser cost and greater communication efficiency of unilingualism over multilingualism leads languages to organize themselves in physical space in such a way as to avoid territorial overlaps; languages tend to coalesce into monolingual areas juxtaposed to one another” (Laponce 1993:26). Here, peace among languages requires territorial niches of varying status, from outright secession to some sort of federalism. That linguistic context is more compatible with *collective* rights than the former one (Laponce 1993), but Kymlicka (1995:112) rightly mentions that leaving the decision to sub-state units “just pushes back the problem”.

Situations of communication tend to favour the language that *already*

has power. Linguistic domination does not boil down to an alternative between freedom and constraint. It entails a measure of complicity from the dominated – a complicity which is neither free adhesion nor passive submissiveness. These situations are only partly influencable by lawmaking. Official recognition of a language does not by itself contradict the de facto reduction of that language to a *folklore*. This is exactly what Bourdieu (1982:131) calls *stratégies de condescendance*. Such strategies, consist in “deriving profit from the hierarchy between languages, by symbolically denying that there is a hierarchy between these languages”. Strategies of condescendence are compatible with legal recognition or collective rights. Legal measures alone cannot affect significantly long-term phenomena of linguistic assimilation. For a language to exist, it must be spoken, but it must be spoken in a context with enough people who understand it.

Where does the above leave us? On the one hand, the status of official language does play a role in the future development of a language. On the other hand, linguistic law-making alone cannot guarantee the concrete status of a language. The efficacy of top-down linguistic policies is context-bound and context-specific. Institutions in the widest sense of the term—from parliaments to schools or police forces—matter a great deal, and they do *not* favour multilingualism. Institutions may be gender-blind, ethnicity-blind and religion-blind (officially if not practically), but they *cannot* be language-blind. Social and political practices cannot do without using at least *a* language (Laponce 1984) and, logically, it is much easier for an institution to function in one language than in two or more. That is the key paradox of linguistic policies: *individual languages need institutions in order to survive as societal languages, but institutions cannot easily accommodate linguistic diversity.*

## **II – Settings of Citizenship**

### **A – Citizenship and Time**

We can distinguish two natures of time: on a general level, there is historical time, the time of the development of human beings constituted in societies; on a more concrete level, there is also social time, time as embedded in human activities. Both natures of time are relevant to the possibilities to exercise one’s democratic citizenship.



## 1 – Time as a Civic Resource

Time can be a civic resource. A sense of duration, of continuity, is part and parcel of civic responsibility (Chesnaux 1998). In Christiano's (1996:4) words, "the ideals of political equality and rational deliberation require that citizens have more equal resources for developing their understanding of their society and their interests. Equal citizens must also have the resources to make their points of view known to others as well as to listen to what others have to say in turn. And they require that citizens have a robust equality of control over the ultimate decision".

Understanding, debate/action, and control: concretely, these three conditions of citizenship are exercised in many different ways, but logically they have to be inscribed in some kind of three-step sequence. That sequence corresponds to the past-present-future triad of human consciousness.

There is a difference between that triad and the three dimensions of space (length, width and depth): the latter are neutral and interchangeable—as anybody who ever played with a Rubik's cube knows—whereas the relation between past, present and future only exists in the specific position each has towards the two others and in the awareness we have of it. In other words, the position of the present as the intermediate step between past and future can only be the result of a deliberate effort of the human mind (Chesnaux 1998). Mentally—but only mentally—we can project ourselves in the future, of which we know nothing save that it will "occur", and which is, therefore, the time of political responsibility. That responsibility supposes that the future is undetermined (otherwise, why act?) (Popper 1992). Mentally, we can also think back about the past, which is the "thickest", most sedimentary dimension of time, and which is, therefore, the only objectively accessible reference our awareness of time can anchor itself to. We know the past will not reoccur, but we have personal and collective/cultural experiences of it. The present, by definition, remains the dimension of our presence in the world: it is the German *Gegenwart*, the "thing" we inevitably collide with (*gegen-*).

We can conclude from the above that *civic time cannot be anything else than historical time*. It has neither the myth-governed immobility of the pre-modern, tribal Dreamtime, nor the extraverted and joyful (or lethal) anarchy of post-modern theories. Citizenship supposes a robust awareness

that the past is *not* a foreign country, that the past can be known, and that the future remains unknown and open. Citizenship can only thrive inasmuch as the accessibility of the past and the indetermination of the future are seen as legitimate.

## 2 – *Time as a Civic Constraint*

Time can also become a civic constraint. The first time-related factor that is inimical to the exercise of citizenship is, quite simply, poverty, or relative deprivation. Citizenship implies that the individual has enough material resources to be able to take the time to reflect upon and exercise his citizenship. A life in destitute conditions reduces the person to living day in day out, with little awareness of the past and little prospects for the future.<sup>9</sup> Homeless people in European cities, for instance, tend to live in a zero degree of temporality. The lives of unemployed persons, in some cases, hover dangerously close to it (Badreau 1998). Poverty and civicness are uneasy bedfellows.

The second time-related constraint on citizenship derives from the functional division of time which hallmarks industrial societies. Technocratic time, linked to imperatives of production, is alien to the diverse, flexible reality of society. It boils down the passage of time to a purely sequential string of identical events: the past-present-future triad gets transmogrified into an endless 1+1+1 (...) series. That mechanistic reproduction of social time, decided from above, yields a fictitious, “packaged” temporality, which only robots would enjoy, and which weakens people’s awareness of the past and of the future.

Another time-related constraint on citizenship comes from the explosion of information generated by technological development, notably by devices such as Internet, or real-time TV. These technologies enable the citizen to “master” the event almost immediately, but tend to deny him

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<sup>9</sup> Rufin (1991) describes the life of an inhabitant of a Brazilian shanty town as such: “the favela dweller lives in a kind of watchful idleness. He does nothing, but is constantly ready—ready to do anything, as if the migration that led him there were suspended; as if the movement that made him fall into the trap of the favela were nothing but a pause and could turn into a new departure anytime”.

the time needed to assimilate information and turn it into knowledge (Virilio 1997). By the same token, the practical constraints of the treatment of real-time information tend to fuel increasingly instrumental perceptions of language: if cognitive operations are supposed to become the shortest possible series of elementary steps, then it is important that language be scraped clean of its possible ambiguities.<sup>10</sup> Such an instrumentalisation of language fits well in theories of rational choice, which rest upon a perception of human life as the optimal management, by an enlightened self-interest, of patterns of survival in a world dominated by a scarcity of resources. However, it contradicts the sense of permanence which citizenship entails. It also contradicts the possibility to think beyond the immediate given (Châtelet 1998). It is simply not true that “a picture tells more than a thousand words” (Saramago 1998).

The next factor constraining citizenship is related to the above. It is the problem of what Christiano (1996) calls rational ignorance. The complexity of modern society requires that tasks be divided up and that individuals specialize narrowly in them. The tasks that most ordinary citizens have to perform have little to do with making law and policy. At the same time, one vote among millions of others does not make much of a difference. As a consequence, many citizens have little reason to take the time (1) to inform themselves on the issues they are asked to vote on, and (2) to go and vote. The gap deepens between the growing mass of information that is produced and the time needed to analyze it and to appreciate its possible interest (Debord 1988). Thus, the citizen who wants to optimize his time, but who is outside of the social circles that produce information (media, academia, lobbies, etc), is led to give up trying to get informed by himself. Apathy and conformism become rational attitudes (Châtelet 1998).

If it is rational to ignore the present, then ignorance about the past appears even more so, which in turn weakens citizenship even further, for it also leads to indifference towards the future. Not only is comparison

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10 The governmental justifications behind the failed linguistic reforms of France and Germany in the 1990s had it that certain orthographical and grammatical idiosyncrasies—conveniently renamed “incoherences”—made these languages inimical to computer processing.

with the past inherently subversive, but a self-proclaimed timeless power cannot be a democratic power. Democracy is by definition open to change, and the idea of change apart from time is inconceivable (Sztompka 1993).

## **B – Citizenship and Urbanity**

### *1 – The City as a Civic Resource*

#### a – Urban Sociability

Citizenship is embedded in a variety of social roles which unfold in relation to the place where they are played (Sansot 1995). Historically, the city was born as the result of the need of interaction of people, which immediately prevents us from defining the city in a static fashion. It is not only the place where goods are traded, but also the place where different people meet, and the place where political authority seats. The city is larger than the village, but it is not a larger village (Bonello 1996). It should be imagined, first and foremost, as the place where encounters occur. Symbolically, the city is the crucible of social values that are supposed to last longer than the buildings and the whims of the powers of the day. Thus, the city cannot be reduced to the mere physical implementation *ex post* of a planned intellectual project (Bonello 1996).

Cities have something more palpable than nations. One can, for instance, discuss at length about whether the nation whose capital is Prague exists or not. Yet, there is little doubt that Prague is a city, and that there is a city called Prague (Derrida 1992). That seemingly trivial example is a timely reminder of the physical aspect of the urban phenomenon. There are, of course, a great many ways to experience a city (a city, like a landscape, is a boundless sum of possible itineraries), but the city has something of an immediate presence. It has been edified through time, with many rivalries, projects and cancellations. It is the past monumentalised, space embedded in time.

Citizenship entails a certain dimension of urban sociability. In *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Jane Jacobs (1961) describes how streets play a civic role. Her basic argument is that cities, by definition, are full of strangers. A city is a place where you can meet a stranger and

have a conversation (the quintessential urban pleasure) or get mugged (the quintessential urban calamity) (Kunstler 1993:127). Thus, the bed-rock attribute of a successful city district is that a person must feel personally safe and secure on the street among all these strangers. Safety comes from, as Jacobs (1961) puts it, “eyes on the street”, the kind of informal control people exert on other people. That control supposes a certain sense of cohesiveness and belonging that rests upon well-defined neighborhoods and multiuse streets. A multiuse street is a street that accommodates different kinds of traffic, and where there is a quantity of stores and other public spaces. A mono-functional street (a street lined by a blank wall, an expressway) is a dead one.

This is a reason why pedestrian streets are not a good idea from a civic point of view. The creation of pedestrian street is informed by an ideal of rationality and progress (Sansot 1995). The pedestrian street is “transparent”, because planners, semiologists, psychosociologists took part in its creation and wondered about the common good. They seem to operate on the premise that city people are mostly interested in going swiftly from point A to point B, and seek the sight of obvious order and quiet. That is patently untrue (Jacobs 1961; Muray 1999). Multifunctional streets are typical of the cities of the Antiquity or of the Renaissance. In Jacob’s words (in Le Gates & Stout 1994:107), “under the seeming disorder of the old city, wherever the old city is working successfully, is a marvelous order for maintaining the safety of the street and the freedom of the city (...). There is nothing simple about that order or the bewildering number of components that go into it”. Like democracy, the city cannot be anything else than imperfect, unfinished (Bonello 1996).

## b – The Role of Third Places

The existence of third places is an indispensable component of urban sociability. Civic life requires settings in which people meet as equals without regard to race, class or national origins (Lasch 1995).

These settings are third places to the extent that they are between the family circle and the workplace, between privacy and structured organisations, between the womb and the rat race. They are the places where informal meetings can occur and conversations unfold, thereby sustaining the life of neighbourhood. As Kunstler (1993) puts it, a community is

not something you *have*, like a pizza, but rather something that *happens*. Third places are precisely the places where community “happens”. It does through a number of rituals, like deambulation, salutation, or conversation, by which people create and recreate community.

These rituals form the flexible but indispensable border between insiders and outsiders. No community-building can do without a modicum of opacity. Without opacity, the neighborhood becomes transparent, borderless, and dissolves itself. Third places are—not exhaustively—cafés, coffee shops, community centers, beauty parlors, general stores, bars, hangouts, etc. Such places are the antithesis of the private club and of the shopping mall. When third places disappear, sociability has to retreat somewhere, and tends to be preempted either by the market or by the state. The former is what tends to happen today in Western Europe and North America.<sup>11</sup> The latter as we shall see, is what happened in communist systems, including the Baltic republics.

## 2 – *The City as a Civic Constraint*

Urban sociability is an ambiguous and fragile sociability. When social links between people disintegrate, the city intensifies feelings of solitude, which fractures the social fabric even further. The city is a civic resource, but it can also become a civic constraint. That can happen when the clear con-

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11 In his field research in a suburb of Lyon, Charvet (in Bellanger 1996) notes how public spaces are becoming vacant spaces. “Any village was a open-air lesson in public life” he writes. It had “a town hall flanked by a school, a church nearby, and a market on the village square”. Today in the “sensitive” suburbs, there is no more scene for the meeting of generations. Places where informations are exchanged, opinions debated and conflicts expressed are vanishing. There is only an annex of the town hall. Places of worship are closed (for Christians) or clandestine (for Muslims). The supermarket has reduced the space of the market to a pure consuming function. In North America, Barber (1995:130) describes how “once upon a time, stores found a home in downtown neighborhoods among workshops, churches, restaurants, schools, and town halls as elements in an architecture of public space that integrated shopping into other public activities... The isolation of commercial space from every other kind of public space (...) certified by mall development has allowed commercial consumption to dominate public space”. In American suburbs, “the mall *is* the “neighborhood”, and commercial space is the only community space in sight” (op.cit:132).

science of the city's embeddedness in time is lost (the total city), and/or when the city tends to segregate rather than integrate (the fragmented city).

#### a – The Total City

Certain urban theories and political ideologies lose sight of, or even deny the intrinsic value of the city's situation between past and future, between path-dependence and indetermination. That denial is governed by a variety of rationales, all of which are inseparable of visions of what a city should be. Both Plato and Thomas More, for instance, laid out plans for what their ideal, utopian city would be. The XIXth century witnessed several utopian attempts to remedy to the flaws of the industrial city. XXth century functionalists like Gropius, Loos and Le Corbusier tried to figure out urban model that would generate efficiency, well-being and, ultimately, happiness. All these urban teleologies have a common point: they conceive of the city in terms of rational models, not as a processus, or a problem. The city is mentally turned into a thing, a reproducible object.

Translated into messy human terms, that ideal of purity leads logically to tyranny (Bonello 1996). Italian fascism, for instance, had an outspoken anti-urban bias. In the Bucharest of the 1980s, Ceausescu tried to perfect the political submission of the populace by destroying the monuments that would remind them of the country's pre-communist past, and by forcing increasing amounts of rural people to move into similar, nameless suburban buildings. A city plan that tries to solve all urban problems exhaustively here and now, without taking the past into account nor giving leeway to future generations, leads logically to a human disaster. The city must remain a space which is neither saturated by its own past nor closed to its transformation (Derrida 1992).

#### b – The Fragmented City

The city can also become a civic impediment when the vision of the city as an integrated whole, as something which is more important than the sum of its parts, is replaced by a vision in which each urban ingredient is treated in isolation.

To quote a famous article from the mid-sixties, a basic principle of urbanity is that *a city is not a tree*. According to Alexander (1965), a city

should not be designed with a neatly branching tree-like organisation dividing functions from each other, because “whenever we have a tree structure, it means that within this structure no piece of any unit is ever connected to other unit, except through the medium of that unit as a whole”. The city should not be seen as tree-like, because from a human point of view, the relations between urban ingredients are as important as the ingredients themselves (Kunstler 1993).

That principle means, for instance, that the spaces between buildings are as important as the buildings themselves. Streets should not be seen only a place for traffic, but as part and parcel of the urban fabric. By contrast, monofunctional streets hallmark the functionalist models of the XXth century. In 1929, Le Corbusier wrote that “the city of today is dying because it is not geometrical. To build in the open would be to replace our present haphazard arrangements, which are all we are today, by a uniform layout. Unless we do this there is no salvation. The result of a true geometrical layout is repetition. The result of repetition is a standard, the perfect form”. Le Corbusier and other functionalists hated street life, its messiness, its passions and its vices. They swore by geometry, transparency and hygiene.

In the course of the XXth century, functionalist conceptions of urban planning gained an enormous influence in North America and Western Europe (Kunstler 1993). The tree is accessible mentally, and easy to deal with. Its simplicity and apparent logic seduced social engineers and private lobbyists, both corporations being receptive to claims that urban life could and should be quantifiable and rational.

The results are obvious today. Urban functions are increasingly dissociated from each other. American zoning laws enacted as early as the 1940s have tended to physically separate work from housing, business districts from residential districts, and recreational facilities from everything else, not to mention university campuses (Alexander 1965). American middle classes have been increasingly enticed away from the city centres and tend to make their homes outside of towns, in the suburbs.

Likewise, in Europe in the 1960s, many cities surrounded themselves with monofunctional (residential) suburban developments. Larsmo (1992) describes how “in the 1960s, the heart of the Swedish town somehow disappeared. As a consequence of a collusion of political and commercial interests, the central parts of most Swedish towns came to look like each other. That emptiness at the geographical heart of social life creates a strange



dynamic, for the center remains nevertheless symbolically loaded and therefore attractive to the young people who live outside of it” (my translation).

The civic consequences of that reorganisation of urban space are far-reaching. The two elements of the suburban pattern that cause the greatest problems are the separation of uses and the vast distances between things (Kunstler 1993). As a consequence, whereas city life optimises the possibility of contact between people, and especially different kinds of people, the suburbs strive to eliminate precisely that kind of human contact. The result is a psychological difficulty to cope with conflict or even difference. The suburbs are places where it *is* important to keep up with the Joneses. Suburbs have been denounced by several authors as being socially one-dimensional communities, anti-civic noplaces, with the worst elements of city and country, and none of the benefits (Kunstler 1993).

The separation of functions advocated by functionalistic urban planning has consequences for city centers too. If the suburbs are the ideal place to live, then the city itself becomes less desirable, and urbanity and civicness are also matters of desire. Even if urban sprawl in Europe has not reached American proportions, not a few European city centers have been restructured in a functionalistic spirit in the 1960s and 1970s, not unfrequently generating a certain monotony.

As a rule, monofunctional places make it difficult for the Jacobsian “eyes on the street” to play their role. That is not an unexpected byproduct of functionalism, but a logical component of it. Stockholm’s Sergels Torg, for instance, is a bureaucratic utopia cast in concrete. The ideal city of the functionalists is a place where informal controls are not needed and can even be pernicious, for what is informal is hard to manage. The rationale of functionalistic social engineering is that the atrophy of informal controls can and should be made up for by an expansion of bureaucratic controls. Yet, bureaucratic control, by definition, cannot catch up with the inherent complexity of human life. The built-in risk of bureaucratic control is bureaucratic overload and subsequent breakdown. When that happens, people are led to improvise new ways to meet their needs, but they are not likely to reinvent the informal sociability that existed before the state tried to become a substitute (Lasch 1995). We will not recreate the village square.

Urban monotony is a symptom of civic crisis. Given that cities are both the public realm monumentalised and the repositories of cultural memories, the weakening of the urban fabric has both civic and cultural consequences. On the surface, it entails architectural ugliness, which can favor the development of a certain indifference toward the public realm, which in turn gives a free rein to the construction of even more urban ugliness. Considering that charm is “that which makes our physical surroundings worth caring about” (Kunstler 1993:168), and that civicness entails interest for things which are not oneself, we see that urban charm is an eminently civic category.

On a deeper plane, the monofunctionality of many urban surroundings and the boredom they generate for individuals are not alien to the development of social pathologies like suicide, violence, or self-ghettoisation (Wacquant 1993). The impoverishment of human interaction impedes the capacity to communicate: the absence of an authentic public realm is compensated by the development of myriads of mini-narratives derived from mini-cultures, mini-morals, mini-artistic forms—witness the development of groups whose self-definition rests upon an exclusivist, and partly masochistic identification to “the neighborhood”.

Bogdanovic (1993) claims that anti-urban, anti-civic instincts are virtually present in any society. Most of the time, they remain latent. All it takes for them to flourish is adequate social conditions, or an ideology and the means to carry it out. The ritual murder of cities in the name of ideas or interests is the high point of warfare throughout history. The human mind is torn between the myth of the city as perfection and the myth of the city as corruption (Pike 1981). Thus, the fascination people have always felt at the destruction of a city may be partly an expression of satisfaction at the destruction of an emblem of irresolvable conflict—that is, a deeply human emblem. Civic life is not the life of serfs, or robots, or of apes. That was the question Bogdanovic (1993) asked when witnessing the destruction of Sarajevo by Serbian troops: how can we prevent them from turning us all into apes?

## **C – Citizenship and Nationhood**

Beside urbanity, the notion of citizenship is intimately linked to the notion of nation. Even authors suggesting that it is an outdated concept

dig and delve into it. Most theoretical approaches share a basic assumption about the fundamental duality of the notion of nation. That duality may be analytically fruitful, but it becomes easily misleading.

### *1 – The Classic Duality Ethnic Nation/Civic Nation and Its Limits*

Discussions of the nation often begin with attempts to define what a nation is. Yet, as Brubaker (1996b:14) points, the question is not innocent: “the very terms in which it is framed presuppose the existence of the entity that is to be defined”.

Two schools of thought on the nation have developed themselves in modern times. The civic school of thought is rooted in the American and the French revolutions of the late XVIIIth century. It conceptualizes the nation first and foremost as a political artifact, which people share by an act of will. In Renan’s famous phrase, the nation is a daily plebiscite. The civic nation has a dimension of rupture, of breaking away from the old order, deemed unjust. The other school of thought, that of the ethnic nation, came as a romantic reaction to the conceptual and empirical changes prompted by American and French revolutionaries. It views the nation less as a political artifact than as a cultural one. It takes issue with the excessive abstraction of civic ideals, and insists instead on the substantial components of the nation, such as customs, languages and symbols. Continuities matter more than ruptures.

These two schools of thought have fueled the construction of an enormous body of literature. Part of it has a militant character and tries to defend one school of thought against the other. Other authors are less sanguine about the civic/ethnic duality and content themselves with stating that it exists and then use it as the basis of typologies in which different nations can be classified. It is common wisdom, for instance, that the United States and France are close to the ideal-type of the civic nation, whether Germany rather inches toward the ethnic conception of the nation.

The civic-ethnic dichotomy, then, tends to be the staple diet of academic discussions about the nation, which often begin with the acknowledgement of a duality. One example among many: “There are two definitions of a nation, one focusing on an ethnocultural community and the other focusing on a civic community. Under the first definition, Switzerland contains four nations, whereas under the second there is a single Swiss

nation” (Karklins 1994a:45). Depending on the authors, nations are presented as primordialially real, historically reconstituted, or socially organized, but there is hardly a synthesis to reconcile these visions.

What is important for us here is that the civic-ethnic *duality* is not an *antithesis*. At times, the border between both gets blurred within theory: “where the civic dimension, identification with the institutions of the state and society, is weak, ethnicity inevitably assumes a stronger role”, Schöpflin (1993) writes. His postulate is both right and wrong. It is right when it says that a low degree of civic identification and a high degree of ethnic awareness can coexist. It is wrong when it says that they *have* to.

The distinction between Western and Eastern nationalism stays instrumentally reliable only as long as we take these categories as ideal-types. But even as ideal-types, we cannot assume that civicness is the logical opposite of ethnicity and that the interplay between them is a zero-sum game. We can, for instance, use these ideal-types in order to draw typologies of nationalist discourses, but the ideas of “Western nation” and “Eastern nation ” are not *definitions*. There are no such things as purely “Western” or purely “Eastern” nations. Elements of “Western” nationhood and elements of “Eastern” nationhood exist in various proportions in all nations. It is their respective codification and their interplay that make each nation different from all the others.

#### a – The Ideal of “Civic Nation”

The idea of civic nation is first and foremost a republican ideal. As we saw above, it is a set of principles derived from the notion of national sovereignty. The republic contrasts with the alternative forms of *imperium* and *dominium* to the extent that it is based on rule of law. The idea of civic nation does not imply that the nation is a cultural void. It only implies that cultural idiosyncrasies are normatively irrelevant. That normative neutrality enables a measure of openness toward the outside. The hallmark of the civic nation is that anyone can integrate into it, regardless of de facto features like creed, race or mother tongue.

Of course, that does not imply that everybody *has* to go through a process of integration: most people receive their nationality at birth, notwithstanding migrations and other globalising tendencies. Existing legislations on citizenship always combine *jus soli* with *jus sanguinis*. What makes them distinct is not the absence or the presence of either *jus*

(because both are always present), but their mutual balance within each legislation (Thiesse 1999). Thus the idea of civic nation does not imply that the nation is a cultural blank page. What it implies is that people become citizens through participation, and that outsiders can become insiders provided they fulfill a number of conditions.

In other words, the nation is not given once and for all. It is a process of integration—both the integration *of* society (as opposed to its falling apart) and the integration of individuals *into* society (Schnapper 1994).

#### b – The Ambiguity of “Ethnic Nation”

The idea of ethnic nation is more complex, due to the extreme ambiguity of the concept of ethnicity, torn as it is between primordialist and constructivist conceptions that get often mixed. The idea of ethnic nation can be two things: a tautology or a contradiction in terms.

If we take the adjective “ethnic” as something that *qualifies* “nation”, then the expression ethnic nation is a tautology. Be it in a primordialist or constructivist mode, if we acknowledge ethnicity as a category of analysis, we also need to acknowledge that people – *everybody* – by definition can “carry” ethnicity (primordialism) or “experience” ethnicity (constructivism) (Banks 1996). And given that there is no nation without actual people, it is hard to see how a particular nation could be more or less “ethnic” than another one. If we choose the primordialist vision of ethnicity, every nation has *some* “ethnic origins” in a measure that is by definition impossible to assess, since these origins are lost in time past. The longer one’s family has been in an area, the more incapable one gets to know about the breakdown of one’s ancestors. The only people who can decline their origin in some measure are either migrants or people who have kept track of migrant ancestors.

The constructivist notion of ethnicity fares hardly better when qualifying the object “nation”. It is impossible to say how many “ethnic groups” have existed on a given territory. The longer we look back in time, the more difficult it becomes to know how different groups conceived of themselves and how related to each other. As Smith (in Banks 1996:130) puts it, it is “unlikely that we can ever know what the sentiments of affect were between people long dead, and I don’t see how one can prove one way or another that the Elamites (c.3500 BC to 500 BC) manifested a sense of solidarity”. Like in the former case, we are left

with a tautology (there is a measure of ethnicity in each nation) of little concrete utility. Given the inevitable human heterogeneity of national societies, if we conflate ethnicity with nationhood, then it is easy to “prove” that, “in very few countries can the citizens be said (...) to belong to the same *ethnonational* group” (Kymlicka 1996:1 – my emphasis). On the other hand, if we retain the distinction between ethnicity and nationhood, we can take that heterogeneity into account and still try to understand why and how most European states have evolved into national states, albeit each in its particular way (Vebers 1997).

If we take the adjective “ethnic” as something that no longer qualifies but *defines* “nation”, then the expression ethnic nation becomes a contradiction in terms. If, for the sake of the argument, we accept that we can measure a nation’s degree of ethnicity, and that some nations are inherently more “ethnic” than others, then the expression “ethnic nation” comes to designate the particular nations for which “ethnicity” is seen as a necessary and sufficient defining principle. In other words, we would define away the specifically political component of the nations labelled “ethnic”. That would leave us not with nations, but with ethnic groups. If we omit the political component, there is in effect no difference between both. That is, for instance, what Anthias & Yuval-Davis (1992:25) claim: “There is no inherent difference (although sometimes there is a difference of scale) between ethnic and national communities: they are both the Andersonian ‘imagined communities’”.

The andersonian notion of imagined community has almost reached a paradigmatic status. But interestingly, Anderson himself never uses the expression “imagined communities” without qualification. All communities are imagined.<sup>12</sup> Anderson stresses that nations are not only imagined communities, but imagined *political* communities. He adds that they are imagined as inherently *limited* and *sovereign*.

Thus there seems definitely to be an inherent difference between ethnic collectivities and national collectivities: it is the political component (Eriksen 1993). It is not a question of scale nor a difference of degree, but one of nature. The concept of nation supposes that there is a politi-

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12 Bauman (1996) stresses that belief in the presence of communities is their only building block.

cal link between individuals, among an infinity of other links (Schnapper 1994). Of course, that political link needs some concrete cultural anchoring. It is necessarily related to preexisting feelings, myths and cultural traits. As Smith stresses, even if nationhood is not “natural”, and even if its origins are unclear, its development is situated in a certain historical continuity. It is characterised by identities which, though they are not “natural” either, change very slowly once they have been constituted.

The vocabulary of ethnicity has become so pervasive in the media and in academic writing that we no longer perceive the contempt it entails. The “ethnic so-and-so” is *always* an infantilised Other, seen as either tame and endearing (“ethnic culture”, “ethnic music”) or unchained and dangerous (“ethnic claims”, “ethnic conflict”), but certainly not taken as one of *us*.<sup>13</sup>

That perception extends itself to whatever noun we attach the prefix “ethno-” to. Calling Latvia an ethnocracy (Poulsen 1994), for instance, leaves little doubts about what one thinks of the country’s moral rating. Poulsen’s motivations were partly understandable in 1994, when Latvian legislation still was in the works and did not yet have clear-cut criteria for the granting of citizenship. But when labelling Latvia an ethnocracy, he also reproduced the primordialist rhetoric of the Latvian nationalists he obviously dislikes. Yet, if we take as an indication the proportion of Danes enjoying power positions in Denmark, then Denmark does not decisively look less ethnocratic than Latvia does.<sup>14</sup> Besides, Latvians are not more “ethnic” than Danes are, be it primordially (there are no Latvian or Danish races) or constructively (both Latvianness and Danishness

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13 In September 1999, the pilot of “The West Wing” a NBC series about The White House, drew criticism for the absence of minority characters in its ensemble cast. As a result, NBC decided to add such characters and hire “black faces, Asian faces, Latin faces”. The legend of picture accompanying the article in the *New York Times* goes thus: “The show, whose pilot episode was criticised for the absence of minority roles, has recently added many ethnic characters” (NYT, 20 September 1999). The conflation minority = ethnic, and vice versa, is perfect. So is, by the way, the conflation ethnicity = race. The mere possibility that the white actors in the cast could also be “ethnic” is tacitly rejected from the start.

14 In 1994, on a total of 100 MPs in the Parliament of the ethnocratic Latvia, all of whom by definition were Latvian *citizens*, there were, according to official *ethnicity* categories, 89 Latvians, but also 6 Russians, 1 Belarussian, 1 Pole, 1 Jew, 1 Liv and 1 Greek (UNDP 1995:21).

are constructions). Labelling Latvia an ethnocracy instills the feeling that Latvians—visualised as a closed, homogeneous group, which they are not—are a sour case of “ethnics” who have politicised their ethnicity, *which is precisely what “ethnics”, as opposed to normal people, are not supposed to do*, or at least not to the point that it risks hindering mankind’s progress towards Higher, post-national Things.

## 2 – Reevaluating Nationhood

Philosophies of the nation try to systematize historical realities that are inevitably ambiguous (Schnapper 1991). I agree with Brubaker (1996b) that “to understand the power of nationalism, we do not need to invoke nations, nor should we, at the other extreme, dismiss nationhood altogether. We need, rather, to decouple categories of analysis from categories of practice, retaining as analytically indispensable the notions of nation as a practical category, nationhood as an institutional form, and nationness as event, but leaving “the nation” as enduring community to nationalists”.

Trying to define what a nation *really* is or, conversely, trying to denounce it as a pernicious lie, are two sides of the same coin, depressing variations on the eternal theme of the chicken and the egg. If we focus only on the stories by which categories of identity have been constructed, in the hope of challenging the grip they have over people, we risk to neglect the plain fact that certain identities *do* continue to be invoked and felt, albeit for reasons that remain annoyingly unclear (Calhoun 1994b).

When reading that the nation is an imagined community, we risk taking “imagined” as synonymous with “unreal”, and then set out to denounce the nation as a less genuine layer of identity than other layers like region, race, culture, class, gender, etc. That attitude seems widespread today, due a frequent conflation of “nation” with “nationalism”, often denounced as a near-pathological weakness of the human mind rather than analysed in a balanced fashion. According to Taguieff (in Cassen 1998), what presents itself as anti-*nationalism* is rather an anti-*nationism*, ie the rejection of the idea of nation-state as something inherently bad or dangerous. He suggests the national dimension is no longer fashionable in the universe of the media. They are supported by



the partisans of a world society without borders, and by the partisans of a regionalised Europe. Such a discourse can be found for instance in Miglio (in Cassen 1998), who claims that "the project of European unity must be carried out between large regions linked by common interests" because, he says, "the nation does not exist".

Rationales like Miglio's are unfalsifiable, because they rest upon a logical fallacy: it does not make sense to claim in the same breath that the nation does not exist, and that the region does. Sweden is not more artificial than Scania, or Spain less real than Catalonia. There may be more written about Catalan nationalism than about Spanish ditto, but that is more a testimony to social scientists' general reverence for sub-state *nationalisms* than a proof positive of the "falseness" of Spanish *nationhood* (as opposed to the "authenticity" of the Catalan one). Spain or Sweden are certainly cultural artefacts: no nation is a fact of nature. Yet, if their sheer duration is anything to go by—and it is, definitely, since history is the only large-scale laboratory we have—as national cultural artefacts go, Spain and Sweden have been relatively fruitful so far. Other artefacts prove less fruitful, for instance Czechoslovakia or the Soviet Union, which only lasted for a few decades. No amount of USSR-building succeeded in convincing a majority of Balts that they belonged in the Soviet Union.

The above leaves us with a feeling that, fundamentally, nationhood is a *bet*—and a bet that can be lost. It works only if enough people adhere to it. Here, the notion of adhesion does not bring us back to the old opposition between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, between organicism and contract. It rather means that there will be a nation X as long as the word conjures up images, hopes and fears whose combination make X different from both the nation Y and the quantifiable, visible socio-economic-territorial unit called X. To say with Anderson that "the nation is imagined" and to conclude with Miglio that "the nation does not exist" is possible only if we overlook the complexity of the word "imagined". As Deleuze (in Bayard 1996) aptly explains, *the imaginary is not the unreal, but rather the impossibility to distinguish between the real and the unreal*. That the nation is imagined does not turn it into a lesser mode of existence than other identities (Eriksen 1993; Sansot 1995).

National identities are bound to be endlessly constructed, negotiated,

patched up, made of bits and pieces. At the same time, they are not *nothing*. A nation participates both of the concrete and the imaginary, and its imaginary aspects are part and parcel of its concrete components. Not everything about nation-building boils down to deception and make-believe (Eriksen 1993).<sup>15</sup>

The construction of a nation is not only a top-down process. Part of it escapes the will of planners, and fortunately so. Individuals play a key role,<sup>16</sup> and there are only so many plausible versions of history.<sup>17</sup> The development of nationhood implies establishing a relation between an inevitable social, religious and regional diversity and a political project carried out by institutions and sustained by an ideology. It is a process of integration of various populations. That process is inscribed in history, and by definition, it is never completed (Schnapper 1994).

We may never know exactly *why* the category “nation” has been such a success story in modern times, but that does not give us the right to write it off as an anomaly or an anachronism. The historical development of nationhood is neither a temporary departure from what “should have happened” or a smokescreen hiding “the real thing” (Nairn 1997). Discourses about the “end of” are no novelty, but ours is a world in which, for better and for worse, the national category remains “widely, if unevenly, available and resonant as a category of social vision and division” (Brubaker 1996b:21), if only because, as Deudney (1996:441) stresses, nations are “intergenerational communities, bonding the present to the past and future”.

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15 “Political entrepreneurs cannot construct a nation *ex nihilo*... Raw materials include myths, symbols and cultural boundaries; territorial and administrative boundaries; networks and patterns of social communication; the ethnodemographic, demographic and religious maps and their relation to the political map; and the manner in which and the extent to which cultural markers are associated with political power of economic status” (Brubaker 1996b:355).

16 “National identity is as much about choice of partner, doctor or contractor, friends and social affiliations as it is about the symbols of nationhood devised and purveyed by those who make it their business to propagate such things” (Kirby 1995)

17 “Despite the “invention of tradition” that the writing of ethnohistory may involve, unless it also makes genuine contact with people’s actual experiences, that is, with a history that has happened, it is not likely to be effective” (Peel in Eriksen 1993:94).

Notwithstanding warnings against the “dangerous latecomers to nationalism” (Hobsbawm 1996), there are many logically conceivable political societies, but not many historically possible ones. The constitution of human societies into modern, democratic political societies has been linked to the development of nationhood, which remains a privileged category of political space (Schnapper 1994). Dahrendorf (1991) too stresses that so far, the ideal of citizenship has been concretised and guaranteed only within the borders of national states, notwithstanding academic rejections of the national dimension as outdated or inherently evil. Even if, conceptually, we should retain the distinction between nation and state, there is more than a contingent link between both. Neither the formation of a worldwide market, the increasing awareness of transnational environmental issues, or the academic and mediatic praise of sub-national cultures are convincing acts of birth of a new *civitas*. When all is said and done about various theories of the nation, one thing remains that gives the nation its materiality: the territory, preferably sovereign (Allmang 1999). There may be no “historical law” of nationhood, but there is no nation without place.

Precisely, Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians find themselves today in a situation where they can act as sovereign peoples on given territories. But to them, that situation is still a novelty, whereas it has rather been the rule in Western Europe. In general, the states of Central and Eastern Europe are of more recent vintage than those of Western Europe. Central and East Europeans have some reason to be aware of the fragility of their existence as sovereign peoples.

One can react in two ways to such feelings of vulnerability. The first possible mental reaction is an irony sometimes bordering on nihilism, a theme found in all the literatures of Central and Eastern Europe. The other possible reaction consists in an overcompensatory, vehement emotional attachment to a particular territory, praised as the cradle of one’s nationhood, an attitude also found everywhere in the region (Tismaneanu 1998). And Baltic societies certainly contain nationalist *discourses* of an ilk that elicits justified mistrust in the West (although similar ones thrive here as well, and even tend to gain more votes). Such discourses are interesting objects of study in their own right. But we need to reject the idea that, by itself, the *de facto* existence of such nationalisms turns

“Lithuania”, “Latvia” or “Estonia” into categories of social and political division that are *by definition* more primordial, premodern or irrational than the categories “Sweden”, “Spain” or “France”.

When it comes to the ways national societies work and the ways people actually perceive and relate to each other, the visions of Europe as a juxtaposition of “Western/civic nations” and “Eastern/ethnic nations” do not make a lot of sense. Latvia is neither more nor less “ethnic” than Sweden. Every historical nation entails both a civic principle and an ethnic principle. These principles can never be made fully congruent, neither conceptually nor practically. The tension between them cannot and should not be defined away. It is not an anomaly. Both at the individual and the collective level, national identities have a tangible base (they are not “empty signifiers”, they do not arise out of *nothing*) but at the same time they are bound to be endlessly constructed, negotiated, patched up, made of bits and pieces. We can state, then, that *there can be no citizenship if a majority of citizens does not share the idea that the nation is somehow greater than the sum of its component parts, and the idea that there is a public sphere, lying beyond individual interests, in which conflicts are to be formulated and negotiated.*

### **III– Institutional Level: Citizenship, Consensus and Conflict**

We can start by retaining two basic notions from our theoretical overview: firstly, citizenship is a way of organizing plurality. Its operative principle is political equality, which supposes both representation and participation. Participation can neither be total or constant, which justifies representation. Symmetrically, representation can never be complete or adequate, which justifies participation (Roman 1995). Secondly, citizenship excludes the discovery of a central principle: it is the impossible synthesis between equality and freedom. The *conflictual* process of searching for that synthesis is valuable in itself.

#### **A – Consensus And Its Risks**

Citizenship therefore hinges on the question of the nature of the links between *state*, *political society* and *civil society*. They must remain separated

and limit each other. Neither the state nor civil society act by themselves spontaneously in a democratic fashion: it is the separation between state and civil society that allows the political society to be born.

A face-to-face contact between the state and civil society would lead to the victory of one of them against the other, but not to democracy. The state can destroy the political system by claiming to be in unmediated contact with the people, or to be the direct expression of social demands (authoritarian populism). Another danger arises when the political society itself invades the state and civil society: oligarchies, including political parties, can accumulate resources and impose their choices to citizens who thereby are reduced to their role of voters (example: the Italian *partitocrazia*).

Another, less obvious danger exists if both the state and the political society are viewed as being pure *reflections* of civil society rather than its abstraction. The status of civil society in social sciences is a complex set of arguments not all of which are congruent (Foley & Edwards 1996).<sup>18</sup> The notion of civil society becomes easily misleading, for it tends to nurture representations of society as a consensual whole. A hallmark of the civil society argument is its refusal to give a central place to political power and to conflictual relations between social groups. The empirical constation of the consensus (where it exists) or its position as precondition (where it does not) defines away the legitimacy of conflict: it becomes “archaic” or “anachronic”.

The civil society argument easily issues in advocating the depoliticisation of conflict and presenting consensus as the normal state of a true democracy. As Touraine (1994) puts it, “the dominant model of society externalises

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18 It is commonly accepted that networks of civil associations, if they are sufficiently dense, can promote the stability and effectiveness of the polity (*ibid.*). This is what we can call the civil society argument. In Northern Italy for instance, civil society was found to reinforce the efficacy of institutions (Putnam 1993). In Eastern Europe under communism, civil society (in whatever way it could exist) acted as a democratic counterweight to an undemocratic state, albeit with difficulty. Since self-interest by itself is not enough to sustain a democratic society, the civil society argument needs the further hypothesis of enlightened, virtuous citizens (Baechler 1994:136). A democracy with only virtuous citizens would work perfectly. Conversely, if no citizens were virtuous, democracy would be impossible. Reality is somewhere on that theoretical continuum. What proportion of virtuous citizens is needed? Is there a threshold? Are virtuous citizens virtuous all the time? Obviously not. Resolving these questions theoretically seems impossible.

conflict. It portrays society as an immense mainstream. We are so used to hearing about minorities, marginality or social exclusion that we forget that these words conjure up an image of society as devoid of any essential conflict". What is gaining currency today is the post-modern representation of societies at peace with themselves (Baudrillard 1992), the metaphor of apolitical and conflict-free societies where distribution of tasks only obeys pragmatism (Birnbaum 1975). That supposes a professionalisation of political life combined with benign indifference from the citizens.

To use a medical metaphor, we could say that such consensual societies are like overprotected bodies that tend to lose their natural defences against viral aggressions (Baudrillard 1990). Citizenship supposes not the lack of conflict, but the lack of social violence: citizens, quite simply, have to accept to live together, notwithstanding eventual intense conflicts within society. The constitutive principle of citizenship is the political—that is, pacified—expression of conflict. Democratic citizenship needs consensus on one point only: the rules of the game. Beyond that, consensus is *not* particularly desirable. It is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for the organization of plurality (van Gunsteren 1997; 1998). If depoliticised consensus comes to be seen as an end in itself, then dissenting voices tend to become ostracised. That can happen in many different ways.<sup>19</sup>

In a democracy, politics is a set of strategies used in order to reach partly unreachable political ends (Baechler 1994). These rules are means to ends never reached but which give their meaning to political activities

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19 We can list three such possibilities. First, the democratic base of consensus makes it possible to avoid the question of *the limits of lawmaking*. Modern societies are hallmarked by the creation of an immense and ever-increasing set of laws. More and more things become either compulsory, forbidden, or in any case regulated. If it can be proven that a law can *somehow* contribute to collective well-being (for instance, a law making bike helmets compulsory), then contestation of it gets easily denounced as irrational and therefore illegitimate (but why is it actually impossible to regulate *everything* here and now?). Secondly, ostracisation can happen by legal means, notably when the potential dissenter comes *from outside*: all it takes is a set of legal instruments making sure that the outsider remains an outsider. Switzerland, for instance, is hallmarked by a high degree of social consensus. It has been ruled by the same combination of political parties since 1959 (Marti 1996). At the same time, it is very difficult to become a Swiss citizen (Schnapper & Centlivres 1991). (This note continues on the next page)

(Touraine 1994). Therefore, political equality is the rule of the game, not its result (Todorov 1996a). Differences are given, so unity can only be the outcome of an effort. Perfect unity (in the sense of sameness or perfect equality) is by definition out of reach. Conflict is not contingent, but rather an inevitable dimension of the human condition, due to the fact that human beings are free, conscious and live in societies (Baechler 1994).

Civil society must be strong in the defence of the common good, not in the defence of itself *as civil society* (Foley & Edwards 1996). If civil society becomes idealised at the expense of the common good (hazy as that notion might be), then that makes it possible to ask countless benefits from institutions without having to justify yourself (Bruckner 1995). The notion of “rights to” is powerfully mobilising. If you can establish a right and prove you are deprived of it, then you become an objective victim. Parekh (in Beiner 1995), for instance, contends in his defense of multiculturalism that the state is obliged to serve the pluralistic subgroups, not vice-versa.

Not only does that rationale nurture the demagogic idea that the state is essentially a milk cow, but it also obscures the extent to which identity is socially nurtured and constructed, rather than being the mechanistic reflection of the “natural” truth of each individual or group. Struggles over identity are not only struggles *between* identities, but also struggles *within* a particular field of shared relevance (a polity) that gives them meaning (Calhoun 1994b).

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(Continued) The intern consensus of the Swiss polity is protected by watertight external borders. Thirdly, when the dissenter comes *from within*, its ostracisation can be done politically. There is, for instance, a striking coincidence between the overall ideological reconciliation of the left and the right in France in 1983, and the electoral breakthrough of the far-right National Front in 1984 (Taguieff 1991). The French political space has become relatively pacified: verbal contests notwithstanding, most parties agree on most things. At the same time, very symptomatically, they have by and large proven unable to take up a debate with Le Pen. He is part and parcel of the public space, but there is no interlocution. He speaks in a void. Likewise, Haider in Austria has been able to build momentum *not in spite of* the political and social consensus that has dominated the country since the end of World War II, but *because of* that consensus. Le Pen and Haider are not anomalies, but logical outcomes of societies that started to see consensus as an end in itself, and where dissent had to find new, unconventional channels of expression.

If that field of shared relevance is ignored or rejected, then it is the very existence of the other becomes offensive. From there, the step towards essentialisation (both of oneself and the other) is small. Essentialising tendencies are pervasive in identity discourses (Bruckner 1995; Calhoun 1994b). “When feelings and attitudes are the main referents of arguments, to attack any position is automatically to insult its holder, or even to assail his or her perceived “rights”; every *argumentum* becomes *ad hominem*” (Hughes 1993:66). The common world then becomes the mere community of people’s disagreements. The political becomes subordinated to the judiciary, and is turned into a balancing act between irreducible subjectivities (Bruckner 1995). Law is no longer what unites people, but what separates them.

When all parts become victims, secession becomes a solution. At the end of *Multicultural Citizenship*, Kymlicka acknowledges that he has reached the limits of the liberal paradigm, and that the granting of group-differentiated rights does not necessarily have soothing effects. In such cases, Kymlicka writes, “maybe we should be more willing to consider secession”. Ironically, the polity, the “field of shared relevance”, rejected *a priori* because of its identification with “the views of the majority”, becomes desirable again *ex post*.

The conclusion we can draw here is that democratic citizenship does not boil down to the power of rationality (republicanism), the freedom of interests groups (liberalism), or communitarian identity politics (cultural citizenship). It combines elements which tend to drift away from each other and which all can lead to social violence if they are allowed to act without limitation (Touraine 1994).

It seems that a democratic political system has to recognize the existence of unsurmountable conflicts, at an equal distance between republican rationality and liberal relativism. To reject common references in the name of factual diversity is as dangerous as to reject diversity in the name of a norm (Schneider 1993). On the one hand, we no longer believe that human beings are only citizens and that “irrational” idiosyncrasies are necessarily damageable. We believe that a human being is more than a citizen of a state. Politics is not everything. Modern value pluralism supposes that we reject any attempt to switch back to a premodern, pre-political conception of the “good” (Wolin 1993). On the other hand, in a democracy, citizenship cannot be viewed as an identity on a par with others (Walzer 1992). We need to reject the neo-conservative



notion that the civic culture that best suits a modern civil society is based on a combination of private initiative and political atony (Cohen & Arato 1993). That project feeds on the ideal of a full control of civil society by itself, whereby democracy then becomes the mere managing of weak, scattered social demands and of competitiveness-induced economic measures. But pure and simple pragmatism is itself a utopia. Facts are constructed through ideas, and figures depend on mathematical methods.

Tocqueville stresses that the democratic character of political culture or institutions cannot be maintained without active citizen participation in egalitarian institutions, civil associations and political organisations. Even the most developed civil society needs more than just passive tolerance: it needs, if not a substantive notion of the common good, then some common concerns or, if one prefers, discourses and debates about the common good that do not conflate the notion of “common good” with the notion of “rights to” (Calhoun 1993).

## **B – The Management of Political Conflict**

Institutions provide patterns of and for interactions in the search for the common good. “In plural societies”, van Gunsteren (1998:48) writes, “there are numerous institutions designed to process plurality: the media, the courts, conversation (talking the matter out), therapy, management, a municipal council, a forum, arbitration, mediation, the free press, parliament, and a party congress”.

Different systems vary to the degree to which they approach the ideal of political equality. Equality can be measured by the extent to which people can play a role in decision-making, the extent to which governmental decisions are subject to popular control, and the extent to which ordinary people are involved in the running of the political community (Lively 1995). A minimal definition of democracy is: a set of procedural rules for arriving at collective decisions. Some conditions of responsible government can be asserted with fair assurance: wide freedom of association, freedom of speech, free elections. Other conditions may be necessary: majority decision procedure, responsible party system (Lively op.cit).

So far, the existence of power groups which take it in turns to govern via free elections remains the only concrete form in which democratic principles have been realized (Bobbio 1987). Citizen participation is

necessary to ensure that decisions of national importance are made in accordance with the popular will and that political leaders represent the people. Elections are a privileged moment of citizen participation. In elections, participation can be analysed both in qualitative and in quantitative terms. One can look both at how people vote and at how much (or how little) they vote. One can also try to understand why they vote the way they do and as much (or as little) as they do.

The major difficulty in understanding post-communist citizenship is that the three elements mentioned above—state, political society, civil society—find themselves in a state of simultaneous upheaval (Offe 1992). As suggested in chapter I, post-communist societies are dominated by a conflictual and contradictory complex of social actions. Znepolsky (1996) contends that the neo-liberal promise has not been fulfilled. He writes about the “neo-liberal utopia” that coexists with the remnants of the socialist utopia, which now functions like a retrospective conservative utopia. Different fragments of both utopias often coexist within persons.

Democracy supposes support from the people, but that support is not necessarily expressed in political terms. Compared with economic goods, political goods are less tangible and cannot be easily evaluated. The difference between the *homo economicus* and the *homo politicus* is that the citizen does not “pay” and often the consequences of his actions escape internalization (Sartori 1987). Citizenship today is mostly a passive role: citizens are spectators who vote (Walzer 1992). We may focus on values and beliefs and try to find if “enough” citizens hold beliefs that are conducive to civiness. However, political theory cannot give us a quantitative threshold: we cannot establish theoretically how many percent of virtuous citizens the establishment of democracy requires (Baechler 1994). Besides, in any polity, citizens are only intermittently virtuous (Walzer 1992).

Several authors notice the low degree of consensus which hallmarks postcommunist societies, and suggest that consensus or “trust” is a precondition of democracy. I think they tackle the problem the wrong way around. They “solve” the political problem of organizing differences and conflicts by positing its opposite: unity. However, consensus is not a *condition*. It is a problem which citizens have to work on. It is a possible *outcome* of citizens’ activities (van Gunsteren 1997). The postulate that consensus is essential conflates a desired result with the conditions for

producing it. In a complex society, it is illusory to search for a purely philosophical conception of civiness. Civic behaviour refers to a norm that exists within social practices. Thus, to understand citizenship, we must look at how society's intern boundaries are constructed, both in discourses and in institutions (Mische 1993). Families, for instance, play an essential role in the construction of citizenship, but that construction cannot refer to the sphere of intimacy only. People need an institutional "outside" fulfilling functions of recognition and socialization. There can be no democratic citizenship is a society that only exists in a narcissistic, consensual relation to itself. We have to rediscover social relations, that is, relations of power (Touraine 1994). As Walzer (1992) puts it, there is no escape from power and coercion.

Walzer warns against the antipolitical tendencies that accompany the celebration of civil society. What is at stake now in postcommunist countries is not the flourishing of a "virtuous" civil society but rather the construction of a specifically political space, independent of specific interests, where conflicts can be politically formulated and negotiated. It is tempting to develop notions of societies as singular, bounded and internally integrated, and as realms in which people are more or less the same (Calhoun 1993). We tend to nurture the ideal picture of people as inhabiting a single social world and as able to unambiguously place themselves in their social environments (*ibid.*). Consequently, people on borders, children of mixed marriages, people moving geographically, or people climbing or descending the social ladder do not always easily fit in our analytical schemes.

A possible corrective to that distortion is to narrow the focus of analysis. Touraine (1994), for instance, claims that we should focus less on encounters between "cultures" and more on stories of individuals who go from a situation to another and whose identity draws resources from several societies and different cultures. There is a problem of inference. We should be wary of postulating necessary correlations between identities, beliefs, interests and patterns of behaviour. As Elster (1983) writes, "there is no reason to suppose that beliefs shaped by a social position tend to serve the interests of the person in that position. There is no reason to suppose that beliefs shaped by a social position tend to serve the interests of the ruling or dominant group. There is no reason to suppose

that beliefs shaped by interests tend to serve these interests”. Rather than being stated *a priori*, possible correlations are rather something that should be demonstrated.

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## CHAPTER IV

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### Being a Citizen in the Soviet Baltic Republics (1940-1990)

#### **Introduction: on Totalitarianism**

The Soviet Union has been a fascinating object of study, to the point that a sub-discipline in the social sciences was named after it. Sovietology was very much a product of its times. As fields of empirical research, communist countries were quite simply not open for everyone to wander freely and gather material. Soviet policy-makers expended great efforts to assure that what was projected in the official ideology was also realised in life. As a result, Sovietology was maybe the least empirical of the various branches of area studies research. It was criticised in different ways. It was attacked by behaviourists for instance for being too state-centered and for neglecting the movement of societies and cultures. Another criticism was that Sovietology was little more than Russian studies writ large: all problems tended to be seen from the Russian perspective (Chandler 1994; Fleron 1996). However, the common charge that Sovietology failed to anticipate the USSR's demise is partly exaggerated (Revel 1992).

Sovietology has had a complex relation to the notion of totalitarianism. The career of the notion itself has had ups and downs. According to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, the word was coined by Mussolini in the 1920s in order to enthusiastically describe the system he was envisioning for Italy. Trotsky was the first who used the word in a negative sense, in order to characterize Stalin's way of exercising power. After World War II, Hannah Arendt and Friedrich and Brzezinski were the first who tried to theorize the "perverse modernity" of totalitarianism. Pioneering theoreticians of totalitarianism insist on the lack of historical precedent. According to Hannah Arendt, totalitarianism represented a radical novelty, irreducible to traditional

despotisms. Likewise, Friedrich and Brzezinski stress that totalitarianism was an historical innovation. Arendt had mostly Nazi Germany in mind, while Friedrich and Brzezinski took a broader perspective and applied the concept both to fascist Italy, Nazi Germany and Stalin's USSR.

The comparability of these three regimes has been a bone of contention ever since. The question has been made even more sensitive by the fact that, while fascism was overwhelmingly rejected after 1945 as an acceptable alternative to Western-style democracy, Soviet-style communism has elicited more ambiguous reactions, ranging from outright rejection to enthusiastic militancy.

In the 1960s, with the coming of *détente*, the word totalitarian as applied to the USSR came under attack for uselessly reeking of Cold-War rhetoric. The waning popularity of the term in Western scholarship in that decade went hand in hand with the behavioralist revolution in the social sciences. With their clear focus on ideology and state structures at the expense of the movement of societies and cultures, Arendt and Friedrich and Brzezinski provided easy targets to behavioralist critics whom, in turn, were trying to bring up similarities in values and attitudes between capitalist and communist societies.

That debate had the merit of showing that the word "totalitarianism" could be a double-edged weapon for analysis. Taking it as its face value (seeing it as "total"), one could be tempted to view it as *the* universal key to understanding the USSR. Rejecting it, one could toe the opposite line and neglect the concrete effects of Marxism-Leninism's all-embracing ambitions.

Unexpected reinforcement came from the East in the early 1970s, when a number of dissident writers like Zinoviev or Havel restated the value of the term totalitarianism, while nuancing it at the same time. Central to the writings of these authors was the idea that, with the passage of time, post-totalitarian societies were becoming *more* totalitarian, not *less* totalitarian. The bottom line of their argument was that, although the heights of Stalinian terror were a thing of the past and the term "post-totalitarianism" would therefore sound more appropriate, the European communist systems, by the mere virtue of their continued existence, were incrementally shaping the life world of individuals to such an extent that people were integrating the values of the system. In other words, communist regimes no longer resorted to all-out repression for the simple reason that they could afford *not* to.

At the same time, these authors stressed that European communist societies were neither unchanging, monolithic, or totally manipulated from above (Hosking 1991). Various social strata, nationalities and religions continue to exist and interact within them, albeit in specific forms. Thus, on the one hand, the Soviet state was all-embracing: horizontally, it was widely involved with social institutions; vertically, it dominated these institutions (Motyl 1992). On the other hand, totalitarianism was based on fear, but not only. Too much may have been made of the use of coercion, and too little attention might have been paid to the unifying principles which served to justify it. Other elements must come into play, like for instance regional diversity, or the degree of consensus in the country.

The USSR was successful in maintaining the integrity of the world's greatest state territorial area with the most complex ethnic, religious and national differences of any state in history. When studying Soviet society at the microlevel (for example, the activities of a given local party secretary, or a kolkhoze), what appears is that the border between decision-makers (supposed to be omnipotent) and ordinary citizens (supposed to be submissive) was not as watertight as the word "totalitarian" taken at its face value would have us believe. Whatever the weight of the Party-based structures, some spaces for agency remained. The social and mental we/them dichotomy, widely—and rightly—put forth as a key dimension of communist societies, is nevertheless not the only dynamic principle of these societies (Ferro 1997). Zinoviev, for instance, stresses vigorously the complexity of the we/them interplay at the local level. The problem is that such studies remain scarce, and even quasi non-existent for those areas of the USSR which, like the Baltic republics, used to be almost completely off-limits for Western scholars and journalists.

That leaves us with the impression that the elements of the totalitarian model can be made to fit into any theoretical framework—be it that of collective choice, political culture, political economy, class conflict or some other perspective. Many theories of totalitarianism are possible, but totalitarianism itself is not a theory, in the sense of body of systematically related generalisations of explanatory value. Totalitarianism is rather a typological construct. It enables to distinguish among types of states, political systems, regimes or other entities to which the construct might be affixed (Motyl 1992).

The notion of totalitarianism is not in itself total, in the sense that it

has no ambition to give an exhaustive picture of a society or a political system. Most of all, it has a descriptive value, and in that it remains indispensable. Pre-1989 communist states were different, and radically so, from dictatorial states such as the Greece of the colonels or Franco's Spain (Motyl 1992). Remove the term "totalitarianism", and it is not obvious how the Soviet Union differs from them. But these differences are crucial (Hosking 1991). Totalitarian societies are mutually comparable in a specific way. Each has a historically unique nature and, as Friedrich himself acknowledges, we may never know exactly why such societies ever could exist. Neither Nazism nor Stalinism were doomed to happen. Political regimes are never given, and even in totalitarianism politics remains "the art of making irreversible choices in unpredicted circumstances and according to incomplete knowledge" (Aron 1955). Totalitarian regimes are neither eternal nor a visitation of fate, but they have consequences in proportion with their messianistic ambitions.

## **I – The Scene**

### **A – The Baltic Historical Background**

In being able to look back upon an era of recent statehood (1918-1940), all three Baltic nations possessed powerful national symbols to mobilize their peoples' support for independence (Smith 1996). When new political and social spaces were opened up by Gorbachev's twin policies of *perestroika* and *glasnost*, the idea that national independence was both desirable and feasible crystallised across the Baltic Soviet republics, with a speed and an ease that can only be understood by recourse to history.

Baltic nationhoods, and all the more so Baltic statehoods, are of relatively recent vintage. Lithuanians could boast a medieval kingdom stretching from the Baltic to the Black Sea, but it became increasingly entangled with Poland. What today is Lithuania and the eastern Latvian province of Latgale were part of the Polish Commonwealth, whose fate they shared: when Poland was incrementally incorporated into the Russian empire, so did they (Latgale in 1772, Lithuania in 1795).

No Estonian or Latvian states ever existed before 1918. The territories of *Estland* (corresponding to the northern half of today's Estonia) and *Livland* and *Kurland* (together corresponding to the southern half of



today's Estonia, plus today's Latvia minus its easternmost part) were German-dominated from the XIIIth onwards, and although Peter the Great won them in 1721, the German cultural, economic and even political imprint on them remained until the First World War.

In the Russian empire, the current Baltic entities did not exist as separate territories. Thus, during czarist times, as before them, notions of Estonian, Latvian or Lithuanian citizenship were unknown. They only appeared in 1918, with independence. For the three Baltic peoples, modern national consciousness developed only in the second half of the nineteenth century. Lithuanians differed from Latvians and Estonians, and were actually more similar to Poles and Czechs, in being able to refer to "their" medieval kingdom taken as the ancestor of the nation in the making. Neither Estonian nor Latvian newly-formed elites could fruitfully use memories of the German provinces of Estland and Livland for nation-building purposes. Minaudier (1997) notices that Estonians sometimes refer to the pre-1227 (ie. pre-German) unit as a "free state", and from that base call the 1918-1940 era as the "second republic" and the current era as "third republic", but that may depend more on a linguistic conflation between "republic" (*vabariik*) and "free state" (*vaba riik*) than on a conscious attempt to instrumentalize the pagan era as a national base.

However, the discrepancy between Lithuania on the one hand and Estonia and Latvia on the other should not be overstated. Memories of the medieval Lithuanian kingdom notwithstanding, one can say that, rather than preexisting units that became incorporated into the Russian empire, the current entities "Latvia", "Lithuania" and "Estonia" indeed came into being within the context of that empire. Within a few decades, the Baltic peoples successfully devised coherent national identities, both superficially similar and truly different. The three of them have shown resilience to adverse circumstances, while at the same time being shaped by these circumstances (Balodis 1990; Raun 1990; von Rauch 1974; Vardys & Sedaitis 1997).

That resilience is linked to different factors, of which we can only give a cursory treatment here. These factors are: a general identification with the West, the centrality of language in nationhood, and an experience of statehood.

## 1 – Identification with “the West”

The “Westernness” of Balts is both religious, political and linguistic. Before their absorption in the czarist empire, they were dominated by Sweden, Germany, or Poland, whose respective faiths wore off on Balts, who in their immense majority are not orthodox. When the first independence came in 1918, Balts adopted constitutions inspired from certain Western European ones. During that period (1918-1940), there was also a reaction against the Russian language, whose study decreased dramatically, especially in Estonia, where it almost vanished<sup>1</sup> (Kreindler 1990). Conversely, direct cultural relations were established with Western Europe and the United States. Throughout the Soviet period, the Baltic republics remained the most westernised among Soviet republics (Park 1994). Somehow they embody the tragedy of Central Europe according to Kundera, namely that it was culturally in the West, politically in the East, and geographically at the center.

## 2 – The Centrality of Language

Today, the Baltic languages have strength and depth, but their speakers remain aware of their recent emergence, and they do not take them for granted (Kreindler 1990). The three Baltic peoples speak specific languages. Latvian and Lithuanian are the only Baltic languages strictly speaking, while Estonian belongs to the Fenno-Ugric family of languages.

The Baltic national identities have been constructed around these languages. Somewhat awkwardly, we could say that there is a Latvia (and a Lithuania, and an Estonia) because there are people who speak Latvian (and Lithuanian and Estonian), rather than the other way around. In the Baltic area, national identity was chiefly constituted by reference to a cultural base, central to which was a specific language.

The other classic building block of culture, namely religion, also played a role, albeit more in civilisational than national terms (with reservations for

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<sup>1</sup> Minaudier (1997) emphasizes that one would be hard put to find convincing evidence of long-lasting interest of Estonians for Russian culture. There are, for instance, hardly any Russian melodies in Estonian folklore. As a matter of fact, Estonia was the only Soviet Socialist Republic in which knowledge of Russian *decreased* in the 1980s.

Lithuania). Estonians and Latvians are majoritarily lutheran, while Lithuanians are majoritarily catholic. Identification with Western Christendom has been decisive for the Balts' self-identification with Western civilisation as opposed to orthodox Russia. Yet, as possible fixations for nationhood, these faiths had the inconvenient of being shared with the immediate masters (Germans in Estonia, Germans or Poles in Latvia, Poles in Lithuania).

As a whole, Lithuanians have been much more successful than Latvians and Estonians<sup>2</sup> at instrumentalising religious faith for national purposes. However, catholicism is not all there is to Lithuanian nationalism, and the relations between the Lithuanian Church hierarchy and Lithuanian nationalists have never been as friction-free as the received equation Lithuanian = catholic seems to imply.<sup>3</sup>

In the context of the XIXth century Russian empire, the social structure of the Baltic area was one in which "class" coincided with "nationality". In *Estland* and *Livland*, the upper classes were German. They had been present in the area since the XIIIth century, and their incorporation into the Russian empire in 1721 had not significantly reduced their privileges. In Lithuania, the landowners and the clergy were Poles (or Polonised Lithuanians). Balts formed the bulk of the peasantry, and their nationhood was weak in several respects: not only did they have no institutions of their own save village councils, but until 1850 there were few traces of awareness of even a community of language. Symptomatically, Estonians themselves had no name to designate their own group, save a purely geographical word (*maarahvas*) roughly meaning country people. Their German masters would classify them as *Undeutsche* (which officially defined them by what they were not) or use the imprecise word *Esten*, of which we do not know if it reproduces a local ethnoname or the simple German designation of a cardinal point.

The Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanians languages were rather three dialectal

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2 Laitin (1995:289) notices that some Estonians in the XIXth century converted to orthodoxy and that the protestant-orthodox cleavage does not contain "the ideology of non-bridgeability that surrounds the Muslim-Christian divide". In any case, Estonians today are largely secular in practice.

3 Anecdotically, we can notice that the Grand Old Man of modern Lithuanian independence, Vytautas Landsbergis, is not a catholic but a protestant (although an irate Vilnius taxi driver once assured me that the man was a Jew).

continuums whose mutual external borders were either rather watertight (Estonian/Latvian) or rather porous (Latvian/Lithuanian). Although these languages were rich in folklore, they had no body of academic or artistic literature. Neither were they taught, whereby becoming educated entailed for Balts adoption of a new language (German or Polish) (White 1996).

Baltic national identities were constructed through the formation of standardised vernaculars and the formation of indigeneous educated elites (Kreindler 1990). Part of the ruling German elites did take part in the effort of national identity-building, especially in its first phase. As a late after-effect of Herderian ideas, interest for the local languages grew among certain Baltic Germans. They provided the material basis and intellectual underpinnings of the subsequent Latvian and Estonian national movements.<sup>4</sup> However, the movement soon acquired its own momentum, and from the end of the 1850s onwards, a new generation wished to acquire education without giving up its Estonian or Latvian identity (White 1996). Movements like the *Young Latvians* or the *St Petersburg Patriots* began to publish journals and campaigning for the emancipation of Estonian and Latvian from their German masters.

The russification campaign launched by the tsarist regime in the mid-XIXth century was mainly directed against the Baltic Germans. It helped to weaken the German grip on Balts while failing to replace the German influence with a Russian one. Thus, the russification campaign indirectly promoted the growing assertiveness of Latvians and Estonians. The russification campaign was also directed against the Poles. Given that Lithuanians, not without some reason, were suspected of sympathy for them, they had to face common repressive measures, like the ban of the Roman alphabet from 1864 to 1904. Therefore, Lithuanians could less easily play their local masters against the Russians than their Baltic neighbours did. At the same time, russification had the effect of rallying all segments of the Lithuanian population around the demand for language rights (Kreindler 1990).

The post-1918 independences forced the Baltic languages to become sociologically complete: suddenly, they had to perform the range of

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4 The *Gelernte Estnische Gesellschaft* was founded in 1838. Kant published his *Critiques* in Riga, and it was in Riga too that Herder elaborated the ideas which then influenced Baltic perceptions of nationality (White 1996)

functions inherent in modern statehood. At the same time, independence offered concrete possibilities for Balts to expand and standardize their native tongues. For the first time, these languages became languages of a whole educational system, including universities (Kreindler 1990). The publication of books, magazines and newspapers increased dramatically. Latvia, for instance, became the second country in Europe regarding the publication of books per capita after Denmark.

When the Soviet Union annexed them in 1940, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia were no longer “emerging nations” whose main parameters remained to be defined. They had been independent for two decades. They were viable political societies whose level of development, by most standards, matched that of neighbouring European countries (von Rauch 1974; Lieven 1994; Hiden & Salmon 1991). Baltic societies were diversified, with bourgeoisies, middle classes and intellectuals, national literatures, universities and institutions, all structured around national languages. Subsequent Soviet-era migrants often failed to grasp the full measure of the “maturity” of these languages, which no longer were patchworks of peasant dialects, and that maturity’s implications for Baltic nationhoods. When settling down in one of the Baltic Soviet republics, they did not necessarily understand that they were *not* settling down in one of the many Russian regions where small peasant peoples had coexisted with Russians for generations, and where the Bolsheviks had instituted more or less fictitious “national” autonomies. They tended to behave accordingly, which many Balts still find hard to stomach today.

### *3 – The Experience of Statehood*

Today, perceptions of Baltic interwar statehoods balance between skepticism and idealisation. They are influenced by what happened before and after them. The period of independent statehood had its weaknesses but in retrospect it can only seem better than what came after it.

The newly independent Baltic states adopted very democratic constitutions that included possibilities of referenda along Swiss *Eidgenossenschaft* lines as well as generous provisions for minorities (Hope 1996). The interwar period was hall marked by overall economic upswing and a noticeable expansion of primary, secondary, higher and adult education.

The key political problem of that period was governmental instabil-

ity, with an average of more than one cabinet a year. Baltic constitutions favoured an extreme multipartism. In Latvia for instance, any group of five persons could register as a political party, and 26 parties came into parliament at the 1925 elections. Certain commentators have also emphasised the relative lack of democratic culture among the suddenly enfranchised smallholders who formed the bulk of the political personnel.

That instability fostered authoritarian reactions in 1926 (Lithuania) and in 1934 (Estonia, Latvia). The three authoritarian regimes lasted more or less until the 1940 annexation, which makes it difficult to assess the direction in which the countries were going. We can only speculate about it, but at least the authoritarianisms that prevailed in Latvia (1934–1940), Estonia (1934–1940) and Lithuania (1926–1940) were fundamentally different from the totalitarian logic that informed the functioning of the neighbouring Soviet state (Hiden & Salmon 1991; Lieven 1994; Kirby 1995).

The authoritarian regimes of Antanas Smetona (Lithuania), Karlis Ulmanis (Latvia) and Konstantin Päts (Estonia) can be classified as benign rather than malignant, if one approves of such definition. Hope (1996:64) stresses that “a new cultural identity, born politically in the 1860s, and the political democracy born in 1920–22 continued to shape the political beliefs and actions of Balts in a way undreamt of in Germany after 1933”. For instance, liberal education for all continued to be supported. Minority language education remained untouched in Latvia (Lacombe 1997). In Lithuania, Smetona continued to support actively the Jewish Community, and minority language schools remained partly or entirely subsidised. Baltic politicians often had a corporatist rather than extremist mentality and identified themselves with rural smallholders politics (Hope 1996).

Neither is there convincing evidence of increased political extremism among the population at large. Given the nature of the sparsely populated and isolated countryside, and the unhurried tempo of a very traditional church year, many people quite simply did not take political twists and turns very seriously (Hope 1996).

#### *4 – The Beginning of the Soviet Period*

The states of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia were annexated by the Soviet Union in 1940 as a consequence of the 1939 Soviet-German pact. The

process of annexation has been quite well laid out by historians (see for instance Kirby 1995; Poska 1971; Trapans 1971). Roughly, it happened in three stages: a *preparatory* phase (fall 1939 – spring 1940), during which the countries were isolated and the USSR acquired military bases on their territories by forced treaties; an *occupational* phase (summer 1940), during which a Soviet-sponsored government was installed and rigged elections were held;<sup>5</sup> a *linking-up* phase (August 1940), during which the countries formally joined the USSR.

On September 7, 1940, the Supreme Soviet of the USSR issued a decree conferring Soviet citizenship upon all Latvians, Lithuanians and Estonians who were residents in their respective countries. The situation of the Baltics became shifting again in 1941, when the German army invaded the USSR, but the subsequent German defeat and the return of the Red Army in the region in 1944 sealed the fate of the three countries for several decades to come.

The repression following entry into the USSR, culminating in the night of 13–14 June 1940 when about 60 000 persons were deported, had the affect of alienating even the people who, in the beginning phase of Sovietisation, might have been neutral. When, one week later, the German army attacked the USSR, popular uprisings took place in all three Baltic republics, parts of which were freed from Soviet rule even before German troops had reached them. These insurrections made obvious the illegitimate nature of Soviet rule (Shtromas 1996).

After the return of the Red army in the area in late 1944, anti-Soviet movements of guerilla were (called the forest brotherhoods) lasted for another eight years. Misiunas & Taagepera (1983) estimate that, in Lithuania, about 100 000 persons were directly involved in armed resistance at one time or another (40 000 in Latvia, 30 000 in Estonia). To these figures must be added the people who did not fight but carried out

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5 That the July 1940 elections were rigged, and that the entry into USSR contradicted the will of the overwhelming majority of the population, has been known since early on (Balodis 1941; Borgelin 1941; de Beausse 1997). However, the fiction that Balts somehow applied voluntarily for USSR membership still lingers on. From time to time, it raises its head in the speeches of some Russian politicians or, much more rarely, in the readers' mail of *The Baltic Times*. Yet, academically, it is a dead horse nobody would dare to flog today.

certain duties on behalf of the guerillas. Shtromas (1996:93) estimates that for several years after the end of World War II, “the Soviets in the Baltic area controlled firmly only the larger towns and roads, whereas the countryside belonged to the guerilla entirely”.

The Baltic area had been colonised by Russia before, but the *Soviet* colonisation was without historical precedent (Hallik 1998a). There was in Stalin a mix of Russian imperial tradition and ideological messianism. The shock that was caused among the inhabitants of the Baltic states by their quick incorporation into the Soviet Union cannot be underestimated, even though it is hard for us, sixty years on, to capture the full measure of it. We are dependent on direct testimonies.<sup>6</sup> The military invasion and forced annexations exposed Baltic peoples to what they took as an overwhelming, backward force.<sup>7</sup> From our present perspective, such testimonies may sound prejudiced or ethnocentric, but the annexation took place at the worst possible time in Soviet history, that is, just after Stalinism had reached unprecedented heights of repression, thanks to which Stalinian rule was better entrenched than ever before. The Balts were not subjected to a particular cruelty. Their treatment, brutal as it was,<sup>8</sup> resulted from the logic

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6 These are quite numerous. For instance, the memoirs of the French ambassador in Riga, who stayed on until mid-September 1940 before leaving to Sweden, bring home the daily disarray of the Latvian population in the first weeks of sovietisation (de Beausse 1997). On the general repression that came with the sovietisation of the Baltic area, and particularly the deportations of 1941 and 1949, the *Hearings of the US House of Representatives's Committee to Investigate the Incorporation of the Baltic States into the USSR* (1954) remain a valuable source. See also Misiunas & Taagepera (1983) and, for a post-1989 assessment, Courtois (1998).

7 “In contrast to the British and French colonial empires, the [Russian] empire is at the gates, and its center, the Russian nation, is perceived by most peripheral people, from Balts to Georgians, as economically and culturally arrierated” (Moïsi & Rupnik 1991:56).

8 Repressive measures aimed at crushing any resistance to the Soviet rule in the area were decided as early as 11 October 1939, that is, eight months before the Baltic states were taken over by the USSR. It has been estimated that during the process of incorporation into the Soviet Union, 39 % of Lithuanians, 40 % of Estonians and 43 % of Latvians had members of their family deported, imprisoned or killed (Rose 1997:41). Drawing from his encounters with Baltic inmates, Solzhenitsyn ponders about the fate of the Balts in several places in *the Gulag Archipelago* (“Should we, or should we not, regard the expulsions from the Baltic states as “deportation of nations”? They do not satisfy the formal requirements. The Balts were not deported wholesale: as nations they appeared to remain in their old homes (...). But they were thinned out, their best people were removed”) (volume III, 1976:390).



of the Soviet system. Then, of course, the Soviet annexation brought to Baltic city streets some country bumpkins of Uralian soldiers “who had never seen wristwatches or flush toilets” (Connor 1992:285). But this time the bumpkins were calling the shots, and the central feature of their rule, beyond its brutality, was that it was fundamentally perceived as *absurd*: its general ruthlessness, bad enough in itself, seemed to be backed up by principles which were impossible to understand.<sup>9</sup>

## **B – Principles of Citizenship and Nationality in the Soviet State**

The Soviet nationalities policy showed considerable vacillations on the continuum between pluralism and assimilation (Connor 1992). It appeared at times confused and contradictory. Marxist-Leninist ideology provided a number of basic values, but no blueprint or a guarantee of implementation of its own precepts (Hill 1992). The problem was increased by the magnitude of Soviet territory and the extreme variety of humans living in it. Nationality policy intertwined with demographic, religious, migration, education, cultural or other policy areas, so the task of managing national relations becomes a single component in a complex web of decision-making. It is unrealistic to think in terms of nationality policy in isolation (Hill 1992).

### *1 – The Ideological Base of the Soviet Nationality Policy*

The USSR was dominated by Russia, but it was not a strictly *Russian* empire. It was the first empire ever to be dominated by a political party. That had both intended and unintended effects (Hosking 1991). The Soviet nationality was based on an array of Leninist precepts supposed

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<sup>9</sup> In his classic essay *The Captive Mind*, first published in 1953 and still very readable today, Milosz excels at expressing how and why the workings of the new rule seemed absurd to most people: “Older people remembered Czarist times; but the new order did not look like Czarist rule at all; it was a thousand times worse. In the years that followed the disintegration of the Czar’s empire, Russia had evolved towards principles of organisation which Europe had never known (... )Why did towns and villages become scattered with flyers and propaganda brochures? Why did loudspeakers shout day and night? Why did lorries carry immense portraits? Why the flowers, the meetings, the tribunes? If there is only one voting list, if there is no choice, what is propaganda good for? People understood nothing” (Milosz 1953) (my translation).

to enounce the formula for managing national heterogeneity. As late as 1986, the program of the CPSU claimed: "The Party has resolved and will continue to resolve [all issues involving the relations among the country's national groups] on the basis of the tested principles of Lenin's nationalities policy" (Connor 1992:31).

The foundations of the communist doctrine regarding nationality were laid out in the years 1903-1914. The Bolsheviks rejected nationalism as an ideological adversary, but nevertheless retained the principle of national state, with a territory and a border.<sup>10</sup> Lenin's dialectical formula for taming nationalism reflected his perception of nationalism as the outgrowth of past discrimination, which meant that the legacy of hostility and distrust could and would be eradicated by national equality.

One basic aspect of that policy, especially at the beginning of the Soviet Union, was to permit and even encourage the use of national languages (Connor 1992). To use a more modern terminology, Lenin was more interested in the message than in the medium. Like missionaries facing pagans, the Party had to make use of the local languages, supposed to fulfill the function of conduits of messages shaped by the CPSU. Party directives, so the rationale went, "would not be resisted as the orders of an alien (Russian) regime if they came dressed in the local tongue and other appropriate national attire" (Connor 1992:32). In 1928, Stalin captured it in the formula "national in form, socialist in content", which made a perfect fit with the definition of the nation he had given three years earlier in *Marxism and the Question of Nationalities*.<sup>11</sup> Stalin's definition of the nation, repeated as late as 1982, was never repudiated or significantly modified (Hill 1992).

The stated objective was not the destruction of nationalities as such, but the destruction of the class enemy. That was supposed to happen within national forms. The phrase "national in form, socialist in content" was repeated as such in the 1961 in Party Program. Besides, that document contained new formulations extolling the harmonious development of all Soviet nationalities as their "flourishing" (*rastsvet*); the process of the "drawing together" (*sblizhenie*) of nationalities was presented as a step on the way to their complete merging (*sliianie*) (Hill 1992:58).

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10 See notably Stalin's 1912 brochure *Marxism and the National Question*.

11 Symptomatically, that definition left aside the political dimension of nationhood.

Officially, society was getting closer to a superior (post-national and supra-national) degree of consciousness, whereas nationhoods continued to be institutionalised at the sub-statelevel. Even in retrospect, it is difficult to separate the desired effects from the undesired effects of Soviet nationality policy, but there is at least a visible measure of continuity in how the Soviet state conceived of its nationality policies.

The claim that “the official objective was not the destruction of nationalities as such” may sound surprising given what actually happened in certain places. In some cases (like Crimean Tatars), the brutal destroying of certain nationalities *was* indeed planned and carried out. In other cases, the “soft” destroying of some problematic peripheral nationalities—among which the three Baltic ones—by their slow demographic dilution in a wider Russian sea, if not directly planned as such (although it is hard to know), was not either viewed as *really* undesirable by the center.

Nevertheless, the official bottom line was not to destroy nationalities, but to destroy the class enemy. That distinction might sound purely rhetorical and even hypocritical, given that russification indeed came as one of the *de facto* effects of that rationale: the October Revolution had taken place in Russia with mostly Russian actors, and Soviet patriotism entailed therefore a privileged relation towards things Russian. Yet that distinction between class and nationality enables us to understand certain features of the Soviet state, and notably its relative decentralisation. Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia did become Soviet republics, but they never became *Russia*, and that *legal* distinction had enormous *practical* consequences.

## 2 – *The Relations between Center and Periphery*

### a – Centralisation

The administrative structure of the Soviet state was strongly centralised. Diplomatic, military and economic power was firmly located in Moscow. The ruling Communist party did not even pretend to federalism (Hosking 1991). Local party branches were subordinated to the all-Union Central Committee in Moscow. The Russian republic contained about 90 % of the Soviet Union’s territory and over 70 % of its population, and was logically the dominant member of the 15-republic Union.

After open Baltic opposition was eliminated, Soviet authorities set in

motion a variety of mechanisms supposed to make their rule ubiquitous and irreversible. Methods of control included the direct subordination of local KGB branches to the center, and the abolition of territorial military units (Zamascikov 1990). Since 1938, the Soviet army, which also fulfilled a function of police, worked on a non-territorial mode. Due to that, Baltic recruits would normally not do military service within the Baltic military region (which contained the three republics and the enclave of Kaliningrad). Besides, given their categorisation as potentially subversive nationalities (along with Jews, Crimean Tatars and Western Ukrainians), Baltic conscripts would as a rule not be able to serve outside the borders of the USSR, for instance in the people's democracies of Central Europe, or in the Navy. The distance between individual republics' authorities and the armed forces was reinforced by the general lack of contacts between the military and the civilian population, save those which authorities encouraged for purposes of political education (Rakowska-Harmstone 1986).

The relations between center and periphery always created problems for Soviet constitutionalists. Their divergences explain why the elaboration of the new 1977 Soviet constitution took about fifteen years. In agreement with the conclusions of the XXIVth congress of the CPSU, the 1977 constitution reinforced the center's prerogatives at the expense of the federal ones (Ginsburgs 1990; Schultz 1990; Uibopuu 1990). It defined the USSR as a unitary multinational state (article 70), while the former 1936 constitution mentioned a federation. The economy was likewise said to be an integrated complex, oriented and managed by the center. At the same time, Soviet jurists continued nonetheless to claim that the fifteen union republics, including Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania, were sovereign states, as was mentioned in the article 76 of the new constitution, which made them "sovereign socialist states".<sup>12</sup>

That theory, however, ignored the articles 73 and 74 of the same con-

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12 That theory was usually buttressed by a variety of arguments. The union republics, for instance, had the right to adopt their own constitutions, and the right of legislative initiative at the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. They also had a formal right to secession, which had far-reaching political consequences under Gorbachev when that right was taken seriously by several peripheral nationalities. Actually, in federal constitutions, the right to secession is an exception rather than a rule. For instance, neither the constitution of the Federal republic of Germany nor the constitution of the United States contain it. There are quite simply no ready-made procedures by which Bavaria or Florida could become independent states.

stitution, which gave effectively the last word to the center.<sup>13</sup> In practice, Union republics could not make use of their sovereignty, be it domestically or internationally (Kherad 1992). Logically, the respective constitutions of the Soviet Baltic republics, adopted in April 1978, tried to combine republican sovereignty and centralism, but they paid lip service to the former while giving more space to the latter.<sup>14</sup> At the sub-constitutional level, the union's fundamental laws gave little latitude to the development of the respective characteristics of the union republics. Overall, the evolution of the balance of power between the center and the republics showed a clear tendency to increased standardisation, not differentiation. Existing differences were too small to justify the notion of a specific Baltic *legal* profile within the USSR.<sup>15</sup> At the same time, as we shall see now, the institutional framing of multi-nationality was not an empty shell.<sup>16</sup>

#### b – Decentralisation

The USSR had federated republics, autonomous republics, and autonomous regions (Bogdan 1993:207).

Fundamentally, the institutionalisation of multinationality by the Soviet regime had its origins in ideology. Of course, the immensity of the Soviet territory *favoured* a certain level (varying in time and place) of power delegation, but as such, it did not *force* to it.<sup>17</sup> As a practical matter, it was certainly hard for the central planners to specify every detail and to

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13 Article 73 habilitated the federal government to act upon any point of republican jurisdiction that could interest the Union as a whole. Article 74 gave the federal constitution prevalence over the republican ones.

14 The imbalance was reflected in the wording of the three Baltic constitutions themselves, which (save the names of the republics) was strictly identical in the first 67 articles.

15 Baltic legislations showed a modicum of specificity only in their criminal codes and in their education laws (compulsory education was 11 years in the Baltic republics against 10 in other parts of the USSR).

16 "Institutional definitions of nationhood did not so much constrain action as constitute basic categories of political understanding, central parameters of political rhetoric, specific types of political interest, and fundamental forms of political identity" (Brubaker 1996b:24)

17 Multi-nationality in czarist Russia, though it may have been perceived, was never institutionalised (Brubaker 1996b).

control every implementation of their orders. At the local level, the people in charge had a certain leeway (highly varying between concrete cases) to adapt centrally-decided policies to local conditions (Barner-Barry & Hody 1995). But the crux of the matter is that the USSR never was conceptualised as a nation-state, not even a Russian one. Even as originally drawn, the borders of the sub-state units in the USSR did not approximate national distribution (Connor 1992).

The *territorial* divisions of nationality were completed by *personal* divisions of nationality. When the pass book was introduced in 1932, the ethnicity of Soviet citizens was registered and became a permanent administrative fact affecting (positively or negatively) every individual's possibilities to education, job and housing (Hosking 1991).<sup>18</sup> Both divisions used the same categories, but they were not congruent with each other (Brubaker 1996b). In other words, your *place of residence* within the USSR had no bearing on your *nationality*.

The nationality of children born in mixed families depended on the one that parents indicated to authorities. Once registered, somebody's nationality could not be changed, regardless of possible changes in residence or language (Bogdan 1993). Whatever the official rhetoric about the ultimate merger of nationalities, their separate existence was authoritatively registered.

Therefore, the framing of nationhood in the Soviet Union contained a fundamental tension between two principles: on the one hand, nationhood was pervasively institutionalised, individually and collectively, at the sub-state level. The citizenry as a whole was *not* defined in national terms: parts of it were, and at a sub-state level only. On the other hand, everything was done at the state level to try and drain these varied sub-Soviet nationhoods of whatever authentic—in other words, potentially subversive—content they may have had, for the benefit of a “Soviet people” which has the increasing favour of official rhetoric.

These two principles contradicted each other. Neither could be realised in full without violating the other: “Territorial autonomy was not carried through because of the special role reserved by the center for Russians and the Russian language. Extra-territorial cultural autonomy was not carried through (except for the Russians) because of the leeway afforded to national republics to “nationalise their territories”” (Brubaker 1996b:40).

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18 Soviet legislation acknowledged neither double nationality (you could not be Russian-Latvian) nor double citizenship (you could not be Soviet-Canadian).

## II – The Actors

### A – Actors at the Top

#### 1 – Party Men

In theory, the five-year plan fused individual, social and state purposes. In practice, implementing the plan shaped power relationships at all levels (individuals, work collectives, Republic ministries, all-Union ministries, Party) (Harding 1992). The USSR was managed by a network of information and patronage, but also of material interests. The *nomenklatura* was an unprecedentedly monolithic and dominant ruling class, buttressed by a panoply of honours and privileges (Hosking 1990; Ferro 1997).

It was only in the post-Stalin era, after the violent period of collectivisation and industrialisation was over, that the new ruling class took shape (Remnick 1994). It had been created by Stalin but could live without him, even better without him, actually (Hosking 1991). There was no willingness to reverse the thaw after Khrushchev: even the highest rulers were afraid to go back to the times when the apparatus of repression could grind away at both the “class enemies” and its operators themselves. Quite simply, the *nomenklatura* wanted to live—and to live well (Stoskus 1995). It did just that, during what Remnick (1994) calls the go-go years under Brezhnev.

Throughout the Brezhnev period (ie, from the mid-1960s to the early 1980s), a series of clientelistic networks, at times forming along national lines and at times crossing them, blanketed the country at the local level (Beissinger 1992). That was made easier by Brezhnev’s slogan of “stability of cadres” (Hosking 1991) and by the increasingly gerontocratic character of Soviet power in the late 1970s (Stoskus 1995).

The *nomenklatura* structured itself around a basic agreement on the desirability of the use of political positions for personal gain, notably the enjoyment of scarce and valued goods like closed shops, foreign currency, foreign travel, cars, dachas, clinics, etc. Soviet clientelism was not unlike what is broadly called mafia methods: according to Remnick (1994), the mutual congratulations, the feasts and wedding parties, the piety and self-righteousness all smacked of Mafia culture. To which one can add a basic principle of mafia patterns, namely the monetisation of interpersonal trust. As a result, members of the ruling Soviet class were birds of a feather.

Most of them were bound together by the exchange of illegal services, and penalties were seldom applied (Stoskus 1995).

The price of continued enjoyment was incorporation, denial of particularity, and enthusiastic endorsement of the principles and practices that confirmed the Union. To obtain required signifying, and each significations and resultant benefit incorporated the individual and simultaneously confirmed the existing structures of power (Harding 1992).

In the process, communist ideology became a password among the “made” men (Remnick 1994). Stoskus (1995:30) goes so far as to contend that ideology was made “empty phraseology that was believed by hardly anyone. Nor did the nomenklatura believe it”. While that may not have been true in all cases, it was certainly true in most. The interesting thing for us here, is that the general consensus within the nomenklatura was strong enough to withhold the system for several decades. Of course, in many policy areas, it is not clear today whether the motivation was directly ideological, or simply pragmatic or political and merely rationalised in ideological terms (Hill 1992). But no matter what individual members of the ruling class actually thought deep inside (nobody might ever really know anyway), they obviously agreed that the instrumentalisation of communist phraseology was necessary for the maintenance of their rule, and that that maintenance was in itself highly desirable. No one wanted to change it for fear of bringing about something unexpected (Stoskus 1995). As a result, no one could avoid a certain degree of complicity. Not only was the rank and file unfree, so were the higher bosses (Levada 1993). All were enmeshed in an immense network of patron–client relationships.

## *2 – The Indigeneous Elites in the Baltic Soviet Republics*

How did Baltic communist elites fit in that system? The answer depends on what Baltic republic and what period we look at.

At the time of the annexation, Baltic communist parties were negligible. They had about 1500 members in Lithuania, 1000 in Latvia and less than 200 in Estonia (Zamascikov 1990). The Soviets made efforts to enlarge the base of their indigeneous support. At first, they managed to retain the small segment of national intelligentsias that had been anti-establishment during independence, but these people were few and not always reliable (Shtromas 1996). Recruitment increased after 1944, but the increase in overall mem-



bership figures actually rested upon a more than proportional increase of the Russian component. Russian over-representation within the CPSU was an all-Soviet phenomenon, and it was stronger in the Baltic branches of the CPSU than in the Party taken as a whole. Concomitantly, Baltic under-representation within Party structures appeared at several levels.<sup>19</sup>

Due to the paucity of reliable local personnel, and due also to Moscow's mistrust of persons who, like the Balts, had not already undergone 20-odd years of sovietisation within the USSR, the CPSU recruited among the offspring of Baltic families who had migrated to Russia in the previous decades. Thousands of "Russian Balts" moved thus back to the Baltic area. Given that their only source of legitimacy was in the Kremlin's corridors, and since many of them were hardly familiar with their language of origin,<sup>20</sup> these "ex-expatriates" elicited quickly the hostility of local Balts, which, by reaction, turned them into a highly pro-Russian mass whose subservience to orders from Moscow long remained the main criterium of qualification. They generally turned out to be efficient relays of central directives, whence their identification with the immobilism of the years 1970-1987.

That phenomenon of "elite importation" was especially conspicuous in Estonia, where the bulk of the population so far had proved rather insensitive to social democratic or communist ideas. As opposed to Latvia and Lithuania, Estonia did not have any serious social democratic movement at the turn of the century (Hope 1996), and an aborted communist coup in Tallinn in 1925 scared people away from socialist ideas. As a result, when the new masters began to establish their rule in Estonia, they simply could not find enough people willing and able to relay their influence. Thus, as early as 1948, a majority of the CPE Central Committee consisted of Russians and repatriated Estonians (Raun 1991:171). After the 1950-1951 purge of "bourgeois nationalists", and up to May 1988, both the seats of First Secretary and Prime minister

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19 For detailed figures, see Dellenbrant (1990) and Zamascikov (1990). Among the indicators given, there is for instance the proportion of Balts who were Party members compared with general figures at the all-Union level. In the mid-1980s, for an average of 100 for the USSR, the proportion of Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians who were Party members was, respectively, 60, 72 and 72.

20 They were consequently nicknamed *Latovici* in Latvia, and *Yeestlased* in Estonia (due to how their Russian accent made them utter the word *Eestlased*—Estonians).

were held by *Yeestlased*. The most prominent were the two successive First Secretaries of the CPE, Johannes (Ivan) Käbin (1950–1978) and Karl Vaino (1978–1988), none of whom spoke Estonian fluently. Besides *Yeestlased*, Russians were also overrepresented in the Party structures in Estonia.<sup>21</sup> However, although it remained faithful to Party orthodoxy, the Estonian communist elite did not in general display hard-line tendencies like the Latvian one did.

Latvia exhibits a roughly similar pattern to Estonia's (Landsmanis 1976; Levits 1990; Silde 1990). There, a greater proportion of native elites mixed with the imported ones, at least until 1959. That year, under the leadership of Eduards Berkļavs, the Deputy Chair of the Council of Ministers, a number of top Latvian communists tried to loosen the grip of the center and to cater more to Latvian interests. For instance, they passed regulations which restricted migration to the Latvian SSR, demanded knowledge of the Latvian language by Party and government functionaries, reinforced the teaching of Latvian in high schools and at Riga University, and planned to restrict the growth of heavy industry (Dreifelds 1996). As a result, about 2,000 of these "national Communists" were purged in July 1959. After that, and until the last years of Soviet rule, the Latvian SSR was ruled by Party functionaries of remarkable servility, headed by two successive First Secretaries, Arvids Pelse (1959–1983) and Augusts Voss (1983–1987) who have become living symbols of submissiveness in the eyes of the Latvians (Dreifelds 1996; Bogdan 1993). One can fairly say that Soviet rule in general was harsher in Latvia than in the other two Baltic republics. As late as 1987, the *Latovici* were still monopolising the seats of First Secretary and of Chairman of the Council of Ministers (or Prime minister). Only one out of five Party secretaries was a "national" Latvian, and Party business was conducted almost exclusively in Russian.<sup>22</sup>

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21 In the 1970s and early 1980s out of five positions in the secretariat of the Central Committee of the CPE, two or three were usually taken by Russians (Park 1994).

22 A Latvian interlocutor born in the 1950s assured me that up until the late 1980s, she hardly ever heard her (nominally Latvian) leaders speak Latvian on TV, and that when it finally happened in Gorbachev's time, their command of their "mother tongue" was so poor that she almost felt embarrassed for them.

Somehow Lithuania is a deviant case. Given that very few Lithuanians were living in Russia before World War II, the importation of cadres could not proceed as easily as in the other two Baltic republics. Therefore, the indigenisation of the Lithuanian branch of the CPSU reached a higher level than in Latvia and Estonia.<sup>23</sup> The Communist Party appeared therefore less alien in Lithuania. Consequences are visible today: Lithuania is the only Baltic country in which the reformed communists constitute one of the two largest political parties. That seems currently unthinkable in Latvia and Estonia.

Unlike the other two, Lithuania by and large escaped Party purges, due not least to the acumen of Antanas Sniečkus, the First Secretary of the CC of the Lithuanian SSR. Biographical information on Soviet Baltic leaders remains rather fragmentary up to this day, but Sniečkus ranks clearly among the most intriguing figures among them. He led the Lithuanian communist party from 1926 to his death in 1974, and was shrewd enough both to escape purges and to fence off local competitors. He played the Soviet system better than his Latvian and Estonian colleagues, giving evidence of communist zeal in Moscow<sup>24</sup> while, especially after Stalin's death, securing enough leeway to act against the wishes of the Kremlin at the home level if the need arose.<sup>25</sup> In the early 1970s, he dissuaded Moscow to pursue industrial expansion in Lithuania, and

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23 The phenomenon became especially visible after 1965. According to Vardys & Sedaitis (1997), JFK's compromise on Cuba in 1962 led many Lithuanians to see the USA as unwilling to lift the Iron Curtain and to consider Soviet rule as permanent. Once that mental step was taken, it became possible for Lithuanians to view Party membership as a pragmatic means to reach career purposes.

24 Stalin allegedly used to say that he and Sniečkus were the last true communists in the USSR.

25 As early as December 1956, he held a balance between Moscow and Vilnius sensitivities by publicly claiming that "We communists do not claim that there was nothing positive in the life of the Lithuanian nation in the years of bourgeois rule. The communists place a high value on everything positive done by the Lithuanian nation in the various branches of life under the bourgeois rule" (speech before the Supreme Soviet of Lithuania, quoted in the annals of the American academy of political and social sciences, May 1958). In the 1960s, Sniečkus encouraged Lithuanians to be, if not believers, then at least realists (in Vardys 1967).

thereby minimised the environmental damage and the large Russian migration with whose consequences the Latvian and Estonian governments are still struggling today.

## **B – Actors Down Below: a Tentative Portrait of the Soviet Citizen**

### *1 – The Ideal-type of “Homo Sovieticus”*

Soviet citizenship was informed by a specific conception of the relation between the individual and the collectivity.

First and foremost, Marxism was seen even by its founders not as an ideology of society but as the *science* of society, possessing a number of key concepts—particularly class (Hill 1992). When Marxism in Russia became Marxism-Leninism under Stalin, it retained its aura of science, and did until the last days of the Soviet Union. According to a further claim, the Communist Party had a special relationship with the ideology, and this relationship mandated its rule (ibid.). The CPSU’s monopoly of competence got justified by its virtue of being scientifically correct, which also implied that other philosophies and ideologies were objectively incorrect: the Party was not only correct, it was infallible (ibid.). The management of the country by the CPSU took place through the Plan, which was supposed to articulate the optimal disposition of human and material resources.

The other key characteristic of the totalitarian system was its pervasiveness. It unceasingly supervised, indoctrinated, exhorted, and mobilised—not always successfully, but its presence was invariably evident (Hosking 1991). That permanent mobilisation derived fundamentally from the fact that a totalitarian regime conceptualizes itself as a *movement* instead of a state of things. It cannot afford to stand still, lest the void thus created be quickly filled by what, for want of a better expression, we can call the daily life of society (Kadaré 1991). The regime, thus, cannot afford not to try and relentlessly mobilize the citizenry. Mobilisation gets rationalised by the all-embracing pretensions of ideology.

Milosz captured the phenomenon in an eloquent metaphor in *The Captive Mind*: if the teachings of the doctrine are true the way “two plus two is four” is true, then it becomes undecent to tolerate the opinion that two plus two is five. Thus it becomes indispensable to bank into

the minds of people that not only is two plus two four, but there is no way it can ever be anything else than four, and it is a good thing it can't. Knowing that human beings are not unequivocally receptive to rational reasoning, those in charge resorted to emotions and feelings. The top-down communication that took place in Soviet society was built upon emotional appeals cast in rational terms. Milosz stressed that the rhetoric of justice versus injustice and, more broadly, appeals to moral indignation were always present in Stalinian sloganising.

That particular combination of rationalism and emotions shaped mentalities in a specific way, which nurtured patterns of behaviour whose combination yielded the contested figure of the *homo sovieticus*. As opposed to classic authoritarianism, totalitarianism tends to create its own society (Hosking 1991). That became visible when the lid of secrecy got removed by Gorbachov in the second half of the 1980s, and journalists and scholars began to enjoy a freedom of action which had been denied to them so far. The policy of *Glasnost* brought to light ample evidence that the USSR was not just another variety of authoritarian regime at least evolving into something better. At the same time, the multifaced and vibrant awakening of society led to contest the pure image of *homo sovieticus*, irreversibly bred by Soviet debilitating conditions, and congenially incapable of generating any independent civic or cultural life (Hosking 1991). Thus, on the one hand, the shaping of mentalities by the system did not work well enough for the system to perpetuate itself. On the other hand, it did not entail that mentalities had not been shaped at all.

The *homo sovieticus* is first and foremost as an ideal type, defined as a determined array of patterns of social behaviour. The main characteristics of the *homo sovieticus* were the following:

- (1) A strong awareness of his exclusive character, a feeling of historical exceptionality, which informed a very strong feeling of dichotomy between "us" (or "ours") and "them".
- (2) A perception of the "state" distinct from most European ones; an adhesion to a paternalistic state, in which the state appeared as a universal institution managing all aspects of life, and therefore entitled to the permanent and exclusive gratefulness of the population.
- (3) A sense of hierarchy coupled with a strong egalitarianism.
- (4) An imperial frame of mind.

Some reservations are needed here. First, the *homo sovieticus* is a historically transitory phenomenon, whose golden age took place in the 1930s and 1940s (Levada 1993). What dominated society after that, and especially at the time of Levada's writing, was a deteriorated type of *homo sovieticus*. That the *homo sovieticus*, first in his original and then in his deteriorated shape, dominated Soviet society does not mean that every individual did fit into the model. The ideal type of *homo sovieticus* should not be mistaken for real individuals living in the Soviet empire (Allik & Realo 1996).

Yet, the general capacity to call the shots, to shape the overall atmosphere of society, can be considered as a sufficient condition for speaking of a dominant type.<sup>26</sup> In Levada's (1993:33) words, "a position defended by 30 % or 40 % of the population can be dominant if some are forced to accept it, if its partisans have responsibilities or play a charismatic role, or if critics are few and far between". The *homo sovieticus* mirrored the way the Soviet state conceived of individuals: not as bearers of preexistent or inalienable rights, or bearers of national consciousness, but exclusively as the bearers of labor power (Harding 1992).

Statistically, the *homo sovieticus* was Russian or russified. The identification to the state differed among nationalities: Russians could relate to it as "theirs" more easily than other people could. Thus, the ideal-type of the *homo sovieticus* should be applied to Balts even more cautiously than it is to Russians. Yet, given that the national dimension is not all there was to the ideal-type (as we have seen, it had other characteristics as well), and that the ideal-type was dominant, it seems reasonable to assume that the identities of Balts during Soviet times bore *something* of the *homo sovieticus*, managed differently by each individual. That has nothing to do with primordial necessity, and everything to do with the simple fact

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26 Nekrasas (1994:35) sums it up eloquently: "The new man was to be a perfectly functioning small screw in the big state machine. But after the deregulation of the machine, he lost the meaning of his existence. He became a cynic. He was not so brave as totalitarian ideologists expected him to be. He didn't want to sacrifice his personal interests (he had them even without having the sense of personal responsibility) for the sake of the triumph of glorious ideas. He simply tried to adjust himself to the ill-functioning system, but was absolutely unfit to strengthen it".

that nobody, Balt, Russian or Papu, can live in a society without getting influenced by it.

The trouble for us analysts is that the interplay between that *something* and the “rest” of identity is not a zero-sum game. Spontaneously, we may feel like assuming that a totalitarian society moulds its citizens and makes them obedient. Witness, for instance, a widespread perception that the combination czarism + orthodoxy + communism somehow made Russians more apathetic and submissive to authority than the “enlightened” citizens of Western democracies. Intuitively the idea might sound attractive, but the match is never perfect. Allik & Realo (1996) have a point when they notice that, regarding obedience to illegitimate military orders, Muscovites in August 1991 had a higher level of “refuse” responses than Americans in 1971, and almost the same level as Bostonians in 1776. Dictatorships do not unequivocally succeed in teaching their citizens to be authoritarian. Even totalitarian societies are human too, and as Milosz nicely puts it, human material displays an annoying tendency: it dislikes being treated as human material. The effects of totalitarianism on civic consciousness are context-dependent.

## *2 – Victims or Perpetrators? Two Contexts*

Several features of the Soviet system contributed to blur the distinction between power exercisers and powerless, between perpetrators and victims.

Among native Balts, the Soviet regime offered prospects of upward mobility—albeit one with conditions—which could be perceived by some as the embodiment of social justice. As a result, at least during the first years of the Soviet regime, some at the lower end of the social scale bought into the official propaganda according to which national struggle was a cover by the former ruling classes who sought the restoration of their former privileges (Shtromas 1996).

By the mid-fifties however, it seems that very few among indigeneous Balts supported the notion of socialism that the regime claimed to embody. The general pattern of behaviour that established itself was a pragmatic combination of outward compliance with inward dissent (Shtromas 1996). The overwhelming majority found themselves somewhere on a continuum between total conformism (morally uncomfortable)

and total nonconformism (socially dangerous). Life went on, and it entailed compromises. We can take two examples of social contexts in which compromises were inevitable: the army and the shops.

#### a – The Army

The *dedovshchina* was a Soviet Army tradition according to which each new conscript would have to (1) unconditionally obey the orders of an elder, and (2) be systematically harassed by these elders. Military service lasted two years and was structured by a non-official hierarchy: during the first six months, you were a *shakh*, then after six months you became a *zapakh*, and during the last six months of service you were a *died* (Wisniewska 1990).

Harassment methods against the *shakhs* included repeated beatings, deprivation of sleep and food, having to carry excessive weights, and so on.<sup>27</sup> The *shakhs* who proved unable to bear that treatment appeared as the inevitable scrap inherent to any process of production. Those who proved more resilient were supposed, after six months, in their turn, to similarly harass the newly-recruited *shakhs*. The function of the *dedovshchina* was to resocialize individuals through strength, and thereby to demonstrate the total irrelevance of human norms like reason or justice as valid bases of action. The conscript who became a *zapakh* and, later, a *died* reproduced on others the treatments that had been inflicted upon him, became ipso facto a carrier of that new strength-based moral norm, even if the old moral had not disappeared deep inside him. The soldier who left the army after military service entered civilian life with that double morality in him (Levada 1993).

The acceptability of that double morality as a valid basis of human life varied strongly within Soviet society. It varied, first, with the level of education: educated people tended to reject the legitimacy of the *dedovshchina* more than factory workers did. It also varied with geography. In 1990, people were asked to react to the statement “The *dedovshchina* should be abandoned and those found guilty should be punished”. The respective proportions of respondents who agreed with that statement were 48 %

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27 Vivid testimony in Wisniewska (1990).



in Uzbekistan, 59 % in Siberia, 64 % in European Russia, and a record 83 % in Lithuania.<sup>28</sup>

## b – The Shops

Soviet women had the good fortune to escape the *dedovshchina*. However, they too lived in contexts where the distinction between victim and perpetrator got blurred. The Soviet economy was a huge institutionalised sellers' market, run for the benefit of those who operated it, not for those who had to use its products (Hosking 1990). The combination permanent underproduction/low pay did that the majority of the people were living in a state of relative poverty (Hosking 1990; Levada 1993; Verdery 1996).

Of course, the notion of poverty in the USSR must be qualified: Soviet poverty did not *generally* reach the extremes of deprivation that can be observed in Third World countries (although famines did happen). It was more a common condition of need, a life of equality in material mediocrity.<sup>29</sup> By 1989, figures were released that showed that the average Soviet citizens had to work ten times as long as the average American to buy a pound of meat. Soviet citizens were treated as producers, not consumers.<sup>30</sup> The rationing of goods took place, first, through the waiting line, which was not considered an anomaly. People expected and were expected to spend time in them (Hosking 1990). It also took place through the second economy, the “grey” or “black” market.

Most shop assistants were female, and Soviet women were thus put in a situation where they also could exert arbitrary power on others. There is, of course, a difference between “hard” socialisation by the *dedovshchina*

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28 Similar data from Latvia and Estonia is unfortunately missing in Levada's otherwise very rich study, but we can reasonably assume that figures would be close to the Lithuanian one.

29 “There was also the sheer crumminess of the things that you could find: the plastic shoes, the sulfurous mineral water, the collapsible apartment building” (Remnick 1994:203).

30 In 1929, consumer goods represented about 60 % of the Soviet industrial output. The figure then fell to 39 % in 1940, 27 % in 1960 and about 25 % in 1986 (Mořsi & Rupnik 1991).

or “soft” socialisation by the waiting line. However, both had the effect of blurring the border between the empowered and the powerless, and of entrenching the perception that notions like reason, justice or honesty could not be considered as realistic bases of human life. By itself, it did not make sense to harass new draftees or to wait for hours to buy basic commodities. Yet you had to go through these rituals.

It is the reason why it is too simple to view the communist system in terms of public submissiveness versus private opposition. People had a *certain* stake in the system, whose all-embracing ambitions elicited a limited and conditional loyalty (Hosking 1990). The state acted mainly as the instance that guaranteed social cohesion and order and organised the life of people. At the same time, the pretensions of the state to manage everything generated a dissatisfaction that was just as general (Levada 1993).

It has been said that the reason of the failure of the Soviet system was, ultimately, its failure to produce the goods. I think that proposition overlooks other aspects of Soviet life. There was more to Soviet people than a flock of dissatisfied customers, and the limits of the economic argument become obvious in the Baltic case: the Soviet Baltic republics were economically the most advanced ones, nevertheless they took the first available opportunity to leave the system. What remains clear, however, was that delivery of the goods was *one* mode of legitimation of the system (Harding 1992). Getting used to “live in a lie”, people perpetuated the system. Even private opposition to the regime was far from unanimous. The handful of “dissidents” who dared speak openly did not elicit the admiration of everybody.

We are thus led to nuance the opposition between “us” (the powerless) and “them” (those in power). That dichotomy is well documented and is acknowledged as being one of the pillars of the “socialist mind”. However, that opposition was normative rather than social. There was, on the one hand, a feeling that society consisted of “them” versus “us”, and on the other hand, an impossibility to know where the physical limit was. The psychological consequences of that oxymoron are best described by Havel (1989; 1991). He explains how, in the communist system, the limit between the oppressors and the oppressed did not cut neatly between two distinct groups, but ran through every individual.

In the same vein, Kuzmickas (1996:112) speaks about the incremental shaping of a new type of person, “of suppressed individuality, blind to

noble values, with no sense of civic responsibility and obedient to command". Baranova (1994:11) asks herself "what attitude allowed a situation where rational beings considered the constant perishing of their friends and neighbors as the normal course of events". She quotes Karl Jaspers (1961) on the question of German guilt, who emphasised the "countless little acts of negligence, of convenient adaptation, of cheap vindication, and the imperceptible promotion of wrong; the participation in the creation of a public atmosphere that spreads confusion and thus makes evil possible. All that had consequences".

In the last analysis, the tension between the preservation of individual dignity and the need to do social compromises was managed in the depths of individual consciences. Liehm (1998) emphasizes that, fundamentally, *isolation* was the key characteristic of the human condition in the communist society.

### **III – The Play**

In order to make the picture of Soviet Baltic citizenship more vivid, we shall now look at how it was exercised and experienced in context. We will examine its spatial (urban) dimension, its time dimension, and its linguistic dimension.

#### **A – Urban Space: Civic Resource or Civic Constraint?**

While communism lasted, it produced specific patterns of urbanisation, both in the USSR and in the people's democracies. The dismantling of these patterns is a historically unique process as well (Szelenyi 1996). One of the hallmarks of socialist cities was the persistence of a number of rural traits, to the point that some observers talk about a phenomenon of "imperfect urbanisation". Not only were many inhabitants first-generation urban dwellers, but, in view of the various shortages in food products, urban people in general had little incentive to sever whatever links they may have had with the countryside.

City life may heighten ethnic consciousness (intergroup encounters are less likely to happen in the countryside), but there is no direct link between both. In the USSR, the increased urbanisation of society seems to have first lowered ethnic consciousness (the decades 1920 and 1930

saw a rapid rise in intergroup marriage) and then heightened it. After 1945, Soviet urbanisation did not lessen sub-state identities in general, and in the Baltic Soviet republics, it worked rather in the opposite direction (Gitelman 1992).

In the Soviet period, the Baltic republics became increasingly urbanised societies. Their urbanisation had a number of specific patterns, apparent in public places, in private places and in third places.

### *1 – Public Places*

Soviet cities obeyed the principle of state ownership. Therefore, city planners needed less economising with space than their capitalist colleagues did, whence the massive features of many socialist cities: wide avenues, seemingly endless streets, immense squares, enormous buildings etc.<sup>31</sup> The disproportion of certain elements of the urban fabric had the advantage, from an ideological point of view, to stress the insignificance of the individual in the system. The disproportion was accentuated by the paucity of the various means that enabled you to overcome it physically or technologically: for instance, roadsigns were scarce, and maps were notoriously in short supply. The totalitarian urban fabric is one in which the individual is seen as redundant.

The Baltic peoples had the fortune of continuing to live in urban surroundings which, although they were not unharmed by World War II and became increasingly decrepit after it, retained the structure of the pre-Soviet urban fabric. One needs not look further to understand the attraction Baltic cities exerted on Russians during Soviet times (Kéhayan 1978; Thubron 1983). The architectures of Baltic cities bear witness of the historical presence of vanished communities—Germans, Jews, “lost atlantises” as Lieven says. But these cities also retained their basic pre-Soviet style. During the war, none of the Baltic capitals was damaged to the extent that it had to be reconstructed from ruins.<sup>32</sup> Thus, they escaped

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31 The Soviet Union had no monopoly on that. It was a standard feature in the people’s democracies as well.

32 Not all Estonian cities escaped destructions. Narva, for instance, was almost entirely destroyed.

becoming the usual Soviet concrete desert.<sup>33</sup> They were not all equally affected by the war and the Soviet period.

Tallinn managed best through these five decades. It was bombed by the Soviet airforce in 1944, but only a section of the old town was destroyed (Lieven 1994). In 1971, Treadgold (1971:39) stressed that “in Estonia the cultural tradition is secured partly by the mere fact of the survival undamaged of Tallinn”.

Riga suffered more severely in WWII than Tallinn did. It was partly rebuilt in Soviet modern style. In the postwar years, Riga’s historical monuments were not as well preserved as those of Tallinn or Vilnius.<sup>34</sup> In many cases, the reconstruction and decoration of public buildings was carried out by craftsmen from outside Latvia with little sentimental attachment to them. “If anywhere in the Baltic area there is a danger of something approaching obliteration of the indigeneous culture”, Treadgold (1971:40) finds, “it is to be found in Latvia”.

Vilnius suffered less during the war than Riga did, and never became as important in Soviet industrial activity than Tallinn and especially Riga did. Consequently, the Soviet/Russian stamp was (and still is) less prominent in Vilnius than in the other two Baltic capitals. In comparison with Tallinn and Riga, the persistence of rural traits was (and still is) relatively conspicuous in Vilnius, a city built on several hills and criss-crossed by a maze of back alleys and backyards.

Baltic cities had something in common: public spaces in them were not spaces for the public, but spaces for the regime’s monopolistic celebration of itself. Lacking the possibility to stage independent manifestations, people made their views known through silence, not speech. The way in which they were silent was significant. So was the way (slowly) they would gather for a forced meeting and the way (instan-

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33 It is enough to look at Minsk or Kaliningrad to get a hint of what could have become of Vilnius, Riga or Tallinn.

34 According to Lieven, the architecture of much of Riga has “the depressing quality of a grande bourgeoisie lady fallen upon evil days”. There is indeed a bitter contrast between the current poverty of the Latvian capital and the memories of past wealth cast in its Jugendstil stones. Yet Riga retains the atmosphere of the major, cosmopolitan city it was before the war, a label neither Tallinn nor Vilnius can claim.

taneously) in which they would then disperse. The rulers paid attention to the kind of silence that prevailed in society (Kapuscinski 1995). The decades of Soviet occupation in the Baltics were a time of public silence.

Attempts to break that silence and engage in public protest have nevertheless been recorded. Some received widespread press coverage, while knowledge about others remains piecemeal. According to Misiunas and Taagepera (1983:241), “full-scale riots occurred in Lithuania on at least three postwar occasions”, in 1956, 1960 and 1972. Region-wide, the most visible wave came in the aftermath of the crushing of the Prague spring in 1968. International sporting events were privileged fora for public Baltic discontent in the early 1970s. In several recorded cases in Tallinn and Vilnius, the public would boo at the Soviet flag and cheer at visiting teams (Küing 1973). After the victory of the Czechoslovakian ice hockey team in 1972 in Tallinn, students from Tallinn Polytechnic Institute drew across town waving the Czechoslovakian flag. More dramatically, several attempts to Jan Palach-like self-immolation took place in Baltic cities at the turn of the 1970s, the most famous one being the Lithuanian student Romas Kalanta’s suicide in a Kaunas park in May 1972. Kalanta’s funeral degenerated into a riot directed explicitly against the regime, and which lasted several days before getting crushed. In the early 1980s, such spontaneous manifestations of dissent became most conspicuous in Estonia. For instance, both “unprecedentedly large student demonstrations ” (Misiunas & Taagepera 1983:242) and worker’s strikes took place in Tallinn and Tartu in October 1980.

## *2 – Private Places*

The situation of the individual in the urban fabric was problematic in private places as well. City planners worked outside the reach of public participation. Collective ownership meant that housing space was regulated and housing quality standardised. The norm was that a person should not have more than 9 square meters of living space (+ 4 square meters by family) (Bohnet & Penkaitis 1990). Consequently, apartments that were originally built for one family came to accommodate several of them, sharing the kitchen, the corridor, the bathroom and the telephone if there was any (Siniavski 1988). Empirical Soviet-wide research suggests that collective housing had an overall negative influence on sociability.

Good neighbourly relations were the exception rather than the norm.<sup>35</sup> Standardised housing patterns did not make mentalities more collectivist (Enyedi 1996).

Collective housing had negative effects on family life. The specifically Western family structure of the Balts (nuclear/egalitarian) was forced into an extended family structure (several generations under the same roof and even in the same room). The permanent lack of intimacy that ensued is not alien to the striking rise in divorces in the Baltics in the post-war decades, and definitely undermined the already weak Baltic demographics, with abortion as the most usual contraception (Zvidrins 1997). In survey research in Lithuania in the 1960s and in Estonia in the early 1970s, most women indicated that they would have more children had the housing situation been better (Stepukonis 1997; Parming 1971).<sup>36</sup>

It is hard to tell if the negative psychological effects of promiscuity in private places were the unexpected byproduct of the state management of housing, or if they were the intended outcome of a conscious policy.<sup>37</sup> What is clear, at least, is that the *possibility* of these effects was not inimical to the ruling ideology.<sup>38</sup> They were not necessarily seen as a *problem*.

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35 The word “neighbour” got a negative overtone: more than anything, the neighbour was somebody who prevented you from living. Siniavski (1988:214) describes vividly how easily arguments and quarrels about small matters could flourish in the cramped space of the collective apartment.

36 Fertility surveys were carried out in the former USSR as early as the 1920s but were stopped at the beginning of the 1930s given that nobody wanted to risk contradicting the “regularity of fast population growth in socialism” which Stalin had announced. Fertility surveys began to be carried out again in the 1960s (Volkov 1997).

37 Kadaré (1991) claims they were. Exiguity, he writes, was a state priority in the countries of real existing socialism. Exiguity disheartens, overwhelms, exasperates the individual.

38 In 1969, Estonian architect Mart Port wondered if city planners were using apartment dwellers as guinea pigs in a socio-biological experiment: “Will they exist without stores and barber shops? They will. How about trash-collection points a thousand feet away? They’ll carry it... No laundering facilities? They’ll manage. But lower the room temperature by 10 degrees? They’ll start complaining. so let us make a note: a boiler room is a must—that’s the survival threshold” (in Misiunas & Taagepera:1983:213)

In the Baltics, the problem of private places became partly alleviated thanks to the incremental rarefaction of communal flats. Empirical research on Baltic living standards over the decades 1970-1980 shows that collective housing, which used to be the norm, was encountered much less frequently by the mid-1980s, though it had not disappeared (Bohnet & Penkaitis 1990). The authors find a “surprisingly high proportion of private housing” in the mid-1980s. They also find that the inhabitants of the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian republics disposed of more housing space than those of Russia. Average figures, however, obscure a number of geographical discrepancies<sup>39</sup> and social discrepancies.<sup>40</sup>

At this point, if we compare Soviet public places with Soviet private places, we come to the very general observation that, in public places, people tended to have *too much* space, while in private places, they tended to have *too little* of it. The irrelevance of the individual in the system was physically embodied both by the difficulty to mentally and physically invest (and thus humanize) public spaces, and by the difficulty to find elbow-room and privacy where it was needed.

### 3 – *Third Places*

What about third places? We saw that they were an indispensable component of urbanity. In the Baltic case, their civic function was affected both quantitatively and qualitatively. Compared with capitalist cities, socialist cities had a clear scarcity of third places.<sup>41</sup> They had less urban services in the form of shops, restaurants, cafés and street vendors. Reports abound about how the apparently simple project of having dinner in town could turn into a complicated enterprise. The activity of eating out was supposed to be collective and planified rather than individual and spontaneous. Being admitted into a dining place in

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39 Private housing was more frequent in the countryside than in the towns.

40 Russian migrants, especially Army personnel, enjoyed a privileged treatment regarding the attribution of state apartments. According to Soviet legislation, every tenth newly constructed apartment had to be handed over to the Baltic military district.

41 It is only fair to say here that communist cities had less marginality as well, like criminality, homelessness, or prostitution (Szelenyi 1996).



order to spend your own money was not a right but a privilege—just like in certain trendy Stockholm cafés, definitely, but the key difference is that Stockholm dwellers who shun lineups always can go eat somewhere else.

Another difference with Stockholm is that, in the Baltic context, whatever third places existed could turn into places of linguistic rivalry. In the Baltic republics, the massive influx of Russian workforce was motivated by russification purposes and by security imperatives in a region where the bulk of the population remained hostile to Soviet rule. Russian migration directed itself to cities rather than to rural areas. In 1979, Russians represented 20 % of the population in Vilnius, 47 % in Tallinn and over 50 % in Riga (Bogdan 1993). Other cities were diversely affected by the phenomenon.

In the cities, third places were the permanent, daily scene on which the language rivalry between Balts and Russians was acted out. They were an objective factor of linguistic russification.<sup>42</sup> As such, even when there was nothing explicitly “ideological” about them (in the sense that they were not necessarily adorned with a banner or a picture of Lenin), they fulfilled the function of entrenching in people’s minds the notion that the regime, identified with Russian domination, was everywhere, and that there was physically no way to escape it.

Another effect of the scarcity of third places was the prevalence of a general boredom. The political importance of boredom should not be underestimated. It generates apathy and submissiveness, and is thus the ally of the totalitarian state. Kadaré (1991) insists that European communist rulers were very sensitive to the level of boredom in society. A decrease of boredom meant potential subversion. Not a few East European authors<sup>43</sup> emphasize the vital psychological importance of escaping boredom, by

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42 Both aesthetic and linguistic. “The shop windows were decorated in a Russian style which was alien to us and which I utterly detested. In the shops, if I spoke my native language, the shop assistants yelled at me, and if I sent my son to shop he came back empty-ended because he spoke no Russian” (Estonian woman, born 1958, in Lieven 1994:82)

43 The Croatian journalist Slavenka Drakulic is particularly good at bringing home the importance of the smallest details of daily life.

seemingly trivial ways for individuals to entertain themselves outside the reach of institutions.<sup>44</sup>

## **B – The Flattening of Historical Time**

The temporality of the Soviet and Soviet-inspired systems was specific. It can be roughly characterised as an ideologically-induced flattening of historical time which in turn generated a flattening of social time. We saw in Chapter III, part II, that the triad past-present-future is both a central dimension of the human mind, and that the exercise of citizenship rests upon a robust awareness of the three elements of the triad. Citizenship requires both a sense of the past and a notion that the future can be influenced through action in the present.

In the Soviet system, both the past and the future took specific traits which strongly influenced the present. There was something messianic and even clearly religious about the ideology of the Bolsheviks. The links between Russian orthodox messianism and Leninism are complex. Siniavski (1988) shows how the revolutionaries of 1917 actually transposed biblical formulae into their own lingo. For instance, the notion of Kingdom of Heaven was part and parcel of their rationale (although this time the Kingdom would have been reached by human will, not divine fiat). Marxism-Leninism gave itself as being the ultimate key to understanding the laws of nature and society, so its scientificity itself was of a religious character, for whoever contested it was seen as inherently evil. The historicity of the Leninist ideology is based on perceptions of history in terms of doom versus redemption. Therefore, the system was based upon the idea of a politically determined future. The future was not open, it was already-known. The past was not open either: it had to embody ideologically determined processes.

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44 The notion of entertainment here gets intimately linked to a more ethic notion of individual dignity. We might rather talk of individual preservation. It was done through small, daily acts, like the telling of jokes, or the sewing of clothes that would be of good quality and not look like everybody else's. Central to that effort of individual preservation was, precisely, the upkeep of a sense of place. In his writings, Havel recalls how important it was for prison inmates to know what part of Prague each one of them came from.

## 1 – *The Logical Past*

Soviet historiography took pains to demonstrate that the Baltics incorporation into the USSR was the logical outcome of everything that had happened to them before. With “everything”, I mean the historical events, the organisation of political actors, the transformation of the economic and social structure, and the cultural and artistic development.<sup>45</sup> In other words, it was both an *inevitable* outcome and a *positive* outcome.

The minutes of a conference of historians held in Tallinn in October 1954 state that the incorporation of the Baltic states in 1940 was an “historically determined act prepared by all the preceding development of the Baltic lands, by the entire struggle of their toiling masses against the capitalists and the landlords. Outside the Soviet system, Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania had no possibilities for economic and cultural development”. What deserves mentioning here is that, whatever the behavioralist rhetoric about the post-1956 softening of totalitarianism, the above rationale was repeated *ad nauseam* until the very last years of the Soviet regime. In the 1960s, certain Baltic leaders, like the already-mentioned Antanas Snieckus, well aware of the persistence of feelings of alienation towards the system, began telling people to be at least realists if not believers. In the 1980s, when it became impossible to sustain the fiction that the 1940 incorporation had been inevitable, one insisted increasingly on its positive aspect in order to try and give it a modicum of *ex post* legitimacy.<sup>46</sup>

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45 In the early 1950s, for instance, a large-scale campaign was organised in Latvia in order to prove the dependence of the entire Latvian literature upon the “progressive Russian literature” (Ekmanis 1971). Misiunas & Taagepera (1983) give detailed accounts of comparable campaigns in the other two republics. All were part of a more general pattern of historical rewriting in which the much-celebrated “mutual enrichment of cultures” was a strictly one-way proposition (from the Russian to all the others, not the other way round). Ekmanis writes that, in comparison to their Lithuanian and Estonian colleagues, the Latvian literary bureaucrats were particularly insensitive to their nation’s culture (a claim corroborated by several other sources).

46 That was, notably, the core of Mikhail Gorbachev’s message to Lithuanians when he visited Vilnius in January 1990, in a last-ditch attempt to moderate the breakaway republic.

## 2 – *The Inevitable Future*

The temporality of Soviet system was very much self-contained. On the surface, the hypothesis of the end of the system was irrelevant. Communism was simply not supposed to ever come to an end (Siniavski 1988), and in due logic you need not wonder what happens after eternity. At the same time, the Soviet regime seemed strangely obsessed by its own death, which is a trait common to all totalitarian systems (Kadare 1991). Necrophiliac slogans would abound, claiming that the Soviet people would *never* give up socialism. Other slogans encouraged people to “overtake”, to do “always better”: today’s sacrifices were the price to pay in order to attain future bliss. However, it became increasingly clear that that bright future, like the horizon, was always receding: the future would only bring more of the same.

There were various rather simple means to entrench in people’s minds the notion that Soviet rule would last for ever. For instance, in the early 1980s, the only maps of Lithuania available in Lithuania were in the Cyrillic (instead of Latin) alphabet (Bungs 1990). The example may sound trivial, but that penury had the very concrete effect of preventing Lithuanians from visualising their own country in their own language, unless they resorted to older maps.

A central preoccupation in Moscow was that the West would once and for all stop bother about the Baltic states and move towards recognition of the 1940 annexation. Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia were reincorporated into the USSR in 1944-45 without the benefit of international agreement. At the conferences of Tehran, Yalta and Potsdam, the Allies did not raise the question, but did not go so far as to recognize the absorption of the Baltic states *de jure* (Anderson 1990). Research shows that Soviet policy makers, as late as the mid-1980s, remained irritated at Western non-recognition, and attentive to any signs of its possible weakening (Liivak 1990).<sup>47</sup> The Soviet ambition was to turn the whole thing into a non-issue.

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47 At the beginning of 1987, Moscow gave the Pope permission to visit the USSR on the condition that the Holy See would recognize the belonging of Baltic republics to the Soviet Union. Later that year, the Soviet press reacted harshly to an eleventh-hour decision of the Portuguese government not to let a delegation visit Estonia. The Western bottom-line was that the physical presence of Western officials on Baltic soil would be interpreted by the USSR as indirect recognition (if only for propagandist purposes).

One way to make the West indifferent and the Balts submissive was to isolate the Baltic Soviet republics from the non-communist world. In that the regime was rather successful. A “second iron curtain” separated the USSR from European people’s democracies.<sup>48</sup> The few Western authors who had the possibility to travel within the Soviet Baltic area emphasize the general feeling of isolation they met. P.O. Enquist, for instance, stresses the “enormous need of contacts” he found in Riga in the late 1960s.

Much has been made of how the Soviet Baltic republics represented a “Soviet West”, even a “Soviet abroad”, by virtue of their *relative* cultural openness. It is true that a number of Western books got translated in Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian before Russian, and that *West Side Story*, for instance, could be staged in Tallinn while seen as decadent in Moscow. Finnish TV was visible in northern Estonia from 1958 on, which gave Estonians a window on the West nobody else in the USSR could enjoy.<sup>49</sup> However, the rulers gave a relative free rein to Balts in matters of cultural life only because they knew they could afford it.

They had at least two reasons to think so. Firstly, *taken together*, native speakers of Latvian, Lithuanian or Estonian represent about 6 million persons. The Baltic languages were not taught beyond the Baltic area. Moreover, they were not taught between themselves. The result, still visible today, is that Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians generally do not understand each other, and that virtually nobody outside the Baltic area understands any of these languages. Of course, several instances of cooperation between dissident movements have been recorded (common knowledge of Russian came in handy), but the linguistic barrier between the Baltic area and the rest of the USSR acted as screen against the easy contamination of subversive ideas.

Secondly, no doubt existed as to who was ultimately calling the shots. Polish newspapers became suddenly impossible to find in Vilnius and

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48 In *Imperium*, Polish journalist Ryszard Kapuscinski (1995) describes eloquently how the lengthy and intricate process of crossing the USSR land border reinforced the traveler’s certainty of entering a different world. See also the first pages of Colin Thubron’s (1983) travelogue *Among the Russians*.

49 As the saying goes, until *glasnost*, Estonians were the only ones in the USSR who knew Lech Walesa had a mustache.

Riga when Solidarity was on the rise (Vardys 1983). Restrictions on phone and mail contacts with the West became reinforced during the tenure of Andropov (Bungs 1990). Stoskus (1995) suggests that it is wrong to speak about the Soviet regime's toleration of dissent. In many cases, the authorities were rather at a loss of what to do with it. Different domains of culture were differently affected, but whatever flexibility became salient resulted from either lack of concern, incompetence, private calculation, or just faked civility—not from a change of principles. The word “tolerance” was actually banished from dictionaries (Stoskus 1995). Whatever tolerance existed was precisely that—a tolerance, something the superior gives to the inferior as the whim takes him, but certainly not a principle, a project, a right or a self-evident proposition.

### *3 – The Eternal Present*

So far, we have seen that the Soviet regime had a founding myth at the beginning, and another one at the end. Caught between a logical past and an already-known future, the present became, consequently, inevitable.

The Soviet system, like other European communist systems, rested upon the existence of a central subject monopolising power and truth, which was also the only subject of social activity (Havel 1991). Consequently, social activity ceased to be the field where different, more or less autonomous subjects interacted. The USSR was a deeply segmented society, in which a multitude of diverse associations existed but did not interact (Ferro 1997; Hosking 1991). As a result, society did not evolve towards a differentiation of social spheres working according to their own respective logics, but rather towards a fragmentation, a segmentation into an increasing number of constituent parts that were exclusively regulated by relations of power (Levada 1993).

Where everything is known in advance, there is no room for events to happen or discussion to take place. Under such an entropic regime, Havel (1991) writes, society cannot breathe: “the elimination of life in the propre sense brings social time to a halt, so that history disappears from its purview (...). Slowly but surely we are losing the sense of time. We begin to forget what happened when, what came earlier and what later, and the feeling that it does not really matter overwhelms us”.

Havel puts forth the surprising idea that in the 1950s—the most Stalin-

ian period—Czech history still bore some human traits. The time “before” was still close at hand. Then people began losing their historical marks. The Hungarian writer Reszler (1991) expands on that theme. He contends that if life could go on in Hungary between 1947 and 1956, it is thanks to the former regime’s impetus, which had not quite disappeared yet. Then people’s historical consciousness started fading.

The temporality of life under occupation is a strange one. People live through events which they know somehow “should not” have happened, or would have happened another way had the “normal” chain of events been allowed to follow its course. As soon as 1953, Milosz emphasised how difficult it became for Central and East Europeans to know what world was “natural”. As the years went by, the nationhood of Latvians, Lithuanians and Estonians became more and more perceived in terms of *myth*, for the simple reason that it was socially and materially hard to get *knowledge* about it (Silbajoris 1971). Consequently, the awareness of the “anormality” of the situation remained, but it became increasingly hard to know what the “normal” course of events would have been.

Besides the blurring of historical memory, the flattening of time took quite prosaic forms as well. The anthropologist Katherine Verdery (1996) shows how communist regimes succeeded in monopolising people’s daily lives through having them *wait* for most things (be it in waiting lines or on waiting lists). The politically determined inefficacy of the structures of production, and the ensuing shortages, forced people to invest an inordinate amount of their time in the business of daily survival. By robbing them of their time, the state took an essential life resource away from them.<sup>50</sup> Daily life became an obsession precisely because there was no normal daily life. The systematic waiting, built into the system, constructed a paradoxical permanence built on instability and precarity (Siniavski 1988). When combined with the weakened historical awareness mentioned above, that precarious permanence yielded a specific temporality that could be called as an eternal daily life.

The regime, however, never succeeded in entrenching the notion that that kind of life was—for want of a better word—normal. Interestingly, the idea of normal life seems to have been rather independent of national-

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<sup>50</sup> See also Zinoviev (1991).

ity. In 1990, the Russian historian Iouri Afanassiev stated that “most people in the Soviet Union do not live the life that a normal man ought to be able to live in a contemporary society” (in Moïsi & Rupnik 1991:50). But in the Baltic republics, the feeling of lack of normal life was intimately linked to the theme of lost sovereignty. More than any other Soviet peoples, the Balts remained unreconciled to their incorporation into the Soviet Union. Party leaderships of nominal Balts had to coexist with people resentful of Soviet authority and determined to do their utmost to preserve their specificity till a more favourable historical juncture (Hosking 1991). The mental legacy of independent statehood was a cultural resource. It could not come out in the open, since the only publicly acceptable legacy was the false one constructed in Moscow for ideological purposes. The true legacy had to be orally transmitted from parent to child and grandchild, and thus stayed within the confines of the family circle – a fragile means of transmission, for it depended on the survival of the prewar generation.

Those in power knew about that phenomenon, and worried about it. In the late 1960s, the minister of education of the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic once complained that the Latvian grandmother had become a political institution. Various statements of communist Baltic leaders in the mid-sixties show that they were aware of the persistence of nationalism in the Baltics. Brezhnev himself knew the problem had not been solved (Bogdan 1993) and, in 1972, the persistence of the nationalities problem was officially acknowledged at the highest level of the Soviet state.

The remainder (1972-1982) of Brezhnev’s rule was marked by a policy of more rapid acculturation. Neither Andropov nor Chernenko softened the line of recharged militancy against national “deviations” (Connor 1992). Several Western scholars have noticed that the KGB was harder on the non-Russian dissenters than on their Russian counterparts. The constraints upon the KGB in dealing with the former were generally less (Knight 1992). Far away from the center of events in Moscow, where Western journalists and diplomats learned quickly about the treatment of political dissenters, the KGB had a freer rein to deal with non-Russians who spoke out against the regime. There is much evidence to show that between the mid-1960s to the early 1980s, the KGB was especially harsh in its treatment of dissenters among non-Russians. According to Motyl,



Lithuanians constituted the largest nationality (proportionately) in labor camps. Ginsburgs's (1990) comparative study of the application of penal sanctions in various Soviet republics revealed that Lithuanian courts tended to act tougher than their Russian counterparts, whereas Latvian and even more Estonian tended to be more lenient. Ginsburgs attributes that to the will of Moscow and local regents to deal harshly with the Catholic Church, which played a major subversive role in Lithuania, as opposed to the more submissive Protestant churches dominating Latvia and Estonia.

### **C – Bringing Languages Back In**

The system fell. A true *homo sovieticus* would have lost even the awareness of his own alienation. The Balts did not become *russified*, and that played a role in their not becoming as *sovietised* as their rulers hoped they would.

The legal status of Baltic languages was well entrenched. At the same time, their social status was incrementally undermined by countless small Russian inroads.<sup>51</sup> In many cases of bilingualism, the costs of bilingualism tend to shifted on the weaker groups. Soviet bilingualism was no exception. It tended to be a one-way proposition. Roughly put, given that Russian was rationalised and promoted as the state's *lingua franca*, non-Russians were supposed to know Russian (whether or not they lived in Russia or in “their” territory) whereas Russians (likewise, regardless of place of residence) could afford not to know other languages (Vardys, 1967; Bogdan 1993).<sup>52</sup> Non-Russian pupils living in non-Russian republics were

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51 Underground Lithuanian publications from the late 1970s—early 1980s explain for instance that announcements on trains were now made in Russian only (they used to be in both languages), and that the Lithuanian language was incrementally pushed out of the educational system, both in kindergartens and in universities (in Bungs 1990).

52 According to a clandestine 1975 Estonian-Latvian document sent to the governments participating in the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, “virtually nowhere can one speak of the praised reciprocal enrichment of national cultures. As for language, only one Russian out of nine in Tallinn is able or dares to maintain that he has a good command of the national language. Such figures clearly demonstrate the real role of the Russian contingent as an instrument of unilateral Sovietisation” (in Bungs 1988).

entitled to primary and secondary education in the republic's tongue. Conversely, non-Russian pupils living in Russia were not entitled to education in their language. By contrast, Russian pupils living anywhere in the Union were entitled to Russian-language education.

The study of Russian was made compulsory in all Soviet schools in 1938. From 1958 on, the "voluntary principle" permitted non-Russian parents living within their eponymous administrative unit to send their children to Russian-language schools. In 1959, the Russian language was for the first time officially thrust into the role of the primary language of all Soviet peoples. Khrushchev's education laws of 1958-59 swept aside the fundamental principle that a child must be taught in his mother tongue, which in effect made the native language optional (Kreindler 1990). From then on, the pressure for Russian increased in the public services, in schools, and as a mechanical effect of increased Russian migration to the fringe republics.

Brezhnev followed and intensified the path opened by Khrushchev. His tenure increased the emphasis on the prominent role of the Russian nation, its "revolutionary energy, unselfishness, diligence and profound internationalism", which had earned it the "honest respect of all peoples" of the USSR (Urdze 1990:358). The last years of the Brezhnev era saw a renewed militancy in the promotion of Russian. In the new 1977 constitution, the right of non-Russians to non-Russian language education, which so far was a right, became a mere possibility (Connor 1992; Bogdan 1993).

Empirical research in the Baltics shows a marked increase in the frequency of speeches, broadcasts and ceremonies devoted to "internationalism" over the decades 1960-1970 (Urdze 1990). In the fringe republics, "internationalist" language policies had the effect of making it practically hard, and in some cases even impossible to do without Russian in everyday life (Urdze 1990). At the same time, there were hardly any official initiatives that might have encouraged proliferation of Baltic languages among the Baltic Russian population. Even projects like the introduction of Latvian language courses on television were rejected as expressions of bourgeois nationalism, although—or rather, indeed, because—they would have been the expression of a genuine internationalism, as opposed to the one fabricated in Moscow (Urdze 1990).

Russification failed, in the sense that the overwhelming majority of

Balts continued to use their mother tongues as main languages (Vardys 1975). Theoretically, and to a large extent in practice, the native languages retained their primacy as languages of education. Continued language loyalty was reflected in the census figures, but also in the choice of parents who continued to send their children to native language schools. The choice between Russian- and native language schooling appears to have been crucial in determining national self-identity. Baltic scholars continued to use their language in publications despite limited exposure (Kreindler 1990). Various evidence points to a general antipathy towards the Russian language, or more precisely to a refusal to consider it as an alternative to the Baltic ones.<sup>53</sup>

Their specific mother tongues provided Balts with an array of ready-made tools with which they could take distance from the messages from the top. Take for instance the transposition of Soviet official rhetoric into the Baltic languages. Russian influence manifested itself chiefly by Sovietisms, either by direct borrowing (*kulak, oblast*) or by direct translation. At the same time, by 1940, the Baltic languages had reached such a level of standardisation that established methods of word incorporation already existed. Moreover, the difference between the Latin and the Cyrillic alphabets barred further the wholesale transposition of Russian words into Lithuanian, Latvian or Estonian. The non-Indo European syntax of Estonian made the process even trickier than for Latvian and Lithuanian.

In order to understand how Baltic languages both were *affected* by the regime's policies and constituted a resource *against* them, we also need to take some distance from the majority/minority dialectic and look at how totalitarianism acts upon languages, regardless of their "quantitative" status.

Under its internationalistic guise, the Soviet regime followed a deeply culturalist logic. National languages *were* recognised. At the same time, the official motto was "culture national in form and socialist in content". The regime took pains to turn national cultures into harmless, petrified

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53 The weak link in the Baltic chain in that respect being Latvia, where the proportion of the eponymous nationality within the republic's population in the 1980s got threateningly close to 50 %, under which limit the continued existence of Latvia as a Union republic could have been seriously put into question. In the 1989 census, over 35 000 people officially registered as "Latvians" indicated Russian as their mother tongue (Vebers 1997).

folklores (Bogdan 1993). When visiting the fringe republics, Brezhnev could applaud local folk artists, while knowing fully well that his non-Russian locutors would speak to him in Russian as soon as they meant business. From the Russian viewpoint, the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian languages would be temporary relics, impractical decorations.

The general language policy had the effect of confining the non-Russian languages to the daily needs while promoting the “international” Russian as the language of science and communication, which is a classic colonial pattern. As a rule, the prevalence of Russian increased with the level of instruction (Connor 1992). In 1983, a clandestine Lithuanian journal worried that the academic status of Lithuanian was officially good but concretely bad, since the increase of Russian titles was found primarily in books or journals, publications that deal more with cultural and scientific topics, ie texts using a more sophisticated use of language.

That meant that national languages (except Russian which, precisely, was *not* conceptualised as a national language) were no longer supposed to *express* anything, but only to *transmit* things, to act as vehicles for the superior truths coming from the top. Russian was supposed to be the only link to universal truths. Other languages were meant to become, literally, folk languages, *patois*, that is, isolated codes whose *de facto* existence was postulated as being irrelevant to the dialectics of history.

In *the Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Kundera describes the communist system as the reign of kitsch. The kitsch is specific in that “it excludes from its field of vision everything that is essentially unacceptable in human life”. In the kingdom of kitsch, answers are already given, and rule out any new questions, and with them the possibility of doubt, perplexity and irony. Symptomatically, besides classic class struggle, rhetoric, official sloganising would emphasize “life”, “happiness”, “well-being”—all rhetorical devices meant to promote the literally *inhuman* picture of a social universe perfectly reconciled with itself.

The inner danger that threatened East European languages was, thus, loss of meaning. The Czech writer Ivan Klima (1994) describes how “people spew out their words faster and more carelessly all the time, because they feel that the person they are talking to will understand them anyway, because what they are saying isn’t really saying anything”. Due to the totalitarian nature of the system, free conversation had to be

restricted to the little circle of relatives and friends who could be trusted. In other words, authentic speech could not be directed towards society at large. Authenticity had to find shelter somewhere else, for instance in the telling of jokes,<sup>54</sup> or in literary creativity.<sup>55</sup> The possibility to mean supposes the possibility to reason, therefore the right to ask questions, and questions were precisely what was taboo (Kapuscinski 1995).

Typically, the writers who became symbols of intellectual resistance to communism seldom use the word “culture” in the sense of “ethnic cultures”. They use it in the singular, without adjective, in a sense which is more classic but broader and deeper than the notion of “way of life”. When Konrad mocked his country’s “not very cultivated intelligentsia”, or when Klima wrote that “we live in a milieu that is bereft of culture”, they did not mean that Hungarian or Czech lifestyles were in danger. They meant that they were living in a system where truth was self-contained and monopolistic.

That is the reason why Kundera’s metaphor of communism as kitsch, although well-chosen, misses part of the story. His metaphor went home in the West because it reinforced the fairy tale about Good and Evil. But social life under communism did not boil down to a good guys versus bad guys kind of scenario. Like other political or religious teleologies, official communist rhetoric took advantage of possibilities to create self-referential utterances both formally correct, logically unassailable and

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54 Soviet sloganising could sound weird once translated. That discrepancy enabled jokes that nourished mental resistance. In Estonia, the official acronym for Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic (ENSV), for instance, could be said to actually mean *Enne Nälg Siis Veletsus*—“First hunger, then misery”. Such jokes are part and parcel of the little stories, or *little history* of mental resistance. Today, the danger in retrospect is to underestimate the underlying despair that informed these stories, and to idealize them, a bit the way European tourists in Cuba today marvel at how local drivers manage to fix their old gas guzzlers despite the scarcity of spares.

55 Baltic cultural life experienced a virtual standstill as long as Stalin lived. After that, the cultural atmosphere remained generally stultifying because of censorship, but it became less monolithic. Authors, journalists and artists learned how to live with censorship and how to make the best possible use of whatever flaws existed in the system (Kubilius 1997). How life in a dictatorship influences literary creativity is an open and difficult question.

semantically false (Bourdieu 1982, Hagège 1985).<sup>56</sup> That impoverishment affected minority languages and majority languages alike. Siniavski (1988) devotes a whole chapter to “the Soviet language” (not “the Russian language”). He stresses that the official lingo had become increasingly disconnected from reality and thereby had been turned into an incantatory system. Popular parlance did not remain unaffected either. Siniavski (1988) and Kapuscinski (1995) notice a vanishing of the art of asking questions, and the appearance of an infinite number of sayings expressing resignation.

In such a context, “culture” becomes the mental tool that enables you to take some critical distance from what exists here and now, including your own self. In other words, “culture” in a totalitarian system is first and foremost a relation between you and the world, as the art of asking questions and discussing the answers (Klima 1994): not a means to self-fulfillment, but the very antithesis of self-fulfillment. It supposes self-distanciation, possibly irony, but in any case conscience, which is precisely what totalitarian ideologies seek to abolish.<sup>57</sup>

In other words, in the Soviet Union, the alternative was not, or not *only*, between Russian culture and the others (no national culture is by itself incompatible with dictatorship and arbitrariness), but also, on a deeper plane, between culture and its denial—call it submissiveness, barbarity, slavery, whatever. What matters here is not so much the question of how much people “believed in the system” (we will never know and, after all, so what?), than the existence of an all-embracing mechanism of re-codification of all existing symbols and values. That top-down recodification was informed by an ideology-driven denial of the autonomy of culture. The system would criticize or even destroy all potential sources of alternative authority, based on family ties, linguistic identity,

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56 Speeches by Khrushchev and Brezhnev contained a low frequency for the use of verbs and, concomitantly, a high frequency for the use of nominalised verbs. For instance, rather than saying “the people are struggling against imperialism” (a statement open to verification), one would say “the anti-imperialist struggle of the people” (a self-contained utterance presenting as obvious and true something which is not necessarily so) (Hagège 1985). Other rhetorical devices came to use, but this one was typical.

57 Hitler said once that conscience was a Jewish invention (Steiner 1973:47).

knowledge, or professional competence (Levada 1993). Eventual success outside the norms defined by the Party would be put down as an attempt to manipulate, calomniate or receive undeserved personal gain. The point, thus, was to weaken the value of culture, not in the sense of “ethnic culture”, but in the sense of autonomous thought. To get a depressing glimpse of it, one only need to read a few pages of the history books printed by the Novosti agency, or a speech by Brezhnev, and keep in mind that their rhetoric had to be revered as the truth.

Thus there was a double dimension to the Balts’ cultural resistance to communism. When Lithuanian writers stood up for the defence of their language, they did not do it only for the sake of Lithuanian self-esteem. What was at stake, more fundamentally, was the right to say that it is possible to express something relevant and even (why not) potentially universal in *Lithuanian*, wherever that “something” comes from. The same applies to the other languages of the Soviet Union. The staging of *West Side Story* in Tallinn, or the translating of Camus or Kafka into Estonian before they were translated into Russian, were part and parcel of the cultural resistance of the Estonians.

This is why we partly miss the mark when we adopt uncritically the claim that resistance to communism went through people’s attachment to “their cultures”. Retrenchment onto “cultures”, where it happened, was a second-best solution forced by the concrete, political circumstances of life in the Soviet Union. Mental resistance was informed by a refusal to become “cultures” *and nothing but*. Such “cultures” were widely institutionalised in the Soviet Union, albeit in castrated, folkloric forms. “Cultures” were what Balts *already* had, and they wanted to escape the reservation. One way to do that was to assert their nationhood.

## **D – Back Outside the USSR**

From 1979 onwards, the Baltic dissident movements overtly committed themselves to the restoration of their respective independences. In the second half of the 1980s, the question of Baltic independences became increasingly salient. While the perspective appealed to the quasi-totality of Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians, surveys made in 1991 show that, among Russians—both in the Baltic republics and in Russia herself—support for Baltic independences correlated with a variety of factors,

notably age (negative correlation) and education (positive correlation) (Karklins 1994a). Another factor influencing positively the attitude of non-Balts was length of residence. Generally, people having lived in Latvia, Estonia or Lithuania for a long time were more sympathetic to independence than recent migrants (Karklins 1994a, Smith et.al 1996). In the USSR at large, growing pluralism became a symptom of as well as a motor for political change after 1987 (Karklins 1994b).

The Soviet system became increasingly dualistic. The Party's institutional control remained formally, but in practice it chipped away, while alternative organisations mushroomed, becoming increasingly assertive and autonomous, and mobilising growing amounts of people. The diversity of these movements is such that it prevents us from seeing the Baltic independentist drive as a single-issue movement. The quest for independent nationhood took a variety of guises and was expressed in different ways. The quest for independence was present from the start in the discourse of a number of more radical groups emerging from the "dissident" movement of the 1970s. It was also embodied, more implicitly and then explicitly, in the rhetoric of grassroots movements as diverse as environment protection clubs, human rights groups, leagues of women documenting abuse against draftees, etc.

We could discuss at length about the degree to which such groups actually were independentist from the start but hid it tactically for some time behind Gorbachev-style rhetorics.<sup>58</sup> In a broader perspective, it is a moot point. Psychologically, these movements were releases from the consciousness of being small republics in the Soviet Union (Hallik 1997). The national dimension was not an optional, sentimental coat of paint given *ex post* to pragmatic preoccupations. The link between them was not contingent, but logical. The concrete problems that preoccupied Balts resulted from their belonging in a state which they had not asked to enter and which no longer worked. Environmental problems in Northeast Estonia had been caused by decisions of industrial policy ta-

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58 Chapter 4 in Karklins (1994) provides a good overview of the emergence of the grass-roots movements in Latvia in the late 1980s. For Estonia, see the chapter "Recent developments in Estonia: three stages of transition (1987-1997)" in Lauristin & Vihalemm (eds.) (1997). For Lithuania, see Lomaniene (1994) as well as chapter 5 in Vardys & Sedaitis (1997).



ken in Moscow, not in Tallinn. The Latvian housing shortage was directly linked to the fact that about one-fourth of the housing stock built in Latvia from 1986 to 1990 was for military personnel (Karklins 1994a). The weakening of the role of Baltic languages in the social sphere resulted from language and population policies in which Balts, even Baltic communist leaders had little say. In a state like the USSR, where nationhood was both institutionalised (territorially and bureaucratically) at the sub-state level *and* prevented from above from acquiring political salience, the quest for local self-rule was bound to have politically destructive effects at the state level.

Baltic independentist ambitions were informed by two political impulses whose mutual links were not contingent (Hallik 1997). The first impulse brought up notions of anti-totalitarianism, democracy, and open society. It was rooted in the European rationalist political tradition of rule of law and right to self-determination (Lauristin & Vihalemm 1997). The second impulse was based on a restorationist ideology. Its starting point was that the incorporation of the Baltic countries in 1940 had been illegal, illegitimate, and detrimental to the interests of Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians. It viewed the restoration of Baltic statehoods as conform to international law, morally just, and necessary to secure the nations' vital interests.

Thus the political dimension of Estonianness (and Lithuanianness, and Latvianness) came as a backlash in the late 1980s, during the Baltic "singing revolution". In Soviet times, the Baltic song festivals were privileged fora for people to assert Latvian, Lithuanian or Estonian identities. There was something very "ethnic" about the meeting of hundreds of thousands of people celebrating their mother tongues and their traditional songs. Yet, by gathering and singing, Balts were delivering a strong message about matters civic: they were asserting their weariness with the Soviet state and their longing for sovereignty. At the Baltic song festivals, ethnicity and civicness, the particular and the universal were not antithetical to each other. Quite the opposite: they were mutually reinforcing.

The process of reestablishment of Baltic independences does not fit nicely in any of the boxes of the classic civic-ethnic dichotomy. It fits into both, which suggests that, empirically and conceptually, the border between both categories is not as watertight as the typology seems to

imply. Even retaining the distinction for analytical purposes would suppose that we account for how (in general, and in a withering-away USSR in particular) civicness could be devoid of “ethnic” aspects. Both aspects of nationhood are intertwined to such an extent that disconnecting them sounds mostly speculative. Ethnocultural claims were just one of several factors undermining the old regime (Karklins 1994a). Far from being “ethnic”, the Baltics independence movements were clearly political in nature. They vindicate Nairn’s (1997:53) statement that “the genuine point of national identity is not possession of one’s own folk-dance academy but government—or anyway, the attempted government of one’s own affairs”.

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# CHAPTER V

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## Recreating States

Today the Baltic states are independent. At the same time, they are getting increasingly embedded in a number of political and economic networks (Kionka 1994). While the level of interstate cooperation remains relatively low, Baltic international activity directed to other countries has been conspicuous. Lithuania and Estonia became members of the Council of Europe in May 1993 and Latvia in February 1995. Most surveys reveal an overwhelming consensus among political elites in the Baltic states in favor of EU membership (Lofgren 1997), while the citizenry at large does not always match the elites' enthusiasm. In that perspective, the three countries have been aligning national laws with EU standards. They signed the European agreements that grant them the status of associate members of the European Union in June 1995. Entry into NATO is viewed as desirable as well, since NATO is considered as the only serious guarantee of political independence. Lithuanian leaders have been the most vocal ones in courting NATO favor (Girnius 1997).

To describe and explain how Balts eventually succeeded in restoring independence would take us beyond the reach of this book. The process is well documented today. Independence movements proved ultimately successful, although some power structures of the USSR continued to exist in the Baltic countries until after the demise of the USSR itself, like the procuracy in Latvia or Soviet (then renamed Russian) military forces (Karklins 1994a).

To call Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania "new states" is convenient but misleading (Bieliunas 1998). These states are both new and old. Baltic independentist movements contained a tension between reformist actors (ie, those who accepted the idea of a legal continuity between the Baltic Soviet republics and the new republics) and restorationist actors (ie,

those who rejected that idea, and instead emphasised the continuity with the prewar republics). The latter eventually carried the day (Hallik 1997).

International law does not offer clear norms about a situation in which a state “disappeared” for fifty years (Kherad 1992; Bieliunas 1998). The Latvian, Lithuania and Estonian declarations of independence of 1990 were met with a certain reserve by the international community (Czaplinski 1993). In general, international law does not consider secession as a *right*, and condemns it when it hurts the territorial integrity of a state. Given the specificity of the Baltic case, the exercise of right to self-determination could not be considered to hurt the territorial integrity of the Soviet state. It was rather the illegal annexation of 1940 which hurt the independence and therefore the territorial integrity of the Baltic states (Kherad 1992). The 1940 annexation put an end to the Balts’ *de facto* independence, not to the continued existence of their states. Consequently, the recovering of their independence cannot be seen as a pure case of secession.<sup>1</sup> The Baltic states are not strictly speaking Soviet successor states (Russia is<sup>2</sup>). At the same time, they retain links with the former Soviet Union, of which they were part at least *de facto*, and combine them with other links with the prewar republics of Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania.

## I – Territories

The political map of that part of the world has been fundamentally altered since the late 1980s, but what is striking is how little new borders have actually been drawn. Instead, the internal borders of the USSR have been elevated to the status of international borders.

The territories of the Baltic states today link them directly to the eponymous former Soviet republics. Given that the Soviet annexation

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1 “Lithuania never adhered to the USSR, therefore no [Soviet] secession law can be applied to it” (Landsbergis 1990)

2 On January 1, 1992, the Russian Federation assumed the USSR’s international and strategic conventions (e.g. foreign diplomatic properties and privileges, permanent seat at the UN Security Council, military assets, etc)

entailed a partial redrawing of the external borders of Estonia, Latvia or Lithuania, none of them today has the same state borders as the prewar republics: they have these of the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian SSR. In comparison to the pre-1940 republics, that entails either a territorial loss (for Latvia and Estonia) or a territorial gain (for Lithuania).

In September 1944, the Soviet government proceeded to carve up Estonia's territory, attaching the Narva area to the Russian oblast of Leningrad, and the Petseri area to the oblast of Pskov (Anderson 1990). The loss for Estonia represented 5 % of the prewar area and 6 % of the population. Both territories are still part of Russia today. Estonian politicians make no longer much fuss about that (they did in the first half of the 1990s), but from a legal point of view, the question remains open, given that the Estonian constitution, in its article 122, still takes the 1920 Tartu Peace Treaty as the principal determinant of the Estonia's land boundaries.

The carving up of Latvia's easternmost parts took place more incrementally. Successive steps were taken in 1944, 1945, 1947 and 1953. They touched essentially the Abrene area. The town of Abrene is called today Pytalovo. Latvian authorities have kept a low profile on the issue.<sup>3</sup> In February 1997, Aivars Vovers, the head of the Latvian delegation discussing the border, said Latvia no longer demanded that the border agreement contain a reference to the 1920 Riga peace treaty, which stated that the Abrene district belonged to Latvia. So far the treaty delimiting the boundary with Russia has not been signed and the question remains formally open.

On 19 October 1999, the Lithuanian parliament ratified a treaty on border demarcation with Russia. In 1939 the Soviet-Lithuanian treaty of mutual assistance, beside paving the way of subsequent occupation, "gave" Vilnius back to Lithuania. The city and its regions had been occupied by Poland since 1920, which led to a breakup of diplomatic relations between Poland and Lithuania until 1938, and the resettlement of the Lithuanian capital in Kaunas (Kovno). A French journalist of that time wrote "You just do not go from Kovno to Warsaw. There are no

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3 *The Baltic Observer*, February 2, 1995

trains. The roads are closed. Wire and phone lines do not work. Vis-à-vis Poland, Lithuania is neither at war nor at peace. They ignore each other, they do not talk to each other. Armed guards watch closely each other at the border” (Kérillis 1930:316).

The historical and legal “Lithuanianness” of Vilnius is fragile enough for it to have been reasserted in the current Lithuanian constitution, whose article 17 in extenso reads explicitly “The capital of the Lithuanian state is Vilnius, the long-standing historical [*ilgaamžė istorinė*] capital of Lithuania”. By comparison, the Latvian constitution mentions the state capital but says nothing of its historicity (“The Saeima shall assemble in Riga. It may assemble elsewhere only in extraordinary circumstances”, article 15), while the Estonian constitution makes no mention of the state capital at all. No one would care to deny that Riga and Tallinn ought to be part of respectively Latvia and Estonia, and that they have no serious challengers as state capitals. As we shall see, the position of Vilnius is not quite as obvious.

## II – Redefining the Citizenry

While rules of public international law on state succession are not clear, those which focus particularly on citizenship are almost absent (Bielionas 1998). The notion of human rights implies that some rights exist which are inherent in the person rather than in the subject of law. The position of citizenship vis a vis human rights is not straightforward. The notion of citizenship is sometimes explicit, like in article 15 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, sometimes implicit (Bielionas 1998). Sometimes it is found in social rights. Citizenship is at the interface between the domestic order and the international order, but at least, the idea that each state ultimately decides who its nationals are seems firmly entrenched.

The Baltic states do not consider themselves as successor states of the USSR and took legal steps underlining their position (Petrauskas 1997a), although they had to make compromises. Attempts to base some of the national legislation on the one that existed before 1940 may have seemed to underline the legal continuity rather than concretely restore the state *ad integrum*.

## A – The Legal Reframing Of Estonian Citizenship

### 1 – The Citizenship Laws

Broadly, we can distinguish three stages in the formation of Estonian citizenship legislation. Until April 1, 1995, the attribution of Estonia's citizenship was governed by the 1992 resolution *On the coming into effect of the law "On citizenship"*, which actually reenacted the prewar (1938) citizenship law (Park 1994; Barrington 1995).

Opinions on whom would receive Estonian citizenship diverged already in the early 1990s, but the restorationist option carried the day. On February 26, 1992 the Estonian Parliament voted to restore Estonia's 1938 citizenship law.<sup>4</sup> According to that decision, automatic citizenship would be granted to people who were Estonian citizens prior to June 16, 1940 (the last day before the Soviet occupation of Estonia) and to their direct descendants. Persons not eligible for automatic citizenship and wanting to become Estonian citizens would have to go through a process of naturalisation.<sup>5</sup> A number of Russian movements promptly took issue and demanded the zero option.<sup>6</sup> The Russian Parliament echoed them by announcing that Russian citizenship would be granted to all former Soviet citizens living outside Russia who so wish.<sup>7</sup> The breakthrough of restorationism was confirmed by the victory of the nationalist *Isamaa* (Pro Patria) party at parliamentary elections in September 1992.

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4 Full provisions of the 1938 citizenship law can be found in Hallik (1997).

5 With the following requirements: First, at least 2 years of residence in Estonia from March 30, 1990 (meaning concretely that one could begin submitting applications for naturalisation on March 30, 1992), followed by a delay of one year for the application to be processed. Second, the passing of an exam of proficiency in the Estonian language with a vocabulary requirement of 1,500 words). Third, taking an oath of loyalty to the republic of Estonia and its constitutional state structure.

6 On March 20 1992, a demonstration led by former CPSU activists was held in Tallinn demanding the establishment of a "Baltic Russia" in the newly-independent countries (*The Baltic Independent*, March 27, 1992).

7 Polls conducted at that time showed that 86 % of Estonia's Russophones fully agreed or generally agreed with that decision (Raitviir 1996).

As a second stage, on 19 January 1995, a new citizenship law was passed. It defined naturalisation requirements more precisely. It extended the required period of residency from 2 to 5 years, and added a requirement of legal source of income and a requirement of knowledge of the Estonian Constitution and Law on Citizenship.<sup>8</sup>

As a third stage, in 1998, amendments were passed that provide for stateless children under 15 who were born after 26 February 1992 (when the country's 1938 citizenship law was reinstated) to gain citizenship. The children's parents must apply on their behalf, must be stateless themselves, and must have lived in Estonia for at least five years. Both the EU presidency and OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities Max van der Stoep welcomed the passage of these amendments to Estonia's citizenship law.

Once the restorationist principle had been established, Estonian legislators fine-tuned the language legislation in several steps. The continuity of Estonian language has been a central factor in reproduction of Estonian identity (Vihalemm 1999). Came independence, about three-quarters of the Russian-speakers supported the idea that Russian should be the second official language of Estonia, while an overwhelming majority of Estonians (92 %) rejected it (Raitviir 1996). Citizenship legislation includes a language requirement at a minimum conversational level. From 1993 on, that language requirement has been reviewed several times. On 10

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8 A person who wishes to receive Estonian citizenship must: (1) be at least fifteen years of age; (2) have lived in Estonia on the basis of a permanent residence permit for no less than five years prior to the date on which an application for Estonian citizenship is submitted and for one year from the date following the date of registration of the application. This does not apply to persons who lived in Estonia before July 1, 1990 and who applied for a residence permit before April 30, 1996 as specified by the Citizenship Act; (3) have knowledge of the Estonian language in accordance with the requirements of the Citizenship Act; (4) have knowledge of the Estonian Constitution and the Citizenship Act, in accordance with the Citizenship Act; (5) have permanent lawful income sufficient to support himself or herself and his or her dependants (unemployment benefits are also considered a lawful income); (6) take an oath declaring loyalty to the state of Estonia: "*In applying for Estonian citizenship, I swear to be loyal to the constitutional state system of Estonia*" (source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs). The fees for these exams are 20 % of the minimum salary, and they are waived for students, pensioners and unemployed candidates.



February 1993, the Law on Language Requirements for Citizenship was passed after a fact-finding mission of Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) made public its report. The report said that Estonian laws do correspond to international norms, but nonetheless called for the quick adoption of a clear language law for citizenship qualification. According to the law that got passed, applicants must be able to communicate orally in day-to-day situations, public services and official institutions.<sup>9</sup> On 15 April 1993, the language exam was softened (the requested level became that of the final test for those finishing Russian school). Several exemptions have been incrementally introduced.<sup>10</sup>

Currently, the language exam tests listening comprehension, reading comprehension, writing ability and speaking ability. Each part is successfully completed when 60 % of the answers are correct. The language tests are scored on a basis of mutual compensation: for example poor verbal abilities can be compensated by good performance in written exercises.

## 2 – *The Legal Status of Non-citizens*

Estonia's Constitution and legal acts (such as the *Aliens Act*) provide a legal status to the non-citizens who do not apply for Estonian citizenship, or have not yet chosen which citizenship they wish to hold. The *Aliens Act* was amended on July 1, 1997 in order to grant non-citizens the right to apply

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9 The law specified that an applicant's spoken Estonian must be clear enough to understand but he or she may take the time to find a suitable word, repeat and reword the phrase, and make mistakes in grammar and syntax. They must be able to understand material in the media on citizens' rights and duties, and to compose a curriculum vitae (Park 1994). See also *The Baltic Independent*, February 12, 1993.

10 Those who had applied before the 1990 elections to the Estonian Congress escape the language test and the one-year delay [NB. The Estonian Congress was an institution that served as an alternative forum to the then-existing Supreme Council. The Congress registered the citizens of pre-war Estonia and their direct descendents. It dissolved itself in 1992]. Concretely, that decision applied to about 30 000 persons who did not have Estonian citizenship before 1940 but who had the Estonian nationality in Soviet times. Applicants born before January 1, 1930 are exempt from the writing ability section. Special exemptions are also provided for handicapped candidates. One measure bound to have serious future effects is that applicants who have acquired elementary, secondary or higher education in Estonian are exempt from the language exam.

for permanent residence permits.<sup>11</sup> A later amendment (September 24, 1997) applied to the people who had applied for temporary residence permits before July 12, 1995, and made them eligible for permanent residence permits starting from July 12, 1998. As of today, over 300 000 residence permits have been issued, around 89 000 of them into Russian passports.

Estonian legislation separates the political status of the non-citizens from their civil rights. Regarding political rights, the 1993 *Law on Local Elections* allows non-citizens to vote at local elections (Ainso 1997), a move later confirmed by the 1996 *Law on Elections of Local Government Councils*.<sup>12</sup> However, non-citizen residents may not be organised into political parties, militarised associations, nor can they be elected into national and local institutions (Ruutsoo 1998).

Regarding civil rights, on paper at least, permanent residents who arrived before July 1991 have the same rights as Estonian citizens in privatisation of property, privatisation of housing and have right to own land. The *Dwelling Rooms Privatisation Act*, for instance, gives non-citizen residents the right to acquire apartments for vouchers given by the government. Thus they have the possibility to own apartments (Ainso 1997). Permanent resident non-citizens are also supposed to have access to the same jobs as citizens, except state official positions and certain jobs in the civil service (Ruutsoo 1998). Nevertheless, Andersen (1997) finds that in the process of privatisation of the economy, the legislation contains a number of distortions which have the concrete effect of making of citizenship a *sine qua non* of full participation.<sup>13</sup>

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11 The decision applied to an estimated 200 000 persons (RFE/RL Newsline July 2, 1997).

12 Approved by the Estonian Parliament on May 16, 1996. According to that law, citizens of other states, or those who have not yet chosen their citizenship, have the right to vote in local government elections, if they are over 18 years old, permanent residents and to the 1st of January of the local governments elections' year, and have lived at least five years on the territory of the respective local government. Estonia is one of the few states where such an opportunity exists.

13 Andersen concludes his study of the Estonian legislation on privatisation by stating that "only by passing through the "eye of the needle" which is citizenship can the Russians achieve equality with the Estonians", and that "to a considerable degree", the process has been to the advantage of the Estonians.

### 3 – *The Estonian Law on Minorities*

On 26 October 1993, the Estonian Parliament voted a law that came as a direct continuation of the prewar legislation on cultural autonomy for minorities (Ainso 1997). In 1925, the *Cultural Autonomy for Ethnic Minorities Act* gave minority groups whose membership exceeded 3000 the right to self-determination in cultural matters, with financial support provided by the state. The Act also made provisions for receiving education in minority languages, which led to the creation of schools where tuition took place in German, Russian, Swedish and Yiddish. Estonian was taught in all of them given that bilingualism had been set as an explicit objective for children from minority language groups. Most schools were monolingual but mixed-language schools also existed, where two and at times three languages were used for tuition (Estonian-Russian, Estonian-German, Estonian-Swedish, Latvian-Russian, Yiddish-German-Russian schools) (Vare 1998). The current Estonian law on minorities is actually a revamped version of the 1925 Act. It allows eligible minority groups to form councils with elected representatives at the municipal and national levels and provides partial public funding for activities aimed at promoting cultural awareness.<sup>14</sup>

### 4 – *School Reform*

#### a – Background

The human heterogeneity existing in Estonia differs strongly from the prewar heterogeneity. The balance between groups has changed. A comparison between the 1934 and 1989 censuses shows that the share of Estonians dropped from 88 % to 61,5 % of the total population. Estonians thus went from a situation in which they represented nine-tenth of the population of their country to a situation where they constitute less than two-thirds of it. Secondly, the components of the population have changed. As a result of the war and of the Soviet occupation, Estonia has lost its two longest-standing historical minorities, the Germans and

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<sup>14</sup> *The Baltic Independent*, December 10, 1993.

the Swedes. Conversely, between 1934 and 1989, the proportion of Russians increased fivefold (Hallik 1998a). About 400 000 people living in Estonia (on a total population of less than 1.5 million) have Russian as a mother tongue. Different estimations concur in finding that about a quarter of them speak Estonian *fluently*, about a quarter do not speak any Estonian *at all*, and the remaining 50-odd % constitute an intermediate group with varied proficiency in Estonian (Heidmets 1998).

The majority (60,5 %) of the Russian-speaking residents was born outside Estonia (Hallik 1998a). As first-generation migrants, they met little difficulty to adjust to their new environment. From the start, they tended to form a relatively separated subsociety. The Soviet economic system favored the concentration of labor force into industrial branches linked to military complex. The heavy industry of the Estonian SSR was strongly geographically concentrated, whence the continued specificity of the geographical balance of Estonia's population today. Estonia's countryside remains overwhelmingly Estonian-speaking (there are no rural areas with non-Estonian majorities), while 90 % of non-Estonians live in urban areas (half of them in Tallinn and in the surrounding province of Harjumaa, one third of them in the Northeast). In the industrial northeastern province of Ida-Virumaa, Estonians account for less than 20 % of the population (Hallik 1998a). The Russian-speaking share of the local population exceeds 95 % in the main cities of that region, namely Narva, Kohtla-Järve and the former Soviet army base of Sillamäe.

Of course, Russians were not the only non-Estonians, but as we saw in Chapter IV, the Soviet system did not give to other minorities possibilities to schooling in their own languages. After the Soviet takeover, the Estonian educational system became integrated into the wider Soviet system of education, whereby Estonian and Russian became the only languages of tuition. The language of tuition for children classified as Estonian was Estonian, and the official policy aimed clearly at making them bilingual (Estonian-Russian). Children classified as Russian would receive tuition in Russian-language schools, but school policy for them was rather oriented toward monolingualism. They did study Estonian, but as a rule the classroom hours were few and the tuition rather low-

level. For children neither “Estonian” nor “Russian”, the objective was linguistic assimilation into either group—preferably the latter. Thus, the minority language schools that existed before 1940 were closed down. Children would go to either Estonian or Russian-language schools. It was not possible to study one’s native language even as an optional subject (Vare 1998). Concretely, the choice of school entailed either monolingualism (Russian) or bilingualism (Estonian-Russian). Given the linguistic specificity of Estonian, which is not an Indo-European language, and the preeminence of Russian across Soviet society, the choice of Russian rather than Estonian understandably appeared as the most realistic option for people belonging to lesser linguistic groups.<sup>15</sup>

As a result, Russian in Estonia became the main language of people who did not and *still do not* view themselves as Russians (Hallik 1998a). By 1989, no more than 13 % of Estonia’s Russians and 7 % of all other non-Estonian inhabitants considered themselves proficient in Estonian (*ibid.*). Thus, in 1991, Estonia became an independent European country in which one-third of the population did not know the national language. In practice, the heterogeneity of the prewar society had given way to a situation of bilingualism. The existence of a dual school system, in which Russian-language schools existed side by side with Estonian-language ones, with next to no mutual contacts (let alone cooperation), drove a wedge between the two groups from childhood already. Estimations done in the 1990s showed that a strong majority (82 %) of Estonia’s Russians used to socialize during their childhood in a monolingual Russian environment (Raitviir 1996). The separation was reproduced in everyday life, in which ordinary relations between Russians and Estonians did not come about as a matter of course. Hallik (1998a) goes even further and describes Estonia as a bi-national society (*kaherahvuslik ühiskond*).

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15 After graduation from secondary school it was possible to continue studies in Russian, given that both local and federal needs were taken into account in vocational and higher education. Both Estonian and Russian were used for teaching in those institutions. For some “strategic” subjects, like naval studies, tuition was only in Russian. The Tallinn Naval College admitted students from all over the Soviet Union. On the other hand, many other specialist subjects that were not taught in Estonia, and to receive education in these, one had to look for opportunities elsewhere, in another Soviet republic (Vare 1998).

## b – Reform

After Estonian independence was reinstated, the status of the Estonian and Russian languages was reversed. The functions of the Russian language, once the *lingua franca* of a superpower became brutally narrowed (Vare 1998). Today, Estonian is the only official language of state and local government authorities, although in localities where a majority of inhabitants belongs to the Russian minority, they have the right to communicate with authorities in that language (Ruutsoo 1998). The law regulating the language requirements for officials was over one year in the making, due to disagreements between MP:s (most of whom wanted to delegate the authority to define language proficiency levels to the government) and President Lennart Meri (who replied that the matter had to be couched in law instead of being decided by the government). The Constitutional Court later backed Meri's objection when it ruled that such requirements could be stipulated only in a constitutional law.<sup>16</sup>

In 1992–1995 a package of laws on education was passed in the Estonian parliament, making up the judicial framework within which education in Estonia is organised, on the base of the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia (1992), which makes of Estonian the official language. According to the language law (1995), all other languages in Estonia are regarded as foreign languages. Estonian is now taught in every Russian-language school and class. In 1996, a new unified *Official Curriculum for Primary and Secondary Schools of the Estonian Republic* was adopted, with implementation in Russian schools in 1998–1999. The 1998 programme *Developing the Non-Estonian School* of the Ministry of Education stipulated that by 2007, Estonian will have to become the only language of instruction.

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16 The law was finally passed in its third reading, together with amendments requiring those working in the service sector to be proficient in the Estonian language. President Meri promulgated these amendments on 13 February 1999, in spite of criticism from the Russian Party in Estonia and the United People's Party (the largest party of Russian-speakers in Estonia), which on 12 February 1999 issued a statement urging the EU and the OSCE to pressure Tallinn to revoke the legislation. The amendments went into force on 1 July 1999 (RFE/RL Newsline, 24 and 25 November 1998; 9 February 1999; 15 and 16 February 1999).

## **B – The Legal Reframing of Latvian Citizenship**

### *1 – The First Legal Distinction: Citizens / Non-citizens*

#### a – The Procedures of Naturalisation

Devising a citizenship law proved a more drawn-out process in Latvia than in Estonia. The Latvian constitution—actually the reenacted and amended 1922 constitution (Penikis 2000)—is silent on citizenship matters (Petrauskas 1997b). After recovering independence, Latvia voted a temporary citizenship law (October 15, 1991) which, like in Estonia, restored the citizenry of the pre-1940 citizens and their descendents. Legally, the aggregate body of the citizens of the June 17, 1940 (the day when the republic of Latvia became occupied) continues to exist.

The group who received Latvian automatic citizenship by virtue of the restorationist principle included 1 720 000 persons (75 % of Latvia's population), among whom 365 000 “non-Latvians”: contrarily to a widespread idea, and against pressure from certain nationalist Latvian politicians, Latvian citizenship has never been reserved for “ethnic Latvians”. Those who did not receive citizenship were the 700 000 Soviet-era migrants, who, if they wanted to become citizens, had to go through a process of naturalisation.

The requirements for naturalisation included knowledge of the Latvian language, of Latvia's history, of the Constitution, and proof of “lawful income” (Endzins 1997). The period of residence of five years was quite liberal (originally, a period of 16 years was planned), since most non-Latvians have been residents for longer than that (Steen 1997:19). These conditions are by and large comparable to Estonia. What was specific to Latvia, and quickly became the main bone of contention, was a system of quotas and naturalisation windows for naturalisation, adopted on 22 June 1994 due to pressure from two nationalist parties, the Latvian National Independence Movement, and For Fatherland and Freedom. According to the quotas, a number equivalent to 0,1 % of the total number of citizens could be naturalised each year.

When the debate opened in earnest in the Latvian parliament in June 1993, seven of the eight parties represented in parliament, accounting for 93 % of the seats, supported the naturalisation quotas so as to preserve the over-representation of Latvians in the electorate (Stepan 1994).

According to the system of “windows”, persons aged 16–20 would be allowed to apply for naturalisation in 1996, then in 1997 persons between 20 and 25 could, etc. Concretely, that meant that many non-citizens never would have a chance to apply for citizenship.

On 30 January 1998, Prime minister Krasts said he no longer excluded the possibility that the government would call for naturalisation of all children born in Latvia since 21 August 1991, regardless of their parents’ citizenship.<sup>17</sup> Krasts’s own party (the above-mentioned For Fatherland and Freedom) strongly opposed that liberalising move, but the Prime minister received decisive support from president Ulmanis, Foreign affairs minister Birkavs (whose explicit objective was to avoid the emergence of a two-community state on Latvian territory), and the coalition partner Harmony Party. After pressure from the OSCE, the windows system was removed on 22 June 1998. Beside the removal of naturalisation windows, Latvia decided to grant citizenship to all children born after independence if parents require it, provide for simpler language tests for older residents. That liberalising move was confirmed by a referendum on October 3, 1998 (Zaagman 1999).

## b – The Status of the Non-citizens

Beside citizens (*pilsonis*), Latvian legislation gives a legal status to the persons who reside legally in Latvia but do not have the country’s citizenship (*nepilsonis*). Muiznieks nonetheless criticizes Latvian legislators for taking so long in regulating status of non-citizens. The law *On the Status of Former USSR Citizens Who Do Not Have Citizenship of Latvia or Any Other State* was adopted on April 12, 1995 only. It put an end to several years of uncertainty about the legal status of more than 700 000 persons. For a long time, the Citizenship and Immigration Department refused to include many non-citizens on the registry of inhabitants, thereby ma-

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17 The 1997 UNDP report in Latvia stresses that between 2000 and 3000 non-citizen children had been born yearly in Latvia. They have no direct ties to the extinct USSR, and their automatic statelessness contradicted the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (binding on Latvia), whose article 7 provides for the children to citizenship at birth. The official Latvian position was becoming increasingly untenable.



king it hard for them to work legally (Muiznieks 1997).<sup>18</sup> Today, the legal status of the non-citizens is determined by a host of laws and decisions limiting certain social and economic rights to citizens, for instance the access to certain professions. The US Department of State (1996) notices that some of these limitations are reasonable (diplomats, armed guards) while others look harder to justify (pharmacists, Latvian airlines crewmembers). Social benefits like pensions are paid regardless of citizenship, but non-citizens may not form political organisations or own land.

Latvian authorities have also been late in issuing internationally recognised travel documents for non-citizens. Instead, the Citizenship and Immigration Department would require departing non-citizens to obtain separate reentry permits, thereby restricting their right to leave from and reenter Latvia freely (Muiznieks 1997). The law now stipulates that registered permanent resident non-citizens enjoy the right to establish and change residence within Latvia, travel abroad, and return to Latvia.

## 2 – *The Second Legal Distinction : Citizenship/Nationality*

Latvian legislation makes a difference between *citizenship* and *nationality*. Until the year 2000, the latter got officially registered alongside the former in people's passports. That unusual practice continued both the pre-1940 and the Soviet-time practice.

According to Latvian legislation, each person inherits ethnicity from his parents. At 16, children born in mixed families must choose the ethnicity of one of their parents (UNDP 1997:49). An official procedure to change one's ethnicity does exist, but it is quite an intricate process.

When combined, the distinction between citizens and non-citizens, and the distinction between citizenship and nationality, serve as a basis for making a legal difference between "ethnic minorities" (*etniskas mino-*

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18 Skuland & Hasler (1994) have interesting information about the kind of people who were denied registration in early 1990s. Many for instance were former Soviet Army officers, or people living in dormitories and therefore not considered as having a "real" address. One ironic consequence of the attitude of the Citizenship and Immigration Department was that, as late as 1995, nobody really knew how many inhabitants Latvia had. There was a 50 000-person discrepancy (on a total of about 2.5 million people) between the statistics provided by the CID and those of the State Statistical Committee.

ritates) and “ethnic groups” (*etniskas grupas*). Only citizens can be members of “minorities”, whereas “groups” include both citizens and non-citizens (Vebers 1997). Thus, Latvia’s “groups” are logically larger than its “minorities”.<sup>19</sup>

The expression “ethnic minority” is not used as a matter of course in Latvia. It is an import from the West. So is the word *minoritate* itself (“ethnic” or not). Latvians will rather speak about [unhyphenated] “minority” (*mazakumtautība*), “Russian-speakers” (*krievvalodigie*), “foreigners” (*cittautiesi*) or “communities” (*kopiena*). Latvian legislation itself will rather use expressions like “permanent inhabitant of the Latvian republic” (*LR pastavigais iedzīvotājs*) or “national and ethnic groups” (*nacionālas un etniskas grupas*). Latvian legislation leaves quite open the interpretation as to what actually constitutes an “ethnic group”. The *etniska minoritate* intellectually cherished by much Western scholarship still looks like a fresh import in the Latvian and Latvian-Russian psyches. According to Vebers (1997), Latvia’s Russians until recently saw the term “ethnic minority”, if applied to them, as an insult.

Legal uncertainties notwithstanding, Latvia has renewed its minority infrastructure. Especially in the late 1980s – early 1990s, a massive move towards (re)establishing cultural associations became salient. Minorities became social actors again (Dribins 1996). In 1988, an umbrella organisation was established.<sup>20</sup> It was pro Popular Front (independentist), and thereby became instrumental in giving non-Latvians another forum than the pro-Soviet Interfront (Vebers 1997). On March 19, 1991, the law *On the Free Development and Rights to Cultural Autonomy of Latvia’s National and Ethnic Minorities* was passed.<sup>21</sup>

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19 The groups present in statistics are usually the following: Latvians (*latvieši*), Russians (*krievi*), Belarussians (*baltkrievi*), Ukrainians (*ukraini*), Poles (*poli*), Lithuanians (*lietuviēši*), Jews (*ebreji*), Gypsies (*cigāni*), Germans (*vačieši*) and Estonians (*iģauni*).

20 LNKBA, *Latvijas Nacionālo Kultūras Biedrību Asociācija*, Association of the National Cultural Societies of Latvia.

21 That law gets direct inspiration from the December 8, 1919 law, which stated that the network of minority nationalities was “in its organisational capacities autonomous”. Prewar Latvia had German, Polish, Jewish, Russian and Belarussian schoolboards beside the Latvian ones. In the 1933–34 schoolyear, 80 % of the children from these minorities attended these schools (Dribins 1996).

### 3 – The Third Legal Distinction : Official Language/Minority Languages

Latvia is the Baltic republic where the Russian language made the biggest inroads during Soviet times.

The Latvian-language environment became destroyed in most cities. It was comparatively preserved in the countryside, but after the purge of the “national communists” in 1959, authorities closed down many small rural Latvian-language schools.

The usage of Latvian was rather restricted in institutions. For instance, Russian became the language of bookkeeping in all Latvian ministries bar one. In the 1980s, the position of Latvian became weakened further when many Russian schools no longer taught it (Kamenska 1995). Increasingly, children from mixed Latvian/Russian families would be sent to Russian-language schools: assimilation through wedding favoured Russian. Every census of the Soviet era marked a diminution of Latvian language use in conjunction with the declining share of Latvians in the population.

Today the proportion of Russian-speakers in the population of Latvia can be estimated at about 40 %.<sup>22</sup> Almost 80 % of them live concentrated in urban or rural areas where they constitute absolute linguistic *majorities*. Of the seven largest cities in Latvia, only one (Jelgava) is inhabited by a majority (52 %) of Latvian-speakers, while the other six, including the state capital (Riga, Daugavpils, Liepaja, Jūrmala, Ventspils, Rēzekne) have Russian-speaking majorities (Milevska 1998).

Consequently, while Latvians represent the majority of the country's population (52 % in the 1989 census, 55,3 % in 1998), over one third of them live in an environment where they actually constitute a *minority*. Skuland and Hasler (1994) describe the situation in Latvia as one where the majority suffers from inferiority complex while the minority has a superiority complex. The objective of Latvian legislators since the return to independence is to make of Latvian the country's *lingua franca*.

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<sup>22</sup> The 1997 Demographic Yearbook of Latvia indicates the following proportions: Russians 32,5 %, Belarussians 4 %, Ukrainians 2,9 %.

### a – Language in Institutions and Companies

The Language Law which took effect in May 1992 contains a provision which obliges all persons employed in both state and private sector to have a command in Latvian language “at the level necessary to carry out their duties”.<sup>23</sup> All ministries and departments had to elaborate detailed lists to determine which level of the state language proficiency was required for specific jobs. All persons who graduated from schools with a language of instruction other than Latvian were subject to a state language test.

### b – Language in Schools

Latvia inherited from the Soviet Union a largely dual education system. All levels from kindergarten to university<sup>24</sup> had both Latvian and Russian-language sections.

The Latvian government has agreed so far to continue using Russian as language of instruction in public schools where pupils are primarily Russian-speakers. All are supposed to learn Latvian. The government’s stated long-term goal is that all public schools eventually convert to Latvian as language of instruction (US State Department 1996). The linguistic Latvian/Russian duality still extant in Latvia’s school system is officially seen as a temporary adjustment to de facto conditions. Latvian is now taught in all educational institutions. At the same time, Latvian legislation contains generous provisions for minority language schools. It is currently possible to acquire education in eight different minority languages.

The *National Latvian Language Training Programme* was figured out in the mid-1990s with the assistance of United Nations Development Programme, with a view to enabling everyone to acquire education in

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23 Three levels of the state language proficiency were officially established. The first level corresponds to some basic knowledge (for people whose positions do not imply a lot of limited interaction with the public, like bus drivers, guards, service personnel etc). The second level requires a certain fluency both in spoken and written language (requested for shop assistants, employees in the sectors of communications, food services, nurses, and police officers). The third one is close to perfect knowledge (requested for people in high-profile public positions, like lawyers, judges, doctors, elected officials at all levels, officials of state and government institutions, employees of cultural, educational and research institutions).

24 Some exceptions existed in vocational training.

the Latvian language. Authorities reopened some of the Latvian schools that got suppressed during the Soviet era, while they closed several Russian-language schools, notably in areas from which Russian army troops have been withdrawn.

That effort went on together with an intensification of the teaching of Latvian in Russian-language schools and, conversely, a reduction in Latvian-language schools of the load of Russian, now on a par with other languages like English, German and French. Some Russian-language sections have been maintained in Latvian-language schools, but most face an uncertain future, because of financial constraints,<sup>25</sup> and also because of a certain lack of popularity among parents, who generally prefer sending their children to monolingual schools.

## **C – The Legal Reframing Of Lithuanian Citizenship**

### *1 – Citizenship Legislation*

Lithuania's citizenship law was passed on 5 December 1991. It replaced the previous citizenship law of 3 November 1989, under which residents of Lithuania, regardless of ethnicity, language or religion, were given two years to decide whether they wanted to become Lithuanian citizens. When the deadline expired on November 3, 1991, about 90 % of the permanent residents had announced their intention to get citizenship when the law would be passed (Barrington 1995a; Petrauskas 1997b). Most of those who chose *not* to were either members of the former Red Army still stationed in Lithuania and planning to return to Russia (although some eventually stayed in Lithuania and now complain of discrimination), or people from the mainly Polish-speaking regions of Vilnius and Salcininkiai. Why the latter rejected the citizenship offer remains unclear. Lithuanian authorities often put the blame on the local authorities whom, it has been claimed, encouraged people not to sign as citizens.<sup>26</sup> Be it as it may, in comparison to Latvia an Estonia, the question of who should be granted citizenship

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25 The UNDP's 1995 report indicates the existence in Latvia of 28 classes with only *one* student learning in Russian and of 44 with *two* students).

26 *The Baltic Independent*, May 29, 1992.

quickly became an non-issue in Lithuania. Currently the qualification for citizenship includes 10 years of residency, a permanent job or source of income, knowledge of constitution, renunciation of any other citizenship, and proficiency in Lithuanian.

## 2 – *The Entrenchment of Group Rights in Lithuanian Legislation*

Lithuanian law makes a difference between citizenship (*pilietybe*) and nationality (*tautybe*) but today Lithuanian passports no longer register one's nationality alongside citizenship. People of Lithuanian *nationality* represent over 80 % of the country's population (3,712 million in 1996). That proportion accounts for the fact that the drafting of the citizenship law took less time and controversies than in the neighbouring republics, and for the liberal characteristics of that legislation (Öst 1994; Barrington 1995a).

In 1989, the *Law on National Minorities* enshrined the minorities' right to cultural development. Lithuanian legislation generally rests upon the supremacy of individual rights, but its outspoken emphasis on multiculturalism also called on measures to guarantee group rights. The constitution, adopted on October 25, 1992, stresses both kinds of rights. However, as opposed to the above-mentioned law, the constitution makes no mention of national minorities as minorities (*mazumos*): its official wording is "citizens belonging to national communities" (*tautines bendrijos*), which ignores the distinction between majority and minority. Group and individual rights are seen as complementary rather than contradictory. In law, all citizens have the right to foster their native language, customs and cultures, and minorities may independently administer their cultural, charitable and educational associations. The *Law on National Minorities* stresses their right to receive state support for culture and education. Lithuania accepts positive discrimination, although in 1996 it was estimated that so far the implementation of the principle had not been regulated with enough precision (Vaitiekus 1996).

The development of Lithuania's legislation on minorities has been an evolutionary process involving substantial lobbying by minorities eager to change some provisions of law they found too restrictive (Resler 1997). For instance, the Lithuanian language law of November 18, 1988, and its follow-up legislation of January 25, 1989, made of Lithuanian

the only state language, and gave all state officials two years to acquire at least a rudimentary knowledge of it. Due to certain resistances the deadline for proficiency was first extended to 1993, following which the authorities granted several successive extensions. In its 1996 report, the US State Department stressed the absence so far of documented evidence of job dismissal based on the language law, and noticed that Lithuanian authorities themselves were asserting that the law aimed at giving people a "moral incentive" to learn some Lithuanian, not at helping to fire them. In 1991, Lithuanian legislators decided to allow locally-spoken languages to be spoken in addition to Lithuanian at local institutions and organisations, in areas densely populated by minorities.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, in localities where over 1/3 of the population consists of non-Lithuanian speakers, the law requires local government proceedings and documents are to be available in both languages.

As a whole, collective language rights seem to be better supported in Lithuania than in Latvia and Estonia (Smith et.al 1996). That has been helped by the fact that, even before independence was reestablished, knowledge of the eponymous language was more widespread, and attitudes towards it more positive than in Latvia and Estonia. In surveys conducted in 1989, 83 % of Lithuania's Russians, 78 % of the Poles and 77 % of the Belarussians agreed that every resident of Lithuania should know the Lithuanian language (Krukauskiene 1996). Lithuanian language legislators thus benefited from a starting point which their Latvian and Estonian counterparts only could dream of.

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27 *The Baltic Times*, January 22, 1998.





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# CHAPTER VI

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## The Horizontal Dimension of Citizenship

This chapter focuses on the question of *who* the citizens (and non-citizens) of the Baltic countries are. In relation to our double model of the Legacy and the Scruples, it situates itself more firmly within the Legacy. As seen in chapter III, the Legacy model gives a central role to representations of national history. By using notably the tools of exogamy and language, this chapter explores the horizontal relations among individuals and among groups as historically-situated and -aware actors. It also brings up the similarities and differences between the three countries.

### **I – Estonias’ Quiet Separation**

The process of the adaptation of the Russian-speakers to the unexpected situation of living henceforth in an independent, officially unilingual Estonia could not be easy.

The most positive development today is that the demands that emanate from Russian-speakers now fit into an essentially *Estonian* framework. In the first years of independence, several Russophone leaders demanded, for instance, the granting of automatic citizenship, the establishment of local autonomy in Narva, or the acknowledgement of Russian as Estonia’s second official language. Such radical demands are hardly ever formulated nowadays. According to Smith and Wilson (1997:851), “Russian-speakers must weigh the short-term costs of being a non-citizen against the long-term benefits of individual adherence to the statu quo. This may explain why many chose to invest their time and resources in becoming citizens rather than engaging in collective action. The growth in attendance at Estonian language schools, for instance, indicates that many Russian-

speakers are keen to exploit the avenues that exist to become citizens”. The majority of non-Estonians have linked their future to Estonia, and they are looking for ways to participate in Estonian society.<sup>1</sup>

Heidmets and Lauristin (1998) nonetheless characterize the development of Estonia in the 1990s as a “quiet differentiation”. Regarding Estonians themselves, their attitude is often ambiguous. On the one hand, they no longer seriously argue for a return to the prewar borders, and have shed the hope that Russian-speakers would depart *en masse*. The idea of the necessity of integration is gaining ground. The stabilised sovereignty has created a sense of security and an understanding that it would be sensible and beneficial to get on well with the large Russian-speaking population which is going to stay in Estonia. On the other hand, Estonians continue to feel disturbed by the large and “different” group of people living among them.

Heidmets and Lauristin find that introversion is a dominant attitude among non-Estonians, who tend to show a lack of interest about what is happening in the country. During the 1990s, they have hardly melted into the Estonian society. In certain cases their isolation has even deepened. As we shall see, several indicators suggest that society remains strongly differentiated (Heidmets 1998).

## **A – The Legal Cleavage**

Estonian citizenship legislation has not been very successful in making citizenship attractive and accessible to most non-citizens.

On the one hand, the requirements for naturalisation have been incrementally clarified and softened, in accordance with the recommendations of the OSCE (Zaagman 1999). All the non-citizen residents legally living in Estonia may apply for Estonian citizenship. By 1995, most had lived in Estonia for more than 5 years and could therefore apply to naturalisation without waving.

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1 Not many Russian-speakers have left Estonia since the return of independence (only 65 813 between 1989 and 1995) (Smith & Wilson 1997). Fears (or hopes) of a massive migration back to Russia have petered out.

On the other hand, naturalisations have been proceeding rather slowly. In March 1995, the majority of non-citizens had still not applied for citizenship. In 1996, of about 1.5 million Estonian residents, little less than 1.1 million had Estonian citizenship. That figure includes 150 000 persons of Russian descent who either had had their citizenship restored, or acquired it through naturalisation. Of the remainder (that is, about 400 000 persons), 120 000 had taken Russian citizenship while the others were still apparently undecided (Ainso 1997).

Data compiled and released in the fall of 1998 by the Citizenship and Migration Board gave the following results as of January 1998:

- (1) a total registered population of 1.454 million;
- (2) the following "ethnic" categories: Estonians represent 65.1 % of the country's population, Russians 28.2 %, Ukrainians 2.6 %, Belarusians 1.5 %. Other, smaller groups total 2.6 % of Estonia's total population;
- (3) the following legal categories: 1.075 million citizens of Estonia (*Eesti kodanikud*) and 379 000 aliens (*muulased*). The aliens are in turn subdivided between 323 000 documented resident aliens (*dokumenteerimaga isikud*) and "some" undocumented resident aliens (*dokumenteerimata isikud*). As of July 1998, an overwhelming majority of the documented resident aliens category (311 000 out of 323 000 persons) had fixed-term residence permits, while the remainder (12 000) had permanent residence permits. Besides, there were 8 849 retired Soviet soldiers with 7 400 dependents residing in Estonia by special permission.

According to some estimations there are also about 30 000 persons who are not registered anywhere.

That data distinguish between Estonians as the indigenous people and Russian-speakers as immigrants. Regarding Estonians (970 000 persons), more than 50 000 of them are either immigrants themselves, or returnees. When Estonia regained its independence, they did not have Estonian citizenship, but most of them now do (albeit as part of a dual citizenship). As a result, almost 100 % of the "ethnic" Estonians are Estonian citizens.

The second group (520 000 persons) is quite varied. In 1997, Russians represented 82-85 % of it. Some of them (about 40 000 persons) have had

family roots in Estonia for several generations, and their language proficiency and loyalty towards Estonia are usually seen as unproblematic. The same applies to some smaller groups currently living in the Estonian republic like the Latvians (2 876 persons in 1994, estim.), the Finns (15 090), the Germans (1 861) or the Tatars (3 546) (Hallik 1998). Between 80 000 and 100 000 such persons received Estonian citizenship automatically. The other Russian-speakers in Estonia are Soviet-time immigrants and their offspring. According to the 1989 census, that group includes about 48 000 Ukrainians and 28 000 Belarussians.

How many citizens of Russia are now living in Estonia remains unclear. Estonian authorities have no means to control if an applicant to naturalisation does or does not already hold a Russian passport (interview Nutt 1999). The government has to rely on figures released by the Russian embassy in Tallinn. As of 1 January 1998, the embassy recorded 125 091 Russian citizens living in Estonia. Earlier, the embassy had denied having data on the number of Russian nationals in that country.<sup>2</sup> Andres Kollist, then head of the Estonia Citizenship and Migration Department, said that by 1 January 1998 his department had issued residence permits to 88 683 holders of Russian passports. Those who do not want Russian citizenship and do not apply for Estonian citizenship get a temporary document, the “grey passport”. Those who do not apply for the grey passport make do with the red passport, which actually is the old Soviet passport. Both documents make stateless persons of their holders (Minaudier 1997). The possibility to receive Russian citizenship has actually been taken by some Estonian politicians, notably from the *Isamaa* (Pro Patria) party, as a reason to consider that there is no need to make access to Estonian citizenship easier (interview Nutt 1999).

The implementation of the citizenship policy follows the requirements of the legislation, but it is still far from completed. The slow pace of naturalisations so far seems linked to a certain lack of interest from potential applicants rather than to the intricacy of the process itself.<sup>3</sup>

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2 RFE/RL Newline, January 8-9, 1998

3 It has been estimated that over 90 % of the applicants complete the test on the Estonian Constitution successfully. Over 80 % pass the language test.

## **B – The Language Gap**

### *1 – The Weaknesses of School System*

According to Estonian legislation, the country's educational system is uniform, but concretely, the dual school system persists, albeit with large differences between regions (Ainso 1997).

The overwhelming majority of Russian-language schools are located in the cities,<sup>4</sup> and over 40 % of Russian schoolchildren attend schools in Tallinn, where they make up nearly a half (47.4 %) of all schoolchildren. A further 36 % of them are concentrated in the Northeastern region of Ida-Virumaa in whose cities they make up the absolute majority whereas Estonians are few and far between<sup>5</sup> (Vare 1998). Russian-language tuition is also available at vocational schools, universities and other higher educational institutions, but its future seems uncertain.

According to Vare (1998), the requirements of the language law have not been strictly observed. The law's objective is that young people graduating from Russian-language schools should master enough Estonian to be able to continue their studies in that language. However, so far it has been possible to graduate from a Russian-language school without any real proficiency in Estonian.<sup>6</sup>

Several factors complicate Estonian linguistic policy-making. First, many headmasters and teachers are monolingual Russian-speakers. Today, over half the teachers working in Russian-language are hardly able to communicate in Estonian on a day-to-day basis, including, and this is the crux of the problem, those who are supposed to teach Estonian. Practically, many cannot use professional information in Estonian, let alone take part in seminars or receive further training in that language. As a result, Russian-language schools still have features of the Soviet

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4 Only about 1 % of all Russian-speaking schoolchildren attend rural schools.

5 In Kohtla-Järve for instance, Estonian children represent about 20 % of all schoolchildren.

6 According to Vare (1998), the best thing to do would be to introduce bilingual tuition in Estonia and to create a bilingual environment at school, with immersion classes of the Finnish kind.

model of education: the tuition remains wholly in Russian (no subjects are taught in Estonian), while Estonian is taught as a foreign language, often at a low level, with old textbooks, by non-native speakers who obtained their education in Soviet times, outside Estonia (Vihalemm 1999). Given that the teachers' low pay hardly makes the job attractive, school authorities do not easily find Estonian-language teachers who prove both qualified and willing to move to the economically depressed industrial areas where Russian-speakers form the majority (interview Nutt 1999).

That makes it difficult for Russian-language schools to perform an integrative function. They tend rather to reproduce the already-existing isolation of Russian-speakers from the wider Estonian society. In some areas for instance, like precisely Ida-Virumaa, the use of Estonian in the service sector has actually been decreasing.

## 2 – *The Fossilisation of Estonia's Linguistic Cleavage*

A very detailed study by a researcher from the Department of Journalism of Tartu University finds no convincing evidence of linguistic assimilation of Estonia's Russophones. Vihalemm (1999) analyzes changes in linguistic perceptions and strategies related to the Estonian language over the years 1990-1997. She used a poll of Russian urban dwellers aged from 15 to 40. She endeavoured to check whether the situation in Estonia vindicated Laitin's scenario of "competitive assimilation" or "cascade effect".<sup>7</sup> She comes to a generally negative answer.

One of her most important conclusions is that, although Russian-speakers no longer contest the *instrumental* value of knowing Estonian, the high *symbolic* barrier between Estonian and Russian languages is likely to be retained in the longer perspective. Vihalemm sees no valid reason to expect explosive growth in the use of Estonian by Russophones in the near future. The boom of adult language learning is more or less

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7 According to Laitin's scenario, the long-term strategies of the Russian families in the planning of the education of their children form the key issue in the choice between collective versus individual strategies. The "competitive assimilation" scenario rests upon the hypothesis of a predominance of individual strategies of linguistic adaptation, nourished by an effect of mutual emulation

over. Persons who so far have refrained from trying to learn Estonian are hardly likely to start making the effort now: they have presumably found ways to adjust to living in such conditions.

Regarding members of the younger generation (15-year olds), Vihalemm finds that they have no significantly better communicative experience than their elders. The vast majority of people in that group tend not to use Estonian (even if they know it) when they interact with the Estonians. In actual interaction, knowing Estonian may not guarantee full acceptance into the peer group, since one does not master the nuances of language or the jokes. Above a certain level of linguistic competence, people will try to avoid code switching (Vihalemm op.cit:30-32). In certain contexts, not speaking a foreign language with persons whose mother tongue it is becomes a rational strategy. Even for a Russian who speaks good Estonian, that strategy sounds all the more tempting given that, in communication with Russians, Estonians themselves will tend to switch to Russian, in order to gain time, and also to retain the symbolic divergence between languages (Vihalemm op.cit:26). These combined individual strategies make the choice of the language of interaction highly context-dependent: the use of either Russian or Estonian is divided between situations, partners and social spheres. The use of the Estonian language remains restricted to certain spheres and partners (Vihalemm op.cit:27). Language still marks strict boundaries.

Ironically, this linguistic fossilisation is taking place in a society in which the instrumental value of the national language is now beyond discussion. Estonian authorities made it clear from the start that they rejected official bilingualism, and that the Soviet-type school system would have to be replaced by a system in which the Estonian language would be dominant as a matter of course. The Russophones' perceptions of Estonian as potential second language have changed considerably over one decade. While in 1990, only a third of them thought it was necessary to know Estonian, five years later 80 % did (Vihalemm op.cit:29). Today, many Russophone parents are understandably dissatisfied with the level of Estonian-language education received by their children. They exert mounting pressure for increasing the teaching of Estonian in secondary school and gymnasium. As many as 24 % of Russophone parents even want their children to study in a wholly Estonian-language school instead of a Russian-language one.

Vihalemm concludes that the macrolevel conditions of Estonian society do not create the social pressure which would be necessary for the development of communicative competence through frequent communication. Thus, although the *instrumental* value of Estonian is acknowledged, its *integrative* value remains uncertain. Vihalemm even states that the diffusion of Estonian among Russophones may be accompanied by a strengthening of the *symbolic* significance of Russian. Paradoxical as that phenomenon sounds, Vihalemm relates it to the fact that, generally, the communicative experience acquired in school, high as it may be, does *not* become extended to other spheres, due to both individual linguistic strategies and to wider social conditions at the macro-level.

### **C – The Mental Cleavage**

The key distinction in people's minds and in politics remains the one extant between Estonian-speakers and Russians-speakers (regardless of whether or not the latter see themselves as Russians). Kruusvall (1998) studied mutual perceptions in Estonia and found that the levels of distress of Estonians and non-Estonians were comparable, but that the reasons of distress differed.

As far as Estonians are concerned, the most distressed ones (28 %) are statistically related to older people with lower educational level, although some young and educated people also belong in this group. They live both in regions where there are many non-Estonians and in other regions. The group of the “moderately distressed” (33 %) feel mostly disturbed by competition with non-Estonians. That group comprises many educated young women who cannot find adequate jobs. Those who feel less distressed (40 %) in relation to non-Estonians tend to be better-off, more educated, and more urban than the average of the other two groups. They worry most over development of Estonian language and culture. That group also comprises people claiming to be indifferent towards the whole question.

Among non-Estonians, the most distressed one (32,4 %) suffer mostly from legal uncertainty and bureaucratic opaqueness. They expect the state to give them citizenship. But that group also comprises people who already have Estonian citizenship, for instance parents worried for the educational future of their children, poorer woman wanting state support for churches, as well as those whom Kruusvall calls “agitated veterans” (1/3



of whom have Estonian citizenship). The moderately distressed (43 %) fear unemployment rather than bureaucratic pettiness. Some are wealthy status-seekers, ie. mostly men, worried by their unclear legal status rather than by social problems or educational problems, and expecting equal opportunities for reaching leading positions in public life. The less disturbed among the non-Estonians (24.4 %, about half of whom are Estonian citizens) tend to be relatively older, less educated people, living in regions where Estonians are a majority, and who have already realised their aspirations in life.

Interestingly, citizens of Russia are represented in all the three groups. According to Kruusvall (1998), that supports the hypothesis that people taking Russian citizenship do so for practical rather than political or ethnicity-related reasons. Laitin (1995) backs Kruusvall when he states that among Russian-speaking leaders, appeals to a Russian “fatherland” are rare, whereas the notion of Russian-speaking population is already part of popular speech.

Kruusvall’s study shows that there are differences in attitudes between Estonians and non-Estonians. Generally, the large Russian community in Estonia disturbs Estonians, who entertain ideas of non-Estonians as foreigners, as aliens who affect daily life in Estonia and who, under certain conditions, might even jeopardize the existence of the Estonian nation. The non-Estonians are also disturbed and dissatisfied; their problems stem from their undetermined judicial status, as well as concern about their own and their children’s future in Estonian society. The uneasiness of Estonians with regard to the Russophones is more impersonal, rests on social stereotypes and is directly aimed at the other group. The uneasiness of the Russophones is first and foremost directed at the institutions and officials of the Estonian state.

We see that the distress of Estonians tends to be more abstract, based on generalised attitudes and oriented towards the whole social group (non-Estonians in general), whereas the distress of non-Estonians is more concrete, derives from everyday problems, oriented first towards state institutions and officials. According to Kruusvall (1998), that asymmetry in distress is the reason why Estonian society has remained devoid of conflict between Estonians and non-Estonians: people do not worry about the same things, and when they worry about each other, they do not worry in the same way.

The asymmetry of Estonian and non-Estonian worries is mirrored and reinforced by the country's media. According to Heidmets (1998), while reading Estonian-language newspapers, the uninitiated might get the impression that non-Estonians either do not exist, or exist chiefly as a problem or a cause for concern. Heidmets notices that Estonian-language media seldom present non-Estonians as potential interlocutors for constructive discussion. For the Estonian media (and a large part of the politicians), the non-Estonians exist mostly as a *problem* (Heidmets & Lauristin 1998). On the other side of the language barrier, the Russian-language media are busy with their own concerns. When they try to enter, as Heidmets puts it, the "Estonian side of the field", their discourse tends to boil down either to claims or to irony directed at Estonian authorities.

Raudsepp (1998) notices that, as far as the question of citizenship is concerned, Estonian-language articles tend to be couched in impersonal, legalist terms while the Russian-language articles often pay more attention to concrete, psychological aspects of the issue.

More worryingly, there seems to be rather little dialogue between newspapers from both sides. In average, Estonians consume more media than non-Estonians do. Most of the latter tends to read little printed material. They rather receive everyday information from the Russian TV-channels or through contact with people who do not know the local language (Makarov 1999). Only a small part of the younger and economically more successful Russian-speakers watches TV and reads newspapers in both languages (Heidmets & Lauristin 1998).

## **D – A Tentative Explanation**

I think that the Soviet legacy does not by itself explain the continued differentiation of Estonian society. It rather seems that the Estonians' experience of life in the USSR reinforced rather than counteracted patterns of behaviour which, actually, existed before 1940 and whose roots go deeper than the annexation, as gets reflected in matrimonial patterns.

The long-term characteristics of Estonian demography offer little potential for assimilation of the Russians-speakers in the foreseeable future. The earliest available data on Estonian demography is from 1897. Estonia offers a long-term picture of general demographic weakness. Estonia conducted its first census since the restoration of independence in

April 2000. Its results confirmed that Estonia's population is rapidly dropping (about 1.4 million residents, against 1 565 662 in 1989), due both to natural decrease and to emigration.<sup>8</sup> As opposed to the general European trend, Estonia had low fertility rates in the decades after World War II. No baby-boom took place, and fertility rates remained constantly below replacement level (UNDP 1995). They reached a peak in 1988 (2.26 per thousand inhabitants), then went into a sharp decline throughout the 1990s. Another characteristic of Estonian demography is a high level of abortions, which currently exceeds the level of live births by more than 50 % (ibid.). The average life expectancy not risen in Estonia since end of 1950s, with significant gender difference in mortality rates, resulting in a 10 years difference in life expectancy. Mortality figures reveal a high proportion of violent and accidental deaths, among which the highest suicide rate for males in Europe since the 1960s (ibid.). The combination of continuously positive balance of migration with the natural decrease of the Estonian population led to the world's most rapid population decline (ibid.).

Although it is seldom emphasised, Estonia's demography offers some continuity when it comes to endogamy (Raitviir 1996). Compared to other groups of the former USSR, Estonians seldom marry beyond their group. Among non-Estonians themselves, exogamy is more frequent. The Estonian group is the one that tends to live in a relative matrimonial isolation.

These trends belong in and reinforce a wider pattern where Estonians and Russian-speakers tend to constitute two societies living side by side, with relatively less daily interaction than in Latvia and Lithuania. Distance does not mean aggressivity: Raitviir (1996) did a comparison of mutual attitudes across Estonia, and found that three quarters of Estonians and Russians view interethnic relations in Estonia as good or very good. The breakdown of Raitviir's figures by locality reveals that it is in the places where Russians have more daily experience of common life with Estonians that they tend to deem interethnic relations as better.

Microlevel research conducted in the town of Võru confirms the trend above. The authors find that "the contacts between Russian- and Estonian-speakers are most intimate in the sphere of public production, and are very restricted outside work" (Shlygina & Grigoryeva 1994:248). "The material

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8 Mel Huang, "Head count", *Central Europe Review*, vol 2 nr 20, May 22, 2000.

collected about the Russian population contain very few negative opinions about the Estonians, and the opinions that are expressed are often quite irrational, or they apply to certain people only and are not of a general nature. There are, likewise, practically no very anti-Russian attitudes to co-workers among the Estonians (...) On the whole the negative attitudes were on both sides restrained and far from hostile” (Shlygina & Grigoryeva op.cit: 246-7). The town of Võru thus offers a picture where both groups coexist quietly with relatively little communication. That tends to apply to Estonia in general, even if local conditions can vary.

Intergroup marriage involving Estonians was not frequent during the Soviet period nor before it, and so it remains today. Even the hardly anti-Soviet study of Vålme and Gustafson, published in 1976, acknowledged that mixed marriages between Estonians and Russians seldom took place.

By and large, the return to independence does not seem to have had any noticeable effects on the matrimonial behaviour of the Estonians, which obviously has deeper roots than the historical tribulations of Estonian politics. In a nutshell, Estonians and non-Estonians seldom marry each other *regardless of the kind of political regime they happen to be living under*. The Estonians’ endogamy suggests that, across time, they have generally tried—consciously or not—to keep Russians at a certain distance. The *Estonian Human Development Report* (1997) stresses that integration will probably prove a serious ordeal for Estonian themselves, for it presumes their readiness and goodwill. It is in that context that we should replace Laitin’s (1995) apt conclusion that the high enrolment of Russians in Estonian-language classes as early as 1990-1991 strongly suggests that, as opposed to official Estonian rhetoric, *the Russian-speakers are in general more ready to assimilate than Estonians are actually willing to have them assimilate*.<sup>9</sup>

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9 In 1995, a sociological study published in *Eesti Ekspress* and *The Baltic Independent* (March 10, 1995) showed that over 60 % of Russians would be glad if most of their children’s friends were Estonian, 37 % would prefer if their children married Estonians while only 12 % would mind. That relative lack of Russian qualms about exogamy meets resistance among Estonians. In the fall of 2000, i.e. about a decade after the return to independence, *Eesti Päevaleht* published the results of a Saar Poll survey revealing that almost half of Estonians (45 %) still believe that the country would be better off if the non-Estonians left (*The Baltic Times*, September 14, 2000).

Estonian policy-making towards Russian-speakers reproduces that gap. Until February 1998, the Estonian state had not formulated any clear programme for integration. The issues were declared important, but the official motto that “citizenship cannot be forced on anyone” (meaning clearly that, if some people do not want to apply for citizenship, it is their problem) nourished a certain passivity, in the hope that, somehow, time would solve the problems (Ruutsoo 1998). It took almost a decade for Estonian authorities to wake up to the fact that those Russians who did not see their future in Estonia have already left, and that the overwhelming majority of those who haven’t are there to stay.

By the mid-1990s, the period of revolutionary radicalism was over. The spectrum of political ideology moved towards the center (Hallik 1997). The party system was progressively stabilising itself. Estonian politics in general became tamer. However, Estonian parties still interpreted nationhood in terms left over from liberation movement. A comparison between political platforms for the 1995 elections shows that Estonian parties had little plans to organize political dialogue with non-Estonians for the purposes of discussing state structures, non-Estonian participation in political power, nor possible consociational arrangements (Kask 1998). Hallik (1997:13) observed that the question of the non-Estonians’ integration “remained on a rhetorical level without being fleshed out by any real practical policies”.

A later study by Vihalemm (1999) shows that Estonian parties remain unanimous in the need to encourage non-Estonian out-migration. They still see Estonia’s Russophones, not only as *an* existential threat, but as *the* existential threat to the Estonian people, while paying less attention to worrying phenomena linked to the enormous changes Estonian society has been going through, like negative birth rates, increasing suicide rates, increasing drug consumption or the development of asocial behaviour—all trends which are bound to be more socially destructive than the presence in Estonia of people who speak Russian. Vihalemm observes that no party platform contains thought-out plans to organize a political dialogue with the non-Estonians, for instance for the purpose of discussing state structure, non-Estonian participation in political structure, or possible consociational arrangements. Neither has the law-making process entailed consideration of possible future scenarios. As a result, nobody seems to know how to handle a situation in which about every fifth resident of the country is stateless.

It is only fair to mention here that whatever integrative efforts might exist are seriously impeded by the scarcity of Russian representatives and by the overall weakness of Russian organisations. There is the Estonian Association of Nationalities, the President's Round Table of Minorities, and a score of ethnic societies, some of which have joined under an umbrella organisation called Lyra. Yet, Russophones crosscut in status and interests. Their group sense is diffuse or mixed, and they lack an institutional framework, be it within or outside of Estonia. A general rhetoric of insecurity coexisted with an absence of organised network for expression and protection.<sup>10</sup> According to Park (1994), the Russophone elite in Estonia lacks support among Russian-speakers. In opinion polls, they tend clearly to prefer Estonian politicians.<sup>11</sup> At the same time, their basic trust of the Estonian state has not been achieved as yet (Vihalemm 1999). They find themselves in a kind of institutional no man's land. Combined with the vagueness of future prospects, that institutional weakness has led to a certain seclusion of Russians-speakers onto their own language group.

However, that seclusion does not make Russia more attractive. Despite the fact that two influential identity-building devices (education and the media) are Russia-centered, the political loyalty of the Russophone population towards Russia is generally weak (Vihalemm 1999). The future plans of the Russophones tend to be rather pragmatic and individual-based. In general, they do not expect much support from larger groups or institutions.

Moreover, the Estonian citizenship legislation has helped to create "in-

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10 Most political organisations of Russian-speakers before 1991 had a pro-Soviet orientation and disappeared in the wake of the failed coup in August 1991 (Park 1994). The communist party was outlawed in 1991, and it has not been able legally to re-form. An umbrella organisation does exist: the Russian Representative Assembly, created on 30 January 1993 in Tallinn, out of different organisations, and called by Park (1994:80) a "quasi-Parliament for Russian-speakers". The Estonian government decided to treat it as an "ordinary public organisation that acts within the Estonian constitution". The Russian Representative Assembly is legalistic. It has chosen institutional politics as the arena where it can champion citizen rights. Russian hard-liners rather gather in the Russian Council, which got set up in April 1993 in opposition to the Russian Representative Assembly, and demands both unconditional citizenship and the installation of Russian as second official language.

11 Park (1994:82) suggests that "the unimpressive personal image of Russian politicians among the Russian-speaking community may be one of the factors explaining why Estonia was relatively successful in 1991-1993 in containing ethnic unrest".

siders” and “outsiders” among the Russian-speakers, which in turn weakens the social base for possible collective action as Russian-speakers. The Estonian government has used skillfully the possibility to grant citizenship for “special services”. For instance, in 1992 all the leadership of the city of Narva, including the mayor, received it that way (Park 1994). A number of prominent non-Estonians (scientists, cultural figures, businessmen) benefited from the same preferential treatment.

Lately, however, integration has become a fashionable term in Estonian politics.<sup>12</sup> Continued separation has an increasingly visible price. Especially worrying is the unemployment spreading among the young Russian-speakers as a consequence of the poor efficacy of the teaching of Estonian so far. On 10 February 1998, the government led by Mart Siiman adopted the first official document concerning non-Estonians, entitled *The Integration of Non-Estonians into Estonian Society—The Basics of Estonian Integration Policy*.<sup>13</sup> It is the first political document where Estonia defines the goals of its policy about aliens, sets an objective (integration) and describes the measures that should be carried out.

The document stresses that “spontaneous practices must be replaced by an official strategy whose clear objective is to integrate non-Estonians into Estonian society” (my translation<sup>14</sup>). The document defends the ideas that one should start seeing non-Estonians as a potential rather than a pro-

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12 Heidmets & Lauristin (1998) define integration in Estonia as “a process in the course of which non-Estonians residing in Estonia would be gradually brought to participate equally in Estonian society. Integration means the dismantling of the barriers which prevent many non-Estonians from competing in the Estonian labour market, from having access to educational facilities in Estonia, and from participating in local cultural and political life. These barriers are mostly related to their Estonian language proficiency, their familiarity with local culture, and their judicial status, but also to fears and prejudices which stem from rapid social changes. Integration is not the obliteration of ethnic identity, integration is not the loss of something; it is the acquisition of new qualities which are needed in order to cope in modern Estonian society”. According to Heidmets & Lauristin, the main proponents of integration are the newly-emerged entrepreneurial class, the liberal intellectuals, and Estonia’s foreign partners.

13 *Mitte-eestlaste Integratsioon Eesti Ühiskonda – Eesti Riikliku Integratsioonipoliitika Lähtekohad*, published integrally in Heidmets (ed.)(1998).

14 “Uue sammu sisuks peab saama senise paljuski spontaanse arengu asendumine riikliku strateegiaga, mille sisuks on selge orientatsioon mitte-eestlaste integratsioonile Eesti ühiskonda”

blem; that one should speed up naturalisations in order to reduce the number of stateless residents; that one should reach a consensus about the future of Russian-language education, and give proper training to Estonian-language teachers, in order to facilitate everybody's professional and geographical mobility and thereby break the isolation of the Russian-speakers.

Interestingly, the document mentions multiculturalism, and one of its footnotes stresses that integration does not mean a change of ethnic identity, but the authors also defend clearly the establishment of a political pluralism independent of ethnic origins. The wording of the text itself reflects their attempt to hold the difficult balance between these two principles. Nowhere does the document mention Russians (*venelased*) or even Russophones (*venekeelsed*). At one point only does it mention Russian-language education. Instead, the key distinction is between, on the one hand, "Estonians", and on the other hand, "non-Estonians" (*mitte-eestlased*) or "aliens" (*muulased*). A footnote explains that both terms are used as synonyms.

Thus there is a certain rhetorical ambiguity at work here. That the category "non-Estonians" does not appear as a *legal* categories need not surprize us. What is more interesting for us here is that the category "alien" is not a legal category *either*. It applies undistinctly to people who may be Estonian citizens, Russian citizens, citizens of other countries, or stateless persons. Consequently, despite the official objective being to avoid the fossilisation of a situation of "two communities—one state", the official rhetoric somehow reproduces and entrenches the separation between "true" Estonians and everybody else.

It seems that Estonian legislators have to make do with a semantic lack. There is no straightforward word in Estonian to designate a person who has Estonian *citizenship* but who does not have Estonian as a *mother tongue* or as a first language. No neutral term exists which could cover an exclusively state-related category. In other words, the semantic equivalent of "Canadian" or "Swiss" (categories that designate citizenship, not language) does not exist in Estonian. One possible equivalent exists ("Estonian citizen", *Eesti kodanik*), but its meaning becomes immediately veiled by the fact that the adjective "Estonian" functions as both the whole and one component part, the box and one of its contents. Whence impractical rhetorical contortions, like "non-Estonian citizens of Estonia" (*mitte-eestlased Eesti kodanikud*).

There are two complementary ways to interpret such an ambiguity. The optimistic interpretation is that that expression mirrors an overall modera-



tion in Estonian nationalist feelings. Nobody in Estonia is planning to force resident Russians to disappear through assimilation (unlikely in any case, given Estonia's demographic weakness). Strong as the Estonians' attachment to independence might be, one would be hard put to find in their politicians's rhetoric or in the general tone of the media the kind of aggressivity, at times bordering on messianism, that emerges from time to time in Latvia and Lithuania (Berenis 1998). Minaudier (1997) rightly notices that Estonians have no "lost province", no "sacred cradle" on which to construct an ideology of *Blut und Boden*. There are no projects of remaking the nation's lost unity by constraint or violence. Compared to Lithuania's and especially Latvia's, the Estonian far right is electorally marginal. Estonian nationhood is never defined in genetic terms, at least not outwardly. People do not see themselves as the pure descendents of the *Aestii* mentioned by Tacitus. There is no negation of external contributions—at least as long as these contributions are not only *Russian*, which tended to be the case in the USSR.

Which leads us to the second, less optimistic interpretation: as long as the notion of "Estonian of Russian origin" remains anathema or unknown, the complete conceptual, if not legal, disconnection between *nationality* (supposed to be already-here, and kept intact) and *citizenship* (supposed to be constructed and increasingly attractive) will continue to be taken as a postulate rather than as a possible, value-neutral outcome of social interaction. Thereby, Estonian policies aiming at integrating "the Russians" into Estonia's body politic risk bumping into the logical contradiction of a situation in which the "Estonian" category is supposed to be both saturated with meaning (if it is a *nationality*) and the neutral, smallest common denominator of *citizenship* everybody is supposed to identify with. In the process, citizenship tends to become drained of its affective content. There seems to be no theoretically tidy solution to that contradiction.

## II – Latvia

### A – Desirable Citizenship?

The pace of naturalisations remained slow in Latvia until recently. The 1997 UNDP report notices that "less than 5 % of eligible non-citizens have applied for citizenship and undergone naturalisation". Although the Citizenship Law was passed in July 1994, naturalisations did not begin

before 1 February 1995 (UNDP 1997).<sup>15</sup> In the seven years after independence, only about 10 000 persons received citizenship through naturalisation.<sup>16</sup> According to Nils Muiznieks,<sup>17</sup> several factors can account for that lack of interest: people have a weak or nonexistent knowledge of Latvian and fear the language test; they do not want to do military service in Latvia; they want to keep being able to travel to Russia and/or study in Russia without visa; the application fee is too high;<sup>18</sup> the windows system is by itself humiliating and discouraging. The *Baltic Times* of March 13, 1997, described the rhythm of naturalisations as “very disappointing”, and said that talking of “gradual naturalisation” was an understatement: naturalisation was not taking place *at all*.

Like in Estonia, a number of non-citizens decided to take Russian citizenship, an initiative partly prompted by the fact that Russia does not recognize the Latvian non-citizen passports introduced in April 1997.<sup>19</sup>

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15 The processes of adopting implementing regulations and of recruiting the Naturalisation Board's staff, by themselves, took several months.

16 In 1996, when naturalisation windows were still in force, 33 000 persons aged 16–20 were entitled to apply, but only 525 actually did (Saffrais 1998). For 1995 and 1996 together, 3 999 were naturalised. Initiative from potential applicants was generally lacking. In 1997 only 2 994 were naturalised, while as many as 120 000 non-citizens who were entitled to apply in 1997 abstained from doing it, according to head of naturalisation department Eizenija Aldermane (RFE/RL Newline, January 8–9, 1998).

17 Interview 1998. Nils Muiznieks heads the Latvian Center for Human Rights and Ethnic Studies Interview in Riga. In its 1997 report of human rights in Latvia, the U.S. Department of State shares Muiznieks's hypotheses (“The reasons for this relatively small number may include potential applicants' lack of confidence about their language ability, the restricted category of applicants eligible to seek naturalisation in the first 2 years, certain benefits that flow from noncitizen status (such as travel without visas to Russia and exemption from compulsory military service) and a sense that the legal status of permanent resident noncitizens is relatively secure”)

18 30 lats, or about 60 dollars, which corresponds to a third of the average salary

19 On March 11, 1998, the validity of Soviet-era passports was extended. More than half a million persons still had no other travel documents: the authorities proved unable to cope with the demand, so far they had handed out only 134 000 non-citizen passports, according to Janis Lejins, deputy head of citizenship and migration department. By March 1998, 3 % of non-citizens held Soviet-era foreign passports, 74 % had Soviet internal passports, 15 % had received Latvian non-citizens' passports (RFE/RL Newline 10–12 March 10–12, 1998 and March 25, 1998).

Other motivations come into play as well. Russia's ambassador in Riga Aleksandr Rannikh noted that those who take Russian citizenship generally come from "socially vulnerable strata constantly experiencing the difficulties of the economic situation and fearing unemployment, as well as pensioners and invalids deprived of the privileges they enjoyed in the recent past". They form the bulk of the demonstrators and pickets calling for the observance of human rights in Latvia.<sup>20</sup> Like in Estonia, Latvian authorities have little means of knowing exactly how many among the country's residents have taken up Russian citizenship. At least, it seems that the move so far has been less popular in Latvia than in Estonia.

Although the October 3, 1998 referendum decision lifted restrictions on who could apply for a Latvian passport and effectively gave automatic citizenship to children born in the country after Latvia regained independence in 1991, that decision does not make the granting of citizenship unconditional. Applicants must still show proficiency in Latvian. There is consequently little reason to hope that all non-citizens will apply. Muiznieks estimates that only about 250 000 of 650 000 non-citizens speak Latvian well enough to pass the test, and believes that many won't even try to learn. Some people have adjusted to life as non-citizens and seem barely willing and/or able to acquire another legal status. However, the amendments seem to have acted as a psychological release for the non-citizens who do not want to remain non-citizens. Two weeks after the amendment took effect, the naturalisation board said that 1 769 non-citizens had begun the naturalisation process (while a disappointing 3 374 applications had been made in the first 10 months of 1998). According to Muiznieks, "these people want to have a sense of belonging or a sense of social status that maybe they feel they didn't have without citizenship. More than anything else, citizenship gives them this sense of psychological security". Naturalisation officials expected around 20 000 people to become citizens each year, which is also a practical limit: according to Naturalisation Board head Eizenija Aldermane, her services cannot currently handle more than that figure.

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<sup>20</sup> *The Baltic Observer*, March 31, 1994.

## B – Latvian as the New Lingua Franca

The position of Latvian as the country's *lingua franca* seems still weakly established today.

As before independence, the only places where Latvian dominates as the more or less obvious *lingua franca* are the countryside and the small towns.<sup>21</sup> “Russian majorities in the cities still determine to a great extent what the everyday internal language of commerce and business is, and it is by and large not Latvian. Perusal of any Russians-language daily in Riga shows many employment advertisements where companies outrightly proclaim that they are hiring only Russian-speakers” (Milevska 1998). The Latvian case lacks equivalent in Europe (picture a situation where *Dagens Nyheter* would regularly feature employment ads excluding Swedish-speakers).

The continued weakness of the position of Latvian must be placed in the wider political context. What we should emphasize here is that, up until a few years ago, a vocal proportion of Latvian politicians did not consider *at all* the possibility that the Russian-speakers could be integrated on the basis of Latvian language. The bottom-line was that these people had to *leave*, in the name of decolonisation, and with—naturally—the West's financial support (Muiznieks & Kamenska 1996).<sup>22</sup> In 1994, Skuland and Hasler stressed that a dominant moment in the Latvian political discourse was that Latvia's Russians already had an “ethnic homeland” and an own state (Russia), and as a people ought *not* to be granted minority status.

If truth be told, that attitude found some reinforcement among the Russian-speakers themselves, most of whom in the early 1990s did not seem to believe that it ever would be necessary for them to know Latvian. They needed time to adjust to new situation. Research conducted in the mid-1990s showed that 90 % of the non-Latvian respondents expressed

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21 with the exception of the rural regions of Daugavpils and Kraslava (mostly Russian-speaking).

22 That was for instance stated in very clear terms by Maris Grinblats, later Minister of Education, and then a prominent member of the Latvian Citizens Committee. He said that a massive migration of the Russians back to the Russian Federation was the best solution, and that since neither Russia nor Latvia could afford to support the process financially, Western powers should help (Sovetskaia Molodëzh, September 18, 1991). He was not an isolated voice.

a desire that children learn Latvian (Druviete 1996). There is evidence of a watershed in the perception of Latvian by Russian-speakers at about that time (Muiznieks & Kamenska 1996). The Russian language remains a pragmatic instrument of intergroup communication<sup>23</sup> but in the second half of the 1990s it lost its political function and most of its ideological overtones (Suna 1998).

Latvian authorities bear a part of the responsibility in the situation. The organ in charge of implementing linguistic legislation is the State Language Center, founded in 1992. The Center fulfills different functions that range from printing of Latvian language schoolbooks to verifying that the packages of imported goods carry instructions in Latvian. The Center employs 18 inspectors nationwide (half of whom are stationed in Riga), whose task consists in making sure that employers respect the legislation that forbids them to hire people whose certified language competence is below the demands of the law.

The implementation of the language law has been problematic so far. In 1992-1993 about 300 000 state employees had to take the language test, successfully passed by about half of them, who therefore received a language proficiency certificate that must be produced upon demand. Yet as of 1995, Kamenska (1995) noticed that no widespread dismissals because of linguistic weakness had been reported so far. Besides, not only is there now a thriving market for counterfeit language certificates, but there are also reported cases of physical assault and threatening phone calls against the inspectors, who until 1998 lacked the legal capacity to force an employer to dismiss someone (they could only fine the person).<sup>24</sup> Inspectors can do little against the Russian-speaking managers who have dismissed Latvian-speaking employees in order to upkeep a mostly Russian-speaking working environment.<sup>25</sup>

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23 A mixed blessing, because it fosters what Muiznieks (1998) calls passive linguistic behavior on the part of Latvians (i.e. switching to Russian when speaking with non-Latvians). That behavior certainly facilitates intergroup communication, but it has the disadvantage of slowing down the integration of non-Latvians on the basis of the Latvian language.

24 In 1998, Parliament amended the labor law in order to enable the State Language Inspectorate can now demand termination of work contract if employee speaks poor Latvian.

25 *The Baltic Observer* April 6, 1995.

Until now, the implementation of the language law has been mostly a coercive process. People are aware that Latvian will be increasingly leading language, and there is a high demand for Latvian language courses,<sup>26</sup> but they have not been seen as a financial priority, and as a result state assistance in the creation and support of language courses has remained limited (Kamenska 1995:60).

As a result, the teaching of Latvian to Russian-speaking adults has been done in an unconcerted fashion, mostly by a blossoming host of private firms, including shady ones of the “teach-you-Latvian-in-a-week” kind. Supply follows demand, which makes it hard—including for Latvian authorities themselves—to really know how many people studied or study Latvian. Compared with Estonia, which began to educate future state language instructors as early as 1990, Latvia took such measures relatively late, and it remains difficult to regulate the quality of language instruction, where any exists at all. The State Language Center estimates that about half the firms provide adequate Latvian language courses to their employees, from intensive 1–3 month courses (the most popular ones) to 1–2 years courses.

Like in Estonia, the shortage of qualified teachers has proven the most serious hurdle in the generalisation of the new national *lingua franca*. The lack of financial incentive does not make the profession attractive. The 1996 UN Development Programme report stresses that Latvian teachers “receive salaries barely above the existence minimum”. The criteria of selection have not always been clear either. Initially, the Ministry of Education demanded that teachers (including those working in minority-language schools) must have at least the second level of proficiency, while schoolmasters and their deputies needed the highest (third) level. In December 1996, the Ministry of Education and Science issued a decree saying that *all* teachers were henceforth required to have the highest level of fluency in Latvian. Those who fail to meet this requirement,

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26 An opinion poll of September 1998 showed that 70 % of the non-citizens want to improve their command of the state language. 84 % of those younger than 35, 48 % of those over 50. Wish strongest among those with elementary command (80 %) or intermediate command (75 %), weaker among those with no command at all (53 %). Half pointed to difficulties related to age (27 %), financial difficulties (25 %), or lack of practice (23 %). (RFE/RL November 10–11, 1998).

were to be fired after September 1, 1998. In September 1998, the Ministry of Education and Science announced that the decree's entry into force would be postponed in several towns (like Daugavpils, only 14 % of whose population is registered as "Latvian").

The Latvian school authorities lack the financial means to establish the position of Latvian more firmly. As a result, children belonging to the country's *majority* cannot always receive education in their own language as a matter of course. The 1995 UNDP Report noticed the continued existence of 15 rural districts (*pagasti*), 13 of which in Latgale, where only Russian-language schools existed, although Latvians constituted about a third of the local population. In Riga itself, some Latvian families had to enroll their children in Russian language school for want of place in Latvian-language ones.

On the other hand, Latvian has become an increasingly attractive language. With each schoolyear, the number of children learning in Latvian is increasing, whereas attendance in Russian-language schools has been falling constantly. Some Russians have left. Parents of smaller minorities prefer sending their children to Latvian schools. Russophone children are sent to Latvian language schools in increasing numbers by parents who, with good reason, see it as a way to secure their children's future in independent Latvia.

But that is seen as a mixed blessing by Latvian school authorities, whose all-out promotion of Latvian has somehow become a victim of its own success. In many cases, the placement of non-Latvian children into Latvian groups has not produced the expected results: in schools where Latvian children mix with Russian in roughly equal numbers, the former tend to learn Russian before the latter learn Latvian. The phenomenon has been observed both at kindergarten level and in basic and upper secondary schools.<sup>27</sup> As a result, some headmasters resist enrolling

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27 "Most Latvian teachers are not prepared to teach classes with students having widely differing language abilities. Often, non-Latvian children are not proficient in Latvian and cannot keep up, their parents are not able to help them, and teachers do not have the time to assist them. What is more, the children do not use Latvian at home. Thus, Latvian and non-Latvian children tend to communicate in Russian because it is their common language, and immersion techniques are not effective." (UNDP 1996)

too many Russian-speaking pupils in each class, and many Russophone parents now complain that their children cannot enter Latvian-language schools.

What we see here, then, is a paradoxical situation in which authorities are trying to counteract or at least contain a social evolution that actually proves the success of their own policy (Kolstø 1996). School authorities now stress rather the teaching of Latvian in Russian-language kindergartens. That may be more fruitful from the point of view of “Latvianisation”, but the problem is that 75 % of all children do not attend any kindergarten at all (Kamenska 1995) The UNDP (1996) confirms that disturbing trend, and even notices a decline in the proportion of children attending basic school.

### **C – Less Tragic than Meets the Eye?**

Latvians have relatively better demographic indicators than most other groups. The Latvians’ share in Latvia should increase and stabilize at about 60 % during the 2000 decade. Their birth rate is higher (UNDP 1997). The Latvian share among newborns—determined by the mother’s passport ethnicity—has risen since 1989 (from 51 % in the mid-1980s to 65 % in 1994), while the share of non-Latvian newborns has plummeted (UNDP 1995).

Of the three Baltic states, intergroup marriage occurs most often in Latvia, by far. About 35 % of all marriages are mixed (UNDP 1995; Vebers 1997). Vebers (1997) stresses that “the mixing of nationalities from generation to generation takes place with some intensity”. As a result, “many people in Latvia have affiliation with more than one ethnic group” (UNDP 1997). The restoration of independence and subsequent social upheaval have *not* had any negative consequences on Latvia’s high rates of intergroup marriage.

The 1996 Demographic Yearbook reveals very high rates of out-group marriage (above 80 %) for *all* non-Latvian/non-Russian groups bar one.<sup>28</sup> These rates have even been increasing. Obviously, members of Latvia’s smal-

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28 Unsurprisingly maybe, Gypsies constitute the exception to the rule. Dribins (1996) states plainly that “*Gypsies are not assimilating*”.



ler minorities have little qualms about exogamy.<sup>29</sup> Most of Latvia's Lithuanians, for instance, choose Latvians as matrimonial partners, while only 15-20 % of them marry another Lithuanian. The offspring of mixed marriages tends increasingly to assimilate into the greater Latvian-speaking environment, whereas in Soviet times, assimilation through wedding favoured rather Russian. In 80 % of the Polish-Latvian marriages, for instance, the offspring grows up within a mostly Latvian linguistic environment (Dribins 1996).

Exogamy happens relatively less often among Russians and among Latvians than among the small groups mentioned above. That can be partly attributed to a mechanistic cause: these two groups are by far the country's largest ones in absolute terms. That increases logically one's possibility to find a partner within one's own group. Nevertheless, the Latvians' and Russians' rates of out-group marriage are not negligible.

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29 Latvia's smaller minorities are in general rather denationalised, due to Soviet-time nationality policies, but somehow they compensate the weakness of their identity by an organisational activism which is superior to the one of larger minorities. Soviet nationality policies denied infrastructures (like schools or cultural activities) to these small minorities, whence their relative linguistic russification. The 1989 census shows a strong discrepancy between official categories and actual knowledge of corresponding language. As a rule, these minorities were quick to use the new organisational opportunities offered to them by independence (Vebers 1997).

The Livs are Latvia's only *territorial* minority. They are seen as an indigeneous people alongside Latvians (Vebers 1997). Today they number only about 200 persons, and might thus be the smallest officially recognised group in Europe. Given that they have traditionally lived on coastal areas, the Soviet-era ban on access to some coasts and on fishing accelerated their assimilation (UNDP 1995). Although their finno-ugric language is taught in Riga and in Ventspils, its future remains highly uncertain. Not all the Livs speak it fluently, and most of those who do are elderly people.

Jews were hit by World War II and by Soviet-time denationalisation. The USSR-wide antisemitic campaigns of 1949 and 1952 might have acted as deterrents and accelerated their russification. Latvian Jews today are few in numbers (15 000, 0,6 % of the population in 1995) but they are well organised and actively involved in social life. Most speak Russian at home, and 44,3 % are Latvian citizens. Changes of official denomination deserve mentioning here. Before 1940, "Jew" in Latvian was *Zids*, a term that generally was not as pejorative as the Russian *Zhid*. After the Soviet takeover, the *Zids* category was replaced by *Ebrejs* in order to distance Latvian vocabulary from the prewar usage. The reader interested in the fate of Latvia's Jews could do worse than browse in Vulfsons's memoirs (1998). (This note continues on the next page).

Russian exogamy actually *increased* during the 1985–1995 decade. Obviously, the end of Soviet power has not led to a withdrawal of Latvia’s Russian population unto itself—quite the opposite. About 40 % of Latvia’s Russians (both men and women) marry non-Russians.

In general, Latvians appear more reluctant than Russians to marry outside their group.<sup>30</sup> A 1992 survey of 789 students at the University of Latvia revealed that significantly more Latvians than Russians think spouses should come from the same group. They view it as more important than sharing religious views, political views, or education level. Still, Latvians have integrated through intergroup marriage far more than their Estonian and Lithuanian neighbours have. Not all Latvians have a favourable view of exogamy, but it is clearly *not* a taboo. Latvian exogamy does remain less frequent than Russian exogamy: about 18 % of Latvian men and women marry outside their group. Part of that difference with Russian figures can be explained away by the statistical fact that Latvians constitute the majority (54 %) of the country’s population. Still, almost

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(continued) Latvia’s Poles, although invisible in western media, have deep roots in the country, especially in Riga and in the Eastern region of Latgale. They have maintained proportions across the decades (about 65 000 persons, 2,2 % of the population). Most have Latvian citizenship (62 %) and are urban dwellers. Many have been russified or (more seldom) Latvianised. But they have a well-organised cultural and school infrastructure.

Only a handful of Estonians (3013) lived in Latvia in 1995, which is ten times as little as at the end of the XIXth century. Most live in Riga, where there is an Estonian school, and in the towns of Aluksne, Ventspils, Cesis and Valmiera (Vebers 1997). Most speak fluent Latvian, and half of them are Latvian citizens.

Ten times as many Lithuanians live in Latvia (35 646 in 1995, 1,42 % of the country’s population). Many are either Soviet-era migrants, including former deportees who came back from Siberia after 1953, but did not have the permission to live in Lithuania after their release and chose Latvia as a second best solution. More than half speak fluent Latvian. They are well organised, with a central organisation (Latvia’s Lithuanian Community), a cultural society, a youth association, a school in Riga, sunday schools in other cities, Lithuanian language programs on the state radio. and a newspaper (*Lietuviu Balsas*). Not many (only about one third) are Latvian citizens. That may be due to the fact that few of them are eligible for automatic citizenship and lack motivation to apply: beside Soviet-era migrants, many have pre-1940 roots in Latvia but did not have (or descend from persons who did not have) Latvian citizenship at that time, like seasonal agricultural workers (Vebers 1997).

30 *The Baltic Observer*, April 6, 1995.

one Latvian out of five married outside his or her group in 1985–1995. The figures for Latvian women (17,7 %) and Russian women (40,5 %) can be usefully contrasted with the 1,2 % of black American women having a white partner in 1992, and with the roughly 2 % of Turkish women having a German partner in Germany in 1992 (Todd 1994). About every third child born in Latvia in 1996 has parents of two different “nationalities”, which is more than twice the Estonian figure. In the long run, Latvian society seems unlikely to move towards increased group differentiation, rather the opposite. The UNDP’s 1996 report stresses that “in any case, the continuation of current demographic trends will result in a more ethnically homogeneous society” (1996:26).

As the figures above make it plain, *Latvian society does not consist of two separate, hostile groups*. The psychological distance between Latvian-speakers and Russian-speakers seems clearly less important than the distance between Estonian-speakers and Russian-speakers in Estonia. Although mutual animosity at the purely *rhetorical* level tends to be higher in Latvia than in Estonia, concrete patterns of matrimonial behaviour yield another, less dramatic picture of intergroup relations within Latvian society. Neither the Russian nor the Latvian group looks consolidated around a clear, homogeneous and exclusivist national idea. The ideal of civic nation is not bereft of intellectual roots in Latvia, and although it lacks salience in most recent political discourses, it is not alien to the Latvian psyche either.<sup>31</sup> Uncertainties about the future do exist but they have obviously not led to a withdrawal of each group unto itself. This is especially true of the Russian population.

### *1 – The Fuzziness of Russian Identity: Impossible Past, Unlikely Future*

The larger minorities of (Belarussians, Ukrainians, Russians) are those who can be referred to as “Russian-speakers”, although the term is not fully exact.

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31 Among the members of the *Jaunlatviesi* (Young Latvians) movement which influenced the national awakening of the late XIXth – early XXth centuries, some prominent writers defended the ideal of civic nation, notably Krisjanis Valdemars and Karlis Kundzins (Dribins 1998). The Latvian Constitution, edicted in 1922, and in force again today, states that the fullness of power belongs to the people of Latvia (*Latvijas tauta*), not to the Latvian people (*latviesu tauta*). Herderian ideas are not all there is to Latvian nationhood.

The presence of Ukrainians in Latvia is recent. As opposed to Russians and Poles, very few Ukrainians lived in the country before World War II. In 1997, they were a bit less than 70 000. Only about 6 % of them have Latvian citizenship, which can be partly linked to the over-representation of former Soviet army officers among them. In the 1989 census, the majority viewed Russian, not Ukrainian, as their mother tongue, and almost half of them spoke Russian at home. Latvia's Ukrainians do not constitute a consolidated minority. Currently between 80 % and 90 % of them live in mixed marriages. They have a relatively high level of average education (coming second best after the Jews), and thereby contradict the cliché of the Russian-speaking-blue-collar, but their organisational network remains underdeveloped, with only one Ukrainian-language secondary school (the others go to Russian-language schools) and one cultural society (with 200 members in 1995).

As opposed to Ukrainians, Belarussians (105 600 in 1997, 4.3 % of the population) have historic roots in Latvia, notably in the Latgale region, where most of them lived before 1940. Today only a quarter of them still do, while the others are concentrated in urban areas. Those who during Soviet times migrated to Latvia as workers entered an already mostly Russian-speaking industrial environment. That accentuated a russification process which actually had already begun in the Belorussian SSR itself. Today less than 10 % have a higher education, while their absolute majority consists of workers with a specialised secondary education. Only one fifth of them are citizens of Latvia, and their cultural and associational life remains rather undeveloped (Dribins 1996; Vebers 1997).

The Russian influx to Latvia began at the end of the XVIIth century, when persecuted Old Believers found shelter in Latgale. In the 1935 census, Russians accounted for over 10 % of the population. During Soviet times, their proportion increased threefold, and their absolute numbers by 4.5 (from 200 000 to 900 000). The Soviet-time Russian influx was never stable. It comprised a large remigration as well as new arrivals. The 1997 Statistical Yearbook indicates that Russians represent 32.5 % of the population, which is a slight diminution since 1989 (34 %). Half of them live in Riga, where they account for 44 % of the inhabitants. They are an absolute majority in Daugavpils. Many work in the industrial sector, and the intelligentsia, very few in agriculture. 38.6 % are Latvian citizens.

One would be hard put to find evidence that Latvia's Russians constitute

a *community* at all. We should rather see them as a broad, heterogeneous group, split between different interests and political orientations. Many associations exist, but up to now, all attempts to set up an umbrella organisation representing all Latvia's Russians have failed. That atomisation can be reasonably linked to the fact that Russians actually were the most de-nationalised and sovietised nationality in the USSR: Russianness was the referent all other groups were supposed to admire and emulate although it had been drained of most of its authentic content.

Symptomatically, Russian families seem to have entered a process of disintegration, hallmarked by lower birthrates than Latvians, and an increase in divorces. That trend only reinforces the already-existing weakness of the organisation of the Russians *qua* Russians. In a context where the Russian "civil society" has never been very developed, and where the Russian nuclear family now becomes weakened as well, the biography of the family becomes the main building block of the Russian-speakers' individual identity.

During her field research among Russian-speaking families in Riga, Rosengard (1996) recorded precise accounts of when and where parents, grandparents and great-grandparents were born, of how they prospered, and in many cases of how they were affected by the Russian Revolution and the Second World War. Rosengard finds that family biographies often contain two themes whose combination functions as a legitimisation for their presence in Latvia: the first theme is that of the victimisation of the Russians who were sent to the periphery of the Empire, and thus became historical victims of the Empire's fall. The second theme is that of the Russian contribution to the development of Latvia. People's awareness of their family biography coexists with a general sense of discontinuity. Their past, Rosengard writes, is a lost country. Knowledge of family biography acts a means of individualising history, and also as a way to take distance from events one does not want to be part of and thereby, so it is hoped, to refute the equation Soviet power = Russian power.

Rosengard found that beside that "lost past", and because of it, most of her informants were also unable to plan for the distant or even immediate future. What remains is a highly uncertain present. That uncertainty, however, does *not* translate itself in hopes that pressure from Russia will somehow contribute to improve the situation. Potential or actual Russian pressure (diplomatic, economic, military) tends to worry

Latvia's Russians about as much as it worries Latvians themselves, the sole difference being that the latter view the possibility of a Russian military intervention as more realistic than the former do (Zepa 1996a).

## 2 – *The Latvians between West and East*

The Latvian group is not homogeneous either. Herloff-Mortensen (1996) studied intragroup divide among Latvians, and found it possible to divide them in three categories. First, the “local Latvians” (*vietējie latvieši*), “Latvian Latvians” (*Latvijas latvieši*) or “Latvians from here” (*latvieši no šejienes*). Secondly, the “Western Latvians”, who are returnees from the USA, Germany, Sweden, Australia or Canada, often called “exile Latvians” (*trimdas latvieši*), “American Latvians” (*Amerikas latvieši*), “emigrants” (*emigranti*) or “Latvians from there” (*Latvieši no turienes*). Thirdly, the returnees from former Soviet republics, mainly Russia, called “Eastern Latvians” (*austrumu latvieši*) or “Russia's Latvians” (*Krievijas latvieši*).

Herloff-Mortensen found that each subgroup had specific (and ambiguous) self-perceptions and mutual perceptions, which she links to their having been socialised in widely different social environments. The “Western Latvians” fled during and just after World War Two (240 000 persons). They integrated into American, Australian or German societies while maintaining their latvianness through a network of organisations. Latvia is either the homeland they themselves escaped from, or the country of their parents or grandparents. They are often well-educated, and many have double citizenship. The “Eastern Latvians” (150 000 persons) got deported to Russia in the 1940s. They had to adjust to harsher conditions and experienced more difficulty to maintain their latvianness. They lived scattered, with little mutual contact, and no organised network. No Latvian-language schools existed in the Russian SSR. Many Eastern Latvians married Russians, changed names, and did not insist on upkeeping their mother tongue, so as not to make their latvianness too conspicuous in a society where Balts were collectively suspected of collaboration with Nazi Germany. Finally, the “Latvian Latvians” are those who did not leave Latvia and lived through the Soviet period.

Member of the three categories consider themselves Latvians, but not according to the same criteria.

The Latvian Latvians insist clearly on territory and downplay blood ties, claiming that moving away from your homeland eventually makes you lose your identity.

Western Latvians insist on family descent. Territory is not instrumental for them. Neither is, interestingly, language: they speak a Latvian which Latvian Latvians find both old-fashioned (it is the language they or their parents took with them from Latvia in 1940-45) and altered (anglicised or germanised). Western Latvians reply by claiming that the "local" variant, updated as it may be, is heavily russified. But who will decide? In general, Latvian Latvians are not unequivocally positive toward the accession of Western Latvians to high positions. Somehow, the latter remain the elite that left, lived well in the West while folk back home put up with communism, and came back to occupy positions of an educated upper class with above-average salaries. We can directly link Herloff-Mortensen's findings with what Enquist writes about the despair and bitterness he encountered in Riga in the late 1960s, among Latvians who did not understand why so few exiles seemed to be eager to come to visit.

The Eastern Latvians also insist on family descent, even if they can have trouble proving their Latvian ancestry: some were born in Russia, and even had the "Russian" nationality in Soviet times. Some lack language skills and/or sufficient documentation of their Latvian descent, and far from all have Latvian citizenship. But even if the criterion of family descent is not unequivocally useful to Eastern Latvians, it is the only one they have: for obvious reasons, they cannot use the criterion of territory. Herloff-Mortensen found it hard to make contact with them. The main goal of their association in Riga is to help them to gain citizenship and find housing. Otherwise they keep a low profile and have little political, social and economical influence. They remained marred by their "russianness" in the eyes of Latvian Latvians. Both groups are in turn marred by their "sovietness" in the eyes of Western Latvians, which is all the more ironic given that both Eastern Latvians and Latvian Latvians view themselves as violently anti-Soviet, claiming that Western returnees cannot understand what they had to endure. As a whole, Herloff-Mortensen concludes that "discourses based on authentic/artificial, continuity/discontinuity and Western/Soviet constitute stronger categorical divides than whether or not one is a citizen".

### **III – Lithuania**

Today there are little signs of mutual tensions in Lithuania. Intolerance between groups is considered as a problem by only 8 % of Lithuanians, 2 % of Russians and 2 % of Poles.<sup>32</sup> Like in the other two Baltic republics, the Lithuanian pattern is one in which the members of the eponymous nationality tend to be more skeptical of exogamy than the members of the non-eponymous groups (Mazuriene 1995). In the Soviet Union, interethnic marriages were propagandised and stimulated by the Soviet Union's official ideology, but Lithuanians seem to remain rather impervious to matrimonial propaganda in general (Zvinkliene 1996). After reaching a peak of 18 % in 1989, the rate of interethnic marriage in Lithuania was in 1994 at the 1986 level (14.7 % and 14.9 %). Just like in Latvia and Estonia, intergroup marriage hardly got affected by the restoration of national independence.

Lithuanian families seem more tightly knit than Polish ones. Poles differ from Lithuanians in their having more family ties abroad. In a 1994 survey, 67.8 % of Poles admitted having relatives in Poland, 36.7 % in Belarus and 17.5 % in Russia (corresponding figures for Lithuanians did not exceed 17.6 %). They also differ in their acceptance of exogamy: about 70 % of Poles said they approve of marriage with a Lithuanian, whereas 33.8 % of Lithuanians approve of marriage with a Pole.

#### **A – The Unproblematic Russians**

People of Russian nationality in Lithuania, most of whom came under the Soviet era, seem as a whole better integrated in the national society than those of Latvia and Estonia. They are fewer and further between. In Soviet times, Lithuania never attracted Russians as much as the other two republics did. It offered less job opportunities, and memories of the 1944–1952 guerilla movement may have lingered on as well (although we can only speculate about how much they concretely acted as a deterrent).

In February 1993, Smith et al (1996) undertook a major comparative survey of the Baltic Russians in four cities : Riga (Latvia), Daugavpils (Latvia), Narva (Estonia) and Klaipeda (Lithuania). The proportion of Russians in each city's population is, respectively, 47 %, 58 %, 86 %

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<sup>32</sup> *The Baltic Times*, January 22, 1998.



and 28 %. They were asked to what extent they agreed with statements such as (first) *People working in the service industries and the state institutions should be required to speak the eponymous language*, (second) *Only people who have a knowledge of the eponymous language should be entitled to Latvian / Estonian / Lithuanian citizenship*, and (third) *Russian should be the language of ethnic contact in Latvia / Estonia / Lithuania*.

The Russians from Klaipeda were the ones who agreed most with the first two statements, and who disagreed most with the third one. At a broader level, that survey confirms a finding which most authors agree on, namely the existence of a strong local patriotism among Baltic Russians: they will often identify with their city before they identify with the Baltic state they live in or, indeed, with Russia itself.

Local conditions have their importance, for better and for worse: the open attitude of Klaipeda's Russians can be usefully contrasted with the one of those who live in Siauliai, Lithuania's fourth-largest city. In the Soviet era, Siauliai was a major army base, and therefore a closed city. Many of Siauliai's Russians were professionally and socially associated with the military base, and thus had no incentive to learn Lithuanian or indeed feel any strong connection to Lithuania as such. Some were repatriated along with the 11000 Red Army soldiers once stationed in Siauliai, but Russian-speakers still make up about 7 % of the city's population. Former members of the Soviet army and the KGB are banned from Lithuanian citizenship, while the others Russians have already received it. In Siauliai, the most politically vocal ones are Soviet army pensioners, some of whom in their forties, "who complain bitterly of Lithuania's refusal to guarantee their military pensions and benefits" (Clarke 1995). Klaipeda's Russians had more incentives, more opportunities, and thus presumably more willingness of social interaction with Lithuanians than Siauliai Russians. Apparently, Klaipeda's richer social network made the step toward learning some Lithuanian both more useful and less dramatic.

## **B – Lithuania's Poles and Lithuanian Identity**

### *1 – Social Background*

The situation of the people of Polish nationality (7 % of the population) is more complicated. Today we can distinguish two groups.

First are the Poles or descendants of Poles who settled in the Kaunas region before the Second World War. About 200 000 before 1939, they became reduced to a few thousands after World War II casualties, Soviet deportations and linguistic lithuanisation. So far they run no schools of their own, and only a handful of cultural organisations exist.

Secondly, there is the larger group living in Vilnius and the Vilnius region. They predominate in certain areas like Salcininkai and the south-east of Vilnius. They are not immigrants, but a native minority, who made a rich contribution to the country's cultural, social and economic development (Gwiazda 1994), at least until it got "intellectually decapitated" (Burant & Zubek 1993) after World War II: during the years 1945-46, and immediately after 1956 too, most of the Poles of the Vilnius region were repatriated (or more accurately, expatriated) to Poland. Those who left were mainly members of upper and middle classes, while most of the destitute strata (ie., the peasants) stayed on.

In all, the region lost about a third of its inhabitants. The city of Vilnius itself became depopulated. Then, re-population began, albeit with people coming from other parts of the Soviet Union, who settled down in urban and suburban areas<sup>33</sup> at the expense of rural ones, which experienced a considerable population decline (Mazurienė 1995). The official language of education in the Vilnius region changed several times during Soviet period. After World War II, both Russian schools and Polish schools were established, later to be replaced by exclusively Russian and (in some places) Lithuanian ones. In many schools, several language sections coexisted, with Russian as the language of intergroup communication (by which Lithuania differs from Latvia and Estonia, where schools of different languages were rather physically separated).

Lithuania's Poles became partly de-nationalised as a result of Soviet school policies. Across the Soviet period, attendance in Polish classes decreased. Polish parents increasingly preferred to send children to Russian-language schools (Mazurienė 1995). According to the last Soviet census, in 1989 more than half of the children officially registered as "Polish" did *not* attend Polish-language schools. As often in the Baltic area,

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33 Soviet authorities regulated the population influx to Vilnius itself, thus many chose suburban areas as a second-best solution.

nationality, native language and most frequently used tongue are not always synonymous.

Field research conducted in the mid-1990s (Mazuriene 1995) found that 88.3 % of the Poles living in Eastern Lithuania are fluent in spoken Polish, and 72 % in written. 89.8 % say Polish is their mother tongue. Only 52.6 % are fluent in spoken Lithuanian (46.1 % in written), which clearly puts them at a disadvantage on the job market. Today, among 52.2 % of Polish adults with school-age children, more wish them to be educated in Lithuanian (52.2 %) than in Polish (44 %). Demand for education in Russian has become very low among them (3.8 %), and it is next to non-existent among the Lithuanians who live in the mostly Polish-speaking areas (0.4 %). 28.8 % of the Lithuanians living in the area speak fluent Polish and 21.3 % write it fluently. The whole Vilnius region is now characterised by a highly fragmented linguistic environment with one losing side (Russian), one outsider whose future is highly uncertain (Belarussian), and two temporary winners competing against each other (Polish and Lithuanian).

Other sources based on field research done in 1995<sup>34</sup> vindicate the idea that “considerable disparities” exist in Lithuania between (1) the nationality of the children, (2) their language of instruction, and (3) their mother tongue. Unsurprisingly maybe, the smallest disparities are to be found among “Lithuanian“ children. Other children reveal large discrepancies, and they are aware of the complexity of their situation. Less than one-third of the (officially) “Belarussian“ children view Belarussian as their mother tongue, and 77.4 % of the “Poles“ view Polish as their mother tongue. “Russian” schoolchildren actually constitute less than a third of the Russian-language classes’ contingents (Lakis 1995).

Lithuanian Poles have nonetheless made active use of the possibilities offered to them by the post-USSR Lithuanian legislation. Mazuriene (1995:73) finds that “the social infrastructure enabling the active functioning of the Polish population on this territory is actually quite rich and various”. A tight network of associations exist (from sports clubs to religious or business associations), covered by the umbrella Union of Poles in Lithuania (*Zwiazek Polakow na Litwie*). About ten periodicals in

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34 with 907 high school students from 21 schools in 5 mostly non-Lithuanian districts of East Lithuania.

Polish are edited, including the daily *Kurier Wilenski*. Mazurienė also finds an increase in interest for the study and the diffusion of the history and culture of the *Wilenszczyzna*, the Vilnius area.

## 2 – Historical Background

The Polishness of Lithuanian Poles does not exist as a matter of course, as can be expected from people who during the XXth century were shifted from one state sovereignty to another about half a dozen times, and never had a say in the matter.<sup>35</sup> The Polish they speak is rather a mosaic of Slavic dialects that lie “somewhere between” Polish and Belarussian. They have been either “nationalised” or “denationalised” by the successive powers (Polish, Lithuanian and Russian, in no particular order).

Historically, the well-known label *Tutejzy* (a pre-national, or rather a-national denomination meaning literally “the people from here”) has been both a device for survival and a political weapon, depending on who says it: when used by the Vilnius Poles themselves, it has been a shrewd way for them *not* to take sides for or against the nationalising policies of the day, in the hope of being ignored and left alone; when used by politicians of either persuasion, it has been a way to designate these people as cultural blank pages that only expect to be filled in. In the 1920s, *Tutejzy* was what Pilsudski used to call the Belarussians, and many Belarussians living on the other side of the current state border still call themselves that way. In the 1990s, Vilnius Poles were called *Tuteisiai* by prominent linguist Zigmąs Zinkevicius<sup>36</sup> in order to beef up his controversial claim that there “never were any true Poles in the Vilnius region”, and that those who call themselves like that today are, in fact, polonised Lithuanians.<sup>37</sup>

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35 “Although Polish culture penetrated deeply into the region, its driving forces—the nobility and the intelligentsia—were obliterated and removed from the area over the course of the XXth century. As a result, in recent times the national identity of the population there has been in flux” (Burant & Zubek 1993:385).

36 Author of the first *History of the Lithuanian Language* ever published in English, and Minister of Education and Science in the mid-1990s.

37 I suspect that Zinkevicius is the mysterious “professor Z” interviewed by Applebaum (1994). Professor Z claimed that “the Poles in Vilnius nowadays think of themselves as Poles because they are Catholic and because their grandmothers went to Polish schools, but they are not Poles. They are the descendents of Lithuanians” (Applebaum 1994:67).

### 3 – *The Polish Dimension of Lithuanian Identity*

The ambiguity of the Lithuanian Polish identity is actually nourished by the way Lithuanians themselves relate to it, and Zinkevicius's denial of the authenticity of these people's Polishness comes as one of the latest variations on an old theme.

Lithuanians carry ambiguous memories of the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth,<sup>38</sup> which was a time of historical greatness but also a time of incremental national weakening. Lithuanian-speakers always constituted a minority in the Commonwealth, where religion often was a more relevant criterium of identity than "nationality". The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth had as many as seven official languages, but Lithuanian was not one of them (Lieven 1994). Society's elites became increasingly polonised<sup>39</sup> (von Rauch 1974). The subjects of the Great Duchy would designate themselves as Lithuanians regardless of their being "ethnically" Lithuanian, Slavic or Jewish, and regardless of whether they spoke Polish (the language of the nobility) or their "national" tongue. For instance, a lord of Bielorussian origin, speaking Polish, would see himself naturally as a Lithuanian (Greimas & Zukas 1993). Only in the XIXth century did the conflation language/nationality emerge, incrementally and unevenly.

Whereby Lithuanian memories of the Commonwealth cannot—or not only—contain the romanticism extant in the Polish visions. At the time of the Lithuanian national awakening of the second half of the XIXth century, Applebaum (1994:46) notices, Polish patriots imbued the word *kresy* ("borderlands", "marches") with a nostalgic meaning suggesting "a lack of demarcation, an endless horizon with nothing certain beyond:

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38 The union between Poland and Lithuania was sealed on 18 February 1386, when Lithuania's Grand Duke Jogaila (Jagiello) married Poland's queen Jadwiga. The condition was that Jogaila agreed to become Roman catholic. Lithuanian catholicism was originally a Polish import. The personal union became a confederation in 1569, when the treaty of Lublin merged the Kingdom of Poland and Grand Duchy of Lithuania into one common republic (*Rzeczpospolita Obojga Narodow*) with one single elected ruler and one parliament (Burant 1991).

39 "The Lithuanian upper classes identified more and more with their Polish counterparts, because Lithuania was less developed and the social structure of Poland was older and more firmly established" (von Rauch 1974)

once upon a time, they told themselves, the fields and forests of the *kresy* were the outer rim of the known world". Thus, the positive Lithuanian images of common resistance against the czar (notably in 1830 and 1863) take a more greyish shade when associated with memories of the critical attitude of the Polish-speaking aristocracy toward the establishment of a Lithuanian state. What the aristocracy wanted was the resurrection of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (Janulaitis 1937). But Lithuanian nationalists did not want to revive the Commonwealth, which they viewed it as a noble cheat in which Lithuania acted as the weaker partner. In that, Lithuanians differ from Latvians and Estonians, who also were peasant peoples, but whose *baltendeutsche* masters appeared more clearly like strangers. Lithuanian nation-builders faced a elite who, although linguistically polonised, was seeing itself as Lithuanian too, and claimed the same patriotic ideals and the same historical heritage.

Whence the Lithuanians' impossibility to see their medieval past as entirely "theirs". Runblom (1995) notices a tendency within current Lithuanian historiography to minimise the fact that the union with Poland was part and parcel of Lithuania's medieval glory. Likewise in literature: in a recent issue of the magazine of the Lithuanian Writers' Union *Vilnius*, Rubavicius (1999:14) stresses that "the most accurate insight into the culture of the nobility in Lithuania and the Polish-Lithuanian mentality can be found in the work of the Nobel Prize winner Polish writer Czeslaw Milosz. It is not to be found in Lithuanian literature".

Whence, too, the impossibility for Lithuanians to construct Poles as *foreigners* the way, for instance, Estonian authorities conceptualize Estonia's Russians, regardless of citizenship, as *muulased*, aliens. The connection between that impossibility and Lithuania's historical past gets clearly established by Savukynas (1998) in his study of the configurations of religious identity in Lithuania since the XVIIth century. Savukynas shows how the institutionalisation of cult of the Virgin Mary as the protector of the *Rzeczpopolita* led to a legitimisation of the position of Catholics regardless of language, which in turn gave them the power to denounce members of other confessions as pagans and national traitors. Symptomatically, Lithuanian folklore often demonised groups like the Latvians, the Germans, the Russians and the Jews (who get blamed for a variety of sins like witchcraft or relations with Satan), but it hardly ever demonised Poles. At least that was true until the end of the XIXth century, when

language gained increased salience as a national identity marker, which in turn made it possible to denounce the Poles too as “deceivers” and “bad Catholics”.

Nevertheless, the older feelings of religious commonality never vanished, making a radical “Otherisation” of Poles impossible. These feelings linger on today, even if, of course, they do not by themselves determine or exhaust the range of mutual perceptions.<sup>40</sup> Poles can never be wholly “foreign” in Lithuania. The Lithuanian word for “foreigner”, *uzsienietis*, is geographic. It has nothing to do with language or blood linkage: *uzsienietis* means, literally, “from behind the border” as well as “from behind the wall”, since *siena* means “wall” as well as “border”. But Lithuanian Poles do not come from “beyond the border”. They are “from here”, definitely.

At the same time, they are not “Lithuanian” the way the word is conceived of today. The conceptions of the nation which now predominate in Lithuania have older roots than the beginning of the Soviet period, and they have been reinforced, rather than weakened by the Soviet experience. Donskis (1998:81) stresses that “for the vast majority of Lithuanian intellectuals, nationality is merely another term for ethnicity. The confusion of political and cultural terms reaches its climax in the inability—or conscious refusal—to equate “Lithuanian-ness” with Lithuanian citizenship (...) Identity is defined in terms of ever-presence rather than activity (...) This might help to explain why and how Lithuanian intellectuals and even government officials still believe that they have the right to decide (...) where a man/woman—or even an entire ethnic group—belongs”.

That is what enables Applebaum’s “professor Z” to, on the one hand, acknowledge that “at present, the linguistic features of southeastern Lithuania are so diverse that it is difficult to delineate them on a linguistic map” (Zinkevicius 1996:317) and, on the other hand, contend nonetheless that Lithuanian Poles are actually polonised Lithuanians who are unable to understand who they really are.

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40 The respective articles of Juknevičius (1998) and Ziliukaite (1998) are well-documented and give valuable insights in how religiosity develops in present-day Lithuania and in how it interacts with civicness and identity.

Such patterns of thought actually got reinforced by the Soviet system, as a look into the current Lithuanian constitution, adopted in 1992, shows. It contains interesting indications as to what constitutes “the people” of Lithuania. In its preamble, it states that “the Lithuanian Nation approves and declares this Constitution”. Its article 2 states that “the State of Lithuania shall be created by the People. Sovereignty shall be vested in the People”. Its article 37 states that “citizens who belong to ethnic communities shall have the right to foster their language, culture and customs”.

So far so good, but what is interesting for us here is that in the original text, “Nation”, “People” and “ethnic” are all rendered by the same word (*tauta/tautinis*). A comparison between differently dated sources<sup>41</sup> gives us a hint of how one word has come to mean such different things.

If we check out the word “tauta” in three dictionaries (one of 1927, one of 1970, one of 1992), we see that the Soviet-time (1970) dictionary is the odd one out. The common rendition of “nation” and “people” by *tauta*, which already existed in 1927, and still does in 1992, does not appear in the 1970 dictionary. Obviously, embedding in written form the identification of a Lithuanian “people” to a Lithuanian “nation” was not deemed to be acceptable in the Soviet context. The word *nacija*, present in 1970 and 1992 but absent from the oldest source, is actually borrowed. It is closely related to the adjective *nacionalistas*, which in the Soviet vocabulary pertained to those who did not endorse the motto of “internationalism”. As the 1927 dictionary shows, the original Lithuanian word for “nationalist” or “patriot” does exist: it is *tautininkas*. But it does not appear in the 1970 dictionary. Regarding the word *liaudis* (1970, 1992), which also means “people”, it is borrowed from the Russian *liudy*, and as such had the favour of the official Soviet jargon. “People’s democracy” for instance was *liaudies respublika*, not *tauto respublika*.

The above strongly suggests that the official Soviet rhetoric has brought about a narrowing of the range of the politically useful vocabulary in Lithuanian. Only today do the effects of that narrowing become fully

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41 Laucka, A (et.al), *English-Lithuanian Dictionary*, Mokslas, 1992. Juskiene, A (et.al), *Prancuzu-Lietuviu Kalbu Zodynas*, Valstybinis leidybos centras, 1970. Busch & Chomskas, *Litauisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch*, Georg Neuner, 1927.



visible: out of three Lithuanian words that can be used to mean “nation” or “people” (*tauta*, *nacija* and *liaudis*), two (*nacija* and *liaudis*) connote Soviet power and, as such, are too negatively loaded to be used as a matter of course. Somehow, only *tauta*, which the Soviets did not like, is left.

The trouble, now, is that that linguistic impoverishment fits into and reinforces the weakly liberal conception of national identity that existed *before* the Soviet takeover.

The ambiguities above are informed further by the generally *negative* perceptions of the Poland of the 1920s and 1930s (when the Polish army occupied Vilnius and its region), and the more *positive* perceptions of post-1945 Poland, first as an unruly People’s Democracy (Vardys 1983),<sup>42</sup> and today as a possible model of westernisation and a precious diplomatic go-between on the road to EU-membership (interview Karosas 1995). Interstate relations are active and good.

But Lithuanian perceptions become *negative* again regarding those among the “local Poles” who offered little resistance to russification and became rather loyal to the Soviet state and social structures (Holm-Hansen 1992). During the independence drive of the late 1980s, some members of the Polish-speaking population in the Vilnius area sought to create an autonomous region within Lithuania. Another thought was to create a Soviet republic on the territory of eastern Lithuania, or to join neighboring Belarus. One of Wiszniewska’s (1990:87) Polish informants relates the events in a rather good-natured way: “There is this little insignificant county that rebelled against Lithuanian authorities. In its center, one village: Soleczniki. One day, the inhabitants set up a huge banner saying Autonomous Polish Republic. They elected a council and a president, then asked for official recognition. They said: “As long as the

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42 After World War II, Moscow allowed few contacts between Poland and the Lithuanian SSR. The goal was to remove memories of the common past and of the Polish eastern presence so as to make both Poles and Lithuanians see their new, forced state borders as “normal”. Whence, for instance, the promotion of stereotypes in Soviet Lithuanian historiography about the “*Panska Polska*” (the Poland of the nobility). Poland somehow remained a “window on Europe” for Lithuanian intellectuals, albeit under controlled forms. In general there was “*little mutual contact and knowledge*” in the early 1980s (Burant & Zubek 1993).

negotiations are not over, there can be no trade exchange between our republic and the Lithuanian state. There is no way we shall deliver the milk and wheat produced by our kolkhoze". Things calmed down, of course" (my translation).

But Lieven (1994) estimates that "had the Soviet Union persisted for another year or so, the Lithuanian government might have encountered Polish regional institutions which were a good deal harder to dismantle". The Lithuanian central government enforced direct control of the Vilnius and Salcinikai districts after these municipalities supported the failed coup in August 1991.

The question of the political loyalty of the Vilnius region was all the more sensitive for the Lithuanian opinion since Lithuanians identify their genesis as a people with the birth—both historical and mythical—of the city of Vilnius in 1323, more than Latvians and Estonians can identify their national origins with their respective state capitals, founded not by themselves, but by their Danish/German masters.

Even today, Vilnius remains linked to a number of myths that give that city a specific symbolic load. Vilnius embodies physically a tension central to Lithuanian identity, derived from the fact that, as we saw above, the history of *Lithuania* and the history of *Lithuanians* are not quite the same thing. Like Austria, today's Lithuania has a capital city whose peripheric position on the map testifies of an imperial past whose borders stretched well beyond the current state limits.

The name Vilnius itself results from the XIXth century addition of a Lithuanian ending to the Belarusian name Vilna, by which the city had been known prior to that time (the Polish name is Wilno) (Burant & Zubek 1993). Architecturally, Vilnius is a Central European city, baroque and therefore closer to certain cities in Poland or Slovakia than to Riga or Tallinn (Markeviciene 1999; Venclova 1997). Historically, it was peopled by Poles, Belarussians and Jews for longer than it was peopled by Lithuanians. But the ethnography of the Vilnius region across time remains extremely confused, because census figures have tended to change with the nationality of the census takers, and because for a long time the mass of the inhabitants of the region did not view themselves as nationally determined, contenting themselves with the assertion that they were local people, *tutejzy*, period. The post WWI Polish occupation and the post WWII Soviet one hardly make things simpler.

It seems at least that, in the early XIXth century, the city's population was mostly Polish-Jewish, with a strong admixture of Belorussians. The 1897 census (admittedly not quite reliable) indicates only 2 % of Lithuanians in Vilnius (Burant & Zubek 1993). The Lithuanisation of the *city* of Vilnius began in the earnest in 1940 only, when Stalin "gave back" the city to Lithuanians after it had been occupied by Poland for almost the whole period between the two World Wars. The Lithuanisation of the *region* of Vilnius has hardly ever been carried out at all. Today, the city is a (mostly) Lithuanian enclave in a Polish/Belarusian region. Even if it no longer serves as the cradle of a vibrant *litwak* culture, somehow it remains much more than the administrative center of the state of Lithuania (Burant & Zubek 1993). Strikingly, in a survey done in 1993, about every tenth inhabitant of Vilnius (regardless of nationality) even viewed the city as his *motherland* (Krukauskiene 1996).

It is in that context that we should replace, for instance, the claims regularly put out by certain Polish-speaking politicians of Lithuania that the state ought to finance the creation of a complete structure of higher education in the Polish language (interview de Suremain 1995). As Milosz puts it, modern Lithuanian nationhood emerged in the XIXth as a creature of Lithuanian philology—a philology whose cradle can be very precisely delimited on a map, namely the yards and study rooms of Vilnius University. Still today, the apparently benign question of introducing programmes wholly in Polish within the confines of Vilnius University carries an enormous affective and symbolic load. It is guaranteed to bring both outcry from Lithuanian academics and easy (albeit temporary) political gain to the Polish politicians willing to bring the theme up.

The problem is rather that so few of Lithuania's Poles enroll in universities *at all*, in whatever language. Today, the Polish-speaking areas have the lowest average standard of living in Lithuania, and the poorest infrastructures (schools, hospitals, cultural life). In 1991, it was estimated that a Pole was 6 times less likely to receive higher education than a Lithuanian (Holm-Hansen 1992). Those Poles who want to pursue an university education often go to Poland itself. Almost by definition, Poland offers them a wide choice of educations in Polish that outweighs anything the Lithuanian state ever will be able to afford, as well as a wider choice of career opportunities once they have graduated. Thus the Polish-speaking population of Lithuania suffers from a brain drain which seems hard to stop in the near future.



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## CHAPTER VII

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### The Vertical Dimension of Citizenship

This last chapter explores what I call the vertical dimension of citizenship. Within the double Legacy/Scruples model, it shifts the focus on the Scruples. In other words, it explores the conditions in which individual citizens in the Baltic countries can “enter” the polity and contribute to its transformation. It uses notions of time, urbanity, consensus and conflict as discussed in chapter III.

#### **Introduction**

The Singing Revolution came as a symbol of what Havel calls the power of the powerless in his essay of the same name. Like the other European “velvet revolutions”, it was made possible because people acted as citizens, in whatever situation they found themselves (Van Gunsteren 1998). Lieven (1994:254) emphasizes the “courage of peaceful, unarmed crowds (...), convinced that they would be attacked but standing their ground”. Latvia’s declaration of *de jure* independence, for instance, and the formation of the Godmanis government, on 4 May 1990, took place amidst threats of retaliation from pro-USSR Mayor of Riga Alfreds Rubiks, and a stone’s throw from a demonstration of pro-Soviet forces and Soviet officers outside parliament’s building. These were times when mobilisation was high and the sense of unity strong, as was the expectation of the imminent “good life” (Estonian UNDP 1997).

In times of optimism, people were verbalising their readiness to sacrifice a certain material security for the sake of independence, but these were also, in part, rituals performed to encourage everybody to share the common strife. According to a widespread notion, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia were potentially prosperous countries where the general level of so-

cial well-being would soon equal Western Europe's if only the Soviets would retreat (Samalavicius 1994). So far, that has not come true.

Post-communist transformations are commonly envisaged as synonymous with a disengagement of the state from the social sphere, so that society can "breathe freely" again. An appreciable measure of state disengagement has taken place. Tangible manifestations of it are, for instance, the lifting of travel restrictions or freedom of the press. A more or less gradual privatization of the economy has been carried out.

Thus the state, in the Baltic countries, has given up the all-embracing ambitions and functions which hallmarked the Soviet system. However—and this might be the central paradox of post-communist transformations in general—the process of giving up these functions requires considerable involvement of the state itself (Bunce & Csanadi 1993; Ostrovska 1996), both for positive and negative reasons. On the one hand, only the state can muster the power and resources necessary to minimize corruption and ensure a genuinely free economy.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, in many cases, genuine privatization didn't occur, the state retaining a controlling interest in many of the largest firms. In certain cases, the very fact of state involvement ensured that political interests would often win out over economic efficiency.

Although macroeconomic policies differ between Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia, and in spite of a number of banking crises in Latvia and Lithuania (Paeglis 1994), these countries show improving macroeconomic performance over the 1990s, in terms of, for instance, inflation, national debt or foreign trade. At the same time, a rapid growth in social inequality can be observed (UNDP 1996; 1997). The 1998 UNDP report on Lithuania stresses that although "there has been an obvious breakthrough in restoring democracy and political rights, relatively less success has been achieved in the field of rights to economic and personal security" (Zaleskiene 1998).

Today, the exercise of citizenship by citizens bumps, not into obstacles deliberately erected by the state like in the USSR, but into drastic economic changes and difficulties. Civic weakness comes not so much from a scarcity of resources than from a rapid redistribution of the resources. The question will be treated in the first part of this chapter.

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1 Michael Kopanic. Book review of *Capitalism with a Comrade's Face: Studies in the Post-Communist Transition* by Frydman, Murphy and Rapaczynski, Central European University Press, Budapest, 1998, in *Central Europe Review*, vol 2 nr 5, February 7, 2000.

The exercise of citizenship by citizens also bumps into what could be designed somehow trivially as a post-communist hangover, which the second part of this chapter discusses. Once they got rid of Soviet power, Balts had to set up a power of their own, and get accustomed to it. It is not easy. The citizenry's expectations concerning sovereign power might have been too high to calmly accept its actual, necessarily imperfect achievements. Opinion surveys in the Baltics show that people's trust in and identification with institutions like state institutions and political parties remain low. People have more trust in those institutions whose task it is to inform and educate the public, like the media, schools and (especially in Lithuania) the Church.. The institutional frameworks are in place, but the sense of shared citizenship seems to remain weak. In Soviet times, people looked upon power as something inimical and even alien. One had to adapt oneself to power, but there was no need to respect it. Whenever there was the chance, it was considered quite moral to ignore, mock and cheat the authorities. Not only seem such perceptions to persist, but—and that might well be the most serious problem for the consolidation of citizenship in the Baltic states—they have found reinforcement in certain attitudes and patterns of behaviour among some of the people who are exerting power.

## **I – The Vertical Fragmentation of Baltic Societies**

### **A – “Privatizations” : By Whom And For Whom?**

In a way, the respective policies of privatization in the three Baltic countries have become victims of their own success. Over the years, there have been relatively few scandals, give or take some (possibly inevitable) cases of bogus land and apartment privatization in all three countries. No grand pyramid schemes utilizing privatization vouchers took place like they did in Russia or in the Balkans.<sup>2</sup> The record, however, deteriorated in 2000. One of the problems many investors meet is that the laws which regulate Baltic pri-

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<sup>2</sup> “Financial pyramids” rose and fell in several post-communist countries in the mid-nineties. These financial schemes rest upon a simple principle. Attracted by the prospect of high interest rates, people deposit money, but that money is not actually invested: it is used to remunerate those who deposited before. The system works until the day no new depositors show up. The “businessmen” who initiate these pyramids usually escape with impunity (Warde 1997).

vatisations get constantly amended. Besides, many of the unequivocally useless or unequivocally prized assets have already been taken care of. Only the most contentious items remain.<sup>3</sup>

### 1 – A View from Above

Privatizations in the Baltics are not a linear process by which an ubiquitous state incrementally withdraws and, like an ebbing tide revealing shells, restores society to its underlying condition. They have been influenced by the ability of powerful social groups and their networks to capture the assets released by privatization for themselves.

There are, of course, differences between countries, but Frydman et al. (1996) find that “spontaneous privatizations” happened all over the East, whence the replacement of the old regime’s elite by a “kleptoklatura” which does not always seem to think all that differently from the communist-era nomenklatura, for the plain reason that it partly consists of the same people.<sup>4</sup>

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3 In **Estonia**, *Eesti Raudtee* (Estonian Railways) remains the last big item to be privatized. Given that railways play a significant role in the oil transshipment business, companies have fought hard for the privatization. **Lithuania** has never had a privatization agency as such, by which it differs from Latvia and Estonia, which set up each its Germany-like agency. Lithuania’s privatization program has nonetheless been far-reaching. By the end of 1994 already, Lithuania had privatized over 95 % of all domestic apartments, 85 % of all agricultural lands and assets, and around 83 % of all state enterprises that were put under the privatization program. By 1995, over half of Lithuania’s GDP was attributable to the private sector (*The Baltic Observer*, March 2, 1995). The privatization of the country’s shipping fleet (LISCO) plagues the political life of the country. The privatization of banks has also been problematic, especially regarding the Lithuanian Savings Bank (*Lietuvos Taupomasis Bankas*, LTB). Of the three Baltic countries, **Latvia** seems to have been the most sensitive to privatization issues. Problems linked to them have caused several governments to fall. The most contentious privatization process has been the one of the Latvian Shipping Company (*Latvijas Kugnieciba*, nicknamed LASCO), due not least to the intense partisanship of the whole privatization process. Each political party feels the need to have a presence in the Privatization Agency and the councils of the largest state-owned companies such as, precisely, LASCO and the power utility Latvenergo. Many state assets in Latvia are still to privatize (Mel Huang, “When the sweet turns to sour“, *Central Europe Review*, vol 3 nr 5, February 5, 2001).

4 One example among plenty: the Vilnius supermarket *Pas Juozapa* was opened by an entrepreneur named Juozapas Budrikis, who so far had made a living out of preaching the horrors of private property to the toiling masses of the city of Ukmerge, where he was the First Secretary of the Communist Party.



Membership in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was a “political capital” that facilitated access to economic assets, both during communism and during the transformation period (Karpinski 1996).

After independence, party activity in the Baltics quickly became associated with the distribution and redistribution of economic resources in the interests of a few narrow groups. The class of new entrepreneurs arisen from the privatization process got “created” by political decisions about what would be privatized, for how much, and to the benefit of whom. Positions in government or parliament have often been used as launching pads to land in positions at banks or businesses, especially linked to the transit trade. In 1994, Lieven stressed that a major threat to the future of the Baltic States lied in the connections between the new entrepreneurial class and the leaders of organised crime, particularly in connection with the seizure of state property.

One should of course be careful with the use of the term “Mafia”, which is, first and foremost, one of these Western terms which, enthusiastically adopted by post-Soviet vernacular and played back to Western journalists causes general confusion (Sampson 1998). According to Lieven (1994), it covers at least three kinds of actors: the informal black marketeers, the organised crime rings, and the old Soviet establishment.

This reservation being made, it is getting clear that the informal structures of relationships that developed during the Soviet period still have a much more powerful influence on processes in society than is common to admit (Ostrovskaja 1996). The discovery that the elite was moving farther away from the people came as an unpleasant surprise, as the illusion of community was not yet overcome. As Ostrovskaja (1996) puts it, both state and society are somehow forced to watch as an influential third force, which she calls the shadow economy, has emerged. The interests of that “shadow society” are often in counterpoint to those of the state, due notably to tax evasion, and of the rest of society: the impoverished state cannot make good on promises, which nourishes perceptions of society as the war of all against all.

## *2 – A View from Below*

Demographic indicators give an idea of the effects of post-communist transformations in Baltic societies. Throughout the Baltic region, the na-

tural rate of population increase has collapsed (Centeno & Rands 1996). A 1995 Unicef report on 18 post-communist countries, including the Baltics, notices that “psychosocial stress is increasingly seen as a factor explaining the increase in deaths caused by heart problems, ulcers, cirrhosis, suicides, accidents and homicides” (in Soulé 1996).

In the Baltic countries, suicide rates, which already ranked among the highest in the world during Soviet times, have not decreased, but increased since the return to independence, notably among women, young people and the elderly, while nativity has decreased (Raječkas 1996; Värnik 1997; Zaleskiene 1998). Baltic suicide rates hover at about 40 per 100 000 inhabitants. According to World Health Organisation estimates, that figure tops Russian and Hungarian suicide rates by a margin, is about double Denmark’s or Switzerland’s rates, and almost three times Sweden’s.

Politically democratic edifices erected atop general economic poverty rest upon shaky foundations (Campeanu 1990). Of course, it is hard to define poverty, or even to figure out an objective threshold separating the poor from the non-poor. As Kosztolányi (2000) puts it, “even if an objective criterion is agreed upon by researchers, it is unlikely to coincide with the subjective assessments of individuals concerning their level of welfare”. These assessments are informed by the set of ideals and aspirations propagated by society, currently Western-style consumerism. It does not have to be bad in itself. Some authors, like the late Stefan Heym, may have looked too scornfully at the all-too human pleasure East Europeans showed when they too became able to go shopping. After all, Brossat (1992) notes, maybe political pluralism is not enough. Maybe plurality cannot be appreciated as a value if it is not experienced in daily life as well, for instance in the hedonistic pleasure of being able to buy butter whenever you need it, and in a place where the shopkeeper is nice. However, Baltic domestic products have trouble competing. Western goods are being dumped onto Eastern markets. Long-term investment is not always a priority for Western actors: capital has to circulate (Eliad 1990). Therein lies the difference between the glittering of consumption goods in the West and in the East: the former is a glittering at the surface of already-existing, powerful structures of production, while the latter is a glittering with much less underneath. As Centeno & Rands (1996:386) nicely put it, “the vicarious pleasure of seeing luxury goods may have worn thin”.

Poverty in the Baltic countries has historical roots which reach back a long way. Zaleskiene (1998) stresses, for instance, that rural areas in Lithuania have a long experience of poverty. The Lithuanian countryside was generally poor in czarist times and during the post World War I independence. Soviet-time transformations hardly made things better.<sup>5</sup> The poverty of Baltic rural areas generally increased during the Soviet period. The trend shows no signs of abating today, the worst off being the rural areas of Eastern Latvia. By all standards of measurement—average income, mortality, health indicators—rural poverty is more severe, and deeper, than urban poverty (Zaleskiene 1998).

Although the historical experience of rural areas shows that poverty is no new phenomenon in the Baltic countries, these societies are also confronted to a kind of poverty which is still very new to them, which policy-makers are ill-equipped to face, and which is directly linked to the transformations of the post-Soviet period.

To begin with, Baltic societies are experiencing the development of a growing underclass, for which no uniform social protection policy has been developed. The term “underclass” covers people who are completely, or almost completely, marginalized in society, and who are concretely excluded from the exercise of citizenship (like chronic alcoholists, drug addicts, people with psychological problems, ex-convicts, or homeless persons) (Zaleskiene 1998). So far no systematic empirical investigation of that category exists, but indirect data strongly suggests that the number of such people has more or less doubled in the Baltic countries since the mid-1990s. Today over 20 000 children in Lithuania alone do not attend school, for reasons related to their parents’ low social status and living standards (*ibid*).

Besides, above that underclass, and in addition to the more “traditional” poor (families with small children, pensioners, unemployed persons), many people in the Baltics, although they may not qualify as “poor”, have suffered a decline in their standard of living. Differences in income

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5 “The primitive technology used in agriculture, scarce job opportunities and poor transport communications have led to a situation where the majority of the rural population for decades has been excluded from all the comforts of modern life, from a lack of modern domestic facilities to limited access to health care, education, employment, culture and entertainment” (Zaleskiene 1998).

distribution in the Baltics are only partly related to differences in formal education, professional skills and education (Loogma 1997). Members of the salaried middle class, like teachers, doctors, scholars or civil servants earn generally low wages and suffer from a shortage of credit at affordable rates.<sup>6</sup> That makes it hard for them to plan their lives a long time ahead. In a context of material uncertainty, people have to devise different strategies of survival, like the combination of several jobs, and the notion of honest activity gets easily blurred.<sup>7</sup> Such a social context does not favour the minimum feeling of material security which, as we saw in Chapter III, citizenship supposes.

## **B – Post-communist Time: Civic Resource or Civic Constraint?**

We saw in Chapter III, part II, that time could act either as a civic resource or a civic constraint, and that citizenship supposed notably an awareness that the past was not a “foreign country” and that the future remained unknown and open. We saw in Chapter IV, part III, that the totalitarian logic of the system in which Balts lived between the end of World War II and 1990 precisely strived to eliminate that possibility, and that the temporality of Soviet citizens, Balts and others, could be seen as a kind of eternal present, an eternal daily life.

Today, the situation is different. The lid on the respective national pasts has been lifted, and the future is open. Venclova (1997) finds, for instance, that the atmosphere in Vilnius today has nothing in common with the atmosphere in which his generation came of age. In a nutshell, he feels that “the country no longer needs to be saved”.

However, time does not act unequivocally as a civic resource in the Baltic countries. To begin with, so far the the time of the first independence

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6 Loogma (1997) notices that Estonian banks generally demand a net income of EEK 2 000 per family member, which means that at the time of her writing less than one-fourth of Tallinn’s inhabitants were considered as credit-worthy.

7 In a poll conducted in Latvia in the spring of 2000, 75.9 % of the respondents considered it impossible to get rich by honest means (Mel Huang, “Latvia : stability sacrificed“, *Central Europe Review*, vol 2 nr 15, April 17, 2000).

is the only past that looks usable as a source of inspiration for the production of civic symbols. Political actors in the Baltics stress continuities with the pre-1940 republics. Examples abound (Lieven 1994; Landsbergis 2000). The Soviet period, being widely viewed as illegitimate, cannot logically fulfill that kind of function. It works rather as a negative model. That is problematic given that that period lasted for about half a century. It was certainly easier for Germans after 1945 to take some mental distance from the Nazi period, which “only” lasted for 12 years, than for Balts to reject *en bloc* everything related to a historical period which, save for the youngest, merges with a major part of their lives, like it or not. In the Baltics, most of the history of the last century remains impossible to use as a point of reference (Åberg 1997). It is an awareness no society can feel comfortable with.

Regarding the future, as far at least as official statements are concerned, it is basically synonymous with entry in the European Union. While Baltic elites look by and large positively at the perspective (interview Karosas 1995), the population seems to be more skeptical.<sup>8</sup> The word “Union” may not sound unequivocally positive to people who were long forced into one and just escaped from it. The timetable of EU-entry is bound to be a difficult exercise in policy-making: if it is put off too long, impatience and frustration among the supporters of accession will grow. If Baltic efforts to court EU’s favour do not receive tangible rewards soon enough, then it may become hard to keep momentum. Conversely, a quick accession is bound to bring outcry from people who will insist on difficulties of adjustment.

What about the present? On the one hand, as suggested above, the neo-liberal discourse on the post-communist transformation usually gives it the problem-solving form familiar in policy analysis: if you want to achieve outcome A, then you must get actor X to produce output Y, which will then interact with its environment so as to achieve outcome A (Gowan 1995). It is expected that individual behavior and informal structures will rapidly adjust to the newly established institutions (Aligica 1997). In other

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8 In March 2001, for the first time, more than a half of Estonia’s citizens declared themselves majoritarily skeptical against the country’s entry into the European Union (*Postimees*, March 28, 2001).

words, one posits that a harmonious relation between interests, affectivity and democratic citizenship will somehow come to be. The prescriptions that govern the transformation recommend ending state interference, funding and control as a principle. Society, it seems, can be “civil” only beyond the reach of state action. Shock therapy is said to be the best path to truly democratic institutions.

On the other hand, Baltic policy-makers generally acknowledge that the existing social and political institutions are likely to be resistant to shock therapy. In other words, in order to build a true democratic polity, one has to ignore what civil society says as soon as it starts protesting (Gowan 1995), according to the TINA principle (There Is No Alternative).

Fears of a new annexation by Russia may explain why Baltic policy-makers stick to their endeavours. As some other post-communist countries fall behind, one can also sense a fear of sharing their fate. The Estonian press, notably, sometimes displays a certain gladness at the comparatively lesser economic success of the other two Baltic countries in the context of EU enlargement.<sup>9</sup> In the three Baltic republics, fears of losing the feeling of belonging to the West increase the general readiness to tolerate deteriorations in the social realm.<sup>10</sup>

## **C – Post-communist Urban Space: Civic Resource or Civic Constraint?**

### *1 – Situation Today*

We saw in chapter III, part B, that civicness supposes a certain culture of urbanity. The current rate of urbanization in the three republics is of about 70 % of the population. Today’s Baltic countries are urbanized societies. At the same time, several authors emphasize that few truly urban traditions exist among Balts themselves, who historically were peasant

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9 See for instance the magazine Luup, June 14, 1999, “Katkenud Balti kett” [The broken Baltic chain]

10 Annist, Aet, “Progress without protest”, Central Europe Review, vol 2 nr 27, July 10, 2000.

rather than urban peoples (Lieven 1994; Kirby 1995; Åberg 1997). Neither Tallinn nor Riga were founded by Estonians or Latvians.<sup>11</sup> In Lithuania, only lately did Vilnius become majoritarily inhabited by Lithuanians, while the country's only major port, Klaipeda, had a strong German component until World War II. Until the XXth century, most Balts lived in the countryside, while urban populations throughout the area rather consisted of Germans, Russians, Poles and Jews. That a majority of Balts are urban dwellers is a historically new phenomenon.

We saw in Chapter IV that, while communism lasted, it produced specific patterns of urbanization. The dismantling of these patterns is a historically unique process as well (Szelenyi in Andrusz et al 1996). Post-communist transformations have reorganized urban space. The development of post-communist cities shows trends comparable to those that exist in the West, notably the fall in industrial employment and the growth in the service sector, but the forces and factors behind these processes are specific (Kliimask 1997).

The first factor influencing Baltic urbanity is the increasing impact of market forces. The breakup of the socialist economic system, combined with the disintegration of the Soviet economic space, changed the nature of urban economic activities (Kliimask 1997).

The second factor is that, today, all Baltic peoples support and legitimise their claim to national sovereignty by referring to the particularities that distinguish them from others (Åberg 1997). In that context, their respective capital cities are important resources in the creation of symbolic images that posit Baltic nations as part and parcel of the West.

Both factors influence the evolution of public places, private places and third places, all of which influence the way citizenship gets experienced by people, as seen in Chapter III. They also influence the way different Baltic cities relate to each other and to the rest of the country, which is what we shall look at first.

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11 Åberg quotes, notably, a 1996 *History of Tallinn* according to which nine out of ten stonemasons in Tallinn in the late Middle Ages were Estonian, but none were masters, and they were prohibited from joining the most powerful guilds. Thus, the *History* says, "it seems that Germans laid the plans while Estonians laid the bricks".

At a general level, we can state that post-communist transformations have deepened rather than filled in the gap between urban areas and rural areas. Many cities, especially the capital ones, have had their status upgraded. From being provincial and peripheral cities of the Soviet Union, they now have become centers of political power as well as important venues for economic and cultural activities (Kliimask 1997). As a result, the economic and social differences between capital cities and other cities, and even more so between cities and rural areas have been accentuated. In many cases the latter suffer from stagnation and underdevelopment (Pichler-Milanovitch 1997).

Lithuania's urban network is less centralized around dominating nodes than Estonia's and Latvia's, due to Lithuania's ambiguous position in relation to the Baltic sea and to Central Europe. Vilnius does not dominate the national context the way Riga and Tallinn do, whereas Tallinn and Riga are the political, cultural and economic hubs of their respective states (Vareikis 1997).

By the mid-1990s, Estonia was divided politically into two parts: a not very extensive "centre" comprising Tallinn and Tartu and their immediate hinterlands, and the remaining part of the republic (Raitviir 1996). A quiet but long-lasting rivalry makes itself felt between Tallinn and Tartu. Tallinn is winning new jobs at the expense of other Estonian regions, since the increase manifests itself in the service sector, and this sector gravitates near potential clients—ie, near Tallinn, where nearly one third of the national population live and where an estimated half of the country's economic potential is located (Kliimask 1997). Recently, however, several high-tech companies, the Baltic Defence College as well as Estonia's Education ministry established themselves in Tartu. Huang (1999) emphasizes that although "the development of other cities than Tallinn is surely a healthy sign", "much work remains to be done to develop the north-eastern industrial cities of Narva and Kohtla-Järve<sup>12</sup> and well as the more rural southern towns of Viljandi and Valga".<sup>13</sup>

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12 The unemployment rate in Narva in the early 1990s was about 50 % (*The Baltic Independent*, February 19, 1993).

13 Mel Huang, "The Emergence of Tartu", *Central Europe Review*, vol 1 nr 13, September 20, 1999.



The rural-urban gap, as well as the imbalance between cities, are most conspicuous in Latvia. In February 2000, while the country's lowest jobless rate (4.2 %) was in the state capital Riga, it hovered at about 28 % in the city of Rezekne.<sup>14</sup> The city of Daugavpils, which is the second largest in the country, is dominated by industrial plants which made sense in the all-Soviet economy, but do not anymore. Lieven (1994) notices that divisions along class lines were already very apparent in Daugavpils in the early 1990s. The collapse of heavy industry in the Eastern part of the country and the privatization of agriculture have led to the vanishing of a whole range of social landscapes. So far nothing has come to replace the "kolkhoze ties" which the collective farming system had bred. People in the rural areas of Eastern Latvia generally live far away from each other, and small schools, community centers and social activities no longer exist. Symptomatically, while in the West most suicides are committed in big cities, in Latvia it is the other way around.

## 2 – *Public Places*

Upon recovering independence, Balts inherited an organisation of municipal power which had been introduced in the last years of Soviet power and which based itself on a system of local authorities responsible to the higher levels of hierarchy. Streips (1998) emphasizes that when the centralised Soviet system collapsed, "local governments inherited a range of responsibilities and obligations somehow by default". Strictly speaking, there weren't such things as municipal property, or even municipal budgets. The local governments now active in the Baltic countries had to be created from scratch.

The reform of local governments generated controversies in the three Baltic states throughout the 1990s regarding the appropriate level of centralisation/decentralisation. Shortly after the reestablishment of independence, decentralising measures were taken but, as central governments became more firmly institutionalised, they incrementally began to reclaim functions for them, which led to the protest of local governments (Sta-

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14 *The Baltic Times*, February 5, 2000.

ras 1998; Streips 1998). Streips stresses that in general, local governments “perceive the central government as a centralising force while the central government genuinely sees itself as decentralising”. Apparently, there is still a tendency, inherited from the Soviet system, to view municipalities as executors of centrally made decisions. Staras (1998) stresses that in any case, Lithuanian political parties have generally shown little interest in local reform. Although laws on local governments do exist today, supporting legislation has not always been adopted, which perpetuates a certain confusion about exactly what local governments are supposed to do. Still today, many city government functions are actually mandates from the state (Pichler-Milanovitch 1997).

Therefore, it is only fair to say that whatever local governments exist today are, in due logic, not always well equipped to implement the radical reforms decided at the state level (like privatization, property restitution, school reform and land reform), nor to manage the social problems linked to these reforms (Marana 1997). That makes it tempting for national governments to shift the blame for reform problems onto local governments.

Vast dissimilarities exist between the financial possibilities of local governments (interview Valimäe 1998), but Baltic municipalities generally find themselves in a vicious circle of insufficient resources and low popularity. Many city governments have neither the authority nor the financial capacity to undertake activities aimed at stimulating investments in order to sustain employment (Pichler-Milanovitch 1997). It is also hard for them to fund local schools and to distribute social security payments. The poverty of many residents, notably in rural areas, affects the resources of municipalities in different ways. Many dwellers in public housing, for instance, cannot afford to pay bills for rent or even for basic utility services. The mayor of Daugavpils, for instance, once acknowledged that only a quarter of the inhabitants did pay the rent, heating or electric bills.<sup>15</sup> As a result, local governments at times get themselves cut off from utility services. Many fall into debt or even face bankruptcy, waiting for a bailout from the government. In 2001, Huang noticed that

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15 *The Baltic Independent*, January 29, 1993.

in Estonia, “once every two weeks, some scandal or budget crisis erupts in some local community”.<sup>16</sup>

Poverty also makes it difficult for municipalities to offer decent salaries to their employees and thus to attract competent manpower.<sup>17</sup> Corruption seems to be rife at the local than at the national level (interview Linderfalk 1998). Property issues are dealt with locally, and national officials as well as top officials of larger towns are generally under more public scrutiny (Huang, art.cit). Streips (1998) sees as a symptom the fact that, in the Latvian local government elections of 1994, the nomination periods had to be extended in some districts, because no one could be found to run.

### *3 – Private Places*

As seen in chapter IV, the Soviet kind of city planning entailed physical changes in Baltic cities, notably through the development of entirely new residential areas built around by and large unharmed pre-war cores. Baltic residential districts thus became more heterogeneous: some had Soviet standards while others by and large kept their own, basically pre-war identity (Marana 1997). The new areas were so different in scale, style and technology that some authors speak of new cities altogether, built and inhabited by a new, different society (Roze 1997). These housing developments were, as Csagoly<sup>18</sup> puts it, “the grand achievements of communist central planning”. Most got built in the 1960s and 1970s. Today, they are the home of a majority of inhabitants in the Baltic area. Almost two-thirds of the Riga dwellers live in such high-rise apartment

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16 Mel Huang, “Carving out a new Estonia”, *Central Europe Review*, vol 3 nr 2, January 15, 2001.

17 The exception to that rule are the three state capitals, whose Councils act as important chambers of power, and where careers can be more lucrative than in the national service. On the use of the Tallinn City Council as a springboard to national power, see notably Mel Huang, “The politics of intrigue”, *Central Europe Review*, vol 2 nr 37, October 30, 2000.

18 Paul Csagoly, “Post-com pre-fab”, *Central Europe Review*, vol 1 nr 25, December 13, 1999.

buildings, hardly attractive but where, Marana (1997) notices, the standard of amenities is often higher than the Latvian average. The trouble is that, given these buildings' average life span of 20 to 30 years, many are now entering the stage at which damage becomes irreparable (Csagoly art.cit).

Ownership reforms have been carried out in the three Baltic states. They aim at restoring the rights of former owners. It is done through either replacement (in the case of land), compensation or restitution (Rajevska 1998). Restitution has proven especially tricky. It raises "difficult questions of the actual restoration of nationalized property, the fate of plundered properties, the rights of the titular owners of such property, issues of dual and conflicting ownership, and much more".<sup>19</sup> In many cases, property restitution turned into a vicious circle. Pre-1940 buildings were given back to previous owners (or their eligible parties) who eventually proved unwilling or unable to invest in the property, not even for its basic maintenance. Soviet-era tenants would in turn declare themselves unwilling or unable to pay rents or even utility bills in a residence that becomes increasingly decrepit (ibid). In Soviet times, rent expenditures represented a small fraction of the average household income, and today low-income households often cannot face the increase. Whence an increase in eviction-related civil court cases (Marana 1997).

Soviet housing legislation got repelled after independence. The network of Soviet housing cooperatives got reorganized according to condominium principles, which gave members of these cooperatives with full ownership of their dwellings (Marana 1997). Today, the majority of dwellings in the Baltic countries are privately-owned. In Tallinn, for instance, the share of privately-owned housing reached about 80 % of the total housing stock in the second half of the 1990s (Loogma 1997). In the three Baltic states, a strong demand for single-family housing and 1-to-3 storey housing makes itself felt (Roze 1997). But currently, new construction projects receive little bank credit, due to the instability of the Baltic economies and the fragility of the Baltic banking systems. A lot of banks show simply no interest in financing individual housing construction projects (Marana 1997). The lack of elbow space that was pervasive in Soviet times has not disappeared.

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19 Mel Huang, "Retrieving stolen property", *Central Europe Review*, vol 2 nr 6, February 14, 2000.

#### *4 – Third Places*

The Soviet-time residential suburban areas mentioned above play an ambiguous civic role today. They inform people's mental images of contemporary city life, but on the other hand the social fabric in these areas shows "signs of disintegration rather than integration and cohesion" (Marana 1997). Third places in the form of social and commercial spaces were not adequately incorporated into the urban fabric when these housing projects were built, give or take a handful of shops and schools. Public services and recreation facilities remain poorly developed today, which results in a minimal public life.

So far, the increased social differentiation generated to the shift to market economy has only weakly translated itself into a new residential stratification in Baltic cities.

In the USSR, the impact of the social structure on urban space was not very significant in any case, in the sense that large ghettos or radically disreputable districts were clearly less frequent occurrences than in West European and North American cities. More or less attractive urban districts did exist, of course, but residential segregation tended to take place within the buildings themselves rather than between different parts of town (the higher social groups faced the street, while lower ones lived in smaller dwellings facing the backyard) (Pichler-Milanovitch 1997). Loogma (1997) emphasizes, for instance, that Tallinn in 1990 had no ethnic-based ghettos nor typical lower-class areas close to the city centre. The only truly run-down areas, she writes, were "hostels where unskilled workers from other parts of the USSR concentrated". Such buildings, like in other Baltic cities, were geographically scattered throughout the urban fabric and did not by themselves constitute large-scale enclaves of poverty.

In general, economic stratification has taken place faster than spatial relocation. Urban stratification along social lines is only in its initial stages in the Baltic states. In other words, no clear divisions between upper class, middle class and poor residential districts can be observed (Marana 1997). It means that Baltic residential areas are still, by and large, inhabited by a mix of people with different levels of income, social status and nationality. While that is certainly positive from a civic point of view, it comes partly from negative reasons: incrementally, the environment and reputation of various areas are becoming more important for the choice of residence (Loogma 1997), but many people who would like to move

out cannot, due to economic reasons. Those who are comparatively better off have been so far the most mobile. Loogma links her finding to what she views as a general lack of clearly defined social identities. Little correlation seems to exist between income and class identity. Whatever identity-creating processes exist tend to work top-down: “the upper strata have been the first to develop new identities” (ibid).

So far, then, the role of third places in the Baltic cities has been influenced less by a geographical redistribution of city districts along social lines (still weak) than by policies decided at the national level. Among these is the process of rehabilitation and revitalization of old historical centres, as part of the general effort of creation of symbolic national images aimed at making a clean break with the Soviet experience. Beside favouring tourism, the revival of Tallinn’s Hanseatic past, for instance, or the celebrations, in 2001, of the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of Riga, have the effect of pushing the symbolic East-West boarder further East (Åberg 1997). When combined with increasing demand for office and retail space in central locations (Pichler-Milanovitch 1997) that rehabilitation process might have the effect of making centrally-located dwellings unaffordable to lower-income strata. Such dwellings often provide great “gentrification” potential (Vilnius’s Užupis district is a case in point). Baltic inner-city areas tend to decline in population. They are in the process of getting transformed from residential to office and commercial areas (Pichler-Milanovitch 1997). As a whole, third places are infinitely more numerous in Baltic cities today than in Soviet times, and that is in itself a positive phenomenon. But the risk, in the long run, is that many Baltic cities will give the picture of well-off historical kernels—with restaurants, hotels, shops, banks, and prices catching up with the West—surrounded by a sea of deprivation cast in concrete.

## **II – The Emergence Of Political Spaces**

### **A – Institutional Balances in the Making**

The three Baltic republics are parliamentary democracies where government is responsible to parliament. All three parliaments are unicameral and elected for four-year terms on the basis of proportional representation, with qualifications for Lithuania: of the 141 members of the *Seimas*,

71 are directly elected by popular vote in single-seat constituencies while 70 are elected by proportional representation. Latvia's *Saeima* has 100 members, and Estonia's *Riigikogu* 101. The systems in Latvia and Estonia are more strongly parliamentary than Lithuania's. Latvia and Estonia have a Prime Minister as head of government and an executive president as head of state,<sup>20</sup> while Lithuania opted for a semi-presidential system—a label made official by a ruling of the Lithuanian Constitutional Court of 10 January 1998.<sup>21</sup>

Lithuania's president gets directly elected by the citizenry, while the other two get elected by the countries' parliaments, through secret ballots, for a maximum of two successive terms. The Lithuanian president appoints and dismisses the Prime Minister following the parliament's approval. He can dissolve parliament. So far the *Seimas* has encroached upon the dominant political role and resisted every effort to swing the political centre from the legislative to the executive branch (Lukosaitis 1998). By and large, the Lithuanian president has stronger powers than his Estonian and Latvian counterparts.

Estonia's president gets elected by two successive ballots in the *Riigikogu*. The first ballot needs a majority of 2/3—so far, it has never happened—then the second ballot is a runoff between the two top candidates. In 1999, the Estonian parliament rejected an attempt to introduce direct presidential elections and to put the issue to a referendum. The bill to change the constitution had been put forth by the Centre Party, whose ambitious and controversial leader Edgar Savisaar is one the leading contenders for the post. The issue looks bound to reappear sooner or

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20 The three Baltic presidents at the time of this writing are : in Lithuania, Valdas Adamkus (since 4 February 1998 ; next planned election in 2003) ; in Estonia, Arnold Rüütel (since September 2001, after Lennart Meri's second mandate came to an end. Meri got first elected, against Rüütel, on 5 October 1992 and was reelected in September 1996); in Latvia, Vaira Vike-Freiberga, after Guntis Ulmanis's two successive tenures (since 8 July 1999 ; next planned election June 2003)

21 The term semi-presidential was coined by Duverger in order to characterise the French Fifth Republic. The Lithuanian president has more limited powers than the French one. He has no formal opportunities to directly lead the work of government (although the constitution mentions it).

later, given that a majority of Estonians do support the prospect of direct presidential elections. The Estonian president's role is largely ceremonial, but it carries powers that include the right to appoint the prime minister, to return legislation to parliament for reconsideration (i.e., delaying its implementation) and to declare a state of emergency. The influence which former president Lennart Meri exerted on Estonian politics throughout the 1990s came from the man's personality and competence rather than from his formal attributions.<sup>22</sup> He often complained that he had too few opportunities to directly address the nation and made a full use of his three annual speeches (New Year's Day, Independence Day and Victory Day).

Latvia's president gets elected by the *Saeima*, by a simple majority of 51 votes in the 100-member Parliament. The evolution of the Latvian presidency has been comparable to the Estonian one, in the sense that Guntis Ulmanis, who held the post from 1993 to 1999, established the president's office as an effective and active player on the domestic political scene<sup>23</sup> as well as in the international arena, although his actual role certainly exceeded the presidency's formal powers. Penikis (2000) stresses that Ulmanis used the presidential initiative (i.e., the right to propose legislation) and the suspensive veto (the right to send a bill back to parliament for consideration) "far more vigorously than his predecessors in the 1920s",<sup>24</sup> and that Ulmanis's successor Vaira Vike-Freiberga shows no sign of reversing that trend.

As a whole, the relation between the executive and the legislative branches seems more "routinized" now in Latvia and in Estonia than in Lithuania, not least because the Lithuanian constitution makes room for complicated three-way battles. The Lithuanian president, notably, can

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22 Meri "earned a reputation at home and abroad for being a wise academic-minded statesman of the grand old days of statesmen". (Mel Huang, "There's something about Meri" CER vol nr 24, March 8, 1999).

23 Mel Huang, "Latvia's outgoing president", *Central Europe Review*, vol 0 nr 39, June 21, 1999. On Ulmanis's successor Vaira Vike-Freiberga, see Mel Huang, "Latvia's new president: not a moment too soon", *Central Europe Review*, vol 1 nr 3, 12 July 1999.

24 The comparison makes full sense given that the basic framework of Latvian statehood today is the pre-Soviet (1922) constitution.



only appoint or dismiss ministers on the recommendation of the Prime Minister, but parliament can also dismiss individual ministers. The personality of *Seimas* chairman Vytautas Landsbergis also plays a decisive role (interview de Suremain 1995). When Landsbergis returned as chairman in the fall of 1996, he conceived of his role similar to 1991, when he first held the position and was seen as the *de facto* head of state. At that time, the country still had no fully functioning presidency. Not so in 1996. Landsbergis consequently found himself at loggerheads with president Brazauskas. Feuds began immediately after Brazauskas's successor Valdas Adamkus became president in January 1998, although—or maybe because—he and Landsbergis belong to the same political party. Since then, Landsbergis has been trying to water down the powers of the presidency (whereas he used to push for a strong executive in the early 1990s, as long as he believed he would get the job). Landsbergis's personality and *de facto* influence are such that his personal agenda often supersedes the tasks of the government,<sup>25</sup> thereby creating a tense relationship between the two “heads of state” which at times leaves the Prime Minister in the shade.<sup>26</sup>

This being said, the three Baltic institutional frameworks are in place, with the presidents acting as stabilizing forces. They are endorsed by a majority of people. As in the 1920s, each Baltic country now spawns multiple political parties tied to interest groups and led by strong personalities (Clemens 2001:56) but, as opposed to the 1920s, post-independence hardship has not led voters to seek comfort in authoritarian leadership. Dissatisfied voters can and do vote incumbents out of office, and incumbents do actually leave office once they are voted out. Thus we have a situation where, first, democratic institutions exist and, by and large, work

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25 Two recent examples: in 1999, Landsbergis pushed through a bill preventing former KGB personnel from working in a variety of public and private sector jobs. The same year, the designation of a government ombudsman was seriously delayed because Landsbergis voted down president Adamkus's candidate Kestutis Lapinskas (Mel Huang, “Landsbergis versus the KGB”, *Central Europe Review*, vol 0 nr 29, April 12, 1999, “Private sector lustration”, *Central Europe Review*, vol 0, nr 38, June 14, 1999, “War of words explodes”, *Central Europe Review*, vol 0, nr 31, April 26, 1999).

26 Mel Huang, “Who runs Lithuania?”, *Central Europe Review*, vol x nr 19, February 1, 1999.

and, second, the demand for undemocratic rule is low among citizens. The weak link in the civic chain comes rather from the political parties themselves.

## **B – The Weakness of Baltic Political Parties**

Baltic parties have been rather successful in formulating goals (liberal market economy, integration into European structures), but so far they have had less success in acting as vehicles of socialization and mobilization. The Baltic party systems are in place, but parties remain weak.

So far they have neither developed complex structures nor attracted a lot of members. Almost all are still relatively new. Some of the largest among them gained the formal status of political parties only after several years had passed since the reestablishment of independence.<sup>27</sup> In Latvia, by 1995, only 12 out of 42 parties had over 200 members (Kalnins 1995). In the first years after the reintroduction of independence, Baltic parties would often change their names and leaders as they split, separated, fragmented and then merged into new political formations. Therefore, it is hard to draw an overall picture of the evolution of Baltic parties over the 1990s decade without paying what would otherwise seem to be an inordinate amount of attention to the shifts and turns of the careers of prominent party members themselves. Ostrovska (1996) stresses that in Latvia, some highly visible politicians have managed to be members of three or four different parties since the return to independence.

In that country, at the first post-Soviet elections in 1993, the electoral coalitions actually reflected the four main factions in the Supreme Council (Soviet-born, but which had survived so far). Most party programmes offered a similar mixture of parliamentary democracy, individual rights, rule of law, free market, social responsibility. Most had no apparatus to help them and struggled to get funds. Few made their funding public.<sup>28</sup> Party fragmentation has favoured the appearance of specific but

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27 In Latvia for instance, Latvia's Way became registered as a party in 1993, and For Fatherland and Freedom in 1995.

28 *The Baltic Independent*, IV-161, 14 May 1993.

short-lived movements gathered around one person.<sup>29</sup> In 1994, Lieven wrote that Latvian parties were “by and large no such things but simply groups of individuals gathered around particular leaders, slogans or interests”. According to him, they had “no party organisation, no structure, no registered membership no policymaking bodies and most emphatically no party discipline” (Lieven 1994:215). Two years later Dreifelds (1996:8) found Latvian parties “malleable, shifting, fractious and constantly dividing”.

Today, although the worst days of party fragmentation are arguably over and party systems are incrementally getting stabilised, including in Latvia (Clemens 2001), Baltic parties suffer rather from a lack of clear-cut ideological divides between them.

### 1 – *The Formation of Party Systems in the Baltics*

The formation of political parties in the Baltic states between 1987 and the early 1990s was rough terrain. Raitviir (1996) even contends that the soil for the evolution of political parties was less fertile than it was in the early 1920s. In Soviet times up to Gorbachev, the creation of independent political movements in the Baltic republics was unthinkable. Thus it was very difficult for intellectual loners in the Baltics to convey the truth to their compatriots. The situation in Poland or, indeed, Russia with its strong *samizdat* tradition, were different (Samalavicius 1994).

#### a – *The Rise and Fall of Lithuania’s Bipolar Party System*

Lithuania differs from the two other Baltic republics to the extent that the two main actors of the Singing Revolution of 1986–1990 managed

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29 Joachim Siegerist for instance, in spite of his not speaking Latvian (he is a German with Latvian roots) and his having been sentenced to an 18-month prison term by a Hamburg court for instigating hatred against gypsies in Germany, enjoyed a few years of relative electoral success and media exposure in Latvia in the first half of the 1990s before receding from the scene. Siegerist lost his seat in the Latvian Parliament in 1995 because he had made light of the rules that say that MPs must attend over one-half of the regularly scheduled sessions. His Popular Movement for Latvia (TKL, *Tautas kustība Latvijai*) gained only 1,7 % of the votes in the last elections in 1998, thereby failing to make the 4 % hurdle. On the Siegerist phenomenon, see *The Baltic Independent*, April 30, 1993 and September 1, 1995, as well as *The Baltic Observer*, April 21, 1994.

to keep their respective cores intact throughout the 1990s. It had a relatively stable, bipolar party system throughout the 1990s, due not least to its mixed electoral system which, in effect, has been a way to give the biggest parties the ability to hold the most seats.

On the right, the conservative Homeland Union, heir to the independentist Popular Front *Sajudis*, dominated;<sup>30</sup> on the left, the LDDP (former Communist Party) did; in between were the smaller parties like the Polish Union (*Lenku Sajunga*), the Christian Democrats (*Krikscioniu Demokratu Sajunga*) and many others.

The Homeland Union was and still is the province of the already-mentioned Vytautas Landsbergis, clearly one of the most intriguing figures of the post-communist political landscape. Hastily selected as “the representative national Lithuanian hero” by the West’s media during the high point of the independentist struggle, a kind of Lithuanian Havel if one wishes, Landsbergis soon disoriented his interlocutors because of his relentless defence of Lithuanian nationhood in the face of globalising trends and because of his authoritarian leanings. His star thus quickly set, and today he no longer has the international exposure he once enjoyed. But his mediatic twist of fate reflects as much the complexity of the character as the media’s need to present foreign cultures in ways that are immediately comprehensible in Western terms, with “democratic” and/or “progressive” forces opposing the forces of darkness. Landsbergis does not fit nicely in. Although his days of glory are arguably behind him, he is not likely to vanish from the Lithuanian political scene altogether.

Within the Homeland Union, the main cleavage seems to have been the one between the members of the Vilnius academic intelligentsia (among whom Landsbergis) and the more radical nationalists from Kaunas. The former were overrepresented at first, but the first half of the 1990s witnessed a gradual takeover and radicalisation of the party by representatives from Kaunas, although the takeover was never complete.

On the left side of the parties’ spectrum, within the LDDP, the power struggle took place between the “philosophers” (i.e. intellectuals, mostly

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30 The Lithuanian popular front *Sajudis* was officially renamed Homeland Union (*Tevynes sajunga*) in 1993, but people generally call it the Conservatives in everyday life.

from Vilnius university) and the “apparatchiks” (i.e. former functionaries of the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party). The latter incrementally took over, up to the point where the LDDP fraction in Parliament remained the only key position still held by the “philosophers”.<sup>31</sup> The general preference in the public for the LDDP’s leader Brazauskas over Landsbergis reflects a general pattern in the former Soviet republics: while the Communist Party itself had become highly unpopular, many people continued, in many cases, to prefer individual Communist leaders<sup>32</sup> over the leaders of the opposition (Lieven 1994).

The era of partisan bipolarity began to show signs of weakness in 1996. It has now come to an end. On 27 October 1999, Prime minister Rolandas Paksas resigned due to his disagreement with the signature with the American company Williams of an agreement on investment in the Lithuanian oil industry. Paksas got replaced by Andrius Kubilius, who between 1992 and 1996 acted as head of the Conservative faction in the *Seimas*. At the municipal elections of March 20, 2000, voters expressed disaffection for both the LDDP and the Homeland Union.<sup>33</sup> The biggest winner in that election was the New Union (Social liberals) led by Arturas Paulauskas (16 % of votes), while the Lithuanian Peasants Party came second in coalition with Christian Democrats. The Homeland Union managed to retain 10 % of the votes, thanks probably to the symbolic weight of that party, which somehow continues to symbolise Lithuanian independence whatever it does and regardless of Landsbergis’s faux pas.

The subsequent legislative elections of October 2000 came as a confirmation of dilution of Lithuania’s bipolar party system. Today, there are about 40 political parties in Lithuania (and this in a country of less than 4 million inhabitants). Of these, 27 participated in the 2000 election, building 15 lists (either by forming lists on their own or by creating coalitions and common lists). Lithuania is now ruled by a coalition of four parties of centre-right, namely the Liberal Union (*Liberalu sąjunga*,

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31 *The Baltic Independent*, October 21, 1994.

32 Especially those who, like Brazauskas or Estonia’s Arnold Rütitel, escaped responsibility for government during the highly delicate 1990–1992 period.

33 In Lithuanian local elections, people vote for parties and a short-list of candidates, but it is the local *taryba* (town council) that elects a mayor from within its ranks.

led by former Vilnius mayor Rolandas Paksas), the New Union (*Naujoji sąjunga*, led by Arturas Paulauskas), the Center Union (*Centro sąjunga*) of Romualdas Ozolas and the Modern Christian Democratic Union (*Moderniuju krikščionių demokratų sąjunga*) of Vytautas Bogušis.

All these parties save the Center Union are newcomers on the political stage. That coalition of parties campaigned under the label of “New Policy Bloc” and with the non-official patronage of president Valdas Adamkus. It has a total of 67 seats in Parliament out of 141, and thus needs the individual support of some more deputies in order to secure the majority of 71 seats. Today, 14 parties have seats in the Lithuanian parliament, which means that as many as 10 of them, including the largest one (the social democrats, 51 seats out of 141) belong formally in the opposition, or have nothing but more or less strenuous links with the ruling coalition. The Lithuanian party system has now entered a process of recomposition whose outcome remains, at this juncture, unclear.<sup>34</sup>

#### b – Latvia

Latvia distinguishes itself from the other two Baltic republics in that its independentist Popular Front, although no less heterogeneous than the Lithuanian *Sąjūdis* and the Estonian *Rahvarinne*, survived longer, both as a movement and a parliamentary faction. Lieven (1994) sees two reasons to it: first, there was little chance of any faction replacing it. Secondly, given that creating state institutions and voting a constitution proved a more drawn-out process in Latvia, people’s awareness of the country’s greater fragility maintained trust in the Popular Front as the only truly independentist political formation.

Another specificity of Latvia is that, even more than in Lithuania and Estonia, many of the persons who gained seats in parliament are people who were members of the Soviet establishment, or who had achieved at least a certain official status in Soviet society (Lieven 1994). They displayed a higher organisational capacity than their Lithuanian and Estonian counterparts. That applies both to people sincerely dedicated to indepen-

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34 On the small radical Lithuanian parties, see Mel Huang, “Lithuania’s loons take off”, *Central Europe Review*, vol 2 nr 16, April 25, 2000.

dence and to persons with only superficial commitments to it. Following the putsch attempt in Moscow in 1991, Latvia banned the Latvian Communists Union, the Veterans Rights Defence Union and the Russian Citizens Association of Latvia, i.e. shadowy organisations with roots in the anti-independence Interfront of the late 1980s.<sup>35</sup> Yet, while Soviet loyalists just about vanished from the scene in Lithuania and Estonia (at least within parliaments), in Latvia they reorganised themselves into a fraction called Equal Rights which, at least during the first half of the 1990s, had about one fourth of deputies.<sup>36</sup>

Since the restoration of independence Latvia has had only one majority government, in 1995.<sup>37</sup> In 1999, the country had 48 registered political parties, out of which 6 are represented in parliament today.<sup>38</sup> The latest Latvian elections at this juncture took place on 3 October 1998.

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35 *The Baltic Independent*, October 8, 1993.

36 As seen in Chapter IV, part of the Party elite in Estonia and Latvia consisted of nominal Estonians or Latvians whose families got repatriated from Russia in the late 1940s and who were strongly loyal to the Soviet regime. While in Estonia, such cadres either quickly adjusted to the new independentist winds or disappeared from the political scene altogether, Latvia's "imported" elite comprised articulate, influential figures, who consistently fought against Latvian independence and had a hard time to accept it afterwards (Karklins 1994 :43). Among them are former Riga mayor Alfreds Rubiks, who got an eight-year prison sentence for supporting the January 1991 Soviet crackdown in Riga but was released from jail in November 1997 for good behaviour, and the "black colonel" Viktor Alksnis who, in a memorable *Foreign Policy* article in November 1991, warned for impending catastrophe should the USSR cease to exist (NB how he was able to get his article published in *Foreign Policy* in the first place I might never know), and who, a year later, predicted that the whole Baltic region would soon return to Russia because, he claimed, "it is an illusion that the Baltic republics can survive" (*The Baltic Independent*, November 6, 1992).

37 Mel Huang, "Stability still not in style", *Central Europe Review*, vol 0 nr 17, January 19, 1999.

38 These are : the People's Party (*Tautas partija*, conservative), 24 seats ; Latvia's Way (*Latvijas cels*, liberal), 21 seats; the alliance Fatherland and Freedom/LNNK (*Tevzeme un Brīvibai/LNNK*, national conservative), 17 seats ; the Popular Concord Party (*Tautas saskanas partija*, progressive centrist), 16 seats;the Latvian Social Democratic Union (*Latvijas Sociāldemokrātu apvienība*), 14 seats ; and the New Party (*Jauna partija*, centrist), 8 seats. The Democratic Party Saimnieks now has become marginalized. It was very much a vehicle for former members of the communist establishment, including its leader Ziedonis Ceveris (interview Muiznieks 1997).

The pendulum swung to the left, but given that “leftist parties” favour market economy and EU adhesion, the change in majority has not led to a significant changes in governmental policies on these issues. The largest parties in Latvia (the People’s Party, Latvia’s Way and For Fatherland and Freedom) have very similar platforms over key issues such as citizenship, privatization, foreign relations, language and budgetary matters.

Since the restoration of independence, the most successful party is Latvia’s Way (interview Muiznieks 1997). It has participated in every government since the first fully general elections in 1993, leading several of them. It was founded as liberal centrist movement, which brought together an “odd combination of former Soviet-era bosses, emigré activists, lawyers, academics and the ever-loved *biznesmeni*”.<sup>39</sup> The most recent major party is the People’s Party, organized by—and, to a large extent, around—Andris Skele in the spring of 1998 between his two successive stints as Prime Minister.

As opposed to Lithuania and Estonia, Latvia has an active branch of National Bolsheviks. The National Bolsheviks are one of the various extremist right-wing groups that operate in Russia, and openly challenge the independence of countries like, precisely, Latvia. The National Bolsheviks’ Latvian branch comprises mainly young, unemployed and disenfranchised males – very much, as Huang puts it, a “textbook case of extremism”. Latvia’s National Bolsheviks stem from the country’s “lost generation”, who finished their compulsory education around the time the Latvian language was made official and thus were never pushed into learning it. Their extremist behaviour becomes especially salient around independence day celebrations (interview Muiznieks 1998). It could easily snowball and get out of control.<sup>40</sup>

### c – Estonia

When the USSR acknowledged Estonia’s independence in 1991, the Estonian Parliament was loosely divided in four groups, of which one

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39 Mel Huang, “Is this really Latvia’s Way?”, *Central Europe Review*, vol 0 nr 20, February 8, 2000.

40 See also Mel Huang, “The lost boys”, *Central Europe Review*, vol 2, nr 41, November 27, 2000.



was Russian and three Estonian (Lieven 1994:278). The independentist umbrella organisation Popular Front *Rahvarinne*, which dominated the political and social scene, had to face the same dilemma as its Latvian and Lithuanian counterparts: either it would remain “the” national movement and retain its dominant position in the short term, albeit at the risk of future fragmentation and dilution, or it would become a party among others, which means becoming smaller and relinquishing claims to represent the whole nation (Lieven 1994:280). The Estonian Popular Front dissolved itself on November 13, 1993, its chairman Edgar Savisaar saying it had achieved its aims.<sup>41</sup> By then, the blocks had cohered, and the Estonian political scene gave a picture of greater discipline than in the majority of post-communist countries (Lieven 1994 282).

Estonia’s electoral system distributes the vast majority of its seats by proportional representation, despite voting being at the level of single candidates. Regardless of the distribution of votes for candidates in an electoral district, for a party to gain seats via PR, the total vote for all its candidates in all 11 regions must reach 5 % of the national total. The most recent parliamentary elections at the time of this writing (early 2002) took place on 7 March 1999. The Centre Party (*Keskerakond*), headed by former prime minister Edgar Savisaar, won the most seats, but the three-member, centre-right opposition coalition comprising the Reform Party, the Moderates’ Party and the Pro Patria Union gained an overall majority between them (53 seats out of 101). The coalition in power<sup>42</sup> looked shaky but worked well until the resignation of Prime Minister Mart Laar (Pro Patria) in January 2002. Currently, 7 parties have seats in the Estonian parliament.<sup>43</sup>

Estonia’s political map is such that, as opposed to what happens in Lithuania and in Latvia, no one wants to be firmly established on the left wing. As a result, although Estonia’s party spectrum does have a left wing, there is little strength and unity among it. Left-wing parties move further

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41 *The Baltic Independent*, November 19, 1993.

42 It consisted of the Pro Patria Union (*Isamaliit*, conservatives), the Reform Party (*Reformierakond*, liberal), and the People’s Party (*Rahvaerakond Moodukad*, centrist).

43 Mel Huang, “The final stretch”, *Central Europe Review*, vol 0 nr 22, February 22, 1999.

and further to the centre and shudder at being labeled “left”. While Pro Patria dominates both the right wing,<sup>44</sup> the more centrist *Moodukad* is currently sidelined, and the opposition Centre party—so far the only party that could establish itself as the dominant left-wing force—has a problem with its leader Edgar Savisaar. Either a loved or hated individual, Savisaar polarises the Estonian public more than anyone else. He does bring in a lot of votes for his party, which is consistently the largest vote-winner in elections, albeit not large enough to rule each time. Savisaar’s big brother figure<sup>45</sup> attracts a relatively large cohort of loyal followers—a core 20 to 25 % of the electorate supports him, coming from the usual centre-left base: social activists, middle and lower-middle class, workers etc—but it also keeps other electors away from the Centre party. As a result, there is a void in the left wing of Estonia’s political spectrum.<sup>46</sup>

## 2 – *The Lack of Clear-cut Ideological Cleavages*

Most Baltic parties agree on the basic principles and targets of development as set by Western institutions. Not many of them, and indeed not many individual politicians either, can be said to represent the interests of any major group of people. As long as the independence struggle lasted, questions of daily management tended to recede in the background of preoccupations, and whoever could articulate the independentist position most boldly would have the moral edge. Came independence, in the area of economic and social policy, interparty differences have appeared as either nonexistent or, when they exist, as contradicting common (Western) wisdom. The political parties that appeared in the Baltic countries do not always fit nicely into the classic left-right scale, because of the coexistence of two political dimensions within the party spectrum: there is the so-called classic socio-economic dimension, and the nationalist dimension. No clear correlation exists between both.

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44 Pro Patria has large contingent of loyal voters, and gains popularity among the young and the new citizens of Russian origin. (Mel Huang, “Does Estonia have a left?”, *Central Europe Review*, vol 2 nr 13, April 3, 2000).

45 When he sat as the interior minister, Savisaar got implicated in a tape scandal which led to his resignation.

46 Mel Huang, “Does Estonia have a left?”, *CER*, vol 2 nr 13, April 3, 2000.

Some members of nominally rightist parties, although seldom letting their non-credentials become forgotten, and although being quite radical on questions of national independence and citizenship, may defend social programmes which are more reminiscent of Scandinavian social democracy than of Reaganomics. Conversely, formally left-wing politicians often defend free-market policies more vigorously than their nominally liberal or conservative counterparts do. That phenomenon seems most conspicuous in Lithuania. The Lithuanian right's skepticism of far-reaching privatization comes for a large part from—as it were, not quite unfounded—fears that LDDP members, many of whom held official positions in Soviet times, will eventually succeed in reaping the most interesting fruits of privatization for personal gain. The small size of the Baltic political elites makes itself seldom forgotten. Not a few decisions pertaining to privatization have been influenced by motivations linked to personal history and personal rivalry. The privatization of the *Literatu Svetaine* restaurant in Vilnius, for instance, knew many twists and turns, not least because it personally involved two heavyweights of Lithuanian politics, namely Vytautas Landsbergis and then-Prime minister Slezevicius.

The ideological filiations of parties or of individual politicians do not always tell us much about the ideological stances of today. Labels can be misleading, including the “former communist” one. Although the Soviet Communist Party was banned in all three Baltic states after the failure of the August 1991 coup, many of its members fanned out across the political spectrum and continued to play a prominent role in politics. And anti-communist credentials do not guarantee public competence. Former dissident Estonian Lagle Parek, for instance, became minister of the interior thanks to her anti-communist past, but got kicked out of government due to her failure to perform her duties as a minister and to tackle rising crime.<sup>47</sup>

The label “green” in the Baltics bears little of the left-wing ideological implications spontaneously attached to it in Western Europe. Several nationalist Baltic politicians, like Lithuania's Zigmantas Vaisvila, cut their political teeth in ecological protests during the first three years of Gorbachev

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47 *The Baltic Independent*, December 3, 1993.

(Lieven 1994). Green Baltic politicians often defend positions which bring them closer to the nationalist right of their own countries than to their nominal counterparts of Sweden or Germany.

Rather than economics or social policy, then, and beside intricate questions of personal history, ideological divisions between parties depend mostly from attitudes toward the pre-1940 republics and toward nationality. In Lithuania, where the issue of nationality has been less salient than in Latvia and Estonia, the evaluation of the country's historical past remains by and large the only distinguishable watershed between left and right-wing political parties (Donskis 1998:80). The Conservatives call for the reconstruction of social safety net, while the LDDP speaks about the need for a market economy, but otherwise they echo each other's rhetoric, including on normally divisive social issues. The Conservatives, for instance, have no clear position on abortion (they learnt from mistakes from the Polish right). More than a decade after the regaining of independence, the main Lithuanian parties are still divided by their relation to history, not by their politics. According to Racas (2000), being right-wing in Lithuania, first of all, means "being anti-Communist and being suspicious of everything related to Russia, while being left-wing means little more than being opposed to those who say they are right-wing. Because of these divisions, everybody in Lithuania who opposes the policy of the Conservatives, be it in the economy, education, health reform or even in the change of time zones (already changed twice in Lithuania, because it is right-wing to live under Brussels but not Moscow time, even if night then comes at three in the afternoon), is left-wing".<sup>48</sup>

The lack of clear-cut ideological divides between parties lies at the basis of the weakness of citizenship in the Baltic countries today, for several reasons: firstly, it makes it difficult for citizens to identify with any party. Ostrovska (1996) notices that in Latvia, no political party present in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> *Saeima* was elected on the basis of its social program; secondly, given the general ideological consensus between parties, political conflict gets reinvested into *ad hominem* attacks, whereby a worrying continuity can be observed with Soviet-time practices; finally, parties with very sim-

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48 Arturas Racas, "Calvin Klein and communism", *Central Europe Review*, vol 7 nr 27, July 10, 2000.

ilar socio-economic programmes, which in other settings would look almost bound to work together, have trouble cooperating due to divergences over nationality issues, or because of personal rivalries (Kalnins 1995). Latvians, for instance, had to put up with yet another minority government after the 1998 elections when the two leading parties—Latvia’s Way and the People’s Party—despite similar policy goals, failed to build a coalition because of the rivalry between their respective leaders Valdis Kristopans and Andris Skele. Kristopans eventually formed a minority centre-right government, which lasted only for a few months, upon which Skele formed a new minority centre-right government which proved short-lived as well.

### **C – The Uncertain Symbols of Citizenship**

The revolutions of 1989 were called revolutions of citizenship. They were the reappropriation of citizenship by people who had been deprived of it (Di Palma 1991). It was a political act. Today it is hard to figure out what, exactly, has been reappropriated.

Citizenship exists in relation with political power. Here, it is hard to escape an impression of symbolic void in the place where political power should be. Symbols play an indispensable role in the creation of an imagined political community, but the distinctive signs of the new system are still uncertain. For anyone who lived some time in one of the Baltic countries, and at the risk of caricature, it seems that the true symbol of political power is not the coat of arms, the national flag or the inaugural speech. It is the Audi V8 4.2L driven at top speed on one-way streets. Such noisy signs of “Westernness” play the role of collective tranquillizers. They are the living proof that, at least, *something* has changed. But what?

The three countries exhibit many similarities in elite patterns: “a considerable part of the elite who came into position after the regime change is recruited among former Communist Party members (though comparatively less in Lithuania than in Latvia and Estonia), but mostly they are not from the tainted top nomenclature from the Soviet period. They are the ambitious young generation who took their first steps in the Soviet hierarchy” (Steen 1997). The way Baltic political elites talk and act is thus informed by a double mental heritage, whose combination

varies of course between individuals: there is the psychological legacy of communism itself, and the psychological legacy of the escape from communism (interview Ozolas 1995).

In the first years of independence at least, there was, understandably, a certain general lack, varying of course between people, of any real sense of the need to respect democratic and parliamentary rules. The inexperience of the deputies coexisted with hangovers from the Soviet system designed to confine real legislative powers to the executive. In 1992, for instance, *Sajudis* deputies finding themselves in a minority decided to paralyse parliament by denying it the quorum to pass legislation. They would boycott individual votes and then hold separate meetings. Over controversial questions, parliaments could establish the “principles” on which a law was to be based, and then postpone the pain of passing the law itself for several months, which induced to continued legislative and individual irresponsibility. Lieven (1994) stresses that not only the population at large but even the politicians themselves were convinced of their right to continually criticize the government without suggesting alternatives. Writing about Lithuania, Krupavicius (1998) stresses that the protest discourse that hallmarked the days of the independentist struggle did not disappear from the political horizon after the reestablishment of national independence. On the contrary, according to him, it moved into dominant position in the domestic political stage, and finds nourishment in people’s frustration over the costs of reform policy.

But that might not be the most significant aspect of citizenship in the Baltics. More interesting for us here, is the shrinking of the politically and socially useful language. It is a direct legacy of the communist system (Siniavski 1988; Petersson 1992). Its effects can be observed directly in the kind of rhetoric certain politicians use, for instance when unruly elements in society are spontaneously called “hooligans” (which constructs them into outsiders, parasites living out of the fundamentally sound body of society), when the word “mafia” gets the status of an universal explanation of society’s ills, or when some Baltic politicians *really* cannot debate without calling each other a KGB informer.

The available array of rhetorical tools needed to formulate and negotiate still suffers from the use of certain words in the Soviet system. That the words “party” or “union” do not sound overly positively comes as a classic example. Other examples suggests that the idea that controversy

is a normal and desirable feature of a democratic system does not come as a matter of course, even among the highest-ranking politicians. In early 1995, when asked to comment on the oppositions' attacks against a financial embezzlement he was suspected of, the Lithuanian Prime Minister Slezevicius (LDDP) answered spontaneously "Well, this is what we have an opposition for".<sup>49</sup> All personal acrimony aside, such a statement from a Prime Minister can only lend credit to the idea that a political opposition is not something you are supposed to debate with on a routine basis. Progress exists, however: in 2000, amendments brought a degree of novelty into elections in Lithuania. Candidates now discuss issues together instead of delivering monologues. So far they had a choice, thus many used to pick up the most comfortable option (the monologues). That turned previous campaigns into tedious affairs which only 2 or 3 % of TV viewers would watch.<sup>50</sup>

As we saw in chapter IV, in *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Kundera describes the communist system as the kingdom of kitsch, a world in which answers are already given, which rules out any new questions (and with them the possibility of doubt, perplexity and irony). Latvian Prime minister Vilis Kristopans did just that in a remarkable 1999 interview.<sup>51</sup> Kristopans was asked about his relations with Aivars Lembergs, the mayor of Ventspils. Ventspils is a major commercial harbour managing the transit of goods between Western Europe and Russia, and it is by far Latvia's richest city in terms of per capita income. The transit business generates quick, high and uncontrollable benefits. Mayor Lembergs has been in charge since before independence, and has been easily reelected ever since, meeting next to no political opposition. In 1999, Latvia's largest daily newspaper *Diena* investigated about the personal links between mayor Lembergs and Prime Minister Kristopans. When asked about whether or not a certain

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49 *The Baltic Observer*, February 23, 1996. Prime Minister Slezevicius had used his influence to obtain double the normal interest rate on a deposit account at the Innovation Bank, and secretly withdrew his money two days before the government froze the bank's assets (*The Baltic Independent*, February 16, 1996). For the chronology of the Lithuanian banking crisis that led to the resignation of Slezevicius, see *The Baltic Independent*, January 12, 1996.

50 *The Baltic Times*, September 7, 2000

51 *The Baltic Times*, March 11, 1999.

meeting between him and Lembergs had taken place, Kristopans replied “*Diena* lies. Period”. *Diena* is the only major newspaper in Latvia that is not owned by the stock company Preses Nams, which is the largest printing and publishing group in the Baltics. A few months before that interview was given, the controlling interest of Preses Nams had been acquired by the stock company Ventspils Nafta, which is the leading crude oil and oil products transshipment company in the port of Ventspils, as well as in the whole Baltic Sea region. Ventspils is a school case of the development of the shadow economy in post-communist countries, and Lembergs a living embodiment of the capacity of some members of the ex-Soviet nomenklatura to secure political power at the local level and political links at the state level (Muiznieks 1997).<sup>52</sup>

These statements by two Baltic Prime Ministers ring in a way that reminds one of the Soviet-time perception of power: an adversary is not someone you’re supposed to discuss with, but to crush (Donskis 1998). The difference is that, today, personal rivalries and *ad hominem* attacks are no longer channeled through intern Communist Party manoeuvring or disciplinary measures. They are channeled by the Baltic judiciary systems, which are getting quickly overloaded. In many cases, discussions for or against certain political decisions—often in privatization matters—have turn into personal attacks which “logically” result in legal actions for libel. Resorting to the judiciary rather than to the political forum in order to sort out the validity of political decisions seems to be an attitude which is evenly distributed between the three Baltic states. Although that attitude, by itself, does not prevent policy-makers and bureaucracies from getting many things concretely done, it has deleterious effects on the quality of the public debate, and is all the more pernicious since the judiciary in the Baltics is still far from politically independent (interview Nutt 1999). Clemens (2001:57) bluntly states that “in the 1990s, Baltic

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52 On the sacking of Economy Minister Ainars Slesers (centre-left) by Kristopans, a few hours after Slesers launched accusations at Aivars Lembergs, see notably Mel Huang, ““They’re all paid off in cash, top offices and girls” Has the ugly truth about Latvian politics finally been revealed?” *Central Europe Review*, vol 0 nr 34, May 17, 1999. Slesers had publicly questioned whether Lembergs’s double position as mayor of Ventspils and government proxy over the company Ventspils Oil was a conflict of interest.



judicial systems were inefficient, and there were long delays in court hearings and the enforcement of decisions”.

Beside courts, response to criticism within the political intelligentsia often comes in terms of conspiracy theories, a variety of which circulate in the Baltic states today. Vakinin (1999) provides us with a rather plain definition of a conspiracy theory: it is, quite simply, the permanent quest for motives (“why did he do it, what did he try to achieve, why had he not chosen a different path, why here, why with us, why now, what can it teach us”).<sup>53</sup> Conspiracy theories in the Baltics today find reinforcement in the psychological legacy of the Soviet period, which was rife with conspiracy talk but also, and decisively, in the plain fact that conspiracy talk is easier and more attractive than hard thinking about political and economic reform. Then it becomes tempting to start your own conspiracy theory.<sup>54</sup>

The most well-known, and certainly most popular conspiracy theory, more or less equally shared by the three Baltic states, is the one that links criticism of the government’s action with communist nostalgia and former involvement in KGB networks. The question of the former connections of Estonian Centre Party leader Edgar Savisaar with the KGB, for instance, surfaces regularly.<sup>55</sup> Baltic politics throughout the 1990s were hallmarked by charges and counter-charges of KGB involvement (interview Landsbergis 1995).

Another kind of conspiracy theory, less well-known in the West, is the one which equates democratic rule with moral indifference and

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53 Sam Vakinin, *The Elders of Zion*, *Central Europe Review*, vol 1 nr 25, December 13, 1999.

54 *The Baltic Independent*, January 8, 1993.

55 In late 2000 for instance, revelations were made over an agreement signed in late 1991 between Estonian and Soviet security officials concerning the status of KGB agents. In exchange for files, equipment and arms from the local KGB branch, the document protects against the “harassment” of KGB officials by the Estonian state. The document surfaced during the court hearing of former KGB agent Sergei Bouchelovski, bidding to stay in Estonia after the Citizenship and Migration Department refused to extend his residence permit. Savisaar, who at the time led the independentist Popular Front, got allegedly involved in the conclusion of the agreement (Mel Huang, “KGB Skeleton in the Closet”, *Central Europe Review*, vol 2 nr 38, November 6, 2000).

ethical relativism. Although it is hard to know for sure, that theory seems to find more echo in Lithuania than in Latvia and Estonia. Siliauskas (1998), notably, studies elite attitude in interwar Lithuania (1918–1940) and concludes that the majority of the Lithuanian political elite, both on the left and on the right, rejected the notion of liberal democracy at that time. Smetona’s authoritarian regime, established by a coup in 1926, was responsible for the development of a new political discourse. It had nothing to do with the discursive strategies and practices of the multinational Lithuania of the Renaissance (Donskis 1998). Rather it was infomed by contempt for the West and its derivative phenomena (liberal democracy, capitalism and the bourgeoisie, secularisation, value pluralism). Such rhetoric got spread by Catholic Church-oriented journals like *Zidinys* (the hearth) or *Naujoji Romuva* (the new sanctuary), or in social-philosophical essays by authors like Antanas Maceina (Donskis 1998). According to Siliauskas (1998), the concrete political processes of democracy functioning in a hierarchic structure of government remained unanalysed, and the opportunity to modernise political thought was missed. The philosophical/ideological idiom of the interwar period is still very much alive in Lithuania. It is intertwined with the more modern discourse of European integration and liberal democracy. Donskis (1998) contends that, even today, liberal ideas are only capable of attracting an alternative creative/intellectual community consisting mainly of young academics. In short, liberal nationalism, which calls for critical questioning of one’s society and country in terms of universal and moral criteria, is condemned, in present-day Lithuania, to be relegated to the margins of societal consciousness and culture. The discontinuity of statehood and isolation under Soviet rule has bred a lack of self-irony and self-mirroring (Samalavicius 1994).

The above gives us a hint of why the political public space remains narrow although an impressive range of political, economic and social reforms have actually been carried out since the return to independence, and although signs of “Sovietness” are decreasing with time. In Soviet times, as we saw in Chapter IV, appeals to moral indignation, based upon a strong we/them, good/bad dichotomy, were ubiquitous in the slogans, newspapers and speeches which the Party lavished on the citizenry. They had the effect of promoting the specifically totalitarian conception of a human universe fully reconciled with itself, in which problems and controversies were not seen as logical components of any society but,

fundamentally, as anomalies. At the same time, under communism, the notion of common good became conflated with the slogans coming from the top, and thereby became as discredited as the institutions themselves, perceived as simple prolongations of the Party (Moïsi & Rupnik 1991). Today, like other post-communist societies, and to a degree which naturally varies between actors, Baltic societies seem to have trouble seeing their intern differentiation as normal, let alone desirable, and indeed compatible with the search for the common good. Self-representations (“the nation”, “civil society”, “the people”) remain largely unifying, whereas the institutions whose task it is to debate about and/or act for the common good—from political parties to administrations or armed forces—by definition imperfect and in a way divisive, are discredited.<sup>56</sup> That explains the apparently paradoxical fact that, while emerging from a dictatorship, post-communist citizens tend to spontaneously view the inevitable hesitations and messiness of democratic rule as proof positive that a democratic state is *weak*. Thus, on the one hand, the citizenry still expects a lot from institutions. On the other hand, it does not give to institutions the kind of elbow room they need to function. In a way, Baltic politicians are damned if they do and damned if they don’t.

Under the Soviet system, the political public space was deeply reorganized—or, more precisely, disorganized—not least at a symbolic level. The effects of that collapse are still powerful today. The most diehard of them may well be the pervasive notion that society is divided in “us” and “them”. We saw in Chapter IV that that dichotomy, although one of the pillars of the “communist mindset”, does not imply that one can view the communist system in terms of public submissiveness versus private opposition. The limit between the oppressors and the oppressed did not cut neatly between two distinct groups. It ran through every individual instead. Today, due no longer to communist secrecy but to political and social upheaval, not only is it still difficult for citizens to know who the social “them” actually are, but the clear normative idea of “our” goodness versus “their” badness has vanished itself. “They”, after all, run in open elections, and the clear notion of the “we” is lost. Under communism, “we” were oppressed, but “we” were morally right. This is what Han-

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56 On the situation in the military, see notably *The Baltic Observer*, June 23, 1994; RFE/RL Newline, October 22, 1998; RFE/RL Newline, December 28, 1998.

kiss (1994) calls the paradigm of the prisoner and the paradigm of the martyr: both roles, of course, are deeply unpleasant, but at least there is something morally gratifying in being a martyr. That feeling of innocence is lost now. Short of continued denial of the past regime, it is still hard to know who “we” are.

That situation pleads for the rehabilitation of the function of “involved spectator”, or “committed spectator” as defined by Aron (in Fumaroli 1992). Democracies ultimately rest upon the existence of independent voices and thoughts who act as watchdogs against both the state’s Machiavellian tendencies and civil society’s leanings toward voluntary enslavement. It is hard to know who can play this role in the Baltics today. Former dissidents have had difficulties outlasting independence. Professional journalists face severe financial constraints, and sometimes death threats. The capacity to formulate society’s problems may become the most important factor influencing the future evolution of citizenship.

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# CONCLUSION

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This study originated in an attempt to give the notion of citizenship a more central place in democratic theory, notably in the branch of democratic theory broadly known as transition studies. The aims of the study have been to operationalize the concept of citizenship as an analytical tool enabling us to approach the development of democracy in societies that so far lived in non-democratic systems. In so doing, the study has also aimed at assessing whether and how the major theories of citizenship dominating the social sciences today can be used as frameworks for the study of specifically post-communist citizenship. The Baltic countries have been used as a triple case study.

I found that the kind of citizenship now developing in the Baltic countries does not fit under a single heading. It is informed both by legacies from the Soviet period and by the specific conditions under which these societies are extracting themselves from the Soviet experience. Citizenship has been reframed both as a means to reject the Soviet experience, as a means to manage the concrete legacies of that experience, and as a necessary principle of collective democratic organisation. The republican theory of citizenship is useful to understand the workings of citizenship in the Soviet context, which was hallmarked by an absolute rationalisation of the relation between citizen and state. At the same time, we saw that radical republicanism was not all there was to the Soviet conception of citizenship. The rationalising ambitions of that conception were, to a surprising extent, corrected and, indeed, contradicted by a principle increasingly discussed today in debates about citizenship, at times being put forth as a means to, somehow, save liberal citizenship from itself, namely the principle of group-based rights. For mostly ideological reasons, the republican atomisation of the Soviet citizenry was counterbalanced by a complex array of collective divisions entrenched in law. That radical disconnection of citizenship and nationality, originally conceived of as an ideologically consistent and politically

desirable principle of collective organisation, eventually sowed the seeds of the demise of the Soviet state, when a number of groups, among which Balts, began to try and make citizenship and nationality congruent again. Interestingly, that very same principle of disconnection between citizenship and nationality, together with the development of group-based rights it entails, is increasingly put forth in contemporary political science, notably within the liberal-communitarian debate, as a decisive criterion for assessing the degree of democracy of a given polity. It might be one of the reasons for the relative mismatch between the Baltic countries as empirical cases on the one hand, and contemporary political theorizing on the other. In a nutshell, group-based principles of social classification was what Soviet citizens already had. What they were dearly missing was individual rights. Today, individual rights have been reintroduced, and Baltic polities also grant group-based rights to an extent that exceeds what exists in most European countries. The normative discussion individual rights/collective rights that has become so salient today, and more generally the liberal/communitarian controversy, do not help us a lot to understand the weaknesses that can be observed in Baltic citizenships today.

There is no citizenship without culture, but our analysis of citizenship in a totalitarian context suggests that vital citizenship supposes the upholding of a conception of culture as individual capacity of rational thought rights which has become the upholding of a conception of culture as values, ideas and ways of life. The latter conception underlies current theories of cultural citizenship but, as argued, it tends to get conflated with ethnicity. The complexity of the social fabric in the Baltic countries is such that it would not make a lot of sense to try and draw lines between the different cultures that coexist in the region. In any case, cultural cleavages should not be seen a priori as contiguous with ethnic cleavages. Eventual overlaps are an empirical possibility, not a theoretical given. In a time where primordial conceptions of identity hardly retain a scientific following any more, the increased use of the notion of ethnicity tends to perpetuate rather than correct confusions between primordialism and constructivism. Therefore I tried to put in perspective the “ethnic” categories used in most primary and secondary sources. In order to do so I resorted to instruments taken not from political theory as such but from anthropology and linguistics.

I found the double model of the Legacy and the Scruples useful as a basic framework of analysis. Regarding the Legacy model, which accounts for the horizontal dimension of citizenship, perceptions of Balts and people of other groups tend to diverge, albeit to a point only. They diverge when it comes to identification with the national dimension and to perceptions of the USSR. While the national dimension is a strong component of the civic identity of Balts, most Russian-speakers, as well as Lithuania's Poles, tend to have more fragmented identities, often dominated by a strong city patriotism. Local patriotism is vibrant among Balts as well, whereby their local identities tends to overlap with that of the Russian-speakers. Regarding the Soviet Union, next to no Baltic national identifies with it, which hardly comes as a surprize. Russian-speakers and Lithuanian Poles have more nuanced perceptions of the USSR and its legacy, but that does not imply that they crave for a return to Soviet-like times.

Thus, perceptions converge in considering that the desirability of independence is beyond question now. The majority of non-Balts reject the hypothesis of a return to a status as part of a recreated Soviet Union. Interestingly, that rejection seems strongest in Latvia, notwithstanding the rather chaotic way in which Latvian citizenship legislation eventually emerged, and notwithstanding the fact that mutual animosity at the rhetorical level has often been more intense there than in the other two countries. That accounts readily for the fact that fewer non-citizens have decided to take Russian citizenship in Latvia than in Estonia. Russian-speakers in the Baltics observe developments in Russia, and obviously the majority of them (including those who have not applied for citizenship yet) has come to agree that they have better future prospects in a Baltic country. In 1994, Karklins (1994: 48) wrote that in the very first years of independence, "the main problem was that although it was impossible to be a Soviet citizen without the Soviet Union, a significant number of Russians and some non-Russians continued to identify themselves as such". Today, regardless of group membership, a large majority of inhabitants reject the idea that the Baltic states "belong" to Russia. In that context, the fact that sizeable numbers of people have taken Russian citizenship can only be seen as damageable.

There have been cases of "ethnic conflicts" being internationalised. The triple Baltic case actually works the other way round: it is an internatio-

nal conflict that has been “ethnicised”, not least by external analysts and actors. On the field, it never became «ethnicised» to the point where tensions eventually led to violence. In the last 3–4 years of the Soviet period, which were times of great political and social tension, Baltic political developments tended to pattern cleavages along ethnic lines. That statement no longer holds. Political mobilisation along ethnic lines, especially among minorities, has remained generally weak throughout the period that has elapsed since the return to independence. As seen in chapter VII, not many “ethnic parties” exist, and none of them has succeeded in attracting and keeping minority votes. Election results across the period show that in the Baltic countries as in most post-communist countries, using a rhetoric of nationalist aggressiveness may help you attract protest votes, but in the long run it does not lead you very far. Interestingly, in cases where worries about ethnic unrest have been expressed at all, they are greater among majorities than among minorities. As suggested in chapter VI, Estonians are by and large the most worried ones: while Lithuanians managed to retain a comfortable demographic majority throughout the Soviet period, and while Latvians have often lived in heterogeneous human environments (their relatively high level of exogamy suggests that they have never sincerely adhered to an exclusivist conception of nationhood), the Soviet-time migrants to Estonia arrived in an area whose indigenous population already was relatively homogeneous at the time of the annexation and had traditionally expressed little cultural interest for Russia, as opposed to what existed in Latvia and Lithuania.

At the reintroduction of independence, there was very little cohesiveness in the Russian-speaking population, which consisted of a rather motley collection of individuals much more than of a community with a well-defined sense of shared identity and common interests. Throughout the 1990s, a historically new “Russophone” identity seems to be emerging, albeit in a piecemeal, uneven way, and with strong local variations. That is partly an outcome of the specific nature of the Soviet Union: the linguistic russification of the small non-Russian minorities, for instance, seems hardly reversible, notwithstanding signs of cultural revival among them. It is also an outcome of the rhetoric used by Baltic politicians, who will often homogenize non-Balts as “Russians” or “Russian-speaking population”.

In any case, that invented identity has become a social fact, whose po-



litical implications however remain far from obvious. At least, that identity does not generally get codified in an exclusivist sense. It does not rest upon blood ties *at all*, which would be fully impractical in any case, given the high degree of exogamy of the minorities in the Baltic states. Geographically, unlike the settlers in the Six counties of Ireland, there is no sense of where possible borders should be drawn. Demands to that effect have petered out, including in Northeastern Estonia. A more problematic question relates to the ways, means and resources for the Russian-speakers' reidentification: they are generally deficient, which from the Baltic points of view can be seen both as a blessing (a fragmented Russian-speaking identity will be difficult to instrumentalize in order to put out differential claims) and a curse (now that a consensus about the necessity of integration has been reached, the absence of Russophone *interlocuteurs valables* complicates policy-making). Defending multiculturalism and granting differentiated rights to "the Russians" fits into recent international legal norms as well as into the prescriptions of modern political thought, but concretely it has been an effective means of keeping Russian-speakers at bay, especially in Estonia. Now that a majority of Russian-speakers acknowledge the instrumental value of Baltic languages and the legitimacy of Baltic independences, Baltic policy-makers are increasingly forced to make good on their promises. In the short term, that implies, for instance, financing adult language education on a greater scale than has been the case so far.

The "Scruples" model suggests that the vertical dimension of citizenship remains problematic, not least because the citizenry's identification with political institutions remains low. Even if we certainly can relate the weakness of the Scruples to psychological legacies from the Soviet period, in which institutions were perceived as generally hostile to the individual citizen, we should strongly link it to a number of post-Soviet factors as well. So far, Baltic voters have had *some* reasons not to put their wholehearted trust into those who are in charge. The problematic development of the Scruples does not boil down to the temporary after-effect of an inherently damageable Soviet political culture. It also comes as a reaction to decisions which were taken after the Soviet period, by certain Balts.

The Baltic cases suggest that the practical exercise of citizenship is the main source of civic vitality, and that the conditions in which citizenship

is concretely exercised are decisive. Today, the concrete conditions of that exercise are far from ideal in the Baltic polities. Socio-economic conditions definitely play a part. However, acknowledging their importance should not lead to overshadowing the decisive role played by more specifically political conditions, notably those related to the way power is exercised by those who have it. Among Baltic parties, the general lack of consistent ideological identifications coexists with a broad consensus on the fundamental guidelines of economic and foreign policy. Plainly put, most political actors in the Baltic countries agree on most things, and that makes it paradoxically hard for them to work together, and even harder for citizens to identify with any one of them and with the institutions they work in. There seems to be no theoretically tidy way out of that predicament. At least, it seems to warrant the granting of a more central place to political conflict in theoretical problematisations of citizenship. The strengths and weaknesses of citizenship in the Baltic cases tend to vindicate van Gunsteren's claim that vital citizenship does not by itself require consensus beyond the most basic rules of the game. The difficulty among Baltic elites to formulate conflict in political terms is bound to be more problematic for citizenship than the degree of political "maturity" of the citizenry itself. Maturity is hard to assess in any case, and the argument can easily get reversed: it can be reasonably argued that the inhabitants of the Baltic states, as opposed to Western analysts, have a first-rate experience of what being unfree means. As Baudrillard wrote somewhere, they have already been through the worst and drawn all the consequences of it. It can reasonably be argued that the experience of life in a totalitarian system can serve as a healthy warning against triumphalistic sloganising and demagogic mobilisation. In the Baltic cases, what is surprising is actually how little violence has come to taint the general process of democratisation. The hopes of having a strong leader which some citizens show, express a craving for good, effective government rather than a longing for authoritarianism.

In the Baltic countries, individuals bar the youngest ones share an experience of life in the Soviet system, but that experience is constantly redefined. The receding Soviet empire left behind it societies traumatised by their recent past. First, citizens share an experience of life in fear. Havel insists that the cement that held European communist societies together was fear of a special kind. Even when the extremes of repres-

sion subdued after Stalin's death, the memory of them coloured everything. Secondly, citizens share an experience of life in guilt. The Soviet state was a guilt-dealing machine. Several kinds of guilts coexisted. There was the official, primordial guilt which applied to anybody who belonged to a "wrong group". What the wrong groups were varied, depending on the time and the circumstances, but they were all defined from above, and their members had no say in the definition. Latvians, Lithuanians and Estonians were a priori guilty of their bourgeois past, whence the possibility for Russians to still call them fascists decades after 1945. In addition to that a priori, "official" guilt, hardly a problem today, there was the more intimate, the more subtle feeling of guilt that came from the need for every person to compromise with the system in order to survive. That intimate layer of guilt, of course, was not as lethal as the official guilt. It did not send you to jail. All one had to do was to live with it. The complexity of that kind of guilt makes it difficult for an outsider to understand post-communist mentalities. Post-communist countries have been dealing with that guilt in different ways, ranging from a passive will to "turn the page" to a legal activism made difficult by the lack of historical precedent. Significantly, none of the Baltic states has displayed much eagerness to prosecute Soviet-time decision-makers, beyond some of the most obvious Bad Guys.

That relation to the past is shared by the citizens of the Baltic countries regardless of their national and sub-national identities. Current Russian historiography has been taking pains to find the "year zero", the point in Russia's history where things started to go wrong. For the time being, the position of Balts is potentially more comfortable given that, somehow, they can relate their current difficulties to the Soviet legacy. Returning to independence enabled them to extract themselves from the *end of history* the Soviet system forced them into. Yet their point of view becomes uncomfortable again given that there was no "year zero" of democratisation and decommunisation either. No Nuremberg-like trials ever took place. The process of critically assessing people's behaviour during Soviet times – a Baltic *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* if one will – is bound to take long. For the time being, the effort gets possibly impeded by the difficulty to live with the awareness of the pointlessness of the sacrifice. Western theories of citizenship might reach one of their limits here. Fundamentally, Balts, Russians and other inhabitants of the Baltic

area spent several decades in a totalitarian system for *nothing*. Theories of citizenship give few clues about how democratic citizenship can flourish on a ground dominated by notions that, in the final avail, the afflictions one endured were all to no purpose. It is an awareness no society can feel truly comfortable with. It is a moral issue, albeit not one of the who-should-give-what-rights-to-whom kind. Living with it in your everyday life does not have to be tragic either.

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