The Image of Russia
in the "New Abroad":
The Russian-speaking Diaspora
along the Baltic

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What is/are the image/images of Russia in terms of its statehood and na-
tionhood for the Russian-speaking diaspora, and how is "Russia" imag-
ined in the diasporic discourses of "Russianness" as a cultural, ethnic,
historical (or memorial), and familial (or social network) identity that
defines itself in terms that are different and more complex than the limits
of national identity? In other words, what are the readings of post-
Socialist (as postmodern) Russian "space" from the viewpoint of dias-
pora/diasporization? How does the post-Soviet Russian-speaking dias-
pora[1] inflect, in many subtle ways, the "reading" of "Russia" by its oth-
ers, and what are "meanings" of Russia reframed in the visions the post-
Soviet diasporas in the "new abroad," "near abroad," and "far abroad"?

In this chapter, I will first address some ways in which Russia and

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1 Khachig Tölölyan, "The Nation-State and Its Others," Diaspora 1, no. 1 (Spring
1991), pp. 3–7; Khachig Tölölyan, "Rethinking Diaspora(s): Stateless Power in the
Transnational Moment," Diaspora 5, no. 1 (Spring 1996), pp. 3–36; William Safran,
"Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return," Diaspora 1, no. 1
(Spring 1991), pp. 83–89; William Safran, "Deconstructing and Comparing Diaspo-
ras," in Waltraud Kokot, Khachig Tölölyan and Carolin Alfonso, eds., *Diaspora, Iden-
tity and Religion: New Directions in Theory and Research* (London: Routledge, 2004),
pp. 9–30.

Russianness have been imagined through the "Russian," or more precisely, Russian-speaking diaspora in the Baltic political and public discourses of the 1990s to the early 2000s. Secondly, I will address the "meanings" of "Russia" imagined by Russian-speaking people, specifically in Latvia. In the third part of the chapter, the reciprocal aspect of this mutually totalizing imagination—how "Russia" looks upon "the Russian-speaking community" in the Baltic countries—takes the discussion further, to the discourse of "Europeanization" of the Baltic societies, the concept of "Euro-Russian" identity, and its realities.

Imagining "Russia" through "Russian-speaking" People in the Baltic Countries

Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania have experienced modernity through dramatic changes. They belong to those states and cultures that have been shaped by forces of exclusion and marginalization, as well as by the shared peripherality between empires and power. Restoration of political independence (1991) and reconstruction of state- and nationhood were pursued as retro-imaginations, or a "return to the past," into the pre-1940 state borders and ethnic boundaries by virtue of belonging, place, and identity, by reclaiming the origins/genealogies/authenticities in their national histories before the Soviet military annexation of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania in 1940 and the complete postwar political and economic incorporation into the USSR. Fluidity of Russian-speaking diasporic identities should be seen in the context of diaspora (Tölölyan 1991/1996, Safran 1991/2004) interactions with the (supra) territorial contexts of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and the European Union, as well as in the context of the impact of macro-level frameworks and institutions (for example, statehood, ideology, citizenship, supranational obligations, geopolitical preferences) upon the conditions of diasporic stabilities/contingencies.

Europeanization and Nation Building—Demons, Snakes, and Edens
A Russian scholar, Renal'd Simonian, in his analysis of the Russian-speaking diaspora in the Baltic countries gives a rather precise outline of the history and social structure of the Baltic Russians[2]: the so-called old diaspora; the creative intelligentsia; engineers, doctors, employees of research institutions, theatre people, and journalists; highly skilled workers; the military, including retired officers and rank-and-file soldiers; and construction workers, hired by quota. In this connection, a Lithuanian sociologist, Vladis Gaidys, points out: "It should be noted that the popular stereotypes of the uneducated Russian is far from being accurate."[3] He indicates that "the percentage of Russians with a higher or specialized secondary education is higher than that of Lithuanians. The situation is approximately the same among the urban and rural populations. Russians also have a higher level of education in Latvia, the corresponding indicator for Latvians being 96 and for Russians 143." What Gaidys called the popular stereotype of the uneducated Russian in Lithuania and Latvia was transplanted into a proliferating image of a degraded Russian-speaking migrant, with a touch of "Asian" threat. Quite recently, an image of a barbarian enjoying vandalism, alien to the rules of integration into a democratic and tolerant Estonian nation, was proliferated by the Estonian and European media in their live TV coverage of the social disorders caused by the dismantling of the Bronze Soldier Monument (Tallinn) and used as evidence of an internal/external threat with "the hand of Moscow."

2   Renal'd Simonian, "The Russian Diaspora in the Baltic Countries," *Russian Politics and Law* 42 no. 4 (July/August 2004), pp. 67–88.

3   Vladis Gaidys, "Russians in Lithuania," in Vladimir Shlapentokh, Munir Sendich and Emil Payin, eds., *The New Russian Diaspora: Russian Minorities in the Former Soviet Republics* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1994), p. 94.

Продовольственная программа
(фрагмент).
Рисунок из журнала Dadzis, 1991 г

The profoundly negative agendas of the early 1990s, however, should
not be viewed as a result of the specific Baltic situation, but in the wider
context of international politics conducted on an imagological level more
often than in the field of competing ideologies, if any. The purifying "re-
turn to the past"[4] agenda of the early 1990s was constructed as isomor-
phic to the national and regional political and public discourses of the
"return to Europe." As a Lithuanian scholar, Leonidas Donskis, writes:
"[The] new democracies had to catch up with Western European history
to qualify for the exclusive and honorable club of Europe. Moreover,

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4 See also Pami Aalto and Eiki Berg, "Spatial Practices and Time in Estonia: From
Post-Soviet Geopolitics to European Governance," *Space and Polity* 6, no. 3 (Dec.
2002), pp. 253–270; Pami Aalto, "Beyond Restoration: The Construction of Post-
Soviet Geopolitics in Estonia," *Cooperation and Conflict* 35, no. 1 (March 2000), pp.
65–88; Mikko Lagerspetz, "Post-Socialism as a Return: Notes on a Discursive Strat-
egy," *Eastern European Politics and Societies* 13, no. 2 (1999): pp. 377–390.

'yet another Europe' had to become even faster than Europe, transforming itself into a more or less recognizable collective actor in global economy and politics. Capitalism, which had long been presented in Soviet high school textbooks as the major menace to the mankind, now seems to be more aggressive and dynamic in post-Soviet societies than in far more moderate, timid, egalitarian, social-democratic, welfare state-orientated, and postcapitalist Western European countries."[5]

From the other side of Europe in the process of reimagination, "The Case for Europe" at the macro level of global geopolitics was expressed by Javier Solana in the *International Herald Tribune*: "From time to time we have to remake the case for Europe. First, to exorcize the demons of our past. Second, to extend the benefits of economic and political cooperation across our continent. And third, to deal with a borderless and insecure world."[6] In this exemplary statement, the EU as a metonym for Europe stands out as a key collective actor in shaping the global world as a marketplace, pressing upon national policies, either internal or foreign, by constructing an isomorphy between the "demons of the past" and "a borderless and insecure world" of the future. Furthermore, neoliberal interventions into the post-Soviet economies and the dismantling of universal social welfare provisions were invested hugely into the russophobic rhetoric of struggling with "the demons of the past" in exchange for consistent decomposition of the social welfare regimes (as compromised by Sovietism). Ethnicity, in my view, was successfully instrumentalized in the "clash of civilizations" discourse[7] as a tool of social desolidarization policies during the economic switch from a command economy to a *laissez-faire* market. The transitionalist policies advanced the progres-

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5 Leonidas Donskis, *Loyalty, Dissent, and Betrayal: Modern Lithuania and East-Central European Moral Imagination* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005), p. 3.

6 Javier Solana, "The Case for Europe," *International Herald Tribune*, May 28 (Sunday), 2005.

7 Merje Kuus writes about the discourses of civilizational conflict, national territorial sovereignty, and security as a core of identity debates in her excellent article. Merje Kuus, "European Integration in Identity Narratives in Estonia: A Quest for Security," *Journal of Peace Research* 39, no. 1 (2002), pp. 91–108.

sion of social exclusion, deskillization, and impoverishment of different groups of people in terms of their age, gender, place, job, and, although not always, ethnicity.

"Return to nation" as an East-Central European and Baltic geopolitical reclaim to European authenticity (legal, political, historical, cultural, religious) incorporated several discourses, central to creating images of Russian speakers, Russianness, and, by proxy, Russia[8]. The discourse on Russian speakers as "new minorities" and the related minority rights discourse have been actively promoted by the European Union as a core to the integration policies, as part of the harmonization of national human rights legislation with the EU *acquis communautaire* and as a positive example vis-à-vis ethnic tensions and their resolution in Russia and in other post-Soviet countries. The recent Tallinn events questioned the success of this approach, having its genealogy in the postcolonial legacy and its theories of multiculturalism, as two nights of social unrest manifested an amazing similarity to ethnic outbursts in other European cities (for example, *Beurs* in Paris). The events around the dismantling of the Bronze Soldier in Tallinn unveiled the effects of the overwhelming political and public discourses about aliens, migrants, and invaders, permeated with a totalizing reference of heterogeneous Russian-speaking communities (a legacy of the Sovietological dichotomic thinking about the ethnosocial processes in the Soviet Baltic republics) to a single external territorial referent—Russia, and a single temporal referent—Soviet history. Russian speakers' attempts to mobilize for collective claims for political and social justice were successfully legitimized by the political mindsetters, either at the national or supranational (EU) level as threaten-

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8 Merje Kuus says in her article: "Taagepera (1999: 24), a prominent academic actively involved in designing the premises of ethnic integration in Estonia, explicitly contrasts Estonia's European character with the non-European ways of Russia: Whenever Russia or Serbia consider adopting western ways, they must go outside and give up parts of themselves. In contrast, when Estonia or its Baltic neighbours (Latvia and Lithuania) adopt western ways, they only have to reach deeper and actually recover parts of themselves." Kuus, "European Integration in Identity Narratives in Estonia," p. 97.

ing symptoms of Russian speakers' Soviet nostalgia or pro-Russia conspiracy. The intersection of these discourses had at least two major effects upon the self-identification processes of Russian speakers in the Baltic countries. First, the political space has had to be controlled to prevent Russian speakers away seeing themselves as a collective participatory subject of the post-Soviet democratic process—either in the form of political alienation (Estonia, Latvia), or in the form of latent resistance to any "Russian" presence in the sphere of political decisions in Lithuania. Secondly, the political space, specifically in Estonia and in Latvia, was discursively constructed as a space of latent internal ethnic conflict, and thus in need of observation, policy intervention, monitoring, etc., or measures for political objectification of the Russophone (=Russian-speaking) communities in the three Baltic states *en route* to the European Union.

Мильоны – вас. Нас – тьмы, и тьмы, и тьмы: Discourses of Security, or Orientalism, Re(ad)dressed?

This brings us to the discourse of the "numbers" of the Russophone population, seen in terms of ontological insecurity and ethnic anxiety and translated into specific models of citizenship regimes in Estonia and Latvia. The numerical factor was accepted by the geopolitical partners of Estonia and Latvia as a political excuse in a situation when Lithuania granted all its residents, including Russian speakers who moved there after 1940 ("not that many"), political citizenship. Citizenship regimes helped ethnopolitical loyalties[9] to be mobilized for dividing societies, articulating certain demands, and instrumentalizing certain political claims and solidarities by radical nationalists to defuse the democratic appeal of the popular movements of the late 1980s–1990s. In the dominant retro-imagination of that period, the major image attached to "Baltic Russians" was one of a "contaminating" demographic and politically hostile mass, alien, and retarding the success of regional Eurocentriza-

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9 Loyalty and betrayal, among key concepts of the ethics of nationalism, are the theme of a recent collection of papers edited by Leonidas Donskis (see note 5) the first attempt to provide a discursive map of Lithuanian liberal and conservative nationalism.

tion. Family as a problematic political site was already foregrounded in national mass media in the early 1990s. The mid-1990s became a period of active production of *ethnostudies*: ethnopolitical, ethnocultural, ethno-demographic, and ethnosociological longitudinal surveys and researches of families, with a focus on ethnically mixed families, the dynamics of families' ethnic homogeneity/heterogeneity, and choices of ethnic belonging among children of mixed marriages from "a core nation and a Slavic nation":

> By comparing migration waves with resulting changes, ethnic structure of Latvian families has not changed much and it is not changing. Change occurs very slowly, with a generation transforming next generation. We can calm ourselves down that time will cure all wounds — also our nation's scars. The more russification "worked on" a generation, the more "natural" it becomes by revealing itself in the ethnic structure of people born in Latvia, the more it remains in our lives and genes.[10]

Another example is as follows:

> A stable family is the basis of the state. [...] The most stable are marriages between a Latvian woman and an ethnic minority man, or a Russian man with an ethnic minority woman. [...] The most unstable are marriages between Latvians and Russians: Latvian man—Russian woman, and Russian man—Latvian woman. [...] It seems that in both Russian homogeneous and ethnically mixed families the most frequent divorces are in the families in which one of the partners is Russian.[11]

The discourses of family, restored purity of identity and contaminating disloyalty, and dangers of ethnic "mutation" can produce arguments similar to the views of Vitautas Landsbergis junior:

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10 Rungule, R, "Ģimene un tautība. Paaudžu atšķirības," *Latvijas Zinātņu Akademijas Vēstis*, section A., no. 11/12 (1995), p. 21.

11 Pavlina I, "Etniski Jauktas Laulības Latvijā," ibid., p. 59.

Как-то поспорили мы с другом — есть ли в Литве литовцы? Друг утверждал, что Литву уже постигла участь Пруссии и последние литовцы погибли в послевоенных сражениях, растворились в эмиграции или умерли в Сибири. А то, что осталось — всего лишь по-литовски говорящие русские, у которых нет ничего общего с литовской застенчивостью, любовью к родному краю, с чувством гармонии, с чувством 'стыда.' Они слушают дешевую русскую музыку, пьют дешевую русскую водку и матерятся, как последние мужики. Начал спорить, что знаю немало замечательных русских, которые иногда бывают даже бо́льшими патриотами, чем сами литовцы. Друг согласился и добавил, что мы говорим не о русских, а о тех, кто себя называет литовцами. Поэтому я предложил, что может более точный, вежливый термин — говорящие по-литовски монголы? Или 'ястребки' (помощники регулярных войск СССР, воевавшие с послевоенными 'лесными братьями' — прим. перев.)? Вон, как популярна литература 'ястребков' — постоянно выпускаются несколько изданий, вымывая последние остатки литовского самосознания. Тогда мы начали размышлять — а кто же был бы тем традиционным литовцем, каковы черты его характера? Исчезнувший литовец, в первую очередь, мог быть охарактеризован словом — уважение. Уважение к своему краю, своей женщине или мужчине, своим детям, своей земле, своим мыслям. Традиционный литовец знал, что, боготворя свою женщину, и сам становишься богом. [...] Мутировавший, 'ястребковый' (монгольский) вариант литовца этими красивыми особенностями не отличается — это несчастливый, часто спившийся, склонный винить всех и вся, только не себя. Хамство, эгоизм — свойства этого мутанта. Это человек, непонимающий, что главное на этом свете — понять себя, освободиться от комплексов, страхов и стать хорошим человеком, заботящимся о других... Свою женщину он также часто воспринимает как машину для утоления желаний, т.е. превращает ее в проститутку, сам, таким образом, становясь проститутом. Друг говорит, что популярная монгольская матерная фраза 'е... мать' есть ни что иное, как военная команда воинов-насильников Чингисхана, которой мужчинам порабощенных стран приказывали насиловать своих матерей. Так оккупанты быстрее всего ломали мировоззрение скромного человека, и он становился рабом, манкуртом. Об этом писал и Ч. Айтматов в романе 'И дольше века длится день.' Позже, часто бессознательно употребляя эту матерную фразу, человек уже добровольно продлевает свое рабство, начавшееся

много веков назад. Кроме того, насилуемый нередко и сам становится насильником — этот психологический закон хорошо помнит большинство служивших в советской армии.[12]

The return to nature/nation/Europe/past/authenticity was not the only geopolitical discursive framework within which the Russian-speaking people of the Baltic region were expected to reimagine their identity, status, affiliation, and belonging. In accordance with the EU and NATO, approaching the borders of Russia, how Russia was viewed by the USA and the EU turned into leverage of ultimate importance to the Baltic political managers of the internal "ontopolitics" of security from the early 1990s.[13]A very recent example is an interview with Vaira Vike-Freiberga, president of Latvia, about a candidate for the presidential campaign, Aivars Endzinsh, and the left party, "The Center of Integration," whose major constituents are Russian-speaking citizens of Latvia. In the view of the president of Latvia, the candidate's validity is compromised by his former membership in the Communist party although he has been very well accepted by the nation in the capacity of the head of the Constitutional Court in the 1990s. Furthermore, in the president's words, the party is a suspicious actor in the political scene of Latvia because the president knows something about some compromising financial support of the party (implying "the hand of Moscow"?). This is quite a telling example of an actively used "thinking security" discursive framework in times of parliamentary and presidential elections since the early 1990s. It has been consistently and effectively used as a means of depoliticizing the political process by manipulating the media audience with images of external threat sifting through the networks of internal ethnicized and disloyal masses/conspiracies/mafia/political parties.

Furthermore, as I have already mentioned, within the dominant geopolitical pressures in the region, the presence of "Russian-speaking"

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12 From *Delfi* [www.delfi.lt], November 13, 2006.

13 Mikhail A. Molchanov, "Russia and Globalization," *Perspectives on Global Development and Technology* 4, no. 3/4 (2005), p. 397–429.

populations was approached in the early 1990s as a "problem"[14] in terms of European security and the new evolving EU borders with Russia. Russian-speaking communities were overwhelmingly looked at as a problem, and the discourse of "people as a problem" was proliferating in the political/academic rhetorics from the early 1990s. Let me again use Gaidys as an example:

> The professional composition of Russians in Latvia is similar to that of Lithuanians. The *main problem* there lies not in the Russians' social structure, but *in their greater number*. The same goes for Estonia, especially for its northeastern region. [...] Lithuania *was fortunate* in *not having a similarly high concentration of Russians*, with *the controversial exception* of Snieckus, which is the site of a nuclear power plant and to which Lithuania can be seen as *a hostage*. For instance, in February 1992, an employee of the nuclear power station, a highly skilled computer specialist who *was suspected of intentionally introducing viruses* into the computers monitoring the operation of the reactors, was arrested"[15]

From the mid-1990s, the image that "we are the border of Europe" became dominant in the national political rhetoric,[16] implicitly mapping the accents of "us" and "them" beyond this border in the continental and trans-Atlantic securitization discourse.[17] In this geopolitical context, the nationalist public and political discourses in the Baltics of the early and mid-1990s on Russian-speaking communities proliferated around the

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14 See Walter C. Clemens, *The Baltic Transformed: Complexity Theory and European Security* (Lanham, Boulder: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001).

15 Ibid., p. 95.

16 "Similarly, us hosting the NATO Summit in the month of November is an indication of the area of security and stability that Europe extends now as far as Latvia's eastern borders, and on that occasion, we will be very pleased to welcome the first-ever prime minister of Great Britain on a visit to the Republic of Latvia." From a press conference transcript of Vaira Vike-Freiberga and Tony Blair and a number of speeches of NATO officials.

17 See, for example, an excellent analysis of discourses of security, nation, and identity in the construction of the ethnic other in Kuus, "European Integration," pp. 91–108 (see note 6).

meaning and images of "the fifth column": "the hand of Russia," conspiracy, mafia, corruption, and alcoholism, and later, the infamous *vodka-vobla-chastushki* image (from the famous statement of Vaira Vike-Freiberga, the president of Latvia, on how she saw Russians in their celebrations of Victory Day in 2005). They were seen as "occupants," "a big problem" (the words of Lithuanian president Valdas Adamkus in one of his interviews), in a word, a space of danger and threat, in big quantities and degrading quality, feeding financially and ideologically from the big "Russian bear" hiding behind, with a kind of somatically/genetically mutated "Russianness." They were the post-Soviet "leftovers" to get rid of. The image of a debilitated, lumpenized, deskilled mass of "совки," with the looming image of threatening and pauperized Russia behind, was consistently activated by politicians, the media, and intellectuals as an imagological instrument of identity politics. The Russo-Orientalist implications of Landsbergis junior's anxiety about mutated Lithuanianness are smoothed down in the metaphoric expressions used by the president of Latvia, Vaira Vike-Freiberga. During the NATO summit, she expressed her trust in NATO that it would keep aliens away from Latvia, a rather ambiguous statement in a country with several hundred thousand people with the political status of "alien." In her final presidential speech, she even compared Latvia with a future Eden from which all snakes will be exiled.

In these examples of post-Soviet transitionalist thinking, ethnic, cultural, and political differences have been framed as incompatible. The construction of cultural and civilizational "incompatibility" is exactly what a great Lithuanian thinker Tomas Venclova is concerned about in his paper "Russians and Lithuanians" when he deconstructs the stereotype:

> Русские не европейцы, а русско-монголо-татарская ассимиляционная смесь, для которой явления европейской культуры непонятны и чужды, а в советском масштабе даже враждебны и опасны". Эти слова вызывают во мне внутренний протест. [...] Ненависть можно понять. В Восточной Европе ее понять особенно просто. Но ненависть и чувство мести не способствуют конструктивному решению каких бы то ни

было социальных проблем. Большая, а может быть, и большая часть литовцев смотрят на русских недифференцированно, руководствуясь эмоциями и чуть ли не расовыми инстинктами, а не разумом.

Russian chauvinism should concern the Russian intelligentsia, as Venclova points out:

Меня же, литовца, беспокоят мои земляки, их комплексы, их ошибки. Так или иначе обратная связь национальной ненависти и мести — штука опасная и нежелательная. Лучшие люди Литвы и России — я могу утверждать со всей ответственностью — постепенно гасят эту обратную связь. Это не будет ни "национальным разоружением", ни потерей бдительности. Наоборот, настоящие национальные поражения начинаются тогда, когда анализ сменяется неконтролируемыми эмоциями, ксенофобией и громогласными фразами.[18]

At the same time, as I have already mentioned, policy makers have recently started to acknowledge the potential of diasporas as development partners for home and destination countries, although many ethnographies still tend to portray diasporas' relations to "host" societies solely in terms of unequal power.[19] The academic, public, and political work of Brigita Zepa[20], Marju Lauristin[21], Raivo Vetik, Janis Jurkans, and other well-known scholars, thinkers, and politicians in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania have constantly challenged the socially destructive

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18 Quoted from the article of Grigorii Pomerants, "Перед лицом единой судьбы" [http://ps.1september.ru/2000/13/5-1.htm].

19 James Clifford, "Diasporas," *Cultural Anthropology* 9, no. 3 (1994), pp. 302–338; Daniel Boyarin and Jonathan Boyarin, "Diaspora: Generation and the Ground of Jewish Identity," *Critical Inquiry* 19, no. 4 (Summer 1993), pp. 693–725; Richard Marienstras, "On the Notion of Diaspora," in Gérard Chaliand, ed., Tony Berrett trans., *Minority Peoples in the Age of Nation-States* (London: Pluto, 1989), pp. 119–125.

20 See some publications and interviews of Professor Brigita Zepa available in Russian [http://www.politnauka.org/comm/lu/zepa.php] [http://www.rosbalt.ru/2005/01/28/188448.html](accessed March 26, 2007).

21 See an interview with Marju Lauristin in Russian [http://www.moles.ee/02/Sep/21/15-1.php] (accessed March 26, 2007).

discourses and actions of mainstream politicians and media in stressing that Russian-speaking populations are not the "problem" but are important "social capital" and have "social value" for building up our democratic societies.

From the other side of the border, Russian perceptions of the Baltic Sea region in the post-Cold War era have been contradictory, from nostalgic images of the former "Soviet West" to the image of the most hostile enemies at the Russia-NATO border, in the context of regional developments as serious challenges to Russia (NATO and EU enlargements). Further, regionalization (and thus, the question of delegating more power and authority to the ethnic enclaves in the eastern parts of the Baltics and, reciprocally, in the western part of Russia, in Pskov and Novgorod, for example) turned out to be a serious challenge to the core principle of Europe's former security architecture of indivisibility and a serious challenge to OSCE and NATO as major security providers in Europe (a challenge when security can be comprehended in more region-specific terms). For the Baltic states of Latvia and Estonia, their eastern and northeastern regions were a real headache in the period of intensive nation- and state-rebuilding, the centralization of political power, and the "nationalization" of legislation in citizenship, education, and language. For Russia, regionalization turned out to be also a challenge in terms of its traditional concept of national sovereignty. All parties have been interested—as nation-states and supranational unities—in securitizing politics and sanctifying national interest, sovereignty, and borders over the tendencies of the regionalization and municipalization of power and authority. Russian speakers have been dealt with by Russia as an issue in its negotiations with Latvia and Estonia, as well as with the European Union.

What happened in this complex interplay of national and supranational geopolitical actors was the objectification of "Russian speakers" as a certain "community," with its specific "meanings" in the eyes of its "beholders"—a source of insecurity and threat to identity in the Baltic states and their geopolitical partners, a collective agent in the minority rights agenda promoted by the EU, and a constituency for Russia to ex-

press its concerns about human rights in the Baltic states.

Looking at Baltic Russians from Russia and Baltic Russians Looking at "Ethnic Homeland"

Discourses of Minority, Rights, and Diaspora

If Russian-speaking diasporic formations have been looked upon as a problem, an issue, an agenda, and an object, diasporic formations under the general denominator, the "Russian-speaking population," have been gradually negotiating their identities by dealing with attitudes, frameworks, discourses, and legislations, as well as with some European urban diaspora communities. This means the creation of new social networks and institutions, as well as the reconstitution of cultural knowledge. In addition, Baltic cities created historical and cultural conditions for Russian-speaking communities as urban centers of diaspora formation. Russian-speaking diasporas as a postsocialist "flow" had to deal with reframing identity as a process of national topography (de-Sovietization). These processes, however, have been initially inflected with two discursive and clearly flawed prerequisites of totalist Sovietological thinking—the alleged hostility of Russian speakers to the changes in the Baltic nations, and the utopian confidence that the radical change would definitely guarantee the blossoming of democracy. Moreover, the Baltic situation has also been indicative of the tension between imagining of the international order through the figure of the nation-state still unable to divorce the process of managing the transnations that trip across the nation-as-one from the post-Soviet transitionalist policies against the "excess" of "alien" identities that block the nation.

Today, Russian speakers in the Baltic countries can be transnational, culturally convertible, and universally applicable. They can also wish for cultural continuity, and thus patterns of cultural consumption—in Russian, national, and English-based (or German-based) cultural, media, and Internet products in almost equal proportions, to invent their own "cultural consumption baskets." They identify themselves less in terms of macro identity, but more in terms of micro levels—friends, colleagues,

relatives. They actively adopt multiple elements of local/European conduct, lifestyle, fashion, etc. One might say that all of this is an indication of gradual ethnic integration in the Baltic societies due to the change of generations. However, I would argue against this form of developmentalist view on ethnic relations, or "the change of generations" argument that I often hear from my colleagues from non-Baltic countries. Such an approach implicitly supports the argument of the incompatibility of older generations as if they lived in two mutually impenetrable communities—"titular" and "migrant"—in the Soviet period, and this, of course, is not true. Secondly, let me remind you here that the insecuritization discourse (the threat of Balkanization, for example) proliferated by different geopolitical actors around the Baltic region, starting from the 1990s, at the macro level, was very little supported and even criticized by the local residents of the region in the course of the 1990s. The question of how social, family, friendly, occupational, neighborly, and other connections, affectivities, and networks beyond "ethnicity issue" have been securing the Baltic world of the 1990s should be addressed to the people of the older generations with experience and knowledge, and the conditions of negotiation, individual and collective, on a new paradigm of life and work, beyond the prescribed scripts of national integration politics, should be discussed. Thus, in my view, the situation of social unrest and outbursts of violence around the Bronze Soldier in Tallinn should be considered more in terms of the response of dislocated and disenfranchised individuals and groups to the ambiguities of national integration politics in Estonia.

On its "western front," the diaspora politics of the Russian Federation, until the late 1990s, ranged from complete disattachment from the former Soviet citizens to sporadic outbursts of "taking care" of the political rights of "our Russian compatriots" in Estonia and Latvia. That hundreds of thousands of people felt lost and disoriented in this dramatic "in-between" situation only added to the image of Russia as a dehumanized society, holding no moral obligations to its compatriots.

Diaspora politics has obviously become a visible dimension of Russian foreign policy from 2000 (Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian

Federation). The Russian Federation claimed that it would seek to obtain adequate guarantees for the rights and freedoms of compatriots in states where they permanently reside and to maintain and develop comprehensive ties with them and their organizations. The conceptualization of Baltic Russians as a compatriot community that started with Putin's coming to power was presented in Russia's 1999 Law on Compatriots Abroad that states that "compatriots are people born in one state who are living or who have lived in it, and who possess general familiarity with the language, religion, cultural inheritance, traditions, and customs, and they are also direct descendants of such people." A practical example is the recent "compatriot" campaign, with a program, repatriation policies, and the idea of introducing a "compatriot certificate" that should not contradict a national passport but would allow a compatriot to travel and work in Russia without a visa.

On the other side of the Russian-Baltic border, the European Alliance of Russians[22] as an emerging transnational subject of the European political space has recently been established, and sent a delegation, together with the Baltic delegations, to 2005 Congress of Russian Compatriots Abroad in October (Moscow).[23] First, the very fact of the alliance,

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22   More information, see [http://eursa.org].

23   From an interview with Miroslav Mitrofanov, chairman of the REA: Альянс создан, во-первых, для обмена информацией и опытом между русскими, живущими в разных странах. Как русские в разных странах решают одни и те же проблемы? Как подают проекты в самоуправления? Какие отношения складываются с местным населением? Это все ведь очень интересно и важно. Вопросы обучения, переобучения, признания дипломов. Что надо требовать от России и что от Евросоюза. Кстати, взаимоотношения с «исторической родиной» — очень сложный и неоднозначный вопрос. Значительная часть эмиграции уже сегодня готова стать частью административной системы России. Я считаю, это очень тревожная тенденция. Многие русские организации за рубежом ждут уже не только финансовой помощи, но и инструкций из «центра». В том числе и в Латвии. Но сегодня нет инструкций, как выживать в этом мире. У России полно собственных проблем. Россияне сами заинтересованы, чтобы эмиграция была сильной, самостоятельной, способной помочь России. И чтобы хотела этого. [...] Потому что есть другая очень опасная тенденция в нынешнем русском мире – это, как ни странно, русофобия.

with its initiative starting from the Baltics, indicates a relative and grow-
ing political, economic, and social self-sufficiency of the "in-
betweenness" of the Russian-speaking communities in the region. Baltic
Russian-speaking communities as an economic and social benefit and
value for Russia (and also the Baltics of the 2000s) as well as a model of
entrepreneurship and mobility are thus drawing a new type of relation-
ship, which, of course, is and will be subject to renewed stereotypes and
images from the former "curtain" legacy. Furthermore, the condition of
"in-betweeness" is likely to be reclaimed by the "Russian world" dis-
course. Kolstoe, for example, argues that "the ethnicity-based identity
paradigm may rub off even on the Russians. If you consistently treat—
and maltreat—someone on the basis of her ethnicity, she may, in the end,
begin to see herself in ethnic categories. In turn, this may lead to a
strengthening of ethnic solidarity between Russians in Russia and Rus-
sians in the FSU states and to a higher saliency of the diaspora issue in
Russian politics."[24] However, the established European Russian Alliance
(Miroslav Mitrofanov), partially reflecting the marginality of "pro-
Russian" parties and Russian-speaking constituencies at the national
level, sees its mission more as an autonomous diasporic subject of trans-

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– «Русский русофоб», согласитесь, звучит дико...

– Тем не менее это реальность. Во многих эмигрантах жив оголтелый антисове-
тизм, который перерастает в русофобию. В странах Европы сильны антирусские
настроения. Особенно во Франции, Польше, Финляндии, в Швеции. В Швеции,
когда хотят напугать ребенка, до сих пор говорят: «Вот придет русский и тебя в
мешок посадит». И, к сожалению, есть русские, готовые копировать такие
«национальные особенности». Я упомянул всего несколько направлений
деятельности Европейского русского альянса. И как раз сейчас в Санкт-
Петербурге проходит Конгресс российских соотечественников, в работе которого
участвуют наши товарищи по ЕРА. На этом конгрессе они представляют собой
уже организованную силу и, безусловно, их голос будет услышан. [...] Не случай-
но символом конференции стал твердый знак на фоне карты Европы. Такая буква
есть только в русском алфавите. Не произносится, но пишется. Что сильно пута-
ет иностранцев, изучающих русских язык. [http://www.zapchel.lv/?lang=ru&mode=
rakurs&page_id=4605] (accessed March 26, 2007).

24 Pål Kolstø, Review of Igor Zevelev, *Russia and Its New Diasporas*
[http://folk.uio.no/palk/Zevelev_for_Diaspora.htm] (accessed March 26, 2007).

THE IMAGE OF RUSSIA IN THE "NEW ABROAD"

national and supranational Euroepan politics also vis-à-vis the Russian Federation, and much less in the capacity of one of the instruments of the Russian diaspora politics of RF, as the participation in the Russian Compatriots' Congress in Moscow clearly showed.[25]

Europeanization—Euro-Russian Identity (?) and the Case Study of Latvia

The Russian-speaking communities of the three Baltic societies, partially the offspring of the "old" minorities, and partially those who moved to the Baltics after 1940, found themselves since 1995 between retro-imaginations and futuro-Europeanization, or in other words, access to the EU was perceived as a potential and positive reidentificatory space for a new Euro-Russian identity[26] and the possible resolution of a number of issues around their political status in Estonia and Latvia.

Renal'd Simonian, in his already quoted article, gives his rather generalized and idealized image of young Baltic Russians: "Young Rus-

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25 See [http://www.rusidea.ru/?part=77&id=721]. Also Высказывание, сделанное руководителем отдела изучения европейской политики ИМЭМО РАН РФ Надеждой Арбатовой: "Что такое русскоязычное меньшинство в Балтии для самой России: разменная карта в какой-то большой политической игре или, как записано в нашей внешнеполитической доктрине, задача государства — 'защита их интересов?' Насколько мы печемся об этих людях реально? Опыт Югославии показал, что наилучший способ защищать интересы своих соотечественников—это поддерживать хорошие отношения с государством, где живут эти меньшинства. То есть, если мы хотим действительно защищать права этих людей, мы должны выбрать такую политику, чтобы не разжигать страсти. [...] Нам действительно надо определиться, что такое русскоязычное население: разменная ли это карта, или наш приоритет сам по себе." Еще более характерной является реплика депутата латвийского Сейма Яниса Урбановича: "Когда вы мне не помогаете, вы мне только вредите. "Никогда Россия своих соотечественников..." Они никакие не ваши, они мои, я их вам никогда не отдам. Вы мне лучше помогите. А если не знаете, как помочь, не мешайте." [http://www.archipelag.ru/ru_mir/rm-diaspor/sootech/vodo-russkie].

26 "Мы — часть всемирной русской глобальности и мы — национальное меньшинство в стране, в которой живем": Интервью заместителя председателя Союза славянских просветительских и благотворительных обществ Эстонии Игоря Ермакова [http://www.marinews.ru/allnews/224632].

sians in the Baltic states differ from their Russian peers: they are efficient, practical, and industrious. As a rule, they speak not only the language of the titular population, but also English. From the beginning, they could not rely on anybody's help and found themselves in a tough struggle for survival. Many of them have successfully mastered trade, banking, and financial operations and have established business contacts in the West. Here they are referred to as 'Euro-Russians.' Thus, public sentiment in the Baltic countries reflects the changes that are taking place in the perception of our compatriots. [...] The Euro-Russians, as a new ethnic subgroup, are probably an intermediate social stratum and a public moderator that is fated to lessen the existing polarization and to ensure the stability of the entire system of relations in that region, as any structural meso-level would do."[27] His view of young Euro-Russians as an example of cross-identification is more of a vision inspired, most probably, by his contacts with the Russian urban business elite in Riga or in Tallinn as well as a traced "retro"—in terms of how in the Soviet times, the Baltics was seen as "the Soviet West," and its Russians more developed, more advanced, more Europeanized than Russians on the mainland.

I am not sure if Renal'd Simonian adequately reflects upon the situation although I am pleased with his vision of Euro-Russian identity, on the one hand. On the other, this rather occidentalized vision helps to overlook the most difficult question—what does it mean to be a "Baltic Russian" man or woman in political, cultural, social, and ethnic terms? In social terms, the situation is far from being a monolithic image produced by wishful thinking after his encounters with young people from the urban educated/business/political Russian-speaking elites, in a situation when "Europe" has become a space of economic and social escape more than a place of deliberated supranational identification, inflected with national belonging and ethnic identity.[28]

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27 Simonian, "The Russian Diaspora," (see note 2), p. 84.

28 Ref. Appendix A, on the research of inter-ethnic tolerance in Estonia (in the end of the paper).

The perception of a European identity in post-Soviet Baltic societies is linked to the ideologies and practices of (re)constructing the status and image of the "other." In this context, I will use some examples from my previous research that, in my opinion:

1. highlight certain heterogeneous traits in the self-identification of Russian-speaking families in Latvia, relevant in the complex process of the formation of a new Russo-European identity.

2. reveal the problematic ways the image of Russia enters and is formed in the contemporary Baltic/Russian identity in relation to the idea of the nation and the question of belonging.

As a result of the radical changes in economic policy and a changed orientation of Latvia from one gravitating towards the East to one favoring the West, abrupt restrictions on the social mobility of the Russian-speaking population in Latvia were accompanied by the economic transnationalization of Russian speakers who were trying to establish themselves in the European and Russian labor markets, be it trade along the Turkey-Baltics axis or the Poland-Baltics-Russia axis; the development of a construction and IT market between Russia, Latvia, Germany, and Ireland, etc. (commuters, construction workers, the intelligentsia); or simply emigration if an opportunity presented itself. On the one hand, the process of state and national consolidation was accompanied by diaspora creation on both sides of the border as well as the transnationalization of unentitled population segments in respect of their "homelands," which following the disintegration of the USSR, becoming newly independent states such as Byelorussia, the Ukraine, Russia, Armenia, etc.

For the above reasons, in the post-Soviet transnationalization of the Russian-speaking population in the Baltics, on the one hand, we see a drive to maintain a single language (Russian as the cultural and socio-economic *lingua franca* both in the Baltic space as well as beyond, for instance in the geography of post-Soviet transnational family ties). On the other hand, we see a complex process of political, economic, and social reidentification to a considerable degree incorporating individ-

ual/family/group reactions into the very term "Russian-speaking" seen as invoking strong connotations of social and economic nationalization policy. For this reason, we should also consider reidentification processes from the perspective of ethnic "complication" or a multilateralization of the collective identity of Russian speakers[29]. Baltic societies of the 1990s went through a peculiar phase witnessing the mutation of the post-Soviet corporate identification of "Russian-speaking" into more complicated forms of ethnic, regional, and intercultural self-identification, as well as a conscious choice of ethnicity.

In the difficult process of choosing an ethnicity, several factors can be highlighted. On the one hand, in the early stages of the restoration of independence, any non-Russian (yet still Russian-speaking) self-identification was welcomed as testimony to the regeneration of a multi-

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29 Попробуем проанализировать типологию русского бизнеса в отдельно взятой соседней стране. С точки зрения рядового эстонского обывателя "русский" - это любой не эстонец. И поэтому к категории "русских" бизнесменов в равной степени относятся владелец сети магазинов и "точек общепита" этнический армянин Эвер (Григорян), совладелец нескольких разнопрофильных фирм еврей Цингиссер, хозяин Центрального рынка Таллина украинец Полищук или русский Бурлаков, чей бизнес сегодня лежит в сфере высоких технологий. Впрочем, здесь нет раз и навсегда установленных жестких рамок. В принципе этническая принадлежность того или иного "персонажа" является результатом его собственного самоопределения. Хотя на деле это довольно длительный и непростой процесс, в котором играют роль очень многие факторы. И одного желания тут мало. [...] Принято считать, что у бизнеса нет границ и, как следствие, нет национальности. Тем не менее каждая нация привносит в эту сферу присущие именно ей черты. Особенно если ее представителям приходится действовать в иной этнической среде. И в этом смысле нельзя говорить о русских предпринимателях, работающих в Эстонии, не учитывая ряд аспектов - исторических, экономических, психологических. Недаром еще лет десять назад, то есть фактически с момента восстановления государственного суверенитета Эстонской Республики, журналистами было пущено в ход сравнение живущих здесь русских с евреями: оказавшись волею судеб "инородным телом" в мононациональном окружении, русские вынуждены во всем быть "на полкорпуса" впереди представителей коренного населения, чтобы не просто выжить, но стать конкурентоспособными на местном рынке труда [http://www.expert.ru/sever/current/sosedi3.shtml].

cultural society in Latvia. Children from mixed families often "rewrite" their "authentic" identity as non-Russian such as Latvian, German, Finnish, Polish, Ukrainian, Byelorussian, etc. However, they are still relegated to the "Russian-speaking" part of society, both on the basis of their birth and their language of education, which determine their access to higher education and ultimately to jobs in the labor market. On the other hand, the return to one's authentic ethnic identity was encouraged by the countries mentioned (including Germany, Poland, Finland, Byelorussia, Ukraine, etc.), but more often than not, this "choice" for individuals or families was a forced one deriving from losing their job, economic marginalization, or social disorientation. The reclamation of one's authentic ethnic identity usually related to the opportunity of emigrating to or acquiring the right of residence in the country of origin, without losing the right to work in Latvia.

There were also other factors impacting on the so-called reestablishment of ethnic authenticity such as the construction of a certain hierarchy of preferred ethnic choices. When I asked one of my respondents why her family preferred to change their ethnicity on their passports of "aliens," she requested that the tape be turned off and said that a change of one's ethnic identity hardly changes anything as far as naturalization processes are concerned. She was a retiree who had worked in a plant in Riga that formed part of the Soviet textile industry for about forty years. Her pension following the privatization of the plant, and given the absence of a system of rules providing a social safety net, was only 25 LVL (approximately 40 USD per month). Referring to her situation as one of social injustice and helplessness, she said: "It's better now to be German than Russian. Latvians have considerable respect for Germans and next to none for Russians." It is important to point out in this respect the aspiration to obtain certain security based on one's ethnicity, especially when age, length of employment, and the status of "alien" can only be depended on to "guarantee" social and psychological uncertainty. Gender and ethnicity, necessarily and mutually constituting the social dimension in the process of "choice," in this case represented a reaction to practices of political exclusion and social demodernization.

Her family intended to join, as they put it, "their folks in Germany" (*к своим в Германии*). As the main points of connection to Germany they referred to family ties, superior living conditions, as well as "the same blood" and mutual assistance. As her daughter, N., expressed it: "I chose 'German' as my ethnic identity already when I was issued my first passport. I wanted to be a German" (in the 1980s). Despite the fact that she was employed by a private bank, she intended to emigrate to Germany as she felt that there was no future for herself or her nephew in Latvia as Russian-speaking citizens. According to N., it is impossible for her, even if she spoke excellent Latvian, to be promoted beyond the post of secretary because she is "Russian speaking" and a woman.

The changes in the ethnic composition of Latvia's population and taking the citizenship of, for instance, Byelorussia or the Ukraine was and is taking place largely on account of a conscious shift on the part of individuals and families alike in their ethnic identification towards "non-Russian." This is a process occurring at the juncture of a complicated maze of political, economic, social, gender, and psychological pressures emanating both from the past and the present and forcing individuals to "cast their choice."

In both cases, the territorial component of the reidentification process has typically been taking the form of an urban setting and, in this sense, the ideology of post-Soviet nationalist demodernization as a return to one's own "corner," to one's own "little plot of land" eventually translated into a search for a "place of one's own." In reidentification processes, processes of Russian-speaking imagination both at the regional and national level, this Russian-speaking "place" has assumed a complicated set of parameters: "Baltic Russian speaking" and "Latvian Russian speaking." Nevertheless, for many reasons, these have not turned into any sort of political or cultural mobilizing factor. On the one hand, the search for such a unifying identity resulted from a virtualization of social escapism in a mass-scale situation of "boundary straddling," of being "neither here nor there." In this connection, one should not disregard either the social, regional, economic, historical, or finally, the ethnic heterogeneity of the Russian-speaking population nor its marginal impact

on processes taking place at the political level (thus, there are two Roma communities in Latvia—one "Russian" and the other "Latvian").

By the same token, ethnic transnational changes taking place as a rule on professional or family grounds often lead to increases in the emotional distance regarding the perception of belonging to Russia (as the historical homeland where one's parents and grandparents were born) as well as gradual changes in the scenarios of individual and collective ethnicity such as "being Russian in Latvia" seen as an indicator of a "Russianness" different from that of Russia, or "being a German woman in Latvia." In the second of the interviewed families, both T. and her daughter underscored in particular the difference between their relatives in Latvia and "the ones who live in Russia." At the same time, when referring to interrelations in student circles, all of the respondent women consistently differentiated between "themselves" (that is, Russians, Russian speakers) and Latvians.

> T.: "When we were travelling in Germany meeting our relatives, we would always emphasize that we were Germans from Latvia, that we had no relation whatsoever to Russia, and that our relatives over there are completely unlike us, very different."
> U.: "No, our relatives in Russia—well, they are quite different." (She has not been to Russia for seven years).

U does not want to visit her relatives in Russia ("I don't want to go to Russia; I think it's a total dump," "In Spain we tried to speak Latvian when we saw how people were pointing at a group of Russians," "In Meissen, I finally felt at home.")

It is curious that in the second family, T. and her daughter are descended from Germans who settled in Latvia during the Soviet period, and almost all of their relatives are Germans who went on to settle in various parts of Siberia. T.'s appreciation for Germany (which pays compensation to anyone who was an "enemy" to the Soviet Union until 1956, and this makes T. very proud of Germany) is accompanied by a realistic assessment of the opportunities of Germans settling in Germany during the last decade:

I feel sorry for them—they hate their Russian accent, they are ashamed of their mother who is a German, but does not have a good command of the language. Those who emigrated were unable to achieve much here, and will most likely have even less chance in Germany.

For her, the main question is the actual price she would have to pay to become a "real German" and whether it would be at all possible for her to become a real "German woman." She ends her story with a question: "Here, for the past twenty years, people have addressed me with respect—by my first name and patronymic. Who will I be over there?"

In the first family, when the mother was asked about emigration, she replied: "I am a nobody here, I feel ashamed that I am a burden to my daughters; at least there, I'll have a decent retirement." At the same time, both mother and daughter stress the importance of their family ties with relatives already in Germany. When the daughter returned from Germany, she took great pleasure in speaking about "us there...," "our folks over there...," mainly and completely identifying herself with the larger family network in Germany as her principal opportunity for professional growth at her age as well as for education for her nephew—all of which, according to her, their family lacks in Latvia due to their status of "non-Latvians."

Whereas in the first, impoverished family, the attitude to ethnic reidentification appears to be rather deliberate and uncompromising, aiming at the definitive reestablishment of their Germanness among "their folks over there," in the case of the second family who have a network of friends and relatives in Riga and display a higher level of social integration, the daughter's perception of ethnic designation is rather one of a sort of "safety net" that is beyond the reach of the politically imposed opposition between "Russian speakers and Latvians," which in a certain sense is also explained in the position adopted by her.

On the other hand, in both interviews, there is a comparative analysis of the situation regarding the redetermination of individual or family ethnicity among those that stayed in Latvia and those who emigrated, for instance, to Germany.

T. (second family): "I don't want to live in Berlin. It's not really German, you know. You hear Russian in the streets—there's people arriving from Russia—or Turks who are about everywhere. Why would I want to live in Berlin, if I can hear the same thing here?"

The wish to be "fully accepted among the Germans as a German" finds its own "space" either in Riga, among one's relatives and in the respective social environment, or in Germany, in respect to which moving to "relatives over there" refers primarily to the family as an indicator of restored Germanness.

Meanwhile, the terms "Russian speaking," "we Russians," and "us non-Latvians" as a particular collective identification keep surfacing during the interview. It is very likely that these phrases reflect the linguistic, cultural, and cognitive outlook in which generations of the interviewed families were raised and educated. Again, it also results from the fact that the constant representation of "Russians" as the single largest minority in terms of percentage of the total population by the media, academics, and politicians leads these minorities to unite themselves in a situation that in actuality continually exposes the heterogeneity of both the majority and the minority, when statistics keep pointing out the considerable proportion of ethnically "mixed" families, while the highest percentage of noncitizens belongs to the Ukrainian minority.

Furthermore, the market has also come to determine the social spheres for the so-called majority of Russian speakers. Statistics indicate that Russian speakers are mainly represented in the service industry with blue-collar jobs, which means an increased flexibility in the quality of a transnational workforce in the European and Russian labor markets, which is already creating a focus of considerable interest on the part of Russian speakers regarding the Baltic states' entry into the EU. The European dimension is represented as a multicentered formation in which the multilateralization of ethnic and cultural identification is perceived as a social and economic value. It is possible to say that ethnic reidentification of being a minority in a multicultural society currently involves an element of recognition, which is obviously an important social factor, although due not so much to the national state policy regard-

ing the family and professional spheres, the heterogeneity of which was the very subject of radical nationalistic processes in the early nineties.

I have already been noted that the European dimension itself is a parameter of belonging and of difference. Europe is considered to be much more attractive as an image and a destination point of the desire to belong, or a much "friendlier" version of the parameter of "one's own place" than the "national" dimensions. It can be said that currently, there are certain communities in the Baltic states that may be referred to as multicentered formations embodying certain elements of thought characteristic of a transnational community. In these communities, the model of "finding work in Europe or America, or in Russia, while living in Latvia, having relatives in Estonia and friends in Germany" is gradually becoming characteristic of the thinking of younger generations. I was intrigued by a young man—not in Riga, but in Berlin, working at a small hotel— who had a perfect command of English and German, waiting for his brother to come from Ukraine and some business partners from Moldova, himself turning out to be Russian. At this point, I line up with the argument of Simonian about Euro-Russian young people in the Baltics. The "Euro identity" is becoming a transnational dimension in the formation of individual and family attitudes favorable to remaining in Latvia, Lithuania, or Estonia.

What is common in similar, yet different family biographies of women whom I have interviewed is that in a particular situation, individuals can be seen to attempt to live out their own (or their family's) lives, and in this sense, realize themselves while feeling different, strange, and autonomous. They are looking for what would be "their own" understanding (also in explicitly gender-related terms, regarding the reconstruction of the traditional role of the woman: the Germanness of the image of the grandmother) of the sanctity of life, which becomes their "private system of the highest importance"[30] This is a "personal" system for normalizing the social space of one's life and one's family.

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30 Thomas Luckmann, "Religion and Personal Identity in Modern Society," in Anthony Giddens, ed., *Human Societies: An Introductory Reader in Sociology* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), p. 229.

Luckmann says: "In the absence of an "official" model, an individual can choose from a number of systems of the highest importance. The choice is based on the preferences of the subject, which are dominated by the social biography of an individual, and similar biographies are the result of similar choices."[31]

In today's "multispace," those that found themselves in the frames of a "subaltern" condition may, unlike the previously imposed community-determined choice of ethnicity that was based on a symbolic unity of the territory of the denomination or ethnicity, also opt for an individual, informed choice situated outside of the traditional community and institutional ties. In this way, individual ethnic consciousness prefers the private sphere, the sphere of the family, or also certain para-private spheres, such as the sphere of a religious sect, for instance. As a very well-known Latvian Russian-speaking politician, Boris Cilevich, has said recently: "And now all of us are building up capitalism in our separate families."

The changes in the ethnic composition of Latvia's population and taking the citizenship of, for instance, Byelorussia and the Ukraine was and is taking place largely on account of a conscious shift on the part of individuals and families alike in their ethnic identification towards "non-Russian." This is a process occurring at the juncture of a complicated maze of political, economic, social, gender, and psychological pressures emanating both from the past and the present and forcing individuals to "cast their choice." By the same token, ethnic transnational changes taking place as a rule on professional or family grounds often lead to increases in the emotional distance regarding the perception of belonging to Russia (as the historical homeland where one's parents and grandparents were born) as well as gradual changes in the scenarios of individual and collective ethnicity such as "being Russian in Latvia" seen as an indicator of a "Russianness" different from that of Russia.

Meanwhile, the terms "Russian speaking," "we Russians," and "us non-Latvians" as a particular collective identification keep surfacing dur-

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31 Ibid.

ing the interviews of young women, students of the University of Latvia, whom I interviewed a couple of years ago. It is very likely that those phrases reflect the linguistic, cultural, and cognitive outlook in which generations of the interviewed families were raised and educated. Their very emotional statements are really telling in terms of reimagining the space, time and figures of social capitalisation in urban Russian-speaking families. Let me quote just a couple of very recent examples:

1. "We, here, are really SO different from them in Russia."
2. "No, but they in Russia—they are so different from us, here, in Europe."
3. "No, we Russians here are so different from them in Russia— we talk differently, we behave different—we are Baltic Russians."

In the interviews with my respondents, either from Russian-speaking German families or Russian-speaking university students, knowledge of the family's biography became a means of individualizing history, further connected to the negotiation of an individual story into an individual-family construction of "my place." At the same time, "homeland" discourses are dominated by alienation rather than familiarity: "I am Russian, but I am not like Russians in Russia," "Russians from Russia say: 'You are not like we are.'" By the same token, ethnic transnational processes that started taking place as a rule on professional or family grounds often lead to increases in the emotional distance regarding the perception of belonging to Russia and to the gradual changes in the scenarios and choices of individual and collective ethnicity. (Refer to the part of the paper where I discuss the interviews with the respondents from "Soviet German" families, residents of Latvia.)

The "Euro identity" is dominantly entering a transnational dimension in the formation of individual and family identities and choices of Baltic Russophone communities. Meanwhile, the "European imagination" draws around Europe its own "boundary," which was evidenced in a city advocacy advertisement poster calling people to vote to accede to the EU in the early 2000s: "Do not exclude yourself from Europe!" It takes us

back to the words of Javier Solana according to whom the process of eastern enlargement of the EU at the same time represented the completion of "Europe" as he sees it. Its "border," however, in terms of its multiple, heterogeneous, subaltern, and multilateral practices and reidentifications, beyond the dominant political discourses, would most enjoy producing a new image of an "unwalled" interspace in this part of the Euro-Asian geoscape.