Ethnic relations and ethnic policy in the Baltic States

Part II

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Spring 2009
Ethnic conflict – how and why it was prevented?

• Why situation was solved in non-violent way?
  – **Russian minority wasn’t unified** - different factions. Estonians/Latvians unified camp neither.
  – **International factor.** Even national radicals should accept Western organizations and their prescriptions.
  – **Social factors** – transition hit both Russians and indigenous people. Since 1993 it was clear that Estonia and Latvia would be economically more successful than Russia – reduced separatism
  – **Cultural factors** – Estonians/Latvians more respected among Russians (“Western people”) so Russians accepted them as leaders of transition, as reform-makers (diff. from Moldova)
How radical is Estonian/Latvian citizenship policy?

- **Ethnic policy in Latvia and Estonia** – main factors:
  - Demographic situation – therefore Latvia most radical
  - Political – excluding Russians from political process, to prevent them to retard the reforms or act as “5th column”
  - Pragmatic – some parties afraid that their main rivals would be successful among Russian electorate (Estonia).

- **Apartheid in Estonia and Latvia?**
  - Ethnic criteria not a basis for granting the citizenship
  - Russian minority have all social and civic rights, only political rights are restricted (Parliament elections)

- **No international law demands automatic citizenship for all**

- **In European context Latvian/Estonian citizenship laws quite liberal.**
Ethnic relations – today’s situation

• Repatriation strategy failed (peak of remigration 1992-1994, Estonia 100 000, Latvia 115 000).

• Assimilation will be utopian.

• **Positive developments:**
  – Language – competence in local languages much better than in 1989, especially among younger generation.
  – Labour market: transition hit Russians a little bit harder, today differences between wages are decreasing. For Russians in Latvian economic situation even better
  – Identity and loyalty: new Baltic-Russian identity, loyal to Latvia and Estonia, less to Russia.

• **Problems:**
  – Under-representation in public administration and no influence on every day politics
  – Pace of naturalization is slow and after 2007 dried up
## Naturalization in Estonia/Latvia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Estonia</th>
<th>Latvia</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>5,421 (passed the language exam 0)</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>1993</td>
<td>20,370 (passed the language exam 3013)</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>1994</td>
<td>22,370 (passed the language exam 5679)</td>
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<td>1995</td>
<td>16,672 (passed the language exam 10,689)</td>
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<td>1996</td>
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<td>1997</td>
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<td>1998</td>
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<td>2006</td>
<td>4,753</td>
<td>16,439</td>
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<td>2007</td>
<td>n/d</td>
<td>6,547</td>
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</table>
Demographic situation today

- **Estonia:**
  - 120,000 non-citizens,
  - 120,000 Russian citizens.
  - 90,000 Russian-speakers have obtained citizenship.

- **Latvia:**
  - 42% of Russians Latvian citizens,
  - 430,000 non-citizens (19%),
  - 60,000 Russian citizens.

- **Non citizens are not allowed to work:**
  - in public administration,
  - in police,
  - to establish political parties,
  - run for elections, etc.
Bronze soldier affair

- Bronze Soldier – a monument for commemorating Red Army soldiers in the city center of Tallinn
- Different meanings:
  - For Estonians – a monument of occupation
  - For Russians – a monument of World War II and struggle against fascism (Monument of the Liberation)
- Tensions since May 2006
- Reform Party and IRL promised to relocate the monument in electoral campaign 2007
- Bronze Night in April 2007
  - Archeological excavations - a tent was erected.
  - Confrontation: police versus Russian demonstrators
  - The demonstrators were dispersed by police and moved into city and started to loot shops and break windows
  - Estonian embassy was sieged in Moscow
Exercises

• Compare the citizenship policy and ethnic policy in Latvia and Estonia! What was similar, what was different?
• Compare the ethnic policy and citizenship policy of Lithuania with Estonia and Latvia! Why it was so different?
• Discuss the question: Whether Estonia and Latvia made right decisions introducing quite exclusive citizenship laws in the early 1990s or the “zero-option” (granting citizenship for all) would have been the better solution?
• Search for German Citizenship Law and compare it with Estonian Citizenship Law! Which of them is more liberal towards immigrants?
• Compare the problems with immigrants or ethnic minorities in your own home country with the Baltic States!
References


Suggested reading

