

*Review*

# **Self-awareness and the quest for belonging in Russian life stories in Latvia**

**Dagmara Beitnere-Le Galla**

Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, University of Latvia, Riga, Latvia.

Received 2 January, 2021; Accepted 31 March, 2021

**In the 20th century, Latvia has experienced the proclamation of the state, then the loss of independence and the restoration of independence. At such a difficult time in history, the country has changed in terms of demography, ethnicity and linguistic culture. The article features interviews from the National Oral History Project “Ethnic and Narrative Diversity in Life Story Constructions in Latvia” to summarize the self-understanding of the Russian-speaking minority. National identity research has acknowledged that the concept of 'identity' has become too vague, so the analysis of life stories focuses on people's self-understanding of who they feel they belong to while living in Latvia. This is the specificity of the interviews to get the process of self-reflection, how people encounter the history of their family, gain a framework for self-understanding. Respondents talk about the experiences and attitudes of previous generations towards the imprints of history in a totalitarian system on human destinies, up to emotional self-reflection as a healing of injuries. The Russian-speaking minority in Latvia is heterogeneous, with different political experiences and, consequently, attitudes towards the independent state of Latvia. Life story research is a method of initiating a dialogue between two linguistic groups. Listening to and understanding diversity is one way to reduce tensions and avoid ethnic conflicts. The life stories analyzed in the article revealed the so-called ‘Zones of silence’, the defaults of family stories, which only in a democratic society allow them to be told in public.**

**Key words:**Life story, cultural memory, self-awareness, belonging to.

## **INTRODUCTION**

A quarter of a century has passed since Latvia regained its independence, and the National Oral History (NOH) archive has amassed a significant collection of life stories, albeit largely the life stories of Latvians. However, the NOH project has now also begun collecting and studying the life stories of Latvia's minorities, including how they reflect a sense of national and cultural belonging. Sociology makes use of oral history and the biographical approach when it is necessary to understand

changes in society and culture over a longer period of time. In a world of changing social relationships, a person's lifetime provides the opportunity to notice very different experiences as well as to see the world through the eyes of another human being. Society invariably includes a variety of different experiences and therefore also stories thereof.

Latvia is home to people of 100 different ethnicities, whose life stories are all a part of society's diversity,

E-mail: [dbeitnere@gmail.com](mailto:dbeitnere@gmail.com).

Author(s) agree that this article remain permanently open access under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

whether it be differences in origin, language, cultural identity or experience. Studies of life stories (like the actual life stories themselves) are important because they give us an opportunity to look at the world through the eyes of another person (Bela, 2010). Individual experiences of life bear witness to significant social changes and how people perceive of themselves within those changes. For example, does one's life experience (through one's memories) offer a meaningful relationship with the past; in other words, is the past obtained in the present in order to provide orientation for the future. A life story contains memories, which are not static representatives of past events but can be activated to help an individual or community create their sense of identity (Caldicott and Fuchs, 2003). Oral history researcher Paul Thompson points to the social purpose of oral history, because an individual who tells about his or her life must find a vision about him or herself. Therefore, it is important for a researcher not to avoid uncomfortable topics in confrontations between history and personal experience, because the past is not only a lovely landscape but often also a place of conflict and differing interpretations of history (Thompson, 2000). Thompson believes that oral history is not always an instrument for change; however, oral history can definitely be a means through which to change a point of view of history (Thompson, 2000).

Individual life stories and experiences cannot automatically be included in collective identity (Jameson 1986), because each is a separate voice; but each individual story can nevertheless contribute to the paths of collective understanding on the way towards collective identity. It is not a spontaneous process; it demands the making public of life stories and reflecting on them and, as indicated by Jacques Derrida, it is painfully hard for life to become an object of study (Derrida, 1988). Also, as in this case, when a study involves individuals of a different ethnic group, one must overcome cultural and linguistic barriers, because listening to and understanding another person means playing back that person's voice. Derrida stresses that "this event [hearing and understanding] is entrusted to us [...] politically and historically [...] [and] it is we who have been entrusted with the responsibility of [...] the other's text." (Derrida, 1988)

Methodologically, the article is based on a qualitative research approach, using the "snowball" approach, selection by addressing people, and applying for the conversation themselves. Life stories are analyzed with a focus on the answers to look for answers, how people understand themselves and construct their understanding of belonging to Latvia in the story. The research approach of this paper is oriented towards dialogue, because the researcher not only analyses but is also at the same time in dialogue with the research subject, which can open up opportunities for common meaning and values. The paper reflects life stories obtained during the course of the study. These stories have been told in both Latvian

and Russian and seek both the shared and the different, because life stories as stories of experience can bring people closer as well as give voice to different opinions and viewpoints.

## **RUSSIAN MINORITIES IN THE DISCOURSE OF LATVIAN HISTORY**

Historically speaking, Russians are a young minority in Latvia, compared to the Livonians, who were one of the first indigenous peoples in the area, or Jews and Roma, who have lived in the area of present-day Latvia since the 16th century. Russia strived to obtain the Baltic territories already since the 16th century, and the mindset of occupation, annexation and incorporation remained the same over the centuries, despite changes in the Russian elite. The settlement of Russian civilians in the area of present-day Latvia took place over the course of several centuries. Old Believers persecuted by Tsarist religious intolerance sought refuge here in the second half of the 17th century, but the number of ethnic Russians in Latvia was still small in the 19th century. The policies of the Tsarist system, and later the Soviet system, exploited the same instruments of Russification, with education and media policies formulated in their own interests.

According to the 1881 census, there were 82,237 Russians (or 3.89% of the total population) living in the Baltic provinces of Estonia, Vidzeme and Kurzeme. By 1897, this number had risen to 232,204 (12.0%) Russians, not counting the borderlands, where population numbers were ambiguous. In 1920, the Russian population numbered 157,671 (10.19%). According to the 1925 census following Latvian independence, the Russian population was estimated at 231,658 (12.56%) (Skujenieks, 1927). After the Bolshevik revolution in Russia of 1917, a considerable number of members of the Russian elite who had been persecuted by the Bolsheviks sought refuge in Latvia.

In the life stories, Old Believer families appear as a Russian religious-cultural group loyal to Latvia. Likewise, Russian intellectuals who sought refuge in Latvia following the Russian Revolution are also portrayed as loyal to Latvia. These two Russian memory-group communities are among the minorities whose self-awareness formed as a result of opposition to Russian Tsarism as well as Soviet policies.

In order to secure its power, the manifestations of Soviet colonialism are equated with simulacra (Annus, 2012); the officially advocated equality of all ethnic groups was led by the dominant nation, Russia. In occupied Latvia, the Soviet regime organised the mass settlement of Soviet citizens, mainly Russians (Riekstiņš, 2015). It is therefore doubtful whether the new arrivals after the Second World War - behind whom stood the Soviet Union, the victor of the Second World War that had subjugated all of Eastern Europe to its political

influence - should be counted among Latvia's minorities. These newcomers were not refugees; instead, they were citizens of the Soviet Union used as an instrument of colonisation.

After the Second World War, the independence of the sovereign Latvian state was ignored and the country was incorporated into the Soviet Union, thus continuing a policy that had begun already during the Tsarist era, under cover of which the demographic situation in Latvia was changed. During almost half a century under the Soviet regime, the percentage of Latvians fell from 77 to 52% of the total population. The largest non-Baltic social group consisted of Russian-speaking Soviet citizens, who were accustomed to being in a leading position and displayed a distinct Soviet influence in cultural leadership (King and McNabb, 2015; Muižnieks, 2004; Applebaum, 2012). The colonial power had instilled in these newcomers after the Second World War an understanding of themselves as the bearers of industrialisation and a new worldview, which, in their opinion, would promote the development of Latvia; therefore, the dominance of the Russian language in the state and public sectors was taken for granted.

The collapse of the Soviet Union left a variety of minorities in many Eastern European countries. As stated by ethnic minority researcher Leo Dribins: "Those Russians, as well as some Russified Ukrainians and Belarusians who had emigrated to Latvia and Estonian in large numbers after the Second World War and had no legal or historical link with the national statehood of these countries found themselves in a very unusual situation. By not automatically receiving citizenship in these countries, they felt marginalised and discriminated against." (Dribins, 2004) Likewise, the Baltic German minority, which had previously for centuries been the socially dominant group in Latvia, found themselves in a psychologically similar situation after the declaration of Latvian independence in 1918.

When Latvia regained its independence in 1991, 48% of the population was non-Latvian. Compared with the other former Soviet republics, this was the highest proportion compared to the indigenous population. Of this non-Latvian population, 34% were Russians, who regarded the change in their legal status negatively. Particularly painful for them was the loss of the Russian language's leading position and the need to begin using the Latvian language in public life and state administration. The renewed Republic of Latvia continued its pre-war democratic tradition of establishing ethnic minority schools: Polish, Ukrainian, Estonian, Lithuanian, Belarusian and Jewish schools. According to Dribins, Russian-language schools did not morph into ethnic minority schools; instead, they preserved their former form and thus encouraged the retention of the Russification process.

Another great shock to the Russian community after Latvian independence were the new assessments of

history, which differed radically from Soviet interpretations of history. The Latvian media remained bilingual, as it had been during the Soviet period. As the successor state of the Soviet Union, and through the use of cooperation agreements, Russia supplied the Russian schools with history textbooks, because it was interested in maintaining influence and control over its people.

Dribins misleadingly included post-war newcomers to Latvia in the numbers of historical minorities, because he considered that they could gradually be incorporated into the system of minority cultural autonomy. However, the situation of post-war newcomers, who made up one third of Latvia's population and considered themselves to be residents of the western region of the Soviet Union, changed dramatically in 1991. The political, historical and social perceptions created by the former regime and still alive within this population (and partially already passed on to the next generation) hindered its reorientation from the status of dominant ethnic group to that of a minority within the Latvian state. Dribins was therefore forced to adjust his original assumption: "The majority of the Russian-language press published at that time came out strongly against the construction of a national state in Latvia and supported an orientation towards the development of a two-community society, which in reality would mean a transition to a multiethnic form of statehood, which the majority of Latvian citizens categorically rejected." (Dribins, 2004).

The duality of the situation and the feelings of Soviet citizens after the collapse of the Soviet Union were described by Anne Applebaum, who noted that many people felt disoriented. They felt this way not so much because communism had lost; mostly, they were worried about what would happen afterwards. Applebaum accented that people did not feel like they belonged to the countries in which they suddenly found themselves; they therefore did not feel responsible for the governments of those countries, and that is also precisely why they longed for stable identities (Applebaum, 2015). A slightly different scene is painted by the newest study undertaken by Latvian political scientists: over the course of twenty years, one third of Latvia's Russian-speaking population have not managed to choose between Western and Eastern values. The study emphasised that having a stable identity is not important to this community; it is more interested in bettering its economic situation, health care and personal safety (Ozoliņa, 2016). That, then, is the backdrop that has developed over the past twenty-five years among the part of Latvia's population whose life stories are analysed in this paper.

## ASPECTS OF POST-COMMUNIST RESEARCH

According to American researcher Ewa Thompson (2007) remarks that the Western intellectual environment does

not have a deep enough tradition of understanding Tsarist Russia nor its successor, the USSR, and its imperial nature. In 1991, many politicians, researchers and journalists wondered where all of these new countries, whose national awakenings had dismantled the Soviet Union, had come from. Most Westerners had assumed that the citizens of the Soviet Union were all Russians (Hirsch, 2005). Only in recent decades have there been a number of studies aimed at analysing imperial history and its legacy on the understanding of individual and experienced history (Erickson, 2008; Jones, 2006; Stern, 2006; Breyfogle et al., 2007; Kochetkova, 2009; Kovacevic, 2008; Barnes, 2011). These studies have been published in the 21st century and have not yet been fully integrated in the Western social space, much less the post-Soviet space. Applebaum also remarks that Eastern Europe is seen only in the context of the Cold War (Applebaum, 2012).

Likewise, Russian historian Yuri Afanasiev emphasises that these newest studies have not influenced those levels of self-awareness in broader society that form identity, because an individual acquires self-awareness from long-term self-reflection, in which the history of his or her people plays an important role. Afanasiev believes that Russia must write a new post-1991 history in which historical facts are not suppressed by ideological interpretations. This is a long process, a process in which the Russian nation must learn history anew and develop a self-awareness of its own that provides the opportunity to create “an identity that reflects the self-awareness of individuals, groups, the society and the nation in the context of social relations” (Афанасьев, 1995). It is not easy to begin a process like this, and therefore social and cultural memory can first be awakened through communicative memory, or life stories. Is individual experience and self-awareness open to understanding itself in a new light – as the result of colonialist policies by which their living space is located in an area that is not ethnically their own.

In the Western view, colonies are usually associated with overseas territories whose indigenous populations often belonged to different races, cultures and languages. The Russian Empire's transformation into the Soviet Union masked the state's colonial nature even more; in addition, the proximity of the territories subjugated by it to Russian ethnic borders did not allow the borders between the dominion and colony to be clearly seen (Томпсон, 2007). The academic literature is dominated by an understanding of the concept of colonialism that requires a search for a corresponding concept and understanding thereof for the present research concept.

Following the Second World War, the Soviet occupying force remained in Latvia for another 46 years (from 1945 until 1991). Many mixed marriages took place during this time, and social life was organised with the goal of establishing a new, Russian-speaking Soviet citizenry. The process of Sovietisation aspired to intervene not only

in people's world views but also in their everyday lives; even more, it strived to influence their identity.

The renewal of Latvian independence allowed research to begin in analysing and creating an understanding about the experiences of both sides regarding the learning of history and the perception of their own identities. Moscow-based anthropologist Svetlana Rizhakova, who analysed Latvian identity and self-awareness, was one of the first to address the issue of how we see each other. She noted the concepts of *savējais* ('our own') and *svešais* ('the foreign'), or “we” and “they”, and concluded that changes have taken place in the identities of Latvians and other ethnic groups since the mid-1990s (Рыжакова, 2003). Rizhakova studied the concepts of “person”, “nation” and “the foreign” and concluded that the psychological type of “Latvianness” shows unexpected loyalty to its own ethnic group. Russians living in Latvia whom Rizhakova interviewed showed a less negative reaction to the concept of “the foreign”. Her conclusion allows us to explain the historical aspects of the creation of the Russian mentality; namely, the colonisation of large territories around its borders meant that the Russian ethnos needed a readiness to master the new, unknown and also foreign. In fact, not only master but also incorporate it into its territory, language and culture. The Russian mentality thus evolved within a frame of mind that, in relation to itself, did not develop elasticity and a readiness to integrate into other languages and cultures, and therefore fear and a variety of prejudices still prevent their integration in another culture. This is all based in an understanding of assimilation that the Russian academic environment has for decades equated to the losing of oneself (Hanovs, 2014); it has not perceived assimilation as a harmonious adaptation to life in a different place. To feel and perceive of oneself as the foreign or different element is an individual's own choice and demands a specific reflection regarding one's self-awareness.

Polish-American researcher Ewa Thompson uses the concept of “the other” to mark an invisible border that can be found in language or recognised in a text/narrative. This border is fragile, and, she indicates, the formulators of post-colonial discourse find it difficult to resist creating feedback in relation to their own dominant culture and language (Томпсон, 2007). Post-colonial discourse researcher Bhabha (2004) believes that in situations when individuals are robbed of an “unmediated visibility of historicism” – in other words, there has been a break in their history or world view, they must look for legitimacy in the cultural autonomy provided by the previous generations.

Newcomers to a different society or new culture perceive the new environment as different, but they do not ascribe this any meaning, or they view the local culture as merely different. Balkan researcher Nataša Kovačević suggests using post-communist narrative research (life stories) as open questions. Her opinion

corresponds with Bhabha's idea that the future must be created with an open question, and history is a mediator in this process (Bhabha, 2004). Kovačević believes that reanimated memories of communism do not provide the capital of time, because an excessive and uncontrolled reminder resists being translated itself [understood – D. B.] (Korosevic, 2008). The concept of openness is inspired by Jacques Derrida's ideas about the creation of the future as an open question, which can also influence European identity as an open question, the opening of one's own and another's identities in a unifying project (Derrida, 1992).

To paraphrase Kovačević's idea about Europe and the identity of the foreign, I would like to use this concept as an approach to this paper, opening up Russian life stories as an opportunity to not only become familiar with a different experience but to also search for common experience. When asked how knowledge is linked to impact, Hans-Georg Gadamer responds that one must search for one's own history as well as that of the foreign, to which our own historical consciousness is then applied in order to discover at which point the shifting horizon begins. Understanding is always the process of the mixing of the perceived existing horizons (Gadamer, 1999), which in this study is represented by life stories. They serve as the method and approach for this process of understanding, and, as pointed out by historians in all eras, life stories can tell us about the silences and gaps about which history tells us nothing.

A small aside with a history: In 2007, I was studying the issue of how Latvians are seen by members of other ethnic groups. I interviewed Armenians and Belarusians, and the life stories I heard demonstrated concern about the preservation of their own identities, including their languages and important links to their ethnic homelands.

In these interviews we were unified by a common social history and memory, because the narrators and interviewer belonged to the same era and had experienced the same empire, in which we both had been minorities. A referendum regarding the country's second language, Russian, was held in Latvia in 2012 (Pleps, 2012). This event made the language issue even more sensitive:

I remembered these life stories as I listened to the life stories of Russians living in Latvia as I conducted the research project in 2013 to 2015.

### **I AM A RUSSIAN AND A PATRIOT OF LATVIA**

The choice of methods for any study is also linked with the selection of respondents. Reaching members of the Russian community in Latvia in a sense means traversing an invisible border, because, as indicated by media

research in Latvia (Šulmane, 2002; Kļave and Zepa, 2010), the society is divided by the communication environment. The media writing and broadcasting in Latvian are open to a variety of opinions; they are also influenced by various different kinds of social memory and other stratifying factors of society. The invisible border that divides Latvia's society has social consequences. As stated by Māris Cepurītis and Rinalds Gulbis in their study, "The existence of two information environments would not be dangerous to Latvia if both of these environments voiced similar opinions and adhered to similar values." (Cepurītis and Gulbis, 2012).

For the present study, life story narrators were searched for myself, some narrators volunteered themselves, and still others were suggested to me by the Russian Society of Latvia – people who were ready to share their experiences and entrust their stories of self-awareness to the study. The names of all respondents mentioned in this paper have been changed.

The first person I spoke with is a visible personality in the Latvian media whose knowledge of the Latvian language and loyalty towards the Latvian state attracted my attention and led me to believe that he could be a key person to interview for this study. Dmitri was 45 years old (b. 1968, NMV-3872), had worked as a guide in his youth, was very familiar with Latvia's history and now worked in the real estate business. His responsiveness and willingness to speak was disarming, and we began our conversation with his family history. Dmitri's family has lived in Latvia for five generations and feels well integrated in the country's language and culture. The interview was conducted in Latvian and provided an insight into one Russian family's attitude towards the Soviet system:

*Regarding my childhood, Latvia was always near to my heart. That's understandable – I was surrounded by educated people who had lived comfortably and had suffered under Soviet rule and the Soviet army. On the other side was the proletariat, farmers; things were slightly different for them, because...I don't know...maybe their mentality. I can't say they were committed Communists, but their attitude was nevertheless slightly different, not towards Latvians, but towards the Communist regime.*

Dmitri learned to speak Latvian only in 1995 and is self-taught. As a result, he consistently does not let Latvians speak Russian with him:

*I did not speak Latvian as a child, because Latvian language was not an obligatory subject at school. For example, you could get a five [the best mark possible] for remembering just a few things. That's not good motivation for learning a language. The second reason is that my Latvian friends spoke Russian with me. I tried speaking Latvian, but they continued speaking in*

*Russian. I can understand them, because at that time the Russian language was in demand, and you couldn't achieve anything without the Russian language. That kept me from learning the Latvian language. But my mother and father spoke Latvian very well, and my grandmother, too. (NMV-3872)*

Dmitri studied his family's history, listened to his grandparents' memories and was inspired by the stories of his grandmother's sister, and he believed this is how he formed his opinion about processes in society.

*It's difficult to explain, but I think it's very bad that people in this era of globalisation are becoming like Soviet citizens. I don't see a big difference. A global person can be born in Latvia, study in Germany, work in Ireland, then work in America, meet a woman from France there, get married, and then move to India to work. This whole mixture isn't bad in and of itself, but it doesn't let the person find himself. Understand me correctly: my Polish, German and Russian blood is all contained within a single root. A person can take pride in the fact that he has Latvians, Poles, Russians, and so on in his family tree. People can be proud of that, but it's all incorporated into something comprehensive. (NMV-3872)*

His time serving in the military (in the late 1980s), as well as his experience as a child, resulted in Dmitri associating his identity more with Latvians. "It is not difficult for me to call myself a Latvian nationalist," he admitted during the interview. He described his self-awareness, which had developed over the course of many years and was the result of several different considerations:

*In my childhood, I heard insults addressed to me, that I was a Russian portyanki [footwrap], but more often I heard people calling me a Gans [Hans] or Fricis [Fritz] because I had light-coloured hair. Gans is the shortened Russian form of the German name Johann. In the army, too, I was called Hans, a fascist and more. When I returned from the army, I had a great hatred of Russians, because in the army there were Russians from the countryside – from Voronezh, Tambov... You know, there it was difficult to maintain a positive attitude towards the Russian people... Now I have a better attitude towards the Russian people. But Latvian-Russians nevertheless differ from Russians in Russia.*

Thus Dmitri revealed in our conversation that his appearance and bearing differed from the envisioned image of the Soviet citizen. At one point he felt like a foreigner among Russians while at the same time feeling like a foreigner among Latvians. He said that serving in the Soviet army could be a particularly jarring experience. And perhaps it is true that, as a person whose family has lived in Latvia for already five generations, Dmitri's

bearing and self-awareness are different; this is something he understood already as a child on the playground.

When living outside of their ethnic homelands for a long period of time, people tend to acquire an accent in their native language and their bearing changes as well, which influences their image as a whole. I had already heard about these differences compared with Russians in Russia during the years of the Soviet occupation; these were stories that Latvian-Russians told after visits to Russia. Also the concept of a double standard, namely, that while in Latvia, Russians were considered representatives of "the great Russian nation" (a designation established by the Soviet ideology) living on the fringes of the empire, an area that had always been seen as belonging to the cultural sphere of the West. In Russia, however, they became conscious of their sense of belonging to Latvia. There was even a running joke that these Russians spoke Latvian when they were in Russia – something they never did in Latvia. Language and its use are not only an invisible border that divide people in Latvia; they are often also joined by a certain attitude towards language, which Dmitri was conscious of as a barrier between so-called Soviet Man (*Homo sovieticus*) and Russian culture:

*So you can imagine the language spoken by these people who ended up here. These people arrived from Russia, where the Russian language, culture and nation had been destroyed. Bulgakov's Sharikov was social scum, a dog is a dog... Understand, I can compare the Soviet people with cosmopolitans who say they have no homeland, that they're citizens of the world. They have no roots, they've been torn from their roots, because a person without roots is like a plant without roots – it's just a decoration.*

Dmitri's military service and life experience formed his sense of belonging to Latvia, and he perceived his Russian identity merely as a cultural identity:

*I think that ethnically I'm definitely a Russian, I belong to the Russians, my parents are Russians, and I was raised as a Russian. But I'm also a Latvian, because I belong to Latvia, to the Latvian nation. I could even say that I don't belong to Russia as such at all. I consider Russia a neighbouring country, because I'm linked to Russia, because we share a language. I'm linked to Russian culture, or, more precisely, through Russian culture – primarily, and more, I belong to Latvia, there's no other option.*

Dmitri's position regarding his ethnicity is linked to his loyalty to the country in which his family resides; for him, feelings of cultural belonging ("I'm a Russian and culturally belong to Russia, that is, to Russian culture") live side by side with a sense of belonging to Latvia, so

much so, in fact, that he has no problem admitting to being a Latvian nationalist. His views show that democratic citizenship is not always based on people's ethnic identities; it always places higher value on the diversity of cultural forms and is more likely to feel a need for socialisation in the common political culture that emerged in the democratic states of Europe in the 20th century and allows people to obtain citizenship and participate in the life of the state in which they have chosen to live (Habermas, 1992).

Dmitri spoke rapidly and seemed to have thought his narrative through well. I noticed that he reacted to my questions in a similar way to Latvians – first negation, which is immediately followed by affirmation or agreement:

*You can't talk about differences in mentality, but of course, they do exist. Regarding Latvians, you could say that Latvians are prouder than Russians. And Latvians have one problem: they're embarrassed to say anything to another person, not embarrassed, but to get involved in other people's lives. In my whole life, only three people have corrected me when I speak Latvian; everyone else has just listened and hasn't said anything. If one were to ask how many Russians correct other people's language, Russians feel free – they have no problem correcting people's language.*

This observation from life regarding language use and attitudes towards it lead to the conclusion that Latvians do not feel free, because they lack the courage to reprimand others. At this point, Dmitri's narrative showed a division into "us" and "them", which he used to indicate one of the differences he had noticed in social interactions in Latvian and Russian society. He also referred to the use of the Russian language to differentiate between Russians who have lived here for several generations before the Second World War and newer arrivals after the war. In other words, in terms of language use, there are not merely two groups, Latvian and Russian; new and different identity groups and senses of belonging can be discerned in terms of linguistic culture.

### **I AM A LATVIAN OF UKRAINIAN DESCENT**

Yes [voiced very convincingly – D. B.], *I, for example, consider myself a Latvian of Ukrainian descent. But of course, I live here, in Latvia – how can I be a genuine Ukrainian if I live here? Because I don't participate there [in Ukraine]. It's one thing to live and also participate in life. But it's another thing to live here and not know the language but nevertheless support Latvia. At work they're together with Latvians, and also in their social lives, but when they come home, they're Ukrainian.*

Thus Victor (b. 1930, NMV-4382) began his narrative. He had approached me after a public discussion and wished to speak in more depth about Latvian-Ukrainian issues, although mainly about issues regarding the Soviet political heritage in Latvia. The idea of a political state that includes all citizens loyal to Latvia has been cultivated for decades but remains questioned by both Latvians and Russian speakers. Therefore, Victor's self-awareness was unexpected at the beginning of the interview. The term 'Russian speakers' has already become established in academic studies about national policies and issues of integration, and as historian Mārtiņš Mintauris notes, "The preconditions for dividing society into two conditional parts: the so-called Russian speakers and indigenous peoples; formed in modern-day Latvia and Estonia as the result of the ethno-political policies implemented by the Soviet authorities." (Mintauris, 2014).

Victor, who worked as a journalist, also used such a division in his interview. He admitted that he did not participate in or support the *Tautas fronte* (Popular Front of Latvia) founded in 1989, because already then he realised that Latvia would not be able to automatically grant everyone citizenship, simply because there were too many Russian-speaking newcomers who could vote to have Latvia joined to Russia again. When asked how much he knew about his family's history and what his family experienced under Soviet rule, Victor told a story that Latvians also tell:

*My mother never told me anything. She also died without having told me anything. I learned the whole truth only in 1998. And when I learned about my family, all of this truth.... after that I began having problems with my thyroid.*

Thus Victor's narrative reached a climax, an emotional experience he still had difficulty speaking about. Back then, as he was preparing documents to apply for a passport, he had to return to his native city in Ukraine to obtain a birth certificate, which had been lost. Up until then, he had only heard a little bit, from a cousin living in Ukraine, about how Soviet repressions had affected his family. But when he travelled to his native city in 1998, he wished to learn more about his father, mother and other relatives:

*In 1998 I travelled to Ukraine, to the city where I was born, in order to obtain a birth certificate. I also went to the former KGB to learn more about my parents. The inspector told me to return the next day. When I arrived there, I was led to some long tables on which 137 court cases had been placed – cases about my parents and everyone who belonged to my family. I didn't have time to read all of them; I read only those that pertained to my closest relatives. I learned that many of them had been shot to death right there, as stated in the documents. But*

*my father perished in the Arkhangelsk camp in 1942.*

Victor was born into a mixed family. His mother was Polish and his father was a Ukrainian whose family was descended from Serbian settlers. He had childhood memories of his otherwise untalkative grandmother gathering all her grandchildren around her and telling them fairy-tales about the newcomers from a mountainous land. Back then, he perceived them as fairy-tales, and only later, after finding out about his family's history, did he understand that she had in fact been telling them the family's history. Both of Victor's parents were college-educated; his father had even earned two degrees.

*My mother was arrested for the first time in 1930, when she was pregnant with me. She was later released, then taken into custody again, released, and taken into custody again in 1937 and remained in custody until the war. As I read in the charges brought against her, she had supposedly been a leader of the Polish counter-revolutionary movement. There were other offences, too, I guess also in conjunction with my father, because there were many members of the clergy in the family, many of them were executed in 1937.*

I asked Victor again whether his mother had really not ever told him anything, because she arrived in Latvia first and is also buried here.

*Back when I worked as a journalist, I leaned left politically [although he does not say that he was a member of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union – D. B.]. My mother told me that my father had also fought in the First World War, that he had come from a poor family and had associated with the Bolsheviks because he believed that justice was possible, that there would be no more poor people and rich people. Although in the charges brought against my father that I read it was stated that he was a Ukrainian nationalist, a counter-revolutionary and also an officer of the White Guard.*

The story of Victor's family reminds us of the countless lives that were brutally torn apart and destroyed by the Stalinist repressions of the 1930s; people were destroyed for the most minor of suspicions and lack of loyalty to the Soviet regime. Victor's story contains dramatic stories from early childhood, for example, about how, when their mother was arrested, the two young children were left alone in the empty apartment, without supervision or food. Victor remembered that a few days later he and his sister were taken to an orphanage near Kiev. After six months of searching, their mother's sister found them there, in spite of the fact that their surnames had already been changed. Six months after their aunt had recovered them, she was arrested for this "crime" and deported to Kolyma. Victor's childhood memories are traumatic:

*I remember during my mother's last arrest, her father came to the prison, took me from there and brought me home with him. (NMV-4382)*

But after his grandfather's arrest, Victor again ended up in an orphanage, from where his mother regained custody of him only when the war ended. I met Victor one more time to talk about his family history, because he was still quite troubled by what had happened to his family and wanted to bear witness about relatives who had perished merely because they had been held in suspicion about resistance to the regime. The Soviet system had to break the life of a person if there was only a hint of suspicion.

Victor showed photographs and told me about the fate of every member of his family, about their destruction – they were supposedly at fault just because they were educated inhabitants of western Ukraine, and some of them were also clergy of the Uniate (Eastern Catholic) Church. The Soviet system sought to assure its existence by counteracting the legal, cultural and moral foundation of society, and the first step in this process was reprisals against the national elite (Oberlanders, 2004). Latvian life stories also contain silent zones due to fears that revealing the truth about family members who had suffered repressions might harm their children's futures and opportunities; many parents therefore refrained from telling the truth for decades.

These untold family stories lead to gaps in personal histories, and when a person wishes to learn about the fates of his family members and is finally confronted with the truth, sometimes the mind is unable to control the body's reaction. In the city of his birth in 1998, Victor did not have enough time to read all of the many documents pertaining to his family. However, just reading about the accusations and repressions carried out against his parents caused him to fall very ill:

*I had problems with my thyroid for three months, I wasn't able to sleep, I lost 27 kilograms. [is silent for a long time] You know, what troubles me most is the carelessness towards the generations that were destroyed, that they're not remembered anywhere. And, seeing as the state does not remember, then the youth also pay them no attention. My mother, too, did not tell me anything because she feared that it could influence my life.*

Victor did not reproach his mother for remaining silent, and yet his untold family history, the truth about the repressions, continues to trouble him. After all, she could have told the truth – even if just whisper it (Faidžīss, 2010), or tell it only to family members and have them promise not to tell anyone else. Then the memories could help in forming and preserving identity, saving the younger generations much time wandering around in the grip of Soviet ideology and false identity stories. A break in memory and experience, keeping silent about

injustices suffered and the reluctance of today's society to return to these weighty historical issues are all at the root of Victor's anxiety. He is worried not only about the war in his native land but also about the fragmentation of the Ukrainian community in Latvia and in Ukraine itself. The influence of the Russian media is also felt as a dividing force between friends and relatives, who say, "Please don't call me anymore."

When asked how he arrived in Latvia and how he came to feel at home here, Victor said that his mother moved to Latvia first, because during her time as a deportee she had met a Latvian woman who helped her to find a job and apartment in Latvia. Victor arrived later, after finishing his military service, and worked in the field of emergency medicine. Two older colleagues, medical nurses, helped him to settle in in Latvia. They invited him to visit them, taught him to drink coffee, and showed him magazines from the pre-war era. The two women also spoke German and Russian proficiently, which helped him to realise that he was now living in a different culture.

*I recently read about the experiences of Sandra Kalniete's family. I don't agree with her ideological views, but it was interesting to read about her experiences in Siberia. Because Ukrainians collaborated with Latvian deportees, and often they also accompanied them back to Latvia. If any Ukrainians later tried to return to Ukraine, they were no longer accepted there; they were accused of having become Latvian and told to go back (Kalniete, 2001; 2009).*

In the interview, Victor concluded that the common experience of Latvians and Ukrainians within the Soviet empire has not lessened the ideological division among Ukrainians living in Latvia today. He blamed not only the Russian media but also the weak democracy in Ukraine. He believed that the fragmentation of Ukrainian society not only in Ukraine but also in the Ukrainian societies in Latvia is proof of the destruction wrought by the Soviet ideology.

Dmitri and Victor arrived at the sense of belonging expressed in their stories via different experiences. Dmitri's views are based on an integrated understanding, rooted in five generations, of himself as part of a family history that was Russian but never recognised the Soviet system and its deformed use of Russian culture and language. Victor's story is emotional, because the silence about his family's tragedy in relation to the Soviet regime resulted in a completely opposite view of himself and led him to reassess his worldview until finally arriving at a candid self-awareness and forced him to forge a new relationship with the country in which he lives. His life story demonstrates that historical consciousness is a form of introspection that connects with the psychology of understanding (Gadamers, 1999) and opens a path to self-understanding combined with life experience.

Learning about one's family history and incorporating it

into one's identity can sometimes be traumatic; it can not only affect a person emotionally but also leave a much deeper impression about which one wishes to bear witness. In writing about 20th-century Russian history, British researcher Catherine Merridale has noted that almost every Soviet family had "secrets", because the first fifty years of the 20th century in the Soviet Union were marked by a string of catastrophes. Private memories were preserved, but only partially; however, they had no opportunity to be publicly acknowledged and thus influence the collective feeling of these painful memories, and therefore social memory evolved only episodically and lacked political influence (Merridale, 1999).

Psychologists have noted that secrets or deliberate silence can manifest as depression or unconscious anxiety (Merridale, 1999). The totalitarian system influenced people's self-awareness for decades, because parents hid their stories and experiences to protect their children. The next life story presents another life, one that children had to endure as a sign of shame (in the narrator's own self-awareness) and thus all the more so try to fit in in order to regain the favour of the Soviet system.

## UNDER THE SIGN OF CAIN

Boris used this phrase to describe his life (b. 1931, NMV-4241). He was a retired engineer who had held several positions of responsibility. After the interview, he sent me a cover letter for the interview that served as a summary of his life story and again mentioned Cain. His father had been arrested and convicted. For what?

*I still don't know, to this day. Like I said, my father was an officer in the Tsarist era, and such people were not highly regarded and looked upon with suspicion by the USSR. And from that time onward, for the rest of our lives, my sister and I were marked with the sign of Cain [their father was sentenced according to the now well-known Article 58 for betrayal of the homeland – D. B.], we were considered enemies of the people. Our father died in 1954; he was rehabilitated after his death, his name added to the list of the innocent who had suffered from Soviet repressions.*

Historian Orlando Figes' extensive study *The Whisperers (Faidžiss, 2010)* illustrates the Soviet regime's brutal subjecting of private life to the ideas of the totalitarian state. Boris' life story also shows how repressions or suspicions affect several generations, until the collapse of the Soviet system finally emboldened people to speak out, bear witness to their experiences and search for the words to describe them. Boris repeated the Biblical phrase he had found, the "sign of Cain", several times throughout the interview. His childhood memories

revolved around the onset of the war and how his whole family ended up in the German-occupied zone. He was nine years old at the time, but these memories remained very vivid for him:

*The Germans put us – my mother, both of my sisters and me – in a train car and sent us to Germany. There, near Düsseldorf, was the Oberhausen concentration camp – around it, barbed wire fencing and guards with dogs. My mother and sisters were taken to a chemical factory every day to work, but I just walked around the camp in idleness and waited for them to come back home. There were bombardments by British-American airplanes. They arrived in big groups, 15 or 20 at a time, and dropped all of the bombs at night; by morning everything was calm. How did we manage to escape from there? Mother took that secret to her grave.*

The miracle of rescue and survival is found in many wartime life stories, and subsequent generations are rarely able to explain it, because the secret remained untold. And, even though the family did not talk about it, did not remember it, the Soviet regime did know and monitored people's lives without them even knowing it:

*When my youngest son was studying in Saint Petersburg, he was summoned by the osobist [Osobij otdel in Russian – the special Ministry for State Security unit found in every educational institution and place of employment] and asked why he hadn't revealed that his father had been sent to Germany during the war and why he hadn't indicated on his application form that his grandfather had been the captain of a Tsarist army headquarters. My son responded that his father had been a child during the war and that the family had never spoken about his grandfather. (NMV-4241)*

Even if the family did not remember, then the KGB knew everything about everybody and also about those who tried to hide things. A mistake like that could cost people dearly: job loss, prohibition of working in one's profession, coming under constant surveillance by the security system. Boris told his life story in Russian, which he apologised for, because he had acquired Latvian citizenship and also passed the Latvian language exam. But, because he had no opportunity to use the language, it had become an inactive language for him, which he again apologised for, although more for the purpose of explaining himself, he said, because his whole life he had tried to wash himself clean of this sign of Cain inherited from his father. As a youth, he worked very hard and was active in the Komsomol. His health was damaged by work-related injuries, and he received a state-paid vacation to the Black Sea:

*I took the train from Moscow, and in the south, when the train started heading along the coast... I stood in the train*

*car and didn't even realise right away that it was the sea. That was a very vivid impression. And that's when I decided that, come what may, but I was going to live and work by the sea.*

That is why, when it came time to continue his education, Boris decided on the Odessa Hydrotechnical Institute, where he earned a degree in engineering and was then assigned a job in the Russian Far East. There he led the construction of port facilities in Nakhodka, Kamchatka and elsewhere.

*Then I received an invitation from Latvia through the Moscow Ministry; apparently it was preparing to do reconstruction work on its ports. This was also linked to the fact that a person cannot continue working at such a high level of responsibility for a very long period of time. At first I ended up in Liepāja, but then the port there was converted to military needs and we were all relocated elsewhere; that's how I ended up in Ventspils.*

And so he spent his life here, and his sons grew up here as well. Boris emphasised that the main thing for him has been honest work; even now, as a retiree, he walks around and observes the port of Ventspils. Sometimes he also finds things that can be improved and praises things that have been done well. Boris had experienced war and the German occupation, so he could not refrain from saying that if the Soviet occupation is often mentioned in Latvia, he knows more about what an occupation is because he has experienced it himself. Back then, people were starved to death, many died of typhus and other illnesses, and people were sent to Germany as forced labourers. Once again in the interview, Boris returned to the theme that, throughout his whole life, he has concentrated on doing honest work in order to free himself from the sign of Cain, from his status as an enemy of the people:

*I was always conscious that I would have to answer hundredfold for actions that my peers would not be held accountable for. I shaped my demeanour and behaviour accordingly. I realised that I would not be further promoted in my field, so I tried to be a good specialist, and I think I have succeeded.*

The feeling of guilt and the effort needed to constantly prove one's loyalty to the Soviet regime is indicative of the trauma that Boris has lived with since childhood. Nor did keeping silent help in preventing his children from being branded with that same stain; the KGB files contained information about everyone, and it was impossible to hide anything. And thus, with divided feelings, Victor fulfilled his work duties to the Latvian state, and, although he feels foreign here, he has nevertheless gained a sense of fulfilment in his life because he lives by the sea, as he promised himself he

would in his youth.

### LANGUAGE AS A BORDER IN THE FAMILY

How does a person who was born and grew up in a mixed family gain an understanding of oneself? In Latvia, families were split not only by war and political alliance but also by language. The next interviewee is Alexander (b. 1972, NMV-4249), a 42-year-old man with a secondary technical education who later also earned a post-secondary degree. He was born in Latvia into a mixed family. "I had to make a choice when it came time to get a passport: Latvian father, Russian mother, I chose my mother's ethnicity," he said.

People in the Soviet system were faced with such a choice not only when they had to indicate their ethnic belonging in their passports but also when they needed to obtain a stamp stating their registered place of residence. For those born into mixed families, the choice of ethnicity as an adolescent meant making a choice for life. In the Soviet Union, such people often chose the Russian ethnicity because it offered a child broader opportunity for education and a more secure future in terms of a profession. Life stories often refer to the fact that Latvians were not hired in many important positions in Soviet Latvia; it was like an unwritten law, because they were not trusted. Alexander continued:

*My father's sisters speak Latvian, they actually consider themselves to be Latvian, but my father spoke only Russian, because the family, which was based in Latgale, had Polish roots. But I have no contact with that [Latvian] side of the family.*

Such a situation was possible not only in a family from the eastern Latvian region of Latgale. Latvians who had returned to Latvia from Russia during the Soviet era sometimes also chose Russian as their ethnic belonging in spite of having Latvian surnames. Such choices were most often based on the ethnicity of the mother. Russian was Alexander's first language and his only language for many years. He began his narrative in a reticent manner, using short sentences to tell about himself and what he remembered of his childhood. We spoke in Latvian, and during the interview I felt his tension, because he wished to not so much tell about his own attitude as that of this group – speakers of Russian – towards the Latvian state and language.

*We lived in Ķekava, a pleasant little village, where there was room to run around and do mischief. Around us almost only Latvians. There were two tracks at school – the Latvian and Russian school – there was also a preschool in Russian. Latvian was not spoken in our home; our home language was Russian. I began school knowing only one word in Latvia, bumba ['ball']. The*

*children I played with all spoke Russian well. I never wondered why or how. I lived in my own little world and didn't know where that world was located.*

A carefree and matter-of-course childhood, politics never talked about in the home, everything provided for by the Soviet system – such an environment gave him the feeling that things would always remain the same and nothing would ever change. Alexander's first insight came during his service in the Soviet Army, where he encountered the different attitudes of the soldiers and noticed that they formed groups according to nationality. "I did my military service in Kaliningrad," he said, "and when Latvia proclaimed its independence, all of the 'foreigners' were sent home."

It turned out that they no longer belonged to that big and seemingly unchanging group of Soviet soldiers; Latvian independence had turned Alexander into a "foreigner", the "different" one, the "stranger":

*I was a good son at home, but that [the army] served as good experience for me. There was the dedovshchina, which was both a positive and negative experience. I wasn't sad that my service lasted only one year, but it was too bad I didn't get a chance to enjoy a second year of service, when you're no longer a new recruit but already an "old guy", a veteran in the army, which lets you feel like a ruler in relation to the new recruits.*

When asked about his feelings regarding the processes that had been set in motion in Latvia, Alexander responded that he saw the barricades on the streets but did not see any sense or meaning in them. I tried understanding his viewpoint and asked whether he felt surprised and unprepared for the big changes in Latvia:

*No, it wasn't a surprise. Just because I was young and not interested doesn't mean that I didn't see that the Soviet Union was barely hanging on by a single thread. In the army you could see other fellow countrymen and how they perceived it all. There I also saw that Russians were not really [held in high regard]...and that none of them were there of their own free will. That's also why the zemlyaki [groups of fellow countrymen] formed there; half of that army unit were Lithuanians and from Georgia. I was in the middle, although I stayed more with the Lithuanians. I even began to understand the Lithuanian language, we could laugh about jokes together. The Ukrainians spoke sharply about the Russians back then, too. The Georgians, too, and also the Lithuanians. There was one incident when the Uzbeks, or whoever, said that they were going to go beat up the Russians. Back then I didn't realise that no one in that Russian world was there of their own free will. Naturally, everyone wanted their own country, their own life, instead of having a big brother always saying how things are going to be.*

I asked Alexander again whether they ever spoke about such things at home. No, never, he said. The first strange thing he noticed was hearing a report on *Voice of America* radio that the government here had so-and-so many Russians and so-and-so many Latvians – ten times fewer. Alexander asked a Latvian neighbour from their apartment building (who spoke with them in Russian) about this, and the neighbour confirmed it. Alexander did not ask anything else, and the issue was never raised again. Alexander learned to speak Russian after his mother-in-law announced that she was to be spoken to in Latvian:

*So I told myself why not, it'll be good practice. Now it's become a habit that I talk to her only in Latvian. My wife later told me that when she told her mother about her choice, she said a phrase that I hear more and more often today: "Better an alcoholic Latvian than a Russian." Now, though, she [mother-in-law] and I have a very, very good relationship. But I hear those words when the people here rise up against the mayor of Riga – who cares, even a drunkard, as long as [he's] a Latvian. (NMV-4249)*

The need to learn the language forced many people to leave their comfort zones and learn Latvian. For Alexander, too, his parents' family was split by language, and he has been forced to cross the language barrier in his own family as well. But this latter situation is accompanied by his mother-in-law's hurtful comment, a comment that was not uncommon in conversations already during the Soviet era. With it, Latvians tried to protect their language's and culture's borders against mixed marriages (of which the largest number is in Latvia), but, as is seen, such a pejorative attitude has not been of much help:

*I had no problem with citizenship, because my father was a Latvian citizen. But my mother still does not have Latvian citizenship, even though she speaks Latvian well. Back then, it seemed most of the people gladly accepted the independent state, but they didn't think that they would have to go somewhere and confirm that they wanted to belong to Latvia. Because lots of people have spent their lives here, lots of people have family here and are linked only with Latvia. When the internet "trolls" announced that they should go home, then we have to admit that they have nowhere to go – they're already at home. In my own case, I don't know where else my home would be. I'm here in Latvia.*

Alexander then put himself in his countrymen's shoes, first of all his mother's, who now, without Latvian citizenship, has an easier time travelling to visit her relatives in Arkhangelsk. She does not have citizenship nor has she strived to obtain it, because she thought she would receive it automatically.

*Imagine the lives of those lots of Russians who have settled and made their homes here, who get along well with all of their neighbours, who don't care whether a person is Latvian or Russian. When all of that suddenly began, then it was revealed that they would have to pass a test, while the neighbour next door [who is a drunkard – D. B.], he doesn't have to do anything. Before, we lived in a wrong, maybe skewed, country, but we all had the same passports. So why do I now have to go and get a new passport when my neighbour has also lived here since birth and he doesn't have to do anything like that?*

Alexander's story had been created by the accumulation of experiences and situations, and he was open to establishing a dialogue with me in order to seek an answer to what is, in his mind, unfairness in the issue of citizenship. I told him, however, that a large number of residents back then (about 400,000) voted against the independence of Latvia, when the *Interfront* was formed, which did all it could to delay the restoration of statehood. The interview became more and more of an active dialogue in which each side expressed its understanding of the situation that has arisen. I told about how we did not proclaim a new state in 1991; instead, we restored the state of Latvia founded in 1918, that international and national legal foundations of statehood required an accurate reconstruction of this state in order to right the injustices carried out against the Latvian nation. Alexander responded to my arguments:

*We're each in our own boat; each group has its own media, its own newspaper. In every era, people are born who then hear stories that have been mythologised. We're each in our own boat. The children who are born into divided boats, they inherit that hostility. And the hostility just keeps growing bigger. And that's not just among the Russians; it's also among the Latvians, because they, first of all, become intolerant. Not only Latvians but also Russians.*

The referendum in 2012 regarding a second official language in Latvia shone a bright light on the divided society, also creating an invisible border among those Russians who had obtained citizenship but nevertheless voted in great numbers to make Russian an official state language, not realising that this would be a serious threat to Latvian statehood. The divided media and divided education system continue to keep us in separate boats. And that then is one side of the problem, if only the boats were heading the same direction.

## HORIZONS OF INTERACTION

In Latvian culture and life stories we can define certain values that are expressed more often than others in life stories. These include "home" - a family's properties or

the parents' home that remains in the memory as having been lost or perhaps regained after independence. In my research on cultural references, I have come to the conclusion that the stories (narratives) I hear or read have often motivated people to make serious changes in their lives, such as leaving a stable job in the city to restore a rural property. Home, and more often a home in the countryside, is one of the icons of Latvian culture. We see this reflected in Latvian literature as well as in the fine arts – the Latvian landscape is unimaginable without a rural homestead, even if it appears far off in the distance.

In his lectures about literature, Russian literary scholar Dmitry Bykov has emphasised that Russian literature does not contain a specific ideal of the “home”, because Russian literature was more centred on reflecting the internal emotional experiences of people rather than their Environment (Bikovs, 2013). Therefore, in my interview with a Russian literary figure who still had vivid, warm, sincere memories of both of her grandmothers and her grandfather, the memories somehow correlated with the stories told in Latvian memory narratives. Her memories included stories about houses and creating a home as well as stories about books and caring for flowers. Tatiana was born after the war in Kaliningrad district; her father was a military officer:

*I was born in the town of Baltiysk, and I even clearly remember my medical card, on which Пиллау [Pillau – the original German name of this East Prussian town] was written in Cyrillic letters, then crossed out, and Балмуück [Baltiysk] written over it. That was at the time when the names were changed.*

Tatiana (b. 1948, NMV-4281) has a higher education and is a member of the Russian Literary Association; therefore her memories contain many well-considered and deeply understood nuances about the way in which the Soviet system formed young people. Having been influenced by her grandparents, she is well-read and already as a teenager had inherited an ability to criticise Soviet-era slogans and aesthetics. Several times in her life story she mentioned how her grandparents differed from other people around them:

*My grandfather and grandmother Zoja read books to us every day. But my grandfather was a great master - he created paintings - he drew lines on a piece of paper, transferred an image or magazine illustration, and then developed his étude for a painting. And that's how the big room in our apartment got its wonderful appearance. I remember an acquaintance coming to visit one time, and, as she entered the room, she clasped her hands together as if in prayer and said, “Oh God, how beautiful your home is!” I remember there was a flower bed under the each window of the house, and the residents in all of the apartments competed to see who had the most beautiful*

*flower bed.*

The stories of adults, and sometimes also their attitudes, remain in a person's mind; they leave an impression for a lifetime. Tatiana especially remembered how her family members, who held differing opinions about various political positions, perceived the death of the “great leader”:

*Stalin died, and everyone cried so hard. But our grandmothers weren't very ideological. But our grandfather was ideological. He believed that people had always, since ancient times, since the antique world, been waiting for the end of capitalism and then everything could be divided up amongst the poor. But the grandmothers were unusually clear thinkers and didn't believe that you could steal from others and then divide up the stolen goods amongst yourselves. They didn't believe that was a good idea.*

Her grandmothers' clear vision about life and values has accompanied Tatiana for her whole life and has helped her to develop a critical attitude towards ideological manipulations, to which even young children were subjected. She remembered the park in Baltiysk where she played as a child; there were plaster sculptures and large portraits of Stalin and Lenin painted on white canvases:

*The portraits were tightly pulled over the frames, but they meaningfully fluttered in the strong wind anyway. And next to these portraits, during some celebration or another, some strangers dared to ask me and my cousin, “Girls, whom do you love more - Grandfather Lenin or Grandfather Stalin?”*

In a way, Tatiana's childhood in the militarised town with a Soviet-era aesthetic and Soviet attitudes characterised the way in which the Soviet system broke down the boundary between the private and the public. Her story contrasts with the life stories of Latvians, in which the older generation remembers that if you met a stranger on the road, it was expected that you greeted him or her. This was a common part of rural life, but it was impossible in the city.

*It was like city life - people would arrive, for example, a family, and you'd never know whether they'd stay in Baltiysk or move away, say, to Mongolia. So it became the norm to not greet others; no one particularly tried to start a conversation or become friends with others.*

The alienation in people's daily interactions was also determined by the Stalinist repressions, and people tried to talk less in order to avoid saying anything superfluous. Tatiana's father, who was an army officer, was transferred to East Germany, but Tatiana's frequent illnesses forced

her to return to her grandmothers. Life with her parents in Germany as well as returning again to her native town led to contemplation and comparisons. Tatiana remembered that, while living in Baltiysk:

*There was a beautiful newspaper wall at school on which was an article titled "I am responsible for everything". I read the article and became ill. Because I became very aware of the fact that I wasn't capable of being responsible for everything... Because we had been given a task, and not just any task – [we had been tasked with] rectifying all of humanity.*

The postulates of Soviet ideology and loud slogans that communism would be victorious all across the globe were an element of street design in all major cities. In her teens, reading books and spending most of her time by herself, Tatiana seemed to have an incredible ability to grasp the gravity of ideological declarations and the impossibility of applying them to her life. Only after arriving in Latvia, where her family moved due to her father's transfer to a garrison in Latvia, did she hear the communist party's slogans criticised publicly for the first time "and even jokes told at school about Lenin and Stalin, and in general there was more internal freedom here".

Tatiana had vivid memories of her childhood, because her family moved several times, to different countries, and eventually ended up in Latvia. At first glance, the environment resembled that of Germany, and here, as she attended a Russian high school, she encountered a greater internal freedom and more tolerance from teachers towards students' opinions. Perhaps she did not express it directly, but her memories of her teenage years reveal an internal tension between what she saw and heard in her surroundings, which helped her to develop the ability to observe, perceive and change along with new experiences. Both of her grandmothers were intelligent women, and they often repeated the saying that:

*"Simplicity is worse than theft." In fact, there was a certain type of simplicity and trust, and I'm completely convinced that this simplicity and sense of trust was specially cultivated. A kind of pathetic style, naivety to the point of absurdity, and trust in everything - nowadays I understand that it was all part of the ideology.*

At the end of the interview, Tatiana contemplated her life and concluded that she is a Russian by birth and language, but she has never lived in Russia. She was born in a recently-occupied territory that still retained quite a bit of the old Königsberg; she also lived in East Germany and spent the rest of life after childhood in Latvia. She had spent her entire life in areas adjoining Russia, until one day she realised she lived in a different country.

The next interviewee expressed similar feelings in her life story. Her parents had also moved around often; the huge new country encouraged the development of a new kind of citizen who migrated from one place of residence to the next, because that was how one became acquainted with a large country. Everywhere they went, they sought a home in which to feel good, and everywhere they went, they sought a place to care for. But what if they were misunderstood and rejected?

## **I'M A CLASSIC OCCUPIER**

With this phrase Larisa (b. 1955, NMV-4240) introduced herself over the phone before we met at a library. A journalist by training, it seemed this was not the first time she had told her life story. It contained a resignation regarding the injustice she had experienced, and it seemed that she had expressed this many times before amongst her own people.

Larisa and her family have lived in Latvia since 1979, when her husband was transferred here for work. They settled in Latgale, the eastern part of the country. Larisa began the interview in Latvian but, feeling insecure, switched in Russian. She had studied in Orenburg, where she also got married. Her husband's first job was on the Baikal-Amur Mainline, or BAM, in 1976. Three years later he was transferred to Latvia. Larisa worked in the editorial offices of a newspaper, and the first purchase she made for the family was a Latvian dictionary, even though in Latgale her colleagues, including Latvians, more often spoke Russian amongst themselves. Learning the local language was thus more difficult.

Larisa quickly changed subjects and began talking about the beginning of the Atmoda, or National Reawakening. She advocated for the views of the *Tautas Fronte* (Popular Front of Latvia) and encouraged people to believe that everyone would be able to peacefully work and live together in an independent Latvia. But then the situation changed; in Larisa's view, the Latvians turned their backs on those whom they had promised citizenship. That is when she began feeling ashamed of her previous views and uncomfortable, because she felt responsible towards the people she had encouraged to support Latvian independence.

Larisa told about her parents, about how her father moved frequently in a search for a better place for his soul; therefore Larisa spent her childhood and adolescence in various parts of the Soviet Union. They also lived in the Virgin Lands, between the Kazakhs and Buryats:

*I don't know my husband's native land, either; I've only visited there. That's an unknown area for me. Also where I graduated from school in Orenburg; then we were in the Virgin Lands [Tselina]; then we had to move because Mother got sick. I feel no connection to that place either,*

*because basically there isn't anywhere in Russia I can call my native place. The place where I was born, I was a year old and then my parents moved to Ukraine, then the Virgin Lands. Maybe that's where I lived the longest, until 6<sup>th</sup> grade. If anything, my native place is in Latgale; that's where we spent the best ten years of our life. I fell in love with that area from the very first moment. We have friends there; that's also where our son was born.*

Frequent moving is characteristic not only of military families. Internal migration is an instrument in the unification of a large country, because as people move around, they bring along with them something from their previous lifestyles and thus help to form a single, common perception or world view across the country. In the interview, however, Larisa denied her initial comment about being a classic occupier, which she had supposedly said jokingly:

*But it's not really right to say that I'm a classic occupier, because I've endured countless legal proceedings in order to remain here to live. In 1992 we were refused citizenship here as well as the right to stay here and live independently. Many Latvians couldn't understand why I wasn't a citizen, because I spoke Latvian well. I could not be naturalised because I was a family member of an "enemy of the people". We were forced to take Russian citizenship.*

It was then my turn to ask why they had been rejected if the family was ready and willing to fulfil the requirements for naturalisation. Larisa said it was because of her husband, who had decided to take the opportunity to be demobilised simply in order to remain in Latvia:

*Because at that time there was a law that if a husband joined the reserves [Larisa's husband was a KGB officer; she says this at the end of the interview, but at this moment allows the listener to assume that her husband was an army officer – D. B.] before the Soviet army withdrew, then one could apply to remain in Latvia.*

I did not ask her whether she understood Latvia's responsibility as a state and concern about an officer of the Soviet Union's state security forces (KGB) not simply demobilising but joining the reserves and insistently wishing to remain here for life instead of returning to his ethnic homeland. Instead, I allowed her to continue talking and express her resentment:

*Russians say that "the law goes in the direction it's turned". That's why we took legal action to stay in Latvia. I myself would have rather just packed up our things and left, but my husband wanted to stay here as a matter of principle. And so our family was split up, because our daughter went to Russia to study because she couldn't apply to any schools here because she didn't have an*

*official registered place of residence here. And she remained there after her studies, too. Now we see our grandchildren once a year.*

I listened to the beginning of Larisa's story with understanding, about her disappointment in the independence process, that they were not given the opportunity to obtain citizenship, that citizenship was denied to her family even after several law suits against the Latvian state, until they were all forced to accept Russian citizenship. The situation of Larisa's family shows that some groups of former Soviet people, perhaps without even really being conscious of it, remain foreigners in Latvia because they do not understand the situation in which they have ended up.

This life story reveals a certain issue of self-awareness that has preoccupied Russians ever since the Stalin era, when the hypertrophic glorification of Russian culture and language began, and when people could be arrested for not speaking Russian. In fact, there existed a frightening everyday expression - "You don't love Russians?" - which, when said by someone in a chilling sort of tone, could mean that repressions might soon be under way. But by constantly being lauded as an exemplary nation that liberates all and brings culture and progress everywhere, one may over time lose a sense of reality and connection to one's surroundings. The KGB was a repressive apparatus of the Soviet system, and therefore the presence of Committee for State Security staff in an independent country is a matter of loyalty, especially when such employees do not retire but instead merely join the reserves.

## I CHOSE RIGA

*What do people usually begin with. My childhood was spent... seeing as I was born in Russia, in the small town of Bely, not far from Smolensk but which now belongs to Tver Oblast. It's a town that stood like a guard, protecting Moscow from attacks from the west. It guarded Moscow from the Lithuanians, the Poles, the Swedes, the French. After Napoleon's wars, it was the only town portrayed on that arch in Paris.*

Tatiana (b. 1964, NMV-4250) began telling her life story. She wished to speak only in Latvian, and she also wished to tell the story about how she ended up in Latvia. She began the narrative with an introduction to her native town, which I believe she had probably learned in school, namely, how to tell about their native town, a town with a heroic history as an outpost of Moscow.

*A childhood like any other. My family and I - my parents and older brother - lived in the centre of the town, but we spent the summers and winter vacation at our grandmother's house, which was by the river running*

*through the town. Grandma talked a lot about the family history. There was an important ritual at her house - the drinking of tea in the morning and evening, a coming together with all the snacks everyone had made.*

Now, in midlife and looking back on her life, Tatiana concluded that she had been raised by her father and grandmother (in her narrative, she consistently used the Germanic term *omīte* 'granny' often heard in Latvian, although as a child in Russia she had called her grandmother *babulya*), because her mother worked a lot and often also travelled for work; therefore Tatiana had more memories about time spent at her grandmother's house. I asked her whether she remembered the conversations while drinking tea, whether conversation was a significant family ritual in her grandmother's home. Tatiana then told about her own children and that she had established her grandmother's ritual of drinking tea around the *samovar* (a container for boiling water and preparing and dispensing tea) in her own home as well. However, they do it less often than at her grandmother's home, perhaps only once a week, when no one is hurrying anywhere and there's time for conversation. Also, her *samovar* runs on electricity.

*My grandmother was one of those people who couldn't stand talk about politics at the table. The family had suffered plenty: one daughter was an active Komsomol member and was regarded as responsible for the Soviet regime, but the other daughter kept to her old French-school lifestyle [she had graduated from the French high school]. My great-grandfather was an officer in the Tsar's army, my grandmother was from the Third Guild of merchants, and they had their own set of rules at home.*

I noticed an awkwardness in Tatiana's narrative, but I did not ask her again about it; instead, it revealed itself in a later conversation. I later learned that her own branch of the family came from the daughter who was an active Komsomol member, lived in Leningrad and, as the war broke out, sent her daughter (Tatiana's mother) to live with the other daughter, who lived in a safer environment in the small town of Bely – to the grandmother who had studied French at school and from whom Tatiana inherited her attitude towards life:

*I remember how she would open up her sunduk (dowry chest) and show the dresses and shoes. We later secretly took those shoes to wear to dances.*

They family spoke little of the repressions they had endured, because it was a painful topic. From their grandmother's stories, Tatiana knew that:

*[the repressions] were quite difficult. My great-grandfather suffered repressions in 1938; he was taken and never returned. The same thing happened during the Second*

*World War, my grandfather was arrested. My grandmother went to the labour camp in Georgia to try to get him out of there.*

Family members were not always allowed to visit those who had been arrested and punished; an arrest was often even accompanied by a ban on the arrestee corresponding with his or her family. Tatiana's grandfather was deported to a penal battalion, where he worked on the construction of a military road in Georgia. In general, repressions became a part of the next generation's life stories and also their identities. The 1930s were not the only decade full of indescribable suffering in many families (Merridale, 1999); the post-war years and silence also play a role in these difficult emotional experiences.

When asked how she ended up in Latvia, Tatiana responded with her family's story about wartime. Her mother's mother died during the blockade of Leningrad, and her mother was sent to live with her aunt in Bely as a young girl:

*In early 1943, when the Germans were leaving Smolensk, they gathered up people and put them on trains, and I don't know how, but that train ended up in Aizkraukle [in Latvia] and stood there for a while, so that my grandmother and mother somehow escaped from the train. My grandmother didn't talk much about that.*

There are silenced topics in almost every life story, such as a grandmother's or mother's heroic act to save family members:

*There in Aizkraukle they met Marija, who lived nearby and hid my grandmother and the little girl. My mother was eight years old at the time. For many years after the war, my grandmother still visited Marija from time to time. In the years following the war, she helped us out with produce, she helped us out in all kinds of ways.*

The unusual rescue story became the foundation of a long friendship between two families. Tatiana remembered coming to Latvia for the first time with her mother and grandmother, a trip that turned out to be a fateful event in her life:

*The fact that they escaped and survived, maybe that's also why I later didn't want to end up anywhere else besides Latvia. The first time I came was at age twelve, when we spent Christmas vacation with the family that had saved my mother's family. That image of Riga remained in my memory. I was in Riga for only one day, one stroll through a Riga lit up with lights in wintertime, and it was decisive in my life. (NMV-4250)*

The friendship with the family in Aizkraukle was sincere. They also had a daughter of a similar age, and the two girls began calling themselves cousins. After finishing

eighth grade, at the age of fourteen, Tatiana packed her suitcase and came to Riga in secret, without telling her parents. It was fairly easy to travel around back then, and Tatiana decided to stay in Latvia and begin her studies here. She admitted that the lure of Riga - from a single stroll through the wintry city - had embedded itself in her memory.

Tatiana said that, when she had grown a little older, her mother took her along on business trips and other travels; she had been in many cities across the Soviet Union and had also seen Lake Baikal in Siberia. She liked Moscow and Saint Petersburg, but nothing could change her decision to continue her schooling in Riga. Tatiana remembers that at that time an officially registered place of residence in Latvia was required to apply to the colleges in Latvia, and therefore she was forced to switch from her selected field of study in pedagogy to nursing, where such a registration was not necessary. Later, when she was already working as a nurse at the Children's Hospital, she quickly learned the Latvian language, because there were children at the hospital from all across Latvia, and not all of them knew Russian.

In the late 1980s Tatiana was trained in a new specialty, podology. This new specialty brought new patients into her life, including some who had personally witnessed Latvia's time as an independent republic. The patients became interesting conversation partners who gladly spoke about history as well. Regarding modern-day Latvia, Tatiana admitted that she would have liked to have lived during the time of Ulmanis (the president of Latvia from 1936 to 1940). In one part of Latvian society, the Ulmanis era, especially following the coup in May 1934, remains the country's "golden era". This is a part of the social memory of older Latvians, which Tatiana, as an open and kind person, picked up from her patients. They, in turn, shared with her their political views and told such vivid stories of life in the independent republic that they also conjured an image of Latvia's happy period for Tatiana, who had grown up in the Soviet system. That is the nature of narrative – to bring a message from the past that is endowed with the idealism of that era and with it "cast an anchor" in a different era and society. Narratives of the prosperous Ulmanis era can be found amongst a part of Latvian society, but I had never before heard it from a Russian.

## THE TRAJECTORIES OF LIFE STORIES

The Latvian life story collection focuses on the suffering brought about by the Second World War, deportations and the loss of the Latvian state. By listening to the life stories of Russians and other non-Latvians, we see that they contain similar stories, such as the silence of parents about family members who had suffered repressions, thus hoping to protect their own children from complications in life. Latvian families also remained silent

because the loss of the Latvian state brought the threat of repressions and deportation. Why the silence in Russian families?

The life stories again reveal to us a reminder of how the Soviet system created a new society through brutal power. It was an intentional "kingdom of righteousness" that was built with terror and mistrust and demanded constant loyalty from citizens to the new ideals. To achieve this, people had to forget their pasts, who they were, who were their family. Families tried to forget, hide and conceal anything that could potentially harm their children's lives.

The memories of families were interrupted or at least kept far from "the light of day". But silent zones and untold stories nevertheless find people as soon as they develop a natural desire to understand themselves, which people do through their family stories. The untold can hit a person hard, sometimes even targeting the physical body like an invisible weapon, making it suffer for things it does not know and understand the fates of family members and loved ones; years of repressions aimed at parents can be experienced as a stigma, as seen in the life stories of Victor and Boris.

Russian life stories do not bypass the period of the Soviet system, memories of which are as just as diverse - from the time of the Russian Empire and the experiences of military families to reflections in which people have found the true story of their family and thus, often through pain, also their own identity, or are on their way to doing so. Belonging to the society in which they live means creating an identity from the social context. This context is contradictory but open, which gives a person the opportunity to become acquainted with and understand it. The stories analysed in this paper show that understandings of one's situation in modern-day Latvia differ, just like the memories of life under the Soviet system and their parents' experiences differ.

It has become a habit to speak of two separate communities in Latvia, which I wish to call into question with this paper. This view is based on memory groups, which differ not only among Latvians but also among Russians and so-called Russian speakers; these memory groups are different, and they also confront each other. The aforementioned life stories show only a small part of this diversity. Some narrators are able to recognise the colonial policies of the Soviet regime, as seen in Dmitri's story and the candid story of self-awareness that Victor told after learning about the fates of his family members as the result of Stalinist repressions, through which he gained a new sense of self-awareness and sense of belonging to Latvia. Tatiana's life story shows that one can be raised in a military family, but her grandparents' intelligent outlook on life taught her to look critically at her surroundings, and this influence made her open, upon her arrival in Latvia, to the land, culture and language of that country, where she has spent the rest of her life. The events in Larisa's life, on the other hand, are not reflected

upon with an understanding of her participation in the policies of the Soviet system; the families of KGB employees who arrived in Latvia as a result of Soviet policies often did not see themselves as an instrument of Soviet power.

Regarding Russia's post-Soviet period, Russian historian Yuri Afanasiev reminds us that lost history is lost identity. Soviet history was something the regime manipulated and used to create a collective mythology, and overcoming this requires a history that frees people's memories (Афанасьев, 1995). One story can encourage others to look at the Soviet experience from a critical perspective and gain the courage to form a new identity in the land in which they have chosen to live. The sense of belonging to a country of residence that has become a second homeland can develop from a new understanding of the history of one's own family and ethnic community.

In Latvia today we can only very conditionally speak of collective memory as something monolithic; instead, it is more likely to consist of groups of collective memory through which we can search for not only for what is different (for example, memory conflicts in Latvian or Russian life stories) but also for the interspace in memory that allows us to see our common experience (such as life in a repressive totalitarian society). A concealed and deformed family history in life stories can awaken and affect the memories of larger groups, because remembering and memory is like a form of "transportation" that is in constant motion and makes connections between individuals. This could also be one of the ways how and why memories of events in which individuals have not participated are still attributed to themselves and included in the formation of their personal identity (Wegner, 1986).

Individual and group memories are people's and society's opportunity to hear each other. Jacques Derrida calls this the opening up of oneself to another in a common, unifying project. That other person, or anyone else, who was perhaps a stranger before listening to the story, can become a partner in a dialogue in a society in which many groups have experienced a breach in memory and thus also in their understanding of themselves.

György Schöpflin, who has studied the minorities of Hungary, has commented that the Latvian situation involves a previously dominant minority, a previously dominated majority and an aggressive neighbour. This results in a high level of insecurity on the part of both the majority and the minority, psychologically they both feel like minorities. In such a situation, each of the groups perceives the initiatives of the other with the highest possible degree of suspicion and there is a low level of trust in political institutions, with each group thus focusing on itself. Issues are perceived in an even more acute manner due to the fact that the minority sees itself as a historical minority (which it is, but only partially), while the majority sees the minority as immigrants and colonists.

The fact that the minority inhabits the cities hinders the construction of urban models characteristic of modernity, in which the majority dominates. The minority, for its part, must understand that one of the most vivid symptoms of the majority's dissatisfaction is a very high level of emigration. According to Schöpflin, a way out of this situation is to be found by gradually establishing mutual trust, which is the responsibility of both the majority and the minority. He also mentions symbolic gestures of confidence in the Latvian state, the rejection of Russian intervention, and recognition of the fact that the majority has a minority mindset (Schöpflin, 2006).

The shifting horizons of memories may connect or move apart, but it is important for them to be in dialogue, with the intention of seeking and evaluating themselves and the social and political environment, because we are united by the Latvian state.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

## REFERENCES

- Annus E (2012). The Problem of Soviet Colonialism in the Baltics. *Journal of Baltic Studies* 43(1):21-45.
- Applebaum A (2012). *Iron curtain: the crushing of Eastern Europe 1944-56*. Penguin UK.
- Applebaum A (2015). *Between East and West: Across the Borderlands of Europe*. Introduction to the 2015 edition. New York: Penguin Books. Available at: [https://www.amazon.com/Between-East-West-Across-Borderlands-ebook/dp/0679421505/ref=la\\_B0011QULQS\\_1\\_4?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1471514211&sr=1-4](https://www.amazon.com/Between-East-West-Across-Borderlands-ebook/dp/0679421505/ref=la_B0011QULQS_1_4?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1471514211&sr=1-4)
- Barnes SA (2011). *Death and redemption: the Gulag and the shaping of Soviet society*. Princeton University Press.
- Bela B (2010). Dzīvesstāsti kā resurs sabiedrības izpētē: Nacionālās Mutvārdu vēstures projekts [Life stories as a resource for public research: The National Oral History Project]. *Socioloģija Latvijā [Sociology in Latvia]*. Rīga: LU Akadēmiskais apgāds P 384.
- Bhabha H (2004). *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge P 211.
- Bikovs D (2013). "Открытый урок с Дмитрием Быковым. "Преступление и наказание" - странный русский детектив [Lecture about F. Dostoevsky – "An open lesson with Dmitry Bykov". Crime and Punishment: An unusual Russian detective]. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kxwcA9NAeCY>
- Breyfogle N, Schrader A, Sunderland W (Eds.) (2007). *Peopling the Russian periphery: borderland colonization in Eurasian history*. Routledge.
- Caldicott E, Fuchs A (2003). Introduction. In: Caldicott E and Fuchs A (eds.), *Cultural Memory: Essays on European Literature and History*. Berlin: Peter Lang pp. 12-13.
- Cepurītis M, Gulbis R (2012). Ārpolitikas mīti Latvijā. Eiropas Savienība un Krievija [Foreign Policy Myths in Latvia: The European Union and Russia]. Rīga: LVMBFAF. P 79.
- Derrida J (1988). *The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation*. University of Nebraska Press P 6.
- Derrida J (1992). *The Other Hearing: Reflections on Today's Europe*. Indiana University Press pp. 76-77.
- Dribins L (2004). Etniskās un nacionālās minoritātes Eiropā. Vēsture un mūsdienas [Ethnic and National Minorities in Europe: History and the Modern Day]. LU FSI, Rīga P 113.
- Erickson CW (2008). J. Hedenskog, V. Konnander, B. Nygren, I. Oldberg and Ch. Pursiainen (eds.), *Russia as a Great Power: Dimensions of Security Under Putin*, London: Routledge, 2005, 464

- pages. *The Journal of Power Institutions in Post-Soviet Societies*. Pipss.org, (8).
- Faidzīss O (2010). Čukstētāji: privātā dzīve Stalīna Krievijā [The Whisperers: Private Life in Stalin's Russia]. Rīga: Zvaigzne, 2010.
- Gadamers HG (1999). Patiesība un metode. Rīga: Jumava 508 p.
- Habermas J (1992). Citizenship and National Identity: Some Reflections on the Future of Europe. *Praxis Internazionale* 12, April, pp. 1-19.
- Hanovs D (2014). Nācijas koncepts kā starpkultūru komunikācijas procesa ietvars. Situācija Latvijā [The concept of nation as a framework for the intercultural communication process: The situation in Latvia]. *Nācijas hronikas. Latvija 2014. Debates*. [Chronicles of the Nation. Latvia 2014. Debate.] Rīga, LU LFMI. P 226.
- Hirsch F (2005). Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union (Culture and Society after Socialism). Cornell University Press P 1.
- Jameson F (1986). Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism. In: *Social Text*. P 69.
- Jones P (Ed.) (2006). The dilemmas of de-Stalinization: negotiating cultural and social change in the Khrushchev era. Routledge.
- Kalniete S (2001). Ar balles korpēm Sibīrijas sniegos. Atēna.
- Kalniete S (2009). With dance shoes in Siberian snows. Dalkey Archive Press.
- King GJ, McNabb DE (2015). Nation-Building in the Baltic States: Transforming Governance, Social Welfare, and Security in Northern Europe. ISBN 9781482250718
- Kļave E, Zepa B (2010). Etniskā integrācija Latvijā – pētnieciskais diskurss [Ethnic integration in Latvia – the research discourse]. In: Tisenkopfs T (eds.) *Socioloģija Latvijā [Sociology in Latvia]*, Rīga: LU Akadēmiskais apgāds pp. 201-219.
- Kochetkova I (2009). The myth of the Russian intelligentsia: Old intellectuals in the new Russia (Volume 62). Routledge.
- Korosevic N (2008). Narrating Post/Communism: Colonial Discourse and Europe's Borderline Civilization. London: Routledge P 20.
- Kovacevic N (2008). Narrating post/communism: colonial discourse and Europe's borderline civilization. Routledge.
- Merridale C (1999). War, death, and remembrance in Soviet Russia. In: Winter J and Sivan E (eds.). *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge University Press P 76.
- Mintauris M (2014). Nacionālisms, koloniālisms, postkoloniālisms: par dažiem padomju politikas mantojuma aspektiem Latvijā [Nationalism, colonialism, post-colonialism: Some aspects of the heritage of Soviet policies in Latvia]. In: *Nācijas hronikas. Latvija 2014. Debates* [Chronicles of the Nation. Latvia 2014. Debate]. Rīga, LU LFMI. P 133.
- Muižnieks N (2004). Russians in Latvia: History, Current Status and Prospectus. Rīga: Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Available at: <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/en/policy/society-integration/integration/russians-in-latvia-history-current-status-and-prospectus>
- Oberlanders E (2004). Nacionālās elites zaudēšana Baltijas valstīs [The Loss of the National Elite in the Baltic States]. pp. 53-54. Available at: [http://www.arhivi.lv/sitedata/ZURNALS/zurnalu\\_raksti/50-61-Oberlanders.pdf](http://www.arhivi.lv/sitedata/ZURNALS/zurnalu_raksti/50-61-Oberlanders.pdf)
- Ozoliņa Ž (2016). Societal Security: Inclusion-Exclusion Dilemma. A Portrait of the Russian-Speaking Community in Latvia. Rīga: Zinātne pp. 218-219.
- Pleps J (2012). 'Politika.lv': In one language. Delfi. Latvia. Available at: <https://www.delfi.lv/news/versijas/janis-pleps-politikaviena-valoda.d?id=42617190>
- Riekstiņš J (2015). Padomju impērijas koloniālā politika un Latvijas kolonizācija [Colonial Policies of the Soviet Empire and the Colonisation of Latvia]. Rīga: Tieslietu ministrija [Ministry of Justice].
- Schöpflin G (2006). Nācijas, valstis un etnicitāte Centrālajā un Austrumeiropā [Nations, states and ethnicity in Central and Eastern Europe], 2006. Available at: <http://providus.lv/article/nacijas-valstis-un-etnicitate-centralaja-un-austrumeiropa>
- Skujenieks M (1927). Latvija. Zeme un iedzīvotāji [Latvia. Country and Inhabitants]. Rīga: Gulbja apgāds pp. 257-258.
- Stern L (2006). Western Intellectuals and the Soviet Union, 1920-40: From Red Square to the Left Bank. Routledge.
- Šulmane I (2002). Profesionālais diskurss latviešu un krievu presē: Salīdzinošā analīze (valsts svētki – sabiedrības vienotībai vai sašķelšanai?) [Professional discourse in the Latvian and Russian press: A comparative analysis (national holidays – for unity or the fragmentation of society?)], *Komunikācija. Kultūra, sabiedrība, mediji* [Communication: Culture, society, media]. LU Raksti, (648): 158-179.
- Thompson P (2000). *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*. Oxford University Press P 1.
- Wegner DM (1986). *Transactive Memory: A Contemporary Analysis of the Group Mind*. In: Mullen B and Goethals GR (eds.) *Theories of Group Behavior*. New York: Springer-Verlag P 186.
- Афанасьев ЮН (1995). Как России заново обрести свою историю [How Russia rediscovered its history] // Россия, XX век: Сер. науч. тр.; Проспект / Рос. гос. гуманит. ун-т. М. P 6. Available at: <http://www.yuri-afanasiev.ru/bibliohron.html>
- Рыжакова СИ (2003). «Латышскость» в зеркале этнокультурных стереотипов и образов. Мультикультурализм и этнокультурные процессы в меняющемся мире [“Latvianess” in the Mirror of Ethnocultural Stereotypes and Images: Multiculturalism and Ethnocultural Processes in a Changing World]. Москва, Аспект Пресс P 150.
- Томпсон Э (2007). Имперское знание: русская литература и колониализм [Thompson E (2000) Imperial knowledge: Russian literature and colonialism] [quoted after translation Перекрестки [Crossroads]]. P 32.

## Sources

Interviews from the National Oral History project.

“Etniskā un naratīvā dažādība dzīvesstāstu konstrukcijās Latvijā” [Ethnic and narrative diversity in life story constructions in Latvia], LZP, Nr. 370/2012 – NMV 3872, 4240 (the name of the narrator has been changed), 4250, 4241, 4249, 4281, 4282.