

THE LAST PRISONERS OF THE COLD WAR

***The
Stateless
People
of Latvia
in their
own Words***

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The Greens | European Free Alliance
in the European Parliament

Main Contributors

- © Miroslavs Mitrofanovs
- © Aleksandrs Gamaļejevs
- © Viktors Jolkins
- © Vladimirs Buzajevs
- © Aleksejs Dimitrovs
- © Tatjana Ždanoka

Foreword

Twenty years have passed since the end of the Cold war. Fifteen years have passed since the USSR dissolved giving rise to either new or restored independent states. The years that followed contained a lot of both happy and tragic events, but the general outcome is not in doubt - the end of the Cold War opened the way for the reunification of Europe based on the common values of freedom, democracy and human rights.

The end of each war in history usually results in the redistribution of territory, property and punishment of the vanquished. The side defeated in the Cold war is more or less evident. But still the discussion continues on who personally is guilty for the policy of communist governments and how they should be punished. This discussion is not only encouraged by some politicians, but is the aspiration of a substantial part of society. The politicians respond to this by saying how Russia must apologise for the crimes of communism and compensate the losses and moral sufferings of the peoples of Eastern Europe. But Russia is too important for the West to become a scapegoat in the present situation. Some people think the former communist leaders should be punished depending on their level of personal guilt. But a long time has passed and the old generation of communists who were most closely engaged in the repressions has left the political stage. The new generation of European communists participated in democratic reforms and has become an integral part of the modern political system. So, who would be punished for the crimes of the past?

Some nations found a local solution. The most radical of them was invented in the Baltic countries of Latvia and Estonia - the states punished their local Russian-speaking minorities. An MEP Rihards Pīks (EPP-ED), asked by a journalist whether Latvians should forgive Russian-speakers for the mistakes committed by the USSR, replied, *"the Bible says, children must pay for the sins of their parents"*¹.

After the restoration of independence sixteen years ago, all permanent residents of Latvia and

Estonia who were not descendants of citizens of the first period of independence (1918-1940), were deprived of political and some social rights. One third of the population of Latvia found themselves in the artificial status of "Latvian non-citizens". This status means that a non-citizen doesn't have citizenship of any country but at the same time cannot claim to be a stateless person. Replying to a Latvian Russian-speaking journalist who'd asked *"What are we now in Latvia?"*, Mr. Visvaldis Lācis, a former officer of the Latvian Waffen Division of the SS, but currently - publicist and ideological inspirer of nationalistic Latvian youth, said - *"Now you are nothing"*. The Russian-speaking minority of this country became the last prisoners of the Cold war.

The solution of dividing people into citizens and "non-citizens" was purely political in nature. From a legal point of view another way was also possible - the neighbouring country of Lithuania at the moment its independence was restored adopted the "zero option" granting citizenship rights to all its residents. The Latvian invention of non-citizen status provided for the exclusion of the minority from sharing in power and stabilized majority support for radical liberal reforms carried out by right wing governments. Due to reform Latvia has become the poorest country of the European Union, and has the highest rate of depopulation. But even the poorest Latvians are still voting in favour of right wing parties as a kind of revenge for communist repression.

Why is the Latvian approach to the local Russian minority so radical? This attitude is grounded in Latvia's dramatic history. Seven centuries of foreign domination was interrupted only in the beginning of the twentieth century when Latvia gained independence. During the First World War and the first independence period the share of ethnic minorities dropped from 40% in 1914² to 23% in 1935. At that time ethnic Russians made up one tenth of the population.

In 1940 the country was forcefully annexed by the Soviet Union. Several waves of communist

repression as well as the Second World War caused the loss of more than 300,000 inhabitants. The national resistance against the Soviets went on until the beginning of 1950s. Then both the repressions and the resistance drew to a close and the Latvian elite decided that the only way for the country's development was integration into the Soviet system. Latvia became a loyal republic of the Soviet Union. It had the highest share of scientists, developed agriculture and modern industry. Industrial development was performed by attracting labour from Russia and other territories of the USSR. Labour migration led to the growth of the Russian-speaking minority which reached 40% of the population at the end of the Soviet era.

The end of the Cold war which led to national independence for the Baltic countries also brought up the issue of guilt for the communist repressions of the 40s and early 50s, as well guilt for the discomfort caused by changes in ethnic proportions. Who would pay? There were not a lot of options for revenge for the past. The Soviet totalitarian empire had disappeared. The new democratic Russia supported the restoration of the independent states and could not become the main enemy at that time. The overwhelming majority of Latvian communists had moved successfully to liberal and right wing parties. It was not possible to punish all those who had collaborated with the Soviets because in this case the majority of the Latvian elite - its journalists, artists, scientists, managers and lawyers would have had to be punished too. In such circumstances the local Russian-speaking minority was chosen as a target group for avenging historic grievances. Those of them, who had arrived in Latvia during Soviet times became stateless, those Russians who were the descendents of citizens of the first independent state (up to 25% of registered citizens of Latvia in 1993) were excluded from the decision-making process by unwritten laws of ethnic discrimination. The definition "you are nothing" affected both parts of the Latvian Russian-speaking community.

What has changed in sixteen years of independence? The Russian-speaking citizens of Latvia became more active in politics, but their position is still not taken into consideration relating to issues of minority education or the use of languages. The problem of mass scale statelessness is still acute. The number of non-citizens declined from 700,000 to 400,000. Now they make up no more than 20% of the population. More than a hundred thousand of them became Latvian citizens; the rest of the "disappeared non-citizens" mostly died due to poor social conditions or left the country.

The process of naturalisation started only in 1996. At present non-citizens do not have the right to participate in local elections (newcomers from EU countries enjoy this right). Non-citizens cannot travel without a visa within the EU. Restrictions relating to more than sixty professions are still in force concerning Latvian non-citizens, as well as discrimination in calculating pensions. After sixteen years of independence, after Latvia joined the EU and NATO it is still holding 400,000 Cold War prisoners "liberating" them slowly and reluctantly. The existing rate of naturalisation would only provide a solution for the problem over a period of 40 years. This means that the majority of non-citizens of the old generation will never enjoy equal rights with Latvian citizens. No exception from the rules is made even for the specific group of former prisoners of Nazi concentration camps, persons forcibly moved to Latvia during World War II or the refugees of that war, who did not have homes to return to.

Why is the process of dealing with the problem of mass statelessness so slow? Launching the naturalisation process was not a goodwill gesture by the Latvian political elite but the result of heavy pressure by the EU and other foreign powers. The former Prime minister and leader of the "Latvian Way" party (ALDE) Mr. Ivars Godmanis gave a frank evaluation: *"There is the Citizenship law that stipulates the order of naturalisation. And please don't say the order is very easy. Why is it that so many people failed to gain citizenship within 15 years? This means the law is not so 'soft'... At the same time the law is supported by our Western allies and it is a good tool against Russian attacks. We can always say the law meets the requirements of universal standards"*³.

Latvian citizenship law is based on the same principles as similar laws in many other European countries (five year residency qualification, examinations in the state language and history, anthem and oath). But this law is not adapted to the specific conditions of modern Latvia where the main target group – the non-citizens clearly remember the time they had full citizen rights and participated in the democratic elections of 1989 and 1990. The majority of non-citizens do not see themselves to be real foreigners in Latvia for whom examinations and oath would be the appropriate way of integration. The older non-citizens are alienated from the state because of a combination of factors including age, health and poverty. When your monthly income is only 125 Euros (the average pension in Latvia) it is too difficult to think about any examination, history or oaths. A significant portion of non-citizens have problems

with the Latvian language because they have spent their working lives in predominantly Russian-speaking workplaces and are living in a Russian-language environment. In such circumstances only one third of recent non-citizens are going to pass through the naturalisation process⁴.

Any attempt to improve the law is opposed severely by the ruling parties. The chairman of the People's party of Latvia (EPP-ED) Mr. Atis Slakteris said: *"The citizenship law is strong and there is no need to redraft it. If we open the law it gives an opportunity for enemies of Latvia to ask for a softening of the law"*⁵. But Mr. Slakteris didn't express the most radical position - another part of the Latvian political elite campaigns to make the law more restrictive.

The party "For Fatherland and Freedom" (UEN) regularly tries to end the process of naturalisation. The leader of the party and vice-chairman of the Latvian parliament Mr. Jānis Straume expressed this wish: *"I don't see any obstacle as to why the departure of non-citizens must not be supported. They are still living in Russian speaking environments and belong to this country only through formal reasons. The majority of them do not hide their hatred for Latvians. It is not worth postponing this process in the name of integration. People who were ready to join an ethnic Latvian environment passed the naturalisation process a long time ago. Also I do not see why the naturalisation should not be stopped or restricted"*⁶. The approach is supported by the former Minister of defence, the MEP Mr. Valdis Girts Kristovskis ("For Fatherland and Freedom", UEN): *"We cannot hope that people who found themselves in Latvia because of a political process, who live here and take part in the country's economy will become conscientious helpers of the Latvian state"*⁷. In the first part of 2006 the party of Mr. Kristovskis and Mr. Straume three times tried to put forward bills supporting the suspension of naturalisation. The bills were not supported by the rest of the right wing parties because they are content with the slow rate of naturalisation

which will take decades and will not affect the two thirds of today's stateless residents.

The Latvian non-citizens are not indifferent towards their own fate. They take part in protest actions as well in appealing to international organisations. The official position of the state towards the protests is expressed by Mr. Ojars Kalnins, the director of the Latvian state institute (the general establishment for state propaganda): *"Journalists ask – what is the situation with your Russians? We reply – the problem is not in Latvia, the problem is in Moscow and it is a political, not a human problem"*⁸.

So officially Latvia denies its responsibilities towards the situation facing twenty per cent of the country's people who do not possess any citizenship and blames neighbouring country for the problems. Some conservative politicians defend the current slow process of naturalisation, another part asks for its suspension and the "repatriation" of non-Latvians.

But how do the non-citizens see the situation? What do they actually hate and love? What are the vivid hopes of the "Last Prisoners of the Cold War?" Our book is a selection of personal stories from thirty one Latvian non-citizens of different ages and occupations.



On behalf of the editorial team
Miroslav Mitrofanov
(Miroslavs Mitrofanovs)⁹

¹ European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, Council of Europe November 2005, Study on the use of racist, antisemitic and xenophobic elements in political discourse, Jean-Yves Camus.

² Balodis A. "Latvijas un latviešu tautas vēsture", "Kabata" grāmatu apgāds, Rīga, 1991

³ "Latvijas avīze", July 14, 2005

⁴ Survey Baltic Institute of Social Sciences, "Ethnopolitical Tension in Latvia: Looking for the Conflict Solution", Riga, 2005

⁵ "Latvijas avīze", January 23, 2006

⁶ "Latvijas avīze", December 05, 2005

⁷ "Latvijas avīze", November 05, 2005

⁸ "Latvijas avīze", January 12, 2006

⁹ Latvian spelling of names shown in brackets, here and throughout the book.

Elvira Ilyahina

(Elvira Iljahina)

73 years old. Born in Byelorussia in 1932. In 1943 she was sent to the "Salaspils" concentration camp in Latvia. She is a chemical engineer by profession. Has worked all her life at the big textile works "Rīgas Manufaktūra", rising from various posts and over the years reached the position of director of the works. Currently a pensioner, she is head of the Latvian Association for Child Prisoners of Fascism – "Remembrance for the Future". She has an adult daughter and a grandson.



I was taken to the "hospital" quarters and was laid on a white covered table, my arm was bandaged over the elbow and a needle was injected at the curve, blood started to drip into a glass bowl and they took approximately 300 grams. This was later repeated several times.

I was born to the family of a military doctor in Pollotsk oblast, Byelorussia not far from the Byelorussian and Latvian border. My parents worked at a military hospital and I together with my sister Nadya, who is one and a half years older than I, spent most of the time at our Granny's in Kartyenievo village, some two kilometres from the military town. That was our main family home. In 1937 Nadya started primary school and I was reluctant to stay at home. Although I was only 5 years old at the time, I was also admitted to the school, and was quite advanced for a child of my age – I knew how to read and write in Polish and Russian, count to over a hundred, how to subtract and add. So, my life's journey had begun but its course was interrupted by the war.

On 22 June, 1941 we were all awoken by a massive roar – bombs were exploding. So that was the start of World War II for me and my family, and with each new day our lives became a living hell.

The bombing and shelling continued, and soon artillery could be heard. Soviet forces were retreating and all the inhabitants of our village hid in a big forest ravine. By the beginning of August 1941 the German troops invaded our village. From the first days of occupation they began to hunt down certain civilians, arresting people who were suspected of participation in the Communist party, young activists, state institution workers, kolkhoz and village soviet workers, teachers and many other categories of people. The fascists began resolving the "Hebrew question" on the spot – they purposefully wiped out people of Jewish decent. On the streets they snatched anybody slightly resembling a Jew and sent them for slaughter.

I cannot really describe in full the horror of those days, as the establishment of the "new German order" continued to develop in ever more sinister ways. At the end of 1942 they started de-

stroying peaceful settlements. They completely ravaged villages and homes together with children, young and old people and even burnt people alive inside their houses. In the Osveyskiy region of Byelorussia alone 11,383 peaceful inhabitants were burnt alive and shot, and more than 14,000 adults and children were sent to concentration camps in Latvia, Poland and Germany.

On 23 February, 1943 at 10 a.m. our village of Kartyenievo together with neighbouring villages was surrounded by armed men. Three of them broke into our house and ordered us out onto the street. They issued an order: "All cattle should be taken to the village square"! They did not give us time for preparations at all. I and my sister heard unfamiliar words which our Granny said to the men and she received an angry reply from one of them and he rattled his sub-machine gun.

Our Granny was born in Kurlandia and so spoke Latvian. Upon hearing Latvian she told them: "Two children and a woman live here, why are treating us like this"? These words made them angry and they shouted: "You should have been shot in the first place"! But these words could be understood only by our Granny. Later we found out that policemen from the Latvian penalty battalion spoke this language which was foreign to us.

All of the inhabitants were driven into a freezing cold barn. The temperature was -25°C. Opposite the barn was a stack of straw, we were ordered to bring straw into the barn and were told: "Like that you shall burn faster". However, at 5 a.m. another order was issued and we were sent on foot to the railway station, which was 5 kilometres away. At the station we were all driven into freight carriages and sent to Latvia, to the Salaspils concentration camp.

In a few days time, late at night our Mom was told to get off her bunk bed and was taken away. It turned out later that she was taken to the camp hospital for medical experiments. I and my sister Nadya were left with our Granny.

One morning, armed prison guards entered our barracks and issued an order



for everyone to strip. Many did not really believe this order and did not follow it. Sub-machine guns were instantly clanked and everyone undressed. We were ordered outside and naked and barefoot we were driven over the ice and snow to another shed. There lay heaps of hair – separated: fair, dark blond, black... After the haircut we proceeded to "decontamination" which we had to endure under a cold shower where the shower heads protruded along the length of the barrack. It was impossible to evade this shower which for many prisoners became the last shower of their lives. After the "shower", all naked and wet we were driven outside and into another barrack where on a concrete floor laid a stack of straw. So we were stationed: men, women, babies, infants and the elderly.

It was unbearably cold and scary. Our Granny tried her best to warm us up with her body warmth. Many got sick and died. In two and a half days time we were taken to our first barrack where various clothes and shoes were scattered. We were ordered to get dressed. However, we could not find our own things, so I had to wear different sized boots. And so intimidated and hungry we were turned into vagabonds.

A few days after the "decontamination" we were all taken outside where they started to separate children from their parents, sorting them out according to their age. Little ones were forcefully torn away from their mums. People

It is really frightening that neo-Nazi forces are active in Latvia, they are reminiscent of the things I experienced in the school of fascism and violence as a child. Those words I heard at that time, I frequently hear today.

Limitations for non-citizens cannot be accepted as measures to rectify past injustices. Even before the independence, ethnic Latvians dominated the most prestigious positions in the society.

were crying and screaming. The adults were also sorted by age groups. Moms and dads tried to scream some farewell words to children torn from them. My sister, Granny and I found ourselves in different groups. We were allocated different barracks. While at Salaspils concentration camp, we had no news of one another, nor of our mother. I was put into the children's barrack with kids aged 8 - 12 years.

Soon after that, we children who had been deprived of our parents, underwent forced medical experiments, they took our blood and made us swallow different pills. I was taken to the "hospital" quarters and was laid on a white covered table, my arm was bandaged over the elbow and a needle was injected at the curve, blood started to drip into a glass bowl and they took approximately 300 grams. This was later repeated several times. After such procedures I could barely walk.

During the summer, children of different ages were sent away. I was taken by a farmstead owner to work at his farm. My day started at five in the morning and in summer it was over around eleven at night or even midnight. My duties included tending to nine or ten cows and prior to taking the cows to the fields, in the afternoon and in the evening, I had to help clean the cow shed, milk the cows and bring water. My mistress was angry at me for milking cows, as she was able to milk 8 - 9 cows, and owing to my little hands could not master milking one cow. That was the beginning of my experience of child slavery, which to this day remains for me and several thousand other people living in Latvia, not recognised at all.

I must admit that I was really lucky, as in autumn 1943 my Mom found me with the help of a married couple - Irena and Eduard Semashko. Mom was working at the time at the textile works "Rīgas Manufaktūra" and was allowed to attend Roman Catholic Church. There she met a Polish lady, Irena Semashko, who out of compassion for Mom's sorrow helped find me.

The owner of the farm where I was a slave labourer started saying at the end of summer that for the autumn

and winter season he did not need me and was going to return me to Salaspils concentration camp. Only the Semashko couple saved me from going back to Salaspils concentration camp, as they helped to get me appointed as a nanny in their family. They had four daughters and the eldest was the same age as me.

Later they also found my sister, who from the concentration camp was sent to work as a shepherd, much like myself. Irena and Eduard Semashko helped her to be appointed as a maid and starting from 1944 she was sent to work at the same factory as my Mom - "Rīgas Manufaktūra". Later on Mom and the Semashko family found our Granny who also worked on a farm.

In August 1944 we were arrested once more and sent to a Riga camp which was located in buildings that looked like barns. We were placed on a concrete floor and it was forbidden to leave the premises. Gates to the outside had an armed guard and were only opened in the morning, to take away what had accumulated during the night. We were kept without practically any food. From this camp children were taken to Germany. My sister Nadya was taken to Germany when she was aged thirteen. She endured several concentration camps, where she was made to work on military production. She was freed by the Red Army on 23 April, 1945. Three of us - my Mom, Granny and I were not taken away because they did not have time, the front line was rapidly approaching Riga. We were kept in the camp until the last moment, until the guards ran away, then we went onto the streets. After a few days, on 13 October 1944, German troops left Riga. We were free. After the end of the war we managed to find my sister Nadya and in 1945 she returned to us in Riga.

So, this is how all of my family - taken by the Germans during the war - came to be in Riga. Our family consisted of our seventy year old Granny, my Mom who was disabled due to the medical experiments at Salaspils, and my sister. We had nowhere to return to. The place where we lived before was completely destroyed. My sister and I had to shoulder the main responsibilities ourselves. Despite the fact that we were only chil-

dren, we felt unusually uplifted, since the fear for our own lives and those of our family was gone. We knew that we had survived and would live.

My sister and I went to work and study at the same time, as our family considered an education a must. I started working at "Rīgas Manufaktūra" where Mom had been forcibly taken. And my entire professional career from beginning to director of the works took place there. I graduated from the faculty of chemistry of a Moscow Institute where I studied by correspondence. I worked as a supervisor, foreman, workshop manager, and then became a director.

In the time when *perestroika* started we were happy at first. Significant economic changes relating to businesses took place. Later on, Latvia decided to become an independent state. The new authorities decided my destiny – like thousands of other Latvian inhabitants I became an alien. My daughter and my grandson, who were born here, became aliens too. It was a horrible period, and it remains hard and humiliating to this day. Naturally, I did not expect it. I strongly believed that common sense would prevail. A normal, sound person could not have imagined this. Limitations for non-citizens cannot be accepted as measures to rectify past injustices. *Even before independence, ethnic Latvians dominated the most prestigious positions in the society¹.*

After that my life was quite hard. I did a lot of community work - with victims of fascism here in Latvia. There are around fourteen thousand such people in Latvia, and they struggle for survival.



If you are slapped in the face, you have to do something about it. Even, if some time has passed since then. However, one should act differently and I have accomplished something - I became naturalised. This is strictly my own decision, nobody can force me into it or persuade me. Despite my advancing years, I know the Latvian language quite well. I took this decision to enable myself to vote at elections and maybe my voice will be heard...

I dearly hope that other people, with a different understanding of the subject will enter our politics. It is really frightening that neo-Nazi forces are active in Latvia, they are reminiscent of the things I experienced as a child. Those words I heard at that time, I frequently hear today.

Photo, page 6: Elvira Ilyahina looking to the future after a difficult start in life (1953)

Photo, page 7: At the opening of the Memorial to underage fascism prisoners in Saratov, Russia (centre)

Photo, page 9: Memorial to Salaspils concentration camp - remembrance for the future (centre, front)

Alexander Gamaleyev

(Aleksandrs Gamaļejevs)



During several years my wife each half a year had to go to the Department of Citizenship and Immigration and ask for the next in turn allowance to live in my apartment!

45 years old, born in Riga. Two higher educations, graduated in 1984 as a mechanical engineer from Riga Polytechnic Institute (now Riga Technical University), in 1991 – as a practical psychologist from St. Petersburg University. Business and organisational consultant and trainer. Is an activist of the political association “For Human Rights in a United Latvia”. Married, has two daughters.

During WWII my grandfather was a military journalist. He participated in the liberation of Riga in 1944. After the war he continued his work in Riga and brought his wife and daughter to Latvia. My mother lived in Riga from the end of the 1940s until she died in 1993.

My father graduated from Odessa Marine Engineers Institute in 1956 and got his *graduating assignment*² to Riga Ship-Repairing Yard (now – Riga Ship-Building Yard). He worked at the Yard for 48 years until his retirement in 2004. And now after 50 years of living and working in Latvia he is still a non-citizen.

I have not been active in public and political life until recently, paying more attention to my career. First I got a technical education but then became interested in psychology and graduated from St. Petersburg University in Russia. Since the beginning of the 1990s I have been working in the area of applied psychology in business and organisational development.

In Soviet times I never encountered ethnic problems. My mother's second husband is an ethnic Latvian and I have always had good relations and mutual understanding with him and his relatives. In Soviet times he was the First Vice-Minister of the Meat and Dairy Industry of Latvia and I know from my own experience that *it is not true that ethnic Latvians were discriminated against in respect of their right to get prestigious positions in society*¹. Quite the contrary.

I was rather pessimistic when *Atmoda*³ came. I wasn't against Latvian independence as it was but from the very beginning nationalistic ideas and a strong drive for historical revenge could be heard in the speeches of the *Popular Front*⁴ leaders.

Everything became clear on 15 October 1991⁵ when the Supreme Council of Latvia adopted the resolution “On Restoration of the Rights of the Citizens of the Republic of Latvia and General Conditions of Naturalisation”. Next morning I woke up in a country of apartheid, where a well integrated population was divided into citizens and non-citizens.

Very soon I experienced the “new order” in the case of my own family. My wife was assigned to work in Riga having graduated from the Khar'kov Technical School of Light Industry in Ukraine and arrived in Latvia in 1984. She lived in the hostel for workers of a textile factory (which was quite usual for young specialists

at that time) until we married several months before the Declaration of Independence which was adopted on the 4 May 1990. Then for several years my wife had to go every six months to the *Department of Citizenship and Immigration*⁶ (CID) and ask for the next in turn allowance to register my apartment as her living place!

In 1994 our first daughter was born and I tried to minimise my contacts with state bodies as much as I could. For a long time I didn't intend to pass the naturalisation test since I saw it as humiliating to have to apply for citizenship which was needlessly taken away in the first place.

This lasted until 2003 when my children's secondary education was put at risk by the *minority secondary school reform*⁷ which was to come into force in 2004. This was not a minority secondary school reform but a transformation of these schools into Latvian language schools. I couldn't stay silent any longer and joined an informal organisation called the Staff of Russian language School Defence. I participated in a number of protests and other activities and although we didn't manage to stop the reform, it was considerably mitigated – also as a result of the organisation's actions.

On 1 September 2004, myself and other activists chained ourselves to the doors of the Cabinet of Ministers protesting against the introduction of this "school reform". On 16 March 2005 I participated in the antifascist action which broke up the procession in honour of those Latvians who took part in WWII on the side of the fascists. And on 4 May 2005 – the 15th anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence I was among those who put on striped prisoners overalls to remind people of the deceit towards non-citizens (given that 15 years ago in the Declaration of Independence, Latvian citizenship had been promised to every resident of Latvia having expressed their will to acquire it).

My activities were noticed by the police and security services, which suggested to me that I wouldn't be able to count on an easy life in the future. Indeed, I started to run into trouble at work. For example, a number of project proposals that I had developed were declined without reasonable explanations (earlier project proposals of the same quality had been accepted), some clients refused to work with my organisation to avoid having contact with me, etc. Finally, I had to leave the organisation as I didn't want my colleagues to get into difficulties because of me.

My civil activity was noticed by police and security service, which promised me that I shouldn't calculate on "easy life" in the future.



In 2004 I joined the political association "For Human Rights in a United Latvia". In order to try to help advance the cause of minorities in Latvia I decided to become a citizen and in May of 2005 I submitted documents for naturalisation. In August I passed the naturalisation exams which were not a great problem for me.

Usually it takes 6 – 8 months after the examination before the decision concerning citizenship is taken. So I counted upon getting citizenship long before the Saeima (Parliament) elections of October 2006. In June 2006 I was included in the list of candidates from the political association "For Human Rights in a United Latvia". But I didn't get a decision regarding my naturalisation in time for the

submission of candidate lists. The only answer from the Naturalisation Board was: "We still haven't received an answer from the Security Police". There was nothing to do but strike my name off the list of candidates. I see it as nothing other than a petty act of revenge from the state.

In any case, I am not going to leave Latvia. I will stay here and keep doing everything I can to stop the discrimination against the Russian speaking population. As for my children, I consider it my duty to give them an opportunity to get the best education. But then they'll decide for themselves. Today I would prefer them to leave Latvia. I don't consider that the current political and economic conditions offer them the best prospects.

Some clients refused to work with my organisation as they avoided having contacts with me. Finally, I had to leave my organisation as I didn't want my colleagues to meet additional problems.



Photo, page 10: Alexander Gamaleyev at their summer house tasting red currant with 7-year-old daughter Nastya

Photo, page 11: 1 September 2004: Chained to the doors of the Cabinet of Ministers protesting against the introduction of so-called "school reform" (Alexander, second from left)

Photo, page 12: At the parents' Conference: "We have to defend the right of our children to study in their native language"

Valery Kravtsov

(Valērijs Kravcovs)

Born in October 1961 in Siberia. Higher education, graduated in 1986 as a metallurgy engineer, Assigned to Latvia in 1988. After collapse of USSR established successful private business. Publicly active, currently is chairman of Russian Community of Liepaya. Married, has three children.

I came to Latvia as a result of my *graduating assignment*² in February 1988. I really had no choice, in those days university graduates who wouldn't go to work where they were assigned were at risk of two years in jail.

In Latvia I started to work at a research lab of a big metallurgical plant; for this I needed to complete my education with a master's degree, which I received in 1989 in Moscow. I was provided with a room in a dormitory house and registered for a municipal apartment. I got married in Latvia; we already have three children born here. When *Atmoda*³ began, in March 1991 I voted for Latvian independence⁸.

I was young, life was changing rapidly. I had high hopes for the future and supported the ideas of the *Popular Front*⁴. It was like euphoria, and the question itself was quite good: "Do you support a democratic and independent Republic of Latvia?" It wasn't completely clear at that time what "independent" meant, the word "democratic" appealed to me. Who could be against democracy? Not me.

I remember from that time a heated discussion with an elderly woman from *Interfront*⁹ – she shouted at me: "Look, first they'll deprive you of this, then they will strip you of that..." I couldn't believe this was possible but well, now I see that she was right... Moreover, even she couldn't imagine some of the things that have now become almost too commonplace to be worthy of remark.

But at that time we felt differently; I remember eighteen voluntary groups studying Latvian at our plant, guided



by enthusiasts, virtually for free. It was like a spontaneous emotional peak, people wanted to study Latvian and the future looked bright. I once spent my vacation in a summer camp solely to try to master Latvian, and I wasn't too far away from my goal. But then, the *Language Law*¹⁰ was adopted and the euphoria fell pretty fast. In two weeks the number of the language-study groups was reduced to just two – it was how Russians willing to join ethnic Latvians on their way to state independence reacted to what they considered a rip-off.

Then the *Citizenship Law*⁵ was adopted. At the beginning, the difference didn't look so much but I started to feel it pretty fast. Because of where I lived I was not allowed to register even as a *permanent resident*¹¹ and obtain an ID code. It was part of a campaign to squeeze out of Latvia assigned young specialists like me. Without the ID code I had no rights to a municipal apartment and this is lost forever. I must say it's really unbelievable: I had to spend half a year trying to prove my right to be a... non-citizen! Well, I overcame that, obtained my *non-citizenship status*¹² and

After the Language Law was adopted the number of language-study groups was reduced – it was how Russians willing to join ethnic Latvians on their way to state independence reacted to what they considered a rip-off.

It's really unbelievable: I had to spend half a year trying to prove my right to be a... non-citizen!



started a private business. The free border regime with Russia has helped a lot, the business was successful and allowed me to forget political problems for the next ten years.

The situation changed with the introduction of the "school reform" that directly affected my children. I understood that I was still sitting in a cage – a golden one but a cage nevertheless; I couldn't protect my children.

I can afford a private school for my children. My elder daughter now studies in Birmingham University, another had the misfortune to get under the reforms' steamroller but now she's in Birmingham too, in a good private school. My son Vanya just started school – he's in the first form. But private schools aren't

available for everyone. I know that regular schools are not prepared for these reforms, the quality of education will suffer. But nobody cares – and I'm not the only one who understands this. Actually this was the reason why the NGO "Russian Community of Liepaya" was born, the "reform" not only caused big resentment amongst Russians, it also stimulated us to join.

Just recently I have obtained citizenship. It was a really difficult decision, I still think that I should have got it automatically and with no preconditions, but there was no hope of that. So I decided to go for naturalisation, I felt it was better than being excluded from political participation. Let's say, I want my taxes to be spent for public welfare, I don't want the government to set up "speaking stones" instead (*an expensive promotional project launched by the Latvian government in Europe – Ed.*) or buy archives of Waffen SS to hide a shameful past. I pay enough taxes to finance a teachers' salary in each and every school in Liepaya and I'd gladly agree to spend that money on improving education. Add 300 people employed in my business, their salaries and taxes, isn't this enough to have the right to influence how that money is spent? I want my taxes to contribute to the building of a truly democratic and socially oriented state in Latvia not the contrary.

I hope my children will stay in Latvia. My elder daughter is taking a course in English and German legislation. I know there is a demand for such lawyers in Latvia; many colleagues running international businesses need people to represent their professional interests overseas.

Photo, page 13: Valery Kravtsov (right) with his family: wife Irena Vinvalka, ethnic Russian, non-citizen, born in Russia (left), son Ivan Kravtsov (centre, front), step-daughters Inese and Diana, ethnic Latvians

Photo, page 14: Inese (left), Ivan (centre), Diana (right)

Yelyena Ronkiyo

(Jelena Ronkijo)

Born in Riga in 1965. Finished medical school. A medical attendant by profession. Has two children.

My parents were assigned to Latvia in 1962 to work in construction. Latvian industry was rapidly developing at that time and many people were invited to come here and work at different enterprises.

I was born in 1965, I was educated here in Latvia and went to medical school - more or less the usual Soviet life story up to the moment I met and fell in love with a Cuban citizen in 1985. We had a son in 1988 and got married in 1990 (before then it was difficult to get permission to marry a foreigner).

In 1991 we left for my husband's home in Cuba. A year later our second son was born there. At that time Cuba's economic situation was quite precarious following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Cuban authorities began pressuring all foreign residents to take Cuban citizenship. Those who refused were offered the opportunity to leave. By that point I had nothing to lose and decided to go back to my parents in Riga.

That's where my problems began. I needed travel documents - my old Soviet passport belonged to a state which had ceased to exist. First of all we got in touch with the Russian Embassy as Russia was the main successor of the USSR, but they refused us passports because we'd come from Latvia. From there I turned to the Department of Migration and Citizenship of Cuba who spent a year thinking about what to do with us. Eventually they gave me and my children passports which we used to travel home. Our return journey took us via Moscow where I had to get a visa from the Latvian consulate to be able to enter my own country. There they explained that any further questions on my stay in Latvia would be addressed by the *Department of Citizenship and Immigration*⁶ (CID).

The nightmare started from the moment of my return. The first thing the CID did was to ask why I had returned and tell me to go back. I explained that both myself and my eldest son were natives of Latvia. To this they replied laughing: "And if we deport your little son? What will you do?" He was just one year old at the time.

This was a great shock and I went to the State Office of Human Rights. There they made a helpless gesture and said: "The Constitution acknowledges the right of return only of citizens. Wait, there may soon be changes".

I held out until 1997 but no new laws appeared. That's when I applied to the court with the help of human rights campaigners. During the whole process the representatives of the CID behaved appallingly. It was very clear that they wanted rid of me and indeed showed me documents stating that I should go. But they had no answer to my simple question, "to which country should I go?" There was nobody waiting for me in Cuba since I'd been long divorced whilst I'd never held the citizenship of the country of my birth. During one court hearing I asked the Deputy Head of the CID "I was born in Latvia, my eldest son was born here, only the youngest was born in Cuba and he had never been a citizen of Cuba, but only had a temporary residents' passport. Where should I go?" He could not answer.

Finally I was given the *status of alien*¹² according to the court decision. But my problems weren't over yet. When I'd got together all the



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*...for the time being
the children remain
illegal.*

necessary documents I went to the CID office to get personal codes for the children - the officials threw the documents in my face.

I decided to go for naturalisation to help my children become citizens. But I was refused saying that I did not have a five year period of continuous registration in Latvia even though I attempted to disprove this. Citizenship won't solve all my problems, but there is some hope that they will grant citizenship to my youngest son. Soon enough the minimum residence period will pass and I will try the exam for citizenship.

But for the time being the children remain illegal. I try to register them on the basis of my status as an "alien". But the CID insists that they should be registered as foreigners on the basis of their father's birth. I cite article 67 of the children's rights law, where it is written that if the court hasn't established the place of a child's residence separately, then it is considered to be

the place of residence of his mother. Then the constitution where it is written the rights of mother and child are protected by the state. They have laughed and said that I talk nonsense.

I was lucky with kindergarten and school. In the school where I was a pupil myself the teachers admitted my children at their own risk. It was only in the eighth grade that the headmaster got in touch and told me that the CID had issued an order compelling all illegals to pay for their schooling otherwise the school itself would have difficulty with its certification. I asked a document on the basis of which I should pay and so the affair has finished. Those who were weaker (there is another boy-illegal studying with us) have agreed and are paying.

All this time I had to work illegally. It was very difficult economically. For example, until the age of eighteen medical services should be free but I have to pay the whole price for the children. Now I am studying Latvian at free courses at the Labour Exchange. Once I have learned I will go to hospital to work in accordance with my profession. At least it is good that there were no problems with accommodation - we are living with my parents.

When we are discussing this situation at home in the evening my mother often says: "How could Latvia behave in this way towards our grandchildren?" For the next court case if possible, I would like to invite international correspondents. I don't want to harm Latvia, but they should know in other countries what is happening here. However, I believe that sooner or later I will obtain justice.

Constantine Matveyev

(Konstantīns Matvejevs)

Born in Riga in 1954. Graduated from the Faculty of Law, University of Latvia. Member of the first Latvian Parliament (Saeima) after independence. Dean of the Faculty of Law in the Baltic Russian Institute. Married, with one daughter.

My father was born into an old Russian-German family in Riga, in 1896.

My grandmother came from the Baltic Germans. According to family legends they originally were from Lotaringia. They came to Latvia at the end of the epoch of Livonia. My grandfather was from Latgale (in eastern Latvia). His parents came into the territory of Latvia after the abolition of serfdom. In Riga, at the beginning of the 20th century the Germans still dominated. The Russians were the second largest group, so Russian-German families were very typical. The mass immigration of ethnic Latvians into Riga started later.

My father completed his studies at Riga Commercial School; which was quite prestigious at that time. Then the First World War broke out. As the front got closer, a mass eastward evacuation of infrastructure began, followed by people and families. My father got to Petrograd (now – St. Petersburg). Then he took part in the Civil War in Russia. First he fought on the side of the Whites, on the Northern Front, together with the English. When they were defeated, he found himself compelled to travel around Western Europe; to England and to Italy. In spite of having got married at the time, my father felt completely alone. During a long period of time he was plagued by doubts of whether he had made the right choice. After great reflection he decided to return to Russia. It was very complicated; he had to go through Iran. After having returned, he fought on the farthest fronts once again, now on the side of the Reds.

When he was preparing to return to Russia, he was warned of his possible

arrest, but mistakenly. He was put in prison, but not immediately; it happened when Stalin's repressions started, in 1934. In addition, he got a relatively short sentence for serving his punishment, about 6 - 8 years which was unusual at the time. By the beginning of the Great Patriotic War my father was set free. He asked to be posted to the front, but was refused. He was sent to work somewhere in the Urals, in Russia. He even received a medal with the profile of Stalin for his excellent work. As soon as the Soviet Army approached Riga, he wished very much to return to his native city. Although he was sent to Siberia once again in 1949, he was one of the first to be released after Stalin's death in 1953.

My mother was born in the South of Russia in Cossack territory and her family is of Cossack origin. There was a settlement named Vorontsovka near her Cossack village; Latvians lived there at the time as a result of economic migration in the second part of the 19th century. My mother's older sister got married to an ethnic Latvian, and after the Second World War he wished very much to return to Latvia. When they went to Latvia, my Mum, as a younger unmarried sister, was sent to help them. She intended to be in Riga only

On 15 October 1991 I said: "One day what you are voting upon will be unanimously declared as having been without legal basis since the moment of its adoption".



I, as a Member of the Parliament of Latvia and a member of its legal affairs committee, nevertheless, ceased to be a Latvian citizen!

for a very short time, to help with their child, while he was a small baby, but she met my father, who had returned from Siberia in 1953, and stayed in Riga. I was born in 1954.

I finished school in Riga and then graduated from the State University of Latvia, and gained a degree in Law. For many years I worked as a research assistant in the Latvian Academy of Sciences before specialising in criminal sociology.

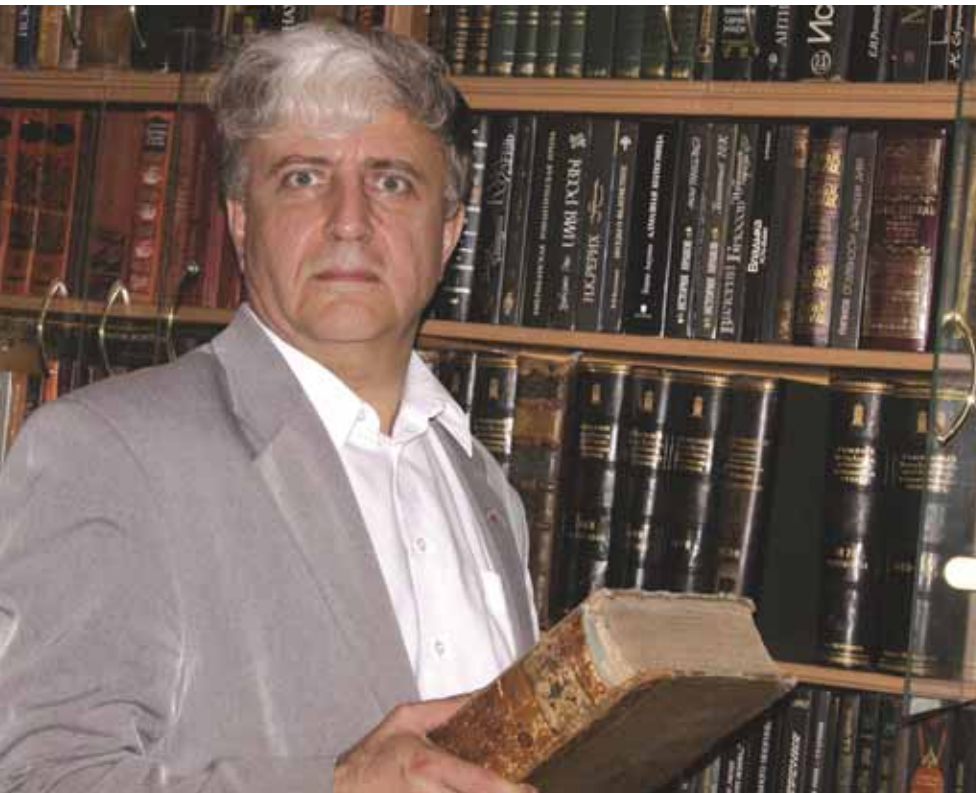
Then came *perestroika*. Those events are known as *Atmoda*³ in Latvia. My interest in Latvian history meant that it was not difficult for me to predict the course of the events. I understood that those leading *Atmoda* did not plan just

the "Ravnopraviye" (*equality*) grouping. Although the law dividing citizens from non-citizens was passed later, its different versions had already been discussed. The name of our grouping had come from this. I was in the Parliament's legal affairs committee. The most interesting event took place on 15 October 1991⁵. That day, during the final discussion, having realised the balance of votes I said: "One day what you are voting upon will be unanimously declared as having been without legal basis since the moment of its adoption". But the majority voted in favour, and I, as a Member of the Parliament of Latvia and a member of its legal affairs committee, nevertheless, ceased to be a Latvian citizen! Only those Latvian residents became citizens, whose ancestors had the status of citizen as of June 17, 1940. As I have already noted my father was at that time in a camp for political prisoners in Russia.

Having been given the *status of "alien"*⁶ I remained a Member of Parliament until the end of that Parliamentary term in 1993. Today I stand by my words. The indifference of Western Europe to everything, which has happened, was the only striking thing for me. New elections took place in 1993, but I could not take part in them. At that time non-citizens did not even have the right to naturalisation. But at least I found myself in work. From 1994 until recently I was a dean of the faculty of Law of the Baltic Russian Institute. The most interesting thing is that, in spite of its name, the majority of students are ethnic Latvians. At the moment it is the second largest higher education institution in our republic. About ten thousand students study there, a considerable number for Latvia.

Now I have the opportunity to be naturalised, but I will not use it for reasons that are very close to my heart. It is not a problem for me to pass an exam on history and the Latvian language. But, to be subjected to the procedure of naturalisation is a kind of humiliation for me as a person, who was born and has lived all his life in Latvia, having had deep historical roots here and a long line of ancestors documented.

However, I am not against Latvian citizenship. Because of it my wife and I



the recreation of the First Republic, but the recreation of the 1930s period exactly, the period of the dictatorship of Ulmanis. The national minorities had a terrible time during that period and what was happening now bore no relation to the proper notion of independence, rather to that particular version from Latvian history.

In 1990 I was elected to Parliament - the first Parliament of newly independent Latvia. I was a member from

have registered our daughter as a Latvian citizen. It became possible, because she was born after August 1991. The amendments, which permit this, were made in 1998.

My wife is a teacher at the Baltic Russian Institute in Daugavpils, she was born in eastern Latvia and has never left her native country. It is astonishing, but she has never had the right to vote in thirty two years. Not once, at either level of government, firstly because of age and then she was deprived of citizenship, like me.

It may sound strange after all I've said, but I am still a Latvian patriot. This is my native land.

I would like to note that my situation with my Latvian roots is not unique. People such as me form a considerable part of the population. It angers me when nationalists say that non-citizens have no right to old infrastructure at all. My grandfather worked as a successful administrator in the port of



Riga. It was an important element of Latvian infrastructure. Our family had three modest houses not far from the centre of the city. The property was lost and there was no opportunity to have our rights to it restored. I as well as other non-citizens received less *privatisation certificates*¹³, than other people who were declared citizens.

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Photo, page 17: Constantine Matveyev (standing, right) at the admission exam to Russian Baltic Institute

Photo, page 18: Collecting books is Constantine's main hobby

Photo, page 19: Discussion with students

Alexandra Malashonok

(Aleksandra Malašonoka)



20 years old. Born in Riga. At the moment – a first year student of the Faculty of International Economic Relations at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations

I was born into a family which always placed a great emphasis on high quality education. That is why the reform of secondary education⁷ in Latvia made such an impact on me. When even those headteachers, who supported the reform in public, indicated that they would carry it out

as sensitively as possible, I asked myself: why do we have to lose anything? How could I believe that it was not our parents, but the ruling clique that had our best interests at heart? And why are the voices of many thousands of Latvian inhabitants not an argument for the authorities? Yet the President gives the impression that responding to the interests of the Russian-speaking community is not a priority.

It became quite clear to me that I could not remain aloof from what was going on, and together with my parents and classmates I decided to work to protect education in my mother tongue. Soon I understood the depth of the issue. One of the most serious reasons is the huge non-citizenship amongst the inhabitants of Latvia. People, who were born in Latvia and have lived here all their lives, 450 000 Latvian inhabitants, who still have a purple "alien's

passport"¹²... One in five has no right to vote even in local elections. Not long ago I was one of them. Once, a Member of the Saeima (Latvian parliament) asked me, why I was not a Latvian citizen.

"Really, why am I not a citizen of my country? I was born in Latvia, my parents were also born here. So please tell me, why am I not a citizen of my homeland?" The MP was silent. Really, what could he say?

"Occupiers!" Today, influenced by the example of our country's political elite, this word has become more and more commonplace in referring to the Russian-speaking population in Latvia. But it really seems to me, that the meaning of this word is not clear to our authorities... In 1943 my grandmother and her family were forcibly expelled from their home in the Kalininskaya region. They were sent as forced labour to Germany through Latvia – in Riga there was a so-called "Russian committee", whose task was to deal with their expulsion. Miraculously, my grandmother's turn never came – the liberation of Riga by the Soviet forces prevented her from being sent to Germany.

She had no place to return to – her home village was burnt - an action in which the Germans, Czechs and Latvians participated. It was more than 60 years ago, but my grandma still remembers quite clearly, that they were afraid of the troops from the Baltic States most of all. Grandmother settled in Riga only to find out after many years that it has turned out that at the age of 14 she occupied Latvia... The strange irony of fate is the fact that people like the commandant of the camp, which exploited child slave labour, have the status of politically oppressed, while my grandmother and our family as her descendants are considered as the occupiers and have no rights in Latvia.

Once, a Member of the Saeima (Latvian parliament) asked me, why I was not a Latvian citizen. "Really, why am I not a citizen of my country? I was born in Latvia, my parents were also born here. So please tell me, why am I not a citizen of my homeland?" The MP was silent. Really, what could he say?

It is not easy to live with the “purple passport” (alien’s passport). It is also not very easy to explain that you are not a refugee while crossing frontiers. At the age of 18, I passed the exam to get citizenship.

Talking about exams, for me (as well as for almost every Latvian school-child) they were not a problem – but final examinations in the state language are much more difficult. However, it was very hard morally. And not only for me. In the eyes of the people standing in the queue for the opportunity to obtain citizenship, there was a mute question – why? Why should we pass the exam to get citizenship of our fatherland?

However, the fact that the exam was not difficult for me and didn’t make me feel nervous doesn’t mean, that there is no other problem. Before my eyes an elderly woman in the queue of the applicants for Latvian citizenship – had a heart attack, an ambulance was sent for.

Crowding behind the door, fellow-sufferers told each other, how *they voted for an independent Latvia in 1991*⁸. At that time both ethnic Latvians



and Russians were sure that it would lead to a better life in their country. But then, for some reason, from the Russian-speaking part of the population together with their passports they took away all their rights... And forgot to return them.

My Grandmother settled in Riga to find out after many years that it has turned out that at the age of 14 she occupied Latvia...



The bearer of this passport is under the protection of the Republic of Latvia. The Government of the Republic of Latvia requests all those whom it may concern to allow the bearer to pass freely without let or hindrance and to afford such assistance and protection as may be necessary.

This passport is valid for travel to all countries. The bearer of this passport is entitled to depart and enter the Republic of Latvia.

Photo, page 21: Laima Clock in the centre of Riga - the most popular meeting point

Photo, page 21: Alien's passport

Alexandra Malashonok also pictured at Council of Europe, Strasbourg on page 43 (left)

Gennady Goglov

(Genādijs Goglovs)

46 years old. Radiotechnical engineer. Married, two children.

I was born in the city of Gusj Khrustaljny (300 km to the east of Moscow). Gusj Khrustaljny is famous as a centre for the crystal industry. My parents were workers at the Cut Glass Factory and did their best to ensure a good education for their children (I have an elder brother).

After graduating from the Moscow Electro-Technical School of Communications in 1977 I got a job at the Station for Space Communications. I got that promising and prestigious position because I was the best graduate; in addition, I was very fond of radio technology. Anyone who ever happened to get a job just in line with their favourite occupation would understand me. I was very happy at the time.

But in 1979 I was called up for military service in the Navy and was sent to the Baltic coast. Not to waste any time during military service I entered the correspondence department of the Moscow Institute of Communications, I graduated from this Institute in 1986 with a degree in Radiotechnical Engineering. After serving in the Navy I planned to come back to the Station for Space Communications. But in Latvia I met my future wife and for her sake I decided to give up my career. During the engagement her parents laid down a condition: not to take their only daughter

from them. And after three years of obligatory military service I stayed in the Navy continuing to serve in the submarine fleet.

My wife was born in Latvia. During World War II her mother (at that time a little girl) together with her elder sisters was deported from their village in Pskov oblast (a region of the Russian Federation bordering Latvia) to Germany. The village was burnt out, adults were killed. After the war the sisters had nowhere to return. They came to Latvia where the intensive restoration of industry took place and a lot of workers were needed.

At the end of 80-s the *Popular Front*⁴ began campaigning for national independence for Latvia. The speeches of the Front congresses were clearly nationalistic. Realising the situation may be bleak for us in an independent Latvia we considered the possibility of leaving for

The Latvian authorities denied me as a former servant of the army of "occupation" the possibility to become a citizen of this country for the rest of my life!



Russia. But at that time it was not possible for us because of housing prices, which were much higher in Russia than in Latvia. We could sell our apartment for just 2500 USD, but to buy a similar apartment in Russia in a city comparable to Riga one would have to pay ten times more. We didn't risk leaving.

In 1990 I quit serving in the military because I wanted to spend more time with my family. By that time we had two children. I started to work at a radio repair shop. Up to then I had had quite a secure life: I had my beloved family, a good education, an apartment, and interesting work.

But in 1991 my family became "alien" in Latvia. And I became an "occupier" of my own country. There was a great deal of pressure, we were deprived of our citizenship and the right to privately own our apartment, the period of my military service was not included in my record, which is important for calculating pension and other social payments. In contrast to other non-citizens our family didn't receive *privatisation certificates*¹³ at all. As a former military servant I didn't even try to get them but I hoped my wife and children would get privatisation certificates since they were born in Latvia. But they were refused as "members of a former military servant's family". Just as in Stalin's times when a person could be repressed as "a member of a public enemy's family". My wife was guilty for having fallen in love with and married a military servant.



Later on my wife and children became Latvian citizens by passing the procedure for naturalisation. But I am still "alien" even though I have passed all the exams for naturalisation and haven't broken any law in my life. The Latvian authorities denied me as a former servant of the army of "occupation" the possibility to become a citizen of this country for the rest of my life! As such I lose the right to enter a number of professions in Latvia and to enjoy free movement in the European Union. I am a life-long stateless person in Latvia and, consequently, in the EU.

My wife and children were refused privatisation certificates as "members of a former military servant's family". Just as in Stalin's times when a person could be repressed as "a member of a public enemy's family". My wife was guilty for having fallen in love with and married a military servant.

Photo, page 22: Gennady Goglov with his son Denis in 1985

Photo, page 23: Currently Gennady is an electrician at the sewage disposal plant

Peteris Ludzenieks

(Pēteris Ludzenieks)



74 years old. Born in Ukraine (which at that time was part of the Soviet Union). Ethnic Latvian on his father's side. Has been living in Latvia since 1948. Former long-distance driver, currently retired.

My father's family had deep historical roots in the Madona region of Latvia. My cousins once removed are still living there. In 1915 my grandfather left for St. Petersburg with his two sons. My father was the younger of the two, but his elder brother was killed by the Whites during the Civil War several years later.

My father was luckier.

In 1919 he finished secondary school. Then he was taken ill with typhus and was sent to Ukraine to recover. Having found himself in the city of Dnepropetrovsk, which was a big industrial centre, he graduated with honours from the Institute of Mining Metallurgy. Later he got his PhD and became a Professor of Mining Metallurgy. But then came the times of Stalin's repressions and in 1938 he was imprisoned. In 1942 he died in a prison camp... At the end of 50s he was fully exonerated.

I was born in Dnepropetrovsk in 1932. On my mother's side my grandfather was Russian from Siberia and my grandmother was Ukrainian. After the start of WWII my family was evacuated to the Urals, and in 1942 at the age of ten I ran away to the front. Of course, I was not admitted to take part in the battles but I helped soldiers as much as I could: in shoe-making and other

things. During the war boys like me were called "sons of regiments". Our regiment had a long and glorious journey and at the end of the war liberated Prague. Until 1947 I was still an army pupil but then I returned to Dnepropetrovsk almost at the same time as my mother. We found our house burnt down during the war and decided to return back to my fatherland in Latvia.

We returned to Latvia in 1948 and found a number of relatives from my father's side. I finished basic (lower secondary) school and simultaneously got a driver's licence. I also completed courses in mechanics and for 37 years I worked as a long-range driver, getting an honorary title of Veteran of Labour. And then the time of *Atmoda*³ came.

At the March referendum of 1991⁴ I supported the independence of Latvia. And in 1991 when the Supreme Council of Latvia adopted the resolution "On Restoration of the Rights of the Citizens of the Republic of Latvia"⁵ was adopted I applied for registration as a citizen of Latvia. I was asked whether my mother or father had been living in Latvia before 1940. I confirmed that my grandmother had been living here (in 1915 only my grandfather and two sons left for Russia but my grandmother stayed in Latvia). They told me that grandmothers and grandfathers "were not taken into consideration" if their grandchildren were born before 1940 outside Latvia, were citizens of another country and arrived in Latvia later. Only in 1997 did I accidentally find out that they had simply cheated me. In fact, grandmothers and grandfathers were considered as close relatives and I did have all of the rights for citizenship in 1991. But that was the strategy of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration (CID)⁶ at that time – their main goal was to put as many as they could into the second tranche.

But that was not the end of the story. I went to the archives and got the

Department of Citizenship and Immigration told me that grandmothers and grandfathers "were not taken into consideration". Only several years later did I accidentally find out that they had simply cheated me.

documents confirming that my grandmother had permanently lived in Latvia in 1940. Then I came back to CID but got the same answer: "No, we will not recognize your right for citizenship!" It took me 5 years, with the help of human rights campaigners, I was compelled to pass three levels of the court including the Supreme Court to prove an obvious truth.

But while I was running around the courts I lost the right to privatise the land on which my house was situated. The Supreme Court of Latvia resolved to grant me citizenship only in November of 2002. But at that time it was too late to submit documents for privatisation of land. The land under my house was given to my neighbour as his relatives owned it before 1940. According to the law in such cases citizens who lived on the land of former owners had the first-hand right to privatise it and heirs of former owners could receive compensation from the state. But that law was in force only until 1997.

As a result I have to rent the land from my neighbour. Because of CID bureaucrats' fraud I was caused direct material damage.

I remember very well the terrible state of Latvia after WWII. We all worked to rebuild and develop the national econo-



my. And then a huge amount of people were deprived of their rights. In my own experience I have seen that the true goal of those who came to power after Atmoda was not the restoration of historical justice, nor care for the interests of common people. Their main goal was to redistribute the national economy and property in their own interests. It is a pity that it should have happened.

In my own experience I have seen that the true goal of those who came to power after Atmoda was to redistribute the national economy and property in their own interests.

Photo, page 24: Peteris Ludzenieks with his wife Olga in 1975
Photo, page 25: Peteris tending his garden

Asya Andrejeva

(Asja Andrejeva)



66 years old. Born in Ukraine. Chemical Engineer. Worked for 25 years at the woodworking factory in Riga. Since 1992 - activist with the Latvian Human Rights Committee (F.I.D.H.)

I was buying one loaf of bread and one pack of margarine a week. That was my life at that time. I will never forget it and never forgive.

One of my grandmothers was Polish, and my grandfather was a German baron. My ancestors on my mother's side were Hungarians and Jews. My mother's parents came to Ukraine from Hungary. My father grew up in Ukraine where my grandmother married for the second time. Her second husband was Russian; he adopted my father and gave him his Russian surname – Andrejev. It was important at that time especially because of Stalin's repressions against foreigners.

At the beginning of WWII my family was deported to the Southern Urals classed as "unreliable". Even after the war our family experienced a lot of difficulties because of my father's German descent. Finally, in 1957 we moved to Riga where the political climate was more tolerant than in

Russia. Here I entered the faculty of chemistry in Riga Technical University. After graduating I was assigned to the woodworking factory in Riga where I worked for 25 years. In 1978 I was offered a contract to work in the USA but I couldn't accept for domestic reasons. At the woodworking factory I rose from being foreman-technologist until eventually I became chief of the shift.

In the late 80s the *Popular Front of Latvia*⁴ appeared. It advocated national independence. The Popular Front's activists asked me to join them. Otherwise, they threatened, I would lose my job. I replied that it didn't matter whether I joined or not, since in any case industrial enterprises would be closed in an independent Latvia. Unfortunately I was right. In 1992 my factory was decimated, I was dismissed.

Then a real nightmare began. A lot of plants in Riga were closed, workers dismissed, and equipment sold. People went to labour exchanges and there were no prospects. At that time it was a great success to find a job as a salesman on the open market, unofficially and without paying any tax. To get in a queue at the labour exchange I had to come at night bringing a thermos of hot tea. For half a year I received paltry unemployment benefit and then it was over. There was no job for me. I was buying one loaf of bread and one pack of margarine a week. That was my life at that time. I will never forget it and never forgive.

Though my father suffered a lot at the hands of the Soviet authorities because of his origin he highly valued the country in which he lived. He took the break-up of the USSR to heart. He wouldn't have died so early if it were not for these events.

I didn't take so keenly to the political changes. If the new order would es-

establish equal relations for all former citizens of the USSR I could accept all these changes. But it was clear to me from the very beginning that my life would become much harder in an independent Latvia not only because of economic difficulties but first of all because of the legal and moral conditions.

In 1991 I became stateless. I had betrayed nobody; I hadn't violated any law, legally moved to Latvia during Soviet times. I have been living in Latvia for almost 50 years and working for this country. As a result I was punished and become an "alien". Should I apply for Latvian citizenship after this humiliation? For me it is a complete absurdity. I will never apply for naturalisation.

Since 1992 I am an activist with the Latvian Human Rights Committee (F.I.D.H.). Initially I had come there with my own problems related to my dismissal and non-citizenship. In order to clear up my personal legal problems I studied law and then



started to help others based upon my experience speaking with visitors in their native language. In fact, I have gained a new specialty having studied human rights legislation in depth. In ten years our NGO has helped tens of thousands of people.

If the new order would establish equal relations for all former citizens of the USSR I could accept all these changes.

Igor Gusev

(Igors Gusevs)



For all my efforts to clear up the situation I heard only this: “If you don’t like it, return to your Russia!” But this is not my Russia any more. I was born and raised here, in Latvia.

40 years old. Born and grew up in Riga. He graduated from the faculty of history and philosophy of the University of Latvia. Businessman, publisher of “Klio” – cultural and historical bulletin and martial arts magazine “Kumite”. He is an author of many TV shows on the history of Latvia and the City of Riga. Married with a daughter.

At a young age towards the end of the 1940s my parents arrived in Latvia from the Smolensk oblast of Russia that had suffered a lot during the World War II. Everything was completely destroyed, there were no places to work. On the other hand, substantial investments were made in Latvia in order to restore its domestic economy. My uncle came to Latvia earlier; he was a prisoner at the Salaspils concentration camp.

Dad worked as a mechanic for a fleet of taxis, Mum was a teacher of maths. I graduated from the faculty of history and philosophy at the University of Latvia.

Up to the moment of *Atmoda*³ I taught history in a secondary school. *Atmoda* was received by my family very positively. We had nothing to do with neither the authorities, nor the Soviet elite. We all hoped for changes for the good. We were not activists of any political movement, but sympathised with the *Popular Front*⁴. Often we argued with hard-core communists that Latvia had the right to its self-determination – it is an integral right of any nation. Consequently, when in 1991 the nation-wide referendum⁸ was carried out, all my family voted for Latvian independence.

When the Latvian flag was raised on the building of the State Council, I proudly stood with my hat off and tears were in my eyes as I saw the flag of my state. Through my work in school and as a patriot I tried to foster love towards this state and Latvian national traditions amongst my students.

And then suddenly we all somehow were turned into occupiers, migrants and enemies of the Latvian state. I started to hear a lot of words, such as that I was sucking the blood out of the Latvian nation and that if I really loved this country, the best I could do was to leave it for good. I was completely shocked by such perverse logic. At first I thought it was just the individual opinion of some weird people. Nevertheless, later it appeared that such “weird people” were in power. These were the very same people that during *Atmoda* told me that we were in the “same boat” and that Russian brothers had to support Latvian independence.

All of a sudden the same people adopted an act⁵ according to which I and all my family became aliens. For my support of independence I got only a strange and weird status – *non-citizen of Latvia*¹². For all my efforts to clear up the situation I heard only this: “If you don’t like it, return to your Russia!” But this is not my Rus-

sia any more. I was born and raised here, in Latvia. All that shocked and hurt me greatly.

Years passed by. I settled down and started my own family. I have a wife and a dear daughter. However, I am still made to feel like a second class citizen. Now, I am allowed to prove my right to citizenship to somebody. Yes, sure, many get citizenship for a more comfortable life, for example, or for travelling to Europe without problems. However, for me - to be a citizen means to belong to the country whose independence I supported a long time ago. To go now and apply for naturalisation means to accept the legitimacy of this horrible, crying injustice which was performed towards me and my family. It was absolutely unjustified. I do have my own self-respect and to undergo naturalisation is humiliating for me. I cannot get over this humiliation, as yet. My wife is a non-citizen too and like me, she was born in Latvia. She is also hurt and offended. For us citizenship - is a sign of affiliation to our homeland. Some countries have a punishment - denationalisation for having been convicted of some criminal offences, but we have never committed criminal offences.

I do not hold any grudges against Latvia. We love this country, we consider it ours. For us Latvia is the unforgettable architecture of the Riga streets, the pine aroma on the seashore, all

the decent people that I know. However, my Latvia is not associated with the well-groomed faces of the officials and members of parliament who say:

"We realise that we deceived people when we said that Latvia is our common home, but we could not behave any other way". They don't really understand that by doing this they prove their own malice. These people for me do not represent Latvia; it's not the united democratic country whose independence I supported in 1991.

Many of my acquaintances have left Latvia. A lot of my former students currently work in Europe. I do not rule out the possibility that even I may have to leave Latvia. Not because I want to, but for my daughter's sake. If I will have to do it, I shall do it with tears in my eyes. However, until I feel that I am allowed to lead a normal life here where I can breathe freely, I would not be assured that my child will have a decent future.



*To go now
and apply for
naturalisation
means to accept
the legitimacy of
this horrible, crying
injustice which was
performed towards
me and my family.*

Photo, page 28: "For me Latvia is the unforgettable architecture of Riga streets..."

Photo, page 29: Igor Gusev with his one and a half year-old daughter Dasha

Svetlana Somova



I was assigned a lower category – a “migrant”, with the infamous “round stamp” in my passport, identifying my existence but no more – nothing, a nobody from nowhere in my own country.

45 years old. Born in Riga. Latvian citizen, higher education (physicist), works as a network administrator. Married, has three daughters.

When independence came, I was somewhat confused; there was no reason to cling to the Soviet past but the nationalistic sentences of the “new democrats” didn’t appeal either. By that time I already had two daughters and was pregnant with the third, so I had other things to worry about.

However, pretty soon I felt what independence meant to me personally. My father was an ethnic Latvian, I was born in Latvia, my family had been living in Latvia for ages so it seemed that by any standard I should easily become a Latvian citizen. But things didn’t happen quite like that. The problem was that my grandfather had never been a Latvian citizen; one of the first things the first Latvian Republic (which existed until 1940 and now is claimed to be a democracy) did, was to deport political opponents. My grandfather wasn’t high up amongst Latvian communists; but he used to be a neighbour of the Zile family of

famous communists and helped them from time to time. Nonetheless, he was exiled to Russia.

My grandmother was a Latvian citizen though, and this is where the romantic story begins. They were not yet married at the time of my grandfather’s deportation, though when she heard what happened, she decided to go after him to Russia. She didn’t know where exactly he was in such a huge country and didn’t understand a word of Russian either – I’m still amazed how she could find him there – but she did.

Life in the USSR wasn’t easy; my grandfather was arrested in 1937 but with his steely character, in spite of torture he didn’t show any evidence of “anti-Soviet activity” as others arrested together with him did, and he’s the only one of them who survived. The repressions had nothing to do with ethnicity; in 1937 the parents of my Russian mother were exiled to Siberia as “kulaks” too. My grandfather was always dreaming of returning to Latvia – and moved back just after the end of World War II. Later my father joined my grandparents too.

When independence came, my father tried to prove his right to be a Latvian citizen, but the only proof he had was an old paper saying that my grandmother got her citizenship of the USSR in exchange for her Latvian citizenship. He was told that a paper issued by the "occupation regime" could not be considered as proof of citizenship and thus he could only obtain the status of a non-citizen (or alien) in his fatherland. The reason was probably that my father, although he had excellent command of Latvian, never got rid of his Russian accent and this was enough to trigger the "strangers recognition system" of "true Latvians".

What happened to me wasn't any better. I was assigned a lower category – a "migrant", with the infamous "round stamp"¹⁴ in my passport, identifying my existence but no more – no registration code assigned, no rights to change place of abode, to pass the state Latvian language exam necessary to get employed, to get state children's allowance, to get back into Latvia if by chance I'll happen to go abroad – nothing, a nobody from nowhere in my own country.

Actually my passport was already sealed with a "non-citizen's" mark when another, more "watchful" registrar got the impression that I had an apartment in a building that belonged to a Soviet enterprise. She was wrong, but who cares – my *registration*¹¹ was cancelled immediately, my passport was seized and I was left without any valid ID for months. There is no law allowing anyone and everyone to do the things she did, but it didn't matter whether she was right or wrong. Nonetheless I still fail to see how the house where someone lives can determine his or her rights – but this was a typical case at that time. The premises of the *Department of Citizenship and Immigration (CID)*⁶ were flooded with dismayed people, teetering on the edge of hysteria seeking their "alienship", the courts were overloaded, those who were not determined enough were leaving Latvia in their tens of thousands, families were broken, property abandoned. I thought I'd go mad when I had to bury my mom; without a passport I couldn't prove I was her daughter, or sign any

papers to arrange the funeral. "Baigais gads" you say? (*Ed remark: "Horrible year" – a famous book tendentiously describing Soviet repressions*) Believe me; the early '90s were not much better for many in Latvia.

For me this resulted in four courts' hearings over several years (including the Supreme Court) to prove that it won't hurt Latvia if I become a non-citizen. That was when I met Vladimir Bogdanov (his story is also included in this book) – he was up to his eyes in work helping many affected people and amongst others he helped me too; we won the case in the Supreme Court. I knew that the CID often ignored courts' verdicts but I was lucky when I came to register; Mr. Bruveris the ombudsman was there conducting an inspection, so the registrars had to hide their hatred for us, the "migrants", and just did their job.

Finally I got the seal in my passport – but even this is not yet the end of the story. In 2000 I wanted to exchange at last that red Soviet passport for a non-citizen's one. I knew by that time I already had the right to full citizenship – the Parliament had adopted a law that allowed ethnic Latvians to get citizenship through registration order, bypassing the time consuming naturalisation procedure. But I didn't feel myself prepared for that; firstly, I had suffered too much because of this government and didn't want to ask them for anything more than what was absolutely necessary; secondly, I didn't

I thought I'd go mad when I had to bury my mom; without a passport I couldn't prove I was her daughter, or sign any papers to arrange the funeral.



*...the early '90s
were not much
better than the early
'40s for many in
Latvia.*

think (and I still don't) that ethnicity should make any difference in people's rights – I didn't want to benefit from a law that tastes of racism.

So I applied for a non-citizen's passport. Guess what? I was told that they were uncertain why I had such difficulty in obtaining permission for non-citizenship, therefore they needed yet another investigation to make sure that I really deserved it. One of my daughters at that time won the right to play for Latvia in the World Youth Chess Championship, but without a valid passport she couldn't go abroad at all. So I had no time to wait for yet another decision and this was how I became a citizen: by registration order, fast and easy – merely because of my ethnicity. Honestly, I'm still a little ashamed of that but the question was whether I

would allow my daughter to fall victim to those crazy nationalists.

Well, my life started to straighten up since then; I was happy with my family, had a good job, and together with my husband we earned enough to get by. I tried to stay away from politics as much as I could, but unfortunately this didn't continue too long. When it became clear that politicians were not going to abandon the "school reform", I had to do something.

There were huge protests but they didn't result in changing the reforms. Now the Russian-speaking community is not yet united enough to resist efficiently; we must work hard to change this. I cannot accept discrimination as the state policy and will continue to resist as much as I can.

Photo, page 30: Svetlana Somova at her work place

Photo, page 31: From left to right: sisters Nadya (14), Olya (17), Tanya (16) and... their Mum Svetlana at the beach (2004)

Sergey Malakhovsky

(Sergejs Malahovskis)

Born in 1964. Brought to Latvia at the age of 3 days by his parents who were permanent residents of Latvia. Professional journalist. Currently Chief of International Department at one of Latvia's most popular Russian language newspapers, "Chas" (The Hour). Married, with two children from his first marriage and one from the second.

The histories of two fourth and fifth generation Latvian *non-citizen*¹² families were intertwined in mine and my wife's marriage. My grandfather was a decorated soldier; he served throughout the whole of World War II – from Brest in June 1941 until Vienna in April 1945 where he was severely wounded by a bayonet in the lung for which he was sent to Riga for treatment. He recovered and stayed in Riga, where he brought his family, and spent his entire working life as an accountant.

Then he and his wife *became non-citizens in 1991*⁵. They were too old to pass the naturalisation procedure. Even if they had wanted to, for them it was impossible because up to 1998 there existed so-called "windows of naturalisation". According to these at first only the youngest (16 – 20 years old) category of non-citizen could apply for naturalisation, the following year those in the 21 – 25 age group could apply, and so on. Middle-aged and elderly "aliens" were prohibited for years even from applying for naturalisation! Thus, my grandparents died with the status of "alien".

At the end of World War II my wife's grandfather was invited to Riga as a diesel specialist to work on the restoration of the Riga Diesel Plant. This plant was one of the best of its kind in the USSR. For a long time he was director of the plant, and received numerous awards for his work. He retired during the decline of the Soviet Union. When the citizenship law was adopted he refused to naturalise despite his flu-



ent Latvian. He had been a Respected Citizen of the City of Riga and then in a moment became a non-citizen of the country which he had helped rebuild and had dedicated all his efforts.

The current propaganda claims that industrial specialists were brought by the Soviet authorities while Latvia could have dealt with post war rebuilding by itself. But *ethnic Latvians represented 70% of the Soviet authorities in the country*¹ and were in total power in Latvia. You may compare the situation with Lithuania which was not inviting so many specialists from other parts of the Soviet Union. As a result at the moment of proclaiming independence the percentage of Russians and representatives of other ethnicities in Lithuania was much less than in Latvia. And there were no problems with citizenship in Lithuania. But Latvia itself pressured Moscow asking for bigger quotas for invited specialists.

My wife's father refused to apply for citizenship, refusing to grovel before a humiliating law and emigrated to Is-

The current propaganda claims that industrial specialists were brought by the Soviet authorities while Latvia could have dealt with post war rebuilding by itself. But Latvia itself pressured Moscow asking for bigger quotas for invited specialists.

“What is the difference between two children born from the same mother?” - “Your elder son was born in another country”. But he was born in the same territory and the collapse of the country shouldn’t influence the destiny of a particular individual.

rael. My wife also does not understand why she has to pass a naturalisation procedure since she’s the third generation living in Latvia. All our relatives are non-citizens. Only a few had to naturalise because of their businesses. For us it’s a question of principle.

The story of my “arrival” in Latvia is also interesting. When I was due to be born my mother went to her relatives who lived in the city of Atomash, an important nuclear research centre in the Russian Federation - usually the best doctors worked in such centres. I was brought to Latvia at the age of three days. Nevertheless, as I’d been born outside Latvia I received less privatisation certificates following independence. In addition, I was punished for my studies at the Faculty of Journalism of the Rostov State University (Russian Federation) - ten years of my work in Latvia before entering Rostov University were thrown away by the bureaucrats.

My eldest child who was born in 1986 has to apply for naturalisation to become a citizen. His younger brother, born at the time of independence could be simply registered as a citizen if we together with his mother make an application. My former wife asked; “What is the difference between two children born from the same mother?” - “Your elder son was born in another country”, was the answer. But he was born in the same territory and the collapse of the country was an objective historical process which shouldn’t influence the destiny of a particular individual.

I don’t apply for naturalisation for moral reasons. First of all, the current text of the oath means fidelity not to the Latvian state but to the ruling regime. Why shouldn’t I call for a change in the current regime which has wallowed in corruption? Secondly, when passing the history exam I have to answer the question: “What happened in Latvia in 1940?” The “right” answer is “Latvia was occupied by the Soviet Army”. But this answer is not true, it contradicts historical facts.

What “occupation” could there have been if Soviet tanks were met by the Latvian people with flowers? Among

those who were enthusiastically meeting the Soviet Army was Mavrik Vulfson, one of the future leaders of *the Popular Front*⁴, a famous fighter for Latvian independence. Within a week of proclaiming independence the photo of him kissing the armour of the Soviet tank disappeared from the Red Latvian Shooters Museum (now the Occupation Museum).

We can talk about annexation or incorporation using the correct historical terminology. I can’t accept the views of the current political elite on Latvian history and will not swear falsely. The history of the ethnic Russian population in Latvia goes back four hundred years. They were, are and will continue living here. And I shouldn’t have to apply to become a citizen of my own country.

The Latvian authorities are dividing the ethnic Russian population according to the time of their (or their relatives’) arrival in Latvia. Those whose ancestors came to Latvia before 1940 were recognized as “historically living in Latvia” and were given citizenship automatically.

But those who came later – why were they not accepted as “historically living” here? Does this mean that Latvia had no history from 1940 till 1990? Such a policy is leading to great social tension. I suppose Russians are generally calmer than the more southern nations. But long ago Bismark said that “Russians harness slowly but ride fast”. An explosion in social tensions in Latvia seems inevitable. It can only be avoided by bringing about full equality amongst our residents.

My view of *Atmoda*³ events differed from my wife’s. She voted “against” at *the referendum in March 1991*⁸ fearing the later consequences. I supported independence and even took an active part in the *Atmoda* processes. In *January 1991*¹⁵ at nights we were secretly producing democratic newspapers, then taking the trace-paper under our clothes out of the printing press to be printed in the countryside. The next day these newspapers were delivered to the *barricades*¹⁵. That was the last time we spoke a common language with ethnic Latvians. Our main slogan at that time

was: "Latvia – our common home!" When former Prime Minister Einars Repshe was recently reminded of that slogan, he answered; "How couldn't we lie..." If such a referendum would happen now I would vote against.

I do see my future in Latvia. I am a professional journalist. During my career I have worked on various publications. Currently I am a chief of the international department at one of the most popular Latvian newspapers in the Russian language - "Chas". My children will choose their futures for themselves. I would like them to stay in Latvia but the current situation makes it less and less likely. Another five to ten years of such policies and only old people will stay here.

In fact a lot of ethnic Latvians "vote with their feet" which means they do not take part in the elections at all. Not long ago I talked to the famous Latvian artist Mr. Cimbergs. He told me honestly that for a long time he hadn't participated in elections. He explained that among the ethnic Latvian parties he didn't see any for whom he could vote. But his mentality prevents him from voting for "Russians". It's easier not to vote at all. I think a lot of ethnic Latvians are currently taking such a position...



Our main slogan at that time was: "Latvia – our common home!" When former Prime Minister Einars Repshe was recently reminded of that slogan, he answered; "How couldn't we lie..."

Photo, page 35: Sergey Malakhovsky (first from right) taking part in the Russian Schools defenders' demonstration in September 2003

Natalya Sevidova

(Natālija Sevidova)



50 years old, born in Riga, vice-editor in chief of leading daily "Vesti-Segodnya", two children.

...very soon the Latvian leaders openly declared: "We cheated you. We needed your votes at the elections. Our strategic goal is to build Latvia for ethnic Latvians. And all means are valid to reach this goal".

My father was a professional journalist. During World War II he continued to work reporting from the front. In 1948 he came to Riga together with his wife from the Volga region (Russian Federation) and worked here in Russian-language newspapers – first as a journalist, then as a chief of department in the newspaper "Sovetskaya Latvija" (Soviet Latvia). My mother was a nurse working in Riga city's polyclinic.

I was born in Riga in 1955. In 1976 I graduated from the Latvian State University, my specialty was German philology. In 1975 I started my career at the newspaper "Sovetskaya Molodezh" (Soviet Youth). At first I wrote short pieces, then became a correspondent. Later I reached the level of chief of department and for a time I fulfilled the duties of editor-in-chief. In 1998 our newspaper was reorganised and renamed "Vesti Segodnya" (News Today). Since that time I have been working on this paper, now as a deputy editor-in-chief. So 30 years of my life are connected with the same daily.

The newspaper became opposed to the established power structures at the end of the 80s. In fact it was a mouthpiece of *perestroika* and one of the most popular democratic media in the former USSR. The reason for this was that in the former Soviet Union Latvia always was more "western and liberal" than Russia. Being free-thinking the newspaper became very popular, its circulation exceeded one million!

In speaking about the events of *Atmoda*³ that took place at the end of the 80s, my political views were always moderate. I have never been a supporter of the more radical factions. The day before the *referendum on independence in 1991*⁸ two articles had been published in our newspaper. One was written by the head of department Alla Berezovskaya entitled "Why I would take part in the referendum", the other was written by me and its title was "Why I wouldn't take part in the referendum". I argued that I was ready to vote for the independence of Latvia but there were a number of questions without answers. I was not sure that in independent Latvia I would have more freedom and opportunities. Nobody dispelled my fears which were later realised.

In 1992 – 1993 the social collapse took place. Many industrial enterprises closed; a lot of people were cheated by financial pyramids. Hundreds of thousands of people who had enjoyed equal rights a couple years before, suddenly got the humiliating "alien" status, received an unfair share of *privatisation certificates*¹³, were persecuted by language inspections, and even lost the right to use their original names. A lot of people had to start from scratch. A number of them succeeded in business, but a lot of engineers who weren't needed any more had to become street vendors.

I might say that I was in luck. The newspaper has survived. We, journalists, to be professional could not allow

ourselves to be affected by all the unfairness, all the human drama. Many of us couldn't endure it. My close friend and splendid journalist Liliya Plesniece was defending the most unfortunate people. So deeply did she feel their problems that she would travel to the remotest countryside where people had lost all their hope and gave them some money or some kind of humanitarian help. But then she died from cancer. I am sure that happened because of everything she was suffering. Her job wore her out absolutely.

On the other hand, the Russian-speaking population in Latvia has passed a tough survival test. I am proud of my compatriots who succeed in spite of all these difficulties. Private business and private universities, non-governmental organisations and media have been created. We have created our Baltic Russian sub-culture. We have learnt to count only on ourselves.

Did I expect in the early 90s that we would be deprived of our political rights and that I would not be able to participate in later elections? As a journalist I got used to reading between the lines. The political documents of *the Popular Front*⁴ were superficially attractive but behind which skeletons lurked in the closet. I had quite good reasons to expect dirty tricks. And very soon the Latvian leaders openly declared: "We cheated you. We needed your votes at the elections. Our strategic goal is to build Latvia for ethnic Latvians. And all means are valid to reach this goal".

I didn't participate in *the referendum of 1991*⁸. And later I couldn't participate in any voting. As a *non-citizen*¹² I was deprived of my civil right to do it. To be honest it wasn't a surprise. All the bitterness I had experienced earlier when I saw where things were going. When everything had been done at the offi-

cial level I just became aware that we would have to live with it.

Sometimes I try to convince myself now is the time to at last get citizenship by naturalisation. I love my native country, here I feel more comfortable than anywhere else. But at some subtle psychological level it is difficult to make myself convince state officials that I am good and loyal. I don't consider myself worse than a person who would examine me for the naturalisation. Indeed it's difficult – in some sense application for citizenship means that you accept the imposed and unfair "rules of the game". But such an attitude doesn't mean that non-citizens are not loyal to their country.

I have got two children. My elder daughter graduated from university and is now working in a joint venture. She married a young man from a Latvian-Russian family. She's already naturalised and is going to live in Latvia. My younger daughter also passed the naturalisation requirement and after school went to Great Britain to continue her studies. She is not going to come back and I miss her. It's a pity that so many young people leave Latvia.



I am proud of my Russian-speaking compatriots who succeed in spite of all these difficulties. We have learnt to count only on ourselves.

Photo, page 36: Natalya relaxing in the silent corner of the garden

Photo, page 37: Natalya Sevidova when visiting her younger daughter in Great Britain

Irina Pryadko

(Irina Prjadko)



77 years old. Born in Novgorod (Russian Federation). Worked as a cook, now retired. Has an adult daughter and two grandsons.

I was born in 1928 in Novgorod. I was studying at school there before the war started in 1941. We as a partisan family were evacuated to Siberia. The town was already being bombed. We got ready in three hours, took some clothes, put some straw in the carriage and together with fourteen thousand other people in a similar situation, we were relocated to the Omsk region in Siberia.

In 1946 I came to Riga, two of my sisters lived here. One of them was amongst those who liberated Riga in 1944 and the other was assigned here to restore the city. Riga was in ruins, everything was wrecked, factories stood idle. We worked restoring a big factory, whilst at the same time growing crops. There was sowing, haymaking and harvesting. While this was going on I completed my secondary education at night school. So I lived without any holidays at all. I started working as a cook and achieved the highest level in my trade. My daughter was born.

When deportation occurred in 1949, among those deported from Latvia was my husband's sister. They were sent to Kemerovo region in South Siberia,

where a Latvian village was built with a Latvian school. Latvians were very industrious. They were allotted a lot of land on which they built houses and started bee-gardens. When my husband's sister came recently to visit us with five other ethnic Latvians, they all agreed: "Now we have our own house, our own bee-garden, good bread, we live as decent people". When they were asked to return to Latvia they categorically declined.

At the very beginning I did not really trust the promises of the *Popular Front*⁴. I had a gut feeling that the processes which started at the time were not good. We have lived here for such a long time having "a common table and spoon". We didn't really pay any regard to each other's ethnicity. Then suddenly there were clashes in talks at work. Everyone suddenly started to blame us. Hatred started.

We understood soon that we would be deprived of citizenship as a result of *Atmoda*³. But we didn't expect our children to be *deprived of an education in their native language*⁷...

The school results of Yaroslav, my grandson fell dramatically after the reform. He sits at home, learns by rote, but it's still far too difficult for him. No progress. An acquaintance of mine followed the integrators' advice and put her daughter in a Latvian kinder garden. Later this girl went to a Russian school. Now they have employed a tutor to teach her native Russian. But she is not coping well. It may be that very soon they will have to turn to a psychiatrist due to the girl's serious development disorders.

We started to think about ways to make people listen as soon as we learned about the reform. The authorities did not wish to listen to us. We did turn for help to European institutions but received only very general responses and this was not much real help. Then my grandson asked me: "But Putin is Russian isn't

An acquaintance of mine followed the integrators' advice and put her daughter in a Latvian kinder garden. Later this girl went to a Russian school. But she is not coping well. It may be that very soon they will have to turn to a psychiatrist due to the girl's serious development disorders.

he?" I told him: "Yes, he is". And he suggested: "Let's write him a letter. If he is Russian let him defend us! If he doesn't who else will?"

On 23 April 2003 he wrote a letter to president Putin in his own childish handwriting. Two months passed and suddenly on 21 June we received a call from the Russian Embassy. They asked: "Did you write a letter to Putin?" We were dumfounded and replied: "Yes, we did". "Then please come to the embassy for your reply".



During the meeting the ambassador asked Yaroslav: "How many mistakes did you make in your letter?" but my grandson didn't get confused and replied: "None. My granny had checked everything". Then the embassy held a press conference. They gave gifts from Putin – an encyclopaedia consisting of thirty three books and three books for Yaroslav personally. Later they presented Yaroslav with a letter from Putin as well. Well, we thought that was that ... It turned out that it was just the beginning. In three days we were again invited to the embassy and were informed that president Putin wants to personally meet the boy who wrote him a letter and invited him together with his class to Moscow.

At school a pandemonium began. There was a huge tension. Many, especially ethnic Latvians asked Yaroslav, why he didn't write to his own president? He replied: "The reason is that she doesn't read in Russian. Why should I write to her? She promised to learn Russian in a couple of months to show the Russians how easy it is to learn a foreign language. Some years have passed since then".

After the visit to Moscow my grandson was left with a lot of impressions. Everywhere they got a very warm and

cordial welcome and received gifts. On returning home a journalist asked Yaroslav at a press conference: "Are you planning to serve in the army to defend your homeland?" and Yaroslav replied: "If it's my homeland then why was I not granted citizenship? Why was it not granted to my granny, Mum and dad?"

Despite all that we are staying here. We have six graves here; my daughter has lived here all her life. We have nowhere to go. My eldest grandson, Misha, is going to get naturalised. He speaks four languages, studies at college, is involved in a restaurant business, and wants to do more. Yaroslav dreams of becoming an architect. Of course people cannot do without knowledge of Latvian. Some need it for their work, others - for communication. But a child shouldn't be deprived of his native language. At home we communicate in Russian. Yaroslav has written about it to Putin: "We are all learning the Latvian language, we are not against Latvian. But we do want to study in Russian."

Yaroslav has written about it to Putin: "We are all learning the Latvian language, we are not against Latvian. But we do want to study in Russian."



Photo, page 38: Irina Pryadko with grandson Yaroslav

Photo, page 39 (above): Irina in 1950

Photo, page 39 (below): 10-year-old Yaroslav with his classmates at the reception held by President Vladimir Putin of Russia (2003)

Maria Shirshina

(Marija Širšina)



I was a citizen's wife and logically should have got citizenship automatically. But I was deprived of this right.

55 years old. Worked as a modeller, then at the radio technique works. Homeless, was evicted from her flat where three generations of her family lived. Two children.

I was born and lived in Lipetsk oblast, Russia. That's where I finished secondary school and sewing technical school. I got married early, at 19, practically straight after finishing my studies, since then I've been living in Riga, my husband's native city. All my working experience has been here. I worked as a modeller in a work shop and since the birth of my first child I worked at a kinder

garden. Then I was trained for a new profession and worked at the radio technique works.

We never belonged to the communist party, we stayed away from politics. People tried to persuade my husband to join the party, but he refused saying that he was doing his utmost for the country and homeland without being a party member. When the decision on the *restoration of pre-war Latvian citizenship*⁵ came, I was a citizen's wife and logically should have got citizenship automatically. But I was deprived of this right. My husband died in 1996. He was not present at a very difficult part of my life.

In 2002 we were evicted from our flat. My husband's family and later our fam-

ily had lived in this flat since 1941. At our expense a complete overhaul and redecoration were done. When the house was built in the 1930s, the only convenience was cold water. During Soviet times, renovation work was undertaken to install hot water, gas and heating.

We had a permanent tenancy agreement with the state. I have never had any rent arrears. I try not to collect debts even now that our financial position is quite difficult.

The owner of our building is a foreigner; he obtained the building along with the tenants.

According to the *de-nationalisation law*¹⁶ seven years after the reinstatement of proprietorship an owner has the right to review the situation following receipt of official permission. After seven years he started to terrorise tenants with a demand to sign new conditions of renting, whereas according to the law the old ones were still valid. New agreements were far worse compared to the previous ones – they were concluded for a short-time and without a right of continuation. Due to the tenants not being lawyers many of them did not fully comprehend the consequences of the agreements. Many ended up homeless.

In the agreement that I was offered the rent was three times higher than we paid before and made no economic sense, with the agreement running for two years. After taking legal advice we offered a compromise for discussion. But we didn't get a reply. Suddenly we received a subpoena for our eviction because of capital repairs. To our surprise the owner had won the trial. Yes, the capital repairs could be considered as a basis for temporary eviction. In that case, following the repairs the owner should have given us the opportunity to come back or provide alternative accommodation. But in our case the owner hadn't even got an allowance for capital repairs at all!

The eviction took place on the 16 October 2002. It was followed by Latvian as well as foreign media. From early morning a lot of people came to our house – Members of Parliament and Riga City Council, representatives of non-governmental organisations as well as ordinary people who sympathized with us. We, together with my children were in a hurry to take out our belongings and vacate the premises. But the owner prevented us from doing it with the help of the guard he had hired. He ordered the gates closed and it was not possible to drive the lorry for our belongings into the yard. The guard would not allow people to come to our apartment and help us. As a result a clash took place between the indignant public and the guards that was provoked by the owner. And our family in fact, was forcibly thrown out onto the street without being allocated alternative accommodation.

In addition, the owner later accused us of damaging his property during the eviction! And again the court groundlessly supported the owner. As I am currently unemployed my children have to pay him compensation for our humiliating public eviction. This is total absurdity!

For some time following the eviction I turned to the social services for help. They asked for proof of abode and assured me it was only a formality. As I didn't have an address I gave them that of a friend. When I came for welfare, they told me: "Now we will visit your flat and see in what circumstances you live". I showed them the court eviction decision and explained that I didn't have any place to live. After that they made it clear to me that I was nobody in this country and refused social assistance.

As a result of our very public eviction our family's right to private and domestic life has been impeded upon. Our good name has been tarnished because the eviction has been portrayed

by some media, as if we were evicted for debts which is simply untrue. Because of this my children had problems at work. Some have said that we Shirshins shouldn't be allowed to work in state institutions because we are against Latvia. But we are not "contra" Latvia, we are "pro" the restoration of lawfulness in Latvia.

Having exhausted all legal avenues in Latvia we have submitted an application to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. This is our last hope to restore justice.

It is not so easy to consider relocation to another country at my age. I have lived in Latvia for such a long time; my husband was born here, lived here until his death, my children grew up here and live here, and I consider it to be my state. The children should decide for themselves but my daughter is not planning to relocate yet. She is a lawyer and will continue her masters studies. I have brought up my children as decent and honest citizens of Latvia. My son is working for the fire service. He was ashamed of those who ordered firemen to assist in evicting people on to the street.

My children have to pay the owner compensation for our humiliating public eviction. This is total absurdity!



Photo, page 40: Maria Shirshina (left) and her daughter Natalya hope that justice will be done
Photo, page 41: For Maria, daughter Natalya and son Vyacheslav give hope and support

Nikita Halyavin

(Nikita Haļavins)

Born in 1989 in Riga, year eleven student at school. Hobbies: sport, painting, programming, chess, languages. The only child in the family, mother is a coach of oriental martial arts, father is a businessman.

When inspectors from the ministry come, lessons become a show; usually we take one of the preceding topics which we're already familiar with and therefore may concentrate on speaking in Latvian.

In 1991 my parents voted for an independent Latvia⁸; they thought this would lead to a better life. It was a common opinion at that time that democracy would easily cure all the problems caused by the communist regime. Nobody could imagine in 1991 that the changes would result in mass non-citizenship.

Now my dad is strongly against naturalisation. He is of the opinion that naturalisation is an unfair approach towards those who were permanently resident in Latvia at the time of independence. My mother on the other hand has taken the opportunity, mostly for pragmatic reasons – her job requires her to travel so non-citizenship would limit her professionally. Another reason was me; she wanted me to be a citizen and this would be impossible otherwise. Person-

ally I share the view of my dad and like him would never go for naturalisation, regardless of the benefits. Honestly, I'd rather leave Latvia all together. I'm comfortable with the choice of my mother though, it's her decision and I respect it.

Before the *minority secondary education reform*⁷ I had no interest in politics. But once someone decided that we had to be taught in Latvian only, I started to reflect on the political processes that led to this weird decision.

I found that things were getting crazy pretty fast. It was quite surprising to hear from teachers in our Russian minority schools phrases like "What do you mean that you're not occupiers of Latvia, what are you talking about?" They are so used to what politicians tell them that they sincerely accept that they are "occupiers". I wonder if it's a course of bilingual education that makes someone a zombie like this. Anyway it's sad; when a teacher says something like that, it has a severe impact on students.

Well, of course the reform in schools didn't go as was expected. In fact, there is silent sabotage almost everywhere. When inspectors from the ministry come, lessons become a show; usually we take one of the preceding topics which we're already familiar with and therefore may concentrate on speaking in Latvian. This would be impossible of course if a subject would be new and/or complicated. Teachers achieve the required 60% of state language usage in different ways. Some simply speak a weird mixed language, a part of a phrase in Russian and the rest in Latvian; others give us explanations in Russian and then get the required 60% of time when we're doing exercises.

Textbooks that we get in Latvian are mostly useless; complicated topics that take too much time to understand in a non-native language. Therefore we



prefer textbooks in Russian. After the reform began, teachers got used to giving us higher marks than they normally did before, to make the results look nicer. It's funny, sometimes there is no need to know much to get a good mark; it's enough to say a few words in Latvian and the teachers are happy.

When I saw all of this my reaction was that it's very wrong, and this made me become politically active. One of my "answers" to the reform is my website www.shkola.lv ("shkola" in English means "school"). Its main purpose is to provide training aids in the Russian language. Currently there are study aids on 14 different subjects available; they are based on the best textbooks issued in Russian, the quality is very high and helps gain enough knowledge to get into good universities. I started this project alone, but things are changing now. When people see what has been done, they understand how important it is to have such a resource and have started to help me. Currently we're a team of 16; we have managed to get the attention of the mass-media and even attracted some sponsors.

Despite certain personal achievements I'm still very concerned about the situation; I'm yet to decide whether to stay in Latvia or to leave for somewhere else. I was born in this country, my family and friends are living here. On the other hand, I respect also Russia as the country of my ethnic origin. Currently I'd wish my future job to be in international business, preferably related to Latvia. Another option is mass-media, it provides a real possibility to in-



fluence the situation with national minorities. A TV show that speaks of the benefits of a united society may cause positive changes in public opinion.

Now the fact that there are more than 400,000 *non-citizens*¹² in Latvia is pretty bad for many reasons. In particular this has a negative impact on state economics. Non-citizen's business activity is limited, therefore they produce less than they could and pay fewer taxes. It's funny to hear politicians screaming that Russians are occupiers of Latvia and that they should leave for Russia while huge numbers of Latvians move to Ireland because of the poor living conditions in Latvia. This is something the government must address, instead of screwing up history.

One of my "answers" to the reform is my website www.shkola.lv ("shkola" in English means "school"). Its main purpose is to provide training aids in the Russian language.

Oleg Gotsulyak

(Oļegs Gociļaks)



52 years old. Born in Riga. Has higher education as an electrical engineer, worked as a chief power-engineer at various enterprises. Married, has a daughter.

I couldn't imagine how many ethnic Latvians would support ethno-radical politicians and accept the deprivation of political rights from most of their Russians neighbours.

My father was an army officer in Ukraine (which at that time was a part of the Soviet Union), and served throughout World War II. After the liberation of Latvia in 1944 his regiment settled here. My mother is also from Ukraine; they got married before the war. My mother was in great danger when the German Army occupied Ukraine. Luckily, she managed to leave at the last moment, otherwise as a Jew and the wife of an army officer she would have had little chance to survive. In 1946 she joined my father in Latvia and was one of those who worked hard to create a counter-epidemic service here.

I was born in Riga and spent almost all my life here, except for three years of work in Siberia. I went there of my own will after graduation – I wanted to see what I was capable of in extreme circumstances. Then I came back to Riga,

and have been working as a chief power engineer at various enterprises.

The USSR started to collapse, enterprises experienced big problems, some closed down; that was a really difficult time. Yet relationships within Latvian society were still good, nothing like the extreme nationalism we see now – hence the hopes for a friendly and fresh environment, a prosperous future, and a good relationship with Russia.

I voted for Latvian independence⁸ but now I regret that I did – my hopes didn't come true. I thought that changes were necessary but in the huge USSR it was impossible to make them fast enough; in Latvia it seemed to be much easier to build up a country where everyone would feel comfortable. I felt it would be impossible without taking into consideration the positive historical role of Russia and Russians in the development of the Latvian nation – I'd go as far as to say that Latvia obtained its independence twice, both times with the help of Russia – and listening to leaders of the Popular Front of Latvia⁴ I thought they understood this too.

But I was wrong; there were several factors I couldn't foresee. First, I couldn't imagine how many ethnic Latvians would support ethno-radical politicians and accept the deprivation of political rights from most of their Russians neighbours. Second, I never thought that the Russian-speaking community here would behave so indifferently regarding the rights of its members and there wouldn't be mass protests against their violation. Third, I had an illusion that the so called "civilized world" that was screaming at times so loudly of the infringed rights of a few Soviet dissidents, would not take lightly the breach of the very basic rights of 800,000 people. And lastly, I couldn't guess that Russia would put so little effort into defending its compatriots in Latvia.

I really didn't think that we would end up with the worst possible scenario. Now I

know it was my mistake to vote for Latvian independence. Although definitely my voice wasn't a decisive one I still regret that I did, and feel responsible for what has happened afterwards. Well, at least the lesson is learned: now we know that human rights are defended only when there is someone in power who benefits from it, otherwise nobody cares. It's still hard to believe how Europe may consider "democratic" the state where such a fundamental thing as universal suffrage is broken and a huge number of inhabitants have no right to vote. Now I feel myself a second class citizen. Not only have I restricted political rights; during privatisation of state property I got less *privatisation certificates*¹³ than citizens had, why? It's hard to believe that every citizen contributed to the creation of that property so much more than I did. So I decided to stay away from the Latvian authorities as much as I could, unless they managed to get under my skin – then I would protest.

I'm not going to go through naturalisation; the procedure may well be democratic and appropriate for foreigners, but it's totally wrong when exercised on people born here, myself included. I'm not going to swear to be "loyal" to the regime that humiliates me for no reason. I also believe that nobody is entitled to ask how I feel about a particular government, unless I decide to share my view of my own will. The current ruling regime is very ethnocentric; it's enough to see how hard it tries to *destroy education in Russian*⁷.

I also hate that it favours former SS-men, at the same time belittling soldiers of the anti-Hitler coalition. There are double standards everywhere; for example with the former SS-men they say in Europe those are victims of Hitler's regime who were forced to serve but in Latvia they're praised as national heroes. They scream how much they are shocked with the Holocaust and at the same time describe Salaspils concentration camp as a "work-farm to rehabilitate criminals".

Nobody in Latvia speaks of "integration" anymore; they almost don't hide the fact that the goal is either to squeeze out, or at worst to assimilate Russians. MPs and other politicians openly call for building up "Latvia for ethnic Latvians", discuss deportations to Russia and nobody gets shocked. Of course they don't kill us here, but systematic intrusion in such sensitive areas as language, education and culture hurts. Now many say naturalisation must be stopped, or at least only persons of proven "loyalty" may be allowed to naturalise. Well, I believe if someone is entitled to decide on another's "loyalty", except if one's crime against the state is proved in a court, then something has gone very wrong – it's clear mark of totalitarianism.

Although as I said I won't go for naturalisation, I would not force anyone to be like me. My wife, when she was at risk of losing her job, got naturalised, as well as my daughter. My daughter is a talented musician, she's now studying in Switzerland; I'd like her to come back here but we need to create a more friendly society in Latvia first – friendly for both working and living.

It's still hard to believe how Europe may consider "democratic" the state where such a fundamental thing as universal suffrage is broken and a huge number of inhabitants have no right to vote.



Photo, page 44: Oleg Gotsulyak in Strasbourg (2005)
Photo, page 45: Oleg with his daughter Elina

Zigurds Benkis

(Zigurds Beņķis)



63 years old. Born in Latvia. Ethnic Latvian, citizen of Latvia. Electrician, with unfinished higher education. Has two adult children.

In 1943 I was a new born baby when my dad was taken into the German army. He did not wish to kill anyone and the Germans sent him further away from home, into Poland, because he was considered as an unreliable person. After some time he went missing. Despite the fact that all knew that Dad was recruited to the German army, our family did not encounter any repressions.

My uncle was also recruited to the German army and he guarded warehouses near Liepaya. Then he was taken prisoner by the Soviet Army. For two years he worked in forced labour in northern Russia and was released in 1947. He did not encounter any severe repressions. Upon his return he became a leading furniture designer, and a leading community figure. When they gave him a send-off for his retirement, they rented the Small Guild (the same building where US president

George Bush got a red carpet reception in 2005) - he died four years ago in poverty, the new authorities forgot about him. Those deported from Latvia in 1949 were mostly people who fought voluntarily on the side of the Germans or genuinely innocent people about whom envious neighbours informed the authorities.

I was never a member of any party, or movement of that kind. I always lived in friendship with my fellow country people - both Latvians and Russians. We studied together, worked and engaged in sports. Separation on ethnic grounds is completely artificial in Latvia. The Russians were artificially made into the enemies, so the wanna-be politicians could gain cheap popularity and put their snouts in the trough. I don't agree with what's been going on. I always put an effort not just to study history, but to draw conclusions for myself, to understand what is happening around me and look at historical regularities.

Many people in Latvia have similar thoughts, but cannot get over deeply held beliefs or prejudices. They took part in the fight for independence and sincerely believed in the ideas they were offered. To admit to having made mistakes is also hard for a young person, not to mention older people who have lived their lives and consider themselves wise. Therefore many prefer to continue playing by the same set of rules and blame Russia and the Russians for all our problems.

I do realise that I am saying things which are unpopular in the Latvian community. However, first of all I am a person and only then am I Latvian! I am also for the freedom and independence of Latvia. I am against people who split us apart. These actions are directed against Latvians themselves.

For example, the *issue of the denationalised houses*¹⁶ touched both Russians and Latvians. Nobody really verified

Separation on ethnic grounds is completely artificial in Latvia. The Russians were artificially made into the enemies.

how many owners sold their houses before 1940, which of them were ceded to the state, some found false relatives.

I can give you an example. My uncle's wife lived in such a house with her parents from when the house was built in 1939. A year later when Latvia joined the Soviet Union, the house was nationalised. After independence of Latvia, an alleged claimant to the house came and started to evict the family on to the streets. To begin with he claimed the house needed a drainage system

for which the inhabitants had to pay a substantial amount. When I came and made an estimate it appeared that in fact such a system cost only kopecks but no-one understood what was going on.

I really hope that the new generation will be able to take an unbiased view of what's happening in Latvia. They see how ordinary people are being treated here and they leave. I do hope that they will return, and sooner or later everything will change for the best.



First of all I am a person and only then am I Latvian! I am also for the freedom and independence of Latvia. I am against people who split us apart. These actions are directed towards Latvians themselves.

Photo, page 47: Zigurds Benkis at Chimkent, September 1965

Eduard Goncharov

(Eduards Gončarovs)



38 years old. Born in Kazan (currently - capital of the Tatarstan Republic - part of the Russian Federation) to the family of a serviceman in the Soviet Army. He graduated from the Riga School of Railway Transport. Currently employed as a mechanic at the Latvian Railways.

I arrived in Latvia with my dad in 1978. I was ten at the time. When I arrived, my contemporaries had already been studying

Latvian for a year. In the main, the families of servicemen did not have to study Latvian, as they were there only temporarily. However, I chose to study Latvian and this was the right decision – my dad stayed here, in Latvia till his pension. After graduation from school I enrolled at the Riga School of Railway Transport. After finishing high school, I started working at the Latvian Railways where I am employed up to this day. I have tried my skills in TV journalism, but after Russian TV broadcasting was practically destroyed, I returned to the railways.

I was not a member of the Comsomol (Young Communist League) or the Communist Party. When the *Popular Front*⁴ emerged, I was indifferent to it until the moment when I came to one of its meetings. At that meeting one of the orators said that the Soviet Union was evil for Latvians, but that fascism had been a blessing. The audience

started to applaud. At that moment I realised that this was not my way. And I was not wrong. Since that time and up to now all of the state system of the Republic of Latvia is geared towards the exclusion of Russians from Latvia. Indeed, there is some economic basis to this as well. The current system can provide neither for Latvians nor for the Russians, hence it resorts to a form of divide and rule.

After the segregation of people in Latvia into citizens and non-citizens, I went to receive my non-citizenship (alien) status. It turned out, however, that I was not even entitled to this humiliating status! Despite the fact my dad had demobilised long before independence, at *registration*¹¹ we were endorsed with a *round stamp*¹⁴ in our passport (it means that we were not recognised as Latvian non-citizens) as was done to all who resided at houses that were owned by the Soviet Army. According to the law, the category of non-citizens was one hundred per cent applicable to us. Indeed, many families did not receive non-citizen status, although they had nothing to do with the army, but unfortunately, they had moved into "servicemen's" houses after an exchange of flats.

Immediately after that I encountered problems at work. I was told that despite the fact they highly valued me as a professional, they would have to dismiss me, if during one year's time I did not change my status.

My dad and I brought an action to court and won the case. The court ruled that we had to be allotted non-citizen's status. I came with this court decision to the branch of the *Department of Citizenship and Immigration (CID)*⁶, but was advised there that I had to go with the decision to the manager of the branch, and she would see the public only once a week. After that I visited her once a week for two months, but could not meet her in person!

It was understood that such stalling was purely political as the CID system of that time, was focussed on the exclusion of Russians from Latvia.

Each time I was literally shown the door – they either cancelled visiting hours or the manager's child was sick or something else turned up. Well, this was an open mockery. It was understood that such stalling was purely political as the CID system of that time, was focussed on the exclusion of Russians from Latvia.

I was lucky enough – at the time clearance occurred at the CID system, its manager was dismissed and I managed to see the new boss in person. He listened to me and made an official order. After that the regional branch of the CID allotted me a non-citizen's (alien) status in just five minutes.

If I had not managed to become a non-citizen then I would have encountered quite serious problems. Firstly, I would have been dismissed from my job. At the time nobody paid particular attention to the law and there was an undercover order to get rid of "roundstamper"¹⁴ in the course of one year. Secondly, I would not have been allowed to cross frontiers and if I did they would not permit me to return to Latvia. In addition, there were a lot of restrictions, for example, in the sphere of health care.

At the railways most of the staff is made up of Russians. Now there are legislative initiatives being prepared in order to get rid of us. I do not believe in changing and influencing this situation through elections. Even if the Russians will elect forty per cent of their own representatives to the Saeima (the Latvian parliament) the remaining sixty percent will not change anything. My vote will not impact anything and I simply do not wish to swear an oath to people who openly hate me. This is the exact reason I do not become naturalised.

I see the solution only in building up a strong Russian community. I have lived here for thirty years and consider this country my own. Therefore I am staying here and will do everything I can to make it into a normal European country free of fascism and Russophobia.



The current system can provide neither for Latvians nor for the Russians, hence it resorts to a form of divide and rule.

Photo, page 48: Eduard Goncharov believes in developing the Russian community in Latvia
Eduard Goncharov also pictured protesting against school reform on page 11 (second from right)

Olga Scherbachenko

(Olga Ščerbačenko)



19 years old. Born in Riga. In 2006 she is due to finish secondary school

After the education reform of the Russian schools we have to devote more time to translation than the actual learning of a subject.

During WWII my Grandpa helped to free Latvia from the German invaders and participated in the liberation of Riga. After the war was over he remained in Latvia as there was lots of work in renewing the domestic economy. My dad was born in Riga and he got his education in engineering here. Mum completed secondary school in Byelorussia and came to Riga to study at the Institute of Polytechnics. She completed her studies in electrical engineering and was assigned to work at a factory. Later my brother and I were born here, in Riga.

During the *Atmoda*³ time my parents did not believe this experiment would end up as it had for the Russians. My dad was the head of a Study and Manufacturing centre at the Riga University of Aviation, but after independence the institute was wound up and dad got the sack. Since then he has worked in various private companies. Mum is a housewife and she brought up me and my brother.

I often have the chance to visit my relatives in Russia. There I am not considered Russian, because I come from Latvia. In Latvia I am also an alien. In Russia many people think that I am a Latvian citizen. They could not really comprehend how it is that I was not given citizenship in my homeland.

To get citizenship via the naturalisation process was out of the question in our family. Why should we have to go and be humiliated for something that was taken away from us?

I am finishing the 12th year of secondary school. I don't have time for anything. All the free time I previously had was swallowed up by the *education reform of the Russian schools*⁷. Sometimes we have nine classes at school, which means they finish at 4 pm. At home we have to translate from Latvian algebra, geometry, and chemistry textbooks. Only after an hour with a dictionary can I properly start my home work. And I can't manage it every time. Sometimes I can't find special terms in common dictionaries and then I have to ring up Latvian acquaintances and ask for an explanation of an unknown term or I can't do my homework. Humanities subjects are a bit easier, but I have to devote more time to them. First I read a textbook in Latvian and then look on the Internet for what I can't understand. So it means that we have to devote more time to translation than the actual learning of a subject.

At the beginning the authorities managed to face down the wave of protests against the reform, by promising that everything would be fine and that everything was done for our own good. But I hear many say that we were tricked and they ask when the next protests will start. Only some honours students say that everything is fine, but those are less than ten percent. I am still wondering why we have to study in Latvian if we are Russian speakers. In Soviet Union times the Latvians could study in Latvian. Even in Stalin's period they were not deprived of this right



After finishing school I plan to study at an institute of higher education. I have not decided yet, but probably it will be in Russia. Latvia is my homeland and I love it from the bottom of my heart, but the way things are now is not good.

I have not decided yet in which state I will live. However, a change in the state policy towards the Russian community might influence my choice in favour of Latvia. If the state were to treat us right, then I would be more than happy to live here.

I am still wondering why we have to study in Latvian if we are Russian speakers. In Soviet Union times, even in Stalin's period, the Latvians could study in Latvian.

Peter Baslik (Pjotrs Basliks)



45 years old. Higher education, economist. Married, two children.

I was born in Karelia. In 1963 at the age of 2 together with my parents I arrived in Latvia. Having finished secondary school I was drafted into the army and served in Afghanistan. I received awards, including the Red Banner order.

After army service I returned to Latvia, graduated from the Riga Polytechnics Institute as an economist. I worked in various positions at the institute, in light industry, at the Industrial Robotic Works, as a teacher in technical schools. I am married with two children. I had three sons but the eldest died. My wife was born in Latvia. Most recently I have worked at a secondary school where I teach labour and drawing.

When *Atmoda*³ came I started to believe in the ideas of liberty and democracy. I participated in the *barricades*¹⁵. I sympathised with the ideas of the *Popular Front*⁴, participated in their activities and personally knew many key

people in the Popular Front. However, I have never supported nationalistic ideas. I know Latvian perfectly and have both oral and written skills. Many people cannot even guess whether I am Latvian or Russian.

I didn't take much interest in politics until the *reform of education*⁷ began. I have noticed that as a result of the reform children's level of knowledge of subjects has declined. Sometimes during my lessons they cannot grasp the meaning of the subject. I am teaching technical subjects that in comparison are far more complicated than humanities. There are no suitable teaching books in Latvian, so we have to use Russian or Estonian ones translated into Latvian. Unfortunately, there are no local teaching books.

At the beginning of the nineties I received Latvian citizenship. I was working in the police force at the time. It was in 1992 - 93. We were working on a case of selling Latvian citizenship. Citizenship had been sold for 800 dollars at five or six places. For my participation in that operation I was promised citizenship with the consent of the prosecutor's office. Later I received a document where by decision of the Supreme Council I received Latvian citizenship for particular services to Latvia.

I was a citizen for three years. Later I bought an apartment in a house where former military servants lived. The tenants of such houses were often checked for passport regime as soon as the *Department of Citizenship and Immigration*⁶ (CID) refused to register¹¹ them even as "aliens"! One day a lady from the CID came to check my passport. I showed her my passport and she immediately took it. She said that it was unlawful. There was no court decision regarding depriving me of citizenship and there was no court hearing as such. Also in all computers I was registered as a citizen. However I became an "alien".

There was no court decision regarding depriving me of citizenship and there was no court hearing as such. Also in all computers I was registered as a citizen. However I became an "alien".

I didn't fight with them. Having become an "alien", I had to leave the police force. One didn't have a future there without citizenship. I couldn't work as an official either. So I went to teach at school. Last year I submitted documents for citizenship, there were some rumours circulating that soon only citizens would be allowed to teach. I was allowed to undergo examinations which I passed without problems. Later my documents went for verification and after that verification the Naturalisation Board received a document which stated that I was a KGB agent and I was not to be admitted to citizenship. On the 12 June 2005 the question of admittance of citizenship was suspended. I was outraged. How could I be called a KGB agent without any grounds?

So I submitted documents to the prosecutor's office to find out on what grounds I was considered a KGB agent. The basis for it was a KGB file, filled in, as they said, in my name but without my signature. Though I had never been a communist party member, I assumed that information about me was held by the KGB. Serving in Afghanistan, working in defence - all of that would have been checked up by the KGB.

But I never signed any documents, and moreover I was never an agent. The prosecutor's office has instituted legal proceedings and examined witnesses. The case was transferred to court. What the decision will be and when it will be handed down - is not known. Within a year they should allocate me citizenship or deny it.

I do see my future in Latvia but at the moment I don't see my children's future here. I wish to see their future somewhere abroad. This current nationalism is not acceptable to me. People are all the same, nobody has the right to separate them into casts. I'm staying here. This is my country and the situation should be corrected. There is no other choice. If I don't and if others don't act then what sort of future will there be?

The Naturalisation Board received a document which stated that I was a KGB agent and I was not to be admitted to citizenship. However, I never signed any documents, and moreover I was never an agent. How could I be called a KGB agent without any grounds?



Photo, page 53: Peter Baslik with his wife Marina and sons (from left to right) Oleg, Pavel, Alexander

Joury Kotov

(Jurijs Kotovs)



Born in 1938 in Leningrad (now St. Petersburg). Has been living in Riga since 1946. Graduated from Leningrad State University, geophysicist. Two children.

In the beginning of 1941 my father was assigned on business from Leningrad to Tallinn, the capital of Estonia. He worked as an electrician in the port. When World War II started I was evacuated to Leningrad together with my mother and sister but my father stayed in Tallinn. At that time I was only 3 years old. My sister fell ill and went to hospital. It was hit

by a German shell, not everybody was killed but the archive was burnt down and my mother could find no trace of my sister. We haven't seen her since. At the end of 1942 we were evacuated from blockaded Leningrad to the Russian interior.

When the fascist troops occupied Estonia, my father was placed in a concentration camp. Later he was moved several times between different concentration camps in the Baltic republics and in 1944 he was brought to Latvia.

One day whilst being transported in a lorry with other prisoners my father managed to escape. For several months he concealed himself as an old man. After the liberation of Riga by the Soviet Army my father found a stable job (which was very important for him) and decided to stay in Latvia. In 1946 he found me and my mother and we moved to Riga too. My father was an electrician and was

working on the railways, my mother – at the instrument-making plant.

I finished secondary school in Riga and then entered Leningrad State University. After graduating in 1961 from the faculty of physics *I was assigned to work for three years*² in the north – in the republic of Komi (a structural part of the Russian Federation) searching for oil and gas reserves. Then I came back to Latvia and went to work for a geological survey expedition. Most of my working life I was researching different areas including the Baltic Sea near Liepaya (Latvia) and Klaipeda (Lithuania) - we were searching for oil there. Also I was surveying proposed new residential districts in different regions of Latvia.

At the beginning of *Atmoda*³ I was working as a technologist at the radio-technique plant. In 1988 the *Popular front*⁴ group was created at our plant and I joined this group. I joined the Popular Front of Latvia having been inspired with *perestroika* and transformations started in the USSR by Mikhail Gorbachev. I thought these transformations would renew the Communist party and lead to a multi-party system.

At the *March referendum in 1991*⁵ I voted for the independence of the Latvian republic because I considered the principle of nations' right to self-determination very important. I thought that if ethnic Latvians were striving for independence we should support them. Even in my worst nightmare I could not imagine that instead of moving ahead and developing democratically, Latvians would start settling old scores, that we would be divided into Russians and Latvians, citizens and "aliens".

At first I didn't take too much interest in political resolutions and declarations. I didn't understand straight away what was intended under the guise of restoring rights to former Latvian citizens and their descendants. I couldn't conceive that it would result

I thought that if ethnic Latvians were striving for independence we should support them. Even in my worst nightmare I could not imagine that instead of moving ahead and developing democratically, Latvians would start settling old scores.

in the deprivation of civil rights from all who were not included in the defined categories.

When on the 15 October 1991⁵ I became aware of the real goals of "restoration of rights of former Latvian citizens". I felt anger towards those with whom I had been supporting Latvian independence. But in 1992 I got a record in my documents that I had come to Latvia only in 1968. I was furious and tore the document to pieces in front of the bureaucrats' eyes. I went to court over that unfair decision, but I was turned down. Then I appealed to the Supreme Court. The only result I got was that they changed my date of arrival to Latvia from 1968 into 1964. But in fact I had been living in Latvia since 1946; I had finished secondary school here. Yes, I had been studying in Leningrad (Russian Federation) from 1956 until 1961 and then for three years I had to work at the place where I was assigned after university – in northern Russia. But it was within the same country. And because of an unfair reduction in how long I had lived in Latvia I got less *privatisation certificates*¹³ having been disfranchised of my economic rights.



After the proclamation of independence I worked at the radio-technique plant until 1992, then until 1994 at the lighting engineering plant. Both plants closed as it was said that Latvia didn't need as much industrial production as during Soviet times. In 1995 I entered private business. I had retired on a pension in 1998 and since that time devoted a lot of time

to my family. My daughter Dascha finished secondary school last year.

Also I spend much time on public activities. During 2003 – 2004 I was taking an active part in the movement against *education reform of secondary minority schools*⁷.

In 1992 I got a record in my documents that I had come to Latvia only in 1968... But in fact I had been living in Latvia since 1946; I had finished secondary school here...



Photo, page 54: Climbing Elbrus - the highest peak in Europe, Caucasus (1984)
Photo, page 55: Motorbike race from Estonia to Latvia in 1959

Vladislav Andreyev

(Vladislavs Andrejevs)

28 years old. Born in Riga. In 1999 graduated from the faculty of Economy of the Riga University of Aviation and in 2001 completed his studies at the Institute of Transport and Communication; currently works as a financier.

percent. They have the right to apply for naturalisation and this is made out to be some kind of huge favour to them. But the basic fact is that prior to 15 October 1991 (the date of adoption of the act on restoration of the rights of citizens of the Republic of Latvia)⁵

we all were citizens and on that day citizenship was traitorously taken away from us, without legal redress.

And this so called right to apply for naturalisation was granted to us only in 1998 following many protests. This is only the right to redeem something that was stolen from us! And for this we have to pay, undergo a check from the special service and pass an examination on Latvian language and history.

There was no backlash in 1991 because most people simply felt shock. Many people did not understand how this might have happened.

For many years we had lived side by side together, and suddenly...

We all lived in one country which was acknowledged by the UN and the Helsinki act of 1975 on post-war frontiers. A year and a half after the declaration of independence an act was adopted, stating that not all of the country's residents were to be considered as citizens.

Despite the fact that I consider naturalisation a process of buying back what was stolen, I have still undergone it. My main motivation was to get voting rights, to be able to influence political life in this country, even according to unjust rules. I must admit this was rather an unpleasant procedure that I had to endure, because a Latvian liv-

Naturalisation is a process of buying back what was stolen.

My parents came to work in Latvia in the 1950s. In fact, my ancestors lived in the territory of modern Latvia during Russian tsarist times. At the time, the part of Latvia they lived belonged to the Vitebsk province.

After Latvia got its independence the division between the ethnic Latvians and non-Latvians (mainly Russian-speakers) was approximately 50/50. Many Latvian politicians believed that if they invented obstacles for the Russians, all the latter would leave Latvia for good. They dreamt of establishing a mono ethnic state here. Some people left, but not as many as they wished. Well, it is quite impossible for half the population to leave the country. At the moment the Russian Diaspora in Latvia constitutes around forty



ing beside me does not have to prove anything. I had to prove my loyalty towards the state and knowledge of history. It is a loathsome and humiliating procedure.

I would like to emphasise the fact that naturalisation is by no means a panacea for discrimination in Latvia - firstly, many Russians (mostly the older generation) simply cannot pass the examinations, secondly, there are many conditions laid down to prevent a person getting naturalised, and thirdly, the Cabinet of Ministers can simply deny citizenship without any court authority, if it considers that a candidate is not "loyal enough" as was the case with Youry Petropavlovsky (see *the last article in this issue*).



Mikhail Averin

(Mihails Averins)



20 years old. Born in Riga. Currently studies at evening school and works in security.

I cannot understand why as a result of the struggle for independence I had to suffer? Why I had become an alien in the country where I was born? What is the principal difference between me and a Latvian person who maybe was born on the same day and at the same maternity hospital?

All of my paternal and maternal grandparents arrived in Latvia after WWII. My mum and dad were born and raised here. Dad worked as a programmer, starting when old computers were still used. In 1985 we already had a computer at home. Mum was employed as a secretary.

My family reacted calmly to independence. My parents did not take an interest in politics at the time and just hoped for the best. The only thing that I remembered is when we went with my parents to our summer cottage during the putsch in Moscow in the August of 1991, a tank stood across the road where the document control was conducted.

My family felt the after-effects of Latvian independence quite quickly. The economy was being destroyed, and soon after that my parents lost their jobs. After being sacked my dad "dropped out" from programming since this trade demands regular updates, he had to forget

about working in this sphere. Then our family faced real hunger. We ate only fried potatoes for weeks. We simply lacked money for anything else. After that my parents had their own small business – a couple of trade positions at a trade warehouse. Currently Mum works as a dispatcher and dad is a watchman.

I cannot understand why as a result of the struggle for independence I had to suffer? Why me? Why I had become an alien in the country where I was born? What is the principal difference between me and a Latvian person who maybe was born on the same day and at the same maternity hospital? I do not intend to get naturalised, because I consider this entire process utterly humiliating – to pass some examinations in order to receive something that I was unlawfully deprived of, something I had a right to by birth?

Recently I was refused down a visa to go to England. I wanted to visit my friend there but the embassy thought I was going there to work illegally. However, if I were a citizen, I would not have to ask for a visa at all. I could take a plane and in two hours I would be in London.

For three years I was engaged in the young firemen's brigade. I wanted to become a fireman but here lack of citizenship was a major obstacle. According to Latvian law, a *non-citizen*¹² has no rights to become a fireman in Latvia. Despite the fact that becoming a fireman still interests me, I am not about to sacrifice my principles in order to get my dream.

In addition to the non-citizenship, as an insult, *education reform*⁷ was imposed upon us. It's not really easy to understand school subjects and now we have to do it in Latvian. I had to transfer to evening school. The quality of education there is

lower, of course, but after the introduction of education reform I lost all hope of getting a quality secondary school education. In the evening school it's much easier to study and they interpret the education reform less strictly.

I plan to get my higher education in England. It is easier and cheaper there. However, my future I do see in Latvia. If I'm going to be lucky, then I shall open my own business here. Sooner or later everything is going to change here. This will happen through the unity and campaigning of the Russian community.



Vladimir Bogdanov

(Vladimirs Bogdanovs)



Born in 1946 in Russia. Higher education, lawyer. Provides free judicial consultations, especially on human rights issues. Married, has two adult children.

My family arrived in Latvia when I was 7 years old and I have been living here permanently since then. My children and grandchildren were born here. I don't know why I'm not now a citizen of Latvia; I've spent all my life here and always considered it my country. In the USSR we had two levels of citizenship: of the USSR itself and of a republic of residence. As a citizen of the LSSR

(Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic) I had the right to participate and stand for local authority elections; as a citizen of the USSR I could vote for federal authorities and stand in federal election. The USSR is gone but there was no reason to deprive me of my right to vote in Latvia.

At the referendum of 3 March 1991⁸ I voted for Latvia to remain a part of the USSR. This was because I knew that there was no plan to develop Latvia as an independent country and it's a mistake to do something if you have no idea how. Now it's obvious that my doubts were reasonable – it's enough just to mention the demographics and the number of people leaving Latvia to work abroad – they are unable to earn enough to survive here. It is obvious, that it is the unskillfulness of the authorities to run national economy and their own errors rather than the "consequences of occupation" as they claim, which is to blame.

The way the authorities behave in relation to the law has much to do with the

country's current problems. There was no legal basis to making me (as well as 750,000 other people) *non-citizens*¹². So I refused to take this status; I still live with my Soviet passport. I know it is unlawful to enforce someone to become a non-citizen, and the authorities know that too, therefore they prefer to leave me alone. Unfortunately, they have managed to convince the rest; otherwise we'd have avoided mass non-citizenship.

I also refused to get a personal code assigned, in solidarity with the people who were unlawfully prohibited from getting it – and there was a huge number of such people, tens of thousands. Unfortunately people didn't take the right to vote seriously; they are used to thinking that this is not their business. Unlike many others, I knew from the very beginning how serious the restrictions of political rights can be. From a pure judicial point of view the legitimacy of the whole state becomes questionable if there is no universal suffrage; unfortunately, a serious discussion on this matter has only just begun. I must say as a lawyer I'm surprised with the attitude of the EU; looking at the statements coming from Europe. I do not see any mentions of the legal aspects of the problem; they discuss non-citizenship just as a humanitarian issue that needs to be solved somehow. We only hear of small and insufficient proposals to deal with the issue, and there is no serious attempt to tackle the ever more restricted rights of the non-citizens – a situation which has worsened since EU membership.

Latvian politicians say: "There is a unique and difficult political situation in Latvia". In fact they developed this situation themselves by creating non-citizens. Now they are afraid that the non-citizens, if allowed to vote, wouldn't vote in their favour. Well, they are right; we never accepted the restrictions to our rights, and would never vote for those who supported them. Therefore they prefer to keep us away,

I still live with my Soviet passport. I know it is unlawful to force someone to become a non-citizen, and the authorities know that too, therefore they prefer to leave me alone.

to be able to continue using the benefits that power brings to them. Actually the ruling politicians seem like another world, apart from the rest of the nation. They alone are the source of the ongoing decline – both economic and moral. People are starting to see this; recent surveys show that many do not trust the authorities anymore. The state asks for more and more and gives back less and less, therefore businesses and people have to hide their income, just to survive. This means that independence here is just decorative; there is no real feeling of belonging to the state in people's minds.

As they say, if there is a hole, someone has to fill it in – I'll try to do what I can and continue to help people as much as I can. I couldn't promise that my efforts will bring about noticeable changes for the better. With God's blessing I'll be able to go on helping people, if not – well, there is no escaping fate. I do not intend to leave Latvia anyway, my family and I have lived here for more than fifty years, my children were born here, grew up, and were educated here, they in turn had their children here and never thought of leaving to go elsewhere. Time will tell if we'll be able to change something. I know there must be a solution; we just must call things by their own names and not replace one notion with another – like the replacement of citizenship with naturalisation. It's just not possible to develop a concept based on a falsehood. If people were unlawfully deprived of their political rights then we must solve this specific problem and discuss it openly. If citizenship is taken away without a court hearing in every single case, then this must be said, recognised as a breach of justice and a violation of human rights and a solution for this particular problem must be developed.

I'm not stuck in the past and I wouldn't mind exchanging my Soviet passport if there were no unlawful preconditions. In fact, the duty of Latvia is to register my citizenship and issue the appropriate documents – unless I refuse to obtain citizenship by my own free will. I'm

certain we'll end up with this sooner or later. There are just too many people who share my thoughts – under no circumstances would they go for naturalisation. It seems that Europe is beginning to see that despite the lack of real progress during so many years, nobody in Latvia is concerned about pushing naturalisation forward so there is a need for urgent measures.

The authorities believe that I'll have to exchange my passport to get a state pension, or to go abroad or something



else. But it would be against my principles. I won't give up, as I didn't when they tried to evict me from my apartment when I refused to pay more than was asked in the agreement I signed. I'm open to listen to my opponents; if anyone could show me where I'm wrong I'd go along with them but so far they haven't been able to do so.

Editor's comment. In 2004 Vladimir Bogdanov undertook 57-day hunger-strike protesting against the authorities' decision to evict him from his apartment. He was taken to hospital unconscious and near death. As result of the hunger-strike his health has suffered and he has almost lost his eye-sight...

The state asks for more and more and gives back less and less, therefore businesses and people have to hide their income, just to survive. There is no real feeling of belonging to the state in people's minds...

Photo, page 61: Vladimir Bogdanov with daughters Natalya (left) and Julia (right) during his 57-day hunger-strike

Anna Nickolayevska-Bardina

(Anna Nikolajevska-Bardina)



27 years old. Born in Riga. Musician. Studies Culturology, married, with one daughter.

My grandmother was born in Azerbaijan. Her sister had married and moved to Latvia at the time of the first period of independence. But my grandmother stayed in the USSR and was fighting at the front during WWII. After the war in 1949 she joined her sister in Riga, since she had no more living relatives. My mother was born in Riga in 1957. In the 1990s after the restoration of Latvian independence, my grandmother's sister was granted Latvian citizenship automatically, whilst my grandmother, mother and I became stateless.

My father is a Polish Jew. He was born in 1941.

During the war his family moved to Lithuania, where they managed to escape the Holocaust. But my father's mother died in 1944. After the war he moved together with his elder sister to Riga where they managed to find a home. And so my father too became an "alien" in the 90s.

I was born in Riga in 1978, in what were still Soviet times. I have happy memories of my childhood. I used to love to play different outdoor games, even football; all in all we were very happy.

I was a teenager when *Atmoda*³ started. Once, on my way home during January 1991 I came under fire near the Freedom Monument. I asked my mother why they had shot. She said that some people are campaigning for freedom but that the details are unclear. My

mother was an apolitical person, but at the referendum of 1991⁸ had voted in favour of Latvian independence. When we were declared "aliens" my mother felt deeply disappointed.

Independence affected our family's life. My grandmother lost a part of her pension because the years she was working as a cook in the Soviet army were deducted from her record. The years of my mother's work in a military plant were not taken into consideration, though she was just assembling small details on a production line and was a civilian. The first time I felt the difference between me and Latvian citizens was when I tried to enter the Medical Academy in 1995. I wanted to become a pharmacist, but I was told that only citizens might work as pharmacists. "Aliens" could study but not work. I began to understand what had happened: I was born and lived my whole life in Latvia but for some reason I became an alien in my country. At school I passed the Latvian language proficiency exam in the highest category, but there was (and still is) a list of professions that may be occupied only by citizens. I didn't enter the Academy and started working in construction.

I was working at the restoration of the National Opera. After the repair works had finished there was the inauguration ceremony. I saw for the first time a crowd with a banner stating "Occupiers, get out of Latvia!". The message was clear and in time "occupiers" became a familiar name for local Russian-speakers. The President, ministers, and a lot of policemen had seen the slogans but nobody intervened. I tried to talk to the people holding the banner: "The National Opera was restored by people of different origins; there were Latvians and Russians, citizens and aliens. Am I an occupier having been born in Riga in a local family?" They told me over and over again: "You are an occupier, go away to your Russia!" Afterwards, walking in Old Riga, I began to frequently see such slogans. That event

I wanted to enter the Medical Academy and become a pharmacist, but I was told that only citizens might work as pharmacists. Aliens could study but not work.

made me change my mind and realise there are a lot of people who hate us.

I became a musician. For five years I have been singing in different groups. Then I worked as an assistant for a public affairs manager. Once I passed the competitive examination for a good vacancy. The only other candidate equal to me in every respect was a Latvian girl. The company chose her. The manager explained clearly: we need a native Latvian to satisfy the nationalist feelings of state officials from Labour Inspection who come continually and ask why there are few Latvians on the staff.

For three years I worked for "Russian Radio". It was only partly Russian, the major part of the broadcasting was in Latvian. I prepared music programs and adapted Russian advertisements in Latvian and vice versa. The radio was a purely commercial project. No politics. But it was badgered by continuous inspections and the quotas of broadcasting in the state language. As a result "Russian Radio" was forced to shut down.

For a long time I wasn't very interested in politics, but when the State *started*

to destroy Russian minority schools? I joined the campaign movement. My daughter is growing up, she needs a good knowledge of Latvian and European languages as well as a good education in her mother tongue.

My daughter is attending a Russian-language kindergarten. The administration provides paid lessons of the Latvian language. The kindergarten celebrates both Latvian and Russian folk holidays. For the Latvian events I am dressing my daughter in Latvian national costume, for the Russian – in Russian costumes. She has friends in the Latvian kindergarten. I support her in contacting with Latvians, but I don't want her to be discriminated by the Latvian state neither in her native language nor in the fulfilment of her potential.

I feel deeply disappointed by the paradox of Latvian citizenship. It is not a problem for me to pass the Latvian language exams and gain citizenship, but why should I pass exams like a foreigner? Why must I prove that I am a local after four generations of my family have been living in Latvia? I see the option of naturalisation for me is also humiliation. Some people say we should forget the insults and think about the future, but in the circumstances when the discriminatory policy of the authorities is underscored by the insults given to Latvians 65 years ago it is impossible for me to overlook the situation, and agree with the logic of the state treating me as if I were an immigrant.

The manager explained clearly: we need a native Latvian to satisfy the nationalist feelings of state officials from Labour Inspection.



Photo, page 62: Anna Nickolayevska-Bardina with her 4-year-old daughter Sofia

Anatoly Tridub

(Anatolijs Tridubs)



We were not able to privatise land on which we had worked nor our house. It is a shame that property was sold almost to everyone except non-citizens (aliens).

27 years old. Born in Latvia. Entrepreneur.

In 1954 my dad and his parents arrived in Latvia when dad was only two years old. His parents were assigned here owing to employment. Since then he has been a permanent resident of Latvia. After graduation from secondary school he worked in the farming industry. After finishing college in the late 1960s, my Mum came to Latvia from Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) on a graduation assignment². She was also employed in the farming industry – in cattle breeding. Then she rose to a position of director of a grain processing works. Dad at first worked in high rank positions, he was a deputy president of the kolkhoz. However, upon his refusal to join the ranks of the Communist Party he was reduced to team-leader and later was “eliminated” to a lower position of combine operator and tractor driver.

I was born in 1979. Our family lived in the countryside, not far from the small Latvian town of Mazsalaca. There I got my primary education, and later went

on to the Riga Railway College where I was trained as a foreman – railways maintenance team leader.

When *Atmoda*³ arrived I was only a child, however, I do remember that people who worked at various important positions took possession of anything they could put their hands on. All the real estate and equipment was allotted among themselves. Afterwards, years of famine arrived. We were lucky, as our family in 1988 took 35 hectares of land for farming. I do remember quite clearly that some people visited us asking for some grain which they boiled and ate it. It happened during the period from 1992 to 1997. That happened in Vidzeme - in the district that was considered successful.

I do not deny Latvia’s right to independence; however, I think that *Atmoda* was in fact a coup, as a result of which a lot of common people suffered – not only Russians, but Latvians as well. People lost all their savings. Flats and land on which they worked, all of a sudden became privately owned. If in Riga everything appeared more or less acceptable, than in rural areas where many kids up to ten years of age could not attend school as it was too expensive for their families, who lacked money for clothing and transport.

We instantly felt the results of the adoption of *the law on citizenship*⁵. We were not able to privatise land on which we had worked nor our house. It is a shame that property was sold almost to everyone except non-citizens (“aliens”). Quite often so-called former owners of land appeared. However, people who lived in that area often said that this or that piece of land had never been in the possession of people who claimed their rights for it.

At the beginning of the 1990s we were promised that people who for many years had worked the land would be allowed to buy it privately. Since 1988 we had continuously farmed 35ha of land.

Nevertheless, owners of the best pieces of this land later appeared. It was not profitable to farm the worse parts. Non-citizen's status also deprived us of any hopes to own property (until 1998 not all of us could get naturalised as some age restrictions applied). In the end, our dream for a farm had to go.

Well, now we regret it, but at the time we could not afford to get depressed. We had to work hard – in order to survive. I worked in construction, home appliances shops and at a shipyard. In 2001 I took my first steps in business. Currently I am a director of my own small company BDC (The Baltic Computer Centre). The firm employs nine people.

A few years ago my parents passed naturalisation procedure and were accepted for citizenship. Despite the fact that they spoke good Latvian, they had to undergo a strict examination, as they were checked not only for spoken language skills but written as well. However, I do not apply for naturalisation out of principle. Still, I am offended. I was born here, pay taxes and have to pass some kind of exam... Many ethnic Latvians themselves do not properly know their history which does not prevent them from being citizens.

In doing business, citizenship does not offer a lot, but it does make you more self-assured. Of course, going to Europe without a visa would be convenient as well. In 1999 I asked to be enrolled in the Latvian Army, voluntarily, but I was contemptuously kicked-out of the military registration and enlistment office – told that I was a *non-citizen*¹², meaning that I was not worthy to serve in the ranks of the Latvian army. After such kicks I completely lost any motivation for naturalisation.

The future of my business I partially see here and partially abroad. It is rather difficult to operate here due to excessively high taxes. I see the future of my children in Russia which is a much more stable country. Here you don't really know what to expect next. We are all told that we hold rights, however, our main rights were taken away from us long ago and they are not about to return them. They cry about the horrible totalitarian empire of the USSR but those who ruled in Soviet Latvia are still ruling now. That is the reason I don't see the future of my children here. Even if they become citizens, in a regime such as the one we have now, they will be second class citizens.

In 1999 I asked to be enrolled in the Latvian Army, voluntarily, but I was contemptuously kicked-out of the military registration and enlistment office – told that I was a non-citizen, meaning that I was not worthy to serve in the ranks of the Latvian army.

Sergey Padchin

(Sergejs Padčins)



Born in 1975. Graduated from Riga Institute of Civil Aviation Engineers, which was later closed. Electrical engineer.

In 1946 my granddad was assigned from the City of Gorky (Russian Federation) to the Baltics to restore industry after the war. He worked in Vilnius, Lithuania and my grandmamma asked to be assigned to Klaipeda, also Lithuania as she wanted to be closer to granddad. Some time later granddad fell very seriously ill and died.

At that time Latvia was considered a more cultured republic, so grandma with her two daughters – my mum and aunt moved here. When they arrived, my mum was seven. Grandma had worked all her life for the textile industry at various Riga factories. She completed her career in the Ministry of Light Industry, devoting thirty five years of work to the Latvian Republic.

My paternal granddad went to Riga military hospital at the end of the war. After the war he, like many oth-

ers, remained here to restore Latvian industry. He was employed in the furniture industry.

My mother graduated from Riga Institute of Medicine and worked in various Riga polyclinics. Dad graduated from Riga Polytechnic Institute and worked as an engineer.

I was born in Riga. I was raised by grandma, who after my mother's death legalised her guardianship. All her life granny was a devoted communist. She considered that the Soviet regime gave her everything.

But even she during *Atmoda*³ - despite being over eighty years of age - tried to learn Latvian. On TV she heard a call; they said to speak Latvian as one can. Latvians would definitely correct you and help. But soon after that we realised that even those non-Latvians who knew the language well – found themselves to be "aliens", people of a lesser status. That made many lose motivation to study the language.

I personally reacted negatively to the *Atmoda* events. Why? My parents and grandparents had all their lives worked for Latvia and suddenly they were called occupiers and even at that time I heard people say that we weren't needed here. A year after getting independence I was "pleased" to receive the news that for this country I was an "alien".

Having finished secondary school I enrolled in the Institute of Civil Aviation Engineers. I always had an interest in aviation. While studying at school I was involved in Jelgava aviation club. However, at the faculty of flight engineers I was turned down at admission due to being an alien. So, I had to study to be an electrical engineer.

Then I couldn't get a job. I went for a job at Matisa prison as chief electrician. I completely fitted the criteria, but when they realised that I was an

I always had an interest in aviation. While studying at school I was involved in Jelgava aviation club. However, at the faculty of flight engineers I was turned down at admission due to being an "alien".

"alien", I was refused. Then I worked for several years in the textile industry. Later I worked in a hospital and at the Tram and Trolley Board.

My family members also suffered. My aunt, who after the death of my mother helped to raise me, was not accounted fifteen years of work from her career in Latvia, it was explained to her that she had worked for the "occupation regime". She worked at an engineering centre that developed ordinary pencils. It was just that engineering centre happened to belong to some military department.

Currently I am going to lodge documents to obtain citizenship. I didn't do it earlier because I felt insulted that I had to pay for something which should be mine. Sometimes I even felt proud that for this regime I am an alien, as they are absolutely alien to me. I am ready to be loyal to Latvia. However, I don't have to be loyal towards those who called my parents occupiers. I am going to take this citizenship because I am tying my destiny with that of this country. I don't believe that the ruling elite will ever accept those inhabitants which it had previously turned down.

Although I do believe that when the generation of current politicians will be replaced by a new one, they will treat differently those people who have devoted their lives to the prosperity of this republic.

I went for a job at Matisa prison as chief electrician. I completely fitted the criteria, but when they realised that I was an "alien", I was refused.



Photo, page 67: Sergey Padchin whilst a student at the Riga Civil Aviation Engineers Institute

Victor Kudryavtsev

(Viktors Kudrjavcevs)

Born in Riga in 1955. For 10 years worked as a train driver. For the last 15 years has worked for the fire brigade.



It was forbidden to employ any new non-citizen to the fire service.

After graduating from Velikiye Luki Railway Technical School my father and mother were assigned to work in Latvia in 1953. It was a natural step as the City of Velikiye Luki is located in Pskov region of Russia, not far from Latvia. My father worked for many years for the Latvian railways – he was employed as a chief engineer at the Riga Carriage Park. My mother worked at the same place, but unfortunately she died early.

I was born in Riga in 1955. After graduating from secondary school and completing my army service I worked at the radio-technical plant for two years. Then I followed my parents' example, finished train drivers' training and worked for the railway for ten years. But I felt that it wasn't for me and after *perestroika* I moved to work at the fire service.

For the last fifteen years I haven't changed jobs. At the fire service there is a wonderful group of people and in spite of the various political developments in our country, my colleagues remain very humane people. Nobody divided us according to our ethnicity. The same goes for citizens and *non-citizens*¹² ("aliens"). According to the amendments to the Fire Safety Law which were adopted in December of 1994, aliens that were employed before that time can continue working. However, it was forbidden to employ any new ones.

In order to please officials, in many similar organisations management tried to get rid of non-citizens. In our organisation, on the contrary, no one was fired. We have good management who would not allow the mistreatment of employees, so the authorities tried another way to get rid of aliens. Language check-ups began. A lady came, found someone who didn't answer her in the state language and was happy to uncover a "public enemy". A costly report on the incident later appeared. People have been sacked in such circumstances, or rather they've preferred to go quietly so as not to put our fair minded management in a difficult position.

I wouldn't say that I really welcomed independence. It's not that I am against freedom for the Latvian nation; it's just that it wasn't right to instantly break economic ties that were built over many years. As a result of this action many of my relatives and friends remain on different sides of the border.

It has also affected me personally. In Soviet times there was a "Nakotne" Collective Farm which supported tourism and assembled a great tourist team. The majority of its participants were ethnic Latvians. We were keen on sailing and traveled all over the Soviet Union. We had never encountered any ethnicity problems. There were some plans to visit Lake Baikal in Russia – the deepest freshwater lake in the world.

However, after national borders appeared our plans went out the window.

With the onset of *Atmoda*³ and the appearance of *the Popular Front*⁴ came more and more nationalistic statements. I paid little attention to them as I had enough problems of my own to deal with. I thought things would blow over. That's why when I and others were deprived of our citizenship and many of our rights it came as a huge shock. Being born here, having worked here all this time, it comes as a great shock when suddenly aged 35 you become a nobody. It is insulting for a human being.

My wife is a citizen by ancestry, therefore our daughter (she is fourteen now) automatically became a citizen. We are trying to encourage her to study Latvian but it's rather hard as we live in a Russian suburb. At school the level of teaching Latvian is very low. Anyhow, she is making progress with her Latvian and I am sure that if she decides to stay in Latvia, then language would not be a problem. My elder daughter from my first marriage herself successfully passed the exams for citizenship.



I still haven't decided about my own future, whether I should stay in Latvia or not. All this state policy is aimed at conflict with Russia. I don't like it. I could have followed the nationalists' advice and moved to Russia for good, but I have nowhere to go. My children also have roots here. Therefore I have nowhere else to go. Let's hope that everything will work out.

Language check-ups began in the fire service. A lady came, found someone who didn't answer her in the state language and was happy to uncover a "public enemy".

Photo, page 68: Besides working in the fire service Victor Kudryavtsev is also engaged in boat building
Photo, page 69: Sailing catamarans is Victor's favourite sport

Youry Vasilchenko

(Jurijs Vasiļčenko)



Owing to the fact Grandpa was not my blood relative; I did not get Latvian citizenship, in spite of the fact that he adopted my Mum.

38 years old. Born in the Latvian city of Daugavpils. Youry is a teacher of Russian by profession, but a businessman by occupation. He builds houses, industrial developments and oil storage facilities. Previously he was involved in milling and furniture manufacture. Married with a son.

My Mum was born in Byelorussia in 1941, my grandmother gave birth to her in an open field. On one side was a village and on the other, advancing German troops, whilst shells flew overhead. My mother's dad was Jewish and in addition was a Commander in the Red Army. He went missing in action, we could only imagine what could have happened to a Jewish Red Army officer.

In 1946 my grandmother moved from Byelorussia to Daugavpils to work at the hospital. There she met my mother's step-dad. He was from Latgale, a native of Latvia, whose ancestors have lived in Latvia for more than four hundred years. But owing to the fact

Grandpa was not my blood relative; I did not get Latvian citizenship, in spite of the fact that he adopted my Mum. She went to her first year of school here, in Latvia.

My dad was born in Ukraine, and he came to Latvia on assignment in 1951 after graduating from the Building Technical School. From construction foreman he was promoted to the position of manager of the biggest Transport Construction Trust in the former USSR.

My dad had a distinguished record in construction in the Latvian and Estonian Soviet Socialist Republics. He was involved in building Riga airport, Riga railway station, Tallinn airport, Kaliningrad airport, Mazeikjai oil-processing plant and many other large-scale facilities.

After finishing her training, Mum became a teacher of Russian and literature and for many years worked as a school deputy principal in a Latvian school. Afterwards she was a director of the biggest children's library in Riga.

Our family has never had problems with the Latvian language. Neither my parents nor my wife and eight year old son had problems with it. We were confident in Latvian up to the moment when the language became compulsory. Afterwards it completely disappeared from use in our family and our circle of friends. If the representatives of the indigenous people get their heads straight and realise what they did to us, we will be happy to speak fluent Latvian once more.

I was hostile to independence. At the start of perestroika I was speaking with an old, wise Jewish man. He predicted what was going to happen in the coming years. His words came true. He also told me that for as long as the pro Hitler generation is still around we cannot completely relax, some of

them only live and dream about taking revenge. *Language repressions*¹⁰ and *school reforms*⁷ will seem petty in comparison to that revenge. But if they only sense our weakness, they could simply dig a hole in Rumbula forest (site of the WWII massacre of civilians) and bury us alive. The civilized world will be outraged for a few days and then forget about it. Yugoslavia proved this. Everything could be presented to the world community simply as a part of the democratic process.

*The decision to deprive us of our citizenship*⁵ did not come as a surprise. At the time we endured a lot of similar humiliations, for example, return visas. For some years non-citizens who left Latvia, could not return home without return visas. So, how are we to treat this independence after everything we had to go through? Nevertheless, independence is an accomplished fact of life, a reality. Nobody is going to fight against it.

I quickly realized that even if I took the oath of allegiance, being a *non-citizen*¹² I would sooner or later have to bid farewell to my job with the police. Inequality of rights between citizens and non-citizens grew with each day. I decided to leave the police force and go into business, where discrimination was slightly less prominent. Company management gives not only material benefits, but also raises your self-esteem.

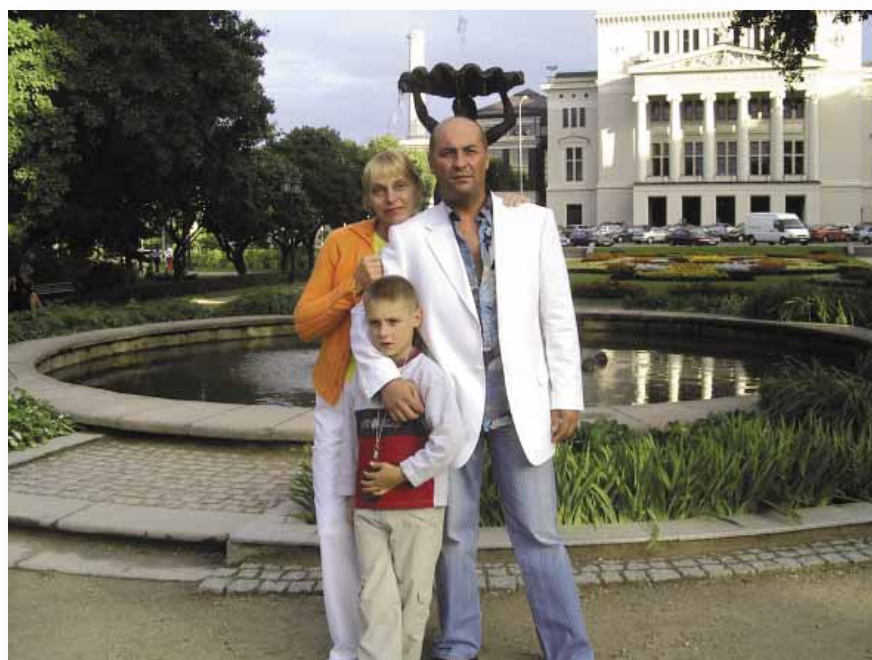
I am quite offended by the distortion of my name. In comparison to other surnames, I am lucky, as it has no declensions. But my name was corrupted. I don't know who

Yurijs is, as my name is Yury! My son is Pavel, not Pavels.

My wife was naturalised, but I am not inclined to do that. It's not really the matter of a stupid exam with outrageous questions where I have to humiliate myself to get a mark in Latvian history. I consider that if I was born and raised here, worked and paid taxes here then I should not have to prove anything to anyone. My ancestors' graves are here. If citizenship will be given to me by right, then I will take it. Nevertheless, I am not applying for naturalisation – for me it means utter humiliation.

My future is here. I am going to build it myself. I hope that my son stays in Latvia too, but when he grows up, it will be his choice. My duty is to make him a decent educated person who does not forget his roots.

I am quite offended by the distortion of my name. I don't know who Yurijs is, as my name is Yury! My son is Pavel, not Pavels.



Photo, page 71: Youry Vasilchenko with his wife Olga and son Pavel near the Opera House in Riga

Youry Petropavlovsky

(Jurijs Petropavlovskis)



51 years old. Born in Riga. Graduated from the Rozentals School of Arts and the Academy of Arts of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Latvia. Worked in the semiconductor appliances plant "Alfa". Following change over to the market economy, worked in various private firms. Is an activist of the political association "For Human Rights in a United Latvia". Married, has two daughters.

"The Soviet Authorities offered me a game of poker, but I offered them a cup of tea". No problem but we did not find anything in common.

My ancestors were among the first to settle in Siberia. My ancestors on my father's side were priests and rural teachers. My surname Petropavlovsky has its origin in the name of St. Peter and St. Paul (in Russian – Pavel). My ancestors on my mother's side were Siberian peasants, merchants and factory owners.

My grandfather Nikolay Vasilyevich Petropavlovsky was descended from a religious family. He was expelled from the seminary because of his boisterous temper and rebelliousness to the authorities. It is difficult to say whether he really had a bad temper or, possibly, his dismissal had more to do with politics. When the Civil War started, my grandfa-

ther became a volunteer in the Izhevsk Regiment of the Kolchak Army. When that regiment came out against the Bolsheviks, the resistance movement it was a unique regiment, which fought under the red banner and had a motto "For the Soviets without Bolsheviks!" Close to that regiment was "Imantas pulks", the regiment of the Latvian White Riflemen, which returned into Latvia through China after the Civil War had been finished and took part in Kolchak's actions "For a Unified and Indivisible Russia".

Following the pro-Soviet Czech rebellion in the suburbs of Krasnoyarsk, my grandfather was taken prisoner by the Reds. He was sent to interrogation camps and was declared a politically and ideologically suitable person by the Soviet Authorities. Then he was drafted into the Red Army, with whom he reached Vladivostok, fighting the Japanese. After the War was over, he returned home. At that time our family lived in Western Siberia. Then my grandfather worked for the system of Popular Education, in 1936 he became a victim of Stalin's repressions and was executed by a firing squad.

My father was a student and a youth leader at the Aviation Faculty of the State University at Tomsk at that time. After my grandfather was arrested, my father was expelled from the Komсомol Organisation (Young Communist League) and from the university. There was a rationing system at that time; it really meant starvation for him. My grandmother who also was dismissed wrote a letter to Krupskaya (Lenin's widow), who was still alive. Strange as it seems, but it achieved the desired effect and my grandmother was reinstated at her working place. When the Second World War broke out, my father - with the rank of junior lieutenant - was mobilized into the artillery. He was sent to the front at Leningrad.

My father was in command of an artillery division during the defence of Leningrad. In 1942 he joined the Commu-

nist Party. After the breakthrough of the blockade of Leningrad, he fought in Pskov and Novgorod regions. He took part in the battles for Riga and finished the war in Eastern Prussia having the military rank of major and the post of commander of an artillery division. After the war finished, he was in command of a garrison in a small town in Eastern Prussia. My father married a German there, but he was sent to Kronshtadt as soon as my German stepbrother Burhardt was born (who unfortunately, did not survive). His wife Hilda was sent to her relatives, in the Western zone of English-American occupation. At that time it was not compatible to have a German wife and a half-German child and to be the commander of an artillery division and a major in the Soviet Army.



To continue his military Service with a senior post in Physics and Mathematics my father was sent to the Riga Artillery Specialised School of Coastal Defence in 1953. During Khrushchev's cuts in the armed forces my father was made redundant and started teaching work as a civil servant, where he taught in different specialized military schools in Latvia as well as in the Industrial Polytechnic School.

My mother was fourteen when the war came. She worked as a lamp maker in the mines of the Kemerovo region (south

Siberia), where her family lived at the time. Then she was a ward maid in a military hospital. After that my mother was sent to work in commerce where she worked for a further forty nine years. She started as a head of a department and finished as director of a fabric shop.

I was born in Riga in 1955. I lived in the historical centre of the city built in the Art Nouveau style. At that time it was a very rough area, and this early experience taught me how to fight hard for my beliefs - it is in my blood. When I finished the fifth form, I had drawn all over every smallest piece of paper at home. So, under pressure, I was sent to the Rozentals School of Arts by my parents. It was a mixed school, and the Latvian pupils often hit us when they got together. But one day, when we were in the ninth form, all of us went to the sports club, to take up wrestling. After about six months peace and quiet returned to the school.

After finishing school I hesitated about what to do next. All my relatives on my father's side were teachers or lecturers in Physics and Mathematics. On the other hand, I was interested in History and Economics. At last, I chose design, because it connects Economics with Psychology as well as a precise scientific approach. I entered the Faculty of Design of the Academy of Arts. The language of teaching was Latvian. It was the only language of teaching of almost all humanities faculties during Soviet times. In spite of Russian being an official language of instruction, many subjects at the Rozentals

School of Arts were almost wholly taught in Latvian. Because of it I had no big problems when I entered the Academy.

There were only three Russian students on my course. The lectures started at half past eight and finished at nine o'clock in the evening. We had a lot of additional subjects. I was almost completely absorbed in a Latvian language environment. After two courses my Latvian classmates had grown so accustomed to my presence that they forgot I was Russian. They confided in me

“Revolutions are prepared by idealists, carried out by fanatics, but there are crooks that reap the rewards”.

In fact the Latvian court recognized that the actions of the government are outside the jurisdiction of the court even if the government breaks the law!

easily their opinion about "Russian pigs" and dreams about the defeat of Russia. Evidently, such kinds of institutions rose the nationalists of nowadays. It was disgusting for me. But, on the other hand, I was not an advocate of Communism. The only decoration in my room was the portrait of my grandfather, who was shot in 1936. I grew up realizing I was alone.

After I graduated from the Academy and finished serving in the army, I worked as a designer and a constructor in "Alfa", the plant of semiconductor appliances.

In 1987 the Latvian Union of Painters nominated me for the post of Deputy Minister of Local Industry and at the same time Deputy Director General of "Progress" a scientific-industrial association. I passed the competition and became the sole candidate. But the question arose: I was not a member of the Communist Party, and it was suggested that I join. I categorically refused and said: "If you need an independent specialist, it's me. If you need an obedient puppet then look for somebody else".

earned. My earnings were good enough. After the collapse of the USSR I worked in some different representative offices of foreign companies. I started working in a joint venture as a designer-constructor. And I finished up working in the field of fuel and oil chemistry.

All this time I refrained from taking part in politics. I did not take part in it directly, but I did ideologically. Then as now I remain a radical opponent of suppression by the authorities. But I could not imagine that conversion to a new market economy system would finish up with such stealing. Sometimes I imagined myself as an "owner" in a small country. I supposed that the opportunities presented by the resources inherited from the USSR would help everyone. But the psychology of thieves and the psychology of owners are different. Having seized power the new elite was not just going to focus on running the country. They turned to thinking about how to loot it. As they say "revolutions are prepared by idealists, carried out by fanatics, but there are crooks that reap the rewards".

When the survey, which was considered as a referendum⁸ by many people, took place, my wife and I voted against the USSR and against the future Republic of Latvia. Why? I had already realised then that it would be an enormous fraud. Participants in a referendum are legally capable and enjoy full rights as subjects of a possible transformation of the state's structure. A participant in a referendum enjoys full basic rights as well as their full rights as a citizen of the future society. But a participant in a survey is simply someone who expresses an opinion by using the system of survey. This opened the whole thing up to fraud. Otherwise, it would have been impossible to deny almost half the population its electoral rights.

Then, for some time, I attended meetings of the Centre for Democratic Initiatives. It was a liberally mixed organisation, with opinions which broadly concurred with my own. But its methods, constant discussions and meetings, were not for me. After that, for some time, I stepped back from politics and focussed on work. Then some business problems arose, after a serious illness my father



Although *perestroika* was at its height nobody wanted to admit a non-party person into the ranks of the party elite. I do not feel any kind of offence with respect to the Soviet Authorities. Figuratively speaking, "the Soviet Authorities offered me a game of poker, but I offered them a cup of tea". No problem but we did not find anything in common.

When private enterprise was allowed, I went to work for a private business. It was a type of semi-capitalist enterprise. The procedure of earnings was calculated in proportion to the means you had

died and I was seriously ill, too. In 1998 only, after very long consideration, I started to help develop the association "For Human Rights in a United Latvia", which had just been founded.

After joining the European Union the problems of the Latvian "aliens" became ever more acute. It has become clear that Europe does not care at all for the 400,000 Latvian *non-citizens*¹². In this sense, Europe has backed *minority secondary school reform*⁷ despite numerous protests by the Russian-speaking population. Indeed this has not been a minority secondary school reform but a transformation of these schools into Latvian ones.

I together with many other parents was quite aware of the serious consequences of such an experiment on children and participated in the activities of the Staff of Russian-language School Defense. This is an informal organisation which never had any formal leader. Each person brings their own personal qualities to the organisation – professional skills, experience, time, etc.

The protests against school reforms coincided with my naturalisation. I decided to become a citizen to participate fully in the public and political life of my country, to help shape the future.

I passed all of the examinations and checks, all the relevant bodies have confirmed my right to become a citizen of Latvia. But our government, just before its resignation, struck me off the list because they hadn't liked my public activities.

I brought an action against the government and the court accepted my case for consideration. Then suddenly the court decided that it had taken a hasty decision, changed its mind and just left my case without consideration. The same happened at all stages of the

court including the Senate of the Supreme Court of Latvia. In fact the Latvian court recognized that the actions of the government are outside the jurisdiction of the court even if the government breaks the law!

The Cabinet of Ministers is the most unstable of the three branches of power in Latvia. It used to change every nine months! This body decides whether someone deserves Latvian citizenship on a totally subjective basis. But following this logic they may decide that Latvian citizenship cannot be granted, for example, to blondes or to those who are taller than 184 cm!

Now my case will be considered in Europe. If the decision is negative it will be an adequate answer to those who have blamed me for using political methods such as protest meetings, pickets, information campaigns in the mass media, etc. Instead they advised me to appeal to the court... So, I have appealed and what? Such a decision will illustrate that it is useless to wait for justice, lawfulness and care for our problems in Europe.

If the decision will be positive I will be pleasantly surprised. For me this will be a signal that Europe's view of the issue of Latvian non-citizens is beginning to change...



If the decision will be positive I will be pleasantly surprised. For me this will be a signal that Europe's view of the issue of Latvian non-citizens is beginning to change...

Photo, page 72: "I spent my childhood in the historical centre of Riga, built in the Art Nouveau style"

Photo, page 73: "The only decorative element of my room was the portrait of my grandfather Nikolay who had been shot in 1936"

Photo, page 74: Youry with daughters Alina (middle) and Irina

Photo, page 75: Non-citizen's (alien's) passport of Youry Petropavlovsky, life-long stateless person following the Latvian government's decision

References

1. Limitations for non-citizens cannot be accepted as measures to rectify past injustices. Even before the independence, ethnic Latvians dominated the most prestigious positions in the society (**Table 1**).

Table 1

Employment of non-Latvians in Latvian SSR in 1987



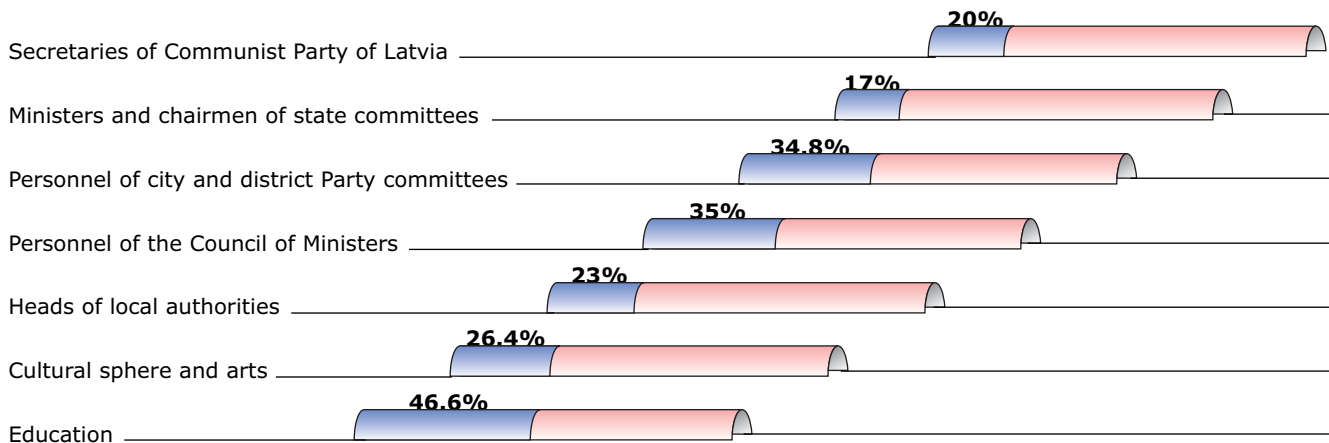
non-Latvians



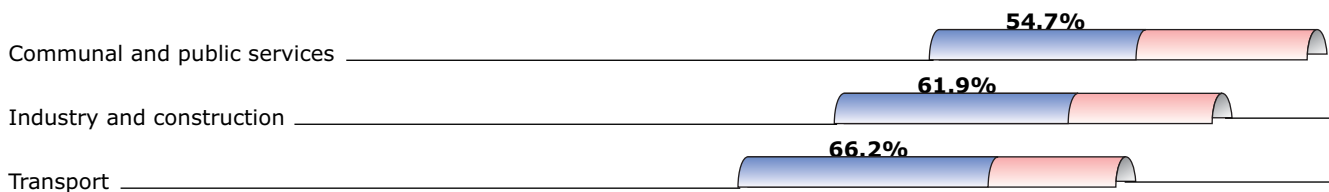
ethnic Latvians



PRESTIGIOUS OCCUPATIONS:



NON-PRESTIGIOUS OCCUPATIONS:



2. **Graduating assignment** - each graduate in the USSR was assigned to a work placement where he/she had to work for at least three years. Graduates had almost no choice; on the other hand, a job was guaranteed to each of them.

3. **Atmoda (Awakening)** - the public movement for Latvian national renaissance, that led to the restoration of Latvia's independence during the "Singing Revolution" of 1987 -1991.

4. **The Popular Front of Latvia** was the main pro-independence political organisation in Latvia in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

The pre-election program of the Popular Front promised Latvian citizenship to each resident of Latvia wishing to acquire it (without any formal naturalisation procedures) and equal rights irrespective of ethnic origin. The Popular Front won the elections to the Supreme Council of Latvia in 1990 and expressed a will to restore the independence of the Republic of Latvia with such a program.

5. **15 October 1991** - the Supreme Council (Parliament) of Latvia adopted the resolution "On Restoration of the Rights of the Citizens of the Republic of Latvia and General Conditions of Naturalisation" According to this act, only those residents, who had been Latvian citizens before 17 June 1940, as well as their descendants, were recognized citizens of Latvia. Legal status of other former citizens of the USSR (virtually all of them ethnic non-Latvians) remained unclear before 1994, when the Citizenship Law was adopted. According to the Citizenship Law, such persons (with some restrictions) are entitled to apply for citizenship through naturalisation procedure only.

6. Citizenship and Immigration Department (CID) was the state institution responsible for citizenship and migration matters from 1992 till 1996, when it was renamed the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs.

CID had a negative publicity among Russophones in Latvia due to different reasons (unclear legal acts in the field of citizenship and migration, breach of principles of administrative procedure, etc.) Sometimes statements of CID officials were clearly Russophobic.

CID officials refused to register¹¹ the tenants of so-called "KETch houses" (the houses built by the military), people living in so-called "office apartments" or hostels, civil personnel of the Soviet military units, persons who left Latvia for a temporary job, seamen, as well as members of families of such persons.

7. Minority secondary education reform – In 1998 the Saeima (Parliament) adopted the Education Law, which stipulated that starting from 1 September 2004 instruction in all state and municipal secondary schools is to be provided in the state language only. In practice that meant elimination of the existing secondary education system in minority schools without any reason.

After several huge meetings and rallies with thousands of people involved, the Parliament adopted amendments to the Education Law, stating that from 1 September 2004 not less than 5 subjects in minority secondary schools (excluding the Latvian language and literature) are to be taught in Latvian. Another condition was that not less than 60% of the curriculum must be taught in Latvian, leaving a maximum of 40% for minority languages. Besides that, from 2007 all state exams and tests will be passed in Latvian; due to this reason a number of schools could switch to instruction in Latvian only in order to ensure good exam results. This is one of the most topical minority problems in Latvia.

8. March referendum in 1991 – 73,68% of all Latvian residents confirmed their strong support for independence on 3 March 1991, in a non-binding "advisory" referendum. A large number of ethnic non-Latvians also voted for the proposition to establish a democratic and independent Republic of Latvia.

9. International Front of Latvian Workers (Interfront is the Russian abbreviation) was the main unionist public organisation in Latvia in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The International Front opposed the independence of Latvia and promoted the idea of the USSR as a federal socialist state.

10. Language Law – the Law "On Languages" of 5 May 1989. The Law stipulated that Latvian is the only official language in Latvia. It was rather liberal in comparison with later amendments to the Law and other legal acts concerning linguistic issues. The original idea of the Law was to promote survival of Latvian and ensure real bilingualism. The new wording of the Law "On Languages" adopted on 31 March 1992, was in fact not a revision but a brand new law. All references to the Russian language were completely removed. It contained much stricter requirements to use the official language. Simultaneously the Council of Ministers adopted regulations concerning the level of knowledge of the language as one of the basic job qualifications not only for public employees, but for any job (except a few low-skill professions).

11. Registration – On 11 December 1991 the Supreme Council of Latvia adopted the Law "On Population Register". According to the Law, all residents of Latvia had to apply for registration. Besides that, Latvia's citizens (under the resolution "On Restoration of the Rights of the Citizens of the Republic of Latvia and General Conditions of Naturalisation") had to be separated from the persons who were not citizens of the country, as well as from persons to whom the Law "On Population Register" could not be applied. During registration a lot of cases were reported, when one appealed against negative decisions of the Citizenship and Immigration Department⁶. In many cases courts abolished decisions of CID.

12. Non-citizens – The status of the non-citizens after the adoption of the resolution of 15 October 1991⁵ was uncertain for a long time and this has opened an opportunity for mass abuse first of all at registration in the Population Register¹¹. Latvia refuses to recognise non-citizens even as stateless persons and officially considers them "former USSR citizens", that is, as being citizens of a non-existent state. Therefore, Latvia evades the fulfilment of obligations under the UNO Convention "On the Reduction of Statelessness."

The Law "On the Status of the Former USSR Citizens who are not Citizens of Latvia or Any Other Country" adopted on 12 April 1995 made the stateless persons' position more certain and reflected some universally recognised rights in relation to non-citizens. But with all its merits it fixes even in the title the odd notion of "phantom" citizenship of a non-existent state and consolidates, also, inequality of rights (*see Appendix 1*).

13. Privatisation certificates – securities issued by the Latvian authorities at the beginning of the 1990s for use in the privatisation of state or municipal property. According to the law, non-citizens received less certificates than citizens. According to the Agency of Privatisation, 86.4% of privatisation certificates for years resided in Latvia were issued to citizens by March 1998, and only 13.6% - to non-citizens. It means that an average non-citizen obtained 2.8 times fewer privatisation certificates than an average citizen did.

14. "Roundstamper" – a group of persons with so-called "round stamps" in passports, the marks meaning the refusal to register a person¹¹. These people suffered from violation of a number of their fundamental rights. "Roundstamper" could only get a short-term residence permit. They could not be tenants or be employed for a term exceeding the term of the permit. They could not receive taxation books and enjoy taxation privileges. They could not receive a driving license, free medical aid, social allowances, privatisation certificates. They had no right to invite relatives or friends from abroad, register marriage or birth, change the place of residence. CID⁶ never provided any official statistical data concerning "roundstamper". So only approximate data can be derived from the accessible information. According to the National Committee of Statistics, by August 1993 the difference between the number of registered residents (about 1,400,000 citizens of Latvia and 715,000 non-citizens) and the entire number of Latvian inhabitants was about 160,000 persons. Therefore, out of a total of 875,000 non-citizens, almost 20% of non-citizens were had not been included in the Population Register.

15. Barricades of January, 1991 – In January, 1991 thousands of people erected barricades around important government buildings and initiated street patrols in Riga. The process was caused by fear that Soviet special forces would suppress the independence movement. Although the virtually unarmed citizens posed little real threat to the Soviet Army, the symbolic and selfless gesture made by the citizens galvanized support for independence throughout the Baltics and the rest of the world.

16. Law on the denationalisation of buildings – The denationalisation of buildings was conducted in accordance with the Law "On Denationalisation of Buildings" and "On Return of Buildings to Legitimate Owners" adopted in October, 1991. There were at least eighty thousand apartments affected by the restitution process, therefore between 270,000 and 280,000 people were affected.

Social guarantees for tenants in denationalised buildings are clearly insufficient. More than 34,000 families (120,000 people) have been evicted from their apartments, as they were not able to pay market price for rent.

APPENDIX 1

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN RIGHTS OF LATVIAN CITIZENS AND NON-CITIZENS¹²

I. Prohibition to occupy certain state and public positions, to be employed in certain professions

a) State Institutions

Jobs reserved for Latvian citizens only:

1. State office (Senior Public Service)	Satversme (The Constitution of the Republic of Latvia), as amended of 15.10.98, Art. 101
2. Civil Servants (A)	The Law "On State Civil Service", adopted on 05.06.00, Art. 7
3. Constitutional Court Judges	The Law "On Constitutional Court", adopted on 05.06.96, Art. 4 (2)
4. Judges (A)	The Law "On Judicial Power", adopted on 15.12.92, Art. 51 (1)
5. Public Prosecutors (A)	The Law "On the Public Prosecutors Office", adopted on 19.05.94, Art. 33 (1)
6. State Security Officers (A)	The Law "On State Security Institutions", adopted on 05.05.94, Art. 18
7. Diplomatic and Consular Service (A)	The Law "On Diplomatic and Consular Service", adopted on 21.09.95, Art. 3 (2)
8. State Controllers, Members of the State Control Council, Manager of the Auditing Department (A)	The Law "On State Control", adopted on 09.05.02, Art. 30.
9. Workers and officials of the Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau (A)	The Law "On Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau" adopted on 18.04.02, Art. 5.
10. Members of the Councils of Regulators of Public Services (A)	The Law "On Regulators of Public Services" adopted on 19.10.00, Art. 37.
11. Sworn land surveyors	The Land service regulations No. 20 "On special licenses to be obtained to value and fix the statute or price of real estate according to categories of fixing the statutory price and valuation", adopted on 21.07.93, Art. 7
12. Police Service (A)	The Law "On Police" adopted on 04.06.91, Art. 28 with amendments adopted on 08.06.94.
13. Prison Guard (A)	The Law "On Prison Administration", adopted on 31.10.02, Art. 10 (1)
14. State Fire Fighting and Rescue Service (A)	The Law "On Fire Safety and Fire Fighting", adopted on 24.10.02, Art. 28.2
15. Border-guards	The Law "On Border Guard", adopted on 27.11.97, Art. 7 (1)
16. Workers of State Revenue Service (A)	The Law "On State Revenue Service", adopted on 28.10.93, Art. 17 (as amended of 25.10.01)
17. Officials of the Labour Inspection	The Law "On State Labour Inspection", adopted on 13.12.01. Art. 5
18. Workers of the departments of Records of Acts of Civil Status	The Law "On Acts of Civil Status", adopted on 21.10.93., Art. 3 (2). The Law "On Acts of Civil Status", adopted on 17.03.05., Art. 3 (2)
19. Access to information declared a state secret (A) (B)	Law "On State Secrets", adopted on 17.10.96, Art. 9 (2)

b) Private Sector**Jobs reserved for Latvian citizens only:**

20. Sworn Advocates and Advocate's Assistants (A) (B)	The Law "On Advocacy", adopted on 27.04.93, Art.14 (1) and 83
21. Non-citizen couldn't participate as a defender in a criminal action even if he/she has got advocate qualification in one of the EU countries (B)	"The Criminal Law", adopted on 01.10.05, Art. 79
22. Sworn Notaries and Notary's Assistants (A)	"The Notary Law", adopted on 01.06.93, Art. 9 (1), 147 (1)
23. Court Bailiffs (A)	The Law "On Court Bailiffs", adopted on 24.10.02, Art. 12 (1)
24. Heads of the detective agency (A) (B)	The Law "On Detective Activity", adopted on 05.07.01, Art. 4
25. The managers of security guards (A) (B)	The Law "On Security Guard Activities", adopted on 29.10.98, Art. 6
26. Only Latvian citizen has the right to be employed in civil positions for army units	The Law "On Military Service", adopted on 30.05.02, Art. 16.
27. Internal Auditors	The Law "On Internal Auditors", adopted on 31.10.02., Art. 14 (2)

c) Public sector**Only citizens have the right:**

28. To be elected as Jurors	The Law "On Judicial Power" adopted on 15.12.92, Art. 56
29. To serve in the National Guard (Zemessardze)	The Law "On National Guard (Zemessardze)", adopted on 06.04.93, Art. 5 (1)
30. To establish political parties	The Law "On Public Organisations and Associations", adopted on 15.12.92, Art. 43
31. Political parties are allowed to operate if at least 1/2 of the members are citizens	The Law "On Public Organisations and Associations", adopted on 15.12.92, Art. 45 with amendments adopted on 05.04.95
32. To be elected to the National Radio and Television Council	The Law "On Radio and Television", adopted on 24.08.95, Art.42
33. To participate in local elections (A) (B)	The Law "On Elections to City Domes, Regional and Rural District Councils", adopted on 13.01.94, Art. 5.
34. To be elected to Commissions and working groups of considerable part of municipalities	The Statute of Riga Municipality with amendment, adopted on 22.05.01 establishes this restriction only for Auditing Commission (Para 8). In some other municipalities (for example, in Jelgava) the restriction is expanded to all commissions.
35. Only Latvian citizens and citizens of other EU countries residing in Latvia are allowed to take part in the elections to the European Parliament (A) (B)	The Law "On the Elections to European Parliament" adopted on 29.01.04, Art. 2.
36. Only citizens of Latvia can become a Chancellor and Award Capitulars (who are dealing with items related to state awards)	The Law "On State Awards" adopted on 04.03.04., Art. 43
37. Only citizens of Latvia can become bishops, chaplains and military co-ordinators of the Catholic church	The Law "On the Treaty between the Holy God's Throne and Latvian Republic" adopted on 12.09.02., Art. 5, 24 and 25
38. Contacts with foreign citizens, access to cultural monuments and mass media are guaranteed to citizens only in some of the Agreements	7 Agreements, signed from 7.08.92 to 16.04.03 (see Appendix 2, Para 2.1)

II. Property Rights

Only citizens have the right to:

39. Obtain land into ownership whether owning a building on it, if the land was not owned by them before 22.07.40	The Law "On the Land Reform in the Cities of LR", adopted on 20.11.91, Art. 12(1), (2) (as amended of 31.03.94, Art. 8)
40. A judicial person has the right to acquire the land plot into ownership in the LR cities if more than a half of its statute capital belongs to LR citizens. Should this ratio be changed, the deprivation of the land plot is envisaged (B)	The Law "On the Land Reform in the Cities of LR", adopted on 20.11.91, Art. 20 (as amended of 24.11.94, Art. 3)
41. Analogous to No. 40 limitation for judicial persons when buying land plots in rural areas (B)	The Law "On the Land Privatisation in Rural Regions", adopted on 09.07.92, Art. 28 (as amended of 08.12.94, Art.14)
42. Every citizen of Latvia is allotted 15 certificates more than a non-citizen. A non-citizen born outside Latvia gets another 5 certificates less. One certificate is an equivalent of state property volume, created during 1 year of a person's life	The Law "On Privatisation Certificates", adopted on 16.03.95, Art. 5
43. Non-citizens who arrived in Latvia after the retirement age (60 for men, 55 for women) and who had less than 5 years of hired employment receive no privatisation certificates	The Law "On Privatisation Certificates", adopted on 16.03.95, Art 5 (4)
44. A Latvian citizen is allotted with certificates if he lived in Latvia before 31.12.1992 and at any time was registered as a permanent inhabitant. Non-citizen of Latvia is allotted with certificates since the last their arrival in Latvia only and having purpose for permanent residence in Latvia.	The Law "On Privatisation Certificates", adopted on 16.03.95, Art 5 (3)
45. Only citizens and legal entities are guaranteed the protection of their investments abroad	30 Agreements, adopted within the period of 05.03.92 - 22.09.99 (see Appendix 2, Para 2.2)
46. Non-citizens do not have a right to register their aircrafts in the Register of Civil Aviation Aircrafts	The Law «On Aviation» adopted on 23.02.93, Art. 7, 8. The Law «On Aviation» adopted on 05.10.94, Art. 7, 8.
47. Protection of intellectual property abroad is guaranteed by some bilateral Agreements to citizens only	4 Agreements with 6 states, adopted within the period of 06.07.94 - 22.04.96, 3 Agreements lost their power after Latvia became a member of EU (see Appendix 2, Para 2.3)

III. Private enterprise

48. Licenses for air transportation abroad are guaranteed, by bilateral agreements to the companies controlled by Latvian citizens. If such control is lost, the license is revoked	23 Agreements, signed within the period of 01.07.92 - 18.10.99 (see Appendix 2, Para 2.4)
49. Only companies controlled by Latvian citizens can fish in territory under US jurisdiction	Fishery agreement with USA 08.04.93, Art.1
50. Non-discrimination regarding double taxation is guaranteed to citizens only	12 Agreements, signed within the period of 17.11.93 - 14.05.04 (see Appendix 2, Para 2.5)
51. Only citizens of Latvia are guaranteed with state support in various cases if trading abroad	4 Agreements, signed within the period of 29.11.91. - 16.10.02. (see Appendix 2, Para 2.6)

52. Establishment of joint-stock companies is not allowed to non-citizens who have resided less than 21 years in Latvia. Similar limitations exist for chairpersons of joint-stock companies, sworn auditors

The Law "On Joint-Stock Companies", adopted on 18.05.93, Art. 10.1 (1), 17.4

53. Commercial Handling of Weapons is allowed only for Latvian citizens and European Union citizens (A) (B)

The Law "On the Handling of Weapons", adopted on 06.06.02, Art. 36

IV. Social Rights

54. Years of employment outside Latvia are not included the non-citizens' employment record when calculating pension rates

Law "On State Pensions", adopted on 02.11.95, transitional regulations, Art. 1

55. The right to rent premises in official hostels in Riga for a non-restricted period of time applies only to those non-citizens whose length of residence as well as of work in Riga is more than 10 years

The Rules of Riga Municipality No. 52 "On the Order to Use the Official Hostels", adopted on 26.03.96, Art. 4

56. Only citizens have the right to receive different kinds of social aid in the territory of Finland. Years of employment in the territory of Finland are included only into citizens' employment record when calculating social insurance

Agreement with Finland on social benefits of 11.05.99, Art. 4.1., 5.2., 16, etc.

V. Other Rights and Freedoms

57. Only citizens have the right to study in certain higher education establishments

Statute (Constitution) of the Academy of Police, adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers on 17.06.98, Art. 69; 27.02.02., Art. 84.
Statute (Constitution) of the National Academy of Defence, adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers on 30.06.98, Art. 22; 08.01.03, Art. 22.

58. Latvian citizens may enter 73 foreign countries without visas. Non-citizens may enter, without visas, only 7 of them

See Appendix 2, Para 2.7 or web site of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs:
<http://www.am.gov.lv/en/service/4728/>

59. Non-refoulement to the other country is not guaranteed to non-citizens

Satversme (Constitutional) Law "Rights and Duties of the Citizen and the Individual" of 10.12.91., Art. 6; Amendments to Satversme of 15.10.98. The Law "On Criminal Process" of 01.10.05, Art. 697
Repatriation Law, adopted on 21.10.95, Art. 2

60. The right of repatriation is enjoyed only by Latvian citizens as well as by persons whose ancestors are Latvians or Livs

61. Only Latvian citizens and (in some cases) legal entities are guaranteed legal assistance when abroad

9 Agreements, signed between 11.11.92 and 21.05.98 (See Appendix 2, Para 2.8)

62. A citizen can be deprived of citizenship by court decision only. A non-citizen can be deprived of his status by decision of administrative authorities

The Law "On the Status of Former USSR Citizens who are not Citizens of Latvia or Any Other Country", adopted on 12.04.95, Art. 7

63. Non-citizens who have received compensations when leaving Latvia (i.e. as compensation for apartments left behind) from any state institutions or from abroad, apart from losing their former legal status, also lose the right to enter Latvia for residency

The Law "On the Status of Former USSR Citizens who are not Citizens of Latvia or Any Other Country", adopted on 12.04.95, Art.1 (3); according to the Law "On Immigration", adopted on 31.10.02, they may enter, if they pay back the compensation

64. The right to reunification with an adult child having no Latvian citizenship is reserved for Latvian citizen only	The Law "On Immigration", adopted on 31.10.02. Art. 24(1), 31(1)
65. The invitation to receive a visa is not needed if the person applying for a visa is ethnic Latvian or Liv or if one of his parents is a citizen of Latvia	The Law "On Immigration", adopted on 31.10.02. Art. 12(2), p.5
66. Non-citizens can be acknowledged as politically repressed persons (by the Nazi regime), only if they were repressed because of their national identity or who were young children and were confined in prisons and concentration camps in the territory of Latvia at that time (B)	The Law "On Determining the Status of Politically Repressed Persons who are Victims of Communist and Nazi Regimes", adopted on 12.04.95, Art.4, pp. 1-3
67. The right to self-defence: to acquire and receive a weapon as a personal award is allowed only to citizens (A) (B)	The Law "On the Handling of Weapons", adopted on 06.06.2002, Art. 19(6)
68. Only Latvian citizens are entitled to form collections of weapons (B)	The Law "On the Handling of Weapons ", adopted on 06.06.2002, Art. 34
69. Protection from publication of correspondence, telephone talks, telegraph messages without consent of an addressee and an author or their heirs, non-interference in private life is guaranteed only to Latvian citizens	The Law "On Press and Other Means of Mass Media" of 20.12.90. Art. 7
70. Non-citizens are not considered as belonging to national minorities	The Law "On Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities" of 31.05.05., Art. 2.

Comments:

1) with **(A)** those laws are marked which offend non-citizens' honour and self-respect because they equate non-citizens with incapable persons, criminals, enemies of the Latvian Republic and alcoholics;

2) according to the laws marked with **(B)** rights forbidden to non-citizens are ensured to foreigners, mainly to EU citizens.

APPENDIX 2

LIST OF SOME BILATERAL AND INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS DISCRIMINATING AGAINST NON-CITIZENS

2.1. General agreements (difference No. 38)

1. With Hungary of 07.08.92, Art. 8, 14, 17
2. With Ukraine of 23.05.95, Art. 9, 15, 18
3. With EU of 12.06.95 (in force from 1998), Preamble, Art. 37 - 44
4. With India of 01.09.95, Art. 3.1 Education in India is allowed to Latvian citizens only
5. With Czech Republic of 10.05.99), Preamble
6. With Mexico of 15.04.05, Art. 21. Scholarships to study in Mexico are allowed to Latvian citizens only
7. With EU of 16.04.03 (in force from 01.05.04), Art. 45. Only Latvian citizens may be delegated to work in the European Commission

2.2. Agreements on the protection of investments (difference No. 45)

1. With Finland of 05.03.92, Art. 1 (1) 'c'
 2. With Sweden of 10.03.92, Art. 1(3)
 3. With Denmark of 30.03.92, Art. 1(3)
 4. With France of 15.05.92, Art. 1.2, 1.3
 5. With Norway of 16.06.92, Art. 1.3
 6. With Taiwan of 17.09.92, Art. 1.3
 7. With Switzerland of 22.12.92, Art. 1. (1a)
 8. With Poland of 26.04.93. Art. 1. (1a)
 9. With Great Britain of 24.01.94, Art. 1(c)
 10. With Israel of 27.02.94, Art. 1.3
 11. With the Netherlands of 14.03.94, Art. 1(b)
 12. With Czech Republic of 25.10.94, Art. 1.2
 13. With Austria of 17.11.94, Art. 1(2)
 14. With USA of 13.01.95, Art. 1 (1c)
 15. With Canada of 26.04.95, Art. 1.
- * Canada, unlike Latvia, protects the interests of both its citizens and residents*
16. With Greece of 20.07.95, Art. 1 (3)
 17. With Portugal of 27.09.95, Art. 1.3
 18. With Spain of 26.10.95.

** The only example, when Latvia equally protects the rights of its citizens and non-citizens. The only exception is Art. 7.1, by which the transfer of salaries and other compensations is guaranteed to citizens only*

19. With Vietnam of 06.11.95, Art. 1 (1c)
20. With Estonia of 07.02.96, Art. 1.2
21. With Lithuania of 07.02.96, Art. 1.2
22. With Belgium and Luxembourg of 27.03.96, Art. 1.1 (1a)
23. With Korea of 23.10.96, Art. 1.2
24. With Egypt of 24.04.97, Art. 1 (2a)
25. With Italy of 11.07.97, Art. 1.3, 7.1.e
26. With Ukraine of 24.07.97, Art. 1.2.a
27. With Belarus of 17.06.1998, Art. 1c, 2, 3, 5
28. With Slovakia of 11.06.1998 Art. 1 (2)
29. With Hungary of 10.06.99. Art. 1 (2)
30. With Moldova of 22.09.99. Art. 1 (3)

2.3. Agreements protecting intellectual property (difference No. 47)

1. With USA of 06.07.94, part II
2. With Ukraine of 21.11.95, Art. 15.2, lapsed 01.05.04
3. With EFTA of 07.12.95, Art. 15.2, lapsed 01.05.04
4. With Slovenia of 22.04.96, Art.15, lapsed 01.05.04

2.4. Air traffic agreements (difference No. 48)

1. With Poland of 01.07.92, Art. 3.4, 4.1(a)
2. With Hungary of 09.03.93, Art. 3.2(a), 4.1(a), 5(c)
3. With the Netherlands of 25.03.93, Art. 4.4, 5(c)
4. With Israel of 03.11.93, Art. 3.4, 4.1(a)
5. With Finland of 29.11.93, Art. 4(a)
6. With Great Britain of 06.12.93., Art. 4 (4), Art. 5 (1)
7. With Belgium of 12.12.94, Art. 5.1(d)
8. With Estonia of 20.01.95, Art. 3.5, 4.1(c)
9. With Ukraine of 23.05.95, Art. 3.4
10. With Uzbekistan of 06.06.95, Art. 4.4, 5.1(a)
11. With Belarus of 07.09.95, Art. 4(1), Art. 5(3), Art. 13(3)
12. With Turkey of 15.09.95, Art. 3.4, 4.1(a)
13. With Lithuania of 09.09.96, Art. 3.5, 4.1(c)
14. With Thailand of 08.11.96, Art. 6.5, 7.1(a)
15. With Egypt of 23.04.97, Art. 6 (4), Art. 7 (1)
16. With India of 12.10.97, Art. 3.4, 4.1
17. With Slovakia of 09.04.98., Art. 3(2), Art. 5(1)
18. With Kazakhstan of 19.05.1998
19. With China of 04.03.1999, Art. 3.2, 4.1
20. With Morocco of 19.05.99. Art. 4 (1)
21. With Bulgaria of 19.05.99, Art. 3(5), Art. 4(1)
22. With Singapore of 06.10.99. Art. 3(2), Art. 4(1)
23. With Croatia of 18.10.99., Art. 3(4), 4(1), 6(2)

2.5. Taxation Agreements (difference No. 50)

The Agreements against double taxation (including residents), but citizens are at a disadvantage.

1. With Poland of 17.11.93, Art. 3, 25
2. With Canada of 04.06.95, Art. 24 (1)
3. With Belarus of 07.06.95, Art. 23.1
4. With China of 07.06.96, Art. 3.1 (h), 26
5. With Germany of 07.06.96, Art. 3.1(g), 24
6. With France of 14.04.97, Art. 24
7. With Italy of 21.05.97. Art. 26
8. With Singapore of 06.10.99, Art. 24
9. With Switzerland of 31.01.02, Art. 24
10. With Romania of 25.03.02, Art. 26
11. With Spain of 04.09.03, Art. 25
12. With Hungary of 14.05.04, Art. 24

2.6. Free trade Agreements (difference No. 51)

1. With Ukraine of 29.11.91, Art. 12
2. With USA of 09.12.92, Art.2
3. With USA of 06.07.94
4. With Bulgaria of 16.10.02, Art. 5 (2)
5. With Hungary of 29.10.02, Art. 5 (2)

2.7. Countries for which a visa is not required for Latvian citizens (difference No. 58)

Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Estonia, Fiji, Finland, France, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, Hong Kong SAR, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Macao, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Moldova, Monaco, Morocco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Saint Lucia, Samoa, San Marino, Serbia, Seychelles, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, St.Vincent and the Grenadines, Sweden, Switzerland, Tunisia, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Uruguay, Venezuela.

Non-citizens may enter only 7 countries without visa:

Denmark, Dominica, Estonia, Lithuania, Saint Lucia, Samoa, Croatia.

2.8. Agreements on legal assistance (difference No. 61)

The Agreements have the following main advantages for Latvian citizens:

- a) equal rights with the citizens of the host country regarding legal assistance;*
- b) free legal assistance and non-payment of court expenses;*
- c) sending documents free of charge and (in many cases) without translation;*
- d) consular assistance;*
- e) recognition of marriages, sanity, adaptation etc. in accordance with the laws of another party to the Agreement;*
- f) non-refoulement to the other country in case of criminal offences.*

1. With Estonia and Lithuania of 11.11.92, Art. 1, 16, 17.1, 18, 21, 25

** Non-citizens are only mentioned in Art. 17.2. The parties must provide the following information: about convictions, instigation of criminal proceedings, recognition as chronic alcoholics, drug addicts and insane. Among non-citizens, 4% are ethnic Lithuanians.*

2. With Russia of 03.02.93, Art. 1, 11, 16, 17, 19, 22, 26, 62.1

** Regarding non-citizens (Art. 76, 77), information about convictions and instigation of criminal proceeding is transferred. Among non-citizens, 64% are ethnic Russians.*

3. With Russia of 04.03.93, Art. 1

4. With Moldova of 14.04.93, Art. 1, 16, 17, 18, 61(1)

5. With Belarus of 21.02.94, Art. 1, 11, 16, 19, 21, 25, 60

** Regarding non-citizens (Art. 75, 76), information about convictions and instigation of criminal proceedings is transferred. Among non-citizens, 12% are ethnic Byelorussians.*

6. With Poland of 23.02.94, Art. 1, 11, 18, 20, 22, 27, 49, 68.1

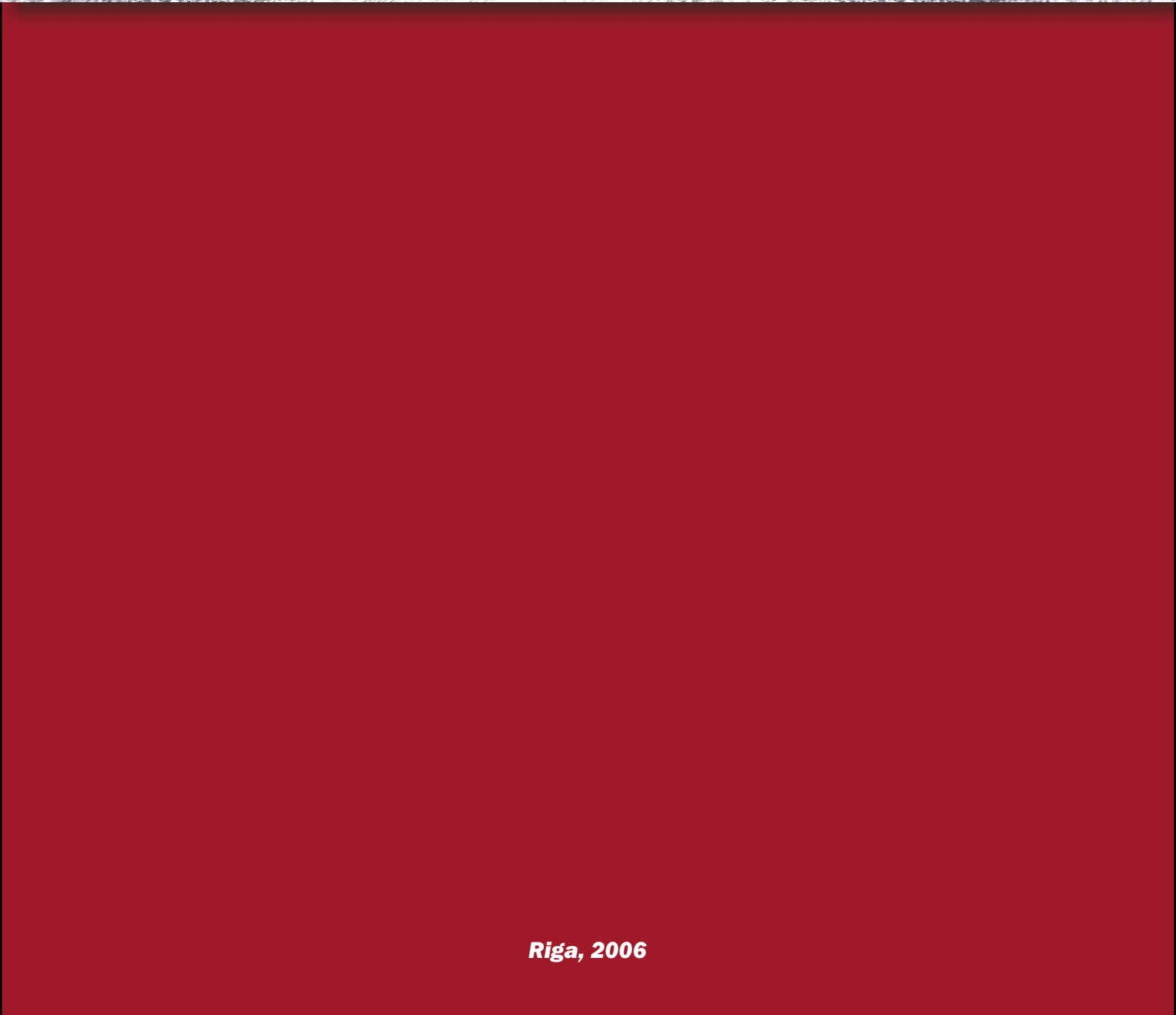
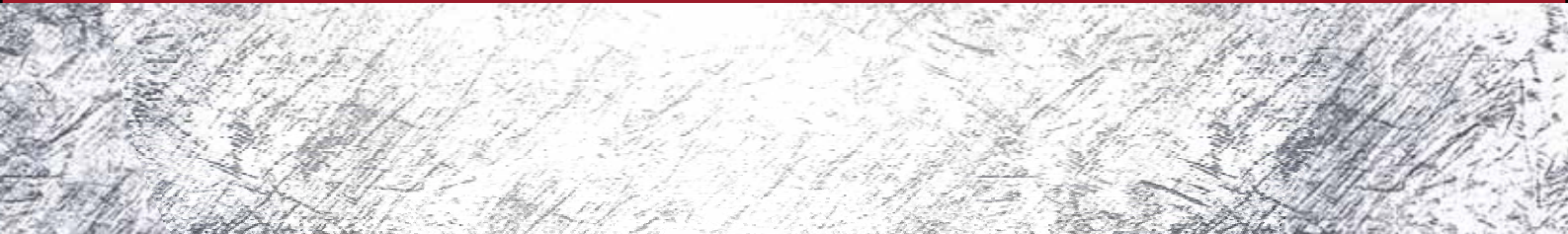
** Among non-citizens, 3.5% are ethnic Poles.*

7. With Ukraine of 23.05.95, Art. 1, 11, 16, 17, 18, 21, 24, 44, 55(1)

** Among non-citizens, 9% are ethnic Ukrainians.*

8. With Uzbekistan of 23.05.96, Art. 1, 11, 16, 17, 19, 22, 25, 44, 55

9. With Kirgizia of 21.05.1998, Art. 1, 17, 19, 41



Riga, 2006