

Divergence Profiles of Communication Processes between Latvia and Russia

Viktor V. Voronov✉

Institute of Sociology of the Federal Centre of Theoretical and Applied Sociology,
Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Russia

voronov@isras.ru; <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1022-3692>

Abstract. The article, based on scientific literature and a large number of sources: sociological studies, various statistical and analytical materials, regulations, materials from mass media and social networks, provides an analysis of the deepening split in historically similar (according to G.Hofstede's criteria) neighboring societies of Latvia and Russia. 12 groups of communications are considered that determine the content of the information space of Latvia in relation to Russia: foreign policy, economics, attitude towards Russia and Russians, education, science, culture, media, non-profit organizations, youth, religious and interreligious, freedom of movement, interregional communications. The results of the study show that Latvians and Russians are divided not so much by ethnic characteristics or the specifics of culture and traditions, but by their attitude to political history. At the same time, the negativization of the Russian state and Russians is undertaken mainly not by the population, but by the ruling political elite of Latvia, whose behavior is entirely determined by the interests of the countries of the Anglo-Saxon world. At the same time, the currently obvious divergence (divergence) in the development paths of historically similar societies that have been in the same civilizational space for centuries has led to differentiation in the manifestations of communication. Signs of an accelerating divergence in communication processes between Latvia and Russia are manifested in foreign policy communications, attitudes towards Russia and Russians, in culture, in the media and some other areas. Profiles of containing the divergence of communication processes – in religious and interreligious communications, youth, scientific communications, freedom of movement, etc. The results obtained allow us to hope with cautious optimism for the restoration of good-neighborly communication relations between Latvia and Russia in the foreseeable future.

Keywords: communication regime, communication groups, Latvia, hostility, differentiation of processes, Russia

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Introduction

The end of the globalization era is characterized by the growth of conflicts in the economic, political, socio-cultural spheres of modern societies in various macro-regions of the world, which are caused by fundamental differences between the political elites of Western and other civilizations in their understanding of the values of the future world order. The post-Soviet countries have not escaped these processes. The divergence of development paths is most obvious in countries that have chosen not the traditional development model, like Russia, but the Western model, like the Baltic countries [7]. Let us consider the signs of such a divergence and their features using the example of communication processes in Latvia. At the same time, a systemic analysis shows that the unfriendly and even hostile attitude of the Latvian state towards Russia and Russians is initiated mainly not by residents, but by the ruling political elite, whose behavior is entirely determined by the interests of Western countries. The purpose of the article is to analyze the signs of acceleration or restraint of the divergence of communication processes in Latvia in relation to Russia. To this end, the work examines the differentiation of unfriendly communication processes, characteristic features of various communication groups in Latvia (foreign policy, economics, attitudes towards Russia and Russians, education, science, culture, mass media, non-profit organizations, youth, religious and interreligious, freedom of movement, interregional communications), which are examined in more detail in this article.

Materials and Methods

In the work, along with domestic and foreign scientific literature, various empirical sources are widely used: the results of sociological surveys (mass and quota), expert interviews, government documents, speeches by government officials, statistical data, regulatory legal acts, materials from various media and social networks. The following research methods were applied to the specified sources: historical and logical methods for studying the state of knowledge of the problem of the divergence of communication processes in Latvia and Russia; comparative and analytical methods for identifying trends in the field of the communication regime and communication groups in Latvia based on the collected empirical material; inductive – systematization of conclusions on the topic of the study.



Results

1. Foreign policy communications

Interstate relations between Latvia and Russia are confrontational. The “Public Report of the State Security Service for 2022” speaks of “Russia’s confrontation with the civilized part of the world”. Thus, Russia is excluded from world civilization and is characterized both in the past and present as an “imperialist state.” The state system in Russia is characterized as the “Russian regime”¹. It should be noted that in the “Public Report on the Activities of the Security Police in 2013” Russia was also considered a state that poses a threat to Latvia’s national security “through efforts to strengthen its influence in neighboring countries, using both compatriot policies and the so-called soft power and economic instruments”.

The President of Latvia (since July 2023), and before that the Minister of Foreign Affairs (2011-2023) E.Rinkēvičs uses negative connotations in all his references to Russia. He calls on Latvian residents not to visit Russia; he has used such an epithet in relation to the Russian elite as “jackals”²; Russia as an “aggressive state, its citizens have no place in Latvia, Europe, Ukraine”³; advocates closing the Baltic Sea to Russia; characterizes Russia’s actions in the information space in relation to other states as “criminal actions”⁴, etc. Interparliamentary cooperation has been curtailed. On November 17, 2022, the Latvian Saeima decided to “refuse to form groups of deputies in order to facilitate cooperation with the parliaments of Russia and Belarus”⁵.

If we evaluate the problems that affect the territorial integrity of the Latvian and Russian states, we should mention the impossibility of concluding a border treaty between the countries. On January 12, 1992, the Supreme Council of the Republic of Latvia recognized the annexation of the Pytalovo (Abrene) district to Russia in 1944 as “unconstitutional”, based on the fact that when the peace treaty was signed in 1920, this territory remained under Latvian control⁶. Since October 15, 1991, the ethno-political conflict has been unfolding

1 Valsts Drošības Dienests. (2022) Gada Publiskais Pārskats. [National Security Service. (2022) Annual Report] Available from: <https://vdd.gov.lv/uploads/materials/32/lv/vdd-2022-gada-parskats.pdf>.

2 VIDEO> “Kurš šakālis kuram rikli pārgriezīs.” Rinkēvičs par situāciju Krievijā [Which jackal will cut whose throat.” Review on the situation in Russia]. (2023) Available from: <https://www.apollo.lv/7802063/video-kurs-sakalis-kuram-rikli-pargriezis-rinkevics-par-situaciju-krievija>.

3 Rinkēvičs rosina diskutēt par Baltijas jūras slēgšanu, konstatējot Krievijas vainu zemūdens infrastruktūras bojājumos. (2023) [Rinkēvičs encourages a discussion on the closure of the Baltic Sea, establishing Russia’s fault for the damage to the underwater infrastructure] Available from: <https://www.liepajniekiem.lv/zinas/sabiedriba/latvija/rinkevics-rosina-diskutet-par-baltijas-juras-slegsanu-konstatetot-krievijas-vainu-zemudens-infrastru/>.

4 Rinkēvičs: Hibriduzbrukumu gadījumā jābūt gataviem vēl negaidītām lietām. (2023) Available from: <https://zinas.tv3.lv/latvija/rinkevics-hibriduzbrukumu-gadijuma-jabut-gataviem-vel-negaiditam-lietam/>.

5 Saeimā neveidos deputātu grupas sadarbībai ar Krievijas un Baltkrievijas parlamentiem. (2022) [The Saeima will not create groups of deputies for cooperation with the parliaments of Russia and Belarus] Available from: <https://www.saeima.lv/lv/aktualitates/saeimas-zinas/31618-saeima-neveidos-deputatu-grupas-sadarbibai-ar-krievijas-un-baltkrievijas-parlamentiem>.

6 Laganovskis 2015.

around the assessment of the legal status of non-citizens of Latvia⁷, as well as the status of the Russian ethnic minority in Latvia, the content of political, socio-economic, linguistic and cultural rights⁸ and more. In Latvia, the political elite views the issue of the rights of the Russian population as a method that Russia is resorting to in order to “delay Latvia’s integration into international structures”⁹.

The conflictual nature of interstate relations over the decades has meant that since 1991, no Russian president has visited Latvia. In 2006, B.Yeltsin arrived in Latvia for the ceremony of awarding him the Order of Three Stars. At the same time, the former Russian president said that the main obstacles to normal Russian-Latvian relations are the refusal to conclude a border agreement and the “problem of Latvian residents of Russian nationality”¹⁰. However, in 2005, Latvian President V.Vike-Freiberga visited Russia, and in 2010, Latvian President V.Zatlers visited Russia. But some of the Latvian press assessed these visits extremely negatively, as “flirting with Russian imperialism”¹¹.

2. Economic communications

The State Security Service’s “Public Report for 2022” states that Latvian entrepreneurs need to reconsider their ongoing economic ties with the “East”, otherwise this will be associated with “reputational risks” for them, and for Latvia as a whole – it threatens “national economic security”. The report characterizes Russia as an energy supplier as an “unreliable supplier”. Therefore, it is recommended that the entire West reconsider its energy policy¹². However, economic cooperation with Russia, especially in the energy sector, was assessed extremely negatively by the Security Police earlier, for example, in 2013¹³. On August 1, 2022, the “Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Latvia and the Government of the Russian Federation on Economic Cooperation” was suspended. Therefore, it is hardly possible to talk about platforms for public communication in the business sphere for Latvian and Russian entrepreneurs.

After February 24, 2022, Latvia joined the financial and economic sanctions of the European Union against Russia (freezing the bank reserves of the Central Bank of Russia,

7 List of main claims and recommendations of international organizations and NGOs against Latvia regarding the rights of national minorities. (reference information) (2003). Available from: <https://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/lv/1665245/>.

8 Manipulation: state policy of Latvia – linguistic genocide of Russians. (2022) Available from: <https://www.delfi.lt/ru/detektor-lzhi/manipuliacia/manipulyaciya-gosudarstvennaya-politika-latvii-yazykovoy-genocid-russkih-91118139>.

9 Bleiere D. (2023) Boriss Jeļcins. Available from: <https://enciklopedija.lv/skirklis/52937-Boriss-Je%C4%BCcins>.

10 Jeļcinam ... 2006

11 Tālavas Taurētājs. (2023) Kā Latvijas Valsts prezidenti “flirtēja” ar 9. maiju un Krievijas imperiālistu [Talavas Taurejs. (2023) How Latvian Presidents “flirted” with May 9 and Russian imperialism]. Available from: <https://talavastauratajs.com/ka-latvijas-valsts-prezidenti-flirteja-ar-9-maiju-un-krievijas-imperialismu/>.

12 Valsts Drošības Dienests. (2022) Gada Publiskais Pārskats [National Security Service. (2022) Annual Public Report], p. 43, 49, 51. Available from: <https://vdd.gov.lv/uploads/materials/32/lv/vdd-2022-gada-parskats.pdf>.

13 Public review of ...2013.

banning cooperation with most Russian banks, restricting access to EU financial markets, restrictions on deposits, cryptocurrency, etc.; restrictions on the export of dual-use goods, imposing sanctions on dozens of military and industrial enterprises, closing airspace for Russian aircraft, banning the entry of sea vessels flying the Russian flag, banning Russian transport from transporting goods through the territory of Latvia, banning investments in the energy sector of Russia, etc.). However, the available data indicate ongoing economic cooperation between Russian and Latvian businesses. In the first half of 2022, the total trade volume between Russia and Latvia reached 1.4 billion euros, which is 13% more than the trade volume in the first half of 2020. In the first half of 2022, imports from Russia amounted to 897.33 million euros. More than half of the total volume of Russian exports were mineral fuels, mineral oils and their distillation products, bituminous substances, mineral wax, iron and steel, wood and wood products, charcoal. In the first quarter of 2022, the volume of Russian investments in Latvia amounted to 1.8 billion euros, Latvian investments in Russia – 112 million euros¹⁴.

The “Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Latvia and the Government of the Russian Federation on the implementation of customs formalities during the period of withdrawal from the territory of the Republic of Latvia of the Armed Forces and Border Troops of the Russian Federation temporarily located on the territory of the Republic of Latvia” dated 02.06.1993 is still in force; signed on 25.06.2008 “Protocol of the Government of the Republic of Latvia and the Government of the Russian Federation on the extension of the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Latvia and the Government of the Russian Federation of June 2, 1993 on customs border checkpoints”¹⁵; Law “On the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Latvia and the Government of the Russian Federation on Cooperation and Mutual Assistance in Customs Matters” dated 15.10.2003¹⁶.

14 Eiropas Savienības sankcijas pret Krievijas Federāciju. [European Union sanctions against the Russian Federation] (2023) Available from: <https://www.mfa.gov.lv/lv/par-eiropas-savienibas-sankciju-pret-krievijas-federaciju-piemerosanu-latvija>.

15 Latvijas Republikas valdības un Krievijas Federācijas valdības PROTOKOLS par Latvijas Republikas valdības un Krievijas Federācijas valdības 1993.gada 2.jūnija vienošanās par muitas robežas caurlaides punktiem darbības pagarināšanu. [PROTOCOLS of the Latvian Republic and the Russian Federation on customs border checkpoints of 1993. Annual 2. June 2008 to extend the validity of the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Latvia and the Government of the Russian Federation of June 2, 1993 on customs border checkpoints.] (2023) Available from: <https://atd.lv/lv/latvijas-republikas-vald%C4%ABbas-un-krievijas-feder%C4%81cijas-vald%C4%ABbas-nol%C4%ABgumi>

16 Latvijas Republikas valdības un Krievijas Federācijas valdības VIENOŠANĀS par Latvijas-Krievijas starpvaldību komisijas izveidošanu ekonomiskās, zinātniski-tehniskās, humanitārās un kultūras sadarbības jomās. [AGREEMENT of the Government of the Republic of Latvia and the Government of the Russian Federation on the establishment of a Latvian-Russian intergovernmental commission in the fields of economic, scientific-technical, humanitarian and cultural cooperation.] (2023) Available from: <https://likumi.lv/ta/lv/starptautiskie-ligumi/id/736>.

3. Relation to Russia, Russian, Russian population

The attitude towards Russia is extremely negative in the official publication of the Republic of Latvia *Latvijas vēstnesis* [Latvian newspaper] and in such major publications as *Latvijas avīze* [Latvian newspaper], *Neatkarīgā rīta avīze* [Independent morning newspaper], *Diena* [Day] as well as in the Internet portals www.delfi.lv, www.apollo.lv, www.tvnet.lv, www.lsm.lv.

For many decades, extremely negative assessments of Russia's foreign and domestic policies have been given at public events by Latvian government officials, politicians and the public. Such events have become especially frequent since 2014. Moreover, the very fact of organizing cultural events, such as the young pop singers' competition *New Wave* [(Bērtule 2014)], was the object of criticism (when it was still possible). Since February 2024, posters condemning its foreign policy and caricatures of V. Putin have been posted opposite the Russian embassy building¹⁷.

In the overwhelming majority of posts in the Latvian-language segment of the Internet, assessments of Russia, the main institutions of state power and, above all, President V. Putin, Russia's domestic and foreign policy, its historical path, economic life, culture, morality, and the Orthodox Church are extremely negative. A stable tendency of racist Russophobia has long been formed in a significant part of Latvian social networks. It always manifests itself when talking about topics that directly or indirectly affect Russia, its institutions, values, and the Russian people. Total dehumanization extends to the entire Russian people, their contribution to European and world civilization and culture is denied. Russians are identified with biologically inferior creatures, and Russophobia in the speeches of politicians, articles by journalists, and on social networks has always remained unappreciated by law enforcement agencies. However, the Russophobic tendency is not total. The level of Russophobia in Latvian social networks is inversely proportional to public information about Russia's successes. There are also posts in Latvian-language social networks that caustically ridicule Latvian Russophobes, for example, *Ukrainas fronte...¹⁸*; *Cūku komikss ...¹⁹*; *Veidemane E.²⁰*; VIDEO. *Laima Vaikule ...²¹*.

17 Foto/Galerijas/Pikets Pret Krievijas Agresiju Ukrainā [Photo/Galleries/Picket Against Russian Aggression In Ukraine]. (2023) Available from: <https://www.leta.lv/photo/album/BEADB21D-82BB-4CFF-8E0B-9C63574EF1EE>.

18 “Ukrainas fronte nav sabrukusi!” Slaidiņš nepiekrīt apgalvojumam, ka Ukraina jau ir zaudējusi karā.[The Ukrainian front has not collapsed!] Slaidins disagrees with the claim that Ukraine has already lost the war] (2023) Available from: <https://www.la.lv/ukrainas-fronte-nav-sabrukusi-slaidins-nepiekrīt-apgalvojumam-ka-ukraina-jau-ir-zaudejusi-kara>.

19 Cūku komikss: Krievijas «miera» uzturētāji. Pig comic: Russia's “peace” keepers.] (2022) Available from: <https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/arpus-etera/komiksi/cuku-komikss-krievijas-miera-uzturetaji.a444898/>.

20 Veidemane E. (2022) Tā ir Krievijas tradīcija – iznīcināt brīvus cilvēkus, tautas un valstis [Veidemane E. (2022) It is a Russian tradition – to destroy free people, nations and countries]. Available from: https://m.pietiek.com/raksti/ta_ir_krievijas_tradicija_-_iznicinat_brivus_cilvekus_tautas_un_valstis/komentari.

21 VIDEO. Laima Vaikule sajūsmīna latviešu auditoriju, intervijā krievu žurnālistiem norādot: “Kāda kuram ir darišana, ko mēs Latvijā darām!?” [VIDEO. Laima Vaikule excites the Latvian audience, stating in an interview with Russian journalists: “Who cares what we do in Latvia!?”] (2023) Available from: <https://www.la.lv/video-laima-vaikule-sajusmina-latviesu-auditoriju-intervija-krievu-zurnalisti-noradot-kada-kuram-ir-darisana-ko-mes-latvija-daram>.

It should be noted that Latvian society belongs, according to G. Hofstede's criteria, to the individualistic and "feminine" type of culture (caring for others, law-abidingness, striving for personal success)²² with a dominant mentality of rural (peasant) conservatism. Latvians are mentally closer to the interconnected functioning and development of the local and external economic, socio-cultural communication environment. Belonging to the "feminine" type of culture is common to Latvians and Russians, and this brings them closer together, despite the opposition of external and internal hostile political and nationalist forces [19].

In recent years, there have been virtually no large-scale sociological studies aimed at identifying the attitude of Latvian residents towards the Russian Federation. The situation can be clarified by data from studies such as "The Possibility of Destabilization of Society: Potential Threats to National Security" (2016); "Patriotism among Latvian Youth and Society" (2018); "The Desire of Latvian Society to Defend the State: Facilitating and Limiting Factors" (2020); public opinion research by the sociological company SKDS (2022). These studies claim that "Russia's influence has decreased in Latvia, as the feeling of belonging to Russia, the number of Russian patriots" and the proportion of people oriented towards Russian media have decreased. According to these studies, from 2008 to 2022, the proportion of "patriots of Russia" has decreased from 12% to 4%. At the same time, according to these studies, the proportion of "patriots of Russia" in families where the spoken language is Russian is also low: 19% (in 2018), 12% (in 2022), with a high proportion of "patriots of Latvia" 66% and 67%, respectively.²³

The attitude towards the Russian population is revealed in the "Public Report of the State Security Service for 2022", which speaks of the collective identity of Latvian Russians as sharing the values of the "so-called "Russian world"". Public "organizations of Russian compatriots" are also negatively characterized as a "pro-Kremlin segment" in Latvia. This policy is assessed as a form of Russia's "soft power". Russia's policy of attracting Latvian youth to higher education institutions, which is becoming the object of attention of the Latvian special services, is assessed negatively²⁴. Compared to earlier similar reports, only representatives of Russian public organizations are named as "extremists". Whereas in the "Public Report on the Activities of the Security Police in 2013", in addition to Russian NGOs, their leaders were also named Latvian radical nationalists I. Shishkins and A. Garda²⁵.

Official statistics contain information on interethnic marriages without distinguishing between age groups. The dynamics over the past 50 years are interesting.

²² Hofstede G. 6 dimensions for website.xls. Dimension Data Matrix. Available from: <https://geerthofstede.com/research-and-vsm/dimension-data-matrix/>.

²³ Bērziņa I. (2023) Latvijas sabiedrības un valsts attiecības Krievijas–Ukrainas kara kontekstā. Rīga: Drošības un stratēģiskās pētniecības centrs. P.2-4. [Bērziņa I. (2023) Latvian society and state relations in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war. Rīga: Center for Security and Strategic Research. P.2-4.] Available from: https://www.naa.mil.lv/sites/naa/files/document/I.Berzina_Latvijas_sabiedriba_%20un_valsts_attiecibas_Krievijas_Ukrainas_Kara_Konteksta.Pdf.

²⁴ Dienests Valsts Drošības. (2022) Gada Publiskais Pārskats [State Security Service. (2022) Annual Public Report]. P. 25-26. Available From: <https://vdd.gov.lv/uploads/Materials/32/Lv/Vdd-2022-Gada-Parskats.Pdf>.

²⁵ Publiskais pārskats. [Public review.] 2013, p. 13. Available from: <https://vdd.gov.lv/noderigi/2013-gada-parskats>.

Thus, in 1970, 11.4% of Latvian women married Russians and 14.2% of Latvians married Russian women, 16.8% of Russian women married Latvians and 17.1% of Russian men married Latvians. These proportions did not change in subsequent Soviet times. In 1990, 11.4% of Latvian women married Russians and 11.8% of Latvians married Russian women, then 15.9% of Russian women married Latvians and 16.0% of Russian men married Latvians. In 2022, these proportions of Russian-Latvian marriages did not change in relation to Latvians, for whom Russians became partners in 10-12% of cases, but Russians doubled the share of Latvian spouses among all marriages: if 10.2% of Latvians married Russians and 11.8% of Latvians married Russian women, then 31.3% of Russian women married Latvians and 28.8% of Russian men married Latvians²⁶. These changes require separate research. Although one of the reasons is the sharp reduction in the number of Russians in the population of Latvia in the post-Soviet period (by 2 times). And as statistics on small ethnic groups (Belarusians, Ukrainians, Poles) show, they are not characterized by a predominant orientation towards marriages exclusively in "their" ethnic environment, but by an orientation towards interethnic marriages. Of course, one of the motives of some Russians is the need to provide their children with a more comfortable entry into the Latvian environment. There are also no such precise data in official statistics as the place of residence of those entering into marriages. Therefore, it is quite possible that some Latvian-Russian marriages were concluded in emigration (to Great Britain, Ireland, etc.), where the effect of the ethnic factor in choosing a partner is not so relevant compared to Latvia. Information occasionally appears in the public space about Russian people recording their ethnicity in their Latvian passports. (The Latvian passport allows for the recording of one's ethnic identity along with citizenship.) Such issues have been raised in the press for several decades. For example, there was a note about the need for an absolutely Russian-speaking Pole who graduated from a Russian-language school in Latvia to record his ethnic identity.²⁷ Articles in the Russian-language segment of the Internet over the past two years have mainly discussed the value of combining several ethnic identities in one person – Russian, Ukrainian, Latvian, rather than renouncing Russian affiliation²⁸. True, Latvian anthropologists believe that "Latvian Russians are experiencing an identity crisis." Although they admit that this assessment is "hypothetical."²⁹

In Latvia, there have been no studies on ethnic discrimination against Russians in the sphere of employment, admission to universities, work, etc. However, sociologists have noted the fact of ethnosocial stratification, which is also evident in economic life, given the obvious underrepresentation of ethnic minorities in socially prestigious spheres of employment,

²⁶ Calculated by: Laulību skaits pēc laulāto tautības – Līgavaiņa tautība, Laika periods un Līgavas tautība. [Number of marriages by nationality of spouses – Groom's nationality, Time period and Bride's nationality] (2023) Available from: https://data.stat.gov.lv/pxweb/lv/OSP_PUB/START_POP_IL_ILN/ILN050/table/tableViewLayout1/.

²⁷ STRENGA 2007. [STRENGTH 2007]

²⁸ Трофимова – Гаике. 2022.

²⁹ "Latvian Russians are experiencing an identity crisis." (2023) Social anthropologist Klavs Sedlenieks on how the war changed society. Available from: <https://rus.delfi.lv/51164891/latvija/55173430/latviyskie-russkie-perezvivayut-krizis-identichnosti-socialnyy-antropolog-klavs-sedlenieks-o-tom-kak-voyna-izmenila-obshchestvo>.

in public administration, in the management of large businesses, in science and culture [5]. The issue of observing the rights and freedoms of the Russian-speaking population has been the subject of heated political debate since the state independence of Latvia in 1991. Political parties, public organizations, mass media, and opinion leaders oriented toward the Latvian part of society categorically deny the very fact of violation of the rights of people belonging to ethnic minorities as such, including the Russian population. Although, for example, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe noted in a 2021 resolution that “the labour market requires a high level of proficiency in the Latvian language, which ... limits the ability of non-native speakers <...> to gain access to civil service positions”³⁰. The U.S. State Department’s 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Latvia notes, “Nongovernmental organizations representing minority groups stated that discrimination and harassment against members of minority groups, including what they considered hate speech, continued to go unreported to authorities”³¹.

The issue of observing the rights and freedoms of the Russian-speaking population was raised mainly by political parties and public organizations, publicists oriented towards ethnic Russians. This is, first of all, the party “Russian Union of Latvia”. The current version of the program of this party speaks of a state policy of historical revenge directed towards Latvian Russians, about forced assimilation, about “a complete ban on the use of the Russian language in school, about the extensive demolition of monuments dedicated to the liberation of Latvia from Nazism, a ban on Russian TV channels, an extensive campaign of Russophobia in the media”³². The most famous reports on the rights of the Russian-speaking population in Latvia for decades were prepared by Vladimir Buzayev, who claims that there are 84 differences in the human rights of citizens and non-citizens of Latvia [1; 8]. Also well-known in Latvia is the economist and head of the “Non-Citizens’ Congress” Alexander Gaponenko³³. The Social Democratic Party “Harmony”, which had the largest faction in the Saeima in 2011-2022 and was not represented at all in the last Saeima, does not use the narrative about the violation of the rights of the Russian-speaking population in Latvia in its program. At the same time, the party advocates for the full ratification of the “Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the withdrawal of reservations (declarations) made upon ratification of the convention. “Harmony” advocates the use of languages of national minorities in communication with state and municipal institutions in places where national minorities live traditionally or in significant numbers ..., for broader opportunities for the use of foreign languages and languages of national minorities at all levels of the education system by using the positive experience of bilingual education and simultaneously solving

30 Resolution ... 2021

31 2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Latvia. Available from: <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/latvia/>.

32 Program of the Russian Union of Latvia party in the elections of the 14th Seimas of Latvia. (2022) Available from: <https://rusojuz.lv/programma-partii-russkij-sojuz-latvii-na-vyborah-14-go-sejma-latvii/>.

33 Alexander Gaponenko (2018): The Latvian authorities are trying to shut my mouth. Available from: <https://rg.ru/2018/05/12/aleksandr-gaponenko-vlasti-latvii-pytautsia-zakryt-mne-rot.html>; Александр Гапоненко (2022): “A “special operation” has begun in Latvia to expel those disloyal to Nazism.” Available from: <https://russkiymir.ru/publications/301201/>.

several balanced problems: ensuring effective acquisition of the state language, preserving the ethnic identity of all residents” (Programme of the Social Democratic ... 2011). However, for a long time, in the short version of its program “4 thousand signs” “Harmony” did not even mention the presence of ethnic minorities in Latvia [2]. The party “For Stability”, which is focused on the Russian-speaking population and was able to get into the current Saeima in 2022, in its program advocates the right to receive education in their native language. At the same time, not a single Latvian party provides for the right to education for the Russian population in their native language, and to one degree or another advocates for the complete transfer of all education, including private education, to the Latvian language [3].

Russian is the second most widely spoken language among the Latvian population after Latvian. According to 2017 (there is no more recent information), Russian was the mother tongue for 36% of Latvian residents, including 55.5% of Latgale residents, 53.5% of Riga and surrounding areas residents, 23.8% of Zemgale residents, 19.4% of Kurzeme residents and 9.3% of Vidzeme residents³⁴. According to the Population Census (2011), 37.2% of residents use Russian as their main language in home communication. The highest proportion of residents using Russian as their main language in an informal environment is 60.3% in Latgale and 55.8% in the Riga region. According to the 2011 Population Census, 78.9% of respondents in Daugavpils, 56.8% in Rēzekne, 49.6% in Riga, 43.2% in Jūrmala, 37.9% in Liepāja, 37.5% in Jelgava and 36.3% in Ventspils mainly used Russian at home (2011. nations of the year ...2023). The 2000 Population Census data showed that 43.7% of residents understood Russian as a foreign language.³⁵ However, there is a tendency for the number of Latvians who understand Russian to decrease. If in 1996 84% of residents considered their knowledge of Russian as good, in 2008 this share fell to 69%. The lowest level of knowledge of Russian was in the age group of 15-34 years: 54% understood Russian well, 38% had very weak knowledge, 8% did not understand anything in Russian at all.³⁶ According to the Law on the State Language, the Russian language is not assigned the status of a state language or a language of a national minority. At the same time, the Law guarantees “the right of ethnic minorities to use their native and other languages.” However, these languages are considered “foreign”³⁷.

4 Educational communication

There is currently no educational cooperation between Latvia and Russia. In addition, in 2023, the Latvian Ministry of Education and Science called on the Ministry of the Interior

34 Ārējās migrācijas apsekojuma rezultāti (t.sk. dati par valodām). [Results of the external migration survey (including data on languages)] (2023) Centrālā statistikas pārvalde [Central Statistical Office]. Available from: <https://stat.gov.lv>.

35 2000. gada tautas skaitīšanas rezultāti csb.lv [csb.lv census results.]. (2023) Available from: <https://archive.ph/20120707232130/data.csb.gov.lv/DATABASE/tautassk/databasetree.asp?lang=16>.

36 Baltic Institute of Social Sciences 2008. gadā veiktā Latvijas iedzīvotāju aptauja [Baltic Institute of Social Sciences 2008 Latvian population survey] (2023) Available from: https://valoda.lv/wp-content/uploads/docs/Petijumi/Sociolingvistika/14_Valoda_2008.pdf.

37 Valsts valodas likums [State Language Law] (2020). Available from: <https://www.vestnesis.lv/ta/id/14740>.

to assess public calls to master Russian curricula remotely³⁸. At the same time, until 2022, educational cooperation between Russia and Latvia was widely represented at the level of local governments, primarily Rezekne and Daugavpils [17], a number of universities and academies of Latvia, including the University of Latvia. Joint university scientific conferences were held and collections of scientific papers were published, for example, “Ethnicity 2021/16”³⁹.

In autumn 2017, the Ministry of Education and Science put forward an initiative to transition almost all education of ethnic minorities to the state language. In early December, the government generally approved the proposal of the Ministry. It is planned to gradually implement the reform in ethnic minority schools by the 2021/2022 academic year. At the same time, bilingual education will remain in pre-school educational institutions, three possible models of bilingual education will be implemented in grades 1–6 of primary school, and 80% of the educational process will be carried out in Latvian in grades 7–9. Secondary school (grades 10–12) will operate only in Latvian [more details: 4]. The table shows the permissible volume of teaching of Russian language and literature in primary and basic schools of Latvia for ethnic minorities, which existed until September 1, 2023, when a complete transition to the state language began. In secondary school (grades 10–12), teaching in Russian has already been excluded. And from September 1, 2023, the total transition of education of ethnic minorities to the state language will be carried out. Pupils from families of ethnic minorities will have the opportunity to master their native language and the history of their native culture only within the framework of optional classes.⁴⁰

Table 1. Number of teaching hours per week allocated to academic subjects in ethnic minority schools in general education schools (standards in force until September 1, 2023).

Subject	class								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Ethnic minority language	4	5	5	4	4	4	3	3	3
Literature (teaching in the language of an ethnic minority)	–	–	–	1	2	2	2	2	2

Source: Volkov, 2021 [5]

38 IZM aicinājusi Iekšlietu ministriju izvērtēt publiskos aicinājumus apgūt izglītības programmas talmācībā Krievijā. [The Ministry of the Interior has invited the Ministry of the Interior to evaluate public invitations to learn educational programs through distance learning in Russia] (2023) Available from: [https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/zinas/latvija/21.07.2023-izm-acinajusi-iekslietu-ministriju-izvertet-publiskos-acinajumus-apgut-izglitibas-programmas-talmaciba-krievija.a.517305/\(21.07.2023\)](https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/zinas/latvija/21.07.2023-izm-acinajusi-iekslietu-ministriju-izvertet-publiskos-acinajumus-apgut-izglitibas-programmas-talmaciba-krievija.a.517305/(21.07.2023)).

39 Ethnicity, 2021/16: Ethnicity, Memory and Social Anthropology. Available from: <https://dspace.lu.lv/dspace/handle/7/56996>.

40 Saeima 1. lasījumā apstiprina pāreju uz mācībām tikai latviešu valodā. [In the 1st reading, the Saeima approves the transition to education only in Latvian] (2022) Available from: <https://www.izm.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/saeima-1-lasijuma-apstiprina-pareju-uz-macibam-tikai-latviesu-valoda>.

The possibility of studying in Russian is not available even in private universities since 2021⁴¹. The Law on Education (Article 11.1) provides a mechanism for recognizing higher education diplomas. This Law does not contain a provision on the exclusion of Russian diplomas. Access of graduates of Russian schools (citizens of Russia) to universities in Latvia is regulated by the Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Latvia No. 599 “On the entry of citizens of the Russian Federation into the Republic of Latvia” (validity period of the current version from 27.06.2023 to 04.03.2024). According to this document, entry is permitted only to those citizens of Russia, including for the purpose of obtaining education, who have a permit from Latvia, the EU, the states of the European Economic Area, Switzerland; holders of a long-term Schengen visa; family members of citizens and permanent residents of Latvia, the EU, the European Economic Area, Switzerland; family members of diplomats accredited in Latvia⁴².

There are currently many Russian language courses in Latvia, for example, in Riga at the Pygmalion Language Centre (Russian Language Courses 2023), at the Baltic Media® Language Training Centre (Russian Language Courses Online and in Riga 2023), etc. The Language International Internet portal lists the addresses of 14 such courses in Riga. Similar courses are also available in Daugavpils. The Rezekne City Council has allocated 21,000 euros for optional classes in Russian language and literature for children of national minorities. The Ministry of Education and Science condemned this decision. However, the city's mayor A. Bartashevich spoke out against the government's policy of banning the Russian language: “the authorities want our children to forget their native Russian language, losing the opportunity to study it in schools”⁴³.

Data from a large-scale sociological study (2022) show that 59% of Latvian residents receive information daily from the media in Russian, and 85% in Latvian (mostly from the Internet). At the same time, 95% of ethnic minorities receive information in Russian⁴⁴.

5. Scientific communications

After February 24, 2022, cooperation with Russian scientists was curtailed. In the appeal issued by the Latvian Academy of Sciences “Stop Russia's aggression against Ukraine”, the Russian Academy of Sciences is called upon to “objectively assess the Russian

41 Augstskolu likums. [Law on Universities] (2023) Available from: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/37967-augstskolu-likums>; Liegums studijām krievu valodā privātajās augstskolās atbilst Satversmei, angļu valodā – ne. [The ban on studies in Russian in private universities is in line with the Constitution, but not in English] (2023) Available from: <https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/zinas/latvija/liegums-studijam-krievu-valoda-privatajas-augstskolas-atbilst-s>.

42 Par Krievijas Federācijas pilsoņu ieceļošanu Latvijas Republikā. [On the entry of citizens of the Russian Federation into the Republic of Latvia.] (2023) Available from: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/335394-par-krievijas-federacijas-pilsonu-ieceļošanu-latvijas-republika>.

43 The mayor of Rezekne called the demolition of the monument to Soviet soldiers barbaric. Available from: <https://ria.ru/20221109/snov-1830196066.html> <https://ria.ru/20221109/>.

44 Nulle A. (2022) Biezāk izmantotais mediju veids Latvijā – interneta ziņu portāli. [The most frequently used type of media in Latvia is internet news portals] Available from: <https://lvportals.lv/skaidrojumi/339124-biezak-izmantotais-mediju-veids-latvija-interneta-zinu-portali-2022>.

army's invasion of Ukraine"⁴⁵. There is not a single Russian scientific organization in the list of "Partner organizations of the Academy of Sciences of Latvia"⁴⁶. On March 4, 2022, the Academy of Sciences of Latvia supported the decision of the European Federation of Academies of Sciences and Humanities to suspend the membership of the Russian Academy of Sciences in this organization.⁴⁷

B some scientific publications in Latvia allow publishing in Russian. For example, the journal of the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the University of Latvia, "Orthodoxy in the Baltics"⁴⁸, collections of scientific conference proceedings⁴⁹. At Daugavpils University, the scientific journal Sociālo Zinātņu Vēstnesis /Social Sciences Bulletin publishes articles in any of the three languages if they meet the requirements and profile of the journal⁵⁰.

Interpersonal connections and scientific cooperation between Latvian and Russian scientists have acquired a local character, but have not lost interest in joint research on current scientific problems [20]. Dissertations can only be defended in either Latvian or English. Although the Law does not include a position prohibiting the defense of a dissertation in Russian⁵¹. Latvia has a mechanism for recognizing documents on scientific degrees obtained abroad. The description of the procedure has been developed⁵².

6. Cultural communication

In the spring of 2022, the Seimas Foreign Affairs Committee decided to suspend or denounce agreements with Russia on economic cooperation, culture and cross-border contacts⁵³. Therefore, non-governmental projects of cultural cooperation with Russia, if possible, are only possible as an individual initiative.

45 Latvijas Zinātņu akadēmijas aicinājums apturēt Krievijas agresiju Ukrainā [The call of the Latvian Academy of Sciences to stop Russian aggression in Ukraine.]. (2023) Available from: <https://www.lza.lv/aktualitates/jaunumi/969-latvijas-zinatnu-akademijas-icinajums-apturet-krievijas-agresiju-ukraina>.

46 LZA PARTNERORGANIZĀCIJAS [LZA PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS] (2023) Available from: <https://www.lza.lv/starpt-sakari/lza-partnerorganizacijas>.

47 LZA atbalsta ALLEA lēmumu apturēt Krievijas Zinātņu akadēmijas un Baltkrievijas Zinātņu akadēmijas dalību organizācijā. [LZA supports ALLEA's decision to suspend the membership of the Russian Academy of Sciences and the Belarusian Academy of Sciences in the organization.]. (2023) Available from: <https://www.lza.lv/aktualitates/jaunumi/986-lza-atbalsta-allea-lemumu-apturet-krievijas-zinatnu-akademiju-un-baltkrievijas-zinatnu-akademiju-dalibu-organizacija>.

48 Orthodoxy in the Baltics. (2023) Available from: https://dspace.lu.lv/dspace/bitstream/handle/7/50246/Pravoslavie_v_Baltii_%20N9%2818%29_2020_web.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

49 Time of Challenges and Opportunities: Challenges, Solutions, Perspectives. (2023) Available from: https://bsa.edu.lv/docs/science/book/conference_20230513.pdf.

50 Sociālo Zinātņu Vēstnesis. [Journal of Social Sciences.] Available from: https://du.lv/en/social-scienceSociālo_Zinātņu_Vēstnesiss-bulletin-2/.

51 Zinātniskā doktora grāda piešķiršanas (promocijas) kārtība un kritēriji. [The procedure and criteria for awarding a scientific doctorate (promotion).] (2023) Available from: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/124787-zinatniska-doktora-grada-pieskirsanas-promocijas-kartiba-un-kriteriji>.

52 Arvalstis iegūtu izglītības dokumentu akadēmiskā atzīšana Latvijā. [Academic recognition of educational documents obtained abroad in Latvia] (2022) Available from: <https://aic.lv/arvalstu-diplomu-atzisana/arvalstis-iegutu-izglitibas-dokumentu-akademiska-atzisana-latvija> (10.12.2022).

53 Latvijas Republikas un Krievijas Federācijas divpusējās attiecības. [Bilateral relations between the Republic of Latvia and the Russian Federation.]. (2022) Available from: https://www.mfa.gov.lv/lv/latvijas-republikas-un-krievijas-federacijas-divpusejas-attiecibas?utm_source=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F.

The preservation of monuments and memorial sites related to the culture and history of Russia is a very acute problem in Latvia. In March 2022, Vice President of the Academy of Sciences of Latvia Ojars Spārītis stated: "The monument in Victory Park is an insult to the Latvian nation enslaved by the Soviet occupation."⁵⁴ In February 2023, the Public Memory Centre and the Riga City Council Monuments Council called for the dismantling of "monuments glorifying totalitarianism" from the centre of Riga, a list which included monuments to M.Keldysh and A.Pushkin⁵⁵. A petition to demolish the Pushkin monument has collected 1,600 signatures. On social media, Pushkin was called a "symbol of Russian imperialism"⁵⁶. In March 2023, the Riga City Council's Monuments Council called for renaming Riga's Pushkin, Turgenev, and Lermontov streets, citing the need to eliminate the consequences of "Russification carried out since the 1860s"⁵⁷. In response to these initiatives, members of the Department of Social and Humanitarian Sciences of the Latvian Academy of Sciences called for issues regarding monuments to be resolved after broad public discussions, and not at all through "campaigning"⁵⁸. At the end of November 2023, the Riga City Council decides to rename the Pushkin Lyceum to the Johann Christoph Brotze Lyceum⁵⁹.

The erasure of famous figures of Russian culture from the history of Latvia was already in Soviet times, when official bodies had a negative attitude towards representatives of Russian émigré culture. Thus, in the essay by S.Cielava in Russian, published as a separate edition in one of the central Soviet publishing houses "Art" in 1979 "Art of Latvia", the period 1920-1940 is entitled "Latvian Art", in which there is not a word about Russian artists of Latvia of this period. And at this time in Latvia the Itinerant artist N.P.Bogdanov-

54 LZA viceprezidents Ojārs Spārītis: Piemineklis Uzvaras parkā ir apvainojums padomju okupācijas paverdzinātajai pamatnācijai. [LZA vice president Ojārs Spārītis: The monument in Victory Park is an insult to the enslaved basic nation of the Soviet occupation.]. (2023) Available from: <https://www.lza.lv/aktualitates/jaunumi/1085-lza-viceprezidents-ojars-sparitis-piemineklis-uzvaras-parka-ir-apvainojums-padomju-okupacijas-paverdzinatajai-pamatnacijai>.

55 Ozola-Balode Z. (2023) (1) Publiskās atmiņas centrs aicina aizvākt totalitārismu slavinošus pieminekļus no Rīgas centra. [The Center of Public Memory calls for the removal of monuments glorifying totalitarianism from the center of Riga.]. Available from: <https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/zinas/latvija/publiskas-atminas-centrs-aicina-aizvakt-totalitarismu-slavinoshus-pieminekhus-no-rigas-centra.a496973/>; Ozola-Balode Z. (2023) (2) Rīgas Pieminekļu padome nolemj pārvietot pieminekli Andrejam Upītim un Annai Saksei. [The Riga Monument Council decides to move the monument to Andrej Upitis and Anna Sakse.]. Available from: <https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/zinas/latvija/rigas-piemineklu-padome-nolemj-parvietot-pieminekli-andrejam-upitim-un-annai-saksei.a499201/>.

56 Antonenko O. A monument to Pushkin was dismantled in Riga. What does hockey have to do with it? Available from: <https://www.bbc.com/russian/features-65758434>.

57 Aicina derusifikācijas gaitā likvidēt Puškina ielas nosaukumu. [Calls for the elimination of the name of Pushkin Street in the course of derussification.]. (2023) Available from: <https://vs.lv/raksts/sabiedriba/2023/03/15/aicina-de-rusifikacijas-gaita-likvidet-puskina-ielas-nosaukumu>.

58 LZA Humanitāro un sociālo zinātņu nodalās viedokļi: par Krievijas impērijas un padomju režīma atstāto pieminekļu demontāžu un par Atmiņas institūcijas dibināšanu. [Opinions of the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences: on the dismantling of monuments left by the Russian Empire and the Soviet regime and on the establishment of the Institution of Remembrance.]. (2023) Available from: <https://www.lza.lv/aktualitates/jaunumi/1550-lza-humanitaro-un-socialo-zinatnu-nodalas-viedokli-par-krievijas-imperijas-un-padomju-rezima-atstato-piemineklu-demontazu-un-par-atminas-institucijas-dibinasanu>.

59 The Riga City Council decided to rename the Pushkin Lyceum. (2023) Available from: <https://rus.jauns.lv/article/novosti/585590-rizskaya-duma-prinyala-resenie-pereimenovat-puskinskii-licei>.

Belsky (1968-1945), academician of painting S.A. Vinogradov (1869-1938) were active. This publication also says nothing about German, Jewish and other figures of artistic culture of interwar Latvia [10:32-169]. A similar situation of “cancellation of Russian culture” was also in the encyclopedia “Soviet Latvia”. This publication also designated the period in Latvian artistic culture in 1920-1940 exclusively as “Latvian art” [9]. Therefore, already by 1991, the myth that independent Latvia is a country with total dominance of ethnic Latvian culture was actively functioning in the public consciousness.

However, since the late 1980s, during the period of liberalization in the USSR, figures in Russian culture, science, and journalism in Latvia have been actively engaged in the “return of Russian names” to the public space. In these publications, the significant “Russian presence” in Latvia in history, culture, science, journalism, theater, politics, and economics is shown over many centuries. Support was also received from the Academy of Sciences of Latvia for scientific research and publications on Russian topics. And such publications by numerous researchers have been and are being published to this day in both Russian and Latvian [18]. The website “Russians of Latvia” operates in Russian, Latvian, and English, a kind of encyclopedia of Russian names and Russian life in the past and present of Latvia (editor – Doctor of History Tatyana Feigmane)⁶⁰. The Department of Russian and Slavic Studies at the University of Latvia regularly hosts international scientific conferences and publishes works on Russian literature and culture [14].

Since the end of February, an active de-Russification campaign has been underway in Latvia, the goal of which is to completely eliminate symbols associated with Russia and Russian culture from the country’s public space⁶¹. At the same time, the country’s president, E. Rinkevics, said that he has no disagreements with the “derussification” movement; he himself is closer to the “Latvianization of Latvia”⁶².

One of the most pressing issues is the treatment of historical events related to Russia in school textbooks. The territory of Latvia was included in Russia in the 18th century, was part of the Russian Empire throughout the 19th century, and most of the history of the 20th century for Latvia is the history of its being part of the Russian (18 years) or Soviet state (51 years), and it is no coincidence that the “Russian (Soviet)” theme is one of the most important in covering the history of Latvia in the 20th century. Latvia twice (in 1918 and 1991) gained independence from Russia. Even after 1991, it is impossible to find studies on the history of Latvia that do not consider Russia’s influence. At the same time, history textbooks written by modern Latvian authors are characterized by the opposition of “European civilization”, to which the authors of the texts include both Latvia and Russia (15:4, 38). This dichotomy led some Latvian historians to a primitivism in their understanding of Russia, its institutions, values, historical meanings, which contributed to the penetration of Russophobic ideas into

historical texts, including school textbooks. The 1992 history textbook includes extremely negative assessments of Russia. For example, the material on the Livonian War begins with the statement: “The troops of Ivan the Terrible... burned, plundered and devastated Livonia as best they could”, in approximately the same vein, the annexation of Livonia to Russia as a result of the Northern War is viewed as a manifestation of the insatiable “appetite of the Tsar”. In general, the annexation of Latvia to Russia in the 18th century is assessed negatively – “a window to Europe” meant new suffering and new oppressors.” Here are the assessments of the emperors: Nicholas I – “a ruthless ruler who suppressed the uprising of educated Russian officers in 1825.” Much is said in this textbook about the positive growth of culture and public life of Latvians in the 1850s and 1860s, but the reforms of Alexander II are not mentioned at all. One of the most important reasons for the revolution of 1905–1907 was “the lack of rights of the Latvian people – it is no coincidence that Russia was called the “prison of nations” [11: 71, 111, 115, 131, 140–151, 156].

The most pressing issue for Latvian history textbooks, as well as for historical science in general, is the interpretation of the history of the 20th century, primarily the period of being part of the USSR (1940-1991). In Latvia, the idea of being part of the USSR as a period of “Soviet occupation” is legally formalized, which determines the content of both historical research and history textbooks for elementary, secondary and higher education. Even during the years of being part of the USSR, the Supreme Council of the Latvian SSR on July 28, 1989 adopted the “Declaration of Sovereignty of the Latvian State”, which characterizes “the loss of state independence, the inclusion of the Republic of Latvia in the USSR” in 1940 as a result of “Stalin’s criminal foreign policy”⁶³. The Declaration of the Supreme Council of the Latvian SSR of May 4, 1990 characterizes the period of being part of the USSR as “the occupation of Latvia and the liquidation of the sovereign authority of the Republic of Latvia.”⁶⁴ On 22 August 1996, the Saeima adopted the “Declaration on the Occupation of Latvia”, the beginning of which is associated with the signing of the Non-Aggression Pact between the USSR and Germany in 1939 and the introduction of the Soviet military contingent into Latvian territory and its subsequent incorporation into the USSR in June-August 1940. According to this document, Russia is still considered a country to which “the Abrene (Pytalovo) region was illegally annexed”. The USSR is characterized as a force that “deliberately carried out genocide against the people of Latvia”. The Declaration expresses regret that Russia “did not recognize the occupation of Latvia by the USSR”⁶⁵. In May 2014, the Saeima adopted amendments to the Criminal Law, which provide for up to 5 years of imprisonment for persons who “deny the fact of the occupation of Latvia by the USSR”⁶⁶.

⁶³ Deklarācija par Latvijas valsts suverenitāti. [Declaration on the sovereignty of the Latvian state.] Available from: https://www.barikadopedija.lv/raksti/Deklarācija_par_Latvijas_valsts_suverenitāti_1989_gada_28._jūlijā.

⁶⁴ 1990.gada 4.maija Latvijas PSR Augstākās padomes “Deklarācija par Latvijas Republikas neatkarības atjaunošanu” [May 4, 1990 “Declaration on the Restoration of the Independence of the Republic of Latvia” of the Supreme Council of the Latvian SSR]. Available from: <https://www.atlants.lv/referats/1990gada-4maijs-latvijas-psr-augstakas-padomes-dek-/492372/>.

⁶⁵ Deklarācija par Latvijas okupāciju [Declaration on the occupation of Latvia] (1996). Available from: <https://www.vestnesis.lv/ta/id/63838>.

⁶⁶ Krimināllikums LR 1998. Available from: <https://www.vestnesis.lv/>.

⁶⁰ Russian Latvia. (2023) Available from: <https://www.russkije.lv/>.

⁶¹ Latvijas novadu un valstspilsētu timeklvietnes ir derusificētas [The websites of Latvian counties and national cities have been de-Russified]. (2023) Available from: <https://www.la.lv/latvijas-novadu-un-valstspilsetu-timeklvietnes-ir-derusificetas>.

⁶² “Latvianization” or “De-Russification”: Rinkevich explained the difference between his approach. (2023) Available from: <https://bb.lv/statja/politika/2023/06/01/latyshizaciya-ili-derusifikaciya-rinkevich-obyasnil-v-chem-otlichie-ego-podhoda>.

These assessments of the Soviet stage of Latvian history are also reproduced in school textbooks. The versions of the same authors of textbooks published in Latvian and Russian even differ in the titles of some important events in Latvian Soviet history. Thus, in the Russian language textbook by Doctor of History Indulis Keniņš "History of Latvia. 20th Century", one of the chapters on post-war history in Latvia is called "Construction of Socialism in Latvia", which is included in the section "The Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic within the USSR"⁶⁷. In the Latvian version of this author's textbook, in the section "The Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic – one of the colonies of the Soviet Empire", the chapter is called "The construction of socialism in Latvia – colonization and Russification". This author evaluates Soviet Russia extremely negatively, believing that immediately after October 1917, "the unlimited dictatorship of the Bolsheviks... began, which relied on unprecedented terror" [16:77, 119-129], although modern Latvian historians evaluate the chain of events of 1918 positively, including the Brest Peace, which ultimately led to the independence of Latvia [13:105 – 106]. At the same time, I.Keniņš acknowledges the significant role of Latvians in strengthening Soviet power. The author describes the economic, political and social situation in Soviet Latvia negatively, and says nothing about the development of Latvian culture during this period. The author saw some positive aspects in the activities of those Soviet leaders who created the preconditions for Latvia's independence. This applies to V.I.Lenin, a supporter of the "right of nations to self-determination", but, according to I.Keniņš, who moved away from supporting this principle during the preparation of the Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty; to L.P.Beria, who, after the death of I.V.Stalin, spoke out "against the Russification" of the Union republics; to N.S.Khrushchev, who declared the "crimes of the Stalinist regime" and M.S.Gorbachev as the initiator of "perestroika" and "new thinking"⁶⁸. In some publications, historians assess the attitude towards the process of Sovietization of Latvia after the war as a contradictory phenomenon, which included both "fear of repression" and "fatigue from the horrors of war, hope for a normal life. At the same time, there was a part of the population that "wanted to cooperate" with the Soviet government, to make a career both along party-state lines and in civilian life [13:301-302].

It is worth dwelling on the information about Russian writers and poets in school literature textbooks. In the literature textbook in Latvian for the 12th grade, which very briefly introduces works of world prose and poetry, there is a small excerpt from the novel by M.A.Bulgakov "The Master and Margarita" and several poems by A.A.Akhmatova. The literature textbook in Latvian for the 11th grade, reflecting trends in world literature of the 17th – first third of the 20th century, talks about the poetry of A.A.Blok in the section "Romanticism" and publishes a small excerpt from the novel by F.M.Dostoevsky "Crime and Punishment" [12:69-71, 88-93]. There is a series of literature textbooks within the textbooks oriented towards the programs of national minorities and prepared in Russian. Their author is Oksana Leonidovna Filina, a professor at the Baltic International Academy (Riga). Some

⁶⁷ Kenins I. History of Latvia: Textbook. for grades 8-9: [Trans. from Latvian] Riga: Zvaigzne, 1990: 218 – 224

⁶⁸ Kenins I. History of Latvia: Textbook. for grades 8-: [Trans. from Latvian] Riga: Zvaigzne, 1990. C. 59-68, 220, 221, 237.

of these textbooks introduce students primarily to Russian literature (including the Soviet period). For example, a 224-page textbook for grade 4 includes excerpts from works by more than fifty Russian writers, one Latvian poet, one Italian writer, and an excerpt from a text by an Austrian scientist. A 488-page textbook for grade 8 contains excerpts from works by 20 classics of world literature, beginning with Antiquity, including 12 representatives of Russian literature. These textbooks were approved by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia. Information about Russian scientists in school textbooks is scant. The flyleaf of chemistry textbooks for grades 8, 10, and 12 contains the Periodic Table of Chemical Elements, but without the name of its author, D.I.Mendeleev.

There are currently no cultural contacts with Russia. However, pianist M.V.Pletnev performed piano concertos by S.V.Rachmaninov in Jurmala in August 2023. The troupe of the Latvian National Opera and Ballet Theatre announced a performance of P.I.Tchaikovsky's ballet Swan Lake in November 2023⁶⁹. Official statistics do not provide any information on the number of books by Russian writers and poets published in Latvia in recent years. At the same time, there is data on the number of books in Russian and their circulation published in Latvia in 2022 (data for 2023 has not yet been published). These are 107 books with a circulation of 41.5 thousand copies (in 2021 there were 115 books with a total circulation of 53.5 thousand, and in 1992 – 358 and 9065.0 thousand, respectively). The share of books published in Russian among all books published in Latvia in 2022 was 5%, and their circulation was approximately 2%⁷⁰.

7. Media communication

The State Security Service's Public Report for 2022 states that more than 130 Russian sources on the Internet have been closed, including the VKontakte and Odnoklassniki platforms, and access to Russian materials on YouTube has been restricted⁷¹. While access to such publications as Rossiyskaya Gazeta, Komsomolskaya Pravda, Izvestia, Vedomosti, Kommersant, etc. is closed, Sovetskaya Rossiya, Zavtra, km.ru and other left-leaning newspapers and Internet portals on YouTube (Krasnoe Radio, Aurora, etc.) are accessible without problems. Information about Russian media outlets admitted by the Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to work in this country is classified⁷². Therefore, it is difficult to accurately determine their share among foreign media outlets. With a high

⁶⁹ Pēteris Čaikovskis [Peter Tchaikovsky] 2023. Available from: <https://prezi.com/i/wcauchzpib3r/peteris-caikovskis/>.

⁷⁰ Statistiskā datubāze. Grāmatas un periodiskie izdevumi. [Statistical database. Books and periodicals.] (2023) Available from: https://data.stat.gov.lv/pweb/lv/OSP_PUB/START_IZG__BI__BIG/?tablelist=true.

⁷¹ Valsts Drošības Dienests. (2022) Gada Publiskais Pārskats. [National Security Service. (2022) Annual Report.] P. 16-41. Available from: <https://vdd.gov.lv/uploads/materials/32/lv/vdd-2022-gada-parskats.pdf>.

⁷² Spalvēns R. (2023) Ārlietu ministrija kļūdījās, ielaižot Latvijā Krievijas medijus, uzsver Šnore. [The Ministry of Foreign Affairs made a mistake by allowing Russian media into Latvia, Šnore emphasizes] Available from: <https://www.delfi.lv/193/politics/55162954/arlietu-ministrija-kludijas-ielaizot-latvija-krievijas-medijus-uzsver-snore>.

degree of probability, Dozhd, Meduza, and Novaya Gazeta are among those admitted.⁷³. At the same time, suspicions are increasingly being voiced among Latvian politicians that representatives of these media outlets are also “great-power Russian imperialists,” and the presence of “independent Russian media in Latvia... brings risks” (assessment made by the State Security Service)⁷⁴.

8. NGO communications

There are no joint projects between Latvian and Russian NGOs. In 2006, the society “Russian World of Latvia” was registered in Latvia⁷⁵. However, in Latvian-language journalism, the phenomenon of the “Russian World” itself is assessed exclusively negatively⁷⁶. The Report of the Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States, Compatriots Living Abroad, and International Humanitarian Cooperation (Rossotrudnichestvo) for 2022 only talks about improving the qualifications of teachers teaching in Russian in 2022.⁷⁷ At the same time, in the State Security Service Report for 2020, the activities of Rossotrudnichestvo are considered as “Russian propaganda” hostile to Latvia⁷⁸. There is no information on the home page of the A.S. Pushkin Institute of Russian Language about the projects implemented in Latvia. It is stated that in 2014-2015, methodological seminars for improving the qualifications of teachers were organized in Latvia⁷⁹. The home page of the A. M. Gorchakov Public Diplomacy Foundation also has no information about projects in Latvia. At the same time, the Foundation’s activities became the object of extremely harsh criticism by the Constitutional Protection Bureau of Latvia back in 2012⁸⁰.

⁷³ “Grūtāk kļuvis atspoguļot pašas sabiedrības viedokli.” Vairāki Krievijas neatkarīgie mediji savu darbību turpina Latvijā. [“It has become more difficult to reflect the public’s own opinion.” Several Russian independent media continue their activities in Latvia.] (2022) Available from: <https://www.apollo.lv/7536323/grutak-klusis-atspogulot-pasas-sabiedrības-viedokli-vairaki-krievijas-neatkarīgie-mediji-savu-darību-turpina-latvija>.

⁷⁴ Apalups K. (2022) VDD: Krievijas neatkarīgo mediju darbs Latvijā rada informatīvās telpas un izlūkošanas riskus. [VDD: The work of Russia’s independent media in Latvia creates information space and intelligence risks.] Available from: <https://www.pardrosibu.lv/2022/07/31/vdd-krievijas-neatkarīgo-mediju-darbs-latvija-rada-informatīvas-telpas-un-izlūkošanas-riskus/>; Ne visi, kas ir pret Putinu, ir Latvijas draugi. [Not everyone who is against Putin is a friend of Latvia] (2023) Available from: <https://jauns.lv/raksts/zinas/541788-ne-isi-kas-ir-pret-putinu-ir-latvijas-draugi-uzskata-deputats-snore>.

⁷⁵ Latvijas krievu pasaule. [Latvian Russian world.] (2023) Available from: <https://company.lursoft.lv/latvijas-krievu-pasaule/40008104478>.

⁷⁶ Niklass 2022. Available from: <https://bobe.me/index.php/news/niklass-says-goodbye-to-his-old-self-in-song-and-music-video-for-leti-un-naivi>.

⁷⁷ Rossotrudnichestvo 2022. C. 6. Available from: <https://rs.gov.ru/app/uploads/2023/04/otchet-o-realizacii-publichnoj-deklaracii-czelej-i-zadach-v-2022-g>.

⁷⁸ Krievijas propagandas izplatīšanai latvija tiek verveti arvien vairak jauniešu [More and more young people are being recruited in Latvia to spread Russian propaganda] Available from: <https://www.sargs.lv/lv/latvija/2021-03-26/krievijas-propagandas-izplatīšanai-latvija-tiek-verveti-arvien-vairak-jauniešu>.

⁷⁹ Russian Center. (2023). Available from: <https://www.pushkin.institute/projects/ruscentr>.

⁸⁰ Satversmes aizsardzības birojs [Office for the Protection of the Constitution] (SAB) 2013. Available from: <https://www.sab.gov.lv/?a=s&id=178pgoffset=1&jid=70>.

9. Youth communications

At present, we can only talk about individual contacts between Latvian youth studying or working in Russia, and, accordingly, Russian youth in Latvia. For example, more than a hundred young people from Latvia are sent to Russian universities every year under quotas alone. However, such interest of Latvians in Russian education is negatively assessed by Latvian special services.

10. Religious and interreligious communications

Relations between the Latvian Self-Governing Orthodox Church and the Russian Orthodox Church have become extremely complicated since 2022. “The Holy Synod condemned the actions of Metropolitan Alexander of Riga aimed at destroying church unity, and stated that until the Bishops’ Council and then the Local Council of the Russian Orthodox Church consider the appeal of the Council of the Latvian Orthodox Church of October 20, 2022, the provisions of Chapter XII of the Statute of the Russian Orthodox Church shall apply to the said Church”⁸¹. On September 5, 2022, the then President of Latvia E. Levits spoke about the need for amendments to the Law on the Latvian Orthodox Church, providing for its complete independence from the Moscow Patriarchate and effectively declaring its autocephalous status⁸². The Saeima of Latvia approved this bill⁸³. On September 9, 2022, the Synod of the Latvian Orthodox Church confirmed the decision of the Saeima to determine the autocephalous status. On October 20, at the Council of the Latvian Orthodox Church, 160 of its 161 participants voted for autocephaly. In 2023, the severance of ties with the Russian Orthodox Church continued.

11. Freedom of movement

Latvia accepts visa applications only from certain categories of citizens of the Russian Federation:

- 1) family members of citizens of Latvia (spouses, parents, grandparents, children, grandchildren, as well as dependents);
- 2) family members of citizens of the European Union, the European Economic Area or the Swiss Confederation (in accordance with Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 675 of 30 August 2011 “Procedure for the entry and stay of citizens of the Union and their family members” in the Republic of Latvia”);
- 3) persons who have received the right to reside in Latvia;

⁸¹ Latvian self-governing Orthodox Church. (2023) Available from: <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/79088.html>.

⁸² President Levits initiated the dissolution of the ties of the Latvian Orthodox Church with the Moscow Patriarchate. (2022) Available from: <https://web.archive.org/web/20220905102517/>.

⁸³ ATZINUMS 2022. Available from: <https://titania.saeima.lv/LIVS13/saeimalivs13.Nsf/0/3F4996C05DE704B5C22588B40048AB76?OpenDocument>.

4) persons whose entry is related to humanitarian considerations (in the event of a serious illness of a close person or participation in a funeral, when there is a threat to the safety, health or life of a person or a member of his family)⁸⁴.

There is no possibility of dual citizenship (of Latvia and Russia). There have been changes for Russian citizens to obtain a residence permit. The issuance of both initial and repeat temporary residence permits is no longer possible. The amendments do not affect the process of issuing temporary residence permits – the registration of permits continues.

Initial and repeat residence permits can be requested:

- in connection with family reunification (spouses, minor children, persons under guardianship and trusteeship, parents of Latvian citizens and non-citizens of Latvia who have reached retirement age, guardians or trustees, adult children of Latvian citizens);
- applicants for the EU Blue Card and specialists, managers and interns transferred to the company;
- researchers and students (including researchers and students for nine months – after completing a research project or a master's or doctoral study program);
- persons who have received temporary protection or alternative status in Latvia; persons who have been granted permanent resident status of the European Union in Latvia or such status has been granted in another Member State of the European Union;
- any person, regardless of the reason for the temporary residence permit issued to them (start-up, any temporary residence permit related to employment or commercial activity, investment, etc.), who has worked in Latvia during the last three months prior to submitting an application for a temporary residence permit and for whom income tax has been paid, as well as if the person continues to exercise the right to employment granted to them⁸⁵.

According to the amendments to the Immigration Law submitted to the Saeima on 22 September 2022, the permanent residence permit issued to Russian citizens will expire on 1 September 2023. In order to live in Latvia, they must apply for the status of a permanent resident of the EU. To obtain this status, Russian citizens must submit to the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs a copy of their identity document, as well as a certificate of knowledge of the national language at level A2 and availability of financial means.⁸⁶ On August 22, 2023, the Cabinet of Ministers of Latvia instructed the Ministry of Internal Affairs to prepare amendments to the Immigration Law, which provide Russian citizens

⁸⁴ Krievijas Federācijas pilsoņu iecelšana Latvijā. [Entry of citizens of the Russian Federation into Latvia.] (2023) Available from: <https://www2.mfa.gov.lv/moscow/konsulara-informacija/krievijas-federācijas-pilsonu-iecēšana-latvija>.

⁸⁵ Izmaiņas uzturēšanās atļauju saņemšanas kārtībā Krievijas un Baltkrievijas pilsoņiem. [Changes to the procedure for obtaining residence permits for citizens of Russia and Belarus.] (2022) Available from: <https://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/izmaiņas-uztēšanas-atļauju-saņemšanas-kartiba-krievijas-un-baltkrievijas-pilsoniem> (26.9.2022).

⁸⁶ Jurkāns I. (2023) PMLP informē, kas sagaida tos Krievijas pilsoņus, kuri nebūs darījuši neko sava uzturēšanās statusa sakārtošanai [PMLP informs what awaits those Russian citizens who have not done anything to correct their residence status.]. Available from: <https://zinas.tv3.lv/900-sekundes/pmlp-informe-kas-sagaida-tos-krievijas-pilsonus-kuri-nebus-darijusi-neko-sava-uztēšanas-statusa-sakartosanai/>.

living in Latvia with another two years to pass the Latvian language test in order to legally reside in Latvia.⁸⁷.

12. Interregional communications.

Currently, interregional cross-border and/or transborder cooperation projects have been curtailed. Meetings aimed at developing dialogue and cooperation between officials, civil servants, scientists, cultural, scientific, educational figures, etc. have been suspended.

There is not a single Russian city among Riga's 25 sister cities. Daugavpils' sister cities in Russia are Narofominsk, Moscow City Central Administrative Region, St. Petersburg, Pskov⁸⁸. The largest Latvian cities do not have Russian sister cities: Liepāja⁸⁹, near Jelgava⁹⁰, near Rezekne, near Jūrmala, near Ventspils⁹¹.

Conclusion

An analysis of the state and development of the main communication groups in Latvian society allows us to state with restrained pessimism that in the coming years we should hardly expect positive socio-economic, socio-cultural and especially political communication ties between Latvia and Russia as a neighboring country. Latvians and Russians are divided not so much by ethnic characteristics or specific culture and traditions (Russian is the second language of communication after Latvian, it is native to 36% of the country's residents), but by political history, in which Russia is presented as an aggressive state that poses a threat to Latvia's national security. The unfriendly and even hostile attitude of the Latvian state towards Russia and Russians is initiated, mainly, not by residents, but by the ruling political elite, whose behavior is entirely determined by the interests of Western countries. In a NATO member state that has no real sovereignty, there cannot be any other direction of foreign policy communication. At the same time, the results of the study of twelve different groups of interpersonal communications show that in such communication groups as science, youth, freedom of movement, religious and interreligious communications and in some other groups there are positive processes in relation to Russia and Russians, which allows us to hope

⁸⁷ Mikuda S. (2023) Krievijas Federācijas pilsoņu uzturēšanās Latvijā pēc 2. Septembra [Residence of citizens of the Russian Federation in Latvia after September 2]. Available from: <https://lvportals.lv/e-konsultācijas/30248-krievijas-federācijas-pilsonu-uztēšanas-latvija-pec-2-septembra-2023>.

⁸⁸ Sadraudzības pilsētas. [Commonwealth Cities] (2022) Available from: <https://www.daugavpils.lv/pilseta/par-daugavpili/sadraudzibas-2022.pilsetas>.

⁸⁹ Sadraudzības pilsētas. [Commonwealth Cities] Available from: <https://www.liepaja.lv/sadraudzibas-pilsetas/>.

⁹⁰ Sadraudzības pilsētas. [Commonwealth Cities] 2023. Available from: <https://www.jelgava.lv/pilseta/par-jelgavu/sadraudzibas-pilsetas/>.

⁹¹ Sadraudzības pilsētas. 2023 [Commonwealth Cities. 2023]. Available from: <https://www.ventspils.lv/par-ventspili/sadraudzibas-pilsetas/>.

with cautious optimism for the restoration of good-neighbourly relations between Latvia and Russia in the foreseeable future.

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About the author

Viktor V. VORONOV. DSc (Soc), Professor, chief researcher of the Institute of Sociology the Federal Centre of Theoretical and Applied Sociology, Russian Academy of Sciences. <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1022-3692>. Address: 24/35, Krzhizhanovskiy street, Moscow, 117218, Russian Federation. voronov@isras.ru.

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