Russia and the nation-state building in Latvia

Or how to be a Latvian?

THIBAULT MUZERGUES

Résumé: In 1994, the Latvian Foreign Minister at the time commented that Latvia was on the way from the Soviet Union to the European Union. While any academic should be careful about the real meaning of such a declaration – after all, at the time, EU entry for the three Baltic States was still a very long-term prospect – a nation-builder such as Birkâvs obviously spoke in these terms in order to represent the «end» of a process began in the 1870s-1880s, which created and defined a Latvian national identity. From a relatively perennialist standpoint, it seems crucial to try and explain how Latvia’s nation-builders came to this «conclusion», and therefore rejected in full the region’s modern past as part of Russia, the Soviet Union, and the Eastern European group.
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In 1994, the Latvian Foreign Minister at the time commented that Latvia was “on the way from the Soviet Union to the European Union”. While any academic should be careful about the real meaning of such a declaration – after all, at the time, EU entry for the three Baltic States was still a very long-term prospect – a nation-builder such as Birkâvs obviously spoke in these terms in order to represent the « end » of a process began in the 1870s-1880s, which created and defined a Latvian national identity. From a relatively perennialist standpoint, it seems crucial to try and explain how Latvia's nation-builders came to this « conclusion », and therefore rejected in full the region's modern past as part of Russia, the Soviet Union, and the Eastern European group. Latvia has not belonged to the Western European World since the treaty of Nystad in 1721, by which Peter the Great annexed the Livonia, and therefore its integration (rather than reintegration) in the European World needs to be carefully scrutinised. In order to explain this insistence on joining the Western club, many scholars have claimed that the key to Latvian identity has always been its relationship with the Russian community in Latvia and Russia as a political entity, and that as a result, the Baltic state's claim is more of a reaction against these two entities rather than anything else. In fact, stating that Latvia has built its national identity against Russia and its Russian communities leads to the conclusion that its efforts to Europeanise itself are actually nothing but de-Russification. Thus, it is interesting to examine to what extent – and in what ways – Russia and Latvia's Russians have influenced Latvian nation-building. In order to answer this question, our approach in this dissertation will be historical and will as a result be divided in four main parts, the first one considering the first Latvian national awakening period (1870-1916), the second focusing on the 1917 revolution and the subsequent attempt by Latvian elites to create a viable Latvian nation-state (1918-1939). The third part will in turn look at the true meaning of the period of Soviet invasion and occupation (1940-1983) within the domain of

1 Birkavs, Valdis, comments made at the Stockholm School of Economics conference The Baltic States on their way to the European Union, Riga, Latvia, December 3, 1994.
definition set in the question, while the fourth part will analyse and explain Latvia's second awakening period and its second attempt at nation-state building (1984-present).

Indeed, since Latvia is one of the few ex-Soviet republics with a clear and unquestionable national past, its current developments should also be seen in the light of Latvia's history. Furthermore, within this historical context, it is impossible to give a teleological, unique explanation to Latvian nationalism, as each of the periods and sub-periods studied in this work corresponds to one or another explanatory theory of nationalism (for example, the period 1870-1916 corresponds to the making of a Gellnerian, sociological nationalism, while the efforts of state-building engaged in the period after 1917 correspond to its Marxist interpretation) and responds to the more general historical developments of the time, despite a relative intellectual continuity present in the mind of the nationalist Latvian intelligentsia, as will be evidenced in this dissertation. The choice of such an approach is therefore not motivated by the will to give a primordialist spin to this analysis of Latvian nationalism (which in any case is not possible within this context), but by the reality of the developments of Latvian nationalism over the last 130 years.

There are two theoretical starting points to this dissertation. Following the new schools of state-integration/assimilation and nation-building, the first one refutes Eugene Weber's idea that nation-building is an event that can be defined in time (that is with a departure point A and a finishing point B) that can only be led by élites. As the structure of this work shows, this dissertation will try to verify that nation-building is a continuing, never-ending process that could possibly be defined in terms of A, but certainly not in terms of B, and that, in the case of Latvia, once the process had been initiated by élites, it evolved following its own dynamics.

The second starting point of this work is the belief that there is a strong correlation between existentialism and nation-building. Although the standard bearers of the French, atheist school of existentialism such as Camus or Sartre never thought of applying their theory of the other to nationalism, one can accept that their theory could be valid in the context of this study. For Sartre, “autrui is the other, that is to say the self who is not my self“, and against whom as an individual I have to define myself; within this context, Merleau-Ponty is even clearer: “what is given is not me on the one hand and the other on the other hand, but me with the other”.

When applied to a theoretical framework of nationalism, a nation, in order to construct itself, needs an other in order primarily to become conscious of its existence as a nation, and then to define itself. This existentialist application has been used, consciously or not, by many political scientists in explaining the rise of nationalism in general or a given region\(^5\), but it has not yet been

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\(^5\) For example, Dominic Lieven states that, in 1914, “Canadians and Australians had no one, and above all, no neighbour, to hate and against which to define themselves. This tends to be a crucial weakness in the formation of national identity and nationalist ideology” (Lieven, Dominic, Empire, London: Pimlico, 2003, p.54).
applied systematically to any general or particular study of nationalism. It will therefore be central to this work, and will have a particular meaning within the context of Latvian nation-building. In fact, the aim of this dissertation is to see whether Russia and Latvia’s Russians have always represented the other against whom Latvianness has defined itself, and if not, whether they have been important in the Baltic state’s nation-building process in other ways. The following work will show how Russia has played a key role in helping to define Latvian nationalism, from the beginning, but not always and not necessarily in existentialist terms. The Baltic Russians other phenomenon will be analysed as a recent, thus malleable one.

**1870-1916: Latvia under imperial Russia: Latvianness defines itself against the Baltic German**

*From the origins to 1905*

The easiest way to explain the current tensions that exist between Latvia and Russia on the one hand, and Latvia and its Russian communities on the other, would be to take an absolutely perennialist view and assert that, in any case, “Latvians have always hated Russia and the Russians and these three entities could never be reconciled”⁶. This accusation, however, is nothing more than journalistic sensationalism. In fact, any study of Latvian history before 1916 shows that Russia and the Baltic Russians were never considered by Latvian nationalists as a genuine and immediate threat to the « survival » of their nation at the time, particularly before 1905.

It is difficult to talk about a primordial Latvian nation originating from the beginnings of time, as even perennialists such as Hugh Seton-Watson do not include Latvia in their classification of « old nations »: “The old nations in Europe in 1789 were the English, Scots, French, Dutch, Castillians and Portuguese in the West; the Danes and Swedes in the North; and the Hungarians, Poles and Russians in the East”⁷. No mention is made of Latvia as such, for the simple reason that in 1789, Latvia even as a name was unknown, divided as it was between different gubernie under imperial Russia. In this sense, it is easier and probably nearer the truth to talk of the Latvian Nation as an « imagined community »⁸ rather than a primordial entity. However, the goal of this dissertation is not to take sides in the argument over the origins of nationalism, but to see whether the existentialist philosophical framework is applicable to the history of Latvian nation-building. It is thus interesting to see that, considering any of the two great theories of nationalism (modernism and primordialism), the theory of the other stands, and both interpretations concur to show that neither Russia nor Latvia’s Russians played this role in the definition of Latvian national

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identity. Reasoning by the absurd, i.e. considering the primordialist/perennialist account, it appears that the « eternal enemy » of Latvia, this other against whom a Latvian nationalist defined himself primordially was not Russian, but German. In fact, for many thinkers, the year zero of Latvia's national history is the first encounter with the Germans who had come to christianise this area during the Northern Crusades⁹, in the 12th Century. From this epochal come what Smith would call the founding myths of the Latvian nation, most revered among them Laēplçsis, the bear slayer who in his adventures come to fight neither a Nevski nor a Russian, but a German black/Teutonic knight. From then on, the Germans had settled in the Baltic and held power and subjected Latvians to their power. When Kurland and the Baltic provinces were annexed by Peter the Great, these German barons were confirmed in their privileges and were therefore able to keep on what a nationalist historiograph would call « internal colonialism » against ethnic Latvians. It is worth noting that, until the period of Latvian national awakening (still according to Latvian nationalist historiography), Russia never seems to have had a negative impact on the country's inhabitants, particularly as the Tsar had emancipated Kurland's serfs in the early 19th Century¹⁰. According to primordialists, then, the perennial other against which Latvia has defined itself was German, not Russian.

If one takes the more plausible modernist explanation into consideration and contends that Latvian nationalism rather has invented "a local high (literate, specialist transmitted) culture of its own"¹¹, then the context in which Latvian nationalism was born in the 1870s did everything once again, to define Latvianness against these Baltic German Barons. In fact, at the time, they were still the ones who held power in Kurland. They were nobles, extremely loyal to the Tsar, and therefore had been granted further controlling privileges as a result, leading Hosking to state that this German nobility was "at the opposite extremity from the Poles and Jew"¹². Furthermore, “the German community completely dominated the city. German was the main language of business and of cultural life. It was the sole language of government”¹³. Even more interesting is the fact that ethnic and class lines were blurred, as “when upward mobility did occur [for an ethnic Latvian] it was nearly always accompanied by total Germanisation”¹⁴. One therefore finds himself in a Gellnerian situation, where “only when a class happened to be [...] a « nation » did it turn from being a class-in-itself into a [...] nation-for-itself”¹⁵. As a result, and following a neo-Marxian vision of class-struggle, Latvian class and national consciousness did develop against the Baltic

¹² Hosking, Geoffrey, Russia, People and Empire, London: Fontana, 1997, p.35.
¹⁴ Ibid., p.2.
Germans, which explains the emergence of the Laèplçsis story in Latvian literature at the time. Latvianness as a class and as a « nation » was subjected, or threatened by German dominance, and it therefore seems logical to perceive the Baltic Germans as the other for Latvian Nationalism.

If the other was neither Russian nor the Russians, did any of these entities play a role in the emergence of Latvian nationalism? As has been seen earlier, the Baltic Russians were at the time not more numerous than Latvians in Riga, even less in the countryside. Nevertheless, they shared a lower class status with them, and therefore shared a common interest with Latvian nationalists, i.e. bringing down German dominance, and this explains why Riga's Russians went into local government coalition with Latvian nationalists against the dominance of the city's German hegemony. In the same way, Russia came to have the same interest as Young Latvians in the 1880s as programmes of russification were planned for Latvia. Imperial Russia had the same interest of breaking the German's powers, and this is why it reluctantly accepted to become a circumstantial ally with Latvian nationalists, “the policy of Russification being encouraged to some degree by the Young Latvians”16. As a result, Russia and the Baltic Russians played an important role in the development and spread of Latvian nationalism, but this time as allies, however reluctant and uneasy the alliance was between what were at the end of the day two different policies of national homogenisation in a same territory.

1905-1917: The beginning of a shift in the definition of the other?

The 1905 revolution marked a first « turning point » in Latvia's nation-building process. In fact, while this period of general unrest in Imperial Russia's Baltic province confirmed the fact that its bases of definition were against the German élite as the other, it also marked a break in the uneasy alliance between Latvia and Imperial Russia.

The events of this failed revolution comforts any one in the belief that Latvian nationalism was not originally directed against Russia or the Baltic Russian population. The explosion of protest, and violence that took place in Latvia was yet again directed against those who held power and wealth, and those who had been a threat to Latvian identity's survival, or to be nearer the truth, its national birth. Again, one gets back to Gellner, and it seems that the collusion between ethnic and class identity in Latvia greatly helped the mobilisation of the masses by the Latvian nationalist intelligentsia against the German Barons. Pabriks and Purs have noted that “armed peasant formations successfully captured small towns”; and “burned dozens of Baltic German manors (45 in Kurzeme and 85 in Vidzeme)”. Until the recovery of the Russian state in terms of power projection within its own realm and its re-acquiring of the monopoly on violence in 1906, Latvian nationalists – which had turned from a Risorgimento-type nationalism to a more integral idea Latvia's national future17 – violently claimed their definition against the German other. As far as

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Russia was concerned, there is no account depicting revolutionaries in Riga carrying heavily politicised, anti-autocratic slogans\(^{18}\). Furthermore, demands for separation from the Empire were totally absent. These came about much later, as will be seen in the second part. Latvians then saw Russia as the only possible help they could get to break German dominance in their region, and would therefore not have dared to think of an independence which would by definition benefit first Latvia's élitists, i.e. the Baltic Germans. The Baltic Russians were, just like the Latvians, worried about their local other and participated in the burning of mansions, and therefore were still allied with the nationalists at the time.

The problem was that, in 1905, unrest had not turned into a full-fledged revolution. As a result, when Nicholas II managed, through a mix of co-optive and repressive moves to save his throne for a while, the masses that had participated in the revolution in the Baltic provinces were severely repressed. The Tsar, seemingly had learned his lesson, and never again was he to try and diminish his German servants' hold on power in Latvia: “Russification was not withdrawn, but the central authorities ceased harassing the German leadership, made some concrete concessions to the German population and encouraged the Russian political leaders within Riga to move into an electoral alliance with the Germans against the Latvians"\(^{19}\). In other words, the Russian State had gone back to its old alliance with the Baltic Germans who incarnated stability and order in Latvia whose nationalism was becoming too dangerous. Thus, Latvians saw themselves being punished for their crimes (many were innocent of burning manors, but were still hanged) by the Germans who were helped in their task by Russian army regiments.

The attitude of Baltic Russians after 1905 was much more equivocal. It is obvious that many Riga Russians had been scared by the rise of the exclusive brand of Latvian nationalism that had been rising in 1905, and many had been seduced by Russian nationalism, thereby turning against Germans and Latvian nationalists. However, these Russians were far from being totally loyal to their Tsar. At the time, no policy of internal colonisation had been tried by the Imperial government, and as a result, Latvia's Russian communities were composed in priority of Old Believers whose forefathers had fled religious persecution in Russia and still to some extent regarded the Romanov dynasty as the embodiment of the Antechrist. These Russian communities were therefore far from reliable for the russifying regime in St. Petersburg, and tended to adopt a neutral stance in the new confrontation between the central authorities and Latvian nationalists.

A question therefore arises: is this a first turning point in Latvia's nationalists' relationship with Russia and the local Russian population? The answer is yes, though to a very small extent. Latvian nationalists understandably did not swallow the treason of the imperial government, and this is where one can see the appearance of anti-Russian rhetoric in nationalists' writings. However, it is difficult to assess whether this rhetoric was directed primarily against the Tsarist

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regime or against Russia's direct control over Latvia. Evidence suggests that the second proposition is the one which was still standing at the time, as "at the beginning of the Revolution, there were no liberal Latvian newspapermen or politicians who asked for an independent Latvia". This was because "nationalist leaders were still aiming at autonomy within a democratic Russian Federation, if only because they regarded such a link as their only protection against conquest by the Germans". It is therefore clear that, while a shift making Latvia's intelligentsia and elites – the only real nationalists at the time – reticent towards Russia had occurred after 1905, this was in no way a major turning point in Latvia's relations with Russia or its Russian community. The enemy, the other against whom the nationalists defined the Latvian nation was still the local German community. This shift towards an anti-Russian feeling was however to be amplified immediately after the October 1917 revolution.

1917-1939: Latvia turns to define itself against two others: Germans and Russians

If, as one has been able to see in the precedent chapter, the Latvian nation, in its early construction, defined itself primarily and by far against an internal other who was not Russian but German, considering the fact that the situation is nowadays totally different (i.e. the other is represented by Russia and the Baltic Russians), one has to look for a turning point in which the main other was to be changed. Coming from this angle, most scholars have argued that this turning point was to be found in the Molotov-Ribbentropp pact which was followed by the Soviet invasion. While such a view seems seducing at first, this dissertation contests its validity. In fact, the most defining moment in terms of Latvia's relations with the political entity « Russia » and, to a lesser extent, the Baltic Russians, came in the years immediately following the Bolshevik Revolution, in which the new Latvian nation-state focused its construction against Russia, Germany and the Baltic Germans. Thus, there was no turning point, but a series of turning points which provided a sliding dynamic in the definition of Latvianness, as will be seen in this chapter.

The impact of the Bolshevik Revolution in Latvia

Interestingly enough, the best way to explain the position of Latvian nationalists during the years 1917-1918 is a Marxist-Leninist one. According to Lenin, nationalism is "a choice [...] made by the bourgeoisie [...] When the proletariat finds itself in a position of force, it naturally chooses self-determination according to its class-interests and chooses to the proletarian state against which it was separated". There was at the time a very class-conscious proletariat in Latvia, as

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Riga was then the second biggest harbour in Russia, heavily industrialised, and was also caught in the middle of the North Eastern Front during a war in which many countries only avoided a Socialist revolution by accident or a sudden change of military leadership. It is therefore no surprise to see that, in 1917, the Province's capital was nicknamed « Riga the Red »\textsuperscript{23}. Considering the troubled times and the industrialisation drive that had been impressive before the war in Latvia's main cities, the Latvian proletariat was naturally numerous and radical.

In Latvia, the Bolshevisation of the workers movement occurred at the same time as in Russia, but to a much bigger extent, and one sees most of the « exploited masses », in Leninist terminology, being won over to the Bolshevik cause. Latvian riflemen were particularly active and instrumental in this process, engaged as they were “\textit{in performing a variety of tasks for the Party such as helping to organise soviets for the workers in the cities and for the landless peasantry in the country; campaigning for the Bolshevik ticket in the various elections; and helping the landless peasant in carrying out the agrarian revolution in organising strikes and confiscating estates}”\textsuperscript{24}. After the Petrograd revolution, Riga was even declared a Socialist Republic, in which “a Soviet of Workers and Landless Peasants became the central authority, and soviets of landless peasants were former in place of the local councils”\textsuperscript{25}.

This was obviously unacceptable for the nationalist élite. Unlike the Russian or Azeri élites, they had the chance to counter this revolution through the German Army’s invasion and occupation of Latvia, which came as a « mixed blessing »: it comforted the Latvian nationalists in their belief that Germans were the main other against which they had to define themselves in order to survive as a nation, as the Baltic Germans collaborated with the puppet regime set up by the 2nd Reich in Latvia. Germany as a state-entity was also becoming an \textit{other}, as it had shown its capacities to reach Latvian soil and to help their ethnic « compatriots » in the Baltic region.

However, at the same time, the liberal élites, which were the only class with a real national consciousness, knew that Bolshevism, which denied the existence and future of nations, represented a new threat to Latvia’s existence as a nation. Consequently, Bolshevism became a new enemy, a new \textit{other} against which the Latvians had to define themselves as a nation. In October 1917, the Riga newspaper \textit{Lidums} observed: “\textit{Latvia presently perhaps undergoes the grimmest moment of its history. The war is smothering us so that we can hardly breath. It is difficult to say from which direction come the heaviest blows – from the Germans who are behaving according to their usual standard, or from our own army. But that isn't all. There is another incubus that has settled on our nation's tormented chest, that is the Bolsheviks and the terrorists}”\textsuperscript{26}. The duality of « Latvianess » definition against its \textit{other}, or, to be more precise, its \textit{others}, is obvious, and the « times of trouble » that Latvia had to bear in the following years, with

\textsuperscript{26} \textit{Lidums}, October 25, 1917.
German Occupation followed by the Bolshevik attempt of an invasion (Soviet Russia’s foreign policy was still woven by the necessity of spreading the revolution throughout the world), and which only ended as a result of British naval intervention, comforted Latvian nationalists in their belief that they now had to contend with two powerful neighbours that each enjoyed the luxury of having a potential fifth column to use in order to threaten the state’s recent independence.

The first period of independence (1919-1940): contending with two others abroad, and one within

There were two main priorities for the new Latvian state in 1919, and during the whole inter-war period: the first one was state-building, i.e. ensuring the continuation of the existence of Latvia as an independent state, and the second was nation building, that is to make Latvian citizens loyal to their imagined community.

First, it is useful to focus on Latvian diplomacy during the inter-war period, as one can clearly see a confirmation of the trend begun in 1917-1918. In fact, the Latvians had to contend enormously with realpolitik, for power-projection reasons, while France, Britain and (from 1935) Germany and Russia did not have so many constraints imposed upon them by diplomatic issues (although they certainly themselves had quite a few). Thus, French and then German politicians, because they led great powers, could project their power in a relatively aggressive way against each other, because they were one another’s other. On the other hand, Latvia had a small territory, a small population, limited resources in both economic and military terms, and therefore could not aggressively compete with its two powerful political others, Russia and Germany. This explains why Latvian diplomats played very carefully with both Soviet Russia (and, after 1924, the Soviet Union) and Hitler’s Germany, while actively courting the French and English governments. This does not mean, however, that Latvian politicians and nationalists did trust their others, far from it. They knew that « Once […] Russia and Germany [could regain] their strength, the delicate equilibrium [would] no longer endure », thereby threatening the existence of the Latvian state27. Being isolated between its two Baltic neighbours and Russia, and therefore not being able to enjoy the patronage of, say Finland, Latvia was therefore the most enthusiastic country in the formation of a Baltic entente which was however very limited in scope and did not come into real effect, mainly because each of the three newly independent states could not agree on a common enemy, a common other. This was due to history and each republic’s geographical position. Thus, Lithuania considered Poland and Germany as its others, and therefore asked for a certain amount of protection from Moscow. Estonia, on the other hand, had the USSR as its definite other, while Latvia was in the peculiar position of having to build its national identity against two powerful others28. Because a Baltic entente rendered a power projection impossible, Latvia had to do what small states usually do, i.e. rely on the goodwill of its neighbours and the success of its diplomacy.

Within Latvia, things were also complex: as Soviet Russia had clearly become an enemy for Latvia's nationalist elite, the latter had to spread some anti-Russian sentiment when diffusing their idea of the Latvian nation, and logically, this trend should have been reflected in the increasing number of actions directed against the ethnic Russian population, particularly in the context of inter-war Eastern Europe and the rise of Ulmanis' authoritarian regime, which championed a "strong and Latvian Latvia". This was generally not the case, since Russian-Latvian ethnic relations were relatively friendly at the time. In order to explain this non-development, one has to look at the identity of these Latvian-Russians. As has already been seen, the Russian population before 1917 was primarily composed of Old Believers who could certainly not be mobilised by the Bolsheviks. It is true that a new wave of Russian immigrants arrived after 1917, but those were fleeing Bolshevik persecution. As a result, "in the 1930s, [...] the Russian minorities were largely led by White Russian Émigrés, hardly likely to appeal for Stalin for protection against the Balts".

These Russians did not correspond to the Latvian nationalist imagery, and were therefore treated accordingly.

The now more nation-conscious Latvians were however much more wary of their traditional other: the Baltic Germans, who had more reasons to look to Hitler for protection. After all, "Riga [had] emerged as capital of an independent Latvian republic, where the Germans lived on as a dwindling, powerless minority, mistrusted by their Latvian rulers and with their economic strength gradually overshadowed by that of the triumphant Latvian bourgeoisie". Thus, the Baltic German minority came to be feared and distrusted with regards to the maintenance of Latvian independence after Hitler's rise to power. After all, Riga was not that far from Danzig, and the Sudeten Germans had not needed so much vexations as Latvia's Germans to call for irredenta with the Third Reich. This is why the Baltic Russians were not regarded as a real threat yet, and why its role in defining Latvian nationalism was kept to a minimum until 1939.

The year of 1939 marked a pivotal moment in Latvian national history in two senses. First and foremost, the Molotov-Ribbentropp agreement, which made Latvia immediately part of the Soviet « sphere of interests », was yet another defining moment for Latvia's future definition of itself against Russia, but just as important was the treaty of October 1939 "regarding the repatriation of Latvian citizens of German Race to the German Reich", by which almost all of "the German people [resigned] from the commonwealth of Latvia". By this treaty, Hitler got rid of Latvia's internal

32 Excerpt from the Secret Supplementary Protocol to the German-Soviet Non-Agreement Agreement of 23 August 1939, quoted in The Occupation and Annexation of Latvia: 1939-1940, Riga: State Archives of Latvia, 1995, p.98. The full relevant extract reads: "In the event of territorial and political reordering in the territory of the Baltic States (Finaland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania), the northern border of Lithuania shall be considered to be the boundary between the German and Soviet spheres of interest".
33 Excerpt from the treaty, quoted by Bīlimenis Alfred (compiled by), Latvian-Russian relations: Documents,
other, which could after a while lead to an existentalist crisis in the form of Sartre's reflections on memory in *Huis Clos*. If Latvia's *other* no longer existed, against who was this nation going to define itself against internally? Stalin made sure that this identity crisis did not happen, and quickly swept all dualities or hesitations on who was Latvia's internal and external *other*.

### 1939-1985: Invasion, Occupation, and the conclusion of the Latvian nation re-alignment

As has been seen in the precedent chapter, the events that will now be accounted did not constitute a turning point in itself, as some historians have described it, but rather the continuation and amplification, due to historical factors, of the process of re-definition of Latvianness against its *others*. However, the importance of Latvia's Soviet years should not be understated either. Soviet policies towards Latvia in fact crystallised for years this new definition and gave the Russian communities in Latvia the role that one now knows: that of the *other*.

### 1939-1947: Invasion, war and terror. Russia becomes the single other

Following the German-Soviet pact, the Soviet Union quickly moved, in a combination of power-projection, agitation and provocation, to end the Baltic States' independence. Following this treaty's re-arrangement, the USSR's sphere of interest had been extended to Lithuania. In order to counter the threat of both Germany and Soviet Russia, the three Baltic States had therefore at last moved into a sort of alliance to protect their independence, but that was not sufficient. On June 16, 1940, claiming that this alliance was a violation of the Latvian-Soviet mutual assistance pact (signed on October 5 1939), Stalin demanded that "a government must immediately be established in Latvia which is ready and willing to provide for a honest implementation of the [beforementioned] pact"\(^{34}\). Following the establishment of this friendly government, the local Bolsheviks, helped by contingents of Red Army divisions, mounted a successful coup, and "demanded the reattachment of « the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic to the Soviet Union »"\(^{35}\). A campaign of terror and dekulakisation typical of the 1930s Soviet Union followed, with peasants as the main target, and led to the deportation of 20,734 Latvians, and the killing of 1,355 others\(^{36}\). This ruthlessness made Latvian nationalists understand that their warnings against Soviet Russia

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had not been wrong but also, retrospectively, that Soviet Russia rather than Germany had threatened most the independence of Latvia. Although the Latvians were still wary of the growing threat of Nazi Germany, they now had an immediate and main enemy, that is the USSR, which had territorially claimed its heritage from Tsarist Russia. The experience of deportations was a powerful mobilising experience for ordinary Latvians (who by now had been won over by Latvian nationalism), and obviously comforted them in the idea that their other, their enemy was now mainly Soviet Russia, in other words, the USSR. It has to be said, however, that Baltic Russians were still not seen as the other considering that they too could be deported (particularly the White émigrés), and also because those Latvians who were deported lived with Russians in Siberia, whether as campmates or as neighbours and, living in the same conditions, did not think of them as their other.37

The experience of the WWII could have been a catalyst for a remobilisation against both Germany and the Germans, particularly as the Wehrmacht quickly occupied Latvia and repressed its inhabitants. However, as was the case in many occupied countries at the time, Latvians split on this issue, and many went into collaboration with the Germans. Moreover, there was no consensus among the nationalist leaders about the definition of their other, their national enemy against whom they had to define themselves. Therefore, the émigré government then declared that “the change from the monstrous terroristic military occupation by Soviet Russia to military occupation by German troops [...] will not bring freedom and independence to Latvia and its inhabitants”38. The local resistance movements agreed, and were declaring just before Latvia’s « liberation » that “the Latvian people accept no dependence on Germany or the USSR”39. However, those who collaborated with the Germans in Riga were more numerous than those who joined the Soviets, as the memories of Baltic German domination were somehow diminished by time, while the memories of Soviet atrocities were still fresh in every Latvian’s mind: for example, “When the German armies occupied the Baltic states [...], Latvians had a chance to take a look at [the NKVD’s] basement torture chambers”40. This sort of revelations, encouraged by German propaganda, continued to lessen the duality of perception of the other, and encouraged its realignment against Russia as a State entity. By 1944, however, this realignment was far from over.

The end of this realignment in fact came in the last years of Stalin’s leadership, as the Red

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37 For interesting accounts on life in the GULAG for Latvians and their fraternisation with local Russians, see notably Ulmanis, Guntis, No Tēvis Jav Neprasa Daudz, Riga: Liktenstāti, 1995, p.41.
Army re-asserted control in Latvia. From that moment, the campaign of terror and de-kulakisation was re-initiated and amplified. Jubulis’ estimations account for around 70,000 people «executed or deported»\(^{41}\). Between 1940 and 1949, Latvia had lost 30% of its total population\(^{42}\), and considering the fact that, for most of this period, Latvia was composed of Russian rather than German population, the responsibility for these dark years came to be borne solely on the shoulders of the USSR. Considering the impact of wars and catastrophes of this type in terms of crystallising national identity, this terror process had a huge impact on the development of the Latvian national sentiment for years to come.

Many historians and political commentators had at the time branded these deportations as a «genocide»\(^{43}\). Retrospectively, this proposition is erroneous. According to McGarry and O’Leary’s definition in their ethnic conflict resolution taxonomy, genocide "is the systematic mass-killing of an ethnic collectivity"\(^{44}\). Stalin’s terror in this period was not a genocide, but rather the direct and indirect systematic mass-killing of a class, not an ethnie, within Latvia. Unlike the Chechens, Balkars and other peoples, Latvians were not found guilty of «collaboration» with Germany as a people, and therefore were not deported as a whole nation. However, the fact that this terror campaign did not happen simultaneously with the rest of the Soviet Union, reinforced the sentiment of injustice and crime in the eyes of Latvian nationalists and the Latvian population – who at least in the Daugavpils area could get some news of the situation in neighbouring Pskov, for example. This therefore helped to crystallise a latent Latvian nationalism against this new other which, for the first time in Latvian-Russian relations history, had become its sole enemy.

1949-1986: The other turns native: the growth of a new internal enemy: Latvia’s Russians

The examiner might have noticed the relative lack of attention given to the role of the Baltic Russian community in shaping the development of Latvian nationalism, and therefore the building of the Latvian nation. As has been seen however, until the late 1940s, the country’s Russians had played no role in this development, except maybe in 1870-1905, when parts of the Russian nationalist groups formed a coalition with Latvian nationalists (with very little results, however). In any case, the Baltic Russians thus far had played no role as the other.

This uneventful relation was to end during the period of Soviet occupation. The reasons for this degradation in ethnic relations in the LSSR are due to two main factors: colonisation and russification. Firstly, Latvia in the post-war years was the theatre of a massive immigration from


\(^{42}\) ibid.


Russified areas of the Soviet empire to the small republic. This massive arrival of Russophones had been planned by Moscow obviously to de-homogenise the territory of the SSR, but also for economic reasons: Latvia, though devastated by the war, was one of the most advanced parts of the Soviet Union and was short of workers. Following this rationale, Soviet leaders decided to bring en masse Sovietised citizens to the Baltic SSRs. Russified workers were actually more than willing to establish themselves in these republics, “where living standards [were] far superior to those in Russia” and, from the 1960s, where “the possibility of acquiring consumer goods evoking western markets [attracted] them irresistibly”45. However, because of this agreement between the Russian government and the people, the arrivals quickly became floods, and “the population was swollen by 535,000 non-Latvian immigrants, rising from around 1.4 million at the war’s end to 2 million by 1955”46. The obvious result of this, particularly in the period following World War II, was a rise in shortages, and following the USSR’s discriminative policies in favour of Russians, priority was given to these Russophones in terms of housing, jobs, access to economic privileges, etc. This trend quickly became totally irreversible, and the result was not only the gradual growth of the Russians over the Latvians whose fertility was already rapidly declining, thereby threatening their being as a nation, but also the establishment of a control regime in the Republic, in which a Russian ethnic group was closed and was to be permanently segregating against Latvian nationals. As McGarry and O’Leary have commented, such strategies tend to «[add] to the accumulated stock of ethnic grievances»47, which was already growing rapidly in economic terms in the ethnic republic.

Russification was probably the biggest factor in the making of an internal other in the form of Latvia’s Russians. Coming from a state of total independence to that of extreme subordination to Moscow, Latvians saw Russian replace Latvian as the language of government, Latvian government officials being replaced by Russian ones in the LSSR, particularly after the anti-national communism purge of 1959, and their own language being submitted to multiple vexations. For example, “Russians were known to demand that Latvians speak a «human language» (i.e. Russian) and not the language of «dogs» and «fascists» (i.e. Latvian)”48. The expression of such vexations, which actually had already been used (in a more refined manner) by Baltic Germans in the nineteenth Century was obviously to provide more arguments for nationalists to see the newly arrived Russians as the new other against whom Latvianess should be defined, even more particularly as they also threatened the sheer being of the Latvian nation: by the mid-1980s, Latvia was not far from becoming a minority in its own republic, thereby threatening the sheer existence of the Latvian nation.

Most scholars, from Kenez to Hughes have argued that “ethnic and regional conflicts in the Former Soviet Union were kept dormant under communism”\(^49\). While such a statement is right when considering most parts of the Soviet Union, historical evidence suggests that the Baltic States did not fit their description. Of course, there were no pogroms against Russians at the time, nor was there any admittance from the CPSU that serious tensions existed between Latvians and Russians or Latvians and Soviet occupation, but there were many clues which showed that, even during the stability period enjoyed by Soviet citizens in the Brezhnev era, Latvia and its Baltic neighbours remained « Millstones around Moscow's neck »\(^50\). The mistake that some scholars specialised in this area during this period have committed is their lack of attention to the reaction of people, which in this case could be scientifically reflected not only in the amount and nature of dissent activities, but also in the behaviour of the Republics’ Communist parties. In terms of popular dissent, “it could be said that dissent-disagreement with or opposition to the system was, almost by definition, endemic”\(^51\). The most indisputable clues come from the attitudes of the Latvian CP and its organs, whose internationalism and rejection of nationalism is beyond question. There were many occasions in which these expressed fears towards the Russophone fluxes. For example, “the Latvian Secretary warned readers of Kommunist as early as 1978 that some Latvians wanted no more large enterprises in their republic because of the resulting influx of non-Latvians”. Even earlier, in 1956, Edvard Berklâvs, the LSSR leader himself, with official data to prove his point, denounced in diplomatic terms the policies of russification imposed by Moscow, when he denounced those who put discrimination as being directed at Latvians\(^52\); in the 1950s, such speeches were common among a leadership who adopted a brand of national-communism not by conviction, but because, communists as they were, they also tried to understand their locals, and tried to channel their aspirations, particularly under Krushchev and Brezhnev, using the party channels. This shows the continuity in Latvian nationalism, and therefore that the process of nation-building was stopped (although it untypically was not directed by the élites) during Soviet occupation. Therefore, Latvian nationalism did evolve by that time by giving the USSR, and therefore Russia as a State entity, the unenviable status as sole other, but also by crystallising its definition of self-identity against the newly arrived Baltic Russians.


1986-Present: Singing revolution, independence and the diverse roles played by Russia and the Russians

The period that will now be looked at is quite typical of Alter’s explanations of the rise of the Risorgimento nationalism followed by its gradual replacement by a more integral nationalism. In fact, the Latvian “singing revolution” puts down any remnants of credibility to the primordialists’ theories of ethnic conflict: while the conflict potential with Russia and Russians nowadays is not the result from ancient hatreds, the grievances accumulated during the years of Soviet Occupation were wiped out in 1986 and, oddly enough, Russia as a national entity and Latvia’s Russians, far from remaining others, became allies to the new Young Latvians. Their demise as others after 1991 therefore cannot be accounted for solely on the base of vexations endured during Soviet occupation.

1986-1991: The two “others” become allies

The first thing to be said about Latvia’s second Risorgimento might first appear as a digression. However, it is crucial to understand the nature of the 1980s nationalist movement to pursue investigations into Latvian nation-building. Hughes and Sasse have argued that, in the former Soviet Union, “Elite-led rather than mass mobilisation tends to moderate conflict potential, whereas mass ethnic mobilisation may radicalise situations and act as a constraint on elites, limiting their policy and decisional calculus”. These comments have a hold in this context, but not within that of a national movement instrumentalised by élites. In fact, because Latvians were already nationally self-conscious, they did not need mobilisation to the same extent, for example, in Belarus, and this explains the success of the Popular Fronts in the Baltics as opposed to their relative failure in Central Asia or Belarus. For sure, intellectuals such as Dâinis Ivâns gave the first signs of the rise of a new national movement in Latvia, but this, unlike in most of the USSR, was followed by acts of defiance and national dissent expressed not by elite-groups but by popular groups. Thus, the founding members of the first openly nationalist organisation, Helsinki-86, were not members of the national elites, but students in their majority.

When these leaders were arrested and subject to Soviet repression in 1987, the movement had already attracted a mass-following, only by hear-say, and the death of Helsinki-86 as a result did not announce the end of a dissident movement in Latvia, particularly as Gorbachev’s Perestroika was now allowing the remaining dissidents to express themselves more freely. The movement, on

55 Interview with former dissident Konstantins Pupurs, May 10, 2003. Pupurs was one of the leaders of the Latvian section Helsinki-86, and was as a result arrested, tortured, and expelled from the Soviet Union by the KGB.
the contrary, continued and quickly amplified, as “after a few weeks of existence, the Latvian Popular Front [could] count 250,000 adherents and a considerable number of sympathisers”\(^{56}\). In this sense, Latvia’s Risorgimento nationalism succeeded because of some «lid-opening», which was untypical for the Soviet Union, though not for the Baltic area. Nevertheless, the Front’s leaders came to have a very important role, as they tried to channel the aspirations of the masses, and most importantly, as they tried to make a nationalist movement respectable in the Soviet Union. “In this context, the Front […] tried to avoid any accusation of chauvinism, inter-ethnic hostility, of anti-Russism”\(^{57}\). 

Apprehending such anti-Russian spillovers from the masses (which were clearly not fancy dreams, as a Riga riot in 1985 had already proven\(^{58}\)), the Latvian Front managed to gain respectability by convincing the masses, sometimes with difficulty, to «be self-controlled, united, and [not to] give way to instigation [by the local provokatsii]». Thus, the LTF leaders (who were intelligentsia – and not elite – members) managed to «control» the reactions of the masses.

For this to happen, the Baltic Russians could not serve as an other. They could not be branded as an enemy, particularly as the LTF leaders “knew that they needed the support of large numbers of non-Latvians because it was widely believed at the time that Latvians had already become a minority in their own homeland”\(^{59}\). As a result, most militants and the LTF leadership understood that there was a need to win the Russians over. This is why the focus was on «national» unity, and why the Latvians came to adopt a nationalism that was of a nineteenth Century Polish Risorgimento type. The enemy was to be the Soviet Union, not Russia as such, and Latvia’s “liberation would herald the liberation of the whole of humanity from war and oppression”\(^{60}\). Because of these tactics, as well as because of the non-credibility of the reactionary Interfront, most Russians were quickly won over or persuaded to neutrality, and they became circumstantial allies in the fight for Latvian independence rather than others against whom Latvia defined itself.

It is here interesting to come back to Russia as a national entity. Because some Baltic Russians could still identify with Russia, the LTF leaders could not identify the RSFSR as the other. In any

\(^{56}\) Carrère d’Encausse, Hélène, *La Gloire des Nations, ou la Fin de l’Empire Soviétique*, Paris: Fayard, 1991, p.207. The Latvijas Tautas Fronte, or LTF (Latvian Popular Front) had been created under Moscow’s supervision «for the defence of Perestroika». It was clear from the beginning, however, that its leaders were recognised nationalists (Ivâns is a prime example for this), and its quick rise can therefore only be put in the context of mobilisation in favour of the Latvian nation, not of Perestroika.

\(^{57}\) Ibid., p.213.

\(^{58}\) See Misiunas, Romuald, and Taagepera, Rein, *The Baltic States, Years of Dependence, 1940-1990*, London: Hurst & Co., 1993 . The incident showed that mass-mobilisation could happen in a violent fashion and could, as Hughes and Sasse have argued, poison ethnic relations. The fact that it didn’t has to be put on the merit of the LTF, who tried to diffuse anti-Russian sentiment, but also on the masses who could have rejected their arguments.


case, it was not the entity that was responsible for Latvia's occupation and colonisation; the other therefore had to be the USSR, and what it represented (purges, terror, communism, etc.). However, if Russia, like the Baltic Russians, was not the other, its role was actually important with regards the success of the Baltic movement. In fact, after the rise of the LTF came the rise of what could be called the Young Russians movement, led by Yeltsin, and who at the time stuck to a same Risorgimento vision of Russian national development. Having the same interest as the Baltic Fronts, the Russia led by Yeltsin, far from being an other, became an ally once power was acquired by the Russian presidency. Considering the power that Russia's elected president could have in guaranteeing Latvia's independence against the Soviet Union (as has explicitly been admitted by the Russian Duma in its impeachment attempts against Yeltsin in 1998\(^{61}\)), Latvian nationalists were all too happy to take Russia on board and to ask their militants “to be ready to join the all-Russian strike declared by […] Boris Yeltsin”\(^{62}\). Here again, Russia's role has been very important (perhaps more than that of Latvia’s Russians), but not as the other. Russia, like the Baltic Rusisans, had become a circumstantial ally that helped Latvia acquire its independence in 1991.

1991-present: Russia and the Russians become the other

It is now useful to come back to the post-1991 period in order to define Latvia's relationship with these two entities and debunk a few other myths. The fact is that, once independence was acquired, Latvia's relations with Russia and its Baltic Russians quickly deteriorated, though this poisoning relation remained within acceptable limits (there was never any threat of massive unrest as there was in Moldova, for example). The aim of this part will be to account for these changes and their scope.

In terms of Latvia's relations with its Russian Community, relations deteriorated almost immediately after independence. In fact, “the Latvian congress came in 1991-1992 to be dominated by extreme radical nationalists, such as Māris Grīnblats and Višvaldis Brinkmanis, whose statements threatened war with Russia and frightened the electorate”\(^{63}\). Although, retrospectively, Lieven overstated the radical nature of the nationalising LNNK, it is certain that its rise ended the harmony period between the two communities. From the autumn of 1991 to the approval of the 1994 law on citizenship by the Saeima, steps were taken to have the Russians who had been emigrated in during the occupation period «effectively excluded from political life in

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\(^{61}\) Remington, Thomas F., Parliamentary Politics in Russia, in White, Stephen, et al.,Developments in Russian Politics 5, Houndmills: Palgrave, 2001, p.50. The impeachment that was initiated in 1998 in fact accused the Russian President, between other things, of having dissolved the Soviet Union by encouraging peripheral nationalism (and therefore Latvian nationalism) against the will of the Soviet people.


Russia and the nation-state building in Latvia. Or how to be a Latvian?

Those Russians then were excluded from citizenship, according to a strict international legality if the occupation of Latvia had been unlawful and had not respected international regulations concerning occupation behaviours, then the Russians who had arrived in Latvia as a result of this occupation were not to be considered as citizens – under the international laws of occupation no migration to the occupied territories were legal. If the presence of these Russians was unlawful, then they were to be considered as either aliens and therefore transferred massively to their country of origin (which was not possible for a variety of reasons), or as emigrants whose right to become citizens was to be given through a process of naturalisation by the Latvian government. Until that moment, they remained excluded from many parts of Latvia’s Social Contract.

In this perspective, it is important to explain why such a strategy was chosen. The purely legalistic argument does not stand, as international law is created by states for states, and therefore Latvia in many ways could have chosen the « zero-option », hereby contradicting legalistic continuity, as Lithuania did in the same period. Most scholars have argued that the difference between Lithuania, which chose the « zero-option » and Latvia, who chose the « 1940 option »65, was the number of Russians residing in the three republics: while Lithuania had not seen its ethnic mix significantly changed since 1946, Latvia and Estonia had coped with massive immigration, and were not far from becoming minorities within their own country. More importantly, the problem was also that, although “only about one-fourth of the Russians in Latvia [had] supported Interfront in 1990”66, “most Latvian political forces agreed that the loyalty of Soviet immigrants to the new state could not be taken for granted”. This was not the case in the short-term, of course, but Latvian nationalists had learnt the lessons from the inter-war period, and knew that it was impossible to make predictions about the national and international atmosphere for more than ten years... After all, who in 1928 would have predicted the events of the 1930s-1940s? The Russian immigrants therefore represented a potential fifth column which had to be eliminated via integration.

Integration is actually the word to be employed when talking about Latvia’s policy towards Russia. Too many scholars have accused this state of “systematic institutionalised discrimination against their large Slavic Minorities”67, of being an ethnocracy. A careful consideration of the situation, however, shows that the accusation does not stand. Using O’Leary and McGarry’s taxonomy, ethnocracy corresponds to a system of control, which is a system in which “the

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relevant majority [monopolises] the police and judicial systems, [manipulates] the franchise to consolidate their domination, [practises] [...] institutional discrimination in employment against the minority's cultural and educational system”\textsuperscript{68}. The last accusation is erroneous, because of “the State's determination to provide education in nine [...] different languages”\textsuperscript{69}. Furthermore, the concept of control underpins an un-crossable barrier between the two communities. The problem is that those Russian-speakers who had been naturalised before 1940 obtained citizenship automatically in 1991, and that other Russians have gained their citizenship through language tests and an oath of loyalty in recent years. This is where the real issue lies. Scholars tend to see Latvia's Russians as one community, while they actually form several communities\textsuperscript{70}, some clearly anti-Latvian, others totally integrated (which is actually the goal of the government and corresponds to McGarry and O'Leary's taxonomy), and some in the process of being integrated within a relatively multicultural environment.

It is now time to look at Russia's role in Latvia's nation building. Considering that Russia claimed the diplomatic heritage of the Soviet Union immediately after the collapse of the USSR, it is obvious that Latvia's relation with the Federation was to turn sour quickly. A series of issues such as military withdrawal and the fate of the Russian communities in Latvia was to render the relation between the two states more difficult, and to turn Latvia more quickly into the arms of the West. However, these events were not necessarily those which crystallised this relation as that of others. In fact, the withdrawal issue was quickly resolved, and realpolitik impeded Russia to push too far its rhetoric on Latvia's Russians, as Lieven has argued: “one reason for the Russian diaspora's quiescence was that they received no encouragement to intransigence from Yeltsin's Moscow”\textsuperscript{71}. Its role was however important from a historical standpoint. Citizenship and the problems posed by legality are at the core of the question. Many scholars have made the mistake of giving one single factor to explain the disenfranchisement of many non-Latvians. The story is actually more complicated. In fact, another difference between Latvia and Lithuania is a problem of irredenta. In fact, in 1944, Stalin had granted Lithuania several districts to the expense of their national other, Poland, the most important one being Vilnius. On the other hand, he had taken “the town of Abrene (Pytalovo) and six districts of Abrene (Pskov Region)”\textsuperscript{72} from Latvia to give it

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{70} See ibid., p.135, and p.44 for a more detailed development on this issue. In any case, it has been shown in this work that the already heterogenous immigrants from the 1950s-1980s had little in common with the traditional Old Believers residing in Russia since the 17th Century and those who had fled Bolshevik Russia.
\end{thebibliography}
to Russia. From a lawyer’s point of view, if Lithuania had adopted a strategy of legalism, because the re-drawing of boundaries was a direct consequence of an unlawful Soviet Occupation, it would have recognised *de jure* that Vilnius was not part of Lithuania, which was unacceptable for the Lithuanian government in the name of national integrity and because the city was also capital of this state. On the other hand, because for Latvia one of the consequences of occupation was the annexation by Russia of the aforementioned districts, it was in Latvia’s interests to do so: it was always possible, in a distant future, for Latvia to legitimately claim these territories back. Therefore, while Vilnius had to move quickly to deny parts of the illegality of Soviet Occupation, it was in Riga’s interests not to do so, and this partly explains why Vilnius granted automatic citizenship to its residents (including, of course Poles, who would potentially have been another argument for Warsaw’s irredenta claims) while Latvia did not. If roles had been inverted, it is possible to imagine that it would have been Latvia, not Lithuania, which would have chosen the zero-option. Therefore, Russia played an important role in Latvia’s decision to temporarily « exclude » its Russophone minority and take a nationalising approach of its nation-building, not only as an *other*, but also as a passive witness of Stalin’s boundary re-drawals.

**Conclusion: The Passing of an Age?**

It is the role of an academic dissertation to find many answers, all of them complex, to a given question. This work has been able to answer to the following question: «To what extent has Russia and the Russian communities in Latvia influenced nation-state-building in Latvia?» In general, Russia has played a much greater role than Latvia’s Russian Communities in shaping the way the Latvian nation built itself and defined itself. This in itself challenges the views of many, who would tend to see this role as incumbering to the latter rather than the former (even in the post-modern era, Russia has continued to play a big role. To a certain extent, the lack of action with regards the Baltic Russians in 1991-1999 has prevented an ethnic conflict in the Baltic State). The Baltic Russians became key actors in the nation-building process only after Stalin’s annexation, while Russia had played its part since the 1870s.

However, one cannot give this role any systematic definition. In this sense, the existentialist starting point of this essay has been proven completely wrong regards both the Baltic Russians and Russia. Though it is clear that Latvianness has always had to contend with (and, if one follows Sartre, also needed) an *other*, the Baltic Russians have rarely played this role, while Russia has not always been an *other* in the process that has been accounted for. The two entities have sometimes been seen, or even have been allies in Latvia’s struggle to define itself as a nation-state. Therefore, it is clear that an existentialist spin to nationalism is very useful, but has to be

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73 It has to be noted that Estonia, which was also amputed of some of its 1939 territories by Stalin, followed the same path as Latvia. This therefore tends to enhance the valor of this argument, which should not, however, be overestimated. The classic explanation is perfectly compatible with it.
used carefully, as there are roles another nation can play in a nation-building process without being branded as an enemy, an *other*.

Concerning the second starting point, Weber’s theory of nation-building’s eventful nature has been shattered in its application to Latvia: there has been a continuity in the process of nation-building, and furthermore a continuity that has adapted itself to changes. If nation-building had been an event, Latvia either would not have survived the disappearance of its original *other*, or it would only have turned occupation against its new others, the USSR and the Baltic Russians. This shows that nation-building is a never ending process, and thus this dissertation cannot account for what will happen to Latvianess in the next decades.

Henriksson finished his book on the Baltic Germans by evoking the inter-war years as « the passing of an age »[^74]. One can only wonder if the situation is not actually the same nowadays for Russia’s role in defining Latvian national identity in *any* way. In fact, gradually, Russia is coming to terms with its loss of the Baltics, and seems to respect Latvia’s independence. With regards to the Baltic Russians, who are still bound to play the role of internal *others* until their total integration or assimilation (which will take generations), Russia has been less and less vociferous, leaving “*it to the Western governments and the OSCE to press Tallinn and Riga on minority issues*[^75]. In this sense, and while the EU has recently absorbed Latvia, Russia’s role in Latvian nation-building is getting gradually weaker. This might lead to an existentialist issue for the Latvians as in 1939: once Russia is gone, against whom are they going to define themselves? The process of realignment might already be under way, as Latvians are quickly moving against the EU, and now see that they are “*on their way from the Soviet Empire to the European Empire*[^76]. The great danger for the EU in Latvia is to become, in the near future, this *other*, particularly as it is taking Russia’s role in defending the Russian minorities.

[^75]: Pravda, Alex, Foreign Policy, in White, Stephen et al., *Developments in Russian Politics 5*, Houndmills: Palgrave, p.219.
[^76]: See note [1] for reference. Latvia is, with Estonia, the most Eurosceptic country arriving in the European Union, and was even more wary of Mr. Chirac’s and Mrs. Alliot-Marie’s declarations on the CEECs « lack maturity » in foreign policy.