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Ethnic Problems of the Baltic Region

Abstract: The research is devoted to the ethnic problems of the Baltic region (the territory of 3 former Soviet republics – Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania). This topic remains relevant, despite the fact that these republics do not have a special global political, economic and cultural influence. The region has almost lost its industrial potential. In the Baltic States, the population is rapidly declining, returning to the figures of more than a century ago. The research shows the reasons why civil society has not developed in the Baltic States. The result is the fragmentation of society. The basis of the research is based on the historical method. Although there is a fairly significant scientific literature on the history of the region, mainly in Russian, this topic is usually reduced to the history of aboriginal peoples, which cannot be considered historically correct. The Baltic republics will gradually fade away, which will only paradoxically spur the struggle for these empty territories. The results of the study will be applicable in the field of ethnological research within the framework of the development of a single European space and the preservation of historical and cultural heritage.

Keywords: Baltic States, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Ostsee region, Ostsee Germans, ‘Russian-speaking population’, ‘non-citizens’, emigration, diasporas.

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Этническая проблематика Прибалтийского региона

Аннотация: Исследование посвящено этническим проблемам Прибалтийского региона (территория 3 бывших советских республик – Эстонии, Латвии, Литвы). Данная тема сохраняет свою актуальность, несмотря на то что эти республики не имеют особого глобального политического, экономического и культурного влияния. Регион, практически утратил свой промышленный потенциал. В Прибалтике стремительно сокращается численность населения, возвратившись на показатели более чем столетней давности. В статье указаны причины, по которым в Прибалтике так и не сложилось гражданское общество. Результатом становится фрагментация общества. В основу исследования положен исторический метод. Хотя по истории региона существует довольно значительная научная литература, преимущественно на русском языке, данная тема обычно сводится к истории аборигенных народов, что не может считаться исторически корректным. Прибалтийские республики ждёт постепенное угасание, что только

парадоксальным образом подхлестнёт борьбу за эти пустеющие территории. Результаты исследования будут применимы в области этнологических исследований в рамках развития единого европейского пространства и сохранения историко-культурного наследия.

Ключевые слова: Прибалтика, Эстония, Латвия, Литва, Остзейский край, остзейские немцы, «русскоязычное население», «неграждане», эмиграция, диаспоры.

Introduction

Of the regions of historical Russia, the Baltic States occupy a special place. Speaking of the Baltic States, it is necessary to distinguish the Baltic States in several meanings.

First, in the narrowest sense of the word, the Baltic States are the territory of the former Livonia, which later make up three Russian provinces—Estland, Courland and Livonia. These provinces formed a separate general government of the Russian Empire—the Baltic Region. The German name for the Baltic Sea—Ostsee, this region was even called Ostsee in the Russian press. (Now-the territory of Estonia and Latvia).

Secondly, the Baltic States in the broader and most traditional sense refers to the historical and cultural region that included the three republics (with the addition of Lithuania) that emerged during the collapse of the Russian Empire and existed in 1918–1940, then became Soviet republics, and finally joined the European Union.

And, finally, third, the Baltic States are considered as a special region of historical Russia, including, along with the three former republics of the Soviet Baltic States, the Kaliningrad region.

Thus, the study aimed to consider the ethnic problem of the Baltic region through the prism of all three meanings. Consequently, the following research objectives were:

- analyze the historical and geographical aspects of the territorial formation of ethnic groups;
- identify the main features of the policy of segregation in the modern society of the Baltic states;
- present the prospects for the development of the Baltic peoples in the 2020s, based on the study results.

The research used the works of leading experts in this field such as D.V. Zhitin, A.A. Ivanova, V.M. Kabuzan, P.M. Koryavtsev, M.N. Rutkevich and others.

Results

Historical and Geographical Aspects of the Territorial Formation of Ethnic Groups

Geographically, the Baltic States are of crucial importance for Russia's foreign policy relations. It is located on the direct route from the central regions of Russia to Europe. Estonia covers 45,227 sq. km, Latvia—64589 sq. km, Lithuania—65,300 sq. km, and Kaliningrad Region—15,125 sq. km. The total area of the region is 190,300 sq. km. However, it is also necessary to add 23354 sq. km of East Prussia lands, ceded to Poland in 1945.

By European standards, the former republics of the Soviet Baltic States are not so small. Even tiny Estonia is huger than its former metropolis Denmark. And Lithuania and Latvia, each

separately, are twice the size of Belgium. The Kaliningrad region, the smallest in Russia, is still almost one and a half times larger than Cyprus.

In Estonia, the average population density: 29 people per square km, in Latvia—the 30 persons per sq. km in Lithuania, 44 people/sq. The decline in the population of the Baltic States causes a reduction in the average population density of the region. According to scientists, “in socio-demographic terms, there is a ‘desertification’ of most of the territory of the Baltic States. Rare cities in the ‘anthropo-desert’ are relevant a forecast for the near future not so much for Russia as for the Baltic states.” (*Zhitin & Ivanov, 2017*)

The following ethnic groups inhabit the Baltic States: Estonians (925,000), Latvians (1.3 million), and Lithuanians (2.3 million). The now officially non-existent Latgalians of Latvia (in 1934 they were declared Latvians, and since then they have been counted as Latvians by statistics, although in religion, language and culture they are seriously different from the Latvians themselves) can be attributed to the Baltic ethnic groups. Russians are a large ethnic group of the Baltic States. There are one million Russians in the Kaliningrad region, 342 thousand in Estonia, 560 thousand in Latvia, 180 thousand in Lithuania. However, as it will be presented later, the real Russians, as the so-called ‘Russians’, were more. There are significantly more ‘Russian-speaking’ people in the Baltic States. The proportion of all persons whose native language is Russian was 35% in Estonia, 42% in Latvia, and 12% in Lithuania. Russian speakers also included a certain number of representatives of local ethnic groups—0.3% of Estonians, 2.5% of Latvians and 1% of Lithuanians, respectively, who indicated Russian as their native language. Also, Poles live in the Baltic States (250 thousand in Lithuania, 50 thousand in Latvia. From 1945 to 1950, half of the Polish population left Lithuania (or rather, was expelled). For seven centuries, a huge role in the Baltic States was played by the Germans, who were both a specific ethnic group of Baltic Germans (Deutsch Balten), and the entire ruling class of the Ostsee region to a significant extent.

Historically, the Jews, who almost completely disappeared during the Second World War, played a significant role. During the Second World War, the largest number of Jews were killed in Lithuania (260 thousand people), i.e., almost the entire Jewish population of the republic. There were 86 thousand people in Latvia and 9 thousand people in Estonia by killed. In the same years, Estonian Swedes almost completely left their homeland.

As a result of assimilation processes, the Finnish people of Livonia, which gave the name of Livonia and Governorate of Livonia, completely disappeared. Once a very huge nation, numbering up to 50 thousand people in the middle of the 13th century, almost completely Latvized in ancient times. In the middle of the 19th century, there were only 2,324 Livs. Already the All-Russian census of 1897 did not take into account the Livs. In 2011, 167 residents of Latvia called themselves Livs, because they had a share of Livian blood. But none of them knew the language of their ancestors. The last native speaker of the Lebanese language died in Canada in 2013. Nowadays, the Latvian language enjoys state patronage in Latvia. A unique case in world law: a completely extinct language has official status. And this is in Latvia where the Russian language, native to half of the inhabitants and understandable to almost everyone, does not have such a status.

Thus, the Second World War also affected the Baltic peoples not only by the disappearance of Germans, Jews and the decline in the number of Poles but also by a general demographic

catastrophe. As a result of emigration, deportations, genocide, and military losses, the decline in 1939–45 was about 1.7 million people, which accounted for 28% of the three Baltic republics' population (6 million people in 1939) (*Kabuzan, 2009*).

Features of the Policy of Segregation in the Modern Society of the Baltic States

After the restoration of independence in 1991, the entire population of the Baltic States is divided in two categories at the official level—'titular', i.e., native people, and 'migrants', i.e., 'Russian-speaking'. According to the official history, the titular ones are the original and permanent residents of the Baltic countries, and the Russians are only the newly arrived 'migrants'. Immediately after the declaration of independence, the authorities of the new Baltic countries introduced the concept of 'non-citizens' (in fact, restricting the rights of all migrants).

On February 6, 1992, the Supreme Council of Estonia issued a Decree restoring the Estonian Citizenship Act of 1938. Following the Decree, only persons who had citizenship on June 16, 1940, and their direct descendants were automatically considered citizens. As a result, only about 120 thousand of the almost 470 thousand Russians were able to become Estonian citizens automatically.

The Law on Latvian Citizenship was passed on July 22, 1994. According to it, the original citizens are persons, who were citizens of Latvia before June 17, 1940, and, also, their descendants who were registered. As a result of the application of this Law, only about 280 thousand of the almost 900 thousand Russians received citizenship.

'Non-citizens' are discriminated against at all levels, e.g., in Latvia, there are 70 differences in the rights of citizens and non-citizens: restrictions on holding positions in various sectors (in the public, private and public sectors)—19, 8 and 11 differences, respectively; restrictions on the right to property—9 differences; restrictions on private entrepreneurship—6 differences; social rights—3 differences; other rights—14 differences. And after Latvia acceded to the EU, some classes (13 in total), still inaccessible to non-citizens of Latvia, became available to EU citizens. Particularly, this applies to the right to stand as a candidate and vote in local elections allowed the EU citizens with six months of residence experience in Latvia. However, it has still forbidden to non-citizens, most of whom are local natives, and most of the rest have lived in the country for more than 30 years. All this apartheid-like process is not discussed by human rights activists and European democracies.

At the same time, although the official mass media of Estonia and Latvia states that Russians are discriminated against only because they came to the republics after 1940, this is not true. So, in 2013, the Latvian Seimas adopted a law, according to which the right to dual citizenship of Latvia is provided only for ethnic Latvians. In other words, the descendants of Latvian emigrants from the Russian Empire who left long before 1918, who never lived in free Latvia during the first independence, who do not speak the Latvian language at all, can count on obtaining Latvian citizenship without problems. And this is in contrast to the Russians who were born, have worked all their lives in Latvia, and remain 'non-citizens'.

In Lithuania, there is no such apartheid-like regulation at the official level. But it is so hard to call Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians 'titular' nations. 'Titularity' has always assumed independence, and the Baltic peoples were only completely subordinate for most of their

existence. The truly titular peoples in the Baltic States are the Russians, also, the vanished Ostsee Germans and, to some extent, the Poles of Lithuania.

Historically, many Russians in the Baltic Republics are natives of the Baltic States, and Lithuanians, for example, in their capital, Vilnius, are post-war migrants. As always, it is difficult with Jews, among whom there are many natives and migrants.

As the modern author P.M. Koriavtsev notes, “clearly, which is characteristic of a large part of the representatives of the titular nation in the Baltic republics hostility (often turning into hatred) to Russia and ‘Russian-speaking’ is not caused by any wrongful actions of the object of dislike (as manifested long before any repressive measures, in almost all cases, the Russian side which bore a return character), and is entirely rational and is a specific feature of their world. Further, it is necessary to consider that the ‘Russian-speaking’ population of the Baltic states is, in fact, no less ‘indigenous’ than the representatives of the titular nations or the same Ostsee Germans, and therefore the Baltic rhetoric about the ‘occupiers’ that has become familiar has a frankly speculative, Nazi character. In general, the anti-Russian policy of the Baltic states is caused by reasons of a completely unconstructive nature, and one should not count on its sanity and the prospects for a reasonable correction with an arbitrarily loyal attitude of Russia to them.” (*Koriavtsev, 2005*)

As always is the case in regions with mixed populations, inter-ethnic marriages in the Baltic States were very common in all historical periods. Latvia alone in the Soviet era had one of the highest rates of ethnically mixed marriages in the USSR, exceeding a quarter of all marriages performed in the republic (275 ethnically mixed families for every thousand). In general, by the end of the Soviet era, about 50% of Latvians, about the same number of Estonians, and about 40% of Lithuanians were in ethnically mixed marriages (*Rutkenich, 1992*). In general, it is difficult to find a ‘native’ Baltic who does not have at least 1/8 of Russian blood.

Finally, due to the political situation, a voluntary change of nationality was not uncommon. So, many Lithuanians got drunk, there were a lot of ‘juniper Germans’ (as they ironically called the voluntarily numbed Estonians), and in the Latvian lands, there was the concept of ‘shameful Latvians’, to refer to Latvians posing as Germans. Many Latvians and Estonians, who had converted to Orthodoxy, did not speak Russian. During the period of both the first and second independence, there were opposite cases when people of very different ethnic origins tried to join the ‘titular’ nations of the Baltic States. So, even in Latvia between 1930 and 1935, the entire population of the country increased by 50 thousand people, but the number of Latvians in the country increased by 77.6 thousand. In the 1930s, the government of the Latvian dictator K. Ulmanis pursued a policy of ‘Latvishization’ (*latviskošana*). In the course of this policy, many people of various nationalities, who may have had Latvian blood in their veins, as well as children whose parents were Latvian, were automatically counted by statistics as representatives of the titular nation. A completely similar policy was carried out in 1920-40 in Estonia. Thus, between 1922 and 1934, the population growth was 19,354, but the number of Estonians increased by 22,544.

Something similar was happening under the new independence. In Soviet Latvia, between 1970 and 1979, the number of Latvians increased by 2 thousand people. However, over the next decade, between 1979 and 1989, the number of Latvians suddenly increased by 44 thousand people. The reason is clear: in the context of the rise of the nationalism of ‘indigenous’

nationalities, many people born from mixed marriages preferred (or so their parents preferred) to turn into Latvians. However, many migrants, due to careerist considerations, also turned into ardent 'titular' adherents of nationalism.

At the second independence, the mixing continues. Russian Russian mothers in Latvia out of almost 5 thousand children born to Russian mothers, only 60% had a Russian father. In 26% of cases, the father of the child of the Russian mother was a Latvian (*Suschiy, 2018*). In 2015, out of 5,27 thousand Latvian children born to Russian mothers from Latvian fathers, 1,16 thousand were registered as Latvians. No less significant is the fact that only 159 out of 14,1 thousand children born to Russian fathers by Latvians were written in Russians (*Suschiy, 2018*).

To assimilate the local Russians, the Baltic authorities impose on them a change of names and surnames in a local way. Between July 1, 2010, and July 1, 2014, 195 surnames were changed to Estonian by order of the Minister of Internal Affairs, and in 129 cases, the person, who wanted to change their surname, was Russian by nationality. As reported by the web site rus.err.ee, in 2010, 12 surnames were Estonized, 38 in 2011, 59 in 2012, 60 in 2013, and 26 in 2014. During the research, it was established that many new Estonians consciously decided to assimilate with the aboriginal population.

According to anthropological characteristics, Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians belong to a large Caucasian race, mainly to its northern branch. Among them, there are several anthropological types. Thus, Western and southern Latvians, northwestern Lithuanians, Western Estonians and Livs belong to the Western Baltic type of the Atlantic-Baltic minor race. It is characterized by very light skin, light hair, blue or grey eyes, tall stature, the large size of the head and face. Along with this, the indigenous peoples of the South-Eastern Baltic States also include representatives of other anthropological types of northern Caucasians. Most Russians and Poles living in the region are also Northern Europeans.

Historically, the inhabitants of the Baltic States were the peoples belonging to the Baltic or Letto-Lithuanian branch of the Indo-European family (the ancestors of the Latvians, Lithuanians and now extinct Prussians), and the Finnish ethnic groups of the Ural family (Estonians and Livs). However, these ethnic groups themselves appeared somewhat later.

The Baltic States have always been among the regions of Europe sparsely populated, although the population density in the Baltic States is higher than the average in Russia. As the modern American historian of Latvian origin A. Plakans notes, "if we operate with demographic criteria, since the 13th century, the lands of the Baltic coast have never experienced a demographic boom, but constant internal migration has always provided population growth at the end of each century." (*Plakans, 2016*) Indeed, overall population growth in the region has always been low, and migration has had a large impact on the absolute and relative population size. The German conquerors who ruled the Baltic States for seven centuries, being an absolute minority of the regional population, tried to prevent a high increase in the indigenous population. Some demographic growth occurred only in the 19th century and the first decade and a half of the 20th century. But even then, the total natural increase in the Baltic States was significantly lower than the national level. In Estonia and Latvia, the total growth rate in 1851–1860. It was equal to 7.9% against 12.0% in Russia as a whole, in 1911–1916 this indicator decreased to 2.9% against 13.2% in Russia. In 1914, 7,046,1 thousand people lived in the territories of the three future Baltic republics (according to other sources, 6.5 million inhabitants) (Russia 1913, 1995).

However, it was during the periods of independence that the Baltic States died out. In 1920–40, the population increased slightly. The population of Estonia, according to the 1922 census, was 1,107.1 thousand people, which was by 149 thousand people more than in 1897. However, it should note that the population of Estonia was significantly expanded due to the inclusion of Russian territories in its composition, according to the Treaty of Yuriev in 1920 (Pechora region and the lands to the east of the Narova River with Ivangorod), where 64 thousand people lived. Between 1913 and 1939. The increase in the population of Estonia was slightly less than 100 thousand people, and mainly due to the re-emigration of 38 thousand Estonians from St Petersburg. But if we take the natural increase, then between 1922 and 1939, the population of Estonia increased from 1,108,000 to 1,134,000 inhabitants ([Zetterberg, 2013](#)), or by 15.4 thousand people within the modern borders of Estonia ([Manakov, 2017](#)). According to the terms of the Treaty of St George in 1920, as already mentioned, the Pechora district of Pskov Region became part of Estonia. 22% of the inhabitants of this area were Setu-Orthodox Finno-Ugric people. And all the Setu were declared Estonians and were counted as such by the official statistics. At the same time, Russians, who then made up 8.2% of the total population of Estonia, provided about half of the total natural population growth of the republic ([Pumpyansky, 1931](#)). In Lithuania, the population increased by only 52 thousand people. Half of the increase was due to the re-emigration of Lithuanians. However, the number of residents of Latvia has decreased by more than 600 thousand people ([Karlov, 2010](#)). So, in 1913, on the territory of modern Latvia lived 2,493 thousand inhabitants, in 1935—1,905 thousand. In Estonia, the Russian-language newspaper *Daily Vesti* in no. 2 for 1937, concerning the official authorities, predicted that (unless something extraordinary happens) the entire population of Estonia will be 860 thousand in 2000. An extraordinary event happened: the annexation of the USSR and the Second World War. And in 1989, the population of the Estonian Republic was 1,565 thousand people (including Estonians—963 thousand).

A new demographic rise, caused by a large-scale mechanical increase, occurred during the Soviet period of the region's history. In 1950–1989, the population of Latvia grew by 42%, Lithuania by 44%, and Estonia by 54%. The entire population of the three Baltic Republics in 1989 reached the hugest number in its history, reaching 7,929 thousand people. At that time, 1,573 thousand people lived in Estonia, 2,666 thousand in Latvia, and 3,690 thousand in Lithuania. In the Kaliningrad region in 1989, there were 871 thousand inhabitants. In total, 8,800 thousand inhabitants lived in the Baltic States.

As of 1989, the three autochthonous ethnic groups of the Baltic States accounted for 1.9% of the USSR population, and together with the non-ethnic (primarily Russian) one of the regions—2.8%. There were 3,068 million Lithuanians (of which 2,92 million lived in Lithuania, i.e., 95% of the ethnic group).

The number of Latvians was 1,459 thousand, of which 95.1% of the ethnic group lived in Latvia. In general, from 1959 to 1989, the indigenous population of Latvia grew by only 90 thousand people (to 1387.8 thousand people), slightly falling short of the level of 1930 and much inferior to 1935, which reflected the results of the 'Latvization' of the population. In the 1980s, from 35 to 42 thousand people were born in Latvia every year. The maximum was reached in 1987 when 42 thousand children were born. Another thing is that the birth rate of Russians exceeded the birth rate of Latvians.

The number of Estonians in 1989 was 1.027 million (963 thousand, or 93.8%, lived directly in Estonia).

A particularly severe demographic crisis erupted during the ‘second independence’ since 1991. The Baltic States set a kind of world record for the loss of population in peacetime as a result of depopulation and emigration. Between 1990 and 2020. The Baltic States lost 2 million inhabitants. The reason for the large-scale decline in the Baltic population was a combination of three factors—low birth rate, high mortality and mass emigration. Already in the middle of the second decade of the 21st century, the three Baltic republics had fewer inhabitants than a century ago (in 1914—6,536 thousand, in 2016—6,174 thousand). At the beginning of 2020, the Lithuanian population was 2,668 thousand inhabitants, Latvia—1,865 thousand, Estonia—1,292 thousand. In total-5 825 thousand inhabitants. It is no accident that the Baltic lands were called “temporarily inhabited territories”.

At the same time, the decline in the total population was explained not only by the outflow of the Russian population but also by the extinction of the ‘titular’ nations. It is significant that there were 1,318,000 Latvians in Latvia in 1897, 1,467,000 in 1935, 1,298,000 in 1959, 1,387,000 in 1989, 1,284,000 in 2011, and 1,263,000 as of January 1, 2019! However, after all, many people of mixed origin have declared themselves Latvians, so there are even fewer ‘real’ Latvians, i.e., when analyzing data on the native language of Latvian residents, according to the 2011 census, you can find a lot of interesting data. The total number of residents for whom the native language was Latvian in 2000 was 1,383 thousand, and according to 2011 data—1,165 thousand people. There was a 15.8% decrease, which was even slightly more than the decrease in the total population (13.0%).

Estonians have similar problems. There were 790,000 Estonians on the lands of modern Estonia in 1881, 867.8 thousand in 1897, 1,052 thousand in 1913 (the largest number in history), 969 thousand in 1922, 893 thousand in 1959, already 963 thousand people in 1989, and 905.8 thousand in 2016. As the study showed, the increase of almost 135 years was insignificant.

The situation of the Lithuanians, whose number doubled in the 20th century, is somewhat better. At the end of the 19th century, there were 1,620,000 Lithuanians within modern Lithuania, 2,150,000 in 1959, and 2,992,000 in 1989! The population of Lithuania grew by 28 thousand people a year for 40 years! At the same time, the share of migrants from other union republics was 6-8 thousand people per year. But after 1992, the Lithuanians became the world record holders for extinction and considering emigration, the population is reduced by almost 50 thousand people a year. 26% of all households in Lithuania have only one parent. As of the beginning of 2019, there were 1.3 times fewer children in Lithuania than older people. In Lithuania, as of January 1, 2020, under 15 years of age accounted for 13.8% of the total population, and those over 64 years of age—16.5%. However, many young people actually live abroad and often were born there. So, a large part of the Lithuanians in the category “...under 15 years” is actually a cut-off slice for the nation. But pensioners mostly live out their lives at home.

Latvia has similar problems, too. In 2020, 17,483 newborns were registered in Latvia. It was an anti-record—the lowest birth rate in a century! (recall that in Soviet times, 40 thousand babies were born in Latvia every year). The results are clear: if in 2009 the share of young people aged

18-24 was 11% of the country's population (238 thousand people), then young people made up only 6.4% of the Latvian one (122 thousand) a decade later.

It should take into account that in the first and second decades of the 21st century, children were born by representatives of the older generation, who were born in the 1980s when the birth rate was quite high. In other words, when the small generations born in the 21st century begin to have their children, the birth rate will decrease even more. However, even now in Latvia in the age group from 18 to 24 years, 48 children are born per 1000 women, i.e., three times less than in the 1980s.

Ageing of the population has become one of the most important problems of the Baltic States. In Lithuania, the ageing of society looks particularly impressive, given that in 1990, the median age (average age) was 33 years, and Lithuanians were one of the six youngest ethnic groups in Europe. Now the Lithuanian society is ageing twice as fast as the average in the European Union (EU).

As the modern Russian researcher, A. Nosovich writes, "...the Baltic states will not turn into poorhouses. The almshouses, in any case, have service personnel. They will turn into Mount Obasute from Japanese fairy tales, to which the Japanese attributed their old men and women to die of hunger and cold." (*Nosovich, 2019*)

Thus, the Baltic countries exported abroad, perhaps already a critical part of their breeding population, but did not acquire the economic capacity that would ensure them the status of countries attractive for the re-emigration of their citizens. These States may quickly face a natural collapse, as they will have a much larger population in need of age-related care than the means to provide that care.

Perspectives for the Development of the Baltic Peoples in the 2020s

However, for all its difficulties, the Baltic States can be very attractive for guest workers from the post-Soviet space. After the Maidan of 2014 and the beginning of the civil war in Ukraine, a huge number of Ukrainian labour migrants rushed to the Baltic States. Thanks to Ukrainian immigrants, the decline in the population in the region has slowed down.

As of January 1, 2020, 2 million 794.3 thousand people lived in Lithuania—this is 145 (one hundred and forty-five) souls more than a year earlier, the Statistics Department under the Ministry of Finance happily reported. However, the entire increase came from immigrants who arrived. In 2019, 19.7 thousand foreigners immigrated to Lithuania—this is 7.3 thousand more than a year earlier, which indicates a fairly high, by Lithuanian standards, growth rate. Today, migrants from third countries make up about half of all immigrants. The first place is occupied by Ukrainians (8.9 thousand), the second—by Belarusians (6.4 thousand), the third—by Russians (1 thousand) (*Ivanov, 2020*). The Lithuanians themselves continue to emigrate and die out.

The same year 2019 in Estonia was also marked by an influx of labour from Ukraine. According to the Police and Border Guard Department, 25,000 Ukrainian citizens received work permits in Estonia out of the total number of foreigners in 2019. However, Estonian politicians, fervently supporting the Russophobic Kyiv regime, nevertheless saw that Ukrainians were not going to become Estonians. Moreover, once away from the hysterical Bandera people, the Ukrainians in the Baltic States began to rapidly re-Russify, forgetting the Ukrainian *mova*. Prominent Estonian politician Mart Helme said that Ukrainians are more likely to integrate into

the Russian-speaking community, and “for us, this is a cultural and demographic problem” (*Vital, 2020*).

In 2020, due to quarantine measures caused by the COVID-19 virus pandemic, Estonia could not obtain seasonal workers from Ukraine for agricultural work. As a result, there was a real threat of death in the fields of the entire crop, especially strawberries. Former Finance Minister Jurgen Ligi was indignant: “It is clear that the Estonians no longer harvest the crop. Indeed, nobody milks cows. This time, even the seedlings could not be planted according to the plan and weeded them. A reliable labour force is waiting in Ukraine, but unlike other European countries, they will not be allowed here for the season.”

The mass emigration is just killing these countries. A critical mass of citizens of childbearing age has already left the Baltic States. Significantly, 20.8% of the population left Lithuania by 2018, and 25.3% of the population left Latvia. It should note that even in Bosnia, where the war raged in the 1990s, fewer residents left (19.9% of the total population). However, according to indirect indicators (water consumption in cities, the volume of purchases of food and fuel, the size of cargo transportation, the voltage of the power grid), the population of the three countries is less than the official figures. According to the 2011 census, it turned out that 20% of the total housing stock in Latvia was empty. Also, the ability to fill out electronic census questionnaires along with a vote on the Internet leads to the fact that the ‘exact’ numbers of residents living in the Baltic States are not accurate.

Since all three republics have been members of the European Union since 2004, the Balts who moved to any other EU country are taken into account especially so the real scale of emigration is difficult to determine, i.e., if a Lithuanian family lives in Britain and has children, they fall into the ‘natural growth’ of Lithuania, although they also receive British citizenship by birthright. In 2011, the Lithuanian authorities added another 16% of those born abroad (mainly in the UK) to the number of those born in the republic itself, which is called, in one fell swoop.

The reasons for the cunning of the Baltic statistics are clear because many Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians hide their stay abroad not to pay taxes on their earnings there. Some of them are registered as unemployed, so, on the contrary, expats from the Baltic States can receive a small allowance. Emigrants often do not declare their departure. They pay medical fees to be eligible for treatment in the Baltic States, which is much cheaper than in their places of permanent residence in Western Europe (high and quality affordable medicine is one of the legacies of the Soviet time). As long as the family or individual citizens who have left the country retain the citizenship of Latvia, Lithuania or Estonia, they are included in the statistics of their countries. The authorities are also inclined to ‘improve’ statistics, since up to 20% of the budget revenue of the Baltic republics is made up of EU subsidies, and they are calculated based on the total population. Finally, there is a psychological and propaganda reason to hide the size of the Balts exodus because it turns out that the whole struggle for the freedom of the Baltic was conducted to leave it.

Emigration from the Baltic States differs in one significant indicator. Contrary to the hopes of the nationalist part of the citizens that the Russians would leave, and they would live in an ethnically ‘clean’ country, it turned out the opposite. By definition, more Estonians and Latvians went abroad than Russian ‘non-citizens’ of Estonia and Latvia respectively. The reason is clear because the ‘titular’ had the citizenship of a member state of the European Union and could

more easily get a job than the 'non-Europeans'. Non-citizens (this is the overwhelming majority, Russians) did not have the opportunity to get a job abroad legally. So, they were forced to stay at home in Estonia and Latvia.

Emigrants from the Baltic States quite often marry natives of the country of residence. A life partner with non-Latvian citizenship in 55% of women and 29% of the men, who left Latvia. 27% of single women live abroad with children, and only 9% of men are single fathers (Khazan, 2020). This is how the process of the gradual dissolution of the Baltic nations outside the Homeland looks clearly.

Mass emigration from the Baltic States has another feature: it almost does not give any significant re-emigration. The vast majority of leaving Balts consciously plan to stay in their new country of residence forever and integrate into the local society.

The most characteristic feature of the Baltic diasporas is the rapid voluntary assimilation. Most of the descendants of emigrants of the 19th and 20th centuries were almost completely assimilated into the countries of residence. Thus, there are more than 1.3 million ethnic Lithuanians in the United States, but only 300 thousand identified themselves in the 2015 census as Lithuanians, and most of them are recent emigrants. (By the way, in 1959, there were 450,000 American Lithuanians). There are 48,000 Latvians in the United States. It is no less significant than in the United States for the decade 1990-2000. The Estonian diaspora even decreased from 27 thousand to 25 thousand people, and by 2015 it had already decreased to 21 thousand, although the 90s were a time of mass emigration of Estonians overseas (*Tammarnu et al., 2010*). The large Lithuanian ethnic communities in Latin America, numbering hundreds of thousands of people, have almost completely disappeared – the Lithuanians have disappeared among the residents.

This is because the Balts have always been ideal emigrants. Literate, hardworking, law-abiding (it is significant that nowhere in the world did the Baltic ethnic mafia arise), they always sought to integrate into the local society. After a few years of living in a new country, the Balts tend to become 'their own' for residents, often names and surnames are changed locally.

Thus, in the modern world, the influence of the Baltic countries is a value that tends to zero. The American magazine U.S. News makes an annual list of the most influential countries (based on such criteria as GDP, population, GDP per capita, appearance in the news headlines, participation in the formation of global economic models). In 2019, the Baltic states took the last place in terms of influence in the world (*Ranking of the most powerful countries, 2019*).

Conclusion

Thus, the study has analyzed the ethnic state of the three Baltic countries based on the three meanings of the name of the region itself. The analysis showed that the indigenous population of the republics is rapidly decreasing due to the change in the political configuration of Europe which they have become a member. Open borders and unambiguous subordination to the EU have led to change towards the predominance of the part of the population in the states' ethnic composition, i.e., people considered 'non-citizens' or has limited rights.

The decline in the population is due to the possibility of labour migration within the EU. The mechanism of covering up the actual outflow due to double statistics no longer helps to

keep the population growth within the framework of positive results. One leads to additional political tension within the Baltic States.

The reduction in the 'citizens' number leads to a reduction in the labour market which simultaneously decreases due to the natural decline of industry (in Estonia and Latvia). Political preferences harm changes in the structure of the economy of countries. Some enterprises are closed due to retaliatory sanctions from the Russian Federation, others cannot compete with European manufacturers. The artificially created specialization structure of the EU member states also has a specific impact.

At the same time, the understanding of hidden nationalism remains stable. This is evident in the constitutional provisions of Estonia and Latvia, which clearly and unambiguously prescribe the division of the population into 'citizens' and 'non-citizens'. These apartheid-like social factors deepen not only the split in society, which is supposed to be gradually levelled by the extinction of generations of the Soviet past until the 2030s but also the real ratio of 'aborigines' and 'non-aborigines' in their ethnic composition.

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