

## Baltic Refugees of World War II and Their Descendants: Resettlement and Adaptation in Four Lands

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**Abstract:** At the end of World War II, an unprecedented burst of politically motivated emigration occurred from Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, to escape incorporation into the Soviet Union. This report describes processes of resettlement and adaptation in four lands: Sweden, Canada, Australia, and the United States of America. The analysis examines how refugees' and descendants' experiences were shaped by selectivity of evacuation, camps for displaced persons, clustering patterns, and host country policies. The traumas, disruptions, and deprivations experienced during several years of war, foreign occupation, and rootlessness in refugee camps did not prove to create enduring disadvantages, as the second generation more than made up for the ground lost (at least for several years) by their parents. The yearslong journey of the refugees in finding new homes and new careers turned out to be most conducive to the creation of a global network of cohesive, viable, and interdependent ethnic communities. The Baltic refugees prefer to think of themselves as maintaining the traditions of their homelands, but they learned to do some important things differently on the way to new lands, through a process of social levelling and cooperation within their own local ethnic group, as well as through interacting with other local communities of their own kind, with other Baltic groups, and with their new neighbors in the host countries. Later generations will not continue to do everything like their elders did, but substantial numbers of descendants still show a rather high degree of commitment to maintaining their cultural and even linguistic heritage in some form.

**Keywords:** Baltic refugees, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania

### Introduction

For thousands of years, the population in each of the Baltic countries consisted mostly of the same core group, despite influxes of immigrants from nearby countries and departures of natives. Changes in ethnic composition accelerated after the incorporation into nearby empires in recent centuries. The outflow of natives, mostly to Russia and the New World, was long motivated primarily by economic factors, as emigres sought land or jobs.

In late 1944, unprecedented numbers rushed to leave Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. The motive was political: fear of a regime change. This report examines the basis for this exodus, the process of relocation, and adaptations in four of the main destination lands – Sweden, Canada, Australia, and the United States of America (USA). Each of these countries drew thousands of refugees from at least two of the Baltic groups. Britain and Germany were also quite important as new homelands for Latvian refugees, with counts of 14,000 and 12,000 respectively by 1951's end, but Britain's count dropped to 10,000 by the end of the 1950s, reflecting resettlement in the other main English-speaking countries.<sup>1</sup>

### Sources of Information

The analysis uses census reports and other publications about Baltic refugees. The author also draws on his personal experiences in the Estonian communities of Gothenburg (Sweden) and Indianapolis (USA), as well as observations made during frequent visits to Baltic communities elsewhere. Some material comes from the memoirs of Erich Haas (my great-uncle) and from my interviews with return migrants in the post-Soviet era.

The latter group comprises 109 Estonians, 41 Latvians, and 19 Lithuanians contacted between 1996 and 2014. It was not a random sample, as there was no comprehensive list of return migrants available, but it includes almost all such persons whom I learned about and could contact. Three generations are included: those born in the old homelands, their children born outside these lands, and grandchildren at least 18 years of age. Inclusion required residence in a post-Soviet Baltic country for at least six months. Some opted not to establish permanent residence there, and returned abroad. The semi-structured interviews were conducted primarily in face-to-face meetings with tape-recording, a few by telephone with note-taking, and a few by e-mail correspondence. Excerpts of responses given in the Estonian or Swedish languages are presented here in English.

Another basis for characterizing refugees and descendants is my own study of the small Estonian community of Indianapolis, in the north-central region of the USA (1992). It included all Estonian Society members in the metropolitan area who had Estonian ancestry and joined between its founding in 1952 and May 1, 1991, plus descendants and spouses of Estonian ancestry. Data on 138 persons came from membership

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<sup>1</sup> Andrejs Plakans, *The Reluctant Exiles: Latvians in the West after World War II* (Leiden: Brill/Ferdinand Schöningh, 2021), 141, 162.

applications and interviews with two dozen informants who had lived in the city for at least three decades.

### Reasons for Leaving

The Baltic lands endured a year of Soviet occupation from June 1940. Many of those deemed as hostile or unreliable elements endured brutal treatment, especially during the Soviet retreat from Nazi German forces. Similar violence had occurred in 1918–20, when the Baltic republics were established and communists fought for regimes modelled after and allied with Soviet Russia. As Soviet forces returned in September 1944, people who had not aligned with them but had acquired fighting skills, occupied prominent positions, owned businesses, or displayed leadership abilities had good reasons to fear deportation, repression, or execution. This included military and police officers, government officials, teachers, lawyers, doctors, and clergy. Those in creative professions – artists, writers, actors – could again expect interference and censorship under Soviet rule, if their work was judged inimical to the communist movement to overthrow the capitalist order and abolish private enterprise, ostensibly to benefit the lower classes.<sup>2</sup> The great selectivity of the refugee stream is aptly illustrated in detailed reports for Latvia. Putniņš notes departures from the homeland for 58% of medical professionals and dentists, 70% of pharmacists, and 42% of engineers.<sup>3</sup> For active ministers of Lutheran congregations, Plakans reports a number of departures which amounts to 60%. If departures had been proportional to the refugees' share of Latvia's population, only 10% would have fled, in any given occupational category. For Lithuania, Dapkutė reports the departure of 50% of the academic staff at Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas, about 70% of the Writers' Union's members, 25% of priests, and almost 100% of ballet and opera artists in Kaunas.<sup>4</sup> A departure proportional to refugees' share of Lithuania's population would have been just 2% from each category.

<sup>2</sup> Milda Danys, *Lithuanian Immigration to Canada after the Second World War* (Toronto: Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1986), 9; Toivo U. Raun, *Estonia and the Estonians* (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution, 1991), 150–1, 153–6; Plakans, *The Reluctant Exiles*, 13, 32–3.

<sup>3</sup> Aldis L. Putniņš, *Latvians in Australia: Alienation and Assimilation* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1981), 16, citing E. Dunsdorfs' 1968 book, *Trešā Latvija*.

<sup>4</sup> Daiva Dapkutė, "Lithuanian Diaspora: From Displaced Persons to Diaspora Politics," in *Population Displacement in Lithuania in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Thomas Balkelis and Violeta Davoliūtė (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2016), 243.

Even farmers had reasons to fear Soviet rule, on the basis of newspaper coverage of collectivization of farms in the Soviet Union in the 1930s. Farmers could draw inferences from their own experiences under the first Soviet occupation of 1940–41, when some collective farms were set up in Baltic lands. Although participation was voluntary then, it was clear from burdensome taxation, production delivery requirements, low fixed prices, and discriminatory treatment of private farmers, especially prosperous ones, that Soviet policy meant to promote collectivization.<sup>5</sup> Yet farmers were loath to leave the land only recently granted to veterans who had fought for national independence, or acquired in the previous generation or two. Farmers also hesitated to abandon buildings they had made, animals dependent on them, and crops almost ready for harvest.<sup>6</sup> In the study of Estonians in Indianapolis, only 1 of 69 (1%) individuals whose occupational situations were known was involved in farming at the time of departure,<sup>7</sup> despite Estonia's predominantly rural population (67% in 1939).<sup>8</sup> In 1947, a registry of 111,495 Latvians in DP camps, compiled by the exiles' Latvian Central Committee, listed an occupational category of "agriculture-related occupations" for 20.2% of the individuals, only slightly less than the 20.5% for the largest category, of white-collar (non-manual) professions and occupations. If students are excluded, then the two largest categories each account for about 26% of Latvia's labor force. This still means a substantial underrepresentation of farmers, in light of census data on urbanization, at 34.6% in 1935.<sup>9</sup> With about two-thirds living in rural areas, where the overwhelming majority of people were involved in farming, proportional representation would require much more than a quarter of the refugee stream to be comprised of agriculturalists.

Refugees' departure on the eve of Soviet reoccupation in September 1944 was typically contemplated beforehand, but final arrangements were often made hastily, after the rapid collapse of the front. Those who fled did not necessarily think they were abandoning their homeland forever.<sup>10</sup> Erich Haas wrote (1960–68): "At that time, the thought was that it might not be necessary to go far, we will soon turn back again, when the opportunity comes for that and the situation at the front improves."<sup>11</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Raun, *Estonia and the Estonians*, 152–3; Andrejs Plakans, *The Latvians* (Stanford: Hoover Institution, 1995), 145–6.

<sup>6</sup> Erich Haas, *Mälestusi vöõrsilt*, Indianapolis, 1960–68 (Unpublished memoirs in 6 handwritten volumes. A copy is archived at the Estonian Literary Museum in Tartu.); Plakans, *The Reluctant Exiles*, 3.

<sup>7</sup> Ain Haas, "The Estonian Community of Indianapolis," in *Proceedings of the Eighth Meeting of the Finno-Ugric Studies Association of Canada*, ed. Joel Ashmore Nevis and Juta Kõvamees Kitching (Vancouver: FUSAC, 1992), 9.

<sup>8</sup> Raun, *Estonia and the Estonians*, 131.

<sup>9</sup> Plakans, *The Latvians*, 108.

<sup>10</sup> Dapkutė, "Lithuanian Diaspora," 242; Plakans, *The Reluctant Exiles*, 43.

<sup>11</sup> Haas, *Mälestusi vöõrsilt*.

## Escape Routes

Escape depended on relatively accurate information about troop movements, as well as access to transportation by ships, trains, and convoys of motor vehicles. Urbanites had advantages in these respects, thus their overrepresentation amid the refugees. Among Indianapolis Estonians, for example, refugees from the three largest cities of Tallinn, Tartu, and Pärnu were especially common. Only 23% of the sample came from rural areas, although 42% had been born in them. The population of Estonia was still overwhelmingly rural (67%) in the 1939 census.

The main escape route went south to Germany. Those not belonging to minorities slated for extermination in Nazi ideology (such as Jews and Roma) generally found the German occupation more bearable than Soviet rule, so evacuating alongside German troops was not so daunting. The widespread knowledge of the German language in the Baltic lands was helpful in arranging transport, lodging, medical care, etc. in Germany, as well as in new lands with sizable German immigrant communities. Some lower estimates of the number of Baltic wartime refugees arriving in Germany range from 160,000 to 190,000.<sup>12</sup> Up to 40,000 more used the secondary escape route through Sweden, discussed below.

In his review of relevant literature, Kasekamp reports a total of 280,000 Baltic wartime refugees.<sup>13</sup> The latter figure comprised 140,000 Latvians, 75,000 Estonians, and 65,000 Lithuanians. The last of these figures is only slightly higher than other estimates.<sup>14</sup> It represents about 2% of the prewar population of 2,900,000 in 1939 (excluding Klaipėda region). Raun suggests that the Estonian figure may actually have been up to 100,000, which would have been about 9% of the prewar population of 1,134,000 in 1939.<sup>15</sup> A recent count of Latvian refugees puts their total at 171,000 civilians in Germany; 25,000 ex-soldiers who became prisoners of war in western Allied zones in various Central European lands; and 5,000 asylum seekers in Sweden. These counts add up to 201,000, which would have been about 10% of the prewar population of 2,000,000 in 1939.<sup>16</sup> Adding Raun's count for Estonians, Plakans' for Latvians, and Kasekamp's for Lithuanians yields a grand total of as many as 366,000 Baltic refugees, or 6% of the three countries' total prewar population.

<sup>12</sup> Inta Gale Carpenter, "Baltic Peoples," in *Peopling Indiana: The Ethnic Experience*, ed. Robert M. Taylor Jr. and Connie A. McBirney (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1996), 60.

<sup>13</sup> Andres Kasekamp, *A History of the Baltic States* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 139.

<sup>14</sup> E.g. Dapkutė, "Lithuanian Diaspora," 241, citing *Lietuvių enciklopedija* 1955, 5: 148.

<sup>15</sup> Raun, *Estonia and the Estonians*, 166, 181.

<sup>16</sup> Plakans, *The Reluctant Exiles*, 45, 56, 152.

In Germany, most refugees crowded into camps with barracks set up for prisoners of war. They were often put to work, for example, to repair bombing damage that Germany endured until the end of the war in May 1945. Refugees usually spent two to four more years in camps during the Allied occupation of Germany. Opportunities to enter Canada and Australia arose in 1947, and in late 1948 admission to the USA began.<sup>17</sup>

There was an alternative water route westward to Sweden, typically in open fishing boats. Many on the western coast and islands of Estonia chose this option. Some Latvians also did so, after Soviet planes began bombing large ships en route to Germany. In Sweden there were also camps for refugees, but these were occupied only for a few weeks or months, due to rapid dispersal to cities.

### Destinations

The exodus to Sweden actually began in 1940, after the establishment of Soviet bases on several Estonian islands. Evacuation of some 8,000 people of the Swedish-speaking minority from insular and coastal areas continued under German occupation. Displaced fishers and farmers were initially sent to fishing harbors and farms, where they found it demeaning to work under others for little reward. Most resettled in the Stockholm area. This was facilitated by the expedited granting of Swedish citizenship, with the right to relocate freely.<sup>18</sup>

Swedish-Estonians' ancestors had come to Estonia, starting in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century. Descendants spoke their own dialects of Swedish, but adapted well to standard Swedish, particularly when their children went to regular schools and household conversation drifted toward this form of the language. Standard Swedish was already familiar to them before evacuation, through their own newspapers, as well as religious literature and other materials from Sweden. Publication of their newspaper was eventually transferred to Sweden. Much new research on this minority's history, traditions, and dialects has been published, annual reunions feature performers of their folk music and dancing, and they have a library and museum in Stockholm (now at the Estonian House). Swedish-Estonian refugees assimilated easily, but retained a distinctive identity, even in subsequent generations.

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<sup>17</sup> Carpenter, "Baltic Peoples," 60.

<sup>18</sup> Elmar Nyman, "En minoritet i minoriteten: estlandssvenskarna i Sverige," in *De första båtflyktingarna: En antologi om balterna i Sverige*, ed. Lars-Gunnar Eriksson (Stockholm: Statens Invandrarverk, 1985), 90, 97–106.

The wave of refugees arriving in Sweden in late 1944 was much larger. By December 1, there were 31,500 from Estonia, including Swedish-Estonians.<sup>19</sup> The numbers of Latvians and Lithuanians were unspecified. By April 1, 1945, 22,092 refugees had been counted as born in Estonia, 2,863 from Latvia, and 287 from Lithuania.<sup>20</sup> The Estonian figure of 22,092 evidently excluded up to 5,000 children under age 16. Adding the proportionate numbers of such minors to the Latvian and Lithuanian figures yields a total of 30,955. It is unclear whether Swedish-speaking refugees from Estonia were included. Erlander reportedly did include them in December 1944.<sup>21</sup> Yet they may have been excluded in April 1945, as they had received Swedish citizenship by then. Adding Nyman's figure of 8,000 Swedish-Estonians brings the total to nearly 40,000.

After many moved on to other lands and others arrived from Germany, the 1950 census revealed these counts of foreign-born residents, including small numbers of prewar immigrants: 25,062 from Estonia, 4,423 from Latvia, and none listed for Lithuania. The figures for 1960 showed 20,384 from Estonia, 3,625 from Latvia, 330 from Lithuania. In 1980, the figures dropped to 15,331 from Estonia, 2,664 from Latvia, and 255 from Lithuania.<sup>22</sup> The declining figures reflect mortality of elderly refugees, and do not include descendants born in Sweden.

Such counts are somewhat misleading, as birthplace does not necessarily correspond to ethnicity. Some born in the Baltic lands belong to ethnic minorities rather than native majorities. Some born in Russia in the tsarist era migrated to their Baltic ancestors' homelands and might identify as being of a Baltic nationality.

There were many reasons for Baltic refugees to feel comfortable in Sweden. The climate, diet, and material culture there were familiar. There were no marked physical differences in appearance that made it hard to blend in with Swedes. Both Estonia and North Latvia had undergone relatively benign Swedish rule before annexation by the Russian Empire in the early 18th century. "The good old Swedish time," as it was called by both Estonians and Latvians, left a legacy that included the predominance of the Lutheran Church and the establishment of village schools. In an earlier era, there had been Baltic involvement in the Vikings' extensive trade network and a shared material culture, including similar ships, weaponry, and decorative styles that still inspired Estonian and Latvian craftsmen and illustrators of works about their ancestral heritage.

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<sup>19</sup> Bernard Kangro, *Eesti Rootsis* (Lund: Eesti Kirjanike Kooperatiiv, 1976), 43, citing eventual prime minister Tage Erlander.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 42, citing Statistical Yearbook for Sweden, 1946.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>22</sup> Sven Alur Reinans, "Balterna i Sverige – några demografiska aspekter," in *De första båtflyktingarna: En antologi om balterna i Sverige*, ed. Lars-Gunnar Eriksson (Stockholm?: Statens Invandrarverk, 1985), 68.



A few months after arrival in Sweden, Estonians and Latvians began to gravitate toward smaller cities with factory jobs. By the 1980s, concentration in large cities was evident, especially by younger refugees with some schooling in Sweden. Exact figures on place of residence were found only for the Estonia-born, of whom 60% lived in large cities by the 1980s, 44% in the Stockholm area alone.<sup>23</sup>

Baltic refugees were too few to form residential enclaves, which limited opportunities to start businesses serving other refugees. As new housing became available in suburbs, usually in the form of apartments or rowhouses, distances between Estonians' or Latvians' homes grew, limiting intraethnic socializing. Similar trends developed in other countries, but houseowning was more common in North America and especially Australia. Studies in the latter case found home ownership rates of 70–84% (of households) already in the 1950s, compared with an estimated 50% as the typical rate elsewhere.<sup>24</sup> In Sweden, spacious yards for outdoor activities were uncommon. Instead, refugees could get plots in urban gardening colonies or cottages in scenic forest or island settings. Sweden's tradition of "allemansrätten" (every man's right [to roam]) gave them access to natural areas on private lands, for berry-picking, mushroom-hunting, hiking, even camping.

Despite a rather smooth adjustment, many refugees felt insecure in Sweden, given its proximity to the Soviet-controlled zone. Concern was exacerbated by the deportation of 7 Estonians, 147 Latvians, and 22 Lithuanians who sought asylum in German military uniforms. In January 1946, they were turned over to Soviet custody, despite strong protests and even suicide attempts, including a few successful ones. Sweden's Social Democratic government, with its base of support in labor unions where leftist ideology prevailed, had been quick to give *de facto* recognition to Soviet annexation of the Baltic lands. Refugees therefore wondered whether other concessions would be made to Soviet demands, at their expense.<sup>25</sup> Thus, interest in relocating to more distant lands grew.

The preferred destination was North America, where the reputed availability of land, jobs, and business opportunities had lured earlier streams of Estonians, Latvians, and especially Lithuanians before World War I. All three groups of Baltic wartime refugees could benefit from organizations, sponsorships, and support services set up by such earlier migrants, mainly in cities of the East Coast and the Great Lakes in Canada and the USA. Some of the earlier migrants were leftist exiles who had arrived after the aborted Revolution of 1905 in the Russian Empire. Others had endured harsh working conditions, union-busting, and economic depressions in their homelands and in the new lands.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>24</sup> Plakans, *The Reluctant Exiles*, 289, 392–3, citing Edgars Dunsdorfs' 1974 article in *Arhivs* 14.

<sup>25</sup> Kangro, *Eesti Rootsisis*, 44; Karl Aun, *The Political Refugees: A History of the Estonians in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1985), 25; Raimo Raag, *Eestlane väljaspool Eestit* (Tartu: Tartu University; 1999), 67; Plakans, *The Reluctant Exiles*, 81.



Pro-Soviet sentiments among such earlier migrants were a source of conflict with the new arrivals, whom the former sometimes labelled as fascists and Nazi sympathizers. So the new refugees typically set up their own newspapers, congregations, and community centers, even if informal socializing with the old migrants continued in some places. The new arrivals had better relations with religious folks among the earlier migrants, especially clergy.<sup>26</sup>

Canada began to admit war refugees in 1947, initially just young people without dependents or serious health problems. Toronto became the main place of settlement, with notable concentrations also in Montreal and Vancouver. Annual reports on ethnic origins of immigrants during 1922–1965<sup>27</sup> showed surges for all three Baltic groups from 1947 to the mid-1950s. For 1947–53, the three groups had roughly equal totals: 13,037 Estonians, 12,911 Latvians, 11,187 Lithuanians. In 1954–59, Latvians' figure was still relatively high at 1,854, compared to 1,069 Estonians and 989 Lithuanians, and then came a steep dropoff for all three groups. For similar spans of years before the postwar surge, the totals were quite low, except that Lithuanians had a rather large number in the earliest period for which data were available (4,941 in 1922–29, compared to 529 Estonians and 340 Latvians). There was a similar earlier wave of Lithuanian immigration to the USA in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Figures for the USA are not as precise, as they are based on decennial censuses rather than annual tallies. The only prewar data listing all three Baltic groups are from the 1930 census: 3,550 persons born in Estonia, 20,673 in Latvia, 193,606 in Lithuania.<sup>28</sup> The 1960 census was the first conducted after the wave of political refugees. It counted 13,991 born in Estonia, 50,681 in Latvia, 121,475 in Lithuania, including prewar immigrants. Lithuanians' figures dropped more steeply in later censuses, due to earlier immigrants' mortality. By 1980, there were 12,169 born in Estonia, 34,349 in Latvia, 48,194 in Lithuania. In 1990, almost half a century after the mass exodus of 1944, the figures were 9,210 for Estonia, 26,179 for Latvia, 29,745 for Lithuania.<sup>29</sup> By then, almost all prewar immigrants had died, and little new immigration had occurred, due to travel restrictions in the Soviet-occupied homelands. Thus, the 1990 census is the most appropriate for assessing relative sizes of the three Baltic groups among the political refugees.

<sup>26</sup> Jaan Pennar, Tõnu Parming, and P. Peter Rebane, *The Estonians in America: 1627–1975* (Dobbs Ferry, New York: Oceana, 1975), 4, 8–16, 24–8, 32–3, 37; Danys, *Lithuanian Immigration to Canada*, 80–8, 225, 227–9, 301.

<sup>27</sup> Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, *Report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism IV* (Ottawa: Privy Council Office, 1970), 240–5.

<sup>28</sup> Campbell Gibson and Kay Jung, *Historical Census Statistics on the Foreign-Born Population of the United States: 1850 to 2000* (Washington DC: Population Division, Bureau of the Census, 2006), Table 4.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, Table 3.

The 1990 census reveals areas of concentration that include subsequent generations born outside the old homelands, via state tallies for languages spoken at home.<sup>30</sup> By this measure, Illinois (with the city of Chicago) stands out as the foremost center for Lithuanian settlement, accounting for 25% of all persons in the USA who spoke Lithuanian at home. Other centers were also in states where prewar Lithuanian immigrants had concentrated: New York and nearby New Jersey at 8% + 5%, Massachusetts (including Boston) at 10%, and Pennsylvania (including Philadelphia and Pittsburgh) at 10%. Estonian was most frequently spoken in New York and nearby New Jersey at 19% + 15%, with California coming in next at 12%. Latvian-speakers had notable concentrations in New York and New Jersey at 12% + 5%, California at 11%, Michigan at 10%, and Illinois at 8%. West Coast cities, especially in California, had been added to previous destinations in the East Coast and Great Lakes regions.

Australian census data give a very clear picture of the wave of wartime refugees. The 1947 census listed 1,102 persons born in Estonia, 447 in Latvia, 273 in Lithuania – about the same as in 1933. The 1954 census indicated that there were 5,523 more Estonia-born persons who entered Australia during the preceding seven years (between mid-1947 and mid-1954), 16,667 more from Latvia, 8,069 more from Lithuania – a total of 30,259. Highest concentrations were in the southeastern states of New South Wales (including Sydney) and Victoria (including Melbourne). Each drew about a third of the Baltic-born (35% and 31%, respectively). South Australia (including Adelaide) drew about half of the remainder (17%). The Estonia-born were much more concentrated in New South Wales at 49%, compared with 21% in Victoria and 14% in South Australia. The Latvia- and Lithuania-born were both slightly more likely to settle in Victoria: 33% and 35%, respectively. New South Wales drew 31% of both of these groups, and South Australia drew about half of the rest. Already by 1954, the Baltic-born had gravitated toward metropolises (72% in all three groups) rather than smaller cities (16–19%) or rural areas (10–12%).<sup>31</sup>

Australia's census in 1981 counted 5,040 persons born in Estonia, 12,061 in Latvia, 5,844 in Lithuania, for a total of 22,945.<sup>32</sup> So there was substantial attrition of the first-generation cohort. This would be expected among those who were middle-aged or elderly when fleeing in 1944.

In all lands where large numbers of Baltic refugees settled, they found their way to temperate and relatively moist zones. In such places, the climate was similar to that

<sup>30</sup> *Language Spoken at Home and Ability to Speak English For United States, Regions and States: 1990. Report 1990 CPH-L-133* (Washington DC: Population Division, Bureau of the Census, 1994), Tables 6–56.

<sup>31</sup> S.R. Carver, ed., *Census of the Commonwealth of Australia, 30th June, 1954: Statistician's Report, VIII Australia* (Canberra: Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, 1962), 148–50.

<sup>32</sup> Betty Birškys, Antanas Birškys, Aldis L. Putniņš, and Inno Salasoo, *The Baltic Peoples in Australia* (Melbourne: AE Press, 1986), 52, 104, 165.

of their homelands. They avoided frigid areas of Sweden and Canada, as well as hot and dry parts of the USA and Australia. Everywhere the refugees were drawn to large cities, where educational and economic opportunities were greatest. This helped them adapt successfully in their new homelands.

### Schooling and Employment

Generally Baltic refugees can be described as overachievers, both in terms of education and occupation. This is especially true for those with some schooling in the new homelands, as well as for the second generation, born abroad. There are systematic studies that confirm the impressions of success.

In Sweden, most refugees came from fisher-farmer families in small villages and had only a six-year elementary education. They could not get high-status jobs, so factory work was commonly chosen by the older cohort. Women did so in higher numbers initially, although housekeeping was also an option. Men often came to factory work after a stint in more physically demanding jobs like lumbering, peat extraction, road construction, and farm labor. Compared to Sweden's population as a whole, both Estonia- and Latvia-born refugees were overrepresented in blue-collar jobs (manual work) in 1950. Thirty years later, they were still overrepresented in manufacturing, where most jobs are blue-collar. This pattern was found for both genders of both nationalities, except among those in the youngest cohort, who had arrived in 1944 as children under 9. The latter group, who got most or all of their schooling in the new land, had a higher rate of finishing high school (gymnasium) than was typical in Sweden in 1980.<sup>33</sup>

An age-cohort analysis was also done for refugees in Canada.<sup>34</sup> In the 1971 census, all age cohorts that were at least 25 years old at arrival had higher educational attainment than typical of Canadians and most immigrant groups. Among people of Estonian ethnic origin who were at least 25 years old in 1971 (typically born outside Canada), a majority (52%) had completed secondary education, 11% had college degrees, and 3% had graduate degrees. In the youngest of these cohorts (ages 25–34 in 1971), who typically arrived in Canada as minors ages 5–14, 27% had attained college degrees and 8% had graduate degrees. Thus, younger refugees markedly exceeded their elders' relatively high educational attainment, which was above the Canadian average.

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<sup>33</sup> Reinans, "Balterna i Sverige," 72–6.

<sup>34</sup> Aun, *The Political Refugees*, 53–4.

Occupational status was also higher than typical of Canadians in 1971. Estonians were overrepresented in the highest category, among professionals and managers. In the subcategory of natural sciences, both Estonians and Latvians were strongly overrepresented, at the top of the list for Canada's ethnic groups. In terms of income, a correlate of occupational status, people of Estonian origin (typically first- or second-generation) were about one third higher than Canada's average, surpassed only by Latvians and Jews.<sup>35</sup>

A detailed analysis from the USA is the study of Indianapolis Estonians. Among first-generation adults (age 21 or more at 1944's end), most men (53%) and many women (22%) had gone through an institution of higher learning. Both figures are higher than the 16% shown in the 1980 census for metropolitan Indianapolis. The gender gap disappeared among younger Estonians. Among those who were minors at 1944's end or at least age 25 in the second generation, 65% finished four years of college by 1991, including 19% with graduate degrees. Among 32 members of the second generation who finished high school, 4 were valedictorians, with the highest grade averages in their graduating classes.<sup>36</sup>

The highest level of occupational status is the high white-collar category (professional, managerial, technical). This was attained by 53% of first-generation adults in Estonia, dropping to 26% among them in Indianapolis, where low blue-collar jobs (unskilled manual labor) were much more common (59%). This reflects disadvantages in the labor market, such as lack of full fluency in English and the need to get recredentialed. The comparable figure for high white-collar jobs in the 1980 census for the local area was 25–31%, depending on whether part-time workers are included.<sup>37</sup>

Younger members of the first generation, who finished school abroad, fared much better. High white-collar jobs were attained by 70%. These jobs tended to be technical jobs like engineering, accounting, laboratory research – requiring numerical or visual rather than verbal acuity. In the second generation, born en route to or in the USA, the figure was 74%. Teaching was their most common career, as it had been for adult refugees in Estonia.<sup>38</sup>

Evidence of such success for Baltic refugees in Australia is less comprehensive in the available material. Anecdotal examples can be found in Birškys et al. (1986).<sup>39</sup> Putniņš presents findings from a 1971 census study where age-group differences were standardized and the sexes were examined separately in educational comparisons. Baltic-born men (who finished their educations either before or after arrival in Australia) were 2.2

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 55–6.

<sup>36</sup> Haas, "The Estonian Community of Indianapolis," 6, 8.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 8–10.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 7–10.

<sup>39</sup> Birškys et al., *The Baltic Peoples in Australia*.

times more likely to have a university degree than typical for Australia's male population. Baltic-born women were 3.8 times more likely to get such a degree than typical for Australia's female population.<sup>40</sup> My sample of returnees who moved back to the old homelands had 15 individuals from Australia, all from high white-collar positions there (100%), within all three Baltic groups. Comparable figures are 86% for 25 individuals from Sweden, 89% for 24 from Canada, 82% for 46 from the USA, 71% for 7 from other lands. This sample may have been skewed toward occupational success, which would give people more skills and resources for relocation. Yet other high achievers might have been deterred by the thought of what they would be giving up in the West for an uncertain future in the Baltic homeland.

### Language and Cultural Issues

Most Baltic refugees went to English-speaking countries, where their knowledge of German and Russian was not much of an asset. Some did find work as translators and instructors of those languages, even in camps for displaced persons (DPs). Estonian refugees had the greatest linguistic disadvantage, as their tongue is not in the Indo-European family and thus diverges most from English (as well as Swedish). All three groups benefitted from familiarity with the Latin alphabet and rather similar pronunciation of letters in their own tongues. They also had high literacy rates, so they could benefit from printed learning materials.

It helped that they were generally housed in ethnic clusters in refugee camps and typically settled where others of their own kind went. They could thus use their native languages to learn from others' experiences, to engage with social networks, and to enjoy entertainment. Newspapers and books were available in their own languages and circulated widely, generally in newly produced form from intellectuals among them rather than transported from their homelands.

Children in camps attended classes in their parents' languages, but also got instruction in other tongues. After resettlement and enrollment in regular schools alongside agetates of the host country, children learned locals' language quickly. Often, they also got lessons in their mother tongue at part-time schools, where instruction and creation of learning materials were done by teachers trained in the old homeland.

Sweden's government was especially helpful in promoting instruction in minority languages. In the 1960s, a program for school-based tutoring in the mother tongue was

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<sup>40</sup> Putniņš, *Latvians in Australia*, 44.

begun, initially depending on voluntary involvement by local districts (communes), but mandatory for them since 1977, if requested by at least 5 students of a given minority in a district. Government support was even provided for full-time Estonian-language schools in Gothenburg and Stockholm, with some lessons in Swedish. The elementary school in Gothenburg had to close in 1994 after 34 years, as did the high school in Stockholm after two decades.<sup>41</sup> Enrollments dwindled as families moved out to the suburbs and students' commuting times became overlong. In Stockholm, however, enrollment in the elementary school, founded after camp schools were defunded in 1945, has grown to some 200 students, and middle-school grades have been added. This school's unique viability has been enhanced by the recent influx of families relocating from Estonia. Parents working at their homeland's embassy, businesses with operations in both countries, academic or research positions, and other temporary assignments want their children prepared for further schooling in their native language in Estonia.

Another special case of a school set up for newly arrived refugee children and operated for decades longer is the Latvian high school (gymnasium) in Germany. With funding from the (West) German government, it operated from 1946 to 1998 in three locations, longest in Münster. The number of graduates was small (up to 8 per year), but the school drew students even from other countries with its rigorous curriculum.<sup>42</sup> Similar opportunities for immersion in the ancestral language now exist in all the Baltic homelands, for high school and university students.

Commitment to transmitting Baltic languages and lore to subsequent generations has been quite high in refugee communities. Many parents of the first generation enrolled their children in part-time ethnic schools. In the Soviet era, such schools were seen as a way to counteract russification policies in the old homeland, which put survival of both linguistic and cultural heritage at risk. Many such schools still operate, serving refugees' grandchildren and offspring of post-Soviet migrants. A Canadian study of 16 ethnic groups measured intensity of interest in transmitting ethnic heritage by comparing enrollment in each group's part-time ethnic schools to its population in Canada. The three Baltic groups came out at the top of the list of enrollment rates.<sup>43</sup> In the 1971 census, persons of Baltic origin also had some of the highest rates of learning their ancestral language (79% for Estonians, 78% for Latvians, 62% for Lithuanians), using it as their main language at home (49%, 46%, and 34%, respectively), and maintaining it as the predominant mother tongue, with little change over the previous decade in all three groups.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Raag, *Eestlane väljaspool Eestit*, 85–6.

<sup>42</sup> Plakans, *The Reluctant Exiles*, 154.

<sup>43</sup> *Report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism*, 151.

<sup>44</sup> Aun, *The Political Refugees*, 177–8.



There is a dearth of published census data on language retention among descendants of the foreign-born, especially among small minorities. However, there is an interesting finding for the largest Baltic group: in 1990, there were 55,781 at-home speakers of Lithuanian in the USA,<sup>45</sup> yet only 29,945 persons born in Lithuania. That speakers are twice as numerous as first-generation immigrants, almost half a century after the latter's exodus from their homeland, indicates that the language is passed on to descendants at a rather high rate. Counts of at-home speakers of Estonian and Latvian were much lower: 8,822 and 25,333, respectively, about the same as the numbers for those born in the old homelands (9,210 and 26,179, respectively).

The contrast with Lithuanians' language situation seems due to a large influx of Lithuanians at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. This earlier influx meant more time to produce a large third generation. Also, the earlier Lithuanian wave came when family sizes were larger – before effective birth control and postponement of childbearing to pursue higher education. Bigger family sizes meant more descendants who could be involved in at-home usage of Lithuanian.

The difference cannot be attributed to stronger commitment to language preservation among Lithuanians. This is clear from other figures in the same 1990 U.S. Census. Persons born in Latvia and Lithuania who spoke their mother tongue at home numbered 19,145 and 20,758, respectively.<sup>46</sup> Dividing these figures by the numbers born in those countries yields 73% and 70%, respectively, for first-generation immigrants living in a setting favoring language transmission. The previous census of 1980 yielded virtually identical results, at 73% and 68%, respectively. So there was no trend toward speaking only English at home. Language use in the smaller Estonia-born group was not reported.

Of course, parents of the same ethnicity may talk with each other in their native tongue, but use the host country's language with their children. This might be done if parents think they would thus help their children do better in school or if parents want to practice the new tongue for their own benefit. There are also households where parents in a mixed (interethnic) marriage use the non-Baltic spouse's language between themselves, but the Baltic spouse speaks his/her mother tongue with their offspring.

In places with a small ethnic community, linguistic assimilation into the majority is accelerated. In the Indianapolis study, there were so few potential mates available for the offspring of Estonian refugees that mixed marriages became the norm, which did not favor language transmission. Only a third (32%) of the second generation spoke

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<sup>45</sup> Bureau of the Census 1994.

<sup>46</sup> Campbell J. Gibson, Emily Lennon, Kay Jung, and Marie Pees, *Historical Census Statistics on the Foreign-born Population of the United States: 1850-1990. Working Paper POP-WPO29*, (Washington DC: Population Division, Bureau of the Census, 1999), Table 5.



Estonian, which became virtually extinct in the third generation, with only two sisters in one household learning it.

Assimilation occurs more slowly in places with large ethnic communities. The best available data are for persons of Estonian origin in Canada in 1971. Ethnic endogamy was the norm for age cohorts in their 40s, 50s, and older, but about two-thirds of both males and females in their 30s and younger married non-Estonians. The language spoken most at home was Estonian for about three-quarters in the cohorts of age 45 or older, but English for about two-thirds of younger cohorts. The trends were not as stark in the area of greatest Estonian concentration (metropolitan Toronto). Here, a slight majority of married folks in their 30s, among both males and females, had paired with other Estonians, but among those in their 20s or younger, only 37% of married males and 46% of married females did so. Around five-sixths in cohorts of age 45 or older spoke mostly Estonian at home, but slight majorities of younger cohorts spoke mostly English at home.<sup>47</sup>

Small ethnic communities are unfavorable for the preservation of cultural heritage. If they cannot afford to keep a community center, practice sessions and performance venues for choirs, orchestras, theater troupes, folk dancers, etc. become hard to arrange. There is a dearth of people who share enough interest in a certain cultural activity to become participants. Great variety of cultural organizations cannot be sustained except in cities with large Baltic communities.

Some recent trends alleviate such problems. One is the development of stronger links and symbiotic relationships between ethnic groups from the Baltic Sea area. Folk music and dance groups may have members from more than one Baltic group, and may include Scandinavian and Finnish members as well, as they delve into similarities of instrumentation and repertoire. Joint participation in international festival displays, Midsummer celebrations, and Christmas markets occurs in some cities. If a certain Baltic group is too small to maintain its own community center, it may use facilities of another Baltic group that is larger, in exchange for rent or labor contributions.

Another factor enhancing the vitality of smaller Baltic communities is the arrangement of regional, national, and even international conferences and festivals. These provide opportunities to observe, learn, and perform traditional folk arts, even for individuals from places where few of their kind live. Such opportunities are also offered at summer camps, serving not only youths but also adults, with new links to the old homelands via guest lecturers and performers.<sup>48</sup> Academic organizations develop networks of scholars within and between the Baltic groups, and involve non-academics in collecting and preserving documents, publications, memoirs, oral histories, recordings of interviews and

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<sup>47</sup> Aun, *The Political Refugees*, 180, 182.

<sup>48</sup> Silvija Meija, *Latvians in Michigan* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2005), 50–7.

performances, artifacts of historical or ethnographic value, etc. The Internet obviously favors such networking.

Experiences and activities of Baltic refugee communities were generally similar, regardless of which country they settled in. This is to be expected from similarities in their traditional cultures and their common refugee camp experiences. Yet, there was some divergence, because of varying opportunities and policies in the host countries. This is most evident among Estonians, due to the large number ending up in Sweden, so close to their homeland and with a more socialistic and collectivist political culture. The other three major destinations were all former British colonies with large populations, a longer history of great ethnic diversity, and more emphasis on individualism and entrepreneurialism.

There were similar consequences from concentration of refugees in certain cities, Toronto for Estonians and Latvians in Canada, Chicago for Lithuanians in the USA. The latter was a rather unique situation, due to the great prewar immigration there and less dispersal to other lands. There was also a noteworthy instance of bipolarity, in that the city of Stockholm had an outsize importance as a center of Estonian refugee settlement, comparable to Toronto's. A similar bipolarity is also evident for Latvians, involving the same two cities.

In Sweden, there was less incentive to organize protests against Soviet oppression, as the dominant Social Democratic Party showed no inclination to reverse its acceptance of Soviet annexation of the Baltic lands. In the USA, there was much more concern about communist infiltration and spying. So representatives of the Baltic countries could draw news coverage of their testimony about the flaws of communism and injustices of Soviet occupation, at Congressional hearings and street demonstrations at the Soviet embassy in the capital city of Washington. The location of the United Nations headquarters and important news organizations in New York City also meant opportunities to draw media attention to appeals for support against Soviet occupation. In contrast to Sweden, public opinion in the USA, Canada, and Australia was more sympathetic to the Baltic countries' plight and more skeptical of Soviet leaders' intentions, so Baltic demonstrators could feel that their efforts had impact. A noteworthy example of impact happened in Australia, when the Labour government granted *de jure* recognition to Soviet occupation of the Baltic lands in 1975. All three Baltic groups organized protests and urged the opposition Liberal Country Party to reverse the new policy. A quick reversal did come after the next election led to a change in government. In 1978 the offending Labour Party showed that it was chastened by the affair, when its federal caucus voted unanimously to promise that it would never again reinstate its pro-Soviet policy on *de jure* recognition.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Putniņš, *Latvians in Australia*, 20–1.

Sweden played a major role as a source of Estonian- and Latvian-language publications. Labor-market counsellors' efforts to find workers employment matching their skills and experience meant that Estonian and Latvian intellectuals had good chances to continue the kind of writing and research they did in their homelands, sometimes only through clerical jobs in archives and libraries where they had easy access to valuable materials. More books, both fiction and nonfiction, were printed in Sweden than elsewhere and were distributed to Estonians worldwide. The Latvian Encyclopedia was published in Sweden, as well as many works by intellectuals who relocated there from DP camps in Germany.<sup>50</sup> Sweden also had a prominent role in the early years of exile as a center for Estonian music recording projects, until an alternative emerged in Toronto.

Sweden's proximity to the Baltic lands and transportation links with them created opportunities for Baltic refugees and their adult children to get work assignments as travel agents, guides, ferry and airline staffers, etc. Visits from neutral Sweden to the Soviet-occupied homelands were easier to arrange, with less complicated visa procedures. In the post-Soviet era, Swedish companies seeking to expand their operations on the other side of the Baltic Sea sought people of Baltic origin to be their agents there. So it is no wonder that living in Sweden was associated with visiting the old homelands sooner and more often, for both Estonian and Latvian subsamples in the study of Baltic return migrants. (There were no Lithuanians from Sweden in the study.)

Sweden also became the place where information from the Baltic countries flowed more freely, particularly for Estonians. A bookstore in downtown Stockholm, connected with a newspaper for the exile community, offered many publications from Soviet Estonia. Sweden was also visited more often by scholars and performers from Soviet Estonia, who were not always relentless apologists for the Soviet regime. This meant opportunities to learn more about contemporary trends and new research on Estonian heritage. Writing before Gorbachev's reforms to open up Soviet society to outside contacts, Putniņš suggested that the lack of such opportunities for Latvians in Australia and North America was a major factor in the second generation's lack of identification with Latvians in Latvia, and worried that it might portend a decline in effective political action to free the homeland.<sup>51</sup>

Concentration of some 10,000 Estonian refugees in Toronto stimulated development of a web of economic enterprises and support services in Canada. The young men initially favored for entry to Canada often worked on construction projects, which gave them experience to serve as subcontractors and builders for both later arrivals and Canadian customers. Some 180 Estonian enterprises were involved in the construction

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<sup>50</sup> Plakans, *The Reluctant Exiles*, 51, 83–5, 156–60.

<sup>51</sup> Putniņš, *Latvians in Australia*, 83, 108.

sector just in Toronto by the mid-1950s. Such firms were involved in building suburban neighborhoods, high-rise apartments, and office complexes, not only in the Toronto area but also in British Columbia.<sup>52</sup> College dormitories were also built in several cities. One beside the University of Toronto's campus had lower floors allocated to an Estonian archive, library, museum, meeting spaces for conferences – important resources for the university's Estonian Studies program that was set up with support from Estonian donors. Other sectors where Estonian entrepreneurs prospered were manufacturing, newspaper publishing, music recording, handcrafts, a credit union, bakeries and delicatessens. The organizational ability, leadership, creativity, and financial acumen developed in such diverse undertakings enabled Canadian Estonians to take the initiative in arranging quadrennial Estonian World Festivals, from 1972 to 2013. These were held in seven countries, but Toronto was the most frequent venue.

### Realizations

The sample of Baltic return migrants was asked about their experiences within their ethnic community. No major differences were found between the four main countries in which the refugees settled. The focus here will be on generational differences in reactions to their upbringing abroad.

When asked whether they have always thought of themselves as mostly Estonian/Latvian/Lithuanian, something else, or both, there was a clear generational trend. Those who were minors during the exodus and thus lived in refugee camps felt overwhelmingly Baltic (90%). In the second generation, two-thirds said "Baltic" (62%) and one-third said "Both" (32%). The third generation was split between "Baltic" (36%), "Both" (27%), and "Other" (36%). Living in the ancestral homeland strengthened the sense of Baltic identity for the third generation (42%), more so than for the second (29%) or first (19% among minors of 1944).

When asked what their parents said about the old homeland, social problems were rarely brought up. This could lead to disillusionment when first encountering the reality. A second-generation Estonian man from Canada noted: "What surprised me was that there are all sorts of Estonians. I was used to all of them being well-behaved, middle-class doctors, teachers, etc. That Estonians are also thieves and beggars and great drunkards, that was surprising." A second-generation Estonian woman from Australia had a similar reaction: "The range is wider here. There comes a disappointment... that there are

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<sup>52</sup> Aun, *The Political Refugees*, 60–1.

Estonians who are liars, bums, and scoundrels... Not all [Estonians abroad]...are nice and polite, but there is that tendency. But the Estonians are like any people. Not all of them are intelligent, beautiful, and honest.” A second-generation Lithuanian man from the USA recalled: “[There were] standard romantic tales of a happy, prosperous, patriotic people, diligent, virtuous. The shortcomings of Lithuanian life were glossed over.” A woman of the same background said of her parents: “Their memories became more rosy than any sort of reality could have been.”

Refugees may have felt more pressure to behave, for two reasons. First, their ethnic community was small enough to function like a village, where gossip and ostracism keep people in line, as there is no anonymity or escape from disapproval. Second, they are acutely aware of their role as guests and representatives of a small nation seeking support for its liberation, and feel a responsibility to make a good impression on their hosts. This was an especially acute concern in the DP camps, when refugees worried about how to impress the gatekeepers and screeners controlling their access to work assignments, amenities, resources, and resettlement options. Even those born long after the DP camp experience could feel constrained in such ways, as shown in a 1976 study of second-generation Estonian high school students in Adelaide, Australia. Those classified as more involved in their ethnic community (less alienated from it) tended to show more conscientiousness, shyness (lack of social boldness), group dependence, (self-)control, and aspiration to seek high-prestige occupations.<sup>53</sup>

With regard to parents’ accounts about the Soviet system, overwhelming majorities of all three generations felt these tales were accurate. Some even said the reality they encountered during their first visit was actually worse. A second-generation Lithuanian woman from the USA noted: “My first trip was in 1987, and everything looked much better than I expected... As I got to know people, the reality unfolded, and it was probably more devious than anything my parents even knew about-like the system of stealing, lying, turning in your friends and neighbors to the KGB [secret police]...”

Those who had been active in cultural activities in the West were sometimes disappointed that such things did not seem to be taken as seriously in the old homeland. A second-generation Latvian woman from the USA remarked:

I had the feeling that maintaining a distinct Latvian identity is more prevalent in the emigre community than it is in Latvia. In terms of the traditional cultural arts (choir singing, folk dancing), I had the impression that Latvians in Latvia wish [rather] to be seen as progressive and liberal in their presentation – perhaps to demonstrate that they are a “Western” country now, not a “backward” country.

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<sup>53</sup> Putniņš, *Latvians in Australia*, 51 (citing unpublished honors thesis by P.E. Ķiploks).

On the other hand, some experienced a sense of relief, knowing that they did not have to make great exertions personally to save the culture, when there are plenty of people in the old homeland who can help do that. A second-generation Latvian man put it this way:

I used to travel incredibly long distances to be with other Latvians, regardless of whether I had other common interests with them. I would not do that now [laughs]... That's the minority[']s predicament, because you have to exert a lot of effort to maintain your identity. But I'm living in the mother ship now and I'm of the majority, so it doesn't really require an effort on my part.

When asked to assess how refugees' organizations had fared in raising the next generation, most of the first-minor and second generation thought they had done things right for the most part. The third generation was more neutral, but not really critical. A Lithuania-born man who was a minor in 1944 said: "I think they were doing everything right, but you cannot maintain the second generation in your image. Integration into the local country[']s culture is a normal process and nothing can stop it." A second-generation Latvian woman from the USA commented on patriotic ceremonies: "I can see it was very national[istic] upbringing... [W]hen I'm doing it for my own sons, I call it brainwashing [laughs]... But I don't think it was a bad thing."

Finally, there is an ironic outcome, in that some returnees realize they want to retain a distinct identity or legacy as Westerners in the old homeland. In Estonia, a group of entrepreneurs and officials formed an informal Sauna Club, to socialize regularly and commiserate about the challenges of de-Sovietization. Latvians from the West formed a choir in Riga, to enjoy making music like they did before relocating. Some second-generation parents question the urgency of teaching their ancestral language to their children, when the latter are immersed in it anyway in the old homeland. A second-generation mother realized that in Latvia her children might forget the English and Swedish they once spoke fluently, so the children now attend an English school in Latvia and are encouraged to speak English at home and to watch Swedish films.

A Lithuanian researcher, who was raised under Soviet rule and spent years working abroad, conferred with others like himself about how to apply their foreign experience in their homeland. He had come to really appreciate efforts of refugee organizations in the West to preserve their religious and cultural heritage, rather than acquiesce in assimilation as emigres of the post-Soviet era seem more prone to do. He expressed hope that more of the latter would learn from the example of the World War II refugees and their descendants, and bring back knowledge to help accelerate reforms benefitting the homeland. Thus, such returnees are trying to retain some distinctiveness and resist assimilation

into the local society they dreamed of rejoining for so long, in ways reminiscent of what the wartime exiles opted to do in the West.

## Conclusion

Previous migration studies have identified many factors favoring successful adaptation in new lands. Generally, these apply to the Baltic groups, which enjoyed advantages like education, job skills, urban experience, organizational ability, compatible values, indistinctive appearance, hospitable reception, and language familiarity (at least with regard to German). Such factors help explain why the Baltic groups had a migration experience with little resemblance to that found for earlier streams.<sup>54</sup> The Baltic groups fit better under Kim's concept<sup>55</sup> of new urban immigrants, as well as Rose and Pertzoff's<sup>56</sup> notion of smaller-scale and more dispersed migration. The Baltic groups' migration differs from the latter types in its suddenness, brief intensity, and political motivation. So they align best with groups fleeing dispossession and persecution from revolutionaries, autocrats, or invaders. Among such cases, the Baltic exodus is distinctive in terms of the small size of the groups involved. This accounts for their great concern about linguistic and cultural extinction, as well as their great commitment to preserving their heritage.

Despite generally successful adaptations, Baltic refugees have shown some dysfunctional patterns. Putniņš points to psychiatric treatment admissions, suicides, alcohol abuse, men's never marrying – all found more often among first-generation Baltic refugees than among host country natives and sometimes even among other East European immigrants.<sup>57</sup> There may still be some applicability of certain classic notions about dysfunctional aspects of any immigrant experience. Particularly germane may be social-disorganization or marginal-man theories, about how exposure to contradictory sets of social rules creates stress over social expectations and confusion about one's identity.<sup>58</sup> Yet Baltic refugees showed unusual resilience and cohesion in coping with their lot, as their situation led to a sense of mission and a source of self-esteem that few other groups can match.

<sup>54</sup> E.g. William I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, vol. 2 (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1927).

<sup>55</sup> Illsoo Kim, *The New Urban Immigrants: The Korean Community in New York* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1991).

<sup>56</sup> Peter I. Rose and Liv Olson Pertzoff, *Strangers in their Midst: Small-Town Jews and their Neighbors* (Merrick, New York: Richwood, 1981).

<sup>57</sup> Putniņš, *Latvians in Australia*, 34–42.

<sup>58</sup> Robert Ezra Park, "Human Migration and the Marginal Man," *American Journal of Sociology* 33, no. 6 (1928): 881–93.



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