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## **COLLECTIVE IDENTITY OF THE RUSSIANS IN LATVIA AND SECURITY OF CIVIC SOCIETY**

The historical experience of the presence of the Russians in Latvia shows that this national group, with a certain negligible exception, has always tended to preserve its specific ethnic and cultural character within the Latvian society. Since 1991, the Russian national minority has been considering the preservation of its cultural and ethnic traits to be the most important value of national identity.

The collective identity of the Russian national minority in Latvia is not the main factor, which increases the level of social anxiety of the representatives of this national group. It is not a must to decrease the sphere of display of the elements of the collective identity of national minorities in the process of the formation of common civic identity of the Russians and other national minorities. The development of liberal values both in the society and in the mind of national minorities will let to gain the essential balance of the elements of collective and common civic identity of the national groups in Latvia.

**Key words:** identity of national minorities, individual and collective autonomy, social anxiety, and discourses of national consciousness

### **1. Collective identity of Russian minority in Latvia**

The identity of national minorities of a state is an extremely complicated social, cultural and psychological phenomenon. It combines common civic and state values, which lead to the drawing of the people, who belong to the national minorities, to the interests and aspirations of civil society and the state. The identity of national minorities includes also the values, which are characteristic of the minorities as of special ethnic and cultural communities. As a rule, ethnic traditions, mother tongue, national mentality, religion, the values of professional and national culture belong to the above-mentioned values.

The relationship between common civic and collective elements of the identity of national minorities is not always simple. It depends on a variety of factors. For example, the quota of national minority in the national structure of a country, the historical

conditions and the experience of co-operation of national minority with dominating national group, the relationship between the country of residence and the historical native land of national minority.

The historical experience of the presence of the Russians in Latvia shows that this national group, with a certain negligible exception, has always tended to preserve its specific ethnic and cultural character within the bounds of Latvian society. In the period of state restoration in Latvia since 1991, the Russian national minority has been considering the preservation of its cultural and ethnic traits to be the most important task. As in other democratic states, the preservation of collective identity of national minorities cannot contradict liberal values in Latvia.

The liberal principles of the relationship between common civic and collective-group elements in national identity suppose the priority of common civic identity, irrespective of whether or not a person considers himself to belong to a national, religious, or other minority. In case the representatives of a national minority wish to preserve their ethnic and cultural specific characteristics, these characteristics are to become the addendum, but never the substitution, to common civic identity. Moreover, liberalism insists on the fact that the aspiration to preserve ethnic and cultural elements in national identity must be based on the individual choice of a person only. Not a national, cultural or religious minority has a right to force anybody to assimilate its group values. Liberalism recognizes the principle of individual but not of collective autonomy in the preservation or acquirement of the identity of a national minority in addition to common civic identity.

The well-known modern theorist of liberalism Joseph Ratz considers the admission and realisation of the principle of individual autonomy, which means personal responsibility of an individual for the social choice he makes, to be a fundamental value of a modern liberal state. Individual autonomy must display itself in all the spheres of social life and be applied to the representatives of all social groups and cultural communities, including national minorities, within a democratic state. The principle of individual autonomy is relevant to the specific characteristic features of modern and post-modern Western society, which is undergoing through constant technological, economic

and social changes. An individual will be able to adapt to these changes, when he is free, concerning his habitual social environment. The principle of individual autonomy also helps a person to pass from one cultural identity to another (Razc 2001, 328.–329.lpp.).

J. Ratz is extremely negatively disposed to the cultivation of the principle of collective responsibility and collective autonomy within the community of national minority, for it leads to paternalism and restriction on individual autonomy of the person, who belongs to a social and cultural minority. Thus the people, who originate from those social and cultural groups, will be deprived of many opportunities afforded by the state in various spheres. However, J. Ratz addresses his critical remarks concerning collective identity in the life of modern society to “immigrants” and representatives of “religious sects”, he does not examine the problem of interconnection between common civic and collective elements in the identity of historic national minorities (Razs 2001, 373. – 374.lpp.). At the same time J. Ratz does not deny that liberal doctrine demonstrates positive attitude to the admission of “collective rights” of some social communities within a state. J. Ratz enumerates the circumstances, which allow to admit these rights:

- collective rights of a community serve the interests of an individual;
- collective interests are related to the good of a social group;
- collective interests are not compulsory for an individual as his social obligation (Razc 2001, 190.lpp.).

Such an attribute towards the collective identity of national minorities is extremely popular in the bounds of classical liberalism. However, significant social changes make liberal consciousness correct its position concerning the evaluation of the role of collective identity in the life of national minorities. These changes include, first of all, the expansion of the European Union by increasing the number of the Eastern Europe member states, the population of which includes significant national minorities. Will Kymlicka, who has been sharing the principles of classical liberalism for a long time, believes that modern multicultural Europe cannot follow the principle of “ethnic-cultural neutrality” any longer, for this principle ignores the collective identity of national minorities. As W. Kymlicka considers, in modern circumstances liberalism must recognize not only the principle of individual autonomy for national minorities as the

legal foundation to preserve their identity. W. Kymlicka believes that liberalism should extend its values to the admission of the principle of collective autonomy. This scientist considers that in the bounds of liberalism it is necessary to pass from ethnic-cultural neutrality to ethnic-cultural fairness concerning national minorities (Kymlicka 2001, pp.19–21).

The admission of human rights to the collective identity for the national minorities is determined by ethnic diversity of European countries, which includes various types of ethnic-cultural groups, such as national minorities, isolated ethnic-religious groups, racial groups, immigrants, etc. It must be done to protect the interests of national minorities, which reside in national states for a long time and have contributed significantly to the historical development of these states. W. Kymlicka offers to recognize the collective identity of these social groups distinguishing them from the ethnic-cultural diversity. A state must grant national minorities the guarantees for ethnic-cultural preservation in comparison with other ethnic-cultural groups. Thus, according to W. Kymlicka, concerning immigrants, state may pursue the policy of “integration”, but concerning national minorities it is necessary to pursue the policy of “incorporation”, which presumes the preservation of specific characteristics of these national groups (Kymlicka 2001, p.33).

The polemics, within the theory of liberalism, on the balance of common civic and collective elements of the identity of national minorities affects directly the interests of the largest national minority of the Latvian Republic – the Russians, who constitute 29% of the population of the country. From the perspective of the development of Latvian common civic identity the protection of the Russians’ collective identity is the social problem, the solution of which that can satisfy the interests of the state and this national minority, has not been found yet. There are many biases in the social consciousness against the recognition of the rights of Latvian Russians to develop their collective identity within common civic identity.

The sociological research was carried out by the Institute of Social Investigations at the Faculty of Social Sciences of Daugavpils University in winter and spring in 2004.

The materials of the research contain important information about the interrelationship between common civic and collective elements of national identity.

The materials of the research confirm that the Russian national minority in Latvia tends to identify the collective elements of its identity with the mother tongue. In the restored Latvian Republic the collective identity of the Russians more and more often displays itself as the language identity. This is the tendency that has been pointed out by the author before. The sociological research shows that it the mother tongue that is considered to be the most important characteristic of the national identity for the Russian respondents. In its significance, this characteristic surpasses such characteristics of identity as “ethnic origin”, “Latvia – my native country (the country of residence)”, “I am a citizen of the Latvian Republic”, “belonging to certain culture”, “belonging to a certain religion” (Volkov. 2001, 138.lpp.; Волков 2002, с. 64 – 82). That is why the Russian population of Latvia connects the preservation of its status of national minority with the preservation of the social functions of the Russian language in the social and private life of this national group. Of course, for the Latvian society there is an important problem: the preservation of the social functions of the Russian language in the cultural environment of the country would not hinder the development of common civic identity of an individual, not depending on his ethnic origin and assimilated cultural values.

The formation of common civic identity of various national groups in Latvia appears to be the social process, which lets these groups significantly extend the opportunities of their participation in the life of democratic society. It is obvious, that the acquirement of such identity by national minorities is a deeply humane and positive process, which decreases the level of social anxiety in the situation of the choice of new civic values.

In the process of the acquirement of new common civic values the valuation of the state of interethnic relations in the social environment can be performed by the important index of the level of social anxiety of national minorities. Obviously, the more rarely the respondents assess the relations between the nationalities as problematical the fewer obstacles they meet in the way of the acquirement of new values and new social opportunities, which are offered by the multicultural and multinational state of Latvia.

There is an important question whether the natural aspiration of national minorities to preserve their common identity can cause their valuation of the state of the national relations as a problematical one, what, in its turn, can put obstacles to the acquirement of common civic values.

As the materials of the sociological research show the Russians and the respondents of other ethnic origins are most of all worried not about the prospects of preservation of their mother tongue and culture in Latvia. The highest level of social anxiety is caused by the possibility of ecological disasters and economic disorders, by the complications in the demographic situation and foreign policy. In general, 33.8% of the respondents evaluated the state of the national relations as “critical”, 24.5% - as “not critical”, 41.7% – are not sure in their evaluation. At the same time 22% of the respondents, who do not worry about the threat to their language and culture, 35.5% of those, who consider the state of the national relations as a critical problem, and 48.4% of the respondents, who worry a lot about the threat to their language and culture, consider the state of the national relations to be the critical problem.

Not only apprehensions of the future of the mother tongue affect the increase of social anxiety evaluating the state of the national relations; there are some other reasons that cause the increase of social anxiety. The sociological research proves that the respondents, who evaluate the state of the national relations as “critical”, more often mention “threats to their emotional condition at work”, “threats to their emotional condition posed by side of the officials”, “disability to be competitive on the labour market”.

The table below presents the correlation of the opinion of the respondents, who evaluate the state of the national relations as “critical”, and the level of the perception of various threats by these respondents.

**Table 1**

**Perception of the State of National Relations in Winter – Spring, 2004 (in %)**

	Threat to the mother tongue and	Threat to the emotional	Threat to the emotional	Threat to the competitiveness on

	culture	condition at work	condition posed by the officials	the labour market
Is not worried	<b>22.0</b>	33.	30.5	25.0
Is and is not worried at the same time	<b>22.4</b>	32.0	33.0	31.0
Is worried	<b>35.5</b>	39.0	35.0	39.0
Is worried very much	<b>48.4</b>	56.0	58.0	47.0

**Source:** sociological research carried out by Institute of Social Research of Daugavpils University in winter – spring, 2004. (N = 551)

The sociological research also proves that the importance of liberal values in the mind of the respondents affects the perception of the acuteness of the problem of the national relations. Thus, among the respondents, who consider the state to be responsible for the regulation of salary, 35.8% evaluate the problem of the national relations as “critical”. But among the respondents, who consider the state should not interfere in the regulation of salary, 27.3% evaluate the problem of the national relations as “critical”.

The increased level of the anxiety about the state of the national relations is also characteristic of the respondents, who prefer to communicate only in their mother tongue in the multiethnic and multicultural social environment of Latvia. For example, among the respondents, who “communicate with their friends and relatives mainly in their mother tongue”, 36.4% consider the problem of the national relations to be “critical”. But 22.5% of those, who “often communicate with their friends and relatives in their mother tongue”, consider this problem to be “critical”. The same correlation can be seen correspondingly to the use of languages at work: among the respondents, who consider the problem of the national relations to be “critical”, 37.6% “mainly speak mother tongue at work”, 31.1% “often speak mother tongue at work”, and 13.5% “rarely speak mother tongue at work”.

Thus, the collective identity of the Russian national minority in Latvia is not the main factor, which increases the level of social anxiety of the representatives of this national group. It is not a must to decrease the sphere of display of the elements of

collective identity of national minorities in the process of formation of common civic identity of the Russians and other national minorities. The development of liberal values both in the society and in the mind of national minorities will let gain the essential balance between the elements of collective and common civic identity of the national groups in Latvia.

## **2. Russian collective identity in discourses of national consciousness**

Russians realize their collective identity as a foundation for their consolidation as a national minority in Latvia. On the one hand, a national minority status does not pose a threat to the stability and integration of the Latvian nation, and, on the other hand, a minority status strengthens the national identity of the Russians. The analysis of Russian national consciousness shows interconnections between the necessity to preserve the collective identity and the perspective of the integration of the Latvian society.

In the consciousness of the Russians in Latvia one can trace several discourses that link the collective interests of this national group with integration of the Latvian society and with its security. First of all, these are the culture-centred discourse and the discourse upon human rights advocacy.

The culture-centred discourse deals with the concepts of the Russian culture as a national formation, which, at the same time, lacks of national limitedness and is available to other nations and ethnic groups. The followers of this discourse believe that the Russian culture – a part of the Russians' social life – has initially been integrated into the Latvian society. These views became especially popular with the Russian creative intelligentsia of Latvia, and, in particular, with the writers J.Abyzov, L.Azarova, R.Dobrovenskii, V.Dozorcev, and others. The culture-centred approach underlies the activities of a range of Russian social institutions in Latvia: the Latvian Society of Russian Culture, the Association of the Russian Language and Literature Teachers, the Pushkin Society, the Alexander Men' Foundation.



Within the culture-centred approach there has been worked out the substantiation of the necessity of integration of the Latvian society, as well as that of integration of the local Russians into this society. Firstly, it is declared that the existence of the local Russian population in Latvia is not self-sufficient if compared to that of Latvians. Therefore, it is hardly possible to imagine the Latvian Russians' life out of the context of their interaction with the Latvian society. J. Abyzov describes this initial necessity for the Russian – Latvian integration in the following way: “Latvians, who live in Latvia,... are a single whole... Yes, there is also the Russian-speaking population, but it exists as if in the niche of the Latvian nation. The greatest achievements and success of Russians in the field of culture...are not here, but there, where is the Bolshoi Theatre, the Hermitage, and the Troitse-Sergieva Lavra [a monastery – V. V.]” (АБЫЗОВ 2002, с. 45). Abyzov and many other representatives of the creative intelligentsia are familiar with the idea of *enclave* nature of Russian national life in Latvia (АБЫЗОВ 2002, с. 209, 213). Moreover, “it has always been typical of Russians to adopt the local environment with its stable respectful attitude towards law, order, customs, traditions and values”. The Russians do have what to offer to the Latvian society. Abyzov calls it *the Russian substratum*, which has developed in the course of two centuries of Russians' residing in Latvia (АБЫЗОВ 2002, p. 148). The Russian cultural tradition has been able to overcome ethnic isolation and to imbibe the values of many Baltic nations: “We used the term *the local Russian culture*, though, as a matter of fact, it would be more precise to speak about a *the Russian nature of the local culture*” (АБЫЗОВ 2002, с. 212). As it turned out, the Baltic nations had a predisposition to the following synthesis: “The Baltic region is a kind of crucible, in which different ethnic groups do not really melt...but are heated to a certain degree, thus reaching the state of symbiosis” (АБЫЗОВ 2002, с. 95).

Secondly, the culture-centred approach, though based on the centuries-old traditions of the Russian presence in the Baltic region, does not belong to mass phenomena. The culture-centered approach is mainly related to the principle of individual cultural autonomy, which presupposes a personal responsibility for the maintenance of the Russian national and cultural identity in Latvia. In 1991, when the

independence of Latvia was restored, J.Abyzov explained the need for a personal choice of the Russian national values in the following way: “First of all, I mean freedom as self-awareness..., that I am Russian, living in a bit different milieu...Russia cannot be here, around me. I am Russia... It is absolutely necessary... to be aware of yourself as a thinking personality, for whom the truth is superior to Motherland and State” (АБЫЗОВ 2002, с.115).

The culture-centred approach complies with the principles of liberalism and it is not against the Latvian Law. For instance, the Law “On Free Development of National and Ethnic Groups in Latvia and Their Right to Cultural Autonomy”, which came into force in 1991, protects the right of the individual choice of one’s national identity.

The culture-centred discourse is closely connected with the traditionalistic types of orientation of the Russian consciousness in Latvia. The demand for traditionalistic motivation in the process of creation of a modern integrated society is connected with the system of cultural values, which has been providing a peaceful life and effective cooperation among people of different nationalities for many centuries. The most obvious manifestation of the Russian traditionalism in Latvia is the Old Belief Religious Movement, which in the year 2000 involved 70,000 people. The traditionalism of Old Belief cannot be politicized or situation-oriented towards integration of the Latvian society. However, the Latvian and Russian old-believers have shown much interest in this integration process. The Latvian mass media regularly prepares materials about the Old Belief communities’ life, highlights the views of famous representatives of the Old Belief intelligentsia on the development of the Latvian society.

For many centuries the old-believers have been able to form and maintain positive attitude of the Latvians towards Old Belief and old-believers. Besides, they have developed a *cultural* – not political or ideological – approach to such symbols of all-Russian consciousness as Byzantine heritage, tolerance of the Western globalization, etc. (Персикова 2002<sup>c</sup>, 2002<sup>b</sup>). Basing on the authority they have in the Latvian society, the old-believers, as well as the Russian public organizations and

human rights defenders, are concerned about the planned cessation of the secondary education with Russian as a language of instruction. The Old Belief community regularly organizes seminars on the problems of the Russian culture and the national minorities' prospects for education in their native languages. In 2000, "Pomorskii Vestnik" published the materials expressing the ideological position of the Latvian Association of Support of Schools with Russian as a Language of Instruction concerning the crucial secondary school reform being carried out by the Ministry of Education and Science (Ковальчук и Пичугин 2000).

In addition to the classical Russian traditionalism, the attempts to form a temporal traditionalistic discourse as an ideological basis for integration of the local Russian population into the Latvian society are being made. These attempts are basically connected with the activities of the Russian Party, ideological basis of which is the Russian nationalism. According to the ideology of nationalism, the fact that the Russian people, living in the diaspora, possess peculiar ethnic features and play a great role in the processes concerning the whole population of the country, is a sufficient precondition for the Russian population to have the right to exercise all those social functions, which are usually carried out only by the titular nation of the country as such. These claims receive the most obvious expression in attempts to achieve that the Russian language is given the status of the second official language in Latvia. The nationalist discourse does not accept the European model: *nation – national minorities* - for the Russian population. Therefore, the integration of the Latvian society is considered a remote perspective, the achievement of which demands crucial reform of the Latvian legislation and Constitution. In addition to this, contemporary Russian nationalists in Latvia do not take into consideration their predecessors' bad experience during the revolutionary upheavals of 1905 – 1907 and the post-revolution period, which split the local Russian society. The present-day Russian Party has gained no authority over the Russian population as well (the Party did not obtain the necessary 5% of votes in the Parliament elections in 2002, and that happened during the utmost consolidation of the Russian voters, which the history of Latvia has never witnessed before).

The culture centred discourse is related to a people's necessity to identify themselves not only with the civil, but also with the ethnic and cultural community. The significance of such identification was stated by Anthony Smith. According to this scholar, "the growing interest in the socially conditioned quality of all the collective identities, including cultural identities, and understanding of a nation as a cultural community" (СМИТ 2004, с. 24 ) has been displayed in the western science since the 1960s. The scholars' interest in cultural and linguistic components of the establishment and development of nations, national and ethnic groups is to a certain extent connected with the impossibility from the positions of modernism to account for important peculiarities of recurrent outbreaks of ethnicity both in the capitalistic centre and in the periphery. Moreover, A.Smith emphasizes that "the national component is an integral part of the modernization project" (СМИТ 2004, с. 93).

The specific nature of the Latvian situation is that for the representatives of the Russian national minority both the identification with the civil Latvian society as well as that with the ethnic and cultural values of their "own" national minority turn out to be of great importance. In case of the advantageous development of the political process – integration of the Russian ethnic and national minority in the Latvian society and retention of this minority's identity – these two types of identity can complement each other. The cultural identity, as it is displayed in the culture centred discourse analyzed above does not exceed the limits of the model "national state – national minorities" accepted in Latvia.

The analysis of the culture centred discourse of the Russians in Latvia shows that it cannot be viewed as an alternative to the identity developed in modernism. In the culture centred discourse there, undoubtedly, exists an orientation towards the traditional ethnic values. But at the same time this discourse is also involved in designing of the cultural identity that does not coincide with the identity of the Russians in Russia.

To better understand the general logic of the Russian minority's in Latvia interest in modelling their own culture centred discourse, it is important to take into account the approach of E.Hobsbawm and T.Ranger, who described the process of "inventing a

tradition” – a way of designing a new cultural identity on the basis of traditional values in the conditions of modernism. (Hobsbawm E., Ranger T.1983, p.1-2) One can also agree with R.Brubaker’s opinion, that, when analyzing national communities, one should not attach “substantiality” to them (Brubaker R.1996, p.21). The concept of the culture centred discourse is that which will allow for considering the identity of the Russians in Latvia as a developing, flexible phenomenon. The culture centred discourse is also a way of ethnic categorization in the processes of interethnic interaction as described by F.Barth (Barth F. 1969, p.14), or establishing the ethnic boundaries of changing interaction described by J.Armstrong (Armstrong J.1982, p. 6).

The identification with the ethnic community is important because of a number of reasons, therefore the culture centred discourse is so topical:

1. Psychological reason – the Russian people view the strengthening of ties within their own community as an important resource for reducing the level of social alienation from the Latvian state and society;
2. Social reason – the Russians view the values and possibilities of their own culture as significant resources for the development of a new civil society’s institutes (entrepreneurship structures, social and cultural infrastructure functioning in Russian, elements of the “high” Russian culture – theatre, literature, science and research, etc.), as well as the search for their own place in the system of social stratification and in the systems of power of the Latvian State and society;
3. Intellectual reason – the general principles of national identity established in Russia cannot be applied to the Russian minority in Latvia. It is necessary for them to carry out intellectual work within their community in order to develop their own model of identity as an ethnic and cultural community of the Latvian society.

The discourse of human-rights advocacy in Russian consciousness, which asserts the necessity of the integration of the Latvian society, also has a liberal directivity. In the modern history of Latvia, development of the discourse of human-rights advocacy started already in 1991, when the country became independent *de-facto*. The discourse of human-rights advocacy is based on the liberal concepts,

according to which the legal equality of citizens is viewed as a prerequisite for integration of the society, but, in Latvia, the Russian defenders of human rights have concentrated their attention on something different. They disapprove of the legislation and the existence of mass non-citizenship among the representatives of national minorities in Latvia, the fact that the residents of the country do not have the same social rights, which the citizens of Latvia do enjoy (*Report*. 2002, p. 78). Therefore, the main feature of the discourse of human-rights advocacy in Russian consciousness is its close link with political interests of this group of population.

At the same time, the discourse of human-rights protection, with its orientation towards integration of the Latvian society, and the culture-centered discourse are similar, as they both share the understanding of a national identity as an exceptionally personal concern of its bearers, as well as hostility towards ethnic nationalism and etatism. B. Tsilevich (Cilevičs), famous human-rights activist, outstanding publicist and member of the Latvian Parliament, holds that true liberalism must be based not on the idea of ethnicity, but on the concept of human rights (Цилевич 1998, с.45, 333). However, the Russian defenders of human rights have not always managed to combine their views on the equality of rights and the role of national identity in the development of the modern integrated society. In the beginning of the 1990s, there was an attempt to completely ignore the influence of national values upon the discourse of human-rights advocacy. B. Tsilevich declared that “in the modern world the struggle between two completely different concepts of statehood is evident. The first one is based on the principles of nationalism, the second – on human rights”. It is obvious, that such understanding of the modern statehood is a little erroneous: since the Enlightenment both the idea about human rights and the idea about civic nationalism have been existing in complex, but still a unity. The idea, that the discourse of human-rights advocacy can be freed of the influence of national values, formed the basis of the activities of a public organization, which worked in the beginning of the 1990s, – the League of Apatrides. This organization protected interests of the permanent Latvian residents, who were not citizens of Latvia. In that

period of time, B. Tsilevich believed in the people, who had extensive experience in nonconformist activities since the Soviet regime (Цилевич 1998, с.126).

By the beginning of 2000, the discourse of human-rights protection had experienced its evolution. At present, among its followers there does not exist any contraposition between the idea of human rights and that of national values as prerequisites for integration of the Latvian society. This development of human-rights defenders' views was promoted by the political struggle in Latvia, which demanded the Russian community to carry out approved and concerted actions when using the institutes of democracy in order to implement the interests of the national minorities. Thus, the understanding of the fact, that the Latvian national state is not a recurrence of ethnic nationalism, but a manifold political establishment that can also be considered a source of legitimacy of national values of such a large group of Latvian residents as the Russians, gradually developed. There have been some changes also in the lexicon of the Russian discourse of human-rights protection. The prevalent identifier *an alien*, used in the beginning of the 1990s, is often replaced by *Russian*, *Russian-speaking* and *the Russian linguistic minority* (Цилевич 1998, с.296).

Human-rights defenders are mainly oriented towards protection of rights of the Russian linguistic minority in the sphere of education and social functions of linguistic minorities. This fact brings the defenders' position closer to the European discourse of human-rights protection.

Today the human-rights discourse forms the basis of many Russian public institutions in Latvia. Firstly, this refers to the Latvian Association of Support of Schools with Russian as a Language of Instruction, the Latvian Human Rights Committee, the Union of Citizens and Non-Citizens. The goal of these organizations is to carry out independent expert examination of the legislative acts of the Republic of Latvia, and its applying is directly related to the interests of national minorities, as well as to work out and popularize humanitarian projects that can positively affect the minorities' life and the relations existing between them and the government. Already for many years The Latvian Association of Support of Schools with Russian as a Language of Instruction has been organizing parents' conferences "To Study in the

Native Language”. Some of their propositions concerning the adjustment of the reform of national minorities’ schools have been accepted by the Ministry of Education and Science (these schools are given the right to submit for accreditation the study programmes based on those worked out by the Latvian Association of Support of Schools with Russian as a Language of Instruction).

Unfortunately, some large-scale Russian public institutions, for instance, the Russian Community of Latvia, do not have legally correct understanding of the local Russians as a national minority of the country. On the one hand, the Russian Community of Latvia, together with other Russian public institutions, advocates the ratification of the Framework Convention of the European Council for the Protection of National minorities, which envisages legal guarantees for languages of national minorities. On the other hand, the Russian Community of Latvia fights for the Russian language to be given the status of the second official language of the country (Volkovs, [www.politika.lv](http://www.politika.lv)).

Thus it is obvious that all the discourses of the Russian consciousness in Latvia, which often express conflicting views, agree in their attitude towards education in one’s native language. The national minorities express the most negative attitude towards infringement of rights in the sphere of education, which is closely connected with the socialization of the young generation and reproduction of cultural identity of the national minorities in Latvia. The greatest concern in this field is caused by the reform, which envisages transition of the secondary education of national minorities to studies in Latvian as a language of instruction.

The Russian people consider that implementation of these plans will lead to destructive consequences for the Russian national minority, and that it is aimed not at the integration of the Latvian society, but at the assimilation of the national minorities. Human-rights defenders, as well as scientists and teachers, share the opinion that such reform will bring about the whole complex of negative consequences:

- a possibility for the Russian youth to qualitatively master the Latvian language in minority schools is being denied (Бухвалов и Плинер 2000);



- the national minorities' right to cultural autonomy is being denied (Плинер 2002);
- the prestige of the native language and culture is denied; the status of the language is diminished to that of a language used only within a family domain;
- the multicultural nature of the Latvian society, as well as wholesome reproduction of the Russian culture in Latvia, is called into question (Плинер, Алтухов и Соколов 2002);
- the competitiveness of the Russian youth, that could participate in commercial and humanitarian contacts between Latvia and the Russian Federation, decreases (Плинер, Алтухов и Соколов 2002);
- the succession of cultural and linguistic socialization of the Russian youth in the model "family, informal communication – school" is impaired (Персикова 2002<sup>a</sup>, 2002<sup>b</sup>, 2002<sup>c</sup>);
- high quality education in the Russian schools, which has developed in the period of restoration of Latvia's independence, and which allows school leavers to enter and study in higher education establishments in both Russian and Latvian, is disregarded (Александрова 2002).

So, the discourses of collective identity play significant role in the reproduction of the Russian ethnic traditions and in the processes of interethnic communication in Latvia. Collective identity is the important social value for Russian minority consciousness in Latvia. For the security and integration of civic society, it is necessary to find the compromise between universal democratic values of the Latvian society and the collective identity of Russian minority.

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*Received 17. 09. 2004.*

## **Резюме**

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### **Коллективная идентичность русских Латвии и безопасность гражданского общества**

Русские – важнейшая составная часть населения Латвии, от которой в значительной степени зависит целостность, а, следовательно, – и безопасность и интеграция латвийского общества. В то же время в науке и общественно-политическом сознании не решенным является вопрос, насколько интеграция и безопасность гражданского общества может допустить культивирование принципов не только индивидуальной, но и коллективной идентичности представителей национальных меньшинств. В статье показано, что коллективная идентичность русских Латвии не ставит под сомнение безопасность и принципы интеграции общества. Коллективная идентичность русских в основном связана со статусом национального меньшинства.

## **Kopsavilkums**

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### **Latvijas krievu kolektīvā identitāte un pilsoniskās sabiedrības drošība**

Krievi ir Latvijas iedzīvotāju svarīga sastāvdaļa, kas būtiski ietekmē pilsoniskās sabiedrības integritāti un drošību. Pašlaik zinātnē un sabiedriskajā apziņā nav atrisināts jautājums, vai pilsoniskā sabiedrība var pieļaut ne tikai nacionālo minoritāšu pārstāvju individuālās, bet arī kolektīvās identitātes funkcionēšanu. Raksts parādā, ka krievu kolektīva identitāte Latvijā ir saistīta ar nacionālās minoritātes statusu un neapdraud sabiedrības drošību un integritāti.