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DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL MINORITIES
Republic of Estonia up to 1944

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Abstract. Estonia in its history has several times lost its independence to various powers like Germans, Swedes or Russians. Being on the crossroad of trade routes, its cities having belonged to the Hanseatic League, has also initiated several immigration waves. The paper focuses on the formation and fate of five national minorities in Estonia until 1944. National minorities are compared from the viewpoint of their demographic development, concerning mainly their fertility, mortality and nuptiality patterns. The trends of the demographic processes are followed until 1944, while four out of five minorities present in the Republic of Estonia practically disappeared. Ironically, in several cases only survivors of those deported into Siberia and taken into Soviet Army returned to Estonia. Russian minority is the only one, although reduced to one fourth in its size, which has maintained its existence as a national minority until nowadays.

Estonian people have lived on the present territory for more than 5000 years, being in this respect among the oldest nations in Europe. According to more recent historical evidence, this duration could be probably extended to the period following the withdrawal of continental icecap (Künnap 1996). Estonians together with other Northern nations, participated in the emergence of a specific society known today as the Viking civilisation. When the new West-East trade routes were transferred from the Mediterranean to the Baltic Sea, they happened to cross Estonian territory and placed the area into the focus of interest for different powers. Estonia lost its independence at the beginning of the 13th century after 20 years of fighting against the combined attack of Germans, Danes, Swedes and Russians, sanctioned by the Church. As a result Estonia was partitioned. Two Bishoprics were established (Tartu and Saare-Lääne), from the rest, the Southern part of Estonia went to Livonic Order, Northern to Denmark, South-Eastern part to Pskov Republic, North-Eastern part and the whole territory of historical Inkeri (Ingermanland or Vatlandia) to Novgorod Republic. As a result, Estonia became a dividing line between the Roman-Catholic and Orthodox worlds, the division

which has maintained importance until nowadays. It is noteworthy that for many centuries Estonia remained a battlefield, which resulted in much more frequent population crises than on average in Europe. Among others, the population crises caused three massive waves of immigration, partly encouraged by ruling powers. Among the latter the Baltic-German nobility gained the dominant role. The migration exchange was also common in the Estonian cities belonging to Hanseatic League. During the Northern War the local Baltic-German nobility surrendered to Peter the Great in 1710. In return Russia endorsed the continuity of the rights and privileges of German nobility in the region. Lutheran Estonia was included into the Russian Empire, but under a special Baltic order, the autonomy of which included the continuation of court and justice systems, land-use and local government. Baltic provinces remained an autonomous region until the russification programme by Alexander III in the 1880s (Thadden 1981).

After being ruled by various powers for 700 years, the Republic of Estonia was declared on 24 February 1918, and defended in Independence War (1918-1920) against Russian Federation as well as German military forces (Laaman 1964). For the first time the national land boundaries (approximately three fourths of Estonian boundaries are water boundaries) were defined which, *inter alia*, determined the population of Republic of Estonia. The Tartu Peace Treaty with Russian Federation was built on principles of ethnic boundaries, and not on the previous gubernia division of Russian Empire (Eesti-Vene Rahuleping 1920). Due to an extensive territory of ethnically mixed population, this principle was not easy to follow. Since the 10th century, immigration of Russians towards North had taken place for several centuries. The immigration towards Estonian land had intensified into areas which after the partition of Estonia had remained under the Russian rule: towards Inkeri already since 13th century and to South-East Estonia under Pskov Republic in the 15th century, concentrating around the Petseri Monastery. Waves of the migration of Estonians, on the other hand, towards these territories, called Small-Estonia, have taken place in the 16–18th centuries, and more intensively during the emigration wave of the second half of the 19th century. However, even after that Estonians remained a minority in most of these regions. According to the Tartu Peace Treaty, it was agreed to divide the mixed population areas in the way that up to 60,000 ethnic Russians remained in Estonia, while up to 200,000 Estonians were left in Russian Federation. The boundary was drawn through the Peipsi Lake, leaving its Eastern shore, including the historical Small-Estonia, in Russia. A special option policy was adopted in the framework of the Treaty, allowing both ethnicities under consideration to return to their homeland during one year.

State boundary between Latvia and Estonia was also drawn upon the principles of ethnic boundaries. On the one hand, there had never been official Estonian-Latvian boundary in history (Southern Estonia and Northern Latvia formed the province of Livonia for centuries). On the other hand, the new boundary was not very difficult to define because there had never been any large-scale Latvian and

Estonian migration interchange in Livonia. Only limited areas of mixed population existed, particularly urban areas like Valga/Valka, Heinaste/Ainazhi and Hopa/Ape.

1. Number of national minorities

Taking into consideration the principles applied in boundary definition, it is not surprising that the population of the Republic of Estonia was ethnically rather homogeneous until the WW II, particularly if compared to neighbouring Finland, Latvia and Russian Federation. According to the last prewar population census (1934), Estonians comprised 88.1 percent of total population. The remaining part of the population, 120 thousand in number, consisted of representatives of 51 ethnicities (Table 1). Five of the ethnic groups exceeded 3,000 in number which had become a threshold for a national minority considered by the Cultural Autonomy Law (Riigi Teataja 1925). The most numerous minority, Russians, accounted for 92.6 thousand people, Germans 16.3 thousand, Swedes 7.6 thousand, Latvians 5.4 thousand and Jews 4.4 thousand (RSKB 1935). The ethnic composition of population is presented in Figure 1. All other ethnicities together formed a group of 7.3 thousand individuals. The current report is discussing the above-mentioned five bigger Estonian national minorities, which *inter alia* had also been the subject of the Cultural Autonomy Law.

Figure 1

Population by ethnicity
Estonia 1934

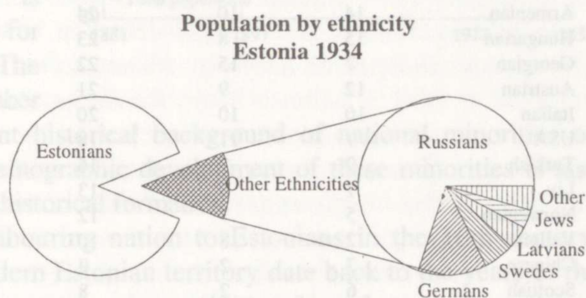


Table 1

Ethnic composition of population
Estonia 1934

Ethnicity	Male	Female	Total	Proportion in Total Population	Proportion in Total Minority Population
Estonian	465789	526731	992520	88.1	–
Russian	44572	48084	92656	8.2	70.0
German	6534	9812	16346	1.5	12.4
Swede	3665	3976	7641	0.7	5.8
Latvian	2254	3181	5435	0.5	4.1
Jew	2214	2220	4434	0.4	3.4
Pole	712	896	1608	0.1	1.2

Table 1 continued

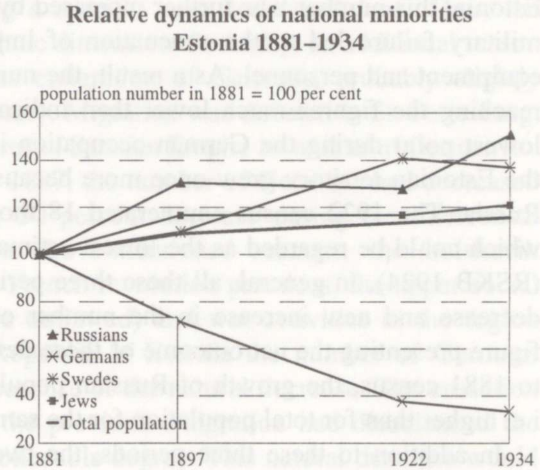
Ethnicity	Male	Female	Total	Proportion in Total Population	Proportion in Total Minority Population
Finn	522	566	1088	0.1	0.8
Ingerian	452	389	841	0.1	0.6
Gypsy	419	347	766	0.1	0.6
Lithuanian	131	122	253	0.0	0.2
Dane	120	108	228	0.0	0.2
Tatar	90	76	166	0.0	0.1
Englishman	89	69	158	0.0	0.1
French	40	62	102	0.0	0.1
Swiss	46	53	99	0.0	0.1
Czech	45	47	92	0.0	0.1
Ukrainian	50	42	92	0.0	0.1
Dutch	20	12	32	0.0	0.0
Caraim	16	10	26	0.0	0.0
Greek	10	15	25	0.0	0.0
Armenian	14	10	24	0.0	0.0
Hungarian	15	8	23	0.0	0.0
Georgian	7	15	22	0.0	0.0
Austrian	12	9	21	0.0	0.0
Italian	10	10	20	0.0	0.0
USA	7	11	18	0.0	0.0
Turkish	9	7	16	0.0	0.0
Liv	7	6	13	0.0	0.0
Norwegian	5	7	12	0.0	0.0
Vallone	2	8	10	0.0	0.0
Chinese	7	2	9	0.0	0.0
Scottish	6	2	8	0.0	0.0
Karelian	3	4	7	0.0	0.0
Serb	2	3	5	0.0	0.0
Mordva	3	0	3	0.0	0.0
Bulgarian	1	2	3	0.0	0.0
Japanese	1	2	3	0.0	0.0
Spanish	3	0	3	0.0	0.0
Portugese	1	1	2	0.0	0.0
Moldavian	1	1	2	0.0	0.0
Irish	2	0	2	0.0	0.0
Votes	2	1	3	0.0	0.0
Osset	2	0	2	0.0	0.0
Fleming	1	1	2	0.0	0.0
Brasilian	0	1	1	0.0	0.0
Abhas	0	1	1	0.0	0.0
Romanian	0	1	1	0.0	0.0
Komi	1	0	1	0.0	0.0
Korean	1	0	1	0.0	0.0
Irani	1	0	1	0.0	0.0
Unknown	972	594	1566	0.1	–
Total	528888	597525	1126413	100.0	100.0

In order to compare the number of national minorities over a period of time, one should once more consider boundary changes. Due to data availability, such comparison was possible, building on the gubernia boundaries of Russian Empire, because census data of 1922 and 1934 could be adapted to those boundaries, *vice*

versa recalculations were not possible (RSKB 1924, 1935). According to the old administrative division, the territory of the Republic of Estonia was divided between Estland, Livland, St.Petersburg and Pskov gubernias. Nevertheless, four Estland counties, and five Livland counties were afterwards fully included into Republic of Estonia, providing the basis for time-consistent comparison of ethnic changes during half of the century. The graph is representing the relative change for four ethnic groups (Figure 2). The dynamics of population number reflects the principally different historical background of national minorities on Estonian territory. Similarly, demographic development of these minorities is also affected by the features of their historical formation.

Figure 2

Relative dynamics of national minorities Estonia 1881–1934



Russians became the neighbouring nation to Estonians in the 10th century. Russian settlements on the modern Estonian territory date back to the years of the Livonic War. In early 18th century some additional settlements, mostly of fishermen were established on the Western shore of Peipsi Lake (Moora 1964). All those settlements were founded by the Orthodox oldbelievers-refugees escaping religious persecution by Russian authorities (Grass 1914). In Estonian land, including Petserimaa, remaining under Russian rule after the partition of Estonia in the 13th century, the Russian settlements are older, appearing together with the spread of Orthodox church. In general, regardless of being part of the Russian Empire, there was no remarkable Russian immigration into the modern Estonian territory up to the russification programme introduced by Alexander III. In Baltic gubernias, which remained under a special Baltic order, the Russian language and Orthodox religion were not widely spread. Russian, although the official language, was not used by any social strata, except the military personnel. The immigration began to increase after the russification programme, because of the need for Russian-speaking administrators, servicemen and teachers. The new imperial enterprises were established which drafted their workers mostly from Russia. The Russian ethnic minority was breaking into two distinct parts: upper classes, consisting of new immigrants for local Russian administration and concentrated in cities, and historical peasantry in the bordering regions.

The growth of Russian population in Estonia at the turn of the 19–20th centuries was rather extensive. Between the 1881 and 1897 censuses the number of Russians increased approximately 30 percent, during the years preceding the

WWI this process was accelerated. As the war broke out and the front approached Estonia, this number was further increased by Russian troops. However, soon the military failure led to the evacuation of imperial enterprises together with the equipment and personnel. As a result, the number of Russians sharply decreased, reaching the figures much lower than indicated by the 1922 census. From that lowest point during the German occupation in 1918, the number of Russians on the Estonian territory grew once more because of refugees fleeing from the Red Russia. The 1922 census enumerated 18 thousand Russians without citizenship which could be regarded as the lowest estimate for the number of those refugees (RSKB 1924). In general, all these three periods of rapid alterations of increase, decrease and new increase in the number of Russians are not reflected in the figure presenting the net outcome of these developments. Nevertheless, compared to 1881 census, the growth of Russian population remained close to 30 percent, i.e. higher than for total population for the same period.

In addition to these three periods, the two above-mentioned parts of Russian minority grew even more distinctly. Although the former official stratification was abolished in Estonia, in social terms the differences between Russian refugee and historical peasant groups became even more evident. From the viewpoint of population number, the remarkable proportion of the refugees maintained high mobility and after temporary residence in Estonia emigrated further. Because of this emigration, the significantly high natural increase of the other part of the Russians has turned out smaller. Nevertheless, despite negative net-migration, the total growth of Russians has been the highest among the minorities in the Republic of Estonia.

The first major wave of Germans, apart from merchants and missionaries, reached Estonia in early 13th century as invaders. After the conquest of Estonian and Latvian lands, Germans had established themselves as the ruling class. Consequently, up to the 19th century in the Baltic region, being a German was commonly understood rather belonging to the upper social standing than to a specific ethnic group. This higher social strata, which had been formed already in the 13th century, managed to keep its position up to 1918, despite different powers ruling the country (Wittram 1973). In such conditions where nations had not developed their modern meaning, becoming a German became a prerequisite for upward social mobility. In addition to social mobility as a source of increase, the immigration of German merchants and craftsmen into the cities, especially those of the Hanseatic League, took place. But there has never been any mass German peasant immigration into Estonia. Altogether the number of Germans remained rather small over centuries, never exceeding 5–6 percent of the total population, and on the eve of the 20th century comprising around 2.5 percent.

In the second half of the 19th century the continuous decreasing trend of German population began. The primary reason for the decrease was the cessation of assimilation process accompanying social mobility – the most important source of growth of Germans. Alongside with the formation of modern nations throughout Europe, Estonians developed their national identity. At the same time also Germans

developed their ethnic identity and the upward movers of non-German origin became marginalised, even acquiring a specific term *kadakasakslane*. Thus, the social mobility was untied from its ethnic dimension. Secondly, an additional reason for the decrease was the continuous emigration of Germans, probably slightly accelerated at the end of the 19th century. Migration was directed to St. Petersburg, close to Estonia, and other urban centres of Russian Empire as well as to Germany.

Between two censuses, 1881 and 1897, the number of Germans had decreased ca 30 percent, followed by another 30 percent decrease during the intercensal period of 1897–1922. Besides the above-mentioned reasons, the bolshevik repressions in 1917 (inspired by the French revolution practices, the upper social standings, particularly nobility, were outlawed) and war activities in the region should also be underlined. In the Republic of Estonia the number of Germans continued to decrease, now mostly because of the natural decrease. The cessation of social mobility input as well as the previous emigration had disbalanced the German age and sex structure to a noticeable degree. This natural decrease would have surely continued under the normal course of social development, accelerated by the new phenomenon of assimilation.

Swedish population on the Estonian territory dates back to the 13-14th centuries, having emerged after the conquest of Estonia, supposedly slightly later than Swedish settlements in Western Finland (Blumfeldt 1961). Swedish fishermen settled on small islands of the North-Western coast which had not been inhabited before. Due to the geological elevation these islands were relatively young and had continuously been emerging from sea. After the conquest of Estonia and, particularly, after the sharp depopulation of Northern Estonia following the 1343 uprising, there was no local population to inhabit these islands. Later, the Swedish population also started land cultivation and partially moved to the mainland coast. From social viewpoint, Swedish population belonged to the peasant standing, even during the Swedish rule (1561–1710) the permanent upper stratum was not formed. In the 19th and 20th century, Swedish population had continuously increased. However, during the 1920–1930s their number stabilised and showed later a small decrease. The latter process was mostly because of assimilation of the population but also due to (temporal) emigration for educational and employment reasons to Sweden. The Swedish population participating in the urbanisation process seems to have headed not only towards the Estonian cities (Tallinn, Haapsalu), but also to much closer Swedish and Finnish cities (Stockholm, Turku). Over the whole period of 1881–1934, the Swedish population with its 37 percent of growth exceeded the total population mostly due to higher fertility. In this connection it is interesting to note that the Swedish population in Estonia has provided inspiration to demographic science, being the object for the first application of family reconstruction method (Hyrenius 1942), followed some 15 years later by the French school.

The Jewish population is the youngest among the national minorities of Estonia. There was no Jewish community in any Estonian city during the Middle

Ages and only some Jewish people have been recorded earlier than the 19th century in Estonia (Gurin 1936). The situation began to change under the Russian Empire, particularly after the special law of Alexander II from 1865, which for the first time allowed certain social strata of Jewish population to migrate into the northern cities of the Russian Empire (soldiers, merchants, craftsmen and people with higher education). The immigration into Estonia was intensified during the rule of Alexander III when Jewish pogroms began in Ukraine and Belorussia. On the one hand, Estonia was regarded a preferable destination country, because of safety reasons (no pogroms have taken place in Estonia, even during WWII). On the other hand, the immigration was limited because of no established network of the Jews in the receiving end. Figure 2 presents the close similarity between the dynamics of the total number and Jewish population. Thus, surprisingly, the closest resemblance can be found among a minority with the most clearly expressed immigrant origin and diverse demographic behaviour, discussed below. The other specificity of Jews concerns their overwhelming concentration into cities – more than 98 percent of Jews form the urban population.

The number of Latvians in Estonia is difficult if not impossible to define before the state boundaries between the neighbouring countries were drawn. As already mentioned, the border was drawn by ethnic boundaries, the careful implementation of which left only six thousand Latvians in the borders of Estonia (Kübarsepp 1926). Even from such a small number only half can be found in the bordering regions, with others dispersed over the country. Due to the unavailability of data on Latvians from earlier censuses, they are not represented in Figure 2. During 1922–1934 the number of Latvians had decreased from estimated six thousand to 5434 persons. The Latvian minority was characterised by natural decrease. As will be discussed later, the number of children registered as Latvians was extremely low which clearly refers to the assimilation process in mixed marriages.

Thus, Estonian national minorities have had rather different and in some cases even diverse ways of historical formation. This difference is reflected in their population number, more in its dynamics and even more in the spatial distribution and demographic processes, described below. Beyond the demographic development, the historical minority formations exerted influence on the fate of national minorities during WWII. Estonia suffered heavily in the conflict of neighbouring great powers, however, from today's perspective, Estonian national minorities paid even a higher toll.

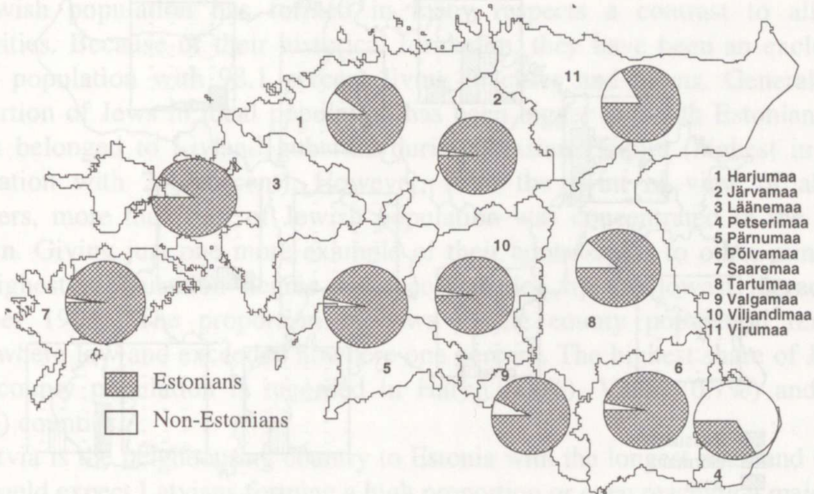
2. Spatial distribution of national minorities

The spatial distribution of Estonian national minorities largely stems from their historical formation. Their regional distribution is represented according to the 1934 census data (RSKB 1934). The spatial distribution is given in two dimensions, following the county and urban-rural division. The importance of urban-rural

distribution lies primarily in the way it complements the social structure of national minorities. As for the county distribution, additional references are made to community level data in cases of higher concentrations of specific minorities. This is particularly important when national minority formed a majority on the community level, as local communities were the main unit in realising the large-scale social policies, including education, health and social care, i.e. even to a broader extent than foreseen by the Cultural Autonomy Law. Figure 3 presents the proportion of national minorities taken together in total county populations, Figure 4 presents the distribution of minorities between the counties.

Figure 3

Proportion of non-Estonians in county population
Estonia 1934

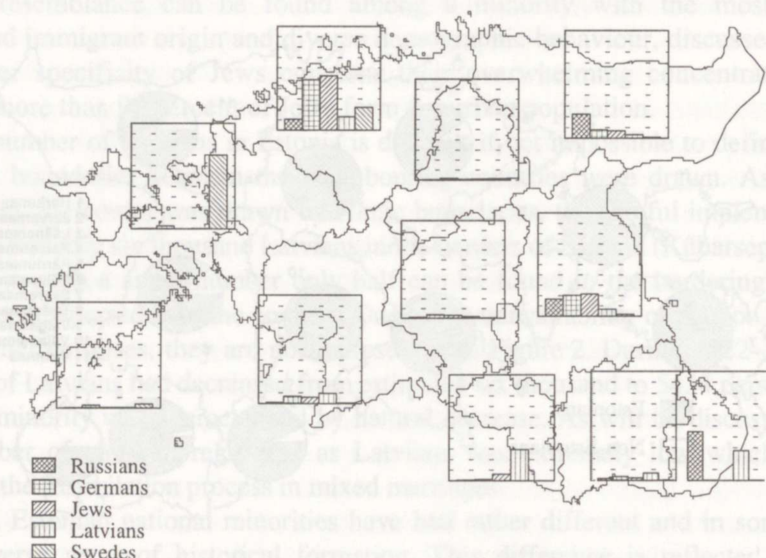


Russians have concentrated, on the one hand, in bordering counties of Petseri (44.7%) and Viru (22.3%) as well as on Western shore of Peipsi Lake, and on the other hand, in capital region Harju (10.5%) and to a lesser extent in other major cities. The former reflects the historical Russian peasant community, the latter comes partly or even mostly from the former Russian administrative classes as well as from recent refugees. Petseri county in general belongs to the ethnically mixed population area. Altogether in this county Russians accounted for 63.5 percent of total population, in six out of eleven Petseri communities they formed a majority. In other five communities Estonians were prevailing. However, being also the bordering county to Latvia, Petseri was characterised additionally by Latvian settlements. Although small in number, the latter formed one third of Latvian minority in Estonia. Similar majority of Russian population could be found in three trans-Narva communities of Viru county. Additionally, two Russian

majority settlements of fishermen were situated on the Western shore of Peipsi Lake, namely Mustvee and Kallaste towns. Apart from mixed population areas in Petseri and trans-Narva, Kallaste and Mustvee were localised in the Estonian environment in Tartu county. Reflecting the above-mentioned division of Russian minority into two distinct parts, Russians in Petseri county consisted of 95.7 percent of rural population, while on the other extreme, Russians in Harju county were 92.4 percent urban. However, in total, the urbanisation degree was only 28.8 percent, being slightly different from the average for the total population.

Figure 4

Distribution of national minorities among counties
Estonia 1994



Apart from Russians, Germans were characterised by a very high level of urbanisation with 83.3 percent living in cities and towns. Germans were represented rather evenly in all historical towns, and to a lesser extent in urban settlements which developed in the 19th century. From the viewpoint of distribution of German minority, the bigger the city, the greater the absolute number of Germans. However, concerning the proportion of Germans in city population, it was lower in bigger cities (3–4 percent) with upward gradient towards smaller cities, peaking in Kuressaare (7 percent). At the county level, the distribution of Germans in Estonia was rather determined by the location of urban settlements. As expected, the biggest concentrations of Germans can be found in Harju (48%) and Tartu (20%) counties, surrounding the two larger cities. In total county population this translates into 3.3 and 1.8 percent respectively.

The concentration of Swedes in insular communities comes from their historical formation. The specificity of the Swedish population, partly because of their relatively isolated settlement, is its spatial compactness. In a few small islands they formed an almost homogeneous community in ethnic terms. In coastal mainland, such a compact settlement area emerged only in Lääne county. In total, there were four communities with Swedish majority in Estonia. Despite being small in numbers, Swedes were the second minority, who besides Russians formed a majority on a community level. Reflecting their insular settlement, Swedish population had the lowest level of urbanisation (14.5%). The same pattern is reflected from the county perspective, with 70.0 percent of Swedes living in Lääne and an additional 22.0 in Harju county. This concentration in Lääne county results in 7.0 percent in total county population, leaving Swedish minority below one percent in all other counties.

Jewish population has formed in many respects a contrast to all other minorities. Because of their historical formation, they have been an exclusively urban population with 98.1 percent living in cities and towns. Generally, the proportion of Jews in local population has been bigger in South Estonian towns which belonged to Livland gubernia during Russian Empire (highest in Valga population with 2.4 percent). However, from the point of view of absolute numbers, more than half of Jewish population was concentrated in the capital Tallinn. Giving just one more example of their contrastness to other minorities, the highest urbanisation degree was accompanied by the lowest literacy rate (Körber 1902). The proportion of Jews in the county population remained everywhere low and exceeded nowhere one percent. The highest share of Jews in total county population is recorded in Harju (0.9%), Valga (0.7%) and Tartu (0.5%) counties.

Latvia is the neighbouring country to Estonia with the longest mainland border. One could expect Latvians forming a high proportion or even reaching a majority in some border communities, however, the above-discussed ethnic boundary principle avoided respective situations. Thus, the highest proportion of Latvians accounted only for 21.1 percent (Kaagjärve community) and in additional two communities exceeded 10 percent. From the perspective of spatial distribution, Latvians can be divided into two parts: one inhabiting bordering areas and the other being dispersed around the country, consisting mostly of urban population. The latter part of Latvians seems to be engaged in mixed marriages or otherwise closely integrated into the Estonian society and as shown below, displays the signs of assimilation. From the county perspective, Latvians were concentrated in Valga (29.3%), Petseri (27.3%) and Harju (13%) counties. However, due to small numbers, Latvians formed only 4.0%, 2.3% and 0.3% in respective county populations. Because of the above-mentioned two parts of Latvian population, the level of urbanisation among them on the average was 49.0 percent.

Among five national minorities only Russians and Swedes are characterised by compact settlement, forming in some communities a majority. From the viewpoint

of the development of those national minorities, not only the National Minorities Cultural Autonomy Law, but also the Community Law and related legislation have played a major role in their organisation. Germans, Jews and Latvians are characterised by a disperse spatial distribution. This division seems to be the most important feature of national minorities in Estonia.

3. Demographic development and population structure

To discuss the demographic development of Estonian national minorities, consideration should be given to the timing aspects. In this respect, the timing of the demographic transition, but also the spread of European marriage pattern are of key importance in the first half of the 20th century. Compared to the European average, timing aspects acquire even greater importance in Estonia, being situated in the region of biggest contrasts between the neighbouring nations. Estonia itself and correspondingly its titular nationality belonged to the pioneering countries of demographic transition. Some minorities in Estonia, however, seem to follow other patterns of timing, similar to that found in countries of their origin. The timing was reflected in the course of demographic processes and to a greater extent expressed in the population age structure.

Estonia forms an eastern boundary for the European marriage pattern, evidence of which are found as late as in the second half of the 18th century according to the parish registers (Palli 1988, 1996). The beginning of demographic transition, embedding almost simultaneous decline of fertility and mortality, can be traced back to the middle of the 19th century. The decline progressed continuously until the 1920–1930s. Because of this early transition, Estonia was characterised by the highest life expectancy in Eastern Europe and close to countries pioneering the mortality transition (Katus and Puur 1992). Fertility transition stands out for even earlier completion compared to many West European countries, dropping under the replacement level already in the 1920s (Katus 1994). As a result, age structure had begun to transform in 1860–1870s, and the ageing process was rather progressed by the end of the period under discussion.

Despite the common experience of demographic transition, nations bordering Estonia display considerable diversity in its timing and patterns. The closest similarity could be found with Sweden and Northern Latvia (Hofsten and Lundström 1976, Zvidrinsh 1986). In demographic development Finland lagged behind Estonia around 20 years (Strömmer 1969). Russia and Estonia are demonstrating one of the largest, if not the most large difference in timing of demographic development among the neighbouring nations in Europe, accounting for approximately half a century (Vishnevski and Volkov 1983).

3.1. Demographic processes

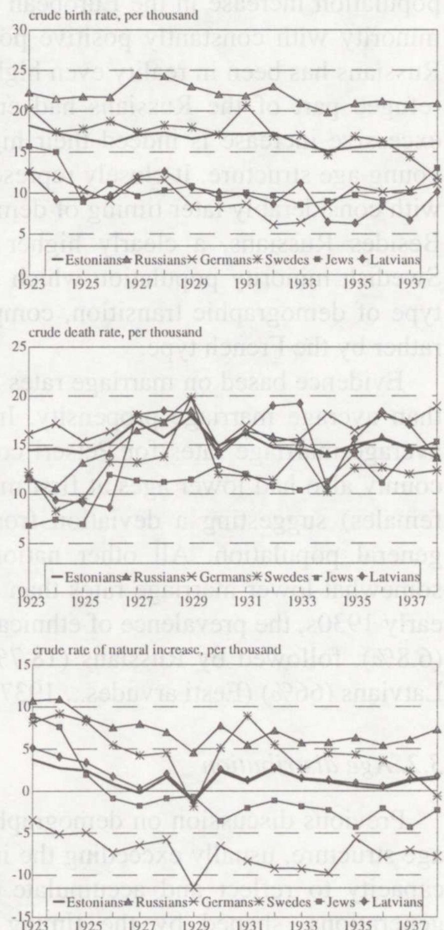
The following discussion of the main demographic processes is based on the data from censuses of 1922 and 1934 (RSKB 1924, RSKB 1935) as well as vital statistics, published in *Bulletin of Statistics* (RSKB 1922–1940). Covering the whole period, the comparative dynamics of demographic processes for all national minorities can be followed on the basis of crude rates. Evidently the differences in crude rates partly reflect the dissimilar age structure. To present the latter impact, crude rates are complemented by the age-standardised rates for national minorities around the 1934 census.

Dynamics of crude death rates compared to the average reveal that throughout the period, the death rate of Germans tends to be the highest, and of Jews the lowest among national minorities (Figure 5). Also Swedes demonstrate the lower levels by this indicator. Crude death rate of Russian minority was slightly lower than in general population in the 1920s, then fluctuating very close to that level. The biggest fluctuations can be found for Latvians consistent with their small number. However, most of the discussed differences are caused by the age structure of a certain minority. According to the age-standardised mortality rate, the above-average mortality rate can be found only among Russians with quite significant difference accounting for 25 percent above average. All other minorities are characterised by lower rates, Latvians having the lowest level with the deviation of 16 percent. The latter can be explained mostly, as shown later, by their very low total fertility, and consequently, small proportion of infant deaths. Considering the age structure, the same could be expected for Germans. However, standardised mortality rates close to average suggest the higher mortality rates among German minority compared to total population.

Differences in crude birth rates for national minorities are clearly higher than in death rates. Exceeding the average persistently by 5 points, Russians are characterised by the highest level.

Figure 5

Birth rate, death rate and population growth of national minorities Estonia 1923–1938



Fluctuating very closely around the average is the birth rate among Swedes. Three other national minorities are demonstrating rather close trends between each other at the level of 10 per thousand, i.e. even more than 5 points below the average. In the 1930s the crude birth rate drops even below that level, decreasing for Latvians to 5 per thousand, for a few years a similar level is demonstrated by German population. By age-standardised indicators the picture somewhat changes. The impact of age structure seems to be the greatest for Swedes who now display, together with Russians, a fertility level clearly higher than the average. According to the child-woman ratio, Swedes display the fertility level almost equal to Russians. It is easily explained by the lower infant and child mortality rates during the period for Swedes, compared to Russians and in general, delayed fertility decline among Swedish population during transitional period.

The variation in crude birth and death rates tends to cumulate in natural increase. It is noticeable that the population growth for total Estonian population has been close to zero, reflecting the early demographic transition. In this respect, all national minorities together, with the exception of Russians, have very low population increase in the European context of the period. Russians are the only minority with constantly positive population growth. Actual natural increase of Russians has been in reality even higher than in the presented figures, because the refugee part of the Russians had emigrated from Estonia. The reason for this excessive increase is indeed their higher fertility combined with their relatively young age structure. It closely represents the demographic development in Russia with considerably later timing of demographic transition, as it is generally known. Besides Russians, a clearly higher natural increase is also presented by the Swedish minority population which can be explained by their so-called English type of demographic transition, compared to the majority population proceeding rather by the French type.

Evidence based on marriage rates show that only Russians stood out for higher than average marriage propensity. Indirectly, this is consistent with the above-average marriage rates for Petseri county, inhabited mostly by Russians. Petseri county also had lower ages at first marriage (3 years lower for males, 2 years for females) suggesting a deviation from European marriage pattern, prevalent in general population. All other national minorities have been characterised by somewhat lower marriage rates than the average. According to the data from the early 1930s, the prevalence of ethnically mixed marriages was lowest among Jews (6.8%), followed by Russians (18.7%), Swedes (23.6%), Germans (33.9%) and Latvians (66%) (Eesti arvudes... 1937).

3.2. Age distribution

Previous discussion on demographic processes revealed the importance of the age structure, usually exceeding the impact of demographic intensities. Due to its capacity to reflect and accumulate the demographic experience of successive generations, shaped by the timing of demographic transition and historical

formation of national minorities in Estonia, age structure provides a summarising insight into the population development (Table 2).

Table 2

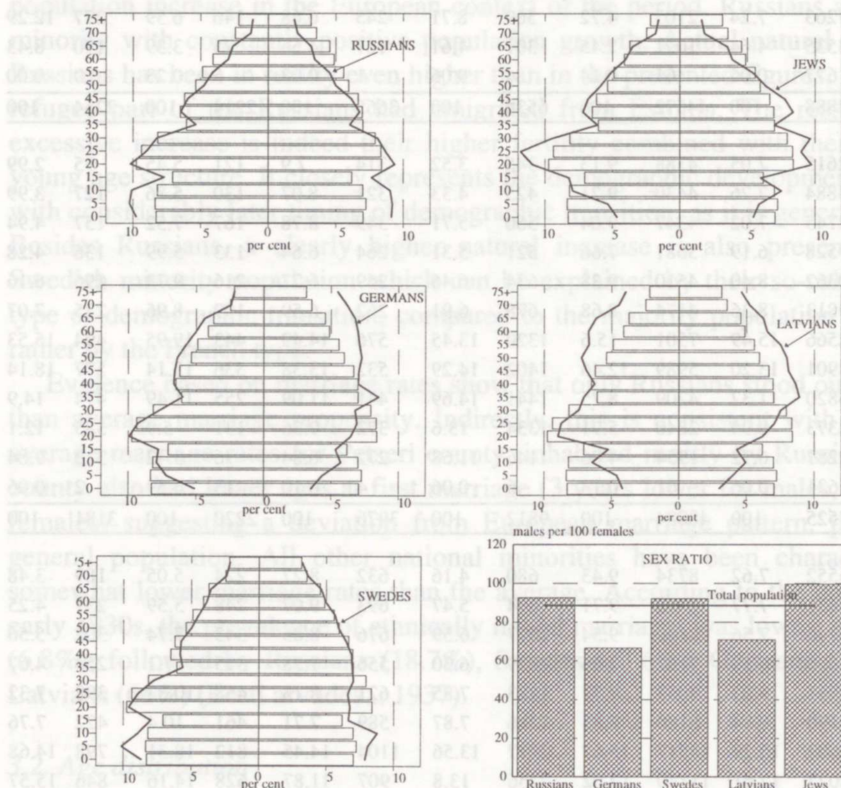
Population by age and sex
Estonia 1934

Age	Total Number	%	Russians Number	%	Germans Number	%	Swedes Number	%	Jews Number	%	Latvians Number	%
Males												
0–4	43937	8.27	4346	9.75	335	5.13	318	8.68	103	4.65	94	4.17
5–9	44747	8.34	4568	10.25	469	7.18	372	10.15	118	5.33	104	4.61
10–14	44001	8.18	4493	10.08	517	7.91	327	8.92	176	7.95	145	6.43
15–19	37578	7.05	3421	7.68	508	7.77	292	7.97	182	8.22	118	5.24
20–24	51599	9.73	4543	10.19	649	9.93	352	9.6	242	10.93	202	8.96
25–29	49377	9.37	4006	8.99	608	9.31	327	8.92	262	11.83	197	8.74
30–39	80036	15.07	7016	15.74	897	13.73	528	14.41	369	16.67	304	13.49
40–49	63126	11.94	5151	11.56	854	13.07	375	10.23	292	13.19	269	11.93
50–59	53012	10.11	3773	8.46	823	12.6	361	9.85	244	11.02	354	15.71
60–69	37263	7.24	2103	4.72	569	8.71	245	6.68	146	6.59	277	12.29
70+	23535	4.64	1091	2.45	301	4.61	167	4.56	75	3.39	190	8.43
Unknown	677	0.06	61	0.14	4	0.06	1	0.03	5	0.23	0	0.00
Total	528888	100	44572	100	6534	100	3665	100	2214	100	2254	100
Females												
0–4	42615	7.05	4388	9.13	345	3.52	314	7.9	121	5.45	95	2.99
5–9	43884	7.26	4430	9.21	425	4.33	321	8.07	130	5.86	127	3.99
10–14	42745	7.02	4347	9.04	560	5.71	349	8.78	167	7.52	157	4.94
15–19	37528	6.19	3681	7.66	521	5.31	264	6.64	133	5.99	136	4.28
20–24	50362	8.40	4510	9.38	634	6.46	269	6.77	216	9.73	196	6.16
25–29	49813	8.36	4174	8.68	678	6.91	262	6.59	199	8.96	225	7.07
30–39	92566	15.49	7501	15.6	1320	13.45	576	14.49	443	19.95	494	15.53
40–49	78901	13.20	5989	12.46	1402	14.29	532	13.38	336	15.14	577	18.14
50–59	66820	11.32	4209	8.75	1441	14.69	441	11.09	255	11.49	474	14.9
60–69	52373	8.94	2840	5.91	1334	13.6	372	9.36	131	5.9	385	12.1
70+	39287	6.72	1954	4.06	1146	11.68	272	6.84	76	3.42	313	9.84
Unknown	631	0.06	61	0.13	6	0.06	4	0.10	13	0.59	2	0.06
Total	597525	100	48084	100	9812	100	3976	100	2220	100	3181	100
Both												
0–4	86552	7.62	8734	9.43	680	4.16	632	8.27	224	5.05	189	3.48
5–9	88631	7.77	8998	9.71	894	5.47	693	9.07	248	5.59	231	4.25
10–14	86746	7.56	8840	9.54	1077	6.59	676	8.85	343	7.74	302	5.56
15–19	75106	6.59	7102	7.66	1029	6.30	556	7.28	315	7.1	254	4.67
20–24	101961	9.03	9053	9.77	1283	7.85	621	8.13	458	10.33	398	7.32
25–29	99190	8.84	8180	8.83	1286	7.87	589	7.71	461	10.4	422	7.76
30–39	172602	15.29	14517	15.67	2217	13.56	1104	14.45	812	18.31	798	14.68
40–49	142027	12.61	11140	12.02	2256	13.8	907	11.87	628	14.16	846	15.57
50–59	119832	10.75	7982	8.61	2264	13.85	802	10.5	499	11.25	828	15.23
60–69	89636	8.14	4943	5.33	1903	11.64	617	8.07	277	6.25	662	12.18
70+	62822	5.74	3045	3.29	1447	8.85	439	5.75	151	3.41	503	9.25
Unknown	1308	0.06	122	0.13	10	0.06	5	0.07	18	0.41	2	0.04
Total	112641	100	92656	100	16346	100	7641	100	4434	100	5435	100

Age structure of each minority is presented in a separate graph, compared to the total population (Figure 6). Russian minority stands out for the youngest population. The proportion of children (0–14) accounts for nearly 30 percent while the elderly constitute less than one tenth of the Russian population. In terms of dependency ratios, this implies steep increase in child-dependency combined with low level old-age dependency. Among national minorities concerned, Russians are the only group for which the median age does not exceed 30 years. Leaving aside war-time recession and the very youngest cohorts, their age-pyramid is the closest among national minorities to the classical triangular shape. Judging by the indicators of population ageing, in terms of demographic transition Russian population lags behind Estonians by at least one generation.

Figure 6

Population age structure and sex ratio of national minorities
Estonia 1934



Differently from Russians, Germans display a clearly distinctive pattern. While the proportion of working age population is similar to the total population, children make up only 16.2 percent. Respectively, the proportion of the elderly

exceeds 20 percent and the median age for German population is close to 40 years. The lower than average fertility level for the German minority has been a relatively new phenomenon, age structure reveals that earlier it has not been lower compared to the total population. The delayed effect of gender-selective emigration in the second half of the 19th century has heavily distorted the sex ratio above age 35. On the other hand, the small number of children also has an effect on assimilation. From the perspective of population development, the anomalous configuration of the population pyramid resembling the inverse triangle, would have been determining the continuous decrease of German minority for the future.

Swedes appear to be the second minority, together with Russians, having younger age structure than total population, although the deviation from total is much smaller. Proportions of the aggregated age groups as well as the dependency ratios reveal that this difference is related to a higher share of children among Swedes, suggesting for higher fertility being sustainable in Swedish population. Concerning the elderly, the upper end of the age pyramid is practically similar to that of total population.

A characteristic feature of the Jewish population in Estonia is the highest share of working age population, and consequently, the lowest dependency ratio, revealing the immigrant origin of the population. The proportion of elderly among Jewish minority is close to that of Russians, however it is not accompanied with similarly high proportion of children. Low share of children might result from the immigration of single persons and relatively limited marriage market (Jewish minority is characterised by the lowest proportion of mixed marriages, as discussed earlier).

Age distribution of Latvians is very close to that of Germans. However, the proportion of the elderly is even higher, the highest among the national minorities. Among Latvians children constitute only 13.3 percent, while the elderly make up 21.4 percent. The median age for Latvians exceeds 40 years which is extremely high even for modern populations with sustained underreplacement fertility. Given the close timing of demographic transition in Latvia and Estonia, the observed gap in the ages 20–39 must obviously be related to assimilation. The same assimilation process described the Estonians living in Latvia.

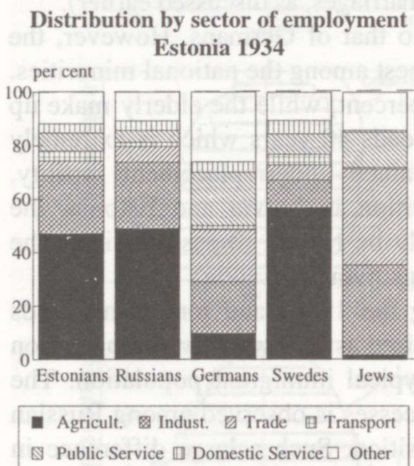
In general, the population processes during the 1930s and long-term trends accumulated in the age structure can be summarised as follows. Jewish population demonstrates demographic development of a typical immigrant population. The largest difference in timing of demographic processes is observed among Russian population with the delayed demographic transition. Such a large difference in demographic processes accumulated in the age structure, is expected to have its impact on demographic development for a long period. Germans and Latvians, for rather different reasons, display the symptoms of assimilation. Both national minorities are already characterised by the negative population growth and the age structure presents clear evidence of the continuation of this trend. Swedes display in their demographic development a pattern closest to the average with the slightly different type of demographic transition common to Sweden.

3.3. Economic structure of population

The period treated in this report coincides with the emergence of the Republic of Estonia with its newly established boundaries, but it also meant the transition from a feudal-like social structure of the Russian Empire into a typical North-West European society of that period without social classes. The other principal change was the land reform, which put an end to the institution of great landed property of landlords, having direct effect on agricultural population. Both changes had affected national minorities to a different extent.

Comparing the distribution of minorities between aggregated economic sectors, among Russians the share of agricultural employment exceeded the average, accounting for half of the active population (51.0%). To a substantial extent, this has been brought about by the extremely high share of agricultural employment in Petseri county and trans-Narva communities. Due to another socially distinctive part of the minority, Russians were at the same time characterised by a relatively high share of employment in industry, while the tertiary sector remained relatively under-represented among the minority. As for the economic status, Russian minority was characterised by the lowest proportion of employers and liberal professions, the entrepreneurial activities being largely limited to self-employment. Among national minorities they also stood out for the highest share of paid blue-collar employment.

Figure 7



Compared to Russians, the employment structure of the German minority appears significantly different. Due to their historical position and concentration in urban areas, agricultural employment among German minority is about five times less common than in total population (10.3%). Consequently, nearly one fourth of German population has reported living on incomes not related to employment, typically from different kinds of property and real estate. Leaving the latter category aside, Germans are almost equally distributed between industry, trade, public service with the latter being the most important single sector. Among national minorities, Germans could be most frequently found working as employees in white-collar occupations, in relative terms selection was biggest into self-employment in liberal professions. Generally, the employment structure of Germans emphasises the continuation of their well-established position also in modern conditions.

The share of primary sector activities was the highest among Swedish minority (58.2%). Consistent with its spatial concentration in rural environment, more than

a half of Swedish population were engaged in fishery and agriculture, the first particularly in island communities. Accordingly, the industrial employment appeared about twice below the average. Given the sectoral distribution, the Swedes had not surprisingly been characterised by the highest proportion in self-employment and lowest in paid employment.

Reflecting their relatively recent immigrant origin and concentration in cities, the Jewish population stands out for virtually non-existent agricultural employment (2.0%). The largest single sector among Jews is trade, followed closely by industry: taken together, these sectors account for more than two thirds of total employment. Also, the public administration and liberal professions are found with higher frequency among Jews than in general population. Suggesting intensive business-orientation, the economic composition of Jews were characterised by the highest proportion of employers and own-account workers, and the second highest in white-collar employment and liberal professions. Also, noticeably high proportion of Jews have reported non-work income.

One can easily draw the conclusion from the above-discussed figures that the economic structure of national minorities was more or less defined by the proportion of agricultural employment. Those national minorities, particularly Jews and Germans, who lacked specific national territories and were therefore dispersely distributed, mostly in urban areas, did not develop a full economic structure. Once more the historical pathways of minority formation have proved decisive.

4. Organisation of national minorities

Following the formation of modern nations, the ideas regarding ethnic communities as bearers of specific interests and respective rights, spread in the 19th and culminated in the early 20th century. Also the Estonians, having formed themselves a minority in the Russian Empire, were particularly aware of the importance of equal possibilities for the development of national minorities. Already the Manifest of Independence declared the equity of all ethnic groups and proclaimed the right for cultural autonomy for national minorities living within the boundaries of Estonia. This right was stated in the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia in 1920. After discussing various projects and proposals, the Cultural Autonomy Law was passed in the Parliament on 12 February 1925 (Riigi Teataja 1925). The Law was called to mainly regulate the support for various minority institutions, particularly for the operation of educational and cultural institutions. Many such institutions had already emerged during the years of the Republic of Estonia and now they could receive additional support, the others gained better material basis to start from. It should be stressed that the underlying idea of the Cultural Autonomy Law was based on the principle building exclusively on the initiatives coming from each minority itself. By the Law,

central and local government allocated resources for primary and secondary educational establishments as well as for cultural activities, but the administration of these funds was given to the minorities themselves, represented by an elected Council. Additionally to governmental support, the Council naturally had the right to collect voluntary donations and apply for other sources. The Cultural Autonomy Law adopted the minimum size of 3,000 individuals for the ethnic group to be regarded as a national minority, regardless of its spatial distribution or other characteristics.

The Cultural Autonomy Law was particularly important for national minorities with disperse settlement. In Estonia, education, health and many other social issues were largely dealt with on local government level. Therefore, minorities with compact settlement could exercise quite comprehensive rights through the community institutions, and for them, the Law just added another dimension to the already existing possibilities.

The advantage of the Cultural Autonomy Law was first taken up by Germans, already in 1925, followed by Jews in 1926. Russians, Swedes and Latvians did not apply for provisions foreseen by Cultural Autonomy Law, the first two mostly in view of their historically compact settlement which already had secured their needs as a national minority. As for the Swedish minority, the principles and procedures worked out by cultural autonomy served as a basis in the implementation of the Swedish-German agreement, allowing Swedes as a national minority to leave Estonia in 1944 before the second Soviet occupation. In the case of Latvians, already in 1922 the special Convention on Schools was ratified which enabled to exchange pupils between the two countries. Evidently this provision together with clear tendency towards assimilation explains why the channel provided by the Cultural Autonomy Law was not used by Latvians. Besides the above-mentioned, Estonian legislation did not limit the political organisation of national minorities. Respectively, Russians, Germans and Swedes established their national parties which represented them in the Parliament.

The practice of Estonian authorities regarding national minorities deserved attention already by contemporaries of the time (Hasselblatt 1928, Schiemann 1937). Estonia happened to be the first country to adopt the principles and policies reflected in the Cultural Autonomy Law. Estonian legislation was discussed and approved of in the League of Nations. The policies of Estonian authorities were also appreciated by the minorities themselves. For example, in 1926 after having granted the rights to the Jewish minority, Estonia happened to become the first government to receive the certificate from the World Organisation of Jews, notifying the honorary record of Estonia in the Golden Book of Jewish National Fund (Gurin-Loov 1990). Against the background of contemporary assessments, more commensurate evaluation of Estonia's minority policies can be given from today's perspective. The Russian national minority has supported strongly the movement towards the restoration of Estonian independence, being in sharp contrast with immigrant Russians, called Soviets by the national minority. Apart

from political opinions, the Russian national minority, which is going to be discussed in the second part of the report, differs remarkably also by demographic and social characteristics (Etnilised... 1996). Restoration of Estonian independence has received considerable support also from two minorities who had to leave Estonia in the course of World War II. Having left for Germany and Sweden, the respective minorities have maintained their identity with Estonia, and supported Estonia and Estonians when it was possible. Such situation cannot be compared to cases where the supporters and recipients are belonging to the same minority. This kind of support would have been unthinkable if the experience and attitudes towards Estonia had not been positive. Pro-Estonian information in mass-media, lobby work with Parliament and Government authorities in Germany and Sweden as well as contributing to the contacts between the countries cannot be overestimated, particularly during the period of preparing the restoration of Estonian independence.

Taking the historical perspective, the Estonian minority policy in the 1920–1930s seems to have been successful particularly because the principle which built upon the initiative of a national minority itself (Matsulevitsh 1993). Long before becoming fixed in a special law, the same principles have been in work allowing numerically very small ethnic communities like Swedes and Peipsi Russians to maintain their identity and rather different – particularly for Russians – culture and life-style throughout centuries.

5. Disappearance of national minorities

The outbreak of the Second World War deprived Estonia of its sovereignty and left the country in the arbitrary of opposing great powers which condition, as it turned out later, lasted an entire fifty years. Due to the war and related social discontinuity, the population of Estonia suffered heavy losses. Even by today, it has not recovered in numbers, forming about 90 percent of its prewar size. In the long-term impact it is drastic even against the background of countries like Poland and Byelorussia which suffered the biggest casualties in the war. Returning to Estonia, however, the biggest losses occurred to its national minorities, suffering from each of the successive three occupations in its own way. Like their historical formation and demographic development, so was their fate different in these years. Regardless of the way, the final result, however, was similar: the extinction of a national minority. Not going into multiple relevance of this process, without admitting it, the following of the postwar trend in Estonian minority development is hardly possible.

Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (23. August 1939) divided Eastern Europe between two expansionistic powers, leaving Estonia to the Soviet Union. By the same Pact it was agreed that the German minority could leave the countries expected to go under the Soviet rule before the relevant activities were launched. For the German

minority in Estonia, Hitler's speech (6. October 1939) calling for Germans to return, came quite unexpectedly. Further steps proceeded quite rapidly in Estonia, taking advantage of the German Cultural Autonomy register. Contemporary impressions show a general reluctancy to leave Estonia and despite the looming threat of Soviet occupation, approximately 20 percent of those enlisted in German minority refused to go (Hehn 1982). By the end of this campaign in May, 1940, 13 339 members of German minority were repatriated (Riigi Teataja 1940). After the occupation of Estonia by the Soviet Union, the German repatriation became once more a possibility, now based on the agreement with Soviet authorities. Under new conditions the attitude towards repatriation changed decisively, and this was regarded as the only legal way of escaping from the Soviet Union. Despite the fact that the country of destination was belligerent, the remaining part of German minority was joined by Estonians who managed to get the necessary certificate. In the second wave of repatriation, about 7,000 in number, more than half were of non-German origin (Angelus 1995). As a result, the German minority had left Estonia. However, later circumstances revealed their willingness to return. During the German occupation, repatriants massively applied for return. The return was not allowed on these grounds by the authorities, some few exceptions managed to return using other pretences.

After the turn in the war, when the Soviet Union began to regain territory, one of the first tasks was to find the Germans to be arrested and deported. In Estonia in the beginning of the second Soviet occupation, 342 persons of German origin were arrested and deported (Directive No 1/2144, 7. February 1945). As it has become evident recently from NKVD documents, one eighth of German origin as well as marriage to a German was good enough reason to be eligible for these deportees. As a result, Estonia became free of Germans for the first time in seven hundred years.

Like Estonian population in general, losses to Jewish minority began to occur during the first Soviet occupation. The mass deportation in June 1941 enlisted 418 Jews, which accounted for nearly 10 percent of their number and was relatively higher than among total population (Salo 1993). In the beginning of German-Soviet war, Jews were given a possibility to evacuate to the other regions of the Soviet Union. Most of them left and it is estimated that only around 1,000 remained in Estonia. German Nazi authorities closed all Jews in Estonia into concentration camps and by 1. July 1942, it was declared that in Estonia all Jews (928 in number) had received a special treatment which meant execution (Loov-Gurin 1994). After the war, part of the evacuated Jews returned to Estonia; based on the later data it can be estimated at no more than 15–20 percent of prewar number, i.e. about 1,000. Due to such a small number, the remaining Jewish population could not maintain its status as a minority on previous terms.

At the beginning of the first Soviet occupation, Sweden took steps to get the permission for the Swedish minority in Estonia to leave. According to the documents, Moscow even agreed. However, in practice it was not realised. In

reality, many Swedes lost their homes, because from the Soviet viewpoint their home islands were regarded strategically important location for the Soviet army. As other minorities, Swedes also shared the experience of deportation, however, in slightly smaller proportion. The evacuation of Swedish minority became again an issue in 1944 when the threat of the second Soviet occupation emerged. Now Sweden negotiated with German authorities, and despite the opposition of German Foreign Ministry, the agreement was reached with local German military command (Kommitten... 1950). As discussed earlier, Swedes were not in need to secure the development of their minority through the Cultural Autonomy Law, and therefore, no official lists of Swedish minority had been prepared. Now they were prepared, actually based on the same cultural autonomy principles. In the given situation, this channel was the only legal way of leaving the country, granted by German authorities, and many Estonians managed to be included in the lists, altogether 7920 Swedes escaped (Aman 1961). As a result of organised evacuation, very few Swedes remained in Estonia. Together with a part of mobilised and deported, the number of Swedes in Estonia hardly exceeded a few hundred. Such a small number was insufficient to maintain the continuity of their minority.

Regarding Russian minority, the first Soviet occupation hit most heavily its refugee part. The deportations and other repressions are estimated to have accounted for one third of them. On the other hand, the historical peasant part of Russian minority was concerned to somewhat lesser extent compared to the total population. The next, much sharper decrease of Russian minority occurred in another way at the beginning of the second Soviet occupation. Regardless of the war time, the Supreme Council of the Soviet Union was in a hurry unilaterally in 1944 to establish new boundaries, transferring most of the Petseri county (23 August) and trans-Narva areas (24 November) from Estonia to the Russian Federation. Puppet authorities were later forced to adapt to new boundaries. From population perspective, the transfer of Petseri county and trans-Narva areas to Russian Federation involved the reduction of population by 66,500 according to 1934 census (according to the population estimates for 1944 by 56,200 (Kaufmann 1967)). As a result, Estonia lost all its mixed population areas and the remaining Russian minority consisted of mostly urban part and residents of Western shore Peipsi Lake settlements. It has been estimated that after the new boundaries, the Russian minority in Estonia in absolute numbers accounted for about 23,000 (Katus 1989). Although reduced more than by three fourths from its prewar size, Russians have maintained themselves as the national minority in Estonia (Figure 8).

Latvian minority had already been in the 1920–1930s one of the smallest and the most integrated and partly assimilated, largely through mixed marriages. In later years both of these trends seem to have progressed. Additionally, the number of Latvians sharply decreased due to the transfer of Petseri county which concentrated nearly one third of the minority. As all others, Latvian minority suffered

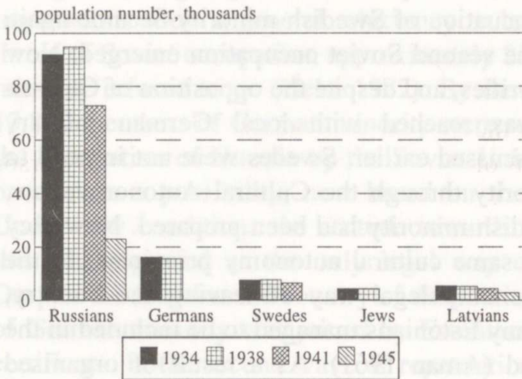


Figure 8

the losses from deportations, repressions and war operations. Altogether, these processes seem to have at least halved the size of Latvian minority, leaving the remainder widely dispersed across the country. In these conditions, Latvians have progressed towards the loss of their minority status.

In conclusion one can say that the Second World War hit the national minorities of Estonia particularly hard. As a result, four out of five minorities present in the Republic of Estonia practically disappeared. Ironically, in several cases only survivors of those deported to Siberia and taken into the Soviet Army returned to Estonia. Russian minority is the only one, although reduced to one fourth in size, which has maintained its existence as a national minority.

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