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Ethnic relations and ethnic policy in the Baltic States Part I

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Objectives of the lecture

- To provide a general overview about the ethnic relations, citizenship policy and ethnic policy in the Baltic States
- To compare ethnic policies and ethnic relations in three Baltic States
- To provide a general overview about the current situation and the problems related to ethnic relations in Baltic countries

Outcomes of the lecture

- The basic knowledge about ethnic relations in the Baltic countries and problems related to it
- The basic knowledge about the models of citizenship policy and ethnic policy implemented in the Baltic States

Ethnic relations – introduction I

- Historical minorities (before World War II):
 - Estonia: Baltic Germans, Coastal Swedes, Russians (Peipus region, South Eastern Estonia, Narva).
 - Latvia: Baltic Germans, Jews, Russians (Riga).
 - Lithuania: Poles (Vilnius), Jews, Germans (Memelland).
- In 1939:
 - Latvians in Latvia 75%,
 - Lithuanians in Lithuania 70%,
 - Estonians in Estonia 88%.
 - After the World War II share of indigenous population around 90%
- Soviet time immigration started right after the war (voluntary, but some workers were deported)

Ethnic relations – introduction II

- Engine of immigration - large scale industrialization. New industries demanded new workforce.
- Latvia and Estonia had better industrial infrastructure.
- Lithuania was not so industrialized and had their own labour pool in rural districts. Lithuania managed to prevent so extensive immigration
- In 1989:
 - Latvians in Latvia – 52% (now 56%),
 - Estonians in Estonia 62% (now 65%),
 - Lithuanians in Lithuania 81%.
- Share of indigenous population declined 8% in a decade

Specific features of Russian immigrants and immigration

- Soviet time immigrants – neither historical minority, classical immigrants or guest workers. Rather an imperial minority:
 - Strategic immigration initiated by Soviet authorities for changing demographic composition. Immigrants – workers for industrial sector.
 - In Soviet times Russian immigrants enjoyed much more privileges than indigenous people (modern apartments, special shops, etc.)
 - Attitudes – not motivated to learn local languages.
- More specific features:
 - 80% living in towns,
 - 80-90% in towns where they are comprising half of population and usually even more
- In Estonia concentrated to North-Eastern Estonia and to Tallinn
- In Latvia to Riga and to Eastern and South-Eastern Latvia. More scattered and mixed settlements than in Estonia

3 models for citizenship policy

- Restitution model (Latvia and Estonia)
 - Citizenship only granted to interwar citizens and their descendants
 - Other permanent residents can obtain citizenship through naturalization (competence in local languages, knowledge of constitution and local history).
- “New state” model (CIS countries) – citizenship granted automatically to all permanent residents on the territory of the state, no specific preconditions.
- Mixed model (Lithuania)
 - an opportunity to obtain the citizenship without naturalization (or with minimal preconditions) was offered to all permanent residents for certain time period.
 - After that “the window” is closed - new applicants would obtain citizenship through naturalization.

Ethnic policy – Estonia I

- 1989 Language Law – reversed language situation.
- February 1992 – Citizenship Law.
 - Popular Front supported mixed model, Congress restitution model.
 - According to the law: naturalizations started 1993,
 - Language tests, later exam of Estonian constitution was introduced
 - KGB agents and Russian military personal not to allowed to apply.
 - 80 000 Russians obtained automatically citizenship (interwar citizens)
- 1992-1994 Laar's government de-colonization policy.
- June 1993 - Law of Aliens:
 - All non-citizens should obtain *temporary* residence permits within *a year*.
 - The actual goal of the law: to force Russians to repatriate.
 - Silent resistance of Russians, deadline was postponed 3 times

Ethnic policy - Estonia II

- 1996 government started to issue Alien Passports (OSCE pressure).
- It was also allowed to exchange temporary residence permits for permanent ones (OSCE's pressure).
- 1997-1998 – Integration Program (EU influence).
- 1998 citizenship granted to all stateless children born in Estonia.
- Periods:
 - 1989-1995 hostility, repatriation policy (failed);
 - 1995-1997 interregnum period;
 - Since 1998 integration paradigm
 - 2006 – 2007 Bronze Soldier conflict – temporary heightened ethnic tensions

Ethnic policy - Latvia I

- Riga – Latvians 37%, Daugavpils – 14%, Ventspils 95%.
- Long and hot debates over the citizenship.
- Latvians supported restitution model (moderates - 5 years residency, radicals – 16 years)
- 1994 Citizens Law finally adopted (OSCE pressure):
 - Restitution model like in Estonia, competence of language + exams of history and constitution.
 - “Windows system” - all who were born in Latvia would have right to apply for citizenship by the year 2000, born outside – up to 2003 (all together 8 age groups – “windows”).
 - First draft of law – naturalization quota 2000 persons in a year, but OSCE protested.
 - 740 000 (1/3 of population) were declared non-citizens
- Distribution of Alien passports and permanent residence permits started already 1995 (no problems like in Estonia)

Ethnic policy -Latvia II

- Naturalization process started in 1995 and was very slow
- 1998 Liberalization of Citizenship Law
 - Russia, EU and OSCE exerted pressure on Latvian politicians to abolish windows system and grant citizenship to stateless children born in Latvia (born after August 1991, parents lived in Latvia at least 10 years and no citizens another state).
 - Amendments adopted, but national radicals asked president to organize referendum.
 - Slight majority voted in favour of amendments.
 - Since 1998 Russians more active to apply for citizenship
- 1999 – failed attempts to tighten language policy
- Since 2004 – secondary education only in Latvian

Ethnic policy – Lithuania I

- 2000 - 81% Lithuanians, 7% Poles, 8% Russians
- 1989 Citizenship Law
 - Allowed to apply for citizenship to all permanent residents, without language requirements.
 - 90% of Russians and Poles exploited the opportunity
 - The “window” was closed 1991 – language exam (800 words, Estonia - 1500) + constitutional exam
- Why mixed model? Lithuania as a successor state of Soviet Lithuania because to prevent any Polish claims to Vilnius.
- 1991 amendment allowed to use minority languages in regions more densely populated by minorities.

Ethnic policy – Lithuania II

- Russians very passive and not very well-organized
- Polish minority:
 - Have strong identity,
 - Oppose to Lithuanization
 - Less satisfied with their current situation and politically more active
 - Have their own party - Polish Union (2 seats in parliament)