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THE DISCOURSE OF POWER THROUGH GENDER IN WORLD WAR II LATVIA

For Latvia, as for much of Eastern Europe, World War II meant occupation by two authoritarian powers: the Soviet Union from 1940 to 1941 and Nazi Germany from 1941 to 1945, when Soviet occupation returned.[1] This chapter considers how the occupiers and the occupied used gendered dialogue in a negotiation for power, and how this discourse shaped the narrative of wartime occupation during World War II.[2] Furthermore, this discourse continues to influence how Latvians remember the past, and this chapter examines the evolution of a gendered historical narrative of World War II Latvia. More broadly, however, this analysis suggests that a gendered perspective of World War II may transcend the time period and provide insight into postwar societies more broadly.

First, I briefly trace the arc of gendered discourse during the war through an analysis of the Latvian-language periodical press under the Soviet and Nazi occupations. Both the Soviet and Nazi powers used gendered language and relationships to construct new national identities and

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[1] Soviet troops occupied Latvia on June 17, 1940. Nazi troops entered Latvia on June 26, 1941. The Soviet Army returned in July 1944, and Riga fell on October 13, 1944; Latvia's western-most province of Kurzeme remained under Nazi occupation until the end of the war in May 1945. The second Soviet occupation lasted until 1991, when Latvia regained independence. For an overview of the war, see Romuald Misiunas and Rein Taagepera, *The Baltic States: Years of Dependence, 1940-1990*, rev. ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). Thereafter Misiunas and Taagepera, *The Baltic States*. The most recent and comprehensive history of both occupations is Björn M. Felder, *Lettland im Zweiten Weltkrieg: Zwischen sowjetischen und deutschen Besatzern 1940-1946* [*Latvia in World War II. Between Soviet and German Occupiers 1940-1946*] (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2009).

[2] See also, Mara Lazda, 'Family, Gender, and Ideology in World War II Latvia', in Maria Bucur and Nancy M. Wingfield, eds., *Gender and War in Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 133-53, thereafter Lazda, 'Family, Gender, and Ideology'; and Mara Lazda, 'Latvia', in Kevin Passmore, ed., *Women, Gender, and Fascism in Europe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 124-47. Thereafter Lazda, 'Latvia'.

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legitimize their regimes. Creating new Soviet and Nazi masculinities and femininities were integral to establishing political, social, and economic domination and to recruit Latvian collaborators for the new regimes.

However, contrary to the intent of both occupiers, the emphasis they placed on gender also contributed to Latvian resistance. This resistance appears in several forms, including in the very periodicals that the occupation regimes hoped would disseminate and reinforce their ideologies. As the years of occupation passed, Latvian authors used gendered language to formulate articulations of autonomy, cautiously creating alternative conceptualizations of the Latvian nation. In this way, gender became a forum for the discourse of power under occupation.

Importantly, this gendered discourse extends beyond wartime and also shapes postwar narratives and writings of history. The second part of the chapter turns to the oral histories from ethnic Latvians. One of the greatest challenges scholars of war face is understanding how local populations saw and interacted with occupation regimes. Even though (as many scholars of memory point out)[3] memories change under the influence of – among other factors – time, social constructions of the past, and personal backgrounds, I propose that the study of Latvian oral histories is a necessary step for assessing both the reception of the occupation powers as well as the long-term effects of the gendered nature of wartime occupation.

Soviet Occupation and the Press: *Cīņa* and *Darba Sieviete*[4]

Soviet forces occupied Latvia on June 17, 1940. On August 7, 1940, a local office of *Vserossiiskaia assotsiatsia proletarskikh pisatelei* (All-Union Association of Proletarian Writers, or VAPP) was established to control all aspects of publishing.[5] Interwar newspapers and publishing houses were

[3] See for example, Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory* (New York: Harper and Row, 1980); Elizabeth Tonkin, *Narrating Our Pasts: The Social Construction of Oral History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Susan A. Crane, 'Writing the Individual Back into Collective Memory', *American Historical Review*, 102, 5 (1997): 1372-85; Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History,* 3rd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); James Wertsch, 'The Narrative Organization of Collective Memory', *Ethos*, 36, 1 (2008), 120-35.

[4] For a discussion of the press focusing on images of the family, see Lazda, 'Family, Gender, and Ideology', 133-53.

[5] Three Latvian Communists staffed the Riga office: K. Silmalis, K. Dreimanis, and V. Ardamatskis. VAPP and the Commissariat for Communications supervised production and content. Copies of all publications had to be sent to VAPP. Rolfs Ekmanis, *Latvian Literature under the Soviets 1940-1945* (Belmont: Nordland, 1978), 45. The Commisariat for Communications was established on September 30, 1940.

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closed in the first weeks of occupation[6], and new Soviet publications appeared in their place. Two of the new creations with the largest circulations were *Cīņa* (Struggle) and *Darba Sieviete* (Woman Worker). The Latvian-language daily newspaper *Cīņa* produced 10.000 to 25.000 copies of the first nine issues but soon expanded to 60.000 to 200.000 copies. Latvian Communist Kārlis Ozoliņš, who had been active in the interwar communist movement, was the main editor for most of the newspaper's run.[7] *Darba Sieviete*, a bi-weekly women's magazine, was sent directly to women who had subscribed to mainstream, middle-class interwar women's magazines. The first issue appeared on August 1, 1940 and the last on June 15, 1941. Its circulation ranged between 20.000 and 30.000 copies. The main editor was Cirene Palkavniece. Palkavniece had also been active in the interwar Latvian Communist Party. *Darba Sieviete* was not sent to women who had subscribed to journals with an explicitly nationalist content such as *Latviete* (Latvian Woman).[8] Although specific characteristics of the readership are unknown, the articles clearly targeted mothers, especially mothers with young children.

From the first issues, *Cīņa* defined women's and men's roles to set the new regime apart from the nationalist Latvian interwar government.[9] Gender 'norms' were explicitly political. *Cīņa* derided interwar gender roles as limiting women to motherhood and, more importantly, as symbolic of the corruption and weakness of the nationalist interwar government. *Cīņa* targeted the image Latvian conservative groups had promoted – women in

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[6] Elmārs Pelkaus, Andris Caune, Daina Kļaviņa, Jānis Riekstiņš, Nikolajs Rižovs, Heinrihs Strods, Irēne Šneidere, and Indulis Zālīte, eds., *Okupācijas varu politika Latvijā 1939-1991: Dokumentu krājums* [*Occupation Regime Politics in Latvia 1939-1991: Document Collection*] (Riga: Latvijas Valsts Arhīvs, 1999), 115. In 1937, forty-seven newspapers were published in Latvia. Of these, ten were dailies, published in Latvian (six); German (two); Russian (one) and Yiddish (one). Arveds Švābe, *Latvju enciklopēdija* [*Latvian Encyclopedia*] (Stockholm: Tris Zvaigznes, 1950-1955), 2003. Thereafter Švābe, *Latvju enciklopēdija*.

[7] Ē. Flīgere, comp., *Latviešu periodika: Bibliogrāfisks rādītājs* [*Latvian Periodicals: Bibliographic Guide*], vol. 4 (Riga: Latvijas Akadēmiskā Biblioteka, 1995), 43-44. Švābe, *Latvju enciklopēdija*, 1817.

[8] Brempele, Ā., E. Flīgere, D. Ibule, L. Lāce, and M. Lazdiņa, comps. *Latviešu periodika*. [*Latvian periodicals*], vol. 3, part 1 (Riga: Zinātne, 1988), 45-46. The *Darba Sieviete* of 1940-1941, published by the Latvian Communist Party, was not a direct successor to the *Darba Sieviete* published by the Women's Section of the Social Democratic Party from 1923 to 1930. B. Gudriķe , ed., *Latviešu literatūras darbinieki: Biogrāfiska vārdnīca* [*Participants in Latvian literature: Biographical Dictionary*] (Riga: Zinātne, 1964), 217.

[9] Latvia had been ruled by a national authoritarian dictator, Kārlis Ulmanis, since his coup in 1934. While Latvia had been established on the civic idea of nation in 1918, by 1934, a more conservative vision of an ethnic nation had become dominant.

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Latvian folk costumes as embodying the Latvian nation. *Cīņa* directly attacked this model of Latvian femininity as one author wrote with obvious contempt, "[t]he only rights women [under the old regime] had were to wear folk costumes (*uzģērbt tautiskos brunčus*) and to present bouquets of flowers to the 'leaders.'"[10]

In place of these maidens in folk garb, *Cīņa* featured photographs of women as workers. Articles featured the "first women" in every job: "Women in metallurgy", "Women – Tram Conductors", "First Women Glassblowers", "First Woman Machinist".[11] The description of "first women" sent two, somewhat contradictory, messages to Latvian readers. First, the redefinition of roles for women was a natural outgrowth of the realization of a woman's strength. *Cīņa* often published individual testimonies in which women confirmed that they were following their natural, true calling. "Irma" had been unhappy working as a hairdresser (the only option available to her in the interwar period) but now "most of my comrades and I [are training to work on the railroad] because we're interested in railroad work. It is exciting and appeals to us".[12]

The second message emphasized the extraordinary and unusual nature of women working in positions that had been dominated by men. *Cīņa* calls these jobs "men's work", for example: "Belova stands at the machine doing men's work", and "some men cannot even keep up with Kozlovskaja".[13] Women working in these positions were depicted as the model for Latvian women but also suggested that they were out of the norm, even in Soviet Latvia. In doing so, the articles also recognized a tension between the traditional roles and the new Soviet ideals. Moreover, such commentary questioned the ability of Latvian men.

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[10] 'Darba sieviete atgūst tiesības' ['The woman worker regains her rights'], *Cīņa*, 3 July 1940, 2.

[11] 'Sievietes metalapstrādāšanas nozarē' ['Women in Metallurgy'], *Cīņa,* 7 May 1941; G. Brokons, 'Sievietes tramvaju vadītājas' ['Women Tram Conductors'], *Cīņa*, 22 May 1941; L. K., 'Stikla fabrikā 'Komunārs'' ['Visiting The Glass Factory 'Commune''], *Cīņa*, 18 May 1941, 8; J. F., 'Pirmā sieviete mašīnu rīkotāja' ['The First Woman Machinist'], *Cīņa*, 19 January 1941, 3.

[12] 'Sievietei vienādas tiesības ar vīrieti' ['Woman has the same rights as man'], *Cīņa*, 5 December 1940, 6.

[13] 'Priekšzīmīgas strādnieces' ['Model Women Workers'] 6; see also, 'Sievietes vīriešu darbā' ['Women Doing Men's Work'], *Cīņa,* 16 May 1941, 8; 'Sieviete veic vīriešu darbu' ['Woman Does Men's Work'], *Cīņa*, 1 June 1941, 8. See also Attwood's discussion of "men's work", Lynne Attwood, *Creating the New Soviet Woman: Women's Magazines as Engineers of Female Identity 1922-1953* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1999), esp. 87-89, 97-103. Thereafter Attwood, *New Woman*. According to Attwood's account, the ability of women to perform 'men's work' was more contested in the pages of Soviet Russian press than in *Cīņa*.

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Latvian men also found a new ideal model in the pages of *Cīņa:* the Red Army soldier. The portrayal of the Red Army in *Cīņa*, particularly in the first months of occupation, emphasized its awe-inspiring strength. Authors wrote that this army was like no other, for "we have never seen an army like this one, militarily the most powerful in the world, but also a true army of the people".[14] However, if indeed the Red Army had 'liberated' Latvia, the Soviet regime had to explain the continued presence of arms and military forces. Thus in addition to describing the physical power of the Red Army and its peaceful intentions, *Cīņa* also dedicated much of its praise of the army as a nurturer and 'educator of the people'.

Most significantly, the Soviet soldier was a father and husband – to the Latvian nation as well as to individual women and children. This model of masculinity – powerful, sophisticated, kind, and fatherly – countered the impression of occupation soldiers as outside enemies. The soldier was both a brave hero and a member of the intimate life of the family:

> "[The Red Army soldiers show us] how to honor women, how to love children – we did not know how to do this either, but now the Red Army soldier is teaching us this, too. [The respect shown women] would be difficult for our reactionary compatriot in his well-made tuxedo […] to understand […]. [The Red Army soldier] never yells at a child, never pushes him aside."[15]

But how did the gendered language of the occupation press differ from that in the Soviet Union proper? Numerous scholars have examined Soviet depictions of women as well as the Soviet construction of masculinity.[16]

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[14] D. Pern–s, 'Sarkanā armija – tautas audzinātāja' ['The Red Army – the Guardian of the People'], *Cīņa*, 26 July 1940, 1.

[15] 'Jaunā laika jausma' ['The Beginning of a New Era'], *Cīņa*, 14 July 1940, 2.

[16] There are numerous works on the Soviet ideology, women, and the family. To list just a few: Gail Warshofsky Lapidus, *Women in Soviet Society: Equality, Development, and Social Change* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), esp. 73-83; Wendy Z. Goldman, *Women, the State, and Revolution: Soviet Family Policy and Social Life, 1917-1936* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Victoria E. Bonnell, *Iconography of Power: Soviet Political Posters under Lenin and Stalin* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1998); N. L. Pushkareva, *Russkaia zhenshchina: Istoriia i sovremennost': Dva veka izucheniia 'zhenskoi temy' rysskoi i zarubezhnoi naukoi, 1800-2000* [*Russian Woman: Past and Present: Two Centuries of study 'women's subjects' in Russian and foreign science, 1800-2000*] (Moscow: Nauchno-izdatel'skii tsentr, "Ladomir", 2002), esp. 24-30, and the extensive bibliography; Susan E. Reid, 'Gender and Power in Soviet Art in the 1930s', *Slavic Review*, 57, 1 (1998), 133-73; Attwood, *New Woman*; Melanie Ilič, ed., *Women in the Stalin Era* (New York: Palgrave, 2001). On Masculinity see, for example, Karen Petrone, 'The Paradoxes of Gender in Russian War Memory', in Karen Petrone, *The Great War in Russian Memory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011); Lilya Kaganovsky, *How the Soviet Man Was Unmade: Cultural Fantasy and Male Subjectivity under Stalin* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008); Barbara Evans Clements, Rebecca

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The Latvian press under Soviet occupation reveals, however, that the press recognized particular culture and traditions in adapting its rhetoric to Soviet Latvia. The Soviet press did not simply export the same gendered images and rhetoric used in Soviet Russia.

The analysis of the press is most useful, therefore, for revealing the conflicts, tensions, and spaces of negotiation. Conservative women's groups in interwar Latvia had appealed to women to foster Latvian culture in their families; authors in Soviet publications turned to women to dismantle these traditions. This direct conflict is most evident in *Darba Sieviete*.[17] In the first issue of *Darba Sieviete*, for example, one author called for the reevaluation of "backward" Latvian traditions that were in conflict with modernization, such as weaving and sewing traditional costumes. The author conceded women could be interested in handicrafts, but she questioned the utility and originality of such domestic art. This directly challenged the work of interwar Latvian middle-class women's organizations, which saw such skills as key to contributing to national pride.

Anticipating a negative public reception, Latvian Communist Party leaders sought to tone down this attack on Latvian traditions. The second secretary of the LCP (Žanis Spure), wrote a public response in *Cīņa*, asserting that in fact the new regime valued handicrafts and would support craft competitions, tying this to the Soviet respect for national cultures. He dismissed the *Darba Sieviete* article as "empty words" (*tukša runāšana*). "We will not only allow handicrafts", he wrote, "we will support them, organize exhibits, and the best works will receive awards." Spure concluded by stressing that culture "blossoms and grows" in the family of the Soviet peoples, and so will culture in Soviet Latvia.[18]

Friedman, and Dan Healey, eds., *Russian Masculinities in History and Culture* (New York: Palgrave, 2002). For a comparative perspective on masculinity under authoritarianism, see Karen Petrone and Jiu-Hyun Lim, eds., *Gender Politics and Mass Dictatorship: Global Perspectives* (New York: Palgrave, 2011).

[17] The first issue of *Darba Sieviete* appeared on August 1, 1940. Each issue was between twenty-eight and thirty-six pages. Like *Cīņa*, it reprinted articles that had appeared in Soviet Russian publications. For example, E. Orļikova, 'Padomju sieviete sabiedriskā ražošanā' ['The Soviet woman in socialist production'], *Darba Sieviete*, 15 October 1940, 5-6 reprinted from the Soviet Russian paper *Problemy ekonomiki*; K. K., 'Marksa un Engelsa domas par sievieti un ģimeni' ['The Thoughts of Marx and Engel on the woman and the family'], *Darba Sieviete*, 1 December 1940, 5-7; F. Putincev, 'Neklausiet vilkiem avju drānās!' ['Don't listen to a wolf in sheep's clothing' (anti-religion article)], *Darba Sieviete*, 1 February 1941, 3-4, reprinted from the Soviet Russian satirical magazine *Bezbozhnik*.

[18] Z. Spure, 'Ko un kā raksta mūsu prese' ['What and how our press writes'], *Cīņa*, 4 August 1940, 2. In the August 15, 1940 issue, the editorship of *Darba Sieviete* explained that there had been a mistake in the article, but the explanation did not in fact criticize the original content of the article.

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Despite the criticism of the image of women in folk costumes, the Soviet regime co-opted this symbol – subduing its connection to the Latvian nation of the interwar period. In the first days of occupation, a drawing of the three Baltic states as three sisters in traditional garb appeared in *Cīņa* as they faced the family of Soviet peoples. Notably, however, when women appeared in the pages of the press in folk costumes, they did not appear as mothers. Most often, these women appeared in parades of the peoples of the Soviet Union, sporting one uniform among many.[19] Undoubtedly, the Latvian woman in folk costume appeared far more rarely than the Latvian woman worker.[20]

The reconceptualization of the family and personal relationships was tied closely to the Sovietization of Latvians and contributed both to support of the regime as well as resistance to it. Even within the highly censored press, we can detect spaces of negotiation among Latvian authors and readers. At the very least, the Soviet regime and its supporters recognized the connection between Latvian gender roles and the Latvian nation.

Press under the Nazi Occupation: *Tēvija* and *Mana Māja*

In July 1941, the Nazi occupation replaced that of the Soviet. For the Nazis as for the Soviets, the press was a central tool through which to shape a new Latvian identity and to recruit collaborators. For the Nazis the gendered rhetoric in the press also served as a channel to disseminate its racial, antisemitic ideology. But before turning to the images of masculinity and femininity in the Nazi press, we must consider two points about the Nazi racial hierarchy and the plans for Latvia in the New Europe.

First, it is clear that the long-term Nazi plans for Latvia and the *Ostland* territories were annexation and Germanization.[21] In the short-term, how

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[19] This is most evident in photographs of parades, where women in folk costumes proceed alongside women athletes, Stakhanovites, nurses, and so on. See, for example, 'Pirmā maija demonstrācijas ainas Rīgā' ['Scenes from May 1 demonstrations in Riga'], *Cīņa*, 4 May 1941, 8. See also Karen Petrone, *Life Has Become More Joyous, Comrades: Celebrations in the Time of Stalin* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 23-45.

[20] There were fewer than ten images of women in folk costume in the pages of *Cīņa* and *Darba Sieviete*.

[21] For example, Alfred Rosenberg, Nazi ideologue and head of the Reich Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories in Berlin announced even before the occupation that the Reich would ban "all expression of loyalty [to Latvia] or autonomy". Elmārs Pelkaus, ed., *Okupācijas varu politika Latvijā 1939-1991: Dokumentu krājums* [*The politics of the occupation powers in Latvia 1939-1991: Collection of Documents*] (Riga: Nordik, 1999), 173. H. Marnitz recalls instructions issued at a preparatory meeting before he took his position at the division of health: "We were instructed to never, not officially, not in writing

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ever, Nazi officials pursued a policy of duality. This duality meant that on one level Nazi occupation policies suggested a return of Latvian culture and independence that the first Soviet occupation (1940-1941) had destroyed. For example, the regime established a local self-administration [*landeseigene Verwaltung*] staffed by Latvians (selected in Berlin) to give the illusion of local autonomy, while in fact the administration's power was limited both by decree as well as struggles between German civilian and military leaders.[22] In addition, the regime calculatedly allowed the reappearance of Latvian national symbols forbidden under the Soviet regime, such as the national flag.[23] As became increasingly clear to the local population during the occupation, however, particularly with the brutality of the Holocaust, the Nazis did not intend to allow any autonomy.[24]

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or verbally, to use the words Latvian, Latvia, the Latvian people" [*latvisks, Latvija, latviešu tauta*]. Harijs Marnics, *Kāvi pār Daugavu* [*Struggles over Daugava*] (n.p.: Apgāds Latvija, 1958), 32.

[22] On the self-administration see Edvins Evarts, 'Okupācijas iestādes par zemes pašpārvaldes uzdevumiem un funkcijām (1941. g. jūlijs-1944. g. septembris)' ['Occupation institutions on the responsibilities and functions of the self-administration'], *Latvijas Vēstures Institūta Žurnāls*, 4 (2003), 120-40. At best, the self-administration acted as an intermediary between the Latvians and the occupying regime and offered limited protection from worse fates; but the self-administration's failure to effectively resist the Nazi regime also facilitated the murder and deportation of thousands of Latvian citizens, of whom Jews were the greatest victims.

[23] Policies regulating national expression underscored the unequal relationship between German and Latvian cultures. The Latvian national flag, for example, could be flown but only on approved occasions and in diminished size next to the Reich flag. Latvian Embassy in the United States, *Latvia under German Occupation* (Washington, D.C.: Press Bureau of the Latvian Legation, 1943), 69. Although Latvian could be used on the local level, German was the official language of the Reich Commissariat. Order issued by H. Lohse, August 18, 1941, as cited in Raphael Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1944), 301-02.

[24] The Nazi regime and Latvian collaborators murdered approximately 90.000 Jews in Latvia, of whom 70.000 were Latvian citizens. The Jewish population in 1935 in Latvia was approximately 93.000. In the first year of Soviet occupation, 5.000 were victims of deportations. After the German attack in June 1941, between 10.000 and 15.000 Latvian Jews fled to the Soviet interior, of whom approximately 5.000 were drafted into or volunteered for the Soviet Army. From November 29, 1941 to February 10, 1942, the Nazi regime deported to Latvia approximately 25.000 Jews from Germany, Austria, and the Czech protectorate. See Andrew Ezergailis, *Holocaust in Latvia, 1941-1944: The Missing Center* (Riga: Historical Institute of Latvia, and Washington, D.C.: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 1996), 70, 356-57; Josifs Šteimanis, *History of Latvian Jews*, Helena Belova, trans., Edward Anders, ed. (Boulder, Colo.: East European Monographs, 2002), 125. Misiunas and Taagepera calculate the Jewish evacuation to the Soviet east and enlistment in the Soviet army to be 18.000. See Misiunas and Taagepera, *Baltic States*, 64.

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The second point to consider is the Latvian position in the Nazi 'racial hierarchy' as an important factor in the gendered dialogue that emerged. Clearly the greatest victims of the Nazi occupation and World War II were Latvia's Jews, who represented about five percent of the population.[25] The 'racial' position of ethnic Latvians and their Baltic neighbors, however, was ambiguous. The most-northern group, the Estonians, were considered "racially akin to the Germans", but Latvians and Lithuanians, along with the Czechs, were "partially Germanic."[26]

Nazi officials debated the potential of Latvians to be assimilated throughout the occupation but postponed more precise analysis until after the war was won when the Baltic States would be integrated into a greater Nazi German state. The evaluation of the 'racial purity' of Latvians changed throughout the war; the 'racial value' of ethnic Latvians seemed to increase as German need for labor, soldiers, and material resources grew. But most importantly for this analysis, the ambiguity of the Latvian 'racial evaluation' made gender, itself a fluid category, a particularly useful tool for the Nazi regime in disseminating its propaganda.

To compare with the Soviet construction of gender, my examination of occupation and identity discourse in the Nazi press comes from two Latvian-language publications: *Tēvija* (Fatherland), a newspaper with a broad audience, and *Mana Māja* (My Home), a semi-monthly periodical whose target audience was women.[27] As under the Soviet occupation, what

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[25] According to the 1935 census, the total population of Latvia was 1.950.502, with Russian (10.6 percent), Jewish (4.8 percent), German (3.2 percent), Polish (2.5 percent), Belorussian (1.4 percent), and Lithuanian (1.2 percent) minorities. Data according to 1935 census, as cited in Janis Rutkis, *Latvia: Country and People* (Stockholm: Latvian Nation Foundation, 1967), 292, 302.

[26] Ihor Kamenetsky, *Secret Nazi Plans for Eastern Europe: A Study of Lebensraum Policy* (New York: Bookman, 1961), 83, 89-90.

[27] The first issue of *Tēvija* appeared on July 1, 1941. The number of copies published ranged between 220.000 and 280.000; its position as the dominant news source was reinforced through the republication of *Tēvija* articles in provincial newspapers. At the end of the war, from late 1944 to 1945, the number of issues fell to 25.000. Flīgere, ed., *Latviešu periodika: Bibliogrāfiskais rādītājs*, vol. 4, 92-3; 125; (Latvian State Historical Archive, hereafter abbreviated, LVVA), 74, apr. 1, l. 2, 27. *Mana Māja* was published from 1942 to 1945. *Mana Māja* had a circulation of approximately 60.000 issues per year. Flīgere, *Latviešu periodika: Bibliogrāfiskais rādītājs*, vol. 4, 14. The staff of the press was Latvian, but worked under the censorship of the local Division for Press and Propaganda supervised by the General Commissariat and Security Police (SD, *Sicherheitsdienst*). Arturs Žvinklis, 'Latviešu prese nacistiskās Vācijas okupācijas laikā' ['The Latvian Press under Nazi occupation'], in Andris Caune, ed., *Latvija otrajā pasaules karā: Starptautiskas konferences materiali* [*Latvia during World War II: Materials from an international conference*], Latvijas vēsturnieku komisijas raksti [Symposium of the Commission of the Historians of Latvia], vol. 1 (Riga: Latvijas Vēstures Instituta Apgāds, 2000), 353-59.

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the press could write was restricted[28]; however, Latvian authors found spaces within the restriction in which to carve out spheres of autonomy.[29] Again, many scholars have examined images of masculinity and femininity under Nazism.[30] However, the Nazis, like the Soviets, had to adapt their discourse to the local conditions and traditions. We must consider the specific nature of gendered images outside the Reich proper to uncover the

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[28] Press Chief W. Zimmermann of the Ostministerium in Berlin issued Confidential "Press Instructions" to the editors-in-chief of officially approved papers. LVVA, f. 74, apr. 1, l. 2, 30.

[29] The instructions were distributed only to editors-in-chief (individual authors may never have seen them); moreover, editors were often directed to reword phrases provided before publication. See for example the "Press Instructions", December 4, 1942, "Nur zur Information!", "Wörtlicher Abdruck verboten!" LVVA, f. P-74, apr. 1, l. 3, 8. With the declaration of total war in 1943, the Nazi officials reiterated the secrecy of the Press Instructions and limited their distribution to officially approved editors. LVVA f. P-74, apr. 1, l. 3, 36. Censorship and control also increased. LVVA f. P-70, apr. 5, l. 23, 83.

[30] See, for example, Jill Stephenson, 'Propaganda, Autarky and the German Housewife', in David Welch, ed., *Nazi Propaganda: The Power and the Limitations* (Totowa: Barnes and Noble, 1983), 117-42; Renate Bridenthal, Atina Grossmann, and Marion Kaplan, eds., *When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984); Gisela Bock, *Zwangssterilisation im Nationalsozialismus: Studien zur Rassenpolitik und Frauenpolitik* [*Forced Sterilization in Nationalsocialist Germany: Studies in Racial and Women Politics*] (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1986); Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family, and Nazi Politics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987); Lisa Pine, *Nazi Family Policy 1933-1945* (New York: Berg, 1997); Elizabeth Heineman, *What Difference does a Husband Make?: Women and Marital Status in Nazi and Postwar Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Elizabeth Harvey, *Women and the Nazi East: Agents and Witnesses of Germanization* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); Claudia Koonz, '"More Masculine Men, More Feminine Women": The Iconography of Nazi Racial Hatreds', in Amir Weiner, ed., *Landscaping the Human Garden: Twentieth Century Population Management in a Comparative Framework* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 102-34; Dagmar Reese, *Growing up Female in Nazi Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006). – Scholars have also begun to analyze the gendered rhetoric in Eastern Europe. In addition to Elizabeth Harvey's work listed above, see Melissa Feinberg's work on the Czech Republic, 'Dumplings and Domesticity: Women, Collaboration, and Resistance in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia', in Maria Bucur and Nancy M. Wingfield, eds., *Gender and War in Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 95-110. The Nazi press in Latvia has also received recent scholarly attention. See, in addition to the above cited article by Žvinklis, Matthew Kott, 'The Portrayal of Soviet Atrocities in the Nazi-controlled Latvian-language Press and the First Wave of Antisemitic Violence in Riga, July-August 1941', in David Gaunt, Paul A. Levine, and Laura Palosuo, eds., *Collaboration and Resistance during the Holocaust: Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), 127-60. Didzis Bērziņš, 'Nacistiskā antisemītisma propaganda laikrakstā *Tēvija* 1941. g. jūlijā: latviešu līdzdalības diskurss', ['Nazi Antisemitic Propaganda in the Newspaper *Fatherland* July 1941: The Discussion of Latvian Participation'], *Latvijas Arhīvi*, 4 (2009), 63-98.

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interactions between populations under occupation and the occupation regime.

As in the case of the Soviets, the occupation soldiers represented a new masculinity. The German army was "all-powerful" and "crowned with praise and victory" (*slavas, uzvaras vaiņogāta*). Articles contrasted the chaotic, cowardly nature of the Red Army with the bravery and order of the Germans. 'Eyewitness' accounts described both the brutality of the Red Army and the alleged sophistication of the Germans. One author examined the quarters the Soviet soldiers had abandoned. He poked around and saw pits with "piles of fetid meat and fish, pieces of bread, bottles of alcohol, and as proof, that a 'brave warrior' really lived there, he [had] left his 'business card' – in some places slept next to it, in some places on top of it." The author then turned to describe the German who stood guard nearby: "healthy, strong, with an open, intelligent expression." He concluded: "What a contrast to the exhausted, raggedy, and stupid Red Army soldier."[31] In sum, the comparison is deliberate and contrasting masculinities were a means by which to communicate the political transfer of power.

These first discussions of masculinity focused on the power and superiority of the Germans. In short time, however, there is a slight shift in the use of gender. If in the first weeks of occupation, gender served to legitimize the regime, its function soon became more active in appealing to and recruiting Latvian men and women in support of the new order. Articles also paid increasing attention to femininity and the role of women as mothers. Significantly, a change in article authorship accompanied the increased focus on women. In the first issue of *Tēvija*, no names of authors appeared.[32] However, within the first months of occupation, the names of Latvian authors appeared in the columns of *Tēvija* – often names of intellectuals, writers, and community leaders familiar from the interwar period of independence. It is with these articles that the significance of gender as a channel through which Latvians tried to negotiate for power within the occupation structure becomes evident.

The clearest illustrations of the manipulation of gendered language by both Nazis and Latvians appear in *Mana Māja*, the magazine for women.[33] The Nazi officials used the journal to assert the regime's presence and influence in women's lives. They regularly reported on the accomplish-

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[31] 'Pa sarkano bandītu pēdām' ['On the trail of the red bandits'], *Tēvija*, 1 July 1941, 2.

[32] This continued to be the case for many articles throughout the Nazi occupation; authorship and the extent of the influence of Nazi overseers cannot, in many cases, be determined. The sources for *Tēvija* included orders and declarations issued locally and in Berlin as well as re-publications of articles from German sources.

[33] I discuss other examples in Lazda, 'Latvia'.

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ments of women in Germany. The message was clear – Germany and its women were superior to the Latvians. As stories of Latvian women appear, they do so in the shadow of Germans. Thus, while seeming to portray the Latvian family as strong, *Mana Māja* also emphasized that the 'German way' served as the ideal model and Latvians were subordinate to it. The first issues in particular offered this dual approach: praising Latvian culture and families but also pointing to Germany, where women had already made significant achievements.

However, Latvian authors soon modified these images. As in *Tēvija,* we can detect a growing kind of national appeal that seemed to address Latvians, which was possible because it co-opted Nazi rhetoric. Articles on eugenics, for example, discussed the strength of families and the health of children, in accord with Nazi guidelines. In *Family and Nation*, the author asked: "How is a strong [*krietna*] family shaped? By strong women and men." While incorporating National Socialist language, however, the ambiguousness of *which* nation the author means seems to suggest a sense of Latvian national pride and purity. He continued: "A nation [*tauta*] depends on the family. But the opposite is also true – a family will only be truly happy, if both partners of the marriage are from the same people [*tauta*]."[34] Another article went a step further, apparently criticizing the Germanization policies of the regime. The author instructed readers to "teach your children to honor and love the language of their father's fathers. The most important factor that separates one people from others is language."[35]

There are, of course, several possible readings of these lessons. These articles could have been a warning to both Latvians and Germans to avoid relationships with each other, fearing 'contamination' of both peoples. But, when seen in the larger context of the surrounding articles, as well as the increased pressures from the Germans for Latvian support, these articles also contain evidence of resistance, as a call to strengthen the *Latvian* nation against the Germans, offering a more direct challenge to the Nazi regime. This increased focus on the strength of the nation is accompanied by visual nationalist reminders such as a more prominent presence of Latvian women in folk costumes.[36] The timing of this change in emphasis is important, for these symbols appeared more frequently as the years of

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[34] E. Lauva, 'Ģimene un tauta' ['Family and nation'], *Mana Māja*, 12 (June 1944), 177.

[35] Kl. Siliņš, 'Mūsdienu ģimene' ['The family in our time'], *Mana Māja*, 3 (February 1944), 35.

[36] See especially the images on the covers of April 10, 1943; March 1944; May 1944; and June 1944.

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occupation passed, when the violence of the Nazis had become increasingly clear, and when the Nazi regime had drafted Latvian men into the military.[37] This somewhat ambiguous address to the nation is made more clear in the press of the resistance.[38]

At the same time, it is also possible, or likely, that by incorporating racial rhetoric and ideas that seemed in accord with Nazi goals, Latvian authors contributed to support of the regime and aided collaboration. Latvians collaborated with the Nazis on several levels, including the carrying out of the murder of the Jews.[39] Though this may not have been the intent of

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[37] The Latvian SS Voluntary Legion remains a controversial part of Latvia's past under the Nazi occupation. Although there was a short period during which enlistment was voluntary, the response was insufficient for the military needs of the Nazi regime. Thus, in February 1943, men born between 1919 and 1924 were drafted, which was then expanded to those born between 1906 and 1926. The 15th division was the first to be established and fought first in Russia, then in 1944 in northern Latvia. In 1944 it was sent to Pomerania, where in 1945 it found itself in the U.S. and British zone. The 19th division fought primarily in Kurzeme, western Latvia. In 1945, most were sent to Siberia by the Soviet regime. Many Latvians saw, and continue to see, the Legion as the only opportunity to participate in the battle against the Soviet Union – and saw a fight against Germany as the next step that would free Latvia. The Legion as a whole did not participate directly in the murder of Latvian Jews; however it is known that individuals who had been part of the killings later joined the Legion. Andrew Ezergailis, ed., *The Latvian Legion: Heroes, Nazis, or Victims?: A Collection of Documents from OSS War-Crimes Investigation Files, 1945-1950* (Riga: Historical Institute of Latvia, 1997); Mirdza Kate Baltais, *The Latvian Legion: Selected Documents* (Toronto: Amber Printers and Publishers, 1999); Inesis Feldmanis, 'Latviešu un citu nevācu tautu ieroču SS vienības Otrajā pasaules karā: Kopīgais un atšķirīgais' ['Latvian and other non-German nations in the Waffen SS units during World War II: The Common and the Different'], in Latvijas Vēsturnieku komisijas, ed., *Okupācijas režīmi Latvijā: 1940-1956* [*Occupation Regimes in Latvia: 1940-1956*], Latvijas Vēsturnieku komisijas raksti [Symposium of the Historians of Latvia], vol. 7 (Riga: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds, 2002), 165-78; Edvīns Brūvelis, ed., *Latviešu leģionāri* [*Latvian Legionnaires*] (Riga: Daugava Vanagi, 2005).

[38] For example, on March 30, 1942, the underground publication *Voice of the People* (*Tautas Balss*) wrote: "It is perfectly clear to anyone that the descendants from [a mixed] marriage are lost to the Latvian nation, but the Latvian woman must be aware that she received her blood from her nation and her only and greatest duty is to give it back […] If the Germans have written laws to protect their nation's blood and honor, then we must also have the same demands."

[39] Latvians collaborated with the Nazi regime on several levels. At the beginning of the occupation, Nazi German officials worked with former members of the interwar extreme right, most notably the Thundercross, who hoped that the Nazi arrival would finally rid Latvia of the evils of communism and help establish a pure and ethnically Latvian Latvia. Although a few Thundercross leaders did serve in official positions in the Nazi governing structure, collaboration between these extremists and the Nazis was shortlived. – Although a precise number is unknown, it is clear that Latvians were participants in the Holocaust in Latvia. The most notorious of these collaborators was Viktors Arājs and the Arājs Commando formed soon in the summer of 1941. This group of approximately three hundred men

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the articles' authors, their incorporation of ideas of 'purity' may have, at the very least, made the racist ideology of the Nazi regime more tolerable and tempered resistance.

In the end, it is difficult to know how Latvians received and read the press under either the Soviets or the Nazis. However, this challenge should not lead us to dismiss the official press during the occupation as formulaic rhetoric. Rather, a study of the changing conceptualizations of the Latvia under Soviet or Nazi ideology is significant to identify the successes and failures of propaganda in building support. Moreover, the gendered discourse that appears in the press under both occupations lives beyond the wartime period in the oral texts of Latvian participants and witnesses. Latvian interviewees repeatedly use gendered frameworks to recall their wartime experiences.

The construction of this framework may not be a deliberate choice, but it provides evidence of wartime perspectives that are difficult to uncover. That is, the prevalence of gender suggests that, first, on some level Latvians received and incorporated the ideology disseminated by the press. In sum, even the propaganda in the press were not just empty words. And second, the gendered narratives emphasize the continuity between wartime personal interactions and the writing of this experience after the war. Wartime frameworks shape postwar history writing. This influence is evident in oral histories from ethnic Latvians, to which I now turn.[40]

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murdered Jews throughout Latvia in the summer and fall. The number of collaborators outside this group is much larger, although the numbers are unknown. – For more on collaboration, see Rudīte Vīksne, 'Arāja komandas dalībnieks pēc padomju tiesas prāvu materiāliem: Sociālais stāvoklis, izglītība, iestāšanās motīvi, piespriestais sods' ['The Arajs commando participants based on the Soviet court cases: Social status, education, motivation, and sentences'], in Andris Caune, ed., *Holokausta izpētes problēmas Latvijā*: *Starptautiskas konferences referāti* [*The Problems in Holocaust Research in Latvia: Results of an International Conference*] (Riga: Latvijas vēstures instituta apgāds, 2001), 350-83; Robert G.Waite, 'Reliable Local Residents: Collaboration in Latvia, 1941-1945', in Andris Caune, ed., *Latvija otrajā pasaules karā: Starptautiskās konferences materiāli. 1999* [*Latvia during World War II: Materials from an International Conference*], Latvijas Vēsturnieku komisijas raksti [Symposium of the Historians of Latvia], gada 14.-15. jūnijs, *Rīga*, vol. 1. (Riga: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds, 2000), 115-44. Martin Dean, 'Local Collaboration in the Holocaust in Eastern Europe', in Dan Stone, ed., *The Historiography of the Holocaust* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 120-40.

[40] My examples come from my work over a period of about ten years with the National Oral History Project (NOHP) at the University of Latvia. It was, in fact, my initial work with oral histories that led me to focus on gendered discourse and identity. I follow the NOHP model of life story approach, which means that each interview aims to record the entire life narrative of the individual rather than investigate a specific time. I began my discussion of World War II with two general questions: How do you remember the arrival of the Russians? How do you remember the arrival of the Germans? I used "Russian"

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"Old Wine in New Bottles": Latvian Memories of Occupation

Recollections of violence are central to Latvian recollections of war, and these focused especially on the mass deportations under the Soviets and the Holocaust under the Nazis. However, most often Latvian narratives do not focus on clear alignments for or against the occupation power but rather on day-to-day survival and on the struggle to comprehend the changes and brutality around them. In these accounts, it was striking that interviewees most often tried to communicate their impressions through gendered language, that is, through explicit discussions of masculinity and femininity and the roles of men and women. Both men and women, of various class backgrounds, often made a comment on the masculinity and femininity they associated with the war.[41] The use of gendered language itself reveals small spaces of autonomy between collaboration and resistance in which Latvians sought to express some kind of national identity. The narrators work to reconcile the propaganda of liberators with the lived experience of personal interactions.

As one man (b. 1917) recalled, "[i]n 1940 something dark and rather senseless began, full of all kinds of contradictions."[42] Other interviewees debated, half-jokingly, which would be the lesser evil – a Russian or German occupation. To many, the Russians would be the preferred occupying power. Latvians would have some freedom since everyone knew that "the Russian is a fool". Latvians who had lived close to the border with Russia said they had seen the poverty of Soviet Russia first-hand and knew what

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instead of Soviet and "German" instead of Nazi because this is how Latvians colloquially refer to these occupations "The Russian times, the German times".

[41] The oral history interviews with ethnic Latvians considered here are drawn from three sources. First, I selected eighteen oral histories in the National Oral History Project at the University of Latvia in Riga (*Nacionālā mutvārdu vēstures arhīvs,* further NMV), ranging in date from 1993 to 2003. Second, working closely with the staff of the archive, I conducted twenty-eight interviews in the summers of 1995, 1996, and 1997. Many of these focused on the Soviet deportation of Latvians to Siberia after the war. In addition, forty-two interviews took place during a ten-month stay in 1999-2000. The third group of sources consists of thirteen video interviews found at the Museum of the Occupation of Latvia (*Okupācijas Muzeja Fonds,* further OMF). The structure and recruitment of these interviews differs slightly from the first two categories in that the OMF staff focuses on the years of the war and the postwar Soviet occupation. In total, these 101 interviews represent a range of socioeconomic, regional, and educational experiences. However, the interviews selected are all with people who identified themselves as Latvian rather than a member of a minority group, although I did interview Latvians of Polish, Russian, and Jewish descent. All names used in the citations are pseudonyms.

[42] Aleksandrs Mūrnieks, Interview by Mara Lazda (hereafter ML), June 2000, Latvia.

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awaited them.[43] Others recalled their anti-German upbringing, as one woman (b. 1920) noted that "I remember clearly that [in school we were taught] the Germans were our historical enemies."[44] The experience of both occupations, however, led many to conclude that the goals of the regimes were more similar than different, that both wanted to eliminate the Latvian nation and state. According to one account:

> "It seemed that the Germans were as a nation a little more civilized, but to say that there was some kind of enthusiasm for them, that would be wrong. Nothing good could come of it whether the Russians or Germans won. They would have sent us away somewhere; we would have nothing. It was old wine in new bottles."[45]

In trying to describe their interactions with each regime, interviewees call upon gendered images. For the Soviet period, I came to expect the "nightgown story", a comment on the lack of sophistication of Russian women. I heard this story numerous times, even though I have not yet found any references or documentation outside this myth. According to one woman's (b. 1918) rendition, for example, she said that "[I will] never forget when we saw the officers and their wives. I said to my brother: 'Look they've come in nightgowns!'" She explained that the Russian women went out on the town wearing nightgowns as evening dresses. "And you can imagine how beautiful our nightgowns were if a Russian woman would actually go out dancing in them!"[46]

The ignorance and inappropriate behavior of Russian women stayed in the minds of many as an illustration of the lack of civilization of the new regime. One woman (b. 1919) added that as well as inappropriately wearing nightgowns,

> "[Russian women] all had boots; they were the ones who introduced the world to knee-length boots. Honestly. Before [the Soviet occupation] we did not know that women could wear such boots and with little skirts. For a long time I could not imagine wearing such boots because it was repulsive [*pretīgs*] to me. So there was such humor, too."[47]

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[43] Skaidrīte Salmiņa, Interview by ML, June 1997, Latvia.

[44] Mirdza Pētersone, Interview by Māra Zirnīte, June 2003, Kuldīga, Latvia, NOHP. Mūrnieks, quoted above, thought that Latvians were simply more used to living with Russians in the independence period. They interacted more with Russians than with Germans because Germans had a more developed system of cultural organizations and thus kept to themselves more than the Russians.

[45] *"Tie paši vēži citā kulītē"* [literally, the same crabs in a different bag]. Anna Krastiņa, Interview ML, August 2000, Latvia.

[46] OMF, 174, 175.

[47] Elvīra Eglīte, Interview by ML, August 2000, Latvia.

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A particularly shocking memory for one woman (b. 1920) was coming face-to-face with a Soviet woman soldier, who "with a rifle on her shoulder shout[ed in my face] 'who is not with us is against us, who is not with us, is against us.'"[48] Another (b. 1931) described the improper conduct of women soldiers when the Soviet occupying forces returned in 1945: "One memory that sticks out is how those Russian women from the front [*frontietes*] stood by the store – women in uniform – pouring shots of alcohol for themselves."[49]

The appearance of Soviet Russian soldiers played a central role in life stories as a reflection of the foreign nature of the new rule and new ideology and seemed openly to contradict the image the press tried to project of Soviet military sophistication. Reactions to the appearance of soldiers on the street reflect confusion and fear. Although there are few direct references to sexual violence, interviewees acknowledged its occurrence. Latvians deported to Siberia alluded to incidents of sexual exploitation. Women specifically mentioned their fear of rape when the Soviet regime returned in 1945. One woman (b. 1925) and her sister waited for the return of the Russians with great fear, "we were afraid of being raped. We covered ourselves with mud as much as possible, so no one would touch us."[50]

But in addition to fear, the narratives also contain humor and pity regarding the Russian soldiers. Some mocked the arriving soldiers "who were such little, little men [*mazi, mazi vīreļi*] who wore hats with a pointy top. We had a great laugh about them [saying] 'a point on top and underneath a fool' [*augšā puļķīts apakšā muļķīts*]."[51]

These impressions point to how Latvian understanding of gender norms acted as a filter through which they saw Soviet policies and ideology. Certainly for some Latvians, Soviet promises of liberating women as well as providing more opportunities for men, particularly from the working class, were attractive and helped recruit supporters such as the Latvian women's delegate to the All-Union Soviet, Ieva Paldiņa. However, life stories reveal also how personal contact with the first Soviet representatives – Russian men and women – distanced many Latvians from the new regime. This reaction was not limited to Latvian members of the middle class or to urbanites. Latvians in a sense used accepted definitions of gender roles to create their own hierarchy and to protect themselves.

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48 OMF 228, 229.

49 Erika Granta, Interview by ML, August 2000, Latvia.

50 Lilija Kalniņa, Interview by NMV, 1992.

51 Jānis Vilciņš, Interview by ML, August 2000, Latvia.

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Even more importantly, moments in these life stories point to how Latvians used traditional gender roles to shield themselves from the Soviet regime and ideology. The story of resistance to Soviet women's fashion – such as the rejection in the woman's story above of short skirts and tall boots – is in part an amusing anecdote. These descriptions may offer a bit of humor, but they also indicate how Latvians used gender roles to distinguish themselves from the occupying power. Latvians carved out a space in which to protect their identities as Latvians despite the growing influence of Soviet ideology and Russian culture and language. The Soviet ideology and regime were associated with the unkempt, uncivilized appearance of the Russian male soldiers, which was in contrast to the daily praises that appeared in the newspapers of the valiant, sophisticated Red Army. The conduct of Russian women also resulted in a bit of pity for the foreigners as they did not understand something so 'basic' as proper dress. Moreover – as the somewhat mocking tone of the narrators as they describe the encounters with Russians indicates – Latvians could perhaps feel superior to the foreigners and maintain a measure of self-respect because of their knowledge of 'proper' gender norms.

In response to my question about the arrival of the Germans, many interviewees point out an inner conflict. The invasion by Nazi Germany came two weeks after Soviet mass deportations and seemed to many Latvians to bring relief from further Soviet deportations.[52] Yet this initially positive impression contrasted with the historical attitudes toward their neighbors as the "seven-hundred-year oppressors". One woman recalled the absurdity of the positive reception of the Germans. She said that in her education, "very little negative was said about the USSR. […] [T]he whole

[52] In one night, from June 14 to June 15, the Soviet regime arrested and deported 15.424 Latvian citizens of all ethnicities. See Heinrihs Strods, 'Septītā pļauja (1940-1949)' ['Seventh Harvest'], in Anda Līce, ed., *Via dolorosa: staļinisma upuru liecības* [*Via dolorosa: Testimonies of the victims of Stalinism*], vol. 2 (Riga: Liesma, 1993), 11. See Sindija Dimanta and Indulis Zālīte, 'Četrdesmito gadu deportāciju struktūranalīze' ['Structural anlaysis of the Deportations of the 1940s'], in Tadeušs Puisāns, ed., *Okupācijas varu nodarītie postījumi Latvijā 1940-1990: Rakstu krājums* [*The destruction by the occupation powers in Latvia 1940-1990: Collection of Essays*] (Stockholm: Memento, 2000), 148; Zālīte and Sindija Eglīte, '1941. g. 14. jūnija deportācijas struktūranalīze' ['Structural analysis of June 14, 1941 deportations'], in Andris Caune, ed., *1941. gada 14. jūnija deportācija – noziegums pret cilvēci. Starptautiskās konferences materiāli* [*The June 14, 1941 deportation – crime against humanity. Materials from an International Conference*], Latvijas Vēsturnieku komisijas raksti [Symposium of the Historians of Latvia], vol. 6. (Riga 2002), 40-50; although the exact numbers are not known, scholars have calculated recently that approximately one-fifth of those deported survived life in exile. See Jānis Riekstiņš, '1941. gada 14. jūnija deportācija Latvijā' ['The June 1941 deportation in Latvia'], in Andris Caune, ed., *1941. gada 14. jūnija deportācija* [*The June 14, 1941 deportation*], vol. 6 (Riga 2002), 28.

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time in school we were taught that Germany was our enemy." [53] But after June 14, 1941, her attitude changed 180 degrees: "Imagine, after one occupying power, we joyfully welcomed another".[54]

While the image of Russian women played a central role in the memories of the Soviet occupation, the presence of Latvian women was significant in memories of the German occupation. Interviewees remembered young women in traditional folk costumes who greeted the Germans with flowers and Latvian food. While curious boys were allowed to look at the soldiers' guns and gas masks, "Latvian girls in folk costumes brought milk and *pīrāgi* [filled rolls] to the soldiers".[55] The welcoming of 'liberation' was closely tied in Latvian memories to the appearance of women in national garb as the representatives of the Latvian nation. These Latvian women reinforced the contrast between Soviet emphasis on the image of women as workers: the Latvian women reclaimed the image of the woman in folk costume. The vision of these women, moreover, indicated to Latvians a return to an understanding of gender roles and order associated with the interwar period.

Interviewees also pay considerable attention to their first encounters with the German soldiers, particularly in contrast to their impressions of the Russians. Narrators emphasize the beauty and order of German soldiers:

> "What beautiful boys [the Germans were], as if they had been especially selected [*izlasīti*]. Their uniforms and figures were beautiful. [...] And the first thing they did when they arrived was look for water – and in Rēzekne we have artesian wells – and they immediately went to the water and washed up and shaved."[56]

The manners of the Germans were indicative of a sophistication the Russians had lacked.

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[53] Līvija Austriņa, Interview by ML, August 2000, Latvia.

[54] Austriņa, Interview.

[55] Edvards Liepiņš, Interview ML, August 2000, Latvia.

[56] Alise Lazdiņa, Interview by ML, August 2000, Latvia. See also Irēna Saleniece's analysis of oral histories on Latvian attitudes toward Wehrmacht soldiers, Irēna Saleniece, 'Vērmahta karavīri Latvijas iedzīvotāju atmiņā (pēc mutvārdu vēstures avotiem)', in Andris Caune, ed., *Latvija nacistiskās Vācijas okupācijas Varā 1941-1945. Starptautiskās konferences referāti. 2003* [*Latvia under Nazi German occupation 1941-1945: Presentations from an International Conference*], Latvijas Vēsturnieku komisijas raksti [Symposium of the Commission of the Historians of Latvia], vol. 11 (Riga: Latvijas Vēstures institūta apgāds), 40-47.

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> "The Germans were polite [...] [,] they asked to use the toilet. In this way their civilized attitude was evident. Representatives of the Red Army never asked [to use the toilet]. Afterward you just found [it] and had to clean it up."[57]

In time, Latvians saw the polished Germans as conniving and not worthy of their trust; 'gentlemanliness' could not hide the violence of the antisemitic policies and the murders of the Holocaust.[58] One interviewee (b. 1930) concluded:

> "The Germans committed their atrocities calmly, like a gentleman. [...] They knew how to commit their crimes with a smile on their lips. The Russians by contrast were horribly crude from the start. What they did was the same for both. Just the way they carried it out was different."[59]

While interviewees describe the violence of the Holocaust, and also recognize the role of Latvian collaborators[60], this violence coexists with the image of Germans as 'civilized'.

These narratives provide evidence that individual Latvians responded to the gendered discourse that appeared in the press (as well as in occupation regime policies). However, even these brief examples about the appearance and behavior of Russians and Germans initially appear superficial and are disturbing for both the interviewee and the interviewer. It is difficult to comprehend, as the interviewer removed from the war experience, how those responsible for the murder of millions could be described as 'civilized' or even 'beautiful'?

Nevertheless, I would like to suggest that rather than diminishing the violence of both regimes, in particular the German and Latvian murder of the country's Jews, these narratives point to the inner struggles of individuals and the negotiation of power between occupation and regimes and people under occupation. Recognition of these struggles does not alleviate individuals of their responsibility in collaboration with the regimes, of course. The emphasis on personal interactions with soldiers, both Soviet and Nazi, allowed Latvians to make the distinction between individual men and the Soviet and Nazi 'power'. As one woman, who initially had described her first impression of the Germans as "a beautiful painting", noted later that, "the [real] German [*vācietis*] was not like those soldiers, like

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[57] Jūlijs Zaķis, Interview.

[58] Aleksandrs Mūrnieks, Interview.

[59] Zigurds Zālītis, Interview.

[60] When asked whether Latvians also participated in the shootings, Ausma Stārķe (b. 1912) responded frankly "Do you think Latvians [*latvietis*] were better than anyone else?".

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those boys, who were washing up by the well. [The German in power – *tas vācietis*] was making demands."[61]

Central to this negotiation between occupier and occupied is the construction of narratives that allow the witnesses of an era to make a complicated reality comprehensible. In this case, interviewees need to distinguish between their individual interactions with soldiers and the larger occupation structure. The gendered language of these narratives is deliberate – the malleability of gender itself as a concept makes it an effective tool in articulating a wartime experience full of contradictions.

Conclusion

Examination of the gendered experience of the World War II occupations in Latvia – and in Eastern Europe in general – helps us understand how Latvians continue to process this complicated past and write the history of the twentieth century. More importantly, however, this gendered lens contributes to scholarship beyond Latvia and World War II. There are at least two ways that the gendered analysis of World War II shapes a transnational history.

First, while several scholars have pointed to the inadequacy of categories such as collaborator, resister, and bystander and have pointed to the overlap between participatory roles[62], a gendered analysis of the struggles for power between occupier and occupied reveals not only the existence of the overlap between categories, but also *how* individuals could both participate in and resist the occupation power. The lack of what Joan W. Scott calls "fixity" of gender[63] allowed groups with different ideologies to use similar gender constructions for very different purposes.

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[61] Marta Upīte, Interview by ML and Māra Zirnīte, 2000, Latvia.

[62] To list just a few, one of the most controversial interpretations of resistance was that of Martin Broszat's *Resistenz,* who proposed a wider definition of resistance in addition to organized activity. See Broszat, 'Resistenz und Widerstand' ['Resistence and Opposition'], in Martin Broszat, Elke Fröhlich, and Anton Grossmann, eds., *Bayern in der NS-Zeit* [*Bavaria during Nationalsocialism*], vol. 4 (München: Oldenbourg, 1981), 697-99. As cited in Neil Gregor, ed., *Nazism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 242. Works such as Philippe Burrin, *Living with Defeat: France under the German Occupation, 1940-1944*, trans. Janet Lloyd (London: Arnold, 1996), and Robert Gildea, *Marianne in Chains: In Search of the German Occupation 1940-1945* (London: Macmillan, 2002) consider the idea of overlapping categories of resistance and collaboration.

[63] Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, rev. ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 5.

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Second, a gendered analysis of World War II also suggests how this period shaped the politics of post-socialist tradition. The oral history conversations for this study took place in the 1990s and 2003, at a time when post-socialist societies were considering questions of citizenship, social policies (such as child subsidies and maternity leave), and school curriculum. In other words, while the interviews focused on the past, transition politics provided the context in which these conversations and research took place.[64]

In sum, the Latvian case study is not just about WWII or Eastern Europe. Nor is it just about how political language is gendered. If we think about gender as a channel for negotiation of power, then, I want to suggest, the experience of WWII in Eastern Europe can provide insight into questions of power and resistance more broadly. When occupied societies no longer have control over traditional political, social, and cultural institutions, gender emerges as a sphere in which they attempt to construct autonomy.

[64] About Gender Politics in Post-War Latvia see Zelče in this volume.

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