

LATGALIAN EMIGRANTS IN SIBERIA: CONTRADICTING IMAGES

Sanita Reinsone

Abstract: The turn of the 20th century saw a large-scale voluntary emigration of Latgalians to Siberia. The descendants of Latgalian emigrants still live in the villages founded by their predecessors. In the article the author examines the image of the Latgalian emigrants created by the printed media of the period, which carefully followed the process of emigration, and explores what contemporary Siberian Latgalians tell about their antecedents, arguing that the image of the simple-minded emigrants cultivated by the local newspapers at the turn of the 20th century contradicts the narrated image of skilful emigrants that symbolise the progressive origins of their community.

Keywords: Latgalian migration, newspapers, oral narratives, Siberia, 19th century

INTRODUCTION

Siberia as a land of great opportunities appeared on Latgalian¹ agenda in the second half of the 19th century. When in 1861 serfdom was abolished on the territory of Latgale, the peasants there gained the migration right, very much the same as the peasants in the neighbouring Baltic provinces (Kurzeme, Livonia/Vidzeme and Estonia), who had been granted this freedom several decades earlier, and migration to the distant provinces of the Russian Empire afforded what so many could not achieve by staying in Latgale – to own some land. The intensity of emigration reached its zenith at the turn of the 20th century, becoming a mass movement² that substantially affected the demographic situation in Latgale and made migration the top issue of social discourse in the printed media of the epoch.

Data on the scale of Latgalian migration to Siberia, which continued until the First World War, vary throughout different sources. The quoted numbers of emigrants start at some tens of thousands and amount to even several hundreds of thousands, while the most recent calculations show that the number of the emigrants might have been around 50,000 people or approximately 10% of the population of Latgale³ (Kikuts 2011: 42). At the beginning of the 20th century,

Vitebsk province (which Latgale was also a part of) is believed to have comprised one of the largest groups of Siberian emigrants from the western provinces of the Russian Empire (Kolotkin 2012: 7).

Viewed in a larger context, migration was one of the most important processes in the 19th century on the whole European scale, being caused by a rapid growth of population as well as other reasons. Massive migration from Europe to the so-called New World was one of the most important features of the evolving world economy of the 19th century (Hatton & Williamson 1994; Baines 1995: 5). The economic migration was an issue that affected the whole of the Latvian territory already beginning in the mid-19th century. Although the system of serfdom had for a long time tied the peasants to a specific location, the emigration of Latvians falls within the same period as the great European emigrations. For the peasants of the Baltic provinces other regions of the Russian Empire were the only place where they could go, using the available means of transportation, the rights granted to them by the law, and the personal identification documents issued to them (Zelče 1999: 79).

This article attempts to look at the Latgalian emigrants of ca 1900 from two qualitatively and historically different viewpoints: first, it is the image of the emigrants to Siberia in the Latgalian printed media of the period, i.e., the image created at the time when the migration process was ongoing, and, second, the views of the Latgalian emigrants in the oral narratives of their descendants – modern Siberian Latgalians. I argue that the image of the simple-minded emigrant cultivated at the turn of the 20th century has remained encapsulated in the material of the printed media from the period, and in the view of their descendants living in Siberia the emigrants symbolise the progressive origins of their community.

THE ISSUE OF EMIGRATION IN THE LATGALIAN PRINTED MEDIA OF THE TURN OF THE 20TH CENTURY

The role of the printed media in the migration-related processes of the turn of the 20th century was a significant one: the newspapers were among the very few mass media that regularly brought the news to the community. In addition, the Latgalian newspapers not only were instrumental in bringing the information to their audience, but also actively participated in the processes taking place in society by analysing them and disseminating propaganda. The Latgalian newspapers at the turn of the 20th century became the platform of two contradictory propaganda campaigns: in favour and against the Latgalian emigration. The representation of the two stances was far from equal:

the critique of emigration was dominating, as the heads of these newspapers, their editors and writers were representatives of the Latgalian intelligentsia, Catholic priests, teachers and men of letters, who viewed the emigration of their compatriots as a threat to the cultural and economic development of Latgale. In parallel to them, information and views on emigration were published by some anonymous authors, emigrants, their relatives and acquaintances, who had already accumulated some experience of emigration. Also, in essence, the articles are diverse: first, there are short ones, providing information on the current situation in Siberia, i.e., if there is any available land, in which district there is no land left anymore, where exactly it is available and how much, what is the quality, what are the most recent government regulations for getting land, etc. As an example, here is a fragment from an article published in 1909, entitled, *To Those Preparing to Leave for Siberia*:

[...] In Tomsk and Omsk districts there is no more available land left. The whole Vitebsk province is only allowed 20 lots, 30 dessiatines⁴ each. There is still free land behind Lake Baikal, along the River Amur; peasants of the Vitebsk province are allowed to take some 7–8 free land lots here.
(Sk. 1909: 2)

The authors who suggested migration were urging the readers to purchase the land maps that indicated the territories still available (Sākla 1906: 3). Also, the authors who aimed at keeping people from leaving, published detailed accounts of Siberian districts and villages in which Latgalians resided. Along with hindering emigration, their aim was also to promote the Latgalian unity in emigration: having learned through their articles about the districts and villages where Latgalians could be found, their compatriots were more likely to go there, instead of trying to settle in Russian villages or those of other nationalities. There were tens of such articles in the Latgalian printed media of the turn of the century, especially around the end of the first decade of the 20th century, when the emigration fever was slowly dying down.

Second, there were articles either encouraging or discouraging the readers to undertake the lengthy journey to Siberia and other distant parts of the Russian Empire, by either promising incredible benefits or just the opposite: scaring with dangers awaiting the newcomers. Frequently information from other Russian newspapers was rendered, adding an ominous framework, e.g.: “The papers bring terrifying news from the whole of Russia [...]” (L-niks 1907: 2). The argumentation basis of the emigration proponents was thorough information: examples of the success of the emigrants (“[...] they took many lots of land, built their houses and live in prosperity [...]”) (Sākla 1906: 3); promise of a better life and the urge to seize the opportunity that might vanish soon (“Peasants!

Act wisely and quickly, buy more land now, as the price of the land is rising by the day!”) (Sk. 1909: 2). Similar slogans urging the peasants to act wisely and smartly, but, on the contrary, not to leave, were also used by the opponents of the emigration: “Compatriots, better stay at home!” (Ripa 1906: 2–3) By providing a graphic illustration of the emigrants’ hardships, they urged the peasants to avoid gullibility and not to trust those who insisted that the land in Siberia was given for free, at the same time appealing to rationality and national, religious and cultural values that would be lost by submission to the emigration fever (e.g. Trasuns 1908: 3).

Third, the newspapers published epistolary accounts of the emigrants themselves, either still in Siberia or already having returned to Latgale, their relatives or other people who made these accounts public. These accounts depict the hardships encountered by the emigrants and their mood is predominantly resigned, sad and regretful.

We are scattered all over, do not see or meet one another. We have no church. For example in Achinsk district we are expecting a church to be built, but no-one is willing to fulfil our wish. The Russians are much better off: they have a number of churches. Many Latvians fade away completely, as they do not live together with the rest of the Latvians, but rather far away from the others. The government sometimes indeed attempts to mix us with the Russians, so that we would easier leave and forget our religion, our language. (Tučs 1909: 3)

The emigrants mainly complain about the poor living conditions, lack of food, intolerable weather, hard work, separation from their relatives and homeland Latgale, adding to it inaccessibility of culture and education, along with slow degradation of the religious identity caused by limited opportunities of its practicing: there are neither churches nor priests in Siberia. Such accounts of the emigrants and the general situation of the Latgalian emigration is analysed in reflexive newspaper articles, the authors of which attempt to understand the reasons of this movement, as well as their immediate and later consequences.

Along with the information distributed via newspapers, there also existed a non-documented personal communication, distributed mostly orally or through the letters of relatives or acquaintances in Siberia. Already earlier, in the 1860s, when the first Latvian emigration campaign targeted at Novgorod province, its scale was significantly influenced by the rumours about the free land lots available for a song, which spread quickly among the peasants (Zelče 1999: 80). In other countries as well the community’s view of the destination and its image was affected by numerous factors and paths of information distribution: through meetings in taverns, fairs, and markets, outside churches after ser-

vices, etc. (Rosoli 1993: 226). The fact that the information distributed within the Latgalian community through personal communication was probably the most influential and had a greater impact than the anti-emigration propaganda in the newspapers, can be seen from the relatively small number of articles suggesting emigration (in comparison to the large scale of emigration), as well as references to “cock-and-bull stories” about Siberia as told in Latgale in the articles discussing the Latgalian emigration (see, e.g., Svenne 1923: 64).

Latgalians’ emigration reached its peak at about the time when emigration from the other parts of modern-day Latvia was already diminishing, because in Latgale serfdom was abolished later. Thus the Latgalian newspapers in essence just continued the emigration discourse started a few decades earlier in Latvian-language newspapers, which saw the acute aspirations for “one’s own corner, own strip of land”⁵, resp. some property, and being a landowner (Latviešu Avīzes 1890: 1–2) as the reason for the Latvian peasants’ endeavour to leave for the far-away lands, not as a desire to quickly and venturesomely improve their material situation. Also, in the case of Latgalians, the emigrants are mainly not the ones in deep poverty⁶, but those who see Siberia as an opportunity to improve their quality of life through the acquisition of a larger farm. In this aspect the profile of the Latgalian emigrants coincides with the assumption that the European emigration of the 19th century was not primarily a movement of the destitute and hopeless, but rather represented a quest for greater opportunities (Hamerow 1983: 86).

HOW SIMPLE-MINDED, OH, HOW SIMPLE-MINDED IS OUR LATGALIAN PEASANT⁷: THE IMAGE OF SIBERIA AND THE LATGALIAN IN THE PRINTED MEDIA OF THE TURN OF THE 20TH CENTURY

“With every new spring the old song about Siberia is renewed. Let’s go to Siberia! Let’s go to Tomsk! Let’s go and seek a new land and new luck!” – this is how in 1910 the situation of emigration is depicted by the Latgalian newspaper *Drywa* (Sk. 1910: 3). The Latgalian papers at the turn of the 20th century have been preserved until the present day as one of the few witnesses of the epoch, providing us with something more than just a list of the migrants and the applications of the peasants requesting the permits to leave; these papers afford us an insight into the background of the migration discourse, showing how this movement was received in different parts of society – with prejudice, confusion and fear, myths and hope, but simultaneously also with scepticism, suspicion and disbelief. As a result of the information campaigns – one that

was in favour and the other that was against the migration – two very bright images were created: those of the emigrant and their destination, namely Siberia. Described by using colourful epithets, metaphors and comparisons, these images worked on either side. While the proponents of emigration constructed them, then the opponents intercepted these constructions, hyperbolised and deconstructed them.

Siberia at the turn of the 20th century had become the promised land, that of great opportunities, the saviour of the needy people aspiring to become landowners. It was the place where milk flowed instead of water, honey rained from the sky, and the crops need not have been sown at all: just let a bull to prod the soil with a horn and prepare to harvest. While the proponents tended to keep their statements low-key in order to sound credible and create a rational impression, the opponents did just the opposite: they picked the most picturesque metaphors, hyperbolising them to the absurdity:

In Siberian rivers it is not water that flows – it is milk; and it is not water that rains down from the sky – it is honey. (Ripa 1906: 2–3)

In Siberia there are hills of gold and rivers of milk. (Ripa 1907: 3)

In Siberia land is given to anyone requesting it, and that land is of excellent quality. (Lejdumniks 1907: 3)

Siberia [...] is a golden place, a place of treasures and happiness, where wine and honey flows. (Skrinda 1909a: 2)

The metaphorical rhetoric of Siberia as an idyllic land of great opportunities and peasants' happiness is characteristic not only to the Latvian printed media. Similar images and clichés have also been used in other countries from which people migrated to Siberia, e.g., Estonia, where newspapers participated equally actively in the formation of emigration discourse, using hyperbole and caricature in depicting the qualities of the destination of Estonian emigration at the end of the 19th century (Jürgenson 2002; for the experience of other countries see also Hoerder & Rössler 1993).

As opposed to the idealised land of peasant happiness, the *true face* of Siberia is shown by using a contrastive approach: it is revealed as a “distant magnet”, having drawn thousands to it, ruining them and forcing them to eat “bread soaked in tears” (Lejdumniks 1907: 3). The potential emigrants are warned that not everyone that hopes will happily reach the destination; one must reckon with a hard and testing journey, as was described in the articles in rather graphic scenes intended to arouse pity: miserable, ill, dying people, who jostle, swear, cry and curse, and in their midst – hungry children dressed in rags, leaving the carriages at every stop in the hope of finding some food.

The children are getting sick especially frequently, they have to go without washing themselves for weeks, and hungry for days. The naked bodies of the children freeze and become covered in pimples from different contagious illnesses. The parents have much trouble with such ill children. Conductors and doctor's assistants are seeking such children on the train, separating them from the parents in order to send them to a hospital at the nearest train station. Clearly enough, the parents do not want to be parted from their children. They hide them under the benches, on shelves, between packages and rags, so that the "eye of the government" would not find them. Many children die on the way, unable to cope with the hardships of the travel. (Sk. 1910: 3)

The fate of those having reached the destination is no better though. They find no hills of gold and rivers of milk in Siberia. Instead, having spent all they had, the travellers find unfriendly clerks, "which we can find in great numbers in our local government institutions" (L-niks 1907: 2), inhuman weather, fully suppressing the contentment with the vastness and fertility of the land, and, last but not least, of course, inhumanly hard toil.

In summers, around noon, the sun is so hot that one can find no rest. In the evenings there are myriads of gnats and gadflies showing no mercy; when the heat reaches up to 45 degrees, one is cooked as a crayfish immediately. [...] In winter it is so cold that you meet neither a man nor a bird on the road. When the thermometer drops to 40–45 degrees, everybody is sitting at home, heating the stove continuously. Sometimes there are such snowstorms that neither the sky nor the ground is discernible. (Bycans Odums 1907: 1–2)

Contrary to this, the proponents of migration emphasise the most significant and the most pleasant to the peasant's ear: there is much free land in Siberia, it is cheap and fertile. Similar narrative strategies are used in the formation of the emigrant's profile. In the depiction of the proponents of emigration, the potential emigrant – the poverty-stricken peasant, who has to "fight his own brother for the land", and with no expectations of any change until the very end of his days – acquires a potential of activity and agility, becomes a modern man, capable of changing the conservative way of thinking, take the reins of life in his own hands and give up the safe, well-known, though modestly rewarding place in favour of future prosperity.

The described change of thinking in a community was a characteristic transformation process in different 19th century communities, a process that has also been designated as the rise of the age of individualism, for which the emigration processes were quite appropriate: a peasant severs his ties with the native

environment, losing his social status and the guarantees it provides, becoming a free individual who takes all the responsibility for his future destiny (Zelče 1999: 79). In the hands of the opponents of emigration the same potentials of a Latgalian change completely: their Latgalian emigrant is uneducated (“simple-minded”) and naive (instead of being brave and decisive), greedy (instead of oriented towards future prosperity), and incapable of reasonable actions.

[...] our greedy, impoverished, credulous Latvians started moving, preparing for the long journey, selling the lot of land they had. (Lejdumņiks 1907: 3)

How simple-minded, oh, how simple-minded is our Latgalian peasant. [...] In the recent years tattered and hungry, he suffers from hunger and cold, but is unable to earn himself any income. Sometimes an opportunity for earning lies just there under his nose, but he will still not see it because of his narrow-mindedness. Show him a rouble, show him a lump of bread, and he will follow them for miles and miles, spending much more time on that than he spends earning his living. (Drywa 1909: 1)

The naivety and lack of wits is shown very demonstratively in the articles that project the typical Latgalian as finding himself under the influence of an emigration agitator. For example, the reaction of the typical Latgalian as described when telling the story of Jezups Strods from Bukumuizha, who, having returned from a short stay in Siberia to his native village, narrates to his former neighbours (“our simple-minded peasants”) about the wonders of this faraway land:

Bukumuizha peasants are listening to the stories of Jezups Strods with their mouths wide open. “Vow, what a life there,” says one, “Let’s go there!” – “Sure, let’s go. Why shouldn’t we go to such a land! Do we have that kind of life here, is our soil like that?” And the wondrous stories of a happy life in Siberia told by Jezups Strods have stirred the minds of Bukumuizha peasants so strongly that all they can do is dream about Siberia, and they plan to go there in great numbers. (Ripa 1906: 2–3)

Having arrived in that foreign territory, these character traits of the Latgalian are aggravated by a still greater lack of wits and moral degradation, while it all is superseded by hardships of life unknown previously. The image of the simple-minded emigrant is also backed by the few published letters from the emigrants themselves or those who have travelled the distance to find out what the compatriots’ life in Siberia is like. The conditions depicted allow for a comparison: the emigrants, full of remorse for their unreasonable decision,

live like beasts – no school, no church, no homeland, no native tongue (see, e.g., Bycans Odums 1907: 1–2).

The educated Latgalians, opponents of emigration, who are the authors of the majority of anti-emigration articles, see the opportunities for a full-fledged, mentally and physically balanced life of Latgalians only in their native land, in Latgalian society. The educational, cultural, and religious qualities attainable here are associated with the land and the community, which cannot be transported to anywhere else; without these the emigrant is lost to his land, nation and culture. They defend the view that a person is not able to undergo a sudden change. The decision to sell all of one's property and leave will not change what they are: a lazybones will be the same, a drunkard will carry on drinking and the poor will be poor, so where is the difference – to be poor here or in faraway Siberia.

Those who think that life is hard only here, while in Siberia there are hills of gold and rivers of milk, are very wrong. [...] A poor and not too bright person will encounter difficulties everywhere; the crops grow by themselves only to those who have a thick purse. (Ripa 1907: 3)

[...] the leaving ones are lost to the nation and the church; a poor person will experience hard life wherever he goes. [...] The same hills of gold as in Siberia we can also find right here [...] First take what is lying within your reach, and only then seek for the missing in some distant place. Do not just go for a place far away because it will cost you most dearly. It is not reasonable to leave your own house and the places inhabited by your forefathers to some stranger, in order to become a traveller in a foreign place without your own homeland and language. (Trasuns 1908: 3)

What in fact encouraged the formation of this exaggerated migration discourse in the Latgalian printed media was the concern of the intellectuals for the unity of their nation, its strength and mental advancement, along with the opinion that the emigrants, by severing themselves from their land, nation and culture, harm not only themselves but also the nation, which is thus dispersed and weakened in its aspirations for mental development, subjecting itself to foreign, i.e., undesirable influence:

We do not need to run from our fatherland, instead we should take care of it; we shall buy it from the foreign hands and the nation that has only brought to us lewdness and delinquency, due to which culture is just an empty void. (Auseklis 1906: 3)

This opinion falls in line with the national identity formation processes of Latvians and other eastern and northern European oppressed nations, which

took place at the end of the 19th century, and one of the directions of which was based on understanding the differences of a community as the foundation for a nation's unity, allowing to draw borders separating it from everything foreign, based on the inherent differences, demanding unity within the community. A nation is perceived "as a collective individual and a collection of individuals", in which everyone acknowledges their affiliation with the whole (Handler 1988: 32–39; Bula 2000: 80). Nevertheless, the appeal of intellectuals to the necessity of the nation's unity in order for it to ensure successful existence could not stop the wave of emigration, as was also admitted by Francis Trasuns, one of the most active representatives of the Latgalian intelligentsia of the time:

The propaganda and the propagandists have done their part, though. The promised hills of gold in Siberia have overcome the love to fatherland and fear of the long journey and unknown fate. Not only whole families but even whole villages have left and are still leaving for Siberia. (Trasuns 1908: 3)

With the emigration fever dying down, Latgalian intellectuals took care of the preservation of the nationality and religious life of the compatriots living far away, collecting information about the colonies formed and establishing contacts with them (Apeļš 1970). At the end of the first decade of the 20th century, a journey of a Latgalian Catholic bishop to the Siberian Latgalian Catholic parishes was organised, which took nearly a year and was scrupulously described in the newspaper *Dryva* (Skrinda 1909a–d; 1910a–b). Catholic priests are sent to the larger colonies, to support the religious and social life of the emigrants, as with the arrival of these priests churches are built and both the cooperation intensifies and ties are strengthened between the less distant Latgalian villages.

IN THE OLD DAYS THERE WAS EVERYTHING. NOW NOTHING IS LEFT: SIBERIAN EMIGRANTS IN THE ORAL NARRATIVES OF THEIR DESCENDANTS

Timofeyevka was among the largest colonies established in Siberia at the end of the 19th century by emigrants from Latgale; shortly after its foundation there were slightly over 500 inhabitants in it. Also today this village with its population of ca 170 people, situated in the Vengerovsky district of Novosibirsk Oblast, is among the largest Latgalian villages in Siberia (Mežs 2011: 71). This chapter is devoted to the oral narratives of the modern-day inhabitants of Timofeyevka about their predecessors and the origins of the village, and examines what happened to the image of the simple-minded/progressive emigrant in a modern situation. Is it still topical? If not, then what has replaced it and what

the descendants of the emigrants tell us about their predecessors? The material used is oral interviews conducted with the inhabitants of Timofeyevka, recorded during two fieldwork sessions in 2004 and 2006 by the researchers of the Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art, the Archives of Latvian Folklore, and the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Latvia. During this field study, conversations with the inhabitants of Timofeyevka were not deliberately aimed at studying the founders of the village and the corresponding period. They cover quite a wide thematic range, discussing numerous topics of personal and social life, culture and ethnography, as well as historical and religious issues. Nevertheless, the narratives relating the origins of the village seem special in the context of all these stories. These are stories of a historically and geographically significant experience of the community: its origins, the roots of the Timofeyevka inhabitants, their sense of identity, and the formation of their common *lived* space (Berdoulay 1989: 130).

The past is the dominant tense in all the conversations held with the people of Timofeyevka, though also present and future are reflected in them. The stories of the past add one more dimension to the village; they mark places, people and actions, making them more lively, manifold and deeper; they serve as an introduction to the present and our contemporaries. Placing of the past in a seemingly foreground situation is encouraged by the context of the conversational situation: interviewers are interested in history, culture, traditions, everyday life of the village and the community, along with the lives of the informants and the stories about them. Also, the people of Timofeyevka like to browse their memories and talk in great lengths about the bygone days. The past is a contrast to and a nostalgic expression of the present discomfort, as characterised by the frequently presented description: *In the old days there was everything. Now nothing is left* (Vera Savenko). This nostalgic mood of the past arouses contradictory emotions. Memory narratives of the better times and events in the village and the informants' lives are accompanied by joyful and energetic delight, while the description of the present situation is harsh and full of remorse.

The nicest memories show two childhoods: the origins of the village and the days of childhood and youth of the narrators themselves. The informants in their story worlds become children eager for their grandmothers' tales, young, strong and active villagers as they remember themselves from the past. The village flourishes, becomes active and youthful. The predecessors of the informants – the old Latgalians – are not simple-minded and credulous, as is shown in the articles of the turn of the 20th century that depict emigration. They are not only newcomers, but also the grandparents of the modern older generation of Timofeyevka, who work skilfully and lead their economies, are aware of ancient

wisdom, celebrate their festivities and build a church. The childhood of the oldest generation of the modern people of Timofeyevka is the touching point of ages. While they were children, they got to know the *first* Latgalians who were as enterprising as to move to the faraway land, and they have preserved emotionally warm memories of these people.

Unequivocal positivism creates the feeling of idealisation of the age and the people. It is accompanied by the contrasts in the mood: realisation of the loss and regret about the insufficiency of the present compared to the past (Dickinson & Erben 2006: 224; Wolf-Knuts 2003). The contrasts of ages permeate the narratives of the people of Timofeyevka, becoming their most pronounced characteristics. The contrasts unite the ages in the lives of the narrators and the village and they change the *lived* space: the village that was once the centre of social and economic activity is deserted, overgrown and sunk into idleness and unemployment. *Now there is nothing* – again and again it is repeated by the villagers who live with the past in their hearts.

Due to associations and thematic transitions, the narrators jump from one period to another, mentioning and emphasising events significant for Timofeyevka and themselves, or the ones that in the course of the conversation suddenly emerge as worthy of being told. Different ages stand side by side, as well as people of different generations and the related events. They form a peculiar collage of recollections and events with a particular emphasis on collective experience. The narrator, contrary to expectations, seldom becomes the main hero and centre of the events.⁸ 'I' remains secondary or does not appear at all, creating an impression that the narrator is the *voice of the community*, having assumed the role of the village's representative.

Modern people of Timofeyevka have heard about the foundation of the village mainly from their grandparents, and more rarely from their parents. In comparison to the depiction of other epochs in oral narratives, memories of the origins of Timofeyevka are rather negligible, and in the conversation these are not expanded into large narratives with an elaborate plot. In the narrations about giving in to the temptation of the free land, the predecessors' long journey across the whole of Russia and the beginning of a new life in distant Siberia are reflected as a brief sequence of events and separate personal episodes, as memorised from the stories of grandparents or parents.

– *Where were your ancestors from, don't you know?*

– *I do not know that.*

– *But when did they come to Siberia?*

– *Once, once upon a time my mother told me that she was from some Vitebsk province. Mother. She was eleven when she was brought here. That's what she told us. (Vera Kalugina)*

- *What was said about the olden days? When did they first arrive here?*
- *Who the heck knows that! Well... From Latvia they came. Someone was the first to found Timofeyevka. But I do not know who it was.*
- *Wasn't it said who the first was?*
- *No, we didn't show much interest. They were rather old already. And I didn't ask my mother. Somehow... I never asked. (Vera Savenko)*

Both of these fragments of conversations show a typical situation: the informants do know where their predecessors came from, but that is about it. A more detailed narrative would not be formed, and the topic of the first arrivals is substituted by some other. Most of the stories by the people of Timofeyevka related to the arrival of their predecessors in Siberia have a common trait: they are very brief and told evidently as generalised experience stories. An impression is created that the recollections of the newcomers have been preserved until our days in some collectivised form. Personal events and similar though still different experiences have lost their individuality in the course of a century, with the stories of the arrival merging and forming something resembling a collective story of the foundation of the village with a simplified line of plot and the emphasis on the most important – the motif, action and its result. These stories resemble local legends, in their reflection of the experience or events that are connected to a community or its surroundings, and are important to the members of that particular community (Butler 1990: 44). In 2004, a simplified and laconic version of the village foundation story was told by Konstantīns Kravalis, mentioning the motif of emigration and founding of the village:

There was no land! There was no land! And then this whole village here emerged, and the trees were cut down and floated down the river. A raft comes; one builds a house and lives there.

The laconic expression of the informant and his linguistic economy fits the most important information about the emigration and the founding of the village into these very few sentences. The twice repeated *There was no land!* reflects the heavy problem of the particular history period – the lack of available land. A story of emigration and founding of the village was also told by Viktoria Ruduša, an informant interviewed several times during both of the fieldwork sessions.

There was no land to live on. And why did the Latvians come here? The Latvians... This land here was empty, there was nothing on it. The Tatars had once lived here. But then our Latvians came, worked the land, settled by the river. The first that moved here, they say: "Nice! There is all the land one needs, you can sow however much you like!" So, everyone rushed

here. Both sisters and brothers started arriving. All these people came and built the Latvian village.

The story emphasises the spatial aspect: the *empty* space chosen by the Latgalians (*empty land*, i.e., non-cultivated land) is tamed, furnished and converted into a place of work and living. Viktoria also makes references to personal propaganda mentioned in the previous chapter of the present article. In the stories of generalised experience, which level down the individual experience and reveal the events and the community as an integrated whole in a co-ordinated activity, the Latgalians arrive, work and build a Latgalian village. The problems of the situation are retained in the stories that share personal memories. A few moments later in the same conversation Viktoria, when asked from where her ancestors had come, manages to remember what her grandmother had once told her:

My mother Dārte came from Latvia. She lived somewhere near Rīga. In a hamlet. My mother Dārte told me that her sister had come here first. Here she got married. And then asked her to come as well, and my mother Dārte was wed by Donats. He had also come from the Latvian land.

In conversations with Viktoria regarding the time that Timofeyevka was founded, one can hear constant references to the stories told by her grandmother Dārte. She is the informant's authority in this regard. Although such threads of recollections can hardly be called "stories", it is still obvious that along with the previously demonstrated generalised version of experience, the oral stories also feature some personal attachment to the events that took place a century ago. An indirect presence of this period is felt in the frequent mentions of grandmother Dārte, as the whole conversation is reverted to the time of her life. Using the indirect discourse as a method of narrative formation, as if not telling the story itself, but recalling what was told and how, a seemingly unpretentious impression is created that Viktoria herself – the narrator – is just mediating between the narration situation of the past and the present one, substituting the real narrator, so as to convey his message to the audience of the present.

Also Brons Štaņins, a man from Timofeyevka, who had visited Latvia several times, told the story of emigration and the foundation of the village:

- Don't you know from where the ancestors came here?*
- From Latvia.*
- From Latvia. But which exact place?*
- Who could say that! They were already here a long time ago. I cannot remember anything. My grandmother Māra, the mother of my mother. She had come from Latvia. But who knows from which exact place. Were*

there any relatives left behind? I was told there was a brother and two more sisters. In Latvia. And my mother also told me how... How should I tell you that? By the Jews. Say, grazing pigs in Latvia.

– So, and how did they get here?

– And then how did they get here? One needs land. Children were born to them. Here, there. Well, and the grandparents: “Let’s go to Siberia!” Came to Siberia, here, by train. In the old days there was some train. A very slowly moving train, bit by bit. Came to Barabinsk. And that was it. Get off. On the land. But, they say, there was no forest back then. They made dugouts. There was no forest. Only later. Some years later the forest appeared. Started growing. They were in the dugouts. And somewhere in Urman, the northern district, there was forest. From there they brought timber. By horse and cart... And when the timber was processed, for a house or whatever. They floated it down the river.

The story of Brons Štaņins covers all the most important details of the process in a brief form: the problem (*one needs land*), its cause (*children were born*), the solution (*let’s go to Siberia!*) and the action (*came to Siberia*). After that the events of the story are localised in Siberia, reflecting arrangements of the space. This conversational episode on the emigration topic reveals in a stylistic bipartition at which point the personal memories of the life of Grandmother Māra in Latvia change into a narrative of generalised experience, with the question asked by the listener and then repeated by the informant himself (*And then how did they get here?*), marking the border between the two types of narrative. Although judging by the form, the second part of the narrative reflects the collectivised experience, the informant introduces in it personal nuances, twice referring to the statements of his grandparents. The use of direct speech creates the impression of presence at the communicative event of the past, at which Brons has not been personally present and which took place in Latvia, and at the same time adds vitality to the narrative. The informant pictures his grandparents as taking the decision to emigrate, and then illustrates it in a simplified manner, speaking in the voice of his grandparents (*Let’s go to Siberia!*). Even if this insertion of direct speech is not a quote or a reference to a particular communicative event in the past, involving the grandparents, but instead is constructed at the present moment of communication (Tannen 2007: 102–132), with the informant successfully using customary narrative techniques, the experience of the grandparents in the life of the informant and all the references to their stories and actions in the narrative create and enliven these quoted persons in the stories, whose images in other cases have dissolved in the generalised narrative of the collectivised recollections.

In a conversation with the seventy-year-old informant Geļa Ņiminska, the emigration of her grandparents and foundation of the village were touched upon both in 2004 and 2006.

– *But the grandmother, what did she sing, what did she tell?*

– *My grandmother may have also come here, come here a long time ago from Latvia, where she lived. I forget... But she told me a story or two, that there, when they lived in Latvia, there was no... was very little land. Let's say, there was a father and a mother, and they had, say, three or four sons. And when they get married, one has to give them some part of their land. And so they learned that here much land was available, and many came here. When they came here long ago, there was no village here, nothing. They say the Tatars, they lived on that hill. So it was called the Tatar hill.*

– *Where?*

– *Just here, behind the village. And later, when they came here, they say, all the Tatars ran away, thought that who knows what has arrived... But now here in the hamlet there are none of those old people left. But my mother, I do not know whether she was born here or not. Never talked about that. Was she brought here from there? No, I cannot say that! Never occurred to me. So they said that the grandma and grandpa came here from there. And took some children with them. But my mother, I do not know whether she was born here or brought here. Can't be, I believe, that she was brought.*

The initial fragment of this conversation shows how the informant tries to recall the communicative event, in which her grandmother told about the fact of emigration. It is worthy of note that she has recollections of the fact that such an event (or even several) has taken place (*she told a story or two*), while the basic events of emigration are characterised by her in the same manner of narration – devoid of any personality – the illustratively informative character of which she emphasises by calling a story an example (*Let's say, there was a father and a mother, and they had, say, three or four sons*). Personal nuances related to emigration can be traced at the very end of that excerpt, in which the informant, continuing the dialogue with herself, tries to evaluate her mother's connection with the emigration and refers to the stories told to her regarding her grandparents coming to the place, and bringing some children with them. In 2006, also asked about the possible origin of her ancestors, the informant repeatedly indicated lack of communication, which was already somewhat referred to in the conversation in 2004.

– *Where could your ancestors have come from? Anyone never said anything?
– I did not talk about it, no, and then we were just little kids. From where,
from what place did these ancestors of ours come here? [...] Our grand-
mother and grandfather came here.*

– *But they never told you how they came?*

– *Not even a single mention, how they travelled, how they got here. [...] Who could have known that such a conversation is to be expected? They only said that they came here because of the land. When they found out that there was much land here. But there was no land here. If you have a family, and many children, there has to be land for all of them... When he gets married, the land has to be divided. And mostly because of that land they came. There were many of them here. There was a village Lyubamirovka, across the river. Before that they went there. But now there is no-one there either. [...] Not a living soul there. For many years crops are sown and hay is made on the land of that village. But this Timofeyevka? It came later, after Lyubomirovka. I also don't know which village came first. Maybe both at the same time. Maybe Timofeyevka, maybe... There were Ukrainians and Russians. But here there were more Latvians. There were no Russians in Timofeyevka in the olden days. Only Latvians lived here. But there are still Russians, Tatars, and many others.*

Geļa Ņiminska is one of the most knowledgeable psalm (*Officium defunctorum*) singers and preservers of the spirit of the Latgalian Catholicism in the village. There have been several individual interviews with this informant; she has taken part in the collective psalm singing documented both in 2004 and 2006. She tells willingly about the religious rituals and the context of their performance, celebration of festivities and handicrafts. The past and Timofeyevka's *golden age*, i.e., the time when the first generation of inhabitants lived there, is of great importance in the stories told by Geļa Ņiminska. The characteristics of this period also reflect the basic values of her life – belief, family and work (as a union of knowingness⁹ and diligence). The events of the ancestors' emigration and foundation of the village do not affect her life directly, and as an event of indirect importance for the personal life of the informant, are reflected in the narrative in the form of collectivised experience.

Similarly to Savenko's stories, Ņiminska too, in both of the conversation fragments refers to the lack of communication, which is also frequently mentioned in conversations with the other informants. The discourse of communication that never happened is significant for the analysis of this topic.¹⁰ Ņiminska indicates the possibility of communication, had she known that "*this kind of conversation will ever take place*". The reason given for this lack of communication is the age difference of the generations: *they were rather old* (Savenko), *we were still*

little kids then (Niminska), and the lack of personal interest in the events: *we didn't show much interest* (Savenko), *never even occurred to me* (Niminska). In a conversation about the founder of Timofeyevka, Timofejs Marnauza, Viktoria Ruduša plays the episode of the communication that never took place, asking her grandmother Dārte a question and, instead of an answer, providing a statement that the first generation of emigrants would have known that answer:

See, whatever kept me from asking mother Dārte long ago? – “Mum, who was the first to come to Timofeyevka?” – She did know that! These people who had come from Latvia themselves, they knew it!

The informants now are of the age as were their grandparents when it was about the last time to ask the latter questions about their lives. The time of youth of this generation, when the communication of a grown-up person with one's grandparents usually is the most active, happened to fall in a period when, due to social and political situation it was not desirable to emphasise one's origins. Besides, the importance of emigration in the life of Latgalian emigrants in Timofeyevka, and especially that of their descendants, was overshadowed by the tragic events of the late 1930s, the Second World War and the hardships of the post-war years, which not only altered the administrative and economic order established in the village, but also the whole life of the community, dramatically changing the population and the gender proportion.¹¹ Viewing it from the perspective of the current older generation, one can understand the dominance of stories of these *changes*, the war and the post-war years, while the *ancient* events that have been witnessed by none of the now living have become seemingly insignificant in the context of the informants' own lives. The arrival of their grandmothers and grandfathers in Siberia and the foundation of the village are events that occupy a stable place in the collective memory of the village, while it is only of secondary importance for the lives of the narrators themselves.

The realisation of the communication that could have been raises regret in the narrators. Some of the informants are aware of their special status as representatives of the older generation in the preservation of the village's collective memory and the linguistic and religious identity (closely related to that), as well as their transmission to both the future generations and the researchers from the outside.¹² Still, the discourse of the missing communication also reveals the critical attitude of the narrators towards their knowledge and that of the previous generations. For example, Viktoria Ruduša in her contrasting depiction of generations expresses her feeling of inferiority and, along with it, the loss of knowledge and skills not transmitted to the further generations (or not preserved):

The people who lived in the olden days, our grandmothers... They knew everything! But what do we know? A story or two of our parents. What we have heard. And that is it. Nothing is left anymore.

The small episodes of memories that tell about the people who came to this distant place and the conversations with them that are preserved by the current inhabitants of Timofeyevka relate to the nostalgia of the ages as expressed in the contrasts of the past and the present and reflected in a dialogical unity of loss and idealisation. The generation of the first settlers symbolises the lost knowingness of the community, which cannot be restored anymore. The motif of idealisation of this generation appears in a close relationship with the time of their lives; namely, the emotional landscape of the age of the village's origins can be found in the stories about the people of this period. Brons Štaņins's grandmother Māra and Viktoria Ruduša's grandmother Dārte, as well as the reflection of the whole *first* Latgalian generation of Timofeyevka in oral narratives embodies the values that are connected with the period of the village's origins not only for Brons and Viktoria, but also their other contemporaries. And of these values the most important are religiousness, knowingness and diligence.

Narratives about the grandparents project an idealised idyllic landscape of the first years of Timofeyevka, when the flow of mental and economic life, festivities and everyday events was harmonious. Mentioning of grandparents and their stories in the thematic and emotional contexts allows to perceive this generation as a knowing, active and skilful one, while this period is perceived as one of the best in the history of Timofeyevka¹³, when the village's population was larger, when people knew what and how to do, and when social and religious life was much more active. The grandparents of the inhabitants of Timofeyevka are no runaways who abandoned their culture in Latgale. They are the newcomers – the bringers of culture, the cultivators of the *empty* space and Latgalianness, and for the future generations a direct link to Latvia and the values brought to Siberia from there.¹⁴

CONCLUSION

At the turn of the 20th century, the printed media was among the few forms of mass media regularly informing the public about the news; therefore the role of the printed media in the emigration processes that took place at the time was substantial. The Latgalian emigration was reflected by two opposing propaganda campaigns: one was proposing emigration, the other was opposing it. As the

newspapers were managed by Latgalian intelligentsia and representatives of the national awakening movement, which was concerned about the nation's mental and material development, the newspapers were mostly opposed to emigration, while the news about emigration from its proponents also reached the potential emigrants via other ways, including those of personal communication. As a result of these campaigns, the newspapers created a contradictory image of the emigrants and their desired Siberia. Siberia became the Latgalian's "promised land", while the emigrant was pictured as a lucky person, awarded with an excellent and realistic opportunity to change one's life for the better, described in colourful epithets, metaphors and similes. The mythicised images of Siberia and the emigrants are used on either front, but while the proponents of emigration construct them, the opponents intercept these constructs, hyperbolise and then deconstruct them, using them as a contrast to the *actual* Siberia (harsh and demanding hard work) and the emigrant (an uneducated peasant, naive and incapable of rational decision-making). Over the course of time, the images of the emigrants and their desired Siberia have been turned into clichés, representing the obsessed emigrants and their imagined lands of happiness, which are also used in modern discussions concerned with Latvian emigration.

One of the Latgalian colonies – the current village of Timofeyevka – is inhabited by the grandchildren of the first Latgalian colonists. The oral narratives recorded during field research carried out in 2004 and 2006 show that their memories of their grandparents, their long journey and settling in are rather scarce. They contain few personal details and their characteristic form is generalised experience. The very descendants of the emigrants quite frequently indicate that they were not told about the emigration and they were too young to ask about how the Latgalian came to Siberia. In the stories about Latgalian emigrants – the grandparents of the inhabitants of today's Timofeyevka – an idyllic scene of the first years of Timofeyevka is drawn, with balanced and well-developed economic and mental life. The image of the emigrant is just the opposite to the simple-minded Latgalian who is lost to his nation because of the departure from the native land; that is the notion cultivated in the discussions of the turn of the 20th century by the opponents of emigration. The inhabitants of today's Timofeyevka picture the colonists as a knowledgeable, active and skilful generation, capable of transporting these Latgalian qualities and develop them in an *empty* space, thus creating a reference to the image of the decisive, practical and successful emigrant created a century ago by the proponents of the migration.

NOTES

- ¹ Latgale is the eastern part of Latvia, approximately one-fourth of the total territory of today's Latvia. Latgalians, unlike the rest of Latvians (who are mainly Lutherans) traditionally belong to the Roman Catholic faith. Historically Latgale was separated from the rest of Latvia (at that time a Baltic province), as it was part of Vitebsk province. Therefore life in Latgale followed different rules and its administration applied different principles. Because of these as well as other reasons many of the economic, legislative, social and cultural processes in Latgale took turns completely different from those taking place in other territories inhabited by Latvians (Zelče 2009: 51). Since the 18th century, Latgalians have had a separate literary language of their own, which has been used in books and newspapers, and from time to time has also been taught as a separate subject at school. The Latgalian literary language saw its heyday at the beginning of the 20th century, when many newspapers and books were published in it, and respective grammar books and dictionaries were compiled. From 1918, when the Latvian national state was founded, and until 1934, when Kārlis Ulmanis established his authoritarian regime, there were special classes of the Latgalian literary language at the schools of Latgale.
- ² The migration processes within the Russian Empire were strongly influenced by the social and political change at the end of the 19th century: first, it was the agrarian reform initiated by the Minister of the Interior, Piotr Stolypin, that promoted the division of villages into separate farmhouses (PSZ 1909: 970), which meant that land availability (which was scarce already) decreased still further; second, developments in the transport system at the end of the 19th century, in particular the construction of the Trans-Siberian railway, which contributed to making the migration of peasants from the European part of Russia to Siberia a mass movement, with Siberia becoming one of the world's most popular migration destinations by the numbers of migrants (Moon 2002; McKeown 2004: 156–157; Manning 2005: 147; Leasure & Lewis 1968: 376).
- ³ According to the all-Russian census of 1897, there were slightly more than 500,000 inhabitants in Latgale. Also those who returned from Siberia after some not so long period of time may have been counted as emigrants. Initially every third emigrant re-emigrated; later on the number of those who changed their minds reduced (Kaufman 1905: 248; see also Ķikuts 2011: 39, 42; Kursīte 2011: 18–19). A more exact count of the Latgalian emigrants requires specific additional study.
- ⁴ Old-Russian unit of land area; 1 dessiatine equals roughly 1 ha.
- ⁵ The Latvian phrase “Savs kaktiņš, savs stūrītis zemes” is an idiomatic metaphor, originating from the 19th century Latvian literature, which continues to exist in the Latvian language as an expression of the historically rooted striving for some private property.
- ⁶ The migration required available means that were frequently gathered by selling all of one's property, including cattle and tools. At the same time it meant severing ties with the homeland. Well-off peasants moved to Siberia rather rarely; more frequently those were families of craftsmen that owned no land, families that earned their subsistence by seasonal work, as well as the ones with a great number of male descendants. Historian Toms Ķikuts, using the material on Latgalian emigration available in the archives, projects a typical emigrant's family: “[...] on average, there were 6.4 persons

and the head of such a family (practically in all cases it was a male) was on average 38 years old, [...] larger families usually did not have a great number of children, but it was a number of single and married siblings emigrating together with their parents” (Kikuts 2011: 37–38).

- ⁷ An expression about the emigrants to Siberia by the Latgalian intellectual of the turn of the 20th century, Francis Trasuns (Drywa 1909: 1).
- ⁸ A similar observation was made by social anthropologist Roberts Kīlis, while carrying out his fieldwork in the Latvian colony Bobrovka: “[...] in the narrative it is difficult to ascertain what one would call a life story – the life line leading through several stories and including in it a sequence of life experiences. [...] The villagers avoided portraying themselves in the centre of events or processes” (Kīlis 2002).
- ⁹ This notion in the context of the article is used to denote a set of diverse knowledge of practical, religious, magical and aesthetic realms.
- ¹⁰ In a narrative, such remarks can be characterised as meta-narrative comments (Babcock 1977: 67), which explains why the narrative is as it is.
- ¹¹ “The Soviet rule, collectivisation of the countryside, repressions against the peasants and the intelligentsia led to the loss of the mental dimension (language, religion, education), along with heavy physical loss, especially during the repressions of 1937–1938, when the majority of males in Timofeyevka were arrested and executed, but also during the Second World War. Intimidated by the repressions, weakened by the war and the postwar famine, the colonists gradually lost their Latgalian identity” (Kursīte 2011: 24; see also Brolišs 1998: 12; Kolotkin 2012: 54–55).
- ¹² Here a special note must be made of the self-respect of the first Latgalian emigrants in the preservation of their language, as attested by numerous informants, indicating the strictness in the attitude towards the language used in communication with children.
- ¹³ In the stories told by the villagers it can be felt that there was another *golden age* around the 1960s–70s, which in the narratives is similarly contrasted to the current situation. It is the time when certain social wellbeing and stability was attained, and there was active social life in the village, and, simultaneously, it was the time of youth of the generation which is now the oldest in the village. The stories about the past recreate a world for the representatives of the older generation, in which they were more potent than they are now; in this narrative world, the narrator has considerably greater control over this world of events than he/she has ever had, even while actually living in it (Young 1987: 200).
- ¹⁴ One of such symbols asserting the identity and religious cultural values is, e.g., the Catholic song and prayer books which were brought from Latvia by the emigrants, and which several of the villagers have managed to preserve until today. It was customary to bury the book along with its owner, but the people of Timofeyevka have testified that, contrary to the wish of a grandparent or parent, the books could also have been preserved.

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