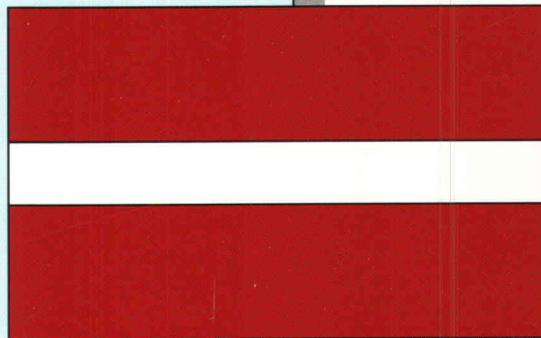


Latvia

An Economic Profile



August 1992

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Latvia: An Economic Profile

August 1992

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Latvia: An Economic Profile

Preface

This is one in a series of profiles on the republics of the former Soviet Union principally intended to provide basic reference material as a backdrop for assessing future developments in these new states. The profile provides a description of the geography, population, and economy of Latvia and compares its level of development, growth, and social welfare to that in Finland and Sweden.

International comparisons, particularly for aggregate measures such as GNP, are difficult to make because of differences in definitions and methods used by various countries in compiling statistics. International currency exchange rates are deficient for this purpose because they do not reflect relative purchasing power of different currencies over the whole range of output of goods and services included in GNP. Because of the lack of these parities, alternative measures have been selected. These measures include data for which comparable international statistics were available.

For the most part, official statistics in the public domain provided the data used in this profile. The Latvian statistical abstract (*National Economy of Latvian SSR*) was the most important source of data. Extensive use was also made of *Trud v SSSR (Labor in the USSR)*, *Sotsial'noye razvitiye v SSSR (Social Development in the USSR)*, and the *Perepis' naseleniya (Population Census)*. Reference country comparisons relied on the information found in those countries' statistical abstracts and in various OECD publications covering national accounts, food production, and the like. More detailed statistics are included in the appendix.

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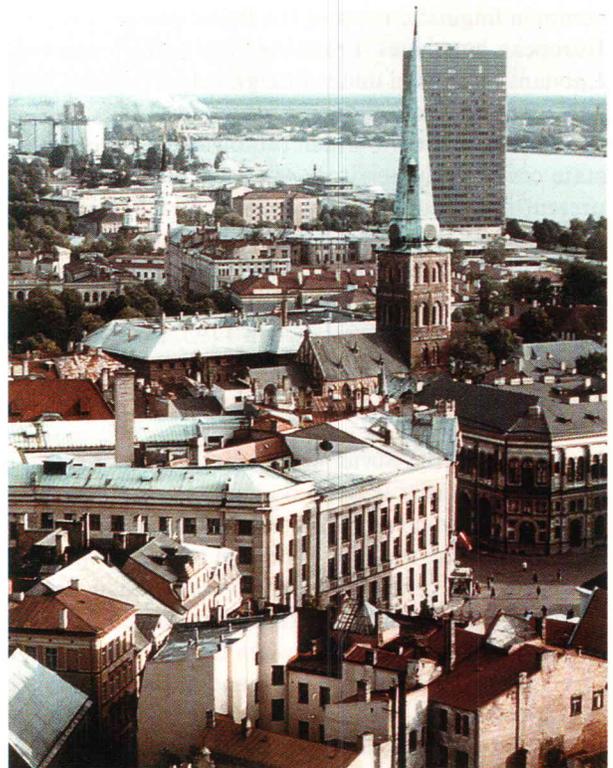
Latvia: An Economic Profile

Geography and Climate

Latvia is the “middle” Baltic state in terms of size, population, and geographic location. It is situated between Estonia and the Gulf of Riga to the north and Lithuania to the south. Russia and Belarus border Latvia to the east and the Baltic Sea lies to its west. With an area of 64,500 square kilometers (about the size of West Virginia), Latvia ranks 12th in size of the 15 former Soviet republics, larger than only Estonia, Armenia, and Moldova.

Like the rest of the great northern European plain, the country is low lying with more than one-fifth of the land no more than 131 feet (40 meters) above sea level and three-quarters less than 400 feet (122 meters) in elevation. The fertile Riga-Jelgava lowland in the center of Latvia separates the western morainic hills of the Kurland region from the highlands of picturesque Livonia in the northeast and Latgale in the southeast. The countryside is very moist with numerous peat bogs and nearly 3,000 small lakes. The largest river, the Daugava, originates on the western slopes of the Valday Hills in Russia's Tver' Oblast, flows westward through the northern part of Belarus, and then northwestward through 230 miles (370 kilometers) of central Latvia before emptying into the Gulf at the capital city of Riga, where its mouth is a mile (1.6 kilometers) wide. This river is navigable throughout Latvia, accounting for substantial commerce in addition to locally produced hydroelectric power at three locations—Kegums, Stucka, and Riga.

Because of the moderating influence of the Atlantic Ocean and the Baltic Sea, Latvia enjoys less extreme variations in climate than most of the European part of the former USSR. Riga's January temperatures average 23 degrees Fahrenheit (−5 degrees Centigrade) and its July temperatures average 63 degrees Fahrenheit (17 degrees Centigrade). Cloud cover, fog, high humidity, and rainfall are persistent throughout the year, with an average annual rainfall of 566 millimeters (23 inches) in Riga.



Downtown Riga: looking toward the Daugava River

The port at Riga usually freezes over in the winter, but the Baltic Sea ports at Liepaja and Ventspils remain ice-free. The Baltic coast, however, consists of pine-covered sand dunes and offshore shallow sand bars that are not conducive to natural harbors. As a result, Latvia's western ports lie only at the mouth of rivers.

Forests cover over one-third of the territory, most prominently in the uplands of Kurland and Livonia. Conifers (Scotch pine and Norway spruce) dominate, but in the west are scattered broadleaf forests of birch, ash, maple, oak, and linden. Most of Latvia contains either poor sandy bedrock and moraine loamsoils or acidic podzols leached of minerals by the pine needles of the conifers.

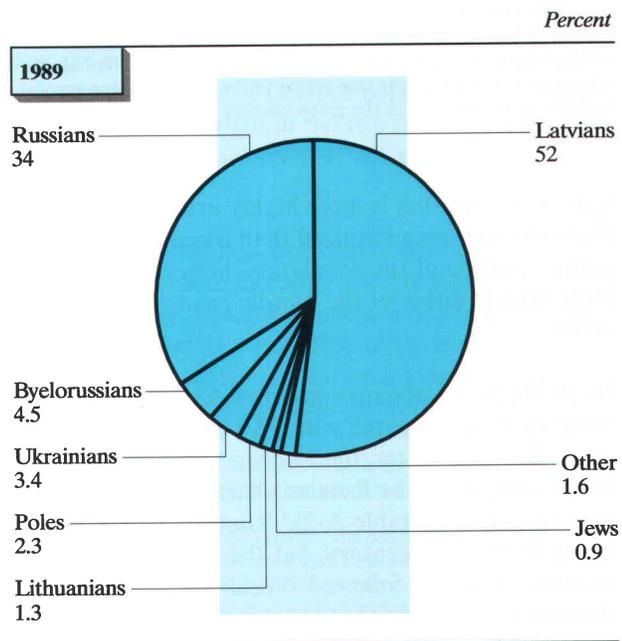
Riga's Old Town



Despite the similarities in geography and climate, the distribution of the labor force in Latvia differs significantly from that in Finland and Sweden (table 2). The differences reflect not only the lower level of economic development in Latvia, but also the impact of past Soviet development policy. Thus, nearly a third of Latvian workers are employed in the industrial sector, as compared with less than one-fourth in the two Nordic countries. The share of agriculture also is relatively high. The small shares employed in domestic trade, public dining, financial institutions, and in the service sector all stem largely from such development policies.

In all three countries, the size of the labor force as a percentage share of the total population is approximately the same (table 2), but underlying characteristics are different. First, previous Soviet policy relied on large annual infusions of labor as a means of stimulating economic growth. This policy contributed to high labor force participation rates relative to Finland and Sweden, especially of females. In 1989, fifty-five percent of the state sector work force in Latvia was female. Second, Latvia has a younger population than the two Nordic countries with one-third below age 16 compared to under 30 percent for Finland and Sweden.

Figure 2
Latvia: Population Structure



A final noteworthy feature of the labor force is that Russians are disproportionately represented in the higher-paying sectors such as industry and transport, while the Latvians' presence in the lower-paying sectors such as culture, art, and education exceeds their population share (appendix table A-3). This pattern is repeated throughout most non-Russian republics of the former Soviet Union, reflecting earlier Soviet policy of dispatching skilled Russians to the republics to staff industry and other high-priority sectors (table 3).

Structure and Performance of the Economy

Aggregate Measures. Gross national product (GNP) accounts comparable to those in the West are not yet available for Latvia. Preliminary estimates suggest, however, that the agricultural, industrial, and construction sectors probably contribute about two-thirds of total GNP as compared with less than one-third in Finland and Sweden. Trade and services would make up a mere one-third of Latvian GNP, as compared with over two-thirds in the Scandinavian countries. Such a relatively backward and distorted structure of the Latvian economy was also reflected in the labor force distribution.

Nearly 60 percent of Latvian GNP is used for purchases of goods and services by consumers. This figure includes the value of health, education, and social services provided at no cost to consumers by the government. Sweden and Finland spend relatively more on consumption, 69 percent and 64 percent of GNP, respectively. Latvia devotes nearly one-third of GNP to investment as a result of the longstanding emphasis on industrial development in the former Soviet Union. The investment shares for Sweden and Finland are much lower, 21 and 28 percent, respectively. Latvia devotes a much smaller share of GNP to government services than do Sweden and Finland, where public services are considerably greater.

Growth rates for GNP comparable with those in the West have not yet been calculated for the former Soviet Republics. Preliminary estimates for Latvia suggest, however, that gross domestic product (GDP) in Latvia increased at less than 2 percent annually during 1981-88, perhaps a little less than the 1.9-percent annual growth registered by Sweden but well below

Table 2
Distribution of the Labor Force by Sector

	Latvia (1990)	Finland (1989)	Sweden (1988)
Total (thousands)	1,408.7	2,470.0	4,466.0
Total (percent share)	100.0	100.0	100.0
Industry	30.3	22.7	23.0
Agriculture and forestry	15.5 ^a	8.8	3.6
Transportation and communications	7.3	7.2	7.0
Construction	10.3	8.1	6.5
Trade and public dining	9.1	14.9	14.6
Credit and insurance	.5	7.9	8.3
Services and other branches	27.0 ^b	30.4	37.0

^a Includes collective farms and private agriculture. The share is probably understated because of undercounting labor used on private plots.

^b The residual category comprises mainly housing and personal services, government, health and social security, education, and miscellaneous activities. For Finland and Sweden, residual includes public administration and defense, recreational and cultural services, and other branches.

Table 3
Ethnic Latvians' Share in State Sector
Employment, 1987

Percent

Total	52
Sector	
Industry	38
Agriculture ^a	69
Transport and communications	38
Construction	46
Trade and public dining	49
Health and physical culture	53
Education	59
Culture and art	75
Government administration	56

Note: Total population figure is for 1989.

^a Excludes collective farms.



A shop of the Riga radio factory

is heavily concentrated in the machinery industries, which employ nearly two-fifths of the total. Key products are transportation equipment (electric and diesel trains, minibuses, and ships), relatively high-quality consumer and military durables (radio and electronic equipment), machine tools, electrical and communications equipment, and chemicals and petrochemicals. The soft goods and food branches employ nearly 30 percent of the industrial work force and produce relatively high-quality textiles and clothing and several important foods that satisfy domestic demand and contribute importantly to exports. Table 4 and appendix table A-5 provide data on Latvia's most important industrial products.

Agriculture. The collectivization of Latvian agriculture after World War II divided farm organizations into two sectors—the dominant socialized sector, consisting of large state and collective farms, and the private sector, consisting mostly of small plots and

animal holdings belonging to the rural population. Practically no individual peasant holdings were left. State and collective farm households were permitted to cultivate private plots of one-half to 1 acre (0.5 hectare) and maintain one or two head of livestock. In addition, nonagricultural households had, and still have, very small “garden-size” plots for cultivation. Thus, Latvian agriculture before independence was dominated by 320 collective and 248 state farms (in 1987), producing roughly three-fourths of gross output. Most of private-sector output was produced on the small holdings of households attached to these very large socialized farms. In contrast, Sweden and Finland have nearly 96,000 and 173,000 privately operated farming units, respectively, that produce all farm output.

Latvia's collective farms were organized nominally as “producers' cooperatives,” and state farms were organized along the lines of state-operated industrial enterprises. The data shown in table 5 suggest the immense size of these enterprises.

The poor soils and bogs, humid climate, and abundance of meadowlands made livestock raising the chief contributor to output. Primary emphasis is on dairy farming; hogs are raised for bacon and other meat products.

Most of the land devoted to crop production is used to grow grain, grasses, and potatoes for livestock feed. Rye, oats, and barley are produced for local consumption; flax, which is exported, and sugar beets are the main industrial crops. Vegetables are grown in both collective and private farms usually located near urban areas. Fisheries are important along the coast of Latvia, with sardines, herring, and cod comprising the largest catch, much of which is exported.

Because of the fluctuations in growing conditions, agricultural production around the world is characterized by instability in annual output. As table 6 shows, even in the countries bordering on the Baltic Sea, where normally there is more than enough precipitation for successful growing of crops, swings in output are relatively wide.

Table 4
Production of Selected Industrial Products

Thousand metric tons
(except where noted)

Product	Latvia			Finland			Sweden		
	1985	1987	1989	1985	1987	1989	1985	1987	1989
Primary energy									
Electric power (<i>billion kWh</i>)	5	6	6	49	53	57	114	119	118
Minerals and metals									
Crude steel	550	568	555	2,518	2,669	2,921	4,813	4,595	4,692
Chemicals									
Mineral fertilizers	169	185	188	1,752	1,929	1,744	NA	NA	NA
Detergents	10	10	12	NA	NA	NA	170	177	NA
Forestry products									
Timber production (<i>1,000 cu m</i>)	4,074	4,463	4,167	43,611	42,000	47,113	NA	NA	NA
Sawn timber (<i>1,000 cu m</i>)	866	946	825	6,896	6,935	7,189	11,006	10,624	NA
Plywood (<i>1,000 cu m</i>)	107	119	95	591	663	602	NA	NA	NA
Paper	167	145	138	4,419	4,407	4,606	3,025	3,590	NA
Construction materials									
Cement	787	843	776	1,695	1,579	1,596	2,124	2,253	NA
Construction bricks (<i>million units</i>)	648	730	790	107	134	72	74	NA	NA
Processed foods									
Meat (indust. prod.)	242	257	259	321	326	321	76	83	NA
Butter	45	47	47	73	61	62	51	43	NA
Cheese	23	24	25	NA	NA	NA	125	124	NA
Macaroni	11	12	11	NA	NA	NA	18	18	NA
Soft goods									
Shoes (<i>million pairs</i>)	26	26	25	NA	NA	NA	4	5	NA

Notes: Finland: Sawn timber production for 1987 and 1989 includes only that from large sawmills. Paper includes printing, writing, and newsprint only. Bricks exclude refractory and acid-resistant bricks. Sweden: Confectionery goods do not include chocolates. Detergents include soap and organic surface-active agents whether or not they include soap. Paper includes printing, writing, and newsprint only.

Automated dairy near Riga.

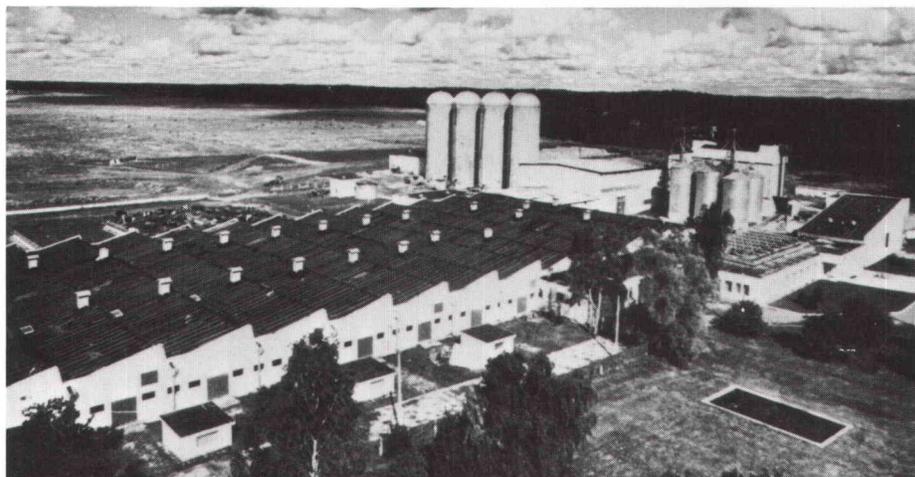


Table 5
Selected Characteristics of
Agricultural Enterprises, 1988

	Latvia ^a	Sweden	Finland
Number of farms	601	95,553	172,687
Agricultural land per farm (hectares)	3,910	29	14
Cattle (per farm)	1,943	17	8
Hogs (per farm)	2,279	23	8
Poultry (per farm)	17,234	113	37
Number of workers per farm	383 ^b	1.8 ^c	1.1

^a State and collective farms only.

^b Annual average per farm.

^c Includes forestry, hunting, and fishing.

Table 6
Growth in Farm Output, Selected Years

(1980 = 100)

	Latvia	Finland	Sweden
1985	120	113	109
1986	127	113	106
1987	124	99	93
1988	123	103	91
1989	127	114	99
1990	114	118	107

Table 7
Latvia: Production of Major
Agricultural Products, Selected Years

Thousand metric tons
(except where noted)

	1980	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
Meat	284	324	332	338	344	331
Milk	1,695	1,957	1,959	1,988	1,974	1,977
Eggs (million)	730	880	923	921	920	890
Wool (tons)	382	437	454	456	382	370
Potatoes	1,199	1,272	1,566	1,135	1,110	1,315
Vegetables	200	217	219	194	214	220
Grain	815	1,294	1,508	1,630	1,142	1,597

Since 1940, livestock production in Latvia has increased nearly twofold, while crop cultivation has grown only 14 percent despite large investments in soil drainage and fertilization programs. Overall, when production of crops and livestock products is priced in US dollars, Latvia's output in 1988 (\$1,449 million) is slightly more than four-fifths of Finland's (\$1,721 million) and 55 percent that of Sweden's (\$2,629 million). Livestock production in all three countries varies between 70 and 83 percent of the total value of agricultural output.

Production of important commodities is given for a series of years in table 7.

Latvia lags the two Nordic countries in all farm productivity measures, despite the fact that all three countries are burdened with relatively unproductive podzolic soils that often require drainage and use of lime and fertilizer as soil additives. Even with the usage of roughly one-third more mineral fertilizer per unit of cultivated land, crop yields in Latvia fall far short of those in Finland and Sweden. When the yields per hectare of wheat, barley, oats, rye, and potatoes are weighted together, the Swedish and Finnish crop yield is 152 percent and 58 percent, respectively, greater than Latvia's (based on an average of 1988-89 harvests). There were also important differences in milk yield per cow. Milk production per cow in Latvia averaged 3,606 kilograms in the period 1988-89 compared to 6,548 kilograms in Finland and 7,011 kilograms in Sweden.

As indicated above, the private sector in the 1980s accounted for roughly one-fourth of Latvian farm output. The limited data available indicate that crop yields and livestock productivity are moderately higher in the private sector than on state and collective farms.

Transportation. Latvia's advantageous trade location encouraged the development of a transportation infrastructure that was among the best in the former Soviet Union. The rather dense radial water, road, and rail networks emanating from Riga also facilitated the development of food-processing industries. The main port of Riga is used primarily as a port of transit, with over 90 percent of its traffic geared to international trade. Imports, primarily of grain, accounted for 71 percent of Riga's freight turnover in 1989. Riga is also a Baltic terminus of the gas pipeline network of the former Soviet Union. Another major port, Ventspils, is the marine terminal of a trunkline branching off from the Friendship oil pipeline, which was extended from Polotsk in northern Belarus in 1968 (table 8). Since Latvia's transport network is heavily geared toward foreign trade, east-west transport links are far more developed and better maintained than north-south routes. This situation hampers Latvian domestic economic development, as well as the country's attempts to serve as a land transport link between Scandinavia and Central Europe.

Table 8 *Million tons*
Freight Traffic at Riga and Ventspils^a

	Riga	Ventspils
Total	7.3	35.6
Grain	3.0	0.6
Oil products		31.1
Other bulk	3.0	3.9
Refrigerated cargo	0.1	
Containers (gross)	1.2	

^a 1990 data are used for Riga and 1988 data are used for Ventspils.

Table 9 *Kilometers*
Land Transport Networks, 1989

	Latvia	Finland	Sweden
All roads	58,600	76,372	133,673
Paved roads	32,500	34,005	107,856
Unpaved roads	26,100	42,267	25,817
All rail	2,397	5,890	11,491
Electrified rail	271	1,636	7,464

Table 10
Means of Transport in 1989

	Latvia	Finland	Sweden
Automobiles (thousands)	259.9	1,795.9 ^a	3,578.0
Autos (per 1,000 inhabitants)	97	363 ^a	420
Trucks	40,593	213,637 ^a	294,901
Ships	90 ^b	220	435
Dry weight (million metric tons)	1.2	0.969	2.463
Airplanes	42 ^c	733	2,033

^a 1988 data.

^b There was no Latvian "flag" as such in 1989.

^c Figure does not consider the fact that Aeroflot also served Riga.

Loading coal at the port in Riga.



In most respects, Latvia's transport network is not comparable to those of Finland and Sweden. Although there are nearly as many kilometers as paved roads as in Finland (table 9), Latvia's rail network is considerably smaller than those of the Scandinavian countries. Also, Latvia has far fewer automobiles than Finland or Sweden. The same is true for trucks, airplanes, and ships (although Latvia has more shipping tonnage than Finland). (See table 9.) The scarcity of automobiles accounts for most of the difference between Latvian and Scandinavian passenger transport traffic (table 10).

Finally, Latvia suffers from problems that are typical of transportation throughout the former Soviet Union. Most rolling stock (trucks and trains) is extremely old (over 10 years) and the aging problem is becoming worse. The recent decline in truck production has forced shippers to extend service lives even further beyond design specifications. The situation in rail transport is similar. Many railcars have been in service for at least 20 years, with some in service since the 1950s.

Investment. Investment increased rapidly in Latvia in the 1980s as it did in Finland and Sweden (appendix table A-6). As shown in figure 5, however, there are

major differences in the patterns of investment between Latvia and the two Nordic countries. Consumer-oriented investment in 1989 in housing and services accounted for nearly two-thirds of overall investments in Finland and nearly 60 percent in Sweden, as compared with only 30 percent in Latvia. In contrast, Latvia devoted about half of its investment to the industrial and agricultural sectors, roughly double the shares in the Nordic countries.

As in the other republics of the former Soviet Union, collective and state farms absorbed nearly one-fifth of Latvian investment in 1989. In Finland, agriculture, together with forestry and fishing, accounted for just over 5 percent of all investment.

Sharp differences observed in overall investment by sector of the economy are also present in industrial investment patterns (table 11). Machinery industries absorbed over two-fifths of investment in Latvia in 1987, far more than the Nordic countries. Nearly one-fourth of industrial investment was focused on the soft goods and processed food branches as opposed to less than one-tenth in the two Nordic countries.

Figure 5
Investment Allocations
by Sector of the Economy, 1989

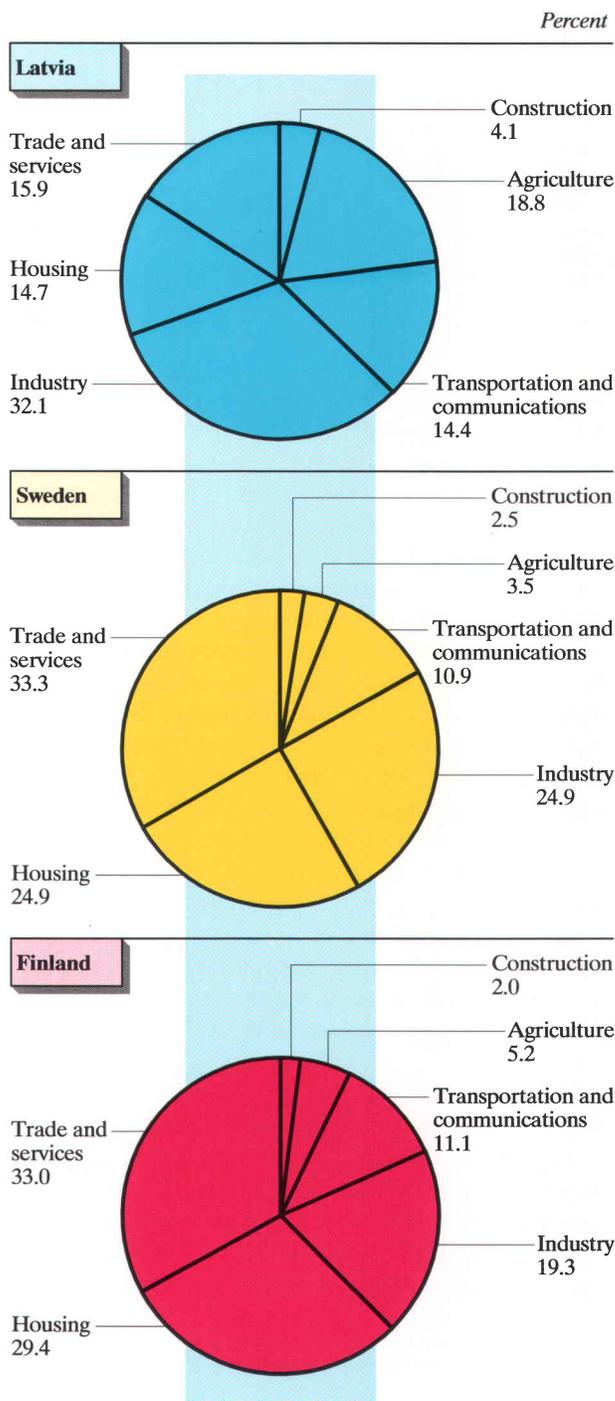


Table 11
Structure of Industrial Investments,
by Branch, 1989

Percent share

	Latvia	Finland	Sweden
Electric power	6.5	20.0	19.3
Fuels	2.8	1.3	2.1
Chemicals and petrochemicals	7.7	10.4	8.3
Machinery	40.7	14.4	31.3
Wood, paper, and pulp	8.6	38.8	23.2
Construction materials	9.1	3.3	2.9
Soft goods	7.0	1.2	1.3
Processed foods	17.5	5.7	6.8

Both the Finns and the Swedes devote a far higher percentage share of their investment outlays to wood-processing industries than do the Latvians. This reflects, in part, a relatively larger resource base in Sweden and Finland with one-half and three-fifths, respectively, of the land area covered by forest compared to two-fifths in Latvia.

Investment, traditionally directed by the Soviet Government in Moscow, has stagnated since independence. Neither the Latvian Government nor the rudimentary commercial banking system has enough capital to make substantial investments.

Economic Reform

Latvia intends to introduce a market economy and has taken a number of steps to do so, although implementation is still in an early stage. The government has freed most prices and wages and adopted some of the legislation necessary to support a market economy, including laws on property ownership, land, privatization, freedom of economic activity, and anti-monopoly policy. Latvia also has revamped its tax system, established its own social security system, and created an independent Bank of Latvia and is in the beginning stages of creating a Western-type network of commercial banks. Preparations are being made to replace the ruble with a Latvian currency, the lat, perhaps by the end of 1992.

Privatization. In 1989, 86 percent of all employed Latvians worked in the state sector, with most of the remaining work force occupied in collective farms. Private activity, however, is making inroads in the economy, especially in the socialized portion of agriculture. In 1989, farmers gained the right to form private farms from lands previously held by collective farms. By May 1990, private farms numbered nearly 6,500 and in 1990 they accounted for 4 percent of the harvest in grain, 3 percent in sugar beets, 8 percent in potatoes, and 4 percent in vegetables. Subsequent land reform legislation, providing, among other things, for restoration of state-confiscated property to former owners, resulted in a rapid increase in the number of peasant farms to about 30,000 in May 1992. Although they accounted for some 13 percent of cultivated farmland, their contribution to total production is still small.

Latvia has also proceeded rapidly with the transformation of state and collective farms. At the beginning of 1992, 93 percent of them had been transformed mainly into joint-stock companies that eventually are to be fully privatized.

Other sectors of the economy also have been moving toward greater privatization. Foremost among the new forms have been the producer cooperatives, accounting for a small but increasing share of the republic's employment and commercial activity. At the beginning of 1990, for example, 4,086 cooperatives employed 134,800 workers, accounting for 5.6 percent of commercial turnover, a much larger share than in the other Baltic states. Data on the volume of contracted work indicate that most Latvian cooperatives operated in industry (60 percent) and construction (26 percent) with the remainder engaged primarily in wholesale trade, agriculture, and information-related services and technology. In addition to cooperatives, 14,900 persons were engaged in individual labor activities in 1990. Of these, roughly three-fifths were involved in domestic trade undertakings and nearly one-fifth in domestic services.

Despite an impressive body of relevant legislation and some initial progress, privatization of nonagricultural property has scarcely gotten started, with only a few small shops having been sold and a few joint-stock companies created up to now. New legislation passed

Table 12
Employment and Sales by
Cooperatives, 1988-91^a

	Number	Employment (thousands)	Sales (million rubles)
1988	246	5.2	10
1989	1,190	28.7	190
1990	4,086	134.8	1,079
1991	5,407	198.7	2,041

Note: Employment is as of end of year; sales are total for the preceding year.

^a As of January 1.

in the spring of 1992 aims to speed up privatization by establishing a commission to carry it out using a variety of payment procedures.

Inflation and Unemployment. Until recently, the only measures of inflation available for Latvia were official price indexes, which showed very little inflation but which significantly understated the actual price rises. These statistics show that, from 1986 to 1989, state retail prices increased on average about 4 percent annually. Subsequently, the government decentralized many prices, causing consumer price increases of 11 percent in 1990 and 172 percent in 1991. The nearly complete liberalization of prices in early 1992 resulted in another burst of inflation. According to official statistics, from January to March 1992, consumer prices increased by over 200 percent. Using Western standards for developed countries, both Finland and Sweden had fairly rapid inflation rates over the past decade. Finland had an average annual inflation rate of 7.2 percent, and Sweden's rate was 7.9 percent.

While Latvia was still part of the Soviet Union, unemployment was not officially acknowledged.⁴ As of early 1992, there are few data on current unemployment, but official reports showed 31,700 unemployed persons registering at job placement centers. Given a labor force of 1,652,000, this implies an unemployment rate of 1.9 percent for 1992. During

⁴ All republics of the former Soviet Union are in the process of developing such statistics and corresponding employment policies.

the 1980s, the Swedish unemployment rate varied from 1.4 to 3.5 percent. In Finland, the rate was somewhat higher, ranging from 3.5 to 5.4 percent.

Foreign Economic Relations

Foreign trade is a major outlet for Latvian production and a key source of basic necessities.⁵ In 1989, 25 percent of Latvia's output was exported, while imports accounted for 27 percent of supply. The country's small size and poor natural endowments, along with the effects of longstanding Soviet industrial development policy, explain trade's key role.

Most Latvian trade has been with other republics of the former Soviet Union (appendix tables A-7 and A-8). In 1989, over 93 percent of exports went to other republics and two-thirds of these exports consisted of machinery, processed food, and soft goods. Other republics shipped Latvia 75 percent of its imports and two-thirds of these consisted of machinery, chemicals and petrochemicals, oil and gas, and soft goods.

Latvia is a net importer of electric power, oil, and gas and in 1991 imported 91 percent of the energy it consumed. Traditionally, oil products have come by rail or road from Lithuania, and both Lithuania and Estonia have supplied electricity. A more detailed picture of Latvia's sources and uses of energy is presented in table 13.

In addition to being a net importer of energy, the country is solely dependent on a wide array of other imports from former republics. These products include ferrous and nonferrous metals, steam turbines, oil pipelines, excavators, bulldozers, tractors, trucks, tires, lumber, and building materials. Moreover, roughly three-fourths of the country's supplies of synthetic resins and plastics come from beyond the borders.

Because short growing seasons and poor soils limit both crop and livestock production, Latvia is a net importer of farm products. Latvia depends highly on other former republics for grain to support its livestock sector. In 1989, Latvia imported roughly 3.5

⁵ Foreign trade includes both trade with other former Soviet republics, as well as with foreign countries.

Table 13
Energy Production, Consumption,
and Imports, 1991

	Billion Kilowatt-Hours	Thousand Barrels Per Day of Oil Equivalent
Primary energy production		
Hydroelectric power	3	15
Consumption		
Total (<i>percent shares</i>)	100	170
Oil	58	
Gas	21	
Coal	3	
Other ^a	17	
Net Imports ^b		155

^a Primary electricity, shale oil, peat.

^b Net imports are calculated by subtracting production from consumption.

times as much grain from other former republics as it exported, because of the republic's small harvest in grain. Latvia also imported substantial amounts of crop products (most likely feed grains) from outside the former USSR and since independence has sought to reduce this dependence.

Highlighting Latvia's key contributions to interrepublic exports were electricity, transportation equipment and parts, radioelectronics, and consumer goods. Exports of buses, diesel engines and generators, railroad cars, and mopeds took such a large share of total output that growth in domestic consumption was virtually precluded. Almost all Latvian-produced audio equipment (radios and record players), telephones, and washing machines were shipped to other former republics. The substantial excess of production over domestic use of such goods as wool fabric, linen, sewn goods, hosiery and knitwear, and shoes permitted the bulk of these commodities to be exported. Finally, Latvia was a net exporter of meat, dairy products, flour, granulated sugar, confections, and alcohol.

Table 14
Joint Ventures, First Half 1990 and First Quarter 1991

Million rubles
(except ventures)

	Number of Ventures ^a	Exports		Imports		Sales to the former republics	
		Jan-Jun	Jan-Mar	Jan-Jun	Jan-Mar	Jan-Jun	Jan-Mar
		1990	1991	1990	1991	1990	1991
Latvia	47	2.8	10	1.2	6	0.5	3
Estonia	105	2.8	5	4.0	4	2.7	4
Lithuania	18	0.5	3	3.1	5	2.6	1

^a As of 1 July 1990.

Table 15
Joint Ventures: Investment by Source Country ^a

	Million rubles	Shares (percent)
Total	253	100
Latvia	139	55
Foreign	108	43
Other former republics	6	2

^a As of 1 January 1991.

Latvia is increasingly becoming the focus of joint-venture activity in the Baltic states with the number of functioning joint ventures in Latvia having increased from 30 to 85 between January 1990 and January 1991.⁶ In value terms, total trade turnover grew 300 percent in less than a year's time and amounted to 16 million rubles during the first quarter of 1991. By contrast, trade turnover in Lithuania grew 122 percent and in Estonia 32 percent, producing 8 and 9 million rubles of revenue, respectively (table 14). The number of ventures increased further in 1991 and early 1992.

⁶ The number of registered joint ventures is much greater, 162 as of January 1991, involving 172 foreign firms and 25 foreign government agencies. Registered joint ventures are projects that have been agreed to by firms in the former Soviet Union and abroad, whose existence, at least on paper, has been registered by authorities in the former republics. Functioning joint ventures are those that have commenced their intended activities.

Yet, despite rapid growth, joint ventures comprise a small part of the Latvian economy. Although investments in joint ventures surged in 1990, these ventures accounted for only 1.5 percent of Latvia's new capital formation in the public and private sectors. In November 1991, Latvia adopted a liberal foreign investment law to encourage joint ventures as well as direct investments.

US firms are the most active in Latvian joint ventures, with 39 US firms investing the equivalent of 79 million rubles by the beginning of 1991. The United States is followed by Germany, with 32 firms having committed 8.9 million rubles also by the beginning of 1991 (table 15).

According to January 1991 data, of the 85 functioning joint ventures, 23 were in industry, two were in trade and distribution, four were engaged in scientific research, and 56 were in unspecified economic sectors. Leather industry joint ventures are the leading exporters, based on Latvia's relatively large livestock sector. Raw materials for the leather and shoe industries account for almost two-thirds of joint-venture exports. The largest import item, electronic equipment, accounted for roughly one-third of joint-venture imports.

Living Standards and Social Indicators

Personal Income. Latvians obtain the bulk of their income from wages and salaries. Wages are highest in industry, construction, and transportation and lowest

in education, health, and culture. Data available for 1990, before rapid inflation set in, show that 4.7 percent of the population in Latvia had incomes below 100 rubles a month, generally taken as the poverty level. In contrast, 15 percent of the population had income over 300 rubles per month:

<i>Per Capita Monthly Income^a</i>	
Average monthly income (<i>rubles</i>)	Share of population (<i>percent</i>)
Less than 75	0.9
75.1 to 100.0	3.8
100.1 to 150.0	19.5
150.1 to 200.0	26.1
200.1 to 250.0	21.3
250.1 to 300.0	13.9
More than 300.0	14.5

^a Includes pensioners.

Although comparative statistics on income distribution are difficult to obtain, data available suggest that incomes are distributed more equally in Latvia than in relatively egalitarian Sweden and much more so than in Finland.

In 1988, Latvian families spent nearly three-fourths of their after-tax incomes on food, clothing, and durables. Conversely, less than one-tenth went to purchase services. Services provided for the population has been a relatively neglected sector of the Latvian economy. Even with the inclusion of the underground economy, the picture does not change appreciably. The service sector is extremely small by Western standards and is the subject of endless complaints about quality and availability.

Food Consumption. The caloric content of the average daily diet in the 1980s in Latvia, as well as in Finland and Sweden, exceeded both US and internationally recommended dietary allowances.⁷ Latvian per capita food intake came to 3,367 calories (1988-90 average) versus 2,805 calories for Finns and 3,454 calories for Swedes (1986-88 average). In Latvia, the share of calories from starchy staples (potatoes and grain products)—a rough indicator of the dietary quality—was somewhat above the level of the developed West, while Finland and Sweden were below it.

⁷ Recommended daily caloric allowances for US adults are 2,650 for males and 1,950 for females.

All three countries relied heavily on animal products and vegetable oils as a source of caloric intake, but Latvia's share of 50 percent was 1 percentage point below Finland and 11 percentage points above Sweden. Common forces operate to produce the similarity in diet. Cold winters and short growing seasons limit the variety and quantity of vegetables and fruits. Relatively high incomes induce consumers to substitute animal products, vegetable oils, fats, and other "quality" foods for the "inferior" starchy staples.

To sustain the relatively high levels of production and consumption of meat and dairy products, all three countries require imports of animal feedstuffs. The greater ability to pay hard currency for food imports, however, permits Finland and Sweden to maintain per capita consumption of fruits at more than twice the level of Latvia.

Inventories of Selected Consumer Durables. Latvia, along with the other Baltic republics, was better off than the rest of the Soviet republics in terms of ownership of consumer durables. At the end of 1989, for example, Latvia had 94 cars per 1,000 population, more than 50 percent above the average of the former Soviet Union:

<i>Holdings per 1,000 Population, 1989</i>			
Durable goods	Latvia	Finland ^a	Sweden ^a
Telephones	173	590	890
Televisions	411	480	393
Automobiles	94	320	380

^a 1984.

Latvians were also comparatively much better off in terms of several other common durables and possession of home telephones. Nonetheless, Finland and Sweden, as would be expected, have much higher ownership rates of such items, and the higher quality of their durables results in greater reliability, enhanced operating life, and fewer repairs. Telecommunications equipment is a prime example. The basic technology incorporated in all telephone networks of the former USSR, including the Latvian network, is so primitive and unreliable by Western standards that its modernization is high on the priority list of the fledgling Baltic countries.

State food store



Housing. As of the late 1980s, the provision of housing in Latvia was well below that in the two Nordic countries. In terms of general living space per capita, the average Latvian was provided with 19.4 square meters, 17.5 square meters in urban areas, and 24.5 square meters in rural areas. By way of contrast, the average Finn had 30.5 square meters. In 1989, over four-fifths of all urban housing in Latvia was owned by the state, and the remainder was held privately or by housing cooperatives. Somewhat over half of the housing in rural areas was owned privately. In terms of the quality of Latvian housing, there are also substantial deficits, and amenities are relatively poor:

Utility	Share of Housing Equipped With Amenities ^a (percent)		
	Latvia (1989)	Finland (1988)	Sweden (1985)
Running water	80	95	97 ^b
Hot water	60	89	NA
Central heating	67	88	99
Flush toilets	78	92	98
Bathing facilities	67	87	96

^a End of year shown. The figures for Latvia do not include rural private housing, much of which probably lacks most amenities.

^b Figure is for 1970, the last date reported.

Rents on state-owned apartments are low and heavily subsidized: rents cover only about one-fifth of current maintenance costs. Hence much housing is in poor repair. Despite the low rents, housing conditions are the subject of much complaint. In 1989, only 9 percent of Latvian families who were on waiting lists for better housing improved their circumstances as compared with 13 percent for the former Soviet Union as a whole. This was the case, despite a sizable program to build new housing in the 1980s.

Since independence, rents have increased. The Latvian Government has been slow to privatize housing because its decision to recognize the claims of pre-1940 owners has made the process extremely complex.

Pensions, Health, and Welfare. As in all former Soviet republics, the Latvian people are covered by a state-provided system of “cradle-to-grave” social security to which they have not been required to contribute directly. Old-age, survivor, and disability pensions are provided. Both the nominal value of Latvian pensions and the extent of the population covered increased during the 1980s. Reflecting mainly the aging of the population, the number of pensioners grew by roughly 12 percent, while monetary value

rose by 56 percent. During that period, however, the number of collective farm pensioners dropped by one-quarter and the nominal size of their pensions nearly doubled, bringing their retirement incomes to within 84 percent of that received in the state sector—up one-fifth from a decade earlier.

Old-age pensioners are the most numerous group, and their average pensions are relatively low, less than 40 percent of the average monthly wage. Although many have some other income, the incidence of poverty among them is clearly large. Over half of all state pensioners and 90 percent of all collective farm pensioners received pensions of less than 100 rubles per month.

As in Latvia, the populations of Finland and Sweden are covered by comprehensive social welfare programs. Although comparisons on such complex matters are tenuous, it appears that the Nordic countries' social safety nets are more inclusive and protective than their Latvian counterpart. Thus, nearly 100 percent of the eligible population receives old-age pensions in Finland and Sweden, whereas Latvia's net extended to about 85 percent of the population in 1989. Both Finnish and Swedish programs are fully indexed to the cost of living and hence protect the pensioner against inflation. In 1991, Latvia adopted its own social security system, which extended coverage to all citizens and established unemployment benefits.

As with pensions, Latvia's health care system cannot be readily compared to those found in Finland and Sweden. Institutional differences are vast: Latvia follows the centralized Soviet model where there is little role for family doctors and private health insurance. Moreover, medical training and support facilities do not meet Western quality standards. For these reasons it is less ambiguous to compare outcomes

rather than inputs.⁸ The life expectancy of Latvians was lower than in the reference countries—70.4 years for both sexes (1989) as compared with 76 years in Finland (1990) and 77 years in Sweden (1990). Although infant mortality was lower in Latvia than in most of the republics of the former Soviet Union, its rate of 11 deaths per 1,000 births was far greater than in the Nordic countries. In 1988, Finland's infant mortality was 6.1 deaths per 1,000 births (probably understated), and Sweden's was 5.8 deaths per 1,000 births. For all other age groups, the main causes of death in Latvia (as well as in Finland and Sweden) were cardiovascular diseases and cancer. Accidental deaths was also one of the leading causes of death in Latvia.

Other Social Indicators. A collection of social indicators describing aspects of Latvian society not covered in other sections is shown in table 16. This is not meant to be an exhaustive index of social conditions but is intended to pinpoint areas where tensions exist or could potentially develop. Strikes in the workplace have become increasingly common in the former Soviet republics. As of 1989, this aspect of labor discipline in Latvia was much lower than in either Finland or Sweden, because no workdays were reported being lost due to strikes. The suicide rate in Latvia was roughly the same as in Finland, but higher than in Sweden by 50 percent. In contrast, the divorce rate in Sweden was twice as high as in Latvia.

Another indicator of social malaise is crime. The data show that the overall level of crime in Latvia is much less than that in the two Nordic countries and is correspondingly less in most of the subclasses of

⁸ Latvia's health indicators are generally better than those found in other republics of the former USSR. For example, Latvia had 50 doctors per 10,000 inhabitants in 1990, compared with 44.4 for the USSR as a whole in 1989.

Table 16
Social Indicators in Latvia and the Nordic Countries, 1989

	Latvia	Finland	Sweden
Consumption measures			
Per capita living space, 1989 (<i>square meters per capita</i>)	19.6	30.5	NA
Entertainment expenditures, 1989 (<i>rubles, workers and employees</i>)	19.6	NA	NA
Doctors, 1989 (<i>of all specialties per 100,000 persons</i>)	496.0	238.0	281.0
Option indicators			
Access to day care, 1989 (<i>preschools per 1,000 children of preschool age</i>)	59.0	NA	NA
Savings, 1989 (<i>average deposit per person, rubles</i>)	1,782.0	NA	NA
Risk indicators			
Per capita expenses on labor safety, 1987 (<i>rubles</i>)	58.8	NA	NA
Percent below poverty line, 1989 (<i>disposable income below 100 rubles</i>)	9.8	NA	NA
Labor discipline			
Strikes, 1989 (<i>worktime lost in thousand workdays per 1,000 state sector employees</i>)	0.0	21.5	91.8
Alcoholism and drug abuse			
Alcoholism, 1989 (<i>cases per 100,000 persons</i>)	165.0	NA	NA
Drug abuse, 1989 (<i>cases per 100,000 persons</i>)	6.5	NA	NA
Alcohol-related deaths, 1989 (<i>deaths per 100,000 persons</i>)	6.8	NA	NA
Crime rates			
All crimes, 1989 (<i>per 100,000 persons ages 15 to 67 or 69</i>)	1,841.1	10,255.0	17,444.0
Murder	24.0	4.0	2.6
Assault	846.7	571.0	689.0
Rape	7.1	11.6	25.4
Robbery	21.9	60.2	90.5
Theft	350.9	4,856.0	11,874.0
Fraud	NA	1,740.0	1,614.0
Suicides			
Total, 1990 (<i>per 100,000 persons</i>)	25.9	26.7	17.3
Family structure and divorce			
Divorce rate, 1989 (<i>per 1,000 persons</i>)	4.2	NA	8.1

crime. However, there is a caveat; the crime indicator that is most reliable across time and geographic space, the murder rate, tells a different story. In this category, Latvia's rate is much higher than in Finland or

Sweden. The assault figures also support this impression of greater physical violence. On the other hand, if rape is treated as a violent crime, then conditions in the Nordic countries are much worse.

Appendix A

Selected Tables and Charts

A-1 Latvia

Per 1,000 persons

Births, Deaths, and Natural Growth of the Population, 1980-90

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
Births	14.1	14.1	14.7	15.8	15.8	15.3	16.0	16.0	15.5	14.5	14.1
Deaths	12.7	12.7	12.3	12.6	13.0	13.2	12.0	12.2	12.2	12.1	13.0
Natural growth	1.4	1.4	2.4	3.2	2.8	2.1	4.0	3.8	3.3	2.4	1.1

Table A-2

Latvia: Population Structure, 1989

	Thousand Persons	Percent	Percent Urban	Percent Rural	Age Dependency ^a
Total	2,666.8	100.0	71.2	28.8	43.5
Latvians	1,387.8	52.0			
Russians	905.5	34.0			
Byelorussians	119.7	4.5			
Ukrainians	92.1	3.4			
Poles	60.4	2.3			
Lithuanians	34.6	1.3			
Jews	22.9	0.9			
Other	43.8	1.6			

^a Age dependency is the percent of the population that is younger and older than the working ages: males 16 to 59, females 16 to 54.

Table A-3
Latvia: Average Monthly Wages and Salaries by
Branch of the Economy, Selected Years

Rubles

	1980	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
Wage and salary workers, all branches	171.4	195.9	201.4	208.9	227.0	249.9	290.9
Industry	186.3	212.1	217.5	225.4	248.2	270.8	309.1
Wages	183.2	208.9	214.0	223.1	240.6	260.6	295.2
Salaries	201.1	227.2	234.3	236.2	282.9	317.0	372.2
Agriculture (state)	157.0	214.2	224.4	226.6	235.1	259.2	281.2
Construction	203.8	241.7	249.6	265.6	295.0	332.9	385.4
Construction-assembly	205.1	247.6	255.2	270.4	291.2	331.2	385.1
Wages	209.8	252.0	260.0	272.8	284.9	322.1	371.5
Salaries	185.8	228.8	234.4	259.5	320.8	374.8	450.8
Transportation	201.1	223.9	231.4	243.1	268.2	286.2	362.5
Railroad	170.9	197.0	208.5	227.7	250.8	263.2	462.4
Water	217.9	243.7	248.4	258.2	299.6	331.3	341.7
Urban transportation	209.2	230.1	236.0	245.5	268.8	285.0	326.7
Communications	148.4	158.9	164.2	170.9	189.3	209.2	245.0
Trade and public dining	139.7	151.5	153.7	160.3	175.1	203.0	260.2
Information-processing services	148.1	171.9	181.3	188.2	202.8	237.1	271.4
Housing-communal economy	140.4	160.1	166.3	171.9	184.5	199.5	231.9
Health, physical, and social services	133.2	141.7	144.2	154.0	162.9	176.4	203.8
Education	142.1	154.6	159.6	168.1	171.6	177.7	195.5
Culture	111.9	125.5	123.5	131.2	133.8	142.8	193.9
Art	154.9	163.7	167.3	170.9	173.6	179.7	229.3
Science	176.1	194.5	200.3	207.8	244.2	309.5	353.0
Credit and social security	159.7	178.5	188.7	190.9	214.0	239.5	417.8
Government administrative services	164.2	178.9	186.7	192.6	211.3	279.6	355.4
Collective workers	NA	218.7	229.8	238.6	250.9	274.1	308.3
Agriculture	151.9	212.7	222.7	230.9	243.1	264.1	300.5
Fishing	NA	278.5	301.8	316.0	328.8	377.8	396.2
Cooperative workers	X	X	X	X	408.0	526.0	400.0

NA=Data not available.

X=Not applicable.

Table A-4 *Percent*
Latvia: The Structure of Industrial Output,
Selected Years ^a

	1980	1985	1989
Total industry	100.0	100.0	100.0
Heavy industry	49.3	53.7	54.9
Electric power	1.4	1.4	1.4
Fuels	.5	.5	.4
Metallurgy	1.9	1.8	1.6
Chemicals and petrochemicals	6.2	7.2	7.6
Machinery	23.4	26.6	27.6
Wood, pulp, and paper	5.4	5.9	5.7
Construction materials	3.5	3.2	3.2
Glass, china, and earthenware	.7	.6	.6
Heavy industry, n.e.c.	6.3	6.5	6.8
Soft goods	23.4	20.5	19.0
Processed foods	26.7	25.3	25.4
Other branches	.6	.5	.7

^a Calculated from the gross value of industrial output.

Table A-5
Latvia: Production of Selected Industrial Products
and Materials

	1980	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
Primary energy							
Electric power (<i>billion kWh</i>)	4.7	5.0	5.2	5.9	5.1	5.8	6.6
Peat ^a (<i>1,000 metric tons</i>)	1,136.0	489.0	617.0	263.0	422.0	483.0	309.0
Minerals and metals							
Steel (<i>1,000 metric tons</i>)	527.2	550.1	566.5	568.1	559.2	555.1	550.1
Rolled ferrous metals (<i>1,000 metric tons</i>)	769.9	823.4	836.2	849.1	848.3	794.5	731.4
Machinery							
Diesel engines and generators (<i>1,000 units</i>)	12.6	11.2	10.5	9.7	9.7	7.8	6.2
Buses (<i>1,000 units</i>)	14.2	15.2	14.7	17.1	17.6	17.0	17.1
Potato harvesters (<i>1,000 units</i>)	2.1	2.1	1.0	1.4	1.4	1.1	1.8
Milking machines (<i>1,000 units</i>)	25.6	29.5	31.3	29.5	32.2	25.1	21.8
Fertilizer spreaders (<i>1,000 units</i>)	14.2	15.2	14.7	17.1	17.6	17.0	17.1
Piston pump drives (<i>1,000 units</i>)	8.8	10.2	11.1	11.4	10.5	11.2	12.1
Electric lamps (<i>million units</i>)	95.7	66.3	57.8	55.5	43.4	38.4	33.7
Chemicals							
Mineral fertilizers (<i>1,000 metric tons</i>)	19.9	169.0	186.1	185.1	176.1	187.9	179.5
Chemical fibers and knitwear (<i>1,000 metric tons</i>)	38.4	50.3	51.4	52.3	52.0	50.9	48.3
Paint and varnish materials (<i>1,000 metric tons</i>)	59.0	54.2	53.3	50.3	52.6	53.2	47.0
Synthetic resins, plastics (<i>1,000 metric tons</i>)	31.7	35.0	37.0	38.3	40.0	37.9	33.6
Soaps, all types (<i>1,000 metric tons</i>)	11.1	10.1	10.2	10.3	10.9	12.0	12.0
Forestry products							
Timber production (<i>1,000 cu m</i>)	3,711.0	4,074.0	4,338.0	4,463.0	4,542.0	4,167.0	3,704.0
Sawn timber (<i>1,000 cu m</i>)	802.7	865.8	921.3	946.3	1,023.9	824.7	789.4
Plywood (<i>1,000 cu m</i>)	106.2	106.9	114.1	118.8	113.4	95.0	64.7
Paper (<i>1,000 metric tons</i>)	131.4	166.6	160.2	144.5	153.3	137.9	107.2
Cardboard (<i>1,000 metric tons</i>)	12.1	10.3	8.3	20.6	10.1	10.2	10.6
Construction materials							
Cement (<i>1,000 metric tons</i>)	837.7	787.1	867.6	842.5	825.0	776.0	744.3
Reinforced concrete (<i>1,000 cu m</i>)	1,403.3	1,495.4	1,557.6	1,604.3	1,638.9	1,634.8	1,498.0
Construction bricks (<i>million units</i>)	585.8	648.1	699.5	730.1	744.7	789.6	856.8
Linoleum (<i>1000 sq m</i>)	6,280.0	6,740.0	6,958.0	7,412.0	7,599.0	7,813.0	6,476.0
Window glass (<i>1000 sq m</i>)	6,132.0	3,525.0	4,189.0	4,187.0	4,156.0	3,846.0	2,982.0

^a Peat production includes production of peat bricks.

^b Milk does not include private farm production.

Table A-5 (continued)

	1980	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
Processed foods							
Meat (1,000 metric tons)	199.3	242.5	250.4	257.1	263.6	258.6	234.4
Total fish catch (1,000 metric tons)	526.2	537.9	564.6	570.8	558.7	547.0	470.2
Butter (1,000 metric tons)	33.6	44.6	45.9	47.4	47.1	46.7	43.6
Whole milk ^b (1,000 metric tons)	426.5	539.9	567.0	582.6	576.6	576.1	559.7
Macaroni products (1,000 metric tons)	12.1	10.6	11.0	11.6	11.4	11.4	11.9
Granulated sugar (1,000 metric tons)	303.0	249.0	240.0	248.0	243.0	248.0	230.0
Canned goods (million cans)	403.1	456.1	480.3	476.6	495.2	504.0	466.8
Soft goods							
Cotton fabrics (million sq m)	56.7	61.3	60.6	61.4	59.2	55.6	48.5
Wool fabrics (million sq m)	16.4	16.1	15.8	16.2	16.1	15.8	14.5
Linen fabrics (million sq m)	17.9	19.4	19.7	19.2	19.6	19.8	14.1
Silk fabrics (million sq m)	24.9	26.0	28.0	28.0	27.8	27.7	25.6
Stocking-hosiery goods (million pairs)	69.7	75.8	76.9	77.8	78.3	78.8	73.9
Knitted goods (million units)	44.0	44.5	44.2	42.0	42.8	43.0	40.2
Shoes, all types (million pairs)	23.3	26.0	26.3	26.9	26.2	25.0	20.6
Consumer durables							
Radios (1,000 units)	2,125.0	1,570.0	1,908.0	1,871.0	1,762.0	1,486.0	1,567.0
Washing machines (1,000 units)	590.0	647.0	659.0	660.0	657.0	612.0	570.0
Furniture (million rubles)	164.0	197.0	206.0	213.0	216.0	219.0	214.0



1911年
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