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Analysis

Alexander Dugin, the Issue of Post-Soviet Fascism, and Russian Political Discourse Today

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Summary

The past year witnessed a welcome sensitization of the Russian public towards skinhead attacks and ultra-nationalist propaganda. Nevertheless, the administration of Vladimir Putin and the Kremlin-controlled mass media have maintained an ambiguous stance with regard to xenophobic tendencies in politics and public discourse. While primitive hatred of foreigners and ethnic violence are officially stigmatized, the dissemination of national stereotypes and anti-Americanism, in particular, by Kremlin-directed mass media and political pundits continues unabated. For example, the notorious publicist Alexander Dugin, who openly propagated fascist ideas in the 1990s, has become an important player in shaping the discourse of Russian political and intellectual elites today. It remains to be seen how the Russian leadership will handle the challenges resulting from such a contradictory approach to its domestic and foreign policies in the coming years.

A New Sensitization Towards Right-Wing Extremism?

In view of escalating violent attacks and other actions against foreigners, the debate on Russian fascism is currently experiencing a new high in the Russian media. There was a similar debate in the mid-1990s, when the confrontation between President Boris Yeltsin and the “intransigent opposition,” a state of near-civil war in Moscow, the ascent of Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, the appearance of neo-Nazi parties, and the first Chechen war, gave rise to the notion of a “Weimar Russia.” Even though this construct has made only rare appearances in commentaries in recent months, the current media debate is also marked by alarmism.

It is to be welcomed that the increasing right-wing extremist tendencies within the party landscape and youth culture, which had been largely ignored for many years, are now at least partially acknowledged by the Russian public, and countermeasures are being debated. Even the Russian judiciary, which has been known for its pro-nationalist bias is beginning to submit to the pressure of public opinion (or the presidential administration), and now applies the Russian penal code’s section on xenophobic crimes more frequently than was the case during the 1990s. Other promising developments include the sharp reactions of state officials to a xenophobic campaign advertisement aired by the “Rodina” alliance ahead of elections for the Moscow municipal parliament and the measures against the often deadly skinhead attacks on immigrants and visiting students. Official statements on such issues occasionally refer to the “anti-fascist” heritage of the Soviet Union and to the Russian people’s alleged special deep-rooted aversion against fascism.

Ambiguous Reactions

Despite such encouraging signs, the Kremlin-controlled mass media have an altogether ambivalent stance toward right-wing extremist tendencies. Although manifest anti-Semitism and violent racism are now heavily criticized and visibly stigmatized, other xenophobic patterns remain present, or are even increasing, in reporting on foreign news and political commentaries. In addition to the traditional anti-Western, anti-Baltic, anti-Gypsy, and anti-Polish reflexes, this is increasingly true for prejudices against Ukrainians and Caucasians, recently, especially, against Georgians. Unquestionably, though, it is the US that holds first place among the “enemies of Russia,” as projected by the Russian state media. The increasingly primitive and profound anti-Americanism seen, for example, in prime time political television shows like “Odnako” (“However”, hosted by Mikhail Leontiev), “Realnaia politika” (“Real Politics”, hosted by Gleb Pavlovskiy), or “Post scriptum” (hosted by Alexei Pushkov) is raised to the level of a Manichean world-view, where the US is made responsible for the majority of mishaps and failures in recent Russian, and indeed global, history, and where US society mutates into the negative Other of Russian civilization. It is curious that Germany – the country that has caused Russia the most harm in recent history – is often excepted from this paranoid perception of the external world and stylized as a collective friend of Russia, probably not least because of Putin’s personal preferences (a distorted view that has, however, been stoked by the unorthodox approach to Russia of former German chancellor Gerhard Schröder).

Finally, it is important to note that despite the increasing censure of certain right-wing extremist ten-

dencies, the representatives of ultra-nationalist political groups regarded as close to President Putin have been excepted from the Kremlin's campaigns to discredit the radically nationalist camp. This is true in particular for Zhirinovskiy's so-called Liberal Democratic Party, although many statements made by Zhirinovskiy and his entourage equally stir xenophobic hatred among the population (for example, his notorious pamphlet "The Last Leap toward the South"). Last year Putin personally awarded the "Order of Merit for the Fatherland" (fourth degree) to Zhirinovskiy – a man who in September 1995 had physically attacked a female MP, Yevgenia Tishkovskaya, in the State Duma in front of TV cameras.

Aberrations of the Intelligentsia

Besides such tendencies in the broader public, there are similarly contradictory developments in the discourse of the elites and political pundits. On the one hand, the political leadership is promoting integration of Russia into Western organizations such as the G8 and the World Trade Organization. On the other hand, the political discourse of experts, as well as intellectual life in general, are characterized by the spread of an anti-Western consensus often described as "Eurasian," the essence of which is the assertion that Russia is "different" from, or indeed, by its nature, the opposite of the US. The Russian book market is experiencing a glut of vituperative political lampoons whose main features include pathological anti-Americanism, absurd conspiracy theories, apocalyptic visions, and bizarre fantasies of national rebirth. Among the more or less widely read authors of such concoctions are Sergei Kurginyan, Igor Shafarevich, Oleg Platonov, Maxim Kalashnikov (a.k.a. Vladimir Kucherenko), and Sergei Kara-Murza.

Probably the best-known writer and commentator of this kind is Aleksandr Dugin (b. 1962), who holds a doctorate in political science (from an obscure Russian provincial institute) and is the founder, chief ideologue, and chairman of the so-called International "Eurasian Movement," whose Supreme Council boasts among its members the Russian Federation's Culture Minister Aleksandr Sokolov, Vice Speaker of the Federation Council, Aleksandr Torshin, several diplomats, and other similarly illustrious personages, including some marginal Western intellectuals and CIS politicians. Dugin's increasing celebrity is remarkable considering that the chief "Neo-Eurasian" is not only among the most influential, but also one of the most brazen of the ultra-nationalist publicists. While authors such as Kurginyan or Kara-Murza are satisfied to promote a renaissance of classical Russian anti-Western sentiments in their pamphlets and subtly draw on Western sources, Dugin admits openly that his main ideas are based on non-Russian anti-democratic concepts such

as European integral Traditionalism (René Guénon, Julius Evola, Claudio Mutti, etc.), Western geopolitics (Alfred Mahan, Halford Mackinder, Karl Haushofer, and others), the German "conservative revolution" (Carl Schmitt, Ernst Jünger, Arthur Moeller van den Bruck, etc.), and the francophone New Right (Alain de Benoist, Robert Steuckers, Jean Thiriart).

Furthermore, during the 1990s, Dugin repeatedly hinted at his sympathy for selected aspects of Italian Fascism and National Socialism, such as the SS and its *Ahnenerbe* ("Ancestral Heritage") Institute, and has described the Third Reich as the most consistent incarnation of the "Third Way" that he advocates. In the chapter "Fascism – Boundless and Red" of the online version of his 1997 book *Tamplieri Proletariata* (The Templar Knights of the Proletariat), he expressed the hope that the inconsistent application of originally correct ideas by Hitler, Mussolini, etc. would, eventually, be followed in post-Soviet Russia by the emergence of a "fascist fascism". In Dugin's apocalyptic worldview, global history consists of a centuries-old confrontation between hierarchically organized "Eurasian" continental powers and liberal "Atlantic" naval powers. Today, this confrontation is carried out between Russia and the US as the main representatives of the two antagonistic types of civilization, and its final battle is approaching (Dugin uses the German word *Endkampf*, which has fascist connotations, without a Russian translation).

One might expect Dugin, and other extremely right-wing pundits offering similar pro-fascist statements, to be subjected to the same public stigmatization as neo-Nazi parties and skinhead groups are currently experiencing. However, this has not been the case so far. On the contrary, Dugin and others of his ilk, such as the well-known editor-in-chief of Russia's leading ultra-nationalist weekly *Zavtra* ("Tomorrow"), Aleksandr Prochanov, are popular guests in prime-time political television shows such as *Vremena* ("Times", hosted by Vladimir Pozner), *Tem vremenem* ("In the Meantime", hosted by Aleksandr Archangelsky), *Voskresni vecher* ("Sunday Evening"), or *K Baryeru* ("To the Barricade", hosted by Vladimir Solovyov), and are even invited to popular talk shows like *Pust govoryat* ("Let Them Speak", hosted by Andrei Malakhov).

The Post-Soviet Conception of Fascism

The fact that Dugin has so far been "spared" by the Kremlin-controlled media and his political opponents is not only due to his recent celebrity as a "radical centrist" and fanatical supporter of Putin, but also his ability to win the sympathies of prominent members of the Russian legislative and executive branches. He has likewise managed to avoid the charge of promoting fascism by adapting his writings and public image to the distorted conception of fascism inherited from Soviet

propaganda. In the post-Soviet discourse, the term “fascism” is equated with German National Socialism and its external trappings, such as the swastika or Roman salute. Occasionally, the propagandistic usage of the term “fascism” goes so far as to include all ideas regarded as “anti-Russian”, and, paradoxically, becomes a rhetorical instrument in xenophobic agitation campaigns of Russian ultra-nationalists.

The example of Dugin illustrates that, as a result of the idiosyncratic conception of generic fascism in post-Soviet Russia, it is sufficient to rhetorically dissociate oneself from the worst crimes of Nazi Germany and to refrain from blatant copying of Nazi symbols in order to avoid public stigmatization as a “fascist”. This approach would, at least, explain why, on the one hand, obviously neo-Nazi groups such as the “Russian National Unity” of Aleksandr Barkashov or skinhead gangs are being vocally suppressed by the executive and judiciary, while on the other hand ultra-nationalist writers who, in terms of their rhetoric, are no less radical are not only tolerated, but have unhindered access to public platforms and state-controlled media, and are, sometimes, allocated an active role in PR projects of the Kremlin’s political technologists.

1984 – Déjà Vu

Another factor in favor of Dugin and similar publicists is the return of the Russian leadership to quasi-Orwellian forms of organizing public discourse. Kremlin-controlled political reporting in the mass media has become a succession of national-patriotic happenings in which international developments of any kind – whether a Russia-China summit or Russian athletes’ performance at the Olympics, the “Orange Revolution” or foreign success of a Russian fantasy movie – are exaggerated into either collective triumphs or shared humiliations of the Russian nation under its faithful leadership.

The attendant superficiality and emotionality of public debates, which occasionally degenerate into bizarre shouting matches between participants of political television shows, replace serious analysis. Political commentaries are fixated on the “here and now” which, in the case of Dugin, may have contributed to the fact that his well-known neo-fascist stance during the 1990s has been “forgotten”. The mantra-like disparagement of the

West that accompanies the agitational realignment of foreign news reporting increases the playing field for the propagation of anti-Western slogans which also furthers the spread of extremist ideas proposed by Dugin and theorists with similar leanings.

Outlook

Will the newfound sensitivity towards nationalist tendencies lead to a sustained return to tolerant and liberal aspects of Russia’s political tradition? Or is this new tendency no more than the latest episode in the Putin administration’s fluctuating media campaigns?

One can identify two contrary trends – one ideological, the other pragmatic – whose collision has restored a certain measure of controversy to the generally dull public discourse in Russia. On the one hand, the dualist worldview introduced by the Kremlin in the past few years – the simple, but honest Russians struggling for independence against a devious, soulless, imperialist West – fulfils an important role in legitimating the “tough” course of the resurging Russia under its new president. However, the officially approved paranoia also opens the floodgates for radical conclusions. Since the US model of society is presented as the antithesis of Russian civilization, one should not be surprised when youth gangs of violent thugs try to prevent an “Americanization” of Russian society in their way. The damage caused by such reactions to the international image of Russia is, in turn, incompatible with the equally strong tendency towards establishing the country as a respected partner of the Western countries and as becoming a part of the “civilized world” (the preferred Russian term for the economically advanced democratic states). Besides, the leadership of the Kremlin appears to be considering large-scale immigration as a way of replenishing the rapidly dwindling population of the Russian Federation, which would create new, potentially explosive, tensions. Finally, the fanatical anti-Americanism and pro-Iranian positions of Dugin and others are in contradiction to a number of security policy preferences of the Kremlin and its efforts to join the international coalition against terrorism as a full member. Due to these and other challenges in the coming years, the – at least partial – handover of power in 2008 will gain additional importance.

Translated from the German by Christopher Findlay

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Further Reading:

Anastasia V. Mitrofanova, *The Politicization of Russian Orthodoxy: Actors and Ideas*, Stuttgart: Ibidem Publishers, 2005 (Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society, vol. 13).

Marlene Laruelle, “Aleksandr Dugin: A Russian Version of the European Radical Right?” *Kennan Institute Occasional Papers*, no. 294 (2006), <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/news/docs/OP294.pdf>

Roger Griffin, Werner Loh, and Andreas Umland (eds.), *Fascism Past and Present, West and East: An International Debate on Concepts and Cases in the Comparative Study of the Extreme Right*, Stuttgart: Ibidem Publishers, 2006 (Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society, vol. 35).

Analysis

Imperial Nationalism in Russia

By Emil Pain, Moscow

Summary

Russian nationalist ideas and organizations are rapidly spreading through Russia now. Contemporary Russian nationalists stress the idea of rebuilding the Russian empire. However, their focus on the idea of “Russia for the Russians” is incompatible with efforts to bring other ethnic groups together in one political entity. The authorities support Russian nationalist ideas, in the mistaken idea that they will be able to manage nationalist forces. In fact, the rise of Russian nationalism is likely to encourage separatism among other ethnic groups.

The Dynamics of Russian Nationalism

Sociological theory usually counterposes the concepts of nationalism and imperialism. Here I will try to show that these phenomena complement each other in the ideology and practice of contemporary Russian nationalism.

Post-Soviet Russia is surviving a process combining the disintegration of the empire and a simultaneous attempt to restore it. This process is accompanied by the rapid growth of ethnic self-consciousness among its many peoples. In the beginning of the 1990s, the minority non-Russian ethnic groups began asserting their rights. By the end of the 1990s, it was the majority ethnic Russians who had become vocal. Although the ethnic Russians became ethnically conscious later than the other groups, their feelings are quickly growing and now the ethnic majority considers itself to be more threatened than the minorities. From the beginning of 2000, the share of ethnic Russians who feel threatened by members of other ethnic groups living in Russia is almost twice the number of other groups. During the Soviet era, the ethnic Russians were the most tolerant of the ethnic groups in Russia.

The Russian’s fear of other ethnic groups was particularly noteworthy after the series of terrorist acts in the summer of 1999 and beginning of the “second Chechen war” that fall. Initially, the feelings were directed against the Chechens, but after 2000, they spread to a variety of other ethnic groups. Since that time, approximately two-thirds of respondents feel some form of antipathy toward other nationalities. Anti-Semitism grew particularly quickly and now the level of anti-Semitism among Russian nationalist leaders has even outstripped their anti-Chechen and anti-Muslim feelings.

The number of nationalist organizations is growing as quickly as nationalist consciousness. In the beginning of the 1990s, most nationalist organizations were

based on the “national movements” of the various republics within the Russian Federation, including the Chechens, Tatars, Lezgin, and Avars, among others. Since the end of the 1990s, most activity has focused on the organization of ethnic Russians groups, a sector which today is the largest and fastest growing part of the nationalist movement in Russia. The number of youth organizations supporting the slogan “Russia for the Russians” has grown by a factor of 10. (These groups are often labeled “skinheads” but the skinheads only make up a fraction of this movement.) In 1991, only several hundred individuals were members of Russian nationalist organizations; in 2001, there were more than 10,000. In the subsequent two years, their numbers tripled, reaching 33,000 by 2004. While these numbers reflect official data, experts indicate that significantly larger numbers of youth participate in ultra-radical nationalist organizations.

In the 1990s, the skinheads belonged to small groups that numbered from 3 to 10 individuals. After 2000, they began to create large organizations, bringing together up to 500 individuals. In Moscow, the first large organizations to appear were Skinlegion and the National Socialist Group 88. In Moscow, there are more than 6,000 young Nazis. In St. Petersburg, there are more than 3,000, including at least 500 in Russian Fist and no less than 100 in the Kolovrat organization. In Nizhny Novgorod, there are more than 2,500 skinheads and 300 of them are in North, the largest group.

If the growth of the youth national-fascist groups continues at this rate, and they continue to focus their attention on Russia’s large cities, their numbers could quickly become comparable to the numbers of law enforcement officers. The members of these groups are well coordinated across cities and can quickly move from place to place. In fact, their level of organization is much higher than the police forces who must

deal with them. Deputy Interior Minister S. Shadrin recently admitted this fact, pointing out that his colleagues had little information about the nationalist groups.

The youth Russian nationalist organizations are quickly becoming politicized under the influence of radical political parties, such as the National Great Power Party of Russia (NDPR), the Party of Freedom (PS), Russian National Unity (RNE), and the Russian All-National Union (ROS). All of these parties exist illegally, but act openly. For example, two NDPR leaders presented their books in the Union of Writers of Russia hall in the center of Moscow. Aleksandr Sevostyanov presented "Time to be Russian" and Boris Mironov, who is formally wanted by the authorities, presented "The Jewish Yoke." At the latter presentation, organizers announced that they were collecting signatures for the notorious Appeal of the 500, which demanded the closing of the all Jewish organizations.

Various pickets, demonstrations, rallies, and other acts of mass protest conducted by nationalist activists are becoming regular occurrences in Russian cities. Force is used with increasingly frequency. In 2004, skinheads committed 12 murders and 40 beatings in Moscow, and 7 murders and 24 beatings in St. Petersburg. In 2006, the number of violent incidents based on nationalism increased. During the first six months of the year, 137 fell victim to such attacks, with 18 dying from their wounds.

The police have noted the upsurge in violence. In 2003, they filed 20 cases of murder on nationalist grounds and 44 in 2004. These cases represent the most clear cut examples of murder for nationalist or racist reasons. Most of the time, the authorities are reluctant to qualify the murders as being connected to nationalist causes. Usually they list the cause as hooliganism or domestic quarrels.

The Russian authorities try to ignore the growth and activities of Russian nationalism in order not to cloud the picture of political stability in the country. Nevertheless, the nationalist groups became so active that Interior Minister Rashid Nurgaliev described them as fascist. Putin indirectly admitted the same thing during a 2005 speech in Poland.

Unfortunately, there are enormous reserves for the growth of national-fascist organizations. Levada Center senior researcher Leonid Sedov claims that the latent support for the "Russia for the Russians" slogan is 17 million. However, the overall number of people sympathetic to this idea is much larger. According to the polls of numerous sociological organizations, the share of the population supporting the slogan "Russia for the Russians" in one form or another has not

dropped below 53 percent and in some years reaches as high as 60 percent. Today, supporters of this idea include Communists, Soviet conservatives, and traditionalists seeking to restore the empire and monarchy, but also Russian (*rossiiskii*) pragmatists and supporters of radical market reform. Among the latter group, 30 percent support the slogan. Such nationalist ideas are equally wide-spread among members of parties on the right and the left. About half of the people who today support "a special Russian national path" 15 years ago backed such democratic leaders as Andrei Sakharov, Galina Starovoitova, and Yegor Gaidar. The most prominent member of this group is Mikhail Yur'ev, once a State Duma member from the Yabloko party, who has recently penned a best-selling book which is the most consistent and effective expression of imperial nationalism currently available.

On the Phenomenon of Imperial Nationalism

In my view, the classic contradiction between empire and nation needs to be redefined, at least in Russian conditions. Thanks to the lack of development of all peoples in Russia, few adopt a civic form of nationality, in which the state is built on the basis of popular sovereignty. Ethnic nationalism, however, proclaiming the dominant position of one ethnic, racial, or religious group in the state, is growing. This ethnonationalism is not the same among different ethnic groups. The national movements of the ethnic minorities set the goal of creating their own states and succeeding from the Russian empire, Soviet Union, and now Russian Federation, using the rhetoric of "the nation against the empire." The leaders of Russian nationalism are filling out their ranks with an alternative idea: the resurrection of the empire as the geographic expression of the Russian nation.

What is the relationship between the growth of Russian nationalism and the conduct of the imperial project? These phenomena would seem to be mutually exclusive: the growth of ethnic suspicion is incompatible with the desire to preserve peoples in a unified government. The slogan "Russia for the Russians!" contradicts the traditional imperial slogan of "All peoples are subjects of one state and sovereign." However, the supporters of the new imperial project have not set themselves the goal of establishing a stable, functioning empire, making their project entirely utopian. Their goal is to mobilize the ethnic majority to take power and ultimately establish an entity in which the Russian people can dominate. When a people does not feel like the owner of its country, it begins to assert itself, at least in respect to the ethnic minorities.

All contemporary national-imperial projects in Russia play on these feelings.

The Russian Authorities and Russian Nationalism

The federal authorities use standard nationalist ideologies to consolidate society. Thus they rely on the military heroic past, emphasizing the glorious victories of the empire; fear, focusing on the image of an enemy; and strength, pressuring the national movements of the ethnic minorities.

This policy is suicidal for the authorities. They are victim to the illness typical of personalistic regimes: conceit. Many regime ideologists claim that if it is possible to create “managed democracy,” then it is also possible to manage nationalism. They are deeply mistaken since nationalism has a completely different nature than democracy. It is based on the weakly-controlled mythological consciousness and demands constant emotional support. It is easily awakened, but difficult to direct toward the goal of preserving power. Today we see that the main thing is that nationalism has escaped state control and is developing beyond the desire or goals of the current Russian establishment. All types of nationalists do not consider the current regime their ally. Thus, Yur’ev notes that “no one likes the current pseudo-model [Putin’s regime], some less than others, but nevertheless no one.” This mood among the imperial nationalists dooms all attempts by the authorities to work with them.

In order to consolidate the people who revere the past, the Russian authorities created a new holiday, “the Day of National Unity,” marking the events of 1612. However, the holiday was quickly monopolized by the Russian nationalist organizations united in the Russian March movement. Now the authorities fear this holiday, placing Russian police on guard in Russian cities. The authorities tried to scare the people with an enemy image, but instead became the enemy themselves. In numerous flyers, the nationalists explain to their readers that all of their problems are the result of the so-called “antinational government,” where people with non-Russian last names dominate, particularly ministers Zurabov, Levitin, Nurgaliev, and even Prime Minister Fradkov.

In the throes of “managed nationalism,” the authorities created the nationalist party Rodina, but soon it almost slipped out of control. The authorities managed to reorganize the party’s leadership, but seem incapable of dealing with its electorate, which could turn into a crowd of people willing to conduct a pogrom. The authorities are extremely afraid of this crowd. It is capable of using force against the Chechen

nationalists and the Islamic fundamentalists in the republics of the North Caucasus. But the authorities do not want this force used against the Russian people and, as a result, are being dragged along behind a growing xenophobic outburst. After the ethnic pogrom in Kondopoga from August 30 to September 3, 2006, the authorities talked about the need to “guarantee the priority of the indigenous population,” signaling support for the idea of Russian dominance. After the excesses with Georgia in the fall of 2006, in which hundreds of illegal Georgian migrants were deported, the authorities announced the introduction of quotas for foreigners living in Russia. The Russian authorities undoubtedly are drifting toward a policy of imperial nationalism. However, a new generation is rising and they are hungry wolf cubs, who have studied Dugin’s textbooks, becoming brainwashed xenophobes. For a start, why shouldn’t they try to take the place of those with non-Russian last names in the government?

The Future of Imperial Nationalism in Russia

Thanks to contemporary Russia’s democratic procedures, these forces cannot win political office. Naturally, they have no interest in democracy. Their ability to take power through a coup is also unlikely, although they discuss the possibility among themselves. More probable is a “quiet” and gradual replacement of the authorities and the growth within the bureaucracy of the national-imperial forces. Thus I am in agreement with Yur’ev, who writes that “the strategic appearance in the depths of the Russian power structures of an orientation favoring the second model (a full-blooded empire - E.P.) is completely logical and facilitated by the pressure of conditions.”

In its drift toward imperial nationalism, Russia is similar to Germany at the end of the 1920s. However, I remind you, that the Nazi’s premier idea, in the final analysis, did not bring them to power in Germany. In Russia, the likelihood of the success of the national-imperial model is even smaller, taking into account the complicated territorial structure of our country, with large sections populated by non-Russian peoples and with their growing share of the Russian population. In these conditions, the divide between imperial policy and the real demands of the country would appear very quickly and, as a consequence, the national-imperial regime would not have any chance for a stable existence.

Empires can long fight the nationalism of the minorities living on the periphery or in the colonies, but against the nationalism of the majority, they are defenseless and will be quickly destroyed. Russian his-

tory testifies to this fact. Provoked by the defenders of the empire and supported by the authorities, the rise of Russian nationalism in 1905-1906 was the beginning of the end of the Russian empire. The paradox of imperial nationalism is that it is made for saving the empire, but in reality is the base for its destruction. If the current rise of Russian nationalism brings it to power, it will not be possible to preserve Russia's uni-

ty. Russian nationalism will stimulate quick growth among the nationalist and religious-fundamentalist movements of the ethnic minorities in the Russian republics. This situation confirms the indeterminate fragility of the national-imperial system. The threat of a fascist Russia is real, unfortunately, but this outcome is not foreordained. The country has a choice.

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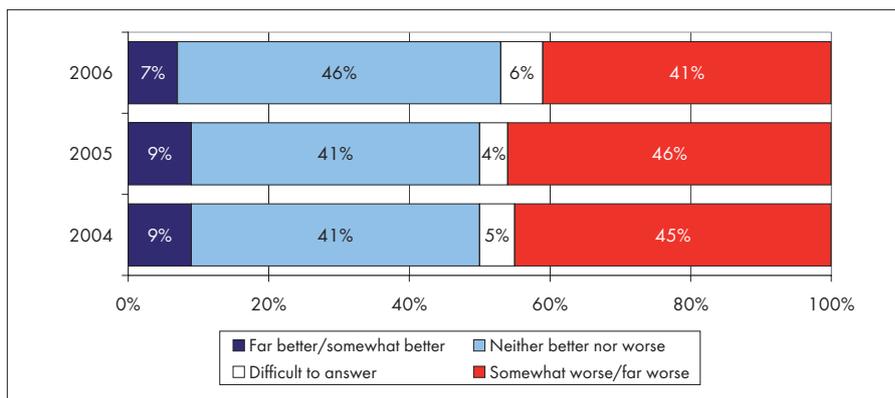
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Opinion Survey

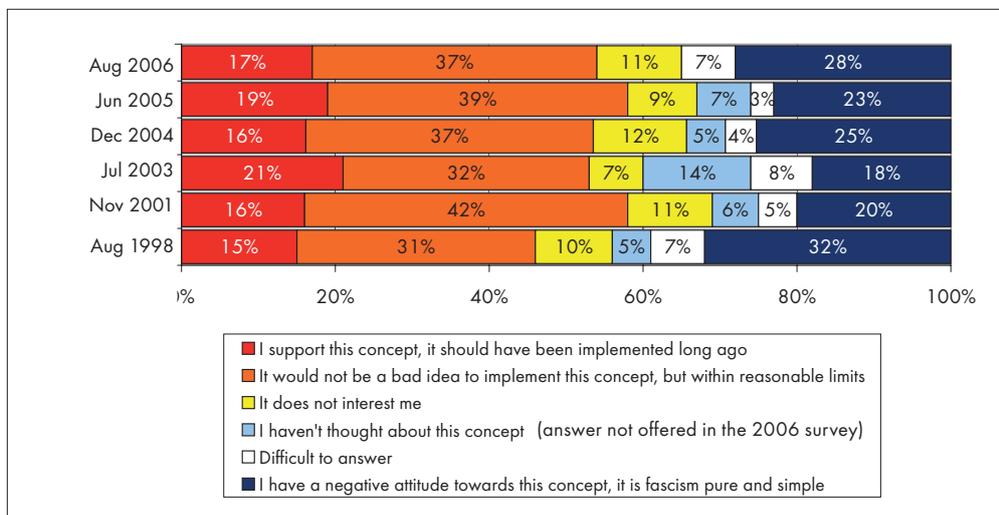
“Russia for the Russians?...”

Source: <http://www.levada.ru/press/2006082500.html>, 27 August 2006

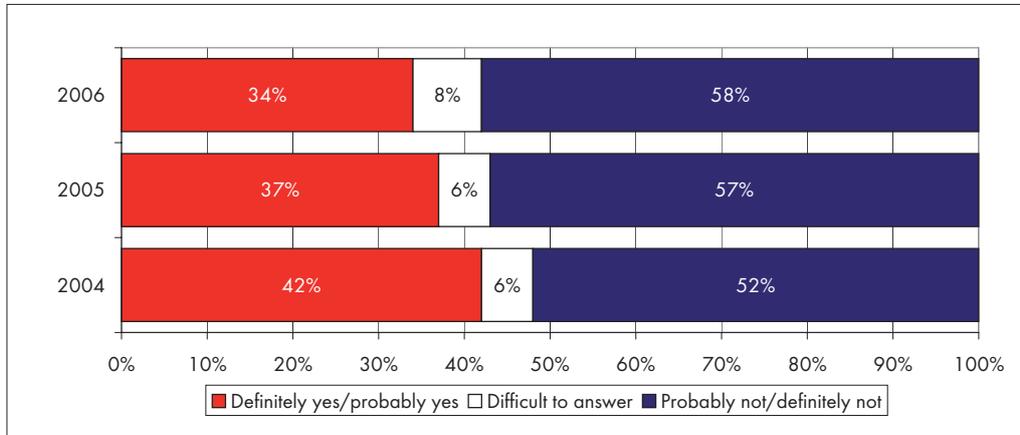
Do Russians in Russia Live far Better than Other Ethnicities?



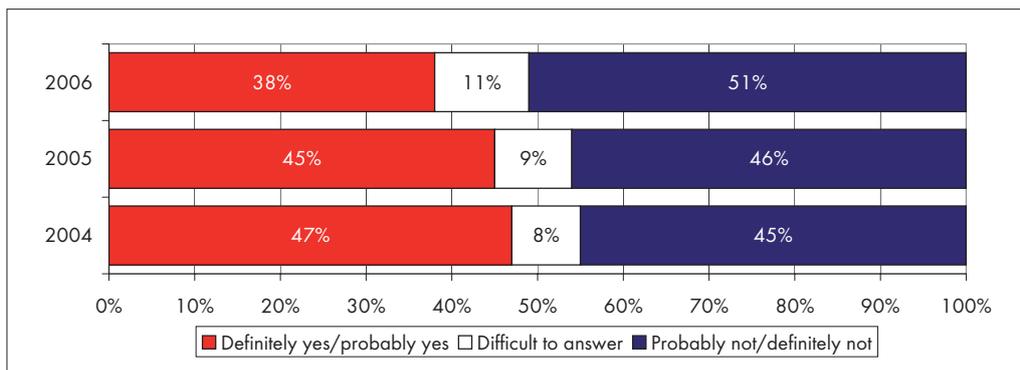
What is Your Attitude Towards the Concept „Russia for the Russians“?



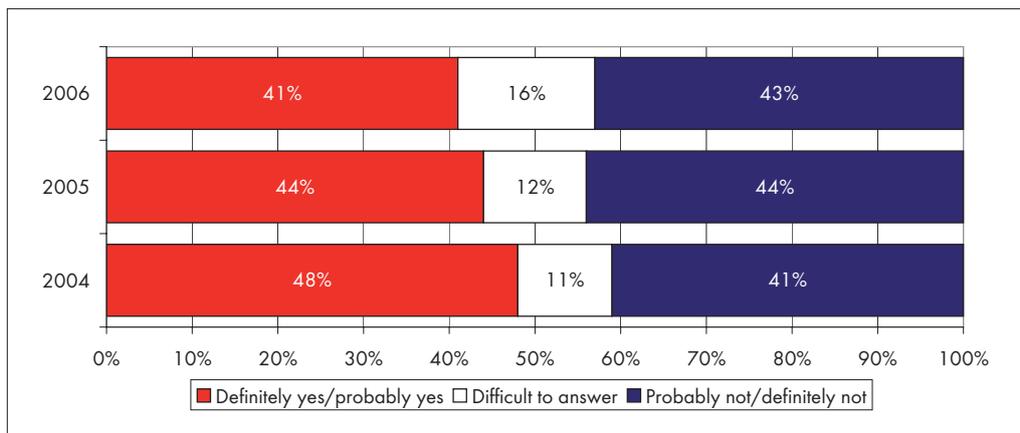
To What Extent Do You Agree with the Following Statement: “People of ‘Non-Russian’ Ethnicity are to be Blamed for a Lot of Russia’s Problems”?



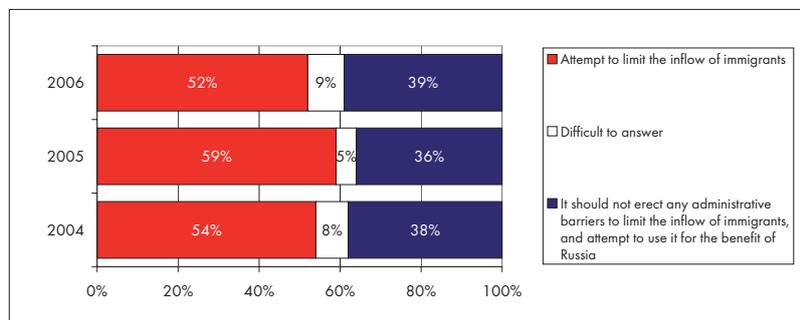
To What Extent Do You Agree with the Following Statement: “Ethnic Minorities Have Too Much Power in Our Country”?



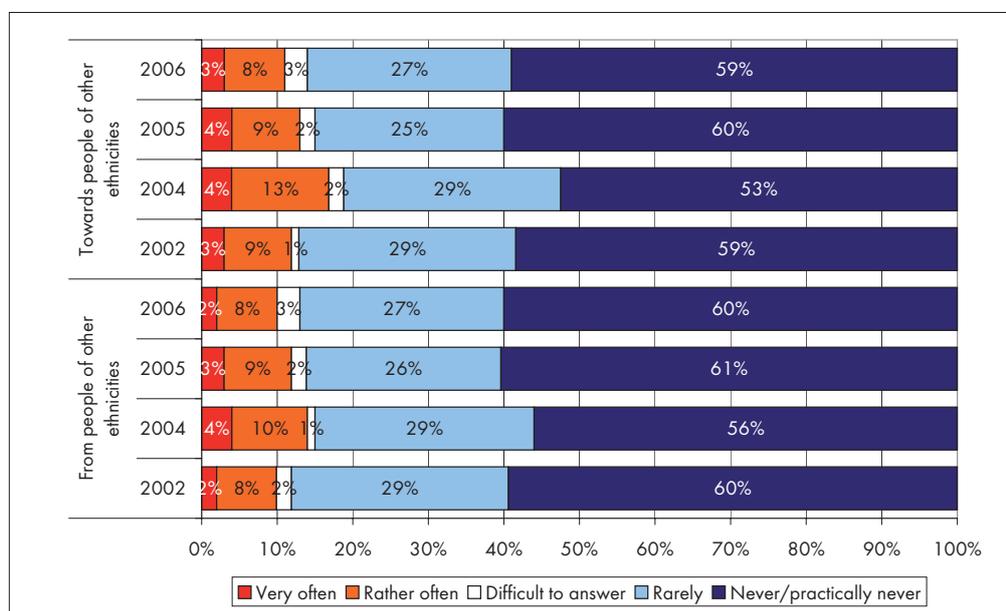
To What Extent Do You Agree With the Following Statement: “It is Necessary to Limit the Influence of Jews in Government, Politics, Business, Law, Education and Show Business”?



In Your Opinion, What Policy Should the Government Pursue in Regard to Immigrants?



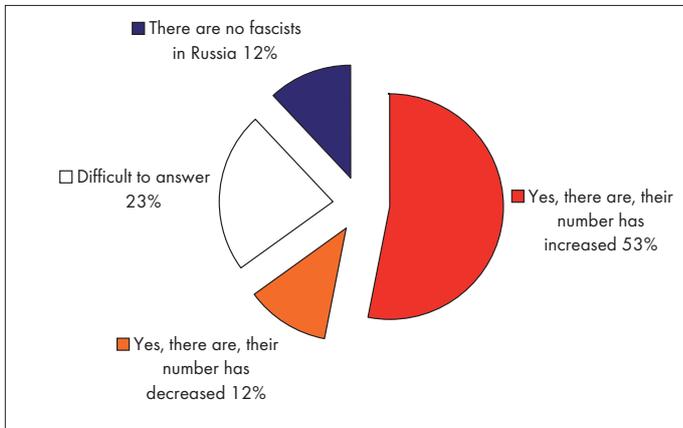
Do You Feel/Experience Hostility...?



Is It Necessary to Limit the Residence of the Following Ethnicities on Russian Territory?

	2004	2005	2006
1. Emigrants from the Caucasus	46%	50%	42%
2. Chinese	39%	46%	41%
3. Vietnamese	39%	42%	35%
4. Gypsies	32%	30%	29%
5. Emigrants from the former Central Asian republics of the USSR	31%	31%	23%
6. Jews	15%	18%	13%
7. Ukrainians	8%	8%	7%
All ethnicities apart from Russians	14%	11%	11%
It is not necessary to impose any limitations on the residence of any ethnicity	21%	20%	25%
Difficult to answer	5%	5%	7%

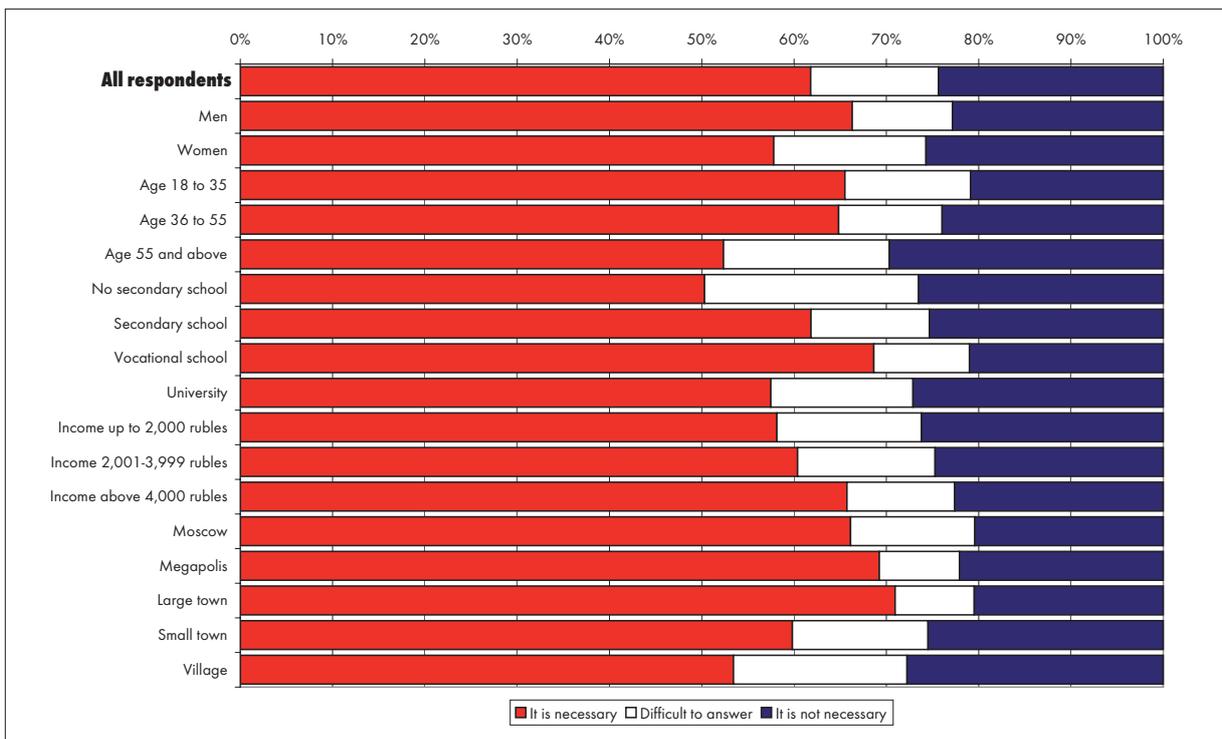
Are There Fascists in Russia? If Yes, Has Their Number Increased in the Last Years?



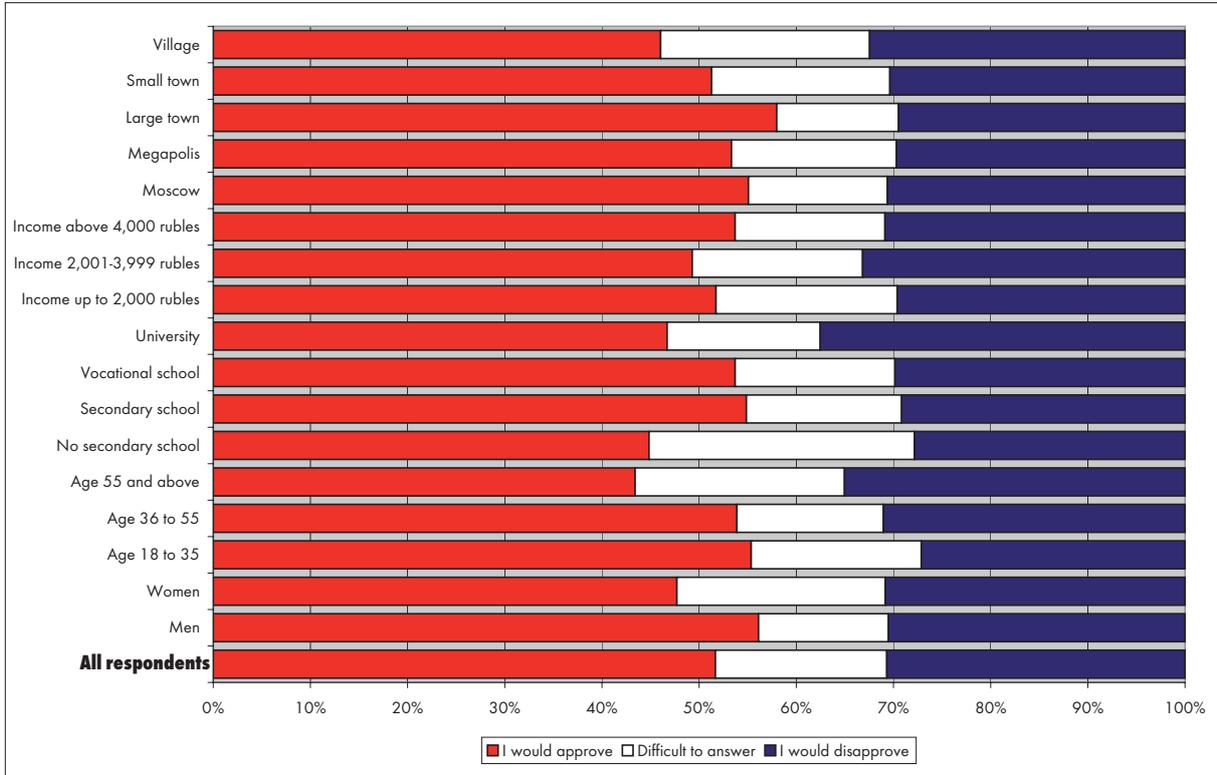
Interethnic Hostility

Source: Survey conducted by FOM Institute, 11-12 November 2006 <http://bd.fom.ru/zip/tb0645.zip>, 20.11.2006

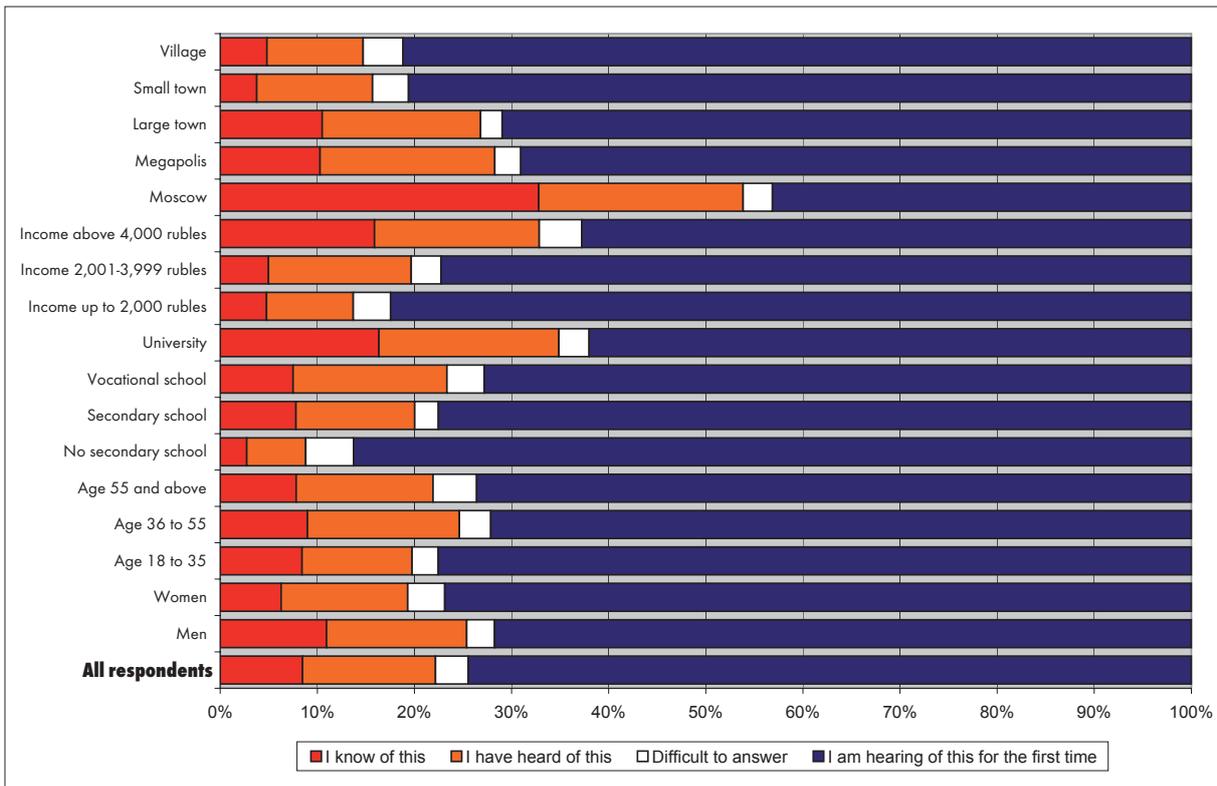
In Your Opinion, is it Necessary to Limit the Entry of Certain Ethnicities into Your Oblast, Rayon or Town?



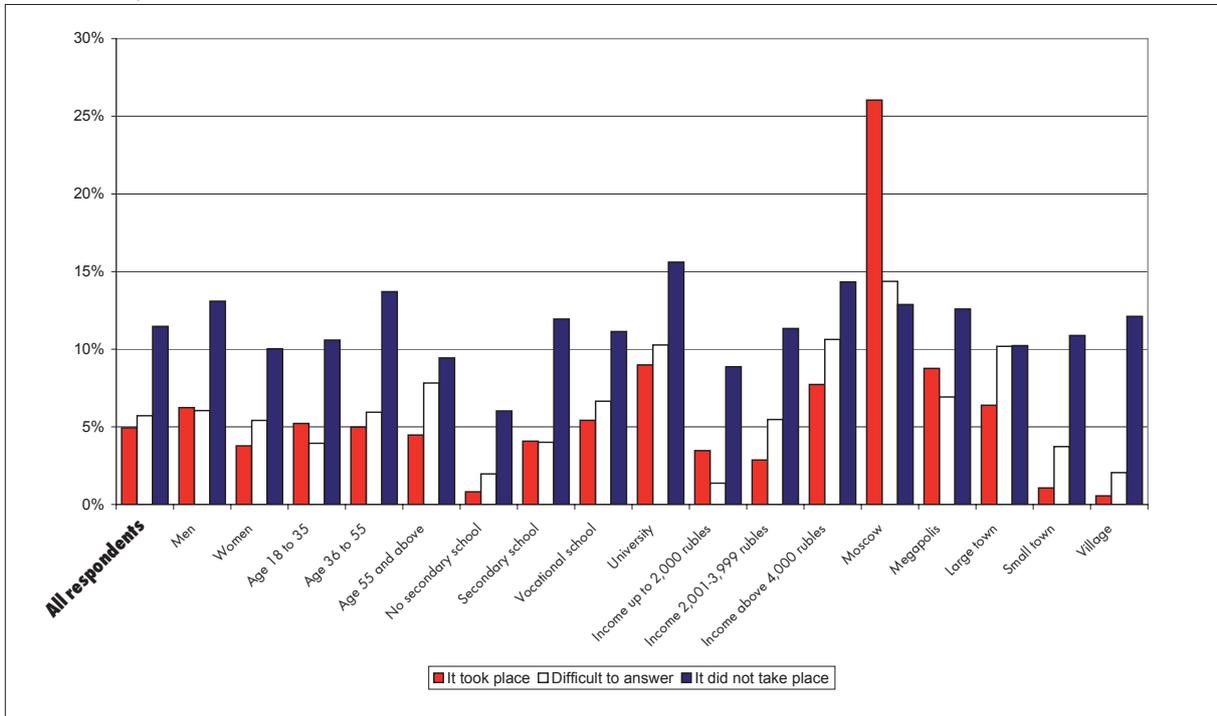
If, in Your Region, the Decision Would be Taken to Expel Certain Ethnic Groups, Would You Approve or Disapprove of Such a Decision?



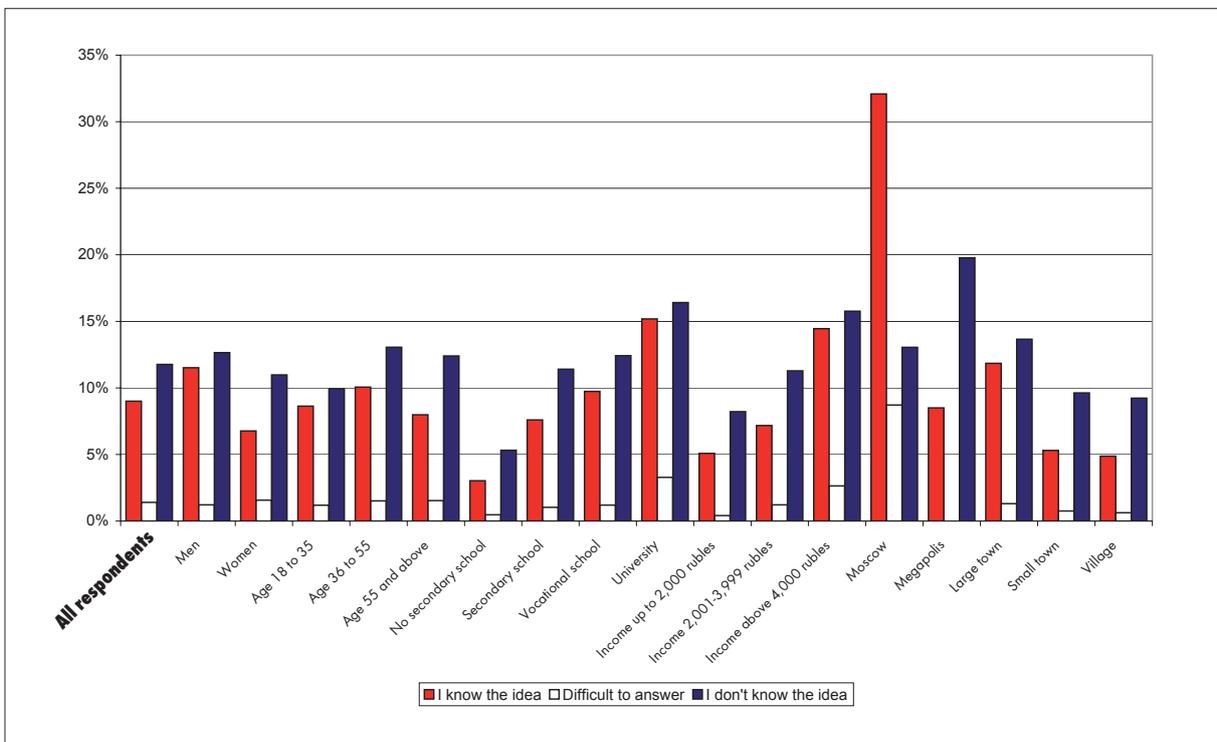
On November 4, in a Number of Russian Cities There Occurred Demonstrations Under the Overall Designation "Russian March". Do You Know, Have You Heard, or Do You Hear For the First Time That a "Russian March" Has Taken Place in a Number of Russian Towns?



**Did a “Russian March” Take Place in Your Region?
(Answers By Those Who Knew of the “Russian March”)**



**Do You Know the Main Idea Behind the „Russian March“?
(Answers By Those Who Knew of the „Russian March“)**



Regional Report

Russian Nationalism Expands in the Regions

By Yury Shabaev, Syktyvkar

The fall of 2006 marked an increase in the activity of Russian nationalist groups in Russia at the national and regional levels. The most visible manifestation of this phenomenon was the “Russian March” held on the November 4 Day of National Unity in Moscow and many regional capitals like Komi’s Syktyvkar.

In Komi, on that day Union for National Revival (SNV) leader Yury Yekishev sought permission to hold a demonstration, but never received an official response from the authorities, even though the law requires that a response be provided within three days. However, when approximately 60 of his supporters began to gather, they were met by police who informed them that the authorities had forbidden the demonstration. Those who had intended to march were then taken by bus to the police station.

The SNV was not alone in organizing the demonstration. Among the groups that joined in the march were Dor’yam As’nyms, an association of Komi intellectuals that represents the radical fringe of the Komi nationalist movement. Such coordination among radical groups is growing at both the national and regional levels.

Radicals Benefit From Kondopoga Events

Events at the end of the summer of 2006 in the city of Kondopoga in the republic of Karelia gave the nationalists a powerful new rallying cry in the fall of 2006. After men from Azerbaijan and Chechnya killed two ethnic Russians in a bar fight in Kondopoga, young ethnic Russian men in the city burned the bar and attacked homes and businesses owned by migrants from the Caucasus on the night of September 2. Many ethnic minorities fled that night and the events received extensive national media attention.

After Kondopoga, Russian nationalists began to actively distribute information about the events there. Radicals in Komi handed out leaflets with such titles as “The Truth about Kondopoga” and “A Letter from the Women of Kondopoga” calling on Komi residents to follow the Karelian example and drive “guests from the south” out of their territory. These flyers were distributed not only in the usual places where similar leaflets have appeared in the past, but also in a host of new cities and villages where such publications had not been seen before. In essence, the geography of national-radical activity is spreading.

Like the SNV, the Movement Against Illegal Immigration (DPNI) has also intensified its out-

reach efforts. During October and the beginning of November, I received requests to prepare seven reports on agitation material, determining whether the content of the flyers directed against migrants and specific ethnic groups violated laws designed to prevent the sowing of ethnic discord. This is the first time that I have seen so much activity among radical movements in Komi.

Official Policy Fails to Address Problems

Komi’s official policies to deal with ethnic conflict are characterized by their declaratory and formal nature. The authorities have no desire to form their ethnic policies based on the interests of the ethnic groups living in the republic. Moreover, the authorities are displaying clear ethnic favoritism for well-connected individuals and groups. By working with the formal leaders of the various ethnic organizations in the republic, the authorities cannot hope to influence the mood of the population or change social attitudes because these leaders have little or no influence within the larger ethnic communities.

The recently formed new commission on inter-ethnic relations, initiated by veterans’ groups (primarily Afghan), and headed by the governor, is not capable of transforming the character of ethnic relations in the republic. For a start, it has no plans to create even the most simple system of monitoring ethnic relations in the republic’s large cities. The people who set up this committee have no idea what they should be doing. Currently, their main plan is to “visit the markets” where many non-ethnic Russians engage in retail trade activities.

In fact, it seems as if the entire bureaucratic machine has decided to pay much more attention to the markets and now the situation at these sites has become the focus of considerable attention. The republic’s migration service has also begun to participate in inspections of the city markets, but these measures are hardly likely to produce the results that the bureaucracy is hoping for.

Sources of Ethnic Tension in Kondopoga

Despite the authorities’ focus on the markets and the non-Russians who work there, it is necessary to understand that the events in Kondopoga did not start in these places and did not become possible because the ethnic minorities who worked there were unpopular with the larger population. The violence

occurred because the authorities preferred to adopt formalistic nationalities policies rather than truly effective ones, thereby severely undermining the rule of law. Additionally, the social mood was such that, ideologically, the Kondopoga population was prepared for pogroms against the Caucasus migrants living there (see *Izvestia*, November 28 and 29, 2006). According to a recent survey conducted among the youth of Karelia, more than 40 percent of college and high school students in this republic have negative feelings toward Caucasus migrants.

It is important to note, however, that the atmosphere of conflict in Karelia, in general, and in Kondopoga, in particular, was not off the chart. In the opinion of conflict specialists, in this situation the danger of prolonged, open conflict does not exist. Nevertheless, the conflict potential was significant. Additionally, the sharp growth of conflictual feelings sparks incidents, which effectively violate the rights of entire ethnic communities. Such an incident took place in Kondopoga. Of course, it is impossible to predict the occurrence of such an incident. It is only possible to warn about the presence of conflict feelings within the mass consciousness of the population.

Growing Racism and Xenophobia

Russian specialists have noted with increasing alarm that there is a strong growth of racist and xenophobic feelings in Russian society. This situation is a logical result of the removal of the idea of an expansive civic solidarity from the mass consciousness. Having first rejected the idea of the “Soviet people,” and then having failed to build a general civic identity, the regional political elites (together with politicians at the federal level) and ethnic entrepreneurs created the ideological basis for the expanding xenophobia.

This growth might not have occurred, but during the last 15 years in the country there was a consistent imposition of ethnicity while simultaneously rejecting the idea of an authentic civil society. There was no effort to pursue a policy of consolidating society or form practical mechanisms to form a Russian (*rossiisky*) civil society in the civic rather than ethnic (*russky*) sense. As a result, Russian society, which experienced an intensive process of social stratification and is suffering a crisis of identity, has become increasingly divided into

ethnic segments.

Today in Russia there is an enormous deficit of civic solidarity, which naturally creates grounds for an unprecedented growth of xenophobia. In these conditions, the further continuation of the authorities’ ethnic policies could threaten the internal stability of Komi and Russia as a whole.

Clear Signs of Danger in Komi

The question remains of whether the authorities will pay attention to these warnings. Unfortunately, in Komi the authorities have declared that a repeat of the Kondopoga violence is impossible. But this is not correct! The situation in the republic differs little from the situation in Karelia. Moreover, a public opinion survey of the Komi population that we conducted in 2004 showed that 40 percent of the respondents (the same number as in Karelia!) support the idea of removing all the Caucasus migrants from the republic. Fear of the Caucasus people is growing, as we discovered when we compared the results of the 2004 survey with one we conducted in 1996.

In this situation, it is necessary to pursue a consistent policy of civic consolidation and a state program of integration, which makes it possible to strengthen regional identity and civic solidarity. Additionally, it is necessary to pay attention to the needs of the indigenous Finno-Ugric people.

The Komi authorities do not take into account the warnings that the situation in the sphere of inter-ethnic relations is extremely complex in the republic. The main ethnic advisors who influence ethnic policy are themselves ethnic entrepreneurs. As a result, like the governor of Karelia, the Komi authorities place a lot of hope in the actions of local ethnic group leaders, claiming that they are responsible for the actions of the members of their ethnic communities. These hopes proved unfounded in Karelia.

In our view, while the politicians at the federal and regional levels do not make the formation of a over-reaching Russian identity the core of their inter-ethnic policy by building a non-ethnic Russian (*rossiisky*) people through a program of integration, the ethnic Russian marches will systematically destroy the unity of the people living in Russia.

About the Author:

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Suggested Reading:

Aleksei Ukkone, “Proshchanie s ‘kulinarym internatsionalizmom’”, www.kominarod.ru.

About the Russian Analytical Digest

The Russian Analytical Digest is a bi-weekly internet publication jointly produced by the Research Centre for East European Studies [Forschungsstelle Osteuropa] at the University of Bremen (www.forschungsstelle-osteuropa.de) and the Center for Security Studies (CSS) at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich (ETH Zurich). It is supported by the Otto Wolff Foundation and the German Association for East European Studies (DGO). The Digest draws on contributions to the German-language *Russlandanalysen* (www.russlandanalysen.de), the CSS analytical network on Russia and Eurasia (www.res.ethz.ch), and the Russian Regional Report. The Russian Analytical Digest covers political, economic, and social developments in Russia and its regions, and looks at Russia's role in international relations.

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