

HENRIK KJÖLSTAD



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Henrik Kjölstad

White Russia –

Xenophobia, Extreme
Nationalism and Race
Radicalism as Threats to
Society

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164 90 Stockholm	SE-164 90 Stockholm

Sammanfattning

Rasistiskt eller etniskt baserat våld i Ryssland och Östeuropa har ökat kraftigt de senaste åren. Rapporter om större grupperingar, nätverk och politiska partier med extremnationalistisk agenda menar att detta blivit ett problem som nu måste tas på största allvar. Högt uppsatta politiker, däribland Vladimir Putin själv, har uttryckt att rasismen i Ryssland är ett hot gentemot landets säkerhet. Samtidigt visar vittnesrapporter och uttalanden att det verkar finnas skäl att tro att rasismen blivit så pass institutionaliserad att det finns kopplingar till högre ort, och en del menar att åtaganden och uttalanden som regeringen gjort kan tolkas som ett steg mot ett mer nationalistiskt och främlingsfientligt Ryssland.

Denna rapport gör en presentation av rasradikala grupper och uttryck för främlingsfientlighet i Ryssland, vad dessa gruppers mål och ideologi består av, vilka metoder de använder sig av och hur de påverkar såväl det ryska samhället som det globala fenomenet rasradikalism i övrigt.

Nyckelord:

Rasism, Ryssland, extremnationalism, främlingsfientlighet, rasradikalism

Abstract

Racial and ethnic violence in Russia and Eastern Europe has increased drastically in recent years. Reports indicate that large groups, networks and political parties with a national extremist agenda have become a severe challenge to society and must be taken seriously. Prominent Russian politicians, including Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, have recognised that racism in Russia poses a threat to the country's security. However, statements from witnesses and reporters show that racism now appears to be so institutionalised that structural xenophobia exists even within organised contemporary politics in Russia, while actions and statements expressed by the government could lead to even greater nationalist and xenophobic feeling in the country.

This report examines the goals, methods and ideology of race radical and xenophobic groups in Russia, their influence on Russian society and the links to the global phenomenon of radical racism.

Keywords:

Racism, Russia, xenophobia, extreme nationalism, race radicalism

Foreword

There have been many reports in the media recently about the increase in xenophobia, racism and radical nationalist extremism in Russia. This report analyses this phenomena within the theoretical concepts of human and societal security.

The report was produced at the Division of Defence Analysis, Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI), and the work was carried out within the Russian Foreign, Security and Defence Policy Project (RUFS) during autumn 2008. The author is a Master's student at the University of Uppsala. The report was scrutinised within the RUFS project in November 2008. Special thanks to Ingmar Oldberg, senior researcher and Russia specialist at the FOI, who read the manuscript in different versions and contributed to its improvement.

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Jakob Hedenskog

Deputy Research Director and Project Manager

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1 Introduction

Over the past few years, there have been increasing numbers of reports regarding racist activity in Eastern Europe, Russia in particular. According to Amnesty International, the situation regarding racially motivated violence is severe and has been categorised as "out of control".¹ Individuals living in Russia have been the objects of violent attacks, some of them fatal. An estimated 83 people were killed in such attacks in 2007 and 59 were killed in the first half of 2008.²

Foreign Ministry spokesman Aleksandr Yakovenko explained his concern during an open address to the media, stating that "the problem of skinheads is common to both Russia and other countries, and we should fight it together".³ During his presidency, Russia's Prime Minister Vladimir Putin urged the Federal Security Service (FSB) to combat all racism in Russia, not only when it comes to violence. He appears to view the very ideas of racism and xenophobia as threats to Russian society.⁴

Racism is not a problem specific to Russia. There are groups, organisations, parties and individuals in almost every European country that belong to this ideological category. However, the Russian and East European manifestations of the trend have become increasingly violent and extreme. To date, their Western counterparts have not been as outspoken and have not used as extreme methods of violence to achieve their goals. Even so, the white supremacy movement is by no means bound by existing national borders, but is continuing to expand globally due to better communication and international establishment of ideological affinities and alliances. The

¹ BBC News online (2006) "Putin faces up to racist scourge", published 7 May, 2006, accessed February 4, 2008 (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4755163.stm>)

² Lasseter, Tom (2008) "Hate crime killings in Russia on the rise", *McClathy Newspapers*, published 13 July, 2008, accessed September 10, 2008 <http://www.mcclatchydc.com/world/v-print/story/43927.html>

³ CNN.com (2002) "Russia pledges action on skinheads", published 19 May 2002, accessed September 10, 2008 (<http://edition.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/europe/05/19/russia.skinheads>)

⁴ Moscow Times (2007) "FSB told to stop political extremism", *The Moscow Times*, published 1 Feb. 2007, accessed February 8, 2008 (<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/stories/2007/02/01/012.html>)

main questions are whether the violence apparent in Russian xenophobia can cause a spill-over effect to its Western counterparts, and whether extreme right wing groups in the East and West are achieving an increased degree of cooperation.

While acknowledging that racism in Russia has become an escalating problem, the question arises as to whether this specific phenomenon should be labelled a threat to security, as Vladimir Putin states, and if so, what degree of security threat it can pose. Are there existing theories of security that can explain the problem and if so, can they serve as comprehensive theories that cover all its vital aspects of modern extremism?

There are several reasons why xenophobia, extreme nationalism and race radicalism can be regarded as a threat to security:

- *From a human security perspective:* The racially motivated violence in Russia may have reached a level that is undermining security for sections of the Russian population.
- *From a societal security perspective:* Radical nationalism, here represented by several of the race radical groups, may permeate into organised political parties and groups that could gain sufficient popularity to create violent governments, the agendas of which could develop into 'traditional' hard security threats.
- *From a trans-national security perspective:* The prominent violence carried out by race radical groups in the East may spread to their Western counterparts. Radical racism is not limited to national borders. Race radicals world-wide are creating networks and establishing contacts and partnerships with each other.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The debate among academics and researchers dealing with security studies is diverse, to say the least, when it comes to defining a security threat or issue and establishing the criteria that should be fulfilled for a certain issue to be incorporated within the boundaries of security.

However, this report does not go further into that debate. The research presented here is first and foremost based on the empirical issue of contemporary xenophobia, extreme nationalism and race radicalism in Russia and therefore, existing theory is applied in a specific way. The prime focus is on human and societal security factors. The trans-national security factor and international and regime security perspectives are mentioned, but are not applied as theoretical tools in this research. The theoretical concepts of human and societal security are used as guidelines to investigate whether race radicalism should be classified as a security threat, and if so, within which of the theories.

An extended concept of security, as opposed to the traditional realist and neo-realist definition, should cover a range of issues and not only those primarily or previously regarded as military threats.

2.1 Human security

Human security as a concept concentrates on conflicts within states themselves and the consequences they may have for the residents in the countries concerned. It is worth noting, however, that this does not challenge the frameworks of a more state-centred nature, but can be seen as a complement to it.⁵

However, the term human security itself is defined differently within a range of topics. A narrow school of human security focuses on threats of violence, a broader school focuses on threats based on underdevelopment and a very broad school is concerned with threats of an even greater scale to human freedom. A way to combine the schools of human security is based on the idea of using violence as a dependent

⁵ Kerr, Pauline (2007), "Human security", taken from Collins, Alan et al, *Contemporary Security Studies*, Oxford University Press, printed in Great Britain, page 91

variable, whereas human development can be regarded as an independent variable.⁶ This method is used partly in the present analysis.

According to the United Nations Development Program definition of human security, there are sub-categories relating to the term. These are economic, food, health, environmental, personal and community security. The focus in this report is on two of these, personal and community security.

"Personal security — Personal security aims to protect people from physical violence, whether from internal or external states, from violent individuals and sub-state actors, from domestic abuse, etc. For many people, the greatest source of anxiety is crime, particularly violent crime."⁷

"Community security — Community security aims to protect people from the loss of traditional relationships and values and from sectarian and ethnic violence. Traditional communities, particularly minority ethnic groups, are often threatened. About half of the world's states have experienced some inter-ethnic strife. The United Nations declared 1993 the Year of Indigenous People to highlight the continuing vulnerability of the 300 million aboriginal people in 70 countries as they face a rising spiral of violence."⁸ It should be pointed out, however, that this concept overlaps with the theory of societal security, as discussed in the following section.

2.2 Societal security

In this case, society refers to the idea of identity, the perception of collectives and individuals who identify themselves as members of a specific collective. As such, individuals refer to themselves as being part of a larger group. The idea of a collective can take several shapes and forms. The first thing that comes to mind is probably the identification with a specific national group, but there are other ways of expression: sub-cultures, communities based on regionalism, race, a

⁶ Ibid. Page 99

⁷ UNDP (1994) *Human Development Report*, United Nations Development Program

⁸ Ibid.

common language, etc.⁹

In his paper *Societal security*, Paul Roe addresses extreme cases of societal insecurity at the edges of internal conflicts, between rival collectives, and lists as examples the Hungarian minority in Romania and their troublesome integration with the rest of the country, the clashes between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, and the wars in the former Yugoslavia.¹⁰

The concepts of ethnicity, nationality, and culturally tinged identity are complex and have been the subject of much academic debate. In the context of this report, the question of societal security refers to the theoretical community/collective of the race radicals, the possible collective of non-Slavs as a threatened group, and the identity of other Russians.

The societal security theory is used as a way of examining the possible threats to *Russian* society as a whole, and as a way of analysing whether xenophobia, extreme nationalism and pro-white race radicalism pose a threat to non-Slavic Russians in particular.

⁹ Roe, Paul (2007) “Societal security”, taken from Collins, Alan et al, *Contemporary Security Studies*, Oxford University Press, printed in Great Britain, pages 164 - 179

¹⁰ Ibid.

3 LIMITATIONS AND SOURCES

This report is based on academic literature in the shape of previous scientific research, but due to the nature of the subject, scientific analyses of this issue are scarce. Therefore, the material also includes newspaper articles, reports and interviews. In addition, it includes the author's own interviews with experts on the subject, excerpts from internet discussion boards and the race radicals' own published material and statements.

Much of the material was collected from the SOVA Centre, an organisation in Russia focusing on xenophobia, hate crimes and human rights. However, it must be noted that the work of the SOVA Centre has been criticised. Maria Engström, a Swedish researcher who has focused upon the New Right movement, represented in Russia primarily by Aleksandr Dugin, has accused the SOVA Centre of having a Western-orientated bias and of overestimating incidents of ethnic hatred and the importance of race radical groups.¹¹

When presenting the different race radical groups and organisations, several groups were omitted due to time and space limitations. The groups omitted are similar in ideology, formation and nature to those included, but were considered either too small in terms of organisation size or to have too little influence in the race radical scene. The same selection principle was applied when analysing statements by race radicals. All statements and opinions presented here are not necessarily shared by all individuals and organisations in the race radical scene.

3.1 Definitions

One of the problems when approaching the subject of xenophobic activity is its many definitions. Many of the different labels that have been used to describe the phenomenon tend to overlap. Incidents that have taken place in Russia or globally and that can be said to have links to, or roots affiliated with, racism of some kind are defined by

¹¹ Engström, Maria (2008), Author's interview, 29 Oct. 2008

researchers as e.g. racist, Nazi, neo-Nazi, extreme right wing, extremist, Fascist or xenophobic actions. This point is made since some of the material used for this report might seem confusing at a first glance.

The individuals and groups involved in xenophobic activities and organisation seldom speak openly about being neo-Nazis themselves, but use other forms of categorisation such as pro-nationalist, racist, patriot, pan-Slavist, pan-Germanist, radical, white power advocate, etc. The views and issues of organised racial radicalism are not always logical. Examining the primary sources of racial radicalism, there are for example white power groupings world-wide that label themselves "nationalists" while at the same time plotting with outside or "foreign" interests to overturn the elected government. Due to the overarching goal of survival of the white race, these groups see themselves as partners.¹²

Even within the East European white power organisations there is no homogeneous view of who are 'friends' or 'enemies'. For example, there are links, via the pan-European right wing group European National Front, between the Russian organisation *Russkii Obraz* and the Bulgarian National Alliance, which would make one believe that they are tied together and united. However, the internet debate forum 'White Power – Bulgaria' contains fierce attacks by Bulgarian radical racists on Slavs in general and Russians in particular, labelling Russians 'untermensch' and 'dogs', who have 'nothing in common with proud Bulgarian Aryans'.¹³

Race radicalism: "A view which holds that members of a race are organically linked together and by nature share certain inherited physical and mental features that separate them from other races." Race radicals are not by definition racists, as they do not necessarily view races in terms of superior or inferior.¹⁴

¹² Whitelaw, interview (2001), *Resistance Magazine*, issue 16, 2001, pages 38-40

¹³ White Power – Bulgaria (2008), published 26 August 2008, published 26 Aug. accessed Sept. 3, 2008 <http://bg-nacionalisti.eblahfree.com/Blah.pl?b-26/m-1219779324/>.

¹⁴ Gardell, Mattias (1998), *Rasrisk*, Natur och Kultur, Stockholm, pages 13-22, 149-183

Extreme or illiberal nationalism: "Aggressive, exclusive nationalism, often connected to ideals of past national glory, social cohesion, order, and stability in society".¹⁵

Xenophobia: "A fear of, or aversion to, not only persons from other countries, but other cultures, subcultures, subsets of belief systems; in short, anyone who meets any list of criteria about their origin, religion, personal beliefs, habits, language, orientations, or any other criteria".¹⁶

From the author's point of view, labelling all groups and organisations presented in this report 'xenophobic' would perhaps be the simplest way to limit inaccurate ideological definitions. However, it would not be the most correct. As mentioned above, all actual racists are race radicals as they share the opinion that race is essential to human relations, but far from all race radicals are racists. The same goes for xenophobia; to label all xenophobic groups 'racist' or even 'race radical' would be as inaccurate.

It is necessary to understand that Russian xenophobia, extreme nationalism and race radicalism are to some degree connected, but are not always one and the same. They may cross and intersect. All are mentioned here, but the focus is primarily on race radicalism. In several cases xenophobic groups abandon one ideological classification in favour for another, either because they have had a genuine ideological change or because of PR-related issues in attempts to appeal to broader audiences. In Sweden, this is best exemplified by the political party *Sverigedemokraterna* (the Sweden Democrats) which changed its earlier outspoken racist agenda to a more moderate nationalist approach while still keeping xenophobic tendencies.

It should be noted that the rising political extremism in Russia is not only of a race radical nature. The scene is somewhat complex, as there are organisations that may share common elements and outlooks but should not necessarily be labelled 'racist'. For example, the organisation National Bolsheviks, on their own website, have images of swastikas along with Vikings (a popular motif in Western neo-racial

¹⁵ Taras, Ray (2002) *Liberal and Illiberal Nationalisms*, Palgrave Macmillan, printed in Great Britain, page 37

¹⁶ Chapman, James P. (1975), *Dictionary of Psychology*, Dell Publishing, printed in New York

radical spheres too), but also pictures of Trotsky and Lenin, along with anti-American slogans and a sceptical view of the current Russian leadership. According to one researcher on the subject, this example of anti-democratic tendencies should be regarded as a sign of youth seeking alternative, authoritarian political stances regardless of their other political agendas.¹⁷ These include the National Bolsheviks with their authoritarian features, the Pro-Kremlin youth group *Nashi*, which is distinctly nationalist and loyal to government in character, yet openly hostile to outspoken race radicalism, and the Eurasian Union which represents the anti-liberal and anti-Western 'new right' phalange. Even though these groups share traits of nationalism, they do not adhere to either the same extreme or illiberal nationalism principles or race radicalism as represented by the groups presented in this report.

Analysing in detail the degree of racism or xenophobia held by a certain group or organisation is therefore next to impossible, unless the group openly describes itself as such. Simply focusing on the official material of an organisation is not reliable for a full-scale analysis of its character. A group such as the Movement Against Illegal Immigration (MAII) is careful not to present itself as a race radical organisation, even though it has assisted in racial violence and counts a number of race radical members within its ranks.

For this report, a modified version of the Library of Congress version of Russian transliteration into English was used. Certain names have been left with an alternative spelling due to their established use in English, such as 'Yeltsin', 'Joseph', 'Yabloko' and 'Pamyat'. English translations of the names of the race radical groups are used, and thus the abbreviations are in English even though some of the groups might be better known by their Russian abbreviations, such as the Movement Against Illegal Immigration, MAII (in Russian DPNI).

¹⁷ Waksberg, Arkadij (2005), "Rysslands politiska kamp tillbaka på gatan", *Svenska Dagbladet*, published 22 Oct. 2005, accessed 10 February, 2008
http://www.svd.se/dynamiskt/kultur/did_10829816.asp.

4 THROUGH THE AGES: RACISM IN RUSSIA

4.1 The xenophobic tradition in Russia

Russia has had a long tradition of xenophobia, ranging from religious issues such as fear of the Western, and in the Orthodox Christian view corrupt, Catholic Church¹⁸ to anti-Semitism in Tsarist Russia¹⁹, and to ethnic issues such as a hostile view of Chechens in contemporary Russia.

The Russian Federation is a multi-ethnic federation that contains many ethnicities within its borders. The early Soviet Communist regime under Vladimir Lenin and later Joseph Stalin addressed this question and called it a "nationality question". Before the revolution, Lenin had addressed nationalism as a possible threat to Communism, as he saw it as a competing element and ideology to socialism. This movement was seen by Lenin to hold such power that it could not be wholly stopped. A political strategy to counter this issue involved creating different nationality-based federal republics within the Soviet Union (such as Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, etc.) and also partly within the Soviet Russian Socialist Republic (such as Chechnya-Ingushetia, the Jewish Autonomous Oblast, etc.). This in turn was intended to guarantee the different nationalities the possibility to develop an ethnic identity but within the boundaries of Communism, and thus a peaceful way to meet the threat of nationalist ideology was believed to be established.²⁰

Even so, the different ruling elites of Russia throughout history have launched a number of attacks on its own people. Before the Bolshevik revolution and the establishment of Communism, there were repeated

¹⁸ Bodin, Arne (1998), *Ryssland och Europa*, (Natur och Kultur, Borås), pages 72-75.

¹⁹ Jenssen, Hans et al (1991), *Antisemitismen*, (Natur och Kultur, Stockholm), pages 70-71.

²⁰ See Kolstö, Pål (2000), *Political Construction Sites*, (Westview Press, USA), 2000.

pogroms, slanders and attacks on Jews. In the late 1800s, the infamous falsified document entitled the 'Protocol of the Elders of Zion' was published in Russia and was used as a reason for attacking Jews.

The Black Hundreds (Chiornaia sotnia)

As a starting point for organised Russian extremism, the Black Hundreds group was established in the early 1900s. Its political programme does not appear to have been directly specified, but its interests lay foremost in counteracting the Revolutionary movement within Russia. Its loyalty thus lay with the Tsarist regime and it stood out as a strongly conservative political assembly. Orthodoxy, autocracy and national character were important factors in its ideology, and its members consisted of landowners, merchants, the bourgeoisie, artisans and others with an interest in keeping the established order intact. Its conservatism also included xenophobic activity, especially anti-Semitism, maintaining the afore-mentioned Russian Orthodox tradition of hostility towards Jews.²¹

The anti-Semitic tradition survived during the Stalinist era of the Soviet Union, where a state campaign was launched in the early 1950s blaming Jewish doctors for an assassination attempt on Joseph Stalin.²²

Ethnic discrimination in the Soviet Union has been a debated issue, especially because of state-sponsored russification, making Russians the 'first among equals', with Russian the official language of the Soviet Union and Russian and Slavic culture holding a leading position in regard to other the cultural contributions of ethnicities. For example, in Russia there has long been a view of differences between Slavs and Caucasian people. Slandering of Chechens did not start with the labelling of the Chechen people as Nazi-collaborators during World War II, but with the Russian colonisation in the 18th and 19th century. It also played a prominent role in Russian literature, such as in Leo Tolstoy's book *Prisoner of the Caucasus*.²³

²¹ See Laqueur, Walter (1993), *Black Hundred: The Rise of the Extreme Right in Russia*, (HarperCollins Publishers Ltd).

²² Ibid. pages 106-111.

²³ See Evangelista, Matthew (2002), *The Chechen Wars - Will Russia Go the Way of the Soviet Union?*, (Brookings Institution Press).

As mentioned previously, definitions of terms associated with the topic of xenophobia and right wing extremism tend to be somewhat vague. Due to this, it is hard to actually pinpoint a date when modern Russian racism was born. Researcher Stephen Shenfield argues that it cannot be said that there has existed an explicit tradition – at least not within the borders of the country itself – of actual organised Fascism or Nazism in Russia. Rather, the movements of Russian Fascism were created outside the country's borders by Russian immigrants influenced by Western European Fascist movements. Many ideological elements that bear a resemblance to Fascism nonetheless appeared in other movements during the 1900s, but cannot be said to have achieved any ideological breakthrough. Due to the devastating war against Nazi Germany and subsequent Soviet propaganda labelling all right wing movements Fascist, there has been an aversion in Russia to adopting such a label.²⁴

4.2 Xenophobia, extreme nationalism and race radicalism in the 1990s

With the exception of anti-Semitism and a sceptical view of Central Asians and Caucasians, outspoken racism was a rare phenomenon within the Soviet Union, but a foundation of xenophobia was laid, upon which organised pro-Slavic ethnic extremist groups could develop. Two of the most important of these are presented here.

Pamyat

This group was not started in the 1990s but in the late 1970s, but its influence on the more modern scene of extreme nationalism and race radicalism in Russia cannot be underestimated. This organisation gave rise to the off-shoot group Russian National Unity (RNU), which is regarded as the most important organisation for the new wave of right wing extremism in Russia. Pamyat ('remembrance' or 'memory ') had its early roots under the name Vityaz, which was sponsored by the Soviet Society for the Protection of Historical and Cultural

²⁴ Stephen D. Shenfield (2001), *Russian Fascism: Traditions, Tendencies, Movements*, (Armonk, M. E. Sharpe) pages 32 – 35.

Monuments, with the aim of assembling people with some academic background who could contribute to the preservation of Russian values and culture. The group later took the name Pamyat and split into several factions in the mid-1980s, when their material became public. Some of their material was tinged with anti-Semitism, in the tradition of the Black Hundreds.²⁵

In a report by the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews (UCSJ) from 1999, the most acute problem in the 1990s was identified partly in the rising masses of racist skinheads, which certainly alarmed many people, but also in the anti-Semitism that was suddenly openly propagated by accepted parties and representatives in the Duma and other forums. The UCSJ named the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, the RNU but also the Russian Orthodox Church as being responsible for rising anti-Semitism.²⁶

Anti-Semitism at first did not seem to exist on a broad scale within the Russian race radical skinhead scene, or at least was not regarded as an important issue. Instead, this was something that Russian skinheads 'learned' via contacts and influences from the Western counterparts. While people with Asian and African features remained evident targets for persecution, Jews evolved into a group suspected to be more of a 'behind the curtain'-type, conspiring against Russia.^{27 28}

²⁵ See Korey, William (1995), *Russian Anti-Semitism, Pamyat, and the Demonology of Zionism*, (Harwood Academic Publishers).

²⁶ UCSJ (1999), *Anti-Semitism, Xenophobia and Religious Persecution in Russia's Regions 1998-1999*, Union of Councils for Soviet Jews (UCSJ), pages 13-32.

²⁷ Tarasov, Aleksandr, Youth Human Rights Group (2005) "Nazi Skinheads in Modern Russia", *Youth Human Rights Group*, published Oct. 18 2005, accessed Sept. 20 2008, <http://right.karelia.ru/eng/index.php-?razdel=articles&page=2005101850>.

²⁸ Matyhl, Markus, Stephen Roth Institute (2001) "*The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Modern Russia*", published 31 May, 2001, accessed September 20, 2008 <http://www.tau.ac.il/Anti-Semitism/asw99-2000/mathyl.htm>.

Russian National Unity (RNU) (Russkoie Natsionalnoie Edinstvo (RNE))

In the 1990s the RNU gained enormous influence in what was to become the Russian race radical scene. Its numbers of members were estimated at most at around 70 000, and it not only united skinheads, but also youth with leisure activities, camping and outdoor life, all under the banner of Nationalism.

The RNU was by no means a secret organisation, even though it acted somewhat less publicly than for example the Communist Party or the Liberal Democrats. It was open about its activities and at times was even endorsed and used by local politicians. Its ideology was based on four main influences: German Nazism, Italian Fascism, Romanian Fascism and the Black Hundreds legacy. Its membership numbers are said to have peaked in 1999 at around 100 000 members. The group later lost its dominance after a split.²⁹

A rumour developed that the RNU's leader, Aleksandr Barkashov, was part of the Supreme Soviet coup attempt in the Russian White House in 1993 against ex-President Boris Yeltsin's forces. Whether he actually took part in the fighting is debated, but he was indeed persecuted for the insurrection, only to be granted amnesty in 1994 by the newly elected Duma. Some time after this, the RNU distanced itself more from Pamyat, to adopt a more elaborate form of Fascism. It created an emblem that was a merger between a swastika (in Russian: *kolovrat*) and the 'Star of the Mother of God', which adorned members' uniforms. Members also used the greeting '*Slava Rossii*' (Glory to Russia) and stretched their right arm from the chest into the air, in a '*Sieg heil*' manner, as a symbol of ranking spiritual matters over material indulgence. The goal of the RNU was to form a 'strong Russia', in which an aggressive form of nationalism based upon ethnicity and race rather than culture was the ideology, as opposed to a more diffuse 'patriotism' based on allegiance to the Russian state. An anti-Semitic version of Orthodox Christianity mixed with elements of spiritualism, Buddhism and New Age was adopted. The RNU showed

²⁹ Shenfield, Stephen (2001), *Russian Fascism: Traditions, Tendencies, Movements* (Armonk M.E. Sharpe), pages 113-128

strong resentment towards Jews and Roma, with the possible hint of a future extermination of the two peoples.³⁰

The views about the RNU were mixed; some saw its members as vigilantes and to some degree as protectors of safety and order in a turbulent time. Some viewed it as a very positive force, as it managed to gather restless and troubled youth to a more meaningful existence. In the words of a young woman active in the RNU, "In the USSR, there was the *Komsomol*, in the West there are the Scouts. And here (in Russia) there is the RNU."³¹

The Duma parties of the Liberal Democratic Party and the Communist Party, along with certain parts of the Russian Orthodox Church, fuelled anti-Semitism. The conflicts in Chechnya and Georgia helped to reinforce a negative view of both North and South Caucasians among politicians and in most parts of Russian society. In addition to this, the massive rise in the RNU and xenophobic tendencies met little or no resistance from the authorities. The situation in the 1990s may have created a basis of institutionalised xenophobia and racism, paving the way for the current situation.

4.3 Contemporary race and ethnic extremism: An overview

Much of the ethnically motivated violence and attacks on non-Slavs in contemporary Russia consists of incidents carried out by more or less pronounced racist groupings. Examples of these include Format 18, the DPNI and the Slavic Union. However, as we shall see later on, hostility towards non-Slavs appears to have some links with statements originating from individuals in top positions in Russian society today.

Violent race radicals in Russia have attacked and targeted in particular people from the Caucasus, people of Central Asian descent, black or coloured people and religious groups such as Muslims and Jews. The reason for these specific targets for attack stems from the conception that Russian race radicals have referred to Central Asian peoples as

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ UCSJ (1999), *Anti-Semitism, Xenophobia and Religious Persecution in Russia's Regions 1998-1999*, *Union of Councils for Soviet Jews*, pages 14-16

'Russia's blacks', often paperless guest workers from former Soviet Republics, which make them 'easy targets' as they are likely to be treated badly by the authorities and viewed as 'illegal immigrants'. Reports show that many non-Slavs, especially people from the Caucasus, perceive themselves to live in danger.³²

Two of the most remarkably violent attacks were made public in 2004 and 2007. In 2004, a 9-year Tajik girl, Khursheda Sultanova, was stabbed to death by alleged skinheads. In 2007, a film clip of the beheading of two men, of Tajik and Daghestani descent, respectively, was spread over the internet. Film clips showing assaults on random inhabitants of non-Slavic descent have become widely used by Russian race radicals, such as the group Format 18. In an interview with one of Moscow's skinhead gangs conducted by TV reporter Ross Kemp, a spokesman for the group claims that this is indeed an important tool, and that they "...do not practice unarmed combat for sports or self-defence purposes... but for street fighting. We want people to be inspired"³³. These clips have been available on many Russian racist websites, but also more publicly on sites such as youtube.com.

Hostility towards Africans or people with dark skin seems to be escalating, based upon reports made by the BBC. People have been killed in so-called 'race riots' in St Petersburg, and slandering and offences against immigrants appear to be part of everyday life. This is not only a problem in big cities, as life also appears to be harsh for dark-skinned people in smaller towns. Russian intellectuals seem concerned that these attacks are likely to prevail in the long-term future and see this activity as a legacy from the Soviet Union, where the risk of being punished for offending other persons was very low.³⁴

Another of the most widely used methods of recruitment to these organisations is spreading propaganda with the help of so-called white

³² Jackson, Patrick, (2006) "Living with race hate in Russia", *BBC News Europe*, published 24 Feb. 2006, accessed September 15, 2008
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4737468.stm>.

³³ Kemp, Ross (2006), *On gangs*, BAFTA Documentary TV series for Sky One, season 2, episode 2, 2006

³⁴ Jackson, Patrick (2006), "Living with race hate in Russia", *BBC News Europe*, published 24 Feb. 2006, accessed September 15, 2008
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4737468.stm>.

power music or white noise, which preaches white supremacy. The music may take several forms of tonal expression, but is characterised by its pro-white racism. One of the biggest international publications in this genre is the US-based Resistance Magazine, founded by the then race radical George Eric Hawthorne (now George Bundi), who also started a record company under the same name. Resistance Magazine contains interviews, articles and other content promoting white supremacy ideology. This magazine has been helpful for Russian and other eastern European race radicals aiming to establish themselves in a global white power community. The number of Russia-based bands and organisations has grown steadily, along with other East European racist groupings.³⁵

Russian race radicalism has taken hold outside of Russia too. Many white power-activists world-wide see Russia as the 'future for the white race'. The spread has been diverse. One of the more spectacular expressions can be found in Israel, where Russian race radical immigrants have organised and have terrorised citizens of the country, not only Jews but all groups deemed racially inferior. Reports show that there is a link between Russian racist groups operating outside of Russia, and groupings within their native country.³⁶

Many of the groups in Russia gather on the day of the 'Russian March', which has become a rallying point of manifestation of Russian right wing extremism. In 2007, the SOVA Centre reported that the annual demonstration was attended by a number of race radical and extreme nationalist organisations, including the Movement Against Illegal Immigration (MAII), the National Imperial Party of Russia (NIPR), the Russian Order Group, the Slavic Union (SU), the 'Rus' Party in Defence of the Russian Constitution (PDRC), the National Socialist Society, the Union of Orthodox Gonfalon Carriers (UOGC), the Union of Russian People (URP), the Colonel Kvachkov Support Group, the Russian National Bolshevik Front (Ivan Strukov's RNBF), the Pamyat National Patriotic Front, the National Union, the Russian Community of the Crimea, the Lukashenko-2008 Group, and the Russian Public

³⁵ See Resistance.com.

³⁶ Galili, Lily, (2003) "Anti-Semitism, right here at home", *Haaretz.com*, published 23 May, 2003, accessed February 12, 2008, <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/pages/ShArt.jhtml?itemNo=296114&sw=neo-Nazi>.

Movement (RPM). Unofficially, the march was attended by members of other groups, including supporters of N. Kuryanovich and Russian All-National Union (RANU).³⁷

The Union of Councils for Soviet Jews has stated that it believes that the chance of any racial extremist organisation gaining actual political power in the Duma is fairly small. However, the chances are that in smaller regional and republic assemblies of the Russian Federation, the influence of xenophobic extremism might become significantly greater than on a federal basis.

It is worth mentioning that xenophobia, hate crime and racial extremist organisations have not decreased in Russia over a ten-year period. Some might argue that economic decline in the 1990s during the Yeltsin era created a basis for this kind of activity and ideology. This is probably true, to some extent. One might then expect that with an increased standard of living and a better economic forecast, xenophobic tendencies would decrease over time. However, there appear to be no statistics or evidence supporting this. Instead, we find a steady increase in hate crimes, and networks of nationalist extremists appear to be attracting ever greater numbers.

Movement Against Illegal Immigration (MAII) (Dvizhenie Protiv Nelegalnoi Immigratsii (DPNI))

Today, MAII is one of the most important xenophobic organisations in Russia, and differs from many of the other active ideologically similar groups in the country. In one way, it can be said to represent a modern type of xenophobia, which may be a greater threat to human and societal security than many of its counterparts. This will be explained later on.

MAII gathers a large amount of demonstrators and supporters, and has overcome many of the 'childhood diseases' of organised Russian

³⁷ SOVA Center, Kozhevnikova, Galina (2007), *Autumn 2007: Nazi Raids, Russian Marches, and Putin as Schtirnitz*, SOVA Center for Information and Analysis, <http://xeno.sova-center.ru/6BA2468/6BB4208/A886251>.

xenophobia.³⁸ By doing so, it has obtained closer ties with the European scene, making open collaborations with ideologically similar groupings in other parts of Europe.³⁹

The ideology of MAII is, as the name suggests, centred on combating immigration, but is in reality based on a pro-Slav/pro-Russian xenophobic perception which has advocated both violent and non-violent activity, and which has functioned as an umbrella organisation for different skinheads and assisted them with legal aid. Its structure is not hierarchal, but rather takes the shape of a network. There appears to be no real focus on other political questions besides combating immigration, which in turn makes it 'easier' for it to define itself, as there is no need to specify itself further.⁴⁰ The multi-faceted outlook may have made it easier for even the pro-democratic group Yabloko to cooperate with it under a united banner during the 2007 elections.

As mentioned previously, earlier Russian traditional xenophobia was tinged with severe anti-Semitism, a prominent feature during the 1990s too. However, with MAII anti-Semitism has faded away, at least to some extent, from organised Russian xenophobia – not least because the leader of the organisation, Aleksandr Potkin, is reported to be of Jewish descent, something which he himself does not deny but responds to with a rather noncommittal approach.⁴¹

People's Union (Narodnii Soiuz)

The People's Union advocates the ideas of Russian nationalism and Orthodox monarchism, sporting the imperial flag colours, black, yellow and white in its party symbol. It refers to its view of ideal nationalism as 'popular socialist'. It was formerly called People's Will and had an ideological foundation based upon imperialism and

³⁸ Rosalskaia, Maria SOVA Center (2008), Moscow, author's interview (by telephone), 26 September 2008.

³⁹ An example of this is an open letter to the Italian group La Falange, in which the DPNI gives its support for its activities and hopes for an immigrant-free Italy.

⁴⁰ SOVA Center (2008), *Rightwing Organizations and Groups in Russia and their symbols*, SOVA Center for Information and Analysis, Moscow, pages 1-2.

⁴¹ See Stormfront Discussion Board for an internet racist discussion on the subject. <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/showthread.php?p=5944720>.

militarism.

The group considers itself a serious political party and as such distances itself from outspoken racist extremism, but assumes patronage over individuals charged with crimes of a xenophobic nature. People's Will participated with the group *Rodina* in the 2003 elections and gained 8 mandates. However, in the 2007 elections, it was discarded by the Central Electoral Commission.⁴²

Great Russia (Velikaia Rossiia)

Categorising Great Russia is problematic, as its material, statements and affiliations contain different and at times even contradictory ideological traits. To label it race radical would be inaccurate, as it claims that Russia holds a voluntary coalition of peoples. It officially distances itself from racial nationalism, but claims that Russians have specific characteristics not found anywhere else in the world, and that this involves a desire for autonomy, creativity, indulgent but hard nationalism, tolerance and generosity.⁴³ However, it does not renounce anti-Semitism except in its more radical and violent manifestations. Instead, its official line is that Russian nationalists must not focus solely upon the "Jewish question" or the "Masonic conspiracy". Neither should "domination and violence be the purpose of Russians, but may be necessary in the context of self-protection and self-organisation". (Manifesto of the Revival of Russia). Great Russia also openly sympathises with MAII and participates in the Russian March.

Great Russia, like the People's Union, wishes to see the establishment of an Orthodox superpower, based upon what it refers to as the "Russian doctrine", an ambiguous vision of a coming Russian golden age, where the 'Third Rome' will regain its former glory and stand as a solid guardian of true values among global moral decrepitude. The group is thoroughly anti-liberal and is trying to establish itself as a political party and attempted to be registered as such to participate in

⁴² SOVA Center (2008), *Rightwing Organizations and Groups in Russia and their symbols*, SOVA Center for Information and Analysis, Moscow, page 4.

⁴³ Velikaia Rossiia official website, <http://www.velikoross.ru>, accessed November 2, 2008

the 2007 elections, but to no avail. It is reported to have a rather low level of activity as of today. Its leader is Andrei Saveliov.⁴⁴

The People's Nationalist Party (PNP)
(Narodnaia Natsionalnaia Partiia (NNP))

As an openly neo-Nazi party and thus racist, the PNP traces its roots back to 1994 and has ideological traits with a reference point back to the previously mentioned Black Hundreds. The party was started by Alexander Ivanov-Sukharevskii and soon gained a strong influence and increased its membership size. It has an estimated number of regional departments of 47 division groups. However, the organisation split into two factions after it was attacked in 2003 and Sukharevskii was injured. The two groups share same name, but have two different leaders.⁴⁵

Russian National Unity (RNU) (Russkoie Natsionalnoie Edinstvo (RNE)), present organisation

The RNU was previously mentioned as the most important extreme nationalist organisation in Russia during the 1990s, and one gets the impression that it remains thoroughly active due to the number of articles and amount of material written about and by the group. Some of its local divisions also stand out as some of the few extreme nationalist and race radical groups that have been declared extremist by the Russian government. However, times have changed, and the RNU today has lost much of its former influence and power and has become rather fractured. It still exists, but its activity has diminished. Rather than being the most powerful group, its importance is more historical, as being the 'founding' racist group encompassing racist skinheads, ordinary youth and extremist activity. Today, the RNU has fully embraced the Orthodox identity.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Ibid, page 1.

⁴⁵ SOVA Center (2008), *Rightwing Organizations and Groups in Russia and their symbols*, SOVA Center for Information and Analysis, Moscow, page 3.

⁴⁶ Official Russian National Unity website (2008), <http://rne.org>, accessed 10 September 2008.

The Slavic Union (SU) (Slavianskii Soiuz (SS))

The SU group is an off-shoot from the Moscow delegation of the RNU, fronted by Dmitrii Demushkin. Among the RNU and MAIL, this organisation stands out as one of the most internationally featured outspoken race radical groups, which regards survival of the white race as the most important issue.⁴⁷ SU has been subjected to much media coverage but according to a spokesperson for the SOVA Centre, the group is not as big as it would like the public to believe.⁴⁸ Its outlook specialises in a kind of neo-paganism under the name "Russism" and it has rejected the Orthodox identity of Pamyat and parts of the RNU, and as such appeals to many young and violent skinheads. Nowadays, it tolerates Orthodoxy among its representatives.⁴⁹ In an interview, Demushkin has stated that he does not distance himself or the SU from violence, but encourages people to act on their own, so that there can be no link between the organisation and violent activities.⁵⁰

The National-Socialist Society (NSS) (Natsional-sotsialistsheskoie Obshchestvo (NSO))

As an off-shoot from the Slavic Union, the NSS organisation is one of the more openly self-proclaimed neo-Nazi race radical formations, also sporting a NSDAP-like swastika in its emblem. Reported to be a small organisation, it is nevertheless militarised and violence-orientated. It had, or has, a direct link to the even smaller group Format 18, which will be described more thoroughly later on, which was part of the NSO until September 2007. The group is split in two directions but is nonetheless still active.

It is hard to keep an active track of the smaller groupings in the race

⁴⁷ Schweitzer, Daniel (2005) *White Terror*, Dschoint Ventschr Filmproduktion AG, Germany

⁴⁸ Rosalskaia, Maria SOVA Center (2008), Moscow, author's interview (by telephone), 26 September 2008.

⁴⁹ SOVA Center (2008), *Rightwing Organizations and Groups in Russia and their symbols*, SOVA Center for Information and Analysis, Moscow page 14.

⁵⁰ Schweitzer, Daniel (2005) *White Terror*, Dschoint Ventschr Filmproduktion AG, Germany.

radical scene. A common feature both in the Western and Eastern extremist scenes, not only on the right wing political scale but also on the left and in the religious sphere, is that with few exceptions – if any – organised groups want to be recognised and stand out among the others. The problem with this is not only that they may be very small, but the information about them may not always be reliable. With the help of the internet, a lonely individual without actual support but with some skills in webpage design can easily create a website for a supposed 'organisation' which in fact may not exist other than by its name. In addition, individuals can act upon their own initiative without help, references or orders from a higher ranking individual in an organisational hierarchy. It should be noted that the persons presumed responsible for the previously mentioned video of two men being beheaded claimed to be part of an organisation called the 'Nazi Party of Russia', but the SOVA Centre claims never to have heard of the group.

Apart from the facts mentioned above, another problem with identifying minor organisations is that they often tend to be short-lived. If one group does not get the attention it seeks, it may change its name, disband or in some cases, if it finds itself in trouble, either legal or with other groups in its scene, it may simply go underground and stay active but away from the public eye. In some cases, the latter may actually pose a greater threat than groups that strive for media attention. Professor of religious history Mattias Gardell found in his field studies among race radical groups in the USA that some of the most militant groups were devoid of active public recognition.⁵¹

Some groups have been omitted from this report even though they have gained reputations and have been called "some of the most popular skinhead groups in Russia"⁵², since they are based in local regions and operate in specific areas, such as Blood & Honour Russian Division, Skin Legion and United Brigades 88, which are primarily Moscow-based. St Petersburg has its own gangs, such as Russian Fist,

⁵¹ Gardell, Mattias (2008), author's interview, Uppsala, 23 September 2008.

⁵² Ocran, Sydney (2008), (Liberian Ph.D Candidate living in Moscow), conversation with the author, 10 Oct. 2008.

while Nizhnii Novgorod has the North group, and Yaroslavl's group White Bears.⁵³

Format 18

Given a public face by its member Maxim "Tesak" Martsinkevich, Format 18 is a clearly racist organisation and became infamous in Russia and abroad for being among the first racist groups to use multi-media in its violent activity, by attacking people of non-Slavic appearance, filming it and later posting it on the internet. Martsinkevich was convicted of incitement of racial hatred in 2008, while three of his associates were convicted of the murder of an Antifa (left-wing group) activist. The Format 18 website has now been closed by the Antifa, but there still exists active support for the group and there have been campaigns such as "Free Tesak", vocal martyr among race radicals, that present him as a victim of violation of freedom of speech.⁵⁴

The Ryno Group / White Brotherhood (Beloe Bratstvo)

In July 2008, this group gained world-wide news coverage as one of the most violent and ruthless race radical groups in Russia. Headed by two 18-year-old men, Artur Ryno and Pavlev Skachevskim, it stands accused of 20 racially motivated murders and has claimed responsibility for even more murders and fatal violence.⁵⁵

There is not much information available on the group as such, even though it has gained media coverage, as its organisation appears to be rather loose – with no political manifesto except for stating that

⁵³ RIA Novosti, (2003) "Skinheads In Russia: Who Are They?", *Pravda.ru*, published 6 Aug. 2003, accessed Oct. 4, 2008.
http://english.pravda.ru/main/18/87/345/10666_skinheads.html.

⁵⁴ Grishin, Anton (2007), "Skinhead Russia", *Moscow News*, published 6 Sept. 2007, accessed 4 Oct. 2008
<http://www.mnweekly.ru/national/20070906/55273681.html>.

⁵⁵ Ermakova, Nataliia (2007) "Beloe bratstvo" obedelos na skinkhedov", *Gazeta.ru*, published 2 Aug. 2007, accessed 5 Oct. 2008,
http://www.gazeta.ru/2007/08/02/oa_245939.shtml.

"Moscow must be purified". As its members face prosecution, the group is likely to remain inactive or disorganised. However, there remains a possibility of copycat activity.

Schultz 88

This group could have been omitted since it is primarily based in St. Petersburg. However, it is included due to its internal structure, which is of importance. Reported to be one of approximately 50 active skinhead groups in Russia, Schultz 88 claims to be a representative of the "white man's jihad" and that the race radical movement has begun to divide itself into cells and into an al-Qaeda like structure. This kind of formation can also be seen in the West as with the Swedish network *Fria Nationalister* (Free Nationalists), acting in small but effective groups with little or no direct links with each other, which makes their actions and members harder to trace. A representative of Schultz 88 claims that the group has "sent several hundred people to hospital", and sports Western white racist terrorists Timothy McVeigh and Robert Jay Mathews as role models. The group does not consider itself as necessarily Russian, but rather "belonging to the white race".⁵⁶

'Rus' Party in Defence of the Russian Constitution ('Rus' PDRC) *(Partiia zashchity rossiiskoi konstitutsii ('Rus' PZRK))*

Based on the remaining active fragments of the Russian National Unity, Rus PDRC is now the most active organisation to have risen from the RNU's ashes. The ideology of the organisation is somewhat hard to determine, but has been labelled 'ultra-right'. Its members range ideologically from Nazis, to extreme Nationalists and sympathisers of Italian Fascism. It was denied registration as a party in 2007. One of its characteristics is that even though it is headed by a man named Yurii Vasin, the group is not led by a specific individual, but run as a

⁵⁶ Zarakovich, Yurii (2004), "From Russia With Hate", *TIME Magazine*, published 1 Aug. 2004, accessed September 22 2008.
<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,674718-2,00.html>.

collective.⁵⁷ Its official statements praise constitutionalism, social justice and even democracy, but at the same time claim that the party, in its activities, is based on traditional national values inherent to the Russian people and other indigenous peoples of the Russian Federation and promotes their national revival, and also advocates "traditional Cossack law" to protect the borders of Russia. It warns against foreign threats such as NATO in the West, the economic power of China and Japan in the East, and active development of Islamic states in the South.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ SOVA Center (2008), *Rightwing Organizations and Groups in Russia and their symbols*, SOVA Center for Information and Analysis, Moscow, page 10.

⁵⁸ official website, pzrk.ru, attained 10 November, 2008

5 REACTIONS

5.1 From Russian politicians

The Russian government has, on various occasions, raised voices of concern regarding racism in the country. Vladimir Putin has stated that "race-motivated crimes undermine the security of the state". Different politicians, such as in the Leningrad region, have also condemned racism and claimed it to be a serious threat to public safety.

One could argue that the early state sponsoring of *Nashi* was, and still is, a way of combating xenophobia. Its establishment was launched as a reaction to the rapid rise in racist skinhead and RNU membership numbers, along with a growing concern from the government regarding the National Bolsheviks. However as noted, regardless of its original purposes, *Nashi*'s ideology and activities appear to have adopted a nationalist character which, if not wholly in line with the previously mentioned race radicals, still bears a resemblance to patriotism of a fanatic kind.

However, it appears that the government has not acted forcefully enough, as the number of reported incidents is still high, and not much seems to have changed. There is new legislation on hate crimes, which is a step forward (Law on Combating Extremist Activity, Article 116, Paragraph 2, Part (c) of the Russian Criminal Code). It remains to be seen whether this legislation can bring any real change to the situation. Reports from the Moscow-based SOVA Centre claim that criminal prosecutions of individuals who have been involved in hate crime of a violent nature have decreased, whereas the number of attacks is still alarmingly high.

Racist violence continues to grow at a high rate, including, in addition to neo-Nazi skinhead attacks, numerous everyday violent conflicts driven by ethnic and racial hatred. In contrast, criminal prosecution of individuals who have committed violent crimes has decreased for the first time since 2003.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Kozhevnikova, Galina (2008), *Autumn 2007: Nazi Raids, Russian Marches, and Putin as Schtirnitz*, SOVA Center for Information and Analysis

Various reports show that local policemen dealing with these issues have acted in a negligent way, remaining uninterested in actually dealing with the problem, either by refusing to classify race or ethnic motivated attacks as crimes, instead calling assaults and violence as bland "hooliganism", or in some cases actually taking part in the hostilities themselves or refusing to act.^{60 61}

Format 18's website was closed down by the Russian Antifa, and not the authorities. The government does not support the autonomous groups combating race radicalism, as they are seen as equally unpredictable, unstable and directed towards hooliganism.⁶²

5.2 Reactions to the violence in the Russian race radical and extreme nationalist scene

Russian xenophobia, race radicalism and extreme nationalism have manifested themselves in forms from violent street activity to propaganda posted on websites on the internet. The xenophobic spectrum is not homogeneous, as it expresses itself in a myriad of ways, ideologies and opinions. The organisations listed in the previous chapters are not necessarily the best of friends with each other, as their methods, outlook and goals differ. However, analysis of material such as interviews, propaganda, material and opinions posted by Russian race radical organisations and independent individuals themselves

<http://xeno.sova-center.ru/6BA2468/6BB4208/A886251>.

⁶⁰ Griffiths, Emma (2007), "St. Petersburg - Hate Crimes", Journeyman TV for ABC, broadcasted: 20/03/2007, accessed 26 Sept. 2008
Transcript available at <http://www.abc.net.au/foreign/content/2007/s1906862.htm>.

⁶¹ UCSJ official site (2008), "Russian policeman sentenced for hate speech distribution", Union of Councils for Jews in the Former Soviet Union (UCSJ), published 5 September 2008, accessed 10 Sept. 2008,
<http://www.fsmonitor.com/stories/090508Russ3.shtml>.

⁶² Grishin, Anton (2007), "Skinhead Russia", *Moscow News*, published 6 Sept. 2007, accessed 27 Sept. 2008,
<http://www.mnweekly.ru/national/20070906/55273681.html>.

reveal a common feature: very few of them denounce the street violence and random attacks. Even when asked about the murder of 9-year-old Sultanova, at least two racist skinheads interviewed replied that "it may have been regrettable that a child died ... but if she had lived, she would have grown up to be our enemy anyway".⁶³

5.3 Reactions by Western counterparts

Compared with Western race radicalism, the East European rising wave of extremist xenophobia appears in general to be more brutal and violently orientated. Whereas Western racial radicalism often leans towards a 'peaceful' discourse/rhetoric, often claiming self-defence as its prime vehicle for violence,⁶⁴ many of the East European counterparts have advocated a rhetoric based upon a more active use of force and have encouraged people to take part in violent attacks on people of non-Slavic descent. Large, organised right-wing extremist parties and organisations in the West tend to distance themselves from street attacks and violence towards random targets, as such activities may damage their outlook, cause, reputation and image.⁶⁵

Western race radicals are not as homogeneous in their reactions as the Russian individuals and organisations. An easy way to get a glimpse of international debates on the issue in the racist scene is via the internet discussion board *Stormfront.org*, used by race radicals on a large scale, and with contributors from around the world. Under the forum thread "Russian Skinhead Video", one user has posted links to violent video clips created by Format 18, the content of which is much the same as previously mentioned – random attacks and persecution of Russian

⁶³ Griffiths, Emma (2007), "St. Petersburg - Hate Crimes", Journeyman TV for ABC, broadcasted: 20/03/2007, accessed 26 Sept. 2008

Transcript available at <http://www.abc.net.au/foreign/content/2007/s1906862.htm>

⁶⁴ However, there are exceptions to this: recent investigations in Sweden by a magazine specialising in reports on xenophobic activity, *Expo*, reported a rise in extreme right wing violent crimes. However, the primary focus for these groupings appear to be rival extremists on the left political scale such as *Anti-Fascistisk Aktion* (AFA), *Revolutionär Front* (Revfront) and the Young Syndicalists SUF, (*Syndikalistiska Ungdomsförbundet*).

⁶⁵ Kemp, Ross (2006), *On gangs*, BAFTA Documentary TV series for Sky One, season 2, episode 2

citizens with a non-Slavic appearance.⁶⁶

The statements selected here are all from Western countries, as the aim is to find out their reactions to the Russian race radical methods. There are a range of opinions on a sliding scale. While some Western radicals are directly offended by the content of the films, others have another approach, justifying the methods.

Some of the debaters with the most negative view of the videos and methods used by Russian skinheads claim that this way of supporting the cause of white supremacy does not serve it, as people outside the movement will look at these and find race radicalism offensive, and they will scare away people who otherwise may be interested in joining the white supremacist movement. Others have a more positive view of the material, saying that "if this is the Russian way of handling things, it is their business ... we who do not live there have no reason to give opinions on what is not our country". In other words, some advocate the principle of "whatever method that suits the environment is best, and as we do not live there we should not denounce it". Other voices have a directly appreciative view, claiming that "the Russian skinheads are the SA [*Sturmabteilung*, the Nazi German stormtroopers in the 1920s and early 1930s] of today. They do their job well; a lot of foreigners are now scared to live in or visit Russia. The message has been sent; they are not welcome". The most outspoken supporters of the methods see no problem with engaging in the fighting and would wish to see the same methods applied in their native countries, labelling the denouncers of violence as "battle scared desk nationalists who do not understand the seriousness – this is war and war demands bloodshed".⁶⁷

Even race radicals who have no record of violence but who have rather placed themselves among the intellectuals, such as David Duke in the US, have started to look upon Russia as some kind of a role model for how the race issue should be treated. In his article "Is Russia the key to

⁶⁶ Stormfront Discussion Board, postings from September 2006 to October 2006, accessed 13 October 2008, <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/showthread.php/russian-skinhead-video-262952p7.html>.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

white survival? ", Duke argues that "the white race faces a world-wide genetic catastrophe" but that "Russia has a greater sense of racial understanding among its population than does any other predominantly white nation" and that while earlier white nations face degeneration, Russia and the Eastern bloc have understood things better than the West. He refers to the Soviet era as "the Jewish-Bolshevik" age, which (white) people have now acknowledged as alien and negative. Other race radical groups and individuals have also stated their admiration for Russia, much along the same lines as David Duke.^{68 69}

It is not certain whether the admiration is equally mutual. Professor M. Gardell argues that even though the Russian race radicals in their formation period were to a large extent heavily influenced by the Western racist scene, this interest has calmed down, as the Russian race radicals see themselves as leaders of the global scene. The Western radicals have faced a lot harder opposition to their cause, as Western government laws are much harder on hate crime and racist organisations. The Eastern, and in particular Russian, skinhead groups and organisations have been able to form, act and build up their movement without disturbance from the state.⁷⁰ However, MAII at least has written an open letter to its Italian counterpart and stretched out an open hand for cooperation, while representatives from the Swedish group *Nationalsocialistisk Front* (NSF) have partaken in Russian race radical demonstrations. Even the RNU holds a Swedish division, operating from Stockholm. A Moscow division of the originally English organisation Blood & Honour (B&H) also exists, though it is claimed by the SOVA Centre that it is not regarded by the international B&H as an official branch.

According to the Swedish Security Police (SÄPO), connections between Swedish and Russian race radicals at least appear to be loose and few. A small division of the RNU is active in Stockholm, but apart from this the only real activity seems to be a few participations in

⁶⁸ Info 14 (2005), (Swedish race radical site), "Ryssar fördrev zigenare" (translated: "Russians evicted gypsies"), posted 23 Feb. 2005, accessed 8 Oct. 2008 http://www.info14.com/2005-02-23-ryssar_fordrev_zigenare.html.

⁶⁹ Schweitzer, Daniel (2005), *White Terror*, Dschoint Ventschr Filmproduktion AG, Germany.

⁷⁰ Gardell, Mattias (2008), author's interview, Uppsala, 23 Sept. 2008.

demonstrations such as the annual Swedish Salem March and the Hess March in Wunsiedel in Germany.⁷¹

⁷¹ Hagström, Ahn-Za, SÄPO, author's interview (e-mail correspondence), Stockholm, 11 November 2008.

6 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

6.1 Nationalism and racialism: A sliding scale?

Much has been written about the question of nationalism in Eastern Europe, and recently perhaps even more so about nationalism in the former Soviet republics. In the latter case, nationalism can be viewed as either a positive or a negative factor, but almost without exception as a necessary part in shaping national identity. The rising interest in the Orthodox Church in Russia after the demise of the Soviet Union suggests that religion has been an important point of focus of a collective Russian identity. This goes for both Russian citizens in general, but also for great parts of the right wing extremist groups such as the RNU.

Labelling all extremist nationalism in Russia as an outlet of violent skinhead aggression is a grave mistake. Demonstrations held in various parts and cities of the country show that nationalist supporters have many different features. Film clips of nationalist demonstrations spread on the Internet as propaganda and documentation show that even though there are sometimes undeniably large amounts of short-haired people in classic skinhead outfits, the majority of the demonstrators appear to be 'ordinary' people without any special characteristics.⁷²

6.2 Human security and causes of xenophobia and violence

As mentioned previously, the narrow school of human security focuses upon threats of violence. In larger cities of Russia today in particular, there are a number of groups which face severe threats to their safety, due to their skin colour, descent and religion. This shows a real threat to human security.

The broader school is more focused upon underdevelopment.

⁷² Griffiths, Emma (2007), "St. Petersburg - Hate Crimes", Journeyman TV for ABC, broadcasted: 20/03/2007, accessed 26 Sept. 2008
Transcript available at <http://www.abc.net.au/foreign/content/2007/s1906862.htm>.

According to the idea of combining schools of human security, as such pointing to underdevelopment as an independent variable for explaining outbursts of intra-state political violence, there is reason to believe that there is a connection between unemployment, a decreased standard of living and possibly the identity void left by the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the rise of political and racial extremism in Russia and the violence that has followed. Frustration among unemployed, disillusioned and violent young people might have triggered part of the current racist violence. According to a Moscow racial radical spokesperson, many of their gang members have a previous record within the army and now, with nothing to do, have become restless.⁷³

The current picture of Russia is seldom associated with great improvements in building a fully functioning welfare state. Common explanations of growing xenophobia are usually found in decreased standards of living, economic deprivation and downturn, mass unemployment, etc. However, even though factors like these certainly may have helped to establish ethnic hatred in Russia during the turbulent 1990s, they do not fully explain the situation of today. With an overall growing standard of living in Russia, we would have expected a decline in race radicalism and ethnic hatred, but the situation does not appear to be improving and, if not growing in numbers, radicals seem at least to be staying on a large scale, concentrated to larger cities such as Moscow and St Petersburg. Another problem is that racist or xenophobic ideals also seem to be anchored in higher political institutions and administration.

Even though Vladimir Putin has expressed concern about racist activities with the Russian Federation, other parts of his political discourse and practice do little to put some actual weight behind his words. At a summit for the Organisation of Islamic Conferences in Malaysia in 2003, he stated that "all attempts to provoke islamophobia in Russia have failed".⁷⁴ This statement seems to bear little

⁷³ Kemp, Ross (2006), *On gangs*, BAFTA Documentary TV series for Sky One, season 2, episode 2.

⁷⁴ Pravda (2003), "Islamophobia in Russia", *Pravda*, published 16 Oct. 2003, accessed 5 Feb. 2008, <http://english.pravda.ru/hotspots/terror/16-10-2003/3864-islam-0>.

resemblance to the situation of many Muslims living in fear in Russia today.

The violent acts committed by the racist groupings and individuals do not appear to be isolated events. In my opinion, this violence should generally be regarded as being based upon political initiatives, even though this might not be an appropriate explanation for all of the events (delving deeper into this, one might argue that some of the reported incidents may be more of a 'hooligan' type of crime with little political motive).

The very broad school of human security is concerned with threats to human freedom. So far, there is little actual evidence that xenophobia, extreme nationalism and race radicalism advocated by the groups presented in this report have managed to threaten human freedom, as they have too little influence on the mainstream political agenda. There might be concerns about implicit effects on political freedom, a matter elaborated on later in this discussion.

6.3 Societal security

An active rise in xenophobia can pose a threat to societal security by provoking violence and threatening parts of a country's population, thus causing severe separation, fear and alienation. Discrimination, intimidation and harassment might also evolve into escalating ethnic hatred, especially if the threatened part of the population recognises the threat and decides to retaliate. Can Russian pro-white race radicalism cause this within the Russian Federation?

A spontaneous answer to this question would be 'probably not', as active race radicalism plays a relatively small role as regards the whole of the Russian population. Unfortunately, however, this is also what keeps it from receiving proper attention.

Even though the question of national issues tends to play quite a central role within the boundaries of societal security, it is hard to claim with absolute certainty that the theoretical concept of societal security could or should be applied to the phenomenon of race radicalism, even in Russia. The reason for this goes back to the earlier discussion of the definition of the phenomenon or objective of research in this report. The concept of 'nation' is complex, and may be even

more so in Russia, since the Russian Federation's borders hold a myriad of different nationalities. Even though there should be no doubt that violent extremism poses a threat to individuals belonging to certain ethnic groups, it is far harder to claim that we can see a rising threat of violent ethnic conflict on a larger scale, such as the examples given by Paul Roe (Hungarians and Romanians in Romanian Transylvania, or the collision between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland).

As stated previously, the label that race radicals choose for themselves is by no means logical, except perhaps for the concept of 'white power'. Thus, their 'enemies' or objects for hatred do not belong to a specific group, even though certain ethnicities face a broader challenge and threat than others (such as Jews, people from the Caucasus and Central Asia).

The concept of societal security holds, to a certain degree, the prediction that the perceived threatened group may find a common threatening object or group. Even though race radicals are threatening, they simply do not fit the same role as a rival ethnic group in an ethnic conflict (such as Poe's examples) due to their differences. Likewise, the threatened group or groups are probably too diverse, as they range from ethnic to religious minorities and have few things in common apart from their non-Slavic appearance.

On the other hand, a greater societal threat is more likely to emerge based upon further conflicts of a state-centred nature. As conflicts between Russia and other states have shown, the Russian state appears to be likely to use ethnic discrimination as a tool for pursuing its agenda, as with the Russian-Georgian case. As these ethnic groups are more distinct, they are probably more likely to view themselves as targeted homogeneous collectives.

6.4 Xenophobic, extreme nationalist and race radical organisations

The fact that MAII is the most successful of these organisations is alarming. Under the banner 'illegal immigration', MAII has not only managed to unite many previously divided groups and individuals, but has also made it easier to connect with the West, as it is addressing the

'same issues' as many of its Western counterparts. This might be recruiting rhetoric in line with the current debate on illegal immigration within the European Union and in the United States of America.

Where Russian race radicalism is heading is hard to foresee. The movement as such is younger than its Western counterparts, which means that we still might not have seen its final transformation.

Modern Russian xenophobia, extreme nationalism and race radicalism cover a large area of outlooks and ideology. There has been a transformation in a short period of time from a state-sponsored idea of 'cultural heritage', Vityaz, possibly tinged with anti-Semitism, to a more organised form of group, Pamyat, which in turn via the RNU gave birth to the radical movement that is around today. Apart from these groups, anti-Semitism has manifested itself on a broader scale via the Orthodox Church, the Communist Party and the Liberal Democrat Party. Organised Russian xenophobia then emerged during the late 1990s and created several ideologically different branches, ranging from xenophobic interpretations of the Orthodox faith, as in the case of the RNU, to the early neo-pagan identity of the racist group the Slavic Union.

The Orthodox identity may have been important as a 'rallying point', and may have created an easy focus for unity among different race radicals and extreme nationalists within Eastern Europe. Serbian, Ukrainian and Belarusian radicals have united under the banner of Orthodoxy, which can be an indication that it can serve as a traditional identity, the history of which can be of fundamental value, along the same lines as modern nation-building adopting symbols of a golden age. However, continuing with the Orthodox identity may alienate other race radical and extreme nationalist groups and create splits between Orthodox and non-Orthodox Slavic groups and individuals. The demise of the RNU may suggest this, as it appears to have lost much of its former attraction.

It serves the race radical movement to be vague and sometimes opaque in its visions. As long as there is no fully clear view of what the aim really is, as in specifying state structure, economics, etc., there is no special need for an ideological division among different groups. Of

course, rivalry may emerge due to other causes such as personal issues and power struggle among groups.

The broad variety of Russian race radicalism of today may decline if the organisations lay ideological and different views of identity aside, to focus upon uniting towards a common goal. The success and large membership of MAII may be an indication that this is happening.

With the Internet site youtube.com and similar sites, race radicals and extreme nationalists now have a more public platform, making propaganda and hate speech more accessible than before. With this medium, race radicalism is not limited to obscure mail order firms and websites. Many race radicals engage in discussion boards available on the site, commenting on the film clips.

6.5 Possible authoritarian consequences

The implementation of extremist laws by the Russian government has so far not had a considerable effect on race radicalism, xenophobia and hate crime. The criteria for what actually defines extremism appear rather dubious, as the prohibition of the National Bolsheviks suggests.

The authorities have verbally been tough on hate crime, xenophobia and racism as threats to societal security, but not in action. The few examples of actually addressing the subject are limited to the banning of a few local divisions of the RNU, a few persecutions of incitement of racial hatred (often in connection with more serious crimes) and the possible shutdown of websites preaching white supremacy and posting racist material. It is not necessarily a good way to handle hate groups by labelling them extremists and outlawing them, but as the law functions today, this could be done without serious effort, as with the case of the National Bolsheviks and the various Islamic organisations.

A problematic but possible side effect of the current official way of dealing with the problem could paradoxically be a strengthening of authoritarianism and a loss of democracy. Xenophobia, extreme nationalism and race radicalism have grown into such serious problems in Russia from a human security perspective, addressed not only within the country's borders but also abroad, that the issue could function as a legitimate argument for taking 'extraordinary measures' on combating the racist groups. The authorities may then, as is already done to

some degree, continue to label unwanted dissidents as extremists and by doing so, easily silence political opposition. The ban on the National Bolsheviks could be an alarming example of this possible outcome.

6.6 Spill-over effects

There is little solid proof that the Russian violence is spreading towards the West. The most probable area where this is happening appears to be in Eastern Germany, where MAII has been actively making ties and promoting its interests. Eastern Germany also contains some of the most violent race radical groups in Western Europe.

However, as argued by Mattias Gardell, Russian race radicals appear in general less interested in the West. The judicial systems of Western countries create, at least for now, too many obstacles for organised violent race radicalism. Furthermore, according to SÄPO, the level of co-operation appears to be low.

However, it is alarming that only a few Western race radicals actually condemn the racist violence and attacks on lonely, unarmed and vulnerable individuals in Russia. This is a grave change from the rhetoric used by Western race radicals in the 1990s, where much emphasis was laid on arguing from a self-defence perspective, and where it was claimed that the government and the invisible 'ZOG' (Zionist Occupation Government, the old anti-Semitic conspiracy theory claiming that Jews control global society) were the real enemies.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ For example of rhetoric and goals in the Western race radical scene in the 1990s, both black and white racialists in the US have collaborated together for a common cause - racial separatism - something very unlikely to occur in Russia.

7 Concluding remarks

- The Russian authorities do not seem to take the threat of racism seriously, despite vocal condemnation. The law on combating extremism appears to be misused and so far has not brought much change to racist issues. Instead, it may be used to silence opposition groups.
- The easiest way for Russia's race radicals to lay aside their differences appears to be under the banner of combating immigration.
- There is no hard evidence to suggest that Russian race radicalism has influenced its Western counterparts significantly or will do so in the future.
- Russian racism has been allowed to grow strong without significant interference since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Xenophobia has also been prominent in Russian history for a much longer time.
- Little suggests that race radicalism and xenophobia in Russia are about to decline. Real change would require considerably more attention to the problem, both from the Russian authorities and from abroad. The current economic crisis may foment even more ethnic tension.
- The Russian authorities have not managed to secure the safety of a large fraction of the Russian population.

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