

HUMAN AND ETHNIC MINORITY RIGHTS IN THE CONTEXT OF AN EMERGING POLITICAL CULTURE IN RUSSIA

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Abstract

The political culture appears to be instrumental for understanding regime changes and consolidation processes in post-socialist countries. In a situation of rapid disintegration of most traditional Soviet values and habits, the current Russian political culture cannot but disintegrate and become contradictory. That is why the search for reliable criteria for its evaluation proves to be the corner-stone for the analysis. The author argues that public attitudes toward human rights fully reflect a complicated combination of individualistic and collectivist, self-dependent and paternalistic principles.

Human rights also represent a specific arena of ethno-political competition. The asymmetrical and multi-ethnic Russian federation is an arena of inefficient ethnic policy and sharp inter-ethnic conflicts. Within this context, attitudes towards the political status of diaspora and ethnic minorities help distinguish between civic and hegemonist patterns of political culture. In its empirical part, the paper presents data from fifteen public opinion polls recently conducted by Russian, Western, or joint teams. The results enable the author to detect some current shifts in attitudes, to trace some long-term tendencies and to draw several general conclusions. The young generation of Russian citizens has been chosen as the subject of a case study as one of the potentially most influential social groups that could predetermine the outcome of the current ideological and political struggles.

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Political Culture and Mass Expectations of the Human Rights Situation

The formation of a civic political culture is the key problem of contemporary Russian politics. An evaluation of an emerging Russian civil society could significantly help realise the essence, alternatives and perspectives of a changing political regime. The most general question is: what is actually more characteristic for the interpretation of the current Russian political culture — transformation or continuity, adaptiveness or consistency, Russian imperial and Soviet legacies or the impact of Western liberalism?

Implementing the classical behavioural, psychological approach to political culture, including its disputes (Almond and Verba 1965; Eatwell 1997; Etkins and Simeon 1979), I could suppose that the existing Russian political culture — being highly fragmentary in its structure — represents a very peculiar combination of parochial, subject, and participant models without any dominant one. The proportions of these three types depend basically on the societal environment. Civic culture is just to emergence. The role of old and new ideological paradigms and concepts in the formation of Russian mass and individual consciousness is particularly important. That is why public responses to various ideological appeals need special attention.

It is commonly assumed that political culture is the basis for political activity, both on personal and institutional levels. The study of political participation in Russia, embracing electoral behaviour and preferences, party identifications, and ideological cleavages, and affiliations with protest and dissent activities, have been solidly reflected in different publications (Fleron 1997; Gibson 1996; Hahn 1997; Petro 1995; Rukavishnikov 1998; White 1997a; Wyman 1997). Some authors emphasised a recent, partial reversion in Russian politics to old cultural patterns (Brovkin 1996; Brym 1996; Fukuyama 1995; Gudimenko 1994; Rose 1999; Urban 1998), but there has been practically no research focusing on public attitudes to human rights as criteria for assessing the political culture. At the same time, the works mentioned above omit or slightly touch on backgrounds, manifestations, and perspectives of Russian ethno-nationalism as an influential factor in shaping the patterns of the political culture.

The dramatic transition to democracy has caused three major, correlated changes in the process of shaping Russian political culture linked to the human rights agenda. The first one is connected to a new level of public aspiration and interest to the issues of rights and freedoms, the second one is based on increasing claims and demands of citizens for a guarantees of their individual opportunities, and the third one refers to people's deep concern and frustration with the volume of implementation.

There is a common public assumption that the Russian constitution is one of the most formally advanced documents in the world in terms of proclaimed civic rights, but the execution of constitutional norms is much behind their declaration. The approval mechanism of the 1993 constitution itself turned out to be rather disputable and controversial. The text was not worked out by a popularly elected deliberative assembly, published a month before the referendum, and adopted with practically no discussions and changes two months after the bloody hostilities between the president and Parliament which sharply divided society (Rose 1995a).

Not surprisingly, the New Russia Barometer III survey — conducted four months later, in March to April 1994 — showed that only 12 per cent of the surveyed could be defined as “optimistic supporters,” who voted “yes” in the referendum and expected a lawful state with the approval of the new constitution (Rose 1995a, 41).

Even deeper mass scepticism was reflected in the investigation of the Russian-American Human Rights Group in August to September 1994. Only 7 per cent of the respondents perceived the inclusion of personal rights and freedoms in the constitution as a positive change (Mikhailovskaia 1995, 74). The survey detected a striking confusion in the public assessment of human rights developments: whereas 23 per cent of the respondents rated the human rights situation in Russia as a change for the better, 33 per cent rated it as a change for the worse, and the rest did not see any significant change (22 per cent), or could not answer the question (20 per cent). One cannot but agree with Cass Sunstein’s argument that for post-socialist countries “it is important to undertake a cultural shift through which people would look less to the state for their support, and more to their own efforts and enterprise” (Sunstein 1993, 37).

An analysis of public opinion regarding the significance of constitutional guarantees reveals the highest ranking for rights to legal protection, social security, personal immunity and inviolability of one’s property, and fair compensation for one’s labour (rankings from 96 to 89 per cent), followed by protection from arbitrary job dismissal, free choice of the place of residence, private property, freedom of conscience, and reception and distribution of information (rankings from 70 to 49 per cent). In comparison, some basic political rights were obviously underestimated, for instance freedom of speech — 38 per cent, the right to free association — 29 per cent, and the right to participate in the activities of any political party or movement — 23 per cent (Mikhailovskaia 1995, 71, 75).

In time, public mistrust of government efforts to establish the rule of law has grown further, while people’s expectations are considerably diminished. According to the Central and Eastern Eurobarometer (March 1996), Russia held the record among the surveyed 19 post-socialist countries for negative opinions on this issue. People who replied negatively (85 per cent) to this question thought there was “not much” (35 per cent) or “no respect at all” (50 per cent) for human rights in Russia.

The very high level of dissatisfaction regarding respect for human rights is equal to that concerning attitudes toward the development of democracy. Only 6 per cent of Russian respondents (in the same survey) positively evaluated the way democracy was developing in their country, compared to 86 per cent of negative responses (another record level).

This unsatisfactory situation was confirmed later by joint Russian-Canadian research on Russian regions (Spring-Summer 1998), which uncovered the following results on the issue: 7 per cent positive and 80 per cent negative responses to the development of Russian democracy. It is important to emphasise (corresponding to the data of the same survey) that the image of democracy has become strongly associated with the implementation of civil rights (see Table 1).

Table 1: Public Perceptions of Democracy

"What is most important for democracy in Russia?"	Very important %	More important than not %	More unimportant than not %	Not at all important %
Observation of the constitution	78	18	2	3
Independent courts	72	22	3	4
Free press	69	25	4	3
Right to private property	50	30	11	8
Assemblies in which citizens decide	50	29	12	9

Source: Working papers of joint Russian-Canadian survey "Russian Regions."

Roots and Manifestations of Russian Ethno-Nationalism

Another line of sharp disputes refers to understanding the rights of ethnic majorities and minorities. As Claus Offe assumed, in post-communist, atomised societies with their "associational wasteland," "ethnicity and nationalism are virtually the only things that could provide guidance for collective action" (Offe 1992, 23). He emphasised the particular hardship for a transforming multi-ethnic society, where a "pre-civic mentality" might find its way into a negative consolidation, looking on minorities as "potential enemies, not worth being entrusted with the status of equal members of the political community" (Offe 1997, 66). This conclusion might be fully applied to contemporary Russia.

There exists a widely spread supposition that classical communism or Western type liberalism have significantly exhausted their potentials for Russia and are gradually being replaced by the ideology of nationalism in its peculiar Russian implementation (Anderson 1998; Fish 1997; Kutkovets and Klyamkin 1997; Pastukhov 1998). The phenomenon of Russian ethno-nationalism has been recently turned into a developed subject of academic study (Braun 1997; Dreiling 1998; Drobi-zheva 1996; Flenley 1996; Laitin 1996; Tishkov 1997; Tismaneanu 1998; Tolz 1997; Tolz 1998).

For a decade, popular moods and affiliations shifted considerably toward traditional Russian and imperial values. The disintegration of the USSR and the troubles of 25 million Russians in countries of the former Soviet Union (FSU) led to an intense search of national self-identification. The loss of the great power status revived "national idea" disputes, with variable "nostalgia aspects" — such as the "restoration of the mighty USSR" or the "revival of the powerful Russian empire" (which look practically the same for some politicians) — predominating. Frustration caused by inefficient market reforms and uncivilised power struggles, as well as a growing distrust of government, undermined the public's positive image of liberal democracy and made Russians vulnerable to ethnic prejudices and notorious "Zionist-Masonic plot" theories. The Chechen war together with the myth of Caucasian domination of the Mafia was impetuses for creating an "internal enemy image."

In its public application, Russian ethno-nationalism faces a dilemma between aggressive hegemonic chauvinism or comparatively tolerant civic patriotism. For Russia's radical right movement, the political solution lies in totalitarian statism. Its programs seek the protectionist function of the state in the form of legally guaranteed

privileges for the Russian majority, proportional ethnic representation in government and other public offices, and restoration of the imperial unitary state model with traditional administrative units: *guberniya, uezd, volost*. It should be mentioned that apart from an ultra-nationalistic state design, the alternative of a “civic-territorial” federation to the existing “ethnic” one is still being sharply disputed in Russian academic and political circles.

Table 2: Nation-wide Surveys on Public Attitudes and Voting Behaviour in Russia, 1993-1998

Title	Organisers	Time	Sample	N
Public Opinion and Transition Experience	S.Whitefield, G.Evans, VYadov, ISAN	June-Aug. 1993	50 regions	2030
The Russian Election Study	T.Colton, S.Lehmann, J.Hough, S.Tumanov, M.Guboglo	Dec. 1993	69 <i>oblasts</i> and republics	1000 – pre-, 4000 – post-election
The Glasgow Poll	M.Wyman, S.White, B.Miller, P.Heywood, GALLUP UK, ROMIR	Nov. 1993 -Jan.1994	128 sampling points	2136
New Russia Barometer III	R.Rose, C.Haerper, G.Pashkov, PLS, FOM	March-April 1994	14 regions	3535
Constitutional Rights in Russian Public Opinion	I.Mikhailovskaia, Y.Kuzminskii, Y.Mazaev, RAHRG	Aug.-Sept. 1994	10 regions	5103
New Russia Barometer IY	VTsIOM for CSPP, R.Rose, E.Tikhomirov	March-April 1995	10 regions	1943
New Russia Barometer Y	VTsIOM for CSPP, R.Rose, W.Mishler, E.Tikhomirov	Jan. 1996	11 regions, 104 units	2340
Specific Russian Pattern	T.Kutkovets, I.Klyamkin, ISA	May 1996		1519
New Russia Barometer YI	VTsIOM for CSPP, R.Rose	July-Aug. 1996	22 regions, 69 units	1599
New Russia Barometer YII	VTsIOM for CSPP, R.Rose	March-April 1998	11 regions	2002
Russian Regions	V.Yadov, J.DeBardeleben, A.Kazakov, ISAN, Carlton University (Ottawa)	March-Aug. 1998	5 regions	1975

ISAN – Institute of Sociology, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow;

ROMIR – Russian Opinion and Market Research, Moscow;

PLS – Paul Lazarsfeld Society, Vienna;

FOM – Public Opinion Foundation, Moscow;

RAHRG – Russian-American Human Rights Group;

VtsIOM – All-Russian Centre for Public Opinion Research, Moscow;

CSPP – Centre for the Study of Public Policy, University of Strathclyde;

ISA – Institute for Sociological Analysis, Moscow.

In addition to those commonly shared principles, various ultra-nationalist quasi-parties or groups express their ethnic hegemonism in terms of exclusiveness or inclusiveness. Within the former, the Russian Party, for instance, advocates a Russian expansion into north Kazakhstan, north Kirgizstan, the Crimea, and Left Bank Ukraine with reconsiderations of the boundaries in accordance with the compact settlements of ethnic Russians. It demands the election of an ethnic Russian to head of state, the expropriation of “Zionist property” and its return to the “robbed

Russian people," and promotes repatriation of Jews from Russia. Within the latter, the National Republican Party of Russia suggests an ethnic proportional electoral system and a so-called "geographical federation," composed of territorial units which might provide cultural or economic autonomies for non-Russian ethnic groups, but on the strict precondition that they adopt the predominant, "historical Russian statehood." This reconstruction should be accompanied by a "peaceful repatriation" of ethnic Russians from FSU republics. The most ridiculous hybrid of both approaches is presented by the Russian National Unity program, which clamours for extending the ethnic definition of "Russian" to Ukrainians and Belorussians, and for "genetic cleansing" of Russian ethnicity, i.e., by proposing barriers for mixed marriages or priorities in health care for ethnic Russians (Babintsev and Berdnikov 1996; Danilov and Zassorin 1993).

The new socio-economical environment rather than ideological programs and political activities of extremist nationalist organisations has evidently affected the patterns of Russian political culture among elites and, especially, the masses. It is essential for political analysis to detect whether the ethno-centric appeal has found a sound echo in Russian public consciousness. Some recent surveys (Table 2) could be helpful for the assessment.

Russian Diaspora: Public Attitudes toward Rights and Political Status

Different polls indicate a growing sense of victimisation of the majority, a tremendous feeling of deprivation, and increased inter-ethnic hostility among Russians by 1993. The time coincides with the success of the nationalist, Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) in the 1993 State Duma (Lower House of parliament) election and is an absolutely logical point to consider public moods and attitudes¹. The moment of such a shift could be explained by the initial and most painful reaction to the split of the Soviet Union, the first wave of people's dissatisfaction with reformist policies, and the rise of aggressive and nihilist sentiments in society as a response to the bloody, "president versus parliament" power struggle.

Then there was overwhelming support of Moscow protecting Russian diasporas in the "Near Abroad." Along with some other investigations, such a tendency was revealed by the Russian Election Study survey (December 1993). For instance, when asked whether the Russian state should defend the rights of Russians who live in FSU republics, fully 92 per cent answered "yes," only 3 per cent said "no," and 5 per cent declined to answer (Hough 1994, 13).

But when those issues were offered to respondents in connection with other, more appealing problems, they proved not to be the first priority. Thus, according to the New Russia Barometer (NRB) III survey (March-April 1994) among the variety of possible concerns, only 4 percent of the interviewed marked the treatment of Russians in FSU republics, which ranked far behind price increases, low wages, increasing crime, and government ineffectiveness (Rose and Haerpfer 1994, 22). The later NRB surveys proved that the public image of such a protection was not really intervention but basically one of negotiations (92 per cent in the 1996 survey), to a lesser extent — economic pressures (67 per cent) and repatriation of ethnic Russians from those countries (67 per cent), and almost excluded military action (16 per cent), which had been advocated so much by radical nationalists.

There was a noticeable difference during the 1993 election campaign under the influence of the LDPR's militant, restorationist rhetoric. The Glasgow Poll conducted at that moment (November 1993 to January 1994) reflected the peak level of expansionism in the overall public attitudes together with those supporters of competing political parties (see Table 3).

Table 3: Expansionist Attitudes of Party Voters in the 1993 Parliamentary Elections

Nature of suppositions	Favourable responses according to the identification with the party			
	All	LDPR	KPRF	VR
"Do you believe that there are parts of other countries that should belong to Russia?"				
Pre-election poll - %	51	67	64	47
Post-election poll - %	49	60	54	43
"Do you support threat of military actions to defend the rights of Russians living outside Russia?"				
Pre-election poll - %	25	41	17	17
Post-election poll - %	25	31	31	25

Source: Wyman et al. 1995, 603.

Those moods were naturally higher among LDPR supporters, but KPRF voters were not much different from ethno-centrists; what was really striking was the level of nationalism among VR² supporters who had been considered liberals. It would lead to the conclusion that in 1993 nationalist appeals resulted in a practically universal response.

Public attitudes toward this issue have considerably changed during the last five years, according to a VTsIOM (All-Russian Centre for Public Opinion Research) survey in March 1999. Its data could be interpreted as a very peculiar mixture of several contradictory perceptions. They include a prevalence of civic, multi-ethnic nationalism, a limited proportion of Russian ethno-centrism, a striking exclusion of minorities, and an unprecedented indifference to Russia's diaspora; these sentiments attest to tremendous confusion in mass consciousness.

Ethnic Minorities and Xenophobia

Returning to 1993 as a starting point of the analysis, we discover that the Public Opinion and Transition Experience survey (June-August 1993) indicated a solid basis of support for anti-minority positions, although these attitudes were less widely shared among the population than its more basic antipathies to the course of market and democratic reforms at that moment. There was a relatively even distribution of attitudes toward the existence or extent of minority group rights, with large numbers of respondents located between the two extremes. Cultural exclusiveness was obviously dominant in people's minds, which manifested itself in its ethno-linguistic aspects. Whereas only 29 per cent agreed (and 37 per cent disagreed) that "National minorities should have more rights that they have now," 47 per cents agreed (and only 27 per cent disagreed) that "All national minorities in Russia should be educated in the Russian language" (Whitefield and Evans 1994, 53).

With time, most surveys observed a stabilisation of the volume of Russian ethnic hegemonism and noted even a slight decrease since 1993 (see Table 4).

Table 4: Dynamics of Russian Exclusivism according to Surveys from 1993 to 1999

	Year	YES in %	NO in %
"Should ethnic Russians be officially recognised in Russia as a major ethnicity?"	1993	53	—
	1995	43	38
	1999	43	48
"Who is to blame for current miseries of Russia?"			
Non-Russians residing on the territory of Russian Federation	1993	33	—
	1999	20	71
Ethnic Russians who did not manage to preserve their best traditions, religion and culture	1994	49	39
	1999	52	40

Sources: *Drobizheva et al.* 1996, 143; *Rose and Haerpher* 1994, 20; *Segodnya-Interfax*, March 16, 1999; *Tolz* 1998, 1015.

Empirical evidence from NRB polls seems to contradict the Russian national superiority concept. The surveys show that despite the rhetoric of extreme nationalistic leaders, like Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, Nikolai Lisenko, and others, xenophobia and anti-minority hostility occupied a stable but modest position in the respondents' perceptions. In 1998, 40 per cent of respondents believed that other nationalities living in Russia represented no threat at all, whereas only nine per cent considered it a "big threat" (Rose 1998, 51). The NRB polls also demonstrated that anti-Semitism on a mass level should neither be neglected nor exaggerated; for instance, in public opinion Jews rank next to last among sixteen groups that were sometimes blamed for the country's economic problems. But simplifying this problem could have a misleading effect. No doubt, the unprecedented growth of influence of ethnic Jews in business and governmental structures has inspired a new level of anti-Semitism among Russians who are more affected by scapegoating in a situation of growing uncertainty and dissatisfaction. According to a 1994 survey, 30 per cent of the respondents agreed that "Jews in Russia today have too much power and influence," and an additional 20 per cent was uncertain about the statement (Whitefield and Evans 1994, 53).

Anti-Semitism could still be more provoked by recent vulgar, anti-Semitic remarks of Albert Makashov and Victor Ilyukhin (members of parliament, and Movement for Army Protection leaders and KPRF members). The State Duma has refused to condemn them after a parliamentary majority of communists and nationalists voted solidly against the resolution. The incident could be explained by the pre-election logic of Zyuganov's party which — in its current split — considers radical "communo-patriots" one of the "three columns" for collecting potential votes. Added to an overall shift of the KPRF leadership to nationalism, this tactic may have double consequences for public attitudes toward the party: expanding its base of support in nationalist circles while keeping from Zyuganov those still backing Marxist principles of "proletarian internationalism."

With the rejection of atheist policies under the communist state, Russia experienced a rising adherence to the Orthodox faith. Traditional religious beliefs were turned into meaningful criteria of Russian national identity by some strata of soci-

ety; they replaced vanishing communist spiritual values and became fashionable for the greater majority. There is a higher level of conservatism and traditionalism among Russian Orthodox believers compared to non-believers, which find their specific expression in attitudes toward ethnic minorities. Thus, according to the 1996 VTsIOM survey, 47 per cent of interviewed believers agreed with the point of view that “non-Russians have too much influence in Russian Federation,” while only 37 per cent of non-believers shared the opinion (Dubin 1998, 43).

The Specific Russian Pattern study (May 1996) closely analysed the system of attitudes among Russian nationalists who constitute 16 per cent of the population, according to its data. They appeared to be mostly consolidated in their ethno-centric attitude toward human rights. Only 25 per cent of them approved the principle of ethnic equality, while 75 per cent advocated a legally guaranteed priority for rights and freedoms of the Russian ethnic majority. Their motivations look egotistical rather than hegemonic, since they felt deprived in a situation in which non-Russians were adapting to the new reality better than Russians (Kutkovets and Klyamkin 1997, 134-135). A joint Russian-Canadian survey (Spring-Summer 1998) revealed that ethnic Russians virtually evaluate transition changes much more pessimistically than non-Russians do (Table 5).

Table 5: Differences in Evaluations of the Transition between Ethnic Groupings (in per cent)

Evaluation of Changes	Ethnic Russians	Non-Russians
“Situation has improved”	3	17
“Situation has not noticeably changed”	21	16
“Situation has worsened”	50	21
“Difficult to say”	22	40

Source: Working papers of joint Russian-Canadian survey “Russian Regions.”

Young People in Russia: Combining a Liberal Vision of Human Rights and Nationalist Sentiments

In the process of political socialisation, it is essentially important to trace the political subcultures of various layers of the population. Some recent Russian and Western publications have focused on descriptions of the political culture of young Russians to anticipate tendencies in its national development (Riordan et al. 1995; Sibirev and Golovin 1999; Williams et al. 1997).

Public consciousness, affiliations, and political behaviour of Russian youth stand in a significant contrast to those of other generations. In terms of political culture models, the parochial type is almost completely omitted, the paternalistic type is much less vocalised than in the case of older Russians, while the participant type is comparatively developed and based on a greater inclination toward liberal values — a promising perspective for an emerging civic culture. Thus, according to a Russian-American Human Rights Group survey, young people are more critical in their evaluations of the human rights situations in the past, more optimistic in their assessment of current changes, and more active in their attitudes to the issue than their older, fellow citizens: 71 per cent of respondents younger than twenty years of age and 67 per cent of older ones, agreed that “Human rights were never pro-

tected in our country;" 33 and 23 per cent, respectively, agreed that "The situation with human rights has improved," and 21 and 16 per cent, respectively, believed that "People should actively defend their rights" (Mikhailovskaia 1995, 75). Students, according to the same investigation, turned out to be more devoted to democratic principles in their values and priorities than average citizens (Table 6).

Table 6: Priorities in Human Rights According to Social Standing

Attitude	Students %	Total %
The right to private property is "important" or "very important"	70%	52%
It is more dangerous for our society to condemn the innocent	50%	36%
Mass media should present all points of view	59%	54%

Source: Mikhailovskaia 1995, 76.

At the same time, political participation among young people is predominantly spontaneous combined with stable apathy and nihilism toward political parties.

Concerning the impact of ethno-nationalist ideologies, young people in Russia are demonstrating two opposite tendencies. On the one hand, surveys have reflected an unprecedented decline of patriotic pride, a high level of distrust of the national government, and a large rise of cosmopolitan sentiments. For instance, a poll by the Russian Federation State Committee on Youth's Affairs and a statement by its chairman, Victor Denikin, on March 23, 1999 showed that only as little as 3 per cent of young Russians felt proud of their motherland. Almost half of them would like to leave Russia forever.³ It is interesting to compare these data with results of an NRB III survey in 1994, which showed that young respondents possessed the same level of cosmopolitanism as older people. On the other hand, a new shift to Russian ethnic consciousness recently is quite noticeable among young people. It is based on an intense search for national self-identification and the "Russian idea" as well as on public disputes over the new geopolitical position of the Russian State. With minimum support for restoring imperialist doctrines, youngsters are rather actively advocating the concept of a "competitive and economically mighty Russia." The specific paradox of their ethno-political attitudes consists of an integration of a low level of ethnic prejudices with a high level of ethnic exclusiveness. Youths are subjects of a struggle for influence between radical pro-fascist nationals and liberal patriots or moderate nationalists.

Governmental Policy toward Radical Ethno-Nationalists and Public Responses

It must be mentioned that since the very start of the Russian ultra-nationalist movement, governmental offices demonstrated, in most cases, their unwillingness or inability to combat the unconstitutional dissemination of ethnic hatred by pro-fascist groups. There are two major reasons. Firstly, the Russian post-communist government adopted but not once utilised various nationalist appeals and slogans (Drobizheva 1996; Tolz 1998); secondly, the lack of a special federal law on combating political extremism (currently under consideration by the State Duma). President El'tsin's special decree, including its demand for criminal prosecution, failed

to have a serious effect. Occasional judicial considerations and court decisions cover only a great minority of the cases.

As has been mentioned above, in the fall of 1998, the State Duma failed repeatedly to pass a resolution censuring Makashov and Iluykhin's anti-Semitic remarks. Krasnodar *krai* governor, Nikolai Kondratenko, announced his strong support for Makashov and encouraged the distribution of anti-Semitic literature in the province. In his response, President El'tsin promised in December 1998 a powerful offensive against anti-Semitism and extreme Russian nationalism.

The first (more or less resolute) measure was undertaken in 1998 by then Minister of Justice, Sergei Stepashin, who refused to register the Russian National Unity (RNE) party on the federal level accusing it of ethnic segregation. There was some legal confusion in the decision, since such an allegation — if proven — could constitute legal grounds for criminal prosecution rather than prohibition of registration. The RNE leader, Alexander Barkashov, declared that Stepashin's act was illegal and could not undermine the political might of RNE with branches in dozens of Russian regions (registered by local governments), and that real Russian patriots "would remember Stepashin when they come to power."

The turn of regional government policies toward the Russian extreme right could be noticed recently with the start of the irreconcilable fight against RNE activities in Moscow, proclaimed by the city's mayor, Yuri Luzhkov and launched by blocking Barkashov's intention to hold an RNE congress there. The Moscow authorities, reacting to a paramilitary march by 200 RNE activists through the city, prohibited their regional branch and the party newspaper, "The Russian Order," while the Moscow City Duma approved (in April 1999) additional measures banning production, dissemination, and demonstration of Nazi symbols and symbols resembling them. One day later, the St. Petersburg City Legislative Assembly adopted a similar decision. Other restrictions of Nazi symbols were reported from Kemerovo *oblast'* and other regions.⁴

These government activities may have caused a double polarising effect. They could contribute to rehabilitating confidence in the Moscow city government among democratically minded, moderate nationalists, who appear to be the bulk of potential Luzhkov voters. But they may also inspire new public sympathy for ethno-political extremists as "innocent victims of authoritarian pressure." Hopefully, the first reaction will prevail among public sentiments.

On the eve of national elections, radical nationalists intensified their attempts to combine forces and collect votes. RNE initiated an umbrella coalition — National Bloc — with less publicly known nationalists and was aiming for 20 per cent of the electorate.⁵ Since an RNE ally — Spas (Saviour) — registered for the election, Russian ultra-nationalists received a legitimate opportunity for representation in parliament. Although the government and pro-liberal public circles became nervous, chances looked more hypothetical than real.

The 1999 parliamentary and 2000 presidential elections were crucial for Russia's political discourse. Despite their attempts, ideologically different and — in numerous cases — antagonistic, ultra-nationalist groups could not be consolidated within widely recognised blocs and competitive against major players in the Russian elections.

The voting demonstrated a new level of nationalistic appeals from most of the participating parties, whose ethno-political messages varied along liberal-authori-

tarian lines. Extreme Russian ethno-nationalism is still preserving its certain socio-economical, cultural, and psychological base in Russian society. However, its political success seems unlikely in the face of both, the impact of a “socialist internationalism” legacy on some people and the influence of cosmopolitan, liberal values, as well as the immunity to fascism inherited from the memories of World War II among the greater majority of citizens. An additional, reliable proof was this year’s celebration of Victory Day, the only remaining holiday fully observed by most of society.

The most predictable and preferable alternative — at this point — to Russian chauvinism or communist restorationism (and their predictable combinations) could be found in an “enlightened patriotism” (emphatic wording for moderate nationalism), which promises to affect the protest vote and might be represented in power by centrist coalitions.

Conclusions

The people’s concern in the sphere of human rights is inspired basically by socio-economic hardships of market reforms — such as, delays in salary payments, low incomes for the majority of the population, a high cost of living, or absence of trustworthy and sufficient social guarantees — as well as their criticism of the legal protection system, which fails to provide personal security, immunity, and inviolability of property, the right to free choice of residence, and other constitutional norms.

Political participation in favour of promoting civic rights is being developed in two major directions: legitimate formal actions, like elections and referenda, partisan mass meetings, and petitions, as well as spontaneous, informal protest marches, strikes and transportation blockades, which recently prevail.

In the sphere of political culture, the human rights agenda reflects a conceptual, ideological confrontation of traditional, paternalistic, collectivist habits and expectations typical of communist values, and reciprocal, individualistic perceptions associated with pro-liberal affiliations.

In summary, given the overall situation of rights and freedoms in the Russian mindset, one must conclude that contemporary Russia, on its path to rule of law, strongly needs a “civic rights culture” based on genuine respect for ethnic legal equality and human dignity and inclusive of education, practical applications of knowledge, and consolidated democratic experiences.

Notes:

1. The most profound analysis of LDPR 1993 electoral success in terms of its social profile, nationalist appeal, and campaign technology was offered by Hough 1994; Malyutin 1998; Mikhailovskaia and Kuzminskii 1994; Ordeshook 1995; Sakwa 1995; White et al. 1997b; Whitefield and Evans 1994; Wyman et al. 1995; Wyman et al. 1998.
2. KPRF — the Communist Party of Russian Federation; VR — the Choice of Russia Party.
3. *Izvestiya*, March 24, 1999.
4. *Segodnya-Interfax* April 29, 30, 1999; *Nezavisimaya gazeta* May 21, 1999; *Izvestiya*, May 19, 21, 1999.
5. *Kommersant*, April 27, 1999.

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