CERS Working Paper

Dividing Lines: the Construction of Four Races in Soviet Russia

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Introduction

This essay critically analyses the processes of racialization of four different groups in Soviet Russia (1917-1991): black people, South East Asians, Muslims, and Jews. Despite an official egalitarian ideology that claimed racism only existed in the capitalist West (Stalin, 1936), this essay demonstrates that not only did racialization take place in Soviet Russia, but racism existed also. This context demonstrates a unique set of racial ideas, which were often hidden in Soviet discourses and shows how an egalitarian philosophy can result in racial oppression (Rex, 1980). We see that the application of traditional Marxist theory is problematic when looking at racism, as the phenomenon still persists even when capitalist relations cease to exist. Also, in following the Marxist ideology, Soviet Russia adheres to racism and the notion that races are real bio-cultural entities (Law, 2012).

The first section of this essay looks at the processes of racialization of black people, analysing the anti-racist rhetoric and demonstrating how political motives can change racial ideas. The second section analyses the processes of racialization of South East Asians and the East in general. Factors that may have led to the ethnic cleansing of Koreans are also discussed. Following on from this, the third section explores the processes of racialization of Muslims and the discrimination that they faced. Finally, the fourth section analyses the racialization of Jewish people, demonstrating it's historical and ideological roots.

Racialization is the assigning of "social and cultural significance" to a "group of people who are recognised as sharing common physical or physiognomic characteristics and/or a common lineage of descent" (Law, 2010: 3). In other words, it is the construction of a group of people as a race. Although racial ideas are often given a pseudo-scientific logic, they are socially constructed, along with ideas around ethnicity and nationality (Weitz, 2002). There is nothing natural about these identities, nor are they fixed or entirely separate from one another (ibid.). Nevertheless for the sake of clarity, an ethnic group can be defined by "shared customs based on a belief of common descent," which can "develop into nations when they become politicized and strive to… [obtain] political order" (Weitz, 2002: 6).

Ethnicity is often self-defined, although it can be seen as primordial, meaning that an individual is a member of an ethnic group from birth, unable to escape or change this identity (Law, 2010). This primordial view of ethnicity is similar to ideas of race. Weitz (2002: 7) suggests that race is a denotation of identity in its most exclusive form; every single member of the racialized group is seen as possessing specific features that are "indelible, immutable, and transgenerational." Whilst racial distinctions are frequently looked upon in terms of phenotype, it is not the case that race is necessarily making reference to skin colour (ibid.), as demonstrated in the case of Soviet Russia. Dissimilar to ethnicity, race always involves a construction of hierarchical difference, which is often resisted by the 'subordinate' group (ibid.). Racism occurs when a concept of race is mobilised, involving the specified racial group's negative attribution (ibid.).

It is important to note that many of the racialization processes that occurred in Soviet Russia were likely to have also affected the other republics in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R). Particularly as Gleason (1990: 14) suggests the U.S.S.R was only divided along "pseudo-federal lines", and was in fact "maintaining a rigidly centralized government-party organization."

Removing the Red-Tinted Glasses: The Construction of Blackness

"Black and white can all be red."
(Hughes, 1936: no pagination)

This was the message that Communist Russia spread; encapsulated in the writing of African-American, Langston Hughes. A message that clearly suggests that under the red Communist flag, the colour of your skin is irrelevant. At a time where black people were being lynched in America, it is no wonder that the egalitarian philosophy presented by the Soviets was appealing to Hughes (1936) and other black radicals (see Matusevich, 2008). However, as this section of the essay suggests, the red state may not have been as rosy as it claimed to be. There were ambivalent racial ideas that existed among the Russian population, and as time passed some of this ambivalence turned to overt negativity (Quist-Adade, 2005). The anti-racist rhetoric of the Soviet state is examined here in depth, as well as the consequences this may have had in terms of how black people were treated. Seemingly, as the most visible victims of Capitalist exploitation and slavery, black people were used in Soviet propaganda (Matusevich, 2008; Quist-Adade, 1993; 2005), targeted for conversion to Communism (Kanet, 1968) and on the receiving end of both special treatment and everyday racism (Matusevich, 2008). Moreover, the way in which this changes over time demonstrates the politics of race and how racial ideas and hierarchies are mobilised by officials in order to achieve their political goals (Quist-Adade, 2005).

As race is socially constructed (Weitz, 2002), it is important to consider some of the pre-existing racial ideas about black people prior to the Bolshevik revolution, as they may have influenced their treatment in the Soviet era. Many Russians associated racism with the American slavery system, comparable to the Russian serfdom that they condemned (Rogers, 1973). The term 'white Negro' emerged, so Russians could directly compare the white slavery in Russia with the black slavery in the US (ibid.). Whilst the term was developed to point to similarities, it shows that they do not see themselves as the same, as the term distinctly differentiates the two groups of people on ethno-racial grounds and colour of skin. The reference to colour suggests that the white/black dualism, which existed in the rest of Christian Europe, may have also existed in Orthodox Russia, where whiteness symbolised chastity and righteousness (Law, 2010). The notion of a racial hierarchy may have paralleled this, as the Russian radical thinkers who made the association often inferred that Russian serfdom was worse as it both delayed Russia's political advancement and enslaved their own Christian brothers whilst the Americans enslaved an alien race (Rogers, 1973). So even though they were overtly condemning racism, they were not free of implicit racism themselves (ibid.). However, once this became apparent to the Bolsheviks, there was a reinforced rejection of not only American racism but the biological foundations of racism itself (ibid.). Hence, when Bolsheviks came into power they were already rejecting the idea of racism, seeing it as a characteristic of the previous Russian autocracy.

Moreover, for the Marxists, racism was a product of class exploitation; the bourgeois, capitalist West exploited the proletariat, particularly those from the East (Marx and Engels, 1848; Comintern, 1920; Stalin, 1936). Therefore, for Russia to be truly Socialist, there could be no racism. Stalin (1936), although realising Russia was still in a period of transformation, maintained that unlike the West the U.S.S.R was "profoundly internationalistic" as:

"All nations and races have equal rights… neither difference in colour or language, cultural level, or level of political development, nor any other difference between nations and races, can serve as grounds for justifying national inequality of rights."
(Stalin, 1936: no pagination)

It is clear that in terms of official ideology, although races did exist, there was no place for racism in Soviet Russia. Nevertheless, it is important to consider the internal political value of this rhetoric for a nation with a multi-ethnic composition (Matusevich, 2008). They claimed lift the status of ethic minorities from subservience not only in the U.S.S.R, but also abroad (ibid.). Matusevich (2008) suggested that, consistently, non-white people have been the most discriminated-against and exploited section of societies worldwide. Thus, in claiming to be opposite to the capitalist West (Stalin, 1936), it is no surprise that the official ideology of Russia was, in part, anti-racist, embracing peoples of colour (Matusevich, 2008). Africans, in particular, became a symbolic representation of capitalist degeneracy (ibid.).

Russia's involvement in Africa began early in the Soviet era, Lenin had ambitions of an international proletariat revolution (Service, 2009), and he maintained that its victory in Europe depended on the revolution's success in the Western colonies (Law, 2012). Thus, from the 1920s, Russia supported anti-colonial struggles in Africa with material and military resources (ibid.). Numerous black Soviet sympathisers and black radicals went to the Soviet Union, in the 1920s-30s; most emigrated from North America or the Caribbean in pursuit of racial harmony that was absent in their countries of origin (Matusevich, 2008). Indeed many came back with stories of positive experiences, like the aforementioned Hughes (1936). Claude McKay (1923), a Jamaican-American writer and poet, recalled his experience in Soviet Russia with such optimism he assumed it would be called propaganda. Perhaps his optimism stems from the fact that he witnessed the overt racism in the United States and England (Giles, c2000). Indeed, he claimed the Russians reactions towards him lacked the impertinence and offensive nature that would usually be experienced by a "very dark colored man… in Germany and England" (McKay, 1923: no pagination).

Though, not all black people recalled positive experiences in Soviet Russia. Smith (1964: cited in Matusevich, 2008: 66) claimed that in the search for racial equality they were given "the full treatment of racial inequality in reverse." This special treatment was not always welcome:

"I was beginning to feel uncomfortable from all this flattery, which had a touch of condescension in it, too."
(Richard, 1963: cited in Matusevich, 2008: 67)

Interestingly Richard, who was writing in the early 1960s, almost three decades after Smith, also felt as though there was "racial discrimination… in reverse" (ibid.). Matusevich (2008) argues that there was a sense of paternalism towards black people, despite the Soviets good intentions. Quist-Adade (2005) also notes this paternalism but maintains that Soviet Russia lacked genuine sentiment of anti-racism, despite their rhetoric of Soviet solidarity. There was often much confusion amongst Africans in the Soviet Union caused by a combination of propaganda sponsored by the state, every day racism and the generous selflessness, and warm which they often came across within many soviet people (Matusevich, 2008). Often they were ridiculed, but also treated as objects of curiosity, as Russians were fascinated by their foreignness (ibid.). Quist-Adade (2005) demonstrates the extent to the ambivalent attitudes towards black people in the Soviet Union, by drawing on a film, shot in the 1930s, *The Circus.* One line in the film states, "In our country we love all kids… all shades of colour. They can be black, white, red, even blue..." Contrast this with another quote from the same film: "mixed marriage between the black and white races is a racial crime" (*The Circus:* cited in Quist-Adade, 2005: 81).

With the Cold War, Soviet Russia became ever more involved in Africa as the "superpowers" battled "for the 'hearts and minds' of Africa" (Matusevich, 2008: 68). With this in mind, the Soviets began providing scholarships for African youths; and after the 1957 Youth Festival in Moscow the numbers of African students increased (ibid.). In an attempt to portray socialism as superior to capitalism, the media presented racism and ethnic hatred as non-existent in the 'new soviet consciousness' and that it was merely in the 'unjust, wild West' that black people were lynched (Quist-Adade, 2005). However, this was not accurate, several cases of racially motivated attacks and murders of Africans occurred in the Soviet Union, they just went unreported (ibid.). So in attempting to appear anti-racist Soviet Russia was masking the reality, thus allowing the discrimination to continue.

However, with Gorbachev's reforms and the politics of the Cold War disappearing, Soviet foreign policy was being re-evaluated and its future direction was becoming more western-oriented (Matusevich, 2008). It was argued that the previous government had damaged the Russian economy by allowing the Third World to 'sponge' off them (ibid.). The anti-racist, paternalistic rhetoric soon turned to anti-African with Africa often being a "metaphor for poverty, backwardness and hopelessness" (Quist-Adade, 1993: 93). With images already circulating of Africa being a carefree continent, it was an easy scapegoat for the Soviets in a time of economic crisis (Matusevich, 2008).

Ethnic Cleansing: The 'Yellow Peril' and South East Asians

It is important to locate the construction of South East Asians as a racial group in the broader set of racial ideas from which its stems. As Russia occupies a unique geographical position where it has been seen as both European and Asian (Guins, 1949). In "A Manifesto to the Peoples of the East" (Comintern, 1920: no pagination), Russia is positioned as part of the 'West':

"People's of the East! In this holy war, all the revolutionary workers and all the oppressed peasants of the West will be with you. They will help you."

This may be because Marx and Engels (1848) imply that countries belonging to the East are "barbarian" or "semi-barbarian" forced to be dependent upon the bourgeois of the "civilized" West. Thus, by positioning Russia as part of the West, it has seemingly separated itself from the East, as part of the "civilized" world. Indeed, Law (2012: 144) notes that, in Marxist-Leninist terms, race was often defined as "socio-historical backwardness" as opposed to "biological inferiority." Even in the Manifesto to the Peoples of the East (Comintern, 1920) covert racism towards the East is apparent. Throughout, there is the notion that the 'peoples of the East' are defenceless, as though they are unable to succeed without help from the Russians. Such an anti-colonial discourse, "against the English conquerors" is contrasted with subtle victim blaming as the "ignorance of the peoples of the East" is suggested as part of the reason colonialism has occurred. The following metaphor encapsulates how the Comintern (1920: no pagination) represents the 'peoples of the East':

"The English imperialists have a tenacious grip on the throat of the peoples of the East, and prepare for them a dark future."

This powerful image of the English (and perhaps of the capitalist West in general) portrays them as the evil villains, the peoples of the East as vulnerable victims, and the Communist Russians as the heroes. Seemingly, this provides an insight to the way in which power is positioned in the mind of the Soviets, whereby they are not as powerless and uncivilized as the East, yet different from the corrupt capitalist West. Endorsing this view, Dostoyevsky (2002: cited in Tlostanova, 2010: 173) stated: "in Europe we were hangers-on, in Asia we will come as masters." This construction of difference and power, along with the hope of liberation, demonstrate how racial ideas are used to mobilize political action (Stone and

Rizova, 2014). Nevertheless, this notion of a racial hierarchy and difference is not so explicit in the Manifesto (Comintern, 1920). The notion of similarity is invoked in the classification of peoples, so to unite people in the political struggle (Campbell and Till, 2010), that is the revolution. Similar in the way that they are "peasants and workers," "toilers," and "oppressed and exploited;" with a "common enemy" that is "Imperialist England" (Comintern, 1920: no pagination). The political motive is clear, the worldwide proletariat revolution (Service, 2009). For the Bolsheviks, this could only be achieved if the nationalities of the multinational Soviet Union were all fused together into a single Soviet people (Huttenbach, 1990).

Moreover, Huttenbach (1990: 3) suggests that for the Bolsheviks the ethnic diversity existing in Eurasia was a "*temporary* condition," they presumed that the "future outcome of Soviet rule would be a basically Russified Soviet citizenry." For Lenin, integration was inevitable and nationalism would disappear with the fall of capitalism (Gleason, 1990). The notion of integration bares with it the idea of difference and that the ethnic minorities would be in need of acculturation to some extent (Law, 2010). However, it seems as though ethnic minorities were expected to assimilate almost wholly with Russian culture (Huttenbach, 1990). Again, implying that the Russian culture occupied a superior status in the Soviet's ideology.

However, what were discrete attempts of Russification under Lenin's rule, turned into overt attempts by Stalin as a way to Sovietization and denationalization (Huttenbach, 1990). From around 1928, Stalin, along with other radicals, demanded more central controls and force (Mann, 2004); assimilation was no longer enough. Mann (2004) notes the importance of Marxism as an ideological power in the political logics of the Bolsheviks. The Socialist vision was entirely future-oriented, with Marxism providing the ideal of a better classless society (ibid.). As, Stone and Rizova (2014) suggest, such elaborate ideological ideas are often used to justify racial oppression. In the mid-1930s, Soviet ethnic cleansing began; ethnic cleansing is the "forcible removal of an ethnically defined population from a given territory" (Martin, 1998: 817). Initially the mass deportations began with the "liquidation of the kulaks as a class," otherwise known as dekulakization (Gelb, 1995). The kulaks as a class were racialized, depicted as 'enemies of the people' with innate characteristics (Mann, 2004). Lenin (cited in Mann, 2004: 322) used terms like "bloodsuckers" and "parasites" to describe them, suggesting they were sub-human and that the country needed to be cleansed of such 'infected' people. Tlostanova (2010) suggests that the logic of modernity justifies this sub-human status and is used to legitimise racial violence However, Mann (2004) suggests that during the Great Famine the identity of the enemies broadened uncontrollably and as class was not as evident as ethnicity, ethnicity became used as a marker.

In 1937, the first full-scale ethnic deportation took place in Soviet Russia, that of the Far-Eastern Koreans (Gelb, 1995). It was the first ethnic cleansing of an entire nationality, and it happened regardless of whether they were Communist or not (Martin, 1998). There are a couple of factors that may have lead to this. Firstly, in the 1920s there was already a policy of resettlement around ethnic groups (ibid.). Rather than facilitating class-based international solidarity, as the Bolsheviks had hoped, this led to intolerance towards national outsiders (ibid.). Secondly, Martin (1998: 829) suggests that Soviet xenophobia, which is an "exaggerated fear of foreign influence and foreign contamination," played a significant role. This stems from an "ideological hatred and suspicion of foreign capitalist governments," as opposed to hatred based on ethnicity or race (ibid.). Moreover, there was a status hierarchy (stemming from tsarist Russia) where that status of immigrant Koreans and nomadic Asians were at the bottom of the hierarchy (ibid.). Thus creating further ethno-racial tensions between the two groups.

Another potential factor, suggested by Łopińska (2012), is the 'Yellow Peril' syndrome. This is the belief, stemming from Eurocentric ideas, that there is a 'yellow race,' which is somehow dangerous, particularly in terms of expansion and domination. It invokes a set of multifaceted prejudices and fears towards those defined as part of the 'yellow race,' primarily

the Japanese and the Chinese (ibid.). But other members of the South East population, such as the Koreans and Mongolians, have also been racialized as 'yellow' (Dikötter, 2008). This fear may have been particularly salient in Soviet Russia because of the military conflict between Japan and Russia in 1905, whereby the latter was defeated (Łopińska, 2012). It was perhaps the vast number of Asian settlers in the Russian Far East (ibid.) and the increasing Soviet xenophobia with the looming threat of Japan, which was, at the time, occupying Korea (Martin, 1998) that led to this mass deportation. Gelb (1995) suggests that the Soviets were suspicious of the Koreans primarily because they were Asians. Implying that there was some element of a racial logic at work.

Religion to Race: Muslims as Backward

Muslims in Soviet Russia were not only classified as 'peoples of the East,' and thus uncivilized and backward; they were racialized as a religious and ethnic group. The racialization of Muslims can be seen as stemming from ideas embedded in pre-modern Imperial Russia, as to even be considered a Russian one had to be a Russian Orthodox (Khodarkovsky, 1997). Any person who was non-Christian or non-Russian was labelled '*inorodtsy*' (ibid.), literally meaning 'born others' (Tlostanova, 2010). The term 'Tatar' became used to define any Muslim regardless of ethnicity (ibid.); this carried with it pejorative connotations because of its connection to the word 'Tartarus,' meaning living hell (Law, 2012). Even when Muslims were converted to Orthodox Christianity they were still considered "half-wild 'Tatars'" (Tlostanova, 2010: 176). Tlostanova (2010) maintains that there were both internal and external factors influencing the racialization of Muslims and the assigning of negative characteristics to them. Such as the external influence of Western modernity, and the internal influence arising from the historical conflict with the nomads of the Eurasian Steppe, and the later colonization of Russia by the Mongolians (ibid.). Following Western discourses, Russia coded Islam as a non-white religion, which brought with it many pejorative racial ideas (ibid.).

With the revolution came the Bolsheviks fundamental rejection of religion (Kenez, 1985). The Marxist ideas underpinning their entire ideology, represented religion as a tool used by the bourgeois in the oppression of the proletariat (Marx and Engels, 1848; Kenez, 1985). Nevertheless, direct appeals were aimed at Muslims specifically, in an attempt to win over the Muslim regions both inside the U.S.S.R and outside, and convert them to Communism (Spector, 1959). In the initial years of the Soviet era, the Soviets made numerous symbolic gestures towards Muslims, to show its goodwill toward Islam (ibid.). Spector (1959) suggests that this effort to form an alliance with the Muslim Orient was because the Soviet's believed the revolution was dependent upon it. This demonstrates the political motive that the Soviet's had for masking any existing prejudices they had for Islam as a religion or Muslims as an ethnic group.

However, these prejudices came to light at the first (Baku) congress of the peoples of the East issued by the Third international (Spector, 1959). The aim of which was to turn the leaders of the Muslim world against the west (ibid.). Conversely, it led many to the realization that Soviet Russia had no place for religion, not even Islam (ibid.). This occurred as Skatchko, a Third International delegate, labelled the Muslim clergy as frauds by declaring the land belongs to god, and that they "hide behind a white turban and the Holy Koran the fact that they are parasites and oppressors" (Skatchko; cited in Spector 1959: 57). This created ethno-racial tensions between the two groups and led to an increase in Islamophobia (Tlostanova, 2010). Muslims were presented as backward and in need of modernizing by the 'Great Russians' (ibid.). There was even an association made between Islam and dirt and disease, with the Soviets refusing to accept the Muslim cleansing ritual as legitimate cleaning (Tlostanova, 2010). Even when individuals were atheist, if they had Muslim ancestors they were still considered 'ethnic Muslims' and were treated with suspicion and as though they

were a second-class citizen (ibid.). Thus, Muslims were seen as having negative characteristics as a consequence of biological difference.

Muslims, like all of the other ethnic minorities existing in Soviet Russia, were expected to assimilate, to undergo a process of Russification, Sovietization and denationalization (Huttenbach, 1990). As part of this, the Soviets systematically eradicated any signs of Islam (Tlostanova, 2010). By the 1960s, forced Russification and self-Islamophobia was almost automatic, due to the racial discrimination against Muslims in education and employment (ibid.). Tlostanova (2010) argues that Muslims were forced into a cycle of dependency. This seems somewhat ironic as the Soviets often condemned the capitalist West for forcing Eastern countries to be dependent. Although, as Rex (1980: 131) suggests, when there is a "doctrine of equality of economic opportunity," the ideas of "racial superiority and inferiority complement each other." Meaning that when there appears to be unequal economic equality between those classified as races, it can be justified with the idea that one is more superior to the other. This can only be maintained if both the exploited and exploiters believe in the racial hierarchy (ibid.).

From Segregation to Forced Assimilation to Expulsion: The Soviet Jewry

The racialization of Jews has existed for a long time in Europe, with anti-Semitism deeply embedded in its society and culture, sometimes elaborated as an ideology or theory (Runnymede Trust, 1994). Anti-Semitism is both "a form of racism and something distinct from it" (Sayyid, 2010: 9). For analytical purposes, this essay distinguishes between anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism. Thus, anti-Judaism is the "hostility to the beliefs and practices of the Jewish religion;" and anti-Semitic racism is the "hostility to Jews on the assumption that they constitute a separate 'race'" (Runnymede Trust, 1994: 23). These notions are interconnected and the discourses accompanying them often overlap one another (ibid.). It has been noted that prior to the Bolshevik revolution, both popular and official anti-Semitism was rife in Russia, perhaps because of the national faith – Orthodox Christianity (Schapiro, 1970). From the epoch of Peter the Great, the Church and the state were closely intertwined, with priests consistently supported tsarist policies with enthusiasm (Kenez, 1985). Some of these included racial logics of segregation, which at best only gave "the 'better' Jews a chance of working towards their emancipation and assimilation" (Schapiro, 1970: 1). The early Church Fathers portrayed Jewish people as followers of the devil, because of their apparent deicide and rejection of Jesus' teachings; this initiated a process whereby Jews became considered as sub-human (Runnymede Trust, 1994).

Schapiro (1970) suggested that the Imperial policies towards the Jews, which continued until the Revolution of 1917, had a variety of implications. One of which was the Jewish involvement in the revolutionary activity of the Social Democrats (ibid.). Hence when the Bolsheviks came to power, so did many Jews. In the civil wars (1918-1921) that ensued after the revolution, the Whites (the counterrevolutionaries, primarily made up of the Mensheviks and the Church with support from the West) used anti-Semitic propaganda in an attempt to turn people against the Reds (primarily the Bolsheviks) (Kenez, 1985). The Whites claimed that Jews and Communists had an unholy alliance against Russia; with many officers genuinely believing that the 'alien' Jews had purposefully destroyed their country (ibid.). Communist leaders were portrayed as Jewish in White propaganda, and the peasant's anti-Semitism was legitimated by the commanding officers, as they neither prevented nor stopped pogroms (ibid.). Like elsewhere in Europe, Jews were described as microbes that infected the healthy body politic of the country, implying Russia needed to be cleansed of this unclean group (ibid.). Similar to the aforementioned rhetoric employed by officials regarding South East Asians (Lenin: cited in Mann, 2004).

Although it is true that the revolutionaries wished to distance themselves from the tsarist regime, and so were reluctant to attack the Jewish religion, anti-Semitism still reared its ugly

head (Rothenberg, 1970). As this essay has previously noted, the Bolsheviks saw religion as nothing more than a tool of the bourgeois (Kenez, 1985). Hence, to become a Bolshevik, one had to reject the notion of religion. Thus, it is noteworthy that the motives of the Jews joining the revolutionary party were not necessarily related to Jewish emancipation (Schapiro, 1970). As when they joined they were deliberately breaking away from the Jewish religion, tradition and culture to embrace an ideology where nationality was irrelevant (ibid.). When the government resumed attacking the Jewish religion the attacks were primarily carried out by Jewish communists themselves, so to prevent the state from being suspected of anti-Semitism or adherence to tsarist anti-Jewish policies (Rothenberg, 1970). Although Judaism was not the only religion to be persecuted by the Russians, there was a disproportionate amount of Jewish people imprisoned or executed (Schapiro, 1970).

Furthermore it is important to note, that the 'Soviet-Jewry' were by no means a homogenous, readily identifiable or definable community in Soviet Russia (Schapiro, 1970). Within the community there were two polar views: on the one hand, there were people who aimed and hoped for complete assimilation in Russia; and on the other, there were people who desired national, cultural and religious separateness (ibid.). Then there were the Jewish people who sat somewhere in between these polarities (ibid.). Nonetheless, this lack of homogeneity did not prevent Jewish people from being grouped together as a race and presented as biologically inferior (Weinryb, 1970). Being of a Jewish nationality was inevitable; if you had Jewish parents you were identified as a Jew (Korey, 1970). In 1932, a 'single passport system' introduced whereby nationality had to be specified – Jewish being one of them (ibid.). This nationality was not dependent upon place of birth, rather it was primordial; hence, this official legal category permanently fixed the Jewish identity (ibid.).

However, the fact that Jewish people had no clear national territory was problematic (Korey, 1970). For Stalin (1913: no pagination), a nation was defined as:

"*A historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture."*

The "psychological make-up" that Stalin is referring to is something that he sees as a characteristic of a group of people deriving from a common lineage of descent. This suggests that for Stalin, races were real bio-cultural entities and nations were constructed by bringing them together (Law, 2012). Stalin (1913: no pagination) argues that although some people may possess a common "national character," otherwise known as ethnicity, if they are missing one of the aforementioned characteristics they "cannot be said to constitute a single nation." Therefore, Jewish people not only faced anti-Judaism discrimination, but also on the grounds that they weren't recognised as a national entity, which meant they did not receive the full benefits usually given to Soviet nationalities (Rothenberg, 1970).

However, Stalin did not just have a problem with Jewish people claiming to be a nationality, it would seem that he disliked them on a personal level. According to Stalin's daughter Svetlana (cited in Weinryb, 1970: 308), when her brother Yakov married a Jewish girl it "displeased" him as "he never liked Jews, though in those days he wasn't yet as blatant about expressing his hatred for them as he was after the war." Weinryb (1970) claims that Stalin's suspicion aroused during World War Two; when Nazis took Yakov prisoner, he assumed that Yokov's wife had betrayed him. As Stalin had such power in Russia, it would not be a surprise if he influenced the anti-Semitism that took place there. His suspicions towards Jews may have been, in part, because of Soviet xenophobia (Martin, 1998). Particularly because of the aims and ideals that were often associated with Jewish people – such as those of capitalism (Schapiro, 1970). Marx had also made the association:

"What is the profane basis of Judaism? Practical need, self-interest. What is the wordly cult of the Jew? Huckstering. What is his wordly god? Money."

(Marx: cited in Runnymede Trust, 1994: 18)

As the Bolsheviks followed this ideology, it is likely that at least part of Soviet anti-Semitism stemmed from this idea.

Conclusion

To summarise, this essay has analysed how four groups of people – black people, South East Asians, Muslims and Jews – were racialized in Soviet Russia despite the egalitarian utopia the Bolsheviks portrayed it to be (Stalin, 1936). Various racial logics were implemented by the state, however, we primarily see assimilation, whereby policies were aimed to Russify and Sovietize its diverse citizenry (Huttenbach, 1990). The attribution of negative characteristics happened to all four groups: black people were seen as an alien race (Rogers, 1973), exotic yet backward (Matusevich, 2008; Quist-Adade, 1993). South East Asians were portrayed as uncivilized and powerless (Comintern, 1920), yet a potential threat (Łopińska, 2012). Muslims were associated with hell (Law, 2012) and considered unclean and uncivilized (Tlostanova, 2010). Jewish people were seen as the enemy, often portrayed as greedy capitalists (Weinryb 1970).

Although new racial ideas may have come into existence within the Soviet era of Russia, most of these ideas stem from either historical events, such as in the case of the 'Yellow Peril' syndrome (Łopińska, 2012), or previous constructions of difference (including racial, ethnic and national), such as the racialization of Jews and Muslims (Runnymede Trust, 1994; Khodarkovsky, 1997). Thus it would not be surprising to note that many of the racial ideas that existed in Soviet Russia still persist today, despite the collapse of Communism (Tlostanova, 2010; Matusevich, 2008).

It is important that we consider the different power relations at play in the racialization of groups and how a perceived threat or liberation of these existing structures may increase racial conflict (Stone and Rizova, 2014). Although an egalitarian utopia seems desirable, it is important that we take Rex's (1980) suggestion seriously in that the ambition for this may result in racial oppression. Soviet Russia should be used as an example to show where this has happened, in order to prevent similar incidences in the future. However, the ethnic cleansing of Koreans (Martin, 1998), and the suppression and discrimination felt by various ethnic minorities (Tlostanova, 2010; Matusevich, 2008; Kenez, 1985) could well be forgotten about, as Vladimir Putin advocates positive history books where these aspects of the past are often left untold (This World: Stalin's back, 2009). History has a habit of repeating itself (Stone and Rizova, 2014), particularly if we do not learn from past mistakes.

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