Racialisation and Russia

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The rise of ethnic hostility and racism is generally associated with the post – communist context, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the economic and social crisis that ensued. It can be argued that racism was suppressed under communism, as after 1989 there was an eruption of far more extreme racism amongst the people manifested in the context of liberal democratic states. However, contrary to this belief the Soviet state actively pursued racist policies and this essay will explore those processes of racialisation and their impact on contemporary racisms in the Russian federation. This essay will focus on more subtle and yet equally significant forms of everyday racism in post-Soviet Russia, rather than the violence of extremist civilian groups. It will explore the reasons for the rise in racist feeling amongst the populace since communism's collapse, how far this can be attributed to the country's Soviet legacy and the role of the media and government officials in the racialisation of ethnic and racial minorities.

Active State Racism in the Soviet Union and its legacy in Post-Soviet Russia:

Active state racism in the Soviet Union is often not properly explored, as the dominant discourse is that the USSR was free from racism. Moscow was projected to the world as 'the one society that had discovered the cure for racial prejudice' (Roman, 2002:2). In 1948 the UN general Assembly adopted the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide unanimously. During the drafting of the convention, the Soviets tried to make an amendment that was on a roll-call vote rejected. They believed the convention should indicate that genocide was 'organically bound up with fascism-Nazism' and similar right-wing ideologies, just as they believed racism was intrinsically linked to such ideologies and incompatible with communism (Schabas, 2000:77). A study of racialization in Russia shows that this is not the case and that no nation can shield itself from racism (January-Bardill, 2005).

The Soviet government promoted 'friendship' amongst its people, yet in reality there was a distinct hierarchy of nationalities (Hugh Seton-Watson, 1956). The Russians were presented in Soviet propaganda as the older brother and the most socially and culturally 'advanced' nation, while the Ukrainians and Belarusians were seen to come next and then the rest of the ethnic groups. Official rhetoric explained that Russia was a civilizing force to the backward nationalities and was responsible in the main for the triumph of socialism. The non-Russian peoples were therefore expected to show a level of respect, as they had benefited from what Russia created. Mikhail Kalinin, the chairman of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet, described the benefits of communist rule in the Caucasus in 1942 as "the most enlightening demonstration of the reforming beneficial effect of the Soviet system on the psychology and character of people' (Roman, 2002:4). The state invited students from Africa and Asia to come to the Soviet Union and study at its universities. In 1960 The Patrick Lumumba Friendship University in Moscow was founded which aimed to give these students the opportunity to be properly educated (Quist-Adade, 2001). However, founded during the Cold War this project had the added bonus of educating young 'foreigners' in Soviet values and ultimately spreading socialist ideals to other nations (BBC News, 2010). Just as Russia was the older brother of the Soviet nations, its relationship with the African and Asian students was that of 'teacher and student' (Roman 2002:7). In both cases, Russian people were painted

as superior, which is a precondition for the processes of racialization of non-Russians and 'blacks' once communism fell.

The Soviet and particularly Stalinist obsession with seeking out "class enemies" and "enemies of the people" would have been engrained in the mass consciousness of the population and influenced their thinking in post-Soviet society. The Moscow Bureau for Human Rights report on 'Racism, xenophobia, ethnic discrimination and anti-Semitism in Russia' (2005:2) states that 'it is only natural that Russians blame "enemies" for their today's troubles' considering the history of struggle with "enemies of the people". The regime needed scapegoats, as it was not in the Soviet realm of thinking to believe that problems could be attributed to fault in policy – they believed they had found the scientifically correct policy (Korey, 1972). In the Soviet Union these enemies and scapegoats were members of a certain class, for example in the countryside it was the Kulaks – the wealthy farmers. Today "enemies" are members of national minorities and citizens with dark skin. The Soviet propaganda machine encouraged mass generalisations, placing all wealthy farmers into the category 'Kulak' and encouraging not only mass discrimination against this group but its liquidation. Although not a process of racialisation as such, the same psychology, negative stereotyping, and segregationist logic were being employed. Generalisations, reminiscent of Soviet times, are made in post soviet society which sweep minorities into categories. Drug trafficking and crime is associated primarily with the Roma and Tajiks, terrorist attacks with Chechens and Caucasians in general, and unemployment with migrants (ECRI 2005, Law, 2011).

Under the Soviets entire population groups were deported, there were pogroms and official and popular discrimination against entire communities. Originally based on class, deportations and discriminations soon became racially and ethnically motivated. The persecution and repression of Islam and other non – Orthodox religions, as well as discrimination against the Jews, was common in the Russian empire and the Soviet Union. The Stalinist regime carried out mass deportations of whole national groups based upon their ethnicity between 1937 and 1949 (Martin, 1998, Pohl, 1999). These groups would be exiled to the Urals, Siberia and Central Asia where they were confined in areas where living conditions and lack of rights would cause the inevitable death of hundreds of thousands. Over a quarter of the North Caucasian population perished in exile in the six years after their deportation. Similar statistics can be found for the other deported nationalities. Therefore it is impossible to deny that active state racism wasn't at work in the USSR (Pohl, 1999). The notion that the Soviet Union was free from racism upheld in the regimes official rhetoric and accepted by many contemporary onlookers must be categorically rejected since the archives began to open under Glasnost in the late 1980s.

In the late 18th century the Russian Empire began to extend into the Caucasus, which from the outset became a hotbed of resistance to Russian and then Soviet rule. The 19th century brought war between Russia and North Caucasian guerrillas. The history of grave conflict with the North Caucasus planted the seeds of immense prejudice among the Russian population against Caucasian nationalities, particularly ethnic Chechens (Pohl, 1999). This prejudice is still alive today and Caucasians are often blamed for instability or disruptions in Russian society. Its Muslim population resisted Soviet rule and in many ways saw World War II as a chance to be free from Russian oppression. In this period the Karachays, Chechens, Ingush and Balkars were deported in order to ensure soviet security. Soviet ethnic cleansing shows the existence of state racism in the USSR.

To suggest that Communist Russia was free of racism is untenable when one study's the experience of the Jews who were the subject of fierce repression, pogroms,

purges, exclusion and professional and educational quotas. Anti-Semitism persisted throughout the Soviet period even though it went against classical Marxist teaching. Stalin stated in 1936 that: "Communists, as consistent internationalists, cannot but be irreconcilable, sworn enemies of anti-Semitism." (Stalin, 1954:30) However, the Jewish community did not fit into the order of the Soviet Union – they had no nation, in Stalin's eyes they were 'rootless' – the Prague trials and the Doctors' Plot are examples of Stalin's attempt to cleanse the Soviet Union of the Jewish community (Gibson and Howard, 2007). Ilya Ehrenburg comments that one was wrong to believe that racism would vanish as socialism was built (Ilya Ehrenbury, 1967, cited in Korey, 1972). In the late 1930s Stalin's Great purge greatly dented the Jewish population – targeting almost all the Jewish cadre and destroying the institutions that ensured the survival of Jewish identity. The 1930s marked the reintroduction of anti-Semitism into official state policy.

A Soviet diplomatic official claimed that in 1939 quotas were set, upon Central Committee orders, on the number of Jews that could be admitted into educational institutions, and in 1945 the Center issued a confidential decree for the removal of Jews from positions of power in factories (Korey, 1972). Such discrimination only increased with the passage of time – in the early forties Jews struggled in the field of diplomacy, and the number of Jews in prominent positions declined through the fifties and sixties. The quota system shows the development of a racial hierarchy as Jewish prospects are greatly limited and they are excluded from positions of importance in the Soviet Union. The treatment of the Jews in the USSR only worsened with the onset of the Cold War. Conflict between the east and the west engineered Great Russian chauvinism which became distinctly racist in character. The Jewish institutions left standing after the Purges were destroyed as suspicions about their ties to the imperialist west deepened (Korey, 1972:25).

Russia's history of the racialisation of the Jews caused fear that in the post-Soviet context there would be renewed repression. However based on his analysis of a survey of Russian attitudes conducted in 1992, Dmitrii Furman writes: "no mass anti-Semitism was revealed by the survey (our data agree in this regard with the data of other, analogous surveys), and a Jewish pogrom seems less likely than some sort of "Caucasian" pogrom." (1995:55). The report from the Union of Councils for Jews in the Former Soviet Union states that 'the active promotion of anti-Semitism is no longer state policy' and commends President Putin's support of the Jewish community. However the report suggests that behind the positive rhetoric there are still government authorities that engage in discriminatory activities (Naftalin, 2002, cited in Leonard, 2003:26).

Rise in Racist feeling amongst the Populace Post Communist collapse:

Etienne Balibar warns of the importance of distinguishing between the 'presence of racism *within the state* from an (official) state racism' (authors emphasis) – institutional racism being state sanctioned and sociological racism being present among the people (1991:39). The Soviet state took an official stance against racism, this stance was used in the Soviet bid to spread socialism and bolster its image. However in reality, racial discrimination and ethnic cleansing was rife under the Soviet Union and the post communist Russian government is more serious about combatting racism. However racist views have become much stronger amongst the Russian populace since communism collapsed.

Not just in Russia, but also in many other former Soviet countries, the collapse of communism has given rise to radical ethno-nationalism and racial violence. This can be partly attributed to the confusion, crisis in identity and insecurity which can

accompany such an immense transition for society (Barany, 1994). The void created by the death of socialism, exasperated by persistent economic difficulties and the renewed right to freedom of speech, created the preconditions for a surge in racist discourse. The temptation in such conditions is to scapegoat minority groups and have someone to blame for the upheaval (Brym, 1994, Barany, 1994). Communist Russia created a culture of intolerance that has survived its collapse. Post-communist countries tend to suffer from higher levels of xenophobia and racist attitudes than advanced Western states (Burjanek, 2001). Lisa A Flores writes that concern about national identity and a rise in the negative portrayal of foreign immigrants or the "other" often surfaces in times of 'economic shifts or political turmoil' (2003:362). Flores looks at the portrayal of Mexican immigrants in the U.S. media, which culminated in the deportation of Mexican workers in the 1930s. She shows how when the economy collapsed into depression and competition for jobs reached new heights, the American media began to portray Mexicans as "illegal aliens" when before they had been 'constructed as ideal in a number of ways' and seen as useful workers who would 'work hard for little money' (2003:369-370). Similarly in Russia in the midst of the collapse of everything the nation had been familiar with for decades racist attitudes began to rise.

Groups targeted for discrimination and racial prejudice are in the main "Visible minorities" and those groups who have a different culture or those who are not of Russian orthodox faith (ECRI, 2005). Caucasians have become the main target of racist discourse and discrimination in post-Soviet Russian society (HRW, 1998). The Roma experience a similar amount of prejudice, whilst the Jews have become more assimilated into society. Data from the *European Values Study of* 1999 shows that among the Czech population and other ex soviet countries this pattern is somewhat replicated with the Roma experiencing the highest levels of racial discrimination and the Jewish population the least (Burjanek, 2001). The Levada Centre carried out a survey in 2002 which showed that 73 per cent of the population negatively received migrants from the Caucasus, in comparison to only 17 per cent feeling uneasy about migrants from Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova (Kosygina, 2010:3). The term "Caucasian" refers to all the nationalities which come from the Caucasus Mountains, which lie between Russia and the middle East. They are seen by Russians as "black" and discriminated against for their non-Slavic features and darker skin. Human Rights Watch (HRW) reports that one Caucasian woman said:

> They say we are lazy, that we steal, that we are parasites on the backs of Moscow…For forty-five years I slaved for this country and now, because I am from the Caucasus, I'm treated like a human being of the lowest sort (HRW, 1998).

The collapse of a command economy and the move to a free-market economy was an easier transition for many Caucasians than it was for ethnic Russians. Caucasians were known for being small traders bringing fresh produce to the market from the "black-market economy" of Georgia, Azerbaijan and Soviet Armenia. This has engineered hostility as according to an ethnic Armenian "the average Russian, who has grown accustomed to state trade and to markets of the Soviet era, considers someone who buys low and sells high almost criminal" (HRW, 1998).

Larisa Kosygina (2010) conducts a number of interviews with Russian Migrants, all of whom had lived in Russia for over a year and had been citizens of the Soviet Union. An analysis of her interviews makes it clear that the racialization of these people is taking place. Interviews reveal that respondents are discriminated against based on their non-Russian appearance - the colour of their skin and their facial features. They are subject to negative stereotyping such as being seen as a destabilising force

in Russian society. Those perceived to be part of the Caucasian "race" are labeled 'blacks' and seen as the threatening 'Other'. Migrants who are of Russian appearance are received more positively and find it easier to become assimilated into society. The interviews reveal that the racialization of Caucasian migrants, which is embedded in social consciousness and exasperated by discriminatory practices on an official level, leads to disadvantages for the group in the employment and housing sector and their social segregation (ECRI, 2005).

Institutional Racism and The Role of the Media in Post Soviet Russia:

Under Gorbachev, nationalism in the republics began to flourish as a result of his policies of Glasnost and demokratisatsiya, which relaxed central control over society, and exposed Soviet induced suffering in the nationalities. This in turn triggered an explosion in ethnic conflict, which would end in 1991 in the formal break up of the Soviet Union. By 1987 various republics were calling for independence, including the Baltic republics and Estonia. Russian nationalist feeling grew and there was a surge in regional nationalism. The rise of ethno-nationalism has caused racist hatred and violence to spiral out of control. Extreme Russian nationalism is similar to fascism, with ethnic Russians elevated to a superior status representing the Aryan race. The Russian National Unity party, formed in 1990, advocates the segregation of various peoples like the Roma and the Jews and calls for an end to mixed marriages to ensure the Russian population is "unpolluted" (Law, 2011). The Cossacks became fiercely nationalist and hostile towards non-Slavic people. Etienne Balibar writes that 'the discourses of race and nation are never very far apart' (1991:37). Other Scholars, such as H. Arendt (1986), have agreed that although nationalism and racism are separate concepts racism is often a product of nationalism especially when the former becomes endorsed by the state. Nationalism often ultimately leads to a segregationist logic and the social exclusion of 'foreign' elements and minority groups. According to Robert Miles "The ideas of "race' and "nation", as in a kaleidoscope, merge into one another in varying patterns, each simultaneously highlighting and obscuring the other" (Miles, 1987:39).

In 1991 the fiercely nationalist Cossacks began to reassert themselves as a "unique ethnic community" (HRW, 1998). The Cossacks are generally hostile to non-Slavic people and believe strict migration rules need to be implemented. In the South of Russia some Cossack groups operate as quasi- governmental agents. An Armenian activist in Krasnodar told HRW that the campaign of the Cossacks gets worse during elections: "Certain candidates campaign under the slogan: Away with the people of Caucasian ancestry" (HRW, 1998). In the gubernatorial elections of December 1996 in Krasnodar region, Nikolai Kondratenko was elected. A member of the right-wing Fatherland coalition, his campaign was built on a "racialization of official rhetoric against ethnic minorities, especially of non-Slavic and Caucasian origin, and a radicalization of the Cossak movement, encouraged by the authorites" (HRW, 1998). Governor Kondratenko creates an atmosphere where racist sentiment is acceptable and ethnic discrimination is tolerated (Verkhovsky, 2002).

HRW reports that under Gorbachev the Soviet media misrepresented the ethnic conflicts in the Caucasus denying their true causes and presenting them as being the result of thuggish behavior 'or the untrammeled destructive nature of the native people' (HRW, 1998:6-7). Such misrepresentation in the media fostered negative feeling about Caucasians and contributed to the racialization of non-Russians. Members of those regions were seen as a threat to order and became an unwelcomed presence in Russian cities such as Moscow (Roman 2002:9). Thus, the mass media aided in the social exclusion of non-Russian minority groups. The highly influential nature of the media and the impact it can have on popular opinion and

processes of racialisation makes this very dangerous (Gandy *et al.,* 1997:160). The European Commission on Racism and Intolerance in 2005 expressed concern that racist hate speech could now be found in the mainstream media and in works published by eminent publishing houses. However, Journalists have also played a significant role in denouncing the racialization of ethnic groups in the media and raising awareness about the problems that confront visible minorities in Russian society (Roman, 2002:10-11).

The Center for Information and Analysis 'SOVA' carried out an investigation into 'Hate Speech in Russian Mass Media' in 2001 which showed 'non-Russians', 'Asians' and 'Caucasians' to be the 'groups' singled out for the most intense discrimination in the Russian media. Negative stereotypes of non- Russians as thieves, inferior, drug traffickers, terrorists and a threat to Russian jobs are reproduced in popular television programmes and Russian newspapers (Kosygina, 2010). The Roma population experience similar processes of racialisation as the Caucasians do. They are seen as racial outsiders and are socially excluded. Often they are categorized alongside the Caucasians as "visible" minorities and similar negative stereotypes of the group as thieves, drug dealers and engaged in the black market are employed. Racist attitudes of the Roma are fuelled by the perception that they exploit food shortages and live at the expense of ethnic Russians (ECRI, Third report).

In the 21st century the Russian government is under moral obligation to combat racism and it therefore demands a standard of behavior among its officials. High level government officials consistently condemn racial, ethnic and religious hatred. The Russian government takes an official stance against all manifestations of nationalism, racism and xenophobia. In 2001 President Vladimir Putin condemned "negative, racially motivated acts" (The Moscow Times, 2001) and the same year he declared: "if we allow the development of this bacillus of chauvinism, or nationalist or religious intolerance, we will destroy the country" (Naftalin, 2002, cited in Leonard, 2003:26). The government has taken steps to protect the rights of ethnic minorities such as the establishment of the department on Inter-Ethnic Relations and the banning of racially or ethnically offensive images in commercial advertising (Law, 2011). Significant progress has been made in the criminal prosecution of racist crimes; particularly in Moscow were twice as many people were convicted for racist violence in 2008 than in 2007 (SOVA, 2009). However, racism has been identified in government policies. For example, the State Duma, even in the early 21st century when Nationalists and communists had far less influence, refused to take any active measures to combat the spread of increasingly violent nationalism or pass any policy declaration on the issue (Verkhovsky, 2002).   The 2005 European Commission on Racism and Intolerance reports that the Russian authorities have increasingly begun to address and combat the problem of racism, and have taken steps to raise awareness about the need to fight intolerance among the police force, law enforcement officials and in schools (ECRI, 2005). However it also expresses concern that ethnic and racial minorities are targets of racist political discourse and are scapegoated for society's troubles. On a number of levels, notably among the police and law enforcement officials ethnic profiling and racial targeting is still a pressing problem. The Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (2008) report that ethnic Caucasians, Roma and Africans continue to be harassed by the police and other law enforcement officers. It also expresses concern about the destruction of Roma settlements and the segregation of children belonging to ethnic minorities in remedial classes.

The registration system enforced by Russian officials is an example of the racialization of dark skinned people living in Moscow. In 1932 the internal passport

system was introduced. In order to reside in the USSR's cities all citizens had to carry a passport which contained a residence permit or Propiska. The passport contained information about the person including ones ethnic background. The propiska survived the Soviet Union's demise, despite attempts in 1991 to put an end to the system. Originally designed to restrict the flow of the peasantry into urban centers, it had the added bonus of allowing authorities to root out potential "enemies of the people". In post Soviet Russian society it retained this bonus which is taken full advantage of by some law enforcement officials. Many areas wanted to restrict the entry of refuges escaping ethnic conflict zones in the regions of the former Soviet Union. This led to the system being implemented in a discriminatory fashion denying residence permits to people of certain racial or ethnic backgrounds such as Caucasians (HRW, 1998). In 1998, a Constitutional Court ruling lifted some of the strictest restrictions on freedom of movement, which was a positive development. However, just after the ruling, the Mayor of Moscow Yuri Luzhov publicly stated that the police would continue to implement the old registration system policies. HRW report that:

> Moscow's rules for residence and visitor's permits are the most stringent in Russia, and Moscow police enforce them in a way that is so predatory and discriminatory (targeting people with dark skin) that the rules appear as mere pretexts for abuse, including extortion, beatings, invasion of privacy, and destruction of identity documents (HRW, 1998).

Ethnic Caucasians and Central Asians have their identity checked by the police far more frequently and thoroughly than those who look Slavic and ethnic Russian (ECRI, 2005). The Roma, like the Muslims and the Caucasians are "visible minorities" and as a result are also victims of the discriminatory implementation of the registration system (ECRI, 1999).

Various obstacles have been put in place which make it very difficult for migrants to register as residents with the police. Therefore they are living in Moscow illegally and are liable to expulsion. This allows the police to carry out campaigns against people living in the city unregistered. Roman (2002) writes that the term 'unregistered people' has become interchangeable with the term 'blacks', and that these campaigns are directed against dark- skinned people. Luzhkov, Moscow's mayor, initiated a campaign to clear the cities of unregistered people in October 1993 during the state of emergency. The association between criminal activity and dark-skinned Caucasian migrants allows officials to clear the cities of these migrants under the pretext of fighting crime. The Russian population often witnesses the harassment of dark skinned citizens by the authorities, and this is likely to cause Russian citizens to associate dark-skinned migrants with criminal activity (Roman 2002). In 1995, in reference to Caucasians, Mikhail Suntsov, the head of Moscow's regional directorate for organized crime, reported that "certain hard-core characteristics of behavior, including criminal, exist for certain ethnic groups" (HRW, 1998). The results of a project carried out by the Moscow Bureau for Human Rights in 2005 on 'Racism, Xenophobia, ethnic discrimination and anti-Semitism in Russia' showed that 60% of the population believes immigration increases criminal activity.

Islamophobia and the War on Terror:

Religion plays a part in the processes of racialization alive in Russia today. Being Orthodox has become increasingly associated with being ethnic Russian, and dark-skinned non-Russians are associated with Islam. The intellectual tradition in Russia, which was heavily influenced by western European discourse, was to see: "the absolute and systematic difference between the West, which is rational, developed,

humane, superior, and the Orient, which is aberrant, undeveloped, inferior." (Said, 1978, cited in Geraci, 1997:138) People from the Caucuses Mountains are not only discriminated against for being 'black' but for being 'Muslim'. The Northern Caucasus is still a colonial territory of Russia and yet its inhabitants are treated as alien others. Islamic culture (like Jewish culture) is not stifled in post soviet Russia and the authorities allow new Mosques to be built and Muslim festivals to be organized (Tlostanova, 2010). The law of December 1990 on religious freedom prompted a significant revival in religious activity (ECRI, 1999). However, Islam is constructed as an external force and Muslims as outsiders – invaders on Russian soil, and yet in some cases they have inhabited their territory much longer than ethnic Russians (Tlostanova, 2010). Terrorist attacks are seen as the work of Chechen Islamist groups and this results in increasing discrimination against Muslims and Caucasians. Just as the Caucasians are subject to discriminatory activities on the part of the police Muslim woman wearing the veil are often searched without serious grounds, and Muslim citizens are far more likely to be stopped by the police and have there identity checked than ethnic Russian citizens (ECRI, 2005). The difficulty with ensuring the War on Terror does not take on a racist dimension is demonstrated in the Russian context.

Islam and Bolshevism were rather incompatible ideologies. Both being authoritarian, and penetrating all aspects of life. Even though Bolshevik policy towards its Muslim subjects was not always consistent, the official Marxist stance on Islam which was supported by the Soviet state was clear. It is set out in the 1953 edition of the Great Soviet Encyclopedia:

> Like all religions, Islam has always played a reactionary role, being a weapon in the hands of the exploiting classes and an instrument for the spiritual oppression of the workers and for the subjection of the peoples of the East by foreign colonialists (*Bol'shaya Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya* , 1958, cited in Wheeler, 1967:139).

The Soviet state was inherently suspicious of any principle or group whose roots were older than the establishment of the regime. Its goal was the 'methodical elimination of all alternative thinking and being' (Tlostanova, 2010:171) and this applied particularly to the Muslim community whose relationship with Russia was characterized by conflict and oppression with brief periods of strategic unity. Tlostanova (2010) attributes the increase in Islamophobia after the eighteenth century to Western modernity which took on a distinctly Christian, and later secular, form as well as the history of Russian conflict with the nomads of the Eurasion Steppe and then the Mongol invasion in 1237. Officially, Muslims would be subject to persecution by the Soviet state, only if they were not loyal citizens. However in reality Russians perceived Islam as a violent, intolerant religion and the influence of Western discourses of the second modernity painted Islam as a non-white religion lacking in humanity. The logic of modernity provided justification for the sub-human status of population groups and discrimination against them. It was Eurocentrism which dictated Russia's relations with its Muslim population (Gatagova, 2006, Tlostanova, 2010). Russian scholars and government officials used racial and civilizational arguments to show that Islam and modernity were incompatible. Imperial Russia turned Islam into a race – the term 'Tartar' was used in the nineteenth century to define a Muslim of any nationality or ethnicity. Today they are defined as ''Black' showing how this religious group have been racialised over time (Tlostanova, 2010).

Although the Soviet Union tended to denounce religion it still created a distinct hierarchy of religious beliefs placing the Russian Orthodox Church firmly at the top

as the most civilized and superior. The Bolsheviks created a negative image as part of their nation building process which represented all the elements it so despised – religion, nationalism, the bourgeois and the backward. It needed to show that all the above could be cleansed by Soviet social engineering. This image was the oriental Muslim woman who was seen to embody ideas of disease, depravity, religious fundamentalism and backwardness. This woman was going to be moulded into the soviet 'new man' by the great civilizing force that is Russia (Tlostanova, 2010).

In the post soviet context the mission to civilize and assimilate the 'other' has disappeared whilst the segregation of and hostility to the 'other' remains. Racism in post soviet Russia has taken on a decisively anti-Islamic dimension. The active racialisation of Muslims under the Soviet state, the mass influx of Muslim migrants after its fall, combined with the Chechen wars, the international war on terror and terrorist activity in Russia itself has engineered great hostility towards this religious group. Although the government is aware that the threat does not come from the Muslim community in general but small radical groups of Muslims, the clear distinction between the two often becomes blurred. The failure to make this distinction gives rise to anti-Islamic sentiment (Verkhovsky, 2002).

ECRI highlights that it is the duty of the state to fight terrorism. However 'the fight against terrorism should not become a pretext under which racism, racial discrimination and intolerance are allowed to flourish' (ECRI 2005:23). Caucasians, particularly Chechens, are increasingly associated with terrorism, and the Russian population sees them as a threat to society's stability. An explosion in racist sentiment as well as racially or ethnically motivated violence often follows violent or terrorist acts. For example, a Russian man was reported murdered in the Volograd region of Russia in August 2000. The murder prompted a meeting of local citizens who called for all Chechens to be deported from the town. The funeral service was accompanied by violent attacks on houses were Chechen people lived (Pravda.ru., 2007). Similarly, HRW reports that in 1997 in Armavir, bombs went of in a number of train stations which resulted in 5 deaths. The terrorist act was allegedly the work of Chechens. This led to the Russian Interior Minister Anatoly Kulikov declaring that his office had been bombarded with letters from Russians calling for all Chechens to be expelled from the region (HRW, 1998).

Conclusion

Active state racism and the fostering of images of Russian superiority in the Soviet Union, laid the foundations for contemporary processes of racialisation in Russia. The association of Muslim Caucasians with terrorism and criminal activity has reinforced traditional prejudices. The Bolsheviks denounced western style racism which they believed was a product of a capitalist system, yet they pursued their own Soviet style racism (Weitz, 2002). Responsible for ethnic cleansing, systematic discrimination, mass deportations and creating ethnic, religious and racial hierarchies, the Soviet state was actively racist. However, racism amongst the populace was far less overt and increased considerably after communisms collapse which was accompanied by immense social, political and economic transitions which fuelled ethnic tensions. The post Communist Russian government is officially anti-racism and yet discriminatory practices are prevalent at a lower level of government and xenophobia even creeps into political discourse at a higher level (Verkhovsky, 2002). The media, police, and other law enforcement officials play a significant role in the racialization of visible minorities and are partially responsible for the populace increasingly associating ethnic and racial minorities with criminal activity. In 1995 the Human Rights Watch group published a report which accused the *militsiya*, the

OMON and road officers of the GAI of violent discrimination against dark-skinned citizens (Roman 2002:15).

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