



CENTRAL EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY
CENTER FOR POLICY STUDIES



OPEN SOCIETY INSTITUTE

VICTORIA ANTONOVA

Diversity Management and Concepts of Multiculturalism in Russia

2006 / 2007

CPS INTERNATIONAL POLICY FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM ▲

VICTORIA ANTONOVA

Diversity Management and Concepts of Multiculturalism in Russia

Abstract

Managing ethnic diversity in multicultural Russia has recently become even more of an urgent issue than it used to be. The civil service as a societal institution may not distance itself from this problem if it seeks to effectively administer society's life and to be an institution in which citizens have trust and confidence.

The present policy paper sought to analyze the capability of the Russian civil service to adopt multiculturalism, first in its employment policy and later more broadly as a social policy for the regional community. The concept of 'multiculturalism' has been studied through more relevant to the post-Soviet and Russian times notion of the 'nationality question'. An attempt to illuminate the specificity of the Russian approach to multicultural policies if they were to be developed in the civil service in Russia has been made in the policy paper. The main matters of concern were the attitudes and values of the senior civil servants in the regional governments of the Saratov and Perm regions in Russia.

A number of policy advices have been developed to make civil service in Russia more diverse and therefore improve the efficacy of this institution.

This policy paper was produced under the 2006-07 International Policy Fellowship program. Victoria Antonova was a member of the 'Combating Open Society Threats' working group, Stephen Kotkin and Vadim Volkov. More details of their policy research can be found at <http://www.policy.hu/themes06/socthreat/index.html>.

The views contained inside remain solely those of the author who may be contacted at antonova@policy.hu. For a fuller account of this policy research project, please visit <http://www.policy.hu/antonova/>.

December 2007

Language Editing – Martin Baker

Formatting and Type setting – Judit Csikós

International Policy Fellowship Program

Open Society Institute

Nador Utca 9

Budapest 1051

Hungary

www.policy.hu

This document is available under a Creative Commons distribution copyright

Contents

- 1 Introduction 4
 - Methodology* 5
 - Choosing Target Departments and Gaining Access to Them* 8
 - Data Collection* 10

- 2 Background and Current Issues 14
 - Ethnic diversity within the regions being studied* 15
 - The state of events as regards ethno-cultural policies for the regions* 17

- 3 Civil Servants’ Personal Attitudes, and their Effect on a Conceptualizing of Multiculturalism 23
 - Perceptions of the nationality question as being painful* 24
 - A comparison of Russians with non-Russians* 25
 - Making judgements on the basis of one’s nationality* 27
 - An ideological explanation for attitudes shown towards the nationality question* 28
 - A political explanation for attitudes towards the nationality question* 29
 - Civil Servants’ Views on the Effects of a Conceptualizing of Multiculturalism* 32
 - Does the ‘National Question’ Influence the Civil Service in Russia?* 36
 - The Soviet legacy as regards handling the “nationality question”, and its impact on the presence of minorities within the civil service in Russia* 36
 - “The Russian majority” factor* 37
 - Non-traditional occupations for minorities* 39
 - An Unspoken but Clear Taboo* 40
 - The Reluctance of Minorities* 41
 - A Lack of Vacancies* 42
 - Reasons of a systemic nature* 43
 - A lack of trust* 45
 - Does Multiculturalism suit the Civil Service in Russia?* 48

- 4 Conclusions and Recommendations: An Assessment of ‘Russian Multiculturalism’ Alternatives, and Some Strategies That May be Pursued 50

- Bibliography 55

1 Introduction

Even after fifteen years of social, economic and political transformation in Russia, the country has not had the successes it might have hoped for in dealing with the so-called 'national question'. Recently, the configurations of the 'national question' and the reasons for ethnic tensions have changed significantly. On one hand, the existence of a person's multiple identity - in contrast to a single identity, i.e. the 'Soviet people' – is now less open to question; yet, on the other, ways of accommodating ethnic and cultural diversity have not been developed in a clear manner.

An urgent need to look at ways to manage diversity and develop a more appropriate ethno-policy in Russia has shown itself in a number of official documents and programs, including the Program for the Promotion of Tolerance and Improving Inter-ethnic Relations in Russia, sponsored by the European Union; and a renewed Concept of National Ethno-Policy of the Russian Federation, which was developed by a group of leading scholars from the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Russian Academy of Sciences (under the supervision of Dr. Valery Tishkov). Recently, the concept of multiculturalism has been incorporated into Russia's ethno-policy agenda. However, ethno-policy is not just a matter of terms and concepts - it is much more a matter of getting to understand, adopting and applying the meanings of these concepts into real life.

Comprehending multiculturalism in Russia means that civil servants and bureaucrats should play an active part in promoting ethnic diversity in society and in developing public openness towards diversity and multiculturalism. It is necessary to understand that if bureaucrats are responsible for decision-making and for implementing launched policies, such persons will have the power to intensify and popularize policies – or, instead, slow them down. What strategy they will choose depends on how they perceive and accept the 'nationality question' and ethnic diversity personally, and also on a professional basis.

Methodology

The qualitative study of the concept of multiculturalism and diversity management in the civil service in Russia was based on in-depth interviews conducted with senior civil servants from regional government departments – namely, in the cities of Saratov and Perm.

At the outset of the research, the main assumptions were that, via such interviews, it would be possible to gain an understanding of how multiculturalism is perceived, characterized, developed and actually put into practice within the institution of the civil service (within the context of these two regions); I also anticipated that the professional and personal experiences of research participants - persons who were specifically involved in decision-making with regard to diversity issues within related departments - would probably offer a valuable insights into such matters.

When choosing the civil service as a target institution for research into multiculturalism, I was guided by a number of reasons. The first is that the civil service is responsible for providing a wide range of services to citizens, so it addresses the vast majority of the population. The second reason was that in democratic societies the civil service is expected to express the *general public's* interests rather than the interests of elite groups; and, thirdly, the civil service reflects the national government's policies – thus, if accepted and put into practice within the context of the civil service system, multiculturalism would then be seen as the accepted state response to society's diversity.

The civil service is at the centre of public administration – and public administration is about how society is governed, meaning that if multiculturalism's principles are within the very fabric of the civil service this would indicate that multicultural principles are highly valued by public administration and the state - which, in turn, would make it possible to assume that such principles are shared by both citizens and government. My assumption, therefore, is that if multiculturalism actually *works* within the civil service (which is the centre of public administration) it could be said that civil society and government institutions will benefit from multiculturalism - and that multiculturalism should thus be developed within a diverse society, and within the civil service, which would enable the latter to demonstrate and increase its ability to achieve its own goals.

If multicultural principles are, however, not likely to be seen as suitable for the civil service - and, hence, for public administration - then, arguably, something will need to be done to alter the performance of the civil service so that it takes on board multiculturalism's principles. Obviously, multiculturalism is a challenge for the civil service/public administration; and being successfully applied in the civil service it can then also have success in society at large.

In order to see the impact that multiculturalism could have on the civil service in Russia, a three-level model relating to the civil service as an institution has been utilized (Perry, 1989; Bekke and Perry, 1996; Perry and Thomson, 2004), namely the:

- operational level;
- governance level
- performance level.

Each level looks at the institution of the civil service from a different angle. The *operational level* refers to the civil service as being a *personnel system* and a system of employment. The civil service system is the primary means by which to provide staff to administer the organs of the state. Hence, the functioning of the civil service as a *personnel system* can be described mainly via its recruitment, selection, and promotion processes, as well as in terms of training and development practices. Therefore, in the context of the present policy development project, one needs to see how multiculturalism affects those processes and practices related to the civil service as a *personnel system* - which leads to the following lines of enquiry (those used in interviews):

- What are the recruitment procedures within the department - and how do they take on board ethnic diversity?
- What do selection/promotion processes in a department look like? How do they reflect both diversity and multiculturalism?
- How do training and professional development programs for civil servants develop persons' diversity awareness and build up diversity-related competence?
- How does diversity in the workforce influence organizational culture and the workplace environment within the institution of the civil service?

The *governance level* - or the *collective choice level* - refers to collective decisions made by officials to determine, enforce, continue or amend ways of acting

that are 'authorized' via institutional arrangements (Kiser and Ostrom, 1982: 208) – and the two main functions of the modern civil service are apparent at this level. Such functions are 'to advise government ministers on policy matters and to make decisions in the name of their ministers' (Pilkington, 1999:2). In other words, at a governance level, the nature of tasks performed by civil servants on a daily basis is being reflected. At this level of the civil service, I was particularly interested in the type of collective decisions that relate to civil service reforms and to issues pertaining to community cohesion. Another important issue related to the governance level is the role played by the civil service when forming multicultural policies and putting forward anti-discrimination legislation. The lines of enquiry for this level were the following:

- What national legislation provides a framework for multiculturalism and diversity in the civil service?
- How does the department keep in touch with ethnic communities and their leaders, and are these contacts maintained on a regular or more occasional basis?
- Is the current stage of civil service reform taking on board the multicultural/diversity context?

The *performance level* sees the civil service as a *symbol system*. It takes into account the organizational values that are shared by the majority of civil servants; it also sees the civil service as a public institution, one that symbolizes the link between the citizen and the state. It is also at a performance level where civil servants may feel either proud of themselves as professionals - or as unconfident, for not being able to act in a highly professional and competent fashion when carrying out their duties.

The civil service's performance level, which in its evolution has given rise to myths and symbols that have become instruments open to interpretation also often attracts public interest and may be assessed. So the *performance* of the civil service can create a positive or negative attitude on the part of citizens (including civil servants themselves) and can be an efficient tool with which to gain resources, make changes in salary scales and maintain the legitimacy of mechanisms of governance (Bekke and Perry, 1996). Hence, in connection with this project, I was curious to see the impressions civil servants had in relation to the civil service as a diverse and multicultural institution - and what persons thought about multiculturalism within the context of Russia's civil service.

The lines of enquiries for the *performance level* were:

- What are civil servants' attitudes and values regarding multiculturalism?
- Do civil servants see the civil service as a really multicultural institution?
- Is it necessary for the civil service to be diverse - and what are the pros and cons involved?

Investigating the presence or absence of diversity at these three levels of the civil service in Russia has enabled me also, on the basis of the data collected, to make some suggestions regarding whether it is a 'diversity-friendly' or 'multiculturalism-friendly' institution.

Choosing Target Departments and Gaining Access to Them

At the start of the research process I was aware, based on experiences gained from initial communications with the regional government departments of Perm and Saratov, that I would need to overcome some barriers in gaining access to research 'sites'. In general, the difficulties I had been anticipating were alike, in both regions. First, it was quite difficult to find a perfect respondent for an interview, bearing in mind the terms and conditions of the study - and this problem is more noticeable in Russia. This was because there were no civil servants within the regional government holding specific responsibilities linked to diversity issues. Second, it was not easy to get contact details or establish personal contact with any prospective interviewee. Third, I had to fit into respondents' usually extremely busy work schedules to be able to get an at least one-hour interview. Finally, it was important that I obtained official permission to record the interview.

It turned out to be quite difficult to gain access to bureaucrats in regional governments, even though I was able to rely on personal connections and contacts with government employees and utilize teaching positions held by me at the Volga Region Academy for the Civil Service (in the city of Saratov) and at Perm State Technical University (in Perm). To begin with, I should mention that senior civil servants in the regions are not accustomed to being interviewed and, in general, do not feel comfortable if being interviewed by an academic; for the organizational culture of government departments indicates a reserve, so that persons are not so ready for open discussions about issues. Also, with this particular study the following could be noted: the research project's topic appeared to be unpopular, indeed 'complicated' - so that

civil servants were not overly willing to talk about it. The third obstacle I faced was that of choosing the 'right people' as interviewees, because diversity management did not appear to be the responsibility of anyone in particular from a regional government department.

So the list of criteria for choosing departments in which to make interviews, in both the Perm and Saratov regions, is as follows: I sought out the largest departments, in which the head of the department belonged to a minority ethnic group; and departments which happened to be responsible for a number of issues closely connected to ethnicity and nationality-based issues.

Using to the above-mentioned criteria, the following regional government departments in Perm and Saratov were thereby chosen:

- The Civil Service and Personnel Management Office (the city of Saratov)
- The Ministry of Labour and Social Development (Saratov)
- The Ministry of Youth Policy (Saratov)
- The Department of Labour and Social Policy (the city of Perm)
- The Administrative Office of the Governor of the city of Perm
- The Department of Education (Perm)
- The Legal Department (Perm)

The first series of interviews in the Saratov region took place in August 2006, the second in September 2006, and the third in November 2006. In the Perm region the interview periods were June 2006, and February and March 2007. In the chosen departments, persons occupying main, leading or senior positions within the civil service system were targeted.

The two research 'site' regions - Saratov and Perm – were chosen because I was born, grew up and have been pursuing my professional career in different periods of my life in these regions; I do know that both of them appear to be extremely diverse but, at the same time, they have not been listed among regions having ethnic tensions and/or conflicts between members of different national groupings. This factor is an important one, as the potential for region-specific conflict would not benefit this research project. Such a dispute would have inevitably biased the study's procedure as well as its results and conclusions. As Young has emphasized (1998),

'in a situation of cultural frictions, tensions and violence, the focus of diversity management and governance in multi-ethnic societies is shifted

so as to overcome ethnic conflicts. An urgency-based framework is not normal therefore...'

(Young, 1998: xi).

Regional government is more likely to be interested in finding ways of prevention and 'accommodation therapy' rather than look into the 'pathology of conflict' (Young, 1998: xi). Thus, in my research I wanted ethnic diversity to produce 'instructive lessons', ones that would help policies to be proactive rather than reactive (i.e. being a response to violence and conflict). In order to do this, therefore, non-conflict regions and places that were 'non-biased' (in the sense of having major ethnic tensions in existence) have been chosen as the study's framework.

Data Collection

During the fieldwork I collected data primarily via in-depth interviews, by using written documents, reports and official online information on the regional government departments' web-sites. The majority of data collected in Perm and Saratov came from the period between June 2006 and March 2007. In all, 51 interviews with senior civil servants in Russia were conducted, 15 of which took place in Saratov and 36 in Perm.

One interesting observation from the field research experience might be added here: as I started interviewing people in Perm and Saratov I became enthusiastic, thinking that my ability to tell persons about the international experience of multiculturalism (as I had experienced it in a previous research career) would certainly be beneficial, and it would allow me to raise their interest in the topic, which seemed to me extremely attractive and thought-provoking in itself.

Yet reality turned out to be precisely the opposite: while I was preparing for the interviews I decided to discuss my research idea with my colleagues, in both Saratov and Perm. All of them were united in the opinion that referring to Western experiences might create a barrier in relation to my interviewees - and might prevent them from approaching my questions positively, or from being sincere, open and objective. Later during the interviews, I tried to 'play the Western card' anyway - just to see if my colleagues' surmise were true. And, indeed, every time I mentioned the Western experience of dealings with multiculturalism people became suspicious and defensive. As I see it, this fact just proves that the myth of the constant East-West confrontation,

rooted in Cold War times, is unfortunately still alive, albeit being much weaker and less widespread.

It is still difficult for modern civil servants in Russia to see foreign experiences related to diversity management in an at least neutral way. The first reaction I got from a number of persons might be described as a desire to reject *completely* any ideas originating from the West - or to insist that each and every approach to the 'nationality question' we have in Russia is undoubtedly and unconditionally better than any foreign strategy, and that we do not need any advice from the West.

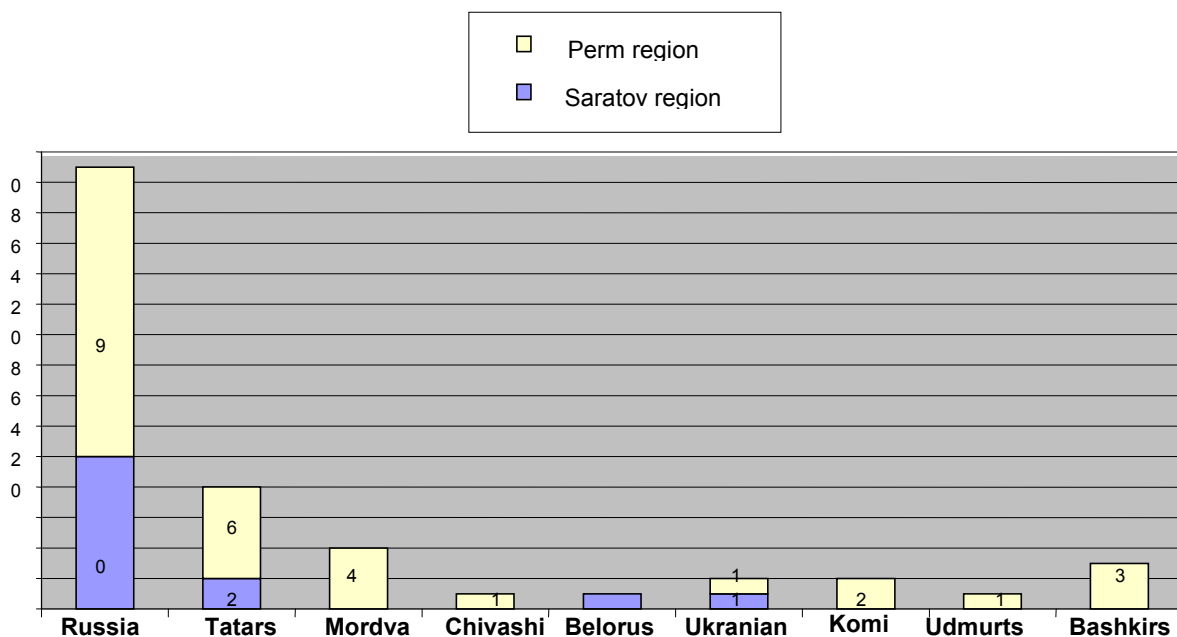
What quite amazed me was the similarity in attitudes held by the older and the younger generation of civil servants; for I could read in people's eyes and via their statements that they tended to think about me as a pro-Western - so probably not a very patriotic - person. Moreover, both young and older respondents adhered to the position that it would be wise not to put this comparative perspective at the centre of things, but to speak about it more discreetly. As I continued with my questions, persons began to show greater passion, interest and commitment to the subject, though – and I could see that in order to gain people's trust it was better *not* to refer to Western examples too often, but just to mention the idea of multiculturalism in general, where appropriate.

On the whole, though, these regional respondents took my research seriously - and they were ready to say 'where they stood', and seemed sincere in their views, even though at times they were somewhat constrained and obviously were not over-comfortable speaking about diversity issues.

The breakdown of research participants from the Russian sample, by nationality and region, can be seen at the bar chart below.

Diagram 1

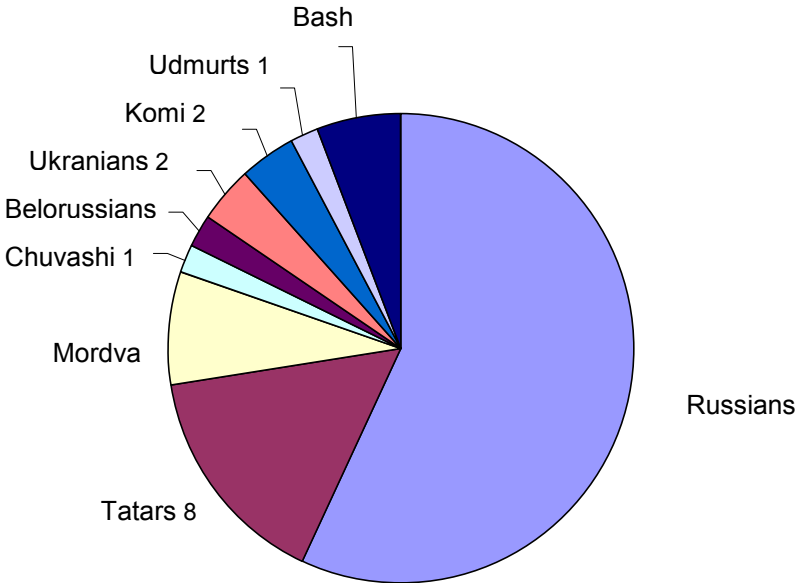
Respondents in the regions, by nationality



In general, the 51 respondents, from both regions - Saratov and Perm, belonged to nine nationalities. The vast majority of them were ethnic Russians. The second largest ethnic group in both regions were Tatars. People of Mordva, Chivashi, Komi, Udmurt and Bashkir nationality are statistically significantly represented in the Perm region, so in my sample persons from these groups are also represented. Ukrainians and Belorussians represent quite big communities in the Saratov region, in general - and people of these nationalities were among my respondents as well. This diagram shows the distribution of respondents by nationality, in both regions.

Diagram 2

Respondents from Perm and Saratov, by Nationality



All interviews were done at participants' workplaces, in people's own offices. On average, interviews lasted an hour and a half, though with some exceptions (when an interview went on for an hour/hour and a half). All interviews made were tape-recorded and transcribed.

2 Background and Current Issues

As Russian history has shown, granting different rights to different groups of national and ethnic minorities would not be accepted in Russia as a 'fair' multicultural policy outcome, and would probably lead to a rise in tensions between the Russian majority and non-Russian groups as well as among minority groups themselves. In addition, it is simply impossible to put, with any degree of correctness, most of the non-Russian population of the Russian Federation into national or ethnic minority 'boxes' or categories. For example, how would one deal with minorities from the so-called 'internal diasporas', such as Tatars, Bashkirs, and Chuvash, who have their own 'titular republic' within the Russian Federation, but who also live outside it? Similarly, how would one refer to the Russians who live in the autonomous republics within Russia? Is it right to see these people as immigrants? Or are they more likely to be a national minority? When we look at the tremendous diversity and complexity of cultures living together within Russia's territory and perhaps at the historical pre-conditions of their contemporary status, we can see that it is dangerous to draw a line between 'hosts' and 'guests' in Russia.

Thus, multiculturalism, seen as a 'normative response to the fact of diversity', can help explain what civil servants might do when they are designing and implementing ethno-policies; and the main principles of multiculturalism - such as equal opportunities for all citizens, social inclusion, and understanding and respecting ethnic- and cultural diversity - ought to be able to fit in with Russia's social and political reality to become the basis for ethno-policy developed in the country.

A society where multiculturalism has been accepted and which gives an ethno-policy option can be described as 'a polity in which every individual receives equitable recognition of identity both as a citizen, and as a member of a particular faith, ethnic group, or other cultural community' (Tyler, 2004: 20). So it is quite clear that certain actions must be taken by the state in order to make all members of a society feel equally valued and recognized. In a similar manner, the need for a state's intervention may derive from one more observation being made in relation to a multicultural society, as presented by Raz (1994).

The three strengths of a multicultural society, as highlighted by Raz, are as follows:

- The life of most cultural groups instantiates 'true values' and a valuable way of life. A multicultural society allows a plurality of valuable cultures to co-exist with a minimum of tension;
- A multicultural society is more likely to provide individuals with opportunities to 'escape from' groups that are repressing some 'important aspects of one's nature' (e.g. sexual orientation);
- It should not be forgotten that some people are so completely 'intertwined' with their original culture that they could not leave it without becoming psychologically crippled (Raz, 1994: 183; 185; 178-80).

Based on what was learned in interviews with the regional civil servants, this paper will give a brief description of the concept of multiculturalism in Russia's regions - and offer some explanations as to why there is a lack of multicultural policies in the country. In order to develop a more relevant understanding of multiculturalism - in particular for the Saratov and Perm regions - a concept of multiculturalism as a policy needs to be studied more carefully from the point of view of those who are responsible for the planning and implementing ethno-policy in regions – i.e. from the point of view of regional senior civil servants.

Ethnic diversity within the regions being studied

It is necessary to state that both regions could be seen as a local projection of the Russian Federation as a whole in terms of the ethnic background of its population. There are about 112 nationalities in the Saratov region. Even though the majority of the population here - as in Russia overall - consists of ethnic Russians (they make up about 81 per cent of the region's population), ethnic minorities, such as Tatars (2.16 per cent), Mordva (0.62 per cent), Chuvashi (0.6 per cent), Kazakhs (2.94 per cent), have always considered themselves to be important ethnic groups there (Normativnije Akti Po Nacionalnim Voprosam, 2001); and these minorities do seem to have become integrated into the mainstream.

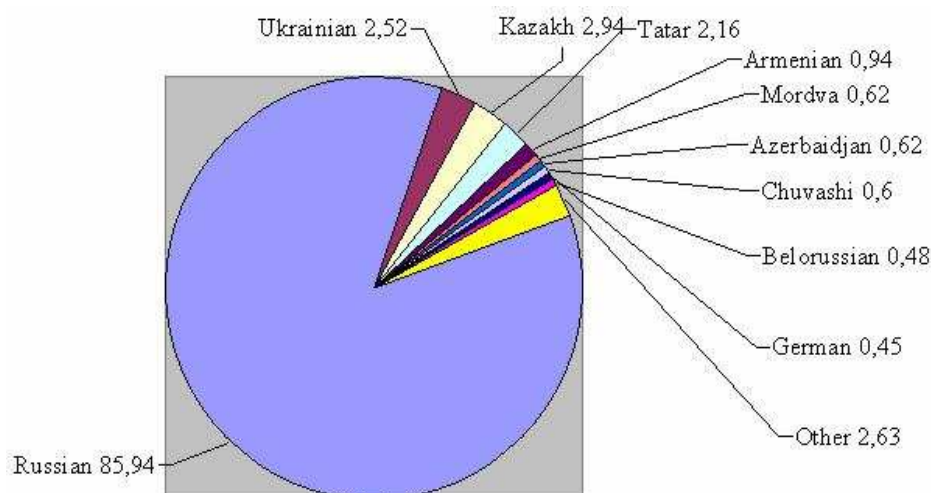
Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, this region has become one of the most popular recipients of immigrants from former Soviet Republics. According to estimates from the Regional Migration Service, an influx of more than 260,000 persons into the Saratov region had been registered by the end of 2005, constituting about 9.5 per cent of the region's population then. The vast majority of immigrants are from the Northern

Caucasus (Chechnya, Dagestan), Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and the Ukraine. Such people do not usually have Russian citizenship when they come, and a large number of them are economic immigrants and refugees seeking asylum.

Several decades ago, one could hardly describe the Saratov region in terms of an ethnically-segmented or divided society; yet during the transition period, ethnic self-identification has taken great strides and, now, the region's population is both diverse and multicultural (Diagram 1). Even integrated minorities have their native language protected, have access to resources, and there is fair treatment on the labour market.

Diagram 3

The main nationalities of the Saratov region
(% of the total population of the region, as of October 2002)



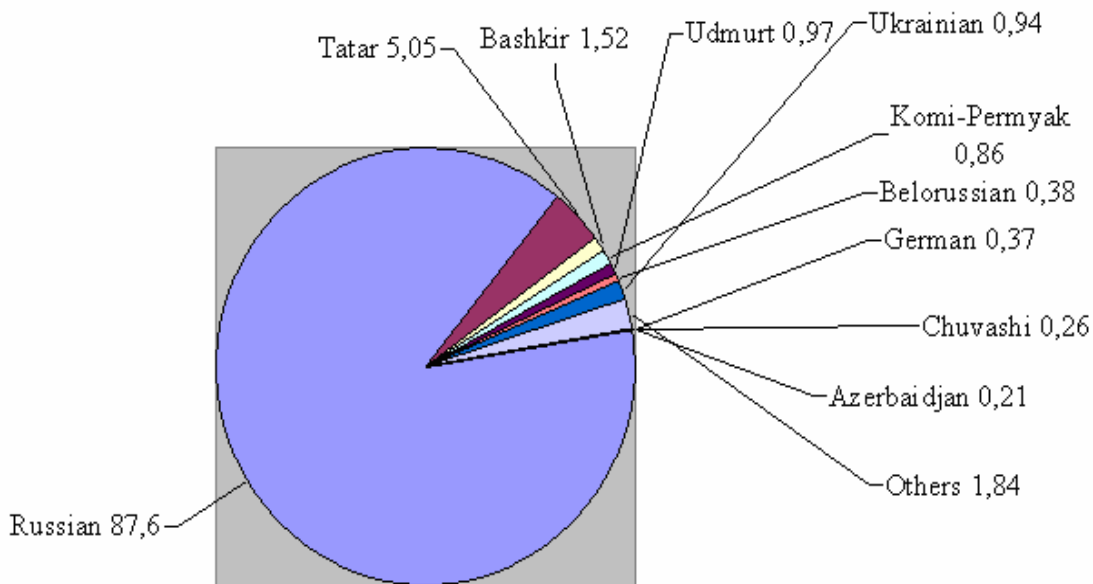
* Source: Data for the diagram comes from the 2002 Census - official data available at the site of the National Statistics Committee of the Russian Federation: www.gks.ru

The Perm region (West of the Ural Mountains) is one of the most multicultural regions, not only in the Urals, but in Russia as a whole. There are more than 100 nationalities living together in the Perm region, among whom the most numerous are Russians, Tatars, Komi-Permyak, Bashkir, Ukrainian, Udmurt, and Belorussians. People of German, Jewish, Mordva, and Chuvash extraction are also represented

there (Chernykh, 1998: 32). One can easily see that the ethnic backgrounds of the inhabitants of both regions are alike.

Diagram 4

**The main nationalities of the Perm region
(% of the total population of the region, as of October 2002)***



Source: The data for the Diagram 2 was taken from the 2002 Census - official data available at the site of the National Statistics Committee of the Russian Federation : www.gks.ru

The state of events as regards ethno-cultural policies for the regions

Being aware of the fact that a wide spectrum of cultures resides in the region, the Saratov regional government has welcomed the formation of ethnic and cultural public organizations. By 2001, there were fifty-six ethno-cultural centres and ethnic associations registered there. In order to encourage and support the cultural development of different ethnic communities, a special festival – the Ethnic Culture Day – was launched to celebrate and show respect for the cultural traditions of Tatar-Bashkirs, Germans, Finno-Ugric and Ukrainians. The region actively utilizes this form of ethnic ‘self-formation’ as models of Ethno-Cultural ‘Autonomies’ – and it has now become an option as regards public self-government. Coming in two main forms – territorial (ethnic districts, ethnic communities, friendly associations of people of a

particular nationality) and ex-territorial (ethnic associations, ethnic unions, ethnic societies) – Ethno-Cultural Autonomies in the Saratov region have appeared on both regional and local levels. According to official data from the Saratov regional Ministry of Cultural Affairs, there are seven Ethno-Cultural Autonomies registered in Saratov region: the Ukrainian, the Kazakh, the Tatar, the German, the Armenian, the Jewish, and the Chuvashi Ethno-Cultural Autonomies (Obshaya Kharakteristika Territorii, 2005).

The Saratov region is also a place where a unique ethnic site, an the Ethnic Village, has been built to better publicize the cultures of the main ethnic groupings there, so as to ‘expose’ these cultures to the region’s general population. It has been widely advertised in media that the Ethnic Village is the achievement of a close and fruitful cooperation between the regional government, ethnic organizations and the Ethno-Cultural Autonomies there. Recently, regional achievements as regards ethno-cultural policy have been termed ‘successful’ and ‘unique’ – and the fact that there have been no disputes or conflicts on grounds of ethnicity or religion in the region during the last eight years is used to justify such positive assessments (Shinchuk, 2004).

The Second Principal Program for the Social and Ethno-Cultural Development of the Nationalities of the Saratov Region (2003-2006)¹ has sought to ‘integrate’ the region’s power bodies with ethnic communities to achieve worthy living standards for every resident of the Saratov region. This program shares its main ideas and principles with one from 1998-2001. The 2003-2006 program had three fundamental approaches:

- 1) Ethnic and cultural pluralism, as a necessary condition for the preservation and development of public consensus in the region;
- 2) A harmonization of inter-ethnic relations from the point of view of equality, inclusion and participation, which helps stabilize the social and cultural environment of the region;
- 3) Integration, as a gradual process, which will encourage all residents having different nationalities to actively participate in the social, economic, cultural and spiritual life of the region and of the country as a whole (Programma, 1998: 11).

¹ The first Principal Program for the Social and Ethno-Cultural Development of Nationalities of the Saratov Region was carried out in 1998-2001.

Thus, the regional government has, at least on paper, acknowledged the diverse ethnic nature of the Saratov region and has made several attempts towards making all nationalities feel respected and that they are getting equal appreciation from the government and the region's residents.

Yet the regional government in Saratov seems *not* to have any understanding that ethnic diversity should receive recognition actually *within* the government and civil service too – for the regional government does not have records of the region's civil servants by nationality or ethnic origin (Ruban, 2003).

The Perm region appears to be one of the most advanced regions of the Russian Federation with regard to working out nationality policy strategies for the regional population. Starting from the beginning of the 1990s, when the collapse of the Soviet Union was accompanied by a raising of the self-consciousness of ethnic minority groups, the regional government launched and successfully implemented a number of programs focusing on the harmonious development of all nationalities and ethnic groups residing in the region. Among these were a Program for the Development of the Ethnic Cultures of Peoples of the Kama Area, for 1993-1995 and 1996-1998; and the Program for the Development and Harmonization of the Ethnic Relations of Peoples of the Perm Region for 1999-2003 and 2004-2008. As in the case of the Saratov region, the latter program for Perm is a primary tool via which to manage ethnic diversity in one of the most poly-ethnic regions in the Russian Federation.

The program highlighted that in order to promote good ethnic relations in the region and fight ethnic and religious extremism it is important to:

- coordinate the efforts of executive power bodies there in the area of ethnic relations;
- adjust the actions of federal authorities and local self-government bodies with the civil society institutions;
- make use of new, innovative methods of managing inter-ethnic relations;
- have permanently research being done to look into the ethno-cultural environment in the region (Oblastnaya Tselevaya Programma, 2004).

As in Saratov, the situation is similar in that the number of the ethnic groups and nationalities in the Perm region have chosen to establish their own Ethno-Cultural Autonomies. One should mention the Tatar-Bashkir and the Jewish Regional Ethno-

Cultural Autonomies as being among the most active. In general, both regional and local levels of Ethno-Cultural Autonomy formation have been utilized in the Perm region. There are six Ethno-Cultural Autonomies there: the Chuvashi, Tatar, Tatar-Bashkir, Jewish, German, and Polish (Obyedineniya Natsional'nykh Men'shinstv, 2001). It is important to underline, too, that regardless of the fact that inter-ethnic relations seem to be under the control of the regional and municipal governments in both the Saratov and the Perm regions, it was not easy to find precisely relevant data relating to the actual number of Ethno-Cultural Autonomies there; for data differed from source to source, indicating that a constant study and monitoring of the ethno-cultural environment - and publication of up-to-the-minute information in such regions - has yet to be accomplished. In addition to the Ethno-Cultural Autonomies, there are Ethno-Cultural Centres for the German, Slavs, Polish, Udmurt, Mari and the Komi-Permyak minorities of the Perm Region. Some rather weak attempts to consolidate and create such centres have been also made by Estonians, Belorussians and Ukrainians, though by being dispersed throughout the region, they have now become more assimilated (Obyedineniya Natsional'nykh Men'shinstv, 2001).

Unlike in the Saratov region, Perm's regional authorities have never made use of the concept of multiculturalism as a model for ethno-cultural regional policy. At the same time, though, as with the Saratov regional government, Perm's has focused its efforts and attention on the preservation and development of the region's diverse cultures, being especially concerned with language, folklore, ethnic practices and the traditions of minority ethnic groups. Issues to do with social inclusion, equal opportunities and the equal participation of minorities in all areas of regional life are more likely to appear as a desirable outcome of the special harmonization programs that have been launched rather than as an effective means of accomplishing harmonization. Neither in Perm nor in Saratov has the active participation of ethnic minorities in decision-making at a regional level, thus giving a more fair representation of non-Russian nationalities within the senior civil service, ever been considered a component within the process of building and promoting good inter-ethnic relations in the regions.

In neither region has any noteworthy ethnically-based conflicts been registered for a long period of time. Nevertheless, in the late 1980s the regional authorities did see

some of the ethnic aspects within regional development as deserving special attention. Among the most challenging were the following:

- There were very few 'ethnic-minority schools' in the regions; and these schools did not provide a sufficient level of knowledge that related to the ethnic history and culture of the existent ethnic minority groups;
- Publications of books in the native language of regional ethnic minority groups were insufficient as regards amount;
- Ethnic traditions and practices in common, everyday life, including the reproducing of ethnic folklore and being positively aware of national cuisine and costume, were rapidly disappearing - and even Russian culture (the 'majority culture') was no exception here;
- There was a lack of stable inter-ethnic relations between the most influential and sizeable Komi, Tatar, Bashkir and Udmurt cultures;
- The regional mass media had a lack of programs existing in minority languages. (Chernykh, 1998: 33).

These are just a few of the issues that had reminded regional authorities there of the importance of the ethnic component in a region's social and political life. All such issues had a link, in the main, with important cultural components like language and folklore.

In order not to foment any kind of deep dissatisfaction amongst ethnic minorities, and as a response to the outlined problems, a number of measures have been taken by the Perm Regional Administration, including elaboration of a comprehensive program entitled The Ethnic-Minority School (between 1990 and 1995) and the establishment of a Socio-Cultural and Nationalities Affairs Office within the Perm Regional Administration.

Of course, a desire to preserve ethnic minority cultures and to support their traditions and languages is extremely important and helpful - but does it meet all the needs of ethnic minorities here? And does it really help to make all nationalities in a region feel equally valued? These are questions that I shall additionally address in this paper.

Unfortunately, the language and folklore components within the cultural variety of this region's population have never stimulated or encouraged local authorities to go 'beyond' them - and set up a kind of government program aiming to use this diversity as a benefit in terms of the economic, social and political development of the region.

This is so because, firstly, it would at least require a more intensive study of social stratification in connection with ethnicity-related issues as well as an exploration of the attitudes and values of Russians and non-Russians regarding each other, while also taking a look at the economic status of minority groups and their social and political activities and seeing the positions that ethnic minorities occupy in the labour market. Secondly, when it comes to *specific* social, economic and political steps that need to be taken in relation to matters of ethnicity, the government is likely to see this task as being extremely complicated and daunting – so it is probably not a top priority on the list of government activities there.

Given all this, we might thus say that, unfortunately, up to now both scientists and politicians have remained convinced that as long as the ethnic situation in the region remains stable and peaceful, it means that regional government activities can then just be limited to celebrating cultural diversity via nationality festivals and to establishing and opening ethno-cultural centers - which will lead to the creation of positive, stable ethnic identities and the promoting of tolerance and good inter-ethnic relations.

Even the prestigious and internationally-recognized Research Institute of the Russian Academy of Science – The Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology - does not include in its recommendations for governmental bodies the importance of diversity management via the active involvement of ethnic minorities in public service and their being represented fairly in all areas of civil life. (Arrived-at recommendations were the result of a project from 2002 that was part of the Federal Specified Program on Tolerance Development and Extremism Prevention in Russian Society (2001-2005); <http://www.iea.ras.ru/projects/ethnotolerans/4.htm>, Proekt ‘Socialno-Psihologicheskie Factori Ethnicheskoi Tolerantnosti’). Like many others, scholars from the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology were ignoring the importance of ethnic minority participation in decision-making via their being represented in the civil service.

In general, whatever policies for ethnic minorities are active at present in the regions currently, Russia has no entirely explicit ‘nationality policy’, one that works for and with the ethnic groupings/nationalities making up the country’s population - or that takes on board ethnic relations, which could aim at solving the long-standing and persistent ‘nationality question’ in the Russian Federation (Abdulatipov, 2001; Drobizheva, 2003; Tishkov, 2003).

3 Civil Servants' Personal Attitudes, and their Effect on a Conceptualizing of Multiculturalism

As has been seen, in order to be able to examine multiculturalism on the basis of Russian civil servants' experiences, I had to ask my respondents from the regional governments of Saratov and Perm about the so-called 'nationality question' instead of explain to them the nature of multiculturalism and diversity in its Western form and try to get some reflections on this.

In the Russian academic and political tradition, 'national' and 'multinational' refer to the category of 'ethnicity' rather than to a notion of citizenship and/or nationhood. In Soviet times, ethnic or national peculiarities were celebrated within the USSR by a presenting of national costumes, ethnic foods and stressing the unity of the 'fifteen republics – fifteen sisters' within the Soviet Union (See Appendix 1). Yet the Soviet doctrine of 'internationalism' presumed the supremacy of communist ideology and the dominance of 'official' Russian culture within the former Soviet Union's borders – and this led to the gradual disappearance of ethnic minority languages and underestimation of the value of different cultures. Even though, at first glance, an 'equality' of all nationalities was achieved in the USSR, reality was different. For instance, representatives of some Middle-Asian republics (such as Uzbekistan or Turkmenistan) were considered to be less intellectual, less civilized, less well-educated and more prepared to do unskilled jobs than were Russians.

This is why, now, in post-soviet Russia the recent passport reform *excluded* mention of the actual nationality of the passport holder; too many people in Russia still remember how dangerous such a revelation could be in the past (for example, to be of Jewish descent); nowadays, of course, many people will perhaps witness 'complications' should they be Muslim - even if one's nationality is *not* written down in one's passport.

Formally, Russia does fall into the category of the multinational state, one that voluntarily adopted a form of multicultural federalism (in 1993). However, even though Article 26.2 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation states that 'everyone has the right of the native language use, the right to voluntary choose the language in which to relate to others, upbringing and education', not all of these positions of 'institutional

completeness' (Kymlicka, 2003) are actually guaranteed. The interviews I conducted shed light on the issue of the readiness of society and government to accept, respect and manage diversity. Considering the lack of systematic data for and research into this issue, my research participants' views and opinions on the importance of attending to the 'nationality question' in the Saratov and Perm regions did have great value with regard to providing insight and developing a new analytical approach towards ethnic minority accommodation.

When questioning civil servants about the nationality issue and seeing the shape it took within their own routines and profession, I assumed that answers might show people's awareness of cultural diversity in terms of ethnicity - and the significance of this within a regional civil service; and it was also my intention to learn about the differences between interviewees' perceptions of the 'multinational Soviet people' of the former Soviet Union and those pertaining to the 'multinational people of the Russian Federation' now.

Perceptions of the nationality question as being painful

The majority of respondents said that the 'nationality question' is a distressing and sensitive one - while many noted that the ethnic diversity issue is, in addition, something that is very important, albeit quite frightening:

'the nationality question has always appeared to be very painful for Russians in any sphere of society's life...'

(16)

Both Russian and non-Russian interviewees suggested that:

'... the 'nationality question' is most sensitive. Though it has always been kept secret, or concealed, somehow ... because the nationalities issue is complicated.'

(24)

Virtually all senior civil servants observed that:

'...there is no doubt that a problem does exist in this regard. It needs to be addressed - sociological scrutiny of the issue is greatly needed today...'

(23)

The majority of respondents from Russian regions assumed that it would be better to leave the issue of cultural and ethnic diversity alone, as a division of society along nationality lines has always seemed to be natural. Some interviewees remembered a popular saying from Soviet times – namely, that it was indecent to make known, in public, one’s nationality, faith or salary; such things were seen as being exclusively matters of ‘concern’ in the private realm.

‘It’s important to study ethnic and nationality processes in the region, and perhaps some proactive and preventive steps might be developed so as to prevent conflicts... Yet cultural differences, the differences between nationalities, should not be over-stressed. This should exist at an instinctual level. It is natural that we have different nationalities - no need to talk about this... It’s a fact. It’s natural! Should I refer to this, I would be noting that you are different from me, that you are not like me... But what really distinguishes us? Mainly language... Yet we usually have the same problems, even though we belong to different nationalities. If someone refers to the nationality and background of another, I’ll be suspicious of this person... I’d think that he or she was making the distinction on purpose... that there are not always good intentions behind it...’

(19)

A comparison of Russians with non-Russians

In general, the level of theorizing about multiculturalism and diversity, as reflected in interviews with persons in the civil service, appears in the following: in the Russian respondents’ perspectives, diversity is to be seen as a problem in the same way as it points to a ‘difference’. For Russians, what makes ‘them’– the ethnic minorities - and ‘us’ – the history-bearing, ethnic Russians alike are common problems of a social and economic nature, i.e. which both Russians and non-Russians face and have to live through. An illustration of the above was expressed by a Saratov respondent:

‘Even if being of different ethnic descent, we are all alike with regard to the problems we face in our everyday lives – I mean, we have problems finding a job, we struggle to get a decent salary, to bring up

our children, give them a good education, etc. We all have to deal with such problems, whatever one's nationality or ethnic origin...'

(27)

The vast majority of respondents from both regions tended to make comparisons between the Russian majority and other, minority cultures - explaining that, for them, diversity implied the existence of some nationalities that are better than others (for some reason). Ethnic diversity was seen by interviewees as being something obviously based on a different spectrum of cultural values - thus, civil servants have tended to see diversity in a negative way.

'I'm always ready to say that Russians should occupy first place! I think this is my national Russian pride speaking here, though... However, a tolerance shown towards other nationalities and other cultures should be instilled in persons from their earliest years... So here, I would say, the inflexibility of our culture is evident... We tend to accept everything that is like us, that resembles our own views and values - but will reject anything that is different...'

(29)

It was quite evident from the interviews that almost all persons had some sort of feeling that some nationalities were closer to their own - but that some might be seen as a sort of 'alien element'. For example, a lot of respondents from both regions saw Tatars in the same way as Russians, feeling that people from these two nationalities nowadays even look alike, so that it is hard to distinguish between them... Such opinions might also be supported by data gathered in Perm, in 2000, by scholars from the Sociological Research Centre of the Perm State Technical University². According to their findings, both Russians and non-Russians see representatives of the Tatar, Bashkir, Udmurt and Komi-Permyak nationalities as being close to themselves. Upon being asked to indicate nationalities that might be perceived as 'alien', 34.7 per cent of respondents said that 'there are no such nationalities', while 18.8 per cent found it difficult to provide such an example. However, the rest of the respondents did list some 'aliens', which were as follows (in a descending order - from the 'most alien' to the

² The study sought to analyze the socio-cultural attributes of inter-ethnic relations in the city of Perm at the end of the XXth century. The proportional quota sample covers 946 participants and has included representatives of the most numerous fifteen nationalities residing in the city of Perm.

'least alien': Chechens, Azerbaijani, Armenians, Georgians, nationalities from the Middle Asia, Roma and Jews (Leibovitch, Stegnyy, et al. 2003: 181-83).

In this study, it was principally Russians who had painful recollections of representatives of minority groups from the Soviet past or from more recent times. Not all of the negative impressions refer exclusively to nationalities from the Caucasus republics (as might have been expected) – for a number of respondents remembered non-friendly attitudes coming from Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians towards Russians:

'Once, in the times when the USSR was flourishing, I travelled with some friends to the Baltic republics – Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia... And we felt sort of humiliated and discriminated against. I've never felt like that in the Caucasus republics or in the Asian republics! We were more than welcome there in Georgia, in Armenia, or in Uzbekistan... But in the Baltics it was different... Even in the shopping malls! The variety of goods there was much better than in peripheral Russia, and we were eager to do some shopping there! Yet most of the time the shop assistants neglected us... If there were local people shopping at the same time, people in the malls wouldn't serve us until they had finished with these, the persons from Latvia or with another local ethnicity... Local people were always the first to be served. And we felt really uncomfortable...'

(30)

Making judgements on the basis of one's nationality

On the whole, regional civil servants demonstrated a great degree of uncertainty about whether it might be positive to give one's attention to the ethnic diversity of the region's population. For the most part, they had negative personal attitudes concerning diversity, perceiving it primarily as a factor disuniting and setting people of different nationalities against each other. When noting their own personal feelings about ethnic minorities, interviewees from Russian regions first showed a tendency to make judgments and to stick labels on non-Russians - and only afterwards come to the conclusion that, in the end, it is very important to be tolerant towards and display a respect for the fact of diversity.

It is important to underline here that the meaning of 'ethnic minority' in Russia, in addition to the obvious, directly numerical sense, has been commonly loaded with such

attributes as 'less civilized' and 'less educated'. Usually, the term 'ethnic minority' ('natsmen'shinstva') refers to persons from the Caucasus and Asian republics of the former Soviet Union as Armenians, Chechens, Azerbaijani, Uzbeks, Tadjiks and Turkmens (to name but a few). All of these might be seen as 'visible minorities'. At the same time, though, it was rather uncommon to refer, for example, to Ukrainians or Belorussians as ethnic minorities because, in spite of their numbers in Russia, the anthropological characteristics of such groups were seen as being the same as ethnic Russians'. It is also possible to say that, on an everyday basis, the meaning of 'minority' is now limited to someone's being 'non-Russian' - and respondents in both regions preferred to speak just about 'Russians' and 'non-Russians', without making the term 'minority' explicit.

An ideological explanation for attitudes shown towards the nationality question

While trying to explain a feeling that it is not beneficial to cultivate or support ethnic diversity, Russian respondents often mentioned the pitfalls of Soviet nationality policy, which led to the break-up of the Soviet Union; and, indeed, an ideological component seemed to be the most common and most frequently occurring factor in the majority of explanations given by interviewees on what had been done wrongly by Soviet - and later by Russian - leaders in terms of nationality policy. As one respondent from Saratov put it:

'I tend to blame the nationality policy of the Communist Party, which allowed the USSR to collapse and divided the USSR into these specific countries – Russia and others... We used to live all together - and no one referred to nationality 'issues'. Of course, there were some problems in relation to this, but these were kind of routine, everyday questions - and nothing more! They didn't lead to secession demands, or conflicts...'

(29)

Such an opinion actually holds within it a number of unvoiced concerns - as well as some subtle controversies; but, in general, it shows that it was impossible for the USSR's official Soviet ideology to find the right response to the nationality question. In an attempt to explain the latent problems existing 'between the lines' in the above citation, one should emphasize a number of things. First, one should not overlook the

fact that these 'kind of routine' issues were/have been constantly on the state's agenda, in slightly modernized versions, for the entire period of the Soviet and Russian states' existences - and they are probably here to stay. Second, a 'non-raised nationality issue' could arguably mean a 'non-raised structural disparity issue' because, as theory and collected data have observed, nationality, as such, has rarely been seen as a serious reason for conflict. However, the third thing to note is that the nationality issue has been a basis via which to stereotype and bring about prejudice for a long time - and it is still influencing public opinion to some extent (as the most recent surveys along with the present study indicate). Fourthly, probably one of the most important factors is that by the time of *perestroika* and *democratizatsiya* the pace of economic growth in the republics along with the relative levels of development achieved differed greatly. For example, according to Schroeder (1999) 'national income per capita in 1985 ranged from being less than half the all-union average in Tadjikistan to being more than one-third above it in Latvia and Estonia, with Belorussia and the RSFSR just behind. These latter four republics, along with Lithuania, also ranked highest with regard to industrial output per capita, while the four Central Asian republics were lowest on both measures.' (Schroeder, 1999: 49).

A political explanation for attitudes towards the nationality question

Another imperfection that needs to be dealt with in order to make the nationality question less 'troublesome' – and which will help the civil service become more diverse and multicultural – is the 'ethnicity/nationality principle', i.e. which has been put into the foundation of the Russian Federation as a federative state (see Appendix E). The negative aspects of this type of federative structure in Russia were said by interviewees to be things that kept 'on the burner' the long-lasting nationality question in the country. The problem is, clearly, not easy to tackle, for any attempts to do so would imply making amendments to the Constitution of the Russian Federation. As said earlier, a process of merging the existing units of the Russian Federation is now under way in Russia – though one might doubt whether such a process would touch upon national republics, such as Tatarstan, which at present have equal status with other units of the Federation (such as regions, krais and autonomous okrugs). Thus, the very structure of the Russian Federation at the moment could be seen as a factor making the nationality question more intractable.

The following opinion, from a civil servant, shows how the problem outlined above and results seen from some of the nationality policy initiatives might, in practice, actually correlate:

'I believe that the initial mistake was made when a subject of the Russian Federation had been created on a nationality basis, on an ethnicity basis... All republics within the Russian Federation are national republics - with a specific titular nation in each. I think that all subjects in the Federation should be created on a territorial basis. So now we have, for example, Bashkortostan, the republic within the Russian Federation, where the titular nation – the Bashkirs – in fact don't make up a majority in the republic.

However, all leadership positions at the republic level as well as at a local level are taken up by Bashkirs. And this principle is followed in all national republics! So the question arises: aren't there any talented people from the other nationalities within these republics who might serve as the senior officials? So, no - I don't support this 'nationality' or 'ethnic' principle in relation to the federative structure in Russia. It creates a number of problems... and any attempts to change or improve the situation for the non-titular nationalities in a republic will inevitably be seen as potential disadvantage for the titular population...'

(37)

The last argument here refers to the social, economic and political statuses of both titular and non-titular nationalities within Russian Federation republics. As Tishkov (1997) noted, 'it is common for members of specific ethnic groups to play leading roles in industrialization, land exploration, and resource development', and thereby to enjoy a better social and economic status; yet (he continues) 'the paradox of the present situation is that those industries with predominantly Russian-speaking personnel give the largest amounts of money in relation to GNP (for example, 80% in Tatarstan and Yakutia) to territories in which political power is in the hands of non-Russians' (Tishkov, 1997: 280). Thus, the well-known topic of 'who's feeding whom' arises, which, as data here has shown, was often articulated by respondents.

Within the context of the latter, one might see another notable problem behind this opinion – and this is the issue of a so-called 'new Russian diaspora', referring to

those approximately 25 million ethnic Russians who, as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union, have found themselves outside the borders of their own state, even though 'most of them have had no feeling of having emigrated' (Aasland, 1996: 477). As Alexander Ossipov has indicated, 'Russians in the former Soviet Union did not move out of their state - rather, the state 'moved' from them...' (Ossipov, 2001: 180).

Some Perm respondents recalled times when Russians from Georgia (Abkhazia), Azerbaijan, Moldova (Trans-Dniestr) and some Central Asian states found themselves at the centre of armed conflicts, and were forced to migrate to Russia's regions. Many of the interviewees had been involved in communicating with the Russian refugees - or 'forced migrants' - at the beginning of the 1990s and still have a vivid memory of emotionally and physically exhausted people, many of whom had been forced to leave virtually all their possessions behind. For the majority of persons it was a big problem to settle down in a new place and to begin a new life in Russia. Such negative things experienced by civil servants here (i.e. while working with such groups of people) of course affected persons' attitudes towards particular non-Russian nationalities – so the idea of seeing representatives from these ethnic groups among their peers within the regional civil service did not cause great enthusiasm among research respondents.

'After the Soviet Union's break-up, a lot of inter-ethnic relations and conflicts between different nationalities appeared on the Russian agenda. I am confident that this should not have been done like this, though... It was done under nationalist forces' pressure from the ex-USSR's national republics. An alternative way could have been chosen; perhaps independence might have been granted to some nationalities - not in the form of territorial independence. It might have been done through granting equal rights and opportunities to minority nationalities...'

(65)

Thus, many problems related to the demise of the Soviet Union, and with such consequences - not only for Russians but also for all other nationalities - as well as the unresolved question of an ethnicity-based federation had all made an impact on interviewees' personal attitudes towards diversity, multiculturalism and the 'nationality question'. For interviewees from Russia, therefore, this historical legacy along with

negative personal experiences – giving a feeling of having been ‘insulted’ - often predominated in opinions about the ‘nationality question’ in the regions; and all the issues looked at above might be seen as serious obstacles when it comes to ‘Russian multiculturalism’ as it exists within the civil service.

Civil Servants’ Views on the Effects of a Conceptualizing of Multiculturalism

While it was not so difficult for research respondents to speak about what they personally thought about ethnic diversity and the ‘nationality question’, they needed to make a greater effort to make decisions and to share their professional opinions about the ‘nationality question’ and ethnic diversity within regional civil services. Basically, those who agreed with the importance and existence of a ‘nationality question’ in regional civil services argued that since Russia really is a multinational country the government and the civil service should be, too. Many respondents thought that if there are no quotas for minorities in the civil service or for government, this then means that there are no problems in relation to them or their being represented within power echelons. Some participants did admit that they had never even thought about the ethnic diversity issue within their own organization before being asked about it in the interview; they also argued that the less attention being given to the diversity topic, the fewer problems there would be, which opinion was particularly widespread among Perm respondents (i.e. 19 of 36 agreed with this). Such persons explained their attitudes as follows:

“I’m sure that the nationality question is not really an issue with regard to cities having a Russian-majority population... It is a force-fed - an artificial – problem... I am the Head of Department - and there are 14 people in it, 13 of whom are of Slavic appearance. I have no idea whether they are ethnically Russians, or Ukrainians, or Belorussians... One woman is of Tatar origin...”

(33)

In order to justify their positions in relation to the non-existence of a ‘nationality question’ within the regional civil service, respondents spoke about a peaceful, non-conflictive working environment and the low representation of ethnic minorities at different management levels:

“It is possible to say that there is no nationality question for the regional civil service agenda at the moment because, thank God, there are no conflicts here that might be connected to such a question... One more explanation for this: we don’t give any attention to the nationality of a civil servant..”

There is no ‘nationality question’ for there are few people of non-Russian descent among our civil servants.”

(21)

Growing up in Soviet times, most respondents had very rarely - or never - thought about their peers or more senior staff in terms of diversity.

“I have never thought how diverse our department might be! I can’t say that we give any special privileges to representatives from the national majority or to minorities... Moreover, according to Federal Law it is the right of any citizen of the Russian Federation to apply for a job in the civil service, regardless of ethnic background or gender.

The main thing we look at when selecting candidates for an advertised vacancy is level of education and how he or she meets professional requirements...”

(42)

However, giving no attention to ethnicity or other diversifying factors does not prevent someone’s making judgments or having negative emotions related to representatives of non-Russian, minority ethnic groups – as one could see when somebody gave a personal, non-professional opinion:

“Of course, one can see, from their appearance, that some civil servants are not from the majority group –meaning that they are not Russian; but, in general, this doesn’t matter. The main thing is whether the person is good at his or her job, and is a well thought-of employee... As a matter of fact, it seems to me that it is better not to focus on the nationality of a civil servant. If you do this, it means you are doing it on purpose... And what might this purpose be? To make a note of how these people do their jobs in comparison with Russians?! This would immediately mean that we are keeping in mind the idea that

Russians differ from non-Russians – that someone is better, someone is worse... Also, one thinks about the unpleasant incidents you witness in your everyday life, things concerning Armenians or Azerbaijani in the market place, for example... And then you just get into a bad mood!”

(17)

As can be seen, for a great number of respondents the lack of minority representatives within the civil service in both regions means fewer problems to cope with - and nothing more. A colour-blind or ethnicity-blind approach to the issue is seen as the best solution.

The opinions noted above make it clear that all professional attitudes had by Russian civil servants in relation to the nationality question and ethnic diversity in the civil service have been built up on the basis of ideas about assimilation - which have put Russian culture and Russian people into leading, commanding positions. The degree of assimilation attained might be looked at according to a specific number of 'satisfied conditions', such as:

- substituting the minority group's cultural models with those of the host, majority group;
- there being an absence of value- and power-conflicts;
- and an absence of overt discrimination (Bolaffi et al., 2003: 20-21).

All of these conditions have been nominally satisfied in the former Soviet Union, as interviewees explained.

The 'morality' of work colleagues and the fact that they have a nice personality were always underlined as the first indicators when one sought to judge a non-Russian nationality; which then, of course, goes hand in hand with professionalism, knowledge possessed and skills. The existence of certain shared values - such as mutual respect, mutual assistance, and friendship between nationalities - were seen by respondents as being ties that still bind people in Russia. In addition, 'the spiritual commonality of socialist nationalities' has not completely vanished from the hearts and minds of persons - even if they may well have been affected by a number of psychological 'traumas' connected to ethnic conflict in the wake of the collapse of the USSR (Bol'shaya Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya, 1976; Tyldum & Kolstø, 2004).

As the interviews showed, civil servants from both the Perm and the Saratov regions were, at the present time, not ready to absorb 'the beauty of multiculturalism' in terms of having a more deeper understanding of and respect for the particularities and universality of different nationalities; though the main reason for this might arguably be seen via the fact that most respondents were not familiar with a multicultural approach with regard to handling the 'nationality question' - in other words, they had never specifically thought about feelings related to the USSR's 'one united people' or about the presence of a number of the minority nationality schools in the country; or about the literature, art and music of non-Russian nationalities being taught (as a piece of Russian heritage) in every ordinary school in Russia; or about the attributes of multiculturalism (etc.). Such attributes - except for the 'Soviet people' feeling that is shared by all nationalities - are now interwoven in the lives of the people of Russia on an everyday basis, and hence are taken for granted, albeit under the name of 'internationalism' - and not of 'multiculturalism'.

It is also important to see that the attitudes and values of senior civil servants in the two Russian regions regarding ethnic diversity do determine the way relations between the civil service, as an institution, and national minority groups are developed. In its turn, this makes the ethnic dimension of social, political and economic relations in the regions more or less visible depending on what strategy has been chosen by the authorities to manage regional diversity.

Currently (as interviews revealed), it is more likely that the civil service, as a social institution, would prefer to stick to the old-fashioned assimilation approach to the 'nationality question', given that the majority of senior civil servants were in favour of *not* emphasizing cultural differences, indeed of concealing them - rather than trying to learn from multicultural policy, to see which within the multicultural community celebrates incorporation not as inclusion per se but as an achievement as regards diversity. The most commonly expressed opinion of Russian civil servants referred to diversity and, thus, multiculturalism as a problem rather than a way of responding to situations. On the conceptual level, Russian region respondents referred, in the main, to multiculturalism via its descriptive usage - while it is less frequently comprehended as an ideology. A more or less positive meaning of diversity and multiculturalism has been attributed to the first approach ; while the second, more analytical approach towards multiculturalism may be seen as something having a destructive effect on good inter-ethnic relations in Russia. It is not being perceived - either personally or

professionally - as a competitor for the well-known and already tested assimilation option.

Does the 'National Question' Influence the Civil Service in Russia?

It has been noted earlier that not all regions in the Russian Federation gather statistical data based on civil servants' nationality backgrounds. Fifty one regions of Russia, from eighty nine, do have this data available for internal usage - yet any external enquiries into the ethnic breakdown of civil service cadres need to be permitted and given the go-ahead by the regional authorities. The Republic of Karelia, along with the Moscow, Saratov, Tver and the Chelyabinsk regions do not 'register' civil servants according to their nationality at all (Ruban, 2003: 179).

The survey done by Perm sociologists (mentioned earlier) has presented evidence that the Russian majority, for example, does not wish to see representatives of minority cultures holding senior positions either in the government or the civil service. The same study revealed the quite common view that the presence of non-Russians in both regional and local administrations was considered to be the factor that 'made real' the myths and stereotypes related to minorities - and which might provoke or aggravate inter-ethnic tensions (Leibovitch, Stegnyy, et al., 2003: 245). According to the Perm scholars' data, more than 56.3 per cent of the civil servants participating in the survey were more likely to support a Russian candidate for the post of Mayor of the city of Perm - and would not be likely to consider candidates having either Tatar, Bashkir or Komi-Permyak nationality as being appropriate candidates (Leibovitch, Stegnyy, et al., 2003: 242). Among the nationalities which respondents excluded from the list of potential Mayoral candidates for the Perm position, the following were mentioned, in a descending order: Azerbaijanians, Armenians, Georgians, Jews, Germans, Latvians, Lithuanians, Estonians, Tatars, Ukrainians, Roma, Chechens and, finally, Middle Asian nationalities.

The Soviet legacy as regards handling the "nationality question", and its impact on the presence of minorities within the civil service in Russia

As my own research has also demonstrated, the same tendency to see mono-cultural government and the civil service as the most suitable option for regional administration becomes apparent in the contemporary composition of regional

government in the Perm and Saratov regions. Since official data on ethnicity and nationality is lacking in both regions, the only way to make it clear that non-Russian nationalities are being underrepresented within the regional civil service when it comes to senior positions is to check the official web-sites of the Perm and Saratov regional governments, where a listing of senior civil servants is available. Because of the specific spelling of non-Russian last and first names, it is possible to (more or less) identify minority members from the list. This simple technique (used in 2003) gave me the names of seven non-Russian senior civil servants in the Saratov government and ten minority representatives in the Perm regional government*. As the ethnic composition of both regions is similar, the existence of non-Russians in these regional governments have also been quite close in the ethnic background to each other, with Tatar, Bashkir, Jewish, German, Ukrainian, Georgian, Chivash and Mordva representatives being present among senior civil servants here.

With these kinds of precondition relating to the non-significant representation of minorities in the regions' power structures, I would suggest that one of the main reasons for the under representation of non-Russian minorities within the civil services of the two regions might be rooted in the Soviet legacy of the 'nationality question' within the Russian Federation.

"The Russian majority" factor

Almost all interviewees expressed the feeling that the social atmosphere had not been marked by the placing of Russians and non-Russians in different social categories. In general, people were not divided on the basis of ethnic origin or nationality. This 'nationality blindness' could be seen in both private aspects - when a respondent was talking about friends and neighbours - as well as in the public arena, i.e. when persons were discussing relationships at their workplace (with peers and bosses). The 'Russian majority' factor was often referred to as being the most likely reason for the lack of minority representatives among senior civil servants. In both research sites, interviewees stated that this appears quite logical to them. The following opinion, from a Saratov respondent, sums up this idea:

* The official site of the Saratov regional government is available at: www.saratov.gov.ru

'I think that we need to head for the expectations of the majority of the population. I really do believe this! In our region, Russians have an absolute majority - so I don't think it's wrong that the vast majority of senior civil servants in the region have a Russian background... Anyway, all people in the region, disregarding nationality, can take part in decision-making and in governance via their being able to vote for elected officials and for deputies at both regional and local levels.'

(23)

Apparently, therefore, when attempting to take on board the public's interests and to meet public expectations, the civil service system replaces this public with the majority group. However, in terms of the historical background of inter-ethnic relations in Russia, this may not simply mean that minority interests are being ignored – it could also signify that, from the respondent's point of view, the Russian majority's interests and expectations are similar to those of non-Russians, so would rarely come into conflict with the latter. Perhaps the tendency for persons to have this point of view is in consequence of the enduring ideology once clearly articulated by Stalin in mid-1930s being applied over decades - and, indeed, it has probably still not vanished completely. This ideology openly praised the Russian people for its past and present virtues, and for its role as 'elder brother' in the 'Soviet family of nations'. This was in the period of the Sovietisation of Union Republics, and the process was to a large extent dependent on the increasing number of Russian cadres arriving there in this period (Aasland, 1996). Also, the high status of Russians – who were 'first among equals' (meaning by 'equals' all nationalities of the USSR, including Russians) - was 'intended to facilitate the drawing together of nations into one Soviet people' (Chinn and Kaiser, 1996: 74). Hence, the Russians were supposed to express the *united* Soviet people's interests.

Given this explanation, it is not surprising that the opinions of Russians are still considered to be the reference point in those regions where they form a majority. Thus, the *first factor*, which when it comes to civil servants' attitudes provides an explanation for the fact of the minority under-representation in the civil service, points to the *numerical superiority of Russians* in the studied regions.

Non-traditional occupations for minorities

One needs to note that, via the interviews, it became clear that the experience of working alongside non-Russians was quite different for the sample's civil service members.

In most cases, when a respondent touched upon good relations among varied nationalities in the workplace, these references also concerned previous job positions held outside the civil service system or a government institution. A number of respondents, for example, came to the civil service from the industrial sector, where they had had supervisory positions – and such persons were more likely to recall the 'friendship among different nationalities' as being a fundamental characteristic within inter-ethnic relations from the Soviet period.

Often, relations between different ethnic groups - from personal experience and as publicly-declared norms and values within such relations at the time of the USSR - were seen by people as being positive and friendly, and they encouraged all sorts of interactions between nationalities:

'The communists did their best to deal with the nationality question - I mean, they had graded and reduced this question to some extent in the USSR. There were some 'blips' with it, however: at one time it might have been some crazy idea that the Jews were gaining control of the country! Or perhaps somebody else... Yet there was this central ideology for the whole multinational society, a single ideology – that we are a great and united, multi-national nation... And this ideology had been welcomed and was happily accepted in society...'

(25)

Nevertheless, in both regions virtually no respondent who had begun their professional career in the civil service, a government body or in any kind of bureaucratic organization in the Soviet past was able to say that they had had experience of working within a multicultural environment; for only rarely could someone remember a minority-group person working in the senior civil service. Although if it *did* happen it usually occurred at a very high level of the nomenclature hierarchy – and even now (as interviewees explained) minority representatives are quite ambitious and have high expectations when it comes to posts they are willing to occupy:

'I believe, that, for example, Armenian people will not be so eager simply to get a job in the civil service, in administration only... This is not

prestigious enough for them. They certainly wouldn't come, for example, to work in local administration - they will have their eyes set at least on the regionally administrative body...'

(67)

An Unspoken but Clear Taboo

Respondents rarely made themselves think about actual reasons for the lack of non-Russians among some of the professional occupations, including senior civil servant positions – it was in many cases a situation that they referred to as a 'concurring of circumstances'. However, some persons also referred to the existence of 'unofficial, secret instructions', such instructions being ones developed by Communist Party ideologists; and they consisted of quite clear guidelines stating that opportunities should *not* be given to representatives of some nationalities as regards their taking up specific senior positions or having occupations (including getting an administrative civil service job):

'At the moment, I can't imagine what kinds of concerns might relate to the nationality factor... I remember that, at one time, it was a problem for non-Russian staff, for example, to get onto the Regional Communist Party Committee ("Obkom partii") or get a job in the Oblast Trade Union Office... If you happened to be a Jew, you would definitely be rejected... The answer would be 'No', no way... It didn't matter how qualified you were! I knew of such examples myself. Though, now – well, I can't imagine any tensions appearing...'

(18)

In a lot of cases, civil servants stressed that it was often not their own intention to see non-Russian representatives as being 'not suitable' for an appointment within the civil service; it was more of an 'unofficial' directive from above, one aimed at limiting the number of ethnic minority persons at senior levels. A very explicit comment about this was made by a respondent from Perm:

'You want to know how I feel about the different nationalities in the civil service in the region – tell me, then: exactly what nationalities are we talking about...?'

(52)

On the basis of respondents' opinions, it can be inferred that 'unspoken' directives from top management do still exist, suggesting that one should be very 'choosy' and 'careful' if wishing to make a civil service post available to an ethnic minority person. So an *unofficial and 'unspoken'*, albeit clear, *directive about not having many ethnic minorities in the civil service* can be seen to be an additional reason for the shortage of such persons in the system at present; and even though the 'strength' of this factor nowadays is not so great (indeed, it is becoming weaker), it does still affect the ethnic breakdown of civil service staff.

The Reluctance of Minorities

One of the most widespread opinions among interviewees concerned the *reluctance and unwillingness of minority members* to become civil servants. It was chiefly the Russian respondents who explained that minority members are not interested in this kind of job position:

'Perhaps they (minorities - V.A.) are more, I don't know, business people... This is my personal view. They set up and run their own businesses and make good money. They are not bureaucrat types! It seems to me that they don't want to sit in an office; and if they do want something, well, they want a very senior positions - they want something prestigious...'

(17)

Closely linked to this opinion were those related to the fact that very few minority persons - almost none, in fact - apply for civil service jobs. In short, many interviewees said that ethnic minorities are not interested in working in the civil service, and would prefer to be in business. However, as the present study has revealed, there is no hard data within regional civil service offices proving the above - as there are no statistics indicating how many applicants from different ethnic backgrounds apply and have been successful (or not) with their application, and for what reasons.

Yet not all participants agreed with this, for a number of respondents in both regions explained that certain ethnic groups and diasporas *are* willing to occupy a civil service post – something that will be elaborated upon in the following chapter.

A Lack of Vacancies

Other reasons that prevent ethnic minorities from being employed within the civil service, in the both regions, relate to, simply, there being a *lack of vacancies*; and there are *particular difficulties* arising at times in *finding someone with the specific qualifications* needed. The following citation clarifies this:

'I doubt whether a non-Russian would be chosen... We have a very limited number of employees here. There is virtually no staff flow in our Unit. If someone is about to retire, then we will seek out a candidate to replace him... We don't really have any form of 'competition' -we just choose someone from among our leading specialists...'

(24)

The practice of selecting a candidate from existing staff or from another department should a vacancy turn up is quite common in the civil service system; and if there is no relevant candidate from within the system, a opportunity is used to find someone with the needed qualifications from an 'inner circle' of friends and colleagues from other organizations. At this stage of the selection process, a minority member may appear among the candidates, though in most cases just theoretically rather than in practice. Thus, a so-called 'word of mouth' recruitment might potentially lead to indirect discrimination. In the case of the two regions under investigation here, 'word of mouth' recruitment means that the door to the civil service is closed to potential candidates from minority groups, i.e. as information about the vacancy is spread mainly amongst Russians who occupy civil service positions already, or among their friends, who are, for the most part, of Russian descent too.

'Just recently, I was looking for a specialist for our department... I got thirteen applications. The best candidate, who was chosen, was Tartar. The thing is that the specifics of the post required a strong knowledge in environmental law, and it was extremely difficult to find a relevant candidate... But that Tartar woman was sort of perfect – very professional and very knowledgeable. I didn't care about her nationality at all. She has been selected on the basis of merit, and according to her capacities...'

(39)

The above quote, from a Perm respondent, proves that merit-based competition will not overlook talent, even if it does come from an ethnic minority representative. It is also worth mentioning that Perm civil servants were, overall, more likely to express similar opinions to the one above than persons from Saratov – and they emphasized that the larger the number of candidates for a post, the higher the likelihood of finding the most suitable appointee. Saratov interviewees were generally less optimistic when assessing their chances of finding the best candidate for a civil service vacancy from among minority persons. At the same time, though, they did not entirely reject this possibility.

As can be seen, for a great number of respondents the lack of minority representatives within the civil service in both regions merely means fewer problems to cope with. A colour-blind or ethnicity-blind approach to such an issue is seen as the best solution.

Reasons of a systemic nature

Given that ethnicity or nationality very often appear to be one of the main grounds for discrimination, I expected my respondents to mention this at least a few times as a factor contributing to the shortage of minority staff in their region's civil service. Yet the vast majority of interviewees avoided using this term directly - though when being asked directly about the existence of discrimination on grounds of nationality some people thought that it did exist - and even gave very specific examples:

'Discrimination in terms of national origin can be seen in our region at all the levels of bureaucracy, without exceptions... In the majority of cases it is a hidden discrimination. The main gateway to discrimination is in the appointments process. Although, officially, there is open competition for the majority of posts within the regional civil service, all talk about the fairness and transparency of such competition is plain rubbish... It is just for show! A chosen candidate has either been already working in this position for a while - and this just needs to be officially confirmed via the competition procedure - or he/she has already been approved of in relation to the vacancy.'

Thus, all this 'to-do' about competition is nothing more than window-dressing - though it is necessary, to show that everything is legal...'

(17)

An *unfair and non-transparent appointment process* can thus be seen to be a major reason for discrimination within the civil service. Research respondents suggested three main appointment-obtaining options were 'available'. First, in order to be a successful candidate for a post, it is necessary to reveal one's personal loyalty to superiors; secondly, bribes (or facilitation payments) may occur if one wishes to get a specific position; and the third (and least likely) option is that if there is no candidate who takes on board one of the two previous requirements, someone else will be picked, just 'by chance' – and this candidate may, by chance, be from a national minority group. All three cases may/will include discrimination, however (as respondents underlined).

People's opinions on the lack of a fair and professional appointment policy here correspond with results seen in a nation-wide survey that was conducted in August 2004 by the Levada-Center³. Respondents were asked "How do you think new appointees to state bodies are being selected now...?":

- 30% said that new appointees are being chosen according to their professional qualities;
- 17% could not decide;
- while 53% said that new appointees are being selected according to their personal loyalty to President Vladimir Putin (Levada, 2005).

Unfortunately, interviews revealed that corruption also appears to strongly affect competition and appointment processes within the civil service. Thus, if a civil servant 'shares power', this in many cases means sharing 'extra money' and 'extra opportunities' when there is an allocation of resources. The point here it that is not only the predominant Russian group that does not want to give up its authority - it is more

³ Levada-Center (ex-VCIOM-A) is an independent, non-profit organization at the Yuriy Levada Analytical Center, headed by Yuriy Levada, the well known Russian sociologist, founder and the head of the former All-Russian Center for Public Opinion and Market Research (VCIOM) and later founder and head of VCIOM-A . The story behind the creation of VCIOM-A, in English, can be found at: http://iicas.org/2003en/02_10_an_en.htm

likely that its members do not want to run the risk of granting power and giving 'complementary resources' to minority groups that are considered to be unreliable - such as Chechens, and some minorities from the Caucasus, for example:

'Everyone knows how these 'so-called' merit-based and open competitions are being organized... It's all there on paper. But the system has this within it too: that if some of representatives from the X minority group decide that they really need one from among themselves in a senior position somewhere - let's say, in the regional government - well, they would come with a generous 'facilitation payment'; and then it is quite likely that this specific appointment would take place... So, in this case the nationality of the candidate would not be taken into account - what occurs merely depends only on the amount at stake...'

(29)

Conversations about this theme additionally showed that, for the most part, neither ethnicity nor nationality per se present a problem for minority members in their being able to become senior civil servants - rather, it is the non-transparent, unfair and often corrupt system of appointments and personnel management within regions. Such a system affects all nationality groups - indeed, it affects the whole population. Unfortunately, these problems become more visible especially when non-Russian civil servants are involved. The fact of the poor, authoritarian administrative system in Russia - which makes an extremely hierarchical bureaucracy and power elite the only ruling class in society - was said by respondents to be one of the most major barriers holding back ethnic minority persons from entering regional civil services.

A lack of trust

In senior civil servants' views, one more serious thing preventing regional authorities from attracting minority representatives into the civil service is a strong belief that the majority of the population is not likely to trust minority leaders in the civil service or government.

'...from the point of view of the electorate, I would say that people's attitudes towards minority representatives being in top positions in the civil service is negative. Let's say, if there is someone from Jewish descent occupying a key position in government or in the civil service -

I, a Russian, would not be happy to be 'under his governance'; because I have a belief (one cultivated in my family, and among friends) that such a kind of situation is wrong. And there has not been any opportunity for this stereotype to change...(...) Even though, as an intelligent person, I can assure myself that the nationality background is not a big deal, still I have some anxieties about all these non-Russians... I sort of trust them - though only to some extent...

This attitude is never discussed openly, however – it's an impulsive thing, which is rarely affirmed openly... Yet such a thing is widespread among the population...'

(20)

Thus we can see that, as regards Russian bureaucracy and the administrative system, there are more factors that one might link to the problem of the shortage of ethnic minorities in regional civil services - one of which is a stereotyping, where non-Russian nationalities often cause Russians to have negative feelings and prejudices; while another is the low level of trust had in the authorities in general. In addition to these, the so-called 'mentality inertia' inherent to a large part of modern Russia's population still causes people to see ethnic minority representatives as 'alien', 'problematic' nationalities, and as persons who need to be distanced from Russia's power structures. Such 'mentality inertia' resulted from the great number of collisions and transformations that virtually all nationalities, especially non-Russian, underwent during Soviet times; and these upsets had a major impact on the mental and intellectual capacity of some generations to think about the 'nationality question' in both positive and constructive ways (Tishkov, 1997a: 42-8).

However, as respondents themselves had been exposed to some good examples of minorities' participation within the civil service, most persons assumed that if a transparent and fair selection and appointment procedure were to be used, then non-Russian civil servants could have enriched the civil service institution in the regions:

'While admitting ethnic minorities into the civil service, we need to bear it in mind that, at the moment, there is almost no trust in the regional government - nor any great trust in the country's government! Therefore, from my point of view, if someone has the necessary skills

and knowledge, he or she is welcome to the civil service, to improve governance in the region... And this person will make all efforts to work effectively... Here, therefore, it doesn't matter what the one's ethnicity is!

(21)

As the majority of respondents were not in favour of continuing with an unfair selection process, some (particularly from the Perm region) were sure that something should be done to protect ethnic minority candidates from discrimination - and the role of regional heads was fundamental here.

To summarize therefore, there seems to be a number of reasons why there is a lack of ethnic minority participation in the senior civil service in Russia's regions. Among these, the following are the most influential:

- Russian domination in the regions;
- the reluctance of minorities to apply for civil service positions;
- there being a lack of vacancies in many departments;
- the 'unofficial' taboo regarding minority members within the senior civil service;
- a lack of trust had in minority leaders as civil servants;
- a non-transparent and unfair selection and appointments process;
- corruption in – and of - the administrative system;
- the traditional 'non-occupation' of civil service posts by minorities.

These things could probably be put into more specific categories, depending on what social, administrative, or ideological basis underlies them. I would suggest the following ones:

- reasons depending on common values and norms had by persons as a result of/rooted in the Soviet legacy;
- the authoritarian type of administrative system;
- social disparities;
- the primacy of the ideological purpose of ethnic relations.

These reasons might be considered social, administrative or ideological barriers standing against the potential adoption of multiculturalism in the Russian civil service. In other words, civil servants may say they believe in the idea of the equality of all

nationalities in Russia – but this is not supported by a lot of evidence in *real life*; indeed, this difference may actually be an obstacle on the road to a ‘Russian multiculturalism’ in the civil service.

Does Multiculturalism suit the Civil Service in Russia?

One of the main goals of the current study was to find out whether, on the basis of empirical data, civil servants in Russia’s regions were ready to incorporate multiculturalism into the civil service – and, to do this, the following approaches were made. Given that in the Russian context the term ‘nationality question’ was used instead of ‘multiculturalism’, and that respondents generally spoke about different nationalities when addressing the ethnic diversity of regions, this objective might be considered in the following two ways. First of all, it might be suggested that ‘being ready for multiculturalism in the civil service’ would have meant to my respondents something that was nearby– so would they welcome the idea of having a diverse civil service, based on principles of multiculturalism - with equal opportunity, social inclusion, understanding and respect for ethnic diversity (etc.)? Secondly, it is possible to assume that persons’ willingness to adopt multiculturalism might also be based on the long-term outcomes that one may have expected from a diverse civil service in a specific region of Russia.

When summing up the views and opinions of Russian civil servants, it is important to note what the main outcomes could be (in respondents’ perspectives) if the regional civil service happened to be ethnically diverse. Persons did indicate that ethnic diversity, multiculturalism and related principles are not likely to suit the civil service in Russia nowadays; they would not get great support from current civil servants. Among the most impressive - and occasionally contentious – things that a multicultural civil service in Russia might bring are the following:

- a decrease/increase in the public’s trust in the civil service as an institution, and in regional government;
- an increase in negative attitudes, and a greater stereotyping of ethnic minorities;
- persons supposed that minority-group civil servants would undertake a sort of ‘ethnic expansion’ within the civil service, thereby ‘flooding’ the institution with members of their own ethnic group;
- the interests of the Russian population will be infringed;

- social and ethnic well-being and conditions in the regions would deteriorate;
- an uncontrolled lobbying for the explicit/implicit interests of minorities will start up.

4 Conclusions and Recommendations: An Assessment of 'Russian Multiculturalism' Alternatives, and Some Strategies That May be Pursued

A number of policy moves could be developed according to a three-level model of the civil service, as follows.

At a Personnel System level:

- Introducing Assessment Centre technology that can be applied to staffing policies within the civil service;
- Attracting senior civil servants from different regional government departments to participate in selection committees;
- Monitoring the number of applications submitted in relation to civil service job positions - with particular attention being paid to the senior positions - from members of ethnic minorities;
- For the sake of an equal opportunities policy, keeping a record of the nationality/origin of all civil servants in regional government;
- to make training and professional development courses on diversity management obligatory, and courses in curricular should be started in regional Academies for the Civil Service;
- Guaranteeing open and wide advertising for vacancies existing within a civil service;
- Giving citizens equal access to information about job vacancies within the civil service in the region - by the means of regional media, ethnic communities and the civil service institution itself.

At a Governance level:

- Ensuring that federal and regional legislation dealing with the civil service is being implemented and treats citizens equally, and without discrimination on grounds of ethnicity;

- Establishing a regional government body that is responsible for handling ethnic diversity issues in a region (i.e. Committee on Inter-Nationality Relations), with the participation of the minority representatives;
- Ensuring that ethnic diversity issues are being included in regional government agenda.

At the performance level:

- Setting up targets in regional governments so that they improve minority participation and change organizational culture by making it more tolerant to minority presence;
- Disseminating 'best practice' experiences in terms of ethnic-minority representation within the civil service
- Evaluating the efficacy of regional civil service institutions on the basis of the degree of active participation of ethnic minorities occurring
- To develop and teach 'professional development' courses on diversity management in Russia

One of the most basic findings of the present study is that, at present, the civil service in Russia is not ready to adopt multiculturalism in its norms, practices and values. However, this has given us some evidence that many Russian civil servants are not satisfied with the principles upon which the appointments process is built - or with the practice of exploiting the upsetting and complicated 'nationality question' as an effective ad-hoc tool in a pre-election period. Interviewed persons in the two regions were greatly concerned about there being a lack of relevant ideology and policy here, which could otherwise make all people, regardless of nationality and ethnicity, feel equally valued and recognized within society.

Some strategy might thus be suggested so as to alter approaches to the 'nationality question' by the civil service (and in Russian society overall), and to thereby make the adoption of so-called 'Russian multiculturalism more feasible – among whose main aims could be the following. First, it should seek to prepare the multinational population of the Russian Federation to think about the spectrum of existing nationalities, including the Russian majority - and about the state's *response* to ethnic diversity - in a way that is quite different from the primordial and assimilationist approach of 'Soviet internationalism'. This 'enlightening' procedure for the strategy is most important and

will be time-consuming, as any change in people's ways of thinking usually takes up a lot of time and will come in stages; and when it comes to the civil service's adopting multiculturalism, the process of educating bureaucrats about ethnic diversity and multiculturalism cannot be skipped, as persons are confused about - or have no suggestions to make with regard to - the 'nationality question' and how problems might be solved. The fact that national strategy in the field of inter-ethnic relations and nationality policy has been lacking in the country since the beginning of the 1990s makes it clear that neither federal nor regional governments have tried to create a workable policy in order to accommodate ethnic diversity within the civil service system. Thus, enlightenment and education to promote the main principles of multiculturalism - such as social justice, equal opportunity and respect for all nationalities - should be the strategy's first step. There is also a need to come up with new courses for universities curricular, which would build diversity awareness among civil servants and develop their professional and personal diversity competences.

After this first step – and when the attitudes of civil servants towards ethnic minorities and the 'nationality question' have been amended, so that persons can start to value and respect ethnic diversity - a second step might be taken... This assumes that the strategy is seeking to adjust the policy of multiculturalism to the Russian context - in order to make it more suitable for Russian circumstances, and also more functional.

Even though this study's data shows that multiculturalism cannot be 'invented' within nationality policy, the same empirical data provides us with some evidence that, after some 'corrections', it may still be helpful in the initiating and developing of 'Russian multiculturalism' within regional civil services. Based on evidence from the present research, it is possible to suggest the introduction of 'Russian multiculturalism' as a policy that wishes to acknowledge *variations between rather than the diversity of cultures*. Such *variations* are familiar to persons who lived through Soviet times, for friendship with and the flourishing of fifteen Soviet republics, along with their titular nationalities, was celebrated. Firstly, *variations between cultures* would not underline their differences but should seek to outline their variety and richness. Secondly, a belief that all cultural segments were of equal value used to exist and was well known, even if it was only a formal part of the "united Soviet nation's" declared ideology. Hence, a belief that all *cultural variations* might be presented fairly if there is some form of competition for a job, say, within the regional civil service might also become one of the main bastions of multiculturalism in Russia. Thirdly, 'Russian multiculturalism' should

be seen as being open to further development and a flexible policy – that is, rather than a fixed one (as was the case with the dogmatic ideals of the ‘internationalism’ of Soviet times). If a purely ideological component is now to be replaced by a multiculturalism having a ‘business and moral rationale’, this could then mean that all *cultural variations* present in the regions – Russians, ethnic minorities that have dwelt in the regions for a long time, newcomers, economic migrants from the republics of the former USSR - will be able to move forward. If seeking to handle the needs of majority and minority groups alike, ‘Russian multiculturalism’ will require the following: that there is an adjustment in the claims and aspirations of both the ethnic minority and the Russian majority. However, all potential adjustments will have to be done in conformity with the main principles of multiculturalism.

Another alteration multiculturalism would arguably have to undergo to become more relevant to Russians includes a change in the main foundation existing for the principle of social inclusion. The generally-declared civil rights for all citizens of Russia, regardless of one’s nationality/ethnic origin, and the prohibiting of discrimination as laid down in the Constitution of the Russian Federation and in a number of Federal Acts, have been widely violated - and thus should not be seen as the main rationale for the inclusion of all nationalities in Russian society. As the present study has shown, it is possible that, in the case of Russia, the existence of a number of unresolved issues of a social and economic nature, ones that are alike, could serve as a basis for social inclusion; for the vast majority of research respondents had seen a need to overcome such problems, which could then help unite all nationalities in the country.

One more alteration will need to be made in order to place multiculturalism in a Russian context. As the interviews showed, Russian civil servants did not wish to depend on affirmative action or on quotas as attempts to resolve the ‘nationality question’. As Soviet and Russian history has testified, power-sharing issues and equal participation in decision-making have always been the main stumbling-blocks against the more broad representation of ethnic minorities within the civil service and government. Thus, the principle of equal opportunity in a Russian context could arguably mean, first of all, equal opportunities for all nationalities to enter senior civil service positions and to participate equally in decision-making. This principle will probably be one of the most contentious for civil servants – thus, hard to agree with. Yet at the same time, based on this study’s findings, for non-Russian nationalities it would mean not only gaining access to resources; it would also mean that if they

participated equally in decision-making, they would also share responsibility for the outcomes of decisions made. First, according to conventional wisdom, the presence of a greater number of minority representatives would probably give the impression that the Russian ruling majority is being weakened - but if power-sharing and the fair representation of minorities in the civil service and in regional government is the result of social inclusion and a transparent appointment process (based on the principle of equal opportunities for all citizens), then it is more likely that Russians and non-Russians will try to find the best solution to issues they face *together*, without blaming each other for selfish motivations or resorting to aggressive lobbying. And second, being fairly appointed - according to professional and educational requirements - ethnic minority civil servants could strengthen people's confidence in regional government and in the civil service generally, i.e. as a social and political institution.

All alterations to the policy of multiculturalism outlined above point to the preventive nature of 'Russian multiculturalism' that might have as its basis modified principles of respect for the variations of cultures, equal opportunity and social inclusion. Thus, a Russian kind of multiculturalism can be recognized as an 'introductory policy', aiming to enable civil servants and regional populations to understand, recognize, value, respect and 'manage' variations in cultures. This policy might be seen as being a transition from 'internationalism' to a new national policy, one which has yet to be worked out... Being a proactive, rather than a reactive policy, 'Russian multiculturalism' could serve as a mitigating factor when a civil servant has to deal with a sensitive, and perhaps rather scary, 'nationality question'. The proactive nature of 'Russian multiculturalism' is a specific feature making it different from more reactive multiculturalisms (ones coming from abroad).

One more important, and specific feature of the Russian approach to multiculturalism is the following (as was mentioned in interviewees): for it to be suitably adopted as policy within the civil service, multiculturalism first has to be stabilized and fixed in the Russian society as its descriptive characteristics and, next, it will have to be developed and accepted as an ideology and as a norm. These three different concepts of multiculturalism, if realized one after the other, will make it possible for 'Russian multiculturalism' to appear as a successful and appropriate policy, not only within the civil service, but within society as a whole.

Bibliography

Abdulatipov, R. (ed) (2001) *Osnovi Natsionalnykh i Federativnykh Otnoshenii*. Moscow: RAGS.

Arutuynyan, Y. et al. (ed) (1992) *Russkie – Ethnosotsiologicheskie ocherki*. Moscow: Nauka.

Chernykh, A.(1998) 'Etnicheskiy Sostav Naseleniya v Yuzhnom Prilam'e', in N. Dubova and N. Lopulenko *Etnicheskie Problemy Regionov Rossii:Permskaya Oblast*, Moscow: Stariy Sad.

Drobizheva, L.(2002) 'Etnicheskie Aspekty Izucheniya Social'noy Differenttsiatsii', in L. Drobizheva (ed) *Social'noe Neravenstvo Etnicheskikh Grupp: Predstavleniya i Real'nost'*, pp.3-11. Moscow: Academia.

Drobizheva, L. (2003) *Socialnye Problemy Mezhnatsionalnykh Otnoshenii v Postsovetskoi Rossii*. Moscow: Academia.

Hajda, L. and Beissinger, M. (ed) (1990) *The Nationalities Factor in Soviet Politics and Society*. Boulder, San Francisco & Oxford: Westview Press.

Khabibullin K., Skvortsov N. (1993). *Ispytaniya Natsionalnogo Samosoznaniya*. Sankt-Peterburg.

Kolsto, P. (1999) *Nation-Building and Social Integration Theory*, in P. Kolstø (ed) *Nation-Building and Ethnic Integration in Post-Soviet Societies - An Investigation of Latvia and Kazakstan*. pp. 44-62. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Konstitutsiya Rossiiskoy Federatsii. (1993) Moskva: Politizdat. An English version of The Constitution of the Russian Federation is available on the official site of Bucknell University at <http://www.departments.bucknell.edu/russian/const/constit.html>

Kottak, C., and Kozaitis, K. (2003) *On Being Different: Diversity and Multiculturalism in the North American Mainstream*. Boston: McGraw-Hill.

Kranz, H. (1976) *Participatory Bureaucracy: Women And Minorities in a More Representative Public Service*. Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books.

Mnatsakanyan, M. (1998) *Etnosociologiya: Natcii, Natsionalnaya Psikhologiya, Mezhnatsionalnye Konflikty*. Moscow.

Mosher, F. (1982) *Democracy and Public Service*. New York: Oxford University Press. *Normativnije Akti Po Nacionalnim Voprosam*, 2001

Rice, M. (ed) 2005. *Diversity and Public Administration: Theory, Issues and Perspectives*. Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe.

Sikevitch, Z. (1994) *Etnosociologiya: Natsionalnye Otnosheniya, Mezhnatsionalnye Konflikty*. Sankt-Peterburg.

Sikevitch, Z. (1999) *Sociologiya Natsionalnyh Otnoshenii*. Sankt-Peterburg.

Smith, G., Bohr, A., et al. (1998) *Nation-Building in the Post-Soviet Borderlands. The Politics of National Identities*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tishkov, V. (1997a) *Ethnicity, Nationalism and Conflict In and After The Soviet Union. The Mind Aflame*. London: Sage.

Tishkov, V. (1997b) *Ocherki Teorii i Politiki Etnichnosti*. Moscow: Institut Etnologii i Antropologii RAN.

Tishkov, V. (2003a) *Rekviem po Etnosu. Issledovaniya po Socialno-Kulturnoy Antropologii*. Moscow: Nauka.

Zdravomyslov, A. (1997) *Mezhnatsionalnye Konflikty v Postsovetskom Prostranstve*. Moscow: Aspekt Press.

Young, C. (ed) (1998) *Ethnic Diversity and Public Policy. A Comparative Inquiry*. Palgrave