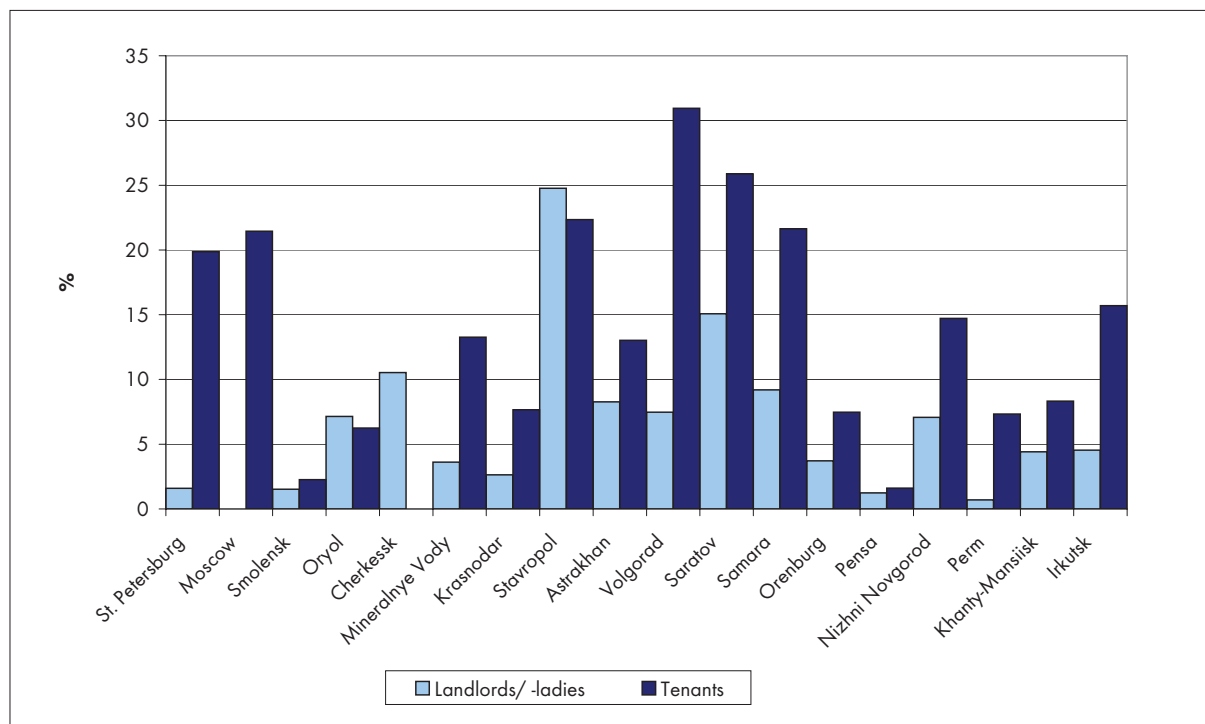


Figure 6: Discrimination against foreigners on the housing market

Proportion of landlords/-ladies and tenants including the proviso “Only for Russians” in their ads in free advertising leaflets in various Russian cities



Source: Analysis of 11,100 rental offers and 9,400 rental searches in free advertising leaflets from 2002–2004.

Regional Report

Ethnic Russians Flee the North Caucasus

Oleg Tsvetkov, Maikop

Summary

Russians have been leaving the North Caucasus since before the collapse of the Soviet Union. At the same time, the local population has been expanding rapidly. The result is a growing divide between the North Caucasus and the rest of Russia, where anti-Caucasus sentiments are increasing. Kremlin policies, such as relying on the local elites, have not improved the situation.

Russian Exodus from North Caucasus Republics

Ethnic Russians are leaving the North Caucasus. Their share in the overall composition of the population has declined dramatically. At the end of the 1959, Russians made up 38.8 percent of the population in the seven national republics of the North Caucasus. By the time of the 2002 census, this figure had dropped to 14.9 percent, a loss of nearly 62 percent. In absolute terms, the number of Russians living in the Caucasus dropped by 994,600 individuals. Overall, there are 6.6 million people living in the North Cau-

casus, representing more than 100 nationalities.

In conditions of deep economic crisis, corruption, intense inter-ethnic conflict, and high levels of crime, the main players in the North Caucasus republics are the ethnic clans and groups. The Russians have only a weak ability for ethnic mobilization, are losing the battles for influence and resources, and therefore are leaving their homes of many years.

Growing Distance with Rest of Russia

With the departure of the Russians from the North Caucasus republics, the cultural distance

between the North Caucasus and the rest of Russia is growing. The two sides claim different historical, social, and cultural-religious identities. A “domestic abroad” has appeared inside of Russia, in some ways similar to the position of Kosovo inside of Serbia, though the North Caucasus does not seek full political independence.

The administrative borders with the “domestic abroad” are guarded not simply as state borders, but as borders with a probable enemy. In particular, this situation affects the borders of Dagestan, Chechnya, and Ingushetia with Stavropol and North Ossetia.

The Russian exodus from the North Caucasus republics comes when anti-Caucasus feelings in the rest of Russia are growing. Several famous Russian nationalists (Aleksandr Sevast'yanov and Eduard Limonov), as well as politicians in other camps, have called for expelling Chechnya, or at least part of it, from the country. Such feelings eventually could spread to a much wider array of Russian society and could be directed against the entire North Caucasus.

Thus, hypothetically, the threat to Russia's territorial unity comes not only from the North Caucasus separatists, but also from “simple” Russians unhappy about the need to provide financial subsidies to economically ineffective republics with restless and culturally distant populations.

Central Authorities Powerless

The central authorities are not adopting serious measures to stop the processes of de-Russification. This inactivity comes in spite of the fact that President Vladimir Putin, judging by his speeches, understands that the exit of Russians from the Caucasus could have negative consequences. In a May 2006 meeting with Cossack atamans, Putin said that the ability of Russians and the Caucasus peoples to live together “made the North Caucasus a viable territory of the Russian Federation.” The exit of the Russians “marks the violation of the culture” of neighborly relations in this territory.

Dmitry Kozak, Putin's presidential envoy to the Southern Federal District, which includes the North Caucasus, has not raised this issue publicly in a serious way. However, his predecessor Viktor Kazantsev was extremely active in these matters. For example, in January 2001 he held a meeting of his staff to discuss the problems of the Russian population and its exodus from the region. Local experts and religious figures participated in the meeting. The participants examined the political, legal, economic, informational-ideological reasons for Russians to depart. According to the press release following this gathering, the con-

versation focused on the inequality suffered by the Russians. This inequality appeared in numerous ways: “the understanding of the ‘rights of the titular peoples,’ the republics’ heraldry, regional electoral laws, the language demands made of high-level officials, the practical aspects of privatization, access to higher education and professional advancement, and in the formation of national political stereotypes.” Despite Kazantsev's efforts, the exodus of the Russians continued.

As Russians Leave, Local Population Expands

The demographic statistics of the first post-Soviet decade tell a clear story: as the Russians leave the North Caucasus republics, local populations are expanding. According to official data, 343,000 Russians left the Caucasus republics during the 1990s. Migration accounted for 86 percent of this loss, while negative natural growth accounted for 14 percent. During this same period, the size of the native Caucasus nationalities in the North Caucasus republics grew by 403,000 individuals.

The share of Caucasus nationalities in the population of each of the Caucasus republics grew significantly during this time. At the beginning of 1999, it ranged from 92.9 percent in Ingushetia to 23 percent in Adygeya. The share of the Russians correspondingly dropped and by 1999, ranging from 1.1 percent of the population in Ingushetia to 66.4 percent in Adygeya (Russians make up a majority only in this republic). Overall, at the beginning of 1999, the Caucasus nationalities made up 70 percent of the population of the republics, and Russians represented less than 20 percent.

Extreme Difficulties in Chechnya

The situation in Chechnya is particularly difficult. According to the 1989 census, there were 293,800 Russians in the then combined Checheno-Ingushetia region. According to the 2002 census, only 40,600 Russians remained in Chechnya and 5,600 in Ingushetia. Some experts believe that even these figures for Chechnya are exaggerated.

The outflow of Russians from Chechno-Ingushetia began during the years of the Soviet Union. Between 1979 and 1988, 70,000 people left, mainly Russians. When the post-Soviet Chechen wars started, many Russians were killed by the separatist fighters, other Russians died as a result of the Russian bombing. Russian refugees numbered in the hundreds of thousands.

There are no definitive figures on the number of deaths and refugees. One source, prepared by a group of Russian scientists headed by V. A. Tishkov, claims

that during the 1991–2 period, when Chechnya first declared its independence, more than 120,000 Russians fled into neighboring Ingushetia. Between 1991 and December 1994, when the first Chechen war started more than 200,000 Russians left Chechnya, according to the former Ministry for Nationalities Affairs and Regional Policy. Between 1991 and 1999, the ministry claims that more than 21,000 Russians were killed in Chechnya (not including Russians who died during military operations), more than 100,000 homes and apartments belonging to non-native peoples, including Ingush, were taken, and more than 46,000 people were coerced into slavery or used as forced laborers. Of course, many Chechens were killed during the fighting and the brutal policies of the Russian military contributed greatly to the overall level of violence.

According to the data of V. I. Mukomel', the well-known Russian sociologist, 35,700 people died in Chechnya between 1994 and 1996. Vitalii Belozerv, a well-known demographer in Russia's south, pointed out that "if the data are correct, most of the victims were in Grozny and thus most of them were Russians."

During his trips to Chechnya, President Putin did not feel it necessary to meet with Russian resident-activists there thinking bleakly about their future. However, in a June appearance on NTV's *Realnaya politika*, Gleb Pavlovskii, an adviser close to the presidential administration, argued that a policy of ethnic cleansing had been carried out in Chechnya. Pavlovskii said that "the Russians will return to their Caucasus homes." Chechen Prime Minister Ramzan Kadyrov has also called on Russians to return.

However, the humiliation of the Russians (with the de facto acquiescence of the central authorities) in Chechnya was so great, and the experiences that they lived through so terrible, that restoring their former numbers in the foreseeable future is not likely.

Other Regions Also Face Difficulties

Ingushetia is another region where the authorities are trying to return some of the many Russians who fled. Thanks to special efforts they have managed to bring back about 400 individuals, a figure that was considered a great success and much celebrated in the press. However, the momentum from this "success" was spoiled by the June 2006 murder of Galina Gubina, the deputy mayor of Ingushetia's Sunzhensk Raion, who was in charge of efforts to return the Russians. Ingushetia is unlikely to be a major destination for Russians since they make up only 1.2 percent of the population, according to the 2002 census.

In Dagestan, Russians made up only 4.7 percent, according to the 2002 census, dropping from 9 percent in 1989. More than 20,000 Russians have left Karachayev-Cherkessia in the last five years. Russians are no longer the largest ethnic group in the region, with their share dropping to 33.6 percent. Between 1989 and 2002, the number of Russians in North Ossetia and Kabardino-Balkaria dropped by 24,000 and 14,000 respectively. Even in Adygeya, the only North Caucasus republic where Russians make up an absolute majority, the population has been shrinking. During the last 10 years, it declined 10 percent. These trends are likely to continue for the near and medium term, according to various sociological polls and demographic prognoses.

Many Problems Lead to Exodus

Among the reasons commonly listed for the Russian flight from the North Caucasus republics are the numerous conflicts in the region, the high level of corruption and crime, the exclusion of Russians by Caucasus clans from management, education, and business positions, the lack of employment opportunities, the poor ability of Russians to compete as an ethnic group against other groups, and the day-to-day prejudice of Caucasus peoples in relation to Russians. Many of these feelings were provoked by the historical wounds inflicted by the Caucasus War of 1817–1864, during which the Russian Empire colonized the region, and WWII, during which Stalin deported the Chechens, Ingush, and Karachayevtsi.

Many Russian scholars and politicians see part of the reason for the Russians' departure in the specific federal construction of Russia, which includes non-ethnic regions (oblasts and krais), and ethnic regions, such as the North Caucasus republics. In the ethnic republics, the status of the Russians will always be lower than the status of the titular peoples, a factor that will always push the Russians to leave.

Among the negative consequences of the Russians' departure is the North Caucasus's loss of highly-skilled workers, a reduction in local productivity, violation of the historical balance between various ethnic groups and the consequent growth of ethnic conflict, and the deterioration of social conditions spurred by the explosion of ethnic and Islamic traditionalism.

Recently, various domestic authors have pointed out that the Russian exodus is accompanied by the formation in the North Caucasus of a network-based, ethnically-fragmented and deeply corrupt society, only formally under the jurisdiction of the Kremlin. Real power in this social order is wielded by clans who hold office and parallel structures operating in conjunction

with the clan-based authorities. As an expert pointed out at a recent conference, “society in the Caucasus is breaking down into a conglomerate of local clans and associations of mafia structures, representing...the prototype of a ‘people’s mafia structure.’ The regional, and to some degree federal, authorities are suffering from an unprecedented crisis of faith and are practically deprived of legitimacy in the eyes of the local population.”

Kremlin Hierarchy of Power Fails to Provide Answers

The situation in the Caucasus is the result of the failures and mistakes of the Russian authorities during Putin’s efforts to “strengthen the vertical of authority,” according to Sergei Markedonov, a well-known expert at the Institute for Political and Military Analysis. The Kremlin’s proposed hierarchy can do nothing to counter the fact that the North Caucasus has slipped into a “gray zone,” only tenuously under Kremlin control: “a vertically hierarchical state without horizontal connections is the absence of a state. In this situation, ‘the absence of the state,’ strengthened neither by the contributions of the elite or the growing well-being of the masses, cannot become a base for social stability. It is necessary to first restore confidence and social stratification – only then will it be possible to restore society’s internal integration.”

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Number of Ethnic Russians in the North Caucasus Republics (2002 Census)

Republic	Number of Russians	Entire Population
Kabardino-Balkaria	226,620	901,494
Karachayevo-Cherkessia	147,878	439,470
Adygeya	288,280	447,109
Dagestan	120,875	2,576,531
Ingushetia	5,559	467,294
North Ossetia-Alania	164,734	710,275
Chechnya	40,645	1,103,686
Total	994,591	6,645,859

Further reading:

- V. A. Tishkov, ed., *Puti mira Severnom Kavkaze: Nezavisimyi ekspertnyi doklad*, Moscow, 1999.
- V.P. Kuksa, “Migratsionnye protsessy v usloviyakh etnopoliticheskikh konfliktov na Severnom Kavkaze,” *Gosudarstvennoe i munitsipal’noe upravlenie: Uchenye zapiski SKAGS*, no. 2, 2001.
- V. Belozеров, *Etnicheskaya karta Severnogo Kavkaza*, OGI, 2005.

Markedonov and other authors also consider it a mistake that the Kremlin in its North Caucasus policy relies on the elite clans dominant in each of the republics rather than recruiting among the elite “modernized” Caucasus residents not attached to the mechanisms of ethno-clan solidarity and oriented toward individual (rather than ethnic group) responsibility and a democratic social order.

With the upcoming 2007 parliamentary and 2008 presidential elections, it would be a mistake to expect changes in the Kremlin’s policy. So that the elections will take place as the Kremlin hopes they will, Putin needs the support of the North Caucasus elites and their administrative resources. Once again the Caucasus Russians are pawns which are easy to sacrifice in order to win the larger game.

The Russian exodus from the North Caucasus demonstrates not only the collapse of Moscow’s national policy, but also shows its inability to integrate society around various national and realistic goals that are acceptable for the citizens. If the elite stops being interested in the survival of any of the peoples living in its own country (or one of its regions), and cannot ensure the unity of the peoples, then the integrity of that country is automatically under threat.

*Translation from the Russian and editing:
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