

The Affirmative Action Empire



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The Affirmative Action Empire

Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939

TERRY MARTIN

Cornell University Press - ITHAGA AND TONDON

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To Sally and Eli

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This book is dedicated to fally, without whose love and extraordinary tolerance it could never have been written, and to Eli, who appeared in the middle of the project and made it all much more fun.

T.M.

Cambridge, Massachusests

Footnote Abbreviations

The following footnote format, with one exception, is used throughout the book: ARCHIVE fond/opit//data (date): Rmy. For protocols of Communist Party meetings, the following format is used: ARCHIVE fond/opit//data (date): protokol/punkt. For the Harvard Interview Project, the citation HIP A26, 43 means Harvard Interview Project, "A" Interview Series, Respondent fize, page 43.

BFORC British Foreign Office: Russia Correspondence

CGM Captured German Materials

GARCE Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii

GARP (TsGA) – Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii [formerly TsGA]

RSFSR1

HIP Barvard Interview Project 188 Polnoe sobranie socialnenica

RGAE Rostiskii gasudarstvennyi arhbiv ebonomiki RGVA Rostiskii gasudarstvennyi voeunyi arkhiv

RTsKhIDNI - Rominkii Theatr Khranowiia i Izucheniia Dokumentov Novei-

shei Letorii

SU Sohranse ugahonenis i rasjorianhenii SZ Sohranse nahonio i rasjorianhenii

TiDAHOU — Taensral kyi derzhuynyi urkhio hramudi byth ab'ednun'

Ukrainy

TsDAVCII/ Tsontračinji derzhapnye arkkir pykonnykh orhansp Ukrasny

TiKhS/) Tientr hbraneniia jortespennoj dobumentatu:

A Note on Style

I used the Library of Congress transliteration system for Russian, Ukrainian, and Belorusciae, suppressing soft signs in proper names and with the usual exceptions for well-known names such as Triotsky. The east of characters and places in this book covers dozens of languages, and it would be impossible to accurately name all non Russians in their native languages. Therefore, I have used Russian names throughout for individuals' and place names, with the sole exception of several well known Ukrainians. I have also used the contemporary place names rather than the emerging new ones, such as Engizia vot Kyngyzstan.

The Affirmative Action Empire

The Soviet Affirmative Action Empire

The Soviet Union was the world's first Affirmative Action Empire Russa's new revolutionary government was the first of the old European multiethnic states to confront the rising tide of nationalism and recound by systematically promoting the national consciousness of its echnic minorities and establishing for them many of the characteristic institutional forms of the nation-state. The Bolsheeik strategy was to assume leadership over what now appeared to be the inevitable process of decolorization and carry it unit in a manner that would preserve the territorial integrity of the old Bussian empire. To that end, the Soviet state created not just a dozen large national republics, but tens of dicrusands of national territories scattered across the entire expanse of the Sovier Union. New national clites were trained and promoted to leadership positions in the government, schools, and industrial enterprises of these newly formed technolies. In each territory, the national language was declared the official language of government. In diszens of cases, this necessitated the creation of a written language where one did not yet exist. The Soviet state financed the mass production of books, journals, newspapers, movies, operas,

¹The Austro Hungarian empire was the first of the old Emopera empires to see in existence decatence, by separatist nationalism. After 136%, the Hungarian balf of the empire parsued a streegy of building a Hungarian nation-state through astimalation, whereas the Austrian half of the empire pioneered many of the street people astimalation, whereas the Austrian half of the empire pioneered many of the street people astimation of the Francisco Their policy bewever, was primarily a defensive strategy of granting concessions to nationalist demands, whereas the Society pureup of an entire, prophylactic strategy of promoting non-Russian nation-building to prevent the growth of rationalism. On the policies of the Austro Hungarian empire, see Adam Wandmarks and Polet Urbanitsch, eds., Dis Habibotantschandes, 1846, 1948, Band III. Die Villar des Reiches (Vienna, 1980).

museums, folk music ensembles, and other cultural output in the non-Russian languages. Nothing emparable to it had been attempted before, and, with the possible exception of India, no multiethnic state has subsequently matched the scape of Soviet Affirmative Action. This brook is decoted to an analysis of this novel and fascinating experiment in governing a multiethnic state.

The Logic of the Affirmative Action Empire

Why did the Bolsheviks adopt this radical strategy? When they seized power in October 1917, they did not yet possess a coherent nationalities policy. They had a powerful slogan, which they shared with Worshow Wilson, of the right of nations to self-determination. This slogan, however, was designed to recruit ethnic support for the revolution, not to provide a model for the governing of a multiethnic state. Although Lenin always took the nationalities question seriously, the anexpected strength of nationalism as a mobilizing force during the revolution and civil war nevertheless greatly surprised and disturbed him. The Bolsheviks expected nationalism in Poland and Finland, but the attenerous nationalist movements that sprang up across most of the former Russian empire were not expected. The strong nationalist movement in Ukraine was particularly tunnerving. This direct confrontation with nationalism compelled the Bolsheviks to formulate a new nationalities policy.²

This did not occur without contestation. On the one side were the nation-builders, led by Lenin and Stalin; on the other side were the internationalists, led by Georgii Pistakov and Nikolai Bukharin. At the Eighth Party Congress in March 1919, the two sides clashed over the questions of the right of national self-determination.³ Pistakov argued that "during a sufficiently large and formrous experience in the borderlands, the alogan of the right of nations to self-determination has shown itself in practice, during the social revolution, as a slogan uniting all counterrevolutionary forces." Once the proletariat had seized power, Pistakov maintained, national self determination became irrelevant: "It's just a diplomatic game, or worse than a game if we take it seriously." Pistakov was apported by Bukharin, who argued that the right to self-determination could only be invested in the proletariat, not in "some fictitious so-called fuational wik."

^{*}Birthard Pipes, The Formatism of the Soviet Undon (vov. ed., Cambridge, Mass., 1964), Ronald Ceigner Surg. The Revenge of the Past (Stanford, Cabil., 1963); Andrea Cossion, Religherite a knowless on Hibraring 1968 1969 1964 (Moscow, 1969); Icremy Smith. The Beligherite and the National Question, 1967-1923 (Localon, 1995), Yur. Sleekine, "The 128SR as a Communal Apart 1966 of How a Socialist Scale Promoted Ethnic Particularism," Sleeke Review 13 (Summer 1994): 414–432. Francine Hitsch, "Empire of Nations. Colonia! Technologies and the Making of the Social Union, 1967–1930" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton, University, 1998).

⁷ For a good background discussion, see Smith, The Balderick and the National Quarties, 7–28.
⁴ So had r Val R KP/9/. Problem (Moscow, 1951): 70–80.

⁵ lbid., 52.

[&]quot;Brid , 48–49. This profiles was bright supported by Stellar as well in December 1917 and January 1918. I. V. Stellar, "Otter resembleann Ukraintsam virght i na fronte," Sophigsafin 4 (Moscow, 1994–1995) 8; "Vystupknilla na III vscrossiakem s"exés soverov IU, 8, i K. D., "4: 51–53.

Lenin had clashed with Piatakov and others on this issue before and during the revolution." He now answered this renewed challenge with characteristic vigor. Nationalism had united all counterrevolutionary forces, Lenin readily agreed, but it had also attracted the Bolsheviks' class allies. The Finnish bourgeoisie had successfully "decreived the working masses that the Muscovites [Maskenly], chauvinists. Great Russians wanded] to oppress the Finns." Arguments such as Piatakov's served to increase that fear and therefore strengthen national resistance. It was only "thanks to our acknowledgement of [the Finns'] right to self-determination, that the process of [class] differenfiation was eased there." Nationalism was fueled by historic distrust: "The working masses of other nations are full of diarrust [siedowrie] towards Great Rossia, as a kulak and oppressor nation." Only the right to self determination rould everyone that distrust. Unin argued, but Piatakov's policy would instead make the party the heir to Tsarist chauvinism: "Stratch soy Communist and you find a Great Russian charvinist.... He sits in many of us and we must tìght hìm."⁸

The congress supported Lonin and totained a qualified right of national solf determination. Of course, the majority of the former Russian empire's nationalaties were forecal to exercise that right within the confines of the Soviet Union. The period from 1919 to 1923, therefore, was devoted to working out what exactly non Russian "national self-determination" could mean in the context of a unitary Soviet state. The final result was the Affirmative Action Empire: a strategy aimed at disarming nationalism by granting what were called the "forms" of nationalousd. This policy was based on a diagnosis of nationalism worked out largely by Lenin and Stalin. Lenin had addressed the national specifion repeatedly from 1912 to 1916, when he formulated and defended the slugan of self-determination, and again from 1919 to 1921, after the alarming success of nationalist movements during the civil war ¹⁰ Stalin was the Bolshovsky acknowledged "master of the nationalities question.": author of the standard prerevolutionary (ex) Marxism and the Nationalities Question, Commissar of Nationalities from 1917 to 1924, and official spokesment on the national question

⁷Lenin's two major prerevolutionary emodes on Piatakov's position, whose major exponent was Rosa Lascandors, were "O prior maisi ha someoperducatio" (1904) in V. I Lenin, PSS to (Moscow, 1975 1975), 255-720, and "Somalisticheskala revolutation i pravo causii na samonprede lenie" (1976) PSS 27-19.—66. He also debated Piatakov at the party's several economics of April 1975, see Nassonal nyi rajovi na perchrenke macusi (Muscow, 1991): 11-27.

^{*} Pis mai strad, 94-55, 1007-2016.

^{2.}htd., 547. Straith, The Baldweiler and the National Question, 21.

[&]quot;For the period 1612 to 1616, in addition to 1 in works cited 2009, see "Tokey periodisional norms voprosu" (1913) PSS 23: 314—322; "Kriticheskie zamethi po natsional norms voprosu" (1913) PSS 24: 113 130, "Tong: disknessi in same opposition (1913) PSS 30, 17–48. For the period 1919 to 1922, see "Pis'mo k tabuchim i kresc'anama Ukrainy..." (1919) PSS 40: 40–49; "Oh narranemii NSSR" (1920) PSS 43: 211—113; "K coprosu is patriopal analiskly ili ob favtonomizatsii" (1922) PSS 43: 336–362.

¹⁰⁰ b. Broth objects silia SNSR. Stenogramms, zasiolam a sektan ra sTesta. BKP/b/ ponazional/normi veprese 25.04.23². Israsicke TaX XPSS, pp. 3 (1997): 609.

at party congresses.¹² Lenin and Stalin were in fundamental agreement on both the logical rationale and the essential aspects of this new policy, although they came into conflict in 1922 over unportant issues of implementation. Their diagnosis of the nationalities problem rested on the following three premises.

The Marxist Premise

First, the point on which Piatekov and Leain agreed, nationalism was a uniquely dangerous mobilizing ideology because it had the potential to forge an above class alliance in pursuit of national goals. Leain called nationalism a "hourgeois trick" but recognized that, like the hedgehog's, it was a good one. It worked because it presented legitimate social grievances in a national form. At the Twelfth Party Congress in 1923, Bukharin, by then a tervid defender of the party's nationalities policy, noted that "when we tax [the non-Russian peasantry] their discontent takes on a national form, is given a national interpretation, which is then exploited by our opposents." Ernest Gellner has parodice this argument as the "wrong-address theory" of nationalism: "Just as extreme Shi'ite Muslims hold that Archangel Gabriel made a mistake, delivering the Message to Mohammed when it was intended for Ali, so Marxists basically like to think that the spirit of history or human consciousness made a terrible boob. The wakening message was intended for *claims*, but by some terrible postal arror was delivered to *national*.

The Bolsheviks viewed nationalism, then, as a masking ideology. Masking metaphors recur again and again in their discourse about nationality. Scalin was particularly fond of them: "The national flag is sewn on only to deceive the masses, as a popular flag, a convenience for covering up [disc prykrytus] the counter-revolutionary plans of the national bourgeoise." "If bourgeois circles attempt to give a national tint [untilonsPrecis absenta] to "our conflicts, then only because it is convenient to hide their battle for power behind a national costume." This interpretation of nationalism as a masking ideology helps explain why the Bolsheviks remained highly suspicious of national self expression, even after they adopted a policy explicitly designed to encourage it. For example, in justifying a wave of national repression carned out in 1934. Stalin characteristically invoked a masking metaphor. "The remnants of capitalism in the people's consciousness are much more dynamic in the sphere of nationality than in any other area. This is because they can mask themselves so well in a national costone."

²Stalin's articles and speeches are collected in 1. Stalin, dimetrized i solutions/ine-estental topregres (Mescent, 1934).

[&]quot;Tenic, "Kak Ppiskop Nikon zashchishchaer Maraintzew?" (1913) 1935/24: 9.

Drownal may i Acad B K P/b/. Incongraphical if makes (Masseria, 1968), 612.

²² Ernost Gellnor, Narious and Nasionalism (Ithaca, N.Y., 1984), 129.

^{*}Stohin, "Politika apvetskof elasti per tursimial" minu vopitosa e Bossii" (1915), in Markasm. 54; "Vystupieniiz na III veerussiiskom s"eade," 4...

[&]quot; KVII ("Voll VKIP/A) Standymythodin dicher (Mescew, 1914), ji

This understanding of nationalism led Piatakov to support the only apparently logical response: attack nationalism as a counterrevolutionary idealogy and nationality itself as a reactionary remnant of the capitalist era. Lenin and Stalin, however, there the exact opposite conclusion. They reasoned as follows. By granting the forms of nationhood, the Soviet stare could split the above class national alliance for stateland. Class divisions, then, would naturally emerge, which would allow the Soviet government to recruit proletarian and peasant support for their socialist agenda. Lenin argued that Finnish independence had intensified, not reduced, class conflict. § National self-determination would have the same consequences within the Soviet Union. Likewise, Stalin insisted it was "necessary to 'take' automorny away from [the national bourgeoisie], having first cleansed it of its bourgeois lith and transformed it from bourgeois into Soviet amonomy." A belief gradually emerged, then, that the above class appeal of nationalism could be disarmed by granting the forms of nationhood. This was the Marxist premise.

The Modernization Premise

This conclusion was butterssed by a second premise; national consciousness was an unavoidable historic phase that all peoples must pass through on the way to internationalism. In their prerevolutionary writings, Lenin and Stalin argued that nationality emerged only with the onset of capitalism and was itself a consequence of capitalist production.²² It was not an essential or permanent attribute of mankind. Platakov understandably interpreted this as meaning that nationality would be irrelevant under socialism and therefore should be granted no special status. Both Lenin and Stalin insisted, however, that nationality would persist for a long time even under socialism.²¹ In fact, national self awareness would initially increase. Already in 1916, Lenin stated that "mankind can proceed towards the inevitable fusion [slitania] of nations only through a transitional period of the complete freedom of all oppressed nations.⁹²³ Stalin later explicated this paradox as follows: "We are undertaking the maximum development of national currare, so that it will exhaust itself completely and thurshy create the base for the organization of international socialist culture.⁹³³

Two factors appear to have combined to create this sunso of the inevitability of a national stage of development. First, the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian empire and the surprisingly strong nationalist movements within the former Bussian empire greatly increased the Bolshevikal respect for the power and

^{*}In his progressing impay writings, I main repeatedly cited Swencer's granting Norway i mependence in 1905 as having spect the emorganeo of class conflict in both countries. Ecnin. **O prave massin," 285, "Notabilistic resisting revolutions," 255.

^{pi}Stalin, ^a Odna iz ochorodnykli zadnob^a (1018) *Sorbinenila* 4: 55

²¹Stalin, Mariakov, 4, 15; Jen 1, "O prave ratkli," 255, 271.

²¹ On Lemm, see Talay hassionalised policibl TW REP. Remagnificientil order revenues IV symbolenum 218 KEP, 1921 m. (Mescent, 1992); jo. 71, on Stellin, see Markelem, 155 tils.

²²Lenin, *Socsialisticheskaia revolitutsiia.* 256.

 $^{^{\}prime\prime}$ A GANDON' y N/1/2440 (1989); ϕ

ubiquity of nationalism. Stalin was particularly impressed by the process of national succession in the formerly German cities of Austro Hungary. At the 1921 party congress, he pointed out that just fifty years earlier all cities in Hungary were predominantly German, but had now become Hungarian. Likewise, he maintained, all Russian cities in Ukraine and Belorussia would "inevitably" be nationalized. Opposing this was fittle: "It is impossible to go against history." Elsewhere Stalin called this pattern "a general law of national development in the entire world." National consolidation, then, was unavoidable even under socialism.

Moreover, this national stage of development took on a more positive connotation as it became associated not only with capitalism but also with modernization in general. In his rebuttal of Piatakov and Bukharin, citing the example of the Bashkira, Lenia had stated that "one must wait the development of a given nation, the differentiation of proletariat from bourgeois elements, which is unavoidable . . . the path from the medieval to bourgeois democracy, or from bourgeois to proletarian democracy. This is an absolutely unavoidable path." As Lenia focused Bolshevik attention on the Soviet Union's eastern "backward" nationalities, the consolidation of nationhood became associated with historical developmental progress. This trond reached its climax during the cultural revolution, when Soviet propaganda would boast that in the far north, the thousand-year process of national formation had been telescoped into a mere decade. The formation of nations, then, came to be seen as both an unavoidable and positive stage in the modernization of the Soviet Union. This was the modernization premise.

The Colonial Premise and the Greatest-Danger Principle

A third and final premise asserted that non Russian pationalism was primarily a response to Tsarist oppression and was motivated by a historically justifiable distrust (negligeric) of the Great Russians. This argument was pressed most force fully by Lenin, who already in 1904 had attacked Russ Lusemburg's denial of the right of self-determination as "objectively aiding the Black Hundred Great Russians. . . Absorbed by the fight with astionalism in Poland. Russ Luxemburg forgot about the nationalism of the Great Russians, though it is exactly this nationalism that is the most dangerous of all." The nationalism of the oppressed, Lenia maintained, had a "democratic content" that most be supported, whereas the nationalism of the oppressor had no redeeming value. He ended with the slogan "Fight against all nationalisms and, first of all, against Great Russian nationalism."

³⁴Desiarji s^eetá RFI/b/. Protokoly (Mostow, 1953): 206.

[÷] ΚΩΚΘ/ΩΝΤ 5τΒ/τ/449α (1929): 116.

[&]quot; Yor'mui / etal, 55.

²⁷ H sezida VIIII. XV suspra. Steneggrafichedel ouches (Masseur, 1941), 16. Yur. Slezkine, Arctic Microry (Ithaca, N.Y., 1994).

²⁶ Lenin, *O prave parsii,* 277, 275, 276, 316.

Bolshevik conduct between 1977 and 1979 convinced Lenin that the all-Russian Communist party had inherited the psychology of great-power chanvinism from the Tsarist regime. In non-Russian regions, the Bolshevik party, relying almost exclusively on the minority Russian proletariat and agricultural colonists, had frequently adopted an evertly chanvinist attitude toward the local population. This attitude alarmed Lenin, and his harsh attack on Piatakov was partly motivated by the latter's anti-Ukrainian policy in Kiev. In December 1979, Lenin again launched a hierce denunciation of Bolshevik chanvinism in Ukraine. His anger climaxed during the notorious Georgian affair of 1922, when he denounced Dzerzhinskii, Stalin, and Ordzhonikidze as Great Russian chanvinists (russified natives, he maintained, were often the worst chanvinists). Such Bolshevik chanvinism inspired Lenin to coin the term **motispaw** (mindless Russian chanvinism), which then entered the Bolshevik lexicon and became an invaluable weapon in the rhetorical arsenals of the national republics.

Lenin's concern over Great Russian chanvinism ied to the establishment of a crucial principle of the Soviet nationalities policy. In Detember 1922, he reiterated his 1914 attack on Great Russian chanvinism with the added admonition that one must "distinguish between the nationalism of oppressor nations and the nationalism of oppressed nations, the nationalism of large nations and the nationalism of small nations.... [I]: relation to the second nationalism, in almost all historical practice, we nationals of the large nations are guilty, because of an infinite amount of violence [committed]." This cancept entered formulaic Bolshevik rhetoric as the distinction between offensive (nationalism, the latter being viewed as a justifiable response to the former. This belief in turn led to the establishment of the important "greatest danger principle"; namely, that great-power (or sometimes Great Russian) chanvinism was a greater danger than local nationalism.

Lenin's extreme formulation of this principle led to one of his two differences of opinion with Stalin over nationalities policy in late 1922. Stalin had supported the greatest danger principle before 1922 1923, reiterated his support in 1923, and from April 1925 to December 1952 supervised a nationalities policy based on that principle. Nevertheless, Stalin was uncomfortable with the insistence that all local nationalism could be explained as a response to great power chaovinesse. Based on his experience in Georgia, Stalin insisted that Georgian nationalism was also characterized by great power exploitation of

³ Designyi s²eed, 191, 209. Pipes, The Formacian, 126-114, 172, 183.

^{*}Richard Pratta ett., Der Ondersone Jesten (New Haven, Camin., 1994): 78-77.

³¹Lorin, "K voprosu o narsional nostiakh," 456–553.

[&]quot;At the 1927 party compress, Zutonskyi zarithmes this term to Lenle. Dashaye Feat, 207.

 $^{^{22}}$ (enin, "K voprosa o narsional nostiekh," $_{7}^{12}$ (e.e.,

^{**} Dromadontys ("ved., 693–695)

^{*}Their second difference of opinion came over the structure of the Soviet Union and inparticular the place of Russia within the Soviet Union. This is eigenseed in Chapter in.

their Ossefine and Abkhaz minorities. Stalin therefore always paired his attacks on Great Russian chanvinism with a complementary attack on the lesser danger of local nationalism. This difference in emphasis led Stalin, in September 1922, to accuse Lenin journary of "national liberalism." This difference of emphasis was also evident in Lenin's and Stalin's terminologies. Lenin typically referred to Russian nationalism as great-power chanvinism, which distinguished it from other nationalisms, whereas Stalin preferred the term Great Russian charvinism. Despite these differences in emphasis, Stalin consistently supported the greatest-danger principle.

The Marxist, modernization, and colonial premises, then, combined to form the theoretical rationale for the nationalities policy that Legin and Stalin seccessfully imposed on a reluctant Bolshevik Party through a series of resolutions. at the 1919, 1921, and 1923 party congresses. Their reasoning can be summarized as follows. Nationalism is a masking ideology that leads legitimate class interests to be expressed, not in an appropriate class-based socialist movement, but rather in the form of an above-class national movement. National identity is not a primordial quality, but rather an unavoidable hy-product of the modern capitalise and early socialise world, which must be passed through before a mature international socialist world can come into being. Since national idendry is a real phenomenon in the modern world, the nationalism of the oppressed. non-Russian peoples expresses not only masked class protest, but also legithuate national grievances against the oppressive great-power chauvinism of the dominant Russian nationality. Therefore, neither nationalism nor national identity can be unequivocally condemned as reactionary. Some national claims—those confined to the realm of national "form" are in fact legitimate and must be granted to split the above class national alliance. Such a policy will speed the emergence of class cleavages and so allow the purry to recruit non-Russian proletasian and peasant support for its socialist agenda. Nationalism will be disarmed by granting the forms of nationhood.

The Fiedmont Principle

The intersection between nationalities and foreign policy was a fourth factor influencing the formation of the Affirmative Action Empire. Already in November 1917, Lenin and Stalin issued an "Appeal to all Muslim Toilers of Russia and the East," which promised to end impenal exploitation within the former Russian empire and called on Muslims outside. Russia to overthrow their colomal masters. This binkage between domestic nationalities policy and foreign policy goals in the east was quite common during the civil war period. After

³⁶ Disenzalminyi shint, 487–490.

^{***}La ratorii obrazevaniia SSSR,7 no. 9 (1959): 16,

²⁶The key resolutions are found in Vielmoi Feed, 1871. Derlathi Feed, 1774-1841. Dermotterhi Peed, 691, 697, Valley national less politiks, 182, 186.

^{71.} Lazovskii and I. Bibin. Scretikain felitika za to les po nattismal noma-vegresa v RSFSR. (Moscow-Leni sprad, 1918): 2-3

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