

The party changed in the course of the war from a revolutionary opposition to rulers of a state. The "party became militarized and highly centralized, in a state of almost permanent mobilization and disciplined action. Its cadres were moved around where necessary by a newly created department, the *uchraspred*. Elections to secretarial positions ended, not to reappear in any meaningful way until Gorbachev . . ." <sup>13</sup> In the next half decade the party divided, unequally, between an "old guard" of prerevolutionary and revolutionary veterans, and a new majority that came in during the New Economic Policy (NEP) years. With the peasant redistribution of land in 1918 and the sanctioning of the status quo in the NEP period, the archaic features of peasant Russia re-emerged to dominate the countryside. Outside the villages, a coercive state edifice became a permanent feature of Soviet political life. "Authoritarianism," Lewin wrote, "was an unavoidable feature in these conditions—the question was, what type of authoritarianism was it going to be." <sup>14</sup> One of the most longlasting and pernicious legacies of the civil war, he concludes, was the identification in Bolshevik minds of socialism with statization.

The theme of "the revolution betrayed" (the phrase is Trotsky's) that featured in the work of Deutscher, Carr, and Lewin stood in stark contrast to more conservative authors who proposed that even if the revolution did not fit an orthodox Marxist agenda, Bolshevik practice, and particularly Stalinism, was "the revolution fulfilled" (this phrase is Adam Ulam's). A unique position was taken by Sheila Fitzpatrick who, instead of evaluating whether the revolution fulfilled or betrayed Marxism, elaborated the actual relation of the party/state to the class it purported to represent. Rather than a severing of the Bolshevik-worker connection, Fitzpatrick noted, "By recruiting party members primarily from the working class for fifteen years after the October Revolution, the Bolsheviks did a good deal to substantiate their claim to be a workers' party."<sup>15</sup> Workers became party members and managers moved up through the ranks, and ended up the chief beneficiaries of the revolution. Upward social mobility, rather than proletarian democracy, was the real outcome of 1917. Socialism came to mean economic development and modernization, laying the foundations of an industrial society, and Stalin's choices were usually in favor of workers and the towns and against peasants and the villages. "The party's new orientation was expressed in Stalin's slogan 'Socialism in One Country.' What this meant was that Russia was preparing to industrialize, to become strong and powerful, and to create the preconditions of socialism by its own unaided efforts."<sup>16</sup> The practical and patriotic program had great resonance in a significant segment of the party and the urban population. Years later, even after they had fled the USSR, Soviet emigrants could agree that the one great achievement of the Communists was the industrialization of a backward peasant society.

For most of the leading Communists, the NEP was a retreat from the forward movement toward socialism, a period of transition fraught with dangers of a capitalist restoration. That fear, as well as anxiety about Stalin's accumulating power,

13. *Ibid.*, p. 412.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 418.

15. Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, 2nd edition (Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 11.

16. *Ibid.*

led Zinoviev and Kamenev to break with the General Secretary. Stalin sided with Nikolai Bukharin, who envisioned NEP as an evolutionary road to socialism in which the state socialist sector would bring "the seething, unorganized economy under socialist influence."<sup>17</sup> Bukharin, one of the most popular, even beloved members of the Politburo, emphasized the potential for class collaboration, rather than violent conflict under the dictatorship of the proletariat. Central to Bukharinism was the unity of the peasant and worker, the *smychka* symbolized in the sickle and hammer, and a rejection of the coercive tradition of the civil war militants. His policies were mild and reflected Bukharin's own nature. A genial, lively man known to have been a personal favorite of Lenin's, Bukharin did not possess the ruthlessness of his political partner. When the NEP economy soured at the end of 1927, and peasants withheld grain needed for the cities, Stalin was prepared to adopt radical, violent measures against the villages. He now castigated Bukharin's propeasant lenience as a "right deviation." Steadily, Stalin and his closest comrades moved to crush the better-off peasants, the so-called "kulaks," and eventually to drive the peasants into collective farms. Instead of concessions to society, most important to the mass of peasants who made up the majority of the population, a new political order arose that ruled by the abundant application of terror on society. The crisis that had led to the end of political moderation and the Stalin-Bukharin diumvirate opened the way for the radicals to end NEP and establish a quite different socioeconomic system—one that would pass into history as Stalinism.

Terry Martin was one of the first Western researchers using the newly opened Soviet archives in the early 1990s to investigate the nationality policies of the Communist party. His work shows that in its first decade, Soviet policy aimed at the eradication of nationalism by paradoxically promoting national cultural autonomy in hundreds of territorial units. A policy of "affirmative action" for non-Russians coexisted with imperial political relations between the center and the national peripheries. Hence Martin coins the phrase "Affirmative-Action Empire" to describe the peculiar program that discriminated against the largest nationality, the Russians, who were susceptible to "Great Russian Chauvinism," while both fostering and limiting the national expression of non-Russians.

### AN AFFIRMATIVE-ACTION EMPIRE: THE EMERGENCE OF THE SOVIET NATIONALITIES POLICY, 1919–1923

Terry Martin

When the Bolsheviks seized power in October 1917, they did not possess a coherent nationalities policy. They had only a slogan, which they shared with Woodrow Wilson, of the right of all peoples to self-determination. This slogan, however,

17. Stephen F. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography, 1888–1938* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973), p. 197.

was designed to recruit ethnic support for the revolution, not to provide a model for the governing of a multiethnic state. The strength of nationalism as a mobilizing force during the revolution and civil war greatly surprised and disturbed the Bolsheviks. They expected nationalism in Poland and Finland, but the numerous nationalist movements that sprung up across most of the former Russian empire were not expected. In particular, the strong nationalist movement in Ukraine, which most Bolsheviks felt differed little from Russia, was particularly unnerving. This direct confrontation with nationalism compelled the Bolsheviks to formulate a new nationalities policy.

### THE LOGIC OF THE SOVIET NATIONALITIES POLICY

Nationalities policy was not on the agenda when the Eighth Communist Party Congress convened in March 1919. However, during a discussion of the Party Program, a polemic arose over the Bolsheviks' traditional support for the right of national self-determination. Piatakov argued that "during a sufficiently large and torturous experience in the borderlands, the slogan 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, Piatakov maintained, national self-determination became irrelevant: "it's just a diplomatic game, or worse than a game if we take it seriously." Piatakov was supported by Bukharin, who argued that the right to self-determination could only be invested in the proletariat, not in "some fictitious so-called 'national will.'"

Lenin had clashed with Piatakov and others on this issue both before and during the revolution, and he answered this new 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 "deceived the working masses that the Muscovites (*Moskvaly*), chauvinists, Great Russians want[ed] 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] differentiation was eased there." Nationalism was fueled by historic distrust: "the working masses of other nations were full of distrust (*nedoverie*) toward Great Russia, as a kulak and oppressor nation." Only the right to self-determination could overcome that distrust, Lenin argued, but Piatakov's policy would instead make the party the heir to Tsarist chauvinism: "scratch any Communist and you find a Great Russian chauvinist . . . He sits in many of us and we must fight him."

The congress supported Lenin's position and retained the right of national self-determination. Of course, the majority of the former Russian empire's nationalities were forced 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 result was the Soviet nationalities policy: a strategy aimed at disarming nationalism by granting the forms of nationhood. This policy

was based on a diagnosis of nationalism worked out largely by Lenin and Stalin. Lenin addressed the national question repeatedly from 1912 to 1916, when he formulated and defended the slogan of self-determination, and again from 1919 to 1922, after the alarming success of nationalist movements during the civil war. Stalin was the Bolsheviks' acknowledged "master of the nationalities question"; author of their standard prerevolutionary text—*Marxism and the Nationalities Question*, Commissar of Nationalities from 1917 to 1924, and official spokesman on the national question at party congresses. Lenin and Stalin were in fundamental agreement on both the logical rationale and the essential aspects of this new policy, though they came into conflict in 1922 over important issues of implementation.

Their diagnosis of the nationalities problem rested on three premises. First, the point on which Piatakov and Lenin agreed, nationalism was a uniquely dangerous mobilizing ideology because it had the potential to forge an all-class alliance for national goals. Lenin called nationalism a "bourgeois 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, now a fervid 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 opponents." Ernest Gellner parodied 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 *classes*, but by some terrible postal error was delivered to *nations*."

The Bolsheviks viewed nationalism, then, as a masking ideology. Masking metaphors recur again and again in their discourse about nationality. Stalin 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 (*dliia prykrytie*) the counterrevolutionary plans of the national bourgeoisie." "If bourgeois circles attempt to give a national tint (*natsional'naia okraska*) to [our] conflicts, then it is 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 1934, in justifying a wave of national repression, 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 costume."

This understanding of nationalism led Piatakov to support the only apparently logical response: attack nationalism as a counterrevolutionary ideology and nationality itself as a reactionary remnant of the capitalist era. Lenin and Stalin, however, drew the exact opposite conclusion. They reasoned as follows: By granting the forms of nationhood, the Soviet state could split the above-class national alliance for statehood. 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' autonomy away from [the national bourgeoisie], having first cleansed it of its bourgeois filth and transformed it from bourgeois into Soviet autonomy." A belief gradually emerged, then, that the above-class appeal of nationalism could be disarmed by granting the forms of nationhood.

This conclusion was buttressed 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. It was not an essential or permanent attribute of mankind. Piatakov understandably interpreted this as meaning that under socialism nationality would be irrelevant and therefore should be granted no special status. However, both Lenin and Stalin insisted that nationality would persist for a long time even under socialism. In fact, national self-awareness would initially increase. Already in 1916, Lenin stated that "mankind can proceed towards the inevitable fusion (*sliianie*) of nations only through a transitional period of the complete freedom of all oppressed nations." Stalin later explicated this paradox as follows: "We are undertaking the maximum development of national culture, so that it will exhaust itself completely and thereby create the base for the organization of international socialist culture."

Two factors appear to have combined to create this sense of the inevitability of a national stage of development. First, the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian empire and, second, the surprisingly strong nationalist movements of 1917 to 1921 within the former Russian empire, which greatly increased the Bolsheviks' respect for the power and 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 ago, all cities in Hungary were predominately German, but had now become Hungarian. Likewise, he maintained, all Russian cities in Ukraine and Belorussia would "inevitably" be nationalized. Opposing this was futile: "It is impossible to go against history (*nel'zia itti protiv istorii*)." 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 with modernization in general. In his rebuttal of Piatakov and Bukharin, citing the example of the Bashkirs, Lenin stated that "one must await 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 Lenin focused Bolshevik attention on the Soviet Union's eastern, "backward" nationalities, the consolidation of nationhood became associated with historical progress. This trend 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.

A third and final premise asserted that non-Russian nationalism was primarily a response to tsarist oppression and was motivated by an historically justifiable distrust (*nedoverie*) of the Great Russians. This argument was pressed most forcefully by Lenin, who already in 1914 had attacked Rosa Luxembour's denial of the right of separation as "objectively aiding the Black Hundred Great Russians. . . . Absorbed by the fight with nationalism in Poland, Rosa Luxembour 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, Lenin maintained, had a "democratic content" which must be supported, while the nationalism of the oppressor had no redeeming feature. He ended with the slogan: "fight against all nationalisms and, first of all, against Great Russian nationalism."

Bolshevik conduct between 1917 and 1919 convinced Lenin that the All-Russian Communist party had inherited the psychology of Great Power chauvinism from the tsarist regime. In non-Russian regions, the Bolshevik party, relying almost exclusively on the minority Russian proletariat and colonists, had frequently adopted an overtly chauvinist attitude toward the local population. This attitude alarmed Lenin and prompted his harsh words for Piatakov in March 1919, as Piatakov had supported an anti-Ukrainian line in Kiev. In December 1919, Lenin again launched a fierce denunciation of Bolshevik chauvinism in Ukraine. His anger climaxed during the notorious Georgian affair of 1922, when he denounced Dzerzhinskii, Stalin, and Ordzhonikidze as Great Russian chauvinists. (Russified natives, he maintained, were often the worst chauvinists.) Bolshevik chauvinism inspired Lenin to coin the term "*rusotiapstvo*" (mindless Russian chauvinism), which then entered the Bolshevik lexicon and became an invaluable weapon in the national republics' rhetorical arsenals.

Lenin's concern over Great Russian chauvinism led to the establishment of a crucial principle of the Soviet nationalities policy. In December 1922, he reiterated his 1914 position with an 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 . . . in 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 concept entered formulaic Bolshevik rhetoric as the distinction between offensive (*nastupitelnyi*) Great Power nationalism and defensive (*oboronitelnyi*) local nationalism, the latter being accepted as a justifiable response to the former. This belief in turn led to the establishment of the important "Principle of the Greater Danger": namely, that Great Power (or Great Russian) chauvinism was a greater danger than local nationalism.

Lenin's extremely categorical expression of this principle led to one of his two differences of opinion with Stalin over nationalities policy in late 1922. They also disagreed about the structure of the Soviet Union. . . . Stalin had supported the Principle of the Greater Danger prior to 1922-23, reiterated his support in 1923, and supervised a nationalities policy based on that principle from 1923 through 1934. Nevertheless, Stalin was uncomfortable with the insistence that *all*

local nationalism could be explained as a response to Great Power chauvinism. Based on his experience in Georgia, Stalin insisted that Georgian nationalism was also characterized by Great Power exploitation of their Ossetine and Abkhaz minorities. Stalin, therefore, always paired his attacks on Great Russian chauvinism with a complementary attack on the lesser danger of local nationalism. This difference in emphasis led Stalin, in September 1922, to jocularly accuse Lenin of "national liberalism." This difference of emphasis was also evident in Lenin and Stalin's terminology. Lenin always referred to Russian nationalism as Great Power chauvinism, which distinguished it from other nationalisms, while Stalin preferred the term Great Russian chauvinism. Still, this was a difference in emphasis, not content. Stalin consistently supported the Principle of the Greater Danger.

These three premises, then, combined to form the theoretical rationale for the nationalities policy that Lenin and Stalin successfully imposed on the 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 by-product of the modern capitalist and early socialist world, which must be passed through before a mature international socialist world can come into being.

Because national identity is a real phenomenon in the modern world, the nationalism of the oppressed non-Russian peoples expresses not only masked class protest, but also legitimate national grievances against the oppressive Great Power chauvinism of the dominant Russian nationality. Neither nationalism nor national identity, therefore, 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 party to recruit non-Russian proletarian and peasant support for its socialist agenda. Nationalism will be disarmed by granting the forms of nationhood.

I have thus far ignored one other factor, foreign policy concerns, that did play a role in the formation of the Soviet nationalities policy. Already in November 1917, Lenin and Stalin issued an "Appeal to all Muslim Toilers of Russia and the East," which promised to end imperial exploitation within the former Russian empire and called on Muslims outside Russia to overthrow their colonial masters. This link between domestic nationalities policy and foreign policy goals in the East was quite common during the civil war period. After the Treaty of Riga fixed the Soviet-Polish border in 1921, this concern shifted westward. The Soviet Union's western border now cut through the ethnographic territory of Finns, Belorussians, Ukrainians, and Rumanians, and it was hoped that a generous treatment of those nationalities would attract support from their ethnic brethren in neighboring countries. This foreign policy goal, however, was never the primary motivation of the Soviet nationalities policy. It was seen as an exploitable benefit of a domestically driven policy that affected the intensity of implementation in sensitive regions, but not the content of the policy itself.

## THE CONTENT OF THE SOVIET NATIONALITIES POLICY

An authoritative account of the actual content of the Soviet nationalities policy was finally delineated in resolutions passed at the Twelfth Party Congress in April 1923 and a special TsK conference on nationalities policy in June 1923. These two resolutions, along with Stalin's speeches in defence of them, became the standard Bolshevik proof texts for nationalities policy and remained so throughout the Stalinist era. Prior to April 1923, nationalities policy had been debated repeatedly at important party meetings. After June 1923, this public debate ceased. The 1923 resolutions affirmed that the Soviet state would maximally support those forms of nationhood that did not conflict with a unitary central state. This meant a commitment to support the following national forms: national territories, national cultures, national languages, and national elites.

National territories had in fact already been formed for all the large Soviet nationalities. The 1923 resolutions merely reaffirmed their existence and denounced all plans to abolish them. . . . The 1923 resolutions also reiterated the party's recognition of distinct national cultures and pledged central state support for their maximal development. . . . The primary focus of the 1923 resolutions was on national languages and national elites. In each national territory, the language of the titular nationality was to be established as the official state language. National elites were to be trained and promoted into positions of leadership in the party, government, industry, and schools of each national territory. Although these policies had been articulated as early as 1920, and officially sanctioned at the 1921 party congress, next to nothing had actually been accomplished. These two policies came to be called *korenizatsiia*. . . .

*Korenizatsiia* is best translated as indigenization. It is not derived directly from the stem *koren-* ("root"—with the meaning "rooting"), but from its adjectival form *korennyi* as used in the phrase *korennyi narod* (indigenous people). The coining of the word *korenizatsiia* was part of the Bolsheviks' decolonizing rhetoric, which systematically favored the claims of indigenous peoples over "newly arrived elements" (*prishlye elementy*). . . .

The 1923 resolutions established *korenizatsiia* as the most urgent item on the Soviet nationalities policy agenda. In keeping with the Bolshevik interpretation of nationalism, *korenizatsiia* was presented in psychological terms. It would make Soviet power seem "native" (*rodnoi*), "intimate" (*blizkii*), "popular" (*narodnoi*), "comprehensible" (*poniatnyi*). It would address the positive psychological needs of nationalism: "The [non-Russian] masses would see that Soviet power and her organs are the affair of their own efforts, the embodiment of their desires." It would likewise disarm nationalism's negative psychological anxiety: "Soviet power, which up to the present time [April 1923] has remained Russian power, [would be made] not only Russian but international, and become native (*rodnoi*) for the peasantry of the formerly oppressed nationalities." Native languages would make Soviet power comprehensible. Native cadres who understood "the way of life, customs, and habits of the local population" would make Soviet power seem indigenous rather than an external Russian imposition.

... Soviet nationalities policy. . . did not involve federation. In 1923, Ukraine, led by Khristian Rakovskii, pressed very aggressively for the devolution of meaningful federal powers to the national republics. Stalin rebuffed Rakovskii's proposals scornfully as amounting to confederation. Although the 1922–23 constitutional settlement was called a federation, it in fact concentrated all decision-making power in the center. National republics were granted no more powers than Russian provinces. Prior to June 1917, both Lenin and Stalin denounced federation and advocated a unitary state with "oblast autonomy" for national regions. This meant the formation of national administrative units and the selective use of national languages in government and education. In June 1917, Lenin abruptly rehabilitated the term federation, but used it to describe what amounted to a much more ambitious version of oblast autonomy. As Stalin noted coyly in 1924, federation "turned out to be not so nearly in contradiction with the goal of economic unification as it might have seemed earlier." Soviet federation did not mean devolution of political power, but rather the promotion of national forms: national territories, cultures, elites, and languages.

Economic equalization occupied a much more ambiguous place in the Soviet nationalities policy. The 1923 resolutions called for measures to overcome "the real economic and cultural inequality of the Soviet Union's nationalities." One economic measure proposed was transferring factories from the Russian heartland to eastern national regions. This policy was adopted but then almost immediately discontinued. This proved typical of economic equalization programs. In contrast to cultural and national equalization, there were almost no bureaucratic institutions to supervise and implement economic equalization. Economic equalization programs belonged to an all-Union economic policy sphere, where they had to compete with other economic goals, rather than a privileged nationalities policy sphere. National republics could and often successfully did use the 1923 resolutions and their "backward" national status to lobby all-Union agencies for privileged economic investment. However, they could make no absolute claim to investment based on nationalities policy. One prominent exception to this rule in the 1920s was the preferential redistribution of land in favor of titular nationalities, which did become a systematic part of the Soviet nationalities policy.

### AN AFFIRMATIVE-ACTION EMPIRE

If the Soviet Union cannot accurately be described as a federation, then how should it be categorized? Its distinctive feature was the systematic support of national forms: territory, culture, language, and elites. These were not original choices. They are the primary domestic concerns of most newly formed nation-states. In Georgia and Armenia, for instance, the Soviet government boasted that it had deepened the national work begun by the governments it deposed in 1920–21. Soviet policy was original in that it supported the national forms of minorities rather than majorities. It decisively rejected the model of the nation-state and replaced it with a plurality of nation-like republics. The Bolsheviks attempted to fuse the nationalist's demand of national territory, culture, language, and elites, with the socialist's demand for an economically and politically unitary state. In this sense, we might call the Bolsheviks international nationalists.

To develop this idea, I compare Soviet practice with Miroslav Hroch's famous three-phase model for the development of nationalism among the "small" stateless peoples of Eastern Europe: first, elite nonpolitical interest in folklore and popular culture (phase A); second, the consolidation of a nationalist elite committed to the formation of a nation-state (phase B); third, the emergence of a nationalist movement with mass popular support (phase C). Hroch largely ignored the existing multiethnic state, reflexively assuming it would oppose these developments. The Soviet state, instead, literally seized leadership over all three phases: the articulation of a national culture, the formation of national elites, and the propagation of mass national consciousness. It went still further and initiated even "Phase D" (my term now, not Hroch's) measures typical of newly formed nation-states: establishing a new language of state and a new governing elite. To use more familiar Bolshevik terminology, the party became the vanguard of non-Russian nationalism. Just as party leadership was needed to lead the proletariat beyond trade-union consciousness to revolution; the party could also guide national movements beyond bourgeois nationalism to Soviet international nationalism.

This policy represented a dramatic shift from 1913, when Lenin argued that the party should only support ending all national discrimination and warned that "the proletariat cannot go further [than this] in the support of nationalism, for going further means the 'positive' (*pozitivnaia*) affirmative action (*polozhitel'naia deiatel'nost'*) of the bourgeoisie which aims at strengthening nationalism." In the same spirit, Zinoviev told a Ukrainian audience in 1920 "that languages should develop freely. In the end, after a period of years, the language with the greater roots, greater life and greater culture will triumph." Dmitrii Lebed, Secretary of the Ukrainian Tsk, called this theory "The Battle of Two Cultures" in which, "given a party policy of neutrality, the victory of the Russian language will be guaranteed due to its historic role in the epoch of capitalism."

By the 1923 party congress, neutrality had become anathema. Zinoviev himself now stated, "We should first of all reject the 'theory' of neutralism. We cannot adopt the point of view of neutralism . . . we should help [the non-Russians] create their own schools, should help them create their own administration in their native languages . . . Communists [should not] stand to the side and think up the clever phrase 'neutrality.'" Neutrality, Zinoviev insisted, was simply a cover for Great Russian chauvinism.

The 1923 resolutions supported this position. Not only was Piatakov's call for a positive fight against nationalism denounced as Great Power chauvinism, so was Lenin's prerevolutionary policy of neutrality. Lebed's "Battle of Two Cultures" was condemned in 1923 as was a similar "leftist" position in Tatarstan and Crimea.

The Communist party had now embraced Lenin's "positive affirmative action of the bourgeoisie." However, as the Hroch comparison illustrated, Soviet affirmative action supported national minorities, not majorities. The Bolsheviks now scorned bourgeois governments for supporting only formal "legal equality," instead of taking positive action to achieve "actual (*fakticheskoe*) equality." This extreme suspicion of neutrality explains one of the most striking features of the Soviet nationalities policy: its resolute hostility to even voluntary assimilation. Neutrality meant voluntary assimilation due to the historic strength of Russian national culture. Positive action, therefore, was needed to defend non-Russian

national culture against this unjust fate. No one denounced neutrality and assimilation more categorically than Stalin:

We are undertaking a policy of the maximum development of national culture . . . It would be an error if anyone thought that in relation to the development of the national cultures of the backward nationalities, central workers should maintain a policy of neutrality—"O.K., fine, national culture is developing, let it develop, that's not our business." Such a point of view would be incorrect. We stand for a protective (*pokrovitel'stvennuiu politiku*) policy in relation to the development of the national culture of the backward nationalities. I emphasize this so that [it will] be understood that we are not indifferent, but actively protecting (*pokrovitel'stviushchie*) the development of national culture.

Of course, positive action on behalf of one nationality implies negative action toward others. In the Soviet case, where all non-Russians were to be favored, Russians alone bore the brunt of positive discrimination. Bukharin stated this fact bluntly: "As the former Great Power nation, we should indulge the nationalist aspirations [of the non-Russians] and place ourselves in an unequal position, in the sense of making still greater concessions to the national current. Only by such a policy, when we place ourselves artificially in a position lower in comparisons with others, only by such a price can we purchase for ourselves the trust of the formerly oppressed nations." Stalin, who was more sensitive to Russian feelings, rebuked Bukharin for the crudeness of his statement, but did not and could not dispute its content. As we shall see, Soviet policy did indeed call for Russian sacrifice in the realm of nationalities policy: Majority Russian territory was granted to non-Russian republics; Russians had to accept extensive affirmative-action programs for non-Russians; they were asked to learn non-Russian languages; and traditional Russian culture was stigmatized as the culture of oppression.

New phenomena merit new terminology. As a national entity, I believe the Soviet Union can best be described as an Affirmative-Action Empire. I am, of course, borrowing the contemporary American term for policies that give preference to members of ethnic groups that have suffered from past discrimination. Such policies are common internationally and go by various names: compensatory discrimination, preferential policies, positive action, affirmative discrimination. I prefer the term Affirmative Action because, as the above paragraphs have shown, it describes precisely the Soviet policy choice: affirmative action (*polozhitel'naia deiatel'nost'*) instead of neutrality. The Soviet Union was the first country in world history to establish affirmative-action programs for national minorities and no country has yet approached the vast scale of Soviet affirmative action. The Soviet Union also adopted even more extensive class-based affirmative-action programs and considerably less assertive gender-based programs. As a result, the vast majority of Soviet citizens were eligible for some sort of preferential treatment. Affirmative action permeated the early Soviet Union and was one of its defining features.

However, the existence of such programs alone does not justify calling the Soviet Union an Affirmative-Action Empire, because I am proposing this term as an ideal-type to distinguish the Soviet Union as a national entity from alternative ideal-types: nation-state, city-state, federation, confederation, empire. I am using affirmative action here to refer not only to programs on behalf of members of a given ethnic group, but primarily to Soviet state support for the national forms of

those ethnic groups. As noted in the Hroch comparison above, the Communist party assumed leadership over the usual process of national formation, and took positive action to construct Soviet international nations (nations in form not content) that would be content to be part of a unitary Soviet state. Positive support of the forms of nationhood was the essence of Soviet nationalities policy. The formation of the Soviet Union in 1922–23 established the territorial form of nationhood, not a federation of autonomous national territories. Therefore, the constitutional form of the Soviet Union was itself an act of affirmative action. . . .

. . . Modern empires, however, are not usually associated with affirmative action. They were typically divided into a center and periphery with different legal, political, and economic norms. The Soviet Union was a unitary state. In modern empires, the periphery was economically exploited by the center. This was not at all the case in the Soviet Union. Most importantly modern empires had a privileged state-bearing people (Lenin's Great Power Nation), with whom the empire was identified and whose interests the empire served. The Soviet Union explicitly renounced the idea of a state-bearing people. Despite this fact, in an important sense the Russians did remain the Soviet Union's state-bearing people. Only the Russians were not granted their own territory and their own Communist party. Instead, the party asked the Russians to accept a formally unequal national status to further the cohesion of the multinational state. The hierarchical distinction between state-bearing and colonial peoples was thus reproduced, but reversed, as the new distinction between the formerly oppressed nationalities and the former Great Power nation.

. . . In Hroch's model, the imperial state acts only negatively (and futilely) to prevent the emergence of national movements. The Soviet state instead adopted the opposite strategy. It acted positively in support of this decolonizing movement with the aim of co-opting and diverting it away from the goal of independent statehood. Soviet affirmative action, then, was a radical strategy for imperial maintenance. As the state-bearing people, Russians were now literally asked to bear the burden of empire by suppressing their national interests and identifying with a nonnational Affirmative Action Empire. Had Lenin lived to write a theoretical account of his creation, he might have called it: *The Soviet Union, as the Highest Stage of Imperialism*.

Terry Martin, "An Affirmative-Action Empire: The Emergence of the Soviet Nationalities Policy, 1919–1923," unpublished essay; a fuller version appears in his *The Affirmative-Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001).

### Aleksandra Kollontai, *The Workers' Opposition*

1921

Robert V. Daniels, the historian of oppositions within the Communist party, wrote that this pamphlet by Kollontai "could well represent man's (sic) highest ascent toward faith in the proletariat."<sup>1</sup> Written just before the Tenth Congress of the RKP (b) (March

1. Robert Vincent Daniels, *The Conscience of the Revolution: Communist Opposition in Soviet Russia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960), p. 128.