

**Forging Soviet Citizens:
Ideology, Identity, and Stability in the Soviet Union, 1930-1991**

by

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С каким наслаждением
 жандармской кастой
я был бы исхлестан и распят
за то,
 что в руках у меня
 молоткастый,
серпастый
 советский паспорт...

Читайте,
 завидуйте,
 я –
 гражданин
Советского Союза.

В. В. Маяковский, Стихи о советском паспорте (1929)

*With what pleasure
 I would be flogged and crucified
by the gendarme cast
because
 I have in my hands
 a hammered,
sickled
 Soviet passport...*

*Read it,
 envy me,
 I am
 a citizen
of the Soviet Union.*

V. V. Mayakovsky, Lines about a Soviet Passport (1929)

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Whenever I arrived in an archive with my letter of introduction, archivists received my letter either with practiced indifference or with concern about the scope of my project. One well-meaning archivist even suggested I ask my advisor for a better, more specific topic. Alongside my appreciation that this is not how American academia works, I have been especially grateful for all the support and advice from my advisor, Douglas Northrop, who has always encouraged me to think big while holding me responsible for the smaller details (and for keeping Central Asia in focus!). Throughout the Ph.D. process, Doug has been an untiring source of wisdom and advice. It is impossible to imagine this dissertation without his support.

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NOTE ON TRANSLATION AND TRANSLITERATION

Research for this dissertation was drawn primarily from Russian-language sources, with additional sources in Ukrainian, Uzbek, Kazakh, and other languages. Wherever possible, I have sought to consult materials in original languages. All translations into English are my own unless otherwise noted.

I cite all archival documents from the former Soviet Union according to the Russian terms for each level of organization: *fond* (collection), *opis* (inventory), *delo* (file), and *list* (page). Although these have equivalent terms in other languages, I have used the Russian for the sake of simplicity and to reflect the uniformity of Soviet archival organization.

Russian, Ukrainian, and Belarusian terms, names, and materials are transliterated according to a simplified Library of Congress transliteration system, with diacritics removed, except where names or terms have standard transliterations that are familiar (for example, Yeltsin not Eltsin). For Uzbek, Kazakh, and other Turkic languages, written in Cyrillic beginning in the late 1930s and early 1940s, I transliterate according to current standard Latin variants, including special characters. For Uzbek, this is straightforward, as a standardized Latin alphabet was approved in 1995. For Kazakh, this has been more complicated due to the ongoing process of Latinization. Kazakh-language sources and terms are transliterated according to the version approved in February 2018. Names of individuals in Latin-based languages (such as Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian) are left in the original spelling, including special characters.

I have attempted in the text to render names according to the spelling of their language of origin (thus, Jambyl rather than Dzhambul), particularly for cases in which non-Russian languages or identities were self-evidently relevant to individuals. For cases in which Russian-language versions are more common or also relevant, I provide Russian equivalents in parentheses. In footnotes and the bibliography, names and titles are transliterated according to the language of the materials. Thus, a poem by Jambyl translated into or written in Russian will appear under the name “Dzhambul” in notes. Whenever I was unable to determine spelling in the original language, for example with obscure republic-level politicians, I have transliterated from Russian. Place names are generally rendered according to names in use at the time, as rendered in the local language except where cities have standard English-language variants (thus, Almaty and not Alma-Ata, Kyiv not Kiev, and Leningrad not St. Petersburg, but Moscow not Moskva, and Tashkent not Toshkent).

The question of language use and spelling is never a precise science. However, in light of the fact that the Soviet state placed considerable weight on the promotion of non-Russian languages and cultures, and in recognition of the independent status of former union republics, my use of non-Russian names and places reflects my own attempt to take these identities seriously.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores patriotism, citizenship, and identity in the Soviet Union, arguing that leaders increasingly promoted a notion of civic identity that emphasized citizens' active participation. People embraced this vision of citizenship across a wide geographical and cultural spectrum, as many identified as citizens of the Soviet Union. Based on a diverse array of citizen letters, educational curricula, civic rituals, oral history interviews, newspaper discourse, and legal documents collected during 27 months of fieldwork in Russia, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia, this dissertation considers the complexities of citizenship in a multiethnic, multilingual environment.

A wide variety of discourses and practices contributed to a growing sense of community within the Soviet Union. This dissertation emphasizes the evolving discourse of the "Soviet people" (*sovetskii narod*). When the concept was first invoked in the 1930s under Joseph Stalin, it was closely associated with participatory patriotism, which called upon citizens to sacrifice and contribute to economic and political life. This emphasis encouraged people from a variety of ethnic, linguistic, and social backgrounds to consider themselves first and foremost citizens of the Soviet Union. This identity did not preclude ethnic affiliations but rather saw these as part and parcel of civic identity. In wartime, the stakes of participation increased, as citizens experienced the country as a coherent whole that was engaged in an existential struggle. This experience paved the way for more expansive notions of civic identity under Stalin's successors, Nikita Khrushchev and Leonid Brezhnev, who envisioned a more cooperative relationship

between state and society, founded on a recognition of the Soviet people as an existing community.

Citizens experienced, participated in, and developed Soviet identity through a variety of practices and encounters. Most obviously, citizens encountered on a daily basis the omnipresent discourse of the Soviet people in newspapers, political speeches, and rhetoric. A growing sense of identity could also emerge in interactions with the state and fellow citizens, encounters that became normalized as Soviet culture, customs, and civic life became entrenched in everyday life. Citizens, however, did not simply receive and recite messages of identity. They drew on personal observations and experiences to articulate their own understanding of Soviet identity in ways that reinforced and challenged the official discourses. This engagement ensured that dynamic understandings of Soviet identity shaped civic life across the country.

Returning the focus to Soviet identity challenges a widespread belief, most evident in scholarship written outside the Soviet Union and Russian Federation, that the Soviet Union failed to cultivate a distinct sense of civic identity. A powerful recent scholarly focus on the promotion of ethnic identities has driven an underappreciation of the discourses, institutions, and practices that drew citizens closer to one another and that imbued the state with a sense of permanence and even genuine popularity. Tracing the origins of, reception of, and engagement with Soviet identity offers insight into a powerful institution that influenced identity formation across a wide geographic space. This focus expands the empirical basis for the wider global scholarship on citizenship, which typically locates the origins of modern, participatory citizenship in the process of claiming civil rights, most often within democratic contexts. The present study suggests that similar notions of civic identity and citizenship could in non-democratic contexts—not simply as a state-driven institution but as one navigated and negotiated by citizens themselves.

INTRODUCTION

In a 1976 letter addressed to the commission convened to prepare a new Soviet constitution, Anatolii L., a young party member and scientific researcher at the Kaliningrad observatory, petitioned the state to eliminate the entry for ethnicity in Soviet internal passports. He believed such a change would better reflect his own identity: “I was born in our marvelous multiethnic country and identify only as an equal rights-bearing citizen of the Soviet Union.” Born in Northern Kazakhstan to Ukrainian and Polish parents in 1946, Anatolii spoke only Russian and felt little attachment to either of his parents’ ethnicities. In his own passport, he had fluctuated between Ukrainian and Polish identities, but found neither to “correspond to the Marxist-Leninist understanding of belonging to a nation (*natsiia*).” Only Soviet identity, he declared, could appropriately describe him and others like him.¹

From the introduction of the Soviet internal passport regime in the 1930s, ethnicity (*natsional’nost’*) was recorded in citizens’ identification documents and used in applications for schools and jobs, and even when receiving medical care.² Anatolii was one of many citizens who openly opposed this system in letters to the constitutional commission in the 1960s and 70s.

¹ State Archive of the Russian Federation (hereafter GARF), f. 7523, o. 131, d. 367, l. 190–190ob. Anatolii gives his full name and address, but since he and other letter writers cited in the dissertation were not public figures, I omit full names to preserve privacy for individuals and their families. For greater anonymity, I use first names when available. We will return to Anatolii L. and other letter writers with similar requests in Chapter 3.

² Victor Zaslavsky and Yuri Luryi, “The Passport System in the USSR and Changes in Soviet Society,” *The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review* 6, no. 1 (1979): 137–53; A. K. Baiburin, *Sovetskii pasport: istoriia, struktura, praktiki* (Saint Petersburg: Evropeiskii universitet v Sankt-Peterburge, 2017). *Natsional’nost’* can alternatively be translated as the cognate “nationality,” but I prefer “ethnicity” for two reasons: first, it has a more specific meaning in English that avoids confusion with questions of citizenship and belonging to the “nation.” Second, ethnicity better reflects Soviet usage: the term referred to both small and large ethnic groups, regardless of claims to political autonomy, and included groups not commonly seen as “nationalities” in English, like Jews.

Many expressed deep dissatisfaction with what they saw as an unfair, unnecessary, or simply outdated institution. Ascribed passport ethnicity, letter-writers argued, poorly represented their lived realities and ideological leanings. Many believed replacing ethnicity with “citizen of the Soviet Union” would more accurately reflect how they identified themselves.

This dissertation considers how and why people of diverse social, ethnic, and geographic backgrounds came to identify primarily as citizens of the Soviet Union. In contrast to recent scholarship in Soviet history, it shifts the focus away from the promotion of ethnic identities towards the cultivation of a distinctly Soviet identity, one that was seen, at least theoretically, to be compatible with (and even informed by) national affiliations. The internal passport itself symbolically testified to this understanding: while serving as citizens’ primary record of identification as Soviet citizens, the infamous and unpopular fifth line documented their ethnic affiliation according to the ethnicity of either parent. It was this item that Anatolii criticized in his 1976 letter, preferring to be identified only as a Soviet citizen. His and similar statements of attachment to the state, this dissertation demonstrates, should be seen in light of the state’s deliberate agenda to cultivate Soviet identity. Through an exploration of Soviet patriotism, citizenship, and identity, I argue that leaders promoted a civic identity that emphasized active participation in public life. People across a wide geographical and cultural spectrum embraced this vision of citizenship, even as ethnic, gender, and linguistic differences created disparities in citizens’ claims to and participation in this citizenship.

This dissertation traces the development of Soviet identity in the lead-up to World War II and its evolution in subsequent decades. Based on a wide range of sources collected over 27 months of fieldwork in Russia, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia, I consider the complexities of citizenship in a multiethnic and multilingual environment. I suggest that leaders explicitly

embraced a civic identity that was buttressed by ethnic identities, but that this relationship was often fraught with tensions between theory and practice. My dissertation offers a more positive interpretation of Soviet citizenship than is typically presented by historians, shedding light not only on how citizenship as an institution was established, cultivated, and practiced, but also on how it contributed to the longevity of the Soviet state.

A wide variety of discourses and practices contributed to a growing sense of community within the Soviet Union. This dissertation emphasizes the evolving discourse of the “Soviet people” (*sovetskii narod*). When the concept was first invoked in the 1930s under Joseph Stalin, it was closely associated with notions of participatory patriotism, which called upon citizens to make sacrifices and take part in economic and political life. This emphasis on Soviet identity encouraged people from a variety of ethnic, linguistic, and social backgrounds to consider themselves first and foremost citizens of the Soviet Union. This identity did not preclude ethnic affiliations but rather saw these as part and parcel of a broader civic identity. In wartime, the stakes of participation increased, as citizens experienced the country as a coherent whole that was engaged in an existential struggle. This wartime experience paved the way for more expansive notions of civic identity under Stalin’s successors, Nikita Khrushchev and Leonid Brezhnev, who envisioned a more cooperative relationship between state and society that was founded on a recognition of the Soviet people as an existing, meaningful community of citizens.

Citizens experienced, participated in, and developed Soviet identity through a variety of practices and encounters. Most obviously, citizens encountered on a daily basis the omnipresent discourse of the Soviet people in newspapers, political speeches, and rhetoric. A growing sense of identity could also emerge in everyday interactions with both the state and fellow citizens, encounters that became normalized as Soviet culture, customs, and civic life became entrenched

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Returning the focus to Soviet identity challenges a widespread belief, most evident in scholarship written outside the Soviet Union and Russian Federation, that the Soviet Union failed to cultivate a distinct sense of civic identity. A powerful recent scholarly focus on the promotion of ethnic identities, for all of its contributions, has also driven an underappreciation of the discourses, institutions, and practices that drew citizens closer to one another and that imbued the state with a sense of permanence and even genuine popularity. Tracing the origins of, reception of, and engagement with Soviet identity offers new insight into a powerful institution that influenced identity formation across a wide geographic space. This focus also expands the empirical basis for the wider global scholarship on citizenship, which typically locates the origins of modern, participatory citizenship in the process of claiming civil rights, most often within democratic contexts. The present study suggests that similar notions of civic identity and citizenship also emerged in non-democratic contexts—not simply as a state-driven institution but as one navigated and negotiated by citizens themselves.

Nationalities Policy and Soviet Identity

My focus on Soviet identity and citizenship contrasts with much existing scholarship. Recent historical work on identity in the Soviet Union has generally explored Soviet *identities*: especially the countless ‘national’ identities that proliferated among a wide variety of ethno-culturally defined groups. In recent years, scholarship on “Soviet nationalities policy”—a catch-

all term for the party-state's broad agenda to manage its diverse population—challenged the classic Cold War view of the Soviet Union as a “prison-house of nations.”³ Historians of nationalities policy have shown how the state promoted ethno-linguistic minorities as part of a wide-ranging program of “affirmative action” that promoted national elites through favorable quotas in higher education, guaranteed representation in government, and extensive cultural programs.⁴ As Terry Martin argues, leaders sought to circumvent potential nationalist uprisings by establishing and controlling forms of nationhood, a “strategy designed to avoid the perception of empire.”⁵ Martin traces the rise of affirmative action policies in the 1920s and early ‘30s, before analyzing their slow demise, culminating with what he terms the “return of the Russians” and the rise of the concept of the “friendship of the peoples” on the eve of World War II.

Francine Hirsch interprets this shift differently, arguing instead that nationalities policy should be instead understood as “state-sponsored evolutionism,” which would transform citizens

³ “Prison-house of nations” borrows from Marx’s description of the tsarist empire. In the Cold War, scholars and government officials in the west emphasized state oppression of linguistic, religious, and ethnic minorities, epitomized in the 1958 Library of Congress report *The Soviet Empire: Prison House of Nations and Races; A Study in Genocide, Discrimination, and Abuse of Power* (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Office, 1958). Many Cold War-era scholars pointed to hotspots of restive nationalism as potential sources of instability, see Hélène Carrère d’Encausse, *Decline of an Empire: The Soviet Socialist Republics in Revolt* (New York: Newsweek Books, 1979); Alexander J. Motyl, *Will the Non-Russians Rebel? State, Ethnicity, and Stability in the USSR* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987); Bohdan Nahaylo and Victor Swoboda, *Soviet Disunion: A History of the Nationalities Problem in the USSR* (New York: Free Press, 1990).

⁴ Richard Pipes’s *The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism, 1917–1923* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954) was one of the first historians to address the Soviet Union’s cultivation of ethnic identity. In his view, the Soviet Union did so instrumentally, to trick minorities into working with the state, before ultimately undermining and destroying national cultures. Nationalities policy came into renewed focus in the 1980s with Gerhard Simon’s pioneering *Nationalismus und Nationalitätenpolitik in der Sowjetunion: von der totalitären Diktatur zur nachstalinischen Gesellschaft* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1986). His sweeping study of the entire Soviet period (to 1986) traced the evolution of nationalities policy from its early blossoming in the 1920s and ‘30s, a retreat, and an eventual return in the 1960s. The collapse brought newfound attention to the nationalities question, as scholars offered more generous interpretations of the Soviet cultivation of ethnicity, including Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993); Yuri Slezkine, “The USSR as Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism,” *Slavic Review* 53, no. 2 (1994): 414–52. In subsequent years, the field has expanded dramatically, see especially Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939* (Ithaca: Cornell, 2001); Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005). Both Martin and Hirsch focus primarily on the first decades of Soviet rule; Jeremy Smith offers a comprehensive study of the entire Soviet period in *Red Nations: The Nationalities Experience in and After the USSR* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

⁵ Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 19.

into a higher stage of Marxist-Leninist historical development. Rather than seeing change in the 1930s as a shift in policy, Hirsch convincingly demonstrates that the nascent state pursued a program of “double assimilation,” by which individuals were first fused into nations, which were in turn integrated into state and society, in two distinct but overlapping processes.⁶ What Martin describes as a reversal, Hirsch alternatively describes as a shift in emphasis from the first phase to the second. Although Martin’s policy reversal and Hirsch’s distinct but overlapping phases share much in common, Hirsch draws more attention to role of ethnic minorities and local actors, in part reflecting her focus on the work of early Soviet anthropologists and ethnographers.

The work of local actors has come into sharper relief in the proliferating literature on regional aspects of nationalities policy. In suggesting how central initiatives were translated, altered, negotiated, and even initiated at the periphery, these studies enrich and challenge arguments put forward by Martin, Hirsch, and others. Matthew Pauly’s study of language education in Ukraine, for example, reveals considerable resistance to Ukrainization not evident from Martin’s more sweeping perspective, while Peter Blitstein highlights the dialectical relationship between Russian and native-language education.⁷ Scholars of early Soviet Central Asia emphasize a focus on women, as manifested through unveiling campaigns and public health and educational initiatives.⁸ Others suggest the specific ways the nascent state forged changes in

⁶ Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, 8.

⁷ Matthew D. Pauly, *Breaking the Tongue: Language, Education, and Power in Soviet Ukraine, 1923–1934* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014); Peter Blitstein, “Nation-Building or Russification? Obligatory Russian Instruction in the Soviet Non-Russian School, 1938–1953,” in *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, ed. Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 253–74.

⁸ E.g. Gregory J. Massell, *The Surrogate Proletariat: Moslem Women and Revolutionary Strategies in Soviet Central Asia, 1919–1929* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974); Paula A. Michaels, *Curative Powers: Medicine and Empire in Stalin’s Central Asia* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2003); Douglas Northrop, *Veiled Empire: Gender and Power in Stalinist Central Asia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004); Marianne Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan: Islam, Modernity, and Unveiling Under Communism* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006); Adrienne Lynn Edgar, *Tribal Nation: The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); Ali F. İğmen, *Speaking Soviet with an Accent: Culture and Power in Kyrgyzstan* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012).

industry and agriculture, often to tragic effect, while others, not speaking on nationalities policy *per se*, have focused on religious dimensions of these policies.⁹ These and other studies have called attention to the interplay between center and periphery, shedding light on the implied and explicit hierarchies that shaped Soviet ethnic relations.¹⁰

Not coincidentally, scholars of nationalities policy have overwhelmingly focused on the 1920s and 1930s, when policies of minority promotion were most pronounced. Relatively few have considered the fate of nationalities policy after World War II and Stalin's death in 1953, although Gerhard Simon, Jeremy Smith, and Krista Goff are notable exceptions. Gerhard Simon's *Nationalismus und Nationalitätenpolitik in der Sowjetunion* (1986; English translation in 1990) analyzed shifts in nationalities policy from the founding of the Soviet Union to the Brezhnev era. More recently, Jeremy Smith's *Red Nations* (2013) provides an updated analysis that also considers the fate and role of nationalities policy in the collapse of the Soviet Union.¹¹ Both offer schematic, general overviews of policies over time. Krista Goff's recent work on non-titular minorities (those not associated with a given republic) draws attention to the fate of nationalities policy after Stalin, with attention to how minorities understood and expressed ethnic and civic identities.¹²

Although all of these scholars have done much to illuminate the Soviet Union's unique approach to managing diversity, scholars, particularly in the West, have paid surprisingly little

⁹ Matthew J. Payne, *Stalin's Railroad: Turksib and the Building of Socialism* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001); Sarah I. Cameron, *The Hungry Steppe: Famine, Violence, and the Making of Soviet Kazakhstan* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, forthcoming). On religion, see Shoshana Keller, *To Moscow, Not Mecca: The Soviet Campaign against Islam in Central Asia, 1917–1941* (Westport: Praeger, 2001); Anna Shternshis, *Soviet and Kosher: Jewish Popular Culture in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006); Eren Tasar, *Soviet and Muslim: The Institutionalization of Islam in Central Asia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

¹⁰ On the imperial nature of ethnic hierarchies, see Northrop, *Veiled Empire*; Serhy Yekelchuk, *Stalin's Empire of Memory: Russian-Ukrainian Relations in the Soviet Historical Imagination* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004).

¹¹ Simon, *Nationalismus und Nationalitätenpolitik in der Sowjetunion*; Smith, *Red Nations*.

¹² Krista Anne Goff, "What Makes a People? Soviet Nationality Politics and Minority Experience After World War Two" (University of Michigan, 2014).

attention to the related phenomenon of all-union Soviet identity. To the extent that Soviet identity has been discussed, it has often been in studies of the post-revolutionary discourse of the “new Soviet person” (*novyi sovetskii chelovek*), a figure widely understood to be the product of the new revolutionary era.¹³ Yet there has been little focus on the emphasis on the collective sense of Soviet identity that really began on the eve of World War II, when elites first spoke of the emergence of a Soviet people. In subsequent decades and especially in the 1970s and ‘80s, however, a number of Soviet academics and theoreticians, including Iulian Bromlei, Mykhailo (Mikhail) Kulichenko, Maksim Kim, and others, focused on the flourishing (*rastsvet*), coming together (*sblizhenie*), and fusing (*sliianie*) of peoples. These processes were widely considered to contribute to the forging of a united Soviet people, a community that progressively assumed nation-like qualities.¹⁴

Western scholars have generally been quite skeptical of these claims. Indeed, the existence of Soviet identity has not so much been ignored as explicitly dismissed. Terry Martin rejects the concept entirely: “No attempt was ever made to create a Soviet nationality... The Soviet people were primarily a figure of speech, used most frequently as shorthand for the passionate patriotism [of the Soviet peoples].”¹⁵ Yuri Slezkine similarly remarks, “no one ever suggested there existed a ‘Soviet nation’ (*natsiia*, that is, as opposed to the ethnically non-specific *narod*).”¹⁶ The widespread undervaluing of Soviet identity has only intensified since the

¹³ Igal Halfin, *From Darkness to Light: Class, Consciousness, and Salvation in Revolutionary Russia* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000); David L. Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values: The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity, 1917–1941* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003).

¹⁴ E.g.: Iu. V. Bromlei, *Etnosotsial’nye protsessy: teoriia, istoriia, sovremennost* (Moscow: Nauka, 1987); M.I. Kulichenko, ed., *Razvitie sovetskogo naroda—novoi istoricheskoi obshchnosti* (Moscow: Izd-vo Polit. literatury, 1980); M. P. Kim, ed., *Sovetskii narod—novaia istoricheskaiia obshchnost’ liudei: Stanovlenie i razvitie* (Moscow: Nauka, 1975); I.P. Tsamerian, *Natsii i natsional’nye otnosheniia v razvitom sotsialisticheskom obshchestve* (Moscow: Nauka, 1979). For a rare discussion of these authors and others, see Şener Aktürk, *Regimes of Ethnicity and Nationhood in Germany, Russia, and Turkey* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 197–228.

¹⁵ Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 461.

¹⁶ Slezkine, “The USSR as Communal Apartment,” 443. Emphasis in the original.

Soviet collapse, which many scholars have analyzed in light of rising nationalist pressure, foremost in the Baltic republics and the Caucasus.¹⁷

These post-Soviet views differ from those of the Soviet Union's contemporary critics, who acknowledged the existence of Soviet identity but interpreted it as evidence of linguistic and cultural Russification that stamped out all semblances of national particularity. Within the Soviet Union, the Ukrainian literary critic Ivan Dziuba panned discourses of internationalism as a ruse for Russification and called for a return to Leninist policies of ethno-cultural promotion.¹⁸ In the West, critics pointed to Russian-language use and the discourse of the Soviet people as evidence of ethnic repression and cultural imperialism.¹⁹ Other contemporary critics interpreted national mobilization in Central Asia and Ukraine as resistance to Russo-Soviet cultural integration and a major threat to state stability.²⁰ Although these fears ultimately proved unfounded as the biggest nationalist pressures within the USSR came from the Caucasus and the Baltic states, the idea that ethnic and Soviet identities were incompatible continues to be commonplace. In a less overtly critical mode, Kate Brown has observed a rising sense of Soviet identity among deported Poles and Germans on the emptied Kazakh steppe. There, Brown notes, individuals slowly lost their

¹⁷ On the collapse, see Suny, *Revenge of the Past*; Mark R. Beissinger, *Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*. Both Suny and Hirsch emphasize that nationalist mobilization was possible only in the wake of systemic collapse. On the Baltics and the Caucasus, see Anatol Lieven, *The Baltic Revolution: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and the Path to Independence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993); Georgi M. Derluguian, *Bourdieu's Secret Admirer in the Caucasus: A World-System Biography* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005). Derluguian's nuanced study contextualizes nationalist mobilization within processes of alienation of Khrushchev-era elites who found their upward mobility limited under Brezhnev. In Derluguian's analysis, their turn towards nationalism was a last resort.

¹⁸ *Internatsionalizm chy rusyfikatsiia?*, 2nd ed. (Kyiv: KM Academia, 2010).

¹⁹ Myroslav Prokop, "Pro t. zv. radians'kyi narod (I): Do henezhy poniattia i dyskusii pro n'oho," *Suchasnist'* 1976, no. 2 (182) (February 1976): 70–79; Myroslav Prokop, "Pro tak zvanyi radians'kyi narod (II): Vid 'radians'koho narodu' do 'radians'koi natsii,'" *Suchasnist'* 1976, no. 3 (183) (March 1976): 60–70; Roman Solchanyk, "Molding 'The Soviet People': The Role of Ukraine and Belorussia," *Journal of Ukrainian Studies* 8, no. 1 (Summer 1983): 3–18; Borys Lewytskyj, "Sovetskij Narod" "Das Sowjetvolk": *Nationalitätenpolitik Als Instrument Des Sowjetimperialismus* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1983). In education, see Yaroslav Bilinsky, "Education of the Non-Russian Peoples in the USSR, 1917–1967: An Essay," *Slavic Review* 27, no. 3 (1968): 411–37.

²⁰ E.g. Carrère d'Encausse, *Decline of an Empire*; John Alexander Armstrong, *Ukrainian Nationalism*, 3rd Edition (Englewood: Ukrainian Academic Press, 1990).

sense of national affiliation and “began gradually to fuse into Soviet identities as they assimilated into Russian-Soviet culture.”²¹ Yet even for Brown, Soviet identity simply appeared in the absence of alternatives and when ethnic identity no longer had meaning, rather than something that was distinctly cultivated, either by individuals or the state.

A few scholars have written against the grain of these dominant, negative understandings of Soviet identity. Bruce Grant reveals the emergence of a distinct Soviet culture and identity within the Nivkhi community on Sakhalin Island in the Soviet Far East.²² Focusing almost entirely on the post-Soviet period, David Laitin also acknowledges the existence of the Soviet people, at least among Russian speakers in Central Asia and the Baltics, but he does not explore how these identities formed.²³ Turning back to history, Şener Aktürk and Zbigniew Wojnowski have each explicitly explored the postwar discourses surrounding the Soviet people.²⁴ Aktürk concluded that leaders sought to forge a nation-like understanding among citizens, although he limited his analysis to ideological discussions under Khrushchev and Brezhnev. Wojnowski vaguely suggests that the Soviet people was offered as a unifying concept for the country’s diverse citizenry. In other writings, the historian Ronald Suny reminds us of the emotional pull of Soviet identity, which formed, in his words, an “affective community” that transcended ethnic

²¹ Kate Brown, *A Biography of No Place: From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 191. For a rare discussion of the “Soviet people,” see Aktürk, *Regimes of Ethnicity and Nationhood in Germany, Russia, and Turkey*. Aktürk claims that the Soviet people (*sovetskii narod*) can and should be considered a national identity, and he suggests late Soviet leaders took concepts of Soviet nationhood seriously.

²² Bruce Grant, *In the Soviet House of Culture: A Century of Perestroikas* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

²³ David D. Laitin, *Identity in Formation: The Russian-Speaking Populations in the Near Abroad* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), especially 94–95.

²⁴ Aktürk, *Regimes of Ethnicity and Nationhood in Germany, Russia, and Turkey*, 197–228; Zbigniew Wojnowski, “The Soviet People: National and Supranational Identities in the USSR after 1945,” *Nationalities Papers* 43, no. 1 (2015): 1–7. Wojnowski expands his argument with a narrow focus on patriotism in *The Near Abroad: Socialist Eastern Europe and Soviet Patriotism in Ukraine, 1956–1985* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017).

divisions.²⁵ Taking a more cultural approach, Adrienne Edgar also suggests the existence of Soviet identity in her study of interethnic marriage in late Soviet Central Asia. Elites and citizens alike interpreted such marriages as evidence of the ongoing creation of the Soviet people.²⁶ Lastly, and more recently, Krista Goff demonstrates that non-titular minorities in the Caucasus invoked citizenship to demand national rights and language use.²⁷

This dissertation builds on this work by considering the origins and sources of Soviet identity, not only arising from party-state elites but from citizens as well. I challenge the widespread notion that ethnic and civic identities were inherently at odds and instead demonstrate how the state conceived these two loci of identity as mutually constitutive. Leaders and citizens alike increasingly understood Soviet identity to have the same sort of affective charge and motivational pull that is typically associated with the nation. Indeed, under Khrushchev and Brezhnev, leaders and citizens frequently acknowledged, or at least implied, that the Soviet people functioned essentially like a nation.²⁸ By focusing on this long-term, ongoing, and evolving project of forging Soviet identity, this dissertation also has implications for understanding the cultivation of quasi-national civic identities and the practice of citizenship, both in the Soviet Union and more broadly around the world.

²⁵ Ronald Grigor Suny, “The Contradictions of Identity: Being Soviet and National in the USSR and After,” in *Soviet and Post-Soviet Identities*, ed. Mark Bassin and Catriona Kelly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 17–36.

²⁶ Adrienne Lynn Edgar, “Marriage, Modernity, and the ‘Friendship of Nations’: Interethnic Intimacy in Post-War Central Asia in Comparative Perspective,” *Central Asian Survey* 26, no. 4 (2007): 581–99. Jeff Sahadeo’s current work suggests similar notions of Soviet identity, see *Red or Black? Friendship, Racism and Migration in Soviet Leningrad and Moscow* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, forthcoming).

²⁷ See Krista A. Goff, “‘Why Not Love Our Language and Our Culture?’ National Rights and Citizenship in Khrushchev’s Soviet Union,” *Nationalities Papers* 43, no. 1 (2015): 27–44.

²⁸ Soviet understandings of the nation were deeply influenced by Stalin’s prerevolutionary writings, foremost *Marxism and the National and Colonial Question*, ed. A. Fineberg (New York: International Publishers, 1935), originally published in 1913. The essay defined a nation as a community of people bound by a common language, territory, culture, and economic life. As we will see in Chapter 3, citizens and leaders often invoked Stalin’s understanding of the nation in describing the Soviet people even after de-Stalinization was well underway.

Identity and Citizenship Between Nation and Empire

The concept of “identity” itself has recently been at the center of considerable scholarly debate. As Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper put it in a 2002 essay, use of the term has proliferated to such an extent as to render it in their view nearly meaningless. For greater clarity, they propose less ambiguous terms, including identification, categorization, self-understanding, and others.²⁹ Although their critique of overuse is fair, the usefulness of the term is determined not despite but because of its depth of meaning. As Charles Tilly noted, “The concept ‘identity’ has remained blurred but indispensable in political analysis and social history for three obvious reasons: first, the phenomenon of identity is not private and individual but public and relational; second, it spans the whole range from category to organization; third, any actor deploys multiple identities, at least one per category, tie, role, network, group and organization to which the actor is attached.”³⁰ Responding to Brubaker and Cooper in 2002, Tilly returned to the concept: “people regularly negotiate and deploy socially based answers to the questions ‘Who are you?’ ‘Who are we?’ and ‘Who are they?’ These are identity questions. Their answers are identities—always assertions, always contingent, always negotiable, but also always consequential.”³¹

Following Tilly, I use the term not only because of its flexible range of meanings but also because it best describes what citizens themselves believed they were doing when they reflected on their allegiance to the state—and what the state hoped to accomplish when cultivating these discourses. Identity is not taken as innate or fixed but is rather specifically negotiated within the realm of available discourses and institutional arrangements. Here, Soviet identity functions as shorthand for a general sense of how citizens understood who they were, particularly vis-à-vis

²⁹ Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, “Beyond ‘Identity,’” *Theory and Society* 29, no. 1 (2000): 1–47.

³⁰ Charles Tilly, “Citizenship, Identity and Social History,” *International Review of Social History* 40, no. S3 (December 1995): 7.

³¹ Charles Tilly, *Stories, Identities, and Political Change* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), xiii.

the state. I locate the origins of this identity at the intersection of state discourses and citizens' own experiences, practices, and articulations. Here I am influenced by historical scholarship on national and civic identities and citizenship.

Theorists of nations and nationalism have pointed to these entities' constructed nature, challenging previously dominant notions (foremost among nationalists themselves) of the immutability of national identity. Karl Deutsch, Ernest Gellner, and Benedict Anderson emphasized the role of modernization in the conceptualization and formation of national communities, pointing to new means of communication, print capitalism, urbanization, and industrialization as factors in the theoretical (or "imagined") construction of nations.³² Historians have developed and challenged these views in a host of studies that suggest how nations were conceptualized and came into being as the result of policies of centralization and increased cultural ties. Eugen Weber's *Peasants into Frenchmen* and Linda Colley's *Britons*, for example, drew attention to concurrent nation and state-building processes in Western Europe, revealing how even relatively homogeneous national identities came together only as the result of concrete policies that unified previously more heterogeneous, multilingual, and multicultural societies.³³

In Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe, these processes looked quite different: national movements emerged not as the result of state policies but out of growing ethnic and cultural consciousness among imperial minorities in the Habsburg, Russian, and Ottoman Empires. Here, scholars point to the formation of national consciousness among groups that faced varying levels of historic oppression or cultural underdevelopment, processes that started

³² Karl W. Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication: An Inquiry into the Foundations of Nationality* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1953); Ernest Gellner, *Thought and Change* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964); Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983); Benedict R. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised edition (London: Verso, 2006). The literature is too vast to summarize here; for a concise overview, see Suny, *Revenge of the Past*, 1–19.

³³ Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870–1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976); Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

with elites and gradually spread across the populace.³⁴ In the Soviet case, the state itself was heavily involved in this process of forging ethnic consciousness.³⁵ Scholars of “national indifference,” including Tara Zahra, Pieter Judson, Jeremy King, and others, argue that the uptick in national activity in the late 19th century often reflected resistance or indifference to nationalism, rather than a widespread embrace of it. Their work urges us to redirect attention to the longevity of more hybrid, regional, religious, and even civic identities.³⁶

In a corrective to this widespread focus on national identity, other historians have suggested that civic identity could form a similar locus of affective belonging. Scholars have identified the military and state bureaucracies as key institutions for forging civic identity among political, military, and social elites in the Habsburg Empire.³⁷ Similar attempts occurred in the late Russian Empire, though most scholars concur that these were quite limited and largely unsuccessful.³⁸ In the Ottoman Empire, Islamic identity and discourses of modernity bridged

³⁴ Miroslav Hroch offered a theoretical overview of these processes in *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe: A Comparative Analysis of the Social Composition of Patriotic Groups among the Smaller European Nations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985). For historical views on the formation of national consciousness in Central and Eastern Europe, see Robert A. Kann, *The Multinational Empire: Nationalism and National Reform in the Habsburg Monarchy, 1848–1918* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950); Brian Porter, *When Nationalism Began to Hate: Imagining Modern Politics in Nineteenth Century Poland* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Timothy Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569–1999* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); Faith Hillis, *Children of Rus’: Right-Bank Ukraine and the Invention of a Russian Nation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013).

³⁵ E.g. Suny, *Revenge of the Past*; Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*; Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*.

³⁶ E.g. Jeremy King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans: A Local History of Bohemian Politics, 1848–1948* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Pieter M. Judson, *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006); Tara Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900–1948* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008); James Bjork, *Neither German nor Pole: Catholicism and National Indifference in a Central European Borderland* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009); Tara Zahra, “Imagined Noncommunities: National Indifference as a Category of Analysis,” *Slavic Review* 69, no. 1 (2010): 93–119.

³⁷ István Deák, *Beyond Nationalism: A Social and Political History of the Habsburg Officer Corps, 1848–1918* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Laurence Cole, *Military Culture and Popular Patriotism in Late Imperial Austria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); John Deák, *Forging a Multinational State: State Making in Imperial Austria from the Enlightenment to the First World War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015).

³⁸ On the ultimate failure, see Ronald Grigor Suny, “The Empire Strikes Out: Imperial Russia, ‘National’ Identity, and Theories of Empire,” in *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, ed. Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 23–66. On multiethnic state loyalty in the military, see Joshua A. Sanborn, *Drafting the Russian Nation: Military Conscription, Total War, and Mass*

ethnic divides, at least among middle-class and intellectual elites.³⁹ So, too, has there been considerable attention to discourses of civic identity among colonial subjects in the British and French Empires.⁴⁰ Scholarly focus has been generally on elites or otherwise more unusual cases (migrants, for example), rather than on more popular notions of civic identity. Pieter Judson goes further in his recent history of the Habsburg Empire, demonstrating how notions of state loyalty and institutional practices like elections forged a sense of civic belonging not only among imperial elites but across the empire.⁴¹ These discussions of civic belonging have also contributed to a broader conversation about the historical development, understanding, and practice of citizenship.

Contemporary scholarship has connected modern notions of citizenship temporally to the rise of civil society and the public sphere in Western Europe and the U.S. in the 18th century.⁴² Scholars generally take one of two major approaches to defining citizenship. The first defines citizenship as membership status within a governing state. Since citizens are endowed with certain rights and obligations, as Rogers Brubaker described in his study of citizenship in France and Germany, states must develop ways to delineate who belongs. Citizenship serves as both “an instrument and an object of closure” that connects individuals to the state.⁴³ Mrinalini Sinha

Politics, 1905–1925 (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003); Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern, *Jews in the Russian Army, 1827–1917: Drafted into Modernity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

³⁹ Hasan Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908–1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Keith David Watenpaugh, *Being Modern in the Middle East: Revolution, Nationalism, Colonialism, and the Arab Middle Class* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

⁴⁰ Mrinalini Sinha, *Specters of Mother India: The Global Restructuring of an Empire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Mary Dewhurst Lewis, *The Boundaries of the Republic: Migrant Rights and the Limits of Universalism in France, 1918–1940* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007); Sukanya Banerjee, *Becoming Imperial Citizens: Indians in the Late-Victorian Empire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010); Frederick Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa, 1945–1960* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

⁴¹ Pieter M. Judson, *The Habsburg Empire: A New History* (Cambridge: Belknap, 2016).

⁴² Rogers Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992); Linda K. Kerber, “The Meanings of Citizenship,” *The Journal of American History* 84, no. 3 (1997): 833–54; Andreas Fahrmeir, *Citizenship: The Rise and Fall of a Modern Concept* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

⁴³ Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood*, 71.

offers a more nuanced, rights-based approach in her study of the Child Marriage Restraint Act in India (1929), which granted protections to all Indian women irrespective of religion, enabled Indians to envision individual rather than communal rights, creating a fleeting sense of rights-based citizenship.⁴⁴ Within this state-focused paradigm, others focus on documenting citizenship. Here, the emphasis is on the rights ascribed to citizens and non-citizens, the determination of citizenship status, and the crossing of the citizenship boundary through immigration and naturalization (as well as emigration and denaturalization).⁴⁵ Others look specifically at the passport and identity documents as means to establish and monitor status in order to include and exclude citizens from the rights of citizenship.⁴⁶ Although individuals interact with citizenship regimes, the status is achieved rather than navigated in perpetuity.

Working from T.H. Marshall's classic essay, a second approach to citizenship shifts the emphasis away from the question of status and instead focuses on exercising rights.⁴⁷ As Frederick Cooper notes, "Citizenship, in most contemporary formulations, is a relationship between a state and individuals," one forged by countless interactions.⁴⁸ In this view, citizenship is perpetually negotiated, as citizens practice, navigate, and perform rights and obligations, or demand rights where they may not currently exist. These studies have concentrated almost exclusively on citizenship in (nominal) democracies, citing participatory citizenship as a catalyst for increasingly democratic and equal polities, with a focus on claims-making and participation.

⁴⁴ Sinha, *Specters of Mother India*.

⁴⁵ E.g. Saskia Sassen, *Guests and Aliens* (New York: New Press, 1999); Yasemin Nuhoğlu Soysal, *Limits of Citizenship: Migrants and Postnational Membership in Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1994); Rieko Karatani, *Defining British Citizenship: Empire, Commonwealth and Modern Britain* (London: Frank Cass, 2003); Fahrmeir, *Citizenship*; Lewis, *The Boundaries of the Republic*.

⁴⁶ John C. Torpey, *The Invention of the Passport: Surveillance, Citizenship, and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Craig Robertson, *The Passport in America: The History of a Document* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Keith Breckenridge, "The Book of Life: The South African Population Register and the Invention of Racial Descent, 1950–1980," *Kronos*, no. 40 (2014): 225–40; Baiburin, *Sovetskii pasport*.

⁴⁷ T. H. Marshall, *Citizenship and Social Class, and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950).

⁴⁸ Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation*, 4.

Citizenship is a category of performance, contestation, and mediation.⁴⁹ Intrinsic to this approach is the role of individuals in shaping citizenship. Exemplifying this emphasis on individual agency, Sukanya Banerjee's work on the late Victorian British Empire highlights the role of four Indian actors in challenging their subject status by demanding individual rights to participate in public life. In this sense, they "became" citizens through claiming and practicing their rights.⁵⁰ Shifting the attention away from democratic practices, Jan Palmowski argues that citizenship in the German Democratic Republic was predicated on citizens' active civic participation.⁵¹

Although neither vision of citizenship has been central in scholarship on the Russian Empire or the Soviet Union, echoes of both approaches have had some prominence. Some deny the possibility of participatory citizenship in Russia and the USSR and suggest a rights-based approach to citizenship is impossible. Instead, they focus on Russian and Soviet deviation from European norms, emphasizing the arbitrariness of imperial and Soviet law.⁵² Others emphasize the Soviet focus on collective over individual rights.⁵³ In his study of Russian citizenship, Eric Lohr argues that Russian and Soviet citizenship can only be defined in terms of membership status. He justifies his choice by noting the "relatively rightless" status of Russian (then Soviet) subjects, building on a trope that sees citizens as oppressed objects of Russian and Soviet state policies.⁵⁴ His work looks almost exclusively on immigration and naturalization, building on a

⁴⁹ E.g. Karen Zivi, *Making Rights Claims: A Practice of Democratic Citizenship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Niraja Gopal Jayal, *Citizenship and Its Discontents: An Indian History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012); Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation*.

⁵⁰ Banerjee, *Becoming Imperial Citizens*.

⁵¹ Jan Palmowski, *Inventing a Socialist Nation: Heimat and the Politics of Everyday Life in the GDR, 1945–1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

⁵² Laura Engelstein, "Combined Underdevelopment: Discipline and the Law in Imperial and Soviet Russia," *American Historical Review* 98, no. 2 (1993): 338–53; Marshall Poe, *The Russian Moment in World History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

⁵³ Victoria E. Bonnell, *Roots of Rebellion: Workers' Politics and Organizations in St. Petersburg and Moscow, 1900–1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983); Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values*.

⁵⁴ Eric Lohr, *Russian Citizenship: From Empire to Soviet Union* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 3. Lohr's study focuses almost entirely on citizenship status in imperial Russia. He suggests that the institution was

longer tradition that has focused on the legal boundaries of citizenship.⁵⁵

More recently, scholars have begun to take the category of participatory citizenship more seriously. Valerie Kivelson demonstrates that the early modern Muscovite system met a minimal set of requirements typically associated with citizenship: people in Muscovy recognized themselves as members of a polity, membership within which was universal and associated with specific rights and obligations. There were even mechanisms for making successful legal claims on the state. Still, Kivelson concludes that the absence of a “self-conscious claim to freedom as a citizen’s right” ultimately divides subject from citizen, thereby suggesting that citizenship as a participatory, rights-based category cannot apply to Muscovy.⁵⁶ Scholars have been more optimistic about the usefulness of the concept in the Russian Empire, citing court activity, civic rituals, peasant legal structures, and tax codes.⁵⁷ For many, this was tied to a rising sense of ethnic Russian identity in the 19th century.⁵⁸ Work on Soviet citizenship has been more limited, and many deny that Soviet subjects could be considered rights-bearing citizens at all, particularly in light of Stalinist repression.

generally in keeping with European trends until the revolution. The Soviet period, covered in a single chapter, considers citizenship through the 1930s, with a brief discussion of the collapse and its implications in the epilogue.

⁵⁵ Viktor Sergeevich Shevtsov, *Sovetskoe grazhdanstvo* (Moscow: Iuridicheskaiia Literatura, 1965); George Ginsburgs, *The Citizenship Law of the USSR* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff Publishers, 1983); V. M. Safronov, *Konstitutsiia SSSR i sovetskoe grazhdanstvo* (Moscow: Iuridicheskaiia Literatura, 1984).

⁵⁶ Valerie Kivelson, “Muscovite ‘Citizenship’: Rights without Freedom,” *The Journal of Modern History* 74, no. 3 (September 2002): 465–89; here: 489.

⁵⁷ David Moon, “Peasants into Russian Citizens? A Comparative Perspective,” *Revolutionary Russia* 9, no. 1 (1996): 43–81; Jane Burbank, “An Imperial Rights Regime: Law and Citizenship in the Russian Empire,” *Kritika* 7, no. 3 (2006): 397–431; Yanni Kotsonis, *States of Obligation: Taxes and Citizenship in the Russian Empire and Early Soviet Republic* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014). Burbank’s article appears in a special edition of *Kritika* on citizenship in the Russian Empire and Soviet Union; articles by Golfo Alexopoulos, Serhy Yekelchuk, and Denis Kozlov are considered below. Edith Clowes, Samuel Kassow, and James West’s earlier volume explored voluntary association and public culture in late imperial Russia: *Between Tsar and People: Educated Society and the Quest for Public Identity in Late Imperial Russia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

⁵⁸ See especially the July 2000 discussion in *Slavic Review*, including Josh Sanborn, “The Mobilization of 1914 and the Question of the Russian Nation: A Reexamination,” *Slavic Review* 59, no. 2 (July 2000): 267–89; Scott J. Seregny, “Zemstvos, Peasants, and Citizenship: The Russian Adult Education Movement and World War I,” *Slavic Review* 59, no. 2 (July 2000): 290–315; S. A. Smith, “Citizenship and the Russian Nation during World War I: A Comment,” *Slavic Review* 59, no. 2 (July 2000): 316–29; Josh Sanborn, “More Than Imagined: A Few Notes on Modern Identities,” *Slavic Review* 59, no. 2 (July 2000): 330–35; and Scott J. Seregny, “Peasants, Nation, and Local Government in Wartime Russia,” *Slavic Review* 59, no. 2 (July 2000): 336–42.

A few scholars, though, have provocatively suggested at least a limited possibility of Soviet subjects as active, participatory citizens, either explicitly or implicitly. Perhaps the best formal treatment of citizenship can be found in Golfo Alexopoulos' work, which explores the "legal and cultural boundary" of citizenship under early Stalinist rule as experienced by those who traversed this boundary. Hers is primarily a study of repression and the deprivation of rights, analyzing only the period that ended with adoption of the 1936 Constitution, which formalized equal citizenship for all subjects. She extends this work to the constitution itself in a subsequent article, yet she describes citizenship primarily as a state-sponsored institution. Tantalizingly suggesting that the state under Stalin established a blueprint for active citizenship, she offers little sense of how people actually responded to or interacted with this institution.⁵⁹

Sheila Fitzpatrick implicitly hints at the possibility of active, participatory citizenship both in *Stalin's Peasants* and *Everyday Stalinism*, which focus on everyday life in Soviet Russia. Fitzpatrick draws on a range of sources, including petitions, interactions with authorities, the culture of rumors, as well as evidence of civic organization and voluntary association. Rather than reading these as forms of active citizenship, Fitzpatrick reads into her sources a culture of resistance to a repressive regime, suggesting how citizens learned to "mouth slogans" in support of the regime.⁶⁰ Emphasizing repression and the limited rights of citizens, her work exemplifies the generally negative vision of Soviet citizenship that permeates scholarship.

Moving away from categories of resistance and accommodation, Stephen Kotkin offers a slightly more optimistic vision in *Magnetic Mountain*. Kotkin acknowledges that many citizens

⁵⁹ Golfo Alexopoulos, *Stalin's Outcasts: Aliens, Citizens, and the Soviet State, 1926–1936* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003); Golfo Alexopoulos, "Soviet Citizenship, More or Less: Rights, Emotions, and States of Civic Belonging," *Kritika* 7, no. 3 (2006): 487–528.

⁶⁰ Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants: Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village after Collectivization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

adopted the language of the state and learned to “speak Bolshevik” in constructing their own identities. He focuses on acculturation into the Soviet system through participation. As Kotkin notes, “It was not necessary to believe. It was necessary, however, to participate as if one believed—a stricture that appears to have been well understood, since what could be construed as direct, openly disloyal behavior became rare.”⁶¹ Following Kotkin, scholars have suggested that citizens individually made meaning of Soviet identities and ideology but with little attention to the collective nature of Soviet identity.⁶² Moving into the late Soviet period, Alexei Yurchak explains citizens’ illusive sense of stability through the changing nature of ideology as understood by the generation who came of age under Brezhnev. Yurchak argues that language and ideology underwent a “progressive normalization” after Stalin’s death, as political speeches became increasingly rote and repetitive. For Yurchak, the pervasive authoritative language contributed to a sense that ideology was stable, concealing how inflexible and brittle it had become. Implicit in his work is the sense that ideology ceased to be meaningful, as citizens recited ideology rather than navigating it on a personal level.⁶³

Perhaps the most exciting statements of active, participatory citizenship can be seen in recent work that analyzes how citizens actively took part in society. As Serhy Yekelchuk argues, “the Stalinist state understood citizenship as practice, with participation in a set of political rituals and public display of certain ‘civic emotions’ serving as the marker of a person’s

⁶¹ Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, 220.

⁶² E.g. Igal Halfin and Jochen Hellbeck, “Rethinking the Stalinist Subject: Stephen Kotkin’s ‘Magnetic Mountain’ and the State of Soviet Historical Studies,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 44, no. 3 (1996): 456–63; Anna Krylova, “The Tenacious Liberal Subject in Soviet Studies,” *Kritika* 1, no. 1 (2000): 119–46; Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary under Stalin* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006); Timothy Johnston, *Being Soviet: Identity, Rumour, and Everyday Life under Stalin, 1939–1953* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁶³ Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 75–76.

inclusion in the political world.”⁶⁴ The state constantly monitored political allegiance, which was measured through the expression of emotions, including love for the motherland, gratefulness to Stalin, and hatred towards enemies. In his work on the Khrushchev era, Denis Kozlov argues that critical reflections on and understandings of the past, including of citizens’ own participation in mass terror, produced “a more reflective, open-minded understanding of social membership.” Kozlov suggests this sense of membership did not necessarily entail uncritical allegiance to the state.⁶⁵ Krista Goff suggests that non-titular minorities invoked ideology and citizenship to claim minority rights.⁶⁶ Together, this new work is starting to reshape our understanding of how Soviet citizens participated in civic life and made claims on the state, even while lacking robust guarantees of their rights.

I extend this work by placing civic participation into the context of notions of Soviet identity as articulated by both elites and citizens. State discourses of identity called on citizens to participate in society through contributing to economic and civic life, serving in the military, interacting with their compatriots, and taking part in public discourse. In interactions with others and the state, citizens engaged with ideologies and discourses of Soviet identity not simply as something they memorized and repeated but as something they negotiated and wrestled with. This approach challenges widespread views that support for the state was only superficial. Citizens were not simply “mouthing slogans” (Fitzpatrick), “speaking Bolshevik” (Kotkin), or memorizing and performing ideology (Yurchak). Rather, they engaged with ideology in a deep way, often adopting the language of citizenship to express commitment to the state and its

⁶⁴ Serhy Yekelchuk, *Stalin’s Citizens: Everyday Politics in the Wake of Total War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 3. On the Soviet Union as an affective community, see also Suny, “The Contradictions of Identity.”

⁶⁵ Denis Kozlov, “‘I Have Not Read, but I Will Say’: Soviet Literary Audiences and Changing Ideas of Social Membership, 1958–66,” *Kritika* 7, no. 3 (2006): 559. He develops this argument further in *The Readers of Novyi Mir: Coming to Terms with the Stalinist Past* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013).

⁶⁶ Goff, “‘Why Not Love Our Language and Our Culture?’”

projects, all while understanding their membership in the Soviet body politic.⁶⁷ As people themselves made clear, this helped to forge an affective community, wherein citizens felt a genuine sense of deep patriotic, political, and emotional belonging to the Soviet people, as they personally identified as citizens of the Soviet Union.

Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation focuses on sources of Soviet identity, both as expressed by political elites and individuals. The first three chapters take a largely chronological approach and consider the origins and development of discourses of Soviet identity from Stalin to Brezhnev. Although there are some forays into citizens' experiences, the focus in these chapters is largely on party-state discourses, particularly the concept of the Soviet people, which was first articulated in the 1930s. The final two chapters look at two related sources of identity: the creation of explicitly Soviet holidays and rituals and the use of the Russian language, which served as the primary means of communication between citizens. Because Soviet identity was a complex institution that emerged from many sources, this study is in no way exhaustive; still, it places sustained attention on several key aspects of identity formation in the Soviet Union.

Chapter 1 traces the first articulations of the concept of the Soviet people (*sovetskii narod*) on the eve of World War II. The looming war, I demonstrate, was a foundational moment for an emergent sense of Soviet identity. Working primarily with central newspapers, I demonstrate that the Soviet people served as a conceptual basis for a coherent notion of civic identity. This identity was rhetorically connected with three interrelated discourses: a sense of

⁶⁷ This extends arguments made by Halfin, Hellbeck, and Krylova, see Halfin and Hellbeck, "Rethinking the Stalinist Subject"; Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind*; Krylova, "The Tenacious Liberal Subject in Soviet Studies." Building on this work, I emphasize the collective nature of this individually experienced identity, observing how the state understood citizens to be part of a unified body politic, the Soviet people.

heroism and exceptionalism that distinguished the Soviet Union and its citizens from their peers in other countries (and from their own histories in the Russian Empire); a dialectic of unity and diversity; and the identification of enemies that delineated the limits of the body politic. In letters, citizens frequently adopted the language of citizenship, suggesting the state's nascent successes in cultivating Soviet identity.

If Chapter 1 focuses on the theoretical foundation of Soviet identity through a study of prewar ideological discourse, Chapter 2 considers World War II and its aftermath as critical moments when citizens started to experience the Soviet Union as an integrated whole. War was a transitional moment, as the nascent sense of community loosely formulated in the 1930s took on new manifestations. The first half the chapter looks at wartime discourses of unity, which extended and challenged prewar notions of civic identity. The chapter also considers how citizens experienced these discourses, focusing on interethnic relations in the military and increased interaction on the home front. The final section considers the postwar trajectories of these experiences, demonstrating that the state continued to cultivate interpersonal interactions in peacetime, as memories of the war became entrenched in postwar notions of Soviet identity.

In the wake of Stalin's death in 1953, the state continued to foster discussions of Soviet identity. Chapter 3 considers its evolution under his successors, Nikita Khrushchev and Leonid Brezhnev. Here I demonstrate how notions of participatory, active patriotism focused more on the party and the people than on Stalin. In contrast to the Stalin era, when the idea of the Soviet people functioned primarily as a tool for popular mobilization, the concept expanded into ideological discussions, suggesting new confidence among elites about the existence of the Soviet people, manifested in the term's explicit appearance in the 1961 Party Program and the 1977 Constitution. This decision, I show, suggested a more robust notion of Soviet identity that

dovetailed with and reflected a more collaborative understanding of the relationship between state and society. The final part of this chapter considers citizens' letters to the constitutional commission in the 1960s and '70s. Letter writing offered opportunities to both engage with and challenge official ideology, as citizens expressed a deep sense of civic belonging.

The fourth chapter turns to Soviet holidays and rituals, which were formulated as an explicit counterweight to and replacement for religious rituals. In the first part, I consider new revolutionary holidays as a source of civic identity that promoted popular participation. I also look at the creation of non-religious civic rituals, tracing their evolution from the radical experimentation of the 1920s to more institutionalized forms under Khrushchev and Brezhnev. Using republic-level archives, I demonstrate that civic rituals (and thereby Soviet identity) were envisioned as compatible with ethnic identity but explicitly irreconcilable with religious practice.

The final chapter analyzes the role of the Russian language, which I see as something of a microcosm of the state's overall approach to Soviet identity. Across all periods, I demonstrate that Russian functioned as tool of hierarchical and lateral integration, binding citizens both to the state and to one another. Leaders did not see Russian exclusively—or even primarily—as the language of the Russian people. Rather, they emphasized the language's utility and commonality across the entire populace and attempted to make Russian more ethnically neutral. Use of Russian was incentivized through its associations with the state, culture, progress, and interethnic communication, and Russian proficiency was deeply connected with Soviet identity. At the same time, Russian's dominance suggested persistent inequalities, as the expectation of near-native proficiency systematically disadvantaged non-Russians.

The dissertation's epilogue considers the fate of the "Soviet people," suggesting that rhetoric shifted quantitatively and qualitatively in the late 1980s and since the collapse of the

Soviet Union. This shift coincided with citizens' vocal concerns about worsening interethnic relations that starkly contrasted with the rhetoric of prior decades. Citizens' letters and oral history testimonies from this era give insight into growing unrest, both experienced and anticipated, and suggest increasing signs of instability and disunity. Although these circumstances do not explain the Soviet collapse, they suggest declining social cohesion as citizens spoke more freely about the problems they observed. The state was increasingly aware of these tensions, as evidenced by sociological data it collected about the political and social orientations of young people and its interest in alternative means of managing interethnic relations. The dissertation concludes by ruminating on the legacies of Soviet identity, which did not disappear simply because the Soviet Union ceased to exist.

Sources and Approach

To understand the discourses and experience of Soviet identity, this dissertation draws on a diverse array of newspaper articles, citizen letters, educational curricula, civic rituals, oral history interviews, and legal documents collected from across the former Soviet Union. This dissertation seeks not to understand "Soviet identity" as a monolithic, stable institution, but rather, to understand the wide range of available sources and discourses that shaped citizens' understanding and expression of themselves and their lives. How a person identifies, of course, depends on a range of factors, including the social context and circumstances under which identity is questioned. Identity is not taken as a fixed, unchangeable category; rather I understand the creation, assumption, and navigation of identity to be a process that citizens constantly negotiated, often in response to specific and changing circumstances.

Central to this analysis is close attention to the specific language used by both citizens

and party-state elites. This approach places considerable weight on propagandistic discourse and citizens' own descriptions of themselves and their identification. I see state-sponsored discourses around Soviet identity, including the concept of the Soviet people, as language that citizens could adapt to talk about their own lives. Although it does not follow that these words should necessarily be taken at face value or as objective descriptions, neither should they be dismissed simply because they were produced under problematic circumstances. Here, I am less concerned with whether things were "truly" meant or believed (not least because questions of authenticity rarely have satisfying answers), although I generally contend that people meant what they said more often than not. Rather, by analyzing the specific language used and considering the particular circumstances under which texts and letters were produced, we better understand how citizens constructed and talked about their own identities and interpreted state discourses.

A more literal word on language: the vast majority of sources throughout this dissertation were written in Russian, reflecting the state of archives and publishing in the (former) Soviet Union. In some cases, this reflected both explicit and implicit policies and state preferences. In Kazakhstan, people who spoke at state and party meetings in Kazakh were often encouraged to summarize remarks in Russian, since meetings often lacked qualified staff to record Kazakh-language statements. Other than an observation that they presented in Kazakh, sometimes nothing was recorded if they did not comply. Non-Russians frequently addressed the state in Russian, reflecting an internalized belief that complaints and suggestions would be better heard if offered in Russian. In Kazakhstan, the paucity of Kazakh-language materials in the archives is striking, often limited to discussions of Kazakh-language curricula and cultural matters, if even then. In other republics where I researched, including Ukraine and Lithuania, archives contained considerably more non-Russian material, reflecting the higher status, prioritization, and

development of those languages. To the greatest of my linguistic abilities (and sometimes thanks to helpful archive staff, foremost in Lithuania), I have tried to consult non-Russian sources wherever possible as a view onto the ways of being Soviet. Non-Russian sources often suggest the ways in which identity in the Soviet Union was conceived as nested, wherein sub-state identities, particularly ethnic and linguistic ones, were seen to inform and strengthen attachment to the state as a whole. This was especially true during World War II, when ethnic identity was cultivated as an integral part of wartime patriotism, in part through non-Russian propaganda.

To understand the field of discourses surrounding Soviet identity, I also draw heavily from the country's two premier central newspapers, *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, organs of the communist party and the state, respectively. As Jan Plamper notes, *Pravda* set the tone for public discourse: "*Pravda* was much more than the first socialist state's prestigious newspaper: it was both a mirror of the Soviet political, social, and cultural landscape and an invaluable compass used to navigate through this rugged terrain."⁶⁸ I supplement newspapers with archival and published party-state materials, which suggest how citizens and elites conceived and interacted with ideology through propaganda campaigns, school curricula, civic rituals, letter writing, and media, as well as through other institutions and practices of citizenship.

Reflecting the biases of archival and published records, primary attention is on state discourses, but citizens' own voices also frequently emerge through a range of archival and non-archival sources, including citizen letters, memoirs, and oral histories. Letters to the state from individuals, particularly in connection with the 1977 Constitution, offer insight into how citizens voiced their own understandings of their identities. Although oral histories are a limited part of the formal source base, informal conversations over more than a decade of travel, work, and research across the former Soviet Union, including nearly every republic and across the Russian

⁶⁸ Jan Plamper, *The Stalin Cult: A Study in the Alchemy of Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 30.

Federation, have shaped my understanding of how people talk about and remember their lives.

Formal on-site archival research for this dissertation was conducted in Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Lithuania, as well as the Hoover Institution in Stanford, California. This strategy was designed to reveal and exploit specific circumstances concerning post-Soviet archives, as well as to understand the country's geographical diversity. As a result of the country's collapse, archival records are now managed by fifteen independent states, each with its own rules governing access. In general terms, republic-level research reveals specific local variants and initiatives often invisible from Moscow's view. Many educational and cultural policies were quite decentralized, contributing to the need for regional research. This geographical reach also enables access to otherwise unavailable files. Although Russian archives have declassified the vast majority of documents, many files, including most related to state security, remain off-limits to foreign researchers. Government decisions in Ukraine and Lithuania to make the files of the Committee on State Security (KGB) available to researchers provide insight into how this secretive institution monitored and interpreted citizens' words and behaviors. Kazakhstan, too, has notably provided quite complete access to Soviet-era files with relatively few exceptions. Archival work outside Moscow thus enables observations and conclusions that would be hard to gauge from work in Russia alone.

This approach was partially inspired by my own observations during my earliest travels across the former Soviet Union, where, despite obvious differences in language, culture, and physical geography, I encountered deep similarities and shared history. Changes wrought by the advent of Soviet power were often most visible at the periphery. There at the edge of empire, everyday life underwent notable and obvious changes that had a significant impact on the lives of ordinary citizens. In Kazakhstan and Central Asia, for example, the rise of mass literacy as a

result of educational campaigns transformed what early Soviet leaders saw as a backwater, “backwards” periphery into an integral and integrated part of the Soviet Union. The rise in Russian-language proficiency, too, was especially pronounced and noteworthy in non-Russian regions, where implicit and explicit ethnic hierarchies were also rendered most visible. Those who experienced structural inequalities were more likely to comment on it than those who benefited from institutionalized and informal privileges. Efforts to integrate parts of Western Ukraine and the Baltic republics after World War II further shed light on larger processes of cultural inclusion and social change. Because these developments can be most easily observed in “peripheries,” research in Central Asia and Eastern Europe made me more sensitive to analogous processes that unfolded across the country in less dramatic ways.

Multi-sited research is here understood as synoptic: rather than as a means of comparing and contrasting life in one republic or another or between center and periphery, the multiplicity of research sites sheds light on how the Soviet Union operated as an integrated whole. This approach has two primary advantages. Most obviously, this approach reflects the fact that the Soviet Union was a single, unified country. Citizens—political and cultural elites in particular—circulated and moved across Soviet space relatively freely and interacted with one another across geographic, ethnic, and linguistic lines, binding citizens together in a common cultural experience. Citizens, whether in a village in Ukraine or an urban center in Kazakhstan, had access to parallel institutions and had similar recourse to appeal to local, republic-level, and all-union institutions. Upward mobility often entailed movement across spatial hierarches, from villages to cities to republic capitals, all the way to Moscow. Citizens—especially students, political leaders, and cultural elites—frequently traversed these lines for work, study, and even domestic tourism. Aided by the Russian language, citizens participated in and contributed to a

distinctly Soviet cultural life, as they interacted with state institutions and fellow citizens.

Secondly, this multi-sited research challenges and nuances our understanding of the relationship between center and periphery across the Soviet Union. Republic archives often demonstrate how central policies were adapted, translated, and implemented on the ground, often modified to meet the needs of specific republics, regions, and localities. This relationship, however, was never unidirectional. My approach also illuminates the ways supposed peripheries shaped policy and became central sites for the formation of Soviet identity. This was especially evident during World War II, when borderland battlefields and far-flung hinterlands became key sites for forging Soviet identity among combatants and civilians. Educational curricula, including the study of Russian, were also surprisingly decentralized, creating space for republic leaders to negotiate and adapt to local circumstances. Republic activists also helped cultivate civil rituals that took into account local cultural heritage and traditions, providing a way for Soviet identity to be forged in specific, ethnically inflected ways at the periphery. Here, the periphery is not seen as a deviation from the center but as an integral and ordinary part of the Soviet Union.

In addition to its wide geographical expanse, this dissertation also has a wide temporal reach, beginning in the 1930s, with the initial discussion of Soviet people, and ending in the country's final days, with thematic forays into the 1920s and earlier. This coverage has been made possible by technological changes as well as extended research across the former Soviet Union. The digitization, online availability, and optical character recognition (OCR) of central newspapers has enabled generalizations about trends in word-usage over time, revealing patterns that would have been nearly impossible to identify even a decade ago. Advances to archival search terms in the State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF) have similarly made it far easier to identify useful materials across a broad temporal and institutional reach. Imperfections

notwithstanding, these technological advances enable a more wide-ranging, integrative approach.

This long temporal span challenges the typical tactic in Soviet history to study shorter timeframes. As already noted, scholars of nationalities policy have focused almost exclusively on the 1920s and '30s, when the state was most engaged in promoting ethnic identities. This in turn has driven an almost singular attention to policies of minority promotion. This focus also reflects a more general post-Soviet obsession with understanding Stalinism more concretely through carefully combing the archives. Although things have certainly improved since a 2003 critique of “1930s studies,” the 1920s and '30s have remained prominent in historiography.⁶⁹ Moving away from the tight focus on the 1920s and '30s, others offer nuanced portraits of later generations, providing key insight into how citizens navigated the circumstances of subsequent decades.⁷⁰ This more temporally limited approach enables a deeper, more complex understanding of specific eras but has contributed to a tendency to understand Soviet history episodically.

The temporal and geographic reach of this dissertation enables sustained attention not only to the formation of a distinctly Soviet identity in the 1930s but to its evolution in subsequent decades across the country. Only this wide temporal approach can reveal how discourses of Soviet identity expanded from the realm of patriotism to more all-encompassing notions of participatory citizenship. The geographic reach similarly suggests how ideas of Soviet identity were adapted, altered, and understood by citizens across a wide cultural and linguistic space.

⁶⁹ “From the Editors: ‘1930s Studies,’” *Kritika* 4, no. 1 (2003): 1–4.

⁷⁰ For examples of these generational portraits, see Ludmilla Alexeyeva and Paul Goldberg, *The Thaw Generation: Coming of Age in the Post-Stalin Era* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1990); Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More*; Vladislav Zubok, *Zhivago’s Children: The Last Russian Intelligentsia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009); Juliane Fürst, *Stalin’s Last Generation: Soviet Post-War Youth and the Emergence of Mature Socialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Donald J. Raleigh, *Soviet Baby Boomers: An Oral History of Russia’s Cold War Generation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Benjamin Tromly, *Making the Soviet Intelligentsia: Universities and Intellectual Life under Stalin and Khrushchev* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Serhy Yekelchuk, “The Early 1960s as a Cultural Space: A Microhistory of Ukraine’s Generation of Cultural Rebels,” *Nationalities Papers* 43, no. 1 (2015): 45–62; Seth Bernstein, *Raised under Stalin: Young Communists and the Defense of Socialism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017).

Together, political elites, scholars, and ordinary citizens engaged in a broad-ranging conversation about the nature of Soviet identity that unfolded over decades. For many citizens, this identity was not just theoretical but observable in their everyday lives and the world around them. Indeed, some would say it continues on, diminished but unbroken. As we will see in Chapter 1, discourses about the emergence of a new Soviet person surfaced in the immediate aftermath of revolution, but the idea of Soviet identity took on new life in the mid-1930s, when elites first articulated the notion of the Soviet people in the looming shadow of World War II. This discursive formulation served as a baseline for conversations in subsequent decades, as elites and citizens pointed to existence of the Soviet people as a coherent, affective community, the sum total of decades of ideological discourse and common experience.

Chapter 1

“The Heroic Soviet People”: Heroes, Enemies, and the Making of a United Body Politic

In 1935, Nikolai Bukharin, a top-ranking Bolshevik leader, published an article in *Izvestiia* celebrating the emergence of a unified Soviet people. He emphasized that, in the face of a menacing fascist threat abroad, the country was unifying across both class and ethnic lines. Together, Bukharin argued, “the unity of goals, unity of leadership, the unity of a planned economy, the colossal growth of actual connections—economic and cultural—all of this leads to the unusual consolidation of peoples... In this manner, a new reality is being raised up—the heroic Soviet people.”¹ The accompanying page layout (Figure 1) underscored the emphasis on diversity. Along the left side of the page, under the headline, “People of our country,” a series of portraits featured people in national dress representing a wide range of economic sectors. A photo of Samarkand’s Shah-i Zinda mausoleum and works by the Ukrainian poet Maksym Ryl’s’kyi and the Russian-Jewish poet Iosif Utkin reminded readers of the country’s diverse geography. An essay by the academician I.P. Pavlov declared the Soviet Union to be a homeland for all citizens.

There can be little doubt about intentionality: the layout clearly celebrated both the unity and diversity of the Soviet Union. The motifs are familiar to anyone versed in Soviet ideological writing, but Bukharin’s essay was one of the earliest elaborations of the concept of the Soviet

¹ Nikolai Bukharin, “Geroicheskii sovetskii narod,” *Izvestiia*, 6 July 1935, 3. References to the “Soviet people,” a collective, singular noun, are translated from *sovetskii narod* unless otherwise noted. Reflecting the Russian, I always treat the noun as singular (i.e. the Soviet people is, not the Soviet people are).

ЛЮДИ НАШЕЙ СТРАНЫ



Героический советский народ

Н. БУХАРИН

Вот вы знаете, вы знаете, вы знаете... Героический советский народ... Н. Бухарин...

МОН ОТЧУЖДА

Масис РАЙСКИЙ

Отчужден ли вы отчужденный... Мое отчуждение...

ЗДРАВИЦА

Иван УТИН

Здравствуй, мой друг... Здравствуй, мой друг...



И. Утин в горах...

АКАДЕМИК И. П. ПАВЛОВ О СОВЕТСКОЙ РОДИНЕ

Степан, в вашу статью... Академик И. П. Павлов о Советской Родине...

ДОКУМЕНТЫ ПРОШЛОГО

ПОДАРОК... НЕКОСВИТЕЛЬНО... НАДЕЖНАЯ... ДОКУМЕНТЫ ПРОШЛОГО...

Карл РАДЕК



БОЛЬШЕВИКИ И СОВЕТСКАЯ ДЕМОКРАТИЯ

В России Советская власть... Большевики и Советская демократия...

ГРАЖДАНЕ

Господин Иван Губарев

Господин Иван Губарев... Граждане...

ДЛЯ ОБЪЯВЛЕНИЯ

ИЗВЕЩЕНИЕ

ИЗВЕЩЕНИЕ... ДЛЯ ОБЪЯВЛЕНИЯ... ИЗВЕЩЕНИЕ...

Figure 1: Izvestia, 6 July 1935, 3.

people (*sovetskii narod*). It represented a new articulation of the ever-changing relationship between nation and empire, a subject much discussed by scholars of Russian and Soviet history.² On one hand, the concept of the Soviet people stood at the heart of a civic, nation-like identity borne of rhetoric of equality and commonality. On the other hand, the repeated emphasis on diversity unintentionally testified to the Soviet Union's imperial character, particularly in light of persistent inequalities between citizens. The civic identity embedded in the new concept of the Soviet people simultaneously recognized individuals' ethnicities and affirmed their belonging to a unified Soviet collective. Leaders sought to harmonize national and civic forms of belonging as the threat of war necessitated social cohesion.

The term itself was likely chosen carefully. "Narod," a collective noun of Slavic origin with a meaning roughly equivalent to the German *Volk* ("the people"), distinguished itself from both the plural *liudi* (people, individuals) and the Latin-derived *natsiia* (nation). Bolshevik thinkers understood the latter as a temporary phenomenon that would disappear after worldwide revolution. The word *narod* had both ethnic and non-ethnic uses. Most commonly, the term referred to the Soviet Union's more developed ethnicities—the Russian people, the Ukrainian people, etc. The term was also used in at least one context with a non-ethnic, quasi-class meaning: the "working people" (*trudovoi* or *trudiashchiisia narod*). *Narod* itself derives from *rod*, a word that conveys family, kinship, and birth, which was disconnected from the ideological baggage, bourgeois connotations, and academic jargon of "nation," even though these meanings somewhat overlapped. The phrase *sovetskii narod* suggested a vague, untainted vision of society as a unified collective, united by a sense of imagined kinship and common origin.

Although the term would later become a banal part of state ideology, the Soviet people

² Valerie Kivelson and Ronald Suny offer an overview of these discussions in *Russia's Empires* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), especially 1–16, 75–88.

had been almost completely absent from the press during the 1920s and into the 1930s. Its emergence on the ideological scene in the mid-1930s was thus unprecedented, and the nearly identical pattern of its use in both *Pravda* and *Izvestiia* suggests intention rather than coincidence, with a notable surge in usage preceding World War II (Figure 2).³ Yet when the term began to appear in 1934 and 1935, it rarely appeared with any explanation of its meaning. Bukharin’s article was one of the first to grapple with the concept in any depth. In the years that followed, the phrase “Soviet people” appeared regularly and became a hallmark of ideological discourse under Stalin and after.

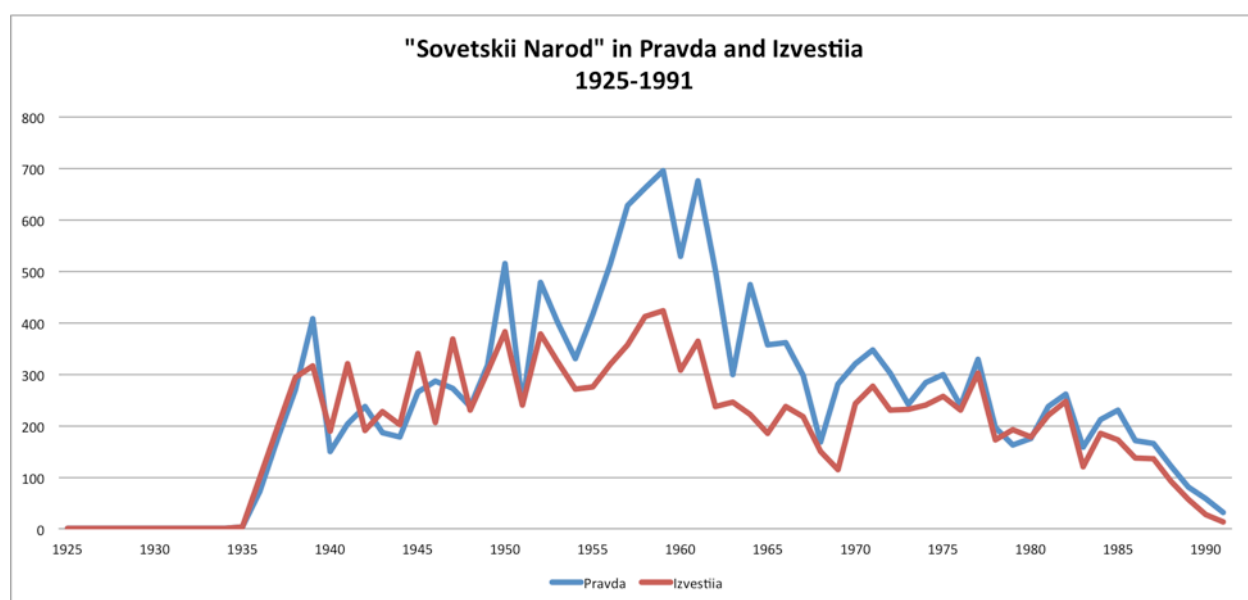


Figure 2: Use of “sovetskii narod” in Pravda and Izvestiia, 1925-1991.

This chapter looks at the earliest invocations of the Soviet people from the mid-1930s until the outbreak of war in 1941, drawing primarily on central newspapers, journals, and published state documents. This was a turning point in public understandings of Soviet identity,

³ Data from *EastView*, retrieved March 2012. For each year, the term “sovetskii narod” (in quotations in Cyrillic) was searched from January 1–December 31. Numbers indicated represent the number of pages the term appeared in each publication. Thus, if the term was used multiple times on a single page, it is counted only a single instance. Although an imperfect system based on text recognition (which is much more unreliable for newspaper editions for the 1920s and 1930s), data offer an idea of approximate usage over time. The search only includes search in the nominative and accusative cases.

as leaders stressed the emergence of a distinctly Soviet body politic. I focus on three interrelated discourses that crystalized around the concept of the Soviet people in the 1930s: heroism and Soviet exceptionalism; the coexisting unity, equality, and diversity of the populace; and the use of enemies to define the limits of the Soviet people. Each of these discourses served a mobilizing purpose that promoted a participatory, patriotic citizenship that called all citizens to take an active part in economic, political, and cultural life. Newspapers, journals, and other party-state sources, of course, provide a subjective lens through which to view events and discourses of the 1930s, but close analysis of these sources uncovers the state-sponsored discourses that citizens encountered and negotiated on a daily basis. Though problematic, official rhetoric provides key insight into the discursive world of Soviet life.

This discourse was not merely theoretical: throughout the late 1930s, the state cultivated new modes of civic engagement that became closely associated with citizenship. In the first three sections that follow, my analysis is tightly focused on public discourses around Soviet identity and the Soviet people in the central press. In the final section, I turn towards popular responses, focusing on letter writing in connection with the 1936 Constitution. Using both archival and published letters, I demonstrate that participation and active patriotism were hallmarks of Stalin-era citizenship that created a space for people to engage with their own identities. In letters, many citizens adopted the language of citizenship to describe their own emotional attachment to the Soviet state, hinting at the state's early successes in forging civic identity. These discourses around Soviet identity and the modes of participation that were first cultivated under Stalin created a blueprint for his successors to adapt in subsequent decades.

Making Heroes, Soviet-Style

Bukharin's 1935 piece emphasized that the state's revolutionary approach to class and

power had fostered a distinctly Soviet type of heroism. With the proletariat and collectivized peasantry at its helm, the Soviet people constituted a “heroic people”: “not slaves, not serfs, not hired slaves of capital. They are ‘young masters of the country,’ creators, organizers, people who fight with the elements, with enemies—[they are] stubborn and persistent, used to breaking down all barriers, courageous, extraordinarily energetic, and [people] who know how to bear scars and who know how to win.”⁴ In both his title and his analysis, Bukharin described heroism as a uniquely Soviet trait, one that could be readily observed in the population at large.

In identifying a specifically Soviet heroism, Bukharin contributed to an ongoing conversation about the exceptionalism of the state and its citizens. This conversation, one that began shortly after 1917, highlighted how revolution contributed to the formation of a new type of person, a “new Soviet person” (*novyi sovetskii chelovek*), who would be a core building block of a new society.⁵ Alongside the idea of the new Soviet person, notions of “Soviet people” (*sovetskie liudi*), which also circulated prominently throughout the 1930s, placed more emphasis on individual membership in the more collective Soviet people (*narod*).

Over the first decade of rule, leaders embarked on an ambitious agenda to remake society and people from the ground up. Through explicitly Soviet political structures; new experimental culture in literature, the arts, and the theatre; education and literacy campaigns; new approaches to labor and work; and an ambitious agenda of minority promotion, the state sought to forge a new society that differed from its predecessors and its contemporary rivals in every way possible. The concept of the Soviet people built on this discourse but placed new emphasis on the collective heroism that bound citizens together in a single community, with a shared way of life, communal traits, and a common future under communism.

⁴ Bukharin, “Geroicheski sovetskii narod,” *Izvestiia*, 6 July 1935, 3.

⁵ This phrase is typically rendered “new Soviet man,” but I prefer to translate it as “person” in keeping with the gender-neutrality of the Russian original.

The New Soviet Person: Forging a Soviet Way of Life in the 1920s

After seizing power in the October Revolution and winning the subsequent civil war, Soviet leaders in the 1920s embraced the idea that they had made a radical break to establish a new economic order, a new political system, and a new society. The canonical History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (“The Short Course”) argued that the revolution had “created the conditions for the development of Socialist construction” and “thereby ushered a new era in the history of mankind.”⁶ Revolution had paved the way for the creation of the “new Soviet person,” a class-conscious, hard-working individual forged by revolution. Historical scholarship has emphasized this emergence of a new person. Igal Halfin, for instance, explores how Soviet ideology resembled a secular religion, arguing that Marxism offered an eschatological, messianic worldview that promised salvation through revolutionary consciousness. The new person, according to Halfin, was to be “totally emancipated from the servile capitalist system,” transformed by revolution to face a bright future in communism.⁷ Jochen Hellbeck’s study of diary writing has likewise demonstrated that individuals personalized revolutionary rhetoric and explored their own place within a new, socialist society. Far from being simply objects of state policies, individuals actively negotiated official ideology.⁸

Across the Soviet Union, the creation of this new person took on common characteristics, with a focus on labor, education, and other aspects of a modern, Soviet way of life, all of which intensified after Stalin’s rise to power. Educational policies aimed at opening schools, teaching basic native-language literacy, and developing curricula that imparted Marxist and Soviet values

⁶ Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks): Short Course* (New York: International Publishers, 1938), 224.

⁷ Halfin, *From Darkness to Light*, 1. See also Igal Halfin, *Language and Revolution: Making Modern Political Identities* (London: F. Cass, 2002).

⁸ Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind*. Cf. Krylova, “The Tenacious Liberal Subject in Soviet Studies”; Johnston, *Being Soviet*.

and principles.⁹ Theater, film, and the arts were mobilized for closely related purposes.¹⁰ Atheist activists worked tirelessly to reduce religious influence on everyday life.¹¹ Local leaders adopted various campaigns and policies to bring this new way of life into being. In rural areas, leaders focused on the collectivization of agriculture and the recruitment of peasants to work on collective farms.¹² The opening of factories and industrial worksites helped to create a proletariat that included previously marginalized groups, like women, peasants, and ethnic minorities.¹³ In Central Asia, leaders focused on women's dress and other habits associated with a feudal past.¹⁴ These efforts, taken as a whole, pointed to a distinctly Soviet way of life that was itself helping to forge a new society, guided by a distinct set of morals and principles.

Together, policies that rebuilt society according to socialist principles contributed to a sense of Soviet exceptionalism. Indeed, one early invocation of the Soviet people appeared in a

⁹ On schools, see Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union, 1921–1934* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Larry E. Holmes, *The Kremlin and the Schoolhouse: Reforming Education in Soviet Russia, 1917–1931* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991); Pauly, *Breaking the Tongue*. These topics are also covered in the literature on nationalities policy, see Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*; Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*.

¹⁰ Sheila Fitzpatrick considers the interplay of the arts and education in *The Commissariat of Enlightenment: Soviet Organization of Education and the Arts under Lunacharsky, October 1917–1921* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970). The arts also feature prominently in other studies, including Richard Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams: Utopian Vision and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Katerina Clark, *Petersburg: Crucible of Cultural Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995). Richard Taylor offers a study of the use of film in *Film Propaganda: Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany*, 2nd ed. (London: I. B. Tauris, 1998), 21–62. For theatre specifically, see also Alaina Lemon, *Between Two Fires: Gypsy Performance and Romani Memory from Pushkin to Post-Socialism* (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2000), 130–35; Shternshis, *Soviet and Kosher*, 70–105; İğmen, *Speaking Soviet with an Accent*, 98–119; Mayhill Fowler, *Beau Monde on Empire's Edge: State and Stage in Soviet Ukraine* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017).

¹¹ On anti-religious propaganda among Orthodox Christians, see Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams*, 101–23; Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants*, especially 204–214; Lynne Viola, *Peasant Rebels under Stalin: Collectivization and the Culture of Peasant Resistance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). On anti-religious propaganda directed towards specific religious minorities, see Shternshis, *Soviet and Kosher*, 1–39; Keller, *To Moscow, Not Mecca*.

¹² Lynne Viola, *The Best Sons of the Fatherland: Workers in the Vanguard of Soviet Collectivization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants*; Viola, *Peasant Rebels under Stalin*; Mary Buckley, *Mobilizing Soviet Peasants: Heroines and Heroes of Stalin's Fields* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006).

¹³ David L. Hoffmann, *Peasant Metropolis: Social Identities in Moscow, 1929–1941* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994); Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*; Payne, *Stalin's Railroad*; Elena Shulman, *Stalinism on the Frontier of Empire: Women and State Formation in the Soviet Far East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

¹⁴ On unveiling, see Massell, *The Surrogate Proletariat*; Northrop, *Veiled Empire*; Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan*; Edgar, *Tribal Nation*, 221–60. On other policies towards Central Asian women, see Michaels, *Curative Powers*; İğmen, *Speaking Soviet with an Accent*, especially 120–139.

1930 article by Karl Radek, who stressed the unique relationship between state and society:

Bourgeois journalists and writers, trying objectively to talk about the great achievements (*podvigi*) of the Soviet state and the Soviet people, sink into a sea of falsehood and slander. And, despite this, the alluring power of the USSR grows. For the fact cannot be hidden from the masses of the world that we have overcome the devastation of war, that we are moving forward and are industrializing our country by our own strengths, despite the Finnish boycott from the side of the entire bourgeois world. It is impossible to hide from the masses that we have undertaken the unprecedented task of socialist restructuring of agriculture and that we have destroyed unemployment at the same time that it is raging across the entire world.¹⁵

Even without directly theorizing the Soviet people, Radek's contrast between Soviet successes in agriculture and full employment and the rampant unemployment across the capitalist world pointed to the country's unique triumph in paving an alternative, allegedly superior path to that forged by its crumbling, capitalist neighbors. Bukharin advanced this idea, declaring that the emergent collective represented a new historical phenomenon, a "new reality" (*real'nost'*) that was exceptional in its revolutionary approach to class and power. Here, he built on past discourses of the new Soviet person but emphasized its collective nature. He suggested that heroism both defined and distinguished citizens and contributed to Soviet exceptionalism. Nowhere could the exceptional nature of the Soviet state be seen more clearly than in the new heroes that emerged from its population in the mid-1930s.

Explorers, Adventurers, and the Making of Soviet Heroes

The connection between the Soviet people and heroic accomplishments was perhaps most evident in the glorification of individual heroes, who were celebrated simultaneously for their extraordinary accomplishments and their ordinary background. The identification of new heroes departed from practices of the 1920s, when leaders remained skeptical of glorifying individual

¹⁵ Karl Radek, "Ushi gospodina Puankare," *Izvestiia*, 19 November 1930, 2. The word for achievement, *podvig*, implies a certain sense of heroism, often associated with success in war or against dramatic odds.

accomplishments in a society that prided itself on collectivism. As David Brandenberger observes, the focus on individual heroes reflected a larger shift towards “popular revisionism.” When the more theoretical and class-based discourses largely failed to convert the masses to Bolshevism, an emphasis on individuals cultivated popular understandings of revolutionary transformation and would lead to popular mobilization.¹⁶ Soviet writer Maksim Gorky spearheaded this shift. Beginning in the late 1920s, his popular biographical works demonstrated the transformation of individuals within the new system. Individual memoirs of the revolution and its impact were popular and widely read.¹⁷ The accomplishments of ordinary workers also became a focal point of the 16th Party Congress, held in Moscow in 1930. There, writers and journalists devoted new attention towards celebrating citizens’ everyday heroism.¹⁸ These discourses emphasized revolution’s transformative effect on individuals and fostered the idea that citizens had undergone a process of deep, personal change.

By the mid-1930s, discourses of heroism became more formalized, as the popular press transformed heroism into a trait of the entire Soviet people. One of the most publicized early episodes in the celebration of a distinctly Soviet heroism was the events surrounding the fate of the S.S. *Cheliuskin*, a ship commissioned in 1933 for an Arctic expedition around the northern coast from Murmansk to Vladivostok. By the fall of 1933, it became clear that the retrofitted steamship, stuck in the icy waters of the Chukchi Sea, could not complete the journey. The crew settled in for the winter. By February, the ship had been crushed by ice, and a dramatic rescue

¹⁶ David Brandenberger, *Propaganda State in Crisis: Soviet Ideology, Indoctrination, and Terror under Stalin, 1927–1941* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), especially 67–97. “Populist revisionism” appears on page 3.

¹⁷ Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind*, 15–35.

¹⁸ Brandenberger, *Propaganda State in Crisis*. Rosalinde Sartorti also notes a shift around 1930, with a two-page *Pravda* spread detailing a couple dozen individual heroes in industry, including those awarded with the Order of Lenin, see “Legende und Wirklichkeit der Sowjethelden,” in *Osteuropa im Umbruch: alte und neue Mythen*, ed. Clemens Friedrich and Birgit Menzel (Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang, 1994), 134–35. She explores the use of the title in subsequent decades. She extends this analysis in “On the Making of Heroes, Heroines, and Saints,” in *Culture and Entertainment in Wartime Russia*, ed. Richard Stites (Indiana University Press, 1995), 176–93.

was launched to save the crew by plane. Upon their return, the state inaugurated the award of “Hero of the Soviet Union” to recognize the seven pilots who participated in the mission.¹⁹

That June, massive celebrations of the returned heroes on Red Square showcased the state’s emphasis on participatory patriotism. *Pravda*’s third-page description of the large public rally connected the feats of individual heroes with the entire populace:

On June 19, 1934, on Red Square in Moscow, the Soviet people gave the highest recognition to the human race (*chelovecheskaia priroda*), to people of the Stalinist tribe (*plemia*). The demonstration of Moscow proletarians went on many hours, celebrating the greatest victory in world history in the silent icy realms of the Arctic. There they stand before us, the sons of the great Motherland, hundreds of S.S. *Cheliuskin*’s hardened crew, pilots, and flight engineers. Look into their weatherworn faces. They are our heroes, who emerged from the depths of the people (*iz nedr naroda*).²⁰

Though the Soviet people featured only once in this editorial, and then only as spectators, the editorialist directly linked the masses and their heroes. Although the heroes themselves were individuals, fellow citizens celebrated their accomplishments as a collective. The editorial emphasized not only that the masses had gathered to celebrate the great accomplishments, but that these heroes, the “sons of the Motherland,” had arisen from “depths of the people,” from the ranks of the very workers who had come to celebrate their extraordinary compatriots.

The following year, in 1935, a manned high-altitude research mission offered another occasion to extend the same ideas into scientific accomplishments. After the balloon successfully reached a height of 16,000 meters and researchers completed their research mission, technical problems forced two of the three researchers to parachute back to Earth. The third successfully landed the balloon with all its scientific equipment in a village outside Tula. The article lauded the scientific results, which were “massive and incomparable with any previous flights” at home

¹⁹ Brandenberger discusses their accomplishments and their role in the emerging cult of heroes and heroism in *Propaganda State in Crisis*, 73–76. Another editorial celebrated their accomplishments: “Mozhno zavidovat’ strane, imeiushchei takikh geroev, i geroiam, imeiushim takuiu rodinu,” *Pravda*, 19 June 1934, 1.

²⁰ “Demonstratsiia chuvstv,” *Pravda*, 20 December 1934, 3.

and abroad, signifying a major step towards the “study and mastery of the stratosphere.” This success, a front-page editorial remarked, was made possible by the “atmosphere of greatest attention and manifold support from the side of the entire Soviet people.”²¹ Several days later, after the scientists received the Order of Lenin, *Pravda* noted: “Our parachutists are a wonderful example of the great power of the Soviet people. And this is far from coincidental, since parachuting is audacity (*smelost’*), and where there is audacity, there is also our Soviet youth.”²²

Both articles directly linked the achievements of the “heroic trio” to the success of the Soviet people, cultivating the sense of common accomplishments and community and deepening the discursive connection between the Soviet people and heroism.²³ The earlier article portrayed the people’s support as crucial to the mission’s success. The second placed the mission into a longer list of accomplishments: “Our people, having demonstrated audacity (*smelost’*) in the greatest of revolutions and having covered itself in the glory of unfading heroism in the battles of the civil war and in the great victories of the two Five Year Plans, goes at the head of all progressive humanity. And how couldn’t [the people] have heroes and daredevils among its ranks, prepared for everything in the interests of their motherland?”²⁴ The extension of audacity to the entire population connected the feats of the research crew to the people.

In describing the public response, the press suggested a shared emotional experience that united citizens around the accomplishments of its heroes, illustrating Ron Suny’s assertion that “nations are as much ‘affective communities’ as they are ‘imagined communities.’”²⁵ Although the descriptions of the “feelings” and pride of demonstrators that dominated reporting on the

²¹ “Pobeda muzhestva i samoobladaniia,” *Pravda*, 27 June 1935, 1.

²² “Nagrada za otvagu i samoobladanie,” *Pravda*, 30 June 1935, 1.

²³ The term “heroic trio” appeared in a Dem’ian Bednyi poem, a greeting to “our new, glorious trio of heroes of the motherland,” also published in *Pravda*, 27 June 1935, 1.

²⁴ “Nagrada za otvagu i samoobladanie,” *Pravda*, 30 June 1935, 1.

²⁵ Suny, “The Contradictions of Identity,” 17.

feats of Soviet heroes may or may not have corresponded to the actual lived reality of participants, the repeated emphasis on the shared emotions relayed to citizens the state's message about collective emotions. This language sought to bind citizens together into a more closely-knit, affective community and popularized a sense of collective belonging that, as we will see in the final section of the chapter, self-evidently shaped citizens' own emotional connection to the Soviet state. One article on the success of the high altitude balloon mission commented on the "enthusiasm" of the crowds as they rushed to greet the returning heroes upon landing.²⁶ A 1937 article on a North Pole research station noted a similar display of emotion: "The reception more than anything showed what kind of feelings guide our people (*liudi*), what kind of deep love workers foster for their motherland and its heroes... Moscow met its polar heroes with flowers, joyful greetings, cheerful songs. The streets were overcrowded with the people, and the day of the reception became a public festival."²⁷ This demonstration, or at least assertion, of what Serhy Yekelchuk has termed "civic emotions" suggested an affective connection that ordinary citizens allegedly shared with both their compatriots and heroes.²⁸

This alleged public display of emotion and the growth of affective ties, moreover, was seen to have practical implications, suggesting the participatory nature of patriotism. In

²⁶ "Pobeda muzhestva i samoobladaniiia," *Pravda*, 27 June 1935, 1.

²⁷ "Stalinskoe zadanie vpolneno blestiashe!" *Pravda*, 26 June 1937, 1. The editorial continued, "It is hard to convey the warmth and sincerity of this meeting. It was a moving demonstration of the unity of our people (*narod*) and its cohesion around the party of Lenin and Stalin and the Soviet government." The article on the demonstrations following the return of the 1934 *Cheliuskin* mission was titled "Demonstration of Feelings," *Pravda*, 20 June 1934, 3. For additional examples that draw a connection between heroic feats and emotional responses of the populace, see "Nagrada za otvagu i samoobladanie," *Pravda*, 30 June 1935, 1; "O dobrosti i trusosti," *Izvestiia*, 3 September 1935, 1; "Chest' i slava geroiam stalinskoi epokhi!" *Pravda*, 13 July 1937, 1. Though these articles celebrated the exploits of pilots, explorers, and other exciting heroes, displays of emotions were also associated with everyday heroes, like Stakhanovite heroes, discussed below.

²⁸ Yekelchuk proposes "civic emotions" as "a tool for studying the interaction between citizens and the state," focusing on publicly displayed emotions—especially love for Stalin and the country and hatred towards enemies—as form of mandated political ritual, see *Stalin's Citizens*, 4. Yekelchuk previously used the term in "The Civic Duty to Hate: Stalinist Citizenship as Political Practice and Civic Emotion (Kiev, 1943–53)," *Kritika* 7, no. 3 (2006): 529–56. In both cases, Yekelchuk analyzes the period during and after World War II, which postdates the analysis of this chapter.

discussing the affection for stratospheric researchers, one article noted that patriotic pride had led to voluntary contributions of more than 50 million rubles to replace the *Maksim Gorky*, a large aircraft that had crashed earlier in 1935. This outpouring of resources was seen to be the “natural expression of such ardent feelings that Soviet people foster towards its aviation as an impenetrable guardian of its revolutionary achievements!”²⁹ Beyond the obvious benefits of financial support, emotional support from crowds was said to motivate ever greater accomplishments from celebrated heroes: “Covered in glory, they return to their native places, to an atmosphere of warm concern and attention from the masses, so that when the party and the motherland calls them to accomplish new feats for [the party and motherland’s] glory, they will again master new successes.”³⁰

More generally, articles linked the celebration of heroes to a shared sense of pride and patriotism that bound citizens together. As one editorial noted, “Love for the motherland, ardent and boundless, love for their party, for their state, for their Red Army, for their *vozhd’* (leader) Stalin—this is what drives Soviet people (*liudi*), this is what binds them into a strong and powerful collective and makes this collective victorious.”³¹ The invocation here and elsewhere of the plural *liudi* (people, individuals) further emphasized the agency of individuals as members of the collective Soviet people. A 1940 editorial explored the emotional connection between citizens and the physical territory of the Soviet Union. Reporting on the return of researchers after 27 months aboard a floating Arctic research station, the article imagined the researchers’ response upon their return Soviet soil: “An immeasurable happiness fills the hearts of the 15

²⁹ “Pobeda muzhestva i samooblaniia,” *Pravda*, 27 June 1935, 1. The plane’s own story had already been an opportunity to invoke the Soviet people: mourning the plane’s initial demise, French radical Edouard Herriot expressed confidence that “the Soviet people in its very resilience will gain sufficient strength to overcome the pain.” *Pravda*, 17 May 1935, 2.

³⁰ “Narod i ego geroi,” *Izvestiia*, 27 July 1937, 1.

³¹ “Stalinskoe zadanie vypolneno blestiashe!” *Pravda*, 26 June 1937, 1. As stated earlier, this article describes demonstrations following a successful mission to the North Pole.

Soviet patriots who have victoriously finished their heroic journey. For the glory of the motherland they completed their amazing feat. And there it is—the motherland, there it is—Soviet land, and there it is—the people, enveloping the heroes in a brotherly embrace.”³²

This emotional connection was not exclusively reserved for returning heroes. The article described similar emotions among ordinary citizens: “With their feelings and thoughts, the entire multimillion Soviet people is directed there, to the far-off yet near and dear (*rodnoi*) coast of the Kola Peninsula... Motherland! How much is contained in this word for each of us, citizens of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics!” The editorial highlighted the great power of patriotic love, which purportedly filled people with happiness and courage, inspired them to heroic feats, and enabled them to fight against their enemies. As described by the press, love for the Soviet Union inspired both extraordinary heroes and ordinary citizens, unified by a willingness to sacrifice for the good of their country: “The Motherland for every Soviet patriot is more valuable than everything, more valuable than life itself.”³³ In addition to inspiring popular interest in Soviet accomplishments, the impact of this patriotism also carried over into the economy.

Stakhanovism and Heroism in Labor

Aviation and exotic exploration formed just a fraction of the inspiring stories featured in newspapers. More often, heroism was of a much more prosaic variety: that of workers in mines, in factories, and on the fields of collective farms, seen as exemplary and definitional to the Soviet people. Aleksei Stakhanov, a Donbas miner who became a celebrity for his record output in a single day, represented perhaps the most famous example. After his feats became publicly known, his name became synonymous with a movement of shock workers and Stakhanovites

³² “Na rodnuuu zemliu,” *Izvestiia*, 29 January 1940, 1.

³³ “Na rodnuuu zemliu,” *Izvestiia*, 29 January 1940, 1.

who symbolized the raw power of the working class. This was true in industry and in agriculture, where heroes of labor could inspire ordinary citizens to similar feats.

Leaders—even Stalin himself—routinely feted Stakhanovite heroes at the Kremlin palace and held them up as an inspiration for fellow citizens. Press features about Stakhanovites abounded with references to the Soviet people and emphasized the distinctly Soviet nature of the movement.³⁴ An article on the first Conference of Stakhanovite Workers in Industry and Transport emphasized the meeting's historic importance and highlighted how the famous laborers had been plucked out of obscurity: “Two or three months ago, their lives were known only in their workshops, workplace, mine. Today the entire country knows these names: Stakhanov, Busygin, Krivovoe, Smetanin, Diukanov, Artiukhov, Vinogradova, Iusin. Their deeds have become the banner of the broadest movement of the entire Soviet people.”³⁵ The successes of these exceptional workers, the article emphasized, were inseparable from the country's economic development.

Public discussions and celebrations of Stakhanovism repeatedly connected labor and heroism, seeing them as intrinsically connected to a distinctly Soviet way of life. “Labor in our country,” one editorial proclaimed, “has become a matter of heroism, a matter of valor and heroism. Soviet people (*liudi*) know that as they work for themselves, they are working for the good of the people (*narod*).” The author further emphasized that because people understood that their labor was for their own benefit and was prized by society, they were more willing to contribute. This, the article claimed, “is why the ranks of heroes of socialist labor, who work

³⁴ E.g. “V riady stakhanovskogo dvizhenie,” *Sovetskoe iskusstvo*, 23 October 1935, 1; “Geroi nashego vremeni” (a play on Turgenev's novel, *A Hero of our Time*), *Pravda*, 13 November 1935, 1; “Lozungi truda i bor'by,” *Izvestiia*, 23 April 1936, 1; “Stakhanovskie dni,” *Izvestiia*, 3 October 1936, 1.

³⁵ “Liudi stalinskoi zakalki,” *Pravda*, 15 November 1935, 1.

with enthusiasm, passion, and high creative output, multiply with each year.”³⁶

Accordingly, the press accentuated the ordinariness of labor heroes in all industries and economic sectors to inspire fellow citizens. Workers themselves emphasized their humble origins and a sense of shock about their unexpected celebrity and upward mobility. In both agriculture and industry, the Stakhanovite movement emerged as a strategy to boost productivity and agricultural output to limited effect.³⁷ Scholars have debated the economic success of the initiative, but there can be little doubt that the movement sought to harness the economic capacity of workers in industry and agriculture and to mobilize popular participation in the economy.³⁸ A 1934 *Pravda* editorial confirmed this goal: “The Stakhanovite movement is not a goal unto itself but a means—a means for the faster growth of production, the faster completion of the program of the second Five Year Plan.”³⁹ The celebration of heroes was seen to inspire other citizens’ economic productivity, suggesting the broader accessibility of heroism.

“Among Us Anyone Can Be a Hero”

The repeated emphasis that heroes had emerged from the ranks of ordinary citizens allegedly filled people with the sense that they, too, could achieve the same successes. The press celebrated these heroes as examples of the boundless creative and productive power of the Soviet people. Public discussions centered on heroes—in the economy and in science, technology, and

³⁶ “Narod geroev, narod sozdatelei!” *Pravda*, 28 April 1939, 1. The title, “Hero of Socialist Labor” was established in 1938 to recognize heroic deeds in the economic and cultural sphere.

³⁷ Donald A. Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and Stalinist Industrialization: The Formation of Modern Soviet Production Relations, 1928–1941* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1986); Lewis H. Siegelbaum, *Stakhanovism and the Politics of Productivity in the USSR, 1935–1941* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Buckley, *Mobilizing Soviet Peasants*, 37–59.

³⁸ Donald Filtzer has argued that the movement was highly disruptive to workplaces, which negated advantages in increased individual productivity. See Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and Stalinist Industrialization*, especially chapter 7; cf. Siegelbaum, *Stakhanovism and the Politics of Productivity*. Both Filtzer and Siegelbaum focus on the political significance of the movement; Siegelbaum is most interested in how leaders managed productivity as a category.

³⁹ “Liudi stalinskoi zakalki,” *Pravda*, 15 November 1935, 1. This confirms Siegelbaum’s assertion that “Stakhanovism was most obviously about productivity, about making the most of working time to achieve the maximum output with available technology,” see *Stakhanovism and the Politics of Productivity*, 2.

the military—as emblematic of a distinctly Soviet way of life and as an example for all citizens:

The names of Heroes of the Soviet Union, the names of commanders and Red Army soldiers, Stakhanovites and famous collective farmers are used in our country with great popularity and love, because people see a living example of work and struggle, the most complete combination of the qualities inherent to the Soviet people. The clarity of purpose, the perseverance in achieving this purpose, the strength of character to break any and all obstacles—here is the strength of Soviet people (*liudi*), here is a guarantee of new, even more glorious victories.⁴⁰

This vision of Soviet people as uniquely equipped for achievement implied that all citizens contributed to the country’s expanding glory and economic success. In doing so, ideologists, leaders, and citizens emphasized that everyone might be capable of the same achievements, since the state promoted the very conditions that made such grandiose feats possible.

That these heroes had once been ordinary people suggested the accessibility of heroism, epitomized in the words of a popular song, “Among us anyone can become a hero.” Invoking this lyric, a long editorial noted how truthful these words had become: “Once they fell into conditions that demanded audacity and resourcefulness, completely insignificant, modest people have turned into miracles of valor and bravery.” The article reflected on how the Soviet Union had created “incomparable heroes out of ordinary Soviet people (*liudi*) who were no different from their comrades.” Citing the unprecedented success of the great construction projects in the first and second Five Year Plans and the “grandiose” third Five Year Plan, the unmatched heroism in flight, and various expeditions, the editorial posited that society was moving full speed ahead toward new victories. The Soviet people, the author suggested, could only move forward: “The Soviet people knows that success and victory are in its very own hands, the Soviet people finally recognizes itself as the all-powerful master of his own fate.”⁴¹

Scientific discoveries, military achievements, and economic success were heralded as

⁴⁰ “Stalinskoe zadanie vypolneno blestiashe!” *Pravda*, 26 June 1937, 1.

⁴¹ “Narod geroev, narod sozdatelei!” *Pravda*, 28 April 1939, 1. The song lyrics cited in the article originated from a 1934 musical comedy, *Veselye rebiata*, though the lyrics themselves seem not to have appeared in the original film.

signs of a Soviet heroism that distinguished citizens from their peers abroad. Journalists who invoked the concept of the Soviet people identified the distinctive relationship between the state and the populace as the wellspring of strength, often pointing specifically to the state's concern for ordinary workers, women, and minorities. A 1935 editorial suggested that plans for continued industrial construction demonstrated the "motherly concern for our great, heroic Soviet people."⁴² A 1938 editorial celebrated the state's emphasis on women's inclusion in society and the economy: "Soviet women, arm in arm with their husbands, fathers, brothers, are fighting for communism. This doubles the powers of socialist formation. It gives the Soviet people a power that human society has never had and could not have [in the past]."⁴³ Soviet agriculture, industry, and science, newspapers frequently noted, were more productive, successful, and innovative than those in the capitalist West.⁴⁴ Stalin, too, was praised for his ability to cultivate and inspire the masses to unprecedented feats.⁴⁵

The Soviet people was associated with a new brand of heroism that people outside the country could only envy, a heroism that newspaper editors praised as widespread and universal.

As one front-page *Pravda* article emphasized in 1935:

Our Soviet people is now the most abundant with gifted people and natural talents: all those who were once crushed, trampled, mutilated and destroyed by capitalism are now rising up to a full-blooded creative life and are burning with a desire to lay their brick into the magnificent edifice of socialism being constructed. This is why so quickly and on such an unprecedented mass scale heroic record-holders appear on the all-union stage of competition. They are the masters of their craft, the authentic talents of the Soviet people, and they are enveloped with popular esteem. And there will be more of them with each passing day. Because the new competition for greater mastery is only just beginning. And because the concern for every worker of our country, written on the banner of the established socialist order and implemented by the party and our *vozhd'* (leader) Comrade Stalin with Bolshevik precision, opens new, previously unseen springs of vital energy.⁴⁶

⁴² "Velichie epokhi," *Pravda*, 13 July 1935, 1.

⁴³ "Zabota o zhenshchine-materi," *Pravda*, 12 November 1939, 1.

⁴⁴ On agriculture and industry, see "Geroi nashego vremeni," *Pravda*, 13 November 1935, 1.

⁴⁵ M. Shkiriakov, "Stalin i narod," *Pravda*, 21 December 1939, 10.

⁴⁶ "Novyi razmakh sotsialisticheskogo sorevnovaniia," *Pravda*, 28 September 1935, 1.

By emphasizing “concern for every worker” alongside a shared experience of past oppression and current glory, the editorialist underscored the collective accomplishments of all citizens and articulated a deeper sense of what bound them together.

Privilege and Preference in Making Soviet Heroes

For all the celebration of the ordinariness of extraordinary heroes, the selection did not reflect all members of society in equal measure. Although articles repeatedly suggested that any citizen could become a hero, examples usually drew from select, privileged groups, complicating the vision of complete participation. First, there were gender discrepancies. Women dominated among agricultural heroes, but few were associated with the more dramatic, exciting exploits of explorers, scientists, and military heroes.⁴⁷ Although there was certainly no lack of women in technical fields, their prominence (and the relative dearth of men) in rural Stakhanovism suggested a deep association between women and agriculture.⁴⁸

More significantly, the most-celebrated heroes almost always came of a Russo-Slavic-European heritage. Non-Slavic, non-European minorities constituted a significant segment of the populace, but they rarely featured among the country’s most decorated citizens. A 1938 propaganda poster (Figure 3) designed by Lazar and Sof’ia Lisitskii illustrated this fact.⁴⁹ Under the banner “Who is glorified and famous in the country of socialism,” the poster featured photographs a selection of prominent heroes (right to left): miner Alexei Stakhanov, textile worker Elena Vinogradova, pilot Valery Chkalov, Moscow metro worker Tatiana Fedorovna, machine builder Ivan Gudov, and tractor driver Praskov’ia Kovardak. Below the portraits, a

⁴⁷ Valentina Grizodubova, a pilot and the first woman to be recognized as a Hero of Soviet Union, was a notable exception.

⁴⁸ Buckley, *Mobilizing Soviet Peasants*.

⁴⁹ Poster available at <http://redavantgarde.com/collection/show-collection/246/print/>, accessed June 21, 2018.



Figure 3: “Who is glorified and famous in the country of socialism” (1938).

quotation from Stalin suggested that “neither property ownership, ethnic origin, gender, nor social position but the personal labor of each citizen determines his position in society.” Yet the images themselves revealed familiar tropes. The only pilot is male; the only agricultural hero is female. Although the poster presented male and female heroes in equal measure and showcased technical, agricultural, and military fields, not a single figure came from a non-Slavic minority. All were almost certainly ethnic Russians (or at least Slavic) and perceived as such by readers.

The press, too, devoted increasing attention to the Russian people, reversing the trends of the 1920s and early 1930s, when ethnic Russians had taken backseat during the heyday of affirmative action policies. By the late 1930s, ethnic Russians were restored to prominence, as they returned as the dominant figures of society. This return was suggested in a 1937 *Pravda*

editorial. The piece opened with a celebration of ordinary citizens, noting how the Soviet people had “defended and strengthened their country” in order to enjoy the many benefits of their own liberation from capitalism.⁵⁰ The rhetoric subsequently shifted. Speaking of the three pilots involved in a recent transarctic flight mission, the editorial remarked, “The echo of the Chkalovite and Gromovite pilots, the echo of the heroic deeds that reverberate from one end of the country to another, gives birth to new, modest, and noble heroes, the sons of the great Russian people... They take on their wings the national pride of the great Russian people, the resplendent glory of the country.”⁵¹ Another editorial likewise switched between the “heroic (*bogatyrskii*) power of the Soviet people” and the “glorious traditions of the Russian people.”⁵² In crediting the Russian people, the editorials hinted at an emergent hierarchy among the various Soviet peoples in official rhetoric.⁵³

These inequalities in representation dovetailed with a new emphasis on Russian history and language in educational curriculum, what Terry Martin has termed the “reemergence of the Russians.”⁵⁴ The study of Russian became mandatory in all schools beginning in 1938. Most non-Slavic languages were gradually switched from modified Latin to modified Cyrillic alphabets between 1939 and 1941, a change that was justified as a means to make it easier for non-Russians to learn Russian.⁵⁵ Russian war heroes, previously condemned in official ideology for their connections to Russian imperialism, were resurrected as Soviet heroes. Brandenberger

⁵⁰ “Chest’ i slava geroiam stalinskoi epokhi!” *Pravda*, 13 July 1937, 1.

⁵¹ “Chest’ i slava geroiam stalinskoi epokhi!” *Pravda*, 13 July 1937, 1. Chkalov and Gromov were two of the best-known pilots of the era.

⁵² “Geroicheskie syny geroicheskogo naroda,” *Izvestiia*, 15 January 1940, 1.

⁵³ For extended reflections on the Russian people in the late 1930s, see V. Volin, “Velikii Russkii narod,” *Istoricheskii zhurnal*, no. 5 (1938): 1–17; “Velikii russkii narod,” *Pravda*, 15 January 1937, 1.

⁵⁴ The phrase appears as a chapter title in Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 394–431. On the changing role of the Russian people, see also Blitstein, “Nation-Building or Russification?”; David Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism: Stalinist Mass Culture and the Formation of Modern Russian National Identity, 1931–1956* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002).

⁵⁵ Blitstein, “Nation-Building or Russification?” We will return to this in Chapter 5.

describes this shift as a quest for a “usable past” that could rally citizens together as the country moved inevitably towards war.⁵⁶ Together, these policies underscored the *de facto* hierarchies that governed interethnic relations.

Although there was some room for heroes who represented ethnic minorities, most prominently in local newspapers or in republic-level school curriculum, ethnic Russians maintained a position of prominence that suggested their implicit (and occasionally, explicit) superiority over their non-Russian compatriots. Russians almost exclusively stood in for an ethnically neutral citizen and played the role of senior partner and “older brother” to their non-Russian counterparts, tropes that grew more pronounced in subsequent decades.⁵⁷

Despite disparities in representation, there can be little doubt that the everyday heroes as celebrated by Bukharin and others in newspapers and in political speeches were meant to be universally accessible. Everyone was called to participate in the public celebration of Soviet heroes and to emulate their examples through contributions to the economy and political life. The rhetorical presence of the Russian people complicated but did not contradict the celebration of heroic deeds as a focal point for an affective, patriotic sentiment that drew citizens together into a unified Soviet people. This simultaneous unity and diversity formed another cornerstone of Soviet identity.

Soviet People, Soviet Peoples: Unity, Equality, and Diversity on the Eve of World War II

Alongside the emphasis on universal heroism, Bukharin’s seminal discussion of the Soviet people devoted considerable attention to the themes of unity and diversity, which were fundamental to emergent notions of Soviet identity. He argued that the state’s unique approach to

⁵⁶ Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism*, 43–62.

⁵⁷ Yekelchik studies the unequal partnership between Russians and Ukrainians in *Stalin’s Empire of Memory*, 39–47.

power had eliminated the class and ethnic divides that had once separated subjects in the Russian Empire, bringing together a multiethnic population into a single political and economic project. The unity that Bukharin described did not deny ethnic and class differences. Rather, he emphasized the polity's multiethnic character: this "new reality" was a "heroic Soviet people, multiethnic, uniting the powers of the proletariat, the collective farm peasantry, and the Soviet intelligentsia, with its proletariat part at its 'head', transforming everyone in its image and likeness."⁵⁸

This dual emphasis on both unity and diversity formed another key aspect of early articulations of the Soviet people. These two seemingly contradictory concepts were connected in practice through a concurrent emphasis on equality. Within the press and in other ideological rhetoric aimed at the public, the state's guaranteed equality for all citizens was seen as a precursor to multiethnic participation in and contribution to economic, political, and social life. Not coincidentally, the rhetorical rise of the Soviet people complemented significant legal and ideological changes, including the adoption of the 1936 Constitution, which theoretically granted all citizens the same rights and responsibilities. Although this much-celebrated equality was often contradicted in practice, it formed the foundation for a diverse, united citizenry.

Imperial and Early Soviet Antecedents

Despite Bolshevik leaders' explicit attempts to disassociate the Soviet present from Russia's imperial past, the vision of a multiethnic and unified state that emerged in the 1930s was not without historical precedent. The Russian Empire, itself led by a predominantly Russian but nevertheless multiethnic nobility, offered limited opportunities for non-Russians to participate in governance and civic life while retaining distinct linguistic, cultural, and religious

⁵⁸ Nikolai Bukharin, "Geroicheskiĭ sovetskii narod," *Izvestiia*, 6 July 1935, 3.

identities. The military represented a cogent source of civic identity and provided opportunities for the (partial) integration of non-Russian male subjects. This intensified after the 1874 decree mandating “universal” conscription, though many citizens were excluded from eligibility.⁵⁹

Although the full extent of this mandate was realized only during World War I, and even then with severe inequalities, compulsory military service was a powerful source of civic identity.⁶⁰

More often, the imperial regime attempted to foster multiethnic loyalty by extending privileges towards favored groups (often at the expense of others), a practice Kivelson and Suny call “a trademark of empire.”⁶¹ Privileges took many forms across time and space. In the 18th century, Don Cossacks and Bashkirs were granted limited cultural and political autonomy in exchange for loyalty as a means of pacification. To hedge against Swedish influence in the Grand Duchy of Finland, Alexander II granted special status to the Finnish language in 1863. Selective religious pluralism represented another source of integration.⁶² Individuals also benefited from special privileges, especially at times of imperial expansion. As Ian Campbell notes, state weakness especially in the 19th century created opportunities for (Kazakh) intermediaries to enter imperial bureaucracies as purveyors of local knowledge.⁶³

⁵⁹ Sanborn, *Drafting the Russian Nation*; Petrovsky-Shtern, *Jews in the Russian Army, 1827-1917*. Many groups, including Central Asians and other *inorodtsy*, were exempt or excluded from military service.

⁶⁰ Central Asian recruits, who were not trusted and thus served only in the rear, particularly experienced ethnic inequalities within the military, contributing to the devastating 1916 revolts in Turkestan and Semirech'e. On the 1916 revolts, see Daniel R. Brower, *Turkestan and the Fate of the Russian Empire* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003); Tomohiko Uyama, “A Particularist Empire: The Russian Policies of Christianization and Military Conscription in Central Asia,” in *Empire, Islam, and Politics in Central Eurasia*, ed. Tomohiko Uyama (Sapporo: Slavic Research Center, Hokkaido University, 2007), 23–64; Jörn Happel, *Nomadische Lebenswelten und zarische Politik: der Aufstand in Zentralasien 1916* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2010).

⁶¹ Kivelson and Suny, *Russia's Empires*, 129.

⁶² Andreas Kappeler gives a comprehensive overview of imperial policies towards ethnic minorities in *The Russian Empire: A Multi-Ethnic History*, trans. Alfred Clayton (London: Routledge, 2001). On religious pluralism, see Robert D. Crews, *For Prophet and Tsar: Islam and Empire in Russia and Central Asia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006); Paul W. Werth, *The Tsar's Foreign Faiths: Toleration and the Fate of Religious Freedom in Imperial Russia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014). As Crews and Werth both suggest, the extension of privileges to certain groups coincided with harsh repression of others.

⁶³ Ian W. Campbell, *Knowledge and the Ends of Empire: Kazak Intermediaries and Russian Rule on the Steppe, 1731–1917* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017).

While some groups found favor and upward mobility, others found themselves excluded from political, social, and religious life, and inequalities abounded in many places and among many groups. Bolshevik leaders sought to capitalize on this weakness.⁶⁴ Indeed, early Soviet leaders explicitly used nationalities policy to reverse some of the more pernicious elements of tsarist policy, which they criticized as oppressive of ethnic minorities. Scholars of nationalities policy have demonstrated how the fledgling state promoted minorities through representation in government, native language education, and culture. This was intended to foster state loyalty and a better understanding of Marxism-Leninism, which was the core of the state's ideology.⁶⁵

Despite the centripetal force of Marxism-Leninism, initial policies emphasized class and ethnic differences rather than unity. Early nationalities policy may have aimed to win the hearts and minds of ethnic minorities, but specific policies and practices tended to encourage division. By relying on ethnic quotas in personnel matters and encouraging the development of each ethnic group separately, the state generally promoted thinking along ethnic lines rather than across them. The theoretical unifying force of ideology was often less meaningful than practical policies of minority promotion. The height of affirmative action policies in the early 1930s also coincided with brutal class warfare. From dispossessing and nationalizing land holdings to

⁶⁴ Studies of this type of exclusion have tended to be specific, but John Slocum provides an excellent overview in "Who, and When, Were the Inorodtsy? The Evolution of the Category of 'Aliens' in Imperial Russia," *Russian Review* 57, no. 2 (April 1, 1998): 173–90. Some groups that faced specific exclusion at various points included Jews, Old Believers, Poles, and Central Asians, though this list is in no way exhaustive. See Eugene M. Avrutin, *Jews and the Imperial State: Identification Politics in Tsarist Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010); Irena Paert, *Old Believers: Religious Dissent and Gender in Russia, 1760–1850* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003); Theodore R. Weeks, *Nation and State in Late Imperial Russia: Nationalism and Russification on the Western Frontier, 1863–1914* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1996); Paul W. Werth, *At the Margins of Orthodoxy: Mission, Governance, and Confessional Politics in Russia's Volga-Kama Region, 1827–1905* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002).

⁶⁵ Suny, *Revenge of the Past*; Slezkine, "The USSR as Communal Apartment"; Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*; Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*.

suppressing religious elites, this set of policies ruptured tsarist-era social structures.⁶⁶ The post-revolutionary state distinguished between full citizens and those whose social origin excluded them from many rights, including the ability to vote. This created strict gradations in citizenship that relegated many to second-class status.⁶⁷ Collectivization and the harsh repression of accused “kulaks” (wealthy peasants, a subjective category) intensified these processes. Accordingly, on both ethnic and class levels, the early state was more attuned to difference than to unity, setting the stage for the interventions of the 1930s.

Laying the Legal Groundwork for Equality

In light of the politics of ethnic and class difference that dominated the post-revolutionary period, Bukharin’s 1935 article reflected a shift towards establishing a collective identity that would bridge the ethnic and class divides of the past. In ethnic terms, this emerged as the state retreated from active promotion of minorities.⁶⁸ Discourses surrounding the idea of class and its role in society also underwent major revision and reconsideration in the mid-1930s. The discussion of common economic goals reflected broader trends in ideological discourse that tended to see the class issue as largely resolved. This confirms Benjamin Tromly’s assertion that the concept of the Soviet people shifted attention away from divisive class conflict.⁶⁹ At the 17th Party Congress, held in early 1934, Stalin declared the country was “approaching the creation of a classless society” largely as a result of industrialization under the first Five Year Plan. His speech touted the major economic and cultural changes that were creating a more uniform and

⁶⁶ On collectivization generally, see Moshe Lewin, *Russian Peasants and Soviet Power: A Study of Collectivization*, trans. Irene Nove (New York: Norton, 1975); Viola, *The Best Sons of the Fatherland*; Viola, *Peasant Rebels under Stalin*; Fitzpatrick, *Stalin’s Peasants*.

⁶⁷ Alexopoulos, “Soviet Citizenship, More or Less.”

⁶⁸ Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 309–461.

⁶⁹ Benjamin Tromly, “Soviet Patriotism and Its Discontents among Higher Education Students in Khrushchev-Era Russia and Ukraine,” *Nationalities Papers* 37, no. 3 (May 2009): 299–326.

united society.⁷⁰

The Stalin Constitution, adopted in 1936 to replace the 1924 version, further established equality regardless of class or ethnicity, at least theoretically, even as purges, mass imprisonment in the Gulag system, and questionable democratic norms suggested the many limitations of this equality in practice. The constitution officially eliminated gradations in citizenship, granting universal suffrage and full rights to all citizens.⁷¹ In its official history, the party touted universal suffrage and equality as major accomplishments: the constitution established the equality all citizens, “irrespective of their nationality or race” as “an indefeasible law.”⁷² Neither the 1936 Constitution nor the 1938 Short Course spoke of the Soviet people as such, but these works spoke of the citizenry as a “Socialist society” unified by its loyalty to the “Socialist fatherland.”⁷³ This was declared to be a “new stage of development,” marked by the “completion of the building of a Socialist society and the gradual transition to Communist society, where the guiding principle of social life will be the communist principle: ‘From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs.’”⁷⁴ Bukharin’s shift towards emphasizing unity across ethnic and class lines thus reflected broader legal changes, which had profound implications for participatory citizenship.

Friends and Family: The Metaphors of Multiethnic Unity

Embedded in the discourse of the Soviet people, as we have already seen, was a dual

⁷⁰ “Otchetnyi doklad t. Stalina XVII-omu s”ezdu partii o rabote TsK VKP(b), *Pravda*, 28 January 1934, 4.

⁷¹ Golfo Alexopolous provides one of the most enlightening discussions, although her book finishes with the constitution: *Stalin’s Outcasts*. She extends this analysis to the constitution in “Soviet Citizenship, More or Less.”

⁷² Central Committee of the CPSU, *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks): Short Course* (New York: International Publishers, 1939), 345.

⁷³ An English language edition of the constitution appeared the same year under the title, *The Soviet Constitution* (New York: International Publishers, 1936). For the Russian original, see Iu. S. Kukushkin and O.I. Chistiakov, *Ocherk istorii Sovetskoi Konstitutsii* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1987).

⁷⁴ Central Committee of the CPSU, *History of the CPSU*, 346.

emphasis on both the unity and diversity of the Soviet populace. These aspects of identity were developed and complemented by metaphors of friendship and family, which contributed to discourses of unity, equality, and diversity. Metaphors of friendship often complemented and extended notions of equality between Soviet peoples, emphasizing lateral connections between citizens of different ethnicities. In contrast, family metaphors, not only of the “brotherhood” or “family of peoples” and of Russians as older brothers, but also of Stalin as a “father of the peoples,” usually deepened hierarchical relationships among ethnic minorities and towards the state. Both sets of rhetoric suggested new ways to think of the body politic as a unified whole.

Like the Soviet people, the concept of the friendship of the peoples (*druzhba narodov*) emerged in the mid-1930s seemingly out of nowhere. Prior to mid-1936, the phrase had only been used in the context of international relations—concerning the friendship between people(s) of the Soviet Union and of foreign countries.⁷⁵ By mid-1935, the central press popularized the idea of the friendship of (Soviet) peoples on a timeline that roughly coincided with the rise of the Soviet people (Figure 4).⁷⁶

The first invocations of the term in the central press concerned events that celebrated diversity and brought together citizens of different ethnicities. A July 1935 article, for instance, described a meeting between representatives of the Belarusian, Ukrainian, and Transcaucasian Federative Republics in Minsk. The delegation traveled together to the border for a mass demonstration in an ethnically Polish region on the Polish border, a region that was described as a “wonderful example of the triumph (*torzhestvo*) of Leninist-Stalinist nationalities policy, of the

⁷⁵ For example, “Tol’ko soiuz s SSSR iavliaetsia deisvitel’noi garantiei nekapitalisticheskogo razvitiia Mongolii,” *Izvestiia*, 29 December 1930, 1; “SSSR i Turtsiia,” *Izvestiia*, 2 June 1934, 2; Ia. R. “Druzhba narodov na vstreche s litovskimi kulturnymi deiateliami v VOKS,” *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 24 June 1935, 4.

⁷⁶ Data from *EastView*, retrieved in October 2016. This timeline slightly predates that offered by Terry Martin, who discusses the rise of the concept beginning in December 1935. References to the friendship of the peoples between July and November 1935 were irregular but existent. Beginning in December, as Martin notes, references to the friendship between peoples skyrocketed.

friendship of the peoples of the Soviet Union.”⁷⁷

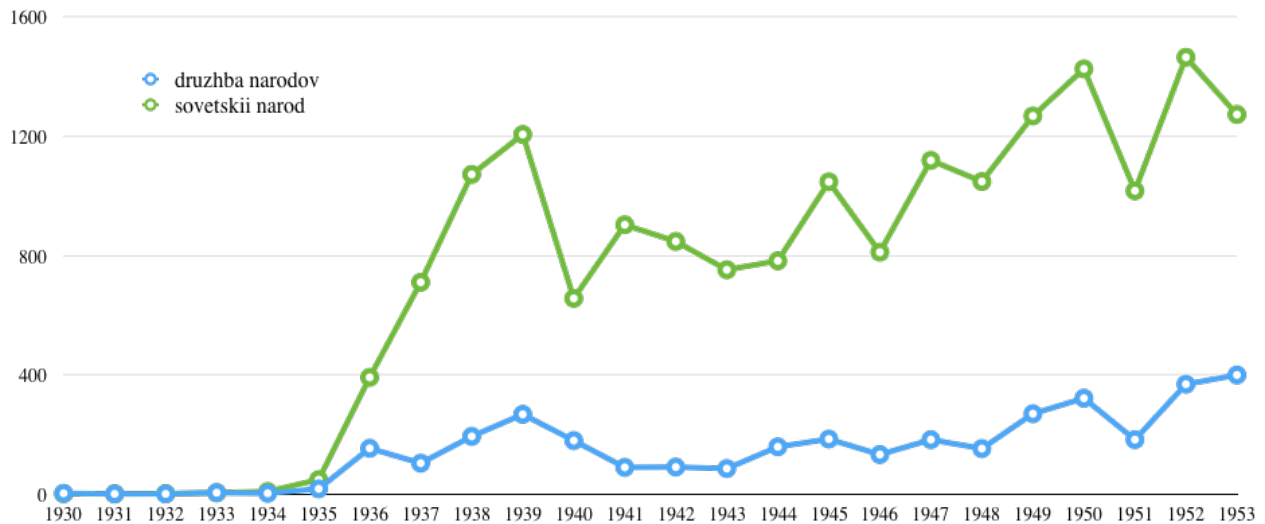


Figure 4: Friendship of the peoples (*druzhiba narodov*) and Soviet people (*sovetskii narod*) in *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, 1930–53.

A widely publicized horse race from Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, to Moscow was employed for similar propagandistic purposes. Thirty riders, collective farmers from across Turkmenistan, covered some 4300 kilometers over 83 days before arriving in the nation’s capital, demonstrating their superior skills in managing and handling their horses. Upon arrival in Moscow, the horsemen in national costume were greeted as heroes by Head of State Mikhail Kalinin, Head of Government Viacheslav Molotov, and Defense Commissar Kliment Voroshilov and celebrated as an example of the international friendship of the peoples of the USSR. In a speech addressing the delegation, Voroshilov declared their heroic race from Ashgabat to be “not only proof of the fraternal friendship of peoples of the USSR but also a formidable admonition (*groznoe predosterezhenie*) to its enemies.”⁷⁸ In subsequent months, the concept was widely invoked in celebrations of leading collective farmers across the country, as well as in the context of a series of 10-day festivals (*dekady*) to celebrate the arts and culture of specific republics, discussed in

⁷⁷ “Massovka na granite: delegatsii bratskikh republic u tov. A.S. Cherviakova,” *Pravda*, 14 July 1935, 6.

⁷⁸ “Priem turkmenskikh konnikov narkom oborony tov. K.E. Voroshilovym,” *Izvestiia*, 26 August 1936, 1; see also “Blestiashchii finish,” *Izvestiia*, 22 August 1935, 1.

Chapter 4.⁷⁹

The motif of friendship generally offered an equitable vision of mutual relations that connected citizens across ethnic lines and emphasized linkages and mutual relations not only mediated through Moscow but also between peripheries directly. This weakened historic hierarchies and enabled citizens to develop and grow together. As one 1935 editorial noted, reflecting on a joint gathering of Tajik and Turkmen collective farmers at the Kremlin, “The Soviet Union, a socialist cooperation of peoples, is flourishing.” The article ended with Stalin’s remarks at the meeting: “the friendship between peoples of the USSR is a great and serious conquest. For as long as this friendship exists, peoples of our country will be free and invincible. No one, neither external or internal enemies, can scare us as long as this friendship lives and thrives.”⁸⁰ The emphasis on mutual relations and inherent equality was most evident in general discussions of the friendship of the peoples and when discussing relations among non-Russian peoples. Some elements of hierarchy returned in discussions of bilateral friendship between the Russian people and its fraternal counterparts, which were often couched in paternalistic language of what Russians had done for their “younger brothers.”

While the motif of friendship emphasized lateral ties and equality, family metaphors offered a more hierarchical vision of society. Invocations of the Soviet Union as a family or brotherhood of peoples had something of a longer history. As Joshua Sanborn notes, the metaphor of brotherhood had been prominent in the military at least since the late tsarist period, as the state sought to forge a sense of social cohesion in a multiethnic institution: “The family

⁷⁹ Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 437–42.

⁸⁰ “Velikaia druzhba narodov,” *Izvestiia*, 6 December 1935, 1. See also “Velikaia druzhba,” *Pravda*, 5 December 1935, 1. Stalin’s full speech was also published in *Pravda*, see “Rech’ tov. Stalina na soveshchanii peredovykh kolkhoznikov i kolkhoznits Tadzhikistana i Turkmenistana,” *Pravda*, 6 December 1935, 3. Lowell Ray Tillit also discusses the speech in *The Great Friendship; Soviet Historians on the Non-Russian Nationalities* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969); see also Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 438–39.

metaphor was used not only to build affinitive bonds between conationals but between soldiers as well. The nation was like a family, as was the army, as indeed was the primary battle group to which the soldier belonged. The attempt to utilize kinship bonds as a model for new social relations was intentional and was part of the military's repertoire throughout the twentieth century."⁸¹ Family metaphors, both in the post-revolutionary period that Sanborn analyzes and in subsequent decades, deepened notions of imagined kinship that connected citizens across ethnic lines. Throughout the 1930s, the press consistently described the populace as a "family" or "brotherhood of peoples."⁸²

In the early 1930s and mid-1930s, the family metaphor tended to be more equitable. A front-page article in *Izvestiia* ahead of the Seventh All-Union Congress of Soviets, for example, interpreted the upcoming congress as demonstrative of the "historical victory of the fraternally consolidated family of peoples." The article specifically highlighted the fact that "there are no longer backwards and unequal [peoples] in this family of peoples" as proof that greater equality had been achieved.⁸³ By the late 1930s, the metaphor of brotherhood returned with an emphasis on Russians' prominence, reflecting the new weight being placed on ethnic Russians. The discourse of equality among all peoples was complemented by the new tendency to see Russians as the "first among equals," and, significantly here, as the "older brother" to fellow citizens. By the late 1930s, it became increasingly customary for non-Russians to express gratitude to their older brother, the Russian people, for sacrificial assistance during the revolution and since. These metaphors dominated ideological language for the remainder of the Soviet Union's existence, but

⁸¹ Joshua Sanborn, "Family, Fraternity, and Nation-Building in Russia," in *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, ed. Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 97. On early invocations of brotherhood, see also Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 432–37.

⁸² For 1930s examples, see "U poroga VII S"ezda sovetov," *Pravda*, 24 January 1935, 1; "Velikoe bratstvo svobodnykh narodov," *Pravda*, 6 December 1935, 1; "Edinaia sem'ia narodov," *Pravda*, 30 January 1936, 1; "God dvadtsatyi," *Pravda*, 7 November 1936, 1.

⁸³ "U poroga VII S"ezda sovetov," *Pravda*, 24 January 1935, 1.

they were most prominent under Stalin.⁸⁴

Rounding out the family metaphors, Stalin himself was routinely cast in a paternal mode, as a veritable father of the peoples. As Jan Plamper observes, Stalin was frequently pictured with children, including with ethnic minorities—with a Buriat girl, a blond boy, or young Uzbek women—even as Stalin’s identity was often Russified.⁸⁵ In a famous encounter in December 1935, the Tajik Pioneer Mamlakat Nakhangova gave a Tajik translation of *Questions of Leninism* to Stalin, who signed a portrait for her in return. *Pravda* ran a front-page photo of Stalin with Nakhangova and the Turkmen collective farmer Ene Gel’dyeva. The accompanying article described the encounter and the concurrent joint gathering of Tajik and Turkmen collective farmers. The article described the joyous cries of the audience, “Hooray for Stalin! Long live our teacher, our father, our leader Stalin! Long live our dear, favorite Stalin!”⁸⁶ As with family metaphors more generally, Stalin’s central position suggested hierarchical integration into a family of peoples, with Stalin himself at the top as the ultimate father-figure of authority, to whom citizens were expected to express constant gratitude and loyalty.⁸⁷ His presence offered one point of unity that encouraged citizens to see themselves as part of a diverse family of peoples, as they collectively contributed to and participated in civic life.

Multiethnic Participation and Representation

Scholars have pointed to participation as a hallmark of Soviet citizenship, especially

⁸⁴ Here, Yekelchyk’s discussion of Russian and Ukrainian relations in the 1940s is also relevant to the 1930s, see Yekelchyk, *Stalin’s Empire of Memory*, 39–47.

⁸⁵ Plamper, *The Stalin Cult*, 70. On images of Stalin with women, children, and ethnic minorities, see also Jeffrey Brooks, *Thank You, Comrade Stalin!: Soviet Public Culture from Revolution to Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 89–97; Catriona Kelly, *Children’s World: Growing Up in Russia, 1890–1991* (Yale University Press, 2007), 105–6.

⁸⁶ “Velikaia druzhba,” *Pravda*, 5 December 1935, 1. This encounter is also described in Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 437–38.

⁸⁷ On Stalin’s image and position more generally, see especially Brooks, *Thank You, Comrade Stalin!*; Plamper, *The Stalin Cult*.

under Stalin.⁸⁸ Participation in a wide-range of practices and institutions, from voting in elections to writing letters, from marching in parades to serving in the military, demonstrated not only people's status as citizens but also the broad base of multiethnic support that the state received from the populace. Citizens' own reflections will be discussed below; here I show how the state presented and interpreted participation as evidence of the unity, equality, and diversity of its people, even as actual practices often belied the state's ideological message.

The adoption of the 1936 Constitution provided an opportunity for leaders to celebrate the cohesion of the populace, as the document itself was celebrated for the radical equality it supposedly guaranteed. Even without directly invoking the Soviet people, the constitution was rhetorically connected with the citizenry, in part through the process of creating the document. Discussions of the draft version, clearly intended as propaganda, drew deep associations between the constitution and the citizenry. On the eve of the special All-Union Congress of Soviets, which gathered to approve the constitution, an *Izvestiia* editorial noted that the Congress was

convened to accumulate and implement in its decisions the aspirations, hopes, and expectations of 170 million people (*narod*), citizens of the country of victorious socialism. It is summoned to say all that has occupied the minds of the entire country for almost half a year, that inspires the Soviet people to a new scope of heroic, Stakhanovite labor, which gives the forward movement of socialism new speed and new energies. The Congress of Soviets is summoned to discuss everything that millions of Soviet citizens have said about the draft constitution, having studied it in their workshops and clubs, in mines and in the fields, in shepherds' huts and nomad camps, in camp tents and at earthworks. With enthusiasm, with pride, with consciousness of its own glory and might, the Soviet people discussed the Stalin Constitution.⁸⁹

Here, the author emphasized diversity both by repeatedly stressing the millions of citizens who

⁸⁸ E.g. Karen Petrone, *Life Has Become More Joyous, Comrades: Celebrations in the Time of Stalin* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000); Yekelchuk, *Stalin's Citizens*; Samantha Lomb, *Stalin's Constitution: Soviet Participatory Politics and the Discussion of the 1936 Draft Constitution* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017); Olga Velikanova, *Mass Political Culture Under Stalinism: Popular Discussion of the Soviet Constitution of 1936* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

⁸⁹ "Stalinskaia konstitutsiia," *Izvestiia*, 24 November 1936, 1. For an additional reference to the Soviet people and the constitution, see "SSSR—moguchee mnogonatsional'noe gosudarstvo," *Izvestiia*, 28 November 1936, 1. Here, the "Soviet people expressed its jubilation, its pride in Article 121," which guaranteed education for all citizens.

had come together to discuss the constitution and by pointing to citizens' varied living and working conditions. The mention of nomadic camps (very few of which continued to operate) and earthworks referenced exotic scenes unfamiliar to many readers. Together, the Soviet people rallied around the creation of the constitution, "with millions of hands, as the great charter of socialism, the victorious banner of new times, of the new history of humanity. Our people stands together, cohesive and powerful."⁹⁰

In subsequent years, the constitution was celebrated for its radical equality. Study of the document was mandated in all schools beginning in 1937, furthering its discursive connection to the Soviet people and its universal claims.⁹¹ On the second anniversary of its adoption, one *Pravda* editorial noted great "enthusiasm" with which citizens received the document and exercised their civil rights through voting, a demonstration of their "moral-political unity."⁹² Further underscoring the multiethnic community, the editorial ran alongside a poem by Kazakh poet Jambyl Jabaev, who called the constitution the "law of happiness" for his "favorite people."⁹³ The poem, complete with a smattering of Kazakh words (and annotated Russian translations), furthered the notion that the constitution was property of all citizens, including ethnic minorities, as well as the object of significant emotional attachment.

Elections provided an opportunity for journalists and leaders to talk about unity and diversity. This was most true during the 1937 elections to the Supreme Soviet, the highest legislative body, the first held under the conditions of the total equality and universal suffrage

⁹⁰ "Stalinskaia konstitutsiia," *Izvestiia*, 24 November 1936, 1.

⁹¹ On mandating study of the constitution, see "Ob izuchenii konstitutsii Soiuzna SSR v shkolakh: telegramma predsedatelia Sovnarkoma Soiuzna SSR tovarishcha V.M. Molotova, predsedateliam Sovnarkomov soiuznykh respublik ot 1 fevralia 1937 goda," published in *Istoricheskii zhurnal*, No. 2 (February 1937), 97–100. Voroshilov connected the Soviet people and the constitution the following year in his May 1 speech, *Izvestiia*, 4 May 1937, 1.

⁹² "Pod znamenem stalinskoi konstitutsii," *Pravda*, 5 December 1938, 1. The editorial ran beneath a nearly quarter-page photograph of Stalin at the Constitutional Congress.

⁹³ Dzhabbul, "Zakon schast'ia," *Pravda*, 5 December 1938, 1. The poem was centered on the page, next to Stalin's portrait and to the right of the lead editorial.

allegedly guaranteed by the constitution. Directly ahead of the elections, *Izvestiia* proclaimed that election day “should be a great holiday of unity of workers of all peoples of the USSR under the victorious banner of Lenin and Stalin,” citing an address from the communist party.⁹⁴ The text featured reporting from various municipalities and republics and speeches from prominent politicians, all showcasing the country’s diversity. Many speeches referenced the Soviet people, pointing specifically to the 1936 Constitution as a marker of unity.⁹⁵

The reporting of the results placed the Soviet people at the heart of what was hailed as a successful campaign. Both *Pravda* and *Izvestiia* devoted full-page spreads to discussing the election results, which were universally interpreted as a sign of the unity. Under the headlines “The Soviet people fervently greets its electors” and “The Soviet people is united (*splochen*) as never before,” *Pravda* reported on a massive demonstration in Kyiv of 300,000 voters to celebrate the election and presented various reports and telegrams from various corners of the country, including Engels (on the Volga), Kursk (on the Black Sea), Tashkent (Uzbekistan), and even reports of voters participating in elections on skis and by reindeer in far northern settlements. In all their geographic and cultural diversity citizens collectively and unanimously voted for representatives of the communist party.⁹⁶

Reports from Almaty (Kazakhstan), Rostov-on-Don (Southern Russia), Yerevan (Armenia), and elsewhere made similar proclamations, relayed under the heading, “In the world there is no government whose policies were approved by such a great number of votes as in the

⁹⁴ “Den’ 12 dekabria 1937 goda dolzhen stat’ dnem velikogo prazdnika edinieniia trudiashchikhsia vsex narodov SSSR vokrug znamenii Lenina-Stalina,” *Izvestiia*, 7 December 1937, 2.

⁹⁵ “Den’ 12 dekabria 1937 goda dolzhen stat’ dnem velikogo prazdnika edinieniia trudiashchikhsia vsex narodov SSSR vokrug znamenii Lenina-Stalina,” *Izvestiia*, 7 December 1937, 2. Another set of speeches with comparable statements appeared the following day, see “Trudiashchiesia nashei rodiny s ogromnym pod’emom privetstvuiut obrashchenie Tsentral’nogo Komiteta Vsesoiuznoi Kommunisticheskoi Partii (bol’sheviki),” *Pravda*, 8 December 1937, 2. The Soviet people also featured in speeches delivered by factory head S.P. Iun’kov and doctor V.A. Vasil’eva at the Bolshoi theatre during a pre-election gathering of voters from one Moscow district. See

“Predvybornoe sobranie izbiratelei Stalinskogo izbiratel’nogo okruga gor. Moskvyy,” *Pravda*, 12 December 1937, 2.
⁹⁶ *Pravda*, 16 December 1937, 3.

Soviet Union.”⁹⁷ In a meeting with voters, the Stakhanovite Solov’ev addressed the Secretary of the Central Committee of Kazakhstan, Levon Mirzoian: “The election of Comrade Stalin as a deputy of the Supreme Soviet is an expression of the will not only of the voters of the Stalin district of Moscow but of the many millions of people (*narod*). Together with all workers, we share this joy: the results of the election in our country, the likes of which have never been heard in history, have shown the entire world the strength, power, unity and cohesion of the Soviet people.”⁹⁸ As in *Pravda*, attention to representing the various peoples and geography of the Soviet Union gave self-evident proof of the country’s diversity.

An overview of the electoral process, published in a historical journal that same month drew analogous conclusions:

In these truly free, truly democratic elections, victorious is the Stalinist bloc of communists and non-party members, victorious is the agenda promoted by the Bolshevik party and their non-party allies, victorious is the moral and political unity of the Soviet people, a symbol and banner of which is manifested in the great leader (*vozhd’*), teacher and friend of the peoples, Comrade Stalin... The Soviet people has voted for the unconquerable Stalinist blocs of communists and non-party members, for the power of the soviets, for the Bolshevik party, for the great leader of peoples Comrade Stalin.⁹⁹

Drawing comparisons to the United States and France, where “democratic” victories were won with barely more than 50 percent of the voters and with comparatively low voter turnout, the article proposed that the very enthusiasm and unanimity of the population’s support was evidence of their moral-political unity. The article concluded by noting the apparent enthusiasm with which everyone had voted for their leader and government, affirming the policies of the Bolshevik party and its allies.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ *Izvestiia*, 16 December 1937, 2.

⁹⁸ *Izvestiia*, 16 December 1937, 2.

⁹⁹ “Triumf sotsialisticheskoi demokratii,” *Istoricheskii Zhurnal*, No. 12 (December 1937), 12–15; here, 12 and 15.

¹⁰⁰ “Triumf sotsialisticheskoi demokratii,” *Istoricheskii Zhurnal*, No. 12 (December 1937), 13–15. Analogous claims were made about elections to republic-level supreme soviets, see “Edinstvo partii i naroda,” *Izvestiia*, 28 June 1938, 1; B. Volin, “Velikaia pobeda sovetskogo naroda,” *Istoricheskii zhurnal*, 1938, no. 7 (July), 1–4.

The same discourse pervaded reporting on the actual assembly of the Supreme Soviet the following January, as a diverse array of elected representatives convened for legislative activity. The head of the mandate commission, Sadyk Nurpeisov of Kazakhstan, emphasized the unprecedented representation of ethnic minorities, including not only Russians, Ukrainians, Azerbaijanis, Georgians, and other major ethnicities, but also representatives of small minorities like Bashkirs, Yakuts, Karakalpaks, and Karelians. Electoral results were again heralded as “proof of the moral and political unity of the Soviet people, its cohesion around the party of Lenin-Stalin.”¹⁰¹ Newspapers published various speeches from the first session of the Supreme Soviet in subsequent days, and the January 20 issue of *Izvestiia* even included a sizable picture of the Belarusian delegation in national dress behind a Belarusian-language banner.¹⁰² As reflected in reporting on elections and elected assemblies, political institutions and the communist party supposedly represented cogent sources of unity.

Holidays, anniversaries, and celebrations of various accomplishments also became moments to demonstrate unity and a sense of civic belonging. By the mid-1930s, invocations of the unity of the Soviet people became standard for holidays, as citizens gathered *en masse* to demonstrate their support and love for their country. A 1936 article about the preparations for May 1 emphasized the holiday’s importance: “Never before in all our history has the entire Soviet people been this unified together, from the small to the great. Ever more indestructible becomes the friendship of the peoples who are triumphantly building socialism.” The conclusion further noted the importance of the holiday for citizens and allies around the world.¹⁰³ Analogous

¹⁰¹ “Rech’ Predsedatelia Mandatnoi Komissii deputata Nurpeisova Sadyk,” *Izvestiia*, 15 January 1938, 1.

¹⁰² *Izvestiia*, 20 January 1938, 3. Similar reporting happened concerning other assemblies. Newspapers frequently reported on party meetings and congresses that took place across the USSR. For one example, see the reporting on party congresses and party work in union republics in *Pravda*, 16 June 1938. The press celebrated the “flowering” of culture, society, and politics across the Soviet Union.

¹⁰³ “Lozungi truda i bor’by,” *Izvestiia*, 23 April 1936, 1.

language surrounded the holiday in subsequent years, as the holiday became part of the shared legacy of all citizens.¹⁰⁴ Anniversaries, especially annual celebrations of the October Revolution on November 7, functioned the same way.¹⁰⁵ Institutional anniversaries were invoked for the same purposes, evidenced in the spate of twenty-year anniversaries in the late 1930s and early '40s. Discussions in the central press of the twentieth anniversaries of the Red Army and Navy (February 1938), the Komsomol (October 1938), and of other political and cultural institutions offered a chance to celebrate citizens' unity.¹⁰⁶

The military held particular significance. A 1938 *Pravda* article referred to the Red Army as the “powerful army of the Soviet people,” a connection strengthened by the fact that the army was literally derived from the people: “The Red Army and Navy have countless reserves—the entire 170-million-strong, powerful people (*narod*), inspired by the ideas of communism, monolithically fused together around the party of Lenin-Stalin, its Stalinist Central Committee and the Soviet government.”¹⁰⁷ The editorial closed by arguing that all citizens were obligated to serve in the military and aid the Red Army in any way they could. A January 1939 article in *Istoricheskii zhurnal* stressed this point, while also hinting at diversity: “The political and moral unity of peoples (*narody*) of our great country is especially reflected in the Red Army. The

¹⁰⁴ E.g. Voroshilov's May 1 speech on Red Square in 1937, *Izvestiia*, 4 May 1937, 1; “Prazdnik pobedy,” *Izvestiia*, 1 May 1938, 1; “Boevoi smotr revoliutsionnykh sil trudiashchikhsia,” *Pravda*, 3 May 1939, 1; “Narod geroev, narod sozdatelei!” and “Sovetskii narod radostno vstrechaet velikii prazdnik 1 maia,” both in *Pravda*, 28 April 1939, 1.

¹⁰⁵ Examples of holiday reporting include: “Pod znamenem Lenina-Stalina,” *Izvestiia*, 10 November 1936, 1; “K 20-letiiu Oktiabr'skoi revoliutsii: Doklad M. Molotov na torzhestvennom zasedanii v Bol'shom teatre 6 noiabria 1937 g.,” *Istorik-Marksist* No. 4 (62) (1937), 2–21; T. Korradov, “Dvadtsat' let bor'by za mir,” *Istorik-Marksist*, No. 4 (62) (1937), 62–80; “Parad nesokrushimoi moshchi sovetskogo naroda,” and “Vsenarodnyi prazdnik,” *Izvestiia*, 10 November 1940, 1. On both the emergence of the celebrations of October, including in theatre and film, see Clark, *Petersburg*, 100–121; Taylor, *Film Propaganda*, 63–73; Malte Rolf, *Soviet Mass Festivals, 1917–1991*, trans. Cynthia Klohr (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013), 31–63.

¹⁰⁶ See A. Kronov, “20 let Leninsko-Stalinskogo Komsomola,” *Istoricheskii zhurnal*, No. 9 (September 1938), 14–24; G. Fadeev, “XX let Raboche-krest'ianskoi krasnoi armii i voenno-morskogo flota,” *Istoricheskii zhurnal*, no. 2 (February 1938), 20. The twentieth anniversary of Soviet cinema was similarly feted: “Slavnoe dvadtsatiletie,” *Iskusstvo Kino*, No. 1 (February 1940), 10–13. The anniversary of the adoption of the 1936 constitution was also commemorated as an annual holiday, see “Pod znamenem stalinskoi konstitutsii,” *Pravda*, 5 December 1938, 1.

¹⁰⁷ “Moguchaia armiia sovetskogo naroda,” *Pravda*, 14 August 1938, 1.

Soviet people and its army are a single whole, unified by a single aspiration towards building communism, towards defending hard-won socialism. The Soviet people knows no higher duty than to protect the socialist fatherland (*otechestvo*).”¹⁰⁸ Reporting on the new military oath and protocol for being sworn into the military, the article noted the deeply felt connection between the new recruit and his homeland. Taken individually, the new “oath of loyalty to one’s own motherland (*rodina*), to one’s own people (*narod*), further increases and strengthens the connection of the Red Army to the Soviet people, further increases the political consciousness of its soldiers, who deeply know for what they fight and what they defend.”¹⁰⁹

Articles also stressed the public’s emotional bond to the military. As the same article noted, “The Red Army is made strong by both the revolutionary enthusiasm of its soldiers, who are inspired with love for the motherland and by ideas of proletarian internationalism, and it is made strong by the fervent love of the entire Soviet people.”¹¹⁰ A 1938 *Pravda* editorial made analogous claims: “The heroic army of the Soviet people is full of patriotic feelings. Youth entering the ranks of the Red Army know that they are called to defend the interests of the people. Soldiers and commanders of the Red Army know that the Soviet people, with enormous attention, follows how its dear army grows and strengthens” as it mastered modern technologies of war and prepared to defend the homeland.¹¹¹

A 1937 article in *Pravda*, published ahead of the 20th anniversary of the founding of the Red Army noted, “Soviet Union relies upon the invincible Red Army, surrounded by the love and support of the entire Soviet people.”¹¹² This love, as suggested in an *Istoricheskii zhurnal*

¹⁰⁸ “Velikaia kliatva sovetskogo voina,” *Istoricheskii zhurnal*, No. 1 (January 1939), 7. Here, the word for fatherland is derived from the word *father*, as opposed to *rodina*, which derives, like *narod*, from a stem that indicates kinship.

¹⁰⁹ “Velikaia kliatva sovetskogo voina,” *Istoricheskii zhurnal*, No. 1 (January 1939), 8.

¹¹⁰ “Velikaia kliatva sovetskogo voina,” *Istoricheskii zhurnal*, No. 1 (January 1939), 7.

¹¹¹ “Lagernaia ucheba Krasnoi Armii,” *Pravda*, 3 August 1938, 1.

¹¹² T. Korradov, “Dvadtsat’ let bor’by za mir,” *Istorik-Marksist*, No. 4 (62) (1937), 80.

article by G. Fadeev, was driven by a deep consciousness of what the army and state provided citizens: “Over the course of a number of years, Soviet power has been able to ensure that our Motherland now has at its disposal tested punitive organs and a well-equipped Red Army, as well as a consistently enacted political agenda of peace in the field of foreign relations.” The relative peace of the last 16 years was seen as a testament to the army’s role as a guarantor of a Soviet way of life, enabling citizens to work peacefully and productively.¹¹³

The Soviet People Expands: The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact

The motif of unity, discussed abstractly in the 1930s, became critical as the Soviet Union expanded westwards after the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. As the population swelled to include millions of new citizens, the state utilized state and party institutions to ensure the political and social integration of these new territories. As part of this process, the western Soviet Union underwent significant administrative changes. Both the Ukrainian and Belarusian SSRs expanded with the acquisitions of new territories from interwar Poland in 1939. The Baltic States—Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania—were annexed in 1939 and became union republics the following year. The Winter War with Finland culminated in the addition of parts of Finland to the Karelian ASSR, which was accordingly reorganized as the Karelo-Finnish SSR. Finally, the invasion of Romanian territories in 1940 led to the formation of the Moldovan SSR and the addition of Northern Bukovina to the Ukrainian SSR.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ G. Fadeev, “XX let Raboche-krest’ianskoi krasnoi armii i Voennno-morskogo flota,” *Istoricheskii zhurnal*, no. 2 (February 1938), 20.

¹¹⁴ On Ukraine and Belarus, see Jan Tomasz Gross, *Revolution from Abroad: The Soviet Conquest of Poland’s Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Amar offers a case study of Lviv in *The Paradox of Ukrainian Lviv: A Borderland City between Stalinists, Nazis, and Nationalists* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015), 44–87. Geoffrey Roberts reviews the diplomatic decisions in the Soviet takeover over the Baltic, concluding that the incorporation of the three Baltic republics was not the original intention but rather came about as a result of false perceptions of the situation in the Baltics and as a response to Hitler’s success in Eastern Europe, see “Soviet Policy and the Baltic States, 1939–1940: A Reappraisal,” *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 6,

As the Soviet Union incorporated territories, the press emphasized the unity of all Soviet citizens, including those who had recently joined. Elections became a focal point as the press hailed nearly unanimous votes for the communist party and for formal accession to the Soviet Union as demonstrations of the people's will. In February 1940, *Pravda* discussed the upcoming party elections in Western Ukraine and Belarus and noted the inclusion of a more than a million new members and high levels of voter participation. Reports from Western Ukraine and Belarus celebrated the liberation from “bourgeois (*panskaia*) Poland,” the appearance of Marxist-Leninist classics, and the availability of various lectures and courses, all signs of the region's seamless incorporation.¹¹⁵

The following month, after elections to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and to the Supreme Soviets of the Ukrainian and Belarusian SSRs, *Izvestiia* devoted nearly an entire front page to the electoral triumph, as headlines celebrated the glorious day and the “great enthusiasm” of agitators and voters alike. “Love for the motherland, Soviet patriotism,” the front-page editorial declared, “brightly blaze in the hearts of workers of the western oblasts, as well as in the hearts of our entire people.”¹¹⁶ Photos depicted joyful voters in Lviv and Białystok submitting ballots. The press also described the alleged joy with which voters in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia went to the polls the following summer to vote for new pro-Soviet parliaments: “How much sincere joy and deep gratitude can be seen in the faces of laborers, white-collar workers, soldiers in their meetings with Red Army soldiers... On billboards and posters carried by

no. 3 (November 1995): 672–700. Mark Schrad, also focusing on international law, offers comparative study of the borders of Karelia/Finland and of Moldova/Romania in “Rag Doll Nations and the Politics of Differentiation on Arbitrary Borders: Karelia and Moldova,” *Nationalities Papers* 32, no. 2 (2004): 457–96. Northern Bukovina remains less studied, though Svitlana Frunchak offers some discussion in her dissertation, see “The Making of Soviet Chernivtsi: National ‘Reunification,’ World War II, and the Fate of Jewish Czernowitz in Postwar Ukraine” (University of Toronto, 2014), especially 98–246.

¹¹⁵ “Vybory rukovodiashchikh partiinykh organov” and “Izbiratel’naia kampaniia v zapadnykh oblastiakh USSR i BSSR,” *Pravda*, 11 February 1940, 1.

¹¹⁶ “Blestiashchaia pobeda bloka kommunistov i bespartiinykh,” *Izvestiia*, 24 March 1940, 1. Gross analyzes election campaigns in Western Ukraine and Belarus during this period in *Revolution from Abroad*, 71–113.

workers, you most frequently see the inscription, ‘we will strengthen the friendship with the great Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.’”¹¹⁷ A week later, *Pravda* heralded the decision of the three elected assemblies to join the Soviet Union as the embodiment of citizens’ will, declaring that “the boundaries of the brotherly family of socialist peoples have been broadened.”¹¹⁸

Family metaphors abounded in reporting on newly acquired territories. This served a dual purpose of justifying the incorporation of new people and territories into the USSR and asserting the common bonds and imagined kinship between all citizens. *Pravda* highlighted connections between residents of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania and their now-fellow Soviet citizens: “In the soldiers of the valiant Red Army, workers, peasants, the working intelligentsia saw not only representatives of the great, friendly Soviet people, but also the bearers of a higher, socialist culture, their own brothers, the couriers of the people’s happiness.”¹¹⁹ A front-page spread in *Izvestiia* on the acquisition of Bessarabia and northern Bukovina from Romania highlighted a profound sense of countrywide unity: “Millions of workers of the USSR send ardent greetings to their blood brothers who are entering the happy Soviet family.”¹²⁰ The following month, *Izvestiia* published photos of representatives of Bessarabia and northern Bukovina in national dress and of the joyous crowds that greeted the delegation sent to Moscow to celebrate unification.¹²¹ The same edition detailed official visits of Estonians in Leningrad and of Lithuanians in Minsk and Moscow to celebrate unification.

Here and elsewhere, the press offered a sanitized description of the peaceful, celebratory advent of Soviet power, glossing over the darker aspects, including the brutal suppression of

¹¹⁷ “Golosuut trudiashchiesia Latvii,” “Vsenarodnye vybory v Estonii,” and “Litovskii narod vybiraet novyi seim,” *Izvestiia*, 16 July 1940, 2.

¹¹⁸ “Sovetskaia vlast’ v pribaltiiskikh respublikakh,” *Pravda*, 23 July 1940, 1.

¹¹⁹ “Sovetskaia vlast’ v pribaltiiskikh respublikakh,” *Pravda*, 23 July 1940, 1.

¹²⁰ “Milliony trudiashchikhsia SSSR shliut plamennyi privet edinokrovnyim brat’iam, vstupaiushchim v schastlivuiu sovetskuiu sem’iu,” *Izvestiia*, 30 June 1940, 1.

¹²¹ “Vstrecha v krasnoi stolitse,” *Izvestiia*, 31 July 1940, 1.

“anti-Soviet elements” and deportations of unreliable populations. Reports within the People’s Commissariat of Internal Affairs (NKVD) tell a very different story of the incorporation of these territories between 1939 and 1941. The NKVD carefully prepared for and monitored elections to ensure they were held in an organized and appropriate manner without interference from “anti-Soviet elements.”¹²² Holidays, celebrated as symbols of unity, were also carefully monitored, most ruthlessly on the Soviet holidays of May 1 (Labor Day) and November 7 (Day of the October Revolution). The NKVD also surveyed the mood and atmosphere and suppressed any potentially anti-Soviet activities.¹²³ This undercurrent, not seen in the published newspaper record, hints at a third motif that ran through official discourse about the Soviet people: the idea that the body politic was also defined by exclusion and suppression.

Forging Enemies, Abroad and at Home

In the previous two sections, I focused on how the discourse of the Soviet people offered a sense of what bound citizens together. Not surprisingly, however, another powerful source for uniting citizens was a growing articulation of who did not belong. The emphasis on enemies, to be sure, was not unique to the mid-1930s. From the very origins of the state, Soviet leaders had expressed considerable concern about capitalist encirclement and foreign intervention, which fed concerns about class enemies within the country.¹²⁴ This anxiety took on new urgency in the mid-

¹²² On this process in Lithuania in 1941, see Lithuanian Special Archive (hereafter LYA), f. K-1, o. 10, d. 3, ll. 20–34, 46–71, 108–111, 121–135.

¹²³ See documents in the archive of the Security Service of Ukraine (hereafter SBU), f. 16, o. 1, d. 419, which covers NKVD operations across Ukraine. Although not specific to the newly incorporated western oblasts, several reports note the importance of work in the region, see ll. 6–7, 65–66, 71–72, 76–78, 86–88, 94–95 and others.

¹²⁴ Stephen Kotkin has pointed out that economic mobilization in the late 1920s bore much in common with mobilization for war, and the threat of capitalist encirclement featured prominently in justifications for rapid pace industrialization, see *Magnetic Mountain*, 29–35. Fitzpatrick has argued that a 1926–27 war scare served as a justification for mass mobilization in “The Foreign Threat during the First Five Year Plan,” *Soviet Union/Union Soviétique* 5 (1978): 26–35. Jon Jacobson offers an overview of early Soviet foreign policy in *When the Soviet Union Entered World Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

1930s as threats of war became less theoretical. Following the Nazi rise to power in Germany and escalating conflicts in Europe and Asia, ideas about the “enemies of the Soviet people” took on new life, suggesting that the term was intrinsically connected to the threat of war and a new awareness of enemies, both beyond and within Soviet borders.

Foreign Fascism and the Soviet People

The specter of war featured prominently in Bukharin’s 1935 piece, which used a contrast between the Soviet people and its external enemies as a device to sharpen the articulation of civic identity. Nearly half of the article was a discussion of the enemy’s “malicious, frenzied campaign” against the Soviet people. Fascists, Bukharin warned, could easily manipulate and utilize this slander to discredit the Soviet Union. He emphasized the menace of German fascism, which, he argued, justified its “world-historical mission” in ways that were antithetical to Soviet citizens. It depended on a racial ideology that saw one people (*narod*) and race (*rasa*) as intrinsically capable of ruling over remaining peoples. Fascists, he continued, envisioned a small class of those destined to be rulers (*vozhdia*), a class that “always corresponded to the major factory owners, the financial sharks, banking wolfhounds, artillery merchant princes, illustrious and titled landholders, and Wilhemine generals.”¹²⁵ As Bukharin described, the Soviet people detested this worldview because it made the proletariat a perpetually oppressed underclass. Soviet society contrasted with fascist society through its radical equality, achieved through eliminating capitalists, landholders, and private property. Fascism thus stood as a symbolic foil to the Soviet people.

German fascism was far from the only menace covered in the press. Newspapers reported

¹²⁵ Nikolai Bukharin, “Geroicheskii sovetskii narod,” *Izvestiia*, 6 July 1935, 3. The “merchant princes” are likely a reference to the Krupp family, who had been premiere manufacturers of artillery and weapons for several hundreds of years before becoming prominent industrialists.

frequently on the threats to the Soviet Union both on land and at sea, which only grew with Soviet support for republican forces during the Spanish Civil War. Italian ships sunk at least three Soviet ships in the Mediterranean—the *Komsomol* in 1936, and the *Timiriazev* and the *Blagoev* the following year. *Izvestiia* discussed the attacks under the headline “Do away with fascist banditism on the high seas!” The newspaper highlighted the protests and responses of citizens across the country with a photograph of a protest, various excerpts from resolutions and meetings, a political cartoon, and a poem. These were featured under a sub-headline that read, “The multimillion Soviet people demands a severe retaliation against the presumptuous pirates who sunk the *Timiriazev* and *Blagoev*.”¹²⁶

Commenters and resolutions described the “fascist barbarians” in no uncertain terms as provocateurs of war and demonstrated citizens’ readiness to defend their country. The most prominent resolution, prepared by employees at a Moscow factory, promised a pushback against “any enemy.” Another, from a factory in Kuibyshev, noted, “The Soviet people has sufficient strength and is ready at any moment to deal the death blow to the enemy, in order to dispel his hunger for infringing on the interests of USSR.” Along the bottom of the page, a short piece by poet Vasilii Lebedev-Kumach mentioned the fates of both the *Komsomol* and the *Timiriazev*. He implored the Soviet people not to forget the aggressive banditism of “fascist pirates.”¹²⁷ The entire spread, covering most of the page, raised alarm about the risk of war.

As entanglements continued in Europe, borders in the east provided another point of escalating conflict. Skirmishes on the Soviet-Japanese border followed the establishment of Manchukuo, the puppet-state founded after the 1931 Japanese invasion of Manchuria. Tensions escalated in the summer of 1938 over the territory around Lake Khasan, today on the border of

¹²⁶ All these references can be found on *Izvestiia*, 4 September 1937, 1.

¹²⁷ *Izvestiia*, 4 September 1937, 1.

North Korea, China, and Russia. Fitting for the tenor of the day, the press decried the incursions of Japanese fascists, and the ensuing battle, which lasted two weeks in August 1938, offered an opportunity to emphasize citizens' willingness to defend the country and its borders. On August 3, a full second-page spread in *Pravda* reported on countrywide responses to the battle under the headline, "The Soviet people and its heroic Red Army, unified around the party of Lenin-Stalin and the government, are ready to deal a crushing blow to the provocateurs of war."¹²⁸

Throughout the two-week conflict, both *Pravda* and *Izvestiia* published a steady stream of resolutions from various groups of workers, institutions, and citizens across the country, all of which condemned the actions of "Japanese fascists."¹²⁹ The overwhelming message, as stated in a resolution from a Moscow oblast factory, was to make "Japanese interventionists understand that in the dreadful hour of military danger, the entire Soviet people will rise up in defense of the borders of its motherland and defeat the enemy on his very own territory."¹³⁰ Public resolutions portrayed the Soviet Union and its populace as reluctant to enter war but prepared to defend the country. An August 7 *Pravda* headline declared that the "Soviet people is ready at any minute to stand up in defense of its motherland," while the accompanying resolutions continued to promise no mercy to the "Japanese fascists."¹³¹

The routine publication of these resolutions underscored the supposed unity of citizens behind their government, a unity that had become self-evident in light of this violation of what

¹²⁸ "Sovetskii narod i ego geroicheskaia Krasnaia Armiia, splochnnye vokrug partii Lenina-Stalina i pravitel'stva, gotovy nanesti provokatoram voiny unichtozhaiushchii udar," *Pravda*, 3 August 1938, 2. The resolutions were a continuation from the first page.

¹²⁹ These can be found in most editions of *Pravda* and *Izvestiia* from the first half of August 1938. See, for example, *Pravda*, 3 August 1938, 1–2; *Pravda*, 5 August 1938, 1; *Pravda*, 7 August 1938, 1–2; *Pravda*, 9 August 1938, 1; *Izvestiia*, 9 August 1938, 1; *Pravda*, 10 August 1938, 1.

¹³⁰ "Ves' narod podnimetsia na zashchitu sovetской zemli," *Pravda*, 3 August 1938, 2. Other resolutions included similar statements.

¹³¹ See *Pravda*, 7 August 1938, 1–2.

one resolution called the “holy borders of the Soviet state.”¹³² Journalists emphasized that the entire population supported the government’s decisions and actions in this military conflict. As *Pravda* declared, “The entire Soviet people unanimously approves the hardline agenda of the Soviet government.”¹³³ On August 10, nearly two weeks after the conflict began, a special session of the Supreme Soviet assembled to condemn the attack, rule on emergency conditions, and finance the war effort. A front-page *Pravda* editorial hailed this meeting as a symbol of the unity of the Soviet people.¹³⁴

The Red Army ultimately won a decisive victory at the cost of nearly 800 soldiers killed or missing and another 3000 injured.¹³⁵ The press heralded the costly victory as a joint accomplishment of the Red Army and Soviet people:

The Japanese militarists, attempting to drag Japan into war with the Soviet Union managed to be quickly convinced of the might of the Red Army. The provocative attacks of Japanese samurais on Soviet territory aroused the terrible wrath of the entire multi-million people (*narod*). From place to place across our immense motherland, the Soviet people declared its readiness at any minute to stand up in defense of the socialist fatherland at thousands of meetings and rallies.¹³⁶

Recalling the battle the following year, another article declared: “The events at Lake Khasan demonstratively showed how capable our soldiers, commanders, and political workers are. The cruel lesson that the impudent Japanese samurais learned will long stay in the memories of those who sought ill-gotten gains.” The editorialist concluded that the love allegedly felt by the Soviet people for their army was borne of a deep knowledge that the army was “capable of defeating

¹³² “Sviashchennye granitsy sovetskogo gosudarstva neprikosnovenny!” *Pravda*, 10 August 1938.

¹³³ “Ves’ sovetskii narod edinodushno odobriaet tverduiu politiku Sovetskogo pravitel’sstva,” *Pravda*, 5 August 1938, 1. Several days later, *Izvestiia* declared, “The great Soviet people unanimously defend the decisive agenda of the government of the USSR.” *Izvestiia*, 9 August 1938, 1.

¹³⁴ “Vtoraia sessia Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR,” *Pravda*, 10 August 1938, 1.

¹³⁵ Casualties on the Japanese side were considerably lower, around 500 killed and 900 wounded. However, the Soviet show of strength sufficiently convinced the Japanese side of the futility of continuing this battle, and they sued for peace on August 10, 1938. For the most extensive study of this event and other ongoing Soviet-Japanese border disputes the following year over Nomonhan, on the Mongolia-Manchukuo border, see Alvin D. Coox, *Nomonhan: Japan against Russia, 1939*, 2 vols. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985).

¹³⁶ “Moguchaia armiia sovetskogo naroda,” *Pravda*, 14 August 1938, 1.

any enemies of socialism, wherever they might appear.”¹³⁷

From Enemies Abroad to Enemies at Home

More often than not, reporting on fascism as the ideological opponent of the Soviet people remained rather vague, as suggested by the fact that enemies within the Soviet Union were accused of collaborating with fascists abroad. As James Harris observes in his study of the Great Terror, using the threat of war to justify repressive measures and drive internal cohesion was a well-established practice.¹³⁸ Fears of collaboration with enemies abroad became clearly pronounced in reporting on Moscow show trials between 1936 and 1938, symbolic of the Great Purges more broadly. In the first of these trials, against the so-called Zinoviev-Kamenev bloc in August 1936, 16 defendants were convicted and executed for various crimes against the state. On August 21, 1936, in the middle of the proceedings, a front-page *Izvestiia* editorial directed readers on the proper interpretation of the ongoing trial. Under the headline “fascist degenerates (*vyrodki*),” the article described the defendants as Trotsky’s disciples and active participants in a dangerous terrorist center.

The article contrasted the accused with the Soviet people in its introduction: “every hour, before the Soviet people and to the entire world, more clearly revealed are the crimes committed and prepared by people who, according to Kamenev’s confession, distinctly imagine that they are going against the government that is building socialism, against socialism.” Calling for the

¹³⁷ “Krasnaia Armiiia—gordost’ sovetskogo naroda,” *Pravda*, 18 March 1939, 1. The racialized othering of the Japanese would become a trope of wartime propaganda in the U.S. in the 1940s, see John W. Dower, *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986).

¹³⁸ James R. Harris, *The Great Fear: Stalin’s Terror of the 1930s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). On the purges more generally, see also J. Arch Getty, *Origins of the Great Purges: The Soviet Communist Party Reconsidered, 1933–1938* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); J. Arch Getty and Roberta Thompson Manning, eds., *Stalinist Terror: New Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). On the similar use of the external war threats in Soviet domestic politics in the 1920s, see Jacobson, *When the Soviet Union Entered World Politics*, 206–32; Fitzpatrick, “The Foreign Threat during the First Five Year Plan.”

conviction and execution of the accused, the editorial accused the defendants of fascist tendencies, citing Zinoviev's own recorded words from the trial as proof: "Trotskyism plus terrorism is fascism." The defendants stood accused of betraying the state, meriting clear hatred from all citizens: "All these names of malicious enemies, agents of Trotsky and fascism are hateful to workers of the USSR. Their hands are stained with the blood of the remarkable person, the talented leader of workers, the great son of our motherland S.M. Kirov."¹³⁹

During the 1936 trial, the connections with fascism remained relatively vague. A more explicit connection was made several months later during the next major show trial in January 1937, in which 17 high-ranking officials (most prominently Karl Radek and Mikhail Piatakov), were tried for Trotskyism and various plots against the state. A front-page *Izvestiia* editorial decried the defendants as "allies and accessories of fascist aggressors." Going through several of the defendants individually, the article accused them of Trotskyist schemes, spying for Germany and Japan, and aiding Japanese spies in a plan for an attack with biological weapons. Above all, the article repeated their deep affiliation with fascism and fascists at home and abroad.¹⁴⁰

The trial provided an opportunity to display the emerging consensus about enemies of the people. The editorial concluded that the trial provided an opportunity for citizens to unite:

Thousands, tens of thousands of meetings day and night are taking place during factory shifts, in mines, on collective farms. Our entire land has risen up again, clenching its fists, harsh and filled with wrath, full of hatred towards the Trotskyist band of fascist agents, towards their cursed schemes and monstrous, bloody deeds. As one, our entire people (*narod*) has awakened to complete decisiveness, demanding ruthless punishment for evildoers, the restorers of capitalism, the basest traitors of the motherland. The entire Soviet people and with it all honest people of the world, burning with contempt towards Judas-Trotsky and his henchmen (*oprichniki*), are mobilizing all of their energies for the struggle with fascism and are demanding the remnants of the counterrevolution, the servant of fascism, the criminal anti-Soviet Trotskyist band be trampled into the ground

¹³⁹ "Fashistskie vyrodki," *Izvestiia*, 21 August 1936, 1.

¹⁴⁰ "Soiuzniki i posobniki fashistskikh agressorov," *Izvestiia*, 25 January 1937, 1. Similar claims are made about both the first and second trials in an extended historical journal article published in February 1937. See "Podlaia trotskistskogo-fashistskaia banda," *Istoricheskii zhurnal*, No. 2 (February 1937), 1–12.

and annihilated completely.¹⁴¹

A journal article on Bukharin and Rykov's expulsion from the party in April of the same year made an even simpler pronouncement about the so-called "rightists": much like Trotskyists before them, they "ceased to be a political movement and turned into a band of the worst enemies of the Soviet people, traitors and betrayers of the socialist motherland."¹⁴² Enemies were defined by their opposition to the state, a fate many were unable to escape. Even Bukharin himself fell victim to the very people whose rhetorical existence he had helped to forge: he and 20 others were convicted in another show trial in March 1938 and executed shortly thereafter.

The concept of the Soviet people was inextricably linked to this more nefarious context. As the term became popularized during the mid-to-late-1930s, the language used to describe enemies underwent a concurrent shift, as can be seen in the trajectories of terms "class enemy" (*klassovoi vrag*) and "enemy of the people" (*vrag naroda*). Both terms originated in the post-revolutionary period, but "class enemy" was the preferred term throughout the 1920s and early 1930s.¹⁴³ Although many of the accusations of so-called "class enemies" had little basis in reality and the term often served instrumentally as an accusation that could be leveled against anyone, it marked people whose class interests and background were believed to be hostile to the interests of the populace, the state, and Marxist ideology.

In the mid-1930s, however, the preferred terminology began to change, as leaders shifted

¹⁴¹ "Soiuzniki i posobniki fashistskikh agressorov," *Izvestiia*, 25 January 1937, 1. The word "henchmen" [*oprichniki*] derives from the group of people tasked with extralegal measures to terrorize and torture the population on orders from Ivan the Terrible in the sixteenth century.

¹⁴² V. Zhebrovskii, "Put' pravykh restavradorov kapitalizma—Bukharina i Rykova," *Istoricheskii zhurnal*, No. 3–4 (1937), 65. *Izvestiia* ran an editorial describing responses to their eventual 1938 trial, accusing them of trying to create disunity within the "multiethnic Soviet people" and emphasized their status as fascist collaborators and enemies of the people. See "Volia trudiashchikhsia," *Izvestiia*, 14 March 1938, 1.

¹⁴³ One of the first uses of "enemy of the people" was in the November 28, 1917 (December 11, new style) decree regarding the arrests of leaders of the Constitutional Democratic (Kadet). The decree ruled, "members of leading organs of the party of Kadets are subject to arrest and trial under revolutionary tribunals as enemies of the people." "Dekret ob areste vozhdai grazhdanskoi voiny protiv revoliutsii," 28 November [11 December] 1917, available at <http://www.hist.msu.ru/ER/Text/DEKRET/17-11-28.htm> (accessed April 2018).

towards using “enemy of the people,” as evidenced by their relative trends in *Pravda* and *Izvestiia* (Figure 5).¹⁴⁴ The concurrent decline of “class enemy” and meteoric rise of “enemy of the people” reflected two ongoing processes. First, the rhetorical consensus that the country had built a classless society made it more difficult to claim the continued existence of class enemies. Second, more importantly, the sense that there existed a distinct Soviet people also made it easier to talk about enemies of this people as a unit. As society coalesced around its state and institutions, the idea that its enemies stood against the body politic writ large easier to claim.

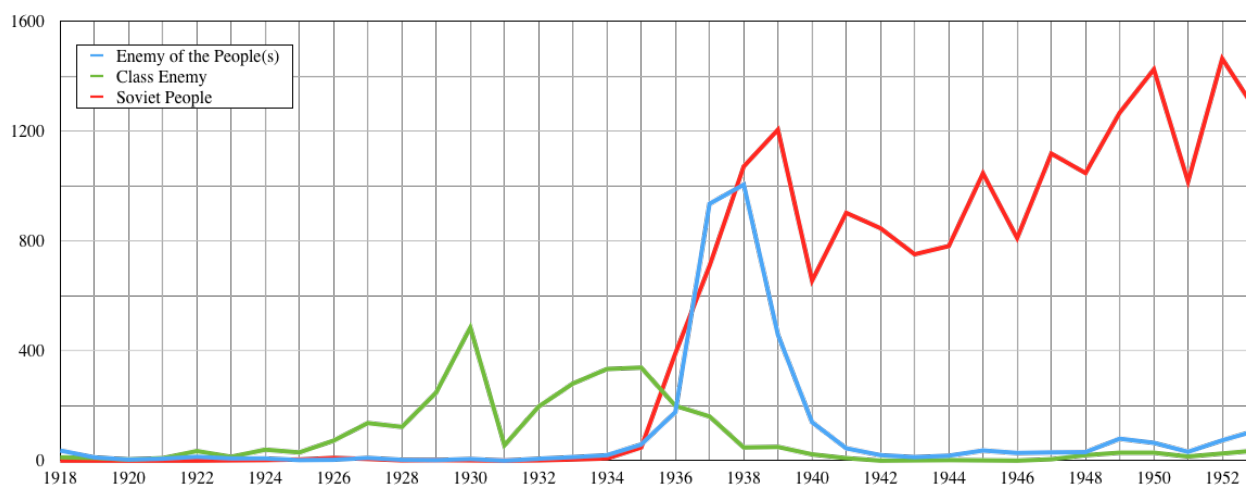


Figure 5: Enemy of the People(s), Class Enemy, Soviet People(s) in Pravda and Izvestiia, 1918–53.

The rhetorical connection between the Soviet people and the concept of “enemies of the people” was further suggested by the Soviet people’s prominence in reporting on internal security. On December 20, 1937, the People’s Commissariat of Internal Affairs (NKVD)—formerly the Cheka and precursor to the KGB—celebrated its 20th anniversary, and the press emphasized the organization’s deep connection to the people:

¹⁴⁴ Data from EastView, compiled in November 2016. Each line represents the total number of pages on which each term appeared in *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*; multiple instances of a single word on the same page are counted once. Each search term covers each term in singular and plural forms, in all grammatical cases. On rhetoric of terror both in the 1930s and earlier, see Igal Halfin, *Terror in My Soul: Communist Autobiographies on Trial* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003); Igal Halfin, *Intimate Enemies: Demonizing the Bolshevik Opposition, 1918–1928* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007); Wendy Z. Goldman, *Terror and Democracy in the Age of Stalin: The Social Dynamics of Repression* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Wendy Z. Goldman, *Inventing the Enemy: Denunciation and Terror in Stalin’s Russia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

In the hearts of the Soviet people lives an inextinguishable hatred towards all sworn enemies of socialism. The Soviet people surrounds the fighters of Soviet intelligence with deep attention and concern, helping them in their difficult battle. The Soviet people knows that its unremitting watchman—the People’s Commissariat of Internal Affairs will mercilessly destroy all enemies of the people, all base traitors of the motherland. Soviet intelligence, constantly improving its technology and methods of work, should quickly unmask and immediately and decisively suppress every political agenda of the enemy to encroach upon our motherland, upon our great, free people. Soviet intelligence officials should live up to the exclusive trust that is shown to them by the Soviet people, the party, and Stalin!¹⁴⁵

Izvestiia’s official press release called the NKVD “the punishing arm of the Soviet people” and praised employees for “honestly and selflessly fulfilling its duty before the Soviet people in the battle with [foreign] espionage, sabotage, and subversive activity.”¹⁴⁶ Beneath the statement, an editorial repeated the sentiments while warning of “remnants of exploited classes within the country” and “reactionary fascist forces of capitalist countries beyond the bounds of the Soviet Union.” Their possible union, the paper warned, endangered the entire country.¹⁴⁷

The following day, *Pravda* described the various celebrations for the organization’s 20th anniversary and proclaimed, “Soviet intelligence is made strong by the support of the people.” Making little distinction between internal and external threats, the article emphasized the importance of the secret police organs in defending the Soviet Union as fascists threatened war. These conditions, the article continued, obligated “the entire Soviet people to greater vigilance.” The article quoted L. Sharov, a factory worker, who extended his good wishes to NKVD head Nikolai Yezhov: “May Comrade Yezhov know that the Chekisty [secret police] of the NKVD are not only those who work in the punishing organs, but also millions of workers who have learned Bolshevik vigilance, who have learned to unmask enemies of the people, and who

¹⁴⁵ M. Frinovskii, “Na strazhe zavoevanii sotsializma,” *Pravda*, 20 December 1937, 3.

¹⁴⁶ “K dvadtsatiletiiu VChK—OGPU—NKVD,” *Izvestiia*, 20 December 1937, 1.

¹⁴⁷ “Privet sovetskoi razvedke!” *Izvestiia*, 20 December 1937, 1.

comprise the reserves of the NKVD.”¹⁴⁸ This statement stressed that participation in and cooperation with intelligence was a patriotic duty, as citizens united to identify and punish enemies. Such calls to action played on citizens’ fears to deepen the affective claims of Soviet identity and called upon citizens to participate in the struggle with its enemies.¹⁴⁹

The focus on so-called enemies of the people belied the perpetual assertion that citizens shared equal rights. Already we have seen how the “revised nationalities policy” described by Martin led to the re-centering and reemergence of Russian and Russians. As the press placed more weight on the Russian people, leaders also regarded some citizens as exceptionally dangerous. In the early 1930s, a series of national repressions included brutal famines in Ukraine and Kazakhstan; purges of national party elites; and growing apprehension over “enemy nations” within the Soviet Union.¹⁵⁰ Deportations removed suspicious ethnic minorities from border regions and forced settlement in internal regions of Central Asia and Siberia beginning in the mid-1930s, replacing them with citizens the state deemed trustworthy. These deportations included forced resettlements of Germans, Poles, and Finns from the western borders, Koreans from the eastern borders, and various non-titular minorities in the Caucasus.¹⁵¹ This process

¹⁴⁸ “Sovetskaia razvedka sil’na podderzhkoi narod,” *Pravda*, 21 December 1937, 1.

¹⁴⁹ On popular participation in terror, see David Priestland, *Stalinism and the Politics of Mobilization: Ideas, Power, and Terror in Inter-War Russia* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 304–403; Goldman, *Inventing the Enemy*; Goldman, *Terror and Democracy in the Age of Stalin*.

¹⁵⁰ Scholars have argued about the proper interpretation of these events, with the most extreme arguing that policies towards specific nations constituted genocide, see Robert Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Norman M. Naimark, *Stalin’s Genocides* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 70–79; Andrea Graziosi, *Stalinism, Collectivization and the Great Famine* (Cambridge: Ukrainian Studies Fund, 2009). Sarah Cameron offers a discussion of the debates about the Kazakh famine in “The Kazakh Famine of 1930–33: Current Research and New Directions,” *East/West: Journal of Ukrainian Studies* 3, no. 2 (2016): 117–32. Cameron herself argues that the Kazakh famine falls short of current legal definitions of genocide but may fit within more expansive definitions, see *The Hungry Steppe*. Regardless of the terminology used, there is little doubt that there was an ethnic component to these campaigns, as Martin and others argue: Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 273–393; Brown, *A Biography of No Place*, 134–52; Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 21–118.

¹⁵¹ On deportations of ethnic Germans and Poles in the Soviet West in the mid-1930s, see Brown, *A Biography of No Place*, 134–52; Irina Mukhina, *The Germans of the Soviet Union* (Routledge, 2007), 29–56. Koreans on the eastern frontier faced similar treatment beginning in 1937, see Michael Gelb, “An Early Soviet Ethnic Deportation: The Far-Eastern Koreans,” *The Russian Review* 54, no. 3 (1995): 389–412; Terry Martin, “The Origins of Soviet Ethnic

intensified during the Great Terror, which included a series of sweeping party purges alongside selective targeting of specific national minorities.¹⁵²

Campaigns against internal enemies took on new dimensions after the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, which allied the German and Soviet states and set the framework for the Soviet annexation of new territories. Between the signing of the pact and the German invasion in 1941, the terms “fascist” and “fascism” disappeared almost entirely from the country’s central newspapers, leaving internal enemies as the primary targets of repressive propaganda campaigns.¹⁵³ The state devoted special attention to newly annexed territories. Across Western Ukraine and Belarus, the Baltic States, and Moldova, local authorities targeted assorted “anti-Soviet elements,” a flexible category that broadly included nationalists, the religiously observant, comparatively well-off peasants, non-communist political activists, and anyone else local or Soviet authorities deemed to present a threat to the new Soviet order. Those targeted were subject to mass deportations, imprisonment, and execution.¹⁵⁴

Cleansing,” *The Journal of Modern History* 70, no. 4 (1998): 813–61. Additional discussions of border campaigns and deportations can be found in J. Otto Pohl, *Ethnic Cleansing in the USSR, 1937–1949* (Westport: Praeger, 1999); Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 312–16; Pavel Polian, *Against Their Will* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2003), 92–114; Naimark, *Stalin’s Genocides*, 80–98. Oleg Pobo’ and Pavel Polian have edited primary sources on Stalin-era ethnic deportations: *Stalinskie Deportatsii: 1928–1953* (Moscow: Mezhdunar, 2005).

¹⁵² Scholars have debated the degree to which an ethnic component defined the Great Terror, with some focusing predominantly on the internal party dimensions of the Great Purges, see Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror: A Reassessment*, Fortieth Anniversary Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Getty, *Origins of the Great Purges*; Getty and Manning, *Stalinist Terror*. More recently, James Harris has argued that it was driven largely by paranoia about foreign influence and intervention, see Harris, *The Great Fear*. Others have focused more specifically on the ethnic dimensions of the Great Terror, demonstrating that a disproportionate number of ethnic minorities fell victim to purges, both within the party and outside it. See Brown, *A Biography of No Place*, 153–72; Conquest, *The Great Terror*, 250–90; Naimark, *Stalin’s Genocides*, 99–120; Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 89–118.

¹⁵³ Based on research conducted in the *EastView* online archive for *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, accessed February 2017. Word searches of the two publications indicate that the terms “fascist” (*fashist*, which produces results for both the noun and verb versions) and “fascism” (*fashizm*) appeared regularly prior to the signing of the pact. In 1937, for example, the terms appeared on at least 1371 (fascist) and 1237 (fascism) in the two publications; in 1938, the terms appeared on 1289 and 1275 pages, respectively. In 1939, however, use of the terms fell precipitously: “fascist” appeared on 531 pages of the two publications, and “fascism” on 458 pages between January 1 and August 23, 1939, and only 13 and 7 times after the signing of the pact. The terms appeared 33 and 5 times in all of 1940, and 13 and 3 times between January 1 and June 22, 1941.

¹⁵⁴ Most literature on Stalin-era deportations and other repressive techniques in newly annexed territories focuses on the period immediately after World War II. On Stalinist terror and repression between 1939 and 1941, see Gross,

The campaigns directed against national minorities in the decade before World War II exposed the *de facto* inequalities that governed interethnic relations within the Soviet Union, particularly when seen alongside the concurrent reemphasis on ethnic Russians. Although these two discourses were not directly connected, their coincidence suggests a hierarchical approach to managing the ethnicities that comprised the Soviet people. The celebration of some groups and the repression of others belied repeated assertions of the equality, suggesting a distinct limitation on who could participate in civic life and by what means. At the same time, as long as citizens avoided being labeled enemies of the people, they were called to participate in civic life.

Letter Writing and Participatory Citizenship

As we have seen, the concept of the Soviet people was from the start tightly associated with notions of participatory patriotism. From celebrating heroes to contributing to the economy, from voting in elections to identifying enemies, party and state leaders called citizens to participate in civic life in myriad ways. Public discourse tightly connected these various forms of popular participation and contribution with invocations of the Soviet people, confirming, as Yekelchik argues, that “Stalinist citizenship” was “an active form of participation.”¹⁵⁵ The central press celebrated active participation as a key element of citizenship, often placing more emphasis on the act of participation than on the content. Yet the content of participatory

Revolution from Abroad, 144–224; Polian, *Against Their Will*, 115–22; Igor Cașu, “Stalinist Terror in Soviet Moldavia, 1940–1953,” in *Stalinist Terror in Eastern Europe: Elite Purges and Mass Repression*, ed. Kevin McDermott and Matthew Stibbe (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010); Aldis Purs, “Soviet in Form, Local in Content: Elite Repression and Mass Terror in the Baltic States, 1940–1953,” in *Stalinist Terror in Eastern Europe: Elite Purges and Mass Repression*, ed. Kevin McDermott and Matthew Stibbe (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 19–38; Amir Weiner and Aigi Rahi-Tamm, “Getting to Know You: The Soviet Surveillance System, 1939–57,” *Kritika* 13, no. 1 (2012): especially 7–22; Frunchak, “The Making of Soviet Chernivtsi,” 250–80; Björn M. Felder, “Stalinist National Bolshevism, Enemy Nations and Terror: Soviet Occupation of the Baltic States 1940–41,” in *The Baltic States Under Stalinist Rule*, ed. Olaf Mertelsmann (Böhlau Verlag Köln Weimar, 2016). Snyder also describes various deportations in what he terms “Molotov-Ribbentrop Europe”: *Bloodlands*, 119–54.

¹⁵⁵ Yekelchik, *Stalin’s Citizens*, 5.

patriotism was not inconsequential. For example, as we will see in Chapter 4, the state carefully developed the content of holiday festivities at both the center and across the country, infusing celebrations with visual representations of the ideological messages it sought to impart.

Under Stalin's centralized rule, ideological messages emanated primarily from the center, as the state and party determined both the content and rhetoric of Soviet identity. Regardless of the party-state's clear primacy, this was never exclusively a one-way process. Paralleling and complementing messages from the state and party at the center, citizens across the country also had opportunities to communicate their own opinions and interpretations. Public letter writing became an important medium for citizens to address grievances, petition for help, comment on ongoing matters of political and social significance, and even reflect on and communicate details of their own lives.¹⁵⁶ The content of letters themselves, many of which were saved and archived by state organs, offers insight into how citizens made sense of ideological messages. Here, alongside the significant scholarship on Stalin-era letter writing, I focus on one campaign—letters written in connection with the 1936 Constitution—as a window into the state's early success in cultivating the practices of Soviet identity.

¹⁵⁶ Following Sheila Fitzpatrick, I distinguish between “public” letter writing to the state, party, newspapers, and other public institutions, from private letter writing, to family, friends, and loved ones. As Fitzpatrick notes, the “public” aspect should not be overstated, and indeed, letters were only ever “partially public.” In letters, citizens often drew broadly from details of their private lives, providing a glimpse into their life circumstances and their own reflections on many aspects of life in the Soviet Union. Newspaper boards occasionally reported publicly on the content of the letters received by editorial staff, but more often, letters were read, archived, and described in internal reports. See Sheila Fitzpatrick, “Suplicants and Citizens: Public Letter-Writing in Soviet Russia in the 1930s,” *Slavic Review* 55, no. 1 (1996): 79–80. For relevant discussions of early Soviet letter writing and popular opinion, see J. Arch Getty, “State and Society Under Stalin: Constitutions and Elections in the 1930s,” *Slavic Review* 50, no. 1 (1991): 18–35; Fitzpatrick, “Suplicants and Citizens”; Sheila Fitzpatrick, “Signals from Below: Soviet Letters of Denunciation of the 1930s,” *The Journal of Modern History* 68, no. 4 (1996): 831–66; Sarah Davies, *Popular Opinion in Stalin's Russia: Terror, Propaganda and Dissent, 1934–1941* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Matthew E. Leno, “Letter-Writing and the State: Reader Correspondence with Newspapers as a Source for Early Soviet History,” *Cahiers du monde russe* 40, no. 1/2 (1999): 139–69; Lewis H. Siegelbaum et al., eds., *Stalinism as a Way of Life: A Narrative in Documents* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

Reading Letters Along and Against the Grain

Given the repressive conditions of the Stalinist Soviet Union, citizens' letters raise obvious interpretive and methodological questions. High levels of surveillance and the unchecked power of the state security apparatus limited and affected the scope of what some citizens might have been willing to write, particularly when signing their names to letters, as most did. Yet even keeping all of these obvious and important caveats in mind, what is most striking about citizens' letters, whether in connection with the 1936 Constitution, to newspapers, or to other institutions, is the unexpectedly wide range of materials and opinions covered. As Lewis Siegelbaum suggests in his co-edited volume of civilian voices, the sheer quantity of letters received by political elites and newspapers is almost unfathomable. Thousands of letters poured into the offices of Bolshevik elites and newspapers daily. Letters themselves served an array of purposes that visibly ran the gamut from complaints to denunciations to expressions of praise and gratitude to the state and its leaders. The state—from party representatives to newspaper offices—devoted significant resources and people to handling letters and their contents, from archiving them to summarizing the range of content in reports. This testified to the state's commitment to understanding and engaging with popular opinion, as well as the letter writers' own investment in civic life.¹⁵⁷

With respect to the 1936 Constitution, the state solicited letters from citizens as part of a formalized all-union discussion of the draft, meaning citizens wrote with reference to a pre-circulated document. Judging by the minimal edits actually incorporated into the final version adopted in December 1936, the content of citizens' letters was not significant to the editing process. Still, the discussion played a symbolic role in signifying mass participation. The sheer

¹⁵⁷ Siegelbaum et al., *Stalinism as a Way of Life*, 1–27, especially 6–9. On the organization of the process, see also Getty, "State and Society Under Stalin," 23–24; Lomb, *Stalin's Constitution*, 62–83; Velikanova, *Mass Political Culture Under Stalinism*.

numbers of apparent participants in the discussion are staggering. The state reported the participation of some 36.5 million citizens, more than twenty percent of the population.¹⁵⁸

Although the state's highest priority was participation itself, it was not entirely indifferent to the content. The state made efforts to showcase letters that praised the draft constitution and could serve as demonstrations of public support both at home and abroad.

Just ahead of releasing the final approved version of the constitution, the state published a collection of letters and responses as a "living testimony to the joy with which the Soviet people discusses the Stalin Constitution."¹⁵⁹ The editors praised citizens' familiarity with the document: "There is no corner of our country where the fiery words of the Stalin Constitution have not reached. There is not a single citizen who would not be familiar with this most wonderful document. The utmost simple words of the basic law of the USSR have inspired millions of people."¹⁶⁰ Letters selected for publication offered a rosy view of citizens' responses, but original letters, filed away in the State Archive of the Russian Federation, generally revealed similar themes and viewpoints.

Self-Identification and Citizenship in Public Letters

In letters to the commission convened for the countrywide discussion of the draft for the 1936 Constitution, citizens addressed a wide range of topics. Although the general tone of letters tended towards laudatory, many citizens did not hesitate to criticize the circulated text. Of all the

¹⁵⁸ GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 1, ll. 16–55. The 1937 census claimed a total population 162 million, though the state kept the results of the census strictly classified, not least because the statistical result suggested the impact of famine, purges, and other repressive policies. On the process and suppression of the census, see Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 404; Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, 280–92. Results were finally published in 1991, see Iurii Aleksandrovich Poliakov et al., eds., *Vsesoiuznaia perepis' naseleniia, 1937 g.: kratkie itogi* (Moscow: Akademiia Nauk SSSR, Institut istorii, 1991).

¹⁵⁹ A. M. Davidiuk, B. A. Galin, and Ia. M. Usherenko, eds., *Sovetskii narod o stalinskoii konstitutsii* (Moscow: Gosudarsvennoe sotsial'no-ekonomicheskoe izdatel'stvo, 1936), 3.

¹⁶⁰ Davidiuk, Galin, and Usherenko, 4.

topics covered in the constitution, participants in the all-union discussion focused most heavily on matters relating to citizenship, revealing, as Samantha Lomb observes, “strongly developed opinions on the role of the state.”¹⁶¹

Letters themselves require attention to their specific limitations and potential advantages. Since letters were the work of individuals, it is impossible to judge to what extent citizens were forthcoming or honest about their observations and opinions, not least because of rampant repression and surveillance in the 1930s. The people most motivated to write often held extreme views at all ends of the political spectrum, including those most satisfied and dissatisfied with their specific life circumstances. Accordingly, it is impossible to determine to what extent fellow citizens, particularly those who did not write letters, shared the opinions of those that did. Letters are more revealing of how citizens described themselves in relation to the state and interpreted their life circumstances. Thus, although letters should not be read as necessarily descriptive or reflective of an objective reality, they offer insight into people’s subjective interpretations. Moving away from the question of whether people “really” thought or believed what they wrote, letters suggest how people adapted the language of state in composing their identities, a process Stephen Kotkin calls learning to “speak Bolshevik.”¹⁶² Here, I am most interested in the degree to which people adopted the language of citizenship in writing to the state.

According to party reports compiled several decades later, more than half of letters made suggestions and comments concerning Chapter 10 of the constitution, which outlined the “basic rights and duties of citizens.”¹⁶³ These included the right to work, rest, medical care, education, and to equal rights before the law, regardless of gender or ethnicity. The chapter also outlined basic civil rights, including freedom of conscience, speech, press, and assembly, and promised

¹⁶¹ Lomb, *Stalin’s Constitution*, 92.

¹⁶² Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*.

¹⁶³ GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 1, ll. 16–55.

the separation of church and state. In perhaps the greatest contrast between the law and reality, citizens were guaranteed the inviolability of both their persons and property, with arrests and seizures permitted only in accordance with the law. The chapter also outlined a long list of obligations, including serving in the military, contributing to the economy and civic life, and defending the country. Although, as already noted, the concept of the Soviet people did not feature in the constitution, the document formally declared anyone who committed crimes against public property to be “enemies of the people,” hinting at the atmosphere of repression.¹⁶⁴

That people responded to matters relating to their rights and duties as citizens suggests a deep engagement from citizens themselves about their own status vis-à-vis the state. Many criticized the poor guarantees of their rights. One of the most common complaints came from collective farmers, who wanted less ambiguity about their status. Many objected to the fact that Article 119 as drafted (and approved) outlined all citizens’ right to rest but guaranteed access to sanatoria, houses of rest, and clubs only to workers (*trudiashchikhsia*). Some feared that the ambiguous phrasing could be interpreted so as to exclude collective farmers. As I. Ianutin, a collective farmer in Bashkiria, noted, “we are neither workers nor white collar workers ([but rather] collective farmers); does that mean that we do not have rest?” He requested that the constitution more explicitly extend the right to rest and care in old age to farmers.¹⁶⁵ Iakov Oguz, a self-identified Jewish factory worker from Moscow, likewise called upon the state to ensure

¹⁶⁴ For a copy of the constitution in the Russian original, see *Konstitutsiia (Osnovnoi Zakon) Soiuza Sovetskikh Sotsialisticheskikh Respublik* (Moscow: Partizdat TsK VKP(b), 1936). Samantha Lomb provides a translated copy of the draft constitution in Lomb, *Stalin’s Constitution*, 147–63.

¹⁶⁵ GARF, f. 3316, o. 41, d. 81, l. 50–50ob. Several other letters from collective farmers and from farms in the same file made analogous requests, see letters on 57 (Rodion G.), 58 (Kazakhstan), 61 (Moldova), 72–73 (Kursk oblast), and 74 (Al. Mekhanshina, Sverdlovsk oblast). A similar view also emerges in collective farmer P. I. Voronov’s letter to Khrestianskaia Gazeta, reproduced in Siegelbaum et al., *Stalinism as a Way of Life*, 168–69. “*Trudiashchikhsia*” literally refers to one who works and could include collective farmers but is sometimes used interchangeably with the word for worker (*rabochii*), which has distinctly industrial connotations. For additional letters on the right to rest, see Davidiuk, Galin, and Usherenko, *Sovetskii narod o stalinskoii konstitutsii*, 200–227.

equal opportunities for all citizens by offering more robust protections against anti-Semitism.¹⁶⁶

Letter writers adopted the language of citizenship to express pride in their country. Many specifically cited their own experiences of upward mobility as a driving factor in their feelings of loyalty and dedication to the state, contrasting the opportunities they had received since the revolution with their experiences in the tsarist empire. Factory worker Petr Latyshev noted in a speech at his workplace, “I have four sons, and I would not have been able to educate them before the revolution. The most a worker could have done for his children would have been to send them to an elementary school and then as soon as they grew up, they would go to the factory like their fathers to work for pieces of bread. Work was difficult.” Now, in contrast, he worked by choice and was thankful for the state’s provision in retirement, as outlined in the constitution. “I am a master (*khoziain*) of my own country,” he proudly declared, to the applause of coworkers.¹⁶⁷ Another letter writer, M. Chinsov, who wrote to recommend that the right to education be limited to citizens who were 40 and younger, similarly noted, “We are actually masters of the earth.” He declared his willingness to defend the country from fascists and others who would slander life in the Soviet Union, as he reflected on the unprecedented opportunities the state offered its citizens.¹⁶⁸

Women, peasants, ethnic minorities, and factory workers often credited the state for offering them unprecedented opportunities relative to their limited horizons in tsarist Russia. One 50-year-old letter writer from Ivanovo noted that his children had first received education after the revolution, and he reveled in the fact that one of his sons had become an engineer and another was finishing up his training as a military pilot.¹⁶⁹ Another noted how his own

¹⁶⁶ GARF, f. 3316, o. 41, d. 193, l. 46–56.

¹⁶⁷ Davidiuk, Galin, and Usherenko, *Sovetskii narod o stalinskoi konstitutsii*, 83.

¹⁶⁸ GARF, f. 3316, o. 41, d. 83, ll. 5–6.

¹⁶⁹ Davidiuk, Galin, and Usherenko, *Sovetskii narod o stalinskoi konstitutsii*, 239–40.

educational opportunities had allowed him, a former shepherd from the Omsk region, to study in Moscow and return as an agronomist, for which he had been recognized with awards.¹⁷⁰ A woman from eastern Siberia described her trajectory from barely literate peasant to award-winning dairy farmer and proudly declared herself to be a citizen with equal rights.¹⁷¹ Many letter writers took pride in a sense of ownership in the state.

Although published excerpts were carefully chosen to showcase happiness and gratitude and clearly served propagandistic purposes, we should not dismiss them out of hand. Indeed, stories of upward mobility testified to the real opportunities the state provided citizens. Even without robust guarantees of rights and privileges (and often, alongside the reality of repression), many experienced significant improvement to their status. For many, the opportunities for educational and professional advancement were unthinkable a generation earlier.

Many specifically interpreted the opportunity to participate in the discussion of the constitution as a clear example of the unprecedented and innovative ways that the state solicited the participation and cooperation of its citizens. This was exemplified in the words of Iakov Oguz, the Jewish factory technician cited earlier:

There can be no question about the fact that I, as a citizen of the world's first socialist state, am happy at the mere thought that I am participating in the discussion of the draft of the Great Stalin Constitution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. My joy—it is the joy of all of us millions of creators of socialism, with a bright, happy life and future. My pride—it is the fact that I am taking part (I, a mere mortal!) in the discussion of the greatest historical document of the revolutionary epoch, every word of which was drafted by Stalin. I take pride in the fact that our constitution—it is the first constitution to stipulate the rights of workers of humanity; the most democratic, the most revolutionary, the most brilliant... Finally, it is the first constitution that a government has released for a broad discussion by the people.¹⁷²

Even as he declared his hopes for better protection of his rights as a Jew, he expressed both pride

¹⁷⁰ Davidiuk, Galin, and Usherenko, 241–42.

¹⁷¹ Davidiuk, Galin, and Usherenko, 272–73.

¹⁷² GARF, f. 3316, o. 41, d. 193, l. 47.

as a citizen and his confidence that the state would continue to provide for him and others.

Under Stalin, this formalized countrywide discussion was mostly ornamental, at least if measured by how much the comments influenced the constitution's actual written content. Although citizens were encouraged to offer suggestions and corrections, few changes were made after Stalin had approved the constitution in April.¹⁷³ Even though letter writers' suggestions were not used to produce the constitution, leaders nevertheless saw the process of discussion as an important avenue for citizens to take part in civic life. The letters offered the state a glimpse into some of the ways citizens made sense of the materials and of their lives more generally. The content of letters, even when critical of the constitution, the state, and life in the Soviet Union, suggested some success in the party-state's efforts to cultivate affective attachments, as people took their status as citizens seriously.

Conclusion: Unity through Hierarchy

As war loomed as an almost inevitable threat to the country, leaders rallied around the concept of the Soviet people as the center of a new vision of Soviet identity that called citizens to participate actively in civic life and defend the country's borders. Here, the focus has been almost exclusively on how the state developed a patriotic rhetoric that encouraged participation and sacrifice in order to strengthen affective bonds to the state when war loomed on horizon, but brief forays into citizens' own writings suggest some noteworthy success already in the 1930s in cultivating new affective attachments to the state. The state featured prominently in discourses about Soviet identity: the state was credited with promoting conditions for a new society, served as the common point of unity for all citizens, and demanded the participation of the populace in securing its defense. All these factors expressed a vision of a participatory patriotism that was

¹⁷³ GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 1, l. 20.

deeply tied to the new ideological concept of the Soviet people.

Embedded in the idea of the Soviet people, and indeed the very phrase, was a vision of a populace unified by an imagined sense of kinship derived from a common commitment to the Soviet state. Across the press and in public speeches, leaders emphasized the diversity, unity, and equality of citizens. Actual practices, however, betrayed the inequalities that defined and shaped Soviet life in explicit and subtle ways, particularly with respect to ethnicity. Through both a stronger emphasis on Russian people, culture, language and history, and a scaling back of the policies that had promoted ethnic minorities in the 1920s, state policies reinforced and formalized the very ethnic hierarchies that leaders had criticized so prominently in the 1920s and early 1930s. With the rising threat of war creating a need for internal cohesion, ethnic hierarchies became an organizing principle and a strategy to manage the country's diverse population.

Even while deepening existing inequalities, more strongly defined hierarchies contributed to a more centralized, unified state, one that not only encouraged but demanded participation from all citizens. This participation both demonstrated and contributed to citizens' affective attachments, especially as the international tensions escalated. The threat of war, while certainly contributing urgency and necessity to unity, was only one aspect of a broad project of cultivating a state-sponsored Soviet identity. Indeed, as much as war overshadowed public life in the 1930s, the speed with which leaders turned their attention to the common traits and linkages that united a staggeringly diverse citizenry is striking. The concept of the Soviet people offered an effective metaphor of unity that sought to harness the creative and productive powers of the entire citizenry, one that would be a powerful ideological tool as war shifted from a rhetorical device to a nightmarish reality.

Chapter 2

Making a Home for the Soviet People: Soviet Identity in the Great Patriotic War and Its Aftermath

In October 1942, Uzbek soldiers on the front received warm greetings, encouragement, and a call to action in a letter from their fellow Uzbeks, published in full in *Pravda*. Following then-established practice, the letter drew upon history, family metaphors, and ideological statements to implore soldiers to remember the examples of their heroic forbears, who fought valiantly against enemy invaders. The text reframed the war as a specific threat to Uzbeks:

The enemy is insidious. Today, using tricks, fear, and panic, he intends to spread dissent among the members of the great family of Soviet peoples, to shatter our determination to achieve victory. Tomorrow he will become the master of our homeland (*yurt*). He intends to give our collective farms and Soviet farms to German barons and landholders and our enterprises to German capitalists as private property. Developing slave markets, they want to sell free Uzbeks like cattle. He will turn the canals we built with love into rivers of blood. He will return to the era of the Mang'it Amirs of Bukhara, even worse than the era of the bloodthirsty khans of Khokand and Khiva. Destroying the Samarkand of Uzbek poet Navoi and Uzbek astronomer Ulug'bek, the Fergana of Uzbek poet Muqimiy, the Bukhara where the hero Tarobiy struggled against Mongol invaders, he will carry off the treasures of this land to Germany. They want to turn our schools into prisons, our theatres into brothels. Hitler intends to steal our literature and our books, our *ghazals* [a type of poem], our songs and our *dutors* [a two-stringed instrument], our cozy homes and our *bekasam* robes [a type of cloth], the beauty of our wives, the clean and calm lives of our elderly, and the peaceful slumber of our children.

Alongside appeals to ethnic pride and history, the letter reminded soldiers that they were children of a single, multiethnic homeland, and that they worked and lived alongside their fellow citizens to build a “big home” and common culture. Together they were called to defend their homeland.¹

¹ “O'zbek xalqining jangchilariga ularning el-yurtlaridan maktub,” *Pravda*, 31 October 1942, 2; a slightly abridged Russian translation followed on page 3. Aside from differences in the order of the text, a few stylistic differences, and the omission of a few lines of poetry in the Russian version, the two texts are roughly equivalent but presume

However, in a departure from standard practice, this letter was published in both Russian and Uzbek. The two versions filled nearly two pages of *Pravda*, one printed in a language completely unfamiliar to nearly all of the paper's readers.² The letter, in both of its versions, exemplified the Soviet Union's wartime efforts to develop an inclusive vision of patriotic citizenship that brought together its diverse citizenry. Here was a quintessential example of what I term *nested patriotism*, the harnessing of sub-state loyalties—here, ethnic affiliation—to the wider interests of Soviet state patriotism.³ In this case, appeals to soldiers' ethnic pride, devotion to their Uzbek *and* Soviet homelands, and desire to protect their families functioned as tools to encourage sacrificial service at the front.

Although Soviet leaders had spent most of the 1930s ideologically (and materially) preparing citizens for war, Nazi Germany's sudden invasion in June 1941 came as a shock to leaders and populace alike.⁴ In subsequent days, the Soviet press called upon citizens to join a patriotic effort to defeat the enemy in what would ultimately become a nearly four-year struggle for the Soviet Union's very existence. By the time of the German surrender in May 1945, war had claimed the lives of some 25 million Soviet citizens, inflicting a deep, almost unimaginable toll on the state, its territory, and its people. Despite vast suffering, the Soviet Union ultimately emerged from World War II intact, even expanding its territory, a victory that leaders would

different knowledge about cultural reference points. The Russian version also makes explicit reference to Uzbeks as "equal rights bearing members" of the Soviet family, while the Uzbek letter simply implies this by noting that the Uzbek people was a child (*farzand*) of the Soviet family, like other Soviet peoples. The letter would have circulated in frontline publications, ensuring wide availability. See especially Brandon Schechter, "'The People's Instructions': Indigenizing The Great Patriotic War Among 'Non-Russians,'" *Ab Imperio* 2012, no. 3 (2012): 109–33.

² The use of Ukrainian and Belarusian, often without Russian translation, was somewhat more common during the war. These Slavic languages were more or less intelligible to Russian-speaking readers, unlike Turkic tongues such as Uzbek.

³ Scholars have long noted that identity is often nested or layered, but to my knowledge this idea has not previously been applied to patriotism.

⁴ The extent of Soviet knowledge about Operation Barbarossa has remained a topic of historical debate and dispute, though there is no doubt the invasion caught the general public by surprise. On Soviet intelligence, see David E. Murphy, *What Stalin Knew: The Enigma of Barbarossa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005). See also Jonathan Haslam, "Soviet-German Relations and the Origins of the Second World War: The Jury Is Still Out," *The Journal of Modern History* 69, no. 4 (1997): 785–97.

credit to the combined efforts of the entire country.

Whether writing about military effectiveness, propaganda, or economic planning, scholars of World War II in the Soviet Union have often been preoccupied with the question of how the country overcame sharp economic, military, and political disadvantages to win the war.⁵ Others have sought to understand how specific groups or the population at large participated (or did not participate) in the war effort.⁶ Some have focused on the human costs of war, including especially the Holocaust.⁷ Yet others have seen World War II as a focal point of Soviet identity primarily in retrospect, as a moment enshrined in collective memory.⁸ The present study has a different goal: to understand how the war itself shaped and altered the understandings of the Soviet identity that had circulated in the previous decade.

What follows in this chapter is primarily a study of wartime propaganda, focusing on the discourses surrounding Soviet identity. In the first half, I consider how wartime propaganda both described and created a united population, focusing on how the propaganda apparatus—

⁵ Roger R. Reese, *Why Stalin's Soldiers Fought: The Red Army's Military Effectiveness in World War II* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2011); Karel C. Berkhoff, *Motherland in Danger: Soviet Propaganda during World War II* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012); John Barber and Mark Harrison, *The Soviet Home Front, 1941–1945: A Social and Economic History of the USSR in World War II* (London: Longman, 1991).

⁶ Catherine Merridale, *Ivan's War: Life and Death in the Red Army, 1939–1945* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006); Anna Krylova, *Soviet Women in Combat: A History of Violence on the Eastern Front* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Kristy Ironside, "Rubles for Victory: The Social Dynamics of State Fundraising on the Soviet Home Front," *Kritika* 15, no. 4 (2014): 799–828; Roberto J. Carmack, "'A Fortress of the Soviet Home Front': Mobilization and Ethnicity in Kazakhstan during World War II" (University of Wisconsin, 2015); Charles Shaw, "Soldiers' Letters to Inobatxon and O'g'ulxon: Gender and Nationality in the Birth of a Soviet Romantic Culture," *Kritika* 17, no. 3 (2016): 517–52; Moritz Florin, "Becoming Soviet through War: The Kyrgyz and the Great Fatherland War," *Kritika* 17, no. 3 (2016): 495–516.

⁷ E.g. Omer Bartov, *The Eastern Front, 1941–45: German Troops and the Barbarisation of Warfare*, 2nd ed. (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001); Karel C. Berkhoff, *Harvest of Despair: Life and Death in Ukraine under Nazi Rule* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004); Wendy Lower, *Nazi Empire-Building and the Holocaust in Ukraine* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

⁸ See especially Nina Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead: The Rise and Fall of the Cult of World War II in Russia* (New York: Basic Books, 1994); Amir Weiner, *Making Sense of War: The Second World War and the Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Lisa A. Kirschenbaum, *The Legacy of the Siege of Leningrad, 1941–1995: Myth, Memories, and Monuments* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Polly Jones, *Myth, Memory, Trauma: Rethinking the Stalinist Past in the Soviet Union, 1953–70* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 173–211; Ivo Mijnsen, *Cities of Heroes: The War Cult and the Postwar Generation in the Brezhnev Era*, forthcoming.

especially the central press, leaders' public speeches, and popular literature—built on prewar discourses of heroism, multiethnic unity, and common enemies to deepen the affective ties that bound citizens to one another. The Nazi invasion placed the Soviet Union in the unique position of managing a defensive war on its own contiguous territory while simultaneously managing a multiethnic, multilingual, and multi-confessional population.⁹ The sheer scale of military calamity necessitated complete mobilization, as the country of necessity relied on the combined efforts of soldiers and civilians to guarantee final victory. To promote the widest possible participation, wartime propaganda described a unity that simultaneously built upon and renegotiated ideas of the Soviet people, confirming and challenging ideas of the 1930s. This discourse specifically used forms of nested patriotism, including appeals to ethnic, familial, local/geographic, and even religious sentiment, to focus and deepen loyalty to the state.

This unified vision was not merely theoretical. Although this chapter primarily considers propagandistic discourses that circulated in the central press, forays into the wartime experiences of soldiers and civilians in the second half of the chapter offer insight into the practical application of propaganda.¹⁰ As demonstrated in archival documents from both the central party

⁹ That the state did not collapse distinguished the Soviet Union from most continental powers. Of course, the Soviet Union was not the only multiethnic polity to fight. Recent scholarship has drawn attention to the imperial dimensions of World War II, see Ashley Jackson, *British Empire and the Second World War* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2006); Ashley Jackson, Yasmin Khan, and Gajendra Singh, eds., *An Imperial World at War: The British Empire, 1939–45* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017); Iain E. Johnston-White, *The British Commonwealth and Victory in the Second World War* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); Eric T. Jennings, *Free French Africa in World War II: The African Resistance* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015). The U.S., too, contended with both racial and religious diversity both at war and at home, see Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 187–237; Ronit Y. Stahl, *Enlisting Faith: How the Military Chaplaincy Shaped Religion and State in Modern America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017), 74–105. For the U.S. and the British Empire, war was fought primarily abroad, while France fell entirely. The USSR faced the additional difficulty of fighting on its own territory, transforming war into an existential struggle.

¹⁰ This is foremost a study of wartime experiences on Soviet-controlled territory during what the state called the “Great Patriotic War,” which began with the German invasion on June 22, 1941, and continued until the state declared victory on May 9, 1945. The period between 1939 and 1941, when the country was ostensibly at peace, comes into partial focus in the previous chapter. Specifically excluded here is consideration of wartime occupation, both for reasons of space and practicality, and also because others offer insightful analysis into the experience of war in occupied territories. Here, the classic work is Alexander Dallin’s *German Rule in Russia, 1941–1945: A Study of*

apparatus in Moscow and in republic archives in Kazakhstan, wartime conditions placed people into increased contact with other fellow citizens both on the front and in the rear, implicitly promoting a sense of common community and belonging that extended beyond class, ethnic, and geographic lines. As a result, World War II complicated the geographic and ethnic structure of the Soviet Union, as the country itself began to operate more as a unified, nation-like whole in both theory and practice. As soldiers and citizens interacted across geographic and ethnic lines, a more powerful understanding emerged of what it meant to be Soviet. At the same time, even as war bound citizens together through common goals and an imagined victory, these interactions also exposed persistent ethnic difference and hierarchies.

The chapter concludes by considering the postwar trajectories of these trends, as the state reasserted its power and ideology while undergoing an extensive campaign of reconstruction in Stalin's final decade. As is evident from archival documents from the center and from the Soviet Union's western republics, this took particular forms in the territories that were newly incorporated into the Soviet Union, which required not only the process of reconstruction but also political, economic, cultural, and social integration. As in wartime, the postwar period was fraught with the same tensions between theoretical visions of equality and institutionalized and informal inequalities. Still, in the aftermath of victory, the war itself was nearly universally understood to have been a foundational moment for the Soviet people and for this broader Soviet identity.

The 'Soviet People' at War: Ideological Mobilization and Wartime Propaganda

Hours after the German invasion, Viacheslav Molotov, the Chairman of the Council of

Occupation Policies (London: Macmillan, 1981). More recent studies include Berkhoff, *Harvest of Despair*; Lower, *Nazi Empire-Building and the Holocaust in Ukraine*.

People's Commissars and the Commissar of Foreign Affairs, addressed Soviet citizens by radio. He described the surprise Nazi attack in terms that accentuated its inhumanity, calling it "without precedent in the history of civilized peoples." The attack, he emphasized, broke treaty agreements between Germany and the Soviet Union, leaving leaders no choice but to declare war. Alluding to Napoleon's ultimately unsuccessful invasion of Russia in 1812, he pledged total defeat to the invading Germans: "The Red Army and our entire people (*narod*) will once again carry out a victorious patriotic war for the motherland (*rodina*), for honor, for freedom."¹¹

Echoing discourses from the late 1930s, Molotov suggested a connection between the state, its military, and its people: "The Government of the Soviet Union expresses its unshakable conviction that our valiant army and navy and the brave falcons of Soviet aviation will fulfill their duty with honor before the motherland, before the Soviet people, and will deal a crushing blow to the aggressor." Calling upon "true Soviet patriots" to provide for all needs of the state and military, he expressed his confidence that the Soviet Union would triumph: "Our cause is righteous (*pravoe*). The enemy will be defeated. Victory will be ours."¹² Molotov's speech was printed in *Pravda* the next day, accompanied by a quarter-page photograph of Stalin and declarations from ministries and military institutions, illustrating the centralized, unified state and diverting attention away from Stalin's curious retreat from the public eye.

When Stalin finally addressed the country directly by radio on July 3, he also asserted the inevitability of victory. Like Molotov, he described the German invasion as a cruel, unjustified, and illegal provocation and an assault on the Soviet way of life. It endangered hard-won economic, cultural, and political achievements and threatened a return to tsarist-era oppression and inequality: "The matter thus concerns the life and death of the Soviet state, the life and death

¹¹ "Vystuplenie po radio Zamestitelia Predsedatelia Soveta Narodnykh Komissarov Soiuzo SSR i Narodnogo Komissara Inostrannykh Del tov. V.M. Molotova, 22 iunia 1941 goda," *Pravda*, 23 June 1941, 1.

¹² *Ibid.*

of the peoples of the USSR, of whether the peoples of the Soviet Union will be free or if they will fall into servitude.”¹³ He called upon citizens to present a unified front to repel the attack, stressing the importance of both military and economic strength. Only the combination of well-trained forces, ruthless partisans, and an organized, focused home front could defeat the enemy. Recalling this speech, Mukhamet Shayakhmetov, then a Kazakh enlistee, remembered, “After hearing these words, I felt even more confident about us winning a speedy victory. Most of my compatriots felt the same. Our faith in the genius of our leader and the indomitable might of the Workers’ and Peasants’ Red Army was enormous.” A surge of patriotism followed.¹⁴

In the first days of the war, *Pravda* and *Izvestiia* painted an image of a population unified to crush the invading fascist enemy. The historian and Central Committee member Emelian Iaroslavskii, in a June 23 *Pravda* editorial, described the country’s principal strength as the unique “moral-political unity of Soviet society,” as citizens joined together in a spirit of patriotism, hatred for the enemy, and willingness to sacrifice for the defense of the country. This war, he stated unequivocally, would be a “battle of the entire Soviet people,” as citizens united under Stalin to defend the motherland. Invoking prewar motifs, Yaroslavskii declared, “Today the day has come when the feelings and energy of Soviet patriots are embodied in a current that breaks all barriers, when war will beget in every step the mass heroism of Soviet people (*liudi*) to make any sacrifices, to surmount any barriers, in order to defend the native country (*rodnaia strana*), to give it the possibility to grow and grow...”¹⁵

Editorials and declarations from citizens further underscored this atmosphere of unity.

Members of the intelligentsia declared their allegiance to the state, their conviction of final

¹³ “Vystuplenie po radio Predsedatelia Gosudarstvennogo Komiteta Oborony I.V. Stalina, 3 iulia 1941 goda,” *Izvestiia* and *Pravda*, 3 July 1941, 1.

¹⁴ Mukhamet Shayakhmetov, *The Silent Steppe: The Story of a Kazakh Nomad under Stalin*, ed. Anthony Gardner, trans. Jan Butler (London: Stacey International, 2006), 259.

¹⁵ Em. Iaroslavskii, “Velikaia otechestvennaia voina sovetskogo naroda,” *Pravda*, 23 June 1941, 4.

victory, and their willingness to fight the enemy.¹⁶ Poetry exhibited the commitment of the creative intelligentsia, as poems sought to drum up affective support from readers.¹⁷ *Pravda* and *Izvestiia* ran numerous full-page spreads of declarations from work collectives, local soviets, and other rank-and-file citizens, attesting to this unified response. Collective farmers, workers in all industries, and attendees at public rallies in every corner of the country declared their intent to fight, in Molotov's words, "for the motherland, for honor, for freedom." Photos depicted large crowds gathering to listen to speeches and soldiers preparing for battle. Headlines like "The Soviet people demonstrates its tight cohesion around the great party of Lenin-Stalin and the Soviet Government" and "The entire Soviet people is unified (*splochen*) and united as never before" borrowed from prewar discourses.¹⁸ Even as the language echoed the past, newspapers, leaders, and citizens portrayed the war as an unprecedented challenge, but one in which ultimate victory was assured.

Desperate Times, Desperate Measures: Heroism and Sacrifice on the Front and Home Front

Leaders and news agencies emphasized the extreme circumstances of war. As Stalin noted in his July 3, 1941 radio address, "The war with fascist Germany cannot be considered an ordinary war. It is not only a war between two armies. It is at the same time a great war of the

¹⁶ See declarations by Leonid Sobolev, Academic P.L. Kapitsa, poet and academic Pavlo Tychyna, academic V.A. Obruchev, Hero of the Soviet Union G. Baidukov, and Academic I. Bardin, all published under the headline "Golos sovetskoi intelligentsii," *Pravda*, 23 June 1941, 4.

¹⁷ For selected poems, see Aleksei Surkov, "Prisiagaem pobedoi," *Pravda*, 23 June 1941, 2; Nik. Aseev, "Pobeda budet za nami!" *Pravda*, 23 June 1941, 3; Aleksandr Prokof'ev, "V pokhod," *Izvestiia*, 24 June 1941, 3; Pavlo Tychyna, "My idemo na bii," *Pravda*, 24 June 1941, 3; Iakub Kolas, "Shalionağa psa—na lantsug!" *Pravda*, 24 June 1941, 4; Vas. Lebedev-Kumach, "Pokonchim s fashizmom," *Izvestiia*, 25 June 1941, 2; Suleiman Rustam, trans. A. Adalis, "Nesokrushimaia krepost'," *Izvestiia*, 26 June 1941, 2.

¹⁸ "Ves' sovetskii narod splochen i edin, kak nikogda," *Pravda*, 24 June 1941, 3; "Nashe delo pravoe. Vrag budet razbit. Pobeda budet za nami: Sovetskii narod demonstriruet svoiu tesnuiu splochnost' vokrug velikoi partii Lenina-Stalina i sovetskogo pravitel'stva," *Pravda*, 23 June 1941, 3. A perusal of *Pravda* and *Izvestiia* in the days following the Nazi invasion would reveal similar headlines. For prewar antecedents as discussed in Chapter 1, see especially "Sovetskii narod splochen kak nikogda," *Pravda*, 16 December 1937, 3; "Velikii sovetskii narod edinodushno podderzhivaet reshitel'niu politiku pravitel'stva SSSR," *Izvestiia*, 9 August 1938, 1.

entire Soviet people against German-fascist troops.”¹⁹ Although allusions to the last successful “patriotic war” on Russian territory in 1812 were common, Stalin emphasized the unprecedented severity and intensity of the German campaign. As he noted in his second wartime address, delivered at the November 1941 meeting of the Moscow soviet, the lack of a second European front enabled Germans to attack with unparalleled ferocity, intensified by the element of surprise. These circumstances contributed to “temporary setbacks” (*vremennye neudachi*) as German troops pushed deep into Soviet territory, inflicting serious casualties.²⁰ Later, Stalin and others pointed to the sheer number of German troops as evidence of unprecedented suffering.²¹

Commenters frequently saw the war as a test or trial (*ispytanie*) of the strength and will of the Soviet people. In the words of war correspondent Il’ia Bachelis in a 1942 *Izvestiia* article, “The Soviet people is undergoing a difficult test. War tests all of us, Soviet people (*liudi*), our country, our state. We are not the only ones who are undergoing the test: the hour of verification has come for all peoples and states. The state system and social structure, economic system, political ideals, and moral qualities—everything boils and bubbles in the fiery furnace of war.”²² Comparing it to rigorous scientific testing to ensure the quality and strength of materials, Bachelis saw war as “a difficult and serious test—perhaps the most serious of all those that humanity has experienced” and a chance to prove mettle and resolve.²³

¹⁹ “Vystuplenie po radio Predsedatelia Gosudarstvennogo Komiteta Oborony I.V. Stalina, 3 iulia 1941 goda,” *Izvestiia* and *Pravda*, 3 July 1941, 1.

²⁰ “Doklad Predsedatelia Gosudarstvennogo Komiteta Oborony tovarishcha I.V. Stalina,” *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, 7 November 1941, 1.

²¹ “Doklad Predsedatelia Gosudarstvennogo Komiteta Oborony tovarishcha I.V. Stalina,” *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, 7 November 1942, 1–2; “Doklad Predsedatelia Gosudarstvennogo Komiteta Oborony tovarishcha I.V. Stalina,” *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, 7 November 1943, 1–2. Stalin’s numbers were frequently cited, see “Velikii geroizm sovetskogo naroda i ego krasnoi armii,” *Pravda*, 11 November 1942, 1; F. Mokienko, “Sem’ mesiatsev spustia,” *Izvestiia*, 21 June 1944, 3.

²² I. Bachelis, “Velikoe ispytanie,” *Izvestiia*, 31 October 1942, 3.

²³ I. Bachelis, “Velikoe ispytanie,” *Izvestiia*, 31 October 1942, 3. For additional descriptions of war as a test, see “Velikaia otechestvennaia voina,” *Izvestiia*, 25 July 1941, 1; “Nepreklonna volia naroda k otporu vragu,” *Izvestiia*, 24 October 1941, 1; “Cherez vse ispytaniia—k konechnoi pobede!” *Pravda*, 29 October 1941, 1; “S novym godom,” *Pravda*, 1 January 1942, 1; “Litso vraga,” *Pravda*, 28 June 1942, 1; “Znamia nashei bor’by i pobedy,” *Izvestiia*, 5

Descriptions of wartime hardship inspired and intensified opportunities for heroism and sacrifice from civilians and soldiers. From the outset, the total impact was undeniable: as leaders repeatedly emphasized, success in war would require the absolute focus not only of all military personnel but also of a meticulously organized rear. As the writer Konstantin Trenev noted in *Pravda* several days after the invasion, “Each of us is ready for any sacrifice. In this hour, our great, heroic people demands heroism from each of us. And each of us is ready for the great historic feat, the feat of struggle for our sacred homeland.”²⁴ As in the 1930s, heroism was seen as an intrinsic quality of the Soviet people, which was unified in patriotic devotion.

Central newspapers abounded with stories of soldiers’ heroism. The “heroic army of the Soviet people,” as described in one editorial, provided training and opportunities for citizens to distinguish themselves: “Every day and every hour of the patriotic war bring ever new examples of the greatest heroism and steadfastness of our soldiers.”²⁵ The state formally recognized its most valiant citizens through awards and titles, including the most prestigious Hero of the Soviet Union, first used for the polar expeditions of the 1930s. The number of recognized heroes skyrocketed during war, as the title was bestowed liberally upon the country’s defenders. As before the war, the recognition of heroes served as an example to compatriots. A profile of Gennadii Gabaidulin, a Tatar awarded Hero of the Soviet Union in 1942, highlighted his willingness to go to war, mastery of weaponry, and refusal to surrender, even once injured. Then convalescing from injuries but ready to return to war as soon as possible, Gabaidulin was seen as an inspiration to both fellow Tatars and all citizens.²⁶

December 1944, 1.

²⁴ K. Trenev, “Vrag budet unichtozhen,” *Izvestiia*, 25 June 1941, 2.

²⁵ “Geroicheskaia armiiia sovetskogo naroda,” *Izvestiia*, 3 November 1942, 1. On heroism in the military as a theme of Soviet propaganda, see Berkhoff, *Motherland in Danger*, 35–67.

²⁶ Akhmed Erikeeov, “Gordost’ tatarskogo naroda,” *Izvestiia*, 29 October 1942, 2. On other heroes, see L. Kuz’min, “Edinaia volia sovetskogo naroda,” *Izvestiia*, 9 June 1943, 2. See Sartorti, “Legende und Wirklichkeit der Sowjethelden”; Sartorti, “On the Making of Heroes, Heroines, and Saints.”

In many cases, heroism was collective, as entire units banded together to defend the motherland. As *Izvestiia* declared in a 1942 front-page editorial, “The heroic defenders of Moscow and Tula, Odessa and Sevastopol, Leningrad and Stalingrad have shown the entire world examples of high military art. Cadres of the Red Army increased in serious strength, they have withstood an onslaught of the enemy of the sort no other army, no other country could withstand.”²⁷ On the eve of victory, Stalin noted the heroism not only of soldiers but of entire cities, singling out Leningrad, Stalingrad, Sevastopol, and Odessa as “hero cities.”²⁸

Stories and legends of heroes did not need to be strictly true to be effective and inspiring. Perhaps most (in)famously, the 28 guardsmen of the Panfilov Division were praised for their heroic, sacrificial defense of Moscow in November 1941. According to official reports, the entire division, a multiethnic unit made up primarily of residents of the Kazakh SSR, perished heroically, taking with them some 70 enemy soldiers and 20 enemy tanks. In reality, several soldiers survived the battle, one of whom was later convicted of treason. Such inconvenient details were stricken from the official record, making room for an embellished account of the unit’s accomplishments and heroism. The legend of the Panfilovtsy grew, memorialized in articles, poetry, and a postwar memorial in Almaty.²⁹ The soldiers were posthumously named Heroes of the Soviet Union, and leaders and citizens took pride in their accomplishments. As Kazakhstan’s First Secretary, Nikolai Skvortsov wrote in a 1942 *Pravda* article, “Of the 28 Guardsmen-Panfilovtsy, famous in the entire world for their heroism and unreserved loyalty to the motherland in the struggle with German occupants, twenty of the heroes are Kazakhstanis

²⁷ “Stalin vedet nas k pobede,” *Izvestiia*, 10 November 1942, 1.

²⁸ “Prikaz Verkhovnogo Glavnokomanduiushchego, 1 maia 1945,” *Pravda*, 1 May 1945, 1. The title of Hero City would see a renaissance under Brezhnev, as Ivo Mijnsen addresses in his forthcoming *Cities of Heroes*.

²⁹ Berkhoff, *Motherland in Danger*, 62–64.

(*kazakhstantsy*).”³⁰ The use of the term Kazakhstani (i.e. of Kazakhstan) rather than (ethnic) Kazakh suggested that nested patriotism could also be defined in civic terms, as a statement of loyalty to both the Kazakh SSR and the Soviet Union as a whole.

Heroism was not limited to the front. Deep in the rear, citizens also contributed to the war effort through industrial and agricultural output. Again invoking a civic form of belonging, Skvortsov emphasized that this work could be equally heroic: “In labor valor (*trudovaia doblest’*) and heroism, Kazakhstanis will not lag behind their glorious countrymen (*zemliaki*), the guardsmen-Panfilovtsy.”³¹ Yo’ldash Oxunboboyev, chairman of the Uzbek Supreme Soviet, likewise noted, “The defense of our motherland—the defense of our happiness, our law, our accomplishments—is the sacred duty of citizens of the USSR. These lofty goals give birth to heroes and heroines of the front and labor.”³² Because victory depended on the ability of the home front to support the troops, labor became a critical arena for heroism and dedication.

Citizens also supported the war effort financially, a practice encouraged through bond and lottery programs designed to fill war coffers. As Kristy Ironside notes, citizens donated generously and with enthusiasm, often pledging life savings (sometimes ill-gained through wartime speculation) to the war effort. The most generous were singled out as public examples of patriotism and commitment.³³ Many contributed to funds designated for specific purposes, including commissioning individual airplanes and tanks. Newspapers also detailed generous gifts

³⁰ N. Skvortsov, “Krupneishaia baza zernovogo khoziaistva na vostokey SSSR,” *Pravda*, 15 May 1942, 3. The multiethnic division was composed primarily of Kazakhstani residents of Russian/Slavic heritage. Deputy Undasynov, representing Kazakhstan at the Soviet of the Union in 1944 similarly noted, “Who does not know about the famous 8th Guard Division of Major General Panfilov, who, in the Motherland’s difficult days, when the enemy was at the doorstep of Moscow, were in the front lines of defenders of the capital?” “Rech’ deputata N. Undasynova,” *Izvestiia*, 15 February 1944, 3. Kyrgyz representative M. Tokobaev at the Soviet of Nationalities likewise reminded delegates that two Kyrgyz men also fought in the division, see “Rech’ Predsedatelia Prezidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta Kirgizskoi SSR tov. Tokobaeva,” *Pravda*, 7 February 1944, 3.

³¹ N. Skvortsov, “Krupneishaia baza zernovogo khoziaistva na vostokey SSSR,” *Pravda*, 15 May 1942, 3.

³² Iuldash Akhunbabaev, “Nash sviashchennyi dolg,” *Pravda*, 5 December 1942, 2.

³³ Ironside, “Rubles for Victory”; Yekelchyk, *Stalin’s Citizens*, 104–17. See also A. Zver’ev, “Iarkaia demonstratsiia sovetskogo patriotizma,” *Izvestiia*, 7 April 1943, 2; “Blestiashchii uspekhy zaima otechestvennoi voyny,” *Pravda*, 17 April 1942, 1.

of warm clothing, food, and other necessities collected in various localities, many of which never reached the front.³⁴ Donations suggested the ongoing theme of individual sacrifice for the greater good, whether risking life and limb in the physical defense of the country, sending loved ones to the front, laboring tirelessly in the rear, or donating hard-earned salaries or valued goods. Such sacrifice and heroism presented an image of a united populace willing to do anything to defend its beloved homeland against a hated and dangerous enemy.

Hatred and Love: The Civic Emotions of War

Wartime propaganda capitalized on what Serhy Yekelchuk has termed “civic emotions” to bind citizens into a tightly knit, affective community.³⁵ As an attendee at a March 1944 meeting of the Administration of Propaganda and Agitation noted, the use of emotion in propaganda—in his case, in higher education—was critical to ensuring effectiveness: “It is necessary to ensure that the teacher combines propaganda and agitation, so that he acts emotionally on the student, not only on the mind, but so that he acts also on the soul, so that he infects (*zarazhal*) and convinces. Unfortunately this is not done enough.”³⁶ During war, hatred towards the enemy—this time an invading fascist one—was perhaps the most important rallying point for emotional unity, and not without precedent. As seen in Chapter 1, a specifically fascist enemy had been a key to the original theoretical formulation of the Soviet people, although this earlier approach had lost ground to a focus on “internal enemies” after the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. The return of the fascist enemy, once Nazi Germany had broken that

³⁴ “Narodnaia initsiativa i oborona ro diny” and “O dobrovol’noi sdache naseleniia teplykh veshchei dlia krasnoi armii,” *Pravda*, 10 December 1941, 1; “Volia k pobeде,” *Pravda*, 18 December 1942, 1; A. Zver’ev, “Iarkaia demonstratsiia sovetskogo patriotizma,” *Izvestiia*, 7 April 1943, 2. On fundraising and donations of goods as the result of wartime propaganda, see Archive of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan (hereafter APRK), f. 708, o. 5/1, d. 596; APRK, f. 708, o. 5/1, d. 603, ll. 15–22 and 34–56; APRK, f. 708, o. 7/1, d. 666, ll. 20–27.

³⁵ On civic emotions, see Yekelchuk, *Stalin’s Citizens*, 2–5. Chapter 1 (9–33) focuses on hatred as a civic emotion.

³⁶ Svetlov, in Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (hereafter RGASPI) f. 17, o. 125, d. 221, l. 9.

treaty, refocused Soviet efforts on internal cohesion against an external foe.³⁷

During the war, the press regularly highlighted German atrocities against “peaceful Soviet citizens” to capitalize on citizens’ outrage and hatred. In his initial address, Molotov emphasized the unjustness of the invasion, highlighting civilian casualties across invaded territory.³⁸ Between November 1941 and April 1942, Molotov also sent a series of diplomatic notes to all Soviet embassies for publication abroad concerning various German atrocities on Soviet territory. Although the notes were ostensibly directed towards a foreign audience, each was published in full in *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, suggesting their domestic importance. The first, published on November 26, described “outrageous atrocities” committed against Soviet prisoners of war, including torture, violent murders, and systematic starvation, including of the wounded and sick. Molotov decried German treatment of Soviet POWs as a violation of the Hague Convention and called for the German government to be held responsible for its military’s cruel and inhumane actions.³⁹

The following two notes, dated January 6 and April 27, 1942, deepened these accusations and focused on Nazi atrocities against civilians. The first, “On the widespread robberies, devastation of the population, and monstrous atrocities of German authorities on occupied Soviet territories,” declared that the Soviet Union was actively tracking all German crimes in accordance with the demands of the Soviet people. Both described German policies of systematic

³⁷ Of course, as discussed previously, there was not a total absence of external enemies: skirmishes along the Soviet-Japanese border between 1939 and 1941 were accompanied by robust invocations of external enemies, though this tended to be isolated to major events, rather than a sustained campaign. Nor was there a lack of internal enemies during war: citizens were encouraged to identify and report any instance of disloyalty, see “Vyshe revoliutsionnuiu bditel’nost’!,” *Izvestiia*, 8 July 1941, 1

³⁸ “Vystuplenie po radio Zamestitel’ia Predsedatelia Soveta Narodnykh Komissarov Soiuzs SSR i Narodnogo Komissara Inostrannykh Del tov. V.M. Molotova, 22 iunia 1941 goda,” *Pravda*, 23 June 1941, 1.

³⁹ “Nota Narodnogo komissara inostrannykh del tov. V.M. Molotova: O vosmutitel’nykh zverstvakh germanskikh vlastei v otnoshenii sovetskikh voennoplennykh,” *Pravda and Izvestiia*, 26 November 1941, 1. This report was published in English translation in London together with the January 6 report under the title, V.M. Molotov, *The Molotov Notes on German Atrocities: Notes Sent by V.M. Molotov, People’s Commissar for Foreign Affairs, to All Governments with Which the USSR Has Diplomatic Relations*. (London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1942), <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/006657627>.

torture, murder, rape, and looting of the “defenseless civilian population,” including women, children, and the elderly.⁴⁰ The third report devoted an entire section to forced labor and categorizing non-combatants as prisoners of war, as cities, villages, and collective farms fell to Nazi invaders.⁴¹

In addition to violent crimes against individuals, the second and third reports interpreted German actions as deliberate attempts to stamp out national cultures and reverse all progress:

The German occupiers stop at nothing in the occupied territories of the Soviet republics to insult in every way the national feelings of Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Latvians, Lithuanians, Estonians, Moldovans, as well as those individuals of other ethnicities residing in the USSR. When meeting [Soviet citizens] on their bloody path, [Germans] inflicted the very same outrages and violence on Jews, Georgians, Armenians, Uzbeks, Azerbaijanis, Tajiks and other representatives of the Soviet peoples, unified amongst themselves by a feeling of fraternal friendship and cooperation in the Soviet Union.⁴²

The third note, although more limited in scope, leveled analogous accusations. It interpreted Nazi crimes as an attempt to stamp out Russian culture, even as it also discussed the destruction of cultural institutions, cities, and villages across occupied territory in the Ukrainian, Belarusian, and the Baltic republics. By listing a diverse group of ethnicities, the note downplayed the primacy of Jewish suffering to emphasize that all Soviet citizens suffered under Nazi rule, thereby cementing the war as a universal Soviet experience. This simultaneous equating but also privileging of some citizens’ experience over that of others reflected persistent ethnic hierarchies

⁴⁰ “Nota Narodnogo komissara inostrannykh del tov. V.M. Molotova: O povsemestnykh grabezakh, razoreniia naseleniia i chudovishchnykh zverstvakh germanskikh vlastei na zakhvachennykh imi sovetskikh territoriakh,” *Izvestiia* and *Pravda*, 7 January 1942, 1–2.

⁴¹ “Nota Narodnogo komissara inostrannykh del tov. V.M. Molotova: O chudovishchnykh zloedianiakh, zverstvakh i nasiliakh nemetsko-fashistskikh zakhvatchikov v okkupirovannykh sovetskikh raionakh i ob otvetsvennosti germanstskogo pravitel’sstva i komandovaniia za eti prestupleniia,” *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, 28 April 1942, 1–3. This note was also published in translated English shortly after it was sent, see V.M. Molotov, *The Third Molotov Note on German Atrocities Sent to All Governments with Which the USSR Has Diplomatic Relations* (London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1942), <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000594744>.

⁴² “Nota Narodnogo komissara inostrannykh del tov. V.M. Molotova: O povsemestnykh grabezakh, razoreniia naseleniia i chudovishchnykh zverstvakh germanskikh vlastei na zakhvachennykh imi sovetskikh territoriakh,” *Izvestiia* and *Pravda*, 7 January 1942, 1.

embedded in Soviet ideology.

Together, Molotov's notes exhorted citizens to avenge the violence inflicted on their compatriots. As the second report concluded, "Our entire multimillion people (*narod*) is filled with a fiery vengeance for the blood and ruined lives of Soviet citizens. Soviet people (*liudi*) will never forget and never forgive the atrocities, violence, destruction, and humiliations incurred and being incurred by the peaceful population of our country by the bestial bands of German occupiers."⁴³ The third report declared that past atrocities of Genghis Khan, Batu Khan, Mamai Khan and those experienced under the "Tatar-Mongol yoke" paled in comparison to Nazi behavior. These allusions, more familiar to the domestic than the foreign reader, secured collective anger and resentment and called upon the international community to hold Germany responsible for its crimes.⁴⁴ Editorials further heightened the emotional response to German atrocities, as citizens were called to avenge German crimes and offer no mercy to perpetrators.⁴⁵

To regularize the process of reporting on Nazi atrocities, the Soviet Union established the Extraordinary State Commission in November 1942. The commission investigated, collected, and published evidence of German wrongdoing in the Soviet Union. Reports on German crimes were regularly published in the central press to keep citizens informed—and angry—about ongoing crimes and cruelties.⁴⁶ The reports, stripped of specific references to Nazi crimes against Jewish citizens, interpreted German atrocities as perpetrated against Soviet citizens generally.

⁴³ "Nota Narodnogo komissara inostrannykh del tov. V.M. Molotova: O povsemestnykh grabezhakh, razorenii naseleniia i chudovishchnykh zverstvakh germanskikh vlastei na zakhvachennykh imi sovetskikh territoriakh," *Izvestiia* and *Pravda*, 7 January 1942, 2.

⁴⁴ "Nota Narodnogo komissara inostrannykh del tov. V.M. Molotova: O chudovishchnykh zlodeianiiakh, zverstvakh i nasiliakh nemetsko-fashistskikh zakhvatchikov v okkupirovannykh sovetskikh raionakh i ob otvetstvennosti germanskogo pravitel'stva i komandovaniia za eti prestupleniia," *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, 28 April 1942, 3.

⁴⁵ See "Groznyi obvinitel'nyi akt," *Pravda*, 8 January 1942, 1; "Gitlerovskie palachi ni uidut ot otvetstvennosti i nakazaniia," *Pravda*, 28 April 1942, 1.

⁴⁶ A complete English-language collection of these reports was published as *Soviet Government Statements on Nazi Atrocities*. (London: Hutchinson & Co. Ltd., 1946).

Some reports contained outright fabrications designed to heighten their emotional impact.⁴⁷

German soldiers were commonly described in unforgiving, dehumanizing terms, a strategy that further increased the level of anger against them.⁴⁸ Words like vermin (*gadina*), plague (*chuma*), monsters (*izvergi*), degenerates (*vyrodki*), beasts (*zveri*), hordes (*ordy*, *polchishcha*), evil spirits (*nechist'*), bastards (*svolochi*), scoundrels (*merzavtsy*), cutthroats (*golovorezy*), and cannibals (*liudoedy*) left little doubt about the appropriate response.⁴⁹ Even the less extreme characterizations—describing Germans as “bandits” (*bandity*, *razboiniki*), invaders (*zakhvatchiki*), and “robbers” (*grabiteli*)—suggested the grave danger German soldiers posed to Soviet citizens and territory. With their “dirty paws,” “beastly instincts,” and “misanthropic, crazy idea of the ‘superior race,’” German soldiers needed to be “cleansed from Soviet land.”⁵⁰ This language justified a severe response. As one 1941 headline bluntly put it, “These are not people.” The accompanying article closed in the harshest of terms: “With this critter (*tvar'*), only one conversation is possible: a bullet, a bayonet, a shell, death. The beast (*zver'*) must be

⁴⁷ M. A. Sorokina, “People and Procedures: Toward a History of the Investigation of Nazi Crimes in the USSR,” *Kritika* 6, no. 4 (2005): 797–831; Kiril Feferman, “Soviet Investigation of Nazi Crimes in the USSR: Documenting the Holocaust,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 5, no. 4 (December 2003): 587–602.

⁴⁸ Here, the Soviet Union was not unique: American discussions of Japanese enemies were likewise tainted with racist imagery, see Dower, *War without Mercy*.

⁴⁹ For selected uses of each of these terms, see *gadina*: K. Trenev, “Vrag budet unichtozhen,” *Izvestiia*, 25 June 1941, 2; “Geroicheskaia armiiia sovetского naroda,” *Izvestiia*, 3 November 1942, 1. *Chuma*: “Litso vruga,” *Pravda*, 28 June 1942, 1. *Izvergi*: K. Trenev, “Vrag budet unichtozhen,” *Izvestiia*, 25 June 1941, 2; “Nenavist' k vragu,” *Pravda*, 11 July 1942, 1. *Vyrodki*: “Litso vruga,” *Pravda*, 28 June 1942, 1; “Blagorodnyi pochini rabotnikov zavoda imeni Vladimira Il'icha,” *Izvestiia*, 15 September 1942, 1. *Zveri*: “Novyi dokument, izoblichaiushchii gitlerovskikh grabitelei,” *Izvestiia*, 17 November 1942, 1; L. Kuz'min, “Edinaia volia sovetского naroda,” *Izvestiia*, 9 June 1943, 2. *Ordyy*: “Edinyi front narodov protiv fashizma,” *Izvestiia*, 5 July 1941, 1; Akhmed Erikeev, “Gordost' tatarskogo naroda,” *Izvestiia*, 29 October 1942, 2. *Polchishcha*: “Geroicheskaia armiiia sovetского naroda,” *Izvestiia*, 3 November 1942, 1; “Nenavist' k vragu,” *Pravda*, 11 July 1942, 1. *Nechist'*: “Vsia strana rabotaet vo imia pobedy,” *Izvestiia*, 18 November 1942, 1; “Krepnet sila nashikh udarov po vragu,” *Izvestiia*, 24 November 1942, 1. *Svolochi*: “Po zavetam Lenina, pod voditel'stvom Stalina—k polnoi pobede nad vragom,” *Pravda*, 22 January 1942, 1. *Merzavtsy*: “Lozungi bor'by za svobodu i nezavisimost' nashei rodiny,” *Izvestiia*, 29 October 1942, 1; “Geroicheskaia armiiia sovetского naroda,” *Izvestiia*, 3 November 1942, 1. *Golovorezy*: A. Vyshinskii, “Velikaia godovshchina,” *Izvestiia*, 5 December 1942, 2. *Liudoedy*: N. Skvortsov, “Krupneishaia baza zernovogo khoziaistva na vostoке SSSR,” *Pravda*, 15 May 1942, 3.

⁵⁰ “Krepnet sila nashikh udarov po vragu,” *Izvestiia*, 24 November 1942, 1; L. Kuz'min, “Edinaia volia sovetского naroda,” *Izvestiia*, 9 June 1943, 2.

destroyed.”⁵¹ The Deputy Foreign Minister Andrei Vyshinskii described the war in stark terms in 1942: “There is an unprecedented battle in the history of mankind for peaceful hearths, for the right to a happy life for people who have built a new, socialist society with their own hands, who are now defending this society in bloody battles with treacherous robbers and bandits with the morality of cannibals and the instincts and psychology of a bloodthirsty beast.”⁵²

Civic emotions, as Yekelchik notes, were not limited to hatred towards the enemy. Love, too, could unite citizens.⁵³ Indeed, as suggested in a front-page *Pravda* editorial, hatred for the enemy and love of country often went hand-in-hand: “The Soviet people and its valiant Red Army are carrying out a merciless battle against Hitlerite bandits. The burning, holy hatred towards the base enemy is borne of warm, wholehearted (*bezzavetnyi*) love for the Soviet motherland, one’s own land, one’s own people, one’s own close family members. Our country is full of this hatred.”⁵⁴ Mikhail Sholokhov’s short story, “The Science of Hatred,” published in *Pravda* on the first anniversary of the German invasion, outlined the duality of love for the motherland and hatred for the enemy. His fictional Lieutenant Gerasimov observed:

And they [soldiers] really learned how to fight and to hate and to love. On such a grindstone as war, all feelings become perfectly sharpened. It would seem as if love and hatred would be impossible to place side-by-side. As they say, “you cannot harness a horse and a trembling doe to the same cart,” but among us they are harnessed and are pulling hard. I arduously hate the Germans for everything they have inflicted on my motherland and on me personally, and at the same time, with my whole heart I love my people and do not want it to suffer under the German yoke. Precisely this compels me—and indeed, all of us—to fight tooth and nail: precisely these two feelings embodied into action, and they will lead to us victory. And if love for the motherland is preserved in our hearts for as long as they beat, then hatred we always carry on the tips of our bayonets.⁵⁵

The central press celebrated the positive role of love—for the motherland, the state and

⁵¹ P. Antokol’skii, “Eto ne liudi,” *Izvestiia*, 16 September 1941, 3.

⁵² A. Vyshinskii, “Velikaia godovshchina,” *Izvestiia*, 5 December 1942, 2.

⁵³ Yekelchik, *Stalin’s Citizens*.

⁵⁴ “Liubov’ k rodine i nenavist’ k vragu,” *Pravda*, 18 May 1942, 1.

⁵⁵ Mikhail Sholokhov, “Nauka nenavisti,” *Pravda*, 22 June 1942, 3.

party, fellow citizens, the military, and Stalin—in binding citizens together. Patriotism was seen to bring together the best of Soviet qualities: “It has become especially clear now that all the most wonderful traits of the Soviet person—selfless devotion, dedication, loyalty, love for fellow citizens—have amalgamated into one all-encompassing trait: patriotism.”⁵⁶ As *Pravda* noted in a New Year’s editorial in 1942, war “has shown all the effective power of Soviet patriotism, the mighty, driving force of our society. In the years of peaceful construction, love for the motherland moved Soviet people (*liudi*) to exploits of labor heroism; in war years, love for the motherland gives rise to military feats of unparalleled courage and bravery.”⁵⁷ The “boundless love of the Soviet people” for the military, another article noted, inspired support for the front.⁵⁸

Contrasting the subhuman descriptions of German soldiers, propaganda often relied on religiously inflected vocabulary to describe Soviet values, territory, and wartime activity, a practice that went back at least to the 1930s. In describing the German invasion as a violation of the “sacred (*sviashchennye*) borders,” newspaper columnists emphasized the importance of defending “sacred Soviet land” from a base, evil enemy.⁵⁹ A 1942 editorial described the war effort in similar terms: “Soviet people (*liudi*) meet the new year, 1942, with fierce hatred towards the enemy, with an unshakable faith in the triumph of our righteous (*pravoe*) cause, with steely determination to bring to a victorious end our sacred struggle for life, for the honor and freedom of our great fatherland.”⁶⁰ Feelings of hatred towards the enemy and obligation to the state were also elevated to “sacred” and “holy,” as its message of liberation and freedom was seen as part of

⁵⁶ Iurii Nagibin, “Na klich Timura,” *Literaturnaia Gazeta*, 29 June 1941, 2.

⁵⁷ “S novym godom,” *Pravda*, 1 January 1942, 1.

⁵⁸ “Geroicheskaia armiiia sovetского naroda,” *Izvestiia*, 3 November 1942, 1.

⁵⁹ See I. Bardin, “V tylu, kak na fronte,” *Izvestiia*, 25 June 1941, 2; N. Levitskii, “Vrag idet k svoei gibeli,” *Izvestiia*, 25 June 1941, 2.

⁶⁰ “S novym godom,” *Pravda*, 1 January 1942, 1. “Our cause is righteous (*nashe delo pravoe*),” said first by Molotov on the day of the German invasion was repeated often.

the state's "historic mission" for human history.⁶¹ Such language cast the war as a quasi-holy movement that left no neutral ground.

As a result, propaganda described the ways in which war brought together "all strata of the Soviet people, all parts of the Soviet state into a single war camp," catalyzing interaction and collaboration.⁶² This unity was described along several important and overlapping lines, which simultaneously hinted at persistent social divisions. First, as before the war, there was a strong emphasis on multiethnic unity, which bound a diverse citizenry into a united Soviet people. Second, newspapers highlighted the unified efforts of men and women and the old and young, further emphasizing how war affected the entire population. Wartime propaganda also brought messages of inclusion for religious practices, thereby expanding notions of Soviet identity. Finally, geographic unity, most obviously the deep connection between the front and home front, represented a key motif in reporting on war. Together, these visions suggested a unity that intensified and expanded prewar rhetoric.

Multiethnic Unity

Perhaps more than before the war, newspapers emphasized the unified, multiethnic Soviet people, often contrasting Soviet equality and inclusion with Nazi racial hierarchies.⁶³

⁶¹ On "holy" (*sviatoi*) and "sacred" (*sviashchennyi*) hatred, see "'Litso vraga," *Pravda*, 28 June 1942, 1; "Nenavist' k vragu," *Pravda*, 11 July 1942, 1; "Antifashistskii miting predstavitelei narodov Zakavkaz'ia," *Izvestiia*, 6 September 1942, 3. On sacred duty, see "Krepnet sila nashikh udarov po vragu," *Izvestiia*, 24 November 1942, 1; Iuldash Akhunbabaev, "Nash sviashchennyi dolg," *Izvestiia*, 5 December 1942, 2. On the Soviet Union's "mission," see E. Krenkel', "Vpered k pobede," *Izvestiia*, 25 June 1941, 2; "Krepnet sila nashikh udarov po vragu," *Izvestiia*, 24 November 1942, 1.

⁶² "Pod znamenem Lenina—vpered, k pobede!" *Izvestiia*, 21 January 1942, 1.

⁶³ On the multiethnic nature of the Soviet body during World War II, see especially "Edinyi front narodov protiv fashizma," *Izvestiia*, 5 July 1941, 1; "Druzhba narodov na fronte," *Pravda*, 14 October 1942, 1; A. Vyshinskii, "Velikaia godovshchina," *Izvestiia*, 5 December 1942, 2; "Dukh velikogo Lenina vdokhnovliaet nas na otechestvennuiu voinu," *Pravda*, 21 January 1943, 1. Of course, as we have already seen, Soviet discourses on equality were belied by persistent, structural inequalities. On Nazism's impact on shaping and accelerating Soviet articulations and understandings of ethnicity (particularly in the late 1930s), see Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, especially 231–308. As Kate Brown notes, the Soviet propensity for labeling and categorizing citizens, especially by

Echoing the rhetoric of the 1930s, official propaganda saw nationalities policy as an essential aspect of the Soviet Union's cohesion. As *Pravda* noted in 1942:

For the first time in the history of humanity, the great idea of fraternal cooperation and friendship between peoples has been brought to life in the Soviet Union. According to Leninist precepts and under Stalinist leadership, a multiethnic state of a new, previously unprecedented type has been created in the USSR. It is based not on national inequality and oppression, not on the division of people into 'superior' and 'inferior' races, but on the complete equality of all peoples inhabiting our country, on their fraternal cooperation and on their strong, indestructible friendship. The Hitlerites' foolish expectations of conflict between peoples of the USSR have suffered a shameful failure.⁶⁴

That German troops mistakenly counted on a complete dissolution of the bonds between Soviet citizens featured routinely in wartime articles; the lack of state collapse was deployed as evidence of the country's strength and unity.⁶⁵

Wartime reporting deepened the positive propagandistic image of the Soviet people as a unified, multiethnic populace. Newspapers routinely highlighted the contributions of Russian and non-Russian citizens, bringing new visibility to minorities and their contributions. One unique innovation of the wartime period was an increasing presence of non-Russian languages and propaganda specifically targeted towards non-Russians. Following the initial invasion in 1941, *Pravda* ran untranslated Ukrainian and Belarusian poems by Pavlo Tychyna and Iakub Kolas, respectively, an occurrence repeated intermittently throughout the war.⁶⁶ The poems characterized

ethnicity, played right into the hands of Nazi administrators in occupied territory, see *A Biography of No Place*, 192–225.

⁶⁴ "Po zavetam Lenina, pod voditel'stvom Stalina—k polnoi pobede nad vragom," *Pravda*, 22 January 1942, 1.

⁶⁵ "Doklad Predsedatelia Gosudarstvennogo Komiteta Oborony tovarishcha I.V. Stalina," *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, 7 November 1941, 1–2; "Pod znamenem Lenina—vpered, k pobede!" *Izvestiia*, 21 January 1942, 1; "Znamia nashei bor'by i pobody," *Izvestiia*, 5 December 1944, 1.

⁶⁶ Pavlo Tychyna, "My idemo na bii," *Pravda*, 24 June 1941, 3; Iakub Kolas, "Shalionaga psa—na lantsug," *Pravda*, 24 June 1941, 4. For additional examples, see Maksym Ryl's'kii, "Zhynete vid mecha!" *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 29 June 1941, 3; Maksym Ryl's'kii, "Slovo pro ridnu matir," *Izvestiia*, 20 March 1943, 3; Volodymyr Sosiura, "Peremoha," *Pravda*, 6 May 1945, 2. Following the liberation of Belarus, several newspaper editions featured some Belarusian, see Iakub Kolas, "Rodnomu beloruskomu narodu," under the larger headline, "Niakhai zhyve Sovetskaia Belarus'!" *Izvestiia*, 28 June 1944, 3; "Slava rodnai Chyrvonai Armii, vyzvaliushai z niametska-fashystskai niavoli stalitsu Sovetskaii Belarusi-Minsk!" *Pravda*, 5 July 1944, 1. An Uzbek-language header also capped a 1944 celebration of the Twentieth Anniversary of Soviet Uzbekistan, though reporting was entirely in Russian, see "Yashasin sovet O'zbekistoni!" [Long live Soviet Uzbekistan!], *Izvestiia*, 24 December 1944, 2.

the German invasion as an attack on “our home” and “motherland,” relying on ambiguous language to refer at once to invaded republics and the Soviet whole.⁶⁷ The occasional publication of works in non-Russian languages, best represented in the above-cited 1942 letter to Uzbek soldiers, suggested that the state valued the use of ethnic themes and national languages. This hearkened back to affirmative action policies of the 1920s and exemplified notions of nested patriotism.

Scholars of wartime propaganda, however, have generally emphasized the prominence of imperial Russian motifs and of ethnic Russians in the late 1930s and during and after World War II.⁶⁸ Some ethnic diversification notwithstanding, Russians still played an outsized role in symbolic representations of the Soviet people. Even as the press highlighted multiethnic contributions, articles described “the great Russian people” as the “first among equals” who guided non-Russians into battle and towards victory.⁶⁹ After the final German capitulation, Stalin’s infamous 1945 toast to the Russian people, discussed below, exemplified the view that Russians played the leading role in securing final victory.⁷⁰ Russians’ undisputed dominant position contributed to a continuing under-appreciation of non-Russian contributions to the war effort and suggested one of the deepest lines of inequality that persisted during and after the war.

Still, Russian pre-eminence had its limits. Russians comprised more than half the Soviet population, somewhat justifying their prominence. But as already noted, World War II saw an upsurge in the prominence of non-Russians, contributing to greater visibility of minorities. Even

⁶⁷ A postwar complaint about mistakes of the Georgian SSR suggested similarly ambiguous discourses had taken place in Georgia: Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (hereafter RGANI), f. 5, o. 16, d. 632, ll. 44–46.

⁶⁸ Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 394–431; Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism*; Fedor Sinitsyn, *Sovetskaia natsiia i voina: Natsional’nyi vopros v SSSR, 1933–1945* (Moscow: Tsentrpoligraf, 2018).

⁶⁹ See N. Levitskii, “Doblest’ sovetskogo boitsa,” *Izvestiia*, 28 June 1941, 2; “Sviatoe bratstvo narodov SSSR,” *Pravda* 16 May 1943, 1; Andrei Perventsov, “My — russkie!” *Izvestiia*, 26 May 1943, 3; “Russkii voyn,” *Izvestiia*, 28 May 1943, 3. In point of fact, at a 1944 meeting to discuss wartime propaganda, one attendee (Svetlov) complained of insufficient familiarity among students with important Russian scholars, see RGASPI, f. 17, o. 125, d. 221, l. 11.

⁷⁰ “Vystuplenie tov. Stalina,” *Pravda*, 25 May 1945, 1. This is discussed more below.

without systematic efforts to include minorities in wartime propaganda, non-Russians often featured in newspapers in both formal and informal capacities, reminding readers of the country's diversity. Ukrainians and Belarusians were upgraded rhetorically to "great" peoples, like their Russian counterparts.⁷¹ Non-Russian historical motifs were deployed to inspire troops and demonstrate centuries of cooperation with (and subservience to) Russians.⁷² Newspapers detailed the exploits of non-Russian heroes and highlighted non-Russians' presence in the key moments of war. In 1943, for example, *Pravda* reported on the Kazakh soldiers who were helping liberate Leningrad, noting that they had performed traditional tea ceremonies, national dances and songs, and read lectures on Soviet progress in Kazakhstan.⁷³ The central press also featured contributions and messages from non-Russians.⁷⁴ The partial reconstitution of ethno-territorial units in the army also provided opportunities to valorize and appeal to ethnic identities.⁷⁵ Home-front propaganda initiatives reflected goals of fostering non-Russian patriotism and support for the war effort.⁷⁶ In Kazakhstan, for instance, the state and party increased the number of Kazakh-language ideological lectures.⁷⁷ Appeals to nationalism in the South Caucasus helped secure popular support for and participation in the Soviet occupation of Northern Iran.⁷⁸

As before the war, the concept of the friendship of the peoples did much of the

⁷¹ Berkhoff, *Motherland in Danger*, 210; Yekelchik, *Stalin's Empire of Memory*, 24–32.

⁷² Maksim Ryl'skii, "Dva moguchikh kryla," *Izvestiia*, 3 July 1942, 3; "O'zbek xalqining jangchilariga ularning el-yurtlaridan maktub," *Pravda*, 31 October 1942, 2; Nikolai Tikhonov, "Golosa slavy," *Izvestiia*, 1 January 1943, 4; Mukhtar Auezov, "Okrylennoe tvorchestvo," *Izvestiia*, 21 June 1944, 3.

⁷³ D. Rudnev, "Pobratimy," *Pravda*, 11 June 1943, 3.

⁷⁴ See, for example, articles under "Sovetskii Kazakhstan—frontu," *Pravda*, 17 July 1942, 3; "Uzbekskii narod—frontu," *Pravda*, 16 August 1942, 3; Mamadali Kurbanov, "Sovetskii Tadzhikistan frontu i strane," *Izvestiia*, 5 January 1944, 2.

⁷⁵ See especially Carmack, "A Fortress of the Soviet Home Front."

⁷⁶ On shortcomings in propaganda work among national minorities, see Egolin's comments at a 1944 meeting of the Administration of Propaganda and Agitation of the Communist Party, RGASPI, f. 17, o. 125, d. 221, ll. 14–18. Propaganda targeted women and rural inhabitants, see APRK, f. 708, o. 5/1, d. 603, especially ll. 24, 26–27.

⁷⁷ APRK, f. 708, o. 5/1, dd. 596, 597, and 603.

⁷⁸ Goff, "What Makes a People?"

ideological work of emphasizing both diversity and unity. The press celebrated successful collaboration and interaction at every opportunity, highlighting examples of cooperation, friendly relations, mutual support (emotional, financial, and in deed), and common sacrifice as evidence of deepening friendship. In the military, the multiethnic units in which most soldiers served illustrated friendship and brotherhood, as soldiers fought side-by-side. Articles and memoirs conveyed the sense that bloodshed had forged deep attachments between soldiers of different ethnicities.⁷⁹ Multiethnic gatherings of regional leaders and intellectuals from across the South Caucasus in Tbilisi in 1942 and from across Central Asia in Tashkent in 1943 brought together political and cultural elites.⁸⁰ Transethnic adoptions of orphans were also seen as evidence of growing interethnic bonds.⁸¹ The press detailed examples of multiethnic friendship on collective farms and in factories deep in the rear, suggesting that examples of unity and friendship could be found everywhere.⁸²

Literature and poetry emphasized collaboration and friendship. The celebrated Kazakh poet Jambyl Jabaev penned Russian-language poems considered exemplary of Soviet patriotism. His most famous poem, “Leningrad, Children of Mine” (1941), testified to feelings of kinship with citizens in occupied territories. The poem served as a model for letters of support penned by

⁷⁹ S. Shatilov, “Plechom k plechu,” *Pravda*, 5 December 1942, 2; D. Rudnev, “Pobratimy,” *Pravda*, 11 June 1943, 3. See also soldiers’ reminiscences in Iurii Il’inskii, *O druz’iakh-tovarishchakh: dokumental’nye rasskazy* (Tashkent: Izd-vo lit-ry i iskusstva imeni Gafura Guliyama, 1985).

⁸⁰ “Antifashistskii miting predstavitelei narodov Zakavkaz’ia,” *Izvestiia*, 6 September 1942, 3; “Antifashistskii miting predstavitelei narodov kazakhskoi, turkmenkoi, kirgizskoi, tadzhikskoi sovetskikh respublik,” *Pravda*, 21 February 1943, 3; *Izvestiia*, 21 February, 3. The Tashkent conference was also featured in editions of *Pravda Vostoka* from February 4–5, 1943, and in *Kazakhstanskaia Pravda* on February 10, 1943, in APRK, f. 708, o. 7/1, d. 666, ll. 131–36. Speeches from the Kazakh delegation can also be found in APRK, f. 708, o. 7/1, d. 666, ll. 116–30.

⁸¹ APRK, f. 708, o. 7/1, d. 666, l. 20–27; Pashsha Makhmudova, “Oni stali det’mi Uzbekistana,” *Pravda*, 16 August 1942, 3; Rebecca Manley, *To the Tashkent Station: Evacuation and Survival in the Soviet Union at War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 223–27. For a postwar celebration of wartime adoptions, see Elena Kononenko, “Liudi chutkogo serdtsa,” *Pravda*, 17 November 1958, 4.

⁸² E.g. Usman Iusupov, “V boevom sodruzhestve narodov SSR,” *Pravda*, 16 August 1942, 3.

communities across the Soviet Union for citizens stuck in the Leningrad blockade.⁸³ The Tatar poet Akhmed Erikeeov employed the same themes in his tale of “two Soviet heroes—Akhmed and Stepan,” a Tatar and Russian, who served side-by-side and were shot, embracing, in captivity. The poem, translated from Tatar, closed with an image of the “fascist villain” surveying the corpses of the dead as he realized that “he could kill imprisoned Soviet people (*liudi*), / but to kill their honor, their friendship is impossible.”⁸⁴ Such works aimed to deepen the affective ties that bound citizens across potentially divisive ethnic lines.

Every Man, Woman, and Child

Alongside multiethnic unity, newspapers and leaders also highlighted how the war effort transcended generational and gender divides. Although wartime propaganda sought primarily to prepare relatively young men for the front, women, children, and the elderly also contributed. Propagandists focused efforts towards women and rural inhabitants, many of whom had heretofore been viewed as beyond the state’s ideological reach.⁸⁵ Schools also served as sites of patriotic education, as educators worked to raise the vigilance and patriotism of both pupils and parents.⁸⁶ As propaganda made clear, war did not discriminate, and all needed to defend the country. Reflecting the need for universal participation, propaganda promoted the idea that everyone played a role in the war effort. Gender and generational differences shaped divisions of

⁸³ Dzhabul, “Leningradtsy, deti moi!” *Pravda*, 5 September 1941, 3. The poem is mentioned in APRK, f. 708, o. 7/1, d. 666, l. 20. Jambyl is cited as an inspiration for soldiers in S. Shatilov, “Plechom k plechu,” *Pravda*, 5 December 1942, 2. His 1945 obituary described him as a “talented Soviet poet,” who combined “traditional forms with new revolutionary content.” “Dzhabul Dzhabaev,” *Pravda*, 23 June 1945, 6. Jambyl’s authorship has been questioned, with many alleging that Russian-language poems and works were produced by Russian writers, see Susanna Witt, “Between the Lines: Totalitarianism and Translation in the USSR,” in *Contexts, Subtexts and Pretenses: Literary Translation in Eastern Europe and Russia*, ed. Brian James Baer (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Pub. Co., 2011). Regardless of his authorship, he retained important symbolic importance as a non-Russian artist.

⁸⁴ A. Erikeeov, “Druzha,” trans. Demian Bednyi, *Pravda*, 5 December 1942, 2.

⁸⁵ APRK, f. 708, o. 5/1, d. 603, especially ll. 24, 26–27. Central Party leaders in Moscow also emphasized the importance of targeting women to ensure their active participation in economic and political life in a 1944 meeting on wartime propaganda, see RGASPI, f. 17, o. 125, d. 221, l. 50.

⁸⁶ APRK, f. 708, o. 5/1, d. 678, ll. 19–20.

labor and sacrifice: young men (and the occasional young woman) headed to the front while the elderly, young, and female toiled in the hinterlands. Even while reifying gender and generational difference, war contributed to subtle alterations in presumed roles and created opportunities for innovative participation in the war economy and frontline battles.

As suggested by the prominence of reports on German atrocities, women, children, and the elderly frequently occupied the role of victims in wartime propaganda. Though passive, this role nevertheless motivated soldiers and civilians to avenge and protect fellow citizens.⁸⁷ Elderly parents, wives, and children were also praised for sending their children, husbands, and fathers to war, a status that afforded them slightly more agency even as it entrenched established gender and generational roles. Much like victims of Nazi aggression, those left behind were seen to need care and protection, as local state and party organs and citizens were expected to provide for their needs.⁸⁸ Women contributed by raising patriotic citizens and exhorting their sons and husbands to fight bravely.⁸⁹ Letters from home, one article noted, boosted frontline morale and courage: after one Uzbek wife's letter encouraging her husband "mercilessly to smash Hitlerite monsters and return home with victory and honors" was published in a military publication, "Takhtobaev began to fulfill his duties even better."⁹⁰ Charles Shaw has noted that women inspired soldiers as romantic objects.⁹¹ As discussed above, citizens also supported the front through donations and labor, sacrifices that were made for the good of the entire Red Army in

⁸⁷ This was quite common among non-Russians, as evidenced in the letter to Uzbek soldiers. See also speech excerpts in "Antifashistskii miting predstavitelei narodov Zakavkaz'ia," *Izvestiia*, 6 September 1942, 3; and "Sovetskie voiny! Sil'nee udary po gitlerovskim razboinikam! Zashchishchat' kazhdyi dom, kazhduiu ulitsu do poslednei vozmozhnosti," *Pravda*, 14 October 1942, 2.

⁸⁸ See P. Pozdeev, "Narodnaia zabota o sem'iakh voennoslužhashchikh," *Pravda*, 1 March 1943, 3; V. Drobyshevskii, "Zabota gorsoveta o bytovykh nuždakh naseleniia," *Izvestiia*, 7 May 1943, 4; "Zabota sovetskoi obshchestvennosti o sem'iakh frontovikov," *Izvestiia*, 13 October 1944, 1.

⁸⁹ See, for example, Margarita Aliger's poem, "Sovetskoi zhenshchine," *Izvestiia*, 25 June 1941, 2; Dm. Rud', "Chuvstva patriotov," *Izvestiia*, 25 June 1941, 3; "Zakon gor—Rech' krasnoarmeitsa Sh. Kenashvili, priznesennaia na gruzinskoi iazyke," *Pravda*, 14 October 1942, 2.

⁹⁰ S. Shatilov, "Plechom k plechu," *Pravda*, 5 December 1942, 2.

⁹¹ Shaw, "Soldiers' Letters to Inobatxon and O'g'ulxon."

the name of their loved ones.

War also created new opportunities for civic participation. As Kalinin noted in his 1943 New Year's address, this included children: "Literally every citizen, even children, strives to mark his or her concern and attention for a soldier of the Red Army."⁹² Arkadii Gaidar's popular 1940 children's book, *Timur and His Squad*, which featured an eponymous hero and a team of do-gooders, inspired children's participation. The press praised adolescent-led initiatives of self-proclaimed 'Timurovites' to care for the families of front-line soldiers and collect scrap metal.⁹³ In a discussion of the book's influence, writer Iurii Nagibin noted, "As soon as the book appeared and was read, hundreds of Soviet children wanted to imitate Gaidar's proud, good, courageous, happy hero. The most fervent children began to spend their youthful energy, the strength of small fists, bravery, and passion for unusual exploits not on empty tricks but on helping people in need."⁹⁴ Along the frontlines, Pioneers were praised for recognizing foreign accents and slyly misdirecting German soldiers towards Red Army units ready to overtake them.⁹⁵ Summers also brought opportunities for children to work on collective farms and in factories, another field of wartime participation.⁹⁶

Women, too, entered new roles in factories, fields, and even on the front, filling roles historically occupied by men. As T. Kuliev, head of the Soviet of People's Commissars of Azerbaijan noted in a review of the work of collective farms, "A massive movement of women

⁹² "Novogodniaia rech' Predsedatelia Prezidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR tov. M.I. Kalinin," *Izvestiia* and *Pravda*, 1 January 1943, 2.

⁹³ E.g. K. Vinogradova, "Opyt odnoi shkoly," *Izvestiia*, 30 August 1941, 3; V. Starikov, "Uchit'sia otlichno!" *Izvestiia*, 5 September 1941, 3; P. Pozdeev, "Narodnaia zabota o sem'iakh voennosluzhashchikh," *Pravda*, 1 March 1943, 3; V. Drobyshevskii, "Zabota gorsoveta o bytovykh nuzhdakh naseleniia," *Izvestiia*, 7 May 1943, 4; Elena Kononenko, "O nashikh det'iakh," *Pravda*, 28 May 1943, 3; "Zabota sovetskoi obshchestvennosti o sem'iakh frontovikov," *Izvestiia*, 13 October 1944, 1.

⁹⁴ Iurii Nagibin, "Na klich Timura," *Literaturnaia Gazeta*, 29 June 1941, 2. A postwar retrospective of the book's influence made similar conclusions, see Vera Smirnova, "Sovetskie deti v detskoj literature," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 21 July 1945, 3.

⁹⁵ "Vyshe revoliutsionnuiu bditel'nost'!" *Izvestiia*, 8 July 1941, 1.

⁹⁶ T. Kuliev, "Trudovoi geroizm kolkhoznikov na uborke urozhaiia: Otvet trudiashchikhsia Azerbaidzhana fashistskim banditam," *Izvestiia*, 28 June 1941, 2.

has begun to master the art of driving tractors. Short-term courses for tractor drivers have been organized. Many girls, having studied this profession earlier, have gotten behind the wheel.”⁹⁷ Wives of frontline soldiers were praised for their participation in the workforce, suggesting the family as another mode of nested patriotism.⁹⁸ Makhsuda M., a diarist who spent the war years in and around Tashkent, recalled high numbers of women entering universities as their male peers went off to war.⁹⁹ As Anna Krylova shows, women participated in frontline battles in unprecedented numbers, taking on unconventional responsibilities as they adhered to “non-oppositional though still binary” gender roles.”¹⁰⁰ More than thirty women, including non-Russians, were recognized as Heroes of the Soviet Union during the war (and more afterwards for their wartime efforts), suggesting new possibilities for glory and honor.¹⁰¹

Expanding the Body Politic: Wartime Religious Inclusion

While discussions of generational and cross-gender unity included citizens in ways that echoed discourses of the 1930s, the needs of war necessitated appeals to previously excluded segments of the population. This included making peace with and legalizing some religious communities and practices. The partial re-legalization of religion indicated an expansion of the theoretical conception of the Soviet people that broke from previous religious oppression and the

⁹⁷ T. Kuliev, “Trudovoi geroizm kolkhoznikov na uborke urozhaia: Otvét trudiashchikhsia Azerbaidzhana fashistskim banditam,” *Izvestiia*, 28 June 1941, 2.

⁹⁸ See especially Dologosheev, “Trudovye podvigi zhen frontovikov,” *Izvestiia*, 18 October 1941, 4; N. Kavskaiia, “Slavnye dela zhen i materei frontovikov,” *Izvestiia*, 12 June 1943, 2. On women specifically taking the place of their husbands, sons, and brothers in factories, see “Velikaia otechestvnaia voia,” *Izvestiia*, 25 July 1941, 1; “Samootverzhennyi trud sovetskogo naroda,” *Izvestiia*, 26 June 1941, 1; V. Starikov, “Zhenshchiny idut na zavody,” 16 September 1941, 3; E. Iuzhnyi, “Oni byli domokhoziakami,” *Izvestiia*, 3 October 1941.

⁹⁹ Marfua Tokhtakhodzhaeva, ed., *XX vek v vospominaniakh, ustnykh istoriakh, pis'makh i dnevnikh zhenshchin Uzbekistana* (Moscow: Natalis, 2008), 252–53.

¹⁰⁰ Krylova, *Soviet Women in Combat*, 13. See also Reese, *Why Stalin's Soldiers Fought*, 257–305.

¹⁰¹ As Kazakh writer Muhtar Áýezov noted, machine gunner Mánshúk Mámétova was the first “eastern woman” to be awarded the title, posthumously in 1944, see “Okrylennoe tvorchestvo,” *Izvestiia*, 21 June 1944, 3.

widespread proselytization of atheism.¹⁰² Although the change in emphasis could in no way be equated with religious freedom, newspapers and the party propaganda apparatus articulated greater religious tolerance. This, as will be seen in Chapter 4, promoted a religious revival of sorts that leaders would feel obligated to address in subsequent decades.

In theory, Article 124 of the 1936 Constitution had guaranteed religious freedom, and its passage ushered in a brief cessation of anti-religious propaganda, including the closure of the *Bezbozhnik* (*Godless*) newspaper. This scaling back, however, had already been reversed by the late 1930s, when the League of the Militant Godless revived its activities.¹⁰³ During war, the state again pursued conciliatory policies towards religion. Initially, these efforts were quietly directed towards the faithful. For instance, the Muslim Spiritual Authority, headed by Abdurakhman Rasulev since 1936, regularly exhorted Muslims to support the war effort. In a May 1942 statement, Rasulev described Nazi atrocities as directed specifically against Soviet Muslims and reminded believers that the Prophet had commanded them to love their motherland.¹⁰⁴

Propagandists were instructed to act with greater respect for religious compatriots. An undated draft directive to leaders of oblast propaganda and agitation divisions in Kazakhstan urged a more “sensitive relationship” (*chutkoe otnoshenie*) towards believers. The directive implored propagandists to scale back atheist messaging and instead emphasize hatred towards fascism by reminding people of German atrocities in occupied territories. The League of the Militant Godless, with its extensive network of propagandists with local experience, was an important partner in this effort. Although the instructions did not forbid anti-religious work, anti-

¹⁰² On atheist propaganda and religious oppression in the 1920s and 30s, see especially Daniel Peris, *Storming the Heavens: The Soviet League of the Militant Godless* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998); Keller, *To Moscow, Not Mecca*.

¹⁰³ Peris, *Storming the Heavens*, 197–220.

¹⁰⁴ This letter, signed by Rasulev, dated May 15, 1942, circulated within Muslim communities. A copy can be found in APRK, f. 708, o. 5/1, d. 618, ll. 7–9.

fascist propaganda would be the main focus.¹⁰⁵ Sh. Galikhaidarov's June 1942 report on the activities of the Kazakh League of the Militant Godless in the first year of war confirmed this reorientation. In speeches and conversations, atheist activists spoke on the tasks and goals of the war and urged discipline in industry, agriculture, and the Red Army. In South Kazakhstan, the most religious region of the republic, the League prepared Kazakh-language exposés on Nazi race theory and highlighted patriotism among believers, encouraged by Rasulev's statements.¹⁰⁶

Public support for the state-led war effort and for Stalin himself from Russian Orthodox and Islamic leaders began to appear in central newspapers in late 1942.¹⁰⁷ In subsequent years, *Pravda* and *Izvestiia* routinely ran letters from church hierarchs pledging monetary support for the war based on donations from the faithful. Muslim leaders also pledged money and, in the words of one *Pravda* announcement, "commanded all believing Muslims to follow the example of Kazakh collective farmer Berdybekov and give the state all available means for accelerating the victory over the Hitlerite bands."¹⁰⁸ Though such statements were seemingly insignificant and often buried in the back pages of newspapers, they hinted at a sea change in the administration of religious practice.

Recognition of religion became more formalized in 1943. Signaling a monumental policy change, on September 4, 1943, Stalin and Molotov met with the three Orthodox hierarchs, Sergii, Acting Patriarch and Metropolitan; Aleksii, Metropolitan of Leningrad; and Nikolai, Exarch of

¹⁰⁵ APRK, f. 708, o. 05/1, d. 618, ll. 4–6. It is unclear whether the drafted report, likely from 1942, was actually sent. See also a letter from the League of the Militant Godless of Kazakhstan from May 1942, which encouraged activists to conduct their work "without offending the feelings of believers," l. 20 of the same file.

¹⁰⁶ All from Galikhaidarov's report, APRK, f. 708, o. 05/1, d. 618, ll. 14–19. This was not the only religious response: this and other reports also expressed concerns about reactionary religious activity that threatened the state.

¹⁰⁷ For early statements of Orthodox support, see letters addressed to Stalin by Acting Patriarch Sergii, *Pravda*, 9 November 1942, 4; *Pravda*, 5 January 1943, 1; by Supreme Pontiff of the Reformed (*Obnovlencheskaia*) Church, Aleksandr Vvedenskii, *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, 7 January 1943, 3; and by Aleksii, Metropolitan of Leningrad, *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, 1 April 1943, 2. On similar statements from Islamic leaders, see letters by Abdurakhman Rasulev, Mufti of the Central Spiritual Administration of Muslims, *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, 12 November 1942, 4; and by Ishan Balakhan Abdu Madzhit Khan Ogly, the Muslim Spiritual Representative of Central Asia, *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, 18 November 1942, 4.

¹⁰⁸ "Po Sovetskoi strane," *Pravda*, 12 June 1943, 2.

Ukraine. The following issue of *Pravda* announced the meeting and an imminent synod to elect a new patriarch.¹⁰⁹ On September 8, Sergii was unanimously chosen to be the first Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia since Tikhon's death in 1925.¹¹⁰ To oversee church matters, the state created the Council for Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church (CAROC) the following month and appointed Georgii Karpov as its chairman.¹¹¹ Following this *de facto* re-legalization of Orthodox religious practice, the church played a more visible, if still relatively marginal, role in patriotic activity in the remaining months of the war. After Sergii's death in May 1944, Karpov participated in the special synod convened in January 1945 to elect his successor, Aleksii. Shortly thereafter, Stalin officially received the newly elected patriarch, evidence of increased state-church cooperation.¹¹²

A parallel process unfolded among Muslim groups. The state approved the formation of the Spiritual Authority of Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan in October 1943, along with analogous organizations for the North Caucasus, the South Caucasus, and the European RSFSR and Siberia.¹¹³ In May 1944, the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults (CARC) was established to oversee religious affairs for non-Orthodox groups. Konstantin Zaitsev initially headed the council but Ivan Polianskii replaced him just a month later.

¹⁰⁹ "Priem tov. I.B. Stalinym Mitropolita Sergiia, Mitropolita Aleksii i Mitropolita Nikolaia," *Pravda*, 5 September 1943, 1.

¹¹⁰ "Sobor episkopov pravoslavnoi tserkvi," *Pravda*, 9 September 1943, 2.

¹¹¹ For general discussions of wartime changes towards the Orthodox church, see Nathaniel Davis, *A Long Walk To Church: A Contemporary History Of Russian Orthodoxy*, 2nd edition (Boulder: Routledge, 2003), 15–24; T. A. Chumachenko, *Church and State in Soviet Russia: Russian Orthodoxy from World War II to the Khrushchev Years*, trans. Edward E. Roslof (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2002), 15–86. Dates of the creation of the CAROC and the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults (CARC) are outlined in the archival records of their successor institution, the Council for Religious Affairs (CRA), GARF f. R-6991. *Pravda* and *Izvestiia* announced the formation of CAROC, see "Ob obrazovanii Soveta po delam Russkoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi," *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, 8 October 1943, 1. As Eren Tasar notes, both Polianskii of CARC and Karpov CAROC were well-established secret police professionals, see Tasar, *Soviet and Muslim*, 78–79.

¹¹² See "Rech' Predsedatelia Sovetskogo Pravitel'stva—Predsedatelia Soveta po delam Russkoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi pri Sovnarkome Siuza SSR G.G. Karpova na Pomestnom Sobore," *Izvestiia*, 4 February 1945, 2, and *Pravda*, 5 February 1945, 2. Sergii's death and burial were announced in *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, see *Izvestiia*, 16 May 1944, 1; "Pokhorony patriarkha Sergiia," *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, 20 May 1944, 2.

¹¹³ Tasar, *Soviet and Muslim*, 46–50.

The formation of these regional councils paved the way for what Eren Tasar has called “religiously informed patriotism” among Soviet Muslims.¹¹⁴ This was, in essence, another iteration of nested patriotism, this time in religious terms. Support letters to Stalin from religious leaders articulated state patriotism with Quranic and biblical citations and exhortations to believers. One May 1944 letter, titled “From the *Kurultai* [council] of Muslim clergy and believers,” closed with a declaration of state loyalty and prayers for Allah “to watch over the victorious path of our valorous warriors and to help them to obliterate the fascist evil spirits from the face of the earth forever.” The letter also offered prayers for Stalin’s good health.¹¹⁵ The following month, another letter closed with a prayer for Allah to bring victory, unleash his wrath against the Germans, and bring glory to the Soviet state: “O great Allah! Exalt our glorious great Soviet homeland, bring happiness to the spirit of the multimillion Soviet people, living in brotherhood and friendship, both in the years of peaceful constructive labor and in the years of struggle with foreign invaders.”¹¹⁶ Statements from the Russian Orthodox Church similarly invoked scriptural citations in addresses to Christians at home and abroad.¹¹⁷

Geographic Unity

As religious appeals enabled new forms of unity and patriotism previously excluded by the state’s anti-religious stance, the press regularly capitalized on another discourse of unity: unity across the geographic expanse of the Soviet Union. This was articulated in two primary modes. First, utilizing another form of nested patriotism that echoed the ethnically informed

¹¹⁴ Tasar, 50–55. See also Jeff Eden, “A Soviet Jihad against Hitler: Ishan Babakhan Calls Central Asian Muslims to War,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 59, no. 1–2 (2016): 237–64.

¹¹⁵ “Ot Kurultaia dukhovenstva i veruiushchikh musul’man Zakavkaz’ia,” *Pravda and Izvestiia*, 28 May 1944, 2.

¹¹⁶ “Ot S”ezda musul’man’skogo dukhovenstva i veruiushchikh Severnogo Kavkaza,” *Pravda and Izvestiia*, 23 June 1944, 2.

¹¹⁷ See addresses to worldwide Christians and to Orthodox “pastors and their believing progeny” on the occasion of the 1945 election of Aleksii as patriarch, published in *Izvestiia*, 6 February 1945, 2, and *Pravda*, 7 February 1945, 2.

patriotism described above, propaganda encouraged citizens, particularly non-Russians living far from the front and evacuated citizens living far from their homes, to treat all Soviet territory as their own. Second, wartime propaganda systematically described the deep connections between the front and the home front. These discourses reminded citizens that all wartime efforts, whether through labor in the rear or through service on the front, contributed to eventual victory.

Wartime propaganda encouraged non-Russian soldiers to see the country as a single geographic whole, a discourse that invited them to defend occupied territory with the same passion otherwise reserved for their native lands. A public letter to Kazakh soldiers from the Kazakh people made this connection explicit:

The unbreakable friendship of the peoples has become the basis of love for one's homeland. Now, the Kazakh, gazing at the palaces of Leningrad, at the full-flowing Neva River, at the dense northern forests, at the splendor of the Black Sea, at the volcanoes of the Far East, can rightly say, "This is my motherland. And everything that is mine is yours, neighbors and brothers, and everything that is yours is mine. Everyone remembers Ukrainian film director Dovzhenko's story about how the Kazakh soldiers upon entering the first inches of liberated Ukrainian land fell to their knees and with their rough hands smoothed and kissed this suffering earth, permeated with the blood of her sons. They did this not only because the steppes of Ukraine reminded them of their native expanses, but because this was now dear and sweet earth also for them, Kazakhs."¹¹⁸

In a radio address to Kazakh soldiers, Nurtas Ondasynov, head of the Kazakh Soviet of People's Commissars, made connections between Stalingrad and Kazakhstan: "In defending the great Russian Volga River, you are defending your own sunny Kazakhstan."¹¹⁹

Such formulations were common. The Red Army soldier Sh. Kenashvili addressed his fellow Georgians in their native language at a Red Army gathering on the banks of the Black Sea: "When the enemy attacked our land, my brothers ran off in defense of the motherland. They

¹¹⁸ "Pis'mo kazakhskogo naroda frontovikam-kazakhham," *Izvestiia and Pravda*, 6 February 1943, 3. This story, which concerned the 229th Infantry Regiment of the 8th Rifle Division, was elsewhere attributed to Maksym Ryl's'kyi, see G. Mikhailov, "Golos grazhdanina," *Literatura i iskusstvo*, 19 September 1942, 2.

¹¹⁹ As quoted by Berkhoff, *Motherland in Danger*, 216.

defended the happiness of Georgia in Ukraine and the Kuban [Southern Russia].”¹²⁰ Another article likewise noted, “The front is far from Georgia, but the motherland of every Georgian is the entire Soviet Union.”¹²¹ Tajik soldiers, too, were encouraged to see all of the Soviet Union as their own, with allusions to landscapes of Tajikistan: “Wherever you fight—on the banks of the Don River, on the steppes of Ukraine, on the outskirts of Leningrad—you are defending Stalinabad, the banks of the Panj River, the Pamir Mountains, the Vakhsh and Leninabad valleys.” Assertions of Soviet friendship ensured this unbreakable connection between land and people.¹²²

In the rear, the evacuated were encouraged to think similarly. One letter addressed to the Ukrainian people noted that Ukrainian collective farmers worked on evacuated collective farms “with the same energy as in their native lands.” In a literal sense, the article noted, Ukraine’s evacuated factories continued to produce for the needs of the front, providing a link between “home” and evacuation.¹²³ As discussed above, literary compositions deepened patriotism by appealing to citizens’ love for their native land, using ambiguous language that allowed “motherland” to be interpreted as both the entire Soviet Union and more localized territories. The central press singled out Ukrainian writers, including Maksym Ryl’s’kyi, Pavlo Tychyna, and others, for their use of Ukrainian motifs and descriptions of Ukrainian land in wartime poetry.¹²⁴

Wartime propaganda also declared geographic unity in the frequent assertion of the unbreakable connection between front and rear, reflecting the understanding that production of

¹²⁰ “Zakon gor—Rech’ krasnoarmeitsa Sh. Kenashvili, priznesennaia na gruzinskom iazyke,” *Pravda*, 14 October 1942, 2.

¹²¹ D. Rudnev, “Tbilisi segodnia,” *Pravda*, 24 June 1942, 3.

¹²² Pis’mo boitsam-tadzhikam ot tadzhikskogo naroda, *Pravda*, 20 March 1943, 3, and *Izvestiia*, 20 March 1943, 2.

¹²³ “K ukrainskomu narodu,” *Pravda*, 2 April 1942, 3.

¹²⁴ On Ukrainian writers, see A. Korneichuk, “Ukrainskie pisateli v dni voiny,” *Izvestiia*, 27 January 1942, 3; Natan Rybak, “Ukrainskie pisateli—frontu,” *Literatura i iskusstvo*, 9 May 1942, 4; G. Mikhailov, “Golos grazhdanina,” *Literatura i iskusstvo*, 19 September 1942, 2. For examples of such poems, see Pavlo Tychyna, “My idemo na bii,” *Pravda*, 24 June 1941, 3; Maksym Ryl’s’kyi, “Slovo pro ridnu matir,” *Izvestiia*, 20 March 1943, 3.

industrial and agricultural goods was as necessary to ongoing battles as the fighting itself. That workers in the rear could work “in a soldier-like manner” (*po voennomu*), “in the manner of the front” (*po frontovomu*), or simply with the same organization and discipline as on the front erased the rhetorical boundaries between the front and rear. In his July 1941 address, Stalin called for the entire country to “restructure all our work in a military mode (*na voennyi lad*).”¹²⁵ Another article noted, “The whole country works for defense, and each production site is an important frontier (*rubezh*).”¹²⁶ The fact that the German military pressed deep into Soviet territory in the summer and fall of both 1941 and 1942 also reminded many citizens that the front was never far away.¹²⁷ Further underscoring this geographic unity, many articles pointed to the fact that people worked towards victory “from all corners of the great Soviet land.”¹²⁸

Regular communication between soldiers on the front and loved ones in the rear further collapsed the distances separating them. Public letters addressed to soldiers of specific ethnicities exemplified this trend and promoted a sense of community that bound citizens of the same ethnicity across the geographic expanses that divided them. Soldiers officially responded to these letters, suggesting a two-way connection.¹²⁹ The press also emphasized emotional bonds: war was not only about protecting the country in the abstract, but about supporting sons, fathers, husbands, brothers, and neighbors. And it was not just letters. Gifts, particularly when they

¹²⁵ “Vystuplenie po radio Predsedatelia Gosudarstvennogo Komiteta Oborony I.V. Stalina, 3 iulia 1941 goda,” *Izvestiia* and *Pravda*, 3 July 1941, 1.

¹²⁶ “Vsia strana rabotaet vo imia pobedy,” *Izvestiia*, 18 November 1942, 1. See also I. Bardin, “V tylu, kak na fronte,” *Izvestiia*, 25 June 1941, 2; I. Zavertailo, “Rabotaem po frontovomu,” *Pravda*, 24 June 1942, 3.

¹²⁷ “Blagorodnyi pochin rabotnikov zavoda imeni Vladimira Il’icha,” *Izvestiia*, 15 September 1942, 1.

¹²⁸ Here, “Sviashchennaia družhba fronta i tyla,” *Pravda*, 27 October 1942, 1. See also “Vyshe revoliutsionnuiu bditel’nost’!,” *Izvestiia*, 8 July 1941, 1; “Narodnaia initsiativa i oborona rodiny” and “O dobrovol’noi sdache naseleniia teplykh veshchei dlia krasnoi armii,” *Pravda*, 10 December 1941, 1; D. Rudnev, “Tbilisi segodnia,” *Pravda*, 24 June 1942, 3; “Stalin vedet nas k pobede,” *Izvestiia*, 10 November 1942, 1; “Novogodniaia rech’ Predsedatelia Prezidium Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR tov. M.I. Kalinina,” *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, 1 January 1943, 2; A. Zver’ev, “Iarkaia demonstratsiia sovetского patriotisma,” *Ivestiia*, 7 April 1943, 2.

¹²⁹ Schechter, “The People’s Instructions.” For a published collection of public letters and responses, see also D.I. Ibragimov, ed., “*Pis’mo Tatarskogo naroda frontovikam-tataram*” i otvety na nego: *Sbornik dokumentov* (Kazan: Glavnoe arkhivnoe upravlenie pri Kabinete Ministrov Respubliki Tatarstana, 2012).

actually reached their destination, were seen as physical manifestations of citizens' love and care for soldiers.¹³⁰ In the words of one front-page editorial, "Our army is connected to our people with millions of threads," as everyone provided for the front.¹³¹

*"Stalin Leads Us to Victory"*¹³²

To divert attention away from hardships, tensions, and strategic blunders, the propaganda apparatus focused on the ultimate, inevitable victory that would justify all sacrifice and difficulties. From Molotov's initial pronouncement onward, leaders emphasized eventual victory. Stalin repeatedly argued that Hitler had severely underestimated the country. Soviet soldiers had defied all expectations and fought valiantly. Indeed, Stalin emphasized the country's unique qualifications to lead the world in World War II in his 1942 speech on the anniversary of the revolution: "I think that no other country and no other army could withstand such an onslaught of brutal bands of German fascist robbers and their allies. Only our Soviet country, and only its Red Army is capable of withstanding such an onslaught. And not only of withstanding it, but overcoming it."¹³³

The central press frequently published similar assertions, though not always with hope for a swift conclusion—particularly not as German troops pushed to the outskirts of Moscow during the bleak autumn of 1941. A *Pravda* editorial that fall concluded, "No matter how hard the struggle, no matter how serious the sacrifices, no matter what tests lie ahead—the ultimate victory will be ours."¹³⁴ Soviet forces slowly repelled German troops through the winter and

¹³⁰ See especially "Sviashennaia druzhba fronta i tyła," *Pravda*, 27 October 1942, 1.

¹³¹ "Geroicheskaia armiiia sovetskogo naroda," *Izvestiia*, 3 November 1942, 1.

¹³² Title from "Stalin vedet nas k pobeде," *Izvestiia*, 10 November 1942, 1.

¹³³ "Doklad Predsedatelia Gosudarstvennogo Komiteta Oborony tovarishcha I.V. Stalina," *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, 7 November 1942, 2.

¹³⁴ "Cherez vse ispytaniia—k konechnoi pobeде!" *Pravda*, 29 October 1941, 1.

spring, only to face a renewed German campaign during the late spring, summer, and fall of 1942. That fall, as German troops pushed deep into Soviet territory at Stalingrad and the siege of Leningrad seemed unending, *Izvestiia* reminded readers, “Stalin leads us to victory”:

‘There will be celebration on our streets!’ declares our leader and commander, and these weighty, assured words enter the soul of the people with great celebration. ‘There will be celebration on our streets!’ —all workers of all countries take up these words. From Vladivostok and Tbilisi, Kalinin and Sverdlovsk, Gorky and Novosibirsk, Frunze and Almaty —from all cities and villages, where thousands and tens of thousands of workers, collective farmers, Soviet intelligentsia listened to Stalin’s speech by radio, where the words of his military order sounded, the people’s living and ardent response sweeps over.¹³⁵

As wartime fortunes gradually shifted and war transformed from a defensive battle on Soviet territory to the liberation of Eastern Europe and ultimately Berlin, discourses of victory became more prominent. As Jan Plamper notes, Stalin’s name and image was tightly associated with wartime success, becoming more present in 1945 as victory neared.¹³⁶ Stalin was frequently praised as the architect of victory, who led the Soviet people and the Red Army successfully into battle for the defense of their country.¹³⁷ Credit, however, went not to Stalin alone; rather, the press described victory as the accomplishment of the military and the Soviet people as well. As the war’s end approached, the central press adopted a more celebratory tone, placing the long-promised and now eagerly-anticipated victory onto the Soviet people’s ever-growing list of accomplishments.¹³⁸

¹³⁵ “Stalin vedet nas k pobede,” *Izvestiia*, 10 November 1942, 1. The sentence, “Budet i na nashei ulitse prazdnik,” literally, “there will be celebration on our streets,” is an idiom that can be alternatively translated as “Every dog has his day” or “Our turn will come.” I have chosen a literal translation since it reflects the geographic imagery and the holiday spirit of the anniversary of the revolution, when Stalin gave the referenced speech. The idiomatic line is not a direct quotation from the speech, see “Doklad Predsedatelia Gosudarstvennogo Komiteta Oborony tovarishcha I.V. Stalina,” *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, 7 November 1942, 1–2.

¹³⁶ Plamper, *The Stalin Cult*, 55–56.

¹³⁷ Especially noteworthy examples include “Stalin vedet nas k pobede,” *Izvestiia*, 10 November 1942, 1; “Stalin —eto pobeda!” *Izvestiia*, 9 March 1943, 1. Ukrainian poet Maksym Ryl’s’kyi’s poem on victory, translated into Russian and published in *Pravda* on May 9, also offered glory and praise to Stalin, Maksim Ryl’skii, “Den’ pobedy,” *Pravda*, 9 May 1945, 3.

¹³⁸ See especially “Istoricheskie pobedy sovetskogo naroda,” *Pravda*, 6 May 1945, 1.

Victory was described as both a collective, multiethnic victory as well as a specifically Russian accomplishment. The latter theme would become especially prominent after the war, most famously in Stalin's toast to the Russian people, delivered at a Kremlin reception for Red Army commanders in May 1945, to "thunderous, continuing applause and shouts of 'Hooray'":

I would like to raise a toast to the health of our Soviet people and, foremost, of the Russian people. I drink foremost to the health of the Russian people because it is the most distinguished nation (*natsiia*) of all the nations that form the Soviet Union. I raise a toast to the health of the Russian people because it earned in this war general recognition as the leading force of the Soviet Union among all peoples of our country. I raise a toast to the health of the Russian people not only because it is the leading people but because it possesses a clear mind, steadfast character and patience... The Russian people's confidence in the Soviet government proved to be the decisive force that ensured the historic victory over the enemy of humanity—over fascism. Thanks to it, to the Russian people, for this confidence.¹³⁹

Even as such statements arguably undermined images of multiethnic contribution, the Soviet press celebrated the victory as one of the entire Soviet people. In the war's final days and after victory, newspaper reportage from across the country and a multiethnic cast of writers and poets, mostly written in or translated into Russian, symbolically reminded readers of non-Russian participation.¹⁴⁰ The press extensively catalogued countrywide victory celebrations.¹⁴¹ As noted in a lead editorial in *Pravda*, "May 9 was a day of celebration of the friendship of all peoples of the Soviet Union. Kyiv, Minsk, Baku, Tbilisi, Tashkent, Ashgabat, Stalinabad, Riga, all capitals

¹³⁹ "Vystuplenie tov. I.V. Stalina," *Pravda*, 25 May 1945, 1; cf. Leonid Leonov, "Russkie v Berline," *Pravda*, 7 May 1945, 1. On the postwar ascendancy of the Russian people, see Yekelchik, *Stalin's Empire of Memory*.

¹⁴⁰ For non-Russian poetry, see Grigol Abashidze, trans. Boris Serebriakov, "Mai i pobeda," *Pravda*, 5 May 1945, 3; Samed Vurgun, trans. A. Adalis, "Znamia pobedy," *Izvestiia*, 5 May 1945, 3; Volodymyr Sosiura, "Peremoha," *Pravda*, 6 May 1945, 2; M. Ryl'skii, trans. Nik. Ushakov, "Den' Pobedy," *Pravda*, 9 May 1945, 3. Sosiura's was published in the original Ukrainian. Prose examples include Leonid Leonov, "Vesna narodov," Pavlo Tychna, "Torzhestvui, zemlia sovetskaia!," Andrei Upits, "Armiia-osvoboditel' nitsa," and Petrus' Brovka, "Bolshoe schast'e," all in *Pravda*, 1 May 1945, 4. Reports on the final war bond, too, highlighted multiethnic participation, see "Blestiashchii uspekh Chetvertogo Voennogo Zaima," *Izvestiia*, 5 May 1945, 3; "Strana s velichaim pod'emom podpisivaetsia na Voennyi zaem" and "Gromadnyi uspekh Chetvertogo Voennogo Zaima," *Pravda*, 5 May 1945, 2–3; "S ogromnym pod'emom idet podpisiska na Chetvertyi Voennyi Zaem," *Izvestiia*, 6 May 1945, 2.

¹⁴¹ "Prazdnik Pobedy," *Pravda*, 9 May 1945, 1; "Gitlerovskaia Germaniia razgromlena. Sovetskii narod praznuet velikuiu pobedu," *Pravda*, 9 May 1945, 3; "Sovetskii narod likuet," *Izvestiia*, 9 May 1945, 4; Maksim Ryl'skii and Aleksandr Il'chenko, "Slezy schast'ia," *Izvestiia*, 10 May 1945, 4; "Strana praznuet velikuiu pobedu," *Pravda*, 11 May 1945, 3; "Leningrad torzhestvuet," "Kiev: Utro pobedy," "Baku: Vsenarodnyi prazdnik," "Minsk: istoricheskoe sobytie," and "Sverdlovsk: Uraltsy slushali vozhdia," *Izvestiia*, 11 May 1945, 2.

of Soviets republics, all their cities rejoiced and celebrated like Moscow. All eyes were turned to Moscow, to the Kremlin, to Stalin!”¹⁴² The diarist Makhsuda M. described the celebrations in Tashkent: “The entire city poured out onto the streets. Music sounded from the loud speakers. On that day, it seems people did not go home. They played accordion, sang, danced, everyone’s eyes shined. I never thought that so many people lived in Tashkent. With flowers in their hands.” She recalled the celebratory, “real” plov—with meat—prepared in honor of victory, and mused about the better fortunes and reduced workloads that would surely come.¹⁴³

Above all, Soviet propaganda described the population in terms of its deep unity across many possible divides. This was not merely a theoretical assertion. Discussion of the many ways that civilians and soldiers had united to wage a massive, unprecedented campaign against the invading enemy dovetailed with citizens’ own experiences. Movement of people and goods both between and within the battle and home fronts created conditions that had made the country operate more like a coherent, unified whole. This experience, however, did not universally reflect the positive messages that emanated from the press and the propaganda apparatus. Indeed, war often brought to light disparities and inequalities—even hatreds—that divided citizens in ways that both exposed and challenged the Soviet Union’s imperial structure.

Shoulder-to-Shoulder: Interethnic Relations and Interactions in the Military

The military provided one of the most important sites of interethnic, cross-geographic interactions for citizens during World War II. Echoing prewar discourses, the press typically characterized the military as a quintessential institution of the entire Soviet people and frequently

¹⁴² “Den’ velikoi pobedy nashogo naroda,” *Pravda*, 12 May 1945, 1. A strikingly similar editorial was published the same day in *Izvestiia*, noting, “Moscow was at the center of the national celebration. To here, to the capital of the Soviet Union, were oriented all thoughts and feelings of people, celebrating in the squares of Kyiv and Tashkent, Riga and Tbilisi, Chişinău and Almaty.” “9 maia 1945 goda,” *Izvestiia*, 12 May 1945, 1.

¹⁴³ Tokhtakhodzhaeva, *XX vek v vospominaniakh...*, 265–66. The diary entry was dated May 12, 1945.

highlighted interethnic cooperation within its ranks.¹⁴⁴ Soldiers generally served in multiethnic units and the military was an important site of cultural, linguistic, and political integration. At the same time, routine interactions often exposed and intensified any number of countervailing inequalities and hierarchies, particularly along lines of ethnicity and language proficiency.

That the military was an important site of integration was hardly unique to the Soviet Union. Historians of empire have often noted that militaries frequently cultivate civic loyalty across linguistically and ethnically diverse polities.¹⁴⁵ In the case of the U.S., for instance, Gary Gerstle demonstrated that World War II was a critical moment in the integration of white Americans, even as it was a time of segregation and exclusion of non-whites.¹⁴⁶ Even in the Russian Empire, much maligned by Bolshevik leaders, military service enabled integration and upward mobility for selected non-Russian minorities.¹⁴⁷ By World War II, the Soviet Union had made significant strides towards inclusion and a more egalitarian military, including the recruitment of Central Asian soldiers and others who had been prohibited from active service before 1917.¹⁴⁸

The press hailed this post-revolutionary inclusion of all citizens in the military and the use of native languages in recruitment and training. “Ethnic minorities in the ranks of the Red Army,” one 1926 article noted, “should not feel for a minute that they are some sort of ‘second

¹⁴⁴ “Krasnaia Armiiia — rodnoe detishche sovetskogo naroda,” *Pravda*, 25 June 1941, 1; “Doblestnaia armiiia sovetskogo naroda,” *Izvestiia*, 27 June 1931, 1; “Geroicheskaia armiiia sovetskogo naroda,” *Izvestiia*, 3 November 1942, 1; “Velikii geroizm sovetskogo naroda i ego Krasnoi Armii,” *Pravda*, 11 November 1942, 1. On “friendship of the peoples” within the military, see especially “Druzhiba narodov na fronte,” *Pravda*, 14 October 1942; “Boevoe bratstvo narodov sovetskogo soiuzna,” *Pravda*, 31 October 1942, 1; S. Shatilov, “Plechom k plechu,” *Pravda*, 5 December 1942, 2; F. Voznyi, “Vospitanie boevogo edinstva,” *Pravda*, 29 May 1943, 3; D. Rudnev, “Pobratimy,” *Pravda*, 11 June 1943, 3.

¹⁴⁵ Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870–1914*, 292–302; Deák, *Beyond Nationalism*; Colley, *Britons*, 283–320.

¹⁴⁶ Gerstle, *American Crucible*, 187–237.

¹⁴⁷ Sanborn, *Drafting the Russian Nation*; Petrovsky-Shtern, *Jews in the Russian Army, 1827–1917*. On tsarist-era exclusion, see especially Uyama, “A Particularist Empire: The Russian Policies of Christianization and Military Conscriptation in Central Asia.”

¹⁴⁸ Roger R. Reese, *Stalin’s Reluctant Soldiers: A Social History of the Red Army, 1925–1941* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1996); Reese, *Why Stalin’s Soldiers Fought*.

class citizens.’ At the time they are drafted, the native language should make all recruits feel that they enter their own dear (*rodnoi*) Red Army as comrades and friends.”¹⁴⁹ The shift to universal male conscription in 1936, the near-complete elimination of territorial units by 1939, and the 1939 decision to lower the draft age from 21 to 19 transformed the military into a more representative institution.¹⁵⁰ As the first major foreign war on Soviet soil since the Bolsheviks assumed power, World War II placed recruits on the frontlines in unprecedented numbers.

Wartime policies to integrate soldiers reflected the dual propagandistic emphasis on the simultaneous unity and diversity of the body politic. The Red Army embodied the cultivation of both ethnic and civic identities and provided an important site of nested patriotism. On one level, the Russian language was a critical aspect of all-Soviet socialization. In a 1943 speech to military agitators who worked among non-Russian soldiers, the head of state and politburo member Mikhail Kalinin indicated the importance of Russian. Studying Russian, he declared, was “exceptionally mandatory. Our military statutes are compiled in Russian, and the military orders given by commanders are also written in Russian. Russian provides for the communication between all peoples of the USSR. The Russian language is the language of Lenin. In this language, our *vozhd*’ Comrade Stalin addresses Soviet people [*liudi*] and the Red Army.”¹⁵¹ Although Kalinin and others simultaneously acknowledged the value of native languages in political socialization, Russian remained supreme as the language of both the Soviet people and the Red Army.¹⁵² As Charles Shaw notes, recruits “needed to adapt to the predominant Russian

¹⁴⁹ Komlev, “Obespechim uspekh prizyva,” *Izvestiia*, 22 August 1926, 3.

¹⁵⁰ Reese, *Stalin’s Reluctant Soldiers*, 9–40. Realities, of course, sometimes overshadowed promises. As Reese notes, Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians continued to dominate the military disproportionately throughout the 1930s, even more so than in the tsarist military.

¹⁵¹ M.I. Kalinin, *O Kommunisticheskom Vospitanii: Izbrannye Rechi i Stat’i*, 2nd Edition (Moscow: Molodaia Gvardiia, 1946), 177.

¹⁵² On native language propaganda, see Schechter, “The People’s Instructions”; Roberto J. Carmack, “History and Hero-Making: Patriotic Narratives and the Sovietization of Kazakh Front-Line Propaganda, 1941–1945,” *Central*

culture and language of the army, regardless of nationality.” Shaw observes a tendency among Uzbek recruits to self-identify by Russian names and to write in Russian, even addressing fellow Uzbeks, many of whom had limited knowledge of Russian.¹⁵³

Learning Russian helped integrate troops both laterally and hierarchically, as the language became the medium for communication among soldiers and with commanding officers. Russian-speakers featured disproportionately in higher ranks and in non-combatant personnel, presenting communication problems for non-Russian recruits, many of whom spoke limited Russian.¹⁵⁴ A draft report on political work in the Red Army observed that political workers and commissars often struggled to speak with non-Russian soldiers, creating tensions within the ranks: “Here, the cadres of political workers and commissars often do not know the language of the ethnicity to which a significant section of the soldiers belong, they do not understand them, they speak to them through translators, they cannot develop good rapport with soldiers, they lack credibility.”¹⁵⁵ Kalinin, too, suggested that many soldiers’ command of Russian was sufficiently limited “in the first stages” as to necessitate ideological work in native languages, subtly suggesting an expectation of eventual proficiency. To combat non-fluency, the military, party, and state emphasized Russian education for recruits in schools and in military training.¹⁵⁶

Still, successful military service did not entail wholesale adoption of “Russianness.”

Alongside the focus on improving Russian proficiency and reflecting the belief that non-Russian

Asian Survey 33, no. 1 (2014): 95–112; Boram Shin, “Red Army Propaganda for Uzbek Soldiers and Localised Soviet Internationalism during World War II,” *The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review* 42, no. 1 (2015): 39–63.

¹⁵³ Shaw, “Soldiers’ Letters to Inobatxon and O’g’ulxon,” 520. On Russian language acquisition among Kazakhs in the military, see Carmack, “History and Hero-Making,” 99–100.

¹⁵⁴ RGASPI, f. 17, o. 125, d. 85, ll. 39–51, 66–67; APRK, f. 708, o. 5/1, d. 1122, l. 48, 66–67.

¹⁵⁵ RGASPI, f. 17, o. 125, d. 85, l. 22. The drafted report was unsigned and undated, but in a file with documents from late 1941 and 1942.

¹⁵⁶ “Druzhba narodov na fronte,” *Pravda*, 14 October 1942, 1. On the process in Kazakhstan, see APRK, f. 708, o. 5/1, d. 1122. Newspapers also reported on efforts to publish textbooks specifically for non-Russian soldiers, see Academic M.I. Muskhelishvili, “Uchenye Gruzii—frontu,” *Izvestiia*, 28 September 1941, 3; “Uchebnik russkogo iazyka dlia boitsov vseobucha,” *Izvestiia*, 3 October 1942, 3.

soldiers' limited command of Russian could prevent ideological integration, the state recruited propagandists who could work with recruits in their native languages, an example of nested patriotism at work.¹⁵⁷ Boram Shin describes this as a “reciprocal” arrangement, whereby the Red Army tried “to *speak* the languages of its Central Asian soldiers and modify its propaganda to better appeal to the Central Asian population” as “Central Asia too acquired fluency in *speaking* the Soviet.”¹⁵⁸ As Brandon Schechter observes, these efforts were targeted specifically towards soldiers from Central Asia and the South Caucasus, who were presumed to have more limited mastery of Russian than their Russian, Ukrainian, and Belarusian counterparts. In part, this reflected concern about high desertion rates and low political awareness among soldiers of particular ethnicities, as well as ongoing inequalities in the perceptions of minority soldiers.¹⁵⁹

The adjustment of propaganda was not limited to use of soldiers' native languages, as Kalinin emphasized to propagandists. He outlined the importance of celebrating a diverse cast of heroes, including non-Russian military officers who had risen through the ranks, believing such examples to have mobilizing power: “Everyone, including Russians, is proud of their ethnicity—and it can't be any other way: he is a son of his people!” Noting the “very deep significance” of this fact, he exhorted propagandists to use national themes in their interactions with non-Russian soldiers: “Go and foster in our people Soviet patriotism, national pride; remind every soldier about the heroic traditions of his people, about its wonderful epics and literature, about the great people, like commanders and military leaders, about the warriors for the liberation of the masses.”¹⁶⁰ The 1942 *Pravda* letter to Uzbek soldiers reflected this strategy, appealing to Uzbek

¹⁵⁷ RGASPI, f. 17, o. 125, d. 85, l. 39–51; Kalinin, *O kommunisticheskoi vospitanii*, 177–79. See also Schechter, “The People's Instructions.”

¹⁵⁸ Shin, “Red Army Propaganda for Uzbek Soldiers and Localised Soviet Internationalism during World War II,” 41. Emphasis Shin's.

¹⁵⁹ Schechter, “The People's Instructions,” 111.

¹⁶⁰ Kalinin, *O kommunisticheskoi vospitanii*, 179.

history and to the physical and cultural geography of Uzbekistan.¹⁶¹ Similar motifs ran through letters addressed to non-Russian soldiers published in *Pravda* and *Izvestiia* throughout the winter of 1943, which brought similar visibility to other non-Russian soldiers on the front while appealing to them through forms of nested patriotism.¹⁶²

In 1941, the state also partially reinstated the territorial military units that had been abandoned in the late 1930s, offering them as an example of ethno-territorial patriotism in practice. Alongside regular military units that bridged republic boundaries, these territorial units, comprised primarily of titular minorities, offered a practical manifestation of nationalities policy. As Roberto Carmack observes, the actual work of these units betrayed ongoing tensions and inequalities. Titular minorities may have filled the ranks, but commanding officers were often ethnic Russians. This illustrated the hierarchical relations between Soviet peoples and ensured reliance on Russian as the *lingua franca*. Furthermore, the state expected republics to equip their own ethno-territorial units despite the fact that many republic-level administrations lacked access to necessary supplies. This meant that territorial units were ill equipped relative to regular units, limiting their efficacy and endangering soldiers.¹⁶³

As suggested by the experience of territorial units, military service reinforced non-Russians' second-class status in ways that qualified their symbolic importance both explicitly and subtly. Although in a 1941 speech Stalin emphasized that all citizens fought together, wartime realities on the ground betrayed deep rifts.¹⁶⁴ A 1942 report discussed condescending

¹⁶¹ "O'zbek xalqining jangchilariga ularning el-yurtlaridan maktub," *Pravda*, 31 October 1942, 2

¹⁶² These generally third-page spreads, published in both *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, included letters to Uzbek (October 31, 1942), Kazakh (February 6, 1943), Armenian (February 27, 1943), Tatar (March 5, 1943), Tajik (March 20, 1943), Turkmen (April 13, 1943), and Azerbaijani (April 21, 1943) soldiers. Only the letter to Uzbek soldiers was run in the original in the central press (though all presumably appeared locally in soldiers' native languages). For a discussion of this initiative, see Schechter, "The People's Instructions."

¹⁶³ Carmack, "'A Fortress of the Soviet Home Front,'" 52–57.

¹⁶⁴ Stalin's speech, delivered in celebration of the 24th anniversary of the October Revolution, was frequently invoked in discussions of ideological mobilization in the military. The speech was reproduced in *Pravda*, 7

attitudes from military leaders towards Georgian, Azerbaijani, Dagestani, and Uzbek recruits. The same report also detailed rumors that one commander had proposed using non-Russian soldiers as a human shield to protect more valuable Russian and Cossack soldiers.¹⁶⁵ Such attitudes were not surprising given Russians' implied and asserted superiority. Kalinin concluded his 1943 speech with words that dripped of condescension towards "previously very backward" peoples and hinted at the embedded hierarchies that placed non-Russians distinctly below their Russian peers by reinforcing their need to follow the example of their Russian "older brothers."¹⁶⁶ Despite efforts to provide additional training to non-Russians, many felt judged for their lack of Russian proficiency. Military leaders, newspapers, and elites complained that poor Russian language skills hindered communication and threatened military efficacy.¹⁶⁷ These and other occurrences underscored the continuing second-class status of non-Russians relative to their Russian peers. As much as the state emphasized multiethnic contributions, non-Russians had neither equal footing nor equal recognition, even in the military.

Everything for the Front: Civil Mobilization and Interethnic Relations on the Home Front

As wartime propaganda repeatedly emphasized, the experience of war was not limited to the battlefields of the Eastern Front and the Far East. Rather, the war was a collective effort, as citizens and goods were called into service. The rear, especially (non-Russian) Central Asia and Western Siberia, served as a source of material support and able bodies, one that the state routinely mined and depended upon for the success of the long campaign. World War II

November 1941, 1–2. Roger Reese discusses the general consequences of the Red Army's multiethnic composition in *Why Stalin's Soldiers Fought*, especially 225–27 and 248–52.

¹⁶⁵ RGASPI, f. 17, o. 125, d. 85, ll. 64–65.

¹⁶⁶ Kalinin, *O kommunisticheskoi vospitanii*, 176–80.

¹⁶⁷ RGASPI, f. 17, o. 125, d. 85, ll. 39–51; APRK, f. 708, o. 5/1, d. 1122; Kalinin, *O kommunisticheskoi vospitanii*, 177; S. Shatilov, "Plechom k plechu," *Pravda*, 5 December 1942, 2. Newspapers also reported on efforts to publish textbooks specifically for non-Russian soldiers, see Academic M.I. Muskhelishvili, "Uchenye Gruzii — frontu," *Izvestiia*, 28 September 1941, 3; "Uchebnik russkogo iazyka dlia boitsov vseobucha," *Izvestiia*, 3 October 1942, 3.

transformed the hinterlands from peripheral territories to essential sites of industrial and economic production and a key place where citizens across a wide geographic and cultural space interacted with new intensity. Whether recruited to far-flung worksites, evacuated to safety in the hinterlands, or forcibly resettled as part of ongoing campaigns to clear occupied territory of alleged traitors, citizens encountered both one another and the vast, diverse territory of the Soviet Union. These interactions simultaneously confirmed the functioning of the state as a singular nation-like whole and exposed enduring inequalities between citizens.

The German invasion, though not unanticipated in general terms, caught the Soviet Union by surprise. As already noted, the German army pressed deep into Soviet territory, threatening land, infrastructure, and people. In response, the state embarked on one of the most ambitious evacuations of citizens and industry in history, transferring them from regions threatened by the German advance into the hinterlands. The Urals, Western Siberia, and Central Asia became the chief receiving regions, as millions of citizens headed east (and occasionally west) and south to places of relative safety. Wartime evacuations, however, were not the only way that people and industry found their way into Central Asia. Beginning in the 1930s, Central Asia and Western Siberia also became sites for massive forced resettlement campaigns of suspicious or supposedly unreliable populations, particularly those living along contested borders in the far west and east.

Resettlement to the interior began in the mid-1930s, while the state renegotiated its nationalities policy. The state resettled significant numbers of Poles, Germans, and Koreans from regions of strategic interest and danger, as the state itself anticipated the near inevitability of war along both its western and eastern frontiers.¹⁶⁸ Many who were forced to leave homes in border

¹⁶⁸ On deportation and its consequences, see especially A. M. Nekrich, *The Punished Peoples: The Deportation and Fate of Soviet Minorities at the End of the Second World War* (New York: Norton, 1978); Gelb, “An Early Soviet Ethnic Deportation”; Martin, “The Origins of Soviet Ethnic Cleansing”; Pohl, *Ethnic Cleansing in the USSR, 1937-1949*; Norman M Naimark, *Fires of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard

regions with Poland and the Far East found themselves resettled in the (now emptied) steppe of Northern Kazakhstan, newly available as the result of brutal sedentarization policies against previously nomadic peoples, and other sites in Central Asia.¹⁶⁹ Although these continued a longer pattern of European settlement of the steppe, Soviet policies differed dramatically in both scope and impact. Resettlement intensified with the outbreak of war, as the so-called “punished peoples” found themselves deported *en masse* to communities in Central Asia, Western Siberia, and the Urals, bringing large numbers of Chechens, Germans, and others.

The hinterlands also received a large influx of evacuees from the front. As Rebecca Manley notes, populations selected for official evacuation reflected the state’s priorities and represented the most privileged members of society: artists, writers, poets, and essential personnel.¹⁷⁰ Citizens were resettled in cities and villages across Central Asia, which became, in Natalie Belsky’s words, “zones of contact,” connecting people to one another in new and often personal ways.¹⁷¹ Evacuation and forced resettlement familiarized populations with new parts of the country, offering first-hand experience with previously unfamiliar territories and peoples.¹⁷²

University Press, 2002), 85–107; Michaela Pohl, “‘It Cannot Be That Our Graves Will Be Here’: The Survival of Chechen and Ingush Deportees in Kazakhstan, 1944–1957,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 4, no. 3 (2002): 401–30; Polian, *Against Their Will*; Brown, *A Biography of No Place*, 173–91; Alexander Statiev, “Soviet Ethnic Deportations: Intent versus Outcome,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 11, no. 2–3 (2009): 243–64; Isaac Scarborough, “An Unwanted Dependence: Chechen and Ingush Deportees and the Development of State-Citizen Relations in Late-Stalinist Kazakhstan (1944–1953),” *Central Asian Survey* 36, no. 1 (2017): 93–112. Documents on deportations can be found in Pobol’ and Polian, *Stalinskie Deportatsii*.

¹⁶⁹ On sedentarization and the devastating famine in Kazakhstan, see Cameron, *The Hungry Steppe*.

¹⁷⁰ Manley, *To the Tashkent Station*. Manley’s work focuses specifically on Tashkent, perhaps the most prestigious resettlement site. As Manley notes, the state rarely prioritized the evacuation of non-essential personnel, and thus left peasants and unskilled workers to fend for themselves. See also Natalie Belsky, “Encounters in the East: Evacuees in the Soviet Hinterland during the Second World War” (University of Chicago, 2014); Lewis H. Siegelbaum and Leslie Page Moch, *Broad Is My Native Land: Repertoires and Regimes of Migration in Russia’s Twentieth Century* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), 239–65; Erina Megowan, “For Fatherland, for Culture: State, Intelligentsia and Evacuated Culture in Russia’s Regions, 1941–1945” (Georgetown University, 2016); Larry E. Holmes, *War, Evacuation, and the Exercise of Power: The Center, Periphery, and Kirov’s Pedagogical Institute 1941–1952* (Lexington Books, 2012); Larry E. Holmes, *Stalin’s World War II Evacuations: Triumph and Troubles in Kirov* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2017).

¹⁷¹ Belsky, “Encounters in the East.”

¹⁷² See especially Siegelbaum and Moch, *Broad Is My Native Land*, 264–65. As they note, newfound territorial familiarity was not limited to evacuees: soldiers, too, saw their homeland through new eyes, see 206–22.

Alongside people, the state also moved strategic factories and their essential personnel to places of relative safety far from the advancing German line. By the end of 1942, nearly 2600 factories and industrial institutions had been relocated to the Urals, Western Siberia, Central Asia, and elsewhere.¹⁷³ Because of their distance from the front, the hinterlands became critical for wartime economic production.¹⁷⁴ Newspapers offered evidence of republic contributions, as articles highlighted the Tajik SSR's agricultural output or the Kazakh SSR's industrial and scientific contributions.¹⁷⁵ War increased the industrial output of formerly backwater regions, transforming peripheries like Central Asia into centers of wartime production. The simultaneous destruction of and threat to western territories increased the relative importance of hinterlands.

Whether citizens arrived as part of privileged, evacuated groups or as one of the oppressed, alien peoples, their arrival brought a greater degree of interethnic interaction and familiarity with both the territory and the local people in resettlement sites. Such interactions underscored a sense of common belonging to a unified state while simultaneously creating tensions as citizens competed for limited resources and navigated the complex world of social inequalities. These interactions contributed to the existence of a Soviet identity, often mediated through the Russian language, that worked both in tandem with and in opposition to ethnic identity.

Evacuated and resettled peoples both strained and supplemented limited local resources. Makhsuda M., a young mother who spent the war years between Chirchik and Tashkent,

¹⁷³ Statistics are cited in Viktoriia Shervud, ed., *Deti voiny: v okkupatsii, v evakuatsii, v plenu, v partizanskikh otriadakh, v blokadu. Narodnaia kniga pamiati* (Moscow: AST, 2015), 196–97.

¹⁷⁴ On industrial evacuation, see A. Uralov, "Evakuirovannyi zavod rabotaet na oboronu," *Pravda*, 27 November 1941, 3; Usman Iusupov, "V boevom sodruzhestve narodov SSR," *Pravda*, 16 August 1942, 3. Industrial evacuation remains relatively understudied, but for one account, see Barber and Harrison, *The Soviet Home Front, 1941–1945*. Paul Stronski also discusses the impact of evacuated factories on housing shortages in Tashkent, see *Tashkent: Forging a Soviet City, 1930–1966* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010), 129.

¹⁷⁵ Mamadali Kurbanov, "Sovetskii Tadzhikistan frontu i strane," *Izvestiia*, 5 January 1944, 2; "Sovetskii Kazakhstan—frontu," *Pravda*, 17 July 1942, 3, especially Sabit Mukanov, "Volshebnoe zerno" and B. Ismagulov, "Nash tekushchii schet." See also Carmack, "A Fortress of the Soviet Home Front."

Uzbekistan, recalled the dire situation just outside Tashkent in her diary:

Before the war, the ravine was an inconvenience for residents, but now it has become a real affliction. The population of the *mahalla* [neighborhood] doubled, and maybe tripled. Evacuees lived in every home. In the courtyards, the trash pits are overfilled, and all trash is thrown away at night, and sometimes even in the light of day, into the ravine. After the melting of snow, the scent of the rotting trash penetrates every home. The overpopulation and non-sanitary conditions frighten me. I feel bad; apparently the undernourishment speaks for itself. I have lost weight, darkened, and I always want to sleep.¹⁷⁶

Later, she found herself in Tashkent, where she noted that teaching staff of the local teachers' institute, previously comprised primarily of 'Turkestani Russians' (those born in Tashkent and elsewhere in the region) had been joined by evacuated teachers from Moscow and Kyiv, as well as many Uzbeks, Tajiks, Azerbaijanis, Armenians, and Jews.¹⁷⁷ Memoir and oral history accounts of ordinary workers and collective farmers discussed their integration into local work collectives. As one Karelian evacuee to Kazakhstan remembered, "We worked in the *kolkhoz* in every season in various kinds of field work. We collected grain, ground millet, etc. We worked a lot and with pleasure. The command 'Everything for the front...' was not empty words."¹⁷⁸ War intensified the feeling that many worked together for a common cause.

As they arrived in new territories, evacuees changed the human landscape of their wartime host communities. Makhsuda's diary entries hinted at changing lifestyles and populations in Tashkent, signaled by the influx of soldiers at the local military hospital:

On the streets, men and women in military uniforms meet. Generally, they are people who are healing in the Tashkent military hospital. They confirm: "Tashkent is a city where the soul exhales from war." In both the new city and the old, there are many evacuated people, especially Jews from Ukraine. In comparison to those who live in Igarchi, they are educated people, among them there are even famous people.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ Tokhtakhodzhaeva, *XX vek v vospominaniakh...*, 235–36. This entry is dated 29 May 1943; the original diary was written in Uzbek with Latin orthography; the published copy has been edited and translated into Russian.

¹⁷⁷ Tokhtakhodzhaeva, 250–51. On the evacuation of another institute, see Holmes, *War, Evacuation, and the Exercise of Power*.

¹⁷⁸ Vasili Grigor'evich Makurov, ed., *Evakuirovannaia Kareliia: Zhiteli respubliki ob evakuatsii v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny, 1941–1945: vospominaniia* (Petrozavodsk: Karel'skii nauchnyi tsentr RAN, 2015), 167.

¹⁷⁹ Tokhtakhodzhaeva, *XX vek v vospominaniakh...*, 251 (October 1, 1944).

She also noted changes in local fashion, as women walked Tashkent's streets in high heels.¹⁸⁰

Evacuees also changed the social landscape as they interacted with local populations and gave residents and evacuees alike first-hand experience with the theoretical “friendship of the peoples.” Makhsuda's diary indicates that she felt her social and intellectual worlds expand with the arrival of her neighbor, Larissa, who had been evacuated to Tashkent in late 1941 with her husband and his co-workers at the Moscow Civil Engineering Institute. Larissa offered Makhsuda reading recommendations and advice for taking advantage of her husband's party administrative position. Interactions with Russians acquainted Makhsuda with the lifestyles, habits, and comparative wealth of her neighbors and compatriots, signified by their collections of elegant household items and books.¹⁸¹

In many cases, interactions entered into the intimate family realm. Many evacuees were housed in the physical living spaces of local residents, bringing them into sustained personal contact with local populations. In some cases, these interactions permanently altered families. In a report, Deputy Head of the Division for Propaganda and Agitation of the Central Committee of the Kazakh Communist Party Liubov Balagurova highlighted the adoption of 2000 orphans from occupied territories and the front in Kazakhstan. She detailed several cases: a woman who adopted an orphaned two-month-old Russian baby that would grow up to be “an honored jigit” (a term used exclusively for a young Kazakh man); a Ukrainian boy who immediately attached himself to his adoptive mother when she arrived at the orphanage; and cases of Kazakh and Tatar women adopting Russian and Belarusian orphans.¹⁸² Adoptions made for excellent propaganda,

¹⁸⁰ Tokhtakhodzhaeva, 254 (October 22, 1944).

¹⁸¹ Tokhtakhodzhaeva, especially 255–57 (October 22, 1944).

¹⁸² APRK, f. 708, o. 7/1, d. 666, ll. 20–27. On the same phenomenon in Uzbekistan, including more than 1000 adoptions in Tashkent alone, see Manley, *To the Tashkent Station*, 223–27.

and the press celebrated these cases as examples of the friendship of peoples in action.¹⁸³ The Uzbek blacksmith Sh. Shamaxmudov, who adopted 15 war orphans with his wife, inspired the Uzbek poet G'afur G'ulam's "You are not an orphan" (*Sen yetim emassan*). The poem, originally in Uzbek, was translated into Russian, published in *Pravda* in 1942, and inspired a 1964 movie.¹⁸⁴

Wartime evacuations also provided unprecedented opportunities for collaboration and interaction, reflecting the positive propagandistic image of the Soviet people. Ábdilda Tájibaev, the Secretary of the Presidium of the Union of Soviet Writers of Kazakhstan, sent a report to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan and the Soviet of People's Commissars, in which he mused about how to take advantage of the talents and abilities of evacuated writers, poets, artists and composers in a 1941 report. He proposed forming agitation-literary brigades to perform in any and all possible performance spaces, including lecture halls, parks and gardens, and hospitals.¹⁸⁵ Such collaborative projects were not merely theoretical: one article highlighted works produced by Central Asian and Russian writers, including collaborative works by Kazakh Muhtar Áýezov and Russian Leonid Sobolev, and by Russian playwright Nikolai Pogodin and Uzbek writers Hamid Olimjon, Uyg'un (Rahmatulla Otaqo'zi), and Sobir Abdulla. Evacuation, the article continued, had also increased interactions between actors and directors of different republics, and had thus "allowed them to get to meet and befriend one another, which, without a doubt, enriches the creativity of one and the other."¹⁸⁶ Evacuation also

¹⁸³ E.g. "Blagorodnyi pochin sovetkikh patriotov," *Izvestiia*, 14 March 1942, 1; Pashsha Makhmudova, "Oni stali det'mi Uzbekistana," *Pravda*, 16 August 1942, 3; Ol'ga Mishakova, "Sovetskaia zhenshchina—velikaia sila," *Pravda*, 8 March 1945, 3.

¹⁸⁴ Manley, *To the Tashkent Station*, 223. See also Gafur Guliam, "Ty ne sirota," *Pravda*, 27 April 1942, 2.

¹⁸⁵ APRK, f. 708, o. 5/1, d. 705, ll. 78–80. On evacuation of the creative intelligentsia more generally, see Megowan, "For Fatherland, for Culture." See also Marietta Shaginian, "Opyt' raboty pisatelei v tylu," *Literatura i iskusstvo*, 9 May 1942, 4.

¹⁸⁶ "Velikie traditsii," *Literatura i iskusstvo*, 4 July 1942, 1.

familiarized Russian writers with the work of their non-Russian compatriots.¹⁸⁷

These mutual interactions are also evident in memoirs and oral histories. The Ukrainian writer Vasyl' Sokil recalled that his evacuated theatre collective expanded to include performers from other cities, who together prepared popular performances on patriotic and “anti-Hitlerite” themes with financial support from the Uzbek SSR.¹⁸⁸ Later, he summarized general wartime conditions: “At a time of great shocks, people unite into a single pursuit. War proved this...one idea dominated: to fight the enemy. And writers one way or another coalesced under a single flag. War conditions simplified creative tasks and identified the main ideas: patriotism, heroism in battle and labor, hatred toward the enemy, and readiness to sacrifice oneself in the name of victory.”¹⁸⁹ The dancer Maksim Gavrilov recalled the warm reception his evacuated Karelian dance troop received from their “Kyrgyz brothers” and injured Kazakh and Kyrgyz soldiers.¹⁹⁰

Large-scale labor mobilizations put citizens on the move, placing many in factories and collective farms in territories deprived of their workers by military mobilization.¹⁹¹ Those mobilized for labor faced vastly unequal conditions. A 1943 report, for example, noted the recent arrival of a large group of unskilled Uzbek, Turkmen, and Tajik workers at various sites in the Udmurt ASSR. The report decried the low quality of living conditions, insufficient Russian proficiency, and too-limited propaganda and agitation work in their native languages, which led to poor work discipline and low production. Blaming the party and local authorities for lack of attention, the report also paternalistically cast judgment on workers’ unhygienic and ignorant

¹⁸⁷ E.g. Writer Kornei Chukovskoi wrote about the work of various Uzbek writers, including poet G’afur G’ulom, see Kornei Chukovskoi, “Saliam,” *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 4 December 1943, 3.

¹⁸⁸ Vasyl' Sokil, *Zdaleka do blyz'koho: spohady, rozdumy* (Edmonton: Kanads'kyi instytut ukr. studii, 1987), 139.

¹⁸⁹ Sokil, 152.

¹⁹⁰ Makurov, *Evakuirovannaia Kareliia*, 263–65.

¹⁹¹ Wendy Goldman, “The Stalinist State and Mass Mobilization: From Evacuation to the Labor Draft to Factory Canteens” (Paper presented at Stalinism and War, Moscow, Russia, 2017). Her forthcoming publication with Donald Filtzer also addresses this phenomenon, see *Fortress Dark and Stern: Life, Labor and Loyalty on the Soviet Home Front during World War II* (Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

habits, highlighting dirty laundry and a propensity to sell spare clothing, even underwear. The report nevertheless noted improvements, both in their daily habits and industrial output.¹⁹²

The arrival of evacuees, deportees, and recruited labor in sites of resettlement placed new arrivals into direct contact with locals, which, whether by design or circumstance, emphasized a more universal Soviet culture, affecting host communities and resettled peoples alike. Russian, celebrated in official propaganda as the language of interethnic communication, often served as the default language. This was further catalyzed by the promotion of Russian in educational spheres. In some cases, native language use was tightly controlled and even prohibited, particularly for Soviet Germans and other deported groups. As Kate Brown describes, Germans and Poles gradually lost their sense of national affiliation and “began gradually to fuse into Soviet identities as they assimilated into Russian-Soviet culture.”¹⁹³ In other cases, the shift to Russian happened by default. Party documents from 1942, for instance, highlighted the limited number of qualified Ukrainian teachers for evacuated children in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and elsewhere.¹⁹⁴ Limited textbooks, teachers, and classrooms often meant that Russian became the default language of instruction, since it was perceived as more accessible.

On the ground, interactions often highlighted de facto differences and inequalities in the strained conditions of war. Reports highlighted tensions that developed as citizens competed for limited resources. As Natalie Belsky demonstrates, “contact zones” were often characterized by conflict and friction.¹⁹⁵ Interethnic interactions also threw into relief inequalities between citizens. As Manley notes, the state’s very preference for evacuating some populations (the intelligentsia, for example) over others reinforced hierarchies embedded in the state’s approach

¹⁹² RGASPI, f. 17, o. 125, d. 184, ll. 79–82.

¹⁹³ Brown, *A Biography of No Place*, 191; cf. Scarborough, “An Unwanted Dependence.”

¹⁹⁴ RGASPI, f. 17, o. 126, d. 5, ll. 114–124.

¹⁹⁵ Belsky, “Encounters in the East.” Paul Stronski also discusses hostilities between local Tashkent residents and arriving refugees, see *Tashkent*, 124.

to both people and places.¹⁹⁶ Receiving populations acutely felt the strain of limited resources, as many perceived state preference for evacuees, especially in large cities like Tashkent, Almaty, and Ufa, which received the country's most important citizens. Deportees also faced social stigma, even as deportation intensified their assimilation into Soviet culture.¹⁹⁷

After Victory: Soviet 'Nation-Building' in a Postwar World

As territories were liberated from German troops between 1943 and 1944, the Soviet Union plunged into a long, extensive process of reestablishing its rule. The physical reconstruction of cities and the countryside took many years and presented one of the most ambitious aspects of this postwar agenda, as the state and citizens struggled to reestablish industrial and agricultural production and ordinary life.¹⁹⁸ Processes of physical reconstruction went hand in hand with an intense campaign to (re)establish and entrench Soviet institutions into everyday life, foremost in those territories newly incorporated into the USSR, such as Western Ukraine, Western Belarus, and the Baltic Republics, and South Sakhalin and the Republic of Tuva in the east.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁶ Manley, *To the Tashkent Station*.

¹⁹⁷ Brown, *A Biography of No Place*, 173–91; Scarborough, “An Unwanted Dependence.” On hostilities between local populations and deportees, see also Stronski, *Tashkent*, 132.

¹⁹⁸ A discussion of the physical reconstruction of the country is beyond the scope of this chapter, but recent studies include Kirschenbaum, *The Legacy of the Siege of Leningrad, 1941–1995*; Thomas M. Bohn, *Minsk—Musterstadt des Sozialismus: Stadtplanung und Urbanisierung in der Sowjetunion nach 1945* (Köln: Böhlau, 2008); Jeffrey W. Jones, *Everyday Life and the “Reconstruction” of Soviet Russia during and after the Great Patriotic War, 1943–1948* (Bloomington: Slavica Publishers, 2008); Karl D. Qualls, *From Ruins to Reconstruction: Urban Identity in Soviet Sevastopol after World War II* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009); Martin J. Blackwell, *Kyiv as Regime City: The Return of Soviet Power after Nazi Occupation* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2016); Markian Dobczansky, “From Soviet Heartland to Ukrainian Borderland: Searching for Identity in Kharkiv, 1943–2004” (Stanford, 2016), 22–81.

¹⁹⁹ A vast and growing literature addresses these processes of construction and asserting Soviet rule, particularly in the western republics, where the vast majority of new citizens lived. See William Jay Risch, *The Ukrainian West: Culture and the Fate of Empire in Soviet Lviv* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011); William Risch, “A Soviet West: Nationhood, Regionalism, and Empire in the Annexed Western Borderlands,” *Nationalities Papers* 43, no. 1 (2015): 63–81; Nicole M. Eaton, “Exclave: Politics, Ideology, and Everyday Life in Königsberg-Kaliningrad, 1928–1948” (University of California, Berkeley, 2013), 159–330; William D. Prigge, *Bearslayers: The Rise and Fall of the Latvian National Communists* (New York: Peter Lang, 2015); Amar, *The Paradox of Ukrainian Lviv*.

At least equally important—and my focus here—was reasserting the state’s ideological project among its citizens, particularly in territories where Soviet rule had only been superficially established during the brief occupations of 1939–41. To reintegrate state and society across the deep divides imposed by war, the state relied on several interconnected processes that extended prewar and wartime practices. These processes included resettling cities, demobilizing soldiers, temporary and long-term population transfers, identifying and managing the politically suspect, cultural exchanges, and cultivating a postwar narrative that would, in one scholar’s words, “make sense of war.”²⁰⁰ The postwar period saw a culmination of the identity discourses that had circulated throughout the war, now modified and adapted for the early Cold War. Hierarchical divisions between citizens, both ethnic and otherwise, were supplemented with new consideration for wartime activities, both among soldiers and civilian populations. The focus on the limits of the Soviet people also continued, not least among new citizens, whose allegiances and loyalties were viewed with suspicion. The emphasis on a warlike atmosphere and external enemies continued, now adapted for Cold War conditions. Together, these processes contributed to the emergence of a postwar Soviet identity that was deeply inflected by the experience of war.

(Re)establishing Rule: Repopulation, Retraining, and Cleansing

With the Red Army’s reentry into depopulated and destroyed cities, the process of rebuilding and reasserting control over a wide swath of territory began in earnest. Aside from the physical and institutional reconstruction, which is beyond the scope of this chapter, population management played a significant role in establishing a postwar order. The state’s handling of these questions—from demobilizing of soldiers to the return of civilian populations from

Literature on new territories in the east is limited. On South Sakhalin, see Sören Urbansky and Helena Barop, “Under the Red Star’s Faint Light: How Sakhalin Became Soviet,” *Kritika* 18, no. 2 (2017): 283–316.

²⁰⁰ Phrase from Weiner, *Making Sense of War*.

wartime evacuation and labor conscription, as well as managing the unintended consequences of war—reflected and built upon existing processes. At the same time, the war loomed large, not least because wartime activity became grounds for determining access to limited resources, whether in offering special privileges to veterans or punishing wartime collaboration.

Despite the state's efforts to manage the resettlement of cities and the return of citizens from evacuation sites across the hinterlands, the actual process of resettling cities tended toward the chaotic. Many citizens, eager to return home and take stock of war's consequences, refused to wait for re-evacuation orders and instead found their own way back to their former homes spread across formerly occupied or otherwise endangered territories.²⁰¹ Others, as Lewis Siegelbaum and Leslie Moch note, chose not to return 'home,' preferring instead to live permanently in their adopted sites of evacuation.²⁰² Citizens who returned confronted terrible conditions and a complex web of negotiations to secure the return of prewar dwellings and belongings, generally without success. The wartime destruction of urban housing stock created a veritable crisis, and disorder was rampant. In Kharkiv (Eastern Ukraine), oblast officials claimed not a single resident occupied their prewar residence.²⁰³ Even if exaggerated, the claim hints at the near total displacement and destruction.

Those who returned found themselves subject to the state's hierarchical approach to managing citizens. As Manley notes, the "emergent hierarchy" for adjudicating housing claims "reflected both wartime service and pre-war statures," suggesting that war had introduced new variables to established patterns. Soldiers and soldiers' families, as well as political and cultural

²⁰¹ On the resettlement of occupied cities and returns from evacuation, see especially Rebecca Manley, "'Where Should We Resettle the Comrades Next?': The Adjudication of Housing Claims and the Construction of the Post-War Order," in *Late Stalinist Russia: Society Between Reconstruction and Reinvention*, ed. Juliane Füst (Routledge, 2009), 233–46; Manley, *To the Tashkent Station*, 238–69; Siegelbaum and Moch, *Broad Is My Native Land*, 262–65; Blackwell, *Kyiv as Regime City*, 19–70 and 102–27.

²⁰² Siegelbaum and Moch, *Broad Is My Native Land*, 264.

²⁰³ Manley, "Where Should We Resettle the Comrades Next?," 234.

elites, often received first priority. Those forced into evacuation or who otherwise spent the war years in the hinterlands encountered a range of discriminatory measures that gave them little recourse to make claims for prewar housing. The charge of service on the “Tashkent front” was negatively leveled against citizens—foremost Jews—who had “sat out” the war years in the relative comfort and safety of evacuation, despite the fact that most actively supported the front with their labor.²⁰⁴ Recent work on postwar urban history, too, suggests that remaining in place during the war was perhaps even more suspect, subjecting citizens to questions about their wartime activities and possible collaboration with occupying forces.²⁰⁵

During wartime, the number of military personnel had swelled, creating unprecedented numbers of soldiers who would need to be returned to civilian life, another challenge for the postwar state. Demobilized soldiers were generally an entitled group, and they received priority in access to housing, job training, and medical services. In addition to legal privileges in the first years after the war, soldiers benefited from social prestige as the war cult grew.²⁰⁶ The privileging of soldiers’ perceived wartime heroism helped make war a foundational moment.

Alongside efforts to rebuild cities and re-establish institutions, leaders were concerned about ensuring the reliability of citizens, reflecting a desire to manage and control the long-term consequences of war. This process took different forms, including the identification and

²⁰⁴ Manley, “Where Should We Resettle the Comrades Next?”; Manley, *To the Tashkent Station*, 149–269; on wartime service, see especially 205–14.

²⁰⁵ Jeffrey W. Jones, “‘Every Family Has Its Freak’: Perceptions of Collaboration in Occupied Soviet Russia, 1943–1948,” *Slavic Review* 64, no. 4 (2005): 747–70; Franziska Exeler, “What Did You Do during the War?: Personal Responses to the Aftermath of Nazi Occupation,” *Kritika* 17, no. 4 (2016): 805–35; eadem, “The Ambivalent State: Determining Guilt in the Post-World War II Soviet Union,” *Slavic Review* 75, no. 3 (2016): 606–29. As Weiner notes, accusations of collaboration were especially dangerous for party members, see *Making Sense of War*, 82–126.

²⁰⁶ See especially Mark Edele, “Soviet Veterans as an Entitlement Group, 1945–1955,” *Slavic Review* 65, no. 1 (2006): 111–37. Edele notes that the legal privileges were received only during active demobilization and petered off as the war became more distant, but that social privileges continued long after the war. On demobilization and veterans generally, see Mark Edele, *Soviet Veterans of the Second World War: A Popular Movement in an Authoritarian Society 1941–1991* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Robert Dale, “Rats and Resentment: The Demobilization of the Red Army in Postwar Leningrad, 1945–50,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 45, no. 1 (2010): 113–33; Robert Dale, *Demobilized Veterans in Late Stalinist Leningrad: Soldiers to Civilians* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015). On housing, see Manley, “Where Should We Resettle the Comrades Next?”

deportation of the politically suspect, reasserting control over nationalist and other ideological discourses that had proliferated during World War II (often with official sanction), and managing religious practices that had gained considerable ground during war itself. Postwar cleansing, often violent, contributed to the ongoing negotiation of the nature of and limits of Soviet identity.

Perhaps the most visible—and most discussed—elements of postwar cleansing were efforts to root out underground nationalist organizations, foremost in Nazi-occupied territories of the far west. In Western Ukraine and the Baltic republics, the process was especially violent, accomplished through raids of real and suspected members of nationalist groups and broad, often indiscriminate deportations of civilians.²⁰⁷ Expulsions of Polish and German minorities from Ukraine, Belarus, and Kaliningrad (and the reciprocal expulsions of Lemkos from Poland to Ukraine) further set the tone for postwar ethnic relations and deepened notions of ethnic hierarchies.²⁰⁸ Attempts to contain nationalism and manage ethnic relations were not limited to new territories. The 1949 deportation of Greeks from the Caucasus to Kazakhstan reflected suspicion of “foreign” ethnicities, a suspicion also directed towards German subjects.²⁰⁹ Stalin’s final purge in the 1953 Doctors’ Plot reflected the most public manifestation of state-sponsored

²⁰⁷ For the most comprehensive treatment of counterinsurgency across the western Soviet Union, see Alexander Statiev, *The Soviet Counterinsurgency in the Western Borderlands* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010). On deportations in the Baltic republics, see Aigi Rahi-Tamm and Andres Kahar, “The Deportation Operation ‘Priboi’ in 1949,” in *Estonia since 1944: Reports of the Estonian International Commission for the Investigation of Crimes Against Humanity*, ed. Toomas Hiio, Meelis Maripuu, and Indrek Paavle (Tallinn: Estonian International Commission for the Investigation of Crimes Against Humanity, 2009).

²⁰⁸ On Polish and Lemko expulsions, see Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 313–37; Amar, *The Paradox of Ukrainian Lviv*, 143–85; on German expulsions, see Eaton, “Exclave,” 312–30.

²⁰⁹ Violetta Hionidou and David Saunders, “Exiles and Pioneers: Oral Histories of Greeks Deported from the Caucasus to Kazakhstan in 1949,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 62, no. 9 (2010): 1479–1501. On suspicion of German (and other politically suspect) teachers around 1948, see RGASPI, f. 17, o. 132, d. 51, ll. 138–149. In this case, a self-identified “concerned communist” complained that German teachers were too politically unreliable to be entrusted with teaching politically sensitive subjects (constitution, history, and geography). Repatriates from China were also treated as highly suspicious. Although the inquiry found few problems with the German teachers in question (who were not repatriates), the party determined that they should be limited to teaching less sensitive subjects like math, science, and German language, presumably due to concerns about the optics.

anti-Semitism.²¹⁰ There were also fears of resurgent nationalism in the Caucasus, suggesting new limits on acceptable forms of nested patriotism.²¹¹ As historians have noted, the population within the Gulag system and assorted special settlements swelled, reaching its pinnacle in the postwar years, making repression a key feature of the postwar order.²¹²

Religion represented an arena of deep suspicion that required careful attention after the war. State cooperation with and recognition of certain religious groups during the war—the Russian Orthodox Church and Islam most prominently—had offered an official seal of approval for a revival of religious practice, one that did not extend to unrecognized groups, like Baptists and other Protestants. In liberated territories, officials frequently expressed concern about the growth of religious activism, not only in newly incorporated territories but also in areas that had already been subjected to decades of Soviet rule.²¹³ Newly incorporated territories were yet to be

²¹⁰ For an overview of the Doctors' Plot and postwar anti-Semitism, see David Brandenberger, "Stalin's Last Crime? Recent Scholarship on Postwar Soviet Antisemitism and the Doctor's Plot," *Kritika* 6, no. 1 (2005): 187–204.

²¹¹ For example, party leaders expressed suspicion about school history curriculum in Armenia that might encourage nationalist thinking, see RGASPI, f. 17, o. 132, d. 372. Here, the conversation concerned one specific textbook for students in grades 8 and 9 in Armenian schools, which, while deemed generally suitable, was far too long and needed additional work concerning certain aspects of Armenian history, particularly vis-à-vis Russian history. This should be seen as a part of the extended conversation about suitable history curriculum that had emerged during World War II, see especially David Brandenberger, "'...It Is Imperative to Advance Russian Nationalism as the First Priority': Debates within the Stalinist Ideological Establishment, 1941–1945," in *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, ed. Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 275–99. After the war, party officials also complained about wartime poetry in Georgia, which inspired love for Georgia rather than the Soviet Union, see RGANI, f. 5, o. 16, d. 632, ll. 44–46. As Krista Goff notes, wartime cultivation of Azerbaijani nationalist visions concerning Iran also necessitated careful management after the war, see "What Makes a People?"

²¹² E.g. Elena Zubkova, *Russia after the War: Hopes, Illusions, and Disappointments, 1945–1957*, trans. Hugh Ragsdale (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1998), 130–38; Yoram Gorlizki and O. V. Khlevniuk, *Cold Peace: Stalin and the Soviet Ruling Circle, 1945–1953* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 124–32; Steven A. Barnes, *Death and Redemption: The Gulag and the Shaping of Soviet Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 139–76.

²¹³ For a brief overview of these processes, see Zubkova, *Russia after the War*, 68–73. Concerns about higher religiosity proliferated in the immediate postwar period, especially within the party, see RGASPI, f. 17, o. 125, d. 506; RGASPI, f. 17, o. 132, dd. 6, 7, 10, 109, 569. One 1948 report from Georgii Karpov, head of CAROC, blamed the rise in religiosity on widespread opening of churches during the war, foremost on occupied territory, see RGASPI, f. 17, o. 132, d. 7, ll. 2–28. Another draft report from 1948–49 blamed rising religiosity on shortcomings in atheist propaganda, especially during the war, see RGASPI, f. 17, o. 132, d. 10, l. 19. Not all officials were concerned: in a 1947 note, Ivan Polianskii, head of CARC, noted that increased religious activity was not of serious political consequence and predicted activity was already starting to "seriously decline." RGASPI, f. 17, o. 125, d. 506, ll. 110–134. Deputy Director of the Administration of Propaganda and Agitation Dmitrii Sheptilov criticized Polianskii's interpretation and suggested his *laissez faire* approach to managing religion presented a grave danger to

reached by atheist propaganda. Across the country, the state set to work closing, imposing limits on religious activity, and reviving atheist propaganda.²¹⁴

New territories were also home to religious groups with little prewar representation, including Baltic Protestants and Catholics, Ukrainian Greek Catholics (members of an Eastern rite Catholic church) in Western Ukraine, and Jehovah's Witnesses. Each of these groups presented specific challenges for integration, and the state devoted special attention to groups closely tied to national identity (Greek Catholics in Western Ukraine, for example) and religious groups with authority abroad (all Catholics, Jehovah's Witnesses). Jehovah's Witnesses, although few in number, presented particular problems, thanks to their propensity toward proselytization, foreign connections, and general disengagement from civic life, which contradicted to the Soviet emphasis on participatory citizenship.²¹⁵ Moves to abolish the Greek Catholic Church and "reunite" it with Russian Orthodoxy were part of a general strategy to circumvent, mitigate, and control its foothold in Western Ukraine.²¹⁶ Brutal repression of nationalism, deportations, and suspicion of religious groups shaped the boundaries of postwar citizenship, as certain practices were deemed incompatible with Soviet life. Navigating this boundary was a complex, fraught process, as other forms of nationalism and religious life were encouraged or at least tolerated.

Repression, however, was only part of the story. There were also attempts to forge new

the party's objectives, see *idem.*, ll. 134–35. For a similar exchange, see *idem.*, ll. 144–166. For another criticism of Polianskii and his attitude towards religion, from Karpov, see RGASPI, f. 17, o. 132, d. 569, ll. 219–223.

²¹⁴ On postwar atheist propaganda and counter-religious measures, see especially RGASPI, f. 17, o. 125, d. 506; RGASPI, f. 17, o. 132, dd. 6, 10, 110, 111, 569. On Soviet atheism generally, see Victoria Smolkin, *A Sacred Space Is Never Empty: A History of Soviet Atheism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018).

²¹⁵ On Jehovah's Witnesses, see Emily B. Baran, *Dissent on the Margins: How Soviet Jehovah's Witnesses Defied Communism and Lived to Preach About It* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

²¹⁶ See especially Bohdan R. Bociurkiw, *The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church and the Soviet State*, 1st ed. (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Study Press, 1996). For party discussions in Moscow of what to do with the church and how to handle it, see RGASPI, f. 17, o. 125, d. 313, ll. 3–48; RGASPI f. 17, o. 132, d. 6, ll. 140–149; RGASPI, f. 17, o. 132, d. 111, ll. 18–19.

connections between citizens, processes that provided a more constructive vision of postwar citizenship, particularly in territories where Soviet rule had been only briefly implemented in 1939–41. In Western Ukraine and Transcarpathia, authorities focused especially on young people. The party and state sought to forge lateral connections between citizens through exchange programs in Eastern Ukraine and elsewhere. Such exchanges indicated a continuing dependence on nested forms of identity in making new citizens.

In 1950, for instance, local party leaders organized an exchange for 317 university students and instructors from Western Ukraine and Transcarpathia. On July 9, 1950, the entire group met in Lviv and was divided into groups, which spent two weeks in Moscow (81 people), Leningrad (78 people), Kharkiv (61 people), Stalino (47 people), and Odessa and Zaporizhia (50 people). Participants attended plays and cultural programs and visited museums, collective farms, factories, and historical sites, with emphasis on places associated with Lenin. At the end of the trip, everyone reconvened in Kyiv to visit museums and monuments before returning home on July 25.²¹⁷ The final days centered on sites connected to Ukrainian poet Taras Shevchenko, including museums and monuments in Kyiv and his burial site in Kaniv. Museums and exhibits portrayed the poet as a revolutionary-democrat and highlighted his “friendship with the great Russian people.”²¹⁸ The finale in Kyiv encouraged students to envision themselves as part of Soviet Ukraine and to see the Soviet Union as deeply invested in Ukrainian identity.

Participants praised the opportunity to better understand the Soviet Union and fellow citizens. In meetings and in post-trip conversations and writings, citizens declared that they “felt even more certain of the might of their socialist Motherland, of the firm confidence of the Soviet people in their own strength, in their boundless devotion to the Bolshevik party and to their great

²¹⁷ Central State Archive of Public Organizations of Ukraine (hereafter TsDAHOU), f. 1, o. 24, s. 2, ll. 344–346.

²¹⁸ TsDAHOU, f. 1, o. 24, s. 2, l. 350.

vozhd' and teacher Stalin.” Leaders described how the trip inspired loyalty to the party, the Soviet Union, and Stalin. Senior instructor A.D. Kovbuz, of Lviv, reported: “For my whole life, all of this will remain in my memory... I am endlessly happy that, despite my age, the Soviet state gave me the possibility to see this.” Others were awestruck by the sheer productive capacity of factories and collective farms. Students especially praised personal interactions with fellow citizens. In meeting with workers, farmers, academics, and students, participants “saw the manifestation of the brotherly friendship of the peoples of the USSR.”²¹⁹ Such exchanges gave participants a connection to fellow citizens and reminded them of their common future.

This exchange program was not one-of-a-kind. Other initiatives connected collective farmers across Ukraine. In an internal party report to Georgii Malenkov in 1950, Ukrainian Party First Secretary Leonid Mel’nikov catalogued exchanges that connected 1435 collective farmers from western oblasts with the republic’s most innovative collective farms, machine and tractor stations, and state farms.²²⁰ The benefits were two-fold. Professionally, exchanges acquainted western Ukrainian farmers, who had little first-hand experience of Soviet agriculture, with the work of successful collective farms. Many were impressed by the sheer scale and quality of agricultural production and shared their impressions with their communities upon their return.²²¹

On a second level, visits also inculcated a sense of identity and belonging both to the Soviet Union as a whole and Soviet Ukraine specifically, an explicit invocation of nested identity. Participants praised trips for giving them positive impressions of the country and the opportunities it offered. G.F. Arabadzhi, a field brigade foreman from the Izmail Oblast who had

²¹⁹ TsDAHOU, f. 1, o. 24, s. 2, ll. 347–48.

²²⁰ TsDAHOU, f. 1, o. 24, s. 2, ll. 340–43.

²²¹ Noted one collective farm chairman Afanasii Kuzmich Sobko, of the “New Life” collective farm in Chernivtsi Oblast: “In my life I have never seen such rich, productive fields. When we saw films in the village, people said that it is impossible that things are really like that in the East. Now we have seen this in real life, and we will tell our collective farmers about all that we have seen and learned, and we will also pursue and achieve the same yields as farmers in Poltava...” TsDAHOU, f. 1, o. 24, d. 2, l. 341.

visited a collective farm in the Odessa oblast, felt that Romanian authorities mischaracterized the Soviet Union and declared, “Soviet power is our native (*rodnaia*) power.”²²² He praised Stalin and the Communist Party, and vowed to take this new knowledge back to his coworkers. Another farmer from Transcarpathia declared his pleasure at Ukrainian unification by Soviet authorities. T.L. Hnatiuk, a Lviv University student who participated in the student exchange, noted that he was thankful that, despite being the son of a poor peasant, he enjoyed unprecedented access to higher education in his native Ukrainian.²²³ This would have been unimaginable for many peasants before postwar integration, a reminder of the real upward mobility that many peasants and workers experienced under Soviet rule.²²⁴

Although it is hard to say to what extent these exchanges were practiced elsewhere, they provide a useful reminder that postwar processes did not simply oppress people into obedience. Exchanges were part of a deliberate effort to build social networks both within and across republics. Malenkov’s own awareness of these exchanges suggested that such exchange represented a key priority in the postwar period. By encouraging lateral ties between citizens, the state demonstrated continuing commitment to fostering a community of citizens, attached both to the Soviet Union as a whole as well as to their sub-state identities (here, Ukrainian). This suggested the perceived compatibility of civic and ethnic identities and the ongoing cultivation of affective bonds to the state.

²²² TsDAHOU, f. 1, o. 24, s. 2, l. 341.

²²³ TsDAHOU, f. 1, o. 24, s. 2, l. 351. These words reflect Yekelchuk’s observation that Soviet victory in war and the resultant unification of Western and Eastern Ukraine “unwittingly fulfilled the old nationalist dream of the state unity of Ukrainian lands,” albeit in a Stalinist form that no nationalist actually wanted, see Serhy Yekelchuk, *Ukraine: Birth of a Modern Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 151.

²²⁴ Scholars have particularly pointed to education as a means of upward mobility, see Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union, 1921–1934*; Michael David-Fox, *Revolution of the Mind: Higher Learning among the Bolsheviks, 1918–1929* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).

From the Great Patriotic War to the Cold War

No sooner had the Great Patriotic War ended than the Soviet Union found itself at the center of a new conflict, this time—the Cold War with the West. Much like the threat and experience of World War II had contributed to the mobilizing discourses of the 1930s and early 1940s, the Cold War offered new opportunities for internal cohesion in the face of a shared external enemy. The Soviet occupation of Eastern Europe drove a wedge between the Soviet Union and its wartime allies, straining an already tenuous relationship. In subsequent years, tensions ebbed and flowed, but the overall atmosphere of distrust remained a key backdrop to the postwar order, as leaders relied on new enemies and new threats of war.²²⁵

In the aftermath of war, Stalin drew direct lines of continuity between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union's erstwhile allies, creating a new atmosphere of present danger and distrust to mobilize the population. In an interview with *Pravda* following Winston Churchill's 1946 "Iron Curtain" speech, Stalin declared the speech a "dangerous act": "Churchill and his friends in this respect strikingly recall Hitler and his friends." Comparing Nazi and English race theories, Stalin warned citizens about western warmongering. He reflected that former allies had little appreciation for the "colossal sacrifices of the Soviet people" and little understanding of what had made new governments in Eastern Europe so eager to align themselves with the Soviet Union. In portraying the growth of communist movements across Eastern Europe as the outcome of communism's victory over fascism, he suggested new global interest in communism was only natural.²²⁶

Stalin's statements initiated a public discourse that contributed to a polarized postwar

²²⁵ For general treatments of the Soviet Cold War, see especially V. M. Zubok and Konstantin Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War: From Stalin to Khrushchev* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996); Vladislav Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev*, Second Edition (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

²²⁶ "Interv'iu tov. I.V. Stalina s korrespondentom *Pravdy* otnositel'no rechi Cherrhillia," *Pravda*, 14 March 1946, 1.

international order, one that pitted a peace-loving Soviet people against aggressive, capitalist enemies abroad. Two months later, a front-page *Pravda* editorial noted citizens' full support for the postwar foreign policy: "victory has not gone to the heads of Soviet people. They are alertly and vigilantly observing the postwar international situation, fixedly remembering their basic and main task: to strengthen victory and guard peace and security from the schemes of the international reaction."²²⁷ The following year, in September 1947, Andrei Zhdanov, the Second Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, addressed the newly formed Communist Information Bureau and interpreted the end of World War II as the beginning of a new phase of tension between the capitalist west and the socialist east. Like Stalin, Zhdanov linked Nazi aggression with western anti-communist movements, singling out the U.S. nuclear program as a weapon directed against the Soviet people.²²⁸ Deepening the focus on the U.S., an editorial published on the anniversary of Lenin's death in 1950 warned readers that U.S. military expenditures represented 71 percent of the U.S. budget. Meanwhile, the U.S. allegedly devoted less than two percent to education and health, a sign that the "camp of imperialism is searching for the way out [of crisis] by preparing new military adventures."²²⁹ Lecture propaganda included a new focus on the "international situation," providing the public with the latest information about western aggression.²³⁰ The state-sponsored Soviet Committee for the Defense of Peace, a voluntary association founded in August 1949, offered a public forum for citizens to promote

²²⁷ "V avangarde bor'by za mir i bezopasnost'," *Pravda*, 2 May 1946, 1.

²²⁸ Andrei Aleksandrovich Zhdanov, *O mezhdunarodnom polozenii: doklad, sdelannyi na Informatsionnom soveshchanii predstavitelei nekotorykh kompartii v Pol'she v kontse sentiabria 1947 g.* (Moskva: Gos. izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1947). On the role of nuclear weapons in the Cold War, see especially David Holloway, *Stalin and the Bomb: The Soviet Union and Atomic Energy, 1939–56* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994); Kate Brown, *Plutopia: Nuclear Families, Atomic Cities, and the Great Soviet and American Plutonium Disasters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

²²⁹ "Idei Lenina zhivut i pobezhdauiut," *Pravda*, 22 January 1950, 1.

²³⁰ A 1949 *Pravda* article, for example, noted the importance of lectures on the international situation, though it complained that the current quality and quantity of such lectures was currently unsatisfactory, see "Lektsionnaia propaganda partiinykh organizatsii," *Pravda*, 11 June 1949, 1. As Yekelchik notes, reports about the successes (and amount) of lecture propaganda tended to be highly exaggerated, see especially Yekelchik, *Stalin's Citizens*, 78–96.

peace and oppose western imperialism. Newspapers hailed the organization as evidence of a widespread commitment to peace, a supposedly inherent trait of Soviet citizens.²³¹

Concerns grew dramatically after the outbreak of open hostilities on the Korean Peninsula in June 1950. In early July, the press was awash with public condemnations of “American aggression” in Korea, and described the Soviet people as a bastion of peace.²³² The following fall, the second meeting of the Soviet Committee for the Defense of Peace offered another opportunity for the press to claim commitment to peace as an intrinsic characteristic of the Soviet people.²³³ The escalating Cold War solidified the Soviet people in propaganda as a force against the West, defining the populace once again in contradistinction to its enemies abroad.

The Soviet (and Russian) People Victorious

As postwar policies generally inculcated citizens with new values and a sense of Soviet identity, deepened connections between citizens, and rooted out elements deemed incompatible with Soviet life, war was understood to have drawn citizens closer together.²³⁴ Even before the war had come to an end, leaders already focused on how to commemorate the experience. As early as 1942, the state considered how to memorialize the war experience and offer a tribute to

²³¹ On the early work of the organization, see “Vo glave bor’by narodov za mir” and “Otkrytie Vsesoiznoi konferentsii storonnikov mira,” *Izvestiia*, 26 August 1949, 1. Of course, following the Soviet government’s lead, the organization focused entirely on western disruptions to peace, saying nothing about Soviet actions abroad.

²³² See especially “Novyi pod’em vsenarodnogo dvizheniia za mir” and “Nepreklonnoi volei otstoim delo mira! Sovetskii narod trebuat prekrashcheniia amerikanskoi agressii v Koree,” *Izvestiia*, 2 July 1950, 1; “Moguchii oplot mira” and “Sovetskii narod s ogromnym vozmushcheniem kleimit priamoi akt agressii amerikanskogo pravitel’stva protiv Korei!,” *Pravda*, 3 July 1950, 1; “Sovetskii narod trebuat nemedlennogo prekrashcheniia amerikanskoi agressii v Koree,” *Izvestiia*, 4 July 1950, 1.

²³³ “Sovetskii narod v bor’be za mir, protiv podzhigatelei novoi voiny: Doklad N.S. Tikhonova,” *Pravda*, 17 October 1950, 2; “Pod znamenem bor’by za mir” and “Vtoraia Vsesoiuznaia konferentsiia storonnikov mira,” *Pravda*, 18 October 1950, 1; “Mir pobedit voinu!” *Pravda*, 19 October 1950, 1. Similar language dominated coverage of future meetings as well, see for example “Vo imia mira i schast’ia narodov” and “Sovetskii narod stoit za mir a otstaivaet delo mira,” *Izvestiia*, 3 December 1952, 1.

²³⁴ E.g. Nikolai Tikhonov, “Velichie sovetskogo naroda,” *Pravda*, 11 February 1947, 3. On war and Soviet identity, see Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead*; Weiner, *Making Sense of War*; Merridale, *Ivan’s War*.

the “best sons of our multiethnic country” and to glorify their anticipated victory.²³⁵ After German capitulation, leaders portrayed the war as a new point of origin, a moment of common historical experience. Use of the term “Soviet people” in the central press escalated after the war, with especially high usage between 1949 and 1952 (see Figure 2, in Chapter 1). The mention of the Soviet people became a formulaic part of official speeches. Even when celebrating the October Revolution, it became customary to refer to World War II, turning the war into a major plot point in the unfolding narrative of the Soviet people.²³⁶ After the war, public commemorations teemed with the vocabulary of sacrifice, unity, and victory, now seen as foundational elements of the Soviet experience and of Soviet identity.

World War II thus became a core part of the state’s legitimation. In an official address to voters across the country on the eve of Supreme Soviet elections in 1946, the Communist Party emphasized its role in victory. Citing the reunification of Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova, the liberation of the Baltic republics, and the incorporation of new territories in Kaliningrad, South Sakhalin, and the Far East, the address declared “the victory of the Soviet people” to be a “triumph of the politics of the All-Union political party.” This, the address declared, should motivate citizens across the country to support their agenda at the polls.²³⁷ Five years after German capitulation, *Pravda* likewise credited victory to the party’s leadership.²³⁸ The press similarly praised Stalin, whose role in guiding the Soviet people to victory became nearly definitional as his cult of personality only grew, best exemplified in the union-wide celebration

²³⁵ See especially “Programma na sostavlenie eksiza—idei pamiatnika geroiam Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny,” from September 3, 1942, a document that was sent to members of the Union of Soviet Architects and the Union of Soviet Artists of the Belarusian SSR, reproduced in N. A. Denisova et al., eds., *Pamiatniki Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny v Belarusi, 1942–1991 gg.: dokumenty i materialy* (Minsk: Natsional’naia biblioteka Belarusi, 2015), 9–10.

²³⁶ E.g. “Pod znamenem partii Lenina-Stalina k pobedu kommunizma,” *Pravda*, 21 August 1952, 1; “Velikaia pobeda sovetского naroda,” *Pravda*, 9 May 1950, 1; “Pod znamenem Lenina-Stalina,” *Pravda*, 7 November 1952, 1. See also Weiner, *Making Sense of War*.

²³⁷ “Obrashchenie Tsentral’nogo Komiteta Vsesoiuznoi Kommunisticheskoi Partii,” *Pravda*, 2 February 1946, 1.

²³⁸ “Velikaia pobeda sovetского naroda,” *Pravda*, 9 May 1950, 1.

of his 70th birthday in 1952.²³⁹

Although memories of war would become more firmly attached to Soviet identity in subsequent decades, it was not merely a collective victory that bound Soviet citizens together. Rather, the experience of the war itself had shaped the contours and outlines of postwar narratives. Because war was experienced on a colossal and unprecedented scale, it served as a touchstone in collective memory. This underscored the fact that the war, perhaps more than any experience before or after, cemented the citizens into a unified Soviet whole.

Continuing the pattern laid out in the late 1930s, discussions of the Soviet people placed heavy emphasis on ethnic Russians, heightening their implicit privilege. As already noted, Stalin's famous postwar toast privileged Russians' leading role in securing victory. The centering of the Russian people, if anything, intensified later in the postwar period. Anna Pankratova's *The Great Russian People*, published in 1948 and revised for an expanded second edition in 1952, continued this line of reasoning, noting how the "Russian people led the fight of the peoples of the USSR for the honor, freedom and independence of their Motherland, and the enemy was defeated."²⁴⁰ Chapters outlined Russians' role in countering oppression, leading the revolution, establishing Soviet power, leading fellow citizens in war, and now guiding an international coalition of socialist countries in the Warsaw Pact. The book was full of quotations from poets, politicians, and public figures from ethnic minorities and countries abroad, who sang the praises of the great Russian people. Pankratova also prepared a methodological guide for teachers of Soviet history in 8th–10th grades, in which she urged teachers to expound on the role of the Russian people, with emphasis on the positive influence of "progressive Russian culture"

²³⁹ See especially the joint statement from the Central Committee and the Soviet of Ministers, "Tovarishchu Stalinu," *Pravda*, 21 February 1949, 1. On the celebration of Stalin's birthday and its postwar cult more generally, see Brooks, *Thank You, Comrade Stalin!*, 198–209 and 219–32; Plamper, *The Stalin Cult*, 75–81.

²⁴⁰ A. M. Pankratova, *Velikii russkii narod*, 2nd Edition (Moscow: Gos. izd-vo politicheskoi literatury, 1952), 3.

on the culture of ethnic minorities.²⁴¹ This rhetoric increased Russians' dominant role in society.

At the same time, the state continued to emphasize the unity and diversity embedded within the Soviet people, building on discourses that had circulated before and during the war. A 1949 Komsomol publication, Nikolai Mikhailov's *On the Map of the Motherland*, offered a thorough presentation of the country's physical, economic, and human geography. The introduction urged its diverse young readers to see the entire country as their own:

Reader! Muscovite and Uralite, Ukrainian and Kazakh! Citizen of the Country of Soviets! Look at the map of the Motherland. Reflect on the map like a master looks at the design of his home, like an engineer looks at a blueprint as a road for his machine, like an artist looks at his best creations. Before you is your property. Before you is your country. Here everything is yours: your mountains and your cities, your forests and your fields. All of these riches belong to you. And you, a Soviet person (*chelovek*), by your collective senses and as an owner, have taken possession of the riches that belong to you.²⁴²

After discussing various aspects of the country and the common history of revolution, socialist construction, and World War II that bound citizens together, the book closed with ever tightening focus, moving from Moscow to Red Square to the figure of Stalin in his Kremlin office. "There is nothing more magical than the view of Red Square on days of public festivities. Each year, the stream of people flows broader... the whole-hearted shout of greetings, with which the people address their great leader, run unabated and speak to the unbreakable unity of the Soviet people, about its dedication to the ideas of communism, about its ardent love for its father and teacher, Stalin."²⁴³ Reflecting on the friendship of the peoples and the love for Stalin that drew citizens together, the book emphasized both the unity and diversity of the country and its people, a testament to the ongoing power of ideas that had first circulated in the 1930s.

²⁴¹ Anna Pankratova, *O prepodavanii istorii v VIII–X klassakh: metodicheskoe pis'mo* (Moscow: Gos. Uchebno-Pedagogicheskoe izdatel'stvo, 1951), 15. On Pankratova's historical work more generally, see also Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism*; Reginald E. Zelnik, *Perils of Pankratova: Some Stories from the Annals of Soviet Historiography* (Seattle: Herbert J. Ellison Center for Russian, Eastern European, and Central Asian Studies, University of Washington, 2005), 12–80.

²⁴² N. N. Mikhailov, *Nad kartoi rodiny*, Second Edition (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1949), 11.

²⁴³ Mikhailov, 286.

Conclusion: Center and Periphery in Flux

As leaders demanded full participation from citizens regardless of ethnicity, age, gender, confession, or location, wartime propaganda promoted an inclusive, expansive vision of the body politic that extended the discourses of the 1930s. Even as official rhetoric implied the compatibility of ethnic and civic identities, citizens did not have equal claims on this identity. Scholars have frequently defined empire as multiethnic polity characterized by regimes of unequal rule (“rule by difference”), pointing both to differences in the treatment of the ruled, as well as between the center and its peripheries.²⁴⁴ Scholars of Soviet history, particularly of nationalities policy, generally agree on the appropriateness of defining the Soviet Union as an empire. Yet empires do not merely exist; rather they are created both holistically, through state policies, and subtly, through countless smaller interactions between citizens. As citizens engaged with one another and with state institutions during and after World War II, the Soviet Union’s status as an empire was perpetually negotiated and constantly remade, both intensifying and disrupting modes of imperial rule.

On one hand, inequalities between citizens, most sharply between Russians and non-Russians, continued into and beyond World War II. The privileged position of Russians, embodied in repeated reminders that they were the ‘older brother’ and ‘first among equals,’ and the reliance on the Russian language highlighted persistent imperial hierarchies. Non-Russian soldiers, particularly those with a limited grasp of Russian, faced attitudes of condescension from their military superiors and were likely placed into positions of greater danger, an inequality that

²⁴⁴ Jane Burbank and Fred Cooper, for example, define empires as “large political units, expansionist or with a memory of power extended over space, polities that maintain distinction and hierarchy as they incorporate new people.” Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 8. Valerie Kivelson and Ronald Suny have similarly defined empire as a “structure of governance” with some or all of four characteristics: 1) rule by a sovereign, 2) rule over diverse territory and people, 3) hierarchical power relations, and 4) rule by difference. See Kivelson and Suny, *Russia’s Empires*, 4.

was intensified by the lower quality of their training and weapons. The use of ethnicity, too, underscored a separate-but-equal approach to managing diversity, wherein true equality remained elusive. In evacuation, local populations frequently observed disproportionate privileges and resources devoted to Russian (and other Slavic) evacuees, further creating the sense of inequality. Institutional inequalities were in no way limited to questions of ethnicity. Evacuation plans prioritized urban elites over rural peasants and skilled over unskilled workers. Military service afforded men more opportunities for integration than women. Peripheries also continued to have a position of relative subservience to the center, as they provided people and goods for the war.

At the same time, as a result of wartime conditions and policies, the Soviet Union began to function and be experienced as a nation-like polity more than ever before, erasing some of the politics of difference in new and important ways. Prewar policies created increased union-wide uniformity through the study of Russian and the cultivation of shared heroes. The invasion of a giant swath of Soviet territory had altered established special hierarchies between center and periphery.²⁴⁵ Previously peripheral regions, such as Central Asia and Siberia, became important sites of economic production and interethnic interaction, as citizens encountered one another in cities, villages, workplaces, and even their homes. The periphery consequently became a central site for the production and experience of Soviet identity, as citizens living there became familiar with one another and the vast country. Demands for production and the use of people for labor and on the front, however, were not uniquely or even particularly unequally borne at the periphery. In fact, in light of previous tsarist-era inequalities, World War II represented a dramatic step forward for many non-Russians in terms of access to the privileges and burdens of

²⁴⁵ On prewar spatial politics and hierarchies, see Nick Baron, *Soviet Karelia: Politics, Planning and Terror in Stalin's Russia, 1920–1939* (London: Routledge, 2007); Niccolò Pianciola, “Stalinist Spatial Hierarchies: Placing the Kazakhs and Kyrgyz in Soviet Economic Regionalization,” *Central Asian Survey* 36, no. 1 (2017): 73–92.

citizenship.

To secure widespread, multiethnic loyalty, the state demonstrated broad commitment to its citizens through increased representation of non-Russians in central newspapers, native-language propaganda and agitation, and appeals to religious minorities. These efforts offered evidence that ethnic and civic identities were not only compatible but mutually constitutive, as ethnic pride, religious affiliation, and even familial devotion were cultivated as potential sources for nested civic patriotism. The continuing reliance on the rhetoric of the Soviet people emphasized the common belonging of all citizens, even as it frequently afforded Russians a privileged position. As the country moved from fighting for Soviet territory to extending its borders, the military relied less on appeals to ethnicity and instead relied on the idea of the Soviet people, which rose in prominence in the aftermath of victory. The rhetoric of the Soviet people melded sub-state and civic modes of identification to remind citizens of their common belonging. Despite—indeed, perhaps because of—inflicting unprecedented destruction on land and citizens, World War II paradoxically created a home for the Soviet people.

Chapter 3

“Citizen of the Soviet Union: It Sounds Dignified”: Soviet Identity under Khrushchev and Brezhnev

In a 1977 letter addressed to the commission convened to prepare a new constitution, I. Yakovenko of Minsk wrote to suggest that all passport ethnicities be replaced with the word “Soviet.” “After sixty years of Soviet power,” he argued, “a new community of people has been created among us—the Soviet people; and so it should be expressed in our Constitution.” Changing passport ethnicity, he claimed, was no mere formality. Rather, he believed this change would offer powerful evidence of the progress made on the so-called “national question” since the revolution. Recategorizing all ethnicities as Soviet, he believed, would “testify to the genuine patriotism of our citizens, whom we call citizens of the USSR.”¹

Yakovenko’s assertion about the primacy of Soviet identity was a small contribution to a decades-long discussion about identity in the Soviet Union. His words, foremost the phrase “a new community of people,” borrowed almost verbatim from General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev’s introductory remarks at the 24th Party Congress in 1971, which had described the Soviet people as a “new historical, social, and international community of people.”² Of course, the notion of the Soviet people was not new: as already discussed, the phrase had been commonly used since the 1930s. By the late 1970s, however, articulations of Soviet identity had changed significantly from the Stalinist context in which they originated. The upheavals of

¹ GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 64, l. 148.

² Leonid Il’ich Brezhnev, *Report of the CPSU Central Committee to the 24th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Delivered by Leonid Brezhnev, March 10, 1971* (Moscow: Novosti Press Agency, 1971).

revolution, crash industrialization, collectivization, and war that characterized the first decades of Soviet rule had given way to a more confident, established state that relied more on tacit consensus and support than terror to pursue its aims on both the domestic and international stage. Under Stalin's successors Nikita Khrushchev (First Secretary, 1953–64) and Leonid Brezhnev (First/General Secretary, 1964–82), changing circumstances enabled new conversations about Soviet identity, as articulated by both leaders and citizens.

In the wake of Stalin's death, political elites and citizens envisioned a more collaborative, cooperative relationship between state and people that suggested a deeper, more developed sense of civic identity and affective attachment to the Soviet Union. Embedded in this identity, as articulated by party-state leaders, scholars, and citizens, was a conviction that the Soviet people was a real, existing, and meaningful community. Although the mobilizing patriotic discourses of the Stalin era continued, notions of Soviet identity, particularly the concept of the Soviet people, expanded into new arenas. Two-way conversations unfolded not only between the state and its people but also within the state and party apparatus, between scholars, and among citizens.

The expanded notions of civic identity that proliferated under Khrushchev and Brezhnev reflected three significant transformations specific to the era. First, Stalin's death catalyzed major changes in ideological discourse, as de-Stalinization paved the way for a greater emphasis on the state, the party, and the people, instead of on the leader. Second, for the first time in its history, the country ceased to operate in perpetual crisis mode. This created greater stability and enabled the party-state to devote more attention to providing for citizens rather than merely to forcing them into obedience. Although elements of terror (and memories of it) never disappeared, the state and party operated in ways that mirrored the rise of postwar welfare states in Western and Northern Europe. Though the emphasis on living standards in the Soviet Union postdated similar

policies in Western Europe, the country was far from an outlier. Finally, as first-hand memories of revolution and civil war faded into the annals of history, a greater percentage of citizens had grown up exclusively in the Soviet Union. If the first generation of Soviet-born citizens had come of age on the eve of and during World War II, a second generation emerged beginning in the 1960s. As the common past and shared memories grew longer, this generational change contributed to a sense of permanence, as letters like Yakovenko's attest.

In this chapter, changing and expanding notions of Soviet identity under Khrushchev and Brezhnev are treated as distinct and interrelated trends. The first section considers the impact of Stalin's death on ideology generally and on notions of the Soviet people specifically. Stalin's absence set the stage for new conceptualizations of identity that placed greater emphasis on the relationship between the party-state apparatus and citizens. The second section looks at patriotic discourses, drawing heavily from the central press. Here, I show that post-Stalin patriotism borrowed heavily from Stalin-era discourses, adapting them for new conditions with mixed success. I then analyze conversations within the state and party apparatuses and among scholars, as seen in published party documents and in academic literature. Elite discussions indicated a deeper conviction of the Soviet people's existence. Finally, I examine how citizens articulated similar ideas about their own identities, looking specifically at letters about eliminating passport ethnicity from the 1960s and '70s, which were collected in the State Archive of the Russian Federation. These letters provide a rare glimpse into how citizens grappled with ideology and state policies while expressing their identities. Together, elites and citizens articulated growing confidence and awareness of a distinctly Soviet identity that had gradually emerged after the revolution but which was now more readily observed across the country.

Stalin's Death and the Evolution of Ideological Rhetoric

Stalin's death paved the way for an overhaul in ideological rhetoric, suggesting a major change in public understanding about the nature of Soviet identity and citizenship. Perhaps the biggest change was the evolving role of Stalin himself. As we saw in Chapters 1 and 2, Stalin had been a focal point of civic identity throughout his long rule. Because of the close association between Stalin and the Soviet people, the reconsideration of Stalin and his legacy was by definition a renegotiation of Soviet identity. In the first weeks after Stalin's death, his specter hung over ideological rhetoric, as his demise became another struggle and tragedy for citizens to overcome collectively. With time, his historic role was reevaluated. By the mid-1950s Nikita Khrushchev led a far-ranging campaign of de-Stalinization, opening the doors for a renegotiation of the relationship between the party-state apparatus and the Soviet people. In this way, Stalin's death was a precondition for the more collaborative vision of state and society that emerged among elites and citizens under his successors.

Mourning as Patriotic Duty in the Wake of Stalin's Death

Although Stalin's death on March 5, 1953, would ultimately hasten social and political transformation, the event itself did not catalyze immediate changes in ideological discourse. During the first years after his death, the concept and use of the Soviet people changed relatively little from its Stalin-era usage. As before, the term remained a hallmark of patriotic discourse and symbolized citizens' ongoing patriotic participation in public life. Stalin's death, in fact, added to the trials and tribulations of the Soviet people, as citizens mourned collectively.

The Central Committee announced his death the next day in *Pravda* and *Izvestiia* in a front-page statement that emphasized the deep connection between Stalin and his people:

The heart of Lenin's comrade-in-arms and the brilliant continuer of Lenin's cause, the wise leader and teacher of the communist party and the Soviet people, Iosif Vissarionovich STALIN, has stopped beating. The name STALIN is endlessly dear to our party, the Soviet people, and to workers of the whole world... Comrade STALIN led the Soviet people to the world-historic victory of socialism in our country. Comrade STALIN led our country to the victory over fascism in World War II, fundamentally altering the entire international situation. Comrade STALIN armed the party and the entire people with a great and clear program of building communism in the USSR.

Stalin's death, the obituary continued, became a moment of unity, as "all the peoples of our country rally closer in a great fraternal family under the tested leadership of the communist party, created and reared by Lenin and STALIN."³

The theme of unity ran through the central press, as funeral arrangements, public mourning, and Stalin's own image dominated newspapers for days on end. Citizens across the country gathered to mourn their departed leader, a shared experience—mediated through press coverage—that bound the country together. This public mourning, a quintessential display of civic emotion, knew no generational, geographic, or ethno-linguistic boundaries. Reports from various cities, factories, collective farms, and representatives of the intelligentsia detailed the outpouring of grief and emotion from every corner of the country, frequently under headlines like "Unity of the people" and "The entire country accompanied the great leader (*vozhd'*) and teacher of the Soviet people and all progressive humanity on his final journey."⁴ After the funeral, held in Moscow at noon on March 9, 1953, the press published photos of concurrent gatherings in Riga (Latvian SSR), Tashkent and Chirchik (Uzbek SSR), Almaty (Kazakh SSR), Tbilisi and Gori (Georgian SSR; Gori was Stalin's birthplace), and elsewhere.⁵ Newspapers

³ "Ot Tsentral'nogo Komiteta Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soiuzna, Soveta Ministrov i Prezidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR," *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, 6 March 1953, 1.

⁴ "Vsia strana provozhala v poslednii put' velikogo vozhdia i uchitelia sovetskogo naroda i vsego peredovogo chelovechestva," *Pravda*, 10 March 1953, 4; "Edinstvo naroda," *Izvestiia*, 8 March 1953, 3. See also "Povtorim velikuiu stalinskuiu programmu," *Izvestiia*, 7 March 1953, 3; "Eshche tesnee splotimsia vokrugh kommunisticheskoi partii!" *Pravda*, 8 March 1953, 1; "Strana proshchaetsia s liubimym vozhdem," *Izvestiia*, 10 March 1953, 3.

⁵ *Pravda*, 11 March 1953, 3 (Tbilisi), *Izvestiia*, 12 March 1953, 1 (Gori) and 2 (Tashkent); *Pravda*, 12 March 1953, 1 (Almaty); *Pravda*, 13 March 1953, 1 (Riga); *Pravda*, 14 March 1953, 1 (Chirchik). Additional photos of mourning

emphasized the simultaneity of these gatherings, as citizens joined together to commemorate Stalin's life and mourn his death.⁶

Even in grief, citizens were called to contribute to the state's economic and political goals, continuing the emphasis on active patriotism. At the funeral, Georgii Malenkov (Stalin's successor as Premier of the Soviet Union), Lavrentii Beria (Minister of Internal Affairs), and Viacheslav Molotov (Minister of Foreign Affairs) commanded citizens to devote their energies and labor to continuing Stalin's mission. Malenkov noted that Stalin's death "imposes upon all Soviet peoples the obligation to multiply their efforts in realizing the grandiose tasks before the Soviet people, to increase their contribution to the common cause of building a communist society and strengthening the might and defense capacity of our socialist Motherland."⁷ Two days after running transcripts of their speeches, *Pravda* noted an uptick in patriotism as letters pledging commitment to Stalin's agenda poured into newspaper offices.⁸ The press detailed citizens' resolve to carry on Stalin's work.⁹

Together with the central press, leaders charted the ongoing history of the Soviet people, now expanded to include confronting the tragedy of Stalin's death. In the first weeks, the press

gatherings in Gori and Moscow were published in *Pravda*, 8 March 1953, 3. On intergenerational and interethnic mourning, see Aleksei Surkov, "Velikoe proshchanie," *Pravda*, 9 March 1953, 1. M. Prilezhaeva highlights children's mourning in "Deti proshchaiutsia s vozhdem," *Pravda*, 9 March 1953, 1. Stalin's death also fell just days before International Women's Day, March 8. To commemorate both the holiday and Stalin's death, *Pravda* and *Izvestiia* highlighted his contributions towards women: E. Tret'iakova, "Zhenshchiny strany sotsializma," *Izvestiia*, 8 March 1953, 4; M. Kovrigina, "Stalinskaia zabota o sovetskikh zhenshchinakh," *Pravda*, 8 March 1953, 4.

⁶ The simultaneity is reminiscent of Benedict Anderson's understanding of the nation, which emphasizes the role of the press in cultivating a common historical experience, see Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

⁷ "Rech' tovarishcha G.M. Malenkov," *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, 10 March 1953, 1; see also speeches by Beria and Molotov, *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, 10 March 1953, 2.

⁸ "Pis'ma sovetskikh patriotov," *Pravda*, 12 March 1953, 2.

⁹ E.g. "Sovetskie liudi mnozhat trudovye usilia v bor'be za postroenie kommunizma," *Pravda*, 13 March 1953, 1, with reporting from Kyiv, Astrakhan, Yerevan, Baku, Stalinabad (today Dushanbe), Sverdlovsk, and Takhil-Tash (Turkmen SSR); "Sovetskii narod samootverzhennym trudom obespechit dal'neishii rastsvet sotsialisticheskoi Rodiny," *Izvestiia*, 13 March 1953, 1, with reporting from Yerevan, Krasnoarsk, Sverdlovsk, Stalingrad, Karaganda, Kyiv, Ufa, Vladivostok, and Kharkiv.

emphasized Stalin's leadership in revolution, development, and war.¹⁰ A year later, a front-page *Pravda* editorial reflected on the relationship between Stalin and his people:

During the prewar five-year plans, the Soviet people brought into being the Leninist program for socialist construction, successfully brought about the industrialization of the country and the collectivization of agriculture, built a socialist society, and radically improved the working people's material situation and raised its cultural level... Thanks to the power of the Soviet state, the wise leadership of the communist party, and the selfless heroism of Soviet people (*liudi*), our people (*narod*) won a world-historic victory over the fascist aggressors and defended our fatherland's freedom and independence... All these victories of the Soviet people are inextricably linked with the name of Stalin...¹¹

The communist party, Stalin, and the Soviet people were seen to be collectively responsible for victories on the economic, cultural, and military fronts, echoing established patriotic rhetoric.

The period of active mourning was short. Much as leaders publicly praised Stalin for guiding the country through revolution, war, and economic development, they seemed to recognize his toxic legacy. As Plamper notes, Stalin's image appeared only five times in *Pravda* between late March 1953 and year's end, signaling a subtle, "silent phase of de-Stalinization."¹² This change in Stalin's representation reflected an ongoing negotiation of his legacy. De-Stalinization, both in its subtle, "silent phase" and its active, more explicit form, paved the way for a new relationship between state and society, one that relied more on civic and institutional structures than on personal power and coercion. Though these negotiations mostly concerned Stalin's role, they also represented a subtler renegotiation of the role of the Soviet people.

De-Stalinization and the Changing Relationship between State and Society

After Stalin's death, the ideological work of replacing him began in earnest, even as

¹⁰ "Rech' tovarishcha G.M. Malenkov," *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, 10 March 1953, 1. For similar views, see articles under the headline "Nash velikii vozhd', otets, i uchitel'," *Pravda*, 7 March 1953, 4; V. Morozov, "I.V. Stalin—sokratnik i genial'nyi prodolzhatel dela Lenina," *Izvestiia*, 13 March 1953, 2.

¹¹ "I.V. Stalin—velikii prodolzhatel' dela Lenina," *Pravda*, 5 March 1954, 1.

¹² Plamper, *The Stalin Cult*, 84.

citizens and the state were still in mourning. It was almost immediately evident that the party, and not another individual, would take up his mantle as the leader of the Soviet people. Even his death announcement made this clear: love for the party would unite citizens and lead the country towards a brighter future. Guided by the party, “the peoples of the Soviet Union... advance confidently toward fresh successes of communist construction in our land.”¹³ Three weeks after Stalin’s death, V. Stepanov declared the party to be the “leader (*vozhd*) of the Soviet people.” The title, previously reserved for Lenin and Stalin, had been historically connected to Stalin’s cult of personality. With his emphasis on Stalin’s historic role, Stepanov implied that no single individual could fill his shoes. Bequeathing Stalin’s former epithets to the party, he concluded, “The communist party, the proven, combative leader (*vozhd*) and wise teacher of the Soviet people, strongly holds in its hands the steering wheel of the state ship and knows where to lead it.”¹⁴ The focus on the party as a united institution, without reference to specific leaders, also distracted from the unfolding leadership struggle within the party, from which Khrushchev would eventually emerge as leader.

Articles like Stepanov’s bridged the country into a post-Stalin era. In the first year after his death, Stalin’s cult of personality remained entrenched in ideological discourse, but his prominence faded quickly. In Stalin’s place, there was a consistent emphasis on other familiar sources of unity: the party, the state, and the people itself. Although none of these emphases were new, they became more prominent in Stalin’s absence. His diminished position made space for the Soviet people, who now coalesced exclusively around the party and state. This signaled a shift in discourse from the personal to a civic, institutional dimension. As noted in the lead *Pravda* editorial on Victory Day in 1953, citizens’ primary loyalty was to the country itself:

¹³ “Ot Tsentral’nogo Komiteta Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soiuz, Soveta Ministrov i Prezidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR,” *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, 6 March 1953, 1.

¹⁴ V. Stepanov, “Kommunisticheskaia partia—vozhd’ sovetского naroda,” *Pravda*, 17 March 1953, 2.

“Soviet patriotism does not separate nations (*natsii*) and ethnicities (*natsional’nosti*), but on the contrary, rallies them into a united, fraternal family,” united by “the people’s deep devotion to their socialist Motherland.”¹⁵ Stalin’s role, though reduced, was not yet omitted: the article credited his and Lenin’s leadership for eliminating class-based and ethnic persecution and establishing the Soviet Union, which laid the groundwork for unity. Such perfunctory statements were dwarfed by the sense that the party and state would take over.

The one-year anniversary of Stalin’s death was greeted with various articles illuminating his historic role. Yet even these suggested a severely diminished cult of personality. *Pravda* ran a quarter-page image of Stalin alongside an editorial that declared him to be the “great continuer of Lenin’s cause” and reported on speeches and events held in his memory.¹⁶ The re-centering of Lenin demoted Stalin: it was only as Lenin’s heir—and not as a leader in his own right—that Stalin was now recognized.¹⁷ The following year, *Pravda*’s discussion of the anniversary was relegated to a theoretical article about Stalin’s role in communist construction buried on the inside pages.¹⁸ *Izvestiia* omitted references to Stalin entirely.

Khrushchev’s 1956 speech, “On the Cult of Personality and its Consequences,” signaled a more deliberate and active process of de-Stalinization. Delivered to a closed session of the 20th Party Congress on February 4, 1956, the speech repudiated Stalin and his actions against the party and society. This marked a decisive shift in rhetoric, and the not-so-secret speech circulated throughout party organs and society in edited form in subsequent weeks and months.¹⁹ Stalin and

¹⁵ “Velikaia sila sovetского patriotisma,” “Besedy, posviashchennye pamiati I.V. Stalina,” *Pravda*, 9 May 1953, 1.

¹⁶ “I.V. Stalin—velikii prodolzhatel’ dela Lenina,” *Pravda*, 5 March 1954, 1. The same discourse was at work in *Izvestiia* the same day, see “Pod velikim znamenem Lenina-Stalina,” *Izvestiia*, 5 March 1954, 1; S. Petrov, “I.V. Stalin—velikii prodolzhatel’ dela Lenina,” *Izvestiia*, 5 March 1954, 2.

¹⁷ Plamper, *The Stalin Cult*, 85.

¹⁸ F. Konstantinov, “I. V. Stalin i voprosy kommunisticheskogo stroitel’sstva,” *Pravda*, 5 March 1953, 2–3.

¹⁹ William Taubman, *Khrushchev: The Man and His Era* (New York: Norton, 2004), 279–89. On de-Stalinization in general, see Polly Jones, ed., *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization: Negotiating Cultural and Social Change in the Khrushchev Era* (London: Routledge, 2006); Jones, *Myth, Memory, Trauma*; Cynthia Hooper, “What Can and

his cult of personality, previously omitted, were now overtly criticized. In his place, the party, state, and people became more prominent, signaling a deeper trust in citizens. *Pravda* attested to the Soviet people's prominence quantitatively: Khrushchev's years in power (1953–64) roughly correlated with a surge in invocations of the Soviet people. Between 1956 and 1962, use of term in *Pravda* reached unprecedented levels that would never again be matched, while *Izvestiia* also used it in a highly conspicuous way.²⁰ This embedded the Soviet people deeply in the ideological norms of the post-Stalin era.

In his study of the 'last Soviet generation,' Alexei Yurchak contextualizes changing ideological norms in the wake of Stalin's death. He explores the "standardization of discourse during the Soviet period, epitomized in the ubiquitous ideological slogans and posters that covered urban space."²¹ Stalin's rise in the late 1920s, in Yurchak's view, was the source of this uniformity, as the party dominated the language of state, ending the experimentation of the 1920s.²² Stalin embodied the role of an "external master" who stood outside the system, infallible and impenetrable, and who alone could signal ideological changes. Stalin's death triggered a systemic transformation. Language underwent a "progressive normalization," as political speeches became standardized and ideological work became a "technical skill of reproducing the precise passages and structures of that language in one's texts and speeches," demonstrating intertextuality and circularity.²³ The quantitative prominence of the Soviet people illustrates what Yurchak calls the "hegemony of form" of late Soviet ideology: after Stalin's death, mention of

Cannot Be Said: Between the Stalinist Past and New Soviet Future," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 86, no. 2 (2008): 306–27. On de-Stalinization and patriotism, see also Zbigniew Wojnowski, "De-Stalinization and Soviet Patriotism: Ukrainian Reactions to East European Unrest in 1956," *Kritika* 13, no. 4 (2012): 799–829.

²⁰ In *Izvestiia*, use of the term remained high during the same years, but annual usage had been slightly higher both around 1953 and would be higher again in the late 1970s and early 1980s, under Brezhnev. See figures in Chapter 1.

²¹ Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More*, 37.

²² Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More*. On experimentation in the 1920s, see Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams*; Clark, *Petersburg*; Eric Naiman, *Sex in Public: The Incarnation of Early Soviet Ideology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

²³ Here Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More*, 48.

the Soviet people continued to be a *pro forma* aspect of patriotic rhetoric, invoked readily by leaders, the central press, and citizens.

Yurchak, however, is overly dismissive of ideological rhetoric. He interprets formulism as a shift towards meaningless, performative speech: “Linguistic, narrative, and rhetorical structures were not read by most Soviet people at face value, as constative descriptions of the world (either true or false)... In fact, because authoritative language was hegemonic, unavoidable, and hypernormalized, it was no longer read by its audiences literally, at the level of constative meanings.”²⁴ Yet the quantitative prominence of the Soviet people did not mean that the term ceased to take on new meanings, particularly not in the 1960s and ‘70s, a little before the period of Yurchak’s primary focus. Indeed, although elites and the press relied on familiar patriotic rhetoric to mobilize participation in civic life, this rhetoric was constantly adapted for changing circumstances. Political elites and citizens actively engaged with ideological concepts and rhetoric in new ways, suggesting that notions of Soviet identity were dynamic and relevant for a new generation living in dramatically different circumstances than their predecessors.

Mobilizing Soviet Identity in the Cold War

In objective terms, domestic and international circumstances under Khrushchev and Brezhnev had little in common with the upheavals experienced under Lenin and Stalin. In prior decades, the country battled for existence both literally and ideologically. From revolution to civil war, from crash industrialization and collectivization to party purges, and from victory to reconstruction, leaders and citizens found themselves in a state of perpetual change and almost unfathomable uncertainty. Beginning with victory in World War II, however, the question of the

²⁴ Yurchak, 75–76. Yurchak’s informants, largely drawn from urban cultural elites, were also not representative of Soviet society as a whole.

country's survival receded to the background as the state not only became more entrenched and powerful domestically but also projected greater power on the international stage.²⁵

Despite the changed circumstances, propaganda still relied heavily on the patriotic rhetoric of war to encourage participatory notions of belonging among citizens. As in previous decades, the state used the press, foremost its central newspapers, to shape public understandings of civic belonging and state patriotism. Using the rhetoric of war, patriotic discourse encouraged active participation in civic life, whether defending the country from potential traitors and enemies, celebrating new scientific and economic accomplishments, or contributing to the state's economic and political goals. At the same time, inspired perhaps by developments elsewhere, the state devoted significant energy to projecting care and concern for its citizens, broadcasting a more collaborative, expansive relationship between state and society. In each of these arenas, public discourse adapted earlier discourses of active, sacrificial patriotism to Cold War conditions, with an eye to both the domestic and international spheres.

Holidays and Anniversaries in Patriotic Rhetoric

Holidays continued to be a central focal point in patriotic discourse. As we will see in the next chapter, public celebrations still served as rituals of citizenship, reminding citizens of their common belonging to the state. Here, I focus on the rhetoric surrounding two holidays—Victory Day (May 9) and the anniversary of the revolution (November 7)—to see the changing messages of the party-state. Although the language surrounding holidays was often uniform and formulaic, close analysis suggests subtle changes at work.

In Stalin's lifetime, holiday rhetoric centered on the leader himself. The 1947 commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the revolution exemplified this: Lenin and Stalin's

²⁵ On the Soviet Union in the Cold War, see Zubok, *A Failed Empire*.

portraits dominated the entire top half of the front page of *Pravda* and appeared above Molotov's address. Molotov praised Stalin for his role in developing the country and securing victory in World War II. The fourth page of the paper ran a letter to Stalin from grateful citizens, thanking him for his leadership, wishing him good health, and glorifying him as the "leader of the peoples, the architect and organizer of all our victories, the dear and beloved comrade Stalin."²⁶ The fifth anniversary of victory (1950) was treated similarly: although *Pravda's* main editorial praised the "Great Victory of the Soviet people," the article ran below a quarter-page portrait of Stalin and attributed victory to his leadership.²⁷ General Vasilii Chuikov, who delivered the main speech, similarly emphasized Stalin's role in victory.²⁸ Even an article ostensibly praising the "soldier-patriots" who had won on the battlefield diverted significant attention to Stalin.²⁹

After Stalin's death, celebratory forms barely changed, but the rhetoric suggested new focal points for patriotism. On the tenth anniversary of victory (1955), with de-Stalinization still in its silent phase, Stalin's portrait featured only as the backdrop of the stage where leaders had gathered, a large but silent relic. The annual slogans omitted all references to him and instead focused on the Soviet people, the military, and the party, which was described, using language previously reserved for Stalin, as the "architect and organizer of all our victories."³⁰ With only passing reference to Stalin, Marshal Ivan Konev's speech focused on the party's leadership and the patriotism and sacrifice of rank-and-file soldiers and ordinary citizens.³¹

Images of the celebratory stage set up for annual celebrations of the October Revolution

²⁶ See "Doklad V.M. Molotova," *Pravda*, 7 November 1947, 1–4; "Predsedateliu Soveta Ministrov Soiuzu Sovetskikh Sotsialisticheskikh Respublik, tovarishchu Stalinu I.V." *Pravda*, 7 November 1947, 4. A decade earlier, *Pravda* looked much the same, with articles similarly flanked by images of Lenin and Stalin, though Stalin's prominence, yet to reach the heights of his cult of personality, was somewhat less marked in the lead articles, see "Geroicheskoe dvadtsatiletie," *Pravda*, 7 November 1937, 1.

²⁷ "Velikaia pobeda sovetskogo naroda," *Pravda*, 9 May 1950, 1.

²⁸ V. Chuikov, "Den' pobedy," *Pravda*, 9 May 1950, 2.

²⁹ S. Borzenko, "Voiny-patrioty," *Pravda*, 9 May 1950, 5.

³⁰ "Segodnia sovetskii narod praznuet den' pobedy," *Pravda*, 9 May 1955, 1.

³¹ "Doklad Marshala Sovetskogo Soiuzu I. S. Konev," *Pravda*, 9 May 1955, 2.

from 1954, 1955, and 1956, as published in *Pravda* each year, are especially evocative of the ongoing negotiation of Stalin's legacy. In 1954, Lenin and Stalin's profiles appeared in the center of the backdrop with Stalin foregrounding his predecessor. The set up for 1955 was nearly identical, save for a change in Stalin in Lenin's relative positions, with Lenin now in front. Leaders commissioned a new stage for the celebrations in 1957. Stalin's image was removed entirely, replaced by an enormous front-facing bust of Lenin who dominated the background, a visual demonstration of Stalin's demotion. The same set-up would be used in 1958, to be replaced with a more classic Lenin portrait the following year.³²

Under Khrushchev, holiday speeches looked to the future. In 1957, with de-Stalinization in full swing, the 40th anniversary of the October Revolution showcased a new political agenda. The Supreme Soviet's official statement to citizens emphasized the post-revolutionary emergence of a "socialist society, created by the labor of the Soviet people," ready to face the challenges of building communism. Naming each of the titular ethnicities of union republics individually and of autonomous republics collectively, the statement highlighted unity and friendship, noting how citizens worked together to improve the country's outlook. The ongoing building of communism would guarantee better living standards in housing, food, clothing, furniture, and other basic necessities. Khrushchev's speech at the same time focused on communist construction, prefiguring his 1960 declaration that communism would be built by 1980. Aside from criticizing Stalin's cult of personality, Khrushchev focused on the production of household goods and living space rather than on industrial output.³³ The emphasis on quality of life differed sharply from the discourses of sacrifice and revolutionary asceticism of prior

³² These images can be seen on the front page of *Pravda* on November 7 of each year. Anna Ivanova inspired this comparative reflection on the stage imagery.

³³ "Doklad N.S. Khrushcheva," *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, 7 November 1957, 2–6. On communism by 1980, see also Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 507–28.

decades.

Under Brezhnev, in contrast, major commemorative speeches tended to look backwards. This trend was exemplified in the commemorations of the 20th anniversary of victory in the Great Patriotic War, in 1965, which marked the beginning of a new focus on World War II. For the first time since 1946, Victory Day was elevated to a non-working holiday, a status it retained for the remainder of the Soviet period (and indeed, across most of post-Soviet space today). The holiday became a centerpiece in the reinvigorated cult of World War II, as military parades, speeches, commemorations, and memorials drew attention to the war and its impact on society.³⁴

The 50th Anniversary of the Revolution, celebrated on November 7, 1967, marked one of the biggest public celebrations in all of Soviet history, with an enormous parade in Moscow and smaller-scale celebrations across the country. The party-state's official address to the Soviet people, published ahead of the anniversary, noted the tasks of communist construction and the ongoing focus on raising living standards, highlighting the state's care and attention towards women and youth.³⁵ Brezhnev suggested similar themes in his November 3 speech, which outlined the progress made over the last 50 years and the tasks that lay ahead. His emphasis on the ongoing commitment to improving living standards garnered loud applause.³⁶ On the anniversary, Premier (Head of State) Aleksei Kosygin reflected on the accomplishments of a half-century of rule.³⁷

In letters, citizens noted the importance of these anniversaries. Several suggested the 50th

³⁴ Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead*; Weiner, *Making Sense of War*; Kirschenbaum, *The Legacy of the Siege of Leningrad, 1941–1995*; Jones, *Myth, Memory, Trauma*. On the specific dimensions of the war cult under Brezhnev, see Vicky Davis, *Myth Making in the Soviet Union and Modern Russia: Remembering World War II in Brezhnev's Hero City* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2018); Mijnsen, *Cities of Heroes*. This is briefly discussed in the following chapter as well.

³⁵ "K sovetskomu narodu, ko vsem trudiashchimsia Soiuza Sovetskikh Sotsialisticheskikh Respublik," *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, 5 November 1967, 1.

³⁶ "Piat' desiat let velikikh pobed sotsializma: Doklad general'nogo sekretaria TsK KPSS L.I. Brezhneva," *Izvestiia* and *Pravda*, 4 November 1967, 2–6, here 4.

³⁷ "Rech' tovarishcha A.N. Kosygina," *Pravda*, 7 November 1967, 1–2.

anniversary might be a good occasion for the state to unveil a new constitution, while others reflected on the progress the state had made in its 50-year existence. Vladimir E., of Turkestan (KazSSR) wrote, “For 50 years, Soviet power has existed. After 50 years, divisions based on ethnic characteristics have lost their necessity. We live by the thoughts and deeds of the entire country, the successes in any part of the country are dear to us, and the Motherland among us is one and the same—the USSR.” Together, he continued, citizens established Soviet power in 1917, defended the country in World War II, and achieved economic and political successes.³⁸

A 1977 edition of a history textbook for tenth graders highlighted the “great historical dates” of the late 1960s and early ‘70s, singling out the 25th anniversary of German soldiers on the doorstep of Moscow (1966), the 50th anniversary of the revolution, and the 100th anniversary of Lenin’s birth (April 21, 1970). The textbook saw war memorials as meaningful reminders of struggle and sacrifice, with reference to the monument to the unknown soldier in Moscow and the 1967 opening of the Mamaev-Kurgan memorial complex at Stalingrad.³⁹ Such descriptions conveyed the significance of historical events for a young generation in hopes of continuing the revolutionary legacy. In this way, holiday rhetoric reflected and contributed to a sense of common experience across time and space. Looking both backwards and forwards, holidays provided opportunities for citizens to demonstrate publicly their commitment to their homeland.

³⁸ GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 357, l. 105ob. For additional letters on the importance of the 50th anniversary, see also GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 312, l. 4; GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 313, l. 6. Once the revolution’s 50th anniversary had passed, others suggested the 50th anniversary of the USSR’s founding and of the 1924 constitution, celebrated in 1972 and 1974, respectively, as other opportunities to pass a new constitution, see GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 317, l. 10; GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 318, l. 5; GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 320, l. 17. The context and content of these and other letters will be discussed in the final section of this chapter.

³⁹ “Velikie istoricheskie daty,” in P.I. Potemkin et al., *Istoriia SSSR (1938–1976): Uchebnik dlia 10 klassa*, ed. M.P. Kim, 6th ed. (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 1977), 211–17.

Education for Citizenship: Curricular Changes under Khrushchev and Brezhnev

Holidays may have served a pedagogical, participatory function for all citizens, but it was in schools that the country invested the most resources for educating and preparing the next generation. This process was tightly bound with institutions of participatory citizenship and patriotism. Under Khrushchev and Brezhnev, changes to school curriculum affected nearly all aspects of teaching and reflected evolving ideas about raising the next generation. Under Khrushchev, the 1958–59 school reform, which ostensibly strengthened the connection between “school and life,” emphasized technical education and practical training while altering one of the foundational elements of nationalities policy. This change was buttressed by more subtle curricular changes. Under Brezhnev, emphasis on technical education continued, while the state instigated an administrative overhaul within the union-wide educational system. These curricular and administrative changes suggested subtle negotiations of Soviet identity.

The 1958–59 school reform marked a massive restructuring of the educational system. The reform’s full title, “Law on the Strengthening of the Relationship of the School with Life and on the Further Development of the System of Public Schools in the USSR,” hinted at its practical orientation. Discussions of major policy changes began when Khrushchev criticized the educational system at the 13th Komsomol Congress in Leningrad in April 1958.⁴⁰ The following September, Khrushchev identified the “separation from life” (*otorvannost’ ot zhizni*) as “the main, fundamental defect (*porok*) of our secondary and higher schools.”⁴¹ New school programs combined scientific and practical training to give students first-hand experience with labor, often

⁴⁰ Blair A. Ruble, *Leningrad: Shaping a Soviet City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 144.

⁴¹ N. Khrushchev, “Ob ukreplenii svyazi shkoly s zhizn’iu i o dal’neishem razvitii sistemy narodnogo obrazovaniia v strane,” *Pravda*, 21 September 1958, 2–3.

in collaboration with local factories, collective farms, and other institutions,⁴²

The reform also marked a major shift in the underlying foundations of nationalities policy. As we will see in Chapter 5, the reform eliminated formal requirements for the language of school instruction, leaving parents to decide whether to send children to national or Russian schools. Theoretically, the change allowed parents to opt out of either Russian or native language education, but in practice, the reform contributed to a prioritization of Russian across the country.⁴³ Moreover, because Russian was closely associated with Soviet identity, the question of school choice implied a certain tension between ethnic and civic identities that had been less present when national schools had been formally mandated. Many parents saw the opportunity to enroll children in Russian schools as a way to ensure upward mobility, but this often came at the cost of declining native-language proficiency in some republics. This policy encouraged a view of language education as a zero-sum game, rather than as an opportunity for mutual enrichment.

While the school reform emphasized uniformity and set the stage for a more universal curriculum, regardless of the language of instruction or the geographical location, an October 1959 joint resolution from the Soviet of Ministers and the Central Committee introduced greater differentiation in history curriculum. The resolution, “On several changes in the teaching of history in schools,” mandated teaching republic history in all schools, a move that reflected a

⁴² Ruble, *Leningrad*, 141–54; Jeremy Smith, “Khrushchev and the Path to Modernisation through Education,” in *Modernisation in Russia since 1900*, ed. Markku Kangaspuro and Jeremy Smith (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2006), 221–36. On implementation and results, see RGANI, f. 5, o. 55, dd. 33, 34, and 95; TsDAHOU, f. 1, o. 73, d. 741; APRK, f. 708, o. 31, d. 1496; APRK, f. 708, o. 32, d. 1445; Central State Archive of the Republic of Kazakhstan (hereafter TsGARK), f. 1692, o. 2, dd. 9, 68, 265, and 792; Central State Archive of the Republic of Tajikistan (hereafter TsGART), f. 360, o. 11, dd. 880, 881, 999. Archives emphasize the reform’s scientific, polytechnic orientation.

⁴³ On the reform’s impact on native-language education and on nationalities policy more generally, see Yaroslav Bilinsky, “The Soviet Education Laws of 1958–9 and Soviet Nationality Policy,” *Soviet Studies* 14, no. 2 (1962): 138–57; Jeremy Smith, “The Battle for Language: Opposition to Khrushchev’s Education Reform in the Soviet Republics, 1958–59,” *Slavic Review* 76, no. 4 (2017): 983–1002.

new focus on local history.⁴⁴ Teaching republic-level history was not unprecedented: some republics, Armenia most notably, had commissioned and implemented local history into school curriculum with some degree of state and party sanction in the postwar period. The 1959 decree, however, signaled a greater institutionalization of the process.⁴⁵

The decree tasked republics with developing curriculum, decentralizing the process and offering local scholars opportunities to lead the initiative. In Kazakhstan, curriculum for fourth graders was even compiled in Kazakh and introduced in Kazakh schools before Russian versions were ready.⁴⁶ In both versions, the fourth grade textbook opened with a description of “Our Kazakhstan,” which promoted a patriotic love for both Kazakhstan and the Soviet Union, recalling wartime tropes of nested patriotism. In language accessible to its fourth grade audience, the introduction described Kazakhstan’s diverse territory, economic sectors, and people. “You should know how your happiness was won,” the introduction concluded. “For this, you must

⁴⁴ The resolution, passed on October 8, 1959, is discussed in T. Turlugulov, *Metodicheskoe rukovodstvo k uchebnomu posobiuu “Rasskazy po istorii Kazakhskoi SSR” dlia 4 klassa* (Almaty: Mektep, 1973), 3. The 1950s and ‘60s saw a proliferation in new republic histories. These multi-volume sets were published over a series of years, see O. K. Kasymenko, ed., *Istoriia Ukrainskoi SSR*, vol. 1 (Kyiv: Izdatel’stvo Akademii Nauk Ukrainskoi SSR, 1956); R. Kh. Aminova, M. A. Akhunova, and Kh. Sh. Inoiatov, eds., *Istoriia Uzbekskogo SSR*, vol. III (Tashkent: Izdatel’stvo “Fan” Uzbekskoi SSR, 1967); B. G. Gafurov, ed., *Istoriia Tadzhikskogo Naroda*, vol. III, part I (Moscow: Nauka, 1964). As David Brandenberger notes with reference to Pankratova’s controversial History of the Kazakh SSR, the push for republic history predated the Khrushchev era, see *National Bolshevism*, 123–32. This shift could also be seen in new attention to regional studies and the founding of local museums, see Victoria Donovan, “‘Going Backwards, We Stride Forwards’: Kraevedenie Museums and the Making of Local Memory in North West Russia, 1956–1981,” *Forum for Anthropology and Culture*, no. 7 (2012): 211–30; Victoria Donovan, “‘How Well Do You Know Your Krai?’ The Kraevedenie Revival and Patriotic Politics in Late Khrushchev-Era Russia,” *Slavic Review* 74, no. 3 (2015): 464–83. As Emily Johnson, Catherine Evtuhov, and Susan Smith-Peter show, regional studies had a longer history that stretched into the 18th and 19th centuries: Emily D. Johnson, *How St. Petersburg Learned to Study Itself: The Russian Idea of Kraevedenie* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006); Catherine Evtuhov, *Portrait of a Russian Province: Economy, Society, and Civilization in Nineteenth-Century Nizhnii Novgorod* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011); Susan Smith-Peter, *Imagining Russian Regions: Subnational Identity and Civil Society in Nineteenth-Century Russia* (Leiden: Brill, 2017).

⁴⁵ On school curriculum for Armenian history, see RGASPI, f. 17, o. 132, d. 372.

⁴⁶ T. Turlygulov, *Qazaq SSR tarihy: epizodtyq ángimeler. IV klasqa arnalǵan oqu kuraly*, Second Edition (Almaty: Qazaqtyń memleketik oqu pedagogika baspasy, 1963). The author also published a methodological guide for teachers, also originally in Kazakh but translated into Russian shortly thereafter, see Turlugulov, *Metodicheskoe rukovodstvo k uchebnomu posobiuu “Rasskazy po istorii Kazakhskoi SSR” dlia 4 klassa*.

study the history of your country (*strana*).”⁴⁷ The same author, T. Turlyǵulov, emphasized the same point in his methodological guide for teachers, first published in 1970: “the history of the Kazakh SSR should inculcate a feeling of ardent love and whole-hearted loyalty to the Soviet fatherland (*otchizna*) and train them in a spirit of internationalism and friendship of the peoples.” This was seen to be of special importance in Russian schools, where the history of the Kazakh SSR was the only mandatory class that focused specifically on the republic.⁴⁸

Similar discussions took place concerning new curriculum for Ukrainian history. One reviewer praised the textbook, which

correctly reveals the main stages of the heroic history of the Ukrainian SSR as an integral part of the Motherland (*Bat’kivshchyna*). The idea of the friendship of the peoples runs through the entire course. The role of the masses as the creators of history and the role of class struggle in the development of a class-based society are sufficiently clear. Clearly underscored in the book is the leadership of the communist party and of V.I. Lenin in particular in the history of the Ukrainian people, the idea of friendship of the peoples, patriotism, and internationalism.⁴⁹

The inclusion of local history would teach students about the diversity and unity of the country and its people, suggesting the continued importance of nested patriotism and the role of republics in developing school curriculum. As will be seen in Chapter 4, this also coincided with the reinvigoration of ethnic holiday celebrations and the formation of new Soviet rituals, which similarly drew from ethno-national cultures, suggesting the state’s broad commitment to the continued development of its ethnic minorities, at least in specific, circumscribed arenas.

Also under Khrushchev, the state dramatically expanded civic education within schools.

⁴⁷ T. Turlugulov, *Rasskazy po istoriiu Kazakhskoi SSR*, trans. B. Gabitov, Third Edition (Almaty: Mektep, 1967), 6. The introduction was a dramatic expansion from the earlier edition, which offered a more cursory description of “our Kazakhstan,” see Turlyǵulov, *Qazaq SSR tarihy: epizodtyq áńgimeler*, 3–4. Later editions in both Kazakh and Russian retained the expanded introduction.

⁴⁸ Turlugulov, *Metodicheskoe rukovodstvo k uchebnomu posobiuu “Rasskazy po istorii Kazakhskoi SSR” dlia 4 klassa*, 4–5. Similar principles were self-evidently at work in the curriculum for 8–9 graders, see E. Bekmakhanov, *Istoriia Kazakhskoi SSR: uchebnoe posobie dlia srednei shkoly Kazakhstana*, Third Edition (Almaty: Kazuchpedgiz, 1961). Unlike Turlyǵulov’s book, Bekmakhanov’s appears to have been written in Russian originally.

⁴⁹ TsDAHOU, f. 1, o. 31, d. 1665, l. 109. Ukrainian history curriculum in the late 1950s and early 1960s, including copies of reviewed textbook manuscripts, is discussed throughout TsDAHOU, f. 1, o. 31, dd. 1228, 1665, and 1666.

Shortly following the adoption of the 1936 Constitution, students studied the constitution as a stand-alone subject in all schools. As evident from textbooks, the course provided a general overview of the structure of the state and society focused around the constitution.⁵⁰ By the late 1950s and early 1960s, the subject was expanded into a more general course in “social studies” (*obshchestvovedenie*), required of all students in their final year of education.⁵¹ Relative to the earlier manifestation, the new course, influenced by the 1961 Party Program, offered a broad introduction not only to the basic structure of the state but to Marxism-Leninism, comparative world systems, and future development. The introduction suggested that broad knowledge of social and political systems would prepare students for their lives as independent, full-fledged citizens.⁵² The curricular shift reflected more expansive notions of citizenship typical of the Khrushchev and Brezhnev eras.

After Khrushchev was removed from office in 1964, the state continued to emphasize technical and practical training, but the most significant educational change was administrative rather than curricular. In 1966, the establishment of the Ministry of Education of the USSR (MP SSSR) signified a shift to a more rationalized and organized means of managing education. Previously, an *ad hoc* mix of the communist party (which had dominated policy in the 1930s and 40s), the Ministry of Higher Education of the USSR, the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of the RSFSR, and the Ministry of Education of the RSFSR had managed educational policy. The

⁵⁰ The textbook for the course here is instructive, see V.A. Karpinskii, *Konstitutsiia SSSR: Uchebnik dlia 7 klassa srednei shkoly* (Moscow: Uchpedgiz, 1954).

⁵¹ The precise date for this shift and how the transition was managed is unclear, but by 1962, textbooks had been prepared for the subject. Comparing old and new curriculum is helpful, see Karpinskii; G. Kh. Shakhnazarov et al., *Obshchestvovedenie: uchebnik dlia bypusknogo klassa srednei shkoly i srednikh spetsial'nykh uchebnykh zavedenii* (Moscow: Gos. Izd-vo Polit. lit-ry, 1962). Trial runs for the new course took place in Ukraine during the 1962–63 and 1963–64 school years, see TsDAHOU, f. 1, o. 31, d. 2163, ll. 129–64. The broader course of social studies had previously been a part of higher education and teacher training, see TsGARK, f. 1692, o. 1, d. 482.

⁵² Shakhnazarov et al., *Obshchestvovedenie*, especially 3–6. For discussions about the preparation of the 1965 edition of the same book, see also RGANI, f. 5, o. 55, d. 137, ll. 1–4. This textbook was targeted to advanced students, so reviewers requested a more simplified version for broader use in the school system.

latter only officially had direct authority over schools in the RSFSR and Russian schools in other republics, but it set informal education standards that were generally observed by local republics, at least to the extent resources permitted. Implementation of the 1958–59 school reform illustrated the difficulties of this administrative structure: after a general law was passed by the Soviet of Ministers in December 1958, each republic adopted its own version of the law, with slight adaptations for local circumstances. After several republics passed versions of the law out of keeping with Moscow’s desires, this process culminated in purges in several republics.⁵³ The 1966 creation of the MP SSSR offered a clear administrative center for educational matters and streamlined the management of education policy and curriculum across the country.⁵⁴

Under Stalin’s successors, schools remained an important site for preparing young citizens for civic life. This preparation combined both all-union and more localized practices and knowledge, implicitly conveying the ongoing relevance and coexistence of ethnic and civic identities. Although these two loci of identity continued to be seen as compatible, the state did not always promote a clear message about how civic and ethnic worked together within the educational system. On one hand, the introduction of the principle of school choice as a result of the 1958–59 reform suggested the implicit limitations of ethnic and civic identities. At the same time, regional history curriculum inculcated students with a deeper sense of place that would inform who they were as citizens. There were other mixed messages as well. The overarching

⁵³ This is discussed in Chapter 5, but see especially Michael Loader, “The Rebellious Republic: The 1958 Education Reform and Soviet Latvia,” *Journal of the Institute of Latvian History/Latvijas Vēstures Institūta Žurnāls* 100, no. 3 (2016): 113–39; Michael Loader, “A Stalinist Purge in the Khrushchev Era? The Latvian Communist Party Purge, 1959–1963,” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 96, no. 2 (2018): 244–82. As Loader notes, the purge was not exclusively related to resistance to the school reform, but the reform nevertheless contributed to deepening tensions within the party apparatus and in center-periphery relations. This is a more nuanced interpretation than the more simplistic argument of nationalist suppression offered by Yaroslav Bilinsky in “The Soviet Education Laws of 1958–9 and Soviet Nationality Policy.”

⁵⁴ On the formation of the MP SSSR, see the annotations for GARF, f. 9563. Its work did not really begin until February 1967, when Minister of Education M.A. Prokof’ev held the first all-union meeting of Ministers of Education. Clear from the files, the first meeting served as a general fact-finding mission to understand the general conditions in public education across the country. At the meeting, Prokof’ev admitted to his limited knowledge of local conditions and his desire to learn more, see GARF, f. 9563, o. 1, dd. 40–41.

emphasis on technical education revealed ongoing prioritization of economic development in industrial terms. This somewhat contrasted with the goals of more expansive social studies curriculum, which trained students for a much broader participation in civic life.

Vigilance, Defense, and Patriotism in the Cold War

Under Khrushchev and Brezhnev, notions of Soviet identity remained closely connected with an implicit sense of danger and precarity, heightening the stakes for participation. To foment continued revolutionary fervor and passionate patriotism among citizens, the rhetoric of war and defense of the homeland pervaded ideological discourse long after there existed any existential threats to security. The ideological landscape of the Cold War consolidated notions of Soviet identity around Marxist-Leninist ideology, always with at least one eye to the principal threats facing the country domestically and abroad.

Mimicking the defensive tone of the 1930s, vigilance (*bditel'nost'*) continued to be seen as a key attribute of the Soviet people. Presaging a political crisis as Stalin lay dying, the party and state issued a joint statement expressing “confidence that our party and the whole Soviet people will in these difficult days show the greatest unity and cohesion, firmness of spirit and vigilance, will redouble their efforts in the building of communism in our country, will rally ever closer around the Central Committee of the communist party and the government of the Soviet Union.”⁵⁵ Quoting this statement, a 1953 front-page editorial in *Pravda* noted, “unity and cohesion, firmness of spirit and vigilance—these [are the] marvelous qualities [that] Stalin, Lenin, and the heroic communist party created and nurtured in our people.”⁵⁶

By definition, vigilance called upon citizens to defend their country; the Cold War was

⁵⁵ “Pravitel'stvennoe soobshchenie,” *Pravda*, 4 March 1953, 1.

⁵⁶ “Velikoe edinstvo partii i naroda,” *Pravda*, 5 March 1953, 1.

rife with opportunity. In a June 1953 article in *Izvestiia*, V. Nikolaev described the dangerous present conditions: “The Soviet people, engaged in building communism, cannot for a moment forget the capitalist encirclement, the cunning intrigues of the imperialist intelligence services. High political vigilance and an uncompromising position towards any possible manifestations of carelessness and gullibility should be an inviolable law for every Soviet person.”⁵⁷ He envisioned vigilance as a universal duty and called citizens to constantly monitor the world around them for any security breaches that might threaten the integrity of the state.

This language permeated discussions of the state security apparatus, which could protect citizens only with extensive popular participation. On the 40th anniversary of the 1918 founding of the Cheka, KGB chief Ivan Serov noted the importance of vigilance in relations between the state, the security apparatus, and the population: “A most important principle in the work of the Soviet state security organs is reliance on the masses, the millions of workers, peasants and intelligentsia. The help given by the people to the state security organs, resulting from the patriotism of Soviet people (*liudi*) and their correct understanding of the interests of the socialist motherland, is extensive and manifold.” Continuing, he saw “high vigilance” as a “patriotic duty” of all citizens, while the state security apparatus battled with ideological foes.⁵⁸ Such rhetoric envisioned cooperation between the state security apparatus and citizens. This devolution of responsibility, also present in the 1930s, emphasized citizens’ participation.

The theme of vigilance continued into the Brezhnev era, as the Cold War suggested the image of a people locked in a fierce battle with capitalism. In a 1965 essay prepared for Armed Forces Day (February 23), Marshal Rodion Malinovskii highlighted civil and military participation in the country’s “high patriotic and international mission.” He described the

⁵⁷ V. Nikolaev, “Nerushimoe edinstvo partii i naroda,” *Izvestiia*, 28 June 1953, 2–3; here 3.

⁵⁸ I. Serov, “Sorok let na strazhe bezopastnosti Sovetskogo gosudarstva,” *Pravda*, 21 December 1957, 6. The Cheka was the predecessor to the KGB.

military's essential role in promoting Soviet values at home and abroad, accomplishments that were attributed the entire population: "In the heat of fierce battles with Hitler's aggressors the Soviet people not only defended the honor, freedom and independence of our homeland but also played a decisive role in saving all mankind from the threat of fascist enslavement. Soviet people (*liudi*) have demonstrated through deeds their loyalty to proletarian internationalism, rendering selfless aid to the peoples of Europe and Asia in their liberation struggle."⁵⁹ Citing the "aggressive plans" of the country's opponents, chiefly the United States, Malinovskii emphasized the need to support the military and soldiers, who ensured the long-term success of the country's domestic and international agendas. This signaled the tight association between patriotism and Cold War-era defense concerns.

A 1966 party publication, "Be Vigilant," similarly urged the diligence of all citizens in their battle against espionage and the penetration by agents of hostile nations in the west, the United States first and foremost.⁶⁰ Patriotism and vigilance remained tightly connected, as a 1967 *Pravda* editorial emphasized the connection between patriotic education (*vospitanie*) and vigilance. Soviet patriotism, the article suggested, emerged from citizens' deep love for their country and the communist party, their conviction in the tenets of communism, and their commitment to the country's domestic and international agenda. This patriotism, the article concluded, bound citizens together in quasi-religious attachment to the state: "'I am a citizen of the Soviet Union!' With pride every patriot pronounces these words. To be a son or daughter of the socialist Fatherland is a great honor. And workers of our country, nurtured by the Leninist party, piously (*sviato*) cherish the high honor and stature of the Soviet patriot."⁶¹

⁵⁹ R. Malinovskii, "Nadezhnyi strazh otchizni," *Pravda*, 23 March 1965, 2.

⁶⁰ A. Maygin and K. Ushakov, *Partiinaia zhizn'*, No. 5, March 1966, in *Current Digest of the Soviet Press* 18, No. 14 (27 April 1966).

⁶¹ "Sovetskii patriot," *Pravda*, 24 June 1967, 1.

As with vigilance, the rhetoric of war encouraged patriotic attachment. Allusions to war and patriotism featured prominently in discussions of technological advances, a field closely tied to defense. The 1957 launch of Sputnik was described on its first anniversary in *Izvestiia* as the “natural (*zakonomernyi*) outcome of the immense progress of the spiritual and material powers of the Soviet people.” The successful launch, the article noted, showcased the country’s scientific capabilities to the world, deliberately contextualizing the satellite in the ongoing Cold War. The article dwelled on American mischaracterizations of the “killer-satellite”: “The world can be once again certain that the bloody hand of capitalism strives to orient against humankind any scientific discovery capable of lightening the labor of people and increasing their power over nature.”⁶² The successful space expedition of the three-man crew of the Voskhod-1 in October 1964 inspired similar pride. As the official statement noted, “The new, great victory in the conquest (*pokorenie*) of the cosmos boosts the glory of our socialist Motherland even higher. It clearly demonstrates to the entire world what kind of unseen heroic feats the Soviet people are capable of, [once] freed of class and national oppression, what gigantic powers and talents are born of revolutionary energy in [the Soviet people].”⁶³

In connecting space exploration with long-term revolutionary processes and emphasizing its international and patriotic function, such statements reflected the general backdrop of the Cold War, which defined the Soviet people in opposition to its enemies in the West. More generally, the language of space exploration reflected Soviet ambitions: the “conquest” (*zavoevanie*, derived from the same root as war; and *pokorenie*, used historically to describe the “subjugation” of peoples of Siberia, Crimea, and elsewhere) and “opening” or “acquisition”

⁶² “Pervyi kosmicheskii god,” *Izvestiia*, 5 October 1958, 1.

⁶³ “Obrashchenie Tsentral’nogo Komiteta KPSS, Prezidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR i pravitel’sтва Sovetskogo Soiuza,” *Pravda*, 14 October 1964, 1. An editorial published the following day quoted the statement and offered deeper analysis of its themes, see “Slava geroiam!” *Pravda*, 15 October 1964, 1.

(*osvoenie*, often used in the context of imperial Russian expansion into Siberia) of the cosmos borrowed from the vocabulary of expansion and war. This suggested that space was another arena in which the country fought for dominance on both a domestic and international stage.

Cold War incidents also provided opportunities for the state to celebrate the distinctly Soviet character of its citizens, as suggested by a minor incident in 1960. After a terrible storm, the four-man crew of a self-propelled barge spent most of two months adrift in the Pacific Ocean with limited supplies, forcing them to resort to eating the leather from their boots and belts. Upon their rescue by a U.S. ship, the four soldiers, led by Tatar junior sergeant Askhat Ziganshin, were taken back to San Francisco. In a press conference with American journalists before their return home, the soldiers emphasized their ordinariness. “Nothing extraordinary happened,” said one soldier to journalists: “Every Soviet soldier in our place would have done the same.” When asked what kind of people they were, Ziganshin simply replied, “Ordinary. Soviet! (*Obyknovennye. Sovetskie!*)” *Pravda* interpreted this statement as a clear demonstration of Soviet character: “These two simple words clearly express the exceptional modesty, high sense of dignity, calm, self-confident force of character of the Soviet person—a person of a new world, raised by the communist party.” The soldiers were praised for demonstrating Soviet values, character, and patriotism to the entire world, showing what revolution and socialism had accomplished within Soviet citizens in explicit contrast to the country’s Cold War rivals.⁶⁴

Propaganda warned citizens about the potential dangers of misleading and inaccurate characterizations of Soviet politics and society abroad, seeking to inoculate citizens from pernicious foreign influences. Party documents were rife with concerns that bourgeois, anti-communist, and anti-Soviet ideologies could penetrate society. Lecture campaigns and other propaganda initiatives portrayed the Soviet Union as locked in a fierce ideological battle with the

⁶⁴ “Geroizm, muzhestvo, sila dukha” (quoted) and “Eto i est’ sovetskii kharakter,” *Pravda*, 17 March 1960, 1.

west, echoing past discourses of capitalist encirclement and external enemies.⁶⁵ As the country struggled with enemies abroad, patriotic rhetoric encouraged citizens to support and promote Soviet ideology at home.

Travel, both within the Soviet Union and in the “near” abroad in the aligned countries of Eastern Europe, also promoted identification as Soviet citizens. As Zbigniew Wojnowski has noted, travel to Poland, Hungary, and other border regions almost paradoxically promoted notions of Soviet patriotism in a region (Western Ukraine) not typically associated with high levels of attachment to the Soviet state. He argues, “Cross-border travel became an important vehicle of de-Stalinization, as it helped to forge new ideas of what it meant to be Soviet in western Ukraine. . . . Following Khrushchev’s denunciation of Stalinist terror, the cautious opening of the Soviet border was part of a larger attempt to find fresh sources of popular support and enthusiasm for the regime’s ‘communist’ project.” Although the success of this project was somewhat mitigated by illegal smuggling in the 1970s and tensions between Ukrainians and Poles, travelers were expected to project their status as Soviet citizens in their interactions abroad. This helped cement the Western Ukrainian experience, at least in the 1950s and ‘60s, to the Soviet whole.⁶⁶ As Anne Gorsuch notes, domestic tourism could also help develop notions of

⁶⁵ The 1961 Party Program, for example, reflected on the “Fight against bourgeois and reformist ideology,” see *Programma Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soiuza* (Moscow: Pravda, 1961). On concerns about foreign influence and bourgeois ideology and propaganda to target this, see TsGARK, f. 1810, o. 2, d. 509, ll. 46–77 (1961); TsGARK, f. 1810, o. 2, d. 0579b, ll. 56–89 (1961); TsDAHOU, f. 1, o. 32, d. 1593 (1980). See also F. Ia. Polianskii, ed., *Istoki sovremennogo revizionizma i ego burzhuaznaia sushchnost’* (Moscow: Izd-vo Moskovskogo universiteta, 1961); Petr Nikolaevich Fedoseev, *Nauchnyi kommunizm i fal’sifikatsiia ego renegatami* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1972); V.P. Uvarov, G.V. Uvarova, and M.V. Nauchitel’, *Kritika sovremennykh burzhuaznykh, reformistskikh i revizionistskikh ekonomicheskikh teorii* (Minsk: Vysheishaia shkola, 1977); Aleksei Kuz’mich Tikhonenko, *Kritika burzhuaznykh i revizionistskikh kontseptsii po korennyim problemam nauchnogo kommunizma* (Moscow: Vysshiaia shkola, 1980); V.I. Bukhalov, *Kritika burzhuaznykh i revizionistskikh fal’sifikatsii sushchnosti sotsialisticheskogo patriotizma i internatsionalizma* (Kyiv: Obshchestvo “Znanie” Ukrainskoi SSR, 1980).

⁶⁶ Zbigniew Wojnowski, “An Unlikely Bulwark of Sovietness: Cross-Border Travel and Soviet Patriotism in Western Ukraine, 1956–1985,” *Nationalities Papers* 43, no. 1 (2015): 82–101, here 83. He expands this argument in *The Near Abroad*.

Soviet identity and a sense of belonging to the Soviet whole.⁶⁷

Patriotism on the Economic Front

While descriptions of vigilance and the defense industry had quite obvious connections to war and frequently looked outwards towards Cold War rivals, similar vocabulary carried over into domestic arenas, where belligerent rhetoric heightened the general sense of urgency. Publicly, the regime remained committed to establishing communism (and indeed, worldwide revolution), but the content of this rhetoric evolved as the state and party apparatus aged and revolutionary fervor receded. The rhetoric of war, battle, and ‘capitalist encirclement,’ all of which had been prominent under Stalin with much more immediate threats, were repurposed for a more humdrum political agenda that interpreted economic development as the key task of building communism. War-infused patriotic rhetoric urgently charged citizens with participating in both ordinary and more experimental economic measures to ensure the long-term viability and success of the state and communist party.

This rhetoric was most at work in the ideological discourses surrounding communist construction, which remained the country’s principle task. As outlined by the party’s theses on the revolution’s 40th anniversary, the transition to communism rested upon continued economic development, both industrial and agricultural, which in turn depended upon the productive energies of the Soviet people. To hasten the transition, the theses emphasized economic policies, including ongoing attention to the ‘material-technical base,’ increasing living space and

⁶⁷ Anne E. Gorsuch, *All This Is Your World: Soviet Tourism at Home and Abroad after Stalin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). See also relevant chapters in Anne E. Gorsuch and Diane P. Koenker, eds., *Turizm: The Russian and East European Tourist under Capitalism and Socialism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006); Diane P. Koenker, *Club Red: Vacation Travel and the Soviet Dream* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013).

improving living conditions, and the Virgin Lands campaign.⁶⁸ The drive to “catch up and overtake” the U.S. in economic output placed internal domestic policies firmly within the Cold War.⁶⁹ Khrushchev’s 1961 pronouncement at the 22nd Party Congress that communism would be largely built in 20 years indicated the state’s dedication to its ideological and economic goals and tasked citizens with participation. Echoing this declaration, the 1961 Party Program adopted by the congress closed with the phrase, the “current generation of Soviet people will live under communism.”⁷⁰ Such rhetoric raised the stakes for building communism.

Although Khrushchev’s contemporaries and successors mocked his tactics, Brezhnev largely extended his predecessor’s Cold War rhetoric. Under Brezhnev, the party continued its formal pursuit of building communism. In the theses prepared for the 50th Anniversary of the October Revolution, industrial and agricultural progress were seen as essential for guaranteeing long-term improvements to citizens’ quality of life. Alongside this focus, the 1967 theses placed considerably more weight on the role of science and on promoting communist morality and principles among the population.

Under both Khrushchev and Brezhnev, ideological discourse infused both ordinary and experimental processes of economic development with war-oriented, patriotic rhetoric to encourage participation in the economy. This was most evident in extraordinary economic campaigns. The Virgin Lands campaign showcased popular participation, with its plan to boost agricultural output in the untapped, agriculturally unproductive lands of the Kazakh steppe and other underdeveloped areas. Beginning in 1954, the state recruited primarily young activists to cultivate the land to ensure a greater degree of food self-sufficiency. Recruitment capitalized on

⁶⁸ “K sorokaletiiu Velikoi Oktiabr’skoi sotsialisticheskoi revoliutsii: Tezisy Otdela propagandy i agitatsii TsK KPSS i Instituta marksizma-leninizma pri TsK KPSS,” *Pravda*, 15 September 1957, 1–5, especially 3–4.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 3. The phrase, a favorite of Khrushchev’s, appears in Theses 17. On agricultural dimensions of Cold War competition, see Aaron Hale-Dorrell, “The Soviet Union, the United States, and Industrial Agriculture,” *Journal of World History* 26, no. 2 (May 2016): 295–324.

⁷⁰ *Programma Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soiuza*.

young citizens' patriotism and commitment to the country's economic goals.⁷¹

This peaceful economic process was often described with the rhetoric of war. Echoing the vocabulary of space exploration, the campaign was often termed the *osvoenie* (reclamation, settlement, acquisition) of the virgin lands. Brezhnev, appointed First Secretary of the Kazakh Communist Party and tasked with leading the process there, made extensive comparisons to World War II in his 1978 memoir:

Again one recalls the war. The people who took part in it were stretched to the limits of human endurance. They went short of sleep and food, they got soaked in the trenches, they lay for days on end in the snow, they plunged into icy water, and yet hardly anyone suffered from colds and other "peacetime" ills. Something similar was to be seen in the virgin lands. I have already compared the great epic of the virgin lands to a wartime front, to a great battle won by the Party and the people. The memory of the war will always be with us frontline men, and it is, after all, an accurate enough comparison. Of course, in the virgin lands there was no shooting, no bombing, no shelling, but all the rest was like a real battle.⁷²

Such comparisons permeated Brezhnev's memoir, suggesting an attempt to infuse late Soviet economic projects with the same urgency of prior eras. The last great Soviet construction project, the building of the Baikal-Amur railroad that began in 1974, similarly recruited Soviet citizens, primarily young ones. The campaign was hailed as an example of interethnic friendship, raw industrial power, and citizens' dedication to the state's agenda, even as the construction itself was ultimately a disastrous failure.⁷³

⁷¹ The Virgin Lands campaign remains woefully understudied. Recent scholarship includes Michaela Pohl, "The 'Planet of One Hundred Languages': Ethnic Relations and Soviet Identity in the Virgin Lands," in *Peopling the Russian Periphery: Borderland Colonization in Eurasian History*, ed. Nicholas Breyfogle, Abby Schrader, and Willard Sunderland (London: Routledge, 2007); Michaela Pohl, "From White Grave to Tselinograd to Astana: The Virgin Lands Opening, Khrushchev's Forgotten First Reform," in *The Thaw: Soviet Society and Culture during the 1950s and 1960s*, ed. Denis Kozlov and Eleonory Gilburd (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 269–307. Aaron Hale-Dorrell studies similar mobilizing strategies in Khrushchev's corn crusade, see "Khrushchev's Corn Crusade: The Industrial Ideal and Agricultural Practice in the Era of Post-Stalin Reform, 1953–1964" (The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2014), 275–309.

⁷² L. I. Brezhnev, *Virgin Lands: Two Years in Kazakhstan, 1954–5* (Pergamon Press, 1979), 7.

⁷³ Christopher J. Ward, *Brezhnev's Folly: The Building of BAM and Late Soviet Socialism* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009).

Raising Living Standards for the Soviet People

While discourses of patriotism and Soviet identity ran through discussions of dramatic economic projects, similar language carried over into the more routine projects of everyday life. The post-Stalin period placed new emphasis on rising material standards, underscoring the more benevolent relationship the government was attempting to forge with its citizenry. Like discussions of science, technology, and defense, the focus on improving living standards also had manifestations in the international sphere. Perhaps most famously, the 1959 “kitchen debate” between Nikita Khrushchev and visiting Vice President Richard Nixon at a Moscow exhibition placed consumer goods at the heart of Cold War competition. As Greg Castillo observes, this was part of a long, extensive Cold War-era focus on providing citizens with material goods, with manifestations on both sides of the Iron Curtain.⁷⁴

In directing new attention to citizens’ quality of life, the Soviet Union took part in a global conversation about the role of the state. Across Western and Eastern Europe on slightly different timelines, the postwar years brought a new focus on providing for citizens. In Western Europe, these conversations intensified immediately after the war with the rise of the welfare state and a wider breadth of state services.⁷⁵ Eastern Europe, which emerged from the war in more dire straits, took cues from the Soviet Union. By the 1950s, as Krisztina Fehérváry notes, patience with sacrifice and privations had grown thin, not least as East Europeans eyed the

⁷⁴ Greg Castillo, *Cold War on the Home Front: The Soft Power of Midcentury Design* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

⁷⁵ See Pat Thane, *Foundations of the Welfare State* (London: Longman, 1982); Rodney Lowe, *The Welfare State in Britain since 1945* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993); Philip G. Nord, *France’s New Deal: From the Thirties to the Postwar Era* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010). Tony Judt’s *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (London: William Heinemann, 2005) offers a broader perspective of this European trend. As Susan Pedersen and Paul Dutton have noted, the focus on public welfare and services was not exclusively a postwar phenomenon: Susan Pedersen, *Family, Dependence, and the Origins of the Welfare State: Britain and France, 1914–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Paul V. Dutton, *Origins of the French Welfare State: The Struggle for Social Reform in France, 1914–1947* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). Still, the scale and scope of welfare programs and citizen services swelled dramatically after World War II. Many thanks to Sarah Mass for directing me toward relevant literature.

relative prosperity of their neighbors further west.⁷⁶ Beginning in the late 1950s, Eastern Europe, including the Soviet Union, responded to this ideological battle by devoting attention to constructing apartments and producing household goods and modern conveniences.⁷⁷

In the Soviet Union, there was some precedent for the post-Stalinist focus on rising living standards. Stalin's famous 1935 declaration, that "Life has become better, comrades. Life has become more joyous," indicated a shift away from the revolutionary asceticism that had characterized early Soviet life.⁷⁸ This language, however, largely disappeared in the immediate postwar period of extreme deprivation, when living standards declined sharply. Vladislav Zubok notes, "Stalin returned to the prewar policy of impoverishing the Soviet people, especially the peasantry and agricultural workers, in order to provide money for industrial rebuilding and rearmament."⁷⁹ After Stalin, ideas about improving material conditions took on a different tone, as political leaders emphasized what the government provided citizens. This was not just about housing. As Gorlizki and Khlevniuk note, top priorities following Stalin's death included long-needed reforms to and reorganization of the Gulag and agricultural distribution system, both of which reflected the interest in improving citizens' lives.⁸⁰

Material concerns, above all standards of living, marked a new invocation of the concept of the Soviet people, as the government focused on providing better living conditions to the

⁷⁶ Krisztina Fehérváry, *Politics in Color and Concrete: Socialist Materialities and the Middle Class in Hungary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 3–5, 78–110.

⁷⁷ Emily Pugh, *Architecture, Politics, and Identity in Divided Berlin* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2014), especially 118–154; Steven Harris, *Communism on Tomorrow Street: Mass Housing and Everyday Life after Stalin* (Washington: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2013); Fehérváry, *Politics in Color and Concrete*.

⁷⁸ Stalin delivered the speech to the First Conference of All-Union Stakhanovites on November 17, 1935. The speech was published in full several days later, see "Rech' tovarishcha Stalina na pervom vsesoiuznom soveshchaniï stakhanovtsev," *Pravda*, 22 November 1935, 1–2; the quote appears on page 1. Stephen Kotkin notes that leaders justified the socialist system by its ability to provide for people: "socialism encompassed a number of tangible precepts bespeaking a staunch commitment to social justice: no one went without food, all children attended school, every sick person received medical care, and there was no unemployment... social justice was said to be a fundamental aspect of a socialist type of society, grounded in putatively nonexploitative property relations." *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as Civilization* (Berkeley: California, 1995), 152.

⁷⁹ Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, 55.

⁸⁰ Gorlizki and Khlevniuk, *Cold Peace*, 133–42.

population as a whole. This was also a departure from Stalin's 1935 language, which indicated rising standards for the best workers while standards for the rest of the population lagged. A 1953 editorial made the new relationship explicit: "The communist party has no other interests than those of the people. Its entire policy is directed at strengthening the economic might of our state, at improving in every way the material wellbeing and cultural level of the Soviet people." This concern for wellbeing, the article continued, in turn drove citizens' "undivided faith in and love for their own communist party," suggesting a reciprocal relationship between the party and people.⁸¹ The ability to provide was seen as a precondition of this new relationship; failure would not be tolerated.⁸²

Khrushchev underscored this same dedication through the pursuit of a new policy: the abolition of taxes and wage reduction. The policy, Khrushchev made clear in his 1960 address to the Supreme Soviet, sought to raise the living standards of the entire citizenry:

Now this agenda is familiar to the whole world. The USSR Soviet of Ministers is submitting to the Supreme Soviet for consideration the draft of a Law on Abolishing Taxes on the Wages of Workers and Employees, as well as other measures aimed at raising the wellbeing (*blagosostoianiiia*) of the Soviet people. The second question concerns measures for completing the changeover of all workers and employees to a shorter working day in 1960. As you see, the day's agenda fully corresponds with spring fever and joy, [and] it reflects the concern of our party and government for the steady growth in wellbeing of the Soviet people, and once again convincingly corroborates the peace-loving character of the policy of the Soviet socialist state.⁸³

⁸¹ V. Nikolaev, "Nerushimoe edinstvo partii i naroda," *Izvestiia*, 28 June 1953, 2.

⁸² For one example of intolerance of failure, consider an editorial from later that year: "The Soviet people under the leadership of the communist party, has successfully achieved magnificent successes in building of communism... However, it must be admitted that in many places needed concern has not yet been given to satisfying material and cultural needs of Soviet people (*liudi*). It is known that the party and the government are doing everything to raise the supplies of foodstuffs and manufactured goods for the people sharply and to eliminate drawbacks in the quality of such goods. Yet certain party organizations, as, for example, the Irkutsk province party organization, do not attach necessary significance to these matters." Here, the editorial identified shortcomings in providing for the people; by shifting blame to peripheral organizations, it underscored the central party apparatus' dedication. "Zabota o blage sovetskikh liudei—vazhneishaia obiazannost' partiinykh organizatsii," *Pravda*, 3 September 1953, 1.

⁸³ "Ob otmene nalogov s rabochikh i sluzhashchikh i drugikh meropriiatiakh, napravlennykh na povyshenie blagosostoianiiia sovetskogo naroda: Doklad tovarishcha N.S. Khrushcheva na sessii Verkhovnogo Soveta," *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, 6 May 1960, 1–5; here 1. Kristy Ironside devotes a chapter of her dissertation to the discussion of tax abolition: "The Value of a Ruble: A Social History of Money in Postwar Soviet Russia, 1945–1964" (University of Chicago, 2014), 222–65.

The 1961 Party Program repeated the party's commitment to raising living standards.⁸⁴ Such formulations dominated political discourse, suggesting that the party sought to serve citizens. Rather than a pre-formulated, rigid patriotism expressed in correlation to defense of the state or the promotion of its ideology, dedication to improving material conditions conveyed a sense of a shared and equalized experience.

Perhaps the most obvious manifestation of this focus was a greater emphasis on the construction and distribution of housing. Although block housing has often been seen as emblematic of the low living standards and gray cityscapes of late socialism, the so-called Khrushchevki (or, more derisively, *khrushchoby*—the Khrushchev-slums) represented a massive improvement over the communal apartments that had dominated urban life since the revolution. These pre-fabricated, typically five-story complexes, intended to be temporary, suggested a new emphasis on increasing housing stock and improving the material conditions of Soviet living. Dmitri Shostakovich's operetta, *Cheremushki* (Cherry-Town, a district of Moscow named for the trees planted between housing units), adapted into an eponymous 1962 musical comedy film directed by Herbert Rappaport. The film immortalized the material promises of what one character called "the age of reinforced concrete," suggesting the hopes placed on the state's housing program. For many, the transition to the dull, gray housing blocks represented a dramatic leap forward in terms of quality of living.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ *Programma Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soiuza.*

⁸⁵ On post-Stalinist mass housing, see Mark B. Smith, *Property of Communists: The Urban Housing Program from Stalin to Khrushchev* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010); Harris, *Communism on Tomorrow Street*. For a visual analysis of housing design, see Philipp Meuser, Dimitrij Zadorin, and Clarice Knowles, *Towards a Typology of Soviet Mass Housing: Prefabrication in the USSR 1955–1991* (Berlin: DOM Publishers, 2015). Krisztina Fehérvári makes a similar argument concerning socialist Hungary in *Politics in Color and Concrete*. Beyond matters of housing, many have pointed to Khrushchev and Brezhnev-era consumption as evidence of the comparative prosperity of the era. See especially Susan E. Reid, "Cold War in the Kitchen: Gender and the De-Stalinization of Consumer Taste in the Soviet Union under Khrushchev," *Slavic Review* 61, no. 2 (2002): 211–52; Susan E. Reid, "This Is Tomorrow: Becoming a Consumer in the Soviet Sixties," in *The Socialist Sixties: Crossing*

This focus continued into the Brezhnev era. Public statements from leaders and in newspapers emphasized that improvements in living standards would be accomplished through collaboration between the state and people. A series of slogans for the anniversary of the October Revolution in 1964, just after Khrushchev's ouster, emphasized this cooperative undertaking: "The Party appeals to Soviet people (*liudi*) persistently to raise labor productivity, to struggle for improvement in the quality and reduction in the cost of products, to do everything possible to economize in the use of material resources."⁸⁶ Improvements in living conditions, the article continued, depended on scientific progress, foremost in the chemical industry, as "one of the decisive conditions... for a further rise in the wellbeing of the people."⁸⁷ Leaders emphasized policies that improved living standards for ordinary citizens, including higher minimum wages, expanding pensions, better housing, decreasing weekly working hours, and greater equality between rural and urban areas. Officials repeatedly stressed that "raising the wellbeing of the Soviet people" was its "most important task," which could be accomplished only through working with citizens.⁸⁸

Amir Weiner has interpreted this focus on living standards as part of the state's ongoing renegotiation of the revolutionary legacy. As the revolution entered its 50th year, he writes, "The regime could no longer conceal the visible strains between an ageing revolution and a leadership fighting to preserve their life achievements at home and abroad, and a rather confused generation simultaneously proud of their fathers' sacrifices...yet detached from the formative experiences

Borders in the Second World, ed. Anne E. Gorsuch and Diane Koenker (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 25–65; Lewis H. Siegelbaum, *Cars for Comrades: The Life of the Soviet Automobile* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008); Anna Ivanova, *Magaziny "Berezka": Paradoksy potrebleniya v pozdnem SSSR* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2017).

⁸⁶ "Prizvyv leninskoi partii," *Pravda*, 19 October 1964, 1.

⁸⁷ "Prizvyv leninskoi partii," *Pravda*, 19 October 1964, 1.

⁸⁸ For an example, see the Central Committee's 1966 address to citizens on the eve of elections, "Obrashchenie Tsentral'nogo Komiteta kommunisticheskoi partii ko vsem izbirateliam-rabochim i rabotnitsam, krest'ianam i krest'iankam, k sovetskoi intelligentsii, k voenam Sovetskoi Armii i Voenno-Morskogo Flota," *Pravda and Izvestiia*, 7 May 1966, 1–2. This echoed statements made by Khrushchev concerning the 1960 tax abolition.

of the founding fathers.” To relieve these strains, the regime provided “material improvement in exchange for unchallenged political and ideological hegemony.”⁸⁹ Weiner suggests this choice was primarily instrumental: a naked attempt for aging party elites to consolidate and maintain power. Yet the language used by elites, not only in public-facing conversations about rising living standards, but also amongst themselves—in closed party conversations, academic and party journals, and government documents—reflected a more robust conversation about the existence of the Soviet people, which contributed to the changing relationship between state and people. I propose that the interest in providing for ‘the people’ may not have been merely instrumental but may as much have been borne of a conviction of the populace’s importance. Newfound attention to the Soviet people as a topic of conversation among political and cultural elites hinted at an increased faith in the existence and significance of the Soviet people.

Elite Conversations: High Ideology and Academics on the Soviet People

In Stalin’s lifetime, discussions of the Soviet people had been primarily the realm of mobilizing patriotic discourse, aimed toward the general populace. As already seen in Chapter 1, the term burst onto the scene in the mid-1930s, but it was notably excluded from the 1936 Constitution and the Short Course. The term was also largely absent from internal ideological discussions, suggesting that its primary purpose was to promote patriotism among citizens. In the decades after Stalin’s death, the term expanded into the realm of “high ideology” and found a place within official party documents, in ideological discussions in literature intended for party

⁸⁹ Amir Weiner, “Robust Revolution to Retiring Revolution: The Life Cycle of the Soviet Revolution, 1945–1968,” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 86, no. 2 (2008): 230. His overarching argument is an updated and nuanced interpretation of what past scholars called the Brezhnev ‘Social Contract,’ see Linda J. Cook, “Brezhnev’s ‘Social Contract’ and Gorbachev’s Reforms,” *Soviet Studies* 44, no. 1 (1992): 37–56.

members, and among the academic establishment.⁹⁰ Although much of this work was technically available to the general public—at least those interested in following the latest ideological discussions—these discussions took place within an elite context. The new focus and proliferation of this material reflected confidence in the existence of the Soviet people at the highest levels of society.

The Soviet People in the 1961 Party Program and the 1977 Constitution

The 22nd Party Congress, convened in October 1961 and attended by over 4,000 delegates and representatives of communist parties abroad, marked the Soviet people's elevation to a concept enshrined in high ideology. Opening this massive congress at the Moscow Kremlin, Khrushchev took the podium to lay the framework for the next two weeks. His very long speech, comprising some 190 pages of text in its English translation, addressed three main topics: the situation in the world at large, the state of communist development in the USSR, and the role of the party. His opening discussion, however, notably developed the concept of the Soviet people. He identified citizens' shared past under socialism, their connection to the Communist Party, and their common destiny under communism: "The party and the entire Soviet people have exposed the intrigues of our enemies and have emerged from all trials with Honor. The Soviet Union is today stronger and more powerful than ever before!" Continuing, he emphasized their future under communism: "It has fallen to the lot of the Soviet people, of the Party of Communists of the Soviet Union to be pioneers in the great mission of communist construction and advance to the victory of communism over uncharged paths."⁹¹

⁹⁰ My distinction between mobilizing, populist "low" ideology, aimed at ordinary citizens, and "high ideology," aimed at political elites, is borrowed and adapted from David Brandenberger; see relevant discussions in *National Bolshevism; Propaganda State in Crisis*.

⁹¹ Nikita Khrushchev, *Documents of the XXII Party Congress*, vol. 1 (New York: Crosscurrents Press, 1961), 6.

Chief among the achievements of the 22nd Party Congress was the adoption of a new Program of the CPSU, replacing past programs produced in 1903 and 1919. Accordingly, the 1961 Program of the CPSU represented an important shift towards a more open record of the goals of the party and state apparatus.⁹² As a testament to the public nature of the program both within the Soviet Union and outside it, the text was submitted for publication just two days after the conclusion of the congress.⁹³ Two years later, the state also prepared an English-language edition for publication abroad with a special preface by Khrushchev.⁹⁴

The program reflected on the concept of the Soviet people in its introduction: “**The Party considers communist construction in the USSR as the great, international task of the Soviet people**, a task corresponding to the interests of the whole world socialist system and to the interests of the international proletariat, [and of] all humanity.”⁹⁵ The program was divided into two parts: the first detailed the development from capitalism to communism, and the second detailed the party’s tasks towards establishing a communist society. While the first part was more or less a standard Marxist-Leninist history of Soviet socialism, the second part suggested that the country had entered a new developmental epoch: the building of communism. The Soviet people was to play a major role in this transition.⁹⁶ The party—most passionately Khrushchev himself—emphasized the building of communism, a task that would unify citizens in their commitment to the state.⁹⁷

Alongside the new party program, Khrushchev also announced plans to draft a new constitution to replace the now-problematic one adopted under Stalin in 1936, during the cult of

⁹² For past programs, see KPSS, *Programmy i ustavy KPSS* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1969).

⁹³ *Programma Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soiuz*. The program was submitted for typesetting on November 2 and approved for printing on November 4.

⁹⁴ *Program of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, With a Special Preface to the American Edition by N.S. Khrushchev* (New York: International Publishers, 1963).

⁹⁵ *Programma Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soiuz*, 1961, 6. Emphasis in the original.

⁹⁶ *Programma Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soiuz*.

⁹⁷ *Programma Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soiuz*, 62. See also Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 508–28.

personality. A constitutional commission was formed to review the process of the preparation and discussion of the 1936 constitution, which was robustly criticized for the lack of serious input taken from citizens themselves, and to begin framing a new constitution. In archived reports, the commission noted that despite receiving many suggestions from citizens in 1936, the constitutional commission had introduced only minor editorial changes between the draft version and the final document.⁹⁸ In addition to writing a new constitution, the commission collected unsolicited letters from citizens, hundreds of whom wrote to offer their own suggestions, adjustments, and even alternative drafts for the constitution. This process, discussed below, was seen to be indicative of much more cooperation between the party, state, and citizens than had been the case in the 1930s. After Khrushchev's 1964 ouster, progress on the new constitution slowed, however, to be picked up again only in the 1970s.

Institutionalized constructions of the Soviet people developed further under Brezhnev's leadership. Ten years after the 22nd Party Congress, Brezhnev made a similar address at the 24th Party Congress in March 1971. Like Khrushchev's speech ten years earlier, Brezhnev's six-hour televised address outlined the party's political agenda for the coming five years. In what was perhaps the most developed understanding yet, Brezhnev spoke of the Soviet people as a "new historical, social, and international community of people having a common territory, economy, and socialist content; a culture that reflected the particularities of multiple nationalities; a federal state; and a common ultimate goal: the construction of communism."⁹⁹

The term also appeared prominently in the 1977 Soviet Constitution, adopted after an extensive public discussion of its contents. The preamble developed the characteristics of the emergent Soviet people, who were said to have granted the constitution its very legitimacy:

⁹⁸ GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 1, l. 20.

⁹⁹ Brezhnev, *Report of the CPSU Central Committee to the 24th Congress of the CPSU*.

The Soviet people,

- guided by the ideas of scientific communism and true to their revolutionary traditions,
 - relying on the great social, economic, and political gains of socialism,
 - striving for the further development of socialist democracy,
 - taking into account the international position of the USSR as part of the world system of socialism, and conscious of their internationalist responsibility,
 - preserving continuity of the ideas and principles of the first Soviet Constitution of 1918, the 1924 Constitution of the USSR and the 1936 Constitution of the USSR,
- hereby confirms the principles of the social order and policies of the USSR, establishes the rights, freedoms and obligations of citizens, [establishes] the principles of the organization and aims of the socialist all-people's (*obshchenarodnyi*) government, and proclaim these in the present Constitution.¹⁰⁰

By claiming legitimacy through citizens' approval, the government indicated its collaborative relationship with society, further demonstrated by the extensive discussion of the document.

Use of the phrase "Soviet people" in the constitution indicated a greater institutionalization and legal framework while endowing this "people" with more concrete attributes. Rather than invoking a vague concept, leaders identified the Soviet people by its common characteristics, implicitly echoing Stalin's definition of "nation." The Soviet people was now a "historic community" with a common past—forged in revolution, development, and war—that was moving towards a common future in communism. If Stalin defined the nation (*natsiia*) as a historic community that shared a language, territory, economic life, and culture/national character, there could be little doubt that the Soviet polity was progressively assuming these characteristics.¹⁰¹ Despite these obvious connections, leaders spoke of the people (*narod*) rather than a nation (*natsiia*), thereby avoiding association with what they saw as a temporary and bourgeois concept.

Engagement with the concept of the Soviet people within the party apparatus marked a

¹⁰⁰ Preamble to the 1977 Constitution, Preamble. A dual English-Russian version is available as *Konstitutsiia (Osnovnoi Zakon) Soiuza Sovetskikh Sotsialisticheskikh Respublik* (Pullman: Russian Language Specialties, 1977). The word "*obshchenarodnyi*" is derived from the word for common/shared (*obshchii*) and people (*narod*) and conveys a sense of the government being common or shared among all citizens of the country.

¹⁰¹ Stalin, *Marxism and the National and Colonial Question*.

departure from the more narrowly mobilizing invocations of the term under Stalin, suggesting a new prioritization of the concept within state and party circles. As leaders invoked the concept not only in their public appearances but behind the closed doors of party meetings, they hinted at a deeper conviction about the existence and the significance of the Soviet people. These conversations also carried over into contemporary academic writing.

From Popular Phrase to Theorized Concept: Scholarly Views on the Soviet People

As party documents and political elites placed new weight on the existence of the Soviet people, similar discussions unfolded in elite publications among scholars and leading ideologues. Theoretical and academic literature on the nature and existence of the Soviet people proliferated throughout the 1960s, '70s, and '80s. Those specializing in the history and nature of the Soviet people were a diverse and interdisciplinary group of historians, ethnographers, sociologists, and demographers based both in Moscow and across the Soviet Union. Together, they offered new evidence about the emergence of the Soviet people, providing the raw material that enabled political leaders to make sweeping statements about progress in the apparently resolved “national question.” While emphasizing diversity, scholars pointed to the commonalities that united many peoples into a single Soviet people.

Under Khrushchev, scholarship on the Soviet people tended towards the general. G. I. Ivanov's 120-page pamphlet, *The Soviet People—Builder of Communism* (1954), offered little more than platitudes about the rise of the Soviet people and its deep connection to the party. The book offered a cursory overview of Soviet history, from the revolution, through the building of socialism to the present, as the Soviet people continued the work of building a communist society, all under party leadership. Since de-Stalinization was not yet underway, the book noted

both Lenin and Stalin's leadership. Other than a shared history since the revolution, the book offered little development of the idea of the Soviet people except as subjects of the Soviet state.¹⁰² Ivan Shkadarevich's *The Soviet People: Creator of a New Life* (1958) similarly avoided deep engagement with the concept. His work, devoid of references to Stalin, focused on the Soviet Union's unprecedented industrial and agricultural development and the leadership's focus on rising living standards. The party's focus on improving citizens' quality of life, Shkadarevich argued, distinguished it from its bourgeois rivals, as the country presented to the world an example of peace, equality, and friendship.¹⁰³ *Kommunist*, the party's leading ideological journal also discussed the concept more routinely in the late 1950s.¹⁰⁴

The 1961 Party Congress, at which Khrushchev extensively discussed the Soviet people ahead of the approval of the 1961 Party Program, marked a new phase of public engagement with the concept of the Soviet people. The scholar of philosophy Ivan Tsamerian hailed the congress and Khrushchev's speech for ushering in a "new phase in the development of ethnic relations in the USSR." Economic, political, and cultural development, he noted, had drawn the various Soviet peoples ever closer together, forging a new historic community, as outlined in the program. With guaranteed equality, the growth of economic and cultural connections, use of the Russian language, citizens grew ever closer. "In all Soviet people (*liudi*) of all nationalities," he wrote, "shared characteristics are taking shape, like deep conviction and loyalty to the ideas of communism and his or her socialist Motherland, an uncompromising attitude and intolerance to all forms of social and national oppression, internationalism and respect for the national feelings

¹⁰² G. I. Ivanov, *Sovetskii narod—stroitel' kommunizma* (Leningrad: Leningradskoe gazetno-zhurnal'noe izdatel'stvo, 1954).

¹⁰³ Ivan Iosifovich Shkadarevich, *Sovetskii narod—tvorets novoi zhizni* (Minsk: Gos. izd-vo BSSR, 1958). A similar, but not quite academic perspective, can be seen in Kazakh folk singer Jalgasbai Aralbaev's *Sovet halqy: Kommynizm ornatyda sheshyshi kúsh* (Almaty: Qazaq memleket baspasy, 1960). Aralbaev devotes far more theoretical attention to the idea of the Soviet people as a "people" (*halq*).

¹⁰⁴ Aktürk, *Regimes of Ethnicity and Nationhood in Germany, Russia, and Turkey*, 206.

of all peoples, peacefulness and hatred towards militarism, a feeling of collectivism and comradeship, etc.” These values established the Soviet people as a new historic community.¹⁰⁵

Tsamerian’s writing reflected the emerging consensus among scholars about a three-phase sequence for the development of national cultures, with distinct but overlapping stages. This process of development, scholars held, distinguished the Soviet Union from its predecessors and contemporaries, offering a unique course of development that shared much in common with what Francine Hirsch has termed “state sponsored evolutionism.”¹⁰⁶ In the first phase, *rastsvet* (development or flourishing), individual nations or ethnicities would flourish under socialism, a process that was economic, political, and cultural. As this process unfolded across the country and within every ethnic group, it paved the way for the second phase: the *sblizhenie* (coming together, or getting closer) of Soviet nations (*natsii*) and ethnicities. The economic, political, and cultural development of each nation, which happened in tandem across ethnic boundaries, would bring them ever closer together. This in turn ensured the growth of common characteristics and values amongst peoples, slowly bringing into existence the final phase of national development, the *sliianie* (fusing) of peoples. Although scholars generally held that this final stage would be years in the making and remained largely theoretical at present, many nevertheless looked for signs that the process was already underway.

General thinking about these three phases was not new: Lenin wrote of the drawing together and fusing of nations as early as 1916.¹⁰⁷ By the 1960s and ‘70s, however, scholarly communities devoted newfound attention to these developmental stages, often specializing or

¹⁰⁵ I.P. Tsamerian, *Novyi etap v razviti natsional’nykh otnoshenii v SSSR* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1962), here 55. By the 1980s, Tsamerian was a senior associate at the Institute of Philosophy at the Academy of Sciences.

¹⁰⁶ Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, 7. Hirsch writes more generally of a “double assimilation,” whereby citizens were fused into ethnic groups, which were in turn fused into Soviet identities more broadly. This differs slightly from the process as outlined by Soviet scholars in the 1960s, ‘70s, and ‘80s. Soviet scholars focused not on the assimilation of individuals but about the phases of development of ethnic groups and nations.

¹⁰⁷ On Lenin’s use of the term, see Tsamerian, *Natsii i natsional’nye otnosheniia v razvitoi sotsialisticheskoi obshchestve*, 178–79; M.I. Kulichenko, *Natsiia i sotsial’nyi progress* (Moscow: Nauka, 1983), 270–72.

focusing on one phase or another in their work. Those focusing on the *rastsvet*, or flourishing, of peoples, pointed to the state's broad agenda of promoting and developing its minorities, often with reference to local conditions. Typical of this trend was Mykhailo (Mikhail) Kulichenko and Valentyn Malanchuk's 1971 work on the "national question" in Ukraine, which traced the political, economic, and cultural development of Ukraine under Soviet rule.¹⁰⁸ Numerous more general studies, including Kulichenko's later work, offered similar perspectives on the Soviet Union's developmental benefits for ethnic minorities across the country.¹⁰⁹ Writing on *sblizhenie* often emphasized the simultaneity of development across the country. With analogous structures of political power, economic growth, and cultural expression, nations and peoples within the Soviet Union took on common characteristics, leading to the rise of a more common Soviet culture that unified all citizens. Importantly, this would not mark the end of national, ethnic, or linguistic difference. Rather, nations achieved higher levels of development in tandem with one another, drawing them closer to one another as their cultures rose to new heights.¹¹⁰ The idea of *sblizhenie* was thus a new articulation of the simultaneous unity and diversity of the Soviet people.

Least discussed was the final phase, the eventual fusing of nations that would occur only under communism. To the extent that most writers discussed the eventual *sliianie* of nations at all, it was generally in the abstract, about a distant future far from the present. As Kulichenko

¹⁰⁸ M. I. Kulichenko and V. Malanchuk, *V. I. Lenin i rozv'iazannia natsional'noho pytannia na Ukraini* (Kyiv: Polityvdav Ukrainy, 1971). Kulichenko's earlier work focused on the revolutionary movement in Kharkiv oblast, see M. I. Kulichenko, *V.I. Lenin i Khar'kovskaia bol'shevistskaia organizatsiia, 1895–1917 gg* (Kharkiv: Khar'kovskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1963). For a similar view on Soviet development and ideas of "rastsvet"/flourishing in Azerbaijan, see F. Kocharli and A.F. Dashdamirov, eds., *Sovetskii narod i dialektika natsional'nogo razvitiia* (Baku: Elm, 1972).

¹⁰⁹ E.g. Institut marksizma-leninizma, *Mnogonatsional'noe Sovetskoe gosudarstvo* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1972); M.I. Kulichenko, *Rastsvet i sblizhenie natsii v SSSR: problemy teorii i metodologii* (Moscow: Mysl', 1981); Kulichenko, *Natsiia i sotsial'nyi progress*.

¹¹⁰ See especially Kulichenko, *Rastsvet i sblizhenie natsii v SSSR*, 307–83; Kulichenko, *Natsiia i sotsial'nyi progress*, 269–313.

noted, this future national/ethnic fusing extended beyond Soviet borders; it would encompass the entire world under communism. Visions of what this global communist society might look like consequently remained vague and unresolved. Indeed, as Kulichenko admitted, there was some chance that diversity in language and culture would remain. Noting that communism itself helped nations flourish and develop, this “ostensibly shows the ‘obvious illegitimacy’ of the opinion that all nations, national languages, and forms of culture would disappear with the final victory of communism on a global scale.”¹¹¹ Suggesting a slightly different view, Tsamerian bristled at the idea that *sliianie* denoted cultural assimilation. Instead, he clarified that the eventual *sliianie* would not mean the averaging out of national characteristics but would rather be the sum total of their complete and all-sided development. Although this would mean a slow disappearance of some ethnicities (*narodnosti*) and the emergence of a common language (not necessarily an exclusive one), *sliianie* would not necessarily entail a complete disappearance of national characteristics, except perhaps in a very distant future.¹¹²

Conferences and edited volumes contributed to understandings of the Soviet people as a historic community, as scholars collectively considered the origins and history of Soviet citizens as a unified body politic. At a large conference in Volgograd in October 1969, more than 300 scholars, primarily from local state, party, and educational institutions but with representation from 11 different republics, offered varying perspectives on the theoretical foundations, history, socio-economic development, and moral and political unity of citizens.¹¹³ Another volume, collectively written at the Institute of History at the Academy of the Sciences of the USSR and edited by the historian Maksim Kim, offered a theoretical and historical overview of the

¹¹¹ Kulichenko, *Natsiia i sotsial'nyi progress*, 303.

¹¹² Tsamerian, *Natsii i natsional'nye otnosheniia v razvitom sotsialisticheskom obshchestve*, 178–82.

¹¹³ P.M. Rogachev, ed., *Sovetskii narod—novaia istoricheskaia obshchnost' liudei: Trudy mezhvuzovskoi nauchnoi konferentsii* (Volgograd: Volgogradskaia Pravda, 1969).

processes that had brought the Soviet people into existence, with chapters that traced the history of the Soviet people from the revolution through the Great Patriotic War into the current era of developed socialism and constructing communism. Additional chapters considered the “spiritual profile” (*dukhovnyi oblik*) of the Soviet people, the development of “all-Soviet characteristics in the cultures of peoples of the USSR,” and the role of national and Russian languages in Soviet society.¹¹⁴ These and other works offered historical perspective on the Soviet people as a community that had come into being as a result of the combined processes of state policies and individual and collective experiences.¹¹⁵

While historians and political theorists looked to the past to understand the creation and emergence of the Soviet people, ethnographers, sociologists, and demographers looked at ongoing processes that pointed to the existence of the Soviet people. Perhaps most prominent was Iulian Bromlei, an ethnographer based at the Academy of Sciences, whose theoretical writings on the concept of “ethnos” (*etnos*, essentially ethnicity) brought renewed attention to the study of ethnicity and “ethnic processes” among Soviet ethnographers in the 1970s and ‘80s.¹¹⁶ Relying on a mix of ethnography in the field and comparative and historical statistical analysis, scholars offered perspectives of changing habits and ethnic identification within the Soviet Union. In their view, these pointed to the growth of shared traits and characteristics that

¹¹⁴ Kim, *Sovetskii narod—novaia istoricheskaia obshchnost' liudei*.

¹¹⁵ For additional contemporary perspectives on the history of the Soviet people, see I.P. Tsamerian, *Teoreticheskie problemy obrazovaniia i razvitiia sovetskogo mnogonatsional'nogo gosudarstva* (Moscow: Nauka, 1973); K.K. Karakeev and Ts.A. Stepanian, eds., *Sovetskii narod: stroitel' kommunizma*, 2 vols. (Frunze: Kyrgyzstan, 1977); Kulichenko, *Razvitie sovetskogo naroda*; M. I. Kulichenko, *Obrazovanie i razvitie Soiuza SSR* (Erevan: Aiastan, 1982); Maksim Kim, ed., *Rodina Sovetskaia: 1917–1987*, Fifth Edition (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1987). Kim's volume first appeared in 1954. On World War II specifically, see also Z.V. Oliinyk, O.L. Rybalko, and N.O. Shvedova, eds., *Velykiy podvuh: KPSS-natkhennyyk i orhanizator borot'by radians'koho narodu proty fashysts'kykh zaharbnykiv u roky Velykoi Vitchyznianoii viiny 1941–1945 rr. (na materialakh URSS)* (Kyiv: Vyscha shkola, 1975).

¹¹⁶ See Iu. V. Bromlei, *Etnos i etnografiia* (Moscow: Nauka, 1973); Iu. V. Bromlei, *Ocherki teorii etnosa* (Moscow: Nauka, 1983). On Bromlei's impact, see Ernest Gellner, “Ethnicity and Anthropology in the Soviet Union,” *European Journal of Sociology / Archives Européennes de Sociologie / Europäisches Archiv für Soziologie* 18, no. 2 (1977): 201–20.

demonstrated unity among citizens.¹¹⁷

Chief among the indicators of the emergence of the Soviet people was the high incidence of interethnic marriage. As Adrienne Edgar notes, the state historically viewed interethnic marriage as just such a sign of the emergence of the Soviet people. In the 1930s, the party saw interethnic marriage as a tool for hastening the formation of the Soviet people. By the 1960s and '70s, literature on the topic proliferated, as official ideology and popular literature "touted mixed marriages as proof of the success of Soviet nationality policy and a harbinger of the consolidation of an overarching Soviet identity."¹¹⁸ Scholars of the 1970s and '80s believed that high levels of interethnic marriage reflected the greater equality between both men and women and people of different ethnicities. As citizens lived within multiethnic communities (foremost in cities) and shared a common language (generally Russian), the conditions were favorable for interethnic marriage. Writing in the 1960s, Antatolii Kharchev observed especially high levels of interethnic marriages in Tashkent, Samarkand, and Leningrad and posited that these were a "circumstantial indicator" of significant changes in family relations. "With the elimination of racial, ethnic, and class inequalities," he concluded, "the range in the choice of a future spouse has broadened considerably. The bridging of gaps of education and culture between the urban and rural populations and between the intelligentsia and the worker-peasant masses has an effect in the same direction."¹¹⁹

L.N. Terent'eva linked interethnic marriage and the *sblizhenie* (drawing closer) of peoples in a 1975 book on ethnic processes in the Soviet Union: "In the USSR, the development

¹¹⁷ On emergent "ethnic processes," see Iulian Bromlei, ed., *Sovremennye etnicheskie protsessy v SSSR* (Moscow: Nauka, 1975).

¹¹⁸ Edgar, "Marriage, Modernity, and the 'Friendship of Nations,'" 583. Cf. Brian D. Silver, "Ethnic Inter-marriage and Ethnic Consciousness among Soviet Nationalities," *Soviet Studies* 30, no. 1 (1978): 107–16.

¹¹⁹ A. G. Kharchev, *Brak i sem'ia v SSSR: opyt sotsiologicheskogo issledovaniia* (Moscow: Mysl', 1964), 195–96. Kharchev also pointed to higher marriage ages and changing expectations about the nature and purpose of marriage, especially in Central Asia and the Caucasus, as evidence of a Soviet way of life, see 175–192.

of mutual interethnic relations is on the path towards ever greater *sblizhenie* of peoples—a long and complicated process. To a certain extent, this process is reflected in the growth in the number of interethnic marriages resulting from the expansion of objective possibilities for interethnic contacts.”¹²⁰ Census statistics, Terent’eva observed, suggested a total growth in interethnic marriages, up from 10.2 percent of all families in 1959 to 14 percent in 1970. In some republics, including Latvia, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine, and in most large cities, interethnic marriages were even more common. After outlining major trends in cities and communities, she concluded that interethnic marriage played a largely positive role in the *sblizhenie* of peoples and strengthened interethnic contacts. Urbanization and greater mobility, she finished, would only continue this trend.¹²¹ Iulian Bromlei, who wrote extensively about endogamy, interpreted high levels of interethnic marriage as an indication that groups were growing closer.¹²²

Alongside interethnic marriage, scholars pointed to language habits as further proof of the existence of the Soviet people, focusing on patterns in both Russian and native language use. Higher Russian proficiency across the country, as we will see in Chapter 5, was seen to reflect the ties that bound citizens together. A new census question in 1970 asked citizens about Russian proficiency. Rising fluency, as demonstrated by comparison of the 1970 and 1979 censuses, was interpreted as an unambiguously positive development. As one book noted, Russian proficiency among non-Russians “broadens the sphere of integration processes. It demonstrates, in part, that the non-Russian population not only studies Russian, but reads Russian language newspapers, books, journals, listens to radio and watches television, wants to educate their children in

¹²⁰ Bromlei, *Sovremennye etnicheskie protsessy v SSSR*, 463. L.N. Terent’eva is identified as the author in the index.

¹²¹ Bromlei, 480. For later discussion of the same phenomena, see also Iu. V. Arutiunian and Iu. V. Bromlei, eds., *Sotsial’no-kul’turnyi oblik sovetskikh natsii: po rezul’tatam etnosotsiologicheskogo issledovaniia* (Moscow: Nauka, 1986), 152–73.

¹²² See for example Bromlei, *Ocherki teorii etnosa*, 200–211. His initial writings on endogamy dated to the 1960s. For an English translation of a 1970 discussion of his work on endogamy within the Institute of Ethnography in Moscow, see “Discussion of Iu. V. Bromlei’s Article ‘Ethnos and Endogamy,’” *Soviet Anthropology and Archeology* 13, no. 2 (October 1974): 78–127.

Russian schools, etc.” Interactions between people of different ethnicities, the book continued, would be “unthinkable without the language of interethnic communication.”¹²³

Native languages, too, were widely seen to contribute to the ongoing *sblizhenie* of Soviet peoples. Like historians, ethnographers and demographers believed the state’s prioritization of native languages had helped to raise the culture of non-Russian peoples, a precondition to their integration into the Soviet people. Literacy, education, and national presses paved the way for participation in civic life for all citizens.¹²⁴ Bilingualism, foremost dual fluency in a native language and Russian, became the subject of serious academic inquiry throughout the 1970s and ‘80s, as scholars sought to understand the mechanisms, impact, and significance of dual-language proficiency.¹²⁵ As one book noted,

Improving social relations presupposes the long-term expansion of communication between ethnicities of the USSR. Therefore, the propaganda of national-Russian bilingualism, systematic study of modern ethno-linguistic processes, and the analysis and clarification of the significance and social importance of national-Russian bilingualism in the long-term strengthening of the multicultural (*internatsional’nyi*) unity of the Soviet people emerge as important tasks of ideological and educational work.¹²⁶

Recognizing the social importance of bilingualism, many scholars called for continued attention to developing and encouraging dual language proficiency among ethnic minorities across the country, another reminder of the perceived compatibility of ethnic and Soviet identities.

¹²³ Arutiunian and Bromlei, *Sotsial’no-kul’turnyi oblik sovetskikh natsii*, 335–36. On use of Russian as described by ethnographers, statisticians, and demographers, see also Bromlei, *Sovremennye etnicheskie protsessy v SSSR*, 293–313. Historians, too, wrote broadly about the role of Russian, e.g. Kim, *Sovetskii narod—novaia istoricheskaia obshchnost’ liudei*, 459–66; Kulichenko, *Rastsvet i sblizhenie natsii v SSSR*, 204–25.

¹²⁴ E.g. Bromlei, *Sovremennye etnicheskie protsessy v SSSR*, 260–90; Arutiunian and Bromlei, *Sotsial’no-kul’turnyi oblik sovetskikh natsii*, 296–306.

¹²⁵ For studies of bilingualism, see A. N. Baskakov and V. Iu. Mikhal’chenko, eds., *Metody bilingvisticheskikh issledovaniï* (Moscow: Akademiia Nauk SSSR, 1976); Iunus Desherievich Desheriev, ed., *Razvitie natsional’no-russkogo dvuiazychiia* (Moscow: Nauka, 1976); M. N. Guboglo, *Sovremennye etnoiazykovye protsessy v SSSR: osnovnye faktory i tendentsii razvitiia natsional’no-russkogo dvuiazychiia* (Moscow: Nauka, 1984); N. G. Mikhailovskaia, ed., *Kul’tura russkoi rechi v usloviakh natsional’no-russkogo dvuiazychiia: problemy leksiki* (Moscow: Nauka, 1985); Lidiia Ivanovna Barannikova, *Vzaimodeistvie iazykov i problemy ego izucheniiia: sbornik nauchnykh trudov* (Elista: Kalmytskii gos. universitet, 1985); G. D. Basova and T. K. Chertorizhskaia, eds., *Ukrainsko-russkoe dvuiazychie: sotsiologicheskii aspekt* (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1988); M. M. Mikhailov, *Dvuiazychie: Problemy, Poiski* (Cheboksary: Chuvashskoe knizhnoe izdatel’stvo, 1989).

¹²⁶ Arutiunian and Bromlei, *Sotsial’no-kul’turnyi oblik sovetskikh natsii*, 305.

Finally, many scholars identified the traits and practices that unified citizens into a common, shared culture, often described as shared “spiritual culture.” Using a combination of statistics and more general observations, scholars pointed to common cultural forms, including shared holidays, rising education levels, cultural institutions, and other traits. On the basis of ethnographic research, scholars described the multiplicity of these forms, which differed across ethnic communities, geographic communities, and even generational divides, as well as the ways that ethnic and regional cultures contributed to an all-encompassing, multiethnic Soviet culture.¹²⁷ As we will see in Chapter 4, new rituals for marking citizens’ life milestones from birth to death exemplified the complementary nature of ethnic and civic identities. Under Khrushchev and Brezhnev, new rituals, developed primarily at the republic level, drew heavily from ethnic and regional traditions while confirming citizens’ civic belonging.¹²⁸

Scholars like Maksim Kim, Mykhailo Kulichenko, Iulian Bromlei, and others generally wrote for a scholarly audience within the Soviet Union, but their work was also influenced by and contributed to Cold War conversations. Many scholarly works paid more than passing reference to the supposedly dangerous ideas circulating abroad, often with specific reference to scholars like Richard Pipes, Theresa Rakowska-Harmstone, Leonard Shapiro, and others. They saw their own work as an opportunity to correct the record.¹²⁹

To expand the reach of this effort, the state put considerable resources and energy into translating, publishing, and distributing a selection of scholarly work abroad. These works

¹²⁷ Bromlei, *Sovremennye etnicheskie protsessy v SSSR*, 314–429; Arutiunian and Bromlei, *Sotsial’no-kul’turnyi oblik sovetskikh natsii*, 180–295.

¹²⁸ Arutiunian and Bromlei, *Sotsial’no-kul’turnyi oblik sovetskikh natsii*, 265–95.

¹²⁹ E.g. V. F. Biakov and V. M. Samofladov, *Peredovyi zahin radians’koho narodu: XXIII z’izd KPRS pro zrostannia kerivnoi roli partii v komunistychnomu budivnytstvi* (Kyiv: Vydavnytstvo politychnoi literatury Ukrainy, 1966), 42–44; Rogachev, *Sovetskii narod*, 16–17, 33–38; T. N. Salohiddinov, *Sovet xalqi—kishilarning yangi tarixii birligi* (Tashkent: O’zbekiston, 1973), 31–32; Tsamerian, *Teoreticheskie problemy obrazovaniia i razvitiia sovetskogo mnogonatsional’nogo gosudarstva*, 13–14; E.A. Bagramov, *Leninskaia natsional’naia politika: dostizheniia i perspektivy* (Moscow: Mysl’, 1977), 173–74, 199–200, 212–28. Other scholars frequently cited include B. Meissner, Alexandre Bennigsen, H el ene Carr ere d’Encausse, Hugh Seton-Watson, and others.

exposed false representations of Soviet nationalities policy and described the “real” nature of interethnic relations and Soviet identity. As the official description of Eduard Bagramov’s *The CPSU’s Nationalities Policy: Truth and Lies* (1988) noted, “Mountains of lies have been created in the West on the state of the nationalities question in the USSR.” Noting Western scholars’ (deceptive) emphasis on forced Russification and the suppression of ethnic minorities’ civil rights, the book bemoaned the woeful state of academic knowledge on the Soviet Union: “it is almost unlikely that one could find any serious works in the West which are devoted to a scientific analysis of the formation of a new historical community of people known as the Soviet people.”¹³⁰ He and others sought to show, in the words of a translated Kulichenko book, “how the USSR solved the nationalities question,” offering rose-colored views of Soviet policies toward ethnic minorities for a foreign audience.¹³¹

In addition to publishing translated versions abroad, scholars also regularly published their findings in the central press. These adapted and accessible articles ensured that the public could access the latest historical, ideological, and sociological research on the nature of Soviet identity and understandings of the Soviet people.¹³² By positioning themselves as quasi-public intellectuals, the scholarly elite could reach an audience that extended beyond the more limited

¹³⁰ E.A. Bagramov, *The CPSU’s Nationalities Policy: Truth and Lies* (Moscow: Progress, 1988), 2.

¹³¹ Mikhail Kulichenko, *How the USSR Solved the Nationalities Question* (Moscow: Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, 1974). For additional examples, see Maxim Kim, *The Soviet People, a New Historical Community* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974); M. P. Kim, ed., *Triumph of the Leninist Ideas of Proletarian Internationalism: Based on Material from the Central Asian Republics and Kazakhstan, 1917–1978*, trans. Semyon Sheiman (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1979); Nikolai Tarasenko, *The United Soviet People* (Moscow: Progress, 1978); Eduard Bagramov, *One Hundred Nationalities—One People: The True Story of the Russian Revolution and the Building of Socialism* (Moscow: Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, 1982).

¹³² Kyrgyz writer Chingiz Aitmatov, for example, reflected on the Soviet people, the meaning and importance of the “friendship of the peoples,” and the ongoing importance of ethnic identities in a 1972 piece: “Mera zhizni—mera vremeni,” *Izvestiia*, 29 December 1972, 2. Dagestani writer Rasul Gamzatov offered similar opinions in “Dumy o Rodine,” *Izvestiia*, 21 March 1981, 3. Leading scholars on Soviet rituals N. Andrianov and A. Belov published a short article on Soviet rituals in *Pravda* in 1976: “Sovetskomu cheloveku—novye obriady,” *Pravda*, 28 May 1976, 3. Eduard Bagramov, too, offered a long reflection on “ethnic relations and the battle of ideas,” in which he discussed both western falsifications of history and reflected on both the nature of ethnic relations in the Soviet Union and the growth of common culture in the Soviet Union, see “Natsional’nye otnosheniia i bor’ba idei,” *Pravda*, 26 July 1979, 4–5.

confines of their dry, academic work. Many citizens were self-evidently aware of leading thought and changing statistics in matters of identity and society, suggesting broad participation in the ongoing conversation about the nature of Soviet identity.

The ‘People’ Speaks: Letter Writing and Self-Identification in Late Socialism

As elites in the party, state, and academia considered the emergence of the Soviet people as a real, existing community, citizens drew similar conclusions based on their own observations and experiences of the world around them. As we have already seen, the state encouraged letter writing as a means of expressing both discontent and loyalty from the Soviet Union’s very inception.¹³³ Letter writing, a key component of the discussions of the 1936 Constitution, also served as a key form of civic engagement under Khrushchev and Brezhnev. As before, letters offered an opportunity for citizens to reflect on their own identities and the future of the state. Although there has been a tendency among scholars of Soviet history to deemphasize or dismiss these letters, many Soviet citizens clearly saw the ritual of letter writing as an integral part of loyal, engaged citizenship. Here, I focus specifically on letters written in connection with the 1977 Constitution, a process that began in 1962 when Khrushchev first announced plans to replace the 1936 Constitution.

In contrast to the 1936 discussions, letter writers who addressed plans for a new constitution in the 1960s and ‘70s did not respond specifically to a proposed draft (though some commented on the existing version), and many took considerable liberty in exploring new possibilities and ideas. Several even prepared alternative constitutions, some more than a hundred pages long, suggesting a deep engagement with and commitment to the state and its

¹³³ Fitzpatrick, “Suplicants and Citizens.”

ideology.¹³⁴ Letters themselves expressed a range of opinions that touched upon all aspects of the existing constitution and their hopes for the future one and reflected on nearly every facet of life.

Although a full discussion of the range of opinions is beyond the scope of this chapter, citizens responded with particular fervor on matters relating to the symbolism and structure of the state. Multiple letters, for example, proposed new flags, seals, and other state symbols, complaining that the hammer and sickle was a poor representation of the modern state in which they lived. Some even included hand-sewn or drawn examples of improvements, including one that proposed adding a satellite to the state seal.¹³⁵ Several offered updated versions of the national anthem, noting specifically the current text's problematic connection to Stalin.¹³⁶ Many explicitly referenced problems associated with the cult of personality and pondered new ways for society to move forward. Others even suggested that the country was now ready for competitive elections, justified, as one letter noted, by the fact that nearly everyone supported the communist party platform. Others believed competitive elections might encourage closer connection with

¹³⁴ GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 308, l. 27; GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 308, ll. 22–25; GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 340, ll. 48–118; GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 343, ll. 43–115; GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 355, ll. 36–127; GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 361, ll. 42–149; GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 362, ll. 3–65.

¹³⁵ I. Galin noted, “The state seal should be the best reminder of a new era—the era of the capturing of the cosmos which began in our country,” and proposed adding a satellite above the earth on the existing seal, see GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 332, l. 85. N. Besportsov similarly suggested the inclusion of a space ship on the flag, see GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 313, l. 31. Flag suggestions were especially common. I. Nesis of Baku proposed a flag with three horizontal stripes in red-blue-red, with 15 gold stars across the blue stripes to represent the 15 republics, and enclosed a hand-sewn example, GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 340, ll. 150–152. Andrei. B. and Anatolii M. of Tula made a similar suggestion to represent the republics with stars the previous year, see GARF 7523, o. 131, d. 332, ll. 20–21. Georgii Z., of Chita, also proposed changes to the flag, also with fifteen stars for republics and with a hand-sewn exemplar enclosed, see GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 357, ll. 117–118. Vasilii K. of Makhachkala proposed that the sickle was especially out of date and proposed replacing it with a combine or other more modern farm equipment, see GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 314, l. 24. Proposals for representing all union republics with stars were especially popular. E. Makhonov, a pensioner from Baku, wanted the middle of the flag to feature the seal of the USSR, and rubbed a ruble coin to put the seal onto his hand-drawn version, GARF., f. 7523, o. 131, d. 356, l. 38. Fedorov, of Orla, suggested the new seal should include the Lenin quote, “Communism is Soviet power plus the electrification of the entire country,” see GARF 7523, o. 131, d 322, l. 16.

¹³⁶ E.g. GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 317, l. 13; GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 332, l. 131; GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 356, ll. 54–59; GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 357, ll. 67–69.

voters.¹³⁷ The breadth of letter content confirms recent scholarly discussions that emphasize the range of opinion and engagement with ideology in the late Soviet period, particularly in the wake of de-Stalinization.¹³⁸

Letters concerning nationalities policy—including territorial delineation, language use, and how and when to use ethnicity—featured especially prominently among the hundreds of letters received between 1962 and 1977.¹³⁹ At least three dozen of these letters, my focus here, rejected ethnic categorization and proposed the elimination of passport ethnicity with an outspokenness that suggested a deep sense of civic identity.¹⁴⁰ Citizens actively engaged with ideology and existing conditions to express ambivalence about ascribed ethnicities, both their own and in general, and to articulate commitment to the state. Their words belie the assertion that Soviet identity was simply a “figure of speech” or an empty, meaningless category. In proclaiming the primacy of their Soviet identities, citizens suggested the affective pull of Soviet citizenship and the state’s success in cultivating civic identity.

¹³⁷ One report, for example, highlighted a range of opinions expressed in letters from 1963 alone, see GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 312, ll. 11–29, with citations from many different letters. As one letter writer from Moscow noted (ll. 18–20), “The elections of one deputy from two candidates will be interpreted by the people (*narod*) as an act of trust,” while also ensuring that deputies would be more connected and responsive to their constituents.

¹³⁸ E.g. Benjamin Tromly, “Soviet Patriotism and Its Discontents among Higher Education Students in Khrushchev-Era Russia and Ukraine,” *Nationalities Papers* 37, no. 3 (2009): 299–326; Benjamin Nathans, “Soviet Rights-Talk in the Post-Stalin Era,” in *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 166–90; Wojnowski, “De-Stalinization and Soviet Patriotism”; Kozlov, *The Readers of Novyi Mir*.

¹³⁹ GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 306, ll. 126–127; GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 308, l. 59; GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 309, l. 50. These numbers do not include the tens of thousands of letters responding to the published draft of the constitution in 1977, which tended to offer more formulaic approval and small criticisms.

¹⁴⁰ Letters were identified by reviewing files of collected letters and from references to these letters in compiled reports on their contents, available in GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, dd. 305–368. As described in the introduction, internal passports, carried by all urban residents beginning in 1932 and extending to all citizens in 1974, served as the primary document of identification in the Soviet Union, and testified both to people’s status as citizens and to their ethnicities. On the system as a whole, see especially Zaslavsky and Luryi, “The Passport System in the USSR and Changes in Soviet Society”; Baiburin, *Sovetskii pasport*.

Letter Writing after Stalin

Two major all-union discussions took place under Khrushchev and Brezhnev, the first in connection with the Party Program in 1961, and the second in connection with the 1977 constitution. Reflecting the more collaborative relationship between the state and its citizens and in contrast to 1936, drafts of both the 1961 Party Program and the 1977 Constitution differed noticeably from adopted versions, suggesting that leaders took formalized discussion of these documents more seriously (or at least needed to demonstrate that they did).¹⁴¹ Because only summaries of the letters for the 1961 program seem to have been preserved, here I focus on the discussion of what would eventually become the 1977 Constitution.

Discussions of the 1977 Constitution began in 1962, when Khrushchev announced plans to draft a new constitution. A constitutional commission was formed with working groups to discuss thematic aspects of the planned constitution. This commission also collected letters from citizens and prepared regular summaries of their contents and general trends for Khrushchev. Although active work on the constitution was largely halted following Khrushchev's 1964 removal, citizens continued to write letters, which were detailed in routine reports to Brezhnev. The thousands of preserved letters collected between 1962 and 1977 offer critical insight into how people made sense of the messages they received. Those who wrote prior to the formal discussion of the draft Constitution were, of course, a self-selecting, motivated group of citizens. Among their themes of choice, petitions to remove passport ethnicity were a persistent and

¹⁴¹ GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 1, l. 20. Leaders blamed this lack of engagement with citizens' letters and the all-union discussion on Stalin's cult of personality. On the 1961 Party Program, see Hoover Institution Archives, Reel 2.52, especially "Naibolee vazhnye dopolneniia i izmeneniia po tekstu proekta Programmy KPSS," 22 September 1961 (original in RGASPI, f. 586, o. 1, d. 302, ll. 46–61), and "Naibolee vazhnye dopolneniia i izmeneniia po tekstu proekta Programmy KPSS," 23 September 1961 (RGASPI, f. 586, o. 1, d. 302, ll. 62–78). For some of the earlier drafts of what would eventually be the 1977 Constitution, see RGANI, f. 5, o. 30, d. 385, ll. 22–100; RGANI, f. 5, o. 30, dd. 441 and 442.

repeated trend across the 1960s and '70s.¹⁴² Many letter writers noted their belief that many shared their opinion and theorized the elimination of passport ethnicity would be popular. Although it would be impossible to judge to what extent this was true, letters nevertheless offer valuable insight into how individuals grappled with questions of ethnicity, identity, and ideology.

Letter writers who wrote about the elimination of passport ethnicity represented a variety of ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and geographic backgrounds, but some generalizations can be made. All the letter writers discussed here wrote in Russian, and most wrote from large urban centers of the RSFSR, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Belarus, and Uzbekistan, the most ethnically heterogeneous republics. Most had names that suggested Slavic, Jewish, or otherwise European (i.e. Baltic, German) ancestry, and a disproportionate number self-identified as or were likely Jewish.¹⁴³ Several cited or implied experience with or observation of discrimination or repression, suggesting a desire to overcome unpleasanties resulting from association with certain ethnicities. Most drew from their own deep familiarity with interethnic relations, whether as participants in, products of, or witnesses to interethnic marriage; as ethnic minorities living outside their 'own' republics; or simply as people with diverse friends, colleagues, and neighbors. Most exuberantly declared 'Soviet citizen' as their primary identification.

Petitions for the removal of passport ethnicity made sense only in the context of nationalities policy and ideological discussions, which, as we have seen, simultaneously promoted both ethnic and civic notions of identity. Official policy saw ethnicity as a functional rather than descriptive category: although citizens could choose ethnicity according to that of either parent, the choices they made affected political representation, language of school

¹⁴² On the prevalence of themes of passport ethnicity, see GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 305, l. 127; GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 308, l. 59; GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 309, l. 50.

¹⁴³ Of more than three dozen letters specifically analyzed, roughly a quarter written by citizens who were likely or self-identified as Jewish, despite the fact that Jews represented less than one percent of the Soviet population.

instruction, educational and employment quotas, and other aspects of everyday life.¹⁴⁴ At the same time, the state promoted notions of Soviet identity, most notably through the idea of the Soviet people. Because of the state's insistence on ethnic categorization and rejection of hybrid, multiple, or civic identities within the passport regime, citizens could simultaneously express deep engagement with state ideology and opposition to its policies concerning ethnicity.

Claiming Soviet Identity: Ideology in Citizens' Letters

In many cases, citizens justified the elimination of passport ethnicity along ideological lines, either directly referencing Marxist-Leninist theory, or more commonly, alluding to official ideological discourse. Anatolii L., whose letter was quoted in the introduction to the dissertation, noted that his connection to his assigned ethnicities had nothing in common with “the Marxist-Leninist understanding of belonging to a nation (*natsiia*),” implicitly suggesting that the party's own ideology justified the elimination of passport ethnicity. Another letter writer, Artur P., writing from Kopeisk (Cheliabinsk oblast, RSFSR), also invoked ideology: “Leninist norms on the national question were crudely violated in the period of Stalin's cult of personality. Instead of cooperation between nations (*natsii*), incorrect nationalities policy sometimes led to ethnic animosity between some peoples of the Soviet Union.” Though these problems were being addressed, he continued, the time had come to fix the “outdated laws on the national question” and eliminate passport ethnicity, a change he believed would be popular.¹⁴⁵

Others emphasized the importance of equality and highlighted commonalities between citizens. In a 1962 letter from Minsk (Belarus), Boris Ch. noted: “With the loss of ethnic

¹⁴⁴ As Saule Ualiyeva and Adrienne Edgar note, aside from (usually) choosing their ethnicity according to that of either parent, the state did little to compel or shape these decisions, though certainly social pressure played a role, see “In the Laboratory of Peoples' Friendship: Mixed People in Kazakhstan from the Soviet Era to the Present,” in *Global Mixed Race*, ed. Rebecca C. King-O'Riain et al. (NYU Press, 2014), 68–90.

¹⁴⁵ GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 334, ll. 173–173ob.

(*natsional'nyi*) characteristics by a large contingent of people of every nation (*natsiia*), a new community of people is being formed, a supra-national (*nadnatsional'nyi*) community, based on a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up, which has emerged in a community of culture.”¹⁴⁶ Invoking but not explicitly citing Stalin’s definition of a nation, Boris Ch. argued that society increasingly resembled a national community. He posited that citizens were moving towards a moral and political unity that rendered ethnic boundaries obsolete, creating conditions for the merging (*sliianie*) of nations through interethnic marriage and the Russian language. These circumstances clashed with what he saw as the “cruel rules of our passport system” that assigned ethnicity irrespective of desires and lived realities.¹⁴⁷

Writing in 1977, I. Yakovenko, also of Minsk and cited in the chapter introduction, saw the formation of Soviet identity as the clear result of previous policy. He believed the elimination of passport ethnicity had “deep political significance, since the ethnicity ‘Soviet’ would show our real accomplishment in the national question in the years of Soviet power (the new community of people (*liudi*)—the Soviet people), and it would be with the goal of showing our perspective on the national question on the road to a communist society.”¹⁴⁸ He stressed the emergence of a unified community as the result of ideology and practices that had united people both theoretically and practically. Defining ethnicity in civic rather than ethnic terms, he believed, would give the state a chance to demonstrate its achievements.¹⁴⁹

Others were less explicit in their invoking of ideology but similarly pointed to this sense of community. For many, guaranteed equality irrespective of ethnic background constituted the critical foundation for unity. V. Teplitskii, a pensioner in Samarkand (Uzbekistan) spoke of pre-

¹⁴⁶ GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 330, l. 63.

¹⁴⁷ GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 330, ll. 54–69; here 61.

¹⁴⁸ GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 64, l. 148.

¹⁴⁹ GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 64, l. 148.

revolutionary discrimination and contrasted that with the equality guaranteed by the party and state. A critical part of this equality, he stressed, was the fact that all nations (*natsii*) had the right to study and speak in the language of their own choosing.¹⁵⁰ Boris T., a lawyer from Kyiv, also proposed the elimination of ethnicity, since “our society is marching victoriously towards communism. ‘Freedom! Equality! Brotherhood!’ are written on our flag. And now there is no idea of dividing our people into Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians and others. There should only be Soviet people (*liudi*).”¹⁵¹ He believed Soviet policy was out of step with other countries, even bourgeois ones, and that it felt positively unnatural: “It’s verging on the absurd... My son—an eighth-grader—comes home and asks me with surprise: ‘Daddy, why do they ask me for my ethnicity, what does it mean?’ And actually. If we have written on our banner the holy words ‘equality and brotherhood,’ what are these divisions even for?”¹⁵²

Through juxtaposing his son’s confusion over the very concept of ethnicity with its omnipresence in everyday life, Boris T. called out what he clearly saw as an illogical system out of keeping with its own ideology. This, he further indicated, simply did not make sense at present: “There was a time when this was necessary, but now it is superfluous and is even harmful. Friendship of the peoples has won and now all nations are unifying into a single, monolithic Soviet family. The entry for ethnicity should disappear.”¹⁵³ Many expressed similar sentiments. Semen N., a pensioner and invalid of World War II writing from a small city in the

¹⁵⁰ GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 329, ll. 154–155. His discussion of pre-revolutionary discrimination implies he was Jewish, although he does not explicitly state it himself. The report summarizing his letter certainly read him this way, see GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 305, l. 125. Based on word choice, his view of “nations” likely did not extend to Jews, who had limited prospects for Yiddish-language education. His words implicitly praise the ability to choose education and communication *in Russian*, rather than in minority languages.

¹⁵¹ GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 329, l. 151.

¹⁵² GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 329, ll. 151–51ob., ellipsis in the original. The writer’s full name and his son’s experience suggest they are Jewish.

¹⁵³ GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 329, l. 151ob.

Gorky oblast (RSFSR) in 1972, suggested that Soviet unity made ethnicity obsolete.¹⁵⁴ Vladimir E. of Turkistan (Kazakhstan) similarly concluded in 1967: “Soviet power has given everyone identical rights. Why then are we dividing people by national characteristics?” After 50 years of the Soviet Union, he argued, ethnic divisions had disappeared, since people lived and worked together in a single, unified motherland that they had collectively defended in World War II.¹⁵⁵

Many cautioned that the current regime of passport ethnicity was counterproductive, even dangerous, hinting at persistent nationalism and anti-Semitism. Vladimir E. warned: “In calling one or another citizen of USSR a Tatar, a Chuvash, etc., we are with this very thing in some measure reminding him that he is actually a Tatar, that is, we are creating some sort of unwanted ethnic divisions. And for what?”¹⁵⁶ M. Berman, writing from Moscow in 1964, similarly saw the existing passport regime as an anachronism that underscored and promoted ethnic divisions. The same year, I. Grishin of Lviv (Ukraine) argued, “a single national consciousness with the Russian people cannot be strengthened if a person is endlessly reminded of the nationality of his ancestors.” The fixation on assigning ethnicity, he controversially continued, hinted at concerns about racial purity and smacked uncomfortably of Nazism.¹⁵⁷ These letter writers argued that the passport regime hindered the natural assimilation already well underway. Others warned that passport ethnicity and ethnic boundaries unintentionally enabled and promoted nationalism and anti-Semitism, which many saw as an acute threat to unity.¹⁵⁸ The elimination of passport ethnicity, they believed, would forge a deeper sense of unity and equality. In doing so, letter writers demonstrated a deep commitment to the state’s ideological projects and the long-term realization of its goals.

¹⁵⁴ GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 363, ll. 30–30ob.

¹⁵⁵ GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 367, l. 105ob.

¹⁵⁶ GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 367, l. 105.

¹⁵⁷ GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 337, ll. 87–88.

¹⁵⁸ GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 309, ll. 54–55; GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 309, l. 130.

The Soviet People in Practice

Letter writers frequently emphasized that the Soviet people, a unified community of citizens, was not simply an ideological construct, but rather, one that they observed in the world around them. As proof of the Soviet people's existence, many pointed to the same evidence identified by scholars, including the frequency of interethnic marriage, the partial loss of ethnically specific traits, and improved knowledge and use of Russian. Many emphasized that continued use of passport ethnicity poorly reflected everyday realities: differences between people had been slowly disappearing, and this trend would become more prominent in future generations. Letter writers cited autobiographical details and those of their children, friends, and neighbors, as well as hypothetical scenarios as evidence of the impracticality of ethnicity. These scenarios correlated with demographic and linguistic changes that scholars observed.

Like scholars, letter writers frequently declared that ethnic differences were being erased, evidenced by widespread interethnic marriage. Many cited the prevalence of interethnic marriage as proof that citizens were not especially motivated by ethnicity in their everyday lives. One letter writer, Kazarian, who identified herself only as an expectant mother, wrote in 1964:

In our country there are many families where the mother and father are of different ethnicities, which never happened in pre-revolutionary Russia. I have often had to observe how many troubles start in the family with the coming-of-age of the child. If ethnicity did not play any kind of role when the parents entered marriage, then the troubles start when both love the people of their ethnicity, and the child has to choose for himself the nationality of either the mother or the father. There are even families in which the blood of different peoples and ethnicities flows, where it is possible to draw lots in choosing an ethnicity. And is there even a purpose? We all have a single Motherland, so why don't we bear its ethnicity?! Citizen of the Soviet Union—it sounds dignified.¹⁵⁹

By comparing the choice of ethnicity to casting lots, she suggested the unsuitability of ethnicity

¹⁵⁹ GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 339, l. 2. Unlike most letter writers cited, Kazarian did not give her address or full name. Another letter writer, G. Gardner, a school official in the Almaty oblast, similarly pointed to the “hundreds of thousands of examples” of interethnic marriage and cited unusual cases, including families that alternated ethnicity from one child to the next and a “Russian” friend with a German father and Ukrainian mother. From these cases, he concluded that ethnicity was no longer relevant: GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 309, ll. 141–42.

for children of interethnic marriages. The continuation of passport ethnicity, she argued, caused unnecessary, artificial strife and encouraged ethnic chauvinism and anti-Semitism, dangerous remnants of the pre-revolutionary past. Although society was not yet blind to ethnicity, she believed that eliminating passport ethnicity would be a source of unity. Concluding her remarks, she noted that Mayakovsky's poem on the Soviet passport (quoted in the epigraph) was a marvelous tribute to the honor being a Soviet citizen. Repeating her own words, she closed, "Citizen of the Soviet Union—it sounds dignified for everyone, for people in the entire world."¹⁶⁰

Writers with first-hand experience of interethnic marriage often emphasized the need to eliminate passport nationalities with specific reference to their children. Andris A., writing from Ogre, Latvia, with occasional Russian mistakes, suggested his marriage to a Finnish woman he had met in Leningrad and the birth of his son had impacted his view of ethnicity: "At home we speak Russian. Who will our son be? A Finn? A Latvian? Who? By his mother a Finn, by me a Latvian! And this is the question that interests me. After all, there are many families that are multiethnic. And with every year there are more and more...For us, ethnicity is completely immaterial. It has become only a name. And with time, it will disappear completely."¹⁶¹ Noting his son would likely not know the language of his passport ethnicity, he argued that Soviet could be the only accurate, truthful, and proper descriptor for the ethnicity of citizens: "After all, we are all Soviet people (*liudi*) and that is and should be our ethnicity. And I think that is how it should be under communism. We are Soviet—now and always."¹⁶²

Andris A. and others highlighted the difficulty of classifying citizens by ethnicities with which they had little personal experience. Anatolii L., the young party member cited in the

¹⁶⁰ GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 339, l. 3. A.I. Liubovnaia, of Ivano-Frankivsk (Ukraine) similarly claimed that continuing prejudices towards certain nationalities, particularly Jews, represented remnants of capitalism: GARF f. 7523, o. 131, d. 309, l. 55.

¹⁶¹ GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 324, l. 108ob.

¹⁶² GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 324, l. 109.

introduction to the dissertation, took his personal background as evidence of the declining importance of ethnicity. Half-Ukrainian and half-Polish by birth, raised in Kazakhstan (likely the result of forced resettlement), and currently working as a researcher in Kaliningrad (RSFSR), he identified only with the Soviet Union and Russophone culture. His lack of familiarity with, connection to, and preference for ethnicity, further suggested by his oscillation between Polish and Ukrainian passport ethnicities, highlighted the incommensurability of his ethnic identity with his lived reality. He was sure that others found themselves in a similar position and expressed confidence that this trend would only become more pronounced with time. In demanding the right to exclude ethnicity from passports, he hypothesized: “There is no doubt that sooner or later, it will be necessary to do so no matter what.”¹⁶³

Like Anatolii L., many writers felt or observed little connection with their assigned ethnicities. Vladimir E., writing from Kazakhstan in 1967, highlighted the unsuitability of assigned ethnicities for children of mixed marriages through citing his childhood friend, Amiran. This friend had been born in Altai krai (South-Central Siberia, RSFSR) to a Georgian father and Russian mother. At birth, he had been recorded as a Georgian according to the ethnicity of his father, whom Amiran had never met. The connection between ethnicity and identity became more tenuous in the subsequent generation, when Amiran’s son, born in Novosibirsk (South-Central Siberia), was also classified as Georgian, despite the fact that neither parent had so much as been to Georgia or could understand a word of the language. Vladimir E. quipped, “What sort of Georgian is he?”¹⁶⁴

Vladimir E. and others stressed that such cases were in no way exceptional. Boris Ch., writing from Minsk in 1962, emphasized the significance of interethnic marriages:

¹⁶³ GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 367, l. 190ob.

¹⁶⁴ GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 367, l. 105.

In a society approaching the construction of communism and a communist relationship between people, ethnic differences have long since ceased to determine anything in mutual relations between people. Marriages between people of different ethnicities have long since become an ordinary occurrence. In the conditions of equality, brotherhood, and friendship of the peoples, the percentage of marriage between peoples of different ethnicities do not signify anything but a mathematical probability, based on the numerical ratios of people of different ethnicities among the entire population of the country.¹⁶⁵

Using a formula he devised, he calculated the likelihood of mixed marriage at approaching 50 percent in most republics, and a trend he believed would continue. In actuality, Boris Ch.'s numbers greatly exaggerated the percentage of interethnic marriage, which represented just 10.2 and 14.9 percent of marriages in the 1959 and 1979 censuses; nevertheless, he interpreted interethnic marriage as evidence of the primacy of civic over ethnic identity.¹⁶⁶ The rise in mixed marriages, Boris Ch. claimed, was the result of two concurrent circumstances: first, ideology had largely erased the differences between ethnicities, and second, people were living in contact with people of different ethnic backgrounds.

Boris Ch. relied heavily on changing demographics to make his case: "In every union republic, representatives of the most different peoples and ethnicities live and work side-by-side with people of the titular nationality." In many union republics, he continued, nearly a third of the population did not belong to the titular nationality, a fact confirmed by postwar census data.¹⁶⁷ Greater contact between ethnicities, he and others believed, emphasized a common Soviet identity, exemplified by the reliance on Russian as a "language of interethnic

¹⁶⁵ GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 330, l. 58.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Edgar, "Marriage, Modernity, and the 'Friendship of Nations.'" Census statistics only represented total marriages, not new marriages (what Boris comments on), which may well have been that high in some places. Still, as Edgar notes, interethnic marriages were on the decline in some parts of the country. Edgar further emphasizes that many marriages, such as between Russians and Ukrainians, or Uzbeks and Tajiks, were celebrated as "interethnic," even though the degree of ethnic difference was low. Such marriages had been common even under tsarist rule.

¹⁶⁷ GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 330, l. 56. See also statistical data from the 1970 and 1979 censuses: Tsentral'noe statisticheskoe upravlenie, *Itogi Vsesoiuznoi perepisi naseleniia 1970 g.*, vol. IV (Moscow: Statistika, 1973), 12–15; O. K. Makarova, ed., *Chislennost' i sostav naseleniia SSSR: po dannym Vsesoiuznoi perepisi naseleniia 1979 goda* (Moscow: Finansy i statistika, 1985), 75–137. Kazakhstan exemplified this trend: in each of the postwar censuses, Russians outnumbered Kazakhs, who represented less than a third of the republic's population.

communication.”¹⁶⁸ As such, Russian was indexed and associated with the state as a whole rather than just the Russian people. One pensioner in Latvia went so far as to claim that Russian had changed enough to justify calling it the “Soviet language.”¹⁶⁹ Whether interpreting bilingualism as a sign of ethnic equality or pointing to Russian monolingualism as evidence of merging identities, many saw the use of Russian as proof that the Soviet people existed in practice.

For many letter writers, learning and using Russian in daily life was an important aspect of integration and a sign that ethnic identities had become less pronounced. I. Grishin of Lviv (Ukraine) noted in 1964, “At present, the consolidation of different ethnicities into a single communist nation is taking place in our country. This is a natural process. All people of our country are already bilingual. Russian has become the language of interethnic communication and is gradually turning into the language of communist society in our country.”¹⁷⁰ G. Gardner, a school official in the Almaty oblast (Kazakhstan), noted:

And who wants to speak which language, and which language will be each person’s native language—let individuals decide for themselves which language they consider to be the best, closest, native. And let our descendants hundreds of years from now say, ‘Yes, in the Soviet Union lived and live a great Soviet nation (*natsiia*), which spoke, wrote, read, composed, and created in over ninety languages.’¹⁷¹

As will be seen in Chapter 5, such sentiments borrowed from official rhetoric that described Russian as a “second native language” (not a foreign language) for all citizens.

Others actively promoted Russian over non-Russian languages, arguing that a focus on native languages was counterproductive to the Soviet Union’s continuing development.

Grinberg, of Tashkent, claimed that the continued emphasis on ethnicity was “preventing the

¹⁶⁸ E.g. Fedor Grigor’evich Panachin and I.N. Strakhov, eds., *Russkii iazyk—iazuk družby i sotrudnichestva narodov SSSR: materialy Vsesoiuznoi nauchno-teoreticheskoi konferentsii: 22–24 maia 1979 g. Tashkent* (Moscow: Nauka, 1981). This is discussed in Chapter 5.

¹⁶⁹ GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 169, l. 255.

¹⁷⁰ RGANI, f. 5, o. 30, d. 444, l. 23. Boris Ch., of Minsk (Belarus) similarly saw Russian as having “transformed from a national language into the language of interethnic communication,” particularly in the Baltics, where nearly everyone, he claimed, now spoke Russian, see GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 330, l. 62.

¹⁷¹ GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 309, l. 141.

spread of the Russian language as the language of interethnic relations, preventing the mutual enrichment of all ethnicities inhabiting the [Soviet] Union with achievements in the areas of science, technology, and culture.”¹⁷² A handful of other citizens, not necessarily speaking about the elimination of passport ethnicity, suggested the state codify and mandate Russian as the official state language in recognition of its importance.¹⁷³ Some commenters went further to note that many non-Russians spoke Russian as their native language, the combined result of educational policies, increased interethnic marriages, and more extensive interethnic interaction.¹⁷⁴ Anatolii L. emphasized that Russian was his native language, and that he did not know the “native” language of either his Ukrainian mother or Polish father.¹⁷⁵ A. Galadauskas of Leningrad similarly noted that despite his Estonian passport ethnicity, he spoke Russian exclusively and preferred to be considered a Soviet citizen.¹⁷⁶

A Tatar engineer, R. Khalitov, writing from Tatarstan in 1964, spoke more generally, noting that many Tatars, Chuvash, and other minorities did not speak their “native” tongue. Russian had become dominant: “We manufacture in Russian, create in Russian, do science in Russian, global masterpieces are created in Russian, and finally, a soldier serves in Russian; but we teach our children in their ‘native’ language, as we are accustomed to calling it.”¹⁷⁷ Continued emphasis on native language education, he feared, would hinder young people’s professional and

¹⁷² GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 325, l. 57

¹⁷³ GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 169, l. 255; GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 304, l. 127; GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 309, l. 54; and GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 312, ll. 31–32.

¹⁷⁴ Censuses confirm this trend. In 1979, census results demonstrated higher Russian proficiency from the previous decade, though the vast majority of people (93 percent) continued to claim the language of their ethnicity as “native” Makarova, *Chislennost’ i sostav naseleniia SSSR: po dannym Vsesoiuznoi perepisi naseleniia 1979 goda*, 71. Census data skewed in favor of native language, since many felt obligated to claim their native language as their primary language regardless of which language they primarily spoke. The 1970 census was the first to ask about proficiency in a second language, which generally measured Russian proficiency.

¹⁷⁵ GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 367, l. 190. Additional examples include Vladimir E., who pointed out that neither his friend, Amiran, nor Amiran’s son had any knowledge of the Georgian language of their passport ethnicity; and Artur P., from Cheliabinsk oblast, who also commented that people frequently did not know the language of their ethnicity. See GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 367, l. 105 and GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 307, l. 52, respectively.

¹⁷⁶ GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 325, ll. 34–34ob.

¹⁷⁷ RGANI, f. 5, o. 30, d. 444, l. 25.

personal development, especially when many had no use for or interest in their native language. At a time when “cooperative labor has brought together ethnicities of our Motherland to such a degree that it is impossible to think of any sort of ethnic antipathy,” and when “all differences between representatives of different ethnicities” would soon disappear, Khalitov believed that the state should more formally prioritize Russian-language education.¹⁷⁸

The tendency towards Russian as the primary language of non-Russians hinted at another development observed by letter writers: more citizens not only did not speak “native” languages, but they were also estranged from their “native” culture. This raised further questions about the sustainability of ethnic classification. Many interpreted this as an indication that people had become indifferent to their ethnic heritage and more fully integrated into society, seen as unambiguously positive developments. Letter writers made these views clear. Boris Ch., perhaps influenced by the prominence of Russian in Minsk, noted that through Russian “a large contingent of people of different ethnicities have lost their ethnic characteristics and have turned into an ethnographic group of a new human community, which retains a bit of local color in lifestyle and culture.”¹⁷⁹

Eduard S., writing from the Tula oblast (RSFSR) in 1964, provided perhaps the most developed expression of this sentiment and suggested that the determination of ethnic belonging was becoming more difficult as the “consolidation of peoples (*narody*) of the USSR into a single nation (*natsiia*)” progressed. With Russian-language proficiency, the classic markers of ethnic belonging had become quite blurred:

And the question emerges of how to determine the ethnic belonging of a Kazakh, for example, who has almost forgotten the language of his ancestors, and speaks, writes, and thinks in Russian. His ethnic character is determined by Soviet reality, which determines

¹⁷⁸ RGANI, f. 5, o. 30, d. 444, l. 24.

¹⁷⁹ GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 306, l. 185. Artur P., of Cheliabinsk oblast, similarly saw the loss of language as part of a larger trend of unfamiliarity with ethnic traditions and customs. See GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 307, l. 52.

the character of other people in our country as well. No one in our country, where there is no room for racial prejudices, places any significance on external appearance, which is to say only his origins separate him from a Russian—his parents were Kazakh, therefore he is Kazakh. But if such a Kazakh turned up in a Kazakh *aul* where they speak only Kazakh, he will feel like he is in an awkward position.¹⁸⁰

Here, he used the shift to Russian as a native language for his hypothetical Kazakh to illustrate that ethnic categories had changed to such a degree so as to render people unrecognizable to their former selves and ancestors. Conversational language, not ethnic heritage, he argued, was the “most important signifier determining the ethnic belonging of the Soviet person.”¹⁸¹ Others went further, questioning the state’s existing ethno-federal structure.¹⁸²

United in the suggestion that passport ethnicity be eliminated or altered, these letter writers saw the elimination of ethnicity and/or its replacement with “citizen of the Soviet Union” as both descriptive of society in whole or in part and as a tool for the continued reduction of ethnic particularism. In both instances, citizens expressed a passionate sense of civic belonging that coincided with their own ideal visions for society. Letter writers routinely argued that ethnicity had ceased to play a role in everyday life and served, if anything, as a hindrance to the complete unity they saw as the outcome of the political agenda of the past decades.

Conclusion: Identity as Conversation

The evolution of Soviet identity under Khrushchev and Brezhnev was a story of both continuity and change. Discussions of identity, including the concept of the Soviet people, borrowed heavily from Stalin-era discourses, most noticeably in the realm of patriotic speech.

¹⁸⁰ GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 309, l. 50. “Aul,” derived from Kazakh, denotes a specifically Kazakh village.

¹⁸¹ GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 309, l. 51.

¹⁸² Grinberg (Tashkent, Uzbekistan), GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 325, ll. 57–61; Shokhov (Almaty, Kazakhstan), GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 309, l. 16; Grishin (Lviv, Ukraine), GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 308, ll. 59–60; Marin (Moscow, RSFSR), GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 311, ll. 44–45; Yakushev (Jurmala, Latvia), GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 311, ll. 47–48; Eduard S. (Novomoskovsk, RSFSR), GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 319, ll. 20–24; and Vladimir B. (Arkhangelsk, RSFSR), GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 367, ll. 23–47.

Indeed, in many cases—on holidays, in economic development, in international relations—the mobilizing, patriotic rhetoric remained largely unchanged, save for Stalin’s absence. Despite dramatic improvements in the country’s domestic and international situation, the vocabulary of war, danger, and crisis infused even the most ordinary processes of economic development with a sense of urgency and necessity. On the other hand, the stronger focus on providing for citizens in the realm of housing and household goods reflected a larger conversation that saw the state’s primary task as providing for its citizens. The Soviet people’s extension into high ideology and academic research about the nature of identity further expanded discussions and understandings of Soviet identity. No longer simply an instrumental, mobilizing phrase to encourage sacrifice and contribution among ordinary citizens, the Soviet people was analyzed from a new starting point, one that assumed that it not only existed but was a powerful force that both reflected and drove change in society at large.

Citizens also participated in the ongoing negotiations of Soviet identity. Schools emphasized a combination of practical skills and theoretical knowledge that would transform children into economically productive and politically conscious citizens. Through participatory rituals—voting in elections, participating in all-union discussions, celebrating holidays, even contributing to the Soviet economy—people across the country engaged in the practices of citizenship, offering visible proof of their common belonging to the state. In letters, many emphasized the overarching importance of their identification as citizens, using their personal lives, observations, and knowledge of both theoretical and statistical literature to offer evidence of the relevance of Soviet identity.

As before, discourses of identity, whether among political elites, scholars, or citizens themselves, were rife with contradictions and ambiguities. On paper, ethnic and civic identities

continued to be seen not only as compatible but to be mutually constitutive, as internal passports offered tangible evidence of citizens' civic and ethnic identities. Scholars argued that Soviet power had not only promoted ethnic minorities but that state support had led to an intensification of ethnic identities, as their national cultures, literature, and arts were elevated into the ranks of all-Soviet culture. Mandated study of local history, too, demonstrated how republics and non-Russian peoples contributed to and participated in the larger processes of history unfolding across the country, reminding citizens of the diverse history that made their country.

Other statements and practices, however, simultaneously contradicted the apparent compatibility of ethnic and civic identities. Although scholars insisted *sblizhenie* (growing closer) would not entail the decline of national cultures but their elevation and that an eventual *sliianie* (fusing) would be generations in the making, both implied a certain decentering of sub-state identities. The *de facto* prioritization of the Russian language in both the educational system and evolving understandings of the future shape of society, too, betrayed a certain degree of inequality that separated citizens from one another and suggested the degree to which Russian and Soviet identities continued to be closely intertwined. This signaled the continuing privileges afforded to ethnic Russians across the country, belying the assertion of the complete equality of citizens. Even individuals expressed ideas about the inherent incompatibility of ethnic and Soviet identities. As many clamored to be recognized exclusively as Soviet citizens, they suggested the long-term supremacy of civic over ethnic identities. Whether as a declarative statement of allegiance to the state, a rejection of the relevance of ethnic identities, or as a tool for avoiding ethnic discrimination, their identification as Soviet citizens demonstrated deep commitment to the state while simultaneously challenging the state's official ideology.

Throughout his years in power, Brezhnev frequently spoke of the "monolithic" unity of

the Soviet people.¹⁸³ Yet it is clear from this analysis that Soviet society was nothing of the sort. While perhaps united around the party and the state, Soviet citizens continued to be a diverse, multiethnic body, full of contradictory and irreconcilable ideas and opinions that engaged directly with the ideology and discourses promoted by the state. In this sense, Soviet identity continued to be a dynamic, evolving set of discourses that enabled a diverse array of actors to participate in wide-ranging conversations about the meaning of citizenship. As political elites indicated a deepening sense of responsibility towards citizens in their words and policies, they envisioned a more cooperative relationship between the state and its citizens. In countless conversations, citizens, scholars, and leaders together continued the ongoing negotiation of the boundaries, institutions, and practices that forged Soviet citizens.

¹⁸³ For example, this idea came up several times in Brezhnev's address at the 24th Party Congress (1971), see KPSS, *XXIV s"ezd Kommunisticheskoi partii Sovetskogo Soiuz, 30 marta–9 apreliia 1971 goda: stenograficheskii otchet*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1971), 26–131.

Chapter 4

“For the Soviet Person, New Rituals”: Soviet Identity through Celebrations and Civic Rites¹

At 11 a.m. on February 22, 1958, a team of horses approached the Palace of Culture of Factory 513 in the city of Kalinin (today Tver'), 180 kilometers northwest of Moscow. At the factory, artist-in-residence N.A. Adul'skii spent three hours overseeing preparations. Artists decorated the sleighs in a “Russian” style, complete with bells and arches painted in the style of Palekh miniatures, the small boxes typical of the region. The drivers, dressed in an “ancient Russian style—a coachman’s robe, special hats, colorful mufflers, and a red belt”—led horses decorated with small bells and multicolored ribbons. A sign affixed to the first sleigh announced a “Komsomol Wedding” to onlookers.²

The preparations complete, an official read a short address in the style of a Russian folk tale and dispatched the sleighs to pick up the groom and the wedding party, which included girls in traditional costumes, accordionists, a photographer, and male and female “matchmakers” dressed in sheepskin coats. The female matchmaker wore a traditional Russian skirt with a decorative hem and a floral shawl. The sleighs departed to the tune of Russian and Soviet songs, and after picking up the groom, they continued on to the bride’s home.³ There, a friend answered the door and requested payment for opening the gate, given in the form of a basket of candy to share with her friends. The groom presented himself for inspection, and upon his positive

¹ Title from N. Andrianov and A. Belov, “Sovetskomu cheloveku—novye obriady,” *Pravda*, 28 May 1976, 3.

² The wedding is described in RGASPI, f. M-1, o. 32, d. 940, 147–169; here, 150. The Komsomol wedding was put together and carried out by N.A. Adul'skii, V.M. Kuz'mina, and P.I. Lariushin.

³ RGASPI, f. M-1, o. 32, d. 940, l. 153.



Figure 6: The bride and groom approach the Palace of Culture, where they will sign their marriage documents. RGASPI, f. M-1, o. 32, d. 940, l. 154.

evaluation, the bride joined him, and they continued together in the sleigh (Figure 6) towards the Palace of Culture, accompanied by relatives and friends, who sang songs about the couple.

Upon arrival at the Palace of Culture, the couple walked a carpeted path and headed inside for the celebratory registration of their marriage, surrounded by fellow Komsomol members and their families. As balalaikas played and friends and family looked on, the couple approached the table and signed the documents that certified their union. The marriage now official, the party continued with champagne and various festivities, complete with Russian music, toasts from their classmates and work collectives, and the presentation of bread and salt by their parents, another old Russian tradition (Figure 7). A short concert of traditional Russian music and Soviet songs followed, with more music, dancing, and singing.



Figure 7: Parents present the couple with salt and bread, wrapped in traditionally embroidered cloths. RGASPI, f. M-1, o. 3, d. 940, l. 154

This 1958 Komsomol wedding was one of the first in a new set of rituals that elevated the signing of marriage documents from a perfunctory exercise into a public celebration. Combining older Russian traditions with newer Soviet ones, the ceremony offered a symbolic celebration of the formation of a new Soviet family. In the years that followed, the state devoted considerable energy and resources to developing, implementing, and popularizing new rituals to mark citizens' life milestones from the cradle to the grave. From birth registrations to funerals, from the first day of school to the presentation of the first passport, new ceremonies sought to impart a distinctly Soviet identity that drew from ethnic and civic traditions.

These new rituals were part of a longer history of public celebration that commenced immediately after the revolution, one that both reflected and shaped the formation of Soviet

identity. Decisions about which holidays and life milestones to mark and how to celebrate offer insight into how understandings of Soviet identity evolved among leaders and citizens over decades, mirroring trends discussed in the first three chapters. Shortly after the revolution and throughout the 1920s, experimentation with both holidays and private rituals reflected uncertainty about the meaning of the revolution in citizens' lives. By the 1930s, the party and state abandoned more tentative forms in favor of carefully choreographed celebrations with widespread popular participation, reflecting the emphasis on active patriotism and a collective Soviet identity. These forms of festivity continued under Stalin's successors, complemented by a growing cast of civil ceremonies to mark life milestones, offering ordinary, everyday ways to demonstrate and experience civic belonging. According to Soviet specialists, the use of civil rituals to mark transitional moments in citizens' personal lives could deepen emotional attachments to the state and enhance popular understandings of what it meant to be a citizen. Public holidays and lifecycle rituals also illustrated the changing power dynamics between the center and periphery and new understandings about what it meant to be Soviet.

In the first section, below, I trace the evolution of public holidays from post-revolutionary experiments to the hegemonic and rigid forms of the 1930s, drawing from both press sources and secondary literature on holiday celebrations. I demonstrate that holiday festivities contributed to a sense of common experience, as citizens gathered together to celebrate important dates and milestones in the history of the state and revolutionary movement. Through mass participation, holidays drew private citizens out into public space, a visual and experiential reminder of their collective belonging. Civil rituals, the focus of the second half of the chapter, had a similar function but a complementary form, bringing the state into the family home and citizens' personal lives. Here, I draw from republic and central archives, as well as the

proliferating Soviet scholarship on these rituals. Like holiday celebrations, civil rituals originated in the post-revolutionary period, when activists experimented with new rituals for birth, marriage, and death to limited success. Personal milestones returned to the center of attention only in the late 1950s and 1960s, when the state devoted renewed energy to these celebrations to reduce religious activity and promote a deeper sense of civic belonging. Through analysis of republic, regional, and Komsomol archival sources and of the work of specialists who researched and worked both in Moscow and across various Soviet peripheries, I demonstrate that these rituals borrowed liberally from local and ethnic traditions, symbolically demonstrating the compatibility ethnic and civic identities.

Soviet literature on holidays and rituals, which proliferated in the 1970s and '80s, saw celebration as an essential part of Soviet life. The limited historical scholarship on these celebratory practices has generally taken narrower approaches to understanding holidays and civil rituals, often focusing on only one or the other, and usually within tight temporal bounds. Perhaps best studied is the establishment of a revolutionary culture through the heavily ritualized process of commemorating the revolution, exploring how the early state told and commemorated its origin story.⁴ Others, as discussed in Chapter 2, have shown how the cult of World War II played a similar role in the postwar years.⁵ More innovatively, Serhy Yekelchuk describes celebrations and elections as practices of participatory citizenship in postwar Ukraine.⁶

Writing on Soviet rituals has typically been interpreted within the framework of Soviet

⁴ See Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams*, 79–100; James von Geldern, *Bolshevik Festivals, 1917–1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Clark, *Petersburg*, especially 122–142; Frederick C. Corney, *Telling October: Memory and the Making of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004); Rolf, *Soviet Mass Festivals, 1917–1991*.

⁵ Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead*; Weiner, *Making Sense of War*; Merridale, *Ivan's War*; Kirschenbaum, *The Legacy of the Siege of Leningrad, 1941–1995*; Davis, *Myth Making in the Soviet Union and Modern Russia*; Mijnsen, *Cities of Heroes*.

⁶ Serhy Yekelchuk, "A Communal Model of Citizenship in Stalinist Politics: Agitators and Voters in Postwar Electoral Campaigns (Kyiv, 1946–53)," *Ab Imperio*, no. 2 (2010): 93–120; on elections as ritual, see also Petrone, *Life Has Become More Joyous, Comrades*, 175–202.

atheism. As Victoria Smolkin observes, the cultivation of civil wedding services, birth registration, and funerals were part of a much broader program of atheist propaganda, targeted to reduce religious practice.⁷ Christel Lane's *Rites of Rulers* (1981) offers a more comprehensive overview of Soviet celebrations. She places ritual practice, both of holidays and public festivals and civil rites, into the context of the theory and practice of ritual behavior. After summarizing the specific practices associated with various rituals and holiday celebrations, she analyzes them in terms of their implicit symbolism and imagery in the context of anthropological theory. She concludes that the Soviet Union had a largely unique, highly systematic, and robustly articulated approach to "modern rituals" that reflected the specific goals—promoting ideology and atheism—of communist elites.⁸ This chapter's more integrated approach to the creation and observation of public holidays and individual and community life milestones expands this work, shifting the focus towards how these celebrations reflected discourses about Soviet identity. Holidays and rituals, I argue in this chapter, deepened the affective elements of Soviet identity and expanded the boundaries of participatory citizenship.

Public Holidays in the Soviet Union

Before the October Revolution, festivals and religious holidays dominated everyday life in the Russian Empire. This included a vast number of both Orthodox feast days (as well as other religious holidays for the empire's many minority faiths) and ritualized celebrations of the ruling elite.⁹ Following the October Revolution, early Soviet ideology promoted the idea that revolution

⁷ Smolkin, *A Sacred Space Is Never Empty*, 165–93. Richard Stites briefly discussed nascent civil rituals in his study of 1920s revolutionary experimentation, see Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams*, especially 109–114.

⁸ Christel Lane, *The Rites of Rulers: Ritual in Industrial Society—the Soviet Case* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), especially 282–84. A similarly broad approach can be found in Vladimir Vladislavovich Glebkin, *Ritual v sovetskoi kul'ture* (Moscow: Ianus-K, 1998). Both tend toward the descriptive.

⁹ On late-imperial holidays and festivals, see Rolf, *Soviet Mass Festivals, 1917–1991*, 17–30. As Rolf notes, studies of festival culture in the Russian Empire are severely underdeveloped, with the exception of considerable work on

had prepared the way for the creation of new type of person and a new way of life, informed by communist ideology and state atheism. As part of this, the early state embraced a new revolutionary calendar, both literally—by abandoning the Julian calendar for the Gregorian calendar used across Western Europe—and figuratively—by developing new holidays and rituals that grounded everyday life in practices that would release society from religion’s grip.

The new “Red Calendar” served three primary purposes. First, the emphasis on secular rather than religious holidays proselytized the state’s atheist, anti-religious agenda, aiming to reduce religion’s influence on everyday life. This projected a message about the incompatibility of religious and civic identities. New holidays, secondly, buttressed the Bolsheviks’ claim to legitimate rule over the fledgling state. Finally, and most importantly for our purposes, holidays and rituals—particularly in the late 1920s and ‘30s—formed a cornerstone of a distinctly Soviet way of life. By the 1930s, public celebrations of holidays and careful management of older forms of festivity solidified an emergent sense of collective identity that dovetailed with articulations of the Soviet people, as citizens collectively marked important dates in the history of their country and the revolutionary movement. In subsequent decades, forms of holiday celebrations remained highly stable, though small changes reflected subtle renegotiations in the understanding and practice of Soviet identity after Stalin.

A Break from Religion: Replacement and Experimentation in the 1920s

Early Soviet rule was marked by wild experimentation as political elites and citizens defined and negotiated the parameters of life under communist party rule. Atheism featured centrally in this agenda, reflecting Marxist suspicion of all religious practices. In the first decade,

the festivals surrounding the ruling Romanov family, see Richard Wortman, *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy*, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

the precise shape and form that public and social life should take was not yet settled. This provided ample space for leaders, cultural activists, and others committed to the Bolshevik agenda to introduce a wide range of initiatives to counteract religion's hold on society. A common strategy in these first years was simply replacing religious celebrations and symbols with analogous non-religious alternatives. Although many of these experimental forms failed to take hold, they laid an early blueprint for a socialist society that set the tone for a specifically secular civic identity.

After the revolution, changing the calendar was one of the first orders of business. On January 25, 1918, just months after assuming power, the fledgling state renounced the Julian calendar in favor of the Gregorian one used in Western Europe. Because the old calendar had been tightly associated with Orthodoxy, the calendar offered evidence of a new, secular order and symbolically suggested a fresh start to the most basic building blocks of public life. Cultural activists also experimented with creative ways to limit religion's influence. Alongside arrests of priests, anti-religious and atheist propaganda, and prohibiting religious activity, there were nascent attempts to offer secular variants of religious holidays, including alternative Komsomol Christmas and Easter celebrations in the early 1920s.¹⁰ Young activists organized various celebrations to coincide with Orthodox Christmas first in 1923. As described by Richard Stites, the event was a veritable "antireligious carnival," complete with clowns mocking God, fake rabbis and priests, parodies of liturgical music, and a bonfire where gods were burned in effigy.¹¹ In the face of public outrage, celebrations at Easter time were comparatively muted, though they

¹⁰ On antireligious activity and atheism in general, see Peris, *Storming the Heavens*; Smolkin, *A Sacred Space Is Never Empty*.

¹¹ Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams*, 109. For a description of the comparatively muted celebrations of Komsomol Christmas the following year, see Neradov, "Komsomol'skoe Rozhdestvo," *Izvestiia*, 8 January 1924, 3. A 1968 description of holiday rituals also described the 1923 event, see V.I. Brudnyi, *Obriady vchera i segodnia* (Moscow: Nauka, 1968), 71–75.

still involved biting mockeries of religious practice and other festivities.¹²

When these nascent attempts to offer secular surrogates for religious holidays largely failed to take hold, the state turned to more heavy-handed measures. In 1928, the state banned the sale and use of Christmas trees and activists “revealed” Grandfather Frost (the Russian equivalent of Santa Claus) to be in cahoots with priests and kulaks, moves that were accompanied by a short-lived revival of anti-religious holidays.¹³ Although religious practice largely continued, most noticeably in villages, the state left little doubt about religion’s perceived incompatibility with Soviet life.¹⁴ Meanwhile, the state’s attempts to strictly control all forms of celebration also signaled its desire to harness public festivity as a tool for building its own legitimacy and for promoting an affective, civic identity on its own strictly articulated terms.

Remembering October: Celebration, Revolutionary Calendar, and State Legitimacy

While restrictions on religious practice set limits for what could be considered acceptable behavior, the cultivation and “invention” of revolutionary holidays offered a more constructive vision of socialist life, a different approach to legitimizing Bolshevik rule.¹⁵ In the 1920s, experimentation with celebrating revolutionary holidays—May 1 (Labor Day) and November 7 (Day of the Great October Socialist Revolution)—contributed to ongoing conversations about the nature of identity in the fledgling state. Over the first decade of Soviet rule, holiday celebrations became ever more elaborate, as the state progressively embraced the revolution as a point of origin for a new society. As celebrations expanded, citizens took part in festivities in growing numbers, laying a cornerstone of patriotic, participatory citizenship.

¹² Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams*, 109–10.

¹³ Stites, 230–31. The 1935 reincarnation of Christmas trees as New Year’s trees is discussed below.

¹⁴ On ongoing religious life, see especially Fitzpatrick, *Stalin’s Peasants*, 204–14.

¹⁵ On holidays as invented, see especially Rolf, *Soviet Mass Festivals, 1917–1991*, 31–63.

Leaders were initially unsure of how best to celebrate and commemorate revolution, not least because the country plunged almost immediately into a disastrous civil war. The first major holiday, May 1 (officially “Day of International Solidarity of Workers”), took place as the Civil War was only just beginning. In 1918, the event lacked a central purpose and had little in common with its future incarnations, but the holiday combined solemnity and merrymaking, a formula that largely continued in subsequent years. A lively parade along revolutionary sites, speeches, music, fireworks, and dancing contributed to the atmosphere of festivity in Leningrad. The more solemn requiem for revolutionary martyrs inside the Winter Palace reminded observers of the sacrifices made in the name of revolution.¹⁶ Each of these aspects sought to increase the emotional impact of the holidays, deepening citizens’ affective ties to the fledgling state. During the first year of rule, new symbols, flags, statues, and language offered visual evidence of the Bolsheviks’ strengthening hold over state and society, and by the first anniversary of the revolution, the scope of celebration grew dramatically, now centered in Moscow. As the civil war waged on, the party carefully managed commemorations to mark its first year of rule.¹⁷

Revolutionary holidays, foremost the anniversary of the October Revolution, became increasingly theatricalized over the next decade, contributing to state legitimacy and forming a cornerstone of a revolutionary Soviet identity that was couched in public participation. Mass spectacles and large-scale open-air theatrical productions cemented official interpretations of revolutionary events and performed them for a relatively undereducated population.¹⁸ Millions of citizens took part in the massive festivities to celebrate a decade of Bolshevik rule in November

¹⁶ Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams*, 84–85; von Geldern, *Bolshevik Festivals*, 86–93. Von Geldern interprets May Day celebrations as reflecting the party’s “struggle with meaning,” as leaders experimented with the symbolism and form of celebrations and how to transmit specific meanings to citizens.

¹⁷ Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams*, 91–93; von Geldern, *Bolshevik Festivals*, 93–97; Rolf, *Soviet Mass Festivals, 1917–1991*, 32–33.

¹⁸ On revolutionary theater, see von Geldern, *Bolshevik Festivals*, especially 40–71 and 134–174; Clark, *Petersburg*, 101–21.

1927, a watershed moment for participatory citizenship. The anniversary marked the pinnacle of a decade-long experimentation to establish the significance of October, centering the revolution as the state's founding moment. The holiday grounded and expanded public memory, transforming the storming of the Winter Palace from what was essentially a *fait accompli* into a dramatic, violent, and popular takeover of the transitional government.¹⁹ The party carefully managed all aspects of the festivities, even issuing detailed instructions to local party administrations to ensure celebrations and speeches across the country would meet Moscow's exacting standards.²⁰ The mass scale of celebrations also increased the participatory mechanisms embedded in holiday festivities, calling citizens to take part in civic life.

This first decade of holiday experimentation reflected two primary goals: establishing the legitimacy of the Bolshevik party and projecting its atheist and ideological messages to the populace. This was part of a larger conversation among leaders about how best to enact, monitor, and demonstrate power across a large geographic and cultural expanse, and to cultivate mass participation in state rituals. With the 1927 decennial celebrations, it was clear that the party and state were there to stay, and the question of legitimacy was largely resolved. From then onward, celebratory mechanisms, particularly on major holidays, became more routinized and managed, as the connection between celebration and Soviet identity became more recognized.

Holidays and the Soviet People: The 1930s

If the 1920s had been a quest to legitimate Bolshevik rule, the 1930s saw a crystallization

¹⁹ Corney, *Telling October*, 175–200. In point of this fact, Sergei Eisenstein's *October (Ten Days that Shook the World)*, commissioned for the decade of the revolution but finished only in 1928, came to be seen as an accurate visual record of the revolution, heightening the drama and scale of the original Bolshevik takeover. Images of the dramatized film were frequently mistaken for documentary footage. On Eisenstein's film and its impact, see Corney, *Telling October*, 183–95; Taylor, *Film Propaganda*, 63–73.

²⁰ Rolf, *Soviet Mass Festivals, 1917–1991*, 60–61.

of the form and practice of celebration that reflected a greater sense of confidence among political elites. This coincided with new articulations of Soviet identity and the concept of the Soviet people, described in Chapter 1. Holidays, parades, elections, and other celebrations provided leaders with occasions to hail the emergence and existence of a distinct, united Soviet people and to encourage (or demand) popular participation in the rituals of state. In comparison to the experimental celebrations of the 1920s, the 1930s saw centralized control over the form and content of holidays, which coincided with new mechanisms of state repression and coercion.²¹ By the 1930s, formal holiday celebrations coalesced into a tightly managed script that was carefully choreographed by the party and its partner organizations, including the Komsomol. The party's strict control over holidays established a certain degree of repetitiveness, which itself served a pedagogical function and emphasized a distinctly Soviet way of life.²² The forms that developed in the 1930s would remain largely unchanged for the remainder of Soviet rule.

Major celebrations took place in three phases, each of which heavily leaned on and encouraged mass public participation. First came the preparatory stage, wherein local authorities erected platforms, raised flags, and informed citizens about upcoming events. By broadcasting the message of upcoming festivities, the state sought near complete participation in holiday rituals. Formal programs followed, including (generally military) parades and speeches from local, republic, and all-union elites. The formal programming ensured that state messages were consistent and disseminated the appropriate pedagogical messages. Last came the celebratory phase, where ideology was set aside for merrymaking and fun. The final phase encouraged popular participation, transforming holidays into moments of public festivity in an explicitly

²¹ On the coexistence of violence and celebration, see especially Petrone, *Life Has Become More Joyous, Comrades*.

²² Rolf, *Soviet Mass Festivals, 1917–1991*, 58. On the pedagogical function of holidays, see also Rosalinde Sartorti, “Stalinism and Carnival: Organization and Aesthetics of Political Holidays,” in *The Culture of the Stalin Period*, ed. Hans Günther (London: Macmillan, 1990), 67.

civic mode.²³ Each phase emphasized citizens' involvement in the design and implementation of holidays and promoted the participatory nature of citizenship that evolved in the 1930s.

Festivities advanced ongoing ideological projects, including the new emphasis on the Soviet people in the 1930s. Holidays enacted two aspects of the discourses surrounding Soviet identity discussed in Chapter 1: the emphasis on and celebration of distinctly Soviet heroes and the simultaneous unity and diversity of the populace. Celebrations of heroes—from polar explorers to Stakhanovite industrial and agricultural workers—projected the unique accomplishments of the state vis-à-vis the population. Mass demonstrations and public parades symbolized and showcased popular participation in heroic feats, signaling the unity of the Soviet people.²⁴ This unity was further displayed through military parades, which increased in prominence in the 1930s and projected order, discipline, and hierarchical unity.

Celebrations reflected state initiatives while cultivating popular participation in civic life. Physical culture parades, the first of which took place in 1936, highlighted the official prioritization of military readiness, as citizens marched to showcase their own physical fitness. The inclusion of ethnic minorities and women highlighted the Soviet Union's multiethnic composition and asserted its message of liberation, not least among women of Central Asia and the Caucasus.²⁵ Suggesting the link between these celebrations and the idea of the Soviet people, the 1938 physical culture parade became one of the earliest invocations of the phrase in visual propaganda. Georgii Kibardin's 1938 poster (Figure 8) visually represented the diverse, hierarchically structured populace.²⁶ In the poster, parade participants included various

²³ Rolf, *Soviet Mass Festivals, 1917–1991*, 65–72.

²⁴ The celebrations are discussed in Chapter 1. See also Petrone, *Life Has Become More Joyous, Comrades*, 46–84.

²⁵ Petrone, 23–45. As Petrone notes, the inclusion of both minorities and women distinguished Soviet politics of the body from their Nazi counterparts, whose otherwise similar parades demonstrated racial purity and the privileged role of men, see especially 33–39.

²⁶ Poster available at <http://redavantgarde.com/collection/show-collection/2119-greetings-to-dear-stalin-.html>, accessed 24 June 2018.

minorities, including Ukrainians, recognizable by the embroidery of their dresses and suits and the flowers in women's hair, and Central Asians and Caucasians, identifiable by their traditional hats, fabrics, and the cuts of their clothing. Dominating the foreground of the poster, modern, ethnically ambiguous citizens—presumably Russians—led fellow citizens under a banner greeting “dear Stalin.” The caption conveyed the main message: “The physical-culture parade: a powerful demonstration of the power and the invincibility of the Soviet people.” The poster encapsulated the Stalinist approach to diversity management: minorities were welcome and visibly present, but always guided by ethnically neutral Russians. This symbolism dominated the 1939 manifestation, which prominently featured Uzbeks, Georgians, and other minorities in national costume, led by Russians who carried a banner declaring themselves the “first among equals.”²⁷

As in the 1920s, holidays centered on major urban centers, foremost in Moscow and Leningrad, the Soviet Union's premiere cities. Union and autonomous republics, oblasts, and local administrations, both urban and rural, took cues from Moscow, as the state projected celebratory practices outwards through party instructions. At the same time, holiday celebrations reflected regional specificities, as localized and ethnic traditions were shaped and adapted for a modern Soviet context with varying degree of sanction. In Central Asia, this often revolved around food prepared specifically for festivities, including *plov* (a rice pilaf typically prepared by men) and *samsa* (meat-filled pastries) in the south, and *bauyrmaq* (fried bread) in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.²⁸ In rural areas, parades and celebrations might include tractors, folk festivities, and collective farm outings.²⁹

²⁷ Petrone, *Life Has Become More Joyous, Comrades*, 35–39.

²⁸ İğmen, *Speaking Soviet with an Accent*, 94.

²⁹ Sartorti, “Stalinism and Carnival,” 66; Rolf, *Soviet Mass Festivals, 1917–1991*, 67–68.



Figure 8: "The Physical-Culture Parade: the powerful demonstration of the power and the invincibility of the Soviet people" (1938).

These adaptations brought all-union celebratory forms and practices to the periphery. They were complemented by national *dekady* (sing. *dekada*), ten-day festivals of the art, music, and literature of union and autonomous republics, which displayed the culture of the peripheries at the center. Like the multiethnic physical-culture parades, *dekady* offered a formalized, visual reminder of the friendship of the peoples, a centerpiece of ideology in the late-1930s. The first, held in Moscow in March 1936 to celebrate and display Ukrainian culture, featured folk music and dancing. Following on its success, subsequent *dekady* showcased Kazakh (May 1936), Georgian (January 1937), Uzbek (May 1937), Azerbaijani (April 1938), Kyrgyz (June 1939), Armenian (October 1939), and Belarusian (June 1940) arts and culture. The central party-state apparatus publicly feted the official delegations and received them at the Kremlin. The press covered performances and meetings with party-state leaders in detail.³⁰ To complement public performances, which had a more limited audience, newspapers ran selections of recent literature and poetry in translation and elaborate reviews of performances, offering a nationwide platform for the most talented and recognized writers and performers of each republic.³¹

Through *dekady*, the central state and republics showcased both Soviet progress and traditional national cultures. A side-by-side photograph of two participants in Kazakhstan's 1936 *dekada*, singer-poet (*aqin*) Jambyl Jabaev, clad in a traditional, fur-lined hat and long white beard, and writer and education activist Sáken Seifullin in a modern suit, suggested contrasting modes of participation in Soviet life (Figure 9).³² *Dekady* were not merely wholesale celebrations

³⁰ The list of *dekady* is not exhaustive. On national *dekady*, see Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 439–40; İğmen, *Speaking Soviet with an Accent*, 133–34; Isabelle Ruth Kaplan, “The Art of Nation-Building: National Culture and Soviet Politics in Stalin-Era Azerbaijan and Other Minority Republics” (Georgetown University, 2017). Jeff Sahadeo also addresses *dekady* as visual representations of Soviet multiethnic friendship in *Red or Black?*

³¹ For example, *Izvestiia* published a full page of selections from Kazakh writers, including work by Sáken Seifullin, Jirshi Ahmetbekov, and T. Jurgenev, together with a piece on Kazakh history and a description of the exhibition on Kazakh art, see *Izvestiia*, 17 May 1936, 3.

³² Demonstrating the coexistence of celebration and persecution and shifting priorities of the state, Seifullin was eventually arrested, brutally tortured, and executed in 1939.



Figure 9: Kazakh singer-poet (*aqin*) Jambyl Jabaev, left, and writer Saken Seifullin right, printed in *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 30 May 1936, 1.

of ethnic kitsch but rather opportunities to demonstrate cultural achievements. The press commended these festivals for making the cultures of Soviet peoples accessible to the broader public and praised the state for cultivating and modernizing national cultures.³³ Through showcasing art and culture, festivals raised the visibility of ethnic minorities and demonstrated their important albeit performative role within the body politic. These celebrations would continue in subsequent decades as a demonstration of the state’s ongoing public commitment to the flourishing of all peoples, even as the space for expressing ethnic identities was strictly

³³ For examples of typical coverage, see “Prazdnik narodnogo iskusstva,” *Izvestiia*, 23 March 1936, 1; “Iskusstvo pobedivshego naroda,” *Pravda*, 27 May 1936, 1; “Talanty sotsialisticheskoi Gruzii,” 14 January 1937, 1; “Torzhestvo uzbekskogo iskusstva,” *Pravda*, 26, May 1937, 1.

circumscribed, tightly controlled, and subject to repression.³⁴

Holiday celebrations also reflected a new emphasis on rising living standards and the end of revolutionary asceticism, first signaled in Stalin's famous 1935 dictum that life had become more joyous.³⁵ As evidence of this new, happier life, Christmas trees returned, now to celebrate the more secular New Year. Ramped up New Year's celebrations, inspired and led by Ukrainian party leader Pavel Postyshev (better known for his role in the Ukrainian famine of 1932–33), were seen as tools for inspiring more emotional love for the country, particularly among children. Bourgeois elements were refashioned as quintessentially Soviet merrymaking, as New Year's became synonymous not with religious practice but with secular, civic belonging.³⁶

While New Year's celebrations offered one of the least ideologically oriented aspects of civic life, celebrations and rituals surrounding the 1936 Constitution and for elections in subsequent years served a more overtly political purpose. As described in Chapter 1, Bolshevik leaders cultivated a distinctly celebratory atmosphere, transforming these events from official formalities to explicitly patriotic holidays. The extensive "all-union" discussion that took place ahead of the final passage of the constitution offered citizens expansive opportunities to participate in civic life and offer comments and criticisms on the structure and function of the Soviet government. Following the final approval on December 5, 1936, the day was declared an annual public holiday, signifying the importance of the constitution itself.³⁷

³⁴ In the 1930s, *dekady* took place most frequently in Moscow. Over time, the sites of these festivals expanded, first to Leningrad and then to other major cities, serving as a means to broadcast lateral ties connecting citizens to one another, including across peripheries. Many of the feted participants in the *dekady* of the 1930s fell victim to Stalinist terror, including Seifullin. As Yekelchik has demonstrated, there was also controversy surrounding *dekady* in Stalin's final years: the Ukrainian *dekada* of 1951 was followed by a campaign of ideological purification concerning acceptable forms of national expression, see Yekelchik, *Stalin's Empire of Memory*, 129–30.

³⁵ "Rech' tovarishcha Stalina na pervom vsesoiuznom soveshchanii stakhanovtsev," *Pravda*, 22 November 1935, 1.

³⁶ On the reintroduction of holiday trees and the navigation of their specific meaning, see Petrone, *Life Has Become More Joyous, Comrades*, 85–109.

³⁷ Getty, "State and Society Under Stalin"; Petrone, *Life Has Become More Joyous, Comrades*, 175–202; Lomb, *Stalin's Constitution*; Velikanova, *Mass Political Culture Under Stalinism*.

Elections functioned similarly. Focusing on postwar elections in Kyiv (which differed little from their prewar variants), Serhy Yekelchyk describes the riotous, joyous celebrations that ensured high turnout and participation. Elections, of course, were not competitive, so citizens lined up for the polls to signify approval for the government. As such, elections became “a festive moment for confirming [voters’] Soviet identities, rather than a political choice.” Polling stations became sites for citizens to express their love for the state and Stalin. From orchestras and brass bands to festivities after the polls were closed, elections were a celebration of participatory, communal citizenship.³⁸ Newspapers hailed elections and near unanimous approval of the party’s chosen candidates as evidence of unity.³⁹ As Jan Gross shows, elections functioned as a tool of Sovietization during the occupation of new territories after the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, signifying their tight association with Soviet citizenship.⁴⁰

In both newly occupied territories and across the country, elections were strictly controlled and tightly managed, a reminder of the darker side of civic celebration under Stalin and the careful state management of the forms, content, and practices of citizenship. Alongside the festive atmosphere existed a sharp undercurrent of surveillance, repression, and state control. After all, participation was never voluntary or optional, and the state enforced strict limits on the forms and interpretations of celebrations. Restrictions and exclusions were omnipresent. In some cases, repression and celebration unfolded concurrently, reflecting the simultaneity of terror and ordinary, everyday life.⁴¹ Large-scale celebrations of the 20th anniversary of the revolution in November 1937 on Red Square, for example, took place at the height of the Great Purges, a short

³⁸ Yekelchyk, *Stalin’s Citizens*, 179–217, quotation on 216.

³⁹ E.g. “Triumf sotsialisticheskoi demokratii,” *Istoricheskii Zhurnal*, No. 12 (December 1937), 12–15; “Edinstvo partii i naroda,” *Izvestiia*, 28 June 1938, 1; B. Volin, “Velikaia pobeda sovetskogo naroda,” *Istoricheskii zhurnal*, 1938, no. 7 (July), 1–4.

⁴⁰ Gross, *Revolution from Abroad*, 71–113.

⁴¹ See especially Karl Schlögel, *Terror und Traum: Moskau 1937* (Munich: Hanser, 2008); available in English as Karl Schlögel, *Moscow, 1937*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge: Polity, 2012).

walk away from the NKVD headquarters and Lubyanka prison, where arrestees awaited trial and execution. Sometimes, terror and celebration were more concretely linked. As the state celebrated mass participation in the 1937 elections—the first with universal suffrage—campaigns were accompanied by a crackdown on anti-Soviet behavior.⁴² Religious life, too, remained strictly controlled, especially after the 1937 census revealed high levels of religiosity, leading to reinvigorated atheist propaganda drives.⁴³ These repressive measures suggested the limits of both acceptable behavior and Soviet identity.

From War to Victory: Holidays and Celebrations in Late Stalinism

World War II and its aftermath saw subtle renegotiations of holiday rituals, as war itself became a quintessential experience for forging a deeper sense of community and unity. Wartime shortages and ongoing worries reduced the scope of all celebrations. Holidays, including annual celebrations on May 1 and November 7, assumed a more subdued tone, but they nevertheless marked collective moments of celebration. At the same time, a more liberal attitude towards religion opened the doors for limited observance of religious holidays, a possibility that remained largely open until Khrushchev's anti-religious campaigns in the 1950s. With war's end, holidays returned by and large to prewar formats, with one innovation: Victory Day gradually entered the pantheon of Soviet holidays, becoming, like the revolution, another point of origin for a united Soviet people. The tentative embrace of Victory Day under Stalin laid the groundwork for its later prominence beginning in the mid-1960s.

Following the Nazi invasion, war's hardships limited the scope of celebrations and

⁴² Lomb, *Stalin's Constitution*, 123–38.

⁴³ Rolf, *Soviet Mass Festivals, 1917–1991*, 76; Peris, *Storming the Heavens*, 197–220. This had extreme ramifications in occupied territories. Gross, *Revolution from Abroad*, 130–33. For an example of interwar surveillance in Western Ukraine around May 1 and November 7, 1940, see reports in SBU, f. 16, o. 1, d. 419.

altered the atmosphere and mood across the country. So as not to interfere with wartime production, holiday observance was shifted to Sundays, and celebrations were scaled back to reflect the more somber atmosphere of war. Despite their more limited scope, holidays presented important opportunities to raise morale and express confidence in inevitable victory.⁴⁴ Perhaps no event was more symbolically significant than the 24th anniversary of the revolution, celebrated during the bleak autumn of 1941, as German soldiers were at the very gates of the Soviet capital. A giant military parade in Red Square projected to the world (and to Nazi Germany specifically) the Soviet Union's commitment to celebrating the revolution, even under the trying conditions of wartime occupation. Stalin's address, only his second communication of the war, projected confidence in ultimate victory and rallied citizens to make all necessary sacrifices.⁴⁵ After the war, as Rolf notes, the "defiant Red Square performance on the major Soviet holiday in 1941 was declared a heroic act, and it was viewed as a harbinger of the fall of Hitler's regime."⁴⁶ Indeed, the event was so significant that the current Russian state, generally ambivalent about Soviet holidays but eager to embrace World War II mythologies, celebrates November 7 not as the anniversary of the revolution but as the anniversary of the 1941 parade in Red Square.⁴⁷

With the announcement of the German surrender on May 9, 1945, impromptu festivities broke out across the country, as people rushed out onto the streets to celebrate the end of a long, brutal war. In Chapter 2, we saw how Makhsuda M. described raucous street celebrations in Tashkent that extended into the night, and the preparation of celebratory, meat-laden *plov*, a

⁴⁴ Rolf, *Soviet Mass Festivals, 1917–1991*, 181.

⁴⁵ "Doklad Predsedatelia Gosudarstvennogo komiteta Oborony tovarishcha I.V. Stalina," *Pravda and Izvestiia*, 7 November 1941, 1.

⁴⁶ Rolf, *Soviet Mass Festivals, 1917–1991*, 181. For one example of this interpretation, see "Moskva prazdnichnaia," *Pravda*, 10 May 1946, 1.

⁴⁷ Here, based on personal observation of the signage for 2015 celebrations, which included a large military parade, complete with period weapons and soldiers marching in World War II-era uniforms.

departure from wartime deprivations.⁴⁸ Newspapers similarly described the atmosphere of widespread festivity across the country.⁴⁹ These spontaneous celebrations marked a departure from the carefully managed events of prior holidays. This, however, was exceptional. The official celebration of victory, celebrated on Red Square on June 24, 1945, returned to the tightly choreographed performances typical of the Stalin era.⁵⁰ The first anniversary was similarly observed. In the final decade of Stalin's rule, celebrations continued to center around May 1 and November 7, which returned to their prewar splendor as part of a broader push, in Yekelchik's words, to restore and maintain "symbolic order."⁵¹ Even Victory Day was demoted to an ordinary working day in late 1946, to be revived as a public holiday only in 1965.⁵²

Religious accommodations made during war also affected the celebration and observance of holidays. The limited re-legalization of religious practice opened the door for the return of religious holidays among the faithful. These effects, however, should not be overstated. The state only permitted registered religious activity, which excluded many groups deemed too dangerous to recognize, such as Jehovah's Witnesses, Ukrainian Greek Catholics, and others. Across the country and particularly in newly incorporated territories of the far west, surveillance remained tight on secular and religious holidays, as the KGB and party watched for signs of anti-Soviet activity.⁵³ In new territories, the state also worked hard to ensure state holidays were celebrated

⁴⁸ Tokhtakhodzhaeva, *XX vek v vospominaniakh...*, 265–66.

⁴⁹ E.g. "Prazdnik Pobedy," *Pravda*, 9 May 1945, 1; "Gitlerovskaia Germaniia razgromlena. Sovetskii narod praznuet velikuiu pobedu," *Pravda*, 9 May 1945, 3; "Sovetskii narod likuet," *Izvestiia*, 9 May 1945, 4; Maksim Ryl'skii and Aleksandr Il'chenko, "Slezy schast'ia," *Izvestiia*, 10 May 1945, 4; "Strana prazduet velikuiu pobedu," *Pravda*, 11 May 1945, 3; "Leningrad torzhestvuet," "Kiev: Utro pobedy," "Baku: Vsenarodnyi prazdnik," "Minsk: istoricheskoe sobytie," and "Sverdlovsk: Uraltsy slushali vozhdia," *Izvestiia*, 11 May 1945, 2; "Den' velikoi pobedy nashego naroda," *Pravda*, 12 May 1945, 1; "9 maia 1945 goda," *Izvestiia*, 12 May 1945, 1.

⁵⁰ This parade is described in Zubok and Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War*, 1–2.

⁵¹ Yekelchik, *Stalin's Citizens*, 34–67.

⁵² Rolf, *Soviet Mass Festivals, 1917–1991*, 182–83.

⁵³ E.g. RGASPI, f. 17, o. 125, d. 313; RGASPI, f. 17, o. 132, dd. 6, 7, 109, 111, and 569; LYA, f. K-41, o. 1, d. 149.

appropriately, since holidays themselves helped cultivate a Soviet way of life.⁵⁴

After Stalin: Public Festivity under Khrushchev and Brezhnev

After Stalin's death, holiday festivities continued largely in the patterns set out under Stalin.⁵⁵ As before, holidays served, in the words of one 1977 book, as "an important means of educating the masses" (*vazhnoe sredstvo vospitaniia mass*), particularly for young citizens.⁵⁶ Specialists in new rituals—a growing community in the 1960s, '70s and '80s—praised the emotional power of holidays, seeing celebrations as means of deepening affective attachment to the state and as evidence of the spiritual strength of the Soviet people.⁵⁷ Aside from continuing Stalinist-style festivities, three post-Stalin developments are worthy of comment. First, a series of anti-religious campaigns under both Khrushchev and Brezhnev cracked down on unsanctioned religious activity, suggesting the perceived incompatibility of religious and Soviet identities. Second, Brezhnev led a reinvigoration of the cult of World War II, as Victory Day became one of the landmarks of the Soviet calendar. Finally, the state demonstrated more comfort with ethnic and local holidays beginning in the 1960s. Each of these developments suggested subtle renegotiations of the boundaries of Soviet identity that dovetailed with the introduction of the new civil rituals, discussed in the following section.

While public holiday celebrations remained relatively unchanged under Khrushchev, state and party attitudes towards religion became increasingly confrontational, somewhat belying

⁵⁴ Amar, *The Paradox of Ukrainian Lviv*, 48.

⁵⁵ As Malte Rolf notes, "After the war, the canon and forms of celebrations remained largely unchanged. How strong the official culture of celebration had become was evident after 1953, when the Soviet mass celebration survived almost unscathed. This was true not only of the May First ceremonies that immediately followed the death of the dictator but also for the festive culture of subsequent decades." Rolf, *Soviet Mass Festivals, 1917–1991*, 188.

⁵⁶ A. V. Belov, ed., *Nashi prazdniki: Sovetskie obshchegosudarstvennye, trudovye, voinskie, molodezhnye i semeino-bytovye prazdniki, obriady, ritualy* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1977), 1.

⁵⁷ E.g. Iakov Petrovich Belousov, *Prazdniki starye i novye: Nekotorye filosofskie aspekty problemy prazdnovaniia* (Almaty: Kazakhstan, 1974), 125–65; N. M. Zakovich, *Sovetskaia obriadnost' i dukhovnaia kul'tura* (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1980).

the liberalism with which the Khrushchev era is often associated.⁵⁸ A brief suppression of religious activity in 1954 was followed by a more extensive campaign that began in 1958 and continued until Khrushchev's 1964 removal. The earlier "Hundred Day" campaign, an intense religious crackdown that began in July 1954, returned serious attention to atheism for the first time since the late 1930s.⁵⁹ As Victoria Smolkin observes, the campaign used "an arsenal of old and new tactics" to eliminate religion, including the closure of churches and other religious buildings, prohibitions on religious practices, and renewed efforts at disseminating atheist propaganda, especially through lectures. Party organs criticized the press and various state and party organizations for insufficient attentiveness to atheist propaganda, and the state redoubled their efforts towards eliminating religion's pernicious hold on society.⁶⁰ After backlash and criticism, the campaign ended abruptly on November 10, and leaders took stock and reassessed their methods of measuring religiosity.⁶¹ Party leaders turned renewed attention to religious activities beginning in late 1958, when leaders unleashed a more sustained and tailored campaign to limit and control religious observance.

The longer 1958–64 anti-religious campaign sought to limit religious practice across the

⁵⁸ For recent discussions of the Thaw that reconsider its supposed liberalism, see especially Jones, *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization*; Stephen V. Bittner, *The Many Lives of Khrushchev's Thaw: Experience and Memory in Moscow's Arbat* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008); Denis Kozlov and Eleonory Gilburd, eds., *The Thaw: Soviet Society and Culture during the 1950s and 1960s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012).

⁵⁹ Chumachenko, *Church and State in Soviet Russia*, 121–22.

⁶⁰ Victoria Smolkin-Rothrock, "'A Sacred Space Is Never Empty': Soviet Atheism, 1954–1971" (University of California, Berkeley, 2010), 64–67. As Smolkin notes, though the campaign was short, it had a long afterlife, as leaders considered more effective ways to measure, control, and limit religion.

⁶¹ Illustrating some of the criticisms levied against this anti-religion campaign, a report on the activities of Lithuania's CARC from late 1954 noted high taxes and illegal violations of believers' rights: Lithuanian State Historical Archive (hereafter LCVA), f. R-754, o. 13, d. 535, ll. 4–34, especially 6–9. The move to scale back this campaign was apparently received with "tears of happiness" from believers according to a report compiled by religious authorities in Lithuania, see LCVA, f. R-754, o. 13, d. 469, ll. 77–82 and 118–136, suggesting the severity of the campaign.

country, particularly around major religious holidays.⁶² As Eren Tasar notes, unregistered activity bore the brunt of the state's attention, reflecting a desire to categorize and control all aspects of religious life. This had its most significant impact on unregistered groups—like Jehovah's Witnesses, Pentecostals, some Baptists, and others—and on folk religious practices just outside the margins of legal religious practice.⁶³ As before, the KGB carefully monitored the population for all signs of unsanctioned activity.⁶⁴ Unregistered mass celebrations, including pilgrimages to sites of local religious significance, were seen as subversive and in need of strict control and ongoing surveillance. New atheist propaganda initiatives targeted specific behaviors, seeking to unmask false religious beliefs and superstitions among citizens at a local level. Although the campaign was reversed after Khrushchev's 1964 removal, similar campaigns again dominated the political and social landscape throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s, ending only with liberalization and religious accommodations under Gorbachev.⁶⁵ Harsh crackdowns sent renewed signals about the incompatibility of religious and civic identification.

While crackdowns narrowed the scope of holiday celebrations and observance, the reinvigorated cult of World War II offered a more constructive vision of Soviet identity beginning in the mid-1960s. In 1965, Victory Day was once again elevated to a public, non-working holiday, paving the way for the massive celebrations and military parades commonly associated with Soviet World War II commemoration. The Brezhnev era was a veritable heyday of new commemorative initiatives that left their mark on urban landscapes across the country. Beginning with the 1967 opening of the giant Mamaev-Kurgan memorial at the site of the Battle

⁶² On the later anti-religious campaign in general, see Chumachenko, *Church and State in Soviet Russia*, 143–88; Davis, *A Long Walk To Church*, 33–46; Smolkin-Rothrock, “A Sacred Space Is Never Empty,” 89–131; Tasar, *Soviet and Muslim*, 194–241.

⁶³ Tasar, *Soviet and Muslim*, 194–241. On Jehovah's Witnesses, see Baran, *Dissent on the Margins*.

⁶⁴ For examples, see RGANI, f. 5, o. 33, dd. 126, 163, 215.

⁶⁵ For typical Brezhnev-era reporting, see RGANI, f. 5, o. 60, d. 24. On late-Soviet atheism, see Smolkin, *A Sacred Space Is Never Empty*.

of Stalingrad, memorials proliferated from Kyiv to Vladivostok and Murmansk to Almaty.⁶⁶

New monuments and memorial complexes spoke both to the collective experience of the war—for example, through tributes to officially designated Hero Cities—as well as to more local aspects. The main war memorial in Almaty, opened in 1975, specifically commemorated the 28 Guardsmen of the (Kazakhstani) Panfilov Division, while the Murmansk complex, opened on a hill overlooking the city in 1974, memorialized “defenders of the Arctic.” Many sites also incorporated smaller tributes to locals who served in World War II, including both those killed and those who returned. These complexes became central sites for Victory Day celebrations, which grew in scale and importance in the Soviet Union’s final decades.⁶⁷ With the introduction of new civic rites, discussed below, memorials also featured in more personal rituals. Memorials came to be seen as meaningful sites for presenting passports and inductions into the military, and newlyweds often laid wreaths and flowers as part of their wedding-day tour (Figure 10).⁶⁸ In this way, World War II became a public aspect of collective identity, as citizens gathered to commemorate the lost and celebrate hard-won victory.

Beginning in the 1960s, party and state leaders also demonstrated more comfort with localized celebrations of holidays of ethnic and regional significance, particularly those closely tied with pre-Islamic and pre-Christian traditions. This included Ivan Kupala (a summer holiday celebrated across the Western Soviet Union, associated with John the Baptist but with roots in pagan rituals) and Nauruz (the “Persian” New Year celebrated across most of Central Asia and

⁶⁶ Memorials, of course, were not unique to the Brezhnev era, but they expanded dramatically in scope and geographic prominence throughout the 1960s, ‘70s, and ‘80s. For visual and descriptive guides of memorials, see Iu. V. Plotnikov and A. G. Khalturin, eds., *Imia tvoe bessmertno: kratkii illiustrirovannyi spravochnik* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1975); V.A. Golikov, *Podvig naroda: pamiatniki Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny, 1941–1945*, 2nd ed. (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1984). A documentary overview of the creation of monuments in Belarus can also be found in Denisova et al., *Pamiatniki Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny v Belarusi, 1942–1991 gg.* As the latter makes clear, the state was concerned about memorials as early as 1942, when war was still raging.

⁶⁷ Golikov, *Podvig naroda*. Monuments in Murmansk and Almaty are discussed on 83–84 and 116–118 respectively.

⁶⁸ Belov, *Nashi prazdniki*, 142–43; Aleksandr Evstifeev, *Starye obychai, novye traditsii: Ocherki o vnedrenii novoi obriadnosti* (Tashkent: Yosh gvardia, 1977), 35.



Figure 10: War memorials in use: a passport ceremony (left) and a wedding visit (right). Undated photographs from *Nashi Prazdniki* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1977), locations unknown.

Azerbaijan, with roots in pre-Islamic celebrations), as well as seasonal folk holidays of diverse ethnic and geographic origins. Under Stalin, New Year's was the only major holiday that derived primarily from folk tradition, and its celebration, as we have already seen, was contested throughout the 1920s and '30s. Although observance of folk holidays never fully disappeared, it always flirted with the boundaries of acceptability and legal practice.

By the 1960s, the state was more comfortable with promoting and celebrating folk holidays, seeing them as an inseparable part of ethnic and regional identity. As a 1977 book noted, these traditions were now instilled with new meaning: "Folk holidays and rituals...

express the masses' relationship to nature, their life experience, and their worldview...

Nowadays in our country, traditional folk holidays are enjoying resurgence; they are cleansed of religious features and imbued with new theoretical content. Through them, the ethnic color and cultural distinctiveness of peoples of the USSR are carefully preserved."⁶⁹ Throughout the 1960s, '70s, and '80s, specialists discussed these holidays extensively, emphasizing their older origins and recovering them from alleged religious cooptation. Many believed that selectively developed aspects of folk culture could demonstrate the progressive aspects of ethnic identities, which complemented civic, Soviet identities.⁷⁰ Formalized celebrations, though sanctioned by Moscow, resulted largely from local initiative, not least because many of the observed holidays lacked countrywide significance. This reflected a comfort with regional variation and local autonomy that had been largely absent under Stalin, when ethnic forms and culture were strictly controlled at the center (for example, through carefully choreographed *dekady*).

The general continuation of Stalin-era participatory forms of celebration combined with religious crackdowns, a renewed emphasis on World War II, and greater comfort with folk holidays exemplified the subtle negotiations over the nature of Soviet identity and the limits of appropriate behavior. On one hand, the state continued to be the locus for public celebrations, indicated both by ritualized World War II commemorations and strict limitations on unregistered religious activity. At the same time, the embrace of folk traditions and holidays was one area in which the state was willing to decentralize the planning and implementation of celebrations, reminding citizens that ethnic identities—once cleansed of religious elements—could and did inform Soviet identities.

⁶⁹ Belov, *Nashi prazdniki*, 147; see also Liudmila Aleksandrovna Tul'tseva, *Sovremennye prazdniki i obriady narodov SSSR* (Moscow: Nauka, 1985), 92–130.

⁷⁰ Especially S. Temurova, *Kommunistik axloqni shakllantirishda progressiv xalq traditsiyalarining roli* (Tashkent: O'zbekiston KP MK-ning nashriyoti, 1971).

Even without complete freedom in how and when ethnic identities could be expressed, the incorporation of folk traditions and holidays belied Brezhnev's assertions about the "monolithic" nature of the Soviet people. If atheist propaganda and intensified commemorations of World War II in theory mobilized more universal aspects of Soviet identity, then other holiday celebrations reflected specific regional and ethnic particularities. This suggested a diversity of possible ways to express civic and ethnic identity. These more subtle negotiations under Khrushchev and Brezhnev coincided with and complemented the cultivation of new rituals for weddings, births, funerals, and other personal milestones.

Rituals and Civic Rites in Late Socialism

While holidays and public celebrations brought private citizens into public space to celebrate the country's accomplishments and losses, the state also focused on new rituals for citizens' private lives. As with public holidays, the revolution ushered in a period of upheaval in ritual form, including experimentation with "red" weddings, baptisms, and funerals. These secular alternatives to religious rites, however, never really took off and faded relative to the more monolithic Stalinist forms. Beginning in the late 1950s and with new intensity under Brezhnev and his successors, the state renewed its interest in the creation, establishment, and implementation of new civil rituals. This brought the state into the more private realm of family life. The cultivation of new rituals for birth, marriage, death, and other life moments dovetailed with anti-religious campaigns and thus functioned as one specific aspect of atheist propaganda. New rituals, however, were also part of a larger cultivation of Soviet identity, one that sought to deepen affective attachment to the state. In light of the state's fears of religiosity, activists worked to ensure new rituals would satisfy citizens' emotional needs. New rituals, part of the

“spiritual culture” of Soviet people, also expressed the unity and diversity of the body politic.⁷¹

Although there was certainly some central state initiative, most of the work for creating and implementing new rituals was decentralized, reflecting the belief that new rituals should express local traditions and customs. Accordingly, republics had broad latitude to develop forms and practices that would be most meaningful locally. This decentralization reflected the state’s general understanding that ‘Soviet’ and ‘ethnic’ identities were mutually constitutive, as old traditions found new life as part of Soviet rituals. The incorporation and adaptation of older customs was seen to deepen the emotional content and attraction of rituals.

Red Weddings, Baptisms, and Funerals: Early Experimentation with Soviet Rituals

In the first decade after the October Revolution, many aspects of everyday life underwent profound changes, as citizens and the state together elaborated the acceptable behaviors and practices suitable within an explicitly communist society. As already seen, state and party leaders and cultural activists viewed religious practices with deep suspicion, particularly in relation to raising the next generation. To reduce the widespread practice of religious rites, some early activists developed non-religious alternatives for birth, marriage, and death. In contrast to later variants from the 1960s, early experimentation with rites and rituals resulted not from official policies and priorities but rather emerged of more spontaneous movements from below, primarily among activists committed to the nascent state and its atheist ideology.

Almost immediately, the state declared the separation of church and state in a January 1918 decree that dissolved church property, abolished all clergy, and gave citizens no religious exemption from fulfilling civic duties and obligations. Atheist propaganda proliferated. As one part of the process of secularization, the registration of civic acts—birth, marriage, divorce, and

⁷¹ For example Zakovich, *Sovetskaia obriadnost’ i dukhovnaia kul’tura*.

death—were shifted from church registries and metric books to state institutions, leading to the founding of civil registry offices across the country, typically known by their Russian acronym ZAGS (*Organy zapisi aktov grazhdanskogo sostoianiiia*—Organs of registering acts of civil status). A December 1917 decree on marriage, children, and family recognized only civil registrations; church weddings would have legal standing only if the parties signed a corresponding civil registration.⁷² These changes embedded the state in rituals of personal life, transforming weddings from private events to civic acts.

The registry office, however, did little to impart the appropriate celebratory atmosphere that some citizens apparently wanted. Church weddings largely continued, now supplemented with the additional trip to ZAGS.⁷³ Others took a more creative approach. Among certain, mostly urban segments of the population, the emergence of red baptisms (or ‘Octoberings’—*oktiabriny*, a portmanteau of October and baptism), red weddings, and, less commonly, red funerals, borrowed from religious rites and competed directly and self-consciously with religious practice. In contrast to religious rituals, a red wedding or Octobering demonstrated citizens’ connection and dedication to the state.⁷⁴ As Richard Stites noted, they served the dual purpose of offering a formal celebration of marriage while simultaneously demonstrating the couple’s commitment to new social norms, including the equality of spouses.⁷⁵ In the mid-1920s, newspapers occasionally reported these rituals across the country, often interpreting them as evidence of progress in

⁷² “Dekret 160 o grazhdanskom brake, o detiakh i o vedenii knig aktov grazhdanskoe sostoianiiia,” in *Sobranie uzakoneni i raspriazhenii rabochego i krest’ianskogo pravitel’sva* № 11, 29 December 1917, available at <http://istmat.info/node/28226>, accessed April 2018.

⁷³ Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams*, 112; Fitzpatrick, *Stalin’s Peasants*, 35.

⁷⁴ For a description of Octobering rituals and Red Weddings, see D. M. Ugrinovich, *Obriady: Za i protiv* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1975), 113–16. As Catherine Merridale notes, ‘red funerals’ pre-dated the revolution as an alternative to a religious funeral, see “Revolution among the Dead: Cemeteries in Twentieth-Century Russia,” *Mortality* 8, no. 2 (2003): 179–80.

⁷⁵ Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams*, 112.

establishing a Soviet way of life.⁷⁶

Some contemporaries believed these civil alternatives could popularize a Soviet way of life and reduce the influence of bourgeois and religious elements. As economist and Bolshevik Iurii Larin noted in a front-page *Pravda* article in 1924, “To arrange an Octobering is to give an oath to raise not slaves for the bourgeoisie but fighters against it. Octoberings denote a solemn (*torzhestvennyi*), practical initiation into social solidarity with their class. In contrast, christening is running from one’s class to the Lord God, to a personal communication through him with enemies of the proletariat.”⁷⁷ Writer Vikentii Veresaev similarly praised the potential of new rituals. Though present versions bordered on banal, he believed artists could create better ones, “a grandiose task, on which it is worth expending our energies.” “The main significance of the ritual,” he continued, “is, on one hand, that it gives people ready-made, artistically strengthened channels for the emergence of feelings crowded into the soul, and on the other hand, organizes these very feelings, and directs, enlightens, and deepens them.”⁷⁸

Others were less convinced, indicating the degree of public debate and contention. One 1924 *Pravda* article questioned their suitability and called for their elimination.⁷⁹ Film director Vitalii Zhemchuzhnyi criticized existing practices as merely an excuse for new parents to be showered with gifts.⁸⁰ Satirical writers Il’ia Il’f and Evgenii Petrov, too, poked fun at the

⁷⁶ E.g. “‘Oktiabriny’ v Kremle,” *Izvestiia*, 16 December 1923, 3; Vitkin, “Krasnaia svad’ba” and “Novyi byt,” *Izvestiia*, 30 December 1923, 3; Sutyryn, “Pervye kubanskie ‘oktiabriny’,” *Izvestiia*, 3 January 1924, 4; “Pervye ‘oktiabriny’ v Krymu,” *Izvestiia*, 12 January 1924, 6; Tkachuk, “Po-novomu,” *Izvestiia*, 30 April 1924, 4; Molotok, “Rabota zavkoma,” *Pravda*, 25 May 1924, 7; “Krasnaia svad’ba,” *Pravda*, 6 January 1925, 7. Similar reporting continued through 1927. These were not limited to Russia, see also “Qizil toydan kolkhoz a’zalari khursand,” *Yosh Leninchi*, 3 October 1930, 1; Uzbek poet G’afur G’ulom also wrote a poem, *Toy*, published in *Yosh Leninchi*, 5 January 1934, 2. Special thanks to Claire Roosien for these citations. K. Kalilov also mentioned Red Weddings in Kyrgyzstan in the 1920s, see K. Kalilov, *Novye obriady i traditsii u kirgizov* (Frunze: Ilim, 1983), 18–19.

⁷⁷ Iu. Larin, “Krestiny ili oktiabriny,” *Pravda*, 30 April 1924, 1.

⁷⁸ V. Veresaev, “K khudozhestvennomu oformleniiu byta (o obriadakh starykh i novykh),” *Krasnaia Nov’* 1923, No. 1, 160–77, here 176–77. On criticism of early Soviet rituals, see also Brudnyi, *Obriady vchera i segodnia*, 75–80.

⁷⁹ P. Egorov, “V mesto krestin, ‘oktiabriny,’” *Pravda*, 13 January 1924, 6. Many readers disagreed, see “Otkliki na ‘oktiabriny,’” *Pravda*, 19 January 1924, 9.

⁸⁰ Vitalii Zhemchuzhnyi, “Protiv obriadov,” *Novyi LEF* 1927, No. 1 (January), 43–47.

“nightmare musical and trade-union mystery” of Octobering rituals and relayed an apocryphal story of one that, at the revenge of the local chairman, morphed into a “two-hour report on the international situation,” delivered over the newborn’s cradle as “adults smoked mournfully and an orchestra played on. All for the sake of positive statistical reporting on the number of successful political conversions!”⁸¹ Not surprisingly, given the lack of official prioritization, they never really caught on. After a brief heyday in the 1920s, red weddings and Octoberings tapered off.⁸² Less elaborate civil registrations of weddings, births, and deaths, however, became standard, even if they were not always perfectly observed or implemented.⁸³

World War II and Its Aftermath: A Religious Crisis

As seen in Chapter 2, World War II dramatically altered relations between church and state, as leaders made formal concessions to the Russian Orthodox Church, Islam, and other religions, in part to foster civic loyalty in conditions of total war. This expanded notions of Soviet identity. The Councils for Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church (CAROC) and for Religious Cults (CARC, which dealt with all non-Orthodox faiths) were founded in 1943 and 1944, respectively, to oversee church-state relations, effectively legalizing some religious life. Republic documents encouraged propagandists to reduce divisive atheist and anti-religious propaganda as part of the total war effort and focus instead on more unifying, anti-fascist propaganda.⁸⁴ Suggesting the degree of newfound religious tolerance, a May 1942 letter addressed to all oblast soviets of the League of the Militant Godless in Kazakhstan urged

⁸¹ Il’ia Il’f and Evgenii Petrov, “Mat’,” *Pravda*, 7 June 1935, 4.

⁸² See especially Lane, *The Rites of Rulers*, 68–69.

⁸³ On state atheism, including campaigns targeted towards religious minorities, see Peris, *Storming the Heavens*; Keller, *To Moscow, Not Mecca*; Smolkin, *A Sacred Space Is Never Empty*; Shternshis, *Soviet and Kosher*, 1–43.

⁸⁴ See for example an undated report from shortly after the outbreak of war sent to the propaganda and agitation divisions of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan. The League of the Militant Godless encouraged local divisions to focus on the atrocities of fascists in occupied territories rather than on atheism: APRK, f. 708, o. 5/1, d. 618, ll. 4–6.

propagandists to avoid offending believers' sentiments as they sought "to prove to every believer that the outcome of the war with fascism will be decided not by the Holy Spirit, but by the power of weapons, the fortress of the home front, and the moral-political unity of the Soviet people."⁸⁵

Within the party, activists worried about the potential impact of revived religiosity. In a series of urgent letters to Stalin and Malenkov in 1943 and 1944, party member and candidate of architectural sciences A.K. Chaldymov urged party leaders to take the threat of religion seriously and proposed founding a "Cult of the Holy Motherland," complete with ministers, temples, and quasi-religious services. Chaldymov expressed dismay about the paucity of Soviet rituals relative to religious alternatives: "Up until now, we have not sufficiently used the weapons that directly act upon human feelings, which have been used by religion at different times and eras. To this day, such powerful weapons for acting on the human psyche have been exclusively in the realm of religion."⁸⁶ His concern, self-evidently, was the lack of emotional appeal of secular rituals. He proposed that a patriotic cult might be entrusted with carrying out holidays, revolutionary celebrations, and events in personal and civic life. Even though it appears nothing came of his seemingly outlandish suggestions, both his writing of meetings to which he had been called and the marginalia scribbled by leaders on archival records indicate he had attention at the highest echelons of power.⁸⁷

After World War II, it became clear that religious life would not recede from the social sphere without additional action. Directives from the party's Ideological Division emphasized the urgency of anti-religious propaganda and warned against complacency in church-state relations. Party documents repeatedly expressed concern about the decline of atheist propaganda

⁸⁵ APRK, f. 708, o. 4/1, d. 618, l. 20.

⁸⁶ RGASPI, f. 17, o. 125, d. 184, l. 106.

⁸⁷ RGASPI, f. 17, o. 125, d. 184, ll. 88–113.

and the mistaken belief that religious adherence would decline on its own.⁸⁸ There was some fear that Ivan Polianskii, CARC chairman from 1944 until his death in 1956, did not take religious activity sufficiently seriously. Fellow activists criticized Polianskii's assertions in a July 1947 report that religion was not of serious political significance. Mikhail Suslov and other top ideological leaders worried that his underestimation of religious cults could fuel an inadvertent religious revival.⁸⁹ These concerns expressed a postwar consensus that religion, in fact, was irreconcilable with Soviet life.

Complicating the relationship between religious and civic identities, religious activity tended to be the highest in the western regions occupied during the war, including Western Russia, Ukraine, and the Baltic Republics, regions that were considered to be far less integrated into Soviet society.⁹⁰ Combating the perceived increase in religious fervor went hand in hand with (re)integration of these communities into society. Propagandists responded to religious activity primarily through atheist propaganda, with the strongest attention to the observance of religious holidays. Much of this propaganda work was conducted by the newly formed Society for the Dissemination of Political and Scientific Knowledge (later: Knowledge Society), founded in 1947, which took up a lot of the work of the now-disbanded League of the Militant Godless.⁹¹

Success in conducting anti-religious and atheist propaganda was typically measured through declining numbers of baptisms, rising numbers of church closures, and a decrease in religious activity. In the same way, frequent religious rituals and activity were interpreted as

⁸⁸ For one example, see RGASPI, f. 17, o. 132, d. 10, ll. 17–65, especially 20.

⁸⁹ Polianskii's report can be found in RGASPI, f. 17, o. 125, d. 506, ll. 110–34. Criticism of this report, sent to party ideologist Mikhail Suslov follows on ll. 135–36, and similar reports and criticism follow on ll. 144–63.

⁹⁰ On Orthodox churches, see RGASPI, f. 17, o. 32, d. 7. For other religious groups, see a 1948 report from the Council of Matters of Religious Cults. RGASPI, f. 17, o. 132, d. 111, ll. 45–68.

⁹¹ For documents concerning anti-religious propaganda in response to religious activity, see RGASPI, f. 17, o. 125, d. 506 (1947); RGASPI, f. 17, o. 132, d. 6 (1948–49); RGASPI, f. 17, o. 132, d. 10 (1948–49); RGANI, f. 5, o. 17, d. 452 ((1953–54); RGANI, f. 5, o. 33, d. 215 (1962–63). On the work of the Knowledge Society in the realm of disseminating state atheism in the provincial RSFSR, see Sonja Luehrmann, *Secularism Soviet Style: Teaching Atheism and Religion in a Volga Republic* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011).

failures of agitation and propaganda work. Most concerning were reports of party members and Komsomol activists taking part in religious weddings and other rites, suggesting the limits of the state's religious accommodations.⁹² This presented the need for more extensive rituals that could compete with religious practice. Leaders began by addressing several administrative problems concerning the governance of civic acts themselves.

Administrative Changes and Improvements to Civil Registries

Even before the advent of new civil rituals, party leaders criticized serious shortcomings in registering civil acts that many feared had led to a greater inclination to turn to religious institutions for a more celebratory environment to mark major life moments, even among party and Komsomol members. Until 1956, the work of civil registry offices fell under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the organization in charge of both the ordinary and secret police. This often detracted from the celebratory atmosphere many newlyweds desired. As a December 1958 Komsomol report for the Central Committee admitted, "The premises of many district and city civil registry offices are in a neglected condition. In many cases, the registry offices are located in police stations, sometimes next to pre-trial detention cells, and the necessary furniture and equipment are lacking."⁹³ Given the circumstances, the report seemed to suggest, it was hardly surprising that many young people were reluctant to make ZAGS the centerpiece of their wedding celebrations.

New attention to the work of registry offices reemphasized the state's role in private life. A 1946 decree addressed the dismal state of affairs at civic registry offices in the RSFSR, tasking local organs with renovating their premises and offering a better environment for registering civil

⁹² RGASPI, f. 17, o. 132, d. 6, ll. 123–29; RGASPI, f. 17, o. 132, d. 109, ll. 82–88.

⁹³ RGASPI, f. M-1, o. 32, d. 940, ll. 1–12, here 4. The December 30, 1958 report extended arguments from a previous report, sent to the Central Committee on December 3, 1958, see ll. 13–18.

acts. The decree ordered registry offices to provide comfortable reception rooms, including a separate waiting room and a hall for the actual marriage registration. It also decreed that weddings should be officiated at predetermined times, so as not to coincide with the registration of other civil acts. Simultaneous divorce proceedings or funerals were not considered optimal; as one report dryly noted, “the registration of marriage and death should be separated.”⁹⁴ The decree also sought to regulate weddings rituals themselves, with specific procedures for applying to marry, signing marriage documents, and receiving the subsequent paperwork. By direction of the Soviet of People’s Commissars, other republics were asked to issue analogous decrees that would account for “local particularities.”⁹⁵

Despite these improvements, problems continued. One report complained that much of the furniture in registry offices had not been renovated or replaced for decades and had simply become junk.⁹⁶ A 1954 report noted that many localities had ignored the instructions from the decree entirely: “Despite the governmental decree, in many cases ZAGS organs are still housed together with other institutions, their premises are often tight, not adequately furnished, lack the necessary equipment, and are kept in an unsatisfactory condition.” The authors of the report, A. Gorkin, K. Gorshenin, V. Starovskii, and A. Puzanov, recommended careful oversight to ensure local offices made the necessary improvements, and they advocated a significant increase in the number of officials hired to staff these institutions.⁹⁷

Further improvements came with a major administrative change in 1956, which shifted the jurisdiction of civil registry offices from the Ministry of Internal Affairs (the police) to the executive committees of local soviets. This shift, the 1958 Komsomol report noted, “contributed

⁹⁴ RGASPI, f. M-1, o. 32, d. 940, ll. 3–4. Quote from another report in the same file, l. 172.

⁹⁵ RGASPI, f. M-1, o. 32, d. 940, ll. 3–4.

⁹⁶ RGASPI, f. M-1, o. 32, d. 940, l. 14

⁹⁷ GARF, f. 9415, o. 3, d. 1392, ll. 160–62, quote on 161.

to the revitalization of registry offices,” as public organizations, including the Komsomol, began tentatively to participate and assist with their work. The Ministry of Trade also circulated a 1958 letter that ordered republic, regional, and oblast trade administrations to ensure wide availability of all goods and services needed for weddings, from dresses and suits to candy and champagne. The letter encouraged republics and local offices to consider opening special stores for wedding attire, developing systems for ordering and delivering food for receptions, and selling flowers, candy, fruit and champagne at registry offices themselves.⁹⁸ Local initiatives sought to move weddings away from civil registry offices to workers’ clubs and houses of culture, which offered a more genial atmosphere for wedding celebrations.⁹⁹

Despite significant improvements, shortcomings remained. At least one report, prepared by Z. Sinitsyn in Latvia, blamed high divorce rates on insufficient attention towards wedding festivities. Greater attention to the importance of marriage, as might be suggested by better wedding procedures, Sinitsyn argued, could potentially lower divorce rates and contribute to a stronger, more stable Soviet family.¹⁰⁰ Participants at a regional meeting in Sverdlovsk, including local officials, Komsomol leaders, and trade union representatives, complained of insufficient involvement from public organizations. Furthermore, activists worried that marriage rituals were too underdeveloped to “create a solemn/celebratory (*torzhestvennyi*) atmosphere.”¹⁰¹

Despite promising local initiatives—the report singled out for praise the Irkutsk, Stalingrad, and Kalinin oblasts—the general situation remained unsatisfactory and in many

⁹⁸ RGASPI, f. M-1, o. 32, d. 940, ll. 8–9.

⁹⁹ RGASPI, f. M-1, o. 32, d. 940, l. 9.

¹⁰⁰ Z. Sinitsyn, “O probleme regulirovaniia braka-semeinykh otnoshchenii. Brak—ser’eznoe delo,” Kemer (Latvia), in f. M-1, o. 32, d. 940, ll. 37–92. Many officials expressed concerns over rising divorce rates and poor sexual mores among young citizens. For more on divorce and family law across the Soviet period, see especially Deborah A. Field, “Irreconcilable Differences: Divorce and Conceptions of Private Life in the Khrushchev Era,” *The Russian Review* 57, no. 4 (1998): 599–613; Mie Nakachi, “A Postwar Sexual Liberation? The Gendered Experience of the Soviet Union’s Great Patriotic War,” *Cahiers du Monde russe* 52, no. 2/3 (2011): 423–40.

¹⁰¹ RGASPI, f. M-1, o. 32, d. 940, ll. 5–6.

cases, quite “formal,” a situation blamed for the high rates of church weddings among youth. The Komsomol offered a long list of suggestions for improving the state of wedding rituals, which included continued monitoring of the condition of registry offices, improving the availability of goods and services from wedding dresses to taxis, and improving the wedding ceremony itself.¹⁰² It was in this context that the February 1958 Komsomol wedding in Kalinin (present-day Tver’), described in the chapter’s introduction, became an example for a new approach to civil rituals, which set the stage for new articulations of Soviet identity.

The Komsomol Wedding (1958) and the Rise of New, Celebratory Weddings

By the late 1950s, substantial consensus had emerged about the unsuitability of existing marriage rituals, and a number of institutions and organizations set out to find better answers for how to meet the needs of the population. In doing so, cultural activists and government officials sought to address two primary problems: the elevated numbers of church weddings, baptisms, and funerals and high levels of divorce. To create better rituals and offer greater support to Soviet families, political and cultural activists turned to older traditions as a way to boost the significance and emotional appeal for citizens, which would in turn foster a deeper sense of affective attachment to the state.

Regional ethnographic expeditions sought to identify historical and ongoing traditions associated with specific communities and ethnic groups. A report on the “modern peasant wedding,” based on materials from expeditions in the Kalinin oblast between 1956–58, observed that the general basis for weddings had changed dramatically under Soviet rule. The older idea that parents would arrange a wedding based on economic considerations was roundly rejected by young citizens, who now chose partners based on personal qualities and relationships. Parents,

¹⁰² RGASPI, f. M-1, o. 32, d. 940, ll. 10–15.

the report, concluded, still offered advice, and sometimes even successfully intervened, but young people determined their own fate. Since the revolution, many older traditions had carried over in altered forms. Although dowries had fallen out of custom, the bride's family still often gave a substantial gift to the groom—a fur coat, boots, or another expensive object—that was generally not returned if the engagement was broken off. A matchmaking ceremony (*svatovstvo*) had generally evolved into little more than an announcement of an engagement, while religious aspects and the bride's ritualized mourning of her own maidenhood had disappeared. Fun elements—games and other merrymaking—in contrast, largely continued, though celebrations were much abridged relative to the multi-day celebrations of the past.¹⁰³

Some of these traditional elements could be seen in the 1958 Komsomol wedding discussed in the introduction, a description of which was prepared by the Executive Committee of the Kalinin oblast soviet as a model for a new kind of wedding. Although this wedding self-consciously and primarily derived its legitimacy from its novelty, the ceremony borrowed extensively from traditional elements: the use of elaborately painted horse-drawn sleighs, the singing of 'Russian' songs, the ceremonial role of 'matchmakers,' traditional clothing, and the parental reception of the newlyweds with bread and salt. These old-style touches added to the wedding's emotional impact. Although this was not the first so-called "Komsomol Wedding"—the term had occasionally surfaced in previous decades—it was part of broader attention to civil rituals that began in the late 1950s.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ RGASPI, f. M-1, o. 32, d. 940, ll. 118–37. For examples of literature on folk wedding practices and other folk rituals based on historical and ethnographic research, see Neonila Ivanivna Zdroveha, *Narysy narodnoi vesil'noi obriadovosti na Ukraini* (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1974); essays in V.K. Sokolova, ed., *Obriady i obriadovi fol'klor* (Moscow: Nauka, 1982); essays in I.A. Kryvelev and D. M. Korgan, eds., *Traditsionnye i novye obriady v bytu narodov SSSR* (Moscow: Nauka, 1981); Kalilov, *Novye obriady i traditsii u kirgizov*; V. K. Borysenko, *Vesil'ni zvychai ta obriady na Ukraini* (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1988). For the most detailed comparative description of various festivities across cultures, see Tul'tseva, *Sovremennye prazdniki i obriady narodov SSSR*.

¹⁰⁴ For early uses of the term, see "Sredi molodezhi," *Pravda*, 1 November 1923, 3; V. Avilov, "Gnev Bozhii," *Krokodil*, No. 20 (1925), 5; Lev Oshanin, "Uvlekat' komsomol'skie serdtsa!" *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 18 March 1954,

Improvements to wedding ceremonies concentrated on several shortcomings in existing practice. The location of weddings continued to be a primary focus. The opening of halls and institutions specifically designed for weddings began in the late 1950s. The first wedding palace, a retrofitted two-story imperial edifice, opened along the banks of the Neva River in Leningrad in November 1959. The first floor had special rooms for submitting and receiving paperwork and separate waiting rooms for the bride and groom and their friends. A carpeted white marble staircase, flanked with statues representing the four seasons, led to the second floor, where there were large halls for the ceremony and reception. The second floor also included a shop for flowers and gifts, where newlyweds could buy rings and guests could purchase presents. A photographer was always on hand, ready to document the ceremony according to the couple's desires. Music rang throughout the palace, with a program designed specifically for weddings.¹⁰⁵

According to a 1964 report, the first palace attracted widespread approval and admiration. The report praised new Soviet weddings as a bulwark of atheism, particularly when conducted in grand and opulent settings:

The opening of the Weddings Palace in Leningrad has great political significance. It is a stronghold of atheist propaganda and it has become easier to fight the influence of religion and religious rituals among youth. It would not be superfluous to mention a conversation between the head of the Palace of Marriage with an elderly man, the grandfather of one of the brides, who said, "I am a deeply religious man and in my time, I got married in the church, but I wanted to see the wedding of my granddaughter in the new Palace, because in the church, they still teach 'Let the wife be afraid of her husband.' This is not suitable for our youth, but here, it is bright, festive, and the words are simple...in a word, it is completely modern."¹⁰⁶

Within just a few months, demand for the Leningrad wedding palace was high enough that it

2; "Komsomol'skaia svad'ba," *Pravda*, 25 January 1957, 6; A. Voloshin, "Doroga v gorakh," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 25 July 1957, 2. In most instances, the term generally described a wedding among young people rather than a specific set of festivities. Beginning in the late 1950s, the term took on a more fixed meaning.

¹⁰⁵ Description of the palace derived from RGASPI, f. M-1, o. 32, d. 1151, ll. 40–41.

¹⁰⁶ RGASPI, f. M-1, o. 32, d. 1151, l. 43. Ellipsis in the original. The Biblical quote is from Ephesians 5:33 ("However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband," NIV), but I have translated it literally from the Russian.

worked nonstop from 10 am to 10 pm daily. In the first five years of its existence, some 50,000 weddings took place in its premises, and the palace attracted visits from fellow citizens and foreigners. Even East German First Secretary Walter Ulbricht and his wife stopped in to admire the palace and extend their good wishes for its continued operation.¹⁰⁷

New wedding rituals became features not only of social calendars but also of the geographical landscape of Soviet life. In subsequent years, similar palaces and special buildings specifically for weddings opened up across the country, first in Moscow, Kyiv, and other large cities, and eventually in smaller communities.¹⁰⁸ Cities and oblasts commissioned new houses and palaces for conducting the ceremonies, often combining elements of local culture with communist symbols. For instance, Almaty's short, cylindrical Wedding Palace (1971) incorporated design elements that were intentionally reminiscent of a yurt but simultaneously featured the standard Lenin portrait and other Soviet symbols.

Throughout the late 1960s and '70s, houses and palaces for weddings proliferated across the country, often in prominent locations in city centers. As one book noted, the first House of Happiness opened in Tashkent in 1964, with another seven opening shortly thereafter across the republic. By 1977, Uzbekistan had 365 of these specialized institutions, a tribute to their importance to late Soviet urban planning.¹⁰⁹ To add to their attraction, buildings were outfitted with all the conveniences deemed necessary for modern Soviet weddings, including shops to buy flowers, wedding clothes, and other necessities. These buildings were built to impart some of the drama and significance that might have been captured by churches, mosques, synagogues, and other religious buildings, often with stained glass, carpeted hallways, and portraits of Lenin and other key figures. One oblast report from Kazakhstan proudly mentioned that a hall had been

¹⁰⁷ RGASPI, f. M-1, o. 32, d. 1151, l. 40.

¹⁰⁸ RGASPI, f. M-1, o. 32, d. 1151, l. 43.

¹⁰⁹ Evstifeev, *Starye obychai, novye traditsii*, 36.

specially appointed and furnished for the weddings in the local Palace of Culture, complete with a prominent bust of Lenin and visible state emblem—truly every couple’s dream!¹¹⁰

Alongside improving buildings and halls used for weddings, considerable thought went to the ceremonies themselves. Activists ensured that the wedding rites would be reasonably straightforward but imbued with sufficient meaning and beauty so as to make them attractive to young people.¹¹¹ In a Komsomol meeting at the division on working youth, participants highlighted the need for attracting talented artists, dance groups, and choral collectives to ensure the quality of the rites. Some proposed assembling published collections based on research and ethnography for couples to select from. Others emphasized the importance of ensuring photographers were always on hand. Traditional food was also thought to be important, with specific reference to the *korovai*, a decorative bread prepared for weddings. Some recommended commissioning new wedding songs, since more traditional versions were no longer handed down from generation to generation. With the help of the Institute of Ethnography, special brochures were compiled to advise couples on how to organize the wedding. All agreed that weddings should be happy, celebratory occasions, and there was much urgent work to be done.¹¹²

From Birth to Death: Family Life in Soviet Rituals

New wedding rituals were not the only traditions to be updated for late Soviet conditions.

¹¹⁰ APRK, f. 708, o. 85, d. 102, l. 69. The file contains a number of local reports from 1979 detailing their work in establishing new rituals. For additional reports from the RSFSR, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine, see GARF, f. A259, o. 45, dd. 1456, 1457, 1468 (1964); APRK, f. 708, o. 67, d. 94 (1979); TsDAHOU, f. 1, o. 31, dd. 2401 and 2402 (1964); TsDAHOU, f. 1, o. 32, d. 46 (1970).

¹¹¹ For discussions of these rituals in Kazakhstan, see APRK, f. 708, o. 44, d. 209; APRK, f. 708, o. 67, d. 93; APRK f. 708, o. 85, d. 102. Among these documents are many local reports on what is being done to make these new wedding palaces more appealing to the population. Obshchestvo Znanie also held a roundtable event to discuss the history and future of Soviet rituals on April 4–5, 1985. See GARF, f. 9547, o. 1, dd. 3660–3661.

¹¹² All drawn from a record of an undated (1958) conversation, see RGASPI, f. M-1, o. 32, d. 940, 171–73. For an example of a brochure that included information about how to organize a wedding, see E.M. Titarenko, ed., *Za novye sovetskie traditsii i obriady* (Voronezh: Tsentralno-chernozernoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1965), 11–19.

In the 1960s, the party and state combatted religious practice not only by propagandizing against it but also by offering richer civil alternatives. Two others, the celebratory registration of the birth of a child (and/or a complementary name-giving ritual) and the more somber civil funerals, offered secular alternatives to events that might otherwise have had religious overtones. Officials feared civil registration alone was too bureaucratic and devoid of emotion to compete with religious alternatives. New ceremonies for birth registration and funerals were not nearly as successful as new wedding rituals, in part because many citizens found simple civil registration to be sufficient. As with weddings, other new “civil rituals” (*grazhdanskie obriady*) were primarily developed at the republic level, where officials created and promoted ceremonies that incorporated regional and ethnic particularities.

Sustained attention to rituals around birth dated to the 1960s. Like weddings, new birth rituals were tied to concerns about religious activity, especially the high number of baptisms.¹¹³ In 1965, Leningrad, ever ahead of the game (or at least with an ample supply of underutilized grandiose buildings), opened the first “Palace of the Infant” (*Dvorets Maliutka*), a two-storied villa with specially appointed space for filling out documents, a shop for selling toys and gifts, rooms for mothers and children (with pediatricians and nurses on hand), and ceremonial and banquet halls.¹¹⁴ Faced with requests for similar institutions, cities quickly followed suit, or else reserved specific space within existing institutions for registering births.¹¹⁵ Some palaces offered parenting advice, in the form of both consultation evenings and brochures that new parents could take home.¹¹⁶ The plethora of services was designed to entice new parents to make birth

¹¹³ On baptisms as the impetus for new rituals, see Vladimir Aleksandrovich Rudnev, *Sovetskie prazdniki, obriady, ritualy* (Leningrad: Lenizdat, 1979), 119.

¹¹⁴ The palace is described in Belov, *Nashi prazdniki*, 133.

¹¹⁵ Rudnev, *Sovetskie prazdniki, obriady, ritualy*, 125.

¹¹⁶ Rudnev, 130. As Rudnev notes, these instructional materials included directions about how to raise healthy children, how to bathe and breastfeed babies, and how to keep to infant feeding schedules.

registration a celebratory event.

Rituals surrounding the birth of a child were simultaneously private family moments and public civil events. Ceremonies were infused with the language of citizenship, as the birth of a child was also the birth of a new citizen. Literature on birth registration procedures emphasized their social function, as well as the importance of the love, care, and help for a child and new parents from a community of family, friends, and co-workers. At the Leningrad Palace, the presiding official read the following text upon the official signing of paperwork, “Today, the son/daughter, born into the family of (parents’ names), is registered. According to the parents’ wish, he/she is given the name (child’s name). In honor of new citizen (child’s first and last name), the state anthem of the Soviet Union will be sung.” To the tune of the anthem, local officials congratulated the parents and gave them the birth certificate, a medallion, and a congratulatory letter from the city administration.¹¹⁷

Like marriage rituals, birth rituals reflected ethnic and local traditions, with some variation across the country. As Lane notes, Latvian rituals were less severe and more emotional than the Leningrad variant. As part of the ritual, young children in national dress presented new parents with the birth certificate with candles that would be lit during the ceremony. A local official emphasized the importance of raising the child in the spirit of love for one’s native place, a stepping stone for love of the Soviet Union, reflecting the nested forms of patriotism discussed in Chapter 2.¹¹⁸ In Ukraine, local elders added a traditional touch, while Karelia employed folk choirs.¹¹⁹ In Lithuania, there was more focus on the actual function of naming the child, and ceremonies often incorporated a traditional family feast. Grandmothers played a uniquely important role in Belarus. In Uzbekistan, reworked “cradle celebrations” (*beshik to’y*) were also

¹¹⁷ Belov, *Nashi prazdniki*, 133.

¹¹⁸ Lane, *The Rites of Rulers*, 71–72.

¹¹⁹ Belov, *Nashi prazdniki*, 134–37.

adapted and included in new civil rituals.¹²⁰ Across the country, new parents planted trees in honor of newborn children, often in special parks where entire promenades were lined with trees for new citizens.¹²¹

Along with offering secular alternatives to baptism, circumcision, and other religious rites, new rituals promoted proper birth registration with the state. Avoiding or circumventing parental reliance on religious ceremony was certainly one benefit of offering more celebratory rituals. Officials, however, were often less concerned about whether the birth was registered in this new, celebratory manner, as long as the birth was registered with local authorities, an important bureaucratic procedure that rendered new citizens legible to state authorities. Although this was less of a problem in urban centers and across the western Soviet Union, officials expressed concerns about unregistered births in Central Asia and in rural communities. Alongside promoting new registration rituals, city and regional authorities conducted extensive work at birthing homes and hospitals to streamline and simplify the registration process, ensuring that the country's newest citizens were known and accounted for.¹²²

Concerns about religious practices also undergirded a new focus on civil funerals, easily the least successful of the new life-cycle rituals developed by state, party, and cultural activists in the 1960s, '70s, and '80s. Civil funerals, at least where they were implemented, offered a somber, reflective service for family members, friends, and coworkers to remember deceased loved ones. A ceremony, overseen by a trained official in uniform, focused on the life of the deceased, before the family accompanied the coffin for burial. Music and poetry, like Dmitrii

¹²⁰ Tul'tseva, *Sovremennye prazdniki i obriady narodov SSSR*, 139–40.

¹²¹ Belov, *Nashi prazdniki*, 134–37.

¹²² On concerns about unregistered births and the measured improvements in getting more babies registered in 1971, see especially GARF, f. 9492 o. 8, d. 52, ll. 16–24 (Tajikistan), 38–45 (Turkmenistan). In Tajikistan, they believed measures to encourage birth registration, from hospital visits to more celebratory rituals, had decreased unregistered births from 44.3 percent in 1958 to between 4.2 and 6.4 percent in 1970, see ll. 20–21.

Shostakovich's Requiem and Robert Rozhdestvenskii's poem "Requiem," contributed to the reflective, somber atmosphere. Speeches reminded loved ones that the work and memory of the departed lived on.¹²³

As with weddings and birth registration, some attention went towards ensuring that cities and rural centers had suitable infrastructure for carrying out civic funerals appropriately. In the 1960s and '70s, there were efforts to improve the quality and administration of cemeteries, many of which were in a disastrous state, thanks to chronic neglect.¹²⁴ There was also some attention to constructing new pavilions within the territory of cemeteries themselves and adding shops for selling wreaths, flowers, and other funereal items. These provided a convenient and appropriate space to conduct civil funerals.¹²⁵

Unlike more laudatory descriptions of birth and wedding rituals, state, party, and cultural activists spoke extensively about shortcomings in funeral rites.¹²⁶ Some worried that existing civil funeral ceremonies, while modestly successfully in cities, were poorly adapted for rural environments.¹²⁷ Despite improvements to the quality and care of cemeteries and the commissioning of new music and rites, secular funerals remained by and large unpopular, especially in the countryside. Authorities may have spoken of the need to improve these rituals, but many seemed unconcerned by the lack of success in this arena, particularly in contrast to concerns about birth registration and weddings. In part, difficulties in introducing and

¹²³ On funerals, see Brudnyi, *Obriady vchera i segodnia*, 153–60; Rudnev, *Sovetskie prazdniki, obriady, ritualy*, 176–82; Lane, *The Rites of Rulers*, 82–86. As Lane notes (82), many books on Soviet rituals eliminated discussion of funerals entirely, illustrating the lower priority afforded to these rituals. Funeral rites approved in Ukraine in 1975 can be found in Central State Archives of Supreme Bodies of Power and Government of Ukraine (hereafter TsDAVOU), f. 2, o. 13, d. 9748a, ll. 100–29.

¹²⁴ As one report noted, less than two percent of funerals were celebrated in the "new" way in Ukraine around 1975, while nearly 50 percent of funerals took place in a church. Specialists complained of the lack of central oversight to managing cemeteries, but it is unclear whether suggestions for a centralized institution were realized: TsDAVOU, f. 2, o. 13, d. 9743, ll. 23–27. On earlier changes to cemeteries, see Merridale, "Revolution among the Dead."

¹²⁵ On suggestions for improving cemeteries, see RGASPI, f. M-1, o. 32, d. 1151, l. 35. Mock drawings for pavilions can be seen in TsDAVOU, f. 2, o. 13, d. 9748a, ll. 121–22.

¹²⁶ E.g. TsDAVOU, f. 2, o. 10, d. 3559, ll. 59–64; TsDAVOU, f. 2, o. 13, d. 9743, ll. 23–27.

¹²⁷ TsDAHOU, f. 1, o. 32, d. 431, ll. 7–8.

popularizing secular funerals stemmed from problems inherent in atheist cosmology. Although a belief in life after death was certainly not a precondition for meaningful funerals, death rituals were precisely the arena in which ideology and new rituals offered the least meaningful alternative to religion. As a result, attitudes, beliefs, and practices surrounding death continued to be influenced by religious belief, even as actual belief evolved and declined.¹²⁸ The state clearly had far more success with rituals for happier occasions.

The Proliferation of Rituals: Socializing Citizens

Rituals celebrating more private milestones in family life—marriage, birth, death—were complemented by new celebrations for other key life events that marked social milestones, including the first day of school, the presentation of the first internal passport, recruitment into the military, and various job-related milestones (the first paycheck, promotions, retirement). Unlike weddings, birth registrations, and funerals, these civic milestones were often celebrated collectively, as groups rather than individuals marked milestones together. Across the Soviet Union, at both republic and local levels, commissions under the authority of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies prepared formal rituals for these new celebratory occasions. Celebrations of these moments rooted (especially young) citizens' private lives and personal development into the life of their communities and celebrated their progressive inclusion in society. The rituals represented state attempts to foster a more universal civic identity.

In general, these rituals celebrated citizens' socialization through their inclusion in the

¹²⁸ On Russian and Soviet attitudes towards death, see Catherine Merridale, *Night of Stone: Death and Memory in Twentieth-Century Russia* (London: Penguin Books, 2002). On Jewish death rituals, see Sarah Garibova, "Memories for a Blessing: Jewish Mourning Rituals and Commemorative Practices in Postwar Belarus and Ukraine, 1944–1991" (University of Michigan, 2017). As Lane notes, religious beliefs did not go unchanged: many self-identified believers by the late 1960s and '70s no longer believed in an afterlife, and most people attended funerals as a means of mourning rather than prayer, see *The Rites of Rulers*, 83.

main institutions of Soviet life, including schools, the military, and the workplace.¹²⁹ Of these rituals, the presentation of the internal passport most obviously expressed state aims of cultivating civic identity and a sense of citizenship among young citizens. By the mid-1970s, the passport system underwent a major change, as use of the internal passport expanded to include previously excluded rural inhabitants. With the universalization of the passport system in 1976, all citizens over 16 years of age were required to carry the internal passport as their primary identity document, one that testified to citizens' nested ethnic and civic identities.¹³⁰ The creation of special festivities for ceremonial presentations of citizens' first passport, a process that began in the 1960s, would add an air of formality and solemnity to this civil ritual. According to a 1977 book, "The presentation of the passport of a citizen of the USSR, the official recognition of young men and women as full-fledged (*polnopravnye*) citizens of the Country of the Soviets, is a significant and thrilling event in the life of young people. This event signifies for them the start of adulthood and independence."¹³¹

Like other ceremonies, the passport ceremony did not have a single form, allowing for regional and local variation. Ceremonies often borrowed from a shared set of rites, including speeches on the responsibilities and duties of citizenship, a formal statement or oath from participants acknowledging their status as citizens of the Soviet Union, a rendition of the national anthem, and recitations of various poems and texts, often including Vladimir Mayakovsky's *Lines about a Soviet Passport*.¹³² The 1929 poem, quoted in the epigraph of the dissertation,

¹²⁹ Descriptions of each of these rituals can be found in Belov, *Nashi prazdniki*; Lane, *The Rites of Rulers*, 67–129. An early set of rituals can also be found in L. Vol'f, *Novye sovetskie traditsii i grazhdanskii obriady: metodicheskoe posobie* (Riga, 1964).

¹³⁰ The law for universal passportization was passed in 1974, but it was implemented only two years later. On the passport system, see Zaslavsky and Luryi, "The Passport System in the USSR and Changes in Soviet Society"; Baiburin, *Sovetskii pasport*.

¹³¹ Belov, *Nashi prazdniki*, 137.

¹³² Brudnyi, *Obriady vchera i segodnia*, 39–46; Belov, *Nashi prazdniki*, 137–39; Lane, *The Rites of Rulers*, 99–102; Albert Baiburin, "Rituals of Identity: The Soviet Passport," in *Soviet and Post-Soviet Identities*, ed. Mark Bassin and

concluded with the poet defiantly and proudly showing his passport at the border: “Read it, envy me, I am a citizen of the Soviet Union.”¹³³ To add to the solemnity and as a symbol of generational turnover, local elites often participated in the ceremonies, including officials, old Bolsheviks, war veterans, and decorated workers. The older generation served as an example to their sixteen-year-old compatriots of how to live and contribute to society.¹³⁴ Passport rituals were often held at war memorials in the summer or in conjunction with local Constitution Day celebrations (December 5 until 1977, October 7 thereafter).¹³⁵

Together with new rituals for family milestones, rituals celebrating citizens’ progressive socialization were seen to be part of a distinctly “Soviet way of life” (*sovetskii obraz zhizni*) emerging among citizens, as described by N. Andrianov and A. Belov, candidates of philosophical sciences, in a 1976 *Pravda* article:

Here dozens of new civil rituals have been quickly approved. They have become an inseparable part of the Soviet way of life... In its symbolic, vividly emotional form, this new socialist ritualism (*obriadnost’*) collectively expresses events that are significant for people. It fulfills important social, worldview, and ideological functions. Having become an element of spiritual culture, it serves as one of the means for transmitting leading ideas and impressions from generation to generation, and enables the confirmation of communist ideals, revolutionary and patriotic traditions, and moral education.¹³⁶

As Andrianov and Belov made clear, rituals helped to forge an affective community, unified in its spiritual values, revolutionary history, and pursuit of communism. This distinct way of life, they suggested, was at the core of a shared identity that united citizens across a vast geographic space. At the same time, the rituals themselves were not monolithic. The “dozens” of emerging ritual forms reflected the richness of the country's diverse, multiethnic population.

Catriona Kelly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 96–103. Baiburin considers how the passport and the ceremony contributed to understandings of the self and functioned as “rituals of identity.” On the development of the ceremony in Ukraine, see TsDAVOU, f. 2, o. 14, d. 821 (1975–78).

¹³³ V.V. Maiakovskii, *Sochineniia v dvukh tomakh*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Pravda, 1987), 594–97, here 597.

¹³⁴ E.g. Belov, *Nashi prazdniki*, 138–39.

¹³⁵ E.g. APRK, f. 708, o. 67, d. 97, ll. 38, 65.

¹³⁶ N. Andrianov and A. Belov, “Sovetskomu cheloveku—novye obriady,” *Pravda*, 28 May 1976, 3. Belov was the primary editor of *Nashi Prazdniki* (1977), one of the major works to outline the history and practice of Soviet rituals.

Blending the Soviet and the Ethnic

In the eyes of many experts, a primary concern was how to imbue new rituals with meaningful emotional content. According to specialists, the path towards emotional impact was paved directly by elements of ethnic and traditional cultures and by instilling older, more traditional rites with new, specifically Soviet interpretations. Determining which traditions to include remained, in the words of one expert, “one of the most difficult questions in the development of new rituality.”¹³⁷ In their syncretic blend of old and new, Soviet rituals were “invented traditions” that borrowed from the past for their emotional legitimacy, yet were carefully and self-consciously developed and adapted for the modern era.¹³⁸ The ethnically informed shape of new rituals echoed the underlying goal of the nationalities policy of another era, which had sought to mitigate ethnic opposition by encouraging the development of national forms within strict boundaries. Although the purpose was no longer to avoid ethnic unrest, rituals broadcasted official views on the limits of acceptable ethnic expression.

Activists focused on how to cleanse traditional rites of antiquated content and symbolism. Most prominently, this meant eliminating or reinterpreting their religious significance. As Dmitrii Ugrinovich noted, “The use of old, folk ritual forms is expedient in those situations when they are not organically connected to an ideology and psychology that is antagonistic to us.”¹³⁹ Many expressed concern that older religious and ethnic rituals implied certain understandings of

¹³⁷ Ugrinovich, *Obriady*, 152. Here, he simply discusses the blending of older and newer traditions. Later, he noted that the blurred line between civic and ethnic traditions presented difficulties, see 156–57. For a similar statement, see N. Sarsenbaev, *Obychai i traditsii v razvitiu* (Almaty: Kazakhstan, 1965), 101. On the blend of old and new more generally, see A. Filatov, *O novykh i starykh obriadakh* (Moscow: Profizdat, 1987).

¹³⁸ As Eric Hobsbawm described in a 1983 essay, “‘Invented tradition’ is... a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour which automatically implies continuity with the past.” Eric Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Tradition,” in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger, Canto Edition (Cambridge University Press, 1992), 1. In comparison to most of the rituals discussed in the Hobsbawm and Ranger volume, Soviet rituals were more self-conscious of their invented status, but tradition similarly served a legitimizing role.

¹³⁹ Ugrinovich, *Obriady*, 155.

social relations that were unacceptable in modern Soviet times. In a 1977 book, for example, Aleksandr Evstifeev warned against Orthodox and Islamic attitudes towards women, which tended to see women as property and deprived them of civil rights. He believed newer Soviet rituals offered an opportunity to create a “family of a new type,” which needed to be celebrated in a public, emotional way that would be memorable to all involved.¹⁴⁰

Among specialists, there was considerable confidence about citizens’ ability to reinterpret and appropriate older traditions. As Ugrinovich noted, when determining the suitability of older traditions, “it is important to consider whether one or another traditional ritual form expresses new conceptual content, or, at the very least, does not contradict [that content].” As examples of good reinterpretation, he noted that engagement rituals no longer symbolized economic relations between families but the couple’s intent to enter into marriage. Similarly, wedding rings had shed their ecclesiastical origins to become symbols of spousal fidelity, which served civil weddings well.¹⁴¹ Evstifeev suggested that young couples had reinterpreted the traditional practice of showering newlyweds with grain—historically to protect them from evil spirits and poverty—as a symbol of peace and harmony.¹⁴²

Scholars, activists, and theorists wrote extensively on the idea that new rituals could combine elements of both the “ethnic” and the Soviet. The “inclusion of ethno-progressive elements in the shared traditions of people of our country,” the Ivano-Frankivisk oblast committee secretary P.D. Sardachuk wrote in 1983, “strengthens their international content. Even the deepest feelings of love for one’s Motherland is formed by the means of fostering in young men and women love for their native land, the paternal home.” Citing one example, he noted that Carpathian mothers in one district in his oblast sent off their sons for military service

¹⁴⁰ Evstifeev, *Starye obychai, novye traditsii*, 32–33.

¹⁴¹ Ugrinovich, *Obriady*, 153–54.

¹⁴² Evstifeev, *Starye obychai, novye traditsii*, 34.

with forest flowers and hand-sewn embroidered cloths.¹⁴³ Another observer, citing recent ethnographic research, noted that many Kyrgyz marriage traditions continued to the present, and he reflected on his belief that the most successful new traditions were ones with analogues in traditional culture.¹⁴⁴

Rituals themselves often differed from place to place in overt and subtle ways, reflecting the specific regional and ethnic traditions of various communities. Ugrinovich argued that the suitability of older traditional rituals depended on the couple themselves and their way of life, suggesting the need for a certain degree of flexibility. What worked in cities, he argued, was not always ideal in the countryside.¹⁴⁵ In general, experts saw rituals as a connection to the past and encouraged the use of ethnic, local, and traditional rituals whenever they could be deemed appropriate.¹⁴⁶ As Vladimir Brudnyi argued in a 1968 book, incorporating traditional elements ensured that weddings continued to express the “people’s soul” (*dusha narodnaia*). As a result, traditions—dress, food, music, rites—differed according to local customs.¹⁴⁷

Regional difference was further encouraged by a significant decentralization in the development and implementation of rituals, which was generally left up to union and autonomous republics. Brudnyi specifically drew from differences between Russia and Ukraine (and within Ukraine itself).¹⁴⁸ In Ukraine and Moldova, proposed uniforms for the personnel who

¹⁴³ P.D. Sardachuk, “Dialektika internatsional’nogo i natsional’nogo v novoi sovetskoï obriadnosti,” in V.A. Zots, ed., *Traditsii, obriady, sovremennost’* (Kyiv: Politicheskoi literatury Ukrainy, 1983), 56–65, here 59.

¹⁴⁴ Kalilov, *Novye obriady i traditsii u kirgizov*, 83.

¹⁴⁵ Ugrinovich, *Obriady*, 155–56.

¹⁴⁶ For example Sarsenbaev, *Obychai i traditsii v razvitii*, 101–2; 318–19; Brudnyi, *Obriady vchera i segodnia*; Ivan Vasil’evich Sukhanov, *Obychai, traditsii i preemstvennost’ pokolenii* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1976); essays in Sokolova, *Obriady i obriadovy fol’klor*.

¹⁴⁷ For a comparative work that analyzed differences in ritual practices across the Soviet Union, see Tul’tseva, *Sovremennye prazdniki i obriady narodov SSSR*.

¹⁴⁸ Brudnyi, *Obriady vchera i segodnia*, 141–48. On Ukrainian customs specifically, see also Zdoroveha, *Narysy narodnoi vesil’noi obriadovosti na Ukraini*; Borysenko, *Vesil’ni zvychai ta obriady na Ukraini*.

would carry out civil rituals incorporated traditional embroidery.¹⁴⁹ Songs were also considered to be an important expression of national identity, foremost in the Western Soviet Union.¹⁵⁰ In the Baltic republics, greater emphasis was also put on coming-of-age rituals, in part to compete with the Catholic and Protestant confirmation ceremonies typically completed by teenagers.¹⁵¹ Reflecting official emphasis on local and ethnic traditions, books and materials on civil rituals and rites were prepared and published all across the country, often in non-Russian languages.¹⁵²

Although cultural activists sought to blend local practice with Soviet rituals, this was not always successful. A. Aliev, the author of a 1968 book published in Makhachkala, Dagestan, complained that, while new forms of weddings eliminated many dangerous elements from the past and were now preferred by young people, there had been too little attention to national traditions: “In new weddings, the parents of the bride and groom and their relatives are often pushed away from making plans, which damages the family character of the ritual; the good elements that can be saved from folk rituals of matchmaking and marriage are not being used.”

¹⁴⁹ For Ukraine, see TsDAVOU, R-2, o. 13, d. 9748a, ll. 201–202. For Moldovan variants, see Valentin Stepanovich Zelenchuk and L. D. Loskutova, *Novye grazhdanskije prazdniki, obriady i ritualy: prakticheskie rekomendatsii* (Chişinău: Kartia moldoveniaske, 1984), 99–108.

¹⁵⁰ P. P. Kampars and N.M. Zakovich, *Sovetskaia grazhdanskaia obriadnost'* (Moscow: Mysl', 1967), 142–44. The authors highlighted significant regional differences from republic to republic, and noted the importance of songs in the Baltic Republics. As Guntis Šmidchens has argued, the songs that informed national consciousness in the Baltic republics would serve anti-Soviet purposes in the late 1980s, see *The Power of Song: Nonviolent National Culture in the Baltic Singing Revolution* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2013). Many books on regional practices also reproduced specific songs from traditional marriage rites and other rituals, see Kalilov, *Novye obriady i traditsii u kirgizov*; Zelenchuk and Loskutova, *Novye grazhdanskije prazdniki, obriady i ritualy*.

¹⁵¹ A. Brēde, A. Menniks, Y. Priedīte, “Pilngadiības svētku organizēšana Latvijas PSR,” in Saulvedis Cimermanis, ed., *Sociālistisko svētku un ieražu attīstības jautājumi: zinātniskās konferences referātu tēzes* (Riga: Zinātne, 1981), 14–19, Russian translation on 99–103. This was especially true in historically protestant Estonia and Latvia. See also Lane, *The Rites of Rulers*, 102–5. The secular confirmation, “Jugendweihe,” was also widely practiced in the German Democratic Republic beginning around 1953. Although it had roots in the 19th century, it was picked up as a means of promoting atheism, see Joachim Chowanski and Rolf Dreier, *Die Jugendweihe: eine Kulturgeschichte seit 1852* (Berlin: Edition Ost, 2000).

¹⁵² E.g., A.K. Aliev, *Narodnye traditsii, obychai i ikh rol' v formirovanii novogo cheloveka* (Makhachkala: Dagestanskii filial Akademii nauk SSSR, 1968); Zdoroveha, *Narysy narodnoi vesil'noi obriadovosti na Ukraini*; Evstifeev, *Starye obychai, novye traditsii*; Kalilov, *Novye obriady i traditsii u kirgizov*; N.U. Zhubasova and A.M. Beisekov, eds., *Grazhdanskije obriady i prazdniki* (Almaty: Kazakhstan, 1984); Zelenchuk and Loskutova, *Novye grazhdanskije prazdniki, obriady i ritualy*; Iurii Stepanovich Gurov, *Novye sovetskie traditsii, prazdniki i obriady* (Cheboksary: Chuvashskoe knizhnoe izd-vo, 1990). The Zhubasova/Beisekov volume was a dual Kazakh-Russian language volume; the Kalilov and Zelenchuk/Loskutova volumes respectively included poems and songs in Kyrgyz and Moldovan.

Aliev blamed both central and local initiatives for a tendency to transplant forms and rituals from Russia, Ukraine, and the Baltic Republics into the North Caucasus, often to poor effect. Rather, the most effective modern form of weddings, he argued, would blend the best elements of old rituals specific to the North Caucasus with new, progressive rituals. Some of the tensions also came in balancing the newer, more modern ceremonies that many young people preferred with older traditions favored by their parents and grandparents.¹⁵³ More generally, suggestions for how to incorporate local rituals were often vague, suggesting that appeals to ethnic and local traditions were often superficial formalities rather than deep commitments.

Alongside more traditional elements, new rituals also reflected aspects of Soviet life. State symbols, like Lenin busts, flags, and state seals, featured prominently in the decor of wedding and infant palaces and registry offices. The use of the Soviet anthem in infant registration, passport ceremonies, and other rituals tied rituals to the practice of citizenship, as did the use of World War II memorial sites for private rituals. After wedding ceremonies, newlyweds embraced the tradition of taking photos at various local sites, many of which were imbued with specific meaning. As Evstifeev described in 1977, “On the day of the wedding, according to a new tradition, newlyweds visit monuments to fallen heroes, lay wreaths of living flowers, reminding them once again at the festive moment of those who protected this happy holiday.”¹⁵⁴ To this day, this tradition can be seen across the former Soviet Union, as any Saturday walk in a city park will almost certainly reveal. Even with their varying ethnically derived content, rituals across the country confirmed citizens’ belonging to a single Soviet state.

¹⁵³ Aliev, *Narodnye traditsii, obychai i ikh rol' v formirovanii novogo cheloveka*, 207–8. See also Kampars and Zakovich, *Sovetskaia grazhdanskaia obriadnost'*, 84–85.

¹⁵⁴ Evstifeev, *Starye obychai, novye traditsii*, 35. For another description of this tradition in small-town Kazakhstan, see APRK, f. 708, o. 85, d. 102, ll. 69–70.

Measuring Success: Rituals on the Frontlines of Soviet Atheism and Civic Identity

By the mid-1960s, activists were already noting the fruits of their labor. In qualitative terms, specialists hailed new rituals for hastening the decline of religious practice. Ritual expert Vladimir Brudnyi noted in 1968 that new rituals had quickly become enmeshed in Soviet life, even new republics like Estonia and Latvia, and they had contributed to a notable decline in religious practice.¹⁵⁵ Andrianov and Belov's *Pravda* article from 1976 similarly credited new rituals for a serious decline in religiosity. New research from Leningrad, they noted, suggested more than 80 percent of people who had "recently" broken with religion had been influenced by new rituals.¹⁵⁶ Although church weddings and baptisms continued among some parts of the population and in some locales, many believed there was evidence of decline.¹⁵⁷ More generally, books, pamphlets, and other published materials praised new rituals for their power to engage citizens emotionally without relying on religious practices and provided atheist alternatives that spoke to citizens' minds and feelings all at once.¹⁵⁸

Alongside more qualitative successes, party and state leaders also demonstrated the effectiveness of new rituals in quantitative terms, which highlighted their function as an instrument of late Soviet atheist propaganda. Because statistics tended to be reported at local and republic levels, countrywide statistics are difficult to approximate, but local state and party organizations noted improvements. The Leningrad division of the Komsomol reported a precipitous decline in church weddings in 1964, a triumph that was attributed to the runaway success and popularity of its Wedding Palace. It was so successful, in fact, that a second palace

¹⁵⁵ Brudnyi, *Obriady vchera i segodnia*, 83–84.

¹⁵⁶ N. Andrianov and A. Belov, "Sovetskomu cheloveku—novye obriady," *Pravda*, 28 May 1976, 3.

¹⁵⁷ E.g. GARF, f. A259, o. 45, d. 1457, ll. 17–35; RGANI, f. 5, o. 33, d. 215, ll. 134–40; TsDAHOU, f. 1, o. 31, d. 2401, ll. 40, 53, 97–98; TsDAHOU, f. 1, o. 32, d. 46, ll. 125–30.

¹⁵⁸ See especially conversations at a 1984 round table hosted by Obshechestvo Znanie on civil rituals, GARF, f. 9547, o. 1, dd. 3660–3661.

was opened in February 1963. “Now,” the 1964 report proudly declared, “almost all marriages in Leningrad are registered in Palaces in a stately, celebratory manner,” citing a decline in church weddings from 25 percent of new marriages in 1959 to 0.24 percent in 1964. This success, the report more generally observed, had contributed to stronger marriages and families.¹⁵⁹

Most republics and locales reported mixed success but marked improvement, according to a series of reports made in the early 1970s. Belarus reported a republic-wide increase in celebratory civic weddings from just 7.3 percent in 1964 to 67.3 percent in 1971. Their report complained, however, of serious understaffing at the Minsk Wedding House, suggesting major limitations to their work.¹⁶⁰ By 1971, Uzbekistan also reported on the widespread availability of “Houses of Happiness” (the name frequently given to smaller wedding institutions, typically in rural areas) across the republic. The report further noted various improvements in their work, though overall the number of new-style weddings remained low, below 50 percent even in Tashkent.¹⁶¹ Turkmenistan, though mum on overall statistics, reported improvements across some rural regions and great enthusiasm for improving the work of registry offices among employees, a large number of whom were women.¹⁶² Other republics reported various shortcomings while acknowledging the importance of continued attention.¹⁶³

That the development of new Soviet rituals was at the forefront of atheism under both Khrushchev and Brezhnev is also evident in the statistical reports on their implementation that emanated from oblasts, cities, and towns across the country. Local reports identified successes

¹⁵⁹ RGASPI, f. M-1, o. 32, d. 1151, ll. 40–44. Statistics on page 44.

¹⁶⁰ GARF, f. 9492, o. 8, d. 52, l. 8.

¹⁶¹ GARF, f. 9492, o. 8, d. 52, ll. 12–14. This only reported on weddings held in the new, “celebratory” manner and excluded those that involved a simpler trip to the registry office. The numbers do not imply the rest were done in a religious context.

¹⁶² GARF, f. 9492, o. 8, d. 52, ll. 28–45.

¹⁶³ Armenia, for example, noted ongoing shortcomings and lack of attention to this important manner. Turkmenistan noted that registry office employees often made mistakes in filling out paperwork, suggesting the urgent need for better training. See GARF, f. 9492, o. 8, d. 52, ll. 25–26; 38–45.

through statistical reporting on the numbers of celebratory birth registrations, weddings, funerals, and other rituals, as well as the number of religious rituals had taken place. Reflecting official understanding and measurement of religiosity, success in implementing Soviet rituals was measured through higher numbers of new rites and declining numbers of religious ones.¹⁶⁴ In Kazakhstan, local oblast and regional committees reported on the numbers of births, weddings, and sometimes funerals that had been carried out in the new, celebratory matter. These numbers were contrasted to statistics on continuing (though declining) baptisms and religious weddings and funerals in the same period.¹⁶⁵ Similar practices were at work in Ukraine and elsewhere.

Atheism, however, was always only one aspect of the potential of these new rituals. Indeed, as one scholar noted, it was precisely their “polyfunctional character” that rendered them indispensable to efforts to educate, socialize, and prepare people, particularly youth, for Soviet citizenship.¹⁶⁶ The built-in flexibility, which permitted different practices based on participants’ ethnicity, geographical location, socio-economic background, and/or personal preferences, enabled rituals, at least in theory, to play a dynamic, adaptable role in civic life.¹⁶⁷ As one author noted, “The versatility of content and function of every ritual or ritualistic cycle is already embedded in their genesis, since the creators and bearers of rituals subordinate ritual art to life circumstances and their own needs.” Speaking of the “syncretic combination (*synkretychne poiiednannia*) of the various origins into a ritual,” she emphasized that rituals played a primarily social function that reflected the circumstances of the present but which also connected people to

¹⁶⁴ For examples of typical “new rituals” vs. religious rituals reporting, see GARF, f. A259, o. 45, d. 1457, ll. 17–35; RGANI, f. 5, o. 33, d. 215, ll. 134–140; TsDAHOU, f. 1, o. 31, d. 2401, ll. 40, 53, 97–98; TsDAHOU, f. 1, o. 32, d. 46, ll. 125–30.

¹⁶⁵ See APRK, f. 708, o. 44, d. 209; f. 708, o. 67, d. 94, and f. 708, o. 85, d. 102.

¹⁶⁶ Valentyna Iukhymivna Kelembetova, *Suspil'no-pobutovi funktsii radians'akoi obriadovosti* (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1984), 145.

¹⁶⁷ Of course, this could also present difficulties. As Baiburin notes, flexibility within the passport presentation system meant that citizens and officials could interpret the ceremonies in different ways, sometimes in contradiction to what the state sought to convey through these rituals: “Rituals of Identity: The Soviet Passport,” 98–103.

the past.¹⁶⁸ Rituals, experts agreed, were fundamental to the institution and practice of Soviet citizenship, instilling in people the morality, worldview, and principles expected of citizens.

Conclusion: Holidays, Rituals, and Identity between Center and Periphery

From the October Revolution to the collapse, celebration and commemoration featured centrally in the development, articulation, and practice of Soviet identity. In the first decade of rule, experimentation both in the forms and symbols of holiday celebrations and civil rituals to mark birth, marriage, and death reflected nascent and ongoing conversations about the nature of Soviet identity and the role of the state and religion in the formation of new citizens. As Stalin strengthened his grip over state and society in the late 1920s and early 1930s, these more open conversations were suppressed in favor of hierarchical and orchestrated forms that dominated public life for the duration of his rule. Forms of celebration mirrored conversations about the nature of civic identity, as leaders and cultural elites emphasized the simultaneous unity and diversity of the Soviet people. Expressions of this unity and diversity remained strictly monitored and controlled by the state under Stalin, as the party-state claimed to be the primary (and often only) source of legitimacy. Carefully choreographed demonstrations of unity, from ritualized cultural performances by ethnic minorities in the *dekady* that proliferated in the 1930s to parades that showcased the country's diversity, both evidenced and deepened rigid hierarchical relations. These celebrations broadcast the ways in which the state had liberated and uplifted its formerly oppressed peoples, a feat for which all citizens were expected to constantly express their deep, enduring gratitude.

Echoing the fact that patriotic discourse under Khrushchev and Brezhnev remained largely unchanged from its Stalinist antecedents, ritualized holiday celebrations under Stalin's

¹⁶⁸ Kelembetova, *Suspil'no-pobutovi funktsii radians'äkoï obriadovosti*, 146.

successors retained most of the features that had crystalized under Stalin. The celebration of major holidays, including annual commemorations of Victory Day beginning in 1965, kept an air of rigid formality that emanated from Moscow. These celebrations, however, were also accompanied by an expansion of celebratory practices that included not only more formal recognition of traditional ethnic and regional holidays but also a rise in lifecycle rituals. Far from the hegemonic, centralized, and ritualized practices of formal holidays, new rituals to celebrate weddings, births, the first day of school, the presentation of the first passport, and other life events were developed primarily outside Moscow. This reflected an attempt to incorporate a wide variety of regional and ethnic practices to instill greater emotional content, offering a meaningful way for citizens to celebrate life milestones in a civic space.

Soviet celebratory practices both reflected and challenged the hierarchical organization of the Soviet Union. The celebration of major holidays remained highly centralized and ritualized from shortly after the revolution until the Soviet Union's demise, reflecting the "rigidity of form" that Alexei Yurchak has identified as definitional to late Soviet society.¹⁶⁹ Forms of celebration emanated from and centered on Moscow, as the party maintained strict control and surveillance across the country. The development of civil rituals under Stalin's successors, in contrast, told a more complicated story. As with holidays, some of the impetus for introducing and developing new rituals came from Moscow. From administrative changes concerning registry offices to issuing instructions for republics to improve and develop new rituals, much of the initial energy (and indeed, a certain degree of permission) came from the center. Reflecting this relationship, the first all-union scientific-practical conference on new rituals took place in Moscow in 1964 on

¹⁶⁹ Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More*.

the party's initiative.¹⁷⁰ Leading academics, many based in Moscow, also wrote extensively about new rituals and their significance in Soviet society. Iulian Bromlei, the ethnographer discussed in Chapter 3 and a key theorist on Soviet identity, even offered a contribution to a 1981 book of methodological recommendations. His article, "New rituality: an important component of the Soviet way of life," reflected on how rituals contributed to modern civic life.¹⁷¹

At the same time, the state's insistence that civil rituals should incorporate and build on ethnic and local traditions decentralized the processes of developing and implementing rituals. This devolution granted greater authority to republics, as well as academics and scholars who researched, studied, and developed these rituals. Not surprisingly, this process yielded mixed results. Some republics, for example Armenia and Turkmenistan, seemed to devote little energy or attention to the development of new rituals, and their occasional reports suggested ongoing difficulties in the implementation and practice of new rituals.¹⁷² By the same token, in the 1970s and especially the 1980s, Ukraine had become the leading authority on new rituals. It was likely for this reason that Kyiv hosted the second all-union scientific-practical conference in 1978, with participation from all republics and many scholars and other specialists, including a major speech by Bromlei. The infrastructure for studying, developing, and implementing new rituals in Ukraine was widely considered to be the best in the Soviet Union, and Ukrainian experts were recognized as leaders in this field.¹⁷³ A 1981 book closed with recommended ritual forms that republics could adapt according to local circumstances, and prominently featured specific

¹⁷⁰ I have been unable to track down records of this conference, though M.A. Orlyk, Deputy Director of the Soviet of Ministers of Ukraine and head of the Ukrainian Commission on Soviet Traditions, Holidays, and Rituals, mentioned the earlier conference at the second conference held in Kyiv in 1978: TsDAVOU, f. 2, o. 14, d. 2655, l. 80.

¹⁷¹ Iulian Bromlei, "Novaia obriadnost' — vazhnyi komponent sovetskogo obraza zhizni," in Kryvelev and Korgan, *Traditsionnye i novye obriady v bytu narodov SSSR*.

¹⁷² See reports in GARF, f. 9492 o. 8, d. 52.

¹⁷³ E.g. GARF, f. 9547, o. 1, d. 3660, l. 37.

ceremonies and costumes that had been developed in Ukraine.¹⁷⁴ This was one palpable disruption of the center-to-periphery power structure that often dominated Soviet politics.

Furthermore, by encouraging the development of rituals that were informed and colored by local and ethnic traditions and practices, the state demonstrated an ongoing commitment to the cultivation of ethnic minorities. Of course, the space for expressing these identities remained closely monitored and tightly circumscribed, not least because of strict restrictions on religious life. Nevertheless, the use and incorporation of traditions from across the country offered a symbolic reminder that these identities informed and contributed to civic identity. The widespread belief that ethnically derived rituals could inspire a deeper, more emotional attachment to the state suggested that elites continued to see ethnicity as a powerful tool for making Soviet citizens.

¹⁷⁴ Kryvelev and Korgan, *Traditsionnye i novye obriady v bytu narodov SSSR*, 142–82. Original discussions, preparations, and approval of these ritual ceremonies can be found in TsDAHOU, f. 1, o. 32, d. 431; TsDAVOU, f. 2, o. 13, dd. 9745, 9747, 9748, and 9748a. One example ritual for initiating people into agricultural work had been developed in Belarus, but examples for weddings, birth registrations, and funerals all came from Ukraine.

Chapter 5

Russian Language, Soviet People: Language Policy from Revolution to Brezhnev

After dozens of Ukrainian intellectuals were arrested in the fall of 1965, the literary scholar Ivan Dziuba sent a critique of nationalities policy in Ukraine to Petro Shelest and Volodymyr Shcherbytskyi, heads of the Ukrainian party and state apparatuses, respectively. Dziuba, then a committed Marxist and member of the Writers' Union of Ukraine, argued that policies in Ukraine had veered dangerously away from Marxist ideology. Under Stalin and since his death, Dziuba wrote, the state had abandoned its prior commitment to national languages and cultures, instead pushing an agenda of linguistic and cultural Russification, thinly veiled under the rubric of internationalism. Ukrainian had become a second-class language as a new generation grew up with a strong preference for Russian. The only acceptable Marxist solution would be a return to the Leninist policies of the 1920s.¹

Not surprisingly, the authorities were unimpressed. Dziuba's book was officially banned and circulated only illegally.² Dziuba himself was accused of "anti-Soviet activities." He was expelled from the Writers Union, removed from his job, and sentenced to five years imprisonment and five additional years in exile, though he was released after just 18 months. His personal trajectory hints at the seriousness with which the state treated questions of language and

¹ Dziuba, *Internatsionalizm chy rusyfikatsiia?* This edition includes Dziuba's letters to Shelest and Shcherbytskyi and facsimiles of pertinent archival documents.

² Although suppressed, unofficial copies (*samizdat*) circulated broadly. The Munich-based Ukrainian literary magazine *Suchasnist'* published the complete book in 1968. It first legally appeared in the Ukrainian SSR in 1990.

culture. In truth, the place of Russian was far more complicated than the simple dichotomy that Dziuba proposed. Aspects of both “internationalism” and “Russification” were certainly present (if not always officially acknowledged) in the way the state handled Russian, but neither concept, nor some hybrid between the two, accurately conveys the complexity of its role.

The Russian language stood squarely at the heart of nationalities policy from the Soviet Union’s very establishment, first through vigorous refusals to acknowledge the language’s obvious centrality, and later through formal acknowledgement of its importance. Analysis of the discourses about Russian, language education, alphabet changes, and pedagogical questions across the country between Lenin and Brezhnev suggests that the state did not see Russian exclusively—or even primarily—as the language of the Russian people. Instead, the state stressed that the language represented an important tool of interethnic communication that belonged equally to all citizens. Rather than a hegemonic project that privileged Russian and Russians, policies and discourses concerning Russian’s status were intended, if not entirely successfully, to make the language more ethnically unmarked and neutral. Leaders and cultural figures sought to incentivize the use of Russian through indexing it as the language of state, culture, progress, and interethnic communication.³ As such, Russian represented a tool of both hierarchical and lateral integration.

Most obviously, Russian functioned as the language of upward mobility and the language of state, connecting people in a hierarchical relationship with the Soviet center. In this function, Russian occupied an imperial position, much like the role English, French, Spanish, and German played in the British, French, Spanish, and Habsburg Empires, respectively. More uniquely,

³ On the concept of “marked” and “unmarked,” see Linda R. Waugh, “Marked and Unmarked: A Choice Between Unequals in Semiotic Structure,” *Semiotica* 38, no. 3/4 (1982): 299–318. Waugh distinguishes between a signal’s absence (a zero-interpretation) and the signal’s direct contradiction (a minus-interpretation). Leaders never denied the language’s connection to ethnic Russians (a zero-interpretation) but emphasized instead its Soviet associations.

Russian also enabled interethnic communication, connecting not only center to periphery but also periphery to periphery. Although this function has played a *de facto* role in all empires—for example, in interactions between South Asian migrants and local South Africans and other imperial subjects or between conscripts in imperial militaries—the Soviet Union uniquely and formally cultivated this function.⁴ Indeed, that learning Russian could enable all citizens, particularly non-Russians, to communicate with one another was central to official justifications for why all citizens should master the language. This reflected Soviet claims of radical equality and the elimination of ethno-linguistic hierarchies and difference.

At the same time, these attempts to ensure greater equality were routinely contradicted by inequalities implicit in the regime's use of Russian. Despite attempts to highlight Russian as an ethnically neutral marker of all-union identity, its connection to the Russian people could not be denied. Its more formal prominence beginning in the late 1930s coincided with new articulations of Soviet identity that emerged in the 1930s. The language's symbolic role as a *lingua franca* and its close association with Soviet identity echoed frequent slippages between the “Soviet” and “Russian” peoples. Since knowledge of Russian increasingly became a prerequisite for participation in society, the burdens of integration nearly always fell unequally upon the shoulders of non-Russian citizens.

Leaders and citizens, informed by changing, competing, and often contradictory goals, perpetually debated, criticized, and negotiated the role of Russian. Its general trajectory between Lenin and Brezhnev hinged around two pivotal moments: the 1938 law that mandated Russian-

⁴ Sukanya Banerjee connects such interactions with articulations of imperial citizenship for Indian and other non-European British subjects, though the issue of language is not discussed, see *Becoming Imperial Citizens*. Indeed, the role of language in empires remains relatively understudied, particularly in its communicative function between citizens of different ethno-linguistic backgrounds. Its hierarchical integrative function in state institutions like the military has been more thoroughly explored, e.g. Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870–1914*, 67–94; Deák, *Beyond Nationalism*; Sanborn, *Drafting the Russian Nation*; Deák, *Forging a Multinational State*. Even in these cases, the question of language use is largely peripheral.

language education for all pupils and the 1958–59 school reform that ostensibly allowed parents to choose the language of their children’s school instruction. These moments suggested three general phases in Russian’s development in the Soviet Union. First, from before the revolution until 1938, leaders promoted the development and use of non-Russian languages while simultaneously recognizing Russian as the language of state, culture, and revolution. Following the 1938 law, Russian’s importance was publicly and systematically emphasized. Educational changes dovetailed with the language’s more prominent function as a language of integration and of all-union and international activity, as Russian transformed into a world language during and after World War II, at least in the growing sphere of Soviet influence. The removal of formal language requirements in 1958–59 signified something of a return to pre-1938 policies, as the state relied on informal modes of cultural imperialism to ensure Russian’s prominence.

This chapter explores the role of the Russian language with a shifting lens between Moscow and union republics. The main foci of language policy were determined in Moscow within party circles and among educational elites, who determined and set the general policies. Also in Moscow, central newspapers discussed the theoretical role of the language and its growing use across the country. At the same time, the practical processes that determined the importance and significance of the language took place primarily at the periphery and among non-Russians, who bore the burden of learning a new language to ensure the possibility of “interethnic communication.” As a result, this chapter leans heavily on archival sources from republic-level Ministries of Education and party documents, which are supplemented with party and state documents from the Soviet center. These parallel lenses illuminate how, even as the Russian language’s position ebbed and flowed from decade to decade, it remained persistently connected to Soviet identity and the practices of citizenship.

Lenin's Language: Russian Between Revolution and *Korenizatsiia*

The first two decades of Soviet rule set the terms of Russian's role in the Soviet Union both in theory and practice. During these early years, Bolshevik leaders simultaneously pursued two contradictory policies. On one hand, they explicitly positioned themselves in opposition to tsarist political agendas with policies of *korenizatsiia* (indigenization), which undermined the historic dominance of the Russian language. On the other hand, these same elites developed theoretical ideas of Russian as the appropriate language of Soviet state, culture, and revolution. As a result, despite meaningful attempts to decenter the language, Russian remained broadly taught and universally important.

Russian as a State Language: Bolshevik Thinking in Theory and Practice

The deep association between Russian and the state predated the revolution, even though, as Michael Gordin notes, the language's development "was not quite linear."⁵ Until the 17th century, Russian state formations used versions of Church Slavonic that differed markedly from vernacular Russian. Peter the Great's 1708 orthographic reform modernized the state language, bringing it more in line with spoken forms. Still, Russian was eclipsed by other languages: Old Church Slavonic in the medieval period, and foreign languages—Latin, German, and French—well into the 19th century. With the flourishing of literary Russian—Pushkin, Gogol, and others—and continued territorial expansion in the 19th century, Russian indubitably became the language of empire. Linguistic (and often cultural) Russification became a prerequisite for social

⁵ Michael D. Gordin, *Scientific Babel: How Science Was Done Before and After Global English* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 83. He offers a brief overview of Russian's general development and its use in science, see 79–103. Two Soviet-era works provide introductions to Russian's historical development: G. O. Vinokur, *The Russian Language: A Brief History*, ed. James Forsyth and Mary A. Forsyth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971); V. V. Vinogradov, *The History of the Russian Literary Language from the Seventeenth Century to the Nineteenth*, ed. and trans. Lawrence L. Thomas (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969).

advancement, though few subjects had access to education. Mastery of Russian, however, rarely guaranteed full integration: although many citizens advanced through civil and military service, non-Russian and non-Orthodox subjects often found their upward mobility limited. Russification in schools and military service furthermore often came with the loss of previously guaranteed autonomy.⁶ Non-Russian languages suffered to varying degrees, ranging from active repression—with prohibitions and limits on Ukrainian, Polish, and Romanian—to negligence.⁷

Outside official circles, the regime's liberal critics advocated Russian as a state language at the turn of the century, and Bolsheviks, too, recognized Russian's significance, even as they criticized oppressive tsarist policies towards the empire's peripheries. In an oft-quoted 1914 article published in *Proletarskaia Pravda*, Lenin staked out a position that, like the liberals he opposed, highlighted Russian's importance: "Even more so than you, we know that the language of Turgenev, Tolstoy, Dobroliubov, Chernyshevskii is great and powerful. Even more so than you, we want the possibility of closer communication and brotherly unity among the oppressed classes of all nations inhabiting Russia without any differentiation."⁸ In contrast to liberals, however, Lenin opposed the mandatory study of Russian, although he did believe citizens should be guaranteed opportunities to study the language on a voluntary basis.

Lenin's 1914 article suggested two fundamental understandings about the role of Russian

⁶ This was true among German and Jewish subjects, see Jean-François Bourret, *Les allemands de la Volga: histoire culturelle d'une minorité, 1763–1941* (Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1986), 61–69; Petrovsky-Shtern, *Jews in the Russian Army, 1827–1917*.

⁷ Johannes Remy, "Against All Odds: Ukrainian in the Russian Empire in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century," and Andrii Danylenko "The 'Doubling of Hallelujah' for the 'Bastard Tongue': The Ukrainian Language Question in Russian Ukraine, 1905–1916," both in Michael S. Flier and Andrea Graziosi, eds., *The Battle for Ukrainian: A Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 2017), 43–62 and 63–96, respectively. On the Russian language more generally, see also Kivelson and Suny, *Russia's Empires*, 199–203. The Il'minsky system, a non-state initiative that promoted native-language use in missionary work of the Russian Orthodox Church, was a notable exception to the neglect or repression of non-Russian languages and a precursor to Soviet policies, see Isabelle Kreindler, "A Neglected Source of Lenin's Nationality Policy," *Slavic Review* 36, no. 1 (1977): 86–100.

⁸ V.I. Lenin, "Nuzhen li obiazatel'nyi gosudarstvennyi iazyk?" *Proletarskaia Pravda*, 18 January 1914.

in the future Bolshevik state. First, he viewed Russian as the language of culture and progress, highlighting the work of writers who observed changes in Russian society and wrote influentially about the country's future. Second, he presumed that Russian would be the language of "closer communication and brotherly unity" among all peoples of the empire, even under conditions of greater equality. Lenin developed his ideas as follows: "Hundreds of thousands of people are moving about from one corner of Russia to another, the ethnic composition of the population is intermixing, isolation and ethnic backwardness (*zaskoruzlost'*) should fall away. Those who by the circumstances of their own lives and work need knowledge of Russian will study it without the stick."⁹ In his view, participation in society—through both interaction with fellow citizens and inclusion in the workforce—would incentivize learning Russian without a state mandate. The presumption of preference for Russian confirmed its *de facto* status as the language of state and society and as a key tool for advancement for non-Russian peoples.

Following the 1917 revolution, politicians, cultural activists, and journalists frequently invoked Lenin's words to demonstrate the importance of Russian and the need for a gradual approach to enforcing Russian-language use. At a 1924 Komintern meeting just months after Lenin's death, head of state Mikhail Kalinin quoted the 1914 article as evidence of Lenin's confidence in the tenets of Bolshevism and his faith that the working masses would ultimately be converted. Lenin's thinking on the nationalities question, Kalinin proclaimed, "made him the leader of both the Russian (*russkii*) revolution and the international revolution."¹⁰ The following year, a full-page spread celebrating the particularity of the USSR and its constitution prominently quoted the same 1914 essay to demonstrate the state's commitment to voluntary study of Russian

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ M. I. Kalinin, *Izbrannye proizvedeniia*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Gos. Izd-vo Polit. lit-ry, 1960), 517. The speech also appeared as "Rech' Kalinina na Kongresse Kominterna 18 iunia," *Izvestiia*, 26 June 1924, 4.

while reinforcing the language's inherent draw.¹¹

The 1920s and '30s saw a growing association between the Russian language and revolution. In a 1921 *Krasnaia Gazeta* article, former Kadet leader Grodeskul highlighted Russian's revolutionary significance: "In the era of the great French Revolution, French was called the language of freedom, and today, Russian is called the language of the worldwide revolution. Soviet Russia has a role like never before, and if Soviet Russia manages to put its ideals into practice, the Russian people will be described in history as the liberator-people of humanity."¹² In a 1927 *Pravda* essay on education, Mansurov, a Tatar representative to the Central Soviet for National Minorities of the RSFSR, advocated teaching Russian in national schools from the earliest grades: "Russian is the language of the majority, it is the language spoken by the progressive proletariat of Russia, who carried out the great proletariat revolution and raised up the flag of liberation of workers of the entire world out from under the yoke of imperialism, it is the language of the richest culture, and the language in which all socio-political and economic life of our federation is carried out." Echoing Lenin, Mansurov highlighted Russian's growing "pull" and emphasized the importance of access to both Russian and native-language instruction.¹³

Linguists and scholars discussed the impact of the revolution, exemplified in Afanasii Selishchev's *Language of the Revolutionary Epoch* (1928).¹⁴ This was part of a growing trend

¹¹ "Den' Soiuza Sovetskikh," *Izvestiia*, 5 July 1925, 4. Lenin's words were frequently cited in subsequent decades and often taken out of context as proof the need to study Russian. See, for example TsGARK 1692, o. 1, d. 237, l. 64; G. Dinmukhametov, "Perevod tatarskoi pis'mennosti," *Pravda*, 29 March 1940, 4. References also permeated *Russian in National Schools (Russkii iazyk v national'noi shkole)*, a journal that began publication in 1957.

¹² As cited in "Obrashchenie byvshego chlena TsK Kadetskoi partii," *Izvestiia*, 5 June 1921, 1.

¹³ Mansurov, "Itogi i zadachi natsional'nogo prosveshcheniia," *Pravda*, 19 May 1927, 5. Here and throughout this chapter, I use Soviet terminology to avoid confusion: "native" designates the language of one's ethnicity; "titular" designates the language of an autonomous or union republic (i.e. Azeri in Azerbaijan, Tatar in Tatarstan); "foreign" designates languages that originated from outside the USSR. In schools, this was typically German or English.

¹⁴ A. M. Selishchev, *Iazyk revoliutsionnoi epokhi: iz nabliudenii nad russkim iazykom poslednikh let, 1917–1926* (Moscow: Rabotnik prosveshcheniia, 1928).

that saw the “language of Lenin” as the international language of the revolution, as poet Alexei Kruchenykh wrote in a 1923 pamphlet, *Methods of Lenin’s Rhetoric: For the Study of the*

Language of Lenin. The introduction highlighted Soviet Russian’s international status:

At the present moment, Russian, in consequence of the particular role of our October revolution, is the language of the international revolution. Knowing just two or three words: “Lenin,” “Bolshevik,” “Soviets”—it is possible to cross the entire world; they are a particular subject, a password by which workers of all countries recognize one another. From this, [we see] the importance of studying Russian revolutionary rhetoric (*rech*) is not just for us but on an international scale. Additionally, the broadest and most comprehensive literature on the socialist revolution has been published in Russian. For anyone studying the revolutionary movement, especially of the last decade, it will be absolutely obligatory to be familiar with the broad Russian literature on this matter.¹⁵

Poet Vladimir Mayakovsky explored Russian’s connection Lenin in his 1927 poem, *To Our*

Youth:

Comrade-youth,
 look to Moscow,
in Russian sharpen your ears!
Even if I were
 a Negro of declining years,
even then,
without despondency or laziness,
 I would learn Russian
 simply because
in it
 spoke Lenin.¹⁶

As suggested elsewhere in the poem, Mayakovsky’s own birth in Georgia and his Cossack heritage connected him with an “all-union” identity that, like Kruchenykh, saw Russian as the common inheritance and future of all progressive peoples, one that drew them towards Moscow.

In dedicating the poem “to our youth,” Mayakovsky indexed Russian as the language of the future. He was not alone. *Izvestiia* correspondent G. Rylkin highlighted the growing use of Russian among Crimea’s Jewish community in a 1926 article, “In a new place.” Rylkin subtly

¹⁵ Aleksei Kruchenykh, *Priemy leninskoi rechi: K izucheniiu iazyka Lenina (1925)*, 3rd ed. (Izd. Vserossiiskogo Soiuza Poetov, 1928), 3.

¹⁶ “Nashemu iunoshestvu” (1927), printed in Maiakovskii, *Sochineniia v dvukh tomakh*, 1:432–36.

contrasted old-fashioned lifestyles with new tropes of tractors and Komsomol members. He described an elderly Jew harnessing his horse at the water pump with a “long, wedge-shaped beard,” assisted by his young grandson. Subtly suggesting incongruity, Rylkin noted that the elderly man spoke Russian, which was not unusual: “Russian has become deeply embedded in life in the colony. We heard how old men and women speak Russian between themselves. As concerns youth, they speak exclusively in Russian. The Pioneers do not know Yiddish at all.”¹⁷ This young generation, he implied, had abandoned old-fashioned ways in favor of new technologies, ideology, and language. Another elderly informant concluded resignedly, “There is no return to the past.”¹⁸

Korenizatsiia: A Decentering of Russian?

To some extent, policies of *korenizatsiia* (indigenization) contradicted the widespread rhetorical centering of Russian. To counter tsarist oppression in keeping with Lenin’s prerevolutionary writings, leaders enacted a far-reaching agenda of “affirmative action” to promote non-Russians. Native-language schooling became a central focus in the first decade of rule, often at the expense of Russian. Terry Martin has highlighted how policies of linguistic Ukrainization, the Latinization of non-Slavic languages, and the favorable treatment of ethnic minorities through quota systems in higher education and government explicitly disadvantaged both Russian and Russians.¹⁹

¹⁷ G. Rylkin, “Na novom meste,” *Izvestiia*, 9 July 1926, 4.

¹⁸ G. Rylkin, “Na novom meste,” *Izvestiia*, 9 July 1926, 4. On the Soviet Jewish settlement of Crimea, see Jeffrey Veidlinger, “Before Crimea Was Russian, It Was a Potential Jewish Homeland,” *Tablet Magazine*, March 14, 2014, <http://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-news-and-politics/164673/crimea-as-jewish-homeland>; Henry Felix Srebrnik, *Dreams of Nationhood: American Jewish Communists and the Soviet Birobidzhan Project, 1924–1951* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2010), 10–12.

¹⁹ Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*. For more specific discussions of the role of language in promoting ethnic identity, see also Edgar, *Tribal Nation*, 129–64; Pauly, *Breaking the Tongue*; Nick Baron, “The Language Question and National Conflict in Soviet Karelia in the 1920’s,” *Ab Imperio* 2002, no. 2 (2015): 349–60.

Although the state certainly prioritized the promotion of ethnic minorities in new and innovative ways during the first two decades of rule, *korenizatsiia* was not simply an agenda of derussification or anti-Russian sentiment. Widespread Latinization campaigns in the 1920s and '30s, for example, were far more complex. While elements of derussification were implicit in the decision not to embrace Cyrillic, alphabets shifted from Arabic to Latin in almost every case (Kalmyk being a notable exception). Activists across Eurasia justified Latinization as a tool for reducing the influence of religious leaders, promoting literacy, and adopting a more universal “international alphabet.”²⁰ Indeed, there were even abortive attempts to introduce a Latin alphabet for Russian, Ukrainian, and Belarusian, a reminder that even the place of the Cyrillic script was as-yet undetermined as Latinization campaigns progressed.²¹

Affirmative action policies were also heavily contested, suggesting that the relative roles of languages continued to be debated. At the 1926 meeting of the Central Executive Committee (TsIK), economist Iurii Larin controversially expressed concern about perceived discrimination against Russians, despite critical attention to Ukraine’s non-Russian, non-Ukrainian minorities. He decried alleged repression of Russian in favor of Ukrainian, citing evidence from complaints to newspaper boards about the dearth of educational opportunities for Russian-speaking children and the unresponsiveness of local governments to complaints voiced in Russian.²² Most of the subsequent speakers objected to his diagnosis and advocated continued Ukrainization, but the controversy suggested a view that pro-Russian language constituency existed as well. As Matthew Pauly argues, resistance to affirmative action policies was often evident at the local

²⁰ D.K., “Mezdunarodnyj alfavit—Mezhdunarodnyi alfavit,” *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 16 December 1929, 1. The proposed Latin script for Russian was described as an “international alphabet.”

²¹ D.K., “Mezdunarodnyj alfavit—Mezhdunarodnyi alfavit,” *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 16 December 1929, 1; Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 196–98.

²² Larin’s speech, delivered on April 16, 1926, can be found in *2 sessia TsIK SSSR, 3 sozyva: stenograficheskii otchet* (Moscow: Izdanie TsIK Soiuz SSR, 1926), 458–68. An abridged version was published in *Izvestiia*, 17 April 1926, 2. The discussion continued the following day: *Izvestiia*, 18 April 1926, 3.

level. Many resisted Ukrainian-language education, most actively in Russophone cities, suggesting widespread use and popularity of Russian in some localities.²³

Although the state did not mandate Russian-language education until 1938, this was not a prohibition. In fact, because there was no all-union Ministry of Education until 1966, educational policy was substantially decentralized, offering leeway for republics to develop their own policies.²⁴ Many republics mandated the study of Russian beginning shortly after the revolution. In the Ukrainian and Belarusian SSRs, all students studied Russian regardless of ethnicity.²⁵ At a 1929 party meeting in the Kazakh *krai*, party leaders pushed for improved Russian-language education, fearing that Kazakh students' lack of Russian proficiency would limit educational opportunities and prevent upward mobility, since higher education was often in Russian.²⁶ By 1938, leaders declared Russian in Kazakh schools to be of “especially urgent concern” (*aktualnoe znachenie*), citing its political significance “as the state language of the Great Soviet Union” and its practical significance in academic disciplines and higher education.²⁷ The Ministry of Education of the Kazakh SSR increased the number of Russian instructional hours in Kazakh schools from 24 to 31 hours per week for the 1937–38 school year, though crippling shortages of both teachers and materials mitigated the impact.²⁸ On the eve of the 1938 law, considerable consensus had emerged across the country about Russian's importance.²⁹

²³ Pauly, *Breaking the Tongue*.

²⁴ Educational guidance emanated from the People's Commissariat of Education of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (NKP RSFSR), which had *de facto* if not *de jure* powers to set union-wide policy, and the all-union Communist Party.

²⁵ On Belarus, see “Na fronte prosveshcheniia,” *Pravda*, 3 October 1924, 4. Ukrainian language policy featured prominently at the April 1926 session, see *2 sessia TsIK SSSR, 3 sozyva: stenograficheskii otchet*.

²⁶ APRK, f. 141, o. 1, d. 2802, especially remarks by Abigalov (ll. 6–8) and Dzhandosov (ll. 9–10).

²⁷ APRK, f. 708, o. 2/1, d. 696, l. 13.

²⁸ APRK, f. 708, o. 2/1, d. 696, l. 4. “Hours per week” denotes the total number of hours taught in all ten grades combined, so this was less than one additional hour per week per school year. On poor teaching quality, see TsGARK, f. 1692, o. 1, dd. 220–221, as well as Peter A. Blitstein, “Stalin's Nations: Soviet Nationality Policy between Planning and Primordialism, 1936–1953” (University of California, Berkeley, 1999), 101–4.

²⁹ Blitstein, “Stalin's Nations”; Blitstein, “Nation-Building or Russification?”

The formal de-emphasis on Russian should thus not be conflated with active repression of the language. Indeed, Russian never disappeared from the central workings of the state, even at the republic and local levels. After all, Lenin's conviction that there was no need to mandate the study of Russian was rooted in a firm belief that forcing Russian would be ineffective: coercion, he wrote, "makes it harder for the great and powerful Russian language to reach other national groups, and more importantly, it exacerbates hostility, creates a million new tensions, intensifies irritation and mutual misunderstanding, etc."³⁰ In Lenin's view, the fastest way to promote proficiency would be to let non-Russians recognize its importance of their own accord while providing resources for them to study the language voluntarily.

No one could deny that Russian was the language of advancement beyond the republic level, and for all the proclaimed equality of languages, non-Russian languages were often disadvantaged in high politics at the all-union and republic scale. Stenographs of party meetings frequently suggested deep preference for Russian: although representatives could theoretically speak in any language, stenographers summarized or omitted remarks delivered in non-Russian languages. This was sometimes even the case in republics, where titular languages were often theoretically prioritized but nevertheless disadvantaged in practice. At party meetings in Kazakhstan, those presenting in Kazakh were encouraged to offer brief remarks in Russian in written or oral form, "since we do not have stenographers who speak Kazakh."³¹

The lack of priority afforded to provisioning meetings with qualified stenographers contributed to an erasure of non-Russian languages and demonstrated *de facto* preferences for Russian. Government ministries and the party frequently conducted their work in Russian, both

³⁰ V.I. Lenin, "Nuzhen li obiazatel'nyi gosudarstvennyi iazyk?" *Proletarskaia Pravda*, 18 January 1914.

³¹ APRK f. 708, o. 3/1, d. 738. This practice was common, and stenographs from meetings in Kazakhstan have frequent notations that simply indicate that the speaker had spoken in Kazakh with no further record of their remark, see also APRK, f. 141, o. 1, d. 5667, d. 108 (1934); APRK f. 708, o. 3/2, d. 38 (1939).

in Kazakhstan and elsewhere, and sometimes even responded to non-Russian language petitions in Russian.³² Ali F. İğmen notes that cultural activists administering local clubs in Kyrgyzstan routinely corresponded in Russian, ironically even when discussing the need to expand the use of Kyrgyz.³³ This preference for Russian filtered down to the population as well. In letters to the central state, non-Russian citizens often wrote in awkward, broken Russian rather than native languages, suggesting many felt requests and petitions would be considered more seriously if delivered in Russian.³⁴

Even without an official mandate, leaders, cultural activists, and even ordinary citizens routinely acknowledged and identified Russian as a language of unique importance in the first two decades of Soviet rule. Although in theory knowledge of Russian was not an absolute prerequisite for participation in civic life, there was little doubt that knowing Russian enabled more active citizenship in practice. This was most true for the upwardly mobile and for any non-Russian who routinely interacted with fellow citizens across ethnic lines. Russian thus enjoyed a position of implicit centrality, paving the way for a more formal role on the eve of World War II.

A Second Native Language: The Centering of Russian after 1938

If the 1920s and early 1930s saw an implicit centering of Russian, the push towards mandatory Russian-language education represented just one policy of a broad agenda that more

³² A 1940 report on the implementing a new script in Kazakhstan noted that the transition was irrelevant to many ministries, including industry and forestry, since they already operated in Russian and had few Kazakh-speaking employees, see TsGARK, f. 1692, o. 1, d. 309a, ll. 131–33. Archives testify to widespread Russian use. In Kazakhstan's state and party archives and Tajikistan's state archives, most documentation was in Russian. More was produced in Ukrainian in state and party archives but Russian remained dominant, particularly in the party.

³³ İğmen, *Speaking Soviet with an Accent*, 65.

³⁴ See letters in GARF, f. 3316, o. 41. Although non-Russian language use was not unheard of (for one example, see GARF, f. 3316, o. 41, d. 83, l. 47, in Uzbek), the vast majority wrote in Russian, even from non-Russian republics. One letter writer, Kostaniuk, wrote in a mix of Ukrainian and Russian (GARF, f. 3316, o. 41, d. 81, l. 22). Another, Abdul N., wrote with spelling errors that suggested non-native proficiency (GARF, f. 3316, o. 41, d. 81, l. 64).

unapologetically embraced Russian beginning in the late 1930s. Pedagogical trends, alphabet Cyrillization, and postwar promotion of Russian in Eastern Europe evinced a more explicitly articulated place for Russian in the Soviet Union and the world. In official parlance, Russian, a language of learning and culture, enabled citizens to communicate with both one another and the state, deepening the connection between Russian and Soviet culture. This coincided with the greater institutionalization of the concept of the Soviet people, as discussed in Chapter 1.

Underlying the state's promotion of Russian was a fundamental understanding that a Russian-inflected civic identity could exist alongside other ethnic affiliations, a fact that scholars of Soviet nationalities policy have often mischaracterized.³⁵ Far from an overt agenda of Russification, a term implying one-way cultural assimilation, the re-centering of Russian that began in the late 1930s was part of a new discourse on Soviet identity that saw ethnic and civic (i.e. Soviet) identities as inherently compatible and even mutually constitutive. This non-binary understanding enabled the state to promote native and Russian languages simultaneously. Cultural and educational policies may have sought to change cultures and lifestyles, but these practices were not simply attempts to turn the various Soviet peoples into something vaguely resembling Russians. Rather, state policy mandated that the overwhelming majority of students be educated in native languages, to which Russian was considered a vital supplement.

Leaders and educators in Moscow and republics adopted two rhetorical strategies to lessen the apparent contradiction in the dual promotion of ethnic and civic identities. First, leaders relied on inclusive, affective language to describe Russian. This discourse encouraged

³⁵ Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 394–431; Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism*. Francine Hirsch suggests that this represented a new phase in “dual-assimilation,” in which leaders shifted away from attention to promoting ethnic identity towards Soviet integration, but this interpretation understands two phases as distinct processes. Kate Brown similarly notes that deported Poles and Germans slowly lost ethnic identities and “began gradually to fuse into Soviet identities as they assimilated into Russian-Soviet culture,” implying incompatibility between ethnic and Soviet identities: *A Biography of No Place*, 191.

non-Russians to see Russian not as a foreign language with little connection to their lives but instead as a “second native language,” near and dear to their hearts. Secondly, policies promoting Russian were often described as practical measures of all-union and cross-cultural integration and tied the language to the goal of promoting interethnic understanding. By deemphasizing the historic connection to the Russian people, this rhetoric of integration favored its function in state institutions and society and deepened its association with Soviet identity. For non-Russians, access to this identity increasingly demanded proficiency in Russian. This simultaneously reified existing inequalities while offering a tool for integration and upward mobility.

Although the state would not formally abandon its commitment to native-language education until the 1958–59 school reform, the implantation of mandatory Russian-language education contributed to a slow, at first almost imperceptible, decline in native languages. The requirement that all schools teach Russian burdened an already severely taxed system, straining the limited availability of textbooks, teachers, and even hours in the day. Given the pervasive implication of Russian’s singular importance, the years that followed the 1938 mandate saw a steady decline in emphasis on non-Russian languages, foremost those of non-titular minorities, who frequently found themselves integrated into either titular-minority or Russian-language schools. Although citizens theoretically shared an equal claim to Russian as either a first or second language, non-Russians persistently bore the burden of language acquisition, sometimes at the cost of their own language.

The 1938 Mandate at the Center and Periphery

Russian was first introduced as a mandatory subject of study for school children in

1938.³⁶ Much like Soviet identity more broadly, the push for standardized Russian-language education was intertwined with the looming threat of war. As Blitstein observes, leaders expressed concerns that the lack of Russian proficiency among recruits threatened military efficacy. These concerns were articulated at the highest level of political leadership: Stalin himself pushed Russian-language education during the October 1937 plenum of the Central Committee, citing the need for a common language among conscripts.³⁷

Following Stalin's demand for universal Russian instruction, the NKP RSFSR prepared a centralized mandate, ultimately passed as the March 13, 1938 decree, "On the mandatory study of Russian in schools of the national republics and oblasts." The decree offered a three-fold justification for requiring the study of Russian:

First, in the condition of a multiethnic state like the USSR, the knowledge of Russian should be a powerful means of connection and communication between peoples of the USSR, enabling their long-term economic and cultural growth. Secondly, mastery of Russian enables the long-term improvement (*usovershenstvovanie*) of national cadres in the areas of scientific and technical knowledge. Thirdly, knowledge of Russian facilitates the necessary conditions for successful military duty by all citizens in the ranks of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army and Navy.³⁸

The law primarily emphasized the need for integration and connection. Knowledge of Russian was seen to be a prerequisite for cultural integration, participation in science and the party, and serving in the military, thereby justifying mandatory study. The direct association between Russian and both military duty and science also connected Russian with all-union pursuits.

The legal rhetoric concerning the implementation of the law dovetailed with several emergent trends discussed in Chapter 1. The focus on all-union institutions, most importantly the Red Army, reflected the growing focus on unity. At the same time, references to the Russian

³⁶ The 1938 decree mandated Russian-language education beginning in second grade in elementary schools (grades 1–4), and in third grade in incomplete secondary and secondary schools (grades 1–7 and 1–10, respectively).

³⁷ Blitstein, "Nation-Building or Russification?," 255.

³⁸ The decree was not published, but a copy can be found in APRK, f. 708, o. 2/1, d. 745, l. 1–8, here 1–2.

people, though not always prominent, hinted at an implicit hierarchy that privileged Russians. Finally, echoing the tenor of the Great Purges, discussions about Russian frequently blamed lagging proficiency on internal enemies. The text of the law held counter-revolutionary Trotskyist-Bukharinite and bourgeois-nationalist elements responsible for the dangerous state of affairs that left many students without access to Russian-language education.³⁹

This anti-nationalist refrain permeated coverage of Russian in non-Russian schools. One *Pravda* article highlighted worrying problems in Tajikistan: “Bourgeois nationalists—enemies of the Tajik people, who spent many years in Tajikistan’s organs of education—have done everything possible to prevent the exposure of Tajik children to the Russian language and culture,” resulting in not only students but even teachers having low proficiency.⁴⁰ Citing this very article, a 1938 report concluded that everything said about Tajik schools “as a whole and completely applies to the teaching of Russian in Kazakh schools.” The report blamed “national-fascists” for the low number of hours (24 per week in the 1936–37 school year) of language instruction and the exclusion of Russian literature from curricula.⁴¹ Ukrainian Party Secretary Nikita Khrushchev similarly blamed bourgeois nationalists for scaling back Russian in Ukraine, and analogous accusations circulated regarding teaching in Karelia, Crimea, and elsewhere.⁴² Attempts to reduce or deemphasize Russian in schools were interpreted as the work of enemies of the people who did not give Russian the proper respect or emphasis.

From the press to internal party meetings, leaders, educators, and cultural activists emphasized Russian as the language of the entire populace. A 1938 *Pravda* headline declared

³⁹ APRK, f. 708, o. 2/1, d. 2/1, 745, l. 1–2.

⁴⁰ “Russkii iazyk v tadjikskoi shkole,” *Pravda*, 28 December 1937, 4.

⁴¹ TsGARK, f. 1692, o. 1, d. 133, l. 14.

⁴² “Doklad tov. N.S. Khrushcheva,” *Pravda*, 16 June 1938, 3; E. Fomenko, “Russkii iazykh v shkolakh Kryma,” *Pravda*, 10 January 1938, 3; T. Lil’chenko, “Russkii iazyk v shkolakh Ukrainy,” *Pravda*, 28 March 1938, 4; K. Zolotov, “Russkii iazyk v karel’skoi shkole,” *Pravda*, 9 April 1938, 3. For a general assessment, see “Russkii iazyk—dostoianie sovetskikh narodov,” *Pravda*, 7 July 1938, 1.

Russian to be the property or achievement (*dostoianie*) of all Soviet peoples (*narody*). The article noted that Russian had historically been the sphere of only privileged non-Russians, studied by the offspring of economic and religious elites. Now, interest in and knowledge of Russian had been democratized and spread to all ethnic minorities: “They do not juxtapose their native language to Russian. They know and love their language, study it, develop it. But at the same time, they want to know Russian as the language of the great people who created the richest socialist culture in the world, with Leninism as its highest achievement. They use Russian as a shared Soviet achievement (*dostoianie*).”⁴³ Although Russian was directly linked with the Russian people, the article’s author foregrounded its connection to socialist culture. Selected individuals—revolutionary heroes, scientists, and writers—were praised as examples of the language’s rich heritage and associated Russian with culture, science, and revolution.

The article promoted Russian as a tool of interethnic communication, which it saw as perhaps its most important historical and contemporary function. As proof, the editorialist cited non-Russians’ use of the language. Taras Shevchenko, the 19th century Ukrainian poet, writer, and artist (here, a “poet-revolutionary”), had been educated and wrote in Russian. Russian literature had also influenced Alexander Chavchavadze, a 19th century Georgian nobleman, writer, and translator. Figures like Shevchenko and Chavchavadze demonstrated Russian’s historic function in cross-cultural communication. In the present era, the editorialist declared, “Russian is becoming the international language of socialist culture,” an international status akin to Latin in the Middle Ages and French in the 18th and 19th centuries. Decrying nationalists and Trotskyists for keeping Russian out of national schools and bemoaning the lack of preparation for the upcoming school year, the article concluded: “Workers of our country want to know

⁴³ “Russkii iazyk—dostoianie sovetskikh narodov,” *Pravda*, 7 July 1938, 1.

Russian language in all its richness. As the powerful instrument (*orudie*) of socialist culture, Russian should become the property (*dostoianie*) of every Soviet citizen!”⁴⁴

Recognition of Russian’s importance also came from republics. At a March 1939 Central Committee in Kazakhstan, Sársen Amanjolov, who drafted the new Cyrillized Kazakh alphabet, explicitly saw Russian as the most powerful “instrument” (*orudie*) for boosting the military and improving culture: “This great Russian language has now become the great international language of the peoples of the Soviet Union in matters of mutual understanding and mutual connection. In this language, our peoples can communicate and understand one another and at the same time, strengthen the friendship of the peoples and the power of our country, both in the Red Army and also in everyday life...”⁴⁵ The Kazakh language, he further noted, owed much of its post-revolutionary development to Russian’s influence, since it enabled Kazakh workers to access the riches of Russian literature and culture.

Party and educational activists frequently highlighted the leading role of the Russian people as a primary reason that all citizens should study Russian. At the 14th Congress of the Communist Party of Ukraine in June 1938, Secretary Nikita Khrushchev proclaimed, “Comrades, now all peoples will study Russian, because Russian workers, foremost the workers of Petersburg and Moscow, raised the banner of revolt in October 1917.”⁴⁶ At a meeting about the new Tajik script, Tair Pulatov, head of the alphabet commission, similarly declared:

The Tajik people has always remembered, remembers, and will remember the enormous significance and influence on the development of its [own Tajik] culture that has been and continues to be shown by the great Russian culture and the great Russian language, the culture and language of the titan people (*narod-ispolin*) that has given humanity such luminaries of science and art like Lenin and Stalin, Pushkin and Tolstoy, Gorky and Mayakovsky, Mechnikov and Pavlov, Tsiolkovsky and Michurin... The Tajik people

⁴⁴ “Russkii iazyk—dostoianie sovetskikh narodov,” *Pravda*, 7 July 1938, 1. Shevchenko also wrote in Ukrainian, but this is not addressed in the article.

⁴⁵ APRK, f. 708, o. 3/2, d. 38, l. 1–2.

⁴⁶ “Doklad tov. NS Khrushcheva,” *Pravda*, 16 June 1938, 3.

sees in them a clear example of all that is cutting-edge, progressive, and luminous, which enables its [the Tajik people's] growth and progress on the path to communism. It sees in this the only correct path to its real, bright, and radiant future.⁴⁷

Pulatov emphasized Russian's importance in culture and science and called all to study and master "the very language in which the great works of Lenin and Stalin were written."⁴⁸ Russian was not only important in the past and present, Pulatov insisted: it was the language of the future.

Educational specialists expressed considerable doubt that rank and file teachers properly valued Russian. At an April 1939 meeting of the Division of Schools and Science at the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan, one attendee, Vasilenko, discussed serious problems that had been uncovered in newspapers, teacher conferences, and school inspections: "If you ask a teacher what revolutionary significance is contained in the decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party [to mandate Russian language education], they don't know. They say it is a progressive language, the language of Lenin and Stalin, but what dictates its necessity, they do not know."⁴⁹ This, he went on, was true of teachers at all types of schools. Many had little concept of what students were expected to know, despite clear expectations in the text of the decision. Rural teachers, he pointed out, lacked both knowledge and training, suggesting significant gaps between the law and implementation.

Outside elite party circles, many echoed the new emphasis on Russian. One 1940 letter to *Pravda* from a Kazakh village commented, "The political and cultural significance of the Russian language for the USSR is enormous. It is not only the language of the most numerous nation in our country, but also the second native language of all its inhabitants and a connecting element of all 160 and more nationalities that settle our Union." The letter writer concluded that

⁴⁷ Central State Archives of the Republic of Tajikistan (TsGART), f. 360, o. 11, d. 69, l. 11.

⁴⁸ TsGART, f. 360, o. 11, d. 69, ll. 11–12. Pulatov also prominently associated Russian with the official party history, which he hailed as "the great scientific achievement of all time."

⁴⁹ TsGARK, f. 1692, o. 1, d. 136, l. 36.

the “mastery of Russian by the entire population of the country is a political task of first-order importance.”⁵⁰ The Scientific-Research Institute of Schools at the NKP of the Kazakh SSR called a meeting to discuss the letter’s content. The report indicated widespread approval of his description of Russian as a “second native language.” Russian was not a foreign language for non-Russian speakers and should be treated and taught differently.⁵¹

On one hand, the idea of Russian as a second native language reinforced the belief that everyone had equal claim to it. At the same time, the concept betrayed continuing inequalities faced by ethnic minorities, who were expected to gain near-native proficiency in Russian despite fewer resources. Because national schools taught native and Russian languages and literatures where Russian schools taught only Russian, non-Russians received far fewer hours of Russian instruction relative to Russian peers, even in the best of circumstances.⁵² More often than not, schools failed to live up to the standards, creating nearly insurmountable hurdles. In many schools, Russian was either taught incompetently or not at all.⁵³ Although Russian teachers were theoretically supposed to speak students’ native language, especially in lower grades, sufficient teachers with the requisite skills often did not exist, least of all in rural communities. Sometimes native Russian speakers with little to no grasp of students’ native language taught in non-Russian schools.⁵⁴ In more unfortunate but exceedingly common cases, teachers who spoke students’

⁵⁰ TsGARK, f. 1692, o. 1, d. 236, l. 74.

⁵¹ TsGARK, f. 1692, o. 1, d. 236, l. 72.

⁵² RGASPI, f. 17, o. 126, d. 23, ll. 49–51. This continued after the war, see RGASPI, f. 17, o. 132, d. 189, ll. 6–7.

⁵³ “Russkii iazyk v tadjhiskoi shkole,” *Pravda*, 28 December 1937, 4; E. Fomenko, “Russkii iazykh v shkolakh Kryma,” *Pravda*, 10 January 1938, 3; T. Lil’chenko, “Russkii iazyk v shkolakh Ukrainy,” *Pravda*, 28 March 1938, 4; K. Zolotov, “Russkii iazyk v karel’skoi shkole,” *Pravda*, 9 April 1938, 3; A. Grigor’ian, “Russii iazyk v nerusskikh shkolakh,” *Pravda*, 16 November 1940, 3; L. Brontman, *Russkii iazyk v raionakh Dagestana*, *Pravda*, 25 September 1940, 3; Gr. Kaminskii, “Russkii iazyk v tatarskoi shkole,” *Izvestiia*, 21 March 1941, 2. On the lack of Russian classes in some Kazakh schools, see also TsGARK, f. 1692, o. 1, d. 133, ll. 14–22.

⁵⁴ At a 1939 conference of Russian teachers in Kazakhstan, several admitted their own lack of knowledge of Kazakh and others spoke of the difficulties faced by teachers who spoke limited Kazakh: TsGARK, f. 1692, o. 1, d. 220, l. 28; 95–97; TsGARK, f. 1692, o. 1, d. 221: ll. 4–5. Occasional reports surfaced of ethnic Russian teachers who had recognized the utility of local languages, but these cases were exceptional. A 1941 report singled out one qualified

native language could barely speak Russian.⁵⁵ Despite limited instruction hours, unqualified teachers, and no Russian in the home, non-Russians were still expected to master Russian roughly on par with native speakers.

The inequality of these expectations can be read across reports decrying the state of Russian proficiency. School inspectors and education policy experts frequently condemned unacceptable spelling and orthographic mistakes among non-Russian pupils. Most reports offered only statistical representations, but when inspectors spoke of specific mistakes, many would be familiar to any language learner. In some cases, mistakes reflected differences between spellings and pronunciations, whereby students would spell Russian phonetically or pronounce words according to spelling.⁵⁶ Students also struggled with unfamiliar sounds and grammatical concepts, and many learned incorrect pronunciation from incompetent teachers.⁵⁷ Other reports

teacher, Raisa Alemasheva, who had learned Uzbek to teach more effectively: N. Anan'ev, "Izuchenie russkogo iazyka v nerusskikh shkolakh," *Pravda*, 10 February 1941, 4. A teacher in Kazakhstan noted that her teaching had improved with basic Kazakh proficiency, in TsGARK, f. 1692, o. 1, d. 220, l. 95–97.

⁵⁵ Naturally, this was exacerbated by the fact that Russian-language education was not prioritized prior to 1938. A 1940 report suggested widespread incompetence among Russian teachers in non-Russian schools, A. Grigor'ian, "Russkii iazyk v nerusskikh shkolakh," *Pravda*, 16 November 1940, 3. Archives are full of reports of unqualified teachers and school administrators with poor Russian. At a meeting on teaching Russian in Kazakhstan during the 1937–38 school year, one attendee noted that poor teaching in early grades had a disastrous effect on proficiency in Kazakhstan, TsGARK, f. 1692, o. 1, d. 18, l. 11. Several delegates at a 1939 conference of Russian teachers noted that many teachers spoke Russian poorly or hardly at all: TsGARK, f. 1692, o. 1, d. 220, ll. 6–9; 58; 62; 114; 167–169; 202–204; 216–222. A 1939 statement on Russian in Kazakh schools noted that teachers' insufficient proficiency was the biggest problem facing schools, TsGARK, f. 1692, o. 1, d. 221, ll. 61–63; an undated statement similarly highlighted teachers' spelling and grammatical mistakes, see ll. 79–85.

⁵⁶ Although Russian is roughly phonetic, pronunciation can be affected by stress (not typically indicated in written Russian), specific grammatical forms, or regional dialects. One report criticized pronunciation even among native speakers, decrying the influence of a Muscovite accent, which further departed from written Russian in the pronunciation of specific words: GARF, f. 10049, o. 1, d. 126, ll. 2–3. The difference between written and spoken Russian could be difficult for language learners. A 1938 report on the state of Russian in Kazakh schools complained that students often omitted spaces between words that are slurred together, added spaces in other cases, and mixed hard and soft vowels (u instead of iu), TsGARK, f. 1692, o. 1, d. 133, ll. 18–19. A 1940 report on Russian education in Dagestan also highlighted small spelling errors of one of the best students: L. Brontman, "Russkii iazyk v raionakh Dagestana," *Pravda*, 25 September 1940, 3. On similarly mistakes in Tatarstan, see Gr. Kaminskii, "Russkii iazyk v tatarskoi shkole," *Izvestiia*, 21 March 1941, 2. In postwar western Ukraine, one report noted that pupils often confused Russian and Ukrainian orthography and pronunciation or spoke Russian with a Ukrainian accent, see State Archive of Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast (hereafter DAIFO), f. R-3, o. 2, d. 60, ll. 73–77.

⁵⁷ TsGARK, f. 1692, o. 1, d. 133, ll. 16–17; TsGARK, f. 1692, o. 1, d. 220, ll. 95–96; TsGARK, f. 1692, o. 1, d. 236, ll. 76–78; APRK, f. 708, o. 2/1, d. 696, ll. 7–9; TsGARK, f. 2071, o. 1, d. 7, l. 58.

highlighted orthographic confusion, whereby language-learners confused Cyrillic letters with similar-looking Latin ones.⁵⁸

At least one letter writer, in a letter to *Pravda* in 1940, took pity on language learners, since Russian was “one of the most difficult languages.” Although the grammar and vocabulary were somewhat familiar for Slavs, Russian presented difficulties for non-Slavic minorities:

But for the rest of the ethnicities of our Union it is sometimes more difficult than their native language... The Russian verb with its perfective and imperfective aspects, past participles, and gerunds, three forms of imperatives—it’s a tough pill [literally: hard bone] for non-Slavs. Declension with an endless array of exceptions. The mutation of sounds. And—the most difficult of all—Russian stress. Just 50 or 60 years ago, scholars in the West believed that Russian stress had no rules whatsoever. Now we know there are rules, and how! In nouns alone there are nine types of stress, but there is no rule for determining to which group one or another noun belongs.⁵⁹

These problems, the author declared, were compounded by the fact that textbooks did not take into account the specificity of non-Russian schools and presumed native proficiency. Such textbooks failed to explain finer points of grammar and vocabulary to non-native learners.

The letter writer implicitly hinted at the significant pedagogical impact of Russian’s status as a second native language. Most practically, students were expected to transition into near-native Russian-language proficiency quickly, with relatively little clarified in their mother tongue. Celebrated teachers often suggested that once students had amassed sufficient vocabulary, native language should only be used in the most extreme cases.⁶⁰ Although this might have been pedagogically sound advice for efficient language acquisition, most reports emphasized the sorry state of the average pupil’s grasp of Russian grammar, often blaming poor

⁵⁸ TsGARK, f. 1692, o. 1, d. 133, l.17; TsGARK, f. 1692, o. 1, d. 220, ll.170–171; TsGARK, f. 2071, o. 1, d. 7, l.52.

⁵⁹ TsGARK, f. 1692, o. 1, d. 236, l. 74. At least two attendees at a 1939 Russian teachers’ conference in Kazakhstan also highlighted the difficulties of Russian stress for non-Russians, see speech by Omarov, of Kustanai oblast, who agreed with fellow speaker, Ukrainian-born pedagogue Evgenii Krotevich: TsGARK, f. 1692, o. 1, d. 220, l. 3.

⁶⁰ See speeches at the 1939 Russian teachers’ conference in Kazakhstan by Kubeev, Aksartov, Atamberdin, and Magzumov in TsGARK, f. 1692, o. 1, d. 221, ll. 14, 28–29, 47–51, and 52–53.

instruction at the earliest level.⁶¹ Because proficiency was often measured by the lack of spelling and grammatical errors, oral fluency was only one goal of language training. Furthermore, given the extreme under-resourcing of schools with pedagogical materials and textbooks, non-Russian schools sometimes relied on textbooks prepared for Russian schools, presuming students to be able to access materials for Russian students of a similar age, clearly an unrealistic expectation.⁶²

Inequalities between languages became apparent when students transitioned into Russian-language schools alongside native speakers. Although the state devoted significant resources towards native-language schools, most extensively at the primary school level (grades 1–4), non-Russian children encountered Russian-language education in a number of circumstances. Non-Russian populations deemed insufficiently concentrated geographically to justify the expense of native-language education often found only Russian-language schools available, a trend that dramatically increased in subsequent decades.⁶³ Transitioning to Russian-language schools was common after fourth grade, when many non-Russians entered Russian schools due to insufficient demand for native language schools and/or shortages of suitably trained teachers. The most upwardly mobile of non-Russian students entered Russian-language higher education, often exposing their poor preparation, particularly in Russian. Insufficient Russian proficiency could prevent non-Russians from continuing their education.⁶⁴ The discourse of the “second native language” thus subtly implied an expectation of near-native fluency, despite the fact that most non-Russians had considerably fewer resources at their disposal for learning Russian.

⁶¹ TsGARK, f. 1692, o. 1, d. 221, ll. 25, 31, 34–38.

⁶² On the unsuitability of textbooks designed for Russian schools in non-Russian schools and the need for specialized textbooks, see TsGARK, f. 1692, o. 1, d. 220, ll. 24–30, 67–75; TsGARK, f. 1692, o. 1, d. 221, ll. 47–48.

⁶³ For example, in a 1938 memo to Aleksandr Zhukov, the director of the Division of Schools of the KPSS, the deputy director of the Division on Schools and Science of the Kazakh Communist Party Ibragimov noted that the republic had eliminated many non-titular minority schools, including schools for Tatar, Kurdish, Armenian, and Tajik minorities in areas with too few students to justify their existence: APRK, f. 708, o. 02/1, d. 746, ll. 26–36.

⁶⁴ APRK, f. 141, o. 1, d. 2802, ll. 9–10; RGASPI, f. 17, o. 125, d. 457, ll. 14–22.

Alphabet Soup: Cyrillization and Orthographic Change

For many non-Slavic students, learning Russian entailed not only acquiring a new language with unfamiliar sounds and grammar but also a new alphabet, since most non-Slavic languages were written in Latin-derived scripts. Across Eurasia, Latinization increasingly came under attack with the introduction of mandatory Russian-language study, culminating in the adoption of Cyrillic-based scripts for most languages between 1936 and the early 1940s.⁶⁵ The transition to modified Cyrillic alphabets highlighted the growing prominence of Russian, as activists emphasized the need for and timeliness of new scripts. As Tair Pulatov, the head of the alphabet commission in Tajikistan, noted, under current conditions of “brotherhood and Stalinist friendship between people of the Soviet Union,” the Latin script stood in “clear conflict with the tendencies of development of the modern Tajik language.”⁶⁶ Political leaders, scholars, and cultural activists argued that the transition to Cyrillic scripts would offer numerous advantages on both individual and communal levels.

On an individual scale, new scripts promised to reduce confusion and educational burdens, since non-Russians students would no longer need to learn two alphabets.⁶⁷ This discourse rhetorically couched the introduction of new scripts in discourses of liberation and attention to non-Russians’ needs while simultaneously privileging the place of Russian. Orthographic choices underscored the Russian language’s privileged position. The near-universal decision to include all Russian letters in new Cyrillized scripts, including for sounds without local equivalents, enabled borrowed Russian words to be properly rendered and promoted proper

⁶⁵ Georgian and Armenian, which retained their own alphabets, were notable exceptions. “Foreign” languages spoken by ethnic minorities, like German, Polish, and Yiddish, continued to be written in their original scripts, though their usage was highly controlled and often repressed. Baltic languages, too, never transitioned to Cyrillic.

⁶⁶ TsGART, f. 360, o. 11, d. 69, l. 13.

⁶⁷ APRK, f. 708, o. 3/1, d. 1099, ll. 10–11; TsGART, f. 360, o. 11, d. 69, l. 13.

pronunciation.⁶⁸ Similarly, sounds unique to non-Russian languages were generally rendered with modified versions of the closest Cyrillic variant (for example, Ғ, Ў, Ҡ in Uzbek were deemed roughly similar to ғ, у, and қ). These choices rendered alphabets for all Cyrillic-based languages approximately mutually intelligible, as mediated through Russian orthography.

At the same time, the vision of communication and common connection was oriented around and through the Russian language. After all, the modified Cyrillic alphabets, which differed from language to language, were far more dissimilar than the more unified Latin scripts that were being replaced. In the 1920s, and 30s, there were concrete efforts to ensure greater mutual intelligibility between non-Russian languages. Because the adopted Cyrillic scripts rendered languages more different, the shift to Cyrillic privileged communication between non-Russian peoples that was mediated through Russian. This switch was thought, above all, to help non-Russians learn Russian more easily and effectively. Although activists occasionally referenced the potential benefits to Russians learning non-Russian languages, the primary focus was typically on improving Russian proficiency among non-Russians.⁶⁹ Improved proficiency, leaders and cultural activists noted, would make it easier in turn for non-Russians to grasp the fundamentals of science, technology, and Marxism-Leninism.⁷⁰ It would also allow non-Russians to receive higher education in elite institutions.

Activists also argued that Cyrillized scripts offered numerous communal advantages. In

⁶⁸ This reversed decisions made in Latinized scripts that chose to approximate non-existent Russian sounds with sounds more familiar (*sobet* for *sovet* in Kazakh, for example), see APRK, f. 708, o. 3/1, d. 1099, l. 9. Amanjolov, who drafted the Cyrillized Kazakh alphabet, complained that the Latin script lacked important characters for conveying Russian sounds, see APRK, f. 708, o. 3/2, d. 38, ll. 3–4. In Tajikistan, Pulatov also complained of spelling difficulties created by poorly rendered Russian words in the Latinized script, see TsGART, f. 360, o. 11, d. 69, l. 13. On the discussion of Russian characters in Kazakh, see APRK, f. 708, o. 4/1, d. 747, l. 17; APRK, f. 708, o. 3/2, d. 38; APRK, f. 708, o. 3/1, d. 738; TsGARK, f. 1692, o. 1, d. 309.

⁶⁹ On the mutual benefits for Russians and non-Russians, see APRK, f. 708, o. 3/1, d. 1099, l. 10–11; APRK, f. 708, o. 3/2, d. 38, l. 4; and APRK, f. 708, o. 5/1, d. 649, ll. 52–54. On improving Russian proficiency specifically among non-Russians, see G. Bel'gaev, "Perevesti buriat-mongol'skuiu pis'mennost' na russkii alfavit," *Pravda*, 7 April 1939, 4; G. Dinmukhametov, "Perevod tatarskoi pis'mennosti," *Pravda*, 29 March 1940, 4.

⁷⁰ E.g. APRK, f. 708, o. 3/1, d. 1099, ll. 10–11.

economic terms, new scripts obviated the need for separate typewriters and presses for Russian and non-Russian languages and enabled access to cutting-edge printing technology available for Cyrillic.⁷¹ More importantly, new scripts would promote unity and communication and serve as an important tool of all-union integration. This mechanism of integration, aided by the Cyrillic script and the use of the Russian language, exposed the hierarchical relationship between Russian and non-Russian peoples. As two Kazakh research scholars noted, the Soviet Union was a “unified system of socialist economy and a community of economic and political interests” and home to a common culture that was “national in form and socialist in content.” Russians’ leading place in society, they argued, justified a common Cyrillic alphabet.⁷² Pulatov similarly saw the adoption of a Russian script as necessary to Tajikistan’s integration, emphasizing cultural unity.⁷³

Concerns about fostering better communication reflected larger ideological projects to forge a more unified society. If, as suggested by two anthropologists, “orthographic choice is really about ‘imagining’ the past and the future of a community,” new Cyrillic scripts visually placed non-Russian republics firmly within Moscow’s orbit and separated them from the outside world.⁷⁴ In 1939, this had specific ramifications in Moldova, which transitioned into a Cyrillic script immediately after Soviet annexation. The new script not only promoted closer interaction with Russians and Ukrainians, it also delineated Moldovan from Romanian as written across the border. Secretary V. Tsyganko of the Moldovan regional committee of the Communist Party argued that the new script “enriches the Moldovan language, strengthens the linguistic connection with the Ukrainian and Russian peoples, makes the study of the Russian language

⁷¹ APRK, f. 708, o. 3/1, d. 1099, l. 11; “Novyi kabardinskii alfavit,” *Pravda*, 11 June 1936, 4.

⁷² APRK, f. 708, o. 3/1, d. 1099, l. 10.

⁷³ TsGART, f. 360, o. 11, d. 69.

⁷⁴ Quotation from: Bambi B. Schieffelin and Rachelle Charlier Doucet, “The ‘Real’ Haitian Creole: Ideology, Metalinguistics, and Orthographic Choice,” in *Language Ideologies: Practice and Theory*, ed. Bambi B. Schieffelin, Kathryn Ann Woolard, and Paul V. Kroskrity (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 285.

easier,” enabling Moldovans to study the works of Stalin and Lenin.⁷⁵ Cyrilized scripts offered a visual, linguistic reminder that non-Russians belonged to a unified Soviet society. New alphabets, alongside newly mandated Russian-language instruction, were tools for promoting civic participation and interethnic communication.

Despite the emphasis on communication, new Cyrilized scripts came with costs borne primarily by non-Russians, revealing hidden inequalities between citizens. On one level, the transition to new alphabets contributed to material shortages across Eurasia. Since students were no longer trained to read materials in outdated scripts, books needed to be reissued and textbooks needed to be rewritten. Although the state allocated financial and material resources to the transition, the process went slowly, thanks in part to widespread shortages during and after World War II. A 1947 report highlighted long-term costs in Kyrgyzstan: “Many necessary books are not being republished. The works of Pushkin, Lermontov, Gogol, Gorky, and also several books by Kyrgyz writers published in the Latin alphabet are not accessible to students now. Pupils who read books in the Russian alphabet do not understand the Latin typeface.”⁷⁶

There were also human costs, since the adoption of new alphabets rendered entire populations effectively illiterate, at least as far as newly published materials and newspapers were concerned. Implementing new alphabets required retraining teachers, massive literacy campaigns, new textbooks and educational materials, and republishing of all literature that was to be preserved, all processes that happened twice in less than two decades. Even though new scripts would ultimately decrease burdens for pupils formerly required to master two alphabets from an early age, a certain number of citizens never fully transitioned. In a published oral history, one Uzbek woman recalled that her parents remained “barely literate” (*malogramotnyi*)

⁷⁵ V. Tsyganko, “Prazdnik moldavskogo naroda,” *Izvestiia*, 12 October 1939, 2.

⁷⁶ “Beseda s predsedatelem pravleniia SSP Kirgizii Tokombaevym,” *Literaturnaia Gazeta*, 14 June 1947, 1.

as a result. Her father learned to read prayers and the Quran in Arabic script; her mother “spent four years studying in what was already a Soviet school, but then, study was in Latin, and then she never managed to master Cyrillic, and in practice, she did not know how to read or write.”⁷⁷ In this sense, script changes in non-Russian languages could be both tools of and obstacles to upward mobility.

World War II: Russian on the Front and Home Front

If the 1938 decree provided a legal and theoretical framework for mandated study of Russian, subsequent decades saw a dramatic increase in the language’s practical significance. During World War II and the waning years of Stalin’s rule, Russian served as a tool of integration, both within the Soviet Union and in its growing sphere of influence in Eastern Europe. Pedagogical changes underscored Russian’s practical significance, as proficiency in Russian became expected from all citizens, as well as a growing number of non-citizens in Eastern Europe and the world. As before the war, the focus on Russian created difficulties for non-Russians, on whom the demands of integration were almost always the greatest.

The Soviet occupation of large swaths of Eastern Europe in the wake of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact created a climate that privileged Russian. As the state made inroads into Western Ukraine, Western Belarus, and the Baltic states, the integration of new territories entailed an overhaul of school curricula, including the introduction of Russian-language study. Reflecting deep suspicion of Polish-language institutions in Western Ukraine and Belarus, the state favored Russian, Ukrainian, and Belarusian schools over Polish ones and imported a variety

⁷⁷ Tokhtakhodzhaeva, *XX vek v vospominaniakh...*, 75.

of elites and institutions as part of a broad-based effort to Sovietize formerly Polish territories.⁷⁸ Those able to communicate in Russian and/or the language of given republics had access to upward mobility due to the benefits of higher quality educational materials and the ability to communicate with newly arrived personnel. The presence of Red Army soldiers, party members, teachers, and other officials recruited from elsewhere in the Soviet Union increased the prominence of Russian and strongly associated the language with Soviet rule.⁷⁹ In Moldova, the transition to a new Cyrillic script in 1939 further underscored Russian's new prominence.⁸⁰ Less trusted minorities, like Poles, Germans, and borderland inhabitants, were subjected to deportation and targeted for agitation campaigns that emphasized Russian proficiency.⁸¹

Both within the military and on the home front, World War II exposed inequalities inherent in language policy. As seen in the original 1938 decree, military concerns factored prominently in the shift to mandatory Russian language study. The introduction of a universal male draft and the elimination of territorial units in the 1930s created a need for communication within the ranks. Despite innovative cultivation of native-language propaganda with non-Russian recruits, detailed in Chapter 2, service in the military promoted a Russian-speaking milieu. Though this did not constitute blatant Russification (soldiers ethnic identities continued to be promoted), it reinforced Russian-inflected Soviet identities within the military.⁸²

The battlefield heightened the stakes of Russian proficiency for soldiers and “peaceful Soviet citizens” living behind enemy lines. Following the German invasion, *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*

⁷⁸ Gross, *Revolution from Abroad*, 126–30.

⁷⁹ On the 1939–41 annexation, see Gross, *Revolution from Abroad*; Amar, *The Paradox of Ukrainian Lviv*, 44–87; Frunchak, “The Making of Soviet Chernivtsi.”

⁸⁰ V. Tsyganko, “Prazdnik moldavskogo naroda,” *Izvestiia*, 12 October 1939, 2.

⁸¹ APRK, f. 708, o. 4/1, d. 724, l. 1. Brown, *A Biography of No Place*, 191; see also Scarborough, “An Unwanted Dependence.”

⁸² Shin, “Red Army Propaganda for Uzbek Soldiers and Localised Soviet Internationalism during World War II”; Shaw, “Soldiers’ Letters to Inobatxon and O’g’ulxon”; Florin, “Becoming Soviet through War.”

provided no shortage of stories of German soldiers whose attempts to infiltrate the countryside had been thwarted by citizens' recognition of their "broken" (*lomanyi*) Russian, often conveyed with renderings of poor pronunciation and grammatical mistakes.⁸³ One report highlighted a fascist bandit (*razboinik*) who "screeched, breaking all rules of the Russian language."⁸⁴ Another reporter, D. Zaslavskii, drew an even subtler distinction in an article about a German radio broadcast that had tried to garner peasant support: "They presented on that day on the radio some woman who was falsely advertised to listeners as a 'collective farmer'... This 'collective farmer' hoarsely screamed as if in Russian, but it was not our Soviet Russian language. It was a spoiled, Russo-German jargon, a vile idiom that combined the fragrance of the feudal lordly manor, the old city bazaar, and the German barracks." Soviet women, Zaslavskii concluded, could easily recognize her as a "German production."⁸⁵ This and similar reports tightened the association between properly articulated, "Soviet Russian" and true patriots, which was only heightened by suspicion of native-language use in occupied territories and Nazi collaboration with anti-Soviet nationalist groups.⁸⁶ Real patriots, such reports implied, spoke proper Russian, suggesting high expectations for the mastery of the language by non-Russians.

⁸³ One report noted that many paratroopers had significant knowledge of Russian, see Colonel M. Spirin, "Pervyi opyt bor'by s vozduzhnymi desantami," *Izvestiia*, 6 July 1941, 2. For selected examples of the unmasking of foreign soldiers, see "Ot sovetskogo Informbiuro (vechernee soobshchenie)," *Izvestiia*, 5 July 1941, 1; "Razvedchik Beliakov," *Izvestiia*, 28 June 1941, 2; "Vernye pomoshchniki krasnoi armii," *Pravda*, 2 July 1941, 2; "Vyshe revoliutsionnuiu bditel'nost'," *Izvestiia*, 8 July 1941, 1. A similar story surfaced about female collective farmers, who successfully identified enemy soldiers by their broken Russian, see A. Popovskii, "Vdokhnovennaia strana," *Literaturnaia Gazeta*, 13 July 1941, 2; Br. Tur, "Mladshii leitenant Muzychenko," *Izvestiia*, 15 July 1941, 2. Such stories ran throughout the war, foremost in the first few months.

⁸⁴ Al. Surkov, "Volk prikidyvaetsia ovechkoi," *Izvestiia*, 20 July 1941, 3.

⁸⁵ D. Zaslavskii, "Skvernaia baba nemetskogo proizvodstvo," *Pravda*, 11 March 1942, 4.

⁸⁶ A 1941 report described a Belarusian-language German broadcast that instructed citizens to capture partisans and their weapons and promised to shoot anyone who aided partisans, "Na ocherednoi press-konferentsii inostrannykh korrespondentov," *Izvestiia*, 17 August 1941, 4. Another highlighted suppression of Russian in Romanian-controlled Bessarabia (Moldova), see "Varvarkii prikaz rumynskogo 'gubernatora'," *Izvestiia*, 24 December 1941, 4. For recent discussions of nationalist collaboration with occupying forces, see Jan T. Gross, "A Colonial History of the Bloodlands," *Kritika* 15, no. 3 (2014): 591–96; Vladimir Solonari, "Hating Soviets—Killing Jews: How Antisemitic Were Local Perpetrators in Southern Ukraine, 1941–42?," *Kritika* 15, no. 3 (2014): 505–33; Amar, *The Paradox of Ukrainian Lviv*, 88–142.

Deep in the rear, citizens lived in ever-closer contact with one another, and Russian often served as a *de facto* means of communication. Wartime policies further promoted Russian in the education of non-Russians both by design and default. In some cases, native languages were tightly controlled and even prohibited. This was especially true for Soviet Germans and other “punished peoples,” deported *en masse* to sites across Central Asia and western Siberia in the 1930s and ‘40s.⁸⁷ In other cases, the shift to Russian-language education happened by default. Party documents from 1942 noted the limited availability of teachers qualified to teach in Ukrainian for evacuated children in Central Asia.⁸⁸ Insufficient textbooks, teachers, and classrooms often meant that Russian became the default language of instruction, since it was perceived to be more universally accessible. These conditions impacted host communities and resettled peoples alike, as the Soviet Union became more unified, connected, and nation-like, mediated through Russian as a language of “interethnic communication.”

Wartime propaganda also emphasized Russian proficiency, even as some agitation was specifically targeted towards minorities in their native languages. At a meeting of the Administration of Propaganda and Agitation of the Central Committee in March 1944, the Russian literary critic Aleksandr Egolin noted with dismay that two recipients of honors from the Uzbek Union of Writers did not even know Russian. Specifically citing the possibility that the unnamed writers in question were more influenced by the culture of “Iranian and other eastern peoples” than by Russian culture, Egolin interpreted this as a severe shortcoming. Wartime conditions necessitated bringing all citizens closer to Russian culture, and in Egolin’s view, that especially applied to honored writers. Soviet unity was thus mediated through Russian.*After*

⁸⁷ Mukhina, *The Germans of the Soviet Union*, 57–108. On the long-term impact of deportation on linguistic and cultural identities, see Brown, *A Biography of No Place*, 173–91; Scarborough, “An Unwanted Dependence”; Mukhina, *The Germans of the Soviet Union*, 131–52. In the mid-1950s, Kazakhstani officials debated reinstating Chechen and Ingush language education, see TsGARK, f. 1692, o. 1, d. 2612.

⁸⁸ RGASPI, f. 17, o. 126, d. 5, ll. 114–124.

Victory: An Expanded World for Russian

Following the German defeat, Russian expanded both geographically and in significance, dovetailing with the celebration of the Russian people. In geographic terms, the expansion of Soviet influence westward to East Germany meant that Russian functioned as a language not only of interethnic but also of international communication, as highlighted by D. Zaslavskii in a 1949 *Literaturnaia Gazeta* article. Zaslavskii opened with a description of a Budapest girls' school, where pupils learned Russian as part of newly adopted curriculum:

Hungarian girls study Russian. So do Hungarian boys. As it is in Budapest, so it is in other cities of Hungary. And also in Romania, in Czechoslovakia, in other countries of new democracy. By and large, the current generation in these countries does not know Russian. But already many adults are studying it. And the adolescent generation will know Russian and will read the works of Russian artistic and scientific literature in the original. The interest in Russian is very great. It corresponds to the great interest in the Soviet Union. This is not just a matter of compliance. The interest in our country is borne of high feelings of friendship, consciousness of the historical role that the Soviet people has played in liberating countries of new democracy from oppressors, foreigners and their own. With love, the names of Lenin and Stalin have been accepted into the national lexicons of all nations. With a feeling of devotion, friendship and love, they instill interest in Russian.

Zaslavskii contrasted the proficiency of Hungarian schoolgirls, who supposedly learned Russian “without grammatical mistakes” with the broken, old-fashioned Russian spoken on foreign radio stations like Voice of America: “This is not the Russian language of our time. Democratic peoples (*narody*) learn genuine Russian, Soviet Russian.”⁸⁹

Zaslavskii saw the increased use of Russian outside Soviet borders, including the study of Russian by “our enemies,” as proof of the Soviet Union’s status as a world power in politics and culture. Knowledge of Russian, he went on, would be a precondition of being an educated person, much like Latin, French, and English: “Now no one can consider himself a scholar in the full and actual sense of the word if he does not know Russian, if he does not read the works of

⁸⁹ D. Zaslavskii, “Velikii iazyk nashego epokhi,” *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 1 January 1949, 3.

Russian thought in the original... Without Russian, it is already impossible to be an authentically educated person.”⁹⁰ Published on New Year’s Day, the article closed with a hopeful vision for the future: “with great power we recognize the great responsibility that Russian literature and Russian science has taken upon itself before all peoples of the world” as the Soviet Union led the world towards communism.⁹¹ In 1953, S. Soltanov expressed similar optimism in *Izvestiia* about the growing number of Chinese students learning Russian in order to read Soviet books and textbooks.⁹² Newspapers routinely reported on the study of Russian in Eastern Europe.⁹³

Within the Soviet Union, the state continued to emphasize the study of Russian, often seen as essential for developing patriotism and for binding the various Soviet peoples together. Knowledge of Russian, educators and cultural figure repeated frequently, brought non-Russians closer to both “the brotherly Russian people” and citizens of other ethnicities, thereby promoting and deepening the “friendship of the peoples” that unified all citizens.⁹⁴ This had particular manifestations in the newly acquired territories of Western Ukraine and Belarus and the Baltic republics, where the state used Russian as a tool of cultural and political integration.

Multidirectional population transfers, including the influx of political and cultural elites, deportations of unwanted or untrusted minorities and activists, and the brutal suppression of purported nationalists, connected the region with the rest of the country. In western republics, the

⁹⁰ D. Zaslavskii, “Velikii iazyk nashego epokhi,” *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 1 January 1949, 3. On Russian use in international science, see “Sovetskie uchenye na mezhdunarodnom kongresse fiziologov,” *Pravda*, 27 August 1950, 2, which reported on the use of Russian at a physiological congress in Copenhagen.

⁹¹ D. Zaslavskii, “Velikii iazyk nashego epokhi,” *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 1 January 1949, 3.

⁹² S. Soltanov, “O tom, chto raduet glaz i serdtshe: pis'mo iz Kitaia,” *Izvestiia*, 25 June 1953, 4.

⁹³ “Krepnet bolgaro-sovetskaia druzhba,” *Pravda*, 21 August 1950, 1; “Pol'sha: Kul'turno-prosvetitel'naia rabota profsoiuzov,” *Izvestiia*, 16 September 1950, 3; “Trudiashchiesia chekhoslovakii izuchaiut russkii iazyk,” *Pravda*, 3 November 1950, 1. See also Rachel Applebaum, “Friendship of the Peoples: Soviet-Czechoslovak Cultural and Social Contacts from the Battle for Prague to the Prague Spring, 1945–1969” (University of Chicago, 2012).

⁹⁴ E.g.: Hotsa Namsaraev et al, “O prepodavanie russkogo iazyka v nerusskoi shkole,” *Izvestiia*, 27 December 1947, 3; Gevork Emin, “Slovo o starshim brate,” *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 5 March 1953, 3; Khamid Guliam, “Prepodavanie russkogo iazyka,” *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 1 September 1956, 2; “Druzhba krepkaia kak granit,” *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 25 April 1953, 1.

Holocaust, emigration, and expulsions had left many cities severely underpopulated, which enabled a greater influx of citizens from elsewhere in the Soviet Union. In Western Ukraine, expulsions of Poles and Polish Jews contributed to this phenomenon, as local and non-local Ukrainians and transplants from elsewhere in the Soviet Union resettled the region.⁹⁵ Suspicion of nationalism and the nationalist underground in the Baltic republics and Western Ukraine drove policies that favored local Russophone elites, who collaborated with cadres sent to the region. As William Risch demonstrates, incoming Russian-speaking personnel, including military officials, railroad employees, teachers, and political elites, together with their families, ensured Russian's newfound prominence (alongside Ukrainian) in formerly Polish-speaking Lviv. The opening of Russian-language schools, theatres, and cultural institutions demonstrated Russian's ascendancy. Russian speakers often viewed their language as superior, begrudging mandatory local-language schooling and Ukrainian's prevalence on the street.⁹⁶

Schools in newly annexed territories taught Russian as part of a broad program to inculcate pupils with Soviet values and principles, which included curricula on the constitution, Soviet history, and other subjects.⁹⁷ Teachers were treated with suspicion and were required to attend various retraining courses to demonstrate their ideological reliability.⁹⁸ As schools were Sovietized, command of Russian became an essential aspect of citizenship, and school administrations closely monitored the state of Russian-language education. One report

⁹⁵ Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 327–33; Risch, *The Ukrainian West*, 27–81; Amar, *The Paradox of Ukrainian Lviv*, 103–9, 143–84; Blackwell, *Kyiv as Regime City*, 19–70.

⁹⁶ Risch, *The Ukrainian West*, 53–81; cf. Amar, *The Paradox of Ukrainian Lviv*, 143–84. On similar factors in Latvia, see also Prigge, *Bearslayers*, 9–20.

⁹⁷ A report on the 1948–49 school year in the Stanislav (later Ivano-Frankivsk) oblast emphasized that schools' "main task" was to "raise the level of educational-socialization (*navchal'no-vykhovna*) work in schools, devoting particular attention to the cultivation (*vykhovannia* [Russian: *vospitanie*]) of Soviet patriotism and national pride." DAIFO, f. R-3, o. 2, d. 122, l. 3.

⁹⁸ On teachers in the Baltic Republics, see Aigi Rahi-Tamm and Irena Salēniece, "Re-Educating Teachers: Ways and Consequences of Sovietization in Estonia and Latvia (1940–1960) from the Biographical Perspective," *Journal of Baltic Studies* 47, no. 4 (2016): 451–72.

documented how Western Ukrainian students confused Russian and Ukrainian pronunciation and grammar, continuing the expectations of near-native proficiency.⁹⁹ A 1948 report from Estonia complained that teachers and school officials undervalued Russian's political significance and noted that many students finishing secondary school had insufficient proficiency.¹⁰⁰

Russian in School Curricula and Pedagogy

Pedagogical debates set the tone for Russian's ascendancy, as pedagogues advocated the expanded use of Russian in the educational process, including encouraging students to speak and practice Russian in their spare time. Administrators in both Moscow and republics also debated curricular changes to offer enhanced opportunities to learn Russian from an early age. These initiatives were not symmetrical: although Russian pupils theoretically studied titular languages in union and autonomous republics, teachers rarely if ever prioritized creating similar opportunities for Russians to practice titular languages with non-Russian peers, implying that ethnic Russians' study of non-Russian languages represented a mere formality.

Reflecting the idea that Russian should be a second native language for all students, Kubeev, a teacher in Kazakhstan, urged his fellow teachers encourage students to use Russian outside of class: "Here, some colleagues might ask, why not in their native language, why not in Kazakh? Because the native language will never be forgotten, and it is necessary to learn to speak Russian well. Outside class, teachers should also speak with pupils in Russian and pupils should speak Russian amongst themselves." Emphasizing the importance of Russian as an instrument of social interaction, he also proposed joint programming for Russian and Kazakh

⁹⁹ DAIFO, f. R-3, o. 2, d. 50, ll. 73–77.

¹⁰⁰ RGASPI, f. 17, o. 125, d. 626, l. 83.

schools to create opportunities for Kazakh pupils to practice.¹⁰¹ Another teacher similarly expressed his belief that teachers should encourage Kazakhs to speak in Russian in their free time. He drew positively from his tsarist-era education, where a sign instructed pupils to “Speak in Russian, not in Kyrgyz.”¹⁰² Such suggestions relegated pupils’ mother tongue to a secondary position in education, even in native-language schools.

Education officials in some union and autonomous republics also explored the possibility of adding an additional “preparatory” year for non-Russian students. Educators envisioned this as a chance to begin learning Russian, and it was temporarily implemented in some autonomous republics and oblasts in the RSFSR in the 1947–48 school year.¹⁰³ The extra year was seen to be most beneficial to minority students who might later attend Russian schools, usually due to the lack of teachers, resources, and students to justify native-language education beyond elementary school.¹⁰⁴ Russian thus played a critical role in educational advancement and was key to upward mobility. Despite some petitioning for improvements to national schools, including opening dormitories, improving pedagogical training, and preparing instructional materials, many saw small, dispersed populations as a justification for greater emphasis on Russian.

As a result of methodological and practical difficulties, local officials often sought to increase hours of Russian-language instruction to prepare students for continued study, either

¹⁰¹ TsGARK, f. 1692, o. 1, d. 221, l. 16. Many Kazakhs today would disagree with his conviction that the “native language would never be forgotten,” though it was certainly believed earnestly.

¹⁰² TsGARK, f. 1692, o. 1, d. 221, l. 50. Kyrgyz was the tsarist term for Kazakh. An attendee at the same meeting argued that rural students should be actively encouraged to speak Russian, since they had few opportunities hear and speak the language relative to their urban counterparts, see TsGARK, f. 1692, o. 1, d. 220, ll. 172–173.

¹⁰³ RGASPI, f. 17, o. 126, d. 457, l. 22; RGASPI, f. 17, o. 132, d. 189, ll. 7–8.

¹⁰⁴ Five-year elementary schools (as opposed to the usual four-year schools) were proposed for many autonomous republics and oblasts, including Yakutia, Dagestan, Buriat-Mongolian, Kabardino and the North Ossetian ASSRs and the Oirat, Tuvan, Cherkess, and Adygei Autonomous Oblasts of the RSFSR. See RGASPI, f. 17, o. 126, d. 23, ll. 11–18 and 49–51. The file includes additional correspondence regarding schools in many minority districts of the RSFSR. Similar propositions were made for Nogai schools, see RGASPI, f. 17, o. 125, d. 457, ll. 14–16. The Central Committee of the Armenian SSR also requested approval in April 1946 for adding an eleventh year of instruction, in part to focus on better Russian-language education, see RGASPI, f. 17, o. 125, d. 457, ll. 91–97. The Georgian SSR already had 11-year secondary schools, see RGASPI, f. 17, o. 125, d. 557.

through curricular adjustments or additional schooling.¹⁰⁵ This was seen to be both in pupils' best interests and in line with popular demand. In a 1945 report to Georgii Malenkov, a politburo member and the Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers, the North Ossetian party secretary K. Kulov remarked, "It must be noted that pupils of our secondary schools and their parents show a persistent desire to fully master the Russian language. At the same time, our intelligentsia expresses a legitimate dissatisfaction with the outcome of the Russian-language education for children of non-Russian nationalities." Many, Kulov continued, fairly believed that students had learned Russian more effectively in tsarist schools than at present, and the RSFSR Ministry of Education responded to these concerns by proposing increased instructional hours.¹⁰⁶

Pedagogues also frequently floated the possibility of teaching additional subjects in Russian. In 1939, Atamberdin, a teacher in Qostanaı, Kazakhstan, for example, argued that some subjects, notably math and physics, would be more effectively taught in Russian, since many secondary school teachers of technical subjects had better command of Russian than of Kazakh.¹⁰⁷ Similar suggestions were made in the North Caucasus after World War II to prepare non-Russians for Russian schools, though these proposals were scrapped because of insufficient proficiency.¹⁰⁸ Higher education, too, was often conducted in Russian. At the Kazakh Institute for Marxism-Leninism, for example, some coursework was taught in Russian, since many major works had yet to be translated into Kazakh.¹⁰⁹ Although Russian-language instruction for subjects other than Russian language and literature was rarely implemented before the 1958–59 school reform, even talking about the possibility deepened the association between Russian,

¹⁰⁵ In Dagestan, many languages simply had too few native speakers, limited methodological materials, and no one capable of preparing such materials at an appropriately scientific level, see RGASPI, f. 17, o. 126, d. 23, ll. 8–9.

¹⁰⁶ RGASPI, f. 17, o. 126, d. 23, ll. 49–51; here 51. For a similar proposal, see RGASPI, f. 17, o. 132, d. 189, ll. 6–8.

¹⁰⁷ TsGARK, f. 1692, o.1, d. 221, l. 50. He was not alone in Kazakhstan. At an undated meeting from 1937 or 1938, another teacher, Olikov, also proposed teaching other subjects in Russian, see TsGARK, f. 1692, o. 1, d. 18, l. 7.

¹⁰⁸ RGASPI, f. 17, o. 125, d. 558, ll. 9–10.

¹⁰⁹ See Fedulova's comments at an undated meeting in 1937–38, TsGARK, f. 1692, o. 1, d. 18, l. 18.

science, and progress.

Educational specialists continued to debate using Russian as a teaching language for selected subjects in native-language schools, usually floated as a means to improve the quality and breadth of Russian-language education. In a 1947 letter to Mikhail Suslov, Andrei Zhdanov, and others, Mikhail Yakovlev, who worked in the Central Committee, expressed concern about the state of teaching Russian across the country. He highlighted shortages of qualified teachers in Central Asia and students' poor command of Russian in many non-Russian schools, which he blamed on insufficient instructional hours relative to Russian peers. Non-Russians, Yakovlev observed, had just 1420 hours devoted to Russian, whereas Russian schools had more than 2400. He proposed an overall increase of more than 400 hours and greater standardization for Russian instruction, which he believed should start in the second half of first grade.¹¹⁰

Proposed increases came at the expense of non-Russian languages, in part because there were only so many hours to work with. This manifested itself in several proposals. Yakovlev advocated limiting pupils to studying a maximum of three languages: their native language, Russian, and one foreign language. This proposal especially affected non-titular minorities, who, in addition to native, Russian, and foreign languages, often studied the titular language of their union or autonomous republic. He also suggested scaling back hours for native language literature whenever literature was deemed insufficiently developed to justify 2–3 hours per week. He cited the limitations of literary canons of Dagestan, North Ossetia, Udmurtia, and the Komi Republic and advocated for more study of Russian literature, deemed vastly more important. He also proposed the instruction of some subjects—history of the USSR, geography, and others—be

¹¹⁰ RGASPI, f. 17, o. 125, d. 558, ll. 85–91; for additional discussions of curricular hours, see RGASPI, f. 17, o. 132, d. 189, ll. 6–8; RGASPI, f. 17, o. 132, d. 365, ll. 70–74.

shifted into Russian in grades 8–10, giving students more active exposure to Russian.¹¹¹

Yakovlev believed problems in teaching Russian were symptomatic of system-wide shortcomings, most urgently in teacher training for non-Russian schools. Many teachers, he noted, were insufficiently qualified to teach at all and specifically ill equipped to teach Russian.¹¹² In addition to increasing Russian contact hours in schools, he proposed additional instruction in teachers' colleges and pedagogical institutions to ensure teachers themselves were prepared. Improving Russian in non-Russian schools, he argued, was in the interests of ethnic minorities: better knowledge would help to develop a non-Russian intelligentsia and promote non-Russian representation in technical and scientific fields, for which knowledge of Russian was essential. Indeed, he saw the overemphasis on native language as a hindrance for non-Russian students: "at present," he concluded, "the matter of *korenizatsiia* in autonomous republics is sufficiently streamlined so as to negatively affect students' mastering of the foundations of science, including Russian."¹¹³

Marxism and the Problem of Linguistics (1950)

Stalin's essays on "Marxism and the Problem of Linguistics," first published as a series of *Pravda* articles in 1950, furthered the emphasis on the practical application of Russian. The essays themselves were the culmination of a dramatic revision of linguistic science that rejected the previously dominant Marrist school led by Nikolai Marr, who had argued for the historical connections between language groups that are today considered to be unrelated.¹¹⁴ Stalin's essays, in the estimation of one scholar, "completely altered the field of Soviet linguistics" and

¹¹¹ RGASPI, f. 17, o. 125, d. 558, ll. 85–91.

¹¹² RGASPI, f. 17, o. 125, d. 558, ll. 85–91.

¹¹³ RGASPI, f. 17, o. 125, d. 558, l. 90.

¹¹⁴ Ethan Pollock, *Stalin and the Soviet Science Wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 104–35. Katerina Clark offers an overview of Marrist linguistics in Clark, *Petersburg*, 201–23.

“brought about a monumental, but ambiguous, shift in Soviet efforts to understand the relationship between Party ideology and knowledge.”¹¹⁵

The essays, formulated as a question-and-answer discussion with young scholars, argued that language was inherently functional and served as a means of communication across class lines and over time. “Language exists, it has been created,” Stalin declared, “for the purpose of serving society as a whole, as a means of communication between people, to be common to the members of society and to be unified for society, equally serving members of society irrespective of their class status.” This was true not only of Russian but also of languages of other Soviet peoples. To the extent that Stalin discussed Russian specifically, he argued that the language had remained relatively consistent across time, despite new vocabularies specific to the socialist era. Soviet citizens, he noted, could easily read Pushkin, suggesting that language was not specific to the given stage of economic development.¹¹⁶ The essays also implied that Russian would continue to be the *lingua franca* until the advent of worldwide socialism, rather than an eventual merging of languages, as Marr had implied.¹¹⁷

Stalin’s writings on linguistics had a two-fold impact on Russian’s place in the Soviet Union. The first concerned the scientific apparatus, as the scientific community embraced an expanded role for Russian and emphasized a comparative-historical approach to linguistics.¹¹⁸ Within linguistics, previously marginalized scholars of Russian language and history rose to new prominence following a purge of the now-rejected Marrist school. Most prominent was Viktor Vinogradov, who was appointed as the Director of the Linguistics Institute. Graduate dissertation

¹¹⁵ Pollock, *Stalin and the Soviet Science Wars*, 123.

¹¹⁶ I. Stalin, “Otnositel’no marksizma v iazykoznanii,” *Pravda*, 20 June 1950, 3. To increase its impact, the column was widely published in the following days, including in *Izvestiia* and *Literaturnaia gazeta* the following day, and in *Sovetskoe iskusstvo* on June 24. The essays were also compiled as a pamphlet published later that year and reissued in several editions under the title, *Marksizm i voprosy iazykoznanii*.

¹¹⁷ Pollock, *Stalin and the Soviet Science Wars*, 129.

¹¹⁸ S. Obnorskii, “Za tvorcheskii put’ v sovetskoi nauke,” *Pravda*, 4 July 1950, 4.

themes, too, were to be revisited and reoriented towards this new direction.¹¹⁹ As Ethan Pollock notes, “forging a new direction in linguistics meant emphasizing the history of the Russian language, its grammar, syntax, and relationship to other Slavic languages. This national emphasis, as opposed to Marr’s transnational linguistic theory, fit with the patriotic fervor of the era.”¹²⁰ This carried over to other fields. In literature, there was a new emphasis on representing the language of the people: literature, like language itself, was supposed to serve the people.¹²¹

The second impact concerned Soviet pedagogy. In practice, the primary result seems to have been an endless series of meetings to discuss the essays’ everyday importance for both teachers and students.¹²² At August and January conferences and at special training sessions, teachers attended lectures and participated in discussions to ensure everyone understood the significance of Stalin’s work and its implications for the teaching of all languages.¹²³ Despite assertions that Stalin’s essays had triggered a restructuring (*perestroika*) in language education, reports on the supposedly significant changes tended to be very vague, and the practical changes seem to have been fairly modest. There was, however, a greater emphasis on communication and proper expression, as one article noted: “Instructions have been sent to localities concerning the restructuring of all work in Russian language, so that it will be oriented towards students’ mastery of firm, deliberate knowledge of grammar, and expertise in literate writing.”¹²⁴

¹¹⁹ “Uluchshaetsia prepodavanie iazykoznaniiia v vuzakh,” *Izvestiia*, 1 August 1950, 2.

¹²⁰ Pollock, *Stalin and the Soviet Science Wars*, 128.

¹²¹ An. Tarasenkov, “Literatura i voprosy iazyka,” *Pravda*, 8 September 1950, 2–3.

¹²² The leader of the Division on Propaganda and Agitation of the Leningrad oblast’ committee, for example, mentioned the discussion of Stalin’s essays on linguistics among the key topics to be discussed in rural propagandists’ lectures and speeches, see A. Popov, “O rabote s propagandistami,” *Pravda*, 20 August 1950, 2.

¹²³ “Ianvarskie raionnye soveshchaniia uchitelei,” *Izvestiia*, 6 January 1951, 3. TsDAHOU, f. 1, o. 73, dd. 628–629. Anna Pankratova’s 1951 pamphlet on the teaching of history also noted that teachers should be expected to be able to define Marxism as explained by Stalin in his essays on linguistics, see Pankratova, *O prepodavanii istorii v VIII–X klassakh: metodicheskoe pis'mo*, 27.

¹²⁴ “Novyi uchebnyi god v shkolakh,” *Izvestiia*, 1 September 1950, 2. See also I. Kairov, “Na poroge novogo uchebnogo goda,” *Pravda*, 27 August 1950, 3; V. Vinogradov, “Stalinskie trudy po iazykoznaniiu i sovetskaia shkola,” *Pravda*, 1 September 1950, 2–3; TsDAHOU, f. 1, o. 73, dd. 628–629.

Teachers in Ukraine offered various interpretations of Stalin's essays. Some highlighted the need to purify Russian and Ukrainian from obsolete words and to avoid local jargon. One interpreted Stalin's words as an instruction for citizens "even more to love their Soviet Motherland, people, Ukrainian language, the language of the brotherly Russian people, and the languages of the peoples of the Soviet Union." Another interpreted Stalin's essays as an instruction for citizens to "mercilessly hate the enemies of the people, bourgeois nationalists." Others complained that instructions on how to overhaul education lacked "concrete directives" to help them make appropriate changes.¹²⁵ Still, one report concluded, Stalin's essays had raised the quality of instruction in general: "This academic year, teachers-linguists have significantly raised demands towards themselves and their students. They have started to pay closer attention to the literacy and culture of speech both during lessons and also out of class, to the correct articulation of thought by students, and to the ideological content of students' answers."¹²⁶

Stalin's essays on linguistics and the resulting emphasis on language's role in communication reflected more comfort with Russian's prominent role in society and prefigured reforms under Stalin's successors. This explicit acknowledgement of Russian's importance was complemented by two policies of Stalin's twilight years: ongoing nationalist repression and the continuing prominence of the Russian people. First, nationalism continued to be deeply suspect, a fact on display in brutal campaigns against nationalists in Western Ukraine and the Baltic republics, as well as in the late Stalinist purges.¹²⁷ The so-called Mingrelian affair, a strategy to undermine Lavrentii Beria's extensive patronage network, instigated a major purge of the

¹²⁵ All quotations from TsDAHOU, f. 1, o. 73, d. 628, l. 122. For an example of generally vague comments on the importance of restructuring language education, see "Pered novym uchebnym godom," *Pravda*, 8 August 1950, 1.

¹²⁶ TsDAHOU, f. 1, o. 73, d. 628, l. 124.

¹²⁷ Weiner, *Making Sense of War*, 129–90.

Georgian party apparatus in 1951–52, ostensibly to eliminate a traitorous nationalist cell.¹²⁸ The Doctors' Plot, a final purge halted only by Stalin's death, similarly conveyed official suspicion of supposed "Jewish bourgeois nationalism."¹²⁹ Although historians have dismissed the anti-nationalist content as the motivating factor of these purges, public rhetoric nevertheless signaled ongoing suspicion of non-Russians to the public.¹³⁰

The Russian people also continued to feature prominently in ideological writing. In keeping with common practice since the late 1930s, the central press regularly reminded readers of Russians' role in guiding their fellow citizens towards communism and portrayed non-Russians as grateful to their Russian older brothers for help and support.¹³¹ Because Russian was self-evidently connected to the Russian people (regardless of whether the connection was formally acknowledged or emphasized), the growing expectation that non-Russians master Russian in order to communicate with fellow citizens hinted at Russians' privileged position. The choice of Russian as a language of communication could never be fully neutral or entirely equal, since proficiency came with highly differentiated costs borne unevenly by Russians and non-Russians (particularly non-Slavs), reifying and deepening inequalities.

Still, the place of Russian was never strictly hierarchical. Family and friendship metaphors implied a certain degree of mutual equality and common belonging, wherein Russian served as a means of communication. Russian, importantly, not only opened the door for non-

¹²⁸ On the "Mingrelian Affair," see Amy W. Knight, *Beria, Stalin's First Lieutenant* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 155–75; Gorlizki and Khlevniuk, *Cold Peace*, 108–13.

¹²⁹ Gorlizki and Khlevniuk, *Cold Peace*, 153–59; Brandenberger, "Stalin's Last Crime?"

¹³⁰ Oleg Khlevniuk, "Kremlin-Tbilisi: Purges, Control and Georgian Nationalism in the First Half of the 1950s," in *Georgia after Stalin: Nationalism and Soviet Power*, ed. Timothy K. Blauvelt and Jeremy Smith (London: Routledge, 2015), 13–31.

¹³¹ E.g. N. Piksano, "Gorkii i druzhba narodov," *Literatura i iskusstvo*, 17 June 1944, 2. Formulaic thankfulness to the "older brother" was especially common after liberation, see "Boitsam, serzhantam, ofitseram i generalam Krasnoi Armii," *Pravda and Izvestiia*, 15 October 1944, 2; "Pis'mo Stalinu trudiashchikhsia goroda Tallina," *Pravda and Izvestiia*, 28 November 1944, 2; "Rech' N. Ia. Natalevich," *Izvestiia*, 27 April 1945, 4; T. Kuliev, "Prazdnik azerbaidzhanskogo naroda," *Izvestiia*, 5 May 1945, 2.

Russians to appreciate the celebrated richness of Russian culture and literature but also could make non-Russian culture and literature legible to fellow citizens. Newspapers highlighted the publication of various collections of translated folk stories, prose, and poetry from non-Russian peoples.¹³² Russian's function as a means to connect citizens was reciprocal: it made Russian-language sources available to non-Russians and translated non-Russian sources accessible to all citizens. This emphasis on mutual connections and enrichment complicated imperial hierarchies implicit in the use of Russian and contributed to its function as the language of state and society.

After Stalin: An Interlude

Stalin's death on March 5, 1953 precipitated considerable political change. Yoram Gorlizki and Oleg Khlevniuk posit that Stalin's death offered an opening for major policy changes to address long-standing problems and inefficiencies that his subordinates had been unwilling to tackle while he was alive.¹³³ Nationalities policy, specifically the place of Russian vis-à-vis non-Russian languages, emerged as a key battleground in the ensuing power struggle. Lavrentii Beria, who was re-appointed Minister of Internal Affairs after Stalin's death, sought to capitalize on dissatisfaction with the state of nationalities policy in the Caucasus, Ukraine and the Baltic states as he vied for political supremacy.

Alongside an agenda of promoting state over party institutions, particularly in the security apparatus, Beria overturned several aspects of late-Stalinist nationalities policy. He swiftly reversed the effects of the Mingrelian Affair, rehabilitating those who had been purged from the party and turning the tables on those who had been locally responsible for carrying it

¹³² E.g. "Otovsitudu," *Izvestiia*, 30 August 1950, 2; A. Fesenko, "V dolgu u chitatelia," *Izvestiia*, 1 September 1950, 3; Liubomir Dmiterko, "Vechnoe i nerushimoe," *Izvestiia*, 26 April 1953, 2.

¹³³ Gorlizki and Khlevniuk, *Cold Peace*. Gorlizki and Khlevniuk note two problems that threatened the Soviet Union with crisis: the unsustainability and economic costliness of the Gulag system, and inefficiencies in the agricultural sector that caused widespread food shortages and distribution problems.

out. This, Amy Knight has suggested, sought not only to reconstitute his patronage network in Georgia, but also “to curb ‘Great Russian chauvinism’ and assert the right of indigenous nationalities” as part of a broader criticism of Stalinist policies.¹³⁴ As Minister of Internal Affairs, Beria recommended replacing Russians with Ukrainians at both the central and oblast levels of the Ukrainian security apparatus (KGB).¹³⁵ A series of draft resolutions prepared for the Central Committee in Moscow highlighted serious violations of Leninist nationalities policy across the western republics. One draft-resolution complained of a serious undervaluing of Ukrainian and widespread use of Russian in higher education, party organs, and state institutions.¹³⁶ Similar claims were made in Latvia, Belarus, and Lithuania.¹³⁷ Each draft expressed concerns that resurgent nationalists might exploit errors in nationalities policy to their advantage.

National activists, particularly those in local communist parties, and some citizens reacted to these measures positively. William Prigge has argued that Beria “propos[ed] radical, concrete and far-reaching reforms for Latvia and other republics,” citing the possible implementation of a Latvian language requirement. Beria successfully found allies among Latvian party leaders.¹³⁸ KGB reports from Lithuania, too, indicated widespread excitement. The assistant director at an institute of experimental medicine reportedly told his acquaintances, “These are very important questions. Now there will only be national cadres. And in the Ministry of Internal Affairs almost all have been replaced with Lithuanians. This is being done very well. It has been necessary to deal with this question for a long time. In truth, it is being done very

¹³⁴ Knight, *Beria*, 188.

¹³⁵ Knight, 188–90.

¹³⁶ RGANI, f. 5, o. 30, d. 6, ll. 16–19.

¹³⁷ RGANI, f. 5, o. 30, d. 6, ll. 20–29 (Latvia), 90–91 (Belarus), 12–15 (Lithuania). The Lithuanian resolution called for initiatives to teach Lithuanian to non-Lithuanians. On the impact in Latvia, see also Prigge, *Bearslayers*, 21–44; Michael Loader, “Beria and Khrushchev: The Power Struggle over Nationality Policy and the Case of Latvia,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 68, no. 10 (2016): 1759–92.

¹³⁸ Prigge, *Bearslayers*, 39.

cunningly so as to gradually send all the Russians out of here.”¹³⁹ Another noted that the release of political prisoners had contributed to an atmosphere of greater freedom and expressed excitement about changing language politics: “They are removing people who do not know Lithuanian from their posts and in their place Lithuanians are being appointed. Everyone who doesn’t know the Lithuanian language is supposed to leave our region.”¹⁴⁰ Lithuanians across the republic expressed hope that a revised nationalities policy would lead to a Lithuanian resurgence at the expense of Russians and Russian. The impact was severe enough to precipitate a reaction: Russians in western republics complained of discrimination in letters to the Central Committee. Some complained of unfair hiring preferences; one went so far as to declare there to be a “pogrom of Russian workers” in Belarus. Others worried that Russians had nowhere to go.¹⁴¹

Beria’s attempt to consolidate his political base by overhauling nationalities policy ultimately failed. Following a trip to East Germany to handle the June 1953 uprisings, Beria was arrested, denounced, and eventually tried and executed in December 1953. His successors largely reversed his reforms. Some have concluded that his bid for power, however short-lived, left a significant legacy. “Beria’s radical approach to nationalities policy,” Knight argues, “marked a sharp departure from the Stalinist line. The implications for center-periphery relations were far reaching, to say the least. For the first time since the creation of the Soviet Union non-Russian nationalities were encouraged to assert their own cultural and political identities and the traditional policy of Russification was thrown into question.”¹⁴² More recently, Jeremy Smith has

¹³⁹ LYA, f. K-1, o. 10, d. 153, l. 63. This and similar internal KGB reports were compiled on the basis of information gathered from informants and employees, based on what was being said on the ground.

¹⁴⁰ LYA, f. K-1, o. 10, d. 153, l. 77.

¹⁴¹ RGANI, f. 5, o. 30, d. 6, ll. 30–32ob, 37–37ob, 38–38ob; 40, 44–52, 99–102.

¹⁴² Knight, *Beria*, 189–90. Reflecting the state of scholarship in 1997, Knight undervalues policies of *korenizatsiia* as an important precursor, a fact that historians have consistently pointed out over the past two decades.

noted that Khrushchev briefly continued some of Beria's reforms in his first years.¹⁴³ There can be little doubt that Beria raised important challenges to Stalinist policies, but most of his reforms were either yet to be implemented upon his arrest or swiftly reversed.

Beria's agenda nevertheless highlights two critical aspects of nationalities policy, both of which were true throughout Soviet rule: Russian's position was never a foregone conclusion, and there was always popular resistance to language policies. First, leaders and citizens continued to debate and negotiate Russian's position. Beria's attempts to solidify a political base by questioning Russian's (and Russians') dominance in non-Russian republics reflected an enduring strain of Soviet thinking on nationalities that had roots in *korenizatsiia* of the 1920s and, looking ahead, would resurface in the 1980s. Second, that Beria could claim a plausible (albeit ultimately unsuccessful) support base by opportunistically endorsing an agenda of national revival reveals considerable resistance to policies that had promoted Russian's expanded role. These voices were often silenced and invisible in the tide of pro-Russian policies and sentiments, but they nevertheless reflected long-standing resentments and criticisms that often bubbled beneath the surface. Beria's power bid opened a brief window of opportunity for party and state apparatuses and private citizens to express dissatisfaction about the status of native and Russian languages. Though the window quickly closed, these complaints did not simply disappear.

Mandating Choice, Displacing Native Language: The 1958–59 School Reform

Under Stalin's successors, Nikita Khrushchev and Leonid Brezhnev, discourses around the role of Russian continued largely in the patterns set out under Stalin. Russian, still the "second native language" of all citizens, continued to function officially as the "language of

¹⁴³ Smith, "The Battle for Language," 987.

interethnic communication” that connected citizens to one another and to the larger world, a discourse that continued to deemphasize the language’s connection to ethnic Russians.¹⁴⁴

Translation into Russian, too, continued to be hailed as a tool for making the works of non-Russian writers accessible to fellow citizens and to a worldwide audience.¹⁴⁵ Newspapers celebrated the growing prominence of Russian not only within Soviet borders but also outside them—even beyond the communist world.¹⁴⁶ This only grew as Khrushchev and Brezhnev sought opportunities to expand Soviet influence into the developing world in the wake of decolonization.¹⁴⁷ At the same time, changes in educational policies—principally the 1958–59 school reform that removed formal language requirements in all schools—contributed to subtle changes in the relative role of Russian and native languages.

The 1958–59 Reform

The school reform of 1958–59, the most significant post-Stalin policy change concerning

¹⁴⁴ On Russian as a second native language, see T. Pulatov, “Uchitivat’ mestnye usloviia,” *Izvestiia*, 21 November 1958, 3; G. Dzhibladze, “Neskol’ko mislei,” *Izvestiia*, 21 December 1958, 4; Mukhtar Auevov, “Bratstvo nashikh literatur,” *Pravda*, 8 May 1959, 4; Nafi Dzhusoity, “Rodnoi iazyk,” *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 18 August 1960, 1; “Rech’ tovarishcha Mukhitdinov, XXII s’ezda KPSS,” *Pravda*, 25 October 1961, 3; S. Shchukina, “Mir uchitsia russkomu: zametki s konferentsii,” *Izvetiia*, 5 September 1969, 5.

¹⁴⁵ E.g. Mukhtar Auevov, “Bratstvo nashikh literatur,” *Pravda*, 8 May 1959, 4; Sabit Mukanov, “Pora tsveteniia,” *Literaturnaia Gazeta*, 24 June 1961, 3; Nikolai Damdinov, “Kak reki v okean,” *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 9 January 1962, 4; Kornelii Zelinskii, “Oktiabr v national’noi literature,” *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 15 September 1966, 1, 4. The journal, *Friendship of the Peoples*, founded in March 1939, also continued to publish non-Russian works in Russian, see A. Surkov, “Druzhba narodov: Perelistyvaia stranitsy zhurnal,” *Izvestiia*, 23 August 1959, 6.

¹⁴⁶ Lao She, “V moei sem’e,” *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 30 June 1953, 4; V. Balabushevits, “Natsional’nyi prazdnik indii,” *Pravda*, 26 January 1959, 6; V. Matveev, “Anglichane khotiat znat’ russkii iazyk,” *Izvestiia*, 10 June 1959, 5; V. Chichkov, “V latinskoi amerike—pora vesenniaia,” *Pravda*, 18 November 1959, 5; O. Orestov, “Russkii—iazzyk sovremennosti,” *Pravda*, 1 March 1965, 3; V. Kostamarev, “I am anxious to Master Russian...” “On khochet znat’ russkii. Nado emu pomoch’!” *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 21 August 1968, 13; “...My khotim znat’ russkii,” *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 23 October 1968, 13; V. Eliutin, “Iazyk druzhby, mira i progressa,” *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 2 July 1969, 12; S. Shchukina, “Mir uchitsia russkome: zametki s konferentsii,” *Izvetiia*, 5 September 1969, 5.

¹⁴⁷ The place of Russian in the developing world differed from its place in the Soviet Union, though more research is needed, particularly outside Eastern Europe. In general, Soviet cultural initiatives in the developing world involved programing, publishing, and other work in local languages, echoing prior *korenizatsiia* policies within the USSR. In the developing world, Russian served primarily as a means of international—not interethnic—communication. The teaching of Russian for advanced education, often culminating in study in the USSR, was a means of upward mobility rather than lateral integration.

the teaching and use of Russian, set into motion a major restructuring of Soviet education. As part of a curricular overhaul that added an eighth year of mandatory schooling and sought to make education more practical, the reform ended the long-standing mandate of native language education, giving parents and students more opportunity to study in Russian-language schools as desired. This paved the way for long-term changes in educational priorities, language use, and popular perceptions over the next several decades. In effect, these changes extended and intensified trends that had begun under Stalin, including the indexing of Russian as a language of science and culture and the celebration of Russian as the language of interethnic communication. At the same time, the state shifted responsibility for increased Russian-language use onto the shoulders of citizens themselves, suggesting more subtle practices of cultural imperialism.

As we saw in Chapter 3, the reform, officially the “Law on the Strengthening of the Relationship of the School with Life and on the Further Development of the System of Public Schools in the USSR,” primarily focused on the establishment of polytechnic education and practical training. The reform, however, also hastened significant changes to the structure of language education in the Soviet Union. The question of language first appeared in Thesis 19 of the joint theses approved by the Central Committee and the Soviet of Ministers in November 1958, which outlined the main principles of the reform. Native-language education, the thesis noted, had been a key feature of Leninist nationalities policy. Students in national schools “also seriously study the Russian language, which is a powerful means of interethnic communication, strengthening the friendship of the peoples of the USSR, and exposing them to the riches of Russian and world culture.”¹⁴⁸ The thesis proposed the following to remedy the overburdening of non-Russians required to study three languages (native, Russian, and one foreign):

¹⁴⁸ “Ob ukreplenii svyazi shkoly s zhizn’iu i o dal’neishem razvitii sistemy narodnogo obrazovaniia v strane: Tezisy TsK KPSS i Soveta Ministrov SSSR,” *Pravda*, 16 November 1958, 2.

It follows to study the question about whether the right should be granted to parents to decide to what school with which language of study to send their children. If a child will study in a school where instruction is conducted in a language of one of the union or autonomous republics, then he can also study Russian according to his desire. And vice-versa, if a child will study in a Russian school, he can study the language of a union or autonomous republic according to his desire. It stands to reason that this should be done if there are the necessary contingents of children for the staffing of classes with one or another language of instruction.¹⁴⁹

Allowing parents to choose the language of children's education, the thesis concluded, was a democratic solution that would alleviate overburdening of students while avoiding "any administering (*administrirovanie*) in this important matter."¹⁵⁰

Discussion of the prepared theses unfolded over the following six weeks. A report prepared by the teachers' newspaper of Kazakhstan indicated considerable support for the new initiative among teachers, many of whom expressed concerns about educational burdens. Many, however, were resistant to the idea of making Russian optional. S. Kenesbaev, an academic at the Academy of Sciences of Kazakhstan, expressed his concerns:

In schools with instruction in a national language, it is reasonable to study Russian, which is the language of progress, civilization, the language of interethnic communication of peoples and of strengthening the friendship of the peoples of the Soviet Union. The study of native and Russian languages is of vital importance, without which it would be difficult, and even impossible, to speak of a broadly educated Soviet person. Because of the overloading of the educational plans of national schools, the study of a foreign language, I dare say, needs to be done through organizing [extracurricular] circles, in which students enroll voluntarily.¹⁵¹

Pravda and *Izvestiia* also routinely published responses to the proposed changes from republic leaders, administrators, teachers, parents, and readers.¹⁵² Those that commented on language specifically indicated a plethora of opinions on how to balance educational needs and limitations.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. "*Administrirovanie*" has connotations of administrative abuse.

¹⁵¹ APRK, f. 708, o. 31, d. 1496, l. 92.

¹⁵² Both newspapers frequently devoted full pages to the ongoing discussion. In *Pravda*, see November 18 (pg. 4), 19 (3), 21 (3–4), 23 (3), 25 (3–4), 27 (3), 29 (3), 30 (3) and December 1 (2), 2 (2–4), 3 (4), 4 (4), 5 (4), 6 (3), 7 (4), 8 (4), 9 (3), 10 (3), 13 (4), 14 (4), and 15 (4). In *Izvestiia*, see November 18 (pg. 2), 21 (4), 23 (4), 26 (2), 30 (4) and December 3 (4), 4 (2), 7 (3), 9 (2), 10 (4), 11 (2), 12 (3), 14 (4), 17 (3), 18 (3), 19 (4), and 21 (4).

Some emphasized the overarching importance of Russian with little or no reference to native languages, suggesting perhaps tacit approval of the new measures that would implicitly scale back native language education. “Now,” declared Lithuanian Party secretary Vladas Niunka, “it is impossible to consider yourself an educated person in our country without knowing or only weakly knowing Russian.”¹⁵³ To prioritize Russian proficiency, Tajik Minister of Education Tair Pulatov proposed smaller class sizes.¹⁵⁴ Others recommended a ninth year for non-Russian schools to ensure dual proficiency in native and Russian languages.¹⁵⁵ Yet others implored that the state continue to mandate native languages, particularly for titular minorities.¹⁵⁶ Some also advocated the continued study of republic languages in Russian schools and among non-titular minorities as a tool of “international education (*vospitanie*).”¹⁵⁷

Similar discussions played out at the meetings of the Supreme Soviet in December 1958, as lawmakers came together to approve the final version of the law. In his address to the general assembly, Ivan Kairov, president of the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences (APN) of the RSFSR, the USSR’s premier pedagogical body, noted that the topic of language had generated considerable countrywide debate. Reiterating the commitment to parental choice, he noted near-

¹⁵³ V. Niunka, “Nazrevshaia gosudarstvennaia zadacha,” *Pravda*, 19 November 1958, 3. M. Mel’nikov, a member of the RSFSR Academy of Pedagogical Sciences, similarly emphasized the importance of Russian, see M. Mel’nikov, “Novyi krupnyi shag vpered v razvitii narodnogo obrazovaniia,” *Pravda*, 9 December 1958, 3.

¹⁵⁴ T. Pulatov, “Uchitivat’ mestnye usloviia,” *Izvestiia*, 21 November 1958, 3.

¹⁵⁵ S. Badmatsyrenov (Minister of Education, Buriat ASSR), “Sozdat’ podgotovitel’nye klassy,” *Pravda*, 21 November 1958, 4. Two Estonian school directors noted the potential benefits of a preparatory year: L. Vaide, “Iskhodit’ iz mestnykh uslovii,” *Pravda*, 25 November 1958, 4; A. Tiki, “Nuzhen deviatii klass,” *Pravda*, 5 December 1958, 4. A reader in Osh (Kyrgyz SSR) made a similar suggestion to a local newspaper, “Po stranitsam gazet,” *Izvestiia*, 14 December 1958, 4. Jeremy Smith notes that suggestions for adding an extra year were deeply rooted and well developed in many republics, see “The Battle for Language,” especially 989–93.

¹⁵⁶ Sh. Simonian (Minister of Education, Armenian SSR), “Pered litsom novykh zadach,” *Pravda*, 27 November 1958, 3; A. Chernichenko and A. Riabokliakh, “V interesakh naroda,” *Pravda*, 23 November 1958, 3. Niunka and Pulatov, cited earlier, also touched upon the need to learn “native” languages alongside Russian.

¹⁵⁷ V. Latsis (Chairman of the Soviet of Ministers, Latvian SSR), “Smotret’ daleko vpered,” *Pravda*, 29 November 1958, 3; V. Mzhavanadze (First Secretary, Georgian SSR), “Programma velikikh preobrazovaniia,” *Pravda*, 2 December 1958, 2–3; G. Dzhibladze (Minister of Education, Georgian SSR), “Neskol’ko mislei,” *Izvestiia*, 21 December 1958, 4. *Vospitanie* is more expansive than the English “education,” encompassing notions of socialization and child rearing.

universal acknowledgement of Russian's importance and concern about overburdening non-Russians. An extra year of instruction, he stated unequivocally, raised too many practical questions and complications. Otherwise, Kairov advocated a policy with flexibility to local conditions: "This issue [of educational burdens] should be taken up by Union republics, each with their own conditions, to find a reserve of the necessary time, for example, by removing secondary materials from programs and textbooks among the subjects in the academic plan or by more persistent searches for rational teaching methods."¹⁵⁸

Delegates reiterated the concerns that had appeared in newspapers. Kh. Pirn, of the Estonian SSR, emphasized the dual importance of native and Russian languages in national schools.¹⁵⁹ Piotr M. Masherou (Masherov) of the Belarusian SSR argued that native language education should be mandated as either a primary or a secondary subject for children of the titular nationality, but that parents should be able to choose main language of instruction. Isidor Dolidze, Mečislovas Gedvilas, and Arvīds Pelše, of South Ossetia (Georgian SSR) and the Lithuanian and Latvian SSRs respectively, argued that both Russian and the republic language should be taught in all republic schools, regardless of the language of instruction.¹⁶⁰ Others said little about native-language education and instead focused on the importance of Russian.¹⁶¹ The Supreme Soviet ultimately decided against a firm statement: the final law, passed on December 24, 1958, only mentioned the historical importance of native language education. Harkening back to pre-1938 policies, republics were ostensibly left to determine specific mandates.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁸ "Doklad prezidenta Akademii pedagogicheskikh nauk RSFSR deputata N.A. Kairova," *Pravda*, 24 December 1958, 4.

¹⁵⁹ "Preniia po dokladam ob ukreplenii sviazi shkoly s zhizn'iu i o dal'neishem razvitii sistemy narodnogo obrazovaniia v strane," *Izvestiia*, 25 December 1958, 5.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 6.

¹⁶¹ See speeches from T.A. Allakhverdiev (Azerbaijan SSR) and A.P. Lupan (Moldovan SSR), *Izvestiia*, 25 December 1958, 6–7.

¹⁶² "Zakon ob ukreplenii sviazi shkoly s zhizn'iu i o dal'neishem razvitii sistemy narodnogo obrazovaniia v strane," *Pravda*, 25 December 1958, 1–2.

The following spring, each republic put forward their own version of the law on schools. Most enshrined the right of parents to choose the language of their children's education. Several republics, including the Uzbek, Tajik, Turkmen, and Kyrgyz republics, also noted the importance of improving the teaching of Russian. In Ukraine, the law clarified that the teaching of either Russian or Ukrainian would only happen with the demonstration of sufficient demand. While most republics complied with the regime's informal push towards parental choice, Azerbaijan and Latvia initially resisted. Instead, the republics continued existing policy, mandating both Russian and the titular language of the republic (and, in the case of Latvia, a foreign language as well).¹⁶³ The state responded to this and other "nationalist" initiatives with leadership purges in both republics.¹⁶⁴ Dissent on this matter, clearly, would not be tolerated.

The 1958–59 laws demonstrated reluctance to push exclusively Russian-language education while informally enshrining Russian's premier position. By allowing parents to choose the language of school instruction, the state avoided the appearance of requiring primary proficiency in Russian. Indeed, the law even ostensibly allowed parents to opt out of Russian entirely. Of course, parental choice was colored by institutional inequalities: Russian schools were often perceived to be better institutions with more students, better textbooks, and more qualified teachers.¹⁶⁵ Parents, too, frequently saw Russian as a gateway to upward mobility, since

¹⁶³ Bilinsky, "The Soviet Education Laws of 1958–9 and Soviet Nationality Policy," 145–46.

¹⁶⁴ Prigge and Bilinsky emphasize the anti-nationalist orientation of these purges, see Prigge, *Bearslayers*, 111–27; Bilinsky, "The Soviet Education Laws of 1958–9 and Soviet Nationality Policy," 146–47. Others have interpreted this more generally as ongoing management of center-periphery relations, see Smith, "The Battle for Language"; Loader, "The Rebellious Republic"; Loader, "A Stalinist Purge in the Khrushchev Era?" Loader's current work places the purge of the Latvian apparatus into the context of widespread purges that affected most union republics under Khrushchev.

¹⁶⁵ See Pål Kostø, "Faulted for the Wrong Reasons: Soviet Institutionalization of Ethnic Diversity and Western (Mis)Interpretations," in *Institutional Legacies of Communism: Change and Continuities in Minority Protection*, ed. Karl Cordell, Timofey Agarin, and Alexander Osipov (Routledge, 2013), 39–40.

elite higher educational institutions usually operated in Russian.¹⁶⁶ As Russian's position grew, the state could maintain a modicum of deniability for its role in this trend. The closing of non-Russian schools due to insufficient demand, what scholars have called the "efficiency principle," could thus be justified as a rational response to market-like forces.¹⁶⁷ Increased use of Russian among non-Russians, rather than emanating from above, could be portrayed as a popular movement, the natural result of Russian's importance.

The Long-Term Impact of the Reform

The reform's impact extended in several directions. On one level, party and state leaders, education administrators, and cultural figures publicly emphasized the ongoing importance of native languages. Indeed, many remarked upon the mutual enrichment of the side-by-side use of native and Russian languages, echoing academics' descriptions of the *sblizhenie* (coming together) of Soviet peoples. As Georgian poet Grigol Abashidze remarked in 1971, "The use of our so warmly beloved 'language of communication,' Russian, far from excludes but rather develops and improves national languages." As evidence, he noted that Russian translations had rendered work by Georgian writers accessible to Russia and the broader world.¹⁶⁸ Kyrgyz writer Chingiz Aitmatov similarly remarked, "Speaking of Russian's importance, we do not deny...the role and importance of other national languages, particularly in places of their ethnic distribution. On the contrary, speaking of Russian, we imply alongside it the all-round development of all

¹⁶⁶ As G. Dzhibladze, the Minister of Education of the Georgian SSR, noted in an article published ahead of the reform, "Hundreds of young Georgian men and women after finishing secondary school successfully study in higher educational institutions of Moscow and Leningrad, made possible by knowledge of Russian." G. Dzhibladze, "Neskol'ko myslei," *Izvestiia*, 21 December 1958, 4.

¹⁶⁷ On the "efficiency principle," see Barbara A. Anderson and Brian D. Silver, "Equality, Efficiency, and Politics in Soviet Bilingual Education Policy, 1934–1980," *The American Political Science Review* 78, no. 4 (1984): 1022–24.

¹⁶⁸ Grigol Abashidze, "Ediny po dukhu i tseli," *Pravda*, 29 June 1971, 3. The Kyrgyz Minister of Education Abdulla Kanimetov argued that Russian had modernized and enriched Kyrgyz with new vocabulary, see A. Kanimetov, "Ot chuvstv—k ubezhdeniiam," *Pravda*, 4 January 1973, 2.

national languages as one of the main features, one of the immutable conditions of Soviet internationalism, the internationalism of a single Soviet culture.”¹⁶⁹

Still, there could be little doubt that the reform contributed to the long-term devaluation of native languages in both practical and symbolic terms. Over the following decades, the number of national schools in many republics dropped precipitously. At the same time, Russian and so-called “mixed schools,” which included class groupings in two or more languages, rose dramatically.¹⁷⁰ Mixed schools were widely celebrated for promoting interethnic friendship between pupils, a key source of “international education (*vospitanie*).”¹⁷¹ These interactions usually favored Russian. The emphasis on “rational” and “economic” approaches—that certain languages would be offered only with sufficient demand (and teachers)—exacerbated declines in native-language schools, hitting higher education and non-titular minorities hardest. Many faced the choice of sending children to either Russian or titular schools thanks to limited local offerings.¹⁷² The reform also essentially gave a green light for republics to shift higher education, most prominently in technical fields, into Russian. The removal of language requirements thus

¹⁶⁹ Chingiz Aitmatov, “Vo imia nashego budushego,” *Istkusstvo Kino* 1973, No. 11, 1–4; here 3.

¹⁷⁰ This certainly happened in Kazakhstan. A 1967 report on schools in Kazakhstan indicated that between the 1959–60 and 1966–67 school years, Russian-language schools increased from 45 to 53 percent of all schools, while Kazakh-language schools fell from 35 to 28 percent. GARF, f. 9563, o.1, d. 76, l. 6. By 1962, the number of Russian schools in the Ukrainian SSR had increased at the expense of Ukrainian ones, and Bilinsky suggested this was likely true in the Kyrgyz SSR, see Bilinsky, “The Soviet Education Laws of 1958–9 and Soviet Nationality Policy,” 151; see also Bilinsky, “Education of the Non-Russian Peoples in the USSR, 1917–1967”; Isabelle Kreindler, “The Changing Status of Russian in the Soviet Union,” *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, no. 33 (1982): 13–16. One contemporary observer, working obliquely with published statistical data, doubted the extremity of the impact, at least in the first decade, see Harry Lipset, “The Status of National Minority Languages in Soviet Education,” *Soviet Studies* 19, no. 2 (1967): 181–89. This, however, does not take into account local specificities or longer-term impacts.

¹⁷¹ On preferences for mixed schools, see Khally Nazarova, “Seiatel’ znanii, dobrykh chuvstv,” *Izvestiia*, 31 October 1963, 3; “Rech’ tovarishcha Pel’she,” *Izvestiia*, 31 March 1966, 4; A. Kanimetov, “Ot chuvstv — k ubezhdeniiam,” *Pravda*, 4 January 1973, 2; E. Garunov, “Rodnykh nashei kul’tury,” *Izvestiia*, 12 August 1977, 2.

¹⁷² Krista Goff writes about this phenomenon in Azerbaijan, see “‘Why Not Love Our Language and Our Culture?’” This was common in the RSFSR: Kreindler notes that Karelian schools transitioned to Russian as the primary language of instruction from first grade in 1958, while other RSFSR minorities saw an earlier transition. Overall, the number of languages of primary instruction offered across the USSR declined after the reform: Kreindler, “The Changing Status of Russian in the Soviet Union,” 21–24.

catalyzed a significant scaling back of native-language education in favor of Russian.

As a result, an increasing number of citizens spoke Russian, including a growing number of non-Russians who spoke Russian as their primary language.¹⁷³ Participation in all-union institutions, most notably the military, aided this trend, contributing to higher proficiency among non-Russian men than women.¹⁷⁴ Interethnic families, too, often favored Russian.¹⁷⁵ Harder to quantify is the effect on native language proficiency, not least because many felt pressured to claim the language of their ethnicity as native regardless of actual practice. Nevertheless, Brian Silver notes that among the Central Asians who claimed Russian as their primary language, “a large majority... apparently fail to retain fluency in their national languages,” citing that in the 1970 census, two-thirds of Russian-speaking Kazakhs and four-fifths of Russian-speaking Tajiks did not claim proficiency in a second Soviet language. “Switching the mother tongue to Russian,” he concluded, “is therefore accompanied ordinarily by declining ability to communicate with nationals who are fluent in the national tongue but not in Russian.”¹⁷⁶ Citizens were aware of a trend of non-Russians who had “forgotten” their native language, which some

¹⁷³ In the 1970 and 1979 censuses, 13 and 16.3 million non-Russians declared Russian to be their native language, though these numbers likely underestimate the frequency, see Tsentral’noe statisticheskoe upravlenie, *Itogi Vsesoiuznoi perepisi naseleniia 1970 g.*, IV:20; Gosudarstvennyi komitet SSSR po statistike, *Itogi Vsesoiuznoi perepisi naseleniia 1979 goda: statisticheskii sbornik*, vol. 4 (Moscow: Goskomstat, 1989), 71. See also Brian Silver, “Bilingualism and Maintenance of the Mother Tongue in Soviet Central Asia,” *Slavic Review* 35, no. 3 (1976): 406–24; Barbara A. Anderson and Brian D. Silver, “Estimating Russification of Ethnic Identity Among Non-Russians in the USSR,” *Demography* 20, no. 4 (1983): 461–89. Both articles suggest some degree of linguistic and cultural Russification.

¹⁷⁴ Brian Silver notes greater Russian proficiency among Central Asian men than women, see “Bilingualism and Maintenance of the Mother Tongue in Soviet Central Asia,” 423.

¹⁷⁵ Edgar, “Marriage, Modernity, and the ‘Friendship of Nations.’” As discussed in Chapter 3, constitutional letters often discussed interethnic marriage and increased Russian usage, see especially letters by Andris A., of Ogre, Latvian SSR (1961: GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 324, ll. 108–109); Boris Ch. of Minsk, Belarusian SSR (1962: GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 330, l. 62); Vladimir E., of Turkestan, Kazakh SSR (1967: GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 357, l. 105); Anatolii L., of Kaliningrad, RSFSR (1976: GARF f. 7523, o. 131, d. 367, l. 190).

¹⁷⁶ Silver, “Bilingualism and Maintenance of the Mother Tongue in Soviet Central Asia,” 423. As Silver notes, the inclusion in the 1970 census of a question on fluency in second Soviet language effectively questioned whether citizens spoke either their national language or Russian fluently (in addition whichever was claimed as ‘native’).

took as proof of the consolidation of diverse, multiethnic citizens into a single Soviet people.¹⁷⁷

Whatever the reasons, higher levels of Russian proficiency promoted the language's status as the *de facto* language of society, suggesting one aspect of the symbolic significance of the 1958–59 reform. The 1961 party program further enshrined Russian's central importance "as the language of interethnic communication and cooperation of all peoples of the USSR." The section on ethnic relations charged the party with two contradictory tasks. On one hand, the party guaranteed "the long-term free development of languages of the peoples of the USSR, the complete freedom for every citizen of the USSR to speak, educate (*vospityvat'*), and teach their children in any language without allowing any privileges, limitations, or coercion in the use of any [particular] language." At the same time, the program explicitly afforded Russian a privileged position: "The ongoing process of voluntary study...of Russian has positive significance, as it promotes the mutual exchange of experience and the exposure of every nation and people to the cultural achievements of all other peoples of the USSR and to world culture."¹⁷⁸ This simultaneous emphasis on equality and the *de facto* privileging of Russian illustrated the state's cautious but effective preference for Russian.

Citizens, too, routinely highlighted proficiency in Russian (and often, non-proficiency in supposedly "native" languages) as a key aspect of Soviet identity in letters written in the 1960s and '70s in connection with the new constitution. As V. Pokrovsky, a Leningrad party member

¹⁷⁷ As discussed in Chapter 3. On "forgotten" native languages and Russian as a native language among non-Russians, see constitutional letters by Andris A. of Ogre, Latvian SSR (1961: GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 324, ll. 108–109); Boris Ch. of Minsk, Belarusian SSR (1962: GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 330, l. 62); I. Grishin of Lviv, Ukrainian SSR (1964: GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 337, l. 87); E. Sinner of Tula, RSFSR (1964: GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 309, ll. 50–51); Vladimir E. of Turkestan, Kazakh SSR (1967: GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 357, l. 105). Some cited their own lack of 'native' language proficiency, see A. Galadauskas of Leningrad, RSFSR (1962: GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 325, l. 34); Anatolii L. of Kaliningrad, RSFSR (1976: GARF f. 7523, o. 131, d. 367, l. 190).

¹⁷⁸ *Programma Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soiuza*. In discussions of the program, Nuritdin Muxidinov, the former First Secretary of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan and Central Committee member of the KPSS highlighted the symbolic importance of Russian, see "Rech' tovarishcha Mukhitdinova, XXII s"ezda KPSS," *Pravda*, 25 October 1961, 3.

noted in a 1968 letter that proposed the enshrining Russian as the country's official language:

In the Soviet Union, all national languages are considered to be equal, but for the convenience of communication between people of different ethnicities, Russian is an all-union language, and, at the same time, a republic language in multiethnic union Soviet republics. Russian merits such great respect. It is an all union and republic language in multinational republics for the following reasons: Russian is the native language of V.I. Lenin; Russian is the native language of people of the Russian ethnicity, as the recognized older brother in the multiethnic brotherly family of the Soviet Union; Russian has already become, in fact, an all-union language; not only Russians but also peoples of all ethnicities of the Soviet Union actively participated in the creation of Russian.¹⁷⁹

Others more simply acknowledged Russian's growing social importance. E. Sinner, of Tula (RSFSR), noted in 1964, "the consolidation of peoples of the USSR into a single nation will happen on the basis of the Russian language as the most widespread, and the richest among the languages of the Soviet Union."¹⁸⁰

That the end of mandated native-language education for all citizens coincided with a reform that emphasized technical and practical education further underscored deep associations between Russian and science, another aspect of the reform's symbolic importance. The reform sought to modernize schools and make them more practical, to connect education more closely with "life." As part of this overhaul, school programs emphasized polytechnic education and practical training, combining theoretical learning with on-site training.¹⁸¹ Many higher educational institutions in union and autonomous republics, which previously operated in local languages, shifted instruction into Russian. In this sense, under Khrushchev and Brezhnev,

¹⁷⁹ GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 312, ll. 31–32. For additional comments about the need to make Russian's status official, see also letters by I. Danilin, of Moscow, RSFSR (1967: GARF f. 7523, o. 131, d. 311, l. 48); Yakushev, of Jurmala, Latvian SSR (1967: GARF f. 7523, o. 131, d. 311, l. 47; 1969: GARF f. 7523, o. 131, d. 361, l. 280; and 1971: GARF f. 7523, o. 131, d. 315, l. 30); Vladimir B., of Archangelsk, RSFSR (1976': GARF f. 7523, o. 131, d. 367, l. 94).

¹⁸⁰ GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 309, l. 50. The same author repeated similar suggestions in 1975, see GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 309, l. 21.

¹⁸¹ Ruble, *Leningrad*, 141–54; Smith, "Khrushchev and the Path to Modernisation through Education." On results of the school reform in polytechnic education, see RGANI, f. 5, o. 55, dd. 33, 34, and 95; TsDAHOU, f. 1, o. 73, d. 741; APRK, f. 708, o. 31, d. 1496; APRK, f. 708, o. 32, d. 1445; TsGARK, f. 1692, o. 2, dd. 9, 68, 265, and 792; TsGART, f. 360, o. 11, dd. 880, 881, 999. Archives emphasize the reform's scientific, polytechnic orientation. Other than its impact on nationalities policy, the reform remains understudied.

Russian was viewed as a language of education, culture, science, and technology, an understanding that diverted attention from the language's connection with the Russian people.¹⁸²

Reflecting the growing identification of Russian with science, there was also a newfound emphasis on the professionalization of teaching Russian, manifested through the founding of new teachers' newspapers and journals, the holding of regular conferences for Russian teachers, and greater control over the quality of instruction. These efforts were oriented both internally, towards teachers and students of Russian within the Soviet Union, and externally, towards language students and teachers worldwide. The pedagogical journal *Russian Language in the National School* began publication in 1957, just ahead of the school reform.¹⁸³ The journal provided a more deeply focused study of specific methodologies for teaching Russian to non-Russian speakers than was offered in the long-existing *Russian Language in School*, which only sometimes featured articles on teaching in national schools. Republic journals on teaching Russian were also founded and expanded in subsequent years, offering teachers insight into the particularities of teaching Russian in specific national contexts.¹⁸⁴

Alongside promoting Russian in non-Russian schools, pedagogical journals emphasized the importance of Russian in ways that presented more subtle challenges to non-Russian readers. Most professional journals, the Uzbek Minister of Education Anvar Kucharov noted at an inaugural meeting of the Ministry of Education of the USSR in 1967, were published almost exclusively in Russian.¹⁸⁵ Moreover, as Vladimir Khvostov, president of the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences, noted at the same meeting, most teaching materials were designed and

¹⁸² On Russian as an international scientific language, see Gordin, *Scientific Babel*, 6 and 241–66.

¹⁸³ N.Iu. Filimonova, "Review of 'Russkii Iazyk v National'noi Shkole,' Edited by I.V. Barannikov," *Russian Language Journal* 41, no. 140 (1987): 323–25.

¹⁸⁴ E.g. *Russian Language and Literature in Kazakh Schools* (1962), *Russian Language and Literature in Georgian Schools* (1966).

¹⁸⁵ GARF, f. 9563, o. 1, d. 40, ll. 102–3.

organized with Russian schools in mind, suggesting a certain one-size-fits-all approach that took Russian schools as the assumed starting point.¹⁸⁶ Although the APN vowed to rectify this situation, it suggested the state saw Russian schools as the default for the entire country, paralleling ethnic Russians' prominence in visual propaganda, as seen in Chapter 1.

Teachers' conferences also raised the degree of professionalism in teaching Russian. Although conferences for Russian-language teachers had taken place under Stalin, the level of organization and their all-union significance increased under Khrushchev and Brezhnev. In both 1960 and 1962, large inter-republic conferences were held in Uzbekistan, the Baltic Republics, and the South Caucasus. Participants reportedly found discussions useful for improving teaching quality and bringing together the expertise of linguists, teachers, and policy makers. As a report on a potential all-union conference noted in 1967, "in modern conditions, when the function of Russian as the language of interethnic communication expands ever larger, the long-term improvement of its teaching is necessary."¹⁸⁷ Perhaps the largest such conference took place in Tashkent in 1979, with opening remarks delivered by Brezhnev. The conference, "Russian: The Language of Friendship and Cooperation of the Peoples of the USSR," covered all aspects of Russian-language education.¹⁸⁸ The state also sponsored and participated in international conferences for Russian teachers abroad as part of efforts to promote Russian worldwide.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁶ GARF, f. 9563, o. 1, d, 41, l. 32.

¹⁸⁷ GARF, f. 9563, o.1, d. 231.

¹⁸⁸ For published proceedings, see Panachin and Strakhov, *Russkii iazyk—iazuk družby i sotrudnichestva narodov SSSR*. For reporting on earlier conferences, see Khamid Guliam, "Prepodavanie russkogo iazyka," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 1 September 1956, 2; A. Bogdanov, "Konferentsiia literaturovedov v Kazani," *Voprosy literatury* 1960, No. 9, 250–52; Iu. Mukimov, "Russkii iazyk v national'nykh shkolakh," *Pravda*, 29 May 1962, 4; "Iazyk sem'i velikoi," *Pravda*, 21 October 1975, 6; "Kak uchit' russkomu iazyku," *Izvestiia*, 21 October 1975, 3; "Iazyk družby i sozidaniia," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 3 December 1975, 2.

¹⁸⁹ V. Kostamarev, "Mir uchitsia russkomu," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 7 September 1967, 5; V. Eliutin, "Iazyk družby, mira i progressa," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 2 July 1969, 12; S. Shchukina, "Mir uchitsia russkomu: zametki s konferentsii," *Izvetiia*, 5 September 1969, 5. On Soviet responsibility for teaching Russian abroad, see also V. Kostamarev, "I am anxious to Master Russian..." On khochet znat' russkii. Nado emu pomoch'!" *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 21 August 1968, 13; "...My khotim znat' russkii," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 23 October 1968, 13.

Given the recognition of Russian's civic importance, considerable attention was turned towards teaching quality. New institutions, faculties, and groups within existing universities that specialized in teaching Russian to non-Russians increased teacher competency.¹⁹⁰ The state also worked to improve rural instruction. At the Ministry of Education's inaugural 1967 meeting Azerbaijani Minister of Education Mehdi Mehdizadə highlighted the difficulties of provisioning rural areas with qualified teachers. He observed that urban students assigned to teach three years in rural schools often found ways to leave early or avoid service in villages. To alleviate these problems, he proposed extending initial teaching assignments to five years and focusing on training local students—who were more accustomed to village life—as teachers.¹⁹¹ The Tajik SSR proposed a more innovative solution to the lack of qualified teachers for staffing Russian schools and Russian-language curriculum by inviting young teachers from Ukraine, Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan to work in the republic for several years during the 1960s and '70s.¹⁹²

Russification and its Discontents

Although many citizens embraced Russian as a means of lateral integration and upward mobility, others criticized Russian's growing prominence as out of step with Leninist principles, a critique articulated by Ivan Dziuba in 1965. Resistance to what many saw as *de facto* rather than *de jure* linguistic Russification emanated from both titular and non-titular minorities across

¹⁹⁰ The Academy of Pedagogical Sciences (APN SSSR) established a scientific-research institute for Russian in national schools in 1969 (“Nauchno-Isledovatel'skie instituty Akademii pedagogicheskikh nauk SSSR,” *Izvestiia*, 5 September 1969, 3). Specialized republic pedagogical institutes for Russian opened in Tashkent around 1964 (“Otosviudu,” *Pravda*, 22 June 1964, 4); and in the late '70s in Tajikistan (O. Latifi, “Adresa prizvaniia,” *Pravda*, 20 June 1981, 3). The Georgian SSR also established special groups to train teachers to teach Russian in rural schools, see T. Lashkarashvili, “Iazyk dlia kazhdogo rodnoi,” *Pravda*, 30 December 1973, 3. Improvements in Russian teacher training in Kazakhstan are also discussed in APRK, f. 708, o. 85, d. 138, ll. 71-74 (1979).

¹⁹¹ GARF, f. 9563, o. 1, d. 40, ll. 122–24. This problem is also discussed in L. Tairov, “Derevnia zhdet uchitel'ia,” *Pravda*, 3 October 1962, 3. On problems in rural schools in Kazakhstan, see APRK, f. 708, o. 85, d. 138, esp. l. 63.

¹⁹² This initiative existed through at least some of the 1950s and '60s, although the scope of the program is unknown, see GARF f. 9563, o. 1, d. 33, l. 4; GARF, f. 9563, o. 1, d. 40, l. 132. A similar program in Azerbaijan is discussed in “Pered nachalom uchebnogo goda,” *Pravda*, 28 August 1955, 2.

the country. In a 1966 letter to the Central Committee, Soviet Germans in the Kyrgyz SSR complained of discrimination experienced by their children. They specifically decried the lack of national schools, which they claimed had resulted in linguistic Russification.¹⁹³ As Krista Goff has noted, non-titular activists in the Caucasus also expressed dismay about the lack of native language schools and resources, as only Russian and Azerbaijani schools became available.¹⁹⁴

Constitutional letters occasionally emphasized the need to strengthen titular languages in non-Russian republics. Three school teachers in Kyiv complained in a 1965 letter about the scaling back of native languages as a result of the 1958–59 reform: “Many parents approach the question too ‘practically,’ and they deny children the native language.” They compared the current preference for Russian over Ukrainian to the elite preference for French over Russian in previous centuries. Rather than the “liberal” position that language choice should be left to parents, they argued, “the study of the language of the people of a given republic should be turned from a right to an important duty of both parents and their children.”¹⁹⁵ Although such views were relatively rare and, as in Dziuba’s case, often swiftly suppressed, public dissatisfaction with linguistic Russification would grow in the 1980s. This movement ultimately contributed to political and social destabilization in the final years of Soviet rule.

Conclusion: Russian for Communication, Imperialism by Default

In 1968, V. Kagosian, an Armenian in Sochi (RSFSR), addressed the constitutional

¹⁹³ RGANI, f. 5, o. 58, d. 23, ll. 62–67. Konstantin B., a self-identified German in the Volgograd oblast, made similar claims in a 1963 letter to the constitutional commission requesting the reinstatement of the Volga German ASSR, see GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 332, ll. 33–36.

¹⁹⁴ Goff, “‘Why Not Love Our Language and Our Culture?’”

¹⁹⁵ GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 310, ll. 23–24. See also the letter by Nikolai R. of Sums’ka oblast, Ukrainian SSR (1964: GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 342, ll. 34–36). V. Teplitskii, a pensioner in Samarkand, praised the fact that the state allowed freedom of choice about language use, positively noting that: “80 percent of national minorities even try to speak in the language that the majority speaks and in which it is more convenient for their child to speak and study.” GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 329, l. 154.

commission with an unusual request:

As is known, today there are more than eight million speakers of Esperanto (the international language of the future). Wouldn't it be expedient to put together initiatives and create conditions for the broad implementation of study of this language in schools and in special courses in the USSR? With the introduction of Esperanto on our planet, humanity can escape the cruel diseases of chauvinism and nationalism. "Native language and Esperanto—on a global scale, for more than three billion people"! The only proper way out: no violation of the principle of absolute equality, and, most importantly, the resolution of the most serious problems of our entire planet. All peoples of our earth will go for this. Two languages on a global scale are easier to learn than thousands. "Study our native language and the language of interethnic communication—Esperanto!"¹⁹⁶

Kagosian and other Esperanto enthusiasts proposed an unorthodox solution to the very problem that stood at the heart of the Soviet language policy: how to both support native language education while guaranteeing at least a minimal degree of communication. The proposal to use Esperanto rather than Russian, Kagosian believed, would provide the fairest solution for everyone, promoting communication not only within the country but across the entire globe.¹⁹⁷

The difficulty of the widespread introduction of Esperanto, of course, ruled out any practical implementation of this wild request, not least because many Soviet Esperanto activists had fallen victim to Stalinist purges.¹⁹⁸ The sheer practicalities of teaching a country of hundreds of millions a language spoken by so few suggest the most important reason why Russian became and remained central, despite palpable discomfort with the language's imperial past. There simply was no better alternative if a common language of communication was considered necessary to the functioning of the state. As much as Lenin and other leaders tried to avoid the appearances of empire, Russian was the most expedient language of communication, spoken by the country's largest ethnic group and a growing number of non-Russians.

¹⁹⁶ GARF, f. 7523, o. 131, d. 313, l. 24. Citizens also wrote about Esperanto during the 1936 constitution discussion, see GARF, f. 3316, o. 41, d. 186, ll. 79–80.

¹⁹⁷ This, of course, has always been the promise of Esperanto. See Esther Schor, *Bridge of Words: Esperanto and the Dream of a Universal Language* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2016).

¹⁹⁸ Ulrich Lins, *Dangerous Language: Esperanto and the Decline of Stalinism*, trans. Humphrey Tonkin (Springer, 2017), 17–28. Brigid O'Keeffe discusses this in her current research.

Soviet leaders and citizens alike adopted wide-ranging discourses that described Russian in terms that attempted to mitigate its imperial overtones. Even before the revolution, Lenin identified Russian as a language of literary and revolutionary culture, and he advocated voluntary study of the language. In the decades after the revolution and with increased intensity after the 1938 law, leaders repeatedly emphasized that Russian was not exclusively or primarily the language of the Russian people; instead, it was the language of revolution and of Lenin, as well as the language of culture and science. Most importantly, it was the language that connected citizens not only with the state, but also with fellow citizens. After the mandate to learn Russian was officially removed in 1958–59, leaders fell back on the idea that citizens themselves chose to learn Russian voluntarily, allowing its usage, both as a primary and secondary language, to be portrayed—often sincerely—as a popular movement.

Of course, the use of Russian was never entirely fair or equal, despite repeated insistence from leaders, the press, and citizens themselves. Russian's preeminent position exposed some of the deepest inequalities that differentiated citizens. Unsurprisingly, non-Russians consistently bore the burden of communication, which was almost always conducted in Russian. It was non-Russians who spent additional hours of the school day learning Russian to ensure they could communicate with neighbors and fellow citizens. The expectation, often explicit, that students master Russian to a degree that put them roughly on par with native speakers only furthered the sense that non-Russian citizens would always be behind fellow citizens to some degree.

Attending Russian-language schools, made possible after the 1958–59 school reform, could reduce the educational burdens of learning Russian. This, however, came at a significant cost, as native-language education and institutions took a back seat to Russian-language ones.

As leaders and citizens routinely acknowledged, Russian served as a tool of both upward

mobility and lateral integration, two features often seen as important for promoting non-Russian minorities and enabling them to participate as equal citizens. Although implicit inequalities continued, the state did offer unparalleled opportunities for its non-Russian citizens to participate fully in civic life. Russian featured centrally in the state's efforts to forge a connected and unified citizenry. As people lived, worked, and traveled side-by-side, Russian served as a powerful adhesive that enabled citizens to engage both with one another and with the state, ensuring its important function as the language of the Soviet people.

EPILOGUE

Whither the Soviet People?

On July 2, 1990, General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev approached the podium to give the introductory speech at the 28th (and, as it happened, final) Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Gorbachev's speech surveyed the current domestic and international situation and outlined the major goals of the party and state over the next five to ten years. In contrast to the more optimistic, celebratory tone of prior congresses, Gorbachev talked more about problems than triumphs. Citing the need to be "objective and principled," he launched almost immediately into a sober assessment of the country's biggest challenges, from ecological disasters in the Aral Sea and Lake Baikal to ongoing complications stemming from the Chernobyl crisis and the aftermath of the Afghan war.¹ Even his concluding words suggested more resignation than confidence: "Before us, comrades, lie the most difficult tasks, and the party sees their resolution, the way out of the crisis to be only forward, only along the path of further democratization and deepening *perestroika*."²

In another significant departure from past practice, and even contrasting his own speech at the 27th Congress in 1986, the Soviet people was curiously absent from Gorbachev's remarks. In his address, he used the phrase only once, when he briefly mentioned the "heroic role of

¹ KPSS, *XXVIII s"ezd Kommunisticheskoi partii Sovetskogo Soiuz: 2–13 iulia 1990 goda: stenograficheskii otchet*, ed. L. N Dobrokhotov, vol. 1 (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1991), 57–58. On many of the environmental concerns that he cites, see especially Douglas R. Weiner, *A Little Corner of Freedom: Russian Nature Protection from Stalin to Gorbachëv* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 355–439.

² KPSS, *XXVIII s"ezd Kommunisticheskoi partii Sovetskogo Soiuz*, 1:101.

communists in the Soviet people's military feat in the era of the Great Patriotic War."³ His words hinted at a change in tone that could be seen across the political and ideological spectrum. This coincided with a growing recognition among both political elites and ordinary citizens of rising interethnic tensions. Although these factors should not be seen in isolation as an explanation for the Soviet Union's impending collapse, they hint at an increasing awareness of social rifts in the late 1980s that suggested a marked departure from prior decades and offer an excellent vantage point to reflect on the long-term fate of the Soviet people.

The Fate of the Soviet People: Newspapers, Ideology, and Social Indicators in the 1980s

In Chapter 1, we observed the meteoric rise of the concept of the Soviet people beginning in the mid-1930s. The 1980s, by contrast, told a different story. Almost as quickly as the term had surged into popular usage just a few decades previously, use of the term plummeted in the central press in the final years of Soviet rule (Figure 11).⁴ In newspapers, the term remained largely confined to empty patriotic formulations that had become standard under Stalin. Outside of narrow academic discussions of the Soviet people, which to some extent continued, public discussion of the concept among party leaders and in the press noticeably declined.

As already suggested in the analysis of Gorbachev's remarks in 1990, this change was both quantitative and qualitative. Whereas past leaders—Khrushchev and Brezhnev most significantly—had talked at length about the Soviet people at prior congresses, the final party congresses devoted far less attention to the term. At first, the change was subtle. In the 1986 Congress, Gorbachev used the term several times, including twice near the beginning of his remarks. Then, his tone remained fairly optimistic. He expressed confidence that necessary

³ KPSS, 1:88.

⁴ Data from *EastView*, collected in October 2016.

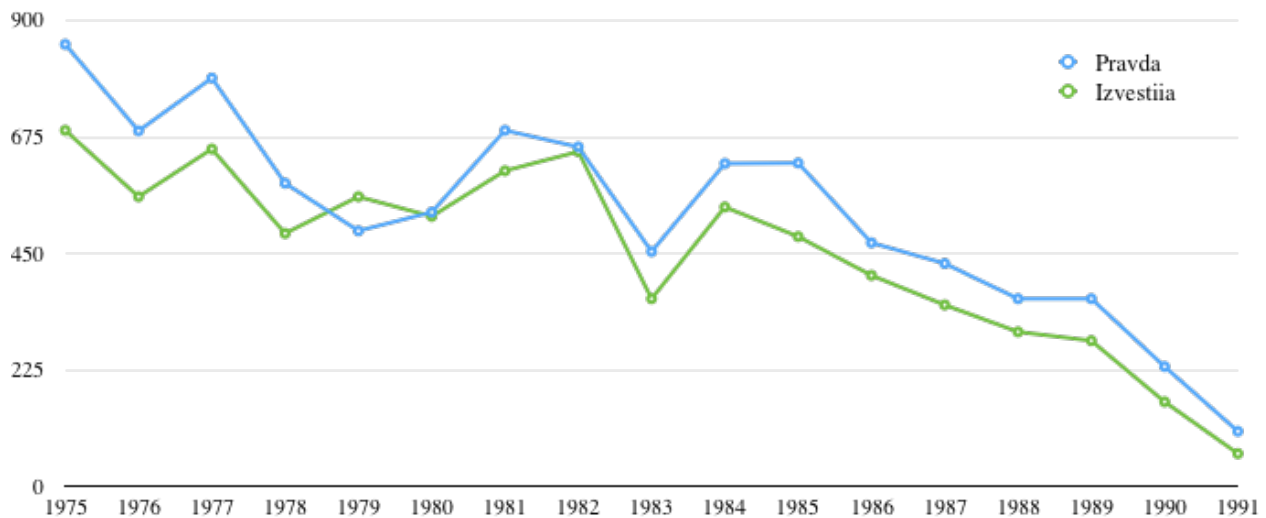


Figure 11: Use of “Sovetskii narod” in *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, 1975–91.

improvements to the political, economic, and social structure would yield positive results and would raise “the material and spiritual life of the Soviet people onto a qualitatively new level.” This would demonstrate to the world the ongoing relevance of socialist construction.⁵ He closed his remarks with familiar tropes: “The Soviet people can be confident that the party deeply recognizes its responsibility for the future of the country and for lasting peace on earth, for the correctness of the planned course. The main thing that is necessary for its practical realization is hard work, unity of the party and the people, and the united actions of all workers.”⁶ Other speeches similarly invoked the term, suggesting continuity with past practices.

Just four years later, as we have already seen, the difference was stark. Gorbachev’s altered tone and emphasis presented the most glaring illustration of how much things had changed, and he was not alone. The decline of the term “Soviet people” was palpable across the thirteen days of meetings, mirroring the steady decline of the term in the central press. This rhetorical shift reflected a growing acknowledgement that there were problems in the general state of interethnic relations. At both the 19th Party Conference, held for the first time since

⁵ KPSS, *XXVII s"ezd Kommunisticheskoi partii Sovetskogo Soiuz: 25 fevralia–6 marta 1986 goda: Stenograficheskii otchet*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1986), 26.

⁶ KPSS, 1:121.

1941, and the September 1989 Plenum, “interethnic relations in modern conditions” featured as a major subject of discussion.⁷ In preparation for the September Plenum, the party solicited letters from citizens about the state of interethnic relations across the country, suggesting a new willingness to hear and discuss the urgent problems facing society. For the plenum, the Communist Party of Ukraine prepared reports on interethnic relations in other countries, including the U.S., Canada, France, and elsewhere, a clear sign that some party leaders were looking elsewhere for new approaches.⁸

Other indicators further suggested the troubling state of affairs, particularly on matters of interethnic relations and international (*internatsional’nyi*, alternatively multicultural) education. A 1987 report on sociological research about the values of students in Kyiv betrayed serious weaknesses in ideological work. In surveys, students were asked to comment on various situations related to interethnic relations. The report concluded that 31 percent of respondents preferred monoethnic educational groups, and 31–37 percent did not approve of interethnic marriages. Further, many students reported first-hand experience of interethnic tensions, most frequently of a minor sort, “rudeness in communication, conversation.”⁹ These numbers concerned the party. The conclusion—that higher educational institutions needed to improve work in “international” training of students—suggests that party leaders saw the current state of affairs among students as unacceptable and in need of continued attention. At the same time, it was also clear that they were relying on old tricks to address new problems.

⁷ TsK KPSS, *Materialy Plenuma Tsentral’nogo Komiteta KPSS, 19–20 sentiabria 1989 goda*, ed. V. Ia. Gribenko and A. V. Iurkin (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1989).

⁸ TsDAHOU, f. 1, o. 32, d. 2558, esp. ll. 58–67.

⁹ TsDAHOU, f. 1, o. 32, d. 2368, ll. 101–9.

*“People are Breaking Apart, Like Sheep without a Shepherd” : Letters on the Eve of Collapse*¹⁰

As leaders and newspapers paid decreasing lip service to the concept of the Soviet people, the party actively collected thousands of letters from citizens, many of which offer insight into how citizens responded to the conditions of the late 1980s. In some cases, as with the preparations for the 1989 plenum, these letters were explicitly solicited as evidence. More often, citizens wrote on their own accord to detail their particular experiences and concerns, much as they had in past decades. In the late 1980s, in the new conditions of *glasnost*, thousands of letters poured in, which the party regularly reviewed and used to compile reports on their contents. The reports, full of extended excerpts from the letters that had been received and statistical analysis of their general content, make it possible to speak of the letters both generally and specifically. Even with all the obvious caveats about the institutional origins of this source material, the letters shed light on citizens’ growing concerns about the state of affairs around the country, particularly on matters of interethnic relations. The reports, too, offer a glimpse into the real anxieties of the party members tasked with compiling them.¹¹

Judging by the thousands of letters received, matters of interethnic relations were a pressing concern for citizens in the late 1980s. The vast majority of letters concerned recent events and escalating conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh, the Baltic States, Moldova, and elsewhere, either by witnesses to events or by concerned citizens living elsewhere.¹² A 1989 report, compiled based on letters addressing interethnic relations in 1988 and 1989, made several

¹⁰ Quotation from RGANI, f. 100, o. 1, d. 308, l. 12.

¹¹ As is clear from reports, communist party members, Russian speakers in non-Russian republics, and nationalist activists were the most prolific in writing letters in the 1980s, offering a vision of how opposing camps interpreted similar situations. Those dissatisfied with the current state of affairs were far more likely to write than those satisfied, so letters disproportionately represent problems rather than successes. As is clear from the selected excerpts themselves, letter writers were never “objective” observers of what happened, though many excerpts do offer insight into what factors shaped their observation. Finally, because original letters do not appear to have been preserved, analysis is limited to what the party itself deemed important to discuss in these reports.

¹² See RGANI, f. 100, o. 1, d. 300, ll. 2–4; RGANI, f. 100, o. 1, d. 399, ll. 3–5.

generalizations: “The majority of letters contains facts that give evidence about the radicalization (*obostrenie*) of mutual relations between nations (*natsiia*); the impingement of the rights of non-titular nationalities in a number of union and autonomous republics and oblasts; requests to implement the necessary measures for suppressing oppressions and injustices, for ensuring [minority] representation in elected bodies, [and] for providing the possibility of study in native languages.” The report further indicated the “polarization of opinions” of authors from regions with multiethnic populations, suggesting that increased tension was particularly visible in places where citizens of different ethnicities lived side by side.¹³

Among the most constant refrains in letters, particularly those from Russian speakers in non-Russian communities, was the sense that new policies promoting non-Russian languages in republics and native-language education discriminated against Russian speakers.¹⁴ A report on letters from Russian speakers in Uzbekistan received between 1988–89 suggested that many believed that conditions had recently worsened. One woman from Samarkand wrote:

For seventy years, our peoples (*narody*) have lived in peace and friendship, all language barriers have practically disappeared, and there has been an increase in mixed marriages—everything was leading towards equality and good neighborly relations. However, recently the ethnic relations in our republic have elicited considerable concern for parts of the population. Nationalism in the last two years has reached greater scopes. Even in public transport people are discussing the possibility of declarations similar to those made in Georgia, Moldova, the Baltic Republics. And confidence is expressed that the police will support such declarations... It is not surprising that the Russophone parts of the population have a skeptical attitude to the local police.¹⁵

Another woman similarly noted that, though she had been born and raised in Uzbekistan and felt it to be her home, she heard increased antagonism and open threats from her Uzbek neighbors, who were increasingly united in their *mahallas* [Uzbek: neighborhoods]. Another woman

¹³ RGANI, f. 100, o. 1, d. 309, l. 4.

¹⁴ In many cases, these letters discussed changes in language policy, foremost the passing of language laws in most republics between 1989–90 that gave increased status to the titular republic language.

¹⁵ RGANI, f. 100, o. 1, d. 294, ll. 47–48. This letter and others cited here were not anonymous, but since the letter writers were not political actors, I have omitted their names for privacy.

reported that she had been told to return to her “own Russia” if she did not agree with current conditions.¹⁶ One Tashkent resident complained that the official status of Uzbek now made it especially difficult for non-Uzbek speakers to participate in local society: “I have lived in Tashkent for 36 years already, and it is not my fault that I have a weak knowledge of Uzbek. Many would like to know Uzbek and other languages. But that is the way things have gone, and it is important to take that into account. Unfortunately, the Uzbek segment of the population does not want to consider this.”¹⁷

Russian speakers across the Soviet Union expressed similar concerns. One report noted that many letters contained “complaints from Russians who live in union and autonomous republics about the difficulty of life in another ethnic (*inonatsional’nyi*) environment.” The report also noted an uptick in requests for help in moving to the RSFSR from other republics, particularly from the Baltic republics, Azerbaijan, ASSRs in the RSFSR, and all the republics of Central Asia and Kazakhstan.¹⁸ Many Russophone letter writers complained of growing tensions from the increased presence of nationalist groups. “Tell me, Mikhail Sergeevich [Gorbachev],” wrote one woman in Moldova, “why do they so furiously dislike Russians in the republics? What bad did we do to them, what did we do to earn this antipathy? Perhaps Russians have committed a great sin for which they must be held in contempt.”¹⁹

Although the registered complaints speak more to the loss of privilege than to growing inequality (indeed, these policies generally promoted greater equality for non-Russians), their words suggest increased polarization and antipathy between various segments of society, foremost along ethnic lines. This is cast into even sharper relief when considered alongside

¹⁶ RGANI, f. 100, o. 1, d. 294, ll. 48–49.

¹⁷ RGANI, f. 100, o. 1, d. 294, l. 53. Her implication that she had lacked opportunities to learn Uzbek should not be taken at face value.

¹⁸ RGANI, f. 100, o. 1, d. 300, ll. 14–15. Ukraine and Belarus are notably absent from the list.

¹⁹ RGANI, f. 100, o. 1, d. 308, l. 12.

letters from nationalist activists, who complained that the historic emphasis on Russian had caused a precipitous decline in native language use. These concerns were expressed most frequently in letters from Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan, as well as several Volga republics, Yakutia, and Buriatia.²⁰ The same report observed that complaints from ethnic minorities often had elements of anti-Russian sentiment.²¹ Although anecdotal, the few oral history interviews I conducted in Kazakhstan, too, indicated a growing sense of animosity between ethnic Kazakhs and non-Kazakhs, particularly after the *Jeltoqsan* riots in December 1986 that broke out after popular First Secretary Dinmuhamed Qonaev (Kunaev), an ethnic Kazakh, was unceremoniously replaced by ethnic Russian Gennadii Kolbin.²²

Above all, letter writers expressed deep concern about the growing factionalism and radicalization of society at large. As one letter writer, a female Russian economist in Chişinău, noted: “People are breaking apart, like sheep without a shepherd, into groups, factions, and camps. Some call public gatherings, revolts, and dream of their own sort of government, dream about ridding themselves of occupants. Others are splitting their heads, how to live, where to live? We don’t have time for this perestroika! [*Do perestroiki li zdes’?*]”²³ Ethnic tensions, of course, were not unique to the late 1980s, but people wrote with a new sense of urgency and alarm, particularly as *glasnost*’ encouraged citizens to discuss difficult issues more openly.²⁴

Although these tensions in no way catalyzed the collapse, they created and exposed

²⁰ RGANI, f. 100, o. 1, d. 300, l. 15.

²¹ RGANI, f. 100, o. 1, d. 300, l. 15.

²² This sense was expressed both by Kazakhs and non-Kazakhs, although the oral history record, conducted more than thirty years later and only after the events in December 1986 had become a significant part of Kazakhstan’s post-Soviet historical narrative, is certainly not sufficient evidence. In one case, one interviewee, a Kazakh woman who was a philology student who specialized in the German language, talked generally about Russians and Kazakhs avoiding each other on the street, but also more specifically about the tension that ensued when she was asked to defend her thesis in Russian, having expected to do so in Kazakh.

²³ RGANI, f. 100, o. 1, d. 308, l. 12. Many thanks to Tamara Polyakova for clarifying the final sentence.

²⁴ On earlier uprisings and ethnic tensions, see especially V. A. Kozlov, *Mass Uprisings in the USSR: Protest and Rebellion in the Post-Stalin Years*, trans. Elaine McClarnand MacKinnon (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 2002).

weaknesses that made the state less equipped to handle the growing economic crisis. At the very moment that leaders spoke less of a united Soviet people and local policies created more variation in governance (particularly in questions of language), individuals felt increasingly alienated from their neighbors and fellow citizens. In many cases, citizens wrote abstractly about problems elsewhere, particularly in Nagorno-Karabakh, the Baltic Republics, Moldova, and Uzbekistan. Many worried that similar tensions were emerging in less dramatic but pervasive ways in their own communities, in sharp contrast to the perceived greater harmony of the past. Many feared the situation could easily escalate into crisis, suggesting a growing sense of disunity that was felt both on the all-union level and locally, suggesting greater problems for the Soviet Union as a whole.

The Soviet People in Theory and Practice: A Look Back

The tone of official speeches, the central press, and citizens' letters in the 1980s differed markedly from prior decades. As we saw in the first chapter, the concept of the Soviet people was first coherently formulated in the mid-1930s as a centerpiece of a new focus on Soviet identity. In 1935, Nikolai Bukharin's explication of a united and "heroic Soviet people" began a decades-long conversation about the nature and existence of the Soviet people. Articulations of Soviet identity in the 1930s borrowed heavily from past discourses, especially the idea of the new Soviet person, even as leaders emphasized the uniqueness of the Soviet epoch. In the first post-revolutionary decades, the communist party was seen to be forging a new community of citizens, diverse in its composition but united in its commitment to the party-state and to Stalin himself. This affective attachment called upon citizens to contribute their energies in pursuit of the state's aims, whether in fostering ongoing economic development, participating in elections

and discussions of the constitution, or identifying and eliminating the enemies deemed outside the body politic. In letters, citizens articulated their identities with reference to their membership in the Soviet body politic, suggesting early success in cultivating an affective Soviet identity.

Citizens' first-hand experience with the Soviet Union as a unified country increased dramatically during World War II, when the stresses and strains of war demanded complete mobilization and participation from all parts of society. As we saw in Chapter 2, the ideology of the Soviet people, as expressed in the central press and in speeches from Stalin and other leaders, reflected expanded visions of the body politic, as the population was called to bridge geographic, gender, generational, religious, and ethno-linguistic divides to support the war effort. Throughout the war, the state appealed to citizens through forms of nested patriotism, which harnessed sub-state identities, whether ethnic, gender, generational, or civic, to a broader Soviet identity. Through evacuations, military service, labor recruitment, and deportations, citizens crossed the geographic and ethno-linguistic worlds to which they had been previously more confined, offering countless and more personal illustrations of the Soviet Union as a united homeland. These efforts to unite citizens broadly continued after war's end, as the war itself joined the October Revolution as a cornerstone of a shared Soviet experience.

After Stalin, political elites broadly continued the Stalin-era focus on patriotism but with much greater conviction about the existence and importance of the Soviet people, the subject of Chapter 3. Notions of Soviet identity were shaped by changing understandings of the role of the state, particularly in the newfound emphasis that the state should provide for its people. Political elites and scholars wrote extensively on the development of the Soviet people, finding evidence for its existence in the common historical past, interethnic marriages, and growing Russian proficiency. Citizens themselves participated in the process of forming more affective notions of

Soviet identity, not least through letters in which many proclaimed their primary identification to be their civic identities as citizens of the Soviet Union.

A wide range of institutions and practices complemented and supported state discourses about Soviet identity. Holiday festivities and the formation of new rituals for marking life milestones from the cradle to the grave, the focus of Chapter 4, cemented distinctly Soviet ways of celebration that reflected and shaped broader discussions about Soviet identity. Under Stalin, celebrations had remained strictly controlled and carefully orchestrated by the center. Holidays and other festivities showcased the unity and diversity of citizens, as well as the rigid hierarchies—particularly ethnic—that were central to the organization of state and society. While largely continuing established celebratory practices, Stalin’s successors devoted energy towards new forms of civic rituals that rooted citizens’ personal lives to the state within a sanctioned framework. In contrast to the rigid hierarchies of Stalin-era holiday celebrations, rituals borrowed heavily from ethnic practices and offered citizens leeway for choosing ceremonies that were meaningful to them. Although this had definite limits, perhaps clearest in the tight control over religious activity throughout the Khrushchev and Brezhnev eras, it offered citizens some space to navigate Soviet identity in ways that reflected their own ethnic, local, and civic identities and experiences.

The Russian language, too, served as a powerful indicator and driver of Soviet identity, as we saw in the final chapter. Across the Soviet period, Russian served as a means of hierarchical and lateral integration, connecting citizens not only to the state but also to one another. Russian’s legal status often reflected larger state priorities. In the 1920s, the language was explicitly deemphasized, as the state promoted ethnic minorities in government, party, educational, civil, and cultural institutions. Yet even without a formal mandate, Russian

remained the *de facto* language of state and was widely considered to be a prerequisite for upward mobility. With the introduction of mandatory Russian education in 1938, its role became more formally recognized and rigidly enforced. The school reform of 1958–59, in contrast, which eliminated mandatory language requirements, reflected greater confidence in the inherent pull of Russian and suggested a reliance on cultural imperialism rather than coercion to ensure its position. Throughout the Soviet period, knowledge of Russian remained a powerful equalizing force between citizens that enabled participation and advancement in civic life. At the same time, the use of Russian reflected and deepened existing inequalities, as the burdens of integration were almost always borne by non-Russians.

Together, these discourses, practices, and institutions shaped a vision of Soviet identity that was predicated on citizens' own involvement in and contribution to the state. From its very inception, the concept of the Soviet people encouraged active patriotism, as citizens contributed to and participated in public life. Over the decades, leaders offered evolving perspectives on the importance of the Soviet people. Yet this process was not unidirectional. By participating in civic life, citizens actively contributed to the process of forging Soviet identity. From letter writing to gathering in public squares for holidays, from economically productive labor to voting in elections, participation—and not rights claims—was the main hallmark of citizenship and belonging in the Soviet Union. In their words and deeds, citizens reflected on and challenged state-sponsored discourses of Soviet identity, as they considered and articulated their own experiences and beliefs of what it meant to be citizens.

The Soviet identity that emerged stood at the heart of several important negotiations, themes that have run throughout each chapter. First, the state and citizens negotiated the boundaries between the theory and practice of Soviet identity. Initial discussions of the Soviet

people were largely theoretical. When Bukharin proclaimed the existence of a united Soviet people, few citizens had extensive first-hand experience with the country as a unified whole. Citizens nevertheless negotiated the meaning of identity through participatory rituals, from writing letters about the 1936 Constitution to voting dutifully in elections and celebrating holidays. World War II deepened the experience of the Soviet people as the country took on more nation-like qualities and operated as a coherent whole. Under Khrushchev and Brezhnev, the practice of Soviet identity also informed the theory: ideologists, scholars, and academics pointed to increasing interethnic marriage and growing Russian proficiency as evidence that the Soviet people was being forged in practice, as a coherent community. As such, the theory and practice of Soviet identity were constantly negotiated and fine-tuned in conversation.

Also at the core of Soviet identity was the ongoing negotiation of both equality and inequality. This manifested itself in many ways. On a most basic level, the initial promotion of the concept of the Soviet people dovetailed with a newfound emphasis on the formal equality of all citizens, as guaranteed in the 1936 constitution. Despite this official emphasis on equality, citizens encountered inequalities in myriad ways in their everyday lives, the result of both explicitly discriminatory policies and more subtle grades of privilege that distinguished citizens from one another along gender, ethnic, linguistic, and class lines. The experience of inequality, in turn, drove some citizens to embrace a Soviet identity, often exchanging non-Russian ethno-linguistic identities for a Russian-inflected, all-union identity. The state, however, offered little room for citizens to reject ethno-linguistic identities entirely: the ongoing mandate of passport ethnicity ensured that this category remained a key criterion by which the state sorted and understood its citizens.

This points to another negotiation: the complex relationship between ethnic and civic

identities. As already stated, the state officially emphasized the compatibility of ethnic and civic modes of identification, as the internal passport powerfully testified. This compatibility could be seen in other areas as well, including ongoing native-language education, the promotion of non-Russian minorities in state and party institutions, the use of nested patriotism during and after World War II, and the adaptation of ethnic traditions into new Soviet ones. The relationship between ethnic and civic identities, however, was often fraught in practice. Beginning in 1958–59, the notion that parents could choose the language of their children’s education placed native and Russian languages in direct competition for scarce resources in education. Many citizens recognized the social privileges and upward mobility that came with Russian proficiency, leading many to seek Russian-language education for their children. Others, particularly those of multiethnic heritage like Anatolii L., whose letter was cited at the beginning of the dissertation, understood their historic ethnic affiliations to be incompatible with their sense of Soviet identity, leading them to embrace their status as Soviet citizens. Such declarations challenged official ideology while simultaneously demonstrating the affective pull of civic identity.

Soviet identity emerged as the result of initiatives that took place at both the center and periphery and among citizens, in ways that reflected and shaped the evolving power dynamics embedded in the organization of the entire state. Across Soviet history, power dynamics to some extent epitomized the strict hierarchies typically associated with empires.²⁵ Especially under Stalin, the state remained organized in a centralized way. Power emanated primarily from the center, which projected its vision for society onto the peripheries. The very notion of the Soviet people emerged as the result of state-sponsored and state-centered initiatives to forge a more unified society. Under Stalin and his successors, the discourses of identity were directed

²⁵ Here, see especially Burbank and Cooper, *Empires in World History*, 8–17; Kivelson and Suny, *Russia’s Empires*, 2–6.

primarily from the center to the country's physical and cultural peripheries. Holiday celebrations epitomized this relationship, as the state developed, controlled, and monitored forms of celebration across the country. The expression of ethnic identity, too, was strictly subordinated to central state control, as exemplified in the formal celebration of national cultures via *dekady* and in center-directed purges of republic-level party-state apparatuses. Crackdowns on ethnic and religious expression further indicated the center's unrestricted hold over civic life.

Relations both between the state and its citizens and among citizens also reflected formal and informal hierarchies. In Stalin's lifetime, the leader himself stood at the pinnacle of society, dominating political, economic, cultural, and social life, as citizens expressed their gratitude, love, and admiration for their leader, teacher, and father. A hierarchical logic also dominated interethnic relations, foremost through the explicit and implicit privileging of ethnic Russians, often celebrated as the first among equals and the older brother to their compatriots. Ethnic minorities, foremost non-Slavic ones, were eclipsed by their Russian counterparts, especially in matters of representation in the central press. In the most extreme cases, repressive measures stigmatized and excluded certain ethnic, religious, and social groups, betraying their relative position on the margins of society. The reliance on the Russian language and expectations of near-native fluency from ethnic minorities also placed the burdens of linguistic integration firmly on the shoulders of non-Russians. All these factors contributed to institutionalized and informal inequalities that exemplified the state's imperial and hierarchical organization.

At the same time, the discourses and practices that surrounded Soviet identity challenged and disrupted rigid hierarchies in new and innovative ways. The notion of the Soviet people itself imagined a diverse populace that was bound by a sense of kinship, shared values, and common civic belonging that was theoretically founded on citizens' equality. Especially during World

War II, unprecedented interactions between citizens altered relations between the center and the periphery. The hinterlands made essential contributions to the central war effort while becoming key sites for forging a deep sense of affective identity. Under Khrushchev and Brezhnev, discourses about providing for citizens and raising living standards articulated a sense of the state's obligations towards citizens, rhetorically upending established power relations. In the 1960s and '70s, republic-level actors shaped and promoted new civic rituals that drew on ethnic traditions and regional practices, which similarly disrupted rigid center-periphery hierarchies. Discourses surrounding the Russian language, too, encouraged not only hierarchical integration into the state but also lateral connections between citizens, which enabled them to interact directly with one another across peripheries. Although use of Russian exposed inherent inequalities between citizens, the language simultaneously provided a vehicle for ethnic minorities to participate fully in civic life and to move freely across Soviet space.

Finally, the emphasis on—indeed, demand of—participation from all citizens promoted an inclusive model of citizenship that drew on ethnic affiliations and civic patriotism to foster an affective civic belonging that bridged ethnic, linguistic, gender, and geographic divisions. The emphasis on participation centered citizens' own role in and contributions to society, while endowing them with opportunities to articulate and practice their identities on their own terms. Although their ability to participate and exert their own agency was circumscribed by state-imposed strictures, citizens nevertheless played an active role in articulating and practicing their own identities. In doing so, they reflected and challenged state discourses of civic identity. Even without real guarantees of rights, people across the country actively engaged with ideology and took part in civic life in ways that confirmed their status as citizens.

As a result, the dynamics between both the center and periphery and the state and its

citizens were constantly in flux, as power and identity were negotiated by political, academic, and cultural elites and citizens. From the revolution to the collapse, ideas of Soviet identity and the nature of citizenship in the Soviet Union were in a state of perpetual evolution and change. This identity, then, is perhaps best seen as a set of available discourses and practices developed and performed by the state, the party, and citizens together and negotiated within specific geographic, temporal, and personal contexts. Together and across a diverse geographic and cultural expanse, the state and its citizens participated in a decades-long conversation about the nature and significance of Soviet identity and citizenship. This conversation varied across time and space and at the center and periphery, as citizens negotiated the meaning and limits of Soviet identity. But, as decades of state discourse and citizens' own words poignantly suggest, it was a real, existing identity, one that many citizens passionately claimed.

*“What will become of the motherland and of us?”*²⁶

On December 8, 1991, Boris Yeltsin (Russia), Leonid Kravchuk (Ukraine), and Stanislav Shushkevich (Belarus) gathered secretly in the Białowieża Forest, in western Belarus. Together they signed the Belavezh Accords, which pronounced the demise of the Soviet Union and the formation of a new Commonwealth of Independent States with dubious legal authority.²⁷ “The Soviet Union,” the accords stated starkly, “as a subject of international law and geopolitical reality, has ceased to exist.”²⁸ Within weeks, the remaining republics—the three Baltic Republics had already seceded—gathered to sign more binding agreements, and the fate of the country could no longer be in doubt. On December 25, 1991, Gorbachev announced his resignation in a

²⁶ Quotation from Soviet/Russian rock band D.D.T.'s “Chto takoe osen’,” written by Yuri Shevchuk in September 1991. The song appeared on D.D.T.'s 1992 album *Aktrisa vesna*.

²⁷ Perhaps the best treatment of the Soviet Union's final months is Serhii Plokhy, *The Last Empire: The Final Days of the Soviet Union* (New York: Basic Books, 2014).

²⁸ Document available in GARF, f. 10026, o. 4, d. 1303, ll. 1–5, here 1. The text is also widely available online.

televised address. After he left his office that evening, the Soviet flag was lowered over the Kremlin for the last time.²⁹

By December 1991, the Soviet collapse was essentially a *fait accompli*. Decades of reliance on oil prices had crippled the economy when falling prices could no longer support the state's needs.³⁰ Within the party and state apparatuses, the lack of control and discipline over bureaucrats and party members had led to veritable looting and (illegal) privatization of state assets, further depriving the country of the resources it so desperately needed.³¹ Ecological and environmental disasters, from the ongoing desiccation of the Aral Sea to the explosion of the nuclear reactor at Chernobyl and the catastrophic Spitak earthquake in 1988 revealed just how ill-equipped the late-Soviet state had become to handle escalating crises.³² Meanwhile, the conversations enabled by Gorbachev's policies of *glasnost* ('openness') unleashed a tidal wave of conversations about the crimes of the past. This raised questions about not only Stalin but also about the communist ideology on which the entire country was based.³³ Revolutions across Eastern Europe in 1989 and the quiet withdrawal of Soviet troops from its former satellites

²⁹ For general discussions of the many factors that led to Soviet collapse, see Stephen Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted: The Soviet Collapse, 1970–2000*, Updated Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Jeremy Smith, *The Fall of Soviet Communism, 1985–1991* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). As Smith notes (p. 5), "it was the unique combination of a number of these factors, both long-term and short-term, which led to the demise of Soviet communism in the manner and at the time that it did."

³⁰ Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted*. As Chris Miller has noted, there were substantial last-ditch efforts to reform the economy, in part inspired by examples from China. These proved insufficient, see *The Struggle to Save the Soviet Economy: Mikhail Gorbachev and the Collapse of the USSR* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016).

³¹ Steven Lee Solnick, *Stealing the State: Control and Collapse in Soviet Institutions* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

³² On late Soviet environmental problems through the lens of environmental activism, see Weiner, *A Little Corner of Freedom*, 402–39. See also Edward Geist, "Political Fallout: The Failure of Emergency Management at Chernobyl," *Slavic Review* 74, no. 1 (2015): 104–26; Serhii Plokhyy, *Chernobyl: The History of a Nuclear Catastrophe* (New York: Basic Books, 2018); Nigel Raab, *All Shook Up: The Shifting Soviet Response to Catastrophes, 1917–1991* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017), 143–205.

³³ Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted*, 67–73. For (near) contemporary scholarly views on the meaning of perestroika and *glasnost* on Soviet society and politics, see Ed A. Hewett and Victor H. Winston, eds., *Milestones in Glasnost and Perestroika: Politics and People* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 1991). As Denis Kozlov shows, this was not unprecedented in the 1980s: the 1960s had seen some degree of similar openness about the crimes of the past, see *The Readers of Novyi Mir*. By the 1980s, these discussions extended to Lenin, who had previously been off limits, opening the floodgates for much broader questioning on the very origins of the state.

illustrated to the world the Soviet Union's declining international influence.³⁴ The August Coup in 1991 rendered Gorbachev entirely powerless at home, culminating in the dissolution of the communist party and its uncontested grip over the Soviet state.

Economic and political crises also opened the doors for previously marginal national and local movements to exert unprecedented influence.³⁵ Uprisings, protests, and outbreaks of violence across the Soviet Union revealed deeper problems facing the country. Clashes between protesters and Soviet troops in Almaty, Kazakhstan (1986); Yerevan, Armenia (1988); Tbilisi, Georgia (1989); Vilnius, Lithuania (1990); and elsewhere signaled declining trust between the people and their state. Ethnic violence, worst in Nagorno-Karabakh (starting in 1988); Fergana, Uzbekistan (1989); and Osh, Kyrgyzstan (1990), exposed rising tensions among citizens.³⁶ By the time leaders gathered in western Belarus in December 1991, the secession of three republics—Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania—was already internationally recognized, and most of the remaining republics had declared independence. Perhaps most damningly, Ukraine's referendum on December 1, 1991, in which 92 percent of voters approved of Ukrainian independence, signaled a complete loss of popular support for preserving the Soviet Union at all.³⁷ In this sense, the final lowering of the Soviet flag on December 25, 1991, represented a symbolic end to a process that had been years in the making.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union also signaled the end of the Soviet people, at least as

³⁴ See especially Mark Kramer, "The Collapse of East European Communism and the Repercussions within the Soviet Union (Part 1)," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 5, no. 4 (2003): 178–256; Mark Kramer, "The Collapse of East European Communism and the Repercussions within the Soviet Union (Part 2)," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 6, no. 4 (2004): 3–64; Mark Kramer, "The Collapse of East European Communism and the Repercussions within the Soviet Union (Part 3)," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 7, no. 1 (2005): 3–96; Mark Kramer, "The Demise of the Soviet Bloc," *The Journal of Modern History* 83, no. 4 (2011): 788–854; Stephen Kotkin, *Uncivil Society: 1989 and the Implosion of the Communist Establishment* (New York: Modern Library, 2009).

³⁵ For explicit statements of the argument that economic and political collapse was a precondition for the nationalist mobilizations, see Suny, *Revenge of the Past*, 154–60; Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, 324.

³⁶ On growing nationalist movements across the former Soviet Union in both general and specific manifestations, see Lieven, *The Baltic Revolution*; Bohdan Nahaylo, *The Ukrainian Resurgence* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999); Beissinger, *Nationalist Mobilization*; Derluignan, *Bourdieu's Secret Admirer in the Caucasus*.

³⁷ Plokhy, *The Last Empire*.

a formally upheld state goal. Much like the Soviet Union itself, the Soviet people's demise was the culmination of a long process. Declining faith among citizens about the unity of their own communities together with the state and party's near-total abandonment of a concept that had previously undergirded official thinking testified to cracks that threatened the once-celebrated ethnic harmony. Violent ethnic clashes offered the most palpable evidence of worsening relations, but these were complemented by countless smaller disagreements and minor clashes. In opening the door to more open and honest conversations, *glasnost*' shone a light on disagreements and rifts that separated citizens from another, particularly as evidence of deep-rooted inequalities became harder to deny. And thus, with the final lowering of the Soviet flag at the end of 1991, the once united Soviet population was now divided by ever-hardening borders, protracted conflicts, different languages, and previously suppressed antipathies. Without its state, the Soviet people could no longer exist. How could it? The story thus ends.

And yet.

Any trip to the former Soviet Union still reveals how its legacies continue to shape both people and places. In many respects, the Soviet identity that was created and the Soviet people (*liudi*, individuals) that were formed during these decades have outlived the state that created them. As Svetlana Alexievich intimated in the introduction of *Secondhand Time* (2013), a collection of oral histories collected over two decades of travel across the former Soviet Union, "Communism had an insane plan: to remake the 'old breed of man,' ancient Adam. And it really worked... Perhaps it was communism's only achievement. Seventy-plus years in the Marxist-Leninist laboratory gave rise to a new man: *Homo sovieticus*."³⁸

³⁸ Svetlana Alexievich, *Secondhand Time: The Last of the Soviets*, trans. Bela Shayevich, Reprint edition, 2016, 3. The concept of *Homo soveticus* was popularized by exiled dissident and sociologist Aleksandr Zinov'ev, whose writings circulated in the underground press during the 1970s. His book, *Gomo soveticus*, was first officially

Continuing, she notes the omnipresence of the Soviet person across former Soviet space and her own intimate familiarity with the identity:

Some see him as a tragic figure, others call him a *sovok*. I feel like I know this person; we're very familiar, we've lived side by side for a long time. I am this person. And so are my acquaintances, my closest friends, my parents. For a number of years, I traveled throughout the former Soviet Union—*Homo soveticus* isn't just Russian, he's Belarusian, Turkmen, Ukrainian, Kazakh. Although we now live in separate countries and speak different languages, you couldn't mistake us for anyone else. We're easy to spot! People who've come out of socialism are both like and unlike the rest of humanity—we have our own lexicon, our own conceptions of good and evil, our heroes, our martyrs.³⁹

Reflecting on the common experiences and shared vocabulary that connected former citizens, Alexievich notes her own familiarity with the life stories and trajectories of her informants and “reminisced alongside” them: “We share a collective memory. We're neighbors in memory.”⁴⁰ Of course, as memories become more distant and a new generation grows up in a post-Soviet world, the presence and prominence of Soviet people retreat more gradually, almost imperceptibly, holdouts and echoes from a country that no longer exists.

published abroad in 1981, see Aleksandr Zinov'ev, *Gomo sovetikus* (Lausanne: L'Âge d'homme, 1982). An English translation appeared in 1985 as Aleksandr Zinoviev, *Homo Sovieticus* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1985).

³⁹ Alexievich, *Secondhand Time*, 3. “Sovok,” a shortening for the Soviet person (*sovetskii chelovek*), is also the Russian word for dustpan, giving it an explicitly derisive air.

⁴⁰ Alexievich, 5.

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