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DISCUSSION

Racial Politics without the Concept of Race: Reevaluating Soviet Ethnic and National Purges

Eric D. Weitz

These are flourishing times for the study of ethnicity and nationality in the Soviet Union and the post-Soviet states. Even a cursory glance at the leading journals reveals scores of articles on the topic. Once the problems of class formation and state power reigned supreme in Soviet studies and the nation was considered passé, a historical relic of the grand epoch of modernity that had been surmounted in the late twentieth century by globalized capitalism and supranational political structures.[1] Recently, however, the emergence of severe and deadly ethnic conflicts in the post-Soviet period have led scholars and journalists back to the nation. The adherents of particular nations have demonstrated a persistence that shows no signs of abating and that mocks the scholarly consensus that sees nations as imagined communities.[2]

Another impulse guides the surge in the study of nationality in the former Soviet Union, one less directly related to contemporary politics of ethnic strife. One might call it the Foucault effect.[3] It registers the shift from the strong social history wave that ran from the 1970s into the 1990s, focused especially on the actions and fate of the popular classes, workers and peasants in particular, to more general issues in Soviet history of representation, culture, identities, and the broad disciplinary impact of the state. The recent literature is not only concerned with massive repression

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1. Particularly egregious in this regard is Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality,* 2d ed. (Cambridge, Eng., 1990). For more sober views on the persistence of nationalism and the national form, see Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge, Eng., 1996), and Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding* (Princeton, 1994).

2. Ron Suny underscored the stark contrast between popular and scholarly understandings of the nation in a lecture at the University of Minnesota, March 2000.

3. To take the phrase from a book title: see Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller, eds., *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* (London, 1991).

but also with the "forging of Soviet citizens."[4] In these works, Stalinist repression is not seen as a bitter, unfortunate divergence from "true" socialism or Leninism, nor is it simply the intrinsic working out of the chiliasm of the revolutionary intelligentsia, Stalinist terror as the inevitable outcome of Leninism or Marxism, or, for that matter, populism, once a revolutionary party had seized power. These twin poles around which so much of the literature has developed have been partly surmounted by interpretations that make the Soviet experience one strain within the larger problematic of modernity. No one, it seems, would deny the role of certain Russian and Soviet particularities, and many of the issues posed in the social history literature retain their saliency. But the emphasis on state-society interactions now entails a great deal more than the earlier social science model of structure and agency; it means exploring the self-disciplining and self-interests of the population, the inner lives of individuals as well as the actions of collectivities, the wide range of disciplinary techniques deployed by the party-state.[5]

In this very large complex of problems, most generally subsumed under "modernity," the nation, that most enduring form of modern political organization, that most powerful fount of identities, figures prominently. In the parlance of the day, it was only through the national form that the various peoples of the Soviet Union would become, in substance, soviet. As the recent historical literature has emphasized, the nation became a focal point of identity, fostered, in so many instances, by the Soviet system itself. National institutions within the Soviet federation, from schools to theaters to the party, became the avenues of mobility for millions of citizens, and, at the same time, formed the structures that promoted self-discipline. And it was because of their national identification that some millions of people became victims of the Soviet state.

To an outsider, the shift in focus of western historiography on the Soviet Union has been remarkable. Not only have Michel Foucault, Zygmunt Bauman, and Claude Lefort replaced E. P. Thompson, Herbert Gutman, and Gareth Stedman Jones in the footnotes of recent articles and books. The luminaries of social history have also been shunted aside by the the-

4. Sheila Fitzpatrick captures this trend with her use of the term *Homo Sovieticus* in *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times. Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (New York, 1999).

5. Some key works that mark the shift in perspective include: David L. Hoffmann and Yanni Kotsonis, eds., *Russian Modernity: Politics, Knowledge, Practices* (New York, 2000); Oleg Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Russia: A Study of Practices* (Berkeley, 1999); Peter Holquist, "State Violence as Technique: The Logic of Violence in Soviet Totalitarianism," in Amir Weiner, ed., *Landscaping the Human Garden: Twentieth-Century Population Politics in a Comparative Framework* (Stanford, 2002); Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism;* Stephen E. Hanson, *Time and Revolution: Marxism and the Design of Soviet Institutions* (Chapel Hill, 1997); Eric Naiman, *Sex in Public: The Incarnation of Early Soviet Ideology* (Princeton, 1997); Jochen Hellbeck, "Fashioning the Stalinist Soul: The Diary of Stepan Podlubnyi (1931–1939)," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 44, no. 3 (1996): 344–73; Stefan Plaggenborg, *Revolutionskultur: Menschenbilder und kulturelle Praxis in Sowjetrußland zwischen Oktoberrevolution und Stalinismus* (Cologne, 1996); and Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley, 1995).

orists and historians of the nation and nationalism, by Benedict Anderson, Ernest Gellner, Rogers Brubaker, and others.

This is all well and good. But recent work on the history of Soviet nationalities has also replicated two key weaknesses of the reigning scholarly literature: first, the rigid separation between studies of nations and nationalism, on the one hand, and race and race thinking, on the other, and, second, the concomitant, long-standing, also rigid separation between "good" and "bad" nationalisms, between a nationalism rooted in popular sovereignty and republican citizenship and associated with the French and American Revolutions, and a nationalism rooted in organic, essentialist understandings of language, culture, and descent, the *völkisch* nationalism always associated with the German theorists Johann Gottfried von Herder and Johann Gottlieb Fichte and their heirs, leading straight down to the Nazis.

The Soviet Union, as recent work has made clear, actively promoted the development of national institutions and national consciousness. "National in form, socialist in content" remained the guiding principle of Soviet policies. The Soviets explicitly and loudly rejected the ideology of race. "Zoological" thinking, as it was sometimes termed in the Stalin period, was characteristic of the Nazi system in particular and degenerate bourgeois society in general, the Soviets claimed. In official Soviet ideology, the friendship of the nations within the Soviet federation had supplanted national hostilities and had completely eliminated the racism typical of fascism and of capitalist societies in general. People purged from the social body for various misdeeds could be "redeemed," brought back into the fold, as opposed to the Nazi and other racial systems that ascribed fixed and eternal identities to population groups.

Yet at the same time, traces of racial politics crept into Soviet nationalities policies, especially between 1937 and 1953. The state not only repressed overly fervent and potentially dangerous expressions of nationalism and deported entire national groups. In the Stalin period especially, particular populations were endowed with immutable traits that every member of the group possessed and that were passed from one generation to the next. The particular traits could be the source of praise and power, as with Russians, or could lead to round-ups, forced deportations, and resettlement in horrendous conditions. Under Iosif Stalin, the Soviets practiced—intermittently, inconsistently, to be sure—racial politics without the overt concept and ideology of race.[6]

In making this argument, I am most definitely *not* claiming that the Soviet Union ever became a "racialized social system" or an "overtly racial regime" on the order of the United States in the Jim Crow era, apartheid South Africa, or Nazi Germany.[7] Soviet nationalities policies were far too

6. I have adapted this phrase from E. P. Thompson's classic article, "Eighteenth-Century English Society: Class Struggle without Class?" *Social History* 3, no. 2 (1978): 133–65.

7. The first phrase comes from Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1980s*, 2d ed. (New York, 1994), the second from George M. Fredrickson, *Difference and Power: A Short History of Racism* (Princeton, 2002).

ambivalent and ambiguous to lend themselves to any single characterization. Nor were ethnic and national purges the only manifestations of the Soviet social engineering drive. Clearly, a whole variety of experiences and activities—class background, political affiliation, "asocial" tendencies, sheer bad luck—could land people in the vortex of purge operations. I am, though, particularly interested in locating the traces of racial politics in the Soviet system *precisely because one would least expect to find them here,* in a polity that very explicitly rejected the entire ideological corpus and terminology of race. The manifestation of racial politics in the Soviet system, however intermittent, in however contradictory a fashion, is highly revelatory of two key historical factors, one relating to the historical evolution of the national form in general, the other relating to the particularities of the Soviet system.

First, the definition of the nation is always about the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. At least since the French Revolution, the specific articulations of those boundaries have always been ambivalent. Even the most liberal and open definitions of the nation have been stalked by more exclusive, racialized conceptions. In the most liberal orders, citizenship has been based simply on birth or residency within the territory of the nation and adherence to the constitution. In this understanding, nationality is not fate; one can shed one's original nationality and adopt another. But even in the most liberal systems the ideal has so often been qualified by immigration and suffrage restrictions and legal and social barriers to resources that the articulation of the nation has entailed various mixes of racial as well as liberal political elements. More closed and exclusive articulations of the nation shade into racialized nationalism by making citizenship a question of descent, of membership in the national cum racial group via lineage. In this conception, moral, intellectual, and political qualities are inextricably entwined with the physical characteristics of the body. One need only think about the debates on citizenship in the Constituent Assembly and National Convention of the French Revolution or the racial limitations imposed upon citizenship by that most liberal document, the United States Constitution.[8] The Soviet Union's own oscillation between the poles of open and inclusive and harshly exclusive, racialized definitions of nationality is hardly surprising when placed in a compara-

8. For some examples based on studies of liberal polities, see Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, 2001); George M. Fredrickson, *The Comparative Imagination: On the History of Racism, Nationalism, and Social Movements* (Berkeley, 1997); Laura Tabili, *We Ask for British Justice: Workers and Racial Difference in Late Imperial Britain* (Ithaca, 1994); and Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge, Mass., 1981). On the issue of race in the French Revolution, see Lynn Hunt, ed., *The French Revolution and Human Rights: A Brief Documentary History* (Boston, 1996), 51–59, 101–18; Shanti Marie Singham, "'Betwixt Cattle and Men': Jews, Blacks, and Women, and the Declaration of the Rights of Man," in Dale Van Kley, ed., *The French Idea of Freedom: The Old Regime and the Declaration of Rights of 1789* (Stanford, 1994), 114–53; David Geggus, "Racial Equality, Slavery, and Colonial Secession during the Constituent Assembly," *American Historical Review* 94, no. 5 (1989): 1290–1308; and Jacques Thibau, ed., *Le Temps de Saint-Domingue: L'Esclavage et la révolution française* (Paris, 1989).

tive historical perspective. At the more open and tolerant end of the spectrum, the Soviets allowed people to choose their nationality upon reaching age sixteen. In its most exclusive and racialized articulation of the meaning of nationality, the Soviet Union rounded up and deported every single member of targeted populations, bar none, stamping every purported member of the group with racial stigmas.

Second, the Soviet Union was particularly susceptible to this slide from open and tolerant to harshly exclusive concepts of the nation because of the centrality of population politics to the state socialist project and because of the multinational, federal structure of the system. The creation of the new society entailed reforming people, creating the new man and woman, and determining the very composition of society, the nature of the population in its most basic, existential sense. When some population groups were perceived to be particularly recalcitrant, particularly resistant to the siren song of socialism, the ideological belief in the malleability of human beings collapsed, especially in the context of the huge social upheavals of the 1930s and the immense danger posed by the German invasion in the 1940s. The fraught instability of these years only heightened the Soviet state's drive for political and social uniformity, which was made immensely more complicated by its multinational character. Certain national groups, targeted as enemies of socialism, became "racialized" in the sense that their suspect characteristics were seen to inhere in each and every member of the group bar none and were transmitted across the generations. While this trend was tied to the particularities of the state socialist project, it also bears comparison with the process of racialization that proved such a strong current of European history from around 1850 to 1945. As a very substantial historical literature has demonstrated, social welfare and imperial discourses, substantially aided by the rise of Social Darwinism and eugenicism, often categorized those who were poor or involved in "degenerate" behavior as bearers of deficient inner constitutions. If they proved unreformable, their inner constitutions resistant to management from outside, then the only solution was to protect respectable society from their deleterious influence, an approach that was exercised with much greater virulence in the twentieth century.[9] In this light also, the Soviet slide from nationality to race—again, though full of ambivalencies and never exercised with the unrelentingly thorough character of the overtly racial regimes of the twentieth century—was not at all exceptional.

To pose the issue in this way, to raise the sensitive matter of race in relation to a case that seems so far removed from the "normal" discourse

9. See, for example, Louis Chevalier, *Laboring Classes and Dangerous Classes in Paris during the First Half of the Nineteenth Century,* trans. Frank Jellinek (New York, 1973); Judith R. Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State* (Cambridge, Eng., 1980); and Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, c.1848—c.1918* (Cambridge, Eng., 1989). Note also Peter Kolchin, *Unfree Labor: American Slavery and Russian Serfdom* (Cambridge, Mass., 1987), 170–71, who makes a parallel argument about the racialization of serfs by Russian nobles.

and politics of race, inevitably invites comparisons between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany and a consideration of the highly charged matter of genocide, issues I will take up in the conclusion. But first, some definitions are in order. Then I will return to the Soviet case via critical reflections on the recent literature on nationalities policies.

Ethnicity, Nationality, Race: Some Definitions

Ethnicity, nationality, and race are all constructed forms of understanding human difference and of organizing social and political systems. As the vast weight of scholarly work over the last few decades has emphasized, there is nothing at all "natural" about any of these identities, even when people share deep feelings of commonality based on language, customs, and religion. The nineteenth-century romantic sense of the "awakening" of nations has long been put to rest by the "constructivist" approach. Even scholars who emphasize ethnicity as an essential component of nation building, one going back to the medieval period, write with much greater attentiveness to the historical contingencies of the national form than did the originators of the academic study of nationalism, Hans Kohn and Carleton Hayes.[10]

As modern forms of group identity, ethnicity, nationality, and race have never been hermetically sealed off from one another; instead, the lines between them are fluid and permeable. Nonetheless, for the sake of analytical clarity, it is still important to disentangle them and to define the characteristics of each form of identity.[11] Critically, especially for the Soviet case that I will deal with at greater length, these characteristics are to be found not only in formally articulated ideologies and discourses but also in *practices,* the cultures developed by particular ethnic, national, or racial groups *and* the policies exercised by states that, among other things, often result in the very invention of group identities or the restructuring of identity from ethnicity to nationality or race.[12]

I follow most writers on the subject who contend that an ethnic group is defined by shared customs based on a belief in a common descent. Ethnic groups develop into nations when they become politicized and strive to create, or have created for them, a political order—the nation-state—whose institutions are seen to conform in some way with their ethnic identity and whose boundaries are roughly contiguous with the group's ter-

10. See Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford, 1986). For some of the first scholarly studies, see Carlton J. H. Hayes, *Essays on Nationalism* (New York, 1926); Hayes, *The Historical Evolution of Modern Nationalism* (New York, 1931); Hans Kohn, *A History of Nationalism in the East* (New York, 1929); Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism: A Study in Its Origins and Background* (New York, 1944).

11. Rogers Brubaker and David D. Laitin, "Ethnic and Nationalist Violence," *American Review of Sociology* 24 (1998): 428*n*1, contend that the term *ethnic* encompasses *nationalist,* but this seems misplaced to me.

12. On the nation as a "category of practice," see Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed,* 21.

ritoriality.[13] Race is the "hardest" and most exclusive form of identity.[14] Race is present when a defined population group is seen to have particular characteristics that are indelible, immutable, and transgenerational.[15] Race is fate; there is no escape from the characteristics that are said to be carried by every single member of the group bar none. While racial distinctions have most often been based on phenotype, race is not essentially about skin color but about the assignment of indelible traits to particular groups. Hence, ethnic groups, nationalities, and even social classes can be "racialized" in historically contingent moments and places.[16]

Unlike ethnicity, race always entails a hierarchical construction of difference. Racial movements and states understand their creation and defense of a racial order as the great historical task of making the political and social world conform to the reality of nature with its fixed system of domination and subordination. While ethnicity is often self-defined—and this was Max Weber's classic, subjectivist definition of an ethnic group—racial categorizations are most often assigned to a group by an outside power, usually a state, though over time, the group may then develop its own racial consciousness.[17] Ethnicity or nationality by no means always or necessarily take on racialized forms, but the possibilities are certainly present, all too easily present when modern states seek to limit the pool of citizens and strive actively to shape the very composition of society. Moreover, while biology provided the pseudo-scientific underpinnings for race thinking in its heyday, roughly 1850 to 1945 in Europe

13. On the definitions of ethnicity and nationality, see some of the excellent collections that have appeared in recent years, such as Montserrat Guibernau and John Rex, eds., *The Ethnicity Reader: Nationalism, Multiculturalism, and Migration* (Cambridge, Eng., 1997); Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny, eds., *Becoming National: A Reader* (New York, 1996); Omar Dahbour and Micheline R. Ishay, *The Nationalism Reader* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J., 1995); and John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, eds., *Nationalism* (Oxford, 1994).

14. I am drawing here on the recent theoretical and historical literature on race, for example, Ronald Aminzade, "The Politics of Race and Nation: Citizenship and Africanization in Tanganyika," *Political Power and Social Theory* 12 (2000): 51–88; Stephen Cornell and Douglas Hartmann, *Ethnicity and Race: Making Identities in a Changing World* (Thousand Oaks, Calif., 1998); Fredrickson, *Comparative Imagination;* Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, "Rethinking Racism: Toward a Structural Interpretation," *American Sociological Review* 62, no. 3 (1997): 465–80; Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation;* Étienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (London, 1991); David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London, 1991). I leave aside some differences on particular issues among these authors and stress the common features of their interpretations.

15. See Fredrickson, *Difference and Power,* 5 (of the manuscript), who writes: "when ethnic differences are regarded as innate, indelible, and unchangeable . . . a racist attitude or ideology can be said to exist."

16. Notably, one strand in the development of racial ideology originated as a defense of aristocratic class privilege in eighteenth-century France. See the discussion of the Comte de Boulainvillier's writing in Hannah Arendt, "Race-Thinking before Racism," *Review of Politics* 6, no. 1 (1944): 42–47, and in Ivan Hannaford, *Race: The History of an Idea in the West* (Washington, D. C., 1996).

17. See especially Cornell and Hartmann, *Ethnicity and Race,* 15–38, and Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation.*

outside of Russia and the Soviet Union, race can also have a cultural basis. With words that are particularly meaningful for the Soviet experience, Étienne Balibar writes: "biological or genetic naturalism is not the only means of naturalizing human behaviour and social affinities . . . *culture can also function like a nature,* and it can in particular function as a way of locking individuals and groups a priori into a genealogy, into a determination that is immutable and intangible in origin. . . . [This perspective] *naturalizes not racial belonging but racial conduct.*"[18] While ethnicity has existed since time immemorial, race and nation emerged together historically in the western world—including Russia and the Soviet Union—from around 1500 onward, although their particular articulations have, of course, varied enormously.

Writing the History of Soviet Nationalities Policies

A formidable literature exists on the issue of nationalities in the Soviet Union, and it dates back to the 1950s. Many of the authors of these works were political scientists, though those writing in the earlier decades possessed a strong historical bent. A number of the authors were émigrés from Russia or the western border regions, and some of the work was supported by émigré organizations in Europe and North America. Writing in the wake of World War II, many of these authors were quick to identify similarities between Nazi and Soviet policies, an approach fully in keeping with the reigning model of totalitarianism. Most were attentive to the contradictions and dilemmas of Soviet policies, but they all tended to emphasize the inherent incompatibility of Marxism-Leninism and nationalism and, with varying degrees of fervency, condemned the Soviet campaigns against national sentiments and national institutions. In one of the less dispassionate expressions of this approach, Robert Conquest labeled Soviet policies "the nation killers."[19]

With a few notable exceptions, historians, caught up in the strong social history wave from the late 1970s onward, tended to shunt this litera-

18. Étienne Balibar, "Is There a 'Neo-Racism'?" in Balibar and Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class,* 22; emphasis in the original. See also the similar formulation in George M. Fredrickson, "Understanding Racism: Reflections of a Comparative Historian," in Fredrickson, *Comparative Imagination,* 84–85.

19. For some examples of this literature going back to the 1950s, with varying degrees of scholarly detachment, see Edward Allworth, ed., *Soviet National Problems* (New York, 1971); John A. Armstrong, *Ukrainian Nationalism, 1939–1945* (New York, 1955); Yaroslav Bilinsky, *The Second Soviet Republic: The Ukraine after World War II* (New Brunswick, 1964); Walker Connor, *The National Question in Marxist-Leninist Theory and Strategy* (Princeton, 1984); Robert Conquest, *The Nation Killers: The Soviet Deportation of Nationalities* (London, 1970); Hélène Carrère d'Encausse, *L'Empire éclaté: La Révolte des nations en U.R.S.S.* (Paris, 1978); Carrère d'Encausse, *The Great Challenge: Nationalities and the Bolshevik State, 1917–1930* (French original, 1987; New York, 1992); Richard Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism, 1917–1923* (Cambridge, Mass., 1954); John S. Reshetar, Jr., *The Ukrainian Revolution, 1917–1920: A Study in Nationalism* (Princeton, 1952). See also the individual volumes of the Hoover Institution series on the nationalities of the Soviet Union.

ture aside and to focus instead on problems of class formation.[20] But now we are back to nationalities. Dissertations, articles, and books by the new generation of authors often echo earlier writing on Soviet nationalities and are quite at variance with the sometimes sympathetic tone of the social historical scholarship that began in the 1970s. The brutal treatment of various groups, from Cossacks to Chechens to Jews, comes across vividly in much of the new writing, to such an extent that few traces are left of the bright prospects for the future that the Soviet project once inspired. Terror, sometimes slighted in the social history literature, figures prominently in many of the newer works as an ongoing, central element of the Soviet system, as it did for the earlier generation of scholars. But the newer work also diverges significantly from the earlier studies, which accepted nations and nationalist sentiment as a given. Francine Hirsch, Peter Holquist, Terry Martin, Yuri Slezkine, Amir Weiner, and others all draw upon the more recent, far more sophisticated theoretical literature to argue for the highly constructed nature of nations and nationalism. In their views, the Soviets created nations at least as much as they destroyed them. Moreover, they embed the nationalities issue in the larger problematic of Russian and Soviet modernity, thereby linking the Soviet experience far more tightly to the common western pattern of development since the Enlightenment. The disciplining techniques adopted by the Soviets, while pursued with a certain ruthlessness and brutality, to be sure, no longer appear so distinctive. In the newer literature, the Soviet Union is not something sui generis, but almost "normal," a state that pursued "population politics" (broadly construed) like any other. "Colonial techniques" of rule, common to the western imperial nations, were replicated in the Soviet Union as it sought to bring "backward" ethnicities and nationalities into modernity, albeit a specifically Soviet modernity. Finally, while the earlier generation of scholars accomplished what was possible with only limited or absolutely no access to archives, the work of the younger generations is characterized by prodigious, pathbreaking archival research.[21]

20. Notable exceptions include Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation* (Bloomington, 1988), and Suny, *The Baku Commune, 1917–1918: Class and Nationality in the Russian Revolution* (Princeton, 1972).

21. Among the works to which I am responding are: Francine Hirsch, "Empire of Nations: Colonial Technologies and the Making of the Soviet Union, 1917–1939" (Ph.D., diss., Princeton University, 1998); Hirsch, "The Soviet Union as a Work-in-Progress: Ethnographers and the Category *Nationality* in the 1926, 1937, and 1939 Censuses," *Slavic Review* 56, no. 2 (Summer 1997): 251–78; Peter Holquist, "To Count, to Extract, to Exterminate: Population Statistics and Population Politics in Late Imperial and Soviet Russia," in Terry Martin and Ronald Grigor Suny, eds., *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin* (Oxford, 2001); Holquist, "State Violence as Technique"; Holquist, "'Conduct Merciless Mass Terror': Decossackization on the Don, 1919," *Cahiers du Monde russe* 38, nos. 1–2 (1997): 127–62; Holquist, "A Russian Vendée: The Practice of Revolutionary Politics in the Don Countryside" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1995); Terry D. Martin, "Terror gegen Nationen in der Sowjetunion," *Osteuropa* 50, no. 6 (2000): 606–16; Martin, "The Origins of Soviet Ethnic Cleansing," *Journal of Modern History* 70, no. 4 (1998): 813–861; Martin, "An Affirmative Action Empire: Ethnicity and the Soviet State, 1923–1938" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1996); Yuri Slezkine, "N. Ia. Marr

Yet an interesting conflict arises within much of the recent literature. Holquist, Martin, and Weiner, along with Slezkine and some others, recognize that the Soviet regime *at times* assigned immutable characteristics to particular ethnic and national groups and made nationality an inheritable, biological category. This recognition would seem immediately to open up a discussion of race. Yet although they raise the term *race,* they step around it gingerly and quickly retreat to the safer language of ethnicity and nationality. They raise comparisons with Nazi Germany only to reaffirm the fundamental distinctions between Nazi and Soviet policies. While their own work is deeply attentive to the ambivalencies of Soviet policies, their ultimate formulations insist, not on ambivalence, but on the triumph of the "Marxian sociological paradigm," as Weiner terms it. The matter, though, is rather messier.

The most general point that emerges from the recent literature is that the Soviet state created nationalities.[22] As Rogers Brubaker cogently points out, the Soviets implemented a dual principle of nationality: the country was created as a federation of national territories and, beginning in the 1930s, every individual became the carrier of a prescribed nationality.[23] To be sure, a strong ethnic and national consciousness existed before 1917 among a number of groups, particularly in the European parts of the empire. But the entire thrust of Soviet policies was to affirm nationality as an organizing principle. Where nations had not yet fully emerged, where tribes or ethnic groups still languished in the childhood of underdevelopment, the state had to force their growth into full national adulthood. In the Soviet view, progress toward socialism could only come in the national form—infused, as the saying went, with socialist content.

The hallmark of this approach in the 1920s and 1930s was *korenizatsiia,* or indigenization, which promoted national languages and national elites and all sorts of national institutions, from schools and publishing houses to soviets and party organizations.[24] Voluntary resettlements carried out in the 1920s were part of overall Soviet policies that sought to create compact ethnic and national communities in delimited areas.[25] With the state itself promoting nationality as a category offering access to power and privilege, nationalist intellectuals and party leaders in many areas fought

and the National Origins of Soviet Ethnogenetics," *Slavic Review* 55, no. 4 (Winter 1996): 826–62; Slezkine, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism," *Slavic Review* 52, no. 2 (Summer 1994): 414–52; Slezkine, "From Savages to Citizens: The Cultural Revolution in the Soviet Far North, 1928–1938," *Slavic Review* 51, no. 1 (Spring 1992): 52–76; Amir Weiner, *Making Sense of War: The Second World War and the Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Princeton, 2001); Weiner, "Nature, Nurture, and Memory in a Socialist Utopia: Delineating the Soviet Socio-Ethnic Body in the Age of Socialism," *American Historical Review* 104, no. 4 (1999): 1114–55.

22. See especially Slezkine, "USSR as a Communal Apartment," and Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford, 1993).

23. See Brubaker, "Nationhood and the National Question in the Soviet Union and Its Successor States," *Nationalism Reframed,* 23–54.

24. See especially Martin, "Affirmative Action Empire."

25. Martin, "Origins of Soviet Ethnic Cleansing."

over the ranking between *narodnost'* (people) and *natsional'nost'* (nationality), the latter suggesting a higher stage of development.[26]

The drive to make nationality an organizing principle of politics and society is also evident in more ominous policies. The Soviets clearly were not going to accept just any kind of nationalism. As early as 1919 and 1920, in the midst of the civil war, the Bolshevik regime exercised massive violence against the Don and Kuban Cossacks as a collective group.[27] "Cossack" came to mean anti-Soviet, a synonym for "enemy" that carried an implicit racialization of a group defined not even by ethnicity but by its special service relationship to the tsarist state. According to Peter Holquist, once the Cossacks rose in revolt, they came to be seen, at times, as a "biological . . . rather than juridical category."[28] To be sure, intensive arguments took place within the Bolshevik leadership, with some individuals condemning the slide into "zoological" terminology as un-Marxist. As Holquist also points out, the total biological categorization of the Cossacks lasted only a few months. Practical policy zigzagged between massive repression that included ethnic cleansings and efforts to incorporate the Cossacks into the Soviet world. But a barrier had been broken, which demonstrated how easy it was to move from social to biological understandings, especially within the intensity of civil war and the determination to create the new man and woman. Similar trends were at work later in the 1920s, when "popular ethnic cleansing" led to expropriations and expulsions of Russian colonists in Kazakhstan and Kirghizstan, actions supported by the republics' governments.[29]

As Amir Weiner has argued most effectively, a great change in nationalities policy came in the 1930s, especially with the proclamation of the Stalin constitution in 1936 with its attendant claim that the cause of socialism had triumphed in the Soviet Union.[30] First the nobility, then the bourgeoisie and the kulaks had been vanquished. No internal *class* enemies existed any longer. There were still, however, individual "saboteurs" and "wreckers" who had sold their socialist souls to Trotskyists, Laborites, fascists, and everything else nonsocialist under the sun. And there were still nations, and some of them would now be accused, collectively, of threatening the very existence of the Soviet Union. The very concept of essential nations that had underpinned the development of nationalities in the 1920s and early 1930s now also underpinned the attack on "suspect" nations. Over the course of the 1930s the objects of persecution shifted from class enemies to "enemies of the people," which slid easily into "enemy nations."[31] Weiner argues: "The arrival of socialism ordained new

26. See Hirsch, "Soviet Union as a Work-in-Progress."

27. See Nicolas Werth, "Un État contre son peuple: Violences, répressions, terreurs en Union soviétique," in Stéphane Courtois, ed., *Le livre noir du communisme: Crimes, terreur et répression* (Paris, 1997), 112–17, and Holquist, "Russian Vendée."

28. Holquist, "Russian Vendée," 381.

29. Martin, "Affirmative Action Empire," 562.

30. Weiner, *Making Sense of War,* and Weiner, "Nature, Nurture, and Memory."

31. Martin, "Affirmative Action Empire," 956–60.

sites of excision. First, with the destruction of antagonistic classes, internal enemies became enemies of the people and were to be sought in new realms. By then, it was the nationality question that harbored the clearest and most present danger to the moral-political unity of the people, declared Stalin in the Seventeenth Party Congress of 1934, underlining the increasing ethnicization of the Soviet social body and the shift in the search for the enemy within."[32] Nationality, then, was by no means eliminated as a guiding principle by the great transformations of Soviet life in the 1930s. If anything, nationality became more fervently rooted as the number of recognized nationalities diminished and particular nationalities suffered immense repression.

The recent literature has described well the subsequent course of Soviet policies and the fate of various ethnic and national groups, and there is no need here to rehearse the details. But a number of key factors are worth highlighting. Beginning in the mid-1930s, as the state limited the proliferation of nationalities, it also asserted the cultural and political superiority of Russia.[33] The consolidation process deprived many diaspora nationalities of their national institutions, and cultural Russification, marked especially by the mandatory teaching of Russian, became the watchword. Stalin justified these policies by proclaiming that the former "feeling of mutual distrust [among the nationalities of the Soviet Union] has disappeared, a feeling of mutual friendship has developed, and thus real fraternal co-operation among the peoples has been established within the system of a single federated state."[34] "Friendship of the peoples" served as the new slogan, repeated through all the media and expressed at one rally after another. Stalin and countless others invoked warm family metaphors to represent the unity, emotional and political, of the Soviet peoples under the aegis of their "genial leader." Folkloric elements, previously condemned as the residues of backwardness, were now celebrated as the expressions of culture, "national in form, socialist in content." Folk dances and music, national dress, epic poetry—all the manifestations so beloved by nineteenth-century nationalists—were honored and celebrated in the Soviet twentieth century as the exotica of the Soviet family of nations. An essentializing rhetoric emerged in the mid-1930s, crass to the very core, with such profound associations as "sunny Georgia with its joyful art." The Russian people and culture were seen as manifestations of primordial being and the model for the other nationalities. The party's theoretical journal and school textbooks trumpeted the achievements of the Great Russian people and their history of heroic battles for independence and freedom against innumerable enemies.[35] In World War II, this kind of rhetoric only intensified as the Soviet state articulated the war as a racial battle between Slavs and Germans and explained the ultimate

32. Weiner, "Nature, Nurture, and Memory," 1122.

33. Hirsch, "Soviet Union as a Work-in-Progress," 276–77.

34. J. V. Stalin, "The National Question and the Soviet Constitution" (1936), *Marxism and the National Question: Selected Writings and Speeches* (New York, 1942), 218.

35. All these examples from Martin, "Affirmative Action Empire," 944–47, 964–65.

victory as a result of the inherent superiority of Russians and their Slavic brethren.[36]

Alongside the elevation of Russians into an essentialized, virtually racialized nation came the escalation of ethnic and national purges.[37] Already in the 1930s, security and domestic political concerns resulted in the forced removals of kulak families from Belarus, whose major identifying characteristic was that they were of Polish nationality.[38] Amid the collectivization campaign, Kuban Cossacks were deported en masse. They were charged not just with resistance to socialism but with Ukrainian nationalism, which marked the event as a critical transition from "class-based deportations, which predominated prior to 1933, to the ethnic deportations that predominated from 1933 to 1953."[39]

The first ethnic deportations, according to Terry Martin, were directed against diaspora nationalities with ties across the Soviet borders to their fellow ethnic groups and were not total in nature.[40] They could be explained on the basis of security concerns, that is, on putatively political rather than racial grounds. But a major shift occurred with the forced removal of Koreans in 1937. Now, for the first time, a population purge involved an entire ethnically defined group. The Soviet regime sought out every single member, bar none, for removal.[41] Like other ethnic deportees of the decade, the Koreans were not declared an "enemy nation" or "special settlers," the term applied to deported kulaks, but "administratively resettled." The relocation seems to have been carried out relatively efficiently, and the Koreans were compensated and provided with their own collective farms and cultural institutions. But they also endured inhumane conditions, including a month spent in barely heated freight cars, and were deposited into open areas in Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, or Kirghizstan without any shelter or food. Many died from epidemics and hunger. In 1943, the government even demobilized twenty thousand non-Russian soldiers from the army, including Koreans and

36. Norman M. Naimark, *Fires of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, Mass., 2001), 89–92.

37. For summaries of the various deportations, see Naimark, *Fires of Hatred,* 85–107; Weiner, "Nature, Nurture, and Memory"; and N. F. Bugai, "K voprosu o deportatsii narodov SSSR v 30–40-kh godakh," *Istoriia SSSR,* 1989, no. 6:135–44. Summaries can also be gleaned from some of the documents published by N. F. Bugai, for example, "'Pogruzheny v eshelony i otpravleny k mestam poselenii . . .': L. Beriia–I. Stalinu," *Istoriia SSSR,* 1991, no. 1:143–60, and "20–40-e gody: Tragediia narodov," *Vostok,* 1992, no. 2:122–39. See also Jean-Jacques Marie, *Les Peuples déportés d'Union soviétique* (Brussels, 1995), and the older but still useful work by Aleksandr M. Nekrich, *The Punished Peoples: The Deportation and Fate of Soviet Minorities at the End of the Second World* War, trans. George Saunders (New York, 1978).

38. Martin, "Origins of Soviet Ethnic Cleansing," 839.

39. Ibid., 847. Other historians would date the beginning of this transition a bit later, to 1937.

40. Martin, "Origins of Soviet Ethnic Cleansing," 815.

41. See Michael Gelb, "An Early Soviet Ethnic Deportation: The Far-Eastern Koreans," *Russian Review* 54 (1995): 389–412, and N. F. Bugai, "Vyselenie sovetskikh koreitsev s dal'nego vostoka," *Voprosy istorii,* 1994, no. 5:141–48.

Chechens, and shipped them to resettlement sites.[42] Deportations of a few remaining Koreans continued as late as 1946.[43]

In the Great Terror, about one-third of the total victims, 800,000 people, were arrested, deported, or executed on national grounds.[44] During the war years, the purges escalated still further, as is well known. Almost 82 percent of the Germans in the Soviet Union, not just in the Volga republic, were deported.[45] Other great waves of deportations unfolded in the southern regions from November 1943 to June 1944 and from July to December 1944 and involved Chechens, Ingush, Crimean Tatars, and at least ten other groups. After the war, yet another round of purges affected populations in the western borderlands, especially in the re-annexed Baltic republics. The Russian historian N. F. Bugai counts in total fifty-eight peoples, 3 to 3.5 million individuals, deported on ethnic and national grounds, including 478,479 Chechens and Ingush and 1,084,828 Germans.[46] At the outset of the 1950s, more than 90 percent of those classified as "special deportees" represented members of ethnically defined populations.[47]

The manner of deportations bears all the characteristics of other ethnic cleansings in the twentieth century, including the Holocaust.[48] The operations were all highly organized, and Stalin was kept informed on a near daily basis of their progress.[49] NKVD troops arrived in force in full display of the symbols of power at their disposal—uniformed and heavily armed troops, fast-driving cars and trucks, rapidly moving men. They sealed off a town or neighborhood, then went door-to-door telling people that they had forty-five minutes (sometimes less) to gather their belong-

42. Germans were expelled from the Red Army by a decree of 8 September 1941, the others somewhat later. As late as March 1949, some 63,000 ex–Red Army soldiers from targeted nationalities were counted in the special settlements, including 33,615 ethnic Germans; 8,995 Crimean Tatars; 6,184 Kalmyks; 4,248 Chechens; 2,543 Karachai; and 946 Ingush. See Weiner, "Nature, Nurture, and Memory," 1134, and Nekrich, *Punished Peoples,* 83.

43. Gelb, "Early Soviet Ethnic Deportation," 401.

44. Martin, "Origins of Soviet Ethnic Cleansing," 855, 858. Martin, though, exaggerates by claiming that the "the Great Terror had evolved into an ethnic terror" (858) since one still has to explain the other two-thirds of the victims for whom ethnicity was not the decisive factor. I thank Peter Holquist for emphasizing this point to me.

45. Werth, "État contre son peuple," 241, 242.

46. Bugai, "K voprosu o deportatsii," 135, 137; Bugai, "20–40-e gody," 122.

47. Nicolas Werth, "Logiques de violence dans l'URSS stalinienne," in Henry Rousso, ed., *Stalinisme et nazisme: Histoire et mémoire comparées* (Paris, 1999), 122. Werth, though, persists in labeling these actions "retrograde and regressive," "a resurgence of obscurantist aspects" (123), rather than seeing their highly modernist character. In this sense, Peter Holquist's arguments are more convincing, as in "State Violence as Technique."

48. For a very effective general description of how these operations work, see Jacques Semelin, "Analysis of a Mass Crime: Ethnic Cleansing in the Former Yugoslavia, 1991–1999" (paper presented at the Comparative Genocides Conference, Barcelona, Spain, December 2000). Semelin emphasizes three elements: "a hierarchy in the structure of command, a sealed up theater of operations, [and] a culture of impunity" (12–13). See also Wolfgang Sofsky, *Traktat über die Gewalt* (Frankfurt am Main,1996).

49. The organized nature of the operations comes through in the documents; see, for example, Bugai, "20–40-e gody."

ings. Sometimes they simply grabbed people from fields and factories. The victims were herded onto trucks and then into sealed freight cars where they sometimes languished for a month before being deposited under open skies in their place of deportation. Following the population removals, place names were changed, buildings destroyed, and cemeteries bulldozed in an effort to erase the visible signs of a once extant people and culture.[50] In many of the transports, around 50 percent of the deportees were children and the elderly.[51] Evidence exists that people too weak to move were simply shot, and the bodies of those who died in the overcrowded boxcars were simply thrown out of the train.[52] By 1948, the mortality rate of the 600,000 people deported from the Caucasus between 1943 and 1944 had reached 25 percent.[53]

At the end of the 1940s another decree declared that the peoples deported between 1941 and 1945 would retain that status "in perpetuity."[54] They would, in effect, carry racialized stigmas for generations. And it is grimly appropriate that the very last Stalinist attack on an ethnic group, an attack imbued with racialist elements, was directed against Jews.[55] All the repressive measures and charges, symptomatic of the worst excesses of the Stalinist imagination, were, in all probability, the steps toward a revival of terror on a grand, societal scale, which would certainly have extended beyond Jews. But the charges of "cosmopolitanism," leveled throughout Stalin's last years, were also redolent with Nazi-style anti-Semitism. Moreover, in the weeks just before Stalin's death, reports circulated of a plan to deport eastward the entire Jewish population.[56] Fewer than ten years after the end of World War II, the scheme raised the specter of the worst actions of both the Nazi and the Soviet regimes.

As should already be clear, the language and practice of racial politics entered into Soviet life, if never completely even in the Stalin period. Historians are attuned to the development. Holquist, as mentioned, writes about the Soviets intermittently viewing Cossacks as a "biological . . . rather than juridical" category.[57] Martin notes that in the course of the 1930s, the Soviet understanding of nationality moved increasingly to an essentializing perspective of "nations as unities with deep originary roots."[58] David Hoffmann writes that "Soviet and Nazi rhetoric alike was

50. For descriptions see Naimark, *Fires of Hatred,* 96–99, 101–4, and Nekrich, *Punished Peoples.*

51. As was the case with Balkarians. See Bugai, "K voprosu o deportatsii," 140.

52. Norman M. Naimark, *Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth Century Europe,* The Donald W. Treadgold Papers in Russian, East European, and Central Asian Studies, no. 19 (Seattle, 1998), 22–24.

53. Werth, "Logiques," 121–22.

54. Werth, "État contre son peuple," 261–62, and Martin, "Terror gegen Nationen," 608.

55. See Werth, "État contre son peuple," 269–76.

56. Weiner, *Making Sense of War,* 198; Werth, "État contre son peuple," 276; Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Soviet Experiment: Russia, the USSR, and the Successor States* (New York, 1998), 374. Weiner writes: "[the] portrayal of Jews in the press assumed an unambiguous racial character" (*Making Sense of War,* 198).

57. Holquist, "Russian Vendée," 381.

58. Martin, "Terror gegen Nationen," 612.

replete with images of disease, infection, and the need to purify, transform, and improve society."[59] Drawing on Claude Lefort's work on totalitarianism and Sander Gilman's on race, anti-Semitism, and the aesthetics of the body, Holquist also writes about the Soviet "politico-social body" and the medical-prophylactic language that the regime deployed to "sculpt" the Soviet population.[60] Slezkine writes that by the end of the 1930s, "every Soviet child inherited his nationality at birth; individual ethnicity had become a biological category impervious to cultural, linguistic or geographic change."[61] Norman Naimark argues that the Soviets intended that the "individual cultures [of the Chechens, Ingush, and Crimean Tatars]—if not the peoples themselves—would perish in the vastness of their new and alien Central Asian special settlements."[62] Weiner titles the section of one chapter of his book, "The Postwar Purification Drive: Totalization and Irredeemability," and goes on to write that World War II "saw a stark shift in the purge paradigm from cleansing certain areas to cleansing entire groups of people. The prewar partiality and focus on specific border regions were replaced by the targeting of each and every member of a stigmatized group regardless of geographic location or service rendered to the Soviet state. . . . Excision was intended to be total, irreversible, and pursued relentlessly."[63]

These arguments would seem to bring us smack into the realm of race. They raise the issue of biology and body aesthetics, so fundamental to the entire discourse of race.[64] They demonstrate the Soviet tendency to make the nation a primordial entity based on common descent and to ascribe the same characteristics to every single member of the group, also typical of the discourse and practice of race. Yet each of the authors is quick to assert that race was epiphenomenal to the Soviet experience, a lapse from the far more typical, Marxian-derived emphasis on human mutability and the primacy of class. Weiner, typically for these authors, ultimately affirms the primacy of the "Marxist sociological paradigm" in Soviet politics. "Total excision in the Soviet polity," he writes elsewhere, "was not necessarily exterminatory nor did it operate by a racial-biological code."[65] Martin writes that Soviet hostility toward foreigners, which included diaspora co-nationals within the Soviet Union, "was ideologically, not ethnically, defined."[66] Naimark argues that the ethnic and national purges under Stalin operated out of "less a racist concept than a Soviet nationalist one, though racism was never far from the surface."[67] Hoffmann states that "if

59. David L. Hoffmann, "European Modernity and Soviet Socialism," in Hoffmann and Kotsonis, eds., *Russian Modernity,* 255.

60. Holquist, "State Violence as Technique."

61. Slezkine, "USSR as a Communal Apartment," 444.

62. Naimark, *Fires of Hatred,* 106.

63. Weiner, *Making Sense of War,* 149–50.

64. Among many works on race, see Sander Gilman, *Creating Beauty to Cure the Soul: Race and Psychology in the Shaping of Aesthetic Surgery* (Durham, 1998), and George L. Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution: A History of European Racism* (Madison, 1985).

65. Weiner, *Making Sense of War,* 207.

66. Martin, "Terror gegen Nationen," 611.

67. Naimark, *Fires of Hatred,* 106.

all governments became concerned with the health of the social body, and some began to excise what they viewed as malignant elements, it is still a vital distinction that the Soviet government did this on a class basis, rather than using biological or racial criteria."[68] Hirsch emphasizes the point that the state ultimately gave people the right to choose their nationality but tends to downplay the more flagrant moments when the regime imposed nationality categorizations upon people and infused those categories with nefarious behavioral and psychological traits.[69] Holquist writes that nationalism and socialism share "a general tendency to homogenize polities," but they work on different axes, the one on the national, the other on a class axis. Playing off Rudolf Hess's definition of National Socialism as applied biology, he labels Bolshevism "massively applied Marxist sociology."[70]

Yet the empirical evidence amassed by Weiner, Martin, Holquist, and others undermines such clear distinctions and blanket conclusions. Instead, it seems to me more insightful to affirm the continual ambivalencies of Soviet policies, their oscillations between more open and harshly exclusive articulations of the nation. At one and the same time in the Stalin period, the Soviets pursued policies that allowed individuals to choose their nationality and encouraged the development of national institutions and also locked members of targeted groups—Koreans, Chechens, Crimean Tatars, and many others—into a destiny from which they had no escape, a clear sign of racial categorizations. The historians discussed above render admirably the complexities and ambivalencies of Soviet policies, until they get to their concluding passages in which they assert the ephemeral, almost accidental, character of racially tinged policies.

Yet the extremes of Soviet nationalities policies, while hardly predestined, were also not accidental. They were keyed into two fundamental realities: first, the inherent ambivalencies in nationalism, and, second, the nature of the state socialist project. To the extent that the Soviet regime promoted national institutions and national consciousness as the path to socialist development, it opened the doors to an essentialist, racialized understanding of the nation, which seems to lurk almost everywhere, even in the most deeply entrenched liberal polities.[71] Soviet policies were marked by the inevitable fluidity between political and racial articulations of the nation, between the very categories of race and nation. If one can see the oscillation in the United States between liberal political conceptions of the nation, which are certainly inclusive and tolerant, and racial conceptions of the nation, which reserve citizenship for the members of the purported white race, why should one be surprised that the Soviets had their own oscillations with their own particular characteristics?

Precisely because population politics was central to the building of socialism, to the literal reshaping of society into a modern, industrial, disciplined, and committed Soviet populace—the "sculpting" of the popu-

68. Hoffmann, "European Modernity and Soviet Socialism," 257.
69. Hirsch, "Empire of Nations," and Hirsch, "Soviet Union as a Work-in-Progress."
70. Holquist, "State Violence as Technique," 27 (of the manuscript).
71. See, again, Gerstle, *American Crucible,* and Tabili, *We Ask for British Justice.*

lation, as Holquist terms it, the "sites of excision," as Weiner describes it—the Stalinist system in particular had a certain propensity for going to the extremes of categorization, for racializing discrete population groups. As much of the most recent work has demonstrated, Soviet social engineering, its drive to remake the population, was one piece of a much broader, pan-western development that cut across all sorts of polities, from liberal to communist to fascist.[72] At the same time, the Soviet Union under Stalin gave to social engineering a particularly systematic and virulent character, precisely because of the system's totalizing claims and the absence of the legal and cultural limits imposed upon the state in liberal regimes. For all the talk about the malleability of human beings, in the immediate present of the Stalin period, which placed such a premium upon uniformity and adhesion to the socialist project, many of those considered outside the pale became enemies in toto. As Yanni Kotsonis argues, "'scientific socialism' lent breathtaking confidence to the essentialism that the categories [of identity] acquired. The recognition that a category was socially determined did not make it less real at any given moment."[73] "Primordial nationalism," the term favored by Terry Martin and other writers, while close, still fails to capture the full dimension of Soviet nationalities policies when they reached the extreme stage of total and complete national purges.[74] Those populations were seen to lie outside the realm of reform, whether by dint of purported cross-border ties to co-nationals or because their ways of being were too rural, too nomadic, too commercial, too individualistic, too religious, or some combination of the above. Each and every member of the population was identified as a carrier of the same suspect traits that he or she transmitted, necessarily, to the next generation. That is a racial logic at work; it is not just "extreme" or "radical" or "primordial" nationalism. And it was not exclusive to Soviet communism. One can see its manifestations in China after 1949 and, especially, in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge.[75]

Yet it needs to be said, once again, that race was by no means the only logic of the Stalinist system. As the recent scholarship has emphasized, the Soviet regime also held out the possibility of redemption for those purged from society and from their historic sites of settlement, as evidenced by the movement in and out of the gulag, by the possibilities for redemption

72. The point is emphasized by Hirsch, "Empire of Nations"; Holquist, "State Violence as Technique"; Weiner, *Making Sense of War;* Hoffmann and Kotsonis, eds., *Russian Modernity;* and Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain,* among others.

73. Yanni Kotsonis, "Introduction: A Modern Paradox—Subject and Citizen in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Russia," in Hoffmann and Kotsonis, eds., *Russian Modernity,* 11. Or as Terry Martin argues in the same volume, "[the Bolsheviks'] attempts to organize, classify and reward their population according to sociological categories led them to reify categories they themselves viewed as constructed rather than essential." Martin, "Modernization or Neo-Traditionalism? Ascribed Nationality and Soviet Primordialism," in Hoffmann and Kotsonis, eds., *Russian Modernity,* 170.

74. See Martin, "Modernization or Neo-Traditionalism?"

75. See Ben Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power, and Genocide in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, 1975–79* (New Haven, 1996).

offered by wartime service, by the oft-repeated claim that sons should not pay for the sins of their fathers and the release of the children of kulaks from special settlements, and, following 1956, by the removal of disabilities from some (though not all) of the purged national groups.[76] Even among those populations trapped in the racial logic, anomalies could appear—the Jew Lazar Kaganovich at the seat of power while the official discourse on Jews was redolent with racial anti-Semitism, a few Koreans who managed to escape the total deportation of the population. But even that most systematic of overtly racial regimes, the Third Reich, had some anomalies—German Jewish men who were spared deportations because they were married to German Christian women, Muslim divisions in that most elite of Aryan formations, the Waffen SS.[77]

In thinking about the ambivalencies of Soviet nationalities policies, it is critical to note that Russian and Soviet deliberations about the meaning of the nation and nationalities did not develop in a vacuum but were firmly embedded in the general western discourse on race and nation. It should come as no surprise, then, that the same ambiguities and ambivalence that haunted this discourse, the tensions between relatively open and inclusive and harshly exclusive articulations of the nation, between belief in the malleability of humans and the firm conviction that certain recalcitrant types had to be purged from society, between social and biological categorizations of populations, were replicated in Russian and Soviet discussions as well, though with their own coloration, of course. In fact, the ambivalence was probably greater precisely because of the multiethnic and imperial character of both the tsarist and Soviet systems. Imperial Russia had no fully developed concept of the nation, and the tensions between Russian-ness and multiethnicity only intensified in the regime's twilight years.[78] "State consciousness" was probably more pronounced than a specifically national consciousness.[79] Russian professionals and intellectuals were notably resistant to the fully developed race

76. J. Arch Getty, Gabor T. Rittersporn, and Viktor N. Zemskov, "Victims of the Soviet Penal System in the Pre-War Years: A First Approach on the Basis of Archival Evidence," *American Historical Review* 98, no. 4 (1993): 1017–49, and Weiner, *Making Sense of War,* 201–9.

77. See Victor Klemperer, *I Will Bear Witness: A Diary of the Nazi Years,* 2 vols., trans. Martin Chalmers (New York, 1998–1999); Nathan Stoltzfus, *Resistance of the Heart: Intermarriage and the Rosenstrasse Protest in Nazi Germany* (New York, 1996); and George H. Stein, *The Waffen SS: Hitler's Elite Guard at War* (Ithaca, 1966), 179–85.

78. On the dilemmas inherent in the multinational character of the empire, see Geoffrey Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire, 1552–1917* (Cambridge, Mass., 1997), and Andreas Kappeler, *Rußland als Vielvölkerreich: Entstehung, Geschichte, Zerfall* (Munich, 1993). Their divergent emphases can be read in tandem. See also the interesting exchange between Josh Sanborn, "The Mobilization of 1914 and the Question of the Russian Nation: A Reexamination," and S. A. Smith, "Citizenship and the Russian Nation during World War I: A Comment," with a rejoinder by Sanborn, "More than Imagined: A Few Notes on Modern Identities," in *Slavic Review* 59, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 267–89, 316–329, and 330–35.

79. I thank Peter Holquist for emphasizing this point to me. On the development of the terminology of people, ethnicity, and nationality, see Nathaniel Knight, "Ethnicity, Na-

thinking that had become hegemonic in the west by 1914. Even those amenable to biologically based explanations for human behavior tended to emphasize the interactive impact of biology and society.[80]

Yet the German romantics of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and their *völkisch* nationalism had a profound influence on Russian conceptions of the nation, which easily separated the population as bearers of a cultural essence—Russian-ness—from the repressive tsarist state. By the end of the century, Russian medical and legal experts were debating the validity of "criminal anthropology" with its strong racialist connotations. As Laura Engelstein has shown, criminal anthropology, with its belief in the biological basis of purported social pathologies, did not triumph wholesale, but it certainly became part of the package of medical and legal discourse in late imperial Russia.[81] Eugenics also began to achieve a wide hearing in this period. With its strong purifying ethos, its belief that human society could be perfected by weeding out unwanted genetic characteristics, eugenics had a powerful appeal that cut across all sorts of political divisions.[82] Here too the German influence was quite strong, and the *Russkii evgeniicheskii zhurnal* regularly reviewed the issues of the *Archiv für Rassen- und Gesellschafts-Biologie,* the leading journal of "scientific" race thinking in Germany.[83] Increasingly, the tsarist state applied the category of ethnicity alongside the more standard language of estates, and ethnicity, while by no means necessarily racialist, certainly had strong essentializing tendencies.[84] Minor currents added an explicitly racial dimension to

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tionality and the Masses: *Narodnost'* and Modernity in Imperial Russia," in Hoffmann and Kotsonis, eds., *Russian Modernity,* 41–64.

80. David Hoffmann and Peter Holquist, *Sculpting the Masses: The Modern Social State in Russia, 1914–1941* (Ithaca, forthcoming). I thank Peter Holquist for sending me an excerpt of this work in progress. See also Laura Engelstein, *The Keys to Happiness: Sex and the Search for Modernity in Fin-de-Siècle Russia* (Ithaca, 1992).

81. Engelstein, *Keys to Happiness,* 128–64.

82. On the strong attraction eugenics held for the left in general, see Michael Schwartz, *Sozialistische Eugenik: Eugenische Sozialtechnologien in Debatten und Politik der deutschen Sozialdemokratie 1890–1933* (Bonn, 1995); Helmut Gruber, *Red Vienna: Experiment in Working-Class Culture, 1919–1934* (New York, 1991); Diane Paul, "Eugenics and the Left," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 45, no. 4 (1984): 567–90; Michael Freeden, "Eugenics and Progressive Thought: A Study in Ideological Affinity," *Historical Journal* 22, no. 3 (1979): 645–71; and Loren R. Graham, "Science and Human Values: The Eugenics Movement in Germany and Russia in the 1920s," *American Historical Review* 82, no. 5 (1977): 1133–64.

83. Graham, "Science and Values," 1146–50.

84. See, for example, Knight, "Ethnicity, Nationality and the Masses," and Charles Steinwedel, "To Make a Difference: The Category of Ethnicity in Late Imperial Russian Politics, 1861–1917," both in Hoffmann and Kotsonis, eds., *Russian Modernity,* 41–64 and 67–86, and Mark von Hagen, "The Great War and the Mobilization of Ethnicity in the Russian Empire," in Barnett R. Rubin and Jack Snyder, eds., *Post-Soviet Political Order: Conflict and State Building* (London, 1998), 34–57. Knight writes: "Deeply rooted in the world view of Romantic idealism, *narodnost'* provided a model of ethnicity that was both essentialist—derived from a concept of immutable identity—and at the same time cultural rather than biological in its manifestations. This is, perhaps, one reason why the racial obsessions of Western Europe throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century evoked (with a few significant exceptions) only a limited response in Russia" ("Ethnicity, Nationality and

the multitude of political movements that emerged in the waning days of the tsarist regime, yet even official tsarist policies were at times imbued with racial anti-Semitism.[85]

The Soviets inherited the ambiguities of the imperial discourse on the nation, to which they of course added their own proclivities.[86] This tendency is readily apparent in Stalin's *Marxism and the National Question,* the work that would continually guide Soviet deliberations.[87] In this polemic and in subsequent writings, Stalin offered no biological concept of nationhood. Instead, he adopted the good Marxian argument that the nation is a form of political organization specific to the period of capitalism. Nonetheless, his defense of the reality of the nation also had pronounced essentializing qualities and went much further than Vladimir Lenin, whose concessions on the national issue were always strategic and tactical.[88] Despite the polemics against the Austro-Marxists in *Marxism and the National Question,* Stalin was, in reality, profoundly influenced by their argument that nations had a certain long-lasting reality.[89] Writing in the catechism-like style he preferred, Stalin provided the ultimate, oft-cited definition of a nation: "a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture."[90] Stalin argued that the nation, though a specific institutional form of bourgeois society, also has a historical reality with a certain stability that is reproduced among its members through culture. "'National character,'" Stalin claimed, is not fixed for eternity but is "modified by changes in the conditions of life; but since it exists at every given moment, it leaves its impress on the physiognomy of the nation."[91] The prospects of a unitary, socialist world culture were so remote and abstract that in the long transition period, proletarian power would contribute to the "blossoming" of national cultures. Once they were fully developed, then the preconditions would exist for their ultimate "fusion into a single, common, socialist (both in form and content) culture, with a single, common language, when the proletariat is

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the Masses," 58). But this seems to me to draw too sharp a distinction between biologically and culturally based essentialisms.

85. See Eli Weinerman, "Racism, Racial Prejudice and Jews in Late Imperial Russia," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 17, no. 3 (1994): 442–95, who discounts the seriousness of racist thought in imperial Russia, while Hans Rogger, *Jewish Policies and Right-Wing Politics in Imperial Russia* (Berkeley, 1986), sees an advance in racial anti-Semitism, especially in the decade before World War I. I thank Amir Weiner for bringing these sources to my attention.

86. On the issue of continuities, see Hoffmann and Kotsonis, eds., *Russian Modernity;* Hirsch, "Empire of Nations"; Peter Holquist, "'Information Is the Alpha and Omega of Our Work': Bolshevik Surveillance in Its Pan-European Context," *Journal of Modern History* 69, no. 3 (1997): 415–50; Holquist, "To Count, to Extract, to Exterminate"; and Holquist, "State Violence as Technique."

87. J. V. Stalin, *Marxism and the National Question* (1913), *Works,* vol. 2, *1907–1913* (Moscow, 1953), 300–81.

88. See Carrère d'Encausse, *Great Challenge,* 35–39.

89. Ibid., 38–39.

90. Stalin, *Marxism and the National Question,* 307.

91. Ibid.

victorious throughout the world and socialism becomes an everyday matter."[92] Even after the worldwide victory of the proletarian revolution, national differences "are bound to remain for a long time."[93]

Through the first two decades of Soviet rule, experts fiercely debated the appropriate criteria for nationality.[94] Language, culture, geography, and biology all came into play. As in so many other countries, eugenics flourished in the 1920s and contributed an overtly racial and biological strain to the discussions on nationality.[95] Eugenics was formally condemned in 1931 and the Soviet state never practiced so-called euthanasia, a radical application of racial politics that in Nazi Germany also marked a critical step on the road to the Holocaust. Yet many of the advocates of eugenicism continued their work through the 1930s under the guise of "medical genetics" and even survived the rise to dominance of T. D. Lysenko and neo-Lamarckism.[96] Similarly, older ethnographers, many of them trained before World War I and strongly influenced by French and German anthropology, continued their work even amid the vast shakeups of their profession in the 1930s.[97] Professional discourses on suicide and on sexual behavior in the 1920s and 1930s at times made "social pathologies" the result of biological, not social, constitutions.[98] Moreover, the intermittent tendency to make class status and "asocial" behavior hereditary characteristics lent another profoundly biological tendency to Soviet thinking and policies.[99] Not only individuals, but entire families

92. Stalin, "Deviations on the National Question" (1930), *Marxism and the National Question: Selected Writings and Speeches,* 208–9.

93. Ibid., 212.

94. See Hirsch, "Empire of Nations"; Hirsch, "Soviet Union as a Work-in-Progress"; Slezkine, "N. Ia. Marr"; and Slezkine, "USSR as a Communal Apartment."

95. See Mark B. Adams, "Eugenics in Russia, 1900–1940," in Adams, ed., *The Wellborn Science: Eugenics in Germany, France, Brazil, and Russia* (New York, 1990), 153–216; and Graham, "Science and Values."

96. See especially Adams, "Eugenics in Russia." Moreover, recent research on countries other than Britain and Germany has shown that eugenics is not necessarily linked to Darwinism and Mendelian genetics; it can flourish just as well with neo-Lamarckism, as in France, Brazil, and elsewhere, where greater attention was placed on environmental factors. See Frank Dikötter, "Race Culture: Recent Perspectives on the History of Eugenics," *American Historical Review* 103, no. 2 (1998): 467–78.

97. Hirsch, "Empire of Nations," 235–36, 264–65, 278–79.

98. See Kenneth M. Pinnow, "Cutting and Counting: Forensic Medicine as a Science of Society in Bolshevik Russia, 1920–29," and Frances L. Bernstein, "'The Dictatorship of Sex': Science, Glands, and the Medical Construction of Gender Difference in Revolutionary Russia," both in Hoffmann and Kotsonis, eds., *Russian Modernity,* 115–37 and 138–60.

99. On the Soviets' obsessive drive to categorize and control the population, see Paul M. Hagenloh, "Police, Crime, and Public Order in Stalin's Russia" (Ph.D. diss., University of Texas at Austin, 1999); Golfo Alexopoulos, "Rights and Passages: Making Outcasts and Making Citizens in Soviet Russia" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1996); and Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Ascribing Class: The Construction of Social Identity in Soviet Russia," *Journal of Modern History* 65, no. 4 (1993): 745–70. In the 1920s and early 1930s the Soviets were already discussing sending into exile "socially dangerous" and "undesirable elements," including the Roma and Sinti. See the secret police documents, 7 July 1925 and 10 July 1933, in Nicolas Werth and Gaël Moullec, eds., *Rapport secrets soviétiques: La société russe dans les documents confidentiels, 1921–1991* (Paris, 1994), 33, 43–44.

could be purged because of the actions or background of a single member. Entire social groups, including nationalities, had to be removed from the population, isolated because they were identified as social parasites or "vermin" (*parazity, vrediteli*), the sources of pollution (*zasorenost'*) or filth (*griaz*), harmful to the "health" of the social body. These "vermin" could not repent and join the socialist fold; their very being placed them outside the collective body.[100] This kind of language immediately recalls the entire discourse of race in modern Europe; at the same time, the language of the "family of nations" recalls Giuseppe Mazzini and other ideologues of liberal nationalism.

The complexity of Soviet nationalities policies runs far deeper than identifying "the striking paradox," under Stalin, of "the simultaneous pursuit of nation building and nation destroying."[101] The issue is more problematic than the "chronic ethnophilia" of the Soviet system.[102] The Soviet regime promoted nationalities, allowed people to choose their national identification, and, for the most part, supported a diversity of cultural and linguistic expression. Yet in the period from 1937 to 1953, the Soviet state also defined certain nations as suspect and dangerous, and those unreliable characteristics were seen to inhere in each and every member of the group. For a defined period of time and in relation to particular populations, Soviet policies rested on the notion that ontology determined politics, that if one were born a Korean, a Crimean Tatar, a Chechen, or, finally, a Jew, one had to think and act in a particular manner.[103] There was no escaping the charge that one was at least a security risk, if not an outright enemy of the people, if one were Tatar or German, Korean or Chechen, or a host of others. The attacks on these people went far beyond mere security concerns, however real these were, especially in light of the cataclysmic scale of the German invasion. But security policies were conducted through a racial lens that captured in the range of vision every member of the targeted groups. No less than the internment of Japanese-Americans by the United States in World War II, the ethnic and national purges in the Soviet Union demonstrated the workings of a racial logic.

Ultimately, it mattered little whether the characteristics ascribed to these people were understood to be transmitted by biology or culture. Even in its high period, roughly 1870 to 1945, when Social Darwinism and eugenics endowed race thinking with a supposedly scientific basis, the boundaries between biological and cultural forms of racism were never

100. Weiner, *Making Sense of War,* 35.

101. Martin, "Origins of Soviet Ethnic Cleansing," 816.

102. Slezkine, "USSR as a Communal Apartment," 415.

103. Holquist's comments strike me as too categorical: "The Soviets did not believe that an individual was irrevocably tainted by his or her biological composition . . . the Soviets did not believe individuals were organically malevolent from birth." He does, however, go on to say that "at times Soviet categories operated in similar ways to deterministic racial categories (the dynamic of ethnic repression bearing the greatest similarities)." See "State Violence as Technique," 28–29 (of the manuscript).

sharp and clear.[104] The real danger of categorizations lay in the ascription of an irrevocable identity with a linked set of immutable behaviors to every single member of the group. That effort marked the practice of racial politics despite the absence of an articulated racial ideology.

But where does this leave the vexed issue of comparison between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union? As has been pointed out time and again, the Soviet Union had no Auschwitz. Despite hyperbolic and politicized comments about "Red Holocausts" and a "Ukrainian genocide," the Soviet system was never geared toward the complete physical annihilation of a defined population group.[105] The term *class genocide* is a travesty that serves political purposes but obfuscates far more than it explains.[106]

Nonetheless, the Soviet drive to remake the very composition of its citizenry, to remove targeted population groups from the social body, to cast certain nations as pariahs for eternity and to drive them into internal exile, does invite legitimate comparisons with Nazi policies—even though the Soviets themselves explicitly rejected the comparison.[107] After all, most historians (though certainly not all) would argue today that the genocide of the Jews arose from the combined logics of ideological anti-Semitism, the extreme and unforeseen conditions in the German-occupied regions in eastern Europe, and the internal, conflictual, even chaotic nature of the Nazi system.[108] That Jews were to be removed in some fashion from German society was a given once the Nazis had taken power. That they would be killed en masse was not an inevitability from 30 January 1933 onward. The Nazi leadership considered seriously at different points in time the forced deportation of Jews, their removal somewhere "to the east," whether Poland or Siberia, or to Madagascar. The genocide of Jews was the extreme and ultimately defining practice of National Socialism, but it need not be the only moment when the policies of radical and racially based population politics merit comparison.[109]

104. For one argument that the connection between science and racism was "accidental," that race thinking can thrive in association with all sorts of other modes of thought, see Jeremy Waldron, "Whose Nuremberg Laws?" *London Review of Books,* 19 March 1998. I thank Thomas Lindenberger of the Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung, Potsdam, for emphasizing this point to me.

105. For various examples of the use of such terms as *Red Holocaust,* see the studies in Rousso, *Stalinisme et nazisme.* For just two examples of the need to distinguish sharply between the Nazi and Soviet projects, see Tony Judt, "The Longest Road to Hell," a commentary on Courtois, ed., *Le livre noir du communisme* in the *New York Times,* 22 December 1997, and Holquist, "State Violence as Technique," 23–24 (of the manuscript).

106. Stéphane Courtois, "Les crimes du communisme," in Courtois, ed., *Le livre noir du communisme,* 9–41, as well as numerous interviews, including those in "Der rote Holocaust," *Die Zeit* 48 (21 November 1997): 17–18, and "Glaube und Schuld," *Die Woche* (29 May 1998): 22–24, the latter also with Joachim Gauck.

107. On the Soviets' own rejection of any comparison with the Nazis, see Hirsch, "Empire of Nations," 266–67, 281–83; Weiner, "Nature, Nurture, and Memory," 1122–23, 1141–49; and Holquist, "State Violence as Technique," 25–27 (of the manuscript).

108. The work that probably best reflects this synthesis is Ulrich Herbert, ed., *Nationalsozialistische Vernichtungspolitik 1939–1945: Neue Forschungen und Kontroversen* (Frankfurt am Main, 1998).

109. From another vantage point, see William W. Hagen, "Before the 'Final Solution': Toward a Comparative Analysis of Political Anti-Semitism in Interwar Germany and

The Soviet purification drive, Weiner argues, "combin[ed] the modern European ethos of social engineering with Bolshevik Marxist eschatology."[110] It was particular because it offered "an eschatological worldview in the sense of belief in an end to History; it was apocalyptic in its belief in the imminence of the End and that, in the wake of reaching socialism, Soviet people were living in the final stages of History; it was millenarian in its belief that the final cataclysm would be followed by the kingdom of communism, namely a conflict-free and harmonious society."[111] Virtually every one of these points can be attached to Nazi Germany, which raises further disturbing lines of similarity between the two systems. In the Nazi ethos, the final, racially pure society would emerge after the cataclysmic battle worthy of the Book of Revelations. The new society of racial domination and subordination, the internally pure, prosperous, and harmonious community, would mark the endpoint of time, the final evolution of history. In struggle the race would be improved, men hardened, women made ever more maternal and devoted to the racial cause.

The specific utopias envisioned by both systems were radically different—a point that always needs to be stated. The Soviet vision of the future was egalitarian and rooted in Enlightenment humanism. The Nazi vision was always one of a hierarchical order of domination and subordination based on the supposedly fixed verities of race. Still, the fact that the Soviets engaged in purges, including what we call today ethnic cleansings, cannot be sufficiently explained by appeals to the unfortunate and tragic departures from true socialism that Stalin supposedly engineered, or, in the classic Trotskyist account, by the manifestations of Russian backwardness. Work by recent historians places the Soviet purges, including the ethnic and national ones, firmly in the context of Soviet modernity, the drive to create "a quintessential enlightenment utopia," as Stephen Kotkin terms it or "the unfolding revolutionary transformation of society from an antagonistically divided entity into a conflict-free, harmonious body," in the words of Amir Weiner.[112] At the very center of the Soviet Union's drive toward socialist modernity lay population politics, which created a set of dispositions that made deportations and ethnic cleansings, if not inevitable, then certainly possible. As Weiner further argues, "exclusion and violence, in this light, were not random or merely preventive police measures . . . but, rather, integral parts of the ongoing community-structuring enterprise."[113] The ethnic and national purges were, then, inextricably connected to the broad, general project of creating the new Soviet man and woman, the Soviet version of modernity's inexorable disciplinary

Poland," *Journal of Modern History* 68, no. 2 (1996): 351–81. Hagen finds extensive similarities in the anti-Semitic policies of the Nazi regime and various eastern European countries, especially Poland, in the 1930s, that is, just prior to the onset of the Holocaust. For Hagen, these similarities reflect the structural crisis of central and east European Jewry that emerged with the rise of nationalism and capitalism.

110. Weiner, "Nature, Nurture, and Memory," 1116.

111. Ibid., 1119.

112. Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain,* 364; Weiner, "Nature, Nurture, and Memory," 1114.

113. Weiner, "Nature, Nurture, and Memory," 1114.

drive.[114] To refashion the population on such an extensive scale required its thorough, indeed, obsessive, categorization, a procedure that made racial politics only more likely.

The Soviet utopia, like the Nazis' utopia, was a social project, very much a twentieth-century enterprise that, by its very nature, entailed popular participation. The Soviet regime, to be sure, exercised a "war against society," in the words of Nicolas Werth.[115] Yet we misread the history of the Stalin period if we take that as the entire picture. In comparison with the historiography on the Third Reich, there is an enormous deficit of research on the perpetrators, supporters, and bystanders of Soviet communism. Work in this area is only beginning, and as more research is done, it will become clear that a combination of self-interest and self-disciplining—not so terribly different from the process in the Third Reich—encompassed a very substantial segment of the population, the people who followed orders to repress the Cossacks, expropriate the peasants, purge party members, and deport the Chechens and Tatars. Though the orders came from the central state, their execution involved the participation of hundreds of thousands, probably millions, of Soviet citizens.[116] They denounced fellow citizens to the authorities and took the land, apartments, and positions of those expelled to the gulag or to the administrative or special settlements in the east. As members of the security organs of the Soviet state, they herded, guarded, and killed the victims. From the vantage point of common citizens, the act of denunciation or participation in the round-up of Koreans, Chechens, and Tatars might have simply been a means of protecting one's own position or securing material benefits by pillaging those less fortunate. From a larger perspective, such actions performed multiple purposes: they served as the means of implementing policies decreed at the center, whether the building of canals or the removal of suspect nationalities; they bound the participants to the regime; and they marked the outer manifestation of transformed inner lives, the "making" of Soviet citizens. However much the population's inner face was a mix of distance, hostility, opposition, and support, its outer face was one largely of compliance with the regime—exacted through fear and terror or won willingly by the regime's promises of progress and its cultivation of a sense of belonging and power.[117] As Vasilii Grossman's literary rendering

114. Still, many observers persist in talking about only the class and political purges; see, for example,Wolfgang Wippermann, *Totalitarismustheorien: Die Entwicklung der Diskussion von den Anfängen bis heute* (Darmstadt, 1997).

115. See Werth, "État contre son peuple."

116. The whole process of accommodation and complicity has been sorely neglected in the historiography on the Soviet Union. Werth, "État contre son peuple," 295, closes his study with a suggestive comment along these lines, but that is all. Similar shortcomings are evident in other recent general histories of the Soviet Union, for example, Robert Service, *A History of Twentieth-Century Russia* (Cambridge, Mass., 1998).

117. I am drawing here especially from Alf Lüdtke, "Einleitung: Herrschaft als soziale Praxis," in Lüdtke, ed., *Herrschaft als soziale Praxis: Historische und sozial-anthropologische Studien* (Göttingen, 1991), 9–63; Lüdtke, "Die DDR als Geschichte: Zur Geschichtsschreibung über die DDR" (unpublished manuscript, Göttingen, 1998), 32–40; and Thomas Lindenberger, "Die Diktatur der Grenzen: Zur Einleitung," in Lindenberger, ed., *Herr-*

of Soviet history in *Forever Flowing* makes clear, the line between the two—compliance attained by fear or won by acclamation—was anything but hard and firm.[118] The "gray zone" that Primo Levi depicted for the world of the Nazi concentration and extermination camps was perhaps even greater—and grayer—in the case of the Soviet Union.[119] At the same time, such actions made victims out of distinct population groups. In other words, the process of mobilizing the population was a mutual one: victims and perpetrators were made together—as Omer Bartov argued recently for the Nazi period, as Grossman depicted in *Forever Flowing*—and the same rituals that bound one side to the regime made the others into the objects of population politics.[120]

A final issue of comparison between the two systems concerns the charged issue of genocide. The very highly contested, inflation-prone term *genocide* needs to be used cautiously. Not every case of national and ethnic purging descends to genocide; not every massacre in history is genocidal in intent or scope. As numerous scholars have pointed out, the United Nations definition is at one and the same time too broad and too narrow. But if one does use, with all its problems, the U.N. definition, then one has to conclude that the Soviets engaged in some genocidal actions.[121] The U.N. Convention defines genocides as "acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group." The specific actions can range from deliberate killings to causing "serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group" or "inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction

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schaft und Eigen-Sinn in der Diktatur: Studien zur Gesellschaftsgeschichte der DDR (Cologne, 1999), 13–44. See also James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, 1990), and for a less metaphorical treatment of "face," Alexander Laban Hinton, "Why Did You Kill? The Cambodian Genocide and the Dark Side of Face and Honor," *Journal of Asian Studies* 57, no. 1 (1998): 93–122.

In regard to recent histories of ethnic cleansings or genocides, I would argue that an approach focused exclusively on the explicit actions of the state is too limited and loses sight of the way that, in the twentieth century, such actions become societal projects. This criticism is applicable, for example, to the enormously important recent work by Naimark, *Fires of Hatred,* and to Ben Kiernan's more general statements in, for example, "Sur la notion de génocide," *Le Débat* (March–April 1999): 179–92, though not necessarily to his highly significant major study, *Pol Pot Regime.*

118. Vasily Grossman, *Forever Flowing,* trans. Thomas P. Whitney (New York, 1972).

119. Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved,* trans. Raymond Rosenthal (New York, 1988), 36–69.

120. See Omer Bartov, "Defining Enemies, Making Victims: Germans, Jews, and the Holocaust," *American Historical Review* 103, no. 3 (1998): 771–816, on the mutually constitutive process of making victims and perpetrators.

121. The usefulness of the U.N. definition was a major point of conflict at the Comparative Genocides Conference, Barcelona, Spain, December 2000, sponsored by the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation and organized by the Genocide Studies Program at Yale University and the Center for Holocaust Studies at Clark University. The fact that current and potential war crimes trials are based on the U.N. Convention is a strong argument for maintaining the definition in scholarly as well as legal work. This is especially Ben Kiernan's argument. See Kiernan, "Sur la notion de génocide," and Kiernan, "Comparing Genocides: Some Underlying Themes" (paper presented at the Comparative Genocides Conference, Barcelona, Spain, December 2000).

in whole or in part."[122] There can be little doubt, I think, that the Soviets imposed conditions of life that they knew would result in severely high mortality rates of particular ethnically defined groups, like the Chechens, Ingush, Tatars, and Koreans. If they did not seek the actual physical annihilation of each and every one of these people, they certainly presumed the death "in part" of significant segments of the targeted populations. Moreover, while some groups, like the Koreans, were granted national institutions in their new settlements, others, notably Chechens and Ingush, were barred from using their language in schools or from engaging in other public forms of cultural expression.[123]

Yet it is important still to distinguish between states that commit genocide and genocidal regimes. The latter are, thankfully, relatively rare. They are the systems in which genocide moves to the core of state practices to such an extent that one can see the entire system revolving centrally around human destruction. The Third Reich constitutes the supreme example, and Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge a second one. The regimes that commit genocidal actions are many and include western colonial states going back to the fifteenth century as well as particular cases in the Soviet Union under Stalin.[124] But it is at this precise juncture that the absence of an explicit racial ideology in the Soviet Union becomes so critical. Racial ideology, when adopted and practiced by a state, necessarily entails the subordination of defined population groups and includes impulses toward ethnic cleansings and genocides. The absence of such an ideology acted as a brake on the Soviet regime's population politics, preventing the unfolding of a full-scale genocidal program along the lines of Nazi Germany. As a result, the state provided purged groups with provisions, however minimal; granted some of them ethnic institutions in the new places of deportation; and, after Stalin's death, could evolve into an authoritarian but not murderous regime, which even granted apologies and reinclusions to some of the groups purged in the 1930s and 1940s.[125]

The practices of racial politics brought the Soviet Union under Stalin uncomfortably close to the Third Reich, though vital distinctions re-

122. Quoted in Samuel Totten and William S. Parsons, "Introduction," in Samuel Totten, William S. Parsons, and Israel W. Charny, eds., *Genocides in the Twentieth Century: Critical Essays and Eyewitness Accounts* (New York, 1995), xiv.

123. Naimark, *Fires of Hatred,* 98. On the question of genocide, Naimark writes in relation to the Chechens, Ingush, and Tatars: "That tens of thousands died during the deportations and after they arrived at their destinations did not overly concern Soviet authorities, though killing off these nations in a genocidal attack was clearly not the Soviets' intention. Instead, policies were implemented to reeducate the Chechens-Ingush and Crimean Tatars. . . . The 'human material' was salvageable; just the nations—as nations—were slated to disappear through assimilation and detachment from their homelands" (105). On the basis of the U.N. definition, the events Naimark describes would constitute genocide.

124. For a forceful statement on the applicability of genocide to colonial states, see Elazar Barkan, "Indigenous Peoples Genocide: Terminology or Human Rights?" (paper presented at the Comparative Genocides Conference, Barcelona, Spain, December 2000).

125. On providing provisions and establishing institutions for some of the purged groups, see, for example, resolutions of the State Defense Committee, May 1944 and July 1944, and communiqué from the Kazakh Communist Party to the National Commissariat of the Interior, 10 January 1945, all in Bugai, "20–40-e gody," 132–36.

mained as well. The recent work on Soviet nationalities has rightly placed Soviet patterns more firmly within the general trends of western history—including its fixation on race and nation in the modern world and the all too common practice of ethnic cleansing and genocide. The racial politics of the Stalin era were not predetermined and were never a fixed, continual characteristic of the Soviet system. But neither were they an aberration or accident. They sit firmly in the mainstream of modern history, marked by the easy slippage between open and harshly exclusive articulations of the nation, by the fateful ubiquity of racial politics.