Constructing Ethnic Identities in Early Soviet Ukraine

Olena Palko and Roman Korshuk

Following the collapse of the Habsburg, Ottoman, and Russian empires, thousands of disparate communities suddenly discovered that they now existed as minorities, often in areas adjacent to their internationally designated homelands. The rights of these various minorities within the borders of the new nation-states were recognised and remained officially under the protection of the League of Nations, from its founding in 1920, to its replacing by the United Nations in 1946. The newly proclaimed Soviet Union, however, did not become a member of the League until 1934, meaning that minorities in this ethnographically diverse area effectively became subject to its domestic and foreign policy considerations. Throughout the 1920s, the Soviet leadership strove to conduct a national minority policy, which would appear to be more generous than the minority treaty requirements, imposed by the League of Nations upon the imperial successor states of central and eastern Europe. In a way, one can say that the Soviet Union in the 1920s developed its policies *vis-à-vis* its western neighbours, particularly Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Romania. In their interwar forms, these three countries possessed large Ukrainian and Belarusian communities, whose sentiments and grievances Soviet leaders wished to use against their respective governments. While Poland, for instance, strove for homogenization and opposed granting its minorities national-cultural rights, the Soviet Union not only declared ethnicity, or rather "nationality" (*natsional'nost'*) as it was called in Soviet discourse, to be a fundamental social category, but also presented ethnic heterogeneity as one of the defining features of Soviet society.

The Soviet Minorities Experiment

The Soviet Union, founded in late December 1922, presided over an extraordinarily diverse population. At the beginning of the 1920s, the Bolsheviks had declared their intention to achieve socialism and national minorities were to play an equal part in the process of its construction. For the first time in history, nationality, or ethnicity (*narodnost'*), became a legally defined category and formed the basis for the administrative (as well as economic) organisation of the new Soviet state. While the 1897 imperial Russian census had offered no direct question on nationality, with imperial demographers defined the ethnic make-up of the empire through a combination of questions on native language, religion and social estate (*soslovie*), the category of *narodnost'* became the key determinant for the first Soviet census of 1926. Moreover, unlike in 1897, the 1926 census was based on presenting nationality as subjective self-determination. As recorded in the survey, 80 per cent of respondents in Soviet Ukraine gave Ukrainian as their nationality, 9.23 identified as Russian, 5.43 as Jewish, 1.64 as Polish, and 1.36 as German. Less numerous were Moldovans, Greeks, Bulgarians, Belarusians, Czechs, Tatars, Gipsies, and Armenians.

Ronald G. Suny and Terry Martin define the 1920s as "the great era of the territorialization of ethnicity" whereby each nationality, no matter how numerically small, was granted the possibility of self-rule in its native language, which extended downward into smaller and smaller territories, the smallest being the size of a single village.[1] Overall, during the 1920s, ethnicity became territorially institutionalized, meaning that every Soviet nationality was provided with a territory of their own, either in the form of a separate, or an autonomous, Soviet republic, national region, or a separate national town or village council (*soviet*).

Soviet Ukraine was the first Soviet republic to implement this reform. This was launched on August 29 1924, by the Council of People's Commissars' (or *Radnarkom*'s) decree "On the formation of national districts and soviets", which resulted in the creation of an intricate system of village soviets (*silski rady*, or *silrady*) throughout Ukraine, the boundaries between which were determined by the ethnic composition of those communities. As Martin notes, the aim of this reform was to create "a maximum possible number of national soviets, which would include in each soviet the maximum possible percentage of each national minority."[2]

By 1929, there were 26 national districts in Ukraine, of which nine were Russian, seven German, four Bulgarian, three Greek, one Polish, and two Jew-

ish. In addition, 1089 national village soviets and 107 town soviets were also established, including some which were formed for the benefit of the territories considerably smaller Swedish and Albanian minorities. Within these national-territorial units, the Soviet state strove to provide access to state institutions, political representation, police and judicial protection, health care, and educational and cultural opportunities delivered in the respective minority language. Moreover, for those individuals of minority origin residing beyond their respective national-territorial units, the state pledged to provide non-territorial autonomy with similar access to services in minority languages and guarantee national rights.

It is not accidental that Ukraine was the first republic to implement this experiment, and later serve as a blueprint for the other Soviet republics. With its multi-ethnic and multi-confessional character, proximity to the western border and previous experience of national movements – both for the Ukrainians and other minorities – Soviet Ukraine was perhaps the only republic in which the wider Union's domestic and foreign concerns mutated and reinforced each other. The generous treatment afforded to both Ukrainians and the so-called western minorities, particularly Poles and Germans, was not only meant to encourage these communities to engage with the rest of Soviet society, but also provide a mechanism to undermine the governments and anti-Soviet propaganda of neighbouring countries.

After Russians and Jews, Poles constituted the largest minority group in Soviet Ukraine. In fact, Ukraine was home to almost half of the Soviet Union's entire Polish population – 476.435 Poles to be precise, most of whom were concentrated in the western provinces of Volhynia, Podolia, and Kyiv. There, as elsewhere in Ukraine, Poles were organized into national soviets; by 1929, 148 Polish national village soviets had been created across Ukraine. In places where the settlement of national minorities had been more concentrated, the creation of separate national regions was also envisaged. Following the official decree of 1922, the first and only Polish national region in Soviet Ukraine was founded in Volhynia province (*okruh*) in 1925, some 120 km east of the Polish border. This new district occupied an area of 650 km^2 with 42,161 inhabitants, out of which 68.9 per cent were recorded as Poles. The centre of this Polish region was in Dovbysh, renamed as Markhlevsk to commemorate the late Polish Bolshevik leader Julian Marchlewski.

The Polish region was established in what was still a socioeconomically backward area; it was far from the railway lines and was still unconnected to the telephone or telegraphy network. The only industry was a ceramics fac-

tory, opened in 1840, that had resumed production in 1922. By 1925, the area's population was predominantly peasant, who represented 92 per cent of the total; literacy was low (47 per cent for men and 37 per cent for women); while only 4 per cent of households had been collectivised – the lowest out of all the national units. Within this new administrative unit, Poles received territorial and cultural autonomy with Roman Catholics being permitted to continue their traditional religious practices, albeit under strict party supervision. The region could also boast its own newspaper, *Marchlewszczyzna Radziecka* (*Soviet Marchlewszczyzna*). Moreover, the district had preferential access to state funding to allow for the accelerated modernisation of the region and its population.[3]

The Criteria for Ethnicity

In the historical region of Right-Bank Ukraine – the area with the largest Soviet Polish population– local identities were complex, with entangled language, culture, and religious practices. Unlike the Poles, Ukraine's other minority groups were easier to differentiate: Jews were defined by religion and the common experience of restricted movement; Greeks and Bulgarians by the compact nature of their settlements in the south, and obvious linguistic distinctions; and Germans who, despite being organized around different religious groups and vernaculars, enjoyed a special autonomous status until the 1880s that made them more "recognisable" in cultural and social terms.

By contrast, Poles appeared more ambiguous. Indeed, identities in Western Ukraine were so entangled that it became almost impossible to differentiate a Ukrainian from a Pole. It should be mentioned that this region, prior to the third partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1795, had formerly belonged to Poland. Historically, the Polish elites had never stopped opposing the Russian imperial administration, resulting in two major revolts from 1830 to 1831 and 1863 to 1864, which also had found purchase with the local Ukrainian population under the slogan "Our freedom and yours". The imperial administration responded with repressive measures against the Polish population – there were no Polish schools, the use of the Polish language was prohibited. This resulted in the assimilation of the Polish population, with many families switching to Ukrainian or used the mixture of the two.

The imperial legacy posed a great challenge to the Bolsheviks' plans. As demonstrated by the official 1925 inspection of the Polish population in Vol-

hynia region, in Koshelivka village soviet all Catholics regarded themselves as 'Poles', although 70 per cent of them used Ukrainian for everyday communication, whereas in the neighbouring village Baliarka, only 5 per cent used Polish.[4] When asked why people would use Ukrainian instead, some responded that it was a habit and that they did not know that "such freedom for the Polish language existed".[5] Moreover, the same party inspection found that the local population could not differentiate between religion and nationality, with all Catholics being regarded simply as "Poles". For example, in the village of Gorodyshche, in Shepetivka *okruh* only 5 per cent of population could tell *natsional'nost'* from religion, or being Polish from being a Roman Catholic.

The biggest challenge, however, was posed by those "in the middle": the Ukrainian Catholics.[6] For this group, national identity mattered since, depending on classification, they were to be subjected either to Soviet Ukrainization policies (as a titular Ukrainian nation) or the alternative minority policies (as Poles). For the Ukrainian lobby, Ukrainian Catholics were "Polonized by the Catholic Church Ukrainians",[7] whereas for the Polish lobby they were Poles who had been assimilated under the tsarist autocracy.[8] Unfortunately, in the case of Soviet statisticians, these people of ambiguous identity could not exist in two categories at the same time. In this debate, the minority specialists had won. It is safe to suggest that the increase in the number of Poles in Ukraine was due to the re-categorization of those Ukrainian Catholics. In the case of one particular village, Stara Syniava, this change was startling, shifting from 20 Poles and 2006 Ukrainian Catholics in 1924, to 2325 Poles and no Ukrainians in 1925.[9]

As explained by the party officials, before people were afraid of their identity, but "now the Polish population is flourishing thanks to our nationality politics, and the number [in 1925] is 309.800 Poles, 22 per cent of whom are definitely Poles", the latter point referring to those who spoke the Polish language.[10] Consequently, minority specialists worked tirelessly to promote Polish and teach their native language to those categorised as Poles. As mentioned, there were Polish-language schools, reading huts and literacy rooms as well as crash language courses for governmental employees. Pedagogical institutes were also created to prepare teachers and educators while publication in Polish was prioritised.

Motives Behind Ethnic Identification

In the Soviet context, the minority question was particularly sensitive. By reaching out to minorities, Soviet leaders pursued a number of objectives, most pressingly the need to consolidate Soviet rule in ethnically diverse, non-Russian provinces. The arduous experience of the Russian Civil War on the imperial frontiers had itself raised the question of a need for cooperation with local populations. Instead of alienating, or even annihilating, non-Russian elites, the Bolsheviks sought to gain their trust and make them eager contributors to the project of building socialism. In terms of "small western minorities", such as Germans or Poles, there was also an urgent need to shift their loyalties, especially given the support they offered to their kin states during the German occupation of Ukraine in 1918, and the territory's brief occupation by a newly restored Poland in 1920.

To engage minorities in the Soviet state-building project, however, the party needed to overcome a century-long legacy of distrust in central (read: Russian) institutions. As highlighted by Joseph Stalin, in order to make Soviet power "near and dear to the masses of the border regions of Russia", it was necessary to integrate "all the best local people" into the new administration, since "the masses should see that the Soviet power and its organs are the products of their own efforts, the embodiment of their aspirations".[11] The use of native languages was viewed as easing this process of political socialization.

In addition, the war and revolution had left the country devastated. The economy, already damaged through the exertions of the war effort, was ruined. "War Communism" – an emergency economic programme aimed at assisting the Bolshevik military campaign by the nationalization of industries, compulsory labor conscription, and forced grain requisitioning – had only exacerbated the chaos. To fulfil their vision of progress, the Bolsheviks were in dire need of a modernization drive for the country as a whole. However, the modernization of the more backward regions meant standardization and reordering their populations into national categories.

This preferential treatment of minorities had a broader implication. The central party leadership did not stop treating "western national minorities", such as Poles or Germans, with suspicion, especially given the widespread fear of another Polish invasion in the late 1920s. As a consequence, these minorities continued to be closely monitored by the Soviet secret services, which, in turn, reported regularly on the influence that the Polish government continued to exercise over their Soviet co-nationals mainly through their diplomatic

services and religious leaders. To prevent minority communities from siding with their 'home' states, the party sought to reduce national discontent, and thereby the potential influence of neighbouring governments in the case of a future war. Particular emphasis was made on poor and middle-income peasants – that constituted the majority of the Polish minority population – who could benefit most from the Soviet modernisation effort.

While fear of foreign invasion was a dominant security concern of the day, an ostentatiously generous treatment of minorities could also provide a positive outlook for the Soviet Union internationally, helping to spread Communism beyond its western borders. In fact, every opportunity was used to contrast the Soviet preferential treatment of its minorities to the assimilatory policies of the Second Polish Republic. At the fifth anniversary of the Polish Markhlevsk region's founding in 1930, Jan Saulevich, the vice director of the Ukrainian Commission of National Minority Affairs, explained that the Polish Region served as an example for workers and peasants just across the border that a proletarian society based on Polish culture was indeed possible. As he elucidated further:

> Situated in the Polish-Ukrainian borderland, the Polish district is a living example of how different the policies in capitalist Poland are; it serves as a constant reminder of the political persecutions of the Ukrainians and Belarusians in Poland; the establishment of the district became one of the main factors to draw and engage the Polish peasant masses into building of socialism, gaining their devotion to the common cause of the Motherland of all the workers – the Soviet Union.[12]

Unravelling the Soviet Dilemma

The Soviet minority experiment was meant to solve the nationality problem once and for all; instead, it created a strong link between ethnic identity, administrative control over territory, access to state funding and, most importantly, land ownership. Thus, the programme only exacerbated existing ethnic tensions. Within less than a decade, the Soviet authorities would come to abandon its strategy of ethnic proliferation and instead start using those state-imposed national categories against their bearers, subjecting entire minority populations to russification and assimilation, ethnic terror, and deportations.

Already on March 5, 1930, the Party Central Committee authorized the deportation of 3000 kulak families from Belorussia and another 15.000 from Ukraine, with the added stipulation being "In the first line, those of Polish nationality."[13] This was followed by the deportation of some 10.000–15.000 Poles from the border regions to mainland Ukraine in 1935–36. A year later, the first wave of Poles from the Zhytomyr and Podolia regions, 36.045 in total, were deported to Kazakhstan.[14] In the wake of the Great Terror, these deportations of ethnic populations intensified and were often accompanied by mass executions. In total, between 1937 and 1938, almost 140.000 Soviet Poles were arrested, of whom 111.000 were executed.[15] Parallel to this, in the so-called "German operation", almost 57.000 ethnic Germans were arrested, of whom almost 42.000 were shot.[16] Both the Polish and German operations provided a model for other national operations organized by the central government. Among them were the Korean, Chinese, Afghan, Iranian, Greek, Bulgarian-Macedonian, Finnish, and Estonian operations.

During the Great Terror, about one-third of the total victims, or 800.000 people, were arrested, deported, or executed on national grounds. These purges escalated even further with the Soviet Union's entry into the Second World War. Almost 82 per cent of Soviet Germans, for example, were deported. Other great waves of deportations unfolded in the southern regions from November 1943 to June 1944, and between July and December 1944, that involved Chechens, Ingush, Crimean Tatars, and at least ten other groups. Following the war's conclusion, yet another round of purges affected populations in the western borderlands, especially in the re-annexed Baltic republics, and newly incorporated Western Ukraine and Belarus.

Scholars have for some time been puzzled by this historical dilemma of the simultaneous promotion and destruction of national identities within the Soviet context. In his seminal work, *Magnetic Mountain*, published in 1995, Stephen Kotkin proposed the view that Stalinism represented its own form of civilisation, being a "progressive modernity".[17] Those scholars who have followed this interpretation, regarded Stalinism as an "Enlightenment" phenomenon, whereby the Soviet political project was founded with the ambition to create a new harmonious society on rational, scientific principles. Accordingly, the Soviet authorities desired to transform the socioeconomic order and refashion wider society. Accordingly, the state was ready to employ unprecedented level of social intervention. In attaining this future socialist utopia, the Soviet authorities also expected the allegiance of their minority populations. These groups would be politically and socially active, eager to contribute to

the Soviet modernization effort, and willingly join the Soviet state apparatus; they would, using Kotkin's phrase, "speak Bolshevik", albeit in a variety of national languages. According to Kate Brown, this was reliant upon "the art of persuasion via enlightenment"[18]: a number of cultural, educational, and ideological initiatives were launched that aimed to bring ethnic populations closer to socialism through the means of their native languages.

By the late 1920s, however, the art of persuasion had reached its limit, having never attained the lofty objectives it was meant to fulfil. Although categorized along national lines, as the primary sources suggest, local communities continued to hold fast to their hybrid identities and local cultures, preferring to stay away from the party and ignoring its various initiatives. Moreover, they did not wish to join collective farms and continued to distrust the Soviet regime.[19] Following the Enlightenment perspective, the state resorted to violence in order to accelerate the process of creating a pure community by "excising" those deemed to be obstructing the Soviet state project. In this search for evil, class and ethnicity concurred. Mass deportations from the border zones commenced in the spring of 1930, with many of those targeted as kulaks being repressed only because of their ethnicity.

In his attempt to explain the paradox of this simultaneous pursuit of nation-building and nation-destroying during the Stalinist period, Martin suggests that ethnic terror became an "unintended consequence" of the Soviet modernizing mission. Instead of transcending national identities, the Soviet strategy of ethnic stratification and labelling turned the impersonal category of nationality into a "valuable form of social capital".[20] Those state-imposed national categories started to be used on the ground to voice local interests. The launch of the collectivization campaign also precipitated a mass emigration movement among almost all of the Soviet Union's western national minority communities. Hundreds of Poles fled across the Polish border while others took part in demonstrations demanding the right to emigrate.

These emigration movements became a sign that the Soviet Piedmont Principle, according to which national minorities were meant to draw their brethren from across the border into the embrace of Communism, had failed. Instead, when collectivization and famine threatened their livelihood, Poles and Germans used their national identities to seek help from respective consulates and petition to emigrate, thus repudiating their Soviet fatherland. Such actions reinforced Soviet security concerns and exacerbated the fear of foreign subversion. In addition, there was a violent resistance to collectiviza-

tion throughout the non-Russian periphery, with the worst peasant uprising taking place in the Polish-Ukrainian border in late February 1930.

Moreover, the Polish minority remained the hardest to collectivize. According to an inspection of the republic's national regions carried out in March 1931, the Polish once lagged far behind other such districts and had the lowest rate of collectivization – some 16.8 per cent (against 4 per cent three years ago), with a 1.8 per cent annual increase during the 1920s (the average rate across Soviet Ukraine being 58.8 per cent by this point).[21] Coupled with the emigration movement, local opposition to collectivization raised questions of the population's perceived loyalty. Consequently, the Soviet authorities responded with the ethnic cleansing of the borderlands and, ultimately, ethnic terror throughout the wider Union.

Eric D. Weitz, a historian of Germany, proposed another approach to understanding the nature of the Soviet ethnic terror under Stalin.[22] In a 2002 *Slavic Review* forum on the topic of race, Weitz argued that Stalin's mass deportations of certain groups during the 1930s and 1940s constituted a "racial politics without the concept of race." Thus, he suggested similarities between the Nazi and Soviet treatment of minority groups. Although the Soviets explicitly rejected the ideology of race, with such (using Stalin's term) "zoological" thinking being a characteristic of the Nazi system and degenerate bourgeois society in general, Weitz argues that traces of racial politics gradually crept into Soviet nationalities policy, especially during the Great Terror and the war period. Certain national groups, who proved to be particularly resistant to socialist appeals, were targeted as "enemy nations" leading to roundups, forced deportations, and resettlement in horrendous conditions. As Amir Weiner put it, "enemy groups previously considered to be differentiated, reformable, and redeemable were now viewed as undifferentiated, unreformable, and irredeemable collectives."[23]

Weitz maintains that race is present when a defined population group is "seen to have particular characteristics that are indelible, immutable, and transgenerational."[24] Race is fate, claims Weitz. As a consequence, certain national groups, targeted as the enemies of socialism, became "racialized" in the sense that their suspect characteristics were seen as psychologically intrinsic to every member of their respective communities and transmitted across the generations. Weitz further maintains that:

> 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.[25]

It was this "racial logic" that made Weitz's approach highly controversial. Numerous scholars of the interwar Soviet Union attacked him for obfuscating important differences between the Soviet and Nazi regimes. Prominent among these critics was Francine Hirsch, a renowned scholar of the Soviet nationality question.[26] Although the Soviet regime practiced the politics of discrimination and exclusion, Hirsch rejects the notion that these were committed as part of a programme of "racial politics". In Soviet thought, nationalities, like classes, were conceptualized as sociohistorical groups with a shared consciousness, and not racial-biological groups.[27] Similar to the belief that different classes would eventually disappear under socialism, so to would separate nationalities eventually merge into the Soviet international whole.

The Soviet case presents several important differences to Nazi Germany. First, Soviet experts were tasked with providing scientific evidence for differentiating race and nationality, up to the point that there were two different disciplines dealing with these categories: ethnographers dealt with national cultures, whereas anthropologists were responsible for assessing perceived racial differences. In the process of historical development, both racial and national distinctions would gradually disappear leading to the unification of peoples as new 'ethnohistorical units' – nationalities and nations – based on shared language, culture, and consciousness. While German anthropologists were concerned with "racial purity", their Soviet colleagues described racial mixing as a by-product of sociohistorical development and indicative of an advanced society.[28]

Second, the historiographical focus on race obscures an important aspect of the evolution of ethnic repression in the Soviet Union. At least during the pre-war years, repressive state policies were aimed at specific territories, mainly border regions, where representatives of the so-called western national minorities predominantly lived. The early wave of deportations mainly targeted these politically suspicious segments, but not their communities as a whole. The lists of deportees from villages with "concentrated Polish and German populations" for instance, included "independent peasants who did not fulfil their obligations to the government and those collective farmers [*kolhospnyky*] who cannot be trusted in the context of the border zone."[29] Once those "harmful elements" were removed, many more minority representatives

remained in the region. It is also important to note, that these deportees often still remained within the boundaries of Soviet Ukraine. There were no instances of intentional mass murder targeting populations at the time. The matters changed with the outbreak of the Second World War, when minorities started to be targeted in their entirety and were subsequently deported, mainly to Soviet Kazakhstan, with executions becoming commonplace.

Third, there was an important difference in the way representatives of different nationalities, especially those of "enemy nations", were treated by the authorities. The Soviet regime did not persecute nationalities because of so-called "biological weaknesses", neither did it label particular nationalities as "degenerate races". Instead, they targeted certain peoples for their perceived lack of allegiance and loyalty to the Soviet state, characterizing them as "bourgeois nationalities," "disloyal peoples," and "enemy nations." Respective repressive measures were implemented as a reaction to the threat of nationalism (internally) and fear of foreign intervention (externally), not least due to Poland's attempts to reach out to Poles across its eastern border through the channels provided by the Roman Catholic Church and diplomatic services; or the Third Reich's claims to intervene in the affairs of "ethnic Germans" in the Soviet Union. In addition to Soviet security paranoia, the persistent opposition of certain ethnic minority groups to Soviet policies (collectivization in particular) led to wide-spread concerns that these nationalities could not be "re-invented" as "Soviet" nations, threatening the entire success of the Soviet socialist project.[30]

Moreover, even at the height of the ethnic-based purges, assimilation or re-integration into Soviet society remained possible. It is worth noting, that all former kulaks – regardless of ethnic origin – actually regained their voting rights with the adoption of the "Stalin Constitution" in December 1936.[31] Furthermore, female "special settlers" who married men of other nationalities in the region of resettlement and rejected their old national cultures could be reinstated as Soviet citizens.[32] War provided another possibility to redeem themselves by offering a chance to prove one's loyalty to the Soviet state. Under the official resolution issued in April 1942, former kulaks could undertake military service, with their families being released from the special settlements and receiving new passports. Mass rehabilitation intensified in the post-war years. Weiner maintains that in 1946, the regime removed all limitations imposed on the families of former kulaks who had children serving in the Soviet Armed Forces, were participants in the Great Patriotic War, or received governmental awards. This also applied to women who had married local residents.[33]

While this chapter has no intention of whitewashing the Soviet regime and its numerous crimes against individuals and groups, including ethnic minorities, this brief comparison between the Soviet and Nazi population politics exposes a necessary distinction between states that commit genocide and genocidal regimes. Nazi racial politics resulted in genocide because they endeavoured not just to exclude certain groups from the society but to eliminate their "genetic material" altogether. By contrast, the Soviet regime did not aspire to eliminate its nationalities. Instead, it strove to reinvent its peoples as loyal Soviet citizens and resorted to any means available to achieve this. No doubt, the Soviet regime had the capacity to physically eliminate all members of "selected" nationalities, however, it preferred mass deportations. Having declared the objective to fight any form of nationalism, the authorities initiated a campaign to eradicate the national cultures of targeted ethnic groups: schools were closed down or converted to exclusively using the Ukrainian language, national regions were liquidated, and, most drastically, the populations were forcibly relocated from their historic places of settlement. The Polish district, mentioned earlier in this essay, was reformed in 1935 and split between other administrative units, thus drawing a line to 'Red Polonia' as this experiment was often dubbed.

Instead of searching for similarities between Nazi and Soviet population politics, both should be treated as extreme cases of what James C. Scott dubbed "high modernism", a state's desire for "the mastery of nature (including human nature), and, above all, the rational design of social order commensurate with the scientific understanding of natural laws."[34] As the cases of the Third Reich and the Soviet Union under Stalin demonstrate, "sweeping, rational engineering" of society implemented by a strong, centralized state, and combined with a weak or non-existent civil society, can easily result in societal catastrophes. Nevertheless, state-initiated social engineering, and the violence it necessitates, transcends any ideology or political system. Hence, the Soviet purification drive was comparable not only to that of National Socialism, but also similar to other, non-totalitarian states in 20th-century Europe, such as postwar Poland or Czechoslovakia, or the earlier example of the 1923 population exchange between Turkey and Greece.

Notes

1 Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), p. 111. Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).
2 Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, p. 35.
3 *Tsentral'nyi deryhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlady Ukraïny* (thereafter: TsDAVO), F.413, op.1, spr. 500.
4 TsDAVO, 413/1/6, ark. 101.
5 TsDAVO, 413/1/6, ark. 102.
6 For the discussion on the problemed posed by the 'so-called' Ukrainian Catholics in Podillia, see: TsDAVO, 413-1-99, ark. 90–96.
7 TsDAVO, 413/1/51, ark. 41.
8 TsDAVO, 413/1/99, ark. 21; 36; 95.
9 TsDAVO, 413/1/99, ark. 90.
10 TsDAVO, 413/1/13, ark. 60.
11 I. V. Stalin, "Politika partii po natsional'nomu voprosu," in *Sochineniia*, Vol. 4, p. 358.
12 Quoted from *Entsyklopediia istorii Ukraïny*: In 10 Vols (Kyiv: NAN Ukraïny, 2010). Vol.7: 306–307.
13 Martin, "Origins of Soviet Ethnic Cleansing," p. 839.
14 *Rubl'ov O., Repryntsev, V. "Represii proty poliakiv v Ukraïni u 1930-ti roky." Z Arkhiviv VUChK-HPU-NKVD-KGB.* 1/2: 2/3 (1995): 116–156.
15 Petrov, N. V. and Roginskiy, A. B. "Pol'skaia operaziia NKVD 1937–1938 gg," in A. E. Guryanov (ed.) *Represii protiv poliakov i pol'skikh grazhdan* (Moscow: Zven'ya Press, 1997), pp. 37–38.
16 Okhotin, N. and Roginskiy, A. B. "Iz istorii 'nemezkoi operazii NKVD 1937–38 gg." in I. Shcherbakova (ed.) *Nakazanyi narod. Represii protiv rissiiskikh nemzev* (Moscow: Zven'ya Press, 1999), pp. 73–74.
17 Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).
18 Brown, *Biography*, 92.
19 Olena Palko, "'Poles of the World Unite': The Transnational History of the 1929 World Congress of Poles Abroad in the Context of Interwar Soviet–Polish Rivalries," *Nationalities Papers* 50:6 (2022): 1143–1163. doi:10.1017/nps.2021.39

20 Terry Martin, "Modernization of Neo-Traditionalism? Ascribed Nationality and Soviet Primordialism," in Sheila Fitzpatrick (ed.) *Stalinism. New Directions*, 348–367 (London/New York: Routledge, 1999).
21 TsDAVO, F.413, op. 1, spr. 552, ark.14.
22 Eric D. Weitz, "Racial Politics without the Concept of Race: Re-evaluating Soviet Ethnic and National Purges," *Slavic Review* 61 (1) (2002): 1–29.
23 Amir Weiner, "Nature, Nurture, and Memory in a Socialist Utopia: Delineating the Soviet Socio-Ethnic Body in the Age of Socialism," *The American Historical Review* 104:4 (1999), p. 1115.
24 Weitz, "Racial Politics," p. 7.
25 Ibid, p. 24.
26 Francine Hirsch, "Race without the Practice of Racial Politics," *Slavic Review* 61 (1) (2002): 30–43.
27 Ibid, p. 30.
28 Hirsch, "Race," p. 36.
29 *Tsentral'nyi deryhavnyi arkhiv hromads'kykh ob'iednan' Ukraïny* (TsDAGO), F1, op.20, spr.6828, ark. 316–317.
30 Hirsch, "Race," pp. 37–38.
31 J. Arch Getty, "State and Society under Stalin: Constitutions and Elections in the 1930s," *Slavic Review* 50, 1 (1991): 18–35.
32 Hirsch, *Race*, p. 41.
33 Weiner, *Nature*, pp. 1132–33.
34 James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 4.

Selected Bibliography

Bemporad, Elissa. *Becoming Soviet Jews: The Bolshevik Experiment in Minsk* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013).
Brown, Kate. A *Biography of No Place: Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004).
Hirsch, Francine. *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).
Iakubova Larysa. *Povsiakdenne zhyttia etnichnykh menshyn radianskoï Ukraïny u mizhvoiennu dobu* (Kyiv: Instytut istoriï Ukraïny, 2011).
Martin, Terry. *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2001).

Nekrich, Aleksandr M. *The Punished Peoples: The Deportation and Fate of Soviet Minorities at the End of the Second World War* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1978).

Palko, Olena. "Debating the early Soviet nationalities policy: the case of Ukraine", in James Harris, Lara Dauds, Peter Whitewood (eds.) *The Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution: Illiberal Liberation, 1917–1941*, 157–172 (London: Bloomsbury, 2020).

Pauly, Matthew D. *Breaking the Tongue: Language, Education, and Power in Soviet Ukraine, 1923–1934* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2014).

Suny, Ronald Grigor. *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993).