

The
**NATIONAL
QUESTION**
and
LENINISM

Joseph Stalin



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and Leninism*

BY JOSEPH STALIN



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N O T E

Twenty odd years ago Joseph Stalin received a number of letters raising problems in connection with the national question and asking him for elucidation. In March 1929, he wrote a letter addressed to two of his correspondents which replied not only to the questions they had asked but to others as well.

This reply, printed in this pamphlet, deals with the concept of "nation," the rise and development of nations, the future of nations and of national languages, and the Leninist policy on the national question. *The National Question and Leninism* supplements the author's major study, *Marxism and the National Question*.

The Concept of "Nation"

(I have received your letters. They are similar to a whole number of letters on the same subject I have received from other comrades during the past few months. I have decided, however, to answer you particularly, because you put things more bluntly and thereby help to achieve clarity. True, the answers you give in your letters to the questions raised are wrong, but this is another matter—of this we shall speak below.

Well, let us pass on to the subject.)

The Russian Marxists have long had their theory of nations. According to this theory, a nation is a historically evolved, stable community of people, based upon the common possession of four principal attributes, namely: a common language, a common territory, a common economic life, and a common psychological make-up manifesting itself in common specific features of national culture. This theory, as we know, has received general recognition in our Party.

It is evident from your letters that you consider this theory inadequate. You therefore propose that the four attributes of a nation be supplemented by a fifth, which is that a nation must possess its own, separate national state. You consider that, without this fifth attribute, there is and there can be no such thing as a nation.

I think that the scheme you propose, with its new, fifth attribute of the concept "nation," is profoundly mistaken and cannot be justified either theoretically or practically—politically.

According to your scheme, only such nations could be recognized as nations as have their own state, separate from others, and all oppressed nations which have no independent statehood would have to be deleted from the category of

nations: furthermore, the struggle of oppressed nations against national oppression, and the struggle of colonial peoples against imperialism would have to be excluded from the concept "national movement" and "national-liberation movement."

More, according to your scheme we would have to assert:

1. That the Irish became a nation only after the formation of the "Irish Free State," and that before that they did not constitute a nation;

2. That the Norwegians were not a nation before Norway's secession from Sweden, and became a nation only after they seceded;

3. That the Ukrainians were not a nation when the Ukraine formed part of tsarist Russia; that they became a nation only after they seceded from Soviet Russia under the Central Rada and Hetman Skoropadsky, but again ceased to be a nation after they united their Ukrainian Soviet Republic with the other Soviet Republics to form the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

A multitude of similar examples could be cited.

Obviously, a scheme which leads to such absurd conclusions cannot be regarded as a scientific scheme.

Practically—politically, your scheme inevitably leads to the justification of national, imperialist oppression, whose proponents emphatically refuse to recognize oppressed and unequal nations which have no separate national state of their own as real nations, and consider that this circumstance gives them the right to oppress these nations.

I shall say nothing of the fact that your scheme would provide a justification for the bourgeois nationalists in our Soviet Republics who argue that the Soviet nations ceased to be nations when they consented to combine their national Soviet Republics into a Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

That is how matters stand with regard to "supplementing" and "amending" the Russian Marxist theory of nations.

Only one thing remains, and that is to admit that the Russian Marxist theory of nations is the only correct theory.

The Rise and Development of Nations

One of the grave mistakes you make is that you lump together all existing nations and fail to see any fundamental difference between them.

There are different kinds of nations. There are nations which developed in the epoch of rising capitalism, when the bourgeoisie, destroying feudalism and feudal disunity, gathered the parts of nations together and cemented them. These are the so-called "modern" nations.

You assert that nations arose and existed before capitalism. But how could nations have arisen and existed before capitalism, in the period of feudalism, when countries were split up into separate, independent principalities, which, far from being bound together by national ties, emphatically denied the necessity for such ties? Your erroneous assertions notwithstanding, there were no nations in the precapitalist period, nor could there be, because there were as yet no national markets and no economic or cultural national centers, and, consequently, there were none of the factors which put an end to the economic disunity of a given people and draw its hitherto disunited parts together into an integral national whole.

Of course, the elements of nationhood—language, territory, common culture, etc.—did not fall from the skies, but evolved gradually in the precapitalist period. But these elements were in a rudimentary state and, at best, were only a potentiality, that is, they constituted the possibility of the formation of a nation in the future, given certain favorable conditions. The potentiality became a reality only in the period of rising capitalism, with its national market and its economic and cultural centers.

In this connection it would be well to recall the remarkable words of Lenin on the subject of the rise of nations, contained in his pamphlet *What the "Friends of the People" Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats*. Refuting the Populist Mikhailovsky, who deduced the rise of national ties and national unity from the development of gentile ties, Lenin says:

"And so, national ties are a continuation and generalization of gentile ties! Mr. Mikhailovsky, evidently, borrows his ideas of the history of society from the fairy tale that is taught to schoolboys. The history of society—this copybook maxim runs—is that first there was the family, that nucleus of all society . . . then the family grew into the tribe, and the tribe grew into the state. If Mr. Mikhailovsky impressively repeats this childish nonsense, it only goes to show—apart from everything else—that he has not the slightest inkling of the course even of Russian history. While one might speak of gentile life in ancient Russia, there can be no doubt that by the Middle Ages, the era of the Muscovite tsars, these gentile ties no longer existed, that is to say, the state was based on territorial unions and not gentile unions: the landlords and the monasteries took their peasants from various localities, and the village communities thus formed were purely territorial units. But one could hardly speak of national ties in the true sense of the word: at that time the state was divided into separate lands, sometimes even principalities, which preserved strong traces of former autonomy, peculiarities of administration, at times their own troops (the local boyars went to war at the head of their own companies), their own customs borders, and so forth. Only the modern period of Russian history (beginning approximately with the seventeenth century) is characterized by an actual amalgamation of all such regions, lands and principalities into a single whole. This amalgamation, most esteemed Mr. Mikhailovsky, was not brought about by gentile ties, nor even by their continuation and generalization: it was brought about by the growth of exchange between regions, the grad-

ual growth of commodity circulation and the concentration of the small local markets into a single, all-Russian market. Since the leaders and masters of this process were the merchant capitalists, the creation of these national ties was nothing but the creation of bourgeois ties.”*

That is how matters stand with regard to the rise of the so-called “modern” nations.

The bourgeoisie and its nationalist parties were and are in this period the principal leading force of such nations. Class peace within the nation for the sake of “national unity”; territorial expansion of one’s own nation by seizure of the national territories of others; distrust and hatred of other nations; suppression of national minorities; a united front with imperialism—such is the ideological, social, and political stock-in-trade of these nations.

Such nations must be characterized as bourgeois nations. Examples are the French, English, Italian, North American, and other similar nations. The Russian, Ukrainian, Tatar, Armenian, Georgian, and other nations in Russia were likewise bourgeois nations before the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the Soviet system in our country.

Naturally, the fate of such nations is linked with the fate of capitalism; with the fall of capitalism, such nations must depart from the scene.

It is precisely to such bourgeois nations that Stalin’s pamphlet, *Marxism and the National Question*, refers when it says that “a nation is not merely a historical category but a historical category belonging to a definite epoch, the epoch of rising capitalism,” that “the fate of the national movement, which is essentially a bourgeois movement, is naturally bound up with the fate of the bourgeoisie,” that “the final collapse of the national movement is possible only with the collapse of the bourgeoisie,” and that “only under the reign of Socialism can peace be fully established.”†

* V. I. Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. XI, pp. 433-34, New York, 1943.

† Joseph Stalin, *Marxism and the National Question*, pp. 17, 24, New York, 1942.

That is how matters stand with regard to the bourgeois nations.

But there are other nations. These are the new Soviet nations, which developed and took shape on the basis of the old bourgeois nations after the overthrow of capitalism in Russia, after the elimination of the bourgeoisie and its nationalist parties, after the establishment of the Soviet system.

The working class and its internationalist party are the force that cements these new nations and leads them. An alliance between the working class and the working peasantry within the nation for the elimination of the relics of capitalism in order that socialism may be built triumphantly; abolition of the relics of national oppression in order that the nations and national minorities may be equal and may develop freely; elimination of the relics of nationalism in order that friendship may be knit between the peoples and internationalism firmly established; a united front with all oppressed and unequal nations in the struggle against the policy of annexation and wars of annexation, in the struggle against imperialism—such is the spiritual, social, and political complexion of these nations.

Such nations must be qualified as socialist nations.

These new nations arose and developed on the basis of old, bourgeois nations, as a result of the elimination of capitalism—by their radical transformation on socialist lines. Nobody can deny that the present socialist nations of the Soviet Union—the Russian, Ukrainian, Byelorussian, Tatar, Bashkir, Uzbek, Kazakh, Azerbaijan, Georgian, Armenian and other nations—radically differ from the corresponding old bourgeois nations of old Russia both in class composition and spiritual complexion and in social and political interests and aspirations.

Such are the two types of nations known to history.

You do not agree with linking the fate of nations, in this case the old bourgeois nations, with the fate of capitalism. You do not agree with the thesis that, with the elimination of capitalism, the old bourgeois nations will be eliminated. But with what could the fate of these nations be linked, if not

with the fate of capitalism? Is it so difficult to understand that when capitalism disappears, the bourgeois nations to which it gave rise must also disappear? Surely, you do not think that the old bourgeois nations can exist and develop under a Soviet system, under the dictatorship of the proletariat? That would be asking too much. . . .

You are afraid that the elimination of the nations existing under capitalism is tantamount to the elimination of nations in general, to the elimination of all nations. Why? On what grounds? Are you really unaware of the fact that, besides bourgeois nations, there are other nations, socialist nations, which are much more solidly united and virile than any bourgeois nation?

Your mistake lies precisely in the fact that you see no other nations except bourgeois nations, and, consequently, you have overlooked the whole epoch of formation of socialist nations in the Soviet Union, nations which arose on the ruins of the old bourgeois nations.

The fact of the matter is that the elimination of the bourgeois nations signifies the elimination not of nations in general, but only of the bourgeois nations. On the ruins of the old bourgeois nations, new socialist nations arise and develop; and they are far more solidly united than any bourgeois nation, because they are exempt from the irreconcilable class antagonisms that corrode the bourgeois nations, and are far more representative of the whole people than any bourgeois nation.

The Future of Nations and of National Languages

You commit a grave error in putting an equal sign between the period of the victory of socialism in one country and the period of the victory of socialism on a world scale, in asserting that the disappearance of national differences and national languages, the amalgamation of nations, and the formation of one common language are possible and necessary not only with the victory of socialism on a world scale, but also with the victory of socialism in one country. And you furthermore confuse entirely different things in "abolition of national oppression" with "elimination of national differences," "abolition of national state partitions" with "dying away of nations," with "amalgamation of nations."

It must be observed that for Marxists to confuse these diverse concepts is absolutely impermissible. National oppression in our country was abolished long ago, but in no wise does it follow from this that national differences have disappeared and that nations in our country have been eliminated. National state partitions, together with frontier guards and customs barriers, were abolished in our country long ago, but in no wise does it follow from this that the nations have already amalgamated and that the national languages have disappeared, that these languages have been supplanted by some one language common to all our nations.

You are displeased with the speech I delivered at the Communist University of the Peoples of the East (1925),* in which I repudiated the thesis that with the victory of social-

* See Joseph Stalin, *Marxism and the National Question*, pp. 193-200.

ism *in one country*—in our country, for example—national languages will die away, that the nations will amalgamate, and in place of the national languages one common language will appear.

You consider that this statement of mine contradicts Lenin's well-known thesis that it is the aim of socialism not only to abolish the division of mankind into small states and every form of segregation of nations, not only to bring the nations closer together, but also to amalgamate them.

You consider, further, that it also contradicts another of Lenin's theses, namely, that with the victory of socialism on a *world scale*, national differences and national languages will begin to die away, that after this victory national languages will begin to be supplanted by one common language.

That is quite wrong, comrades. You are deeply in error.

I have already said that it is impermissible for Marxists to confuse and lump together such diverse phenomena as "the victory of socialism in one country" and "the victory of socialism on a world scale." It should not be forgotten that these diverse phenomena reflect two entirely different epochs, distinct from one another not only in time (which is very important), but in their very nature.

National distrust, national segregation, national enmity, and national conflict are, of course, stimulated and fostered not by some "innate" sentiment of national animosity, but by the striving of imperialism to subjugate other nations and by the fear inspired in these nations by the menace of national enslavement. Undoubtedly, so long as world imperialism exists, this striving and this fear will exist—and, consequently, national distrust, national segregation, national enmity, and national conflict will exist in the great majority of countries. Can it be asserted that the victory of socialism and the abolition of imperialism in one country mean the abolition of imperialism and national oppression in the majority of countries? Obviously, not. But it follows from this that the victory of socialism in one country, notwithstanding the fact that it seriously weakens world imperialism, does not and cannot create the conditions necessary for the amal-

gamation of the nations and the national languages of the world into one integral whole.

The period of the victory of socialism on a world scale differs from the period of the victory of socialism in one country primarily in the fact that it will abolish imperialism *in all countries*, will eliminate both the striving to subjugate other nations and the fear inspired by the menace of national enslavement, will radically undermine national distrust and national enmity, will unite the nations into one world socialist economic system, and will thus create the real conditions necessary for the gradual amalgamation of all nations into one.

Such is the fundamental difference between these two periods.

But it follows from this that to confuse these two different periods and to lump them together is to make an unpardonable mistake. Take the speech I delivered at the Communist University of the Peoples of the East. There I said:

“Certain persons (Kautsky, for instance) talk of the creation of a single universal language in the period of Socialism and the dying away of all other languages. I have little faith in this theory of a single, all-embracing language. Experience, at any rate, speaks against rather than for such a theory. Until now the situation has been that the socialist revolution has not diminished but rather increased the number of languages, for, by stirring up the profound depths of humanity and by pushing them into the political arena, it awakens to new life a number of hitherto unknown or little known nationalities. Who could have imagined that old, tsarist Russia consisted of no less than fifty nationalities and ethnic groups? However, by breaking the old chains and bringing a number of forgotten peoples and nationalities on the scene, the October Revolution gave them new life and a new development.”*

From this passage it is evident that I was contradicting

* Joseph Stalin, *Marxism and the National Question*, p. 196.

people of the type of Kautsky, who (that is, Kautsky) always was and has remained a dilettante on the national question, who does not understand the mechanics of the development of nations and has no inkling of the colossal power of stability possessed by nations, who believes that the amalgamation of nations is possible long before the victory of socialism, already under the bourgeois-democratic order, and who, servilely praising the assimilating "work" of the Germans in Czechoslovakia, asserts offhand that the Czechs are almost Germanized, that, as a nation, the Czechs have no future.

From this passage it is evident, further, that what I had in mind in my speech was not the period of the victory of socialism on a *world scale*, but exclusively the period of the victory of socialism in *one country*. And I affirmed (and continue to affirm) that the period of the victory of socialism in one country does not create the necessary conditions for the amalgamation of nations and national languages, that, on the contrary, this period creates favorable conditions for the renaissance and flowering of the nations that were formerly oppressed by tsarist imperialism and have now been liberated from national oppression by the Soviet revolution.

From this passage it is evident, lastly, that you have overlooked the colossal difference between the two different historical periods, that, because of this, you have failed to understand the meaning of Stalin's speech and, as a result, have got lost in the wilderness of your own errors.

Let us pass to Lenin's theses on the dying away and amalgamation of nations after the victory of socialism on a world scale.

Here is one of Lenin's theses, taken from his article, "The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination," published in 1916, which, for some reason, is not quoted in full in your letters:

"The aim of Socialism is not only to abolish the division of mankind into small states and all national isolation; not

only to bring the nations closer together, but also to merge them. . . . Just as mankind can achieve the abolition of classes only by passing through the transition period of the dictatorship of the oppressed class, so mankind can achieve the inevitable merging of nations only by passing through the transition period of complete liberation of all the oppressed nations, *i.e.*, of their freedom to secede."*

And here is another thesis of Lenin's, which likewise you do not quote in full:

"As long as national and state differences exist among peoples and countries—and these differences will continue to exist for a very long time even after the dictatorship of the proletariat has been established on a world scale—the unity of international tactics of the Communist working class movement of all countries demands, not the elimination of variety, not the abolition of national differences (that is a foolish dream at the present moment), but such an application of the *fundamental* principles of Communism (Soviet power and the dictatorship of the proletariat) as will *correctly modify* these principles in *certain particulars*, correctly adapt and apply them to national and national-state differences."†

It should be noted that this passage is from Lenin's pamphlet "*Left-Wing*" Communism, an Infantile Disorder, published in 1920, that is, *after* the victory of the socialist revolution in one country, *after* the victory of socialism in our country.

From these passages it is evident that Lenin does not assign the process of dying away of national differences and amalgamation of nations to the period of the victory of socialism in one country, but exclusively to the period that will come *after* the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat on a world scale, that is, to the period of the victory of socialism in all countries, when the foundations of a

* V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. XIX, pp. 50-51, New York, 1942.

† V. I. Lenin, "*Left-Wing*" Communism, an Infantile Disorder, p. 73, New York, 1940.

world socialist economy will already be laid.

From these passages it is evident, further, that Lenin qualifies the attempt to assign the process of dying away of national differences to the period of the victory of socialism in one country, in our country, as a "foolish dream."

From these passages it is evident, moreover, that Stalin was absolutely right when, in the speech he delivered at the Communist University of the Peoples of the East, he denied that it was possible for national differences and national languages to die away in the period of the victory of socialism in one country, in our country, and that you were absolutely wrong in upholding something that is the direct opposite of Stalin's thesis.

From these passages it is evident, lastly, that, in confusing the two different periods of the victory of socialism, you misunderstood Lenin, distorted Lenin's line on the national question and, as a consequence, you involuntarily headed for a rupture with Leninism.

It is a mistake to think that after the defeat of world imperialism national differences will be abolished and national languages will die away directly, at one stroke, by decree from above, so to speak. Nothing is more erroneous than this view. To attempt to bring about the amalgamation of nations by decree from above, by compulsion, would be playing into the hands of the imperialists; it would spell disaster to the cause of the liberation of nations, and be fatal to the cause of organizing co-operation and fraternity among nations. Such a policy would be tantamount to a policy of assimilation.

You know, of course, that the policy of assimilation is unreservedly excluded from the arsenal of Marxism-Leninism, as an anti-popular and counter-revolutionary policy, a fatal policy.

Furthermore, we know that nations and national languages possess an extraordinary stability and tremendous power of resistance to the policy of assimilation. The Turkish assimilators—the most brutal of all assimilators—mangled and mutilated the Balkan nations for hundreds of years,

yet not only did they fail to destroy them, but they were forced to capitulate in the end. The tsarist-Russian Russifiers and the Prussian-German Germanizers, who yielded little in brutality to the Turkish assimilators, rent and mangled the Polish nation for over a hundred years, just as the Persian and Turkish assimilators for hundreds of years tore and mangled and massacred the Armenian and Georgian nations, yet, far from destroying these nations, they too were forced to capitulate in the end.

All these circumstances must be taken into account to forecast correctly the probable course of events as regards the development of nations directly after the defeat of world imperialism.

It is a mistake to think that the first stage of the period of the world dictatorship of the proletariat will mark the beginning of the dying away of nations and national languages, the beginning of the formation of one common language. On the contrary, the first stage, during which national oppression will be definitely abolished, will witness the growth and flowering of the formerly oppressed nations and national languages, the establishment of equality among nations, the elimination of mutual national distrust, and the knitting together and strengthening of international ties among nations.

Only in the second stage of the period of the world dictatorship of the proletariat, as a single socialist world economy is built up in place of the capitalist world economy—only in that stage will something in the nature of a common language begin to take shape; for only in that stage will the nations feel the need to have, in addition to their own national languages, a common international language—for convenience of intercourse and for convenience of economic, cultural and political co-operation. Consequently, in this stage, national languages and a common international language will exist side by side. It is probable that, at first, there will be formed not one world economic center common to all nations and with one common language, but several zonal economic centers for separate groups of nations,

with a separate common language for each group of nations, and that only later will these centers combine into one common world socialist economic center, with one language common to all nations.

In the next stage of the period of world dictatorship of the proletariat—when the world socialist economic system has been sufficiently consolidated and socialism has become part and parcel of the life of the peoples, and when practice has convinced the nations of the superiority of a common language over national languages—national differences and languages will begin to die away and make room for a world language, common to all nations.

Such, in my opinion, is the approximate picture of the future of nations and of the way the nations will develop towards their future amalgamation.

The Policy of the Communist Party on the National Question

One of the mistakes you make is that you regard the national question not as a part of the general question of the social and political development of society, subordinated to this general question, but as something self-contained and constant, whose direction and character remain basically unchanged throughout the course of history. You consequently fail to see what every Marxist sees, namely, that the national question is not always of one and the same character, that the character and aims of the national movement vary with the different periods in the development of the revolution.

Logically speaking, it is this that explains the deplorable fact that you so lightly confuse and lump together diverse periods of development of the revolution, and fail to understand that the changes in the character and aims of the revolution in the various stages of its development call forth corresponding changes in the character and aims of the national question, that in conformity with this the Communist Party's policy on the national question also changes, and that, consequently, the party's policy on the national question in one period of development of the revolution cannot be violently severed from that period and arbitrarily transferred to another period.

The Russian Marxists have always stood by the premise that the national question is a part of the general question of the development of the revolution, that at different stages of the revolution the national question has different aims, corresponding to the character of the revolution at each given historical moment, and that the Communist Party's

policy on the national question changes in conformity with this.

In the period preceding the First World War, when history make a *bourgeois-democratic* revolution the task of the moment in Russia, the Russian Marxists linked the solution of the national question with the destiny of the democratic revolution in Russia. Our party held that the overthrow of tsarism, the abolition of the relics of feudalism, and the complete democratization of the country provided the best solution of the national question that was possible within the framework of capitalism.

Such was the policy of the Communist Party in that period.

It is to this period that Lenin's well-known articles on the national question belong, including the article "Critical Remarks on the National Question," where Lenin says:

"... I assert that there is only one solution of the national question insofar as a solution is possible at all in the capitalist world—and that solution is consistent democracy. In proof, I would point, among others, to the example of Switzerland."*

To this same period belongs Stalin's pamphlet, *Marxism and the National Question*, which among other things says:

"The final collapse of the national movement is possible only with the collapse of the bourgeoisie. Only under the reign of Socialism can peace be fully established. But even within the framework of capitalism it is possible to reduce the national struggle to a minimum, to sever its roots, to render it as innocuous as possible for the proletariat. This is borne out by the examples of Switzerland and America. It requires that the country should be democratized and the nations be given the opportunity for free development."†

In the next period, the period of the first World War, when the prolonged war between the two imperialist coalitions

* V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. XX, Russian ed., p. 23, Moscow, 1948.

† Joseph Stalin, *Marxism and the National Question*, p. 24.

tions had undermined the power of world imperialism, when the crisis of the world capitalist system had reached an extreme, when, in addition to the working class of the "metropolitan countries," the colonial and dependent countries had also joined the liberation movement, when the national question had grown into a national and colonial question, when the united front of the working class of the advanced capitalist countries and of the oppressed peoples of the colonies and dependent countries had begun to be a real force, when, consequently, the *socialist* revolution had become the question of the moment, the Russian Marxists could no longer content themselves with the policy of the preceding period, and deemed it necessary to link the solution of the national and colonial question with the destiny of the socialist revolution.

The Communist Party held that the overthrow of the power of capital and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the expulsion of the imperialist troops from the colonial and dependent countries and the securing of the right of these countries to secede and to form their own national states, the elimination of national enmity and nationalism and the strengthening of international ties between peoples, the organization of a single socialist national economy and the establishment on this basis of fraternal co-operation among peoples, constituted the best solution of the national and colonial question under the given conditions.

Such was the policy of the party in that period.

This period is still far from having fully matured. It has only just begun; but there is no doubt that it will yet have its decisive word to say. . . .

A question apart is the present period of development of the revolution in our country and the present policy of the Communist Party.

It should be noted that so far our country has been the *only* one that was ready to overthrow capitalism. And it really has overthrown capitalism and set up the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Consequently, we have still a long way to go to the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat *on a world scale*, and still more to the victory of socialism *in all countries*.

It should be noted, further, that in putting an end to the rule of the bourgeoisie, which has long since abandoned its old democratic traditions, we, in passing, solved the problem of the "complete democratization of the country," abolished the system of national oppression and established equality of nations in our country.

As we know, these measures proved to be the best way of eliminating nationalism and national enmity, and establishing mutual confidence among the nations.

It should be noted, lastly, that the abolition of national oppression led to the national renaissance of the formerly oppressed nations of our country, to the development of their national cultures, to the furtherance of friendly, international ties among the peoples of our country and to their mutual co-operation in the work of building socialism.

It should be borne in mind that these regenerated nations are not the old bourgeois nations, led by the bourgeoisie, but new socialist nations, which have arisen on the ruins of the old nations and are led by the internationalist party of the laboring masses.

In view of this, the Communist Party deemed it necessary to help the regenerated nations of our country to rise to their feet, to their full stature, to revive and develop their national cultures, widely to develop schools, theaters, and other cultural institutions functioning in the native languages, to naturalize—that is, to staff with members of the given nation—the party, trade union, co-operative, state and economic organs, to train their own, national Party and Soviet cadres, and to curb all elements—who are, indeed, few in number—that try to hinder this policy of the party.

This means that the Communist Party supports, and will continue to support, the development and progress of the national cultures of the peoples of our country, that it will encourage the strengthening of our new socialist nations,

that it takes this matter under its protection and guardianship against anti-Leninist elements of every description.

It is evident from your letters that you do not approve this policy of our party. This is because, firstly, you confuse the new socialist nations with the old bourgeois nations and do not understand that the national cultures of our new Soviet nations are *in substance* socialist cultures. Secondly, it is because—you will excuse my bluntness—you have a very poor grasp of Leninism and are not clear on the national question.

Consider, by way of example, the following elementary matter. We all say that a cultural revolution is needed in our indulging in idle chatter, then we must take at least the first country. If we mean this seriously and are not merely in-step in this direction: namely, we must make primary education, and later secondary education, compulsory for all citizens of the country, irrespective of their nationality. It is obvious that without this no cultural development whatever, let alone this talked-of cultural revolution, will be possible in our country. More, without this there will be neither any real progress of our industry and agriculture, nor any reliable defense of our country.

But how is this to be done, bearing in mind that the percentage of illiteracy in our country is still very high, that there are quite a number of nations in our country where eighty or ninety persons out of a hundred are illiterate?

What is needed is to cover the country with an extensive network of schools functioning in the native languages, and to supply them with staffs of teachers who know the native languages.

What is needed is to nationalize—that is, to staff with members of the given nation—all the organs of administration, from party and trade union to state and economic institutions.

What is needed is widely to develop the press, the theater, the cinema and other cultural institutions functioning in the native languages.

Why in the native languages, it is asked. Because only in

their native, their national languages can the mass millions learn to be proficient in the fields of cultural, political and economic advancement.

Bearing all that has been said in mind, I think it should not be so difficult to understand that Leninists cannot carry out any other policy on the national question than the one which is now being carried out in our country—provided, of course, they want to remain Leninists.

Isn't that so?

Well, then let us leave it at that.

I think I have answered all your questions and doubts.

March 18, 1929.

ON THE INTERNATIONAL LIST

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