“Understanding Russian and Soviet National Identity through Soviet War Literature”

Mackenzie A. Jones

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“Understanding Russian and Soviet National Identity through Soviet War Literature”

by

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Undergraduate honors thesis under the direction of

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A Note on the Dating System

This thesis deals with historical events occurring in the Russian Empire and Soviet Union. Prior to 1917, the Russian Empire utilized the Julian Calendar, creating a thirteen-day discrepancy between calendar dates occurring in the Russian Empire and its contemporary Western European counterparts who utilized the Gregorian Calendar. It was not until 1918 that the Gregorian Calendar became widely used in the [former] Russian Empire. In relation to the history of the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation events prior to 1918 are often denoted by both their Julian, Old Style, and Georgian, New Style, date. Nevertheless, within the Soviet Union, and the current Russian Federation, some events are still observed on their Old-Style date. For example, in the Soviet Union the anniversary of the October Revolution was celebrated on November 7th. In the present-day Russian Federation Orthodox Christians may celebrate Christmas on January 7th, rather than December 25th. This disparity between Old Style [O.S] and New Style [N.S] will be addressed directly when necessary to understanding events in the novels. However, for the sake of continuity this thesis will principally rely on New Style dates to refer to events both before and after 1918.

Transliteration

In studying a multi-linguistic sphere, the difficulty of translating terms arises. As this thesis analyzes the similarities and differences between Russification and Sovietization, I decided to use contemporary Russian terms for locations transliterated in the Library of Congress style. For example, I will use Киев (Russian: Киев) rather than Київ (Ukrainian: Київ). Nevertheless, in reference to prominent historical figures I will use the most known spelling for American-English speakers. In addition, when referring to the names of fictional characters I will use the
spelling offered by the respective translator. For example, I have chosen to use Trotsky, instead of Trotskyi, and Mikhail, rather than Michael, but Peter the Great, instead of Pyotr the Great. I acknowledge the inconsistency this creates regarding transliteration of peoples, places, and things.
Introduction

Understanding Russian and Soviet National Identity through Soviet War Literature

I was introduced to the Russian-Soviet identity discourse through the lens of the Cold War. My first encounter with Russian culture was a college course I took in the fall of 2017 entitled “The World Since 1960.” It was an introductory level course, and therefore most of the course work simplified events into a clear cut geopolitical, ideological struggle between the Marxist-communist of the Soviet Union and democratic-capitalist of the United States. Nonetheless, in my personal exploration I encountered the question: What is the difference between Russian and Soviet? On the surface, the information presented was contradictory, the Soviet Union was not intended to be a reiteration of the Russian Empire. Yet, now in the twenty-first century the geopolitical issues of East Central Europe are grouped together and given context by their shared experience under “Russian” rule. After completing this Cold War course, I became very interested in Russian history, and this interest soon transformed into a love of Russian literature.

Leo Tolstoy’s War and Peace: Russian Nationalism

Already in the nineteenth-century, I discovered, Russian literature was closely intertwined with Russian history, and literature became a prominent, legal, way to engage in discourse about the Russian state and peoples’ national peculiarities, such as what makes a Russian a Russian? Who is Russian? Can Russia be reformed and modernized, while maintaining “traditional values” and compete with its Western contemporaries for global power? Leo Tolstoy’s War and Peace (1869) is exemplary of this discourse, in that it takes something considered European standard, that is literary depictions of the Napoleonic Wars, and alters it to fit within the Russian literary
tradition. Literary critics have argued that what makes Tolstoy’s work so significant is exactly this point, taking the “European” subject of the Napoleonic Wars, which had already been depicted by prominent European authors, such as Stendhal and Victor Hugo and making it “Russian.” It is important to note that Tolstoy, himself, considered War and Peace to be not a novel, epic poem, or historical chronicle. Rather Tolstoy thought that War and Peace was a part of a Russian literary tradition where, “not a single artistic prose work, rising at all above mediocrity quite fits into the form of a novel, epic, or story.”

The central theme in War and Peace is Tolstoy’s critique of aristocratic Russians who are alienated from other peoples in the Russian Empire. The Russian characters are not in touch with their Russianness, seen in their usage of the French language and their inability to read or write in Cyrillic. Tolstoy utilized the stereotype of French superficiality to reflect the emptiness in the prototypical Russian aristocrat. However, he also does not seek to degrade his Russian characters, he claims that they possess the same faults of humans at any point in time. War and Peace is explicitly a self-criticism and a reflection on the upper strata which lacked an authentic national identity. And, yet Tolstoy’s War and Peace confirms that even in this lack of self-knowledge, a Russian soul exists. The work is a multigenerational novel; despite experiencing huge disruptions and destruction, the Rostov family is restored in the manner of a Homeric epic, whereby, “the return of a hero and the securing of family are as essential to the great work’s meaning and artistic victory as are the glories and fatalities of the battlefield.” Tolstoy’s War and Peace, thereby, implies the “purist elements” of Russianness will endure historical tragedies.

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2 Mandelker, “Introduction,” in War and Peace, xc-xii.
3 Tolstoy, “Appendix” in War and Peace, 1309.
Though Tolstoy came from a generation of Russian realists, he did not claim that his work was an historically accurate depiction of the Napoleonic Wars. For Tolstoy the historical errors found in *War and Peace* were not only artistic liberties, but also used to support his philosophical claims that history lies outside the realm of human understanding, and therefore it is not in the human capacity to explain historical developments.\(^5\) His novel, therefore, confirms the cultural myth that the Russian victory in 1812, came to fruition due to the existence of a Russian nationalism that was dignified, noble, and rooted in an inherent sense of the Russian’s “otherness.”

Tolstoy argues that events do not happen due to legendary or great peoples; it is something outside of human control that defines societal progress.\(^6\) Events like the failure of Napoleon to seize Moscow, and the burning of Moscow, so important to the Romanovs’ Imperial national policy rooted in a myth of the Russian nation’s innate moral superiority, are presented by Tolstoy as an historically ordained truth. The argument present in *War and Peace*, about Russianness winning over Napoleon's Grande Armée was in alignment with Tsar Alexander I’s conception of the War of 1812 as a Russian achievement, that justified Russia’s peculiarities from other European states. The victory of 1812 confirmed that Russia’s non-adherence to foreign models, such as its despotic rule and lack of development, was not a symbol of backwardness, but rooted in an identity validated by Orthodoxy Christianity.\(^7\)

*Leon Trotsky: On War and Peace*

Tolstoy’s novel was enormously influential, but certainly did not clear up the question of Russian identity. In the twentieth century, indeed, Tolstoy’s model of using literature and

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\(^5\)Tolstoy, “Appendix,” in *War and Peace*, 1309-1317.
\(^7\)Hartley, “Is Russia Part of Europe?,” 369–385.
historical conflict to define Russian identity would continue to be a popular method of “self-discovery” for artists struggling to maintain their individual sense of self, their distinct national identity, while simultaneously forming a Soviet identity. In his *History of the Russian Revolution*, the prominent Bolshevik theorist, politician, and Red Army Commander Leon Trotsky used Tolstoy’s *War and Peace* to criticize the high-ranking officers in the White Army. In the nineteenth-century national discourse in the form of literature was only accessible to the small number of literate people, typically correlating to whom the Bolsheviks considered to be maintainers of “bourgeois national culture.”

Trotsky stated that the national character generated by notions of a patriotic conflict, was rooted in Tsarist oppression, as it exploited the masses by creating an illusion that they were in community with their oppressor. Trotsky asserted that these officers used the rhetoric of patriotism to maintain their own privileges and authority; by exploiting the masses to fight with conviction. He characterized *War and Peace* as a presentation of aristocrats’ cognitive dissonance from the realities of warfare:

The officers considered the best soldier to be a humble and unthinking peasant lad, in whom no consciousness of human personality had yet awakened. Such was the ‘national’ tradition of the Russian army - the Suvorov tradition - resting upon primitive agriculture, serfdom, and village commune. In the eighteenth-century Suvorov was still creating miracles out of this material. Leo Tolstoy, with a baronial love, idealized in his Platon Karatayev the old type of Russian soldier, unmurmuringly submitting to nature, tyranny, and death [in *War and Peace*].

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Trotsky, here, was still following in a well-known Russian tradition, of using literature to make socio-political commentary. To be sure, Novelists who emerged alongside Tolstoy’s are not reflective of one socio-political view, for instance Nikolai Chernyshevsky, was revered by Vladimir Lenin, but Fyodor Dostoevsky, was critiqued for being chauvinistic. The important factor is that they are unified, in their existence within the Russian literary tradition and therefore informed the Bolsheviks’ view of what should and should not be considered literature. Therefore, Soviet literature embodied the Russian tradition, in that it sought to break with traditional conventions of literature and create a literary canon and literary prototypes that were particular to their particular realities.

The rise of literacy and the development of a Soviet literary canon played an essential role in Sovietization. It was theorized by Bolsheviks that literature could be used to define the proper ways in which former oppressed peoples could express their national self-determination, in the absence of a nation-state. Lenin believed that literature could be used as a tool to present the objective oppressive realities of the masses, and therefore establish sympathies and confidence for the coming international proletarian revolution. These factors, however, do not explain the confounding notion of a Tolstoyan novel emerging from the Soviet century.


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(1994) by Vasily Aksyonov are all, in some sense, Tolstoyan war novels of the twentieth century. Nonetheless, the term Soviet-Tolstoy is a misnomer because Soviet war fiction is not focused on the moral suffering ordained by God to indicate the Great Russians’ elevated national character from the primitive to the spiritual. Rather Soviet war fiction engages with moral catastrophes brought about by humanity.¹³ These literary works are also multigenerational family sagas that present a schism within sociocultural norms in the transition between the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. These novels can aid in understanding the development of the multiethnic Soviet state, yet I discourage viewing them as superior to other narratives created by Soviet era artists, be they deemed ideological correct, émigrés, or detractors. Rather, I hope by combining all these narratives, that it will be possible to conjecture the realities of living in a multinational state that claimed to reject the oppression of its predecessor and hallmark itself as ushering in a new era.

_A Soviet People_

I have chosen to analyze four novels; _And Quiet Flows the Don_ (1928-1932; 1940) by Mikhail Sholokhov, _White Guard_ (1926) by Mikhail Bulgakov, _Life and Fate_ (1959;1980) by Vasily Grossman and _Generations of Winter_ (1994) by Vasily Aksyonov, all are family sagas set during periods of political strife and multigenerational sociocultural schism. Thus, these four novels have thematic similarities on integrating the self, the state, and history, in the pursuit of characterizing identities.¹⁴ These novels, in equal measure, discuss the development of national

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policy and national identity from the Russian Empire to the Soviet Union in demonstrating the connections between patriotism and war. To gain a greater understanding of identity politics in the Soviet Union I have analyzed Imperial national policy, Soviet national policy, and themes of national identity present in these works of Russian-Soviet war fiction.

Comparative analysis of these four twentieth century war novels provide prime settings to display the transition between pre-and post- Russian Revolutionary forms of national identification, in terms of how individuals identified themselves and how the state identified its citizens. Due to the closed nature of the Soviet Union, understanding or attaining “objective” narratives about the role of nationalism in creating Soviet patriotism was inaccessible to the outsider. The full publication of these novels, reasons for censorship, or lack thereof, will be discussed in depth in individual examinations of each novel; in doing so alternative narratives regarding the role of Soviet national policy emerge. However, they should not be considered the authoritative, objective truth. The novels I have selected are individual mediations of living in a period of political turmoil reflected in fictional or fictionalized depictions of peoples, places, and events. By analyzing them, I aim to demonstrate that Soviet identity was never monolithic or clear in its divisions. Therefore, my hope is to dispel the presumption that the notion of a Soviet people is an obsolete concept which is incompatible with the identities of post-Soviet states.

Soviet Relics in the Russian-Federation

The modern-day Russian Federation, established after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, has used cultural symbols from both the Soviet-era and the Imperial-era to construct a Russian national identity. The Red Square, located in Moscow, Russia’s capital, contains both Saint Basil’s Cathedral and Vladimir Lenin’s Mausoleum. The current president of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, has used rhetoric like that of both Stalin and the Romanovs to justify
his annexations of territories in states such as Georgia and Ukraine, thereby supporting the idea that what is Russian is and what is Soviet are one and the same.\textsuperscript{15} Outside of Russia, in recent years historians have attempted to uncover a more nuanced vision of the Soviet people. For instance, the works of historians Fredrick Corney, Sean McMeekin, and Amir Weiner demonstrate the ways in which the Soviet regime used the October Revolution to legitimate its right to rule. In addition, notwithstanding Russian narratives about “the Great Patriotic War,” a field of scholarship has appeared in recent years that attempts to uncover non-patriotic narratives about Soviet victory on the Eastern Front.\textsuperscript{16} I hope to add to this work by demonstrating how the state bureaucracy in the Soviet Union used literature to represent a unified, supranational Soviet identity, and how Soviet authors used literature to criticize Soviet national policy.


Chapter One: The Bolsheviks Interpretation of Russian Development

Introduction: Karl Marx in Imperial Russia

As this thesis seeks to explain the development of Soviet identity, it is necessary first to discuss Soviet national policy and its deep entanglement with Russian Imperial nationality policies. Nationalism is typically regarded with secondary importance in discussions of the Soviet Union; this is likely due to Cold War perceptions of the Soviet system primarily as an economic, political threat. However, the Bolsheviks viewed the role of Russian nationalism as a necessary hardship in the transition to their Soviet-style communist state. This chapter will provide an explanation of the theoretical arguments that Bolsheviks used to gain the support from nationalist groups. It will give a historiography of Russian nationalism through the nineteenth-century into the Russian Civil War.

I should start by noting that for Marx, history was not simply a collection of chronological facts, the will of “great men,” or the result of a spiritual, omniscient being - the developments of history, to Marx, was a result of material realities. The central thesis presented in Marx’s theory of historical materialism is that materials provided to human’s dictates what items they can produce, and this therefore informs the economic structures. Subsequently, these economic structures influence changes in the social and political structures of a state. Within this theory Marx stated that there were five main stages of human development, which could be defined through their presentation in the socioeconomic systems of any given nation:17

1. A tribal social order, with a primitive economy.
2. A classical social order, based on slave labor.

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3. A feudal order relying on serfdom.


5. An international society, with a communism economy.

These stages of development were pushed by class conflicts, and would eventually result in the last final stage, the “End of History,” as it were, Communism. In communism no subsequent development would be necessary as the dictatorship of the proletariat would control both the economic and socio-political realities of the society; therefore, there would be no more struggle between the oppressing classes and the exploited masses. Marx’s theory claimed that the level of human progress within a society could be determined by its stage of development.

The potential of revolution in Russia was recognized by Marxist in the late nineteenth-century. As several crises in the empire signaled to revolutionaries the eminence of a global proletarian revolution. However, at the time of the Bolshevik Revolution most of Russia, and its Imperial territories, was still in the feudal stage of development. Russia was economically stagnant, despite the empire’s wealth of raw materials. These natural resources were usually sold to other industrialized European markets, rather than used to contribute to Russia’s overall economic growth. This meant that Russian self-consciousness was not yet ready for the revolution.

The Absence of a Proletariat in Russia

For both late Imperial officials and Russian Marxists at the beginning of the twentieth century, the problem was that the laboring class in the Russian Empire was by no means yet

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“modern.” On the contrary, it was primarily composed of peasants who identified with the local communities, not the empire. Russian Imperial economic policy suppressed working-class dissidents upon its emergence. This was done in a variety of methods, such as deeming worker’s complaints as insubordination or simply disregarding worker’s concerns. There was also a movement to outsource materials from other European countries, thereby allowing industrial developments, while avoiding the creation of a Russian working class. The varying degrees in which Russification was practiced resulted in stark differences in economic developments across the empire.

Russification policies were foremost concerned with maintaining centralized control of Russia’s borderlands. Tsars Nicholas I and Alexander II created a more aggressive series of policies that would modernize Russia through railroads and industry. However, neither Tsar had the intention of implementing policies that would subsequently result in full-scale industrialization within the empire. This meant that Imperial officialdom viewed state intervention as a necessity in the industrialization process; because it would restrict workers' abilities to gather *en masse* and thereby mobilize a mass revolt.\(^{20}\) At the turn of the century it seemed unlikely that the notions of class polarization could be transferred to the countryside, where capitalism had not developed and “villagers had their own internal interest [and parochial conflicts].”\(^{21}\)

*The Development of Russian Nationalism: Marxist-Leninism*

In the application of Marxist theory to the realities of Russian development, leading Bolshevik theorist Vladimir Lenin acknowledged that the exploited masses of the Russian Empire


had come to revolt through their national conditions, as opposed to class consciousness. Bolsheviks theorized that Russia’s lack of development, prior to the revolution, was caused by Russian imperialism. Bolsheviks claimed that the Imperial structure aided in its own destruction, by not recognizing the legitimacy of other nationals. As stated by Leon Trotsky, “Russia was formed not as a national state, but as a state made of nationalities.”

Vladimir Lenin’s essay, “Critical Remarks on the National Questions,” written October-December 1913, expounds upon his theory that Russian chauvinism aided in the creation of two national cultures, that of the “ruling-classes” synonymous with the landowners, capitalist, and tsarist military officers, and that of the “people” both in the form of the working class and the peasantry. In addition, within the essay “Critical Remarks on the National Question” Lenin stated that the only legitimate national culture was one of the people. In addition, it was theorized that eventually the masses would spontaneously and, or unconsciously come to the realization that identifying with the national culture of the ruling classes, would only hinder their development and reinforce their oppression. In order to understand Lenin’s concept of two national cultures, the role of national identity with relation to the development of the Russian Empire must be discussed.

“Peculiarities of Russia’s Development”: Russification

Russian national identity has been contested for much of its history due its geographical location between Europe and Asia. Considered backwards and primitive by neighboring western

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23Trotsky, “Peculiarities of Russia’s Development,” 641.
25“Peculiarities of Russia’s Development” is the title of a chapter in Leon Trotsky’s History of the Russian Revolution.
European states, the Russian state nevertheless formed a custom of modernization, to be seen as equal in the realm of global power, while concurrently seeking to preserve and strengthen its “Asiatic despotism.”

The history of Russia is transnational. Russia has been a centralized multinational empire since Ivan the Terrible in the sixteenth-century. At the same time linguistic realities denote a desire to maintain a difference between those who lived in or were born in the geographical region of Russia (российский: rossiiskii) versus those who were considered ethnic Great Russians (русский: russkii).

It is also during the sixteenth-century that the Russian Empire began to refer to the Russian language and the practice of Orthodox Christianity as corresponding to Russian identity.

The centralization of the Russian Empire necessitated a centralized institutional and military control to sustain its authority over a vast geopolitical space. In the eighteenth-century, territorial expansion was by European notions a sign of global dominance and legitimacy of governance, therefore expansion of the Russian empire into a consolidated political territory was of utmost importance. These enterprises into non-Russian territories aided in the establishment of Russia as a European power. Despite the rapid expansion of Russian from the sixteenth-century to the eighteenth-century there was a non-attitude within officialdom about defining the conquered peoples as Russians. Even when Russia extended their Imperial influence on Turkish and Central Asian lands there was no forced assimilation in terms of language and religion so long

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as they did not threaten the legitimacy of the monarchy.\textsuperscript{30} It was not until post-Napoleonic period that the Imperial bureaucracy attempted to define the national character of both Great Russians and the peoples living within the empire’s borderlands.\textsuperscript{31} The proto-Russification policies that were implemented \textit{ad hoc} to expand the Russian Empire, created the framework by which Tsar Nicholas I constructed the official policy of “Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nationality." Nicholas I’s national policies, characterized “the uniqueness of Russia’s religious and political life,” as a tool to justify the government’s repressive character, and mitigate the potential of revolt.\textsuperscript{32}

\textit{“Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality”: The Development of an Elite Russian Nationality}

The Russian Empire encompassed a vast space which housed different ethnicities, religious, and linguistic realities; these differences were finally denoted by the Imperial government in the nineteenth-century. The Imperial bureaucracy began denoting distinctions in nationalities to establish hierarchy and consequently maintain the subordinate character of non-Russian nationals. The Imperial government utilized its “innate morality” informed by its Orthodox character in the construction of an internal community between Great Russians that justified their dominant character across its borderlands. Russification, or the notion, of it became more popular as the government was seeking to maintain its authority in non-homogeneous regions in a reaction to seeing its European neighbors failing to maintain monarchical control.\textsuperscript{33}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{30}These regions contained large Muslim populations. These regions with notable Islamic populations correspond with modern-day Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, or stateless peoples who had migrated from the Ottoman Empire to the Volga-Ural region.  
\textsuperscript{31}Burbank and von Hagen, \textit{Russian Empire: Space, People, Power}, 4-6.  
\textsuperscript{33}Burbank and von Hagen, \textit{Russian Empire: Space, People, Power}, 7-8.}
“Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality” was the Imperial doctrine that proclaimed Russian national identity had its bases in submission and respect for the tsar. In other words, the Russian bureaucracy prided itself as moral leader and an establisher of order ultimately based on Christian truth. It was important for Nicholas I to legitimize his role as Tsar, as his power was contested immediately upon his ascension to the throne. After Alexander I’s death, there was a controversy regarding the rightful heir to the throne. In reaction to Nicholas I’s inheritance, a group of dissidents named the Decembrist staged a revolt. The ideology of “Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality” generated a policy of assimilation called Russification, whereby Russian became the language and culture of social mobility.

Russification was aimed at assimilation for political purposes rather than sociocultural ones. The goals of Russification were to create a population loyal to the Romanov Tsar and the Orthodox Church. Yet, Russification policies did not intend to create a sense of shared identity or present the empire’s control over its territories as being justified through notions of an ancestral homeland. A prominent element of Russification is that within the Imperial state structure, there was a constant consideration of the Russian people as “other.” There is little evidence to assume that Russification was ever motivated by the desire of the autocrat, nobility, or the landlords to present themselves as belonging to “the people.” This sense of “otherness” is demonstrated in several of the administrative practices that implemented Russification policies.

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35 Riasanovsky, “‘Nationality’ in the State Ideology during the Reign of Nicholas,” 45.
One predominant example is the ways in which the empire distinguished national differences. The status quo in Imperial Russian administrative practice was to dictate a person's national identity by their lineage, or descent, rather than by the individual's birthplace or self-identification. For instance, a noble family with Polish origins, whose only connection to “their Polish identity” was their surname, would be documented as Polish in legal or official documents. This hypothetical Polish family, presented above, could have fulfilled their “civic duties” to the Tsar, used the Russian language, and lived in Great Russia for decades, yet still be considered Polish. The “othering” of non-Russians by lineage did not inherently bar assimilated individuals from functioning in everyday life, increasing social mobility, or even hold prominent positions in the government or military.\(^{37}\) Russification did create a society in which assimilation to Russian societal norms and usage of the Russian language were essential for social mobility. Furthermore, the ideology of “Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality” necessitated that one be Russified, to be considered a part of cultured, intellectual society, but never promoted the idea of unified Imperial national identity.\(^{38}\)

The dysfunctional usage of Russification to maintain Imperial hierarchy is seen in the inconsistency by which it was enforced. The extent by which Russification was practiced in various areas was informed by the degree of “civilization” present within the borderlands. This disregard for a person's level of assimilation into Russian culture, or the amount of time in which they had resided in Great Russia, is further seen in the exclusionary practices that were informed more by class, than national descent. The institutionalization of Russian formalities was foremost aimed at non-Russian intelligentsia, nobility, and landowners, who resided in the western

\(^{38}\) Riasanovsky, “‘Nationality’ in the State Ideology during the Reign of Nicholas,” 38-46.
territories of the Russian Empire, seen in reference to Poles and Germans. For example, the institutionalization of the Russian language in educational and judicial systems in the present-day Baltic States was motivated by the large number of Baltic Germans who possessed land and dictated local leadership, rather than the fear of agrarian revolt from Lithuanian peasants. This sort of Russification practice was not aimed at convincing the Baltic German or the Lithuanian peasant that he had a shared identity with the ruling classes of Great Russians; rather it created a hierarchical legitimacy in which Russianness remained hegemonic.  

The defining of a national character among lower classes was also done with reference to civilization hierarchy. Those who resided in the western borderlands, such as Belarussians, Cossacks, and Ukrainians were considered ethnic Russians, but they were never considered equal to the Great Russian. For example, in the nineteenth-century Belarussians were often referred to as White Russians in official documentation or speech. In addition, Ukrainians were referred to as Little or Southern Russians.  

The rural populations in the western territories were largely “unaffected” by Russification meaning that no distinct policy of socio-cultural assimilation was dictated to the uneducated, underprivileged masses. They were already “Russian,” while not being presumed to contain enough “civilization” to pose a threat to the Romanovs’ sovereignty.  

The idea that uncivilized peoples did not pose a threat further shows itself in policies put into effect in the eastern territories. For example, forced conversion from Islam to Orthodox Christianity was not a popular method for legitimatizing Russian autocracy in its eastern territories,

40 Serhy Yekelchyk, Ukraine: Birth of a Modern Nation (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 33-52. The term White Russian stems from the translation of the word Беларусь, referring to the territory of modern-day Belarus. It should not be confused with the political, military group of the White Army.
where the policy leaned more towards incentivizing elites from national minorities, rather than attempting to alter their institutions to be more “Russian.” In territories like the Caucasus or Central Asia, the trend was to install the few educated elites from the minority nationality in local governments and or give them land privileges. The Imperial government thought that doing so would ensure that the majority of the “uncivilized” population remained repressed by a select few who ensured loyalty to the House of Romanov, because it was the Imperial government which granted and protected their privileges. This type of symbiotic relationship resulted in an elite population that accepted and promoted Russification as a political tactic, but ultimately was not required to assimilate to Russian culture.  

Russification in the Face of Modernity: The Last Romanov Tsar

The ideological conviction of “Nationality, Orthodoxy, and Autocracy” on the part of the Tsar and the state would continue and even intensify during the reign of Nicholas II, ending only with the Russian Revolution. Indeed, one of the reasons Russification is a critical concept is that many historians have seen these processes aiding in the Romanovs’ decline. The last Romanov Tsar, Nicholas II, came into power at the turn of the century in 1894. Nicholas II was perceived by his contemporaries, and present-day historians, as too naïve and ill-equipped for the role of Tsar. In 1894, the Russian Empire housed approximately 130 subjects of varying nationalities, Slavs, Balts, Jews, Germans, Armenians, Uzbeks, and Tatars; but the Tsar was considered a Russophile. 

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Young Nicholas II idealized a Muscovite style Russian past, that effectively combined rhetoric of civilization hierarchy, to justify repression, and thereby legitimized the Imperial governmental claims that Russian history, language, and culture were superior. His childhood tutor, Constantine Petrovich Pobedonostsev, had a great influence on Nicholas II's conviction that orthodoxy and autocracy were necessities for the survival of the multinational Russian state. During his reign Nicholas II, seemed willfully ignorant to the magnitude of national discord and economic stagnation within his empire. He was uninformed about basic information regarding Russia’s international status, he delegated his decision-making in foreign policy to his ministers, and the most significant industrial development of the period was the Trans-Siberian Railroad. The Russophile Tsar showed no desire to modify the centralizing institutions of orthodoxy and autocracy, solidifying the long-held belief that Russia was incapable of reform in the face of modernity.

The failure of traditional Romanov policy had become clear in the Russian Revolution of 1905, known as Bloody Sunday, which “shattered the ancient, legendary belief that the Tsar and the people were one.” Russia’s military defeat in the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905) damaged the international reputation of the regime, humiliated the domestic popular, and left revolutionary agitators “enraged by the tsar’s rejection to reform.” The lack of military strategy symbolized a weakness in the Russian military and characterized the Imperial military as poorly equipped to

45Riasanovsky, “‘Nationality’ in the State Ideology during the Reign of Nicholas,” 38-46.
46Riasanovsky, “‘Nationality’ in the State Ideology during the Reign of Nicholas,” 64-69.
47Riasanovsky, “‘Nationality’ in the State Ideology during the Reign of Nicholas,” 16, 67.
48Massie, Nicholas and Alexandra, 103-104.
handle modern warfare. Furthermore, Nicholas II’s decision to remain in the war despite Russia's clear weakness symbolized his inefficient leadership.

The combination of military failure and war weariness resulted in workers strikes and agrarian revolt within the Russian Empire. Nicholas II had relied on the military to quell mass descent, as was traditionally done; however, as the Russo-Japanese War left many rank and file soldiers embittered, they were not unified in command and many mutinied. In a haste desire to hold the empire Nicholas conducted a minuscule constitutional reform known as the October Manifesto. Nevertheless, Nicholas II still called on the revolutionaries and dissenters to recall their connection with the motherland and imagined himself as the autocratic representative of the Russian people.50

**The Bolsheviks: On Russification**

The Bolsheviks understood how crucial the nationality question was. Their national policy was constructed to appear as oppositional from its Imperial predecessor. From 1905 through 1924 there were ongoing internal debates among the Bolsheviks in seeking to create, and subsequently, institutionalize a national policy that was without national hegemony. The Revolutions of 1917 are presented in Soviet historiography as events which directly illustrate the connection between national oppression and class struggle. Bolshevik national policy during the Revolution and Civil War was constructed on the grounds of aiding nationals in their development along Marx’s historical materialism, after which they would be united as Soviet nations, and eventually dissolve into a greater international communist community.

Russification was never a standardized process across the empire, and generally it was aimed more at preserving centralized authority of the Imperial government, than at seeking to

generate a feeling of a shared national consciousness. The Soviet Union developed at a time when multinational empires were addressing the effects of nationalism, within the First World War, thus resulting in the fall of similar multiethnic political unions. If one assumes that the inability to maintain a multiethnic sphere in a time of growing nationalism provides one reason why the Russian Empire failed, it is interesting to denote that Bolsheviks believed they could eradicate this budding desire to formulate nation-states, while maintaining most of the territorial influence of its Imperial predecessor.51

An obstacle for the Bolsheviks was the task of consolidating a multiethnic state in the same region of the former Russian Empire. Marxist-Leninist theory supported the notion that Russia’s failure in the First World War was promoted by the alienation of the ruling national class from the masses. Marxist-Leninist theory stated that the ruling classes, known as bourgeois nationals, used nationalism to oppress the masses, through the creation of a false shared identity across class boundaries, and was used to ensure the continuity of the old order. Lenin also perceived non-Bolshevik revolutionary groups, during the First World War, as compromising socialist parties who put their national sympathies above their political sympathies.52

As they consolidated power, the Bolsheviks appealed to the grievances of non-Russian national identities, who had been oppressed under Tsarism, even though the majority were not

52David Brandenberger and Mikhail Zelenov, eds., “The Bolshevik Party in the Period of the Imperialist War and The Second Russian Revolution in Russia (1914–February–March 1917),” in Stalin’s *Master Narrative: A Critical Edition of the History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks), Short Course* (Yale University Press, 2019), 317–348. This source is a definition addition of a Stalinist textbook. The authorship is disputed. Historically, Stalin has been attributed as the author, however it is more likely that writing was done by Central Committee members. Stalin, nevertheless, was the authoritative editor and commentator, and so the textbook was altered to his taste.
from a proletarian class but rather were peasants. Nevertheless, this appeal was not seen to diverge from Marx’s theory of historical materialism; as stated by Lenin, consciousness of national identity occurred in tandem with capitalism. It was theorized that subsequently the masses and working classes would realize bourgeois-nationalists were using nationalism to create a false sense of community, to better exploit them. Therein the masses would recognize that identifying with a nation-state was to their determent. The development of a national consciousness in non-Russian nationals, after the fall of the Russian Empire, was seen as aiding nationals through a transitory developmental stage, as dictated by Marx’s theory, from nationality-based capitalism into socialism.53

The First World War: A Non-National Conflict

The First World War was not only a war between empires but also an internal struggle within empires to maintain their existence. The collapse of multinational empires in the early twentieth century, such as the Austrian-Hungarian and the Ottoman Empire, have been explained by the emergence of nationalism and the desire for political self-determination. The collapse of multinational Imperial states after the First World War was used to defend the notion that empires were incompatible with the realities of modernity. Thus, creating the idea that in the twentieth century the self- determination nation-state would triumph. At the time of the First World War, the Russian soldier was characterized as ill-equipped and weak by their contemporaries, this furthered the collective perception that Russia had made no major contributions to the war. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that the Romanov dynasty had an equal impact on European history.

as the Hapsburg and Hohenzollerns.\textsuperscript{54} In discourses about Russian Imperial collapse, economic stagnation and military insufficiency are often highlighted over nationalism.\textsuperscript{55}

The lack of nationalism discourse surrounding Russian Imperial decay is due several reasons, the primary being that Russia's participation in the First World War is overshadowed by its subsequent Revolution and Civil War. The secondary importance given to discussions of Russian nationalism in the causation of Imperial decay, is confirmed by the presumption that Marxist-Leninism is solely an economic theory. Therefore, the establishment of the Soviet Union was seen as the establishment of an economic order, which created a new social order and not vice versa. Nonetheless, in early Bolshevik interpretations of the First World War nationalism did play a role. Marxist-Leninist promoted the notion that Russia’s failure in the First World War was promoted by the alienation of the ruling national class from the masses, and their attempt to project a form of nationalism that would maintain the old order. In addition, Bolsheviks accused compromising socialist parties for prioritizing their national sympathies over their political sympathies which subsequently resulted in the war’s longevity.\textsuperscript{56}

\textit{From the First World War to the Revolutions of 1917: In Pursuit of Self-Determination}

The Russian Revolution was a socio-political revolution which transpired in two phases. The February Revolution, occurring March 8-16, 1917, began with a series of mass demonstrations and worker strikes in St. Petersburg, then Petrograd, due food shortages, lack of the accessibility to basic goods, and inflation. The State Duma, legislative branch of the empire, was called to address the situation, and on March 15, 1917, Tsar Nicholas II abdicated the throne. As a result, a

\textsuperscript{54}Sanborn, \textit{Imperial Apocalypse}, 1-3.
Provisional Government was formed by the remnants of the Duma. Months later in a landscape rife with political instability and social unrest the Bolsheviks seized control in Petrograd by staging a coup at the Winter Palace, on November 7-8, 1917; this became known as the October Revolution, or the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917.

The Two National Cultures of 1917: The Relationship between National Oppression and Class Struggle

The February Revolution was also considered unsuccessful by Bolsheviks. They noted that the Provisional Government did not display any abilities for reimaging the national relations between Great Russia and its territories; rather it seemed to seek to maintain Imperial notions of Russian authority clouded under false promises. This factor denoted in a Stalinist textbook entitled History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks), which referred to the February Revolution of 1917, as a “Bourgeois-Democratic” appropriation of the Revolution from the masses by “compromising parties” such as the Mensheviks, Socialist-Revolutionaries, Nationalist, and Liberals, who wanted continuation of the Imperialist war out of their own self-interest, rather than peace for the people. These compromising parties sought to maintain the privileges allotted to them by the Imperial structure and were generalized by the Bolsheviks as maintaining Russian chauvinism.

The Bolsheviks would, in theory, give the revolution “back to the people.” 57 Leninism's national policy would be different, it promised that the Bolshevik Revolution would bring an end to the traditional oppressive, autocratic Russian-style nationalism. The dichotomy in which the ruling class identified as separate entities from the masses, the working class, and the peasantry,

was something the Bolsheviks attempted to utilize when seeking supporters in the borderland territories. After seizing power in Petrograd, the Bolsheviks entered negotiations for a separate peace to end Russia’s participation in the First World War. This separate peace was supposed to indicate the Bolsheviks were disinterested in maintaining the social hierarchy of the Russian Empire. The Brest-Litovsk Treaty also stated that Russia no longer had political autonomy over its former geography that lay outside of “Great Russia.”

Russia ended its participation in the First World War by signing the Brest-Litovsk Treaty with the Central Powers on February 9, 1918. This effectively resulted in the relinquishment of several territories of the former Russian Empire to Germany including the modern-day Baltic States, Belarus, and Ukraine; for the Bolsheviks, signing the treaty allowed full domestic concentration on the Civil War.

The concept of resigning from war and admitting defeat was good for the Bolsheviks’ image across the former Russian Empire, as it symbolized both the failure of imperialism and the Bolsheviks’ resolve to bring about peace. Nevertheless, the Brest-Litovsk Treaty was simply a formality. This formality was twofold; violence, disorder, and despair remained widespread realities due to the internal conflicts of newly emancipated states. This social disorder was also intensified by German occupation in the borderlands. The former peace-bearing Bolsheviks soon began to proselytize about the necessities of Civil War to truly terminate the legacy of Russification by eradicating all “counter-revolutionaries” to effectively establish the nations’ right to self-determination.

Bolsheviks attempted to gain support from the mutinous soldiers and the rebellious peasants by framing national oppression as class struggle. The October Revolution 1917, and the

subsequent process of Sovietization, was seen as ushering in a new era in which broke time with the Russian Empire. Sovietization was intended to release people from the chains of the Imperialist structure and would no longer promote policies that expressed ideas of Great Russian national superiority. Leninist and Stalinist historiographers, of the Party line, stated that, “[from] February to October 1917, the Bolshevik Party accomplished the very difficult task of winning over the majority of the working class...and enlisting the support of millions of peasants for the Socialist revolution.”60 It was paramount to the Bolsheviks to persuade masses who rebelled due to their local material realities, despite their ignorance to the theoretical framework, that the October Revolution, the Civil War, and the subsequent process of Sovietization would usher in a new social order that was for their betterment.

*The Russian Civil War: Bolsheviks’ Appeal to Nationalities in Practice*

The Russian Civil War, occurring from November 1917 to June 1923, took place throughout the former territories of the Russian Empire, as the Bolsheviks sought stable socio-political order. To oversimplify the war’s combatants; those in defense of the establishment of the Bolshevik party; were known as the Red Army, while the “White Army,” was composed of a myriad of political sympathies unified by their resistance to the Bolshevik party. The Bolsheviks’ appealed to the peasantry and soldiers, and even the “unconscious” worker, through their local or national realities, during the Revolution and the Civil War, to “[awaken] the masses from [their] feudal lethargy” and encourage the victory over “all [forms of] national oppression, for the sovereignty of the people.”61

However, it should be noted that not all peasants or soldiers who joined the Red Army were ideologically aligned with Bolsheviks, in part, because the theoretical framework was inapplicable to or not understood by them. In addition, the lack of ideological alignment between the soldier and theorist was also informed by a contradiction presented by the Bolsheviks. Bolsheviks had utilized discourse surrounding peace, equality, and national self-determination to gain sympathies, however Bolshevik ideology never claimed that the self-determination of nationalities should therefore result in an autonomous nation-state. This later created conflict within the Red Army, especially as many of the former Imperial territories were concurrently fighting their own civil wars for national autonomy.62

**Conclusion: Russification Informed Sovietization**

Russification and Sovietization are widely used but perplexing terms, used to describe Russia’s national policies through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Both terms are commonly used to refer to various social, cultural, and economic policies aimed at centralizing political authority; these terms have had different means to differing not only over time but also in the contemporary societies in which these policies were implemented.63 Russification aided in generating widespread discontent in the borderlands of the empire. The Imperial government imposed hardline reactionary politics against nationalities which were perceived as threatening, such as Poles and Germans. To repress their development and reinstate Russian hegemony. Russian language, education, and culture took a primary role in the creation of culture in the upper-strata. However, the forced assimilation caused by Russification also created a stronger desire for

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national autonomy within those groups. In addition, as unthreatening non-Russian nationals gained access to social mobility through the Russification systems they began to be informed about the repressive governmental structure. Intellectuals from both threatening and non-threatening nationalities observed the development of constitutional, parliamentary, democratic governmental ideals in Europe. This, again, reaffirmed a desire for national autonomy within the Russian empire.\textsuperscript{64}

In either case one can note that the Imperial structure did not seek to create a unified community based on coexistence. Subsequently, the preservation of this multicultural space was perceived as a fundamental piece in the formation of Russian identity to elites and governing administrative bodies from the eighteenth into the Soviet era.\textsuperscript{65} This inconsistency along with an uncertainty regarding national policy directed at non-Russians aided in the development of revolutionary sentiment and social ferment within the empire. The discontent in the Russian Empire had irrevocable effects in the First World War. Russian weakness in the First World War led to Revolution and an unstable government, resulting in an uncertainty for the future. These events resulted in the dissolution of the Russian Empire and the establishment of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the Soviet Union.

The Bolsheviks supported the notion that their ideology was necessary for development and freedoms of nations and peoples in the former Russian Empire. Paradoxically, this also meant that the ideological strength of the Red Army had always been adapted to national realities. Lenin proclaimed that adapting Marxist theory to the national realities was only to be utilized in so much to elucidate the masses about their oppression. However, giving recognition to national nuances,

\textsuperscript{64}Burbank and von Hagen, \textit{Russian Empire: Space, People, Power}, 18.
\textsuperscript{65}Burbank and von Hagen, \textit{Russian Empire: Space, People, Power}, 15-16.
created a false equivalency between the desires of the Bolsheviks and the regular population from which they gained support. The national policies carried out during Stalinism frequently differed from the international theories proposed by Leninism. Stalin’s “Socialism in One Country” was focused on the internal development of Soviet nations as opposed to staging an international revolution.
Chapter Two: Soviet National Policy as Marxist-Leninist Development

Introduction: The Usage of Literature in the Creation of a Soviet Identity

The history of Soviet literature is often dismissed by Western scholars in so much as the works display a “familiar pattern in which political revolution becomes cultural devolution,” or are concerned with “didactic ideological texts absent of artistic value.”66 The term used to describe Soviet literary style “socialist realism” proves to be inconsistent over time; the term was not its standardized style until the Stalinist era. However, subsequently the standard was altered during Khrushchev’s Thaw and Brezhnev’s Stagnation. Therefore, Soviet literature did not always reflect Marxist- Leninist theory, even when published within the guidelines of officialdom. Nonetheless, analyzing the development of Soviet literature in conjunction with developments in Soviet national policy, proves the opposite. Soviet literary culture is vital to understanding the pluralistic experiences of Soviet patriotism.

Soviet literary culture is vital to understanding the pluralistic experiences of Soviet patriotism. Literature had played an important role in constructing Russian identity, and the function of literature to formulate identity was actively promoted in the Soviet Union.67 Nonetheless, it should not be assumed that all Soviet literature is equivalent to Russian literature, nor is all Russian literature synonymous with Soviet literature. To be sure the novels analyzed in this thesis were written by Russian self-identified authors and were canonized throughout the Thaw to the Dissolution of the Soviet Union as prominent pieces of Russian-Soviet Literature.68 While the Soviets, too, were proud of Russia’s literary heritage, they were critical of the fact that

68This dichotomy will be discussed further in reference to each work.
nineteenth-century narratives, such as Tolstoy’s *War and Peace*, were only accessible to a small group of intelligentsia and nobility. Soviet policy, on the other hand, dictated that literature was to be aimed at the masses, and used a tool for creating a healthy collective. The Soviets used literature both in the consolidation and the preservation of power. Theoretically, Soviet literature was supposed to be a mirror of the success of the Revolution and the social progress of the Soviets, yet due to the nature of censorship it did not always provide a true look into Soviet life.69

*On Nationalism, War, and Literacy*

The emergence of nationalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries changed the characterization of warfare; the victory of nation-state could be used to formulate a collective memory that idealized the positive qualities of the nation. While the technological developments of the twentieth century also influenced the changing characteristics of warfare, nationalism supported the “shared myths and memories of past wars [that provided] a moral compass [and] a sense of collective immortality [of] one’s nation.”70 The First World War was particularly influential in the public perception that intensive nationalism was consequently indicative of aggressive warfare, because it was fought in an unprecedented magnitude and brutality. Representations of the First World War are also significant in discourses relating to the transitions of global powers from empires to nation states, resulting in an irrevocable loss of the past, a feeling of social alienation, and a uncertainty for the future.71 However, the emergence of nationalism and the usage of war conflicts to support the idea of a nation-state, is not indicative of a singular experience in regard to war, because war in and of itself is multifaceted.

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71Hall and Malešević eds., *Nationalism and War*, 1-29.
The ability of the Soviet Union to maintain a multinational, multi-linguistic state within the same space of Imperial predecessors is an anomaly which can directly be explained by Soviet national policy. Twentieth century imperial collapse and modern warfare generated massive physical destruction of Europe, but it also hallmarked a historical discontinuity from the nineteenth-century social order. This feeling of a break with the past is particularly noticeable in the development of national policy within the Russian Empire and the creation of a national identity in the Soviet Union. Soviet historiography frequently used conflicts, mainly the Russian Revolution, Russian Civil War, and the Second World War, to demonstrate the ideological truth of Soviet development.

Mass Illiteracy: The Challenges to Creating a Conscious Identity

During the Revolutions of 1917, the role of literature in the Russian Revolution was unclear and ill-defined. Revolutionary parties, such as the Mensheviks and Social Democrats argued that Russia was not developed enough in terms of economic and social realities to conduct a legitimate revolution. This notion was supported by the presumption within the Mensheviks and Social Democratic parties that universal literacy was a precondition for a socialist’s revolution; thereby facilitating the view that the mass revolts occurring in 1917 were not of a Marxist character. While the Bolsheviks argued the lack of literacy within the masses was a legacy of Tsarism's repressive character stating the Tsarist Ministry of Education intentionally sabotaged popular education, because they understood that education was as vital to the “development of class consciousness.”  

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Bolsheviks claimed the promotion of literacy would evoke the conscious revolutionary character in the masses of uneducated and, or illiterate workers and peasants.\textsuperscript{73}

Lenin theorized that a cultural revolution could be staged among the “unconscious masses.” This cultural revolution was intended to utilize art for the purpose of demonstrating to the masses that their rebellion was in alignment with Marxist historical materialism.\textsuperscript{74} Accordingly, Lenin thought that literature could be used as a tool to present the oppressive realities of the masses and therefore establish sympathies and confidence for the coming international proletarian revolution.\textsuperscript{75} However, “as with so many other aspects of national life, the Bolsheviks found after coming to power that they were ill-prepared to deal with the problems of adult education.”\textsuperscript{76}

The obstacles of agitating the masses through literature presented itself in the Civil War period. At the time the literate minority most likely fell into two factions, one being that of Bolshevik revolutionary attitude and others being generalized as counterrevolutionaries. The Tsarist Russification did not promote literacy among the masses, its foremost concern was implementing the Russian language to suppress the development of nationalities that already had their own literary culture.\textsuperscript{77} The educational reforms in the late nineteenth-century were generally ineffective in promoting literacy among average citizens. Tsarist educational reform was most successful in the 1880s and 1890s in urban regions of the Russian Empire, such as Petersburg, Moscow, and Kiev, meaning that there was a literate proletariat. However, it must be kept in mind

\textsuperscript{73}Kenez, “Liquidating Illiteracy in Revolutionary Russia,” 175.
\textsuperscript{74}Kenez, “Liquidating Illiteracy in Revolutionary Russia,” 173.
\textsuperscript{75}Caryl Emerson, “Literary Theory in the 1920s: Four Options in a Practicum,” Chapter in \textit{A History of Russian Theory and Criticism: The Soviet Age and Beyond}, 77.
\textsuperscript{76}Kenez, “Liquidating Illiteracy in Revolutionary Russia,” 174.
\textsuperscript{77}Kenez, “Liquidating Illiteracy in Revolutionary Russia,” 176.
that the class of peasants was far greater than that of workers. Russian peasants and non-Russian nationalities remained for the most part illiterate.\textsuperscript{78}

During the Civil War there was no standardized, institutionalized method of literacy promotion, due to the unlikely nature that it would take hold during such a tumultuous time. The Bolshevik party had to appeal to a large population of illiterate people, if they wanted to maintain the support they received during the Revolution and gain more support in the Civil War. Between 1919-1920, the Bolsheviks’ Department of Education sought to organize a national education and propaganda program that targeted illiterate adults. However, the Civil War impeded the promotion of literacy in several ways, a general scarcity of resources such as educators, textbooks, and most notably many non-Russian nationalities did not have a written, standardized version of their native language. Despite this fact the Bolsheviks still needed to appeal to the masses in an accessible manner, resulting in a simplification of the more theoretical aspects of Marxist-Leninism. Thus, Bolshevik agitation during the Civil War was conducted through speeches, propaganda, and public meetings.\textsuperscript{79}

The Bolsheviks’ literacy promotion was most influential within the Red Army, through 1919-1920, Lenin and Trotsky decreed a series of compulsory educational classes for the Red Army. Yet these decrees were implemented by local Soviets, and therefore not centralized. Furthermore, it was improbable that the Red Army could all be educated at an evenly matched literacy level, which would in turn allow them to understand Marx theoretically. This is because the soldiers in the Red Army had large disparities in their own educational level, for example the working-class soldiers were more likely to be literate and familiar with revolutionary theory than

\textsuperscript{78}Kenez, “Liquidating Illiteracy in Revolutionary Russia,” 175-176.
\textsuperscript{79}Kenez, “Liquidating Illiteracy in Revolutionary Russia,” 178.
the peasant soldier who was unable to identify the alphabet. By the end of the Civil War, literacy rates were most notable in the cities and among Red Army soldiers from the working class, Bolshevik literary development did not take hold in the rural regions.  

**Leninism: Making an International Union from Imperial Decay**

National policy also played a crucial role in Lenin’s consolidation of the Soviet Union, after the conclusion of the Civil War. At the Eleventh Party congress of the RCP(B), in March 1922, Vladimir Lenin stated that “The Soviet [state] is our achievement; it is a step forward in human progress” and that despite living in the midst of capitalism, the creation of the Soviet state was “the greatest political change in history.” He declared that Bolsheviks had “[enjoyed] enormous confidence…among the masses of people,” as opposed to being perceived as a party that stole power. Lenin also stated in this speech, the establishment of the Soviet state had improved the international perception of the Bolshevik party. Yet, despite Lenin's confident claims regarding Soviet development, in the early 1920s, the Soviet Union was still seeking to construct an identity that broke ties with its Imperial predecessor.

The notion of Bolsheviks understanding of national self-determination as inherent to the class struggle, informed the idea of creating autonomous republics, around national minorities. To highlight that the Bolsheviks were not maintaining Imperial hierarchy, but rather promoting civilization by supporting the states through their developmental stages. This would in turn foster the notion that Bolsheviks sought to promote Soviet modernization overall, rather than isolating resources to a few chosen nationalities. The Bolsheviks, “set out to bring [all] peoples into the

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80 Kenez, “Liquidating Illiteracy in Revolutionary Russia,” 182.
82 Ibid.: In this writing Lenin is regarding the people as the average worker and the peasant.
revolution and maintain their involvement in the international socialist movement” this was primarily done by promoting national cultures and encouraging national participation in social systems within the Soviet sphere. Soviet republics were constructed, in line with Imperial states, meaning that the national republics were constructed as administrative units that represented the national majority in each given region.  

It is significant to note that while intending to create a community which negates identification based on nationality, the organization of Soviet republics solidified national-based associations regarding homelands, languages, and culture. These geographical divisions of the Soviet republics, into national units, were not intended to be areas to congregate nationalities in a derogatory fashion. Most nationalities were not displaced from regions they perceived to be historically their homeland, consequently the divisions of former Imperial territory into national republics supported the Soviet government’s rhetoric of national development. Lenin’s national policy was not contracted to create a singular Soviet national identity or Soviet nation-state.

The Soviet Union was structured as a federal system; each republic had its own national Party systems that controlled the day-to-day reality of the judiciary, economy, and politics within their territories, a process known as korenizatsiia. The policy of korenizatsiia aided in the cultural development of non-Russian nationals, and subsequently supported the recognition of the cultural traditions as elements specific to that national group, rather than a part of a wider Russian

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84The Russian SFSR was only one among the fifteen national republics in the Soviet Union.
historiography. For example, educational policies which intended to increase literacy were conducted in the national [native] language of non-Russian nationals. The promotion of literacy through national languages resulted in the creation of a society where literature could play a more formative role in political consideration.

**Leninism: The New Economic Period and Soviet Literature**

As response to early signs of party weakness, Lenin implemented a series of reforms, beginning in 1923, known as the New Economic Policy (NEP). Lenin often faced criticism that NEP reforms illustrated the ineffectiveness and failure of Marxist theory in practice. This critique came not only from within the Bolshevik party, but also from other revolutionary parties, and the wider population of Bolshevik dissidents. The implementation of *korenizatsiia* revealed a division of opinions among the Bolshevik party. It was considered theoretically correct during War Communism to appeal to the exploited classes through their national realities, but *korenizatsiia* was seemingly divergent from the goal of forming an international union. For some Bolsheviks critics of *korenizatsiia* were rooted in the concern that the emergence of a conscious national identity was a threat to the Soviet state’s stability.

Furthermore, *korenizatsiia* created a decentralized system of governance, as the implementation of Bolshevik policies was entrusted to local authorities. Lenin responded to this criticism by repressing those deemed reformers and counterrevolutionaries. The reaction to NEP

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reforms also resulted in the implementation of inspections of workers and peasants, to “avoid a split which would be fatal to [the] Soviet Republic.” In silencing all dissidenters, even those only accused of conjuncture, it appears that the Soviet state was unsuccessful at conducting a “great break” from Russian Imperial policy in terms of politics, economics, and sociocultural norms.

The shortcomings of national policy under Leninism are reflected in the formative developments of a Soviet literary culture, which took place in the transition from war communism into the New Economic Period. As the Bolsheviks lacked centralized authority in the Soviet Union during the 1920s, Russian literature experienced a short period of freedom. However, literary freedom was seemingly not Lenin’s goal. During this period, Bolsheviks had not yet reached a consensus in defining the characteristics of “Party literature,” notwithstanding the foremost task in establishing a Soviet literary culture was defaming pre-1917 literature. Pre-Revolutionary literature was described as having an individualistic orientation that was characteristic of bourgeois Russian national culture, and therefore not representative of the mass national culture found in the proletariat or the peasant.

The Bolsheviks began declaring that pre-1917 Russian literature was another element of Russian chauvinism, which represented Russians as more cultured and moral than their non-Russian counterparts. This attitude is represented in resolutions created by Lenin and Trotsky. The first formal movement to exile non-Soviet was Lenin’s request during the Central Committee

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Politburo of 1922, for the NKVD to compile a comprehensive dossier of writers, academics, and literary critics. This dossier would assist the Party in identifying remnants of white guard apologist, counterrevolutionaries and, or those producing art that was “non-Octobrist.” 94 Also, in 1922, the initialization of literature censorship emerged with the creation of the Chief Directorate of Literature (Glavlit). 95 By May of 1924 there was a formal resolution representative of the party line entitled “On Print Media” which stated that literature should be representative of the party that is the workers and the “rural correspondents.” 96 The Bolshevik party decrees that followed “On Print Media” further defined the qualities of party-line literature; literature should be functional, representative of the collective, and be instructive and educational for both the reader and the writer.

However, due the lack of centralization during the period, the Bolsheviks’ decrees and resolutions on literature were more effective symbolically, than in practice. An immediate clean break with pre-Revolutionary Russian literature was not conducted as restrictions on “bourgeois press” could not be enforced. Additionally, even in the regions where restrictions on literature were implemented, they did not have a standardized effect as local officials were left with the logistics of ensuring compliance. The lack of nationalization across all industries provided an ability to create art outside of the Party-line for publication. During the twenties, “Russian literature…presented a motley spectacle in which pre-revolutionary literary figures and style

95Stefano Garzonio and Maria Zalambani, “Literary Criticism During the Revolution and the Civil War, 1917-1921,” Chapter in A History of Russian Literary Theory and Criticism: The Soviet Age and Beyond, 16.
dominated the scene, often disguised in proletarian garb.”

Thus, under Leninism elements of bourgeois-national literary culture were still in existence and evolving into modern forms.

There was a sentiment of new freedom in Russian literary culture that resulted in a variety of genres, some which were a continuation of the nineteenth-century literary tradition while others clearly rejected said tradition. Regardless of this divide on tradition, Russian-Soviet literature created in the 1920s, presents a recurring theme of the individual attempting to integrate themselves into the collective.

The early 1920s was still a period of social upheaval, and many of the works that emerge from the 1920s are representative of the internal struggle to redefine one's identity in this new context. Even the works of proletarian novelists, “[were] concerned with psychological realism” that presented “the problems involved in remaking the world…through the prism of the individual.”

The standardization of Soviet literary culture emerged, after Lenin’s death, during the rule of Joseph Stalin.

**Early Stalinism: “Socialism in One Country” (1925-1929)**

Stalin’s enigmatic aura and the brutalities that occurred under his leadership leave him as a fascinating figure within the popular imagination in Western societies that, “the entirety of the Soviet experience is often reduced to Stalin and Stalinism.” Stalin is, also, the primary figure associated with corrupting the international theory put forth in Marxist-Leninism, by implementing national policies that focused on internal realities in the Soviet Union. The national policy formed during Stalinism and Leninism are similar in that both altered Marxist theory, to make it applicable to the Soviet state. The policies conducted under “Socialism in One Country” were concentrated

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on internal affairs and domestic development, as opposed to using Soviet resources to promote an international proletarian revolution.

Stalin’s essay entitled “The National Question and Leninism” (1929) justified his policy of “Socialism in One Country” within the theoretical framework of Marxist-Leninist historical materialism. Stalin explained that this focus on the development of Soviet nationals did not disregard the theoretical arguments in Leninism about the relationship between nationalism and Marxist development. Stalin’s conviction was that “Socialism in One Country” was a continuation of Leninism, on the grounds that Soviet nations fundamentally differed from their Imperial predecessors. Stalin defined Soviet nations having differing characteristics that its predecessor state, and its competitor nation-states, which were both constructed by bourgeois nationalism. In his writing “The National Question and Leninism” Stalin stated that Soviet nations had been constructed in opposition to traditional notions of nationality that were constructed in the Russian Empire. Therefore, Soviet nations were categorically different from other twentieth century

101 Anne Applebaum, *Iron Curtain: The Crushing of Eastern Europe, 1944-1956* (Anchor Books, 2013), xix-xxxvi.; Trotsky. “Appendix II: Socialism in a Separate Country,” in *History of the Russian Revolution*, 890-913; This point is still contested; however, my thesis will argue the notion that Stalinism is a continuation of Leninism, to analyze how the novels perceive Soviet national policy as regressive rather than progressive. To be sure not only in Soviet proper, but also across Eastern Central Europe Soviet ideology was implemented by force, not the transitory nature of history, despite official narratives of the consensual integration. “Socialism in One Country” is generally pointed at the origins of Stalin's corruption of Marxist-Leninist theory. For example, Leon Trotsky states that Stalin’s national policy was a misunderstanding of Leninism, rather than an outright falsification. Nevertheless, Trotsky did not view “Socialism in One Country” as ideological alignment with Bolshevik theory. Trotsky’s disagreements with Stalin led to him being labeled as an enemy of the people and make an example of him as an enemy of the people.


103 Stalin’s “The National Question and Leninism” was written as a direct response to those who viewed Stalin’s national policy as inconsistent with Lenin’s. The following discussion illustrates how he justifies his national policy as a direct reflection of Lenin’s historical materialism.
conceptions of the [bourgeois] nation-states. To support his argument, Stalin stated that Soviet nationals were distinct from their Imperial predecessors, he noted that the Soviet republics had passed through the two periods of Marxist development. In other words, Soviet states had emerged because of the Revolutions of 1917 and thereby signaled a transition away from capitalism and bourgeois nationalism.\(^\text{104}\)

Stalin dismissed criticism leveled at “Socialism in One Country”, by claiming that the individual’s perception that his national policy was not in alignment with Leninism, meant that the critic did not properly understand the theory of historical materialism. Stalin maintained that capitalist states would reach a period of decline and stage workers’ revolution, without Soviet intervention, because in Marxist theory all society would inevitably progress into communism. He supported this by proclaiming that “the victory of socialism in one country - our country [USSR] for example” would give validity to the theory of historical materialism.\(^\text{105}\) Therefore, according to Stalinism, Soviet national policy should not promote the eradication of national differences to construct a unified identity, because the development of nationalities meant that the Soviet state had successfully brought the former Russian Empire out of its feudal character. Subsequently, the formal recognition of Soviet national cultures only affirmed that over time “nations [would naturally] amalgamate.”\(^\text{106}\) Stalin argued that for the state to properly assist the distinct needs of each nationality, in their transition from socialist republics to communist societies, one had to acknowledge the different national characteristics present within the republics.

“Socialism in One Country” in Practice

The national policies conducted during Stalin’s “Socialism in One Country” resulted in pulling back from korenizatsiia; historians have presented Stalin’s shift to an internal national policy, to have been more pragmatic than ideological. Nations of the western frontier, such as Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Georgia, which were already regarded as being more developed than borderland territories. This is because they possessed more developed character before the Revolution. It was feared that with the aid of korenizatsiia these “developed” republics would become too cognizant of their nationality, and therefore desire to consolidate into a nation-state of their own independent from the union. Stalin's fear of republics succeeding into independent nation-states, it seems, was also magnified principally by a fear of signaling Soviet ideological failure to global powers.\textsuperscript{107} Thus, in a pursuit of presenting global power outside its borders, the Soviet Union conducted terrorism, imprisonment, and repression of its own peoples.

The period of mass persecution and arrest, and deportation of non-Soviet enemy elements was the Socialist Offensive or Cultural Revolution (1928-1932). However, in practice these “offensives” disproportionately affected Belorussian, and Ukrainians, as well as “stateless” peoples residing within the Soviet Union, Jewish, Polish, Germans, and Cossacks among others. These national groups overlapped with those that were considered threatening nationalities or persecuted nationalities in the Imperial era. Stalin’s justification for this was that he was not targeting peoples on the grounds of nationality, but rather in effort to foster a sense of Soviet identity by riding it of “non-Soviet, enemy nations.”\textsuperscript{108} In a desire to monitor the non-Great Russian nationalism more effectively Stalin implemented Russian culture and language as a homogenizing force.\textsuperscript{109} Consequently, Stalin's reduction of korenizatsiia did create a “double

\textsuperscript{107} Martin, \textit{The Affirmative Action Empire}, 394.
\textsuperscript{108} Martin, \textit{The Affirmative Action Empire}, 312, 393.
\textsuperscript{109} Martin, \textit{The Affirmative Action Empire}, 393, 394.
assimilation policy” within the non-Russian republics. The Russian language was promoted as a Soviet lingua franca therein still maintaining the rhetoric that all Soviet republics were equal peoples, capable of development given the proper tools.

The institutionalization of Russian followed korenizatsiia meaning the Party had already begun its process of reducing the perception that non-Russian national languages were indicative of being uncivilized or uneducated. This allowed the Party to create the impression that the prominence of Russian culture in Soviet culture was motivated by a desire to increase literacy and establish a lingua franca across the republics. Subsequently, this presented the notion that total assimilation into Russian culture was an individual choice, rather than necessity to appear as a cultured, educated member of society.110 Therefore, the assimilation of non-Russian nationals for social mobility was presented as a tool to better oneself and not a form of oppression. Soviet nationals were still encouraged to become literate in their native languages and familiarize themselves with their national history. However, they were also encouraged to learn about the history of Russia to understand the greater context of the Soviet Union.111

Stalin: Definer of Socialist Realism

During the same period in which the USSR was sorting out its nationalities’ policy, it was also trying to define the proper form art should take in the workers’ state. Socialist Realism was the official terminology for literature that was Party approved, but what exactly it encompassed was evolved throughout the decades. The Russian-Soviet culture in Stalinism presented a recurring theme of the individual attempting to integrate themselves into the collective as it did under Leninism. 112 Although Stalin played an influential role in formulating socialist realism

110 Martin, The Affirmative Action Empire, 394.
111 Martin, The Affirmative Action Empire, 394.
112 Brown, Russian Literature since the Revolution, 11-13.
his own definitions were never consistent; this point will be exemplified in the discussion of Mikhail Sholokhov and Mikhail Bulgakov, who were considered white apologist or ideologically incorrect. This does not mean that the term socialist realism is meaningless, it demonstrates the evolution of what kind of literature works that were approved for publication are reflective of a changing understanding of Soviet identity. Stalin maintained the core message of Bolshevik theory - that literature was an important tool in the creation of a healthy Soviet collective.  

However, it would be a mistake to only acknowledge Stalin’s role in the creation of Soviet literary identity. Maxim Gorky played a formative role in bridging the gap between harsh party line and the diversity in genre or style, thereby creating multifaceted Soviet literature. He even personally advocated for many Soviet writers, such as Sholokhov and Grossman, that were deemed ideologically incorrect. Gorky argued that genres such as romanticism, comedies, and dramas could still be created in the confines of socialist realism. The central thesis of the argument originated from his separation of realism into form and content; the duality of experiencing reality and the inability to truly replicate the real in art is a primary function of art and therefore justifiable. 

*Stalinism: Party-line Literary Institutions*

The Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (RAPP), established in 1925, was most reflective of the Bolshevik party line, despite not being a formal party institution. The RAPP was a union of self-proclaimed proletarian writers who sought to reflect the everyday person as a member of the collective, as opposed to reverencing the average individual in a nardnost’ feature.

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The association’s literary criticism was influential in creating “parameters and conceptual apparatus of socialist realism.” Members of the RAPP used a naming and shaming technique to identify counterrevolutionary or ideological incorrect literature but did not possess official power to exclude these works from being produced within the Soviet Union. Rather, they reported these anti-Bolshevik novelists to the Party, and thereby derived an authorial voice of defining Soviet literature.

Stalin used the “radical ideological puritan[ism]” of the RAPP to his advantage in his ascension to power. However, in the onset of Stalin’s Socialist Offensive he began to criticize the RAPP for their ideological fanaticism. This is seen in a letter to V. N. Bill-Belotserkovsky, a RAPP playwright, dated February 1929, Stalin proclaimed that the RAPP’s desire to define literature as left or right wing was mistaken, in that it implied the Bolshevik party was inherently divided. Stalin stated that art should be judged in relation to its Soviet character. This resulted in a criticism that was oriented at analyzing and dividing literary works on the grounds of being pro-Soviet or anti-Soviet. This indicates that the rhetoric of pro-Revolutionary or counter-Revolutionary was outdated and implying that the Soviet people had already been present foundations of the union.

The Union of Soviet Writers, established in 1932, was created in the path towards nationalization of all industries. Conceptually, the Union of Soviet Writers was open to non-party member writers; however, proper Soviet literary style had already been fashioned by the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers, which was disbanded in 1932. Stalinism sought to eliminate Imperial relics and non-Soviet literary productions at an increased speed. Therefore, the term socialist realism came to represent both the current success of the state, but also motivate the further advancement of the proletarian, socialist movement.\textsuperscript{118} Stalinism’s formal institution of the Union of Soviet Writers meant all works were read by censors prior to publication and subsequently edited before they were released to the public. Subsequently, the monitoring and prosecution of bourgeois-national artists was more effective than it had been under Lenin, and many writers who enjoyed the freedom of the early twenties were barred from partaking in cultural or literary institutions.\textsuperscript{119}

Nevertheless, this should not negate the contributions of Soviet Writers in creating a Soviet literary culture, aesthetic, and identity. As stated early an author did not need to be a Party member to obtain access into the Writers Union, therefore a Soviet authors membership is not directly indicative of their political stance. Self-censorship allotted to Soviet writers with a sense of agency over their work, many party-approved Soviet authors altered their personal style and censored themselves to get published and become a part of Soviet culture.\textsuperscript{120} Therefore, while socialist realism was still fictitious in its representation of the Soviet world, this would not be seen as a falsification of Soviet progress because it was also categorized as art.

\textsuperscript{118}Dobrenko, “Literary Criticism and the Transformations of the Literary Field During the Cultural Revolution,” 43-63.
\textsuperscript{119}Dobrenko, “Literary Criticism and the Transformations of the Literary Field During the Cultural Revolution,” 44.
\textsuperscript{120}Dobrenko, The Making of a Soviet Writer, 349-351.
Conclusion: The Destruction of Imperial Cultural Mythologies in the Soviet Union

Russification was not concerned with eradicating mass illiteracy, because illiterate peasants posed no threat to the survival of the Russian Empire.\textsuperscript{121} Therefore, after the dissolution of the Russian Empire it became clear that many of these newly recognized national cultures did not have a standard dialect language or written system. Sovietization helped increase literacy through two methods, though national language and the Russian language. The Soviets, unlike their Imperial predecessor, recognized non-Russian national languages, thereby supporting the standardization of non-Russian national languages. Thus, the literary culture created during the Leninist period was symbolic of each national republic’s evolutionary character and offered the potential to successfully develop through the stages of Marx’s historical materialism.\textsuperscript{122} Social Realist literature was intended to be reflective of the healthy progress and morality of the social reality in which it was produced. Subsequently, socialist realism was supposed to mirror the success of the Revolution and the social progress of the Soviets.

The changes in Soviet literary culture from Lenin’s New Economic Period to Stalin’s Cultural Offensive can ideological be explained as the evolutionary character of the Soviet state, considering that the Soviet Union was still in the process of historical development.\textsuperscript{123} Stalin is often credited with solidifying a clear, proper definition of party-line socialist realism, which was the standard aesthetic across the arts in the Soviet Union; nevertheless Soviet writers also had an

important role in the creation of a Soviet literary culture. The usage of Russian language as a defining element of Soviet identity was proposed as a method to formulate a communal culture across national republics, rather than a means to suppress or isolate non-Russian nationals. Stalin did theorize that a common international language would emerge as other states went through the phases of Marxist historical development. However, he also believed that to provide Soviet nations with the tools to develop past the restraints imposed upon them by the Tsarist period it was imperative to promote literacy in non-Russian cultures.  

*Imperial Identities in the Soviet State*

Soviet literature has been used both to historicize and describe the usage of conflict in the making of a Soviet identity. For example, *And Quiet Flows the Don* and the *White Guard* offer varying, and at times conflicting, perspectives on the break with Imperial identity during the Russian Revolution and the Russian Civil War. Their novels are also stylistically different, Sholokhov uses “standard” socialist realism to present the discord between the past and the present, while Bulgakov uses fragmented narratives and reflections to place their works within other Russian cultural myths of origin and strength. The events in *And Quiet Flows the Don* by Mikhail Sholokhov and the *White Guard* by Mikhail Bulgakov, for example, concern the effects of the Russian Revolution and Civil War on two distinct communities, Don Cossacks and “Little Russians” (Ukrainians). The themes displayed deal with the deterioration of the national understanding of self that was informed by Imperial Russification policies and the struggle to establish a new sense of national self in alignment with the budding international policy Bolshevik theory. In the illustration of how Tsarist forms of national identification instructed Soviet national

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policy, these literary narratives, closely analyzed in the next chapter, demonstrate the ways in which Sovietization imitated Russification and in doing so produced a separate, but equal form of “despotic chauvinism” that the Soviet state sought to reject in its construction.¹²⁵

¹²⁵Vladimir Lenin, “Centralization and Autonomy,” in Critical Remarks on the National Question, trans. Bernard Isaacs and Joe Fineberg (Moscow, Russia: Progress Publishers, 1972), 45-51.; The Bolsheviks rejected the idea that the national majority, in numerical terms, of a geographical region should have preferential treatment in construction of political, social, or cultural policy in their respective territories. This is informed by the belief that the majority dictate self-determination policy would result in a privileged and oppressed national class.
Chapter Three: Mikhail Sholokhov: A Proletarian Writer

Introduction: Origins of the Counterrevolution

Mikhail Sholokhov’s novel *And Quiet Flows the Don* (1928-1932;1940) was canonized in 1932 by the Union of Soviet Writers as an official model for Soviet style socialist realism.126 Sholokhov’s narrative tells the story of the Melehkov, a Don Cossack family living in the fictional village of Taratsk, between 1912 to 1922. Though the novel depicts the failure of the counterrevolution *And Quiet Flows the Don* is not representative of the party-spirit.127 The plot is limited, in that it addresses the effects of the Revolution and the Civil War through the lens of one specific national group, the Don Cossacks and the regions in which they reside. Sholokhov’s Don Cossacks are not motivated to rebel against the oppressive Tsarist system, because of a spontaneously emerging political awareness regarding a class struggle as theorized by Marxist-Leninism. Furthermore, *And Quiet Flows the Don* does not display the official party narrative, that the Don Cossacks were the antagonistic party in the counterrevolution. rather it overtly criticizes Bolsheviks for viewing the Cossacks as a monolithic group.128

*And Quiet Flows the Don* takes place in 1912-1920 and illustrates the effects of the First World War, the Russian Revolution, and the Russian Civil War as it relates to the Don Cossacks; a semi-autonomous national group that lived along the Dnieper, Don, Terek, and Urals. The Cossacks as a nationality were associated with Imperial identity, by Bolsheviks and Imperialists

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Sholokhov’s narrative uses these conflicts to criticize Bolsheviks’ assumptions that Cossack national identity is inherently related to the Russian Empire. *And Quiet Flows the Don* displays the inability of Bolsheviks to appeal to nationalities without theoretical terms, nor are they aware of the nuances and complexities within Don Cossack national culture. Sholokhov also illustrates the Don Cossacks as already having a clear understanding about intersection of nationality and class, without Bolshevik terminology. Therefore, the Cossacks rejection of Bolsheviks illustrates a clear assertion of self by the Cossacks, as opposed to ignorance or chauvinism.

**The Don Cossacks National Identity in the Russian Empire**

Imperative to understanding Sholokhov's novel *And Quiet Flows the Don* is the conception of the Don territory as being rightfully Cossack land, despite it technically being a territory of the Russian Empire since 1786. This perception was legitimized by the Cossacks’ semi-autonomous existence under Tsarist control which granted them control of their land settlements; they were also given larger land holdings in comparison to the non-Cossacks in the regions they inhabited.130 Even though the restrictions on Cossacks mobility from the time of Catherine the Great resulted in Cossack groups becoming less nomadic frontier men and more settlement farmers, the

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Cossacks’ ability to formulate an identity outside of Moscow’s influence allowed them to maintain the idea that they were a distinctly different group from Russians.\textsuperscript{131}

The Cossacks are an ethnic group which traditionally inhabited the steppes and riverbeds along the Dnieper, Don, Terek, and Urals. From the reign of Peter the Great to the fall of the Romanovs, the Cossacks took part in military service. The primary tasks assigned to military Cossacks during the Imperial era were border patrol and suppressing rebellions. In return Cossacks were granted privileges such as electing their own regional atamans, rather than having Tsar appointed governors in local leadership, in addition to ownership of their cavalry materials, such as horses, mounts, and up to date weapons.\textsuperscript{132} The relationship between the Tsar and the Cossacks was transactional; the Cossacks took an oath of loyalty to the Tsar, in exchange for their autonomy. However, the Cossacks were self-sufficient, and within the steppes and riverbed they inhabited they formed close-knit, isolated communities, which allowed the Cossacks to develop a shared identity that was separate and distinct from Great Russians.

In the nineteenth-century, as well as into the early twentieth century there seems to be the presumption amongst ‘Great Russians’ that the Cossacks assumed that they descended from a different ancestral group from Russians and Ukrainians, and that is why they preceptive themselves as a separate group. However, this cultural belief that the Cossacks were of “pure blood” is disputable. Scholars are not sure of the exact origins of Cossacks; however, the majority agree that they originate from a mixture of runaway serfs, criminals, wanders, Old Believers, and the like who had fled from Russian territory, to escape persecution and oppression. In addition, it

\textsuperscript{132} Chamberlin, \textit{The Russian Revolution}, 7-9.
is likely that these peoples procreated with Tatars, Turkish, and Polish peoples who lived in the bordering areas where the peoples dispersed themselves.133

The Cossacks were an acknowledged ethnic group, but they also held a particular military rank. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the Cossacks were widely perceived as military puppets of the suppressive Tsar or as sadistic perpetrators of violence by the communities they police.134 The increase in Cossack violence by the turn of the century, is however, more so illustrative of Imperial failure. It is true that throughout the nineteenth-century, because of the Napoleonic Wars, the Romanovs, afraid of losing control in the face of rising nationalism. Consequently, Imperial policy dedicated that the Cossack communities be further integrated into the Russian Empire by reducing their autonomy. Cossacks were still granted Imperial privileges, but now with a clear contingency, the Cossacks were made to a more active role in policing borders, suppressing provincial revolts, and eventually repressing social, political upheaval of the Russian intelligentsia and working class in urban areas. The Russian Imperial state utilized the popular belief among Cossacks that they had their individual social history and political autonomy for their advantage; it was not a validation of Cossack individuality, or a shared national character.135

135 Plokhy, The Cossack Myth, 1-11.; David Hugh Stewart, Mikhail Sholokhov: A Critical Introduction (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1967), 203-218.; The English translation by Stephan Garry of And Quiet Flows the Don omits about twenty-five percent of the edition it was translated from. However, this was not a political or artistic move on the act of Gary; rather publishing restrictions only allowed a certain number of pages to be printed. The most important omissions from the first volume are early White Guard perspectives, as well as omission of Mokhov merchant’s perspective because they provide parallels and aid in the understanding of Cossacks perceiving their identity as others. The second volume The Don Flows Home to Sea, also translated by Garry does not have many omissions, principally it maintains the dry historical or military accounts.
It is false to assume that the majority of Cossacks were in ideological alignment with the Imperial government. Historians believe that the Cossacks passively resigned to Imperial authority because it granted them privileges such as erecting local governments, managing their own land and agricultural products, and possessing their own horses and arms. Each Cossack settlement had its own customs, traditions, habits of marriage, familial relations, food, and clothing that reinforces the idea that Cossack culture was distinctly different from Russian culture. These contradictory views of Cossack as both allegiant to the state and being unbound had a profound effect on the creation of the Cossack myth in Russian literature.

**Don Cossacks in Nineteenth-Century Narratives: The Cossack Myth**

*And Quiet Flows the Don* focuses on the Cossacks’ historic “loyalty” to the Russian state and in doing so criticizes the populator mythologies of the Cossacks’ unbridled spirit. The Cossack myth is deeply tied to Russian cultural myth and understanding of national self, as the nineteenth-century literary depiction of the Cossacks created a noble savage prototype. Within both Imperial historiography and nineteenth-century literature, the Cossacks were typescated as being free, energetic, in touch with nature, and not restrained by borders. However, this free-spirit is also characterized as displaying inherent traits of aggression and violence. Kornblatt argues that the depiction of Cossacks as foreign due to their social customs, yet relatable due to their geographical location aided as a guide for how a “proper Russian”, or Great Russian, should behave.

In time of disputes over national identity in the nineteenth-century the prototypical Cossack was used to formulate a Slavophile-centric understanding of Russian national identity, in that some argued that the Cossacks cultural customs where untainted by civilization and therefore reflective

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137 O’Rourke, “From Region to Nation,” 222-223.
of the true sentiments of Old Rus’. Nineteenth-century Russian literature had an important role in constructing the popular view among Great Russians of Cossack social behavior and identity. Great Russian authors often portrayed the Cossack soldier communities as primitive, uncultured, and subhuman; or as a Romantic hero.\(^\text{138}\) The revolts of Stenka Razin and Pugachev are important to understanding the stereotype of unruliness and lack of submission to authority attributed to Cossacks perpetrated by Russians, both Red and White, during the Civil War.\(^\text{139}\)

This monolithic view of Cossack national identity in *And Quiet Flows the Don* is used to indicate the faults with Bolshevik national appeals. The stereotype that Cossacks are inherently militaristic, can be directly linked to the standard Imperial reaction to Cossack uprisings throughout Russia’s state-building process. Both Peter the Great and Catherine the Great took reactionary measures against legendary Cossacks revolts led by Stenka Razin (1670-71) and Emilian Pugachev (1773-1775).\(^\text{140}\) Razin was a Don Cossack who led resistance against Tsarist oppression and Moscow authority, after gaining support from the local population of Cossacks and peasants his rebellion created a ripple effect in which non-Russians living along Volga, in Samara, Saratov, Tsaritsin, and Astrakhan all joined his insurgency bands. Eventually, Razin suffered a grave defeat at Simbrisk, consequently he fled home to the Don where Cossacks arrested him. Razin was publicly executed in Moscow “instructing” the population to not engage in insurrectionist behavior.

The story of Pugachev is similar; Pugachev was a Yaik Cossack, those who settled along the Ural River, who became disillusioned after serving as a lieutenant and experiencing the


increasing authoritative restraints of Catherine the Great as she attempted to expand the territory and centralize authority in the Russian Empire.141 During his rebellion, Pugachev took on the false identity of Tsar Peter III. He had the support from Yaik Cossacks, he also had support amongst the Ural miners, serfs, national minorities, such as Tatars, Bashkirs, and Chuvashs, and religious dissidents, primarily Old Believers.142 The stories of Razin and Pugachev are important in the construction of the Cossack myth of the nineteenth-century, in that they characterize the Cossacks peoples who are naturally inclined to oppose authority and display defiance against despotic rulers. Razin and Pugachev’s collaboration with non-Cossacks in their rebellion against Russian despotism was idealized by the Bolsheviks.

The cultural mythology surrounding the Cossack hero was significant in the construction of Russian national self-identification. This prototype of the Cossack as a rebel was also utilized by the Bolsheviks in late stages of the First World War and Revolution. In seeking to persuade the Cossacks to join their cause, Bolsheviks uplifted the idealized revolutionary Cossack by using the personas of Razin and Pugachev. Neither rebel limited their company to Cossacks, Razin and Pugachev included other disenfranchised groups, creating an understanding that they were equally oppressed and exploited by the same powers, the Tsarist system. This fact was glorified by the Soviets to persuade the Cossacks, that despite their given privileges they were still victims of oppression as the peasant or working classes of Russian and Ukrainians who they lived nearby.143 However, this international collaboration in the face of oppression was not to be found in the reality of the Revolution.

141 Kornblatt, The Cossack Hero, 5-20.
The Role of Cossacks in the February Revolution

The February Revolution of 1917 negated the notion that the majority of Cossacks were blindly submissive to the Tsar, while confirming the myth that the Cossacks national disposition was defiant to any form of authoritarianism. This is displayed in disinterest and refusal to put down the demonstration and mutinies of the February Revolution, despite their supposedly historical identification as loyal military servants of the Tsar. The First World War not only shifted the Cossacks world view as it would for anyone experiencing war horrors, it also highlighted for them how “alienated” and “othered” they were from the state they were protecting.144 Cossacks who did not partake in the suppression of the February Revolution were not necessarily pro-Bolshevik they were simply apathetic and aggrieved and suffering from the war, so they simply abandoned their post or joined in the rebellion.145

Leon Trotsky’s History of the Russian Revolution denotes that the Cossacks’ dissident during the February Revolution was significant in showing that the system had shifted. He argued that the Cossacks’ breaking discipline during the February Revolution, was the first symbol of the military breaking with the Imperial Order. Trotsky denoted that Cossack dissent was shocking; due to the long-established belief that military Cossacks had a conservative national character which coincided with their Imperial privileges. Nevertheless, Trotsky's history furthers the presumption that Cossacks were in alignment with the oppressive national policy of Tsarism, in that even though he viewed the Cossacks rebellion with importance he did not believe that this was indicative that they sympathized with the workers and peasants.146 He characterizes the

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144 O’Rourke, “From Region to Nation,” 222-225.
145 Chamberlin, The Russian Revolution, 76.
Cossacks as a militaristic group, who looked down upon the masses from their cavalry mounts. Consequently, according to Trotsky, the Cossacks were viewed as aggressive making it unlikely fraternization between the Cossacks and the workers took place.\textsuperscript{147} This description of the Cossacks as a military group, isolated from others, is illustrative of the ways in which Bolsheviks still maintained the preconceptions of Tsarist Russian with regard to other national groups. This notion is further supported in Bolshevik writings on the role of the Cossacks in the counterrevolution.

\textbf{The Kornilov Affair: Don Cossacks as a Counter-Revolutionary Nationality}

This idea that the Cossacks were unable to fully break with the Imperial officers emerged from a necessity to own land was carried on into the 1920s, while Sholokhov was writing \textit{And Quiet Flows the Don}. For example, in Stalin’s Short Course it is written that “the Kornilov Affair made it clear to the broad masses of the peasantry that if the landlords and generals succeeded in smashing the Bolsheviks and the Soviet, they would next attack the peasantry.”\textsuperscript{148} Thus, according to the Bolsheviks, the inability of a bourgeois-nationalist to establish a military dictatorship further agitated the masses to join together in class solidarity, was used to symbolize the strength shared the validity and strength of “latent power of the [the workers and soldiers] revolutionary resistance.”\textsuperscript{149} In the consolidation of the Soviet State, decossackization was legitimized by stating that rank-and-file Don Cossacks were forerunners in the counter-revolution. This was supported by examples, Cossacks who were formerly high-ranking Imperial

\textsuperscript{147}Trotsky, “Five Days,” 80.
\textsuperscript{149}Brandenberger and Zelenov, eds, 376.
officers occupying the leading ranks in the White Army. Furthermore, the Don Cossacks insurgency for national autonomy was viewed as a means for the Don Cossacks to maintain their Imperial privileges.\textsuperscript{150}

General Lavr Kornilov attempted a counter-revolutionary movement against the Provisional Government in August 1917. Kornilov’s personality was typified as abrupt and aggressive; he was the son of a Siberian Cossack, and his Asiatic features were often highlighted in contemporary descriptions of him. Kornilov’s Imperial military service resulted in a familiarity with Central Asia and the Far East. At the end of July 1917, Kerensky appointed General Kornilov to Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the South-Western Front to stage an offensive against Bolsheviks. When rumors of a Kornilov-led military coup began to circulate, the Provisional Government did not take them seriously. Kerensky did not react to the General’s hardliner demands which were constructed around the idea that a strict military government would establish a sociopolitical order.

Kerensky's non-attitude to Kornilov is generally attributed to a misunderstanding, Kornilov’s Bonapartism, as it were, were considered flukes of his character, but not any that would legitimate a threat.\textsuperscript{151} When the Provisional Government began to seriously consider the possibility of Kornilov dissident, they perceived his Cossack origins as increasing his ability to cause social disorder, in that it was believed that his Cossack origins would make him relatable and popular among rank-and-file Cossacks. This notion of the Kornilov Affair being a representative of the Cossack diaspora also appears in Bolshevik historiography; therefore, reinstating a perception of Cossack national identity as synonymous with primitiveness, and aggression.\textsuperscript{152}

\textsuperscript{150}Holquist, “‘Conduct Merciless Mass Terror,’” 127–162. 
\textsuperscript{151}Chamberlin, \textit{The Russian Revolution}, 192-198. 
\textsuperscript{152}Chamberlin, \textit{The Russian Revolution}, 197.
The Kornilov Affair, in the Bolshevik narrative, was used to demonstrate the lost case of the counter-revolution. General Kornilov’s strong willed attributes have been characterized in Bolshevik narratives as: an element of Bonapartism, and a retrograde Imperialist.\(^{153}\) Consequently, the monolithic perception of the Cossacks as model revolutionaries was used to dishonor the legend of the Cossack in exchange for a Bolshevik hero. For example, Trotsky wrote that in the failure of the Kornilov affair it appeared imminent that the Cossacks would turn away from the isolationist national identity and realized that their best prospects lay in identifying with the oppressed workers and peasants. The reasoning for why this did not occur was explained by Trotsky, who claimed that it was a prevalent misconception among Cossack communities that they did not see their possession of land around the Don, the Kuban, and the Tver as aiding in Imperialist oppression, but rather believed the holding of this territory to be equivalent to the maintaining of a cultural tradition.\(^{154}\)

**Mikhail Sholokhov: Biography**

Mikhail Sholokhov (1905-1984) was born in Veshenskaia, a district in the Don Host Oblast in the Russian Empire. Sholokhov's childhood presents several complexities for those attempting to understand his own identity, while living among the Don Cossacks he was not necessarily deemed one of them, through Sholokhov's own accounts he undoubtedly regarded the Don as his home. His biological father was a Russian merchant, and his mother was a Ukrainian peasant; their relationship was disapproved of by their respective families. When Sholokhov's mother became pregnant, she married an elderly Cossack, for him to be born legitimately. Until Sholokhov was


seven or eight, he was legally considered a Cossack. In 1912 his mother became a widow and married his biological father, so from then on Sholokhov officially became a Russian, though his family never moved from the Don Region.\textsuperscript{155}

During Sholokhov’s youth his parents wanted to ensure their child received a formal education, nonetheless Sholokhov’s formal education halted when he was merely thirteen years old. At the onset of the Civil War Sholokhov’s father had just sent him to Moscow to receive an education. This, however, became too expensive and so young Sholokhov was relocated to Bugachar.\textsuperscript{156} Here he was exposed to the counterrevolution in southern Russia. Sholokhov’s biographers note that despite residing in regions that were White Army controlled, or had an abundance of White sympathizers, he was drawn to the Red Army.\textsuperscript{157} As a teenager Sholokhov developed pro-Soviet sympathies. He believed in the promise of Communism but did not formally enlist into the Party until after 1929, this would later be used to substantiate the claim that his narrative was politically incorrect and un-Soviet.\textsuperscript{158}

Though Don Cossacks and Ukrainians displayed hostility and rivalry towards each other, even before the war, at this point the Cossacks were keen on not perceived as aggressors or originators of conflict. In October of 1922, Sholokhov moved to Moscow, in the hopes to continue his formal education, however he could obtain menial jobs. In 1923 Sholokhov joined the Young Guard, where he published short stories that are thematically like his magnum opus; however, this was not lucrative nor was he really considered an outstanding writer. Consequently, and to cure

\textsuperscript{155}Herman Ermolaev, \textit{Mikhail Sholokhov and His Art} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 12-65.
\textsuperscript{156}Ermolaev, \textit{Mikhail Sholokhov and His Art}, 12-65.
\textsuperscript{157}Ermolaev, \textit{Mikhail Sholokhov and His Art}, 12-65.
his homesickness, he returned to the Don region in 1924, with the intention to remain there, and married a Don Cossack woman.159

Is Sholokhov a Proletariat or a Soviet Writer?

Sholokhov’s personal experiences of the Civil War, primarily when he was between the ages of 20 and 22, had the most effect on his writing of And Quiet Flows the Don. From 1919 to 1922 Sholokhov lived in the Upper Don Region, where the Red Army was gaining substantial control. He became a food inspector for the Red Army and was therefore negatively perceived by the Cossack community he lived among. At one point he was on the verge of being executed by anti-Bolshevik Cossacks but was likely saved through the mediation of his mother and his Ukrainian origins.160 Though Don Cossacks and Ukrainians displayed hostility and rivalry towards each other, even before the war, at this point the Cossacks were keen on not perceived as aggressors or originators of conflict.

Sholokhov’s personal history lends credibility to his statements that his narrative is an attempt to depict the realities of the counterrevolution and Don Cossack national identity. Sholokhov, it seems, utilized print, oral accounts, and personal observations from his childhood and personal experiences of the Revolution and Civil War to construct the narrative of And Quiet Flows the Don Ermolaev conjectures that the peace time and uprising sections were more likely to have been constructed from oral histories and Sholokhov’s personal perceptions, whereas as the more political and technical elements of the First World War, Revolution, and Civil War were

159Ermolaev, Mikhail Sholokhov and His Art, 12-65.
constructed utilizing the print resources he had access to, which were typically written from a White Guard perspective.\textsuperscript{161}

These factors explain why Sholokhov was perhaps more inclined to give grace, or display sympathies, to the destruction of Don Cossacks' community. \textit{And Quiet Flows the Don} demonstrates how the Russian Bolsheviks were unable to deconstruct presumptions about Don Cossack national identity formed under the empire. Sholokhov’s narrative illustrates how although the theoretical motives for repressing Cossack national identity differed in the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, in practice Bolshevik national appeals appeared continuous with the Russian Empire.

\textit{Sholokhov’s Rewriting of the Don Cossacks}

Mikhail Sholokhov’s novel \textit{And Quiet Flows the Don} was serially published in the Soviet literary journal \textit{Oktyabr} between 1928 and 1940. Sholokhov began to write \textit{And Quiet Flows the Don} in October 1925. In its original conception it was intended to open during the Kornilov Affair of 1917 and focus on the lives of two Red Cossacks named Fiodor Podtielkov and Mikhail Krivoshlikov.\textsuperscript{162} The author discarded the idea of focusing on Red Cossacks, because he considered that the average Russian reader was ignorant to the pre-revolutionary life of the Don Cossacks. As a result, Sholokhov moved the opening of the novel to 1912, and made a Cossack village the focal point of his narrative.\textsuperscript{163}

The first volume of \textit{And Quiet Flows the Don} was published in 1927, during the end of the New Economic Period. Despite this being an era of relative literary freedom, it was also the period

\textsuperscript{161}Ermolaev, \textit{Mikhail Sholokhov and His Art}, 215.
\textsuperscript{162}Murphy, Ducan, et la., “An Introduction and Commentary to Sholokhov’s ‘Tikhiy Don,’” 31.; These characters and the Kornilov Affair do appear in the published edition, but they are presented in secondary scenes.
\textsuperscript{163}Ermolaev, \textit{Mikhail Sholokhov and His Art}, 17.
in which the defining parameters of proper Soviet style literature was being defined.\textsuperscript{164} The novel initially gained popularity with literary circles in Moscow. Nevertheless, in 1929, prominent members of the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers, began to criticize Sholokhov’s novel for being anti-Bolshevik and counterrevolutionary. The primary criticism leveled at, \textit{And Quiet Flows the Don} was that it favorably illustrated pre-revolutionary life of the Don Cossacks, RAPP critics claimed the novel glorified and romanticized the violent, primitive qualities found in Cossack communities.\textsuperscript{165} Furthermore, RAPP critics claimed that, \textit{And Quiet Flows the Don} was representative of Sholokhov's own politically defective, anti-party views.

RAPP critics implied that Sholokhov supported the Don Cossacks’ participation in the Kornilov Affair, and agreed with their desire for national-independence, and therefore could not be deemed a proletariat author, despite his class origins.\textsuperscript{166} The novel does not depict the struggle of the laboring proletariat, nor does it explain Bolshevik violence as a necessary element in Marxist-Leninist development. Sholokhov’s characterization of Bolsheviks was deemed too callous as the narrative does shy away from or seek to justify the Red Army’s active role in destroying the Don Cossack way of life, “it is not a book about Communism; it is not a treatise, but an epic dramatization of man’s great quest for meaning and happiness.”\textsuperscript{167}

As subsequent installments of the novel were published the criticism of Sholokhov's anti-Party character increased, and he was accused of plagiarism. Militant RAPP members also attacked Sholokhov for intentionally misrepresenting Cossacks’ political sympathies, being that the author was Russian and not of Cossack lineage, and therefore could not write a narrative truly reflective

\textsuperscript{164} Cuddon and Habib, \textit{A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory}, 563, 589.  
\textsuperscript{165} Ermolaev, \textit{Mikhail Sholokhov and His Art}, 12-65.  
\textsuperscript{166} Murphy, Ducan, and et la., “An Introduction and Commentary to Sholokhov’s ‘Tikhiy Don,’” 51-56.  
\textsuperscript{167} Stewart, \textit{Mikhail Sholokhov: A Critical Introduction}, 122.
of Cossacks political sympathies. In defense of the emerging author, a faction of established proletariat writers, wrote articles and letters acquitted Sholokhov by stating these criticisms were unfounded. For example, in a letter to the editor of Pravda in March of 1929, the An Association of Proletariat Authors in the North Caucasus, wrote that enemies of the proletarian dictatorship were spreading vicious slander against Sholokhov. They denoted the “stylistic peculiarities” in the work and put forth that the themes in Sholokhov’s work have been contested and clearly constructed from his own observations.

*Sholokhov and Stalin’s Socialist realism*

Nevertheless, in frustration of constant criticism, Sholokhov asked Maxim Gorky to appeal to Stalin on his behalf. The appeal was successful in 1931 Gorky invited Sholokhov to his dacha in the outskirts of Moscow to discuss the political characteristics of *And Quiet Flows the Don* with Stalin. The initial meeting between Stalin and Sholokhov occurred at Gorky’s dacha. When Stalin questioned why Sholokhov characterized General Kornilov in a mild manner, the author explained that he was not interested in presenting counter revolutionaries, like Kornilov, with

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168 Ermolaev, *Mikhail Sholokhov and His Art*, 28-31. Plagiarism claims have never been falsified, because even those who defended him, such as Gorky and Serafimovich had no material proof that the novel was Sholokhov’s original work. The author’s manuscripts were destroyed during the Second World Wars, and to date no copies of Sholokhov’s manuscripts from this early period have been recovered.

169 Benedict Sarnov, ed., *Stalin i Pisateli: Kniga Tret’ya* (Moscow, Russia: Eksmo, 2009), 7-8. Where I have translated “stylistic peculiarities” comes from the Russian passage that reads: Всякий, даже не искушенный в литературе читатель, знающий из данные ранее произведения Шолохова, может без труда заметить общие для тех его ранних произведений и для «Тихого Дона» стилисти ческие особенности, манеру письма, подход к изображению людей.

sympathy, but rather he was emulating the truth that he found in historical documents and oral accounts.\textsuperscript{171} This admission from Sholokhov, might then present confusion for some readers, as historical errors are present in the novel, such as non-chronological dates or attributing events to different peoples and places. However, the ahistoricism may have been intentional being Sholokhov desired to stay true to oral histories and artistic visions; nevertheless, the author did not intend to philosophize, sway the opinions of his readers, or proclaim that his narrative was the objective truth.\textsuperscript{172}

In subsequent meetings with Stalin, the proletariat writer, gained favor with Stalin. The arbitrary nature of Stalin’s approval is illustrated in his support of Sholokhov. Sholokhov presents an anomaly in the construction of socialist realism, his was often not representative of Bolshevik theory, yet Stalin’s favoritism of Sholokhov made him immune to literary criticism. Neither was this favor redacted during the formalization of literary censorship under Stalin, nor during the Purges.\textsuperscript{173} After meeting with Stalin it became easier for Sholokhov to publish installments of \textit{And Quiet Flows the Don}, however Stalin scrutinized the novel’s political messaging.

The narration of the novel is that of a detached observer.\textsuperscript{174} As the volumes continue the novel becomes more didactic and focuses on the decline of Cossack communities as opposed to a unified strength. However, it should be noted that only between 1929 to 1932 did Sholokhov take an active role in editing the most necessary parts for publication. Afterwards he simply sent his

\textsuperscript{172}Ermolaev, \textit{Mikhail Sholokhov and His Art}, 215 -225
\textsuperscript{173}Ermolaev, \textit{Mikhail Sholokhov and His Art}, 30-31.; For example, Stalin enjoyed Sholokhov’s novel \textit{Virgin Soil Upturned} (1932; 1960) despite it depicted the brutality and terror perpetuated by the Red Army during the early days of collectivization.
\textsuperscript{174}Stewart, \textit{Mikhail Sholokhov: A Critical Introduction}, 46-47.
manuscripts to the publishing house and allowed the censors there to make the edits that minimized Red brutalities or weakened the perception of the Bolshevik as a strong, truthful unit.\textsuperscript{175} These events create even more difficulties in uncovering Sholokhov’s intentions for rewriting the history of the Don Cossack in relation to the decline of the empire and the establishment of the Soviet.

\textit{And Quiet Flow the Don: The Decline of the Russian Empire}

The main character of \textit{And Quiet Flows the Don} is Gregor Melekhov, he is individualistic, but not a revolutionary. Stalin advised that Sholokhov edit his principal character Gregor Melekhov to a political sound and strongly convicted Bolshevik in the Red Army, but Sholokhov refused. He believed that altering Gregor’s character to fit an ideological truth would diminish the integrity of his work.\textsuperscript{176} In the novel Gregor remained a character not committed to any ideology presented within the various conflicts; his primary motive is the preservation of his own community. Sholokhov viewed his work as important despite its non-noble, “foreign” focus, and was unhappy that his work was labeled cruel or exotic, and therefore lowly. He viewed literature as replication of truth, not propaganda.\textsuperscript{177} Sholokhov’s line of thought is technically in agreement with the Soviet narrative that literature must be representative of the truth; the progress of the Soviet state and the triumph of the Red Army as vanguards of the Revolution, however the truth presented in, \textit{And Quiet Flows the Don} highlights the negative aspects which aided in the establishment of the Soviet state. The novel’s non-proletariat focus, in combination with its centralizing nationalist developments, over Marxist-Leninist development, does beg the question why the novel was canonized as proper, referential Soviet literature.\textsuperscript{178}

\textsuperscript{175}Ermolaev, \textit{Mikhail Sholokhov and His Art}, 45-65.; Murphy, Ducan, and et la., “An Introduction and Commentary to Sholokhov’s ‘Tikhiy Don,’” 47–56.
\textsuperscript{176}Ermolaev, \textit{Mikhail Sholokhov and His Art}, 12-65.
\textsuperscript{177}Stewart, \textit{Mikhail Sholokhov: A Critical Introduction}, 46-47.
\textsuperscript{178}Clark, \textit{The Soviet Novel}, 15-21.
Cossack Genesis

And Quiet Flows the Don opens by depicting the origin story of the Melekhov family; Prokoffey Melekhou, a Don Cossack, has recently returned home from the Russo-Turkish War (1877-1878) with a Turkish woman whom he took captive to be his wife. This action alienates Prokoffey from his community, he is casted out of his familial home and must begin an independent existence, as the other Cossack villagers now regard him with suspicion. The Cossack villagers believe that Prokoffey's Turkish wife is a witch, and thereby beat her to eliminate the foreign element from their community. This action results in the wife prematurely giving birth and her subsequent death. The graphic tale of the Melekhovs’ origins highlights the stereotypes of a patriarchal society rooted in violence and hostility to foreigners associated with the Don Cossacks. However, it is also reflective of how the Don Cossacks internally thought about their genesis as a distinct individual group. In that it alludes to Cossacks’ origins not being entirely “pure”, in the presentation of a Turkish matrilineal figure, as well as Cossacks military allegiance to the Russian state, and geographical isolation from the rest of the empire.  

The cast of the Turkish matrilineal figure precipitates throughout the novel in that it affects how the other villagers in Tatark view the Melekhovs. Pantaleimon Prokoffievitch, the son of Prokoffey and eventual patriarch of the Melekhov family, appearance at birth is described as Turkish. Pantaleimon’s likeness to his Turkish mother results in him being compared to a Satanic creature, as a child, and later serves as an explanation for his aggressive, violent character. Gregor Melekhov, Pantaleimon’s second son, is described as having a similar “savage quality” in his dark and Asiatic features which replicate his half Turkish father. Contrastingly, Pantaleimon’s eldest

son Piotra is described as having light features. Piotra’s appearance is described as coming from a “luxurious” stock that shares a likeness with his full-blooded Cossack mother, Illichinca.  

The Melekhovs live in a village called Tatarsk, indeed the name of the village itself implies the notion that the Don Cossacks living in this village along the Don River are of Tatar descent. The Melekhovs’ are described as the family of Turks, by the other Cossack inhabitants of Tatarsk, due to their “Turkish blood.” However, these allusions to the mixed ancestral lineage of Cossacks, are not done to separate the Melekhovs’ from their community, as there are other villagers who possess the prototypical physiognomies of other nationalities. For example, Fiodot Bodovskov, a Cossack also from Tatarsk, is described as having a “Kalmik face” and later a Cossack Lieutenant, who is a secondary character, is described as having a Mongolian appearance.

Sholokhov’s presentation of a Don Cossack community that recognizes its multiethnic characteristics, dismisses both Imperial and Bolshevik conceptions that the Cossacks were proud of their heritage due to a belief in racial purity. The pride of the Don Cossacks is presented in other methods, and not on the grounds of a pure bloodline, but rather a heritage that is distinct to them. Mainly the Don River, is the constant, presented in the novel that legitimizes the Don Cossacks’ identity. However, it is imperative to recognize that Sholokhov uses the Don River as a cultural symbol, grounded in a rightful ancient tradition, as opposed to notions of land ownership.

181 At the time of publication, the village of Tatarsk, was an entirely fictional location presumably based on the surrounding villages of Vyoshenskaya, Sholokhov’s birthplace, located in the Upper Don Region. However, there are municipalities called Tatarsk in the modern-day Russian Federation, these are not the same locations as those presented in the novel.
Pantaleimon takes pride in the land that he has inherited from his father, he actively ensures its maintenance, and renovates it in a manner that “brighten[ed] the Melekhov farmyard.” Thus, this inherited land becomes a symbol of both the Melekhovs’ industrious character and their independence, furthermore their land is described as having a “free air [which gave] it a self-satisfied and prosperous appearance.” 184 The Cossacks’ possession of the Don Region contains a folkloric aspect, not granted by man’s legal right to own property, but rather as nature’s gift to the Cossack community, to “evoke a sense of expanse and of abundant, enduring life” in the most trying of times of the Revolution and Civil War. 185

Gregor Melekhov: Breaking with Tradition

The first part of the novel is entitled “Peace” and covers the ominous period between 1912 and 1913. This introductory section informs the reader about the traditional Don Cossacks’ understanding of self. While there are several plotlines in And Quiet Flows the Don that give insight to a society’s struggle to maintain tradition in the tumultuous turn of the century, the most prevalent is the storyline of Gregor Melekhov, Pantleimon's second son, and most rebellious child, Askinia Astakhova, Gregor’s mistress, and Natalia Korshunova, Gregor’s legal wife. Gregor’s romantic entanglement is an underpinning element in his character development, and self-discovery. Gregor and his father are described as having the same “Turkish” temperament, this similarity of unbridled spirit makes them incompatible with one another. The father and son are often seen struggling to assert authority; this relationship emphasizes the individualism associated with the Cossacks and its discord with modernity.

184 Sholokhov, And Quiet Flows the Don, 3.
185 Ermolaev, Mikhail Sholokhov and His Art, 68-82.; Kornblatt, The Cossack Hero, 153.
Gregor and Askinia’s romance is introduced as a non-committal, playful flirtation. Their amorous relationship is limited because Aksinia is the wife of Stephan Astakhov, the Molohkovs’ neighbor. Panteleimon considers Gregor’s flirtations with Aksinia to be shameful, embarrassing conduct. Pantaleimon psychically assaults Gregor when reprimanding him to no longer engage with Aksinia. Gregor shows no desire or intention to enter a traditional marriage, which he knows will be dictated by his father’s will. Shortly after his father’s brutal warning, Gregor makes the assertion that he is control of his life, by deepening his connection with Aksinia and engaging in a sexual relationship with her, while her husband is at military training. This independent character of Gregor’s is presented as a vain attempt to hold onto the mythological ethos of Cossack ambition and liberty.186

Askinia is also a Don Cossack though from a different village, called Dubrovka. She has a brutal backstory, after her father rapes her, Askinia’s elder brother commits parricide. Afterwards, she is given away in marriage to Stephan Astakhov, a Tatarsk native, who proves to be abusive. As Askinia is infertile, unhappy in her marriage, and wants to be with Gregor, she appeals to the aid of mystic old woman named Drozhdikinia, who advises her to drink from the Don to alleviate her suffering. After Askinia drinks from the Don, she crosses herself and prays for the intercession of Mary, illustrating a religious connection and reverence to the river.

The love Gregor and Aksinia have for one another is doomed from the beginning, the love is described “not like an azure [or a] blood red-blossom, but like that of a wayside henbane,” and yet the sweetener moments in the relationships occur near Don.187 For example, after a period of

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186 Kornblatt, *The Cossack Hero*, 4-17.
187 Sholokhov, *And Quiet Flows the Don*, 40; “The Powerful Solanaceae: Henbane,” n.d United States Department of Agriculture, the henbane is a herbaceous plant that is known for its highly poisonous toxicity if misused. However, if correctly used the henbane plant can be beneficial
separation due to Stephan, Aksinia’s husband returning, Gregor and Aksinia encounter each other by chance on the banks of the Don. While Gregor is feeding bullocks, he notices Askisina fetching water, the pair silently admire each other; “[Gregor’s] eyebrows quivered and he smiled stupidly [while] the water swirled and tinkled [Aksinia’s] claves, and for the first time since Stephan’s return, she laughed.”

The juxtaposition of the henbane and the Don River re-enforces the thematic overture that the novel is focused on man’s insufficiency over nature, neither Gregor or Askinia have control over the beauty, abundance, or destruction that is given to them. Yet, they constantly struggle to assert themselves in opposition to nature and time, to live freely Askinia and Gregor both flee their familial homes to the Listnitskys’ estate, which they soon find to be equally oppressive, due to its distance from the Don. Listnitsky Senior, a retired Cossack general, is perturbed by Gregor’s request to work and live at the Yagodone estate. The elderly general retorts to Gregor, “What sort of Cossack will you make if you hire yourself out? Didn’t your father provide for you when you left him?” Listnitsky Senior’s hesitation to hire Gregor is not a condescension rooted in class, but rather an astonishment at Gregor’s violation of customs. The couple is willing to break free from communal, traditional expectations, and hope for a life that can transcend their bondage to their assigned identities.

Pantaleimon does not seek to repress Gregor’s sexuality, meaning that his anger regarding his son’s love affair is not rooted in associations of immorality with adultery or premarital sex; medicinal treatment. In the time of this novel, the plant was known for causing psychological inhibitions, such as hallucinations, delirium, and inattentiveness.  

188Sholokhov, And Quiet Flows the Don, 60.  
189Sholokhov, And Quiet Flows the Don, 130.
what distresses him is the fact that his son so openly disregards his authority. This view is held in common within the Tatarsk community, Sholokhov writes:

If Gregor had made some show of hiding the liaison from the world, and if Aksinia had kept her relations with Gregor comparatively secret, the world would have seen nothing unusual in it. The village would have gossiped a little and then forgotten all about it. But they lived together almost openly, they were bound by a mighty feeling which had no likeness to any temporary association, and the villagers [decided it was immoral].

Pantaleimon holds the belief that his children’s behavior is a reflection upon his family values. Thus, Pantaleimon regards his children’s behavior as a mirror that reflects his patriarchal authority. His anxiety about the public perceptions and his view that his children are a representation of the family highlights the significance of community within Tatarsk. Gregor’s freedom flight, his willingness to be unbound to authority, is portrayed as a loss of identity, which ultimately oppresses him. This conception of the Cossack freedom being a source of oppression is a primary example of how *And Quiet Flows the Don* rejects the Cossack myth. Furthermore, it introduces the theme that social order in the Don Cossack communities is asserted, defined, and monitored within the group, and is thereby not representative of a hierarchy solely constructed by Great Russian oppression.

*Pre-Revolutionary Social Order: The Intersection between Class and National Identity*

*And Quiet Flows the Don* does not present a class struggle of the masses, but it does illustrate the intersections between class and national identity as it relates to the Don Cossacks. The socioeconomic divisions in the narrative are not reflective of the Bolshevik two-national cultures theory, because it shows that even in the recognition of class differences, the Don Cossacks still identify as a distinct group. This dichotomy is primarily shown in the characterization of Mokhov, the Russian town merchant, the Listnitskys, who are a privileged

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190 Sholokhov, *And Quiet Flows the Don*, 46.
estate owning Don Cossacks, and the Korshunovs, a family of well-to-do farmers. Sholokhov’s depiction of the Melekhovs’ interactions with the Tatarsk community, prior to the First World War, gives insights into the class stratification among the Don Cossacks as the readers are exposed to Don Cossacks of various social standings.

The novel opens during the fall of 1912 and the pre-Revolutionary social order illustrated in *And Quiet Flows of Don* is internally enforced by the Tatarsk community, rather than a function of the Imperial patronage system. The Melekhov household is multigenerational, and they are representative of a middling class in the community.\(^{191}\) It is composed of Pantaleimon, his wife Illinichina, and their children Piotra, Gregor, and Dunia, in addition to Piotra’s wife Daria. Pantaleimon is an embodiment of masculinity, he views himself as the undisputed head of household, and when any member of the family attempts to contradict his authority, he grows enraged. Furthermore, his right of passage, or military service, is clearly visible, as Pantaleimon’s mobility is impaired due to the lasting side effects of a leg injury he sustained at an Imperial review during his youth.

Pantaleimon attempts to reassert his authority by forcing Gregor into an arranged marriage with Natalia, the eldest daughter of the Korshunovs. This relationship is used to negate outdated notions of Cossack submissive loyalty to the Tsar, in illustrating the intersections of age, nationality, and class. The Korshunovs “had the reputation of being the richest family in the village of Tatarsk.”\(^{192}\) The home is decorated with images of the tsars, and Miron, Natalia’s father, “accepted Gregor for his Cossack skill, his love of farming, and hard work.”\(^{193}\) It is notable that when Miron refers to Gregor’s positive qualities he describes them as Cossack qualities, and by

\(^{191}\)Ermolaev, *Mikhail Sholokhov and His Art*, 115.
\(^{192}\)Sholokhov, *And Quiet Flows the Don*, 67-68.
\(^{193}\)Sholokhov, *And Quiet Flows the Don*, 68.
contrast, Miron assigns Gregor’s negative characteristics to his Turkish origins. This is seen when Miron states to his wife during the marriage negotiations that, “it's a come-down for me to give my daughter to the Turks!” Miron is humiliated at the proposition that Gregor is a martial match for his daughter, because of the Melekhovs’ relative poverty and Gregor’s “bad notoriety,” that is his open love affair with Askinia. He even refers to his daughter Natalia as an idiot for insisting that she wants to marry Gregor, in spite of his negative traits. However, the idiosyncratic character of the Korshunovs is not limited to Natalia.

Natalia’s paternal grandfather, Grishka, is presented as a prototypical Cossack who derives his sense of pride in having completed his military service in loyalty to the Tsar. Granddad Grishka is a parody of Cossacks’ alignment with “Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality.” He is proud of his military exploits, often reliving memories of his actions in the Turkish campaign of 1877, for which he was rewarded two crosses and the medal of St. George. He believes he has fulfilled a moral duty in having served his Tsars, and the Imperial recognition of his service legitimizes his perception of Cossack identity. He likes appearing heroic, Grandad Grishka states triumphantly, “[no] cavalry in the world can stand up against Cossacks.” He is also deeply religious; he studies, and reads the Gospels, and as the wars progress in the novel Grishka interprets their phases through the lens of the Book of Revelations. This depiction of Grandad Grishka symbolizes the loyal Tsarist Cossack, and aids in Sholokhov’s destruction of the Cossack myth. Because Grishka is often perceived by his own family and other villagers as an odd, nutty old man. This sort of blind revert loyalty to the Tsar is illustrated as an old-fashioned idea, only seriously subscribed to by the likes of Grandad Grishka.

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194 Sholokhov, *And Quiet Flows the Don*, 69.
195 Sholokhov, *And Quiet Flows the Don*, 68.
The Oppressive Russian: Sergei Mokhov

Sergei Mokhov, the town merchant, is the embodiment of Tsarist Russian oppression. He is described as possessing negative qualities associated with capitalism. Mokhov once was a man who lost himself through gambling, but resolved to set himself straight, and began accumulating wealth through trading textiles. Mokhov established himself with a commodity shop. His business enterprise took off, as many Don Cossacks began migrating to the more fertile land on the riverbank, his shop became a centralized place to purchase everyday agricultural goods. The omniscient narrator characterizes Mokhov as “squeez[ing] Tatarsk and the neighboring villages tightly in his swarthy first. There was not a hut free from debt to [Mokhov].”

When the reader is introduced to Mokhov, he is already the complete image of a self-made man. He is described as Mokhov having a corpulent body and carries himself with dignity. Yet, Mokhov is isolated from the Tatarsk and peasant communities that he deals with, they are disinterested in his economic success, and only deal with him when necessary. Sholokhov’s usage of a Russian to symbolize the overarching effects of capitalist oppression, not only shows contemporary hostilities between classed Russian and the average self-sufficient Don Cossack, but it also references a history of nationality-based oppression.

The distrust the Don Cossacks have for Russian merchants was not solely based on class, it is also based on the perception that these merchants in the Don region were descendents of seventeenth-century Russian state spies, who “enriched themselves at Cossacks expense.” Mokhov’s ancestral line is linked to a Russian peasant named Nikita Mokhov who settled on the

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198 Sholokhov, And Quiet Flows the Don, 88.
199 Stewart, Mikhail Sholokhov: A Critical Introduction, 10.
Don as a secret agent of the Tsar, in a response to an incident whereby a few Don Cossacks pillaged a state barge. Mokhov’s peasant ancestor monitored the Cossacks in nearby villages, and then reported any seditious attitudes and, or activities to centralized authorities in Voronezh, the main administrative center in the Don Region. Sholokhov’s characterization of Mokhov’s peasant lineage, and oppressive economic practices, creates a presumption among the Cossacks’ that Great Russians prioritizes their national identity over their class.

*The Russified Cossack: Eugene Listnitsky*

This notion of national identity superseding class identity within *And Quiet Flows the Don* emphasizes the Don Cossacks’ sense of oneness, which is only broken when an individual Don Cossack voluntarily removes himself. For example, Eugene Listnitsky, an educated estate holder and a high-ranking officer in the Imperial army, despite his Don Cossack origins, identifies more with the Russian Imperial officers than his community. His class is not the only reason for his isolation. Listnitsky’s isolation from the Cossack community is also affirmed in his physical location, his family estate, Yagodnoe, which is located far away from Tatarsk. As well as his lack of familial relations, he lives with his widower father, Nikolai Listnitsky, a retired general:

[The Listnitskys are a] Cossack whose family has long since given up its connection to Cossack life and become a landed aristocracy in the Russian empire. His huge estate, Yagodnoe, is surrounded by a brick wall, an indication in its very first description that the home is utterly different from the unbounded, open space associated with the Cossacks.\(^\text{200}\)

However, Listnitsky’s high social standing is not indicative of an inherent superiority to the other Cossacks. For example, Mitka Korshunov’s comparatively low social standing; as seen in his simple, agricultural background, church education, and military rank as a regular conscript

does not deter him from engaging in a horse race with Listnitsky. Listnitsky rank is worthy of mockery to Mikta as he venomously refers to the high-ranking officer as “your excellency.” Nor is Mikta intimidated by Listnistky’s possessions, Mikta shows no regard for the origins of Listnitsky's purebred horse born of a mare that “took prizes at the officers’ hurdle-races at Petersburg.” Mitka asserts that origins of the mare mean nothing to him, and that his common stallion is worthy of competing and capable of outracing Listnitsky’s purebred.

_Hostility to Foreigners: Nationality Precedes Class_

The presentation of both Mokhov, a Russian, and Listnitsky, Russified Don Cossack is significant because it shows that Cossacks’ definitions and maintenance of a distinct identity is introduced by their own worldviews, as opposed to being an implementation of Russian imperialism. The isolation of Tatarsk’s small privileged, intellectual class, from the community at large, displays that the Don Cossacks’ national identity is already in the possession of a class consciousness that understands appeals based on nationality are not always conducted in earnest. The othering of Mokhov and Listnitsky, for their “Russianness”, carries over to Don Cossacks hostility towards the Russian and Ukrainian peasantry that live along the Don River.

This aggression towards non-Cossacks is seemingly the only true element of discord in pre-Revolutionary Tatarsk. The seclusion of foreigners, is foreshadowed in the Melehkovs’ origin story, as originating from a chauvinistic community. For example, early in the novel there is an instance where Mikita Korshunov is rousing a sleepy Gregor, and he refers to as a peasant, which is thereby described as “was the most abusive word Mikta could think of using.” However, in demonstrating that Cossacks already understand the intersections between class and nationality,

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201 Sholokhov, _And Quiet Flows the Don_, 35.  
203 Sholokhov, _And Quiet Flows the Don_, 35.
their hostility towards the peasantry is motivated more by presumptions about their national character, and subsequently, by the belief that the peasants are infringing on the Don Cossacks’ homeland.

Sholokhov’s presentation of the Don Cossacks’ hostility based on national differences, originates from the increase in peasantry settlement in Don Region during the empire’s territorial expansion. In addition, this long standing feud between nationalities is informed by the conception that the peasantry lack the cultural qualities of freedom, autonomy, and self-confidence; because, these settlers came from a class of recently liberated serfs. The increased population of non-Cossacks on what was viewed as ancestral land of the Cossack, creates a dichotomy by which the Don Cossacks are actually represented as a privileged minority as opposed to a national majority in the Don Region. The notion that nationality precedes class, despite the Don Cossacks’ awareness of class stratification, is the root of the Bolsheviks’ failure to appeal to this group through their national realities.

_Bolshevik Ideology as Inapplicable to the Don Cossacks_

In Sholokhov’s presentation of an oppressive class being anomalies that exist on the fringes of the community, in his characterization of Mokhov, the Listnitskys, and the Korshunovs, foreshadows the Don Cossacks’ rejection of a class struggle. This is rejection not based on intellectual incapability, but rather a cultural disagreement. The Don Cossacks understand the intersections between class and nationality, but they do not view themselves as victims of Russification, nor do they see their privileges as Imperial grace, their autonomy is what they consider to be within their national tradition. Therefore, Bolsheviks' understanding of national

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204 Tschebotarioff, “‘The Cossacks and the Revolution of 1917,’” 206-207, 211.
solidarity as an oppressive mechanism of the empire, by which the masses were unaware of, is fundamentally opposed to the Cossacks’ view of themselves. The Cossacks are aware of Great Russian oppression, and the exploitation of Cossack identity, in the perseverance of the empire.

For instance, at a land and labor allotment meeting in Tatarsk conducted by the village administration a humorous tale is told by the village’s compulsive liar, Ivan Avdeitch. In his story Ivan proclaims that the Tsar, in a show of personal favor, enlist Ivan to capture the “biggest thief in our empire.” He states that he was given access to the Tsar’s best horses, and after he captures this supposed thief, Ivan is invited into the personal living quarters of the Tsar and drinks tea with the Tsarina. All Cossacks present, even the Ataman, laugh at this story. This scene is important because it demonstrates that Cossacks’ loyalty to the Tsar is something more so constructed by the Imperial authorities rather than an inherent Cossack belief of their proper duties. The collective laughter at Ivan Avdeitch’s narrative shows an awareness among the Don Cossacks that they realize their privileges are only granted if they maintain the appearance of being hopelessly devoted to the Tsar. However, they realize that it is improbable that the Tsar would regard them with enough reverence to lend out his horses or congratulate their efforts with such intimate favor. Therefore, Bolshevik explanation of nationality as class struggle, is often read by the Don Cossacks as condescension, and a continuity of the Great Russians’ perception that he is the Cossack intellectual superior.

The first Bolshevik, that the Cossacks of Tatarsk, are introduced to is a personification of an assimilated Marxist-Jew. His name is Osip Davidovitch Stockman. When questioned about his national origins he self-identifies as Russian, but when he is accused of being Jewish, he claims that his last name is of German origin. Nevertheless, Stockman never refutes entirely or directly

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that he is Jewish. He has traveled through Rostov and Kuban where he worked in a railway factory; surely this has impacted his political opinions. Fiodot, the first Cossack with whom Stockman interacts, thinks that Stockman’s queries about life satisfaction in the Don are odd. Stockman asks about general attitudes towards food supply, mandatory army training, and the justice system of Ataman authorities. Stockman’s ignorance to the Cossacks’ self-identification as a distinct nation is highlighted when at a violent brawl between Ukrainians and Cossacks at the local mill.

During a lull in the fighting Stockman attempts to rationalize with the Cossack antagonists by loudly asserting that both he and the Cossacks are Russian. While this statement does diffuse the violence of the situation it is only so because of the mass dissent and vocalized disgust from the mob of Don Cossacks regarding Stockman’s statement. As a collective the Don Cossacks insult Stockman’s character, by calling him a liar, a gypsy, a swine who wants to reduce Cossacks to the level of common peasants, in this case Ukrainians, or as they are derogatory referred *kholkl.* Stockman unintentionally increases their anger, when he justifies his statement, by stating the “[historical truth, that] Cossacks are descended from the Russians. Long ago serfs ran away from their landowners and settled along the Don. They came to be known as Cossacks.”

This attempt to enlighten Cossacks about their origins increases the mob's anger, they refute Stockman by saying, “Cossacks are the sons of Cossacks.” The scene, also, foreshadows those notions of Jewish-Bolshevik conspiracy, which Stalinist Soviet historiography claims were externally imposed onto Cossacks by their national allegiance to the White Guard during the Civil War. The negative stereotypes leveled against Stockman is indicative of an already present anti-Semitism.

Furthermore, Stockman’s interaction with an insulted group of Cossacks highlights the lack of

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nuance and understanding presented in Bolshevik ideology regarding the role of the Russian Empire in the construction Cossack identity.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that Stockman’s ideology is tangentially accepted by a small group of workers who have suffered from their employer, the Russian merchant Mokhov’s callous, overbearing behavior. The proletariat Cossacks of Tatarsk include Valet, a miller, David, who is now unemployed, Ivan Alexievich Kotliarov, an engineman, and Filka, a cobbler. In the winter of 1913, these men, along with Christonia, a young man with an intellectual curiosity, and Misha Koshevoi, a teenaged boy, meet regularly at Stockman’s house to conduct meetings. These nights begin as casual social gatherings but are soon transformed into educational meetings led by Stockman. He “informs” the Cossacks of their rebellious past citing peoples like Stenka Razin, Pugachev, and Vasily Balovin. In the presentation of this historical narrative of Cossack rebellion Stockman alludes to the notion that the “tamed” life of the Cossacks is a result of state oppression, and an internal failure within Cossack societies to embody the spirit of their ancestors. For example, Stockman claims that the Don Cossacks had engineered their own decline when they “hired [themselves] out to the monarchs as their bodyguards.” Stockman’s proclamations disregard how the Don Cossacks do not accept the notion that their identity is derived from any sort of Russianness.

Sholokhov’s presentation of Don Cossacks acknowledges their national identity as being worthy of humanity and pride, without the approval of their oppressor, the imperialistic Russian. For instance, the Don Cossacks’ mandatory military service does not create the impression that they are regarded as equals to Great Russians. Christiona, recalls an incident when he became acquainted with a few Russian university students while doing military service in Petersburg. The

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209 Sholokhov, And Quiet Flows the Don, 119.
university students give Christiona’s military unit a portrait of Karl Marx. Christiona, however, describes the portrait as depicting “the chief rebel of Germany [whose appearance was that] of a merchant”; he concludes that the man depicted in the portrait was the students’ “Ataman Karl.”  

While this could be read as a presentation of Christonia’s ignorance, upon analysis it is an indirect rejection of Stockman projection that Cossack’s identity is that of a revolutionary spirit. Christiona paints an equally mythological conception of Karl Marx, and in doing so highlights the error in attempting to educate people based on preconceived notions of their national character.

*The First World War*

Sholokhov’s *And Quiet Flows the Don*’s depiction of the First World War is used to magnify the disconnect between Tsardom and Cossackdom. A Russian colonel informs a Cossack regiment in August 1914 that Germany has officially declared war on *us*, that is Russia:

[The colonel] chose his words carefully, seeking to arouse feelings of national pride, [but in the mind of the] Cossacks, it was not the silk of foreign banners that fell rustling at their feet, but their everyday life, hard, yet native, that fluttered and called: their wives, children, lovers, ungathered grain, [and] orphaned villages.  

The First World War is used to highlight the disconnect between Russians and Cossacks, by presenting incidents that illustrate the Russian officers’ negative opinions and dehumanization of the Cossack units they command. These depictions of the First World War effectively foreshadow the Cossacks’ dissent or rather non-participation in the defensive of the Imperial government during the February Revolution of 1917.

An example of the Russian superiority complex is given during Gregor’s conscription into the military, when Gregor arrives at Vieshenska in 1914 to receive a medical examination, before

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210 Sholokhov, *And Quiet Flows the Don*, 120.
being mobilized. The Imperial officers, colonels, military commissioner, and medical examiner are all Russian and openly degrade Gregor. In one instance a Russian officer states Gregor’s appearance is too savage to be a part of the Ataman’s Lifeguards Regiment, it is stated that ‘It’s impossible. Just consider; the emperor would see a face like that, and then what? His eyes alone…’ ‘He’s a crossbreed. From the East undoubtedly.’

Additionally, when the Russian medical examiners see a bruise on Gregor’s back it is noted that he cannot serve in a brigade, because he is too deformed, “and his body isn’t clean [because of] those marks.” Thus, Gregor begins his military career in an ordinary regiment. In the review of his horse and military equipment, Gregor lightly touches an officer when showing him that he has the proper number of materials in his saddle bag. Gregor’s hand is described as hairy and dark in contrast to the officer's clean white hand. After this miniscule indecent the Russian officer enters a volatile speech seeking minizines Gregor for not adhering to “Cossack regulations”:

> The commissar snatched his hand away as though struck, rubbed it on the edge of his greatcoat, frowning fastidiously, and drew on his glove. Gregor noticed his action and smiled evilly. Their eyes met, and the commissar flushed and raised his voice…. ‘are you a peasant or a Cossack? Where’s your father?’

Sholokhov’s depiction of the First World War, also, works to dispel the notion that all Cossack are inherently violent. Therefore, providing the framework to reject official narratives that Cossacks were the aggressors of the counterrevolution, as a justification of Red Terror during the Civil War. In the early days of the war Gregor’s softer qualities are emphasized; for example, he attempts to save a rape victim and he mends the wounds of a prisoner from an

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214 Sholokhov, *And Quiet Flows the Don*, 175.
oppositional force. Overall, he finds war oppressive. This is seen in his unshakeable guilt after he kills an Austrian in Korolevka with a saber; he not only dismounts to analyze the dead man’s body, but he is horror-struck with a childlike innocence as he looks at the dismemberment of his victim. The notion that he murdered without reason weighs heavily on Gregor, “Gregor looked up and stumbled across to his horse. His steps were burdensomely heavy and torturing, as though he were carrying an unbearable weight on his back. Loathing and perplexity crushed his spirit.”

In addition, sadistically violent Cossacks are presented as outliers in the community, and they even disturb the consciousness of the other Cossacks they interact with. As seen in Gregor’s interaction with a Kazan Cossack, from his regiment, named Alexei Uriupin. Uriupin advises Gregor to not display remorse when killing seen in his statement:

Cut a man down boldly! You’re a Cossack, and it’s your business to cut down without asking questions. To kill your enemy in battle is a holy work. For every man you kill, God will wipe out one of your sins, just as he does for killing a serpent…destroy man! He’s a heathen, unclean; he poisons the earth.

Gregor objects to this line of thought, and though he cannot coherently verbalize his rejection of Uriupin’s claim that one’s Cossack identity gives one the right to murder, he refuses to internalize the belief that Cossacks are inherently brutal. The abnormality of Uriupin’s moral code is reiterated in the description of the regiment's horses’ unfavorable attitude toward him. Gregor points out that the horses display fear and trembling when Uriupin approaches. In addition, Uriupin agrees when told by Gregor, that he has a heart of stone implying his soullessness. Gregor’s unwillingness to accept the stereotypes of Cossack violence, further suggests that Uriupin’s violent behavior is an alimony, and not a shared national characteristic.

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216 Sholokhov, And Quiet Flows the Don, 210.
217 Sholokhov, And Quiet Flows the Don, 231.
Frontline Agitation

In the first two to three years of the First World War the Cossacks are presented as apathetic, simply fulfilling their military obligations. The war’s stalemate contributes to the communal apathy towards fighting in defense of the Imperial regime. The Cossacks became homesick and disillusioned by the destruction of their homeland, that is the Don Region, as “the third year of the war had left noticeable marks on the village.” Conversely, they are indifferent to the state of Russian overall. In the stalemate of the war the Tsar reviews the frontline troops. After a chaotic, disorderly retreat of a Cossack military unit in the face of the Austrians, the company commander alternatively tells the event as if it were a heroic exploit to the Tsar. Nevertheless, the Tsar is described as disinterested and sleepy. The only words of congratulations, or morale boost, he can offer, is a slap on the back when he refers to a soldier as, “‘Good Cossack lad!’” After this lackadaisical remark the Tsar returns to his suite completely unaffected. The autocrat’s non-attitude to the Cossacks’ heroism, in the defense of the Russian Empire, affirms the notion already known to Cossacks that their identity is not earnestly respected by imperialistic Great Russians, but simply exploited.

It is at a Moscow hospital recovering from an injury to his left eye, not in the frontlines, when Gregor is initially exposed to Bolshevik ideology. This interaction is also Gregor’s it is first non-confrontational exposure to an international community - the wounded soldiers that Gregor rooms with include a Latvian, Britishman, and a Siberian. It should be noted that all of Gregor's other international interactions, prior to this hospital stay, have been done in the form of combat with Germans, Hungarians, and Austrians. Gregor befriends a Ukrainian named Garanzha in the

218 Sholokhov, And Quiet Flows the Don, 326.  
219 Sholokhov, And Quiet Flows the Don, 223.
hospital who informs him about Bolshevik ideology. It is suggested that Garanzha was politically agitated in the frontlines, and perhaps his presentation of Bolsheviks is ill informed; still it is by Garanzha, that Gregor is introduced to terms like “bourgeois” and concepts of imperialist, capitalist oppression.

Gregor initially attributes his lack of understanding of Garanzha’s Bolshevik messaging to the disorientation brought about by his injury and Garanzha’s Ukrainian way of speaking. It is even more significant that Garanzha is Ukrainian because it presents the possibility that the Don Cossacks and Ukrainians can live in harmony as suggested by Stockman; but Garanzha’s approach is more accessible. Though these terms give Gregor the vocabulary to describe the discrimination he has experienced it does not lead to an empowerment. In fact, this awareness of Bolshevik theory, and terminology develops into a feeling of intellectual inferiority that remains with Gregor throughout his character development.

*The Revolutions of 1917: A Cossack Nation-State?*

Ultimately, in describing the events prior to February Revolution of 1917, Sholokhov illustrates the multifaceted orientation of Cossacks and their discontents by orienting his narrative around the local attitudes towards the revolutionary period rather than its potential international significance. Sholokhov’s narrative further highlights the Don Cossacks’ identity being bound to their particular territory in that the narrator focuses on the physical description of the Don region and not Russia. Sholokhov states, “during these years life declined to its ebb like flood water in the Don.”²²⁰ Overall, the events of the First World War are not of central importance in the novel; rather, the conflict is symbolic of the events that created the social upheaval leading up to the Russian Revolution.

²²⁰Sholokhov, *And Quiet Flows the Don*, 328.
Cossacks were excluded from the creation of a national republic in the consolidation of the Soviet Union. This is since Bolsheviks had already presumed that Cossack identity was inherently counterrevolutionary. Furthermore, it was denoted that the Don Cossacks were, in reality, a national minority, in the regions perceived as Cossack lands. The distinction presents the Don Cossack, as a national group, as members of a privileged landowning class. Thereby, Red Terror against Cossack communities was justified—seeing that they appropriated the land from the masses. In addition, Cossacks had already illustrated a secessionist character during the Civil War, in their desire to create a nation-state in the Don region. Sholokhov’s narrative, however, does not present this desire to maintain their historical homeland as an expression of privilege, but rather a desire to protect their independence. This is seen when Gregor is first introduced to the idea of national independence.

Gregor is presented with the idea of Cossacks forming an independent nation-state through Yefim Izvarin, “a fervent Cossack nationalist,” in January 1917. Izvarin points out that Bolsheviks are only appealing to the peasants and the Cossack for the moment. The core of their ideology is for the working class, which neither of the prior groups mentioned are a part of. He also states that it is unrealistic for everyone to live in equality and harmony. And does believe that Bolshevism will become just like Tsarism, the only difference is that the established hierarchy will favor the working class and demote the social standing of the Don Cossack. Izvarin equates Kornilov to Lenin and Kerensky, and after the February Revolution he began to express his views more freely.

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“for the complete autonomy of the Don region and the establishment of a form of government which had existed before the enslavement of the Cossacks by Great Rus.”²²³

_The February Revolution of 1917: Is an Autocracy Necessary?_

In reaction to the February Revolution, Sholokhov describes the opening of a divide in opinion based generational tendencies among the Don Cossacks as to what this means to their national identity. The class-based analysis of the February Revolution, presented by Bolshevik theorists, is secondary to the general conflict presented. The younger Cossacks rejected the cultural right of military service, by deserting from the First World War, and subsequently not heeding orders in Petrograd. This behavior is a disappointment to their elders, but to the younger generation the Revolution gives their desertion a justification; the effects of war-weariness seen in the events in Petrograd are insignificant to the social disorder in their native villages, because they perceive the Don Region as their homeland and not Russia.

In a local meeting in Tatarsk, the older Cossacks display their inability to grasp the end of the Romanovs, they view autocracy and necessity informs their identity, their relationship to the Tsarist regime does lend itself to conceptions of tradition; “How [shall we live] without the Tsar? Our fathers and grandfathers lived under the Tsars.”²²⁴ However, the younger Cossacks who have returned home from the frontlines display apathy towards the Tsar’s abdication, and this apathy is supported by the degradation they experienced throughout the First World War. When the Don Cossacks pledge allegiance to the Provisional Government they are described as demoralized, nor did they share the conviction of the Russian officers, “that Russia was bound to fight until the end [of the First World War].”²²⁵

²²³Sholokhov, _And Quiet Flows the Don_, 420.
²²⁴Sholohkov, _And Quiet Flows the Don_, 342.
²²⁵Sholokhov, _And Quiet Flows the Don_, 248.
The minority of Cossacks who view the February Revolution through class-based perceptions is highlighted by Eugene Listnitsky. As stated earlier, Litsniksky is an Imperial officer and a Cossack, who has more pride in his class than his nationality, therefore he derives pride from his association with the empire. When Listnitsky returns home, he overstates the role of the Bolsheviks’ in creating Cossack demoralization on the frontlines. He reports to his father that the Don Cossacks soldiers’ descent to criminality, licentiousness, and savagery had been “root[ed] from below, disintegrated by the Bolsheviks.” In doing so Listnitsky disregards that the Cossacks do have legitimate grievances under the Tsar, which are now being exploited by the Bolsheviks; but the Bolsheviks are not the cause for the Cossacks' demoralization. Furthermore, this statement suggests that Listnitsky has internalized the belief that the rank-and-file Cossacks; are naïve, gullible, and incapable of forming their own complaints against the Empire.

Eugene Listnitsky claims the Bolsheviks’ notions of progress are unfounded, and follows by stating that the soldiers to whom the Bolsheviks appeal to the most are ones who are “not interested in the essence of Bolshevik teaching, but only the possibility of pillaging and getting away from the front.” Listnitsky line of thought highlights how his privilege has distanced himself from his community, and illustrates that he has internalized negative stereotypes regarding his own peoples’ violent character, and supposed lack of intellectual capabilities. Listnitsky’s behaviors, based on internalized prejudices, are used by Sholokhov to reinstate the idea that Cossacks are not blindly bound to each other by nationality. This subsequently, is used to deny

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claims that Cossacks partook in the counterrevolution as result of exploitations of shared nationality.\textsuperscript{228}

\textit{The Kornilov Affair: August 1917}

In the novel, Sholokhov uses the Kornilov Affair to portray the internalized prejudices of high-ranking military Cossacks. Listnitsky, for example, advocates for the restoration of the monarchy, claiming that the Cossacks cannot maintain their identity without authoritative figures. This presumption that Cossacks will succumb to authority, is contradictory to stereotypes about Cossacks national character, but still illustrates how disconnected Listnitsky is from his community. In the initial period of uncertainty in 1917 Listnitsky was granted furlough; nevertheless, his hope in General Kornilov’s restoration results in him re-enlisting the military, When Listnitsky is reinstated in the army, he requests to be transferred to a “less difficult” Cossack regiment in which “he was satisfied to find that many of the officers were monarchist, while the Cossacks were by no means revolutionarily disposed.”\textsuperscript{229} These first impressions lead Listnitsky to believe that it will be easy to regain the Cossacks confidence in their military roles with Kornilov’s hardline character and Cossack influence. Unfortunately for Listnitsky, the Kornilov Affair only characterizes his isolation from the Don Cossack community, as shown in his ignorance.

For example, upon overhearing his regiment of Cossacks singing about their home sickness and attachment to the Don, Listnitsky assigns this longing to the lack of “[a] strong moral consciousness [regarding] their duty and responsibility to their fatherland.” Furthermore, Listnitsky questions the validity of their nationalism, querying, “after all what does the fatherland

\textsuperscript{229}Sholokhov, \textit{And Quiet Flows the Don}, 256.
really mean to the Cossacks? It is an abstract conception at best.”230 When a Cossack Lieutenant Atarschchikov, who is serving in the same regiment attempts to explain to Listnitsky that the Cossacks’ grievances are legitimate, Listnitsky outright denies it. He believes that Atarschchikov is the misguided one for not concluding that the Cossacks’ demoralization was caused by Bolsheviks, and not a genuine Cossack nationalism.

Listnitsky is ultimately confronted with the way Cossacks attitudes have changed when, to his great disappointment, discovers that the rank-and-file Cossacks do not share his enthusiasm and are apathetic to Kornilov’s appointment. The senior ranking Cossack officers in Listnitsky’s regiment understand that they can no longer exercise questionable authority they did pre-1917, as they no longer wanted to be viewed as the embodiment of stereotypical behaviors of the oppressive Russian officer. Nonetheless, it is unlikely that a confidence rooted in shared nationality, will result in the rank-and-file soldiers forgiving the officers of their past sins. Even when the high-ranking officers attempt to appeal to the rank in file Cossacks they do so in a manner of slight, in that they believe that it is their mission to enlighten, thereby dismissing the Cossacks perceptions on the current situation. Sholokhov narrates the officers’ failure to appeal to nationality results in the Russified, Imperial Cossacks, “[cutting] themselves off from the Cossacks with old walls, and as a result the Cossacks almost to a man have come under the influence of the Bolsheviks.” 231

These interactions give insights to internalized prejudices in that the officer Cossacks somehow perceive that the common and rank and file Cossack as maintaining a monolithic ideology. However, the existence of divisions between the officers and the average soldier proves in and of itself that the Cossacks do not display monolithic ideologies. In fact, Listnitsky refutes

the claim that Kornilov may not be in the best interest of the Don Cossacks, because he believes that their class has granted them with a greater culture that is able to estimate situations more critically than the more primitive, simpler mind of the regular Don Cossack.

Sholokhov presents General Kornilov’s personal appeal to the Cossacks in Petrograd, as a failure. Kornilov is unable to appeal to his own nationality, because equates the Cossacks' interest to that of Russians. Kornilov proclaims that the Cossacks’ sacrifice for the fatherland “will safeguard freedom and lead the Russian nation towards the great future worthy of a mighty, free people.” This does not generate any enthusiasm, directly after Kornilov appeal to nationality, Ivan Alexievich, who received his Bolshevik education pre-Revolution at Stockman’s home, spearheads a dissent group who refuse to partake in Kornilov’s coup and persuades them to join the Red Army. Here, again, Sholokhov, presents the Don Cossacks as having a clear understanding of the relationship between class and nationality in their oppression. They are not taken into the counterrevolution, because they believe in a monolithic national goal, but they are also not simply drawn into Bolshevik ideology due to simplicity or by a sudden realization.

*The Red Cossack: Bunchuck*

This is not a denial that rank-and-file Cossacks were radicalized by Bolsheviks; however, within the narrative it is primarily other Cossacks doing the political agitation such as Bunchuck, a working-class Cossack from Novocherkassk. Bunchuck is representative of how the Bolsheviks toned down their theoretical arguments and adapted to local realities to gain support from the Cossacks. In the period between the Kornilov Affair and the October Revolution of 1917 - Bunchuck arrives at Cossack division stationed near a railway, to educate them on Bolshevik

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ideology. While Bunchuck is there he listens to some of the Cossacks express that their willingness to follow General Kornilov, was influenced more so by fear than by ideological alignment.

This military unit seemingly displays a disregard for Kornilov Cossack heritage, yet in a contradictory manner the regiment that their openness and trust towards Bunchuck is because they see him as Cossack who is just like them. Initially, Bunchuck is successful at appealing to the Cossacks’ national identity without appearing condescending. He willingly answers the Cossacks questions about Bolshevisim. However, in Bunchuck’s attempts to explain the necessities of a Bolshevik Revolution by explaining that the Provisional Government and Kornilov counterrevolution maintained the same oppressive system as the Tsarist government, he is laughed at. The Cossacks do not believe that the Bolsheviks will break this chain of autocratic governance, they directly ask Bunchuck “when the Bolsheviks’ get in power what yokes will they put on us?”

Further along in this scene a rank-and-file Cossack, by the name of Chikamasov, questions Bunchuck about Lenin’s origins. Bunchuck replies that Lenin is Russian from Simbirsk. Chikasamov, however, denies this claim, by stating that Lenin is a Don Cossack from a region in the Lower Don. Bunchuck is confused by this confident assertion that Lenin is a Cossack and asks Chikamasov to explain, he expounds by stating that Lenin has the facial structure common to that of Cossacks in the lower Don. However, Chikamasov is most confident that Lenin is a Cossack because he has the rebellious spirit of Pugachev, Razin, and Yermak. Thus, to qualify his statement Chikamasov concludes his treatise to Bunchuck by stating that Lenin cannot be Russian and a revolutionary because revolt is not a Russian national characteristic:

Such men never come out [from a] Siberian province…Yes, and [Lenin] is a Cossack, only he won’t say so at present” he further explains how Lenin could have received such

an extensive education if he was from Cossack…. [Lenin] was taken prisoner by the Germans at the beginning of the war, and learnt it all there, but when he began to get [German] workers to revolt they [German authorities] became frightened…. And so they sent him to Russia.”

After this explanation Bunchuck does not push the matter, however this scene is used for irony purposes. Bunchuck, is also a Russified Cossack, who believes that Bolshevik’s can use the stereotype of Cossack independence of character and unboundedness to promote a proletariat spirit. Bunchuk’s ideological justifications for being violent is not perceived as socially acceptable. Bunchuck himself is an embodiment of a Cossack heroism that partakes in unmitigated violence, but he is as being unlike the other Cossacks.

For example, the morning after Bunchuck stays at the railway Kalmikov, a White Guard officer, attempts to recall the Cossacks to Kornilov with a new method. Rather than speaking of Russia as the motherland Kalmikov speaks of “the glory and honor of the Don, and the historic mission of the Cossacks,” and in a attempt to characterize Lenin as other from the Cossacks, not in alignment with the Cossack beings, he compares Lenin to Judas, “Didn’t your Lenin sell Russia for thirty silver marks?” This statement is significant as it illustrates that the high ranking officers are altering their agitation tactics, understanding that the Don is so significant to the Cossacks, he attempts to establish the narrative that Lenin is unreliable by likening him to a stereotypical conspirator of Jewish origins. Kalmikov, therefore, presents the question: if Lenin could sell out his own homeland why would he protect the Don.

In a rage Bunchuck kills Kalmikov, which horrifies the Cossacks he had just gained favor with. Bunchuck justifies his violence by stating there is no middle ground “It’s either us or

them!..Blood for blood. War to extermination.” However, it was the peace messaging that was most essential to Cossack subscription to Bolshevik ideology and Bunchuck just expressed a propensity towards violence. *And Quiet Flows the Don* demonstrates that the Cossacks are bound to places, the Don; and, that they will do as much as needed to protect their homeland, but they are not willing to be violent for any means necessary. This rift solidifies the failure of Bolsheviks to appeal to Don Cossack masses.

*The October Revolution of 1917 and the Origins of the Civil War*

The subsequent interactions that the Cossacks have with both the Provisional Government and the Bolsheviks; increase their hesitance to put political identities over national affiliations. Even though most are unaware of Bunchuck theoretical notions of necessary violence, during the Bolshevik coup the Cossacks' show a lack of resolve to defend the Winter Palace. The Cossacks decided to leave the Winter Palace unguarded not because of alignment with Bolshevik, but because of war apathy. One of the more vocal soldiers named Lagtuin states:

[Cossacks] there’s nothing for us to do here…The officers have vanished… and are we to stop and die here? Let’s go home…What good has [the Provisional Government] been to us.” their only hesitancy for leaving the fort is being attacked so they “send men out to the Bolsheviks [to explain their peaceful intent]. Let them leave us alone and we'll leave them alone.239

The Bolsheviks’ become synonymous with continuous violence after a group of Red Cossacks are captured, including the prominent figures Podtiefkov and Bunhcuck, by counterrevolutionaries Cossacks in Tatarsk. The group of White Cossacks who initially encircle and arrest Podtiefkov’s regiment of Red Cossacks are hesitant to fight back. One named Mirkin

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238 Sholokhov, *And Quiet Flows the Don*, 400.
cries, “For shame, Podtielkov! are we to shed the blood of our brothers?” Podtielkov surrenders, in result Bunchuck attempts to denounce Podtielkov’s as leader. But the majority of the Red Cossacks were not in consensus with Bunchuck and“were openly in favor of surrender... [they tell Bunchuck] you go and fight; we’re not going to shoot our own brothers!” The Cossacks are hesitant to murder them simply on the grounds of ideological differences, no one wants to volunteer to partake in the mass execution of their brothers.

After a long wait, Mikta Korshunov is the first one to volunteer, a few others follow suit, but most of the Cossacks present at the execution standby harboring a guilt and a sadness as they observe. This instance highlights Mikta as an unhinged minority, and that indiscriminately violence is not an inherent characteristic of Cossacks. It is not surprising, then, that censors believed that Sholokhov's more negative, violent presentation of the Red Army was politically dangerous not because it simply existed, but because the narrative does not work to rationalize or justify the violence. Individual Bolsheviks such as Bunchuck, who is described as a proletariat Cossack from Rostov, do vocalize violence as a necessity to establish the Soviet state. Bunchuck, the Red Cossack, however, he is no more idealized or heroized than Mitka Korshunov, who is a White Cossack, both of whom are also brutal and merciless in the violence practiced in the name of an idea.

**Conclusion: Demystifying the Don Cossacks**

Even though Sholokhov was not ethnically a Cossack, he was still writing from the perspective of an insider and therefore his narrative is not a direct extension of nineteenth-century Russian literary stereotypes, created by the likes of Leo Tolstoy and Nikolai Gogol. Sholokhov

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240 Sholokhov, *And Quiet Flows the Don*, 549.
spent his youth in multiple locations across the Don including Kargin, Baguchar (Voronezh), and Veshenskaia, and considered the Don his home. Though the Don Cossacks did not fully deem him one of their own, he intended to give voice to the Cossacks internal individual interpretation of events, by taking into account their oral histories and resilience. In addition, the novel is informed by Sholokhov’s personal interpretations about Don Cossacks national characteristics. 243

Sholokhov’s narrative subverts the Cossack myth. He introduces the reader to the main characters of *And Quiet Flows the Don* by employing nineteenth-century stereotypes, which are subsequently dispelled by the characters’ actions. Nor does Sholokhov seek to redeem the Don Cossacks image by depicting them as saints, martyrs, or bearers of objective truth. Rather he acknowledges their faults and does not shy away from violent or immoral behavior, but it is leveled in his equal depictions of their positive qualities and human suffering. Furthermore, the novel subverts the Cossacks myth, by not presenting Don Cossacks’ communal identity as monolithic. Sholokhov’s narrative gives the Cossacks a multifaceted view, in presenting social stratifications. 244 In fact, his narrative does detail the differences and divisions internally among Cossack and shows them as multifaceted peoples with differing motives, desires, and intentions, despite their shared self-identification as Cossacks.

*And Quiet Flows the Don* illustrates some of the internal divisions within the group of Don Cossacks such as socioeconomic class and ideological differences, yet despite these divisions, it does not negate their shared cultural identity as Cossacks. Their peculiar, distinct history and geographical location are continually referenced in order to magnify the point that the Don Cossacks do not perceive themselves as Russian; their Cossack identity supersedes political

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244 Ermolaev, *Mikhail Sholokhov and His Art*, 68-82.
orientation. Sholokhov’s Cossack characters are often motivated to join a political faction in the desire to maintain their autonomy over the Don territory, rather than believing in the ideological truths presented to them. Sholokhov’s Don Cossacks do not differentiate between Red and White Terror; the Don Cossacks in *And Quiet Flows the Don*, illustrates a desire to maintain a sense of self, and preserve a connection ancestral land in the coming of modernity.

The novel thus depicts the struggle of Cossacks just not through Marxist-Leninist ideologies of an oppressive socioeconomic system. It is the Don Cossack attachment to the Don that sparks Bolsheviks’ aggression towards them. The Bolsheviks attribute the Don Cossacks’ desire to have autonomy over the Don Region as signs of the Imperial character, as opposed to a desire for self-determination. This, therefore, creates in the Bolsheviks’ imagination, the view that Don Cossack national identity is equal to counter-revolutionaries identity. Consequently, the Don Cossacks began to view the Bolsheviks as people-destroyers or as threats to the Don Cossack traditional understanding of self, because their government would not allow for Don Cossack autonomy. This would result in a retribution violence that colors the Civil War.
Chapter Four: Mikhail Bulgakov: White Apologist Writer

Introduction: The Civil War as Russian Restoration

This chapter will analyze the literary works of Mikhail Bulgakov (1891-1940), specifically his novel the *White Guard*, as a means to further my analysis of the failures of Bolshevik national policy in the Civil War. Bulgakov’s works, written in the early half of the twentieth century, were highly autobiographical, as will be seen in the analysis of the *White Guard*. In the characterization of the Turbin family, there exist replicas of his own siblings. The experiences of the eldest sibling, Alexei Turbin, are modeled directly after Bulgakov’s own experience of the Ukrainian-Russian Revolution. However, what is perhaps most important about the *White Guard* is its lack of realism in its depiction of the Russian Civil War. The *White Guard* gives insights into the psychological nature of the merging of myth, and cultural symbols, while rewriting of history in the pursuit of defining a Great Russian national identity. The novel in part serves to detail Bulgakov’s personal reflections on the Russian Revolution and the Russian Civil War, and the ways in which these events altered his sense of self. These works were deemed as counterrevolutionary and caused Bulgakov to experience extensive censorship from the years of 1928-1929.

The Historical Context of *White Guard*

*White Guard* by Mikhail Bulgakov (1926) tells the story of the Turbins, an ethnically Russian family, living in Kiev, Ukraine during the Russian Civil War, from December 1918 to February 1919. The events of the novel cover the German occupation of Ukraine, the rule of Hetman Skoropadsky, and the takeover of the Petyluries. Stalinist historiography characterized
this entire period as oppressive movements of imperialism and colonialism - that were seeking to prevent the Ukrainian nation from uprising against Russian imperialism.  

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 Republic.  

However, upon analysis it is seen that occurrences in the White Guard react to much longer chronology, as it reflects on periods of the counterrevolution between February 1917 to February 1918. By the turn of the century, the notion that Ukrainians were a subordinate ethnic group to Great Russians was being contested. The failures of Nicholas II's government were felt not only by the Ukrainian soldiers on the frontlines but were also prevalent in the industrial regions of the Donbass and the rural regions of the state. Ukrainians agricultural labor produced the majority of the Russian Empire’s wheat; yet the peasants who produced the goods felt that they were being overtaxed, overworked, and growing poorer. The Donbass regions were rich in natural resources, such as coal; however, these industrial goods were being used for the benefit of the Russian Empire, and not the development of Ukraine.  

After the February Revolution of 1917, Ukraine conducted its own national revolution. In early 1917 Ukraine proclaimed itself to be an independent nation-state under the governance of the Central Rada, a Ukrainian nationalist group. In February of 1918, the Ukrainian National

Republic was created as a result of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty; this governmental entity heavily relied on Germany to maintain its independence from Russia. In April of 1918, the Bolsheviks attempted to overthrow the Rada and gain control of Ukraine but were forced out by Germans who proclaimed they were enforcing the territorial agreements of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, which stated Ukraine was not a part of Russia, and was subsequently a German territory. This resulted in a period of Ukraine being governed by the Hetman of the Ukrainian State, led by General Pavlo Skoropadsky, between April 1918 to December 1918. This government under Hetman Skoropadsky, who was an Imperialist and a member of the Russian nobility, was presumed to be a German puppet government, and it allowed the Germans to exploit Ukrainian natural resources, primarily grain. As a result, the general population of Ukrainian peasants did not favor Hetman Skoropadsky, while monarchists and Russian-identified people living in Kiev did.\textsuperscript{249} The \textit{White Guard} depicts the end of Skoropadsky rule in December 1918 and the establishment of the Directorate of Ukrainian People’s Republic, led by national socialist Symon Petlyura.\textsuperscript{250}

Soviet historiography denotes the failure of these counter-revolutionary movements as a sign that the emerging consciousness of nationality in the masses of Ukrainians was indicative of their Soviet character, Bulgakov’s historical narrative states the opposite.\textsuperscript{251} \textit{White Guard} does not talk about a Soviet people threatening bourgeois nationality, or workers, but rather details the

\textsuperscript{251}Brandenberger and Zelenov, eds. \textit{Stalin’s Master Narrative}, 413.; Yekelchyk, \textit{Ukraine: Birth of a Modern Nation}, 85.
Imperial legacy of national divisions. Bulgakov’s characters consider the Bolsheviks to possess Russian Imperial characteristics, in depicting them as bringers of order and authority. The novel presents doubt about Soviet international integration, by stating that Bolsheviks' appeal to nationalities is performative, and surreptitiously seeks to reestablish Russian dominance.

**Ukrainians in the Russian Empire**

In order to better understand the divisions between Russian nationalism and Ukrainian nationalism, present in Bulgakov’s work, the status of Ukrainians in the Russian Empire must be discussed. Imperial Russian historiography considered the history of Ukraine a subsection of Russian history, and Ukraine as a smaller part of the larger Russian state.\(^{252}\) Indeed, the etymology of the word Ukraine is derived from the proto-Slavic languages word for ‘borderland.’\(^{253}\) In the nineteenth-century, Imperial government officials sought to minimize the idea that Ukrainians were an entirely separate nationality.\(^{254}\) This is due to the belief that recognizing Ukraine as a non-Russian territory would, “[threaten] the dominant position of Russians and assimilated non-Russians in the political, social, and ecclesiastical realms, [and] challenge the basic tenets of the established notions of Russian nationality, its historical legacy.”\(^{255}\)

Vladimir the Great, consolidated Rus, Kievan Rus’ in the year c. 980. This ancient consolidation of Kiev under a Slavic prince was used in Imperial historiography to denote the origins of the Russians’ right to rule Ukraine.\(^{256}\) However, the notion that the geographical region


\(^{253}\) Orest Subtelny, *Ukraine: A History*, vol. 3rd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, Scholarly Publishing Division, 2000), 4-5.; Yekelchyk, *Ukraine: Birth of a Modern Nation*, 3-13.; The Russian word for краї (kraj); meaning broder, corner, and, or edge.


of Ukraine is a historical piece of the Russian homeland, ignores that for many centuries Kiev had been ruled by non-Russians. By the end of the twelfth century into the thirteenth century Ukraine was a fragmented political entity due to invasions by the Mongols. Ukraine was consolidated into a stable geopolitical unit under the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the thirteenth through fourteenth century. Subsequently, after a period of invasions by Tatars and Turks, Ukraine was brought back into the realm of Russian rule in the late seventeenth century. However, even with Ukraine being subjected to the Russian tsar, most of the local realities in the region were dictated by Zaporizhian Cossacks, who governed Ukraine as a Hetmante.\(^{257}\) It was not until the eighteenth century when the Romanovs began to curtail Cossack privileges, that narratives of a Russian-Ukraine began to reemerge into popular discourse.

*What is the Distinction Between Little Russians and Ukrainians?*

The modern-day state of Ukraine was under the control of two multinational empires at the beginning of the nineteenth-century: the Habsburgs governing the western Ukrainian territories and the Romanovs governing the eastern Ukrainian territories, which were referred to as Little Russia. The multinational character of the Russian Empire, in the nineteenth-century, was reflected in the population of Ukraine; large numbers of Poles, Lithuanians, Baltic Germans, Jews, and Cossacks lived in the region. This diversity illustrates that ethnic Russians only made up a portion of the population in “Little Russia.” However, the Imperial bureaucracy’s desire to attribute Ukrainian history as a subsection of their own, is presumably informed by the sheer number of “civilized, threatening” nationalities that lived in Ukraine. As opposed to being aimed at the peasantry, who were in fact the only peoples identified as Ukrainians at this time.

The Russian Empire’s approach to the emergence of nationalism was characterized by repression. Seeing that the Hapsburgs’, who controlled the western-portions of Ukraine, approach to nationalism was more rooted in political reforms and liberalization, the Imperial bureaucracy became more conscientious of the nationalistic developments in their portion of Ukraine.258 The formal elements of Great Russia’s attempts to remain the dominant power in its borderlands, is seen in the establishment of universities and churches in Ukraine.259 Perhaps these institutional reforms would symbolize that Russia was not only interested in supporting Ukrainians’ educational development but also interested in its spiritual development. Although this assumption is in alignment with the primary characteristics of “Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality” it does not mean that these Russified institutions were imposed at random.260

It should be recalled that the nationality element of “Orthodoxy, Autocracy, Nationality” referred to a shared loyalty to the Romanov Tsar, and was not intended to create a shared identity between ethnicities.261 Therefore, the assumption made by those wishing to russify Ukraine—that Ukrainians and Russians shared a sociocultural history—was a falsehood, the only truth behind which was the Russian Empire’s desire to exploit Ukraine's resources.262 The majority of Ukrainians would not have self-identified themselves as having a social, cultural relationship to

262 Yekelchyk, *Ukraine: Birth of a Modern Nation*, 33-34. We have discussed that Cossacks were also viewed as types of Russians and this narrative is also applicable to Belarus - there does not seem to be any research that suggests this notion of continuity with other Imperial territories.
Russians. As most Ukrainians were peasants their primary concern in the age of modernity was not the nationality question, but the land question:

At the turn of the century, the peasants in Dnipro Ukraine were loyal to their family, village, region, church, and perhaps the tsar in faraway St. Petersburg. They knew they were not Muscovites, nor Poles, nor Jews, but did not yet have a clear notion of allegiance to a broader Ukrainian nation...Before nationalist propaganda reached them, and even afterward, Ukrainian villagers remained concerned primarily with the land issue.263

Ukrainians in rural regions, the supposed Little Russians, would have not been predisposed to see themselves as Russians. It appears that the rural peoples would have identified as muzhiks (peasants) or as Orthodox Christians.264 As the peasant was assumed to be non-threatening to the empire’s stability, the foremost assimilation policy that affected Ukrainians were church reforms. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church was not considered independent, but rather a branch of the Russian Orthodox Church.265 But it does not follow that Ukrainians suddenly became aware of their Russianness, since they already viewed their confessional identity with relation to their local realities. Thus, the institutional forms of Russification, as seen in, the implementation of the Russian language in universities, civil government, and judicial reforms were constructed to repress the Polish populations residing in Ukraine.266

The emergence of Russification policies in the mid-nineteenth-century in Ukraine was more so motivated by fear of Polish sedition, and the need to suppress Polish nationality. At the turn of the century the landowning, educated population in Ukraine was predominantly Polish, and

263Yekelchyk, Ukraine: Birth of a Modern Nation, 54.
264Hamm, A Portrait, 1800-1917, 83.
266Remy, “Against All Odds,” 43-58.
assimilation into Polish culture was necessitated for social mobility and access to opportunity.\textsuperscript{267} The rebellion of Poles, in reaction to irredentist conflicts between Poland and Russia, was the Imperial governments’ motivation to Russify Kiev. Kiev, the capital, was viewed with importance, because the city was an economic, political center, as well as a cultural symbol.\textsuperscript{268} Russification of Kiev was used to deter nationalist insurrection and maintain the empire’s economic interest. Imperial assertions that Kiev was a Russian city were successful with a subset of the population in Ukraine, those being ethnic Russians and the emerging working-class in industrial centers.

\textit{Is Kiev a Russian City?}

Nicholas I was the first Tsar to introduce policies that supported the Russian Empire’s claims to Kiev as a Russian city. Prior, Catherine the Great had referenced the continuity between Kiev and Moscow by referring to their respective roles in establishing Orthodoxy in Slavic lands, and in the post-Napoleonic period Alexander I had proposed the development of Kiev as a geopolitical strategy that would deter invasion from the Ottomans and Central European Empires. However, Nicholas I’s policies were the most significant in transforming Kiev into a third metropole of Russia.\textsuperscript{269} Nicholas I was successful at placing Great Russians in administrative positions, yet most of his developmental policies were economic.

Kiev did not become an industrial city, under Nicholas I, as the industrialization was suppressed by the empire, which did not lend itself to the creation of a major proletariat in Kiev. However, the economic gains of Jewish merchants and traders in the city and the surrounding regions now became more profitable to the Russian Empire. The creation of a “Russian” working

\textsuperscript{268}Hamm, \textit{Kiev: A Portrait}, 55-56.
\textsuperscript{269}Hamm, \textit{Kiev: A Portrait}, 23.
class in Kiev did not occur until after the emancipation of the serfs, in the mid-1860s, when several newly liberated peoples from Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia came to industrial cities in search for paid labor.\footnote{Hamm, \textit{Kiev: A Portrait}, 24-25.} As the empire began industrialization in the late nineteenth-century, many Ukrainians moved to Russia for jobs.\footnote{Yekelchyk, \textit{Ukraine: Birth of a Modern Nation}, 54-57.} This migration of Ukrainian peasants in search of wage-labor, does indicate that their assimilation into Russian culture was due to necessity, and not motivated by a conception of shared identity. Nonetheless, the concentration of the industrial centers was in the eastern regions of Ukraine, in the Donbass regions, in cities like Kharkiv; these regions correspond with the places where the Bolsheviks had the most popularity.\footnote{Yekelchyk, \textit{Ukraine: Birth of a Modern Nation}, 70-72.}

The absence of an assimilation regarding rural Ukrainians, presumably had more influence on constructing a Ukrainian national consciousness, than repressing it. In the consideration of Ukraine as a small part of the large Russian state, it followed that there was less monitoring of Ukrainian national developments. For example, the Imperial bureaucracy denoted the Ukrainian language as a minority dialect; subsequently, “the lack of official status made literature especially important for the development of the language and the elevation of its prestige.”\footnote{Remy, “Against All Odds,” 43.} In comparing this repression of Ukrainian literary culture to the repression of the Polish language in Ukraine, one can ascertain the nuances of Imperial national policy. It seems that the Tsars were not afraid of the Ukrainian language, per say, but were fearful of the promotion of Ukrainian literacy.

Appealing to the masses of rural peasants through their language had the potential to create a national identity that was constructed in opposition to the Tsar, and thus generate revolt. This is seen in Alexander II’s policies regarding Ukrainian literature; in his view, it was an expression of
an exclusive Ukrainian nationalism, and therefore a threat to the state. Scholar Johannes Remy in his work entitled “Against All Odds: Ukrainian in the Russian Empire in the Second Half of the Nineteenth-Century” states, “the goal that the Imperial government set for itself when enacting the restrictions was to contain Ukrainian literature, to prevent its expansion, and to deny the common people access to Ukrainian literature.”

The reaction of the Russian Empire to Ukrainian nationalism illustrates a shift in Russification policies. In the mid-1840s was an emergence of self-identified Ukrainian intellectuals. Russification policies such as language repression that had typically been used on a minority of civilized nationals, were now constructed to repress the masses. However, to be sure, the emergence of the nationalist movement among Ukrainian intellectuals was perceived, by the Imperial government, as only a minor element of disorder. The Ukrainian peasants did not regard nationalism with much significance; their concern, as aforementioned, was agricultural developments.

This division may foster the belief that Ukrainian peasants were not discontent with the empire until the turn of the century; however, this is false. The peasantry was frustrated by Russian absolutism; it was just that this frustration was not channeled in national organizations. By the time it was clear that Ukrainians did have discontent regarding the Imperial narrative of Little Russia, the empire was already in the state of crisis. The rising popularity of mass nationalist movements in Ukraine emerged concurrently with the empire’s decline. The methods of Imperial

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274 Remy, “Against All Odds,” 45.
275 Remy, “Against All Odds,” 43-45.
277 Yekelchyk, Ukraine: Birth of a Modern Nation, 54.
repression, and the paternalistic usage of religion, had created the exact opposite of its desired effect.

**Ukrainians in Soviet Historiography**

Soviet historiography regarding the development of Ukraine was utilized to affirm that Sovietization would be different from Russification. Trotsky’s writings about Ukraine prior to the Revolution, describes the state as a low culture, backward space. Furthermore, Trotsky describes the lagging of Ukrainians development as a symbol of Russian oppression. It was important for the Bolsheviks to recognize the Ukrainians’ agrarian revolt, as it related to Marxist stages of historical development. In Trotsky’s writings on the role of nationalities in the Russian Revolution he does note that, “the Ukrainian proletariat was less homogenous, less tempered,” and it followed that the Bolsheviks must recognize the Ukrainian nation. Therefore, in the absence of a working class, the Bolsheviks appealed to the Ukrainians as a nationality group through sympathizing with the peasantry's concerns regarding land rights.

The chief interest of Ukrainian peasant participation in the February Revolution was a desire to have control of the land which they worked. This desire for repossession of land from the landowners was characterized as a question of labor as opposed to an assertion of a national homeland. Nevertheless, the turmoil that descended from the Russian Revolution did result in the emergence of varying political parties seeking to claim the geographical territory of Ukraine as theirs. Ukrainian nationalist living in the region viewed the dissolution of the Russian Empire, as it provided them with the opportunity to formulate their own nation-state. However, the sheer

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diversity of nationalities living within Ukraine made it difficult to redefine identity, as the relationship to Russia had been the binding element in the past:

The Revolution in Ukraine did not mean a clear-cut fight between socialist and nationalist- they were often the same people - but involved a confusing struggle between Ukrainian patriots of different stripes, as well as among the many varieties of socialists and anarchists.280

Mikhail Bulgakov: A Biography

“By the turn of the twentieth century, Kiev could no longer be called a Ukrainian city; neither could it be considered fully Russian,” and, yet, to Mikhail Bulgakov Kiev was the Mother of Russian Cities.281 Mikhail Bulgakov was born May 15, 1891, in Kiev, then a Governorate of the Russian Empire, to an educated Russian family.282 His diaries and letters are filled with loving memories of Kiev, the Kiev of his childhood. In a letter to his sister Nadya, dated December 31, 1917, Bulgakov reminiscences of pre-Revolutionary Kiev with its legendary characteristics.283 At the time of this letter the writer was in Moscow, and he considered the Holy City of Russia as an alienating place, comparably lacking the allure, peace, and serenity of the Mother of Russian Cities, Kiev. In a letter to his sister the young author’s admiration for Russian Kiev is on full display. He dreams of a past Kiev has drowned in the sea of the Russian Revolution. Bulgakov, subsequently, details that he wishes he had been born a century earlier; nevertheless, he still possesses hope that a past Kiev, a Russian Kiev will be restored.284

280Yekelchyk, Ukraine: Birth of a Modern Nation, 67.
282Milne, Mikhail Bulgakov: A Critical Biography, 5-20
284Mikhail Bulgakov, Dnevnik, pis'ma 1914-1940 [Diary and Letters 1914-1940], ed. V.I Losev, (Moscow, Russia: Sovremennyi pisatel' [A Contemporary Writer], 1997). The passage in the diary collection reads: Я в отчаянии, что из Киева нет известий...мения начинает являться сильное подозрение, что 2000 р. ухнут в море русской революции...Ах, отчего опоздал родиться. Отчего я не родился сто лет назад.В особенности мне хотелось бы быть в
Childhood: Russian Empire in Crisis (1891-1917)

Party-line Soviet critics described Bulgakov as that of “a retrograde White Guardist and monarchist.” Even before he became famous, Bulgakov's early works were critiqued as being too reflective of a pre-revolutionary Russian tone and style. Nevertheless, it appears that Bulgakov’s family was not as conservative as denoted in Soviet historiography. He was the eldest of seven children born to Afanasy Ivanovich and Vavara Mikhailovna. His father Afanasy Ivanovich (1859-1907) was Professor of Church History at Kiev Ecclesiastical Academy and descended from a poor village priest. In the early years of Bulgakov’s life he was educated by his father, evidently, Afanasy Ivanovich who hoped to provide young Mikhail with a morality based on Orthodox Christianity. Despite this, Afanasy Ivanovich was criticized by the parish clergy for allowing his children to “think freely.” Bulgakov’s mother, Varvara Mikhailovna (née Pokrovskaya) (1869-1922), instilled a joy of life into her children, and was very loved and admired by her children. Varvara Mikhailovna allowed her children intellectual and social freedoms, such as the choice of reading, and an open dating policy. When Bulgakov was sixteen his father died and his mother remarried to a medical doctor, Ivan Pavlovich Voskresensky, who influenced the teen to attend medical school.
As a teenager Mikhail Bulgakov knew he wanted to write, but being the oldest of seven children, from a home with a modest income, medical school was a more viable career path. His university education began in the ominous period before the First World War in 1912 at Kiev University, where he graduated with honors amid the conflict in 1916. As an inexperienced young doctor, Bulgakov, directly following his graduation, volunteered at the Red Cross, and in the fall of 1916 was transferred to a Zemstvo Hospital on the front lines. The following year in September 1917, right before the October Revolution, Bulgakov took a job working as a doctor in a small village Nikolskoe in the Smolensk province. In Nikolskoe, he became most familiar with treating syphilis, and asked to be transferred to a new post in the infectious and venereological department.

Work on the frontlines proved difficult for Bulgakov. He was a recent graduate, and his first task was treating the unprecedented wounds of modern warfare. Furthermore, the war created a shortage of established, well-trained medical professionals, and therefore Bulgakov was without guidance; he often had to refer to textbooks while operating. It is also noted that around this time, in 1917 at Nikolskoe, Bulgakov began using morphine to cope. Bulgakov’s biographers have argued whether he developed an aversion to the common man, or the masses, in reaction to wartime destruction.

Revolution and Civil War

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291 Haber, Mikhail Bulgakov: The Early Years, 11-19.
292 Haber, Mikhail Bulgakov: The Early Years, 19-16.; Milne, Mikhail Bulgakov: A Critical Biography, 5-20.; Some accounts note that Bulgakov worked at a military hospital while obtaining his degree.
293 Haber, Mikhail Bulgakov: The Early Years, 19-26.
294 Haber, Mikhail Bulgakov: The Early Years, 19-26.
Following the Revolutions of 1917, Ukraine began engaging in an internal civil war that was nationalistic in character. Bulgakov displayed a “hostility to the ideals of Ukrainian independence,” because he viewed himself and his birthplace Kiev as Russian. Bulgakov resided in Kiev for most of the Revolution and the Civil War, and his perception of both events were informed by his view of Kiev as a Russian entity. In February of 1918, after receiving information that his mother and brother had been caught in a military cross-fire while walking home, Bulgakov requested a military discharge in order to return home to Kiev.

His request was granted, and he returned to Kiev governed by Hetman Pavel Skoropadsky, a military dictator, who was unpopular with many Ukrainians. The bulk of Skoropadsky’s support came from local Russians, such as the Bulgaevs, who feared more extreme Ukrainian nationalists. Being that the Bulgakov family identified as Russians they enjoyed the relative peace and order brought about by Skoropadsky and German occupation. This sense of a return to normalcy during Skoropadsky’s reign can be seen in Bulgakov’s opening of private venereology practice in his apartment. When Skoporadsky was overthrown by Ukrainian nationalist, Simon Petlyura, in December of 1918, the Bulgakovs felt a heavy anxiety for their prospects. Bulgakov's biographers note that he along with two of his brothers joined a nonprofessional volunteer unit in defense of the Hetman, initially unaware that the Hetman himself had escaped Ukraine, with the Germans, in fear of being caught by Petlyura’s troops.

\[295\] Milne, Mikhail Bulgakov: A Critical Biography, 12.
\[296\] Milne, Mikhail Bulgakov: A Critical Biography, 19.; Bulgakov did go to Smolensk and Moscow, but most of the time he stayed in Kiev.
\[297\] Haber, Mikhail Bulgakov: The Early Years, 23.
\[298\] Haber, Mikhail Bulgakov: The Early Years, 23.
\[299\] Haber, Mikhail Bulgakov: The Early Years, 19-26.
\[300\] Haber, Mikhail Bulgakov: The Early Years, 23. A similar event occurs in Bulgakov’s novel White Guard.
In the following February of 1919 Bulgakov was mobilized as an army doctor in Petlyura’s troops, but because he regarded the Petlyurites as evil, he quickly deserted this post.\textsuperscript{301} By the end of 1919 the Bolsheviks had made advances towards taking Kiev but were halted by the conflict there between Petlyura’s troops and Denikin’s White Army. And at this time in fall of 1919 Bulgakov joined the White Army in Grozny as a doctor.\textsuperscript{302} Evidently it seems that Bulgakov intended to emigrate with the White Army and their sympathizers when they left from Vladikavkaz and Grozny, in the winter of 1919, as the Bolsheviks were taking the regions. However, he was unable to flee because he became ill with typhus. After his recovery, in early 1920, Bulgakov decided to settle in Vladikavkaz and devote himself to a literary career; he also resolved never to return to medicine for income.\textsuperscript{303} Bulgakov did obtain some popularity within the small literary scene in Vladikavkaz. Nevertheless, Bulgakov’s early literary pursuits proved difficult, “in Red Vladikavkaz, [where] he was particularly vulnerable to attack because of his bourgeois origins.”\textsuperscript{304} Furthermore, most of the residents in Vladikavkaz were illiterate. Therefore, his artist pursuits were restricted to feuilletons and public readings.\textsuperscript{305}

**Publication History of White Guard**

Bulgakov’s manuscripts suggest that he began conceptualizing the novel that would become the *White Guard* in 1922; however, the novel was first drafted between 1923 and 1924. Perhaps the most important autobiographical element in the *White Guard* is the overwhelming sense of loss is present throughout the narrative. This deep sense of despair comes from the loss

\textsuperscript{301}Haber, *Mikhail Bulgakov: The Early Years*, 19-26.
\textsuperscript{302}It is unclear if Bulgakov was conscripted to join the White Army or if he volunteered.
\textsuperscript{304}Haber, *Mikhail Bulgakov: The Early Years*, 30.
of Bulgakov’s mother, in February of 1922. After returning to Kiev to attend his mother's funeral, "White Guard" took its present form. By the end of August 1923, a first draft was completed, followed by approximately another six months of revision."³⁰⁶ Bulgakov's depiction of the Russian Civil War lacks realism, in fact it can be characterized by quite the opposite. The novel immortalizes the psychological effects of the Civil War on Great Russian national identity.

White Guard was published in installments by the journal Rossiya and was intended to be a trilogy that covered the White Guards' activity in the southern region of the former Russian Empire, and the subsequent “take-over” of Ukrainian nationalist forces led by Symon V. Petlyura. ³⁰⁷ However, the Party had other plans. As early as September 1922, non-Party journals such as Rossiya began to spark inner-party discourse among Bolsheviks. The journal was considered under the influence of “Changing Landmarks”; this meant that the Rossiya, and others like it, were perceived as attempting to restore the Imperialistic privileges of the surviving intelligentsia and the kulak classes.³⁰⁸ The Bolsheviks desired to demonstrate a strong cultural policy against such “counterrevolutionaries” who believed that NEP reforms were suggestive of Bolshevik failure and signaled a return to normalcy, that is to Russia before 1917.

The literary journal Rossiya did close in 1925, after only publishing two installments of what was intended to be the “first” novel of the White Guard series. The journal's closing was the effect of several party resolutions, beginning as early as May 1924, which in essence stated that literature should be representative of the party, the workers, and the peasantry. ³⁰⁹ Bulgakov, in

³⁰⁶ Haber, Mikhail Bulgakov: The Early Years, 76.
³⁰⁷ Haber, Mikhail Bulgakov: The Early Years, 75-78.; Milne, Mikhail Bulgakov: A Critical Biography, 69-79.
particular, was reported by Glavlit as a main literary figure perpetuating the ideology of “Changing Landmarks” and was thus accused of encouraging people to become “fellow-travelers.” \textsuperscript{310} Bulgakov was accused of “bulgakovshchina” a term constructed from his surname and that was to imply the assertion of bourgeois influence in early Soviet literary culture. \textsuperscript{311}

Bulgakov was told of the journal's imminent shutdown a few months prior and was told to give some sort of typescript so that the journal could complete the novel before closing. He could not complete writing before it closed; consequently, the novelist entered a publishing contract, in October of 1925, which gave the rights of the novel to a man by the name of Zakhar Kagansky. The edition of the \textit{White Guard} that was published in Russia in 1927 added a pirated ending by Kagansky which blended the conclusion of a 1921 play by Bulgakov entitled “Days of the Turbins” - which covers similar themes and characters as the \textit{White Guard} and was “sensation” at the Moscow Art Theater - and deployed Bulgakov’s writing style. \textsuperscript{312} Nevertheless, in March 1927, Bulgakov commenced writing the novel and reworked some of the sections published in \textit{Rossiya} and wrote his own conclusion. This version of the novel was published by Concorde Publishing House in Paris of 1929.\textsuperscript{313}

\textsuperscript{310}The term “Fellow Travelers” refers to those who submitted to Bolshevik’s ascension to power but showed no interest in converting to or aid in the distribution of Bolshevik ideology.

\textsuperscript{311}Kornienko, “Literary Criticism and Cultural policy During the New Economic Policy,” 16-22.

\textsuperscript{312}Dobrenko, “Introduction,” in \textit{White Guard}, xviii.

\textsuperscript{313}Haber, \textit{Mikhail Bulgakov: The Early Years}, 76.; During the end of the Khrushchev era and the beginning of the Brezhnev era, less censored or hackneyed editions, closer to Bulgakov’s Parisian edition of \textit{White Guard} were published in Russia. However, with the advent of glasnost, under Gorbachev, several missing or discarded manuscripts of the \textit{White Guard} have been recently discovered, making it unclear which draft Bulgakov truly desired for publication. The edition which is analyzed here is a translation by Marian Schwartz that is reflective of “complete” editions of the glasnost Russian, which contains several dream sequences that remained omitted in the Khrushchev and Brezhnev era editions, as well as earlier English translations.
Why then was Bulgakov deemed a “fellow traveler” and allowed to adapt his White apologia to the Soviet Theater? In an appeal from the Proletarian Theater Association to Stalin, in December 1928, members of the Association requested that Bulgakov’s works “Flight” and “Days of the Turbins” should be removed from the stage because of its “weakly masked apologia for White heroics.” Stalin's responses in February of 1929 claim that Bulgakov’s work was fundamentally anti-Soviet and “white apologia”; however, Stalin deemed that Bulgakov’s work “[itself] not all that bad.” Stalin letters to the Proletarian Theater Association reveal his belief that Bulgakov’s work was positive for the construction of Soviet people as it justified Bolshevik victory in the long struggle of the Russian Revolution. Stalin wrote: “Don’t forget that the main impression the viewer takes away from this play is an impression favorable for the Bolsheviks… ‘Days of the Turbins’ is a demonstration of the crushing force of Bolshevism.”

The White Guard: Maintaining Imperial Identity

The narrative of the Civil War by White Guard begins in disordered Ukraine, in December of 1918 with the harshness of a winter blizzard, and the mourning of the Turbins’ mother's recent death. The political character of this conflict is presented as secondary, the White Guard opens in the form of a historical chronicle oriented around religious faith, as opposed to a political ideology. The Christian tonality evoked by the opening passage refers to the Apocalyptic messaging found in the Book of Revelation:

Great was the year and terrible the Year of Our Lord 1918, the second since the Revolution had begun. Sun had been abundant in the summer, snow in the winter and two

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315 Clark, Dobrenko, and Schwartz, Soviet Culture and Power, 57. Letter from the Proletarian Theater Association to I. V. Stalin. [December 1928].

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stars had risen particularly high in the sky; Venus, the Evening Star; and Mars, red and quivering.\textsuperscript{316}

This passage is also significant in that it presents a division between astronomy, as a rational scientific study, and astrology, as a system of belief. This dichotomy between the rational and the believed is present throughout the entirety of the narrative.

\textit{White Guard} centers the Turbin family: the eldest brother, an army doctor, Alexei Turbin, the middle sister, Elena, and their youngest cadet brother, Nikolai, and their close friends Myshlaevsky, Carp, and Shernvinsky. Their conviction that Kiev is a Russian City is a core belief that characterizes their emotions and influences their actions throughout the plot. Bulgakov’s narrative is not socialist realism in any regard, it uses intertextuality, the Bible’s Book of Revelations, as well as national literature like the \textit{Captain's Daughter} by Pushkin, \textit{War and Peace} by Tolstoy, and the \textit{The Brothers Karamazov} by Dostoevsky. Notably, these narratives all refer to the accession of the Good over the Evil, justified by the individual’s enduring faith that, “this too shall pass,” which are rooted discourses of Russianness. \textit{White Guard} is narrated through the third person—the reader is informed about historical events as they occur, yet these events are all filtered through the Turbins’ family and friends’ perceptions and memories. Therefore, Bulgakov establishes early in the novel that the Turbins’ motives, and subsequent actions, are not rooted solely in rational analysis, but are also equally motivated by their faith in the cultural myth of “Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality”.

The Turbin siblings cling to their mother’s last words, “to live,” but as the novel relates “in store for them was death and suffering.”\textsuperscript{317} The introductory scene of the novel characterizes the

\textsuperscript{317}Bulgakov, \textit{White Guard}, 6.
mental strain experienced by the Turbins to maintain their core of beliefs. The description of the Turbins’ family home is full of allusions to a past time; the destructive character of the new epoch is hallmarked by absence of parents, or any parental figure, in the siblings’ life. This is significant in that it illustrates that the Turbins’ perception of the conflict is cloaked in nostalgia. The movement of the plot is motivated by the Turbins’ belief in a conversative nostalgia as representative of a historical truth. This faith that the better qualities of a reminiscent time will endure long after the destruction and chaos of the Civil War is reflected in the description of the home's material items.

The Turbin’s home “is not simply a place of shelter and comfort, however; more important, and more durably as it turns out, it is a repository of family, cultural, and historical tradition.” 318

The apartment is filled with religious icons and the works of Golden Age Russian artists such as Pushkin’s novels and Tchaikovsky’s music. The stove (Russian: печь) is the centerpiece of the Turbin apartment, the Russian stove serves both a functional and decorative purpose. It not only provides the siblings with warmth from the outside shown by the storm, but it is also symbolic of their privileged, civilized life pre-Revolution.319 The scribblings on the stove left by the family and friends give insights into the Turbins’ political views before the characters reveals them in conversation:

   “Terrible rumors rumbling,  
   Bands of Reds are coming!”  
   “Long live Russia!  
   Long live the autocracy!”  
   “Well does Russia remember,  
   The battle of Borodino.” 320

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318 Haber, Mikhail Bulgakov: The Early Years, 81.
320 Bulgakov, White Guard, 9.
Though the Turbins’ hold these concepts as ideological truth, they are aware that in the current era of Ukraine occupied by Germans, Ukrainian nationalist, and Bolsheviks, these thoughts are viewed as incendiary. Nikolka subsequently in a black humor writes underneath these cultural myths of Russian greatness, “I hereby order outsiders not to write on the stove under pain of execution for any comrade and incarceration.” Nikolka’s concluding statement illustrates an awareness that the family’s “traditional Russian values” may no longer exist outside of their private spheres.

The reader is constantly reminded of the city’s Russianness through cultural symbols, even when taken outside of the Turbins’ home. Miniscule things, like a snow filled street are illustrated as reflective of the Christmas spirit. This association of the ordinary alongside the extraordinary, symbolizes the Turbins’ cultural associations of end of the year with beliefs in renewal and rebirth. Allusions to death and renewal are deeply entrenched in the White Guard; as seen in its references to the loss of the family’s matriarch, the brutality of winter, Christmastime, and the coming of the New Year. Bulgakov’s illustration of maintaining hope in extenuating circumstances is also used to affirm that Kiev is a Russian city. These references commemorate the conversion of Kievan Rus’ into an Orthodox region, while simultaneously presenting the Turbins as martyrs of the Bolsheviks’ invasion.

The Turbins: On the Ukranian Question

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321Bulgakov, White Guard, 8-9.
322Cathy Caridi, “Russian Orthodoxy from the Conversion of Rus’ (ca.988) to Today, in Making Martyrs East and West: Canonization in the Catholic and Russian Orthodox Churches (Cornell University Press, 2016), 46-99.
The Turbins’ perception of the Ukraine population is used to illustrate the legacy of Russification. The Turbins’ understanding of their Russianness is based on notions of honorability and being superior. The emergence of mass politics within Ukraine does not alter their perceptions; they maintain that Ukrainians are lower peoples who cannot and should be regarded as their equals. Ukrainians are conceived of as different because they lack order; this is depicted through representations of speech and lack of ideologically unity. Linguistic differences are noted by Alexei Turbin, though he does not consider Ukrainian a true dialect; he simply represents it as incorrect speech, an “awful, made-up language”.

The characters clearly understand the Ukrainian language but consider it lower than Russian in terms of prestige. The Turbins would despise being seen as equals to Ukrainians and in contrast, identify with other non-Russian nationals, as we shall see later, who live within Ukraine. The non-Russian nationals with whom the Turbin family primarily associates are instead Germans or Poles; this association is informed by a shared “civilized” culture. By contrast, the Turbins would despise being seen as equals to Ukrainians. The novel does not argue that Ukraine does not exist, though it does note see Kiev as part of the Ukrainian state. For Bulgakov, as for the Bolsheviks, Ukraine exists—but represents a lower culture, not worthy of consideration as equal to the other ‘civilized’ nation-states.

Bulgakov’s use of Imperial historiography in framing the origins of Russian Orthodoxy in relation to Kievan Rus’ supports the notion that the Turbins are more cultured than Ukrainians. The Turbins’ view of Ukrainians as lacking culture while simultaneously revering Kiev can be explained by the relationship between Orthodox Christianity and Russian nationalism. If one presumes that the Russian Imperial historiography of Ukraine is “correct” the history of Orthodoxy

\[323\] Bulgakov, White Guard, 42.
between Muscovy and Kievan Rus’ demonstrates that Bulgakov’s characters’ understanding of self is directly influenced by the cultural mythology formulated by Russian imperialism. This is an understanding of self-linked Imperial hierarchy; our novelist therefore presents the Turbins as members of the Russian intelligentsia in Ukraine. And their sense of self is in direct relation to their understanding of Kiev as an ancient Russian city, not a Ukrainian entity.

Kiev has a symbolic purpose both in the novel and historically. Bulgakov’s narrative works to link together this ancient interpretation of Kiev as a part of Rus, into a contemporary identity. The name Kiev is rarely mentioned, the location is only referred to as the City. The first description of the cityscape emerges in the form of a dream sequence “narrated” by Alexei Turbin while Kiev is enthralled in a snowstorm. The descriptions of a hard freeze of Dnieper River, the darkness of night elopes the City, is followed Alexei’s anxieties and reflections on the bizarre, unnatural character of the twentieth century, which he presumes will lead to “humanity’s terrible and empty future.”324 Alexei’s doom is temporarily mitigated as he recalls the St. Vladimir monument located on the Dnieper Hill. St. Vladimir’s monument illuminates light, the cross of the statue is described as possessing electric white color that shimmered through the present darkness.

This dream sequence presents that the Turbins’ private sphere by which they can maintain the empire's usage of state-building to inform national identity is not only in the physical, in their home, but also preserved in abstract – their consciousness as it relates to their perceptions of reality. Subsequently, the passage of time, or the historical developments in Ukraine, are expressed in the description of the family’s clock: “black clock was running just as it had thirty years before; tick tock.” While the Turbins hold onto this belief in Imperial decline, they simultaneously hold onto the belief that the White Guards’ defense of the City, Kiev, is justified. This is emphasized in the

324 Bulgakov, White Guard, 53.
City’s characterization as a Holy Mother, “Officers, all the City’s hopes are on you. Justify the trust placed in you by the dying mother of Russian cities and, should the enemy appear, move to the offensive. God is with us!” 

_Autocracy_

The psychological character of the Turbins’ political views is given voice in a drunken gathering, between the siblings and their family friends, in denial that the Romanovs are dead. Even though Imperial collapse has already been fully underway they are still fully asserting that Russian restoration of order will come to pass. When speaking of Nicholas II, Shervinsky relates a story that the Tsar has gone into hiding under Kaiser Wilhelm's protection. Shervinsky claims that Nicholas II commanded the Germans, “Go to Ukraine, gentlemen and form your units and then when the moment is right, I shall personally stand at the army’s head and lead you into Russia’s heart, Moscow.” After, Shervinsky’s drunken tirade, Nikolka makes a toast the “Imperial Majesty’s health,” to which Alexei seconds, “so, if the emperor is dead long live the emperor” Before retreating to bed the company engages in singing the Russian national anthem. This scene illustrates how the Turbins’ mentally cope with German occupation. They attempt to describe it as another form of Russian order, granted by the tsar, and not the effects of Bolshevik corruption of Russian values, by signing a separate peace treaty. Though the group acknowledges the Tsar’s abdication and considers it dishonorable; they are not rid of the belief in an absolutist monarchy.

_The German Hetman: Identification Based on Class and not Nationality_

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325Bulgakov, _White Guard_, 18.
326Bulgakov, _White Guard_, 44
327Bulgakov, _White Guard_, 45.
The myth of Russian authority is maintained in the Turbins’ hope in the Hetman, Pavel Skoropadsky. The Turbins think of him initially as maintainer of Russian order, as the Hetman did not initially view Ukraine as ethnic and cultural unit, but simply a political territory. Yet, the Turbins are aware of the lack of the Hetman’s real authority, his governance is described as an “operetta.” This analogy of operetta is recurring, thus admitting that the White Army’s acceptance of Skoropadsky as a stand-in actor for the Tsar is characterized by a suspension of disbelief. When Hetman Skoropadsky begins appealing to the Ukrainian masses for popularity he breaks his role. Consequently, the unspoken agreement he has with his main audience, the White Army— is broken. The Turbins begin to reject him. They express that their faith in him was misplaced to begin with; as he is not a Russian tsar but some other bazaar object emerging from the general chaos of the era.

At the entry point of the novel the Hetman is attempting to mold his identity to placate the land demands of the Ukrainians, in doing so this falsifies the belief that he is maintaining Imperial notions of national hierarchy. Instead of suppressing the masses he is appealing to what the Turbins’ think is low culture, and therein he is diminishing himself. However, this appeal is in Hetman's best interest if he would like to stay in power, as the Revolution has shown that the methods of old are no longer applicable in the turn of the century. Furthermore, the allusions to Hetman possibly losing power without having mass appeal illustrate that those who identify with Hetman, as a legacy of the Russian Empire, are only a subset of the population. However, they are also the minority that would like to maintain their Imperial prestige.

In Bulgakov's novel the reality that Russians only make up part of Ukraine's multinational population is hinted at through multiple minor characters such as Talberg, Elena’s Baltic German

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Yekechyk, *Ukraine: Birth of a Modern Nation*, 74-76.
husband, and Captain Studzinsky, a Polish acquaintance. Nationality appears as a secondary element; it is used to characterize the White Army’s appeal to only a minority of the population.\textsuperscript{329} The most important point is that even in their cordial relations with other classed nationalities, the Turbins do not proclaim to have a shared national identity; their unification comes from shared ideals. The Turbins still feel that Kiev, the City, and not Ukraine as a whole, is their Russian homeland, and that they constitute the majority. Alexei even claims that most people living in Kiev are Russian. This works to show how unpopular the Turbins’ views are in their contemporary landscape and magnifies their, seeming, delusions about Russian Imperial restoration and the apparent nature of Russian greatness.

In the \textit{White Guard} Kiev is presented in this autonomous, authoritative form. Which further illustrates the sense of Russian historical interpretation of greatness, being foundational for the Turbin’s formulation of identity. It invokes the age-old discussion of Russian national character being eastern or western. However, the notion that the Turbins do not think of their nationality extending outside of major, ancient Russian cities such as Moscow and Kiev also illustrates that they are willing to separate themselves from the rest, and that a unified community in the Russian Empire is non-existent. Through the lens of Bolshevik theory, the Turbins view the world through bourgeois-national culture; however, they do not use it in a manner that creates a false sense of shared identity with the masses. This is supplemented by the narrator’s claims that the Kievan dwellers knew nothing of what “[was] going on around them, in the real Ukraine, which...had tens of millions of people in it...They didn’t know, but they hated with all their heart.”\textsuperscript{330}

\textsuperscript{329}This is the precise reason how Soviet historiography explains the failure of the counter-revolution; counter-revolutionaries do not represent the majority.
\textsuperscript{330}Bulgakov, \textit{White Guard}, 59.
Initially, the members of the White Army seem to identify more with the German military strata, as they are seen as implementers of social order and authority, things they long for in their envisioned Russian restoration. There is momentary prosperity and political stability under the Hetman, “no [threat of] Bolsheviks, and the common folk didn’t loot,” but this stability is also referred to as “a kingdom of make-believe.” However, the Germans presented in the novel do not display the same class and culture over nationality ideal that is embodied in the imperialist Russian characters. Bulgakov foreshadows the notion of the dishonorable German, who abandons his kin in the most vulnerable time, in Elena Turbina’s husband Sergei Talberg. Talberg in his introduction as a two-faced draining individual:

Almost since Elena’s wedding day, a crack had formed in the vessel of the Turbin life, and the good water had leaked through it imperceptibly. The vessel had run dry. The main reason for this, very likely, was to be found in the two-layered eyes of Staff Captain Sergei Ivanovich Talberg.

By all accounts in the novel Talberg had assimilated into Russian culture as seen in his military training and marriage into a Russian family. Yet, Talberg is still referred to as a Baltic German, and therefore incapable of possessing Russian honor – it is not within his national characteristics. For example, Alexei is confounded that Talberg could simultaneously be, “without the slightest concept of honor! [and] an officer of the Russian military academy!” Talberg dishonor comes, not from the fact that he fled, but because unlike the Russians who will abandon Kiev later in the novel he does not confess or confirm that he is fleeing, “the Hetman’s foolish, vulgar operetta” due to self-interest. As Talberg states, the Germans have no roots in the city, as in the Germans have no cultural association with Ukraine, they are only there in their own interest and

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331 Bulgakov, White Guard, 58.
332 Bulgakov, White Guard, 22.
333 Bulgakov, White Guard, 25.
will do anything necessary to reap the financial benefits of occupying Ukraine. Talgerg’s attempts to rationalize his abandonment is used later to illustrate a lack of openness symbolic of Germans’ national character once they abandon Kiev for their home country in the wake of Kaiser Wilhelm II’s abdication. Nonetheless, for the Baltic German Talberg, neither his running away nor the Germans’ flight is indicative of dishonor.

*White Heroism: The Battle of Borodino 1812*

Bulgakov’s prelude to German abandonment with Talberg, later is employed to highlight the strength of the Russian national character. The Turbins begin feeling guilty when they reflect on their former support of the Hetman. Alexei vocally denounces the Hetman, within the family company. He describes the Hetman as suppressing Russian interest, and the Russian population, in not letting the form their own military units, Alexei proclaims:

> If he’d [the Hetman] started forming [a Russian] officer corps in April instead of playing out this ugly Ukrainization comedy, we could have taken Moscow…. Not only would there have been no trace of Petlyura in Little Russia, but we would have swatted Trotsky like a fly in Moscow.\(^334\)

Alexei is actually very critical of Trotsky; specifically, he claims that Trotsky is “more terrible than war, or Germans, or anything in the world.”\(^335\) His statements, discreetly, characterizes Trotsky as non-Russian. Alexei furthermore employs anti-Semitic rhetoric by associating Trotsky with the implementation of disease upon Moscow, thereby corrupting its true Russian character. Alexei does not want to sit and wait for the plague of Bolshevism to descend upon Kievan Rus’; for a Russian army, he claims, the first order of business should be to “block off Moscow with a steel wall.”\(^336\) In mentioning Trotsky, as opposed to Lenin, a Jewish-Bolshevik

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\(^{334}\)Bulgakov, *White Guard*, 41.
\(^{335}\)Bulgakov, *White Guard*, 42.
\(^{336}\)Bulgakov, *White Guard*, 42.
conspiracy is suggested to demonstrate that Moscow has fallen from its former greatness, thereby making the defense of Kiev much more critical for Bulgakov’s characters. Even Shervinsky, who would rather believe he is still living under the dictates of a sovereign Tsar, states that Moscow has been “occupied” by the Bolsheviks. Therefore, the potential loss of Kiev, is introduced with renewed significance; it would mean for the Turbinian strata the bitter end of Russia.

Myshlaevsky advises his friends (Carp, Shervinsky, and the Turbin brothers) to join a volunteer battalion unit to take action in the battle, “for Orthodoxy and Autocracy in Mother Russia.”\(^\text{337}\) They all volunteer not with the conviction that they will win a war against Petlyura or the Bolsheviks, but rather driven by the belief of moral duties. The inscription on the building in which they enlist reads “you may not be a hero but it's your duty to volunteer.” \(^\text{338}\) It is important to note that these young men volunteer to join the Civil War, even though they have an awareness of the fact they are fighting a lost cause. Alexei affirms that he is a monarchist and that he despises Kerensky’s so-called “socialist politics” when asked about his political sympathies by the Colonel of the volunteer battalion, Malyshev. The heroism present in the White Guard is not the grounds of engaging in kinetic conflict, but rather motivated by the “formulation of the ‘old Russia’” as the ghost of the past, while the “new Russia” was equally spectral, a phantom of the future.\(^\text{339}\)

The Turbins define Russian identity having its roots in honor and order, which is legitimized by the control of the City. Centralization of Kiev meant control of the Ukrainian state. Its centralization is also of importance to our characters, so much so that it is only referred to as the City (with capital C). For instance, when reviewing volunteers for the battalion, Colonel

\(^{337}\) Bulgakov, *White Guard*, 46.  
^{338}\) Bulgakov, *White Guard*, 78.  
Malyshev, wants to confirm that their foremost goal is “to defend the City and the Hetman from Petlyura’s bands and possibly from the Bolsheviks.” The volunteer battalion is described as a miraculous formation of a motley crew; most of the men are just beginning their transition into adulthood and have no military experience. While the comparatively older ones have already lost their youth to the First World War, Bulgakov describes 28-year-old Alexei as having aged rapidly since the October Revolution. Colonel Malyshev, who is in his late twenties, is also characterized as a paternal figure to the boys even though the relative difference was more indicative of an elder brother, than a father.

The volunteer regiment is trained in a secondary school named after Tsar Alexander I that Myshlaevsky and Alexei attended as children. During training of this poorly equipped regiment, the image of Tsar Alexander I’s frequently appears:

Astride a thoroughbred argamak covered with a monogrammed Imperial saddlecloth, rearing the argamak, beaming, his white-plumed tricorn cocked at an angle, a bald and gleaming Alexander flew out the gunners. Sending them a smile after smile filled with cunning charm, Alexander flourished his broadsword and with the blade pointed out to the Borodino regiments.

The constant references to Alexander I followed by the occupants reflecting on the Battle of Borodino, are illustrative of the belief that the Russian-orientated forces rooted in tradition and autocracy will succeed despite the comparative weakness. These references are important in that their perceptions of Alexander I are rooted in the belief that his reign marked a transition of Russian nationalism. Alexander I often “attributed Russia’s survival in 1812 to divine providence,” which

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340 Bulgakov, White Guard, 85.
341 Bulgakov, White Guard, 98.
subsequently heightened the image of Russia in Europe. Further on, when the lighting momentary goes out in the building, Alexander I’s portrait remains illuminated. Bulgakov uses these preliminary allusions to liken the coming abandonment of Kiev to the abandonment of Moscow in 1812. Therefore, rather than casting a shame on his characters for lacking fortitude, he characterizes their submission as a confirmation of their devoutness and love for their homeland.

The intermediary section of the novel depicts a lawless Ukraine, in the wake of the Hetman’s flee from Ukraine. After this dishonorable abandonment the Turbins no longer make the connection between themselves and the Germans. In fact, Skoropadsky loses his Russian status in the eyes of the White Army, when he removes, “his Circassian coat, sharovary, and polished boots... [to dress] in the uniform of an [injured] German major so that he was now no better or worse than hundreds of other majors.” Skoropadsky's shamefulness is linked to his German dress, when Colonel Malyshev relays to the volunteer battalion that, “The Hetman shamefully abandoned us all to the tyranny of fate. He fled! He fled like the supreme rat and coward he is! Today, an hour after the Hetman, Cavalry General Belrukov, our army commander, fled to the same place as the Hetman, that is, a German train.” This loss of an authoritative figure leads the Buglakov’s *White Guard* units to descend into disorder and chaos, rendering them hopeless in the defense of the City.

The military units desert *en masse* and retreat without order, leaving Kiev open for Petlyura’s incoming troops. These contradictory behaviors are contrary to what has been

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343 The chaotic nature of the retreat is also referential to Leo Tolstoy’s depiction of the burning of Moscow in 1812.
established as the White Army’s core belief system; as aforementioned, many members of the White Army presented by Bulgakov already perceived the Hetman as lacking the characteristics of Russian honor. It is this perception of a non-Russian character that the Turbin family and friends conclude is the root cause of Hetman’s inability to restore the City’s former status. This disjunction between behavior and thought is representative of the faith-based conviction of righteous Russia, that progress is outside of human control. When the Germans and the Hetman are in power, they are symbolic of autocracy for the Turbins, but they are not the restoration of the pre-Revolutionary autocratic system. In addition, the loss of Imperial identity is represented in a transformation within physical appearances. For instance, members of the White Army remove their Imperial insignia, discard their military uniforms in exchange for civilian clothes, and shave their facial hair. The chaos that follows the Hetman’s abandonment of Kiev, reiterates that the Turbins are fighting for an ideal, they are in denial that the old structures that informed their sense of self are gone.

Kiev is now left open for incoming from Petlyura. Bulgakov’s narrator likens the abandonment of Kiev to the abandonment of Moscow in 1812, which ultimately results in Russian victory. The connection of the two events is presumably used to illustrate the Turbianians belief in Russian restoration present in small allusions such as, the young men are trained in school surrounded with images of Alexander I. Another allusion occurs before the military training at the secondary school. The building where volunteers go to register is a repurposed French department store. When it becomes clear to the military Russian units that the Hetman has fled Kiev, they immediately think of retreating to the Don to join General Denikin’s army.346 Furthermore, in the

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346 Anton Denikin was a Lieutenant General in the Imperial Army, and during the Civil War he became the Commander-in-Chief of the White Guard. Between 1919 and 1930 the White Army under Denikin command had formed a state known as South Russia.
description of the military units disorderly retreat Litetuants and Generals of the White Army are compared to Russian military generals, like Kutuzov, and war miniseries, like Milyutin. It becomes clear as the disorder in the City grows that while this conflict may not mean the emergence of Imperial Russian identity, it does not mean that Russian dominance will consequently disappear.

_Two Mass Cultures: Petlyura as a Demon, Bolsheviks as Muscovites_

Bulgakov introduces to his reader the national socialist as a prisoner released from cell number 666. Petlyura’s true identity is hidden throughout the novel. The characters seem to initially conflate the Bolsheviks ideology with Petlyura’s nationalism because he is a socialist as both play into their fear of mass politics and loss of hierarchical order. Petlyura is recollected as an account clerk, a university student, and a representative of the Zemstvo union. These varying histories of Petlyura result in the implication that his nationalism is not genuine. It is questioned whether Petlyura is using nationalist sympathies for his own political gain:

> no one not a soul knew what this Peturra [German pronunciation] was trying to set up in Ukraine, but everyone knew for sure that he was secretive and faceless...and was hoping to conquer Ukraine, and in order to do so he was on his way to capture the City.\(^{347}\)

As the “invaders” enter Kiev, they are also surrounded by cultural symbols of Russianness. For example, Bolboutin, a Colonel who has mutinied from Petlyura army, “marched unimpeded all the way to the military academy, sending mounted scouts down all the side streets,” pauses when he encounters “[the] colonnaded building of the Nicholas I Military Academy.”\(^{348}\) Yet, this scene is not symbolic of a defender of Russian Romanov-style autocracy emerging; it is the opposite. Bulgakov characterizes Bolboutin’s pause as non-necessity; there are no forces present who would deter him. In the general confusion and misinformation, Bolboutin is described by the

\(^{347}\)Bulgakov, _White Guard_, 78.

\(^{348}\)Bulgakov, _White Guard_, 133.
military units and civilian inhabitants of Kiev, as a Russian Grand Duke, a Bolshevik, an imperialist, and an anti-nationalist. This unwarranted, and contradictory presentation of Bolboutin’s political ideologies shows a disparate desire for any Russian to emerge as leader of Ukraine, so long as it is not Ukrainian. Bulgakov presents the White Guard’s hostility towards Ukrainian nationalism as:

Contrary, the peasants’ fury, ‘the great cudgel,’ is a constant of the Russian character, having little to do with the concrete historical situation and no lasting influence on history. Because the revolt contains no constructive, civilizing element, even its leader, Petlyura, is no more than a myth.349

In fact, apart from Petlyura’s initial invasion, his rule over Ukraine is omitted as if it were a period of delirium. It is not that the Turbins are willfully ignorant to masses power, they would just rather not reflect on its potential. The most significant presentation of Petlyura is that of a Satanic apparition, akin to the literary characterization of Ivan’s Devil in Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, in the sense that he only materializes when thought of, but he never actually appears. Petlyura’s demonic character is used as a psychological protection for the members of the White Army: If one does not believe in him, he will not appear. In addition, Petlyura is characterized as a Biblical “apocalyptic beast” seeking to terrorize and destroy. Petlyura’s cavalry units are the first to enter the City undeterred, evoking the imagery of the apocalyptic horsemen in the Book of Revelations.350

Thus, it is at this period that more references to the Bolsheviks’ Muscovite character emerge. Earlier in the narrative, before the Germans flee, the ascension of Bolsheviks as a Russian

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349 Haber, *Mikhail Bulgakov: The Early Years*, 85.
power is alluded to. For example, as Talberg stated early that the Germans have no roots in Ukraine, he contrastingly states that Petlyura does have “healthy roots…in the peasant masses,” and furthermore the Bolshevik, “had roots in Moscow, [even if] they had emerged from the forest somewhere.”

Talberg's description of the Bolsheviks' appeal to nationalism is based on the presumption that it is insincere. He describes the Bolshevik army as adventurers, who wear sharovary, a national-style of pants in Ukraine. For the Bolsheviks the sharovary is simply a costume, something used to falsely appeal to the masses of Ukrainians. The first, notion that is indicative of this, is early in the novel, before Alexei goes to volunteer, he dreams of Kiev. In this dream he meets some deceased soldiers from the Imperial Army, White Army, and the Bolsheviks together in Heaven - thus characterizing them as all the same being through their nationality as Great Russian. This description in conjunction with the Bolsheviks being called Muscovite adventurers or warmongers, by several officers of the White Guard in December of 1918 indirectly equates them to their Imperial predecessor and creates a familiarity principle.

Conversely, the lack of familiarity in Petlyura’s mass nationalism is what makes him perceived as so dangerous, and ultimately demonic by the Turbin characters. Petlyura seeks to undermine exactly what the Russian Empire maintained, that is a national hierarchy, based on perceptions of culture. Whereas the Bolsheviks’ present themselves as furthering development and establishing culture through their allegiance to ideological principles, Petlyura is described as an undefinable, lawless creature. Petlyura’s appeal to the Ukrainian masses is likened to Hetman’s exploitation of the Russians by a disgruntled mob gathered around St. Sophia’s Church; “they're all blackguards. The Hetman and Petlyura both.”

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352 Bulgakov, *White Guard*, 139.
supposedly gained popularity have no conception of his true identity either. This is seen in the scene outside a St. Sophia’s Church, when people constantly refer to Petlyura as Peter despite his first name being Simon.

Additionally, a Bolshevik public speaker is mistaken for Petlyura. This Bolshevik orator is presumed to be a secondary character in the novel, named Mikahil Semyonovich Shpolyansky. He is from Petersburg and is introduced to the reader a few hours after the death of the Hetman’s City.353 Mikhail Semyonovich Shpolyansky is initially presented as a member of a literary society, called the Magnetic Triolet, an admirer of Kerensky, and having the physical appearance of a romantic literary figure with “an extraordinary resemblance to Evgeny Onegin.”354 Bulgakov’s reinvention of this superfluous man into a Bolshevik, alludes to the Bolsheviks' appeal to mass politics as originating from boredom and self-inflicted suffering. Nonetheless, despite Shpolyansky’s present error in becoming a Bolshevik, he is still Russian. The implication is that he is still a Great Russian.

*The Bolsheviks: Muscovites who Restore of Russian Order*

Bolshevik success is not denoted as a success of their national policy during the Civil War but is rather presented in the restoration of Russia as the rightful ruler over the geopolitical space it owned under the empire. Throughout the narrative Bolsheviks are called Muscovites, linking their identity to another ancient Russian city. The Ukrainians “hated Moscow, be it Bolshevik, tsarist, or anything else.”355 However, the Turbinian strata do not view these qualities as negative; on the contrary, the novel proclaims that only an authoritative figure can save the mother of Russian cities. The Turbin’s neighbor, Vasily, gives this prophecy after Petlyura ascends into the

353 Bulgakov, *White Guard*, 139.
City. Vasily, who is often called by the feminine version of his name, and therein evokes the fairy
tale imagery of Vasilia the Wise, gives voice to his sinister belief that, “only one thing can save
us...Autocracy. Yes. The nastiest dictatorship you can imagine. Autocracy.” Subsequently, the
Bolshevik ascended upon the City, as foretold by the Red Star, Mars.

Retreat into the Home as a Safe Haven

The novel ends with Alexei recovering from, seemingly terminal bout of, typhus. Alexei’s
survival is not attributed to the doctors who treat him, but rather to the fervent prayer of his sister
Elena to the Virgin Mary for his recovery. The family is restored in, “[a] warm and cozy apartment,
[with wonderful] cream curtains on [that] thanks to them you felt cut off from the outside world.
And oh, that outside world, you had to agree, was dirty, bloody, and senseless” The Turbins
retreat into their home where they continue “to observe the rules of Turbin life,” and come to the
consensus that any further attempts at defending Kiev to be “pointless heroism.” To conceal
their political affiliations, the Turbins store their insignia and epaulets in a box, which also contains
a photo of the [dead] Tsarevich Alexei. Colonel Malyshev seeks to protect the Turbins by burning
“compromising documents” but keeps their diplomas and photographs of their mother.
Shervinsky’s new identity is modeled after a stereotypical nineteenth-century artist.

Paradoxically, the Bolsheviks’ capture of the City reinstalled a hope in the Turbins, because
Kiev was now under Russian control. Though their tsarist identity is repressed, the Bolsheviks do
not destroy it. The closing scene of Bulgakov’s White Guard takes place as Alexei reopens his
private practice. Alexei’s first patient in the New Year is named Rusakov, and he is seeking

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356 Bulgakov, White Guard, 252.
357 Bulgakov, White Guard, 226.
358 Bulgakov, White Guard, 191, 208.
treatment for syphilis.\textsuperscript{359} Rusakov begins proselytizing to Alexei by describing Mikhail Semyonovich Shpolyansky journey to Moscow, and the failure of Petlyura to create a nation-state as a precursor to the destruction of Trotsky’s “Kingdom of the Antichrist in Moscow.” Rusakov does not liken Trotsky to the Russian Bolsheviks, because he characterizes Trotsky as Satanic by using anti-Semitic rhetoric. For example, Rusakov refers to Trotsky by his “‘[real Hebrew name] Avaddon, Apollion in Greek, which means ‘the destroyer.’”\textsuperscript{360} Conversely, Rusakov’s “horde of angels” which will cleanse Kiev of its sins as was done in Sodom and Gomorrah are presumed to be Bolsheviks.\textsuperscript{361} Alexei’s association of restorative of angels to the Bolsheviks is not contradicted by our proselytizer. Consequently, this denies that the Bolsheviks emerged victorious in the Civil War due to the validity of their international ideology. It does, however, state the Bolsheviks won because they were Muscovites and therefore instilled with the national qualities of the Great Russians.

**Conclusion: Bolsheviks as Great Russians**

Bulgakov’s *White Guard* uses the conception of “Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality” to illustrate a belief in a restoration of Great Russian dominance. This is done by characterizing the White Army’s in the Russian Civil War, as a temporary trying period of disorder. The rule of the Hetman and the invasion of the Petyluries is described as a theatrical circus-esque dream; therefore, it lacks the endurance presented in what the Turbins define as the Russian national character. Russianness in *White Guard* does not have any tangible objects by which to define its greatness. The Turbin siblings, and their friends, define Russianness, or its greatness as something

\textsuperscript{359}The reader is already aware of Rusakov; he was a minor character in Mikhail Semyonovich Shpolyansky’s literary group. However, in the time that has passed Rusakov has turned to God for salvation.

\textsuperscript{360}Bulgakov, *White Guard*, 295.

\textsuperscript{361}Bulgakov, *White Guard*, 294.
inherited in Russian nationality granted to them by a supernatural authority. Their endurance to the challenging period of the Civil War is analogous with a Christian belief that they possess the morality, the civilization, and the intellect to purport the moral truth in the face of moral decay. The allusions to both Kiev and Moscow by their ancient predecessors Kievan Rus’ and Muscovy is utilized by an acknowledgement that the Turbins’ belief system may be backwards and irrational but not necessarily false.

This usage of faith-based righteousness is also used to explain why the White Army could not defend Kiev without presenting them as on the wrong side of history. The White Army’s lack of military order and professionalism is presented alongside other instances of Russian military failure, in order to demonstrate that the Turbins are still acting within a tradition. Bulgakov does not present the White Army as warmongers; in fact, he often demonstrates their awareness that they are fighting a lost cause. Nevertheless, the worldview informed by “Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality” will not disappear just because the physical world has been altered. Bulgakov’s *White Guard* depicts Russian people who have the strength to endure the trials and tribulations of their current epoch because of their faith in a Russian Kiev – their homeland.

This belief is validated at the end of the novel, when after a short-lived Petlyura's reign the Bolsheviks take Kiev. Thus, Great Russian dominance is restored and states that Bolshevism is deemed permissible so long as it is Russian. Notably, the only named historical figure from the Bolshevik party is Trotsky. It is he who is referred to as the most corrupting element within the Bolsheviks party. This is done through utilizing anti-Semitic tropes Trotsky, is characterized as a demon, the Antichrist, and the Greek god Appollon. Contrastingly, the Bolsheviks as a group are referred to with respect to their “roots” in Moscow. This division of Trotsky, who is of Jewish descent, and the Muscovite-Bolsheviks presents the illusion that the issue with Bolshevik ideology
is the political appeal based on internationalism. Bulgakov never presents the Ukrainian masses as having the capability of making informed decisions; therefore, the popular support found by both the Bolsheviks and the Petylurites is presented as de-evolutionary rebel-rousing. Yet, the underlying presumption presented in the *White Guard* is that if Bolshevisms stopped pretending to be the Party for the masses, and recognized that their power comes from their Russianness, then perhaps there is a chance for a restored social order. If the *White Guard* is read as the “Book of Revelations,” then the Bolsheviks are depicted as the Second Coming of Russian supremacy. Though it may construct a new world order, the Soviet Union, this order is still grounded in the principle of Russianness.
Chapter Five: The Great Patriotic War

Introduction: A Victory of The Soviet Peoples or the Soviet Russian?

The novels Life and Fate by Vasily Grossman and Generations of Winter by Vasily Aksyonov cover the period of Stalinization and the Second World War, thus demonstrating the creation of a Soviet people. Grossman and Aksyonov’s novels highlight the inconsistencies between Bolshevik international theory and its actual practice within the consolidated Soviet State. Life and Fate predominantly focuses on the resurgence of anti-Semitism; nevertheless, Grossman still credits Soviet patriotism for generating war victory. Contrastingly, Generations of Winter focuses on the “disillusionment” of Soviet patriotism, in depicting mass war participation as being generated by the fear of living in the Stalinist state. While the novels acknowledge the formation of a Soviet national identity, they challenge ideals of Soviet international unity, by depicting the integration process as involuntary and alienating.

To better understand the critiques of Soviet patriotism that are offered by Grossman and Aksyonov, the policies implemented to create a Soviet people must be discussed. This chapter will give an overview of Stalin's national policies in the mid-to-late 1930s which served as an undercurrent in the construction of Soviet patriotism and shared a Soviet “national history” that surrounded the Second World War. In addition, this section will discuss how the survival of the Soviet Union and its stability post-war, made Marxist-Leninist historical development discourse secondary. The Second World War had already proved that the Soviet Union was a developed nation, resulting in the transformation of Bolshevik internationalism into Soviet nationalism.

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The Second World War was commonly referred to as “The Great Patriotic War,” in the Soviet Union. In Russian the term is Великая Отечественная война, the English translation loses the sentiment of the term отечественная meaning the fatherland. This rhetoric of the Second World War, was a feat of Soviet patriotism, emphasized the experience of the Eastern Front rather than depicting the war as a global conflict. Victory in the Second World War signaled the success of Marxist-Leninist theory, in framing it as a viable competitor for world order. The “Great Patriotic War” was used by the state to create a narrative and testament to Soviet people’s national character, based on shared principles and a unified identity. 364

_Stalin’s Great Break: The Creation of a Soviet People_

Stalin’s desire to transform the Soviet Union into an industrialized, militarized state led to a period known as rapid development; his policies were called Five Years Plans. These plans were to industrialize the union through collectivization, dekulakization, and work plans. Stalin claimed that these plans would lead the Soviet out of its “traditional Russian backwardness” and evolve the state into “the country of the automobile, a country of the tractor.” 365 The first Five-Year Plan was introduced between 1928 to 1932, to transform the agricultural subsistence society into an industrial state-owned economy. Stalin’s ambitious programs, “intended to eliminate the gap between ‘the ideal’ and ‘the real’ in the Soviet Union and “speed up the road to

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364 This notion remains within the collective memory of post-Soviet states. For example, Victory Day, May 9, a holiday which commemorate the Soviet Union contributions to defeating Nazi Germany is still celebrated not only within the Russian Federation, but also in many surrounding post-Soviet states.

socialism.”366 In terms of industrialization, the plans were successful at increasing the production of oil, gas, and steel; yet the collectivization efforts were a failure.367

The economic, scientific rationale of collectivization was not accepted by the landless peasants who were forced to resettle and work in land allotments known as kolkhozes and sovkhozes.368 Peasants who resisted collectivization or failed to meet quotas were reported as “enemies of the people” by the agricultural commissars who managed the collectives. The characterization of non-compliance among nomadic peoples and the peasantry as a willful rebellion gave Stalin a scapegoat to explain the failures in the sociocultural sphere of his programs. The negative effects of the Five-Year Plans, such as famine, poverty, and the increase in state-sponsored violence were attributed to the non-Soviet nationals’ corrupt character rather than to the failure of “Socialism in One Country.”369

From 1933 to 1938, Soviet national policy entered another significant transition, known as the “Great Retreat.” National policy was no longer presented as inspiring international revolutions, but rather was focused on consolidating a stable state capable of defense.370 There was a relationship between the promotion of a Soviet people and the creation of a modern Soviet state. This period of Stalinist terror was upheld as a commitment of the state to Marxist-Leninist principles of development. The usage of violence to create a pure Soviet, indicates, “[the] regime wanted to prove that its vision of historical process was correct.”371

367 Kotkin, Stalin: Waiting for Hitler, 131.
368 Hirsch, Empire of Nations, 245.
369 Hirsch, Empire of Nations, 247.
371 Hirsch, Empire of Nations, 274.
In 1936, Stalin proclaimed that successful consolidation of Soviet nations had already occurred, however in the following years the height of Stalin’s terrorism occurred with the Great Purges (1937-1938). These Purges were given ideological justification of supporting the Soviet’s evolutionary project. Stalin’s purges were never presented as a persecution of peoples on the grounds of nationality; rather they were characterized as eliminating enemy elements that were deterring Soviet development. Stalin’s policies aimed at state development took on a nationalistic character; in the pursuit of modernity there was an increase in state-level terrorism, mass arrests, and deportations of supposedly dangerous non-Russian nationals.

**Operation Barbarossa**

Soviet historiography considers Operation Barbarossa, the German invasion of the Soviet Union, on June 22, 1941, as the starting point of the Second World War. The perception that Soviet victory over Nazism was an affirmation of ideology was not only a belief held by Stalin. As seen as early as the 1920s in Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*, but Nazis also believed that destruction of the Soviet apparatus would illustrate the inferiority of the Slavic race. Furthermore, Hitler, argued that in face of conflict, Nazism would expose the true character of Bolsheviks' internationalism as a Jewish conspiracy to “achieve world domination.” The General Secretary was unprepared for the invasion, even though Soviet intelligence from early 1941 shows documentation of Nazi signaling that invasion was imminent.

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Stalin did not take any increased measures to prevent the attack. He did not address the Soviet nation until eleven days after the invasion, nor did he give any military orders. Therefore, in the first days of invasion the Soviet military acted on their own accord, often without coordination, as there was no clear communication or strategic military orders coming from the central authorities. This chaos would surely serve to imply that the war on the Eastern Front would end quickly with a victorious Nazi Germany. However, that did not occur. Even in the face of discord and disorder, Stalin did not publicly express that Operation Barbarossa meant that the Soviet state was irrevocably lost.

**Battle of Stalingrad: Soviet Patriotism**

The war’s turning point was the Battle of Stalingrad, August 1942 – February 1943: “before Stalingrad, the Germans won one victory after another, with only a limited setback in the winter of 1941–42.” This achievement against Germany, a nation-state known for its professional military, solidified the conviction that the Soviet Union had transformed a formerly backwards space into a militarized, industrial global power. Therefore, the Second World War became a symbol of the Soviet people's strength and negated Nazi’s ideology of biological determinism. Stalingrad was significant for the Soviet state, not only due to its name (the city of Stalin) but also because it was an industrial center in the Soviet Union. Soviet victory at Stalingrad the early signs of weakness in the war were not indicative of the Soviet Union's lack of development nor did it demonstrate the Soviets’ incapability to conduct modern warfare. The Battle of Stalingrad,

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375 Ellis, *Reframing Hitler’s Invasion of Stalin’s Soviet Empire*, 438-443.
376 Ellis, *Reframing Hitler’s Invasion of Stalin’s Soviet Empire*, 78-80.
indirectly, exonerated Stalinism terror. As Stalin spearheaded the national policy prior to and throughout the Second World War, Soviets’ victory confirmed the narrative that state-sponsored terrorism was a necessity for the creation of a pure Soviet. The war also allowed Stalin to reinvent his image, as a man whose policies resulted in a unified Soviet people; a collective of nationalities who fought for their country, the Soviet Union, to ensure its continuity.\(^{379}\)

**Late Stalinism: Soviet Union as a Nation-State**

In the post-war period the national question receded as the outcomes of the Second World War supported the conception that Sovietization of the national republics had been completed.\(^{380}\) In the late period of Stalinism, the central focus was given to maintaining Soviet patriotism through the presentation of the Soviet Union as a pseudo nation-state. This was primarily done by showing the homogenous, peaceful relationship between Soviet nationalities as the success of Bolshevik internationalist theory.\(^{381}\) However, in practice late Stalinism (1948-1953) saw the transformation of the state from a union to a multinational homeland and reinforced the fear of disunity by presenting the narrative that rootless cosmopolitans wanted to invalidate Soviet patriotism and destroy the Soviet homeland.

The persecution of those Stalinist bureaucrats called rootless cosmopolitans, where those who did not accept the notion of a Soviet homeland or did not buy the believe that Soviet nationals were unified, was in reality a state sponsored anti-Semitic campaign. The underlying rhetoric of Stalin’s campaign against rootless cosmopolitanism indicates a turning point in Soviet national

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policy. Prior to this time, Stalin used ideologically rhetoric to justify the persecution of certain nationalities, as seen in the Great Purges; however, Stalin’s anti-cosmopolitan campaign directly affected the Soviet-Jewish population. The campaign also suggested that nationalities that did not have a national Soviet republic where they represented the majority were characterized as inherently non-Soviets. Therefore, the divisions between republic and union as separate but equal identities became necessary for the Soviet state's survival.

The Emergence of Patriotic Literature

The Second World War fundamentally changed Soviet literature through its persistent use by the state to solidify the concept of a Soviet people, thereby re-affirming “Socialism in One Country”’s focus on state-centric, internal realities, as opposed to using conflict as a means to agitate an international revolution, as justified. As we have seen, the usage of literature to confirm the existence of a Soviet people began in the interwar period to address worries about the state’s internal stability and external security. In the mid-to-late 1930s Soviet literature and criticism shifted along the lines of Stalin’s “Great Break.” The ideological goal of Soviet art had transformed; rather than the proletariat or peasant class being the hero of Soviet literature, the Party began to promote a literary culture that represented the Soviet people.382 In this period, Soviet people were depicted to give credence to the notion that “Socialism in One Country” was in agreement with orthodox Marxist-Leninist theories of development. Although it is contradictory to its real effects, the state-sponsored terrorism synonymous with Stalinism was used to create an image of Soviet solidarity. Socialist realism entered a reconstruction period, whereby revolutionary rhetoric had, “paradoxically [represented a] return to ‘normalcy’ in Russian history

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[the] return to messianic ideology and a powerful state headed by an almighty leader and reformer.” 383

The connection between Soviet literature and Soviet identity became more concrete, during the early period of the war, 1941-1943. Ideological assessments of literature diminished as the primary focus of the Party was the military conflict. The institutional forms of literary criticism had merged with the goals of wartime propaganda, but the desire to imagine a unified people was more important than theoretical concerns. The strict Party-line did reemerge after the victory at Stalingrad, and authors who had formerly been promoted for their patriotic narratives were now accused of losing sight of their responsibility to produce quality art. 384 This rapid change in attitude towards patriotic literature is illustrative of the Soviet bureaucracy’s inclination to adapt the Battle of Stalingrad to excuse the former transgressions and failures of the Party. Soviet writers were now pressured from the top-down to “rewrite the war” in a manner that aligned Soviet victory with Marxist-Leninist theories of historical materialism.385 As the ending of the war became imminent the Union of Soviet Writers in Leningrad began serious discussions about how to “truthfully” depict the war, meaning how to produce a work that was of the Party-line, did not romanticize the Soviet Union’s struggle, or magnify its weakness and disorder. This discourse culminated into a prototypical literary hero known as the “New Man.” The “New Man” in Soviet

literature represented an endurance and purity that was accredited to his Marxist-Leninist development.\textsuperscript{386}

This idea of the “New Man” that initiated the transformation of the core ideology of Bolshevik internationalism into a purely nationalist one.\textsuperscript{387} Within these works, there is an incongruity being that in equating Soviet patriotism with society’s transitions through historical materialism, one would presume that notions of distinguishing Soviet nationalities by their distinct culture, language, and borderlands, would be obsolete. However, the geography of the Soviet Union in its entirety functioned as a homeland, a nation-state of the Soviets. Consequently, representations of the national Soviet Socialist Republics as individual communities were deemed as an anti-Soviet desire to destabilize the homeland and sow discord among the people. Stalin believed that Party-line literature should emphasize the Soviet people, not internationalism, which was deemed to be rootless cosmopolitanism. “Cosmopolitan” literature was persecuted on the grounds that it was sympathizing with the Soviet enemy, the Western world order, or negating the existence of Soviet patriotism, and therefore not in support of Soviet state unity. The foremost victims of Stalin’s anti-cosmopolitan campaign were the Jewish-Soviet people, because Stalin considered Jewish-centric narratives to be diminishing the collective suffering of the Soviet people.\textsuperscript{388}

Soviet literature underwent a difficult period of transition after Stalin's death, in 1953. The Party needed to redefine the social realistic aesthetics to present the current stage of Soviet

development as more central than Marxist-Leninist ideology. This notion that development must proceed theory, was also magnified by the Cold War. As Stalinism had defined Soviet literary culture as being synonymous with Bolshevik ideology, and had subsequently displayed the Soviet victory in the Second World War as a proof to Bolsheviks’ theory of an international community, there emerged a pressure to maintain an image of the state as modern was magnified by the Cold War. This created a new issue; if Soviet patriotism was already indicative of Bolshevism success, then what role should literature have? After Stalin’s death, this question was the principal point of contention at the Second Congress of the Union of Soviet Writers. The Party needed to construct a new literary hero, because the pre-war one was no longer reflective of the current Soviet, but there remained ambiguity as to how to move forward without the centrality of Bolshevik ideology.389

*Post-Stalinism: A Crisis in Soviet Literary Culture*

A policy of recognizing Soviet identity as dual, both of the national republic, and as a part of the union began in the period of late Stalinism and transcended into Brezhnev’s tenure. In the post-Stalin period, there was a trend of double-nationality promotion, whereby the individual republic’s nationality was recognized in relation to their Soviet identity. Moscow’s central authority was maintained by promoting a bilingual culture. For example, the Soviet formal education, literature, and official institutions maintained their recognition of the republic’s national culture. However, Russian was solidified as the Soviet language in cross-republic communications. Ensuring that every student learned their national language and Russian was theorized to promote equal access to opportunities. Russian as a lingua franca was also the most

efficient means by which the official Party apparatus could communicate with its citizens. However, this was not a signal of regression into Imperial national policy; rather it became clearer that Soviet policy in terms of literary promotion was based not on recognition of national languages but on having a bilingual community.

Nikita Khrushchev’s Thaw

Nikita Khrushchev succeeded Stalin as General Secretary of the Soviet Union, in February of 1956, and put forth a shocking denunciation of Stalin at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party, entitled “On the Cult of Personality and Its Consequences.” The political reforms intended to de-Stalinize the Soviet Union, between 1956 to the mid-1960s reforms, are known as the Khrushchev Thaw. The possibilities of liberalization created a new hope among Soviet citizens that the Soviet experience was not equal to Stalinism, in addition to creating a possibility for peaceful coexistence with non-Soviet states. Khrushchev’s reforms did address the most brutal aspects of Stalinism, such as the release of political prisoners from Gulags, nevertheless they were only moderately successful at executing social reform. Khrushchev’s secret speech was critical of Stalinism's brutalities, but it did not negate homogenizing Soviet identity.

This point is highlighted in Khrushchev’s Thaw which maintained the notion of the Second World War as an expression of Soviet patriotism. The Great Patriotic War supported the ideological validity of the Soviet state in that it illustrated Soviet development. Furthermore, as Cold War tensions increased, so did the political necessity to characterize Soviet people as...

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391 Russian: О культе личности и его последствиях. Khrushchev's denunciation better known in English as “The Secret Speech”
392 Fink, Cold War, 98-100.
“others.” This was done by presenting the Soviet republics as a unified group in opposition to the West. Similar to his predecessors, Khrushchev inherited the challenge of maintaining internal stability of the state while simultaneously presenting the state as a viable competitor for global power.

Over time, Khrushchev’s de-Stalinization politics subsided; he was hesitant to implement grand-scale reform believing that such measures would destabilize the Soviet Union. As a result, Khrushchev reinstated the policing of everyday citizens, censorship, and enacted strong military control when states showed signs of dissent. Furthermore, the violent military suppression of Soviet satellites states that attempted to reform Eastern Europeans lead to conviction that the post-Second World War insular identity politics was motivated by a desire to maintain centralized political authority of Moscow. The Thaw's political negotiations, characterized by reform and repression, can be seen in the literature published during Khrushchev’s rule. Novels that challenged ideals of Soviet unity and, or developments were still rejected for publication, because they discredited the Soviet bureaucracy as the embodiment of the people, and the current iteration of the Soviet Union as an extension of Lenin’s promise. In some cases, these novels suggested that the Soviet Union’s inwardness was a product of fear culture, rather than a natural progression. Novels that limited their criticism to singular aspects of Soviet life were more likely to be published, than works that are critical of the Soviet Union as a whole.

The Thaw in Soviet Literature

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Nevertheless, literature produced during the Thaw such as Boris Pasternak’s *Dr. Zhivago* (1957) and Aleksander Solzhensityn’s *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* (1962) demonstrate that Soviet writers did not view the Soviet Union within the dichotomous context of the Cold War. Both *Dr. Zhivago* and the *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* are considered seminal texts in the period of de-Stalinization, though subsequently they were mistakenly considered rejections of Soviet ideology. Both novels were written with the intention of being published through the proper channels of the Soviet Union. The belief on the part of Pasternak and Solzhenitsyn that their dissident works would be approved for publication in the Soviet Union proper is exemplary of their faith in the Soviet Union’s ability to reform. Khrushchev’s approval of this particular work of Solzhenitsyn yet rejection of Pasternak’s work is representative of the fact that the General Secretary's reforms were created to maintain centralized political authority. Furthermore, it demonstrates how insular identity politics took precedence over theoretical conceptions of international unity after the Second World War. The emergence of Thaw literature and the rehabilitation of some writers into the Soviet canon, suggested both that the Soviet Union created a shared identity that was not solely constructed by fear and that intellectuals had an attachment to their Soviet homeland, and thus were willing to critique it.

**Leonid Brezhnev’s Era of Stagnation**

The Soviet Union entered the Era of Stagnation (1964-1982) under the leadership of Leonid Brezhnev. This period is characterized by a lack of liberalizing reforms which generated economic failure and halted developments associated with modernity. Brezhnev’s national policy

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was similar to the policies of *korenizatsiia*. Soviet literature was formative in the creation of a Soviet identity as it was used to represent the development of the collective. Soviet literature was also used as an internal stabilization mechanism by characterizing the Soviet Union as an ever-evolving unified state. The Era of Stagnation, unlike the Great Patriotic War it emerged from, presented the failure Marxist-Leninist theory of historical materialism.

*Samizdat: Denial of Soviet Development*

Consequently, the Era of Stagnation resulted in an increase of dissident literature in the form of samizdat. Samizdat literature was not intended for publication but exchanged discreetly and expressed a disillusionment with the Soviet ideal. The artistic works that created samizdat literary culture confronted Soviet socialist realism stylistically, yet still existed within the Soviet literary tradition. Dissident writers of the 1960s and 1970s viewed themselves with the greater situational context of the Soviet Union; they did not necessarily desire the collapse of the Soviet Union, but rather disagreed with the Soviet bureaucracy's presentation of Bolshevik ideology.\(^{397}\) The samizdat novel is exemplary of the “powerful belief in autonomy associated with Soviet dissident and nonconformist literature.”\(^{398}\)

The writers of the generation were predominantly born and raised after the Revolution; they have no recollection of life in the Russian Empire. Additionally, many dissident writers' work was informed by Soviet art that was rejected and or censored in the prior eras of the Soviet Union. Referencing artists that had been rejected on ideological grounds during Leninism and, or Stalinism allowed dissident Soviet writers to create a historical and theoretical tradition with the social consideration of the Soviets.\(^{399}\) *Samizdat* novels are a direct response to the inability of the


\(^{399}\)Morson and Komaromi, *Uncensored: Samizdat Novels*, 6-10.
Soviet Union to liberalize. Rather than placing this failure on grounds of Bolshevik ideology, they focus their critique on the Soviet bureaucracy and intelligentsia.\textsuperscript{400}

**Conclusion: Not a Return to Empire**

The institutionalization and standardization of the Russian language across the Soviet Union lead to the conjecture that Sovietization became Russification during Stalinism. However, this does not consider that Russification only enforced the usage of Russian in regions where “civilized” nationalities were in power. The Polish and German community had a literary tradition that was reflective of their own national culture by the mid to late nineteenth-century. Imperial perceptions of certain nationalities being civilized, and therefore being able to form a shared identity through a national language, was the primary motive when institutionalizing the Russian language. Russification was not concerned with eradicating mass illiteracy, because it posed no threat to the survival of the Russian Empire.

Nationalism emerged after the dissolution of the Russian Empire while many of the nations did not have a standard dialect language or written system. Sovietization helped increase literacy through two methods, though national language and the Russian language. The Soviets, unlike their Imperial predecessor, recognized non-Russian national languages, thereby supporting their standardization. The institutionalization of Russian followed *korenizatsiia* meaning the Party had already begun its work on reducing the perception that non-Russian national languages were indicative of being uncivilized or uneducated. This allowed the Party to create the impression that the prominence of Russian culture in Soviet culture was motivated by a desire to increase literacy and establish a lingua franca across the republics. Subsequently this presented the notion that total

\textsuperscript{400}Morson and Komaromi, *Uncensored: Samizdat Novels*, 153-162.
assimilation into Russian culture was an individual choice, rather than necessity to appear as a cultured, educated member of society.

The usage of Russian language as a defining element of Soviet identity was proposed as a method to form a communal culture across national republics rather than a means to suppress or isolate non-Russian nationals. Stalin did theorize that a common international language would emerge as other states went through the phases of Marxist historical development. However, he also believed that to provide Soviet nations with the tools to develop past the restraints imposed upon them by the Tsarist period it was imperative to promote literacy in non-Russian cultures. Stalin did not present the institutionalization of the Russian language throughout the Soviet Union as an admission of Russian superiority.

The alteration of Bolshevik theory to national realities supported Soviet officials' claim that unified language and literary school was representative of the collective as opposed to a monolithic, generalized view of a national group. Furthermore, Bolshevik theory and Stalinists argued that the Soviet nation-state was representative of the mass national culture as opposed to bourgeois national culture. Therefore, by the mid-twentieth century Russian identity was presumed to be proletariat in orientation because it emerged from a Soviet-nation state. The next two novels, *Life and Fate* by Vasily Grossman and *Generations of Winter* by Vassily Aksyonov, which have chosen to analyze the relation to a Soviet people, discuss this validity of the claim that Sovietization is an equal merging of Soviet nationalism or perhaps simply a new name for Russification.
Chapter Six: Vasily Grossman: A Cosmopolitan Writer

Introduction: Life and Fate: Friendship of the Soviet Peoples

Life and Fate is as important to literature as it is to history.\textsuperscript{401} Life and Fate is perhaps lesser known to Western readers when thinking of Soviet dissident literature, despite it being written in the same era as Pasternak’s Dr. Zhivago (1957) Solzhenitsyn’s One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich (1962). What is significant about all three of these texts, is the fact that they were written, and that the authors’ considered them publishable. The belief that these “dissident” works could be published in the proper form, through the state controlled literary institutions, is illustrative of the belief that the totality of Soviet citizens' experience was not characterized by Stalinism. The Soviet Union had created an identity based on the perception that it was capable of reform, and ever evolving, and Pasternak and Solzhenitsyn, in the 1950s, seems to have believed that to be true. \textsuperscript{402}

However, Vassily Grossman's depiction of the ordinary citizens, and the individual as the hero of the Great Patriotic War, was far too critical of the Soviet state to be considered for publication, even in the eras of de-Stalinization and stagnation. The cultural understanding of the Second World War being won on account of a unified Soviet patriotism was an important mechanism for the Soviet bureaucracy to maintain internal stability. Though other writers and their works denounced under Stalinism had been rehabilitated into the Soviet literary canon. Life and

\textsuperscript{402} I do not argue with the presumption that Grossman’s novel Life and Fate should be compared with Doctor Zhivago either; Pasternak uses Soviet identity to reaffirm his identity as a Russian, rather than acknowledge his Judaism. Dr. Zhivago contains long digressions, which allude to Jewish isolation from society as a choice. Also, Yuri Zhivago is individualistic, in a different form than Grossman individualistic characters, they extend humanity to the groups that one act can heal another, and that eventually human kindness will triumph. Whereas Yuri Zhivago individualism is more so representative of Pasternak feeling alienated in his own time.
Fate does not attribute victory in the Second World War to Soviet development or its ideological superiority over Nazism. The novel depicts acts of individual kindness and courage as opposed to official orders as symbols of human development. By focusing on platonic love, random acts of kindness, and true dedication to one's labor, Life and Fate, illustrates the ways Soviet people constructed and maintained community, while showing that the Soviet apparatus never fully promoted a connection of international peoples. The novel argues that the Soviet people fought for homeland and self-dignity, not for Stalinism. In addition, Grossman’s characters are cognizant of the distinction between the Soviet government and the Soviet people, which is seen through the identity struggles of Old Bolsheviks, the Soviet Man, and Russian Jews.

Life and Fate states that no ideology is better than another, because all belief systems can be corrupted in order to justify the persecution of people en masse. While Life and Fate does depict a resurgence of Russian chauvinism during the Second World War, Grossman does not argue that Stalinism was the sole corrupting force in Soviet national policy. Rather Grossman explains that the failure of the Soviet Union to execute Lenin’s ideals is due to the inability of human nature to be guided by strict parameters. Grossman maintains that people do have the capacity to form communities across international lines; however, it must truly originate from a person's individual desire to connect and cannot be imposed by ideologies. Soviet identity is presented in all characters in their own way; however, individual identity is tested and or fragmented - not in alignment with the surrounding.

Life and Fate: Historical Context

Grossman’s Life and Fate tells the story of the Shaposhnikov family and social circle, after the turning point of the war. The narrative primarily takes place between September 1942 to early 1943; however, it uses the Battle of Stalingrad to critique the notion of a Soviet people. Grossman
employs flashbacks and character reflections, to comment on life pre-Revolution the Great Purges (1937-1938), Operation Barbarossa, and the shortcomings of the Soviet Union in the early period of the war. The Shaposhnikovs are a Russian family that originates from Moscow; however, throughout the Second World War the family is dispersed in the vast geography of the Soviet Union. This allows Grossman to comment on the tensions and prejudices held between Soviet nationals, and the ways in which korensitsiza failed to generate equal development in the non-Russian eastern national republics.  

While Grossman uses a variety of techniques to critique Soviet national policies, he primarily uses his Jewish characters to indicate the faults in Soviet national policy. Life and Fate reproaches both “Socialism in One Country”, as it relates to the pre-war period, and Soviet patriotism and Stalin’s anti-cosmopolitan campaign, with reproach to the post-war period. Thus, in order to demonstrate the anti-Semitism present in the Soviet bureaucracy’s national policies, Grossman narrative is anachronistic.

Vasily Grossman: On the Continuity of the Jewish Question

The “Jewish Question” is often not elucidated in conversations about Soviet nationalism; however, the “Jewish Question” did pose an issue in the consolidation of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union’s presentation of Jewishness as a kind of statelessness is illustrative not only of a failure in Soviet national policy; this is also reminiscent of the Russian Imperial usage of

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404 Chandler, “Introduction,” xxviii; Martin, The Affirmative Action Empire, 344-393; Alice Stone Nakhimovsky, Russian-Jewish Literature and Identity: Jabotinsky, Babel, Grossman, Galich, Roziner, Markish (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 205-218. It is historically accurate that many Jewish professionals came to question their identity during the Second World War. Grossman’s inaccuracies mostly appear with relationship to his character Viktor Shturm and the discrimination he faces at work. These events are modeled from events such as the Doctor’s Plot which occurred in the post-war period during Stalin’s anti-cosmopolitan campaign.
Jewishness as the antithesis of Russian national identity. In the nineteenth-century the Tsarist regime restricted movement of Jewish people; therefore, most Russian Jews lived in close proximity to each other in a region known as the Pale of Settlement. This region extended along the western borders of the Russian empire known as the modern-day states - Belarus, Lithuania, Moldova, Ukraine, and east-central Poland. Russification policies in the mid-to-late nineteenth-century resulted in state-led pogroms against Jewish communities, as well as restrictive policies on Jewish life. These events were used by the Imperial government in an attempt to define Russianness through what it was not.

This sort of negative definition seen predominantly in the role of anti-Semitism in the nineteenth-century Russian works by writers who discussed the Russian nationality question. Literature written by the likes of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky presented type-casted Jewish characters to communicate the moral, spiritual superiority of the Russians, often informed by Russian cultural association with Orthodox Christianity. 405 In the nineteenth-century Jews were written as secondary characters in the works of Great Russian authors and were constructed from already existing stereotypes regarding Jewish national culture. For example, common illustrations of Jewish peoples included perpetual victimhood, learned helplessness, and martyrdom.406 Jewish characters were stereotyped as greedy, self-interested capitalists, using fatalistic religious beliefs to excuse sloth, hostile, deceitful, self-interested, or a comedic relief.407 Consequently, in the

405Steven Shankman, “Chapter 5: The Death of a Certain God Inhabiting the World behind the Scenes,” in Turned Inside Out: Reading the Russian Novel in Prison, 1 ed. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2017), 109-130. The reference to nineteenth-century Russian authors using Orthodox Christianity, to communicate what is fundamental Russian does not imply that they were practicing Christians; rather, the Orthodox Christianity was used to inform “Russian” sociocultural values.


development of Russian literary culture Jewish characters often served to reinforce negative perceptions about Jewish peoples.

The prevalence of disorder, social unrest, and political frustration in 1905 indicated the insufficiency of Tsarism reactionary, Russification policies, highlighting the discord between modernity and empire. The series of semi-liberal reforms under the October Manifesto did not extend civil rights to Jews. Instead in 1905 Jews in the Russian Empire experienced a resurgence of the state-led pogroms which had commenced after the assassination of Alexander II in 1881.\textsuperscript{408} The blatant anti-Semitism concurrent with the empire’s claim of liberalization supported the thought amongst the Jewish population that their conditions would not improve within the current state structure. As a result, there was an increase of Jewish emigration from the Empire, as well as an increase in Jewish intellectuals joining anti-Tsarism revolutionary parties.\textsuperscript{409}

\textit{The Role of Jewish Nationals in the Bolshevik Party}

In 1913, Lenin wrote, “the best Jews, those who are celebrated in world history, and have given the world foremost leaders of democracy and socialism, have never clamored against assimilation.”\textsuperscript{410} This idea emerged from Lenin’s readings of Marx and his desire to apply Marxist development to the contemporary conditions in the Russian Empire. In Karl Marx’s essay “On the Jewish Question” (1844) the author discusses the necessary transitions a state must go through in order for Jewish emancipation to come to pass. Marx argued that even in a secular state political, cultural identity were constructed on religious [Christian] values, and therefore stated that the

Jewish question was a “secular conflict…between the political state and its presuppositions.”

Marx stated that within the current conditions in developed nations like Germany and the United States, the secular Jewish community demands for emancipation, were limited to the individualistic desire to hold political power and privileged positions in the state, and to join the ranks of those who oppress the masses.

Lenin applied Marx's “On the Jewish Question” to lend credibility to the argument that Russian development could only occur through revolution. Jewish “statelessness” and propensity to assimilation, was seen by Lenin, as a model for the creation of an international community based on unified principles. For example, Lenin argued that the reason why Jewish peoples in Galicia and Russia remained in a “semi-barbarous caste” was not due to some inherent national characteristic but was rather due to the segregation policies imposed upon them by imperialism. Lenin supported his argument by comparing the development of Russian Jews to those in urban, industrial cities such as Paris and New York. He proclaimed when Jewish peoples were given political rights, they showed themselves to be major contributors to democratic, proletarian movements. And thereby Lenin presented Jewish culture as demonstrating the validity of an international culture. In fact several prominent Old Bolsheviks were of Jewish origins, such as Leon Trotsky, Grigori Zinoviev, Karl Radek, and Lev Kamenev. However, they were secular assimilated Jews, believing in the notion that their subscription to Bolshevik ideology, and its international rhetoric, would, “absolve them of the socially ascriptive Jewishness.”

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Lenin’s projection of Jewish people as the ideal of an internationalist community resulted in the suppression of Jewish nationality in the creation of a Soviet identity. The building of the Soviet state was constructed around the recognition of national republics as culturally autonomous units. Tsarist alienation restricted the movement of Jews within the Pale of Settlement, and this consequently meant that the Jewish diaspora became national minorities, in regions that the Soviet constituted as national republics. For example, there was a large Jewish population in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. Furthermore, since Jewish individuals were barred from certain educational opportunities and careers, this also meant that they were overly represented in commercial industries. As a result, Jewish people were particularly affected by economic policies which targeted capitalistic traders and merchants. Although Jewish intellectuals contributed largely to the Revolutionary movement, Jews were often first victims of the Soviet state building process.

This notion of persecution of Jews as a happenstance rather than an expression of anti-Semitism continued into Stalinism. However, the persecution of Jewish peoples was not presented in Stalinist historiography as a persecution of, “a national diaspora, since they lacked a homeland, but rather due to the notion that they were overrepresented in elite, prestigious positions in society,” and therein regarded as a danger to the stability of the Soviet Union. Stalin’s early writings do not give particular attention to the Jewish question, compared to the writings of Marx and Lenin. For example, in his essay on the “Foundations of Leninism” (1924) he states that the goal of the Soviet state was to liberate all oppressed peoples. In addition, in his critiques of his Old Bolshevik “adversaries” Stalin does not outright utilize anti-Semitic rhetoric.

Stalin presented his opposition to Trotsky, and his further persecution of Trotskyites, as an attack of ideology not nationality. Stalin argued that Trotskyism was opposed to Leninism. While this may lead to the conjecture that Soviet national policy was in opposition with Russian Imperial anti-Semitism, it showed itself in other ways. Under both the national policies, koresentsia and Russian homogenization, Jewish peoples suffered internal antagonism as a national minority in the republics in which they resided. In addition, Jewish peoples who assimilated into Soviet culture, or who had assimilated prior to the Revolution and occupied intellectual spaces, became a part of the Soviet intelligentsia strata. 417 During Stalin's cultural offensive, and purges, intellectuals were targeted as they were considered anti-Soviet. 418 These experiences of Jewish identity from the Russian Empire to the Soviet Union, were influential to Vasily Grossman’s identity formation.

**Vasily Grossman: Biography**

Vasily Grossman was born December 12, 1905, in Berdichev, Ukraine. The year of Grossman's birth is significant, in 1905 the Russian Empire was experiencing revolts, but, perhaps, more important to understanding Grossman is the place of his birth Berdichev. Berdichev, Ukraine, at the turn of the century had a majority Jewish population. 419 Despite being born in a “Jewish city” located in Ukraine Grossman did not identify either as Jewish nor as Ukrainian. Grossman's internal conflict with his Jewish-Russian identity did not begin until his adulthood, due to several factors, one being his family’s socioeconomic position, and another the fact that he was raised in the belief of Jewish emancipation through the Revolution.

Grossman’s parents were members of Berdichev’s Jewish intellectual middle class and had joined the revolutionary parties in response to the Jewish pogroms of 1905. Both Grossman’s father, Semyon Osipovich, and mother, Yekaterina Savelievna, were youths during the onset of the Great Reforms. Grossman’s parents aspired for life outside of the Pale of Settlement; they both assimilated into Russian culture at an early age. They took advantage of the small liberties granted to the Jewish population to receive a higher education as they work in commercial, financial careers to establish themselves.\textsuperscript{420} At the time Grossman was born his father was a university-educated chemist and his mother was a teacher of French at a secondary school.

Consequently, Grossman was raised in a self-proclaimed Russified family. His birth name, Iosif, was Russified Vasily. His identity was formulated by Russian culture. Grossman did not speak Ukrainian or Yiddish, as both of those languages were considered lower class; instead, he was educated in Russian and French. Nor was Grossman, as a child, aware of Jewish religious or cultural practices. Thus, Vasily Grossman was raised with the perception that he was a “non-shtetl Jew.”\textsuperscript{421} In his own words Grossman proclaimed, before the Second World War, he did not identify with, or experience the plight or persecution associated with Jewishness.

\textit{Revolution and Civil War}

Grossman's non-attitude towards his Jewish identity can also be explained by his coming of age; he was raised in the belief of Jewish emancipation through the Russian Revolution. Noting that anti-Semitism was still rampant after the 1905 reforms, Grossman’s parents became disenchanted by the notion that they could transcend stereotypes through Russian assimilation. As a result, they became politically active as members of the Mensheviks and the Jewish Bund.\textsuperscript{422}

\textsuperscript{420}Garrard, \textit{The Bones of Berdichev}, 32-37.
\textsuperscript{421}Garrard, \textit{The Bones of Berdichev}, 67.
Grossman was made aware of the political conversations regarding the international assimilation process whereby his Jewish origin would be obsolete at an early age.

Grossman attended secondary school from 1914 to 1919 in Kiev, Ukraine; afterwards, he matriculated into Moscow State University where he obtained a chemistry degree in 1929. Presumably his residence in both Kiev and Moscow during the Civil War would have exposed Grossman to early cases of anti-Semitic behavior. The Bolsheviks claimed that the increased anti-Semitism between 1919-1920 should be attributed to counterrevolutionary movements, such as the White Army, which attempted to mythologize Jews as tyrannical, in order to discredit Bolshevik ideology. Nevertheless, the Red Army did engage in the increased violence against Jews during this period. This was ideological justified by claiming to be keeping with the party-line by brutalizing commercial traders and capitalists, who just so happen to Jewish rather than persecuting Jewish population directly. Grossman believed the theory of international unity would come to pass in the transformation of the Russian Empire into the Soviet Union and did not believe that these early offenses against the Jewish population were reflective of how people viewed him as an individual. In this period, Grossman identified as a Soviet man, who assimilated into Russian culture, but nonetheless his Soviet identity took precedence.

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424 Garrard, *The Bones of Berdichev*, 62-63.; Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire*, 43-45. Jewish people predominantly represented in commercial and trading jobs due to discrimination under tsarism. As a result, the early Bolshevik economic policies disproportionately affected Jews. In addition, since the Soviet Union was divided into republics where they were consolidated by nationality and then led by local authorities in the early 1920s, this meant that the Jewish diaspora were sprawled across other national republics where they represented a minority. Through the process of *korenizatsiia* Jewish people were also reported for seditious behavior more frequently because of anti-Semitism.

Creating A Pure Soviet

After university Grossman moved to the Donbass where he worked as a safety inspector at a coal mine, and then as a chemistry teacher. He pivoted to writing after moving to Moscow in 1932. Grossman’s budding writing career began alongside the horrors of collectivization, famine, and the terrorism of Stalin’s “Great Break”. By all accounts it appears that Grossman did accept the validity of the rhetoric that terror was a needed to establish a pure Soviet community people, who would subsequently support the state-building project that would bring the region into modernity. This is seen in his early short stories, focused on members of the Soviet proletariat including workers in Berdichev, miners in the Donbass. One of his stories entitled *Stepan Kochugin* was nominated for a Stalin Prize. By 1937, during the onset of the Purges, Grossman was a well-respected, professional writer and a member of the Union of Soviet Writers. Subsequently, it would seem as if Grossman would emerge the poster child of success in the form of a true-Soviet Jew.

This all changed when Grossman became a wartime correspondent during the Second World War. It was then that he reached the conclusion that no matter the degree of assimilation, anti-Semitism and xenophobia were embedded in Soviet national policy. Grossman’s journalistic accounts of the Eastern Front give detailed observations of wartime experiences through the eyes of an ordinary person. He reported for the *Red Star* (Russian: Красная звезда), the official

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newspaper of the Soviet Ministry of Defense. Because the Red Star was a prominent military journal, his recordings of the civilian and ordinary rank-and-file soldier were viewed as subversive. He received criticism from the Party apparatus for giving credit to the individual, rather than illustrating the strength of the collective, as a result he was monitored by NKVD. Yet, Grossman remained intent on reporting on the war by giving voice to the Soviet people.\footnote{Garrard, Bones of Berdichev, 139-165.; Katerina Clark, “Ehrenburg and Grossman: Two Cosmopolitan Jewish Writers Reflect on Nazi Germany at War,” in Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History 10, no. 3 (2009): 614-615.}

As the war progressed, Grossman became more cognizant of his Jewish identity. His confrontation with his identity began as he wrote first-hand accounts of the Holocaust on the Eastern Front. However, his disillusionment with the notion of Soviet development was solidified when he learned that his mother was a victim at Berdichev.\footnote{Garrard, The Bones in Berdichev, 30.} In 1943 Grossman, along with Ilya Ehrenburg, joined the Jewish anti-fascist committee and began collecting data and eyewitness testimony of the Shoah on Soviet territory.\footnote{Clark, “Ehrenburg and Grossman,” 614-615.} Grossman and Ehrenberg’s collaborative efforts to not only document, but publish, Soviet complicity and contribution to anti-Semitism, was deemed contrary to the Party line. The official narrative reported by the Soviet Union was that “all nationalities had equally suffered under Hitler," therefore to emphasize the direct suffering of Jewish was seen as a division of the, a denial of Soviet unity.\footnote{Chandler, “Introduction,” in Life and Fate, xiii.} Yet, none of these factors deterred Grossman from presenting the strength of the individual in his post-war writings.

**Publication History of Life and Fate**

*Life and Fate* was written between 1951 and 1961. It is a sequel to a lesser-known novel entitled *Stalingrad*, written in 1951. *Stalingrad* was originally published under the title for *For A
*Just Case* in the Soviet Union in 1952, as a censored collection of short stories. There is a fifteen-year gap between the completion of *Stalingrad* and *Life and Fate*, and despite the emergence of uncensored versions of *Stalingrad*, there is no definitive text. Nevertheless, the continuity between the two stories is clear. At the time Grossman wrote and submitted *Stalingrad* for publication, he was practicing self-censorship, and he made his own revisions after receiving the critiques on his manuscripts. *Stalingrad* is less direct in its critique of the Soviet system. 433 It is possible to read *Life and Fate* as a self-contained novel; however, understanding the allusions to character arcs in Grossman’s campaign novel *Stalingrad* is helpful for deconstructing Grossman’s argument about Soviet identity and nationality; therefore, characterization in *Stalingrad* will be mentioned in places where it aids in the understanding of Soviet identity politics.

Grossman initially intended for *Life and Fate* to be published in the Soviet Union; he sent his manuscripts to a literary journal in October of 1960. Grossman hoped that his work would be published, banking on the semi-liberal reforms in Khrushchev's Thaw and his hope that the Soviet Union was capable of reform. In addition, his earnest intention to get it published via proper channels illustrates his belief in the individual’s responsibility to tell the truth, as seen in his letter to Khrushchev asking permission for his novel to be published. However, “the reason for the extreme caution shown by Grossman’s editors “[in reference to this book demonstrates] that the

Soviet victory at Stalingrad had acquired the status of a sacred myth.”⁴³⁴ *Life and Fate* delegitimized the idea that Soviet nationals had a unified identity, rooted in Soviet development; consequently the novel rejects the justification of any form of Red Terror in the state-building process.⁴³⁵

In 1980, *Life and Fate* was published abroad in Switzerland, and subsequently it was published in the Soviet Union in 1987. Public reaction to the novel was weak, both abroad and at home, to Grossman’s novel. At the time Stalinist-style socialist realism was viewed as outdated by Soviet readers, or simply as didactic Soviet prose by Western readers. In addition, warming Soviet-United States relations, especially under the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev, created a belief that perhaps the Soviet Union was capable of liberal reform, therefore making it irrelevant to touch on Stalinism.⁴³⁶ Furthermore, Grossman was not a part of the samizdat literary culture, which was popular in the late Soviet period. Another conjecture for the novel’s lack of popularity is that the Soviet Union was still unable to accept its role in the persecution of Jewish peoples during the Second World World.

**Life and Fate: Novel Analysis**

*The Shaposnikovs: An Ideal Soviet Family*

The Shaposnikovs, as Grossman presents them, are the essence of Soviet development; they are reflective of the contemporary Soviet intelligentsia class. The diversity of the Shaposnikov family and its relations allows Grossman to comment on the effects of Soviet national policy through generations, geography, and differing forms of individual identity within the USSR. Furthermore, this diverse cast allows Grossman to critique types of Soviet people

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without making broad generalizations. The multitude of characters interwoven into the plot of *Life and Fate* highlights that even in the face of failed Soviet institutions, the Russian people are not a corrupt and hopeless failure. There is strength in the Russian people that comes not from their ideology, but simply from their being. As we shall see, Grossman employs the vastness and natural expanse of Russia, from the ice to the steppes, to prominent rivers, like the Don and the Volga - to support his thesis that the notion of a Soviet people, or Soviet patriotism,  is rooted in the masses.  

Alexandra, the matriarch, is approaching her seventies at the onset of the war but is still working as a chemist who monitors factory conditions. Alexandra Shaposhnikova and her, now deceased husband, Nikolai, were members of the Bolshevik party before the Revolution. The married couple experienced the totality of revolutionary life under Tsarism - political imprisonment, exile in Siberia, and emigration. The Shaposhnikovs’ experiences of being affiliated with the Bolshevik party before the Revolution is shared with their long-time family friends: Sofya Levinton, Mikhail Mostovskoy, and Anna Shtrum.

*Old Bolsheviks: Internationalism in a German Concentration Camp*

*Life and Fate* opens in a German prisoner of war camp, where the reader is introduced to a diverse cast of characters, from a multitude of European nations, opposing political ideologies, and various confessional lines. The central Russian-Soviet character in the German camp is the Old Bolshevik Mikhail Mostovskoy. Mostovskoy is approximately in his sixties, he is old enough to recollect life in the Russian Empire and the transition to the Soviet Union and is therefore a

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438 In total there are four Shaposhnikov children; however, in the analysis of the novel I will only focus on the social circle of her daughters Lyudmila and Zhenya. The other two are Dmitiri, imprisoned during the purges, Maursya, who was killed by German bombers during evacuation from Stalingrad.
great character to illustrate the divisions between Bolshevik theory of internationalism and the current Soviet national policy. During Mostovskoy’s imprisonment he finds comfort in the international community forged in the German camp. He realizes that for the first time since 1917, the Second Comiterm, that he has been able to apply his knowledge of foreign languages. Mostovskoy becomes horrified that he finds the community formed in a Nazi prisoner of war camp to be hosptiable; the camp is described as having, “an excellent knowledge of the mind, language and soul of those deprived of freedom.” 439

The narrator illustrates how the prisoners communicate in “jumbled fragments of French, German, and Russian” and rely on other prisoners to translate more complex ideas.440 Subsequently, the prisoners form a community in which they respect each other's differences, yet they are still able to criticize each other in good faith. For example, Gardi, an Italian priest is revered for his wisdom and faith and still seen as comical elderly figure. The contradictory nature of finding an international community in a camp constructed to enforce Nazi racial ideology is employed to foreshadow Grossman’s argument that there does not exist a genuine international community in the Soviet Union. This introductory chapter in the German camp also sets up a debate, that is a recurring theme in the novel, amongst Russian-Soviet prisoners about the validity of Soviet patriotism.

In the German prison camp is also the first time since before the Revolution that Mostovskoy has interacted with Russians who do agree with him politically. Mostovskoy, initially, attempts to define himself as “other” from his fellow Russian prisoners. He does this by categorizing the Russian prisoners by their pre-Revolutionary political affiliation or current lack

of party consciousness. While Mostovskoy argues that Lenin’s ideals will succeed fascism, the other Russian prisoners are not in consensus. Some express a desire to join the Vlasov Army, others state the willful ignorance in believing that the current Soviet State is defending Lenin’s communist ideal. This is disheartening for Mostovskoy to hear. While he realizes that the Soviet state has not progressed as he presumed, he cannot bear the notion that all his pre-Revolutionary activity and loyalty to the Bolshevik party, in the consolidation of the Soviet Union, was in vain. Yershov, a Russian officer, explicitly states that the Russian prisoners should rejoice at the idea that they are in Fascist camp, stating that being imprisoned in a Russian camp would be very difficult. This sentiment remains true for Mostovskoy - his imprisonment in a non-Soviet space fortifies him with the psychological strength to differentiate Nazi national policy and Soviet national policy in their justification of cruelty in the name of a unified identity.

During an interrogation with an SS Officer, named Liss, Mostovskoy is confronted with the notion that the sole difference between Nazism and Stalinism is perception. In his line of questioning SS Officer Liss constantly interjects that Nazism and Stalinism possess more similarities than differences. Mostovskoy is resolved in his denial arguing that the two ideologies are diametrically opposed. Mostovskoy’s counterargument is that Nazism denies people humanity based on preconceived notions, such as Slavic inferiority, whereas since the creation of Soviet people is rooted not in a biological determinism, it promotes human development. As a rebuttal SS Officer Liss claims that when prisoner Mostovskoy look at each other they are looking to a mirror; Liss retorts, That’s the tragedy of age…I don’t know Russian, but I very much want you to understand me…You may think you hate us, but what you really hate is yourselves - yourselves is us.” ^441 The central argument presented by Mostovskoy is that people in the Soviet Union are

^441 Grossman, Life and Fate, 395.
judged and, or prosecuted due to an individual’s incorrect behavior, and not stereotypes about a group's inherent behavior. Liss reiterates that the only difference between the ideologies is one's point of view; he tells Mostovsky that his fear of facism is rooted in an internal insecurity regarding Bolshevik ideology.

Overtime, this belief in the differences between Nazism and Stalinism became difficult for Mostovskoy to maintain. First and foremost, he realizes that it isolates him from the other prisoners. But what bothers him the most is the feeling of alienation, and his realization that he is unable to take criticism from the Russian prisoners. It also makes him reflect on his personal role in the horrific development in the pursuit of “Socialism in One Country.” After Mostovskoy’s confrontation with SS Officer Liss he decides to collaborate with the other Russian prisoners to create a clandestine movement within the camp to incite rebellion. Thus, blinded by his internal struggle between ideologies Mostovskoy’s forms a community with the other Russian prisoners, based on a shared Soviet experience, but not rooted in theoretical ideology.

*German Occupation Revealing Soviet Antisemitism*

The discourse surrounding the similarities of Stalinism and Nazism that present themselves in Mostovskoy’s experience in a German prison are reinforced in the presentation of Sofya Levinton in a Jewish extermination camp. Sixty-year doctor Sofya Levinton, an army doctor and family friend of the Shasponikovs, is arrested with Mostovskoy. The two are separated from one another at Army Group headquarters, Grossman does not initial divulge the reason for the separation. Sofya Levinton was a Bolshevik before the October Revolution, she had lived in Europe as an exile, traveled through Central Asia, before returning to home in Stalingrad to settle down. Sofya is foremostly characterized by her contributions to the revolutionary movement, and not her Jewish heritage.
The only Jewish characteristic that Grossman gives to Sofya is her surname, that is until it is revealed that upon her separation from Mostovskoy she was transferred to a cattle car. This creates the framework that casts the development of anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union as insidious.\(^{442}\) Upon arrest Sofya is confronted with the fact that despite her education, her admiration of Germans romanticism, and her revolutionary credentials, she will always be perceived as *brider yidin* (a fellow Jew).\(^{443}\) Sofya’s journey to the concentration camp is the first instance, where not only the reader, but also Sofya herself must acknowledge her Jewish identity. Her imprisonment makes her question her “sense of individual identity,” and she soon forms a maternal bond with a small boy named David.

Grossman gives his fictional David his own birthday, December 12, the small boy is exemplary of the hypocrisy found in Soviet state development. David occupies the stereotypical role of martyrdom, and learned helpless; however, his youth reinforces that this is not a characteristic inherent to his Jewishness. David is raised Soviet, when his mother places him in care of his grandmother who lives in a Ukrainian village. He cannot recognize Yiddish words as he can Russian. David’s lack of fluency in Yiddish, is linked to a presentation of him as being without a tradition, heritage. For example, when his mother and grandmother are speaking Yiddish David is shocked, “never before had he heard his mother speak a language he couldn’t understand.”\(^{444}\) Grossman’s depiction of David's inability to communicate in Yiddish, is a commentary on Soviet-Jews having been cut off from their traditional cultural identity. Consequently, David has difficulty establishing his identity and is constantly afraid of the world.

\(^{442}\)In the revised edition of *Stalingrad*, Sofya herself acknowledges she is Jewish in an argument with the Shaposhnikov family claiming they are treating her as not having the same experience of war, because she was not a Russian.
\(^{443}\)Grossman, *Life and Fate*, 199. The Yiddish is the original text.
\(^{444}\)Grossman, *Life and Fate*, 208.
around him. David is hyper-aware of animals, but makes no seeming distinctions between the Jewish, Ukrainian, and Russian population in the village. In David’s mind Lenin is jumbled together with Tolstoy, as he observes the decor in his aunt's home. The repression of David’s distinctness of Jewish identity, to present as a pure Soviet, is exactly what informs his “rootlessness.”

In Grossman's depiction of Sofya and David’s death in the concentration camp, he does not employ the victimhood trope, but restores their humanity and dignity. He highlights Sofya's expression of individual and moral highness, in her refusal to admit she is a doctor and thus spare her life, and death, naked, and attempting to comfort David.445 David releases a butterfly from its chrysalis, signifying hope in life despite his innocent death. Sofya clings to David in the gas chamber like he is her own child. It is not only to comfort David, but also for herself. Sofya’s thoughts, “her eyes were no longer of use to her. If someone had blinded her, she would have felt no sense of loss.”446 Her eyes which read Homer, Huckleberry Finn, Izvestia, saw the Mona Lisa had conducted surgery -” she pressed David, now a doll, to herself; she became dead, a doll.”447

The Prisoner and The Physicist: Is There Such A Thing As the Russian Soul?

Lyudmila is Alexandra Shasponikov’s eldest daughter - during her time at university she married a strict Bolshevik named Abarchuck. The couple had a child named Toyla, who is currently a lieutenant in the Red Army; nevertheless, Abarchuck disowned Toyla due to Lyudmila’s bourgeois origins. After divorcing Abarchuck, Lyudmila begins dating Viktor Sthrum,

445Grossman, Life and Fate, 517.
446Grossman, Life and Fate, 553.
447Grossman, Life and Fate, 554.
her current husband. They have a daughter named Nadya. Grossman depicts the imprisonment of a perianal Bolshevik, Abarchuck, in a Gulag, to highlight the division of Stalinism in theory and in practice. Abarchuck is imprisoned in the Dalstroy sector of Gulag, far from civilization. The camp is dedicated to construction of a railway line of the shore to the Arctic Ocean to transport goods from Kolyma to the Urals. Abarchuck’s prison mates range from Civil War veterans to serial killers, highlighting institutional failure of Soviet purging. Even though Abarchuck is cut off from humanity, he is still concerned with the notion of Soviet development, necessitating violence. He endures his imprisonment, noting that he was a part of a tiny minority that had been wrongfully imprisoned. “Abrachuk’s faith was unshakable, his devotion to the Party infinite”; he reminisces on the service and cruelty he contributed to the eradication of White officers, kulaks, and bourgeois nationalists. 

Abrachuck is incapable of confronting systemic failure; he writes to Stalin to petition for his release. He also, in an episode of moral outrage, confronts his cellmate for stealing tools by exclaiming that they should feel shame for, “stealing scarce metal during the War of the Fatherland.” Abarchuck finds spiritual strength in reaffirming his party loyalty. In his periods of weakness, he reminisces on how he betrayed his family, denounced his friends, and always reported as oppositionist alien aliments - all in the name of the Soviet. Through Abarchuck, Grossman presents Party-line ideology as a version of religious fanaticism: he thus characterizes Bolshevism as spiritual conviction and not a rationale-based worldview.

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448 Toyla and Nadya are raised as siblings, both are aware they do not have the same father.
450 Grossman, Life and Fate, 179.
451 Grossman, Life and Fate, 176.
Abarchuk’s party fanaticism doesn’t serve him, however, even in seeking to fulfill the international promises of Leninism. He is a lonely, depressive character. Abarchuck is hypercritical of the individual’s shortcomings to carry out the plan of Soviet development properly but does not reflect on the ways in which he contributed to Soviet corruption. Seeing everything through the eyes of the collective he is unable to reflect upon his negative qualities; therefore, preventing him from having compassion or making connections through empathy. Abarchuck is characterized as a victim of the state; his strict, tyrannical need to enforce Bolshevik ideology becomes as were his moral obligation as a citizen.\textsuperscript{452} In some ways this illustrates that Abarchuck’s attitudes are regressive. His view of the average Soviet peasant or worker as being unable to recognize their role in the Soviet state does reflect a paternalistic-mysticism. As opposed to acknowledging that people are not limited by their “national character” Abarchuck imposes his own belief system on what is correct Soviet-national behavior. The regressive aspect of Abarchuck’s character is highlighted in his interaction with a fellow inanimate Abrasha Rubin, which also illustrates that Abarchuck Soviet morality is rooted in self-interest.

Abrasha Rubin is seemingly the only Jewish inmate in the camp; nevertheless, in the narration he is introduced as a medical orderly. The reader learns that Rubin is Jewish, through the other inmates’ microaggressions. Rubin is regarded as cowardly and seeking self-presentation. Even though Abarchuck regards himself as morally superior to the other prisoners he still engages the passive anti-Semitism leveled against Rubin. Abarchuck’s primary complaint about Rubin is his “instinct of self-preservation.” Abarchuck references Rubin, as a saboteur; even though Rubin

is an Old Bolshevik and was a Party member prior to his arrest. Abarchuck’s superiority complex, informed by his Soviet identity, makes him a hypocrite, though he claims to be striving for the ideal Soviet, Abarchuck still views Jewish people - Lenin’s example of internationalism - through nineteenth-century prejudices.

Abarchuck’s adherence to the notion of a Soviet national and a non-Soviet national dividing line instills him with xenophobia. The Soviet morality within Abarchuck is reflected in a belief in a Soviet nation-state and not an international community, thus highlighting the fundamental divergence of “Socialism in One Country” from Bolshevik theory. Blinded by his own perception of the Soviet people, he remains complacent when harm is being done to others. One night Rubin is murdered by the criminal convicted prisoners, while all the prisoners in the barracks are aware an unjust murder is taking place no one intervenes. When Abarchuck decides to report Rubin’s murder to a camp official, Abarchuck does so without acknowledging the prejudices Rubin endured. Abarchuck uses Rubin’s death to bolster himself, but this is in line with his identity to denounce, and this gives him “victory of himself” after this momentary conciliation, even though the camp official taking his report only views him as a prisoner and not as a Party man.

Grossman remains sympathetic to Abarchuck; he does not use the character's faults to demonize him, but rather to illustrate the perpetual cycle of violence present in Soviet national policy. The idea of national consolidation, between Soviet republics, does leave Abarchuck with

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453 Being admitted into Communist party is a privilege not all Soviet citizens are members of the Party. 
the impression that there is a Soviet homeland.\textsuperscript{455} Therefore, making his isolation and sacrifice even more justified. This thought is illustrated primarily through Abarchuck reflecting on his son Toyla, who he abandoned. Abarchuck outwardly acknowledges his rejection of his son; he relates to an acquaintance that it would prove difficult to find Tolya, because they do not have the same surname. Abarchuck feared that Toyla would become a bourgeois-national, due to his mother’s affection. Any guilt that Abarchuck feels regarding his son is suppressed. The reader is aware that Abarchuck often imagines Toyla as a good Communist serving on the frontlines in the defense of the fatherland. These paternal longings are never verbalized, creating the presumption that if Abarchuck admitted his failure as a father, he would consequently have to admit the failure of the Soviet. Therefore, it emerges that Abarchuck’s external presentation of a Party-spirit is not always reflective of his individual attitudes.

In his inability to reconcile the two he keeps his non-Soviet thoughts to himself further preventing him from forming deep, meaningful relationships.\textsuperscript{456} His isolation is most clearly seen in his confrontation with his dying Marxist mentor, Magar. When Abarchuck visits the camp hospital, Magar on his deathbed denounces not only Soviet ideology, but also Marxist theory overall. Magar tries to communicate his enlightenment to Abarchuck by stating that their mutual faith in the proletarian revolution, “is a weakness- a means for self-preservation and denial of freedom.”\textsuperscript{457} Magar likens Stalinist Sovietization as a resurgence of chauvinistic nationalism and religious idolatry. He compares the contemporary state of the Communist party to the Black


\textsuperscript{457} Grossman, Life and Fate, 193.
Hundreds. Abarchuk is horrified by what he can only conclude is mental exhaustion, originating from terminal illness; and once again turns his thoughts to Toyla. Therein solidified Grossman’s depiction of Abarchuck’s inability to be vulnerable as stemming directly from his adherence to the Party-line.

_Viktor Shturm: Arrested Development_

Viktor Shturm is introduced to _Life and Fate_, as a character of secondary importance, simply as Lyudmila’s husband; however, as the novel progresses it is clear that Viktor is central to Grossman's argument that the Soviet Union is not representative of its international promise. Viktor’s character flaws are also a way to illustrate his individualism, which is where for Grossman society strength lies, in the individual not the state apparatus. Viktor’s less than ideal character is not employed by Grossman to make him out to be a bad Jew, or a non-Soviet national. Rather it is used to characterize the burden of being a model minority.

Initially, Viktor identifies as a Soviet man, whose assimilation into Russian culture is inconsequential. He defines himself by his work and wants to contribute findings to the field of nuclear physics for the betterment of humanity. Viktor’s confrontation with his Jewish identity begins when he receives a letter from his mother, his last will and testament before being executed in German occupied Ukraine. From this point onwards, Viktor begins to recognize the casual anti-Semitism he experiences, but first attempts to deny that it is occurring; instead he internalizes these anti-Semitic remarks by attributing it to his “Jewish cowardice. “As the plot progresses Viktor’s social isolation increases, he feels alienated everywhere once stating, “I'm alone at home and alone with my friend.”^458 Then Viktor begins to realize that the alienation he is feeling is directly

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^458 Grossman, _Life and Fate_, 470.
attributed to national division; he is externally labeled as Jewish and will be judged as such no matter his self-identification or his contributions to Soviet development.

As he begins, reflecting on 1937, he gives particular emphasis to the denouncing, arrest, and resignation of Jewish individuals. The Jewish Purge victims that Viktor reflects on include both historical figures and fictional characters, Vavilov, Vize, Mandelstam, Babel, Pilnyak, Meyerhold, Korshunov, Zlatogorov, Doctor [Sofya] Levinton.\textsuperscript{459} He reflects on Stalin’s control of the development of Russian science, which is at odds with Viktor’s conception of science as a pursuit of human advancement, that is apolitical. For example, Viktor becomes highly upset when a coworker, Shishakov, disregards Einstein’s contributions to contemporary physics. Shishakov purports that Einstein’s “so-called theory of relativity” was irrelevant to the Russian Volga. Though Viktor cannot articulate exactly how this comment is anti-Semitic, he does understand that Shishakov is delegitimizing Einstein’s contributions in manner that characterizes Jewishness is incompatible with Russianness.

This theme of the incompatibility of being Russian and being Jewish becomes more crucial to Viktor as he tries to navigate his own role in the Soviet Union, while coping with his mother’s death in silence. Viktor's contributions to theoretical physics makes somewhat of a celebrity; his work is nominated for a Stalin Prize. After this consideration Viktor’s colleagues begin to critique the fundamental framework of his work to be non-Soviet orientation. For example, a fellow academic named Gavronov is opposed to Viktor’s nomination for the Stalin Prize. Gavronov justification is not rooted in a critical analysis of Viktor’s work, but rather because he regards Viktor as having, “lacked true scientific foundation, and influenced by the idealist views of

\textsuperscript{459} Grossman, \textit{Life and Fate}, 457.
Western physicists.\textsuperscript{460} Viktor claims that Russian contributions to science should not be overstated over other nationalities, simply because it is Russian Viktor’s emotions overcome his will to maintain his professionalism, and he refutes Gavranov’s criticism by characterizing him as a national type, of a self-important Slavophile.

In order for Viktor’s work to be taken into further consideration for the Stalin Prize he must fill out a questionnaire, which leaves him with a great anxiety regarding his national identity. The nationality question is the source of Viktor’s worry, before the war he did not consider his national identity as containing any significance, but now “it was acquiring a particular resonance.”\textsuperscript{461} He is worried about reporting his patronymic Russified name Pavel rather than the “Jewish” name Pinkhus. He also worried about reporting his place of birth, because his birth certificate says Kharkiv, a city with a significant Russian population; but he recollects that his mother told him he was born in Bakhmut, a city with a Jewish majority. Furthermore, he is afraid to answer questions regarding his family's pre-revolutionary position. These questions illuminate his privileged family’s social position, as petty-bourgeois, white collar workers, and emigrants, all of which can be used to characterize Viktor as a non-Soviet.

In an attempt to claim himself Viktor restates that “the son is not responsible for the father.” This religious phraseology is attributed to Stalin, and therefore illustrates that the Soviet system is one of belief and not of rational. But Viktor’s depression only increases as he realizes the restraints put on Jews during the Imperial era, despite his Soviet assimilation, are still placing limitations on him. This is exemplified in Viktor’s spiritual pleading while completing the questionnaire, “Comrades, surely you understand that emigration was the only possible choice in the tsarist

\textsuperscript{460} Grossman, \textit{Life and Fate}, 467.  
\textsuperscript{461} Grossman, \textit{Life and Fate}, 577.
This point illustrates that the Revolution is a continuation of pre-revolutionary prejudices, remaining because the State fails to acknowledge the individual effects of tsarist oppression and its reflection of the current state of nationals.

Viktor’s work as a physicist is deeply important to him. He attributes his research in nuclear physics to contributing to the future of humanity. This presents a tragic irony for the reader, as it is Viktor’s theoretical framework that will allow the Soviet Union to create a nuclear weapon. Viktor initially believes his access to opportunities is due to the progressive nature of the Soviet state. What is more interesting is that Grossman uses Viktor’s scientific discovery to critique Soviet ideology. Viktor’s theory “had arisen in absolute freedom; it had sprung from his own head,” and only through accepting contradictions, failure, and collaborating with other theorists can Viktor come to his extraordinary conclusions:

To a theoretical physicist the process of the real world was only a reflection of laws that had been born in the desert of mathematics. It was not mathematics that reflected the real world; the world itself was a projection of differential equations, a reflection of mathematics.\(^{463}\)

Viktor’s innovation cannot be explained through the rationale that his work is metaphysical. The Shoah is an indication of the Soviet Union’s experimental failure, Viktor realizes that if ideology takes precedence over one's internal morality, the Soviet state and its theoretical puritanism will not be able to bring about human development.\(^{464}\) Subsequently, Viktor is left with the memory of his mother, Anna Shturm. It is only by her death that Viktor can appreciate the totality of her love for him, and in doing so he comes to the realization that because

\(^{463}\) Grossman, *Life and Fate*, 348.
\(^{464}\) Shankman, “The Death of a Certain God Inhabiting the World behind the Scenes,” 119-121.
of her sacrifices that he was able to transcend obstacles. It is this reflection that allows Viktor to assert his individuality, and no longer internalize the anti-Semitic comments made at work.

When Viktor confronts his superior at work, Kovchenko, who is Ukrainian, about the dismissal of his Jewish coworkers. Kovchenko's response is that of the Party-line, he claims that Viktor's complaints regarding workplace discrimination are unfounded, it is simply Vikto putting his individual needs above the collective. In response, to Viktor’s assertion that the company policy is anti-Semitic, Kovchenko questions if “the Soviet State should be governed by one set of laws and Shturm’s laboratory another?” In another instance Viktor confronts his superior Shishakov about the injustices regarding his Jewish coworkers, Shishkov maintains that the reprimand of Jewish individuals is coincidentally, not intentional. By this point Viktor is at his breaking point and proceeds to have a public meltdown, which leads to his resignation.

Before walking out, Viktor asserts that Soviet perception of scientific progress is flawed because, “the logic of mathematical proof was more powerful than that of Engels or Lenin, [and] the Scientific Section of the Central committee should accommodate Lenin’s views to mathematics and physics, not mathematics and physics accommodate their views to Lenin’s.” It is as if he has come to terms with the notion that external labels will always be used against him; however, he lacks resolve when confronted by his wife and daughter. Both who seem to remain willfully ignorant to the anti-Semitism he is confronted with, and Viktor even accuses his daughter, Nadya, of looking at him as if she is a member of a higher race and he an amoeba.

A few weeks after Viktor’s resignation from work, he receives a personal telephone call from Stalin. During the phone call Stalin congratulates him on his scientific findings. Because

465 Grossman, Life and Fate, 576.
466 Grossman, Life and Fate, 583.
467 Grossman, Life and Fate, 588.
Viktor realizes he is only being granted the privilege to reintegrate into society because of his he is now useful to Soviet science, he genuinely desires community and believes in the emergence of nuclear physicists as representative of a developing, progressive humanity. Viktor’s sense of purpose he reaffirmed here, yet also he is aware that he is contributing to an oppressive being. Furthermore, his submission to Stalinism for survival supports Grossman’s philosophical digressions, about discriminatory behavior not needing to be outright violent to be harmful.

_Novikov and Krymov: A Dual Russia._

Zhenya is Alexandra Shaposhnikova’s youngest daughter and is characterized as beautiful and artistic. Zhenya is very lonely - but not very politically active, it does still seem though that Soviet policy offers her freedom to live as an independent woman so there is that. At the opening of the novel, she is seeking residency in Kuibyshev and employment as a propaganda artist.\(^{468}\) Zhenya has recently separated from her husband Nikolai Krymov, a political commissar, who is thirteen years her senior. Zhenya enters a new romantic relationship with Colonel Pytor Novikov, a man recently promoted to commander of a tank corps. Throughout the novel Zhenya remains torn between the two men, she still has feelings for Krymov and is afraid that Novikov interest in her is inauthentic.

Krymov, a political commissar in the Red Army, is the most cognizant of a dual Russia that is present in the Soviet state. Krymov equates Soviet identity with internationalism, and therefore when Russian patriotism begins to emerge as the symbol of Soviet unity he begins to see himself as a “stepson of time.” Throughout his character development the reader is informed about the struggle to maintain and express one's individuality within the constraint of systematic

\(^{468}\) The pursuit of this career is in honor of her deceased sister Maursya, who reprimanded Zhenya for not making art of the party line before her death.
obstacles.\textsuperscript{469} While Krymov does believe in the validity of Soviet patriotism; he questions how it emerged. Krymov, despite being Russian, does not like when Soviet strength is attributed, or reduced to actions of Russian patriotism.

He does not understand the reverence being given to pre-revolutionary Russian military figures like, Suvorov, Kutuzov and Khmelnitsky, because they are figures incompatible with Lenin’s Revolution. During Krymov’s late teens he fought in the Civil War; therefore, these figures of Russian nationalism were always presented to Krymov as oppressive to the masses, rather than those who fought in the motive of human emancipation. Krymov's line of thought denotes the reverence given to Russian figures as a sign of regression. He feels uncomfortable, “when political instructors praised Russian generals of past centuries. The way these generals were constantly mentioned in \textit{Red Star} grated on his revolutionary spirit.”\textsuperscript{470}

The usage of Russian figures to characterize Soviet strength illustrates a conflict in Marxist theory, and Stalin's statement that the Soviet nation is different from its Imperial predecessor. Krymov’s notion of Soviet identity is constructed around class unity and not allegiance to a homeland. For example, Krymov is confused when he attends a rally at the Stalingrad political administrative section in honor of the 25th anniversary of the October Revolution. During the speeches Krymov was perplexed. Rather than giving reverence to the endurance of ordinary soldiers and workers, the speakers attribute the state’s military and industrial development to Stalin, and therefore the states, than giving.\textsuperscript{471} Krymov maintains that there is a difference between a Soviet individual and a non-Soviet; however, he is put off by the notion that Stalinism, or rather top-down implementation of policy, is representative of the people.

\textsuperscript{470}Grossman, \textit{Life and Fate}, 426, 436.
\textsuperscript{471}Grossman, \textit{Life and Fate}, 519.
Krymov still maintains his belief in a Soviet identity. Through Krymov Grossman illustrates the small ways in which people attempt to assert their autonomy over themselves regardless of the State’s condemnation of individualism.\footnote{Bonola, “Ideological Word and Words,” 55.} Krymov is described as a man stuck in ways and unable to change, in both his internal perception and people’s external judgments. Krymov, similar to Abarchuck, is without community; however, Krymov’s lack of communication skills is illustrated as a part of his personality. Krymov’s internal beliefs regarding Bolshevik ideology and the incapability of Stalinist narratives is not the cause of his isolation. He seems to struggle with intimacy in general. When seeking community Krymov looks for the familiar - people who already know his personality, thus preventing the need for him to communicate verbally.

For example, despite his estrangement from his wife, Zhenya, Krymov seeks out his [former] brother-in-law Spiridonov, while stationed in Stalingrad. Spiridonov and Krymov allude to Zhenya; yet no emotions are stated outright. This omission does not prevent the men from enjoying each other's company. At the Stalingrad Power Station, where Spiridonov is the director, Krymov admires the camaraderie between multigenerational, multinational workers. These interactions are used to confirm Krymov’s faith in the Soviet ideal which are juxtaposed with his at night torments that “magic of the Revolution had joined with people's fear of death.”\footnote{Grossman, Life and Fate, 528.} While he does not reject Leninism, Krymov does grapple with the thought that perhaps Lenin’s successor was irrelevant in seeking to explain the division of Soviet national policy in theory and in practice. He ruminates that even if Bukharin, Rykov, or Zinoviev or Trotsky had come into power, instead of Stalin, none could have put into action the promised, idealized international union. Krymov’s
night time thoughts reflect some unconscious understanding that perhaps it is Bolshevik theory in and of itself that is faulty, it cannot be taken into practice.

It is Krymov’s interactions with people unfamiliar with his personality that illustrate, in his blind subscription to Leninist-Marxist theory, he has prevented himself from experiencing the fullness of life. His fellow Party members, particularly the younger generation, do not revere Lenin’s ideal Bolshevik - all they know is Stalinism. Krymov is removed from his post as Commissar and taken to the Lyubanka, for reasons unbeknownst to him. Krymov recognizes that upon his entrance to the prison cell that “his freedom and dignity has disappeared.” At this key moment of revelation, Krymov is incapable of reflecting on his role in Purges - the denouncing, the reporting, the monitoring of political behaviors, is all attributed to Stalin. When being escorted to the interrogation room at Lubyanka, Krymov recollects the variety of counter-revolutionaries who had been imprisoned here: the kulaks, White Officers, Mensheviks, and priests. These thoughts bring Krymov to conclusion that the Purges, where indiscriminate, in that they persecuted, “true Soviet citizens and members of Party-had been arrested.”

This realization only strengthens Krymov's resolve that he was born in the generation of true Leninists, and the injustice of his arrest is blamed on Stalinism - not on Bolshevik theory in general. Krymov seems unable to reconcile with his personal contributions the corruption of Bolshevik ideology, he does not ask himself how Lenin's dream became Stalin’s nightmare, nor does he critically analyze his contributions to the Purges 1937 as aiding in the corruption of the ideal. Yet, he does not deny the fact that his cellmates are human; whether they are indifferent, hostile, or kind to him is irrelevant - being surrounded by humans in the cell is his initial comfort.

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474 The reader is aware that Krymov has been denounced by Novikov.
While acknowledging his cellmates’ humanity Krymov still regards himself as “other”. His cellmates included a Party member, an art historian, a Social Revolutionary, a Social Democrat, and a Menshevik. Rather than identifying himself as a victim of the State, he regards the other prisoners as ideologically unsound because of their pre-Revolutionary, non-Bolshevik attitudes. It is in this Lubyanka cell that it becomes clear Krymov's belief in the Party of Lenin is preventing him from having the community he so desires.

For example, Krymov cannot follow the discussion among his cellmates in regard to non-Soviet writers like Blok and Mandelstam; he is only familiar with works in the official Soviet canon, such as those by Gorky and Plekhanov. When Dreling, whom Krymov identifies as a Menshevik, states that socialist realism was the enslavement of the working class, rather that its representative Krymov is astounded. Dreling claims that “the image of mother created by Gorky [was] an ikon” which the working class were not in need of, Krymov responds “what’s all this about ikons? Generation and generation reads *Mother* [by Gorky].” Krymov is not cruel, he does wish for his own humanity to be recognized, when thinking of his sentencing he wonders if they take into consideration “that his mother had called him Nikolenka?” By his own analysis Krymov indirectly characterizes the Party as cloaked in a mysticism - it is a faith-based system not a rational school of thought. Paradoxically, Krymov cannot admit that his Party loyalty, and commitment to international unity, has actually limited his world view and ability to form human connections.

*New Men: The Soviet Generation*

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476 Note the Jewish Russian divide in the characterization of Soviet and non-Soviet writers.
Colonel Pytor Novikov, the New Soviet man, is still alienated from his community, and unable to form meaningful connections. His military genius is attributed to his individual character and his love for Russia, not the Soviet. Novikov is not a member of the Party, but Grossman uses him to show how Russian-Soviet nationalism, masquerading as a homogenizing force, is simply a resurgence of Russian belief in their inherent superiority. Novikov takes his commanding role as tank corps very seriously. Despite Novikov self-identifying as Russian, his backstory reveals that he was born and raised in a mining community located in the Donbass region of Ukraine. Operation Barbarossa is significant for Novikov. Too young to recall pre-Soviet identities, Novikov gives particular attention to the night of the invasion; when, as he is running to the fighter squadron located near Brest, a Polish child refers to him in passing as a Russian soldier. He confides to Zhenya that at this moment he was made acutely aware that he was Russian, “of course I’ve always known that I’m not a Turk, bit at that moment my whole sole was singing ‘I’m Russian’”.

Rather than sparking a feeling of similar patriotism Zhenya tells Novikov about her German neighbor's deportation. Zhenya likes intellectual conversations about Rublev, Picasso, Akhmatova, Pasternak and Bulgakov, but finds it devoid of meaning and not fulfilling her desire for human connection. Zhenya is particularly upset at the time of her neighbor Jenny’s disappearance, and despite living in a communal apartment “knows” where Jenny has gone.

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479 This is significant as in my earlier discussion on Bulgakov’s *White Guard*, I noted that most Bolshevik sympathizers in Ukraine lived in these eastern industrial centers, where a proletariat had already formed.
480 Grossman, *Life and Fate*, 330. This scene of Novikov reaction to Operation Barbarossa immediately leading to the introspection that he is Russian takes place in *Stalingrad*. It is significant to Novikov’s characterization, as it is his introduction.
Grossman depicts the disappearance (arrest) of a harmless elderly German woman named Jenny Genrikhovna who has since been assimilated into Russian culture.

Jenny's presentation is largely apolitical, despite two references to her pre-Revolutionary life, one that she had been aboard to major European cities and secondly that many of the children she nannied fought alongside Denikin and Wrangel during the Civil War, and now are dead. Jenny also pays a compliment to the Shaposhnikov matriarch by stating that “was the image of the courageous soul” found in Russian womanhood. Zhenya pushes the issue no further when accused of being a German sympathizer. In her lover Novikov, Zhenya finds the same apathy. Novikov displays no sympathy for Jenny's deportation on the grounds of her national identity.

Novikov's motivation to fight the war is on the grounds of his Russianness, and his generalization of Germans as an enemy force. His intentions are honest, Novikov himself is not a careerist or a fanatical Party ideologue; nevertheless, his characterization is symbolic of Russian passivity in Soviet discrimination based on nationality. In his passivity he aids in what the narrator refers to as, “the trumpet of Russian national sovereignty and the affirmation of what is truly Russian, truly Soviet.” This is exemplified when he recounts a piece of information that Zhenya told him in confidence to “the Party.” Zhenya reveals that Trotsky complimented in one of Krymov’s articles. This was not told to Novikov in order to denounce her estranged husband, but rather in frustration she wants to express her emotional attachment to Krymov. Novikov goes on to relay this information to Getmanov, the tank commissar of Novikov’s corps, and Nyeubeudonov, Novikov’s chief of staff. According to Novikov, his denunciation of Krymov is not on political grounds. He introspectively reflects that “indifferent towards the kulaks and

\[^{481}\text{Grossman, Life and Fate, 125.}\]
\[^{482}\text{Grossman, Life and Fate, 644-665.}\]
saboteurs” but he doesn't attribute this to his cruelty either. Instead, he attributes it to a “good-humored indifference to a lack of political consciousness,” when he denounces Krymov, by revealing that Trotsky once paid a compliment to him. Getmanov then grants Novikov with the social approval which he has been denied for so long, and suddenly Novikov is ashamed of his admission into the nomenklatura group.

Novikov’s patriotism has nothing to do with his political leanings; by contrast Getmanov’s and Nyeubeudonov’s Party loyalty is directly informed by their Russian patriotism. For example, when Novikov’s attempts to promote non-Russian peoples in his tank corps, Getmanov and Nyeubeudonov constantly put forth the notion that non-Russian Soviet soldiers are of dubious political reliability. Novikov attempts to argue that nationality has no role in political reliability. Constantly, Getmanov and Nyeubeudonov, refute this as altering conceptions of homeland and the friendship of nationalities, in conformation with the Party line. For example, Nyeubeudonov claims that collaboration with Germans during the Brest-Litovsk Treaty and annihilation of Germans in the Second World War are all in line with protecting the Soviet homeland, Bolshevism. In his elucidation to Novikov, Nyeubeudonov states that he is “a Bolshevik first and foremost a Russian patriot.” However, Nyeubeudonov is described as having childlike paranoia, without a ground sense of self, it is stated that if Germans take over, he would no longer be protected by the “great, terrible, and beloved State.” This conception of Russian patriotism being in ideological alignment Bolshevism, or the Stalinist Soviet, bothers Novikov, as his patriotism originates from his love of his homeland and his willingness to defend it.

Getmanov’s strict Party line thinking is characterized by lacking a sense of self, nor does his own moral compass guide his sense of justice. It is exactly these characteristics that culminate

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into him having no identity outside of the Patry. Getmanov is illustrated as always “considered a man of the mass, a born leader…. his sole concern being his responsibility to state [and] preoccupations of Moscow.”

Novikov's motivation to fight and take on the burdensome role of Tank Corps has nothing to do with the central Party apparatus in Moscow. Novikov’s conception of the Russian motherland is not a love for Soviet-Russia, but simple attachment and appreciation for the place he was born. Novikov, however, is not, in one section he dismisses high command military planning, in favor of his own, although this particular action was successful Getmanov states he’ll “never forget…you made Stalin wait.”

Thus, further characterizing that Party-line notions of Soviet patriotism is incongruent with the promotion of nations but is imposed upon the people in order to further control them.

Novikov, also comes to the realization internally, that the war will construct beliefs about Russian character overall, he thinks that the “the war would show who Russia truly had cause to be grateful to - people like Getmanov or people like himself.”

Novikov is disgusted by Getmanov’s fakeness, lack of military understanding, claims that he speaks and writes improper Russian, while by contrast Novikov prides his command of Russian language despite coming from an illiterate working-class community. Realizes soviet social mobility which had provided him with his “greatest strengths” correct speech and love for books “was a weakness.” Getmanov and Nyeubeudonov, both of whom are the embodiment of ideological purity in their understanding of Stalinism, represent the claim that the Soviet people had its highest expression in comrade Stalin.

Conclusion: A Soviet People of the People

Though Grossman presents the particular suffering of Soviet Jews brought about by German occupation, his primary focus is using this suffering to highlight the distinctions between Bolshevik international theory and the Soviet Union under Stalinism.487 Grossman interweaves narratives of his Russian and Jewish character to magnify the institutional failures of the Soviet Union. Furthermore, Grossman presents the suffering of Soviet Jews in order to present his arguments regarding the responsibility of individuals in their contribution to the inhumane Soviet systems.488 Rather than focusing on the dehumanization of his Jewish characters on their travel to the gas chamber, conversely Grossman shows the discrete manners of protest in his Jewish characters who knowingly go to their deaths, but still regard themselves with human dignity, and do not wait for it to be granted to them. In doing so Grossman deconstructs Jewish tropes of both pre-revolutionary Russian texts which contrasted Jewish characters with Russians displaying the purity of the Slavic soul and to Party-line Soviet construction of Jewish characters who could only be represented in the collective, due to notions that the existence of a specifically Jewish community were a threatening element to Soviet Union’s collective identity.489

*Life and Fate*’s depictions of lost and lonely people is not limited to its Jewish characters; the experience of isolation is presented by Grossman as inherent to Stalinism. Thus, it is argued that the Soviet state does not promote community. The treatment of Old Bolsheviks in *Life and Fate*, primarily the characters Mostovskoy, Abarchuck, and Krymov, shows how at odds the current practice of Soviet unity is with the emergence of an international community. These three

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men are the most loyal to Bolshevik ideology, and yet, they all end up imprisoned. Their alienation from a community is further highlighted in lack of familial relationship. These characters whom even in the face of showing how devolved Bolshevik theory is in Stalinist practice, they still maintain the belief that the individual conducting the harm is bad, an outlier, a rouge - but never equate this violence, callousness, or inhumanity with the Soviet ideal.
Chapter Seven: Vassily Aksyonov: A Dissident Writer

Introduction: Generations of Winter: Russification of the Soviet

Aksyonov’s Generations of Winter is the first novel in the trilogy. The Russian title for the novel is A Moscow Saga (Russian: Московская сага); the usage of the word saga alludes to a medieval prose form which chronicles a heroic achievement. In naming his novel A Moscow Saga- Aksyonov attributes his accounts of the heroic achievements of the Soviet state to a primitive model; it is perhaps an allusion to an c.890 Slavic text entitled The Primary Chronicle which details the foundations of Rus’. This reference is important in analyzing Generations of Winter as relates the period of new Soviet state consolidation during early Stalinism as relating to the origin of the mythology of the Russian Empire. The novel takes place from 1925 to 1945 and is centered around the family of a Russian doctor Boris Gradov and focuses on the distinct lives of his three children Nikita, a commander of the Red Army, Kirill, a Party loyalist, and Nina, a romantic. The novel highlights the centrality of Russia, in particular Moscow, in the construction of a Soviet nation-state. The usage of satire and myth to present a modern-day Soviet Union, is used to illustrate the state as regressive and on the verge of decline, thus discrediting the Marxist-Leninist theory of historical materialism.

490 Olga Maiorova, “The Varangian Legend Defining the Nation through the Foundation Myth,” Chapter in From the Shadow of Empire: Defining the Russian Nation through Cultural Mythology, 1855–1870 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2010), 54-93.
Vassily Aksyonov: Biography

Vassily Aksyonov was born on August 30, 1932, in present-day Kazan, Russia. His father, Pavel Aksyonov, was a Bolshevik functionary, and his mother, Eugenia Ginzburg, was an educator and prolific writer. Aksyonov was also of Jewish origin, through his mother, and though the Jewish Question provides a subplot in *Generations of Winter*, it is not as central to Aksyonov’s thesis as it is to Grossman’s. Despite both of his parents being loyal Party members, they were arrested during the Purges, on account of being enemies of the people. Initially Aksyonov was housed in an orphanage for children of “enemies of the people” until a family member retrieved him. During his late teens his mother, the prominent dissident writer Eugenia Ginzburg, was released from the Gulag, yet exiled to live in Magadan, a region in the foremost east of Siberia. At the age of 17 Aksyonov went to live with his mother and stepfather in Siberia. On the recommendation of his parents, he obtained a degree to be a medical doctor from Leningrad Medical School in 1956, the same year that Khrushchev denounced Stalin. In 1960, as a young

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491 In the Soviet Period Kazan was initially integrated into the Soviet Union as a Tatar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. This is located on the confluence of the Kazanka and Volga River, the demographics are mixed between Tatars and Russian in the Soviet Period. In interviews and in his personal writings Aksyonov states that he is a Russian from Russia.

492 Gary Saul Morson and Ann Komaromi, *Uncensored: Samizdat Novels and the Quest for Autonomy in Soviet Dissidence*, 1 ed. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2015), 50-55.; *Journey into the Whirlwind* (1967) by Yevgenia Ginzburg, Aksyonov’s mother, is a memoir which documents Ginzburg’s time imprisonment and exile during Stalinsim. The work was rejected for publication, subsequently it became famous in samizdat culture.

493 Morson and Komaromi, *Uncensored: Samizdat Novels*, 46-72.; Maxim D. Shrayer, “Voices of Jewish-Russian Literature: An Anthology,” in *Jews of Russia & Eastern Europe and Their Legacy* (Boston, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2018), 579-827, 858.; Some sources claim that Aksyonovs’ parents were accused of being Trotskyites, however this is unclear. In addition, Aksyonov is of Jewish origin, but it does not appear as a prominent theme in his novel or in his personal identity politics.

man hopeful for reform, Aksyonov quit medicine in order to pursue a career as a full-time writer, after the successful publication of a short story in a popular Soviet literary journal.495

Aksyonov began his literary character along the dictates of the proper Party line. He was a part of the group of writers known as the “The Young Prose,” old enough to remember the atrocities of Stalinism, yet not old enough to need to reconstruct their notions of the Soviet identity. Exposure to Western culture through the war and via semi-liberalization under Khrushchev in conjunction with a rise of sityalgi culture, aided in the belief that the Soviet Union had a bright future not rooted in repression and strict ideological mandates. Aksyonov's early fiction, published in official Soviet literary institutions, was unorthodox with respect to Stalinism; it referenced writers of the Russian Silver Age and was both fantastical, and surrealist.496

Overtime, Aksyonov was confronted with the notion that the Party approval of the Young Prose Movement was used to illustrate a degree of liberation that it did not represent. After Khrushchev’s invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and the Brezhnev-era stagnation Aksyonov became less hopeful of reform in the Soviet Union and began turning to samizdat to produce his literary works. He recounts his expulsion from the Soviet Union as having its origins with his novel entitled The Burn (1980). Aksyonov recollects having no intention of having it published in the Soviet Union proper, and only allowed it to be read by his private inner circle.

While this novel was only intended for samizdat, Aksyonov along with his peers also put together an anthropology of formerly banned works to which they intended to get published with

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the approval of the Soviet bureaucracy. However, the KGB directly approached him, stating that if he ever intended to publish *The Burn* at home or abroad, he would be expelled. Aksyonov stated at that point he realized he’d never be completely free in the Soviet Union, and subsequently had his work published abroad. As a result, in the late 1970s, Aksyonov was first expelled from the Writer’s Union, which he refers to as a child of Stalinism, and then had his Soviet citizenship revoked.497

It should be noted that Aksyonov directly names Leonid Brezhnev as a participant in declaring him an enemy of the Soviet Union. This is very different from the Soviet authors which have been discussed in this thesis, who all appealed to the general secretary, as opposed to publicly shaming them for benefiting from the Soviet bureaucracy. Nevertheless, the dissident author never fully rejected the notion that Soviet Russia was his homeland. Even in interviews during his successful academic career in the United States he never characterized Russia as an “Evil Empire.” His relationship with Soviet Russia is complex.498 Aksyonov’s participation in samizdat culture and life in exile should not be conflated with a desire to deconstruct the Soviet Union as a whole.

Post-Stalinism Soviet literature experienced a shift in which writers believed they could acknowledge the Soviet experience in a subjective manner, but they did not consider themselves as distinct from the masses. The rise of dissident literature in Khrushchev and Brezhnev’s tenure, is more symbolic of a desire to rehabilitate the individual into the collective, by bringing the private realm of Soviet life into the sphere of public discussion.499 It is therefore a continuation of the

497“Booknotes: Say Cheese,” 10:00-19:00.
Soviet literary tradition which has always attempted to negotiate the reality of Soviet life and artistic representations of it. In 1990, under the conditions of Gorbachev’s liberal reforms, glasnost, and perestroika, Aksyonov’s works were rehabilitated in the Soviet Union proper. Aksyonov returned to Moscow in 2003 and died there on July 9th, 2009.

**Publication History: Generations of Winter**

Present within *Generations of Winter* is Aksyonov’s commentary on his Soviet generation born in the era of Stalinism, but coming of age during the hopeful period of the Thaw, only to be disappointed by the subsequent era of Stagnation. The cyclical nature of reform, revolution, and repression is the thematic overture of Aksyonov’s work. The structure of *Generations of Winter* combines early Russian modernism with a satire of Stalinist socialist realism. In a series of digressive intermissions, the novel also has a theatrical fairytale-eques quality, referencing ancient myth to comment on the backward manner of his characters as well as the Soviet state. Aksyonov makes use of cultural references contemporary to his characters, but also refers to ancient mythology of Eastern Europe and Central Asia. His embrace of the grotesque, of avant garde ideas, and of folklore is used to precisely indicate the “absurd reality of Soviet society.”

Even though the novel belongs to the post-Soviet era, its arguments still hold significance in understanding the failures of Soviet national policy to fulfill its international promise. The arguments presented are illustrative of a post-Soviet society not deluded with the myth of reform, but rather one that is aware of stagnation and the failure of the Revolution’s promise. Despite the focal point of the narrative being the height of the Stalinist Purges and the Great Patriotic War, *Generations of Winter* does not focus on a disillusionment due these events, as Grossman does,

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but rather utilizes these events, and the period prior, to illustrate that the Soviet Union was never capable of reform.

Aksyonov touches on the loss of individual responsibility, and the attempts to reconcile the responsibility of the self with the mistakes of the past. In contrast to Grossman, Aksyonov doesn’t make a distinction between the strength of the Soviet state, and the strength of the Soviet people. The Gradov family constantly has encounters with high-ranking officials of the State. These connections, to which are not all negative, actually help the Gradov family maintain its privileges, illustrating simultaneously an alienation and proximity between the individual and the masses.501 The narrative also illustrates the complacency of the Soviet-Russian intelligentsia in the rise of Stalinism. The central argument presented regarding Soviet national policy is that Soviet identity could be used to rise through the Party, without in alliance to the international theories of Leninism, this element is what forefronts Russianness as central to the construction of Soviet patriotism.

**Generations of Winter: Novel Analysis**

*Muscovy: Material Progress*

*Generations of Winter* opens with a conversation between a Reston, American Journalist, and a Ustrayalov, Change of Landmarks member, symbolic of a return to normalcy belief under Bolshevik power in the busy center of Moscow. The introduction of the novel and its characters sets up the recurring dichotomy that presents itself throughout the book, the illusion of Revolutionary success versus the reality of Soviet society. In the opening description of a modern Moscow in 1925, in the background, looms the Lybukana, and black Cheka cars.

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The first chapter entitled “Scythian Helmets” the narrator illustrates a Soviet conception of a civilization hierarchy; within the chapter there are continually reminders that the material progress depicted in the forefront of Moscow is not indicative of human, societal progress. Take for example the description of Moscow:

Just think- in 1925, the eighth year of the Revolution, a traffic jam in Moscow! All Nikolskaya Street, which runs from the Lubyanka prison through the heart of Kitagorod down to Red Square, is filled with select cars, wagons, and automobiles…Everything has the appearance of an amateur production, even people’s fury seems put on. The most important thing, though, is that everyone’s happy to play along.502

The narrator shows the reader the material progress, the modernity present in Moscow in his description of the hustle and bustle traffic. However, he does not characterize Moscow as a place completely transformed by Revolution cultural symbols of the fifteenth and seventeenth century, such as Kitaigorod, and the Spasskaya Tower. Furthermore, beautiful women in Parisian dress are juxtaposed to two Red Army officers, whose uniforms are “disgusted by a deduct savagery of the Revolution” as well as the “chaos of Gog and Mog.”

The Gog and Mog presented in the opening scene of Moscow are Nikita Gradov and Vadim Vuinovich, who were raised alongside the Revolution. They are only twenty-five years of age in 1925 - thus, they are doubly representative of a new era. They have already reached high-military rank: Nikita, is a Brigade Commander, and Vadim, is a Regimental Commander, despite his youth. The association of Nikita and Vadim with medieval, Biblical characters Gog and Mog, illustrates Aksyonov’s view of the Bolsheviks as an apocalyptic force, but also characterizes Moscow as a Holy City of an ancient character.503 Aksyonov does not use these descriptions to exemplify the

Soviet Man, but rather he uses Nikita and Vadim to critique Soviet state-building through the usage of conflict.

The distinction of the two friends' nationality is used in a manner that satirizes the Soviet states rhetoric of a friendship of the peoples. Vadim is from an industrial town in the Urals and possesses the prototypical southern Slavic features. Conversely, Nikita who is a native Muscovite, is described as looking like something of a “Russian Gothic.” Paradoxically both are from more developed regions of Russia - those that would have been characterized as having a proletariat; yet this is negated by their appearance which is attributed to that of the uncivilized borderlands. Thus, within Vadim and Nikita are both non-Soviet and Soviet elements, reinforcing the division between what is perceived and what is real.

The civilized elements of Nikita’s character are attributed to his non-Slavic, Georgian origins. Aksyonov gives him a non-disgustable multinational appearance, the combination of Nikita’s Macedonian, Scythian, and a Caucasian ultimately gives him the look of an Irishman - that is a non-Soviet nationality. Furthermore, the appearance of Vadim and Nikita as not being indicative of their place of origin critiques the notion of a pure-Soviet man, in that it highlights the multinational history of Russia resulting in its ill-defined sense of identity still present within the Soviet Union’s national republics.

The discontinuity between perception and reality in Moscow is highlighted in Reston, an American journalist. Reston reappears throughout the novel as a stereotypical American, entirely ignorant to the cultural significance of the Russian Revolution in the formation of a Soviet identity. Nor does Reston believe in the unification of Soviet states, and he assumes without being told that

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there must be a Russian ruling class, one that harbors delusions about their own greatness. In fact, he receives Soviet guides' reference to the Revolution’s achievement as a sort of expression of a Russian habit to assume superiority over Westerners. Though his job is to report as an insider, he has little understanding of Russian culture, not to mention Soviet culture. He cannot read Russian, despite reporting on the nation for a decade, nor does he understand why Nina refers to herself as Russian and Georgian. He is symbolic of the fruitfulness in which Westerners view the central element to Soviet identity, thereby making the illusion of progression to the external world devoid of meaning.

When Reston is invited to Red Square to celebrate the ten-year anniversary of the October Revolution, he conjectures that “Genuine communism will begin with Stalin.” This is a broader statement to illustrate how ignorant Americans or “outsiders” are to unfavorable attitudes towards Stalin as well as outsiders’ inability to understand the difference between the doctrine promised and the doctrine enforced. When a pro-Trotsky protest takes place, followed by a reactionary usage of force by the state police. Reston, who cannot read Cyrillic, manages to decipher a poster on the side of the Mausoleum that says ‘Thermidor.’ In doing so he conflates, as Stalin would have wished him to do, Trotsky with a violent tyrannical opposition. Reston cannot understand how Stalinism has changed revolutionary discourse within the Soviet state and does not associate the oppressive nature of the Soviet that he observes with Stalinism.

The Gradovites: A Russian Intelligentsia Family

Moscow is characterized as a multigenerational entity: an ancient fortress, an Imperial symbol of Russianness, a unique national character, and a product of Soviet modernity. The

505 Aksyonov, Generations of Winter, 99.
city’s fragmented character is reflected in the Gradov family. *Generations of Winter* particularly focuses on two Soviet nationalities, Georgians and Russians. Mary, the matriarch, is Georgian, and Boris, the patriarch, is Russian; this international union is used as a vessel for Aksyonov to illustrate how Stalin’s national policy indirectly led to a resurgence in Great Russian dominance. The Gradovites, as they are called in the novel, are a quite fragmented family; they have no collective identity. Esteemed-Russian doctor Boris Gradov is disheartened that his children are more aligned with their Soviet identities than with the family tradition. The Gradov children appear to have distinctly different identities even though they are all of the Soviet generation; the eldest Nikita, is a commander in the Red Army, Kirill, is a disgruntled middle child and a Party loyalist, and the youngest Nina is a Romantic poetess.

*The Silver Forest*

Aksyonov’s characterization of the family members illustrates that the Soviet intelligentsia, the height of Soviet development, was simply a term used to cloak the resurgence of the Imperial intelligentsia. Each family member has a distinct, distinguishable, personality, which alters the ways in which they view the development of the Soviet Union. What is important is that the Gradov family does not function as a collective, nor are they representative of a pure Soviet nationality. This division of character in the family is employed to illustrate both the Revolution and Stalinism as forms reminiscent of Tsarist oppression, whereby despotism is a symbol of inherent uniqueness of the nation.

The familial divisions are defined early in the novel at Mary Gradov’s forty-fifth birthday, in 1925. This birthday celebration takes place at the family’s home - the Silver Forest. The Gradov

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family home is introduced as a place of “common sense and order, a real stronghold of the enlightened Russian intelligentsia,” where Chopin is the cathartic remedy for life’s troubles and discourse on “eternal Slavic” questions endure.\(^{508}\) The home is known as the Silver Forest, as in previous literary treatments of Russian family life, the local, physical home is here symbolic of the family’s character. The Silver Forest is an intentional space in which the elders of the Gradov family create an idyllic life devoid of politics. The home is constructed in a way, and often described in a way that remains a place of solidarity and is representative of a fortress that protects them from the dangerous world of Stalinism.\(^{509}\) For the Gradovs, the Silver Forest fulfills a dream-like world whereby through family, music, community they can maintain a sense of pre-Revolutionary normalcy; however, that comes at the cost of partaking in the Soviet repressive system.

Mary’s birthday party is used to introduce Aksyonov’s argument that the strata of Soviet intellectuals’ compliance to Bolshevik development - is an important factor in the corruption of the Soviet state. In addition to the three Gradov siblings' very different interpretations of Bolshevik ideology, there is also a clear divide between the Georgian side of the family and the Russian side of the family. Galaktion is Mary’s eldest brother; he owns a pharmacy in Tiflis, their place of origin, and travels to Moscow for the birthday festivities. Galaktion dislikes Russia’s lack of culture, he describes Russians as having “barbaric manners.” Conversely, he describes his native Georgia as being home to an “ancient civilization”, originating from the Scythians, that is before the creation of Russ’.\(^{510}\) This comparison works to discredit the idea that peoples in the borderlands only became cognizant of the richness of their national history through Soviet policies of

korenizatsiia; but more important it is likely an allusion to the notion that Georgian national identity has always existed in absence of “development.”

* Boris Gradov: Russian Respectability

In the early Stalinist period Boris is introduced as a professor at a medical institute, as well as a senior staff member at the *Soldatyonkovskaya* Hospital. Boris harbors the notion that doctors are noble, respectable, as well as apolitical. Nevertheless, Boris’ expertise in surgery makes him favorable within the party apparatus; therefore, the Gradov family are not victims of the initial movement to eradicate all bourgeois-nationals. Boris thinks his medical profession is still representative of his Imperial notions of Russian honor. In doing so he attempts to ignore the privileges granted to him by Stalinism, thus creating a cognitive dissonance between himself and the oppressive systems to which he contributes. Boris’ entanglement with the Soviet state is illuminated from the beginning when he is asked to conduct a “special medical operation” on Army Commander Frunze. However, this medical operation is a cover for a plan backed by Stalin to execute the commander. Boris attempts to distance his association from the oppressive state by proclaiming himself, “a victim of history,” and thus has no other options but to partake in malpractice.

Boris is alleviated when he is only asked to observe the lethal operation on Frunze. Yet, he is still plagued with the guilt that he allowed his honorable professor to be used with this intention. As a result of Frunze’s death Boris has a renewed desire to reiterate that his medical profession is apolitical and respectable. He takes on an “adoptive son,” in his student, Savva Kitaigorodsky who

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511“История Великой Боткинской Больницы,” Боткинская больница, [https://botkinmoscow.ru/about/history/](https://botkinmoscow.ru/about/history/); Tsar Nicholas II and Vladimir Lenin received treatment in this hospital. This hospital is still operating, it is now called the Boktin Hospital.

is described as “the embodiment of intellectualism and good manners.” Savva surname evokes the meaning descendant of Kitay Gorod; therein, alluding to the notion of “Russian” respectability, and noble character representative of a past social order - Boris longs to see in his biological children. In addition, Savva Kitaigorodsky is the peer of Boris’ Soviet children - and symbolizes that it is possible for Russia to return to its tradition or indicates that Soviet-Russia only exists within the Russian tradition.

*Revolutionary Romanticism: Nina and Tiflis*

Nina, the youngest Gradov child, is used as a vehicle to present the issues of Revolutionary Romanticism. Initially she is a part of a pro-Bolshevik theater troupe; she reveres Trotsky and loves Pasternak; all things in Stalinist historiography would be considered contradictory and anti-Soviet. She is blind to the fact that her boyfriend Semyon Stirlio, an assumed name based on the Russian verb to build, is a careerist, and harbors a deep-seated resentment against her “Gradovite” origins. Strolio is revealed to be a low-ranking member of the OPGU, and in the course of the narrative his deceit, dishonesty, and selfishness lead him to establish a career in the secret police organs. His last name “bluider”, implying that this is grounds on which the Soviet Union is constructed. The nature of Trotskyite rebelliousness is never talked about in anti-Semitic or Stalinist language; the chief error of Trotskyism presented here as a character from the French Revolution - as discussed earlier through Reston’s eyes. Eventually Strolio denounces Nina for being a Trotskyite; the family sends her into “exile” in Tiflis, Georgia.

*Georgia: Stalin’s Birthplace*

514 Aksyonov repeatedly refers to the family unit as Gradovites, it is not just a term used Strolio to insult the family’s “bourgeois-natioanlist” origins.
Aksyonov's depiction of Tiflis remains a place untainted by Stalinism, indirectly presenting a lack of centralization in the early Soviet Union. Georgia is described as the center of Mediterranean civilization of agricultural abundance, while comparatively Russia in its collectivization has created a “crumbling culture of grain growers.” In Tiflis Nina stays with her maternal family. Despite realizing she has been deceived by her Revolutionary Romanticism, she maintains it as a way of coping mechanism. Through Nina eyes’ Tiflis is revolutionary because it is Parisian, and not because it is Soviet. When Nina first arrives, it is the autumn of 1930 as she is 23 years of age. The annexation of Georgia into “Bolshevik Russia” is colloquially referred to as the “Catastrophe,” yet the nation seems untouched by Soviet development. Aksyonov writes, “Here [in Tiflis] it would never occur to you that the First-Five Year Plan was going on in the world outside.”

Georgia appears as it has for centuries; however, the republic’s primitive stage is used to cast a romantic character upon Nina’s adverutism. In Tiflis Nina stays with her maternal family. Her Uncle Galaktion still owns his private pharmacy, though the name has been changed from Gudiashvili to Pharmacy No.18. The Gudiashvilli apartment still has an Imperial character - parquet floors, a salon, ancestral portraits, and the Georgian language is full of emotion. The lawlessness of Tiflis is also discussed through Nina’s relations to men; her associated are Silver Age Russian poets, it is revealed here that the husband she has taken is a homosexual, cocaine addict, and Nina has no shame about her various sexual partners. Her sexuality is so public that her idol, poet Osip Mandelstam, assumes she is a prostitute. And she even goes as far as having

\[515^{515}\text{Aksyonov, Generations of Winter, 124.}\]

\[516^{516}\text{Aksyonov, Generations of Winter, 124.}\]
incestual relations with her first-cousin Nugzar. After graduating from university in Tiflis and becoming disillusioned with her by the abundance in Tiflis, she returns to her native Moscow.

Upon returning she enters into a romantic relationship with Savva, her father’s model student, and the two are married. Savva is the image of practicality - he is straightforward, loving and kind. However, Nina worries that Savva is too characteristic of a nineteenth-century intellectual. When observing Savva from a far Nina list all his non-Soviet characteristics, “he [is into the] secondhand book business, looks for rare additions in his spare time, reads foreign novels, philosophy, is perfecting his French… Why for his appearance alone right now he could be arrested!”

Savva’s characterization as a pre-revolutionary Russian highlights a peculiar type of xenophobia present in “Socialism in One Country.” This is characterized by a xenophobia towards non-Soviet nationals, in addition to a fear of Soviet nationals overtly expressing any type of individualism.

Soviet-Georgian National: Cousin Nugzar

A fictional version of Lavrentiy Beria appears in Generations of Winter as the mentor to Gradov’s maternal first-cousin Nugzar. Beria is drawn to mentor Nugzar, perhaps on the grounds of being a fellow Georgian. Nugzar is the only non-Romantic Georgian that Aksyonov presents. He never loses his Georgian identity, however, at the same time he loses his humanity. In fact, he is always identified as Gradov’s Georgian cousin. In his first exercise of loyalty to the state Beria assigns him with the task of murdering a close family friend - Lado Khakhabidze. Later, in the story Nugzar is made to beat his Uncle Galaktion, who raised him, to death. This scene is employed by Aksyonov, later in the novel, to demonstrate that within the Soviet patronage system of non-Russian nationals, there remains latent corruption. Stalin, Beria, and

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Aksyonov, Generations of Winter, 181.
Nugzar characteristics are interconnected by Aksyonov, in a manner to demonstrate the material realities of Soviet development do not equate to humanity’s progress.

After Nugzar proves his loyalty to Beria, in a show of favor he is invited to Stalin’s personal living quarters in the Kremlin to have a traditional Georgian style dinner. When speaking to Beria, who is acting as the Minister for State Security, about the political character of the war Stalin is characterized as paranoid, enigmatic, and tyrannical, while appearing to be an ordinary man from the Caucasus. As Stalin addresses his attention to Nugzar, who is now a colonel, Stalin transforms into a softer, kind of individual. Stalin’s Georgian speech is informal, and to Nuzgar hearing Stalin speak in their native tongue recalls “home and hearth” and allievates his anxiety. Through conversation Stalin fondly recalls Uncle Galaktion’s paramachy, and in realizing that Nugzar is related to Galaktion, immediately promotes him from a colonel to general. This scene demonstrates how out of touch Stalin is from his native homeland, but also reinforces that simply because Nugzar national identity is recognized does not make him far removed from corruption.

References to Stalin as a Georgian are only employed by Aksyonov to present the notion of the Soviet Union as a Friendship of the Peoples is a flasity, this is reaffirmed in several scenes. For instance, Mary is intent on using her shared nationality with Stalin to appeal for the safety of her grandchildren after their parents are arrested during the Purges. Savva, Mary’s son-in-law, is taken aback by the idea that Stalin is human; he imagines the General Secretary as a fire-breathing dragon. Savva realizes that he had, “never before thought of Stalin as Georgian, or even as a Homosapien.”518 Though Mary associates Georgia with a romantic nostalgia, of its independence and culture, her illusions of her homeland are immediately destroyed when she visits, it is in ruins.

Kirill Gradov: The Marxist

518 Aksyonov, Generations of Winter, 245.
Kirill Gradov’s puritanal Marxism is the result of “middle-child syndrome”. Kirill is hypercritical of his family's imperialist behavior during the NEP reforms and is unaware of his own privilege. To distance himself from the Gradovites he presents himself in a proletarian manner. At one point Kirill refuses to ride in his elder brother Nikita’s military car; he would rather walk in the rain and travel in the crowded trolley than to be seen with a “bourgeois-officer.” Kirill’s resentment against Nikita is not only motivated by a sibling rivalry, but he is also upset that Nikita is granted recognition despite his lack of political consciousness. Kirill reassures himself that he is Nikita’s intellectual superior, even if no one else believes this. After refusing to accompany Nikita in the military car Kirill gets on the trolley and reads a propaganda filled newspaper - which he approves of. He thinks to himself, “It's a good thing events are reported with a Party slant—that way a man isn’t left on his own, at the mercy of facts. On the contrary, a man learns to use facts, to evaluate them from a position of class consciousnesses.”

In 1930, Kirill travels to Tambov - meaning abyss deep pool - also the place of Peasant Rebellion against Bolshevik 1920-21, to give an educational speech to the peasants about the significance of collectivization. The Kazan Station, from which Kirill departs, maintains the appearance of “pre-revolutionary gentility”; its design evolves both the archaic nature of the sixteenth century and the modernism of the twentieth century. This description of the train-station - combines elements of Tatars and Chuvashes culture, and ruled large territories in what would become known as the Russian Empire, and the Soviet Union. In utilizing devices as such the narrator indirectly states that the Sovietization is more primitive and backwards than Russification.

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519 Aksyonov, Generations of Winter, 62.
520 Aksyonov, Generations of Winter, 119.
The first person Kirill meets in his journey to enlighten the rebellious peasants of Gorelovo, the provincial capital of Tambov, is a twenty-year-old secretary of the village's Komsomol Party cell named Petya Ptakhin. According to Soviet historiography Ptakhin’s type is the true base of the Revolution. The Komsomol secretary is the symbol of the peasant-proletariat; yet he does not have a grasp of the ideological concepts he is enforcing. When speaking to the Ptakhin about the Tambov peasant’s lack of party consciousness Kirill initially cannot quite understand the Soviet peasant. This is exemplified literally by the fact that Ptakhin loves speaking in the language of the Revolution, but has difficulty pronouncing these theoretical terms; Ptakhin, “‘oved new foreign words, [which] was not surprising, since the Russian ideological language was now stuffed with…foreign burrows’”\textsuperscript{521}

The Gorelovo who peasants resisted collectivization are called Antoontvites and Antichirst alike.\textsuperscript{522} Kirill’s “historical excursion to the utopian communes of Saint-Simon [and his talk] about the bright prospects of the future” failed to capture his peasants' audience. He speaks of Lenin and Marx and the necessity for rapid agricultural development to bring about modernity - the conclusion of the lecture is met by a elderly peasant who possesses the question to the Citizen Explainer, Kirill, “where will the people go to get cured from the village idiocy?”\textsuperscript{523} Kirill does not seem to understand that it is not a lack of critical thinking, but the fact that the peasants’ lived

\textsuperscript{521} Aksyonov, \textit{Generations of Winter}, 123.
\textsuperscript{522} William Henry Chamberlin, \textit{The Russian Revolution, Volume II: 1918-1921: From the Civil War to the Consolidation of Power}, Course Book ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 436-439. Alexander Antonov is a political agitator from Moscow who is credited with inciting revolts against the Red Army and Soviet Officials from late 1919 until 1921 in the Tambov district, which, ironically is a part of the Voronezh Oblast where the fictional Tatarsk in \textit{And Quiet Flows the Don} is located. In Soviet historiography this event was called Antonovschina ("Antonov's mutiny") and was used to justify brutality and Red Terror on the Ukrainian and Russian peasants living in the region.
\textsuperscript{523} Aksyonov, \textit{Generations of Winter}, 141.
reality is at odds with the theoretical notions of collectivization, that makes them so apathetic. During his failed speech Cecilia, formerly a friend of Nina, is overhead giving a speech about British imperialism which the peasants are more enthusiastic about, but this is because they are drunk. Here again, Aksyonov shows how discontented this rhetoric is from the public, and that a culture of two national classes still exists.

While in Tambov, both Kirill and Cecilia bear witness to the brutality of dekulakization in progress, the mass exile of peasants to Kazakhstan. Unconsciously realizing that there is some fault with collectivization, neither at this point reject the Party line. Rather they adopt a kulak child, named Mikta (Dmitri), whose subversive origins are highlighted because his father burned their farm rather than having it confiscated by the authorities. Kirill and Cecilia's marriage, and adoption of Mikta is an attempt to self-soothe, as opposed to reconcile the failure of the Five-Year Plans. The international character of their marriage, Kirill, being Russian-Georgian, and Cecilia, being Jewish, in order to adopt Mikta - is the image of an ideal Soviet family. Aksyonov uses this branch of the Gradov family to critique the recurring axiom that the son is responsible for the sins of the father.

_Cecilia Rosenbloom: The Soviet Jew_

The primary Jewish character in _Generations of Winter_ is Cecilia Rosenbloom, she is a satirical presentation of an assimilated Russian-Jew allegiant to Leninism and Marx. Despite her ideological purity, Cecilia is characterized as an antisemitic prototype, she lacks femininity, is unhygienic, and self-centered. After the arrest of Nikita an argument takes place between Cecilia and Nina, in which Cecilia professes that Nikita’s arrest must be a sign of his ideological incorrectness; Nina’s enraged response that in Cecilia’s allegiance to Marxist ideology she has lost touch with her familial feelings, her humanity.
Cecilia must confront her ideological loyalty with the state’s interpretation when her husband Kirill is arrested. Cecilia also places herself in a perpetual state of martyrdom in the pursuit of Kirill’s release for “ten years without the right to correspondence.” Her attempts to obtain information about her husband are rewarded only by a singular letter that has clearly been censored, and sexual exploitation by a fox herder to whom she turns for help. However, Cecilia herself never sees herself as a victim of anti-Semitism, for she sees herself as a true Marxist and therefore representative of a prefect Soviet citizen. This disconnect of her internal view and the Soviet view of her most clearly presented in her relationship with adopted son Dmitri Sapunov.

*The Son of a Kulak: Dmitri Sapunov-Gradov*

Mikta, as Dmitri Sapunov-Gradov is called, has no maternal feelings for Cecilia; while he calls other Gradovs by familial names such as grandmother and aunt, he cannot bring himself to call Cecilia his mother. He prefers to stay at the Silver Forest than in the communal apartment where Cecilia resides. To him she is an image of sloth, and an embarrassment, her home has no warmth and her desire to be a part of the collective prevents her from formulating a true bond with her son. Mikta does not initially associate his rejection of his adoptive mother with anti-Semitism until he is drafted into the Red Army. His conscription into the Red Army, recruitment into Vlasov Army, and his witness to Babi Yar; alter his perception of Cecilia and confront his error in not accepting her for what she is.

It was intended that Mitya Gradov-Sapunov would go to medical school and become a doctor, but as the war would have it, at nineteen years old he was conscripted into the army in 1941. Mitya's psychical appearances leave no traces of his past as an “uncivilized peasant”; he is tall with well-defined cheekbones and shining eyes; “on the whole, a magnificent specimen.”

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Though he is treated with love and respect, it is disturbing that the Gradovs attempt to erase any memories of Mikta’s kulak past by evading any discussion of his origins. However, authorities are not so accepting of Mitya’s origins. Mitya becomes a point of interest after three Gradov children are arrested - Nikita, Veronika, and Kirill. This begs the question: why are the Gradovs harboring an enemy of the people?

However, Mitya appears again as the object by which the Gradov family uses to absolve their guilt. When Boris and Mary receive word that Mitya will be removed from their care and placed in an orphanage for enemies of the people. Concurrently, to the Great Purges Boris Sr. is promoted to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR - supposedly he is elected to the role by a working-class district in Moscow. Nevertheless, it is revealed in a dramatic irony that Boris Sr. obtained this promotion by his aid in releasing Stalin from his heroic struggle with a bout of constipation.\textsuperscript{525} Boris Senior is embarrassed by the promotion he sees it as a form of slavery. He is heavily decorated in the manner of an Imperial officer and, “full regalia: dark blue suit, diagonally striped tie, and entirely reproachable gentleman if not for the three barbaric medals on his chest.”\textsuperscript{526} He has Stalin’s personal favor; but he cannot appeal for his children's release. In order to gain mastery over himself, Boris uses his celebrity as an “eminent leader of Soviet medicine” to put Mintenka Sapnuov in the Gradovs’ care. Throughout the phone call he is anxious and unsure of himself, but feels relief when his request is granted, thus reaffirming the notion that external labels in the Soviet Union are not representative of reality.

Mitya does not forget how his parents were consumed by the fires of collectivization. In fact, it serves as his primary reminder that he is Russian. Mitya refers to Boris and Mary as his

\textsuperscript{525}Aksyonov, Generations of Winter, 275.
\textsuperscript{526}Aksyonov, Generations of Winter, 265.
grandparents, and Kirill as father, he even regards Cecilia’s father Naum as his grandfather. Nonetheless he cannot bring himself to consider this “frightful, appalling old Jew” as his mother. He thinks of Cecilia as absent minded, poorly dressed, and unhygienic, Cecilia can only be regarded as “a good-natured aunt, sometimes even extremely king, but she was not cut out to be a mother.”

Mitya is enraged, and asserts that he is one-hundred percent Russian, after his peer Goshka Krutkin presumes that Mitya is of Jewish origin.

In their service Mitya and Goshka become close friends. Goshka is introduced as a “thin and gaunt, construction worker from the Palace of the Soviet projects.” Goshka’s psychic appearance compared to Mitya’s alludes to the failure of Soviet development; Goshka being off the protierliat looks weak, and the child taken in by borgeous nationals appears strong. As the plot progresses Goshka becomes Mitya’s shadow, he constantly asks Mitya opinion before taking action, despite Mitya the fact that is emotionally distant, and verbally cruel. The part is never seen apart; somehow Goshka always ensures they are transferred to the same unit. While on the surface this typecasts Goshka as a slavish Slav, and Mitya as a lordly Great Russian - their relationship is codependent. In the depiction of the peasant and the proletariat Aksyonov’s criticism extends to both the Imperial notion of Russian greatness and contradicts the notion that Russians are the most developed Soviet nationality.

Both Goshka and Mitya become disillusioned with the idea of military heroism early in their service; they are left in the reserves and see no frontline action for months. And when they eventually receive their “baptism of fire” both boys are disturbed. They spend their abundance of free time going to the movies and memorizing Ensein poems. In the pursuit of adventure, they attend a Committee for Russian-Liberation rally, knowing that if the Soviet officers found out

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527 Aksyonov, Generations of Winter, 298.
they’d be punished. The speech which is used to get the young boys to join the Vlasov Army is full of nationalistic rhetoric; the Bolsheviks are called Yid-Communist who are raping Mother Russia and corrupting its future. Goshka and Mitya are conflicted - they recall the terror of the First-Five Year Plans in their youth. But on the other hand, they have been raised as Soviet people, who happened to be Russian. This distinction is clearly seen when the boys are enlisting in the Vlasov Army. Mitya asks the orator, Colonel Bondarchuk, whom he refers to as Comrade Director if he will be discriminated against because his adoptive mother is Jewish. Bondarchuck's response is,”we have nothing against Jews as human beings. You see, we’re only against alien ideas that have been forced upon the Russian people, mainly against Yiddish communism, not against the Jews as such.”

Nevertheless, Mitya reaches his own conclusion when he realizes that he is being asked to partake in the mass execution of Jews at “Garni Yar.”

Mitya’s description shows Ukraine as destroyed not only by Nazi occupation, but also by Soviet rapid development plans. He is first struck by the desolation of the Ukrainian landscape; it appears as if it has not been touched by human civilization or humanity’s highest achievement. Once Mitya infers that the columns of people are being lined up for execution the narration immediately turns to the descriptions of the strong winds and fast running clouds. At the moment of this windstorm, “Ancient Rus’ announced its presence.”

Suddenly, Mitya’s fixated, horrified view of the Jewish women, children, and elderly being massacred by Germans is attached to a “awful, unnamed, unrecognizable” barbarism that is also present in the Russian national character. His moral conscience is disturbed; unable to partake in Garni Yar both Mitya and Goshka hide in

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528 Aksyonov, Generations of Winter, 372.
529 This is Goshka mispronunciation of Babi Yar, the boys are never correct and refer to the event as such throughout the novel.
530 Aksyonov, Generations of Winter, 443.
the bushes and observe the event. Mitya states, “I’ve had all I can take…I joined with the Russian army to fight the Bolsheviks, not to help the Germans kill Jews!” 531 Before running away to join the partisan Mitya in an unplanned act of revenge blindly shoots at a German office in honor of Mama Celia and Grandpa Nuam. 532

*The Origins of Nikita’s Disenchantment: The Kronstadt Rebellion* 533

The tangential references to Nikita’s youth are used to reaffirm that he is a child of the Revolution. He is presumably only seventeen when he joins the Red Army during the Civil War. However, he is disillusioned with the Revolution very early on. His mental health is affected by the memory of Kronstadt, he is assigned with infiltrating the ship wreckers' protest in order to quell their rebellion. Trotsky is presented as a figure that is constantly associated with persecution, in Nikita’s reflection of Kronstadt. He recalls that the Kronstadt sailors not only reject Trotsky as a militaristic, war mongering, they also refer to Lenin as Tsar. The sailors claim that they are reclaiming the Revolution for the people and the peasants, by “[throwing] off Trotsky’s fetters and [casting down] the Lenin tsar.” 534

Nikita is tormented by the fact not that the fact not that he killed Russians, but that he killed workers. In attempting to cope with his participation in brutalizing workers, Nikita struggles to accept the notion of Marxist-Leninist historical development. In his reflections on Kronstadt Nikita

533 William Henry Chamberlin, *The Russian Revolution, Volume II: 1918-1921: From the Civil War to the Consolidation of Power*, Course Book ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 430-450.; The Kronstadt Rebellion was a critical event as to the Soviet regime because the Kronstadt sailors were very allegiant to the Bolshevik party in 1917, and one of the few groups of the Russian proletariat. Upset by NEP reforms and War Communism the Kronstadt sailors come to the belief that the Bolsheviks are incapable of executing the reform they promised. Therefore, their resistance to Bolshevik power would delegitmize the claims of the Party representing the people. 534 Aksyonov, *Generations of Winter*, 19.
concludes that, “ice saved us... historically determined events and the ungovernable force of nature depend on each other in a strange-no, make that disgraceful-way.”\textsuperscript{535} This small statement is significant because it counters the central element of Bolshevik ideology that the October Revolution is the natural, inevitable course of events.

Therefore, Nikita is never taken with the idea of ideological justification for state-led violence. Yet, in the period of early Stalinism neither Nikita’s disbelief or his bourgeois-national background was a hindrance to his rise as a “high ranking officer [who always] dressed in the full uniform of the Worker’s- Peasant Army”\textsuperscript{536} The guilt Nikita feels for partaking in Kronstadt follows him throughout his character development and intensifies as he ascends in military rank. Kronstadt illustrates to him that the Bolsheviks are not actually vanguards of freedom, but just a new yoke; however, Nikita is given the privilege to evade this core issue through his own class origins and nationality.

By focusing on the Kronstadt mutiny, an event that occurs before the consolidation of the Soviet state, Aksyonov places the origins of Nikita’s disillusionment in the period even before the Purges or the Soviet Union’s confrontation with a foreign power, Nazi Germany. Thus, the story focuses on the internal failures of Bolshevism without the need to compare its international ideologies. The novel argues that Soviet ideology was primarily focused on internal security, and affirmations of power; in order to illustrate a progressive society, rather than actually promoting an international community. Nikita’s struggle to justify the events at Kronstadt, shows that the divide between pro-Soviet and anti-Soviet is a fiction in and of itself. Here Nikita learns that the Bolsheviks use their theoretical, to reframe the outcome of events to their favor. Therefore,

\textsuperscript{535}Aksyonov, \textit{Generations of Winter}, 15.
\textsuperscript{536}Aksyonov, \textit{Generations of Winter}, 119.
Kronsdtat is also used to illustrate that Red Terror, is not a transitory state, but an enduring characteristic of Bolshevik power.

*The Great Purge and the Nikitaities*

Veronika, is Nikita’s wife, is introduced as a daughter of a Muscovite lawyer, and she herself identifies as Muscovite. She demands that Nikita advocates for himself on his next military assignment, because for most of the early narrative Nikita is stationed in Minsk, Belarus - which is denoted as backwards. Veronika views Moscow as the center of culture and life. The novel reaffirms the centrality of Moscow, of Russia, in Soviet culture, in that when the Nikita’s branch of the family is in Minsk, it almost seems like they disappear entirely for the narrative.

Regardless of her pleas Nikita is transferred to Nikita’s transfer to Khabarovsk in the defense of the Soviet against the Japanese. These beginnings of internal protection, and preservation of the Soviet state rhetoric were already used in the early 1930s. During his assignment in the Far East, Nikita is arrested on account of his superior General Blücher’s incendiary thoughts. Blücher's arrest particularly highlights the fear culture promoted under Stalinism - in that Blücher’s thoughts about a military coup are not discussed with anyone. His thought is simply that, yet he and all his associates are arrested for just the suggestion of being outside of the Party-line. Before his own arrest Nikita sees his military superiors, ones that he regarded highly in his youth during the Civil War, like Frunze and Yevtushenko, be purged on account of false charges and conspiracy. Therefore, Nikita is almost unfazed by his arrest, recognizing the incongruity between Bolshevik theory and Soviet practice at Kronstadt does not leave him with a moral dilemma with respect to the question of whether Stalinism is a continuation of Leninism. Consequently, when it is his turn, he does not regard himself as a wronged minority, but rather as someone being punished for their sins. As Nikita is being brutally beaten during his
interrogation he thinks, “my retribution has finally come, for Kronstadt, for Tambov…. retribution for my cowardice, for my damned fear of thinking things through to the end for the hypnosis of the Revolution.”

When Nikita is arrested during the Purges, Veronika experiences social ostracization from her fellow Soviets, thus highlighting the hypocritical character of the collective. Veronika wonders, “Well, if they put everyone who is so brave and honorable into jail, who is going to fight against imperialism?” Pushkin becomes Veronika’s solace, after Nikita is arrested, and she and her children, referred to by the narrator as Nikitaities, are forced to return to the Silver Forest in a third-class carriage. This passage reinforces the notion that there is no true collective, Veronika is still identified by her nationality and her class. In the depressive state of events Aksyonov evokes a cultural mythology of Russian greatness, through Pushkin, while also signifying the decline Sovietization has brought about.

*The Great Patriotic War: Marshal of the Soviet Union*

Nikita’s motivation for fighting in the Second World War is self-preservation, and not in Soviet patriotism or even Russian patriotism. Upon his initial arrest in 1937 Nikita had already characterized war as a “romanticism of the herd” and subsequently that the “necessity” of the Purges to drink about Soviet development was simply carried out due to “Stalinist hypnosis.” Operation Barbarossa is of no significance to Nikita; it incites no feelings, and when it occurs, he is imprisoned at Kolyma for two years. In need “to distract himself from the revolting spectacle of the convict quarry[and] for about human history” he repeatedly reminds himself that he not limited by his material condition through a short, formulaic prayer - “If I can still…. that means I’m

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In fact few prisoners are privy to the developments of aggression between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany as new prisoners are rarely admitted to his camp unit. However, when the prisoners do obtain small pieces of information about the war, they defer their questions to Nikita due to his military expertise.

The former Red Army Commander does not analyze the war through historical materialism; he immediately seeks to describe the possible outcomes of the conflict through analysis of the individual behaviors of Stalin and Hitler. Subsequently, these political discussions enlivened the prisoners, rather than preserving themselves through survival machines they feel as though their humanity dignity has been restored. Nikita remains indifferent, claiming that the passion “with which [the prisoners] were discussing the scarp of newspaper print had as its basic aim the same formula ‘If-I-still-then-I-still.’” When reflecting on his own apathy towards the war is not characterized by a feeling of salvation or restoration, he does not dream, repressing all memories of his family, the Silver Forest. Subsequently, his transformation from zek L-148395 to Lieutenant General Nikita Gradov is meaningless. He is taken from Kolyma to Moscow by plane, repressing his memories at the Koylma camps, as if it was a “nonsensical nightmare”; however, his repression is also characterized by his inability to speak out. As Nikita recollects his flight over Kolyma, he characters the taiga’s huge spruce and larch trees as an impermeable mythical army which ascended into a foggy heaven; this the horror in the Gulag is matter between Nikita and the metaphysical. There is no need to discuss the reality of it.

Nikita's rehabilitation into the military is likened to his lack of resistance during his arrest in 1937. In his first contacts with the outside world Nikita thinks of his death, “our resistance

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540 Aksyonov, Generations of Winter, 334.
541 Aksyonov, Generations of Winter, 337.
means nothing to them, nothing at all.” 542 Therefore, the connection is made that although Nikita's material position has improved, his spiritual position has deteriorated. Nikita displays no enthusiasm after being told that Stalin personally requested for Nikita to be reinstated into the army with the rank of colonel general. He is disgusted by the thought of “fight[ing] for the Motherland and thereby defending those criminals in the Kremlin, what a terrible primeval fate! To take up arms against Hitler’s racist hegemony and in favor of Stalin’s class hegemony, for his criminal band!” 543

In a drunken stupor Nikita agrees to take this position on the contingency that his friend Vadim be reinstated into the army; this scene illustrates Nikita as literally drunk with power. Nikita has been informed since his youth that he was never in control under Soviet power; yet he accepts his position in the military in order to regain some sort of autonomy over his life. This informs his rebellious character, as well shall see, when he does not follow commands given by the Party. As his Nikita externally seems to be progressing, his internal struggles increase. Throughout the war Nikita defines the war as a reflection of Stalin’s war and allusions to the war being a patriotic conflict are treated with apathy.

For example, when thinking of the Nazi Army’s logistical strength, he compares it to that of Napoleon Grande Armée - but the analogy of 1812 is incompatible with Soviet Russia. Nikita thinks of the Red Army strength as originating from a “mystery of mass psychology [in which] everyone assumes he’ll survive.” 544 In another scene Nikita reflects on the brutality of modernized warfare stating that, “I, the child of a dynasty of Russian doctors, have consecrated my life...for

542 Aksyonov, Generations of Winter, 343.
543 Aksyonov, Generations of Winter, 346.
544 Aksyonov, Generations of Winter, 388.
the sake of what? The salvation of the Motherland or Stalin’s triumph over Hitler?"\textsuperscript{545} Nikita’s lack of Soviet patriotism is also reflected in his familial relations; he is completely detached from his wife and children.

“A phantom named Nikita Gradov moved, though not the real Nikita, the commander of the Special Strike Force.”\textsuperscript{546} His children Boris IV, and Vera, have been raised by his parents - as Veronika was also arrested during the Purges. The enemy of the people Gradovites are housed in an apartment, in the most aristocratic area imaginable - Gorky Street. For Veronika this rehabilitation into Soviet society was the beginning of the end. Both husband and wife describe each other as no longer themselves - though their physical bodies are present the two people who were before the Purges no longer exist nor will they ever come back. Veronika describes her family reunion as being, “slapped together like something out of Stendhal- the red and the black, a bad joke victims of the era.”\textsuperscript{547}

From the moment Nikita is put on the frontlines he is accompanied by a stool-pigeon. Perhaps it is warranted as Nikita's initial thoughts regard the possibility of obtaining his true freedom through staging a military coup. But, he represses this thought for one he knows his Bolshevik history; he does not think the Soviet people are ready to partake in a mass resistance to the state. In addition, Nikita thinks of all the other Old Bolshevik military commanders who were perished during the purges for not being the image of a Stalinist military hero. None of the factors deter Nikita from taking part in miniature rebellions, whereby he contradicts orders given from the General Secretary, and he does not listen to the advice of his political commissar. Indeed, this makes sense as Nikita already views himself as a goner.

\textsuperscript{545} Aksyonov, Generations of Winter, 423.
\textsuperscript{546} Aksyonov, Generations of Winter, 424.
\textsuperscript{547} Aksyonov, Generations of Winter, 386.
Nikita’s skill as a commander is recognized by the State in an ominous manner when at a Kremlin Ball in the winter of 1942 he was promoted to the Marshal of the Soviet Union. All the commanders that Nikita has interacted with such as Vasily Blucher and Mikhail Tukhachevsky, also, had been awarded this title and were consequently executed during the Purges. The title is given to him after an incident at a Committee for the Defense meeting. General Nikita took full advantage of his rehabilitation on the grounds of military expertise, rather than being a subservient patron; he contradicts Stalin’s military offensive plan. While the other military commanders gave their opinions freely in the discussion, they knew that they all must agree as a collective to Stalin’s plan. In this instance Stalin had said his final word, therefore “[Nikita’s] plan constituted an act of undermining the authority of the Great Leader.” Therefore, in Aksyonov’s narrative only Nikita and Stalin hold the rank of Marshal of the Soviet Union at the same time. It is as if the writing is on the wall, and Nikita is aware that will die soon.

At this Kremlin Ball, in which allied military officers and political officials are present, Nikita becomes embarrassed that the Soviets’ medals and uniforms, which “sparkled like Christmas trees,” in comparison to the simplicity and the formality of the allied powers' uniform. This rumination of Nikita’s focused on his military uniform, rather than the political discussion reinforces one of Kirill’s criticisms that “[Nikita] has no ideological grounding…He’s exactly the same officer of the tsarist army, or the White army…in spite of all his regalia, Nikita is just a simple, old-regime Russian officer.” At the end of evening, Nikita’s first event as Marshal of the Soviet Union, Veronika ironically refers to him as Alexander the Great. This connection of Marshal of the USSR Nikita to Alexander the Great reminds the reader that he is, in part,

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548 Aksyonov, Generations of Winter, 471.
549 Aksyonov, Generations of Winter, 122.
“Macedonian.” This here plays on the notions of imperial Russia’s understanding of civilization hierarchy within its borders; while also presenting the clear divide of nationals, as opposed to integration, among Soviet republics and the othering of non-Soviet peoples in the formation of a unified identity. The reference to Alexander the Great is also used to forewarn the reader that Nikita’s coming cause of death cannot be explained.550

Nikita’s assertion of independence leads to his death, in a desire to redeem himself from his errors at Kronstadt, Nikita allows a unit of Polish insurrectionists to escape Soviet imprisonment. After this act of senseless kindness Storlio, who is now his political commissar, charges the Marshal Gradov with “expressing dubious thoughts, drawing parallels between German fascism and Soviet communism, applying terrorist methods to disgusted military men, and on account of the Polish question.”551 Nikita dies mysteriously, in the summer of 1944. After Storlio reads Nikita’s list of crimes, a sniper is fired by two teenage German boys hiding in behind a facade of the Saint Augustine Cathedral “of Schlossberg, East Prussia”552 Nikita rebels against Soviet military authority, because he realizes there will be no liberation for him either way. The Defender of the Motherland, as he is known in public, is given a state funeral honored as a martyr, rather than a traitor.

Kirill’s Conversion in the Camps

Despite their alienation from one another, both Kirill and Nikita are symbolic of the New Soviet man. They have a fraternal love for one another that is seemingly only divided by their

551 Aksyonov, Generations of Winter, 528.
552 Aksyonov, Generations of Winter, 543.
interpretations on how a Soviet man should live. This wall is broken when both are arrested during the Purges. The novel ends with Aksyonov using Kirill’s allegiance to the Party-line to characterize the Soviet generation as directionless. Nikita, ironically, is given a state funeral with full recognition of his contributions to the Soviet Union, the narrative shifts to Kirill experiences in the Gulag during the twenty-eight anniversary of the Revolution. Kirill, who has been presumed dead by his family, is very much alive. However, his endurance through living in brutal conditions of Kolyma is not founded in his belief in the Party, but rather in his conversion to Orthodoxy Christianity.

While the civilized Soviets who live in the metropole of Moscow are seen praising Stalin at the liturgy for bringing about the war’s victory, Kirill befriends a man named Stasis. Stasis is a Lithuanian medical assistant, who is drawn to Kirill, because he reveres the medical research of Boris Senior. Being brought together by the rationale, and the logical, Marxism and medicine; Stasis confides to Kirill that he was educated at a seminary.  Kirill, subsequently, asked to be educated about Christian practices from Stasis:

“That’s what it is, its all right, Kirill, captivity, but if you want freedom later on, then it’s your will, you do it right now for the freedom of everyone….”
“But you could still at least teach me a few prayers, Stasis,” said Kirill, his eyes suddenly filling with tears as he whimpered like a child.
…. He did not try to persuade Kirill to stop crying…
“Give them to me in Latin, I’ll remember them,” pleaded Kirill. 553

It is in Kirill renouncement of his positivist, rational belief in Marxism for Orthodoxy Christitainity that he obtains freedom.

553 Aksyonov, Generations of Winter, 580-581.
Conclusion: Stalinism as Reinstatement of “Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality”

Generations of Winter by Vassily Aksyonov does describe the Soviet Union as a reinstatement of “Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality;” in the novel Savva describes Russian history as a series of breaks that elicit waves of retribution. Lenin appears as a squirrel who resides in the Silver Forest, and the family's dog is named Pythagoras, implying a theory of return theory of return: 554

The saga protagonists’ spiritual awakening and self-identification are discussed in the context of Tolstoy’s view on the activity of the general mass of people who take part in a historical event and determine its outcome. This allows to elicit Aksyonov’s view on man’s personal responsibility under Stalinism.555

Boris Senior reflects on the Bolsheviks as, “strange people, despite all their materialism, their actions seem to be dictated by some kind of mysticism. How do you explain, for example, embalming Lenin and then putting his remains on display to be worshiped?”556 This iconography is at the end of the novel presented in a religious reverence to Stalin as a Soviet deity. Russia remains the center of Soviet development, non-Muscovite regions, Belarus, Georgia, the far-East, are regions that seem disconnected from Soviet development and are often spoken of with secondary importance. Yet, even in the metropole of Moscow Soviet development is simply an

556 Aksyonov, Generations of Winter, 96.
illusion seen in its material development; nevertheless, this is no way employed by Aksyonov to show the Soviet people as progressive.

*Generations of Winter*, contrastingly, omits the back-forth dialogue of fighting for the Soviet nation or the Russian nation, as the Gradov family’s disbelief in Bolshevik internationalism emerges concurrently with the establishment of the Soviet Union. The Gradovs’ disenchantment with Bolshevism only increased through the various stages of Russian development. Therefore by the onset of the Second World War, Aksyonov’s characters are already in consensus that they are fighting for the maintenance of the Soviet state’s power, and not for the Soviet people. While this despotism motivates the Gradovs to partake in the Soviet systems Aksyonov does not present them as helpless victims of Soviet repression, but rather illustrates the ways in which the state dictated all aspects of life. The Gradovs are cognizant of the manner in which they resign themselves to the will of the Soviet state for self-preservation. Therefore, in order to maintain some sense of agency or “freedom” the Gradovs knowingly participate in a system that they recognise as oppressive.
Conclusion

Can Fiction be History? Alternative Histories of Soviet Identity

In this thesis, I have analyzed four works from Russian-Soviet authors; Mikhail Sholokhov’s *And Quiet Flows the Don* (1928-1932; 1940), Mikhail Bulgakov’s *White Guard* (1926), Vasily Grossman’s *Life and Fate* (1959), and Vasily Aksyonov’s *Generations of Winter* (1994), to understand the role of nationalism and literature in the construction of a unified Soviet identity. Russian literature has long been seen as an arena for the discussion of Russian and Slavic national identities, whether we consider the Imperial era, the Soviet period, or the modern-day Russian Federation. Of course, each of these works has a complicated relationship with the censors and cannot be read directly as truthful history. However, to dismiss these four works as existing only in the binary of state approved Soviet propaganda or anti-Soviet dissident literature is to do a disservice to each individual author’s interpretation of the Soviet state, and their respective commentaries on a Soviet identity. In many ways these novelists give us greater insight into questions such as the formation of identities through the catastrophes of the twentieth century, supplementing a Soviet historiography that Western historians know is heavily compromised by ideology and censorship.

If we compare *And Quiet Flows the Don*, *White Guard*, *Life and Fate*, *Generations of Winter*, and official Soviet historiography, these works illustrate how the same events were interpreted overtime in the making of a Soviet people. These novels argue that domestic terrorism was not the sole basis for Soviet identity, and that while official narratives of Soviet patriotism may not paint the whole picture, it is not entirely false that a Soviet people was forged

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in the course of the first post-revolutionary decades. Upon closer analysis of Soviet war fiction and the phases of Soviet national policy, the origin of the Soviet Union as a multinational homeland has always integrated the individual within the collective experience. As this thesis has demonstrated, these novels are not simply products of Soviet repression or Soviet political agenda; they have complex, complicated relationships with the history of the Russian-state, and they offer the reader a chance to uncover the fusion of identities from the empire into the Soviet century. Thus, aiding in the understanding of modern-day Russian identity politics, which cannot neither be totally characterized as a regressive policies that directly mirrors Romanovs’ Empire or Stalin’s Soviet Union, but rather support the notion that each political system had a directly influenced the following one. The identity politics of modern-day Russia and the surrounding former Soviet states, do maintain a shared history with the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union which is continuously evolving.

**Sovietization is not Russification**

The Bolsheviks regularly claimed that the Revolution represented a break in time, and that the Soviet state broke with the Russian Imperial state and its policies of Russification. In the presentation of theoretical Bolshevik internationalism, Lenin’s consolidation of the Soviet national republics, and Stalin’s “Socialism in One Country,” the recurring message appears that Sovietization is not Russification, but a new social order that breaks with prior understanding of self as an individual entity in exchange for a collective sense of self. But this insistence on a complete break with the past generated oversights in Soviet national policy, as our novels show. *And Quiet Flows the Don* and *White Guard*, for example, illustrate the transition from an Imperial identity to a Soviet identity and uncover how literature can unravel the complexities of Soviet
identity. The novels show that Sovietization is not a continuation of Russification, but that Sovietization did use the legacy of Russification in order to create a Soviet identity.

Soviet literature should be taken into consideration when discussing Soviet identity, because literacy promotion was a primary concern of the Party in their methods of creating and representing Soviet nationals. Official narratives that explained the creation of the Soviet nation recognized the diverse histories and experiences of nationals in the Russian Empire to legitimize their new state. The Soviet Union’s hyper-awareness of the failures in Imperial national policy would seemingly suggest that they would avoid any action that would emulate past repression. But Mikhail Sholokhov’s *And Quiet Flows the Don* and Mikhail Bulgakov’s *White Guard* demonstrate that the Revolution could only be a continuation of the past, in that they present the foundational failure of Bolsheviks to appeal to national groups. Though both authors offer differing critiques of the Russian Bolsheviks, they in some way agree that the revolutionaries’ presentation of the self as enlightened and informed appears to be in alignment with Russian Imperial chauvinism. Furthermore, the Bolsheviks project onto these national groups nineteenth-century stereotypes, thus showing that Bolsheviks are also men of their time.

The works of Bulgakov and Sholokhov express the idea that history is outside of human control, but they do not present human progress in the terms of historical materialism. In the novels it is nature or the supernatural that moves time, and therefore the failure of the counterrevolutionary nationals is presented as submission on their part rather than the victory of the superior strength of Bolshevik ideology, or of the Red Army. Thus, this event, for our authors, did not result in a total transformation of Russian identities. The arguments presented in both Sholokhov and Bulgakov’s works result in the same conclusion: that remnants of an Imperial sense of national identity still existed in the wake of Bolshevik victory.
Predominately the authors use the connection between identity and physical space to make their points; in the case of Sholokhov’s Melehokovs it is Tatarsk and for Bulgakov’s Turbins it is Kiev. This relationship between geography and national identity is presented in the respective characters’ world view and sense of duty to their respective homelands. The national groups of Don Cossacks in *And Quiet Flows the Don* and Great Russians in *White Guard* lose their will to fight when concern for their personal homeland is lost. Flight becomes regarded as heroic, as it is resigning one's fate to chance and, or to the supernatural. The Melehkovs and the Turbins retreat to their homes in a state of vulnerability; their will to engage in kinetic conflict has decreased, but their view of national self is not shattered.

Furthermore, within the national groups the Bolsheviks proclaimed to be representing, a clear hierarchy remained, with the Russians being perceived as the hegemon. In the analysis of the novels it is uncovered why *White Guard* was perceived as more threatening to the creation of a Soviet identity than *And Quiet Flows the Don*. The success of Sholokhov’s work as canonical Soviet fiction stems from the fact that it can still be read as a novel which proves Marxist-Leninist development. The Don Cossacks’ decline can be interpreted as indicative of the supremacy or right to rule of Bolshevik ideology. However, the same sort of reading cannot be applied to *White Guard* because Bulgakov concludes that Sovietization is a new form of Russification. He does not make any distinctions between Russians of the past, present, or future; Bulgakov presents Russians, as well as the other nationalities depicted in his novel, as limited by the constraints of their national character.

**The Soviet Union was a Multinational Homeland**

During the interwar period official narratives from the Soviet Union proclaimed that its inwardness was not a product of Stalin’s culture of fear, but a natural process that demonstrated
the success of Marxist-Leninist historical materialism. According to these narratives, the material progress of Eastern Europe was symbolic of the region’s political effectiveness, or social progress. Within Soviet historiography, it is stated that the one-party state was the embodiment of the people, and the current iteration of the Soviet Union was an extension of Lenin’s promise. The notion that the material progress of the Soviet Union was a confirmation of Bolshevik ideology, and a Soviet people was reinstated during the Second World War. The Second World War is depicted in Soviet historiography as a patriotic, national struggle. Soviet nationals partook in not because of their allegiance solely to their national republic, but rather because their connection to their national republic solidified that they were vanguards of the Revolution.558

The narratives presented in Vasily Grossman’s Life and Fate and Vassily Aksyonov’s Generations of Winter characters reflect on the national identities prior to the Revolutionary, as well as the transition to a consolidated Soviet nation-state. Both novels ruminate on the question, “is Bolshevik ideology inherently corrupt? Or is Stalin’s interpretation of Bolshevik ideology the origins of corruption?” The Soviet soldiers’ allegiance to and defense of the Soviet Union can neither be understood as an ideological-patriotic commitment, nor can it be looked at as totally informed by fear of the state. These novels illustrate that both notions are equally true and existed simultaneously within the individual.

Grossman’s Life and Fate and Aksyonov’s Generation of Winter utilize the notion of the expanse of the Soviet Union as a homeland to the Soviet people to challenge the idea that all Soviet nationals were regarded as equals within the collective. The primary method they use to deny the existence of Soviet patriotism is by illustrating a failure of Soviet national development within

individual republics and illustrating Soviet men as careerist and self-interested, not as representatives of the collective. Both novelists use the Second World War as the focal point of their discussion; however they use the Revolution as a point of origin for their discussions of Soviet identity politics. *Generations of Winter* and *Life and Fate* illustrate how Soviet nationalities were flawed from their construction; in that they were formulated from Imperial understanding of self. Despite the claim of developing Soviet nations that was fundamentally different from that of the bourgeois nations that precede it, they show that the Soviets never entirely rejected Imperial nationality identity, because they used it to construct their own. Following this it is argued that rather than the creation of an entirely new sense of identity, this process only further created a sense of homogenization within its national republics. The national character found in each republic subsequently altered the ways in which Soviet nationals viewed their identities with relation to their Soviet identity.

Grossman’s *Life and Fate* and Aksyonov’s *Generations and Winter* show the break in time generated by the Revolution was not so great as presented in Soviet historiography. The Russian state occupies the same central geopolitical influence in the Soviet Union as it did during the Russian Empire. In order to illustrate the ineffectiveness of the Revolution to break with time both novels share the conclusion that the enemy of the people is not Nazi Germany but is rather the Soviet state. Therefore, Grossman and Aksyonov, in opposition to the official narrative that Soviet victory over Nazi Germany demonstrated the power of Soviet patriotism, use Nazi atrocities to reflect on the failures of Bolshevik internationalism.

In *Life and Fate* the narrative structure flips between German-occupied settings and Soviet territories. Grossman’s narrative, however, remains focused on the Soviet experience of the war. It does so not to heroize the ideal of the Soviets over the Nazis, but rather to illustrate that through
military victory Stalin furthered justified his usage of terror and persecution in the name of pure, strong Soviet state. However, the undercurrent argument in the book is not at odds with the notion of Soviet unity itself; it is rather at odds with the notion that Soviet unity is properly represented by the State apparatus and bureaucracy. *Generations of Winter*, contrastingly, is not concerned with the division between Bolshevik theory and Soviet practice. In that it characterizes the Soviet Generation as recognizing the incongruity of the Revolutionary rhetoric in their daily life. The Gradov siblings intentionally break with a traditional understanding of self - this loss of self is seen as destructive, but also self-inflicted.

**Russianness From the Russian Empire to the Soviet Union**

The centrality of Russianness is common in all four works that I have analyzed above. Sholokhov’s *And Quiet Flows the Don*, Bulgakov’s *White Guard* (1926), Grossman’s *Life and Fate* (1959), and Aksyonov’s *Generations of Winter* (1994) depict prominent events in the Soviet Union through the experiences of nationals residing in or who identify with the Russian state. While other Soviet territories are mentioned, the authors do differentiate the experiences of non-Russian soviet nationals. Ironically, these distinctions illustrate the failure of the Soviet Union to create a unified identity that did not center on Russianness. Therefore, it is understandable why the Russian Revolution is not regarded as a victory of the masses, but has rather become embedded into the national history of Russia. 559

These Soviet-Tolstoyan novels communicate the ways in which Russians, within the context of Soviet national policy, evolved throughout the twentieth century. The novels are critical of the system they live in, and they are reflective of what these authors think of their identity in

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context of their contemporary situation. In depicting pivotal moments, such as the Russian Revolution, the Russian Civil War, and the Second World War, in the creation of a Soviet people, these fictitious narratives do not present a singular interpretation. Therefore, they deny the formulaic official view of the Soviet nation as representative of Marxist-Leninist development. These individual authors have presented a subjective form of “truth” that interweaves official narratives from the Soviet government, with the novelist's lived experiences and perceptions of Soviet national policy. Sholokhov, Bulgakov, Grossman, and Aksyonov have demonstrated the ways in which Soviet identity and Russian identity are inseparable from one another.

Soviet fiction can be used to uncover Russian historiographical trends which used conflict to construct a national identity, which was thereby reinforced through literature. While the fear of despotism is associated with Stalin, his persecution was not always presented as discriminatory towards a singular national group. Terror as the element of Soviet identity formation is mentioned as a flaw in of Bolshevik theory in practice, but that does not originate under Stalinism, as ideological justifications for persecuting groups of people for their predisposed or assumed characteristics has occurred since the Red Terror during the Civil War. There does exist a formulation of a Soviet identity though not in the way of its original intention, as individual national identities coexist within it. The idea that certain regions or places remain not altered by the creation of the Soviet Union; it is only reinforced - even when physical space is stripped away or changed by Soviet policy.

Soviet identity had two components: two forms of identity: a national one and a Soviet one, but they were reliant upon each other. Thus historical reality prevented the merging of Soviet-nationals into a non-distinct conglomerate of equalized peoples, despite the Soviet Union’s attempts to present itself as a single, united, and ever-progressing people. as progressing people.
This notion of continuity is what informs Soviet identity is a recurring theme that connects *And Quiet Flows the Don*, *White Guard*, *Life and Fate*, and *Generations of Winter* through time and space. The stories told in all four of the novels illustrate a determination to express and give credence to the experiences of Soviet individuals without totally denying the existence of a collective Soviet experience.
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