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A Neglected Source of Lenin's Nationality Policy

Lenin's crucial role in formulating and laying the foundations of Soviet nationality policy is acknowledged by all. His nationality program—whether one views it as opportunist and pseudo-Marxist or as “the outstanding contribution to the treasure trove of creative Marxism”—is considered to be his most original and perhaps most successful policy.¹ Lenin's lasting impact on the nationalities themselves is attested by the fact that national dissidents in the Soviet Union often call for a return to “Leninist” policy. One dissident writes, “It is difficult to find today anything more useful, noble and imperative than the restoration of Lenin's nationalities policy.”²

According to most biographers, Lenin became involved with the nationality question only on the eve of World War I while living in exile in the multinational Austrian Empire. It was there that he recognized nationalism as a powerful force and began to devise a program that would harness it for the revolution. Opposing both the cultural autonomy scheme of the Austrian Marxists and the total scorn of nationalism by Rosa Luxemburg, Lenin, in debates with fellow Marxists, formulated his own program.

The program consisted of three components: (1) the absolute rejection of any division of proletarian organizations and, above all, the party along lines of nationality; (2) “National Self-determination”; and (3) “Full Equality of Nationalities and Languages.” Obviously, the first component offered nothing positive. But neither did the second—in Lenin's interpretation the right to self-determination encompassed only the right to secede. For nationalities choosing not to separate, it offered nothing at all.³ Thus, only the third component, the call for equality, constituted the positive core of Lenin's nationality program. This component (particularly its linguistic aspect) served as the basis of the concrete and practical program of national-cultural development that was vigorously applied in the 1920s. With regard to language, Lenin was unambiguous, assured, and consistent—the “national form” in the capsulized formula, which until recently was used to describe Soviet nationality policy, was chiefly equated with language.⁴ (Lenin never made clear how national equality could be trans-

1. P. N. Pospelov et al., *V. I. Lenin, biografia*, 2nd ed. (Moscow, 1963), p. 238.

2. Ivan Dzyuba, *Internationalism or Russification?: A Study in the Soviet Nationalities Problem* (London, 1968), p. 8. Though the call for a return to Lenin may be the most effective method of protest in the Soviet Union today, there seems to be more than mere political calculation involved. Nationalists in the West also favorably compare Lenin's program with Soviet reality.

3. V. I. Lenin, *Kriticheskie zametki po natsional'nomu voprosu* (Moscow, 1970), pp. 41 and 55; Richard Pipes, *Formation of the Soviet Union* (New York, 1968), p. 43.

4. “The specific character of a national culture is first of all determined by the language in which the given culture is being created; namely, the language is the form of national culture” (G. G. Karpov, *O sovetskoi kul'turnoi revoliutsii v SSSR* [Moscow, 1954], p. 70).

lated into territorial or administrative forms. Here he seemed considerably less confident and consistent, and sometimes reversed himself completely, as in the case of first opposing and then favoring a federal solution.)

Only the negative parts of Lenin's nationality program, the injunction against proletarian division and the largely empty slogan of "National Self-determination" (which Lenin only temporarily breathed into life), can be traced to Marx. This is tacitly acknowledged in the Soviet Union, where nationality theory is described as Marxist-Leninist and nationality policy as Leninist. Furthermore, nothing can be traced to Lenin's fellow Marxists, against whose views Lenin "chiseled" out his own policy.⁵ Only the Austrians had a program, and Lenin vehemently rejected it as standing for "a most subtle and therefore most harmful form of nationalism."⁶ Nor can Lenin's program be traced to the Russian revolutionary tradition, to which much of Leninism is often attributed. No Russian movement or party had a coherent and appealing nationality program; indeed, Lenin was never accused of "appropriating" the nationality plank of another party, as was, for example, the case with his peasant program.

What then was the source of the positive part of Lenin's nationality program? From where did he draw the basic approach and specific elements of his program? Why were his early ideas on national equality and language, expressed in his brief references to the nationality question (1895–1903), so consistent with those expressed in his major writings from 1913 to 1916 as well as with those in his very last works on the question?

Although Lenin may have formulated his nationality program relatively late (and in the process of fighting fellow Marxists rather than national oppressors), it is the purpose of this paper to show that he nevertheless approached the nationalities with sincere and deep convictions that were formed in his youth. The positive component of Lenin's nationality program was derived directly from his own father and from a Chuvash friend of the family, the educator I. Ia. Iakovlev. Indirectly, many aspects of his program were derived from the ideas and experiences of a remarkable Russian Orthodox lay missionary, a colleague and friend of Lenin's father, N. I. Il'minskii. Long before the Soviet formula "National in Form, Socialist in Content" was coined, Il'minskii's approach, which centered on native languages, was defended—from Russian nationalist attacks—as one which stressed the "Orthodox content" rather than the "national form."⁷

Il'minskii's approach appeared quite simple and, on the face of it, in the tradition of the Orthodox church. But while Saints Cyril and Methodius, for example, resorted to a special Slavonic tongue for all Slavs (Church Slavonic), Il'minskii expressly elevated the language spoken by the people (sometimes even

5. I feel that M. Holdsworth's verb is well chosen, for it implies the presence of a basic block of material ("Lenin and the Nationality Question," in L. Schapiro and P. Reddaway, eds., *Lenin, the Man, the Theorist, the Leader: A Reappraisal* [New York, 1967], p. 265).

6. V. I. Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 5th ed., 55 vols. (Moscow, 1958–65), 24:225. Hereafter, unless otherwise noted, all references to Lenin's *Sochineniia* are to the fifth edition.

7. Ministerstvo Narodnogo Prosveshcheniia, *Trudy osobogo soveshchaniia po voprosam obrazovaniia vostochnykh inorodtsev*, ed. A. S. Budilovich (St. Petersburg, 1905), p. xi.

two or three dialects) to heights where it served not only as an aid to comprehending, but as the chief vehicle of "the higher truths." Il'minskii even preferred that Orthodox natives pray in their own tongue rather than in Russian. Conversely, to hinder Islam he preferred that Russia's Muslims retain Arabic in worship and education.⁸

Il'minskii's emphasis on the mother tongue led to the establishment of native-language primary schools, to teachers and priests who spoke the language of their pupils and parishioners, to special native secondary schools to train the teachers and priests, and to publication of native-language textbooks and devotional literature. These developments led, in turn, to extensive work on native languages: Il'minskii and his followers had to devise grammars, compile dictionaries and, in cases where languages lacked written forms, create suitable alphabets. The use of the mother tongue as the chief instrument of "enlightening" non-Russians in Orthodoxy formed the cornerstone of what became known as the "Il'minskii system."⁹

In Russia in the latter part of the nineteenth century, Il'minskii's approach was a clear departure from official Russification policies and ran counter to the prevailing current of Great Russian nationalism which stressed especially the Russian language. Yet Il'minskii was able to win the backing of several powerful officials. D. A. Tolstoi, the minister of education, was so impressed by Il'minskii's private Baptized-Tatar School that, despite powerful opposition, his ministry officially adopted Il'minskii's approach in its Regulations of 1870.¹⁰ In practice, however, the mother tongue entered the school only in areas where Il'minskii himself, or his followers, could overcome not only the usual forces of bureaucratic inertia, but the vehement Russian nationalist opposition as well.

What proof can one marshal to link Lenin's nationality policy with Il'minskii's system? There appears to be no evidence of direct contact between Lenin and Il'minskii, nor is there any reference to Il'minskii in Lenin's writings. The connection was indirect, but, perhaps for that very reason, more basic: the ideas came through the father and the home as something self-evident and unquestionable. The *déjà vu* quality of Soviet nationality policy in the 1920s, for one familiar with the Il'minskii system, is not simply a case of Lenin "borrowing" or "adopting" a particular method or feature from Il'minskii's system, but is a result of his acceptance of the very premises on which that system was built. Although no "proof positive" has been found to support the contention that Lenin absorbed Il'minskii's ideas at an impressionable age in the warm home atmosphere, there is, as Leonard Schapiro puts it, "a fundamental difference between the legal evidence admissible in a court of law and the kind of information with which the historian is forced to deal. In attempting to reconstruct a whole picture, and particularly in handling the difficult problem of causation,

8. N. I. Il'minskii, *Vospominaniia ob Altynsarine* (Kazan', 1891), pp. 191-92.

9. The term "system" is somewhat misleading, for Il'minskii stressed no set curriculum or administrative techniques and generally frowned on rules and regulations; nevertheless it was used.

10. "O merakh k obrazovaniu naseliiushchikh Rossiu inorodtsev," *Sbornik postanovlenii Ministerstva Narodnogo Prosveshcheniia*, vol. 4 (St. Petersburg, 1871), pp. 1555-66.

the historian has to consider such factors as myth, atmosphere and the most diverse fragments of information."¹¹

Was Il'minskii's approach so unique as to preclude the possibility that Lenin may have picked it up from some other source? The scope and consistency of Il'minskii's approach had no exact parallel in other missionary or reformist activities in Russia, and, indeed, those that bear closest comparison actually stem from Il'minskii.¹² Most of Western missionary experience—for example, in the Philippines, or Brazil, or among American Indians (who today can brand "religion and education" as their "chief enemies")—points to a totally different approach.¹³ The activities of some Western missionaries only recently have compared with Il'minskii's, and the novelty of the approach is still newsworthy.¹⁴ But even if we ignore the unique emphasis on language in both Il'minskii's approach and Lenin's approach, no evidence exists of Lenin's acquaintance with other missionary activities. There is, however, ample proof that Lenin had the opportunity to observe and learn at first hand about the Il'minskii system.

Vladimir Il'ich Ul'ianov was born in Simbirsk in 1870 (the year that Il'minskii's system won official recognition). The family had moved to Simbirsk shortly before Lenin's birth, upon the father's appointment to a newly created post of inspector of schools.

Il'ia Ul'ianov loved his work and tirelessly promoted education in his province. According to his daughter, the work was "his passion, the main pur-

11. Leonard Schapiro, "The Political Thought of the First Provisional Government," in *Revolutionary Russia: A Symposium*, ed. Richard Pipes (New York, 1969), p. 119.

12. Archbishop Nikolai (the founder of the Japanese Russian Orthodox Mission that by 1912 comprised a community of 32,000 Orthodox Japanese served by a native clergy, a network of primary schools, and a theological seminary with Japanese as the language of instruction throughout) considered Il'minskii's counsels "the foundation of my missionary convictions and activities" ("Archiepiskop Nikolai Iaponskii i Kazanskaia Dukhovnaia Akademiia," *Pravoslavnyi sobesednik*, February 1912, p. 172; Nikolai Iaponskii, "Otvety na privetstvie Akademii ko dniu 30go iubileia ego sluzheniia," *ibid.*, July–August 1912, pp. 203–4). Il'minskii also had an impact on the Muslims. According to Bennigsen, his activity was "one of the immediate causes of the great [Muslim] Reformist Movement." Gasprinskii was well acquainted with Il'minskii's system and, according to Zenkovsky, Il'minskii had a major influence on the Muslim reformer (A. Bennigsen and C. Lemerrier-Quellejay, *Islam in the Soviet Union* [New York, 1967], p. 13; N. P. Ostroumov, "K istorii musul'manskogo obrazovatel'nogo dvizheniia v Rossii v 19 i 20 stoletiiakh," *Mir Islama*, 2, no. 5 [1913]: 316; S. Zenkovsky, "Rossiia i Tiurki," *Novyi zhurnal*, 47 [1956]: 183).

13. *New York Times*, June 18, 1975, p. 36. In Africa, in spite of sporadic missionary efforts to use native languages, European languages continued to be dominant in education. Welmers reports the case of an indigenous minister who, once ordained, preached in English through an interpreter (W. E. Welmers, "Christian Missions and Language Policies in Africa," in *Advances in Language Planning*, ed. J. A. Fishman [The Hague and Paris, 1974], p. 194).

14. See, for example, a report about a Catholic priest holding services in the Cree language for American Indians (*New York Times*, August 23, 1972), or reports about an American Evangelist group which runs a special Summer Institute of Linguistics (*New York Times*, July 27, 1967; June 21, 1969). The Institute sends students to South America to learn tribal languages, then publishes primers that are used in literacy programs, health booklets (Il'minskii also had issued some on cholera and other diseases), and, of course, the Bible in the various languages.

pose in his life.”¹⁵ A contemporary (1876) magazine account of Simbirsk confirms this description as it heaps praise on Ul'ianov for his “limitless, selfless devotion to the cause [of education].”¹⁶

Ul'ianov's impact on his children was profound. According to Krupskaiia, “Il'ia Nikolaevich had a great influence on Il'ich. And there was much that Il'ich could learn from his father.”¹⁷ “Father's example, always busy, always burning for his work, was enormous,” recalled Lenin's sister.¹⁸ “Without taking this influence of the father on the children into account, it is impossible to understand the family,” insists Lenin's brother.¹⁹ The father loved to share his professional experience with those at home. “I remember as a boy, when father would return from a tour of the province and then for hours tell us about the schoolboys.”²⁰ The tales at the family table, according to Trotsky, “were eagerly absorbed by the children's minds.”²¹ All the Ul'ianov children, and certainly the two elder sons, seem to have inherited the same “limitless, selfless devotion to the cause.”

More than one-third of the population in the province was non-Russian, and Ul'ianov, first as state inspector and then as state director of schools, enthusiastically promoted the special native schools authorized by the 1870 Regulations. Writing in 1928, N. O. Lerner remembered, “with special clarity to this very day,” Ul'ianov's tireless efforts on behalf of national minorities.²² D. Delarov, reminiscing about the family in 1924, recalled above all Ul'ianov's “love and special deep concern for opening schools and spreading literacy among the Chuvash.”²³ Ul'ianov's record of achievement in popular education, and especially in native education, is cited by Alston as a demonstration that “a conscientious ‘bureaucrat’ could work wonders within the existing power structure.” In the fifteen-year span of Ul'ianov's activities, not only did the school population greatly expand but the number of non-Russians more than doubled, and most of the non-Russian students were being taught in their own language.²⁴

As colleagues in the same educational region of Kazan', Ul'ianov and Il'minskii worked closely together to open and to encourage the non-Russian schools. According to N. A. Vasil'ev, whose father was a friend of both men, the good relations between Ul'ianov and Il'minskii “were based to a large extent on the mutually shared ideas in the field of native education.” N. A. Nazar'ev, another mutual friend of the two educators, closely associated them. Il'minskii and Ul'ianov also had mutual enemies. For example, the most determined op-

15. Mariia Ul'ianova, in *Vospominaniia o Lenine*, vol. 1 (Moscow, 1969), p. 182.

16. V. Nazar'ev, “Sovremennaia glush',” *Vestnik Evropy*, March 1876, p. 296.

17. N. K. Krupskaiia, *Pedagogicheskie sochineniia*, vol. 2 (Moscow, 1958), p. 685.

18. Mariia Ul'ianova, in *Vospominaniia o Lenine*, p. 183.

19. Dmitrii Ul'ianov, *Vospominaniia o Vladimire Il'iche*, 4th ed. (Moscow, 1971), p. 124.

20. *Ibid.*

21. L. Trotsky, *The Young Lenin* (New York, 1972), p. 19.

22. N. O. Lerner, “Otets Lenina,” *Minuvshie dni*, no. 3 (February 1928), p. 12.

23. Quoted in A. I. Ivanskii, *Il'ia Nikolaevich Ul'ianov: Po vospominaniiam sovremennikov i dokumentam* (Moscow, 1963), p. 228.

24. P. L. Alston, *Education and the State in Tsarist Russia* (Stanford, 1969), p. 104; A. I. Kondakov, *Direktor narodnykh uchilishch, I. N. Ul'ianov* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1948), pp. 50–59.

ponent of Il'minskii's system in the Kazan' educational region, Father A. I. Baratynskii, also constantly criticized Ul'ianov's work.²⁵

Ul'ianov even relaxed with his work at home. "As a rest from work," according to his daughter, "he loved to talk with people who were interested in his work."²⁶ Most of the visitors to the house were his colleagues, and because the question of native education was controversial and each native school involved special effort, much of the discussion centered on it. "Il'ia Nikolaevich's attitude toward the minorities," writes Krupskaia, "could not but influence Il'ich, who listened to what his father was saying, to what was said by others."²⁷ To illustrate how Lenin "followed in his father's footsteps," Krupskaia tells of his coaching a native Chuvash, N. S. Okhotnikov, for the entrance examination to Kazan' University. Okhotnikov, a teacher in one of Il'minskii's schools, had a passion for mathematics but lacked knowledge of the required classical languages. For a year and a half Lenin tutored Okhotnikov free of charge, as the man was supporting a large family on a meager salary. Although this seems to have been unusual for Lenin, it is offered by Soviet biographers as proof of Lenin's generosity and "compassion for the oppressed nationalities."²⁸ The tutoring (two or three evenings a week) involved considerable effort, and came at a time when Lenin had just lost his father and was busy with family affairs as well as preparing for his own entrance examinations. (Okhotnikov and Lenin passed at the same time.) Was this act of generosity Lenin's way of honoring the memory of his father, or was it perhaps an attempt to expiate guilt feelings (many biographers note Lenin's rude behavior in the last year of his father's life) by doing something he knew would have pleased his father? The fact that Lenin was asked to help Okhotnikov by both a close family friend (the Chuvash, Iakovlev) and the principal of his gymnasium (F. M. Kerenskii) may also be significant. Whatever the motivation, the Okhotnikov case suggests a special regard for non-Russians in the Ul'ianov milieu.²⁹

It was through another Chuvash, however, that young Lenin had close contact with the Il'minskii system in action. I. Ia. Iakovlev was not only a friend of the Ul'ianov family and probably its most frequent visitor, but also "the most faithful follower of Il'minskii."³⁰ It is important, therefore, to dwell on details of this connection and to outline briefly Iakovlev's activities.

25. Vasil'ev's memoir in N. G. Domozhakov, ed., *Katanov: Materialy i soobshcheniia* (Abakan, 1958), p. 107; N. Nazar'ev, "Iz vospominanii vstrech i perepiski 70kh godov," *Vestnik Evropy*, April 1898, pp. 683-84, 712; Zh. Trofimov, "Prikaz o skoroi otstavke," *Nauka i religiia*, no. 4 (1976), pp. 6-9.

26. Anna Ul'ianova, *Vospominaniia o Lenine*, p. 18.

27. N. K. Krupskaia, *O Lenine* (Moscow, 1960), p. 28.

28. P. N. Pospelov et al., *Lenin*, p. 7.

29. A. I. Ivanskii, *I. N. Ul'ianov*, p. 259; A. I. Ul'ianova, *Detskie i shkol'nye gody Il'icha* (Ogiz, 1931), p. 28.

30. E. N. Medynskii, *Istoriia russkoi pedagogiki do Velikoi Oktiabr'skoi Revoliutsii*, 2nd ed. (Moscow, 1938), p. 356. For references to Iakovlev as a frequent visitor, see the memoirs of V. V. Kashkadamova, in A. Karamyshev, ed., *Ul'ianov v vospominaniakh sovremennikov* (Saratov, 1968), p. 98; or M. I. Ul'ianova, in M. Ia. Sirotkin, ed., *I. Ia. Iakovlev* (Cheboksary, 1959), p. 59.

The Ul'ianovs met Iakovlev when the family arrived in Simbirsk in 1869. Though himself in gymnasium, Iakovlev was running a makeshift school for several Chuvash boys. The Ul'ianovs immediately offered him help and, when Iakovlev left for Kazan' a few months later to study at the University, Ul'ianov unofficially took the "school" under his wing. While in Kazan', Iakovlev, who had originally ignored his own language and had even written an article supporting Il'minskii's opponents, "was converted to the faith."³¹ Chuvash education and Iakovlev's fledgling school in particular now became the subject of a triangular Il'minskii-Ul'ianov-Iakovlev correspondence. Working together, Il'minskii and Ul'ianov secured the adoption of Iakovlev's school by the Ministry of Education, thereby assuring the school's financial base and further growth.³²

After graduation, Iakovlev returned to Simbirsk as state inspector of Chuvash schools for the entire educational region of Kazan' and as head of the now rapidly growing Simbirsk Chuvash School. (He had secured both posts thanks to Il'minskii.) The Ul'ianov and Iakovlev families lived nearby and had a close relationship.³³ The two officials often inspected Chuvash schools in the province together and Ul'ianov sometimes took along his two older sons. Alexander and Vladimir were also frequent visitors in Iakovlev's school.³⁴

The link between the families was not broken after Ul'ianov's death.³⁵ In 1887, when the Ul'ianov family was shunned after Alexander's attempt on the tsar's life, Iakovlev was one of the few who "did not turn away from them." He even tried to save Alexander's life by enlisting Il'minskii's aid through the latter's high connections.³⁶ After the October Revolution, Lenin in turn came to Iakovlev's aid in matters ranging from job or pension to that of the family's apartment. And whenever Lenin would come across a Chuvash, he would always ask about Iakovlev.³⁷

Iakovlev's active direction of Chuvash education spanned more than half a century, during which time his original makeshift school became the "cradle of Chuvash enlightenment" and trained over two thousand teachers. These teachers were sent out to staff a network of more than four hundred Chuvash-language

31. N. G. Krasnov et al., eds., *I. Ia. Iakovlev v vospominaniakh sovremennikov* (Cheboksary, 1968), pp. 26 and 39.

32. Sirotkin, *I. Ia. Iakovlev*, p. 52.

33. Kondakov, *I. N. Ul'ianov*, p. 51.

34. Ivanskii, *I. N. Ul'ianov*, p. 235; Karamyshev, *Ul'ianov*, pp. 94 and 98. A teacher of Russian in Iakovlev's school was the Ul'ianov family tutor. Accustomed to teaching non-Russians, he spoke in a halting manner and was sometimes ridiculed by Lenin (Trotsky, *The Young Lenin*, p. 75).

35. Iakovlev and his wife were the last people other than family members to see Ul'ianov alive on January 12, 1886. And it was "a pale Vladimir," in the evening of the same day, who broke the news of his father's death when he came to the Iakovlevs to pick up his younger brother (Iakovlev to Il'minskii, January 13, 1886, in Ivanskii, *I. N. Ul'ianov*, p. 248; A. I. Iakovlev, "Chetyre vstrechi s V. I. Leninym," *Istoricheskii zhurnal*, nos. 1-2 [1942], p. 160).

36. N. G. Krasnov, "Sem'ia Ul'ianovykh i prosveshchenie Chuvashei," *Sovetskaiia pedagogika*, April 1965, p. 83.

37. Lenin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 50, pp. 61 and 573; vol. 51, pp. 39 and 533; Krasnov, *Iakovlev v vospominaniakh*, pp. 20, 21, 122-23; R. A. Lavrov et al., eds., *Narody Rossii o Lenine* (Moscow, 1969), pp. 135-39, 265.

schools that Iakovlev had established.³⁸ Under Il'minskii's direction, Iakovlev had also devised a special Chuvash alphabet based on the Russian transcription. (The Chuvash successfully defended this alphabet from Latinization by the Soviets and, though considerably modified, it is still in use today.) While most of the works published under Iakovlev were religious in nature, textbooks, grammars, and even some original literary works were also published, thus making Iakovlev "the founder of Chuvash literature."³⁹ After the 1905 revolution, the first Chuvash-language newspaper began to appear. (Fittingly, the front page editorial of the first issue paid tribute to Il'minskii, "without whose efforts we could not even think of publishing a newspaper in Chuvash."⁴⁰)

Iakovlev's schools gave birth to a fledgling Chuvash intelligentsia which, like its Russian counterpart, tended to be oppositional but not anti-Russian. Since the Chuvash had no "national" religion and the majority were officially Russian Orthodox, the religious aspect of Il'minskii's system was not an attack on their national integrity. Some of the Chuvash, especially Iakovlev himself, were genuinely attached to the Orthodox church (as Lenin's father had been). In addition, Iakovlev and many of his fellow Chuvash had feelings of genuine gratitude toward Russians such as Ul'ianov or Il'minskii who cared about their "dark people." Even after the Revolution, when it became fashionable to attack "Russian chauvinism," Iakovlev continued to preach only unity and love (which earned him the equivalent of the "Uncle Tom" label among the younger Chuvash). This "Patriarch of Chuvash Culture," as Iakovlev became known during his lifetime, had few political ambitions and was quite satisfied with the "national form" which Il'minskii's system provided.⁴¹ Though Iakovlev obviously loved his people and his language (he was moved to tears when he heard the first original poem in Chuvash), he also believed that "our eastern natives are not slated to play any independent political role . . . they must forever remain obedient historical satellites of the Russian people," and that native education therefore must strive "to bring closer [*sblizit'*] the natives to the Russian people."⁴²

Lenin's familiarity with Iakovlev and the Chuvash helps explain his persistent confidence that the nourishment of national cultures need not lead to a disruption of political unity, that, on the contrary, it only promoted good will.

Nikolai Ivanovich Il'minskii (1822–91) turned his back on a successful academic career as an Orientalist to dedicate the latter half of his life to native

38. A. F. Efirov, "Pedagogicheskaiia deiatel'nost' Chuvashskogo pedagoga I. Ia. Iakovleva," *Sovetskaia pedagogika*, July 1946, p. 78; F. Sidorov and A. Markov, "Uchitel' uchitelei Chuvashskogo naroda," *Narodnoe obrazovanie*, January 1969, p. 92.

39. M. K. Korbut, *Kazanskii Gosudarstvennyi Universitet imeni V. I. Ul'ianova-Lenina za 125 let*, vol. 1 (Kazan', 1930), p. 135; D. P. Petrov, *Chuvashiia* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1926), p. 40.

40. *Khypar*, no. 1, January 8, 1906, quoted in D. D. Danilov, ed., *Sovetskaia Chuvashiia: Sbornik* (Moscow, 1933), p. 108.

41. In his own schools, Iakovlev stressed the Russian language much more than Il'minskii because he felt that it alone could open a path to a broader horizon for the Chuvash.

42. Quoted in Danilov, *Sovetskaia Chuvashiia*, p. 23; *Materialy po istorii Tatarii vtoroi poloviny 19 v.: Agrarnyi vopros i krest'ianskoe dvizhenie*, vol. 1 (Moscow-Leningrad, 1936), p. 468.

Orthodox education. In the early 1860s, while still holding the chair of Turkic languages at both Kazan' University and Kazan' Theological Academy, he became totally absorbed with the problem of the baptized Tatars who, because of cultural and linguistic barriers, were estranged from the Russians and the church and often "defected" to the Islam of their brethren. His interest extended also to other non-Russians, whether in the Volga area, Siberia, or the Kazakh steppe. By 1870, Il'minskii had resigned from both his academic posts to become the full-time "Enlightener of Natives" (*Prosvetitel' inorodtsev*).⁴³

Il'minskii was not concerned with nationalism or the national problem. His point of departure was religious, his goal a missionary one: How to turn nominal converts into true adherents of the church. Because his aim was to instill a true faith rather than simply to convert, Il'minskii insisted on a careful psychological approach to the nationalities. He was after "an inner rebirth that originates and grows in the depth of the heart," "a basic, conscious grasp of the Christian faith," and here "police methods" were useless, for they could not "penetrate into the inner sanctuary of thought and conscience."⁴⁴ As a confirmed conservative, Il'minskii approved only of methods that "act slowly and gradually as is the case with all organic and life processes." He expected that his goal, the unity of all nationalities within the folds of the Orthodox church, could be achieved only over a long period "in the course of life."⁴⁵

In regard to culture, Lenin appears no less conservative and seems to lose his voluntarism completely. The same Lenin who set himself against spontaneity in workers' movements and who chose revolution in the face of Russia's backwardness also warned that "in matters of culture, haste and sweeping measures are harmful." Lenin opposed all talk of creating a proletarian culture: "Those who think in terms of hothouses and incubators have no comprehension of the process of birth." With regard to non-Russians, Lenin was especially adamant that "we must be very careful, patient, make allowances for the residue of national mistrust." Lenin believed, as did Il'minskii, that nationalities would merge (albeit under socialism) "in the course of social life," and that "artificial" measures to hasten this process were harmful.⁴⁶

Il'minskii held what might be considered a Herderian view of the role of the mother tongue: "The mother tongue forms the essence of the spiritual nature of both the individual and of a people and, thus, is the most effective means for reeducating and teaching. Only the mother tongue can truly, rather than just

43. For further biographical details see Isabelle Kreindler, "Educational Policies Toward the Eastern Nationalities in Tsarist Russia: A Study of Il'minskii's System" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1969).

44. N. I. Il'minskii, "Ob obrazovanii inorodtsev posredstvom knig perevedennykh na ikh iazyk," *Pravoslavnoe obozrenie*, March 1863, p. 139.

45. N. I. Il'minskii, "Zapiska po voprosu ob otpadeniiakh kreshchenykh Tatar," *Pravoslavnyi sobesednik*, 2 (1895): 272; N. I. Il'minskii, *Pisma k ober-Prokuroru Sv. Sinoda, K. P. Pobedonostsevu* (Kazan', 1895), p. 399.

46. Lenin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 45, p. 389; vol. 40, p. 43; vol. 24, p. 295; E. Dobin, *Lenin i iskusstvo: Memuary* (Leningrad, 1934), p. 229. Even in the heady days of October, Lenin cautioned Lunacharskii (they had met by chance in the corridors of Smolny) "to be very careful with any reforms" (A. Lunacharskii, *Rasskazy o Lenine*, 4th ed. [Moscow, 1971], p. 31).

superficially, set the people on the path to Christianity."⁴⁷ As a linguist, Il'minskii also had a keen appreciation of the uniqueness of each language. "There are slight, almost imperceptible nuances in the sounds and tones of voice as well as in the form and outline of thought that distinguish one people from another. Preserving these differences aids understanding and heightens the impact, while violation of them not only impairs the effect, but even hinders comprehension."⁴⁸ For similar reasons, Il'minskii also favored the popular vernacular version of a language (as, indeed, do the Soviets).

Lenin showed exceptional interest in questions of language.⁴⁹ He seemed to associate national longings and even nationality itself almost exclusively with language. In 1916, for example, he described the Ukrainian struggle as "a movement toward freedom and toward the mother tongue," and in marginal comments on his readings on the nationality question Lenin wrote: "A nation is not based on a common culture or fate but on a common language"; "language and territory are eternal."⁵⁰ Certainly Lenin, in his nationality program, always attached the greatest importance to the mother tongue. At the Second Party Congress, he fully backed the inclusion of a specific language point in the party program and was especially irked that his Bundist opponents, during the debates, had tried to make it appear that he was against "language equality."⁵¹ The right to education in one's mother tongue and the right to use one's language in public and state institutions, essentially in Lenin's formulation, became point eight in the 1903 party program. Later, whenever this point was omitted in party projects, Lenin would personally include it. Lenin instructed Bolshevik deputies in the Duma to demand full equality of languages without any privileges for Russian, a program which was opposed by many of his fellow Bolsheviks (as Lenin's correspondence with Shaumian, for example, illustrates).⁵² He also contemptuously dismissed the Kadet program, even though it favored full rights for all languages, because it preserved for Russian the role of state tongue and hence would still be a required subject in all schools.⁵³

47. N. I. Il'minskii, "O perevode Pravoslavnykh knig na tatarskii iazyk," *Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnogo Prosveshcheniia*, 152 (November 1870): 14-15.

48. Il'minskii, *Pis'ma k Pobedonostsevu*, p. 152. In his own translations, Il'minskii stubbornly opposed all changes "in the direction of Russification." He attacked Tungus translations for their Russian construction, which made them "most obscure for the Tungus," and the Trans-Baikal Mission's Buriat translations for their "Russicisms." Il'minskii also defended the work of a Zyrian linguist against censors' demands to substitute Russian expressions for Zyrian (ibid., pp. 110, 182, 46; N. I. Il'minskii, "Po povodu otcheta Zabaikal'skoi dukhovnoi missii," *Pravoslavnoe obozrenie*, November 1870, p. 377).

49. Krupskaiia, *Pedagogicheskie sochineniia*, vol. 3, p. 670. Lenin's interest in language is also evident from his Notebooks on Imperialism (Lenin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 28, pp. 309-11, 513-16, 552 ff).

50. Lenin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 30, p. 190; vol. 24, p. 388; vol. 26, p. 365.

51. Lenin, *Sochineniia*, 4th ed., vol. 7, pp. 6 and 11.

52. *KPSS v rezoliutsiakh i resheniakh s'ezdov, konferentsii i plenumov*, 7th ed., vol. 1 (Moscow, 1953), p. 40; Lenin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 7, p. 241; vol. 25, pp. 135-36; vol. 32, pp. 142 and 154; vol. 38, pp. 111 and 409; vol. 48, pp. 234-35, 291, 302-3.

53. Lenin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 23, pp. 317, 423-26; vol. 24, pp. 116, 293-95. Lenin's injunction against any privileges for Russian was not openly flaunted until 1938 when Russian was made a compulsory subject. By the School Law of 1958 it was made voluntary again. How-

While Lenin's call for equality of languages was sincere—he stressed this point even more after coming to power—an element of opportunism is not excluded. Lenin, no less than Il'minskii, was concerned with “reaching” the people and saw in the mother tongue the best “instrument” for the task. “Instead of pushing Ukrainian aside,” he pointed out, “we should try to transform it into a tool of Communist enlightenment.”⁵⁴ “We must reach the native masses,” a Bolshevik, well-attuned to Lenin's approach, explained many years later to a visitor who had been puzzled at the emphasis on national culture in a Marxist state, “and the only way we can reach them is through their own language and their own culture, the culture for which they have genuine love.”⁵⁵

To translate the slogan of “Equality of Languages” into reality and to make languages into a viable tool Lenin advocated a broad program of “development of languages and literatures of the formerly repressed nationalities.”⁵⁶ Soviet nationality policy was to help “in every way the free development of each nationality, the growth and spread of literature in the mother tongue.”⁵⁷ Lenin's concern with national languages is clearly reflected in the 1921 party program, in his call to provide the nationalities living outside their national areas with cultural materials in their language, and in his last writings on the nationality question in which he warned against “the numerous violations” that could creep in under the cover of the needs of a uniform railroad system or of a unitary fiscal system.⁵⁸

Lenin's belief in the eventual fusion of peoples did not necessarily imply the formation of a single proletarian language. (In a margin he once jotted down that “perhaps a universal language will be English and maybe + Russian.”⁵⁹) Like Il'minskii, who had given little thought to unity of language as long as unity of faith prevailed, Lenin did not seem to worry about the eventual language outcome. True conservatives in these matters, both felt that the question would be settled by life itself. As Il'minskii had advised against requiring Russian in Muslim schools, pointing out that those who need the language learn it on their own, so also Lenin advised that “he who needs to know Russian . . . will learn it without a stick.”⁶⁰

Lenin, like Il'minskii, appreciated the uniqueness of each language. In the midst of civil war and intervention, he took time to write a tirade against the

ever, according to L. Tairov, Russian is taught from the first year “and the voluntary principle notwithstanding, there has not been a single case yet of unwillingness or refusal to study Russian” (L. Tairov, “In the Language of Brotherhood,” *Pravda*, October 28, 1972, as translated in the *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, 24, no. 43 [1972]: 23).

54. Lenin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 39, p. 334.

55. Joshua Kunitz, *Dawn over Samarkand* (New York, 1935), p. 224.

56. Lenin, *Kriticheskie zametki*, p. 20; Lenin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 38, pp. 95 and 111. On Lenin's instructions, work on alphabets for small nationalities began in 1921 (T. P. Bibanov, “Rastsvet national'noi kul'tury,” *Nachal'naia shkola*, 1972, no. 6, p. 8).

57. Lenin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 39, p. 114.

58. *KPSS v rezoliutsiakh*, p. 559; Lavrov, *Narody Rossii o Lenine*, p. 227; Lenin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 45, p. 361.

59. Lenin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 24, p. 387.

60. *Ibid.*, p. 295.

debasement of Russian, exemplified by sloppy usage and an influx of foreign words. His concern was motivated not only by aesthetics but also by the possibility that comprehension might be hampered.⁶¹

Il'minskii favored the widest reliance on native cadres to serve as teachers, priests, and administrators, for they of course could easily wield the language "instrument" and instinctively knew the best approach. He pointed out that something almost unattainable for an outsider, unless he has studied ethnography for many years, "is freely given a native by nature."⁶² Il'minskii always worked through native front-men such as V. T. Timofeev for the Tatars, I. Ia. Iakovlev for the Chuvash, or Ibrahim Altynsarin for the Kazakhs. According to Il'minskii, natives who enjoyed the confidence of their people should be appointed even if they "lack knowledge or pedagogical experience."⁶³ The Russians, however, were to provide supervision and direction (not because they were superior, but because they had a better grasp of Russian Orthodoxy).⁶⁴

Lenin also preferred to work through non-Russians. In a letter to Gorky, Lenin clearly expresses his pleasure in finding a suitable mouthpiece for a nationality article: "We have here a splendid Georgian who is sitting and writing a lengthy article."⁶⁵ And when the "splendid Georgian" later became the commissar of nationalities he signed decrees with his discarded native name, Dzhugashvili. Lenin always pressed non-Russian Bolsheviks to use their native names. Antonov-Ovseenko, for example, was sent to the Ukraine on Lenin's suggestion, where he was to call himself only "Ovseenko." (Lenin, however, always addressed him as "Comrade Antonov."⁶⁶) On occasion, Lenin would have an article he had written on the Ukrainian question translated into Ukrainian and published under the name of a Ukrainian Bolshevik. (Lenin would then proceed to write an approving commentary under his own name.⁶⁷) There is an echo of Il'minskii in a Stalin telegram to the non-Belorussian Communist leader of the Belorussian party, informing him that a group of Belorussians will arrive shortly and that Lenin asks that "they be met like younger brothers, perhaps yet inexperienced." Lenin insisted, however, no less than Il'minskii, that Russians should provide leadership whenever needed.⁶⁸

61. Lenin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 40, p. 49.

62. N. I. Il'minskii, *Iz perepiski ob udostoeniinorodtsev sviashchennosluzhitel'skikh dolzhnostei* (Kazan', 1885), p. 9.

63. N. I. Il'minskii, "Shkola dlia pervonachal'nogo obucheniia detei kreshchenykh Tatar v Kazani," *Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnogo Prosveshcheniia*, 134 (June 1867): 327.

64. N. I. Il'minskii, "Prakticheskie zamechaniia o perevodakh i sochineniakh na inorodcheskikh iazykakh," *Pravoslavnyi sobesednik*, 1 (1871): 160; K. V. Kharlampovich, "Perepiska Veniamina Irkutskogo s N. I. Il'minskim," *Pravoslavnyi sobesednik*, 2 (1905): 29; P. Znamenskii, *Na pamiat' o N. I. Il'minskom* (Kazan', 1892), p. 257.

65. Lenin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 48, p. 162.

66. A. N. Mnatsakaniian, *Lenin i reshenie natsional'nogo voprosa v SSSR* (Erevan, 1970), pp. 122 and 143; Lenin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 50, pp. 34–35.

67. I. K. Beloded, *Leninskaia teoriia natsional'no-iazykovogo stroitel'stva v sotsialisticheskom obshchestve* (Moscow, 1972), p. 19. The article appears in Lenin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 48, pp. 277–78; the commentary in vol. 25, p. 360.

68. Mnatsakaniian, *Lenin*, p. 154. For example, when a group of Ukrainian Communists objected to the drafting of party and soviet workers from the Russian provinces for the Ukraine, Lenin demanded that each one of them be reprimanded (S. Gililov, *V. I. Lenin—organizator Sovetskogo mnogonatsional'nogo gosudarstva* [Moscow, 1960], p. 63).

Because instilling Orthodoxy was Il'minskii's primary aim, he opposed any attempt to modify the religious content of his program. In schools run directly by him, Il'minskii would not allow the Holy Synod Primer to be replaced by the livelier Ushinskii text. A teacher who had added courses in agriculture was, in Il'minskii's view, "a great scoundrel" who should be dismissed for "having turned from the true goal."⁶⁹

Lenin, of course, had never advocated that nationalities themselves should determine the content of their culture. That, after all, was the Austrian program of national-cultural autonomy. He vehemently repudiated A. Chkhenkeli's demand in the Duma that nationalities be endowed with their own cultural institutions. Lenin's program called for education in the mother tongue for every nationality, but, as he unequivocally put it, "we are opposed to 'one's own program' in one's own national school."⁷⁰

Both Il'minskii and Lenin had warm personal relations and obvious rapport with non-Russians (except religious or political opponents!).⁷¹ Both had a great deal of sympathy for non-Russians and eloquently defended their right to the mother tongue and a distinct way of life if it did not conflict with Orthodoxy or socialism. But at the same time, both opposed the right of the nationalities to determine for themselves the content and direction of their life. While the love for the nationalities was genuine, neither Lenin nor Il'minskii was really concerned with finding a solution to the nationality problem—the ultimate aim was to benefit the Russian Orthodox church or the Russian Communist Party.

Lenin's approach to the nationalities does not diverge from that of Il'minskii in any basic way; their approaches contain the same strengths and weaknesses. As M. Holdsworth points out, Lenin took an uncompromising stand against forceful Russification and demonstrated "an insight (rather rare for him)" with regard to the mother tongue, but he also appears "to have been curiously impervious to the needs and potential of the national intelligentsia" and "oddly unaware of the strength and variety of national emotions."⁷² In Il'minskii's case, the combination of a keen appreciation of the importance of national feelings with an almost complete disregard of their cause can be explained by the fact that he worked primarily among small eastern nationalities, who were surrounded by Russians and were barely awakening to national self-

69. N. I. Il'minskii, *Pis'ma k kreshchenym Tataram*, ed. and trans. A. Voskresenskii (Kazan', 1896), p. 22.

70. Pipes, *Formation of the Soviet Union*, p. 41; Lenin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 24, pp. 58 and 141.

71. In his student days Il'minskii lived with Muslim families and for a few months had a room in a *medrese* (a higher religious school). Later, however, his relations with Muslims grew cold and official, and, as adviser to the government, Il'minskii was personally responsible for many anti-Muslim measures.

One of the delegates to the 1920 Baku Conference, who had joined the group that went on to Moscow to meet Lenin, writes: "Each of us felt that Lenin had lived a long time among us, that he was born and grew up there on the borderland a thousand versts from Moscow." Non-Russians, or even Russians from the borderlands, were often received by Lenin and plied with questions, while important officials marked time in the waiting room (Lavrov, *Narody Rossii o Lenine*, pp. 303, 400–401).

72. See Schapiro and Reddaway, *Lenin, A Reappraisal*, pp. 276 and 290.

consciousness. To his many critics, who charged him with promoting national self-awareness and self-respect and thereby stimulating nationalism and even separatism, Il'minskii responded that "darkness" rather than nationalism was what separated the natives from the Russians. Enlightenment, possible only through their mother tongue, would bring the natives within the folds of the Russian church, thereby solving all problems. Conversely, a policy of Russification only aggravated national sensibilities and heightened "fanaticism."⁷³

Although Lenin was probably better aware of the power of nationalism, he nevertheless continued to view it in the same negative way as Il'minskii. (Undoubtedly, the negative view of nationalism was greatly reinforced in Lenin by Marxism.) Like Il'minskii, Lenin saw nationalism among the non-Russians as simply a response to Russification. Lenin could thus argue that merely extending the right to secede (self-determination) reduced the "danger" that it would be used.⁷⁴ It was also logical for Lenin to center his attacks on Russian nationalism, rather than on what in his view was only its derivative—non-Russian nationalism. Surely the Iakovlev experience can be cited here to explain Lenin's blindness toward the disruptive potential of national cultural awakening and his confidence that the mother tongue and careful treatment of national sensibilities would inevitably lead to "proletarian unity."

There is, finally, another parallel, though of a different sort, between the two men. Toward the end of their lives both were racked by anxiety. In spite of official recognition, Il'minskii saw his system sabotaged and eroded at every turn as he lay dying. But he at least could shift the blame to others, secure in the knowledge that he had been powerless to do more.

The case of Lenin was more bitter. According to his secretary, in his last lucid months, the nationality question "worried him extremely and he was preparing to speak on it at the party congress."⁷⁵ Lewin holds that Lenin's meeting with Dzerzhinskii on the Georgian problem hastened his last attack. Lewin also feels that Stalin's treatment of the nationalities prompted Lenin to recommend Stalin's removal.⁷⁶

A note of anxiety and even remorse was reflected in Lenin's last series of writings on the nationality question. "I am most guilty before the workers of Russia," he began "for not intervening energetically enough into the notorious question of 'autonomization.'" Lenin then went on to question the worth of the right to self-determination and to express the fear that the minorities are in the end left defenseless against the old evil—"the truly Russian Derzhimorda."⁷⁷ Although Lenin was still concerned with the threatened loss of the Soviet image for attracting peoples under colonialism, he also seemed to sound a note of deeper despair. If socialism was not solving the nationality problem, might one

73. N. I. Il'minskii, *O sisteme prosveshcheniia inorodtsev*, ed. A. Voskresenskii (Kazan', 1913), pp. 28–29; Il'minskii, *Pis'ma k Pobedonostsevu*, p. 399.

74. Pipes, *Formation of the Soviet Union*, p. 44.

75. Fotieva's letter to Kamenev, in L. Trotsky, *The Stalin School of Falsification* (New York, 1968), p. 70.

76. Moshe Lewin, *Lenin's Last Struggle* (New York, 1968), p. 69.

77. Lenin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 45, pp. 356–62.

not begin to doubt whether it would solve the other problems? In an introduction to a translated work by two Ukrainian Bolsheviks who reluctantly came to question Lenin's nationality program, Michael Luther accuses Lenin of having "substituted illusion for reality," by appearing to be "the herald of an era of liberation for the non-Russian peoples of the former Empire."⁷⁸ Perhaps Lenin's tragedy was that he too had been under the same illusions and that as he lay dying they were beginning to fade.

78. Serkhii Mazlakh and Vasyl' Shakhrai, *On the Current Situation in the Ukraine*, ed. P. J. Potichnyj (Ann Arbor, 1970), p. xxiii.