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# Imperial Ideology in Russia and the Soviet Union, 1900–1953

## Ideologia imperialna w Rosji i Związku Radzieckim, 1900–1953

**Abstract:** The article investigates the evolution of the imperial ideology of Russia and the Soviet Union between 1900 and 1953. The first half of the 20th century was a period of significant transformation in Russian state ideology. The shift from non-national imperial ideology to Russian imperial national ideology in 1906, with the appointment of Pyotr Stolypin as Prime Minister, was a turning point. The 1917 Revolution and the subsequent establishment of the communist totalitarian regime saw the rise of imperial internationalism as the state ideology, a development that was instrumental in the Bolsheviks' conquest of almost the entire territory of the former Russian empire. However, the 1930s witnessed a profound change as imperial internationalism began to be supplanted by Russian imperial nationalism, which eventually became the state ideology during the Great Patriotic War. This transition, we must stress, had far-reaching implications for the Soviet Union and its imperial ambitions.

**Abstrakt:** Artykuł bada ewolucję ideologii imperialnej Rosji i Związku Radzieckiego w latach 1900-1953. Pierwsza połowa XX wieku była okresem znaczącej transformacji rosyjskiej ideologii państwowej. Przejście od nienarodowej ideologii imperialnej do rosyjskiej imperialnej ideologii narodowej w 1906 r., wraz z mianowaniem Piotra Stołypina na premiera, było punktem zwrotnym. Rewolucja 1917 r. i późniejsze ustanowienie komunistycznego reżimu totalitarnego doprowadziły do powstania imperialnego internacjonalizmu jako ideologii państwowej, co odegrało kluczową rolę w podboju przez bolszewików niemal całego terytorium byłego imperium rosyjskiego. Jednak w latach trzydziestych XX wieku nastąpiła głęboka zmiana, ponieważ imperialny internacjonalizm zaczął być wypierany przez rosyjski imperialny nacjonalizm, który ostatecznie stał się ideologią państwową podczas Wielkiej Wojny Ojczyźnianej. To przejście, musimy podkreślić, miało daleko idące konsekwencje dla Związku Radzieckiego i jego imperialnych ambicji.

**Keywords:** Russia, nationalism, Soviet Union, ideology, Stalinism

**Słowa kluczowe:** Rosja, nacjonalizm, Związek Sowiecki, ideologia, stalinizm

## Introduction

We use the terms:

- Russian non-national imperial ideology – it means that all or almost all of the population of the Russian empire is considered Russian.
- Russian imperial national ideology – meaning that the Russians had to play a dominant role in the Russian Empire or in the Soviet Union. In the time of the Russian Empire Russian in most cases meant Great Russians, Belarusians and Little Russians together, as one people.
- Imperial international ideology – means that the Soviet Union must not only regain all the territories of the former Russian Empire but also include those countries where the world proletarian revolution will win.
- Russian imperial national ideology – means that the Russians must be the dominant nation in the Russian Empire or in the USSR.
- Russian non-imperial national democratic ideology – meaning that the Russians must have their own national State with a predominantly Russian population and that other peoples must have broad autonomy within the Russian state or must have the right to secede and create their own State. Such ideology did not exist either in the Russian Empire or in the USSR due to the lack of political conditions.

I shall try to show how different imperial ideologies existed in the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union in the first half of the 20th century.

## Imperial Ideology in the Russian Empire, 1900–1917

At the beginning of the 20th century, the Russian Empire was at the zenith of its territorial power, stretching from Poland to Port Arthur. From the end of the 19th century until 1905, the main direction of expansion of the Russian Empire was East Asia (Northern China, Mongolia, Korea). Still, after the defeat in the Russo-Japanese War, the main direction of expansion changed to Europe. Russia claimed Constantinople and the Straits, Turkish Armenia, and the territory of Austria-Hungary – Eastern Galicia and Transcarpathia. Russian Empire also planned to unite the Austrian, German and Russian Poland under the sceptre of the Russian emperor. This expansion was one of the causes of the First World War.

The Russian liberal researcher Alexej G. Arbatov thinks that the Russian and Soviet ruling elite could receive the nobility from the colonial peoples, and this international nomenclature brutally exploited and suppressed the population of the Empire as cheap but unproductive labour force and as cannon

fodder for maintaining great power status. The ethnic Russians, as an imperial nation, were often treated even more harshly than other nations. But Russia and the Soviet Union were empires similar to the continental military-political empires, such as the Ottoman Empire, Austro-Hungary and especially the Byzantine Empire, from which Moscow borrowed Imperial orthodox ideology (“Moscow is the third Rome”), construction of the State and the political and juridical norms and traditions.<sup>1</sup>

During the very short period of limited parliamentary democracy in the history of the Russian Empire between 1905 and 1917, the Imperial People Party was founded. Its members called themselves national democrats, but their ideology was imperial in reality. One of the leaders of the national democrats, member of the State Duma Pavel V. Vasiliev, stated: “The moments full of heroism, beauty, national uplift and state success are: the Battle of Poltava, the Patriotic War, the conquest of the Caucasus, the annexation of the Baltic region and Finland”, and compared these achievements with “the great reforms of Alexander II”.<sup>2</sup> Vasiliev also considered: “The national democrats are statesmen and, based on practical considerations, cannot recognise in the national sense any national-political autonomies or marginal home-rules, even shortened, since this will damage imperial unity, will not satisfy the separatist—minded foreign population and complicate and hamper the organisation of internal life for the State”.<sup>3</sup> The other leader of the national democrats, Ivan I. von Zek, considered that the Government in general should not tolerate in the State any national-cultural absorption of one nationality by another, except by the Russian state one”.<sup>4</sup> The members of the Imperial People Party considered themselves both “nationalists-statesmen” and “imperialists” and used these words as synonyms.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A.G. Arbatov, *Russia's own imperial road*, in: *20 Years Without the Berlin Wall: A Breakthrough to Freedom*, ed. N. Bubnova, Moscow 2011, p. 30.

<sup>2</sup> Н.Е. Веров [П.В. Васильев], *Праздник идеи народной самодеятельности. Пятидесятилетний юбилей русского земства, “Дым отечества”*, 9/22 Jan. 1914, no. 2(60), p. 1; cited after: А.А. Чемакин, *Имперская народная партия и независимая группа IV Государственной Думы: русские национал-демократы в 1913–1917 гг.*, academic dissertation, A.I. Herzen Russian State Pedagogical University, Санкт-Петербург 2016, p. 239.

<sup>3</sup> Н.Е. Веров [П.В. Васильев], *Два суждения, “Дым отечества”*, 3/16 July 1914, no. 27(85), p. 4, cited after: А.А. Чемакин, *Имперская народная партия...*, p. 245.

<sup>4</sup> Вечевой [И.И. фон Зек], *Польская загадка, “Дым отечества”*, 12/25 June 1914, no. 24(82), p. 4, cited after: А.А. Чемакин, *Имперская народная партия...*, p. 247.

<sup>5</sup> Н.Е. Веров [П.В. Васильев], *Какой национализм может быть назван здоровым?, Ответ А. Боровому, “Дым отечества”*, 12/25 June 1914, no. 24(82), p. 9, cited after: А.А. Чемакин, *Имперская народная партия...*, p. 245.

Sergej Iu. Witte, head of the government in 1903–1906 and one of the initiators of the Far Eastern expansion of the Russian Empire, was very critical of imperial Russian nationalism. In his memoirs, he ironically stated that “having run through the maps of Russia’s development since the time of Rurik, every high school student will be convinced that the great Russian Empire, during its thousand-year existence, was formed by the fact that the Slavic tribes who lived in Russia gradually absorbed a whole mass of other nationalities by force of arms and in all other ways, and thus the Russian Empire appeared, which is a conglomerate of various nationalities, and therefore, in essence speaking, there is no such thing as Russia, but the Russian Empire exists; well, after we absorbed a whole mass of tribes alien to us and seized their lands – now a semi-comic national party has appeared in the Duma and the *Novoe Vremja*, which declares that they say, Russia should be for Russians, i.e. for those who profess the Orthodox religion, whose surname ends in ‘-ov’ and who read *Russkoe Znamja* and *Golos Moskvy*.”<sup>6</sup> Witte supported a non-national imperial ideology in which the entire population of the Russian Empire was considered a single political nation. It was a development of the traditional concept of the 16th century, according to which Moscow was regarded as the “Third Rome”, as the new and last Christian Empire.

After Witte’s resignation, Pyotr A. Stolypin became Prime Minister. He supported the ideology of the Imperial Russian Nationalism, which Witte and many other high officials opposed.

In the program documents of the Don Union of the Nationalists, we can find statements like “to promote the rule of the Russian nationality within the Russian Empire”<sup>7</sup> and “The indivisibility of the united Russian people in all its branches. Russian culture and the Russian state language domination”.<sup>8</sup> Formally, the Imperial People’s Party was in opposition to the Government. However, the views of the national democrats on the future of the Russian Empire coincide with those of the government leaders. For example, Prime Minister Stolypin considered the Russian people as the unity of Russians, Belarussians and Little Russians (Ukrainians) and denied the right of ethnic minorities to autonomy.<sup>9</sup> In his speech to the State Council on 4 March 1911, Stolypin stated:

<sup>6</sup> С.Ю. Витте, *Воспоминания*, vol. 1: *Царствование Николая II*, Берлин 1922, pp. 116–117.

<sup>7</sup> Б. Корниенко, *Правый Дон – казаки и идеология национализма (1909–1914)*, Санкт-Петербург 2013, p. 212.

<sup>8</sup> *Национально-демократическая партия*, “Русская Жизнь”, 12 June 1911, no. 21–22, p. 707; cited after: А.А. Чемакин, *Имперская народная партия...*, p. 254.

<sup>9</sup> Conversation with P.A. Stolypin, “Новое время”, 30 Sep. 1906, no. 10973, cited after: П.А. Столыпин, *Грани таланта политика*, ed. П.А. Пожигайло, Москва 2012, p. 481.

It is possible to understand the State as a set of individuals, tribes, and nationalities united by one common legislation, a joint administration. Such a State as amalgam observes and protects the existing power relations. But you can understand the state differently; you can think of the state as a force or a union based on national and historical principles. Such a state, implementing the people's covenants, has the will, has the force and the power of coercion; such a state bends the rights of individuals and individual groups to the rights of the whole. I considered Russia as such a whole.<sup>10</sup>

The weakness of the Russian national ideology in the Russian Empire, even in its imperial variant, was also caused by the fact that there were no Russian national mass movements in the early 20th century. Also, the lack of irredentism weakened Russian nationalism. There were no Great Russian ethnic territories outside the Russian Empire. Only some small Little Russian (Ukrainian) territories (Eastern Galicia, Northern Bukovina, Transcarpathia) were part of Austria-Hungary. Still, these lands were instead the object of Ukrainian irredentism, which was part of the Ukrainian nationalism that already existed at the beginning of the 20th century.

During the First World War, Russian imperial nationalism intensified thanks to a campaign against German domination initiated by the government. This campaign led, in the words of the American researcher Eric Lohr, to the “nationalisation” of the Russian Empire, meaning not only the nationalisation of the property of subjects of hostile States and their deportation to the interior of the empire but also the broader spread of the ideas of Russian imperial nationalism among the population.<sup>11</sup> Lohr thinks that the tsarist Government preferred to initiate a large-scale chauvinistic campaign against enemy subjects to gain mass support, mainly from the Russian population, to win the war. But in reality, this campaign made the empire's inner life more chaotic, thereby contributing to the defeat and revolution.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> П.А. Столыпин, *Нам нужна великая Россия... Полное собрание речей в Государственной думе и Государственном совете 1906–1911*, ed. Ю.Г. Фельштинский, Москва 1991, p. 332.

<sup>11</sup> E. Lohr, *Nationalizing the Russian Empire: The Campaign against Enemy Aliens during World War I*, Cambridge (MA) 2003, pp. 6–9; Russian translation: Э. Лор, *Русский национализм и Российская империя: Кампания против «вражеских подданных» в годы Первой мировой войны*, transl. В. Макаров, Москва 2012, p. 64.

<sup>12</sup> Э. Лор, *Русский национализм и Российская империя...*, p. 195.

## The Imperial International Ideology in Soviet Russia and the Soviet Union, 1917 – the Early 1930s

When the Bolsheviks took power, they proclaimed their commitment to the idea of world revolution. But the slogan of the world proletarian revolution really was a kind of an imperial slogan. Marxism was also proclaimed a part of state ideology. During Lenin's and Stalin's rule, the state ideology was formed by speeches and works of the state's leaders. The first leader of the Soviet State, Vladimir I. Lenin, was the architect of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Other states in Europe and Asia should have become members of the USSR after the victory of the communist revolutions in these countries. Yet, in 1915, Lenin stated: "It is impossible to unite nations freely in socialism without a more or less long, persistent struggle of the socialist republics against backward States".<sup>13</sup> And on 23 July 1920, Lenin telegraphed to Iosif V. Stalin: "The position in the Comintern is excellent. Zinoviev, Bukharin, and I think the revolution should be encouraged immediately in Italy. My personal opinion is that for this purpose, it is necessary to Sovietise Hungary, and maybe also the Czech Republic and Romania".<sup>14</sup>

On 20 November 1922, at the Moscow Council, Lenin said about the occupation of Vladivostok by the Red Army: "Now we must pay close attention to our tasks, understand that the main difficulty will be not to give back any old conquest. We will not give them away (Applause)".<sup>15</sup> Lenin and his comrades wanted to save and expand the Russian Empire under another name. The main task was to occupy Poland because, after the fall of the most powerful among the new states which emerged on the territory of the former Russian Empire, the Sovietisation of Germany and the conquest of the Baltic States, Finland, Bessarabia, as well as Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan seemed very easy. On 22 September 1922, Lenin, in his political report to the Ninth Conference of the Russian Communist Party, confessed:

We decided to use our military forces to help Sovietise Poland. Hence, further general policy was followed. We did not formulate this in an official Resolution, recorded in the minutes of the Central Committee, which is a law for the party and the new congress, but we said among ourselves that we should feel with bayonets – is the social revolution of the proletariat in Poland ripe? And here we posed

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<sup>13</sup> В.И. Ленин, *О лозунге Соединенные Штаты Европы (1915)*, in: *Идет, Полное собрание сочинений в 55 томах*, Москва 1969, vol. 26, p. 355.

<sup>14</sup> *Идет, Неизвестные документы 1891–1922*, ed. Ю.Н. Амиантов, Ю.А. Ахапкин, В.Т. Логинов, Москва 2000, p. 357.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 566.

a practical question, which, as it turned out, theoretically is not entirely clear to the best communist elements of the international partnership, that is, the Communist International. When the Congress of the Comintern was in July in Moscow, it was at the time when we were solving this issue in the Central Committee. We could not put this question at the Congress of the Comintern, because this congress had to take place openly, this was his enormous revolutionary, universal world significance, which will affect many times more than it has been up to now.<sup>16</sup>

So, the Sovietisation of one or another territory meant, in reality, its occupation by the Red Army. But officially, it was proclaimed as international help from Soviet Russia (later from the USSR) to the proletariat of other countries. The Soviet ideology under Lenin and early Stalin can be called Imperial Internationalism.

Stalin began his rule with Imperial Internationalism. Even before the October Revolution, in March 1917, he criticised modern federations, stating that “The United States is turning from a federation into a unitary (merged) state with uniform constitutional norms, with limited autonomy (not state, but administrative and political) of the states allowed by these norms. The name ‘federation’ in relation to the United States turns into an empty sound, a relic of the past, no longer corresponding to the actual state of things. The same can be said about Switzerland and Canada...”<sup>17</sup> The federation, which was formed in 1922 as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, was almost from the very beginning a unitary state under the guise of a federation because the Communist Party was unitary and it was the only source of power. None of the important questions could be solved without Moscow’s approval.

At the Third All-Russian Congress of Soviets in January 1918, Stalin emphasised “the need to interpret the principle of self-determination as the right to self-determination not of the bourgeoisie, but of the working masses of this nation. The principle of self-determination should be a means for the struggle for socialism and should be subordinated to the principles of socialism” because “The principle of self-determination was used by the bourgeois-chauvinist circles of Ukraine for their class imperialist purposes”.<sup>18</sup> This means, in fact, that the principle of self-determination did not apply to the territories of the former Russian empire, which were controlled by the Bolsheviks. After all, the bourgeoisie and other opponents of the Bolsheviks had already been removed from power. Only Poland, Finland and the Baltic States stayed

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 374.

<sup>17</sup> И.В. Сталин, *Против федерализма*, in: *идет*, *Сочинения*, vol. 3, Москва 1946, pp. 24–25.

<sup>18</sup> *Идет*, *Выступления на III Всероссийском съезде Советов рабочих, солдатских и крестьянских депутатов 10–18 января 1918 г.*, in: *идет*, *Полное собрание сочинений*, vol. 4, Москва 1947, pp. 31–32.

outside the Soviet Union after the Civil War thanks to the help of Germany and then the Entente. Also, parts of Armenia and Georgia were occupied by Turkey in 1920–1921 and stayed Turkish because, in the 1920s, Kemalist Turkey was a Soviet ally.

## The Imperial Russian National Ideology, the Early 1930s – 1953

In the early 1930s, the transition to imperial nationalism began. It resulted from the embodiment of Stalin's doctrine of "building socialism in one single country", adopted in the late 1920s. On 2 May 1933, at a reception at the Kremlin in honour of the participants of the May Day parade, Stalin said a kind word about the Russian people:

The Party leading millions of people threw the slogan "catch up and overtake", and these millions died for this slogan in a fierce struggle... This slogan of the death of the former Russia, which did not catch up with anyone, and hundreds of millions of people trampled on the spot, not catching up with anyone; this was the death of the former Russia of the most capable people. Leaving aside the issues of equality and self-determination, Russians are the main nationality of the world nationalities; they were the first to raise the flag of the Soviets against the whole world. The Russian nation is the most talented nation in the world. Compare Russian and German capitalism in terms of armament before October, and now we have. Russians were beaten by all – Turks and even Tatars, who attacked for 200 years but failed to master the Russians, although they were poorly armed at that time. If the Russians are armed with tanks, aircraft, navy – they are invincible, invincible.<sup>19</sup>

Even before the beginning of the war between Germany and the Soviet Union, Stalin officially replaced the theory of world proletarian revolution with the practice of the occupation of foreign countries by the Red Army. On 21 January 1940, at a ceremonial dinner with top Soviet officials on the 16th anniversary of Lenin's death, he, according to the diary of General Secretary of the Executive Committee of the Communist International Georgiy Dimitrov, announced: "The world revolution as a single act is nonsense. It takes place at different times in different countries. The actions of the Red Army are also a matter of world revolution".<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> *Застольные речи Сталина. Документы и материалы*, ed. В.А. Невежин, Москва-Санкт-Петербург 2003, pp. 43–45.

<sup>20</sup> В.А. Невежин, *Сталин о войне. Застольные речи 1933–1945 гг.*, Москва 2007, pp. 113–114.



Russian imperial nationalism was significantly strengthened thanks to the campaign of repression within the framework of the NKVD operation on “national contingents” in 1937–1938, when hundreds of thousands of Germans, Poles, Latvians, Estonians, Lithuanians, Finns and representatives of some other nationalities, whose national states were outside the USSR, were shot or sent to correctional labour camps. During the Second World War, the exact role was played by the ongoing repressions against Poles, Germans, as well as several punished peoples who were accused of collaborating with the enemy: Volga Germans, Crimean Tatars, Kalmyks, Chechens, Ingush and some others.

In his first speech after the German attack against the Soviet Union on 3 July 1941, Stalin said:

The enemy is cruel and relentless. He aims to seize our lands, watered with our sweat and our bread and oil, extracted by our labour. It seeks to restore the power of the landlords, restore tsarism, destroy the national culture and national statehood of Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians, Uzbeks, Tatars, Moldovans, Georgians, Armenians, Azerbaijanis and other free peoples of the Soviet Union, carry out Germanisation of them, turn them into slaves of German princes and barons. It is, therefore, about the life and death of the Soviet State, about the life and death of the peoples of the USSR, about whether the peoples of the Soviet Union should be free or fall into enslavement.<sup>21</sup>

And he proclaimed the war with Germany as “the Patriotic War of Liberation”.

It should be stressed that in Soviet times, the term “Russians” began to mean only the people who were called Great Russians in the Russian Empire, since Ukrainians and Belarusians were officially recognised as separate nations, and Ukraine and Belarus became members of the United Nations in 1945.

At the crucial moment, when the forces of the Soviet Western front were practically annihilated, and the road to Moscow seemed open to the German troops, Stalin tried to call on all the peoples of the USSR to resist the Germans, without singling out the Russians among them. But very soon, it became clear that newly annexed nationalities, like Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians, Moldavans and inhabitants of Western Ukraine and Western Belarus, did not want to fight for the communists and the Soviet Power, Stalin decided to turn from Internationalism to Russian Imperial Nationalism. In his report of 6 November 1941, in besieged Moscow, Stalin emphasised the leading role of the Russian people in opposing the Germans. Referring to Hitler

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<sup>21</sup> И.В. Сталин, *Выступление по радио 3 июля 1941 года*, in: *idem, Сочинения*, vol. 15, Москва 1997, pp. 58–59.

and the Nazis, he said: “And these people, deprived of conscience and honour, people with animal morality have the audacity to call for the destruction of the great Russian nation, the nation of Plekhanov and Lenin, Belinsky and Chernyshevsky, Pushkin and Tolstoy, Glinka and Tchaikovsky, Gorky and Chekhov, Sechenov and Pavlov, Repin and Surikov, Suvorov and Kutuzov!”<sup>22</sup> At the parade on the following day, addressing the Red Army, Stalin listed only Russian commanders and statesmen: “Let the courageous image of our great ancestors – Alexander Nevsky, Dmitry Donskoy, Kuzma Minin, Dmitry Pozharsky, Alexander Suvorov, Mikhail Kutuzov inspire you in this war! Let the victorious banner of the great Lenin overshadow you!”<sup>23</sup>

During the Great Patriotic War, orders were established in honour of the army and naval leaders of the Russian Empire: Suvorov, Kutuzov, Ushakov and Nakhimov. Also, the order of Alexander Nevskiy, which existed in the Russian Empire, was re-established.

The restoration of the activity of the Russian Orthodox Church, which was previously strongly repressed, was part of Stalin’s policy of using Russian Imperial Nationalism as a means of wartime propaganda, both within the country and abroad. On 4 September 1943, Stalin received in the Kremlin three senior hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church – the locum tenens of the Patriarchal throne, Metropolitan Sergius of Moscow and Krutitsky, Metropolitan Alexey of Leningrad and the exarch of Ukraine, Metropolitan Nicholas of Kiev and Lviv. At this meeting, Stalin authorised the convocation of a Bishops’ Council to elect a patriarch. However, Orthodox Christianity did not play any serious role in Russian imperial nationalism during Stalin’s rule. The activities of the Russian Orthodox Church were mainly focused on international affairs and had very little influence on internal life.

On 24 May 1945, at a reception in the Kremlin in honour of the commanders of the Red Army, Stalin made his famous toast “to the health of the Russian people”:

I would like to raise a toast to the health of our Soviet people and, above all, the Russian people.

I drink first of all for the health of the Russian people because they are the most outstanding nation of all the nations that make up the Soviet Union.

I raise a toast to the health of the Russian people because they have earned general recognition in this war as the leading force of the Soviet Union among all the peoples of our country.

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<sup>22</sup> *Идет, Доклад на торжественном заседании Московского Совета депутатов трудящихся с партийными и общественными организациями города Москвы 6 ноября 1942 года*, in: *ibidem*, p. 79.

<sup>23</sup> *Идет, Речь на Красной площади 7 ноября 1941 года*, in: *ibidem*, p. 86.

I raise a toast to the health of the Russian people not only because they are a leading people but also because they have a clear mind, a steadfast character and patience.

Our government made a lot of mistakes; we had moments of desperation in 1941–1942, when our army retreated, left our native villages and cities of Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, the Leningrad Region, the Baltic States, the Karelo-Finnish Republic, left because there was no other way out. Other people could say to the government: you have not met our expectations; go away; we will put in another government that will make peace with Germany and provide us with peace. However, the Russian people did not go for it because they believed in the correctness of their government's policy and made sacrifices to ensure the defeat of Germany. And this trust of the Russian people in the Soviet government turned out to be the decisive force that ensured a historic victory over the enemy of humanity – fascism.<sup>24</sup>

In this toast, Stalin proclaimed that the Russian people were the dominant people in the Soviet Empire. When he listed the territories abandoned by the Red Army, the territories of the Baltic States, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova and the Karelo-Finnish Republic were listed together with the Russian Leningrad (Petrograd) region with the former capital of the Russian Empire. All these territories were called native, so all of them should be considered as one whole, led by the Russian people. At the end of the so-called Great Patriotic War, Stalin proclaimed the Russian Imperial Nationalism as a core of Soviet ideology. He said nothing about the Marxism-Leninism. Stalin's main opponent, Lev D. Trotsky, was right when stated: "Stalin, as a so-called practitioner, without a theoretical outlook, without broad political interests and without knowledge of foreign languages, was inseparable from the Russian soil".<sup>25</sup>

Stalin, thanks to the victory in the war, achieved the maximum expansion of the Soviet empire, which became much larger than the Russian Empire at the peak of its power. Practically all territories of the former Russian Empire were included in the USSR. Stalin also added to the Soviet Union Eastern Galicia, Northern Bukovina, Transcarpathia, part of East Prussia with Kaliningrad (Konigsberg) and Klaipeda (Memel), Uriankhai Region (Tuva), Kuril Islands and Southern Sakhalin, which were not parts of the Russian Empire in 1913. Poland, Finland, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, Mongolia, China, North Korea and North Vietnam were included in the Soviet sphere of influence. Such a grand empire was a source of imperial feelings among both the Soviet elite and the Soviet

<sup>24</sup> *Идет, Выступления на приеме в Кремле в честь командующих войсками Красной Армии 24 мая 1945 года*, in: *ibidem*, p. 228.

<sup>25</sup> Л.Д. Троцкий, *История русской революции*, vols 1–2, vol. 1: *Февральская революция*, Москва 1997, p. 285.

people. These feelings served as a breeding ground for the Stalin-inspired campaign against Western influence and “rootless cosmopolitans” (mainly Jews). There were a lot of publications about the “Russian priority” practically in all spheres of science and culture during this campaign to convince the Soviet people of the historical superiority of Russian scientists and cultural figures over representatives of other nations.

In a conversation with director Sergey M. Eisenstein and actor Nikolay K. Cherkasov about the film *Ivan the Terrible* on 26 February 1947, Stalin criticised Eisenstein for the tsar’s image:

Your tsar turned out to be indecisive, similar to Hamlet. Everyone tells him what to do, and he does not decide himself... Tsar Ivan was a great and wise ruler, and if you compare him with Louis XI (have you read about Louis XI, who prepared absolutism for Louis XIV?), then Ivan the Terrible is in the tenth heaven compared to Louis. The wisdom of Ivan the Terrible was that he stood on the national point of view and did not let foreigners into his country, protecting the country from the penetration of foreign influence. There were deviations and irregularities in the showing of Ivan the Terrible in this direction. Peter I was also a great sovereign, but he treated foreigners too liberally, opened the gates too much and allowed foreign influence into the country, allowing Russia to be Germanised. Catherine allowed Germanisation even more. And further. Was the court of Alexander I a Russian court? Was Nicholas I’s court a Russian court? No. These were German courtyards.<sup>26</sup>

Here, Stalin praised Ivan the Terrible for the Russian national point of view in the 16th century and for the effective fight against foreign influence. So, for Stalin, the ideal form of the State was the Russian National Imperial State with an absolute ruler.

In his last public speech on 14 October 1952, at the Nineteenth Congress of the CPSU, published before his death, Stalin when speaking about “those communist, democratic or workers’ and peasants’ parties that have not yet come to power and that continue to work under the heel of bourgeois draconian laws”, stressed, that it was not so difficult for those parties to work, “as it was difficult for us, the Russian communists, during the tsarist period when the slightest movement forward was declared the gravest crime. However, the Russian communists persevered, were not afraid of difficulties and achieved victory”. He stated that it was easier for communists to work in bourgeois countries now because “they have before their eyes such examples of struggle and success as are available in the Soviet Union and people’s democratic

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<sup>26</sup> И.В. Сталин, *Запись беседы И. В. Сталина, А. А. Жданова и В. М. Молотова с С.М. Эйзенштейном и Н. К. Черкасовым по поводу фильма ‘Иван Грозный’*. 26 февраля 1947 г., in: *idem, Сочинения...*, vol. 18, Тверь 2006, pp. 433–434.

countries”.<sup>27</sup> Now Stalin called all communists (Bolsheviks) of the Russian Empire Russians, although, in reality, there were representatives of all the main nationalities of the Russian Empire among the Bolsheviks.

## Conclusion

In the first half of the 20th century, the state ideology in Russia and the Soviet Union changed several times. The non-national imperial ideology was replaced by the Russian imperial national ideology in 1906 when Pyotr A. Stolypin became Prime Minister. After the Revolution of 1917 and establishing a communist totalitarian regime, Imperial Internationalism first became the state ideology. Under its banner, the Bolsheviks established control over almost the entire territory of the former Russian Empire. Then, in the 1930s, Imperial internationalism began to be replaced by Russian imperial nationalism, which finally became the state ideology during the Great Patriotic War. Under its banner, Stalin won the war, regained control over almost all the territories of the former Russian Empire and gained a huge sphere of influence in Eastern Europe and East Asia. The ideology of Russian imperial nationalism sparked a campaign against “rootless cosmopolitanism” and “kowtowing to the West”, which continued until Stalin’s death. From 1900 to 1917, when there was relative freedom of speech in Russia, the existence of an ideology different from the state was possible. But there was no Russian non-imperial National Democratic ideology in that period. Later, any non-state ideology in the totalitarian Soviet Union was impossible. Some leaders of the Soviet Communist Party, headed by Secretary of the Central Committee Andrei A. Zhdanov, who was considered Stalin’s successor, Secretary of the Central Committee Alexei A. Kuznetsov, Chairman of the State Planning Committee Nikolai A. Voznesensky, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Russian Federation Mikhail I. Rodionov, first Secretary of the Leningrad Regional Committee and the City Committee of the CPSU(b) Peter S. Popkov, and some others, planned to transfer the capital of Russia to Leningrad and create the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, which was supposed to protect the interests of the RSFSR and the entire Russian people in the USSR. This idea could have developed into the ideology of Russian non-imperial nationalism. Still, it was sharply condemned by Stalin, who feared that the creation of independent Russian authorities would collapse the USSR. The so-called

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<sup>27</sup> *Идет, Речь на XIX съезде КПСС 14 октября 1952 года*, in: *идет, Сочинения...*, vol. 16. Москва 1997, p. 228.

“Leningrad Group” members have not formalised their ideas into some kind of ideology. After Zhdanov’s death in August 1948, all the leaders of the so-called “Leningrad Group” were arrested and executed in 1950.<sup>28</sup>

After Stalin’s death, his successors returned to imperial internationalism without, at least publicly, singling out the special role of the Russian people. At the same time, due to the relative liberalisation of the norms of party life and censorship, compared to Stalin’s rule, the so-called unofficial “Russian Party”, professing the Russian imperial nationalism of the Stalin era, existed in the party and Komsomol nomenclature and among the creative intelligentsia of the 1950s–1980s as a semi-legal trend.<sup>29</sup> The fact that the ideology of Russian national non-imperial democratic ideology did not arise in the Russian Empire and the USSR in the 20th century contributed to the predominance of imperial ideology in post-Soviet Russia both among the elites and the masses and their hostility both to the national ideologies and to the national movements of the peoples of the former Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. The conditions for the emergence of Russian non-imperial national ideology did not exist both in the Russian Empire and in the Soviet Union. Imperial Nationalism of any kind causes both the elite and the masses the need to apply “Hottentot morality” and double standards in history and modernity. The expansion of their own empire is justified by security considerations and the aggressiveness of their neighbours, while attempts by other countries on the territory of the empire and separatist movements arising in it are unconditionally condemned. Such the installation leads to an objective scientific study of the history of the empire by historians living on its territory, which becomes almost impossible because the State dictates a history that fits into the specified scheme. This was the situation in Soviet historiography and is gradually becoming so in modern Russian historiography of the history of the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, and post-Soviet Russia.

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<sup>28</sup> See: А.В. Сушков, ‘Ленинградское дело’: генеральная чистка ‘колыбели революции’, Екатеринбург 2018, pp. 9–16.

<sup>29</sup> Н. Митрохин, *Русская партия: Движение русских националистов в СССР. 1953–1985 годы*, Москва 2003.