

**THE FACES OF
CONTEMPORARY
RUSSIAN NATIONALISM**

by John B. Dunlop
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Western specialists on the Soviet Union have long taken note of nationalist tendencies among the USSR's many non-Russian ethnic groups. But they have tended to ignore *Russian* nationalism and the special problems of the *Russian* people. John B. Dunlop, a Hoover Institution Fellow, has remedied this oversight.

In the aftermath of the 1917 Revolution, Dunlop writes, "words such as 'patriotism' and 'motherland' virtually disappeared from the Russian vocabulary." The Bolsheviks, after all, were "essentially 'anti-patriots' whose aim was world revolution and the disappearance of all national distinctions." The revival of Russian nationalist sentiment that followed Josef Stalin's death in 1953 was part of a broader critique by intellectuals both of Stalinism and the condition of Soviet life. Russian nationalists were particularly concerned with what they saw as the consequences of rapid, forced modernization: the decline of the village, the razing of priceless architectural treasures, the deterioration of the environment, social and moral decay.

During the 1960s and '70s, the new nationalist movement became a creative force in Russian life, inspiring the work of village writers and introducing nationalist themes into literature and literary criticism. It also inspired the formation of popular societies, notably the All-Russian Society for the Preservation of Historical and Cultural Monuments, a group now boasting 12 million members.

The Russian nationalist movement is by no means monolithic. Its ranks include religious moderates, typified by novelist Aleksander Solzhenitsyn, and ethnocentric, atheist extremists, including the so-called National Bolsheviks, whose notions of Russian superiority smack of simple racism. Relations between Russians and other ethnic groups, particularly Jews, remain a touchy issue. Certain Russian nationalists, Dunlop observes, "are almost obsessed with this small group of people [the Jews]." Though constituting less than one percent of the Soviet population, Jews are resented by some Russians for the key role they played in the Bolshevik Revolution, as well as for their professional achievements and (relatively) high standard of living.

Dunlop describes the Moscow government's complex and fluctuating official response to the various currents of Russophilia. At times, he notes, the regime is remarkably permissive, at other times severe; it is always seeking to co-opt and exploit but is ever conscious as well of the contradiction between Russian nationalism and the official ideology of "internationalism." Dunlop reminds us that "Russia" and the "Soviet Union" are not synonymous, and he makes a persuasive case that the Russian "nation" is as much a captive of Communist power as the other "nations" of the Soviet Union.

—Herbert J. Ellison, Secretary, Kennan Institute