**Soviet Nation**

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**Soviet nation** ([Russian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_language): Советский народ) was an ideological [demonym](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demonym) and proposed [ethnonym](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethnonym) for the population of the [Soviet Union](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_Union). It first appeared in official usage in the 1970s.

**History**

Through the [history of the Soviet Union](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Soviet_Union), both doctrine and practice regarding ethnic distinctions within the Soviet population varied over time. Minority national cultures were not completely abolished in the Soviet Union. By Soviet definition, national cultures were to be "[socialist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socialist) by content and national by form", to be used to promote the official aims and values of the state. While the goal was always to cement the nationalities together in a common state structure, as a pragmatic step in the 1920s and early 1930s under the policy of [korenizatsiya](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Korenizatsiya) (indigenization) the leaders of the Communist Party promoted federalism and the strengthening of non-Russian languages and cultures (see [national delimitation in the Soviet Union](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_delimitation_in_the_Soviet_Union)). By the late 1930s, however, policy shifted to more active promotion of Russian language and later still to more overt [Russification](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russification) efforts, which accelerated in the 1950s especially in areas of [public education](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education_in_the_Soviet_Union). Although some assimilation did occur, this effort did not succeed on the whole as evidenced by developments in many national cultures in the territory after the [collapse of the Soviet Union](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collapse_of_the_Soviet_Union) in 1991.

Reinforcing the distinctions in national identities, the Soviet state maintained information about "nationality" on many administrative records, including school, work, and military records, as well as in the periodic censuses of population. The infamous "fifth record" ([Russian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_language): пятая графа, *pyataya grafa*) was the section of the obligatory [internal passport](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Passport_system_in_the_Soviet_Union) document which stated the citizen's ethnicity ([Russian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_language): национальность, *natsionalnost*). In some cases, this official nationality served as a basis for discrimination.

**Soviet "nation"**

The new term "Soviet nation" (Советский народ) first appeared in official statements at the [24th Party Congress](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/24th_Congress_of_the_Communist_Party_of_the_Soviet_Union) in 1971, and was later incorporated into the [Soviet Constitution of 1977](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_Constitution_of_1977). However, the concept of "Soviet nation" did not use the term that had heretofore been used for a "nation": natsiya (нация). Instead it used the word for a "people": narod (народ). Thus, it may be more appropriate to understand the new concept as "Soviet people" rather than as "Soviet nation."

This single all-Soviet entity—the Soviet people, Sovietskiy narod—was attributed many of the characteristics that official doctrine had formerly ascribed to nations (natsii – нации) and nationalities (natsionalnosti – национальности) composing the multi-national Soviet state. The "Soviet people" were said to be a "new historical, social, and international community of people having a common territory, economy, and socialist content; a culture that reflected the particularities of multiple nationalities; a federal state; and a common ultimate goal: the construction of communism." This description echoed the well-known definition of [nation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nation) of [Joseph Stalin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Stalin), in his essay from 1913 entitled "Marxism and the National Question": "A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture." It also echoed philosophical literature in the 1970s that defined a *socialist* nation (natsiya — нация) as "a social-ethnic community of people, characterized by a single industrial economy, territory, literary language, national character and culture.

Although the word *narod* had an [ethnic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethnic_group) connotation, official doctrine had not yet reached the point that all prior Soviet nations and nationalities (Russians, Ukrainians, Estonians, Uzbeks, and so on) were to merge into a single all-Soviet nation (нация – natsiya). Even in the subsequent Soviet censuses of 1979 and 1989, in which all Soviet residents were categorized by "nationality" (национальность – natsionalnost), none were classified as belonging to the "Soviet nation" or "Soviet nationality". As a project, the construction of the "Soviet people" ended when the Soviet Union (the Soviet state) was [dissolved](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Soviet_Union_%281985-1991%29#Dissolution_of_the_USSR) in 1991.

**See also**

* [New Soviet man](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Soviet_man)
* [Homo soveticus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homo_soveticus)
* [Melting pot](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melting_pot)
* [Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and National Character](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orthodoxy%2C_Autocracy%2C_and_National_Character)
* [Rootless cosmopolitan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rootless_cosmopolitan)
* [Russification](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russification)
* [Zhonghua minzu](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zhonghua_minzu), the equivalent notion in the People's Republic of China

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