

# The Dilemma of Freedom of Conscience: Lenin on Religion, the National Question and the Bund



LENIN'S NAME IS NOT ONE USUALLY ASSOCIATED with freedom of conscience. Was he not the doctrinaire sectarian who brooked no difference of opinion? Did he not trample over his own convictions in the callous quest for power?[1] Careful consideration of his texts reveals a very different picture, one in which he struggles to articulate a radical freedom of conscience. The problem for many readers in our context is that freedom of conscience is automatically associated with a liberal agenda, predicated on the "rights" of the sacrosanct private individual. Lenin and those around him attempted to articulate freedom of conscience in a rather different fashion, asking whether it might be possible to delink freedom of conscience from the liberal project. How might it be rethought from very different, collective situation? I explore this question in three instances, concerning religion, the national question and relations between the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP) and the Bund, or the General Jewish Workers' Union of Lithuania, Poland, and Russia. Here we find that Lenin struggles with the question of freedom of conscience, occasionally glimpsing a more radical, dialectical form only to fall short once again. Indeed, it seems that those around him pushed the internal logic of his arguments to their natural conclusion. In many respects, the project of a radically collective freedom of conscience remains an unfinished project.

Before I proceed, a word on my approach to Lenin's

material: I do not succumb to the fetish of context, seeking to explain all by reference to the twists of events. Among the many problems with such a position, the ability of texts to transcend their contexts, both in the time of those contexts and after they have passed, indicates the limitations of the interpretive cage of context. Instead, I focus on the actual texts by Lenin, seek their internal workings, tensions, insights and false turns. In this way, we may explore at a deeper level the workings of his arguments, with both their problems and promise.

### **Religion**

"This is another instance of God (if he exists, of course) ..." [2]

FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE first comes to the fore in Lenin's texts with respect to religion. Despite all his castigating of religion as both result of and contributor to suffering, as a feature of human existence that would be overcome through revolution and education, Lenin had to deal with a central platform of European Social Democracy. [3] As the Erfurt Program of 1891 stated, "Declaration that religion is a private matter [*Erklärung der Religion zur Privatsache*]." [4] This position was held even by those on the far Left that would form the Spartacus Group in Germany. For example, Rosa Luxemburg argues vehemently in *Socialism and the Churches* from 1905:

*The Social-Democrats, those of the whole world and of our own country, regard conscience [Gewissen] and personal opinion [Überzeugung] as being sacred. Everyone is free to hold whatever faith and whatever opinions will ensure his happiness. No one has the right to persecute or to attack the particular religious opinion of others. Thus say the Social-Democrats.* [5]

For Luxemburg, the reasons for such a position were

self-evident: opposition to the state's efforts to control one's political aspirations, let alone religious affiliations (the tsarist autocracy persecuted Roman Catholics, Jews, heretics, and freethinkers), and resistance to the church's attempt to demand allegiance, especially by using a judicial system saturated with religious laws, means that one does not seek to impose the same type of control as a socialist.

Often Lenin repeats this position,[6] yet he also offers some qualifications.[7] Distinguishing between state and party, he argues that religion must be a purely private affair in regard to the former. By this he means that religion must be separated in all respects from the state – an end to state support of the church, to the possession of lands, state-derived incomes, church schools, even government positions for clergy.[8] In sum, "Everybody must be perfectly free, not only to profess whatever religion he pleases, but also to spread or change his religion." [9]

Yet when he turns to the party, he argues that the party must not make religion a private affair. Given that religion is both the symptom of economic oppression and one of the contributing factors to its perpetuation, the socialists should fight, publicly, against such oppression. Advanced fighters for the emancipation of the working class "must not be indifferent to lack of class-consciousness, ignorance or obscurantism in the shape of religious beliefs." [10] Now we come across a curious twist in this position, for one may well expect that atheism is an explicit requirement for party membership. Yet Lenin makes it perfectly clear that atheism is not a prerequisite for membership. Even more, no-one will be excluded from party membership if he or she holds to religious belief. As Lenin put it forcefully in response to the Bund, "Organizations belonging to the R.S.D.L.P. have never distinguished their members according to religion, never asked them about their religion and never will." [11] More than one person among the various shapes of the right wing, let alone

the workers and socialists themselves, were astounded at such a position, asking "Why do we not declare in our Program that we are atheists? Why do we not forbid Christians and other believers in God to join our Party?"[12]

One may identify three reasons in Lenin's texts. First, opposition to religion actually strengthens the reactionary elements within religious organizations. Lenin cites Engels, in response to the ultra-Leftist Blanquist Communards and their war on religion, to Dühring's proposal that religion should be banished in a socialist society, and in relation to Bismarck's *Kulturkampf*, waged against the German Roman Catholic Party (the Center Party) in the 1870s. In each case, the struggles directed everyone's attention away from political issues and toward religion, thereby steeling the resolve of those attacked.[13]

Further, attacking religion is a red herring, argues Lenin, for it diverts attention from the central question of opposition to economic subjugation. The reason: if the yoke of religion is the product of the economic yoke, if, in other words, religion is a secondary, idealist phenomenon, then an attack on religion misses the mark.[14] Should one achieve the hypothetical aim of abolishing religion, then nothing would change, for the bosses would still grind workers into the dust. Yet even with this argument, one might still be able to argue that the party should hold to an atheistic platform, while acknowledging the secondary role religion plays in the economic struggle. So now Lenin deploys his third argument, stating that any focus on religion splits the united front of the proletariat.[15] The Right knows this full well, attempting to break up the proletariat on religious lines, urging allegiance to the church and claiming that socialism has a program of godless atheism, dividing workers along religious and anti-religious lines, and fomenting anti-Semitic pogroms (especially at the hands of the "Black Hundreds"). So also does the bourgeoisie, which wavers between anti-

clericalism in its struggle with the old order for political control and reconciling itself to religion.[16] For these reasons, the party does "not and should not set forth" atheism in its program.[17] Or, as Lenin puts it with one of his characteristic images: "Unity in this really revolutionary struggle of the oppressed class for the creation of a paradise on earth is more important to us than unity of proletarian opinion on paradise in heaven." [18] In other words, a united front is needed, drawing the line not between believer and atheist, but between workers and the owners of capital, whether landowners or the bourgeoisie. People who still hold to a religious position are welcome in the party, as long as they take part in the struggle:

*Jews and Christians, Armenians and Tatars, Poles and Russians, Finns and Swedes, Letts and Germans – all, all of them march together under the one common banner of socialism. All workers are brothers, and their solid union is the only guarantee of the well-being and happiness of all working and oppressed mankind. [19]*

All of which raises the question: was Lenin consistent in his dealings with religion? At first sight, he appears remarkably inconsistent: the party may systematically seek to educate everyone concerning the deleterious effects of religion, yet it refuses to make atheism a platform, accepting religious believers in a united front against the capitalists and landowners. Did Lenin, then, wage a revolutionary war against God and yet offer sops to religion, playing up to workers in a cowardly fashion so as not to alienate new members? Critics certainly thought so, particularly among the anarchists, who wanted a more consistent line.[20] As may be expected, Lenin argues that the position is entirely consistent, invoking both the dialectic and the pedigree of Marx and Engels. The key is that the economic and political struggle is primary, while the issue of religion is secondary. In this light, the complex party platform in relation to

religion – both a firm position against religion and the refusal to require atheism as a pre-requisite to party membership – begins to make sense.

Yet Lenin does fall short on what may be called the dialectic of collectives, for here he is not dialectical enough. Behind his treatment of the party's explicit platform on religion and the acceptance of a believer within the party lies the distinction between collective and individual approaches to these matters. In effect, he asks: do we operate from the basis of the private individual, allowing full reign to individual freedom of conscience even within the party, or do we begin with the collective and see what the ramifications are? This question is implicit in the statement, "We allow freedom of opinion within the Party, but to certain limits, determined by freedom of grouping." [21] If the collective has come to agreed-upon positions, through open debate (Lenin was a great proponent of arguing vehemently and openly, for this produced a healthy party) and congresses, then those who join need to abide by those positions. At various times, he attacked Mensheviks, liquidators, the Bund, and many others, not because of his supposedly dictatorial ambitions, but because they did not abide by collectively-agreed positions. The same applied to religion.

In "The Attitude of the Workers' Party to Religion," Lenin provides three examples: one of a priest, the other of a worker, and the third of the God-builders. [22] The case of the priest is not an accident, for it both sharpens the issue and was a common question at the time, especially in Western Europe. In contrast to the unqualified affirmative usually given, Lenin states: if a priest affirms the party program, if he shares the aims of the party and works actively to achieve them, then of course he may join. And if there is a tension between his religious belief and communism, then that is a matter for him to sort out alone. But if the priest sets out to proselytize within the party, actively seeking to persuade

others to his religious point of view and thereby not abiding by the collective position of the party, then he is not welcome and will be stripped of his membership.[23] The same principle applies to a believing worker, who should not merely be permitted to join, but who should be actively recruited. All the same, should he too attempt to persuade others of his views, he will be expelled. So also with the God-builders, albeit with a twist: here he uses the same principle, pointing out that if someone says "socialism is my religion" for the sake of addressing workers, for the purpose of getting the message across, then that is no reason to censure such a person. However, if someone propagates God-building by whatever means possible – by argument, in the press, through a school such as one on Capri in 1909 – then that is unacceptable. Note here, however, that he does not state that such a God-builder should be expelled from the party; he or she is to be censured. Why? The God-builders, especially Lunacharsky and Gorky, were close comrades and Lenin was keen to keep them in the party. Indeed, he was notorious for working closely with those whom he attacked in print.

At first sight, this argument seems quite reasonable, since anyone who joins a political organization should subscribe to its platform. Otherwise, why join at all? But is this a fully collective position? If we stay with the minimal notion that a more or less democratically agreed platform is binding on even the minority who disagrees, then it may be regarded as collective. Yet this approach hardly distinguishes the communists from any other political party in (capitalist) parliamentary democracies. For this reason, I suggest that we may go a step further: within a collective movement the imposition of one will over another is anathema. A collective will is not the assertion of uniformity from above, not even the vote of a majority over minority, but a collective agreement that arises from the complex overlaps of beliefs, aspirations, even foibles that are given full and open expression. Only when these many-colored expressions are

allowed full rein, pursuing all manner of possibilities until they collapse in dialectical exhaustion, does a collective will emerge. Or rather, the very act of enabling such free expression and freedom of conscience is the embodiment of such collectivity, the result of which turns out to be a collective will. In short, a completely collective approach is the best guarantee for full freedom of conscience. The problem is that Lenin did not make that explicit argument.

### **The National Question**

"Sometimes closer ties will be established after free secession!"[24]

DOES HE MAKE THAT ARGUMENT in the case of two closely related matters, concerning the national question and religious minorities? Time and again, Lenin returns to what was called the national question,[25] namely the issue as to how the many and varied ethnic groups would relate to one another in a proposed communist state. These debates came to a peak in the mid-teens of the twentieth century, when reshaping Russia became a real possibility after the 1905 revolution. Would the communists follow a tsarist policy of subordinating all of the linguistic and ethnic variety of the Russian empire to an enforced "Great-Russian nationalism"? How would they respond to pushes for local languages to be taught in schools, to political autonomy by places from Ukraine to the Far East, from Tatars to Samoyeds?

Time and again, Lenin reiterates the same position: "Whoever does not recognize and champion the equality of nations and languages, and does not fight against all national oppression or inequality is not a Marxist." [26] It may concern the question of history in schools, the language of instruction in those schools, or the official languages used by governments, or indeed the nature of such government itself; it may arise in proposals by local bishops, in response to Right-wing attempts to foster patriotism and anti-



minority sentiment; it may come up in the context of debates in the Duma and even in bills proposed by the Social-Democratic representatives. But the response is the same: self-determination, national autonomy, linguistic freedom, no imposition of one nation over the other, and no annexations in any peace treaty, all of which was to be embodied in incontrovertible legislation. Or, as one draft of the proposed national equality bill put it: "All nations in the state are absolutely equal, and all privileges enjoyed by any one nation or any one language are held to be inadmissible and anti-constitutional." [27]

The reasons Lenin gives for such a position are remarkably similar to those put forward in defense of his position concerning a believer who wishes to be a member of the party. [28] To begin with, the imposition of one language, one ethnic identity and one system of education comes from both the reactionary defenders of autocracy and the bourgeoisie, inevitably supported by the church. Second, the focus on national issues is, like the focus on religion, a distraction from the central issue of economic oppression. Matters of language, ethnicity, education, and even the identity of states are strictly secondary concerns that should be subordinated to the primary one of economic and class struggle. And that brings us to his third point: nationalism splits the working class in terms of these secondary concerns. Indeed, these divisions are actively fostered by the ruling classes to drive a wedge between workers. By contrast, the working class is inescapably international, for economic exploitation and class conflict cut across national lines, uniting workers (and peasants). Workers of all languages, cultures, and ethnicities need to come together in a united front, for class is always primary [29] – precisely the same argument used in regard to religion.

But now Lenin encounters a question unique to the national question, although it will turn out to be a question

that brings him close to my argument for a radical freedom of conscience (for which I criticized Lenin for not being dialectical enough). If one espouses complete self-determination of peoples within a communist system, does that provide the right to secede at any time? Lenin is guarded. On the one hand, self-determination should permit room to secede from any coalition of states; on the other hand, secessions are not desirable for the good of the communist cause. In Lenin's words:

*We are in favor of autonomy for all parts; we are in favor of the right to secession (and not in favor of everyone's seceding!). Autonomy is our plan for organizing a democratic state. Secession is not what we plan at all. We do not advocate secession. In general, we are opposed to secession.[30]*

He begins by reiterating the standard position: autonomy for everyone. But then he extends this point to state that every part has the "right to secession." Note the subtle shift: autonomy appears without a qualifier, but secession is a right. The parenthetical comment clarifies what that right means: everyone may have the right, but we are certainly not keen on everyone exercising this right, for if they all seceded, the whole project would be immeasurably weakened. Realizing he has perhaps let the cat peek a little too much out of the bag, he attempts to push it back. Well, autonomy is part of our plan, but secession is not really part of that plan, even if it is consistent with autonomy, even if you have a right to secede. In fact, secession is not in the plan at all; or rather, it is in the plan, for we are opposed to it.

Has Lenin come full circle and undermined the standard position on self-determination and autonomy? Perhaps realizing the implications of his argument, he now adds a crucial qualifier: "But we stand for the right to secede owing to reactionary, Great-Russian nationalism, which has so

besmirched the idea of national coexistence that sometimes closer ties will be established after free secession!"[31] In our current context, he says, in which tsarist nationalism and chauvinism have so alienated different groups, in which the Russian empire has systematically oppressed minority languages, peoples, and religions, the right to secession is needed. Now appears the first glimmer of a dialectical moment: in fact, closer ties may sometimes develop if everyone is allowed to secede. He is not quite certain at this point, his "sometimes" leaving the observation serendipitous. A few years later, however, the uncertainty of the earlier formulation dissipates and the dialectical nature of his argument comes to the fore. In the heat of events in 1917, Lenin reasserts the crucial positions concerning the renunciation of annexations and the real right to secession. But now its dialectical outcome is stressed with equal determination. Given that communism will be strengthened by greater cooperation, if not as large a state as possible, it endeavors to draw peoples closer together, yet it does so not through violence but through the free union of working people throughout the world. Or in a sharp dialectical formulation: "The more democratic the Russian republic, and the more successfully it organizes itself into a Republic of Soviets of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies, the more powerful will be the force of voluntary attraction to such a republic on the part of the working people of all nations." [32]

One may compare a worker who is constantly harassed by her boss, micro-managed in order to ensure she acts as she should. The result is that she works badly, takes sick leave whenever possible, has low morale, and looks to escape at the first opportunity. However, should she be allowed to do things her way, to work in the way she sees best and without interference, preferably without a boss at all, it may actually turn out that she does a far better job, is happier, more efficient, and willing to become part of the larger whole. The closeness of this position to my earlier

dialectical argument concerning radical freedom of religious conscience in a collective context should be clear. The more we encourage radical freedom, whether of national self-determination, of religious expression, or whatever, the more will it foster a deeper and longer-lasting collective experience.

### **Lenin and the Bund**

"For the sake of all the gods that be." [33]

ALL OF THE ABOVE came to its sharpest expression in relation to religious groups, [34] especially the Jews. More specifically, the question of the Bund's relations with the RSDLP pushes the dialectical position I have argued above to its next step: if full autonomy does take place, and if those who have pursued their own distinctive agendas do come back seeking a united front, then what do you do? Do they retain their autonomy in the new arrangement, or does one move past autonomy to a new level of unity? The first may be characterized as the Bund's position; the second was Lenin's preference.

One of the most persistent themes in all of Lenin's writings is the RSDLP's opposition to anti-Semitism. Again and again he attacks the tsarist and right-wing "pogrom-mongers," who attempted to whip up sectarian hatred, split the working class, and divert people's attention from economic and political problems. [35] On a number of occasions, the social-democratic representatives in the Duma proposed clearly-worded bills stressing that position. Jews, along with other religious and ethnic groups, would not be discriminated against and would have full equality before the law. For instance, the bill proposed in March 1914 points out that of all the many peoples in Russia, the Jews are subjected to the harshest discrimination and persecution. In particular, states the preamble to the bill, Jewish workers suffer under the double burden of being both workers and Jewish. So the bill stipulates that no one in Russia, regardless of sex and

religion, is to be restricted in any way on the basis of origin or nationality. More specifically, "All and any laws, provisional regulations, riders to laws, and so forth, which impose restrictions upon Jews in any sphere of social and political life, are herewith abolished." [36]

However, when it came to the Bund and its relations with the RSDLP, Lenin took a different line. The Bund repeatedly requested that it become part of the RSDLP, but that it should be accepted as an autonomous group within a federated party. [37] At the many party congresses, the Bund was nearly always present, repeatedly asserting its position, engaging in lengthy debates and negotiations. Yet, although the RSDLP accepted the Bund at the first and fourth congresses, Lenin persistently refused their unremitting push for autonomy. Is this not an outright contradiction with his position concerning national autonomy in a Soviet state? Not immediately, especially if we keep in mind the earlier distinction between freedom of conscience in regard to the state and in respect to the party. In regard to the former, Lenin clearly stresses the point that the Jewish question in Russia is a particular instance of the national question, sharpening the issue in light of the persecution of the Jews. [38] Thus, as with all groups, the Jews should have all the freedoms of any other religious and ethnic group in the new state. By contrast, the Bund's membership of the party should follow the same guidelines for individual believers and even priests. They may join by subscribing to the party platform, but they are not permitted to advocate any position that is contrary to that platform – in this case an autonomous membership. The reasons given for this position are the same as those with respect to members with religious beliefs and the national question: the need to avoid a diversion that splits the working class along religious and ethnic lines, and thereby the need for a united front that cuts across those lines. [39]

Now we come to the core of the differences between the Bund and the RSDLP. For the latter, class was the key and solidarity must be formed on class lines; all else is secondary, no matter whether it is religion or ethnic identity.[40] For the Bund, anti-Semitism was the core issue, for anti-Semitism is a universal phenomenon that leaps across class lines. The case for autonomy was made by references to workers who had participated in pogroms, indicating that anti-Semitism had taken root among the proletariat.[41] Not so, replies Lenin: anti-Semitism cannot be universalized, for it has specific class features, belonging at this day and age to the reactionary ruling class and the rising bourgeoisie. And if workers do join pogroms, it proves not that they are anti-Semitic, but that they have been deceived by the pogrom-mongers (as in so many cases in which workers are split by the ruling classes).

At first sight, the case of the Bund is like that of the priest: join by all means, but do not attempt to advocate a position contrary to the core of the party platform. At this level, Lenin appears perfectly consistent with the position, outlined earlier, in regard to party membership. A closer perusal reveals that the situation is not the same, for the primary issue with the priest or indeed worker is religious belief, while the key issue for the Bund is membership with autonomy, on the basis of a universal notion of anti-Semitism. Now the situation of the Bund begins to leak into the national question, where Lenin articulates a clear position on self-determination and yet holds back at the last minute on the question of secession.[42] To recap, groups have full autonomy and the right to secession, but secession is not part of the plan at all. I would suggest that the Bund's request pushes over into this territory, straddling both party membership and the structure of the state.[43]

Earlier I criticized Lenin for falling short of a fully dialectical position, in which complete autonomy, pushed to

its dialectical extreme, may well produce a far deeper unity, a stronger collectiveness – although he did glimpse such a dialectical approach in the declaration after the October Revolution. How does this apply to debates with the Bund? In many respects, the Bund pushed Lenin's position to its logical conclusion, continually asserting the desire for membership with autonomy. In response to this persistent request, Lenin seems to have fallen short, at least in part, resisting this push in the name of avoiding diversions and building a united front. I wrote "in part," since in one respect at least it seems to me he was correct, for persistent and unremitting autonomy leads inevitably in a case like this to Zionism: "you will turn the regrettable isolation of the Bund into a fetish, and will cry that the abolition of this isolation means the destruction of the Bund; you will begin to seek grounds justifying your isolation, and in this search will now grasp at the Zionist idea of a Jewish 'nation,' now resort to demagoguery and scurrilities." [44]

Is this the outcome of the resolute isolation of the Bund? Now the situation becomes interesting, specifically through the Bund's refusal to join on existing terms. Throughout the long and fractious relationship with the RSDLP, the Bund took many positions. At times they argued; at times they broke off negotiations and stormed out; at times they came to an agreement for a united front that broke down sooner rather than later. [45] However, it was less through their explicit arguments than their acts that the Bund realized the full extent of the dialectic of radical freedom of conscience that I have been pursuing. In order to see how this act-based realization unfolded, let me fill out this story with a few details.

The General Jewish Workers' Union of Lithuania, Poland, and Russia was established at a conference in Vilno in 1897, out of various Jewish Social-Democratic groups. At the first congress of the RSDLP, the Bund became members while

maintaining autonomy in regard to questions pertaining to the Jewish proletariat. By the time of the second RSDLP congress, the Bund left the party after the rejection of its insistence on autonomy and recognition as the sole representative of Jewish worker issues. By 1906, at the fourth congress (usually designated as the "Unity" congress), the Bund re-joined, along with the Mensheviks. But the unity was short-lived and tensions continued through to the October Revolution and beyond. It is as though they took the RSDLP position on self-determination to heart and held to it.

Yet in 1921, after the October Revolution, the Bund dissolved itself and many of its members joined the renamed Russian Communist Party as full members, finally relinquishing their stand on autonomy. I would suggest that this act provides an unexpected answer to a question Lenin already asked in 1903: "Is this isolation to be preserved, or a turn made towards fusion?"[46] Let me misinterpret Lenin slightly and push his question further, since we now begin to move beyond my earlier argument in relation to autonomy and the national question, where Lenin glimpsed the possibility of full collective autonomy: if you grant, in the name of a deeper collective, autonomy free reign and if it then achieves the dialectical result of thoroughly collective unity, what do you do then? Do you continue to allow autonomy for the sake of that unity, or is there a moment when the autonomy fades away, having achieved its task? Is the Bund's joining with the party in 1921 the answer to that question? We may cite all manner of other reasons, such as the practical realization that they would be able to do far more as party members, that the new Soviet state required as united a front as possible. But I would suggest that the Bund in its own way, perhaps unwittingly, lived out the logic that lay at the heart of Lenin's position.[47]

### **Conclusion: Radical Freedom of Conscience**

ON THREE OCCASIONS, Lenin faced the question of freedom of



conscience in relation to collective issues. On religion he argued that one may join the party if one is a religious believer, but that one must abide by the party platform and not propagate alternative positions within the party. Resolving the tension between one's own faith and the platform is entirely one's own concern. On the national question he went further, advocating self-determination and the right to secession, but then arguing that although one may have the right to secession it is certainly not in the interest of the new state for everyone to do so. Yet after the October Revolution, he glimpsed the potential of a radical and potentially risky freedom of conscience in which its full expression would lead to a deeper and voluntary collective identity. On the relations with the Bund it was less Lenin's own explicit observations or indeed those of the Bund that realized this dialectical possibility. Instead, I suggested that the Bund's own acts, in terms of a long history of alternately joining the party, leaving, and then finally dissolving itself after the revolution, may well be read as a realization of the internal dialectical logic of Lenin's own position – one that he was wary to entertain to its full extent.

## Footnotes

1. Unlike many other political thinkers, Lenin evokes strong reactions. Out of the mass of literature, one may identify six major positions: he was not a Marxist (drawing his ideas from Chernyshevsky); he was a man of practice, not theory; he was entirely impractical, lost in theory; he was thoroughly consistent throughout his life, theoretically and practically; he was an unprincipled opportunist, a politician of compromise, throwing aside his convictions whenever needed and moving far from Marxism; he was a deeply principled and theoretically motivated opportunist. While the penultimate position is popular among many commentators, the last position

is the one that describes him best. For references and a fuller discussion, see [Lenin's political and intellectual biography](#).

2. V.I. Lenin, "Speech at Second All-Russia Conference of Organisers Responsible for Rural Work, June 12, 1920," in *Collected Works*, vol. 31 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1920 [1966]), 171.

3. A couple of other contextual matters brought Lenin to respond explicitly in a number of articles from 1909. V.I. Lenin, "The Attitude of the Workers' Party to Religion," in *Collected Works*, vol. 15 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1909 [1963]); Lenin, "Classes and Parties in their Attitude to Religion and the Church.;" see also V.I. Lenin, "Socialism and Religion," in *Collected Works*, vol. 10 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1905 [1966]). The first was the rise among the Bolsheviks of the "God-builders," who advocated drawing on the "warm" stream of religious, utopian hopes in order to enhance communism. The extraordinary Anatoly Lunacharsky, later Commissar for Enlightenment after the October Revolution, was their clear leader. See Anatoly Vasilyevich Lunacharsky, *Religiia i Socializm: Tom 1* (Moscow: Shilovnik, 1908); Anatoly Vasilyevich Lunacharsky, "Atheism," in *Ocherki po Filosofii Marxisma*, ed. Vladimir A. Bazarov, et al. (St. Petersburg: 1908); Anatoly Vasilyevich Lunacharsky, *Religiia i Socializm: Tom 2* (Moscow: Shilovnik, 1911). The other was a statement in the Duma by the Social-Democratic representatives concerning religion. Lenin found the Duma statement excellent in outlining a materialist position (without overemphasising atheism) and the class allegiances of the clergy, but he felt it fell short precisely on the issue of freedom of conscience.

4. SPD, "[Erfurt Program](#)," in *German History in Documents and Images: Wilhelmine Germany and the First World War, 1890-1918* (1891), 3; SPD, Protokoll des Parteitages der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands: Abgehalten zu Erfurt vom 14. bis 20. Oktober 1891, (Berlin: marxists.org, 1891). 3.

Lenin, a good "Erfurtian," cites precisely this text: Lenin, "The Attitude of the Workers' Party to Religion," 404.

5. Rosa Luxemburg, "Socialism and the Churches," in *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks*, ed. Mary-Alice Waters (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970 [1905]); Rosa Luxemburg, *Kirche und Sozialismus* (Frankfurt am Main: Stimme-Verlag, 1982 [1905]), 19; see also Rosa Luxemburg, "An Anti-Clerical Policy of Socialism," *The Social Democrat* August(2004 [1903]): 2; Rosa Luxemburg, "Enquête sur l'antycléricalisme et le socialisme," *Le Mouvement Socialiste* 9, no. 111 (1903): 28.

6. For example, in the Party's 1899 platform, we find "uncurtailed freedom of conscience." V.I. Lenin, "A Draft Programme of Our Party," in *Collected Works*, vol. 4 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1899 [1960]), 239. Similarly, the 1902 platform includes "unrestricted freedom of conscience, speech, the press and of assembly." V.I. Lenin, "Material for the Preparation of the Programme of the R.S.D.L.P.," in *Collected Works*, vol. 6 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1902 [1961]), 28; see further V.I. Lenin, "The St. Petersburg Strike," in *Collected Works*, vol. 8 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1905 [1962]), 92; Lenin, "The St. Petersburg Strike," 92; V.I. Lenin, "Draft for a Speech on the Agrarian Question in the Second State Duma," in *Collected Works*, vol. 12 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1907 [1962]), 296; V.I. Lenin, "To the Rural Poor: An Explanation for the Peasants of What the Social-Democrats Want," in *Collected Works*, vol. 6 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1903 [1961]), 402; V.I. Lenin, "Second Congress of the League of Russian Revolutionary Social-Deomcracy Abroad," in *Collected Works*, vol. 7 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1903 [1961]), 79.

7. Here he cites Engels as his authority. Lenin, "The Attitude of the Workers' Party to Religion," 404. So also in the later work, *The State and Revolution*, when discussing the same clause. V.I. Lenin, "*The State and Revolution*," in *Collected Works*, vol. 25 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1917 [1964]),

455-6. Note also a comment to Plekhanov in 1902, in which he expresses the desire to attack the "freedom of conscience" position. V.I. Lenin, "To G.V. Plekhanov, February 7, 1902," in *Collected Works*, vol. 34 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1902 [1966]), 94.

8. Lenin, "Socialism and Religion," 84-5; Lenin, "Material for the Preparation of the Programme of the R.S.D.L.P.," 28, 30; Lenin, "To the Rural Poor: An Explanation for the Peasants of What the Social-Democrats Want," 402; Lenin, "The Autocracy is Wavering ..." 347-8; V.I. Lenin, "Revision of the Agrarian Programme of the Workers' Party," in *Collected Works*, vol. 10 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1906 [1962]), 194-5; V.I. Lenin, "The Declaration of Our Group in the Duma," in *Collected Works*, vol. 11 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1906 [1963]), 35.

9. Lenin, "To the Rural Poor: An Explanation for the Peasants of What the Social-Democrats Want," 402. See also the proposed "National Equality Bill," put forward in 1914 by *The Social Democrat* members of the Duma (but not made law at the time): "No citizen of Russia, regardless of sex and religion, may be restricted in political or in any other rights on the grounds of origin or nationality." V.I. Lenin, "The National Equality Bill," in *Collected Works*, vol. 20 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1914 [1964]), 173; see also Lenin, "Second Congress of the League of Russian Revolutionary Social-Deomcracy Abroad," 79. The specific aim of this bill was to counter the anti-Semitism and pogroms fostered by the Right.

10. Lenin, "Socialism and Religion," 85.

11. Lenin, "Does the Jewish Proletariat Need an 'Independent Political Party'?", 331, fn. Note also: "a political organisation cannot put its members through an examination to see if there is no contradiction between their views and the Party programme." Lenin, "The Attitude of the Workers' Party to Religion," 408. Here Lenin has listened carefully to the position of Marx and Engels in relation to the First

International, which resolutely refused to make atheism part of the platform. They did so in resistance to pressures from conservatives, anarchists and even former comrades. Thus, the anarchists with Bakunin at their head pushed to make the International officially atheistic, to abolish religious ritual and replace religious faith with science. Marx retorts, "As if one could declare by royal decree abolition of faith!" Karl Marx, "Remarks on the Programme and Rules of the International Alliance of Socialist Democracy," in *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 21 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1868 [1985]), 208; see also Karl Marx, "Declaration of the General Council of the International Working Men's Association Concerning Cochrane's Speech in the House of Commons," in *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 23 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1872 [1988]), 142; Friedrich Engels, "The Congress at The Hague (Letter to Enrico Bignami)," in *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 23 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1872 [1988]), 275-6; Friedrich Engels, "Der Haager Kongreß [Brief an Bignami]," in *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 18 (Berlin: Dietz, 1872 [1973]), 169-70; Friedrich Engels, "Engels to Marx in London, Manchester, 21 April 1870," in *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 43 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1870 [1988]); Friedrich Engels, "Engels an Marx 21. April 1870," in *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 32 (Berlin: Dietz, 1870 [1973]); Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "The Alliance of Socialist Democracy and the International Working Men's Association. Report and Documents Published by Decision of The Hague Congress of the International," in *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 23 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1873 [1988]), 460; Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Ein Komplot gegen die Internationale Arbeiterassoziation. Im Auftrage des Haager Kongresses verfaßter Bericht über das Trieben Bakunins und der Allianz der sozialistischen Demokratie," in *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 18 (Berlin: Dietz, 1873 [1973]), 335. The many opponents of the international, ranging from conservatives and repressive state apparatuses to former comrades like Jules Favre and Mazzini, assumed that the International was just as

the anarchists wished, formally atheist. In reply, Engels asserts again and again that atheism is not part of the communist platform. Friedrich Engels, "Account of Engels' Speech on Mazzini's Attitude Towards the International," in *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 22 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1871 [1986]), 608; Friedrich Engels, "On the Progress of the International Working Men's Association in Italy and Spain," in *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 23 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1871 [1988]), 28; Friedrich Engels, "Engels to Carlo Cafiero in Barletta, London, 1-3 July 1871," in *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 44 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1871 [1989]), 164.

12. Lenin, "Socialism and Religion," 86.

13. Lenin, "The Attitude of the Workers' Party to Religion," 403.

14. Lenin would therefore find the attack on religion by the "new atheists" a typical idealist and bourgeois program, for it makes religion the primary cause of all the world's ills. Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006); Christopher Hitchens, *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (New York: Twelve Books, 2007); Sam Harris, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror and the Future of Reason* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2005); Sam Harris, *Letter to a Christian Nation* (New York: Knopf, 2006); Daniel C. Dennett, *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2007). See the detailed assessment in Roland Boer, "The New Old Atheists," *Australian Marxist Review* 50(2009).

15. Lenin, "The Attitude of the Workers' Party to Religion," 407-8.

16. Or in the different situation of Western Europe, where the bourgeois revolution had already achieved its anti-clerical program, the bourgeoisie may deploy anti-clericalism as a way

to split the united front of the working class. In this respect religion is still made into a basic issue at the forefront of the struggle. Lenin, "The Attitude of the Workers' Party to Religion," 411.

17. Lenin, "Socialism and Religion," 87.

18. Lenin, "Socialism and Religion," 87.

19. V.I. Lenin, "The First of May," in *Collected Works*, vol. 8 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1905 [1963]), 348; Lenin, "A New Revolutionary Workers' Association," 509-10; Lenin, "Our Tasks and the Soviet of Workers' Deputies. A Letter to the Editor," 23; Lenin, "Party Organisation and Party Literature," 47-8. In "The Attitude of the Workers Party to Religion," Lenin gives the example of a strike in a region where the proletariat is divided into "class-conscious Social-Democrats" and those who are religious. The latter are part of a Christian labour union that calls a strike in relation to economic struggle. In this context, it is "the duty of a Marxist to place the success of the strike movement above everything else, vigorously to counteract the division of the workers in this struggle into atheists and Christians, vigorously to oppose any such division. Atheist propaganda in such circumstances may be both unnecessary and harmful." Lenin, "The Attitude of the Workers' Party to Religion," 407.

20. Lenin, "The Attitude of the Workers' Party to Religion," 404.

21. Lenin, "The Attitude of the Workers' Party to Religion," 409.

22. Lenin, "The Attitude of the Workers' Party to Religion," 408-9.

23. Much later, during the "civil" war Krupskaya relates a somewhat amusing story that illustrates this question nicely: "The Second Army had a rather peculiar agitator: he had been a

priest before the October Revolution, but after he had become an agitator for the Bolsheviks. At a meeting of five thousand Red Army men in Perm he spoke of the Soviet power's intimate link with the masses. 'The Bolsheviks,' he said, 'are today's apostles.' When asked by a Red Army man in the audience, 'What about baptism?' he answered: 'That would take a couple of hours to explain, but briefly it's pure eyewash.'" Nadezhda Krupskaya, *Reminiscences of Lenin* (New York: International Publishers, 1960 [1930]), 526. Of course, it is de rigueur to mention in this context the campaigns against parts of the established Orthodox Church after 1917, the long-overdue redistribution of church property and execution of anti-communist priests. See Paul Gabel, *And God Created Lenin: Marxism vs. Religion in Russia, 1917-1929* (Amherst: Prometheus, 2005). As I have argued elsewhere, this situation throws into sharp relief the ambivalence of Lenin's position: he both attacked religion mercilessly but fostered its marginal, pro-communist forms. Roland Boer, "Spiritual Booze and Freedom: Lenin on Religion," *New Proposals: Journal of Marxism and Interdisciplinary Inquiry* (In press). It is worth recalling that the progressive, Renovationist wing of the Orthodox Church attracted the larger part of that church to its agenda at the time.

24. V.I. Lenin, "A Letter to S.G. Shahumyan," in *Collected Works*, vol. 19 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1913 [1964]), 501.

25. A word is necessary here on the curious usage of the terms "nation," "national" and "nationality." Lenin takes here Karl Kautsky's definition of a nation as comprising two items: language and territory. Lenin, "The Position of the Bund in the Party," 99. This position leads one to the very Euro-centric idea that a state must be comprised on the basis of one ethnicity and one language, so much so that newly independent states, from Norway to the parts of the former Yugoslavia, claim what are really dialects to be unique



languages, such as Norwegian in relation to Danish or Croatian in relation to Serbian. It also lies behind the creation of modern Hebrew and the Zionist push for a state of Israel. This position falls down when faced with multi-lingual and multi-ethnic states (Canada, Belgium, Finland, China, Australia etc.) and indeed the simple point that any national entity, let alone an ethnic one, is always a confluence of multiple ethnicities, so much so that one is unable to distinguish any "pure" identity at all. See Igor M. D'iakonoff, *The Paths of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 153. On the complexity of the "national" question in Russia at the time, see Gregor Alexinsky, *Modern Russia*, trans. Bernard Miall (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1913), 297-306. For a close analysis of Lenin's position, see Tony Cliff, *All Power to the Soviets: Lenin 1914-1917* (Chicago: Haymarket, 2004 [1976]), 53-63.

26. V.I. Lenin, "Critical Remarks on the National Question," in *Collected Works*, vol. 20 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1913 [1964]), 28.

27. Lenin, "Bill on the Equality of Nations and the Safeguarding of the Rights of National Minorities," 281; Lenin, "Bill on the Equality of Nations and the Safeguarding of the Rights of National Minorities," 281-3; see also Lenin, "Critical Remarks on the National Question," 22-8; V.I. Lenin, "Liberals and Democrats on the Language Question," in *Collected Works*, vol. 19 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1913 [1963]), 345-7; Lenin, "How Does Bishop Nikon Defend the Ukrainians," 379-81; Lenin, "Resolutions of the Summer, 1913, Joint Conference of the Central Committee of the R.S.D.L.P. and Party Officials," 427-8; Lenin, "The Cadets and 'The Right of Nations to Self-Determination'. "; Lenin, "The Nationality of Pupils in Russian Schools."; Lenin, "Once More on the Segregation of the Schools According to Nationality."; V.I. Lenin, "Corrupting the Workers with Refined Nationalism," in *Collected Works*, vol. 20 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1914

[1965]), 290-1; Lenin, "Clarity Has Been Achieved: Class Conscious Workers, Please Note," 351-2; Lenin, "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination."; V.I. Lenin, "Socialism and War: The Attitude of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party Towards the War," in *Collected Works*, vol. 21 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1915 [1964]), 316-17; Lenin, "The Revolutionary Proletariat and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination."; V.I. Lenin, "Theses for a Lecture on the National Question," in *Collected Works*, vol. 41 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1914 [1969]). These positions were embodied in the famous decree on peace on the day after the October Revolution. V.I. Lenin, "Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies: October 25-26 (November 7-8), 1917," in *Collected Works*, vol. 26 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1917 [1966]), 249-53. For debates over the national question in the Comintern, see John Riddell, ed. *Lenin's Struggle for a Revolutionary International: Documents: 1907-1916, The Preparatory Years* (New York: Monad, 1984), 353-64.

28. For the following arguments a number of texts are relevant: Lenin, "Theses on the National Question," 243-7; Lenin, "Critical Remarks on the National Question," 36-8; Lenin, "On the Question of National Policy."; Lenin, "Bill on the Equality of Nations and the Safeguarding of the Rights of National Minorities."; Lenin, "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination."; Lenin, "The Working Class and the National Question."; Lenin, "Draft Platform for the Fourth Congress of Social-Democrats of the Latvian Area."; Lenin, "'Cultural-National' Autonomy."; V.I. Lenin, "The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination: Theses," in *Collected Works*, vol. 22 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1916 [1964]). Note especially: "Our task is not to segregate nations, but to unite the workers of all nations. Our banner does not carry the slogan 'national culture' but *international* culture, which unites all the nations in a higher, socialist unity, and the way to which is already being paved by the

international amalgamation of capital." Lenin, "Once More on the Segregation of the Schools According to Nationality," 548-9; Lenin, "Corrupting the Workers with Refined Nationalism."

29. Lenin, "The National Question in Our Programme."

30. Lenin, "A Letter to S.G. Shahumyan," 500-1. Or as he puts it later, using the analogy of divorce, "This example clearly demonstrates that one cannot be a democrat and socialist without demanding full freedom of divorce now, because the lack of such freedom is additional oppression of the oppressed sex – though it should not be difficult to realise that recognition of the *freedom* to leave one's husband is not an *invitation* to all wives to do so!" V.I. Lenin, "A Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economism," in *Collected Works*, vol. 23 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1916 [1964]), 72.

31. Lenin, "A Letter to S.G. Shahumyan," 501.

32. V.I. Lenin, "The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution: Draft Platform for the Proletarian Party," in *Collected Works*, vol. 24 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1917 [1964]), 73.

33. V.I. Lenin, "A Note to the Editors of *Proletarskaya Pravda*" in *Collected Works*, vol. 43 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1913 [1972]), 370.

34. From time to time, Lenin mentions Muslims, Roman Catholics, Stundists, Old Believers and "sects," but his arguments come to their sharpest expression in debates with the Bund. V.I. Lenin, "Gems of Narodnik Phrase-Mongering," in *Collected Works*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1897 [1960]), 476-7; Lenin, "The Elections of the Worker Curia in St. Petersburg," 63-4; V.I. Lenin, "The Agrarian Programme of Social-Democracy and the First Russian Revolution, 1905-1907," in *Collected Works*, vol. 13 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1907 [1963]), 408; V.I. Lenin, "Review of Home Affairs," in

*Collected Works*, vol. 5 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1901 [1961]), 291-4; Lenin, "Review of Home Affairs," 281; V.I. Lenin, "Telegram to G. K. Orjonikidze," in *Collected Works*, vol. 30 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1920 [1965]), 494; V.I. Lenin, "Notebooks on Imperialism," in *Collected Works*, vol. 39 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1915-1916 [1968]), 112, 534-6, 762; V.I. Lenin, "Report to the International Socialist Bureau, 'Elections to the Fourth Duma'," in *Collected Works*, vol. 41 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1912 [1969]), 269; V.I. Lenin, "To Camille Huysmans, September 5, ,1911," in *Collected Works*, vol. 43 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1912 [1972]), 280; V.I. Lenin, "What Is To Be Done? Burning Questions of Our Movement," in *Collected Works*, vol. 5 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1902 [1961]), 402, 14. In response to the tsar's "fig-leaf" concessions, which really shore up the established church and the autocracy, Lenin writes: "we demand ... an amnesty for all "political prisoners" and members of religious sects. Until that is done, all talk about tolerance and freedom of worship will remain a miserable pretence and discreditable lie." Lenin, "The Autocracy is Wavering ..." 348. For a far more negative contemporary view of religious minorities and sects, see the work of the socialist Alexinsky and the liberal Miliukov: Alexinsky, *Modern Russia*: 307-17; Paul Miliukov, *Russia and Its Crisis* (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1962 [1905]). By contrast, it is worth noting that the early Iskra was distributed by Lithuanian religious groups, also suppressed by the tsar. Lars T. Lih, *Lenin* (London: Reaktion Books, 2011), 75.

35. Out of the multitude of references, I can give only a representative collection of citations. Lenin, "Gems of Narodnik Phrase-Mongering," 471; Lenin, "The Heritage We Renounce," 529; V.I. Lenin, "The War in China," in *Collected Works*, vol. 4 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1900 [1960]), 376; Lenin, "The Serf-Owners at Work," 96, 98; Lenin, "Material for the Preparation of the Programme of the R.S.D.L.P.," 49, 57; Lenin, "Concerning the Statement of the Bund.;" Lenin, "Does

the Jewish Proletariat Need an 'Independent Political Party'?."; Lenin, "Tasks of the Revolutionary Youth," 44; Lenin, "Preface to the Pamphlet: *Memorandum of Police Department Superintendent Lopukhin*," 204; Lenin, "To the Jewish Workers," 495-6; V.I. Lenin, "While the Proletariat is Doing the Fighting the Bourgeoisie is Stealing Towards Power," in *Collected Works*, vol. 9 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1905 [1965]), 172; Lenin, "On the Current Moment.>"; Lenin, "The Black Hundreds and the Organisation of an Uprising," 203; Lenin, "The Cadet Duma Grants Money to the Pogrom-Monger's Government.>"; Lenin, "Organisation of the Masses and Choice of the Moment for Struggle," 93; Lenin, "Guerilla Warfare," 216; Lenin, "The Elections of the Worker Curia in St. Petersburg," 64; Lenin, "Draft for a Speech on the Agrarian Question in the Second State Duma," 273; Lenin, "The Cuckoo Praises the Rooster," 313; Lenin, "Against Boycott: Notes of a Social-Democratic Publicist," 30; Lenin, "The Agrarian Programme of Social-Democracy and the First Russian Revolution, 1905-1907," 340-1, 63-4; V.I. Lenin, "The Election Platform of the R.S.D.L.P.," in *Collected Works*, vol. 17 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1912 [1963]), 507; V.I. Lenin, "Old and New: Notes of a Newspaper Reader," in *Collected Works*, vol. 17 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1911 [1963]), 300; Lenin, "The Slogans and Organisation of Social-Democratic Work Inside and Outside the Duma," 337, 40; V.I. Lenin, "The Revolutionary Upswing," in *Collected Works*, vol. 18 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1912 [1963]), 108; Lenin, "The Nationalisation of Jewish Schools," 307-8; Lenin, "The Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution," 36, fn; Lenin, "The Government's Policy and the Coming Struggle," 184. For a vivid first-hand description of a tsarist-sanctioned pogrom in Odessa, see the account O. Pianitsky, *Memoirs of a Bolshevik* (Westport: Hyperion, 1933 [1925]), 86-8.

36. Lenin, "The National Equality Bill," 173.

37. On the ground, Bolsheviks and Bundists often worked

closely together. See Pianitsky, *Memoirs of a Bolshevik*: 34-5.

38. Lenin, "The National Equality Bill," 172. See also the subsequent discussions of the bill: Lenin, "National Equality."; Lenin, "Bill on the Equality of Nations and the Safeguarding of the Rights of National Minorities."

39. Lenin, "Concerning the Statement of the Bund," 322-3.

40. Lenin, "The National Question in Our Programme."; Lenin, "The Position of the Bund in the Party."

41. Lenin, "Does the Jewish Proletariat Need an 'Independent Political Party'?", 331-2.

42. This leakage shows up in a structural feature of Lenin's draft resolution from the second RSDLP conference concerning the Bund. First, he states that the Bund may agitate as much as it likes and in its preferred language for national self-determination (according to party platform). Then, immediately following, he proposes that the party "emphatically repudiates federation as the organisational principle of a Russian party." Lenin, "Second Congress of the R.S.D.L.P., July 17 (30) – August 10 (23), 1903," 468. The two statements rub so closely together that they begin to seep into one another.

43. Indeed, at times Lenin seems to have realised that the slippage between his carefully demarcated zones of the state and party membership was taking place in the struggle with the Bund, indeed that the Bund's position did deploy the argument for self-determination and autonomy in relation to the party. This realisation leads him, in an earlier article from 1903, to a contradiction with his general position: he does not reassert the distinction between state and party, but attacks the idea that the Jews constitute a nation at all. The reason: since a "nation" means a distinct language and territory, and since the Jews, due to their unfortunate history, no longer have either a distinct tongue or land, they do not constitute a nation at all. Therefore, they are not entitled to the claim

to self-determination even within a state. Lenin, "The Position of the Bund in the Party," 99-102. Although this argument is an effort at more radical criticism, attacking the root of the Bund's argument for autonomy within the party and seeking to show the reactionary nature of Zionism, it contradicts the position Lenin would later take in 1914 (outlined above), namely that the Jews have the right to self-determination along with any other ethnic group. Did Lenin realise the mistake of the earlier position in 1903, amending it to the line taken in 1914? I suspect so and have assumed the latter to be the main position Lenin takes on the matter, for it is consistent with his treatment of the national question.

44. Lenin, "Maximum Brazenness and Minimum Logic," 63. To my mind, this is a far better argument against Zionism than the one discussed in the previous note, in which Lenin seeks to block Zionism through a spurious argument that a "nation" is comprised of territory and a single language and the Jews have neither.

45. Again, the relevant references to this long tussle are too many to cite in full. Lenin, "Concerning the Statement of the Bund."; Lenin, "Maximum Brazenness and Minimum Logic."; Lenin, "The Position of the Bund in the Party."; Lenin, "To the Jewish Workers."; Lenin, "No Falsehood! Our Strength Lies in Stating the Truth! Letter to the Editorial Board."; Lenin, "The Unity Congress of the R.S.D.L.P. April 10 (23)- April 25 (May 8), 1908," 309; Lenin, "An Appeal to the Party by Delegates to the Unity Congress Who Belonged to the Former "Bolshevik" Group," 310; Lenin, "Report on the Unity Congress of the R.S.D.L.P.: A Letter to the St. Petersburg Workers," 323; Lenin, "Report on the Unity Congress of the R.S.D.L.P.: A Letter to the St. Petersburg Workers," 371-2; Lenin, "Union of the Bund With the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party."; V.I. Lenin, "Concerning an Article Published in the Organ of the Bund," in *Collected Works*, vol. 11 (Moscow: Progress

Publishers, 1906 [1964]); V.I. Lenin, "Plekhanov and Vasilyev," in *Collected Works*, vol. 11 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1907 [1962]), 419; V.I. Lenin, "Report of the Fifth Congress of the R.S.D.L.P. on the St. Petersburg Split and the Institution of the Party Tribunal Ensuing Therefrom," in *Collected Works*, vol. 12 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1907 [1963]), 429. The same applies to the second RSDLP congress, when the Bund decided not to be bound by the congress, thereby effectively withdrawing. Lenin, "Second Congress of the R.S.D.L.P., July 17 (30) – August 10 (23), 1903," 468, 77; Lenin, "Account of the Second Congress of the R.S.D.L.P.,"; Lenin, "Second Party Congress: Plan of Articles," 58; V.I. Lenin, "One Step Forward, Two Steps Back (The Crisis in Our Party)," in *Collected Works*, vol. 7 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1904 [1961]), 212-15.

46. Lenin, "Maximum Brazenness and Minimum Logic," 63.

47. Occasionally, Lenin inadvertently provides an insight into precisely this logic. Writing to Bogdanov in 1905: "we talk of organisation, of centralism, while actually there is such disunity, such amateurism among even the closest comrades in the centre, that one feels like chucking it all in disgust. Just look at the Bundists: they do not prate about centralism, but every one of them writes to the centre weekly and contact is thus actually maintained." Lenin, "A Letter to A.A. Bogdanov and S.I. Gusev," 143.