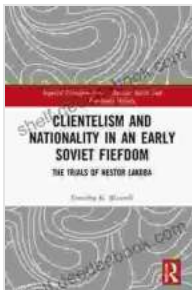


# Clientelism and Nationality in an Early Soviet Fiefdom: The Case of the Gomel Oblast, 1917-1926

## Abstract



**Clientelism and Nationality in an Early Soviet Fiefdom: The Trials of Nestor Lakoba (Imperial Transformations – Russian, Soviet and Post-Soviet History)** by Timothy K. Blauvelt

★★★★☆ 4.3 out of 5

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This article examines the relationship between clientelism and nationality in the early Soviet period, focusing on the case of the Gomel Oblast in Belarus. It argues that clientelistic networks played a key role in shaping the political and social landscape of the oblast, and that these networks were often based on ethnic or national lines. The article also explores the implications of this finding for our understanding of the early Soviet state and the nature of Soviet nationality policy.

The early Soviet period was a time of great upheaval and change. The Russian Revolution of 1917 had overthrown the tsarist regime and

established a new socialist state. The new government was committed to building a new society based on the principles of equality and justice. However, the reality of the early Soviet period was often very different from the ideals of the revolution. In many parts of the country, local officials and party bosses established their own fiefdoms, where they ruled with little regard for the law or the interests of the people.

The Gomel Oblast in Belarus was one such fiefdom. The oblast was ruled by a local party boss named Alexander Myasnikov. Myasnikov was a ruthless and ambitious man who used his position to enrich himself and his cronies. He also used his power to suppress dissent and to create a climate of fear and intimidation.

Myasnikov's regime was based on a system of clientelism. He rewarded his supporters with jobs, promotions, and other favors. In return, his supporters provided him with political support and protected him from his enemies. This system of patronage and corruption extended throughout the oblast, from the highest levels of the party and government to the lowest levels of society.

One of the most striking features of Myasnikov's regime was its use of nationality to divide and rule. Myasnikov was a Russian, and he favored Russians over other ethnic groups in the oblast. He appointed Russians to key positions in the party, government, and economy. He also promoted Russian culture and language, while suppressing the cultures and languages of other groups.

Myasnikov's policy of ethnic favoritism created a deep sense of resentment among the non-Russian population of the oblast. This resentment

eventually led to a series of uprisings against Myasnikov's rule. The uprisings were brutally suppressed, but they ultimately led to Myasnikov's downfall.

### **Clientelism and Nationality in the Gomel Oblast**

The system of clientelism that existed in the Gomel Oblast was based on a combination of personal loyalty, patronage, and ethnic favoritism.

Myasnikov rewarded his supporters with jobs, promotions, and other favors. In return, his supporters provided him with political support and protected him from his enemies. This system of patronage and corruption extended throughout the oblast, from the highest levels of the party and government to the lowest levels of society.

One of the most important ways that Myasnikov maintained his power was through the use of ethnic favoritism. Myasnikov was a Russian, and he favored Russians over other ethnic groups in the oblast. He appointed Russians to key positions in the party, government, and economy. He also promoted Russian culture and language, while suppressing the cultures and languages of other groups.

Myasnikov's policy of ethnic favoritism created a deep sense of resentment among the non-Russian population of the oblast. This resentment eventually led to a series of uprisings against Myasnikov's rule. The uprisings were brutally suppressed, but they ultimately led to Myasnikov's downfall.

### **The Implications of Clientelism and Nationality for the Early Soviet State**

The case of the Gomel Oblast provides a valuable case study of the relationship between clientelism and nationality in the early Soviet period. It shows how clientelistic networks can be used to divide and rule a population, and how ethnic favoritism can lead to conflict and instability. The case of the Gomel Oblast also has implications for our understanding of the early Soviet state.

The early Soviet state was a highly centralized and authoritarian regime. However, as the case of the Gomel Oblast shows, there was also a great deal of local autonomy and corruption. Local officials and party bosses often established their own fiefdoms, where they ruled with little regard for the law or the interests of the people.

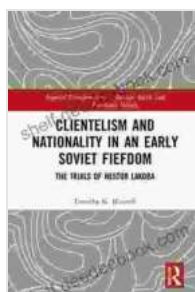
The system of clientelism and nationality that existed in the Gomel Oblast was not unique. It was a common feature of many early Soviet fiefdoms. This system of patronage and corruption undermined the authority of the central government and contributed to the instability of the early Soviet state.

The case of the Gomel Oblast provides a valuable case study of the relationship between clientelism and nationality in the early Soviet period. It shows how clientelistic networks can be used to divide and rule a population, and how ethnic favoritism can lead to conflict and instability. The case of the Gomel Oblast also has implications for our understanding of the early Soviet state. It shows that the early Soviet state was not a monolithic entity, but rather a complex and contradictory regime that was characterized by both centralization and local autonomy.

The legacy of clientelism and nationality in the Gomel Oblast continues to this day. The region remains one of the most ethnically diverse regions in Belarus, and there is still a deep sense of resentment among the non-Russian population. The case of the Gomel Oblast is a reminder of the dangers of clientelism and ethnic favoritism, and it is a warning to those who seek to build a just and equitable society.

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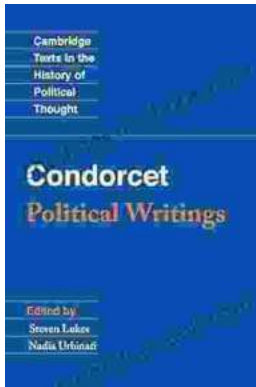
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