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**TITLE: RUSSIA IRREDENTA: SOVIET NATIONALITY POLICY
REAPPRAISED**

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Executive Summary

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 meant the failure of the complex nationalities policy which had held the empire together. The author of the policy (and of the theory which supported it) was Stalin. After Stalin's death the policy became the "Leninist" national policy, but Stalin's immediate successors, Khrushchev and Brezhnev, followed the same general policy, though with important differences in emphasis. The policy was to allow most ethnic groups a carefully measured dose of autonomy in cultural affairs, while ruthlessly suppressing any manifestation of territorial nationalism. The policy recognized national differences--in particular differences in language--and granted the larger nationalities a limited right to maintain their own schools, their own culture, and their own literature. Thus cultural and educational policy was under republic control, though always under the watchful eye of the Communist party. However economic and political affairs were tightly controlled from the center. Nonetheless each favored nationality not only had its own territory ("republic") but had other symbols of statehood. The policy was a risky one because it assured that ethnic identity would survive in the republics and in some cases would actually grow.

This paper concludes that contrary to a view widely held in the West, "Russification" was not the key to maintaining the multinational empire. In educational and cultural policy the goal was bilingualism; Russian was the *lingua franca* but local languages were supported. Alongside the policy of accepting national differences, the bureaucratic apparatus of the Communist party (backed up ultimately by the secret police) assured that the issue of separatism would not come into the open. But when the party came apart the glue that held the USSR together cracked and split.

It should be noted that Russia was an exception. The close connection between the USSR and the traditional empire had the effect of suppressing or confusing Russian ethnic identity. Moreover Russia was denied some of the symbols of statehood that were routinely granted to the other republics (the problem of "Russian dependency"). This poses significant policy problems for the independent Russian state which emerged in 1991. Should Russia be a unitary state with minimal concessions to its ethnic minorities, or should it be a national-federal state on the Soviet model?

There is a curious paradox in Russian policy toward the minorities. The right-wing parties like KRO and ROS openly abandon Stalin's plan and would (if they could) abolish the republics altogether. The democrats (and here we can include El'tsin and his government) accept the traditional national-territorial structure without acknowledging Stalin's authorship. It would be foolish to assume that the issue is closed. There are strong pressures for revision of the 1993 constitution, including the federal structure. The ROS program, for example, was published after the constitution went into effect. While the republics may survive indefinitely, Moscow will take whatever steps seem prudent to reduce their autonomy.

Introductory Note

This paper is part of a larger work, *The Russian Puzzle: Right-wing Nationalism and the Legacy of Empire*, to be published in 1997 by Westview Press.

The paper is a revisionist analysis of Soviet nationalities policy and I take sole responsibility for its conclusions. The research which is reported here was supported by grants from the Earhart Foundation and the National Council for Soviet and East European Research, and that support is gratefully acknowledged. The Hoover Institution provided me with a grant which allowed me to work on the papers of N.V. Ustrialov. Research for this book was also supported in part by a grant from the International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX), with funds provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the United States Information Agency, and the US Department of State, which administers the Soviet and East European Training Act of 1983 (Title VIII). Neither the Earhart Foundation, nor the National Council, nor the Hoover Institution, nor IREX and its funding agencies are responsible for the views expressed here.

I should also acknowledge the help of many Russians who agreed to be interviewed by me. Among them are Viktor Aksiuchits, Col. Viktor Alksnis, Nina Andreeva, Mikhail Astaf'ev, Sergei Baburin, Rev. Aleksandr Borisov, Leonid Borodin, Vera Birusova, Dmitry Vasil'ev, Eduard Volodin, Il'ia Glazunov, Rev. Dimitry Dudko, Vladimir Zhirinovskii, Gennadii Ziuganov, Valerii Zor'kin, Vadim Kozhinov, A.G. Kuz'min, the late Galina Litvinova, Leonid Mamut, Kseniia Mialo, Natal'ia Narochnitskaia, Mikhail Nuzhdinov, Aleksandr Ogorodnikov, Vladimir Osipov, Nikolai Pavlov, Petr Peshkov, Tamara Ponomareva, Aleksandr Prokhanov, Aleksandr Rutsnoi, Galina Starovoitova, Igor Shafarevich, Rev. Gleb Iakunin. None of them bears any responsibility for the views or conclusions of this study.

In citing Russian sources, I have consistently followed the transliteration system of the Library of Congress. In citing the works of Soviet leaders from Lenin to Gorbachev, I have generally relied on the standard editions of their writings:

L.I. Brezhnev. *Leninskim kursom*. 9 vols. Moscow: Politizdat, 1970-1982.

M.S. Gorbachev. *Izbrannye rechi i stat'i*. 8 vols. Moscow: Politizdat. 1987-1990.

V.I. Lenin. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*. 5th ed. 55 vols. Moscow: Politizdat, 1958-1965.

V.I. Lenin. *Sochineniia*. 3rd ed. 30 vols. Moscow: Politizdat, 1936-1937.

I.V. Stalin. *Sochineniia*. 13 vols. Moscow: Politizdat, 1949.

The Soviet edition of Stalin's works was not completed; the 13 volumes contain his writings only through January 1934. A three-volume supplementary edition, prepared by Western scholars, contains published writings beginning with 1934, and thus is a substitute for the phantom volumes 14-16 of the Soviet edition:

I.V. Stalin. *Sochineniia*. Ed. Robert H. McNeal. 3 vols. Stanford: Hoover Institution, 1967.

In a few cases I have found a significant discrepancy between a leader's original statement and the version published in a later, edited edition. Where I discovered such changes I have cited the earlier version.

The reference to the Ustrialov collection is to the archive of N.V. Ustrialov at the Hoover Institution. Material from this archive is cited by file (box) and item number. There is a separate chapter devoted to Ustrialov in *The Russian Puzzle*.

Samizdat documents are cited by AS (*Arkhiv samizdata*) number. All AS documents can be found in *Sobranie dokumentov samizdata*, 32 vols. (Munich: Radio Liberty, 1972-1978) or *Materialy samizdata*, also published by Radio Liberty.

RUSSIA IRREDENTA: SOVIET NATIONALITY POLICY REAPPRAISED

Darrell P. Hammer

We inherited from Stalinism an imperial system with an imperial ideology, with an imperial policy of "divide and rule." This system oppressed the large nationalities as well, and in particular the Russians, who became one of the main victims.

Andrei Sakharov (1989)²

PART I. The Soviet Period

As Russia shrinks in size, the country becomes more Russian. This is easy to show statistically: In the USSR, barely 50 percent of the population was ethnically Russian; in independent Russia the figure is 82 percent.³ The USSR was truly a multinational empire. Today's Russia is a nation state.

Yet it is a nation state without a strong sense of ethnic identity. In 1991 the political scientist Andranik Migranian predicted that the collapse of the USSR would strengthen the sense of national identity and lead to a resurgent Russian nationalism.⁴ The non-Russian nationalities in the USSR had developed this sense of identity because of Stalin's national policy, as will be shown in this paper. For the Russians, their sense of nationhood had been suppressed in the name of "Soviet patriotism." To be sure the ethnic minorities were also expected to be Soviet patriots, but the policy still encouraged them to develop their own national culture. Thus "the Russian people during the years of Soviet power were denationalized to a greater degree than the other peoples of the Soviet empire."⁵ The Russians were the core of the empire, and at the same time (as Sakharov said in 1989) were victims of imperial domination. In comparison with the minorities, Russian national consciousness was slow to develop. The five years of *perestroika* saw the growth of a virulent nationalism in the non-Russian republics, leading to great hostility toward Russian influence and Communist ideology (generally seen as two sides of a single coin), which in turn led to open demands for separation from the empire. In Russia it was more complicated. There was a rift (Migranian calls it a *raskol*) among leaders of the emerging patriotic opposition. Some like Shafarevich and Solzhenitsyn remained determined anti-Communists. Others (Migranian gives the example of Prokhanov⁶) saw in the surviving Communist structure an institutional framework which could hold the country together. This problem of the relationship with the Communists remains a divisive issue within the patriotic opposition. One question which is part of this issue is policy toward the minorities within the new

²*Ogonek*, 31 (1989): 26.

³*Natsional'nyi sostav naseleniia SSSR po dannym vsesoiuznoi perepisi naseleniia 1989 goda* (Moscow: Finansy i statistika, 1990). All the statistics reported here are drawn from this source.

⁴Andranik Migranian, "Perspektivy russkogo natsional'nogo dvizheniia," *Nezavisimaa gazeta*, Nov. 11, 1991,

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶Aleksandr Prokhanov is editor of the right-wing weekly *Zavtra!*.

nation state. Some opposition leaders, including the Communists, want to follow the plan which Stalin laid down for the USSR. Others find Stalin's plan discredited and want to go another way. We will return to this question, and its implications for Soviet policy, later in this paper.

Restoration of the Empire

On September 2, 1945, Stalin addressed the Soviet people by radio to announce the surrender of Japan. The Soviet victory meant the recovery of territories which imperial Russia had lost forty years earlier: the southern part of Sakhalin island and a sphere of interest in Manchuria and Korea. Stalin rejoiced: "We, the men of the older generation, have awaited this day for forty years."⁷ This was precisely what Ustrialov had foreseen in 1920; the "anti-patriots" who had applauded the Russian defeat in 1905 would eventually have a change of heart.⁸

The end of World War II thus brought a successful conclusion to Stalin's long effort to restore the tsarist empire under Soviet rule. True, the map of the USSR as of 1945 did not exactly correspond to the empire. Finland remained independent (but Finland had enjoyed autonomous status under the tsar). The region around Kars, once a southern outpost of the tsar's realm, remained a part of Turkey. Poland retained formal sovereignty but this was largely a fiction. On the other hand Stalin acquired the northern half of East Prussia (which became Kaliningrad *oblast'*) and a parcel of Rumanian territory (added to the Moldavian republic)--territories which had not been in the tsarist empire. But in general the map of the USSR after 1945 resembled the tsarist realm. There was one important difference. The USSR was a multinational empire, but it was not "Russia." The Soviet constitution recognized the non-Russian minorities, and the country was divided into "republics" which corresponded to the major ethnic groups. This structure so carefully built by Stalin and maintained by his successors came apart in 1991, after the August *Putsch*.

Ideology and Policy

The collapse of the Soviet Union as a unitary but multinational state meant the failure of the complex nationalities policy gradually developed after the revolution, which had been designed to hold the restructured empire together. The author of the policy (and of the theory which supported it) was Stalin. After Stalin's death the policy became the "Leninist" national policy, but Stalin's

⁷Stalin, 2 (15): 214.

⁸N. Ustrialov, *V bor'be za Rossiuu* (Harbin, 1920; reprint edition Orange, CT: Antiquary, 1987), pp. 30-31. Nikolai Vasilevich Ustrialov (1890-1937) was a jurist and political philosopher who spent 1920-1936 in the emigration in China. Though an anti-Communist, he tirelessly preached reconciliation with the Soviet regime--the position that came to be called "National Bolshevism" in the emigration and *Smena vekh* in Russia. Ustrialov finally returned to Russia in 1936. The following year he was arrested and shot, one of the victims of Stalin's purges. In 1989 the USSR Supreme Court reviewed Ustrialov's case and overturned the conviction. [Private communication (August 22, 1990) from Maj. Gen. A. N. Karbainov, director of the public affairs center of the KGB.]

immediate successors, Khrushchev and Brezhnev, followed the same general policy, though with importance differences in emphasis. The policy was to allow most ethnic groups a carefully measured dose of autonomy in cultural affairs, while ruthlessly suppressing any manifestation of territorial nationalism. The policy recognized national differences--in particular differences in language--and granted the larger nationalities a limited right to maintain their own schools, their own culture, and their own literature. Each favored nationality not only had its own territory ("republic") but had other symbols of statehood (*gosudarstvennost*).

The Russians were not among these favored nationalities. The Russian republic was denied some of the symbols which were routinely allowed the national minorities. This sense of Russian dependency (*rusaskaia nesamostoiatel'nost'*) was kept hidden under Stalin but began to be openly expressed in the 1960s. Many of the other nationalities thus enjoyed a measure of cultural autonomy, but the regime made no real concessions toward political or economic freedom. Moscow managed the Soviet socialist economy in a highly centralized structure. Politically, each republic was controlled by the local Communist party apparatus, which in turn was supervised from Moscow.

This *national-territorial* structure was the basis for Soviet federalism until the collapse of the USSR. Before the introduction of *glasnost'* in 1985, the policy seemed to be a success. The Soviet Union appeared to be a highly integrated system in which a hundred nationalities lived in relative harmony. The Stalinist policy, however, contained the seeds of its own destruction. On balance, this policy contributed to the development of a stronger sense of ethnic identity in the non-Russian republics. Suny calls it a contradictory policy.⁹ So long as the central authorities ruthlessly suppressed any manifestation of political independence (including territorial nationalism) and the Communist party remained in control, the republics were the compliant servants of Moscow. Once the regime relaxed this control, and the party became unglued, the republics that Stalin had created provided the framework for a nationalism that ultimately led to escalating demands, first for greater autonomy, and then for independence. The cultural autonomy tolerated by the center grew into territorial nationalism which the regime could not control.

For this reason Stalin and his policy have come under severe criticism from those who were desperate to preserve the union at any cost. For example Col. Viktor Alksnis, leader of the *Soiuz* (Union) faction in the Soviet legislature, demanded firm and tough measures to prevent any of the republics from seceding from the union. He now says that the creation of the republics was a mistake in the first place. Before the final collapse, he proposed that the new USSR constitution should abolish the republics and create a genuinely unitary state. For this reason the political conservatives who demanded preservation of the union were not "Stalinists."

⁹Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), p. 106.

The national-territorial structure, despite its flaws, remained the basis of the federal system adopted in the Russian constitution of 1993. It continues to be supported by the El'tsin government.¹⁰

Marxist-Leninist Theory

The Communist Manifesto teaches that the history of earlier societies is the history of class struggle, not the history of national conflict or ethnic antagonisms. Nationalism, as understood in Marxist theory, was a bourgeois phenomenon that would disappear after the socialist revolution. The Manifesto did suggest that nations might survive after the revolution, but Marx and Engels expected that this survival would be only temporary. In the vision of the manifesto, the post-capitalist era would be an age without nationalities. More precisely, the Manifesto made the prediction that "national differences" and "antagonisms" would vanish, as a result of economic development and social transformation. This remained a basic principle of Bolshevik doctrine until the revolution.

In order to understand Stalin's later glosses on this text, we should take note of the distinction that Marx and Engels made between differences and antagonisms among nationalities. Their formulation is, however, subject to different interpretations, and it leaves many questions unanswered. To raise only the most obvious question: In the post-capitalist world when national differences have disappeared, would all people speak a common language? Marx and Engels never addressed such specific questions.

Later Marx and Engels re-examined their earlier views of the national question, and at various times they were advocates of Irish and Polish nationalism. I would agree with Connor,¹¹ however, that revolutionary strategy dictated their later statements on the nationalities problem. They never abandoned their theory. To the end of their lives, Marx and Engels remained committed internationalists.

Lenin left an ambiguous legacy on the national question. Like Marx and Engels, he thought nationalism was a dangerous narcotic. The driving force in history was the class struggle, not ethnic conflict, and he appeared to believe that nationalism would disappear with the advent of socialism. On the other hand, Lenin too was a pragmatic politician who knew that nationalism had a powerful attraction for the masses, and he was ready to use this appeal for his own ends. Thus Lenin wrote in *What is to be Done?*¹² (1902) that the party should appeal to every class in society that felt aggrieved toward the existing order, and this list of alienated groups included the national minorities. In this major work on revolutionary strategy, Lenin dismissed the working class as unable to make a

¹⁰*Rossiiskie vesti*, Nov. 23, 1996.

¹¹Walter Connor, *The National Question in Marxist-Leninist Theory and Strategy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 18.

¹²Lenin, 6: 80-81.

revolution on its own. The revolutionary idea would have to be implanted, from the outside, by the Marxist intelligentsia. The experience of the world war confirmed Lenin in this view. Instead of revolutionary solidarity across national borders, the working class in each of the warring countries had overwhelmingly supported their national government. The bourgeoisie had deceived (*odurachili*) the working class with the narcotic of nationalism. Long before the war, Lenin recognized this political reality, and embraced the slogan of national self-determination.

Other Marxists, both in Russia and in the West, disagreed on the national question. At one extreme, the Austrian Social Democrats Karl Renner and Otto Bauer expected nationalities to survive after the revolution, and argued that any future socialist government would have to develop a policy to deal with them. Bauer argued that socialism would open the national culture to classes that had been oppressed under capitalism, so that socialism would strengthen national self-consciousness. He proposed a system of cultural autonomy for the minorities in the empire. The empire itself was to become a national-federal state (*Nationalitätenbundesstaat*)¹³.

At the other extreme, Rosa Luxemburg attacked both the Austrian plan for cultural autonomy and the Leninist slogan of national self-determination. Like Marx and Engels, she confidently expected nationalism to disappear under socialism, and she refused to make any concession to national feeling. Any compromise with nationalism was a betrayal of socialism, and bound to be illusory.¹⁴

Now it should be noted that although Luxemburg and the Austrian Social Democrats had radically opposed ideas, they also had a common goal: they wanted the existing empires to survive within a new socialist order. Luxemburg wrote that small states were condemned to "political impotence."¹⁵ Lenin was opposed both to Luxemburg and to Renner and Bauer, but as we shall see, he shared their dislike for the small nation-state.¹⁶

Lenin's position on the national question, as developed before 1917, took a middle ground between these two extremes.¹⁷ The starting point for Lenin's theory was national self-determination, by which he presumably meant the right to separate and form an independent national state. At Lenin's insistence, the slogan of national self-determination was adopted at the Second Congress (1903) of the party as point nine in the program.¹⁸ The Russian Marxists, however, remained

¹³Otto Bauer, *Die Nationalitätenfrage und die Sozialdemokratie* (Wien, 1907), p. 462; Karl Renner's views are set out in his pamphlet, *Der deutsche Arbeiter und der Nationalismus* (Wien, 1910).

¹⁴Rosa Luxemburg, *The National Question: Selected Writings* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1976), esp. p. 111.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 129.

¹⁶Lenin, 24: 144-147; 27: 256.

¹⁷Alfred G. Meyer, *Leninism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), ch. 7; Mary Holdsworth, "Lenin and the Nationalities Question," *Lenin: The Man, the Theorist, the Leader*, ed. Leonard Schapiro and Peter Reddaway (New York: Praeger, published in association with the Hoover Institution, 1967).

¹⁸*Protokoly vtorogo s'ezda RSDRP* (Leningrad: Priboi, 1924), p. 3..

divided over nationalities policy, and the more radical members of the party opposed the self-determination slogan. Lenin remained insistent on this point until 1917, but the phrase was precisely that: a slogan and not a policy. Lenin insisted that nations had a right to self-determination, but he did not advocate independence for any particular nation. National self-determination was an abstract slogan to be exploited for tactical reasons. In "The National Question in our Program" Lenin said that the party should support a nationality's demand for self-determination only in "separate, specific cases." And in a letter of 1913 he wrote:

We are for autonomy for all regions, we are for the right of separation (and not for the separation of all!). Autonomy is our plan for the structure of a democratic government. Separation is certainly not our plan. We certainly do not preach separatism. In general, we are against separation. But we stand for the right of separation in view of the Black Hundreds character of Great Russian nationalism, which has so polluted the idea of getting along with one's neighbors, that sometimes there are closer ties after separation!!

The right to self-determination is an *exception* to our general idea of centralism. This exception is absolutely necessary in the face of Black Hundreds Great Russian nationalism, and the slightest deviation from this exception is opportunism (as with Rosa Luxemburg), and a stupid way of playing into the hands of Great Russian Black Hundreds nationalism. But this exception *must not* be interpreted in a broad sense. There is *nothing*, absolutely nothing here beyond the *right to separation*.¹⁹

Although he clung stubbornly to the slogan of self-determination, Lenin was just as relentless in opposing the Austrians' ideas about cultural autonomy. The social democrats, in Lenin's phrase, stood not for national culture but for an "international culture of democracy and the world workers' movement." The slogan about national culture was a bourgeois trap, designed to snare the unwary proletarian. Lenin thought that the idea of national culture leads to a militant bourgeois nationalism which would split the working class movement and (in a favorite phrase of Lenin's) hoodwink the workers.²⁰ Lenin's ideas about national culture thus were written down in response to the program of the Austrian Marxists. In developing his own ideas, Lenin allowed himself to speculate about the nature of culture, and his ideas were to evolve into a theory about "two cultures" which later would be a matter of doctrinal dispute. According to this theory in every society, along with the culture of the ruling class, there is also the culture of the oppressed masses. In a capitalist society, the dominant culture is bound to be bourgeois. Yet in that same society there were also elements of a democratic and socialist culture. After the revolution, a new, international working-class culture would appear, but it would inherit only the democratic, socialist elements, leaving the elements of bourgeois culture to wither and die. Lenin used this argument to justify his insistence that true

¹⁹Lenin, 48: 235.

²⁰Ibid., 24: 119.

Marxists should discard the Austrians' slogans about national culture.²¹ But by the time of the revolution, Lenin had lost interest in the theory. It played no role in the further development of his thought. Morozova, author of a detailed discussion of the two culture theory, cites Lenin's writings only for the period 1913-1914.

The idea of an international, proletarian culture was one manifestation of the utopian idea that national differences would disappear under socialism. Lenin called this the *sliianie* of nationalities. *Sliianie*, which literally means a flowing together, is variously translated as "fusion" or "merger." The different translations have led to a great misunderstanding of what Lenin meant. The general idea is that national differences would disappear under socialism, although Lenin was never explicit about what this meant. Lenin also predicted *sblizhenie*, which is something short of *sliianie*. It means a drawing together of nationalities. Since the meaning of *sliianie* was to become a matter of controversy, it is worth noting exactly what Lenin said:

The aim of socialism is not only to abolish the present division of mankind into small states, not only *sblizhenie*, but also *sliianie*. And in order to achieve this goal, we must, on the one hand, show the masses the reactionary nature of the ideas of Renner and O. Bauer about the so-called "national cultural autonomy," and on the other hand, demand the liberation of the oppressed nations not only in general and fuzzy phrases . . . but in a clear and precise program which takes into account the hypocrisy and cowardice of the socialists in the oppressing nations. Just as mankind can achieve the abolition of classes only by passing through a transitional period of the dictatorship of the oppressed class, so mankind can reach the inevitable *sliianie* only by passing through a transitional period of the complete liberation of all oppressed nations.²²

Lenin was in favor of *sliianie* in part because it would encourage the existence of large states, and like Marx earlier and Ustrialov later, Lenin was not in favor of small states. "The proletarian party strives to create as large a state as possible, because this is beneficial to the toilers. [The party] strives toward *sblizhenie* and the further *sliianie* of nations, but it will reach this goal not by force, but exclusively by means of a free and fraternal union of the workers and toiling masses of all nations."²³

Sliianie, as understood by Lenin, contradicts his continuing insistence on the right of self-determination. Lenin admitted that if the smaller nationalities of Europe exercised self-determination, the result would be a conglomerate of small states that would not be economically or politically viable. However, he seemed confident that the leaders of these smaller nationalities would come to understand this elementary fact and would abandon demands for separatism. After the revolution, they would realize that their people would be better off within the structure of a large

²¹Ibid., p. 121; N.A. Morozova, "Leninskoe uchenie o dvukh kul'turakh i literaturnyi obshchestvennyi protsess 20-30kh godov," *Vestnik leningradskogo universiteta*, 1-2 (1970): 93-106.

²²Lenin, 26: 256.

²³Lenin, 31: 167.

state--if the large state were socialist. "We demand freedom for self-determination, i.e. independence, i.e. freedom for separation for oppressed nations, not because we have a dream about the economic breakup or about small states as an ideal, but on the contrary because we are in favor of large states and because we want a *sblizhenie*, and even a *sliianie* of nations."²⁴

In 1916, summing up the controversy over national self-determination, Lenin wrote that national oppression cannot be overcome under capitalism. Only socialism would accomplish this goal. Then he concluded that *sliianie* would come about only by the withering of the state.²⁵

Characteristically, Lenin held out the promise of *sliianie* without explaining precisely what he meant. Presumably he meant that a multinational society would be a melting pot, where ethnic or national differences would disappear. In some notes written in German at the same time as the previously cited article, Lenin used the phrase *Verschmelzung der Nationen*.²⁶ He refused to be more specific. Did *sliianie* mean that all language differences would disappear? And if so, what would be the common language of mankind? Like Marx and Engels earlier, Lenin never addressed such specific questions.

Lenin's theory is absolutely inconsistent. If *sliianie* was a melting pot where national differences disappeared, then the goal of separation (or self-determination) would become irrelevant. On the other hand, the breakup of larger states through self-determination would undoubtedly amplify existing national differences, and thus prevent *sliianie*. However, as a political slogan, self-determination had a much stronger appeal to the national minorities than the utopian goal of *sliianie*, so it is not surprising that Lenin continued to speak of self-determination after the revolution. On the other hand, *sliianie* disappeared entirely from his political vocabulary (and probably from his thinking) after 1917. Speaking to the Seventh party congress in 1918, he said that it would be premature to announce the withering of the state.²⁷ Since the withering of the state was a prerequisite for *sliianie*, Lenin was postponing *sliianie* to the indefinite future. In 1920 he wrote that the disappearance of national differences (that is, *sliianie*) was a "foolish dream."²⁸ That statement marked the end of *sliianie* as a practical goal for Soviet policy makers. The term was to reappear in later political discussions, after Stalin died, but it was never again advocated by any Soviet political leader.

²⁴Ibid., 27: 68.

²⁵Ibid., 30: 24.

²⁶*Leninskii sbornik* 30:128.

²⁷Lenin, 36: 66.

²⁸Ibid., 41: 77.

Stalin

In 1913, Lenin wrote to Gorkii that the national problem needed more serious examination, and a "marvelous Georgian" was at work on this topic.²⁹ The Georgian was, of course, Josef Stalin, who was then writing his major theoretical tract on the nationalities problem. Stalin was already the Bolsheviks' expert in the field, and his first statement on the national question, published in his native Georgian language, had appeared in 1904.³⁰ In this tract, Stalin already opposed national separatism. He dismissed nationalism as a false ideology deliberately created by the tsarist regime in order to sow hostility among the ethnic groups in the empire. The proletariat, Stalin argued, needed unity above all in order to carry out a successful revolution, and therefore the proletariat should be able to rise above petty national concerns. Stalin, like Lenin, stood for political centralism.

This hostility toward separatism did not make Stalin a Russian nationalist, either in 1904 or later. The term suggested by Tucker, "Russocentric," is a good description of Stalin's position both in 1904 and later in his career.³¹ Stalin in 1904 was already a denationalized Bolshevik, the forerunner of the denationalized party executives who would eventually emerge to manage the non-Russian republics of the USSR. In this early article Stalin was obliged to defend article nine of the party program, but he was already qualifying his commitment to self-determination. The party, he wrote, had an obligation to assure that the expressed desire of any nationality to exercise this right was a social democratic desire, based on the class interests of the proletariat.³²

The work by Stalin that Lenin mentioned to Gorkii, *Marxism and the National Question* (1913), was a development of Lenin's ideas.³³ The main points of the book follow Lenin's arguments as developed in the previous year: hostility to the Austrian Marxists' plan for cultural autonomy, and support for the slogan of self-determination, coupled with a practical desire to exploit nationalist sentiment in the interests of the revolution. Stalin's proposed solution to the national problem in the empire was regional autonomy, which anticipates the national-territorial structure of Soviet federalism. Such developed nations as Poland, Lithuania, Ukraine, and the Caucasus were to become autonomous within some larger socialist political order. Thus Stalin's 1913 proposals anticipate two points about Soviet nationality policy as it evolved after the revolution. First, a socialist regime would offer the nationalities not independence but autonomy, and second, he linked the offer of autonomy to the level of development of a particular nationality. The developed nations could achieve regional autonomy almost at once. The more backward nations would first have to

²⁹*Ibid.*, 48:16.

³⁰*Stalin*, 1:32-55.

³¹Robert C. Tucker, *Stalin as Revolutionary, 1879-1929: A Study in History and Personality* (New York: Norton, 1973), p. 50.

³²*Stalin*, 1: 52.

³³*Ibid.*, 2: 300.

pass through a period of development and socialization, presumably under the party's close control. Stalin did not mention *sliianie*.

Autonomy was acceptable to Stalin, but not independence. Like Lenin, Stalin wanted to preserve a large, multinational state. Schapiro notes that economic considerations alone would have forced any central government, Bolshevik or not, to try to hold the empire together.³⁴ Stalin confirms this because he once wrote that Russia could not survive without the borderlands, which supplied raw materials, fuel, and foodstuffs. Furthermore, the borderlands could not survive without the political and military support of Russia.

Stalin's ideas about the national problem, which were to be the basis for Soviet nationalities policy not only while he was dictator, but also after his death, thus were worked out in 1913. Although framed in Marxist jargon, the ideas were not necessarily Marxist. Any thoughtful writer, anxious as Stalin was to preserve the empire in an age of rising nationalism, might have come to similar conclusions. Gredeskul, who was not a Marxist but later was to be a disciple of Ustrialov in Russia, also developed a plan for creating a multinational state as a way of resolving the national problem. In many ways his National Bolshevik proposal anticipated Stalin's later policy.³⁵

In his first statement on the nationalities question after the February revolution, Stalin insisted on two points: first, he repeated his idea that the nationalities should be given autonomy (not "federation"), including the right to use their own language in education and government, and second, he still supported the right to self-determination.³⁶ However, even before the November coup, we find Stalin predicting that the nationalities could be welded into a "united and brotherly" family, and warning against policies which would foment hostility among them.³⁷ The Bolsheviks, he repeated, were not in favor of the breakup of the empire. On the contrary, a union of small states into a single larger state would help the cause of socialism. However, he went on to say that any such union must be voluntary and must recognize the right to self-determination, including the right to secede.

After the October coup, however, Stalin effectively repudiated the theory of national self-determination. He dismissed the "bourgeois-democratic" idea of self-determination as a fiction. He was careful to say that the revolution had not eliminated the idea of self-determination. But it had destroyed the bourgeois-democratic content of the slogan. Stalin said that self-determination could be recognized for the "people," but not for a bourgeois government. Since the party was the only

³⁴Leonard Schapiro, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1960), p. 221.

³⁵N. A. Gredeskul, *Rossia i ee narody* (Petrograd, 1916).

³⁶Stalin, 3:20.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 223.

legitimate spokesman for the people, only the party could exercise the right. Self-determination should not be a camouflage for anti-Communist rule.³⁸

In 1921, the end of the civil war found the territory of the empire divided among several independent states. At the center was the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, which was predominantly Russian in its ethnic composition but included several national minorities (the Tatars, for example), which became autonomous republics within Russia. Finland, the Baltic republics, and Poland were genuinely independent and ruled by non-Communist governments. The other republics were under Communist rule even though they were theoretically sovereign and independent: Belorussia, Ukraine, and the trans-Caucasian republics. The Far Eastern republic was a different case because the population was predominantly Russian, and in 1922, with the White army defeated, this Siberian buffer state was easily absorbed into the RSFSR.

As the civil war ended, Stalin revealed his own goals in a little known letter of June 1920 written to Lenin. Stalin wanted to reunite the territory of the former empire, except for Finland and Poland, into a federal union with a centralized government on the model of the Russian federation. Other states which might fall under Communist rule (he mentioned Soviet Germany, among others) should remain sovereign states, united with Soviet Russia only in a loose confederation. In the same letter, he criticized Lenin's proposal for a different federal system.³⁹

The Federal System

Stalin repeated this plan in a speech to the Tenth party congress, when he proposed to unite all the Soviet republics into a single state. What Stalin had in mind was a Russocentric federal union, with the RSFSR absorbing the other republics.⁴⁰ When Lenin understood the implications of Stalin's plan he was strongly opposed, and produced his own plan for a federation in which all the republics would be on an equal basis. This dispute over federalism was one of the issues which led Lenin, when he was critically ill, to dictate the political testament which recommended that the party remove Stalin as general secretary. At the same time, Lenin dictated his final thoughts on the national question. There was no reference in these notes to the main themes of Lenin's prerevolutionary writing on the national problem, to the discarded theory of national self-determination, or to *slilanie*. Lenin now had more practical concerns. He began by pointing out that the administrative apparatus in all the Soviet republics was predominantly Russian and included not a few Great Russian chauvinists. Thus he agreed with the argument which Skrypnik had already

³⁸*Ibid.*, 4: 8.

³⁹Lenin (3rd ed.), 25: 624.

⁴⁰Stalin, 5: 38.

made at the Eleventh Congress.⁴¹ The main message of these notes is the need for tact in dealing with nationalities issues.⁴² Lenin made a distinction, which would often be repeated in the future, between the nationalism of an oppressed nation and the nationalism of an oppressor, and insisted that the representatives of the latter nationality must use discretion in dealing with the minorities.⁴³ Tact, as he pointed out in the political testament, was a quality that Stalin lacked. Lenin admitted that it might have been an error to leave the Caucasian problem to Stalin, Ordzhonikidze (another Georgian), and Dzerzhinskii (a Pole): de-nationalized non-Russians could be even more chauvinistic than ethnic Russians.

In August, while Lenin was ill and dying in Gorki, outside Moscow, a commission under Stalin's chairmanship set out to draft a new constitution for the proposed federal union. Stalin produced a plan for autonomization which followed his proposal at the Tenth congress. It called for incorporating Ukraine, Belorussia, and the Caucasus into the RSFSR as autonomous republics.⁴⁴ The commission approved Stalin's plan Sept. 24, with the Georgian representative voting "no," and the Ukrainian abstaining. However, Lenin had sufficiently recovered to intervene directly, and he summoned Stalin to voice his objections to the plan for autonomization. Then he dispatched a note to Kamenev, the acting premier, saying that he had won Stalin over to his position. Instead of Stalin's autonomization, Lenin proposed creating a new federal state, the "Union of Soviet Republics of Europe and Asia." The RSFSR and the other republics would enter this new federation on an equal basis. Lenin denounced Stalin's plan as another tactless example of Great Russian chauvinism practiced by a non-Russian. He wanted to minimize the appearance of Russian dominance, even to the point of eliminating the name Russia from the title of the new federation.⁴⁵ According to Trotskii, Stalin criticized Lenin's position as "national liberalism."⁴⁶ However, Stalin was powerless in the face of Lenin's determined opposition. His commission followed Lenin's instructions and prepared a new draft plan, renaming the federation the "Union of Soviet Socialist Republics." This plan became the basis for the formation of the USSR, which took place with a treaty among the constituent republics in December 1922. The other republics entered the new federal union on an equal basis with the Russian federation. Thus it appeared that Lenin's federal plan had won out over Stalin's plan for autonomization. However, the structure that emerged

⁴¹N.A. Skrypnik, who spoke for the Ukrainian party at the congress, complained about National Bolshevism in the Soviet bureaucracy. He perceived "Ustrialovism" as a great temptation for Russians in the Soviet leadership. Skrypnik complained that the White slogan, "Russia one and indivisible," was also the slogan of Ustrialov and *Smena vekh*. *XI s'ezd RKP(b) mart-aprel' 1922 goda* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1961), p. 73.

⁴²Lenin, 45: 343-346.

⁴³Ibid., 35: 356-363.

⁴⁴Ibid., 35: 557-558.

⁴⁵Ibid., 35: 211-212.

⁴⁶L. Trotskii, *Stalinskaia shkola fal'sifikatsii* (Berlin: Granat, 1932), pp. 78-79.

combined features of both plans. In the formation of the USSR Stalin eventually realized his plan for autonomization, despite Lenin's opposition.⁴⁷

Although the other republics joined Russia in a federal union, Russia's role in the union remained anomalous. In some fields, it appeared that Russian institutions took over the management of all-union affairs. The all-Russian Academy of Sciences, for example, became the all-Union Academy of Sciences. No Russian Academy of Sciences was created, although the other republics had their own academies. The name of the party remained "Russian Communist party (of Bolsheviks)" until December 1925, when it finally became the "All-Union Communist party (of Bolsheviks)."⁴⁸ There was no republic party organization within the RSFSR, although the non-Russian republics had their own parties, at least in name. These anomalies laid the basis for Russian dependency, the complaint that Russia was denied the symbolic institutions of statehood that the smaller republics enjoyed.

Socialism in One Country

With the federal problem resolved, Stalin was free to concentrate on his intentions for the country. These objectives were summed up in the slogan of "socialism in one country," which provided the theoretical foundation of Stalinism. It was a plan to concentrate on the development of the USSR, without taking any risk in foreign adventures. This development was to be socialist in form, although it systematically ignored some of Marx's teachings. Socialism in one country was a clever ideological device which allowed Stalin to claim that the class struggle was over in the Soviet Union (and thus the country could get on with the task of building socialism), but not in the rest of the world (so the Soviet state had to remain strong against the imperialist threat from abroad). The USSR had supposedly resolved its internal contradictions, while the external, capitalist world was still rent with conflict.⁴⁹

The theory of socialism in one country not only abandoned Lenin's teaching, but repudiated what Stalin himself had said only recently. In 1924, in his lectures at the Sverdlov University, Stalin had rejected the idea of socialism in one country.

. . . is it possible to achieve the final victory of socialism in one country without the joint efforts of the proletarians of several countries? No, it is impossible. The efforts of one country are adequate to overthrow the bourgeoisie, and the history of our revolution tells us this. For the final victory of socialism, for the organization of socialist production, the efforts of one country are not enough—especially in a peasant country such as Russia.⁵⁰

⁴⁷A. A. Prazauskas, "Filosofskie problemy teorii i praktiki natsional'nykh otnoshenii pri sotsializme: materialy 'kruglogo stola,'" *Voprosy filosofii* 9 (1988): 45.

⁴⁸*Kommunisticheskaia partiia Sovetskogo Soiuza v rezoliutsiakh i resheniakh s'ezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1970), 3: 243.

⁴⁹Herbert Marcuse, *Soviet Marxism: A Critical Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), p. 99

⁵⁰*Pravda*, April 30, 1924.

Stalin's editors later drastically altered this passage and changed the meaning, deleting the reference to Russia as a "peasant country."⁵¹ Lenin had also said, in 1920, that "it is impossible to complete the socialist revolution in one country."⁵² This statement was excised from later editions of Lenin's works.⁵³

In December 1924, however, Stalin asserted that the victory of socialism in one country was an established fact.⁵⁴ About a year later, Stalin returned to this topic and developed his theory in more detail. The question, he said, was whether the people of the USSR could build a complete socialist society using only their own efforts, and without help from the outside. Stalin's answer was "yes," but he added a warning that the final victory of socialism in the USSR would not guarantee the country against a restoration of the old order, so long as capitalism survived in other states. Then he added an appeal to national pride by reporting that enemies abroad were saying, "The Russians will never get anywhere."⁵⁵

From his lonely isolation in Harbin, Ustrialov welcomed the slogan of socialism in one country as a convenient tactical compromise.⁵⁶ It allowed the party to follow a realistic policy, while holding firm to socialist ideology and terminology. In a curious analogy, Ustrialov said that just as Louis XVIII believed in divine right but not in God, so Stalin could believe in socialism in one country without necessarily believing in socialism. "If this faith [in socialism] helps in the rebirth of the country, then glory unto it!"

In the 1920s Stalin was a supporter of the national minorities. He carried through the process of "nativization," or *korenizatsiia*, and supported the use of local languages and national schools. This policy was to recruit members of the local nationality, and to socialize and train them as reliable Stalinist officials. Stalin also came to the defense of national culture, and he accomplished an implicit revision of Lenin's earlier idea about the two cultures. Stalin acknowledged that after the revolution a new proletarian culture was developing in the USSR. However, this culture was "proletarian in content, national in form."⁵⁷ This was Stalin's first use of that formula. He meant that proletarian culture did not abolish national culture, but gave it a new content. It included the old bourgeois culture, now made accessible to the masses. Stalin insisted that the claim that protection for national culture was a bourgeois slogan was true only before the revolution. (It will be recalled that Lenin made this claim in 1913.) After the revolution national culture became a proletarian slogan.

⁵¹Stalin, 6: 107; *Voprosy leninizma*, 11th ed. (Moscow: Politizdat, 1953) p. 26.

⁵²Lenin (3rd ed.), 25: 474.

⁵³Roy A. Medvedev, *Let History Judge*, trans. Colleen Taylor (New York: Knopf, 1971), p. 45.

⁵⁴*Voprosy leninizma*, p. 84.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 143, 200.

⁵⁶N. Ustrialov, *Pod znakom revoliutsii* (Harbin, 1925), p. 228.

⁵⁷Stalin, 7: 138.

He went on to raise doubts about the idea of *sliianie*. Stalin criticized Marxists like Kautsky for believing that a world language would emerge under socialism, with other languages dying away. "I have little faith," was Stalin's laconic comment, "in this theory of a single world language."⁵⁸

The process of *korenizatsiia* went furthest in Ukraine, and it was in that republic that the reaction in the 1930s would have the greatest shock effect. Speaking at the Tenth Congress, Stalin had pronounced himself in favor of "full Ukrainization." He noted that the cities in the republic, unlike the villages, had a predominantly Russian population, but he predicted that this would change in the course of Ukrainization.⁵⁹

The policy received formal endorsement at the Twelfth Congress, which passed a resolution condemning the National Bolshevik mentality of many Soviet officials. On the other hand, the resolution took the position that some of the republics needed Russian help to overcome backwardness and ignorance. The resolution denounced Russian chauvinism (described as a remnant of the past) and special privileges for ethnic Russians. It also expressed, probably for the last time in a party document, the view that local nationalism was mainly a defense mechanism against Russian chauvinism--so that the struggle with chauvinism would eventually eliminate local nationalism.⁶⁰

Shortly after the congress, a special conference was summoned to work out the details of the policy. The conference called for the full *korenizatsiia* of both state and party organs and for the recruiting of local officials into other organizations such as the trade unions, and laid down a requirement that all "responsible" officials learn the local language.⁶¹ *Korenizatsiia* was Stalin's own form of indirect rule, and he soon set limits to the process. In 1926 he drew a distinction between Ukrainization of the apparatus, which he supported, and Ukrainization of the proletariat, which he opposed. The first term meant the recruitment of ethnic Ukrainians into the party and into the republic bureaucracy. The party would select reliable Ukrainians, and socialize them into the Marxist-Leninist political culture. The goal was to create a local elite, Ukrainian in nationality but well-versed in Marxism-Leninism and above all loyal to the party leadership in Moscow. Thus, in *korenizatsiia*, Stalin was pursuing a limited goal: the creation of a politically reliable local elite. The second term, Ukrainization of the proletariat, would mean forcing the proletariat in the republic to adopt the Ukrainian language and Ukrainian culture. Stalin condemned this as forced assimilation. Since most of the workers in the republic were ethnic Russians, it would violate the nationality policy of the regime. The policy would not allow Ukrainians to stand against Russians, and in particular they should not oppose "Russian culture and its highest achievement--Leninism."⁶² This

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 7: 138-139.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 5: 49.

⁶⁰*XII s'ezd VKP(b)*, pp. 619-697.

⁶¹*KPSS v rezoliutsiakh*, 2: 488-494.

⁶²*Stalin*, 8: 142-153.

phrase is reminiscent of Ustrialov's statement, in 1920, that Bolshevism was the latest product of Russian culture and would be absorbed by the minority nationalities because they were already Russified. "The borderland nationalities have absorbed too much Russian culture to be immune to the latest product of that culture--Bolshevism. . . . The Soviet regime, with all its means, will strive to reunite the borderlands with the center--in the name of world revolution. Russian patriots will fight for the same thing--in the name of a great and united Russia. Despite the profound difference in ideology, the practical course is the same."⁶³ Stalin may have borrowed it directly.⁶⁴

Even with *korenizatsiia*, Stalin meant to retain tight central control over the national republics through the party machinery. The republic officials, although increasingly recruited from the local population, were expected to support Moscow's policy--even at the expense of the minority nationality. Schapiro points out, however, that this policy did not extend advantages or special privileges to the majority of ethnic Russians.⁶⁵

The policy gradually changed. Instead of great-power chauvinism (a code word for Russian nationalism), "local nationalism" came under attack. This process has been studied most carefully in the Ukrainian republic. Skrypnyk, as republic minister of culture, led an effort to develop a culture that was both Marxist and Ukrainian. This was a policy which could, of course, be supported with citations from Lenin's theory about the two cultures. The program of national communism came under increasing attack from Moscow, and in 1933 Skrypnyk committed suicide. The following year, at the 17th party congress, Stalin criticized Ukrainian nationalism as the principal danger--more dangerous, that is to say, than great-power chauvinism.⁶⁶ The purges devastated the Ukrainian party leadership. N.S. Khrushchev, an ethnic Russian, became the Ukrainian party leader. Although the history of national communism in the other republics has not been studied in such detail, the pattern seems familiar. There was a steady campaign against "deviationists" and "nationalists"; the protagonists of national communism, even though they were loyal Marxists, were purged.⁶⁷ According to figures published many years later, in the trans-Caucasian republics in 1935-1936, 456 leading officials were repressed. It is not clear from this Soviet report whether "repressed" meant that they were only removed from office, or tried and imprisoned. In the north Caucasus, Kazakhstan, and Central Asia, nearly all the party first secretaries suffered the same fate. The repressions did not stop with the end of the purges. During the Leningrad affair, beginning in 1948, nearly all the leading officials of the Estonian party organization were repressed.⁶⁸

⁶³*V bor'be za Rossiia*, pp. 10-11.

⁶⁴Robert C. Tucker, *Stalin in Power: the Revolution from Above* (New York: Norton, 1990), p. 42.

⁶⁵Schapiro, pp. 475-478.

⁶⁶Stalin, 13: 363.

⁶⁷John Armstrong, *The Politics of Totalitarianism* (New York: Random House, 1960), p. 69.

⁶⁸*Izvestiia TsK KPSS*, 6 (1989): 78.

Despite this change in policy, and despite the purges, the idea of *korenizatsiia* was not abandoned. Stalin did succeed in creating a cadre of loyal party officials from the minority nationalities. These officials were expected to subordinate national interests completely to the interests of the center. Those who satisfied this requirement had the same opportunity to rise in the party as did Russian officials. When the three Baltic republics were annexed to the USSR in 1940, Stalin had available Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian communists whom he sent to the new areas to take charge. At the beginning of the war with Finland in 1939, Moscow was able to organize a puppet government under an ethnic Finn, Otto Kuusinen.

Stalin's National Bolshevism

Stalin's goal was not Russian nationalism but a Russocentric Soviet patriotism, what Barghoorn called a doctrine of Russian leadership⁶⁹ Much has been made of Stalin's toast to the Russian people after the defeat of Germany, as if this made him a Russian nationalist. His exact words were: "I would like to raise a toast to the Soviet people, and first of all, to the Russian people."⁷⁰ For Stalin the *Soviet* people came first. To the end of his life he remained what Lenin called a Russianized alien (*obrusevshii inorodets*).⁷¹ Stalin was willing not only to tolerate but to exploit patriotic sentiments where they served his larger political purposes--but this did not make him a Russian nationalist.

The notorious *Pravda* editorial of June 9, 1934, "For the Motherland," is sometimes cited as Stalin's decisive step in the direction of Russian nationalism, but the article never mentions Russia. Instead it calls for loyalty to the Soviet motherland.

For the motherland! This cry raises the flame of heroism, the flame of a creative initiative at all levels, in all spheres of our rich and multifaceted life. For the motherland! This cry summons tens of millions of toilers to the defense of their great fatherland [sic]. .

Elsewhere the article refers to "love of the motherland" and "devotion to the cause of the working class." The occasion for the article was the addition of treason (*izmena rodine*, literally "betrayal of the motherland") to the criminal code. In a letter of July 20, 1934, Ustrialov decided that the article meant that Stalin had adopted his position.⁷²

At the same time that the editorial appeared, Stalin wrote some memoranda that are quite revealing of his attitude toward the motherland. For the time being these notes were kept secret but eventually Stalin allowed them to be published. The editors of *Bolshevik* planned a special issue commemorating the twentieth anniversary of World War I, and proposed to republish a forgotten

⁶⁹Frederick Barghoorn, *Soviet Russian Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), ch. 2.

⁷⁰Stalin, 2 (15): 203.

⁷¹Lenin, 45: 358.

⁷²Ustrialov collection 2, 27.

work by Engels from 1890, "The Foreign Policy of Russian Tsarism."⁷³ In a secret Politburo paper, Stalin refused to permit it.⁷⁴ Stalin dismissed Engels' article as an anti-tsarist pamphlet. He seemed particularly incensed that Engels called tsarism the last stronghold of European reaction, while downplaying the danger of German imperialism. In August 1934 Stalin wrote a critique of history textbooks (not published until 1936) which led to a major rewriting of history.

One of the last articles that Ustrialov wrote in emigration--"The Soviet Nation"--was devoted to Stalin's policy. He interpreted the policy as an astute effort to steer between two extremes: pygmy chauvinism, and Russian great-power chauvinism. He had always been skeptical about the eventual *sliianie* of nations, and he expected ethnic differences to endure in the multinational state. Yet he convinced himself that under Stalin's rule, a new nation would evolve, united by Russian culture and the Russian language. This new entity would not be Russian but Soviet: "Before our eyes is arising a curious phenomenon which can be called the 'Soviet nation.' However new or strange this combination of words may be, it is the correct term for a developing historical and cultural reality." Repeating his view that the "subjective element" was the main criterion for identifying a nation, Ustrialov defined a nation as a "community of feelings and consciousness," whose members share a sense of identity, as well as a sense of being different from other nationalities.

From this point of view the population of the Soviet Union comprises a special social world, and is becoming a new nation, historically filled with Russian traditions, a continuation of Russian history but at an essentially new stage. . . . Russia died in order to be restored to life in the Soviet empire. The Russian people are being dissolved in the Soviet nation.

. . . .

The Soviet nation. It consists of the most diverse ethnographic material, with many languages and many different faces. It contains a massive world of peoples [*narody*]. . . . But it is held together by a single state and permeated by a common culture and historical purpose, by the power of a guiding idea.

He concluded that the state was the principal factor in the formation of a nation--and this was particularly true in a total or "ideocratic" state.⁷⁵

The general outline of Stalin's nationalities policy was implicit in the National Bolshevik program that Ustrialov developed in his study in Harbin, though there were important differences. In 1929 Stalin wrote a long paper on nationalities policy which was not published until 1946. Stalin never proclaimed the existence of a Soviet nation. On the contrary, he agreed with Lenin that *sliianie* was a foolish dream. In this paper, which was his most important postrevolutionary statement on nationalities policy, Stalin wrote that socialism, far from eliminating national

⁷³"Die auswärtige Politik des russischen Zarentums," Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Werke* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1962), vol. 22, pp. 11-48. English translation in Marx and Engels, *The Russian Menace to Europe*, ed. Paul W. Blackstock and Bert F. Hoselitz (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1952), pp. 25-55.

⁷⁴Stalin, 3 (14): 2-10, dated July 19, 1934 (first published in 1941).

⁷⁵N. Ustrialov, *Nashe vremia* (Shanghai, 1934), pp. 30-31.

differences, had the opposite result. Employing dialectic logic, Stalin argued that under socialism there was a maximum opportunity for development and flourishing (*rastsvet*) of many different national cultures. At the same time, however, Stalin insisted that socialism had eliminated national antagonisms.⁷⁶ Like Bauer, Stalin argued that national differences, and presumably national self-consciousness, would increase under socialism. However, he continued to denounce Bauer's idea of cultural autonomy, insisting on territorial autonomy instead.

For Stalin to exploit the National Bolshevik idea, he had to carry through a major revision of Marxist-Leninist doctrine.⁷⁷ Stalin's National Bolshevik sympathies could be seen in the 1920s, but he chose to move carefully until he had reached a point where his pronouncements on ideology were beyond challenge. As already noted, some of the documents attributed to an earlier date were not published until 1936, or later. On Jan. 27 of that year the central newspapers published a major pronouncement under the heading "On the Front of Historical Science,"⁷⁸ which included comments, attributed to Stalin and dated August 1934, on history textbooks. From this date, as Dymerskaia comments, the nationalist idea became a central principle of the official ideology, supplanting the Marxist principle of class struggle.⁷⁹

The chosen villain was the historian M.N. Pokrovskii, who had been repudiated in 1934 and was now conveniently dead. After the denunciation of Pokrovskii and his views, the party charged groups of historians with preparing new textbooks with a different interpretation of Russia's past. At the beginning of 1936 the leadership rejected the new revised books. The rejection came in the form of "comments" attributed to Stalin, Kirov, and Zhdanov, and dated Aug. 8, 1934 but now published for the first time. The attack on Pokrovskii is usually interpreted as a return to a traditional Russian nationalism—but that is an oversimplified and misleading interpretation. One of the principal charges made in the comments was that the new works had covered only the history of Russia, ignoring the history of the other nationalities of the USSR, as well as ignoring the colonizing policy of the tsars and the existence of a "prison of peoples."⁸⁰

As Shteppa points out, one of the main results of the new line in history was to put more emphasis on the study of the non-Russian peoples of the union. History now became the "history of the USSR" rather than "history of Russia."⁸¹

⁷⁶Stalin, 11: 333-335.

⁷⁷Liudmila Dymerskaia, "Zamechaniia k istorii, ili istoriia, sotvorenaia po zamechaniiam. Stat'ia vtoraiia," *Strana i mir*, 11 (1986): 67-77.

⁷⁸"Na fronte istoricheskikh nauk," *Pravda*, Jan. 27, 1936.

⁷⁹Liudmila Dymerskaia, "Zamechaniia k istorii, ili istoriia, sotvorenaia po zamechaniiam," *Strana i mir*, 12 (1985): 43-50.

⁸⁰*Pravda*, Jan. 27, 1936.

⁸¹K.F. Shteppa, *Russian Historians and the Soviet State* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1962), pp. 147, 169-170.

Bukharin published an article in which he tried to strike a balance, criticizing Pokrovskii but still defending his Marxism.⁸² It may be that Bukharin (or Marxism-Leninism) was the real target of the campaign against Pokrovskii. A *Pravda* editorial a few days after Bukharin's article laid down what was to become the official line. The Russian people were given credit as first among equals in the family of Soviet nations. The revolution had succeeded because of Russian "revolutionary sweep" (*revoliutsionnyi razmakh*), a term attributed to Stalin.⁸³ The *Pravda* editorial stated that it was false and slanderous to assert that Russia, before 1917, was a "nation of Oblomovs." This was clearly a reference to Bukharin, who had used precisely this expression in an article in *Pravda*.⁸⁴ A later article specifically attacked Bukharin for this phrase.⁸⁵ The editorial continues with a curious quotation from Hitler, who had written that the Slavs had no gift for building a state, and the Russian empire was the creation of Germans.⁸⁶ *Pravda* agreed with the second part of Hitler's statement, commenting that among the Germans who ruled the empire were the Romanovs themselves. (It is true that beginning with Peter III, who was himself half German, all the emperors except Alexander III had German wives; all the emperors except Nicholas II had German mothers. Mariia Fedorovna, consort of Alexander and mother of Nicholas, was Danish.) *Pravda* went on to complain about the manufactured hatred for the Russian nation, which was really fear of socialism, and introduced the standard formula: The Russian workers and peasants, in fraternal union with the other peoples of the USSR, had made the revolution, won the Civil War, and laid the basis for socialism. Moreover Russian culture was the source and inspiration for the cultural development of the more backward peoples of the empire, who now had a chance for the flourishing (in Stalin's term) of their own culture under socialism. Two years later, when Bukharin went on trial, one of the charges was plotting to dismember the USSR, a charge repeated several times in the indictment.⁸⁷ Perhaps no accusation could be more devastating, in the mind of Stalin.

A curious incident of 1936 demonstrates Stalin's approach to history. At the end of October the Kamernyi theater staged the comic opera "Bogatyri,* with music by Borodin and a new libretto by the old Bolshevik Demian Bedny. Set in Kievan Russia, "Bogatyri" poked fun at the primitive culture of the times, especially at the traditional baptism of Kievan Rus. Within two weeks, the opera was withdrawn by a decree of the Committee for Arts Affairs (KDI, the predecessor of the ministry of culture).⁸⁸ The opera was denounced as a slander of the Russian people, and as

⁸²*Izvestiia*, Jan. 27, 1936.

⁸³He used the term in *Voprosy leninizma*, 80.

⁸⁴Jan. 21, 1936.

⁸⁵*Pravda*, Feb. 10, 1936.

⁸⁶*Hitlers Mein Kampf*, ed. Werner Maser (Munich: Rechtle Verlag, 1966), pp. 182-183.

⁸⁷*The Great Purge Trial*, edited by Robert C. Tucker and Stephen F. Cohen (New York: Grossett and Dunlap, 1965), p. 5 et passim.

⁸⁸*Pravda*, Nov. 14, 1936.

presenting an anti-historical portrayal of the reception of Christianity, which was a progressive turning point in Russian history. KDI devoted a special conference to the affair, which denounced both Bedny and Aleksandr Tairov, the theater's director. P.M. Kerzhentsev, chairman of KDI, announced that the decree was fully in accord with the views of "our leaders," which presumably included Stalin.⁸⁹

At the end of the year *Izvestiia* carried an article by Ustrialov, written in connection with the new "Stalin" constitution. Like the *Pravda* article at the beginning of the year, Ustrialov mentions the danger of war and the need for unity in the country in the face of this threat. He is full of praise for Stalin's nationalities policy, which has transformed the former prison of peoples into a free union of equals, where the national question "no longer exists." He is obviously pleased with the new line on history. It has brought an end to the former disdain for history, "in particular for the history of our great Russian people."⁹⁰

Nationalism and the State

The final development of Stalin's doctrine and policy on the national problem requires a brief discussion of his theoretical pronouncements on the state, for the two topics are closely connected. As already noted, he wrote a detailed paper on nationalities policy in 1929, but it remained unpublished until the appearance of his collected works after the war. His later statements consist of some brief remarks found in reports to party congresses, in his speech on the new Soviet constitution, and the papers on linguistics in 1950. Taken together, these remarks contained a fundamental alteration of Marxist theory. In 1939 he justified this revision with an important but rarely cited quotation from Lenin, probably written in 1898:

We do not regard Marx's theory as something complete and untouchable. On the contrary, we believe that it has only laid the foundations of a science which socialists must develop further. . . . This theory provides only general *guiding* principles which are applied differently in England than in France . . . and differently in Germany than in Russia.⁹¹

Stalin asked why the state had not yet withered away in the USSR, and then answered his own question: the Marxist-Leninist theory of the state was not yet fully developed, and required further elaboration. Engels' formula about withering did not apply to the specific situation which followed the victory of socialism in one country. Thus, Stalin said, further development of the theory of the state was necessary.

In his report on the new constitution in 1936, Stalin announced that relations among nationalities had changed dramatically since 1922, that the minorities had overcome their distrust of

⁸⁹*Pravda*, Nov. 15, 1936.

⁹⁰"Samopoznanie sotsializma," *Izvestiia*, Dec. 19, 1936.

⁹¹Lenin, 4: 183-184..

Great Russians and the centrifugal forces that had come into play after 1917. Every nationality had experienced a flowering of its national culture, "national in form, socialist in content."⁹² But despite these tendencies reported by Stalin, the new constitution did not introduce any essential changes in the national structure. According to Stalin, there had been some suggestions in the direction of a more unitary state: a recommendation that the union republics should lose the right to secede, and that the Soviet of Nationalities be abolished so that the new Supreme Soviet would be a unicameral legislature. Stalin rejected both of these proposals.⁹³

Stalin's last comments on the nationalities problem came in his writings on linguistics,⁹⁴ which again raised the issue of the two cultures. Stalin denounces "Talmudists" and "quotation-mongers" who have misunderstand his teachings. He argues that language is not (in Marxist terminology) either superstructure or base. He tells his readers that language is not a class phenomenon, but rather something shared by all classes in society. Although he does not use this term he appears to be saying that language is neutral in the class struggle. Now in his earlier writings, Stalin had considered language to be one of the essential characteristics of national identity, and part of a national culture. Yet it is neither bourgeois nor proletarian. This is an implicit but crucial criticism of the two cultures theory.

In later notes to the paper on linguistics, Stalin made two other points which are relevant to our subject. First, he completed the dismantling of Engels' theory of the withering of the state. Stalin wrote that because of the capitalist threat, the Soviet state must not be weakened but, on the contrary, must be made stronger. Engels' formula is simply not applicable so long as capitalism survives.⁹⁵ Second, Stalin returned (perhaps reluctantly) to the theory of *sliianie*, and recalled his remarks twenty years earlier about the eventual development of a common international language. Such a development would be the quintessence of *sliianie*. Stalin now reminded his readers that the *sliianie* of languages would come only after the final victory of socialism on a world scale.⁹⁶

Stalin's expressed views can be called National Bolshevik, because they do bear a strong resemblance to the more coherent theory which Ustrialov had elaborated in Harbin. For Stalin, as for Ustrialov, the first priority was to maintain the empire, and Stalin pursued this goal with cautious determination until 1945, when he recovered most of the lost territories. Poland and Finland remained outside the renewed empire, but in the 1920 letter quoted earlier, Stalin had already anticipated this.

⁹²*Voprosy leninizma*, pp. 545-573.

⁹³*Ibid.*, 566, 568.

⁹⁴"*Marksizm i voprosy iazykoznaniiia*," Stalin, 3 (16): 114-148.

⁹⁵N.G. Aleksandrov, *Voprosy gosudarstva i prava v svete truda I. V. Stalina "Marksizm i voprosy iazykoznaniiia"* (Moscow: Znanie, 1952).

⁹⁶Stalin, 3 (16): 169.

Stalin's views were Russocentric rather than Russian nationalist. He thought of Russia as the center of the empire, and yet he was cautious about allowing Russia, and the Russians, a separate identity within the Soviet system. The policy of concessions on education and culture aimed at the minority nationalities rather than the Russians. Although Stalin avoided the term "Soviet nation," his conception of the USSR was similar to Ustrialov's vision: a single state with many peoples and many languages. Western scholars have generally agreed that Stalin's policy was one of ruthless Russification. However Anderson and Silver, in several studies focusing on educational policy, reject this view. They concluded that Soviet policy was one of bilingual education rather than linguistic Russification.⁹⁷ There was increasing use of Russian, but this was inevitable in a country undergoing modernization. Most non-Russian parents--at least in the cities--wanted their children to learn to use Russian. Otherwise most careers would be closed to them. This was the process that Russians called "Russianization" (*obrusenie*) as distinct from Russification (*russifikatsiia*). But as Anderson and Silver point out, in the non-Russian republics there was always some opportunity for education in the local language. These conclusions are supported by census data from the Russian republics. In the typical republic, only a tiny minority of the eponymous nationality claimed Russian as a native language. A great majority of that nationality spoke fluent Russian as a second language.⁹⁸

Stalin once admitted that the basic goal of his policy on nationalities was to avoid the mistakes of Austria-Hungary.⁹⁹ Measured by that simple standard, Stalin's policy was a success. Soviet nationality theory, to paraphrase Stalin, was nationalist in content and socialist in form. The regime adapted its Marxist-Leninist doctrine to support a pragmatic policy of careful concessions to the nationalities. In making concessions on such matters as cultural policy and education, the regime recognized not only the existence of nationalities, but that national differences will endure for the indefinite future. *Sliianie*, abandoned by Lenin and ignored by Stalin, never became official Soviet policy.

The theoretical framework which Stalin formulated to justify his policy provided the basic principles of Soviet nationality theory long after he died. In the post-Stalin period much attention was given to cultural pluralism, without recognizing Stalin as the author of this policy. Although, as we shall see, the idea of *sliianie* made a brief reappearance after Stalin died, it was quickly suppressed. It was to pop up again in 1982--only to disappear once more. The only new formulation in nationalities policy was the term introduced by Khrushchev: the new historical community of the Soviet people. This idea had much in common with the idea of the Soviet nation, although that is not

⁹⁷Barbara A. Anderson and Brian D. Silver, "Equality, Efficiency, and Politics in Soviet Bilingual Education Policy, 1934-1980," *American Political Science Review*, 78 (1984): 1019-1039.

⁹⁸See Appendix.

⁹⁹*Voprosy leninizma*, p. 687.

to suggest that Khrushchev got the idea from reading Ustrialov. Khrushchev, however, was not a National Bolshevik. The resurgence of Russian nationalism in the 1960s, although partly a response to Khrushchev's policies, was not something that Khrushchev planned.

Was Stalin's Policy Successful?

The Beria affair in 1953 alerted the post-Stalin leadership to the sensitivity of the national question. Lavrenty Beria had headed Stalin's security service, and after Stalin's death he succeeded in combining police, security, and intelligence into one agency, the ministry of internal affairs (MVD). With this powerful apparatus in his hands, Beria tried to make himself dictator. In May 1953, he wrote several memoranda about the nationalities problem, including the efforts of the secret police to struggle with anti-Soviet elements in Lithuania and Ukraine. He accused the police of making serious mistakes in nationalities policy, of persecuting the national intelligentsia in the two republics (especially Western Ukraine), and of Russification.¹⁰⁰

Some western analysts have argued that Beria had deviated from the Stalinist line in his speech to the 19th party congress in October 1952. While some speakers had warned of the continuing danger of "bourgeois nationalism," Beria implied that the danger had been overcome.¹⁰¹ In fact what Beria said was: "The force which cements the friendship of the peoples of our country is the Russian people, the Russian nation, as the most outstanding of all the nations comprising the Soviet Union." He went on to say that the Stalinist nationalities policy had brought about the "complete and final overthrow" of both great-power chauvinism and bourgeois nationalism.¹⁰²

Beria's notes from 1953 have not been published, but in 1991 the party released the text of the Central Committee meeting of July 1953, which took place after Beria's arrest. The leadership engaged in a frank and detailed discussion of nationalities policy.¹⁰³ In both Lithuania and Latvia, the republic party leadership confessed that it had fallen away from "Leninist-Stalinist" national policy and had failed to advance local officials in the apparatus.¹⁰⁴ The new regime removed the Russian first secretary in Ukraine, L.G. Melnikov, with charges that he had distorted Leninist-Stalinist practice. The specific charges referred to the western Ukraine--that he had staffed the bureaucracy with outsiders, and forced institutions of higher learning to use Russian instead of

¹⁰⁰*Izvestiia*, Jan. 4, 1991.

¹⁰¹Amy Knight, *Beria: Stalin's First Lieutenant* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 165; Charles H. Fairbanks, Jr., "National Cadres as a Force in the Soviet System: The Evidence of Beria's Career," *Soviet Nationalities and Practices*, ed. Jeremy R. Azrael (New York: Praeger, 1978), pp. 144-145.

¹⁰²*Prawda*, Oct. 9, 1952, translated in *Current Soviet Policies*, ed. Leo Gruliov (New York: Praeger, 1953), p. 164.

¹⁰³"Delo Beria. Plenum TsK KPSS 2-7 iul'ia 1953 g. Stenograficheskii otchet." *Izvestiia TsK KPSS*, 1 (1991): 139-214.

¹⁰⁴*Prawda*, June 18 and June 28, 1953.

Ukrainian as the language of instruction.¹⁰⁵ The Ukrainian and central press repeated these charges over the next several weeks. An ethnic Ukrainian, A.I. Kirichenko, replaced Melnikov.

After Beria had circulated his notes on the national problem, the party leadership sent a secret circular to party organizations:

The Presidium of the CC CPSU has adopted a decree which states:

(1) All party and state organs are obligated to carry out a fundamental change in the situation in the national republics--*to put an end to the distortion of Soviet national policy.*

(2) The training, preparation, and general promotion of members of the local nationality to leading work should be organized; the practice of promoting cadres not of the local nationality should be changed; nomenklatura officials who do not know the local language should be reassigned and placed at the disposal of the CC CPSU.

(3) Official business in the national republics should be carried out in the native or local language.¹⁰⁶

As Nahaylo and Swoboda point out, this directive would have meant a return to the *korenizatsiia* policies of the 1920s.¹⁰⁷

Years later, in his memoirs, Khrushchev recalls that he agreed with Beria that there were too many Russians in the republic leaderships, and that there should be a return to the policy of *korenizatsiia*.¹⁰⁸ But these memoirs conceal the truth about Khrushchev's views in 1953, at the time of the Beria affair. Then Khrushchev not only accused Beria of undermining the friendship of peoples and inciting bourgeois-nationalist elements. He went on to accuse Beria of inciting anti-Russian feelings, quoting from a letter written from Lithuania: "One Communist reports that recently nationalist elements have become more brazen and have spoken out openly against Russian officials. It has reached the point where in the stores clerks that know Russian will not sell goods to anyone who speaks to them in Russian. What do these facts mean? They show that Beria's proposals were aimed at embroiling the Russians with other nationalities. . . ." ¹⁰⁹

There was no acknowledged change in the party line, either before or after the arrest of Beria. The republics were accused of distorting established policy. An article in the authoritative journal *Kommunist*, published at the height of the crisis, follows the regular Stalinist line, except for a reference to the two cultures theory. The article described the Russian nation as the most advanced of the Soviet nations.¹¹⁰ Other articles published in the post-1953 period follow the same familiar

¹⁰⁵*Pravda*, June 13, 1953.

¹⁰⁶AS No. 1042. This document surfaced only in 1971.

¹⁰⁷Bohdan Nahaylo and Victor Swoboda, *Soviet Disunion: A History of the Nationalities Problem in the USSR* (New York: The Free Press, 1990), p. 112.

¹⁰⁸*Khrushchev Remembers* (Boston: Little Brown, 1970), p. 330.

¹⁰⁹*Izvestiia TsK KPSS*, 1 (1991): 157.

¹¹⁰S. Iakobovskaia, "Obrazovanie i rastsvet sotsialisticheskikh natsii v SSSR," *Kommunist*, 9 (1953): 29-45. This issue was released to the press June 18; it refers to the dismissal of Melnikov but it also quotes with approval a speech by Beria.

pattern, except that after 1955 the "Leninist-Stalinist nationality theory" became the "Leninist" theory. There is condemnation of national nihilism (an indirect reference to *sliianie*) and emphasis on the use of the Russian language for inter-nation communication.¹¹¹ When these articles mention *sliianie*, it is to remind the reader that according to Lenin's theory, that process lay in the distant future.¹¹²

Khrushchev on the Nationalities Problem

Speaking to the first post-Stalin party congress in 1956, Khrushchev called for expanding the authority of the union republics both in economic management and cultural affairs. The development of national cadres, he said, made possible a greater decentralization of decision making.

Khrushchev's main concern was managing the economy, and he proposed creating an economic committee in the Soviet of Nationalities which could oversee the process of decentralization. He also promised a fairer distribution of resources for health, education, and housing among the union republics. Khrushchev did not, however, venture to change Stalin's theoretical formulations:

Socialism not only does not abolish national differences and characteristics, but on the contrary, it assures a comprehensive development and flourishing of the economy and culture of all nations and peoples. Thus we must not ignore these characteristics and differences, but must take careful account of them in all our practical work in managing economic and cultural affairs.¹¹³

Repeating another of Stalin's formulations, Khrushchev said that the culture of each people should be national in form, socialist in content.¹¹⁴

While Khrushchev made these gestures toward the minorities, he also appealed to the Russians, and tried to abandon the long-standing policy against specifically Russian institutions in the party structure. Beginning apparently in 1955, some of the central committee departments were split into two parts, with one department supervising the RSFSR and the other supervising the union republics. In 1956 this process went a step further with the creation of the Bureau of the Central Committee for the RSFSR. A few weeks later a new central newspaper appeared, *Soviet Russia*, which was an organ of the new RSFSR Bureau and the RSFSR government. There is some mystery surrounding both the creation and the functions of this RSFSR Bureau, and indirect evidence that the party leadership had not approved this innovation. The creation of the bureau was announced a few days

¹¹¹A. Niiazov, "V bratskoi sem'e narodov Sovetskogo Soiuz," *Kommunist*, 8 (1953): 25-39.; Ya. Kalnberzin, "Vospitanie trudiashchikhsia v dukhe druzhby narodov," *Kommunist*, 15 (1955): 26-41; I. Tsamerian, "Leninskie printsipy resheniia natsional'nogo voprosa," *Kommunist*, 16 (1955): 83-98; A. Egorov, "O natsional'nykh osobennostiakh iskusstva," *Kommunist*, 9 (1956): 74-91.

¹¹²Sh.R. Rashidov, "Leninskaia natsional'naia politika v deistvii," *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, 1 (1959): 47-60.

¹¹³*XX s'ezd Kommunisticheskoi partii Sovetskogo Soiuz: stenograficheskii otchet*, 2 vols. (Moscow: Politizdat, 1956), 1: 90.

¹¹⁴*Ibid.*, 91.

after the Party Congress,¹¹⁵ but the motive was not made public, and there was no explanation of the functions of the new bureau. There had been no mention of the new body at the congress, even though the delegates discussed changes in the party statute, and approved several amendments.¹¹⁶ The RSFSR Bureau was not given a legal basis in the party rules until the 22nd Congress in 1961. At the outset, the bureau included Khrushchev as chairman, along with several party functionaries and the republic premier. This was a significant gesture toward solving the problem of "Russian dependency*"; however, Khrushchev never took the next step of establishing a Russian Communist party.

When Khrushchev resigned in October 1964, Brezhnev replaced him as first secretary, but there was no mention of the chairmanship of the RSFSR Bureau. According to one source, Brezhnev did not become chairman of the bureau until the November (1964) plenum, a month after he became first secretary.¹¹⁷ This delay in the appointment again suggests that there was some disagreement over the post, and even over the need for a separate Russian party organization. It appears that the bureau was inactive after 1964, and in 1966, on Brezhnev's recommendation, the 23rd congress abolished it. Brezhnev commented that the party presidium (now renamed the Politburo) or the secretariat examined all important questions about the Russian republic anyway, so that there was no need for a parallel organ.¹¹⁸ Khrushchev was more sympathetic to Russian nationalism than Stalin was. His creation of the RSFSR Bureau gave Russia a political identity which Stalin denied the republic. His unpublished remarks at the July (1953) plenum expose a side of Khrushchev he was careful not to reveal in public--a very Russian sense of grievance and victimization.

His remarks at the party congresses in 1956 and 1961 were mainly reformulations of familiar ideas. Khrushchev made no innovations in theory. At the 21st Congress in 1959 he avoided discussing the nationalities problem altogether. There was a brief resurgence of the *sliianie* idea, but Khrushchev did not encourage it. The preparation of the new party program in 1961 required a new statement on nationalities policy, and Khrushchev could not avoid the issue in his speech to the 22nd congress. He would have nothing to do with *sliianie*, insisting that *sblizhenie* should continue to be the goal. Khrushchev's only reference to the term was to say that it would be premature to make meaningless declarations about the *sliianie* of nations.¹¹⁹ Khrushchev did introduce the new idea of the Soviet people as a "new historical community" (*sovetskii narod--novaia istoricheskaia obshchnost'*), but he never explained what he meant. The party program produced under

¹¹⁵*Pravda*, Feb. 29, 1956.

¹¹⁶*XX s'ezd KPSS*, 2: 428-432.

¹¹⁷*Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia*, s.n. "Brezhnev L. I." The 1966 yearbook says that Brezhnev was first secretary and chairman of the RSFSR Buro from October 1964 to April 1966 (*Ezhegodnik BSE 1966*, "Biograficheskie spravki"), but the first source is probably correct.

¹¹⁸Brezhnev, 1: 357.

¹¹⁹*XXII s'ezd KPSS: stenograficheskiĭ oshet*, 3 vols. (Moscow: Politizdat, 1962), 1: 217.

Khrushchev's leadership, which was optimistic about achieving Communism in twenty years, was cautious on the national question. Although it promised that the next generation of Soviet citizens would live under communism, the new program said: "the removal of national differences, in particular, differences in language, is a much more drawn-out process than the removal of class barriers."¹²⁰ The program did not pick up Khrushchev's idea of the new historical community, and the further development of this concept was left to the Brezhnev regime. The three pages of the program which deal with nationality policy use the word *sblizhenie* (in one form or another) seven times, but never mention *sliianie*. It promises to develop "complete unity" (*polnoe edinstvo*) and this term is sometimes interpreted as a synonym for *sliianie*. However, *sliianie* was a well-established word in the Marxist-Leninist vocabulary, even though it had fallen into disuse. The authors of the program would have used the term if that was what they meant. They used the term "complete unity" in an effort to get off the doctrinal hook and avoid controversy about *sliianie*.

The Problem of Sliianie

Unfortunately the issue refused to go away. Beginning with Lenin, no Soviet leader had endorsed the idea, but a dedicated few orthodox Marxist-Leninists repeatedly raised the issue. From the time of Lenin's remark that it was all a foolish dream, the idea of *sliianie* was not an operating principle of the official Marxist-Leninist ideology. Nonetheless this term, buried in Lenin's prerevolutionary writings, was a potential embarrassment and was occasionally revived after Stalin died—to the general confusion not only of Soviet readers but of western Sovietologists. We have already seen that Khrushchev explicitly rejected the term in 1961. Unfortunately, Western studies often report that Khrushchev favored *sliianie*. Dzyuba, who was one of the most thoughtful and eloquent spokesmen for the interests of a national minority, seems to misinterpret Khrushchev's statement to the 22nd Congress.¹²¹ Brezhnev was even more cautious than Khrushchev, and concluded that it would be dangerous to force even the process of *sblizhenie*. Apparently he never mentioned *sliianie*. Party documents used language that avoided the issue. The concept of complete unity which appeared in the 1961 program was probably deliberately chosen in order to avoid dealing with *sliianie*. The theory of a new historical community, which would be expanded on under Brezhnev, was an implicit repudiation of *sliianie*. This new theory specifically denied that the Soviet people are a distinct nation. It is, on the contrary, a people composed of many nations, a multinational people with a multinational culture. The regime's chief ideologist, Suslov, had little to say about nationalities theory, but he was on the side of *sblizhenie*.¹²²

¹²⁰Ibid., 3: 313.

¹²¹Ivan Dzyuba, *Internationalism or Russification? A Study in the Soviet Nationalities Problem* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968), p. 182.

¹²²M.A. Suslov, *Na putiakh stroitel'stva kommunizma*, 2 vols. (Moscow: Politizdat, 1977), 1: 399.

B.G. Gafurov, a Tadzhik party official, was one of the few writers to treat *sliianie* in a favorable light, but he too was cautious. Like Stalin, he attributes national hostility before 1917 to the deliberate policies of the tsarist regime, and insists that only harmony prevails in the contemporary USSR. Unlike Stalin, he looked forward to the eventual achievement of *sliianie*, although he added:

The *sliianie* of nations is an exceedingly complex and drawn-out process. For this [to come about] what is needed is not only the victory of socialism in the entire world, but also a transition from the first, lower phase of the Communist formation--socialism--to its second and higher phase, Communism. Under socialism, just as there still are essential differences between town and country, and between mental and physical labor, so too national differences are preserved. Presumably these differences will persist even under Communism. There can be no doubt that in the higher stages of Communist society, the disappearance of all national differences will be unavoidable.¹²³

Gafurov went on to conclude that the eventual *sliianie* of nations presumes a single language for all peoples, but this stage of development must lie in the distant future. He accepted the thesis of Stalin that this eventual common language will not be some presently existing language, but a new tongue which will include features drawn from many languages. While Gafurov's article may have been an effort to restore the term to the official ideology, but it was an isolated publication and made no predictions about the immediate future.

Tsamerian was one of the few scholars who has specifically raised the question: "Will national differences survive after the achievement of a Communist society?" His answer is that the world-wide transition from socialism to Communism will be somehow reflected in inter-nation relations, but this fact does not mean that nations will disappear. In the transition other cleavages in human society will vanish: this includes in particular the difference between urban and rural societies, between physical and intellectual labor, and above all else it will bring the total disappearance of class distinctions. The transition thus will help the further *sblizhenie* of nationalities, but not the obliteration of national differences. "Nation" will be something different under Communism, just as a socialist nation is a different social formation from a nation under capitalist domination. The ideology that will dominate in a Communist nation will be wholly international, and the remnants of the old, capitalist mentality will be gone. This means that national differences, which will survive for a long time under Communism, will not foster national antagonisms.¹²⁴

A philosopher from Yakutsk, A.E. Mordinov, argued that the formula of "complete unity" used in the 1961 program was equivalent to *sliianie*, but he radically revised the meaning of the term.

¹²³B. Gafurov, "Uspekhi natsional'noi politiki KPSS i nekotorye voprosy internatsional'nogo vospitaniia," *Kommunist* 11 (1958): 16.

¹²⁴I.P. Tsamerian, *Natsii i natsional'nye otnosheniia v razvitom sotsialisticheskom obshchestve* (Moscow: Nauka, 1977), pp. 170-171.

Sliianie, he wrote, did not mean the disappearance of national differences, much less the disappearance of nations altogether. To believe that *sliianie* meant the disappearance of nations was "national nihilism."¹²⁵ Mordinov's view, however, did not have the support of the party leadership.

There was another sharp discussion about nationality policy in writing the new constitution which was adopted in 1977. The discussion took place behind the scenes, and we have only Brezhnev's version of the losing argument, from his report to the Supreme Soviet in October 1977. He expanded on the idea, introduced by Khrushchev, of the "new historical community":

As is known, in the USSR there has developed a new historical community of persons—the Soviet people. Some comrades—it is true, there are not many of them—have drawn incorrect conclusions from this fact. They propose to introduce into the Constitution the idea of a united Soviet nation, and to liquidate the union and autonomous republics or sharply limit the sovereignty of the union republics, by depriving them of the right to secede from the USSR, and the right to conduct foreign relations. Proposals to abolish the Soviet of Nationalities and create a unicameral Supreme Soviet go in the same direction. I believe that the incorrectness of such proposals is clear. The social and political unity of the Soviet people does not in any way signify the disappearance of national differences.¹²⁶

It is curious that the writers who tried to restore *sliianie*--Gafurov, Tsamerian, Mordinov--represented the minorities. Another group of realistic political writers tried to head off the rehabilitation of *sliianie*. The nature of this renewed debate was not understood in the West, because the meaning of the term remained cloudy. Those who wanted to restore the term to the official ideology tried to soften its meaning, proclaiming that it meant only that the nations of the USSR were becoming similar as measured by certain social indicators, such as health, education, and economic statistics. The country, according to this interpretation, was developing "social uniformity" (*sotsialnaia odnorodnost'*). On the other hand those who opposed the idea insisted on maintaining the original utopian meaning (*otmiranie natsional'nykh razlichii*) as a way of discrediting the whole idea.

Kulichenko, one of the leading theorists, published a major study in 1981 devoted to the Stalinist theory of "flourishing" (without mentioning Stalin) and *sblizhenie*. He defined *sliianie* in the usual way, as the disappearance of national differences, and then he dropped the subject.¹²⁷ However, in an article that also appeared in 1981, Kulichenko offered a radical critique of *sliianie*. He argued that the idea needed further study, and in particular that many who were writing about the

¹²⁵A.E. Mordinov, "Aktual'nye problemy razvitiia mezhnatsional'nykh otnoshenii v SSSR," *Voprosy filosofii* 6 (1971): 26-27; A.E. Mordinov, "V. I. Lenin o sushchnosti natsional'nykh otnoshenii pri sotsializme," *Poliarnaia zvezda* 4 (1969): 91-101.

¹²⁶Brezhnev, 6: 525.

¹²⁷M.I. Kulichenko, *Rastsvet i sblizhenie natsii v SSSR* (Moscow: Mysl, 1981), p. 24.

topic did not fully understand the relationship of *sblizhenie* and *sliianie*. He criticized writers like Mordinov who concluded that the process of *sliianie* had already begun.¹²⁸

In February 1982, the party issued a decree marking the 60th anniversary of the USSR,¹²⁹ and this document provides an authoritative statement of nationalities theory as of the beginning of the year. Like Kulichenko, the decree concentrates on flowering and *sblizhenie*, and avoids the term *sliianie* altogether.

Sliianie now found a new defender in Richard Kosolapov, the rigidly orthodox chief editor of *Kommunist*. Speaking at a conference on nationality policy, Kosolapov summed up the theory in the following way: "Communists do not conceive of a struggle for socialism without realizing the widest possible democracy and therefore they are the most consistent supporters of full *equality of rights* of nations, and of their *right to self determination*." He went on to say that "democratic" goals would be combined with the "social revolution," and the Communists would aim at "the unity and *sliianie* of the workers of all nations. . . ."¹³⁰ He then quoted Lenin's 1916 "theses" that the goal of socialism was not merely the *sblizhenie* of nations, but their *sliianie*. He dismissed as "vulgar utopianism" the view that *sliianie* meant the disappearance of national characteristics and the disappearance of language and ethnic differences.¹³¹

At the end of the year *sliianie* appeared to find favor at the highest level, but it was short-lived. In November Chernenko published an article in *Problemy mira i sotsializma* in which he repeated Lenin's formulation as quoted earlier by Kosolapov.¹³² In an even more startling development the new general secretary, Andropov, repeated the phrase in his speech marking the sixtieth anniversary of the USSR. For most of his speech, Andropov followed the line developed over the preceding twenty years, and spoke of the "new historical community. Then, however, he quite unexpectedly revived the idea of *sliianie*, quoting from the same text that Kosolapov had used: "Our final goal is clear. It is, using the words of V. I. Lenin, 'not only a *sblizhenie* of nations, but their *sliianie*.'"¹³³ In the same speech, referring to cadres policy, Andropov spoke of the need to promote individuals from the national minorities to leading posts in both party and government.

¹²⁸M.I. Kulichenko, "Aktual'nye problemy teorii i metodologii razvitiia natsii i natsional'nye otnosheniia v SSSR," *Aktual'nye problemy natsional'nykh otnoshenii v svete konstitutsii SSSR* (Moscow: Nauka, 1981), p. 48-49.

¹²⁹*Spravochnik partiinogo rabotnika*, vypusk 23 (Moscow: Politizdat, 1983), pp. 112-127.

¹³⁰R.I. Kosolapov, "Klassovye i natsional'nye otnosheniia na etape razvitogo sotsializma," *Sotsial'naiia politika i natsional'nye otnosheniia* (Moscow: Mysl, 1982), pp. 5-6.

¹³¹*Ibid.*, p. 7. The quotation is from Lenin, 27: 256.

¹³²K.U. Chernenko, *Izbrannye rechi i stati*, 2nd ed. (Moscow: Politizdat, 1984), p. 567.

¹³³Iu.V. Andropov, *Izbrannye rechi i stati*, 2nd ed. (Moscow: Politizdat, 1983), p. 9. On this incident, see the detailed study by Martha Brill Olcott, "Yuri Andropov and the 'National Question,'" *Soviet Studies* 37 (1985): 103-117.

Neither Chernenko nor Andropov raised the issue again, and Gorbachev was clearly opposed. In February 1986 he dismissed the orthodox Kosolapov from the *Kommunist* editorial board.¹³⁴ During Gorbachev's first year, the regime's ideologists were busy preparing a new party program to replace the outworn document that had been adopted in 1961. One part of the program would have to provide an updated statement on nationalities problems. Three years later Gorbachev attacked certain "learned men of science" (*muzhi nauki*) who had pressed the issue of *sliianie*, and admitted that he had with great difficulty kept the concept out of the new program.¹³⁵

The Two Cultures

Just before Stalin's death there was a curious resurgence of the two cultures theory. The newspaper of the Moscow literary elite uncovered manifestations of "bourgeois nationalism" in Armenia and Tadzhikistan. The charge was that certain writers had abandoned the two cultures theory in favor of the "theory of the single stream" (*teoriia edinogo potoka*). This allegedly bourgeois theory taught that democratic and progressive literature found its roots in the single stream of national culture, emphasizing links between classical (i.e. re-1917) literature and modern literature. *Literaturnaia gazeta* criticized the single stream theory as an idealization of the feudal past. The most serious danger, however, was that the single stream theory attacked one of the fundamental principles of Marxism-Leninism, because it assumed that national differences were more basic than class differences.¹³⁶

There was a new emphasis on the two cultures theory, and renewed criticism of the theory of the single stream of culture. The theory of the single stream was again condemned as a disguised form of bourgeois nationalism which covered up the class contradictions within a society, and blunted the struggle between the two cultures.¹³⁷

In 1987 A.N. Iakovlev was drawn into a serious argument over the two-culture theory. Fifteen years earlier, as an official of the central party apparatus, Iakovlev had attacked the resurgent Russian nationalists. There is no evidence that Gorbachev was involved, but his chief ideological spokesman once again attacked the nationalists.

The historian A.G. Kuz'min, in an article arguing that Lenin was a true Russian patriot, concluded that the two-culture theory applied only to a society caught up in a class struggle on the

¹³⁴Kosolapov disappeared until Gorbachev left office. In 1993 he surfaced as a member of the political committee of the National Salvation Front, an unsuccessful effort to build a bridge between left and right, and create a "red-brown" coalition. In 1995 he produced a small volume of Stalin's writings: *Slovo tovarishchu Stalinu* (Moscow: Paleia, 1995). This book does not contain any of Stalin's writings on the national question.

¹³⁵Gorbachev, 7: 248.

¹³⁶*Literaturnaia gazeta*, Feb. 5, 1953; *Kommunist* [Erevan], Jan. 9, 1953.

¹³⁷M. Kammari, "Sotsialisticheskie natsii SSSR v usloviakh perekhoda ot sotsializma k kommunizmu," *Kommunist*, 15 (1953): 12-29.

eve of revolution. Kuz'min cited evidence that even before 1917, Lenin tried to protect the Russian cultural tradition against such hostile forces as the Proletcult and Trotskii. He is undoubtedly right. It was noted above that Lenin's theoretical writings on this topic were sketchy, and limited to the period 1913-1914. Then in a peculiar passage, Kuz'min wrote that as the proletariat marches forward toward socialism, it gathers strength from the national-liberation movement, from patriotism, and from the urge to preserve and enrich the cultural tradition of centuries past.¹³⁸ The literary scholar Vadim Kozhinov then joined in the issue, presenting a more restrained analysis which comes to the same general conclusion. He argued that Lenin changed his mind about the two-culture theory after 1917,¹³⁹ although in his postrevolutionary writings he dealt with this topic only indirectly. In 1919 Lenin published a brochure in which he defended the employment of non-Communist specialists, especially in the army. He insisted that the Soviet government would have to build Communism with the bricks thrown at it by the capitalists: "We have no other bricks!" With the bourgeois specialist came bourgeois culture. Lenin did not shrink from taking the best of the old culture. "We must take the entire culture which the capitalists have left behind, and out of it build socialism."¹⁴⁰

In 1987, both Kuz'min and Kozhinov still accepted Lenin as a final authority, but orthodox Marxist-Leninists could not swallow Kozhinov's suggestion that Lenin changed his mind on the theory of the two cultures. Their articles led to a sharp polemic, the two sides exchanging charges about the "distortion" of Lenin's teaching. The party press accused Kozhinov and Kuz'min of abandoning Marxism.¹⁴¹ On the other hand the nationalists denounced anyone who defended the two-culture theory as enemies of Russian culture.¹⁴²

In April Iakovlev, now a party secretary and Politburo member, intervened in the dispute, accusing certain historians and literary scholars (a reference to Kuz'min and Kozhinov) of failing to use a "class approach" in their studies. Further, he charged them with idealizing pre-1917 Russia, with engaging in "political speculation" and demagoguery, and with painting a false picture of Christianity as the mother of Russian culture.¹⁴³ Before *glasnost*, an attack from so authoritative a source as a party secretary would have ended the argument. The opponents of the two-culture theory, however, remained undaunted by Iakovlev's attack, and the issue was not resolved. It was to re-emerge later as a conflict between the "Russian idea" and socialism. The conflict was paradoxical, because it was the traditionalists like Kuz'min and Kozhinov who were willing to take a fresh look at

¹³⁸A. Kuz'min, "Neozhidannye priznaniia," *Nash sovremennik*, 9 (1985): 182-190.

¹³⁹V. Kozhinov, "Uroki istorii: o leninskoii kontseptsii natsional'noi kul'tury," *Moskva*, 11 (1986): 183-198.

¹⁴⁰Lenin, 38: 55.

¹⁴¹*Sovetskaia kul'tura*, Mar. 17, 1987; *Pravda*, Mar. 19, 1987.

¹⁴²V.A. Vinogradov made this charge, in a speech of March 25, 1987 (*Russkaia mysl'*, Apr. 15, 1987).

Vinogradov was deputy chairman of the Moscow branch of VOPIK and a strong supporter of Vasil'ev's *Pamiat*. See the samizdat journal *Zemlia* No. 3.

¹⁴³A.N. Iakovlev, "Dostizhenie kachestvenno novogo sostoiianiia sovetskogo obshchestva i obshchestvennykh nauk," *Vestnik Akademii nauk SSSR* 6 (1987): 51-80.

the meaning of Leninism, while the ideological specialists seemed determined to hold the line against any reinterpretation of the sacred texts. Thus *glasnost*' allowed freer expression of the values and sentiments contained in the "Russian idea," but it did not mean that the Russian nationalists of various persuasions were coming together.

PART II. The Post-Soviet Period

Instead of a Conclusion

The collapse of the USSR represented the final failure of Stalin's nationalities policy but it did not mean that the national problem had been wiped off the agenda. In fact the problem became more pressing. Moreover the Stalinist approach has proved to be tenacious, surviving first the death of the dictator and then the breakup of the Union. The Kremlin now has two national problems and for purposes of analysis it is important to distinguish between them.

The first problem is that of the 25 million Russians left stranded in the fourteen newly independent republics, the so-called "near abroad." The 25 million figure is well known. Less well known is another statistic from the 1989 census: only four percent of ethnic Russians in the USSR were fluent in the language of another Soviet nationality.¹⁴⁴ This simple statistic allows us to draw some important inferences about Russian life outside Russia. It means that within the fourteen republics, only a tiny fraction of ethnic Russians spoke the local language with any fluency. The Russians in the republics tended to live in Russian-speaking communities and not to assimilate with the local population.¹⁴⁵

In the post-*Putsch* article cited earlier, Migranian warned about this problem and criticized the Baltic republics for their short-sighted laws denying citizenship to most ethnic Russians. In 1992 Gorbachev accused some successor states of practicing *apartheid* against Russians and Russian speakers who suddenly found themselves stranded on foreign territory.¹⁴⁶ In a speech to the U.N. General Assembly later that year, Foreign Minister Kozyrev was more specific and accused Estonia and Latvia of discriminating against ethnic Russians and other non-indigenous nationalities.¹⁴⁷ After 1992 the rhetoric was toned down but the issue was not forgotten. Moscow's concern about these

¹⁴⁴*Natsional'nyi sostav naseleniia SSSR po dannym vsesoiuznoi perepisi naseleniia 1989 goda*, pp. 20-21.

¹⁴⁵There has been extensive analysis of this problem: *The New Russian Diaspora: Russian Minorities in the Former Union Republics*, ed. Vladimir Shlapentokh, Munir Sendich, and Emil Payin (Armonck, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1994); Hélène Carrère d'Encausse, *The End of the Soviet Empire: The Triumph of the Nations*, trans. Franklin Philip (New York: Basic Books, 1993); *Russia: A Return to Imperialism?*, ed. Uri Ra'anand and Kate Martin (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996); Paul Kostoe, *Russians in the Former Soviet Republics* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995); Jeff Chinn and Robert Kaiser, *Russians as the New Minority: Ethnicity and Nationalism in the Soviet Successor States* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996).

¹⁴⁶Speech by M.S. Gorbachev in the U.S. Capitol, May 14, 1992, *Congressional Record--Senate*, vol. 138, No. 70 (May 19, 1992), p. S56885.

¹⁴⁷Russian Federation, Permanent Mission to the United Nations, Press Release of Sept. 22, 1992.

Russians is embodied in article 61 of the 1993 constitution, which provides that the Russian Federation shall protect the rights of its citizens abroad. "The Russian Federation," says an authoritative commentary,

is obligated to extend assistance to its citizens on the territory of other states, if there is reason to believe that their governments are violating the rights of these citizens as established by legislation of the host state or arising out of international treaties and customs. Protection must be extended by diplomatic and consular representatives of the Russian Federation. The possibility of extending protection at other levels is not excluded. In any case protection must be provided by diplomatic and consular representatives regardless of whether the person whose rights are being violated requests such assistance.¹⁴⁸

This function, says another commentary, is especially important in the case of Russian citizens living on the territory of the former republics of the USSR.¹⁴⁹

Article 61 has great nuisance value. The Russian government has continued to protest, and to withhold agreement on specific issues such as border demarcation. But beyond protest there is little that Moscow can do at present. A more immediate problem, and one where Moscow can act, is policy toward the ethnic minorities left stranded within Russia. The major problem is the federal structure of the new, independent state. Before 1991 the RSFSR was organized in faithful compliance with Stalin's nationalities program. The RSFSR constitution recognized 31 nationalities besides the Russians, and they were organized into sixteen autonomous republics, five autonomous regions (*oblasti*), and ten autonomous districts (*okruga*). The autonomous republics, like the union republics within the USSR, were given the symbolic trappings of statehood. The Russian constitution solemnly intoned that each autonomous republic was a "Soviet socialist state."¹⁵⁰

This structure was changed with independence. The autonomous republic was re-named simply a "republic." Four of the autonomous regions were promoted to republic status.¹⁵¹ With the separation of the Chechen-Ingush republic in 1992, Russia now contains 21 ethnic republics. But Russia is not the USSR; as already noted ethnic Russians have an overwhelming majority in the new Russian state. If the USSR was a "multinational state"¹⁵² then Russia is a nation state--differing from other nation states only in having a rather large number of small ethnic minorities.¹⁵³ In eight of the republics ethnic Russians are a solid majority of the population. In four others the Russians,

¹⁴⁸*Konstitutsiia Rossiiskoi Federatsii: kommentarii*, ed. by B.N. Toporin, Iu.M. Baturin, and R.G. Orekhov (Moscow: Iuridicheskaia literatura, 1994), p. 307.

¹⁴⁹*Kommentarii k Konstitutsii Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, 1st ed. (Moscow: BEK, 1994), p. 192.

¹⁵⁰RSFSR Constitution of 1978, art. 78.

¹⁵¹The exception was the Jewish autonomous *oblast* which seems fated to remain the only such territorial entity in Russia.

¹⁵²USSR Constitution of 1977, art. 70.

¹⁵³For a contrasting view see Georgii Satarov, "Imperiia ili federatsiia: real'nyi vybor dlia strany," *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, Sept. 8, 1993.

while not a majority, are the largest ethnic group.¹⁵⁴ In only six republics does the titular nationality constitute a majority.

The issue was high on the agenda of the constitutional commission, set up in 1990 to draft a new basic law. Although El'tsin was chairman he was not involved in the work; the commission was directed by its "responsible secretary," Oleg Rumiantsev. It worked diligently and completed a draft in 1991.¹⁵⁵ A careful reading shows that the draft almost completely abandoned the Stalinist model. The country was to have two types of administrative unit: territories (*territorii*) and republics. But the republics were not necessarily organized around a minority ethnic group. Any territory could become a republic and all republics, both national and "regional," were to be equal in status. The republics were to have equal representation in the upper house of parliament, with the exact number of representatives to be fixed by statute.¹⁵⁶ Apparently it was anticipated that many of the Russian-speaking regions and *kraia* would become republics, while the autonomous regions and districts would become territories.¹⁵⁷ Although later commission drafts preserved the republics, they all accepted the concept of "equality of rights" (*ravnopravie*) for all members of the federation. Deciphered, this term means that the republics have no special rights not enjoyed by the Russian regions.

A more conservative approach was taken by the "federal treaty," signed Mar. 31, 1992, and approved by the Congress of Peoples Deputies on April 10.¹⁵⁸ This was actually three treaties, (1) signed by eighteen republics (the Ingush republic, Tatarstan, and Chechnia did not sign), (2) signed by the regions, territories, and Moscow and St. Petersburg--where the population was overwhelmingly Russian and no ethnic problem existed, and (3) signed by the Jewish AO and the ten autonomous districts. In theory all the territorial units were equal but the three separate contracts assured, in Sheinis's words, that some were more equal than others.¹⁵⁹ The federal treaty was a compromise between two extreme points of view:

(1) The Stalinist model--that Russia should be a federation of national republics where the titular nationality would have predominant authority over cultural institutions.

(2) A Russian unitary state, with the pre-revolutionary system of *gubernii* restored, and with only minimal concessions to the ethnic minorities.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁴See Appendix.

¹⁵⁵Konstitutsionnaia komissiiia RSFSR, *Konstitutsiia Rossiiskoi Federatsii (proekt s kommentariiami)* (Moscow-Krasnoiarsk, 1991).

¹⁵⁶*Ibid.*, ch. 4.1

¹⁵⁷F.V. Shelov-Kovediaev, "Problemy federativnogo gosudarstvennogo ustroistva v novoi Konstitutsii Rossiiskoi Federatsii," *ibid.*, pp. 94-98.

¹⁵⁸*Federativnyi dogovor: dokumenty, kommentarii* (Moscow: Respublika, 1992).

¹⁵⁹Viktor Sheinis, "Natsional'nye problemy i Konstitutsionnaia reforma v Rossiiskoi Federatsii," *Konstitutsionnoe soveshchanie: informatsionnyi biulleten'*, 2 (October 1993): 72-76.

¹⁶⁰*Ibid.*, p. 73.

The first was unacceptable to the Russians, for understandable reasons. The Russians had been a minority in the union republics of the USSR. Now they were the majority not only in the Russian regions, but in many of the ethnic republics. The second was barred by the obstinate doctrine of Stalin's nationalities policy. This option was embodied in a draft constitution prepared by the Congress of Russian Communities (KRO), a right-wing party which supported Gen. Aleksandr Lebed'. The KRO draft would have abolished all the republics and divided Russia into *gubernii*.¹⁶¹ The Russian All-peoples Union or ROS (*Rossiiskii obshchenarodnyi soiuz*, the Baburin party) did not prepare a draft constitution but it took a similar position. The ROS program calls for a "state-territorial" structure rather than national-territorial, and for equality of rights.¹⁶² This plan remained in the commission's working draft for the next year. One proposal would have accepted the KRO plan except that the regions would have been called "lands" (*zemli*).

In 1993 there was a virtual "war of the constitutions," which was resolved in September with El'tsin's forcible (and illegal) suppression of the elected legislature. In May the President convened a new body, the Constitutional Conference (*konstitutsionnoe soveshchanie*) which hurriedly put together a draft tailored to his needs.¹⁶³ This presidential draft preserved the Stalinist model, with its national-territorial structure. Rumiantsev objected that this draft gave too much authority to the republics at the expense of the Russian-speaking regions but the President prevailed.

In Russia as in the USSR, the touchstone of nationalities policy was the language issue. One of Russia's first legislative acts after the August *Putsch* was a law on languages which solemnly proclaimed the right of any ethnic minority to teach and to use its own language. But hidden in the text of the statute was a radical innovation: Russian was named as the official language (*gosudarstvennyi iazyk*) of the entire federation.¹⁶⁴ This status was reaffirmed in the 1993 constitution. Although the statute of 1991 promised to maintain schools in the local language, nothing was done to make the promise a reality. Only in four republics is secondary schooling generally available in the local language.¹⁶⁵

The El'tsin government seems committed to maintaining the national-territorial structure inherited from Stalin. But at times he sounds like a true Russian patriot. In 1995 he created a Council on the Russian Language to assure the development and expanded use (*rasprostranenie*) of

¹⁶¹*Konstitutsii Rossiiskoi Federatsii (al'ternativnye proekty)* (Moscow, 1993), 1: 115-132. The KRO program, including the party's thinking on the national question, is laid out in *Kongress russkikh obshchin: manifest* (Moscow, 1994).

¹⁶²*Programma i ustav Rossiiskogo obshchenarodnogo soiuz*a (Moscow, 1995), p. 16.

¹⁶³*Konstitutsionnoe soveshchanie--informatsionnyi biulleten'*, 1 (1993): 109-157.

¹⁶⁴*Zakon RSFSR o iazykakh narodov RSFSR, Vedomosti s'ezda narodnykh deputatov i verkhovnogo soveta RSFSR*, 50 (1991), item 1740.

¹⁶⁵"Razreshimy li v Rossii problemy dvuiazychiia," *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, June 2, 1992. The four republics and the number of school years available are Tyva (seven years), Iakutiia (nine), and Bashkorostan and Tatarstan (eleven).

Russian.¹⁶⁶ In 1996, after winning re-election as President, El'tsin called for the development of a "national idea" to replace the discredited ideology of Marxism-Leninism.¹⁶⁷ This was hardly an original proposal. Many Russians have felt themselves in an ideological vacuum since the collapse of Communism. Indeed a year before El'tsin's statement Lebed', who was to come in third in the presidential election, called for a new ideology, specifically a "great power" ideology, for Russia.¹⁶⁸

Thus there is a curious paradox in Russian policy toward the minorities. The right-wing parties like KRO and ROS openly abandon Stalin's plan and would (if they could) abolish the republics altogether. The democrats (and here we can include El'tsin and his government) accept the traditional national-territorial structure without acknowledging Stalin's authorship.

It would be foolish to assume that the issue is closed. There are strong pressures for revision of the 1993 constitution, including the federal structure. The ROS program, for example, was published after the constitution went into effect. While the republics may survive indefinitely, Moscow will take whatever steps seem prudent to reduce their autonomy.

¹⁶⁶O Sovete po russkomu iazyku, Ukaz Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii No. 1221, Dec. 7, 1995.

¹⁶⁷Itar-Tass, July 12, 1996. See the discussion of this proposal in *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, July 23 and July 30, 1996.

¹⁶⁸Zavtra, 1995 No. 35.

Appendix
Ethnic and Linguistic Data on the Republics of the Russian Federation
(in percentages)

Republic	1970		1989		Russianization	
	Titular Nation (1)	Russian (2)	Titular Nation (3)	Russian (4)	(5)	(6)
<i>Adygeia</i>	21.1	71.7	22.1	68.0	1.6	83.1
<i>Altai</i>	27.8	65.6	31.0	60.4	10.4	67.3
Bashkorostan	23.4	40.5	21.9	39.3	4.6	73.9
Buriatia	22.0	73.5	24.0	70.0	10.6	73.6
Dagestan	24.5	14.7	27.5	9.2	0.7	64.5
Ingushia	--	--	--	--	--	--
<i>Kabardino-Balkar</i>	53.7	37.2	57.6	32.0	1.0	79.2
Kalmykia	41.2	45.8	45.4	37.7	3.9	89.7
Karachaevo-Cherkass	37.1	47.2	40.9	42.5	0.9	79.3
Kareliia	11.8	68.1	10.0	73.6	48.0	49.0
Komi	28.6	46.8	43.3	47.5	25.6	65.3
Marii El	43.7	46.8	43.3	47.5	11.6	75.3
Mordoviia	35.4	58.9	32.5	60.8	11.5	80.3
Sakha (Iakutiia)	43.0	47.3	33.4	50.3	4.9	65.0
Severnaia Ossetiia	48.7	36.6	53.0	29.9	1.8	86.9
Tatarstan	49.1	42.4	48.5	43.3	3.3	77.3
Tyva	58.6	38.3	64.3	32.0	0.9	58.3
Udmurtskaia	32.2	57.1	30.9	58.9	24.3	67.6
<i>Khakasiia</i>	12.3	78.4	11.1	79.5	16.7	72.4
Chechnia	--	--	--	--	--	--
Chuvash	70.0	24.4	67.8	26.7	15.0	69.2

Source: *Natsional'nyi sostav naseleniia RSFSR po dannym vsesoiuznoi perepisi naseleniia 1989 goda* (Moscow: Respublikanskii informatsionno-izdatel'skii tsentr, 1990).

Notes: There is no "titular" nationality in Dagestan; the percentages reported here are for the Avars, the largest ethnic group in the republic. At time of the censuses, there was a united Chechen-Ingush republic, which was divided into two republics; there is no reliable population data for the separate republics. Former autonomous *oblasti* are printed in italics. The spelling follows the text of the 1993 constitution (art. 65). "Russianization" reports the percent of the titular nationality claiming Russian as their native language (col. 5) or speaking fluent Russian (col. 6).