STALIN'S CONCEPT OF THE PROBLEM OF NATIONAL MINORITIES - THEORY AND PRACTICE

by

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INTRODUCTION

The late 16th century witnessed the beginning of the definition of boundaries in Western Europe and, concurrently, the growth of the national state. With few exceptions the boundaries enclosed populations of the same ethnic origins and similar cultural and linguistic backgrounds. When the parallel process was initiated in Central and Eastern Europe the boundaries tended to enclose within one state several heterogeneous groups, widely divergent ethnically and culturally. Such states were faced with the problem of the relationship between the dominant nationality and the national minorities. This relationship was not merely a political one, but encompassed language, culture and religion as well.

The two notable examples of multi-national empires were Austro-Hungary and Tsarist Russia. By the 19th century Austro-Hungary had become the scene of the first really violent minorities struggle, one that continued into the 20th century and precipitated the first world war. After the war the League of Nations attempted to solve the problem by dissolving the empire and carving from it a group of small nations, based as nearly as possible on ethnic and cultural homogeneity. The nations created, however, were still not national states in the western sense, for it was impossible to draw a map of

Central Europe without national overlap. Czechoslovakia, for instance, had a large German minority as well as smaller groups of Magyars, Ruthenians and Poles.[1] Yugoslavia with a Serb, Croate and Slovene majority had German, Magyar, Albanian, Turkish and Italian minorities.[2] Thus, the small nations of Central Europe were still faced with the problem of national minorities, albeit on a smaller scale.

The Russian Empire was similar to the Austro-Hungarian in that it included widely differing races, nationalities and tribes. In the 16th century Ivan the Terrible conquered Kazan and Astrakhan, bringing to the state large numbers of Turks (Volga Tatars and Bashkirs) and Finns (Chuvash and Mordvinians). The tsars of the 17th century added Siberia with its Turkic, Mongol and Ugro-Finnic tribes, as well as the left bank regions of the Dniepre River which were inhabited by Cossaks. Peter the Great annexed what is today Estonia and Latvia, while his aggressive successor, Catherine II, expanded the Empire to include the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth and the Crimean penninsula.

During the 19th century Finland, the central regions of Poland, the northern Caucasus and most of Turkestan were also enveloped by Russia. Therefore, by 1917, Russia covered the immense expanse from the Arctic to Afghanistan

in the north and south, and from Poland to the Pacific Ocean in the east and west.[3]

The empire was composed of approximately 177 distinguishable races, nationalities and tribes, 125 different languages and 40 different religions.[4] The earliest reliable census, taken in 1897, revealed that the Great Russians constituted 44.3 percent of the total population. Table I shows the position of the main national groups exclusive of the Grand Duchy of Finland.[5]

Despite its varied ethnic composition the state was treated, with some exceptions, as a homogeneous unit. No provision whatever was made for national differences, either politicaly or culturaly.

Prior to 1881 the Tsars had no consistant policy towards the national minorities. Periods of harsh repression and russification alternated with periods of relatively liberal treatment. The underlying principle, however, was autocracy which culminated in the years 1881-1905 beginning with the accession of Alexander III. The new regime initiated a policy of official russification and minority repression. An attempt was made to forcibly assimilate all of the non-Russian peoples, including the Finns whose autonomy had hitherto been completely respected.

The Grand Duchy of Finland had been united with

Table I

	Numbers (to nearest 50,000)	Percentage of total population
Russians	55,650,000	44.3
Ukrainians	22,400,000	17.8
White Russians	5,900,000	4.7
Poles	7,900,000	6.3
Lithuanians	1,650,000	1.4
Letts	1,400,000	1.1
Esthonians	1,000,000	.8
Other Finnish Groups	2,500,000	2.
Germans	1,800,000	1.4
Roumanians	1,100,000	.9
Jews	5,000,000	4.
Georgians	1,350,000	1.
Armenians	1,150,000	.9
Caucasian mountaineers	1,000,000	.8
Iranians	1,000,000	.8
Tatars	3,700,000	3.2
Kirghiz	4,000,000	3.2
Other Turkish peoples	5,750,000	4.7
Mongols	500,000	.4
Miscellaneous	200,000	.2

Russia by the person of the Tsar in the year 1809. The Finns had maintained a separate constitution and had their own diet which met regularly under Alexander II. With the exception of a Russian-appointed Governor-General, the administrative organs were staffed with Finns, as was the army command. Moreover, the Tsars aligned themselves with the Finnish majority,in their efforts to institute the Finnish language in government and education,against the powerful aristocratic Swedish minority.

The tentative efforts of Alexander III to russify the Finns were vigorously rejected only to be carried forth more harshly by Nicholas II. In 1898 a law was passed to draft Finnish recruits into Russian units. It placed Russian officers in charge of Finnish units and increased the term of military service from 90 days to five years. In 1899 the Tsar issued a manifesto which gave imperial law precedence over Finnish las. By 1902 Russians were declared eligible for state service in Finland, and the Russian language was introduced into administration and the schools. The final blow in 1903 suspended the Finnish constitution.[6]

The fate of the other nationality groups was similar. In Poland a decree in 1881 prohibited persons of Polish origin and Catholic faith from holding official positions. In 1885 all instruction in the Polish language in primary

and secondary schools was prohibited.

In Armenia the schools were closed in 1897 and the properties of the Armenian church confiscated.

Repression in the Ukraine dated back to the 1870's when publication of works in the Ukrainian language was forbidden. This policy was intensified under Alexander III. The language prohibition extended to most of the non-Russian peoples living in European Russia.

In Central Asia and parts of the Caucasus, russification was limited to the introduction of the cyrillic alphabet. Most of the peoples were illiterate and hence unaffected by this. However, the policy of Russian land colonization, by which Russians merely confiscated the best lands, was devastating for the nomadic and peasant population who depended on the yield of the land for life.

The Russian code of law singled out two groups of people, known as inorodtsy, for special treatment. Inorodtsy were subjects belonging to the following groups: the Siberian nomads, the natives of the Komandorskie Islands, the Samoeds, the nomads of Stavropol, the Kalmyks, the Ordyntsy of the Transcaspian region, the mountains peoples of the Northern Caucasus, and all the Jews.[8]

The relations of the nomadic inorodtsy to the government

were limited to the payment of a tribute or tax. They had the right to self-rule, including native courts and administration.

The policy towards the other group of inorodtsy, the Jews, was completely different from that directed towards any other group. They were neither ignored (as in the case of the nomadic inorodtsy) nor was any attempt made to assimilate them. On the contrary, the leitmotif of the treatment accorded them was one of obliteration. Following the progroms of 1881 (organized attecks on Jewish property and beating and killing of Jews) the "Temporary Rules" were published which forbade the Jews to live outside of large towns and villages. This was an extension of the Pale of Settlement legislation, initiated in the 18th century after the Polish partitions, which restricted the Jews to the western border lands.[9] Moreover, they were forbidden to purchase rural property and were not allowed to acquire licenses for the selling of spirits. This deprived many village Jews of a means of livelihood. In 1887 a numerus clausus for Jews at universities and secondary schools was introduced. In 1890 they were deprived of a zemstvo vote although they continued to pay zemstvo rates.

One of the results of the overall policy of oppression

and russification was that many of the non-Russian areas joined the 1905 revolution. The outbreak of the revolution and the subsequent establishment of a constitutional monarchy ended the period of national persecution but did not solve the basic problem. When the aristocratic Great Russian faction reasserted itself in 1907, a decree was passed which sharply decreased national representation in the Dumas. Turkestan, in fact, entirely lost the right of representation. The new decree stated:

> "The state duma, created in order to strengthen the Russian state, should be Russian also in spirit. Other peoples who are included in our empire should have representatives in the state duma to state their needs, but they can not and shall not be represented in such number as to enable them to decide purely Russian questions."10

Once again, in the 1917 revolution, the national minorities joined the Russian insurgents, this time in much greater number.

The policies of Tsarist Russia vis-a-vis the national problem had succeeded only in antagonizing and inciting the subject peoples. The Bolsheviks, acutely aware of this legacy of ill-will, sought to incorporate into their programme a method for fulfilling the national aspirations of the minority groups. The innate difficulty of the task was enhanced by the contradiction

it presented to the communist theory of dictatorship of the proletariat, which implied unity of the working masses irrespective of nationality. Marxian theory of the planned economy as interpreted by Lenin required a highly centralized government which would endeavor to utilize the resources, both natural and human, for the benefit of the entire state, thus negating nationalistic strivings which attempt to benefit the national unit alone. Centralized control, planned population movements in response to labour demands, exploitation of resources often to the detriment of the economic self-sufficiency of the national unit - these are all in the genetic structure of a socialist state.

This thesis is designed to trace historically the solution of the national minorities problem by the Soviet government, with special emphasis on Stalin's policies in theory and practice. Frequently, Stalin made no specific reference to some of the problems which were treated by the USSR. However, it has been assumed that from 1928 until his death all ideology and legislation relating to this issue either emanated from or met with the approval of Stalin.

NOTES - INTRODUCTION

1 C.A. Macartney, National States and National Minorities. London, 1934, p.416.

2 Ibid, p. 250.

3 Richard Pipes, The Formation of the Soviet Union. Cambridge, 1954, pp. 1-3.

4 Corliss Lamont, The Peoples of the Soviet Union. N.Y., 1944, p. 8.

5 Hugh Seton-Watson, The Decline of Imperial Russia. London, 1952, p. 31. Based on the table in O. Hoetzsh, Russland. Berlin, 1913, p. 437-8, derived from a survey of the results of the census.

6 Ibid, p. 164.

7 Samad Shaheen, The Communist (Bolshevik) Theory of National Self-Determination. Gravenhage Bandung, 1956, p. 5.

8 Pipes, op. cit., p. 5.

9 Solomon M. Schwarz, The Jews in the Soviet Union. Syracuse, 1951, p. 87.

10. Sobranie Usakonenii, No. 94, June 3, 1907, in Walter Russell Batsell, Soviet Rule in Russia, N.Y., 1929, p. 99.

CHAPTER I - SELF-DETERMINATION

In their analysis of social, political and economic phenomena, Marx and Engles were primarily concerned with Western Europe. Since most Western European states were nationally homogeneous, the problem of national minorities was not an issue. However, the revolutions which swept the continent in 1848 pushed the national question into the foreground and provoked from them an interpretation of the problem of national minorities. They did not offer a programmatic approach. Instead, each individual situation was evaluated in light of its contribution to the "single absolute supreme value of the proletarian revolution."[1] The prerequisite for this revolution was the establishment of bourgeois democracy within the framework of the national state, and support was given to those national groups which rose against a reactionary power for the purpose of creating such a state. They opposed those groups which rose against a state which itself was striving for bourgeous democracy. Therefore, the same nation was approved or disapproved depending upon the point in time and the power against which it struck.

For example, in 1848 Russia and Austria were bulwarks of conservatism and, as such, prevented the development of Poland and Hungary (and indirectly, Italy

and Germany). Therefore, support was tendered nations that rose against the Tsar and the Hapsburgs. But the revolt of the Czechs and South Slavs against the German Austrians and the Magyars respectively lacked revolutionary significance and were denounced because they were directed against these developing bourgeois-democratic states. Germany's efforts at unification in 1848 and 1870 were applauded, but denounced as soon as these efforts conflicted with the interests of the French working class. Poland was supported each time she rose against the Tsar, but was discouraged from rebelling when such an uprising threatened the Russian revolutionary movement.[2]

This system, which may be called dialectical relativism, was by no means completely abandoned by Lenin.[3] However, the exigencies of actual power and the peculiar conditions of the Russian empire which the Bolsheviks were to inherit necessitated a concrete plan for action - a programme.

Lenin's theory of self-determination of nations was first incorporated into the party platform at the Second Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party, July-August, 1903. It was presented in opposition to a scheme of national cultural autonomy led by Karl Renner and Otto Bauer at the Brunn Congress of Austrian Social Democrats in September, 1899. According to the latter

plan, each ethnic group of a multinational state was to control its cultural life by means of autonomous organs elected by members of the group on a personal basis, i.e., irrespective of the territory they inhabited. The rationale was that nationalism was primarily a cultural movement, and in order to neutralize it as a force harmful to socialism it should be diverted into cultural channels.[4]

This was violently repudiated by Lenin who argued,

"The basic, fundamental flaw in this program is that its aim is to introduce the most refined, most absolute and most extreme nationalism.... Fight against all national oppression -- yes, certainly. Fight for 'national culture' in general -- certainly not."[5]

The basis for his attitude towards nationalism was the Marxian concept of the internationalism of the proletariat, the oneness of the problems, needs and aims of the proletariat as a class. To consciously promote the unity of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, then, was the cardinal sin. The fault in cultural-national autonomy was that it "separates the nations and actually draws together the workers of one nation and its bourgeoisie."[6]

His own solution was embodied in articles three, seven, eight and nine of the party programme:

"3. Wide local self-government; regional self-government for those localities which are differentiated by their specific habits, customs and population.

"7. Destruction of Social orders (soslovii) and full equality of rights for all citizens, irrespective of sex, religion, race or nationality.

"8. The right of the population to receive education in their native languages; this right to be ensured by the establishment of schools for this purpose at the expense of the state and local government bodies; the right of every citizen to speak at meetings in his native language; the introduction of the native language on a par with the official state language in all local public and state institutions.

"9. The right of all nations (natsii) in the state to self-determination."7

Article 9, the pivot of both Lenin's and Stalin's programmes, was at that time simply a statement of principle. A decade late, however, it had gained full programmatic status and was synonomous with the right to secession.

Let us further examine self-determination. While it was not a static concept, certain aspects of it remained unchanging. To begin, the right of a nation to self-determination, to the point of secession if it so desired, was conditional. The conditions which restricted this right stemmed from the paradox with which Lenin was faced. He was committed to the support of self-determination and secession which are forms of nationalism. Simultaneously he had to maintain the international character of the proletariat whose dictatorship aimed at breaking down national barriers, whose

unity was based on class rather than nationality. Therefore, self-determination was qualified by emphasizing the "general thesis":

"The right of self-determination (secession) is an exception to our general thesis, which is centralism. This exception is absolutely necessary in view of the Black-Hundred type of Great Russian nationalism.... But a broad interpretation may not be made of an exception. There is nothing, absolutely nothing here, and there must be nothing here, but the <u>right</u> to secede." 8

The right to secede was quite different from secession itself. This was made clear at the August, 1913 Conference at which the Central Committee of the Bolsheviks expanded its stand on the nationalities problem. Point five of the five-point resolution states:

"The question of the right of nations to self-determination (i.e., the guarantee by the constitution of the state of an absolutely free and democratic method of deciding the question of secession) must not be confused with the question of the expediency of this or that nation seceding. The Social Democratic Party must decide the latter question in each separate case from the point of view of the proletarian class struggle for socialism..." 9

The February revolution and its aftermath created new problems which led to certain changes of emphasis in the concept of self-determination.

The Provisional Government was unwilling to see the Russian empire torn asunder by the centrifugal force of the various national councils which had lept

to life after the revolution.[10] In the first place it regarded itself as the guardian of the state intact until the convening of the Constituent Assembly, and in the second place it was faced with the problem of continuing the war. It is interesting to note in this context that of all the nationalities only Poland at this time demanded secession; the others applied only for autonomy within a democratic, federated Russian state.

Seizing in the hostility which the Provisional Government's stand engendered, Lenin wrote an article in April, 1917 giving carte blanche approval to self-determination without the usual reservations and conditions.[11] That this was only a tactical maneuvre seems likely in view of the results of the conference of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party two weeks later, April 24-29 (old style).

The text of the resolution on the national question adopted at this conference stated:

"The question of the right of nations freely to secede must not be confused with the question of whether it would be expedient for any given nation to secede at any given moment. This question must be settled by the Party of the proletariat in each particular case independently, from the point of view of the interests of the social development as

a whole, and the class struggle of the proletariat for socialism."[12] (Emphasis mine). At the August, 1913 conference it had been resolved that "the Social Democratic Party must decide the latter question (secession)..."[13] (emphasis mine), and in countless other writings the prerogative of secession had belonged to the 'proletariat'. Thus an evolution had taken place, giving the right of self-determination first to the proletariat, then to the Social Democratic Party -- which by 1917 had, by way of synthesis, become the "party of the proletariat" to whom alone belonged the decision.

Here it is necessary to introduce Stalin. His finger had been in the nationalities pie since 1913, when, on Lenin's invitation, he wrote "Marxism and the National Question", but his role then was a minor one. At the 1917 conference he was more vehement about imposing conditions on self-determination than Lenin -- a portent of the turn his future policies were to take. He said,

"The question of the right of nations freely to secede must not be confused with the question that a nation must necessarily secede at any given moment.... When we recognize the right of oppressed peoples to secede, the right to determine their political destiny, we do not thereby settle the question of whether particular nations should secede."[14]

This was not a new point, but the emphasis was important.

At this conference Lenin was forced to rationalize his

stand in favor of self-determination for the benefit of his opponents within the Party who were horrified at his insistence on the right to self-determination. They considered it a concession of the vilest sort to bourgeois-democracy and folly in the face of the actual potential disintegration of the empire. Lenin felt that two factors would militate against the disintegration of the state: 1) that economic factors would indicate to the members of the non-Russian national minorities that it was to their advantage to belong to a large state, and 2) that the Party desired to maintain a large unified state only if the membership of its constituents was voluntary. Furthermore, he assumed that such a voluntary association would be forthcoming.

> "All that the Finns want now is autonomy. We stand for giving Finland complete liberty; that will increase their confidence in Russian democracy, and when they are given the right to secede they will not do so.... If the Ukrainains see that we have a Soviet republic, they will not break away."[15]

He felt that this would be the attitude of all the national minorities.

The right of Finland to secession had been steadily championed by Lenin and Stalin. It was the first nation to achieve definite results after the November coup. On December 5/18, the Soviet government granted independence

to Finland. Stalin said of the Finnish question at the April conference:

> "We are at present witnessing a definite conflict between the Finnish people and the Provisional Government. The representatives of the Finnish people, the representatives of Social Democracy, are demanding that the Provisional Government should return to the people the rights they enjoyed before they were annexed to Russia. The Provisional Government refuses.... On whose side must we range ourselves? Obviously, on the side of the Finnish people, for it is intolerable that we should endorse the forcible retention of any people whatsoever within the bounds of one state."[16]

Finland's 'right' to secession was tenuous at best. The Finnish Social-Democrats were a strong organized party and when they attempted a revolutionary coup in January, 1918, they received aid from Soviet forces still in Finland. This civil war ended only with the arrival of German troops. Thus, a pattern was set which was followed with slight variation by each national minority which attempted to put into practice the Bolshevik theory of self-determination. All, with the exception of Finland, Poland and the Baltics, were unsuccessful and were brought back into the fold.

Stalin's utterances between 1917 and 1920 slowly veered from a cautious repition of Lenin's to more truthful statements of the contradictions in the concept

of self-determination. In the tortuous, complicated relations with the Ukraine one finds an excellent example of this.

In the opinion of Walter Kolarz, who would probably be classified as a "bourgeois-nationalist' by the Soviets, there was every justification for an genuinely autonomous Ukraine, but "no logic or life in anti-Russian Ukrainian nationalist ideology."[17] Historically and culturally the Great Russians and the Ukrainians are inextricably bound together, even to the extent that the Ukrainians shared fully in the colonization of the Russian empire, and are to be found in all parts now as then. This was generally accepted by all Ukrainians, with the exception of a small, violently nationalistic fringe, and tended to water down both extremes. The right wing which, in another situation, might have pressed for complete independence strove only for wide regional autonomy, and the left wing (i.e., Skrypnik, Rakovski, etc.), instead of desiring complete unification with the central Bolshevik authority, aimed at a greater degree of autonomy than was considered desirable by the center.

Nonetheless, Lenin frequently classified the Ukraine with Poland and Finland as a nation which deserved unqualified independence.[18] At the April 1917 Conference,

during which Lenin insisted several times on secession for the Ukraine as well as for Finland, Stalin mentions only the latter. His first words on the Ukraine, uttered as Peoples' Commissar for the Nationalities, embroidered so lavishly on Lenin's original theme that they invalidated it:

> "The Council of Peoples' Commissars stands...for free self-determination. It would not even object if the Ukrainian people were to secede and form an independent state.... We stand for self-determination of peoples, but we are opposed to self-determination being used as a camouflage for the surreptitious establishment of the autocratic rule of Kaledin."[19]

According to Stalin, then, self-determination belonged to the proletariat through their only true representative, The Bolshevik Party.

The mere existance of Soviets in a region was enough to justify the refusal of secession to any other political body which purported to represent the region. In another context, in 1918, Stalin said

> "...it would be utterly absurd to demand Soviet power in the Western Regions when they had not yet even Soviets..."[20]

implying that where Soviets did exist, no matter what the degree of their representativeness, secession was out of the question.

The Ukrainian Rada was formed soon after the February revolution and resolved its desire to be an autonomous part of a Russian federated republic. By June 2, the Rada petitioned the Provisional government

for 1) recognition of autonomy, 2) division of the area into 12 provinces with predominantly Ukrainian population, 3) appointment of a Commissar for Ukrainian affairs, and 4) a Ukrainian army. The Provisional government was consistent in its attitude towards all of the petitions for some form of autonomy - it refused to make constitutional changes before the constituent Assembly met.[21] In addition, it felt that to grant the Ukraine its own army would weaken Russia's defenses at a critical point in the war.

After the November coup, the Rada assumed all power for the Ukraine, restating the absence of a desire for independence.

An ultimatum was issued to the Rada by the Soviet government on December 4/17, 1917, accusing the Rada of 1) disorganizing the front by recalling Ukrainian units, 2) disarming Soviet troops in the Ukraine, 3) supporting the Kaledin armies by allowing passage of cossack troops to meet Kaledin's armies. It gave the Rada 48 hours to comply with the Soviet request to stop these activities on the pain of war.[22] The refusal of the ultimatum precipated war, during which the Ukraine proclaimed itself independent. The independence

maintained a see-saw existance, now with German aid, now with White Russian aid and with intermittant Bolshevik governments, until August, 1921, when the Red Army secured a final victory.

That the Rada was a representative organ is highly debatable, its representative nature having been questioned even by its own members.[23] Similarly, the nationalist movements among the other national minorities were led by small unrepresentative elite groups. On the other hand, whether the Bolshevik contingents were representative is just as debatable. It is possible to find veiled admissions in Stalin's writings that the Bolshevik Soviets could not have pretended to be representative in some cases:

> "The fact of the matter is that a number of peoples, mainly Turkic peoples -- about thirty million in all -- ...have not had time to pass through the period of industrial capitalism and consequently have no industrial proletariat."[24]

The Bolsheviks, purporting to represent the industrial proletariat above all else, thus had noone to represent among these peoples.

Further, what emerges from Stalin's writings is that even had truly representative bodies desired secession, it would never have been allowed because "Central Russia, that hearth of World Revolution, cannot hold out long

without the assistance of the border regions, which abound in raw materials, fuel and foodstuffs. The border regions of Russia in their turn are inevitably doomed to imperialist bondage without the political, military and organizational support of more developed Central Russia."[25]

In 1921, Stalin echoed this sentiment in an article in Pravda. Immediately following a paragraph devoted to the interdependent relationship of Central Russia and the border regions, he says

"The essence of this policy (the national policy of the Russian Communists) can be expressed in a few words: renunciation of all "claims" and "rights" to regions inhabitated by non-Russian nationalities."[26]

Such a clear contradiction needs no elaboration.

By early 1920, several nations had declared their independence. It was clear to Stalin that this centrifugal force could not be tolerated, and this year may be considered a turning point in his writings. All pretense was abandoned:

"But the question...is not the indubitable rights of nations, but of the interests of the masses of people both in the center and in the border regions.... And the interests of the masses of the people render the demand for secession of border regions at the present state of the revolution a profoundly counter-revolutionary one."[27]

A concrete example of the new attitude occurs in a

speech made at the Congress of the Peoples of Daghestan, November 13, 1920:

"I consider it necessary to state that autonomy for Daghestan does not, and cannot imply its secession from Soviet Russia. Autonomy does not mean independence. The bond between Russia and Daghestan must be preserved, for only then can Daghestan preserve its freedom." [27]

By 1923, self-determination, meaning the right to secession, was a dead issue. The civil war was over and self-determination was no longer useful as a propaganda tool. It was replaced by an emphasis on sacrificing everyting -- especially self-determination of the border regions -- to the success of the revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat. In this context, Stalin said

"Yet it is clear that the political basis of the dictatorship of the proletariat consists mainly and primarily of the central, the industrial regions, and not the border regions, which are peasant countries. If we over-emphasize the peasant border regions at the expense of the proletarian districts, a fissure in the system of the dictatorship of the proletariat may result." [28]

The nature of the national question became one involving the relations of the center to the periphery in a single unified, highly centralized state. Self-determination was confined completely to the colonial peoples living under the aegis of the Western powers, and was mentioned only in this context. True, the right to secession was incorporated in every Soviet constitution, but it remained an ephemeral privilege, an empty phrase paying homage to an idea which had never come to life.

NOTES - CHAPTER I

1 Demetrio Boersner, The Bolsheviks and the National and Colonial Question. Geneva, 1957, p.4.

2 Ibid., p. 26.

3 Ibid., p. 4

4 Shaheen, op. cit., pp. 21-23

5 V.I. Lenin, Critical Remarks on the National Question, Moscow, 1951, pp. 34-36

6 Ibid., p. 49

7 Programm i ustav RS-DRP, Paris, 1914:NN, pp.6-7. in Pipes, op. cit., pp. 32-33

8 V.I. Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. XVII, Moscow, 19 , p. 30 in Pipes, op. cit., p. 77

9 V.I. Lenin, Selected Works. Lond., 1936, Vol.IV, p. 427

10 J. Stalin, Marxism and the National and Colonial Question, London, n.d., pp. 68-69

11 Lenin, Selected Works. Moscow, 1951, Vol. II, pp. 42-43 in Shaheen, op. cit., p. 134

12 History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks), Toronto, 1939, p.190.

13 Supra, note number 11.

14 Stalin, op. cit., p. 64.

15 Lenin, Selected Works. London, 1944, Vol. V, p.310-11 in Shaheen, op. cit.

16 Stalin, op. cit., p. 63

17 Walter Kolarz, Russia and Her Colonies. London, 1952, pp. 124-25.

18 Lenin, Selected Works. Vol. V, p. 278, p. 308.

19 J.V. Stalin, Works. Moscow, 1952-1954, Vol.IV, p. 8.

20 Ibid., p. 37

21 Poland was the only exception to the policy of the Provisional Government. The latter was forced to recognize her independence, for she was under total German occupation.

22 Decree of the Sovnarkom, December 17, 1917. in J. Bunyan and H.H. Fisher, The Bolshevik Revolution. Documents and Materials, Stanford, 1934, p. 439.

23 V. Vinnichenko, Vidrodzheniya Natsii, in Pipes, op. cit., p. 305

24 Stalin, Marxism and the National....., p. 104.

25 Ibid., p. 78.

26 Ibid., p. 118.

27 Ibid.,pp. 79-80

28 Stalin, Works, Vol. IV., p. 409.

29 Stalin, Marxism and the National..., p. 188.

CHAPTER II - FEDERATION

"The right of self-determination means that a nation may arrange its life in the way it wishes."[1] This is the definition given to the term self-determination by Stalin in 1913. Between 1917-1921 self-determination evolved to the point where it denoted only the right to secession. As the preceding chapter demonstrated, this too was eliminated as a solution to the problem of national minorities, as one by one each seceding nation was brought back into the fold. However, the non-Russian nationalities were too potent a force to be ignored. It was, therefore, necessary to structure the state in such a way as to satisfy the desires of the periphery as well as to adhere to the principle of centralization.

The problem had been anticipated by Lenin as early as 1903 on both the party and state level. Centralization of party organization was established at the 1903 Congress in a struggle with the Bund. The latter demanded a position of autonomy within the party, consisting of the sole right to handle specifically Jewish problems wherever they existed in the empire. Their desire to be part of a unified whole with the simultaneous right to handle "national" problems without interference from the center is analogous to the stand taken by the leaders of the non-Russian nationalities in 1917, except that

the former demanded group autonomy and the latter, territorial autonomy. The Bund's demand was rejected because Lenin's concept of the function of national sub-divisions of the party (and state) was that they were to be "agencies for translating into their respective languages the slogans, programs, decisions and will of the all-powerful Central Committee."[2] At the same time he rejected the demand of the Armenian Social Democrats for a future federal system in Russia.[3]

Regarding federalism within the party Lenin said

> "The accursed history of Tsarism has left us a legacy of tremendous estrangement between the working classes of the various nationalities which are oppressed by tsarism. This estrangement is a very great evil... and we must not legalize this evil or sanctify this shameful state of affairs by establishing the "principal" of the separateness of parties or "federation" of parties"[4]

It was but a short step to his statement in the same year regarding the future structure of the state:

> "We must always and unconditionally strive to achieve the closest unity of the proletariat of all nationalities, and only in isolated and exceptional cases may we advance and actively support demands... to substitute a loose federal unity for the complete unity of a state."[5]

Ten years later attention was once more focused on federation and autonomy as an aspect of the problem of self-determination. In 1913, Stalin veered from Lenin's views in his loose definition of self-determination

which was broadened to include federation.

"Speaking generally, the right of nationalities, within the meaning of that clause (clause 9 of the Party programme) must not be restricted; it may be extended to autonomy and federation as well as to secession."[6]

Lenin took issue with this interpretation and in the same year ridiculed the idea of federation and/or autonomy in the following manner:

"You say the right of self-determination does not mean only the right to secede. It also means the right to federate, the right of autonomy. I absolutely disagree. It does <u>not</u> mean the right to federate. A federation is a union of equals, a union which requires the <u>common</u> consent. How can one party claim a <u>right</u> to <u>consent</u> of another party? That is absurd.

"We are in principle against federation -- federalism weakens economic ties, it is an impossible arrangement for a state. You want to secede? To hell with you,.... You don't want to secede? Pardon me, then; don't make up my mind for me, don't think you have a 'right' to a federal union."[7]

He ridiculed it not only as a ramification of his views on centralized party organization but also because federation was anachronistic.

"As long as, and in so far as, different nations constitute an integral state, Marxists will not under any circumstances advocate either the federal principal or decentralization. The centralized big state marks a tremendous historical step forward from medieval disintegration towards the future socialist state (<u>inseparably</u> connected with capitalism), there is no other road to socialism, nor can there be."[8]

In summary, capitalism for its development needed the largest most centralized states. Once capitalism

had disintegrated and had been replaced by socialism, the centralized state was necessary for the same economic reasons. Moreover, since the socialist state would represent the true interests of the people, relegation of power to agencies outside of the central state agencies would be illogical.

Once again reality forced Lenin into a compromise. Faced with civil war and external pressures, he accepted federalism as a temporary expedient in order to keep the former subject nationalities within the framework of the Bolshevik government. In March 1916 he said cautiously,

"One may be a determined opponent of this principle (federalism) and a partisan of democratic centralism and yet prefer federation to national inequality as the only path towards complete democratic centralism."[9]

By March 1918, he incorporated into his rough draft of the Party programme the statement that "A federation of nations as a transition to a conscious and closer unity of toilers, who have learnt voluntarily to rise above nation enmity" was acceptable.[10]

The Constitutional Commission appointed in April, 1918 had as one of its chief tasks to determine the nature of the federal system for the new state. Although several alternatives as to the type of federal units confronted them, e.g., economic, geographic, ethnic or historic, the outcome was largely predisposed by the fact that

the existing units were national-territorial in character. The resulting document, ratified in July, 1918, was limited to registering and regularizing already existing forms created during the revolutionary months. The Russian Soviet Republic was "a federation of national soviet republics"[11] and left to the workers and peasants of each nationality "the right to make an independent decision, at their own plenipotentiary congress of soviets, whether they desire, and if so upon what basis, to participate in the federal government and in other federal soviet institutions."[12] Throughout, the machinery of federation was left undefined.

After the constitution of 1918 had been drawn up, Stalin proceeded to interpret the meaning of autonomy. To begin, he stated that it was necessary to take the autonomy from the hands of the bourgeois autonomous groups, cleanse it and convert it to Soviet autonomy. The difference between bourgeois and Soviet autonomy was that the former variety implied recognition of the central Soviet as long as it did not interfere in the internal affairs of the autonomous republics, while the latter variety implied autonomy based on the control of the local soviets by the central soviet.[13] The reason that a high degree of centralization was necessary at that time (during the Civil War) was explained by Stalin

in the following manner:

"To set up sovereign local and regional authorities parallel with the central authority at such a moment would in fact result in the collapse of all authority.... For this reason, all functions of importance to the whole country must be left in the hands of the central authority, and the regional authorities must be vested chiefly with administrative, political and cultural functions of a purely regional nature. These are: education, justice, administration, essential political measures, forms and methods of application of the general decrees in adaptation to the national conditions and manner of life..."[14]

As the constitution of 1922 was to prove, the most important function of the autonomous unit lay in the last phrase - "application of the general decrees in adaptation to the national conditions and manner of life", and the least important was to pass "essential political measures."

By 1920, although Lenin had accepted federation, he did so conditionally.

"Federation is a transitional form to the complete unity of the toilers of the various nations. Practice has already proved that federation is expedient by the relations that exist between the RSFSR and other Soviet republics.... In recognizing federation as the transitional form to complete unity, it is necessary to strive for closer federal union, bearing in mind, firstly, that it will be impossible to preserve the existance of the Soviet republics...without the closest alliance of the Soviet republics."[15]

Four months after Lenin qualified the existing

federal structure in this manner, Stalin submitted an opinion which appears, on the surface, the opposite of Lenin's. In summarizing the policy of the Soviet government he stated that

"Some comrades regard the autonomous republics in Russia and Soviet autonomy generally as a temporary, if necessary evil which owing to certain circumstances had to be tolerated, but which must be combated with a view to its eventual abolishment. It need hardly be shown that this view is fundamentally false.... Soviet autonomy must not be regarded as an abstraction or an artificial thing; still less should it be considered an empty and declaratory promise."[16]

In this article Stalin defined Soviet autonomy as the need for "schools, courts, administration and organs of authority functioning in the native language."[17] Moreover, "Soviet autonomy is nothing but the sum total of all these institutions clothes in Ukrainian, Turkestan, Kirghiz, etc. forms."[18] It becomes increasingly clear that autonomy was to exist on a cultural (primarily linguistic) and administrative level.

In essence, Lenin and Stalin scarcely differed. Both envisioned a highly centralized organ from which would emenate control over the economy of the entire state and whose decisions would be put into effect in the autonomous areas by natives in the indigenous languages. This concept contained the seeds of a supra-

national central organ which would plan for the benefit of the entire state. In view of the increasing degree of centralization under Stalin, his statement as to the permanence of autonomy with any connotation of political autonomy may be interpreted as an attempt to sugar-coat a bitter pill, and not, as the tone indicates, a violent opposition to Lenin.

During Lenin's lifetime it would appear that the central governmental apparatus made some attempts to bestow autonomy. That it was not a simple case of executing the desire is well illustrated by the negotiations with the Bashkir Autonomous Republic.

Granting autonomy to the Bashkirs was complicated by two factors. The first was the nebulous definition of a "Bashkir". Related to the Tatars, they have in common religion (Islam) and cognate languages which blend into each other through intermediate dialects. Census figures for 1926 indicate that nearly half of those who identified themselves as Bashkirs spoke Tatar.[19]

At the first All-Muslim Congress in Moscow (May, 1917) a large unified Tatar state was voted. This was in opposition to the desires of a small group of educated nationalistic Bashkirs, born of rich land-owning parents

and led by Zeki Velidov. This group, which had pressed for cultural and territorial autonomy for the Bashkirs, walked out of the Congress and formed a Bashkir national council. After the October revolution they joined with the Whites, only to desert within a year when Kolchak made quite clear his negative attitude toward any form of autonomy.

In return for separate Bashkir autonomy Velidov offered the Bashkir army to the Bolsheviks. The agreement signed March 23, 1919 gave to the central authority control over the railways, factories and mines, stipulated that the army was to be subordinate to a common command, and that the state was to be constituted as was the RSFSR. All other authority was vested in a Bashrevkom elected by the Bashkirs until it was feasible to convene a Bashkir Congress of Soviets.[20]

When the territory was liberated from Kolchak, Sterlitamak, a small primitive market town, was chosen as the first capital. This choice was based on the decision to confine the borders of the autonomous republic in order to give the Bashkirs as large a predominance as possible. A larger unit would have been more economically sound, but would have decreased their representation. This was symbolic of the attitude of the central govern-

ment at that time which was one of placating the nationalities. (In 1922 the borders were extended and Ufa, a larger city with a sizable Russian population, was made the capitol.)

The second problem pivoted on the traditional animosity between the Russian settlers and the land-hungry natives. The former had infiltrated for three centuries, taking the best grazing lands from the Bashkirs for themselves. This movement reached its zenith just prior to the revolution as a result of the Stolypin reforms. A correlation was therefore drawn between autonomy and land reform both among the Bashkir nationalists, for obvious reasons, and among the Russian settlers who feared that severing ties with the central Russian authorities would result in loss of their lands. Indeed, after the March, 1919 proclamation of autonomy, the Bashrevkom drew up a resettlement plan to oust all non-Muslims who had come since the Stolypin period.

Thus three forces were ranged against Bashkir autonomy: 1) the Tatars, who desired a large combined autonomous unit, and who accused the Bashkirs of sacrificing Moslem unity for their own selfish purposes, 2) the Russian settlers who wished to retain their land domination and 3) the local soviets composed of workers, soldiers and colonists, ethnically Russian, who consistantly

took the side of the Russian colonists.

The Bashrevkom soon realized that the most formidable opposition came from local sources and that the central government, Stalin included, was in favor of Bashkir autonomy. An incident with the obkom gave evidence of this.

The Obkom, or Regional Committee of the Communist Party, dominated by Russians, and supported by local Russian settlers and Tatars, challanged the authority of the Bashrevkom with the aid of the Turkestan Red Army without the knowledge of Moscow. At this point, in March 1920, a resolution was drawn up under the leadership of Trotsky condemning Bolshevik party interference in the affairs of the Bashkir state. A commission of three, Stalin, Trotsky and Kamenev, was set up in Moscow. They handed down a decison that the protagonists in the struggle between the Bashrevkom and the Obkom should not be allowed to return to Bashkiria. This was apparently a fair decision, the rationale being that the quarrelsome leaders of both factions should withdraw. In fact, deprived of Velidov and considering the paucity of able Bashkirs, the Bashrevkom would have been left leaderless.

Shortly before this incident a new decree on Bashkir autonomy was handed down from Moscow. It was similar

to the agreement of March 1919 in that the state was to be constituted in conformity with the Soviet constitution and that the army was to be subordinate in command to a common command. However, it left only administrative functions to the local apparatus, since even in those spheres in which there was apparent independence of action (interior, justice, education, health, social welfare, and agriculture) the respective commissariats were directly responsible to the VTsIK.[21]

In June of 1920, Velidov's entourage followed him from Bashkiria. There is some disagreement as to whether it was the prohibition of Velidov's return to Bashkiria or the new decree of autonomy which precipitated this move. The fact remains, however, that, bereft of its native leadership, Bashkir political autonomy was at an end, and the new government contained no native Bashkirs.[22]

The antagonism between over-enthusiastic local soviets and the central government created similar problems in several other autonomous areas.

In Turkestan, for example, the natives were suspicious of the autonomy offered by the Communists due to the misrule of the local soviets. Frunze, as a member of a commission to Turkestan in 1920, protested that European Communists were pushing for dictatorship of the proletariat despite the fact that the Muslim proletariat was almost non-existant.[23] Stalin, too, indicated his

awareness of the situation:

"A no less serious obstacle to the realization of Soviet autonomy is the haste, often becoming gross tactlessness, displayed by certain comrades in the matter of sovietizing the border regions. When such comrades venture to take upon themselves the "heroic task" of introducing "pure communism" in regions which are a whole historical period behind central Russia, regions where the medieval order has not yet been wholly abolished, one may safely say that no good will come of such cavalry raids, of "communism" of this kind."[24]

It must be pointed out that Stalin rarely promised that which the central government was not prepared to give. For example, in his declaration on Soviet autonomy for Daghestan, he declared:

"...the Government of Russia considers it necessary to tell you that Daghestan must be autonomous, that it will enjoy the right of internal self-administration, while retaining its fraternal tie with the peoples of Russia.... Autonomy does not mean independence. The bond between Russia and Daghestan must be preserved, for only then can Daghestan preserve its freedom. <u>It is the definite purpose of the Soviet Government in granting Daghestan autonomy to single out from the local forces men who are honest and loyal and who love their people, and to entrust to them all the organs of administration in Daghestan, both economic and administrative</u>."[25] (Emphasis mine)

The last sentence contains the key to the preceding phrase of "the right of internal self-administration" This self-administration was to be carried out by natives of the national areas, but natives of a supra-national character. Indeed, the necessity of training

native cadres was continuously stressed by Stalin until about 1929. At this point the victory of "socialism in one country" changed many aspects of Bolshevik theory and practice, including the nationalities question.

The glaring exception to Stalin's candor in defining autonomy appears vis-a-vis those areas in which the struggle for autonomy assumed the nature of a religious war.

Soviet treatment of religion and religious groups is not, in the writer's opinion, a part of the nationalities problem. However, freedom of religion was used to lure the rebelling natives of the non-christian areas of the Old Russian empire into accepting Soviet autonomy. For example, religion in Daghestan and the Terek region constituted a way of life, secular as well as religious, under a set of laws known as the Shariah. Of the Shariah, Stalin declared:

"We are told that among the Daghestan peoples the Shariah is of great importance. We have also been informed that the enemies of Soviet power are spreading rumours that it has banned the Shariah.

"I have been authorized by the Government of the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic to state here that these rumours are false....

"The Soviet Government considers that the Shariah, as common law, is as fully authorized as that of any other of the peoples inhabiting Russia.

"If the Daghestan people desire to preserve their laws and customs, they should be preserved." [26]

Four days later at a Congress of the Peoples of the Terek Region, Stalin stated

"If it is shown that the Shariah is necessary, then let the Shariah remain. The Soviet Government has no thought of declaring war on the Shariah."[27]

However, earlier in the same month, in a Pravda article, Stalin had explained the nature of these concessions:

"Or if, for instance, the Daghestan masses, who are profoundly imbued with religious prejudices, follow the Communists "on the basis of the Shariah" it is obvious that the direct way of combating religious prejudices in this country must be replaced by indirect and more cautious ways."[28]

In Daghestan a Peoples' Commissariat for the Shariah was created in 1921 and disbanded in 1925.[29] The concession was a temporary one, abandoned as the Party and governmental apparatus grew strong enough to discard the old weapons. Only under the pressures of World War II were the Moslems once more allowed to publish the Koran and Shariah, in limited numbers.[30]

On the eve of the creation of the USSR, the RSFSR was a federation of four national units, united with the border regions in varying degrees. As Stalin explained:

"Soviet autonomy is not a rigid thing fixed once and for all time.... It passes from the narrow administrative autonomy (the Volga Germans, the Chuvashes, the Karelians) to a wider, political autonomy (the Bashkirs, the Volga Tatars, the Kirghiz); from wide political autonomy to a still wider form of it (the Ukraine, Turkestan); and lastly, from the Ukrainian type of autonomy to the highest form of autonomy - to contractual relations (Azerbaijan)."[31]

The process of centralization belongs to the following chapter. A clue to the link between Soviet autonomy and Soviet centralization lies in the following excerpt: (from the Eighth Party Congress of March, 1919)

"There exists at the present time special Soviet Republics of the Ukraine, Latvia, Lithuania and Belorussia. This is the manner in which the question of state structure (of former Russia) has been solved. This, however, does not mean that the Russian Communist Party must likewise be organized on the basis of a federation of independent Communist parties. The Eighth Congress of the Russian Communist Party resolves; it is imperative to have a single centralized Communist Party with a single Central Committee to direct the entire work of the Party in all sectors of the R.S.F.S.R. All decisions of the Russian Communist Party and its leading institutions are absolutely obligatory for all sections of the party irrespective of their national composition. The

The Central Committees of the Ukrainian, Latvian and Lithuanian Communists enjoy the rights of regional committees of the Party and are fully subordinate to the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party."[32]

NOTES - CHAPTER II

1 Stalin, Works, Vol. II, p. 32.

2 Bertram D. Wolfe, Three Who Made A Revolution. N.Y., 1948, p. 234.

3 Pipes, op. cit., p. 236

4 Lenin, Selected Works, Vol. II, p. 330.

5 Ibid., p. 322.

6 Stalin, Works. Vol. II, p. 296.

7 Lenin, Collected Works, Moscow, 1950-51, Vol.XVII, p. 90. in Shaheen, op. cit., pp. 76-77.

8 Lenin, Critical Remarks..., p. 54-55.

9 Lenin, Selected Works. Vol. V, p. 270.

10 Ibid., Vol. VIII, p. 322.

11 Constitution (Fundamental Law) of the Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic (RSFSR), July 10, 1918. in Walter Russell Batsell, Soviet Rule in Russia, New York, 1929,pp. 81-83.

12 Ibid.

13 Stalin, Works, Vol. IV, pp. 77-78

14 Ibid., p. 91.

15 Lenin, Selected Works. Vol. X, pp. 233-234.

16 Stalin, Works. Vol. Iv., p. 371.

17 Ibid., p. 372.

18 Ibid.

19 E.H. Carr,"Some Notes on Soviet Bashkiria." Soviet Studies, Vol. VIII, No. 3, Jan.,1957, p. 219.

20 Batsell, op. cit., p. 140.

21 Ibid., pp. 141-142.

22 A thorough treatment of the Bashkir problem is given in both Carr, op. cit., and Pipes, op. cit., from different viewpoints.

23 X.J. Eudin and R.C. North, Soviet Russia and the East (Documents). Stanford, 1957, p. 49.

24 Stalin, Works. Vol. IV, p. 374.

25 Ibid., p. 408-409.

26 Ibid., p. 409.

27 Ibid., p. 415.

28 Ibid., p. 375.

29 Kolarz, op. cit., p. 198.

30 Wayne Vucinich,"Moslems of the Soviet Union." Current History, Vol. 25, 1953,p.8.

31 Stalin, Works. Vol.IV, p. 367.

32 Eudin and North, op. cit., p. 22.

CHAPTER III - CENTRALIZATION

Centralization as a trend of governmental activity is by no means a Soviet innovation. The nations of the West have also found it expedient and efficient to utilize centralized organization in varying degrees. What is unique about the USSR is the degree of centralization and the instrument used.

In pre-revolutionary Russia the centralizing agent was the Tsar. In the West it is carried out by means of constitutions and elected governmental bodies as well as by dictator-type governments. Neither is so all-pervading and effective as that which has coordinated all activity in the USSR - the Communist Party. While it is necessary to investigate the Soviet constitutions in order to discover how this vast multi-national state was molded into a single unit, such an inquiry would give a distorted picture without an understanding of the role of the party.

The first two constitutions (1918 and 1924) made no mention of the Party whatever. Moreover, the 1936 constitution devotes but one article (Article 26) to its existance:

"...the most active and politically conscious citizens in the ranks of the working class and other strata of the working people unite in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks)

which is the vanguard of the working people in their struggle to strengthen and develop the Socialist System and which represents the leading core of all organizations of the working people, both public and state."[1]

This ommission should not necessarily be construed as an effort to hide the importance of the Party. Both Lenin and Stalin gave the Party the leading position in the affairs of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

In discussing it, Stalin claimed that while the Party was only one working class organization among many, "Its function is to combine the work of all of the mass organizations of the proletariat, without exception, and to guide their ties towards a single goal, that of emancipation of the proletariat.... Only the vanguard of the Proletariat, its Party, is capable of combining and directing the work of the mass organizations of the proletariat. Only the Party of the proletariat, only the Party of the Communists, is capable of fulfilling this role of chief leader in the system of the dictatorship of the proletariat."[2]

He carefully pointed out that Party leadership was not synonomous with the dictatorship of the proletariat, that the Party merely carried out the demands of the proletariat, and that the party worked through the

other proletariat organizations for their benefit. However, Stalin left little to the imagination when he proclaimed that "Here in the Soviet Union, in the land of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the fact that not a single important political or organizational question is decided by our Soviet and other mass organizations without directions from the Party must be regarded as the highest expression of the leading role of the Party."[3]

It must be concluded that no matter how much autonomy the individual territorial unit was granted, the Party would strive to keep all decisions in line with its own plans for the entire state. How this affects the nationalities problem then, depends in part on the composition of the Party.

The fact that the RSFSR had no party organization of its own until 1956 would indicate a certain amount of identification between the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Russian Communist Party.[4] Moreover, Russians often played a leading role in the republican party organizations, while natives of the national minorities did not play a corresponding role in the central Party organs.

The 1920's witnessed a Great Russian preponderance in the party as a whole. In 1922 they constituted 72

percent of the Party membership. By 1927 their numbers had decreased to 65 percent, while they claimed only 52.9 percent of the population.[5] In the republican parties, by 1932, the percentage of indigenous republican members all told was 53.8 percent. There was wide variation among individual groups, however, For instance, in the Armenian Communist Party, 89 percent of the members were Armenian, while the Bashkirs constituted only 17.8 percent of the Bashkir Communist Party, Azerbaidjanis only 39.5 percent of the Azerbaidjan Communist Party, Kirghiz only 42.8 percent of the Kirghiz Communist Party.[6] These parties tended to be dominated both by Great Russians and other outsiders. The nationalities made gains during the 30's,but the Great Russians remained strongly represented. One current commentator succinctly surveyed the situation as follows:

"The party is an institution of the whole Union.... Nor is it a peculiar reserve of the Great Russians from Russia proper or elsewhere. Non-Russian names predominate in the central committees of the republican parties and, as far as evidence takes us, among regional first secretaries in the republics. Nevertheless, there are always a large number of Russians as well, while there is not a corresponding contingent of non-Russians in office in the RSFSR and for most non-Russian first secretaries there seems to be a Russian in the almost equally powerful office of second secretary."[7]

Party composition is not as important in the USSR, a highly centralized state, as representation of the component units are in a state of less centralized and more federal structure. The party member is not necessarily expected to represent his constituency to the center. On the contrary, he is more likely to represent the center to his constituency. The republican parties were to consider the interests of the individual republic only as they could best contribute to the Party and the state as a whole.

The controversies which took place in the process of the "unification of soviet republics into one union state"[8] (the constitution of 1924) revealed the continued pull from the periphery for less centralization, even from Old Bolsheviks. The most overt attempts at decentralization came from Rakovsky, Skrypnik and Mdivani on the issue of foreign trade and foreign representation. These men, representing the Ukraine and Georgia, felt that these functions should be the provinceof the separate republics. To this Stalin replied,

"What becomes of the single union state if each republic retains its own People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs and Peoples' Commissariat of Foreign Trade?... I regard this persistance on the part of some Ukrainian comrades

as evidence of a desire to obtain in the definition of the character of the Union something midway between a confederation and a federation, with a leaning toward confederation. It is obvious, however, that we are creating not a confederation, but a federation of republics, a single union state, uniting military, foreign, foreign trade and other affairs, a state which in no way diminishes the sovereignty of the individual republics."[9]

In its final form the constitution embodied Stalin's views. While it was, for the most part federative, it certainly did diminish the sovereignty of the individual republics. It is in the very nature of federal structure to do so. However, it deprived them of the jurisdiction over purely local matters usually reserved for the individual units of a federation. The Supreme Organs of the USSR had powers over foreign affairs, foreign trade, questions of war and peace, direction of national economy, fiscal policy, control of armed forces (Article 1). Of the powers left to the Union Republics (all those not expressly given to the central organs), the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee of the center had the right to examine, suspend and reject the acts of the member republics. (Articles 31,32, 33).

Two rights were granted to the member republics which are unusual in a federal union, not to speak of a highly centralized state. The first, "Each one of the member republics retains the right to freely withdraw from the union" (Article 4), was treated in Chapter I, and requires no further comment.

The second stated that "The territory of the member Republics cannot be modified without their consent." (Article 6). However, between 1941 and 1946 four A.S.S.R.'s were liquidated by unilateral decision of the center; The Crimean Tatar A.S.S.R. in 1946, the Volga German A.S.S.R. in 1941, the Kalmyk A.S.S.R. between 1943 and 1945, the Chechen-Ingush A.S.S.R. in 1944.[10] The reasons given for this action were that these republics had shown themselves disloyal during World War II, in some cases having actively collaborated with the Germans. These charges were probably true to some extent for there had been indications of over-exhuberent nationalism in these areas before the war. For example, in 1938, 137 leading Chechen-Ingush were charged with having formed a "bourgeois-nationalist" center, which plotted the creation of a North Caucasian Federal Republic as a Turkish and English protectorate.[11]

In the case of the Crimean Tatars, the A.S.S.R. became a province with a large slav population.[12] The Volga Germans were deported and the territory divided between the Stalingrad and Saratov provinces.[13] The Kalmyks were disbanded informally, although there had been no official complaints about their disloyalty, and

the territory was absorbed by the province of Astrakhan.[14]

In addition to the Party and the Constitution, centralization was effected through other less conscious channels. One of the most powerful of these was industrialization. Industrialization of the whole union led to great inter-regional population movements. Until 1938, migration was freely determined by individual responses to variation in economic opportunity, often given impetus by industrial administrations which attempted to recruit workers with subsidized transportation and preferential wage rates.[15] In order to counteract the inability of state and collective farms in relatively undeveloped areas to offer such inducements and which were subsequently unable to meet food-consumption needs, the Program and Rules of the Communist Party for 1938 included a proviso for direct central control of migration.[16]

Most of the migration was eastward. More than three million people moved to the Urals, Siberia and the Far East between 1926 and 1939.[17] According to the redistribution statistics, most of the migrants were slavs, from European Russia.[18] However, on the whole, migration was heterogeneous enough to provide a solvent for national inequalities and helped to diffuse

cultures. Obversely, the trend towards industrialization brought about a widespread need for the Russian language, since it alone had a scientific and technical vocabulary. In this way it served as a tool of centralization.

In conclusion, the minimization of the rights of the member republics was a by-product of the centralization of the state, rather than a positive move to deprive them of their rights.

NOTES - CHAPTER III

1 The Stalin Constitution, Article 126. in Meisel and Kozera, Materials for the Study of The Soviet Union, Michigan, 1953, p. 263.

2 J. Stalin, Problems of Leninism. New York, 1934, p. 32.

3 Ibid., p. 34.

4 D.J. Scott, Russian Political Institutions. Lond., 1958.

5 Merle Fainsod, How Russia is Ruled. Cambridge, 1953, p. 219, Table 6.

6 Julian Towster, Political Power in the USSR. New York, 1955, p. 140.

7 Scott, op. cit., p. 164

8 Declaration passed by the First Congress of Soviets of the USSR, December 30, 1922. in Euden and North, Soviet Russia and the East, Stanford, 1957, p. 60.

9 Stalin, Works. Vol. V,pp. 343-44

10 Kolarz, op. cit.

11 Z.K. Brzezinski, The Permanent Purge. Cambridge, 1956, p. 188.

12 Kolarz, op. cit., p.80.

13 Ibid., p. 75.

14 Ibid., p. 86.

15 Frank Lorimer, Population of the Soviet Union. Geneva, 1945, p. 172.

16 Ibid., p. 173.

17 Ibid., p. 164.

18 Ibid., p. 170, Table 67.

CHAPTER IV - LINGUISTIC AUTONOMY

"A minority is discontented not because there is no national union but because it does not enjoy the right to use its native language. Permit it to use its native language and the discontent will pass of itself.

"A minority is discontented not because there is no artificial union but because it does not possess its own schools. Give it its own schools and all grounds for discontent will disappear."[1]

To today's observer Stalin's statement of 1913 is a gross oversimplification of the problem of national minorities in the USSR. It did, however, indicate an awareness of the immense psychological importance of language and education, an awareness which has not subsided with the vicissitudes in Soviet ideology.

The promise of Article 8 of the Party programme of 1903 has probably been fulfilled more faithfully than any made in regard to the national minorities. It stated that the population had the right "to receive education in their native languages; this right to be insured by the establishment of schools for this purpose at the expense of the state and local government bodies; the right of every citizen to speak at meetings in his native language; the introduction of the native languages on a par with the official state language

in all local public and state institutions."[2]

The article made no mention of Party regulation of the content of education or what the citizen had the right to say in his native language, nor did it deal with the mechanics of alphabets. All of these were to become important facets of the treatment of nationalities, but could not be forseen in such specificity 14 years before the Party had the power to put its programme into effect.

Before education could be provided it was necessary to settle the question of what languages to use in the schools.

In 1913 Lenin viewed the use of native languages in a manner which would not have been well received in later years. He said

"As regards the language problem...eventually the Russian language would be adopted even by the minorities who would by then have been assimilated in the Russian state. But this consummation would be on a voluntary basis; first the minorities should be granted the right freely to employ their own native languages. Especially should this be the case when there was the necessity of polemizing in the native language with the native bourgeoisie, of propagating anti-clerical or anti-bourgeoisie ideas among the native peasantry and urban petty bourgeoisie. When this agitational phase was over and the goal of one state was finally achieved, then the greatness of Russian culture would assert

itself, as the material advantages accruing to those who had mastered the Russian language would bring about cultural and linguistic assimilation."[3]

In the years following the November revolution, it became anathma to speak of assimilation, and Lenin vehemently stressed "...it is necessary to set the strictest rules concerning the use of national languages in the national republics which enter into our union, and to abide by these rules with especial carefulness."[4] For the time being, he discarded the notion that Russian would usurp the place of the state languages: "Particularly, social democracy rejects the principles of 'state language'." [5]

The first post-revolutionary resolution on the subject was made on April 24/29, 1917 and explicitly demanded the "abolition of a state compulsory language."[6] This was followed by a decree on October 31, 1918 which, more specifically, proclaimed the rights of all nationalities and national minorities to education in their mother tongue -- to all who in a given locality had at least 25 children in each form. The study of the language of the majority was made a compulsory second language. This meant that non-Russians in a non-Russian

republic did not have to learn Russian.[7]

The task of granting language rights to the national minorities was immense and complicated. While estimates differ according to the categories and divisions used, there are, according to the Great Soviet Encyclopedia, about 200 languages spoken in the USSR today. Of these, a large number had no written language, and the regime had to set to work not only to create alphabets, but to write, translate and publish books using the new alphabets.

Again, estimates differ; however, at least 60 Soviet nationalities had acquired alphabets by 1936 (according to a Russian source).[8] A more recent Western source gives an even higher figure -- 69 alphabets for 26 million people.[9]

The first decision to be made in creating written languages involved the nature of the alphabet to be adopted. This was not merely a problem for the professional linguist for it had significant political ramifications as well.

The non-Russian peoples fell into four general groups:[10] 1) the people of the Far North, primarily Paleoasiatic and Finno-Ugrian, who possessed no written language, 2) the Finnish tribes who used the cyrillic

alphabet which had been introduced by Russian Orthodox missionaries,[11] 3) the Islamic people who spoke Turkic dialects and, by way of the Koran, used the arabic script, and 4) the Japhetides (Georgians, Armenians, etc.) who had their own alphabets.

The alternatives were the cyrillic, the latin and the arabic scripts. Of these, the cyrillic was not even considered. To the native populations, introduction of the cyrillic script would have appeared a continuation of old Tsarist policy, and the Bolsheviks did not wish to provoke a resurgence of nationalism on the grounds of forcible russification.[12] There remained, then, the arabic and the latin scripts to be considered. A feud developed ranging those in favor of a Latin alphabet against those in favor of using the arabic script (mostly Moslem clergy). Those who had never possessed a written language were little concerned, but the Moslem population presented another problem.

Traditional religious education among the Moslems had largely concerned itself with the Koran, and consequently the arabic script had not been adapted to the spoken Turkic languages. A reform of the script, making it somewhat easier to master, had been under discussion since 1863, and after the October revolution a simplified

version was introduced among the Volga Tatars, Kazakhs and Uzbeks. The anti-latin faction contended that the arabic script was deeply rooted in the Moslem world, that latin lacked some characters essential to Turkic phonology, and that, on the basis of the new reform, arabic was a better choice of alphabet.[13]

The pro-latinizers argued the unsuitability of the arabic script both on grounds of inherent difficulty and on grounds of its inadaptability to the Turkic languages.[14] In addition, the pro-latinizers felt that the latin alphabet was international and panthropic and would thereby facilitate intellectual intercourse between the East and West.

Soviet officialdom was most interested in the obverse of the last consideration. Their interest lay in the facilitation of intellectual intercourse between East and West through the use of the latin alphabet if by so doing it would break the link between the Soviet Moslems and the non-Soviet Moslems. Furthermore, they assumed that the latin alphabet would provide an obstacle to the perpetuation of Moslem religious influence, since the arabic alphabet was synonomous with Islam by way of the Koran.

In fact, the use of the latin alphabet severed not only the link with religious tradition, but served also to keep the various Turkic peoples apart by pointing up the differences between related Turkic dialects.[15]

The initiative to latinize had its origins in Azerbaidjan where, in 1922, 800 workers mastered the new latin script adapted to their language and issued a periodical printed in the new script.[16] The movement was carried on by individual national groups until 1926, when the VTsIK ordered a permanent organization. In that year the Turkological Congress in Baku sanctioned the latin alphabet and in 1927 an All-Union Central Committee for the New Turkic Alphabet was created, in the same city.[17] Three years later it was moved to Moscow and renamed the All-Union Central Committee for the New Alphabet Attached to the Central Executive Committee of the USSR.

The programme was most successful among the nationalities which had never used the arabic script. Not until 1935 did the Presidium of Soviet Nationalities announce the successful conclusion of latinization.[18]

During the period to 1934 no attempt was made to introduce Russian words into the various languages. However, the absence of a scientific vocabulary became an obvious handicap to these languages, leading to a deliberate attempt to standardize specialized terms in the late 30's.

This points up a particularly involved problem which would have confronted any relatively advanced nation attempting to raise the level of education among the peoples of the USSR. Had the central government made no attempt to provide a more or less universal scientific vocabulary for the other national groups, they would have laid themselves open to the criticism of Great Russian chauvinism on the grounds that they were depriving all but those who spoke Russian access to scientific education and literature. On the other hand, taking the stand that t hey did and introducing scientific terminology they were similarly accused. In this case the accusation was that they were attempting to russify the non-Russian languages. The same problem arose with the introduction of compulsory Russian into the schools. This will be dealt with below.

The latin alphabet was not a panacea for the linguistic difficulties of the USSR. In fact, it

created its own difficulties. The 26 symbols had to be supplemented with 125 signs for 72 languages in order to render all the sounds. It became a rather bulky instrument badly in need of revision.[19]

The revision came in the form of a second alphabetic revolution in the late 1930's which introduced the cyrillic alphabet into all the languages of the Soviet Union with the exception of those who had had a latin alphabet before the latinization drive.[20] On the initiative of the secretary of the Kabardino-Balkar regional Committee of the Communist Party, the Kabardians were the first to adopt it in 1935. By 1940 it had spread to the other republics.

Reasons of a linguistic nature were given for the change, but apart from the one stated above they were not easily extricable from the political reasons as had been the arguments of the pro-latinizers almost a decade earlier.

It was felt that the latin script had an artificial quality because it separated the small nations from the "basic" Russian nations. Moreover, since Russian was becoming the lingua franca of the USSR the latin alphabet had outlived its usefulness. Formerly it had played a positive role in creating a cleavage between Soviet

Muslims and non-Soviet Muslems as well as between Soviet Muslims and their religious traditions. Apparently this task was considered completed. A link with the West was no longer desirable, either, because of the cultural growth of the USSR.[21]

The change necessitated the destruction of vast amounts of material since all books and pamphlets printed in latin were now useless.[22] Ironically, several groups who had used the cyrillic alphabet before the first alphabetic revolution and had converted to latin were now forced to reconvert to the cyrillic.[23]

On the heels of the second alphabetic revolution the compulsory study of Russian as a second language was introduced into all schools (Decree of 1938). The decree emphasized the importance of a common means of communication in a multi-national state, the use of Russian in the Red Army, and the fact that, at that time, advanced scientific and technical education could be obtained only at Russian universities.[24]

While this decree was clearly in opposition to earlier objections on the part of Lenin and Stalin to a state language, it did not exclude the simultaneous use of the native languages nor necessarily imply the negation of national rights. In 1929 Stalin outlined the evolution

of national languages as he saw it:

"...the first stage (of the period of world dictatorship of the protelariat), during which national oppression will be completely abolished, will be a stage marked by the growth and flourishing of the formerly oppressed nations and national languages. ...

"Only in the second stage of the period of the world dictatorship of the proletariat...will something in the nature of a common language begin to take shape; for only in that stage will the nations feel the need to have, in addition to their own national languages, a common international language.... Consequently, in this stage, national languages and a common language will exist side by side...

"In the next stage of the period of world dictatorship of the proletariat - when the world socialist system of economy becomes sufficiently consolidated...and practice convinces the nations of the advantages of a common language over national languages - national differences will begin to die away and make room for a world language common to all nations."[25]

In order to fit the USSR into this scheme, Stalin said

"It is possible that, at first, not one world economic centre will be formed, common to all nations and with one common language, but several zonal economic centres for separate groups of nations, and that only later will these centres combine into one common world socialist economic centre, with one language common to all the nations."[26]

In 1930 Stalin was still boasting of the diversity of languages in the USSR.

"Clearly, we have already entered the period of socialism.... Nevertheless, the national languages are not only not dying away or mergin into one common

tongue, but, on the contrary, the national cultures and national languages are developing and flourishing."[27]

In the same report he ventured a prediction which was in line with the accepted Soviet linguistic theories.

"As for the more remote prospects for national cultures and national languages, I have always adhered and continue to adhere to the Leninist view that in the period of the victory of socialism on a world scale...the national languages are inevitably bound to merge into one common language, which, of course, will be neither Great Russian nor German, but something new."[28]

Aside from the great waste of existing printed material and the necessity for all those educated in the latin script to learn and re-learn the cyrillic, the second alphabetic revolution was not without logic. However, seen in the light of other events (see chapter V), the introduction of the cyrillic alphabet and the compulsory study of Russian assumes a more ominous significance. The late 30's witnessed a swing from the emphasis on national culture to one on Soviet culture - which was directed by, and sometimes identified with, Russian culture.

The follow-up of the second alphabetic revolution and its corollary, compulsory Russian, occurred in the linguistic controversy of 1950.

The study of linguistics had hitherto been dominated by the figure of N. Y a. Marr, whose theories had been sanctioned by official Soviet acceptance and who had been followed by all Soviet linguists. Stalin personally took a hand in demolishing him (figuratively), and the outcome of this repudiation remains an excellent example of the change in attitude towards national cultures.

Academician N. Ya. Marr had served Tsarist Russia as an authority on Caucasian languages. In 1920, having become a communist, he proceeded to formulate a theory of linguistics based on the tenets of dialectical and historical materialism. Marr's investigations of the origins of language led him to a theory of hybridization. Contrary to "bourgeois linguistics, his system postulated that certain groups of languages were similar as a result of social convergence and hybridization, not because they originated from the same mother tongue. Further, language was part of the superstructure and, hence, an instrument of class. It proceeded according to the same laws of dialectical materialism which governed historical development. Eventually, therefore, as the world became socialistically unified, languages would hybridize into a single world language different from all existing

languages. In addition, Marr regarded grammar as "formal idealistic doctrine" and"unfit for connection either with true living speech or its base, production."[29]

Late in 1949, immediately following a special scientific session which the Soviet Academy of Sciences devoted to Marr's work on the 15th anniversary of his death, several article appeared in Pravda and Izvestia complaining about the state of soviet linguistics. The articles indicated that despite Marr's emminence linguistics was lagging far behind other soviet sciences and that the most important practical problems were being ignored while "soviet linguists frequently engage in narrowly theoretical armchair work divorced from life".[30]

On May 9, 1950, Pravda opened a linguistic discussion. Leading soviet linguists took part, but the climax came in the form of an article by Stalin in which he toppled Marr from his pedastal.

Clearly, Stalin was prodded into action because the adulation of Marr's theories had stultified further research in the field of linguistics. The complaints of purely theoretical preoccupations on the part of the linguists and the backwardness of soviet linguistics

testify to that. Stalin's main concern, however, was probably with the political ramifications of linguistic theory.

With the increasing importance of the Russian language, the theory of hybridization was no longer palatable. In Stalin's article of June 20, 1950 he stated

> "It would be quite wrong to think that as a result of hybridization of, say two languages, a third new language is obtained which is not quite similar to either of the hybridized languages and differs qualitatively from each one of them. In actuality, in the process of hybridization, one of the languages usually emerges victorious, preserves its grammar and basic lexical fund and continues to develop by the internal laws of its own development, while the other language gradually loses its quality and dies off."...
> "This is what happened, for example, with Russian, with which the languages of a number of other peoples blended in the course of historical development and which always emerged victorious."[31]

Hybridization was henceforth branded a form of cosmopolitanism. The notion that language was part of the superstructure met with a similar fate.[32] The logical implication of this theory was that Russian would wither away as the base of production changed, since it arose in the feudal past. As such there would have been little justification for its widespread propagation and adulation.[33]

It was pointed out to Stalin by a Comrade Kholopov in the course of the Pravda controversy that to deny hybridization was to contradict his proclamations to the 16th Congress in 1930 (see page 69). In reply Stalin maintained that when socialism existed on a world scale "the richest most unified zonal languages...will coalesce into one international language."[34] Moreover, for the present hybridization was out of the question because before world wide socialism there is only "victory and vanquished,"[35] the implication being that since Russian had always emerged victorious from its contact with other languages it would continue to do so until that far-off day when socialism will have triumphed on a world scale and "the cooperation of nations will be set going, and national languages will have the opportunity freely to enrich each other in an atmosphere of cooperation."[36]

Thus Stalin gave the official stamp to the emphasis on the Russian language which was now considered "...the language of the most advanced nation in the USSR, the nation which was first to embark on the path of socialist construction."[37] Articles appeared in the soviet press extolling the adoption of the Russian

script and the superiority of the Russian language - attitudes which, in the early days, would have been branded as the most flagrant Great Russian chauvinism. The cyrillic script was now hailed for its "notable assistance to the various nationalities of the Soviet Union in their successful mastery of the Russian language and in the assimilation of Russian culture."[38] Study of the Russian language was important now not only as a means of common communication but because it "allows them (the working people of the peoples' democracies) to become better acquainted with the life and great achievements of the Soviet People."[39] Finally, it was predicted that "in the formation of a zonal international language, Russian will doubtless play a decisive role for many socialist nations. With the appearance of new socialist nations, the world historic influence of the Russian language will grow steadily."[40]

NOTES - CHAPTER IV

1 Stalin, Works. Vol. II, p. 376.

2 See Note 8, Chapter I.

3 Lenin, Critical Remarks... p. 18.

4 Lenin's letters on the national question, December 31, 1922. in Pipes, op. cit., p. 276.

5 Lenin, "Thesis on the National Problem" Works, Vol. VI. in M. Shore, Soviet Education, New York, 1947, p. 119.

6 Editor, Commission of the Central Committee of the CPSU(B), History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks). Toronto, 1939,p. 190.

7 Decree of the P.C. of Education; Izvestiya VTsIK, October 31, 1918. in Schlesinger, op. cit.,p.18.

8 G. Musabekov, "Pobedy novogo alfavita". Literaturnaya Gazeta, Moscow, January 26, 1936, p.2. in T.G. Winner, "Problems of alphabetic reform amongst the Turkic peoples of Soviet Central Asia". Slavonic and East European Review, Vol. 31, p. 135.

9 Kolarz, op. cit.

10 E. Koutaissoff, "Literacy and the place of Russian in the non-slav population of the USSR," Soviet Studies, Vol. III, October 1951, p. 113.

11 Mari, Komi, Mordvinians, Permians, Udmerts, Karelians.

12 Winner, op. cit., p. 133.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid., p. 136. In Arabic, letters have special forms depending on their position in the word; the

words are written from right to left, the numbers from left to right. As to its unsuitability for adaption to Turkic languages, the latter have vowel harmonies, while Arabic does not. It was also considered quite difficult to produce typewriters in Arabic script.

15 Koutaissoff, op. cit., p. 120.

16 Winner, op. cit., p. 138.

17 Ibid., p. 136.

18 Kolarz, op. cit.p.36.

19 Koutaissoff, op. cit. p. 120-121.

20 Kolarz, op. cit., p. 38. The nations using the latin alphabet before the alphabetic revolution were the Baltic States, the Finns, Armenians, Georgians, Jews.

21 Winner, op. cit., p. 134.

22 Voprosy Istorii, No. 2, 1953, p. 45. in Kolarz, The Peoples of the Soviet Far East. London, 1951, p. 73.

23 Kolarz, Russian and Her Colonies, p. 37. The Mordvinians, Mari, Chuvash, Komi, Udmurt, Ossetins, Oirots, Avars, Kumyks.

24 Koutaissoff, op. cit., p. 123.

25 Stalin, Works. Vol. II, p. 363-4.

26 Ibid., p. 364.

27 Stalin, Works, Vol. XIII, p. 6.

28 Ibid., p. 5.

29 N.Ya. Marr, Selected Works, Vol. II, p. 374-5. in Pravda, June 27, 1949, p. 4. Current Digest, II:27-21-26.

30 Pravda, November 11, 1949, p. 3. Current Digest I:46-16.

31 Stalin, Pravda, June 20, 1950, p. 1-3. in The Soviet Linguistic Controversy, Trans. from the Soviet Press, New York, 1951, p. 75.

32 Ibid., p. 76.

33 The study of Russian was made compulsory in the satellite countries as well as in the USSR.

34 Stalin, Pravda, August 2, 1950, p. 2. Linguistic Controversy, p. 97-98.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.

37 Slavyane, No. 12, December, 1951, p. 26-27. Current Digest, II:5-19-20.

38 Voprosy Iazikovnaniia 1952, p. 3, Moscow, 1952. in Dr. S. Wurm, Turkic Peoples of the USSR, Oxf., 1954, p. 41.

39 Supra, note 37.

40 Vorposy filosofii, No. 2, 1949 p. 131-141- Current Digest II:7-3-6 (1950)

CHAPTER V - GREAT RUSSIAN CHAUVINISM

The Russian revolution was carried out in a spirit of internationalism. Basing their philosophy on Marxian tenets, the Bolsheviks considered the revolution a passive instrument of dialectical materialism which merely followed the indisputable laws of history in initiating a chain of inevitable events. As Lenin put it, the revolution was "a prelude to and a step towards the world socialist revolution."[1] The revolution, according to Lenin, had occurred in Russia despite her backwardness and did not give her any cause for undue conceit.

> "To the Russian proletariat has fallen the honor to start the series of revolutions which with objective necessity grow out of imperialist wars. But far be it from us to look upon the Russian proletariat as the chosen revolutionary proletariat among the workers of the world.... It is not any particular virtues it possessed, but rather the specific historical circumstances, that have made the proletariat of Russia for a certain, perhaps very brief, period the skirmishers of the world revolutionary proletariat."[2]

Today this attitude of humility is no longer apparent in the Soviet Union. It has been replaced by what is known as Soviet Patriotism. In essence Soviet Patriotism differs little from the kind of nationalism exhibited by any other nation in the

20th century. However, the growth of a nationalist mentality had great significance for the national minorities.

By 1925, the stage was set for the growth of nationalism. At this point it was clear that the long-awaited revolutions in the West which were to have followed the Russian revolution would not materialize in the forseeable future. The Bolshevik leaders were left with two alternatives - to work for the success of socialism in one country, or to abandon all the gains of the socialist movement because the orthodox line maintained that socialism was possible only on a world scale. In 1925 Stalin, an advocate of the former, laid down the basis for the future of the USSR, proclaiming that the Union would henceforth focus its energy on the construction of a single socialist state, regardless of the fortunes of the world proletariat.[3]

For the first time the USSR began to think of itself not only as a stage in world development, but as a conscious entity with its own independent destiny. As such, it was bound to take note of its progress, to applaud it, to enter the world industrial, scientific and cultural competition, and to attempt to present its achievements in the best possible light, both to the

Soviet peoples and the world.

What did the growth of nationalism mean to the component nationalities in a multi-national state?

The Great Russians were the largest single ethnic group in the Union, and by 1927, constituted an absolute majority of the population as well. Very much aware of the past and of the unsatisfactory treatment of nationalities by Tsarist Russia, the Bolsheviks sought to evade the dangers of Great Russian chauvinism. It was indicated that, although the centralized state might not grant political autonomy to the constituent nationalities, the center to which they would owe allegiance would be a Bolshevik rather than a Russian one.

This led to the supra-national Soviet ideal known as Soviet Patriotism which attempts "...the fusion of the progressive national traditions of the peoples with the common vital interests of all the toilers of the USSR. This marvelous fusion was created by the Party of Bolsheviks."[4]

The"New Soviet Man",depending on his origins, was asked to lay aside either his Great Russian or his local national allegiance for the sake of an all-embracing

supra-national one. One Soviet commentator defined Soviet Patriotism as follows:

"Soviet patriotism by its very essense is incompatible with nationalism, which seeks to set the peoples of the USSR apart from one another, to separate the peoples of non-Russian nationalities from the Russian people and its culture, from the highest achievement of Russian and world culture, Leninism. "

"Soviet patriotism is equally incompatible with national nihilism, renouncing national traditions and traits or with rapid elimination of all national differences. Such national nihilism is only superficially opposed to nationalism, but in reality it always has been, and remains, its other side, containing nationalist, colonizing and chauvinist tendencies."[5]

The Bolsheviks, recognizing the two type of undesirable nationalism, Great Russian and local, initially emphasized the dangers of the former. Lenin repeatedly cautioned the proletariat to "fight against all nationalism, and, above all, against Great Russian nationalism."[6] He maintained this view throughout his life. It is possible, however, to trace the evolution of the official attitude toward Great Russian chauvinism through Stalin's writings and speeches.

At the 10th Party Congress in 1921, in accordance with Lenin, Stalin proclaimed that "This congress,

emphatically condeming both these deviations as harmful and dangerous to the cause of communism, considers it necessary to point out the special danger and special harmfulness of the first mentions deviation (Great Russian chauvinism), the deviation towards a dominant-nation, colonialist outlook."[7]

At the 12th Congress in 1923 he spoke at even greater lengths on the problem of Great Russian chauvinism. He considered it a danger to be defeated at all costs. "Otherwise we are threatened with the prospect of losing the confidence of the workers and peasants of the formerly oppressed peoples, we are threatened with the prospect of a rupture of the ties between these peoples and the Russian proletariat, and this threatens us with the danger of a crack being formed in the system of our dictatorship."[8]

Local nationalism grew, he felt, as a form of defence against Great Russian chauvinism and "the surest means of overcoming nationalist survivals is to wage determined war on Great Russian chauvinism."[9]

Stalin laid the bulk of the blame for the continued existance of nationalism in all forms at the feet of the New Economic Policy. He made it quite

clear that "as a result of the New Economic Policy, a new force is being engendered in the internal life of our country, namely, Great Russian Chauvinism....

"But the New Economic Policy fosters not only Russian chauvinism - it also fosters local varieties of chauvinism.... Of course, these local varieties of chauvinism are not as strong and therefore not as dangerous as Great Russian chauvinism."[10]

The implication of this view is that with the elimination of the NEP there should have been a corresponding drop in Great Russian chauvinism. Whether or not this in fact occurred, the inauguration of the Five Year Plans did indeed carry with it a change in the attitude towards nationalism. The dangers of Great Russian chauvinism were minimized and replaced with the dangers of local nationalism.

At the 16th Party Congress in 1930, Stalin, for the last time, classified "...the danger of Great Russian chauvinism as the chief danger in the Party in the sphere of the national question."[11]

By 1934 the balance began to tilt in the other direction. Stalin indicated the future trend at the 17th Congress:

"There is a controversy as to which deviation represents the major danger, the deviation towards Great Russian nationalism, or the deviation towards local nationalism. Under present conditions, this is a formal and therefore a purposeless controversy. It would be absurd to attempt to give ready-made recipes for the major and minor danger suitable for all times and for all conditions.... The major danger is the deviation against which one has ceased to fight and has thus enabled to grow into a danger to the state.

"Only very recently, in the Ukraine, the deviation towards Ukrainian nationalism did not represent the major danger; but when they ceased to fight it and enabled it to grow to the extend that it joined forced with the interventionists, this deviation became the major danger."[12]

By the 18th Congress (1939) victories were reported over various national deviators -with good reason. The intervening years had witnessed the great purges. Many of the victims were men accused of local nationalism.

The year 1934 may be considered a turning point in the relationship between Russians and non-Russians in all spheres, political and cultural. The drive towards rapid industrialization which had been greatly increased by the Five Year plans required a hitherto unprecedented degree of centralization. The requirements of industrialization, coupled with the fear engendered by the ever-stronger Nazi movement, led to the need for unity and adherence to the center. These ideas

became the keynotes of official policy. Depending on one's viewpoint, the "national deviators" were either legitimately eliminated as a result of this need for unity, or it was used as an excuse to eliminate the vestiges of local nationalism. Nonetheless, in 1934, although Great Russian chauvinism was not yet completely ignored, local nationalism stood higher on the list of undesirable deviations. Moveover, it assumed greater proportions in those areas which were a focal point of Nazi maneuverings:

> "The German fascists, striving to sever the Ukraine and Belorussia from the USSR, are trying to find a common language with the Polish fascists. At such a moment, local Ukrainian nationalism, which blends with (the plans of) Hitler and Pilsudski, assumes an entirely new role. From a theoretical deviation, it turns into a militant weapon of world fascism. It becomes, at this stage, the principal danger and makes it vital for the CC of the communist parties of the Ukraine and of Belorussia to wage a most irreconcilable struggle against the deviation towards local nationalism in the party and the nationalist counter-revolution as a whole....
>
> "Apart from intensifying the struggle against local nationalism, it is necessary also to step up to the utmost the struggle against Great Russian nationalism, which remains the principal danger in the CPBSU (B) and the USSR as a whole."[13]

The sequel to the growing emphasis on local nationalism was the purges of 1936-1938 which were concerned with two categories of crimes: 1)wrecking and

sabotaging, and 2) espionage and nationalism. The national republics, of course, fell into the latter categories.

The purge was especially intense in the Ukraine, where local nationalism had always been an issue. In 1933 Skrypnik committed suicide in protest over the purges of the Ukrainian Communist Party which had already begun there.[14] More than one-half of the Party secretaries and Party organizers were changed between 1937-38.[15] Klinkov, secretary of the Ukrainian Komsomol was unmasked as an "enemy of the people".[16] In Kirghizia, the heads of communal economy, the press and the political leadership were charged with submission to nationalist infiltration. In July, 1937, the Tashkent Pravda Vostoka opened an attack on the Uzbek administration. Shortly afterwards, Khodzaev, an Old Bolshevik, was removed, as well as Central Committee Secretary Ikramov who was accused of leading a national independence movement.[18]

When Mdivani (another Old Bolshevik), Torosheknidze and Okundzhav, leading Georgian Communists, were accused of conspiracy and nationalist deviation, the purge aimed at Caucasian nationalism as well.[19] The

pattern of removing the cream of the national leadership from the top repeated itself throughout the Union.[20]

The war years strengthened the tendency to eliminate wherever possible the vestiges of local nationalism, e.g., the four A.S.S.R.'s which were liquidated on charges of nationalism and conspiracy. The corresponding increase in the importance of the Russians among the Soviet peoples culminated in Stalin's now famous toast to the Russian people made at a reception in honor of the Red Army commanders on May 24, 1945:

> "Comrades! Permit me to propose one more, one last toast. I should like to propose a toast to the health of our Soviet people, and in the first place, the Russian people.
>
> "I drink in the first place to the health of the Russian people because it is the most outstanding nation of all the nations forming the Soviet Union.
>
> "I propose a toast to the health of the Russian people because it has won in this war universal recognition as the leading force of the Soviet Union among all the peoples of our country."[21]

Another significant yardstick of the recrudescence of patriotism in the USSR was the way in which the authorities regarded the Russian past.

In 1934 a process began which progressively glorified pre-revolutionary Russian territorial expansion and sought to present the Soviet regime as the heir to all the best in the Russian past. That year witnessed the ideological anihilation of the historian M.N. Pokrovsky who had been the most prominent figure in Soviet historiography during the first 15 years following the October revolution. As the historian who, according to Lenin, came nearest to Marxist views,[22] Pokrovsky explained historical events by socio-economic systems and attempted to apply the thesis of the class struggle to all past history. It was his task, and that of all Marxist historians, to demonstrate through the history of all nations Marxist historical materialism. Historical personages, institutional structure of the state, the national element - all was minimized in order to explain social conflicts and historical events in terms of the class struggle.

In the case of the history of the USSR, the picture of pre-revolutionary Russia was a black one indeed. The Pokrovsky school depicted Tsarist Russia as an agent of oppression and evil.

The 1934 decree, which abolished this type of historical presentation, stated "The text-books and oral instruction are of an abstract schematic character. Instead of the teaching of civic history in an animated and entertaining form, with an exposition of the most important events and facts in their chronological sequence, and with sketches of historical personages, the pupils are given abstract definitions of social and economic formations which replace the consecutive exposition of civic history by abstract sociological themes."[23]

The same decree announced the appointment of Professor N.N. Vanag and others to the task of writing a new history of the USSR. It appears that in 1936, when Stalin, Zhdanov and Kirov reviewed the plans for the history, the purely Russian past was still regarded in a negative way. They remarked of the plans that "The group of Vanag did not fulfill the tasks...in the outline there was not emphasized the annexationist-colonization role of Russian Czarism.... There was not emphasized the counter-revolutionary role of Russian Czarism in foreign politics from the time of Catherine II up to the middle of the 19th century and longer."[24]

Although history was to concern itself with historical personages and events instead of abstract phenomena, it took several years to progress to the point where the Russian past was no longer completely bad. Instead of regarding Tsarist expansion as an agent of oppression and exploitation, it came to be regarded, from the point of view of the non-Russian state, as the lesser of two evils, the alternative being foreign domination.

For example,

"Since it was unable to form its own independent state, the Ukraine was faced with the choice of being absorbed by Gentry Poland and the Sultan's Turkey or coming under Russia's rule. This latter prospect, despite the fact that it meant extending Tsarist autocratic oppression to the Ukraine, was, in the given historical circumstances, the best way out for the people of the Ukraine."[25]

The next stage was to consider Tsarist expansion a positive good. A review of a book of Kazakhstan history stated

"Distorting the truth of history, Bekmakhanov failed to reveal the profoundly progressive significance of the annexation of Kazakhstan to Russia."[26]

The article went on to state that the Kazakh historians were henceforth to occupy themselves with

"deeply and truthfully elucidating the history of Kazakhstan on the basis of Marxist-Leninist teachings... resolutely combating all and every attempt to distort the history of the Kazakh people and its continuous friendship with the Great Russian people. "[27]

The corresponding attitude was to deny any non-Russian influence on the history of the national republics. One of many examples is the castigation of "The Uzbek People's Heroic Epic" by V. Zhirmunsky and Kh. Zarifov because it claimed that the Uzbek Epic was molded by Persian and Islamic influences. Moreover, it did not correctly emphasize "that Russian social and economic intercourse which was highly fruitful for the Uzbek people."[28]

Voprosy Istorii succinctly summarized the situation:

"The historians must consider it their vital task to study and to demonstrate the tremendous influence of progressive Russian culture, literature and science upon the culture and science of all other peoples."[29]

There was a parallel development in the cultural life of the national republics. Thus, a Soviet journal could make the unqualified statement that, in the case of Tadzik culture, for example, not only

had it remained completely uninfluenced by Iranian culture, but that "The development of the literature of the Soviet East can be correctly understood only in connection with the beneficial influence of the Great Russian people. The progressive role of Russian culture also influenced the development of Tadzhik culture."[30]

There are, however, probably as many references to Party influence, as there are to purely Russian influence which bears out the supranational element in Soviet patriotism and distinguishes it from unadulterated great-power chauvinism. During Belorussian literature week in Moscow, 1949, Pravda remarked

> "Comrade P. Brovka, chief secretary of the Union of Soviet Writers, spoke on the development of Belo-Russian literature under the guidance of the Party. Directed by the Bolsheviks, Belorussian literature has defeated the bourgeois nationalists who attempted to divorce it from Russian culture and subordinate it to the culture of the West."[31]

In summary, the structure of the new soviet society in regard to its intra-national relationships is well-described by E.H. Carr:

> "Thus the new society of the five-year plans was a society to which all nationalities were admitted on

equal terms, but which had, nevertheless, a distinctly Russian base. Whether or not this promised an adequate solution of the national problem, it was a solution which differed as widely from 'national self-determination' on the one hand as from 'colonialism' or'imperialism' on the other. Counsel is only darkened when it is discussed in these traditional western terms."[32]

NOTES - CHAPTER V

1 Lenin, Selected Works. Vol. VI, p. 17.

2 Ibid.

3 Stalin, Works, Vol. VII, p. 110,134.

4 N.I. Matyushkin, Sovetski patriotizm - moguchaya dvizhushchaya sila sotsialisticheskogo obshchestva, Moscow, 1952, p. 4. in Frederick C. Barghoorn, Soviet Russian Nationalism. N.Y., 1956, p. 9.

5 G.E. Glezerman, Partiya Bolshevikov -"Vdokhnovitel i Vospitatel Sovetskogo patriotizma" in O Sovetskom Patriotizme (collection of articles). Akadamiya Nauk, SSSR, Moscow, 1950, p. 164.

6 Lenin, Selected Works. Vol. IV, p. 292.

7 Stalin, Works. Vol. V, p. 29.

8 Ibid., p. 250-251.

9 Ibid., p. 192.

10 Ibid., p. 244.

11 Stalin, Works, Vol. XII, p. 302.

12 Stalin, Marxism and the National..., p. 267-8.

13 S.D.,"The Struggle against nationalism and the lessons of the Ukraine." Revolutsia i Natsionalnosti No. 1, 1934, p. 17-22. in Schlesinger, Op. cit., p. 185-6.

14 Brzezinsky, op. cit., p. 57.

15 Pravda, June 16, 1938, p. 3. in Brzezinsky, op. cit., p. 78.

16 Pravda, July 22, 1937. in Brzezinsky, op. cit., p. 78.

17 Pravda, August 4, 1937, p.2.in Brzezinsky, p. 79.

18 Brzezinsky, op. cit., p. 82.

19 Ibid., p. 85.

20 For a good treatment of the purges as they effected the national republics see Brzezinsky, p. 77-82, and Appendix II.

21 Stalin, War Speeches. London, n.d. p. 138-139.

22 R. Schlesinger,"Recent Soviet Historiography" Soviet Studies, Vol. I, 1949-1950,p.293.

23 Decree of the Council of Peoples' Commissaries of the USSR and the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolshevik). On the teaching of civic history in the schools of the USSR. May 16, 1934. Slavonic Review, Vol. XIII, p. 204-5.

24 Zamechenii͡a po Povody Konspekta Uchebnika po "Istorii SSSR". Na Fronte Istoricheskoi Nauki, Jan. 27, 1936. Direktivy, KP(B), p. 184. in Ruth Widmayer, The Communist Party and the Soviet Schools 1917-1937. Cambridge, 1952 (unpub. thesis).

25 Voprosy Istorii, No. 2, Feb. 1951 p. 131-38, quoting from the Diplomatic Dictionary. Current Digest of Soviet Press, III:14-5.

26 Pravda, April 25, 1951, p. 3. Current Digest, III:17-12.

27 Ibid.

28 Pravda, January 11, 1949, p. 3. Current Digest I:2,58-59.

29 Voprosy Istorii, No. 3, March 1949, p. 8. Current Digest, I:35-3-9.

30 Literaturnaya Gazeta, February 19, 1949, p. 3. Current Digest, I:9-63-64.

31 Pravda, January 26, 1949. Current Digest, I:4-5-9.

32 Carr, op. cit., p. 232.

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