

**The National Question Since Stalin:
Political and Intellectual
Crosscurrents**

by

David A. Riach

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Political Studies
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Winnipeg, Manitoba

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Abstract

This thesis attempts to address what is perceived by the author as a certain gap within existing Western literature on the national question in the USSR - the lack of a systematic study of nationality policy as a source of leadership conflict during the post-Stalin period. Structurally speaking, it synthesizes an analysis of public statements by Soviet leaders concerning the national question; divergent views on core issues of national relations as expressed within Soviet academic literature and other media; as well as Western sources which have, at different times, focussed on various parts of this debate. In terms of the time frame involved, the thesis begins with Nikita Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin at the XX CPSU Congress in February 1956 and concludes with Mikhail Gorbachev's current efforts at preserving the integrity of the USSR in the face of resurgent nationalist movements throughout the country. The underlying argument is that an important consequence of Khrushchev's incipient "de-Stalinization" was the opening of a new debate among Soviet political leaders and academics on the future of nations and nationalities within the USSR. It is suggested that, as a result of this debate, the post-Stalinist leadership has essentially lacked a coherent policy on the national question.

Introduction

It is undoubtedly true that one of the most salient political features of the twentieth century has been the interaction between communism and nationalism. Certainly, as is pointed out in chapter one of this thesis, the problem of reconciling national differences in a manner that would serve the allegedly superior interests of the communist cause was a major concern for Lenin and, after him, Stalin. Moreover their successors have had to govern an immense multinational state while officially committed to an ideology which foresaw the diminution of national distinctions.¹

As one who has spent considerable time and effort in this area of study, I would, first of all, acknowledge that there has been a great deal of excellent work done by Western scholars on the so-called "national question" in the Soviet Union. However, I notice, at least in those elements of the literature which deal with the nationalities problem at the political level, a certain static quality. To use the words of Ivan Rudnytsky, I would say that much of this material "does not trace the cross currents of opinion which actually take place under the dull lid of an imposed surface conformity."² This thesis represents an effort to draw out or bring into sharper relief some of these cross currents. It is my belief that our understanding of the Soviet experience in dealing with the national question can be enhanced by

taking into account more fully the degree to which the issue, behind a facade of ritualistic pronouncements concerning its final solubility, represented a source of serious dispute within the Soviet leadership; discord which prevented the elaboration of a coherent Party line on nationality policy throughout the entire post-Stalin period.

The underlying premise of this project is therefore that nationality policy has been both the product and reflection of conflict within the Soviet regime, and the national question itself has been much more a source of serious dispute than is commonly assumed. Current Western literature, by and large, takes at face value the notion propagated by the Kremlin, particularly during the Brezhnev period, that Soviet leaders assumed the nationalities issue to have been once and for all "resolved". In fact, such assertions served only to conceal partially discord within the regime over the proper direction national development within the USSR should take and the depth and gravity of this debate have historically been underrated by Western sources.

Methodology

In writing about the "national question" in the USSR, one must first make some effort at defining the term itself. Events over the past few years have made clear the fact that the "national question" operates along several planes - relations between the Moscow centre and the Union republics; relations between the Union republics themselves; and, relations between various nationalities within the Union republics. This thesis is principally focussed on the first element of the "national

question"; that is, the relationship between the centre and periphery especially with respect to the Kremlin's stated aim of reshaping the consciousness of the non-Russian peoples so that they would increasingly identify with the multinational Soviet state, and the notion of a unified "Soviet people" in which the Russian nation played the leading role. To the degree that it will be shown how the response of republican First Secretaries to the homogenizing policies of the centre varied, this analysis can be seen as also concerned, although only in an indirect fashion, with the second component of the "national question" (viz. inter-republic relations). The variation which the thesis seeks to introduce into the three-tiered understanding of the "national question" as outlined above is the argument that not only is there evidence of discord between the central leadership in Moscow and some of the republics over the concept of a "Soviet people" unified around its Russian core, but the centre itself has been divided over how to pursue this aim during the period in question.

In addition to clarifying how one wishes to employ the term "national question" in a structural sense, there is a need to give it meaningful sociological or ethnographical content. Within Soviet parlance itself, the term *natsiya*, or "nation", has been the dominant conceptual category throughout this period, although, as will be pointed out several times in the thesis, the scholars themselves have never agreed on how to define it. As will be noted in chapter three, the extent to which the "nation" retains any link with pre-national ethnic and cultural forms has also been a troublesome dilemma, although the general tendency seems to have been to downplay such linkage. Thus, given the

intellectual preoccupation with *natsiya*, the operative term in the specialist literature, as well as in the speeches of political leaders, has therefore been *mezhnatsionalnye otnosheniya*, literally "international relations."

Since the late 1970s, however, and the ascendancy of what might be termed the "Bromlei school" of Soviet ethnography with its emphasis on the concept of *ethnos*, or ethnic self-identification, as will be discussed in chapter three, the term *mezhnatsionalnye otnosheniya* has taken on new connotations corresponding to this shift of focus away from the politically troublesome concept of *natsiya*. It now is also understood to mean "inter-ethnic relations", and in some instances, is translated from the original Russian to English as such.³ This typifies the recognition, imbibed largely from Western ethnography, of some contemporary Soviet academics (such as Bromlei), that "national" and "ethnic" self-identity are not synonymous. It also reflects the new-found concern, as will be outlined in chapter five, for the preservation of all the country's *ethnoses*, especially those numerically-small peoples who have historically lacked adequate recognition within the Soviet territorial administrative structure, and whose assimilation into one or more dominant cultures was previously regarded as a progressive development. Thus, in speaking about the "national question" in the Soviet Union today, the term "inter-ethnic relations", recognizing the reality of multiple, competing identities at the individual level, is not inappropriate whereas, up until the early 1980s, it would not have really corresponded to what the principal focus was of Soviet scholars themselves who were predominantly locked onto the problem of national

identity as understood within the ideological confines of doctrinaire Marxism-Leninism. In short, as a Soviet editorialist acknowledged in November 1989, the terms "inter-national" and "inter-ethnic" relations are both appropriate to the "national question" in the USSR today.⁴ Indeed, such an interpretation accords with the structural notion of the "national question" operating along several different planes as outlined above. However, for the purposes of clarity and consistency, this thesis employs the term "inter-national relations" throughout with the "inter-ethnic" connotation being understood to apply commencing with the discussion of Bromlei's theory of *ethnos* in chapter three.

Within this conceptual rubric, I would describe my project as picking up on work done by some Western scholars during the late 1960s, and, in particular, Professor Grey Hodnett who wrote several articles elucidating the various aspects of the ongoing debate within the Soviet regime at that time. As he described it:

Disagreement is reflected at its most abstract in the logical inconsistencies in the Party Program [1961]. It becomes more overt in the speeches of important political figures. It can be detected without difficulty in the writings of semi-official commentators on nationality policy. But differences of opinion turn into open polemics in the specialized academic literature on the subject.⁵

This sort of approach is based on the assumption that the intellectual literature mirrors similar differences of opinion within the political leadership itself. In other words, given the authoritarian nature of the Soviet political system, and the censoring of the press, the publication over the years of controversial perspectives on such sensitive issues as the future of federalism or ethnic "fusion", as will be highlighted in chapters two and three especially, would not have been possible without

the scholars involved being supported directly or indirectly by like-minded politicians.

Given the nature of Soviet politics prior to *glasnost*', these sorts of linkages have traditionally been difficult to substantiate, although the use of Anastas Mikoyan's name by some "pro-federalist" writers during the academic debates of the late 1950s, as will be referred to later in chapter two, perhaps provides a meaningful example. The advent of *glasnost*', I would argue, has gone a long way towards validating what some Western specialists have described as this notion of Soviet "open window" politics; to wit, the theory that what appear to be pressure groups representing differing points of view cannot become visible or effective unless the Party leadership is genuinely divided over policy options.⁹

Operating on the sort of methodological presumptions outlined over the preceding few pages, the end result of this exercise is intended to be a short "handbook" on Soviet nationality policy as an issue of leadership conflict during the post-Stalin era written from a combined political science - historiographical perspective.

Chapter Outline

This thesis comprises six chapters. Chapter one is a historical review of the Leninist and Stalinist national policies in the interests of providing a meaningful context for the discussion that follows. It seeks to highlight two elements which seem underrated in much of the existing literature. The first is the extent to which the Bolshevik approach to

the national question is clearly activist in nature, although the fact that Lenin and Stalin differed radically in their practical approach to breaking down national barriers in the USSR is emphasized. The second element I wish to stress in the opening chapter is implied preeminence of psychological factors in both the Leninist and Stalinist approaches to the national question; something which seems not only contradictory to basic Marxist tenets according to which social psychology should be determined by objective material factors, but subsequently proved troublesome for Soviet academics favoring the rapid "drawing together" and "fusion" of nations. Chapter two dwells on the debate concerning the future of nations within the USSR opened as one of the consequences of Nikita Khrushchev's "de-Stalinizing" economic and political reforms of the late 1950s. The extent to which his regime was divided along several different lines over nationality policy is highlighted with the conclusion that repudiating the Stalinist approach to the national question raised a number of fundamental issues in terms of Soviet inter-national relations which the Khrushchev leadership was not able to deal with in a resolute manner.

Chapter three argues that this lack of consensus continued into the Brezhnev period as the political leaders and academic community continued to disagree among themselves over core issues of nationality policy. Smug assertions heard frequently about the national question having been definitively "resolved" served only to conceal this discord. Chapter four shows the comparatively brief Andropov-Chernenko interregnum from November 1982 to March 1985 to be significant for the fact that a tendency, which actually dated from the late Brezhnev period, to ac-

knowledge more frankly persistent problems in the sphere of national relations was accelerated. Nonetheless there continued to be sharp differences of view between top leaders as well as academics with the result that, although old stereotypes were largely discredited, nothing new in the way of coping with the question of nationalities was developed.

Chapter five examines the national question under Gorbachev to date from the point of view that he and his associates were thus bequeathed a policy in this sphere which was in a pronounced state of drift. Thanks to *glasnost*¹ and democratization, the debate over the future of Soviet nations which was for so many years hidden behind a facade of apparent well-being, and cloaked in a variety of ideological buzzwords, has emerged into the open with full force. However, it is suggested that the Gorbachev leadership has, on the whole, failed to meet the challenge of resurgent nationalism in the USSR today with the result that the very future of *perestroika* itself is now in serious doubt. Finally, chapter six draws the appropriate overall conclusions and poses some questions for possible future scholarship.

Notes

¹ This first paragraph is paraphrased from John S. Reshetar, *The Soviet Polity: Government and Politics in the USSR* (New York: Harper and Row, 1981), p. 281.

² Ivan L. Rudnytsky, reviewing Yaroslav Bilinsky's book, *The Second Soviet Republic: The Ukraine after World War II* (New Brunswick, New Jersey, The Rutgers University Press, 1964), in *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 18, October 1967, No. 3, p. 382.

³ For example, in Gorbachev's speech to the XIX CPSU Conference in June 1988, as discussed in chapter five, he uses the term *mezhnatsionalnye*

otnosheniya a number of times and it is consistently translated as "inter-ethnic relations" in English versions of the address published in the USSR itself.

⁴ See the journal *International Affairs*, November 1989.

⁵ Grey Hodnett, "The Debate Over Soviet Federalism", *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 4, October 1967, p. 468.

⁶ See Geoffrey Hosking, *The Awakening of the Soviet Union* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), pp. 53-54.

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The National Question in Historical Perspective

The proletarian revolution calls for the prolonged education of the workers in the spirit of the fullest national equality and brotherhood. Consequently, the interests of the Great Russian proletariat require that the masses be systematically educated to champion -- most resolutely, consistently, boldly, and in a revolutionary manner -- complete equality and the right to self-determination for all the nations oppressed by the Great Russians.¹

V.I Lenin

The fight of the border governments is depicted by some as a fight for national emancipation against the 'soulless centralism' of the Soviet regime. But this is quite untrue. No regime in the world has permitted such extensive decentralization, no government in the world has ever granted to the peoples such complete national freedom as the Soviet power in Russia. The fight of the border governments was, and is, a fight of bourgeois counter-revolution against socialism.²

J. V. Stalin

As, from the sixteenth century forward, a Eurasian entity overlapping Europe and Asia both geographically and ethnically, Russia has historically grappled with a two-pronged problem. There was, on the one hand, the need to mold into a cohesive society the more than 100 socially and linguistically diverse peoples which gave the country its multi-national identity while, on the other, coping with the legitimate demands of these peoples for cultural protection and political autonomy. Indeed, the so-called "national question" is one of the common threads linking together pre- and post-revolutionary Russia. Hence, although

this thesis concentrates on the national question in the USSR during the post-Stalin era, some historical background, focussing, in particular, on the Leninist and Stalinist approaches to the problem is nonetheless in order. This first chapter will be devoted to providing such a perspective.

Lenin's Approach to the National Question Prior to 1917

The national question was of acute importance to Russian Marxists at the turn of the twentieth century. This was because the Tsarist policy of forcibly "Russifying" non-Russian peoples within the empire, by which is meant imposing on them the Russian language and culture, begun in earnest under Alexander III (1881-1894) and continued by his son Nicholas II (1894-1917), had succeeded primarily in building up bitter resentment and even secessionist tendencies among many of the national minorities. Unquestionably, part of Lenin's genius as a revolutionary thinker consisted in his grasping the depth of these sentiments and, on this basis, articulating a policy which held out to the nationalities the prospect of emancipation in the form of "national self-determination".

In essence, Lenin was correct when he wrote in 1914 that: "As far as the theory of Marxism in general is concerned, the question of [national] self-determination presents no difficulty."³ This is because, for Marx, nationalism was a form of "bourgeois ideology" which would cease to exist following the proletarian revolution. In this sense, it was conceived of by him in much the same terms as other forms of "bourgeois ideology". In the words of Isaiah Berlin:

Both Marx and Engels believed that nationalism, together with religion and militarism, were so many anachronisms, at once the by-products and the bulwarks of the capitalist order, irrational counter-revolutionary forces which, with the passing of their material foundation, would automatically disappear.⁴

From his own writings, it is indeed clear that Marx was irreconcilably hostile to the concept of nationalism. For him, class division was paramount and something which transcended national boundaries. Therefore, from the orthodox Marxist perspective, national causes could be defended only to the extent that they furthered the superior goals of class solidarity and socialist revolution. As Marx wrote in *The Communist Manifesto*:

The working men have no country. We cannot take from them what they have not got. Since the proletariat must first of all acquire political supremacy, must rise to the leading class of the nation, must constitute itself the nation, it is, so far, itself national, though not in the bourgeois sense of the word.⁵

Thus, Marx's predisposition towards national movements was conditional. For example, during his time, he regarded Polish and Hungarian nationalisms as progressive because they were directed against the Russian autocracy and the Hapsburg dynasty respectively.⁶ Irish nationalism was also viewed favorably because it was aimed at the British Empire which was then the center of world capitalism. However, Czech and South Slavic nationalisms were seen as reactionary because they had failed to support the revolutions of 1848.⁷

Moreover, it was Marx's belief that nationalism itself, even while capitalism still existed, was becoming a spent force. To quote from his work again:

National differences and antagonisms between peoples are daily more and more vanishing, owing to the

development of the bourgeoisie, to freedom of commerce, to the world market, to uniformity in the mode of production and in the conditions of life corresponding thereto.⁸

In other words, the bourgeois notion of nationalism was something which was collapsing under the pressure of expanding international capitalism. The most important consequence of this from the point of view of revolutionary Marxists was the anticipated evolution of an "internationalist" consciousness among the proletariats of the capitalist world who would come to recognize that only by dispensing with their traditional national allegiances and bonding together in a joint struggle against their oppressors could they hope for liberation.

This was what Marx meant when he wrote in the *Manifesto* that "united action, of the leading civilized countries at least, is one of the first conditions for the emancipation of the proletariat."⁹ Having first seized political power in their own countries, and hence having constituted themselves as the "nation", the proletariats of the capitalist world would then join together and not only put an end to man's exploitation of man, but to the exploitation of one nation by another. The ultimate consequence of this would be a socialist world in which the bourgeois idea of nationalism simply lost all meaning.

Because of this rather simplistic view, which overlooked the fact that people were more divided on a national as opposed to the class basis which was so central to their own understanding of history, and because they themselves thus wrote relatively little with respect to the problem of nationalism, Leszek Kolakowski has correctly pointed out that "Marx and Engels left nothing that could be called a theory of the nationality question."¹⁰ This subsequently posed a particular dilemma for Lenin, faced with the reality of having to forge together a cohesive

revolutionary movement in a country which incorporated more than 100 different national groups, and among many of whom nationalist feelings were growing rather than diminishing.

In principle, the right to national self-determination had been guaranteed to the non-Russian peoples of the Tsarist empire in the founding manifesto of the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party in 1898, and it had been further elaborated in the party programme of the R.S.D.W.P. adopted at its Second Congress in 1903. The issue itself was the subject of sharp debate within the party at the time of its formation, and it is in this context that we see Lenin's early thought on the matter beginning to emerge. This was particularly as a result of his quarrel with the Bund, a more common designation for the General Jewish Workers Union in Lithuania, Poland, and Russia, a socialist party committed to defending the special interests of Russia's large, and historically oppressed, Jewish population.

Although the Jews in Russia were widely dispersed throughout the empire, and thus not clearly identified with any particular region or territory, the Bund reserved the right to speak on their behalf as a distinct nationality. Its principal demand was for "cultural autonomy",¹¹ which Bertram Wolfe has described in the following terms:

By this they meant that the Jewish communities should control their own schools, theatres, press and religious life, free from interference or handicap on the part of the state, should elect their own school and community administrators and speak for and defend the 'national cultural' interests of people anywhere in Russia who chose to regard themselves as Jews.¹²

Being as how the leaders of the Bund thus believed that the Jewish proletariat had such specific needs, they further insisted on organizational autonomy within the Social-Democratic movement, arguing,

as did Marxists from the Baltic and Caucasus, that the national minorities should be represented by their own socialist parties; that only in this way could the legitimate rights of the non-Russians be guaranteed within the broader revolutionary movement. While Lenin rejected in principle the idea of "cultural autonomy", describing it as contradicting "the internationalism of the proletariat", and making it "easier for the proletariat and the masses of working people to be drawn into the sphere of influence of bourgeois nationalism...",¹³ his most serious dispute with the Bund arose over the idea of the Russian Social-Democratic movement becoming a federation of associated parties representing distinct national groups opposed to Tsarist autocracy.

As a centralist who adhered to the Marxian concept of "proletarian internationalism" (the worldwide unity of the working classes irrespective of national differences), Lenin was inherently uncomfortable with the notion of anything that might disrupt the solidarity of the proletariat throughout Russia. His views on the matter were expressed unequivocally during the Second Congress of the R.S.D.W.P. in 1903 when he wrote that "the fullest and closest unity of the militant proletariat is absolutely essential...", and declared that "the Congress emphatically repudiates federation as the organizational principle of the Russian party."¹⁴ These words were written specifically with regard to defining the proper place of the Bund in the R.S.D.W.P., and were coupled with assurances that while the complete unity of the Jewish and all other proletariats was an indispensable condition for the success of the revolutionary struggle in Russia, this would in no way restrict the independence or ability of "Jewish comrades" to advance and

protect their concerns within the party.¹⁵ David Lane has thus put in very succinct terms Lenin's concern with respect to the need for unity:

Lenin and the Bolsheviks supported the view that the class struggle was indivisible and that, therefore, the proletariat would weaken itself in the class struggle by forming separate national parties.¹⁶

His views on this matter, as expressed at the Second Congress of the R.S.D.W.P., led to a bitter split between himself and the leaders of the Bund, who, with their delegates, subsequently walked out of the meeting in protest. The irony of this is that the Bund's departure was the principal reason Lenin and his followers were able to scrape together a bare majority of the remaining delegates and finally win a crucial vote on the key issue of party organization which would, in the end, lead to the R.S.D.W.P. being split into its Bolshevik (Majoritist) and Menshevik (Minoritist) factions.¹⁷

In spite of his hard line towards the Bund, it is clear that Lenin, in principle, recognized the reality of national identities within the empire, and, to this extent, upheld the right of nations to secede from Russia, apparently leaving little doubt about what he understood by this. National self-determination, he wrote in 1914, "means the political separation of nations from alien political bodies, and the formation of an independent national state."¹⁸ However, in spite of what would seem to be the unequivocal nature of such a statement, it is apparent that when Lenin spoke of the right to self-determination, he drew a definite distinction between such a right as a matter of principle, and the actual secession of national territories in practice.

This qualification is evident in some of his earliest writings on the subject. For example, in *The National Question In Our Programme*, written in 1903, he states the following:

The Social Democrats will always combat every attempt to influence national self-determination from without by violence or any injustice. However, our unreserved recognition of the struggle for freedom of self-determination does not in any way commit us to supporting every demand for national self-determination.¹⁹

To this he adds:

Does recognition of the right of nations to self-determination really imply support of any demand for every nation for self-determination? After all, the fact that we recognize the right of all citizens to form free associations does not at all commit us, Social Democrats, to supporting the formation of any new association, nor does it prevent us from opposing and campaigning against the formation of a given association as an inexpedient and unwise step.²⁰

It is necessary to extract from this same article one more quotation in order to demonstrate that, for Lenin, the demand for national self-determination was always subordinate to the interests of the proletariat in the class struggle and the Communist Party would itself be the final arbiter in deciding which demands for self-determination were legitimate and which were not:

As the party of the proletariat, the Social Democratic Party considers it to be its positive and principal task to further the self-determination of the proletariat in each nationality rather than that of peoples or nations. We must always and unreservedly work for the very closest unity of the proletariat of all nationalities, and it is only in isolated and exceptional cases that we can advance and actively support demands conducive to the establishment of a new class state or to the substitution of a looser federal unity, etc., for the complete unity of a state.²¹

Lenin's support for national causes was therefore conditional in a similar sense to that of Marx before him.

What this meant in the Russian context prior to the revolution was that since the working-classes in the non-Russian parts of the empire were struggling to throw off the yoke of Great Russian domination as embodied in Tsarism, their fight for national independence was just and should therefore be supported by Social Democrats. In reality, it could not have been otherwise since to have argued against the rights of these groups to self-determination at this point would have been tantamount to siding with the oppressors.

With the coming of the socialist revolution, however, the interests of the workers throughout Russia would no longer coincide with strictly national aims. Rather, they would be served by the different proletariats themselves being drawn together into a single, unified class in which, as Wolfe puts it, all proletarians, irrespective of national origins, would "eschew, outgrow, and despise all feeling of nationality as bourgeois or petty bourgeois."²² In large part, this was believed by Lenin to be a process which would occur more or less naturally since, in the Bolshevik view, which was very much in keeping with Marx in this respect, nationalist and separatist tendencies were the products of the inequalities resulting from imperialist oppression and exploitation. Under such conditions, national self-determination could only take the form of secession.

However, under socialism, which would establish legitimate equality between all nations, the right to self-determination, specifically in the sense of secession, while still being formally upheld, would be assumed to become, practically speaking, meaningless

and not be exercised. This was because the Leninist approach postulated that once the oppression of victim minorities by the dominant Great Russian nation vanished, so would the psychological basis for secessionism. As Lenin himself put it:

Among the working people of the nations that entered into the Russian empire the mistrust of the Great Russians that has been inherited from the epoch of tsarist and bourgeois Great-Russian imperialism is rapidly vanishing under the influence of their acquaintance with Soviet Russia, but that mistrust has not yet completely disappeared among all nations and among all sections of the working people. It is, therefore, necessary to exercise special caution in respect of national feelings and to ensure the pursuance of a policy of actual equality and freedom to secede so as to remove the grounds for this mistrust and achieve the close voluntary union of the Soviet republics of all nations.²³

Analysts such as Stephen and Ethel Dunn have thus properly concluded that the Leninist guarantee of national self-determination was advanced "for the purpose of removing a psychological barrier to unification of the working class, and thus an irritant that would hinder the progress of the revolution."²⁴ In short, once the subject peoples of the empire realized, by virtue of their guaranteed right to secession, how "free" they were under socialism, the natural historical tendency towards the integration of nations would take hold with the national minorities thus voluntarily remaining in union with Russia. Championing the right to national self-determination, Lenin wrote in the summer of 1915, "far from encouraging the formation of petty states, leads, on the contrary, to the freer, fearless and therefore wider and more universal formation of large states and federations of states."²⁵ Such states, he added, "are more to the advantage of the masses and are more in keeping with economic development."²⁵

Clearly though, Lenin was sufficiently pragmatic to realize that, apart from sanctioning the non-Russians' right to self-determination as a means of liberating them psychologically from what he termed "the great bitterness and distrust of the Great Russians generally in the hearts of the neighbouring nations"²⁷, this naturally occurring process of integration would need assistance, specifically in the form of educating the workers in the virtues of internationalism. It is, he wrote in 1916, "our duty to teach the workers to be indifferent to national distinctions."²⁸ For the communists of the "oppressor" Russian nation, this meant ridding the Russian proletariat of any lingering colonialist attitudes towards the national minorities on the basis that Russia itself could not hope for its own emancipation as long as it oppressed other peoples. The corresponding duty of communists in the "oppressed" non-Russian nations was to agitate against "small nation narrowmindedness" and "isolationism" by inculcating into their workers the benefits, primarily economic, of voluntary integration into the larger whole.

This is a theme which Lenin persistently stressed in his writings on the national question. For him, the Social-Democrat was the "educator of the masses" in this regard. Nationalist sentiments were not to be overcome by means of forcibly trying to "fuse" nations together. As he wrote in October 1917, just prior to the revolution: "We want *free* unification...We want the republic of the Russian (I am even inclined to say Great Russian, for this is more correct) people to *attract* other nations to it. But how? Not by violence, but solely by voluntary agreement. Otherwise, the unity and the brotherly ties of the workers of all countries are broken."²⁹ Thus, the breaking down of national

barriers, particularly in a psychological sense, was envisaged as a fairly lengthy process in which patiently educating the masses to give up their national allegiances in favour of socialist class solidarity would play an integral role.

Hence, the voluntarism so distinguishing of Bolshevism as a radical ideology was apparent in Lenin's pre-revolutionary thinking on the nationality issue. As he wrote in April 1917, the proletarian party "strives to create as large a state as possible...its strives to draw nations closer together, and bring about their further fusion..."³⁰ Lenin's directive that the proletarian party had to "*strive*" (emphasis added) for these goals evidenced clearly his conviction that the "objective" historical process of the rapprochement or "drawing together" (in Russian, *sblizhenie*) of nations, leading to their ultimate "fusion" (*sliyanie*), had to be helped along by certain "subjective" factors; namely, the active intervention by Social-Democrats not only in building the necessary socialist economic base (or "substructure", to use the proper Marxian terminology), but, perhaps more importantly, in teaching the workers the merits of proletarian internationalism.³¹

The National Question During the Early Years of Soviet Power

With the assumption of power in November 1917, Bolshevik nationalities policy began the process of evolving in response to the practical demands of actual implementation as the Bolsheviks themselves began the transition from a party of revolution to a party of government. Lenin and his associates were faced with the prospect of a country which was rapidly disintegrating as more and more of the non-Russian minorities

proclaimed their independence of the Tsarist regime and the short-lived Provisional Government which followed it.³² The long and difficult process of reintegrating into a new, unified state the borderlands of the former Russian Empire began in 1918, and was essentially completed by the establishment of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in 1922. The principal architect of Soviet nationalities policy during this period was the new regime's first People's Commissar for the Affairs of the Nationalities, Joseph V. Stalin.

Stalin had first appeared as the Party's spokesman on the national question at an April 1917 conference of Bolshevik leaders in Petrograd. However, as early as 1913, in his essay *The National Question and Marxism*, he had set forth important views with respect to the matter. He began by offering a definition of what was meant by the term "nation" itself:

The nation is a historically evolved, stable community of people, united by a community of language, territory, economic life, and psychological sense, manifested in a community of culture.³³

However, for a nation to be said to exist, all four of these defining characteristics had to be clearly identifiable. The lack of any one meant that a particular community of people could not be categorized as a "nation".

Moreover, in Stalin's view, nations were a phenomenon representative of the capitalist epoch of historical development:

The nation is not simply a historical category, but a historical category of a particular epoch -- the epoch of rising capitalism. The process of the liquidation of feudalism and the development of capitalism is, at the same time, the process of evolving people into nations.³⁴

Thus, nations emerged as part of the "law-governed" process of historical development, and in particular as the result of the transition from feudalism to capitalism, wherein, for the first time in history, people shared the common economic life necessary for nationhood. From this, it followed that, according to Stalin, the bourgeoisie played the leading role in the creation of nations, and, as such, the struggle for national self-determination at this point was a bourgeois struggle.

In the main then, Stalin agreed with Lenin who, as was previously suggested, saw the struggle for self-determination by the minority nationalities in Russia under Tsarism specifically within the context of the "bourgeois-democratic" phase of the revolution. Like Lenin as well, Stalin stressed the necessity of internationalism and the unity and indivisibility of the proletariat in the class struggle while nonetheless voicing qualified support for the principle of national self-determination:

Social-Democracy in all countries proclaims the right of nations to self-determination...This, of course, does not mean that Social-Democracy will support each and every custom and institution of a nation...It will uphold only the right of a nation itself to determine its own destiny, while at the same time agitating against harmful customs and institutions of that nation so as to enable the working strata to free themselves from them.³⁵

From the last part of this passage, in particular the reference to the "working strata", it is clear that Stalin agreed with the Lenin that the question of national self-determination was always subordinate to the interests of the proletariat in the class struggle and that the Communist Party would reserve the right to decide which demands for self-determination were legitimate and worthy of support. Since the

principle duty of Marxists everywhere was to work towards breaking down national barriers so that the working classes could be united in their common struggle for emancipation, it is not difficult to see by reading between the lines that those instances in which the Bolsheviks could actually support demands for secession would be few and far between and limited exclusively to supporting the struggle for independence by nations continuing to labor under the yoke of imperialist exploitation. As pointed out earlier, since such exploitation was impossible under socialism, the assumption was that formal guarantees of the right of nations to secede from Soviet Russia would serve only the purpose of psychologically liberating the former subject minorities from the residual effects of Tsarist oppression and be, in a practical sense, meaningless.

It was on this basis that the principle of national self-determination was restated immediately following the revolution in "The Declaration of the Rights of the Peoples of Russia", a document co-authored by Lenin and Stalin, and issued by the new regime on November 15, 1917. This decree upheld "the equality and sovereignty of all the peoples of Russia", and the right of the peoples of Russia to self-determination, even to the point of separating and forming independent states.³⁶ However, the true spirit of the Bolshevik interpretation of self-determination was better reflected in "The Declaration of the Rights of Toiling and Exploited People" adopted by the Third All-Russian Congress of Soviets in January 1918, which stated that all the nations of Russia had "the right of unfettered decision whether and on what basis to participate in the federal government and in other federal Soviet institutions."³⁷ As E. H. Carr notes, the reference to

"federation" here was employed "without regard to constitutional niceties"³⁸ as the appropriate vehicle by which the national minorities could be gathered back voluntarily into a union with socialist Russia.

It is with respect to this question of federation that a very serious difference surfaced between Lenin and Stalin in the early 1920s. It is clear that after assuming power it was the hope of the new regime that the sort of voluntary reunion alluded to above would be the result of the non-Russians having carried out their own revolutions following the example of the Bolshevik model. However, the reality of the situation was that, although revolutionary governments did spring up in the borderlands, and independent Soviet republics were established in Azerbaidzhan, Armenia, Belorussia, Georgia, and Ukraine, they were largely anti-Bolshevik.

Clearly, neither Lenin nor Stalin wished to see the actual disintegration of the former empire. Indeed, as Stalin himself openly acknowledged, Russia was heavily dependent on the economic, agricultural, and mineral resources of the borderlands. Moreover, the dismemberment of the country would hardly have been in the interests of a regime which was, at this time, openly espousing the goal of international revolution.³⁹ Consequently, a real problem arose with respect to recovering the border regions without at the same time reviving among their inhabitants a fear of Great Russian imperialism reminiscent of Tsarist times. This process was complicated by the fact that armed force proved necessary to install Bolshevik regimes in certain of the non-Russian territories, most notably Ukraine and Georgia; something which was defensible from the Leninist perspective in the interests of guaranteeing the "proletariat" of these nations the

right to self-determination and upholding the preeminence of the "class struggle".

The first juridical step towards integrating the former subject peoples into a new form of union with Soviet Russia was to gradually reduce their independence by means of a series of bilateral treaties which established close economic and military ties between the independent Soviet republics and what was now called the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (R.S.F.S.R.).⁴⁰ Although these treaties were ostensibly between "equals", in reality the Russian republic was clearly the dominant partner in each instance. Thus, by 1921, excluding the Baltic States which had been lost to Russia as result of World War I and were not recovered until forcibly retaken by Stalin in 1940, the nations of the bygone Tsarist empire, which had been dispersed at the time of its collapse, were once again bound together but as yet only by means of these sorts of contractual arrangements. The next necessary step was to draft a constitutional framework by which to transform the existing structure into a new socialist community of nations. In August 1922, a commission headed by Stalin was established for the purpose of drawing up the new constitution.

In the fall of that year, Stalin's commission completed its work and Lenin, who was recovering from a serious stroke suffered in May, and only a month away from another that would force him out of public life altogether, was presented with a plan which proposed that the new Soviet federation of states be based on the constitution of the R.S.F.S.R. adopted in 1918. Lenin was greatly alarmed by this since the R.S.F.S.R. was a highly centralized form of political organization which hardly seemed to him the proper model for establishing a new union that would

not just legally but practically guarantee equality between Russia and the non-Russian peoples. The words of Helene Carrere d'Encausse are helpful in making this point:

The Federated Republic of Russia, set up by the 1918 Constitution did group eight autonomous republics and thirteen autonomous regions, but it was characterized by a high degree of centralization and an almost total lack of local jurisdictional authority...Under these conditions, proposing the R.S.F.S.R. as a prototype for federation amounted to advocating centralization extended to a different area.⁴¹

In fact, as Carrere d'Encausse goes on to point out, this sort of plan amounted to the de facto geographic extension of the R.S.F.S.R. and the virtual absorption of the non-Russian republics.⁴² Such was the essence of Stalin's policy of "autonomization".

Although, as has been seen, Lenin himself had a clear preference for centralization, and hence the very idea of federation was a substantial concession on his behalf, it has also been suggested that, above all else, he was concerned that if the support of the minority peoples for Soviet power was to be won, anything which smacked of "Great Russian chauvinism" had to be avoided. Thus, he opposed Stalin's constitutional plans in the belief that, if implemented, the new Soviet state would quickly be equated by the non-Russians with its Tsarist predecessor. Russian imperial domination would be back only in a different structural form and under the doctrinal guise of "proletarian internationalism."

In a piece entitled "The Question of Nationalities or Autonomization", dictated in December 1922, Lenin warned once more of the grave danger involved in continuing to treat the national minorities in an unequal fashion. Emphasizing again the need to emancipate the

non-Russians psychologically from their accrued experience of Tsarist oppression, he argued that, although the interests of the class struggle, as always, were predominant, the non-Russians' allegiance in it could not be secured except by means of concession:

What is important for the proletarian? For the proletarian it is not only important, it is absolutely essential that he should be assured that the non-Russians place the greatest possible trust in the proletarian class struggle. What is needed to ensure this? Not merely formal equality. In one way or another, by one's attitude or by concessions, it is necessary to compensate the non-Russians for the lack of trust, for the suspicion and insults to which the government of the dominant nation subjected them in the past.⁴³

As a result, Lenin countered Stalin's constitutional proposal with a draft of his own that provided greater juridical guarantees of equality to the border areas. While in no way dispensing with the ultimate goal of the "fusion" (*sliyanie*) of nations, Lenin was now convinced that federation was necessary as a transitory step on the road to the socialist unitarism of the future.

In addition to legal guarantees, Lenin, as is clear from the quotation above, realized that concrete concessions to local nationalisms were now also necessary if the minority peoples were to be won over to his regime. Therefore, during the period 1921-1927, the Soviet government undertook a major effort to upgrade the quality of education among the nationalities, as well as encouraged the greater use of native languages, the preservation of cultural symbols and institutions, and provided for a meaningful degree of local self-government. Such was the essence of the Bolshevik's "national in form, socialist in content" policy wherein the various non-Russian cultures were to be permitted to assume a national form, primarily with regard to

language, but were at the same time to be socialist in content, with local languages being used not to reinforce the particular heritage of individual nations, but rather to transmit to these peoples an entirely new heritage; that of socialist values and aims.

Within each republic, it was anticipated that this would result in the creation of a new form of local elite which would, despite continuing cultural and ethnic differences, be bound from one republic to another by the same common roots; that of being products of the new Soviet system and thus firm adherents to it. This is what Stalin, co-architect of the plan with Lenin, had in mind when he wrote during the mid-1920s that:

One of the fundamental tasks is to rear and develop in the national republics and regions young communist organizations consisting of the proletarian and semi-proletarian elements of the local population...The Soviet regime will be strong in the republics only when really important communist organizations are firmly developed there.⁴⁴

This was the substance of the regime's policy of "indigenization" or "taking root" (*korenizatsiya*), which aimed not only at recruiting non-Russians into the Soviet party and state apparatus, but encouraged Russian officials in non-Russian areas to learn local languages, and supported the cultural and social development of the minority peoples.⁴⁵ "Great Russian chauvinism" was identified as the main danger to proletarian unity within the USSR, and, while local nationalisms were not to be encouraged, some recognition of national heritages had to be made if the new union was to succeed. In essence, the non-Russian nations had to be allowed to "flower" or "flourish" (*rastvet*) to their full potential if the long-term processes of *sblizhenie* and *sliyanie* were to unfold smoothly.⁴⁶

This did not mean, of course, that a system of central controls were no longer deemed necessary. In fact, a number of checks and balances, such as the primacy of the federal over republican governments, and the broader primacy of the Communist Party itself (which did not even pretend towards federalism) over the entire state structure, were in place to guard against any intensification of local nationalisms. As a consequence, the new Soviet federation clearly demonstrated the ongoing Bolshevik commitment to centralization, and was entirely in keeping with Lenin's declaration that while recognizing federalism as "a transitional form" leading to the "complete unity" (*polnoe edinstvo*) of the working people of different nations, it was also necessary to continually "strive for [the] ever closer federal unity" of Soviet republics.⁴⁷ Furthermore, proposals by some non-Russian communists for a Soviet confederation with a weaker central government were explicitly rejected.⁴⁸

This notwithstanding, it is fair to say that Soviet nationality policy during the 1920s represented a mixture of compromise and control; the intent of which was the creation over time, and with due "patience and circumspection"⁴⁹ as Lenin described it, of a new socialist brotherhood of peoples in which nationalist sentiments would be a thing of the past.

Stalin's Approach to the National Question

During the early 1920s, Stalin, having been forced to yield to Lenin's constitutional plans, vigorously supported the idea of appeasing the minorities and winning them over to Bolshevism by means of cultural,

linguistic, and even political concessions. After 1924, as he became locked in a power struggle for the succession following Lenin's death, he emerged as an even stronger proponent of the rights of the border peoples in an effort to win the support of local cadres against his political opponents; being, as was pointed out above, a leading proponent of the "national in form, socialist in content" policy.

Moreover, in his second major treatise on the national question, *The National Question and Leninism*, published in 1929, Stalin drew a distinction between "bourgeois" and "socialist" nations. The former were dominated by chauvinistic political parties representing private capital, united internally by the perverse psychology of imperialism, and therefore in constant conflict with one another. The latter he saw as being unified internally by unbreakable class solidarity and externally by the same deep class bonds which inherently negated the possibility of conflict between them. He also reaffirmed the Leninist thesis that the victory of socialism in Russia, while paving the way for the long-term "fusion" of nations, in the interim created "favorable conditions for the rebirth and flourishing (*rastsvet*) of the nations that were formerly oppressed by tsarist imperialism..."⁵⁰

With Stalin's assumption of uncontested personal power in the early 1930s, the nationality policy of the Soviet government underwent a fundamental change. Determined to forcibly transform from the top the entire nature of Soviet society through a process of rapid industrialization and agricultural collectivization (i.e., the doctrine of "socialism in one country"), Stalin aimed at creating new social conditions in which nationalism would simply lose all meaning. In this sense, his policy differed little from that of Lenin who also believed

that the socialist transformation of the economic "substructure" of Russian society would be of fundamental importance in allowing the bourgeois concept of nationalism to pass over into proletarian internationalism. Obviously then, the Leninist and Stalinist approaches shared in common the voluntaristic assumption that "subjective" factors were required in aiding the "objective" forces of history moving towards this end. However, the two just as obviously differed profoundly in their approach to helping this process along. As Helene Carrere d'Encausse describes it: "Lenin's confidence in the teaching of internationalism never tempted Stalin. In the early 1930s, he replaced education with naked violence."⁵¹

The nationalities in general were hit very hard by the purges of the 1930s. With the beginning of the *Yezhovshchina*⁵² in 1936, Stalin set about ruthlessly destroying the national elites which had emerged as a consequence of the "national in form, socialist in content" policy of the 1920s of which, as noted above, he himself had been a principal sponsor. By the late 1920s, it had become evident that, although new national elites were indeed being established as a result of the "indigenization" process, they were, to a large degree, nationalist in content as well as in form. Thus, the concept of "national in form, socialist in content" had created a paradoxical situation whereby, instead of giving rise to a new form of unified socialist culture, it provided a framework for the minorities to begin gradually to reassert themselves.⁵³ Stalin apparently saw no other way of dealing with this unwelcome paradox than by resort to force. In Ukraine, for example, the entire Politburo as well as thousands of lower ranking party and state officials were liquidated during the Great Purge of 1937-38,⁵⁴ and the

story was much the same in the Caucasus, Transcaucasia and Central Asia.⁵⁵ As the Soviet historian Roy Medvedev has documented in his monumental work *Let History Judge*, these non-Russian Communist leaders were charged falsely with being "bourgeois nationalists".⁵⁶

In fact, they were guilty only of carrying out what was still the party's proclaimed nationality policy of encouraging the development of national cultures and the emergence of indigenous elites committed to the Soviet system (i.e., *korenizatsiya*). As Geoffrey Hosking tells us, in most cases these purged officials were replaced by Russians directly appointed from Moscow with the result that the proportion of native members in non-Russian party organizations dropped precipitously during the period 1937-1941. Hosking appropriately concludes, therefore, that "it cannot be doubted that the effect of the purges and arrests was to Russify the party membership and bring the national party organizations under much closer control from Moscow."⁵⁷

These purges were accompanied by cultural policies which further smacked of the Russification pursued by the old Tsarist regime in its last years; something that was justified by reversing Lenin's previous contention that "Great Russian chauvinism" was the main danger to proletarian unity in the USSR. Rather it was now "bourgeois (i.e., local) nationalism." As part of the effort to keep indigenous nationalisms in check, the Cyrillic alphabet was imposed on most non-Russian languages throughout the country;⁵⁸ a process which brought these tongues closer to the written Russian and allowed for the steady penetration of Russian words into local vernaculars. At the end of the 1930s, a deliberate effort was undertaken to rewrite the history of the Russian Empire; one which rediscovered the positive leading role of

Russia in the history of the nation, and concurrently denigrated the relative contributions of the non-Russian minorities.

During World War II, the attempt to revive Russian nationalist sentiments was stepped up as the Stalinist regime appealed, in the name of defending the country against Naziism, to a deeply-held sense of Russian patriotism; to the passionate Russian attachment to the "motherland" (*rodina*). The Russian Orthodox Church, historically a powerful symbol of Russian nationalist pride which had been ruthlessly persecuted by the Soviet government since 1917, was largely rehabilitated and voiced support for the regime in its bitter struggle with Hitler.⁵⁰ Furthermore, the memories of previous Russian war heroes such as Admiral Suvorov and General Kutuzov were revived and glorified.

It was also during the war years that likely the most despicable manifestation of Stalinist nationality policy occurred. During 1943-44, the *vozhd'*⁵⁰ ordered the mass deportation of the peoples of six small nations: the Volga Germans, Crimean Tatars, Chechens, Kalmyks, Ingush, and Karachays. They were accused of being traitorous and displaying autonomist tendencies following the Nazi retreat from their territories. In total, more than five million of these unfortunate peoples, innocent of the charges against them, were deported and resettled in sparsely populated and under-developed parts of Kazakhstan, Siberia, and Central Asia. Untold thousands died as a result of this inhuman action, and "all references to the disgraced nationalities disappeared from the history books and encyclopedias, as if they had never existed."⁵¹ Moreover, this tragedy left deep and lasting wounds which made the plight of these disgraced peoples a major policy dilemma for Stalin's successors.

Soviet nationality policy was further modified by Stalin following the Soviet victory in the war. His victory toast in 1945 was to the "Russian" as opposed to the "Soviet" people, and his speeches on the experience of the war made it clear that Russia had sacrificed the most in saving the country and therefore deserved to be recognized as "first among equals"; to be the "elder brother" (*starshii brat*) to all the peoples of the Soviet Union. This notion of Russia as "elder brother" became a cornerstone of the Stalinist approach to the national question and the following propaganda line was typical of the time:

The Russian people are a great people. They have advanced the movement of all mankind toward the triumph of democracy and socialism. Under the leadership of their working class, the most advanced in the world, the Russian people have been the first in history to be liberated from capitalist oppression and exploitation. The Russian working class has helped to liberate from national, political and economic oppression the whole numerous family of peoples inhabiting former tsarist Russia.⁶²

In keeping with this view, the process of rewriting the history of the Russian Empire was continued with the "evil" of Russian domination during Tsarist times now being portrayed as having been "good" for the less advanced and backward non-Russians. The broad attack on minority cultures also continued with the systematic downgrading of all symbols of non-Russian life, and the ongoing penetration of the Russian language, as the so-called "language of the international community of peoples of the USSR",⁶³ into the languages of the minority nations. All this was done, nevertheless, "under the guise of fostering internationalism, proletarian solidarity, and the 'friendship of peoples'."⁶⁴ Stalin continued to speak of a new "spirit of cooperative friendship" having evolved in such a manner that there had been

"constructed the present brotherly cooperation of peoples in a system of a single union state."⁶⁵ Thus, far from signalling a return to traditional Tsarist chauvinism, Stalin's policy of Russian preeminence was transparently justified as representing a sort of "fast track" to the socialist internationalism of the future. The "progressive" Russian language and culture were portrayed as being the primary integrative force behind the rapprochement (*sblizhenie*) of nations as foreseen by Lenin.

In reality, however, by the time of Stalin's death, the Soviet Union was, in the words of Carrere d'Encausse, "a real empire, one in which the preeminence of the Russian people was justified - as in the colonial empires of the past - by a superior civilization and the progress towards which it led its subjects."⁶⁶ Put succinctly, Stalin's nationality policy represented a clear break with that of the 1920s. An uncompromising denunciation of non-Russian cultures replaced the concessions of the NEP period, and the vehicle to the new, unified socialist culture of the future was no longer the education of the masses in the virtues of internationalism, but rather a return by force to the old Imperial policy of Russification.⁶⁷ If one wishes to call the destruction of local elites and institutions, as was intended, a success, then the policy cannot be characterized entirely as a failure.

Nonetheless, experts, such as Geoffrey Hosking, have made the point that the liquidation of illiteracy, the establishment of universal primary education, and the migration of millions of rural dwellers into the cities - all as consequences of Stalin's ambitious modernization plans - had the very real effect of intensifying local national sentiments even as real economic and political power was being

increasingly centralized in Moscow.⁶⁹ This coupled with the fact that, as Donald Treadgold observes, "the minority peoples, faced with the dictation and brutality of Russian Communists, concluded that pre-revolutionary Russian colonialism was back, only increased a hundredfold in severity,"⁷⁰ created a paradoxical situation wherein, to use Hosking's words again, "new nations, in fact, were taking shape under extreme pressure, and old ones were struggling to keep their culture alive."⁷¹ In short, Stalinist policy had the unintended effect of actually strengthening nationalistic moods and prejudices throughout the USSR. Such was what Hosking describes as the "potentially explosive"⁷² state of nationality affairs bequeathed by Stalin to his successors.

Summary

The study of Lenin's original handling of the national question, and Stalin's subsequent policy, is important because it is from this ideological and practical basis that the whole of Soviet nationality policy has flowed since. Some general observations and criticisms are by now familiar to those involved in appraising the experience of Soviet inter-national relations: that Marx erred in predicting the demise of nationalism as a unifying ideological force and assuming that social class is the dominant basis in terms of which human consciousness of interest is formed;⁷³ that a certain tension exists in Leninist theory between the apparently contradictory concepts of "national self-determination", on the one hand, and "proletarian internationalism", on the other;⁷⁴ that the Stalinist definition of "the nation" is dogmatic

and inadequate as far as really understanding the nebulous notion of nationhood.⁷⁴

What is less frequently emphasized in the current literature is, first of all, the voluntarism underlying both the Leninist and Stalinist nationality policies. Lenin's writings on the national question, both before and after the revolution, continually stressed the active, interventionist role to be played by the Communist Party, especially by means of education, in overcoming nationalist prejudices and building a new level of trust between the Great Russian and non-Russian peoples. He clearly realized that a very long time and considerable effort would be required to bring about this new trusting relationship and the consequential "drawing together" of nations in the USSR. For his part, Stalin too was unwilling to simply assume that nationalism, particularly among the minorities, would disappear of its own volition given sufficient time, and sought, by means of rapid industrialization and agricultural collectivization, to create sooner rather than later the "objective" (i.e., socio-economic) conditions which would accelerate its demise. Moreover, he was prepared to use force to crush perceived manifestations of local nationalisms and to, if necessary, obliterate national cultures altogether.

Hence, a strong tendency to rely on "subjective" means - in Lenin's case primarily pedagogy; in Stalin's primarily brute force - to "assist" the "objective" historical processes leading finally to the "fusion" (*sliyanie*) of nations characterized both the Leninist and Stalinist approaches to the national question, something which places them a considerable distance from Marx on this specific issue. As will be pointed out in subsequent chapters, this emphasis on "subjective"

factors has remained typical of Soviet nationality policy in the post-Stalin era.

A second point to be made is the extent to which the Leninist and Stalinist nationality policies imply the importance of psychological factors in defining both the right to "national self-determination" and "the nation" itself. As was pointed out several times during the course of this chapter, the Leninist guarantee of the right to secede was advanced principally for the purpose of liberating the non-Russian peoples psychologically from the accumulated effects of Tsarist oppression; thus paving the way for the "objective" forces of history to play their unifying role in the "drawing together" and "fusing" of nations. For its part, the Stalinist definition of "the nation", as much as it stresses "objective" factors such as a common language, territory, and economic life, nevertheless includes the provision that a "psychological makeup manifested in a common community of culture" is an indispensable condition of nationhood. In both cases, the priority of psychological intangibles over the operation of material factors seems to be implied, a curious irony from the point of view of dialectical materialists since it would seem to contradict, as Shaheen puts it, "the most elementary Marxist tenets according to which social psychology is conditioned by objective social life."⁷⁵

It therefore appears to be another paradox of Leninist and Stalinist theory that both imply the preeminence of a spiritual component in their approach to the national question; a component about which, on the basis of their own materialist philosophy, they have no real business speculating. Moreover, as will be noted in chapter three, the psychological component of Stalin's definition of nationhood

subsequently proved troublesome for Soviet academics who favored the rapid "drawing together" and "fusion" of nations.

While much more could be written in the way of historical background, this particular review of the Leninist and Stalinist nationality policies, highlighting that which it seeks to, should provide some sort of meaningful context for the discussion which unfolds in the following chapters. As will be seen, the contributions of both Lenin and Stalin, with their evident similarities and divergences, to the theory and practice of Soviet nationality policy have remained relevant in the modern era.

Notes

¹ V. I. Lenin, "On The National Pride of the Great Russians", in, *Selected Works Volume I* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1963), p. 628.

² J. V. Stalin, "The October Revolution and the National Question", in *Collected Works Volume IV* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1953), p. 165.

³ V. I. Lenin, "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination", *op.cit.*, p.614. For further discussion of this aspect of Marxist theory, see the first chapter of Ivan Dzyuba's *Internationalism or Russification?* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968).

⁴ Isaiah Berlin, *Karl Marx* (Oxford: University Press, 1978), p. 148.

⁵ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1967), p. 102.

⁶ For an interesting insight into Marx's views in this regard, see Maximilien Rubel, *Oeuvres (Vol. I)* (Paris: Gallimard, 1963).

⁷ As summarized by Reshetar, pp. 281-282.

⁸ Marx and Engels, p. 102.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism Volume II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p.88.

¹¹ The Bund demanded "national-cultural autonomy" as defined by the Austrian socialists Karl Renner and Otto Bauer following the Brunn Congress of Austrian Social-Democrats in September 1899. Samad Shaheen, *The Communist (Bolshevik) Theory of National Self-Determination* (The Hague: W. Van Hoeve Ltd., 1956), pp.23-24, has summarized the Renner-Bauer scheme as follows: "Renner and Bauer endeavoured to reconcile the nationalist movement among the minorities of the Empire with the socialist striving for proletarian unity. They interpreted nationalism as a primarily cultural movement engendered by the process of democratisation, and the scheme they devised sought to neutralize nationalism as a force harmful to socialism by diverting it into cultural channels. They proposed that in multinational states control over the cultural life of each ethnic group be transferred to autonomous organs elected by members of the group and that such organs exercise authority over all their subjects irrespective of the territory which they inhabited. Thus, members of the different nationalities would be organized, irrespective of their place of residence, under national councils for the conduct of their educational and other cultural affairs, and the political and economic unity of the Monarchy and its administration would remain unaffected."

Although the Renner-Bauer plan was obviously drawn up to respond to the nationality problem within the Austrian Empire, Shaheen goes on to point out that it had considerable appeal for the Jewish Bund in Russia: "No other solution of the national question better met the needs of the Jewish minority in Russia, scattered as it was over large territories. Up to 1901, the only political demand of the Bund was in respect of civil equality for the Jews. But at the end of April 1901, in its Fourth Congress held at Byelostok, it declared that 'the concept of nationality is also applicable to the Jewish people', and that Russia should be transformed into a federation of nationalities."

¹² Bertram Wolfe, *Three Who Made a Revolution* (New York: The Dial Press, 1948), p. 579. It is interesting to note the fact that many Jewish intellectuals did indeed become involved in the Russian Social-Democratic movement, including several such as Trotsky (Bronstein), Kamenev (Rosenfeld), Radek (Sobelsohn), and Zinoviev (Radosmysl'ski), who were prominent Bolsheviks.

¹³ V. I. Lenin, "Theses on the National Question", in V. I. Lenin, *On Proletarian Internationalism* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1967), p. 65. Lenin's denunciation of the Bund's advocacy of "national-cultural autonomy" for Russia's Jews came within the context of his broader polemical attack against the Renner-Bauer scheme to which he devoted a considerable amount of effort. As Shaheen, p. 39 has observed, Lenin opposed "national-cultural autonomy" because he feared "it would encourage separatist tendencies in the nationalities whose aspirations could only lead to one thing, the creation of independent states and the disintegration of the Russian state, which eventuality Lenin was trying, by all devices, to avoid since he appeared on the political scene."

¹⁴ V. I. Lenin, "Draft Resolution on the Place of the Bund in the Party", *ibid.*, pp. 27-28.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 27. Lenin writes specifically "that the complete amalgamation of the Social-Democratic organizations of the Jewish and non-Jewish proletariat can in no respect or manner restrict the independence of our Jewish comrades in conducting propaganda and agitation in one language or another, in publishing literature adapted to the needs of a given local or national movement, or in advancing such slogans for agitation and the direct political struggle that would be an application and development of the general and fundamental principles of the Social-Democratic programme regarding full equality and full freedom of language, national culture, etc., etc.."

¹⁶ David Lane, *Soviet Economy and Society* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), p. 204.

¹⁷ As Shaheen, p. 39 notes, after 1912 the Mensheviks supported the notion of national-cultural autonomy, something which greatly concerned Lenin who saw in this the potential for his political rivals to attract considerable support from the minority nationalities at Bolshevik expense. Hence, Lenin's policy on national self-determination needs to be seen very much within the context of his own struggle for power. This gives at least limited currency to critics such as Roman Smal-Stocki, *The Captive Nations: Nationalism of the Non-Russian Nations in the Soviet Union* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1960), pp. 42-46, who have argued that Lenin's central concern was how to seize, hold, and expand power. This does not mean, however, that the Bolshevik guarantee of the right to national self-determination was simply a chimera; nor does it justify Smal-Stocki's brusque assertion that it is a waste of time to examine the principles underlying Lenin's and Stalin's nationality policy. On the contrary, as this chapter will subsequently seek to demonstrate, the Leninist guarantee of the right to secede was meant to serve a very important - indeed, indispensable - purpose as far as the Soviet regime's long term goals for national relations within the USSR.

¹⁸ V. I. Lenin, "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination", p.569.

¹⁹ V. I. Lenin, "The National Question In Our Programme", in *On Proletarian Internationalism*, p. 17.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

²² Wolfe, p. 589.

²³ V. I. Lenin, "Draft Programme of the R.C.P.(B)", in *On Proletarian Internationalism*, p. 249.

²⁴ Stephen P. Dunn and Ethel Dunn, eds., *Introduction to Soviet Ethnography Volume I* (Berkeley: Highgate Road Social Science Research Station Inc., 1974), p.11.

²⁵ V. I. Lenin, "Socialism and War", in *On Proletarian Internationalism*, p. 134.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ V. I. Lenin, "Revision of the Party Programme", *ibid.*, p. 197.

²⁸ V. I. Lenin, "The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up", *ibid.*, p. 160. The reader is also referred to the quote from "On The National Pride of the Great Russians" which opens this chapter for further evidence of Lenin's emphasis on the importance of education in this regard.

²⁹ V. I. Lenin, "Revision of the Party Programme", *ibid.*, p. 197. One can see what might be construed as Russian nationalist pretensions in this and other of Lenin's writings on the national question. In his article "On The National Pride of the Great Russians," *ibid.*, p. 108, he writes the following: "Is a sense of national pride alien to us, Great Russian class-conscious proletarians? Certainly not! We love our language and our country, and we are doing our very utmost to raise her toiling masses (i.e., nine-tenths of her population) to the level of a democratic and socialist consciousness. To us it is most painful to see and feel the outrages, the oppression and the humiliation our fair country suffers at the hands of the tsar's butchers, the nobles and the capitalists. We take pride in the resistance to these outrages put up from our midst, from the Great Russians; in that midst having produced Radishchev, the Decembrists and the revolutionary commoners of the seventies; in the Great-Russian working class having created, in 1905, a mighty revolutionary party of the masses; and in the Great-Russian peasantry having begun to turn towards democracy and set about overthrowing the clergy and the landed proprietors." At the very least, Lenin can clearly be placed in the Russian radical tradition of men like Tkachev and Nechaev and, perhaps more broadly, within what analysts such as Reshetar, p. 282 have identified as the "centralist tradition" of Russian political culture.

³⁰ V. I. Lenin, "The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution", *ibid.*, p. 176.

³¹ As will be expanded on in chapter three, there has been considerable controversy among Soviet scholars over the years as to what Lenin actually understood by the term *sliyanie*, which can mean several things in Russian - for example, "amalgamation", "merger", "integration", or "fusion". Some academics have argued that he did not foresee the complete elimination of national distinctions in a literal sense. Rather, in keeping with his views on the subject of "national culture", Lenin interpreted "fusion" as being the process by which the future internationalist culture of communism would absorb from all "national cultures" their progressive "socialist" elements. Others have maintained that he envisioned the long-term "merging" or "fusing" of all nations (including Russia) into a "de-nationalized", ethnically undifferentiated whole. This would obviously imply racial mixing and biological assimilation through such practices as inter-ethnic marriage and so on.

The origins of the term *sliyanie* itself as used by Lenin in his writings remain unclear. As indicated in note 15 above (a quotation from 1903), he seems to have originally employed it to mean the unification of workers of different nationalities within common proletarian political structures. As such, it had only organizational implications. Here, the dispersion of the Russian proletariat throughout the far-flung reaches of the empire may have been crucial to Lenin's thinking. When "fusion" began to take on connotations of ethnic homogenization is difficult to ascertain. A possible clue may exist in the form of favorable references to the "American melting pot" contained in his "Critical Remarks on the National Question", which was written in 1913. However, this would not necessarily invalidate either of the competing definitions outlined in the paragraph above. In any event, as he wrote in his 1914 article "The Position and Tasks of the Socialist International", *ibid.*, p. 98, Lenin consistently maintained, both before and after the revolution, that "the borderlines of nationality and country are historically transient." Whether this, in fact, entailed the complete effacement of national characteristics or only the least "progressive" features of "national culture" has remained the subject of academic debate.

³² It should be noted here that one of the reasons for the appeal of Lenin's policy on self-determination during the summer of 1917 was the unenlightened approach taken by the Provisional Government under Alexander Kerensky which was clearly intent on maintaining the territorial integrity of the Romanov empire and demonstrated a general insensitivity to the concerns of the non-Russians.

³³ J. V. Stalin, *Natsional'nyi vopros i marksizm* [The National Question and Marxism] (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Priboi, 1913), p. 11.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

³⁶ See "The Declaration of the Rights of the Peoples of Russia", in Isaac Deutscher, *Stalin: A Political Biography* (New York: Penguin Books, 1966), p. 188.

³⁷ As quoted in E. H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution 1917-1923 Volume I* (New York: Penguin Books, 1966), p. 269.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Stalin made both these points in the same article. See J. V. Stalin, "The Policy of the Soviet Government on the National Question", in *Collected Works Volume IV* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1953, p. 363 where he writes first of all that "central Russia, that hearth of world revolution cannot hold out for long without the assistance of the border regions, which abound in raw materials, fuel, and foodstuffs". He follows this up on the next page by stating that "the secession of the border region would undermine the revolutionary might of central Russia, which is stimulating the movement for

emancipation in the West and East." Stalin might have added, with considerable justification, that Russia's economic dependency on the borderlands was the result of absurd Tsarist policies which, by and large, failed to capitalize on the immense resource wealth of the "motherland" itself.

⁴⁰ It must, of course, be reiterated that, as in the cases of Ukraine and Georgia, force of arms had first been necessary to install regimes in these republics which were amenable to such treaties.

⁴¹ Helene Carrere d'Encausse, *Decline of an Empire* (New York: Harper and Row, 1981), p. 19.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ V. I. Lenin, "The Question of Nationalities or 'Autonomization' ", in *Selected Works Volume III* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1963), p. 688.

⁴⁴ J. V. Stalin, "Draft Platform of the National Question for the Fourth Conference Endorsed by the Political Bureau of the Central Committee", in *Collected Works Volume V* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1953), p. 138.

⁴⁵ As Orest Subtelny, *Ukraine: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), p. 387 notes, the primary focus of the leadership's concern for *korenizatsiya* was Ukraine where the process was referred to a "Ukrainization".

⁴⁶ This underscores an apparent tension in Leninist thinking on the national question. On the one hand, local nationalisms are not to be encouraged, but, on the other, nations are to be allowed to "flourish" (*rastvet*). As will be noted in subsequent chapters, how these two seemingly irreconcilable aims play themselves out both in theory and practice has remained an enduring dilemma for Soviet nationality policy.

⁴⁷ See V. I. Lenin, "Theses for the Second Congress of the Communist International", *op. cit.*, p. 374. As a Soviet scholar summarizes it: "V. I. Lenin proved that Soviet federation is fundamentally different from bourgeois federation. Soviet federation does not divide people but rather draws them together (*sblizhaet ikh*). The principal difference between proletariat and capitalist states consists in this. If it is the case that in bourgeois states private capitalist ownership divides peoples, then it is the case that, in the Soviet state, social ownership and collective labour draws the peoples together (*sblizhayut narodyi*)." See S. Yakubovskaya, "Rol' V. I. Lenina v sozdanii Soyuza Sovetskikh Sotsialisticheskikh Respublikh" [V. I. Lenin's Role in Creating the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics], *Kommunist*, No. 10, July 1956, p. 29.

⁴⁸ As noted in Reshetar, *op. cit.*, p. 284, citing M. I. Kulichenko, *Obrazovanie i razvitie SSSR* [The Formation and Development of the USSR] (Erevan: Aistat, 1982), pp. 115-116.

⁴⁹ V. I. Lenin, "Letter to the Workers and Peasants of the Ukraine Appropos of the Victories Over Denikin", *op. cit.*, p. 258.

⁵⁰ J. V. Stalin, *The National Question and Leninism* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1950), p. 16.

⁵¹ Carrere d'Encausse, p. 29.

⁵² This is the name given to what Reshetar, p. 161, aptly terms "the most sanguinary Soviet purge" after the then chief of the Stalinist secret police (NKVD), Nikolai Yezhov. Ironically, Yezhov himself subsequently perished during a further round of purges in 1938.

⁵³ Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone, in her article, "The Study of Ethnic Politics in the USSR", in George W. Simmonds, ed., *Nationalism in the USSR & Eastern Europe in the Era of Brezhnev and Kosygin* (Detroit: The University of Detroit Press, 1977), p. 27, has outlined the nature of this paradox: "In the expectation that a new Soviet proletarian-internationalist culture would evolve through a dialectical synthesis between particular national traditions and a common socialist base...the policy furnished minority cultures with a framework within which to grow. But instead of the expected synthesis, there was a revival of minority cultures; the result in part of the continuation of historical trends and in part of a negative reaction to the Russian flavor of the socialist content and the artificiality of the concept of proletarian internationalism." This particular paradox can be seen as illustrative of the sort of fundamental tension in Lenin's nationality policy alluded to in note 46 above.

⁵⁴ See Subtelny, p. 420, as well as Robert Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine* (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 1986), pp. 331-334.

⁵⁵ Roy A. Medvedev, *Let History Judge: The Origins and Consequences of Stalinism* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1972), pp. 204-207.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 207.

⁵⁷ See Geoffrey Hosking, *A History of the Soviet Union* (London: Fontana Press/Collins, 1985), pp. 250-251. According to his data, the proportion of native members in the Uzbek party organization declined from 61 to 50 per cent during the period 1933-40; in Tadzikistan from 53 to 45 per cent during the same period; and in Kirgizia from 59 to 44 per cent during the period 1933-41.

⁵⁸ As Jonathan Pool, "Soviet Language Planning: Goals, Results, Options" in Jeremy Azrael, ed., *Soviet Nationality Policies and Practices* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1978), p. 234 notes, only those local languages that had substantial literatures in, and strong popular loyalties to, other scripts (i.e., Latvian, Lithuanian, Estonian, Armenian, Georgian, and Yiddish) escaped the process of cyrillicization.

⁵⁹ The plight of the Russian Orthodox Church following 1917 reminds us that symbols of Russian national culture were not immune from attack by

the Bolshevik regime. Moreover, as Medvedev, p. 202 has documented, the Great Purge of 1937-38 not only obliterated non-Russian Communist elites but decimated the party structure within the R.S.F.S.R. itself.

⁶⁰ A Russian word meaning "leader" but with connotations of infallibility and greatness. It was commonly used by his sycophants in reference to Stalin.

⁶¹ Medvedev, pp. 491-492.

⁶² As cited in Subtelny, pp. 422-423.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 422.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ As cited in *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Carrere d'Encausse, p. 36.

⁶⁷ Some authors, for example, Geoffrey Hosking, p. 259, argue that "Russification" is not the proper term to use in describing Stalinist nationalities policy: "This was not really Russification, but rather 'Sovietization' or 'Communization'. It involved subjecting all nationalities, including the Russians, to the centralized political control of the party and to the economic domination of the centralized planning apparatus. Even in Russian areas, this involved a weakening of the national identity in the religious, agrarian and cultural spheres." While, as noted above, Russia proper certainly did not escape the murderous wrath of the Stalin purges; nor did Stalin permit the complete displacement of the internationalist component of Marxism-Leninism by Russian nationalist ideas, Hosking's argument that we ought to classify the Stalinist approach to the national question not as "Russification" but rather "Sovietization" seems suspect at least by reference to the following definition of the two concepts provided by Christopher Doersam, "Sovietization, Culture, and Religion", in Edward Allworth, ed., *Nationality Group Survival in Multi-Ethnic States: Shifting Patterns in the Soviet Baltic Region* (New York: Praeger Publishers Inc., 1977), p. 149: "Unqualified Russification implies the adoption of Russian language and culture by a nationality and the entire replacement of the nationality's culture and identity by a Russian one. Sovietization, theoretically, does not necessarily signify Russification but, rather, the mere eradication of national differences and animosities and the creation of a common Soviet culture. Russification presupposes the virtual annihilation of the nationalities' cultures, whereas Sovietization does not assume the entire substitution of one culture for the culture of another particular ethnic group. It rather suggests a synthesis to which the nationality culture may contribute a part of its original culture, thereby preserving certain of its own features in the newly formed general socialist Soviet culture." The view here is that the clear Stalinist intent to forcibly annihilate certain non-Russian cultures disqualifies his nationality policy from the right to be labelled as "Sovietization". Such would be a correct name for Lenin's educational approach but "Russification", despite what

might be conceded to Hosking as its inadequacies as a definitional term, nonetheless better describes the gist of Stalinist nationality policy.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 260.

⁶⁹ Donald J. Treadgold, *Twentieth Century Russia* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1981), p. 286.

⁷⁰ Hosking, p. 260.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² As C. Wright Mills, *The Marxists* (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1962), p. 127, has observed: "Nationalism, contrary to Marx's general assumption, has increased in importance as a political and economic force, as a military form, and as a basis of men's consciousness. In the making of history today, nation-states - and supra-national blocs of states - are the most immediate forms of organization, political consciousness and militant will. Classes, and particularly alliances of classes, do of course operate by means of nation-states, but the political and military powers resting in these political structures and upon nationalist consciousness often reshape class and alliances of classes."

⁷³ A Leninist would argue, of course, that there is no contradiction here; that "national self-determination and "proletarian internationalism" are two sides of the same dialectical coin. Nonetheless, experts such as Gail Lapidus, "Gorbachev's Nationalities Problem", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 68, No. 4, Fall 1989, p. 96, have justifiably alluded to the fact that, on the basis of Lenin's theoretical assumptions, a fundamental tension was built into the Soviet federation from its very origins: "...the federal structure offered an organizational framework and political legitimacy for the protection and advancement of the interests of national groups, but at the same time Soviet ideology anticipated the ultimate dissolution of national attachments and loyalties and sought the creation of an integrated political and economic community based on universal Soviet citizenship. What balance to strike between these two orientations has remained an enduring dilemma in Soviet politics."

⁷⁴ For an example of this sort of criticism by reference to such renowned Western theorists as Arnold Toynbee, Hans Kohn, and W. B. Pillsbury, see Shaheen, pp. 44-46.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

Khrushchev and The National Question: The Dialectics of "Fusion"

People are to be encountered of course who complain about the effacement of national distinctions. Our answer to them is that Communists are not going to freeze and perpetuate national distinctions. With the building of communism under way, the nations and nationalities are drawing closer together on a voluntary and democratic basis and we shall support this objective process.¹

N. S. Khrushchev

...the disappearance of nations would impoverish us not less than if all men should become alike, with one personality and one face. Nations are the wealth of mankind, its generalized personalities; the least among them has its own coloration and harbors within itself a unique facet of God's design.²

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

By the time of Stalin's death in March 1953, the national question had once again acquired a certain urgency in the minds of Soviet leaders. As indicated near the end of chapter one, although, on the surface, the authority of the Russian "elder brother" among the family of Soviet nations appeared preeminent at this time, Stalin's policies had paradoxically resulted in a hardening of nationalist prejudices throughout the USSR. This was particularly so in the non-Russian borderlands where new nations were emerging under the pressure of forced industrialization and old ones were struggling to survive in the face of officially-sponsored cultural Russification.

This paradox may help account for the fact that prior to Stalin's passing there had been some indication of differences of opinion within his regime concerning the nationality issue; an observation which leads to the conclusion that the degree of rigid subordination to the will of the *vozhd'* commonly assumed of the Stalinist system in Western literature was not as great as previously believed, or was, at the very least, eroding somewhat as Stalin aged.³ The analysis of Charles Fairbanks has revealed certain cracks in Stalinist solidarity with regard to the national question specifically at the XIX CPSU Congress in October 1952. This took the form of a relatively "liberal" speech on nationality policy by Lavrentii Beria, the Georgian chief of Stalin's secret police, who, apparently in the interests of appealing to republican Party organizations for support in the struggle for Stalin's succession already under way, condemned not only "bourgeois nationalism" but also "great power (i.e., Russian) chauvinism" and refrained from the ritual fulsome praise for the Russian "big brother" as the first among equals of Soviet peoples.⁴

Coupled with other manifestations of dissent from the general Stalinist line in evidence at the XIX Congress, most notably Georgi Malenkov's comparatively optimistic appraisal of the current international situation,⁵ the clear impression is left that, even before his death, Stalin's potential successors were well aware of the inadmissibility of perpetuating his system and style of governing. Motivated primarily by the need for greater economic rationality, they recognized the necessity of substituting for Stalinist despotism a political system which functioned on a legitimate institutional basis with some genuine degree of consensus. As Helene Carrere d'Encausse

suggests, in the area of nationalities policy, this led them "to abandon forced russification in order to achieve an equilibrium between the dominant Russian political culture and the national cultures...and to accept a certain degree of political decentralization in order to give some real meaning to the federal system."⁶

The National Question Under Khrushchev, 1956-1958

It was in this context, as well as, like Beria before him, part of an effort to curry support among non-Russian cadres for his own leadership, that Nikita Khrushchev used the occasion of the landmark XX CPSU Congress in February 1956 to denounce Stalin for what he termed "rude violations of the basic Leninist internationalist principles of the nationalities policy of the Soviet state."⁷ In thus repudiating the Stalinist policy of forcible Russification, the intent of which, as Hugh Seton-Watson quite justly observes, "can almost be described as cultural genocide",⁸ Khrushchev declared that the Party would henceforth fully restore Leninist principles in its approach to the national question; something which was part of the broader "return to Leninism" theme underlying the XX Congress in general.⁹

As an editorial published in the official CPSU theoretical journal *Kommunist* at the time of the XX Congress put it, this meant that at the current stage of Soviet historical development, "the flowering (*rastsvet*) of the economies and cultures of all the nations and nationalities populating the USSR"¹⁰ was to be encouraged as a necessary condition of their simultaneous "drawing together" (*sblizhenie*) and ultimate "fusion" (*sliyanie*) into a unified, homogeneous communist

culture to be attained in the distant future. A Soviet academic, writing in the May 1956 edition of the journal *Voprosyi filosofii* (*Problems of Philosophy*), summarized eloquently the Khrushchevian perspective at this time:

The experience of the Soviet Union has confirmed the Marxist-Leninist thesis that in conditions of socialism national differences do not disappear, but, on the contrary, all the conditions for the rebirth and flowering of nations, their cultures and languages are created.

In socialist society, a two-sided dialectical process takes place: the rebirth, development and flowering of socialist nations as well as their drawing together...However, it would be a gross error to assume that the drawing together of nations taking place right now in the USSR means already the beginning of their fusion. This drawing together is taking place against the background of the flowering of nations, their cultures and languages.¹¹

Later that summer, *Kommunist* further repudiated Stalin's nationality policy by publishing an article downplaying his role in the establishment of the Soviet Union in 1922, emphasizing instead Lenin's supervision of this process and highlighting, in particular, the founder of the Soviet state's commitment to the USSR as a federation of equal and sovereign republics.¹²

In the early part of Khrushchev's tenure, this theoretical emphasis on *rastsvet* sanctioned a policy of cultural tolerance reminiscent of the conciliatory attitude taken by the Soviet government, at Lenin's behest, during the period 1921-1927. Most importantly, Soviet historians were called upon to rewrite the history of the Russian Empire so as to discredit Stalinist justification of the former imperial exploitation of the minority peoples.¹³ Following the XX Congress, this was reflected in Soviet academic journals, such as *Voprosyi istorii*

(*Problems of History*), which published a series of articles criticizing the tendency to pre-date the beginnings of the Russian state as well as the idealization of such Russian military heroes as Suvorov and Kutuzov.¹⁴ This rehabilitation of history went so far as to cautiously portray certain non-Russian figures as heroes for having defended their national independence against Tsarist expansionism.

In addition to, as Carrere d'Encausse puts it, urging "the nations to resume their cultural rights and enjoy once more their own traditions",¹⁵ significant legislative action was taken to increase the representation of the nationalities in the central government, and grant the republics a greater degree of authority in the administration of local affairs. For instance, a decree of the CPSU Central Committee and All-Union Council of Ministers on May 30, 1956 transferred enterprises in a number of branches of the economy from the authority of the Union to the republics.¹⁶

On February 11, 1957, the USSR Supreme Soviet empowered the republics to issue their own laws concerning local judicial systems and procedures, as well as civil and criminal codes, although the determination of general principles in these spheres was still reserved to the Union. This was done explicitly within the context of nationalities policy and justified by direct reference to Lenin. As a senior Soviet official put it in a speech before the parliament:

Empowering the Union republics to adopt their own republic codes accords with the Leninist principles of the nationalities policy of the Communist Party; a policy of careful and equal attention to all nationalities, to all peoples that inhabit our great country. Lenin pointed out that the experience of solving the nationality question in our state, with more nationalities than could be found in almost any other country, wholly convinces us that it is

necessary to pay tremendous heed to the interests of the various nationalities.¹⁷

In addition, this same decree gave republics the right to authorize the formation of *krais* and *oblasts* with the Union's role in this regard being restricted to confirmation of any new such administrative units; and, abolished the All-Union ministries of automobile transport, highways, and the river fleet, transferring the control of those enterprises subordinate to them to republican authorities.

On the same day, the Soviet of Nationalities established a parliamentary economic commission to be comprised of 30 members (two from each republic), the task of which was to elaborate a uniform set of principles concerning economic and cultural development acceptable to all the republics. This reform was also announced specifically within the framework of nationalities policy. It would, one of its architects declared, "meet the requirements of our Party's Leninist nationality policy, aimed at increasing in every way the well-being and comprehensively developing the economy and culture of all the peoples inhabiting our great country, in which there are not and never will be any step-children, and in which there are and always will be equal brothers united by eternal friendship."¹⁸

On May 10, 1957, a law was enacted that put the administration of industry and construction, excluding military enterprises, under the authority of national economic councils, or *sovnarkhozi*, which were directly responsible to republican governments. This controversial restructuring, which provoked considerable debate in Soviet media, had been defended prior to its formal ratification by Khrushchev himself as being "conducive to the continued and consistent pursuance of the Leninist national policy;" to the further strengthening of "the

friendship among peoples;" and to promoting "the growth of cadres from among all the nationalities of the country;" a harkening back to the 1920s policy of "indigenization" (*korenizatsiya*).¹⁹

In his speech before the Supreme Soviet officially launching the *sovnarkhozi* project, Khrushchev again made the connection with Lenin:

Along with their immense economic importance, the planned measures are also of *prime political importance* [emphasis added] because they signify a new, long step forward in implementing Lenin's nationality policy, prepared by the entire course of socialist construction. The broad rights given the republics in economic construction will help still more to stimulate the initiative and creative activity of the masses, to unfold the material and spiritual forces of all nations and peoples of the Soviet Union [i.e., the notion of *rastsvet*] and to strengthen still further the friendship among peoples of our country.²⁰

Not surprisingly, this devolution of power to the republics was lauded by some non-Russian Communists as further proof of the wisdom of Lenin's nationalities policy and a powerful new impetus to the "flowering" (*rastsvet*) of their nations.²¹

Accordingly, a certain Leninist circumspection against the fueling of local nationalisms was apparent in Khrushchev's reminder that expanding the rights of republics in the management of industry and construction immeasurably increased the responsibility of local agencies for the economic progress of the entire country, and his warning that the Party had to remain vigilant against possible manifestations of economic autarky and "localist tendencies" (*mestnichestvo*).²² This precaution notwithstanding, however, Khrushchev, by virtue of these decentralizing reforms, appeared to be giving practical substance to the theoretical concept of *rastsvet* and justifying his declaration made before the XX Congress that "far from erasing national differences and

peculiarities, socialism, on the contrary, assures the all-round development of the economy and culture of all the nations and peoples."²³

Early Signs of Discord Within the Khrushchev Regime: Shamil Revisited

It is evident that Khrushchev's innovations in reforming Soviet nationality policy made the issue a major source of controversy within his regime. This can initially be read into efforts begun shortly after the XX Congress, apparently inspired by the Party's ideologist-in-chief M. A. Suslov, to put limits on the "de-Stalinization" of Soviet history. These efforts culminated in the removal of Burdzhakov, the leading "de-Stalinizing" historian, as editor of *Voprosyi istorii* in June 1957.

Perhaps the most important example of this backlash concerned the Imam Shamil, a nineteenth-century symbol of Caucasian resistance to Russian imperialism who had been denounced under Stalin as the worst sort of "bourgeois nationalist" reactionary. Immediately after the XX Congress, a very "pro-Shamil" article defending the legitimacy of the Imam's struggle to preserve the independence of the Caucasus appeared in *Voprosyi istorii*.²⁴ This view was rebutted, however, by a Party historian who wrote in the same journal that such re-evaluation of Shamil was not conducive to "further strengthening of friendship among the nationalities" of the USSR.²⁵ The controversy over Shamil among the academics continued at two separate conferences on the matter held in October and November 1956.²⁶ The result of this dispute was what Carrere d'Encausse aptly describes as a "partial rehabilitation" of Shamil.²⁷

This was indeed evident in the summary of the investigation into the Shamil case published by *Voprosy istorii* in January 1957.

In its report, the journal noted that Stalinist historiography had been wrong to evaluate the Dagestan and Chechen mountaineers' movement led by Shamil as reactionary, as a tool of foreign powers and as inspired from abroad; rather, "broad discussion established that the social-political content of the movement was an anti-colonial and legitimate struggle against the Tsarist colonizers and its fundamental causes were Tsarism's policy of conquest and colonialism..."²⁸ At the same time, however, the article added that further historical research into the 1887 uprising should be focussed on working out the "fundamental questions" of Russian-Dagestan relations - the objectively progressive significance of Dagestan's entry into the Russian state; the beneficial influence of Russian material and spiritual culture upon Dagestan's cultural development; and, the treatment of the history of the struggle of Dagestan peoples together with the Great Russian people for the establishment of Soviet rule and socialist construction in the republic.²⁹

The authors concluded that "the elaboration of the history of Dagestan peoples should serve to educate the working people in Soviet patriotism, proletarian internationalism, national pride and irreconcilability towards manifestations of bourgeois ideology."³⁰ Thus, the partial rehabilitation of Russian and Soviet history during the early Khrushchev years retained certain Stalinist residues inasmuch as although it condemned the predatory nature of Tsarist expansionism, the incorporation of the non-Russian peoples into Russia continued to be defended as having been, by and large, an objectively "positive"

development from their point of view.³¹ This contradictory sort of rehabilitation was the first sign of tension within the Khrushchev regime concerning the national question.

The Case of the "anti-Party Group"

Further evidence of discord over nationality policy is evident in the form of the so-called "anti-Party group", led by the recalcitrant Stalinist commissars Georgi Malenkov, Vyacheslav Molotov and Lazar Kaganovich, which was deposed after trying unsuccessfully to oust Khrushchev in June 1957.

It is apparent from CPSU documents and other non-official sources that this faction opposed Khrushchev's decentralizing economic and political reforms, and the *sovnarkhozi* project especially. In fact, some degree of opposition to this restructuring, although from unspecified individuals, was hinted at by Khrushchev himself early in 1957 when he commented that "some comrades express apprehensions lest the organization of management of industry and construction on the territorial principle and the transfer of enterprises from all-Union to republican subordination weaken the centralized planning principle in the development of our Soviet economy."³² In retrospect, it seems evident that the "comrades" expressing these concerns included those later denounced as the "anti-Party group".

The resolution announcing the group's removal from membership in the Party Presidium and Central Committee on July 4, 1957 accused it of having been against expanding the prerogatives of the constituent republics:

They were against enlarging the powers of the Union republics in the sphere of economic and cultural development and in the sphere of legislation and also against enhancing the role of the local Soviets in carrying out these tasks. Thereby, the anti-Party group opposed the Party's firm course toward more rapid development of the economy and culture in the national republics -- a course assuring further strengthening of Leninist friendship among all the peoples of our country.³³

As the resolution added, the "anti-Party group" had consistently opposed the course approved by the XX CPSU Congress in general, and special mention was made of the fact that the Malenkov faction failed to comprehend the need not only to expand the legislative powers of the republics but to ensure "the flourishing [i.e., *rastsvet*] of national cultures."³⁴

It is worthwhile pointing out that the "anti-Party group's" resistance to economic and political decentralization, framed, as the original reforms themselves had been, explicitly within the context of nationalities policy, was at the top of the list of charges against it. This indicates that the national question itself occupied a very high place on the agenda of the Khrushchev leadership, but it also shows that Khrushchev's early efforts to, as it was put in the Central Committee resolution, "rectify past distortions of Leninist nationality policy"³⁵ were producing cleavages within his regime.

Khrushchev's Retrenchment, 1958-1959

After 1957, Khrushchev's line on the national question began to harden. It is possible that he himself became alarmed at the fact that *rastsvet* seemed to be fostering a resurgence of unwelcome national demands, as manifested by such examples as the Supreme Soviet of Azerbaidzhan's

decree of August 1956 which proclaimed Azeri to be the sole official language of the republic,³⁶ and efforts by the Latvian wing of the CPSU to place restrictions on non-Latvian personnel.³⁷ This hardening may also be partially explained by conservative resistance to his reform program in general which persisted even after the demise of the "anti-Party group".³⁸

The education reform of November 1958 hinted at a tougher nationality policy to the degree that it was designed to promote the study of Russian at the expense of native languages.³⁹ Given Russian's status as *lingua franca* in the USSR, the reform's provision that the parents of non-Russian schoolchildren now be able to choose whether they wanted offspring to be educated in either their native tongue or in Russian, rather than compulsory instruction in both as was currently the case, made it likely that the latter would be chosen since command of Russian, as the language of all higher Soviet institutions, was essential in terms of later educational and career opportunities. This provision also made it probable that Russians living outside their native republic would be less inclined to have their children learn the local language, something which would further weaken its position vis a vis Russian. If we therefore assume that the government's intent was indeed to weaken the position of local languages relative to Russian, commentators such as Yaroslav Bilinsky are warranted in their interpretations of this action as "an effort to hasten the integration of the non-Russian peoples on the basis of the Russian language and culture - Russification, for short."⁴⁰ Thus, a shift away from Khrushchev's internationalist emphasis of 1956-57 was implied.

However, here again there is evidence of discord within the leadership over policy options. Analysts such as Bilinsky and John Kolasky have documented considerable non-Russian resistance to this reform on the part of academics, educators, and republican party officials.⁴¹ The Kremlin's suggestion that instruction in both the native and Russian languages no longer be compulsory for schoolchildren in the republics was a particular sore spot and prominent non-Russian members of the regime were quick to voice their disapproval.

The first of these was V. T. Latsis, a member of the USSR Supreme Soviet and chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Latvian SSR. In a speech at the end of November 1958, less than two weeks after the proposed reform was made public, he remarked that abolishing the compulsory study of the Russian and Latvian languages in his republic was inexpedient and would "hardly promote the strengthening of friendship of peoples."⁴² This precedent was followed less than a week later by V. P. Mzhavanadze, First Secretary of the Communist Party of Georgia and a full member of the CPSU Central Committee, who also advocated continuing the study of two languages (i.e., Russian and Georgian).⁴³

Further opposition to the reform's principle of choice in language instruction was clear during a session of the USSR Supreme Soviet the following month in Moscow. For example, in a speech on December 25, 1958, S. V. Chervonenko, the chief ideologue of the Ukrainian Communist Party, stated that "many years of experience in the public school system of the Ukraine Republic show that compulsory study of Russian and the national language is fully justified...The compulsory study of the two languages must continue. Any other solution would, in our opinion, be

retrogression."⁴⁴ The Lithuanian Minister of Education, M. A. Gedvilas, used similarly strong language in his address to the deputies, saying that "in no case should either the existing system for studying Lithuanian, Russian, and foreign languages or any other long-established and useful traditions be repudiated."⁴⁵ The second secretary of the Latvian Communist Party, A. Ya. Pelshe, added his voice to the criticism, noting that "the working people of the Latvian Republic, particularly at parents' meetings, have unanimously spoken in favor of the need to preserve the study of two languages - Latvian and Russian - in our schools. The study of both these languages has already become a tradition in our republic and it would be inadvisable to abolish this fine tradition."⁴⁶ These senior non-Russian members of the regime were supported in their calls for the preservation of the linguistic status quo in republican schools by other deputies from Belorussia, Moldavia, Georgia, Azerbaidzhan, and Kirgizia.⁴⁷

As Bilinsky's analysis in particular has shown, these sorts of misgivings were also expressed at the regional level in various fora (i.e., republican Supreme Soviets) and media (i.e., local newspapers and journals) not only by party officials, but by intellectuals and, to a certain extent, the public at large. While this remarkably open debate was evidence of the more relaxed political atmosphere in general under Khrushchev, one seems justified in speculating that such disagreement with Moscow's policies could nonetheless not have taken place in the absence of apparent indecision among top leaders in the Kremlin. That the controversial "Thesis 19", which dealt with the principle of linguistic choice, was not included in the all-Union law on educational restructuring approved by the Supreme Soviet in December 1958, and

responsibility for this nominally left to the republics, is further indicative of uncertainty and disagreement at the top.

While all the republics eventually adopted some version of "Thesis 19", a uniform, nation-wide standard was not easily established. The law of the Ukrainian republic, for example, pledged to improve the teaching of both Russian and Ukrainian, while the governments of Armenia, Georgia and Estonia, although approving the standard version of the "thesis" made it clear in discussions surrounding its adoption that they interpreted it in such a way as to improve the teaching of the local language as opposed to Russian. For their part, the Supreme Soviets of Azerbaidzhan and Latvia both deliberately omitted any reference at all to the principle of linguistic choice, digressions corrected only after major purges of both republics' leaderships.⁴⁹

Bilinsky therefore appears to have grounds for expressing his "astonishment" that the Khrushchev regime was not able to "present a united front in such a sensitive area as nationality policy."⁴⁹ The principal lesson of the school reform was that, in Kolasky's words, "even among the most prominent non-Russians who have risen to the highest posts in the Soviet hierarchy, opposition to Russification is very strong."⁵⁰ However, the surprisingly open debate which surrounded the reform also suggests that the Great Russians who dominated the party and state leadership at this time were themselves not fully in accord on nationality policy.

The XXI CPSU Congress (January 1959)

That the Soviet government was less than resolved in its approach to the national question at this time may be further deduced from the fact that in his report to the "extraordinary" XXI CPSU Congress in January 1959, Khrushchev touched only briefly on the matter. Reflective again of a harder personal line in this area, he avoided mention of *rastsvet* altogether and concentrated instead on the unity (*edinstvo*) of nations within the USSR; saying only that the Soviet Union was a "multinational socialist state based on the friendship of peoples enjoying equal rights and united will and striving steadfastly along the path of communist construction."⁵¹

Khrushchev went on to note that the new seven-year economic plan to be approved by the Congress called for "strengthening interrepublic economic ties", and promised that the CPSU would continue to wage "an uncompromising struggle both against great-power [i.e., Russian] chauvinism and local nationalism."⁵² A key task in this regard, he concluded, was "to develop still wider training of the working people in proletarian internationalism and Soviet patriotism."⁵³ This personal backtracking on the part of the First Secretary was even more apparent in an interview with the French newspaper *Le Figaro* published in March 1959. Here again, he made no direct mention of the "flowering" of nations, but did speak at some length about the eventual disappearance of national differences under socialism.⁵⁴

Khrushchev's reticence with respect to *rastsvet* was also reflected in the resolution of the XXI Congress which gave "unanimous" approval to the seven-year economic plan outlined in his keynote address. In terms of principal tasks in the political and ideological spheres, the document stressed the "continued strengthening of the Soviet socialist

system and the unity and solidarity of the Soviet people..."; and called for "stepping up the party's work in developing Soviet patriotism and internationalism, overcoming the survivals of capitalism in the minds of the people, and combating bourgeois ideology [which would obviously include manifestations of local nationalism]." ⁵⁵ Hence, that the Soviet leadership now sought to concentrate on the "unity" (*edinstvo*) of nations and peoples within the USSR at the relative expense of the previous campaign in favor of "flowering" seems beyond doubt.

Further indicative of the firm line which developed in the late 1950's were charges of localism (*mestnichestvo*) made in various media against some regional leaders as part of a broader press campaign against "bourgeois nationalism" which began early in 1959. ⁵⁶ As noted above, the potential for *mestnichestvo* had been a concern surrounding the *sovnarkhozi* reform of 1957 and it turned out to be legitimate. Perhaps embarrassingly for Khrushchev, it was one which had essentially been built into the reform from the start. The project was not meant to undercut the central planning mechanism of the economy but nonetheless dismantled the most vital link in the whole chain of economic command - the ministerial system. In the absence of clear direction from the centre, the *sovnarkhozi* had only one real planning criterion; that being to meet the requirements of their own region. Consequently, they tended to hoard scarce resources and divert investment funds under their control to local needs; a practice obviously detrimental to national priorities. When certain regional secretaries proved unable or unwilling to address this problem, purges were the result with the Baltics and Transcaucasia being hit especially hard. ⁵⁷

A firmer line on the national question was also apparent in the theoretical literature where articles downplaying *rastsvet*, and emphasizing instead "drawing together" (*sblizhenie*) and "fusion" (*sliyanie*) began to appear. The most important of these was authored by the then Director of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the USSR Academy of Sciences, and former First Secretary of the Communist Party of Tadzhikistan, B. G. Gafurov. Writing in the August 1958 edition of *Kommunist*, Gafurov defined the "fusion" of nations as "an extremely complicated and lengthy process" for which was necessary "not only the victory of socialism throughout the world, but also the transition from the first, lower phase of communist construction - socialism - to its second, higher phase - communism."⁵⁸ Although obviously putting *sliyanie* off into the distant future, Gafurov left no doubt that it was unavoidable, asserting that once the highest stages of communist society had been attained, "the disappearance of national differences and fusion of nations is inevitable."⁵⁹

Moreover, he posited that "the future fusion of nations presupposes the formation of a single language for all peoples."⁶⁰ This eventuality was cast within the dubious context of Stalin's theory of a "zonal language", which ostensibly would not be Russian or any other single language but would rather draw from the best of all languages. Bilinsky has therefore appropriately made the point that "anybody who could read between the lines would have had no difficulty in perceiving that from among the languages of the USSR the 'zonal language' of the future would draw most heavily upon Russian, and that the revival of Stalin's thesis of 1950 meant that new efforts were being initiated to favour the Russian language at the expense of the other peoples of the

USSR."⁶¹ Gafurov's article dovetailed with the above mentioned education reform of November 1958 and can be seen as laying the theoretical foundations not only for the Russifying essence of that reform but the general shift in nationality policy emphasis away from the "flowering" of nations towards their "drawing together" and final "fusion" which characterized the Khrushchevian approach leading up to the XXII CPSU Congress in October 1961.

The New CPSU Program (1961) and the National Question

The Third CPSU Program, adopted at the XXII Congress, evidenced in full this shift in thinking on the national question which was grounded in the broader ideological assumption that the USSR was beginning the "full-scale construction of communism" (*razvernutoe stroitel'stvo kommunizma*). Khrushchev himself boldly predicted that the Soviet Union would "create the material and technical base of communism" by the early 1980s.⁶²

In the political realm, this meant that the "dictatorship of the proletariat" had fulfilled its historic mission - to build socialism - and a new form of state structure - the "all-people's state" (*obshchenarodnoe gosudarstvo*) - had come into existence. This concept, which did not appear in specialist literature or official statements prior to the Congress,⁶³ had its basis in the fact that, as befits a socialist society in transition to communism, the "class struggle" in the USSR had substantially "withered away", and remaining contradictions were of a "non-antagonistic" nature. Given their growing commitment to socialist ideals, classes in the Soviet Union were undergoing an

accelerated "drawing together" (*sblizhenie*).⁸⁴ Since, in accordance with Marxist-Leninist teaching, the state is a superstructural reflection of society, the "dictatorship of the proletariat", which was justified by the premise that the working classes had to retain a monopoly of state power in order to suppress vestiges of bourgeois resistance, gave way to the "all-people's state", representative of the new socialist reality that there were no longer any hostile classes to be repressed.

A Soviet academic, in an article published shortly after the XXII Congress, summarized the essence of the *obshchenarodnoe gosudarstvo* as follows:

The new thesis of the CPSU Program concerning the all-people's state represents a further step in the creative development of the Marxist-Leninist theory of the state in general, and the socialist state in particular. It reflects an entirely new period in the development of socialist society and the state when the state ceases to be the instrument of a single class and becomes the embodiment of the united will of all the people, reflecting the interests of society as a whole - when proletarian socialist democracy is transformed into an all-people's democracy, a political form expressing the sovereignty of the people.⁸⁵

This writer and other Soviet theorists of the "all-people's state" were hard-pressed to square it with orthodox Marxist-Leninist doctrine which clearly postulated the "dictatorship of the proletariat" as being necessary for the entire transitional period from capitalism to full communism. Nor were they easily able to explain how the "all-people's state" retained a legitimate class nature.⁸⁶

Such potential ideological objections aside, the "all-people's state" had important implications for the national question. If social classes were undergoing a more rapid *sblizhenie*, then, according to the Party Program, so were nations. This, too, was a theory consistent with

the basic tenets of Marxism-Leninism, and specifically the Stalinist definition of "the nation" as discussed in chapter one, which held that nations were products of particular historical circumstances, and, in the final analysis, class conflict. If class contradictions had essentially vanished from Soviet society, then national differences, while likely to be more enduring, must also be diminishing in significance. As it was phrased in the program:

Obliteration of distinctions between classes and the development of communist social relations is intensifying the social homogeneity of nations and contributing to the development of common communist traits in their culture, ethics, and way of life; to a further strengthening of mutual trust and friendship among them.⁸⁷

The idea of the "all-people's state" therefore signified not only the accelerated "drawing together" of classes but nations. This was made clear in the following passage from the program:

The boundaries between the Union republics within the USSR are *increasingly losing their former significance* [emphasis added], since all the countries are equal, their life is organized in a single socialist foundation, the material and spiritual needs of each people are satisfied to the same extent, and they are all united into one family by common vital interests and are advancing together to a single goal - communism.⁸⁸

While acknowledging that "the effacement of national distinctions, especially of language distinctions, is a considerably longer process than the effacement of class distinctions", the program nevertheless asserted that "with the victory of communism in the USSR, the nations will draw still closer together, their economic and ideological unity will increase, and the communist traits common to their spiritual make-up will develop."⁸⁹

That CPSU policy now had the goal of assisting this process leading to something like the "fusion" of nations was made clear by the statement that the Party would promote the "further mutual enrichment and drawing together" of the cultures of Soviet peoples "and thereby the formation of a future single worldwide culture of communist society."⁷⁰ Commenting on this aim, a Soviet scholar appeared to introduce a new term into the lexicon of Soviet nationality policy by stating that under the "all-people's state" the "still-greater drawing together" (*eshchyo bol'shee sblizhenie*) of nations would take place.⁷¹

In his report to the Congress on the party's new theoretical blueprint, Khrushchev reiterated the fundamental Leninist thesis that "under socialism, two interconnected, progressive tendencies operate in the national question." On the one hand, nations are "undergoing a tempestuous all-round development"; on the other, "they are drawing ever closer together and their influence on one another and mutual enrichment are intensifying."⁷² However, the tone and context of these remarks made it clear that whereas his emphasis at the XX Congress had been on *rastsvet*, Khrushchev, as he had at the XXI Congress, now sought to stress the process of *sblizhenie*. In fact, he seemed to speak of the "flowering" half of the dialectic as essentially complete by declaring that "the Soviet system has roused to a new life and brought to their flowering all the formerly oppressed and rightless peoples who had been at various levels of historical development from patriarchal clan to capitalism."⁷³

This justified Khrushchev's proclamation that, with the selfless aid of "the Great Russian people", the "flowering" of nations in the USSR had already led to their being drawn together to such an extent

that "a new historical community of people who are of different nationalities but have characteristic features in common - "the Soviet people" had come into existence.⁷⁴ Khrushchev identified these characteristic features as: a common socialist homeland - the USSR; a common socialist economic base; a common social-class structure; a common world-view - Marxism-Leninism; a common goal - the building of communism; and, "many common traits in their spiritual makeup and their psychology."⁷⁵ For all its emphasis on material factors (i.e., a common homeland and economic base), this definition of "the Soviet people", with its vague reference to common spiritual and psychological traits, therefore shared with both the Leninist and Stalinist approaches to the national question a paradoxical pre-occupation with social psychology.

While the "drawing together" of "the Soviet people" was obviously an objective historical process with a momentum all its own, Khrushchev, once more in true Leninist and Stalinist form, reminded those present that "subjective" measures were important in helping it along; pointing out in particular that economic integration, which presupposed increasing social mobility and greater interaction between the peoples of the USSR; the extension of the Russian language throughout the country; and the ongoing education of the workers in the values of "Soviet patriotism" and "proletarian internationalism", were the principal vehicles of continuing rapprochement.⁷⁶ Indicative of a much harder personal line on the national question than had been the case at the XXI Congress two years earlier, Khrushchev bluntly asserted that "Communists are not going to freeze and perpetuate national distinctions" and warned that "even the slightest manifestation of

nationalist survival" would be eradicated with "uncompromising Bolshevik implacability."⁷⁷

The notion of "the Soviet people" painted a picture of the USSR as a multinational society advancing confidently along the path of communist construction; its unity and social homogeneity growing as national differences inevitably diminished to the point that "complete unity" (*polnoe edinstvo*), a term first used by Lenin,⁷⁸ would be achieved. While Khrushchev went on to endorse the ultimate goal of *sliyanie*, he added the cautionary note that "even after communism has in the main been built, it will be premature to pronounce the fusion of nations. Lenin, as we know, said that state and national distinctions would exist long after the triumph of socialism in all countries."⁷⁹ However, the fact remained that, in contrast to both the XX and XXI Congresses where Khrushchev had not even made direct mention of the long-term prospect of *sliyanie* (although this had been, to some degree, implied at the XXI Congress), Soviet nationality policy following the XXII Congress was predicated on the theoretical supposition that, as Carrere d'Encausse describes it, the USSR was in transition "from a multiethnic society attached to its national characteristics to a society undergoing ethnic fusion."⁸⁰

It is possible that this would have been reflected in a new constitution which Khrushchev indicated was being drafted at the time in the form of redrawn territorial boundaries, since, in his own words: "When they create the new constitution, the Soviet people will be the discoverers of the state and social organization appropriate to the period of the full-scale construction of communism."⁸¹ Khrushchev thus seemed to be implying a fundamental restructuring of the existing state

apparatus and certain scholars seized upon the opportunity to advocate dismantling the Soviet federal system altogether in favor of a unitary state structure. In the words of one such theorist, national statehood and federation in the USSR had "fulfilled their historic role" and the "full state-legal fusion" of Soviet nations was now a matter of "the foreseeable future."⁸² Short of this radical perspective, less provocative articles focussing nonetheless on the processes of *sblizhenie* and *sliyanie* continued to appear in the specialist literature thereby reinforcing the dominant ideological trend.⁸³

This also helped to legitimize a partial recentralization of state and economy that took place in the last years of Khrushchev's rule and deprived the republics of much of the administrative autonomy they had gained in 1956-57. The most important of these measures was the regrouping of the *sovnarkhozi* into 17 major economic regions under the control of central planning authorities announced in May 1960 and formalized a year later.⁸⁴ This was followed by a further recentralization of industrial management in March 1963.

Signs of Political Resistance to the New Line

While *sblizhenie* and *sliyanie* may have been the predominant ideological themes of Khrushchev's nationality policy during his last years in power, there are some signs of differing opinions within the leadership at least as perceptible in the statements of certain leaders at both the XXI and XXII CPSU Congresses. To begin with, at the XXI Congress several non-Russian representatives appeared to harken back to 1957 and give greater emphasis to the principle of *rastsvet* over *sblizhenie*.

For instance, S. Kamalov, the Uzbek First Secretary, referred to the culture of his people having attained "unparalleled heights" and had comparatively little to say about the process of "drawing together".⁸⁵ The First Secretary of the Armenian Republic, S. V. Tovmasyan, noted that "reactionary American hacks and their underlings, the bourgeois nationalists expelled from our country, are no longer able to deny the flourishing [*rastsvet*] of the economy and culture of the peoples of the USSR,"⁸⁶ and described the USSR as a "great commonwealth [*sodruzhestvo*] of fraternal peoples", terminology implying a limited degree of republican autonomy.⁸⁷ I. D. Mustafaev, First Secretary of Azerbaidzhan, proudly proclaimed that the culture of the Azerbaidzhanian people had flourished under Soviet rule and would "continue to flourish," a statement which seemed to run somewhat against the predominant ideological emphasis on *sblizhenie*.⁸⁸ D. D. Karaev, representing the Turkmenian Republic, lauded the Leninist nationality policy and "its ceaseless concern for the flourishing of all the republics," remarks which again were counter to the prevailing ideological wind at the time.⁸⁹ The Central Committee Secretary responsible for personnel matters, and former Ukrainian First Secretary, A. I. Kirichenko, described the enlargement of the powers of the Union republics undertaken after the XX Congress as having been "enormously important" and as having "the most beneficent effect in the upswing in the economy and culture of the Union republics."⁹⁰ Such a laudatory position on the part of Kirichenko was not unexpected in view of the fact that, as Michel Tatu notes, "he had always been identified with a relatively liberal policy in this area and had risen to be head of the Party in the Ukraine in June 1953 as an opponent of the all-out Russification

favoured by his predecessor, L. G. Melnikov."⁹¹ Moreover, he had done so with the clear support of Khrushchev who had himself served as First Secretary of Ukraine for a time under Stalin.

However, the most important defence of *rastsvet* at the XXI Congress was made by N. A. Mukhitdinov, an Uzbek supporter of Khrushchev who had been elevated to dual membership in the Presidium and Central Committee Secretariat after the June 1957 purge of the "anti-Party" group. In what was clearly *the* speech of the Congress concerning nationality policy, Mukhitdinov began by praising Lenin's "consistent internationalist nationalities program" which had been expressed "primarily in the establishment and development of national statehood for the peoples of the USSR."⁹² He then went on to hail "the historic decisions" of the XX Congress which had enhanced the sovereignty of the republics, thereby contributing "to an even greater economic and cultural flowering [i.e., *rastsvet*] of all nations and peoples of the USSR."⁹³ As Mukhitdinov saw it, the Party's task was to continue this process:

The essence of the Party's nationalities policy today is through comradely cooperation and mutual assistance, to develop comprehensively the economy and culture of all socialist nations, creating the conditions needed to bring them even closer together.⁹⁴

Mukhitdinov seemed to be suggesting in this statement that the proper conditions for the "drawing together" of nations in the Soviet Union did not yet exist and that their "flowering" thus ought to be further nurtured as a necessary precondition. In addition, invoking Lenin's good name, he called for "the most attentive consideration of every nation's characteristics" and condemned "the slightest manifestation of a

nihilistic, contemptuous, snobbish attitude to national characteristics and sensitivities;"⁹⁵ a not so tacit criticism of those within the leadership who apparently favored a more rapid "drawing together" of nations. In his perception of things, although signs of "national narrow-mindedness" in literature, the arts, and historiography could be seen "here and there", it had been "a long time since any large-scale survivals of nationalism have existed in our country and they have no social, political, or economic roots among us."⁹⁶ Based on these remarks, Mukhitdinov, exhibiting some degree of opposition to the post-1957 emphasis on *sblizhenie* and *sliyanie*, saw little justification at this point for intensifying the Party's struggle against "bourgeois nationalism" with its punitive implications for the minority peoples in particular.

Continuing Disagreement at the XXII Congress

Although most of the "dissenting" leaders at the XXI Congress subsequently fell from grace during a wave of purges which swept the republics during 1959-1960,⁹⁷ divisions within the Khrushchev regime over nationality policy continued to be apparent at the XXII CPSU Congress in October 1961. These revolved around the integrationist emphasis embodied in the new CPSU Program adopted at the Congress, the details of which were elaborated earlier in this chapter.

Apart from Khrushchev himself, senior leaders such as M. A. Suslov and his associate F. R. Kozlov could be seen as encouraging the accelerated "drawing together" of nations described in the Program if not their ultimate "fusion". In his role as chief ideologue, Suslov

spoke of further consolidating "the unity of all social strata of the population and all nations of the Soviet Union" and called on the Party to solidify its leading and guiding role in "rousing, organizing and concentrating the efforts, will and energy of all the Soviet people for accomplishing the great tasks of communist construction."⁹⁹ For his part, Kozlov stated that one of the most important duties of a Party member was to "contribute by word and deed to strengthening the friendship of the peoples of the USSR", and referred approvingly to the "monolithic unity" of Soviet society.⁹⁹

To the extent that they paid undue homage to the "great Russian people", several non-Russian leaders appeared willing to accept the Russifying flavor of the Party Program's intergrationist spirit. The First Secretary of the Moldavian Communist Party, I. I. Bodyul, remarked on the "prophetic words of the great Lenin that under socialism nations would draw together and their friendship would grow" having come true and claimed that "since olden times the Moldavian people have gravitated toward Russia and the Russian people."¹⁰⁰ He also referred to Russia as the Moldavian "motherland" and boasted that "an absolute majority of Moldavians" were fluent in Russian.¹⁰¹ T. U. Usubaliev, First Secretary of Kirgizia, spoke of enriching the socialist content of Kirgizian culture by "constantly turning to such a mighty source as the culture of the great Russian peoples of our country" and engaged in fulsome praise for the Russian language as the language of "friendship and brotherhood among all the peoples of the Soviet Union."¹⁰² The recently appointed First Secretary of the Uzbek Republic, Sh. R. Rashidov, resurrected Stalinist phraseology in his description of "the great heroic Russian people" as "our elder brother",¹⁰³ while the new Azeri First Secretary,

V. Yu. Akhundov, was almost whimsical in his praise of Russia, quoting a purported saying among his countrymen that: "If your friend a Russian be, right and broad the road for thee."¹⁰⁴ However, the most facile of these sorts of remarks came from an unexpected source, the Uzbek N. A. Mukhitdinov, who had been the great defender of republican rights at the XXI Congress. He described Russia as both "the first among equals" and the "elder brother" to "all the Soviet nations" and devoted several paragraphs more than any of his non-Russian counterparts to heaping praise on the "great Russian people."¹⁰⁵ While it is difficult to know whether such pro-Russian sentiments reflected a genuine willingness on the part of these non-Russian leaders to see their native lands transformed into Russian-oriented and speaking "Soviet nations", they at least seem to have thought it necessary to pay lip service to this end in the interests of ingratiating themselves to Moscow.

However, neither the willingness to accept implied Russification nor a concern to necessarily say "the right thing" in order to please the Kremlin was shared by other non-Russians whose circumspection about the prospect of the "ever greater drawing together" of nations, let alone their "fusion", was perceptible in comments they made regarding the national question. The First Secretary of Estonia, J. G. Kabin, was notably restrained in his admiration of the "great Russian people" and stressed the equality of nations ahead of "proletarian internationalism" as the most important principle of the Leninist nationality policy.¹⁰⁶ The Georgian leader, V. P. Mzhavanadze, conspicuously avoided elevating Russia to any exalted status, attributing his republic's successes in economic and cultural construction to the "constant help of the Russian, Ukrainian, Belorussian and all the fraternal peoples of the Soviet

Union."¹⁰⁷ However, the strongest defender of the republics at the Congress was the Armenian A. I. Mikoyan, at that time First Vice-Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers, and a very close associate of Khrushchev.

In his address, Mikoyan, as had Khrushchev, repeated the fundamental Leninist thesis concerning the two-sided process of the "flowering" and "drawing together" of nations and warned that "artificially prodding the nations to draw together" could only do harm.¹⁰⁸ On this basis, he proceeded to make a forceful defence of Soviet federalism by recalling Lenin's differences with Stalin over nationality policy in the early 1920s:

Lenin severely criticized and rejected the viewpoint of those who opposed the establishment of a union of independent national republics and proposed merely incorporating them in the Russian Republic on an autonomous basis. In a memorandum sent to the members of Politburo in 1922, Lenin wrote that we consider ourselves equal with the Ukraine Republic and the others, and along with them, and on a level of equality with them, are joining a new union, a new federation, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Lenin upheld the policy of establishing a union of equal and sovereign republics.¹⁰⁹

Mikoyan continued by condemning the fact that "in the succeeding period [i.e., under Stalin], a tendency to curb the rights of the Union republics began to manifest itself" and "decision-making on many matters that were local in character or that concerned the republics were increasingly concentrated at the centre."¹¹⁰ In view of this, the decisions taken after the XX Congress to restore and expand the rights of the republics had been entirely justified.

Providing yet another hint that these reforms had been and, in fact, continued to be the subject of serious disagreement at the top, he

claimed that, contrary to what "some conservative-minded figures had tried to frighten us into believing would be the case" none of these measures had been "in any way detrimental to the political, economic and ideological unity" of the Soviet state. Rather, they had resulted in "heightened local initiative, the burgeoning of creative activity among the masses and the acceleration of our general advance" and consideration should be given to expanding the powers of the republics still further.¹¹¹

Indeed, Mikoyan's recollection of Lenin's commitment to the USSR as a federation of equal and sovereign republics was not just nostalgia on his part. He was clearly using Lenin's condemnation of Stalin's plans for "autonomization" to criticize those within the present-day leadership who were opposed to decentralization or, as some of the academic literature was revealing, favored restructuring the modern Soviet state on a unitary basis. Moreover, Mikoyan had solid credentials as a proponent of federalism in the USSR since he had been one of the non-Russian communists referred to in chapter one as advocating that the country be established from the start as a confederation with the central government having only limited powers as granted to it by the republics.¹¹² That he chose to speak out as he did was a significant sign of disagreement over nationality policy within the Kremlin and it provided a certain insight into the parameters of this disunion. The fate of Soviet federalism was without doubt one of the cardinal issues involved.

Apart from Mikoyan's speech, the Party Program itself presented perhaps the surest sign of divergent views over the future of Soviet federalism at the time of the XXII Congress. As noted earlier,

Khrushchev referred to two progressive tendencies operating in the national question - the "tempestuous all-round development" of nations, and their "ever-closer drawing together". Being as how these dual processes were held to be two sides of the same dialectical coin, the Program, while giving official credence to the post-1957 ideological emphasis on *sblizhenie* and *sliyanie*, was sufficiently ambivalent that it could nonetheless be used in support of arguments both for and against the new line. This was typified by a series of seemingly contradictory declarations concerning the national question. Most notable among these was the claim that, on the one hand, "under socialism, nations flourish and their sovereignty is strengthened", but on the other, "the boundaries between the Union republics are increasingly losing their former significance". As Bohdan Nahaylo puts it:

Proponents of assimilation and the dismantling of the federal system were encouraged by the implicit commitment to *sliyanie*; defenders of national statehood, however, opposed the prospect of denationalization by stressing the importance of the flourishing of nations as an essential prerequisite for their eventual fusion in the remote future.¹¹³

Thus, writers and speakers defending either point of view could legitimately sanction their arguments in terms of no less an important document than the Party Program itself.

Disparate Views Within the Specialist Literature

The theoretical literature during the late 1950's and early 1960's provides yet more evidence of differences of opinion within the leadership concerning nationality policy. Indeed, intense debate

surrounding the national question took place at academic conferences held in Tashkent in May 1962 and Frunze in October 1963.¹¹⁴

To begin with, it is apparent that the proponents of *sliyanie* disagreed over how rapidly it was taking place. Some writers saw "fusion" processes as already evident in Soviet society and, as pointed out earlier, postulated that the final merging of nations in the USSR was a matter of the relatively near term.¹¹⁵ They tended to suggest as well that it was entirely possible for "fusion" to take place in the Soviet Union itself prior to the victory of socialism throughout the rest of the world. In the words of two such theorists, it was necessary "to focus on the fact that the processes of merging [i.e., *sliyanie*] must occur sooner within the USSR than the world as a whole".¹¹⁶ Others, however, adhered more closely to Khrushchev's own assertion that *sliyanie* would be achieved only after the triumph of socialism on a global basis. As one scholar put it, the "full fusion" of nations was "still a long way off" and national differences would exist "long after the victory of socialism in all countries."¹¹⁷ Nor were these differences between the "fusionists" merely semantics.

A point of view which held that the process of *sliyanie* was already visible in Soviet society implied the advisability of a whole range of aggressive, perhaps even repressive, policy options aimed at depriving the Union republics of their remaining rights and prerogatives. On the other hand, an outlook which stressed the durability of national distinctions and put *sliyanie* off into the distant future sanctioned a much more circumspective approach to establishing socialist unitarism not inconsistent with retaining Soviet federalism. In other words, these "theorists" disagreed over to what

extent preserving national state formations either retarded or facilitated the "coming together" of nations. Some argued that federation had played an outstanding role in "drawing together" Soviet peoples thus far and should therefore be retained for the foreseeable future.¹¹⁸ Opposing them, others claimed that federalism had basically fulfilled the tasks assigned to it by Lenin (i.e., that of overcoming the distrust of the non-Russian peoples for Great Russians) and was now a hindrance to the processes of *sblizhenie* and *sliyanie*.¹¹⁹

More profound disagreement over policy was apparent in the form of scholarly articles criticizing the post-1957 emphasis on "drawing together" and "fusion" and defending *rastsvet*. Striking a common theme among the dissenters, one writer warned against artificially forcing "the fusion of national cultures for which the social-economic conditions had not yet matured;" adding that "only stupid people can suppose that the time has already come to curtail the development of the national statehood, culture and language of the peoples of the USSR."¹²⁰ Taking a position similar to that of Mukhitdinov at the XXI Congress, this writer maintained that, while the "drawing together" and final "fusion" of nations remained the Party's long-term goals, their "flowering" needed to be encouraged further as a necessary precondition.¹²¹

Thus, the late 1950s saw a heated debate over whether federation had outlived its usefulness in the Soviet Union. A number of authors, defending either the "flowering" or "drawing together" half of the Party Program's dialectic, and sensing the threat to federalism implicit in the "rapid fusionist" approach, rejected any notion of prematurely transforming the political structure of the USSR into a denationalized

unitary state. Tending towards *rastsvet*, an Armenian academic argued that federation offered the only means for successfully resolving "the most complex tasks of communist construction" relating to the proper adjudication of republican and all-Union interests and would do so for the foreseeable future. In his view, the immense potential of Soviet federalism for encouraging the development of national cultures had far from been exhausted.¹²² Emphasizing more the principle of *sblizhenie*, a leading theorist of the "all-people's state" concept nonetheless differed with those of his intellectual colleagues who saw the "ever-greater drawing together" of nations entailed by it as justifying the dismantling of the federal system. While acknowledging the 1961 Party Program's assertion that territorial boundaries inside the USSR were losing their former significance, the writer cautioned that it in no way followed from this that the need to be respectful towards national sensitivities and particularities had diminished.¹²³ In fact, contrary to its dissolution, one of the central characteristics of the "all-people's state" would be the further "strengthening" (*ukreplenie*), "utilization" (*ispol'zovanie*), and "perfection" (*sovershenstvovanie*) of "the principles of Soviet federation"; this in the interests of bringing about the greater "drawing together" of Soviet nations.¹²⁴ In some instances, "pro-federalist" writers such as these cited Mikoyan's speech at the XXII Congress as a source of legitimation for their own views.¹²⁵

Hence, the intellectual literature mirrored similar divisions of opinion as were apparent in the pronouncements of the Party leaders themselves at both the XXI and XXII Congresses. Moreover, the sharpness of the academic debate demonstrated the extent to which such divergent views were strongly held.

Summary

The nationality policy of the Khrushchev regime was not consistent. The First Secretary's commitment following the XX CPSU Congress in February 1956 to the "flowering" of nations (*rastsvet*) and its decentralizing economic and political implications was resisted by vestiges of hard-line Stalinist opposition to his denunciation of the "cult of personality". Conflict over the direction of nationality policy within the regime sharpened further after 1957 as Khrushchev himself began to back away from his initial support for *rastsvet* and emphasize instead the "drawing together" (*sblizhenie*) of Soviet nations leading ultimately to their "fusion" (*sliyanie*). This discord was evident in several forms: overt minority resistance to the education reform of 1958, divergent views among senior leaders at both the XXI and XXII CPSU Congresses decipherable to the extent that they dwelt on either the "flowering" or "drawing together" of nations, the inherent ambivalence of the 1961 Party Program in this regard, and unresolved clashes of opinion within the academic literature.

All of this suggests a lack of consensus within the Soviet leadership under Khrushchev concerning nationality affairs. In short, Khrushchev's attempted "de-Stalinization" of the national question inaugurated a new debate, not unlike that of the early 1920s, on the future of nations within the USSR which revolved around several key issues of theory impinging on practical policy. For example, what was the dominant trend at work in terms of Soviet inter-national relations - *rastsvet*, *sblizhenie*, or *sliyanie*? If "fusion" had already begun, how quickly would it be achieved? Lastly, what was the status of federalism

in the USSR? All these questions were left unresolved for the succeeding Brezhnev regime.

Notes

¹ N. S. Khrushchev, "On The Program of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union", *Pravda*, October 19, 1961, p. 4, in *Current Digest of the Soviet Press* (hereafter referred to as *CDSPP*), Vol. XII, No. 45, p. 20.

² Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, "Nobel Lecture", in John Dunlop, Richard Haugh and Alexis Klimoff, eds., *Aleksander Solzhenitsyn: Critical Essays and Documentary Materials* (Belmont: Nordland Publishing Company, 1973), p. 566.

³ This line of thinking is finding more expression in some recent Western literature. The assumption that the Stalinist system was an immovable monolith devoid of any divergent opinions is now being questioned. For example, Geoffrey Hosking, *The Awakening of the Soviet Union* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 37, makes the point that although the Soviet intelligentsia was deprived of any real sense of community by the Stalinist terror, no regime, no matter how tyrannical could have succeeded in eliminating altogether the independence of human thought. Indeed, this is the only possible context in which one can make sense of the fairly rapid emergence of something like a "civil society" during the early years of the Khrushchevian thaw following the XX CPSU Congress in 1956. If Stalin had been as successful in atomizing Soviet society as has always been thought, this "flowering" of political and especially cultural life in the USSR so soon after his death should not have been possible.

⁴ See Charles H. Fairbanks, Jr., "National Cadres as a Force in the Soviet System: The Evidence of Beria's Career, 1949-1953", in Azrael, ed., pp. 144-186.

⁵ In his address to the Congress, Malenkov dealt at some length with the cardinal issue of war and peace. He essentially pre-empted Khrushchev's renunciation, some four years later at the XX Congress, of the Leninist "inevitability of war" thesis which declared that a horrific clash between the imperialist powers and the socialist states was unavoidable over the long term. Malenkov instead proposed that, due to the growing economic and military might of the world socialist camp headed by the Soviet Union, the imperialists were now deterred from launching a war which, given the unprecedented destructive capability of nuclear weapons, would mean their own annihilation. Thus, not only was war no longer "inevitable", the fact that the two competing social systems shared in common an interest in survival made possible a certain degree of cooperation between them. This would later be the essence of Khrushchev's doctrine of "peaceful co-existence". In his *Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR*, published immediately prior to the XIX Congress, Stalin's appraisal of the international situation was

exactly the contrary. In his opinion, the contradictions within the capitalist world were worsening which made a new war between imperialist states imminent. Being as how the Soviet Union had been drawn into the last great "imperialist war" (i.e., World War II) Stalin was implying that the same was likely to happen again; something which the USSR had to begin preparation for immediately. Although Malenkov was apparently forced at the last minute to alter his speech to the Congress in order to accommodate somewhat Stalin's pessimism, he nonetheless did not abandon his fundamental position.

⁶ Helene Carrere d'Encausse, "Determinants and Parameters of Soviet Nationality Policy", in Azrael, ed., p. 51.

⁷ See "Khrushchev's Secret Speech", in N. S. Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, Strobe Talbott, trans., (London: Andre Deutsch Ltd., 1971), pp. 540-541.

⁸ Hugh Seton-Watson, "Russian Nationalism in Historical Perspective", in Robert Conquest, ed., *The Last Empire: Nationality and the Soviet Future* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1986), p. 25.

⁹ In the wake of the XX Congress, a spate of articles glorifying Lenin, and in some cases denigrating Stalin, appeared in Soviet media. The most authoritative of these were published in the CPSU theoretical journal *Kommunist*. See, for example the following editorials: "Pod znameniem Lenina - vperyod k kommunizmu" [Under the Banner of Lenin - Forward to Communism], No. 3, February 1956, pp. 3-15; "Polnost'yu vosstanovit' i razvit' leninskie normy partiinoi zhizni" [Fully Restore and Develop Leninist Norms of Party Life], No. 4, March 1956, pp. 3-13; "Pod znameniem leninizma" [Under the Banner of Leninism], No. 5, April 1956. Furthermore, previously "unpublished" writings of Lenin, including his 1922 denunciation of Stalin, appeared in *Kommunist* following the Congress. See "Neopublikovannyye dokumenty V. I. Lenina" [Unpublished Documents of V. I. Lenin], No. 9, June 1956, pp. 15-27. There is an obvious parallel here with Gorbachev's *perestroika* and its early emphasis on "rediscovering Lenin". It is not surprising, therefore, that Khrushchev's reputation has been substantially restored after his having been *persona non grata* during the Brezhnev period. This restoration began when, on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution in November 1987, Gorbachev saluted the "great courage" shown by the CPSU and its leadership "headed by N. S. Khrushchev" at the time of the XX Congress in denouncing the Stalinist "cult of personality". See M. S. Gorbachev, "Oktyabr' i perestroika: revolyutsiya prodolzhaetsya" [October and Restructuring: The Revolution Continues], *Pravda*, November 3, 1987, p. 3.

¹⁰ See "Pod znameniem lenina -- vperyod k kommunizmu", p. 9.

¹¹ I. P. Tsameryan, "Razvitie natsional'noi gosudarstvennosti narodov SSSR" [The Development of the National Statehood of the Peoples of the USSR], *Voprosy filosofii*, No. 3, May 1956, pp. 29-30.

¹² See Yakubovskaya, p. 27.

¹³ This took place within the context of a broader effort to rid Soviet historiography in general of innumerable Stalinist distortions. The need for such an undertaking received official blessing in a scholarly journal article published shortly after the XX Congress. See E. Genkina, Yu. Polyakov, and S. Yakubovskaya, "Voprosyi istorii sovetskovo obshchestva v Bolshoi sovetskoi entsiklopedii" [Questions Concerning the History of Soviet Society in the Great Soviet Encyclopedia], *Kommunist*, No. 5, April, 1956, pp. 113-121.

¹⁴ For a brief summary of these articles, see Wolfgang Leonhard, *The Kremlin Since Stalin* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962), p. 140.

¹⁵ Carrere d'Encausse, *Decline of an Empire*, p. 38.

¹⁶ As cited in Samuel Bloembergen, "The Union Republics: How Much Autonomy?", *Problems of Communism*, Vol. 16, No. 5, September-October 1967, pp. 34-35.

¹⁷ M. A. Gedvilas (Chairman of the Legislative Proposals Committee of the USSR Supreme Soviet Council of Nationalities), "On Placing the Legislation on Judicial Systems of Union Republics and the Adoption of Civil, Criminal and Procedural Codes Under the Jurisdiction of the Union Republics," *Pravda*, February 10, 1957, p. 2, in *CDSR*, Vol. IX, No. 8, p. 19.

¹⁸ V. T. Latsis (Chairman of the Council of Nationalities of the USSR Supreme Soviet), "On the Formation of the Economic Committee of the Council of Nationalities," *Izvestiya*, February 12, 1957, pp. 9-10, *ibid*, No. 9, p. 7.

¹⁹ N. S. Khrushchev, "On Further Improving Organization in the Management of Industry and Construction," *Pravda*, March 30, 1957, p. 4, *ibid*, No. 13, p. 13.

²⁰ N. S. Khrushchev, "On Further Improving Organization of Industry and Construction," *Pravda*, May 8, 1957, pp. 1-5, *ibid*, No. 18, p. 15.

²¹ See N. Mukhitdinov (First Secretary of the Uzbekistan Communist Party Central Committee), "For a Powerful New Upsurge of the Socialist Economy," *Pravda*, April 6, 1957, pp. 3-4, *ibid*, No. 14, pp. 17-18.

²² N. S. Khrushchev, "On Further Improving Organization of Industry and Construction", p. 15.

²³ As cited in Bohdan Nahaylo, "Nationalities", in Martin McCauley, ed., *The Soviet Union Under Gorbachev* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), p. 74.

²⁴ *Voprosyi istorii*, No. 3, 1956, as cited in Robert Conquest, *The Nation Killers: The Soviet Deportation of Nationalities* (London: MacMillan and Co. Ltd., 1970), p. 164.

²⁵ *Ibid*.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 164-165.

²⁷ Carrere d'Encausse, *Decline of an Empire*, p. 39.

²⁸ *Voprosyi istorii*, No. 1, January 1957, p. 195, as translated in *CDSP*, Vol. IX, No. 16, p. 33.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.* For a brief summary of the controversy surrounding Shamil, see Robert Conquest, *The Soviet Deportation of Nationalities* (London: MacMillan & Co Ltd., 1960), chapter 11, "Shamil Again", pp. 148-154.

³¹ That this rehabilitation of history was indeed only partial was no better exemplified than by the fact that a January 9, 1957 decree of the USSR Supreme Soviet denouncing Stalin's mass deportation of the six small nations during World War II pointedly excluded the Crimean Tatars. Only the Volga Germans, Chechens, Kalmyks, Ingush and Karachays were recognized as having had their legitimate rights violated and allowed to return to their traditional homelands. This injustice remains a sore spot in terms of the national question to this day. This was evident in other cases as well. For instance, several Soviet historians reviewing a recently published anthology on the history of Kirgizia noted with satisfaction that although "disclosing the reactionary essence of the Tsarist colonial policy, the authors at the same time show the objectively progressive character of Kirgizia's entry into the composition of Russia." See I. Grishkov, A. Kats, Kh. Musin, and I. Sklyar, "New Work on the History of Kirgizia", *Sovetskaya Kirgizia* [*Soviet Kirgizia*], April 24, 1957, pp. 2-3, in *CDSP*, Vol. IX, No. 21, pp. 33-34.

³² N. S. Khrushchev, "On Further Improving Organization in the Management of Industry and Construction", p. 13.

³³ See "Resolution of Plenary Session of Party Central Committee -- On Anti-Party Group of G. M. Malenkov, L. M. Kaganovich and V. M. Molotov", *Pravda*, July 4, 1957, pp. 1-2, in *CDSP*, Vol. IX, No. 23, p. 6.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

³⁶ As cited in Carrere d'Encausse, *Decline of an Empire*, p. 41.

³⁷ See Yaroslav Bilinsky, "The Rulers and the Ruled", *Problems of Communism*, Vol. 16, No. 5, September-October 1967, p. 17.

³⁸ Theorists of the "conflict school" approach to Soviet politics such as Robert Conquest, Carl Linden, and Michel Tatu have written at length about the existence of an organized conservative opposition led by M. A. Suslov and F. R. Kozlov with which Khrushchev had to contend throughout his tenure as First Secretary. Conquest, in particular, *Power and Policy in the USSR* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1961), p. 386, speculates

that this faction succeeded in forcing Khrushchev to give ground after 1957 on the concessionary aspects of his original nationality policy.

³⁹ See "Law on the Strengthening of the Relationship of the School with Life and on the Further Development of the System of Public Education in the USSR", *Pravda*, December 25, 1958, pp. 1-2, in *CDSP*, Vol. XI, No. 4, p. 13.

⁴⁰ Yaroslav Bilinsky, "The Soviet Education Laws of 1958-59 and Soviet Nationality Policy", *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 4, October 1962, p. 152. The same opinion is expressed by John Kolasky, *Education in Soviet Ukraine* (Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, 1968), pp. 26-28; *passim*.

⁴¹ Bilinsky, *passim*, and Kolasky, pp. 28-31.

⁴² *Pravda*, November 29, 1958, as cited in Kolasky, *ibid.*, p. 29.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ See "Speech by Deputy S. V. Chervonenko, Chernigov Election District, Ukraine Republic", *Izvestiya*, December 25, 1958, p. 4, in *CDSP*, Vol. XI, No. 2, p. 28.

⁴⁵ See "Speech by Deputy M. A. Gedvilas, Alytus Election District, Lithuanian Republic", *ibid.*, p. 30.

⁴⁶ See "Speech by Deputy A. Ya. Pelshe, Rezekne Election District, Latvian Republic", *ibid.*

⁴⁷ Kolasky, p. 29.

⁴⁸ See Bilinsky, "The Soviet Education Laws of 1958-59 and Soviet Nationality Policy", pp. 145-146.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 152.

⁵⁰ Kolasky, p. 31.

⁵¹ N. S. Khrushchev, "On Control Figures for Development of the USSR National Economy in 1959-1965", *Pravda*, January 28, 1959, pp. 2-10, in *CDSP*, Vol. XI, No. 3, p. 5.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ See "N. S. Khrushchev Interviewed by Correspondent of French Newspaper 'Le Figaro'", *Pravda*, March 27, 1959, pp. 1-2, in *CDSP*, Vol. X, No. 13, 1959, p. 27. Admittedly, Khrushchev's response was given to a rather leading question concerning the inevitable disappearance of national differences under socialism. Nonetheless, the fact that he did not avail himself of the opportunity to comment on the "flowering" of nations in the USSR seems significant at least to the extent that it fit

in with the predominant ideological emphasis of the time on "drawing together" and "fusion".

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ See, among other examples, G. O. Zimanas, "Druzhba narodov SSSR i preodolenie perezhitok burzhuaznovo natsionalizma" [The Friendship of the Peoples of the USSR and Overcoming Survivals of Bourgeois Nationalism], *Voprosy filosofii*, No. 1, February 1959, pp. 27-38.

⁵⁷ See Alec Nove, *An Economic History of the USSR* (London: Penguin Books, 1989), pp. 348-352.

⁵⁸ B. G. Gafurov, "Uspekhi natsional'noi politiki KPSS i nekotorye voprosy internatsional'novo vospitaniya" [The Successes of the CPSU's Nationality Policy and Some Problems of Internationalist Education], *Kommunist*, No. 11, August 1958, p. 12.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁶¹ Bilinsky, "The Soviet Education Laws of 1958-59 and Soviet Nationality Policy", p. 149.

⁶² N. S. Khrushchev, "On the Program of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union", *Pravda*, October 19, 1961, p. 1, in *CDSU*, Vol. XIII, No. 44, p. 9.

⁶³ Although the idea of the "all-people's state per se did not appear in academic writings before the XXI Congress, many of the attributes later ascribed to it were frequently discussed. See, for example, two articles by Fedor Burlatsky, who has been a prominent defender of Gorbachev's *perestroika*: "Sovetskaya demokratiya i yeye dal'neishee sovershenstvovanie" [Soviet Democracy and its Further Perfection], *Kommunist*, No. 8, May 1956, pp. 46-61; and "Razvitie sotsialisticheskoi demokratii na sovremennom etape kommunisticheskovo stroitel'stva" [The Development of Socialist Democracy at the Current Stage of Communist Construction], *Kommunist*, No. 13, September 1958, pp. 22-37. In both these pieces, Burlatsky argued in favor of what subsequently emerged as important features of the "all people's state"; specifically, an expanded role for the soviets and the increased involvement of public organizations in the affairs of the state. A certain parallel, therefore, can be seen between this concept and what later became the basis, at least initially, of Gorbachev's ideas for "democratizing" Soviet society today.

⁶⁴ For a theoretical treatment of this notion, see A. Sovolev, "O protivorechiyakh sotsialisticheskovo obshchestva i putyakh ikh preodoleniya" [On Contradictions in Socialist Society and Ways of Overcoming Them], *Kommunist*, No. 2, February 1958, pp. 14-34.

⁶⁵ A. I. Lepeshkin, "Programma KPSS i nekotorye voprosy teorii Sovetskovo sotsialisticheskovo gosudarstva" [The CPSU Program and Some

Theoretical Problems of the Soviet Socialist State], *Sovetskoe gosudarstvo i pravo* [Soviet State and Law], No. 12, December 1961, p. 8.

⁶⁶ For an interesting summary of Soviet writings on the "all-people's state" during the mid-1960s, see Roger E. Kanet, "The Rise and Fall of the 'All-People's State': Recent Changes in the Soviet Theory of the State", *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 1, January 1968, pp. 81-94.

⁶⁷ See "The Program of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union", *Pravda*, November 2, 1961, in *CDSP*, Vol. XIII, No. 46, p. 14. As Carl Linden, *Khrushchev and the Soviet Leadership* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), p. 83, has observed, Khrushchev likely sought to carve out a certain exalted piece of historical ground for himself by overseeing the development of a new CPSU Program: "Lenin, of course, was the author both of the first program of the party in 1903 and of its revised version of 1919. Khrushchev was setting his sights on a distinctive attribute of leadership previously held only by Lenin - the authorship of the basic programmatic document of the party."

⁶⁸ See "The Program of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union", p. 46.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Lepeshkin, p. 12.

⁷² N. S. Khrushchev, "On the Program of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union", *Pravda*, October 19, 1961, pp. 1-10, in *CDSP*, Vol. XIII, No. 45, p. 18.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, No. 44, p. 4.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, No. 45, pp. 19-20.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁷⁸ See chapter one, page 21.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, No. 45, p. 20.

⁸⁰ Carrere d'Encausse, *Decline of an Empire*, p. 45. Grey Hodnett, "What's in a Nation?", *Problems of Communism*, Vol. 16, No. 5, September-October 1967, p. 3 comes to the same conclusion: "The Program did not explicitly equate 'complete unity' with 'merging' [i.e., "fusion"], and Khrushchev's report seemed to deny that they were identical. Yet the Program did leave the impression that the process of 'internationalization' - which it saw operating simultaneously along a broad demographic, economic, social, cultural, psychological,

linguistic, and political front - was leading toward the eventual fusion of nations into a single, nationally-homogenized society."

⁸¹ N. S. Khrushchev, "On Working Out The Draft of a New USSR Constitution," *Pravda*, April 26, 1962, p. 1, in *CDSP*, Vol. XIV, No. 17, p. 15.

⁸² P. G. Semenov, "Programma KPSS o razvitii sovetskikh natsional'no-gosudarstvennykh otnoshenii" [The CPSU Program on the Development of Soviet National-State Relations], *Sovetskoe gosudarstvo i pravo*, No. 12, December 1961, pp. 15-25.

⁸³ See Ye. M. Zhukov, "XXII syezd KPSS i zadachi sovetskikh istorikov" [The XXII CPSU Congress and the Tasks of Soviet Historians], *Voprosy istorii*, No. 12, December 1961, pp. 3-14; A. K. Azizyan, "Torzhestvo leninskoi natsional'noi politiki v SSSR" [The Triumph of the Leninist Nationality Policy in the USSR], *Voprosy istorii*, No. 11, November 1962, pp. 101-124; P. Rogachev and M. Sverdlin, "Sovetskii narod - novaya istoricheskaya obshchnost' lyudei" [The Soviet People - A New Historical Community of People], *Kommunist*, No. 9, June 1963, pp. 11-21; E. V. Tadevosyan, "Pervyi opyt vsesoyuznoi koordinatsii nauchnykh issledovaniy v oblasti natsional'nykh otnoshenii" [The First Experience in Co-ordinating All-Union Scientific Research in the Sphere of National Relations], *Voprosy filosofii*, No. 2, February 1964, pp. 158-161.

⁸⁴ A Soviet economist justified this action in the following terms: "Many important problems in the national economy simply cannot be handled on the level of the economic administrative regions, and these problems cannot be solved by individual economic councils and local Soviets... This is why it is so important to work out national economic plans on the basis of major economic regions. Each of these is a group of contiguous economic administrative regions which joins forces to perform certain production tasks of all-Union pertinence. The major economic regions embrace extensive territory and have all the necessary conditions for the integrated development of their economies." See V. Kistanov, "In Interests of the Integrated Development of the National Economy", *Ekonomicheskaya gazeta* [Economic Gazette], May 28, 1961, p. 7, in *CDSP*, Vol. XIII, No. 41., pp. 16-17.

⁸⁵ See "Speech by Comrade S. Kamalov, Uzbek Republic", *Pravda*, February 2, 1959, pp. 3-4, *ibid.*, Vol. XI, No. 10, pp. 21-22.

⁸⁶ See "Speech by Comrade S. A. Tovmasyan, Armenian Republic", *Pravda*, February 5, 1959, p. 3, *ibid.*, No. 15, p. 23.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

⁸⁸ See "Speech by Comrade I. D. Mustafaev, Azerbaidzhan Republic", *Pravda*, February 2, 1959, *ibid.*, No. 10, p. 20.

⁸⁹ See "Speech by Comrade D. D. Karaev, Turkmenian Republic", *Pravda*, February 5, 1959, p. 3, *ibid.*, No. 14, p. 19.

⁹⁰ See "Speech by Comrade A. I. Kirichenko", *Pravda*, February 1, 1959, pp. 4-5, *ibid.*, No. 9, p. 50.

⁹¹ Michel Tatu, *Power in the Kremlin: From Khrushchev to Kosygin* (New York: The Viking Press, 1969), p. 34.

⁹² See "Speech by Comrade N. A. Mukhitdinov", *Pravda*, January 31, 1959, pp. 7-8, in *CDSP*, Vol. XI, No. 8, p. 25.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁹⁷ In March 1959, almost immediately after the XXI Congress, the Uzbek First Secretary, S. Kamalov and a number of his associates were removed from office. In August 1959, I. D. Mustafaev was purged as First Secretary of the Azerbaidzhan Communist Party, a development no doubt connected with Azeri resistance to the 1958 school reform as discussed earlier. There was a more notable departure in January 1960 when A. I. Kirichenko, the First Secretary of the Ukrainian Party apparatus, was downgraded to the position of Party Secretary at Rostov before losing even that menial position in the spring of 1960. Finally, in December 1960, S. A. Tovmasyan was relieved of his duties as First Secretary of the Armenian Communist Party and, a few months later, exiled abroad as ambassador to North Vietnam.

⁹⁸ See "Speech by Comrade M. A. Suslov, Secretary of the Party Central Committee", *Pravda*, October 23, 1961, pp. 4-5, in *CDSP*, Vol. XIII, No. 51, p. 21.

⁹⁹ See "On Changes in the Statutes of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union: Report by Comrade F. R. Kozlov, Secretary of the Party Central Committee", *Pravda*, October 29, 1961, pp. 4-6, *ibid.*, No. 47, p. 10.

¹⁰⁰ See "Speech by Comrade I. I. Bodyul, First Secretary of the Moldavian Communist Party Central Committee", *Pravda*, October 27, 1961, pp. 3-4, *ibid.*, No. 3, p. 18.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² See "Speech by Comrade T. Usubaliev, First Secretary of the Kirgiz Communist Party Central Committee", *Pravda*, October 24, 1961, pp. 4-5, *ibid.*, Vol. XIII, No. 52, p. 25.

¹⁰³ See "Speech by Comrade Sh. R. Rashidov, First Secretary of the Uzbekistan Communist Party Central Committee", *Pravda*, October 20, 1961, pp. 5-6, *ibid.*, No. 48, p. 21.

¹⁰⁴ See "Speech by Comrade Yu. V. Akhundov, First Secretary of the Azerbaidzhan Communist Party", *Pravda*, October 21, 1961, p. 5, *ibid.*, No. 50, p. 14.

¹⁰⁵ See "Speech by Comrade N. A. Mukhitdinov, Secretary of the Party Central Committee," *Pravda*, October 25, 1961, pp. 6-7, *ibid.*, Vol. XIV, No. 2, pp. 15-17.

¹⁰⁶ See "Speech by Comrade J. G. Kabin, First Secretary of the Estonian Communist Party Central Committee", *Pravda*, October 23, 1961, p. 2, *ibid.*, Vol. XIII, No. 51, p. 15.

¹⁰⁷ See "Speech by Comrade V. P. Mzhavanadze, First Secretary of the Georgian Communist Party Central Committee", *Pravda*, October 21, 1961, p. 3, *ibid.*, No. 49, p. 18. Mzhavanadze's reticence was demonstrated more clearly shortly after the XXII Congress when he pointedly criticized relapses into "great-power chauvinism" in addition to "local nationalism". He seemed to be implying that the problem of "great-power [i.e., Russian] chauvinism" was becoming more acute. See "Make the Historic Decisions of the 22nd Congress a Reality: Report by Comrade V. P. Mzhavanadze at Meeting of the *Aktiv* of the Georgian Communist Party, *Zarya vostoka* [*Dawn of the East*], November 19, 1961, pp. 1-3, *ibid.*, No. 48, p. 8.

¹⁰⁸ See "Speech by Comrade A. I. Mikoyan, First Vice-Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers", *Pravda*, October 22, 1961, p. 2, *ibid.*, Vol. XIII, No. 51, p. 12.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² See chapter one, p. 21.

¹¹³ Nahaylo, p. 76.

¹¹⁴ For a summary of the Tashkent conference, see *Voprosyi istorii*, No. 11, 1962, pp. 101-123. The results of the Frunze conference are summarized in Tadevosyan, *op. cit.*

¹¹⁵ See Semenov, p. 25, as well as Rogachev and Sverdlin, *op. cit.*

¹¹⁶ Rogachev and Sverdlin writing in the February 1964 edition of *Filosofskie nauki* [*The Philosophical Sciences*], as quoted in Hodnett, p. 7.

¹¹⁷ See Azizyan, *op. cit.*

¹¹⁸ See Tadevosyan, *op. cit.*, and Azizyan, *ibid.*

¹¹⁹ See Semenov, *op. cit.*, and the team of Rogachev-Sverdlin, *op. cit.*

¹²⁰ These comments are by M. S. Dzhunusov as cited in Hodnett, p. 11.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² See M. O. Mnatsakanyan, "Deyatel'nost' KPSS po rasshireniyu prav soyuznikh respublik" [The CPSU's Work in Expanding the Rights of the Union Republics], *Voprosyi istorii KPSS*, No. 10, October 1963, pp. 3-15.

¹²³ Lepeshkin, p. 13.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹²⁵ As noted by Hodnett, "The Debate over Soviet Federalism", p. 462.

The Brezhnev Years: "Developed Socialism" and the National Question

Life persuades us that the intensive economic and social development of each of our republics is accelerating the all-round process of their drawing together. National cultures are flourishing and enriching one another, and the culture of the unified Soviet people -- a new social and internationalist community is being molded.¹

L. I. Brezhnev

The Soviet people as a new historic community of men and women do not constitute a new socialist nation....Neither the Russian, Ukrainian, Belorussian, or any other nation dissolves within the Soviet people. They preserve their national statehood, their languages, national consciousness, and the particularities of their cultures...The existence of national differences is an inviolable fact, and the CPSU takes it into consideration as an indispensable condition in scientifically guiding all branches of the multifaceted life of men.²

A Belorussian academic

The apparent lack of consensus surrounding nationality policy which characterized Khrushchev's years in power continued into the Brezhnev era which was marked in general by a further recentralization of economic and political decision-making authority as the new leadership stepped back from Khrushchev's utopian program for the "full-scale construction of communism" without officially repudiating it. The complete abolition of the *sovnarkhozi* in September 1965 signified unequivocally the desire of Brezhnev and his colleagues to reassert the

prerogatives of the centre and slow down the process of "de-Stalinization".

In terms of the national question, this backing away was evident in Brezhnev's first major pronouncement on the matter at the XXIII CPSU Congress in March 1966. Significantly, while calling on "the Party and all communists, irrespective of their nationality ... to continue to work indefatigably to bring about the further comprehensive rapprochement [*sblizhenie*] of the peoples of the Soviet Union", he made no reference to *sliyanie*, nor any mention of the fact that the effacement of national distinctions remained the Party's long-term goal.³ Thus, while reaffirming Khrushchev's latter-day commitment to *sblizhenie*, Brezhnev nonetheless moderated the language of Soviet nationality policy by ignoring the charged subject of "fusion". As John Dunlop observes, since it betokened not only the ideological and cultural unity of Soviet peoples "but was also intended to suggest a biological homogenization of the national components of the USSR," *sliyanie* was a term offensive to both minority and Russian national sensitivities.⁴ By avoiding reference to "fusion", Brezhnev struck a centrist position between contending points of view inherited from his predecessor which were still finding expression in the specialist literature.

Parallel Debates in the Academic Journals

In fact, the XXIII Congress took place in the midst of a major intellectual controversy concerning the national question which unfolded primarily within the context of a symposium sponsored by *Voprosy*

istorii, the theoretical journal of the History Department of the USSR Academy of Sciences.

The symposium was entitled "Discussion of the Concept - The Nation", and centred primarily on the problem of methodology; that is, "the conceptual framework that must be used in selecting, organizing, and interpreting information about nationality affairs within - and to some extent outside - the USSR."⁵ The major elements of methodology include: those particular characteristics which define nationhood; a formula for explaining how and why nations differ under capitalism and socialism; and, a formula that reveals the dynamics of change in socialist nations. Such a framework is necessary for defining and justifying the "laws of development" (*zakonomernosti*) of nations which, in turn, point to the feasibility and desirability of certain policy choices over others.⁶ The centre-point of the debate was the continuing applicability of the Stalinist definition of "the nation" as outlined in chapter one.

In the *Voprosyi istorii* articles, two contrasting approaches to methodology emerged. The first can be described as "assimilationist" and was based primarily on reference to the classics of Marxism-Leninism. It held that nations retained no links with prenational ethnic forms and were exclusively the product of the historical transition from feudalism to capitalism. As such, they were beset even from birth by deep class conflict with the result that the workers of all countries were ideologically and emotionally more strongly bound together than they were to other classes within their "own" nation (i.e., the notion of "proletarian internationalism"). With the victory of socialism in the USSR, class antagonisms had vanished and national distinctions were

rapidly diminishing. While acknowledging the duality of the *rastsvet-sblizhenie* dialectic, the "assimilationists" tended to stress the latter and saw no objective obstacles to the accelerated "drawing together" and "fusion" of nations in the "not-too-distant" future.⁷ One of their major focuses of attack was Stalin's fourth characteristic of nationhood; namely, "a community of psychological makeup manifested in a common culture." This they saw as ascribing a certain permanence to nations which was obviously problematic from their methodological point of view.

Counterposing this "assimilationist" framework was a "moderate" methodology, which, to some extent, relied on more empirically based research. This approach projected the existence of nations much farther back into the past and foresaw them as continuing to exist much farther into the future. It recognized a certain degree of inter-class social and psychological ties within capitalist countries and acknowledged the likelihood of continuing tensions between nations and nationalities even after the socialist revolution. Therefore, these theorists typically gave somewhat greater emphasis to the process of nations "flowering" as opposed to their "drawing together" and postponed "fusion" until the very remote future.⁸ Somewhat ironically then, they were put in the awkward position of having to defend major elements of the Stalinist definition of nationhood, especially its psychological component.

In the main, this debate represented a continuation of that which took place in a less organized form during the last years of Khrushchev's rule. Grey Hodnett may be correct in his interpretation of the symposium as the first serious attempt undertaken since the adoption of the 1961 Party Program to lay a respectable theoretical foundation for the regime's centralizing emphasis on *sblizhenie*. This means that,

although portrayed as a disinterested search for "truth" through a scholarly exchange of ideas, "it may well have been a politically inspired move by those elements in the elite who fear[ed] non-Russian nationalism and favor[ed] a faster assimilation of the national minorities."⁹ To the extent that this exercise can therefore be said to have been officially sanctioned, the publication of strong arguments against the "assimilationist" view is suggestive of continuing differences of opinion among Soviet leaders at this time.

This conclusion is buttressed by the fact that the leadership itself made no effort to intervene directly in the *Voprosyi istorii* debate which ran for almost three years. The first article in the series was published in January 1966 and the last in November 1968, and a August 1970 summary of the symposium made clear the depth of disagreement among the academics over such fundamental issues as whether or not psychological factors should be included in any scientific definition of nationhood; the extent to which national statehood should be considered as an essential characteristic of a "nation"; and the specific differences between "bourgeois" and "socialist" nations.¹⁰ Nor did Soviet leaders make any authoritative pronouncements regarding a parallel debate, also carried over from the Khrushchev period, ongoing in various academic journals specifically relating to the future of Soviet federalism.

At the core of this debate was an argument over the functions Lenin had originally ascribed to federalism in the USSR. The "pro-federalist" position focussed favorably on Lenin's federal compromise of the early 1920s, noting that, as was pointed out in chapter one, Lenin saw no other way of assuring the voluntary unification of widely diverse

nationalities. This interpretation implied that federalism based on national-territorial divisions was still desirable in the Soviet Union and would be for the foreseeable future. In contrast, the "de-federalist" position, based, it would seem, on firmer theoretical ground, was essentially that Lenin had been willing to accept federation only as a temporary, transitional vehicle along the road to the eventual "fusion" of nations. Thus, these writers insinuated that federalism had about served its purpose in the USSR and a political reorganization of the Soviet state on a unitary basis was in order.¹¹ As suggested earlier, the debates over the speed with which Soviet nations were being "drawn together" and the fate of Soviet federalism were closely related. The "assimilationist" methodology alluded to above obviously supported the "de-federalist" view; while the "moderate" approach supported the "pro-federalist" stand. Not unexpectedly then, a number of the writers who took part in the *Voprosy istorii* symposium were also publishing articles on the question of federation.¹²

That widely divergent views on fundamental aspects of nationality policy were openly expressed in the theoretical journals over a period of almost a decade spanning both the last years of the Khrushchev period and the first several of Brezhnev's rule without direct intervention by the leadership (as Hodnett writes, "Brezhnev's report to the XXIII Congress in March 1966 avoided any mention of federalism, thereby leaving the present leadership's public position on the issue indecipherable"¹³) is a reasonable basis for arguing that there continued to be no accord of views among top leaders. Brezhnev's self-congratulatory assertion on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution in November 1967 that "social and national

antagonisms have forever departed from the life of our country"¹⁴ notwithstanding, there was, in reality, "no detailed, all-embracing and fully operational party line"¹⁵ on the national question throughout the 1960s.

The National Question Under Conditions of "Developed Socialism"

Something closer to an "official party line" under the Brezhnev leadership finally emerged at the XXIV CPSU Congress in March 1971. Here again, Brezhnev refrained from reference to *sliyanie*. As had been the case at the last Congress, he was clearly intent on stressing the less controversial features of the 1961 Party Program, and focussed, in particular, on "the Soviet people" as a "new historical community of people"; a concept developed, as was pointed out in the last chapter, by Khrushchev a decade earlier. This emphasis on "the Soviet people" henceforth became the cornerstone of Brezhnev's nationality policy. It figured prominently in all his future statements on the national question, and was written into the preamble of the 1977 Soviet Constitution.¹⁶

However, as Nahaylo observes, the concept of *Sovetskii narod* was adapted by Khrushchev's successors "to fit the requirements of a period in which tacit recognition was being given to the realization that communism was not just around the corner and that a protracted interim stage of 'developed' or 'mature' socialism would first have to be traversed."¹⁷ This was in keeping with what was noted earlier as the Brezhnev regime's quietly backing away from the more utopian aspects of

the 1961 Party Program which forecast the attainment of full communism in the relatively near term.

As Brezhnev's main contribution to Marxist-Leninist ideology, "developed socialism" (*razvitoi sotsializm*)¹⁹ spoke well of the malleability of the doctrine. Brezhnev himself began to use the term on occasion as early as 1967 but it did not come into vogue until the XXIV Congress after which reference to it appeared frequently in Soviet media.²⁰ It received its first theoretical elaboration in the Party organ *Kommunist* in December 1971,²⁰ and from then on the monthly journal usually included a section of essays on "Socio-Economic and Political Problems of Developed Socialism."²¹

As a theoretical innovation, "developed socialism" denoted a separate stage of Soviet historical development which followed its own inherent laws of growth and change. It was, in the words of Donald Kelley, "an economic, social and political entity in its own right, thus conveying legitimacy to the political and social structures developing within it."²² The notion therefore entailed a significant scaling-down of expectations in terms of the time-frame involved in the transition of the USSR from a socialist to a communist society. As a Soviet writer aptly put it, *razvitoi sotsializm* was based on "a sober assessment of the historical distance that still separates us from the highest phase of communism."²³

While the technical and economic forces that were gradually propelling the Soviet Union towards communism would be undergoing further qualitative and quantitative changes, "developed socialism" provided the ideological rationale for enhancing the role of the CPSU and Soviet state which were to assume increased responsibilities in

overseeing these transformations. Hence, while legitimating a certain degree of cautious reformism with respect to the economy,²⁴ "developed socialism" gave Soviet leaders a theoretically grounded defence for retaining unaltered, or even strengthening, the centralized and authoritarian nature of existing political structures. This marked a clear break with the philosophical substance of Khrushchev's idea of the "all-people's state" which had implied a certain democratization of Soviet society based on the gradual devolution of power from the state apparatus if not the CPSU itself.²⁵ "Developed socialism" was therefore a doctrinal framework very much in keeping with the conservative nature of the Brezhnev regime.

As regards the national question, "developed socialism" conceded that national distinctions, while gradually losing their former significance, were indeed likely to last for the duration of this new phase, and, as secondary cultural differences, long into the period of full communism. Nahaylo points out that, within the broader ideological rubric of *razvitoi sotsializm*, whereby any prospect of *sliyanie* was deferred indefinitely, the notion of "the Soviet people" provided the Kremlin "with an expedient formula whereby the enduring multinational nature of the Soviet state could be acknowledged but the emphasis placed on a supposedly higher unity transcending national distinctions and based on shared values."²⁶ Brezhnev retained Khrushchev's ambiguous dialectic of *rastsvet* and *sblizhenie* as interrelated processes at work in the sphere of national relations, but saw it as "leading to a pluralistic integration of nations within a firmly unified multinational community rather than to their amalgamation into a single ethnically undifferentiated whole."²⁷

However, for all its emphasis on multinationalism and the unifying power of supranational values associated with Marxist-Leninist ideology, it is worth noting that Brezhnev's vision of "the Soviet people" under conditions of "developed socialism" involved a substantially elevated role for the Russian nation. To some extent, Khrushchev himself, in announcing the emergence of *Sovetskii narod* in 1961 had, as noted in chapter two, implied Russian preeminence but not beyond suggesting that the selfless aid of "the great Russian people" had been critical in bringing to their "flowering" as nations the formerly oppressed and backward minority peoples.

Brezhnev went much beyond this. At the XXIV Congress he made the following statement:

All the nations and nationalities of our country, above all the Great Russian people, played a role in the formation, strengthening, and development of this mighty union of equal peoples that have taken the path of socialism. The revolutionary energy, selflessness, diligence, and profound internationalism of the Great Russian people have rightfully won them the sincere respect of all the peoples of our socialist homeland.²⁸

Speaking a year later on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the formation of the USSR, he went even further; referring to the RSFSR as "the largest of our republics, the first among equals [*pervaya sredi ravnyikh*] as all the peoples of our multinational country quite rightly call it."²⁹ In exalting the status of the Russian nation, Brezhnev moved even farther away from the internationalist essence of Khrushchev's nationality policy as entailed by the latter's endorsement of *sliyanie* and nearer something like the old Stalinist notion of Russia as *primus inter pares*.

As Frederick Barghoorn suggests, this implied that although the enduring nature of ethnic differences was officially recognized, "the aim of policy remained nonetheless the breakdown of national barriers in the USSR, essentially by means of Russification."³⁰ The official media itself occasionally provided evidence that this was the case. For instance, a May 1971 article in *Pravda* commented favorably on the aggregate results of the 1970 Soviet census which, as the author interpreted them, showed that an increasing number of non-Russians regarded the Russian culture as their native culture and the Russian language as their native language. He also spoke approvingly of the assimilation of a number of small nationalities (i.e., Mordvinians, Karelians, and Jews) into what he coyly described as "the culture and customs of another [viz. Russian]."³¹

In spite of the positive signs such Party specialists were dialectically able to infer from it, the 1970 census actually brought to light certain demographic trends which were highly unfavorable from the regime's point of view - declining birth-rates in the European part of the USSR (especially in Russia proper) counterposed against very high ones among Transcaucasian and Central Asian peoples; weak migration and inter-marriage patterns between the centre and periphery; and, *Pravda's* generally favorable assessment notwithstanding, the declining use of Russian by some individual non-Russian nationalities in comparison with the 1959 census.³²

While the Brezhnev regime's reassertion of Russian preeminence can be seen partly as a conservative response to the fact that, as Khrushchev's experience had shown, a relatively liberal attitude towards non-Russian nationalisms could give rise to undesirable nationalist

demands, as well as representing a neo-Stalinist orientation towards rigid centralization, it was also likely a response to the negative population trends made evident by the 1970 census. In practical terms, it took a number of forms.

First, there was a major effort to increase the study of the Russian language in the republics. Reminiscent of Khrushchev's education reform of twenty years earlier, far-reaching legislation was introduced in 1978-79 which covered every level of the education system and, for the first time, extended the teaching of Russian to kindergartens and nurseries.³³ Brezhnev, in essence, reaffirmed the 1961 Party Program's commitment to Russian as an indispensable vehicle for accelerating the rapprochement of nations. This was a key element in the regime's efforts at inculcating into Soviet society, through not only the primary education system but related Party and public organizations such as the Young Communist League (*Komsomol'*), Young Pioneers, and trade unions, the internationalist values of the new "Soviet people" in which the Russian nation played the leading role.

Second, measures were taken to further enhance Russian domination in central political institutions. Between 1966 and 1981, the percentage of Russians in the CPSU Central Committee rose from 57 to 68, and Russian representation in the Politburo over the same period increased from 6 out of 11 full members to 10 out of 14.³⁴ At the same time, cadre policy received special attention. The practice of installing Russian "Second Secretaries" in the republics as counterweights to native First Secretaries was sanctified. In addition to these actions, Brezhnev frequently spoke of the need for due representation in local party and state organs of all nationalities living outside their native

republics, a measure apparently intended primarily to ensure that Russians residing in non-Russian parts of the country retained a strong political voice.³⁵

Third, there was an attempt by Russian historians to link together the destinies of Russians, Belorussians, and Ukrainians in a Slavic bloc to serve as the nucleus of "the Soviet people". As Nahaylo notes, "the means used to promote the cohesion of the Ukrainians and Belorussians with the Russians even included stressing common blood lines and 'genetic affinity' and depicting the ancient state of Kievan Rus' as a prototype of the USSR."³⁶ With the anticipated further linguistic assimilation of the other Slavs, "the preponderance of an almost 200 million strong 'Russian' core within the Soviet people would be assured."³⁷ As regarded Ukraine in particular, there was an obvious connection here with the CPSU Central Committee "theses" of 1954 celebrating the 300th anniversary of the Treaty of Pereyaslav and proclaiming the "irreversibility" of the "everlasting union" between the "two great Slavic peoples" (i.e., Ukrainians and Russians). Ukraine had thus been granted the status of "second among equals" (behind Russia itself) in the hierarchy of Soviet nations.³⁸

Lastly, the leadership paid special attention to the problem of better assimilating the Central Asian peoples into the Soviet infrastructure. Most importantly, Brezhnev continually stressed the need to integrate the economic resources of Central Asia into the national economy. A special priority was the goal of drawing on abundant reserves of Muslim manpower in order to address chronic labor shortages in the European part of the Soviet Union and Siberia. It was hoped that this would help to break down traditionally strong Central Asian attachment

to national territories and customs. Hence, Brezhnev shared Khrushchev's conception of economic integration as an important means of *sblizhenie*. This was in adherence with the traditional Marxist-Leninist view that all social relations, including inter-national, are, in the main, determined by the nature of the prevailing economic system. Socialist transformations of the economy, with the aid of "subjective" measures, as has been discussed, should therefore bring about the desired results in terms of nationality policy.

Secondary to the economic angle in Moscow's concern over Central Asia were a series of actions taken in an effort to increase Russian birth-rates and control those of Soviet Muslims. First, the regime exhorted young Russians to have more children and went so far as to imply that it was unpatriotic for Russian couples to have only one child. As S. Enders Wimbush observes, it was even suggested in official media that "the quality and quantity of offspring could be improved and infant mortality reduced if 'drunken conception' could be prevented, a reference to the high rate of alcoholism among Russians and its possible contribution to the low Russian birth-rate."³⁹ Second, discussions were initiated in professional circles about the feasibility of somehow promoting differentiated rates of birth in the USSR on the basis of republic and region.⁴⁰ Third, efforts were made to draw greater numbers of Asian women into the labor force in the belief that this might discourage them from having more than three children.⁴¹ However, as Wimbush argues, these were not comprehensive policies, nor was a comprehensive policy for dealing with the critical problem of divergent birth-rates ever publicly approved.⁴² This in spite of the fact that at both the XXV and XXVI CPSU Congresses (February 1976 and March 1981

respectively) Brezhnev issued urgent calls for the elaboration of an effective demographic policy to deal with population problems that he described at the latter as having "become more acute recently".⁴³

In fact, the Brezhnev regime's revival of the old Stalinist notion of Russia as *pervaya sredi ravnyikh* can hardly be viewed as a comprehensive policy in any sense for dealing with the modern-day complexities of the national question made evident especially by the 1970 census. Rather, it was a tacit admission by the Kremlin of the weak appeal of its "internationalist" ideology and the fact that, far from being "resolved", there was ample reason to be seriously concerned about the direction which national development in the USSR was taking. While some Soviet scholars, as pointed out earlier, were able to interpret selectively the results of the census in such a way as to argue that "the progressive process of the drawing together of nationalities and the cohesion [*splochenie*] of peoples" in the USSR was intensifying,⁴⁴ Carrere d'Encausse justifiably counters that, in reality, the census largely "negated Khrushchev's triumphant vision of the drawing together of nations" and made clear that the future evolution of Soviet nations did not imply their "fusion".⁴⁵

The Language of Brezhnevian Nationality Policy

The public pronouncements of Soviet leaders during the Brezhnev years also made clear the extent to which the national question was far from "resolved" and continued to hint at the same sort of disagreement over nationality policy as they had under Khrushchev. That troublesome nationalist sentiments persisted especially in the Soviet periphery was

disclosed by rigorous condemnations of "localism", "national exclusiveness", "bourgeois nationalism" and other associated sins which peppered the speeches of Soviet leaders at the four CPSU Congresses held during Brezhnev's tenure. However, there was by no means unanimity in the degree to which non-Russian First Secretaries were willing to countenance the Russifying policies being articulated by Moscow in response to these problems.

For example, at the XXIII Congress in March 1966 most, but not all, republican leaders echoed Brezhnev's emphasis on the "drawing together" of Soviet nations in which the Russian nation was playing the leading role. The First Secretary of the Tatar Province Party Committee, F. A. Tabeyev, paid excessive homage to "the great Russian brother"⁴⁶, while the Azeri First Secretary V. Yu. Akhundov and the Armenian First Secretary A. Ye. Kochinyan both emphasized the importance of the Russian language as a primary vehicle of *sblizhenie*.⁴⁷ Two other secretaries, the Uzbek Sh. R. Rashidov and the Moldavian I. I. Bodyul, criticized current Soviet scholarship for overemphasizing the "flowering" of nations in theoretical discussions of the national question.

According to Rashidov, the time had come "to make a comprehensive study of the objective processes of the flourishing and rapprochement of nations."⁴⁸ Suggesting some measure of leadership dissatisfaction with the present direction of academic discussions concerning the national question, he remarked that new studies should aim at helping "Party and state cadres deal more properly with questions connected with the development of progressive tendencies leading to the further rapprochement of socialist nations."⁴⁹ Bodyul was more direct in his criticism, noting "a serious lag in scholarship where the elaboration of

theoretical and practical problems of national development is concerned."⁵⁰ Specifically, he attacked the tendency of scholars to "limit themselves for the most part to describing the processes of the flowering of each individual nation."⁵¹ While calling the academic treatment of *rastsvet* "important and necessary", Bodyul complained that, as a result, "the process of the rapprochement and merging [i.e., *sliyanie*] of nations...receives insufficient attention."⁵² The comments of Rashidov and Bodyul perhaps vindicate Grey Hodnett's thesis, as described earlier in this chapter, that the *Voprosy istorii* symposium ongoing at the time of the XXIII Congress was less a disinterested search for the "truth" than it was a politically inspired attempt to establish the proper theoretical ground for the Brezhnev regime's emphasis on the "drawing together" of nations as currently the dominant operative trend in the sphere of Soviet inter-national relations. However, these sorts of criticisms could also be interpreted as evidence of genuine concern within the Kremlin that the rapprochement of nations was a more complicated and contradictory process than first thought or could be openly acknowledged given the claims being made of substantial progress in this direction. In short, questions of national development in the USSR needed to be delved into more deeply and Soviet academics were being called upon to do so provided they stayed within acceptable ideological parameters.

That a certain vacuum existed in terms of nationality policy at the time of the XXIII Congress is also suggested by the fact that three republican leaders were noticeably more moderate in their remarks than the majority of their counterparts, devoting less attention to *sblizhenie* as the goal of the Party's policy and paying no excessive

homage to the Russian nation. The First Secretary of Ukraine, P. I. Shelest, spoke highly of his republic's contribution to Soviet economic and technological achievements and emphasized Ukraine's "equality" within "the fraternal family...of socialist republics."⁵³ Moreover, he cautiously defended Ukrainian sovereignty by noting that the October Revolution had made it possible for the Ukrainian people "to develop and consolidate their statehood."⁵⁴ The Belorussian First Secretary, P. M. Masherov, spoke of "the great friendship and mutually enriching close ties among the peoples of our homeland" but conspicuously avoided granting any special status to Russia by expressing gratitude for the generous aid being received by his republic "from the Russian and other peoples of the Soviet Union."⁵⁵ For his part, A. Ya. Pelshe, First Secretary of Latvia, also defended his republic's sovereignty in a guarded fashion by describing it as a "prospering, highly industrialized and politically equal Union republic."⁵⁶ He furthermore went to some length in drawing attention to the fact that Latvian, in addition to Russian, continued to be studied in republican schools by students of different nationalities; an assertion which stood in contrast to the servile utterances of Akhundov and Kochinyan who, at least outwardly, seemed to accept the prospect of their respective republics becoming more linguistically Russified.⁵⁷

The XXIV Congress in March 1971 witnessed the same sort of divisions. Once again, the majority of republican secretaries who commented on nationality policy in a substantive way endorsed Brezhnev's Russifying emphasis on *sblizhenie*. Making it clear that "proletarian internationalism" by and large meant "proletarian Russification", the Armenian Kochinyan noted that "in the development of Soviet socialist

culture, the role of the culture of the Russian people - their language, art and literature - is invaluable."⁵⁸ T. Yu. Usubaliev, First Secretary of Kirgizia, was even clearer in this regard, referring to "the Great Russian people" as "the true bearers of socialist internationalism and the brotherhood of the peoples."⁵⁹ The new Latvian First Secretary A. E. Voss criticized "the ringleaders of the Latvian emigre rabble" for spreading false allegations about the oppression of national minorities within the USSR and propogating the mistaken view that Russia was "an alien country" for the Baltic republics.⁶⁰ Lastly, the Uzbek Rashidov, described the Russian people as "the older brother [*starshii brat*] and faithful friend of all the Soviet peoples" and made an oblique reference to *sliyanie* by declaring that "the peoples of our country have merged forever in a sacred union with the Russian people."⁶¹

As had been the case at the XXIII Congress, some republican leaders criticized Soviet academics for continuing to devote too little attention to the "objective" process of the rapprochement of nations. The aforementioned Usubaliev accused "the central research institutions, their scholars, the creative unions and workers in culture and the arts" of not yet sufficiently "propagandizing the idea of the friendship of the peoples."⁶² The First Secretary of Turkmenistan, M. Gapurov, noted that "internationalist features in the fields of national culture and everyday life...still do not receive adequate treatment in scientific, literary and the periodical press."⁶³ However, the most forceful critic along these lines was G. A. Aliev, the First Secretary of Azerbaidzhan. He condemned "a certain onesidedness in the scientific elaboration of the problem of national relations under socialism."⁶⁴ While describing as "important and necessary" the publication of many works on "the

flowering of the individual Union republics, nations and nationalities", Aliev faulted the specialist community for inadequately elucidating "the problem of the drawing together of the nations and the formation of a new and historically evolved community of people - the Soviet people, including all the nationalities of the USSR."⁸⁸ According to Aliev, the appearance of new "well-reasoned works on this subject" were needed in order to further intensify the ideological work of Party organizations and the "internationalist upbringing" of the masses.⁸⁹

These criticisms, as they had been at the XXIII Congress, seemed to be an effort on the part of the leadership to once again steer the academic literature in the desired direction (i.e., towards *sblizhenie*) but could also be construed as betraying even greater concern than had been the case five years earlier that, as the 1970 census demonstrated, the anticipated process of "drawing together" was proceeding very slowly, if at all. Hence, it was another call by the Soviet leadership for the country's academics and specialists to, within a Marxist-Leninist framework, enrich their empirical understanding of nationality problems.

The continued existence of a policy vacuum surrounding the national question at this time is again suggested by the presence of a "dissenting minority" of First Secretaries who, through the selective use of language, intimated their disagreement with the notion that *sblizhenie* should be accelerated principally by turning to "the great Russian people". The Ukrainian Shelest, the Belorussian Masherov, the Georgian Mzhavanadze and the Estonian Kabin all emphasized the multinational nature of the Soviet state and the fraternal, collaborative qualities which marked relations between nationalities in

the USSR; relying on terminology such as "the Soviet peoples" (as opposed to the singular "Soviet people"); "fraternal and mutually enriching cooperation"; and "friendship and brotherhood." None of these First Secretaries engaged in servile praise of the Russian people, nor did they dwell on the "drawing together" of nations. Shelest's comments were particularly interesting inasmuch as he noted the "further consolidation of the moral and political [but not cultural or spiritual] unity of Soviet society..."⁶⁷ while Masherov, Mzhavandaze and Kabin all suggested that the principal goal of the Party's nationality policy was the further economic and cultural development of the republics; remarks which tacitly emphasized *rastsvet* over *sblizhenie*.⁶⁸

The interval between the XXIV and XXV Congresses saw the introduction of new terms defining the rapprochement and post-rapprochement stages of national development within the USSR. As Michael Rywkin points out,⁶⁹ in Brezhnev's address marking the 50th anniversary of the formation of the USSR, at which, as was made mention of earlier, Russian preeminence as *pervaya sredi ravnykh* was reasserted, he also spoke of the "all-round drawing together" (*vsestoronnee sblizhenie*) of Soviet nations which was leading to their "cohesion" (*splochenie*), phraseology henceforth employed by Suslov as well.⁷⁰ In articles subsequently published in *Kommunist*, Rashidov, Usubaliev, and the First Secretary of Kazakhstan, D. A. Kunaev, incorporated *splochenie* into their discussions of the national question and adopted more new terminology to denote higher levels of *sblizhenie* leading to something beyond the "drawing together" stage such as "close rapprochement" (*tesnoe sblizhenie*) or "ever-greater rapprochement" (*vse bolshee sblizhenie*).⁷¹

However, reflecting their evident reluctance to legitimize any sort of post-rapprochement language with what could be construed as its de-nationalizing inferences, *splochenie* did not appear in the published writings of other non-Russian secretaries during the early 1970s. Some, for instance, the Belorussian Masherov and the Lithuanian First Secretary A. J. Sniechkus, concentrated on a whole new range of words related to the "flowering" of nations, such as "all-round flowering" (*vsestoronnii rastsvet*) and "genuine flowering" (*podlinnyi rastsvet*); as well as watered-down forms of rapprochement such as "gradual drawing together" (*postepennoe sblizhenie*).⁷²

Apparent differences of opinion within the leadership continued to reveal themselves at the XXV Congress in February 1976. As might be anticipated, the tendency of some republican First Secretaries to engage in defiling praise of the Russian "elder brother" again manifested itself. True to his long-standing tradition of personal subservience to Moscow, the Kirgiz Usubaliev reiterated the importance of the Russian language and culture as an integral means of "drawing together" Soviet nations.⁷³ The Armenian First Secretary K. S. Demirchyan expressed his people's "infinite gratitude" to "their elder [Russian] brother" for the national rebirth of Armenia which had taken place under Soviet rule and noted that in 1978 they would "celebrate the 150th anniversary of the memorable day when the fates of Eastern Armenia and Russia were united forever, when the Armenian people's age-old dream came true."⁷⁴ The recently appointed First Secretary of Georgia (and former Soviet Foreign Minister), E. A. Shevardnadze, declared that while Georgia may be commonly known as the "country of the sun" the true sun for all Georgians "rose not in the East but in the North, in Russia - the sun of

Lenin's ideas."⁷⁶ This sort of facility on the part of Shevardnadze was also apparent in an article published some months after the XXV Congress wherein he referred approvingly to the Russian "elder brother".⁷⁶

Perhaps reflecting, in part, the fact that two long-serving non-Russian First Secretaries who had shown themselves to be rather disinclined to endorse some of Brezhnev's Russifying phraseology - the Ukrainian Shelest and the Georgian Mzhavanadze - were purged in the interim following the XXIV Congress, the "dissenting" minority at the XXV Congress was greatly reduced in size.⁷⁷ The Party leader of Estonia, J. G. Kabin, who, as discussed above, appeared to be "moderate" at the XXIV Congress, emerged as the strongest defender of republican sovereignty on this occasion by limiting his remarks to the "genuine flowering" (*podlinnyi rastsvet*) of his nation and stressing, as he had previously, the collaborative aspects of Soviet federalism.⁷⁸ Other secretaries who had typically been somewhat circumspect in their comments on nationality policy in the past, most notably the Belorussian Masherov, for reasons which are not altogether clear, refrained from making any substantive observations on the matter at all.⁷⁹

As will be expanded on shortly, the predominant theme surrounding the national question at the XXVI Congress in February 1981 was the defacto acknowledgement by Brezhnev himself that, the hackneyed declarations of past years notwithstanding, the national question in the USSR had not been entirely "resolved". This reality was reinforced by ongoing divisions between those leaders who guardedly defended the rights of the republics, for example, the new Moldavian First Secretary S. K. Grossu who spoke of the "genuine flowering" of the "material and spiritual powers" of his people;⁸⁰ counterposed against others, such as

the Turkmen Gapurov, who continued to show degrading deference towards the Russian "elder brother".⁸¹ What this part of the analysis seeks to demonstrate, however, is that, as Western specialists such as Rywkin have shown, high-level pronouncements on nationality policy during the Brezhnev years were delivered through a variety of buzzwords which, to a significant degree, disclosed individual leader's level of conformity with Brezhnev's emphasis on *sblizhenie* and its Russifying implications. While this can also be said to have been true during the years Khrushchev was in power, Rywkin is correct in pointing out that the range of terms defining Soviet nationality policy expanded considerably during the 1970s.

Those First Secretaries who, for reasons of political expediency or genuine ideological conviction,⁸² were inclined to align themselves with Brezhnev - Aliiev, Gapurov, Rashidov, Shevardnadze and Usubaliev most prominently - typically engaged in servile praise of "the great Russian people" as the "elder brother" (*starshii brat*) or "first among equals" (*pervaya sredi ravnyikh*), and were also prone to strong endorsements of the "drawing together" of nations (*sblizhenie*). In some instances, they would emphasize it as an inexorable, "law-governed" process or, as noted above, use new phraseology to denote higher levels of *sblizhenie* leading to something beyond the rapprochement stage such as "close rapprochement" (*tesnoe sblizhenie*). These leaders also focussed on words denoting the post-rapprochement stage of national evolution such as "full unity" (*polnoe edinstvo*), "monolithic unity" (*monolitnoe edinstvo*), and, in the case of Rashidov and Usubaliev, "cohesion" (*splochenie*).

On the other hand, leaders such as Kabin, Masherov, Mzhavanadze and Shelest made evident their resistance to Brezhnev's Russifying policies by typically emphasizing terminology related to *rastsvet* and lower or slower-moving forms of *sblizhenie*. These officials also tended to concentrate on buzzwords stressing the collaborative aspects of relations between nationalities: *bratstvo* (brotherhood or fraternity); *polnoe ravnopravie natsii* (the full equality of nations); *druzhba narodov* (the friendship of the peoples); *bratskoe sotrudnichestvo* (brotherly or fraternal co-operation); *bratskoe sodruzhestvo* (brotherly or fraternal commonwealth); and *ravnaya sredi ravnyikh* (equal among equals).⁸³

As was the case under Khrushchev, statements on nationality policy which dwelt on the theme of *rastsvet* or some lower form of *sblizhenie*, as distinct from the concepts of *splochenie* and *polnoe edinstvo*, can be seen as automatically defending, what Rywkin terms appropriately "the national separateness of the component republics of the USSR against Russian-oriented centripetal forces."⁸⁴ Hence, the expanded vocabulary comprising the leadership's pronouncements on nationality policy during the 1970s; particularly, as Rywkin suggests, the splintering of the basic code word "rapprochement" [*sblizhenie*] into several new terms defining intermediate stages in the "drawing together" of nations, is indicative once again of disagreement over basic issues such as the speed with which this process was evolving, or, by implication, whether it was taking place at all.

That this lack of unanimity was indeed the case is further made apparent by the conflict between defenders and opponents of federalism which surrounded the drafting of the 1977 Soviet Constitution. As has already been described, this debate carried over in an unresolved form from the Khrushchev years. To some extent, it was further fueled by Brezhnev himself at the XXIV Congress (March 1971) whose call for a new constitution to be ready for presentation at the XXV Congress (February 1976) was made within the context of his renewed emphasis on the "drawing together" of Soviet nations and the "monolithic unity of all the peoples of our homeland."⁸⁵ As had been the case ten years earlier with Khrushchev's seeming endorsement of *sliyanie* and the integrationist emphasis of the new Party Program, Brezhnev's remarks, whether intended to or not, apparently emboldened the advocates of "de-federalism" which ignited an intensified discussion within the academic literature concerning the continuing merits of federation.⁸⁶

Reflecting the fact that scholarly supporters of the "de-federalist view" had sponsors highly placed within the leadership itself, Brezhnev was forced to admit in his speech introducing the new constitution that "several comrades" had drawn "incorrect conclusions" from the fact of the emergence of "the Soviet people" as a new internationalist community of people. As he noted:

They propose to introduce in the constitution the concept of a single Soviet nation, to liquidate union and autonomous republics or to curtail sharply the sovereignty of the union republics, depriving them of the right to leave the USSR, and the right to foreign dealings. In the same direction is the suggestion to abolish the Council of Nationalities and create a unicameral Supreme Soviet.⁸⁷

As Brezhnev went on to note, however, these radical proposals had been rejected:

I think that the error of such suggestions is clear. The socio-economic unity of the Soviet people in no way means the disappearance of national differences...The indestructible friendship of the Soviet people in the process of communist construction unswervingly leads to their drawing together and the mutual enrichment [*vzaimoobogashchenie*] of spiritual lives. But we would be following a dangerous path if we began to force artificially the objective process of the drawing together of nations.⁸⁸

Like the wording of the 1961 Party Program, the new constitution was somewhat ambiguous. On the one hand, it clearly dealt a practical blow to federalism by expanding considerably the power of the union at the expense of the republics. Indeed, the document did not provide for the granting of any significant economic or political prerogatives to the republics and greatly diminished previous rights guaranteed them, at least on paper, under the previous 1936 Constitution to enter into relations and conclude treaties with foreign states or otherwise participate in international organizations. On the other hand, however, Brezhnev's remarks above make it clear that "de-federalist" pressures usually, but not always, identified with Russian nationalism to scrap federation altogether were resisted. Thus, likely in recognition of strong non-Russian attachment to the formal trappings of federalism, it was given at least a temporary reprieve.

This respite notwithstanding, the ambiguity of the 1977 Constitution (one might justifiably call it "federal in form but unitary in content") demonstrated that, in the words of Carrere d'Encausse, there was still "no real consensus on the issue of federalism."⁸⁹ If, as she plausibly suggests, the new document was supposed to resolve the

debate opened by Khrushchev in 1961 on the future of nations in the USSR, it fell far short. In other words, fundamental differences over critical questions of nationality policy were proving difficult to resolve.

Continuing discord within the leadership, as exemplified by that which surrounded the drafting of the new constitution, may help account for the fact that, during Brezhnev's later years, his pronouncements on the national question became increasingly imprecise. As Brill Olcott has shown, in one of the last major statements of the Brezhnev period on nationality policy, a February 1982 resolution commemorating the 60th anniversary of the formation of the USSR, "the common traits of the Soviet people are depicted in terms that are vaguer than those that were used ten years previously."⁹⁰ She therefore concludes that this gradual and subtle change in the definition of "the Soviet people" evidenced "growing official recognition that ethnicity is very much a political reality in the multi-national Soviet state, that there is and will be further rapprochement, but a rapprochement of ideology and world view and not of self-identity or culture."⁹¹

Thus, there seems to have been a grudging recognition in the last years of the Brezhnev regime that the traits which bound together "the Soviet people" were weaker than first thought and national distinctions stronger. As Brezhnev acknowledged at the XXVI CPSU Congress in February 1981, while the unity of Soviet nations had never been stronger, this did not mean that "all questions in the sphere of relations among nationalities have been resolved. The dynamics of such a large multi-national state such as ours give rise to a good many problems that require the Party's sympathetic attention."⁹² Continuing rhetorical

utterances about "a new historical community aside", one is forced to wonder just to what extent the Kremlin itself, by the beginning of the 1980s, was any longer confident that "the Soviet people" really existed.

New Directions in the Academic Literature

If, as Brezhnev's remarks at the XXVI Congress would seem to show, the Soviet leadership's awareness of continuing problems with the national question was becoming more acute in the late 1970s, it likely had much to do with the fact that, during Brezhnev's tenure, the academic scope of the Soviet social sciences, including work on the national question, expanded considerably. Indeed, it was pointed out earlier in this chapter that, as early as the XXIII Congress in March 1966, the Brezhnev leadership was publicly calling on Soviet scholars to delve more deeply into the nationalities problem. While there clearly remained highly-placed officials within the Party and academic establishments who, as Brill Olcott puts it, saw "the primary function of academia as to advocate and popularize the goals of the State, rather than to conduct structural social inquiry at the behest of the State under conditions supportive of productive research",⁹³ it was also the case that, since the mid-1960s, "Soviet social scientists have had greater access to Western scholarship and some scholars have applied new ideas (albeit within a Marxist framework) to create a larger data base from which to study their own society."⁹⁴

To couch it in terms already used in this thesis, it appears that, with respect to the national question, the "moderate" methodology, with its emphasis on more empirically-based research, gradually gained the

ascendancy during Brezhnev's rule over the counterposing "assimilationist" approach which based its conclusions almost entirely on what the classics of Marxism-Leninism were seen to have prescribed. The work of two Soviet specialists - Yu. V. Bromlei and V. I. Kulichenko - appears to have been central in challenging what Brill Olcott aptly summarizes as "the approach employed by party ideologues who define research as forays into the writings of Marx, Engels and Lenin."⁸⁵

Empirical research into the national question began in earnest during the late 1960s under the auspices of a special department of the USSR Academy of Sciences. Starting in 1967, small-scale studies were undertaken in the Baltic Republics, Tataria, Moldavia, Georgia, Uzbekistan, and the lower Amur region. In spite of its limited scope, this work yielded some interesting results; most notably the finding that among Tatars, the increasing use of Russian and greater communication among nationalities as a consequence of economic integration did not necessarily lessen Tatar national consciousness. This in spite of the fact that Tataria had been the object of intense efforts at linguistic Russification on the part of Soviet authorities.⁸⁶ Such conclusions implicitly challenged the official view that the extension of the Russian language throughout the country and increased economic intercourse between nations and nationalities were unquestionably leading towards their ever-closer "drawing together". This, in turn, raised the unsettling possibility that, contrary to Marxist-Leninist doctrine, the national question was something largely independent of socio-economic circumstances. Perhaps not surprisingly then, empirical studies of Soviet nationality problems remained limited in function and scope through the early 1970s since, as Zvi Gitelman

writes, such research was fraught with the danger of "unpleasant findings that might undermine the assertions of Soviet ideologists, who, as we have seen, have gone quite far in their claims of an unprecedented ethnically harmonious society."⁹⁷

In spite of this, it was during these years that Bromlei seems to have emerged as a leading spokesman on the national question representing, within a Marxian context, an alternative to Stalinist-style research methods. In June 1970, he published an article in *Sovetskaya etnografiya*, the bimonthly journal of the USSR Academy of Sciences Institute of Ethnography, criticizing the fact that theoretical discussions of such important subjects as ethnic and national consciousness, as well as other socio-psychological aspects relevant to an individual's understanding of himself as a member of a nation or ethnic community were rarely substantiated by any empirical data.⁹⁸ In numerous articles throughout the rest of the 1970s, Bromlei called for a veritable *perestroika* of Soviet ethnography, suggesting that not only were new methods of research needed, but, perhaps more importantly, the psychological attitudes of researchers themselves had to change.⁹⁹

In the mid-1970s, Bromlei made an important contribution towards this end by developing a theory of *ethnos* as a substitute for the concept of national identity. As he saw it, an individual may be conscious of himself as a member of a tribe (*plemya*), a nationality (*narodnost'*), a nation (*natsiya*), or all three at the same time. Bromlei's central argument was that, irrespective of his personal level of national consciousness, the individual perceives himself as belonging to a distinct cultural group. Although his theory proceeded from the traditional Marxist-Leninist assumption that ethnic consciousness is, in

the first instance, a product of material conditions, Bromlei argued that ethnic communities, through the "integrating and differentiating properties" of ethnic relations, were in a "permanent state of ethno-evolutionary change". The result of this dialectical process was that the primacy of the material base gave way to the elements of "spiritual culture, psyche and ethnic self-consciousness" in shaping the individual's sense of membership within a particular cultural community.¹⁰⁰

While Bromlei's theory of *ethnos* drew the obligatory ideological conclusion that, through interaction, cultural diversity would eventually dissipate with all ethnic groups bound to converge into a single socialist culture exhibiting common ethnic features, Brill Olcott is correct in observing that it nevertheless represented an important innovation in Soviet thinking on the national question:

By shifting the discussion from the politically sensitive concepts of nation and national consciousness to *ethnos* and ethnic consciousness, Bromlei has gone a long way toward de-politicising a highly controversial issue, and has directed attention away from objective forms of identification such as the class based 'bourgeois' concept of nationalism toward subjective psychological forms of ethnic identification. Moreover, the assertion of the primacy of the psychological basis of social behaviour represents a major departure in Soviet thought.¹⁰¹

As Director of the Institute of Ethnography of the USSR Academy of Sciences and Chairman of the Scientific Council on National Problems of the Presidium of the Academy, Bromlei's *ethnos* concept gained some currency among fellow ethnographers and, although not endorsed directly by any high Party officials, his views were circulated in all the leading academic journals indicating some degree of official acceptance.¹⁰²

Bromlei's growing influence from the mid-1970s on may also be demonstrated by the fact that he assumed a leading role among Soviet ethnographers attending academic conferences both at home and abroad. In August 1974, he presented his theory of *ethnos* to the Eighth World Congress of Sociology in Toronto.¹⁰³ In July 1976, he led a delegation of Soviet specialists to an international symposium on methodological problems of ethnography held in Austria,¹⁰⁴ and in December of that year he took part in a major conference on the national question in Tallin where he challenged the conventional wisdom that the integration of nations in the USSR and the emergence of a pan-Soviet culture was already well under way; noting, in particular, that "the spiritual cultures of the peoples of the USSR preserve - to a significant degree - a national coloring."¹⁰⁵ In December 1978, Bromlei headed a delegation of 38 Soviet specialists at the 10th International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences in New Delhi.¹⁰⁶ As well, major conferences focussing on the question of *ethnos*, culture, and tradition were held in 1979 in Erevan,¹⁰⁷ and in 1981 in Moscow.¹⁰⁸ In addition to all this, Bromlei frequently chaired meetings on nationality problems for Party workers.¹⁰⁹

Proof of the influence of Bromlei's work even among researchers associated directly with the Party was an important book published in 1981 by M. I. Kulichenko, head of the section on the Theory of Nations and Nationality Relations of the CPSU Central Committee Institute of Marxism-Leninism.¹¹⁰ In earlier publications, Kulichenko had expressly taken issue with the view of some of his colleagues that the "fusion" of nations had already occurred in the area of economics, politics and ideology. On the contrary, he argued that it was possible to talk about

"fusion" only on the ideological plane and even this was not yet complete.¹¹¹ Moreover, he warned against assuming that the "drawing together" of nations in terms of their spiritual lives proceeded as quickly as it did in the economic and political spheres.¹¹²

Given Kulichenko's emphasis on the spiritual aspect of the national question - peoples' interrelations in the sphere of culture - it was to be expected that Bromlei's concept of *ethnos* would be of interest to him and, in his 1981 study, he acknowledged the importance of Bromlei's work and developed his own theory of ethnic self-identity. As he saw it, a person may be aware of himself as a member of the supranational Soviet community, but is simultaneously conscious of belonging to a particular social class, ethnic group, or even a nation. While ideally in a socialist society devoid of class antagonisms, all these identities should be mutually reinforcing with the internationalist (viz. Soviet) element predominating, Kulichenko argued that this was still not necessarily the case and that until the phenomenon of nationalism was better understood the individual's voluntary identification with a supranational entity remained a distant goal. The upshot of Kulichenko's case was therefore that there were immense difficulties involved in creating a unified "Soviet people"; that is, as Brill Olcott puts it, in "restructuring the political self-consciousness of the non-Russian nationalities so that they identify with the multinational (Soviet) state."¹¹³ While Kulichenko agreed that the "drawing together" of nations was, at its core, an "objective process", it was obviously considerably dependent on "subjective factors"; a view also implied in Bromlei, and, as already suggested, one not inconsistent with Lenin's own thinking on the national question.

The importance of the work done by Bromlei, Kulichenko and some of their associates cannot be underestimated. In the words of Brill Olcott:

Their conceptualizations of ethnic and national self-consciousness are far removed from the classic and stereotypical Marxist explanations of social behaviour as a manifestation of class consciousness. Soviet scholars have traditionally argued that nationalism is a 'bourgeois deviation', and although nationalism itself is still viewed as an ideological aberration, these authors maintain that distinct national identities and national cultures continue to shape the political consciousness of Soviet citizens and show no sign of disappearing as their allegedly class-rooted bases wither away.¹¹⁴

These sorts of views were obviously anathema to conservative scholars and Party ideologues who, at an All-Union conference on the national question held in June 1982 in Riga, criticized Bromlei, Kulichenko and other scholars for misdirecting Soviet studies of nationality problems. The conference's keynote speaker, candidate Politburo member B. N. Ponomarev, indicated that the Party should be doing more to stress the international over the national in its ideological work.¹¹⁵ The then editor of *Kommunist*, R. I. Kosolapov, resurrected the notion of *sliyanie*, unheard of as part of official discourse for the better part of a decade, to accuse Kulichenko in particular of diverting attention from the proper goal of nationality policy which should be to encourage the disappearance of national differences.¹¹⁶

Noting that "a debate has been under way for a long time over which trend is dominant in the life of nations - flourishing [*rastsvet*] or convergence [*sblizhenie*],"¹¹⁷ Kosolapov described it as "annoying" that "conflicting views on the matter of ethnic "fusion" [*sliyanie*] "can still be found in our scholarly literature."¹¹⁸ He condemned "the attempts of some social scientists [viz. Kulichenko] to ignore Lenin's

idea of the fusion of nations", claiming that they overstated what Lenin originally understood by *sliyanie*. According to Kosolapov, this was not synonymous "with the total eradication of all linguistic and ethnic differences among national groups."¹¹⁹ In his view, "fusion" signified a process whereby the internationalist culture of socialism came into being by absorbing the most "democratic" and "progressive" aspects of all national cultures, something which did not necessarily imply the complete effacement of national distinctions. Thus, the Party should be doing more to encourage the further mixing of the Soviet population so as to make *sliyanie*, as Kosolapov understood it, a reality.

In contrast, Kulichenko maintained that "the *sliyanie* of nations in classical Marxism-Leninism is understood as the elimination of national differences, the loss by people of national peculiarities."¹²⁰ Hence, given that the Soviet peoples were still strongly attached to national characteristics, "fusion" ought not be defined as the Party's aim at this time since it often acted "as an irritant, provoking negative phenomena of consciousness and behaviour."¹²¹ Evidently then, serious discord continued to exist among specialists during the last years of Brezhnev's rule. Nor, as Brill Olcott argues, were these merely semantical differences. Rather, the scholars disagreed "on how to define the current historical stage of national relations, and consequently on what strategy is best pursued."¹²² However, in spite of the sorts of difficulties encountered at the Riga conference, it is clear that the work of Bromlei, Kulichenko and their like-minded colleagues went a long way towards undermining old ideological stereotypes and, by the time of Brezhnev's death, it seems evident that they had eclipsed Stalin-style academics in importance.

Thus, while persistent disagreement between top leaders over policy choices may account in part for the increasing vagueness of Brezhnev's latter-day pronouncements on the national question, his apparent uncertainty also parallels this trend within the research literature whereby the "moderate" methodology, which first manifested itself in a coherent form during the 1966 *Voprosyi istorii* symposium discussed earlier, gradually usurped the favored "assimilationist" approach. In other words, as the leadership became better informed about the real complexities of the national question in the mid to late 1970s, Brezhnev's statements concerning the matter became less confident to the point that, by the end of his tenure, the concept of "the Soviet people" reflected more strongly than ever the "objective reality" that, while they may share in common certain political, economic and social ideals, vast ethnic and cultural differences prevailed between nationalities and were likely to do so for a very long time. Hence, as Brezhnev to all intents and purposes admitted at the XXVI Congress, the national question was far from resolved.

Summary

To summarize, the Brezhnev leadership inherited from Khrushchev an unresolved debate over the future of nations in the Soviet Union. There had been a lack of consensus within both the political leadership and intellectual community under Khrushchev as regarded fundamental issues of nationality policy.

There was no firm Party line concerning the national question through the end of the 1960s as Brezhnev backtracked from Khrushchev's

apparent commitment to the ultimate goal of *sliyanie*, thereby deferring indefinitely his predecessor's vision of a de-nationalized, socially homogeneous communist culture, and interrelated debates over theoretical issues and the future of Soviet federalism continued in the specialist literature. That there was consensus surrounding Brezhnev's emphasis, after 1971, on "the Soviet people" as a multinational community unified by allegiance to the internationalist values associated with Marxist-Leninist ideology is called into doubt by several things: first, evidence of resistance, as manifested by their choice of language in publicly discussing nationality policy, on the part of some republican First Secretaries, including such senior figures (and fellow Slavs) as Shelest and Masherov, to the Russifying flavour of *sblizhenie* under Brezhnev; second, indications of continuing disagreement over the fate of Soviet federalism brought to light by the debate over the 1977 Constitution and the ambiguous (what was described as "federal in form, unitary in content") nature of the final document itself; and, third, the ascendancy of more sophisticated intellectual writings in the late 1970s which underscored the enduring quality of ethnic and national consciousness.

In short, the uncertain state of nationality affairs bequeathed by Khrushchev in 1964 was never rectified during Brezhnev's almost two decades in power. The leadership and academic community continued to disagree within themselves over almost exactly the same core problems - what the dominant trend was in terms of the contradictory dialectic of *rastsvet* and *sblizhenie*, and determining the future of federation in the USSR. To the extent that previously sacrosanct ideological assumptions about the class roots of the national question had been intellectually

challenged, Brezhnev's successors fell heir to a policy which was essentially in a state of drift.

Notes

¹ L. I. Brezhnev, "The Report of the CPSU Central Committee to the 26th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Party's Immediate Tasks in the Fields of Domestic and Foreign Policy", *Pravda*, February 24, 1981, pp. 2-9, in *CDSP*, Vol. XXXIII, No. 9, p. 9.

² A. Barluk, as cited in Jan Zaprudnik, "Developments in Belorussia Since 1964" in Simmonds., ed., p. 107.

³ L. I. Brezhnev, "The Report of the CPSU Central Committee to the 23rd Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union", *Pravda*, March 30, 1966, pp. 3-11, in *CDSP*, Vol. XVIII, No. 13, p. 9.

⁴ John Dunlop, *The Faces of Contemporary Russian Nationalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 136. As S. Enders Wimbush, "The Russian Nationalist Backlash", *Survey*, Vol. 24, No. 3, Summer 1979, p. 42 notes, for many Russian nationalists, the concept of *sliyanie* "means the unwanted 'yellowing' (*ozheltenie*) of Russian society; and some explicitly Russian nationalist programmes have warned that 'random hybridization' will lead to the 'biological degeneration' of the Russian nation."

⁵ Hodnett, "What's in a Nation?", p. 5. This article provides an excellent summary of the first year of the *Voprosy istorii* symposium.

⁶ As summarized in *ibid.*

⁷ As again summarized in *ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 7; 10-11.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁰ See the editorial "K itogam diskusii po nekotoryim problemam teorii natsii" [On the Results of the Discussion Concerning Certain Problems of the Theory of the Nation], *Voprosy istorii*, No. 8, August 1970, pp. 94-96.

¹¹ A good summary of this debate can be found in Hodnett, "The Debate over Soviet Federalism", pp. 458-480.

¹² P. G. Semenov, for example. See his contribution to the "de-federalist" side of this debate: "Suverenitet sovetskikh natsii" [The

Sovereignty of Soviet Nations], *Voprosy istorii*, No. 12, December 1965, pp. 22-23.

¹³ Hodnett, "The Debate over Soviet Federalism", p. 462.

¹⁴ L. I. Brezhnev, *Fifty Years of Great Achievements of Socialism* (Moscow: Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, 1967), p. 27.

¹⁵ Hodnett, "What's in a Nation?", p. 3.

¹⁶ See "Constitution (Fundamental Law) of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics", in Vadim Medish, *The Soviet Union* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1985), p. 318.

¹⁷ Nahaylo, p. 76.

¹⁸ The terms "developed socialism" (*razvitoi sotsializm*) and "mature socialism" (*zrelyi sotsializm*) were used interchangeably.

¹⁹ See Alfred B. Evans, "Developed Socialism in Soviet Ideology", *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 3, July 1977, p. 413. This is an insightful summary of the evolution of "developed socialism". For post-1977 analysis of the concept, see the same author's "The Decline of Developed Socialism? Some Recent Trends in Soviet Ideology", *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 1, January 1986, pp. 1-23.

²⁰ See B. Sukharevsky, "Ekonomika SSSR - ekonomika razvitovo sotsializma" [The Economy of the USSR: The Economy of Developed Socialism], *Kommunist*, No. 18, December 1971, pp. 58-72.

²¹ Evans, "Developed Socialism in Soviet Ideology", p. 415.

²² Donald R. Kelley, "Developments in Ideology", in Donald R. Kelley, ed., *Soviet Politics in the Brezhnev Era* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1980), p. 187.

²³ Vadim Pechenev, "The Concept of Developed Socialism in the CPSU's Strategy and Tactics", *Pravda*, May 8, 1981, pp. 2-3, in *CDSF*, Vol. XXXIII, No. 19, p. 6.

²⁴ The extent to which there was, in fact, a certain amount of cautious economic reformism during at least the first half of Brezhnev's tenure is sometimes underemphasized in Western literature. Beginning with the so-called "Kosygin" or "Lieberman" reforms of the mid-1960s, which aimed at increasing the decision-making authority of enterprise managers, and continuing into the 1970s with such schemes as the "Shchekino" and "Brigade contract" experiments, which sought to improve labour productivity, analysts such as Linden, p. 228 are correct in noting that the reforming trend within the Soviet regime did not expire with the fall of Khrushchev but, in fact, continued for a time "against the conservative trend with which Brezhnev moved."

²⁵ Although initially discarded altogether shortly after Khrushchev's ouster, the "all-people's state" concept was subsequently resurrected by

Party theorists in the late 1960s devoid of its democratizing characteristics and emphasizing instead the neo-Stalinist notion that, if anything, the role of the state would be strengthened during the transitional period of "developed socialism".

²⁶ Nahaylo, p. 77.

²⁷ Hodnett, "What's in a Nation?", p. 3.

²⁸ L. I. Brezhnev, "The Report of the CPSU Central Committee to the 24th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union", *Pravda*, March 30, 1971, pp. 2-10, in *CDSP*, Vol. XXIII, No. 14, p. 3.

²⁹ L. I. Brezhnev, "O pyatidesyatiletii soyuza sovetskikh sotsialisticheskikh respublik" [On The Fiftieth Anniversary of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics], *Kommunist*, No. 18, December 1972, p. 13.

³⁰ Frederick C. Barghoorn, "Soviet Politics: Official and Unofficial Perspectives", in Conquest, ed., *The Last Empire*, p. 32.

³¹ L. Volodarsky, "Population of the Land of the Soviets", *Pravda*, May, 7, 1971, p. 3, in *CDSP*, Vol. XXIII, No. 18, p. 8.

³² As noted by Carrere d'Encausse, "Determinants and Parameters of Soviet Nationality Policy", p. 54. For official census data, see "The Population of Our Country - On the Age Structure, Level of Education, Nationality Composition, Languages, and Sources of Livelihood of the Population of the USSR. According to Data of the January 15, 1970 All-Union Population Census", *Pravda*, April 17, 1971, pp. 1;3., in *CDSP*, Vol. XXIII, No. 16, pp. 14-18. As Theresa Rakowska-Harmstone, "Nationalism in Soviet Central Asia Since 1964", in Simmonds, ed., p. 281 notes, the process of Russifying the Central Asian languages, which reached its heights during the late 1950s, was halted and even reversed during the 1960s and 1970s. The 1970 census showed that the percentage of adherence to their native languages as opposed to Russian among Uzbeks, Tadzhiks and Kirgiz had actually increased slightly since 1959. The analysis of Vitaut Kipel, "Some Demographic Aspects of Soviet Belorussia During 1965-1975", *ibid.*, p. 98, shows a similar situation with respect to the Belorussian Republic (viz. an increased number of people identifying Belorussian as their native language since 1959). In both the Central Asian and Belorussian cases, the 1970 data also indicated that non-indigenous nationalities were assimilating into the local language as opposed to Russian. None of these developments were desirable from the regime's point of view.

³³ Nahaylo, p. 78.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 79-80.

³⁵ As Nahaylo, *ibid.*, p. 80, notes, this apparently reflected a concern on the leadership's behalf that "affirmative action" policies encouraging what was seen as the arbitrary promotion of local nationals into positions of Party and state authority irrespective of their personal merits (*korenizatsiya* so to speak) had gotten out of hand.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Subtelny, p. 499.

³⁹ Wimbush, "The Russian Nationalist Backlash", p. 46.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ L. I. Brezhnev, "The Report of the CPSU Central Committee to the 26th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union", *Pravda*, February 24, 1981, pp. 2-10, in *CDSP*, Vol. XXXIII, No. 9, p.

⁴⁴ Volodarsky, p. 8.

⁴⁵ Carrere d'Encausse, "Determinants and Parameters of Soviet Nationality Policy", pp. 54-55.

⁴⁶ See "Speech by Comrade F. A. Tabeyev, First Secretary of the Tatar Province Party Committee", *Pravda*, April 4, 1966, p. 4, in *CDSP*, Vol. XVIII, No. 18, p. 16.

⁴⁷ See "Speech by Comrade V. Yu. Akhundov, First Secretary of the Azerbaijan Communist Party Central Committee", *Pravda*, April 2, 1966, pp. 5-6, *ibid.*, No. 16, p. 28., and "Speech by Comrade A. Ye. Kochinyan, First Secretary of the Armenian Communist Party Central Committee", *Pravda*, April 1, 1966, p. 3, *ibid.*, No. 15, p. 13.

⁴⁸ See "Speech by Comrade Sh. R. Rashidov, First Secretary of the Uzbekistan Communist Party Central Committee", *Pravda*, March 31, 1966, p. 5, *ibid.*, No. 14, pp. 23-24.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ See "Speech by Comrade I. I. Bodyul, First Secretary of the Moldavian Communist Party", *Pravda*, April 3, 1966, pp. 3-4, *ibid.*, No. 17, p. 15.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.* This was the only reference to *sliyanie* found in any of the XXIII Congress speeches.

⁵³ See "Speech by Comrade P. I. Shelest, First Secretary of the Ukrainian Communist Party", *Pravda*, March 31, 1966, pp. 2-3, *ibid.*, No. 13, p. 20.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ See "Speech by Comrade P. M. Masherov, First Secretary of the Belorussian Communist Party Central Committee", *Pravda*, March 31, 1966, pp. 5-6, *ibid.*, No. 14, p. 24.

⁵⁶ See "Speech by Comrade A. Ya. Pelshe, First Secretary of the Latvian Communist Party Central Committee", *Pravda*, April 1, 1966, p. 2, *ibid.*, p. 27.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ See "Speech by Comrade A. Ye. Kochinyan, First Secretary of the Armenian Communist Party Central Committee", *Pravda*, April 2, 1971, p. 6, *ibid.*, Vol. XXIII, No. 15, p. 25.

⁵⁹ See "Speech by Comrade T. Yu. Usubaliev, First Secretary of the Kirgiz Communist Party Central Committee", *Pravda*, April 4, 1971, p. 7, *ibid.*, No. 17, p. 31.

⁶⁰ See "Speech by Comrade A. E. Voss, First Secretary of the Latvian Communist Party Central Committee", *Pravda*, April 3, 1971, pp. 2-3, *ibid.*, No. 15, p. 26. Just prior to the XXIV Congress, Voss published a strongly worded article in *Pravda* in which he attacked "localist tendencies" and "national narrow-mindedness" within his republic and dismissed apparent concerns being raised about the degree to which the numbers of the non-Latvian population (viz. Russian) were increasing as a result of greater economic integration. See A. E. Voss, "In Serried Ranks", *Pravda*, March 20, 1971, p. 2, *ibid.*, No. 12, pp. 21;23.

⁶¹ See "Speech by Comrade Sh. R. Rashidov, First Secretary of the Uzbekistan Communist Party Central Committee", *Pravda*, April 2, 1971, p. 2, *ibid.*, No. 14, p. 28. This was the only reference to *sliyanie* in the speeches of the XXIV Congress.

⁶² Usubaliev, p. 32.

⁶³ See "Speech by Comrade M. Gapurov, First Secretary of the Turkmenistan Communist Party Central Committee", *Pravda*, April 4, 1971, p. 8, *ibid.*, No. 17, p. 32.

⁶⁴ See "Speech by Comrade G. A. Aliev, First Secretary of the Azerbaijan Communist Party Central Committee", *Pravda*, April 2, 1971, p. 4, *ibid.*, No. 15, p. 21.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ See "Speech by Comrade P. I. Shelest, First Secretary of the Ukrainian Communist Party Central Committee", *Pravda*, pp. 3-4, *ibid.*, No. 14, p. 17.

⁶⁹ See "Speech by Comrade P. M. Masherov, First Secretary of the Belorussian Communist Party, *Pravda*, April 1, 1971, pp. 5-6, *ibid.*, pp. 23-25; "Speech by Comrade V. P. Mzhavanadze, First Secretary of the Georgian Communist Party Central Committee", *Pravda*, April 2, 1971, p. 3, *ibid.*, No. 15, pp. 15-17; "Speech by Comrade J. G. Kabin, First Secretary of the Estonian Communist Party Central Committee", *Pravda*, April 4, 1971, pp. 3-4, *ibid.*, No. 16, pp. 27-28.

⁶⁹ See Michael Rywkin, "Code Words and Catchwords of Brezhnev's Nationality Policy", *Survey*, Vol. 24, No. 3, Summer 1979, pp. 84-85.

⁷⁰ In a speech marking the 60th anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution in November 1977, Suslov introduced a variation on *splochenie* by referring approvingly to the "ever-greater cohesion of all the country's large and small nations". See M. A. Suslov, "The Great October Socialist Revolution and the Modern Epoch", in M. A. Suslov, *Selected Speeches and Writings* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1980), p. 361.

⁷¹ For their respective use of the term *splochenie*, see Sh. R. Rashidov, "Leninskaya natsional'naya politika v deistvii" [The Leninist Nationality Policy in Action], *Kommunist*, No. 15, October 1974, p. 32; T. Yu. Usubaliev, "Sotsialisticheskii internatsionalizm - nashe znamya i oruzhie" [Socialist Internationalism - Our Banner and Weapon], *Kommunist*, No. 16, November 1974, p. 16; D. A. Kunaev, "V blagotvornoj atmosfere leninskoi druzhby narodov" [In the Beneficial Atmosphere of the Leninist Friendship of the Peoples], *Kommunist*, No. 12, August 1980, p. 21. For Rashidov's use of the terms *tesnoe sblizhenie* and *vse bolshee sblizhenie*, see Rywkin, p. 85.

⁷² See P. M. Masherov, "O nekotorykh chertakh i osobennostyakh natsional'nykh otnoshenii v usloviyakh sotsializma" [On Some Characteristics and Particularities of National Relations in Conditions of Socialism], *Kommunist*, No. 15, October 1972, pp. 15-32; and A. J. Snechkus, "Velikaya sila sotsialisticheskovo internatsional'izma" [The Great Strength of Socialist Internationalism], *Kommunist*, No. 11, July 1972, pp. 14-26. Some of the terminology used by these officials, although it may have been dormant for a while under Brezhnev, can be found in the writings of Soviet leaders prior to 1972. For example, N. I. Podgornyi, "Kommunisticheskaya partiya Ukrainyi - boevoi otryad velikoi KPSS" [The Communist Party of Ukraine - A Militant Wing of the Great CPSU], *Kommunist*, No. 8, June 1958, pp. 11-27, refers to the "genuine flowering" (*podlinnyi rastsvet*) of Ukrainian economy and culture.

⁷³ See "Speech by Comrade T. Yu. Usubaliev, First Secretary of the Kirgiz Communist Party Central Committee", *Pravda*, February 28, 1976, p. 3, *ibid.*, Vol. XXVII, No. 11, p. 15.

⁷⁴ See "Speech by Comrade K. S. Demirchyan, First Secretary of the Armenian Communist Party Central Committee", *Pravda*, February 29, 1976, p. 5, *ibid.*, No. 13, p. 15.

⁷⁵ See "Speech by Comrade E. A. Shevardnadze, First Secretary of the Georgian Communist Party Central Committee", *Pravda*, February 27, 1976, pp. 2-3, *ibid.*, No. 10, p. 12.

⁷⁶ See E. A. Shevardnadze, "Internatsionalisticheskoe vospitanie mass" [The Internationalist Education of the Masses], *Kommunist*, No. 13, September 1977, pp. 45-46.

⁷⁷ As Jaroslaw Pelenski, "Shelest and His Period in Soviet Ukraine, 1963-1972: A Revival of Controlled Ukrainian Autonomism", in Peter J. Potichnyj, ed., *Ukraine in the Seventies* (Oakville: Mosaic Press, 1975), pp. 296-297 notes: "The Shelest period (1963-1972), which in terms of Russo-Ukrainian relations was characterized in Ukraine by resistance to the policies of centralization, by efforts to defend the Ukrainian Republic's rights and prerogatives, and by policies directed at internal cultural, economic and institutional developments, may appropriately be defined as the age of the revival of controlled Ukrainian autonomism." While acknowledging the necessity for "the closest Russo-Ukrainian cooperation", Shelest "never demonstrated a degrading servility when he spoke positively and respectfully of Russia and the Russian people" and "was against the merging of nations, the forced assimilation of the Ukrainians, and the degradation of the Ukrainian language and culture."

⁷⁸ As noted in Rywkin, p. 89.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

⁸⁰ See "Speech by Comrade S. K. Grossu, First Secretary of the Moldavian Communist Party Central Committee", *Pravda*, February 27, 1981, p. 5, *ibid.*, Vol. XXXIII, No. 12, p. 13.

⁸¹ See "Speech by Comrade M. Gapurov, First Secretary of the Turkmenistan Communist Party Central Committee", *Pravda*, February 27, 1981, pp. 5-6, *ibid.*, p. 14.

⁸² According to at least one source, Aliiev and Shevardnadze were convinced proponents of the Soviet regime's nationality policy: "Aliyev [and] Shevardnadze represented the highest human breed developed in the KGB's underground 'nurseries' [both men were high ranking officials in the Soviet security apparatus, and apparently proteges of KGB chief Yuri Andropov, prior to becoming the First Secretaries of Azerbaijan and Georgia respectively]. It was a breed of internationalists who were true believers in the empire, though their names sounded weird even to Russians. Both men had attended Russian schools; and both were devoid of any close attachment to their own soil, or any ethnic roots. Each one looked upon his own republic as an integral part of the Soviet empire. Both (but especially Aliyev) were intolerant toward the ethnic traits, traditions, character, and style of their own peoples. For them, these things were nothing more than prejudices, vestiges of the past, vexing obstacles (which had to be removed) in the way of setting up a universal and supranational Soviet empire." See Vladimir Solovyov and Elena Klepikova, *Yuri Andropov: A Secret Passage Into the Kremlin* (New York: Macmillan Publishers, 1983), pp. 90-91. On the other hand, following the death of the long-time Uzbek First Secretary Rashidov in 1983, his

successor, Imazhon Usmankhodzhaev, accused the late leader of, among other things, merely giving lip service to the goal of disseminating the Russian language more broadly within the republic and having, in fact, hindered the process. The implication was that, in spite of his more than two decades of outward subservience to Moscow, Rashidov was, in reality, something less than a convinced internationalist. See Nahaylo, pp. 90-91.

⁸³ For use of the term "equal among equals" (*ravnaya sredi ravnyikh*), see Masherov, "O nekotorykh chertakh i osobennostyakh natsional'nykh otnoshenii v usloviyakh sotsializma", p. 17. This October 1972 article roughly paralleled Brezhnev's remarks on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the formation of the USSR describing Russia as "first among equals" (*pervaya sredi ravnyikh*). It is not clear whether Masherov's choice of words had any possible connection with Brezhnev's reassertion of Russian preeminence.

⁸⁴ Rywkin, p. 84.

⁸⁵ L. I. Brezhnev, "The Report of the CPSU Central Committee to the 24th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union", p. 3.

⁸⁶ See Potichnyj, pp. 227-228.

⁸⁷ As cited by Brill Olcott, p. 105.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Carrere d'Encausse, *Decline of an Empire*, p. 125.

⁹⁰ Brill Olcott, p. 106.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² L. I. Brezhnev, "The Report of the CPSU Central Committee to the 26th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union", p. 9.

⁹³ Brill Olcott, p. 107.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ As noted in Zvi Gitelman, "Are Nations Merging in the USSR?", *Problems of Communism*, Vol. 32, No. 5, September-October 1983, p. 39. See also Kolasky pp. 39-40.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* The apparent fact that empirical research into the national question remained limited in scope may be another sign in itself of leadership discord over nationality policy, viz. an internecine struggle between those favoring expanding serious research irrespective of whatever unpleasant findings it might render, and those seeking to scuttle it in the knowledge that it would likely reveal exactly what

they didn't want to know concerning the nationality problem (i.e., the fact that *sblizhenie* was, by and large, a myth).

⁹⁹ See Yu. V. Bromlei and V. I. Kozlov, "Leninizm i osnovnyie tendentsii etnicheskikh protsessov v SSSR" [Leninism and the Fundamental Tendencies of Ethnic Processes in the USSR], *Sovetskaya etnografiya*, No. 1, January-February 1970, pp. 3-14.

⁹⁹ For example, see Yu. V. Bromlei, "Etnografiya na sovremennom etape" [Ethnography at the Current Stage], *Kommunist*, No. 16, November 1974, pp. 62-73, and the same author's "K voprosu ob osobennostyakh etnograficheskovo izucheniya sovremennosti" [Concerning the Problem of the Ethnographic Study of Modernity], *Sovetskaya etnografiya*, No. 1, January-February 1977, pp. 3-18.

¹⁰⁰ This brief synopsis of Bromlei's theory is synthesized from Brill Olcott, p.107, and Vakahn N. Dadrian, "Nationalism in Soviet Armenia - A Case Study Of Ethnocentrism", in Simmonds, ed., p. 207.

¹⁰¹ Brill Olcott, *ibid.*, p.107.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ Dadrian, p. 207.

¹⁰⁴ This conference was reported on favorably by V. I. Kozlov, "Metodologicheskie problemy etnografii (k itogam mezhdurnarodnovo simpoziuma) [Methodological Problems of Ethnography (On the Results of the International Symposium)], *Sovetskaya etnografiya*, No. 2, March-April 1977, pp. 117-131. Kozlov appears to be a close working associate of Bromlei who has written in support of the latter's theory of ethnos. See, for example, V. I. Kozlov, "Etnos i kul'tura" [Ethnos and Culture], *Sovetskaya etnografiya*, No. 3, May-June 1979, pp. 71-86.

¹⁰⁵ As reported in Carrere d'Encausse, *Decline of an Empire*, p. 271.

¹⁰⁶ This meeting was reported on by Yu. V. Bromlei and V. I. Kozlov, "X mezhdurnarodnyi kongress antropologicheskikh i etnologicheskikh nauk" [The Tenth Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences], *Sovetskaya etnografiya*, No. 3, May-June 1979, pp. 3-17.

¹⁰⁷ Brill Olcott, p. 116.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

¹¹⁰ Reference here is to M. I. Kulichenko, *Rastsvet i sblizhenie natsii v SSSR* [The Flowering and Drawing Together of Nations in the USSR] (Moscow: 1981).

¹¹¹ See M. I. Kulichenko, *Natsional'nyie otnosheniya v SSSR i tendentsii ikh razvitiya* [National Relations in the USSR and Tendencies of Their Development] (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Myisl', 1972), p. 524.

¹¹² See M. I. Kulichenko, "Sotsial'no - ekonomicheskie osnovyi vzaimovlianiya i vzaimobogashcheniya natsional'nyikh kul'tur v usloviyakh razvitovo sotsializma" [The Socio-Economic Basis of the Mutual Influence and Mutual Enrichment of National Cultures in Conditions of Developed Socialism], *Voprosyi istorii*, No. 5, May 1977, pp. 24-45.

¹¹³ Brill Olcott, p. 108.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 110-111.

¹¹⁷ R. I. Kosolapov, "Class and National Relations in the Stage of Developed Socialism", *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniya* [Sociological Studies], No. 4, October-December 1982, pp. 8-21, in *CDSP*, Vol. XXXIV, No. 49, p. 2.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ Brill Olcott, p. 111.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² *Ibid.*

Nationality Policy Under Andropov and Chernenko

What is the essence of the way indicated by Lenin? One may put it briefly as follows. The unequivocally voluntary union of free peoples as the guarantee of the maximum stability of the federation of socialist Republics; complete equality of all nations and nationalities and a consistent course towards the abolition not only of their juridical but also of their actual inequality; the unhampered development of each Republic, of each nationality in the framework of fraternal union; and the persevering inculcation of internationalist consciousness and a steadfast course towards the drawing together of all the nations and nationalities inhabiting our country.¹

Yu. V. Andropov

In such a country as ours the tasks of perfecting relations between nationalities, naturally, may not be removed from the agenda...We do not see relations between nationalities which have taken shape in our state as something congealed and unalterable, and not subject to the influence of new circumstances and times.²

K. U. Chernenko

The death of Leonid Brezhnev in November 1982 inaugurated a new era in Soviet politics. Many saw in his successor as CPSU General Secretary, the former KGB Chairman Yuri Andropov, a man who, despite his own relatively advanced age (68) at the time he took over, would be a strong leader capable of putting an end to the state of economic, social and even spiritual morass into which the USSR had sunk during Brezhnev's last years in power.

During the 1970s, Andropov's speeches and writings indicated a preference for dealing with Soviet economic problems primarily through

enforcing greater efficiency, the more rational use of available capital resources, and stricter labor discipline than through democratization and decentralization.³ After succeeding Brezhnev, Andropov's basically coercive attempts, in line with his earlier public statements, to restore some degree of labor discipline initially brought about a modest increase in certain areas of industrial production. However, perhaps in increased recognition of the advanced state of economic decline in which the Soviet Union now found itself, he also began to hint at the need for structural reform although, by his own admission, he had "no ready recipes"⁴ in this regard. Moreover, it soon became apparent that, in any event, Andropov's own physical infirmity would preclude any sort of bold move in this direction. Amid rampant rumors of serious illness, he dropped out of public sight in August 1983 and henceforth ruled in the form of ghost-written decrees and statements to which his signature was appended until his death in February 1984.

The selection of Konstantin Chernenko as the new General Secretary ahead of such younger leaders as Mikhail Gorbachev destroyed some of the cautious optimism which had surrounded Andropov's ascension 14 months earlier. Chernenko, at least in the West, was widely perceived as the last of the Brezhnevite "old guard" who would stubbornly endeavor to forestall whatever nascent trends in the direction of reform had begun to emerge under Andropov. However, more perceptive analyses during the early 1980s pointed out that Chernenko's public record prior to his becoming General Secretary suggested that he was, in fact, more favorably disposed towards democratizing reform than most members of the Brezhnev Politburo including his immediate predecessor Andropov. Indeed, his published views in favor of greater inner-Party democracy, enhancing

the role of non-Party organizations in the administration of society, and delegating greater decision-making authority to the local level, as well as his apparent enthusiasm for gauging the mood of the masses through the broader use of public-opinion polling and expanded sociological research, encouraged some Western specialists to describe Chernenko as, in terms of his reformist bent, "falling more within the Khrushchev tradition than into the camp of economic modernizers [led by Andropov]".⁵ Perhaps largely as a consequence of Chernenko's own ill health, which resulted in his death in March 1985 after barely a year in office, whatever greater momentum towards reform in the Soviet Union might have been anticipated on the basis of his previous public utterances never materialized. Nonetheless, the general tendency in that direction, begun under Andropov, was, at the very least, not reversed.

Hence, the relatively brief Andropov-Chernenko interregnum from November 1982 to March 1985 is important as a transitional period between Brezhnev's so-called "period of stagnation" and Gorbachev's current *perestroika*. As far as the national question in particular is concerned, it is significant for the fact that the tendency, which, as pointed out in the previous chapter, stemmed from the XXVI CPSU Congress, to admit more frankly shortcomings in the realm of inter-ethnic relations was accelerated.

Yuri Andropov and the National Question

There is some reason to believe that, for a number of years prior to his becoming General Secretary, Yuri Andropov was the Brezhnev Politburo's "point man" on the national question. Partial evidence for this comes

from a meeting he had in 1967 as part of a high-level government delegation with representatives of the Soviet Crimean Tatar community seeking their full political rehabilitation as well as the right to return to their ancestral homeland from which they had been unjustly deported by Stalin in 1943-44. According to the chief Tatar spokesperson Aishe Seitmuratova, Andropov told his visitors at the time that he was "always being given questions connected with the nationalities problem to deal with" and was "already considered a specialist on these matters."⁶ Certainly, in his capacity as KGB Chairman from 1967 to 1982, Andropov would have been in a better position than most of his leadership colleagues, on the basis of agency intelligence reports, to gauge the real depth of the grievances fueling persistent manifestations of "bourgeois nationalist" dissent throughout the USSR. This intimate knowledge of the complex issues related to the national question subsequently engendered what Nahaylo has properly described as "a more sober approach to the nationalities problem" on the part of the Soviet regime once Andropov became General Secretary.⁷

This was evident on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the formation of the USSR in December 1982, when Andropov made a major speech on Soviet domestic and foreign policies which devoted considerable attention to the national question. In fact, nationality policy was at the top of the list of issues discussed by Andropov and alone took up almost half of his address. For reasons which are not altogether clear, he began by restoring official credibility to the concept of *sliyanie*, telling his audience that the "end goal" of the Party's policy in the area of nationalities was clear: "It, to quote Lenin, 'is not only the convergence [*sblizhenie*] of nations, but their fusion [*sliyanie*]."⁸ He

added the caveat, however, that "the Party knows very well that the path to this goal is a long one" and that nations and national differences "will exist for a long time, much longer than class differences".⁹ Andropov's position on the issue of "fusion" thus seemed to be similar to that of Khrushchev twenty years earlier.

Andropov's resurrection of *sliyanie* induced a subsequent spate of speculation among Western analysts as to what it really implied for nationality policy in the post-Brezhnev period. Martha Brill Olcott argued that, although officially committed to a long-term process of cultural homogenization, the real emphasis of Andropov's remarks was "not on the fusion of nations, but on the continued existence of national differences."¹⁰ She suggested, therefore, that his use of the term *sliyanie* did not signify any intent to actively pursue a policy of "fusing" Soviet nations and nationalities, but was rather an effort on his part to reassert the personal authority of the General Secretary in mediating "between the rival positions on nationality theory which had been carved out during Brezhnev's declining years, as Brezhnev himself used increasingly vaguer terms to camouflage disagreement and to distance himself from ideological infighting."¹¹ Others, such as John Dunlop and Jerry Hough, emphasized what they saw as Andropov's genuine internationalist convictions, pointing as evidence to the apparent downgrading of several Russian nationalist sympathizers in the post-Brezhnev leadership who appear to have opposed the former KGB chief's succession as General Secretary.¹² Still others, for example the Soviet emigre team of Vladimir Solovyov and Elena Klepikova, obviously doubted Andropov's internationalist credentials, perceiving him instead as

understanding *sliyanie* to mean the cultural and linguistic Russification of the minority peoples.¹³

Speculation over the real reasons for his having invoked *sliyanie* once again as the long-term goal of the Party's nationality policy aside, Andropov's speech was more significant for his acknowledgement of what some Soviet social scientists had been arguing in recent years; namely that national consciousness among "the Soviet people" was, contrary to previous expectations, becoming stronger. He described as a "logical, objective process" the fact that "the economic and cultural progress of all nations and nationalities is accompanied by an inevitable growth of national self-awareness."¹⁴ Further to this, Andropov admitted in a surprisingly frank fashion that undesirable manifestations of "national arrogance and conceit" which unfortunately continued to appear as part of this "objective process" could no longer, as they typically had been done for much of the Brezhnev period, be explained away as "survivals of the past". Rather, they were "sometimes nourished by our own mistakes in work".¹⁵ The bottom line of Andropov's remarks was therefore that successes thus far attained in settling the national question in no way meant "that all the problems generated by the very fact of the life and work of numerous nations and nationalities have vanished."¹⁶ Quite the contrary, as he told those present:

Comrades, it follows from everything I have said that relations among nations have not been removed from the agenda in the conditions of mature socialism. They call for special concern and constant attention from the Communist Party. The Party should delve deeply into these problems and chart the way for solving them, creatively enriching the Leninist principles of nationalities policy with the experience of developed socialism.¹⁷

These comments could be construed as a certain concession to pragmatism on Andropov's part since they implied that "Leninist principles" alone were no longer sufficient to deal with modern-day nationality problems. Andropov concluded his remarks on the national question by stating that:

We speak boldly both about the existing problems and outstanding tasks because we well know that we are equal to these problems, that we can and must solve them. An orientation towards action rather than fine words -- that is what we need to day to make the great and mighty Union of Soviet Socialist Republics even stronger.¹⁹

Although Andropov seemed to be calling for an end to a simple declarative approach to the national question, he was unable to propose a solution beyond stressing themes similar to those emphasized by both Khrushchev and Brezhnev before him -- further integration of the republics into the national economic complex (and here Andropov, as had Brezhnev, made special mention of Central Asia); the broader use of Russian as the language of international communication within the USSR; and, concern for the rights of non-indigenous nationalities living outside their native territories (arguably in the first instance Russians).¹⁹

Furthermore, he made no effort to intervene in the intellectual debate which, as noted previously, had continued at the Riga conference earlier that year. Although at least paying lip service to the goal of *sliyanie*, resurrected by ideologues such as Kosolapov at the symposium, Andropov made it clear that this was a very long-term prospect and the Party would do nothing to artificially force the process. Moreover, his Sixtieth Anniversary remarks, as outlined above, could be interpreted as aligning him more with the "moderate" school of theorists alluded to in previous chapters who rejected the idea of simple forays into the

classics of Marxism-Leninism as constituting meaningful research within the complex and contradictory sphere of national relations. Brill Olcott is therefore likely correct in suggesting that the intended purpose of the speech "seems to have been to offer a moderating and consensual statement which relied heavily on precedent."²⁰ Nonetheless, Andropov's address was noteworthy for its candor in acknowledging persistent problems in the area of nationality policy. Despite a lack of new ideas in terms of dealing with these issues, he at least seemed "to display a greater awareness of the complexity of the national problem than his predecessor" and gave every indication that it would occupy a high place on his agenda of domestic concerns.²¹ This heightened awareness was subsequently expressed by some republican officials in their assessments of Andropov's address who suggested that the Party's own inattentiveness during recent years had contributed in an important way to the unwelcome revival of retrogressive national and religious customs particularly in Central Asia and the Baltic Republics.²² It was also reflected in a series of scholarly articles delving into changes in the social composition of Soviet nations, the effects of ethnicity on internal migration, and the basic characteristics of national relations at the intra-personal level which appeared in late 1982.²³

As events would transpire, Andropov's Sixtieth Anniversary address turned out to be his most comprehensive statement on the national question. In speeches before the USSR Supreme Soviet and CPSU Central Committee in January and June 1983 respectively, he touched only briefly on the matter. However, his comments continued to demonstrate a serious concern for the state of nationality affairs in the Soviet Union. In his address to the Supreme Soviet, he stressed the need to "persistently

eradicate any deviations from the Leninist nationalities policy and to consistently ensure the full equality of Soviet people of all nationalities" particularly by "giving more specific and more thoroughgoing consideration to national features and showing greater concern for the all-round development of all nations and nationalities, especially small peoples."²⁴ Following up on this, he reminded the Central Committee a few months later that "a well thought-out, scientifically substantiated nationality policy"²⁵ was vitally important for the Soviet Union's future progress. In neither case did Andropov make any further reference to *sliyanie*; indeed, his comments before the Supreme Soviet regarding the need to show more consideration for the national features of smaller peoples seemed largely to contradict the idea of ethnic "fusion". This made it even more unclear as to exactly why *sliyanie* had been brought back to official life in the first place. Although some specialist literature during the spring of 1983 discussed the concept in light of Andropov's December 1982 statement, it subsequently vanished again from any sort of official discussion of nationality problems.²⁶

The June 1983 Central Committee Plenum - A Watershed

Andropov's brief remarks at the June 1983 Central Committee plenary session notwithstanding, this meeting appears to have been a turning point as far as increasingly frank Soviet criticisms of shortcomings in the Party's handling of inter-national relations was concerned.

In his capacity as Central Committee Secretary responsible for ideological affairs, Konstantin Chernenko commented extensively on

nationality policy. Echoing Andropov's line, he noted that "the resolution of the nationality question as it has been handed down to us from the past in no way means that this question has been removed from the agenda altogether."²⁷ While reiterating the customary aims of improving "internationalist education" of the masses, expanding still further the teaching of Russian in the national republics, and making better use of untapped labor reserves in Central Asia, Chernenko's speech was most important for his observation that *"ideological work in the conditions of our country, which unites over 100 nations and nationalities, is inconceivable without a thorough study of those peoples' specific interests and the features peculiar to their national psychology and culture."*²⁸ The fact that this passage was given emphasis in the published text of Chernenko's report meant that special significance was being ascribed to it, and his call for further research into "features peculiar to...national psychology and culture" implied the influence of people such as Bromlei and other specialists who, as discussed in the last chapter, had been steering Soviet studies of the national question in this direction for several years.

At the minimum, his address, in the words of Rakowska-Harmstone, made explicit "the policy relevance of research done by social scientists,"²⁹ something which was in keeping with what was alluded to earlier in this chapter as Chernenko's apparent enthusiasm for sociological research as expressed in some of his public statements during the 1970s and early 1980s. In the wake of the June 1983 plenum, a number of academics and Party officials alike, some making favorable reference to Chernenko's remarks in particular, began to engage in

frank, and sometimes highly critical, assessments of mistakes and failures in the realm of nationality policy.

Writing in the July-August 1983 edition of the journal *Istoriya SSSR* [*The History of the USSR*], the ethnographer V. I. Kozlov, as pointed out earlier a close working associate of Bromlei, dwelt at some length on the failure of efforts thus far to deal with the issue of differentiated birth-rates between the European and Asian parts of the Soviet Union and other demographic problems as acknowledged at the XXVI CPSU Congress in February 1981.³⁰ The Chairman of the Soviet Sociological Association, writing shortly thereafter in *Sovetskaya Rossiya* [*Soviet Russia*], the traditionally conservative organ of the Russian Federation state apparatus, described the task of "improving relations among nationalities" as among the most important of "a good many urgent, acute problems" facing contemporary Soviet society.³¹ In October 1983, a senior Soviet demographer, again publishing in *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, reiterated ongoing official concern over the country's demographic problems and disclosed that, as part of a new effort to come to terms with these difficulties, a sample population survey aimed at obtaining new data on the nationality makeup of the Soviet population was being planned for 1985.³²

A month later, the Chairman of the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Republic Supreme Soviet, somewhat foreshadowing the critical spirit of Mikhail Gorbachev's *glasnost'*, used the journal *Nauka i religia* [*Science and Religion*] as a platform for criticizing the fact that "at one time, there were certain errors and shortcomings in the implementation of nationalities policy, and certain violations of its Leninist principles in our republic", although he lacked specificity beyond this.³³ Finally,

at the end of the year, a long article on the national question appeared in *Pravda*, the gist of which was that the current phase of Soviet international relations was characterized by the steadily growing "national self-awareness of the peoples" and that the Party had to take this reality fully into account in formulating its nationality policy.³⁴

The National Question During Chernenko's Year As CPSU General Secretary

This tendency towards criticism became especially strong during 1984 after Chernenko succeeded Andropov as CPSU General Secretary in February of that year. Shortly thereafter, an article appeared in the magazine *Nauchnyi kommunizm* [*Scientific Communism*] which was without apparent precedent in its blunt attack on the misdirection of Soviet nationality policy in recent years. According to its author, a "facile" approach which glossed over persistent difficulties and "contradictions" related to the national question had developed in the 1970s. Noting that the XXVI Congress had properly shifted the emphasis away from highlighting successes to dealing with "problems that require attention and prompt resolution", the writer argued that there was no longer any excuse for official complacency.

While expressing some satisfaction that it was now being recognized that "national problems even under contemporary conditions are complicated and require special attention", he pointed out several basic difficulties that needed to be overcome. The most important of these were: a lack of consensus among Soviet experts "on a number of important aspects of theory and practice of national relations"; the disquieting reality that there was not even a unanimity of views as to

the very "essence of the nationalities question under socialism"; and, the failure of Soviet social scientists to sufficiently elaborate "the meaning and content of the principal Party tenets on the nationalities question." The author also charged that in their approach to the officially prescribed dialectic of the simultaneous *rastsvet* and *sblizhenie* of nations, many experts "play down or simply do not notice the complexity of the process and its contradictory nature."³⁵ In sum, this article was a rather profound indictment of the current state of Soviet nationalities policy. Indeed, it implied that, as this analysis is trying to suggest, there really was no coherent policy and had not been for some time. Nor was this writer alone in his criticism.

Later that year, the aforementioned academician Bromlei published an article reiterating, in particular, his criticism that traditional approaches to the national question consistently underrated the significance of ethnic consciousness at the individual level. Implying once again that the nationality problem, to an important extent, existed independently of socio-economic circumstances, he argued that social consciousness does not always "adequately reflect objective social processes, including the processes of the flowering and drawing together of nations."³⁶ Furthermore, it was incorrect to see the sources of continuing negative phenomena in this realm as being the past or "bourgeois propaganda". Rather, they had much to do with "certain shortcomings in the development of modern society, and, to a significant degree in factors relating to the sphere of social consciousness."³⁷ According to Bromlei, the Soviet social sciences had to take "a decisive turn" in direction towards understanding "the real content" of the national question "in all its complexity and contradictoriness",³⁸

which, for him, meant focussing on the individual and his psychology as the most immediate bearer of those characteristics which define ethnic and national self-identification (*ethnos*).

In December 1984, a Soviet philosophy professor, referring a number of times to Chernenko's remarks at the June 1983 Central Committee plenum, called for further sociological research "into the most important problems of national relations." He singled out as subjects requiring special attention the following dialectical relationships which were integral to a thorough understanding of the national question:

- the dialectic between national and pan-Soviet consciousness at the individual level.
- the dialectic between national psychology and the psychology of "the new historical community -- the Soviet people".
- the dialectic between national and pan-Soviet cultures.
- the dialectic between national languages and "the language of international intercourse [viz. Russian].³⁹

In a critical vein, he noted that while "problems concerning the formation, essence and nature of the Soviet people as a new historical community" had been "intensively examined" during the 1970s, the correlation of the "specific laws governing the functioning and development of this social and international community", as well as "the dialectic of pan-Soviet and national, all-Union and republican interests", required further study.⁴⁰

Since the national question, as with other forms of social relations, unfolds along a "complex and contradictory" path, it was

necessary to "substantially raise the theoretical level of research into vitally important problems of national relations."⁴¹ Echoing Bromlei somewhat, the main thrust of the author's case was that surviving remnants of "nationalism and chauvinism" would not disappear on their own. Recognition of such meant that the Soviet social sciences needed to better understand the peculiarities of national psychology and culture in order to strengthen the Party's guidance in the sphere of national relations.

The criticisms of academics such as these were repeated during 1984 by some Party officials as well who, in two separate instances, called for an end "to a declarative approach to nationalities policy"⁴² and condemned "the hushing-up of shortcomings and mistakes"⁴³ in this sensitive area. In another case, the head of the Department of Propaganda and Agitation of the Azeri Communist Party Central Committee noted that "problems of relations among nationalities ...occupy an important place among *the most urgent questions* [emphasis added] of the theory and practice of building a new society".⁴⁴ Giving evidence once again of the Party's enhanced recognition of the indispensable role to be played by Soviet social scientists in addressing these questions, he called on them "to pay special attention to studying the essence and uniqueness not only of certain national and mixed-nationality formations, but of the people themselves and the specific features of their specific culture, everyday life and psychology."⁴⁵ Moreover, reflecting further the apparent influence of scholars such as Bromlei, he made special mention of the need for "clarifying the dialectic of national and internationalist principles at the level of interpersonal relations."⁴⁶

Finally, December 1984 saw the publication in *Kommunist* of a long article by Konstantin Chernenko himself which reviewed the current state of Party affairs in a number of areas of Soviet life and contained what turned out to be his last major statement on nationality policy. Referring in a rather frank fashion to what he termed "difficult problems...in the sphere of relations among nationalities"⁴⁷ he warned that:

The resolution of the nationalities question, in the form in which we inherited it from capitalism, does not mean that it has been removed from the agenda altogether or that we have succeeded in putting an end to vestiges of the past in people's psychology or to manifestations of parochialism and national narrow-mindedness.⁴⁸

To the extent that he thus acknowledged the existence of "difficult problems" with respect to the national question, and, as he had at the June 1983 plenum, legitimized a broader role for the Soviet social sciences in tackling these problems in a more substantive and less doctrinaire fashion, it can be said that during his year in office Chernenko did nothing to deter the fairly radical critique of nationality policy which began under Andropov and perhaps even quietly encouraged it.

In this area at least, such an assessment is somewhat at variance with the typical Western characterization of Chernenko's tenure as representing a de-facto return to, in the words of today's Soviet reformers, Brezhnevian "stagnation" (*zastoi*). While the occasional appearance of articles and statements assessing in high-flown terms the purported achievements of Soviet nationality policy betrayed continuing disagreement within both the academic community and the political leadership,⁴⁹ by the time of Chernenko's death in March 1985, facile

treatments of nationality problems were clearly overshadowed in significance by critical commentaries, often linked to Chernenko's remarks at the June 1983 plenum,⁵⁰ stressing that successes attained to this point in "resolving" the national question as inherited from the past in no way meant that all problems had been solved, or that the issue could be struck from the socio-political agenda of "developed socialist" society. Put succinctly, there was official recognition of the fact that, as a writer in the military journal *Krasnaya zvezda* [Red Star] put it, "even at the stage of developed socialism...the national question remains a reality that gives rise to problems of its own,"⁵¹ and Soviet academics appear to have been given freer rein to continue the critical attitude towards nationality policy which stemmed from the XXVI Congress and was accelerated under Andropov. This perhaps suggests, in turn, that Chernenko's reformist credentials as discussed earlier in this chapter, particularly his emphasis on the value of expanded sociological research, had some degree of legitimacy and that his place in Soviet history thus deserves a certain modest re-evaluation.

Summary

In summarizing the Andropov-Chernenko interregnum, it is apparent that the trend which emerged in the late Brezhnev period towards a more sober and realistic acknowledgement of continuing difficulties in the area of national relations accelerated during this brief two-year period. Nonetheless, neither Party leaders nor intellectuals were able to provide much in the way of answers to questions being posed except to

encourage more comprehensive research into the psychological and spiritual subtleties of national and ethnic consciousness.

While the positive significance of this should not be discounted, it is clear that, as a major consequence, the reform-minded Gorbachev leadership therefore inherited a nationality policy which, if anything, was in an even more pronounced state of drift than it had been at the time of Brezhnev's death.

Notes

¹ Yu. V. Andropov, "Sixty Years of the USSR", *Pravda*, December 22, 1982, p. 1, in *CDSF*, Vol XXXIV, No. 51, p. 2.

² K. U. Chernenko, "Speech at the Plenary Meeting of the CPSU Central Committee 10 April 1984", in K. U. Chernenko, *Speeches and Writings*, Robert Maxwell, ed., (Oxford: Permagon Press, 1984), p. 242.

³ See the collection of Andropov's speeches made prior to his selection as General Secretary in Martin Ebon, *The Andropov File* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1983), pp.

⁴ As cited in *ibid.*, p. 242.

⁵ Jerry Hough, "Soviet Succession: Issues and Personalities", *Problems of Communism*, Vol. XXXI, September-October 1982, p. 32. For other assessments of Chernenko's reformist credentials prior to his becoming CPSU General Secretary see Marc D. Zlotnik, "Chernenko's Platform", *ibid.*, November-December 1982, pp. 70-74 and Yaroslav Bilinsky, "Scherbytski, Ukraine, and Kremlin Politics", *ibid.*, Vol. XXXII, July-August 1983, pp. 1-20. For a revised assessment following Chernenko's succession, see Marc D. Zlotnik, "Chernenko Succeeds", *ibid.*, Vol. XXXIII, March-April 1984, pp. 17-31.

⁶ Aishe Seitmuratova, interviewed by Don Larrimore, April 20, 1983, as cited in Jonathan Steele and Eric Abraham, *Andropov in Power: From Komsomol' to Kremlin* (New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1984), p. 100. Such a view is somewhat reinforced by the fact that the nationality policy was frequently the major focus of Andropov's speeches during the 1970s. See Yu. V. Andropov, *Speeches and Writings*, Robert Maxwell, ed., (Oxford: Permagon Press, 1983).

⁷ Nahaylo, p. 82.

⁸ Andropov, p. 4.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Brill Olcott, p. 112.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² John Dunlop, "Language, Culture, Religion and National Awareness", in Conquest, ed., *The Last Empire*, p. 269, describes Andropov as "a believer in a Soviet melting pot in which the national distinctions of the peoples of the USSR would be submerged." Jerry Hough, p. 39, argues that Russian nationalist sympathizers, most notably I. V. Kapitonov, suffered a serious setback immediately after Andropov moved from the position of KGB Chairman to the Central Committee Secretariat in June 1982.

¹³ Solovyov and Klepikova, pp. 113-116, argue that Andropov indeed favored "fusing" the USSR's more than 100 nationalities into a single Soviet nation but not out of any sincere "internationalist" conviction. Rather, it is their contention that Andropov was a proponent of *sliyanie* on the basis of coercive Russification and claim that he was behind the Russifying policies pursued in Azerbaidzhan and Georgia during the late 1970s and early 1980s by his faithful KGB underlings Aliev and Shevardnadze.

¹⁴ Andropov, p. 4.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.* The fact that command of the Russian language among large segments of the non-Russian population continued to be weak seems to have been recognized as an acute problem under Andropov and a number of articles calling for the expanded and improved teaching of Russian in the republics appeared in Soviet media during the early part of 1983. See, for example, K. Vaino (First Secretary of the Estonian Communist Party), "S tochnyim znaniem obstanovki" [With Accurate Knowledge of the Situation], *Kommunist*, No. 4, March 1983, pp. 51-60; Sh. R. Rashidov (First Secretary of the Uzbek Communist Party), "The Language of Our Unity and Cooperation -- From the Republic Scientific and Practical Conference on the Study of the Russian Language", *Pravda vostoka*, May 21, 1983, pp. 1-2, in *CDSP*, Vol. XXXV, No. 22, pp. 2-4; and K. Khanazarov, "The Language of Friendship and Brotherhood", *Pravda*, June 10, 1983, pp. 2-3, *ibid.*, No. 23, pp. 7-8.

²⁰ Brill Olcott, p. 113.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² See, for example, T. Yu. Usubaliev (First Secretary of Kirgizia), "On The Further Improvement of the Organizational and Political Work of the Republic's Party Organizations in Accomplishing the Tasks Stemming From the Report '60 Years of the USSR' by Comrade Yu. V. Andropov, General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee", *Sovetskaya Kirgizia* [Soviet Kirgizia], May 20, 1983, pp. 1-3, in *CDSP*, Vol. XXXV, No. 20, pp. 1-4, who criticizes Kirgiz historians for their persistent tendency to "idealize" the pre-Soviet history of their republic, as well as attempts by some to revive "religious ceremonies under the guise of national customs." See also M. Gafarova, "Alas, There Are Still Times When an Old Prejudice Intrudes Into Modern Life", *Komsomol'skaya Pravda* [The official organ of the Leninist Young Communist League (Komsomol')], January 20, 1983, p. 4, *ibid.*, No. 4, p. 7, who decries the extent to which religious customs continue to exercise a strong hold on the people of Tadzhikistan; and V. Vitkiavicius, "Atheism Affirms Man", *Molodoi Kommunist*, [Young Communist], No. 12, December 1982, pp. 85-91, *ibid.*, No. 20, p. 11, who condemns the degree to which surviving "bourgeois nationalist" elements in Lithuania use religion for "subversive anti-Soviet purposes".

²³ See Yu. V. Arutyunyan, "Fundamental Changes in the Composition of Soviet Nations", *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniya*, No. 4, October-December 1982, pp. 21-27, in *ibid.*, Vol. XXXIV, No. 49, pp. 3-4; L. L. Ryabokovsky, "The Interaction of Migrational and Ethnic Processes", *ibid.*, pp. 4-5; and, L. M. Drobizheva, "Basic Features of National Relations at the Intrapersonal Level", *ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

²⁴ See Andropov's remarks as reported in "Meetings of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet", *Pravda*, January 13, 1983, pp. 1-2, *ibid.*, Vol. XXXV, No. 2, p. 13.

²⁵ Yu. V. Andropov, "Speech at the Plenary Session of the CPSU Central Committee", *Pravda*, June 16, 1983, pp. 1-2, *ibid.*, No. 25, p. 25.

²⁶ For example, Yu. V. Bromlei elaborated his theory of "inter-ethnic integration" within the context of Andropov's renewed emphasis on *sliyanie* during the spring of 1983. See Yu. V. Bromlei, *Etnicheskie protsessyi v SSSR* [Ethnic Processes in the USSR], *Kommunist*, No. 5, March 1983, pp. 56-64. However, in a number of other writings in various journals (*Sovetskaya etnografiya* in particular) throughout the rest of 1983 and into 1984 he made no further reference to "fusion".

²⁷ K. U. Chernenko, "Urgent Questions of the Party's Ideological and Mass-Political Work", *Pravda*, June 16, 1983, p. 1, in *CDSP*, Vol. XXXV, No. 24, p. 9.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

²⁹ Teresa Rakoswka-Harmstone, "Minority Nationalism Today: An Overview", in Conquest, ed., *The Last Empire*, p. 260.

³⁰ V. I. Kozlov, "Dinamika natsional'novo sostava naseleniya SSSR i problemyi demograficheskoi politiki" [The Dynamics of the National Composition of the USSR's Population and Problems of Demographic Policy], *Istoriya SSSR*, No. 4, July-August 1983, pp. 20-30.

³¹ Kh. Momdzhani (Chairman of the Soviet Sociological Association), "A Specialist's Opinion: Analyzing Life", *Sovetskaya Rossiya* [Soviet Russia], August 23, 1983, p. 1, in *CDSP*, Vol. XXXV, No. 38, p. 5.

³² L. Volodarsky, "Demographers Are Studying", *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, October 13, 1983, p. 2, *ibid.*, No. 41, pp. 1-2.

³³ Kh. Kh. Bokov, "Still on the Agenda", *Nauka i religia* [Science and Religion], No. 11, November 1983, p. 1-4, *ibid.*, No. 52, p. 3.

³⁴ N. Tarasenko, "Questions of Theory: The Implementation of the Leninist Principles of Nationalities Policy", *Pravda*, December 16, 1983, pp. 2-3, *ibid.*, No. 50, p. 7.

³⁵ As summarized in Nahaylo, pp. 85-86.

³⁶ Yu. V. Bromlei, "K izucheniyu natsional'nykh protsessov sotsialisticheskovo obshchestva v kontekste etnicheskoi istorii" [On Studying the National Processes of Socialist Society in the Context of Ethnic History], *Istoriya SSSR*, No. 6, November-December 1984, pp. 41-42.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

³⁹ A. I. Kholmogorov, "Deyatel'nost' partii v oblasti natsional'nykh otnosheniyakh" [The Party's Work in the Area of National Relations], *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, No. 12, December 1984, p. 31.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁴² As quoted in Nahaylo, p. 85.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ A. Dashdamirov, "Questions of Theory: Dialectics of the National and the International in the Personality", *Pravda*, September 14, 1984, pp. 2-3, in *CDSP*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 37, pp. 20-21.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ K. U. Chernenko, "Na uroven' trebovani razvitovo sotsializma - nekotorye aktual'nyie problemyi teorii, strategii i taktiki KPSS" [At the Level of the Requirements of Developed Socialism - Some Pressing

Problems of the CPSU's Theory, Strategy and Tactics], *Kommunist*, No. 18, December 1984, p. 5

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁴⁹ See, for example, Zh. G. Golotvin, "Bankrotstvo burzhuaznykh fal'sifikatsii natsional'noi politiki KPSS i natsional'nykh otnoshenii v SSSR" [The Bankruptcy of Bourgeois Falsifications of the National Policy of the CPSU and National Relations in the USSR] *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, No. 8, August 1984, pp. 50-63.

⁵⁰ It is apparent that the June 1983 plenum was meant by the Kremlin leadership to be an important turning point in the post-Brezhnev era as the CPSU undertook to resolve what Chernenko himself referred to as a number of "complex" tasks related to accelerating the socio-economic development of Soviet society. See K. U. Chernenko, "Uchastnikam Vsesoyuznoi nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii" [To the Participants of the All-Union Scientific-Practical Conference], *Kommunist*, No. 18, December 1984, pp. 22-23.

⁵¹ V. Samoilenko, "Friendship of the Peoples Triumphs", *Krasnaya zvezda* [Red Star], March 7, 1985, pp. 2-3, in *CDSP*, Vol. XXXVII, No. 11, p. 21.

Gorbachev and the National Question: Whither The USSR?

The present situation in relations between nationalities can only be viewed as extremely complicated. Unresolved issues have surfaced one after another, the errors and deformations of many decades are now making themselves felt, and conflicts between nationalities that have been smoldering for years have flared up. Social and economic problems, state and legal problems, environmental and demographic problems, and problems involving the development of language and culture and the preservation of national traditions are all bound together in a tight knot.¹

M. S. Gorbachev

Unfortunately, it seems to me that the leadership carrying out the reform has no clear conception of restructuring for the different republics and regions, which puts the centre on the defensive when it is called upon to respond to the challenges which have already arisen in various parts of the country.²

A Soviet historian

In taking over from Konstantin Chernenko as CPSU General Secretary in March 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev clearly believed himself mandated to "get things going again" in the Soviet Union, particularly with respect to what was obviously seen as the cardinal problem of revitalizing an extremely sluggish Soviet economy. His appointment gave rise to a whole spate of speculation among Western observers and media as to the nature of the man himself, and the impact his accession was likely to have on Soviet domestic and foreign policy both.³ Given that he represented a

younger generation of Soviet leaders who were thought generally to be better educated and more forward-looking than their predecessors, the extent to which Gorbachev was a "reformer" was the central focus among outside observers. One Kremlinologist, quoted in the March 25, 1985 edition of *Newsweek*, argued that while likely being interested in some sort of reform, there was nothing in Gorbachev's speeches or actions prior to his becoming General Secretary to suggest that he was anything more than "a tinkerer, a modifier, a remodeler."⁴ For its part, North America's other most widely read news and current affairs magazine *Time*, in its cover story of March 25, 1985, spoke of an end having been put to "the era of drift, of weak and enfeebled leadership that began in Brezhnev's declining years."⁵ Nonetheless, a follow-up story cautioned readers that "although Gorbachev may exhibit a more amiable personality than his predecessors, there is no reason to doubt that he is cut from the same ideological cloth."⁶

Uncertainty and differences of opinion over the degree to which Gorbachev would undertake what could be considered, at least within Soviet parameters, as "radical" socio-economic reform persisted among Western experts even as Gorbachev himself, certainly as early as April 1985, barely a month following his appointment as General Secretary, began to speak in an open and forthright way of the need for a restructuring (*perestroika*) of the country's economic mechanism.⁷ By the time of the XXVII CPSU Congress in February 1986, it became clear that this *perestroika* aimed not only at reinvigorating the Soviet economy, but at what Gorbachev himself subsequently defined in his book *Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World* as a "thorough renewal of every aspect of Soviet life."⁸ As events have since

transpired, the sphere of nationality relations has become that aspect of Soviet life perhaps most singularly in need of "thorough renewal".

The National Question During Gorbachev's First Year In Power

Western observers such as Taras Kuzio and Nahaylo point out that there were no major policy statements on the national question during Gorbachev's first year in power.⁹ Indeed, the draft of the proposed new CPSU Program published in October 1985 by and large emphasized the traditional aims of Soviet nationality policy - the simultaneous "flourishing" (*rastsvet*) and "drawing together" (*sblizhenie*) of nations leading to their complete unity (*polnoe edinstvo*) "in the remote historical future."¹⁰ However, no mention was made of the ultimate "fusion" (*sliyanie*) of nations which, as noted in the previous chapter, had briefly re-appeared in official discussions of nationality policy under Andropov, although the possible inclusion of *sliyanie* in the new Program was apparently the subject of some internal debate involving Gorbachev himself. This will be expanded on shortly.

The draft contained two other significant points of departure in terms of the national question from the 1961 Program it was intended to replace. First, while the importance of Russian as the language of international communication within the USSR was reiterated, the Russian nation itself was not elevated to any special status for having allegedly given "fraternal" aid to the "formerly backward" non-Russian peoples. Second, references to the diminishing significance of republican boundaries were dropped.¹¹

There are other indications that, in spite of what most Western sources describe as Gorbachev's initial insensitivity to or simple disinterest in nationality affairs, treatments of the issue in Soviet media were not entirely pro-forma. While some writers persisted in blaming nationalist manifestations on Western intrigues,¹² others, as had more frequently been the case since the late Brezhnev period, continued to acknowledge the growth of national self-awareness among the peoples of the Soviet Union although they typically tried to square the ideological circle by arguing that this process was in no way incompatible with the "drawing together" of nations.

One such specialist, writing in *Pravda* on December 20, 1985, was nonetheless careful to point out that socialism did not destroy national differences. As he put it:

The road to the further convergence and, in the long run, the complete unity of nations lies not through the disappearance without a trace of special national features but through the progressive synthesis of the international and the national.¹³

This meant that "the complete unity of nations" was a question of "social, not ethnic, unity."¹⁴ The author was also careful to repeat the cautious statements heard under Andropov and Chernenko that "the successful resolution of the national question left over from the past does not mean that problems will be resolved automatically without daily efforts by Party and Soviet organizations."¹⁵ Furthermore, he argued that the current stage of national relations in the Soviet Union was characterized by "new problems" engendered "by the life and labor of nations and nationalities."¹⁶

Acknowledging that, on the whole, the national question was "a function of the social and class structure of society", this analyst

nevertheless reflected the comparatively "new thinking" of specialists in this area such as Bromlei by stating that, at the same time, "it retains relative independence" of purely material factors.¹⁷ In his words, such factors as "the appreciable increase in contacts between nationalities due to the growth of economic ties between republics"; what he vaguely described as the "unique demographic situation" (apparently a reference to the sorts of demographic problems outlined in chapter 3); and "the processes of the development of national self-awareness, which takes place differently in various regions", were making "additional demands on the regulation of the complex and delicate sphere of national relations."¹⁸ This article seemed to exhibit the same sort of muted concern as had been the case during the previous several years that nationality problems should not be viewed as having been entirely "resolved".

The leadup to the XXVII CPSU Congress in February 1986 saw the debate over ethnic "fusion" (*sliyanie*), as alluded to briefly above, surface once again. Two Armenian scholars, Ts. A. Stepanyan and E. V. Tadevosyan, writing in *Voprosyi filosofii* and *Voprosyi istorii KPSS* respectively, suggested that the concept be included in the new Party Program to be approved at the Congress.¹⁹ They received an apparent riposte from an academic in Tbilisi who, writing in the pages of the Georgian Communist Party daily *Kommunisti*, criticized the tendency of "certain researchers" and "bad propagandists" to "run ahead" of events and, on the basis of an "irresponsible and frivolous attitude towards theory", draw erroneous and premature conclusions about the "fusion" of nations and the national question having been once and for all

"resolved".²⁰ Interestingly, Gorbachev later revealed that he himself had become directly involved in this renewed debate over *sliyanie*.

Speaking in January 1989, he reported that "at one time" he had withstood "only with great difficulty...pressure from certain men of science [perhaps a reference to Stepanyan and Tadevosyan]" who had tried to force a "dangerous directive" proposing to begin "the virtual fusion of nations...into the Party Program now in effect."²¹ Gorbachev's apparent personal role in excluding any mention of "fusion" from the Program published shortly after the Congress is at some variance with the basic Western perception of him as completely divorced from nationality issues during the early part of his tenure. At the very least, it would seem that he played some sort of mediating role in debates which took place over how to define the current stage of Soviet inter-national relations within the framework of the new Party Program. This episode thus revealed continuing tensions, apparently of a rather strong nature given Gorbachev's description of events, within the intellectual community and, by extension, the leadership itself over the proper course of nationality policy under the new regime.

At the XXVII Congress, Gorbachev, after reciting the standard claims of success in this area, displayed some degree of caution consistent with his having previously resisted efforts to restore "fusion" as the Party's final goal as far as the national question was concerned. He warned that "achievements should not create the impression that national processes are without problems. Contradictions are inevitable to any development and they are inevitable in this sphere as well."²² The most important thing, as he saw it, was "to see their constantly emerging aspects and facets and to find and promptly give

correct answers to the questions that life advances."²³ While repeating the need to carry on "a principled struggle against manifestations of national narrow-mindedness, conceit, nationalism and chauvinism, however clothed", Gorbachev also spoke of showing "special sensitivity and circumspection in everything that has to do with nationality policy or affects the interests of every nation."²⁴ It was necessary, he concluded, to apply "Lenin's wise behests...creatively in new conditions" and demonstrate "the utmost attentiveness and devotion to principle in relations among nationalities."²⁵ The emphasis of his remarks, while devoid of new ideas, was clearly on the need to proceed with some caution in dealing with current nationality issues. This sort of concern was echoed by some republican First Secretaries as well, such as the Tadzhik K. Makhamov, who described the current state of relations between nationalities in the USSR as "difficult and multifaceted" and requiring "more Party attention."²⁶ Along similar lines, the First Secretary of Dagestan Province, M. Yu. Usupov, told the Congress that the Party had "much to do" in terms of revising its approach to nationality issues.²⁷

Thus, in contrast to interpretations of Gorbachev's first year in power which view him as entirely unconcerned about the national question, it is possible to present an alternative scenario which sees his early position on the matter as not that dissimilar from Andropov and Chernenko before him. While recognizing continuing "problems" afflicting this realm, in the absence of new approaches, and in the conditions of a virtual policy vacuum which this analysis argues existed at the time, his comments were cautious and relied heavily on precedent. The case for such a view is perhaps further strengthened by recalling

that his critique of other aspects of Soviet life was initially much less radical than it subsequently became as the real depth of the social and economic crisis facing the country made itself painfully evident. In other words, the tepid concern for nationality problems was not necessarily discontinuous with the overall perspective of *perestroika* in its early stages that the USSR was in a "pre-crisis" as opposed to "crisis" stage. Just as Gorbachev has since been forced to admit that problems facing the economy in particular have turned out to be more serious than first anticipated, so has he had to allow that at the beginning of restructuring, the "need for updating nationalities policy" was "by no means fully appreciated" by the leadership.²⁹

Glasnost' and the National Question: The Debate Comes Into Focus

While it would be unfair to claim that Gorbachev's democratizing reforms "created" in and of themselves the nationality problems which have surfaced in the USSR since he came to power, it is undoubtedly true that they gave vent to long-simmering ethnic tensions within Soviet society, the strength of which, as suggested above, have clearly taken him by surprise.²⁹ As a result, whatever illusions Soviet leaders may have actually retained about the final solubility of the national question have been rudely dispelled and it has become an open question as to whether the USSR can ultimately avoid rupturing along its ethnic seams.

Glasnost' in the realm of inter-ethnic relations began to manifest itself in a meaningful sense after the XXVII Congress. An All-Union scientific conference on nationality problems focussing, in particular, on Central Asia (long an area of special concern as has been made note

of in previous chapters), was held in Tashkent in early April 1986.³⁰ This was followed the next month by another conference, also in Tashkent, which dealt with the critical problem of better integrating Central Asian conscripts into the Soviet military.³¹ Subsequent to this, academician Bromlei published an article in *Kommunist* reviewing nationality policy in light of the XXVII Congress and describing the national question as occupying a "substantive place" among "a wide circle of social problems" raised for discussion at the Congress.³² He referred to inter-national relations as "a very delicate sphere requiring greater tact both in its study and, especially, in the resolution of practical problems."³³ Reiterating criticisms he had been making for several years, Bromlei lamented the fact that Soviet academic journals had for too long devoted insufficient attention to a "critical analysis" of national relations and he repeated his call for the Soviet social sciences to take a "decisive turn" towards "deeper study of the real content of national processes in all their complexity and contradictoriness."³⁴

The conferences in Tashkent and Bromlei's article notwithstanding, the impact of *glasnost* with respect to the nationality matter came into sharp relief during June 1986 at the Eighth All-Union Writers' Congress in Moscow. Here, a number of non-Russian writers, including the Ukrainian Boris Olinyk and the Armenian Vardges Petrosyan, decried the Soviet regime's past insensitivity to their national languages and literatures, terming this a violation of the "Leninist principles" of nationality policy.³⁵ As well, a Russian nationalist author, Vasily Belov, outspokenly rejected the prospect of nations disappearing through a process of ethnic "fusion" (*sliyanie*).³⁶ Shortly after the Congress,

the respected Kirghiz writer Chingiz Aitmatov joined in these sorts of denunciations by telling an interviewer from *Literaturnaya gazeta* that "matters should not be portrayed as if everything has been resolved and there are no problems in our nationality spheres."³⁷ He went on to deny categorically the long-held ideological tenet that, "in time, in some distant future, all languages will merge and there will be only one or two languages in the world."³⁸ Such, he maintained, was hardly a prospect to be captivated by; rather, "the world will be impoverished by this" since "these 'victorious' languages will not have a nutritive environment. Monotony cannot support development."³⁹ Therefore, he concluded, it was important "to preserve the diversity of language as long as possible."⁴⁰ Hence, as had often been the case throughout Russian and Soviet history, *les hommes des lettres* were leading the way in challenging some of the fundamental precepts of the existing order.

Occasionally critical articles continued to appear in Soviet media during the remainder of 1986. A corresponding member of the Azerbaidzhan Republic Academy of Sciences, while restating the successes achieved in bringing about the "steady convergence (*sblizhenie*)" of nations and nationalities, observed at the same time that "the development and interaction of nations living in a single multinational state engenders and will always give rise to new questions and problems related to their life and labor together."⁴¹ In his view, these problems were not being faced up to in a satisfactory way:

The propagandistic rhetoric and facile approach to problems that one still encounters do nothing to increase the effectiveness of internationalist upbringing. The forming of internationalist convictions and patriotic feelings is not always seen as one of the key areas of ideological-upbringing work or as a factor in the development of labor and public

and political activeness. Often this work boils down to the implementation of separate, unrelated measures that are mainly timed to coincide with anniversaries. Whenever this work is done 'by guesswork', rather than on a scientific basis, mistakes and omissions are inevitable.⁴²

Furthermore, the writer emphasized a theme in discussions involving the national question which had become prominent under Chernenko:

We also must step up the role of the social sciences in improving Party organizations' work in the area of nationality relations, and must enhance the effectiveness of scientific studies. After all, there is still very little research devoted to the problems of improving nationality relations at the present stage, the reasons for and specific features of nationalism, the social consequences of the internationalization of social life and the problems of national psychology.⁴³

In addition to the commentaries of academics, *Pravda* continued to weigh in with occasional editorials, as it did on December 28, 1986, warning that "our achievements [in the area of inter-ethnic relations] should not create the impression that national processes are without their problems. Life presents new tasks for the improvement of national relations under developing socialism."⁴⁴ Such, then, appeared to be the prevailing view of the Soviet leadership at the end of 1986 - "new tasks" were arising in respect to nationality affairs.

However, the pressure of events soon made it clear that whatever recognition there was of existing difficulties with respect to nationality policy, the real depth of these problems had not yet been fully apprehended. In particular, riots by Kazakh students in Alma Ata in late December 1986 protesting the dismissal of the republic's indigenous First Secretary D. A. Kunaev (a long-time Brezhnev crony), and his replacement by an ethnic Russian G. V. Kolbin, proved to be a real eye-opener for the Gorbachev leadership. While some newspaper

articles attributed these upheavals to the intrigues of corrupt local education officials exploiting the nationalistic feelings of students and inciting them to riot,⁴⁵ Gorbachev himself, speaking a month later at a CPSU plenary session in Moscow, drew what would seem to have been the obvious conclusion from all of this:

Our theoretical thinking is greatly in arrears to the actual practice of national relations...After all, it is a fact, comrades, that instead of conducting objective studies of real phenomena in the sphere of national relations and an analysis of actual social, economic and spiritual processes - which in their essence are very complicated - some of our social scientists have, for a long time, preferred to create 'panegyrical' tracts that sometimes seemed more like starry-eyed toasts than serious scientific research.⁴⁶

These remarks by Gorbachev explicitly legitimized *glasnost*' as it related to the national question and sanctioned a broader public discussion of failures and distortions which brought into clear focus the sort of constrained debates which had been going on within the academic community and political leadership for a number of years.

Indicative of this was a round-table discussion held in Moscow on March 18, 1987 under the joint auspices of the theoretical journal *Istoriya SSSR* and the Research Council on Nationality Problems of the Social Sciences Section of the Presidium of the USSR Academy of Sciences. A large number of Party officials and specialists from the central research institutes in Moscow, as well as scholars from Estonia, Georgia, Kirgizia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Belorussia and Moldavia took part. As defined by academician Bromlei, who appears to have chaired the proceedings, the purpose of this exercise was to delve into "long-ignored negative phenomena in the sphere of national relations in the USSR" and uncover "the real causes of these problems" with a view to

seeking "effective means of removing them."⁴⁷ Although long-standing issues related to the proper demarcation of powers between the centre and periphery, language policy, demographic problems, and internationalist educational work within the Soviet military received considerable attention, the charged subject of ethnic "fusion" arose once again as the focus of the most intense debate.

Two scholars, S. G. Kaltakchyan and M. N. Guboglo, took the position that the disappearance of nations should not be, in Kaltakchyan's words, "regarded as a tragedy."⁴⁸ Guboglo went somewhat farther:

If the experience accumulated by any nationality is useful and contributes to world civilization, every effort should be made to preserve it. If, on the other hand, a nationality's progress is impeded by its past experience, we hardly need to revitalize it, put it on the endangered list, and waste money on protective measures. In other words, there is no need to counter the real process by which parochialism and national narrow-mindedness are overcome. Lenin saw the process of the assimilation of nations under capitalism as a major form of historical progress, since it helped some nations overcome their backwardness.⁴⁹

Counterposing this perspective were S. A. Arutyunov and F. S. Donskoi. According to Arutyunov, it was incorrect to view the process of ethnic assimilation as progressive:

In general, the disappearance of any ethnos is a tragedy. We have a Red Book of endangered species of animals; how much more important it is to preserve ethnos. The concept of ethnic pluralism should have its communist version.⁵⁰

Appearing to take issue with the most basic of Leninist precepts concerning the national question; to wit, the ultimate goal of creating a de-nationalized communist culture, Arutyunov added that:

Soviet society has a stake in preserving the cultural heritage of all ethnos; de-ethnicization leads to

alienation from historical roots, which is inevitably followed by a growth in spiritual emptiness, a coarsening of behavioral norms, and the loss of important moral and ethical values. It is necessary to take a tactful attitude toward national features and to respect every people's ethnic etiquette and the objects of its national pride.⁵¹

For his part, Donskoi criticized those of his associates "who question the need to preserve the languages of small nationalities."⁵² Sounding a similar note to Arutyunov, he said that "the cultures and languages of all the country's nationalities, especially the small ones" must be preserved.⁵³ Western specialists such as Gail Lapidus were quick to pick up on these sorts of sentiments, pointing out that "what is novel in current Soviet discussions is the considerable value now attached to national distinctiveness and the notion that its disappearance would constitute an irreparable loss."⁵⁴ This, indeed, represented a substantial departure in Soviet thinking from even such "radical" or "progressive" ethnographers as Bromlei whose theories, at least outwardly, conformed to the traditional Leninist view that the long-term submergence of ethnic differences was a given.

In his speech of November 3, 1987, commemorating the 70th anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, Gorbachev pointed out that life in a multinational state such as the USSR meant that the national question was a factor impacting on all "socio-economic, cultural and legal" issues facing Soviet society.⁵⁵ Hence, the need to be "extremely attentive and tactful in everything that relates to peoples' national interests and feelings."⁵⁶ Furthermore, he disclosed the Party's intention to "more deeply analyze and discuss" nationality problems "in the near future."⁵⁷ It would seem, then, that the decision to convene a special Central Committee plenum on nationality affairs, formally

announced by Gorbachev in February 1988 (although no date was fixed for it at that time), was made as early as the fall of 1987.⁵⁸

Early 1988 saw Soviet writers again take the lead in applying *glasnost* to the national question. The occasion was a plenary session of the Board of the USSR Writers' Union held in Moscow at which a number of authors, Russian and non-Russian alike, denounced long-standing claims that the nationality issue was devoid of, in the words of V. V. Karpov, "real acute problems which have been hidden behind a shiny facade of official pronouncements."⁵⁹ The Belorussian, Nil Gilevich, decried what he termed "the groundless, unscientific nature and absurdity" of the fundamental Party tenet concerning the "drawing together" (*sblizhenie*) and "merging" (*sliyanie*) of nations.⁶⁰ Rather than bringing about the desired "socialist mass culture", this policy, he noted with some bitterness, had, in fact, led "to a single all-Union lack of culture."⁶¹ A Ukrainian writer, Roman Lubkivsky, launched a similar verbal attack, stating that the idea of *sblizhenie* had been "ruinous to our multinational culture,"⁶² while the Russian Sergei Batuzdin scorned the thought of "fusing" nations together and deplored the "pompous image" of the Russian "elder brother" which had for so long been part of the regime's nationality policy.⁶³

The harsh words above notwithstanding, perhaps the most profound indictment came from Rachev Ovanesyan, an Armenian writer, who suggested that the prized notion of "the Soviet people" as a "new historical community" was largely a myth. As he described it, there was "no 'Soviet people' in general but rather there are Soviet Russians, Soviet Uzbeks and Soviet Moldavians..."⁶⁴ The only time the designation "Soviet people" made sense, he maintained, was when one spoke of citizenship or

political orientation. Since "each of the Soviet peoples has its own history, culture, language, character and significantly distinctive traditions", the term was otherwise meaningless.⁶⁵ Ovanesyan's contention apparently aroused the ire of several other writers, such as the Russian Yuri Andreyev, who defended the claim that the nationalities of the Soviet Union were sufficiently bound together by cultural and spiritual bonds to the extent that a unified "Soviet people" did in fact exist.⁶⁶

Similar tensions within the political leadership at this point may account for the contradictory and vague nature of the Central Committee theses for the upcoming XIX Party Conference published in May 1988. While exhibiting, on the one hand, the new-found concern that "questions of relations between nationalities...require special attention" and "should be solved on a truly democratic basis in line with restructuring"; the theses nonetheless reiterated, on the other, the time-honored dogma that these questions could be resolved only by pursuing a political course aimed at the further "drawing together" of nations (*sblizhenie*) founded on "an internationalist ideology that is incompatible with nationalism and chauvinism."⁶⁷ Apparently as yet unable to formulate a consensus on how to approach emergent problems in the nationality sphere, as manifested during the early summer of 1988 by growing autonomist tendencies in the Baltic States and a budding conflict between Armenia and Azerbaidzhan over the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, the Gorbachev regime was issuing somewhat confused sounding pronouncements which continued to rely heavily on precedent. At the very least, however, more than a year of genuine *glasnost* in respect to the national question served to convince the Kremlin

leadership on the whole that the matter could not be denied a very high place on the agenda of *perestroika*.

The XIX CPSU All-Union Conference (June 1988)

As the Soviet historian Roy Medvedev has summarized it, the XIX CPSU Conference "was the equivalent of a special Party Congress."⁶⁸ As such, it represented a true watershed in the history of Soviet politics which gave real meaning to a number of henceforth vaguely defined terms associated with Gorbachev's *perestroika*; most notably the concept of "democratization" (*demokratizatsiya*). Although the question of a multi-party system was actually raised at the Conference,⁶⁹ it was clear from the speeches of Gorbachev and his supporters that they understood *demokratizatsiya* to mean the transformation of the Stalin-Brezhnev "administrative-command system" into a democratized one-party state in which the rule of law prevailed and the development of Soviet civil society largely independent of direct party-state control was encouraged.⁷⁰ While such a notion obviously remained far removed from "democracy" as understood in the West, it unquestionably implied a thoroughgoing transformation of Soviet society and perhaps even the repudiation of not only the country's Stalinist but, to a significant extent, Leninist past. Indeed, tangible steps in this direction were taken with the proposal by Gorbachev for the establishment of a new parliament with legitimate legislative authority - the Congress of Peoples' Deputies, the first elections to which were held in March 1989.

Given that the Conference took place in the midst of burgeoning nationality problems, the matter was a topic of serious concern.

However, while acknowledging "how tangled the problems of inter-ethnic relations"⁷¹ in the USSR had recently become, Gorbachev's keynote address made it clear that, perhaps as a result of ongoing conflict within the Politburo, his leadership had no clear strategy as yet for coming to grips with these difficulties. His most substantive proposal, as part of his scheme for creating the Congress of Peoples' Deputies, was to endow the Soviet of Nationalities with real power "to deal with all inter-ethnic problems in their entirety."⁷² This was coupled with equally vague calls to redefine the power-sharing relationship between the Union and the republics, as well as to more precisely demarcate the rights of Autonomous Republics "and other ethnic entities" within the constituent republics.⁷³

In the final analysis, Gorbachev's remarks were most revealing to the degree that they disclosed what has since clearly become his personal "bottom line" on the national question:

Practice has borne out the idea underlying the organization of our great Union: the pooling of efforts has made it possible for each of our nations and for our society as a whole to drastically accelerate their advancement and reach new heights of historical progress. For all the difficulties we have encountered, today we can state that this Union has stood the test of time. It continues to be the essential and decisive factor for the future advancement of all our peoples.⁷⁴

While being open to the general idea of granting the republics more autonomy in the economic and political spheres, Gorbachev was insisting that any reforms along this line take place "within the existing state structure of our Union."⁷⁵ It was thus evident that he was strongly inclined towards retaining the USSR as a multinational federation centred in Moscow with power devolving from there to the borderlands as

opposed to some sort of looser confederal or even commonwealth arrangement with real power residing in the republics.

The XIX Party Conference therefore concluded on a somewhat ambiguous note as far as the national question was concerned. On the one hand, it recognized the importance of inter-ethnic relations as a cardinal issue confronting *perestroika* and Gorbachev's comments betrayed a genuine concern about the course of events in this area on behalf of the leadership. On the other, however, the best the conference could do was adopt a blandly worded resolution which basically repeated Gorbachev's sketchy proposals for redefining Soviet federalism within the context of the traditional goal of consolidating the "unity of all Soviet peoples."⁷⁶ Moreover, the General Secretary's defence of the Union as having overall "stood the test of time" seemed to fly in the face of some of his own and others' more critical remarks and the course of events itself as nationalist movements continued to gather strength throughout the USSR.

The CPSU Draft Platform on Nationalities (August 1989)

The XIX Party Conference resolution had restated Gorbachev's call, first made in February 1988, for a special Central Committee plenum to deal with urgent nationality problems. However, presumably due, as Gregory Gleason suggests, to a "lack of agreement within the party over fundamental issues,"⁷⁷ the convening of this plenum was put off a number of times. The broad parameters of this disagreement were, as typically had been the case prior to *glasnost*, reflected in Soviet academic media. For example, the results of a series of scholarly discussions of

nationality issues published by *Sovetskaya etnografiya* in January 1989 revealed, in the words of one participant, "a wide polarization of views" on the policy implications of the national question.⁷⁹

As Steven Burg summarizes it, the debate covered a broad range of issues: the nature of economic relations between the republics; the scope of local economic autonomy and the division of responsibility for funding sociocultural development; the distribution of political authority between the federal government and the governments of the constituent units, including discussion of decentralization of sufficient scope to change the nature of the political order from a federation to a confederation; the definition and role of regions in social, economic and political terms, including consideration of elevating the status of regions that do not now enjoy republic status or reducing the role of republics entirely; and decoupling cultural, linguistic and other 'ethnic' rights from territorial status.⁸⁰ According to the journal's own summary of current discussions among the experts, the level of discord was "often extremely serious" with the only area of real agreement being "that the contemporary ethnic situation ought to be radically improved."⁸⁰ It suggested the existence of two different theoretical currents underlying proposals for bringing about the desired improvement.

The first of these, described as "going back to the old official theory of nations", stressed political and ideological continuity as the necessary pre-condition for restructuring in this sphere. It maintained that the Leninist nationality policy of the Soviet state had always been "basically correct" and had "brought about incontestable success." Seen from this point of view, the problems currently being experienced were

largely the result of "occasional mistakes" rooted in deviations from Leninist principles. While the need to radically improve the current state of nationality affairs was acknowledged, the interests of the international or supranational had strategic priority over strictly national concerns, and the "centralist federalist" political structure of the USSR was to remain unaltered. In short, "the existing system of ethnic relations should be made more efficient rather than radically changed."⁸¹

Counterposing this "centralist federalist" perspective was one described as "heterogeneous" and "critical in character...oriented towards rejecting old stereotypes." The journal noted that this current contained within itself several trends which were at some variance concerning "different ways of decentralizing the state in various spheres" and "strengthening the principles of federalism and peoples' rights." There were even "some radically-minded persons" who favored "transforming the centralist state into a confederation of independent states." Inasmuch as it approached the task of improving relations between nationalities "from a pragmatic viewpoint" which "stressed real trends in social and ethnic development rather than theoretical tenets", this second current was described as being "characterized by a certain 'relativism'" which held out the hope of elaborating "a new theory of ethnic relations under socialism refined from biased interpretations and dogmatism."⁸² Although the *Sovetskaya etnografiya* commentary seemed to favor this latter "relativist" approach, the impression was left that the intellectual and political struggle between the proponents of these contending views was acute.

This sort of discord was in evidence at the Central Committee plenum on nationality issues itself which was finally held in September 1989. As Burg describes it, the meeting revealed "deep divisions in the party but did nothing to resolve them."⁸³ Consequently, the CPSU Draft Platform which emerged, the Gorbachev leadership's "first attempt since assuming power in 1985 to formulate a coherent approach to nationality issues" represented an effort "to reconcile inherently inconsistent positions."⁸⁴ This was evident to the degree that the document appeared to be an uneasy compromise between the "centralist federalist" and "relativist" positions outlined above.

The "centralist federalist" outlook was apparent to the extent that the Platform attributed current strains in Soviet inter-national relations largely to Stalinist distortions of the Leninist principle of "democratic centralism." These were embodied in the fact that Lenin's original nationality policy which, based on his idea of "national self-determination" as outlined in chapter one, stressed the sovereignty and equality of all the republics of the USSR, gave them broad constitutional authority for administering their own affairs, and encouraged the "flowering" of nations, was usurped by Stalin's insistence on rigid centralization, command methods of management, and cultural intolerance. As a consequence, "the demarcation between the jurisdiction of the Union and that of the republics that was codified in the 1924 Constitution was gradually eroded, and the sovereignty of the republics became in large part merely pro forma."⁸⁵ The Party's paramount obligation was therefore to restore "the Leninist principle of self-determination in its true sense" which meant ensuring "the satisfaction of the diverse requirements of all Soviet nations" through

a renewed federation "filled with real political and economic content."⁸⁶ In typically "centralist federalist" tradition, important segments of the Platform emphasized the superior value of the international over the national by noting that a policy of renewing Soviet federalism was intended "to build up and augment the internationalist unity of socialist society and to consolidate the multinational Soviet state."⁸⁷ In keeping with this aim, the actions of "irresponsible political intriguers" and "national careerists" seeking to "exploit the ideas and slogans of renewal" in the service of narrow national aims were to be "rebuffed", remarks which implied a continuing role for repression in the rejuvenated Union.⁸⁸

However, a more critical "relativist" viewpoint was also perceptible within the Draft Platform inasmuch as other parts of the document attributed current problems in relations between nationalities to factors apart from simple Stalinist distortions of Leninist principles and showed considerably more concern for national sensitivities. Most significantly, there was an acknowledgement of the fact that national processes in the USSR did not take place in a vacuum and were deeply affected by global trends. Thus, "the contradiction, found throughout the world in the second half of the 20th century... between strivings for independence and the need to deepen integration ties", which was currently making itself felt in the Soviet Union as well, needed to be more thoroughly analyzed and taken into account in making future policy.⁸⁹ Moreover, "many acute problems of the present day" were blamed on the centre's disregard for "the social and ecological consequences" of economic and industrial development in national areas. Special mention was also made of "the demographic,

economic and social processes that have taken place in recent decades" which had "substantially changed the ratio between the indigenous population and the population that has settled in these areas as a result of migration, something that has given rise to apprehensions about the preservation of national distinctiveness."⁸⁰

The "relativist" component of the Platform was further manifested in denunciations of "grandiloquent talk about unity that is divorced from reality and lectures, discussions and articles in the press that are not backed up by convincing arguments."⁸¹ Also denounced were "theoretical directives calling for the accelerated drawing together of nations and assertions about the supposedly final solvability of the nationalities question."⁸² Reflecting the "relativist" inclination to substantially "de-ideologize" nationality affairs and assess problems in this sphere from a pragmatic perspective, the Platform stressed several times the need to "free theoretical thought from a dogmatic approach to the nationalities question."⁸³ The document concluded that there were "no recipes for its solution" and could be none.⁸⁴ Therefore, nationality policy henceforth required "constant creativity and the ability to respond promptly to problems that arise in the sphere of relations between nationalities" with a view to finding "effective mechanisms for resolving conflict situations."⁸⁵ This sort of sentiment comprised a certain departure in Soviet thinking on the national question which was subsequently picked up on by many Western specialists; namely, the debunking of the idea that the issue could be "solved" finally and absolutely and its replacement by a concern that means be found by which inevitable difficulties in this area could be managed in a non-repressive fashion.⁸⁶

The collision between the "central federalist" and "relativist" points of view embodied in the Draft Platform, which was subsequently approved by the Central Committee in an essentially unaltered fashion, betrayed, as it did within the specialist literature, a divided Party leadership unable to reach agreement on the specifics of a restructured approach to nationalities problems. Consequently, analysts such as Burg point out that official policy has since "remained internally inconsistent."⁹⁷ Moscow's response to nationalist demands throughout the country has been vacillating between relative tolerance, as was initially the case in the Baltics, and various forms of economic and military coercion up to and including the use of deadly force, first in the Transcaucasus and Central Asia, and most recently in Latvia and Lithuania.

Recent Developments

The past year has seen the nationalities crisis in the USSR deepen still further. Gorbachev was unable to forestall the fragmentation of the CPSU itself which began in January 1990 with the "secession" of the Lithuanian Communist Party. This precedent has since been followed by a number of other republican Communist Parties. In March, the Kremlin, despite Gorbachev's personal assurance that force would not be used, resorted to economic blockade and crude forms of military intimidation in response to Lithuania's unilateral declaration of independence from the Soviet Union. This episode yet again spoke of a leadership confused and divided over how to deal with the challenge of resurgent ethnonationalism within the USSR.

The XXVIII CPSU Congress in July 1990 took place against the backdrop of all but one of the fifteen constituent republics having declared some form of political sovereignty. Once more stating the obvious, Gorbachev "self-critically" admitted that he and his colleagues had originally underestimated the extent of nationality problems with the result that they "turned out to be unprepared for what happened when extremely serious problems that had long been accumulating behind a facade of apparent well-being exploded and burst out into the open."⁹⁹ He repeated the need for a radical restructuring of the Soviet federation into what he termed "a real Union of sovereign states" but, in keeping with his previous statements on the national question, made no specific proposals in this direction.⁹⁹ However, he did indicate that work was presently under way on a new "Union Treaty" (*Soyuznyi dogovor*) which would "encompass the entire set of questions relating to the fundamental transformation of our multinational state."¹⁰⁰ Apparently, Gorbachev saw some reason for optimism that this new Union Treaty, once worked out in conjunction with the republics, would be the framework by which the USSR could be preserved as an integral "centralist federalist" state.

This goal was made clear in the outline of a new CPSU Program adopted at the Congress which, while declaring that the Party would "pursue a line aimed at strengthening the sovereignty of the Union republics", emphasized the importance of "preserving the integrity of a renewed Union as a dynamic multinational state", and reiterated, in true Leninist spirit, the superior value of "internationalist unity among all nations and nationalities in the country."¹⁰¹ However, the updated Program also represented a substantial concession to the "relativist"

position, and a radical break with Leninism, in that it dispensed with any reference to the supposed "drawing together" (*sblizhenie*) of nations under socialism, much less the attainment of their "complete unity" (*polnoe edinstvo*) or "fusion" (*sliyanie*) at some point in the remote historical future. Hence, while the "centralist federalists" within the leadership, headed by Gorbachev himself, were grimly clinging to the defence of Leninist principles in their definition of what should constitute restructuring in the area of ethnic relations, the course of recent events had forced them towards a more pragmatic "relativist" perspective at least to the point that they were prepared to concede the historical obsolescence of *sblizhenie*.

In the wake of the XXVIII Congress, the debate over restructuring the Soviet federation came to a head in the form of two competing plans for overseeing the transition of the country's economy to a market footing as the basis for the forthcoming Union Treaty. Both were presented to the USSR Supreme Soviet in early September. The first, initially co-sponsored by Gorbachev and the radical President of the Russian Republic, B. N. Yeltsin, and drawn up under the stewardship of the prominent economist Stanislav Shatalin, envisioned the transformation, over a period of 500 days, of the USSR into, what Ed Hewett describes as "a voluntary economic union, much along the lines of the European Community."¹⁰² Being based on what the Shatalin working group termed "respect for the declarations of sovereignty adopted by the republics," all power was to rest with the republics who would grant to the centre only such limited responsibilities as they collectively deemed fit (such as national defence and internal security).¹⁰³ Those republics which did not wish to become full-fledged partners in the new

Union could apply for the status of an "associate" member, a formula which held out the possibility of reconciling the demands of the Baltic Republics for independence with the centre's desire to maintain the integrity of the Soviet Union.¹⁰⁴

Counterposing the Shatalin Plan was a blueprint worked out under the auspices of the USSR Council of Ministers led by Prime Minister Nikolai Ryzhkov. Described by Ryzhkov in somewhat self-contradictory fashion as a "moderate-radical" program, this plan shared a certain amount in common with Shatalin's scheme in terms of the economic nuts and bolts involved in moving towards a market economy in the Soviet Union. However, there was a profound difference as regarded the actual shape of the reformed Union itself. While ostensibly recognizing "the sovereignty of the Union republics, their equality and economic independence",¹⁰⁵ Ryzhkov explicitly rejected Shatalin's notion of "an economic union of states or, as some are saying, countries on the principle of the European Community."¹⁰⁶ No doubt reflecting Gorbachev's personal view in this regard, Ryzhkov claimed that such a transformation "would mean the elimination of the USSR as a unified state", and declared that his government would not accept reform on a confederal basis.¹⁰⁷ Although prepared to devolve considerably more powers to the republics, the Soviet Prime Minister stubbornly defended the federal principle whereby the centre remained the ultimate arbiter of authority.

Gorbachev himself initially appeared to support significant elements of the Shatalin Plan at least as they pertained to creating a market economy in the USSR. However, he clearly balked at the idea of transforming the country into a confederation. The consequence of this

was an awkward attempt to merge the economic principles of Shatalin's program into the federalist framework of the Ryzhkov proposal. Gorbachev presented this "Presidential Plan" to the Supreme Soviet on October 16 of last year. Drawn up by one of his closest associates, the economist Abel Aganbegyan, it was only about one-third the length of Shatalin's original blueprint and was devoid of specifics on virtually all key points. As Hewett therefore observes, Gorbachev's "Presidential Plan" was "not so much a plan as...a statement of intent so general as to be unobjectionable to the various factions in the debate."¹⁰⁸ Nonetheless, the President's refusal to explicitly endorse the confederal component of the Shatalin Plan strained even further relations between Moscow and the republics. An opportunity to demonstrate a clear commitment to a new beginning on the part of the central government which took into account existing realities was lost with the result that the process of political and economic disintegration within the USSR accelerated as most of the republics, including the Russian Federation, announced their intention to proceed independently with some variation of the "500 Day" concept.

The shelving of Shatalin's project ensured that the Draft Union Treaty finally presented to the Supreme Soviet in November 1990, following a rancorous public debate among deputies which had gone on for several months and exposed again "a wide range of opinions...on the question of the specific forms of organizing the new Union,"¹⁰⁹ was a virtual non-starter as far as a number of the republics were concerned. Four of them - the three Baltic States and Georgia - had previously indicated that they had no intention of signing the new treaty in any event while Armenia and Moldavia now seem unlikely to do so. Other

republics which may be amenable to some form of reconstituted Union, including the Slavic core of Russia and Ukraine, have rejected what they perceive as the "centralist federalist" bias of Gorbachev's draft which insists on defining the new "Union of Sovereign Soviet Republics" as a "sovereign federal state" whereby the centre, apart from being responsible for the country's defence and foreign policy, determines "in conjunction with the republics" the basic contours of economic strategy, manages the nation's transportation and telecommunication grid, and establishes the basic principles of social policy and health care.¹¹⁰ At the present time, it appears as if Moscow can count on only four republics - Kazakhstan, Tadzhikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan- to sign the Union Treaty in its current form.¹¹¹ Furthermore, a planned nation-wide referendum on the question of the federation's future to be held on March 17 has already been hamstrung by the refusal of a number of republics (i.e., the Baltics) to take part.¹¹²

This disquieting state of affairs, as well as continuing internecine ethnic strife particularly in the Transcaucasus and Central Asia, has deepened the sense of crisis within the Soviet Union. Some commentators, including Gorbachev himself, have, since the fall of 1990, been warning of the possible "Lebanonization" of the country, a prospect about which the rest of the world can hardly be enthusiastic.¹¹³ At the same time, however, certain of Gorbachev's radical critics point out that Moscow's refusal to acknowledge that the USSR has, for all intents and purposes, already collapsed as a union state, and thereby initiate restructuring on the basis of the republics' declarations of sovereignty (as the Shatalin Plan essentially proposed), is only intensifying dangerous centrifugal tendencies which are making "Lebanonization" more

likely.¹¹⁴ The Soviet President's recent acquiescence in the renewed use of deadly military force to thwart the autonomist aspirations of the Baltic peoples, in keeping with what is clearly his strongly-held personal view against allowing the dissolution of the Union as it is currently structured,¹¹⁵ can only accelerate this process. Given the fact that, according to one writer, "there are virtually no mutually agreed-upon borders between republics" in the USSR,¹¹⁶ the recommendation of another that thought now be given "to the need to set up multinational armed forces (like the UN peacekeeping forces)...with the aim of preventing the development of conflicts between nationalities" as the current Union inevitably continues to disintegrate may be well founded.¹¹⁷

Summary

The Gorbachev leadership inherited a legacy of dissonance with respect to nationality policy which stretches back as far as the XX CPSU Congress in February 1956. The policies of *glasnost'* and *demokratizatsiya* have given vent to this conflict in the form of the "centralist federalist" versus "relativist" disputes outlined in this chapter, the basic contours of which can be discerned in some of the academic literature prior to 1985. While the debate over how to restructure (or dissolve) the Soviet federation is obviously far from concluded, the discussions of the past several years have nonetheless led to some radical departures from traditional Soviet thinking on the national question; most notably, dispensing with the notion that this is an issue which can be "resolved" finally and absolutely, and repudiating the

fundamental Leninist theses concerning the "drawing together" (*sblizhenie*) and "fusion" (*sliyanie*) of nations.

This legacy of discord notwithstanding however, Western analysts such as Steven Burg are justified in arguing that Gorbachev's approach to nationality problems in the USSR has failed. Personally committed to something like the "centralist federalist" point of view, the Soviet President has been unwilling to, as Burg puts it, "carry *perestroika* through to its logical conclusion and [concede] to the demands for autonomy and democracy of well-organized and widely supported national movements in the republics."¹¹⁸ As a result, Gorbachev has substantially lost the mass support needed to legitimize his personal authority and proceed with his reform program. This has left him with little alternative but to increasingly rely on conservative elements within the CPSU, as well as the military and state security apparatus, with whom he shares, in any event, a determination to prevent the dissolution of the USSR as a unified state formation centred in Moscow. The fact that, as the recent military crackdown in the Baltics makes clear, the "Brezhnev Doctrine" continues to apply within the USSR puts in mortal peril the future of democratic reform there.

Notes

¹ M. S. Gorbachev, "On the Party's Nationalities Policy Under Present-Day Conditions", *Pravda*, September 20, 1989, pp. 2-3, in *CDSP*, Vol. XLI, No. 38, p. 5.

² A. Migranyan, "Dolgi put' k evropeiskomu domu" [The Long Road to a European Home], *Novyi mir* [New World], No. 7, July 1989, p. 173.

³ In many ways this speculating and prognosticating was reminiscent of that which went on in the West during November 1982 when Yuri Andropov

became General Secretary following the death of Leonid Brezhnev and assumed ridiculous proportions. The image of Andropov which emerged at that time, fed by KGB disinformation, was that of a pseudo-liberal intellectual, conversant in perhaps more than one foreign language, and possessing a taste for Western liqueurs and Jacqueline Susann novels. The more astute Western accounts of Andropov's rise to power since have fully exposed how fraudulent this image was.

⁴ Edward A. Hewett of the Brookings Institute in Washington D.C. as quoted in Russell Watson and Robert Cullen, "Moscow's New Generation: Changing The Guard", *Newsweek*, March 25, 1985, p. 27.

⁵ John Kohan, "Ending an Era of Drift", *Time*, March 25, 1985, p. 10.

⁶ James Kelly, "Glints of Steel Behind the Smile", *ibid.*, p. 21.

⁷ Some Western Sovietologists were relatively optimistic that Gorbachev understood the need for radical reform in the Soviet economy. For example, Konstantin Simis, "The Gorbachev Generation", *Foreign Policy*, No. 59, Summer 1985, p. 17, suggested that "one cannot exclude the possibility that Gorbachev will embark on a strategy similar to V. I. Lenin's New Economic Policy (NEP) of 1921." Archie Brown, "Change in the Soviet Union", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 64, No. 5, Summer 1986, p. 1057, argued that even if Gorbachev was not disposed towards some kind of "market socialism", he may still have believed that "the Soviet Union has not yet gone far enough in achieving the optimal balance between [central planning] and market forces." Other experts were less convinced that the new General Secretary was indeed a radical reformer. Seweryn Bialer and Joan Affrica, "The Genesis of Gorbachev's World", *Foreign Affairs: America and the World 1985*, Vol. 64, No. 3, p. 616, argued that Gorbachev likely saw the shortcomings of the Soviet system as resultant of human failure, and thus believed that "dynamic leadership...can produce rapid and significant results without resorting to structural change." Zhores Medvedev, *Gorbachev* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1986), p. 245, offered the opinion that, although Gorbachev may not have at that time made his final choice, the indications were that he preferred "small modifications, administrative methods, and economic adjustments to structural reforms."

⁸ M. S. Gorbachev, *Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987), p. 35.

⁹ Taras Kuzio, "Nationality Problems, Nationalism and State Policy in the USSR 1985-1990", *Soviet Nationality Survey*, Vol. VI, No. 11-12, p.1, and Nahaylo, p. 86.

¹⁰ As cited in *ibid.*, p. 88.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² See, for example, A. Kapto (Secretary of the Ukrainian Communist Party Central Committee), "Questions of Theory: The Class Content of Internationalism and Patriotism", *Pravda*, August 23, 1985, pp. 2-3, in *COSP*, Vol. XXXVII, No.

¹³ E. Bagamorov, "Questions of Theory: Toward the 27th CPSU Congress - The Nature of the Interaction of Class and National Relations", *Pravda*, December 20, 1985, pp. 2-3, *ibid.*, No. 51, p. 8.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ See Ts. A. Stepanyan, "Kommunisticheskaya formatsiya - vysshaya stupen' obshchestvenno razvitiya" [The Communist Structure - The Highest Stage of Social Development], *Voprosy filosofii*, No. 2, 1986, pp. 63-75, and E. V. Tadevosyan, "Problemyi sotsial'novo i internatsional'novo edinstva sovetskogo naroda" [Problems of the Social and International Unity of the Soviet People], *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, No. 2, 1986, pp. 64-69. Tadevosyan comes across as the more forceful of the two by using Brezhnevian language such as the "further cohesion of the Soviet people" (*dal'neishee splochenie sovetskogo naroda*) and criticizing those of his academic colleagues who had "in recent years" called into question the correctness (*pravil'nost'*) of the Leninist thesis concerning the "inevitability" (*neizbezhnost'*) of the future "fusion" of nations.

²⁰ As cited in Nahaylo, p. 89.

²¹ M. S. Gorbachev, "Increase the Intellectual Potential of Restructuring", *Pravda*, January 8, 1989, pp. 1-4, in *CDSP*, Vol. XLI, No. 1, p. 7.

²² M. S. Gorbachev, "The Political Report of the CPSU Central Committee to the 27th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union", *Pravda*, February 26, 1986, pp. 2-10, *ibid.*, Vol. XXXVIII, No. 8, p. 23.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ See "Speech by Comrade K. Makhamov, First Secretary of the Tadzhikistan Communist Party Central Committee", *Pravda*, March 1, 1986, p. 4, *ibid.*, No. 10, p. 15. In contrast to Gorbachev, Makhamov had something to offer in the way of new ideas for dealing with nationality problems by calling for the creation of "appropriate subdivisions within the structure of the CPSU Central Committee's apparatus that would co-ordinate the whole complex of questions in this area."

²⁷ See "Speech by Comrade M. Yu. Usupov, First Secretary of the Dagestan Province Party Committee", *Pravda*, March 5, 1986, p. 7, *ibid.*, No. 15, p. 15.

²⁸ See the editorial "On the Basic Guidelines of the USSR's Domestic and Foreign Policy", *Pravda*, May 31, 1989, pp. 1-3, *ibid.*, Vol. XLI, No. 25, p. 8.

²⁹ As Roy Medvedev appropriately argues: "It is not in the least bit true that [current nationality problems] were created by perestroika and democratization. They had existed earlier. Sooner or later they would have emerged under any regime. And it was better to face them now, for the longer they lasted, the harder they would be to settle." See Roy Medvedev and Giulietto Chiesa, *Time of Change: An Insider's View of Russia's Transformation*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1990, p. 247.

³⁰ As reported by Nahaylo, p. 94.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Yu. Bromlei, "Sovershenstvovanie natsional'nykh otnoshenii v SSSR" [Perfecting National Relations in the USSR], *Kommunist*, No. 8, June 1986, p. 86.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ As reported by Nahaylo, p. 95.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Chingiz Aitmatov, "The Price is Life - A Work Desk Interview", *Literaturnaya gazeta*, August 13, 1986, p. 4, in *CDSP*, Vol. XXXVIII, No. 49, p. 4.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ A. Dashdamirov, "Questions of Theory: The Dynamics and Problems of Nationality Relations", *Pravda*, September 26, 1986, pp. 2-3, *ibid.*, No. 39, p. 5.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁴⁴ See "In a Single Family", *Pravda*, December 28, 1986, p. 1, *ibid.*, No. 52, p. 16. It is interesting to note the use of the term "developing socialism" (*razvivayushii sotsializm*) as opposed to the Brezhnevian concept of "developed socialism" (*razvitoi sotsializm*).

This seemed to imply a scaling down in terms of official descriptions of the current stage of Soviet historical progress and even could be interpreted as suggesting that a true socialist society did not yet exist in the USSR.

⁴⁶ For example, see the following editorials: "Facts, Problems and Opinions: What Happened in Alma Ata", *Literaturnaya gazeta*, January 1, 1987, p. 10, *ibid.*, Vol. XXXIX, No. 1, p. 4; "A Bitter Lesson - It Should Be Learned by Kazakhstan's Young Communist League Aktiv and Those Engaged in the Upbringing of Young People", *Komsomol'skaya Pravda*, January 10, 1987, p. 1, *ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

⁴⁸ M. S. Gorbachev, "On Restructuring and the Party's Personnel Policy", *Pravda*, January 28, 1987, pp. 1-5, *ibid.*, No. 5, p. 12.

⁴⁷ See "Round Table Discussion: National Processes in the USSR - Results, Trends and Problems", *Istoriya SSSR*, No. 6, November-December 1987, pp. 50-120, *ibid.* Vol. XL, No. 9, p. 11.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Lapidus, p. 103.

⁵⁵ Gorbachev, *Oktyabr' i perestroika*, p. 4.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ As Gorbachev told the CPSU Central Committee on February 18, 1988: "...we must examine nationalities policy at the present stage in a very thorough way. And along all lines - both in theory and in practice. This is an extremely important, vital question of our society. I think that we should devote a plenary session of the Central Committee to the problems of nationalities policy." See M. S. Gorbachev, "Provide an Ideology of Renewal for Revolutionary Restructuring", *Pravda*, February 19, 1988, pp. 1-3, in *CDSP*, Vol. XL, No. 7, p. 6.

⁵⁹ V. V. Karpov, "Improving Nationality Relations, Restructuring, and the Tasks of Soviet Literature", *Literaturnaya gazeta*, No. 10, March 9, 1988, pp. 2-3, *ibid.*, No. , p. 5.

⁶⁰ See "Speech by Nil Gilevich (Belorussia)", *ibid.*, p. 6.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² See "Speech by Roman Lubkivsky (Ukraine)", *ibid.*

⁶³ See "Speech by Sergei Batuzdin (Moscow)", *ibid.*

⁶⁴ See "Speech by Rachy Ovanesyan (Armenia)", *ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁶⁶ See "Speech by Yuri Andreyev", *ibid.*, pp. 7;28.

⁶⁷ See "The CPSU Central Committee Theses for the 19th All-Union Party Conference", *Pravda*, May 27, 1988, pp. 1-3, *ibid.*, No. 21, p. 8.

⁶⁸ Medvedev, *Time of Change*, p. 217.

⁶⁹ The economist Leonid Abalkin broached this subject at least to the extent that he posed the rhetorical question as to whether the proposed economic reforms could realistically be carried out within the context of a one-party system. See "Rech' tovarishcha Abalkina L. I." [Comrade L. I. Abalkin's Speech], *Izvestiya*, June 30, 1988, p. 4.

⁷⁰ The precedent for Gorbachev's *demokratizatsiya* could be found within the tradition of Bolshevism itself, particularly in the person of Nikolai Bukharin who advanced the idea of a democratized one-party state based on the rule of law in the 1920s, and whose reformist legacy subsequently served as the inspiration for "democratizers" throughout the Communist world. For more on Bukharin's ideas, see Stephen F. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography 1888-1938* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).

⁷¹ M. S. Gorbachev, "O khode realizatsii reshenii XXVII syezda KPSS i zadachakh po uglubleniyu perestroiki" [On Progress in Implementing the Decisions of the XXVII CPSU Congress and the Tasks of Deepening Perestroika], *Izvestiya*, June 29, 1988, p. 5.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ See "On Relations Between Nationalities", *Pravda*, July 5, 1988, p. 3, in *CDSF*, Vol. XL, No. 37, p.22.

⁷⁷ Gregory Gleason, "Lenin, Gorbachev, and 'National Statehood': Can Leninism Countenance the New Soviet Federal Order," *Studies in Soviet Thought*, Vol. 40, Nos. 1,2,&3, August/September/November 1990, p. 151.

⁷⁸ As cited in Steven Burg, "The Soviet Union's Nationalities Question", *Current History*, October 1989, p. 361.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* Burg is summarizing the results of this discussion published under the heading "Navstrechu Plenumu TsK KPSS po sovershenstvovaniyu mezhnatsional'nyikh otnoshenii v SSSR" [Towards the Plenum on Perfecting International Relations in the USSR], *Sovetskaya etnografiya*, No. 1, January-February 1989, pp. 3-90.

⁸⁰ *Sovetskaya etnografiya*, p. 175

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Burg, p. 321.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ See "The Party's Nationalities Policy in Today's Conditions (CPSU Platform)", *Pravda*, August 17, 1989, pp. 1-2, in *CDSP*, Vol. XLI, No. 33, p. 3.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 7; 3-4.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ As an example, Lapidus, p. 102 writes that: "For several decades Soviet policy was based on the expectation that modernization and socialism would automatically erode national identities and loyalties and that a new multinational community, based on the equality, prosperity, harmony and increasing uniformity of all its members, would be the outcome. Such illusions have largely vanished, and in Soviet rhetoric the focus on 'solving' the nationalities question has been replaced with a concern over 'managing' it."

⁹⁷ Burg, "The European Republics of the Soviet Union", p. 321.

⁹⁸ M. S. Gorbachev, "Advance Further Along the Path of Restructuring - The Political Report of the CPSU Central Committee to the 28th CPSU

Congress and the Party's Tasks", *Pravda*, July 3, 1990, pp. 2-4, in *CDSP*, Vol. XLII, No. 27, p. 8.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ See "Toward a Humane, Democratic Socialism - Program Statement of the 28th CPSU Congress", *Pravda*, July 15, 1990, pp. 1;3, *ibid.*, No. 37, p. 19.

¹⁰² Ed A. Hewett, "The New Soviet Plan", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 69, No. 5, Winter 1990-91, p. 152.

¹⁰³ See "Man, Freedom and the Market - *Izvestiya* Acquaints Readers With the Basic Ideas of the Program Worked Out by a Group Under the Leadership of Academician S. S. Shatalin", *Izvestiya*, September 4, 1990, pp. 1;3., in *CDSP*, Vol. XLII, No. 35, pp. 7-8.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁰⁵ See "The Fourth Session of the USSR Supreme Soviet: Report by N. I. Ryzhkov", *Izvestiya*, September 11, 1990, pp. 1;3, *ibid.*, No. 37, p. 1.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ Hewett, p. 150.

¹⁰⁹ See "The Path to a Union Treaty - Summary of R. N. Nishanov's Report", *Izvestiya*, September 26, 1990, p. 2, in *CDSP*, Vol. XLII, No. 40, p. 2.

¹¹⁰ See "Draft: Union Treaty", *Pravda*, November 24, 1990, p. 3, in *ibid.*, No. 47, p. 15. Apparently, three new names were considered for the revamped Union - the Union of Sovereign Socialist States; the Union of Sovereign Soviet Republics; and, the most radical of all, the Euro-Asian Union of Republics. In another case of vacillation by the centre, it has since been decided to retain the former designation - the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

¹¹¹ See *The Economist*, November 24, 1990, p. 48.

¹¹² If Gorbachev cynically believes that this referendum will without a doubt carry because he can count on the preponderant Russian population of the country, certainly within the R.S.F.S.R. itself, to vote in favor of retaining the USSR, he may be in for yet another rude surprise. Citing the reformist newspaper *Argumenti i fakti* [Arguments and Facts], No. 21, May 26-June 1, 1990, Richard Pipes, "The Soviet Union Adrift", *Foreign Affairs: America and the World 1990/91*, Vol. 70, No. 1, p.76, notes that: "Opinion surveys conducted in May 1990 show that 43 percent of the inhabitants of the Russian republic wished to secede from the union. Contrary to widely held beliefs in Washington, a high proportion

of Great Russians is consistently willing to concede independence to the other republics. This tolerance of separatism can be explained by a widespread feeling that the R.S.F.S.R., which has half the union's population but accounts for 70 percent of its industrial output and 80 percent of its exports, would be better off on its own."

¹¹³ As Gorbachev told a plenary session of the CPSU Central Committee in October 1990: "The Communists must do everything in their power to prevent 'Lebanonization' from happening in our country." See "Opening Address by M. S. Gorbachev", *Pravda*, October 9, 1990, pp. 1-2, in *CDSP*, Vol. XLII, No. 41, p. 4. See also the pessimistic assessment by A. Migranyan, "Social Forecast: An Indissoluble Union? - On the Prospects of the Soviet State System", *Izvestiya*, September 20, 1990, p. 3, *ibid.*, No. 39, pp. 1-4.

¹¹⁴ See, for example, M. Berger, "Sosenki Without The Pines - Which Economic Program Will Be Presented to the USSR Supreme Soviet for Consideration?", *Izvestiya*, August 27, 1990, p. 3, *ibid.*, No. 35, pp. 1-4.

¹¹⁵ As Gorbachev told the USSR Supreme Soviet last November in announcing his plans for revamping the government and strengthening the executive powers of the presidency: "Voices were heard yesterday, with and without references to Lenin, saying: First delimit functions, then unify. If what is meant by this is...a division of jurisdiction and powers and a qualitative renewal of the entire system of ties, both vertically and horizontally, I think that all of us and I personally will support this. But I am resolutely against fragmenting the state, against redrawing territorial boundaries and destroying centuries-old ties between peoples. Now I think it is easier for me to say: From our own bitter experience, experience washed in the blood of our people, we see that we will not be able to separate. Therefore, we should not embark on that path." See "The President Proposes His Program - Speech by M. S. Gorbachev at the Session of the USSR Supreme Soviet on November 17, 1990", *Pravda*, November 18, 1990, p. 1, *ibid.*, No. 46, p.11.

¹¹⁶ Berger, p. 4.

¹¹⁷ Migranyan, p. 4.

¹¹⁸ Burg, "The European Republics of the Soviet Union", p. 321.

Conclusion

There must be unity in the struggle against the yoke of capital and for the dictatorship of the proletariat, and there should be no parting of the ways among Communists on the question of national frontiers, or whether there should be a federal or some other tie between the states. Among the Bolsheviks there are advocates of complete independence for the Ukraine, advocates of a more or less close federal tie, and advocates of the complete amalgamation of the Ukraine with Russia. There must be no differences over these questions.¹

V. I. Lenin

The principal aim of this analysis has been to call into question what seems to be the predominant tendency among Western scholars to view the national question prior to Mikhail Gorbachev, as in the words of one, "politically dormant",² or, at most, a source of pro forma debate among Soviet leaders related merely to determining the proper timetable according to which, in keeping with Marxist-Leninist theory, the "drawing together" (*sblizhenie*) and final "fusion" (*sliyanie*) of nations was taking place. On the contrary, it is argued that, if one disregards the self-congratulatory assertions frequently heard during the Brezhnev years to the effect that the national question had been finally and absolutely "resolved", evidence of the issue as a lively source of discord within the Soviet leadership and academic community is not hard to find. Indeed, a large volume of it exists in a variety of Soviet

media available either in Russian (as well as other languages of the USSR) or in English translation.

This material betrays substantial disagreement over core issues of nationality policy connected to what was described in chapter two as the key problem of "methodology"; that is, defining the "laws of development" (*zakonomernosti*) governing nations within the USSR which, in turn, points to the feasibility of certain policy choices over others. As Gregory Gleason suggests, "important practical differences are attached to the various conceptual categories that are used in political discourse regarding inter-ethnic relations",³ and inter-related debates concerning the contradictory dialectic of *rastsvet* ("flowering") and *sblizhenie* ("drawing together") as well as the fate of Soviet federalism which have spanned the entire post-Stalin era point to rather profound disagreement within the regime over defining current stages of national relations and consequently what strategy was most advisable. This justifies the criticism heard from some Soviet scholars in the early-to-mid 1980s, as quoted in chapter four, that there has been no consensus over the years within both the leadership and academic community as to the very "essence" of the national question under socialism.

The consequences of the regime's inability even to formulate a coherent definition of what comprised the national question under socialism were profound. In the words of Vahakn Dadrian, "the sustained absence of a clear-cut policy and the protracted suspension of the solution of the problem" provided a vacuum in which the intelligentsia of various nationalities were able to promote national interests and concerns.⁴ Hence, while it is true that Gorbachev's democratization and

glasnost' have legitimized the venting of long-standing national grievances within Soviet society, these reforms only brought to the surface more quickly than would have otherwise been the case a latent crisis of ethnonationalism in the USSR which had been building for years as both the Khrushchev and Brezhnev leaderships proved incapable of elaborating a flexible and modern nationality policy free of ideological dogma. This in spite of the fact that, as the depth of the political and intellectual debate itself showed, considerable import was attached by both these regimes to nationality affairs.

Thus, Gorbachev's lack of preparedness to deal with resurgent ethnonationalism should not be surprising given that there has been no clearly formulated and functional "party line" on the national question throughout the whole of the post-Stalin era. High-sounding talk about having "resolved" the issue, particularly under Brezhnev as alluded to earlier, was less evidence of firm conviction than it was the rhetorical utterances of a conservative and divided leadership uncertain of what to do in the face of persistent contradictions in this sphere. Finally, in the early 1980s, this uncertainty showed through in Brezhnev's increasingly vague pronouncements on nationality policy and his tepid admission at the XXVI Congress that "a good many problems" remained which required the Party's "sympathetic attention".

This in itself illustrates an important point to be made. While the depth of existing tensions may not have been clearly understood until very recently under Gorbachev, traditional assumptions concerning the national question were being called into doubt well before the advent of *glasnost'*. The fact that at least a cautiously critical attitude towards nationality policy had developed before *perestroika*

allows for making a potentially important connection between the sorts of open and frank discussions which have characterized recent years and the more constrained debates, especially within the theoretical journals, going back to the Khrushchev period. As pointed out in the summary of the last chapter, these early debates, and those which continued through the Brezhnev years, assume the rough contours of the more explicit points of view now being expressed openly thanks to *glasnost*'. In particular, it is suggested that there is a strong intellectual and philosophical correlation between the "moderate" school of thought which expressed itself during the *Voprosyi istorii* symposium of the mid 1960s, as discussed in chapter three, and the various strains of the "relativist" perspective described in chapter five.

In other words, academic literature from the late 1950s forward which dwelt on the durability of national distinctions, favored continuing the free development of national cultures (viz. *rastsvet*), and deferred "fusion" *ad calendas Graecas*,⁵ in many cases implied the rejection of ideological tenets concerning the "drawing together" and "fusion" of nations. The political climate which prevailed during Brezhnev's years especially precluded the sorts of open denunciations of *sblizhenie* and *sliyanie* which *glasnost*' has given vent to, and meant that these theorists had to pay formal lip-service to these prescribed goals of nationality policy. Nonetheless, the dialectics of their arguments were such that the debunking of these aims can be seen lying not far beneath the surface. Put succinctly, the repudiation of the Leninist essence of the Soviet regime's nationality policy, codified by the Program statement of the XXVIII CPSU Congress last year, has its roots in the intellectual debates of the late 1950s.⁶ This suggests that

what some Western scholars at least acknowledge as the "ambiguities" one has to contend with in evaluating developments in nationality policy under Khrushchev be taken more seriously "in spite of the general trend towards the suppression of local nationalisms and eventual assimilation which is discernible."⁷

Re-examining the Khrushchev period in this regard may also be of value for coming to grips with a certain tension which exists in some of the current literature and is left largely unresolved by this thesis as well; that being the extent to which Khrushchev's shift in policy emphasis after 1957 away from *rastsvet* and towards *sblizhenie* and *sliyanie* was a matter of his own volition or basically imposed upon him by elements of his right-wing opposition led by Suslov.⁸ It is interesting to note that, while clearly emphasizing the process of "drawing together" as opposed to "flowering" during the late 1950s, Khrushchev's personal position on "fusion" aligned him with those intellectuals who were stressing the lasting nature of national characteristics and postponing *sliyanie* until the distant future. In fact, it was pointed out that the most Khrushchev explicitly committed the Party to was the achievement of "complete unity" (*polnoe edinstvo*), a somewhat vague term which did not necessarily connote cultural homogenization.

As observed in chapter two, this "long-term fusionist" outlook was opposed by another point of view advocating a more rapid "fusing" of nations. Although his personal statements on nationality policy do not really give him away in this respect, certain insiders at the time, such as the former Ukrainian First Secretary P. I. Shelest, leave the impression that Suslov was a leading proponent of this view.⁹ Such a

conclusion is somewhat strengthened by independent Western sources who claim that Suslov was among those who spoke out in favor of dismantling the Soviet federal system during the Constitutional debate of the 1970s.¹⁰ Given Brezhnev's remarks upon introducing the new Constitution in 1977 concerning the inappropriateness of suggestions which had been made by "some comrades" to liquidate the Union republics and introduce into the document the concept of a single Soviet nation (as discussed in chapter three), some degree of conflict not only between Suslov and Khrushchev but between Suslov and Brezhnev over nationality policy may be inferred. This perhaps vindicates Shelest's view that the full extent of Suslov's activity "particularly in the historical, ideological, and nationalities questions" spanning, one might add, both the Khrushchev and Brezhnev periods, has yet to be fully exposed.¹¹

The intellectual give and take from the late Khrushchev period forward is also important for revealing the degree to which conflict over the national question, as defined in this thesis, cut across ethnic lines. In other words, it did not break down along simply a Russian - non-Russian cleavage. Proponents of ethnic "fusion", to take perhaps the most contentious example, can be found among theorists of various nationalities as can its detractors. This has become evident in some of the academic debates discussed in chapter five. The same cutting across of ethnic lines has been true within the regime itself, although this is harder to delineate clearly. Resistance to the ideas of *sblizhenie* and *sliyanie* on the part of some republican First Secretaries is perhaps not surprising, although it does undermine some traditional Western assumptions of the extent to which local political elites had been won over to the Soviet system. However, if conflict over nationality policy

first between Khrushchev and Suslov and subsequently between Brezhnev and Suslov, as speculated on above, can be reasonably inferred, then discord among the most senior Great Russians atop the Soviet power structure concerning the national question has also typified the post-Stalin era.

In terms of potential future scholarship, this analysis points to the need perhaps to examine more closely the historical role of the Soviet "thick journals" and the academic institutions they represent as, in Geoffrey Hosking's words, "major centres of what might be called 'establishment non-conformity.'" ¹² It is a principal contention of this thesis that the gravity of the debate over nationality policy in particular which is visible in the pages of these journals during both the Khrushchev and Brezhnev periods, exemplified by the fact that the journals (and thus the institutions they represent) have themselves not spoken with a single voice on the national question over the years, tends to be underrated by Western analyses. In part, this may be because such academic discussions of serious issues confronting Soviet society, including the national question, have until very recently "had to be couched in an oblique and illusory style, to circumvent the censorship, and this has made them difficult for outsiders to follow." ¹³

In the light of *glasnost*', however, it may be time to re-interpret much of the material in the "thick journals" and this thesis is hopefully a first step in the direction of fitting into current Western literature a systematic study of nationality policy as a source of leadership conflict. Further work might be beneficial, for example, with respect to the *Voprosy istorii* symposium of 1966-1969 discussed in chapter three. It appears as if only the first year of this intellectual

exercise has been dealt with substantively by Western scholars,¹⁴ and Soviet specialists such as Bromlei have even quite recently written about the symposium's lasting legacy of discord left as far as defining the core concept of "nation" itself.¹⁵ Another area of particular interest could be trying to ascertain who within the senior Party establishment was supporting the work of "revisionist" scholars, such as Bromlei himself, who began challenging some of the fundamental tenets of traditional Soviet thinking on the nationality problem during the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Another area of possible future academic interest may be expanding Michael Rywkin's research on the lexicon of Soviet nationality policy, especially during the Brezhnev period, as a means of better exposing the role of some republican First Secretaries in debates over this issue within the leadership itself. While an individual leader's choice of language in publicly discussing nationality affairs needs to be examined with some degree of circumspection, it can nonetheless be a helpful indicator for defining his position on the national question relative to his colleagues at the time. At the very least, this type of analysis raises some issues perhaps worth pondering at greater length; for instance, what may seem to some as the surprisingly servile position of Eduard Shevardnadze during his time as Georgian First Secretary in the late 1970s,¹⁶ as well as the apparently resistant attitude of Petr Masherov, the First Secretary of Belorussia for much of Brezhnev's rule and a figure who seems to have received very little attention in Western literature to date.¹⁷

Current events in the USSR obviously provide more fertile ground for scholarly work although the future course they will take is

impossible to predict with any certainty. It cannot be discounted that something like the Shatalin Plan, as discussed in chapter five, may yet be approved with the result that the USSR will be transformed into a confederal union along the lines of the European Community. Undoubtedly, as Zbigniew Brzezinski suggests, "a genuine confederation or commonwealth would be the best option for everyone concerned: the Russians, most of the non-Russians, and certainly the outside world."¹⁹ However, such a desirable outcome ultimately depends on Moscow's recognition, be it under the direction of Gorbachev or someone else, that, in the words of a Central Committee official, "a Russia shorn of the least compatible remnants of its imperial legacy"²⁰ would itself be the better for it.

The only alternative to radical decentralization of the union, up to allowing the free secession of those republics which insist on it, would seem to be renewed efforts at repression on the part of the centre. Unfortunately, the recent crackdown in the Baltics seems to indicate that the pendulum is, at least for now, swinging in that direction. Nonetheless, ultimate recourse to some sort of military-police dictatorship is clearly no answer to pressing nationality problems, and seems most likely to ensure that the eventual break-up of the country will take place amidst violent upheavals and perhaps even civil war. Regrettably, given that, as Richard Pipes puts it, Gorbachev "has made it clear that he is prepared to abandon perestroika, to throw himself into the arms of his conservative opponents, in order to preserve the union and salvage the preeminence of the central government"²⁰ the latter possibility appears, at this stage, more likely.

Notes

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Letter to the Workers and Peasants of the Ukraine Apropos of the Victories Over Denikin", p. 281.

² Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Failure: The Birth and Death of Communism in the Twentieth Century* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1990), p. 91.

³ Gleason, pp. 139-140.

⁴ Dadrian, p. 206.

⁵ Terminology used by Theresa Rakowska-Harmstone, "The Dilemma of Nationalism in the Soviet Union", p. 126.

⁶ One could even argue that the repudiation of these sacred tenets of Leninist nationality policy has its roots as far back as the original debate over the future of Soviet nations in early-to-mid 1920s in which Lenin himself played a pivotal role. This implies that, apart from most of the Stalinist era in which all forms of debate were artificially frozen, the entire Bolshevik legacy as regards nationality policy is one of fundamental disagreement.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

⁸ Observers such as Bilinsky, "The Rulers and the Ruled", p. 17, suggest that after the fall of the "anti-Party group" in June 1957, Khrushchev felt sufficiently secure in power that he no longer needed the support of republican party organizations and, therefore, discontinued his concessionary policy of *rastsvet*. This argument tends largely to assume that Khrushchev's "flowering" campaign was a matter of political expediency more than reflecting a genuine conviction on his part that a certain devolution of power from Moscow to the republics was vital in terms of rationalizing the Soviet economic and political superstructure. As pointed out earlier in this thesis (page 79, note #38), "conflict school" theorists such as Robert Conquest make somewhat more of the role played by the "Suslov-Kozlov opposition bloc" in rolling back *rastsvet*. Of course, the same question at least partially pertains to Gorbachev's apparent retrenchment today. However, this analysis assumes that, thanks to the more open nature of modern Soviet politics, Gorbachev's personal position in alliance with more conservative forces determined to preserve the state structure of the USSR is easier to define.

⁹ See "Memoirs of a Participant in the Events About Difficult Moments in the Country's History: On Khrushchev, Brezhnev, and Others", under

the heading "Shelest Regrets Anti-Khrushchev 'Coup'", in Jonathan Eisen, *The Glasnost' Reader* (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), p. 221.

¹⁰ According to Bilinsky, "Scherbytski, Ukraine, and Kremlin Politics", pp. 18-19, Suslov proposed the abolition of the Union republics in December 1973 ostensibly in the name of rationalizing the Soviet economy. Anthony D'Agostino, *Soviet Succession Struggles: Kremlinology and the Russian Question from Lenin to Gorbachev* (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1988), p. 208, states that Suslov "advocated redrawing boundaries for republics on the basis of economic factors rather than ethnic ones."

¹¹ See Eisen, p. 221. Shelest's complete remarks were as follows: "In my view, Suslov is a figure still to be exposed. He did the party more harm than good. We are still reaping the fruits of his activity, particularly in the historical, ideological, and nationalities questions. He strongly insisted on the speediest merging of nations and their languages and cultures. We see what that led to in the example of Nagorno-Karabakh. It is difficult even to describe him as a personality. He was divorced from life and very inward-looking." Shelest may be right on the mark as regards the national question in particular. To the extent that Suslov left a track record in this sphere it is abysmal. Of special current relevance is the fact that the brutal imposition of Soviet rule in Lithuania during the early 1940s was overseen by Suslov who, in true Stalinist style, orchestrated the mass deportation of Lithuanian nationalist resisters and inaugurated attempts to essentially destroy Lithuanian national culture. Thus, the bitterness with which so many Lithuanians now regard the USSR as an oppressive colonial empire may have very strong roots in Suslov's original "Sovietization" of their republic.

¹² Hosking, *The Awakening of the Soviet Union*, p. 45.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

¹⁴ Reference here is to Grey Hodnett's article of September 1967 "What's in a Nation?" which has been cited a number of times in this thesis.

¹⁵ See "Viewpoint: 'We Live in the Same House' - Academician Yu. V. Bromlei (Interview conducted by A. Plutnik), *Izvestiya*, August 23, 1988, p. 4, in *CDSF*, Vol. XL, No. 17, pp. 10-11.

¹⁶ In October 1990, this writer attended a conference on nationality affairs in the USSR at the University of New Brunswick. One of the speakers was the President of the Georgian Popular Front (an umbrella organization uniting a number of pro-independence groups), Dr. Nodar Notadze. From Notadze's admittedly partisan point of view, one is left with the impression that Shevardnadze's reputation within his home republic is very poor. A useful analogy might be drawn with respect to the status of Jean Chretien in Quebec in that Shevardnadze is seen by the great majority of Georgians as someone who has sold out to Moscow - a *venu* to use the disparaging French term often ascribed by Quebecois to Chretien. Notadze respectfully disagreed with the view of a Western expert on Georgian politics, Dr. Steven Jones from Mt. Holyoke College,

that there is a significant body of public opinion in Georgia which views Shevardnadze as "local boy done good."

¹⁷ There are other indications of Masherov's resistance to the Russifying essence of *sblizhenie* under Brezhnev. For example, Bilinsky, "Scherbytski, Ukraine, and Kremlin Politics", pp. 18-19, writes that the Belorussian wing of the CPSU (under Masherov) outspokenly resisted Suslov's proposal of December 1973, as reported above, to dismantle the Soviet federal structure. Some degree of subsequent displeasure with Masherov in Moscow is implied to the extent that he was humiliated by Brezhnev following his suspicious death in a car accident in October 1980. None of the ruling Politburo attended his funeral in Minsk and the central Russian press hardly made mention of Masherov's passing. This stood in stark contrast to the effusive homage paid him by the Belorussian media, in particular, the Communist Party daily *Sovetskaya Belorussiya*. The fact that a "de-nationalized" Belorussian from Moscow, N. N. Slyunkov, was appointed to succeed Masherov ahead of more logical candidates from within the local Belorussian Party apparatus itself also suggests that the Kremlin was not happy with the state of affairs in the republic during at least the latter part of Masherov's tenure. Nationality policy may be at the root of these tensions.

¹⁸ Brzezinski, p. 279.

¹⁹ Igor Malashenko, "Nationalism's Silver Lining", *Time*, May 21, 1990, p. 25.

²⁰ Pipes, p. 78.

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