The Establishment of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

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The CONSOLIDATION OF THE PARTY AND STATE APPARATUS

The belief that the socialist state required a centralized administration was common to both wings of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party, as indeed it was to European Marxism in general. The traditional view was that government was an instrument of class war and a weapon by means of which the class in power asserted its will, destroyed its opposition, and directed socioeconomic and military legislation to the advantage of its interests. Only a government which had at its disposal complete political and economic authority could accomplish these tasks. The pre-1917 opposition of the Mensheviks and Bolsheviks to federalism, as well as the specific interpretation given by Lenin to the right of national self-determination, were largely inspired by a desire to avoid the evils of a system which permitted hostile elements to find escape from the socialist regime by utilizing the privileges inherent in states' rights.

The Bolsheviks' adoption of the principle of federalism upon their accession to power in no way signified an abandonment of the traditional Marxist hostility to the decentralized state. In the first place, under the circumstances in which it had been adopted, federalism was a step in the direction of centralization, since it gave an opportunity of bringing together once more borderland areas which during the Revolution had acquired the status of independent republics.
The sovereign legislative powers, theoretically vested in the soviets, were, on all levels, down to the smallest town soviets. The leaders of both the Council of People's Commissars and the Communist Party were in fact the same persons. The intertwining of the personnel and activities of the state and party institutions was so intimate that the process of the integration of the Soviet territory occurred not on one, but on two levels. The evolution of Soviet federalism, therefore, cannot be studied merely from the point of view of the changing relations between the central and provincial institutions of the state; it must be approached, first of all, from the point of view of the relations between the central and provincial institutions of the Communist Party.

In the second place, the existence of the Communist Party, with its unique internal organization and extraordinary rights with regard to the institutions of the state, made it possible for the rulers of the Soviet republic to retain all the important features of a unitary state in a state which was formally decentralized. In Communist political theory the supreme legislative authority belonged to the soviets. "Russia is declared a republic of Soviets of workers', soldiers' and peasants' deputies," stated the Declaration of Rights of the Toiling and Exploited People, issued in January 1918; "All power in the center and locally belongs to these Soviets." According to the Russian-Soviet constitution, local soviets delegated their representatives to the All-Russian Congress of Soviets, which in turn appointed an All-Russian Central Executive Committee (VTsIK). The Council of People's Commissars, the supreme executive organ of the state, was in theory responsible to the VTsIK and to the All-Russian Congress of Soviets. In practice, however, the Council of People's Commissars early in the revolution made itself independent of the VTsIK, which did little more than give formal approval to measures promulgated by the Council of People's Commissars.

Side by side with the soviets, the Communists recognized another sovereign institution, the Russian Communist Party. The Bolshevik leaders conceived of the Communist Party as the vanguard of the proletarian revolution and as an organization which provided the soviets with intellectual and political leadership. They drew no clear-cut division of authority between the soviets and the party, on the assumption that the interests of the two were in full harmony, but they admitted openly that the chain of command descended from the party to the soviets, and not vice versa. In March 1919, when they drew up their first party program (superseding the general Russian Social Democratic program of 1903), the Bolsheviks stated the relationship between these two institutions with the following words:

The Communist Party assigns itself the task of winning influence and complete leadership in all organizations of the laboring class: the trade unions, the cooperatives, the village communes, etc. The Communist Party strives particularly for the realization of its program and for the full mastery of contemporary political organizations such as the Soviets . . .

The Russian Communist Party must win for itself undivided political mastery in the Soviets and de facto control of all their work, through practical, daily, dedicated work in the Soviets, and the advancement of its most stalwart and devoted members to all Soviet positions.

The sovereign legislative powers, theoretically vested in the soviets, were, therefore, absorbed not only by the Council of People's Commissars, which operated on the highest level, but also by the Communist Party, which operated on all levels, down to the smallest town soviets.
when such efforts did not go beyond the demand for the right to join the Third International.

His task was facilitated by the fact that nearly all the republican Communist parties were not indigenous, national political organizations, but merely regional branches of the Russian Communist Party. Thus, the Communist Party of the Ukraine was the product of a merger of the Southwestern and Donets-Krivoi Rog Regional Committees of the RKP; the Belorussian Communist Party was the old Northwestern Committee of the RKP under a new name; the Georgian, Armenian, and Azerbaijani Communist parties emerged from the organizational breakup of the Transcaucasian Regional Committee of the RKP; the Turkestani Communist Party came into being through the renaming of the Turkestani Committee of the RKP. Lenin, therefore, did not so much have to centralize the party organization as keep it from falling apart.

In the spring of 1918 the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Ukraine was compelled to acknowledge the authority of the Central Committee of the RKP and to give up its claims of membership in the Communist International. Late in 1919 it was altogether dissolved. The plan of the Belorussians to institute a separate national Communist Party was vetoed by Lenin. The Moslem Communist Party was first subordinated to the Russian Communist Party and then done away with altogether. Similar steps were taken in the other borderland areas. Lenin had thus made it clear that if he had requested the various regional committees of the RKP to change their designations to correspond to the names of the republics in which they were operating, it was largely a concession to mass psychology; he had no intention of splitting party authority or even of introducing the ideas of nationality and federalism into the party organization. As the Communist Party program stated:

The Ukrainians, Latvians, Lithuanians, and Belorussians exist at this time as separate Soviet republics. Thus is solved for the present the question of state structure.

But this does not in the least mean that the Russian Communist Party should, in turn, reorganize itself as a federation of independent Communist parties.

The Eighth Congress of the RKP resolves: there must exist a single centralized Communist Party with a single Central Committee leading all the party work in all sections of the RSFSR. All decisions of the RKP and its directing organs are unconditionally binding on all branches of the party, regardless of their national composition. The Central Committees of the Ukrainians, Latvians, Lithuanians enjoy the rights of the regional committees of the party, and are entirely subordinated to the Central Committee of the RKP.*

If the Soviets were to be the supreme legislative organs of the new state; if they, in turn, were to be subjected to de facto control by the Communist Party; and if, finally, the Communist Party itself in Russia as well as in the non-Russian Soviet republics, was to be completely subordinated to the Central Committee, then clearly actual sovereignty in all Soviet areas belonged to the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party. Soviet federalism did not involve a distribution of power between the center and the province; only a corresponding decentralization of the Communist Party would have made the establishment of genuine federal relations possible. If, in 1917, Lenin had accepted state federalism so readily, it was because he knew that the existence of a unified, centralized Communist Party with authority over political institutions throughout the Soviet territories made possible the retention of unalloyed centralized political power.

The Communist leaders, however, were concerned not only with unifying in their own hands the ultimate political authority over the entire Soviet domain, but also with extending the scope of this authority as widely and as deeply as possible. Partly for reasons of dogma (the conviction that in the period of revolution the total resources of society must be brought to bear on the class enemy), partly for reasons of practical statesmanship (greater efficiency in governing the country and the opportunity for economic planning), they undertook to augment the ultimate policy-making authority—assured them by the party—by assuming control over the entire administrative apparatus of the state.

The integration into a single state of the borderlands conquered in the course of the Civil War began in 1918 and terminated in 1923 with the establishment of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). It was a complex process. Before the Revolution, the Bolsheviks had given little thought to the problems of federalism, and now had to proceed entirely by trial and error. The fundamental incompatibility between the division of powers inherent in federalism and the striving toward the centralization of Communism lent the evolution of the Soviet state a peculiar character. Most of the time it is impossible to tell whether an act involving the transfer of authority from one of the republics to the government of Soviet Russia represented a genuine shift in political power, or only a formal expression of a fact which had been accomplished quietly some time earlier by order of the Party or the Council of People's Commissars. The Communist adherence to democratic terminology in a social order which was authoritarian in the fullest sense of the word also does not contribute to a greater understanding of the growth of Soviet state structure.

For purposes of historical analysis, the territories of the Soviet state which were involved in the process of political consolidation may be divided into three categories: the autonomous regions and republics, the Union Republics, and the People's Republics. It must be borne in mind, however, that such a division is artificial. The centralization occurred in all those areas simultaneously and, even before the formal establishment of the USSR, they were (with the exception of the People's Republics) reduced to a status which was, for all practical purposes, identical.
THE RSFSR

The first Constitution of Soviet Russia (1918), while accepting the general principle of federalism, had made no provisions for the settlement of relations between the federal government and the individual states. Indeed, as one historian points out, the very word "federation" was not even mentioned in the body of the Constitution.3 During 1918, it was not clear what, if any, difference in status there was between the autonomous regions, the autonomous republics, and the Soviet republics, and all those terms were used interchangeably. Wherever the Communists came into power they simply proclaimed the laws issued by the government of the RSFSR valid on their territory and announced the establishment of a "union" with the Russian Soviet republic.

The first attempt to put into practice the principles enunciated in the Constitution was made in the spring of 1918, when the government of the RSFSR (or, more precisely, its All-Russian Central Executive Committee) ordered the formation of the Tatar-Bashkir and Turkestan republics. As we have seen, these attempts were not successful. The Tatar-Bashkir state never came into being because the Russians evacuated the Volga-Ural region in the summer of 1918; while Turkestan, cut off from Moscow by the enemy, had, until the end of the Civil War, no administrative connection with the RSFSR. It was only in February 1919, with the signing of the Soviet-Bashkir agreement, that the decentralization of the administrative apparatus along national lines began in earnest. Between 1920 and 1923, the government of the RSFSR established on its territory seventeen autonomous regions and republics. The autonomous regions (sometimes called "Toilers' Communes") had no distinguishing juridical features even in terms of Soviet law and were described by one Soviet authority as "national guberntii."4 The autonomous republics, on the other hand, were regarded as endowed with a certain degree of political competence, although the limits of this competence were posed a question that troubled the best legal minds of the time.5

The common feature of these autonomous units—regions and republics alike—was the fact that they came into being by decree of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee acting alone or in conjunction with the Council of People's Commissars of the RSFSR. The only exception to this rule was the Bashkir Republic founded, as we saw, in February 1919, by agreement between the government of the RSFSR and a group of Bashkir nationalists; but since the 1919 agreement was unilaterally abrogated fifteen months later with the introduction of the new Bashkir constitution on the orders of the Russian Soviet government, this exception cannot be said to have affected the general practice.

The origin of the autonomous states provided additional assurance that they would not infringe in any manner upon the centralized structure of Soviet political authority. "Autonomy means not separation," Stalin told the North Caucasians in 1920, "but a union of the self-ruling mountain peoples with the peoples of Russia."6 Indeed, the main stress in the Communist interpretation of autonomy was on closer ties between the borderlands and Russia and on the enhancement of the authority and prestige of the Soviet regime in areas where nationalistic tendencies were deeply rooted. As Stalin's statement emphasized, autonomy was considered as an instrument of consolidation, not of decentralization.

As indicated in the sections dealing with the history of the borderlands during the Revolution and Civil War, the government of the RSFSR retained in the reconquered territories full control over the military, economic, financial, and foreign affairs of its autonomous states. These were granted competence only in such spheres of government activity as education, justice, public health, and social security; and even in these realms they were subject to the surveillance of the appropriate commissariats of the RSFSR as well as the local bureaus of the Russian Communist Party. The governments of the autonomous regions and republics, as one Soviet jurist correctly remarked, had more in common, from the point of view of authority and function, with the prerevolutionary Russian organs of self-rule, the so-called Provincial zemstva, than with the governments of genuine federal states.7 There can be little doubt that the tradition of those institutions, introduced during the Great Reforms of the 1860's, had much to do with the evolution of Soviet concepts of autonomy.

The first attempt to consolidate the state apparatus of all the autonomous regions and republics was made in the early 1920's by the Commissariat of Nationality Affairs (Narkomnats or NKN). This commissariat, originally established to serve as an intermediary between the central Soviet organs and the minorities and to assist the government in dealing with problems of a purely "national" nature (which could not be too numerous, in view of the Communist attitude toward the entire problem of nationality and nationalism), had displayed little activity in 1919 and the first half of 1920. Stalin, its chairman, was absent; its vice-chairmen and higher functionaries were called in by the Soviet authorities to fill various posts in the reconquered borderlands; and the remaining borderland areas were largely in the zone of combat or under enemy occupation. As a result, the commissariat led only a nominal existence, publishing a weekly newspaper and occasionally engaging in propaganda activity.

In the spring of 1920 Stalin resumed the active chairmanship of the Commissariat of Nationality Affairs and began to transform it into a miniature federal government of the RSFSR. A decree issued on May 10, 1920, instructed all the national minority groups on the territory of the RSFSR to elect deputies to the Narkomnats.8 This was intended to give the Commissariat a representative character and, in a sense, was the first step in the abandonment of the purely executive aspect of the Commissariat. On November 6, 1920, the Narkomnats decreed that it would assume jurisdiction over the agencies of the autonomous regions and republics which had been attached to the Central
Executive Committee of the All-Russian Congress of Soviets. In December 1920 the government of the RSFSR decreed that the Narkomnats was to open provincial branches and attach them to the Central Executive Committees of the autonomous regions and republics of the RSFSR.

In April 1921 the executive officers of the Narkomnats, and the chairmen of the delegations from the autonomous regions and republics, were constituted into a new body, called the Council of Nationalities (Sovet Narodn'nostei).

While undergoing all those important structural changes, the Commissariat of Nationality Affairs claimed for itself ever broader and greater powers. The November 1920 decree stated that no economic and political measures of the Soviet government applicable to the borderlands could become law unless approved by the Narkomnats, and that all the political organizations of the minorities were to deal with the central Soviet government only through their agencies at Narkomnats. When, a month later, the Commissariat established its branch offices in the autonomous states, it gave them authority to participate in the activities of the Central Executive Committees of the autonomous regions and republics. In the summer of 1922, the Narkomnats claimed that it had the right to supervise the other commissariats of the Soviet Russian government insofar as their activities affected the national minorities, that it represented the autonomous republics in all budgetary matters, and that it alone directed the education of the non-Russian party and state cadres. In 1923, the forthcoming dissolution of the Narkomnats was justified by the fact that "it had completed its fundamental task of preparing the formation of the national republics and regions, and uniting them into a union of republics."

Through such measures the Narkomnats was transformed from one of the minor ministries of the RSFSR into a federal government of the autonomous regions and republics. At least, so it was in theory. In reality, the role of the Narkomnats in the integration of the Soviet state was considerably smaller than its claims implied. The autonomous regions and republics had so little self-rule left that their formal merger in a federal institution had virtually no practical consequences. It was a measure of primarily bureaucratic significance. In 1924 the Commissariat was dissolved and its Council of Nationalities became, through the addition of representatives of the full-fledged Soviet republics, the second chamber of the legislative branch of the government of the USSR.

RELATIONS BETWEEN THE RSFSR AND THE OTHER SOVIET REPUBLICS

One of the main reasons why the Communists found it necessary to differentiate constitutionally between the various conquered borderlands, forming some into autonomous regions or republics and others into Soviet or Union republics, was the fact that some of the borderlands which had separated themselves from Russia in 1917 and 1918 had entered during the period of their independence into diplomatic or military relations with foreign powers. Thus, the Ukraine had participated in the Brest Litovsk negotiations; Belorussia had dealt with Germany and with Poland; the Transcaucasian republics had signed treaties with Turkey, had maintained diplomatic missions abroad, and had been recognized de facto and de jure by the most important Western powers. In order to replace the diplomatic representatives of the overthrown borderland republics and to take over their foreign commitments, it was necessary to create the impression that the subjugated lands retained their independence even after Soviet conquest. Hence, a certain distinction was made in Soviet political theory and constitutional law between the non-Russian areas situated inland, out of contact with foreign powers, and those located on the fringes. The inland areas were formed into autonomous regions and republics, while the outlying ones were made into so-called Union republics. Constitutionally, the cardinal difference between the two types of political organization lay in the fact that the Union republics were recognized as sovereign and independent states, with a right to separate from the RSFSR, whereas the autonomous regions and republics were not. But inasmuch as the right to separation was acknowledged by Soviet leaders to apply primarily to nations living in the "capitalist" part of the world, and the mere mention of this right in connection with areas under Soviet control was regarded as prima facie evidence of counterrevolutionary activity, this constitutional distinction had no practical consequences whatsoever, although it did have some psychological ones.

Having been conquered from without, the borderland areas in the Union category presented specific problems of integration. In the first flush of the Revolution (1917-18), the Communist regimes which had arisen in the borderland areas such as the Ukraine, Belorussia, and the Baltic states, had assumed all the prerogatives of the governments which they had overthrown. The first Communist government of the Ukraine, for example, had a Council of People's Commissars composed of thirteen members, including the Commissars of War, Labor, Means of Communication, and Finance. A similar situation had prevailed in the other borderland areas occupied by the Communists at this time. These governments had, therefore, to be absorbed gradually. The spread of authority of the RSFSR over the republics in this category began in the autumn of 1918 and continued virtually without interruption until 1923.

The first move to integrate the administration of the Soviet republics lying outside the RSFSR with that of the RSFSR was taken in connection with the centralization of the Soviet military apparatus. On September 30, 1918, the VTSIK created a Revolutionary-Military Committee, (Revoensovet) of the Republic, under the chairmanship of Trotsky, to direct and coordinate the entire Soviet war effort against the White forces. The Revoensovet was granted extraordinary authority in the combat zones and was empowered, somewhat ambiguously, to utilize all the resources of the Soviet state for the defense of the

The Establishment of the USSR
regime. Its headquarters were in the railroad train which Trotsky used on his rapid inspections of various sectors of the front endangered by the enemy. From there, Trotsky made requests for manpower and supplies to the vice-chairman of the Revvoensovet, who resided in Moscow and served as a liaison between him and the pertinent government agencies.¹¹

To overcome the delays and other difficulties which such an informal arrangement between the military and civil authorities entailed, the Soviet government established on November 30, 1918, an organ which united all the agencies directly concerned with the prosecution of the war: the Council of Workers' and Peasants' Defense (Sovet Rabochei i Krest'ianskoi Obronoi). This supreme administrating body of war mobilization consisted of Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, and representatives of the Commissariats of Communication (Commissar V.I. Nevskii), Provisions (Deputy Commissar N.P. Brui Khanov), and the Extraordinary Commission for the Supply of the Red Army (Chairman L.B. Krassin). The decree establishing the Council instructed all the provincial Soviet institutions to obey the Council's directives. From the point of view of the integration of the Soviet state, the importance of the Council lay in the fact that it exercised authority not only in the RSFSR, but also in Lithuania, Latvia, Belorusia, and the Ukraine; that is, in all those borderland areas where the Communists were in power at that time. The authority of the Council grew rapidly, especially in the Ukraine, which was for the major part of the Civil War an arena of military operations.

The question of formal relations between the government of the Soviet Ukraine and that of the RSFSR was raised in the early part of 1919, shortly after the Communists had dispersed the Directory at the Third Congress of the KP(b)U, held in March 1919 in Kharkov. The majority of the delegates agreed that the Ukraine and Russia should establish as close economic and administrative ties as possible. They also agreed that the Constitution of Soviet Ukraine should in all essential respects resemble that of Soviet Russia (adopted in 1918), with minor alterations to suit local conditions. However, Sverdlov, the representative of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party at the Congress, refused to approve even such a moderate view, insisting that the Constitution of the RSFSR was not merely a Russian one, but an international one, and therefore should be adopted by the Ukrainian Soviet Republic without any changes whatsoever.¹²

The relationships between the two governments were actually settled by a decree of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party, which was conveyed to the Ukrainian Communists by a directive dated April 24, 1919. According to this directive, the Ukrainian Commissariats of War and of the Means of Communication were to subordinate themselves fully to the corresponding ministries of the RSFSR; the Ukrainian Commissariats of National Economy and Food Supply were to be transferred from Kiev to Kharkov, where they could work under the direct supervision of Moscow and receive necessary funds directly, without requiring the services of the Ukrainian Soviet government; the Commissariat of State Control of the RSFSR was to extend its authority throughout the entire Ukraine; and finally, the Ukrainian railroads were to be directed by the Commissariat of Roads in Moscow.¹³

In May 1919 Trotsky arrived in the Ukraine and took over the government. He did away with the separate Ukrainian Red regiments, merging them with units of the Russian Red Army, and liquidated altogether the Ukrainian Commissariats of National Economy, Finance, and Means of Communications, transferring their functions to the local bureaus of the corresponding Russian commissariats. In place of the Ukrainian Council of People's Commissars, which was, in effect, deprived of its raison d'être by the removal of its principal organs, Trotsky formed a local branch of the Russian Council of Workers' and Peasants' Defense. The Ukrainian Council had as chairman Rakovskii, and as deputy chairmen G.I. Petrovskii and A.A. Loffe—persons unconnected with the Ukrainian Communist movement. The measures put into practice in the Ukraine in the spring of 1919 were given broader validity in a decree of the Central Committee of the RKP of May 1919, which ordered the unification of all the Red Armies and railroad networks on the territories of the Ukraine, Latvia, Lithuania, Belorusia, and the RSFSR under the Council of Workers' and Peasants' Defense.¹⁴

A further step in the amalgamation of the RSFSR with the conquered borderlands was a decree of the VTsIK of June 1, 1919, called "On the Unification of the Soviet Republics of Russia, the Ukraine, Latvia, Lithuania, and Belorusia for the Struggle against World Imperialism." This decree deprived the enumerated non-Russian republics of their commissariats of War, National Economy, Railroads, Finance, and Labor, in favor of the corresponding commissariats of the RSFSR. The decree broadened the authority which the RSFSR had enjoyed through the Council of Defense and embodied in the Soviet constitution legislation originally introduced as wartime emergency measures. The foundations of the state which eventually became the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics were thus laid not by agreement between the RSFSR and the individual, theoretically independent republics, but by decree of the Russian government. In this respect, therefore, there was little difference in the origins of the RSFSR and the USSR.

Another important similarity between the position of the autonomous states and the Soviet republics vis-à-vis the RSFSR was that in both instances the functions of federal government were vested not in a third power, separate and superior to the federating units, but in one of the states which itself was involved in the act of federation. The government of the RSFSR served as the highest state authority not only on its own territory, but also on the territories of the Ukraine, Belorusia, the Baltic states, Transcaucasia, and whatever other lands were conquered by Soviet troops.¹⁵
When, in 1920, the Communists conquered Azerbaijan, an area which, save for a brief period in the spring of 1918, had not been previously under their control, they found it desirable to establish interrepublican relations in a more formal manner. The discussions which ultimately led to the signing of a treaty between RSFSR and Azerbaijan were carried on between Lenin, Chicherin, and N.N. Krestinskii on the one side, and M.D. Guseinov and B. Shakhbatkhitskii on the other. The treaty, signed on September 30, 1920, provided for the government of the RSFSR taking over the commissariats of War, Supply, Finance, Means of Transportation, and Communications, as well as all the organs regulating foreign trade and the internal economy. Significantly, it left Azerbaijan the right to retain its own commissariat of Foreign Affairs. The treaty with Azerbaijan thus followed the pattern set by the decree of June 1, 1919.

On December 28, 1920, and January 16, 1921, the government of the RSFSR signed identical treaties with the governments of Soviet Ukraine and Belorussia. The divisions of authority between the government of the RSFSR and the republican governments was substantially the same as that provided for by the treaty with Azerbaijan. In addition, it stipulated that the two republics would appoint representatives to the commissariats taken over by the RSFSR, and that the exact relationships between the government agencies of the contracting parties would be determined by separate agreements. The two republics were allowed to retain their commissariats of Foreign Affairs and were declared in the preamble to be "independent and sovereign" states. The signatory for the Ukrainian side was Christian Rakovskii, who two years earlier had served as a representative of the Russian Soviet government in its negotiations with the Ukrainian Rada.

In 1921 and 1922 the republics certainly did not treat the right to the maintenance of diplomatic relations as a formality. Azerbaijan, to mention one example, established full relations with six foreign countries, dispatched its representatives to Turkey and Persia, and accredited diplomatic representatives of Germany and Finland. The other republics also maintained at that time active diplomatic relations and participated in international negotiations either jointly with Soviet Russia or, on occasion, separately.

Such was the situation on the eve of the Soviet conquest of Georgia, which rounded out Communist possessions in Transcaucasia. The integration of Georgia, however, proved a much more difficult task than had been the case with the other borderland areas. The patriotic fervor of the Georgians, as well as the existence in Georgia of a relatively strong and rooted Bolshevik organization, precluded a simple incorporation of that area into Soviet Russia. The Soviet government preferred to accomplish the integration of Georgia and the other Transcaucasian republics in two phases: first, it made them surrender political power to a newly created Transcaucasian Federation and then it made the Federationcede these powers to Moscow. This procedure was in part dictated by economic considerations (Transcaucasia having traditionally functioned as an economic unit) and in part by political ones, namely, the desire to neutralize potential national opposition to "Russification."

In fact, the device of incorporating the republics by means of a federation engendered such bitter resistance, especially in Georgia, that the story of the relations between the Transcaucasian republics and the RSFSR after February 1921 belongs more properly in that part of our narrative which deals with the opposition to centralization.

**THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLICS**

The only political formations under Communist control which, for a time at least, enjoyed self-rule in practice as well as in theory were the so-called People's Republics, of which there were three in 1922: Bukhara, Khorezm (Khiva), and the Far East. The agreement between Soviet Russia and the Khorezmian Soviet People's Republic—which was signed on September 13, 1920, and established the pattern for this type of relationship—granted the RSFSR on the territory of Khorezm certain economic privileges, such as the right to exploit natural resources, to import and export without the payment of tariffs, and to use Russian currency. In all other respects, Khorezm remained an independent republic. A similar agreement was signed on March 4, 1921, with the Bukharan People's Soviet Republic, and on February 17, 1922, with the Far Eastern Republic. In all three of these states the rights of the RSFSR were limited to economic matters.

The self-rule acquired by the Khorezmian, Bukhanui, and Far Eastern Republics by virtue of treaties with the RSFSR was not left intact for long. In the case of Khorezm and Bukhara, their autonomy under the Communists was not intended as a permanent deviation from the pattern established in other parts of the country, but rather as a temporary de facto recognition of the unique status which these principalities had enjoyed under tsarist rule. The Far Eastern Republic, on the other, was quite frankly established as a buffer state intended to keep out the Japanese. Its government was not formally Communist, but represented an alliance of various "democratic" groups under Communist control. As soon as the Red Army entered Vladivostok in the wake of the evacuating Japanese, the Far Eastern Republic was abolished and its territory incorporated into that of the RSFSR (October-November, 1922). In Khorezm and Bukhara, the Communists gradually increased their authority throughout 1922 and 1923. In 1924, the Soviet government abolished these People's Republics and later distributed their land among the five new republics created in place of those of Turkestan and Kirghiz: Uzbek, Turkmen, Tajik, Kazakh, and Kirghiz.
THE OPPOSITION TO CENTRALIZATION

The process of integration of the state apparatus encountered serious opposition in the borderlands from groups both inside and outside the Communist Party. This "nationalist deviation" of the early 1920's constituted a stormy chapter in the history of the formation of the Soviet Union. The opposition can be divided into two principal types. There was the resistance of groups which, having collaborated with the Communists for the sake of essentially nationalistic aims, became eventually disillusioned with Communism and turned against it. There was also the opposition of those who had taken seriously the slogans of national self-determination and federalism and, seeing them violated by Stalin and his associates, became defenders of decentralization and states' rights. The former fought for nationalism, the latter for Communism. No collaboration between these two groups was possible, and hence opposition to centralization proved in the end ineffectual.

NATIONALIST OPPOSITION: ENVER PASA AND THE BASMACHIS

The Soviet conquest of Bukhara (September 1920) reinvigorated the Basmachi movement, which had begun to subside somewhat with the introduction by the Communists of a policy of economic and religious concessions in the first half of 1920. At first the Red Armies had little difficulty in conquering the mountainous sectors of the Bukharan principality, where the population, disatisfied with the regime of the deposed Emir, was willing to accept a change in rule. But as soon as the Reds began to evacuate Eastern Bukhara, entrusting authority to native militias, various Basmachi chieftains appeared and took those territories back from the Communists. In the fall of 1921 most of Eastern Bukhara was in the hands of rebels. They were supplied with arms and personnel by the deposed Emir, who had fled to Afghanistan to continue from there the struggle for his throne.

Before long the Soviet regime also suffered setbacks in Western Bukhara. The two groups with whose assistance the Communists had come to power and to whom they entrusted the reins of government in the republic—the Young Bukharans and Young Bukharan Communists—disagreed sharply over the relations of the Bukharan Republic with Soviet Russia. The Young Bukharans, composed largely of liberals associated with pre-1917 jadidism, resented Communist penetration into Bukharan institutions and their meddling in local affairs. They complained that the new regime had brought "seven emirs" in the place of one—a reference to the seven commissars (nazirs) who comprised the all-powerful government of the Bukharan Republic. The Young Bukharan Communists, on the other hand, among whom the younger, more radical elements predominated, cooperated fully with the Communists and strove for a closer integration of Bukhara with the Soviet system.

In the fall of 1921, when such internal difficulties threatened to upset Soviet authority in the Bukharan Republic, Enver Pasha, one of the leaders of the defunct Young Turkish government of Turkey, appeared in Turkestan.

Enver, who had acquired great fame throughout the Moslem world for his victories over the Italians in the African War of 1911-12, escaped at the end of World War I from Turkey to Germany. An ambitious man, endowed with a vivid imagination and undaunted personal courage (though quarrelsome and politically unskilled), Enver had little taste for the life of an exilie which the Turkish defeat had imposed on him. After a brief stay in Berlin, he decided to join his one-time associates Nuri Pasha, Dzhemal Pasha, and Halil Pasha, who had gone into the Soviet service. Hostile to England, he found in the anti-British policy pursued by the Soviet regime in 1920 an opportunity to play once more an active part in Middle Eastern politics. Enver arrived in Moscow in the fall of 1920, following a forced plane landing and brief detention in Riga. In September he attended the Baku Congress of Eastern Peoples sponsored by the Third International, where he presented a memorandum denouncing his own role in the First World War and pledging the Communists his support in the struggle against "Western imperialism."

Enver spent most of 1921 in Transcaucasia, first in Baku and then, after the Communists had conquered Georgia, in Batum. Apparently he desired to reside as near the Turkish frontier as possible, to be in a position to assume leadership in Turkey. In the fall of that year the Soviet government decided to exploit his popularity among Moslems and to send him to Central Asia to help fight the Basmachis. Experience had shown that much success could be achieved by employing one-time Turkish officers to win the sympathies of natives for the Soviet cause. At the same time, Dzhemal Pasha, who had resided in Tashkent since August 1920, was sent on a diplomatic mission to Afghanistan, probably to prevail on the Afghan authorities to stop the Emir of Bukhara and other Turkestanis refugees from using that country as a supply base for the Basmachis.

Enver arrived in Bukhara at the beginning of November 1921. It did not take him long to perceive that he could achieve greater glory by joining the native dissidents than by continuing his ambivalent and uncertain role as a Communist agent. The Basmachi movement was as divided as ever after the failure of an attempt made earlier in the year to unite all the rebel groups under one leader. The Khivan Basmachis were led by Dzhemal Khan; those of the Samarqand district by Akhil Bek, Karakul Bek, and several other kurbachis; a chieftain named Hamdan ruled the district around Khodzhent; the Ferghana Basmachis were quarreling with each other, and so bitter were the rivalries there that, in some cases, partisan leaders resorted to assassination or went over to the Communists to help destroy their opponents. Even in Eastern Bukhara, where the Emir and his chief lieutenant, Ibrahim Bek, claimed full authority, there were numerous independent partisan leaders, who looked with disfavor upon the
deposed monarch. Another source of weakness of the Basmachi rebellion, in addition to the rivalry of individual chieftains, was tribal feuding. Basmachi units of different ethnic origin were at times as busy warring with each other as they were fighting the Communists. Especially bitter was the hostility between the Kirehiz and the Uzbeks, and between the Turkmen and Uzbeks.

It seemed to Enver that all that was needed to transform the genuine and deep-seated dissatisfaction, evident in all parts of Central Asia, into a vast and successful movement for the liberation of all of Turkistan, was the appearance of a personality able to overcome the disunity of Baschachtivo. Enver apparently counted on his personal popularity with the Moslem population and of a personality able to overcome the disunity of Basmachestvo. Enver apparently counted on his personal popularity with the Moslem population and on the appeal of his Pan-Turanian ideology, of which he had long been an avid exponent, to unite the rebel leaders and to stop the intertribal rivalries. With the boldness characteristic of his entire career, he decided, shortly after his arrival in Turkestan, to desert the Communist regime and to defect to the Baschiachis. He tried to establish control over all Bukharan government, including its chairman, Osman Khodzha, and the Commissars of Interior and of War.

The Basmachis at first received Enver coolly, fearing a Communist snare and suspicious of the jadidist group which accompanied him. But the Emir of Bukhara, with whom Enver had entered into a correspondence, instructed Ibrahim Bek to utilize Enver's military skills and to place him in command of the rebel armies fighting in Eastern Bukhara. Establishing his headquarters in the mountains of Bukhara, Enver began to gather around himself some of the independent chieftains operating in that area. His greatest success occurred early in 1922 when he captured Diushambe. From there he was able to impose his authority on the adjoining towns and villages. In the spring, having built up his force to an army of several thousand men, he began to attack Baisun, which obstructed the road to Western Bukhara and prevented him from spreading to the plains of Turkestan, but despite numerous charges he could not capture it.

Notwithstanding his initial triumphs, Enver failed to rally the bulk of the Basmachi forces to his leadership. He was merely another war lord, ruling a small territory and engaging in fights with neighboring chiefs. Of the sixteen thousand rebels active in Eastern Bukhara no more than three thousand owed him allegiance. Great damage to Enver's cause resulted from his disagreements with the Emir and Ibrahim Bek. Enver was too ambitious to be content with mere partisan warfare, and so he interfered as well with the political life of non-Communist Bukhara. He tried to establish control over all the Basmachi units operating in Eastern Bukhara and incited the native population to expel all the Europeans from Central Asia. In May 1922, he sent an "ultimatum" to the government of Soviet Russia (through Nariman Narimanov, chairman of the government of Soviet Azerbaijan), in which he demanded the immediate withdrawal of all Russian troops from Turkestan, offering in return to assist the Communists in their Middle Eastern activities.

Before long he completely lost all political judgment and, when issuing decrees affecting the civil life of Eastern Bukhara without the consent of the Emir, he signed himself "Commander in Chief of all the Islamic troops, son-in-law of the Caliph, and representative of the Prophet."

Such behavior aroused the suspicions of the Emir, who was altogether none too pleased with the association between the Turkish general and the jadidist defectors from Soviet rule, such as Osman Khodzha, who only recently had been his worst enemies. In the summer of 1922, relations between the headquarters of Enver, located near Diushambe, and those of Ibrahim Bek, situated among the Lakai (a Turkic group, settled among the Iranian Tajiks), came near the breaking point. Soon, the Emir began to withhold support from Enver. On at least one occasion when Enver was hard pressed in combat, Ibrahim Bek refused to come to his assistance. Later in the summer of 1922, the Afghan tribesmen who had been sent to his aid were ordered back to their homeland. Without the wholehearted support of the Emir, Enver was doomed. It is difficult to determine which played a larger part in his failure: his unwise handling of the Emir, or the struggle between the conservatives, represented by the Emir, and the progressive jadidists, of which he had become an unwitting victim. In August 1922, Enver was killed in combat with Red troops, who had surprised him and his small detachment in the mountains. His death ended all hope of a consolidation of the Basmachi forces. The Establishment of the USSR

The Basmachi revolt to Bukhara demonstrated conclusively that neither the policy of mere military suppression, tried between 1917 and 1920 and in 1921-22, nor the palliative measures tried in 1920-21 were sufficient to bring order to Central Asia. It was necessary to reverse completely the basic economic and political policies of the regime. Consequently, while undertaking a general military offensive against the Basmachis in Bukhara and other parts of Central Asia, the Turkburo of the Central Committee of the RKP and the Turkmコミsia introduced, in 1922, a series of far-reaching reforms. The most unpopular legislation of the previous rule was abrogated: the vakaf lands, previously confiscated for the benefit of the state, were returned to the Moslems; the religious schools, medrese and mektebe, were reopened; the shariat courts were brought back. After these religious concessions, economic concessions were also granted. The New Economic Policy permitted the return of private trade and put an end to the forcible requisitions of food and cotton which had played a considerable part in arousing popular ire against the Communists. All these concessions had a pacifying effect on Central Asia. The natives, having suffered from the Civil War longer than the other inhabitants of the Soviet state, were eager for peace. As soon as the Communist regime had made it possible for them to return to their traditional ways of life, the Central Asian

The natives, having suffered from the Civil War longer than the other inhabitants of the Soviet state, were eager for peace. As soon as the Communist regime had made it possible for them to return to their traditional ways of life, the Central Asian
NATIONALIST-COMMUNIST OPPOSITION: SULTAN-GALIEV

Another form of nationalistic opposition occurred within the ranks of the Communist Party itself. Prominent in it were non-Russians of radical views who had joined the Communist movement in the course of the Revolution because of their conviction that the establishment of a socialist economy would more or less automatically lead to the destruction of all national oppression. Their nationalism, though tempered and molded by social radicalism, was not entirely dominated by it. When their faith in the ability of the new order to eliminate national inequalities had been shattered by the experiences of the Civil War period, Communists of this type sought redress in nationalism and independence from Moscow. The most important exponent of this tendency was the Tatar Communist, Sultan-Galiev. His quarrel with the party in 1922-23 became a cause célèbre, a test case which opened a heated discussion of the entire national question in the Soviet Union.

Sultan-Galiev had had much opportunity in his capacity as a high official in the Commissariat of Nationality Affairs to observe the effects of Soviet rule on the Moslem population. He was in contact with the Tatar Republic, where, as leader of the right-wing Communist faction, he enjoyed considerable personal following; he had been sent to inspect and report on the situation of the Moslem population in the Crimea; and he had had many opportunities to meet and confer with important Moslem Communists and nationalists from Central Asia and other borderland areas. The total impression was so discouraging that Sultan-Galiev began to doubt whether the assumptions which had originally led him to embrace Communism had been sound. As early as 1919, in conversation with his Volga Tatar colleagues, he had expressed doubt whether the world-wide class struggle which the Russian Revolution had unleashed would really improve the lot of the colonial and semi-colonial peoples of the East. The industrial proletariat, he now suspected, was interested less in liberating the exploited colonial peoples from imperialism than in taking over for its own benefit the entire colonial system. From the point of view of the nonindustrial, colonial peoples, the proletariat's seizure of power would signify a mere change of masters. The English or French proletariats would find it advantageous to retain their country's colonial possessions and to continue the previous exploitation.

Sultan-Galiev did not at first apply those ideas to Soviet Russia and cooperated with the Communist regime for at least two more years after he had first begun to question the inherent ability of the proletariat to solve the national question in the East. It was apparently under the impact of the New Economic Policy that he finally lost all hope in Communism. The NEP, which improved the material situation of the native population, also returned to positions of power the classes which he and other Moslem Communists had identified with the old colonial regime: Russian merchants and officials, as well as Moslem traders and clergymen. Sultan-Galiev viewed the establishment of the NEP as the first formal step in a return to pre-1917 conditions and as the beginning of the liquidation of the socialist revolution in Russia; it increased his skepticism concerning the industrial proletariat's ability to liberate the world's oppressed nations.

He now began to draw broader theoretical conclusions from the evidence provided by four years of Communist rule. The economic inequalities of the world, he argued, could be eradicated not by a victory of the proletariat over the bourgeoisie but by the establishment of the hegemony of the backward areas over the industrialized ones. The war against the imperialism of industrialized societies, not the war against the bourgeoisie: this was the real conflict for universal liberation.

We maintain that the formula which offers the replacement of the world-wide dictatorship of one class of European society (the bourgeoisie) by its antipode (the proletariat), i.e., by another of its classes, will not bring about a major change in the social life of the oppressed segment of humanity. At any rate, such a change, even if it were to occur, would be not for the better but for the worse... In contradiction to this we advance another thesis: the idea that the material premises for a social transformation of humanity can be created only through the establishment of the dictatorship of the colonies and semi-colonies over the metropolitan areas.

Such views struck at the very heart of the Marxist doctrine, but as long as Sultan-Galiev spread them only among his close associates, the Central Committee, which could not have been unaware of the trend of his thought, did not interfere. In the summer of 1921, as a matter of fact, the left-wing faction that had controlled the Volga Tatar Communist party and state apparatus was ousted, and the rightists took over. The chairmanship of the Tatar Council of People's Commissars was assumed by Keshshaf Mukhtarov, a friend and follower of Sultan-Galiev. Soon, however, Sultan-Galiev began to make...
RSFSR meant between the RSFSR. That treaty, it will be recalled, established Communism because Communism seemed best turned to have destroyed once encroachments of a new breed of official whom the Revolution was supposed to ascendancy of Stalin and his coterie. The tenuous guarantees secured by the old and tried Bolsheviks, often with a record of outspoken hostility to the Revolution was supposed to be signed on orders from Stalin. Sultan-Galiev was arrested in April or May 1923 on the order of Stalin, his immediate superior and former protector. His case was discussed at a special conference of representatives of minorities which gathered in Moscow in June 1923. The charges against him were presented by Stalin who stated that whereas the shortage of adequate party cadres had compelled the Communists to cooperate with Moslem nationalists in the borderlands, the Soviet regime would not tolerate treason. Stalin specifically accused Sultan-Galiev of collaboration with the Baazakis, with Validov, and with other Moslem nationalists fighting against the Soviet regime. Sultan-Galiev, according to Stalin, "confessed his guilt fully, without concealment, and having confessed, repented." Despite his repentance, Sultan-Galiev was expelled from the Communist Party. According to Lev Kamenev, he was the first prominent party member purged on orders from Stalin.

COMMUNIST OPPOSITION: THE UKRAINE

The characteristic quality of the opposition to centralization in the Ukraine as well as in Georgia derived from the fact that nationalism in both these areas was not so much a cause as a consequence. The leaders of the opposition here were old and tried Bolsheviks, often with a record of outspoken hostility to nationalism in any form. If in 1922 and 1923 they became identified with the ideals of states' rights, it is largely because they perceived behind the process of centralization the growth of a new Russian bureaucracy and the personal ascendancy of Stalin and his coterie. The tenuous guarantees secured by the republics by decree and treaty became for them now bulwarks against the encroachments of a new breed of official whom the Revolution was supposed to have destroyed once and for all. While an Evener Pasha or even a Sultan-Galiev collaborated with Communism because Communism seemed best to further their national goals, men like Mykola Skrypnik, Rakovski, Mavromatis, or Makharadze turned nationalist in order to safeguard Communism.

The "nationalist deviation" in the Ukraine arose principally because of the failure of Moscow to adhere to the terms of the treaty of December 28, 1920. That treaty, it will be recalled, established an economic and military union between the RSFSR and the Soviet Ukraine. The Ukraine surrendered to the RSFSR certain commissariats (Army and Navy, Foreign Trade, Finance, Labor, Means of Communication, Post and Telegraphs, and the Higher Economic Council), but was recognized, in return, as a sovereign and independent republic. The commissariats of the RSFSR had no right to issue directives to their Ukrainian counterparts without the sanction of the Ukrainian Sovnarkom (Soviet Narochny Komissarov or Council of People's Commissars); nor could they interfere at all with the commissariats left within the competence of the republic. The Ukrainian republic also retained the right to maintain its own commissariat of Foreign Affairs and to enter into diplomatic relations with foreign powers.

It takes no expertise in the theory of federalism to realize that such an arrangement could not work. A country formally recognized as sovereign and independent, and engaged in foreign relations, could hardly allow another power to direct its internal affairs. Conversely, the officials of the government of the RSFSR, accustomed to treating all the territories of the old empire as one, had neither the experience nor the mental habits required to show respect for the intricacies of federal relations. As a result, the elaborate provisions of the 1920 treaty—which at least some officials in the Ukraine interpreted in good faith—remained a dead letter.

The clauses of the treaty, calling for mixed commissions to work out in detail the relations between the Russian and Ukrainian commissariats, were never actually carried out. Throughout 1921 and the first half of 1922, the Sovnarkom and VTsIK of the RSFSR treated the Ukraine as if it were an intrinsic part of the RSFSR. It neither admitted Ukrainian representatives to the commissariats, as provided by the treaty, nor submitted to the Ukrainian Sovnarkom for approval directives to the Ukrainian commissariats. Indeed, in most cases the Russian commissariats did not even trouble to consult their Ukrainian counterparts. The Ukrainians, naturally, protested against such violations of the treaty, but without effect. Their anger increased on occasions when Moscow issued directives to organs which the treaty left fully within the competence of the republic, such as the commissariats of agriculture and justice. And when in May 1922 the Russian Commissariat of Foreign Affairs (probably in connection with the conferences at Genoa or Rapallo) infringed on the international status of the Ukrainian republic, the Ukrainian government sent to Moscow a formal protest, in which it objected to the presumption of the Russian government to speak in its name.

In response to this note, the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party appointed on May 11, 1922, a mixed commission, headed by Frunze, to investigate the Ukrainian complaint. The commission held two meetings in the course of the month. The main result of its deliberations was a resolution whose lengthy title conveys its contents: "On the inadmissibility of any measures which would lead in practice to the liquidation of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, and to the reduction of the powers of its Central Committee, Council of People's Commissars, and central organs." The commission condemned the Russian Commissariat of Foreign Affairs for having violated Ukrainian
sovereignty and drafted several agreements between the commissariats of the two republics. But it did not solve the more fundamental problems affecting Russo-Ukrainian relations. Violations of Ukrainian constitutional rights continued. In September 1922, for example, the Commissariat of Education of the RSFSR issued an order applicable to the Ukraine, even though education was entirely within the competence of the latter.

The chief spokesman of the Ukrainian grievances was M. Skrypnik. Little in his background pointed to his becoming the leader of the nationalist opposition in the Ukrainian Communist movement. Although born in the Ukraine, he had moved in 1900, at the age of 28, to St. Petersburg to attend the Technological Institute, and from then until 1917 he had resided in Russia or Siberia. He was an old Marxist, having joined the movement in 1903. In 1917, after the split in the party he had associated himself with the Bolsheviks and had worked for Lenin on various important assignments, including for a time as editor of Pravda. In October 1917, he had served on the Revolutionary Committee which directed the Bolshevik coup d'état in St. Petersburg. During 1918 and 1919, as a high Soviet official in the Ukraine, he had taken a "centrist" position between the pro-Ukrainian and pro-Moscow factions. The fact that in 1919 he had been appointed head of the department of the Cheka charged with fighting "counter-revolutionary movements," and in 1920 had been made Commissar of the Interior of the Ukraine, testifies to Lenin's having complete confidence in him.

Skrypnik watched with apprehension and anger the utter disrespect which the Russian party and state apparatus showed for the Ukrainian republic. The violations of the 1920 treaty, related above, convinced him that a powerful faction in the Russian apparatus actually wanted to liquidate his republic and, being an outspoken man, he did not hesitate to make his views known. During the discussion of the nationality question at the Eleventh Party Congress, which met in March 1922, he delivered a brief but very pointed criticism of the party's Ukrainian policy. Referring to Lenin's statement that the Communists would emancipate the oppressed peoples of the whole world, Skrypnik said that they would achieve this aim only if they began to do so at home. The Communist party apparatus, in his opinion, was infiltrated with adherents of Smena vech', ready to violate the party's solemn pledge proclaiming the Ukraine independent. "The one and indivisible Russia is not our slogan," he exclaimed—at which point a voice from the audience, however, shouted back ominously: "The one and indivisible Communist Party!"

Skrypnik had occasion to make his views heard both at the Twelfth Party Congress (of which later) and at the special party conference which discussed the case of Sultan-Galiev. At this latter meeting, he took issue with Stalin's analysis of what came to be known as "sultan galievskchina." Sultan-Galiev's actions, he said, were a symptom of a grave disease affecting Communism, a disease caused by the failure of the Communists to carry out their national program, and particularly by their inability or unwillingness to check the growth of Great Russian chauvinism in the party and state apparatus. Sultan-Galiev was merely a scapegoat for the failures of others. The proper way to prevent the emergence of nationalist deviations, according to Skrypnik, was to destroy the national inequalities and injustices present in the Soviet system.

It is not possible to discover in Skrypnik's speeches or writings anything like a concrete ideology. His opposition was that of a convinced Communist who saw nationalism as a legacy of capitalism and, dismayed by its persistence under Communism, fought as best he could for Ukrainian autonomy. His uncompromising position made him many enemies in Moscow. In 1933, threatened with expulsion from the party, he committed suicide.

COMMUNIST OPPOSITION: GEORGIA

The bitter conflict which broke out in Georgia almost immediately upon the establishment of Soviet rule there, and which lasted until the death of Lenin three years later, involved questions of both policy and personality. On the level of policy the main issue was one of authority: What was the power of the Kavihuro, as an agency of the Russian Central Committee, over the Central Committees of the republican Communist parties? The leaders of these parties, especially those of the most powerful of them, the Communist Party of Georgia, were quite prepared to subordinate themselves to the directives of Moscow; but they were not willing to do the bidding of the Caucasian Bureau of the Central Committee, headed by the high-handed Ordzhonikidze. Their differences with the Kavihuro came to a head over the establishment of a Transcaucasian federation, conceived in Moscow and executed by Ordzhonikidze, which threatened to deprive the three Transcaucasian republics of their independence and to transform them into something like the autonomous republics of the RSFSR. It was not long before a dispute over matters of policy transformed itself into a vicious personal feud between two groups of Georgian Communists: the Moscow group, represented by Ordzhonikidze and his supporter, Stalin, and the local, Tiflis group, headed by Mdivani. Lenin at first backed the former, but with time, as we shall see, changed his mind and became so angered by Stalin's and Ordzhonikidze's Caucasian activities that he contemplated taking disciplinary action against them.

On May 21, 1921, the RSFSR and the Georgian Soviet Republic signed a formal treaty modeled on the treaty with Azerbaijan, which recognized Georgia's "sovereignty and independence." The treaty established a military and economic union (but not a political one) between the two republics and provided that the exact arrangements on the merger of commissariats would be worked out by separate agreements. Implicitly, Georgia was allowed to retain its foreign representations, armed forces, and currency.

Yet even before the treaty had been signed, the authorities in Moscow indicated that they were not prepared to respect the sovereignty of the
Transcaucasian republics, so solemnly proclaimed on various occasions. Lenin was anxious to achieve quickly the economic unification of Transcaucasia and particularly to integrate the Georgian transport facilities with those of Azerbaijan and Armenia with which they had been traditionally linked. He accordingly instructed Ordzhonikidze on April 9, 1921, to establish a single economic organization for all of Transcaucasia. He accordingly instructed Ordzhonikidze on April 9, 1921, to establish a single economic organization for all of Transcaucasia. He accordingly instructed Ordzhonikidze on April 9, 1921, to establish a single economic organization for all of Transcaucasia. 58

In the summer of 1921, having concluded that economic integration was not possible without a political one, the Kavbiuro proceeded to lay the foundations for a Transcaucasian federation. To prepare the ground for what promised to be a delicate undertaking, Stalin was dispatched in early July to Tiflis. He was present at the meeting of the Kavbiuro which passed a resolution approving the federation. He also delivered a rather mild, reasonably worded speech in which he pointed out all the reasons for establishing a "certain degree of unity" between the RSFSR and Transcaucasia, but at the same time hastened to assure his audience that there was no intention of depriving the republics of their independence. In his talk he did say a few words, clearly directed at the Georgians, about the dangers of nationalism, but even they were quite conciliatory in tenor; and when some Communists from Baku accused Mdivani and Kote Tintsadze, members of the Georgian Central Committee, of "nationalist deviationism" Stalin denied that this was the case. 72

The Georgian Communists were unimpressed by the conciliatory tone of Stalin's words. Convinced that Stalin and Ordzhonikidze, with the support of some Armenian and Azerbaijani Communists, were in fact encroaching upon Georgian sovereignty, they openly disregarded the various measures which the Kavbiuro took to integrate their republic with the rest of the country. On at least one occasion Mdivani and his group sent a personal protest to the TsK (Central Committee) in Moscow. 74

In view of this situation, it is not surprising that when on November 3, 1921, on instructions from Moscow, the Kavbiuro passed a formal resolution proclaiming that, until the convocation of the First Congress of Soviets of the Republic, it claimed full and exclusive authority on the territory of the republic. And the First Congress of Soviets of Georgia, meeting toward the end of February, approved a constitution of the republic which stated that "the Socialist Soviet Republic of Georgia was a sovereign state which did not permit any foreign power whatever to exercise equal authority on its territory." On the subject of the relations between Georgia and the other Soviet republics it was pointedly ambiguous. The constitution stated that when the "conditions for its creation came about" Georgia would join the International Socialist Soviet Republic; until then it expected to maintain "close" political and economic relations with the existing Soviet republics.11

Notwithstanding Georgian opposition, the Kavbiuro (renamed in February the Transcaucasian Regional Committee, or Zakvakom) proclaimed on March 12, 1922, the establishment of the Federal Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics of Transcaucasia (Federativnyi Soyuz Sotsialisticheskikh Respublik Transkaukaz'ia, or FSSRZ). The constitution of the federation provided that a Plenipotentiary Conference of representatives of the three federating republics elect as its supreme executive organ a Union Council (Sovznii Sovet). The Union Council had competence over the following spheres of governmental activity: military, financial, foreign affairs, foreign trade, transport,
communications, organized combat against the counterrevolution (i.e., Cheka), and direction of the economy. Absolute control of the economy rested in a Higher Economic Council (Vysshii Ekonomicheskii Sovet), which was to function as a permanent committee of the Union Council. The republics were allowed to retain their foreign legations and certain privileges in matters of tariffs and currency. They also were recognized as remaining legally independent and sovereign. The important matter of relations between the new federation and the RSFSR was to be left to be regulated by a separate agreement.82

The proclamation of the Transcaucasian union left little doubt in anyone's mind that the days of Georgian "independence and sovereignty" were numbered. The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Georgia commissioned, in December 1921, its most respected member, Makharadze, to address a memorandum to the Central Committee of the RKP expressing its principal grievances. In it Makharadze charged that the Georgian Communists had not been informed of the intention of Moscow to invade Georgia in February 1921, and for that reason had not been able to stage an internal uprising which would have prevented the entire coup against the Mensheviks from acquiring the character of a foreign invasion. Furthermore he alleged that the Kavkbiuro had ignored the Georgian Central Committee and Revkom and thus had failed to win the sympathies of the Georgian population for the Soviet cause; that Ordzhonikidze had disobeyed Lenin's directives concerning the gentle treatment of the population, the creation of a Georgian Red Army, and a moderate economic policy; and that he had refused to take the Georgian Central Committee into his confidence in the matter of the proposed federation. Makharadze urged in conclusion that the process of federating the three Transcaucasian republics be considerably slowed down.

**Formulation of Constitutional Principles of the Union**

The opposition in the Communist apparatus of the Ukraine and Georgia, particularly intense in the spring of 1922, induced the Central Committee to review the system of relations between the RSFSR and the other Soviet republics. This system had so far evolved haphazardly, by means of bilateral treaties. It not only failed to define with the necessary precision the division of authority between the Russian and republican governments, but confused matters by assigning to the government of the RSFSR functions involving at one and the same time the RSFSR and the federation as a whole. Soviet Russia's entrance on the international diplomatic scene in the spring of 1922 made the need for normalizing relations between the center and the borderlands more urgent than ever. Clearly, Moscow's international position was not strengthened by its recognition of Ukrainian, Belorussian, and Transcaucasian independence. The time had come to supplement the economic and military unions of 1920-21 with a tighter political one.

Which precise event caused the Central Committee on August 10, 1922, to appoint a constitutional commission is a matter of controversy. Frunze hinted that it was the dispute with the Ukraine over foreign policy.83 Ordzhonikidze, on the other hand, claimed that the commission was convened on the initiative of Stalin and himself in connection with the Georgian affair.84 Georgian matters seem to have had something to do with initiating the procedures which eventually led to the formation of the union, for the commission was appointed immediately after the Central Committee had heard a report on Georgia.85 The commission, whose assignment it was to draft for the Plenum a statement defining the relations between the RSFSR and the republics, was headed by Stalin, and included representatives of both the RKP and the republican parties; but the final report was drafted by a four-man subcommittee consisting of Stalin, Ordzhonikidze, Molotov, and A.F. Miasnikov—all reputed "centralists."86 Stalin had never been much impressed either by Lenin's fine distinction between "autonomous republics" and "Soviet republics," or by his high regard for diplomatic niceties in the matter of independence of the republics. This much he had made clear in 1920 in a private letter to Lenin. Commenting on the theses on the national and colonial questions which Lenin had drafted for the Second Congress of the Comintern, Stalin denied that there was a meaningful difference between "autonomous" and "Soviet" republics. "In your theses," he wrote, "you draw a distinction between Bashkir and Ukrainian types of federal union, but in fact there is no such difference, or it is so small as to equal zero."87 Since by 1921 the position of the Soviet republics had declined as compared to 1920, Stalin had no reason to change his mind; and in drafting his project he proceeded from the same assumption.

In the project Stalin strove to give a straightforward and realistic expression to the constitutional practice that had evolved in the preceding five years under Lenin's personal tutelage. That is to say, he treated the Soviet domain as a unified, centralized state and the government of the RSFSR as the de facto government of all the six Soviet republics. In this manner he hoped to eliminate all those difficulties which the legal fiction of "independence" of the republics had made for those who were running the country.

His draft, called "Project of a Resolution Concerning the Relations between the RSFSR and the Independent Republics," first revealed in 1926, has not yet been published in its entirety, but its main points can be readily reconstructed. The key clause was the first one, calling for the entrance of the five border republics into the RSFSR on the basis of autonomy.88 If carried out, this clause would have transformed the Ukraine, Belorussia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia into autonomous republics of the RSFSR, on a par with the Iakut or the Crimean republics, and would have swept aside the whole elaborate system of relations established by the treaties. The second article provided for the organs of the RSFSR—its Central Executive Committee, Council of People's Commissars, and Council of Labor and Defence—to assume the functions of the federal
government for all the six republics. The remaining three articles specified which commissariats were to be taken over by the Russian government, which were to be left to the republics but to function under the control of the corresponding agencies of the RSFSR, and which were to be entrusted entirely to the autonomous republics.96

Stalin completed his project at the end of August and dispatched it to the Central Committees of the republics for discussion and approval. It is important to note, however, that even before the republics had reacted, Stalin, on August 29, 1922, sent a wire to Mdivani announcing the extension of the authority of the Russian government: the Sovnarkom V TsIK, and STO (Sovet Truda i Oborony, or Council of Labor and Defence), over the governments of all the republics.97 The Georgians were so enraged by this unilateral abrogation of the 1921 treaty that they dispatched to Moscow a three-man delegation, which was later joined by Mdivani.98

As may be expected, Stalin's draft had no difficulty securing the approval of the Azerbaijani Communist Party, which was under Ordzhonikidze's firm control.99 But no other republican Central Committee (with the possible exception of the Armenian) followed suit. The first vocal opposition came from the Georgians. On September 15, 1922, the Georgian Central Committee flatly turned down Stalin's theses, voting unanimously, with one dissent (Eliava) "to consider premature the unification of the independent republics on the basis of autonomization, proposed by Comrade Stalin's theses. We regard the unification of economic endeavor and of general policy indispensable, but with the retention of all the attributes of independence."100 Ordzhonikidze, who with Kirov attended these proceedings, then decided to overrule the Georgians. On the following day he convened the Presidium of the Zakraikom, which he headed, and had it pass a resolution approving Stalin's project. The Presidium also ordered the Georgian Central Committee, on its personal responsibility, not to inform the rank and file of its negative decision and to carry out faithfully Stalin's instructions.101

The Belorussians responded (on September 16) evasively. First, they asked for territory to be added to their republic; then they stated that as far as relations with the RSFSR were concerned, they would be satisfied with the same arrangement as that made by the Ukraines.102 The Ukrainians, having procrastinated until October 3, finally passed a resolution which categorically demanded the preservation of Ukrainian independence and the establishment of relations with the RSFSR on the basis of principles formulated by Frunze's commission the previous May.103

Stalin's commission reconvened on September 23. It had little to show by way of republican approval, but the lack of enthusiasm in the borderlands apparently did not much trouble either Stalin or his colleagues. There was more discussion of the draft, during which some clauses were criticized and possibly even changed. No one, however, challenged the fundamental premise of "autonomization."104 Having secured the approval of the commission, Stalin forwarded to Lenin the minutes of its meetings, as well as the favorable resolutions of the Azerbaijani Communist Party and the Zakraikom.105

Lenin apparently had not been kept well informed of the commission's work, for the data which Stalin supplied dismayed and angered him. From Lenin's point of view, the project undid the pseudofederal edifice which he had so carefully constructed over the past five years. Worst of all, it threatened to upset the whole fiction of national equality which Lenin counted on to mollify and neutralize the nationalist sentiments of the minorities. He saw no practical advantages to be derived from incorporation of the five independent republics into the RSFSR. Its only consequence would have been to reveal, with brutal frankness, the dependence of all the Communist republics on Russia and to make it very difficult in the future to win nationalist movements for Bolshevism in the so-called colonized and semi-colonial areas.

As soon as he had become acquainted with the commission's materials, Lenin summoned Stalin. He severely criticized his project and exerted on him strong pressure to modify all those points which formalized the hegemony of the RSFSR over the other republics. He wished for an arrangement whereby all the republics, the RSFSR included, constituted a new federation, with a separate government, called the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics of Europe and Asia. Stalin yielded to Lenin on this and agreed to abandon the idea of 'autonomization' advocated in the first article of his project in favor of a federal union of equal states. But he refused to concede on the second article. Lenin's demand for the creation of new federal central organs—an All-Union Central Executive Committee, Sovnarkom, and Council of Labor and Defence—to supersede those of the RSFSR seemed to him administratively cumbersome and superfluous. Stalin thought that Lenin's purpose could be achieved as well by the simpler device of renaming the organs of the RSFSR as all-Union ones. But Lenin disagreed and criticized Stalin for being impatient and excessively addicted to administrative procedures. On the conclusion of their interview, both men put down their views in a memorandum which they forwarded to Lev Kamenev, then acting chairman of the Sovnarkom.106 Stalin's note was surprisingly insolent in tone.

In the end, Stalin had to yield all along the line and, on the basis of Lenin's criticism, to revise his entire project. The project was discussed at a meeting of the Plenum on October 6, 1922. Lenin, suffering from a severe toothache, had to absent himself from this session, but he made his views unmistakably clear in a note which he sent to his colleagues on that day: "I declare war on Great Russian chauvinism; a war not for life but for death. As soon as I get rid of that accursed tooth of mine, I shall devour it with all my healthy ones."107 He also repeated his insistence that Stalin modify article two of his project. The Plenum accepted Lenin's suggestions, and voted in favor of a new draft calling for the establishment of a Union of Soviet Socialist Republics governed by a
newly created Union Central Executive Committee of representatives of the republican Central Executive Committees. The Plenum also appointed a commission of eleven members to translate these principles into a constitutional project.\textsuperscript{104} It may be noted that Mdivani participated as a guest in these deliberations and, however reluctantly, gave his approval in the name of the Georgian party, but only after having insisted that the Georgian republic enter the Union directly, as a full-fledged member.\textsuperscript{105}

After its approval by the Plenum, the new draft of constitutional principles was sent to the Central Committees of the non-Russian republics. In Transcaucasia, the Azerbaijani and Armenian parties gave their approval promptly, but the Georgians once more made difficulties. From one point of view, the new statement was preferable to the previous one, which they had so unceremoniously rejected on September 15; the federating republics now entered the Union as formally independent states, equal to the RSFSR. But the new project also had one very serious drawback. Whereas Stalin's old project envisaged the three Transcaucasian republics as entering the RSFSR directly, the new one provided for their joining the Union through the intermediary of the Transcaucasian Federation. To the Georgian Communists this provision seemed ludicrous and insulting. Why, for instance, should Belorussia have the right to become a full-fledged member of the Union, and not Georgia? And what was the point of creating a federation if the proposed Union would absorb most of the republican commissariats anyway? A double political union—once with the Transcaucasian Federation, and then, through the Federation, with the Union—simply made no sense to them. The Georgians, therefore, protested to Moscow, demanding the abandonment of the projected federation.\textsuperscript{106} To this request Stalin replied on October 16 in the name of the Central Committee, stating that it was unanimously rejected.\textsuperscript{107}

Temper in Georgia now reached the point of explosion. Dissident Communist leaders held secret meetings at which they complained of the violation of their rights and criticized the policies of Moscow.\textsuperscript{108} They secured at this time the support of the most distinguished Georgian Communist, Makharadze, who on October 19 made a speech in Tiflis pleading for Georgia's direct entrance into the Union.\textsuperscript{109} Makharadze was not only the oldest Georgian Bolshevik (like Zhordania he had become a Marxist while attending the university in Warsaw in 1891-92), but he had a well-earned reputation of being an irreconcilable enemy of nationalism. Before the Revolution he had opposed Lenin's slogan of national self-determination from a position which Lenin called "nihilistic"; during the Revolution (at the April 1917 Bolshevik Congress) he had led the faction which demanded the removal of that slogan from the party's program; and in 1921-22, despite some misgivings, he had collaborated with Ordzhonikidze's centralistic measures. That a Communist of such background should have joined the opposition provides evidence of the near unanimity which existed in Georgia at this time.

On October 20, the three members of the Georgian delegation returned from the mission to Moscow on which they had been dispatched at the end of August and reported to the Central Committee. Having heard them, the Committee voted (twelve to three) to appeal to Moscow once more for reconsideration. Accepting now as binding the decision to establish a Transcaucasian federation, it nevertheless requested the abolition of the Union Council and Georgia's direct entrance into the Union, on the same terms as the Ukraine.\textsuperscript{107} Simultaneously, Makharadze and Tsintsadze sent strong personal letters to Kamenev and Bukharin complaining about Ordzhonikidze.\textsuperscript{109}

Lenin by this time had had his fill of the Georgians. He interpreted their actions as a breach of party discipline as well as a failure to adhere to a decision taken with the concurrence of their representative. On October 21 he dispatched to Tiflis a sharply worded wire in which he rejected their request and stated that he was turning the whole matter over to the Secretariat, that is, to Stalin.\textsuperscript{110} Kamenev and Bukharin sent separate wires to Makharadze and Mdivani accusing them of nationalism and insisting that they cooperate in the establishment of the federation.\textsuperscript{111} Upon receipt of these dispatches the Central Committee of the Georgian Communist Party on October 22 took the unprecedented step of tendering the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party its resignation.\textsuperscript{112} The resignation was accepted, and a new Georgian Central Committee was promptly appointed by the Zakraikom. It consisted mostly of young converts to Communism who lacked both experience and reputation, and whom Makharadze contemptuously dismissed as "Komsomolpay."\textsuperscript{113} With their support, Ordzhonikidze had no difficulty securing full cooperation and approval of the new constitutional project.\textsuperscript{114}

The Georgian affair delayed by several weeks the drafting of the Union agreement. The constitutional committee reassembled again only on November 21, without having accomplished anything in the interval. It now appointed a subcommittee, chaired by the Commissar of Foreign Affairs, G.V. Chicherin, to prepare the draft of a constitution.\textsuperscript{115} Chicherin had his draft ready within a week's time.\textsuperscript{116} It was at once approved by the constitutional committee and by the Central Committee (Lenin included) and, in the course of December, by the Congresses of Soviets of the four federating republics (Transcaucasia being treated now as a single federal republic).\textsuperscript{116} On December 29, 1921, representatives of the republics attended a conference in the Kremlin at which Stalin read the articles of the Union. After some protests, most likely from some Georgians, the majority of those present voted in favor of the act.\textsuperscript{117} Next day a joint session of the Tenth Congress of Soviets of the RSFSR and the deputies of the congresses of soviets of the Ukraine, Belorussia, and Transcaucasia took place in Moscow's Bolshoi Theatre. This joint session called itself the First Congress of Soviets of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.\textsuperscript{118} Its main order of business was to ratify the agreement establishing the Soviet Union—a task which it was confidently expected to fulfill, since 95 per cent of
all the deputies were members of the Communist Party and as such were required by party discipline to vote for resolutions passed by the Central Committee.\textsuperscript{109} The Congress did not disappoint those expectations.

The agreement stipulated that the supreme legislative organ of the new state was the Congress of Soviets of the USSR and that during intervals between its sessions, the role passed to the Central Executive Committee of the Congress of Soviets. The sessions of the Congress of Soviets were to be held by rotation in the capitals of each of the four republics. The highest executive organ of the Union was to be the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR (Sovnarkom Sritsa), elected by the Central Executive Committee and composed of the following officials: a chairman, a deputy chairman; the Commissars of Foreign Affairs, War and Navy, Foreign Trade, Means of Communications, Post and Telegraphs, Workers' and Peasants' Inspection, Labor, Supply, Finance; the Chairman of the Higher Council of National Economy; and in an advisory capacity, the head of the Secret Police (OGPU). The Union republics were to have their own councils of people's commissars composed of the Commissars for Agriculture, Supply, Finance, Labor, Interior, Justice, Workers' and Peasants' Inspection, Education, Health, Social Security; the Chairman of the Higher Council of National Economy; and as consultants, representatives of the federal commissariats. The Commissariats of Supply, Finance, Labor Workers' and Peasants' Inspection, and the Higher Council of National Economy of each of the republican governments were to be directly subordinated to the corresponding agencies of the federal government. The agreement thus distinguished three types of commissariats: federal, republican, and joint. Strictly within the competence of the republican governments were only the Commissariats of Agriculture, Interior, Justice, Education, Health, and Social Security. The final article of the agreement guaranteed every republic the right of secession from the Union, despite the fact that, according to the preceding article, only the federal government could effect changes in the Union Agreement—such as, presumably, matters of entering and leaving the Union.\textsuperscript{130}

The Presidium of the Central Executive Committee, appointed by the First Congress of Soviets of the USSR, formed on January 10, 1923, six separate commissions to prepare the draft of a constitution based on the articles of the Union Agreement.\textsuperscript{122}

\textbf{Lenin's Change of Mind}

The Georgian opposition, whose history since early 1921 we have traced, was of importance not only for its role in shaping the constitution, but also for its impact on Lenin's attitude toward the nationality question. It provided overwhelming evidence against the basic premise of Lenin's nationality policy: that nationalism was a transitional, historical phenomenon associated with the era of capitalism and bound to dissolve in the heat of intense class struggle. Lenin observed with obvious dismay a new kind of nationalism emerging in the Russian as well as in the minority Communist apparatus—that very apparatus on which he depended to eradicate national animosities. As this evidence accumulated in the winter of 1922-23, Lenin went through a reappraisal of Soviet nationality policy which bore all the marks of a true intellectual crisis. It is likely that had he not suffered a nearly fatal stroke in March 1923 the final structure of the Soviet Union would have been quite different from that which Stalin ultimately gave it.

To understand Lenin's change of mind one must bear in mind the effect which both internal and external events since 1917 had had on his nationality policy. Self-determination interpreted as the right to secession was in fact a dead letter. So was federalism, since the military and economic exigencies of the Soviet state, requiring the merger of the conquered borderlands with the RSFSR, had vitiated the very essence of the federal system which Lenin had been forced to adopt as a substitute for self-determination. The minorities were thus left without any effective guarantees against the encroachment of the central authorities; and yet they needed these more than ever in view of the unlimited authority enjoyed by the Communist party over the citizenry. In the end, Lenin's national program reduced itself to a matter of personal behavior: it depended for the solution of the complex problems of a multinational empire upon the tact and good will of Communist officials. To Lenin such a solution seemed perfectly feasible, in part because he himself was a stranger to national prejudices, and in part because he believed that the establishment of Communism destroyed the soil in which nationalism could flourish.

In fact, however, Lenin's expectations were quite unfounded. Like every staunch realist, he mistook that segment of reality of which he happened to be aware for reality as a whole, and in the end displayed no little naivete. Nationalism may well have been rooted in psychology, in the memory of wrongs done or in sensitivity to slight; but surely it was more than that. It reflected also specific interests and striving that could not be satisfied merely by tact but required real political and other concessions. Nor could the groups on which Lenin counted to carry out what was left of his nationality program display that reasonableness this program demanded. Before as well as after 1917 even the closest of his followers had rejected his concessions to the nationalities as impractical and incompatible with the Bolshevik ideology. If the Soviet Constitution of 1918 and the Communist program of 1919 had included his formulae calling for a federation based on the national principle and the retention of the slogan of national self-determination (although in a highly qualified form), it was only because of Lenin's tremendous prestige with the Party. The majority of the Bolshevik leaders remained unconvinced, and the numerous new rank and file who had joined the Communists since the Revolution (in 1922 they constituted 97.3 per cent of the active party membership)\textsuperscript{122} were even less prepared to assimilate the subtle reasoning which lay behind his national program. To the overwhelming majority of Communists and Communist
The Soviet Russian republic alone had the industrial and military might proved themselves weak and incapable of survival without the military assistance of the "unity of the anticapitalist front," or the "destruction of counterrevolutionary forces"—were synonymous with the establishment of Great Russian hegemony. The Communist movements in the Russian borderlands had reached the urban and industrial centers of the country and hence was Communism. The Communist movements in the Russian borderlands had at least another Ukraine, Transcaucasia, and the other borderlands) were Russian by origin, and personnel of Soviet republics, drawn largely from the bureaucracy of the members of the Communist Party (including its regional organizations in the Ukraine, Transcaucasia, and the other borderlands) were Russian by origin, and at least another 10 per cent were Russian by language... The administrative personnel of Soviet republics, drawn largely from the bureaucracy of the ancien régime, was probably even more heavily dominated by Russian and Russified elements.

The preponderance of Great Russians in the political apparatus was not in any sense due to a peculiar affinity of members of that nationality for the Communist movement. Since, as statistics indicate, the proportion of Communists among the entire Russian population was only slightly higher than the country-wide average, and there were several national groups whose ratio of Communists was considerably larger. It was rather due to the fact that the industrial and urban population in the country was predominantly of Russian stock, and that a large proportion of the non-Russians likely to engage in political activity were assimilated. In a democratic state such a one-sided ethnic composition of a party would not necessarily have had great practical consequences; it was different in a totalitarian country, where the party was in full control. Already in the course of the Revolution the equation Communism = Russia had been made in many of the borderlands by both Russians and non-Russians, especially in the eastern regions. As I indicated in the discussion of the 1917-20 period, many elements that had nothing in common with Communist ideology had sided with the Communists because they felt that the regime was essentially devoted to Great Russian interests. This identification of the Communist movement with the Russian cause had inspired much of the opposition in the borderlands to the Soviet government. But it was only after 1920, after the end of the Civil War, that the growth of Great Russian nationalism in the Communist movement became unmistakably evident. At the Tenth Party Congress, held in 1921, a number of speakers called attention to it:

The fact that Russia had first entered on the road of the revolution, that Russia had transformed itself from a colony—an actual colony of Western Europe—into the center of the world movement, this fact has filled with pride the hearts of those who had been connected with the Russian Revolution and engendered a peculiar Red Russian patriotism. And we now see how our comrades consider themselves with pride, and not without reason, as Russians, and at times even look upon themselves above all as Russians.\textsuperscript{123}

Communist writers acquainted with the Soviet Moslem region pointed to the prevalence of Great Russian nationalism in the eastern borderlands:

It is necessary to acknowledge the fact that not only the officialdom in the borderlands, which consists largely of officials of the old regime, but also the proletariat inhabiting those areas which actively supports the revolution, consists in its majority of persons of Russian nationality. In Turkestan, for example, Russian workers thought that once the dictatorship of the proletariat had been established, it should work only for their benefit as workers, and that they could fully ignore the interests of the backward agricultural and nomadic population, which had not yet reached their "proletarian" level of consciousness. The same thing had occurred in Azerbaijan, Bashkirs, and elsewhere. This situation had caused the broad masses of the native population to think that, when you come right down to it, nothing has changed, and that the Russian official has been replaced by a Russian proletariat, who, although he talks of equality, in reality, like the previous Russian official, takes care only of himself, ignoring the interests of the local population.\textsuperscript{124}

The Tenth Congress was the first to take cognizance of the emergence of Great Russian nationalism in the Communist apparatus by including in its resolutions a strongly worded condemnation of what it called "the danger of Great Russian chauvinism."\textsuperscript{125}

In view of this development, was Lenin realistic in entrusting the ultimate authority in the controversial matter of relations between the Great Russian majority of the population and its non-Russian minority to the Communist Party? It was psychologically as well as administratively contradictory to strive for the supremacy of the proletariat, and at the same time to demand that this proletariat, which was largely Russian, place itself in a morally defensive position regarding the minorities; to have an all-powerful party, a fully centralized state, and also genuine self-rule in the borderlands; to have the political apparatus suppress ruthlessly all opposition to the regime in Russia proper and adopt a conciliatory attitude toward dissident nationalism in the republics.

Yet if, despite all these factors, Lenin stood fast by his solution of the nationality question, it is because of its bearing on the long-range prospects of Communism. The failure of the revolution in Germany, which he had regarded as essential for the eventual triumph of the Communist Revolution, made Lenin pay even greater attention to the so-called colonial peoples of the East. Hence the possibilities of a successful revolution seemed much greater than in Europe. And even though such a revolution would not immediately bring down the
capitalist powers, it was expected so to weaken their economic position as to make an ultimate collapse inevitable. But a revolution in Asia and Africa required the use of nationalist slogans, which the Communists could employ only if they proved to be effective champions of national independence. It is for this reason that Lenin considered it of vital importance to dissociate Communism from Great Russian nationalism, with which it had tended to fuse since the end of the Civil War.

Of the three outstanding Communist leaders in the early 1920's, Stalin seems to have realized most clearly the contradictions inherent in the Communist nationality program. The nationalist opposition was divided and ineffective; Lenin approved all the measures giving priority to the Russian apparatus, though he winced at their inevitable consequences; while Trotsky showed little interest in the whole national question. Stalin, however, placed himself squarely on the side of the central apparatus and identified himself with the Great Russian core of the Party and state bureaucracy. He thus stood in the center of Communism's last, and perhaps bitterest, struggle over the national question.

The demoted Georgian Communists kept on sending Lenin telegrams and letters in which they complained of their treatment at the hands of Ordzhonikidze, and requested an impartial inquiry. One such letter particularly attracted Lenin's attention. Written by a prominent figure of the opposition, M. Okudzhava, it accused Ordzhonikidze of personally insulting and threatening Georgian Communists. Lenin turned this letter and other documents over to the Secretariat of the Central Committee, which on November 24 appointed a three-man commission to investigate the affair. The commission was headed by Dzerzhinskii, and included the minority point of view.

What he said we do not know. But how anxious Lenin was to learn all he could is seen from the fact that the instant Dzerzhinskii returned to Moscow (December 12) he departed in haste from Gorki, where he was convalescing, for the Kremlin, and there met with Dzerzhinskii the very same day. Although Dzerzhinskii completely exonerated Ordzhonikidze and Stalin in their dealing with the Georgians, some of the evidence he brought back greatly disturbed Lenin—so much so that from then on he could hardly get the Georgian affair out of his mind. He was troubled most of all by a rather minor incident, to which, for some reason he attached great importance. It involved a quarrel between Ordzhonikidze and a Georgian Communist named A. Kabakhidze, which ended with Ordzhonikidze giving his opponent a beating.

Lenin was infuriated both by Ordzhonikidze's use of physical violence and by Dzerzhinskii's casual treatment of it. He instructed Dzerzhinskii to return to Tiflis to gather more information on this incident, and in the meantime called in Stalin, with whom he had an interview lasting for over two hours. The facts which began to come in from Georgia confirmed his worst suspicions, and he became acutely depressed. Having returned to Gorki, he intended the following day (December 15) to write Kamenev a substantial letter on the nationality question, but before he had a chance to do so he suffered another stroke.

While Lenin lay incapacitated, Ordzhonikidze, with Stalin's support, proceeded further to whittle down the powers left the Transcaucasian federation. The new federation, established in December 1922 as the Transcaucasian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, was much more centralist than that envisaged in the constitution of the previous March. It also said nothing about the independence of the constituent republics. To reduce anticipated Georgian resistance, the Central Committee of the RKP on December 21 ordered the leaders of the opposition, Mdivani, Makharadze, Tintanadze, and Kavtaradze, to leave Georgia, justifying its decision by the information which it said Dzerzhinskii's commission had supplied. How powerful Ordzhonikidze's hold on his area was by now may be gleaned from the fact that in December 1922, at the First Congress of Soviets of Transcaucasia, he was hailed by someone as "the leader of the toiling masses of Transcaucasia." Lenin, having toward the end of December recovered from his stroke, tried at all costs to resume work. He had difficulty with the doctors who did not permit him to do so, until, by threatening to ignore medical advice altogether, he won from them the right to dictate every day, for ten or fifteen minutes, a personal diary. He immediately took advantage of this right to dictate several important memoranda, including one on the nationality question. This memorandum, Lenin's last theoretical contribution on the subject of the national problem, was originally not intended for publication, inasmuch as it contained derogatory remarks about three members of the Central Committee. It became known only because of its involvement in the rivalry between Trotsky and Stalin.

Lenin's analysis of the Georgian incident suffered from all the limitations imposed on him by the Communist dogma. He was unable to perceive that the failures of the Soviet national policy were due to a fundamental misinterpretation of the entire national problem and followed naturally from the dictatorial system of government which he had established. His mind operated only in terms of...
class enemies. Seeking scapegoats, he blamed all national friction on the "bourgeois" elements in the state apparatus, disregarding the fact that in the Georgian crisis the guilty ones, by his own admission, were top members of the Communist Party. His remedies consisted only of reversion to party control of the political apparatus, linguistic measures, and the introduction of "codes of behavior" for Communist officials working in the borderlands—methods which had proved themselves unequal to the task in the previous years of Soviet rule. Nothing illustrated better the confusion which by now pervaded his thoughts on the subject than his contradictory recommendation that the union of republics be both "retained and strengthened" and in effect weakened by restoring to the republics full independence in all but military and diplomatic affairs.142

Lenin, hoping to recover from his illness, kept the memorandum to himself, with the intention of basing on it a major policy statement at the forthcoming Twelfth Party Congress. In the meantime he busily gathered evidence against Stalin and Ordzhonikidze. He probably did not realize, however, how quickly power was slipping from his hands. When, on January 27, 1923, Dzerzhinskii had returned from his second Caucasian mission and Lenin, through his secretary, demanded to see the materials he had brought back, Dzerzhinskii replied that he had turned all materials over to Stalin. A search for Stalin revealed that he was out of town and unreachable. Upon his return two days later, Stalin flatly refused to surrender the materials and did so only when Lenin threatened to put up a fight for them.143 There can be little doubt that, although Stalin pretended to be concerned with Lenin's health, in fact he was personally interested in keeping Lenin as much as possible out of the Georgian feud.

Lenin by now could rely only on a few devoted women from his private secretariat. He turned over to them all the materials brought back by Dzerzhinskii and prepared a questionnaire which they were to use in analyzing them. The questionnaire contained the following seven questions: What was the deviation with which the Georgian Central Committee was charged? In what respect did it violate party discipline? In what ways was it oppressed by the Zakraikom? What instances were there of physical violence used against the Georgians? What was the policy of the Central Committee of the RKP when Lenin was present compared to when he was absent? Did Dzerzhinskii on his second trip also investigate the charges against Ordzhonikidze? What was the present situation in Georgia?144 While the secretaries were busy at work preparing the report, Lenin constantly inquired about their progress. According to the diary of his personal secretary, in February 1923 the Georgian question was then uppermost in his mind.145

In the meantime, the formation of the Soviet Union was forging ahead. In February 1923 the Plenum of the Central Committee (from which Lenin was also absent) decided to add a second chamber to the Union legislature to represent the national groups. Originally, the Communists had been hostile to the idea of a bicameral legislature, considering it a feature of a "class society" and unnecessary in the "proletarian" state. In November 1922 Stalin had stated that, although some Communists were advocating the creation of a second, upper chamber to provide representation for the nationalities as such, he felt that this view "will undoubtedly find no sympathy in the national republics, if only because the two-chamber system, with the existence of an upper chamber, is not compatible with the Soviet government, at any rate, at the present stage of its development."146 By February, however, Stalin changed his mind in favor of a bicameral legislature, largely, in all likelihood, because it enabled him to increase his personal control over the Soviet legislature. The Council of Nationalities (Sovet natotonal'nostei), which was approved by the party and incorporated into the Constitution, was the same Council of Nationalities that Stalin had formed as part of the Commissariat of Nationality Affairs in April 1921, with the addition of deputies from the three Union republics. The second chamber was, therefore, staffed with people who had Stalin's personal approval.147

Lenin finally received the report on March 3. It must have infuriated him, because he now switched his support completely to the side of the Georgian opposition. His first impulse was to form a new and impartial investigating commission;148 the second, to entrust the handling of the whole Georgian affair to Trotsky. On March 5, he addressed to Trotsky the following letter:

Respected Comrade Trotsky! I would very much like to ask you to take upon yourself the defense of the Georgian case in the Central Committee of the Party. The matter is now being "prosecuted" by Stalin and Dzerzhinskii, on whose objectivity I cannot rely. Quite on the contrary. If you agree to assume responsibility for the defense, I shall be at ease. If for some reason you do not agree to do so, please return the materials to me. I shall consider this a sign of your refusal. With best comradely greetings,

Lenin

With this letter, Lenin forwarded to Trotsky his memorandum on the nationality question.149

The following day Lenin sent a brief but significant message to the leaders of the Georgian opposition:150

To Comrades Mdivani, Malahadze, and others: copies to comrades Trotsky and Kamenev. Respected Comrades! I follow your case with all my heart. I am appalled by the coarseness of Ordzhonikidze, and the connivances of Stalin and Dzerzhinskii. I am preparing for you notes and a speech. Respectfully,

Lenin
Simultaneously, Lenin dispatched to Georgia a new investigating commission, consisting of Kamenev and Kuibyshev. Decidedly, events were taking a dangerous course for Stalin and Ordzhonikidze. They were saved from a public chastisement by sheer good fortune. On the day when he had dictated his letter to Mdivani and Makhadzrde, Lenin suffered his third stroke, which paralyzed him completely and removed him for good from all political activity.

THE LAST DISCUSSION OF THE NATIONALITY QUESTION

Lenin's third attack deprived the Georgian opposition, and all those who for one reason or another wanted to slow down the inexorable advance of centralization, of their main means of support. It soon became evident that Trotsky neither could nor would assume the task which Lenin had entrusted to him. Instead of taking the issue to the party leadership, he tried first to obtain permission from the entire Central Committee to make public Lenin's memorandum on the nationality question. Whether he failed to secure it, or whether courage deserted him, is not certain. At any rate, Trotsky did not take charge of the anti-Stalinist opposition among the minorities; and thus he failed to take advantage of an excellent opportunity to embarrass his principal rival at a critical phase in their struggle for power. Lenin's note, having passed through the hands of the entire Central Committee, became widely known to the deputies to the Twelfth Party Congress which assembled in Moscow in April 1923. It was behind all the acrimonious debates on the nationality question which took place there.

The nationality question broke into the open at one of the early sessions of the Congress, during the discussion of the report on the party's Central Committee. Mdivani, unable to control his anger, launched a bitter tirade against the policies pursued by the Central Committee and its Caucasian Bureau in Georgia. Makhadzrde supported him, charging that much of the responsibility for the interparty quarrels in Georgia rested on Ordzhonikidze, who had ignored the old Georgian Bolsheviks in favor of newcomers. He emphatically denied the charge that the Georgian Communists had hindered the unification of Transcaucasia, asserting that they had objected only to the methods and the tempo with which this unification was being accomplished. Ordzhonikidze and Orakhelashvili, speaking for the Stalinist faction, pointed to numerous examples of "nationalist deviations" on the part of the Georgian Central Committee and Georgian government. They also taunted Makhadzrde with his record as a "nihilist" in the national question and as an opponent of Lenin's national program. Stalin took no pains to conceal his utter contempt for the Georgian oppositions. "I think that some of the comrades, working on a certain piece of Soviet territory, called Georgia," he said, "have apparently something wrong with their marbles."

The discussion on the national question, temporarily shelved after this premature explosion, was resumed at a later session. The principal report was delivered by Stalin. In his report, Stalin skillfully maneuvered between the two extreme views on the problem, stressing simultaneously the danger of Great Russian nationalism under the New Economic Policy and the need for the unification of the Soviet state. But in the course of the discussions, in which he answered criticism leveled at the Soviet treatment of the minorities, Stalin made it unmistakably plain that he was not prepared to go along with Lenin's thesis on the relationship of the Russians toward the minorities:

For us, as Communists, it is clear that the basis of our work is for the strengthening of the rule of the workers, and only after this comes the second question—an important question, but subordinated to the first—the national question. We are told that one should not offend the nationalities. This is entirely correct, I agree with this—they should not be offended. But to create from this idea a new theory, that it is necessary to place the Great Russian proletariat in a position of inferiority in regard to the once oppressed nations, is an absurdity. That which Comrade Lenin uses as a metaphor in his well-known article, Bukharin transforms into a whole slogan. It is clear, however, that the political basis of the proletarian dictatorship is in the first place and above all in the central, industrial regions, and not in the borderlands, which represent peasant countries. If we should lean too far in the direction of the peasant borderlands at the expense of the proletarian region, then a crack may develop in the system of proletarian dictatorship. This, comrades, is dangerous. In politics it is not good to stretch too far, just as it is not good to stretch too little.

Next, Stalin proceeded to quote from Lenin's previously published works to the effect that the class principle had priority over the national one, and that the Communists from the minority areas were obliged to strive for a close union with the Communists of the nation which had oppressed them. It did not take great subtlety to realize that "the proletarian region," whose hegemony Stalin advocated, meant Russia, and that his references to Lenin's works were inspired by a desire to offset the damage which Lenin's memorandum had done to Stalin's prestige, by indicating the inconsistencies inherent in Lenin's national theory. To Lenin's statement that "it is better to stretch too far in the direction of complaisance and softness toward the national minorities, than too little," Stalin replied that it was not advisable to stretch too far, either.

The case for the opposition was hopeless. Not only was the Congress packed with Stalinists, but the opposition was also severely handicapped in its choice of arguments. The basic Communist assumptions worked to the advantage of Stalin. The unity, centralization, and omnipotence of the Communist Party, the hegemony of the industrial proletariat over the peasantry, the subordination of the national principle to the class principle—all those Communist doctrines which were in fact responsible for the plight of the
minorities—were axiomatic and beyond dispute. By challenging them, the opposition would have placed itself outside the party. The opposition, therefore, had to limit itself to criticism of the practical execution of the Communist national program. One speaker after another of the opposition pointed out the injustices and failures of the Communist regime in the borderlands: the discrimination against non-Russians in the Red Army ("The army still remains a weapon of Russification of the Ukrainian population and of all the minority peoples," Skrypinik stated), 174 in schools, and in the treatment of the natives by officials. But such charges, damning as they were, did not affect the fundamental premises of Stalin’s case and were easily brushed aside as exaggerations or minor infractions.

The only attempt to analyze the deeper causes of the crisis in the national policy was made by Rakovskii, who rested his argument on Lenin’s thesis of the defective apparatus:

Comrades, this [national question] is one of those questions which is pregnant with very serious complications for Soviet Russia and the Party. This is one of those questions which—this must be said openly and honestly at a Party Congress—threaten civil war, if we fail to show the necessary sensitivity, the necessary understanding, with regard to it. It is the question of the bond of the revolutionary Russian proletariat with the sixty million non-Russian peasants, who under the national banner raise their demands for a share in the economic and political life of the Soviet Union. 179

Stalin, Rakovskii continued, was oversimplifying the danger of Great Russian nationalism in the party and state apparatus when he called it, in the course of his report, a mere by-product of the New Economic Policy. The real cause of the crisis lay deeper: “[I]t is the fundamental divergence which occurs from day to day and becomes ever greater and greater: [the divergence] between our Party, our program on the one hand, and our political apparatus on the other.” The state apparatus was, as Lenin said in his memorandum, an aristocratic and bourgeois remnant, anointed with the Communist chrism. 180 Rakovskii cited a number of instances of the organs of the RSFSR having issued decrees and laws for the other three Soviet republics even before the Union had been formally ratified and the authority of the federal government constitutionally ascertained, and he charged that since December 1922 the Union commissariats had actually governed the entire country, leaving the republics no self-rule whatsoever. To implement Stalin’s suggestions on the means for combating the mounting wave of Russian nationalism, Rakovskii concluded, it was necessary to strip the government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics of nine tenths of its commissariats. 181

How weak the opposition really was became painfully evident when Rakovskii placed before the Congress formal resolutions to reduce the preponderance of the Russian republic in the Union government. He had occupied himself much during the previous several months with constitutional questions and even had drafted a constitutional project which vested much more authority in the republics than did the one formulated in Moscow. 182 That Rakovskii should have become a defender of states’ rights seemed rather strange in view of his whole record as a “nihilist” on the nationality question. But he was a close and loyal friend of Trotsky, and, armed with Lenin’s memorandum, he must have felt on solid ground. He now pointed out that, under the existing system, the RSFSR had three times as many representatives in the Soviet of Nationalities as the remaining three republics put together, and suggested a constitutional arrangement which would prevent any one republic from having more than two fifths of the total representation. Stalin, however, brushed aside this motion as “administrative fetishism.” It was subsequently voted down. 183 The inability of the opposition to secure acceptance of even such a watered-down version of Rakovskii’s project (his original idea of granting the republics nine tenths of the commissariats which the articles of Union had given the federal government was whittled down in committee during the discussion of the constitutional question) indicated the extent to which Stalin and the central party apparatus had gained mastery of the situation.

The Twelfth Congress thus rejected all the suggestions which Lenin had made in his article in the hope of healing the breach in the party caused by the national question: it refused to diminish the centralization of the state apparatus of the USSR by granting the republics more organs of self-rule; it vindicated Stalin and Ordzhonikidze; and most important of all, it turned down, through Stalin, the fundamental principle of Lenin’s approach, namely the necessity of having the Russians place themselves in a morally defensive position in regard to the minorities. The Twelfth Congress, the last at which the national question was discussed in an atmosphere of relatively free expression, ended in the complete triumph of Stalin. The issue of self-rule versus centralism on the administrative level was decided in favor of the latter. Henceforth nothing could prevent the process of amalgamation of the state apparatus from being brought to its conclusion—the more so, since Lenin, the only person capable of altering its course, was entirely eliminated from active participation in politics.

On July 6, 1923, the Central Executive Committee of the USSR formally approved the Constitution of the USSR, and on January 31, 1924—ten days after Lenin’s death—the Second All-Union Congress of Soviets ratified it. The process of formation of the Soviet Union was thus brought to an end.

CONCLUSION

Although the roots of the national movements which emerged in the course of the Russian Revolution have to be sought in the tsarist period, their anti-Russian and separatist aspects were a direct result of the political and social upheaval which followed the breakdown of the ancien régime. Before 1917 the political
activities of the minorities were closely integrated with the socialist and liberal tendencies of Russian society itself and represented regional variants of developments which were occurring at the same time on an all-Russian scale. These activities were limited to relatively small groups of intellectuals, who sought to secure for the minorities a greater degree of participation in the government of the Empire through democratization and autonomy. After 1917 the national movements assumed a somewhat different character. The disintegration of political authority and the eruption of violent agrarian revolutions throughout the Russian Empire had severed the bonds between the borderlands and the center and had left the responsibility for the solution of the most urgent social and political problems to the population itself. Those groups came to power which were most capable of adjusting themselves to the rapid vacillations of public opinion. In Russia proper and in other areas inhabited by Great Russians, it was the Bolshevik Party which, with its slogans of peace, division of land, and all power to the soviets, temporarily won considerable public support. In most of the borderlands, power was won by the nationalist intelligentsia, which pledged an independent solution of the agrarian problem, the redress of injustices committed by the tsarist regime, and neutrality in the Russian Civil War. In Russia, as well as in some of the borderlands, political authority was seized by extremists who had attained mass following only after the outbreak of the Revolution, when the spread of anarchy, confusion, and fear favored groups advocating radical solutions.

But whereas the Bolsheviks had long prepared for a revolution and knew what to do with power once they had attained it, the nationalists did not. They had lacked the opportunities to evolve an ideology or to secure disciplined party cadres. The nationalist movements after 1917 suffered from profound cleavages among conservative, liberal, and radical tendencies, which prevented them from attaining the unity necessary for effective action. In critical moments, the national governments which had sprung up in the borderlands were weakened from within, torn by dissensions among the divergent groups combined under the banners of nationalism. Another weakness of the nationalists was their inability, and, in some instances, their unwillingness, to win over the predominantly Russian and Russified urban population of the borderlands. They were also far too dependent on the politically immature and ineffective rural population. When in the winter of 1917-18 the Bolsheviks and their followers in the armed forces struck for power in the borderland territories, most of the national governments collapsed without offering serious resistance. The only notable exception was Transcaucasia, where the existence of strong indigenous parties, especially the Georgian Social Democrats, and the fear of foreign invasion which united the Russian and most of the non-Russian population, gave the local governments a certain degree of cohesion and strength. The circumstances under which the national republics of what became the Soviet Union emerged were too exceptional and their life span too short for the record to be used as evidence either for or against their viability.

The conflict between the Bolsheviks and the nationalists which broke out in all the borderland areas after the October Revolution, as a result of the Bolshevik suppression of nationalist political institutions, would probably have led to a lasting rupture between them, had it not been for the leaders of the White movement who virtually drove the nationalists into the arms of the Bolsheviks. The White generals proved incapable of grasping either the significance of the national movements or the assistance which they could offer in fighting the Communists. They rejected outright the political claims of the minorities and postponed the solution of the national question to the time when the Bolshevik usurpers should be overthrown and a legitimate Russian government established. In some instances, the White leaders antagonized the minorities inhabiting the theater of combat or their own rear lines to the point where armed conflicts broke out.

The Bolsheviks, on the other hand, made determined efforts, throughout the War, to exploit minority nationalism. The entire Bolshevik national program was designed to win nationalist sympathies through generous offers of national self-determination. Whenever expedient, they made alliances with even the most reactionary groups among the minorities, who, fearful of losing the freedom which the collapse of all government authority had given them, lent a willing ear to Bolshevik promises. Though there were some exceptions—notably in Central Asia—the Communists generally succeeded in winning nationalist support at a time when the struggle for power in Russia was at critical stages.

In the campaigns against Kolchak in the Urals and against Denikin in the Northern Caucasus, the alliance between the Reds and the nationalists helped tip the scales in favor of the Soviet regime. The Bolshevik approach, however, although it had brought immediate advantages, also had its shortcomings. It was more useful as a means of fighting for power than as a program for a party which had acquired power. It was one thing to exploit the mistakes of the opponent by means of promises, and another to make those promises good after the enemy had been overcome. Their entire approach to the national idea, moreover, made the Bolsheviks perhaps the least qualified of all the Russian parties (save for those of the extreme right) to solve the national problem. Not only was their political system based on the dictatorship of a single party, on strict centralism, and on the superiority of the urban, industrial elements over the remainder of the population—doctrines which in themselves precluded an equitable solution of the minority problem—but they also underestimated the viability of nationalism. They were inclined to view it as a mere relic of the bourgeois era, which was bound to disappear once the proletarian class struggle and the world revolution got under way, and they ignored the fact that nationalist movements represented in many cases genuine social, economic, and cultural aspirations. All
Richard Pipes

manifestations of nationalism appearing after the establishment of Soviet power. Lenin considered it to be due either to the aftereffects of the old regime, or to the alleged influence of functionaries of the tsarist bureaucracy on the Soviet political apparatus. To destroy it once and for all, in Lenin’s opinion, it was necessary only to adopt a friendly, conciliatory attitude toward the non-Russian subjects. That nationalism itself represented an aspect of the economic struggle, the Bolsheviks neither could nor would admit. Lenin, the chief architect of Soviet national policy, thus fell victim to his own doctrinairism. The crisis which shook the Communist Party over the national question in the early 1920’s, and the Communist confusion over the persistence of national antagonisms in the Soviet Union and even in the party itself, were due largely to the inability of the Communists to recognize the flaw in their monistic class interpretation of world events.

The Soviet Union, as it emerged in 1923, was a compromise between doctrine and reality: an attempt to reconcile the Bolshevik strivings for absolute unity and centralization of all power in the hands of the party, with the recognition of the empirical fact that nationalism did survive the collapse of the old order. It was not viewed as a temporary solution only, as a transitional stage to a completely centralized and supra-national world-wide Soviet state. From the point of view of self-rule the Communist government was even less generous to the minorities than its tsarist predecessor had been: it destroyed independent parties, tribal self-rule, religious and cultural institutions. It was a unitary, centrally totalitarian state such as the tsarist state had never been. On the other hand, by granting the minorities extensive linguistic autonomy and by placing the national-territorial principle at the base of the state’s political administration, the Communists gave constitutional recognition to the multinational structure of the Soviet population. In view of the importance which language and territory have for the development of national consciousness—particularly for people who, like the Russian minorities during the Revolution, had had some experience of self-rule—this purely formal feature of the Soviet Constitution may well prove to have been historically one of the most consequential aspects of the formation of the Soviet Union.

Notes


2. Program of the Russian Communist party (1919), in TsK, KPB, Rossiskaia Kommunisticheskaiia Partiia (bol’shevikov) v rezolutsiakh ee s’ezdov i konferentii (1898-1922 gg.) (Moscow-Petrograd, 1923), 255-56.

3. Ibid., 254.

4. Ibid., 233-34.

The Establishment of the USSR

5. Carr, The Bolshevik Revolution, 1, 139.


7. Ibid. 10; V. Durdenevskii, "Na putiakh k russkomu federal’nomu pravu," SP, no. 1/4 (1923), 30-33.


11. Ibid., 6 November 1920.

12. Ibid., 21 December 1920.

13. Ibid., 27 April 1921.


15. Ibid., 21 December 1920.


19. KP(b)U, Institut istorii Partii, Istorii KP(b)U (Kiev, 1933), II, 264-65.

20. Sistematicheskii sbornik vseusskih dekretov, 1917-1920 (Moscow, 1921), 63.


22. LS, XVIII (1931), 243; Lenin, XXVI, 619-20.

23. M. Ravich-Cherkasskii, Istorii Kommunisticheskoi Partii Ukrainy (Kharkov), 1921, 111.

24. E.G. Bosh, God bor’by (1917) (Moscow, 1925), 92.


27. LS, XXXIV (1942), 120-21.


30. The background of the Russian-Azerbaijani treaty is discussed by M.S. Iskenderov, Iz istorii bor’by Kommunisticheskoi partii Azerbaizhana za pohodu Sovetskoj vlasti (Baku, 1958), 515-17, and E. A. Tokarzhovskii, Ocherki istorii Sovetskogo Azerbaizhana v period pervogo na mire razrastaniia narodnogo khoziaistva (1921-1925 gg.) (Baku, 1956), 88-90.
The Establishment of the USSR

61. Iakubovskaya, Stroitel'`stro`, 130.
62. V. M. Kuryatnyk, Gosudarstvennoe sootrudnichestvo mezhdu Ukrainskoi SSR i RFSSR
v 1917-1922 gg. (Moscow, 1957), 141, 144.
64. V. V. Pentkovskaya, `Rol` V. I. Lenina v obrazovanii SSSR`, VI, no. 3 (1956), 14-15.
65. Iakubovskaya, Stroitel`stro`, 139-40.
66. Iakubovskaya, Stroitel`stro`, 140-41; Pentkovskaya, `Rol` V. I. Lenina`, 15; V. Chizhik, Ob `izobrazheniyakh` Bukhara (Kiev, 1954), 120.
67. See his autobiographical sketch in Entsyklopedicheski slovar`... Gravat`, XI, pt. 3, supplement, 47-59.
68. Institut Markizmeta-Leninizma pri Te KPPS, Odnadatsyi s`red RKP(b)–entsyklopedicheskoi otchet (Moscow, 1961), 72-75.
70. NKID, Sbornik, III, 18-19.
71. Lenin, XXVI, 191; LS, XX (1932), 178.
72. NKID, Sbornik, III, 9-13; Akademia Nauk Gruzinskoi SSR, `Bor`ba za uprochenie Sovetskoi vlasti v Gruzii` (Tiflis, 1959), 347-48; Gil`lov, V. I. Lenin, 157-58; FKP(b), Dvendvatsyi s`red—entsyklopedicheskoi otchet (Moscow, 1929), 152.
73. `Bor`ba za uprochenie, 56-61; Gil`lov, V. I. Lenin, 151; Iakubovskaya, Stroitel`stro`, 131; Dvendvatsyi s`red, 558; Stalin, VI, 48.
74. Gil`lov, V. I. Lenin, 159; V.S. Kirillov and A. la. Sverdlov, `Grigorii Konstantinovich Ordzhonikidze (Sergo)`—Biografija (Moscow, 1962), 158-59; henceforth referred to as Ordzhonikidze.
75. `Bor`ba za uprochenie, 65; Gil`lov, V. I. Lenin, 161.
76. Iakubovskaya, Stroitel`stro`, 48-49; Gil`lov, V. I. Lenin, 160; Ordzhonikidze, 162-63.
77. Gil`lov, V. I. Lenin, 160.
78. Ibid., 161.
80. `Bor`ba za uprochenie, 38.
81. Ibid., 89.
82. Text, ibid., 108-10.
83. Kommunist (Kharkov), no. 228 (17 October 1923) in M.V. Frunze, Sobranie sochinenii (Moscow-Leningrad, 1926), I, 476-78.
84. Speech cited in Zar`a vostokost, no. 228, 21 March 1923, reported by E.B. Genkina, Obrazovanii SSSR, 2nd ed. (Moscow, 1947), 101; Gil`lov, V. I. Lenin, 151.
86. Ordzhonikidze, 171; `Bor`ba za uprochenie, 117.
87. Lenin, XXV, 624; this letter is not reproduced in Stalin`es Collected Works.
88. Pentkovskaya, `Rol` V. I. Lenina`, 117.
89. My reconstruction rests partly on Iakubovskaya, Stroitel`stro`, 144, 148, and Pentkovskaya, `Rol` V. I. Lenina`, 17, and partly on Lenin`s and Stalin`s letters of 27 September 1922, referred to below (see note 99).

91. Bor'ba za uprochenie, 117.

92. Gililovskaja, Stroitel'stro', 145.

93. First published in Sotsialisticheskii vестник, no. 2/48 (17 January 1923), 19; reprinted, with a record of the vote, in Bor'ba za uprochenie, 116-17.


95. Gililov, V. I. Lenin, 67; Gililovskaja, Stroitel'stro', 146.

96. Gililovskaja, Stroitel'stro', 151-52.


98. Gililovskaja, Stroitel'stro', 149.

99. Lenin's memorandum is reproduced in I.S., XXXVI (1959), 496-98; Stalin has not been published in full, but can be found in the Trotsky Archive, T-755. Both documents are dated 27 September 1922.

100. Lenin, Sochinenija, 4th ed., XXXIII, 335.

101. The revised project, accepted by the Plenum on 6 October, is reproduced in Bor'ba za uprochenie, 117-18.

102. Ordzhonikidze, 172; Gililov, V. I. Lenin, 175.

103. Dvenadtsatyi s'ezd, 53; Stalin, V, 433.


105. Dvenadtsatyi s'ezd, 464.

106. Gililov, V. I. Lenin, 175-76.

107. Beria, K voprosu, 243-44; Gililov, V. I. Lenin, 174-76; Gililovskaja, Stroitel'stro, 154; Ordzhonikidze, 172-73.


109. Sotsialisticheskii vестник, 17 January 1923, 19; Beria, K voprosu, 245-46. L. Schapiro observes (The Communist Party of the Soviet Union, London, 1960, 227) that this letter is not reprinted in Lenin's Collected Works; but it should be noted that it is listed in the complete catalogue of Lenin's published writings, Institut Markizm-leninizma, Khronologicheskii ukazatel' proizvedenii V. I. Lenina (Moscow, 1959-62), II, no. 10,276. See also L. Trotsky, Stalin (New York, [1941]), 357.

110. Sotsialisticheskii vестник (1 January 1923), 19.

111. Ibid.; Dvenadtsatyi s'ezd, 156-57; Gililovskaja, Stroitel'stro, 154; Gililov, V. I. Lenin, 178-79.

112. Sotsialisticheskii vестник, 17 January 1923, 19; Dvenadtsatyi s'ezd, 158; Gililov, V. I. Lenin, 178-79.

113. Bor'ba za uprochenie, 118-20.


115. Ibid.


152. See his circular to the members of the Central Committee of 16 April 1923 in the Trotsky Archive, T-794.

153. Dvanadtsatyj s"ezd, 150-159.

154. Ibid., 185-86.

155. Stalin, Marxism, 137-57.


157. Trotsky, Stalin, 357.

158. Dvanadtsatyj s"ezd, 523; cf. ibid., 548.

159. Ibid., 529.

160. Ibid., 531-32.

161. See his constitutional project in V.I. Ignat'ev, Sovetskih stroi, Vyp. 1 (Moscow-Leningrad, 1928), 115-19, and his theoretical analysis in Sovetskaia Sotsialisticheskikh Sovetskikh Respublik—Novyi etap v Sovetskom soiuuznom stroitel'стве (Kharkov, 1923). The latter contains a critique of the Union constitution.

162. Dvanadtsatyj s"ezd, 532-34.