

# **MARXISM AND THE NATIONAL AND COLONIAL QUESTION**

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**MARXISM AND THE  
NATIONAL QUESTION**

*January 1913*



The period of counter-revolution in Russia brought not only “thunder and lightning” in its train, but also disillusionment in the movement and lack of faith in common forces. As long as people believed in “a bright future,” they fought side by side irrespective of nationality—common questions first and foremost! But when doubt crept into people’s hearts, they began to depart, each to his own national tent—let every man count only upon himself! The “national question” first and foremost!

At the same time a profound upheaval was taking place in the economic life of the country. The year 1905 had not been in vain: one more blow had been struck at the survivals of serfdom in the countryside. The series of good harvests which succeeded the famine years, and the industrial boom which followed, furthered the progress of capitalism. Class differentiation in the countryside, the growth of the towns, the development of trade and means of communication all took a big stride forward. This applied particularly to the border regions. And it could not but hasten the process of economic consolidation of the nationalities of Russia. They were bound to be stirred into movement...

The “constitutional regime” established at that time also acted in the same direction of awakening the nationalities. The spread of newspapers and of literature generally, a certain freedom of the press and cultural institutions, an increase in the number of national theaters, and so forth, all unquestionably helped to strengthen “national sentiments.” The Duma, with its election campaign and political groups, gave fresh opportunities for greater activity of the nations and provided a new and wide arena for their mobilization.

And the mounting wave of militant nationalism above and the series of repressive measures taken by the “powers that be” in vengeance on the border regions for their “love of freedom,” evoked an answering wave of nationalism below, which at times took the form of crude chauvinism. The spread of Zionism<sup>1</sup> among the Jews, the increase of chauvinism in

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“Marxism and the National Question” was written at the end of 1912 and the beginning of 1913 in Vienna. It first appeared in the magazine *Prosveshcheniye* (*Enlightenment*), Nos. 3-5, 1913, under the title “The National Question and Social-Democracy” and was signed K. Stalin. In 1914 it was published by the Priboy Publishers, St. Petersburg, as a separate pamphlet entitled *The National Question and Marxism*. By order of the Minister of the Interior the pamphlet was withdrawn from all public libraries and reading rooms. In 1920 the article was republished by the People’s Commissariat for Nationalities in a *Collection of Articles* by J. V. Stalin on the

Poland, Pan-Islamism among the Tatars, the spread of nationalism among the Armenians, Georgians and Ukrainians, the general swing of the philistine towards anti-Semitism—all these are generally known facts.

The wave of nationalism swept onwards with increasing force, threatening to engulf the mass of the workers. And the more the movement for emancipation declined, the more plentifully nationalism pushed forth its blossoms.

At this difficult time Social-Democracy had a high mission—to resist nationalism and to protect the masses from the general “epidemic.” For Social-Democracy, and Social-Democracy alone, could do this, by countering nationalism with the tried weapon of internationalism, with the unity and indivisibility of the class struggle. And the more powerfully the wave of nationalism advanced, the louder had to be the call of Social-Democracy for fraternity and unity among the proletarians of all the nationalities of Russia. And in this connection particular firmness was demanded of the Social-Democrats of the border regions, who came into direct contact with the nationalist movement.

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national question (State Publishing House, Tula). In 1934 the article was included in the book: J. Stalin, *Marxism and the National and Colonial Question*. A Collection of Articles and Speeches. Lenin, in his article “The National Program of the RSDLP,” referring to the reasons which were lending prominence to the national question at that period, wrote: “This state of affairs, and the principles of the national program of Social-Democracy, have already been dealt with recently in theoretical Marxist literature (prime place must here be given to Stalin’s article).” In February 1913, Lenin wrote to Maxim Gorky: “We have a wonderful Georgian here who has sat down to write a big article for *Prosveshcheniye* after collecting *all* the Austrian and other material.” Learning that it was proposed to print the article with the reservation that it was for discussion only, Lenin vigorously objected, and wrote: “Of course, we are absolutely against this. It is a *very good* article. The question is a burning issue, and we shall not yield one jot of principle to the Bundist scum.” (Archives of the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute.) Soon after J. V. Stalin’s arrest, in March 1913, Lenin wrote to the editors of *Sotsial-Demokrat*: “...Arrests among us are very heavy. Koba has been taken... Koba managed to write a long article (for three issues of *Prosveshcheniye*) on the national question. Good! We must fight for the truth and against separatists and opportunists of the Bund and among the Liquidators.” (Archives of the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute.)

<sup>1</sup> Zionism—a reactionary nationalist trend of the Jewish bourgeoisie, which had followers among the intellectuals and the more backward sections of the Jewish workers. The Zionists endeavored to isolate the Jewish working-class masses from the general struggle of the proletariat. Today the Zionist organizations are the agents of the American imperialists in their machinations directed against the USSR and the People’s Democracies and the revolutionary movement in capitalist and colonial countries.

But not all Social-Democrats proved equal to the task—and this applies particularly to the Social-Democrats of the border regions. The Bund, which had previously laid stress on the common tasks, now began to give prominence to its own specific, purely nationalist aims: it went to the length of declaring “observance of the Sabbath” and “recognition of Yiddish” a fighting issue in its election campaign.<sup>2</sup> The Bund was followed by the Caucasus; one section of the Caucasian Social-Democrats, which, like the rest of the Caucasian Social-Democrats, had formerly rejected “cultural-national autonomy,” are now making it an immediate demand.<sup>3</sup> This is without mentioning the conference of the Liquidators, which in a diplomatic way gave its sanction to nationalist vacillations.<sup>4</sup>

But from this it follows that the views of Russian Social-Democracy on the national question are not yet clear to all Social-Democrats.

It is evident that a serious and comprehensive discussion of the national question is required. Consistent Social-Democrats must work solidly and indefatigably against the fog of nationalism, no matter from what quarter it proceeds.

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<sup>2</sup> See “Report of the Ninth Conference of the Bund.”

<sup>3</sup> See “Announcement of the August Conference.”

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.



# I. The Nation

What is a nation?

A nation is primarily a community, a definite community of people.

This community is not racial, nor is it tribal. The modern Italian nation was formed from Romans, Teutons, Etruscans, Greeks, Arabs, and so forth. The French nation was formed from Gauls, Romans, Britons, Teutons, and so on. The same must be said of the British, the Germans and others, who were formed into nations from people of diverse races and tribes.

Thus, a nation is not a racial or tribal, but a historically constituted community of people.

On the other hand, it is unquestionable that the great empires of Cyrus and Alexander could not be called nations, although they came to be constituted historically and were formed out of different tribes and races. They were not nations, but casual and loosely-connected conglomerations of groups, which fell apart or joined together according to the victories or defeats of this or that conqueror.

Thus, a nation is not a casual or ephemeral conglomeration, but a stable community of people.

But not every stable community constitutes a nation. Austria and Russia are also stable communities, but nobody calls them nations. What distinguishes a national community from a state community? The fact, among others, that a national community is inconceivable without a common language, while a state need not have a common language. The Czech nation in Austria and the Polish in Russia would be impossible if each did not have a common language, whereas the integrity of Russia and Austria is not affected by the fact that there are a number of different languages within their borders. We are referring, of course, to the spoken languages of the people and not to the official governmental languages.

Thus, a *common language* is one of the characteristic features of a nation.

This, of course, does not mean that different nations always and everywhere speak different languages, or that all who speak one language

necessarily constitute one nation. A *common* language for every nation, but not necessarily different languages for different nations! There is no nation which at one and the same time speaks several languages, but this does not mean that there cannot be two nations speaking the same language! Englishmen and Americans speak one language, but they do not constitute one nation. The same is true of the Norwegians and the Danes, the English and the Irish.

But why, for instance, do the English and the Americans not constitute one nation in spite of their common language?

Firstly, because they do not live together, but inhabit different territories. A nation is formed only as a result of lengthy and systematic intercourse, as a result of people living together generation after generation.

But people cannot live together for lengthy periods unless they have a common territory. Englishmen and Americans originally inhabited the same territory, England, and constituted one nation. Later, one section of the English emigrated from England to a new territory, America, and there, in the new territory, in the course of time, came to form the new American nation. Difference of territory led to the formation of different nations.

Thus, a *common territory* is one of the characteristic features of a nation.

But this is not all. Common territory does not by itself create a nation. This requires, in addition, an internal economic bond to weld the various parts of the nation into a single whole. There is no such bond between England and America, and so they constitute two different nations. But the Americans themselves would not deserve to be called a nation were not the different parts of America bound together into an economic whole, as a result of division of labor between them, the development of means of communication, and so forth.

Take the Georgians, for instance. The Georgians before the Reform inhabited a common territory and spoke one language. Nevertheless, they did not, strictly speaking, constitute one nation, for, being split up into a number of disconnected principalities, they could not share a common economic life; for centuries they waged war against each other and pillaged each other, each inciting the Persians and Turks against the other. The ephemeral and casual union of the principalities which some success-

ful king sometimes managed to bring about embraced at best a superficial administrative sphere, and rapidly disintegrated owing to the caprices of the princes and the indifference of the peasants. Nor could it be otherwise in economically disunited Georgia... Georgia came on the scene as a nation only in the latter half of the nineteenth century, when the fall of serfdom and the growth of the economic life of the country, the development of means of communication and the rise of capitalism, introduced division of labor between the various districts of Georgia, completely shattered the economic isolation of the principalities and bound them together into a single whole.

The same must be said of the other nations which have passed through the stage of feudalism and have developed capitalism.

Thus, a *common economic life*, economic cohesion, is one of the characteristic features of a nation.

But even this is not all. Apart from the foregoing, one must take into consideration the specific spiritual complexion of the people constituting a nation. Nations differ not only in their conditions of life but also in spiritual complexion, which manifests itself in peculiarities of national culture. If England, America and Ireland, which speak one language, nevertheless constitute three distinct nations, it is in no small measure due to the peculiar psychological make-up which they developed from generation to generation as a result of dissimilar conditions of existence.

Of course, by itself, psychological make-up or, as it is otherwise called, "national character," is something intangible for the observer, but in so far as it manifests itself in a distinctive culture common to the nation it is something tangible and cannot be ignored.

Needless to say, "national character" is not a thing that is fixed once and for all, but is modified by changes in the conditions of life; but since it exists at every given moment, it leaves its impress on the physiognomy of the nation.

Thus, a *common psychological make-up*, which manifests itself in a *common culture*, is one of the characteristic features of a nation.

We have now exhausted the characteristic features of a nation.

*A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture.*

It goes without saying that a nation, like every historical phenomenon, is subject to the law of change, has its history, its beginning and end.

It must be emphasized that none of the above characteristics taken separately is sufficient to define a nation. More than that, it is sufficient for a single one of these characteristics to be lacking and the nation ceases to be a nation.

It is possible to conceive of people possessing a common “national character” who, nevertheless, cannot be said to constitute a single nation if they are economically disunited, inhabit different territories, speak different languages, and so forth. Such, for instance, are the Russian, Galician, American, Georgian and Caucasian Highland *Jews*, who, in our opinion, do not constitute a single nation.

It is possible to conceive of people with a common territory and economic life who nevertheless would not constitute a single nation because they have no common language and no common “national character.” Such, for instance, are the Germans and Letts in the Baltic region.

Finally, the Norwegians and the Danes speak one language, but they do not constitute a single nation owing to the absence of the other characteristics.

*It is only when all these characteristics are present together that we have a nation.*

It might appear that “national character” is not one of the characteristics but the sole essential characteristic of a nation, and that all the other characteristics are, properly speaking, only conditions for the development of a nation, rather than its characteristics. Such, for instance, is the view held by R. Springer, and more particularly by O. Bauer, who are Social-Democratic theoreticians on the national question well known in Austria.

Let us examine their theory of the nation.

According to Springer:

A nation is a union of similarly thinking and similarly speaking persons. [It is] a cultural community of modern people *no longer tied to the “soil.”* [our italics]<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> R. Springer, *The National Problem*, Obshchestvennaya Polza Publishing House, 1909, p. 43.



Thus, a “union” of similarly thinking and similarly speaking people, no matter how disconnected they may be, no matter where they live, is a nation.

Bauer goes even further.

What is a nation? [he asks.] Is it a common language which makes people a nation? But the English and the Irish... speak the same language without, however, being one people; the Jews have no common language and yet are a nation.<sup>6</sup>

What, then, is a nation?

A nation is a relative community of character.<sup>7</sup>

But what is character, in this case national character? National character is:

The sum total of characteristics which distinguish the people of one nationality from the people of another nationality—the complex of physical and spiritual characteristics which distinguish one nation from another.<sup>8</sup>

Bauer knows, of course, that national character does not drop from the skies, and he therefore adds:

The character of people is determined by nothing so much as by their destiny... A nation is nothing but a community with a common destiny [which, in turn, is determined] by the conditions under which people produce their means of subsistence and distribute the products of their labor.<sup>9</sup>

We thus arrive at the most “complete,” as Bauer calls it, definition of a nation:

*A nation is an aggregate of people bound into a community of character by a common destiny.*<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup> O. Bauer, *The National Question and Social-Democracy*, Serp Publishing House, 1909, pp. 1-2.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 139.

We thus have common national character based on a common destiny, but not necessarily connected with a common territory, language or economic life.

But what in that case remains of the nation? What common nationality can there be among people who are economically disconnected, inhabit different territories and from generation to generation speak different languages.

Bauer speaks of the Jews as a nation, although they “have no common language”;<sup>11</sup> but what “common destiny” and national cohesion is there, for instance, between the Georgian, Daghestanian, Russian and American Jews, who are completely separated from one another, inhabit different territories and speak different languages?

The above-mentioned Jews undoubtedly lead their economic and political life in common with the Georgians, Daghestanians, Russians and Americans respectively, and they live in the same cultural atmosphere as these; this is bound to leave a definite impression on their national character; if there is anything common to them left, it is their religion, their common origin and certain relics of the national character. All this is beyond question. But how can it be seriously maintained that petrified religious rites and fading psychological relics affect the “destiny” of these Jews more powerfully than the living social, economic and cultural environment that surrounds them? And it is only on this assumption that it is possible to speak of the Jews as a single nation at all.

What, then, distinguishes Bauer’s nation from the mystical and self-sufficient “national spirit” of the spiritualists?

Bauer sets up an impassable barrier between the “distinctive feature” of nations (national character) and the “conditions” of their life, divorcing the one from the other. But what is national character if not a reflection of the conditions of life, a coagulation of impressions derived from environment? How can one limit the matter to national character alone, isolating and divorcing it from the soil that gave rise to it?

Further, what indeed distinguished the English nation from the American nation at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries, when America was still known as New England?

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

Not national character, of course; for the Americans had originated from England and had brought with them to America not only the English language but also the English national character, which, of course, they could not lose so soon; although, under the influence of the new conditions, they would naturally be developing their own specific character. Yet, despite their more or less common character, they at that time already constituted a nation distinct from England! Obviously, New England as a nation differed then from England as a nation not by its specific national character, or not so much by its national character, as by its environment and conditions of life, which were distinct from those of England.

It is therefore clear that there is in fact no *single* distinguishing characteristic of a nation. There is only a sum total of characteristics, of which, when nations are compared, sometimes one characteristic (national character), sometimes another (language), or sometimes a third (territory, economic conditions), stands out in sharper relief. A nation constitutes the combination of all these characteristics taken together.

Bauer's point of view, which identifies a nation with its national character, divorces the nation from its soil and converts it into an invisible, self-contained force. The result is not a living and active nation, but something mystical, intangible and supernatural. For, I repeat, what sort of nation, for instance, is a Jewish nation which consists of Georgian, Dagh-estanian, Russian, American and other Jews, the members of which do not understand each other (since they speak different languages), inhabit different parts of the globe, will never see each other, and will never act together, whether in time of peace or in time of war?!

No, it is not for such paper "nations" that Social-Democracy draws up its national program. It can reckon only with real nations, which act and move, and therefore insist on being reckoned with.

Bauer is obviously confusing *nation*, which is a historical category, with *tribe*, which is an ethnographical category.

However, Bauer himself apparently feels the weakness of his position. While in the beginning of his book he definitely declares the Jews to be a nation,<sup>12</sup> he corrects himself at the end of the book and states that "in general capitalist society makes it impossible for them (the Jews) to

<sup>12</sup> See Bauer's book, p. 2.

continue as a nation,”<sup>13</sup> by causing them to assimilate with other nations. The reason, it appears, is that “the Jews have no closed territory of settlement,”<sup>14</sup> whereas the Czechs, for instance, have such a territory and, according to Bauer, will survive as a nation. In short, the reason lies in the absence of a territory.

By arguing thus, Bauer wanted to prove that the Jewish workers cannot demand national autonomy,<sup>15</sup> but he thereby inadvertently refuted his own theory, which denies that a common territory is one of the characteristics of a nation.

But Bauer goes further. In the beginning of his book he definitely declares that “the Jews have no common language, and yet are a nation.”<sup>16</sup> But hardly has he reached page 130 than he effects a change of front and just as definitely declares that “*unquestionably, no nation is possible without a common language.*” [our italics]<sup>17</sup>

Bauer wanted to prove that “language is the most important instrument of human intercourse,”<sup>18</sup> but at the same time he inadvertently proved something he did not mean to prove, namely, the unsoundness of his own theory of nations, which denies the significance of a common language.

Thus this theory, stitched together by idealistic threads, refutes itself.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 389.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 388.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 396.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 130.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

## II. The National Movement

A nation is not merely a historical category but a historical category belonging to a definite epoch, the epoch of rising capitalism. The process of elimination of feudalism and development of capitalism is at the same time a process of the constitution of people into nations. Such, for instance, was the case in Western Europe. The British, French, Germans, Italians and others were formed into nations at the time of the victorious advance of capitalism and its triumph over feudal disunity.

But the formation of nations in those instances at the same time signified their conversion into independent national states. The British, French and other nations are at the same time British, etc., states. Ireland, which did not participate in this process, does not alter the general picture.

Matters proceeded somewhat differently in Eastern Europe. Whereas in the West nations developed into states, in the East multi-national states were formed, states consisting of several nationalities. Such are Austria-Hungary and Russia. In Austria, the Germans proved to be politically the most developed, and they took it upon themselves to unite the Austrian nationalities into a state. In Hungary, the most adapted for state organization were the Magyars—the core of the Hungarian nationalities—and it was they who united Hungary. In Russia, the uniting of the nationalities was undertaken by the Great Russians, who were headed by a historically formed, powerful and well-organized aristocratic military bureaucracy.

That was how matters proceeded in the East.

This special method of formation of states could take place only where feudalism had not yet been eliminated, where capitalism was feebly developed, where the nationalities which had been forced into the background had not yet been able to consolidate themselves economically into integral nations.

But capitalism also began to develop in the Eastern states. Trade and means of communication were developing. Large towns were springing up. The nations were becoming economically consolidated. Capitalism, erupting into the tranquil life of the nationalities which had been pushed

into the background, was arousing them and stirring them into action. The development of the press and the theater, the activity of the Reichsrat (Austria) and of the Duma (Russia) were helping to strengthen “national sentiments.” The *intelligentsia* that had arisen was being imbued with “the national idea” and was acting in the same direction...

But the nations which had been pushed into the background and had now awakened to independent life, could no longer form themselves into independent national states; they encountered on their path the very powerful resistance of the ruling strata of the dominant nations, which had long ago assumed the control of the state. They were too late!...

In this way the Czechs, Poles, etc., formed themselves into nations in Austria; the Croats, etc., in Hungary; the Letts, Lithuanians, Ukrainians, Georgians, Armenians, etc., in Russia. What had been an exception in Western Europe (Ireland) became the rule in the East.

In the West, Ireland responded to its exceptional position by a national movement. In the East, the awakened nations were bound to respond in the same fashion.

Thus arose the circumstances which impelled the young nations of Eastern Europe on to the path of struggle.

The struggle began and flared up, to be sure, not between nations as a whole, but between the ruling classes of the dominant nations and of those that had been pushed into the background. The struggle is usually conducted by the urban petit bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation against the big bourgeoisie of the dominant nation (Czechs and Germans), or by the rural bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation against the landlords of the dominant nation (Ukrainians in Poland), or by the whole “national” bourgeoisie of the oppressed nations against the ruling nobility of the dominant nation (Poland, Lithuania and the Ukraine in Russia).

The bourgeoisie plays the leading role.

The chief problem for the young bourgeoisie is the problem of the market. Its aim is to sell its goods and to emerge victorious from competition with the bourgeoisie of a different nationality. Hence its desire to secure its “own,” its “home” market. The market is the first school in which the bourgeoisie learns its nationalism.

But matters are usually not confined to the market. The semi-feudal, semi-bourgeois bureaucracy of the dominant nation intervenes in the

struggle with its own methods of “arresting and preventing.” The bourgeoisie—whether big or small—of the dominant nation is able to deal more “swiftly” and “decisively” with its competitor. “Forces” are united and a series of restrictive measures is put into operation against the “alien” bourgeoisie, measures passing into acts of repression. The struggle spreads from the economic sphere to the political sphere. Restriction of freedom of movement, repression of language, restriction of franchise, closing of schools, religious restrictions, and so on, are piled upon the head of the “competitor.” Of course, such measures are designed not only in the interest of the bourgeois classes of the dominant nation, but also in furtherance of the specifically caste aims, so to speak, of the ruling bureaucracy.

But from the point of view of the results achieved this is quite immaterial; the bourgeois classes and the bureaucracy in this matter go hand in hand—whether it be in Austria-Hungary or in Russia.

The bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation, repressed on every hand, is naturally stirred into movement. It appeals to its “native folk” and begins to shout about the “fatherland,” claiming that its own cause is the cause of the nation as a whole. It recruits itself an army from among its “countrymen” in the interests of... the “fatherland.” Nor do the “folk” always remain unresponsive to its appeals; they rally around its banner: the repression from above affects them too and provokes their discontent.

Thus the national movement begins.

The strength of the national movement is determined by the degree to which the wide strata of the nation, the proletariat and peasantry, participate in it.

Whether the proletariat rallies to the banner of bourgeois nationalism depends on the degree of development of class antagonisms, on the class consciousness and degree of organization of the proletariat. The class-conscious proletariat has its own tried banner and has no need to rally to the banner of the bourgeoisie.

As far as the peasants are concerned, their participation in the national movement depends primarily on the character of the repressions. If the repressions affect the “land,” as was the case in Ireland, then the mass of the peasants immediately rally to the banner of the national movement.

On the other hand, if, for example, there is no serious *anti-Russian* nationalism in Georgia, it is primarily because there are neither Russian landlords nor a Russian big bourgeoisie there to supply the fuel for such nationalism among the masses. In Georgia there is *anti-Armenian* nationalism; but this is because there is still an Armenian big bourgeoisie there which, by getting the better of the small and still unconsolidated Georgian bourgeoisie, drives the latter to anti-Armenian nationalism.

Depending on these factors, the national movement either assumes a mass character and steadily grows (as in Ireland and Galicia), or is converted into a series of petty collisions, degenerating into squabbles and “fights” over signboards (as in some of the small towns of Bohemia).

The content of the national movement, of course, cannot everywhere be the same: it is wholly determined by the diverse demands made by the movement. In Ireland the movement bears an agrarian character; in Bohemia it bears a “language” character; in one place the demand is for civil equality and religious freedom, in another for the nation’s “own” officials, or its own Diet. The diversity of demands not infrequently reveals the diverse features which characterize a nation in general (language, territory, etc.). It is worthy of note that we never meet with a demand based on Bauer’s all-embracing “national character.” And this is natural: “national character” *in itself* is something intangible, and, as was correctly remarked by J. Strasser, “a politician can’t do anything with it.”<sup>19</sup>

Such, in general, are the forms and character of the national movement.

From what has been said, it will be clear that the national struggle under the conditions of *rising* capitalism is a struggle of the bourgeois classes among themselves. Sometimes the bourgeoisie succeeds in drawing the proletariat into the national movement, and then the national struggle *externally* assumes a “nation-wide” character. But this is so only externally. *In its essence* it is always a bourgeois struggle, one that is to the advantage and profit mainly of the bourgeoisie.

But it does not by any means follow that the proletariat should not put up a fight against the policy of national oppression.

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<sup>19</sup> See his *Der Arbeiter und die Nation*, Reichenberg, 1912, p. 33.



Restriction of freedom of movement, disfranchisement, repression of language, closing of schools, and other forms of persecution affect the workers no less, if not more, than the bourgeoisie. Such a state of affairs can only serve to retard the free development of the intellectual forces of the proletariat of subject nations. One cannot speak seriously of a full development of the intellectual faculties of the Tatar or Jewish worker if he is not allowed to use his native language at meetings and lectures, and if his schools are closed down.

But the policy of nationalist persecution is dangerous to the cause of the proletariat also on another account. It diverts the attention of large strata from social questions, questions of the class struggle, to national questions, questions “common” to the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. And this creates a favorable soil for lying propaganda about “harmony of interests,” for glossing over the class interests of the proletariat and for the intellectual enslavement of the workers.

This creates a serious obstacle to the cause of uniting the workers of all nationalities. If a considerable proportion of the Polish workers are still in intellectual bondage to the bourgeois nationalists, if they still stand aloof from the international labor movement, it is chiefly because the age-old anti-Polish policy of the “powers that be” creates the soil for this bondage and hinders the emancipation of the workers from it.

But the policy of persecution does not stop there. It not infrequently passes from a “system” of *oppression* to a “system” of *inciting* nations against each other, to a “system” of massacres and pogroms. Of course, the latter system is not everywhere and always possible, but where it is possible—in the absence of elementary civil rights—it frequently assumes horrifying proportions and threatens to drown the cause of unity of the workers in blood and tears. The Caucasus and South Russia furnish numerous examples. “Divide and rule”—such is the purpose of the policy of incitement. And where such a policy succeeds, it is a tremendous evil for the proletariat and a serious obstacle to the cause of uniting the workers of all the nationalities in the state.

But the workers are interested in the complete amalgamation of all their fellow-workers into a single international army, in their speedy and final emancipation from intellectual bondage to the bourgeoisie, and in

the full and free development of the intellectual forces of their brothers, whatever nation they may belong to.

The workers therefore combat and will continue to combat the policy of national oppression in all its forms, from the most subtle to the most crude, as well as the policy of inciting nations against each other in all its forms.

Social-Democracy in all countries therefore proclaims the right of nations to self-determination.

The right of self-determination means that only the nation itself has the right to determine its destiny, that no one has the right *forcibly* to interfere in the life of the nation, to *destroy* its schools and other institutions, to *violate* its habits and customs, to *repress* its language, or *curtail* its rights.

This, of course, does not mean that Social-Democracy will support every custom and institution of a nation. While combating the coercion of any nation, it will uphold only the right of the *nation* itself to determine its own destiny, at the same time agitating against harmful customs and institutions of that nation in order to enable the toiling strata of the nation to emancipate themselves from them.

The right of self-determination means that a nation may arrange its life in the way it wishes. It has the right to arrange its life on the basis of autonomy. It has the right to enter into federal relations with other nations. It has the right to complete secession. Nations are sovereign, and all nations have equal rights.

This, of course, does not mean that Social-Democracy will support every demand of a nation. A nation has the right even to return to the old order of things; but this does not mean that Social-Democracy will subscribe to such a decision if taken by some institution of a particular nation. The obligations of Social-Democracy, which defends the interests of the proletariat, and the rights of a nation, which consists of various classes, are two different things.

In fighting for the right of nations to self-determination, the aim of Social-Democracy is to put an end to the policy of national oppression, to render it impossible, and thereby to remove the grounds of strife between nations, to take the edge off that strife and reduce it to a minimum.

This is what essentially distinguishes the policy of the class-conscious proletariat from the policy of the bourgeoisie, which attempts to

aggravate and fan the national struggle and to prolong and sharpen the national movement.

And that is why the class-conscious proletariat cannot rally under the “national” flag of the bourgeoisie.

That is why the so-called “evolutionary national” policy advocated by Bauer cannot become the policy of the proletariat. Bauer’s attempt to identify his “evolutionary national” policy with the policy of the “modern working class”<sup>20</sup> is an attempt to adapt the class struggle of the workers to the struggle of the nations.

The fate of a national movement, which is essentially a bourgeois movement, is naturally bound up with the fate of the bourgeoisie. The final disappearance of a national movement is possible only with the downfall of the bourgeoisie. Only under the reign of socialism can peace be fully established. But even within the framework of capitalism it is possible to reduce the national struggle to a minimum, to undermine it at the root, to render it as harmless as possible to the proletariat. This is borne out, for example, by Switzerland and America. It requires that the country should be democratized and the nations be given the opportunity of free development.

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<sup>20</sup> See Bauer’s book, p. 166.



### III. Presentation of the Question

A nation has the right freely to determine its own destiny. It has the right to arrange its life as it sees fit, without, of course, trampling on the rights of other nations. That is beyond dispute.

But *how* exactly should it arrange its own life, *what forms* should its future constitution take, if the interests of the majority of the nation and, above all, of the proletariat are to be borne in mind?

A nation has the right to arrange its life on autonomous lines. It even has the right to secede. But this does not mean that it should do so under all circumstances, that autonomy, or separation, will everywhere and always be advantageous for a nation, i.e., for its majority, i.e., for the toiling strata. The Transcaucasian Tatars as a nation may assemble, let us say, in their Diet and, succumbing to the influence of their beys and mullahs, decide to restore the old order of things and to secede from the state. According to the meaning of the clause on self-determination they are fully entitled to do so. But will this be in the interest of the toiling strata of the Tatar nation? Can Social-Democracy look on differently when the beys and mullahs assume the leadership of the masses in the solution of the national question?

Should not Social-Democracy interfere in the matter and influence the will of the nation in a definite way? Should it not come forward with a definite plan for the solution of the question, a plan which would be most advantageous for the Tatar masses?

But what solution would be most compatible with the interests of the toiling masses? Autonomy, federation or separation?

All these are problems, the solution of which will depend on the concrete historical conditions in which the given nation finds itself.

More than that; conditions, like everything else, change, and a decision that is correct at one particular time may prove to be entirely unsuitable at another.

In the middle of the nineteenth century Marx was in favor of the secession of Russian Poland, and he was right, for it was then a question of emancipating a higher culture from a lower culture that was destroying it.

And the question at that time was not only a theoretical one, an academic question, but a practical one, a question of actual reality...

At the end of the nineteenth century the Polish Marxists were already declaring against the secession of Poland; and they too were right, for during the fifty years that had elapsed profound changes had taken place, bringing Russia and Poland closer economically and culturally. Moreover, during that period the question of secession had been converted from a practical matter into a matter of academic dispute, which excited nobody except perhaps intellectuals abroad.

This, of course, by no means precludes the possibility that certain internal and external conditions may arise in which the question of the secession of Poland may again come on the order of the day.

The solution of the national question is possible only in connection with the historical conditions taken in their development.

The economic, political and cultural conditions of a given nation constitute the only key to the question *how* a particular nation ought to arrange its life and *what forms* its future constitution ought to take. It is possible that a specific solution of the question will be required for each nation. If the dialectical approach to a question is required anywhere it is required here, in the national question.

In view of this we must declare our decided opposition to a certain very widespread, but very summary manner of "solving" the national question, which owes its inception to the Bund. We have in mind the easy method of referring to Austrian and South-Slav<sup>21</sup> Social-Democracy, which has supposedly already solved the national question and whose solution the Russian Social-Democrats should simply borrow. It is assumed that whatever, say, is right for Austria is also right for Russia. The most important and decisive factor is lost sight of here, namely, the concrete historical conditions in Russia as a whole and in the life of each of the nations inhabiting Russia in particular.

Listen, for example, to what the well-known Bundist, V. Kossovsky, says:

When at the Fourth Congress of the Bund the principles of the question [i.e., the national question—*J. St.*] were discussed,

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<sup>21</sup> South-Slav Social-Democracy operates in the southern part of Austria.

the proposal made by one of the members of the congress to settle the question in the spirit of the resolution of the South-Slav Social-Democratic Party met with general approval.<sup>22</sup>

And the result was that “the congress unanimously adopted”... national autonomy.

And that was all! No analysis of the actual conditions in Russia, no investigation of the condition of the Jews in Russia. They first borrowed the solution of the South-Slav Social-Democratic Party, then they “approved” it, and finally they “unanimously adopted” it! This is the way the Bundists present and “solve” the national question in Russia...

As a matter of fact, Austria and Russia represent entirely different conditions. This explains why the Social-Democrats in Austria, when they adopted their national program at Brunn (1899)<sup>23</sup> in the spirit of the resolution of the South-Slav Social-Democratic Party (with certain insignificant amendments, it is true), approached the question in an entirely non-Russian way, so to speak, and, of course, solved it in a non-Russian way.

First, as to the presentation of the question. How is the question presented by the Austrian theoreticians of cultural-national autonomy, the interpreters of the Brunn national program and the resolution of the South-Slav Social-Democratic Party, Springer and Bauer?

Whether a multi-national state is possible [says Springer,] and whether, in particular, the Austrian nationalities are obliged to form a single political entity, is a question we shall not answer here but shall assume to be settled. For anyone who will not concede this possibility and necessity, our investigation will, of course, be purposeless. Our theme is as follows: inasmuch as these nations are *obliged* to live together, what *legal forms* will enable them *to live together in the best possible way?* [Springer’s italics]<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> See V. Kossovsky, *Problems of Nationality*, 1907, pp. 16-17.

<sup>23</sup> The Brünn Parteitag, or Congress, of the Austrian Social-Democratic Party was held on September 24-29, 1899. The resolution on the national question adopted by this congress is quoted by J. V. Stalin in the next chapter of this work.

<sup>24</sup> See Springer, *The National Problem*, p. 14.

Thus, the starting point is the state integrity of Austria.

Bauer says the same thing:

We therefore start from the assumption that the Austrian nations will remain in the same state union in which they exist at present and inquire how the nations within this union will arrange their relations among themselves and to the state.<sup>25</sup>

Here again the first thing is the integrity of Austria.

Can Russian Social-Democracy present the question *in this way*? No, it cannot. And it cannot because from the very outset it holds the view of the right of nations to self-determination, by virtue of which a nation has the right of secession.

Even the Bundist Goldblatt admitted at the Second Congress of Russian Social-Democracy that the latter could not abandon the standpoint of self-determination. Here is what Goldblatt said on that occasion:

Nothing can be said against the right of self-determination. If any nation is striving for independence, we must not oppose it. If Poland does not wish to enter into “lawful wedlock” with Russia, it is not for us to interfere with her.

All this is true. But it follows that the starting points of the Austrian and Russian Social-Democrats, far from being identical, are diametrically opposite. After this, can there be any question of borrowing the national program of the Austrians?

Furthermore, the Austrians hope to achieve the “freedom of nationalities” by means of petty reforms, by slow steps. While they propose cultural-national autonomy as a practical measure, they do not count on any radical change, on a democratic movement for liberation, which they do not even contemplate. The Russian Marxists, on the other hand, associate the “freedom of nationalities” with a probable radical change, with a democratic movement for liberation, having no grounds for counting on reforms. And this essentially alters matters in regard to the probable fate of the nations of Russia.

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<sup>25</sup> See Bauer, *The National Question and Social-Democracy*, p. 399.



Of course [says Bauer,] there is little probability that national autonomy will be the result of a great decision, of a bold action. Austria will develop towards national autonomy step by step, by a slow process of development, in the course of a severe struggle, as a consequence of which legislation and administration will be in a state of chronic paralysis. The new constitution will not be created by a great legislative act, but by a multitude of separate enactments for individual provinces and individual communities.<sup>26</sup>

Springer says the same thing.

I am very well aware [he writes,] that institutions of this kind [i.e., organs of national autonomy—*J. St.*] are not created in a single year or a single decade. The reorganization of the Prussian administration alone took considerable time... It took the Prussians two decades finally to establish their basic administrative institutions. Let nobody think that I harbor any illusions as to the time required and the difficulties to be overcome in Austria.<sup>27</sup>

All this is very definite. But can the Russian Marxists avoid associating the national question with “bold actions?” Can they count on partial reforms, on “a multitude of separate enactments” as a means for achieving the “freedom of nationalities?” But if they cannot and must not do so, is it not clear that the methods of struggle of the Austrians and the Russians and their prospects must be entirely different? How in such a state of affairs can they confine themselves to the one-sided, milk-and-water cultural-national autonomy of the Austrians? One or the other: either those who are in favor of borrowing do not count on “bold actions” in Russia, or they do count on such actions but “know not what they do.”

Finally, the immediate tasks facing Russia and Austria are entirely different and consequently dictate different methods of solving the national question. In Austria parliamentarism prevails, and under present conditions no development in Austria is possible without parliament. But

<sup>26</sup> See Bauer, *The National Question*, p. 422.

<sup>27</sup> See Springer, *The National Problem*, pp. 281-282.

parliamentary life and legislation in Austria are frequently brought to a complete standstill by severe conflicts between the national parties. That explains the chronic political crisis from which Austria has for a long time been suffering. Hence, in Austria the national question is the very hub of political life; it is the vital question. It is therefore not surprising that the Austrian Social-Democratic politicians should first of all try in one way or another to find a solution for the national conflicts—of course on the basis of the existing parliamentary system, by parliamentary methods...

Not so with Russia. In the first place, in Russia “there is no parliament, thank God.”<sup>28</sup> In the second place—and this is the main point—the hub of the political life of Russia is not the national but the agrarian question. Consequently, the fate of the Russian problem, and, accordingly, the “liberation” of the nations too, is bound up in Russia with the solution of the agrarian question, i.e., with the destruction of the relics of feudalism, i.e., with the democratization of the country. That explains why in Russia the national question is not an independent and decisive one, but a part of the general and more important question of the emancipation of the country.

The barrenness of the Austrian parliament [writes Springer,] is due precisely to the fact that every reform gives rise to antagonisms within the national parties which may affect their unity. The leaders of the parties, therefore, avoid everything that smacks of reform. Progress in Austria is generally conceivable only if the nations are granted indefeasible legal rights which will relieve them of the necessity of constantly maintaining national militant groups in parliament and will enable them to turn their attention to the solution of economic and social problems.<sup>29</sup>

Bauer says the same thing.

National peace is indispensable first of all for the state. The state cannot permit legislation to be brought to a standstill by the very stupid question of language or by every quarrel

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<sup>28</sup> “Thank God we have no parliament here”—the words uttered by V. Kokovtsev, tsarist Minister of Finance (later Prime Minister), in the State Duma on April 24, 1908.

<sup>29</sup> See Springer, *The National Problem*, p. 36.

between excited people on a linguistic frontier, or over every new school.<sup>30</sup>

All this is clear. But it is no less clear that the national question in Russia is on an entirely different plane. It is not the national, but the agrarian question that decides the fate of progress in Russia. The national question is a subordinate one.

And so we have different presentations of the question, different prospects and methods of struggle, different immediate tasks. Is it not clear that, such being the state of affairs, only pedants who “solve” the national question without reference to space and time can think of adopting examples from Austria and of borrowing a program?

To repeat: the concrete historical conditions as the starting point, and the dialectical presentation of the question as the only correct way of presenting it—such is the key to solving the national question.

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<sup>30</sup> See Bauer, *The National Question*, p. 401.



## IV. Cultural-National Autonomy

We spoke above of the formal aspect of the Austrian national program and of the methodological grounds which make it impossible for the Russian Marxists simply to adopt the example of Austrian Social-Democracy and make the latter's program their own.

Let us now examine the essence of the program itself.

What then is the national program of the Austrian Social-Democrats?

It is expressed in two words: cultural-national autonomy.

This means, firstly, that autonomy would be granted, let us say, not to Bohemia or Poland, which are inhabited mainly by Czechs and Poles, but to Czechs and Poles generally, irrespective of territory, no matter what part of Austria they inhabit.

That is why this autonomy is called *national* and not territorial.

It means, secondly, that the Czechs, Poles, Germans, and so on, scattered over the various parts of Austria, taken personally, as individuals, are to be organized into integral nations, and are as such to form part of the Austrian state. In this way Austria would represent not a union of autonomous regions, but a union of autonomous nationalities, constituted irrespective of territory.

It means, thirdly, that the national institutions which are to be created for this purpose for the Poles, Czechs, and so forth, are to have jurisdiction only over "cultural," not "political" questions. Specifically political questions would be reserved for the Austrian parliament (the Reichsrat).

That is why this autonomy is also called *cultural*, cultural-national autonomy.

And here is the text of the program adopted by the Austrian Social-Democratic Party at the Brünn Congress in 1899.<sup>31</sup>

Having referred to the fact that "national dissension in Austria is hindering political progress," that "the final solution of the national question... is primarily a cultural necessity," and that "the solution is possible

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<sup>31</sup> The representatives of the South-Slav Social-Democratic Party also voted for it. See *Discussion of the National Question at the Brünn Congress*, 1906, p. 72.

only in a genuinely democratic society, constructed on the basis of universal, direct and equal suffrage,” the program goes on to say:

*The preservation and development of the national peculiarities*<sup>32</sup> of the peoples of Austria is possible only on the basis of equal rights and by avoiding all oppression. Hence, all bureaucratic state centralism and the feudal privileges of individual provinces must first of all be rejected.

Under these conditions, and only under these conditions, will it be possible to establish national order in Austria in place of national dissension, namely, on the following principles:

1. Austria must be transformed into a democratic state federation of nationalities.
2. The historical crown provinces must be replaced by nationally delimited self-governing corporations, in each of which legislation and administration shall be entrusted to national parliaments elected on the basis of universal, direct and equal suffrage.
3. All the self-governing regions of one and the same nation must jointly form a single national union, which shall manage its national affairs on an absolutely autonomous basis.
4. The rights of national minorities must be guaranteed by a special law passed by the Imperial Parliament.

The program ends with an appeal for the solidarity of all the nations of Austria.<sup>33</sup>

It is not difficult to see that this program retains certain traces of “territorialism,” but that in general it gives a formulation of national autonomy. It is not without good reason that Springer, the first agitator on

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<sup>32</sup> In M. Panin’s Russian translation (see his translation of Bauer’s book), “national individualities” is given in place of “national peculiarities.” Panin translated this passage incorrectly. The word “individuality” is not in the German text, which speaks of *nationalen Eigenart*, i.e., peculiarities, which is far from being the same thing.

<sup>33</sup> *Verhandlungen des Gesamtparteitages* in Brünn, 1899.

behalf of cultural-national autonomy, greets it with enthusiasm;<sup>34</sup> Bauer also supports this program, calling it a “theoretical victory”<sup>35</sup> for national autonomy; only, in the interests of greater clarity, he proposes that Point 4 be replaced by a more definite formulation, which would declare the necessity of “constituting the national minority within each self-governing region into a public corporation” for the management of educational and other cultural affairs.<sup>36</sup>

Such is the national program of Austrian Social Democracy.

Let us examine its scientific foundations.

Let us see how the Austrian Social-Democratic Party justifies the cultural-national autonomy it advocates.

Let us turn to the theoreticians of cultural-national autonomy, Springer and Bauer.

The starting point of national autonomy is the conception of a nation as a union of individuals without regard to a definite territory.

“Nationality,” according to Springer, “is not essentially connected with territory”; nations are “autonomous unions of persons.”<sup>37</sup>

Bauer also speaks of a nation as a “community of persons” which does not enjoy “exclusive sovereignty in any particular region.”<sup>38</sup>

But the persons constituting a nation do not always live in one compact mass; they are frequently divided into groups, and in that form are interspersed among alien national organisms. It is capitalism which drives them into various regions and cities in search of a livelihood. But when they enter foreign national territories and there form minorities, these groups are made to suffer by the local national majorities in the way of restrictions on their language, schools, etc. Hence national conflicts. Hence the “unsuitability” of territorial autonomy. The only solution to such a situation, according to Springer and Bauer, is to organize the minorities of the given nationality dispersed over various parts of the state into a single, general, inter-class national union. Such a union alone, in

<sup>34</sup> See Springer, *The National Problem*, p. 286.

<sup>35</sup> See Bauer, *The National Question*, p. 549.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 555.

<sup>37</sup> See Springer, *The National Problem*, p. 19.

<sup>38</sup> See Bauer, *The National Question*, p. 286.

their opinion, can protect the cultural interests of national minorities, and it alone is capable of putting an end to national discord.

Hence the necessity [says Springer,] to organize the nationalities, to invest them with rights and responsibilities...<sup>39</sup> [Of course,] a law is easily drafted, but will it be effective?... If one wants to make a law for nations, one must first create the nations...<sup>40</sup> Unless the nationalities are constituted it is impossible to create national rights and eliminate national disension.<sup>41</sup>

Bauer expressed himself in the same spirit when he proposed, as “a demand of the working class,” that “the minorities should be constituted into public corporations based on the personal principle.”<sup>42</sup>

But how is a nation to be organized? How is one to determine to what nation any given individual belongs?

“Nationality,” says Springer, “will be determined by certificates; every individual domiciled in a given region must declare his affiliation to one of the nationalities of that region.”<sup>43</sup>

“The personal principle,” says Bauer, “presumes that the population will be divided into nationalities... On the basis of the free declaration of the adult citizens national registers must be drawn up.”<sup>44</sup>

Further.

“All the Germans in nationally homogeneous districts,” says Bauer, “and all the Germans entered in the national registers in the dual districts will constitute the German nation and elect a *National Council*.”<sup>45</sup>

The same applies to the Czechs, Poles, and so on.

The *National Council*, [according to Springer,] is the cultural parliament of the nation, empowered to establish the principles and to grant funds, thereby assuming guardianship over

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<sup>39</sup> See Springer, *The National Problem*, p. 74.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., pp. 88-89.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 89.

<sup>42</sup> See Bauer, *The National Question*, p. 552.

<sup>43</sup> See Springer, *The National Problem*, p. 226.

<sup>44</sup> See Bauer, *The National Question*, p. 368.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 375.



national education, national literature, art and science, the formation of academies, museums, galleries, theaters, [etc.]<sup>46</sup>

Such will be the organization of a nation and its central institution. According to Bauer, the Austrian Social-Democratic Party is striving, by the creation of these inter-class institutions “to make national culture... the possession of the whole people and thereby *unite all the members of the nation into a national-cultural community*.”<sup>47</sup> (our italics)

One might think that all this concerns Austria alone. But Bauer does not agree. He emphatically declares that national autonomy is essential also for other states which, like Austria, consist of several nationalities.

“In the multi-national state,” according to Bauer, “the working class of all the nations opposes the national power policy of the propertied classes with the demand for national autonomy.”<sup>48</sup>

Then, imperceptibly substituting national autonomy for the self-determination of nations, he continues:

“Thus, national autonomy, the self-determination of nations, will necessarily become the constitutional program of the proletariat of all the nations in a multi-national state.”<sup>49</sup>

But he goes still further. He profoundly believes that the inter-class “national unions” “constituted” by him and Springer will serve as a sort of prototype of the future socialist society. For he knows that “the socialist system of society... will divide humanity into nationally delimited communities”;<sup>50</sup> that under socialism there will take place “a grouping of humanity into autonomous national communities,”<sup>51</sup> that thus, “socialist society will undoubtedly present a checkered picture of national unions of persons and territorial corporations,”<sup>52</sup> and that accordingly “the socialist principle of nationality is a higher synthesis of the national principle and national autonomy.”<sup>53</sup>

<sup>46</sup> See Springer, *The National Problem*, p. 234.

<sup>47</sup> See Bauer, *The National Question*, p. 553.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 337.

<sup>49</sup> See Bauer, *The National Question*, p. 333.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 555.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 556.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 543.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 542.

Enough, it would seem...

These are the arguments for cultural-national autonomy as given in the works of Bauer and Springer.

The first thing that strikes the eye is the entirely inexplicable and absolutely unjustifiable substitution of national autonomy for self-determination of nations. One or the other: either Bauer failed to understand the meaning of self-determination, or he did understand it but for some reason or other deliberately narrowed its meaning. For there is no doubt a) that cultural-national autonomy presupposes the integrity of the multi-national state, whereas self-determination goes outside the framework of this integrity, and b) that self-determination endows a nation with complete rights, whereas national autonomy endows it only with "cultural" rights. That in the first place.

In the second place, a combination of internal and external conditions is fully possible at some future time by virtue of which one or another of the nationalities may decide to secede from a multi-national state, say from Austria. Did not the Ruthenian Social-Democrats at the Brünn Party Congress announce their readiness to unite the "two parts" of their people into one whole?<sup>54</sup> What, in such a case, becomes of national autonomy, which is "*inevitable for the proletariat of all the nations?*"

That sort of "solution" of the problem is it that mechanically squeezes nations into the Procrustean bed of an integral state?

Further: National autonomy is contrary to the whole course of development of nations. It calls for the organization of nations; but can they be artificially welded together if life, if economic development tears whole groups from them and disperses these groups over various regions? There is no doubt that in the early stages of capitalism nations become welded together. But there is also no doubt that in the higher stages of capitalism a process of dispersion of nations sets in, a process whereby a whole number of groups separate off from the nations, going off in search of a livelihood and subsequently settling permanently in other regions of the state; in the course of this, these settlers lose their old connections and acquire new ones in their new domicile, and from generation to generation acquire new habits and new tastes, and possibly a new language. The question arises: is

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<sup>54</sup> See *Proceedings of the Brünn Social-Democratic Party Congress*, p. 48.

it possible to unite into a single national union groups that have grown so distinct? Where are the magic links to unite what cannot be united? Is it conceivable that, for instance, the Germans of the Baltic Provinces and the Germans of Transcaucasia can be “united into a single nation?” But if it is not conceivable and not possible, wherein does national autonomy differ from the utopia of the old nationalists, who endeavored to turn back the wheel of history?

But the unity of a nation diminishes not only as a result of migration. It diminishes also from internal causes, owing to the growing acuteness of the class struggle. In the early stages of capitalism one can still speak of a “common culture” of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. But as large-scale industry develops and the class struggle becomes more and more acute, this “common culture” begins to melt away. One cannot seriously speak of the “common culture” of a nation when employers and workers of one and the same nation cease to understand each other. What “common destiny” can there be when the bourgeoisie thirsts for war, and the proletariat declares “war on war?” Can a single inter-class national union be formed from such opposed elements? And, after this, can one speak of the “union of all the members of the nation into a national-cultural community?”<sup>55</sup> Is it not obvious that national autonomy is contrary to the whole course of the class struggle?

But let us assume for a moment that the slogan “organize the nation” is practicable. One might understand bourgeois-nationalist parliamentarians endeavoring to “organize” a nation for the purpose of securing additional votes. But since when have Social-Democrats begun to occupy themselves with “organizing” nations, “constituting” nations, “creating” nations?

What sort of Social-Democrats are they who in the epoch of extreme intensification of the class struggle organize inter-class national unions? Until now the Austrian, as well as every other, Social-Democratic Party, had one task before it: namely, to organize the proletariat. That task has apparently become “antiquated.” Springer and Bauer are now setting a “new” task, a more absorbing task, namely, to “create,” to “organize” a nation.

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<sup>55</sup> Bauer, *The National Question*, p. 553.

However, logic has its obligations: he who adopts national autonomy must also adopt this “new” task; but to adopt the latter means to abandon the class position and to take the path of nationalism.

Springer’s and Bauer’s cultural-national autonomy is a subtle form of nationalism.

And it is by no means fortuitous that the national program of the Austrian Social-Democrats enjoins a concern for the “*preservation and development* of the national peculiarities of the peoples.” Just think: to “preserve” such “national peculiarities” of the Transcaucasian Tatars as self-flagellation at the festival of Shakhsei-Vakhsei; or to “develop” such “national peculiarities” of the Georgians as the vendetta!...

A demand of this character is in place in an outright bourgeois nationalist program; and if it appears in the program of the Austrian Social-Democrats it is because national autonomy tolerates such demands, it does not contradict them.

But if national autonomy is unsuitable now, it will be still more unsuitable in the future, socialist society.

Bauer’s prophecy regarding the “division of humanity into nationally delimited communities”<sup>56</sup> is refuted by the whole course of development of modern human society. National barriers are being demolished and are falling, rather than becoming firmer. As early as the ‘forties Marx declared that “national differences and antagonisms between peoples are daily more and more vanishing” and that “the supremacy of the proletariat will cause them to vanish still faster.”<sup>57</sup> The subsequent development of mankind, accompanied as it was by the colossal growth of capitalist production, the re-shuffling of nationalities and the union of people within ever larger territories, emphatically confirms Marx’s thought.

Bauer’s desire to represent socialist society as a “checkered picture of national unions of persons and territorial corporations” is a timid attempt to substitute for Marx’s conception of socialism a revised version of Bakunin’s conception. The history of socialism proves that every such attempt contains the elements of inevitable failure.

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<sup>56</sup> See the beginning of this chapter.

<sup>57</sup> See K. Marx, F. Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party & Principles of Communism*, Chapter II, Foreign Languages Press, Paris, 2020, pp. 47-56.

There is no need to mention the kind of “socialist principle of nationality” glorified by Bauer, which, in our opinion, substitutes for the socialist principle of the *class struggle* the bourgeois “principle of nationality.” If national autonomy is based on such a dubious principle, it must be admitted that it can only cause harm to the working-class movement.

True, such nationalism is not so transparent, for it is skillfully masked by socialist phrases, but it is all the more harmful to the proletariat for that reason. We can always cope with open nationalism, for it can easily be discerned. It is much more difficult to combat nationalism when it is masked and unrecognizable beneath its mask. Protected by the armor of socialism, it is less vulnerable and more tenacious. Implanted among the workers, it poisons the atmosphere and spreads harmful ideas of mutual distrust and segregation among the workers of the different nationalities.

But this does not exhaust the harm caused by national autonomy. It prepares the ground not only for the segregation of nations but also for breaking up the united labor movement. The idea of national autonomy creates the psychological conditions for the division of the united workers’ party into separate parties built on national lines. The break-up of the party is followed by the break-up of the trade unions, and complete segregation is the result. In this way the united class movement is broken up into separate national rivulets.

Austria, the home of “national autonomy,” provides the most deplorable examples of this. As early as 1897 the Wimberg Party Congress<sup>58</sup>) the once united Austrian Social-Democratic Party began to break up into separate parties. The break-up became still more marked after the Brünn Party Congress (1899), which adopted national autonomy. Matters have finally come to such a pass that in place of a united international party there are now six national parties, of which the Czech Social-Democratic Party will not even have anything to do with the German Social-Democratic Party.

But with the parties are associated the trade unions. In Austria, both in the parties and in the trade unions, the main brunt of the work is borne by the same Social-Democratic workers. There was therefore reason to fear that separatism in the party would lead to separatism in the trade unions

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<sup>58</sup> The Vienna Congress (or *Wimberg* Congress—after the name of the hotel in which it met) of the Austrian Social-Democratic Party was held June 6-12, 1897.

and that the trade unions would also break up. That, in fact, is what happened: the trade unions have also divided according to nationality. Now things frequently go so far that the Czech workers will even break a strike of German workers, or will unite at municipal elections with the Czech bourgeois against the German workers.

It will be seen from the foregoing that cultural-national autonomy is no solution of the national question. Not only that, it serves to aggravate and confuse the question by creating a situation which favors the destruction of the unity of the labor movement, fosters the segregation of the workers according to nationality and intensifies friction among them. Such is the harvest of national autonomy.

## V. The Bund, Its Nationalism, Its Separatism

We said above that Bauer, while granting the necessity of national autonomy for the Czechs, Poles, and so on, nevertheless opposes similar autonomy for the Jews. In answer to the question, “Should the working class demand autonomy for the Jewish people?” Bauer says that “national autonomy cannot be demanded by the Jewish workers.”<sup>59</sup> According to Bauer, the reason is that “capitalist society makes it impossible for them (the Jews—*J. St.*) to continue as a nation.”<sup>60</sup>

In brief, the Jewish nation is coming to an end, and hence there is nobody to demand national autonomy for. The Jews are being assimilated.

This view of the fate of the Jews as a nation is not a new one. It was expressed by Marx as early as the forties,<sup>61</sup><sup>62</sup> in reference chiefly to the German Jews. It was repeated by Kautsky in 1903,<sup>63</sup> in reference to the Russian Jews. It is now being repeated by Bauer in reference to the Austrian Jews, with the difference, however, that he denies not the present but the future of the Jewish nation.

Bauer explains the impossibility of preserving the existence of the Jews as a nation by the fact that “the Jews have no closed territory of settlement.”<sup>64</sup> This explanation, in the main a correct one, does not however express the whole truth. The fact of the matter is primarily that among the Jews there is no large and stable stratum connected with the land, which would naturally rivet the nation together, serving not only as its framework but also as a “national” market. Of the five or six million Russian Jews, only three to four percent are connected with agriculture in any way.

<sup>59</sup> See Bauer, *The National Question*, pp. 381, 396.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 389.

<sup>61</sup> See K. Marx, “On the Jewish Question,” in K. Marx, F. Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. III, Lawrence & Wishart, 2010.

<sup>62</sup> The reference is to an article by Karl Marx entitled “Zur Judenfrage” (“The Jewish Question”), published in 1844 in the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher*. (See K. Marx, F. Engels, “Zur Judenfrage,” in *Marx-Engels-Werke*, Band 1, Dietz Berlin, 1990).

<sup>63</sup> See K. Kautsky, *The Kishinev Pogrom and the Jewish Question*, 1903.

<sup>64</sup> See Bauer, *The National Question*, p. 388.

The remaining ninety-six percent are employed in trade, industry, in urban institutions, and in general are town dwellers; moreover, they are spread all over Russia and do not constitute a majority in a single gubernia.

Thus, interspersed as national minorities in areas inhabited by other nationalities, the Jews as a rule serve “foreign” nations as manufacturers and traders and as members of the liberal professions, naturally adapting themselves to the “foreign nations” in respect to language and so forth. All this, taken together with the increasing re-shuffling of nationalities characteristic of developed forms of capitalism, leads to the assimilation of the Jews. The abolition of the “Pale of Settlement” would only serve to hasten this process of assimilation.

The question of national autonomy for the Russian Jews consequently assumes a somewhat curious character: autonomy is being proposed for a nation whose future is denied and whose existence has still to be proved!

Nevertheless, this was the curious and shaky position taken up by the Bund when at its Sixth Congress (1905) it adopted a “national program” on the lines of national autonomy.

Two circumstances impelled the Bund to take this step.

The first circumstance is the existence of the Bund as an organization of Jewish, and only Jewish, Social-Democratic workers. Even before 1897 the Social-Democratic groups active among the Jewish workers set themselves the aim of creating “a special Jewish workers’ organization.”<sup>65</sup> They founded such an organization in 1897 by uniting to form the Bund. That was at a time when Russian Social-Democracy as an integral body virtually did not yet exist. The Bund steadily grew and spread, and stood out more and more vividly against the background of the bleak days of Russian Social Democracy... Then came the 1900s. A *mass* labor movement came into being. Polish Social-Democracy grew and drew the Jewish workers into the mass struggle. Russian Social-Democracy grew and attracted the “Bund” workers. Lacking a territorial basis, the national framework of the Bund became too restrictive. The Bund was faced with the problem of either merging with the general international tide, or of upholding its

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<sup>65</sup> See *Forms of the National Movement*, etc., edited by Kastelyansky, p. 772.



independent existence as an extra-territorial organization. The Bund chose the latter course.

Thus grew up the “theory” that the Bund is “the sole representative of the Jewish proletariat.”

But to justify this strange “theory” in any “simple” way became impossible. Some kind of foundation “on principle,” some justification “on principle,” was needed. Cultural-national autonomy provided such a foundation. The Bund seized upon it, borrowing it from the Austrian Social-Democrats. If the Austrians had not had such a program, the Bund would have invented it in order to justify its independent existence “on principle.”

Thus, after a timid attempt in 1901 (the Fourth Congress), the Bund definitely adopted a “national program” in 1905 (the Sixth Congress).

The second circumstance is the peculiar position of the Jews as separate national minorities within compact majorities of other nationalities in integral regions. We have already said that this position is undermining the existence of the Jews as a nation and puts them on the road to assimilation. But this is an objective process. Subjectively, in the minds of the Jews, it provokes a reaction and gives rise to the demand for a guarantee of the rights of a national minority, for a guarantee against assimilation. Preaching as it does the vitality of the Jewish “nationality,” the Bund could not avoid being in favor of a “guarantee.” And, having taken up this position, it could not but accept national autonomy. For if the Bund could seize upon any autonomy at all, it could only be national autonomy, i.e., *cultural-national* autonomy; there could be no question of territorial-political autonomy for the Jews, since the Jews have no definite integral territory.

It is noteworthy that the Bund from the outset stressed the character of national autonomy as a guarantee of the rights of national minorities, as a guarantee of the “free development” of nations. Nor was it fortuitous that the representative of the Bund at the Second Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Party, Goldblatt, defined national autonomy as “institutions which guarantee them (i.e., nations—*J. St.*) complete freedom of cultural development.”<sup>66</sup> A similar proposal was made by supporters

<sup>66</sup> See *Minutes of the Second Congress*, 1903, p. 176.

of the ideas of the Bund to the Social-Democratic group in the Fourth Duma...

In this way the Bund adopted the curious position of national autonomy for the Jews.

We have examined above national autonomy in general. The examination showed that national autonomy leads to nationalism. We shall see later that the Bund has arrived at the same endpoint. But the Bund also regards national autonomy from a special aspect, namely, from the aspect of *guarantees* of the rights of national minorities. Let us also examine the question from this special aspect. It is all the more necessary since the problem of national minorities—and not of the Jewish minorities alone—is one of serious moment for Social-Democracy.

And so, it is a question of “*institutions which guarantee*” nations “complete freedom of cultural development.” [our italics—*J. St.*]

But what are these “institutions which guarantee,” etc.?

They are primarily the “National Council” of Springer and Bauer, something in the nature of a Diet for cultural affairs.

But can these institutions guarantee a nation “complete freedom of cultural development?” Can a Diet for cultural affairs guarantee a nation against nationalist persecution?

The Bund believes it can.

But history proves the contrary.

At one time a Diet existed in Russian Poland. It was a political Diet and, of course, endeavored to guarantee freedom of “cultural development” for the Poles. But, far from succeeding in doing so, it itself succumbed in the unequal struggle against the political conditions generally prevailing in Russia.

A Diet has been in existence for a long time in Finland, and it too endeavors to protect the Finnish nationality from “encroachments,” but how far it succeeds in doing so everybody can see.

Of course, there are Diets and Diets, and it is not so easy to cope with the democratically organized Finnish Diet as it was with the aristocratic Polish Diet. But the decisive factor, nevertheless, is not the Diet, but the general regime in Russia. If such a grossly Asiatic social and political regime existed in Russia now as in the past, at the time the Polish Diet was abolished, things would go much harder with the Finnish Diet. Moreover,

the policy of “encroachments” upon Finland is growing, and it cannot be said that it has met with defeat...

If such is the case with old, historically evolved institutions—political Diets—still less will young Diets, young institutions, especially such feeble institutions as “cultural” Diets, be able to guarantee the free development of nations.

Obviously, it is not a question of “institutions,” but of the general regime prevailing in the country. If there is no democracy in the country, there can be no guarantees of “complete freedom for cultural development” of nationalities. One may say with certainty that the more democratic a country is the fewer are the “encroachments” made on the “freedom of nationalities,” and the greater are the guarantees against such “encroachments.”

Russia is a semi-Asiatic country, and therefore in Russia the policy of “encroachments” not infrequently assumes the grossest form, the form of pogroms. It need hardly be said that in Russia “guarantees” have been reduced to the very minimum.

Germany is, however, European, and she enjoys a measure of political freedom. It is not surprising that the policy of “encroachments” there never takes the form of pogroms.

In France, of course, there are still more “guarantees,” for France is more democratic than Germany.

There is no need to mention Switzerland, where, thanks to her highly developed, although bourgeois democracy, nationalities live in freedom, whether they are a minority or a majority.

Thus the Bund adopts a false position when it asserts that “institutions” by themselves are able to guarantee complete cultural development for nationalities.

It may be said that the Bund itself regards the establishment of democracy in Russia as a *preliminary* condition for the “creation of institutions” and guarantees of freedom. But this is not the case. From the *Report of the Eighth Conference of the Bund*<sup>67</sup> it will be seen that the Bund thinks it can secure “institutions” *on the basis* of the present system in Russia, by “reforming” the *Jewish community*.

<sup>67</sup> The Eighth Conference of the Bund was held in September 1910 in Lviv.

The community [one of the leaders of the Bund said at this conference,] may become the nucleus of future cultural-national autonomy. Cultural-national autonomy is a form of self-service on the part of nations, a form of satisfying national needs. The community form conceals within itself a similar content. They are links in the same chain, stages in the same evolution.<sup>68</sup>

On this basis, the conference decided that it was necessary to strive “for *reforming* the Jewish community and transforming it by *legislative means* into a secular institution,” democratically organized<sup>69</sup> (our italics—*J. St.*).

It is evident that the Bund considers as the condition and guarantee not the democratization of Russia, but some future “secular institution” of the Jews, obtained by “reforming the Jewish community,” so to speak, by “legislative” means, through the Duma.

But we have already seen that “institutions” in themselves cannot serve as “guarantees” if the regime in the state generally is not a democratic one.

But what, it may be asked, will be the position under a future democratic system? Will not special “cultural institutions which guarantee,” etc., be required even under democracy? What is the position in this respect in democratic Switzerland, for example? Are there special cultural institutions in Switzerland on the pattern of Springer’s “National Council?” *No*, there are *not*. But do not the cultural interests of, for instance, the Italians, who constitute a minority there, suffer for that reason? One does not seem to hear that they do. And that is quite natural: in Switzerland all special cultural “institutions,” which supposedly “guarantee,” etc., are rendered superfluous by democracy.

And so, impotent in the present and superfluous in the future—such are the *institutions* of cultural-national autonomy, and such is national autonomy.

But it becomes still more harmful when it is thrust upon a “nation” whose existence and future are open to doubt. In such cases the advocates

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<sup>68</sup> *Report of the Eighth Conference of the Bund*, 1911, p. 62.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 83-84.

of national autonomy are obliged to protect and preserve all the peculiar features of the “nation,” the bad as well as the good, just for the sake of “saving the nation” from assimilation, just for the sake of “preserving” it.

That the Bund should take this dangerous path was inevitable. And it did take it. We are referring to the resolutions of recent conferences of the Bund on the question of the “Sabbath,” “Yiddish,” etc.

Social-Democracy strives to secure *for all nations* the right to use their own language. But that does not satisfy the Bund; it demands that “the rights of the *Jewish* language” (our italics—*J. St.*) be championed with “exceptional persistence,”<sup>70</sup> and the Bund itself in the elections to the Fourth Duma declared that it would give “preference to those of them (i.e., electors) who undertake to defend the rights of the Jewish language.”<sup>71</sup>

Not the *general* right of all nations to use their own language, but the *particular* right of the Jewish language, Yiddish! Let the workers of the various nationalities fight *primarily* for their own language: the Jews for Jewish, the Georgians for Georgian, and so forth. The struggle for the general right of all nations is a secondary matter. You do not have to recognize the right of all oppressed nationalities to use their own language; but if you have recognized the right of Yiddish, know that the Bund will vote for you, the Bund will “prefer” you.

But in what way then does the Bund differ from the bourgeois nationalists?

Social-Democracy strives to secure the establishment of a compulsory weekly rest day. But that does not satisfy the Bund; it demands that “by legislative means” “the Jewish proletariat should be guaranteed the right to observe their Sabbath and be relieved of the obligation to observe another day.”<sup>72</sup>

It is to be expected that the Bund will take another “step forward” and demand the right to observe all the ancient Hebrew holidays. And if, to the misfortune of the Bund, the Jewish workers have discarded religious prejudices and do not want to observe these holidays, the Bund with its agitation for “the right to the Sabbath,” will remind them of the Sabbath, it will, so to speak, cultivate among them “the Sabbatarian spirit.”...

<sup>70</sup> See *Report of the Eighth Conference of the Bund*, p. 85.

<sup>71</sup> See *Report of the Ninth Conference of the Bund*, p. 42.

<sup>72</sup> See *Report of the Eighth Conference of the Bund*, p. 83

Quite comprehensible, therefore, are the “passionate speeches” delivered at the Eighth Conference of the Bund demanding “Jewish hospitals,” a demand that was based on the argument that “a patient feels more at home among his own people,” that “the Jewish worker will not feel at ease among Polish workers, but will feel at ease among Jewish shopkeepers.”<sup>73</sup>

Preservation of everything Jewish, conservation of all the national peculiarities of the Jews, even those that are patently harmful to the proletariat, isolation of the Jews from everything non-Jewish, even the establishment of special hospitals—that is the level to which the Bund has sunk!

Comrade Plekhanov was right a thousand times over when he said that the Bund “is adapting socialism to nationalism.” Of course, V. Kossovsky and Bundists like him may denounce Plekhanov as a “demagogue”<sup>74, 75</sup>—paper will put up with, anything that is written on it—but those who are familiar with the activities of the Bund will easily realize that these brave fellows are simply afraid to tell the truth about themselves and are hiding behind strong language about “demagogy.”...

But since it holds such a position on the national question, the Bund was naturally obliged, in the matter of organization also, to take the path of segregating the Jewish workers, the path of formation of national *curiae* within Social-Democracy. Such is the logic of national autonomy!

And, in fact, the Bund did pass from the theory of sole representation to the theory of “national demarcation” of workers. The Bund demands that Russian Social-Democracy should “in its organizational structure introduce demarcation according to nationalities.”<sup>76</sup> From “demarcation” it made a “step forward” to the theory of “segregation.” It is not for noth-

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 68.

<sup>74</sup> See *Nasha Zarya*, No. 9-10, 1912, p. 120.

<sup>75</sup> In an article entitled “Another Splitters’ Conference,” published in the newspaper *Za Partiyu*, October 2 (15), 1912, G. V. Plekhanov condemned the “August” Conference of the Liquidators and described the stand of the Bundists and Caucasian Social-Democrats as an adaptation of socialism to nationalism. Kossovsky, leader of the Bundists, criticized Plekhanov in a letter to the Liquidators’ magazine *Nasha Zarya*.

<sup>76</sup> See *An Announcement on the Seventh Congress of the Bund*, p. 7. The Seventh Congress of the Bund was held in Lvov at the end of August and beginning of September 1906.

ing that speeches were made at the Eighth Conference of the Bund declaring that “national existence lies in segregation.”<sup>77</sup>

Organizational federalism harbors the elements of disintegration and separatism. The Bund is heading for separatism.

And, indeed, there is nothing else it can head for. Its very existence as an extra-territorial organization drives it to separatism. The Bund does not possess a definite integral territory; it operates on “foreign” territories, whereas the neighboring Polish, Lettish and Russian Social-Democracies are international territorial collective bodies. But the result is that every extension of these collective bodies means a “loss” to the Bund and a restriction of its field of action. There are two alternatives: either Russian Social-Democracy as a whole must be reconstructed on the basis of national federalism—which will enable the Bund to “secure” the Jewish proletariat for itself; or the territorial-international principle of these collective bodies remains in force—in which case the Bund must be reconstructed on the basis of internationalism, as is the case with the Polish and Lettish Social-Democracies.

This explains why the Bund from the very beginning demanded “the reorganization of Russian Social-Democracy on a federal basis.”<sup>78</sup>

In 1906, yielding to the pressure from below in favor of unity, the Bund chose a middle path and joined Russian Social-Democracy. But how did it join? Whereas the Polish and Lettish Social-Democracies joined for the purpose of peaceable joint action, the Bund joined for the purpose of waging war for a federation. That is exactly what Medem, the leader of the Bundists, said at the time:

“We are joining not for the sake of an idyll, but in order to fight. There is no idyll, and only Manilovs could hope for one in the near future. The Bund must join the Party armed from head to foot.”<sup>79</sup>

It would be wrong to regard this as an expression of evil intent on Medem’s part. It is not a matter of evil intent, but of the peculiar position of the Bund, which compels it to fight Russian Social-Democracy, which is built on the basis of internationalism. And in fighting it the Bund nat-

<sup>77</sup> See *Report of the Eighth Conference of the Bund*, p. 72.

<sup>78</sup> See *Concerning National Autonomy and the Reorganization of Russian Social-Democracy on a Federal Basis*, 1902, published by the Bund.

<sup>79</sup> *Nashe Slovo*, No. 3, Vilno, 1906, p. 24.

urally violated the interests of unity. Finally, matters went so far that the Bund formally broke with Russian Social-Democracy, violating its statutes, and in the elections to the Fourth Duma joining forces with the Polish nationalists against the Polish Social-Democrats.

The Bund has apparently found that a rupture is the best guarantee for independent activity.

And so the “principle” of organizational “demarcation” led to separatism and to a complete rupture.

In a controversy with the old *Iskra*<sup>80</sup> on the question of federalism, the Bund once wrote:

*Iskra* wants to assure us that federal relations between the Bund and Russian Social-Democracy are bound to weaken the ties between them. We cannot refute this opinion by referring to practice in Russia, for the simple reason that Russian Social-Democracy does not exist as a federal body. But we can refer to the extremely instructive experience of Social-Democracy in Austria, which assumed a federal character by virtue of the decision of the Party Congress of 1897.<sup>81</sup>

That was written in 1902.

But we are now in the year 1913. We now have both Russian “practice” and the “experience of Social-Democracy in Austria.”

What do they tell us?

Let us begin with “the extremely instructive experience of Social-Democracy in Austria.” Up to 1896 there was a united Social-Democratic Party in Austria. In that year the Czechs at the International Congress in London for the first time demanded separate representation, and were given it. In 1897, at the Vienna (Wimberg) Party Congress, the united party was formally liquidated and in its place a federal league of six national “Social-Democratic groups” was set up. Subsequently these “groups” were converted into independent parties, which gradually severed contact with one another. Following the parties, the parliamentary group broke up—

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<sup>80</sup> *Iskra* (*The Spark*)—the first all-Russian illegal Marxist newspaper founded by V. I. Lenin in 1900 (see J. V. Stalin, *Collected Works*, Vol. I, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1954, p. 91, Note 26).

<sup>81</sup> *National Autonomy*, etc., 1902, p. 17, published by the Bund.



national “clubs” were formed. Next came the trade unions, which also split according to nationalities. Even the co-operative societies were affected, the Czech separatists calling upon the workers to split them up.<sup>82</sup> We will not dwell on the fact that separatist agitation weakens the workers’ sense of solidarity and frequently drives them to strike-breaking.

Thus “the extremely instructive experience of Social Democracy in Austria” speaks *against* the Bund and for the old *Iskra*. Federalism in the Austrian party has led to the most outrageous separatism, to the destruction of the unity of the labor movement.

We have seen above that “practical experience in Russia” also bears this out. Like the Czech separatists, the Bundist separatists have broken with the general Russian Social-Democratic Party. As for the trade unions, the Bundist trade unions, from the outset they were organized on national lines, that is to say, they were cut off from the workers of other nationalities.

Complete segregation and complete rupture—that is what is revealed by the “Russian practical experience” of federalism.

It is not surprising that the effect of this state of affairs upon the workers is to weaken their sense of solidarity and to demoralize them; and the latter process is also penetrating the Bund. We are referring to the increasing collisions between Jewish and Polish workers in connection with unemployment. Here is the kind of speech that was made on this subject at the Ninth Conference of the Bund:

We regard the Polish workers, who are ousting us, as pogromists, as scabs; we do not support their strikes, we break them. Secondly, we reply to being ousted by ousting in our turn: we reply to Jewish workers not being allowed into the factories by not allowing Polish workers near the benches... *If we do not take this matter into our own hands the workers will follow others.*<sup>83</sup> [our italics—J. St.]

That is the way they talk about solidarity at a Bundist conference.

<sup>82</sup> See the words quoted from a brochure by Vaněk [*Karl Vaněk* was a Czech Social-Democrat who took an openly chauvinist and separatist stand] in *Dokumente des Separatismus*, p. 29.

<sup>83</sup> See *Report of the Ninth Conference of the Bund*, p. 19.

You cannot go further than that in the way of “demarcation” and “segregation.” The Bund has achieved its aim: it is carrying its demarcation between the workers of different nationalities to the point of conflicts and strike-breaking. And there is no other course:

“If we do not take this matter into our own hands, *the workers will follow others...*”

Disorganization of the labor movement, demoralization of the Social-Democratic ranks—that is what the federalism of the Bund leads to.

Thus the idea of cultural-national autonomy, the atmosphere it creates, has proved to be even more harmful in Russia than in Austria.

## VI. The Caucasians, the Conference of the Liquidators

We spoke above of the waverings of one section of the Caucasian Social-Democrats who were unable to withstand the nationalist “epidemic.” These waverings were revealed in the fact that, strange as it may seem, the above-mentioned Social-Democrats followed in the footsteps of the Bund and proclaimed cultural-national autonomy.

Regional autonomy for the Caucasus as a whole and cultural-national autonomy for the nations forming the Caucasus—that is the way these Social-Democrats, who, incidentally, are linked with the Russian Liquidators, formulate their demand.

Listen to their acknowledged leader, the not unknown *N.*

Everybody knows that the Caucasus differs profoundly from the central gubernias, both as regards the racial composition of its population and as regards its territory and agricultural development. The exploitation and material development of such a region require local workers acquainted with local peculiarities and accustomed to the local climate and culture. All laws designed to further the exploitation of the local territory should be issued locally and put into effect by local forces. Consequently, the jurisdiction of the central organ of Caucasian self-government should extend to legislation on local questions... Hence, the functions of the Caucasian center should consist in the passing of laws designed to further the economic exploitation of the local territory and the material prosperity of the region.<sup>84</sup>

Thus—regional autonomy for the Caucasus.

If we abstract ourselves from the rather confused and incoherent arguments of *N.*, it must be admitted that his conclusion is correct. Regional autonomy for the Caucasus, within the framework of a general

<sup>84</sup> See *Chveni Tskhovreba (Our Life)*, No. 12, 1912. *Chveni Tskhovreba* was a Georgian daily newspaper published by the Georgian Mensheviks in Kutais from July 1 to 22, 1912.

state constitution, which *N.* does not deny, is indeed essential because of the peculiarities of its composition and its conditions of life. This was also acknowledged by the Russian Social-Democratic Party, which at its Second Congress proclaimed “regional self-government for those border regions which in respect of their conditions of life and the composition of their population differ from the regions of Russia proper.”

When Martov submitted this point for discussion at the Second Congress, he justified it on the grounds that “the vast extent of Russia and the experience of our centralized administration point to the necessity and expediency of regional self-government for such large units as Finland, Poland, Lithuania and the Caucasus.”

But it follows that regional *self-government* is to be interpreted as regional *autonomy*.

But *N.* goes further. According to him, regional autonomy for the Caucasus covers “only one aspect of the question.”

So far we have spoken only of the material development of local life. But the economic development of a region is facilitated not only by economic activity but also by spiritual, cultural activity... A culturally strong nation is strong also in the economic sphere... But the cultural development of nations is possible only in the national languages... Consequently, all questions connected with the native language are questions of national culture. Such are the questions of education, the judicature, the church, literature, art, science, the theater, etc. If the material development of a region unites nations, matters of national culture disunite them and place each in a separate sphere. Activities of the former kind are associated with a definite territory... This is not the case with matters of national culture. These are associated not with a definite territory but with the existence of a definite nation. The fate of the Georgian language interests a Georgian, no matter where he lives. It would be a sign of profound ignorance to say that Georgian culture concerns only the Georgians who live in Georgia. Take, for instance, the Armenian church. Armenians of various localities and states take part in the administration of its

affairs. Territory plays no part here. Or, for instance, the creation of a Georgian museum interests not only the Georgians of Tiflis but also the Georgians of Baku, Kutais, St. Petersburg, etc. Hence, the administration and control of all affairs of national culture must be left to the nations concerned we proclaim in favor of cultural-national autonomy for the Caucasian nationalities.<sup>85</sup>

In short, since culture is not territory, and territory is not culture, cultural-national autonomy is required. That is all *N.* can say in the latter's favor.

We shall not stop to discuss again national-cultural autonomy in general; we have already spoken of its objectionable character. We should like to point out only that, while being unsuitable in general, cultural-national autonomy is also meaningless and nonsensical in relation to Caucasian conditions.

And for the following reason:

Cultural-national autonomy presumes more or less developed nationalities, with a developed culture and literature. Failing these conditions, autonomy loses all sense and becomes an absurdity. But in the Caucasus there are a number of nationalities each possessing a primitive culture, a separate language, but without its own literature; nationalities, moreover, which are in a state of transition, partly becoming assimilated and partly continuing to develop. How is cultural-national autonomy to be applied to them? What is to be done with such nationalities? How are they to be "organized" into separate cultural-national unions, as is undoubtedly implied by cultural-national autonomy?

What is to be done with the Mingrelians, the Abkhazians, the Adjarians, the Svanetians, the Lesghians, and so on, who speak different languages but do not possess a literature of their own? To what nations are they to be attached? Can they be "organized" into national unions? Around what "cultural affairs" are they to be "organized?"

What is to be done with the Ossetians, of whom the Transcaucasian Ossetians are becoming assimilated (but are as yet by no means wholly assimilated) by the Georgians while the Cis-Caucasian Ossetians are partly

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

being assimilated by the Russians and partly continuing to develop and are creating their own literature? How are they to be “organized” into a single national union?

To what national union should one attach the Adjarians, who speak the Georgian language, but whose culture is Turkish and who profess the religion of Islam? Shall they be “organized” separately from the Georgians *with regard to religious affairs* and together with the Georgians *with regard to other cultural affairs*? And what about the Kobuletiens, the Ingushes, the Inghilois?

What kind of autonomy is that which excludes a whole number of nationalities from the list?

No, that is not a solution of the national question, but the fruit of idle fancy.

But let us grant the impossible and assume that our *N.*'s national-cultural autonomy has been put into effect. Where would it lead to, what would be its results? Take, for instance, the Transcaucasian Tatars, with their minimum percentage of literates, their schools controlled by the omnipotent mullahs and their culture permeated by the religious spirit... It is not difficult to understand that to “organize” them into a cultural national union would mean to place them under the control of the mullahs, to deliver them over to the tender mercies of the reactionary mullahs, to create a new strong hold of spiritual enslavement of the Tatar masses to their worst enemy.

But since when have Social-Democrats made it a practice to bring grist to the mill of the reactionaries?

Could the Caucasian Liquidators really find nothing better to “proclaim” than the isolation of the Transcaucasian Tatars within a cultural-national union which would place the masses under the thralldom of vicious reactionaries?

No, that is no solution of the national question.

The national question in the Caucasus can be solved only by drawing the belated nations and nationalities into the common stream of a higher culture. It is the only progressive solution and the only solution acceptable to Social-Democracy. Regional autonomy in the Caucasus is acceptable because it would draw the belated nations into the common cultural development; it would help them to cast off the shell of small-na-

tion insularity; it would impel them forward and facilitate access to the benefits of higher culture. Cultural-national autonomy, however, acts in a diametrically opposite direction, because it shuts up the nations within their old shells, binds them to the lower stages of cultural development and prevents them from rising to the higher stages of culture.

In this way national autonomy counteracts the beneficial aspects of regional autonomy and nullifies it.

That is why the mixed type of autonomy which combines national-cultural autonomy and regional autonomy as proposed by *N.* is also unsuitable. This unnatural combination does not improve matters but makes them worse, because in addition to retarding the development of the belated nations it transforms regional autonomy into an arena of conflict between the nations organized in the national unions.

Thus cultural-national autonomy, which is unsuitable generally, would be a senseless, reactionary undertaking in the Caucasus.

So much for the cultural-national autonomy of *N.* and his Caucasian fellow-thinkers.

Whether the Caucasian Liquidators will take "a step forward" and follow in the footsteps of the Bund on the question of organization also, the future will show. So far, in the history of Social-Democracy federalism in organization always preceded national autonomy in program. The Austrian Social-Democrats introduced organizational federalism as far back as 1897, and it was only two years later (1899) that they adopted national autonomy. The Bundists spoke distinctly of national autonomy for the first time in 1901, whereas organizational federalism had been practiced by them since 1897.

The Caucasian Liquidators have begun from the end, from national autonomy. If they continue to follow in the footsteps of the Bund they will first have to demolish the whole existing organizational edifice, which was erected at the end of the nineties on the basis of internationalism.

But, easy though it was to adopt national autonomy, which is still not understood by the workers, it will be difficult to demolish an edifice which it has taken years to build and which has been raised and cherished by the workers of all the nationalities of the Caucasus. This Herostrian undertaking has only to be begun and the eyes of the workers will be opened to the nationalist character of cultural-national autonomy.

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While the Caucasians are settling the national question in the usual manner, by means of verbal and written discussion, the All-Russian Conference of the Liquidators has invented a most unusual method. It is a simple and easy method. Listen to this:

Having heard the communication of the Caucasian delegation to the effect that... it is necessary to demand national-cultural autonomy, this conference, while expressing no opinion on the merits of this demand, declares that such an interpretation of the clause of the program which recognizes the right of every nationality to self-determination does not contradict the precise meaning of the program.

Thus, first of all they “express no opinion on the merits” of the question, and then they “declare.” An original method...

And what does this original conference “declare?”

That the “demand” for national-cultural autonomy “does not contradict the precise meaning” of the program, which recognizes the right of nations to self-determination.

Let us examine this proposition.

The clause on self-determination speaks of the rights of nations. According to this clause, nations have the right not only of autonomy but also of secession. It is a question of *political* self-determination. Whom did the Liquidators want to fool when they endeavored to misinterpret this right of nations to political self-determination, which has long been recognized by the whole of international Social-Democracy?

Or perhaps the Liquidators will try to wriggle out of the situation and defend themselves by the sophism that cultural-national autonomy “does not contradict” the rights of nations? That is to say, if all the nations in a given state agree to arrange their affairs on the basis of cultural-national autonomy, they, the given sum of nations, are fully entitled to do so and nobody may *forcibly impose* a different form of political life on them. This is both new and clever. Should it not be added that, speaking generally, a nation has the right to abolish its own constitution, replace it by a system of tyranny and revert to the old order on the grounds that the



nation, and the nation alone, has the right to determine its own destiny? We repeat: in this sense, neither cultural-national autonomy nor any other kind of nationalist reaction “contradicts” *the rights of nations*.

Is that what the esteemed conference wanted to say?

No, not that. It specifically says that cultural-national autonomy “does not contradict,” not the rights of nations, but “the precise meaning” of the program. The point here is the program and not the rights of nations.

And that is quite understandable. If it were some nation that addressed itself to the conference of Liquidators, the conference might have directly declared that the nation has a right to cultural-national autonomy. But it was not a nation that addressed itself to the conference, but a “delegation” of Caucasian Social-Democrats—bad Social-Democrats, it is true, but Social Democrats nevertheless. And they inquired not about the rights of nations, but whether cultural-national autonomy contradicted the *principles of Social-Democracy*, whether it did not “contradict” “*the precise meaning*” of the program of Social-Democracy.

Thus, *the rights of nations* and “*the precise meaning*” of the program of *Social-Democracy* are not one and the same thing.

Evidently, there are demands which, while they do not contradict the rights of nations, may yet contradict “the precise meaning” of the program.

For example. The program of the Social-Democrats contains a clause on freedom of religion. According to this clause any group of persons *have the right* to profess any religion they please: Catholicism, the religion of the Orthodox Church, etc. Social-Democrats will combat all forms of religious persecution, be it of members of the Orthodox Church, Catholics or Protestants. Does this mean that Catholicism, Protestantism, etc., “do not contradict the precise meaning” of the program? No, it does not. Social-Democrats will always protest against persecution of Catholicism or Protestantism; they will always defend the right of nations to profess any religion they please; but at the same time, on the basis of a correct understanding of the interests of the proletariat, they will carry on agitation against Catholicism, Protestantism and the religion of the Orthodox Church in order to achieve the triumph of the socialist world outlook.

And they will do so just because there is no doubt that Protestantism, Catholicism, the religion of the Orthodox Church, etc., “contradict the precise meaning” of the program, i.e., the correctly understood interests of the proletariat.

The same must be said of self-determination. Nations have a right to arrange their affairs as they please; they have a right to preserve any of their national institutions, whether beneficial or harmful—nobody can (nobody has a right to!) *forcibly* interfere in the life of a nation. But that does not mean that Social-Democracy will not combat and agitate against the harmful institutions of nations and against the inexpedient demands of nations. On the contrary, it is the duty of Social-Democracy to conduct such agitation and to endeavor to influence the will of nations so that the nations may arrange their affairs in the way that will best correspond to the interests of the proletariat. For this reason Social-Democracy, while fighting for the right of nations to self-determination, will at the same time agitate, for instance, against the secession of the Tatars, or against cultural-national autonomy for the Caucasian nations; for both, while not contradicting the *rights* of these nations, do contradict “*the precise meaning*” of the program, i.e., the interests of the Caucasian proletariat.

Obviously, “the rights of nations” and the “precise meaning” of the program are on two entirely different planes. Whereas the “precise meaning” of the program expresses the interests of the proletariat, as scientifically formulated in the program of the latter, the rights of nations may express the interests of any class—bourgeoisie, aristocracy, clergy, etc.—depending on the strength and influence of these classes. On the one hand are the *duties* of Marxists, on the other the *rights* of nations, which consist of various classes. The rights of nations and the principles of Social-Democracy may or may not “contradict” each other, just as, say, the pyramid of Cheops may or may not contradict the famous conference of the Liquidators. They are simply not comparable.

But it follows that the esteemed conference most unparadoxically muddled two entirely different things. The result obtained was not a solution of the national question but an absurdity, according to which the rights of nations and the principles of Social-Democracy “do not contradict” each other, and, consequently, every demand of a nation may be made compatible with the interests of the proletariat; consequently, no

demand of a nation which is striving for self-determination will “contradict the precise meaning” of the program!

They pay no heed to logic...

It was this absurdity that gave rise to the now famous resolution of the conference of the Liquidators which declares that the demand for national-cultural autonomy “does not contradict the precise meaning” of the program.

But it was not only the laws of logic that were violated by the conference of the Liquidators.

By sanctioning cultural-national autonomy it also violated its duty to Russian Social-Democracy. It most definitely did violate “the precise meaning” of the program, for it is well known that the Second Congress, which adopted the program, emphatically repudiated cultural-national autonomy. Here is what was said at the congress in this connection:

*Goldblatt* (Bundist): I deem it necessary that special institutions be set up to protect the freedom of cultural development of nationalities, and I therefore propose that the following words be added to § 8: “*and the creation of institutions which will guarantee them complete freedom of cultural development.*” [This, as we know, is the Bund’s definition of cultural-national autonomy.—*J. St.*]

*Martynov* pointed out that general institutions must be so constituted as to protect particular interests also. It is impossible to create a *special* institution to guarantee freedom for cultural development of the nationalities.

*Yegorov*: On the question of nationality we can adopt only negative proposals, i.e., we are opposed to all restrictions upon nationality. But we, as Social-Democrats, are not concerned with whether any particular nationality will develop as such. That is a spontaneous process.

*Koltsov*: The delegates from the Bund are always offended when their nationalism is referred to. Yet the amendment proposed by the delegate from the Bund is of a purely nationalist

character. We are asked to take purely offensive measures in order to support even nationalities that are dying out.

[In the end] *Goldblatt's amendment was rejected by the majority, only three votes being cast for it.*

Thus it is clear that the conference of the Liquidators did “contradict the precise meaning” of the program. It violated the program.

The Liquidators are now trying to justify themselves by referring to the Stockholm Congress, which they allege sanctioned cultural-national autonomy. Thus, V. Kossovsky writes:

As we know, according to the agreement adopted by the Stockholm Congress, the Bund was allowed to preserve its national program (pending a decision on the national question by a general Party congress). This congress recorded that national-cultural autonomy at any rate does not contradict the general Party program.<sup>86</sup>

But the efforts of the Liquidators are in vain. The Stockholm Congress never thought of sanctioning the program of the Bund—it merely agreed to leave the question open for the time being. The brave Kossovsky did not have enough courage to tell the whole truth. But the facts speak for themselves. Here they are:

An amendment was moved by Galin: “The question of the national program *is left open in view of the fact that it is not being examined* by the congress.” (*For*—50 votes, *against*—32.)

*Voice:* What does that mean—open?

*Chairman:* When we say that the national question is left open, it means that the Bund may maintain its decision on this question until the next congress.<sup>87</sup> (our italics—*J. St.*)

As you see, the congress even did “not examine” the question of the national program of the Bund—it simply left it “open,” leaving the Bund

<sup>86</sup> *Nasha Zarya*, No. 9-10, 1912, p. 120.

<sup>87</sup> See *Nashe Slovo*, No. 8, 1906, p. 53.

itself to decide the fate of its program until the next general congress met. In other words, the Stockholm Congress avoided the question, expressing no opinion on cultural-national autonomy one way or another. The conference of the Liquidators, however, most definitely undertakes to give an opinion on the matter, declares cultural-national autonomy to be acceptable, and endorses it in the name of the Party program.

The difference is only too evident.

Thus, in spite of all its artifices, the conference of the Liquidators did not advance the national question a single step.

All it could do was to squirm before the Bund and the Caucasian national-Liquidators.



## VII. The National Question in Russia

It remains for us to suggest a positive solution of the national question.

We take as our starting point that the question can be solved only in intimate connection with the present situation in Russia.

Russia is in a transitional period, when “normal,” “constitutional” life has not yet been established and when the political crisis has not yet been settled. Days of storm and “complications” are ahead. And this gives rise to the movement, the present and the future movement, the aim of which is to achieve complete democratization.

It is in connection with this movement that the national question must be examined.

Thus the complete democratization of the country is the basis and condition for the solution of the national question.

When seeking a solution of the question we must take into account not only the situation at home but also the situation abroad. Russia is situated between Europe and Asia, between Austria and China. The growth of democracy in Asia is inevitable. The growth of imperialism in Europe is not fortuitous. In Europe, capital is beginning to feel cramped, and it is reaching out towards foreign countries in search of new markets, cheap labor and new fields of investment. But this leads to external complications and to war. No one can assert that the Balkan War<sup>88</sup> is the end and not the beginning of the complications. It is quite possible, therefore, that a combination of internal and external conditions may arise in which one or another nationality in Russia may find it necessary to raise and settle the question of its independence. And, of course, it is not for Marxists to create obstacles in such cases.

But it follows that Russian Marxists cannot dispense with the right of nations to self-determination.

Thus, *the right of self-determination is an essential element* in the solution of the national question.

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<sup>88</sup> The reference is to the first Balkan War, which broke out in October 1912 between Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece and Montenegro on the one hand, and Turkey on the other.

Further. What must be our attitude towards nations which for one reason or another will prefer to remain within the framework of the whole?

We have seen that cultural-national autonomy is unsuitable. Firstly, it is artificial and impracticable, for it proposes artificially to draw into a single nation people whom the march of events, real events, is disuniting and dispersing to every corner of the country. Secondly, it stimulates nationalism, because it leads to the viewpoint in favor of the “demarcation” of people according to national *curiae*, the “organization” of nations, the “preservation” and cultivation of “national peculiarities”—all of which are entirely incompatible with Social-Democracy. It is not fortuitous that the Moravian separatists in the Reichsrat, having severed themselves from the German Social-Democratic deputies, have united with the Moravian bourgeois deputies to form a single, so to speak, Moravian “kolo.” Nor is it fortuitous that the separatists of the Bund have got themselves involved in nationalism by acclaiming the “Sabbath” and “Yiddish.” There are no Bundist deputies yet in the Duma, but in the Bund area there is a clerical-reactionary Jewish community, in the “controlling institutions” of which the Bund is arranging, for a beginning, a “get-together” of the Jewish workers and bourgeois.<sup>89</sup> Such is the logic of cultural-national autonomy.

Thus, *national* autonomy does not solve the problem.

What, then, is the way out?

The only correct solution is *regional* autonomy, autonomy for such crystalized units as Poland, Lithuania, the Ukraine, the Caucasus, etc.

The advantage of regional autonomy consists, first of all, in the fact that it does not deal with a fiction bereft of territory, but with a definite population inhabiting a definite territory. Next, it does not divide people according to nations, it does not strengthen national barriers; on the contrary, it breaks down these barriers and unites the population in such a manner as to open the way for division of a different kind, division according to classes. Finally, it makes it possible to utilize the natural wealth of the region and to develop its productive forces in the best possible way

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<sup>89</sup> See *Report of the Eighth Conference of the Bund*, the concluding part of the resolution on the community.



without awaiting the decisions of a common center—functions which are not inherent features of cultural-national autonomy.

Thus, *regional autonomy is an essential element* in the solution of the national question.

Of course, not one of the regions constitutes a compact, homogeneous nation, for each is interspersed with national minorities. Such are the Jews in Poland, the Letts in Lithuania, the Russians in the Caucasus, the Poles in the Ukraine, and so on. It may be feared, therefore, that the minorities will be oppressed by the national majorities. But there will be grounds for fear only if the old order continues to prevail in the country. Give the country complete democracy and all grounds for fear will vanish.

It is proposed to bind the dispersed minorities into a single national union. But what the minorities want is not an artificial union, but real rights in the localities they inhabit. What can such a union give them *without* complete democratization? On the other hand, what need is there for a national union *when there* is complete democratization?

What is it that particularly agitates a national minority?

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

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

A minority is discontented not because there is no national union, but because it does not enjoy liberty of conscience (religious liberty), liberty of movement, etc. Give it these liberties and it will cease to be discontented.

Thus, *equal rights of nations in all forms (language, schools, etc.) is an essential element* in the solution of the national question. Consequently, a state law based on complete democratization of the country is required, prohibiting all national privileges without exception and every kind of disability or restriction on the rights of national minorities.

That, and that alone, is the real, not a paper guarantee of the rights of a minority.

One may or may not dispute the existence of a logical connection between organizational federalism and cultural-national autonomy. But one cannot dispute the fact that the latter creates an atmosphere favoring unlimited federalism, developing into complete rupture, into separatism. If the Czechs in Austria and the Bundists in Russia began with autonomy, passed to federation and ended in separatism, there can be no doubt that an important part in this was played by the nationalist atmosphere that is naturally generated by cultural-national autonomy. It is not fortuitous that national autonomy and organizational federalism go hand in hand. It is quite understandable. Both demand demarcation according to nationalities. Both presume organization according to nationalities. The similarity is beyond question. The only difference is that in one case the population as a whole is divided, while in the other it is the Social-Democratic workers who are divided.

We know where the demarcation of workers according to nationalities leads to. The disintegration of a united workers' party, the splitting of trade unions according to nationalities, aggravation of national friction, national strike-breaking, complete demoralization within the ranks of Social-Democracy—such are the results of organizational federalism. This is eloquently borne out by the history of Social-Democracy in Austria and the activities of the Bund in Russia.

The only cure for this is organization on the basis of internationalism.

To unite locally the workers of all nationalities of Russia into *single, integral* collective bodies, to unite these collective bodies into a *single* party—such is the task.

It goes without saying that a party structure of this kind does not preclude, but on the contrary presumes wide autonomy for the *regions* within the single integral party.

The experience of the Caucasus proves the expediency of this type of organization. If the Caucasians have succeeded in overcoming the national friction between the Armenian and Tatar workers; if they have succeeded in safeguarding the population against the possibility of massacres and shooting affrays; if in Baku, that kaleidoscope of national groups, national conflicts are now no longer possible, and if it has been possible to draw the workers there into the single current of a powerful movement, then the

international structure of the Caucasian Social-Democracy was not the least factor in bringing this about.

The type of organization influences not only practical work. It stamps an indelible impression on the whole mental life of the worker. The worker lives the life of his organization, which stimulates his intellectual growth and educates him. And thus, acting within his organization and continually meeting their comrades from other nationalities, and side by side with them waging a common struggle under the leadership of a common collective body, he becomes deeply imbued with the idea that workers are *primarily* members of one class family, members of the united army of socialism. And this cannot but have a tremendous educational value for large sections of the working class.

Therefore, the international type of organization serves as a school of fraternal sentiments and is a tremendous agitational factor on behalf of internationalism.

But this is not the case with an organization on the basis of nationalities. When the workers are organized according to nationality, they isolate themselves within their national shells, fenced off from each other by organizational barriers. The stress is laid not on what is *common* to the workers but on what distinguishes them from each other. In this type of organization the worker is *primarily* a member of his nation: a Jew, a Pole, and so on. It is not surprising that *national* federalism in organization inculcates in the workers a spirit of national seclusion.

Therefore, the national type of organization is a school of national narrow-mindedness and stagnation.

Thus we are confronted by two *fundamentally* different types of organization: the type based on international solidarity and the type based on the organizational “demarcation” of the workers according to nationalities.

Attempts to reconcile these two types have so far been vain. The compromise rules of the Austrian Social-Democratic Party drawn up in Wimberg in 1897 were left hanging in the air. The Austrian party fell to pieces and dragged the trade unions with it. “Compromise” proved to be not only utopian, but harmful. Strasser is right when he says that “sepa-

ratism achieved its first triumph at the Wimberg Party Congress.”<sup>90</sup> The same is true in Russia. The “compromise” with the federalism of the Bund which took place at the Stockholm Congress ended in a complete fiasco. The Bund violated the Stockholm compromise. Ever since the Stockholm Congress the Bund has been an obstacle in the way of a union of the workers locally in a *single* organization, which would include workers of *all nationalities*. And the Bund has obstinately persisted in its separatist tactics in spite of the fact that in 1907 and in 1908 Russian Social-Democracy repeatedly demanded that unity should at last be established from below among the workers of all nationalities.<sup>91</sup> The Bund, which began with organizational national autonomy, in fact passed to federalism, only to end in complete rupture, separatism. And by breaking with the Russian Social-Democratic Party it caused disharmony and disorganization in the ranks of the latter. Let us recall the Jagiello affair,<sup>92</sup> for instance.

The path of “compromise” must therefore be discarded as utopian and harmful.

One thing or the other: *either* the federalism of the Bund, in which case the Russian Social-Democratic Party must re-form itself on a basis of “demarcation” of the workers according to nationalities; or an international type of organization, in which case the Bund must reform itself on a basis of territorial autonomy after the pattern of the Caucasian, Lettish and Polish Social-Democracies, and thus make possible the direct union of the Jewish workers with the workers of the other nationalities of Russia.

There is no middle course: principles triumph, they do not “compromise.”

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<sup>90</sup> See his *Der Arbeiter und die Nation*, 1912.

<sup>91</sup> See the resolutions of the Fourth (the “Third All-Russian”) Conference of the RSDLP held November 5-12, 1907, and of the Fifth (the “All-Russian 1908”) Conference of the RSDLP held December 21-27, 1908 (January 3-9, 1909) (See *Resolutions and Decisions of CPSU(B) Congresses, Conferences and Central Committee Plenums*, Vol. I, 6th Russ. ed., 1940, pp. 118, 131.)

<sup>92</sup> E. J. Jagiello—a member of the Polish Socialist Party (P.P.S.), was elected to the Fourth State Duma for Warsaw as a result of a bloc formed by the Bund, the Polish Socialist Party and the bourgeois nationalists against the Polish Social-Democrats. By a vote of the seven Menshevik Liquidators against the six Bolsheviks, the Social-Democratic group in the Duma adopted a resolution that Jagiello be accepted as a member of the group.

Thus, *the principle of international solidarity of the workers is an essential element* in the solution of the national question.

Vienna, January 1913

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<sup>93</sup> *Prosveshcheniye* (*Enlightenment*)—a Bolshevik monthly published legally in St. Petersburg, the first issue appearing in December 1911. It was directed by Lenin through regular correspondence with the members of the editorial board in Russia (M. A. Savelyev, M. S. Olminsky, A. I. Elizarova). When J. V. Stalin was in St. Petersburg he took an active part in the work of the journal. *Prosveshcheniye* was closely connected with *Pravda*. In June 1914, on the eve of the First World War, it was suppressed by the government. One double number appeared in the autumn of 1917.

REPORT ON THE  
NATIONAL QUESTION

*April 29, 1917*

*Report Delivered at the Seventh Conference  
of the RSDLP (Bolsheviks)*

The national question should be the subject of an extensive report, but since time is short I must make my report brief.

Before discussing the draft resolution certain premises must be established.

What is national oppression? National oppression is the system of exploitation and robbery of oppressed peoples, the measures of forcible restriction of the rights of oppressed nationalities, resorted to by imperialist circles. These, taken together, represent the policy generally known as a policy of national oppression.

The first question is, on what classes does any particular government rely in carrying out its policy of national oppression? Before an answer to this question can be given, it must first be understood why different forms of national oppression exist in different states, why national oppression is severer and cruder in one state than in another. For instance, in Britain and Austria-Hungary national oppression has never taken the form of pogroms, but has existed in the form of restrictions on the national rights of the oppressed nationalities. In Russia, on the other hand, it not infrequently assumes the form of pogroms and massacres. In certain states, moreover, there are no specific measures against national minorities at all. For instance, there is no national oppression in Switzerland, where French, Italians and Germans all live freely.

How are we to explain the difference in attitude towards nationalities in different states?

By the difference in the degree of democracy prevailing in these states. When in former years the old landed aristocracy controlled the state power in Russia, national oppression could assume, and actually did assume, the monstrous form of massacres and pogroms. In Britain, where there is a certain degree of democracy and political freedom, national oppression is of a less brutal character. Switzerland approximates to a democratic society, and in that country the nations have more or less complete freedom. In short, the more democratic a country, the less the national oppression, and vice versa. And since by democracy we mean that definite classes are in control of the state power, it may be said from this point of view that the

closer the old landed aristocracy is to power, as was the case in old tsarist Russia, the more severe is the oppression and the more monstrous are its forms.

However, national oppression is maintained not only by the landed aristocracy. There is, in addition, another force—the imperialist groups, who introduce in their own country the methods of enslaving nationalities learned in the colonies and thus become the natural allies of the landed aristocracy. They are followed by the petit bourgeoisie, a section of the intelligentsia and a section of the upper stratum of the workers, who also share the spoils of robbery. Thus, there is a whole gamut of social forces, headed by the landed and financial aristocracy, which support national oppression. In order to create a real democratic system, it is first of all necessary to clear the ground and remove these forces from the political stage. [*Reads the text of the resolution.*]

The first question is, how is the political life of the oppressed nations to be arranged? In answer to this question it must be said that the oppressed peoples forming part of Russia must be allowed the right to decide for themselves whether they wish to remain part of the Russian state or to secede and form independent states. We are at present witnessing a definite conflict between the Finnish people and the Provisional Government. The representatives of the Finnish people, the representatives of Social-Democracy, are demanding that the Provisional Government should restore to the people the rights they enjoyed before they were annexed to Russia. The Provisional Government refuses, because it will not recognize the sovereignty of the Finnish people. On whose side must we range ourselves? Obviously, on the side of the Finnish people, for it is inconceivable for us to accept the forcible retention of any people whatsoever within the bounds of a unitary state. When we put forward the principle that peoples have the right to self-determination we thereby raise the struggle against national oppression to the level of a struggle against imperialism, our common enemy. If we fail to do this, we may find ourselves in the position of bringing grist to the mill of the imperialists. If we, Social-Democrats, were to deny the Finnish people the right to declare their will on the subject of secession and the right to give effect to their will, we would be putting ourselves in the position of continuing the policy of tsarism.



It would be impermissible to confuse the question of the *right* of nations freely to secede with the question of whether a nation must *necessarily* secede at any given moment. This latter question must be settled quite separately by the party of the proletariat in each particular case, according to the circumstances. When we recognize the right of oppressed peoples to secede, the *right* to decide their political destiny, we do not thereby settle the question whether particular nations *should* secede from the Russian state at the given moment. I may recognize the right of a nation to secede, but that does not mean that I oblige it to do so. A people has the right to secede, but it may or may not exercise that right, according to the circumstances. Thus we are at liberty to agitate for or against secession in accordance with the interests of the proletariat, of the proletarian revolution. Hence, the question of secession must be determined in each particular case independently, in accordance with the existing situation, and, for this reason, recognizing the right of secession must not be confused with the expediency of secession in any given circumstances. For instance, I personally would be opposed to the secession of Transcaucasia, bearing in mind the common development in Transcaucasia and Russia, certain conditions of the struggle of the proletariat, and so forth. But if, nevertheless, the peoples of Transcaucasia were to demand secession, they would, of course, secede without encountering opposition from us. [*Reads further the text of the resolution.*]

Further, what is to be done with the peoples which may desire to remain within the Russian state? Whatever mistrust of Russia existed among the peoples was fostered chiefly by the tsarist policy. But now that tsarism no longer exists, and its policy of oppression no longer exists, this mistrust is bound to diminish and attraction towards Russia to increase. I believe that now, after the overthrow of tsarism, nine-tenths of the nationalities will not desire to secede. The Party therefore proposes to institute regional autonomy for regions which do not desire to secede and which are distinguished by peculiarities of customs and language, as, for instance, Transcaucasia, Turkestan and the Ukraine. The geographical boundaries of these autonomous regions must be determined by the populations themselves with due regard for economic conditions, customs, etc.

In contradistinction to regional autonomy there exists another plan, one which has long been recommended by the Bund,<sup>94</sup> and particularly by Springer and Bauer, who advocate the principle of cultural-national autonomy. I consider that plan unacceptable for Social-Democrats. Its essence is that Russia should be transformed into a union of nations, and nations into unions of persons, drawn into a common society no matter what part of the state they may be living in. All Russians, all Armenians, and so on, are to be organized into separate national unions, irrespective of territory, and only then are they to enter the union of nations of all Russia. That plan is extremely inconvenient and inexpedient. The fact is that the development of capitalism has dispersed whole groups of people, severed them from their nations and scattered them through various parts of Russia. In view of the dispersion of nations resulting from economic conditions, to draw together the various individuals of a given nation would be to organize and build a nation artificially. And to draw people together into nations artificially would be to adopt the standpoint of nationalism. That plan, advanced by the Bund, cannot be endorsed by Social-Democrats. It was rejected at the 1912 conference of our Party, and generally enjoys no popularity in Social-Democratic circles with the exception of the Bund. That plan is also known as cultural autonomy, because from among the numerous and varied questions which interest a nation it would single out the group of cultural questions and put them in the charge of national unions. The reason for singling out these questions is the assumption that what unites a nation into an integral whole is its culture. It is assumed that within a nation there are, on the one hand, interests which tend to disintegrate the nation, economic, for instance, and on the other, interests which tend to weld it into an integral whole, and that the latter interests are cultural interests.

Lastly, there is the question of the national minorities. Their rights must be specially protected. The Party therefore demands full equality of status in educational, religious and other matters and the abolition of all restrictions on national minorities.

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<sup>94</sup> Bund—the General Jewish Workers' Union of Poland, Lithuania and Russia, founded in October 1897 (see J. V. Stalin, *Works*, Vol. I, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1954, p. 39, Note 7).

There is Section 9, which proclaims the equality of nations. The conditions required for its realization can arise only when the whole of society has been fully democratized.

We have still to settle the question of how to organize the proletariat of the various nations into a single, common party. One plan is that the workers should be organized on national lines—so many nations, so many parties. That plan was rejected by the Social-Democrats. Experience has shown that the organization of the proletariat of a given state on national lines tends only to destroy the idea of class solidarity. All the proletarians of all the nations in a given state must be organized in a single, indivisible proletarian collective.

Thus, our views on the national question can be reduced to the following propositions:

- a) Recognition of the right of nations to secession;
- b) Regional autonomy for nations remaining within the given state;
- c) Special legislation guaranteeing freedom of development for national minorities;
- d) A single, indivisible proletarian collective, a single party, for the proletarians of all nationalities of the given state.

THE OCTOBER  
REVOLUTION AND THE  
NATIONAL QUESTION

*November 6-19, 1918*

The national question must not be regarded as something self-contained and fixed for all time. Being only part of the general question of the transformation of the existing order, the national question is wholly determined by the conditions of the social environment, by the kind of power in the country and by the whole course of social development in general. This is being strikingly borne out in the period of revolution in Russia, when the national question and the national movement in the border regions of Russia are rapidly and obviously changing their character in accordance with the course and outcome of the revolution.



# I. The February Revolution and the National Question

In the period of the bourgeois revolution in Russia (February 1917) the national movement in the border regions bore the character of a bourgeois liberation movement. The nationalities of Russia, which for ages had been oppressed and exploited by the “old regime,” for the first time felt their strength and rushed into the fight with their oppressors. “Abolish national oppression”—such was the slogan of the movement. “All-national” institutions sprang up overnight throughout the border regions of Russia. The movement was headed by the national, bourgeois-democratic intelligentsia. “National Councils” in Latvia, the Estonian region, Lithuania, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, the North Caucasus, Kirghizia and the Middle Volga region; the “Rada” in the Ukraine and in Byelorussia [Belarus]; the “Sfatul Tsării” in Bessarabia; the “Kurultai” in the Crimea and in Bashkiria; the “Autonomous Government” in Turkestan such were the “all-national” institutions around which the national bourgeoisie rallied its forces. It was a question of emancipation from tsarism—the “fundamental cause” of national oppression—and of the formation of national bourgeois states. The right of nations to self-determination was interpreted as the right of the national bourgeoisies in the border regions to take power into their own hands and to take advantage of the February Revolution for forming “their own” national states. The further development of the revolution did not, and could not, come within the calculations of the above-mentioned bourgeois institutions. And the fact was overlooked that tsarism was being replaced by naked and barefaced imperialism, and that this imperialism was a stronger and more dangerous foe of the nationalities and the basis of a new national oppression.

The abolition of tsarism and the accession to power of the bourgeoisie did not, however, lead to the abolition of national oppression. The old, crude form of national oppression was replaced by a new, refined, but all the more dangerous, form of oppression. Far from abandoning the policy of national oppression, the Lvov Milyukov-Kerensky Government organized a new campaign against Finland (dispersal of the Diet in the summer of 1917) and the Ukraine (suppression of Ukrainian cultural institutions).

What is more, that Government, which was imperialist by its very nature, called upon the population to continue the war in order to subjugate new lands, new colonies and nationalities. It was compelled to this not only because of the intrinsic nature of imperialism but also because of the existence of the old imperialist states in the West, which were irresistibly striving to subjugate new lands and nationalities and threatening to narrow its sphere of influence. A struggle of the imperialist states for the subjugation of small nationalities as a condition for the existence of these states—such was the picture which was revealed in the course of the imperialist war. This unsightly picture was in no way improved by the abolition of tsarism and the appearance of the Milyukov-Kerensky Government on the scene. Since the “all-national” institutions in the border regions displayed a tendency to political independence, naturally they encountered the insuperable hostility of the imperialist government of Russia. Since, on the other hand, while establishing the power of the national bourgeoisie, they remained deaf to the vital interests of “their own” workers and peasants, they evoked grumbling and discontent among those. What were known as the “national regiments” only added fuel to the flames: they were impotent against the danger from above and only intensified and aggravated the danger from below. The “all-national” institutions were left defenseless against blows from without and explosions from within. The incipient bourgeois national states began to fade before they could blossom.

Thus, the old bourgeois-democratic interpretation of the principle of self-determination became a fiction and lost its revolutionary significance. It was clear that under such circumstances there could be no question of the abolition of national oppression and establishing the independence of the small national states. It became obvious that the emancipation of the laboring masses of the oppressed nationalities and the abolition of national oppression were inconceivable without a break with imperialism, without the laboring masses overthrowing “their own” national bourgeoisie and taking power themselves.

That was strikingly borne out after the October Revolution.



## II. The October Revolution and the National Question

The February Revolution harbored irreconcilable inner contradictions. The revolution was accomplished by the efforts of the workers and the peasants (soldiers), but as a result of the revolution power passed not to the workers and peasants, but to the bourgeoisie. In making the revolution the workers and peasants wanted to put an end to the war and to secure peace. But the bourgeoisie, on coming to power, strove to use the revolutionary ardor of the masses for a continuation of the war and against peace. The economic disruption of the country and the food crisis demanded the expropriation of capital and industrial establishments for the benefit of the workers, and the confiscation of the landlords' land for the benefit of the peasants, but the bourgeois Milyukov-Kerensky Government stood guard over the interests of the landlords and capitalists, resolutely protecting them against all encroachments on the part of the workers and peasants. It was a bourgeois revolution, accomplished by the agency of the workers and peasants for the benefit of the exploiters.

Meanwhile, the country continued to groan under the burden of the imperialist war, economic disintegration and the breakdown of the food supply. The front was falling to pieces and melting away. Factories and mills were coming to a standstill. Famine was spreading throughout the country. The February Revolution, with its inner contradictions, was obviously not enough for "the salvation of the country." The Milyukov-Kerensky Government was obviously incapable of solving the basic problems of the revolution.

A new, *socialist* revolution was required to lead the country out of the blind alley of imperialist war and economic disintegration.

That revolution came as a result of the October uprising.

By overthrowing the power of the landlords and the bourgeoisie and replacing it by a government of workers and peasants, the October Revolution resolved the contradictions of the February Revolution at one stroke. The abolition of the omnipotence of the landlords and kulaks and the handing over of the land for the use of the laboring masses of the countryside; the expropriation of the mills and factories and their transfer

to control by the workers; the break with imperialism and the ending of the predatory war; the publication of the secret treaties and the exposure of the policy of annexations; lastly, the proclamation of self-determination for the laboring masses of the oppressed peoples and the recognition of the independence of Finland—such were the basic measures carried into effect by the Soviet power in the early period of the Soviet revolution.

That was a genuinely *socialist* revolution.

The revolution, which started in the center, could not long be confined to that narrow territory. Once having triumphed in the center, it was bound to spread to the border regions. And, indeed, from the very first days of the revolution, the revolutionary tide spread from the North all over Russia, sweeping one border region after another. But here it encountered a dam in the shape of the “National Councils” and regional “governments” (Don, Kuban, Siberia) which had been formed prior to the October Revolution. The point is that these “national governments” would not hear of a socialist revolution. Bourgeois by nature, they had not the slightest wish to destroy the old, bourgeois order; on the contrary, they considered it their duty to preserve and consolidate it by every means in their power. Essentially imperialist, they had not the slightest wish to break with imperialism; on the contrary, they had never been averse to seizing and subjugating bits and morsels of the territory of “foreign” nationalities whenever opportunity offered. No wonder that the “national governments” in the border regions declared war on the socialist government in the center. And, once they had declared war, they naturally became hotbeds of reaction, which attracted all that was counter revolutionary in Russia. Everyone knows that all the counter-revolutionaries thrown out of Russia rushed to these hotbeds, and there, around them, formed themselves into whiteguard “national” regiments.

But, in addition to “national governments,” there are in the border regions national workers and peasants. Organized even before the October Revolution in their revolutionary Soviets patterned on the Soviets in the center of Russia, they had never severed connections with their brothers in the North. They too were striving to defeat the bourgeoisie; they too were fighting for the triumph of socialism. No wonder that their conflict with “their own” national governments grew daily more acute. The October Revolution only strengthened the alliance between the workers and

peasants of the border regions and the workers and peasants of Russia, and inspired them with faith in the triumph of socialism. And the war of the “national governments” against the Soviet power brought the conflict of the national masses with these “governments” to the point of a complete rupture, to open rebellion against them.

Thus was formed a socialist alliance of the workers and peasants of all Russia against the counter-revolutionary alliance of the bourgeois national “governments” of the border regions of Russia.

The fight of the border “governments” is depicted by some as a fight for national emancipation against the “soulless centralism” of the Soviet regime. But that is quite untrue. No regime in the world has permitted such extensive decentralization, no government in the world has ever granted to the peoples such complete national freedom as the Soviet power in Russia. The fight of the border “governments” was, and is, a fight of bourgeois counter-revolution against socialism. The national flag is tacked on to the cause only to deceive the masses, as a popular flag which conveniently conceals the counter-revolutionary designs of the national bourgeoisie.

But the fight of the “national” and regional “governments” proved an unequal one. Attacked from two sides—from without by the Soviet power of Russia, and from within by “their own” workers and peasants—the “national governments” were obliged to retreat after the very first engagements. The uprising of the Finnish workers and *torppari*<sup>95</sup> and the flight of the bourgeois “Senate”; the uprising of the Ukrainian workers and peasants and the flight of the bourgeois “Rada”; the uprising of the workers and peasants in the Don, Kuban, and Siberia and the collapse of Kaledin, Kornilov and the Siberian “government”; the uprising of the poor peasants of Turkestan and the flight of the “autonomous government”; the agrarian revolution in the Caucasus and the utter impotence of the “National Councils” of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan—all these are generally known facts which demonstrated the complete isolation of the border “governments” from “their own” laboring masses. Utterly defeated, the “national governments” were “obliged” to appeal for aid against “their own” workers and peasants to the imperialists of the West, to the age-long oppressors and exploiters of the nationalities of the world.

<sup>95</sup> *Torppari*—landless peasants in Finland, who were forced to rent land from the big proprietors on extortionate terms.

Thus began the period of foreign intervention and occupation of the border regions—a period which once more revealed the counter-revolutionary character of the “national” and regional “governments.”

Only now did it become obvious to all that the national bourgeoisie was striving not for the liberation of “its own people” from national oppression, but for liberty to squeeze profits out of them, for liberty to retain its privileges and capital.

Only now did it become clear that the emancipation of the oppressed nationalities was inconceivable without a rupture with imperialism, without the overthrow of the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nationalities, without the transfer of power to the laboring masses of these nationalities.

Thus, the old bourgeois conception of the principle of self-determination, with its slogan “All power to the national bourgeoisie,” was exposed and cast aside by the very course of the revolution. The socialist conception of the principle of self-determination, with its slogan “All power to the laboring masses of the oppressed nationalities,” entered into its own and it became possible to apply it.

Thus, the October Revolution, having put an end to the old, bourgeois movement for national emancipation, inaugurated the era of a new, socialist movement of the workers and peasants of the oppressed nationalities, directed against all oppression—including, therefore, national oppression—against the power of the bourgeoisie, “their own” and foreign, and against imperialism in general.

### III. The World-Wide Significance of the October Revolution

Having triumphed in the center of Russia and embraced a number of the border regions, the October Revolution could not stop short at the territorial borders of Russia. In the atmosphere of the imperialist world war and the general discontent among the masses, it could not but spread to neighboring countries. Russia's break with imperialism and its escape from the predatory war; the publication of the secret treaties and the solemn renunciation of the policy of annexations; the proclamation of the national freedom and recognition of the independence of Finland; the declaring of Russia a "federation of Soviet national republics" and the battle cry of a determined struggle against imperialism issued to the world by the Soviet Government—all this could not but deeply affect the enslaved East and the bleeding West.

And, indeed, the October Revolution is the first revolution in world history to break the age-long sleep of the laboring masses of the oppressed peoples of the East and to draw them into the fight against world imperialism. The formation of workers' and peasants' Soviets in Persia, China and India, modelled on the Soviets in Russia, is sufficiently convincing evidence of this.

The October Revolution is the first revolution in world history to provide the workers and soldiers of the West with a living, salvation-bringing example and to impel them on to the path of real emancipation from the yoke of war and imperialism. The uprising of the workers and soldiers in Austria-Hungary and Germany, the formation of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, the revolutionary struggle of the subject peoples of Austria-Hungary against national oppression is sufficiently eloquent evidence of this.

The chief point is not at all that the struggle in the East and even in the West has not yet succeeded in shedding its bourgeois-nationalist features; the point is that the struggle against imperialism has begun, that it is continuing and is inevitably bound to arrive at its logical goal.

Foreign intervention and the occupation policy of the "external" imperialists merely sharpen the revolutionary crisis, by drawing new peo-

ples into the struggle and extending the area of the revolutionary battles with imperialism.

Thus, the October Revolution, by establishing a tie between the peoples of the backward East and of the advanced West, is ranging them in a common camp of struggle against imperialism.

Thus, from the particular question of combating national oppression, the national question is evolving into the general question of emancipating the nations, colonies and semi-colonies from imperialism.

The mortal sin of the Second International and its leader, Kautsky, consists, incidentally, in the fact that they have always gone over to the bourgeois conception of national self-determination, that they have never understood the revolutionary meaning of the latter, that they were unable or unwilling to put the national question on the revolutionary footing of an open fight against imperialism, that they were unable or unwilling to link the national question with the question of the emancipation of the colonies.

The obtuseness of the Austrian Social-Democrats of the type of Bauer and Renner consists in the fact that they have not understood the inseparable connection between the national question and the question of power, that they tried to separate the national question from politics and to confine it to cultural and educational questions, forgetting the existence of such "trifles" as imperialism and the colonies enslaved by imperialism.

It is asserted that the principles of self-determination and "defense of the fatherland" have been abrogated by the very course of events under the conditions of a rising socialist revolution. Actually, it is not the principles of self-determination and "defense of the fatherland" that have been abrogated, but the bourgeois interpretation of these principles. One has only to glance at the occupied regions, which are languishing under the yoke of imperialism and are yearning for liberation; one has only to glance at Russia, which is waging a revolutionary war for the defense of the socialist fatherland from the imperialist robbers; one has only to reflect on the present events in Austria-Hungary; one has only to glance at the enslaved colonies and semi-colonies, which have already organized their own Soviets (India, Persia, China)—one has only to glance at all this to realize the whole revolutionary significance of the principle of self-determination in its socialist interpretation.

The great world-wide significance of the October Revolution chiefly consists in the fact that;

- 1) It has widened the scope of the national question and converted it from the particular question of combating national oppression in Europe into the general question of emancipating the oppressed peoples, colonies and semi-colonies from imperialism;
- 2) It has opened up wide possibilities for their emancipation and the right paths towards it, has thereby greatly facilitated the cause of the emancipation of the oppressed peoples of the West and the East, and has drawn them into the common current of the victorious struggle against imperialism;
- 3) It has thereby erected a bridge between the socialist West and the enslaved East, having created a new front of revolutions against world imperialism, extending from the proletarians of the West, through the Russian revolution, to the oppressed peoples of the East.

This in fact explains the indescribable enthusiasm which is now being displayed for the Russian proletariat by the toiling and exploited masses of the East and the West.

And this mainly explains the frenzy with which the imperialist robbers of the whole world have now flung themselves upon Soviet Russia.

THE POLICY OF THE  
SOVIET GOVERNMENT ON  
THE NATIONAL QUESTION  
IN RUSSIA

*October 10, 1920*



Three years of revolution and civil war in Russia have shown that unless central Russia and her border regions support each other, the victory of the revolution and the liberation of Russia from the clutches of imperialism will be impossible. Central Russia, that hearth of world revolution, cannot hold out long without the assistance of the border regions, which abound in raw materials, fuel and foodstuffs. The border regions of Russia in their turn would be inevitably doomed to imperialist bondage without the political, military and organizational support of more developed central Russia. If it is true to say that the more developed proletarian West cannot finish off the world bourgeoisie without the support of the peasant East, which is less developed but which abounds in raw materials and fuel, it is equally true to say that more developed central Russia cannot carry the revolution through to the end without the support of the border regions of Russia, which are less developed but which abound in essential resources.

The Entente undoubtedly took this circumstance into account from the very first days of the existence of the Soviet Government, when it (the Entente) pursued the plan of the economic encirclement of central Russia by cutting off the most important of her border regions. And the plan of the economic encirclement of Russia has remained the unchanging basis of all the Entente's campaigns against Russia, from 1918 to 1920, not excluding its present machinations in the Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Turkestan.

All the more important is it, therefore, to achieve a firm union between the center and the border regions of Russia.

Hence the need to establish definite relations, definite ties between the center and the border regions of Russia ensuring an intimate and indestructible union between them.

What must these relations be, what forms must they assume?

In other words, what is the policy of the Soviet Government on the national question in Russia?

The demand for the secession of the border regions from Russia as the form of the relations between the center and the border regions must be rejected not only because it runs counter to the very formulation of the question of establishing a union between the center and the border regions, but primarily because it runs fundamentally counter to the interests of the mass of the people in both the center and the border regions. Apart from

the fact that the secession of the border regions would undermine the revolutionary might of central Russia, which is stimulating the movement for emancipation in the West and the East, the seceded border regions themselves would inevitably fall into the bondage of international imperialism. One has only to glance at Georgia, Armenia, Poland, Finland, etc., which have seceded from Russia but which have retained only the semblance of independence, having in reality been converted into unconditional vassals of the Entente; one has only, lastly, to recall the recent case of the Ukraine and Azerbaijan, of which the former was plundered by German capital and the latter by the Entente, to realize the utterly counter-revolutionary nature of the demand for the secession of the border regions under present international conditions. When a life-and-death struggle is developing between proletarian Russia and the imperialist Entente, there are only two possible outcomes for the border regions:

*Either* they go along with Russia, and then the toiling masses of the border regions will be freed from imperialist oppression;

*Or* they go along with the Entente, and then the yoke of imperialism will be inevitable.

There is no third course.

The so-called independence of so-called independent Georgia, Armenia, Poland, Finland, etc., is only an illusion, and conceals the utter dependence of these apologies for states on one or another group of imperialists.

Of course, the border regions of Russia, the nations and races which inhabit these regions, possess, as all other nations do, the inalienable right to secede from Russia; and if any of these nations decided by a majority to secede from Russia, as was the case with Finland in 1917, Russia, presumably, would be obliged to take note of the fact and sanction the secession. But the question here is not about the rights of nations, which are unquestionable, but about the interests of the mass of the people both in the center and in the border regions; it is a question of the character—which is determined by these interests—of the agitation which our Party must carry on if it does not wish to renounce its own principles and if it wishes to influence the will of the laboring masses of the nationalities in a definite direction. And the interests of the masses render the demand for

the secession of the border regions at the present stage of the revolution a profoundly counter-revolutionary one.

Similarly, what is known as cultural-national autonomy must also be rejected as a form of union between the center and the border regions of Russia. The experience of Austria-Hungary (the birthplace of cultural-national autonomy) during the last ten years has revealed the absolutely ephemeral and non-viable character of cultural-national autonomy as a form of alliance between the laboring masses of the nationalities of a multi-national state. Springer and Bauer, the authors of cultural-national autonomy, who are now confronted by the failure of their cunningly contrived national program, are living corroborations of this. Finally, the champion of cultural-national autonomy in Russia, the once famous Bund, was itself recently obliged officially to acknowledge the superfluousness of cultural-national autonomy, publicly declaring that: "The demand for cultural-national autonomy, which was put forward under the capitalist system, loses its meaning in the conditions of a socialist revolution"<sup>96</sup>

There remains regional autonomy for border regions that are distinguished by a specific manner of life and national composition, as the only expedient form of union between the center and the border regions, an autonomy which is designed to connect the border regions of Russia with the center by a federal tie. This is the Soviet form of autonomy which was proclaimed by the Soviet Government from the very first days of its existence and which is now being put into effect in the border regions in the form of administrative communes and autonomous Soviet republics.

Soviet autonomy is not a rigid thing fixed once and for all time; it permits of the most varied forms and degrees of development. It passes from narrow, administrative autonomy (the Volga Germans, the Chuvashes, the Karelians) to a wider, political autonomy (the Bashkirs, the Volga Tatars, the Kirghiz); from wide political autonomy to a still wider form of it (the Ukraine, Turkestan); and, lastly, from the Ukrainian type of autonomy to the highest form of autonomy—to contractual relations (Azerbaijan). This flexibility of Soviet autonomy is one of its prime merits; for this flexibility enables it to embrace all the various types of border regions of Russia, which vary greatly in their levels of cultural and eco-

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<sup>96</sup> See *The Twelfth Conference of the Bund*, 1920, p. 21.

conomic development. The three years of Soviet policy on the national question in Russia have shown that in applying Soviet autonomy in its diverse forms the Soviet Government is on the right path, for this policy alone has made it possible for it to open the road to the remotest corners of the border regions of Russia, to arouse to political activity the most backward and nationally diverse masses and to connect these masses with the center by the most varied ties—a problem which no other government in the world has solved, or has even set itself (being afraid to do so!). The administrative redivision of Russia on the basis of Soviet autonomy has not yet been completed; the North Caucasians, the Kalmyks, the Cheremiss, the Votyaks, the Buryats and others are still awaiting a settlement of the question. But no matter what aspect the administrative map of the future Russia may assume, and no matter what shortcomings there may have been in this field—and some shortcomings there certainly were—it must be acknowledged that by undertaking an administrative redivision on the basis of regional autonomy Russia has made a very big stride towards rallying the border regions around the proletarian center and bringing the government into closer contact with the broad masses of the border regions.

But the proclamation of this or that form of Soviet autonomy, the issuing of corresponding decrees and ordinances, and even the creation of governments in the border regions, in the shape of regional Councils of People's Commissars of the autonomous republics, are still far from enough to consolidate the union between the border regions and the center. To consolidate this union it is necessary, first of all, to put an end to the estrangement and isolation of the border regions, to their patriarchal and uncultured manner of life, and to their distrust of the center, which still persist in the border regions as a heritage of the brutal policy of tsarism. Tsarism deliberately cultivated patriarchal and feudal oppression in the border regions in order to keep the masses in slavery and ignorance. Tsarism deliberately settled the best areas in the border regions with colonizing elements in order to force the masses of the native nationalities into the worst areas and to intensify national strife. Tsarism restricted, and at times simply suppressed, the native schools, theaters and educational institutions in order to keep the masses in ignorance. Tsarism frustrated all initiative of the best members of the native population. Lastly, tsarism suppressed all activity of the masses in the border regions. By all these means

tsarism implanted among the mass of the native nationalities a profound distrust, at times passing into direct hostility, towards everything Russian. If the union between central Russia and the border regions is to be consolidated, this distrust must be removed and an atmosphere of mutual understanding and fraternal confidence created. But in order to remove this distrust we must first help the masses of the border regions to emancipate themselves from the survivals of feudal-patriarchal oppression; we must abolish—actually, and not only nominally—all the privileges of the colonizing elements; we must allow the masses to experience the material benefits of the revolution.

In brief, we must prove to the masses that central, proletarian Russia is defending their interests, and their interests alone; and this must be proved not only by repressive measures against the colonizers and bourgeois nationalists, measures that are often quite incomprehensible to the masses, but primarily by a consistent and carefully considered economic policy.

Everybody is acquainted with the liberals' demand for universal compulsory education. The Communists in the border regions cannot be more Right wing than the liberals; they must put universal education into effect there if they want to end the ignorance of the people and if they want to create closer spiritual ties between the center of Russia and the border regions. But to do so, it is necessary to develop local national schools, national theaters and national educational institutions and to raise the cultural level of the masses of the border regions, for it need hardly be shown that ignorance is the most dangerous enemy of the Soviet regime. We do not know what success is attending our work in this field generally, but we are informed that in one of the most important border regions the local People's Commissariat of Education is spending on the native schools only ten percent of its credits. If that is true, it must be admitted that in this field we have, unfortunately, not gone much further than the "old regime."

Soviet power is not power divorced from the people; on the contrary, it is the only power of its kind having sprung from the Russian masses and being near and dear to them. This in fact explains the unparalleled strength and resilience which the Soviet regime usually displays at critical moments.

Soviet power must become just as near and dear to the masses of the border regions of Russia. But this requires that it should first of all become comprehensible to them. It is therefore necessary that all Soviet organs in the border regions—the courts, the administration, the economic bodies, the organs of direct authority (and the organs of the Party as well)—should as far as possible be recruited from the local people acquainted with the manner of life, habits, customs and language of the native population; that all the best people from the local masses should be drawn into these institutions; that the local laboring masses should participate in every sphere of administration of the country, including the formation of military units, in order that the masses should see that the Soviet power and its organs are the products of their own efforts, the embodiment of their aspirations. Only in this way can firm spiritual ties be established between the masses and the Soviet power, and only in this way can the Soviet power become comprehensible and dear to the laboring masses of the border regions.

Some comrades regard the autonomous republics in Russia and Soviet autonomy generally as a temporary, if necessary, evil which owing to certain circumstances had to be tolerated, but which must be combated with a view to its eventual abolishment. It need hardly be shown that this view is fundamentally false and that at any rate it is entirely foreign to the policy of the Soviet Government on the national question. Soviet autonomy must not be regarded as an abstraction or an artificial thing; still less should it be considered an empty and declaratory promise. Soviet autonomy is the most real and concrete form of the union of the border regions with central Russia. Nobody will deny that the Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Turkestan, Kirghizia, Bashkiria, Tataria and the other border regions, if they desire the cultural and material prosperity of their masses, must have native schools, courts, administration and organs of authority, recruited principally from the local people. Furthermore, the real sovietization of these regions, their conversion into Soviet countries closely bound with central Russia in one integral state, is *inconceivable* without the wide-spread organization of local schools, without the creation of courts, administrative bodies, organs of authority, etc., staffed with people acquainted with the life and language of the population. But establishing schools, courts, administration and organs of authority functioning in the native language—this is precisely putting Soviet autonomy into practice;

for Soviet autonomy is nothing but the sum total of all these institutions clothed in Ukrainian, Turkestan, Kirghiz, etc., forms.

How, after this, can one seriously say that Soviet autonomy is ephemeral, that it must be combated, and so on?

One thing or the other:

*Either* the Ukrainian, Azerbaijan, Kirghiz, Uzbek, Bashkir and other languages are an actual reality, and it is therefore absolutely essential to develop in these regions native schools, courts, administrative bodies and organs of authority recruited from the local people—in which case Soviet autonomy must be put into effect in these regions in its entirety, without reservations;

*Or* the Ukrainian, Azerbaijan and other languages are a pure fiction, and therefore schools and other institutions functioning in the native languages are unnecessary—in which case Soviet autonomy must be discarded as useless lumber.

The search for a third way is due either to ignorance of the subject or to deplorable folly.

One serious obstacle to the realization of Soviet autonomy is the acute shortage in the border regions of intellectual forces of local origin, the shortage of instructors in every branch of Soviet and Party work without exception. This shortage cannot but hamper both educational and revolutionary constructive work in the border regions. But for that very reason it would be unwise and harmful to alienate the all too few groups of native intellectuals, who perhaps would like to serve the masses but are unable to do so, perhaps because, not being Communists, they believe themselves to be surrounded by an atmosphere of mistrust and are afraid of possible repressive measures. The policy of drawing such groups into Soviet work, the policy of recruiting them for industrial, agrarian, food-supply and other posts, with a view to their gradual sovietization, may be applied with success. For it can hardly be maintained that these intellectual groups are less reliable than, let us say, the counter-revolutionary military experts who, their counter-revolutionary spirit notwithstanding, were drawn into the work and subsequently became sovietized, occupying very important posts.

But the employment of the national groups of intellectuals will still be far from sufficient to satisfy the demand for instructors. We must simul-

taneously develop in the border regions a ramified system of courses of study and schools in every branch of administration in order to create cadres of instructors from the local people. For it is clear that without such cadres the organization of native schools, courts, administrative and other institutions functioning in the native languages will be rendered extremely difficult.

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

The RCP upholds the historical and class standpoint, giving consideration to the stage of historical development in which the given nation finds itself—whether it is on the way from medievalism to bourgeois democracy, or from bourgeois democracy to Soviet, or proletarian, democracy, etc.

And further:

In any case, the proletariat of those nations which were oppressor nations must exercise particular caution and be particularly heedful of the survivals of national sentiment among the laboring masses of the oppressed or unequal nations.<sup>97</sup>

That means that if in Azerbaijan, for instance, the direct method of requisitioning superfluous dwelling space alienates from us the Azerbaijanian masses, who regard the home, the domestic hearth, as sacred and inviolable, it is obvious that the direct way of requisitioning superfluous dwelling space must be replaced by an indirect, roundabout way of achieving the same end. Or if, for instance, the Daghestan masses, who are profoundly imbued with religious prejudices, follow the Communists “on the basis of the Sharia,” it is obvious that the direct way of combating religious

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<sup>97</sup> See *Program of the RCP*, 1919.



prejudices in this country must be replaced by indirect and more cautious ways. And so on, and so forth.

In brief, cavalry raids with the object of “immediately communizing” the backward masses must be discarded in favor of a circumspect and carefully considered policy of gradually drawing these masses into the general stream of Soviet development.

Such in general are the practical conditions necessary for realizing Soviet autonomy, the introduction of which ensures closer spiritual ties and a firm revolutionary union between the center and the border regions of Russia.

Soviet Russia is performing an experiment without parallel hitherto in the world in organizing the co-operation of a number of nations and races within a single proletarian state on a basis of mutual confidence, of voluntary and fraternal agreement. The three years of the revolution have shown that this experiment has every chance of succeeding. But this experiment can be certain of complete success only if our practical policy on the national question in the localities does not run counter to the demands of already proclaimed Soviet autonomy, in its varied forms and degrees, and if every practical measure we adopt in the localities helps to introduce the masses of the border regions to a higher, proletarian spiritual and material culture in forms conforming with the manner of life and national features of these masses.

In that lies the guarantee of the consolidation of the revolutionary union between central Russia and the border regions of Russia, against which all the machinations of the Entente will be shattered.

THE IMMEDIATE TASKS  
OF THE PARTY IN THE  
NATIONAL QUESTION

*March 10, 1921*

*Report Delivered at the Tenth Congress of the  
RCP(B)*<sup>98</sup>

Before proceeding to deal with the Party's concrete immediate tasks in the national question, it is necessary to lay down certain premises, without which the national question cannot be solved. These premises concern the emergence of nations, the origin of national oppression, the forms assumed by national oppression in the course of historical development, and then the methods of solving the national question in the different periods of development.

There have been three such periods.

The first period was that of the elimination of feudalism in the West and of the triumph of capitalism. That was the period in which people were constituted into nations I have in mind countries like Britain (excluding Ireland), France and Italy. In the West—in Britain, France, Italy and, partly, Germany—the period of the liquidation of feudalism and the constitution of people into nations coincided, on the whole, with the period in which centralized states appeared; as a consequence of this, in the course of their development, the nations there assumed state forms. And since there were no other national groups of any considerable size within these states, there was no national oppression there.

In Eastern Europe, on the contrary, the process of formation of nations and of the liquidation of feudal disunity did not coincide in time with the process of formation of centralized states. I have in mind Hungary, Austria and Russia. In those countries capitalism had not yet developed; it was, perhaps, only just beginning to develop; but the needs of

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<sup>98</sup> The Tenth Congress of the RCP(B) was held on March 8-16, 1921. It discussed the reports of the Central Committee and the Central Control Commission, and also reports on the trade unions and their role in the economic life of the country, on the tax in kind, on Party affairs, on the immediate tasks of the Party in the national question, on Party unity and the anarcho-syndicalist deviation, etc. The political report of the Central Committee, and the reports on the tax in kind, on Party unity, and on the anarcho-syndicalist deviation, were made by V. I. Lenin. The congress summed up the discussion that had taken place on the trade-union question and by an overwhelming majority endorsed Lenin's platform. In its resolution on "Party Unity," drafted by V. I. Lenin, the congress condemned all the factional groups, ordered their immediate dissolution, and pointed out that Party unity was the fundamental condition for the success of the proletarian dictatorship. The congress adopted V. I. Lenin's resolution on "The Syndicalist and Anarchist Deviation in Our Party," which condemned the so-called "Workers' Opposition" and declared that propaganda of the ideas of the

defense against the invasion of the Turks, Mongols and other Oriental peoples called for the immediate formation of centralized states capable of checking the onslaught of the invaders. Since the process of formation of centralized states in Eastern Europe was more rapid than the process of the constitution of people into nations, mixed states were formed there, consisting of several peoples who had not yet formed themselves into nations, but who were already united in a common state.

Thus, the first period is characterized by nations making their appearance at the dawn of capitalism; in Western Europe purely national states arose in which there was no national oppression, whereas in Eastern Europe multi-national states arose headed by one, more developed, nation as the dominant nation, to which the other, less developed, nations were politically and later economically subjected. These multi-national states in the East became the home of that national oppression, which gave rise to national conflicts, to national movements, to the national question, and to various methods of solving this question.

The second period in the development of national oppression and of methods of combating it coincided with the period of the appearance of imperialism in the West, when, in its quest for markets, raw materials, fuel and cheap labor power, and in its fight for the export of capital and for securing important railway and sea routes, capitalism burst out of the framework of the national state and enlarged its territory at the expense of its neighbors, near and distant. In this second period the old national states in the West—Britain, Italy and France—ceased to be national states,

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anarcho-syndicalist deviation was incompatible with membership of the Communist Party. The Tenth Congress adopted a decision to pass from the produce surplus appropriation system to the tax in kind, to pass to the New Economic Policy. J. V. Stalin's report on "The Immediate Tasks of the Party in the National Question" was heard on March 10. The congress unanimously adopted J. V. Stalin's theses on this question as a basis and appointed a commission to elaborate them further. J. V. Stalin reported on the results of the commission's work at the evening session on March 15. The resolution that he proposed on behalf of the commission was unanimously adopted by the congress, which condemned the anti-Party deviations on the national question, i.e., dominant-nation (Great-Russian) chauvinism and local nationalism, as being harmful and dangerous to communism and proletarian internationalism. The congress particularly condemned dominant-nation chauvinism as being the chief danger. (Concerning the Tenth Congress of the RCP(B) see *History of the CPSU(B), Short Course*, Moscow 1952, pp. 391-397. Concerning the resolutions adopted by the congress, see "Resolutions and Decisions of CPSU(B) Congresses, Conferences and Central Committee Plenums," Part I, 1941, pp. 356-95.)

i.e., owing to having seized new territories, they were transformed into multi-national, colonial states and thereby became arenas of the same kind of national and colonial oppression as already existed in Eastern Europe. Characteristic of this period in Eastern Europe was the awakening and strengthening of the subject nations (Czechs, Poles and Ukrainians) which, as a result of the imperialist war, led to the break-up of the old, bourgeois multi-national states and to the formation of new national states which are held in bondage by the so-called great powers.

The third period is the Soviet period, the period of the abolition of capitalism and of the elimination of national oppression, when the question of dominant and subject nations, of colonies and metropolises, is relegated to the archives of history, when before us, in the territory of the RSFSR, nations are arising having equal rights to development, but which have retained a certain historically inherited inequality owing to their economic, political and cultural backwardness. The essence of this national inequality consists in the fact that, as a result of historical development, we have inherited from the past a situation in which one nation, namely, the Great-Russian, is politically and industrially more developed than the other nations. Hence the actual inequality, which cannot be abolished in one year, but which must be abolished by giving the backward nations and nationalities economic, political and cultural assistance.

Such are the three periods of development of the national question that have historically passed before us.

The first two periods have one feature in common, namely: in both periods nations suffer oppression and bondage, as a consequence of which the national struggle continues and the national question remains unsolved. But there is also a difference between them, namely: in the first period the national question remains within the framework of each multi-national state and affects only a few, chiefly European, nations; in the second period, however, the national question is transformed from an intra-state question into an inter-state question—into a question of war between imperialist states to keep the unequal nationalities under their domination, to subject to their influence new nationalities and races outside Europe.

Thus, in this period, the national question, which formerly had been of significance only in cultured countries, loses its isolated character and merges with the general question of the colonies.

The development of the national question into the general colonial question was not a historical accident. It was due, firstly, to the fact that during the imperialist war the imperialist groups of belligerent powers themselves were obliged to appeal to the colonies from which they obtained man-power for their armies. Undoubtedly, this process, this inevitable appeal of the imperialists to the backward nationalities of the colonies, could not fail to rouse these races and nationalities for the struggle for liberation. The second factor that caused the widening of the national question, its development into the general colonial question embracing the whole world, first in the sparks and later in the flames of the liberation movement, was the attempt of the imperialist groups to dismember Turkey and to put an end to her existence as a state. Being more developed as a state than the other Moslem peoples, Turkey could not resign herself to such a prospect; she raised the banner of struggle and rallied the peoples of the East around herself against imperialism. The third factor was the appearance of Soviet Russia, which achieved a number of successes in the struggle against imperialism and thereby naturally inspired the oppressed peoples of the East, awakened them, roused them for the struggle, and thus made it possible to create a common front of oppressed nations stretching from Ireland to India.

Such are all those factors which in the second stage of the development of national oppression not only prevented bourgeois society from solving the national question, not only prevented the establishment of peace among the nations, but, on the contrary, fanned the spark of national struggle into the flames of the struggle of the oppressed peoples, the colonies and the semi-colonies against world imperialism.

Obviously, the only regime that is capable of solving the national question, i.e., the regime that is capable of creating the conditions for ensuring the peaceful co-existence and fraternal co-operation of different nations and races, is the Soviet regime, the regime of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

It scarcely needs proof that under the rule of capital, with private ownership of the means of production and the existence of classes, equal

rights for nations cannot be guaranteed; that as long as the power of capital exists, as long as the struggle for the possession of the means of production goes on, there can be no equal rights for nations, just as there can be no co-operation between the laboring masses of the different nations. History tells us that the only way to abolish national inequality, the only way to establish a regime of fraternal co-operation between the laboring masses of the oppressed and non-oppressed nations, is to abolish capitalism and establish the Soviet system.

Further, history shows that although individual peoples succeed in liberating themselves from their own national bourgeoisie and also from the "foreign" bourgeoisie, i.e., although they succeed in establishing the Soviet system in their respective countries, they cannot, as long as imperialism exists, maintain and successfully defend their separate existence unless they receive the economic and military support of neighboring Soviet republics. The example of Hungary provides eloquent proof that unless the Soviet republics form a state union, unless they unite and form a single military and economic force, they cannot withstand the combined forces of world imperialism either on the military or on the economic front.

A federation of Soviet republics is the needed form of state union, and the living embodiment of this form is the RSFSR.

Such, comrades, are the premises that I wanted to speak of here first of all, before proceeding to prove that our Party must take certain steps in the matter of solving the national question within the RSFSR.

Although, under the Soviet regime in Russia and in the republics associated with her, there are no longer either dominant or nations without rights, no metropolises or colonies, no exploited or exploiters, nevertheless, the national question still exists in Russia. The essence of the national question in the RSFSR lies in abolishing the actual backwardness (economic, political and cultural) that some of the nations have inherited from the past, to make it possible for the backward peoples to catch up with central Russia in political, cultural and economic respects.

Under the old regime, the tsarist government did not, and could not, make any effort to develop the statehood of the Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Turkestan and other border regions; it opposed the development of the statehood, as well as of the culture, of the border regions, endeavoring forcibly to assimilate their native populations.

Further, the old state, the landlords and capitalists, left us a heritage of such downtrodden nationalities as the Kirghiz, Chechens and Ossetians, whose lands were colonized by Cossack and kulak elements from Russia. Those nationalities were doomed to incredible suffering and to extinction.

Further, the position of the Great-Russian nation, which was the dominant nation, has left traces of its influence even upon Russian Communists who are unable, or unwilling to draw closer to the laboring masses of the local population, to understand their needs and to help them to extricate themselves from backwardness and lack of culture. I am speaking of those few groups of Russian Communists who, ignoring in their work the specific features of the manner of life and culture of the border regions, sometimes deviate towards Russian dominant-nation chauvinism.

Further, the position of the non-Russian nationalities which have experienced national oppression has not failed to influence the Communists among the local population who are sometimes unable to distinguish between the class interests of the laboring masses of their respective nations and so-called “national” interests. I am speaking of the deviation towards local nationalism that is sometimes observed in the ranks of the non-Russian Communists, and which finds expression in the East in, for example, Pan-Islamism and Pan-Turkism.

Lastly, we must save the Kirghiz, the Bashkirs and certain mountain races from extinction, we must provide them with the necessary land at the expense of the kulak colonizers.

Such are the problems and tasks which together constitute the essence of the national question in our country.

Having described these immediate tasks of the Party in the national question, I would like to pass to the general task, the task of adapting our communist policy in the border regions to the specific conditions of economic life that obtain mainly in the East.

The point is that a number of nationalities, chiefly Tyurk—comprising about 25,000,000 people—have not been through, did not manage to go through, the period of industrial capitalism, and, therefore, have no industrial proletariat, or scarcely any; consequently, they will have to skip the stage of industrial capitalism and pass from the primitive forms of economy to the stage of Soviet economy. To be able to perform this



very difficult but by no means impossible operation, it is necessary to take into account all the specific features of the economic condition, and even of the historical past, manner of life and culture of these nationalities. It would be unthinkable and dangerous to transplant to the territories of these nationalities the measures that had force and significance here, in central Russia. Clearly, in applying the economic policy of the RSFSR, it is absolutely necessary to take into account all the specific features of the economic condition, the class structure and the historical past confronting us in these border regions. There is no need for me to dwell on the necessity of putting an end to such incongruities as, for example, the order issued by the People's Commissariat of Food that pigs be included in the food quotas to be obtained from Kirghizia, the Moslem population of which has never raised pigs. This example shows how obstinately some people refuse to take into account peculiarities of the manner of life which strike the eye of every traveler.

I have just been handed a note requesting me to answer Comrade Chicherin's articles. Comrades, I think that Chicherin's articles, which I have read carefully, are nothing more than literary exercises. They contain four mistakes, or misunderstandings.

First, Comrade Chicherin is inclined to deny the contradictions among the imperialist states; he overestimates the international unity of the imperialists and loses sight of, underestimates, the internal contradictions among the imperialist groups and states (France, America, Britain, Japan, etc.), which exist and contain the seeds of war. He has overestimated the unity of the imperialist upper circles and underestimated the contradictions existing within that "trust." But these contradictions do exist, and the activities of the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs are based on them.

Next, Comrade Chicherin makes a second mistake. He underestimates the contradictions that exist between the dominant great powers and the recently formed national states (Czechoslovakia, Poland, Finland, etc.), which are in financial and military subjection to those great powers. Comrade Chicherin has completely lost sight of the fact that, although those national states are in subjection to the great powers, or to be more exact, because of this, there are contradictions between the great powers and those states, which made themselves felt, for example, in the nego-

tiations with Poland, Estonia, etc. It is precisely the function of the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs to take all these contradictions into account, to base itself on them, to maneuver within the framework of these contradictions. Most surprisingly, Comrade Chicherin has underestimated this factor.

The third mistake of Comrade Chicherin is that he talks too much about national self-determination, which has indeed become an empty slogan conveniently used by the imperialists. Strangely enough, Comrade Chicherin has forgotten that we parted with that slogan two years ago. That slogan no longer figures in our program. Our program does not speak of national self-determination, which is a very vague slogan, but of the right of nations to secede, a slogan which is more precise and definite. These are two different things. Strangely enough, Comrade Chicherin fails to take this factor into account in his articles and, as a result, all his objections to the slogan which has become vague are like firing blank shot, for neither in my theses nor in the Party's program is there a single word about "self-determination." The only thing that is mentioned is the right of nations to secede. At the present time, however, when the liberation movement is flaring up in the colonies, that is for us a revolutionary slogan. Since the Soviet states are united voluntarily in a federation, the nations constituting the RSFSR voluntarily refrain from exercising the right to secede. But as regards the colonies that are in the clutches of Britain, France, America and Japan, as regards such subject countries as Arabia, Mesopotamia, Turkey and Hindustan, i.e., countries which are colonies or semi-colonies, the right of nations to secede is a revolutionary slogan, and to abandon it would mean playing into the hands of the imperialists.

The fourth misunderstanding is the absence of practical advice in Comrade Chicherin's articles. It is easy, of course, to write articles, but to justify their title: "In Opposition to Comrade Stalin's Theses" he should have proposed something serious, he should at least have made some practical counter-proposals. But I failed to find in his articles a single practical proposal that was worth considering.

I am finishing, comrades. We have arrived at the following conclusions. Far from being able to solve the national question, bourgeois society, on the contrary, in its attempts to "solve" it, has fanned it into becoming the colonial question, and has created against itself a new front that stretches

from Ireland to Hindustan. The only state that is capable of formulating and solving the national question is the state that is based on the collective ownership of the means and instruments of production—the Soviet state. In the Soviet federative state there are no longer either oppressed or dominant nations, national oppression has been abolished; but owing to the actual inequality (cultural, economic and political) inherited from the old bourgeois order, inequality between the more cultured and less cultured nations, the national question assumes a form which calls for the working out of measures that will help the laboring masses of the backward nations and nationalities to make economic, political and cultural progress, that will enable them to catch up with central—proletarian—Russia, which has forged ahead. From this follow the practical proposals which constitute the third section of the theses on the national question which I have submitted. [*Applause.*]

#### Reply to the Discussion

Comrades, the most characteristic feature of this congress as regards the discussion on the national question is that we have passed from declarations on the national question, through the administrative redivision of Russia, to the practical presentation of the question. At the beginning of the October Revolution we confined ourselves to declaring the right of peoples to secede. In 1918 and in 1920 we were engaged in the administrative redivision of Russia on national lines with the object of bringing the laboring masses of the backward peoples closer to the proletariat of Russia. Today, at this congress, we are presenting, on a purely practical basis, the question of what policy the Party should adopt towards the laboring masses and petit-bourgeois elements in the autonomous regions and independent republics associated with Russia. Therefore, Zatonky's statement that the theses submitted to you are of an abstract character astonished me. I have before me his own theses which, for some reason, he did not submit to the congress, and in them I have not been able to find a single practical proposal, literally, not one, except, perhaps, the proposal that the word "East European" be substituted for "RSFSR," and that the word "Russian" or "Great-Russian" be substituted for "All-Russian." I have not found any other practical proposals in these theses.

I pass on to the next question.

I must say that I expected more from the delegates who have spoken. Russia has twenty-two border regions. Some of them have undergone considerable industrial development and differ little from central Russia in industrial respects; others have not been through the stage of capitalism and differ radically from central Russia; others again are very backward. It is impossible in a set of theses to deal with all this diversity of the border regions in all its concrete details. One cannot demand that theses of importance to the Party as a whole should bear only a Turkestan, an Azerbaijanian, or a Ukrainian character. Theses must seize on and include the common characteristic features of all the border regions, abstracted from the details. There is no other method of drawing up theses.

The non-Great-Russian nations must be divided into several groups, and this has been done in the theses. The non-Russian nations comprise a total of about 65,000,000 people. The common characteristic feature of all these non-Russian nations is that they lag behind central Russia as regards the development of their statehood. Our task is to exert all efforts to help these nations, to help their proletarians and toilers generally to develop their Soviet statehood in their native languages. This common feature is mentioned in the theses, in the part dealing with practical measures.

Next, proceeding further in concretizing the specific features of the border regions, we must single out from the total of nearly 65,000,000 people of non-Russian nationalities some 25,000,000 Tyurks who have not been through the capitalist stage. Comrade Mikoyan was wrong when he said that in some respects Azerbaijan stands higher than the Russian provincial districts. He is obviously confusing Baku with Azerbaijan. Baku did not spring from the womb of Azerbaijan; it is a superstructure erected by the efforts of Nobel, Rothschild, Whishaw, and others. As regards Azerbaijan itself, it is a country with the most backward patriarchal-feudal relations. That is why I place Azerbaijan as a whole in the group of border regions which have not been through the capitalist stage, and in relation to which it is necessary to employ specific methods of drawing them into the channel of Soviet economy. That is stated in the theses.

Then there is a third group which embraces not more than 6,000,000 people; these are mainly pastoral races, which still lead a tribal life and have not yet adopted agriculture. These are chiefly the Kirghiz, the northern part of Turkestan, Bashkirs, Chechens, Ossetians and Ingushes. The first thing

to be done in relation to this group of nationalities is to provide them with land. The Kirghiz and Bashkirs here were not given the floor; the debate was closed. They would have told us more about the sufferings of the Bashkir highlanders, the Kirghiz and the Highlanders, who are dying out for want of land. But what Safarov said about this applies only to a group consisting of 6,000,000 people. Therefore, it is wrong to apply Safarov's practical proposals to all the border regions, for his amendments have no significance whatever for the rest of the non-Russian nationalities, which comprise about 60,000,000 people. Therefore, while raising no objection to the concretization, supplementation and improvement of individual points moved by Safarov relating to certain groups of nationalities, I must say that these amendments should not be universalized. I must next make a comment on one of Safarov's amendments. In one of his amendments there has crept in the phrase "national-cultural self-determination":

Before the October Revolution [it says there,] the colonial and semi-colonial peoples of the eastern border regions of Russia, as a result of imperialist policy, had no opportunity whatever of sharing the cultural benefits of capitalist civilization by means of their own national-cultural self-determination, education in their native languages, [etc.]

I must say that I cannot accept this amendment because it smacks of Bundism. National-cultural self-determination is a Bundist formula. We parted with nebulous slogans of self-determination long ago and there is no need to revive them. Moreover, the entire phrase is a most unnatural combination of words.

Further, I have received a note alleging that we Communists are artificially cultivating a Byelorussian nationality. That is not true, for there exists a Byelorussian nation, which has its own language, different from Russian. Consequently, the culture of the Byelorussian people can be raised only in its native language. We heard similar talk five years ago about the Ukraine, about the Ukrainian nation. And only recently it was said that the Ukrainian Republic and the Ukrainian nation were inventions of the Germans. It is obvious, however, that there is a Ukrainian nation, and it is the duty of the Communists to develop its culture. You cannot go against history. It is obvious that although Russian elements still predominate in

the Ukrainian towns, in the course of time these towns will inevitably be Ukrainianized. About forty years ago, Riga had the appearance of a German city; but since towns grow at the expense of the countryside, and since the countryside is the guardian of nationality, Riga is now a purely Lettish city. About fifty years ago all Hungarian towns bore a German character; now they have become Magyarized. The same will happen in Byelorussia, where non-Byelorussians still predominate in the towns.

In conclusion, I propose that the congress elect a commission containing representatives of the regions, for the purpose of further concretizing those practical proposals in the theses that interest all our border regions. [*Applause.*]



CONCERNING THE  
PRESENTATION OF THE  
NATIONAL QUESTION

*May 8, 1921*



The presentation of the national question as given by the Communists differs essentially from the presentation adopted by the leaders of the Second and Two-and-a-Half Internationals<sup>99</sup> and by all the various “Socialist,” “Social-Democratic,” Menshevik, Socialist-Revolutionary and other parties.

It is particularly important to note four principal points that are the most characteristic and distinguishing features of the new presentation of the national question, features which draw a line between the old and the new conceptions of the national question.

The *first point* is the merging of the national question, as a part, with the general question of the liberation of the colonies, as a whole. In the epoch of the Second International it was usual to confine the national question to a narrow circle of questions relating exclusively to the “civilized” nations. The Irish, the Czechs, the Poles, the Finns, the Serbs, the Armenians, the Jews and some other European nationalities—such was the circle of unequal nations in whose fate the Second International took an interest. The tens and hundreds of millions of people in Asia and Africa who are suffering from national oppression in its crudest and most brutal form did not, as a rule, come within the field of vision of the “socialists.” They did not venture to place whites and blacks, “uncultured” Negroes and “civilized” Irish, “backward” Indians and “enlightened” Poles on the same footing. It was tacitly assumed that although it might be necessary to strive for the liberation of the European unequal nations, it was entirely unbecoming for “respectable socialists” to speak seriously of the liberation of the colonies, which were “necessary” for the “preservation” of “civilization.” These socialists, save the mark, did not even suspect that the abolition of national oppression in Europe is inconceivable without the liberation of the colonial peoples of Asia and Africa from imperialist oppression,

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<sup>99</sup> The Two-and-a-Half International—the “International Association of Labor and Socialist Parties”—was formed in Vienna in February 1921 at an inaugural conference of Centrist parties and groups which, owing to the pressure of the revolutionary-minded workers, had temporarily seceded from the Second International. While criticizing the Second International in words, the leaders of the Two-and-a-Half International (F. Adler, O. Bauer, L. Martov, and others) in fact pursued an opportunist policy on all the major questions of the proletarian movement, and strove to use the association to counteract the growing influence of the Communists among the masses of the workers. In 1923, the Two-and-a-Half International rejoined the Second International.

that the former is organically bound up with the latter. It was the Communists who first revealed the connection between the national question and the question of the colonies, who proved it theoretically and made it the basis of their practical revolutionary activities. That broke down the wall between whites and blacks, between the “cultured” and the “uncultured” slaves of imperialism. This circumstance greatly facilitated the co-ordination of the struggle of the backward colonies with the struggle of the advanced proletariat against the common enemy, imperialism.

The *second point* is that the vague slogan of the right of nations to self-determination has been replaced by the clear revolutionary slogan of the right of nations and colonies to secede, to form independent states. When speaking of the right to self-determination, the leaders of the Second International did not as a rule even hint at the right to secede—the right to self-determination was at best interpreted to mean the right to autonomy in general. Springer and Bauer, the “experts” on the national question, even went so far as to convert the right to self-determination into the right of the oppressed nations of Europe to cultural autonomy, that is, the right to have their own cultural institutions, while all *political* (and economic) power was to *remain* in the hands of the dominant nation. In other words, the right of the unequal nations to self-determination was converted into the privilege of the dominant nations to wield political power, and the question of secession was excluded. Kautsky, the ideological leader of the Second International, associated himself in the main with this essentially imperialist interpretation of self-determination as given by Springer and Bauer. It is not surprising that the imperialists, realizing how convenient this feature of the slogan of self-determination was for them, proclaimed the slogan their own. As we know, the imperialist war, the aim of which was to enslave peoples, was fought under the flag of self-determination. Thus the vague slogan of self-determination was converted from an instrument for the liberation of nations, for achieving equal rights for nations, into an instrument for taming nations, an instrument for keeping nations in subjection to imperialism. The course of events in recent years all over the world, the logic of revolution in Europe, and, lastly, the growth of the liberation movement in the colonies demanded that this, now reactionary slogan should be cast aside and replaced by another slogan, a revolutionary slogan, capable of dispelling the atmosphere of distrust of the

laboring masses of the unequal nations towards the proletarians of the dominant nations and of clearing the way towards equal rights for nations and towards the unity of the toilers of these nations. Such a slogan is the one issued by the Communists proclaiming the right of nations and colonies to secede.

The merits of this slogan are that it:

- 1) removes all grounds for suspicion that the toilers of one nation entertain predatory designs against the toilers of another nation, and therefore creates a basis for mutual confidence and voluntary union;
- 2) tears the mask from the imperialists, who hypocritically prate about self-determination but who are striving to keep the unequal peoples and colonies in subjection, to retain them within the framework of their imperialist state, and thereby intensifies the struggle for liberation that these nations and colonies are waging against imperialism.

It scarcely needs proof that the Russian workers would not have gained the sympathy of their comrades of other nationalities in the West and the East if, having assumed power, they had not proclaimed the right of nations to secede, if they had not demonstrated in practice their readiness to give effect to this inalienable right of nations, if they had not renounced their "rights," let us say, to Finland (1917), if they had not withdrawn their troops from North Persia (1917), if they had not renounced all claims to certain parts of Mongolia, China, etc., etc.

It is equally beyond doubt that if the policy of the imperialists, skillfully concealed under the flag of self-determination, has nevertheless lately been meeting with defeat after defeat in the East, it is because, among other things, it has encountered there a growing liberation movement, which has developed on the basis of the agitation conducted in the spirit of the slogan of the right of nations to secede. This is not understood by the heroes of the Second and Two-and-a-Half Internationals, who roundly abuse the Baku "Council of Action and Propaganda"<sup>100</sup> for some slight

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<sup>100</sup> The "Council of Action and Propaganda of the Peoples of the East" was formed by decision of the First Congress of the Peoples of the East, held in Baku in September 1920. The object of the council was to support and unite the liberation movement of the East. It existed for about a year.

mistakes it has committed; but it will be understood by everyone who takes the trouble to acquaint himself with the activities of that "Council" during the year it has been in existence, and with the liberation movement in the Asiatic and African colonies during the past two or three years.

The *third point* is the disclosure of the organic connection between the national and colonial question and the question of the rule of capital, of overthrowing capitalism, of the dictatorship of the proletariat. In the epoch of the Second International, the national question, narrowed down to the extreme, was usually regarded as an isolated question, unrelated to the coming proletarian revolution. It was tacitly assumed that the national question would be settled "naturally," before the proletarian revolution, by means of a series of reforms within the framework of capitalism; that the proletarian revolution could be accomplished without a radical settlement of the national question, and that, on the contrary, the national question could be settled without overthrowing the rule of capital, without, and before, the victory of the proletarian revolution. That essentially imperialist view runs like a red thread through the well-known works of Springer and Bauer on the national question. But the past decade has exposed the utter falsity and rottenness of this conception of the national question. The imperialist war has shown, and the revolutionary experience of recent years has again confirmed that:

- 1) the national and colonial questions are inseparable from the question of emancipation from the rule of capital;
- 2) imperialism (the highest form of capitalism) cannot exist without the political and economic enslavement of the unequal nations and colonies;
- 3) the unequal nations and colonies cannot be liberated without overthrowing the rule of capital;
- 4) the victory of the proletariat cannot be lasting without the liberation of the unequal nations and colonies from the yoke of imperialism.

If Europe and America may be called the front or the arena of the major battles between socialism and imperialism, the unequal nations and the colonies, with their raw materials, fuel, food and vast store of man-

power, must be regarded as the rear, the reserve of imperialism. To win a war it is necessary not only to triumph at the front but also to revolutionize the enemy's rear, his reserves. Hence, the victory of the world proletarian revolution may be regarded as assured only if the proletariat is able to combine its own revolutionary struggle with the liberation movement of the laboring masses of the unequal nations and the colonies against the rule of the imperialists and for the dictatorship of the proletariat. This "trifle" was overlooked by the leaders of the Second and Two-and-a-Half Internationals, who divorced the national and colonial question from the question of power in the epoch of growing proletarian revolution in the West.

The *fourth point* is that a new element has been introduced into the national question—the element of the actual (and not merely juridical) equalization of nations (help and co-operation for the backward nations in raising themselves to the cultural and economic level of the more advanced nations), as one of the conditions necessary for securing fraternal co-operation between the laboring masses of the various nations. In the epoch of the Second International the matter was usually confined to proclaiming "national equality of rights"; at best, things went no further than the demand that such equality of rights should be put into effect. But national equality of rights, although a very important political gain in itself, runs the risk of remaining a mere phrase in the absence of adequate resources and opportunities for exercising this very important right. It is beyond doubt that the laboring masses of the backward peoples are not in a position to exercise the rights that are accorded them under "national equality of rights" to the same degree to which they can be exercised by the laboring masses of advanced nations. The backwardness (cultural and economic), which some nations have inherited from the past, and which cannot be abolished in one or two years, makes itself felt. This circumstance is also perceptible in Russia, where a number of peoples have not gone through, and some have not even entered, the phase of capitalism and have no proletariat, or hardly any, of their own; where, although complete national equality of rights has already been established, the laboring masses of these nationalities are not in a position to make adequate use of the rights they have won, owing to their cultural and economic backwardness. This circumstance will make itself felt still more "on the morrow" of the victory of the proletariat in the West, when numerous backward colonies and

semi-colonies, standing at most diverse levels of development, will inevitably appear on the scene. For that very reason the victorious proletariat of the advanced nations must assist, must render assistance, real and prolonged assistance, to the laboring masses of the backward nations in their cultural and economic development, so as to help them to rise to a higher stage of development and to catch up with the more advanced nations. Unless such aid is forthcoming it will be impossible to bring about the peaceful co-existence and fraternal co-operation of the toilers of the various nations and nationalities within a single world economic system that are so essential for the final triumph of socialism.

But from this it follows that we cannot confine ourselves merely to “national equality of rights,” that we must pass from “national equality of rights” to measures that will bring about real equality of nations, that we must proceed to work out and put into effect practical measures in relation to:

- 1) the study of the economic conditions, manner of life and culture of the backward nations and nationalities;
- 2) the development of their culture;
- 3) their political education;
- 4) their gradual and painless introduction to the higher forms of economy;
- 5) the organization of economic co-operation between the toilers of the backward and of the advanced nations.

Such are the four principal points which distinguish the new presentation of the national question given by the Russian Communists.

*Pravda*, No. 98, May 8, 1921



# THE UNION OF THE SOVIET REPUBLICS

*December 26, 1922*



*Report Delivered at the Tenth All-Russian  
Congress of Soviets<sup>101</sup>*

Comrades, a few days ago, before this congress began, the Presidium of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee received a number of resolutions from Congresses of Soviets of the Transcaucasian republics, the Ukraine and Byelorussia on the desirability and necessity of uniting these republics into a single union state. The Presidium of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee has had this question under consideration and has declared that such a union is opportune. As a result of its resolution, the question of uniting the republics is included in the agenda of this congress.

The campaign for the union of the Soviet Socialist Republics began some three or four months ago. The initiative was taken by the Azerbaijanian, Armenian and Georgian Republics, which were later joined by the Ukrainian and Byelorussian Republics. The idea of the campaign is that the old treaty relations—the relations established by the conventions between the RSFSR and the other Soviet republics—have served their purpose and are no longer adequate. The idea of the campaign is that we must inevitably pass from the old treaty relations to relations based on a closer union—relations which imply the creation of a single union state with corresponding Union executive and legislative organs, with a Central Executive Committee and a Council of People's Commissars of the Union. To put it briefly, it is now, in the course of the campaign, proposed that

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<sup>101</sup> The Tenth All-Russian Congress of Soviets took place in Moscow on December 23-27, 1922. There were present 2,215 delegates, of whom 488 were delegates from the treaty republics—the Transcaucasian SFSR, the Ukrainian SSR and the Byelorussian SSR—who had come to Moscow to attend the First Congress of Soviets of the USSR and had been invited to attend the Tenth All-Russian Congress as guests of honor. The Tenth All-Russian Congress of Soviets discussed the following: report of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissars on the republic's home and foreign policy; report on the state of industry; report of the People's Commissariat of Agriculture (summary of work done to improve peasant farming); report of the People's Commissariat of Education; report of the People's Commissariat of Finance; proposal of the treaty Soviet republics on the creation of a Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. On December 26, J. V. Stalin delivered a report on uniting the Soviet republics. The resolution moved by him was adopted unanimously. After J. V. Stalin had delivered his report, the representatives of the Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia and Byelorussia addressed the congress and on behalf of their respective peoples welcomed the union of the Soviet republics into a single union state: the USSR.

what was formerly decided from time to time, within the framework of convention relations, should be put on a permanent basis.

What are the reasons that impel the republics to take the path of union? What are the circumstances that have determined the necessity for union?

Three groups of circumstances have made the union of the Soviet republics into a single union state inevitable.

The first group of circumstances consists of facts relating to our internal economic situation.

First, the meagerness of the economic resources left at the disposal of the republics after seven years of war. This compels us to combine these meager resources so as to employ them more rationally and to develop the main branches of our economy which form the backbone of Soviet power in all the republics.

Secondly, the historically evolved natural division of labor, the economic division of labor, between the various regions and republics of our federation. For instance, the North supplies the South and East with textiles, the South and East supply the North with cotton, fuel, and so forth. And this division of labor established between the regions cannot be eliminated by a mere stroke of the pen: it has been created historically by the whole course of economic development of the federation. And this division of labor, which makes the full development of the individual regions impossible as long as each republic leads a separate existence, is compelling the republics to unite in a single economic whole.

Thirdly, the unity of the principal means of communication in the entire federation, constituting the nerves and foundation of any possible union. It goes without saying that the means of communication cannot be allowed to have a divided existence, at the disposal of the individual republics and subordinated to their interests for that would convert the main nerve of economic life—transport—into a conglomeration of separate parts utilized without a plan. This circumstance also inclines the republics towards union into a single state.

Lastly, the meagerness of our financial resources Comrades, it must be bluntly stated that our financial position now, in the sixth year of existence of the Soviet regime, has far fewer opportunities for large-scale development than, for instance, under the old regime which had vodka, which

we will not have, yielding 500,000,000 rubles per annum, and which possessed foreign credits to the amount of several hundred million rubles, which we also do not have. All this goes to show that with such meager opportunities for our financial development we shall not succeed in solving the fundamental and current problems of the financial systems of our republics unless we join forces and combine the financial strength of the individual republics into a single whole.

Such is the first group of circumstances that are impelling our republics to take the path of union.

The second group of circumstances that have determined the union of the republics are facts relating to our international situation. I have in mind our military situation. I have in mind our relations with foreign capital through the Commissariat of Foreign Trade. Lastly, I have in mind our diplomatic relations with the bourgeois states. It must be remembered, comrades, that in spite of the fact that our republics have happily emerged from the condition of civil war, the danger of attack from without is by no means excluded. This danger demands that our military front should be absolutely united, that our army should be an absolutely united army, particularly now that we have taken the path, not of moral disarmament, of course, but of a real, material reduction of armaments. Now that we have reduced our army to 600,000 men, it is particularly essential to have a single and continuous military front capable of safeguarding the republic against external danger.

Furthermore, apart from the military danger, there is the danger of the economic isolation of our federation. You know that although the economic boycott of our Republic failed after Genoa and The Hague, and after Urquhart,<sup>102</sup> no great influx of capital for the needs of our economy is to be observed. There is a danger of our republics being economically isolated. This new form of intervention, which is no less dangerous than military intervention, can be eliminated only by the creation of a united

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<sup>102</sup> This refers to the negotiations of the Soviet Government with the British industrialist Urquhart for the conclusion of a concession agreement for the exploitation of mineral deposits in the Urals and in Kazakhstan. The draft agreement was rejected by the Council of People's Commissars on October 6, 1922, owing to the extortionate terms demanded by Urquhart, and also to the British Conservative Government's hostile policy towards Soviet Russia. The Soviet Government's refusal to conclude an agreement with Urquhart served the bourgeois press as a pretext for intensifying its anti-Soviet campaign.

economic front of our Soviet republics in face of the capitalist encirclement.

Lastly, there is our diplomatic situation. You have all seen how, recently, on the eve of the Lausanne Conference,<sup>103</sup> the Entente states made every effort to isolate our federation. Diplomatically, they did not succeed. The organized diplomatic boycott of our federation was broken. The Entente was forced to reckon with our federation and to withdraw, to retreat to some extent. But there are no grounds for assuming that these and similar facts about the diplomatic isolation of our federation will not be repeated. Hence the necessity for a united front also in the diplomatic field.

Such is the second group of circumstances that are impelling the Soviet Socialist Republics to take the path of union.

Both the first and the second groups of circumstances have operated up to the present day, being in force during the whole period of the existence of the Soviet regime. Our economic needs, of which I have just spoken, as well as our military and diplomatic needs in the sphere of foreign policy were, undoubtedly, also felt before the present day. But those circumstances have acquired special force only now, after the termination of the Civil War, when the republics have for the first time obtained the opportunity to start economic construction, and for the first time realize how very meager their economic resources are, and how very necessary union is as regards both internal economy and foreign relations. That is why now, in the sixth year of existence of the Soviet regime, the question of uniting the independent Soviet Socialist Republics has become an immediate one.

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<sup>103</sup> The Lausanne Conference (November 20, 1922 to July 24, 1923) was called on the initiative of France, Great Britain and Italy to discuss the Near Eastern question (conclusion of a peace treaty between Greece and Turkey, delimitation of Turkey's frontiers, adoption of a convention governing the Straits, etc.). In addition to the above-mentioned countries, the following were represented: Japan, Romania, Yugoslavia, Greece, Bulgaria and Turkey (representatives of the United States were present as observers). Soviet Russia was invited to the conference only for the discussion of the question of the Straits (the Bosphorus, the Dardanelles). At the conference, in the Commission on the Straits, the Soviet delegation opposed the proposal that the Straits be open for warships both during peace and war, and submitted its own proposal that the Straits be completely closed to the warships of all powers except Turkey. This proposal was rejected by the commission.

Finally, there is a third group of facts, which also call for union and which are associated with the structure of the Soviet regime, with the class nature of the Soviet regime. The Soviet regime is so constructed that, being international in its intrinsic nature, it in every way fosters the idea of union among the masses and itself impels them to take the path of union. Whereas capital, private property and exploitation disunite people, split them into mutually hostile camps, examples of which are provided by Great Britain, France and even small multi-national states like Poland and Yugoslavia with their irreconcilable internal national contradictions which corrode the very foundations of these states—whereas, I say, over there, in the West, where capitalist democracy reigns and where the states are based on private property, the very basis of the state fosters national bickering, conflicts and struggle, here, in the world of Soviets, where the regime is based not on capital but on labor, where the regime is based not on private property, but on collective property, where the regime is based not on the exploitation of man by man, but on the struggle against such exploitation, here, on the contrary, the very nature of the regime fosters among the laboring masses a natural striving towards union in a single socialist family.

Is it not significant that whereas over there, in the West, in the world of bourgeois democracy, we are witnessing the gradual decline and disintegration of the multi-national states into their component parts (as in the case of Great Britain, which has to settle matters with India, Egypt and Ireland, how, I do not know, or as in the case of Poland, which has to settle matters with its Byelorussians and Ukrainians, how, I do not know either), here, in our federation, which unites no fewer than thirty nationalities, we, on the contrary, are witnessing a process by which the state ties between the independent republics are becoming stronger, a process which is leading to an ever closer union of the independent nationalities in a single independent state! Thus you have two types of state union, of which the first, the capitalist type, leads to the disintegration of the state, while the second, the Soviet type, on the contrary, leads to a gradual but enduring union of formerly independent nationalities into a single independent state. Such is the third group of facts that are impelling the individual republics to take the path of union.

What should be the form of the union of the republics? The principles of the union are outlined in the resolutions which the Presidium of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee has received from the Soviet Republics of the Ukraine, Byelorussia and Transcaucasia.

Four Republics are to unite: the RSFSR as an integral federal unit, the Transcaucasian Republic, also as an integral federal unit, the Ukraine, and Byelorussia. Two independent Soviet Republics, Khorezm and Bukhara, which are not Socialist Republics, but People's Soviet Republics, remain for the time being outside this union solely and exclusively because these republics are not yet socialist. I have no doubt, comrades, and I hope that you too have no doubt, that, as they develop internally towards socialism, these republics will also join the union state which is now being formed.

It might seem to be more expedient for the RSFSR not to join the Union of Republics as an integral federal unit, but that the republics comprising it should join individually, for which purpose it would evidently be necessary to dissolve the RSFSR into its component parts. I think that this way would be irrational and inexpedient, and that it is precluded by the very course of the campaign. First, the effect would be that, parallel with the process that is leading to the union of the republics, we would have a process of disuniting the already existing federal units, a process that would upset the truly revolutionary process of union of the republics which has already begun. Secondly, if we took this wrong road, we would arrive at a situation in which we would have to separate out of the RSFSR, in addition to the eight autonomous republics, a specifically Russian Central Executive Committee and a Russian Council of People's Commissars, and this would lead to considerable organizational perturbations, which are entirely unnecessary and harmful at the present time, and which are not in the least demanded by either the internal or external situation. That is why I think that the parties to the formation of the union should be the four Republics: the RSFSR, the Transcaucasian Federation, the Ukraine, and Byelorussia.

The treaty of union must be based on the following principles: Commissariats of Foreign Trade, Military and Naval Affairs, Foreign Affairs, Transport, and Posts and Telegraphs shall be set up only within the Council of People's Commissars of the Union. The People's Commissariats of Finance, National Economy, Food, Labor, and State Inspection shall

continue to function within each of the contracting republics, with the proviso that they operate in accordance with the instructions of the corresponding central Commissariats of the Union. This is necessary in order that the forces of the laboring masses of the republics may be united under the direction of the Union center as regards food supply, the Supreme Council of National Economy, the People's Commissariat of Finance, and the People's Commissariat of Labor. Lastly, the remaining Commissariats, i.e., the Commissariats of Internal Affairs, Justice, Education, Agriculture, and so on—there are six in all—which are directly connected with the manner of life, customs, special forms of land settlement, special forms of legal procedure, and with the language and culture of the peoples forming the republics, must be left as independent Commissariats under the control of the Central Executive Committees and Councils of People's Commissars of the contracting republics. This is necessary in order to provide a real guarantee of freedom of national development for the peoples of the Soviet republics.

Such, in my opinion, are the principles that must be made the basis of the treaty that is shortly to be signed between our republics.

Accordingly, I move the following draft resolution, which has been approved by the Presidium of the All Russian Central Executive Committee:

1. The union of the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic, the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic, the Transcaucasian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic and the Byelorussian Socialist Soviet Republic into a Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is to be regarded as opportune.
2. The union is to be based on the principle of voluntary consent and equal rights of the republics, each of which shall retain the right freely to secede from the Union of Republics.
3. The delegation from the RSFSR, in collaboration with the delegations from the Ukraine, the Transcaucasian Republic and Byelorussia, is to be instructed to draft a declaration on the formation of the Union of Republics, setting forth the

considerations which dictate the union of the republics into a single union state.

4. The delegation is to be instructed to draw up the terms on which the RSFSR is to enter the Union of Republics and when examining the treaty of union, is to adhere to the following principles:

a) the formation of the appropriate Union legislative and executive organs;

b) the merging of the Commissariats of Military and Naval Affairs, Transport, Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade, and Posts and Telegraphs;

c) the subordination of the Commissariats of Finance, Food, National Economy, Labor, and Workers' and Peasants' Inspection of the contracting republics to the instructions of the corresponding Commissariats of the Union of Republics;

d) complete guarantee of national development for the peoples belonging to the contracting republics.

5. The draft treaty is to be submitted for the approval of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee represented by its Presidium before it is submitted to the First Congress of the Union of Republics.

6. On the basis of the approval of the terms of union by the All-Russian Central Executive Committee, the delegation is to be empowered to conclude a treaty between the RSFSR and the Socialist Soviet Republics of the Ukraine, Transcaucasia and Byelorussia for the formation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

7. The treaty is to be submitted for ratification to the First Congress of the Union of Republics.

Such is the draft resolution I submit for your consideration.



Comrades, since the Soviet republics were formed, the states of the world have split into two camps: the camp of socialism and the camp of capitalism. In the camp of capitalism there are imperialist wars, national strife, oppression, colonial slavery and chauvinism. In the camp of the Soviets, the camp of socialism, there are, on the contrary, mutual confidence, national equality of rights and the peaceful co-existence and fraternal co-operation of peoples. Capitalist democracy has been striving for decades to eliminate national contradictions by combining the free development of nationalities with the system of exploitation. So far it has not succeeded, and it will not succeed. On the contrary, the skein of national contradictions is becoming more and more entangled, threatening capitalism with death. Here alone, in the world of the Soviets, in the camp of socialism, has it been possible to eradicate national oppression and to establish mutual confidence and fraternal co-operation between peoples. And only after the Soviets succeeded in doing this did it become possible for us to build up our federation and to defend it against the attack of the enemies, both internal and external.

Five years ago the Soviet power succeeded in laying the foundation for the peaceful co-existence and fraternal co-operation of peoples. Now, when we here are deciding the question of the desirability and necessity of union, the task before us is to erect on this foundation a new edifice by forming a new and mighty union state of the working people. The will of the peoples of our republics, who recently assembled at their congresses and unanimously resolved to form a Union of Republics, is incontestable proof that the cause of union is on the right road, that it is based on the great principle of voluntary consent and equal rights for nations. Let us hope, comrades, that by forming our Union Republic we shall create a reliable bulwark against international capitalism, and that the new Union State will be another decisive step towards the union of the working people of the whole world into a World Soviet Socialist Republic. [*Prolonged applause. The "Internationale" is sung.*]

**THE NATIONAL FACTORS  
IN PARTY AND STATE  
AFFAIRS**

*April 23, 1923*

*Report Delivered at the XIIIth Congress  
of the RCP(B)*<sup>104</sup>

Comrades, this is the third time since the October Revolution that we are discussing the national question: the first time was at the Eighth Congress, the second was at the Tenth, and the third at the Twelfth. Does this indicate that some fundamental change has taken place in our views on the national question? No, our fundamental outlook on the national question has remained what it was before and after the October Revolution. But since the Tenth Congress the international situation has changed in that the heavy reserves of the revolution which the countries of the East now constitute have acquired greater importance. That is the first point. The second point is that since the Tenth Congress our Party has also witnessed certain changes in the internal situation in connection with the New Economic Policy. All these new factors must be taken into account and the conclusions must be drawn from them. It is in this sense that it

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<sup>104</sup> The Twelfth Congress of the RCP(B) was held on April 17-25, 1923. This was the first congress since the October Socialist Revolution that V. I. Lenin was unable to attend. The congress discussed the reports of the Central Committee, of the Central Control Commission and of the Russian delegation in the Executive Committee of the Comintern, and also reports on: industry, national factors in Party and state affairs taxation policy in the countryside, delimitation of administrative areas, etc. In its decisions the congress took into account all the directives given by V. I. Lenin in his last articles and letters. The congress summed up the results of the two years of the New Economic Policy and gave a determined rebuff to Trotsky, Bukharin and their adherents, who interpreted the NEP as a retreat from the socialist position. The congress devoted great attention to the organizational and national questions. At the evening sitting on April 17, J. V. Stalin delivered the Central Committee's organizational report. In the resolution it adopted on this report, the congress endorsed Lenin's plan for the reorganization of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection and the Central Control Commission, and noted an improvement in the organizational apparatus of the Central Committee and in all organizational activities. J. V. Stalin's report on "National Factors in Party and State Affairs" was heard on April 23. The debate on this report continued during April 23 and 24, and further discussion was referred to the committee on the national question that was set up by the congress, and which conducted its proceedings under the direct guidance of J. V. Stalin. On April 25, the congress passed the resolution submitted by the committee. This resolution was based on J. V. Stalin's theses. The congress exposed the nationalist deviators and called on the Party resolutely to combat the deviations on the national question—Great-Russian chauvinism and local bourgeois nationalism. (Concerning the Twelfth Congress of the RCP(B), see *History of the CPSU(B), Short Course*, Moscow 1952, pp. 403-06. For the resolutions of the congress see "Resolutions and Decisions of CPSU(B) Congresses, Conferences and Central Committee Plenums," Part I, 1941, pp. 472-524.)

can be said that the national question is being presented at the Twelfth Congress in a new way.

The international significance of the national question. You know, comrades, that by the will of history we, the Soviet federation, now represent the advanced detachment of the world revolution. You know that we were the first to breach the general capitalist front, that it has been our destiny to be ahead of all others. You know that in our advance we got as far as Warsaw, that we then retreated and entrenched ourselves in the positions we considered strongest. From that moment we passed to the New Economic Policy, from that moment we took into account the slowing down of the international revolutionary movement, and from that moment our policy changed from the offensive to the defensive. We could not advance after we had suffered a reverse at Warsaw (let us not hide the truth); we could not advance, for we would have run the risk of being cut off from the rear, which in our case is a peasant rear; and, lastly, we would have run the risk of advancing too far ahead of the reserves of the revolution with which destiny has provided us, the reserves in the West and the East. That is why we made a turn towards the New Economic Policy within the country, and towards a slower advance outside; for we decided that it was necessary to have a respite, to heal our wounds, the wounds of the advanced detachment, the proletariat, to establish contact with the peasant rear and to conduct further work among the reserves, which were lagging behind us—the reserves in the West and the heavy reserves in the East which are the main rear of world capitalism. It is these reserves—heavy reserves, which at the same time are the rear of world imperialism—that we have in mind when discussing the national question.

One thing or the other: either we succeed in stirring up, in revolutionizing, the remote rear of imperialism—the colonial and semi-colonial countries of the East—and thereby hasten the fall of imperialism; or we fail to do so, and thereby strengthen imperialism and weaken the force of our movement. That is how the question stands.

The fact of the matter is that the whole East regards our Union of Republics as an experimental field. Either we find a correct practical solution of the national question within the framework of this Union, either we here, within the framework of this Union, establish truly fraternal relations and true co-operation among the peoples—in which case

the whole East will see that our federation is the banner of its liberation, is its advanced detachment, in whose footsteps it must follow—and that will be the beginning of the collapse of world imperialism. Or we commit a blunder here, undermine the confidence of the formerly oppressed peoples in the proletariat of Russia, and deprive the Union of Republics of the power of attraction which it possesses in the eyes of the East—in which case imperialism will win and we shall lose.

Therein lies the international significance of the national question.

The national question is also of importance for us from the standpoint of the internal situation, not only because the former dominant nation numbers about 75,000,000 and the other nations 65,000,000 (not a small figure, anyway), and not only because the formerly oppressed nationalities inhabit areas that are the most essential for our economic development and the most important from the standpoint of military strategy, but above all because during the past two years we have introduced what is known as the NEP, as a result of which Great-Russian nationalism has begun to grow and become more pronounced, the Smena-Vekhist idea has come into being, and one can discern the desire to accomplish by peaceful means what Denikin failed to accomplish, i.e., to create the so-called “one and indivisible.”

Thus, as a result of the NEP, a new force is arising in the internal life of our country, namely, Great-Russian chauvinism, which entrenches itself in our institutions, which penetrates not only the Soviet institutions, but also the Party institutions, and which is to be found in all parts of our federation. Consequently, if we do not resolutely combat this new force, if we do not cut it off at the root—and the NEP conditions foster it—we run the risk of being confronted by a rupture between the proletariat of the former dominant nation and the peasants of the formerly oppressed nations—which will mean undermining the dictatorship of the proletariat.

But the NEP fosters not only Great-Russian chauvinism—it also fosters local chauvinism, especially in those republics where there are several nationalities. I have in mind Georgia, Azerbaijan, Bukhara and partly Turkestan; in each of these there are several nationalities, the advanced elements of which may soon begin to compete among themselves for suprem-

acy. Of course, this local chauvinism as regards its strength is not such a danger as Great-Russian chauvinism. But it is a danger nevertheless, for it threatens to convert some of the republics into arenas of national squabbling and to weaken the bonds of internationalism there.

Such are the international and internal circumstances that make the national question one of great, of first rate, importance in general, and at the present moment in particular.

What is the class essence of the national question? Under the present conditions of Soviet development, the class essence of the national question lies in the establishment of correct mutual relations between the proletariat of the former dominant nation and the peasantry of the formerly oppressed nationalities. The question of the bond has been more than sufficiently discussed here, but when this question was discussed in connection with the report of Kamenev, Kalinin, Sokolnikov, Rykov and Trotsky, what was mainly in mind was the relations between the Russian proletariat and the Russian peasantry. Here, in the national sphere, we have a more complex mechanism. Here we are concerned with establishing correct mutual relations between the proletariat of the former dominant nation, which is the most cultured section of the proletariat in our entire federation, and the peasantry, mainly of the formerly oppressed nationalities. This is the class essence of the national question. If the proletariat succeeds in establishing with the peasantry of the other nationalities relations that can eradicate all remnants of mistrust towards everything Russian, a mistrust implanted and fostered for decades by the policy of tsarism—if, moreover, the Russian proletariat succeeds in establishing complete mutual understanding and confidence, in effecting a genuine alliance not only between the proletariat and the Russian peasantry but also between the proletariat and peasantry of the formerly oppressed nationalities, the problem will be solved. To achieve this, proletarian power must become as dear to the peasantry of the other nationalities as it is to the Russian peasantry. And in order that Soviet power may become dear also to the peasants of these nationalities, it must be understood by these peasants, it must function in their native languages, the schools and governmental bodies must be staffed with local people who know the language, habits, customs and manner of life of the non-Russian nationalities. Soviet power, which until very recently was Russian power, will become a power which

is not merely Russian but *inter-national*, a power dear to the peasants of the formerly oppressed nationalities, only when and to the degree that the institutions and governmental bodies in the republics of these countries begin to speak and function in the native languages.

That is one of the fundamentals of the national question in general, and under Soviet conditions in particular.

What is the characteristic feature of the solution of the national question at the present moment, in 1923? What form have the problems requiring solution in the national sphere assumed in 1923? The form of establishing co-operation between the peoples of our federation in the economic, military and political spheres. I have in mind inter-national relations. The national question, at the basis of which lie the tasks of establishing correct relations between the proletariat of the former dominant nation and the peasantry of the other nationalities, assumes at the present time the special form of establishing the co-operation and fraternal co-existence of those nations which were formerly disunited and which are now uniting in a single state.

Such is the essence of the national question in the form it has assumed in 1923.

The concrete form of this state union is the Union of Republics, which we already discussed at the Congress of Soviets at the end of last year, and which we then established.

The basis of this Union is the voluntary consent and the juridical equality of the members of the Union. Voluntary consent and equality—because our national program starts out from the clause on the right of nations to exist as independent states, what was formerly called the right to self-determination. Proceeding from this, we must definitely say that no union of peoples into a single state can be durable unless it is based on absolutely voluntary consent, unless the peoples themselves wish to unite. The second basis is the juridical equality of the peoples which form the Union. That is natural. I am not speaking of actual equality—I shall come to that later—for the establishment of actual equality between nations which have forged ahead and backward nations is a very complicated, very difficult, matter that must take a number of years. I am speaking now about juridical equality. This equality finds expression in the fact that all the republics, in this case the four republics: Transcaucasia, Byelorussia,

the Ukraine and the RSFSR, forming the Union, enjoy the benefits of the Union to an equal degree and at the same time to an equal degree forgo certain of their independent rights in favor of the Union. If the RSFSR, the Ukraine, Byelorussia and the Transcaucasian Republic are not each to have its own People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, it is obvious that the abolition of these Commissariats and the establishment of a common Commissariat of Foreign Affairs for the Union of Republics will entail a certain restriction of the independence which these republics formerly enjoyed, and this restriction will be equal for all the republics forming the Union. Obviously, if these republics formerly had their own People's Commissariats of Foreign Trade, and these Commissariats are now abolished both in the RSFSR and in the other republics in order to make way for a common Commissariat of Foreign Trade for the Union of Republics, this too will involve a certain restriction of the independence formerly enjoyed in full measure, but now curtailed in favor of the common Union, and so on, and so forth. Some people ask a purely scholastic question, namely: do the republics remain independent after uniting? That is a scholastic question. Their independence is restricted, for every union involves a certain restriction of the former rights of the parties to the union. But the basic elements of independence of each of these republics certainly remain, if only because every republic retains the right to secede from the Union at its own discretion.

Thus, the concrete form the national question has assumed under the conditions at present prevailing in our country is how to achieve the co-operation of the peoples in economic, foreign and military affairs. We must unite the republics along these lines into a single union called the USSR. Such are the concrete forms the national question has assumed at the present time.

But that is easier said than done. The fact of the matter is that under the conditions prevailing in our country, there are, in addition to the factors conducive to the union of the peoples into one state, a number of factors which hinder this union.

You know what the conducive factors are: first of all, the economic coming together of the peoples that was established prior to Soviet power and which was consolidated by Soviet power; a certain division of labor between the peoples, established before our time, but consolidated by us,



by the Soviet power. That is the basic factor conducive to the union of the republics into a Union. The nature of Soviet power must be regarded as the second factor conducive to union. That is natural. Soviet power is the power of the workers, the dictatorship of the proletariat, which by its very nature disposes the laboring elements of the republics and peoples which form the Union to live in friendly relations with one another. That is natural. And the third factor conducive to union is the imperialist encirclement, forming an environment in which the Union of Republics is obliged to operate.

But there are also factors which hinder, which impede, this union. The principal force impeding the union of the republics into a single union is that force which, as I have said, is growing in our country under the conditions of the NEP: Great-Russian chauvinism. It is by no means accidental, comrades, that the Smena-Vekhites have recruited a large number of supporters among Soviet officials. That is by no means accidental. Nor is it accidental that Messieurs the Smena-Vekhites are singing the praises of the Bolshevik Communists, as much as to say: You may talk about Bolshevism as much as you like, you may prate as much as you like about your internationalist tendencies, but we know that you will achieve what Denikin failed to achieve, that you Bolsheviks have resurrected, or at all events will resurrect, the idea of a Great Russia. All that is not accidental. Nor is it accidental that this idea has even penetrated some of our Party institutions. At the February Plenum, where the question of a second chamber was first raised, I witnessed how certain members of the Central Committee made speeches which were inconsistent with communism—speeches which had nothing in common with internationalism. All this is a sign of the times, an epidemic. The chief danger that arises from this is that, owing to the NEP, dominant-nation chauvinism is growing in our country by leaps and bounds, striving to obliterate all that is not Russian, to gather all the threads of government into the hands of Russians and to stifle everything that is not Russian. The chief danger is that with such a policy we run the risk that the Russian proletarians will lose the confidence of the formerly oppressed nations which they won in the October days, when they overthrew the landlords and the Russian capitalists, when they smashed the chains of national oppression within Russia, withdrew the troops from Persia and Mongolia, proclaimed the independence of Finland

and Armenia and, in general, put the national question on an entirely new basis. Unless we all arm ourselves against this new, I repeat, Great-Russian chauvinism, which is advancing, creeping, insinuating itself drop by drop into the eyes and ears of our officials and step by step corrupting them, we may lose down to the last shreds the confidence we earned at that time. It is this danger, comrades, that we must defeat at all costs. Otherwise we are threatened with the prospect of losing the confidence of the workers and peasants of the formerly oppressed peoples, we are threatened with the prospect of a rupture of the ties between these peoples and the Russian proletariat, and this threatens us with the danger of a crack being formed in the system of our dictatorship.

Do not forget, comrades, that if we were able to march against Kerensky with flying colors and overthrow the Provisional Government it was because, among other things, we were backed by the confidence of the oppressed peoples that were expecting liberation at the hands of the Russian proletarians. Do not forget such reserves as the oppressed peoples, who are silent, but who by their silence exert pressure and decide a great deal. This is often not felt, but these peoples are living, they exist, and they must not be forgotten. Do not forget that if we had not had in the rear of Kolchak, Denikin, Wrangel and Yudenich the so-called “aliens,” if we had not had the formerly oppressed peoples, who disorganized the rear of those generals by their tacit sympathy for the Russian-proletarians—comrades, this is a special factor in our development, this tacit sympathy, which nobody hears or sees, but which decides everything—if it had not been for this sympathy, we would not have knocked out a single one of these generals. While we were marching against them, disintegration began in their rear. Why? Because those generals depended on the Cossack colonizing elements, they held out to the oppressed peoples the prospect of further oppression, and the oppressed peoples were therefore pushed into our arms, while we unfurled the banner of the liberation of these oppressed peoples. That is what decided the fate of those generals; such is the sum-total of the factors which, although overshadowed by our armies’ victories, in the long run decided everything. That must not be forgotten. That is why we must make a sharp turn towards combating the new chauvinist sentiments and pillory those bureaucrats in our institutions and those Party comrades who are forgetting what we gained in October,

namely, the confidence of the formerly oppressed peoples, a confidence that we must cherish.

It must be understood that if a force like Great-Russian chauvinism blossoms and spreads, there will be no confidence on the part of the formerly oppressed peoples, we shall have no co-operation within a single union, and we shall have no Union of Republics.

Such is the first and most dangerous factor that is impeding the union of the peoples and republics into a single union.

The second factor, comrades, which is also hindering the union of the formerly oppressed peoples around the Russian proletariat, is the actual inequality of nations that we have inherited from the period of tsarism.

We have proclaimed juridical equality and are practicing it; but juridical equality, although in itself of very great importance in the history of the development of the Soviet republics, is still far from being actual equality. Formally, all the backward nationalities and all the peoples enjoy just as many rights as are enjoyed by the other, more advanced, nations which constitute our federation. But the trouble is that some nationalities have no proletarians of their own, have not undergone industrial development, have not even started on this road, are terribly backward culturally and are entirely unable to take advantage of the rights granted them by the revolution. This, comrades, is a far more important question than that of the schools. Some of our comrades here think that the knot can be cut by putting the question of schools and language in the forefront. That is not so, comrades. Schools will not carry you very far. These schools are developing, so are the languages, but actual inequality remains the basis of all the discontent and friction. Schools and language will not settle the matter; what is needed is real, systematic, sincere and genuine proletarian assistance on our part to the laboring masses of the culturally and economically backward nationalities. In addition to schools and language, the Russian proletariat must take all measures to create in the border regions, in the culturally backward republics—and they are not backward because of any fault of their own, but because they were formerly regarded as sources of raw materials—must take all measures to ensure the building of centers of industry in these republics. Certain attempts have been made in this direction. Georgia has taken a factory from Moscow and it should start operating soon. Bukhara has taken one factory, but could have taken four.

Turkestan is taking one large factory. Thus, all the facts show that these economically backward republics, which possess no proletariat, must with the aid of the Russian proletariat establish their own centers of industry, even though small ones, in order to create in these centers groups of local proletarians to serve as a bridge between the Russian proletarians and peasants and the laboring masses of these republics. In this sphere we have a lot of work to do, and schools alone will not settle the matter.

But there is still a third factor that is impeding the union of the republics into a single union: the existence of nationalism in the individual republics. The NEP affects not only the Russian but also the non-Russian population. The New Economic Policy is developing private trade and industry not only in the center of Russia but also in the individual republics. And it is this same NEP, and the private capital associated with it, which nourishes and fosters Georgian, Azerbaijani, Uzbek and other nationalism. Of course, if there were no Great-Russian chauvinism—which is aggressive because it is strong, because it was also strong previously and has retained the habit of oppressing and humiliating—if there were no Great-Russian chauvinism, then, perhaps, local chauvinism also, as a retaliation to Great-Russian chauvinism, would exist only in a much reduced form, in miniature, so to speak; because, in the final analysis, anti-Russian nationalism is a form of defense, an ugly form of defense against Great-Russian nationalism, against Great-Russian chauvinism. If this nationalism were only defensive, it might not be worth making a fuss about. We could concentrate the entire force of our activities, the entire force of our struggle, against Great-Russian chauvinism, in the hope that as soon as this powerful enemy is overcome, anti-Russian nationalism will be overcome with it; for, I repeat, in the last analysis, this nationalism is a reaction to Great-Russian nationalism, a retaliation to it, a certain form of defense. Yes, that would be so if anti-Russian nationalism in the localities were nothing more than a reaction to Great-Russian nationalism. But the trouble is that in some republics this defensive nationalism is turning into aggressive nationalism.

Take Georgia. Over 30 percent of her population are non-Georgians. They include Armenians, Abkhazians, Ajarians, Ossetians and Tatars. The Georgians are at the head. Among some of the Georgian Communists the idea has sprung up and is gaining ground that there is no particular

need to reckon with these small nationalities; they are less cultured, less developed, they say, and there is therefore no need to reckon with them. That is chauvinism—harmful and dangerous chauvinism; for it may turn the small republic of Georgia into an arena of strife. In fact, it has already turned it into an arena of strife.

Azerbaijan. The basic nationality here is the Azerbaijanian, but there are also Armenians. Among a section of the Azerbaijanians there is also a tendency, sometimes quite unconcealed, to think that the Azerbaijanians are the indigenous population and the Armenians intruders, and therefore, it is possible to push the Armenians somewhat into the background, to disregard their interests. That is chauvinism too. It undermines the equality of nationalities on which the Soviet system is based.

Bukhara. In Bukhara there are three nationalities—Uzbeks, the basic nationality; Turkmenians, a “less important” nationality from the point of view of Bukharan chauvinism; and Kirghiz, who are few in number here and, apparently, “less important.”

In Khorezm you have the same thing: Turkmenians and Uzbeks. The Uzbeks are the basic nationality and the Turkmenians “less important.”

All this leads to conflict and weakens the Soviet regime. This tendency towards local chauvinism must also be cut off at the root. Of course, compared with Great-Russian chauvinism, which in the general scheme of the national question comprises three-quarters of the whole, local chauvinism is not so important; but for local work, for the local people, for the peaceful development of the national republics themselves, this chauvinism is a matter of first-rate importance.

Sometimes this chauvinism begins to undergo a very interesting evolution. I have in mind Transcaucasia. You know that Transcaucasia consists of three republics embracing ten nationalities. From very early times Transcaucasia has been an arena of massacre and strife and, under the Mensheviks and Dashnaks, it was an arena of war. You know of the Georgian-Armenian war. You also know of the massacres in Azerbaijan at the beginning and at the end of 1905. I could mention a whole list of districts where the Armenian majority massacred all the rest of the population, consisting of Tatars. Zangezur, for instance. I could mention another province—Nakhchivan. There the Tatars predominated, and they massacred all the Armenians. That was just before the liberation of Armenia

and Georgia from the yoke of imperialism. [*Voice*: "That was their way of solving the national question."] That, of course, is also a way of solving the national question. But it is not the Soviet way. Of course, the Russian workers are not to blame for this state of mutual national enmity, for it is the Tatars and Armenians who are fighting without the Russians. That is why a special organ is required in Transcaucasia to regulate the relations between the nationalities.

It may be confidently stated that the relations between the proletariat of the formerly dominant nation and the toilers of all the other nationalities constitute three quarters of the whole national question. But one-quarter of this question must be attributed to the relations between the formerly oppressed nationalities themselves.

And if in this atmosphere of mutual distrust the Soviet Government had failed to establish in Transcaucasia an organ of national peace capable of settling all friction and conflict, we would have reverted to the era of tsarism, or to the era of the Dashnaks, the Mussavatists, the Mensheviks, when people maimed and slaughtered one another. That is why the Central Committee has on three occasions affirmed the necessity of preserving the Transcaucasian Federation as an organ of national peace.

There has been and still is a group of Georgian Communists who do not object to Georgia uniting with the Union of Republics, but who do object to this union being effected through the Transcaucasian Federation. They, you see, would like to get closer to the Union, they say that there is no need for this partition wall in the shape of the Transcaucasian Federation between themselves—the Georgians—and the Union of Republics, the federation, they say, is superfluous. This, they think, sounds very revolutionary.

But there is another motive behind this. In the first place, these statements indicate that on the national question the attitude towards the Russians is of secondary importance in Georgia, for these comrades, the deviators (that is what they are called), have no objection to Georgia joining the Union directly; that is, they do not fear Great-Russian chauvinism, believing that its roots have been cut in one way or another, or, at any rate, that it is not of decisive importance. Evidently, what they fear most is the federation of Transcaucasia. Why? Why should the three principal nations which in habit Transcaucasia, which fought among themselves so

long, massacred each other and warred against each other, why should these nations, now that Soviet power has at last united them by bonds of fraternal union in the form of a federation, now that this federation has produced positive results, why should they now break these federal ties? What is the point, comrades?

The point is that the bonds of the Transcaucasian Federation deprive Georgia of that somewhat privileged position which she could assume by virtue of her geographical position. Judge for yourselves. Georgia has her own port—Batum—through which goods flow from the West; Georgia has a railway junction like Tiflis, which the Armenians cannot avoid, nor can Azerbaijan avoid it, for she receives her goods through Batum. If Georgia were a separate republic, if she were not part of the Transcaucasian Federation, she could present something in the nature of a little ultimatum both to Armenia, which cannot do without Tiflis, and to Azerbaijan, which cannot do without Batum. There would be some advantages for Georgia in this. It was no accident that the notorious savage decree establishing frontier cordons was drafted in Georgia. Serebryakov is now being blamed for this. Let us allow that he is to blame, but the decree originated in Georgia, not in Azerbaijan or Armenia.

Then there is yet another reason. Tiflis is the capital of Georgia, but the Georgians there are not more than 30 percent of the population, the Armenians not less than 35 percent, and then come all the other nationalities. That is what the capital of Georgia is like. If Georgia were a separate republic the population could be reshifted somewhat—for instance, the Armenian population could be shifted from Tiflis. Was not a well-known decree adopted in Georgia to “regulate” the population of Tiflis, about which Comrade Makharadze said that it was not directed against the Armenians? The intention was to reshift the population so as to reduce the number of Armenians in Tiflis from year to year, making them fewer than the Georgians, and thus convert Tiflis into a real Georgian capital. I grant that they have rescinded the eviction decree, but they have a vast number of possibilities, a vast number of flexible forms—such as “decongestion”—by which it would be possible, while maintaining a semblance of internationalism, to arrange matters in such a way that Armenians in Tiflis would be in the minority.

It is these geographical advantages that the Georgian deviators do not want to lose, and the unfavorable position of the Georgians in Tiflis itself, where there are fewer Georgians than Armenians, that are causing our deviators to oppose federation. The Mensheviks simply evicted Armenians and Tatars from Tiflis. Now, however, under the Soviet regime, eviction is impossible; therefore, they want to leave the federation, and this will create legal opportunities for independently performing certain operations which will result in the advantageous position enjoyed by the Georgians being fully utilized against Azerbaijan and Armenia. And all this would create a privileged position for the Georgians in Transcaucasia. Therein lies the whole danger.

Can we ignore the interests of national peace in Transcaucasia and allow conditions to be created under which the Georgians would be in a privileged position in relation to the Armenian and Azerbaijanian Republics? No. We cannot allow that.

There is an old, special system of governing nations, under which a bourgeois authority favors certain nationalities, grants them privileges and humbles the other nations, not wishing to be bothered with them. Thus by favoring one nationality, it uses it to keep down the others. Such, for instance, was the method of government employed in Austria. Everyone remembers the statement of the Austrian Minister Beust, who summoned the Hungarian Minister and said: "You govern your hordes and I will cope with mine." In other words: you curb and keep down your nationalities in Hungary and I will keep down mine in Austria. You and I represent privileged nations, let's keep down the rest.

The same was the case with the Poles in Austria itself. The Austrians favored the Poles, granted them privileges, in order that the Poles should help the Austrians strengthen their position in Poland; and in return they allowed the Poles to strangle Galicia.

This system of singling out some nationalities and granting them privileges in order to cope with the rest is purely and specifically Austrian. From the point of view of the bureaucracy, it is an "economical" method of governing, because it has to bother only with one nationality; but from the political point of view it means certain death to the state, for to violate the principle of equality of nationalities and to grant privileges to any one nationality means dooming one's national policy to certain failure.



Britain is now ruling India in exactly the same way. To make it easier, from the point of view of the bureaucracy, to deal with the nationalities and races of India, Britain divided India into British India (240,000,000 population) and Native India (72,000,000 population). Why? Because Britain wanted to single out one group of nations and grant it privileges in order the more easily to govern the remaining nationalities. In India there are several hundred nationalities, and Britain decided that, rather than bother with these nationalities, it was better to single out a few nations, grant them certain privileges and through them govern the rest; for, firstly, the discontent of the other nations would be directed against these favored ones and not against Britain, and secondly, it would be cheaper to have to “bother” with only two or three nations.

That is also a system of governing, the British system. What does it lead to? To the “cheapening” of the apparatus—that is true. But, comrades, leaving aside bureaucratic conveniences, it means certain death to British rule in India; this system harbors inevitable death, as surely as twice two make four, the death of British rule and British domination.

It is on to this dangerous path that our comrades, the Georgian deviators, are pushing us by opposing federation in violation of all the laws of the Party, by wanting to withdraw from the federation in order to retain an advantageous position. They are pushing us on to the path of granting them certain privileges at the expense of the Armenian and Azerbaijanian Republics. But this is a path we cannot take, for it means certain death to our entire policy and to Soviet power in the Caucasus.

It was no accident that our comrades in Georgia sensed this danger. This Georgian chauvinism, which had passed to the offensive against the Armenians and Azerbaijanians, alarmed the Communist Party of Georgia.

Quite naturally, the Communist Party of Georgia, which has held two congresses since it came into legal existence, on both occasions unanimously rejected the stand of the deviator comrades, for under present conditions it is impossible to maintain peace in the Caucasus, impossible to establish equality, without the Transcaucasian Federation. One nation must not be allowed more privileges than another. This our comrades have sensed. That is why, after two years of contention, the Mdivani group is a small handful, repeatedly ejected by the Party in Georgia itself.

It was also no accident that Comrade Lenin was in such a hurry and was so insistent that the federation should be established immediately. Nor was it an accident that our Central Committee on three occasions affirmed the need for a federation in Transcaucasia, having its own Central Executive Committee and its own executive authority, whose decisions would be binding on the republics. It was no accident that both commissions—Comrade Dzerzhinsky's and that of Kamenev and Kuybyshev—on their arrival in Moscow stated that federation was indispensable.

Lastly, it is no accident either that the Mensheviks of *Sotsialisticheskyy Vestnik*<sup>105</sup> praise our deviator comrades and laud them to the skies for opposing federation: birds of a feather flock together.

I pass to an examination of the ways and means by which we must eliminate these three main factors that are hindering union: Great-Russian chauvinism, actual inequality of nations and local nationalism, particularly when it is growing into chauvinism. Of the means that may help us painlessly to rid ourselves of all this heritage of the past which is hindering the peoples from coming together I shall mention three.

The first means is to adopt all measures to make the Soviet regime understood and loved in the republics, to make the Soviet regime not only Russian but inter-national. For this it is necessary that not only the schools, but all institutions and all bodies, both Party and Soviet, should step by step be made national in character, that they should be conducted in the language that is understood by the masses, that they should function in conditions that correspond to the manner of life of the given nation. Only on this condition will we be able to convert the Soviet regime from a Russian into an inter-national one, understood by and near and dear to the laboring masses of all the republics, particularly those which are economically and culturally backward.

The second means that can help us in painlessly getting rid of the heritage from tsarism and the bourgeoisie is to construct the Commissariats of the Union of Republics in such a way as to enable at least the principal nationalities to have their people on the collegiums, and to create a

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<sup>105</sup> *Sotsialisticheskyy Vestnik* (*Socialist Courier*)—organ of the Menshevik whiteguard émigrés, founded by Martov in February 1921. Until March 1933 it was published in Berlin, from May 1933 to June 1940 in Paris, and later in America. It is the mouthpiece of the most reactionary imperialist circles.

situation in which the needs and requirements of the individual republics will be met without fail.

The third means: it is necessary to have among our supreme central organs one that will serve to express the needs and requirements of all the republics and nationalities without exception.

I want especially to draw your attention to this last means.

If within the Central Executive Committee of the Union we could create two chambers having equal powers, one of which would be elected at the Union Congress of Soviets, irrespective of nationality, and the other by the republics and national regions (the republics being equally represented, and the national regions also being equally represented) and endorsed by the same Congress of Soviets of the Union of Republics, I think that then our supreme institutions would express not only the class interests of all the working people without exception but also purely national needs. We would have an organ which would express the special interests of the nationalities, peoples and races inhabiting the Union of Republics. Under the conditions prevailing in our Union, which as a whole unites not less than 140,000,000 people, of whom about 65,000,000 are non-Russians, in such a country it is impossible to govern unless we have with us, here in Moscow, in the supreme organ, emissaries of these nationalities, to express not only the interests common to the proletariat as a whole but also special, specific, national interests. Without this it will be impossible to govern, comrades. Unless we have this barometer, and people capable of formulating these special needs of the individual nationalities, it will be impossible to govern.

There are two ways of governing a country. One way is to have a “simplified” apparatus, headed, say, by a group of people, or by one man, having hands and eyes in the localities in the shape of governors. This is a very simple form of government, under which the ruler, in governing the country, receives the kind of information that can be received from governors and comforts himself with the hope that he is governing honestly and well. Presently, friction arises, friction grows into conflicts, and conflicts into revolts. Later, the revolts are crushed. Such a system of government is not our system, and in addition, although a simple one, it is too costly. But there is another system of government, the Soviet system. In our Soviet country we are operating this other system of government, the system

which enables us to foresee with accuracy all changes, all the circumstances among the peasants, among the nationals, among the so-called “aliens” and among the Russians; this system of supreme organs possesses a number of barometers which forecast every change, which register and warn against a Basmachi movement,<sup>106</sup> a bandit movement, Kronstadt, and all possible storms and disasters. That is the Soviet system of government. It is called Soviet power, people’s power, because, relying on the common people, it is the first to register any change, it takes the appropriate measures and rectifies the line in time, if it has become distorted, criticizes itself and rectifies the line. This system of government is the Soviet system, and it requires that the system of our higher agencies should include agencies expressing absolutely all national needs and requirements.

The objection is made that this system will complicate the work of administration, that it means setting up more and more bodies. That is true. Hitherto we had the Central Executive Committee of the RSFSR, then we created the Central Executive Committee of the Union, and now we shall have to split the Central Executive Committee of the Union into two. But it can’t be helped. I have already said that the simplest form of government is to have one man and to give him governors. But now, after the October Revolution, we cannot engage in such experiments. The system has become more complex, but it makes government easier and lends the whole governmental system a profoundly Soviet character. That is why I think that the congress must agree to the establishment of a special body, a second chamber within the Central Executive Committee of the Union, since it is absolutely essential.

I do not say that this is a perfect way of arranging co-operation between the peoples of the Union; I do not say that it is the last word in science. We shall put forward the national question again and again, for national and international conditions are changing, and may change again. I do not deny the possibility that perhaps some of the Commissariats that we are merging in the Union of Republics will have to be separated again

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<sup>106</sup> The Basmachi movement—a counter-revolutionary nationalist movement in Central Asia (Turkestan, Bukhara and Khorezm) in 1918-24. Headed by beys and mullahs, it took the form of open political banditry. Its aim was to sever the Central Asian republics from Soviet Russia and to restore the rule of the exploiting classes. It was actively supported by the British imperialists, who were endeavoring to transform Central Asia into their colony.

if, after being merged, experience shows that they are unsatisfactory. But one thing is clear, namely, that under present conditions, and in the present circumstances, no better method and no more suitable organ is available. As yet we have no better way or means of creating an organ capable of registering all the oscillations and all the changes that take place within the individual republics than that of establishing a second chamber.

It goes without saying that the second chamber must contain representatives not only of the four republics that have united, but of all the peoples; for the question concerns not only the republics which have formally united (there are four of them), but all the peoples and nationalities in the Union of Republics. We therefore require a form that will express the needs of all the nationalities and republics without exception, I shall sum up, comrades.

Thus, the importance of the national question is determined by the new situation in international affairs, by the fact that here, in Russia, in our federation we must solve the national question in a correct, a model way, in order to set an example to the East, which constitutes the heavy reserves of the revolution, and there by increase their confidence in our federation and its attraction for them.

From the standpoint of the internal situation, the conditions created by the NEP and the growing Great-Russian chauvinism and local chauvinism also oblige us to emphasize the special importance of the national question.

I said, further, that the essence of the national question lies in establishing correct relations between the proletariat of the formerly dominant nation and the peasantry of the formerly subject nations, and that from this point of view the concrete form of the national question at the present moment is expressed by having to find ways and means of arranging the co-operation of the peoples within a Union of Republics, within a single state.

I spoke, further, of the factors which are conducive to such a coming together of the peoples. I spoke of the factors impeding such a union. I dwelt especially on Great-Russian chauvinism, as a force that is gaining in strength. That force is a basic danger, capable of undermining the confidence of the formerly oppressed peoples in the Russian proletariat. It is a most dangerous enemy, which we must overcome; for once we overcome

it, we shall have overcome nine-tenths of the nationalism which has survived, and which is growing in certain republics.

Further. We are faced with the danger that certain groups of comrades may push us on to the path of granting privileges to some nationalities at the expense of others. I have said that we cannot take this path, because it may undermine national peace and kill the confidence of the masses of the other nations in Soviet power.

I said, further, that the chief means that will enable us most painlessly to eliminate the factors that hinder union lies in the creation of a second chamber of the Central Executive Committee, of which I spoke more openly at the February Plenum of the Central Committee, and which is dealt with in the theses in a more veiled form in order to enable the comrades themselves, perhaps, to indicate some other more flexible form, some other more suitable organ, capable of expressing the interests of the nationalities.

Such are the conclusions.

I think that it is only in this way that we shall be able to achieve a correct solution of the national question, that we shall be able to unfurl widely the banner of the proletarian revolution and win for it the sympathy and confidence of the countries of the East, which are the heavy reserves of the revolution, and which can play a decisive role in the future battles of the proletariat against imperialism. [*Applause.*]



REPLY TO THE  
DISCUSSION ON THE  
REPORT ON NATIONAL  
FACTORS IN PARTY AND  
STATE AFFAIRS

*April 25, 1923*



Comrades, before proceeding to report on the work of the committee on the national question, permit me to deal with two main points in answer to the speakers in the discussion on my report. It will take about twenty minutes, not more.

The first point is that a group of comrades headed by Bukharin and Rakovsky has over-emphasized the significance of the national question, has exaggerated it, and has allowed it to overshadow the social question, the question of working-class power.

It is clear to us, as Communists, that the basis of all our work lies in strengthening the power of the workers, and that only after that are we confronted by the other question, a very important one but subordinate to the first, namely, the national question. We are told that we must not offend the non-Russian nationalities. That is perfectly true; I agree that we must not offend them. But to evolve out of this a new theory to the effect that the Great-Russian proletariat must be placed in a position of inequality in relation to the formerly oppressed nations is absurd. What was merely a figure of speech in Comrade Lenin's well-known article, Bukharin has converted into a regular slogan. Nevertheless, it is clear that the political basis of the dictatorship of the proletariat is primarily and chiefly the central, industrial regions, and not the border regions, which are peasant countries. If we exaggerate the importance of the peasant border regions, to the detriment of the proletarian districts, it may result in a crack in the system of the dictatorship of the proletariat. That is dangerous, comrades. We must not exaggerate things in politics, just as we must not underrate them.

It should be borne in mind that in addition to the right of nations to self-determination, there is also the right of the working class to consolidate its power, and the right of self-determination is subordinate to this latter right. There are cases when the right of self-determination conflicts with another, a higher right—the right of the working class that has come to power to consolidate its power. In such cases—this must be said bluntly—the right of self-determination cannot and must not serve as an obstacle to the working class in exercising its right to dictatorship. The former must yield to the latter. That was the case in 1920, for instance, when in order to defend working-class power we were obliged to march on Warsaw.

It must therefore not be forgotten when handing out all sorts of promises to the non-Russian nationalities, when bowing and scraping before the representatives of these nationalities, as certain comrades have done at the present congress, it must be borne in mind that, in our external and internal situation, the sphere of action of the national question and the limits of its jurisdiction, so to speak, are restricted by the sphere of action and jurisdiction of the “labor question,” as the most fundamental question.

Many speakers referred to notes and articles by Vladimir Ilyich. I do not want to quote my teacher, Comrade Lenin, since he is not here, and I am afraid that I might, perhaps, quote him wrongly and inappropriately. Nevertheless, I am obliged to quote one passage, which is axiomatic and can give rise to no misunderstanding, in order that no doubt should be left in the minds of comrades with regard to the relative importance of the national question. Analyzing Marx’s letter on the national question in an article on self-determination, Comrade Lenin draws the following conclusion: “Marx had no doubt about the subordinate significance of the national question as compared with the ‘labor question.’”<sup>107</sup>

Here are only two lines, but they are decisive. And that is what some of our comrades who are more zealous than wise should drill into their heads.

The second point is about Great-Russian chauvinism and local chauvinism. Rakovsky and especially Bukharin spoke here, and the latter proposed that the clause dealing with the harmfulness of local chauvinism should be deleted. Their argument was that there is no need to bother with a little worm like local chauvinism when we are faced by a “Goliath” like Great-Russian chauvinism. In general, Bukharin was in a repentant mood. That is natural: he has been sinning against the nationalities for years, denying the right to self-determination. It was high time for him to repent. But in repenting, he went to the other extreme. It is curious that Bukharin calls upon the Party to follow his example and also repent, although the whole world knows that the Party is in no way involved, for from its very inception (1898) it recognized the right to self-determination and therefore has nothing to repent of. The fact of the matter is that

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<sup>107</sup> See V. I. Lenin, “The Right of Nations to Self-Determination,” in *Collected Works*, Vol. XX, Progress Publishers, Moscow, pp. 393-454.

Bukharin has failed to understand the essence of the national question. When it is said that the fight against Great-Russian chauvinism must be made the corner-stone of the national question, the intention is to indicate the duties of the Russian Communist; it implies that it is the duty of the Russian Communist himself to combat Russian chauvinism. If the struggle against Russian chauvinism was undertaken not by the Russian but by the Turkestanian or Georgian Communists, it would be interpreted as anti-Russian chauvinism. That would confuse the whole issue and strengthen Great-Russian chauvinism. Only the Russian Communists can undertake the fight against Great-Russian chauvinism and carry it through to the end.

And what is intended when a struggle against local chauvinism is proposed? The intention is to point to the duty of the local Communists, the duty of the non-Russian Communists, to combat their own chauvinists. Can the existence of deviations towards anti-Russian chauvinism be denied? Why, the whole congress has seen for itself that local chauvinism exists, Georgian, Bashkir and other chauvinism, and that it must be combated. Russian Communists cannot combat Tatar, Georgian or Bashkir chauvinism; if a Russian Communist were to undertake the difficult task of combating Tatar or Georgian chauvinism, it would be regarded as a fight waged by a Great-Russian chauvinist against the Tatars or the Georgians. That would confuse the whole issue. Only the Tatar, Georgian and other Communists can fight Tatar, Georgian and other chauvinism; only the Georgian Communists can successfully combat Georgian nationalism or chauvinism. That is the duty of the non-Russian Communists. That is why it is necessary to refer in the theses to the double task, that of the Russian Communists (I refer to the fight against Great-Russian chauvinism) and that of the non-Russian Communists (I refer to their fight against anti-Armenian, anti-Tatar, anti-Russian chauvinism). Otherwise, the theses will be one-sided, there will be no internationalism, whether in state or Party affairs.

If we combat only Great-Russian chauvinism, it will obscure the fight that is being waged by the Tatar and other chauvinists, a fight which is developing in the localities and which is especially dangerous now, under the conditions of the NEP. We cannot avoid fighting on two fronts, for we can achieve success only by fighting on two fronts—on the one hand,

against Great-Russian chauvinism, which is the chief danger in our work of construction, and, on the other hand, against local chauvinism; unless we wage this double fight there will be no solidarity between the Russian workers and peasants and the workers and peasants of the other nationalities. Failure to wage this fight may result in encouraging local chauvinism, a policy of pandering to local chauvinism, which we cannot allow.

Permit me here too to quote Comrade Lenin. I would not have done so, but since there are many comrades at our congress who quote Comrade Lenin right and left and distort what he says, permit me to read a few words from a well-known article of his:

The proletariat must demand freedom of political secession for the colonies and nations that are oppressed by “its” nation. Unless it does this, proletarian internationalism will remain a meaningless phrase; neither mutual confidence nor class solidarity between the workers of the oppressing and the oppressed nations will be possible.<sup>108</sup>

These are, so to say, the duties of proletarians of the dominant or formerly dominant nation. Then he goes on to speak of the duties of proletarians or Communists of the formerly oppressed nations:

On the other hand, the Socialists of the oppressed nations must particularly fight for and put into effect complete and absolute unity, including organizational unity, between the workers of the oppressed nation and the workers of the oppressing nation. Otherwise, it is impossible to uphold the independent policy of the proletariat and its class solidarity with the proletariat of other countries against all the subterfuges, treachery and trickery of the bourgeoisie. For the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nations constantly converts the slogans of national liberation into a means for deceiving the workers.

As you see, if we are to follow in Comrade Lenin’s footsteps—and some comrades here have sworn by him—both theses must be retained in the resolution—both the thesis on combating Great-Russian chauvinism

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<sup>108</sup> V. I. Lenin, “The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination” (see *Collected Works*, Vol. XII, Progress Publishers, Moscow, pp. 143-156).

Reply to the Discussion on the Report on National Factors in Party and State Affairs  
and that on combating local chauvinism—as two aspects of one phenomenon, as theses on combating chauvinism in general.

With this I conclude my answers to those who have spoken here.

**SPEECH DELIVERED AT THE  
FOURTH CONFERENCE OF  
THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE  
OF THE RCP(B) WITH  
RESPONSIBLE WORKERS OF  
THE NATIONAL REPUBLICS  
AND REGIONS**

*June 10, 1923*

*Speech on the First Item of the Conference  
Agenda: "The Sultan-Galiyev Case",*

## **I. Rights and "lefts" in the national republics and regions**

I have taken the floor in order to make a few comments on the speeches of the comrades who have spoken here. As regards the principles involved in the Sultan Galiyev case, I shall endeavor to deal with them in my report on the second item of the agenda. First of all, with regard to the conference itself. Someone (I have forgotten who exactly it was) said here that this conference is an unusual event. That is not so. Such conferences are not a novelty for our Party. The present conference is the fourth of its kind to be held since the establishment of Soviet power. Up to the beginning of 1919 three such conferences were held. Conditions at that time permitted us to call such conferences. But later, after 1919, in 1920 and 1921, when we were entirely taken up with the civil war, we had no time for conferences of this kind. And only now that we have finished with the civil war, now that we have gone deeply into the work of economic construction, now that Party work itself has become more concrete, especially in the national regions and republics, has it again become possible for us to call a conference of this kind. I think the Central Committee will repeatedly resort to this method in order to establish full mutual understanding between those who are carrying out the policy in the localities and those

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The Fourth Conference of the Central Committee of the RCP(B) With Responsible Workers of the National Republics and Regions was convened on J. V. Stalin's initiative and took place in Moscow on June 9-12, 1923. In addition to the members and candidate members of the Central Committee of the RCP(B), there were present 58 representatives of the national republics and regions. The chief item on the agenda was J. V. Stalin's report on "Practical Measures for Implementing the Resolution on the National Question Adopted by the Twelfth Party Congress." Representatives of twenty Party organizations of the national republics and regions reported on the situation in the localities. The conference also examined the Central Control Commission's report on the anti-Party and anti-Soviet activities of Sultan-Galiyev. (For the resolutions passed by this conference see "Resolutions and Decisions of CPSU(B) Congresses, Conferences and Central Committee Plenums," Part 1, 1941, pp. 525-30.)

who are making that policy. I think that such conferences should be called, not only from all the republics and regions but also from individual regions and republics for the purpose of drawing up more concrete decisions. This alone can satisfy both the Central Committee and the responsible workers in the localities.

I heard certain comrades say that I warned Sultan Galiyev when I had the opportunity of acquainting myself with his first secret letter, addressed, I think, to Adigamov, who for some reason is silent and has not uttered a word here, although he should have been the first to speak and the one to have said most. I have been reproached by these comrades with having defended Sultan-Galiyev excessively. It is true that I defended him as long as it was possible, and I considered, and still consider, that it was my duty to do so. But I defended him only up to a certain point. And when Sultan Galiyev went beyond that point, I turned away from him. His first secret letter shows that he was already breaking with the Party, for the tone of his letter is almost whiteguard; he writes about members of the Central Committee as one can write only about enemies. I met him by chance in the Political Bureau, where he was defending the demands of the Tatar Republic in connection with the People's Commissariat of Agriculture. I warned him then, in a note I sent him, in which I called his secret letter an anti-Party one, and in which I accused him of creating an organization of the Validov type; I told him that unless he desisted from illegal, anti-Party work he would come to a bad end, and any support from me would be out of the question. He replied, in great embarrassment, that I had been misled; that he had indeed written to Adigamov, not, however, what was alleged, but something else; that he had always been a Party man and was so still, and he gave his word of honor that he would continue to be a Party man in the future. Nevertheless, a week later he sent Adigamov a second secret letter, instructing him to establish contact with the Basmachi and with their leader Validov, and to "burn" the letter. The whole thing, therefore, was vile, it was sheer deception, and it compelled me to break off all connection with Sultan-Galiyev. From that moment Sultan-Galiyev became for me a man beyond the pale of the Party, of the Soviets, and I considered it impossible to speak to him, although he tried several times to come to me and "have a talk" with me. As far back as the beginning of 1919, the "Left" comrades reproached me with supporting Sultan-Galiyev,



with trying to save him for the Party, with wanting to spare him, in the hope that he would cease to be a nationalist and become a Marxist. I did, indeed, consider it my duty to support him for a time. There are so few intellectuals, so few thinking people, even so few literate people generally in the Eastern republics and regions, that one can count them on one's fingers. How can one help cherishing them? It would be criminal not to take all measures to save from corruption people of the East whom we need and to preserve them for the Party. But there is a limit to everything. And the limit in this case was reached when Sultan-Galiyev crossed over from the communist camp to the camp of the Basmachi. From that time on, he ceased to exist for the Party. That is why he found the Turkish ambassador more congenial than the Central Committee of our Party.

I heard a similar reproach from Shamigulov, to the effect that, in spite of his insistence that we should finish with Validov at one stroke, I defended Validov and tried to preserve him for the Party. I did indeed defend Validov in the hope that he would reform. Worse people have reformed, as we know from the history of political parties. I decided that Shamigulov's solution of the problem was too simple. I did not follow his advice. It is true that a year later Shamigulov's forecast proved correct: Validov did not reform, he went over to the Basmachi. Nevertheless, the Party gained by the fact that we delayed Validov's desertion from the Party for a year. Had we settled with Validov in 1918, I am certain that comrades like Murtazin, Adigamov, Khalikov and others would not have remained in our ranks. [*Voice*: "Khalikov would have remained."] Perhaps Khalikov would not have left us, but a whole group of comrades working in our ranks would have left with Validov. That is what we gained through our patience and foresight.

I listened to Ryskulov, and I must say that his speech was not altogether sincere, it was semi-diplomatic [*Voice*: "Quite true!"], and in general his speech made a bad impression. I expected more clarity and sincerity from him. Whatever Ryskulov may say, it is obvious that he has at home two secret letters from Sultan-Galiyev, which he has not shown to anyone, it is obvious that he was associated with Sultan-Galiyev ideologically. The fact that Ryskulov dissociates himself from the criminal aspect of the Sultan-Galiyev case, asserting that he is not involved with Sultan-Galiyev in the course leading to Basmachism, is of no importance. That is not what

we are concerned with at this conference. We are concerned with the intellectual, ideological ties with Sultan-Galiyevism. That such ties did exist between Ryskulov and Sultan-Galiyev is obvious, comrades; Ryskulov himself cannot deny it. Is it not high time for him here, from this rostrum, at long last to dissociate himself from Sultan-Galiyevism emphatically and unreservedly? In this respect Ryskulov's speech was semi-diplomatic and unsatisfactory.

Enbayev also made a diplomatic and insincere speech. Is it not a fact that, after Sultan-Galiyev's arrest, Enbayev and a group of Tatar responsible workers, whom I consider splendid practical men in spite of their ideological instability, sent a demand to the Central Committee for his immediate release, fully vouching for him and hinting that the documents taken from Sultan-Galiyev were not genuine? Is that not a fact? But what did the investigation reveal? It revealed that all the documents were genuine. Their genuineness was admitted by Sultan-Galiyev himself, who, in fact, gave more information about his sins than is contained in the documents, who fully confessed his guilt, and, after confessing, repented. Is it not obvious that, after all this, Enbayev ought to have emphatically and unreservedly admitted his mistakes and to have dissociated himself from Sultan-Galiyev? But Enbayev did not do this. He found occasion to jeer at the "Lefts," but he would not emphatically, as a Communist should, dissociate himself from Sultan-Galiyevism, from the abyss into which Sultan-Galiyev had landed. Evidently he thought that diplomacy would save him.

Firdevs's speech was sheer diplomacy from beginning to end. Who the ideological leader was, whether Sultan Galiyev led Firdevs, or whether Firdevs led Sultan-Galiyev, is a question I leave open, although I think that ideologically Firdevs led Sultan-Galiyev rather than the other way round. I see nothing particularly reprehensible in Sultan-Galiyev's exercises in theory. If Sultan-Galiyev had confined himself to the ideology of Pan-Turkism and Pan-Islamism it would not have been so bad and I would say that this ideology, in spite of the ban pronounced by the resolution on the national question passed by the Tenth Party Congress, could be regarded as tolerable, and that we could confine ourselves to criticizing it within the ranks of our Party. But when exercises in ideology end in establishing contacts with Basmachi leaders, with Validov and others, it is utterly impossible to justify Basmachi practices here on the ground that the ideology is innocent,

as Firdevs tries to do. You can deceive nobody by such a justification of Sultan-Galiyev's activities. In that way it would be possible to find a justification for both imperialism and tsarism, for they too have their ideologies, which sometimes look innocent enough. One cannot reason in that way. You are not facing a tribunal, but a conference of responsible workers, who demand of you straightforwardness and sincerity, not diplomacy.

Khojanov spoke well, in my opinion. And Ikramov did not speak badly either. But I must mention a passage in the speeches of these comrades which gives food for thought. Both said that there was no difference between present-day Turkestan and tsarist Turkestan, that only the signboard had been changed, that Turkestan had remained what it was under the tsar. Comrades, if that was not a slip of the tongue, if it was a considered and deliberate statement, then it must be said that in that case the Basmachi are right and we are wrong. If Turkestan is in fact a colony, as it was under tsarism, then the Basmachi are right, and it is not we who should be trying Sultan-Galiyev, but Sultan-Galiyev who should be trying us for tolerating the existence of a colony in the framework of the Soviet regime. If that is true, I fail to understand why you yourselves have not gone over to Basmachism. Evidently, Khojanov and Ikramov uttered that passage in their speeches without thinking, for they cannot help knowing that present-day Soviet Turkestan is radically different from tsarist Turkestan. I wanted to point to that obscure passage in the speeches of these comrades in order that they should try to think this over and rectify their mistake.

I take upon myself some of the charges Ikramov made against the work of the Central Committee, to the effect that we have not always been attentive and have not always succeeded in raising in time the practical questions dictated by conditions in the Eastern republics and regions. Of course, the Central Committee is overburdened with work and is unable to keep pace with events everywhere. It would be ridiculous to think that the Central Committee can keep pace with everything. Of course, there are few schools in Turkestan. The local languages have not yet become current in the state institutions, the institutions have not been made national in character. Culture in general is at a low level. All that is true. But can anybody seriously think that the Central Committee, or the Party as a whole, can raise the cultural level of Turkestan in two or three years?

We are all shouting and complaining that Russian culture, the culture of the Russian people, which is more cultured than the other peoples in the Union of Republics, is at a low level. Ilyich has repeatedly stated that we have little culture, that it is impossible to raise Russian culture appreciably in two or three, or even ten years. And if it is impossible to raise Russian culture appreciably in two or three, or even ten years, how can we demand a rapid rise of culture in the non-Russian backward regions with a low level of literacy? Is it not obvious that nine-tenths of the “blame” falls on the conditions, on the backwardness, and that you cannot but take this into account?

About the “Lefts” and the Rights.

Do they exist in the communist organizations in the regions and republics? Of course they do. That cannot be denied.

Wherein lie the sins of the Rights? In the fact that the Rights are not and cannot be an antidote to, a reliable bulwark against, the nationalist tendencies which are developing and gaining strength in connection with the NEP. The fact that Sultan-Galiyevism did exist, that it created a certain circle of supporters in the Eastern republics, especially in Bashkiria and Tataria, leaves no doubt that the Right-wing elements, who in these republics comprise the overwhelming majority, are not a sufficiently strong bulwark against nationalism.

It should be borne in mind that our communist organizations in the border regions, in the republics and regions, can develop and stand firmly on their feet, can become genuine internationalist, Marxist cadres, only if they overcome nationalism. Nationalism is the chief ideological obstacle to the training of Marxist cadres, of a Marxist vanguard, in the border regions and republics. The history of our Party shows that the Bolshevik Party, its Russian section, grew and gained strength in the fight against Menshevism; for Menshevism is the ideology of the bourgeoisie, Menshevism is a channel through which bourgeois ideology penetrates into our Party, and had the Party not overcome Menshevism it could not have stood firmly on its feet. Ilyich wrote about this a number of times. Only to the degree that it overcame Menshevism in its organizational and ideological forms did Bolshevism grow and gain strength as a real leading party. The same must be said of nationalism in relation to our communist organizations in the border regions and republics. Nationalism is playing the same role in rela-

tion to these organizations as Menshevism in the past played in relation to the Bolshevik Party. Only under cover of nationalism can various kinds of bourgeois, including Menshevik, influences penetrate our organizations in the border regions. Our organizations in the republics can become Marxist only if they are able to resist the nationalist ideas which are forcing their way into our Party in the border regions, and are forcing their way because the bourgeoisie is reviving, the NEP is spreading, nationalism is growing, there are survivals of Great-Russian chauvinism, which also give an impetus to local nationalism, and there is the influence of foreign states, which support nationalism in every way. If our communist organizations in the national republics want to gain strength as genuinely Marxist organizations they must pass through the stage of fighting this enemy in the republics and regions. There is no other way. And in this fight the Rights are weak. Weak because they are infected with skepticism with regard to the Party and easily yield to the influence of nationalism. Herein lies the sin of the Right wing of the communist organizations in the republics and regions.

But no less, if not more, sinful are the “Lefts” in the border regions. If the communist organizations in the border regions cannot grow strong and develop into genuinely Marxist cadres unless they overcome nationalism, these cadres themselves will be able to become mass organizations, to rally the majority of the working people around themselves, only if they learn to be flexible enough to draw into our state institutions all the national elements that are at all loyal, by making concessions to them, and if they learn to maneuver between a resolute fight against nationalism in the Party and an equally resolute fight to draw into Soviet work all the more or less loyal elements among the local people, the intelligentsia, and so on. The “Lefts” in the border regions are more or less free from the skeptical attitude towards the Party, from the tendency to yield to the influence of nationalism. But the sins of the “Lefts” lie in the fact that they are incapable of flexibility in relation to the bourgeois-democratic and the simply loyal elements of the population, they are unable and unwilling to maneuver in order to attract these elements, they distort the Party’s line of winning over the majority of the toiling population of the country. But this flexibility and ability to maneuver between the fight against nationalism and the drawing of all the elements that are at all loyal into our state

institutions must be created and developed at all costs. It can be created and developed only *if* we take into account the entire complexity and the specific nature of the situation encountered in our regions and republics; *if* we do not simply engage in transplanting the models that are being created in the central industrial districts, which cannot be transplanted mechanically to the border regions; *if* we do not brush aside the nationalist-minded elements of the population, the nationalist-minded petit bourgeois; and *if* we learn to draw these elements into the general work of state administration. The sin of the “Lefts” is that they are infected with sectarianism and fail to understand the paramount importance of the Party’s complex tasks in the national republics and regions.

While the Rights create the danger that by their tendency to yield to nationalism they may hinder the growth of our communist cadres in the border regions, the “Lefts” create the danger for the Party that by their infatuation with an over-simplified and hasty “communism” they may isolate our Party from the peasantry and from broad strata of the local population.

Which of these dangers is the more formidable? If the comrades who are deviating towards the “Left” in tend to continue practicing in the localities their policy of artificially splitting the population and this policy has been practiced not only in Chechnya and in the Yakut Region, and not only in Turkestan... [*Ibrahimov*: “They are tactics of differentiation.”] Ibrahimov has now thought of substituting the tactics of differentiation for the tactics of splitting, but that changes nothing. If, I say, they intend to continue practicing their policy of splitting the population from above; if they think that Russian models can be mechanically transplanted to a specifically national milieu regardless of the manner of life of the inhabitants and of the concrete conditions; if they think that in fighting nationalism everything that is national must be thrown overboard; in short, if the “Left” Communists in the border regions intend to remain incorrigible, I must say that of the two, the “Left” danger may prove to be the more formidable.

This is all I wanted to say about the “Lefts” and the Rights. I have run ahead somewhat, but that is because the whole conference has run ahead and has anticipated the discussion of the second item.

We must chastise the Rights in order to make them fight nationalism, to teach them to do so in order to forge real communist cadres from among local people. But we must also chastise the “Lefts” in order to teach them to be flexible and to maneuver skillfully, so as to win over the broad masses of the population. All this must be done because, as Khojanov rightly remarked, the truth lies “in between” the Rights and the “Lefts.”





## **II. Concerning the methods of training and reinforcing Marxist cadres in the republics and regions from among local people**

*Extract from the report on the second item of the agenda: "Practical measures for implementing the resolution on the national question adopted by the twelfth party congress," June 10, 1923.*

...I pass to the first group of questions—those concerning the methods of training and reinforcing Marxist cadres from among local people, who will be capable of serving as the most important and, in the long run, as the decisive bulwark of Soviet power in the border regions. If we examine the development of our Party (I refer to its Russian section, as the main section) and trace the principal stages in its development, and then, by analogy, draw a picture of the development of our communist organizations in the regions and republics in the immediate future, I think we shall find the key to the understanding of the specific features in these countries which distinguish the development of our Party in the border regions.

The principal task in the first period of our Party's development, the development of its Russian section, was to create cadres, Marxist cadres. These Marxist cadres were made, forged, in our fight with Menshevism. The task of these cadres then, at that period—I am referring to the period from the foundation of the Bolshevik Party to the expulsion from the Party of the Liquidators, as the most pronounced representatives of Menshevism—the main task was to win over to the Bolsheviks the most active, honest and outstanding members of the working class, to create cadres, to form a vanguard. The struggle here was waged primarily against tendencies of a bourgeois character—especially against Menshevism—which prevented the cadres from being combined into a single unit, as the main core of the Party. At that time it was not yet the task of the Party, as an immediate and vital need, to establish wide connections with the vast masses of the working class and the toiling peasantry, to win over those masses, to win a majority in the country. The Party had not yet got so far.

Only in the next stage of our Party's development, only in its second stage, when these cadres had grown, when they had taken shape as the basic core of our Party, when the sympathies of the best elements among the working class had already been won, or almost won—only then was the Party confronted with the task, as an immediate and urgent need, of winning over the vast masses, of transforming the Party cadres into a real mass workers' party. During this period the core of our Party had to wage a struggle not so much against Menshevism as against the "Left" elements within our Party, the "Otzovists" of all kinds, who were attempting to substitute revolutionary phraseology for a serious study of the specific features of the new situation which arose after 1905, who by their over-simplified "revolutionary" tactics were hindering the conversion of our Party cadres into a genuine mass party, and who by their activities were creating the danger of the Party becoming divorced from the broad masses of the workers. It scarcely needs proof that without a resolute struggle against this "Left" danger, without defeating it, the Party could not have won over the vast laboring masses.

Such, approximately, is the picture of the fight on two fronts, against the Rights, i.e., the Mensheviks, and against the "Lefts"; the picture of the development of the principal section of our Party, the Russian section.

Comrade Lenin quite convincingly depicted this essential, inevitable development of the Communist Parties in his pamphlet *"Left-Wing" Communism, an Infantile Disorder*. There he showed that the Communist Parties in the West must pass, and are already passing, through approximately the same stages of development. We, on our part, shall add that the same must be said of the development of our communist organizations and Communist Parties in the border regions.

It should, however, be noted that, despite the analogy between what the Party experienced in the past and what our Party organizations in the border regions are experiencing now, there are, after all, certain important specific features in our Party's development in the national republics and regions, features which we must without fail take into account, for if we do not take them carefully into account we shall run the risk of committing a number of very gross errors in determining the tasks of training Marxist cadres from among local people in the border regions.

Let us pass to an examination of these specific features.

The fight against the Right and “Left” elements in our organizations in the border regions is necessary and obligatory, for otherwise we shall not be able to train Marxist cadres closely connected with the masses. That is clear. But the specific feature of the situation in the border regions, the feature that distinguishes it from our Party’s development in the past, is that in the border regions the forging of cadres and their conversion into a mass party are taking place not under a bourgeois system, as was the case in the history of our Party, but under the Soviet system, under the dictatorship of the proletariat. At that time, under the bourgeois system, it was possible and necessary, because of the conditions of those times, to beat *first of all* the Mensheviks (in order to forge Marxist cadres) and *then* the Otzovists (in order to transform those cadres into a mass party); the fight against those two deviations filled two entire periods of our Party’s history. Now, under present conditions, we cannot possibly do that, for the Party is now in power, and being in power, the Party needs in the border regions reliable Marxist cadres from among local people who are connected with the broad masses of the population. Now we cannot *first of all* defeat the Right danger with the help of the “Lefts,” as was the case in the history of our Party, and *then* the “Left” danger with the help of the Rights. *Now we have to wage a fight on both fronts* simultaneously, striving to defeat both dangers so as to obtain as a result in the border regions trained Marxist cadres of local people connected with the masses. At that time we could speak of cadres who were not yet connected with the broad masses, but who were to become connected with them in the next period of development. Now it is ridiculous even to speak of that, because under the Soviet regime it is impossible to conceive of Marxist cadres not being connected with the broad masses in one way or another. They would be cadres who would have nothing in common either with Marxism or with a mass party. All this considerably complicates matters and dictates to our Party organizations in the border regions the need for waging a simultaneous struggle against the Rights and the “Lefts.” Hence the stand our Party takes that it is necessary to wage a fight on two fronts, against both deviations simultaneously.

Further, it should be noted that the development of our communist organizations in the border regions is not proceeding in isolation, as was the case in our Party’s history in relation to its Russian section, but under

the direct influence of the main core of our Party, which is experienced not only in forming Marxist cadres but also in linking those cadres with the broad masses of the population and in revolutionary maneuvering in the fight for Soviet power. The specific feature of the situation in the border regions in this respect is that our Party organizations in these countries, owing to the conditions under which Soviet power is developing there, can and must maneuver their forces for the purpose of strengthening their connections with the broad masses of the population, utilizing for this purpose the rich experience of our Party during the preceding period. Until recently, the Central Committee of the RCP usually carried out maneuvering in the border regions directly, over the heads of the communist organizations there, sometimes even by-passing those organizations, drawing all the more or less loyal national elements into the general work of Soviet construction. Now this work must be done by the organizations in the border regions themselves. They can do it, and must do it, bearing in mind that that is the best way of converting the Marxist cadres from among local people into a genuine mass party capable of leading the majority of the population of the country. Such are the two specific features which must be taken strictly into account when determining our Party's line in the border regions in the matter of training Marxist cadres, and of these cadres winning over the broad masses of the population.



# THE NATIONAL QUESTION

*April & May 1924*

*Extracts From "The Foundations of Leninism"*

From this theme I take two main questions:

- a) the presentation of the question;
- b) the liberation movement of the oppressed peoples and the proletarian revolution.

1) *The presentation of the question.* During the last two decades the national question has undergone a number of very important changes. The national question in the period of the Second International and the national question in the period of Leninism are far from being the same thing. They differ profoundly from each other, not only in their scope but also in their intrinsic character.

Formerly, the national question was usually confined to a narrow circle of questions, concerning, primarily, "civilized" nationalities. The Irish, the Hungarians, the Poles, the Finns, the Serbs, and several other European nationalities—that was the circle of unequal peoples in whose destinies the leaders of the Second International were interested. The scores and hundreds of millions of Asiatic and African peoples who are suffering national oppression in its most savage and cruel form usually remained outside of their field of vision. They hesitated to put white and black, "civilized" and "uncivilized" on the same plane. Two or three meaningless, lukewarm resolutions, which carefully evaded the question of liberating the colonies—that was all the leaders of the Second International could boast of. Now we can say that this duplicity and half-heartedness in dealing with the national question has been brought to an end. Leninism laid bare this crying incongruity, broke down the wall between whites and blacks, between Europeans and Asiatics, between the "civilized" and "uncivilized" slaves of imperialism, and thus linked the national question with the question of the colonies. The national question was thereby transformed from a particular and internal state problem into a general and international problem, into a world problem of emancipating the oppressed peoples in the dependent countries and colonies from the yoke of imperialism.

Formerly, the principle of self-determination of nations was usually misinterpreted, and not infrequently it was narrowed down to the idea of the right of nations to autonomy. Certain leaders of the Second Interna-

tional even went so far as to turn the right to self-determination into the right to cultural autonomy, i.e., the right of oppressed nations to have their own cultural institutions, leaving all political power in the hands of the ruling nation. As a consequence, the idea of self-determination stood in danger of being transformed from an instrument for combating annexations into an instrument for justifying them. Now we can say that this confusion has been cleared up. *Leninism broadened the conception of self-determination*, interpreting it as the right of the oppressed peoples of the dependent countries and colonies to complete secession, as the right of nations to independent existence as states. This precluded the possibility of justifying annexations by interpreting the right to self-determination as the right to autonomy. Thus, the principle of self-determination itself was transformed from an instrument for deceiving the masses, which it undoubtedly was in the hands of the social-chauvinists during the imperialist war, into an instrument for exposing all imperialist aspirations and chauvinist machinations, into an instrument for the political education of the masses in the spirit of internationalism.

Formerly, the question of the oppressed nations was usually regarded as purely a juridical question. Solemn proclamations about “national equality of rights,” innumerable declarations about the “equality of nations”—that was the stock-in-trade of the parties of the Second International, which glossed over the fact that “equality of nations” under imperialism, where one group of nations (a minority) lives by exploiting another group of nations, is sheer mockery of the oppressed nations. Now we can say that this bourgeois-juridical point of view on the national question has been exposed. Leninism brought the national question down from the lofty heights of high-sounding declarations to solid ground, and declared that pronouncements about the “equality of nations” not backed by the direct support of the proletarian parties for the liberation struggle of the oppressed nations are meaningless and false. In this way the question of the oppressed nations became one of supporting the oppressed nations, of rendering real and continuous assistance to them in their struggle against imperialism for real equality of nations, for their independent existence as states.

Formerly, the national question was regarded from a reformist point of view, as an independent question having no connection with the general



question of the power of capital, of the overthrow of imperialism, of the proletarian revolution. It was tacitly assumed that the victory of the proletariat in Europe was possible without a direct alliance with the liberation movement in the colonies, that the national-colonial question could be solved on the quiet, “of its own accord,” off the highway of the proletarian revolution, without a revolutionary struggle against imperialism. Now we can say that this anti-revolutionary point of view has been exposed. Leninism has proved, and the imperialist war and the revolution in Russia have confirmed, that the national question can be solved only in connection with and on the basis of the proletarian revolution, and that the road to victory of the revolution in the West lies through the revolutionary alliance with the liberation movement of the colonies and dependent countries against imperialism. The national question is a part of the general question of the proletarian revolution, a part of the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The question is as follows: Are the revolutionary potentialities latent in the revolutionary liberation movement of the oppressed countries *already exhausted*, or not; and if not, is there any hope, any basis, for utilizing these potentialities for the proletarian revolution, for transforming the dependent and colonial countries from a reserve of the imperialist bourgeoisie into a reserve of the revolutionary proletariat, into an ally of the latter?

Leninism replies to this question in the affirmative, i.e., it recognizes the existence of revolutionary capacities in the national liberation movement of the oppressed countries, and the possibility of using these for overthrowing the common enemy, for overthrowing imperialism. The mechanics of the development of imperialism, the imperialist war and the revolution in Russia wholly confirm the conclusions of Leninism on this score.

Hence the necessity for the proletariat of the “dominant” nations to support—resolutely and actively to support—the national liberation movement of the oppressed and dependent peoples.

This does not mean, of course, that the proletariat must support *every* national movement, everywhere and always, in every individual concrete case. It means that support must be given to such national movements as tend to weaken, to overthrow imperialism, and not to strengthen and preserve it. Cases occur when the national movements in certain oppressed

countries come into conflict with the interests of the development of the proletarian movement. In such cases support is, of course, entirely out of the question. The question of the rights of nations is not an isolated, self-sufficient question; it is a part of the general problem of the proletarian revolution, subordinate to the whole, and must be considered from the point of view of the whole. In the forties of the last century Marx supported the national movement of the Poles and Hungarians and was opposed to the national movement of the Czechs and the South Slavs. Why? Because the Czechs and the South Slavs were then “reactionary peoples,” “Russian outposts” in Europe, outposts of absolutism; whereas the Poles and the Hungarians were “revolutionary peoples,” fighting against absolutism. Because support of the national movement of the Czechs and the South Slavs was at that time equivalent to indirect support for tsarism, the most dangerous enemy of the revolutionary movement in Europe.

The various demands of democracy, [writes Lenin,] including self-determination, are not an absolute, but a *small part* of the general democratic (now: general socialist) world movement. In individual concrete cases, the part may contradict the whole; if so, it must be rejected.<sup>110</sup>

This is the position in regard to the question of particular national movements, of the possible reactionary character of these movements—if, of course, they are appraised not from the formal point of view, not from the point of view of abstract rights, but concretely, from the point of view of the interests of the revolutionary movement.

The same must be said of the revolutionary character of national movements in general. The unquestionably revolutionary character of the vast majority of national movements is as relative and peculiar as is the possible reactionary character of certain particular national movements. The revolutionary character of a national movement under the conditions of imperialist oppression does not necessarily presuppose the existence of proletarian elements in the movement, the existence of a revolutionary or a republican program of the movement, the existence of a democratic basis of the movement. The struggle that the Emir of Afghanistan is waging for

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<sup>110</sup> V. I. Lenin, “The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up,” in *Collected Works*, Vol. XXII, Progress Publishers, Moscow, pp. 320-360.

the independence of Afghanistan is objectively a *revolutionary* struggle, despite the monarchist views of the Emir and his associates, for it weakens, disintegrates and undermines imperialism; whereas the struggle waged by such “desperate” democrats and “Socialists,” “revolutionaries” and republicans as, for example, Kerensky and Tsereteli, Renaudel and Scheidemann, Chernov and Dan, Henderson and Clynes, during the imperialist war was a *reactionary* struggle, for its result was the embellishment, the strengthening, the victory, of imperialism. For the same reasons, the struggle that the Egyptian merchants and bourgeois intellectuals are waging for the independence of Egypt is objectively a *revolutionary* struggle, despite the bourgeois origin and bourgeois title of the leaders of the Egyptian national movement, despite the fact that they are opposed to socialism; whereas the struggle that the British “Labor” Government is waging to preserve Egypt’s dependent position is for the same reasons a *reactionary* struggle, despite the proletarian origin and the proletarian title of the members of that government, despite the fact that they are “for” socialism. There is no need to mention the national movement in other, larger, colonial and dependent countries, such as India and China, every step of which along the road to liberation, even if it runs counter to the demands of formal democracy, is a steam-hammer blow at imperialism, i.e., is undoubtedly a *revolutionary* step.

Lenin was right in saying that the national movement of the oppressed countries should be appraised not from the point of view of formal democracy, but from the point of view of the actual results, as shown by the general balance sheet of the struggle against imperialism, that is to say, “not in isolation, but on a world scale.”<sup>111</sup>

2) *The liberation movement of the oppressed peoples and the proletarian revolution.* In solving the national question Leninism proceeds from the following theses:

- a) the world is divided into two camps: the camp of a handful of civilized nations, which possess finance capital and exploit the vast majority of the population of the globe; and the camp of the oppressed and exploited peoples in the colonies and dependent countries, which constitute that majority;

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

- b) the colonies and the dependent countries, oppressed and exploited by finance capital, constitute a vast reserve and a very important source of strength for imperialism;
- c) the revolutionary struggle of the oppressed peoples in the dependent and colonial countries against imperialism is the only road that leads to their emancipation from oppression and exploitation;
- d) the most important colonial and dependent countries have already taken the path of the national liberation movement, which cannot but lead to the crisis of world capitalism;
- e) the interests of the proletarian movement in the developed countries and of the national liberation movement in the colonies call for the union of these two forms of the revolutionary movement into a common front against the common enemy, against imperialism;
- f) the victory of the working class in the developed countries and the liberation of the oppressed peoples from the yoke of imperialism are impossible without the formation and the consolidation of a common revolutionary front;
- g) the formation of a common revolutionary front is impossible unless the proletariat of the oppressor nations renders direct and determined support to the liberation movement of the oppressed peoples against the imperialism of its “own country,” for “no nation can be free if it oppresses other nations” (*Engels*);
- h) this support implies the upholding, defense and implementation of the slogan of the right of nations to secession, to independent existence as states;
- i) unless this slogan is implemented, the union and collaboration of nations within a single world economic system, which is the material basis for the victory of world socialism, cannot be brought about;

j) this union can only be voluntary, arising on the basis of mutual confidence and fraternal relations among peoples.

Hence the two sides, the two tendencies in the national question: the tendency towards political emancipation from the shackles of imperialism and towards the formation of an independent national state—a tendency which arose as a consequence of imperialist oppression and colonial exploitation; and the tendency towards closer economic relations among nations, which arose as a result of the formation of a world market and a world economic system.

Developing capitalism [says Lenin,] knows two historical tendencies in the national question. First: the awakening of national life and national movements, struggle against all national oppression, creation of national states. Second: development and acceleration of all kinds of intercourse between nations, breakdown of national barriers, creation of the international unity of capital, of economic life in general, of politics, science, etc.

Both tendencies are a world-wide law of capitalism. The first predominates at the beginning of its development, the second characterizes mature capitalism that is moving towards its transformation into socialist society.<sup>112</sup>

For imperialism these two tendencies represent irreconcilable contradictions; because imperialism cannot exist without exploiting colonies and forcibly retaining them within the framework of the “integral whole”; because imperialism can bring nations together only by means of annexations and colonial conquest, without which imperialism is, generally speaking, inconceivable.

For communism, on the contrary, these tendencies are but two sides of a single cause—the cause of the emancipation of the oppressed peoples from the yoke of imperialism; because communism knows that the union of peoples in a single world economic system is possible only on the basis of mutual confidence and voluntary agreement, and that the road to the

<sup>112</sup> V. I. Lenin, “Critical Remarks on the National Question,” in *Collected Works*, Vol. XX, Progress Publishers, Moscow, pp. 17-51.

formation of a voluntary union of peoples lies through the separation of the colonies from the “integral” imperialist “whole,” through the transformation of the colonies into independent states.

Hence the necessity for a stubborn, continuous and determined struggle against the dominant-nation chauvinism of the “Socialists” of the ruling nations (Britain, France, America, Italy, Japan, etc.), who do not want to fight their imperialist governments, who do not want to support the struggle of the oppressed peoples in “their” colonies for emancipation from oppression, for secession.

Without such a struggle the education of the working class of the ruling nations in the spirit of true internationalism, in the spirit of closer relations with the toiling masses of the dependent countries and colonies, in the spirit of real preparation for the proletarian revolution, is inconceivable. The revolution would not have been victorious in Russia, and Kolchak and Denikin would not have been crushed, had not the Russian proletariat enjoyed the sympathy and support of the oppressed peoples of the former Russian Empire. But to win the sympathy and support of these peoples it had first of all to break the fetters of Russian imperialism and free these peoples from the yoke of national oppression.

Without this it would have been impossible to consolidate Soviet power, to implant real internationalism and to create that remarkable organization for the collaboration of peoples which is called the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and which is the living prototype of the future union of peoples in a single world economic system.

Hence the necessity of fighting against the national isolationism, narrowness and aloofness of the Socialists in the oppressed countries, who do not want to rise above their national parochialism and who do not understand the connection between the liberation movement in their own countries and the proletarian movement in the ruling countries.

Without such a struggle it is inconceivable that the proletariat of the oppressed nations can maintain an independent policy and its class solidarity with the proletariat of the ruling countries in the fight for the overthrow of the common enemy, in the fight for the overthrow of imperialism.

Without such a struggle, internationalism would be impossible.

Such is the way in which the toiling masses of the dominant and of the oppressed nations must be educated in the spirit of revolutionary internationalism.

Here is what Lenin says about this twofold task of communism in educating the workers in the spirit of internationalism:

Can such education... be *concretely identical* in great, oppressing nations and in small, oppressed nations, in annexing nations and in annexed nations?

Obviously not. The way to the one goal—to complete equality, to the closest relations and the subsequent *amalgamation of all* nations—obviously proceeds here by different routes in each concrete case; in the same way, let us say, as the route to a point in the middle of a given page lies towards the left from one edge and towards the right from the opposite edge. If a Social-Democrat belonging to a great, oppressing, annexing nation, while advocating the amalgamation of nations in general, were to forget even for one moment that “his” Nicholas II, “his” Wilhelm, George, Poincaré, etc., *also stands for amalgamation* with small nations (by means of annexations)—Nicholas II being for “amalgamation” with Galicia, Wilhelm II for “amalgamation” with Belgium, etc.—such a Social-Democrat would be a ridiculous doctrinaire in theory and an abettor of imperialism in practice.

The weight of emphasis in the internationalist education of the workers in the oppressing countries must necessarily consist in their advocating and upholding freedom of secession for oppressed countries. Without this there can be *no* internationalism. It is our right and duty to treat every Social-Democrat of an oppressing nation who *fails* to conduct such propaganda as an imperialist and a scoundrel. This is an absolute demand, even if the *chance* of secession being possible and “feasible” before the introduction of socialism be only one in a thousand...

On the other hand, a Social-Democrat belonging to a small nation must emphasize in his agitation the *second* word of our general formula: “voluntary *union*” of nations. He may, without violating his duties as an internationalist, be in favor of *either* the political independence of his nation or its inclusion in a neighboring state X, Y, Z, etc. But in all cases he must fight *against* small-nation narrow-mindedness, isolationism and aloofness, he must fight for the recognition of the whole and the general, for the subordination of the interests of the particular to the interests of the general.

People who have not gone thoroughly into the question think there is a “contradiction” in Social-Democrats of oppressing nations insisting on “freedom of *secession*,” while Social-Democrats of oppressed nations insist on “freedom of *union*.” However, a little reflection will show that there is not, and cannot be, any *other* road leading from the *given* situation to internationalism and the amalgamation of nations, any other road to this goal.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> “The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up,” *op. cit.*





CONCERNING THE  
NATIONAL QUESTION IN  
YUGOSLAVIA

*March 30, 1925*

*Speech Delivered in the Yugoslav Commission  
of the EECI*

Comrades, I think that Semich has not fully understood the main essence of the Bolshevnik presentation of the national question. The Bolshevniks never separated the national question from the general question of revolution, either before October or after October. The main essence of the Bolshevnik approach to the national question is that the Bolshevniks always examined the national question in inseparable connection with the revolutionary perspective.

Semich quoted Lenin, saying that Lenin was in favor of embodying the solution of the national question in the constitution. By this he, Semich, evidently wanted to say that Lenin regarded the national question as a constitutional one, that is, not as a question of revolution but as a question of reform. That is quite wrong. Lenin never had, nor could he have had, constitutional illusions. It is enough to consult his works to be convinced of that. If Lenin spoke of a constitution, he had in mind not the constitutional, but the revolutionary way of settling the national question, that is to say, he regarded a constitution as something that would result from the victory of the revolution. We in the USSR also have a Constitution, and it reflects a definite solution of the national question. This Constitution, however, came into being not as the result of a deal with the bourgeoisie, but as the result of a victorious revolution.

Semich further referred to Stalin's pamphlet on the national question written in 1912<sup>114</sup> and tried to find in it at least indirect corroboration of his point of view. But this reference was fruitless, because he did not and could not find even a remote hint, let alone a quotation, that would in the least justify his "constitutional" approach to the national question. In confirmation of this, I might remind Semich of the passage in Stalin's pamphlet where a contrast is drawn between the Austrian (constitutional) method of settling the national question and the Russian Marxists' (revolutionary) method.

Here it is:

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<sup>114</sup> See J. V. Stalin, "Marxism and the National Question," in *Works*, Vol. II, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1953, pp. 300-381.

The Austrians hope to achieve the “freedom of nationalities” by means of petty reforms, by slow steps. While they propose cultural-national autonomy as a practical measure, they do not count on any radical change, on a democratic movement for liberation, which they do not even contemplate. The Russian Marxists, on the other hand, associate the ‘freedom of nationalities’ with a probable radical change, with a democratic movement for liberation, having no grounds for counting on reforms. And this essentially alters matters in regard to the probable fate of the nations of Russia.

Clear, one would think.

And this is not Stalin’s personal view, but the general view of the Russian Marxists, who examined, and continue to examine, the national question in inseparable connection with the general question of revolution.

It can be said without stretching a point that in the history of Russian Marxism there were two stages in the presentation of the national question: the first, or pre-October stage; and the second, or October stage. In the first stage, the national question was regarded as part of the general question of the bourgeois-democratic revolution, that is to say, as part of the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry. In the second stage, when the national question assumed wider scope and became a question of the colonies, when it became transformed from an intra-state question into a world question, it came to be regarded as part of the general question of the proletarian revolution, as part of the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat. In both stages, as you see, the approach was strictly revolutionary.

I think that Semich has not yet fully grasped all this. Hence his attempts to reduce the national question to a constitutional issue, i.e., to regard it as a question of reform.

That mistake leads him to another, namely, his refusal to regard the national question as being, in essence, a peasant question. Not an agrarian but a peasant question, for these are two different things. It is quite true that the national question must not be identified with the peasant question, for, in addition to peasant questions, the national question includes

such questions as national culture, national statehood, etc. But it is also beyond doubt that, after all, the peasant question is the basis, the quintessence, of the national question. That explains the fact that the peasantry constitutes the main army of the national movement, that there is no powerful national movement without the peasant army, nor can there be. That is what is meant when it is said that, *in essence*, the national question is a peasant question. I think that Semich's reluctance to accept this formula is due to an underestimation of the inherent strength of the national movement and a failure to understand the profoundly popular and profoundly revolutionary character of the national movement. This lack of understanding and this underestimation constitute a grave danger, for, in practice, they imply an underestimation of the potential might latent, for instance, in the movement of the Croats for national emancipation. This underestimation is fraught with serious complications for the entire Yugoslav Communist Party.

That is Semich's second mistake.

Undoubtedly, Semich's attempt to treat the national question in Yugoslavia in isolation from the international situation and the probable prospects in Europe must also be regarded as a mistake. Proceeding from the fact that there is no serious popular movement for independence among the Croats and the Slovenes at the present moment, Semich arrives at the conclusion that the question of the right of nations to secede is an academic question, at any rate, not an urgent one. That is wrong, of course. Even if we admit that this question is not urgent at the present moment, it might definitely become very urgent *if war begins, or when war begins*, if a revolution breaks out in Europe, or when it breaks out. That war will inevitably begin, and that they, over there, are bound to come to blows there can be no doubt, bearing in mind the nature and development of imperialism.

In 1912, when we Russian Marxists were outlining the first draft of the national program, no serious movement for independence yet existed in any of the border regions of the Russian Empire. Nevertheless, we deemed it necessary to include in our program the point on the right of nations to self-determination, i.e., the right of every nationality to secede and exist as an independent state. Why? Because we based ourselves not only on what existed then but also on what was developing and impend-

ing in the general system of international relations; that is, we took into account not only the present but also the future. We knew that if any nationality were to demand secession, the Russian Marxists would fight to ensure the right to secede for every such nationality. In the course of his speech Semich repeatedly referred to Stalin's pamphlet on the national question. But here is what Stalin's pamphlet says about self-determination and independence:

The growth of imperialism in Europe is not fortuitous. In Europe, capital is beginning to feel cramped, and it is reaching out towards foreign countries in search of new markets, cheap labor and new fields of investment. But this leads to external complications and to war... It is quite possible that a combination of internal and external conditions may arise in which one or another nationality in Russia may find it necessary to raise and settle the question of its independence. And, of course, it is not for Marxists to create obstacles in such cases.

That was written as far back as 1912. You know that subsequently this view was fully confirmed both during the war and afterwards, and especially after the victory of the dictatorship of the proletariat in Russia.

All the more reason, therefore, why we must reckon with such possibilities in Europe in general, and in Yugoslavia in particular, especially now, when the national revolutionary movement in the oppressed countries has become more profound, and after the victory of the revolution in Russia. It must also be borne in mind that Yugoslavia is not a fully independent country, that she is tied up with certain imperialist groups, and that, consequently, she cannot escape the great play of forces that is going on outside Yugoslavia. If you are drawing up a national program for the Yugoslav Party—and that is precisely what we are dealing with now—you must remember that this program must proceed not only from what exists at present but also from what is developing and what will inevitably occur by virtue of international relations. That is why I think that the question of the right of nations to self-determination must be regarded as an immediate and vital question.

Now about the national program. The starting point of the national program must be the thesis of a Soviet revolution in Yugoslavia, the thesis that the national question cannot be solved at all satisfactorily unless the bourgeoisie is overthrown and the revolution is victorious. Of course, there may be exceptions; *there was such an exception*, for instance, before the war, when Norway separated from Sweden—of which Lenin treats in detail in one of his articles.<sup>115</sup> But that was before the war, and under an exceptional combination of favorable circumstances. Since the war, and especially since the victory of the Soviet revolution in Russia, such cases are hardly possible. At any rate, the chances of their being possible are now so slight that they can be put as nil. But if that is so, it is obvious that we cannot construct our program from elements whose significance is nil. That is why the thesis of a revolution must be the starting point of the national program.

Further, it is imperatively necessary to include in the national program a special point on the right of nations to self-determination, including the right to secede. I have already said why such a point cannot be omitted under present internal and international conditions.

Finally, the program must also include a special point providing for national territorial autonomy for those nationalities in Yugoslavia which may not deem it necessary to secede from that country. Those who think that such a contingency must be excluded are incorrect. That is wrong. Under certain circumstances, as a result of the victory of a Soviet revolution in Yugoslavia, it may well be that some nationalities will not wish to secede, just as happened here in Russia. It is clear that to meet such a contingency it is necessary to have in the program a point on autonomy, envisaging the transformation of the state of Yugoslavia into a federation of autonomous national states based on the Soviet system.

Thus, the right to secede must be provided for those nationalities that may wish to secede, and the right to autonomy must be provided for those nationalities that may prefer to remain within the framework of the Yugoslav state.

To avoid misunderstanding, I must say that the *right* to secede must not be understood as an *obligation*, as a duty to secede. A nation may take

<sup>115</sup> See V. I. Lenin, "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination," in *Collected Works*, Vol. XXII, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, pp. 393-454.

advantage of this right and secede, but it may also forgo the right, and if it does not wish to exercise it, that is its business and we cannot but reckon with the fact. Some comrades turn this right to secede into an obligation and demand from the Croats, for instance, that they secede *whatever happens*. That position is wrong and must be rejected. We must not confuse a right with an obligation.





THE POLITICAL TASKS OF  
THE UNIVERSITY OF THE  
PEOPLES OF THE EAST

*May 18, 1925*

*Speech Delivered at a Meeting of Students  
of the Communist University of the Toilers  
of the East*

Comrades, permit me, first of all, to greet you on the occasion of the fourth anniversary of the existence of the Communist University of the Toilers of the East. Needless to say, I wish your University every success on the difficult road of training communist cadres for the East.

And now let us pass to the matter in hand.

Analyzing the composition of the student body of the University of the Toilers of the East, one cannot help noting a certain duality in it. This University unites representatives of not less than fifty nations and national groups of the East. All the students at this University are sons of the East. But that definition does not give any clear or complete picture. The fact is that there are two main groups among the students at the University, representing two sets of totally different conditions of development. The first group consists of people who have come here from the *Soviet East*, from countries where the rule of the bourgeoisie no longer exists, where imperialist oppression has been overthrown, and where the workers are in power. The second group of students consists of people who have come here from *colonial and dependent countries*, from countries where capitalism still reigns, where imperialist oppression is still in full force, and where independence has still to be won by driving out the imperialists.

Thus, we have two Easts, living different lives, and developing under different conditions.

Needless to say, this duality in the composition of the student body cannot but leave its impress upon the work of the University of the Toilers of the East. That explains the fact that this University stands with one foot on Soviet soil and the other on the soil of the colonies and dependent countries.

Hence the two lines of the University's activity: one line having the aim of creating cadres capable of serving the needs of the Soviet republics of the East, and the other line having the aim of creating cadres capable of serving the revolutionary requirements of the toiling masses in the colonial and dependent countries of the East.

Hence, also, the two kinds of tasks that face the University of the Toilers of the East.

Let us examine these tasks of the Communist University of the Toilers of the East separately.

# **I. The Tasks of the Communist University of the Toilers of the East in Relation to the Soviet Republics of the East**

What are the characteristic features of the life and development of these countries, of these republics, which distinguish them from the colonial and dependent countries?

Firstly, these republics are free from imperialist oppression.

Secondly, they are developing and becoming consolidated as nations not under the aegis of the bourgeois order, but under the aegis of Soviet power. That is a fact unprecedented in history, but it is a fact for all that.

Thirdly, inasmuch as they are industrially underdeveloped, they can in their development rely wholly and entirely on the support of the industrial proletariat of the Soviet Union.

Fourthly, being free from colonial oppression, enjoying the protection of the proletarian dictatorship, and being members of the Soviet Union, these republics can and must be drawn into the work of building socialism in our country.

The main task is to make it easier to draw the workers and peasants of these republics into the work of building socialism in our country, to create and develop the prerequisites, applicable in the specific conditions of life in these republics, that can promote and hasten this process.

Hence, the immediate tasks that face the leading cadres in the Soviet East are:

- 1) To create industrial centers in the Soviet republics of the East to serve as bases for rallying the peasants around the working class. You know that this work has already begun, and it will advance together with the economic growth of the Soviet Union. The fact that these republics possess all kinds of raw materials is a guarantee that in time this work will be completed.

2) To raise the level of agriculture, above all irrigation. You know that this work has also been pushed forward, at any rate in Transcaucasia and in Turkestan.

3) To start and further promote the organization of co-operatives for the broad masses of the peasants and handicraftsmen as the surest way of drawing the Soviet republics in the East into the general system of Soviet economic construction.

4) To bring the Soviets closer to the masses, to make them national in composition, and in this way implant national-Soviet statehood, close to and comprehensible to the toiling masses.

5) To develop national culture, to set up a wide network of courses and schools for both general education and vocational-technical training, to be conducted in the native languages for the purpose of training Soviet, Party, technical and business cadres from the local people.

It is precisely the fulfillment of these tasks that will facilitate the work of building socialism in the Soviet republics of the East.

There is talk about model republics in the Soviet East. But what is a model republic? A model republic is one which carries out all these tasks honestly and conscientiously, thereby attracting the workers and peasants of the neighboring colonial and dependent countries to the liberation movement.

I have spoken above about bringing the Soviets closer to the toiling masses of the different nationalities—about making the Soviets national in character. But what does that mean, and how does it manifest itself in practice? I think that the national delimitation recently completed in Turkestan<sup>116</sup> can serve as a model of the way the Soviets should be brought

<sup>116</sup> This refers to the national-state delimitation of the Soviet republics in Central Asia (the Turkestan, Bukhara and Khoresm [Khwarazm] republics) carried through in 1924. As a result of this national delimitation there were formed: the Turkmenian Soviet Socialist Republic, the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic, the Tajik Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic as part of the Uzbek SSR, the Kara-Kirghiz Autonomous Region of the RSFSR (subsequently it became the Kirghiz Soviet Socialist Republic), and the Karakalpak Autonomous Region of the Kirghiz Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (later of the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic). The Third Congress of Soviets of the USSR held in May 1925 accepted the Uzbek and Turkmenian

closer to the masses. The bourgeois press regards this delimitation as “Bolshevik cunning.” It is obvious, however, that this was a manifestation not of “cunning,” but of the deep-rooted aspiration of the masses of the people of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to have their own organs of power, close to and comprehensible to them. In the pre-revolutionary epoch, both these countries were torn to pieces and distributed among various khanates and states, thus providing a convenient field for the exploiting machinations of “the powers that be.” The time has now come when it has become possible for these scattered pieces to be *reunited* in independent states, so that the toiling masses of Uzbekistan and of Turkmenistan may be brought closer to the organs of power and linked solidly with them. The delimitation of Turkestan is, above all, the *reunion* of the scattered parts of these countries in independent states. That these states later expressed the wish to join the Soviet Union as equal members of it merely shows that the Bolsheviks have found the key to the deep-rooted aspirations of the masses of the people of the East, and that the Soviet Union is a voluntary union of the toiling masses of different nationalities, the only one in the world. To reunite Poland, the bourgeoisie needed a whole series of wars. To reunite Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, however, the Communists needed only a few months of explanatory propaganda.

That is the way to bring the organs of government, in this case the Soviets, closer to the broad masses of the toilers of different nationalities.

That is the proof that the Bolshevik national policy is the only correct policy.

I spoke further about raising the level of national culture in the Soviet republics of the East. But what is national culture? How is it to be reconciled with proletarian culture? Did not Lenin say, already before the war, that there are two cultures—bourgeois and socialist; that the slogan of national culture is a reactionary slogan of the bourgeoisie, who try to poison the minds of the working people with the venom of nationalism?<sup>117</sup>

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Soviet Socialist Republics into the USSR and amended the Constitution of the USSR accordingly. The national-state delimitation of the Soviet republics in Central Asia was carried through under the immediate direction of J. V. Stalin.

<sup>117</sup> See V. I. Lenin, “Critical Remarks on the National Question,” in *Collected Works*, Vol. XX, Progress Publishers, Moscow, pp. 17-51.

How is the building of national culture, the development of schools and courses in the native languages, and the training of cadres from the local people, to be reconciled with the building of socialism, with the building of proletarian culture? Is there not an irreconcilable contradiction here? Of course not! We are building proletarian culture. That is absolutely true. But it is also true that proletarian culture, which is socialist in content, assumes different forms and modes of expression among the different peoples who are drawn into the building of socialism, depending upon differences in language, manner of life, and so forth. Proletarian in content, national in form—such is the universal culture towards which socialism is proceeding. Proletarian culture does not abolish national culture, it gives it content. On the other hand, national culture does not abolish proletarian culture, it gives it form. The slogan of national culture was a bourgeois slogan as long as the bourgeoisie was in power and the consolidation of nations proceeded under the aegis of the bourgeois order. The slogan of national culture became a proletarian slogan when the proletariat came to power, and when the consolidation of nations began to proceed under the aegis of Soviet power. Whoever fails to understand the fundamental difference between these two situations will never understand either Leninism or the essence of the national question.

Some people (Kautsky, for instance) talk of the creation of a single universal language and the dying away of all other languages in the period of socialism. I have little faith in this theory of a single, all-embracing language. Experience, at any rate, speaks against rather than for such a theory. Until now what has happened has been that the socialist revolution has not diminished but rather increased the number of languages; for, by stirring up the lowest sections of humanity and pushing them on to the political arena, it awakens to new life a number of hitherto unknown or little-known nationalities. Who could have imagined that the old, tsarist Russia consisted of not less than fifty nations and national groups? The October Revolution, however, by breaking the old chains and bringing a number of forgotten peoples and nationalities on to the scene, gave them new life and a new development. Today, India is spoken of as a single whole. But there can scarcely be any doubt that, in the event of a revolutionary upheaval in India, scores of hitherto unknown nationalities, having their own separate languages and separate cultures, will appear on the scene. And as regards



implanting proletarian culture among the various nationalities, there can scarcely be any doubt that this will proceed in forms corresponding to the languages and manner of life of these nationalities.

Not long ago I received a letter from some Buryat comrades asking me to explain serious and difficult questions concerning the relations between universal culture and national culture. Here it is:

We earnestly request you to explain the following, for us, very serious and difficult questions. The ultimate aim of the Communist Party is to achieve a single universal culture. How is one to conceive the transition to a single universal culture through the national cultures which are developing within the limits of our individual autonomous republics? How is the assimilation of the specific features of the individual national cultures (language, etc.) to take place?

I think that what has just been said might serve as an answer to the anxious question put by these Buryat comrades.

The Buryat comrades raise the question of the assimilation of the individual nationalities in the course of building a universal proletarian culture. Undoubtedly, some nationalities may, and perhaps certainly will, undergo a process of assimilation. Such processes have taken place before. The point is, however, that the process of assimilation of some nationalities does not exclude, but presupposes the opposite process of the strengthening and further development of quite a number of existing and developing nations; for the partial process of assimilation of individual nationalities is the result of the general process of development of nations. It is precisely for this reason that the possible assimilation of some individual nationalities does not weaken, but confirms the entirely correct thesis that proletarian universal culture does not exclude, but presupposes and fosters the national culture of the peoples, just as the national culture of the peoples does not annul, but supplements and enriches universal proletarian culture.

Such, in general, are the immediate tasks that face the leading cadres of the Soviet republics of the East.

Such are the character and content of these tasks.

Advantage must be taken of the period that has begun of intense economic construction and of new concessions to the peasantry to promote the fulfillment of these tasks, and thereby to make it easier to draw the Soviet republics in the East, which are mainly peasant countries, into the work of building socialism in the Soviet Union.

It is said that the Party's new policy towards the peasantry, in making a number of new concessions (land on short lease, permission to employ hired labor), contains certain elements of retreat. Is that true? Yes, it is. But those are elements of retreat that we permit *alongside* the retention of an overwhelming superiority of forces on the side of the Party and the Soviet power. Stable currency, developing industry, developing transport, a credit system which is growing stronger, and by means of which it is possible, through preferential credits, to ruin or to raise to a higher level any stratum of the population without causing the slightest upheaval—all these are reserves at the command of the proletarian dictatorship by means of which certain elements of retreat on one sector of the front can only facilitate the preparation of an offensive along the whole front. Precisely for this reason, the few new concessions that the Party has made to the peasantry should, at the present time, make it easier rather than more difficult to draw the peasantry into the work of building socialism.

What can this circumstance mean for the Soviet republics in the East? It can only mean that it places in the hands of the leading cadres in these republics a new weapon enabling these countries to be more easily and quickly linked with the general system of Soviet economic development.

Such is the connection between the Party's policy in the countryside and the immediate national tasks confronting the leading cadres in the Soviet East.

In this connection, the task of the University of the Peoples of the East in relation to the Soviet republics of the East is to train cadres for these republics along lines that will ensure the fulfillment of the immediate tasks I have enumerated above.

The University of the Peoples of the East must not isolate itself from life. It is not, nor can it be, an institution standing above life. It must be connected with actual life through every fiber of its being. Consequently, it cannot ignore the immediate tasks confronting the Soviet republics in the

East. That is why the task of the University of the Peoples of the East is to take the immediate tasks that face these republics into account in training the appropriate cadres for them.

In this connection, it is necessary to bear in mind the existence of two deviations in the practice of the leading cadres in the Soviet East, deviations which must be combated within the precincts of this University if it is to train real cadres and real revolutionaries for the Soviet East.

The first deviation lies in simplification, a simplification of the tasks of which I have spoken above, an attempt mechanically to transplant models of economic construction which are quite comprehensible and applicable in the center of the Soviet Union, but which are totally unsuited to the conditions of development in the so-called border regions. The comrades who are guilty of this deviation fail to understand two things. They fail to understand that conditions in the center and in the "border regions" are not alike and are far from being identical. Furthermore, they fail to understand that the Soviet republics themselves in the East are not alike, that some of them, Georgia and Armenia, for example, are at a higher stage of national formation, whereas others, Chechnya and Kabarda, for example, are at a lower stage of national formation, and others again, Kirghizia, for example, occupy a middle position between these two extremes. These comrades fail to understand that if the work is not adapted to local conditions, if all the various specific features of each country are not carefully taken into account, nothing of importance can be built. The result of this deviation is that they become divorced from the masses and degenerate into Left phrasemongers. The task of the University of the Peoples of the East is to train cadres in the spirit of uncompromising struggle against this simplification.

The second deviation, on the other hand, lies in the exaggeration of local specific features, forgetfulness of the common and main thing that links the Soviet republics of the East with the industrial areas of the Soviet Union, the hushing up of socialist tasks, adaptation to the tasks of a narrow and restricted nationalism. The comrades who are guilty of this deviation care little about the internal development of their countries and prefer to leave that development to the natural course of things. For them, the main thing is not internal development, but "external" policy, the expansion of the frontiers of their republics, litigation with surrounding republics, the

desire to snatch an extra piece of territory from their neighbors and thus to get into the good graces of the bourgeois nationalists in their respective countries. The result of this deviation is that they become divorced from socialism and degenerate into ordinary bourgeois nationalists. The task of the University of the Peoples of the East is to train cadres in the spirit of uncompromising struggle against this concealed nationalism.

Such are the tasks of the University of the Peoples of the East in relation to the Soviet republics of the East.

## **II. The Tasks of the Communist University of the Toilers of the East in Relation to the Colonial and Dependent Countries of the East**

Let us pass to the second question, the question of the tasks of the Communist University of the Toilers of the East in relation to the colonial and dependent countries of the East.

What are the characteristic features of the life and development of these countries, which distinguish them from the Soviet republics of the East?

Firstly, these countries are living and developing under the oppression of imperialism.

Secondly, the existence of a double oppression, internal oppression (by the native bourgeoisie) and external oppression (by the foreign imperialist bourgeoisie), is intensifying and deepening the revolutionary crisis in these countries.

Thirdly, in some of these countries, India for example, capitalism is growing at a rapid rate, giving rise to and molding a more or less numerous class of local proletarians.

Fourthly, with the growth of the revolutionary movement, the national bourgeoisie in such countries is splitting up into two parts, a revolutionary part (the petit bourgeoisie) and a compromising part (the big bourgeoisie), of which the first is continuing the revolutionary struggle, whereas the second is entering into a bloc with imperialism.

Fifthly, parallel with the imperialist bloc, another bloc is taking shape in such countries, a bloc between the workers and the revolutionary petit bourgeoisie, an anti-imperialist bloc, the aim of which is complete liberation from imperialism.

Sixthly, the question of the hegemony of the proletariat in such countries, and of freeing the masses of the people from the influence of the compromising national bourgeoisie, is becoming more and more urgent.

Seventhly, this circumstance makes it much easier to link the national-liberation movement in such countries with the proletarian movement in the advanced countries of the West.

From this at least three conclusions follow:

- 1) The liberation of the colonial and dependent countries from imperialism cannot be achieved without a victorious revolution: you will not get independence gratis.
- 2) The revolution cannot be advanced and the complete independence of the capitalistically developed colonies and dependent countries cannot be won unless the compromising national bourgeoisie is isolated, unless the petit-bourgeois revolutionary masses are freed from the influence of that bourgeoisie, unless the policy of the hegemony of the proletariat is put into effect, unless the advanced elements of the working class are organized in an independent Communist Party.
- 3) Lasting victory cannot be achieved in the colonial and dependent countries, without a real link between the liberation movement in those countries and the proletarian movement in the advanced countries of the West.

The main task of the Communists in the colonial and dependent countries is to base their revolutionary activities upon these conclusions.

What are the immediate tasks of the revolutionary movement in the colonies and dependent countries in view of these circumstances?

The distinctive feature of the colonies and dependent countries at the present time is that there no longer exists a single and all-embracing colonial East. Formerly the colonial East was pictured as a homogeneous whole. Today, that picture no longer corresponds to the truth. We have now at least three categories of colonial and dependent countries. Firstly, countries like Morocco, which have little or no proletariat, and are industrially quite undeveloped. Secondly, countries like China and Egypt, which are under-developed industrially, and have a relatively small proletariat. Thirdly, countries like India, which are capitalistically more or less developed and have a more or less numerous national proletariat.

Clearly, all these countries cannot possibly be put on a par with one another.

In countries like Morocco, where the national bourgeoisie has, as yet, no grounds for splitting up into a revolutionary party and a compromising party, the task of the communist elements is to take all measures to create a united national front against imperialism. In such countries, the communist elements can be grouped in a single party only in the course of the struggle against imperialism, particularly after a victorious revolutionary struggle against imperialism.

In countries like Egypt and China, where the national bourgeoisie has already split up into a revolutionary party and a compromising party, but where the compromising section of the bourgeoisie is not yet able to join up with imperialism, the Communists can no longer set themselves the aim of forming a united national front against imperialism. In such countries the Communists must pass from the policy of a united national front to the policy of a revolutionary bloc of the workers and the petit bourgeoisie. In such countries that bloc can assume the form of a single party, a workers' and peasants' party, provided, however, that this distinctive party *actually* represents a bloc of two forces—the Communist Party and the party of the revolutionary petit bourgeoisie. The tasks of this bloc are to expose the half-heartedness and inconsistency of the national bourgeoisie and to wage a determined struggle against imperialism. Such a dual party is necessary and expedient, provided it does not bind the Communist Party hand and foot, provided it does not restrict the freedom of the Communist Party to conduct agitation and propaganda work, provided it does not hinder the rallying of the proletarians around the Communist Party, and provided it facilitates the actual leadership of the revolutionary movement by the Communist Party. Such a dual party is unnecessary and inexpedient if it does not conform to all these conditions, for it can only lead to the communist elements becoming dissolved in the ranks of the bourgeoisie, to the Communist Party losing the proletarian army.

The situation is somewhat different in countries like India. The fundamental and new feature of the conditions of life of colonies like India is not only that the national bourgeoisie has split up into a revolutionary party and a compromising party, but primarily that the compromising section of this bourgeoisie has already managed, in the main, to strike a deal with imperialism. Fearing revolution more than it fears imperialism, and concerned more about its money-bags than about the interests of its own

country, this section of the bourgeoisie, the richest and most influential section, is going over entirely to the camp of the irreconcilable enemies of the revolution, it is forming a bloc with imperialism against the workers and peasants of its own country. The victory of the revolution cannot be achieved unless this bloc is smashed. But in order to smash this bloc, fire must be concentrated on the compromising national bourgeoisie, its treachery exposed, the toiling masses freed from its influence, and the conditions necessary for the hegemony of the proletariat systematically prepared. In other words, in colonies like India it is a matter of preparing the proletariat for the role of leader of the liberation movement, step by step dislodging the bourgeoisie and its mouthpieces from this honorable post. The task is to create a revolutionary anti-imperialist bloc and to ensure the hegemony of the proletariat in this bloc. This bloc can assume, although it need not always necessarily do so, the form of a single workers' and peasants' party, formally bound by a single platform. In such countries, the independence of the Communist Party must be the chief slogan of the advanced communist elements, for the hegemony of the proletariat can be prepared and brought about only by the Communist Party. But the Communist Party can and must enter into an open bloc with the revolutionary wing of the bourgeoisie in order, after isolating the compromising national bourgeoisie, to lead the vast masses of the urban and rural petit bourgeoisie in the struggle against imperialism.

Hence, the immediate tasks of the revolutionary movement in the capitalistically developed colonies and dependent countries are:

- 1) To win the best elements of the working class to the side of communism and to create independent Communist Parties.
- 2) To form a national-revolutionary bloc of the workers, peasants and revolutionary intelligentsia against the bloc of the compromising national bourgeoisie and imperialism.
- 3) To ensure the hegemony of the proletariat in that bloc.
- 4) To fight to free the urban and rural petit bourgeoisie from the influence of the compromising national bourgeoisie.



5) To ensure that the liberation movement is linked with the proletarian movement in the advanced countries.

Such are the three groups of immediate tasks confronting the leading cadres in the colonial and dependent countries of the East.

These tasks assume a particularly important character and particularly great significance when examined in the light of the present international situation. The characteristic feature of the present international situation is that the revolutionary movement has entered a period of temporary lull. But what is a lull, what does it mean at the present time? It can only mean an intensification of the pressure on the workers of the West, on the colonies of the East, and primarily on the Soviet Union as the standard-bearer of the revolutionary movement in all countries. There can scarcely be any doubt that preparation for this pressure on the Soviet Union has already begun in the ranks of the imperialists. The campaign of slander launched in connection with the insurrection in Estonia,<sup>118</sup> the infamous incitement against the Soviet Union in connection with the explosion in Sofia, and the general crusade that the bourgeois press is conducting against our country, all mark the preparatory stage of an offensive. It is the artillery preparation of public opinion intended to accustom the general public to attacks against the Soviet Union and to create the moral prerequisites for intervention. What will be the outcome of this campaign of lies and slander, whether the imperialists will risk undertaking a serious offensive, remains to be seen; but there can scarcely be any doubt that those attacks bode no good for the colonies. Therefore, the question of preparing a counter-blow by the united forces of the revolution to the blow likely to be delivered by imperialism is an inevitable question of the day.

That is why the unswerving fulfillment of the immediate tasks of the revolutionary movement in the colonies and dependent countries acquires particular importance at the present time.

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<sup>118</sup> This refers to the armed uprising of the workers in Revel (Tallinn) on December 1, 1924, provoked by the sentence passed by an Estonian court at the end of November 1924 on 149 political offenders accused of conducting communist propaganda. The majority of the accused were sentenced to long terms of penal servitude, thirty-nine were sentenced to penal servitude for life, and Tomp, the leader of the Estonian workers, was shot. The uprising was cruelly suppressed by the reactionary Estonian government.

What is the mission of the University of the Peoples of the East in relation to the colonial and dependent countries in view of all these circumstances? Its mission is to take into account all the specific features of the revolutionary development of these countries and to train the cadres coming from them in a way that will ensure the fulfillment of the various immediate tasks I have enumerated.

In the University of the Peoples of the East there are about ten different groups of students who have come here from colonial and dependent countries. We all know that these comrades are thirsting for light and knowledge. The task of the University of the Peoples of the East is to make them into real revolutionaries, armed with the theory of Leninism, equipped with practical experience of Leninism, and capable of carrying out the immediate tasks of the liberation movement in the colonies and dependent countries with all their heart and soul.

In this connection it is necessary to bear in mind two deviations in the practice of the leading cadres in the colonial East, two deviations which must be combated if real revolutionary cadres are to be trained.

The first deviation lies in an underestimation of the revolutionary potentialities of the liberation movement and in an overestimation of the idea of a united, all-embracing national front in the colonies and dependent countries, irrespective of the state and degree of development of those countries. That is a deviation to the Right, and it is fraught with the danger of the revolutionary movement being debased and of the voices of the communist elements becoming drowned in the general chorus of the bourgeois nationalists. It is the direct duty of the University of the Peoples of the East to wage a determined struggle against that deviation.

The second deviation lies in an overestimation of the revolutionary potentialities of the liberation movement and in an underestimation of the role of an alliance between the working class and the revolutionary bourgeoisie against imperialism. It seems to me that the Communists in Java, who not long ago mistakenly put forward the slogan of Soviet power for their country, are suffering from this deviation. That is a deviation to the Left, and it is fraught with the danger of the Communist Party becoming divorced from the masses and converted into a sect. A determined struggle against that deviation is an essential condition for the training of real revolutionary cadres for the colonies and dependent countries of the East.

Such, in general, are the political tasks of the University of the Peoples of the East in relation to the peoples of the Soviet East and of the colonial East.

Let us hope that the University of the Peoples of the East will succeed in carrying out these tasks with honor.

THE NATIONAL QUESTION  
ONCE AGAIN

*June 30, 1925*

*Concerning the Article by Semich*

One can only welcome the fact that now, after the discussion that took place in the Yugoslav Commission, Semich, in his article, wholly and entirely associates himself with the stand taken by the RCP(B) delegation in the Comintern. It would be wrong, however, to think on these grounds that there were no disagreements between the RCP(B) delegation and Semich before or during the discussion in the Yugoslav Commission. Evidently, that is exactly what Semich is inclined to think about the disagreements on the national question, in trying to reduce them just to misunderstandings. Unfortunately, he is profoundly mistaken. He asserts in his article that the dispute with him is based on a “series of misunderstandings” caused by “one, not fully translated,” speech he delivered in the Yugoslav Commission. In other words, it follows that we must make a scapegoat of the person who, for some reason, did not translate Semich’s speech in full. In the interests of the truth I must declare that this assertion of Semich’s is quite contrary to the facts. It would have been better, of course, had Semich supported his assertion with passages from the speech he delivered in the Yugoslav Commission, the report of which is kept in the Comintern files. But for some reason he did not do this. Consequently, I am compelled to go through this not very pleasant, but very necessary, procedure for him.

This is all the more necessary since even now, after Semich has wholly associated himself with the stand taken by the RCP(B) delegation, there is still much that is unclear in his present position.

In my speech in the Yugoslav Commission (see *Bolshevik*,<sup>119</sup> No. 7)<sup>120</sup> I spoke of disagreements on three questions: 1) the question of the ways of solving the national question, 2) the question of the internal social content of the national movement in the present historical epoch, and 3) the question of the role of the international factor in the national question.

On the first question I said that Semich had “not fully understood the main essence of the Bolshevik presentation of the national question,” that he separated the national question from the general question of the

<sup>119</sup> *Bolshevik*, a fortnightly theoretical and political magazine, organ of the Central Committee of the CPSU(B); began publication in April 1924.

<sup>120</sup> See Stalin’s “Concerning the National Question in Yugoslavia,” in V. I. Lenin, J. V. Stalin, *On the National Colonial Question*, Calcutta Book House, 1970, pp. 170-173

revolution, and that, consequently, he was inclined to reduce the national question to a constitutional issue.

Is all that true?

Read the following passage from Semich's speech in the Yugoslav Commission (March 30, 1925) and judge for yourselves:

Can the national question be reduced to a constitutional issue? First of all, let us make a theoretical supposition. Let us suppose that in state X there are three nations A, B, and C. These three nations express the wish to live in one state. What is the issue in this case? It is, of course, the regulation of the internal relationships within this state. Hence, it is a constitutional issue. In this theoretical case the national question amounts to a constitutional issue... If, in this theoretical case, we reduce the national question to a constitutional issue, it must be said—as I have always emphasized—that the self-determination of nations, including secession, is a condition for the solution of the constitutional issue. And it is solely on this plane that I put the constitutional issue.

I think that this passage from Semich's speech needs no further comment. Clearly, whoever regards the national question as a component part of the general question of the proletarian revolution cannot reduce it to a constitutional issue. And vice versa, only one who separates the national question from the general question of the proletarian revolution can reduce it to a constitutional issue.

Semich's speech contains a statement to the effect that the right to national self-determination cannot be won without a revolutionary struggle. Semich says: "Of course, such rights can be won only by means of a revolutionary struggle. They cannot be won by parliamentary means; they can result only from mass revolutionary actions."

But what do "revolutionary struggle" and "revolutionary actions" mean? Can "revolutionary struggle" and "revolutionary actions" be identified with the overthrow of the ruling class, with the seizure of power, with the victory of the revolution as a condition for the solution of the national question? Of course not. To speak of the victory of the revolution as the fundamental condition for the solution of the national question is

one thing; but it is quite another thing to put “revolutionary actions” and “revolutionary struggle” as the condition for the solution of the national question. It must be observed that the path of reforms, the constitutional path, by no means excludes “revolutionary actions” and “revolutionary struggle.” Decisive in determining whether a given party is revolutionary or reformist are not “revolutionary actions” in themselves, but the political aims and objects for the sake of which the party undertakes and employs these actions. As is known, in 1906, after the first Duma was dispersed, the Russian Mensheviks proposed the organization of a “general strike” and even of an “armed uprising.” But that did not in the least prevent them from remaining Mensheviks, for why did they propose all this at that time? Not, of course, to smash tsarism and to organize the complete victory of the revolution, but in order to “exert pressure” on the tsarist government with the object of winning reforms, with the object of widening the “constitution,” with the object of securing the convocation of an “improved” Duma. “Revolutionary actions” *for the purpose of* reforming the old order, *while* power remains in the hands of the ruling class is one thing—that is the constitutional path. “Revolutionary actions” for the purpose of breaking up the old order, for overthrowing the ruling class, is another thing—that is the revolutionary path, the path of the complete victory of the revolution. There is a fundamental difference here.

That is why I think that Semich’s reference to “revolutionary struggle” while reducing the national question to a constitutional issue does not refute, but, on the contrary, only confirms my statement that Semich had “not fully understood the main essence of the Bolshevik presentation of the national question,” for he failed to understand that the national question must be regarded not in isolation from, but in inseparable connection with, the question of the victory of the revolution, as part of the general question of the revolution.

While insisting on this, I do not in the least mean to imply that I have said anything new about Semich’s mistake on this question. Not at all. This mistake of Semich’s was already mentioned by Comrade Manuilsky at the Fifth Congress of the Comintern<sup>121</sup> when he said:

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<sup>121</sup> The Fifth Congress of the Comintern was held in Moscow, June 17-July 8, 1924. On June 30, D. Z. Manuilsky delivered a report on the national question.

In his pamphlet *The National Question in the Light of Marxism*, and in a number of articles published in *Radnik*, the organ of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, Semich advocates a struggle for the revision of the Constitution as a practical slogan for the Communist Party, that is, he in fact reduces the whole question of self-determination of nations exclusively to a constitutional issue (see *Stenographic Report of the Fifth Congress*, pp. 596-97).

Zinoviev, too, spoke about this same mistake in the Yugoslav Commission, when he said: "In the prospect drawn by Semich it appears that only one little thing is lacking, namely, revolution," that the national question is a "revolutionary and not a constitutional" problem (see *Pravda*, No. 83).

These remarks by representatives of the RCP(B) in the Comintern concerning Semich's mistake could not have been accidental, groundless. There is no smoke without fire.

That is how matters stand with Semich's first and fundamental mistake.

His other mistakes arise directly from this fundamental mistake.

Concerning the second question, I said in my speech (see *Bolshevik*, No. 7) that Semich "refuses to regard the national question as being, in essence, a peasant question."<sup>122</sup>

Is that true?

Read the following passage from Semich's speech in the Yugoslav Commission and judge for yourselves:

What is the social significance of the national movement in Yugoslavia? [asks Semich, and he answers there:] Its social content is the competitive struggle between Serb capital on the one hand and Croat and Slovene capital on the other (see Semich's speech in the Yugoslav Commission).

There can be no doubt, of course, that the competitive struggle between the Slovene and Croat bourgeoisie and the Serb bourgeoisie is bound to play a certain role here. But it is equally beyond doubt that a

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<sup>122</sup> See this volume, p. 71.—*Ed.*



man who thinks that the social significance of the national movement lies in the competitive struggle between the bourgeoisies of the different nationalities cannot regard the national question as being, in essence, a peasant question. What is the essence of the national question today, when this question has been transformed from a local, intrastate question into a world question, a question of the struggle waged by the colonies and dependent nationalities against imperialism? The essence of the national question today lies in the struggle that the masses of the people of the colonies and dependent nationalities are waging against financial exploitation, against the political enslavement and cultural effacement of those colonies and nationalities by the imperialist bourgeoisie of the ruling nationality. What significance can the competitive struggle between the bourgeoisies of different nationalities have when the national question is presented in that way? Certainly not decisive significance, and, in certain cases, not even important significance. It is quite evident that the main point here is not that the bourgeoisie of one nationality is beating, or may beat, the bourgeoisie of another nationality in the competitive struggle, but that the imperialist group of the ruling nationality is exploiting and oppressing the bulk of the masses, above all the peasant masses, of the colonies and dependent nationalities and that, by oppressing and exploiting them, it is drawing them into the struggle against imperialism, converting them into allies of the proletarian revolution. The national question cannot be regarded as being, in essence, a peasant question if the social significance of the national movement is reduced to the competitive struggle between the bourgeoisies of different nationalities. And vice versa, the competitive struggle between the bourgeoisies of different nationalities cannot be regarded as constituting the social significance of the national movement if the national question is regarded as being, in essence, a peasant question. These two formulas cannot possibly be taken as equivalent.

Semich refers to a passage in Stalin's pamphlet *Marxism and the National Question*, written at the end of 1912. There it says that "the national struggle under the conditions of rising capitalism is a struggle of the bourgeois classes among themselves."

Evidently, by this Semich is trying to suggest that his formula defining the social significance of the national movement under the present historical conditions is correct. But Stalin's pamphlet was written before

the imperialist war, when the national question was not yet regarded by Marxists as a question of world significance, when the Marxists' fundamental demand for the right to self-determination was regarded not as part of the proletarian revolution, but as part of the bourgeois-democratic revolution. It would be ridiculous not to see that since then the international situation has radically changed, that the war, on the one hand, and the October Revolution in Russia, on the other, *transformed the national question from a part of the bourgeois-democratic revolution into a part of the proletarian-socialist revolution*. As far back as October 1916, in his article, "The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up,"<sup>123</sup> Lenin said that the main point of the national question, the right to self-determination, had ceased to be a part of the general democratic movement, that it had already become a component part of the general proletarian, socialist revolution. I do not even mention subsequent works on the national question by Lenin and by other representatives of Russian communism. After all this, what significance can Semich's reference to the passage in Stalin's pamphlet, written in the period of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia, have at the present time, when, as a consequence of the new historical situation, we have entered a new epoch, the epoch of proletarian revolution?

It can only signify that Semich quotes outside of space and time, without reference to the living historical situation, and thereby violates the most elementary requirements of dialectics, and ignores the fact that what is right for one historical situation may prove to be wrong in another historical situation. In my speech in the Yugoslav Commission I said that two stages must be distinguished in the presentation of the national question by the Russian Bolsheviks: the pre-October stage, when the bourgeois-democratic revolution was the issue and the national question was regarded as a part of the general democratic movement; and the October stage, when the proletarian revolution was already the issue and the national question had become a component part of the proletarian revolution. It scarcely needs proof that this distinction is of decisive significance. I am afraid that Semich still fails to understand the meaning and significance of

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<sup>123</sup> See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. XXII, Progress Publishers, Moscow, pp. 320-360.

this difference between the two stages in the presentation of the national question.

That is why I think Semich's attempt to regard the national movement as not being, in essence, a peasant question, but as a question of the competition between the bourgeoisies of different nationalities "is due to an underestimation of the inherent strength of the national movement and a failure to understand the profoundly popular and profoundly revolutionary character of the national movement" (see *Bolshevik*, No. 7).<sup>124</sup>

That is how the matter stands with Semich's second mistake.

It is characteristic that the same thing about this mistake of Semich's was said by Zinoviev in his speech in the Yugoslav Commission: "Semich is wrong when he says that the peasant movement in Yugoslavia is headed by the bourgeoisie and is therefore not revolutionary" (see *Pravda*, No. 83).

Is this coincidence accidental? Of course not!

Once again: there is no smoke without fire.

Finally, on the third question I stated that Semich makes an "attempt to treat the national question in Yugoslavia in isolation from the international situation and the probable prospects in Europe."<sup>125</sup>

Is that true?

Yes, it is, for in his speech Semich did not even remotely hint at the fact that the international situation under present conditions, especially in relation to Yugoslavia, is a major factor in the solution of the national question. The fact that the Yugoslav state itself was formed as a result of the clash between the two major imperialist coalitions, that Yugoslavia cannot escape from the big play of forces that is now going on in the surrounding imperialist states—all this remained outside of Semich's field of vision. Semich's statement that he can fully conceive of certain changes taking place in the international situation which may cause the question of self-determination to become an urgent and practical one, must now, in the present international situation, be regarded as inadequate. Now it is by no means a matter of admitting that the question of the right of nations to self-determination may become urgent, given certain changes in the international situation, in a possible and distant future; this could, if need be,

<sup>124</sup> See this volume, p. 72.—*Ed.*

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*—*Ed.*

now be admitted as a prospect even by bourgeois democrats. That is not the point now. The point now is to avoid making the present frontiers of the Yugoslav state, which came into being as a result of war and violence, the starting point and legal basis for the solution of the national question. One thing or the other: either the question of national self-determination, i.e., the question of radically altering the frontiers of Yugoslavia, is an *appendage* to the national program, dimly looming in the distant future, or it is the *basis* of the national program. At all events it is clear that the point about the right to self-determination cannot be at one and the same time *both* an appendage to *and* the basis of the national program of the Yugoslav Communist Party. I am afraid that Semich still continues to regard the right to self-determination as an appendage concerning prospects added to the national program.

That is why I think that Semich divorces the national question from the question of the general international situation and, as a consequence, for him the question of self-determination, i.e., the question of altering the frontiers of Yugoslavia, is, in essence, not an urgent question, but an academic one.

That is how the matter stands with Semich's third mistake.

It is characteristic that the same thing about this mistake of Semich's was said by Comrade Manuilsky in his report to the Fifth Congress of the Comintern:

The fundamental premise of Semich's whole presentation of the national question is the idea that the proletariat must accept the bourgeois state *within those frontiers which have been set up by a series of wars and acts of violence*<sup>126</sup> (see *Stenographic Report of the Fifth Congress of the Comintern*, p. 597).

Can this coincidence be regarded as accidental? Of course not! Once again: there is no smoke without fire.

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<sup>126</sup> My italics—*J. St.*



**EXCERPTS FROM A LETTER TO  
COMRADE KAGANOVICH AND  
THE OTHER MEMBERS OF  
THE POLITICAL BUREAU OF  
THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE,  
UKRAINE CP(B)**

*April 26, 1926*

There is some truth in what Shumsky says. It is true that a broad movement in favor of Ukrainian culture and Ukrainian public life has begun and is spreading in the Ukraine. It is true that we must under no circumstances allow that movement to fall into the hands of elements hostile to us. It is true that a number of Communists in the Ukraine do not realize the meaning and importance of that movement and are therefore taking no steps to gain control of it. It is true that a change of sentiment must be brought about among our Party and Soviet cadres, who are still imbued with an ironical and skeptical attitude towards Ukrainian culture and Ukrainian public life. It is true that we must painstakingly select and build up cadres capable of gaining control of the new movement in the Ukraine. All that is true. Nevertheless, Shumsky commits at least two serious errors.

Firstly. He confuses Ukrainization of the apparatus of our Party and other bodies with Ukrainization of the proletariat. The apparatus of our Party, state and other bodies serving the population can and should be Ukrainized, a due tempo in this matter being observed. But it is impossible to Ukrainize the proletariat from above. It is impossible to *compel* the mass of the Russian workers to give up the Russian language and Russian culture and accept the Ukrainian culture and language as their own. That would be contrary to the principle of the free development of nationalities. It would not be national freedom, but a peculiar form of national oppression. There can be no doubt that with the industrial development of the Ukraine and the influx into industry of Ukrainian workers from the surrounding countryside, the composition of the Ukrainian proletariat will change. There can be no doubt that the composition of the Ukrainian proletariat will become Ukrainized, just as the composition of the proletariat in Latvia or Hungary, say, which was at one time German in character, subsequently became Latvianized or Magyarized. But this is a lengthy, spontaneous and natural process. To attempt to replace this spontaneous process by the forcible Ukrainization of the proletariat from above would be a utopian and harmful policy, one capable of stirring up anti-Ukrainian chauvinism among the non-Ukrainian sections of the proletariat in the Ukraine. It seems to me that Shumsky has a wrong idea of Ukrainization and does not take this latter danger into account.

Secondly. While quite rightly stressing the positive character of the new movement in the Ukraine in favor of Ukrainian culture and Ukrainian public life, Shumsky fails to see its seamy side. Shumsky fails to see that, in view of the weakness of the indigenous communist cadres in the Ukraine, this movement, which is very frequently led by non-communist intellectuals, may here and there assume the character of a struggle to alienate Ukrainian culture and public life from general Soviet culture and public life, the character of a struggle against “Moscow” in general, against the Russians in general, against Russian culture and its highest achievement—Leninism. I shall not stop to prove that this is becoming an increasingly real danger in the Ukraine. I only want to say that even certain Ukrainian Communists are not free from such defects. I have in mind such a generally known fact as the article of the Communist Khvilevoy in the Ukrainian press. Khvilevoy’s demand for the “*immediate* de-Russification of the proletariat” in the Ukraine, his opinion that “Ukrainian poetry must get away from Russian literature and its style as fast as possible,” his statement that “the ideas of the proletariat are known to us without Moscow art,” his infatuation with the idea that the “young” Ukrainian intelligentsia has some kind of Messianic role to play, his ludicrous and non-Marxist attempt to divorce culture from politics—all this and much else like it sounds (cannot but sound!) more than strange nowadays coming from the mouth of a Ukrainian Communist. At a time when the proletarians of Western Europe and their Communist Parties are in sympathy with “Moscow,” this citadel of the international revolutionary movement and of Leninism, at a time when the proletarians of Western Europe look with admiration at the flag that flies over Moscow, the Ukrainian Communist Khvilevoy has nothing better to say in favor of “Moscow” than to call on the Ukrainian leaders to get away from “Moscow” “as fast as possible.” And that is called internationalism! What is to be said of other Ukrainian intellectuals, those of the non-communist camp, if Communists begin to talk, and not only to talk but even to write in our Soviet press, in the language of Khvilevoy? Shumsky does not realize that we can gain control of the new movement in the Ukraine in favor of Ukrainian culture only by combating extremes like Khvilevoy’s in the communist ranks. Shumsky does not realize that only by combating such extremes can the rising Ukrainian culture and public life be converted into a Soviet culture and public life.





# ABOUT CHINA

*August 1, 1927*

*Excerpts from a Speech Delivered at the Joint Plenum of the Central Committee and the Central Control Commission of the CPSU(B) at the session "The International Situation and the Defense of the USSR"*

Let us pass to the question of China.

I shall not dwell on the mistakes of the opposition on the question of the character and prospects of the Chinese revolution. I shall not do so because enough has been said, and said quite convincingly, on this subject, and it is not worthwhile repeating it here. Nor shall I dwell on the assertion that in its present phase the Chinese revolution is a revolution for customs autonomy (Trotsky). Nor is it worthwhile dwelling on the assertion that no feudal survivals exist in China, or that, if they do exist, they are of no great importance (Trotsky and Radek), in which case the agrarian revolution in China would be absolutely incomprehensible. You no doubt already know from our Party press about these and similar mistakes of the opposition on the Chinese question.

Let us pass to the question of the basic premises of Leninism in deciding the questions of revolution in colonial and dependent countries.

What is the basic premise of the Comintern and the Communist Parties generally in their approach to the questions of the revolutionary movement in colonial and dependent countries?

It consists in a strict *distinction* between revolution in imperialist countries, in countries that oppress other nations, and revolution in colonial and dependent countries, in countries that suffer from imperialist oppression by other states. Revolution in imperialist countries is one thing: there the bourgeoisie is the oppressor of other nations; there it is counter-revolutionary at all stages of the revolution; there the national factor, as a factor in the struggle for emancipation, is absent. Revolution in colonial and dependent countries is another thing: there the imperialist oppression by other states is one of the factors of the revolution; there this oppression cannot but affect the national bourgeoisie also; there the national bourgeoisie, at a certain stage and for a certain period, may support the revolutionary movement of its country against imperialism; there

the national factor, as a factor in the struggle for emancipation, is a revolutionary factor.

To fail to draw this distinction, to fail to understand this difference and to identify revolution in imperialist countries with revolution in colonial countries, is to depart from the path of Marxism, from the path of Leninism, to take the path of the supporters of the Second International.

Here is what Lenin said about this in his report on the national and colonial questions at the Second Congress of the Comintern:

What is the *most important*, the *fundamental* idea of our theses? The *distinction* between *oppressed* nations and *oppressing* nations. We emphasize this distinction—in contrast to the Second International and bourgeois democracy<sup>127</sup> (see Vol. XXV, p. 351).<sup>128</sup>

The principal error of the opposition is that it fails to understand and does not admit this difference between the two types of revolution.

The principal error of the opposition is that it *identifies* the 1905 Revolution in Russia, an imperialist country which oppressed other nations, with the revolution in China, an oppressed, semi-colonial country, which is compelled to fight imperialist oppression on the part of other states.

Here in Russia, in 1905, the revolution was directed against the bourgeoisie, against the liberal bourgeoisie, in spite of the fact that it was a bourgeois-democratic revolution. Why? Because the liberal bourgeoisie of an *imperialist* country is bound to be counter revolutionary. For that very reason among the Bolsheviks at that time there was not, and could not be, any question of temporary blocs and agreements with the liberal bourgeoisie. On these grounds, the opposition asserts that the same attitude should be adopted in China at all stages of the revolutionary movement, that temporary agreements and blocs with the national bourgeoisie are never permissible in China under any conditions. But the opposition forgets that only people who do not understand and do not admit that there is a difference between revolution in oppressed countries and revolution in

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<sup>127</sup> My italics.—*J. St.*

<sup>128</sup> Lenin, "Second Congress of the Communist International," July 19 August 7, 1920 (see *Collected Works*, Vol. XXXI, Progress Publishers, Moscow, pp. 213-256).

oppressing countries can talk like that, that only people who are breaking with Leninism and are sinking to the level of supporters of the Second International can talk like that.

Here is what Lenin said about the permissibility of entering into temporary agreements and blocs with the *bourgeois-liberation movement in colonial countries*:

The Communist International must enter into a *temporary alliance*<sup>129</sup> with bourgeois democracy in the colonies and backward countries, but must not merge with it, and must unflinchingly preserve the independence of the proletarian movement, even if in its most rudimentary form. (see Vol. XXV, p. 290)<sup>130</sup>

We, as Communists, should, and will, *support bourgeois-liberation*<sup>131</sup> movements in colonial countries only when those movements are really revolutionary, when the representatives of those movements do not hinder us in training and organizing the peasantry and the broad masses of the exploited in a revolutionary spirit. (see Vol. XXV, p. 353)<sup>132</sup>

How could it “happen” that Lenin, who fulminated against agreements with the bourgeoisie *in Russia*, admitted that such agreements and blocs were permissible *in China*? Perhaps Lenin was mistaken? Perhaps he had turned from revolutionary tactics to opportunist tactics? Of course not! It “happened” because Lenin understood the difference between revolution in an oppressed country and revolution in an oppressing country. It “happened” because Lenin understood that, at a certain stage of its development, the national bourgeoisie in the colonial and dependent countries may support the revolutionary movement of its own country against the oppression of imperialism. That the opposition refuses to understand, but

<sup>129</sup> My italics.—*J. St.*

<sup>130</sup> Lenin, “Preliminary Draft of Theses on the National and Colonial Questions,” 1920 (in *Collected Works*, Vol. XXXI, Progress Publishers, Moscow, pp. 144-151).

<sup>131</sup> My italics.—*J. St.*

<sup>132</sup> Lenin, “Second Congress of the Communist International,” July 19 August 7, 1920 (see *Collected Works*, Vol. XXXI, Progress Publishers, Moscow, pp. 213-256).

it refuses to do so because it is breaking with Lenin's revolutionary tactics, breaking with the revolutionary tactics of Leninism.

Have you noticed how carefully in their speeches the leaders of the opposition evaded these directives of Lenin's, being afraid to mention them? Why do they evade these universally known tactical directives of Lenin's for the colonial and dependent countries? Why are they afraid of these directives? Because they are afraid of the truth. Because Lenin's tactical directives refute the entire ideological and political line of Trotskyism on the questions of the Chinese revolution.

About the stages of the Chinese revolution. The opposition has got so confused that it is now denying that there are any stages at all in the development of the Chinese revolution. But is there such a thing as a revolution that does not go through definite *stages of development*? Did not our revolution have its stages of development? Take Lenin's *April Theses*<sup>133</sup> and you will see that Lenin recognized two stages in our revolution: the first stage was the bourgeois-democratic revolution, with the agrarian movement as its main axis; the second stage was the October Revolution, with the seizure of power by the proletariat as its main axis.

What are the stages in the Chinese revolution?

In my opinion there should be three:

The *first* stage is the revolution of an all-national *united* front, the Guangdong period, when the revolution was striking chiefly at foreign imperialism, and the national bourgeoisie supported the revolutionary movement;

The *second* stage is the bourgeois-democratic revolution, after the national troops reached the Yangtze River, when the national bourgeoisie deserted the revolution and the agrarian movement grew into a mighty revolution of tens of millions of the peasantry (the Chinese revolution is now at the second stage of its development);

The *third* stage is the Soviet revolution, which has not yet come, but will come.

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<sup>133</sup> See V. I. Lenin, "The Tasks of the Proletariat in the Present Revolution," in *Collected Works*, Vol. II, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, pp. 19-26

Whoever fails to understand that there is no such thing as a revolution without definite stages of development, whoever fails to understand that there are three stages in the development of the Chinese revolution, understands nothing about Marxism or about the Chinese question.

What is the characteristic feature of the first stage of the Chinese revolution?

The characteristic feature of the first stage of the Chinese revolution is, firstly, that it was the revolution of an all-national united front, and secondly, that it was directed mainly against foreign imperialist oppression (the Hong Kong strike, etc.). Was Guangdong then the center, the *place d'armes*, of the revolutionary movement in China? Of course it was. Only those who are blind can deny that now.

Is it true that the first stage of a colonial revolution must have just such a character? I think it is true. In the "Supplementary Theses" of the Second Congress of the Comintern, which deal with the revolution in China and India, it is explicitly stated that in those countries "foreign domination is all the time hindering the free development of social life," that "therefore, *the first step*<sup>134</sup> of a revolution in the colonies must be to overthrow foreign capitalism" (see *Verbatim Report of the Second Congress of the Comintern*, p. 605).

The characteristic feature of the Chinese revolution is that it has taken this "first step," has passed through the first stage of its development, has passed through the period of the revolution of an all-national united front and has entered the second stage of its development, the period of the agrarian revolution.

The characteristic feature, for instance, of the Turkish revolution (the Kemalists), on the contrary, is that it got stuck at the "first step," at the first stage of its development, at the stage of the bourgeois-liberation movement, without even attempting to pass to the second stage of its development, the stage of the agrarian revolution.

What were the Kuomintang and its government at the first stage of the revolution, the Guangdong period? They were a bloc of workers, peasants, bourgeois intellectuals and the national bourgeoisie. Was Guangdong at that time the center of the revolutionary movement, the *place*

<sup>134</sup> My italics.—*J. St.*

*d'armes* of the revolution? Was it correct policy at that time to support the Guangdong Kuomintang, as the government of the struggle for liberation from imperialism? Were we right in giving assistance to Guangdong in China and, say, Ankara in Turkey, when Guangdong and Ankara were fighting imperialism? Yes, we were right. We were right, and we were then following in the footsteps of Lenin, for the struggle waged by Guangdong and Ankara was dissipating the forces of imperialism, was weakening and discrediting imperialism, and was thus facilitating the development of the center of the world revolution, the development of the USSR. Is it true that at that time the present leaders of our opposition joined with us in supporting both Guangdong and Ankara, giving them certain assistance? Yes, it is true. Let anybody try to refute that.

But what does a united front with the national bourgeoisie at the first stage of a colonial revolution mean? Does it mean that Communists must not intensify the struggle of the workers and peasants against the landlords and the national bourgeoisie, that the proletariat ought to sacrifice its independence, if only to a very slight extent, if only for a very short time? No, it does not mean that. A united front can be of revolutionary significance only where, and only on condition that, it does not prevent the Communist Party from conducting its independent political and organizational work, from organizing the proletariat into an independent political force, from rousing the peasantry against the landlords, from openly organizing a workers' and peasants' revolution and from preparing in this way the conditions for the hegemony of the proletariat. I think that the reporter fully proved on the basis of universally known documents that it was precisely this conception of the united front that the Comintern impressed upon the Chinese Communist Party.

Kamenev and Zinoviev referred here to a single telegram sent to Shanghai in October 1926, stating that for the time being, until Shanghai was captured, the agrarian movement should not be intensified. I am far from admitting that that telegram was right. I have never regarded and do not now regard the Comintern as being infallible. Mistakes are sometimes made, and that telegram was unquestionably a mistake. But, firstly, the *Comintern itself* cancelled that telegram a few weeks later (in November 1926), without any promptings or signals from the opposition. Secondly, why has the opposition kept silent about this until now? Why has it recalled



that telegram only *after nine months*? And why does it conceal from the Party the fact that the Comintern cancelled that telegram *nine months ago*? Hence, it would be malicious slander to assert that that telegram defined the line of our leadership. As a matter of fact, it was an isolated, episodic telegram, totally uncharacteristic of the line of the Comintern, of the line of our leadership. That is obvious, I repeat, if only from the fact that it was cancelled within a few weeks by a number of documents which laid down the line, and which were indeed characteristic of our leadership.

Permit me to refer to these documents.

Here, for instance, is an excerpt from the resolution of the Seventh Plenum of the Comintern, *in November 1926, i.e.,* a month after the above-mentioned telegram:

The peculiar feature of the present situation is its transitional character, the fact that the proletariat must choose between the prospect of a bloc with considerable sections of the bourgeoisie and the prospect of further consolidating its alliance with the peasantry. *If the proletariat fails to put forward a radical agrarian program*, it will be unable to draw the peasantry into the revolutionary struggle and will forfeit its hegemony in the national-liberation movement.<sup>135</sup>

And further:

The Guangdong People's Government will not be able to retain power in the revolution, will not be able to achieve complete victory over foreign imperialism and native reaction until the cause of national liberation is *identified with the agrarian revolution* (see *Resolution of the Seventh Enlarged Plenum of the EECI*).

There you have a document which really does define the line of the Comintern leadership.

It is very strange that the leaders of the opposition avoid mention of this universally known Comintern document.

Perhaps it will not be taken as boastful if I refer to the speech I delivered *in November of that same year, 1926*, in the Chinese Commission of

<sup>135</sup> My italics.—*J. St.*

the Comintern, which, not without my participation of course, drafted the resolution of the Seventh Enlarged Plenum on the Chinese question. That speech was subsequently published in pamphlet form under the title *The Prospects of the Revolution in China*. Here are some passages from that speech:

I know that there are Kuomintangists and even Chinese Communists who do not consider it possible to unleash revolution in the countryside, since they fear that if the peasantry were drawn into the revolution, it would disrupt the united anti-imperialist front. *That is a profound error, comrades.* The more quickly and thoroughly the Chinese peasantry is drawn into the revolution, the stronger and more powerful the anti-imperialist front in China will be.

And further:

I know that among the Chinese Communists there are comrades who do not approve of workers going on strike for an improvement of their material conditions and legal status, and who try to dissuade the workers from striking. [*A voice: "That happened in Guangdong and Shanghai."*] That is a great mistake, comrades. It is a very serious underestimation of the role and importance of the Chinese proletariat. This fact should be noted in the theses as something decidedly objectionable. It would be a great mistake if the Chinese Communists failed to take advantage of the present favorable situation to assist the workers to improve their material conditions and legal status, even through strikes. Otherwise, what purpose does the revolution in China serve? (See Stalin, *The Prospects of the Revolution in China*.)<sup>136</sup>

And here is a third document, of *December 1926*, issued at a time when every city in China was bombarding the Comintern with assertions that an extension of the struggle of the workers would lead to a crisis, to unemployment, to the closing down of mills and factories:

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<sup>136</sup> See *Collected Works*, Vol. X, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow.

A general policy of retreat in the towns and of curtailing the workers' struggle to improve their conditions would be *wrong*. The struggle in the countryside must be extended, but at the same time advantage must be taken of the favorable situation to improve the material conditions and legal status of the workers, while striving in every way to lend the workers' struggle an organized character, which precludes excesses or running too far ahead. Special efforts must be exerted to direct the struggle in the towns against the big bourgeoisie and, above all, against the imperialists, so as to keep the Chinese petit bourgeoisie and middle bourgeoisie as far as possible within the framework of the united front against the common enemy. We regard the system of conciliation boards, arbitration courts, etc., as expedient, provided a correct working-class policy is ensured in these institutions. At the same time we think it necessary to utter the warning that decrees directed against the right to strike, against workers' freedom of assembly, etc., are absolutely impermissible.

Here is a fourth document, issued six weeks before Chiang Kai-shek's coup:

The work of the Kuomintang and Communist units in the army must be intensified; they must be organized wherever they do not now exist and it is possible to organize them; where it is not possible to organize Communist units, intensified work must be conducted with the help of concealed Communists.

It is necessary to adopt the course of *arming the workers and peasants and converting the peasant committees in the localities into actual organs of governmental authority equipped with armed self-defense*, etc.

The Communist Party must everywhere come forward as such; a policy of voluntary semi-legality is impermissible; the Communist Party must not come forward as a brake on the

mass movement; *the Communist Party should not cover up the treacherous and reactionary policy of the Kuomintang Rights*, and should mobilize the masses around the Kuomintang and the Chinese Communist Party on the basis of exposing the Rights.

The attention of all political workers who are loyal to the revolution must be drawn to the fact that at the present time, in connection with the regrouping of class forces and concentration of the imperialist armies, the Chinese revolution is passing through a critical period, and that it can achieve further victories only by resolutely adopting the course of developing the mass movement. Otherwise a tremendous danger threatens the revolution. The fulfillment of directives is therefore more necessary than ever before.

And even earlier, already *in April 1926*, a year before the coup of the Kuomintang Rights and Chiang Kai-shek, the Comintern warned the Chinese Communist Party, pointing out that it was “necessary to work for the resignation or expulsion of the Rights from the Kuomintang.”

That is how the Comintern understood, and still understands, the tactics of a united front against imperialism at the first stage of a colonial revolution.

Does the opposition know about these guiding documents? Of course it does. Why then does it say nothing about them? Because its aim is to raise a squabble, not to bring out the truth.

And yet there was a time when the present leaders of the opposition, especially Zinoviev and Kamenev, did understand something about Leninism and, in the main, advocated the same policy for the Chinese revolutionary movement *as was pursued by the Comintern*, and which Comrade Lenin outlined for us in his theses.<sup>137</sup> I have in mind the Sixth Plenum of the Communist International, held in *February-March 1926*, when Zinoviev was Chairman of the Comintern, when he was still a Leninist and had not yet migrated to Trotsky's camp. I mention the Sixth Plenum of the Communist International because there is a resolution of that plenum

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<sup>137</sup> See V. I. Lenin, “Preliminary Draft of Theses on the National and Colonial Questions,” in *Collected Works*, Vol. XXXI, Progress Publishers, Moscow, pp. 144-151.

on the Chinese revolution,<sup>138</sup> which was adopted unanimously in February-March 1926, and which gives approximately the same estimate of the first stage of the Chinese revolution, of the Guangdong Kuomintang and of the Guangdong government, as is given by the Comintern and by the CPSU(B), but which the opposition is now repudiating. I mention this resolution because Zinoviev voted for it at that time, and not a single member of the Central Committee, not even Trotsky, Kamenev, or the other leaders of the present opposition, objected to it.

Permit me to quote a few passages from that resolution. Here is what is said in the resolution *about the Kuomintang*:

The Shanghai and Hong Kong political strikes of the Chinese workers (June-September 1925) marked a turning point in the struggle of the Chinese people for liberation from the foreign imperialists... The political action of the proletariat gave a powerful impetus to the further development and consolidation of all the revolutionary-democratic organizations in the country, especially of the people's revolutionary party, the Kuomintang, and the revolutionary government in Guangdong. The Kuomintang party, the main body of which acted in alliance with the Chinese Communists, is *a revolutionary bloc of workers, peasants, intellectuals, and the urban democracy*,<sup>139</sup> based on the common class interests of these strata in the struggle against the foreign imperialists and against the whole military-feudal way of life, for the independence of the country and for a single revolutionary-democratic government (see *Resolution of the Sixth Plenum of the EECI*).

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<sup>138</sup> The resolution on the Chinese question drafted by the Eastern Commission of the Sixth Enlarged Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Comintern was adopted at a plenary meeting on March 13, 1926 (see *The Sixth Enlarged Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Comintern. Theses and Resolutions*, Moscow-Leningrad, 1926, pp. 131-36).

<sup>139</sup> My italics—*J. St.*

Thus, the Guangdong Kuomintang is an alliance of four “classes.” As you see, this is almost “Martynovism”<sup>140</sup> sanctified by none other than the then Chairman of the Comintern Zinoviev.

About the Guangdong Kuomintang government:

*The revolutionary government created by the Kuomintang party in Guangdong has already succeeded in establishing contact with the widest masses of the workers, peasants, and urban democracy, and, basing itself on them, has smashed the counter-revolutionary bands supported by the imperialists (and is working for the radical democratization of the whole political life of the Kwangtung Province). Thus, being the vanguard in the struggle of the Chinese people for independence, the Guangdong government serves as a model for the future revolutionary-democratic development of the country*<sup>141</sup> (ibid.).

It turns out that the Guangdong Kuomintang government, being a bloc of four “classes,” was a *revolutionary* government, and not only revolutionary, but even a *model* for the future revolutionary-democratic government in China.

About the united front of workers, peasants and the bourgeoisie:

In face of the new dangers, the Chinese Communist Party and the Kuomintang must develop the most wide-spread political activity, organizing mass action in support of the struggle of the people’s armies, taking advantage of the contradictions within the camp of the imperialists and opposing to them a *united national revolutionary front of the broadest strata of the population* (workers, peasants, and *the bourgeoisie*) under the leadership of the revolutionary-democratic organizations (ibid.).

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<sup>140</sup> In an article on the development of the Chinese revolution of 1925-27, A. Martynov (a former Menshevik who was admitted to membership of the RCP(B) by the Twelfth Party Congress) advanced the thesis that the revolution in China could peacefully evolve from a bourgeois-democratic revolution into a proletarian revolution. The Trotsky-Zinoviev anti-Soviet bloc tried to thrust responsibility for Martynov’s mistaken thesis upon the leadership of the Comintern and of the CPSU(B).

<sup>141</sup> My italics—*J. St.*

It follows that temporary blocs and agreements with *the bourgeoisie* in colonial countries at a certain stage of the colonial revolution are not only permissible, but positively essential.

Is it not true that this is very similar to what Lenin tells us in his well-known directives for the tactics of Communists in colonial and dependent countries? It is a pity, however, that Zinoviev has already managed to forget that.

The question of withdrawal from the Kuomintang:

Certain sections of the Chinese big bourgeoisie, which had temporarily grouped themselves around the Kuomintang party, withdrew from it during the past year, which resulted in the formation on the Right wing of the Kuomintang of a small group that openly opposed a close alliance between the Kuomintang and the masses of the working people, demanded the expulsion of the Communists from the Kuomintang and opposed the revolutionary policy of the Guangdong government. *The condemnation of this Right wing at the Second Congress of the Kuomintang (January 1926) and the endorsement of the necessity for a militant alliance between the Kuomintang and the Communists confirm the revolutionary trend of the activities of the Kuomintang and the Guangdong government and ensure for the Kuomintang the revolutionary support of the proletariat*<sup>142</sup> (ibid.).

It is seen that withdrawal of the Communists from the Kuomintang at the first stage of the Chinese revolution would have been a serious mistake. It is a pity, however, that Zinoviev, who voted for this resolution, had already managed to forget it in about a month; for it was not later than April 1926 (within a month) that Zinoviev demanded the immediate withdrawal of the Communists from the Kuomintang.

About the deviations within the Chinese Communist Party and the impermissibility of skipping over the Kuomintang phase of the revolution:

<sup>142</sup> My italics.—*J. St.*

The political self-determination of the Chinese Communists will develop in the struggle against two equally harmful deviations: against Right Liquidationism, which ignores the independent class tasks of the Chinese proletariat and leads to a formless merging with the general democratic national movement; and against the extreme Left sentiments in favor of *skipping over the revolutionary-democratic stage of the movement* to come immediately to the tasks of proletarian dictatorship and Soviet power, *forgetting about the peasantry*, that basic and decisive factor in the Chinese movement for national emancipation<sup>143</sup> (ibid.).

As you see, here are all the grounds for convicting the opposition now of wanting to skip over the Kuomintang phase of development in China, of underestimating the peasant movement, and of dashing post-haste towards Soviets. It hits the nail right on the head.

Do Zinoviev, Kamenev and Trotsky know about this resolution?

We must assume that they do. At any rate Zinoviev must know about it, for it was under his chairmanship that this resolution was adopted at the Sixth Plenum of the Comintern and he himself voted for it. Why are the leaders of the opposition now avoiding this resolution of the highest body of the world communist movement? Why are they keeping silent about it? Because it turns against them on all questions concerning the Chinese revolution. Because it refutes the whole of the present Trotskyist standpoint of the opposition. Because they have deserted the Comintern, deserted Leninism, and now, fearing their past, fearing their own shadows, are obliged cravenly to avoid the resolution of the Sixth Plenum of the Comintern.

That is how matters stand as regards the first stage of the Chinese revolution.

Let us pass now to the second stage of the Chinese revolution.

While the distinguishing feature of the first stage was that the spearhead of the revolution was turned mainly against foreign imperialism, the characteristic feature of the second stage is that the spearhead of the revo-

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<sup>143</sup> My italics.—J. St.



lution is now turned mainly against internal enemies, primarily against the feudal landlords, against the feudal regime.

Did the first stage accomplish its task of overthrowing foreign imperialism? No, it did not. It bequeathed the accomplishment of this task to the second stage of the Chinese revolution. It merely gave the revolutionary masses the first shaking up that roused them against imperialism, only to run its course and hand on the task to the future.

It must be presumed that the second stage of the revolution also will not succeed in fully accomplishing the task of expelling the imperialists. It will give the broad masses of the Chinese workers and peasants a further shaking up to rouse them against imperialism, but it will do so in order to hand on the completion of this task to the next stage of the Chinese revolution, to the Soviet stage.

There is nothing surprising in that. Do we not know that analogous facts occurred in the history of our revolution, although in a different situation and under different circumstances? Do we not know that the first stage of our revolution did not fully accomplish its task of completing the agrarian revolution, and that it handed on that task to the next stage of the revolution, to the October Revolution, which wholly and completely accomplished the task of eradicating the survivals of feudalism? It will therefore not be surprising if the second stage of the Chinese revolution does not succeed in fully completing the agrarian revolution, and if the second stage of the revolution, after giving the vast masses of the peasantry a shaking up and rousing them against the survivals of feudalism, hands on the completion of this task to the next stage of the revolution, to the Soviet stage. That will only be a merit of the future Soviet revolution in China.

What was the task of the Communists at the second stage of the revolution in China, when the center of the revolutionary movement had obviously shifted from Guangdong to Wuhan, and when, parallel with the revolutionary center in Wuhan, a counter-revolutionary center was set up in Nanjing?

The task was to utilize to the full the possibility of openly organizing the Party, the proletariat (trade unions), the peasantry (peasant associations), and the revolution generally.

The task was to push the Wuhan Kuomintangists to the Left, towards the agrarian revolution.

The task was to make the Wuhan Kuomintang the center of the fight against counter-revolution and the core of a future revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry.

Was that policy correct?

The facts have shown that it was the only correct policy, the only policy capable of training the masses of workers and peasants for the further development of the revolution.

The opposition at that time demanded the immediate formation of Soviets of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies. But that was sheer adventurism, an adventurist leap ahead, for the immediate formation of Soviets at that time would have meant skipping over the Left Kuomintang phase of development.

Why?

Because the Kuomintang in Wuhan, which supported the alliance with the Communists, had not yet discredited and exposed itself in the eyes of the masses of workers and peasants, and had not yet exhausted itself as a bourgeois revolutionary organization.

Because to have issued the slogan of Soviets and of the overthrow of the Wuhan government at a time when the masses had not yet been convinced through their own experience of the worthlessness of that government and of the necessity of overthrowing it, would have meant leaping ahead, breaking away from the masses, losing the support of the masses and thus causing the failure of the movement that had already started.

The opposition thinks that, if it understands that the Wuhan Kuomintang was unreliable, unstable and insufficiently revolutionary (and it is not difficult for any qualified political worker to understand that), that is quite enough for the masses also to understand all this, that is enough for replacing the Kuomintang by Soviets and for securing the following of the masses. But that is the usual "ultra-Left" mistake made by the opposition, which takes its own political consciousness and understanding for the political consciousness and understanding of the vast masses of workers and peasants.

The opposition is right when it says that the Party must go forward. That is an ordinary Marxist precept, and there cannot be any real Communist Party if it is not adhered to. But that is only part of the truth. The whole truth is that the Party must not only go forward, but must also

*secure the following* of the vast masses. To go forward without securing the following of the vast masses means in fact to break away from the movement. To go forward, breaking away from the rear-guard, without being able to secure the following of the rear-guard, means to make a leap ahead that can prevent the advance of the masses for some time. The essence of Leninist leadership is precisely that the vanguard should be able to *secure the following* of the rear-guard, that the vanguard should go forward *without breaking away* from the masses.

But in order that the vanguard should not break away from the masses, in order that the vanguard should really secure the following of the vast masses, a decisive condition is needed, namely, that *the masses themselves should be convinced through their own experience that the instructions, directives and slogans issued by the vanguard are correct.*

The misfortune of the opposition is that it does not accept this simple Leninist rule for leading the vast masses, that it does not understand that the Party alone, an advanced group alone, without the support of the vast masses, cannot make a revolution, that, in the final analysis, a revolution “is made” by the vast masses of the working people.

Why did we Bolsheviks, in April 1917, refrain from putting forward the practical slogan for the overthrow of the Provisional Government and the establishment of Soviet power in Russia, although we were convinced that in the very near future we should be faced with the necessity of overthrowing the Provisional Government and of establishing Soviet power?

Because the broad masses of the working people, both in the rear and at the front, and, lastly, the Soviets themselves, were not yet ready to accept such a slogan, they still believed that the Provisional Government was revolutionary.

Because the Provisional Government had not yet disgraced and discredited itself by supporting counter-revolution in the rear and at the front.

Why did Lenin, in April 1917, denounce the Bagdatyev group in Petrograd which put forward the slogan of the immediate overthrow of the Provisional Government and the establishment of Soviet power?

Because Bagdatyev’s attempt was a dangerous leap ahead, which created the danger of the Bolshevik Party breaking away from the vast masses of the workers and peasants.

Adventurism in politics, Bagdatyevism in matters concerning the Chinese revolution—that is what is now killing our Trotskyist opposition.

Zinoviev asserts that in speaking of Bagdatyevism, I identify the present Chinese revolution with the October Revolution. That, of course, is nonsense. In the first place, I myself made the reservation in my article “Notes on Contemporary Themes” that “the analogy is a qualified one” and that “I make it with all the necessary reservations, bearing in mind the difference between the situation of China in our day and that of Russia in 1917.”<sup>144</sup> In the second place, it would be foolish to assert that one must never draw analogies with revolutions in other countries when characterizing certain tendencies and certain mistakes committed in the revolution of a given country. Does not a revolution in one country learn from revolutions in other countries, even if those revolutions are not all of the same type? If not, what does the science of revolution amount to?

In essence, Zinoviev denies that there can be a science of revolution. Is it not a fact that in the period just before the October Revolution Lenin accused Chkheidze, Tsereteli, Steklov and others of the “Louis Blancism” of the French Revolution of 1848? Look at Lenin’s article “Louis Blancism”<sup>145</sup> and you will realize that Lenin made wide use of analogies from the French Revolution of 1848 in characterising the mistakes made by various leaders before October, although Lenin knew very well that the French Revolution of 1848 was not of the same type as our October Revolution. And if we can speak of the “Louis Blancism” of Chkheidze and Tsereteli in the period before the October Revolution, why cannot we speak of the “Bagdatyevism” of Zinoviev and Trotsky in the period of the agrarian revolution in China?

The opposition asserts that Wuhan was not the center of the revolutionary movement. Why then did Zinoviev say that “all round assistance should be rendered” the Wuhan Kuomintang, so as to make it the center of the struggle against the Chinese Cavaignacs? Why did the Wuhan territory, and no other, become the center of the maximum development of the agrarian movement? Is it not a fact that it was precisely the Wuhan terri-

<sup>144</sup> See *Collected Works*, Vol. IX, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow.

<sup>145</sup> See V. I. Lenin, “Louis Blancism,” April 1917 (in *Collected Works*, Vol. XXIV, Progress Publishers, Moscow, pp. 34-37).

tory (Hunan, Hupeh) that was the center of the maximum development of the agrarian movement at the beginning of this year? Why could Guangdong, where there was no mass agrarian movement, be called “the place d’armes of the revolution” (Trotsky), whereas Wuhan, in the territory of which the agrarian revolution began and developed, must not be regarded as the center, as the “place d’armes” of the revolutionary movement? How in that case are we to explain the fact that the opposition demanded that the Communist Party should *remain* in the Wuhan Kuomintang and the Wuhan government? Was the opposition, in April 1927, really in favor of a bloc with the “counter-revolutionary” Wuhan Kuomintang? Why this “forgetfulness” and confusion on the part of the opposition?

The opposition is gloating over the fact that the bloc with the Wuhan Kuomintang proved to be short-lived, and, moreover, it asserts that the Comintern failed to warn the Chinese Communists of the possibility of the collapse of the Wuhan Kuomintang. It scarcely needs proof that the malicious glee displayed by the opposition only testifies to its political bankruptcy. The opposition evidently thinks that blocs with the national bourgeoisie in colonial countries ought to be of long duration; but only people who have lost the last remnants of Leninism can think that. Only those who are infected with defeatism can gloat over the fact that at the present stage the feudal landlords and imperialists in China have proved to be stronger than the revolution, that the pressure exercised by these hostile forces has induced the Wuhan Kuomintang to swing to the Right and has led to the temporary defeat of the Chinese revolution. As for the opposition’s assertion that the Comintern failed to warn the Communist Party of China of the possible collapse of the Wuhan Kuomintang, that is one of the usual slanders now so abundant in the opposition’s arsenal.

Permit me to quote some documents to refute the slanders of the opposition.

First document of May 1927:

The most important thing now in the internal policy of the Kuomintang is to develop the agrarian revolution systematically in all provinces, particularly in Kwangtung, under the slogan “All power to the peasant associations and committees in the countryside.” *This is the basis for the success of the revo-*

*lution and of the Kuomintang.* This is the basis for creating in China a big and powerful political and military army against imperialism and its agents. Practically, the slogan of confiscating the land is quite timely for the provinces in which there is a strong agrarian movement, such as Hunan, Guangdong, etc. *Without this the extension of the agrarian revolution is impossible...*<sup>146</sup>

It is necessary to start at once to organize eight or ten divisions of revolutionary peasants and workers with absolutely reliable officers. This will be a Wuhan guards force both at the front and in the rear for disarming unreliable units. This must not be delayed.

Disintegrating activities must be intensified in the rear and in Chiang Kai-shek's units, and assistance must be given to the insurgent peasants in Guangdong, where the rule of the landlords is particularly unbearable.

The second document, of May 1927:

Without an agrarian revolution, *victory is impossible.* Without it the Central Committee of the Kuomintang will be converted into a wretched plaything of unreliable generals. *Excesses must be combated not,* however, by means of troops, but through the peasant associations. We are decidedly in favor of the actual seizure of the land by the masses. Apprehensions concerning Tan Pingshan's mission are not devoid of foundation. You must not sever yourselves from the working-class and peasant movement, but must assist it in every way. *Otherwise you will ruin the work.*

Some of the old leaders of the Central Committee of the Kuomintang are frightened by events, *they are vacillating and compromising.* An increased number of new peasant and working-class leaders must be drawn from the masses into the Cen-

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<sup>146</sup> My italics.—*J. St.*

tral Committee of the Kuomintang. *Their bold voices will either stiffen the backs of the old leaders or result in their removal.* The present structure of the Kuomintang must be changed. The top leadership of the Kuomintang must certainly be refreshed and reinforced with new leaders who have come to the fore in the agrarian revolution, while the local organizations must be broadened from the millions of members in workers' and peasants' associations. *If this is not done the Kuomintang will run the risk of becoming divorced from life and of losing all prestige.*

Dependence upon unreliable generals must be eliminated. Mobilize about 20,000 Communists, add about 20,000 revolutionary workers and peasants from Hunan and Hubei, form several new army corps, use the students at the officers' school as commanders and *organize your own reliable army before it is too late. If this is not done there is no guarantee against failure.* It is a difficult matter, but there is no alternative.

Organize a Revolutionary Military Tribunal headed by prominent non-Communist Kuomintangists. *Punish officers who maintain contact with Chiang Kai-shek or who incite the soldiers against the people, the workers and peasants.* Persuasion is not enough. It is time to act. *Scoundrels must be punished. If the Kuomintangists do not learn to be revolutionary Jacobins they will perish so far as the people and the revolution are concerned.*<sup>147</sup>

As you see, the Comintern foresaw events, it gave timely warning of the dangers and told the Chinese Communists that the Wuhan Kuomintang would perish if the Kuomintangists failed to become revolutionary Jacobins.

Kamenev said that the defeat of the Chinese revolution was due to the policy of the Comintern, and that we "bred Cavaignacs in China." Comrades, only one who is ready to commit a crime against the Party can

<sup>147</sup> My italics.—*J. St.*

say that sort of thing about our Party. That is what the Mensheviks said about the Bolshevik during the July defeat of 1917, when the Russian Cavaignacs appeared on the scene. In his article "On Slogans,"<sup>148</sup> Lenin wrote that the July defeat was "a victory for the Cavaignacs." The Mensheviks at that time gloatingly asserted that the appearance of the Russian Cavaignacs was due to Lenin's policy. Does Kamenev think that the appearance of the Russian Cavaignacs during the July defeat of 1917 was due to Lenin's policy, to the policy of our Party, and not to some other cause? Is it becoming for Kamenev in this case to imitate the Menshevik gentry? [*Laughter.*] I did not think that the comrades of the opposition could sink so low...

We know that the Revolution of 1905 suffered defeat, moreover, that defeat was more profound than the present defeat of the Chinese revolution. The Mensheviks at that time said that the defeat of the 1905 Revolution was due to the extreme revolutionary tactics of the Bolsheviks. Does Kamenev here, too, want to take the Menshevik interpretation of the history of our revolution as his model and to cast a stone at the Bolsheviks?

And how are we to explain the defeat of the Bavarian Soviet Republic?

By Lenin's policy, perhaps, and not by the correlation of class forces?

How are we to explain the defeat of the Hungarian Soviet Republic? By the policy of the Comintern, perhaps, and not by the correlation of class forces?

How can it be asserted that the tactics of this or that party can abolish or reverse the correlation of class forces? Was our policy in 1905 correct, or not? Why did we suffer defeat at that time? Do not the facts show that if the policy of the opposition had been followed, the revolution in China would have reached defeat more rapidly than was actually the case? What are we to say of people who forget about the correlation of class forces in time of revolution and who try to explain everything solely by the tactics of this or that party? Only one thing can be said of such people—that they have broken with Marxism.

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<sup>148</sup> See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. XXV, Progress Publishers, Moscow, pp. 183-190.



*Conclusions.* The chief mistakes of the opposition are:

- 1) The opposition does not understand the character and prospects of the Chinese revolution.
- 2) The opposition sees no difference between the revolution in China and the revolution in Russia, between revolution in colonial countries and revolution in imperialist countries.
- 3) The opposition is departing from Leninist tactics on the question of the attitude to the national bourgeoisie in colonial countries at the first stage of the revolution.
- 4) The opposition does not understand the question of the Communists' participation in the Kuomintang.
- 5) The opposition is violating the principles of Leninist tactics on the question of the relations between the vanguard (the Party) and the rear-guard (the vast masses of the working people).
- 6) The opposition is departing from the resolutions of the Sixth and Seventh Plenums of the Executive Committee of the Communist International.

The opposition noisily brags about its policy on the Chinese question and asserts that if that policy had been adopted the situation in China today would be better than it is. It scarcely needs proof that, considering the gross mistakes committed by the opposition, the Chinese Communist Party would have landed in a complete impasse had it adopted the anti-Leninist and adventurist policy of the opposition.

The fact that the Communist Party in China has in a short period grown from a small group of five or six thousand into a mass party of 60,000 members; the fact that the Chinese Communist Party has succeeded in organizing nearly 3,000,000 proletarians in trade unions during this period; the fact that the Chinese Communist Party has succeeded in rousing the many millions of the peasantry from their torpor and in drawing tens of millions of peasants into the revolutionary peasant associations; the fact that the Chinese Communist Party has succeeded during this period in winning over whole regiments and divisions of national

troops; the fact that the Chinese Communist Party has succeeded during this period in converting the idea of the hegemony of the proletariat from an aspiration into a reality—the fact that the Chinese Communist Party has succeeded in a short period in achieving all these gains is due, among other things, to its having followed the path outlined by Lenin, the path indicated by the Comintern.

Needless to say, if the policy of the opposition, with its mistakes and its anti-Leninist line on questions of colonial revolution, had been followed, these gains of the Chinese revolution would either not have been achieved at all, or would have been extremely insignificant.

Only “ultra-Left” renegades and adventurers can doubt this.



**CONCERNING THE  
PROLETARIAN METHOD  
OF LIBERATING THE  
OPPRESSED PEOPLES**

*November 5-7, 1927*

*Excerpts from "The International Character of  
the October Revolution"*

The October Revolution has shaken imperialism not only in the centers of its domination, not only in the "metropolises." It has also struck at the rear of imperialism, its periphery, having undermined the rule of imperialism in the colonial and dependent countries.

Having overthrown the landlords and the capitalists, the October Revolution broke the chains of national and colonial oppression and freed from it, without exception, all the oppressed peoples of a vast state. The proletariat cannot emancipate itself unless it emancipates the oppressed peoples. It is a characteristic feature of the October Revolution that it accomplished these national-colonial revolutions in the USSR not under the flag of national enmity and conflicts among nations, but under the flag of mutual confidence and fraternal rapprochement of the workers and peasants of the various peoples in the USSR, not in the name of *nationalism*, but in the name of *internationalism*.

It is precisely because the national-colonial revolutions took place in our country under the leadership of the proletariat and under the banner of internationalism that pariah peoples, slave peoples, have *for the first time* in the history of mankind risen to the position of peoples that are *really* free and *really* equal, thereby setting a contagious example to the oppressed nations of the whole world.

This means that the October Revolution *has ushered in* a new era, the era of *colonial* revolutions which are being carried out *in the oppressed countries* of the world in alliance with the proletariat and *under the leadership* of the proletariat.

It was formerly the "accepted" idea that the world has been divided from time immemorial into inferior and superior races, into blacks and whites, of whom the former are unfit for civilization and are doomed to be objects of exploitation, while the latter are the only bearers of civilization, whose mission it is to exploit the former.

That legend must now be regarded as shattered and discarded. One of the most important results of the October Revolution is that it dealt that legend a mortal blow, by demonstrating in practice that the liberated non-European peoples, drawn into the channel of Soviet development, are

not one whit less capable of promoting a *really* progressive culture and a *really* progressive civilization than are the European peoples.

It was formerly the “accepted” idea that the only method of liberating the oppressed peoples is the method of *bourgeois nationalism*, the method of nations drawing apart from one another, the method of disuniting nations, the method of intensifying national enmity among the laboring masses of the various nations.

That legend must now be regarded as refuted. One of the most important results of the October Revolution is that it dealt that legend a mortal blow, by demonstrating in practice the possibility and expediency of the *proletarian, internationalist* method of liberating the oppressed peoples, as the only correct method; by demonstrating in practice the possibility and expediency of a *fraternal union* of the workers and peasants of the most diverse nations based on the principles of *voluntariness and internationalism*. The existence of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, which is the prototype of the future integration of the working people of all countries into a single world economic system, cannot but serve as direct proof of this.

It need hardly be said that these and similar results of the October Revolution could not and cannot fail to exert an important influence on the revolutionary movement in the colonial and dependent countries. Such facts as the growth of the revolutionary movement of the oppressed peoples in China, Indonesia, India, etc., and the growing sympathy of these peoples for the USSR, unquestionably bear this out.

The era of tranquil exploitation and oppression of the colonies and dependent countries *has passed away*.

The era of liberating revolutions in the colonies and dependent countries, the era of the awakening of the *proletariat* in those countries, the era of its *hegemony* in the revolution, *has begun*.



THE NATIONAL QUESTION  
AND LENINISM

*March 18, 1929*



*Reply to Comrades Meshkov, Kovalchuk, and  
Others*

I have received your letters. They are similar to a number of letters on the same subject I have received from other comrades during the past few months. I have decided, however, to answer you particularly, because you put things more bluntly and thereby help the achievement of clarity. True, the answers you give in your letters to the questions raised are wrong, but that is another matter—of that we shall speak below.

Let us get down to business.



## I. The Concept “Nation”

The Russian Marxists have long had their theory of the nation. According to this theory, a nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of the common possession of four principal characteristics, namely: a common language, a common territory, a common economic life, and a common psychological make-up manifested in common specific features of national culture. This theory, as we know, has received general recognition in our Party.

It is evident from your letters that you consider this theory inadequate. You therefore propose that the four characteristics of a nation be supplemented by a fifth, namely, that a nation possesses its own, separate national state. You consider that there is not and cannot be a nation unless this fifth characteristic is present.

I think that the scheme you propose, with its new, fifth characteristic of the concept “nation,” is profoundly mistaken and cannot be justified either theoretically or in practice, politically.

According to your scheme, only such nations are to be recognized as nations as have their own state, separate from others, whereas all oppressed nations which have no independent statehood would have to be deleted from the category of nations; moreover, the struggle of oppressed nations against national oppression and the struggle of colonial peoples against imperialism would have to be excluded from the concept “national movement” and “national-liberation movement.”

More than that. According to your scheme we would have to assert:

- a) that the Irish became a nation only after the formation of the “Irish Free State,” and that before that they did not constitute a nation;
- b) that the Norwegians were not a nation before Norway’s secession from Sweden and became a nation only after that secession;
- c) that the Ukrainians were not a nation when the Ukraine formed part of tsarist Russia; that they became a nation only

after they seceded from Soviet Russia under the Central Rada and Hetman Skoropadsky, but again ceased to be a nation after they united their Ukrainian Soviet Republic with the other Soviet Republics to form the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

A great many such examples could be cited.

Obviously, a scheme which leads to such absurd conclusions cannot be regarded as a scientific scheme.

In practice, politically, your scheme inevitably leads to the justification of national, imperialist oppression, whose exponents emphatically refuse to recognize as real nations oppressed and unequal nations which have no separate national state of their own, and consider that this circumstance gives them the right to oppress these nations.

That is apart from the fact that your scheme provides a justification for the bourgeois nationalists in our Soviet Republics who argue that the Soviet nations ceased to be nations when they agreed to unite their national Soviet Republics into a Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

That is how matters stand with regard to “supplementing” and “amending” the Russian Marxist theory of the nation.

Only one thing remains, and that is to admit that the Russian Marxist theory of the nation is the only correct theory.

## II. The Rise and Development of Nations

One of the grave mistakes you make is that you lump together all existing nations and fail to see any fundamental difference between them.

There are different kinds of nations. There are nations which developed in the epoch of rising capitalism, when the bourgeoisie, destroying feudalism and feudal disunity, gathered the parts of nations together and cemented them. These are the so-called “modern” nations.

You assert that nations arose and existed before capitalism. But how could nations have arisen and existed before capitalism, in the period of feudalism, when countries were split up into separate, independent principalities, which, far from being bound together by national ties, emphatically denied the necessity for such ties? Your erroneous assertions notwithstanding, there were no nations in the pre-capitalist period, nor could there be, because there were as yet no national markets and no economic or cultural national centers, and, consequently, there were none of the factors which put an end to the economic disunity of a given people and draw its hitherto disunited parts together into one national whole.

Of course, the elements of nationhood—language, territory, common culture, etc.—did not fall from the skies, but were being formed gradually, even in the pre-capitalist period. But these elements were in a rudimentary state and, at best, were only a potentiality, that is, they constituted the possibility of the formation of a nation in the future, given certain favorable conditions. The potentiality became a reality only in the period of rising capitalism, with its national market and its economic and cultural centers.

In this connection it would be well to recall the remarkable words of Lenin on the subject of the rise of nations, contained in his pamphlet *What the “Friends of the People” Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats*. Controverting the Narodnik Mikhailovsky, who derived the rise of nationalities and national unity from the development of gentile ties, Lenin says:

And so, national ties are a continuation and generalization of gentile ties! Mr. Mikhailovsky, evidently, borrows his ideas of

the history of society from the fairy-tale that is taught to school boys. The history of society—this copybook doctrine runs—is that first there was the family, that nucleus of all society... then the family grew into the tribe, and the tribe grew into the state. If Mr. Mikhailovsky solemnly repeats this childish nonsense, it only goes to show—apart from everything else—that he has not the slightest notion of the course even of Russian history. While one might speak of gentile life in ancient Rus, there can be no doubt that by the Middle Ages, the era of the Muscovite tsars, these gentile ties no longer existed, that is to say, the state was based not at all on gentile unions but on territorial unions: the landlords and the monasteries took their peasants from various localities, and the village communities thus formed were purely territorial unions. But one could hardly speak of national ties in the true sense of the word at that time: the state was divided into separate lands, sometimes even principalities, which preserved strong traces of former autonomy, peculiarities of administration, at times their own troops (the local boyars went to war at the head of their own companies), their own customs borders, and so forth. Only the modern period of Russian history (beginning approximately with the seventeenth century) is characterized by an actual merging of all such regions, lands and principalities into a single whole. This merging, most esteemed Mr. Mikhailovsky, was not brought about by gentile ties, nor even by their continuation and generalization: it was brought about by the growth of exchange between regions, the gradual growth of commodity circulation and the concentration of the small local markets into a single, all-Russian market. Since the leaders and masters of this process were the merchant capitalists, the creation of these national ties was nothing but the creation of bourgeois ties. (see Vol. 1, pp. 72-73)<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. I, Foreign Languages Publishing House Moscow, 1963, pp. 154-155.

That is how matters stand with regard to the rise of the so-called “modern” nations.

The bourgeoisie and its nationalist parties were throughout this period the chief leading force of such nations. Class peace within the nation for the sake of “national unity”; expansion of the territory of one’s own nation by seizure of the national territories of others; distrust and hatred of other nations, suppression of national minorities; a united front with imperialism—such is the ideological, social and political stock-in-trade of these nations.

Such nations must be qualified as bourgeois nations. Examples are the French, British, Italian, North American and other similar nations. The Russian, Ukrainian, Tatar, Armenian, Georgian and other nations in Russia were likewise bourgeois nations before the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the Soviet system in our country.

Naturally, the fate of such nations is linked with the fate of capitalism; with the fall of capitalism, such nations must depart from the scene.

It is precisely such bourgeois nations that Stalin’s pamphlet *Marxism and the National Question* has in mind when it says that “a nation is not merely a historical category but a historical category belonging to a definite epoch, the epoch of rising capitalism,” that “the fate of a national movement, which is essentially a bourgeois movement, is naturally bound up with the fate of the bourgeoisie,” that “the final disappearance of a national movement is possible only with the downfall of the bourgeoisie,” and that “only under the reign of socialism can peace be fully established.”<sup>150</sup>

That is how matters stand with regard to the bourgeois nations.

But there are other nations. These are the new Soviet nations, which developed and took shape on the basis of the old bourgeois nations after the overthrow of capitalism in Russia, after the elimination of the bourgeoisie and its nationalist parties, after the establishment of the Soviet system.

The working class and its internationalist party are the force that cements these new nations and leads them. An alliance between the working class and the working peasantry within the nation for the elimination

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<sup>150</sup> See J. V. Stalin, *Collected Works*, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1953, Vol. II, pp. 313, 322.

of the survivals of capitalism in order that socialism may be built triumphantly; abolition of the survivals of national oppression in order that the nations and national minorities may be equal and may develop freely; elimination of the survivals of nationalism in order that friendship may be knit between the peoples and internationalism firmly established; a united front with all oppressed and unequal nations in the struggle against the policy of annexation and wars of annexation, in the struggle against imperialism—such is the spiritual, and social and political complexion of these nations.

Such nations must be qualified as socialist nations.

These new nations arose and developed on the basis of old, bourgeois nations, as a result of the elimination of capitalism—by their radical transformation on socialist lines. Nobody can deny that the present socialist nations of the Soviet Union—the Russian, Ukrainian, Byelorussian, Tatar, Bashkir, Uzbek, Kazakh, Azerbaijani, Georgian, Armenian and other nations—differ radically from the corresponding old, bourgeois nations of the old Russia both in class composition and spiritual complexion and in social and political interests and aspirations.

Such are the two types of nations known to history.

You do not agree with linking the fate of nations, in this case the old, bourgeois nations, with the fate of capitalism. You do not agree with the thesis that, with the elimination of capitalism, the old, bourgeois nations will be eliminated. But with what indeed could the fate of these nations be linked if not with the fate of capitalism? Is it so difficult to understand that when capitalism disappears, the bourgeois nations it gave rise to must also disappear? Surely, you do not think that the old, bourgeois nations can exist and develop under the Soviet system, under the dictatorship of the proletariat? That would be the last straw...

You are afraid that the elimination of the nations existing under capitalism is tantamount to the elimination of nations in general, to the elimination of all nations. Why, on what grounds? Are you really unaware of the fact that, besides bourgeois nations, there are other nations, socialist nations, which are much more solidly united and capable of surviving than any bourgeois nation?

Your mistake lies precisely in the fact that you see no other nations except bourgeois nations, and, consequently, you have overlooked the



whole epoch of formation of socialist nations in the Soviet Union, nations which arose on the ruins of the old, bourgeois nations.

The fact of the matter is that the elimination of the bourgeois nations signifies the elimination not of nations in general, but only of the bourgeois nations. On the ruins of the old, bourgeois nations new, socialist nations are arising and developing, and they are far more solidly united than any bourgeois nation, because they are exempt from the irreconcilable class contradictions that corrode the bourgeois nations, and are far more representative of the whole people than any bourgeois nation.



### III. The Future of Nations and of National Languages

You commit a grave error in putting a sign of equality between the period of the victory of socialism in one country and the period of the victory of socialism on a world scale, in asserting that the disappearance of national differences and national languages, the merging of nations and the formation of one common language, are possible and necessary not only with the victory of socialism on a world scale but also with the victory of socialism in one country. Moreover, you confuse entirely different things: “the abolition of national oppression” with “the elimination of national differences,” “the abolition of national state barriers” with “the dying away of nations,” with “the merging of nations.”

It must be pointed out that for Marxists to confuse these diverse concepts is absolutely impermissible. National oppression in our country was abolished long ago, but it by no means follows from this that national differences have disappeared and that nations in our country have been eliminated. National state barriers, together with frontier guards and customs, were abolished in our country long ago, but it by no means follows from this that the nations have already become merged and that the national languages have disappeared, that these languages have been supplanted by some language common to all our nations.

You are displeased with the speech I delivered at the Communist University of the Peoples of the East (1925),<sup>151</sup> in which I repudiated the thesis that with the victory of socialism *in one country*, in our country, for example, national languages will die away, that the nations will be merged, and in place of the national languages one common language will appear.

You consider that this statement of mine contradicts Lenin’s well-known thesis that it is the aim of socialism not only to abolish the division of mankind into small states and every form of isolation of nations, not only to bring the nations closer together but also to merge them.

<sup>151</sup> J. V. Stalin, “The Political Tasks of the University of the Peoples of the East” (see *On the National Colonial Question*, Calcutta Book House, 1970, pp. 173-182).

You consider, further, that it also contradicts another of Lenin's theses, namely, that with the victory of socialism on a *world scale*, national differences and national languages will begin to die away, that after this victory national languages will begin to be supplanted by one common language.

That is quite wrong, comrades. It is a profound illusion.

I have already said that it is impermissible for Marxists to confuse and lump together such diverse phenomena as "the victory of socialism in one country" and "the victory of socialism on a world scale." It should not be forgotten that these diverse phenomena reflect two entirely different epochs, distinct from one another not only in time (which is very important), but in their very nature.

National distrust, national isolation, national enmity and national conflicts are, of course, stimulated and fostered not by some "innate" sentiment of national animosity, but by the striving of imperialism to subjugate other nations and by the fear inspired in these nations by the menace of national enslavement. Undoubtedly, so long as world imperialism exists this striving and this fear will exist—and, consequently, national distrust, national isolation, national enmity and national conflicts will exist in the vast majority of countries. Can it be asserted that the victory of socialism and the abolition of imperialism in one country signify the abolition of imperialism and national oppression in the majority of countries? Obviously not. But it follows from this that the victory of socialism in one country, notwithstanding the fact that it seriously weakens world imperialism, does not and cannot create the conditions necessary for the merging of the nations and the national languages of the world into one integral whole.

The period of the victory of socialism on a world scale differs from the period of the victory of socialism in one country primarily in the fact that it will abolish imperialism *in all countries*, will abolish both the striving to subjugate other nations and the fear inspired by the menace of national enslavement, will radically undermine national distrust and national enmity, will unite the nations into one world socialist economic system, and will thus create the real conditions necessary for the gradual merging of all nations into one.

Such is the fundamental difference between these two periods.

But it follows from this that to confuse these two different periods and to lump them together is to commit an unpardonable mistake. Take the speech I delivered at the Communist University of the Toilers of the East. There I said:

Some people (Kautsky, for instance) talk of the creation of a single universal language and the dying away of all other languages in the period of socialism. I have little faith in this theory of a single, all-embracing language. Experience, at any rate, speaks against rather than for such a theory. Until now what has happened has been that the socialist revolution has not diminished but rather increased the number of languages; for, by stirring up the lowest sections of humanity and pushing them on to the political arena, it awakens to new life a number of hitherto unknown or little known nationalities. Who could have imagined that the old, tsarist Russia consisted of not less than fifty nations and national groups? The October Revolution, however, by breaking the old chains and bringing a number of forgotten peoples and nationalities on to the scene, gave them new life and a new development.<sup>152</sup>

From this passage it is evident that I was opposing people of the type of Kautsky, who always was and has remained a dilettante on the national question, who does not understand the mechanics of the development of nations and has no inkling of the colossal power of stability possessed by nations, who believes that the merging of nations is possible long before the victory of socialism, already under the bourgeois-democratic order, and who, servilely praising the assimilating “work” of the Germans in Bohemia, light-mindedly asserts that the Czechs are almost Germanized, that, as a nation, the Czechs have no future.

From this passage it is evident, further, that what I had in mind in my speech was not the period of the victory of socialism on a *world scale*, but exclusively the period of the victory of socialism in *one country*. And I affirmed (and continue to affirm) that the period of the victory of socialism in one country does not create the necessary conditions for

<sup>152</sup> See J. V. Stalin *On the National Colonial Question*, Calcutta Book House, 1970, p. 176.

the merging of nations and national languages, that, on the contrary, this period creates favorable conditions for the renaissance and flourishing of the nations that were formerly oppressed by tsarist imperialism and have now been liberated from national oppression by the Soviet revolution.

From this passage it is apparent, lastly, that you have overlooked the colossal difference between the two different historical periods, that, because of this, you have failed to understand the meaning of Stalin's speech and, as a result, have got lost in the wilderness of your own errors.

Let us pass to Lenin's theses on the dying away and merging of nations after the victory of socialism on a world scale.

Here is one of Lenin's theses, taken from his article, "The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination," published in 1916, which, for some reason, is not quoted in full in your letters:

The aim of socialism is not only to abolish the division of mankind into small states and all isolation of nations, not only to draw the nations together, but to merge them... Just as mankind can arrive at the abolition of classes only by passing through a transition period of the dictatorship of the oppressed class, so mankind can arrive at the inevitable merging of nations only by passing through a transition period of complete liberation of all the oppressed nations, i.e., of their freedom of secession.<sup>153</sup>

And here is another thesis of Lenin's, which you likewise do not quote in full:

As long as national and state differences exist among peoples and countries—and these differences will continue to exist for a very, very long time even after the dictatorship of the proletariat has been established on a world scale—the unity of international tactics of the communist working-class movement of all countries demands, not the elimination of variety, not the abolition of national differences (that is a foolish dream at the present moment), but such an application of the fundamental principles of communism (Soviet power and

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<sup>153</sup> See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. XXII, Progress Publishers Moscow, pp. 146-147.

the dictatorship of the proletariat) as would correctly modify these principles in certain particulars, correctly adapt and apply them to national and national-state differences.

It should be noted that this passage is from Lenin's pamphlet "*Left-Wing" Communism, an Infantile Disorder*, published in 1920, that is, *after* the victory of the socialist revolution in one country, *after* the victory of socialism in our country.

From these passages it is evident that Lenin does not assign the process of the dying away of national differences and the merging of nations to the period of the victory of socialism in one country, but exclusively to the period *after* the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat on a world scale, that is, to the period of the victory of socialism in all countries, when the foundations of a world socialist economy have already been laid.

From these passages it is evident, further, that the attempt to assign the process of the dying away of national differences to the period of the victory of socialism in one country, in our country, is qualified by Lenin as a "foolish dream."

From these passages it is evident, moreover, that Stalin was absolutely right when, in the speech he delivered at the Communist University of the Toilers of the East, he denied that it was possible for national differences and national languages to die away in the period of the victory of socialism in one country, in our country, and that you were absolutely wrong in upholding something that is the direct opposite of Stalin's thesis.

From these passages it is evident, lastly, that, in confusing the two different periods of the victory of socialism, you failed to understand Lenin, distorted Lenin's line on the national question and, as a consequence, involuntarily headed for a rupture with Leninism.

It would be incorrect to think that after the defeat of world imperialism national differences will be abolished and national languages will die away immediately, at one stroke, by decree from above, so to speak. Nothing is more erroneous than this view. To attempt to bring about the merging of nations by decree from above, by compulsion, would be playing into the hands of the imperialists, it would spell disaster to the cause of the liberation of nations, and be fatal to the cause of organizing co-opera-

tion and fraternity among nations. Such a policy would be tantamount to a policy of assimilation.

You know, of course, that the policy of assimilation is absolutely excluded from the arsenal of Marxism-Leninism, as being an anti-popular and counter-revolutionary policy, a fatal policy.

Furthermore, we know that nations and national languages possess an extraordinary stability and tremendous power of resistance to the policy of assimilation. The Turkish assimilators—the most brutal of all assimilators—mangled and mutilated the Balkan nations for hundreds of years, yet not only did they fail to destroy them, but in the end were forced to capitulate. The tsarist-Russian Russifiers and the German-Prussian Germanizers, who yielded little in brutality to the Turkish assimilators, rent and mangled the Polish nation for over a hundred years, just as the Persian and Turkish assimilators for hundreds of years rent and mangled and massacred the Armenian and Georgian nations, yet, far from destroying these nations, in the end they were also forced to capitulate.

All these circumstances must be taken into account in order correctly to forecast the probable course of events as regards the development of nations directly after the defeat of world imperialism.

It would be a mistake to think that the first stage of the period of the world dictatorship of the proletariat will mark the beginning of the dying away of nations and national languages, the beginning of the formation of one common language. On the contrary, the first stage, during which national oppression will be completely abolished, will be a stage marked by the growth and flourishing of the formerly oppressed nations and national languages, the consolidation of equality among nations, the elimination of mutual national distrust, and the establishment and strengthening of international ties among nations.

Only in the second stage of the period of the world dictatorship of the proletariat, to the extent that a single world socialist economy is built up in place of the world capitalist economy—only in that stage will something in the nature of a common language begin to take shape; for only in that stage will the nations feel the need to have, in addition to their own national languages, a common international language—for convenience of intercourse and of economic, cultural and political co-operation. Consequently, in this stage, national languages and a common international



language will exist side by side. It is possible that, at first, not one world economic center will be formed, common to all nations and with one common language, but several zonal economic centers for separate groups of nations, with a separate common language for each group of nations, and that only later will these centers combine into one common world socialist economic center, with one language common to all the nations.

In the next stage of the period of world dictatorship of the proletariat—when the world socialist system of economy becomes sufficiently consolidated and socialism becomes part and parcel of the life of the peoples, and when practice convinces the nations of the advantages of a common language over national languages—national differences and languages will begin to die away and make room for a world language, common to all nations.

Such, in my opinion, is the approximate picture of the future of nations, a picture of the development of the nations along the path to their merging in the future.



## IV. The Policy of the Party on the National Question

One of your mistakes is that you regard the national question not as a part of the general question of the social and political development of society, subordinated to this general question, but as something self-contained and constant, whose direction and character remain basically unchanged throughout the course of history. Hence you fail to see what every Marxist sees, namely, that the national question does not always have one and the same character, that the character and tasks of the national movement vary with the different periods in the development of the revolution.

Logically, it is this that explains the deplorable fact that you so lightly confuse and lump together diverse periods of development of the revolution, and fail to understand that the changes in the character and tasks of the revolution in the various stages of its development give rise to corresponding changes in the character and aims of the national question, that in conformity with this the Party's policy on the national question also changes, and that, consequently, the Party's policy on the national question in one period of development of the revolution cannot be violently severed from that period and arbitrarily transferred to another period.

The Russian Marxists have always started out from the proposition that the national question is a part of the general question of the development of the revolution, that at different stages of the revolution the national question has different aims, corresponding to the character of the revolution at each given historical moment, and that the Party's policy on the national question changes in conformity with this.

In the period preceding the First World War, when history made a *bourgeois-democratic* revolution the task of the moment in Russia, the Russian Marxists linked the solution of the national question with the fate of the democratic revolution in Russia. Our Party held that the overthrow of tsarism, the elimination of the survivals of feudalism, and the complete democratization of the country provided the best solution of the national question that was possible within the framework of capitalism.

Such was the policy of the Party in that period.

It is to this period that Lenin's well-known articles on the national question belong, including the article "Critical Remarks on the National Question" where Lenin says:

I assert that there is only one solution of the national question, in so far as one is possible at all in the capitalist world—and that solution is consistent democratism. In proof, I could cite, among others, Switzerland.<sup>154</sup>

To this same period belongs Stalin's pamphlet, *Marxism and the National Question*, which among other things says:

The final disappearance of a national movement is possible only with the downfall of the bourgeoisie. Only under the reign of socialism can peace be fully established. But even within the framework of capitalism it is possible to reduce the national struggle to a minimum to undermine it at the root, to render it as harmless as possible to the proletariat. This is borne out, for example, by Switzerland and America. It requires that the country should be democratized and the nations be given the opportunity of free development.<sup>155</sup>

In the next period, the period of the First World War, when the prolonged war between the two imperialist coalitions undermined the might of world imperialism, when the crisis of the world capitalist system reached an extreme degree, when, alongside the working class of the "metropolitan countries," the colonial and dependent countries also joined the movement for emancipation, when the national question grew into the national and colonial question, when the united front of the working class of the advanced capitalist countries and of the oppressed peoples of the colonies and dependent countries began to be a real force, when, consequently, the socialist revolution became the question of the moment, the Russian Marxists could no longer content themselves with the policy of the preceding period, and they found it necessary to link the solution of the national and colonial question with the fate of the socialist revolution.

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<sup>154</sup> See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. XX, Progress Publishers, Moscow, p. 40.

<sup>155</sup> See J. V. Stalin, *On the National Colonial Question*, Calcutta Book House, 1970, p. 76.

The Party held that the overthrow of the power of capital and the organization of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the expulsion of the imperialist troops from the colonial and dependent countries and the securing of the right of these countries to secede and to form their own national states, the elimination of national enmity and nationalism and the strengthening of international ties between peoples, the organization of a single socialist national economy and the establishment on this basis of fraternal co-operation among peoples, constituted the best solution of the national and colonial question under the given conditions.

Such was the policy of the Party in that period.

That period is still far from having entered into full force, for it has only just begun; but there is no doubt that it will yet have its decisive word to say...

A question apart is the present period of development of the revolution in our country and the present policy of the Party.

It should be noted that so far our country has proved to be the *only* one ready to overthrow capitalism. And it really has overthrown capitalism and organized the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Consequently, we still have a long way to go to the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat *on a world scale*, and still more to the victory of socialism *in all countries*.

It should be noted, further, that in putting an end to the rule of the bourgeoisie, which has long since abandoned its old democratic traditions, we, in passing, solved the problem of the "complete democratization of the country," abolished the system of national oppression and established equality of nations in our country.

As we know, these measures proved to be the best way of eliminating nationalism and national enmity, and of establishing mutual confidence among the peoples.

It should be noted, lastly, that the abolition of national oppression led to the national revival of the formerly oppressed nations of our country, to the development of their national cultures, to the strengthening of friendly, international ties among the peoples of our country and to their mutual co-operation in the work of building socialism.

It should be borne in mind that these regenerated nations are not the old, bourgeois nations, led by the bourgeoisie, but new, socialist nations,

which have arisen on the ruins of the old nations and are led by the internationalist party of the laboring masses.

In view of this, the Party considered it necessary to help the regenerated nations of our country to rise to their feet and attain their full stature, to revive and develop their national cultures, widely to develop schools, the arts and other cultural institutions functioning in the native languages, to nationalize—that is, to staff with members of the given nation—the Party, trade-union, co-operative, state and economic apparatuses, to train their own, national, Party and Soviet cadres, and to curb all elements—who are, indeed, few in number—that try to hinder this policy of the Party.

This means that the Party supports, and will continue to support, the development and flourishing of the national cultures of the peoples of our country, that it will encourage the strengthening of our new, socialist nations, that it takes this matter under its protection and guardianship against anti-Leninist elements of any kind.

It is apparent from your letters that you do not approve this policy of our Party. That is because, firstly, you confuse the new, socialist nations with the old, bourgeois nations and do not understand that the national cultures of our new, Soviet nations are in *content* socialist cultures. Secondly, it is because—you will excuse my bluntness—you have a very poor grasp of Leninism and are badly at sea on the national question.

Consider, by way of example, the following elementary matter. We all say that a cultural revolution is needed in our country. If we mean this seriously and are not merely indulging in idle chatter, then we must take at least the first step in this direction: namely, we must make primary education, and later secondary education, compulsory for all citizens of the country, irrespective of their nationality. It is obvious that without this no cultural development whatever, let alone the so-called cultural revolution, will be possible in our country. More, without this there will be neither any real progress of our industry and agriculture, nor any reliable defense of our country.

But how is this to be done, bearing in mind that the percentage of illiteracy in our country is still very high, that in a number of nations of our country there are 80-90 percent of illiterates?

What is needed is to cover the country with an extensive network of schools functioning in the native languages, and to supply them with staffs of teachers who know the native languages.

What is needed is to nationalize—that is, to staff with members of the given nation—all the administrative apparatus, from Party and trade-union to state and economic.

What is needed is widely to develop the press, the theater, the cinema and other cultural institutions functioning in the native languages.

Why in the native languages?—it may be asked. Because only in their native, national languages can the vast masses of the people be successful in cultural, political and economic development.

In view of all that has been said, I think it should not be so difficult to understand that Leninists cannot pursue any other policy on the national question than the one which is now being pursued in our country—provided, of course, they want to remain Leninists.

Is not that so?

Well, then let us leave it at that.

I think I have answered all your questions and doubts.

With communist greetings,

*J. Stalin*

CONCERNING DEVIATIONS  
IN THE NATIONAL  
QUESTION

*June 27, 1930*



*Excerpts From the Political Report of the  
Central Committee to the Sixteenth Congress  
of the CPSU(B)*

The picture of the struggle against deviations in the Party will not be complete if we do not touch upon the deviations that exist in the Party on the *national question*. I have in mind, firstly, the deviation towards Great-Russian chauvinism, and secondly, the deviation towards local nationalism. These deviations are not so conspicuous and assertive as the “Left” or the Right deviation. They could be called creeping deviations. But this does not mean that they do not exist. They do exist, and what is most important—they are growing. There can be no doubt whatever about that. There can be no doubt about it, because the general atmosphere of more acute class struggle cannot fail to cause some intensification of national friction, which finds reflection in the Party. Therefore, the features of these deviations should be exposed and dragged into the light of day.

What is the essence of the deviation towards Great-Russian chauvinism under our present conditions?

The essence of the deviation towards Great-Russian chauvinism lies in the striving to ignore national differences in language, culture and way of life; in the striving to prepare for the liquidation of the national republics and regions; in the striving to undermine the principle of national equality and to discredit the Party’s policy of nationalizing the administrative apparatus, the press, the schools and other state and public organizations.

In this connection, the deviators of this type proceed from the view that since, with the victory of socialism, the nations must merge into one and their national languages must be transformed into a single common language, the time has come to abolish national differences and to abandon the policy of promoting the development of the national cultures of the formerly oppressed peoples.

In this connection, they refer to Lenin, misquoting him and sometimes deliberately distorting and slandering him.

Lenin said that under socialism the interests of the nationalities will merge into a single whole—does it not follow from this that it is time to put an end to the national republics and regions in the interests of... internationalism? Lenin said in 1913, in his controversy with the Bundists,

that the slogan of national culture is a bourgeois slogan—does it not follow from this that it is time to put an end to the national cultures of the peoples of the USSR in the interests of... internationalism?

Lenin said that national oppression and national barriers are destroyed under socialism—does it not follow from this that it is time to put a stop to the policy of taking into account the specific national features of the peoples of the USSR and to go over to the policy of assimilation in the interests of... internationalism?

And so on and so forth.

There can be no doubt that this deviation on the national question, disguised, moreover, by a mask of internationalism and by the name of Lenin, is the most subtle and therefore the most dangerous species of Great-Russian nationalism.

*Firstly*, Lenin never said that national differences must disappear and that national languages must merge into one common language within the borders of *a single state before the victory of socialism on a world scale*. On the contrary, Lenin said something that was the very opposite of this, namely, that “national and state *differences* among peoples and countries... will continue to exist *for a very, very long time* even *after* the dictatorship of the proletariat has been established on a *world scale*.”<sup>156</sup>

How can anyone refer to Lenin and forget about this fundamental statement of his?

True, Mr. Kautsky, an ex-Marxist and now a renegade and reformist, asserts something that is the very opposite of what Lenin teaches us. Despite Lenin, he asserts that the victory of the proletarian revolution in the Austro-German federal state in the middle of the last century would have led to the formation of a *single, common* German language and to the *Germanization* of the Czechs, because

The mere force of unshackled intercourse, the mere force of modern culture of which the Germans were the vehicles, without any forcible Germanisation, *would have converted into Germans the backward Czech petit bourgeois, peasants and pro-*

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<sup>156</sup> V. I. Lenin, “*Left-Wing*” *Communism, an Infantile Disorder*, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 1965, pp. 95-96. My italics.—*J. St.*

*letarians who had nothing to gain from their decayed nationality.*<sup>157</sup>

It goes without saying that such a “conception” is in full accord with Kautsky’s social-chauvinism. It was these views of Kautsky’s that I combated in 1925 in my speech at the University of the Peoples of the East.<sup>158</sup> But can this anti-Marxist chatter of an arrogant German social-chauvinist have any positive significance for us Marxists, who want to remain consistent internationalists?

Who is right, Kautsky or Lenin?

If Kautsky is right, then how are we to explain the fact that relatively backward nationalities like the Byelorussians and Ukrainians, who are closer to the Great-Russians than the Czechs are to the Germans, have not become Russified as a result of the victory of the proletarian revolution in the USSR, but, on the contrary, have been regenerated and have developed as independent nations? How are we to explain the fact that nations like the Turkmenians, Kirghizians, Uzbeks, Tajiks (not to speak of the Georgians, Armenians, Azerbaijanis, and others), in spite of their backwardness, far from becoming Russified as a result of the victory of socialism in the USSR, have, on the contrary, been regenerated and have developed into independent nations? Is it not evident that our worthy deviators, in their hunt after a sham internationalism, have fallen into the clutches of Kautskyan social-chauvinism? Is it not evident that in advocating a single, common language within the borders of *a single* state, within the borders of the USSR, they are, in essence, striving to restore the *privileges* of the formerly predominant language, namely, the *Great-Russian* language?

What has this to do with internationalism?

*Secondly*, Lenin never said that the abolition of national oppression and the merging of the interests of nationalities into one whole is tantamount to the abolition of national differences. We have abolished national oppression. We have abolished national privileges and have established national equality of rights. We have abolished state frontiers in the old

<sup>157</sup> K. Kautsky, “*Preface to Revolution and Counter-Revolution.*”

<sup>158</sup> This refers to the address delivered at a meeting of students of the Communist University of the Toilers of the East, May 18, 1925 (see J. V. Stalin, “The Political Tasks of the University of the Peoples of the East,” in *On the National Colonial Question*, Calcutta Book House, 1970, pp. 173-183).

sense of the term, frontier posts and customs barriers between the nationalities of the USSR. We have established the unity of the economic and political interests of the peoples of the USSR. But does this mean that we have thereby abolished national differences, national languages, culture, manner of life, etc.? Obviously it does not mean this. But if national differences, languages, culture, manner of life, etc., have remained, is it not evident that the demand for the abolition of the national republics and regions in the present historical period is a reactionary demand directed against the interests of the dictatorship of the proletariat? Do our deviators understand that to abolish the national republics and regions at the present time means depriving the vast masses of the peoples of the USSR of the possibility of receiving education in their *native* languages, depriving them of the possibility of having schools, courts, administration, public and other organizations and institutions in their *native* languages, depriving them of the possibility of being drawn into the work of socialist construction? Is it not evident that in their hunt after a sham internationalism our deviators have fallen into the clutches of the reactionary Great-Russian chauvinists and have forgotten, completely forgotten, the slogan of the cultural revolution in the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat, which applies equally to *all* the peoples of the USSR, both Great-Russian and non-Great-Russian?

*Thirdly*, Lenin never said that the slogan of developing national culture *under the conditions of the dictatorship of the proletariat* is a reactionary slogan. On the contrary, Lenin always stood for *helping* the peoples of the USSR to develop their national cultures. It was under the guidance of none other than Lenin that at the Tenth Congress of the Party, the resolution on the national question was drafted and adopted, in which it is plainly stated that:

The Party's task is to *help* the laboring masses of the non-Great-Russian peoples to catch up with Central Russia, which has gone in front, to *help* them: a) to develop and strengthen Soviet statehood among them in forms corresponding to the national conditions and manner of life of these peoples; b) to develop and strengthen among them courts, administrations, economic and government bodies functioning in their native

languages and staffed with local people familiar with the manner of life and mentality of the local inhabitants; c) to develop among them press, schools, theaters, clubs, and cultural and educational institutions in general, functioning in the native languages; d) to set up and develop a wide network of general-educational and trade and technical courses and schools, functioning in the native languages.<sup>159</sup>

Is it not obvious that Lenin stood wholly and entirely for the slogan of developing national culture *under the conditions of the dictatorship of the proletariat?*

Is it not obvious that to deny the slogan of national culture under the conditions of the dictatorship of the proletariat means denying the necessity of raising the cultural level of the non-Great-Russian peoples of the USSR, denying the necessity of compulsory universal education for these peoples, means putting these peoples into spiritual bondage to the reactionary nationalists?

Lenin did indeed qualify the slogan of national culture *under the rule of the bourgeoisie* as a reactionary slogan. But could it be otherwise?

What is national culture under the rule of the national bourgeoisie? It is culture that is *bourgeois* in content and national in form, having the object of doping the masses with the poison of nationalism and of strengthening the rule of the bourgeoisie.

What is national culture under the dictatorship of the proletariat? It is culture that is *socialist* in content and national in form, having the object of educating the masses in the spirit of socialism and internationalism.

How is it possible to confuse these two fundamentally different things without breaking with Marxism?

Is it not obvious that in combating the slogan of national culture under the bourgeois order, Lenin was striking at the bourgeois *content* of national culture and not at its national form?

It would be foolish to suppose that Lenin regarded socialist culture as *non-national*, as not having a particular national form. The Bundists did at one time actually ascribe this nonsense to Lenin. But it is known

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<sup>159</sup> See *Resolutions and Decisions of CPSU Congresses, Conferences and Central Committee Plenums*, Part II, 1953, p. 559.

from the works of Lenin that he protested sharply against this slander and emphatically dissociated himself from this nonsense. Have our worthy deviators really followed in the footsteps of the Bundists?

After all that has been said, what is left of the arguments of our deviators?

Nothing, except juggling with the flag of internationalism and slander against Lenin.

Those who are deviating towards Great-Russian chauvinism are profoundly mistaken in believing that the period of building socialism in the USSR is the period of the collapse and abolition of national cultures. The very opposite is the case. In point of fact, the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat and of the building of socialism in the USSR is a period of the *flowering* of national cultures that are *socialist* in content and national in form; for, under the Soviet system, the nations themselves are not the ordinary “modern” nations, but *socialist* nations, just as in content their national cultures are not the ordinary bourgeois cultures, but *socialist* cultures.

They apparently fail to understand that national cultures are bound to develop *with new strength* with the introduction and firm establishment of compulsory universal elementary education in the native languages. They fail to understand that only if the national cultures are developed will it be possible really to draw the backward nationalities into the work of socialist construction.

They fail to understand that it is just this that is the basis of the Leninist policy of *helping* and *promoting* the development of the national cultures of the peoples of the USSR.

It may seem strange that we who stand for the future *merging* of national cultures into one common (both in form and content) culture, with one common language, should at the same time stand for the *flowering* of national cultures at the present moment, in the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat. But there is nothing strange about it. The national cultures must be allowed to develop and unfold, to reveal all their potentialities, in order to create the conditions for merging them into one common culture with one common language in the period of the victory of socialism all over the world. The flowering of cultures that are national in form and socialist in content under the dictatorship of the proletariat

in one country *for the purpose* of merging them into one common socialist (both in form and content) culture, with one common language, when the proletariat is victorious all over the world and when socialism becomes the way of life—it is just this that constitutes the dialectics of the Leninist presentation of the question of national culture.

It may be said that such a presentation of the question is “contradictory.” But is there not the same “contradictoriness” in our presentation of the question of the state? We stand for the withering away of the state. At the same time we stand for the strengthening of the dictatorship of the proletariat, which is the mightiest and strongest state power that has ever existed. The highest development of state power with the object of preparing the conditions *for* the withering away of state power—such is the Marxist formula. Is this “contradictory?” Yes, it is “contradictory.” But this contradiction is bound up with life, and it fully reflects Marx’s dialectics.

Or, for example, Lenin’s presentation of the question of the right of nations to self-determination, including the right to secession. Lenin sometimes depicted the thesis on national self-determination in the guise of the simple formula: “disunion for union.” Think of it—disunion for union. It even sounds like a paradox. And yet, this “contradictory” formula reflects that living truth of Marx’s dialectics which enables the Bolsheviks to capture the most impregnable fortresses in the sphere of the national question.

The same may be said about the formula relating to national culture: the flowering of national cultures (and languages) in the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat in one country with the object of preparing the conditions for their withering away and merging into one common socialist culture (and into one common language) in the period of the victory of socialism all over the world.

Anyone who fails to understand this peculiar feature and “contradiction” of our transition period, anyone who fails to understand these dialectics of the historical processes, is dead as far as Marxism is concerned.

The misfortune of our deviators is that they do not understand, and do not wish to understand, Marx’s dialectics.

That is how matters stand as regards the deviation towards Great-Russian chauvinism.

It is not difficult to understand that this deviation reflects the striving of the moribund classes of the formerly dominant Great-Russian nation to recover their lost privileges.

Hence the danger of Great-Russian chauvinism as the chief danger in the Party in the sphere of the national question.

What is the essence of the deviation towards local nationalism?

The essence of the deviation towards local nationalism is the endeavor to isolate and segregate oneself within the shell of one's own nation, the endeavor to slur over class contradictions within one's own nation, the endeavor to protect oneself from Great-Russian chauvinism by withdrawing from the general stream of socialist construction, the endeavor not to see what draws together and unites the laboring masses of the nations of the USSR and to see only what can draw them apart from one another.

The deviation towards local nationalism reflects the discontent of the moribund classes of the formerly oppressed nations with the regime of the dictatorship of the proletariat, their striving to isolate themselves in their national bourgeois state and to establish their class rule there.

The danger of this deviation is that it cultivates bourgeois nationalism, weakens the unity of the working people of the different nations of the USSR and plays into the hands of the interventionists.

Such is the essence of the deviation towards local nationalism.

The Party's task is to wage a determined struggle against this deviation and to ensure the conditions necessary for the education of the laboring masses of the peoples of the USSR in the spirit of internationalism.

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*Excerpts from the Reply to the Discussion on the  
Political Report*

The second batch of notes concerns the national question. One of them—the most interesting, in my opinion—compares the treatment of the problem of national languages in my report at the Sixteenth Congress with the treatment of it in my speech at the University of the Peoples of the East in 1925 and finds a certain lack of clarity which needs elucidating. The note says:



You objected at that time to the theory (Kautsky's) of the dying away of national languages and the formation of a single, common language in the period of socialism (in one country), while now, in your report at the Sixteenth Congress, you state that Communists believe in the merging of national cultures and national languages into one common culture with one common language (in the period of the victory of socialism on a world scale). Is there not a lack of clarity here?

I think that there is neither lack of clarity nor the slightest contradiction here. In my speech in 1925 I objected to Kautsky's national-chauvinist theory on the basis of which a victory of the proletarian revolution in the middle of the past century in the united Austro-German state was bound to lead to the merging of the nations into one common German nation, with one common German language, and to the Germanization of the Czechs. I objected to this theory as being anti-Marxist, anti-Leninist, and in refutation of it quoted facts from life in our country after the victory of socialism in the USSR. I still oppose this theory, as can be seen from my report at this Sixteenth Congress. I oppose it because the theory of the merging of all the nations of, say, the USSR into one common Great-Russian nation with one common Great-Russian language is a national-chauvinist, anti-Leninist theory, which contradicts the basic thesis of Leninism that national differences cannot disappear in the near future, that they are bound to remain for a long time even after the victory of the proletarian revolution on a world scale.

As for the more remote prospects for national cultures and national languages, I have always adhered and continue to adhere to the Leninist view that in the period of the victory of socialism on a world scale, when socialism has been consolidated and become the way of life, the national languages are inevitably bound to merge into one common language, which, of course, will be neither Great-Russian nor German, but something new. I made a definite statement on this also in my report at the Sixteenth Congress.

Where, then, is the lack of clarity here and what is it exactly that needs elucidating?

Evidently, the authors of the note were not quite clear on at least two things:

*First and foremost*, they were not clear on the fact that in the USSR we have already entered the period of socialism; moreover, despite the fact that we have entered this period, the nations are not only not dying away, but, on the contrary, are developing and flourishing. Have we, in actual fact, already entered the period of socialism? Our period is usually called the period of transition from capitalism to socialism. It was called a transition period in 1918, when Lenin, in his celebrated article, “*Left-Wing Childishness and Petit bourgeois Mentality*,”<sup>160</sup> first described this period with its five forms of economy. It is called a transition period today, in 1930, when some of these forms, having become obsolete, are already on the way to disappearance, while one of them, namely, the new form of economy in the sphere of industry and agriculture, is growing and developing with unprecedented speed. Can it be said that these two transition periods are identical, are not radically different from each other? Obviously not.

What did we have in the sphere of the national economy in 1918? A ruined industry and cigarette lighters; neither collective farms nor state farms on a mass scale; the growth of a “new” bourgeoisie in the towns and of the kulaks in the countryside.

What have we today? Socialist industry, restored and undergoing reconstruction, an extensive system of state farms and collective farms, accounting for more than 40 percent of the total sown area of the USSR in the spring-sown sector alone, a moribund “new” bourgeoisie in the town and a moribund kulak class in the countryside.

The former was a transition period and so is the latter. Nevertheless, they are as far apart as heaven and earth. And nevertheless, no one can deny that we are on the verge of eliminating the last important capitalist class, the kulak class. Clearly, we have already emerged from the transition period in the old sense and have entered the period of direct and sweeping socialist construction along the whole front. Clearly, we have already entered the period of socialism, for the socialist sector now controls all the economic levers of the entire national economy, although we are still far from having completely built a socialist society and from having abolished class distinctions. Nevertheless, the national languages are not only not

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<sup>160</sup> V. I. Lenin, “‘Left-Wing’ Childishness and the Petty-Bourgeois Mentality” in *Collected Works*, Vol. XXVII.

dying away or merging into one common tongue, but, on the contrary, the national cultures and national languages are developing and flourishing. Is it not clear that the theory of the dying away of national languages and their merging into one common language within the framework of a single state in the period of sweeping socialist construction, in the period of socialism in one country, is an incorrect, anti-Marxist, anti-Leninist theory?

Secondly, the authors of the note were not clear on the fact that the dying away of national languages and their merging into one common language is not an intra-state question, not a question of the victory of socialism in one country, but an international question, a question of the victory of socialism on an international scale. They failed to understand that the victory of socialism in one country must not be confused with the victory of socialism on an international scale. Lenin had good reason for saying that national differences will remain for a long time even after the victory of the dictatorship of the proletariat on an international scale.

Besides, we must take into consideration still another circumstance, which affects a number of the nations of the USSR. There is a Ukraine which forms part of the USSR. But there is also another Ukraine which forms part of other states. There is a Byelorussia which forms part of the USSR. But there is also another Byelorussia which forms part of other states. Do you think that the question of the Ukrainian and Byelorussian languages can be settled without taking these specific conditions into account?

Then take the nations of the USSR situated along its southern border, from Azerbaijan to Kazakhstan and Buryat-Mongolia. They are all in the same position as the Ukraine and Byelorussia. Naturally, here too we have to take into consideration the specific conditions of development of these nations.

Is it not obvious that all these and similar questions that are bound up with the problem of national cultures and national languages cannot be settled within the framework of a single state, within the framework of the USSR?

That, comrades, is how matters stand with respect to the national question in general and the above-mentioned note on the national question in particular.

CONCERNING THE  
DEVIATION TOWARDS  
NATIONALISM

*January 26, 1934*

*Excerpts From the Report to the Seventeenth  
Party Congress on the Work of the Central  
Committee of the CPSU(B)*

Or take, for example, the *national question*. Here, too, in the sphere of the national question, just as in the sphere of other questions, there is in the views of a section of the Party a confusion which creates a certain danger. I have spoken of the tenacity of the survivals of capitalism. It should be observed that the survivals of capitalism in people's minds are much more tenacious in the sphere of the national question than in any other sphere. They are more tenacious because they are able to disguise themselves well in national costume. Many think that Skrypnyk's fall from grace was an individual case, an exception to the rule. This is not true. The fall from grace of Skrypnyk and his group in the Ukraine is not an exception. Similar aberrations are observed among certain comrades in other national republics as well.

What is the deviation towards nationalism—regardless whether it is a matter of the deviation towards Great-Russian nationalism or the deviation towards local nationalism? The deviation towards nationalism is the adaptation of the internationalist policy of the working class to the nationalist policy of the bourgeoisie. The deviation towards nationalism reflects the attempts of “one's own,” “national” bourgeoisie to undermine the Soviet system and to restore capitalism. The source of both these deviations, as you see, is the same. It is a *departure* from Leninist internationalism. If you want to keep both deviations under fire, then aim primarily against this source, against those who depart from internationalism—regardless whether it is a matter of the deviation towards local nationalism or the deviation towards Great-Russian nationalism. [*Stormy applause.*]

There is a controversy as to which deviation represents the chief danger: the deviation towards Great-Russian nationalism, or the deviation towards local nationalism. Under present conditions, this is a formal and, therefore, a pointless controversy. It would be foolish to attempt to give ready-made recipes suitable for all times and for all conditions as regards the chief and the lesser danger. Such recipes do not exist. The chief danger is the deviation against which we have ceased to fight, thereby allowing it to grow into a danger to the state. [*Prolonged applause.*]

In the Ukraine, only very recently, the deviation towards Ukrainian nationalism did not represent the chief danger; but when the fight against it ceased, and it was allowed to grow to such an extent that it linked up with the interventionists, this deviation became the chief danger. The question as to which is the chief danger in the sphere of the national question is determined not by futile, formal controversies, but by a Marxist analysis of the situation at the given moment, and by a study of the mistakes that have been committed in this sphere.



**ON THE DRAFT  
CONSTITUTION OF THE  
USSR**

*November 25, 1936*



*Excerpts from the Report Delivered at the  
Extraordinary Eighth Congress of the Soviets  
of the USSR*

The picture of the changes in the social life of the USSR would be incomplete without a few words about the changes in yet another sphere. I have in mind the sphere of *national relationships in the USSR*. As you know, within the Soviet Union there are about 60 nations, national groups and nationalities. The Soviet state is a multi-national state. Clearly, the question of the relations among the peoples of the USSR cannot but be of prime importance for us.

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, as you know, was formed in 1922, at the First Congress of Soviets of the U.S.S.R. It was formed on the principles of equality and voluntary affiliation of the peoples of the USSR. The Constitution now in force, adopted in 1924, was the first Constitution of the USSR. That was the period when relations among the peoples had not yet been properly adjusted, when survivals of distrust towards the Great-Russians had not yet disappeared, and when centrifugal forces still continued to operate. Under those conditions it was necessary to establish fraternal co-operation among the peoples on the basis of economic, political, and military mutual aid by uniting them in a single, federal, multi-national state. The Soviet power had a very clear conception of the difficulties attending this task. It had before it the unsuccessful experiments of multi-national states in bourgeois countries. It had before it the experiment of old Austria-Hungary, which ended in failure. Nevertheless, it resolved to make the experiment of creating a multi-national state; for it knew that a multi-national state which has arisen on the basis of socialism is bound to stand any and every test.

Since then 14 years have elapsed. A period long enough to test the experiment. And what do we find? This period has shown beyond a doubt that the experiment of forming a multi-national state based on socialism has been completely successful. This is an unquestionable victory of the Leninist national policy. [*Prolonged applause.*]

How is this victory to be explained?

The absence of exploiting classes, which are the principal organizers of strife between nations; the absence of exploitation, which cultivates

mutual distrust and kindles nationalist passions; the fact that power is in the hands of the working class, which is the foe of all enslavement and the true vehicle of the ideas of internationalism; the actual practice of mutual aid among the peoples in all spheres of economic and social life; and, finally, the flourishing of the national culture of the peoples of the USSR, culture which is national in form and socialist in content—all these and similar factors have brought about a radical change in the aspect of the peoples of the USSR; their feeling of mutual distrust has disappeared, a feeling of mutual friendship has developed among them, and thus real fraternal co-operation among the peoples has been established within the system of a single federal state.

As a result, we now have a fully formed multi-national socialist state, which has stood all tests, and whose stability might well be envied by any national state in any part of the world. [*Loud applause.*]

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Bourgeois constitutions tacitly proceed from the premise that nations and races cannot have equal rights, that there are nations with full rights and nations without full rights, and that, in addition, there is a third category of nations or races, for example in the colonies, which have even fewer rights than the nations without full rights. This means that, at bottom, all these constitutions are nationalistic, i.e., constitutions of ruling nations.

Unlike these constitutions, the Draft of the new Constitution of the USSR is, on the contrary, profoundly internationalistic. It proceeds from the premise that all nations and races have equal rights. It proceeds from the fact that neither difference in color or language, cultural level or level of political development, nor any other difference between nations and races, can serve as grounds for justifying national inequality of rights. It proceeds from the proposition that all nations and races, irrespective of their past and present position, irrespective of their strength or weakness, should enjoy equal rights in all spheres of the economic, social, political and cultural life of society.

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Then follows an amendment to Article 17 of the Draft Constitution. The amendment proposes that we completely delete from the Constitution Article 17, which reserves to the Union Republics the right of free secession from the USSR. I think that this proposal is a wrong one and therefore should not be adopted by the congress. The USSR is a voluntary union of Union Republics with equal rights. To delete from the Constitution the article providing for the right of free secession from the USSR would be to violate the voluntary character of this union. Can we agree to this step? I think that we cannot and should not agree to it. It is said that there is not a single Republic in the USSR that would want to secede from the USSR, and that therefore Article 17 is of no practical importance. It is, of course, true that there is not a single Republic that would want to secede from the USSR. But this does not in the least mean that we should not fix in the Constitution the right of Union Republics freely to secede from the USSR. In the USSR there is not a single Union Republic that would want to subjugate another Union Republic. But that does not in the least mean that we ought to delete from the Constitution of the USSR the article dealing with the equality of rights of the Union Republics.

3) Then there is a proposal that we add a new article to Chapter II of the Draft Constitution, to the following effect: that on reaching the proper level of economic and cultural development Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republics may be raised to the status of Union Soviet Socialist Republics. Can this proposal be adopted? I think that it should not be adopted. It is a wrong proposal not only because of its content but also because of the condition it lays down. Economic and cultural maturity can no more be urged as grounds for transferring Autonomous Republics to the category of Union Republics than economic or cultural backwardness can be urged as grounds for leaving any particular Republic in the list of Autonomous Republics. That would not be a Marxist, not a Leninist approach. The Tatar Republic, for example, remains an Autonomous Republic, while the Kazakh Republic is to become a Union Republic; but that does not mean that from the standpoint of cultural and economic development the Kazakh Republic is on a higher level than the Tatar Republic. The very opposite is the case. The same can be said, for example, of the Volga German Autonomous Republic and the Kirghiz Union Republic, of which the

former is on a higher cultural and economic level than the latter, although it remains an Autonomous Republic.

What are the grounds for transferring Autonomous Republics to the category of Union Republics?

There are three such grounds.

First, the republic concerned must be a border republic, not surrounded on all sides by USSR territory. Why? Because since the Union Republics have the right to secede from the USSR, a republic, on becoming a Union Republic, must be in a position logically and actually to raise the question of secession from the USSR. And this question can be raised only by a republic which, say, borders on some foreign state, and, consequently, is not surrounded on all sides by USSR territory. Of course, none of our Republics would actually raise the question of seceding from the USSR. But since the right to secede from the USSR is reserved to the Union Republics, it must be so arranged that this right does not become a meaningless scrap of paper. Take, for example, the Bashkir Republic or the Tatar Republic. Let us assume that these Autonomous Republics are transferred to the category of Union Republics. Could they logically and actually raise the question of seceding from the USSR? No, they could not. Why? Because they are surrounded on all sides by Soviet Republics and regions, and, strictly speaking, they have nowhere to go to if they secede from the USSR. [*Laughter and applause.*] Therefore, it would be wrong to transfer such Republics to the category of Union Republics.

Secondly, the nationality which gives its name to a given Soviet Republic must constitute a more or less compact majority within that republic. Take the Crimean Autonomous Republic, for example. It is a border Republic, but the Crimean Tatars do not constitute the majority in that Republic; on the contrary, they are a minority. Consequently, it would be wrong and illogical to transfer the Crimean Republic to the category of Union Republics.

Thirdly, the republic must not have too small a population; it should have a population of, say, not less but more than a million, at least. Why? Because it would be wrong to assume that a small Soviet Republic with a very small population and a small army could hope to maintain its existence as an independent state. There can hardly be any doubt that the imperialist beasts of prey would soon lay hands on it.

I think that unless these three objective grounds exist, it would be wrong at the present historical moment to raise the question of transferring any particular Autonomous Republic to the category of Union Republics.

Next it is proposed to delete from Articles 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28 and 29 the detailed enumeration of the administrative territorial division of the Union Republics into territories and regions. I think that this proposal is also unacceptable. There are people in the USSR who are always ready and eager to go on tirelessly recarving the territories and regions and thus cause confusion and uncertainty in our work. The Draft Constitution puts a check on those people. And that is a very good thing, because here, as in many other things, we need an atmosphere of certainty, we need stability and clarity.

The fifth amendment concerns Article 33. The creation of two Chambers is regarded as inexpedient, and it is proposed that the Soviet of Nationalities be abolished. I think that this amendment is also wrong. A single-chamber system would be better than a dual-chamber system if the USSR were a single-nation state. But the USSR is not a single nation state. The USSR, as we know, is a multi-national state. We have a supreme body in which are represented the *common* interests of all the working people of the USSR irrespective of nationality. This is the Soviet of the Union. But in addition to common interests, the nationalities of the USSR have *their particular, specific interests*, connected with their specific national characteristics. Can these specific interests be ignored? No, they cannot. Do we need a special supreme body to reflect precisely these specific interests? Unquestionably, we do. There can be no doubt that without such a body it would be impossible to administer a multi-national state like the USSR. Such a body is the second Chamber, the Soviet of Nationalities of the USSR.

Reference is made to the parliamentary history of European and American states; it is pointed out that the dual-chamber system in these countries has produced only negative results—that the second chamber usually degenerates into a center of reaction and a brake on progress. All that is true. But this is due to the fact that in those countries there is no equality between the two chambers. As we know, the second chamber is not infrequently granted more rights than the first chamber and, moreover,

as a rule the second chamber is constituted undemocratically, its members not infrequently being appointed from above. Undoubtedly, these defects will be obviated if equality is established between the chambers and if the second chamber is constituted as democratically as the first.

Further, an addendum to the Draft Constitution is proposed calling for an equal number of members in both Chambers. I think that this proposal might be adopted. In my opinion, it has obvious political advantages, for it emphasizes the equality of the Chambers.

Next comes an addendum to the Draft Constitution which proposes that the members of the Soviet of Nationalities be elected by direct vote, as in the case of the members of the Soviet of the Union. I think that this proposal might also be adopted. True, it may create certain technical inconveniences during elections; but, on the other hand, it would be of great political advantage, for it would enhance the prestige of the Soviet of Nationalities.



# ON SOVIET PATRIOTISM

*November 6, 1944*



*Excerpts From Speech Delivered at the Joint  
Celebration Meeting of the Moscow Soviet of  
Working People's Deputies and Representatives  
of Moscow Party and Public Organizations*

The strength of Soviet patriotism lies in the fact that it is based not on racial or nationalistic prejudices, but upon the profound devotion and loyalty of the people to their Soviet Motherland, on the fraternal co-operation of the working people of all the nations inhabiting our country. Soviet patriotism is a harmonious blend of the national traditions of the peoples and the common vital interests of all the working people of the Soviet Union. Soviet patriotism does not disunite but unites all the nations and nationalities inhabiting our country in a single fraternal family. This should be regarded as the basis of the indestructible and ever-growing friendship that exists among the peoples of the Soviet Union. At the same time, the peoples of the USSR respect the rights and independence of the peoples of foreign countries and have always shown their readiness to live in peace and friendship with neighboring countries. This should be regarded as the basis upon which the ties between our country and other freedom-loving peoples are expanding and growing stronger.

The Soviet people hate the German invaders not because they belong to a foreign nation, but because they have caused our people and all freedom-loving peoples incalculable misfortune and suffering. There is an old saying among our people: "The wolf is not beaten because he is grey, but because he devours the sheep." [*Laughter. Prolonged applause.*]

The German fascists chose the misanthropic race theory as their ideological weapon in the expectation that the advocacy of brutal nationalism would create the moral and political prerequisites for the domination of the German invaders over enslaved peoples. The policy of race hatred pursued by the Hitlerites, however, actually became a source of internal weakness for the German fascist state, and of its political isolation from other states. The ideology and policy of race hatred have been one of the factors that led to the collapse of the Hitler brigand bloc. It cannot be regarded as an accident that against the German imperialists have risen not only the enslaved peoples of France, Yugoslavia, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Greece, Belgium, Denmark, Norway and the Netherlands, but also Hit-

ler's former vassals—the Italians, the Rumanians, the Finns and Bulgarians. By their cannibal policy the Hitler clique has roused all the people of the world against Germany, and the so-called “chosen German race” has become the object of universal hatred.

In the course of the war the Hitlerites have sustained not only military but also moral and political defeat. The ideology of the equality of all races and nations, which has become firmly established in our country, the ideology of friendship among nations, has achieved complete victory over the ideology of brutal nationalism and race hatred preached by the Hitlerites.

Now that our Patriotic War is drawing to a triumphant close, the historic role played by the Soviet people stands out in all its grandeur. Everybody admits now that by their self-sacrificing struggle the Soviet people saved the civilization of Europe from the fascist pogrom-mongers. This is the great historic service the Soviet people have rendered mankind.



ON THE TREATY OF  
FRIENDSHIP AND MUTUAL  
HELP BETWEEN THE  
SOVIET UNION AND  
FINLAND

*April 7, 1948*

*Speech given at the dinner in honor of the  
Finish Government Delegation*

I would like to say a few words about the significance of the Treaty of Friendship and Mutual Help between the Soviet Union and Finland, which was signed yesterday.

This treaty signifies a change in the relations between our countries. As it is known, in the course of 150 years of relations between Russia and Finland, there has been mutual distrust. The Finns distrusted the Russians, the Russians distrusted the Finns. From the Soviet side there resulted an attempt in the past to break the distrust that stood between the Russians and the Finns. That was at the time that Lenin, in 1917, proclaimed the independence of Finland. From an historical point of view, that was an outstanding act. But sadly the distrust was not thereby broken—the distrust stayed distrust. The result was two wars between us.

I would like us to go over from the long period of mutual distrust in the course of which we went to war with each other twice, to a new period in our relations: the period of mutual trust.

It is necessary that the conclusion of this treaty breaks this distrust and builds a new basis for relations between our peoples and that it signifies a great change in the relations between our countries towards trust and friendship.

We want this acknowledged not only by those present in this hall but also by those outside this hall, as much in Finland as in the Soviet Union.

One must not believe that the distrust between our peoples can be removed all at once. That is not done so quickly. For a long time there will be remnants of this distrust, for the abolition of which one must work and struggle hard, and to build and strengthen a tradition of mutual friendship between the USSR and Finland.

There are treaties that are based upon equality and some that are not. The Soviet-Finnish treaty is a treaty that is based upon equality, it has been concluded on the basis of full equality of the partners.

Many believe that between a big and little nation there cannot be relations which are based on equality. But we Soviet people are of the opinion that such relations can and should exist. We Soviet people are

of the opinion that every nation, great or small, has special qualities that only they have and no other nation possesses. These peculiarities are their contribution, that every nation should contribute to the common treasure of the culture of the world. In this sense, all nations, big and small, are in the same situation, and every nation is as equally important as the next nation.

So the Soviet people are of the opinion that Finland, although a small country, is in this treaty, as equal a partner as the Soviet Union.

You do not find many politicians of the great powers that would regard the small nations as the equals of the larger nations. Most of them look down upon the small nations. They are not disinclined, occasionally, to make a one-sided guarantee for a small nation. These politicians do not, in general, conclude treaties which depend on equality, with small nations, as they do not regard small nations as their partners.

I propose a toast to the Soviet-Finnish treaty, and to the change for the better in the relations between our countries that this treaty signifies.



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2. *Wage Labour and Capital  
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Rosa Luxemburg
4. *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*  
Frederick Engels
5. *The State and Revolution*  
V. I. Lenin
6. *Labour in Irish History*  
James Connolly
7. *Anarchism or Socialism?  
& Trotskyism or Leninism?*  
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