ANNALS, AAPSS, 433, September 1977

Ethnicity in the Soviet Union

By TERESA RAKOWSKA-HARMSTONE

ABSTRACT: In the Soviet Union, ethnicity is the major force for change. It is a multiethnic society, where the Russians constitute the ruling majority. The country's political system recognizes the ethnic principle in a federal state structure, but the real power is exercised by a unitary and highly centralized Communist party. The ruling ideology of Marxism–Leninism postulates class-based internationalism as the basis of Soviet national integration. Ethnic antagonisms, inherited from Russia's colonial past, were submerged in the Stalinist period, but growing ethnic self-assertion by non-Russian groups became visible in the sixties and seventies, under the impact of accelerated modernization and other policy decisions, such as the development of ethnic cultures. Quantitative and qualitative hegemony of the Russians has been a major catalyst. New Soviet educated elites are the spokesmen for ethnic interests, which are aggregated within national republics. Ethnic conflict manifests itself in all spheres of political, social, economic, and cultural life, but is played by systemic "rules of the game." There is no open separatism or ethnic warfare. Ethnic forces press for an evolution toward greater autonomy, but if it is denied, there may be an explosion.

Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone is a Professor of Political Science at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada. Educated at Montreal's McGill University, Radcliffe College, and Harvard University, she also taught at Douglass College, Rutgers University, and, as a Visiting Professor, at McGill and George Washington University. A Director of the Institute of Soviet and East European Studies at Carleton in 1972–74, she is the author of Russia and Nationalism in Central Asia; the Case of Tadzhikistan *and other contributions on Soviet national relations and politics of Eastern Europe.*

THE international and popular Western image of the Soviet Union rarely recognizes the multiethnic and formally federal character of the Soviet State. The usual perception is that the Soviet Union is synonymous with "Russia." This is so, first, because in the Soviet Union the Russians are the dominant nation, quantitatively and qualitatively, their historical hegemony having survived intact the 1917 Revolution and the transition from Imperial Russia to the Soviet "international workers'" state; second, because the highly centralized nature of the Soviet political system, run by the unitary Communist Party renders the federal constitutional state structure largely irrelevant for the purposes of international Realpolitik. Only rarely is one reminded of the federal nature of the USSR, as in the case of Soviet demands to grant full United Nations' status to all of its constituent national republics, or an attempt to have one or another republic acting as a sovereign state in the international arena for selective (and transient) foreign policy purposes,[1] which in the sixties and seventies, for example, resulted in a higher profile for the Soviet Muslim republics. But, as the flow of exchanges and data between the Soviet Union and the West has increased in the post-Stalin era, the phenomenon of ethnicity (the old-fashioned term used in the Soviet Union is "the national problem") and the presence of ethnic conflict there, have become increasingly visible.

The ethnic conflict in the Soviet Union does not take the form of an open conflict of a kind present in many other multiethnic societies throughout the world. The very nature of the Soviet political system precludes that. Marxist-Leninist ideology, which is the source of legitimacy for the monopoly of power the CPSU exercises in the country, denies the existence of conflicts other than those based in class exploitation, and postulates, ex cathedra, that with the achievement of socialism the class and ethnic conflicts in the USSR have both disappeared. The theory is that the unity of the Soviet nations and nationalities stems from the class-based "proletarian internationalism" (all Soviet citizens, of whatever nationality, are the "working people") and that the "national problem" in the Soviet Union has been solved precisely because of the duality of the Soviet political system. The national character of each ethnic group is safeguarded in the constitutional national form, but their overriding class-based unity, the socialist content, is expressed by the leading role of the CPSU—the "toilers'" vanguard and the leading force in society. Consequently, any open ethnic self-assertion which transgresses the limits of the "national form–socialist content" formula is suppressed. But the dichotomy also opens up the avenues for "legitimate" self-assertion.

The nature and appearance of ethnic conflict in the Soviet Union are, therefore, different than in other more "open" societies. On the one hand, the systemic constraints prevent expression of open separatism as well as open ethnic warfare. For this reason there is no agreement among experts whether the highly visible phenomenon of ethnic self-assertion by major Soviet ethnic groups can be defined as nationalism.

1. See Vernon V. Aspaturian, *Process and Power in Soviet Foreign Policy* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1971), chs. 14 and 19.

On the other hand, the legal framework of the system and its ideological premises not only allow the pursuit of ethnic autonomy, but also preempt the option of a return to an imperial state based on Russian nationalism, even though de facto the new "Soviet" value system and patterns of behavior are permeated —for historical reasons—by the Russian political culture content.

In the Soviet Union, therefore, the forces of ethnicity find their expression within the system and the ethnic conflict is regulated by the rules imposed by it. The Russians and the Ukrainians or the Uzbeks, for example, do not fight in the streets; on the contrary, professions of "unbreakable unity" and "fraternal ties" fill the Soviet media, resound in conferences and assemblies, provide the message in the arts, and form the keynote of official pronouncements. Yet, at the same time the whole fabric of Soviet society is permeated, subtly but unmistakably, by ethnic antagonisms and competition between the dominant Russians and all others in political, economic, social, and cultural life.

All available evidence indicates that the rate of growth of the national self-assertion of major Soviet ethnic groups exceeds their rate of assimilation into a common Soviet value system. The problem, while not officially acknowledged, is recognized by the Soviet leadership. In the words of one of the key Politbureau leaders, ethnic antagonisms constitute one of the three main obstacles on the "road to building communism."[2] In the opinion of this writer, the ethnic conflict is now the major force for change in the Soviet Union. It presents no immediate threat to the stability of the system, but in the long-run the build-up of centrifugal ethnic forces may well contribute to a major change in the nature of the Soviet state as it is today, and may even lead to its eventual disintegration. At present, the ethnicity-generated change is slow and evolutionary, even as the forces pressing for it are accelerating. There has been a degree of grudging and conditional recognition for ethnic demands in Moscow but no real accommodations, largely, one suspects, because the leadership cannot find adequate solution to the problem and any changes in the present system may open the floodgates of nationalism. Should there be a violent change in the status quo, however, ethnicity may well trigger a revolutionary change.

The subject is too complex to be explored fully in a short article. Here an attempt is made to discuss the dimensions and the nature of the ethnic conflict in the Soviet Union, with special emphasis on its sources of growth and the dynamics of ethnic interaction as they evolve under the "rules of the game" imposed by the system.

SALIENT VARIABLES

Background

The colonial heritage of Imperial Russia continues to affect relations between the Russians and non-Russians in the Soviet Union even today. The Russian colonial expansion extended into areas geographically contiguous, but followed a familiar pattern of pursuit of economic and political interests followed by conquest. Most of the non-Russian border areas attempted to break away after the 1917 Revolu-

2. Mikhail Suslov, "The Social Sciences —a Combat Arm of the Party in the Building of Communism," *Kommunist* (Moscow), January 1972, pp. 18–30.

tion but were reconquered by the new Bolshevik government in the name of "proletarian unity." Those that did gain independence, such as the three Baltic states, were reincorporated in World War II, at which time also the Soviet boundaries were extended westward to include the Western Ukraine and Belorussia and Moldavia. Despite an effort, in the Soviet period, at an across-the-board modernization and equalization, aspects of colonial relationships survive, inclusive of attitudes. The multiethnic mosaic of Soviet population today is the result of past colonial conquest, the historical—frequently the living—memory of which is a part of the ethnic consciousness of the non-Russian peoples.[3]

The last (1970) Soviet Census listed more than 100 nations and nationalities. The Russians constituted 53 percent of the total population (a decline of 1 percent since the previous census of 1959), but 21 other national groups numbered more than 1 million people each (see table 1). Of these, the Ukrainians (40.8 millions), the Uzbeks (9.2 millions), and the Belorussians (9.1 millions), were the most numerous; in the overall mix the Slavs had an overwhelming majority of 74 percent. Under the 1936 USSR Constitution,[4] the ethnic groups of any significant size have had their own national administrative-territorial units: there are 15 union republics (SSR) (see table 1), 20 autonomous republics (ASSR), 8 autonomous provinces (AO), and 10 national regions. Not all of the major nations, however, have an appropriate national unit; either because of geographic dispersal (the Jews and the Poles) or for political reasons (the Germans and the Crimean Tatars).[5]

The officially sponsored policy of inter-republic migration and ethnic intermixture has affected the basic national settlement pattern of major groups remarkably little in the 60 years of Soviet power. A preponderant majority of most ethnic groups still live in their national areas or in the regions immediately contiguous (see table 1). The Russians are the most significant exception, and the eastward shift of the Soviet population since 1917 occurred largely because of the geographic mobility of the Russian group who now dominate the urban and industrial centers throughout the country. A number of Ukrainians and Belorussians also migrated eastward; among other groups only the Armenians have shown a certain geographic mobility. The Jews, who are almost totally urbanized (see table 1) are a special case.

Levels of ethnic consciousness and economic and social development vary significantly among major Soviet ethnic groups as do the patterns of their national cultures. Along with the historical nations that had enjoyed periods of inde-

3. In the twenties, Soviet historiography recognized and condemned past Russian imperialism. The interpretation changed in the thirties. Now the conquest is presented as an objectively "good" and historically "progressive" phenomenon, because it involved the minorities in the Russian Revolution that enabled them to become a part of the world's first socialist state.

4. The draft of the new constitution, made public June 4, 1977, did not introduce any changes in the federal structure.

5. The Crimean Tatars (deported along with the Volga Germans during World War II for alleged collaboration with the invaders) are a subgroup of a Tatar national group. There is a Tatar ASSR for the main Tatar group, the Volga Tatars. Both the deported groups were rehabilitated in the sixties but remain in exile, and their autonomous republics were not restored.

TABLE 1

USSR. MAJOR ETHNIC GROUPS, 1970: NUMBERS, URBANIZATION, SETTLEMENT PATTERN AND COEFFICIENTS OF DEVELOPMENT

ETHNIC GROUP	NUMBERS: ABS. FIGURES (MILLIONS)	NUMBERS: % OF THE TOTAL	URBANIZATION IN % OF POPULATION: BY THE GROUP	URBANIZATION IN % OF POPULATION: BY REPUBLIC	SETTLEMENT DISTRIBUTION IN % OF GROUP MEMBERS RESIDENT IN OWN NATIONAL UNIT*	COEFFICIENT OF DEVELOPMENT BY REPUBLIC IN 1965
Russians (1)	129.0	53.3	68	64	83	1.05
Ukrainians (1)	40.8	16.9	49	56	86	1.04
Uzbeks (4)	9.2	3.8	25	37	84	.71
Belorussians (1)	9.1	3.7	44	46	80	1.01
Tatars	5.9	2.4	55	n.a.	26	n.a.
Kazakhs (4)	5.3	2.2	27	52	80	.88
Azerbaijani (2)	4.4	1.8	40	51	86	.71
Armenians (2)	3.6	1.5	65	61	60	.84
Georgians (2)	3.2	1.2	44	48	97	.87
Moldavians	2.7	1.1	20	33	85	.97
Lithuanians (3)	2.7	1.1	47	53	94	1.02
Jews	2.2	0.9	98	n.a.	no unit	n.a.
Tadzhiks (4)	2.1	0.9	26	38	76	.69
Germans	1.8	0.8	46	n.a.	no unit	n.a.
Turkmen (4)	1.5	0.6	31	48	93	.77
Kirgiz (4)	1.5	0.6	15	38	89	.76
Latvians (3)	1.4	0.6	53	64	94	1.17
Poles (1)	1.2	0.5	45	n.a.	no unit	n.a.
Estonians (3)	1.0	0.4	55	66	92	1.14

SOURCE: Columns 2–6 based on *Results of the 1970 All-Union Census*, vol. 4 (Moscow: Statistika, 1973). Column 7 adapted from K. Vermishev, "On the Level of Economic Development of the Union Republics," *Voprosy Ekonomiki*, no. 4 (Moscow), 1970, p. 128. The coefficient was calculated by the Soviet scholar as the ratio of the republic's share of total USSR gross domestic product in 1965 to the share of the given republic's population in total Soviet population in the same year.

NOTE: The USSR population total was 241.7 million; urbanization—56 percent of the population. The national groups which have union republics are in italics. The Russian republic is known as the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic, (RSFSR), because it contains most of the lower type national units,, inclusive of Tatar ASSR. Three more groups number over one million people: the Chuvashi (1.7), the Mordvinians (1.3), and the Bashkirs (1.3). All have autonomous republics within RSFSR. Key: (1) Slavs; (2) Caucasians; (3) Baltics; (4) Central Asians.

* Except for the Slavs, the major part of union republics' national groups nonresident in their republic are settled in the neighboring areas.

pendent statehood, such as the three Baltic republics, Armenia, and Georgia, the Soviet peoples include the Western Slavs and Moldavians, historically subject to the contending influences, respectively, of Russia and Poland, Russia and the Ottoman Empire, later Romania; the Turkic and Iranian groups of Central Asia, the ancient culture of which was destroyed by the thirteenth-century Mongol invasion and who now are developing separate national identities. The dominant Soviet culture is rooted in the Russian Byzantine heritage, but the non-Russians have retained strong traditional cultural identities of their own. These range from the Scandinavian culture and Lutheranism of Estonia and Latvia and Catholicism of Lithuania, to ancient indigenous traditions and Orthodox Christianity of Georgia and Armenia, Western Orthodoxy

of the Ukraine, Belorussia, and Moldavia, and Islam of Central Asia and Azerbaijan.

Policy impact and ethnicity

The growth of the ethnic self-assertion of major Soviet national groups that became visible in the sixties and seventies is as much an unexpected by-product of Soviet policies—reinforced by examples of ethnic self-assertion throughout the world—as it is the outcome of traditional ethnic hostilities. Paradoxically, instead of the expected "internationalization," many of the Soviet policies aiming at the transformation of society and the building of socialism have served to stimulate ethnic polarization. Five key policy decisions have had a direct impact on the growth of national self-assertion in the multiethnic Soviet society: the legitimization of the system in class-based internationalist ideology of Marxism-Leninism; the federal state-unitary party dichotomy; the policy of accelerated modernization and economic development; the cultural policy aimed at the development of "national forms" of all the Soviet ethnic groups; and the dynamic post-World War II expansionist foreign policy.

Marxist-Leninist ideology postulates unity based in a common working-class identity (proletarian internationalism), which overrides particular national political loyalties. The latter are expected to disappear once socialism is established, but the process which involves a change in attitudes cannot be achieved overnight. Thus, in the meantime, while the ethnic-based sense of political identity is seen as a vestigial, transitory, and gradually disappearing phenomenon, its continuous existence is legitimate and cannot be denied. The dynamics of relations between the traditional national loyalties and the new Soviet one, are seen to be developing on a "rapprochement-merger" dialectical continuum. This means a process of all the Soviet nations and nationalities "ever growing closer together" (rapprochement), that is achieved through the "flowering" of their own national socialist cultures, the reciprocal "enrichment" of which serves to develop a common base, all of which is supposed to lead to an eventual merger into a one common Soviet identity. The ideological image of class-based integration, however, precludes a return to the Russian national ethos as the basis of Soviet political loyalty. The de facto Russian content of Soviet norms, value systems, and patterns of behavior cannot be legitimately acknowledged, even though a claim is always made that the Russians, as the most "progressive," are the leading nation in the Soviet family of nations. The claim partially offsets the ideological handicap, but it also serves to increase non-Russians' resentment of the Russian hegemony.

Vladimir Ilyich Lenin's compromise formula of a federal state run by a unitary party (a resolution of an endless debate within the party in the early twenties between assimilationists and the autonomists), has built the country's administrative structure on an ethnic base. A brilliant solution to a seemingly insoluble national problem at the time, in the long run it provided a territorial and economic base for the growth of the ethnic demands and political structures for national interests' aggregation and their articulation at the federal level. The federal administration is Russian-

dominated and in pursuit of their local interests the republican authorities tend to identify with their national constituency. The old ethnic conflict has been reinforced by the new administrative one, especially because in the post-Stalin period the ethnic coloration of the republics' state and party apparatus became increasingly local, although the outsiders (mostly ethnic Russians) continue to occupy strategic power positions there.[6] The conflict is evident not only in the state administration, but also within the theoretically unitary party apparatus.

The modernization policy has transformed and developed the Soviet economy and restructured the society through industrialization, collectivization, urbanization, and the development of mass education and communications systems and social services, affecting all of the Soviet peoples. All the major ethnic groups now are better off economically, have access to educational and social benefits, and have evolved modern elites that participate in the power structure. But, given differentials in the take-off point, the rates of social mobilization have been uneven, and the relative comparative standing within the country of ethnic groups has not changed. Economic and social development indicators still stand the highest in the Baltic northwest and the European republics in general and the lowest in Central Asian southeast.[7] (See table 1.) The growing perception, by the new ethnic elites, of their relative deprivation and of their second-class political status vis-à-vis the Russians feeds ethnic antagonisms, while improved living standards and growing access to means of social and self-fulfillment by the masses stimulate the familiar rising expectations. Increasingly, the ethnic base is being perceived as the instrument for the gratification of the new ambitions by the elites as well as by their ethnic constituency, forging a new bond between them, and giving a new meaning to the traditional sense of ethnic identity and national loyalties.

Modernization also has had differential impact on the dynamics of demographic change. The Russians, and other more developed national groups, have shown a decline (in the last intercensal period, 1959–70) in natural growth rates, while the high fertility rates of the least developed groups, in Central Asia primarily, but also in the Caucasus, are among the highest in the world, the result of cultural (Islam) as much as of social development factors. The shift in the demographic pattern has already had political and economic implications. The Russians' weight in the population at large and in the population of the eastern and southern republics has declined. The depopulation of rural areas of European Russia is reaching crisis proportions and the shortage of labor, particularly skilled labor, is felt in the more developed republics and in the Eastern Siberia–

6. In the forties and fifties there was a pattern in personnel placement in national republics: top positions in party and government bodies were reserved for local nationals; the second-in-command positions, for federal representatives, mostly Russians. See Seweryn Bialer, "How Russians Rule Russia," *Problems of Communism*, September–October 1964, pp. 45–52; Yaroslav Bilinsky, "The Rulers and the Ruled," ibid., September–October 1967, pp. 16–26; and this author's *Russia and Nationalism in Central Asia: The Case of Tadzhikistan* (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1970), ch. 4.

7. See Zev Katz, Rosemarie Rogers, Frederic Harned, eds., *Handbook of Major Soviet Nationalities* (New York: The Free Press, 1975), appendix, pp. 452–58, and 462–64.

Far Eastern region of the RSFSR, where the Soviet economic and strategic build-up has focused in the seventies. At the same time a major pool of unskilled rural-based manpower is building up in Central Asia. Attempts at a resolution of impending manpower crisis may have far-reaching political effects. Cultural factors militate against a natural flow of economic migration (the Muslims of Central Asia do not want to leave their area), while overall political, economic, and strategic considerations make a massive long-range investment to build up manufacturing industries utilizing local manpower in the southeastern regions unlikely.

In the implementation of the national form-socialist content dualism, the Soviet cultural policy aimed at developing the national cultures of the major ethnic groups which would become vehicles for the dissemination of Socialist culture, common to all. National languages were developed and modernized, and a system of mass education was provided in local languages. In some cases this involved the formation of virtually new languages on the basis of regional dialects—as in the case of the Turkic peoples of Central Asia—and written and oral culture forms and fine arts, based in traditional patterns, were revived or developed. The overall thrust of ideological socialization, however, was marked, for all practical purposes by cultural Russification. The study of the Russian language, the common Soviet language and the "language of civilization" has been promoted vigorously; linguistic modernization of national languages took the road of incorporation of Russian-derived vocabulary and grammatical forms and introduction of the Cyrillic alphabet, except in the case of established historical languages; Russian cultural forms have been held as models to be emulated by other groups.

The policy has been extremely successful, but not in a way desired or expected by its initiators. A virtual renaissance of national cultures took place among all the major non-Russian national groups, a renaissance which has become an integral part of their new national self-assertion and a vehicle for the expression of their newly-formed national pride. Bilingualism spread for functional reasons but not the eventually expected linguistic assimilation into the Russian language. Paradoxically, it was the cultural content rather than form that has been affected by the new ethnic cultural renaissance, resulting in the development of officially approved common Soviet forms, the content of which has been increasingly determined by each groups' traditional ethnic heritage.

After World War II the dynamics of Soviet foreign policy combined a drive for an extension of political influence of the USSR as a great power, with an appeal to internationalism of the working class and all progressive forces abroad. The East European socialist states (established in the wake of Soviet armed invasion in 1945) are members of the Socialist Commonwealth, led by the USSR. Within the world Communist movement, Soviet policy has attempted to reestablish its previously undisputed leadership, lost in the aftermath of the death of J. V. Stalin and the challenge by the Chinese. At the same time, the Soviet Union has come to play an increasingly important role in the Third World, as a leader of all "peace loving" and "anti-imperialist" forces. There are contradictions, however, between an international-

ist foreign policy and domestic national integration, which have contributed to the growth of ethnic self-assertion within the Soviet Union as minority groups became aware of examples of successful national self-assertion within the Communist movement and in the Third World.

Theoretically, relations of the states within the Communist bloc and the Communist international movement in general have been governed by the same principle of proletarian internationalism that applies in domestic national relations. In this context, the relative sovereignty enjoyed by the East Europeans provides a tempting example to Soviet ethnic groups and a model to strive for in their search for greater national autonomy within the system. The temptation has been enhanced in the seventies by Soviet efforts at greater integration of the bloc, with its emphasis on the identical nature of "fraternal ties" on both sides of the border[8] as well as a start of direct exchanges between the republics and East European states. In relations with the non-ruling parties, particularly since the birth of "Eurocommunism," the Soviet Union has had to make concessions to polycentrism, including recognition of other parties' right to their own "road to socialism." Ideological concessions lend legitimacy to the republics' quest for greater autonomy, and East European nationalism tends to be contagious.

Finally, in relations with Third World countries, the avowed Soviet support for national self-determination has not passed unnoticed at home, especially because the republics, particularly the Asian ones, are an important asset in foreign policy as models of Soviet-type development as well as justification for the claim that the Soviet Union is an Asian as well as European power. The impact of Third World contacts is particularly important because of numerous exchanges between them and the republics. Members of non-Russian minorities, who feature prominently in Soviet foreign delegations, can thus gain a first-hand knowledge of conditions abroad and can compare their own viability as independent entities (in terms of economic base, infrastructure, educated elites, and so on) with newly independent Third World countries.

ETHNIC CONFLICT AND THE "RULES OF THE GAME"

Dimensions

In party and state relations in the USSR, ethnicity has become the main base for interest group demands, a phenomenon familiar to the students of ethnic relations worldwide.[9] In the absence of institutionalized channels for interest articulation, the republics are the focus for the aggregation of local interests in all spheres of social life; when articulated by local spokesmen, these invariably acquire ethnic overtones. The spokesmen are the new ethnic elites. Fully "socialized" for functional purposes, including fluency in the Russian language and ideological medium, these elites are members of the establishment in their republics—some move up also

8. See this author's "Socialist Internationalism in Eastern Europe—A New Stage," *Survey*, vol. 98, no. 1, (Winter 1976), pp. 38–54.

9. See Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975), p. 7.

to the federal level—but, invariably, their position and power is circumscribed by the presence of the ubiquitous Russians. It is the Russian "fact," probably more than any other single factor, that has been the catalyst in the ethnic self-assertion of the national elites, especially because Russian nationalism also has been on the rise. Since they are partners in the system, the thrust of it is not directed at the systemic status quo but only at the constraints imposed within by Russian hegemony. The aim of ethnic self-assertion of the elites is the maximization of autonomy that is formally theirs constitutionally and the realization of the self-determination principle enshrined in the ideology; if an idea of separatism enters the equation, it is not openly articulated. Ethnic demands are uttered in the systemic double talk familiar to all and concern matters that affect local interests. In a system as highly centralized as that of the Soviet Union, a greater share in decision making at the federal level is of great concern, as is a devolution of power from the federal to the republican level, formally or through personal "pull" upstairs.

The elites' relationship with the Russians is ambiguous; the majority now in the republics' authorities, they resent controls imposed by outsiders and attempt to by-pass and counteract them—frequently with considerable success. At the same time, the relationship is close and collaboration in defense of local interests as seen from an administrator's viewpoint, is not uncommon. Those who made it in the federal service may serve as spokesmen for ethnic interests in Moscow, if representing their own republic; otherwise, they tend to merge into the prevalent Russian coloration. Those serving in other national areas frequently champion federal interests more assiduously than do the ethnic Russians.

The elites' ties with their national constituency are also ambiguous. There is a sense of common interests that seems to be growing vis-à-vis the "they" in Moscow and cultural ties which, by all accounts, appear to be stronger than in comparable situations elsewhere. In the Central Asian republics, for example, there is evidence that most members of local elites have emerged directly from a rural background. At the same time, however, in their daily work the elites act as agents of the central authorities enforcing policies which make them unpopular with the populace.

In the past there was relatively little contact between the various ethnic elites, except within the federal administration. This has been changing, however, under the impact of the "rapprochement" policy adopted since 1961. Contacts are now frequent, especially on a regional basis, but there is no evidence of an incipient common front, except in the case of Central Asian Muslims. Foreign contacts, as pointed out above, are also more frequent. Those with Eastern Europe and the developing countries have been important for the diffusion of new ideas and undoubtedly exposed Soviet ethnic elites to the virus of nationalism.

Legitimization

Ethnic self-assertion in the Soviet Union seeks legitimacy in two sources: the constitutional-legal framework and ideological principles. The USSR Constitution gives the republics the right to conduct their own foreign relations and to have their own military establishments; the first was never genuinely

exercised, the latter was precluded de facto by the 1938 military reform.[10] It also gives the formal right to secede, which has had no value in reality. The enumerated federal powers are all-embracing, leaving little residuary authority to republics. Even so, there are numerous minor provisions formally involving the republics—such as republican legislative bodies' approval of federal decrees or of local boundary changes. The genuine exercise of these provisions is one of the targets of the elites. The subject of secession has not been raised formally, but two Kirgiz scholars, have discussed their republic's right to do so in legal terms.

The focus of the demands for self-assertion is in the ideological sphere. The revival of Leninism as the ruling myth has provided an opening for the ethnic spokesmen to resurrect Lenin's views on the national self-determination principle and on national equality under the federal formula. Numerous treatises have appeared on the subject, most couched in impeccable ideological terms, some explicit in their resentment of Russian hegemony.[11] There is also much discussion of old Leninist policy of autonomization of political cadres (*Korenizatsia*), abandoned under Stalin, as an example to be emulated. The current policy of rapprochement is also used by ethnic spokesmen in support of their demands, by way of emphasizing the "flowering" part of the formula, which presupposes full development of particular ethnic cultures. The current line vis-à-vis Eastern Europe and the CPSU dispute with Eurocommunism are watched carefully for changes of wording in current slogans which may provide an opening in the battle for greater autonomy. In general, ethnic spokesmen are at pains to differentiate between their own brand of socialist ethnicity, which is "progressive," and the capitalist one (bourgeois nationalism) which is vigorously condemned. This does not necessarily protect them from being eventually criticized, by federal authorities, as bourgeois nationalists or from being purged.

Political dynamics

In the political arena, ethnic demands center less on the exercise of formal constitutional powers—although these are desirable—and more on the exercise of the real power within the party structure, focusing particularly on access to decision making and on control of cadres (personnel) policy. In this quest, ethnic leaders increasingly court the support of their ethnic constituency; this is sought among local bureaucracies, but also among the populace, particularly on issues related to national culture. Pressures for greater share in decision making are centered in the republics but extend also to the federal arena. This shows in more open articulation of economic and cultural demands. Control of appointments—traditionally a preserve of the party[12] with selections made at

10. Prior to 1938 some units were formed on ethnic basis, but the reform instituted ethnically-mixed, Russian-language units. Some ethnic units were formed during World War II on an ad hoc basis.

11. Of the latter, the best known in the West is a monograph by a Ukrainian journalist, Ivan Dzyuba, *Internationalism or Russification?* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968), written for and circulated in the Ukrainian party organization, which was later published in the West. Dzyuba has been imprisoned and has since recanted.

12. The party's control of the appointments, the so-called *nomenklatura*, extends

a level higher than the appointments—is a political and highly sensitive matter. Here demands for greater autonomization and a reduction of outsiders in politically important positions are stated obliquely, a battle punctuated by recurrent purges of too outspoken or too ambitious ethnic leaders.

The extent of political changes brought about by ethnic pressures may be observed by comparing the current with the pre-1956 situation, even though qualitatively they are small and far below the level of real political autonomy. Outsiders are still, inevitably, occupying the key position of central committee's second secretary (control of cadres) in all republics; but their ratio declined in other key positions in party and state hierarchies. In the meantime ethnic elites' members within have been vigorously promoting local cadres for positions throughout the republics, squeezing out the Russians. Complaints about the latter practice appear sporadically in the press. At the federal level, the republics' first secretaries, invariably of local ethnic origin, are all members of the CPSU Central Committee (the usage that dates back to Stalin's period), but those representing the key republics or regions are also members or candidate members of the ruling Politbureau. The Ukraine contingent has been particularly strong there, because both N. S. Khrushchev and L. I. Brezhnev rose to power from their local base in the Ukraine. In 1976 Central Asia was represented by the Uzbek and Kazakh party first secretaries; Belorussian and Azerbaijani first secretaries were also included. On the state side, heads of the republican state and judicial hierarchies have been ex-officio members of equivalent federal bodies since the sixties. But, although the republican state and party representation at the federal level has improved, they are still a minority in the ruling state and party bodies. Support of the hierarchies of major republics is a significant factor in factional struggles at the top; it diminishes as one of the Politbureau leaders is able to achieve a degree of personal ascendancy. The Byzantine character of Soviet politics emphasizes the importance of personal pull and factional membership for republican leaders, each new "Boss" appoints his men, and the success of this or that republic in having its demands met frequently depends on the quality of its leaderships' contacts at the top. Georgia, for example, has traditionally enjoyed a higher degree of autonomy because the late Joseph Stalin was a Georgian; its degree of autonomy has survived relatively untouched, despite successive purges of ethnic first secretaries there.

not only to political jobs but also to all important positions in the economy and in the society in general.

Economic demands

In economic relations, the ethnic conflict centers on disputes concerning resource allocation and distribution. Almost every republic would like to maximize its share of investment and to minimize the share of its products allocated to other regions, with total disregard, if one is to believe Soviet sources, of the general interest. The issue is particularly aggravated in the case of economically strongest non-Russian republic, the Ukraine, the leaders of which resent the transfer of

its resources to other regions.[13] It is also crucial in the case of the least developed southeastern republics, laboring under a handicap of being primarily a resource base for the manufacturing industries of European Russia. They agitate for major long-range capital investment and equalization. Because of the recent population explosion there, they argue now from stronger positions but, so far, unsuccessfully. In general there is evidence of central planners being tired of ethnic-based parochial demands, and arguments appear in economic journals that republics are obsolete for purposes of efficient economic management. Their economic role was left unchallenged, however, in the 1973 reform of economic management, despite streamlining, and no basic changes have appeared in the June 1977 draft of the new constitution. Because of sporadic evidence of heated disputes on the subject, the absence of change indicates the weight of the republics' vested interests in the system. The economic battle also centers around annual and quinquennial plan fulfillment indicators, with habitual doctoring in their favor of statistical results not only by enterprises and federally run industries, but also by republics.

Social relations

The pattern of compact ethnic settlement and the concentration of ethnic population in rural areas has favored the survival of traditional agents of socialization, and there is evidence of a high level of social alienation between the local and immigrant communities in the national areas, which spills over into urban settings despite considerable ethnic intermixture there. Traditional social patterns, values, and modes of behavior are also reinforced by the survival of religion and its close identification with the sense of ethnic identity of most major ethnic groups. Evidence of alienation is seen in patterns of social intercourse between the local and immigrant communities and the low incidence of intermarriage, particularly between the Slavs and Asian groups. Among some groups, social behavior has become an ethnic weapon, as in the case of Central Asian Muslims, whose high fertility rates, conditioned by their relatively low level of modernization, persist also in the urban setting for cultural and political reasons.

At the same time, however, the impact of socioeconomic advancement has greatly increased social mobility of ethnic groups, causing rural exodus to the cities. This, coupled with cultural alienation, has served to intensify ethnic conflict in social relations in an urban setting, where the Russians have been a dominant element. Increasingly, there is competition for jobs not only in the political arena but also in economic-technical and professional spheres—heretofore the domain of the Russians in all but the two northern Baltic republics and, in part, Georgia and Armenia, because of their superior qualifications, but reinforced in all of the republics by political preference in filling sensitive and important positions. Because of the development of autonomization of republican

13. Petro Shelest, the Ukrainian party first secretary, who was purged in 1972, was accused of economic as well as cultural nationalism. His additional problem was that he belonged to a "wrong" Ukrainian faction.

power structures, political preference now works both ways, in favor of local candidates as much as immigrants, depending on who controls the hiring, and at what level—a tug of war which is another source of growing ethnic conflict.

Cultural arena

The evidence of ethnic self-assertion is the most open and intense in the cultural sphere. Cultural conflict is in many ways a substitute for an open political conflict, the appearance of which is muted for systemic reasons. As noted above, all of the republics have had a cultural renaissance (it has been least pronounced in Belorussia and Moldavia). Adherence to national languages exceeds 90 percent among all of the major union republic nations, with the exception of Ukrainians and Belorussians, among whom it is in the 80 percent plus bracket, indicating the degree of emigration from their national areas. In republics where the Russification of ethnic languages has gone the furthest —in the Ukraine and in Central Asia—there is a vigorous language "purification" campaign aimed at substitution of national terms for Russian-derived words and grammatical usages. Local language primary education continues to develop along with Russian-language schools, and there are increasing demands for the introduction of local language instructors in technical and professional secondary and higher educational establishments, where it is now conducted primarily in the Russian language. Numbers and circulation of local language newspapers and periodicals and monographs have been increasing, with some republics acting as regional pacesetters. In the literature and fine arts, there has been a revival of traditional themes, symbolism, and imagery and a marked absence of themes dealing with the current socialist reality and internationalism as documented by official criticism. In historiography a battle is raging between the binding official line, that consigns most traditional heroes and events (especially those that testify to past resistance to Russian encroachments) to a reactionary category, and local historians attempt a more objective interpretation based on the research in local archives. Dispute over the interpretation of national history has been most pronounced in the Ukraine, the Caucasian republics, and Central Asia. The significant aspect of the ethnic conflict as revealed in the cultural sphere has been an apparent support for cultural self-assertion by the republican party authorities, the approval of which is necessary for anything that appears in print or in any public form. Official criticism, when it comes, is usually generated in Moscow and appears a considerable time after the event in question has taken place.[14]

TRENDS AND PROSPECTS

It is clear that under the impact of ongoing change the dual "national in form—socialist in content" framework of the Soviet state has been gradually losing its functionality in the area it was meant to resolve,

14. Considerable literature exists in the English language on Soviet ethnicity and on ethnic conflict in the Soviet Union. For most comprehensive recent coverage, see Katz, Rogers, Harned, *Handbook of Major Soviet Nationalities*, and George W. Simmonds, ed., *Nationalism in the USSR and Eastern Europe in the Era of Brezhnev and Kosygin* (Detroit, Mich.: The University of Detroit Press, 1977).

namely, that of ethnic relations. Instead of an expected unionwide integration, it has stimulated the forces of ethnicity, the containment of which is proving increasingly difficult. The process has advanced at differential rates among the several major ethnic groups: currently it is most pronounced in the Ukraine and in the Baltic republics, with Georgia and Armenia not far behind, but there are signs that in a relatively short time Central Asia may well move into the forefront of ethnic turmoil. Many aspects of ethnic self-assertion in the Soviet Union are directly comparable to those in other multiethnic areas, and its eventual outcome may be the same as in other societies, where the conflict has been more open and further advanced.

The policy dilemma for the Soviet leadership is evident from its almost complete immobility on the issue, as seen in the pursuance of past policies, punctuated by half-hearted repressions. Soviet leaders find themselves in a position when even small concessions may open the floodgates of a major change, and continue therefore to maintain a hope that eventually the ideologically-predicted integration will take place after all—a hope that, in view of similar experience elsewhere, appears illusory. Forces for ethnic change now push for the evolution of the system. Should this be denied, however, as seems likely in the face of the current leadership's resistance to it, the resulting pressures may eventually lead to an explosion. Latent separatism may also come to the fore in case of a major international upheaval.