ИСТОРИЯ И РЕЛИГИЯ

Ethnicity and Power in the Soviet Union

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Abstract: Twenty years have passed since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Up until the point of dissolution, the Soviet authorities and intellectual elite had attempted to build a community in order to unite all Soviet citizens in the spirit of socialist modernisation. Although it is difficult to demonstrate that 'a Soviet nation' was successfully created [1], the attempt to build such a nation can serve as a case study through which to examine nation-building processes for constructivists as well as modernists . In addition to socialist modernisation, the Soviet nation aimed to be identified as a state, which would make it similar to the political nations dominant in western countries. Contrary to western tradition, however, it was not a nation state that provided full rights for all its citizens, but rather a socialist state that was 'ruled by workers and peasantry'. Nevertheless, the authorities aimed to give the Soviet nation the characteristics of a specific nation state. "It was a nation that in historical terms strived, or more accurately part of which strived, to form or proclaim a particular state" [2]. While at the time of proclaiming the USSR there was no such thing as the Soviet nation, it can be assumed that it was intended to become a constructed titular nation.

The majority of national communities, even created ones, have an ethnic core. However academics cannot agree on the kind of state the USSR was, to what extent it took into account the ethnicity of its multinational population, how much it reflected the values, culture, and interests of its largest population group (i.e., the Russians) or even whether it was a Russian national state despite the strong influence of Russian ideology and politics. Some Russian academics, especially those in nationalistic circles (e.g., Valerij Solovej) as well as western scholars such as Terry Martin and Geoffrey Hosking stressed that Russians dominated demographically and politically. However, the USSR did not aim to nurture traditional Russian values. It rather fostered the de-ethnicisation of Russians and the ethnicisation of non-Russian. Another group of scientists, including those from post-Soviet states (e.g., Žambyl Artykbaev, Otar Džanelidze, and Georgij Siamašvili) as well as western scholars (e.g., Rogers Brubaker) concede that positive processes such as the allotment of territory to republics and other territorial units, the constitution of authority and administrative apparatus, and the formation of the elites once characterised the ethnic history of the USSR. All these processes, however, were dominated by a lack of sovereignty, a loss of national identity, and damage to the living environment. Georgia rather than the USSR has always been regarded by the Georgian people as their mother country. The Soviet Union, which was considered to be a voluntary union of equal republics, was in fact an artificial creation that non-Russian nations were forced to join. The majority of Georgians did not therefore claim the USSR as their homeland: 'The USSR was for its nations a socio-political state not a homeland' [3].

Non-Russian citizens in the Soviet Union perceived the Russians to be a state-building 'nation' and the USSR a Russian state. The Soviet authorities, who predicated internationalism on the Russian language and new Russian culture, actively combated ethnic nationalism (including Russian nationalism, which was associated with chauvinism and a tsarist legacy). Although Russkost was considered to be a remnant of a disgraceful past, it was nonetheless used as a tool to sovietise society. Indeed, Russian language and culture were both conducive to the assimilation of non-Russians. 'The Great Russian nation' was to be 'the first among equals' and thus Russia provided. Soviet state with certain features of ethnicity. However, Russian characteristics were never treated as instrumental to the USSR, because the aim was to form a new socialist, national community, that was beyond ethnicity, rather than to convert the citizens of the former USSR into Russians. Soviet ideology and science thus set the direction for nationality policy in the USSR, especially in terms of forming a Soviet nation.
Based on the foregoing, the present paper identifies how the ethnic character of both the Soviet nation and the state.

Keywords: Ethnic, Power, the Soviet Union

1. ETHNICITY AND NATION IN SOVIET IDEOLOGY AND SCIENCE

Stalin's definition of nation has been crucial to Soviet theoretical thinking and Soviet policy. A nation was understood as an historically constituted, stable community of people formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological makeup manifested in a common culture [4]. The nation was therefore regarded as the highest stage of ethnic community development. This viewpoint stemmed from the prevailing perception of historical processes as a way to achieve the next stages of economic development as well as the corresponding three-way typology of ethnic communities: tribe as representing primitive culture nationality as representing slavery and feudalism; and nation as representing a capitalist society (it can be assumed that at present its core is the second class).

Capitalist society was to be replaced with by a socialist nation, however. The basis of the social structure would be 'an alliance between the working class and the working peasants', while a crucial factor for nation-building would be the formation of a socialist economy. Socialist paternalism (rather than political rights and national culture) would bind the socialist nation. Serfs were thought to be morally bound to the state and therefore possessed the right to share the social product of the state. They were not politically active; nor did they feel the ethnic bond; all they were expected to do was to be grateful consumers of the goods that were chosen and rationed by the state. Subjects felt state-dependant, and unlike in civil society they did not participate in political life nor did they feel ethnic solidarity. The socialist nation was rather viewed as a new kind of nation, a community beyond ethnicity formed mainly by the economic factors that would remove the class division and build on the mass spatial mobility of its people [5], [6].

Stalin and the Bolshevik party set the direction for Soviet ethnography, which adopted the definition of ethnos that characterised the

Stalinist/Bolshevik perception of a nation and defined its socio-biological character. Iulian Bromlei, an ethnologist considered to be the author of the Soviet theory of ethnos, believed in a natural origin of ethnic communities, and differentiated 'ethnikos' from ethno-social organism. The former meant belonging to an ethno-cultural community regardless of place of residence, whereas the latter related not only to ethnical but also to territorial, political, social, and finally economic belonging [7], [8].

Nations (*nacii*), nationalities (*narodnosti*), and nationality groups were distinguished by their stage of economic and cultural development. This three-way distinction was consistent with the Marxist theory of development but ran counter to the ideas of Sergei Shirokogorov, who dismissed the terms of *narodnost'* and *nacional nost* as vague and difficult to explain [9]. The perception of ethnography above thus affected Soviet nationality policy in the form of federalism.

2. SOVIET NATIONALITY POLICY

The establishment of the USSR as a union of sovereign national republics was inspired by Vladimir Lenin. 'Self-determination from the historical and economic point of view is understood as political self-determination, state autonomy, making a national state (...). Just like humanity can only get rid of class division through a temporary dictatorship of the oppressed class, it can only get to the inevitable blending of nations by liberating all oppressed nations, i.e. freedom of their separation's [10].

The Bolsheviks, however, rose to power in the territory, because the nation-building processes were poorly developed. Still the Declaration of the Rights of the People of Russia by the Council of People's Commissars (Sovnarkom) in November 1918 acknowledged the right of nations to self-determination and autonomy. At the same time, all nationalities were expected to unite as one

Soviet nation based on the Marxist thesis that socialism and the bourgeois character of nationalism resulted in nations becoming alike. Two concepts of the *sliianiia* of nations were state-building processes and Soviet nationality policy. The first was represented by Lenin, who perceived federalism as a union of autonomous national republics. This concept meant uniting the Soviet republics of Europe and Asia with the already existent Russian FSR. Lenin's idea arose from his fear of the separatist tendencies in Ukraine, Caucasia, and Central Asia. His proposal was thus to take into account the strive for independence by the nations in the area that would become the USSR and their fear of Russian dominance [11].

Another concept envisioned by Stalin was the autonomisation of the independent republics. Stalin called Lenin's proposal to form the USSR *liberal nationalism*. The proposition was submitted to the members of the Politburo RCP (Bolsheviks) on 26th September 1922. This notion moved away from Lenin's concept by proposing *sovietisation in a national form:* "Soviet autonomy is the most real, the most concrete form of uniting the outskirts with central Russia. No one can deny the fact that Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Turkestan, Kyrgyzstan, Bashkortostan, Tataria and others cannot do without national schools, courts and administration, bodies of authority that would all consist mainly of local people. The very reason is the outskirts strive for the cultural and material development of the masses" [12].

The new state was to be one economic organism characterised by formal organs of authority (e.g., Sovnarkom, the All-Russian Central Executive Committee); therefore, the Russian SFSR now would be the Councils of People's Commissars and the Central Executive Committees of the independent republics. In this way, fictitious independence would be replaced by actual autonomy in terms of language, culture, justice, internal affairs, agriculture and so

on. Such autonomy was expected to unite the peripheries and the centre in a form of federation. The essence of this concept was thus the formal accession of the Soviet republics to the Russian SFSR as autonomous entities.

Lenin proposed replacing the term *accession* with 'formal federation'. In many ways, this development represented the establishment of the USSR, namely a compromise between Stalinist autonomisation and Lenin's idea of confederation [13]. However, the contradiction between internationalism and the ethnic character of the Soviet republics was striking. One way forward was granting the nations of Russia the right to territorial and national self-determination. Indeed, the coexistence of the two tendencies of internationalism and national identification was characteristic of the entirety of USSR history, rendering it impossible to categorise the country in terms of nation-building processes. Despite their differences, Lenin and Stalin both agreed that the national factor should be taken into account in the state-building process. They were contradicted by high-ranking party officials (e.g., Georgy Pyatakov, Nikolai Bukharin) who were often *internationalists* that believed that the right to self-determination mobilises counter-revolutionary (anti-Soviet) forces and thus should be reserved for the proletariat only [14].

The union republics that directly formed the USSR were sovereign in terms of territory and national emblems (e.g., flags, anthems). They also had their own republican authorities (parliament and government), capital cities and citizenship not to mention a republican communist party. The ethno-cultural nations that had already been established were granted their territories, but not the full right to govern them. Indeed, they were not recognised as sovereign national states for three main reasons. Firstly, and most importantly, they did not have political sovereignty. Secondly, the republican character of society was intentionally (though not

without difficulty) replaced with federal Soviet identity. Finally, the culture dominant in the republics was not the national culture of titular countries but rather the Soviet one created on the basis of post-revolutionary Russian culture and propagated via the Russian language [15]. On the one hand, the union republics were the tool of sovietisation that hampered the nation-building process. On the other, their mere existence, in addition to processes of industrialisation and urbanisation, made it possible for nations to consolidate, which led to the formation of elites and identification with the territory, thus creating the need for autonomy and sovereignty. Despite their differences, Lenin and Stalin both agreed that the national factor should be taken into account in the state-building process. They were contradicted by high-ranking party officials (e.g., Georgy Pyatakov, Nikolai Bukharin) who were often internationalists that believed that the right to self-determination mobilises counter-revolutionary (anti-Soviet) forces and thus should be reserved for the proletariat only [14].

With regards to not fully developed ethno-cultural nations (e.g., those in Central Asia), the existence of federal republics fostered the formation of nations based on 'ethnic material'. The Soviet authorities never made it possible for USSR nations to form nor to disappear.

Information about the developmental stage of national (ethnic) languages as well as religions, traditions, customs, ways of farming, and descent—tribe structures was collected by the ethnographers sent into ethnic territories. These data formed the basis for the territorial division of Central Asia that was the realisation of the state's national idea. In fact, the national/territorial division of the region was heavily politically influenced. It was the result of administrative action (the creation of boundaries, territories, institutions), cultural expression (language, literature), the effect of scientific theories (history, ethnography), and a particu-

lar vision of social structure (national elites, social and economic differentiation) [16].

The actions taken by the Soviet authorities and science resulted in a significant consolidation of Central Asian nations. National identity, a, thus far unknown phenomenon to local people, was created in the European spirit. An interesting notion was removing the term 'Sart' that was rooted in Central Asia and replacing it with the ethnonym 'Uzbek'. Sarts were thought to be a social (ethno-social) category associated with the Tajik people rather than Uzbek tribes because of their character, behaviour, values, resourcefulness, and appearance. As urban people working in trades, administration positions or schools they were treated by Bolsheviks as bourgeoisie (unlike 'the poor' Uzbeks that made their living in agriculture and breeding). Moreover, having been invaded by Turkish tribes, Sarts did not fit the image of a socialist nation. Uzbeks had more symbols and this allowed scholars to define them as an ethnic community that had the characteristics of a nation. The people of the region were provided with national attributes (territory considered to be their own, a constitution, state apparatus, literary languages, long-standing history, and everyday customs) that differentiated nations from one another. Two actions were taken to consolidate the Kazakh people. The first one was to develop a unified culture that was familiar to everyone who felt Kazakh and led a nomadic way of life. The second one was to clarify that members of the Kazakh cultural community have common origins and history. Census officers were instructed in 1926 to register all members of Kazakh tribes as Kazakhs. Moreover, the old 'pre-national' terms were changed into new 'national' ones. For instance, *agajshylyk*, an adjective meaning a sense of community between the descendants of a common ancestor, was replaced by qazaqshylyk to refer to all Kazakhs. In this way, the 'Kazakh nation' became

a great tribe whose members felt inter-related. This sense of belonging was heightened by traditional institutions and it raised no objections from Kazakhs.

In this way, the European model of a nation was witnessed in the region for the first time. Those identity and loyalty criteria that had previously dominated were tribe–descent, territorial, religious, or state ones, which existed simultaneously and grew in relative importance depending on the situation [17]. Hence, Soviet ethnography and the ethno-cultural perception of a nation played a crucial role in the nation-building process.

The territorial units created on the basis of ethnic criteria (Soviet republics, union republics, autonomous oblasts, and okrugs) represented the institutionalisation and territorialisation of ethnicity, which in this way became dependent on a given territory. This ethnic federalism was complemented by personal nationality in the guise of the passports (or identity cards) introduced in 1932 [18]. Russian federalism was in fact illusory. The USSR was a unitary state in which union republics were unequal members of the federation. The relations between them and the centre were of vertical character. All decisions on the crucial interests of each republic had to take into account the benefit of the entire union. It would thus be no exaggeration to define the relations between the centre and republics as patron–client. This provision was enabled by the existence of union republics and other territorial units that were formed according to ethnic criteria. The Kara-Kirghiz Autonomous Oblast, which was established as part of the Russian SFSR in October 1924, contributed to the territorial consolidation of the nation. Three factors were involved: i) the fact the Kirghiz and Kirghiz people's native land became united within one autonomous oblast (until this time they had remained divided between different administrative units of the Turkestan

ASSR); ii) the establishment of its own system of state authority; and iii) the acceleration of the transition of traditional patriarchal–feudal relations as well as economic and cultural development [19].

Although nationality was initially declarative (i.e., a matter of the choice of a particular citizen, from 1938 it was defined genealogically (i.e. dependent on the nationality of parents) and thereby impossible to change except where parents were of two different nationalities. To prove this, it was necessary to submit documents that could verify the nationality of one's parents [20]. It was then possible to choose the nationality of one parent [21].

The USSR thus become characterised by the mismatch between national territories and personal nationality. The vast number of people that occupied national territories belonged to non-titular nationalities, just as a significant proportion of the population lived outside its own republics or other national USSR entities.

Soviet nationality policy aimed to consolidate nations and accelerate the nation-building process. Terry Martin, an American historian, points out that the formulation of this policy was rooted in four factors. Firstly, nationalism was treated as an ideology to mobilise the masses to unite despite class divisions and to fight for national aims. According to both Lenin and Stalin, if Soviet authority took a national form (i.e., satisfied the demand for nationalism to some degree), it would be able to defuse national movements and neutralise the attractiveness of national slogans, thereby creating better conditions to highlight class differences and introduce Bolshevism. Secondly, national identity was considered to be an inevitable stage on the journey to internationalism. Because the future 'blending' of nations would only be possible once oppressed nations became liberated, the nation-building process was perceived as a positive stage of socialist modernisation. Thirdly, the Bolshe-

viks were convinced that the nationalism and separatism of non-Russians were a reaction against the Russian chauvinism of Tsarist authority. In other words, fostering the national development of non-Russians, aimed to prove that the Soviet authorities would not pursue Russian nationalism. Finally, encouraging the development of non-Russian nations was thought to build a positive image of the Soviet Union, raising the number of USSR supporters abroad and allowing the Union to have a greater influence over neighbouring countries.

The aims of Soviet nationality policy were to nationalise the education system, improve state apparatus, and foster a national culture. The last goal became known as korenizatsiya.

3. KORENIZATSIYA

Korenizatsiya (Russian: коренизация) aimed to promote the anguage, culture, and representatives of a titular nation, especially targeting the immigrant populations of the republics. The Soviet authorities concluded that such an indigenisation or nativisation program would only gain the support of non-Russians if it became close to the people and used a familiar native language. To this end, it fostered a national education system and recruited local people who knew the language, customs, and life styles of non-Russians to work in administrative authorities [22]. A circular letter of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party stated the aims of korenizatsiya in the following terms: to strive to place local people in state managerial positions; a rule that comrades who belong to the local nationality and speak local languages would obligatorily belong to the presidia of oblast and national central committees; to introduce a law that every director of the key departments of national central committees must be a worker of the local nationality; and to help the national central committees and oblast committees to select appropriate local workers. The Orgburo

of the RCP (b) Central Committee discussed and accepted the plan to put into force national resolutions, leaving its final review to the Central Committee Secretariat. The quoted document excerpt, signed by Jānis Rudzutaks, was sent to local party organisations [23]. Korenizatsiya, which was pursued until the 1930s therefore involved the representatives of titular nations holding positions in both the authorities and the enterprises of the republics, propagating the national languages in the administration, educational system, and the press, and promoting the indigenous culture and customs. However, it did not act to deprive Russians or Russian-speaking people of party or state-level positions. Korenizatsiya was often understood as implementing the language of local people. The Central Executive Committee and Sovnarkom resolution on the korenizatsiya of the Soviet apparatus in the Kirghiz ASSR stated that all the decisions of the republican and local administration had to be given in both Kirghiz and Russian. In addition, official documentation was to be translated into Kirghiz or the language spoken by the majority of people. Non-Kirghiz officials were also obliged to learn Kirghiz [24].

Korenizatsiya progressed relatively quickly. In 1927, for instance, representatives of the Soviet authorities corresponded to the ethnic structure of many Soviet regions. As one example, the rural councils (selsoviets) in Ukraine comprised 89% Ukrainians, while Ukrainians constituted 85.2% of the rural population. Similarly, Kazakhs, who represented 59.1 % of the rural population in Kazakhstan, comprised 61.2 % of selsoviets. Indeed, the advancement of korenizatsiya in urban councils (gorsoviets) even surpassed the percentage of titular people in cities. For instance, Kazakhs constituted 222 % of council members but only 13.6% of the urban population. In Ukraine, these proportions were 42.3% and 33.4%, respectively. Ukraine was the USSR

region in which korenizatsiya was most successful. In total, 85–90% of the documentation kept by central institutions in the republic were in Ukrainian. From 1924 to 1927, the circulation of newspapers published in Ukrainian rose from 90,000 to 612,000 [25].

By 1932, however, korenizatsiya had been discontinued. It became clear that collectivizisation in non-Russian areas had become unsuccessful and a 'properly conducted nationality policy' had given way to 'kulak-bourgeois' nationalistic tendencies. At this time, nationality policy took the form of russification.

In the 1950 and 1960s, after Stalin's death there was a revival of korenizatsiya, notably in Central Asia. Administrative policy in the region granted nominal sovereignty to titular nations, despite retaining central control, which led to the consolidation and formation of national elites in union republics. Indeed, from the 1960s onwards, the second secretary of any communist party was always of Russian or Slavic origin and rarely even resided in the republic in question. He unofficially performed the role of the local governor, whose duty was to control the nomenclature, while the first secretaries of the communist parties in the republics were the representatives of the titular nations. The number of representatives that undertook managerial functions doubled and the system prevailed in the state and party hierarchy down to the local level. If, for instance, the chairperson of the Supreme Soviet was a Kazakh or Uzbek, his first deputy was of Russian or other non-titular nationality. The same principle applied at the ministerial level, where a minister from a titular nation had a Russian deputy. The more explicit dominance of Russians (Slavs) could be seen in the state security service and armed forces. The head of republican KGB branches, for example, was always of Russian origin and the majority of officers were also Slavic while Russians also held all key party and state positions. The cen-

tre distinguished between Russians from the Russian SFSR and those from other republics. While the former were more trusted than the latter, the elites of the republics, considered local Russians to have a better understanding of local conditions [15].

This period of Korenizatsiya in the 1960s was referred to as *a patrimonial era*. Under the rule of, Khrushchev and Brezhnev, the leaders of the union republics in Central Asia were relatively independent, as long as the economy grew and nationalistic movements remained suppressed. During this period, korenizatsiya was not directed from Moscow, but was rather implemented by the leaders of the republics. The party/state apparatus was dominated by local people, and concentrated on the leader of the same nationality. Patron–client and descent–tribe relationships were thus maintained, and the leader and their apparatus fostered nation-building processes in the republics even though they officially pursued an antinationalistic policy.

4. RUSSIFICATION AND SOVIETISATION

The redirection of Soviet nationality policy in the first half of the 1930s had a wider context. The 'export of revolution' or 'global revolution' yielded to Stalin's concept of 'socialism in one country' that aimed to fill 'the new civilisation with Russian colours' [26]. It became apparent that the hitherto 'positive discrimination' had not brought about the anticipated results. Indeed, according to the Soviet authorities, who were afraid of separatism and decentralisation, korenizatsiya had spiralled out of control to the point that it now posed a threat to unification. The centre strived to create a new commonwealth on the grounds of Soviet patriotism. The Russian nation and 'Russionism', which had previously been depreciated, were now perceived as powerful forces for change, able to unite the multinational population of the Soviet state. This about

turn did not mean, however, that the Bolshevik authority aspired to be a Russian (even if a socialistic) national state. It was assumed that, as in the tsarist empire, the Russian state would unite all other nations, laying the foundations to promote Russians and thereby rehabilitating both their culture and the Russian SFSR as the core of the state.

In December 1935, Soviet propaganda adopted a new rhetoric with the slogan, a *brotherhood of nations*, with the Russian nation regarded as the 'first among equals' or the 'elderly brother'. 'Former Russia is now converted into the USSR, where the nations are equal. The country is strong and powerful thanks to its army, industry and collectivised agriculture. It is the Russian nation that is the most Soviet and revolutionary among the equal nations of the Soviet Union.

At the expense of their own national interests, Russians had previously helped non-Russians overcome their historically justified distrust of the Russian identity. The situation, however, was now reversed: non-Russians were expected to express their gratitude for 'fraternal help' as well as to manifest their 'love and admiration for the great Russian culture's.

This unification process comprised three stages: (i) expressing solidarity and forming amicable relationships with the most progressive Russian working masses; (ii) making the Russian culture available to all the nations of the Soviet Union to foster their cultural development and (iii) establishing the Russian language as their means of communication, ensuring their economic and cultural advancement [14]. The third factor above was used to justify the introduction of obligatory Russian in the schools of Soviet republics and national territorial units (through the resolution of the Central Committee AUCP (B) and Sovnarkom, March 13, 1938). A population with a good command of Russian was thought to provide conditions that were conducive to further sci-

entific and technological development in addition to unproblematic military service in the Workers and Peasants Red Army and Soviet Naval Forces [27]. As the resolution stated, 'national language is the basis for teaching in the schools of republics and national oblasts… and the tendency to transfer the Russian language from the subject of teaching into a language of instruction equals discrimination on the basis of the national language and as such is harmful and improper' [28].

Bolshevik policy became more Russian centrist during the Great Patriotic War. Symbols and historical figures familiar to the Russian majority were exploited in order to raise patriotic mobilisation among Soviet society in 'the search of a usable past'. This term was first used in the essay by Henry Steel Commager, *The Search for a Usable Past and Other Essays in Historiography* [29]. According to the 1939 census, the last before the Third Reich's invasion, Russians constituted 58.4% of the country's population. 'Russification should not be perceived as the ultimate goal of indoctrinating non-Russian ethnic groups in the spirit of soviet patriotism. The authority treated the unprivileged majority of any ethnic group, Russians included, in an utilitarian way, as 'human resources' [30], [31]. Soviet propaganda at the time even compared the leading role of the Bolshevik party to the 'leadership of Russians among Soviet nations'.

The actions taken by the Bolshevik authority undeniably aimed towards the russification of both language and culture. Yet, some Russian and Russian-speaking scientists raised concerns about whether the actual goal of Bolshevik nationality policy was the national conversion of non-Russians into Russians. Academics do not agree whether national (ethnic) conversion is at all possible. Antonina Kłoskowska has pointed out that national identity can be changed by a new sense of cultural belonging but that this does not imply being absorbed by another culture. Sergey Abashin, a Russian anthropologist, has stressed that there is no single answer to the question of whether one's ethnicity (nationality) can be changed. He suggests that ethnicity is regarded as something given, that cannot be affected, whether we take the constructivist or primordialist point of view [32], [33]. Such concerns were generally refuted, however, given that even if non-Russians started to identify with russianism in the long run, this process was treated instrumentally as a platform to sovietisation, or the formation of an international Soviet nation. 'It is a matter of fact that all the elements of a nation — the language, territory, common culture — did not fall from the sky but were gradually shaped, even in the pre-capitalist era. However, those elements were only a nucleus and at best formed a potential basis for a nation's future development in certain favourable conditions' [4].

Indeed, such assimilation was impossible for at least three reasons. First, the Stalinist concept of a nation included a primordialist argument about 'the rooting of nations' and ethno-cultural kinship, which is subject to natural inheritance rather than free choice. Cultural symbols such as language and customs were perceived to be determinants of biological consanguinity and nationality defined on the grounds of genealogy, not residence or language only. Primordialism, in fact, excludes the possibility of changing one's nationality. Bolshevik primordialism notably refers to modern ethnosymbolism, namely a conviction about the ethnic roots of nations. Second 'the rooting of nations' made Bolsheviks believe in the permanence of nations and their mother tongues as well as their resistance to assimilation reinforcing their ethno-cultural basis. Finally, language and cultural assimilation does not necessarily mean the full conversion of national identity. Even today, a vast number of Belarusian, Ukrainian, and Kazakh citizens

are Russian-speaking Belarusians, Ukrainians, and Kazakhs. Belarusian and Ukrainian (non-Galician) city residents were practically the same as Russians in terms of culture; they spoke and still speak Russian, know little or no Belarusian and Ukrainian literary languages but are fully aware of their Belarusian or Ukrainian identity and their national languages are Belarusian and Ukrainian. This is another example of how Soviet nationality policy did not allow the nation-making process to be complete [31]. *Shala qazaq* ('half Kazakh') is an especially interesting phenomenon. *Shala qazaq* was a large Russian-speaking Kazakh population different from traditional Kazakhs (*nagyz qazaq*). Broadly speaking, *Shala qazaq* are russified Kazakhs. The russification of Kazakhs concerned not only their language but also their identity and culture. This started to replace their communal character and clannishness with individualism and developed a consumer way of life. Shala qazaq are perceived as a temporary subethnos between traditional Kazakhs and Russians, a distinction that complicates modern ethnic relations in Kazakhstan.

Process of migration, specially of Russian and other eastern Slavic nations (i.e., *demographic russification*) played a substantial role in consolidating a Russian component in the Soviet state. In the early 1920s, Russians were forbidden from settling in some non-Russian territories of the USSR. Russian settlers from the tsarist era were exiled as illegal immigrants. Later, the policy was abandoned. Soviet migration policy, just as in the Russian Empire, had political, economic and, crucially for the present paper, cultural aims. Its core was the unification of Soviet nations on the grounds of Soviet ideology and Russian culture, and the conversion of the Soviet nations into a homogeneous, classless ethno-social conglomerate. This policy referred to 'the system of ethnographic actions' from Tsarist Russia that aimed to foster the russification of the empire's peripheries through the settlement of Russian peasants [15]. The migration of Russians in the Soviet Union, just as the development of fallow land in the Kazakh SSR in the 1950s, was chiefly urban-led turning the cities of the republics into Euro-Russian cultural centres, whereas the countryside preserved its local ethnic character. Towards the time of the breakup of the USSR, over 25 million Russians lived in the Russian SFSR, representing 17.4% of the USSR population. The most populous Russian concentration outside the Russian SFSR (compared with the nation's population in the USSR) was in the Ukrainian and Kazakh SSRs while the highest proportion of Russians was in the Kazakh, Latvian, Estonian, Ukrainian, and Kirgiz SSRs. Indeed, according to the 1979 census, there were more Russians than Kazakhs (the titular nation) in the Kazakh SSR.

Table 1. Russians in the ethnic structure of the USSR and union republics in 1989

Territory	Overall population (m)	Russians in the ethnic structure of the republic		% of Russians in the USSR	% of Russians Outside the Russian SFSR
		m	%		
Armenian SSR	3,304,776	51,555	1.6	0.1	0.2
Azerbaijan SSR	7,021,178	392,304	5.6	0.3	1.6

Belarusian SSR	10,151,806	1,342,099	13.2	0.9	5.3
Estonian SSR	1,565,662	474,834	30.3	0.4	1.9
Georgian SSR	5,400,841	341,172	6.3	0.2	1.3
Kazakh SSR	16,464,464	6,227,549	37.8	4.3	24.6
Kirghiz SSR	4,257,755	916,558	21.5	0.6	3.6
Lithuanian SSR	3,674,802	344,455	9.4	0.2	1.4
Latvian SSR	2,666,567	905,515	34.0	0.6	3.6
Moldavian SSR	4,335,360	562,069	13.0	0.4	2.2
Russian SFSR	147,021,869	119,865,946	81.5	82.6	-
Tajik SSR	5,092,603	388,481	7.6	0.3	1.6
Turkmen SSR	3,522,717	333,892	9.5	0.2	1.3
Ukrainian SSR	51,452,034	11,355,582	22.1	7.8	44.9
Uzbek SSR	19,810,077	1,653,478	8.3	1.1	6.5
USSR	285,742,511	145,155,489	-	100	-

Rabochij arhiv Goskomstata Rossii. Tablitsa 9c. Raspredelenie naseleniia po natsional'nosti i rodnomu iazyku, www.demoscope.ru (13th November 2012).

Sovietisation had therefore selective ethno-Russian grounds, devoid of Orthodox Christianity and related cultural aspects (music, singing, iconography, etc.). Despite unification tendencies, a relatively strong non-Russian ethnicity remained in certain republics. This ethno-Russian basis of the Soviet state was heightened by the conviction about the Russian sources of the collectivisation of agriculture and Soviet congresses. Sergey Kara-Murza advanced a thesis that the Soviet regime was based on agrarian community communism (peasant community; obshchina, mir) that fostered the collectivisation of agriculture and other reforms by the Bolshevik authorities but Richard Pipes pointed out that the lack of private property was common for both mir and kolhoz. The first, however, was not collective and farming was carried out on-private land. Moreover, the peasants living in mir were the owners of their harvest, whereas kolhoz production belonged to the country

[34]. According to Kara-Murza, this reason explains why the Soviet authorities, for the first time, achieved considerable success in its state modernisation. All previous reformatory and modernisation projects had been almost bound to fail because they did not take into account Russian traditions [35], [36].

Nonetheless, taking into account the way collectivisation progressed and the approval it met with, resistance was lower in central Russia, which had traditions of communal agriculture, than it was in Ukraine.

The chairperson of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR Anatoly Lukyanov stated in 1989 that 'the Soviet congress is a unique phenomenon, whose idea comes from Russian "soborness"'. There is, in fact, an analogy between the Soviet congresses or the congresses of people's deputies of the late USSR and Zemsky Sobors. Neither the Soviet congresses nor those of the people's deputies laid down the law but they did decide on changes to the

constitution, thereby setting the direction for domestic or foreign policy Zemsky Sobors expressed public opinion on Muscovy and the monarch would take this into account at crucial moments for the state. An assembly of the Russian Empire (1613 Zemsky Sobor) elected Mikhail Romanov to be the Tsar of Russia. The Zemsky Sobor, which roughly means the assembly of the land, was an assembly of all the states of Russia. It gathered, in a way, the whole country as one land (territory).

Both russification and sovietisation (collectivisation) intensified in the early 1930s while Stalinist repression against the activists of previously korenised state-party apparatus also increased. They were accused of 'bourgeois nationalism' and membership of counterrevolutionary political organisations and the repressions were mainly aimed at the national elite, with party purges resulting in the change of staff in state bodies [37].

Transforming the people of the USSR into consolidated nations was intended to spread communist propaganda, erode the category of a nation, and establish a national Soviet community. Internationalisation was to be preceded by nationaliisation (ethnicisation); however, the construction of the Soviet nation had a number of stages, two of which were crucial. The first concerned the consolidation of nations whose nation-building processes were in a preliminary stage (or only in the planning stage in the case of ethnic communities). The second aimed to convert the multinational population into a new historical community, the Soviet nation.

5. THE SOVIET NATION AS *A NEW HISTORICAL COMMUNITY*

One leading Bolshevik activist Mikhail Kalinin wrote in 1927 that 'we as a state should make the entire population Soviet, saturate it with Soviet patriotism'. That year he optimistically wrote (using the example of the North Caucasus) about the supposedly already existent Soviet identity: ' Now, that the Chechen people have been given their autonomy it is their responsibility to care about the well-being and development of the country. At once they have felt full right citizens of not only their little Chechnya but also the entire Union' [38]. A number of years later, he added: ' At our place, in the USSR, a Russian man is not being shaped but rather a new type of a man [is emerging] — a Soviet citizen'. Hence, the image of a nation characterised by Soviet citizenship and a peculiar patriotism was already present at the beginning of the 1930s.

Nikolai Bukharin, another prominent Bolshevik revolutionary, pointed out that the consolidation of the Soviet nation was both vertical (class-stratified) and horizontal (national). 'There has come a great union of all classes and nations in a multinational nation, a common mother country which is the USSR' [20]. The basis of this consolidation was an alliance between the working class, peasants, and international intelligentsia: 'That is how the union is built (...) by tighter and tighter unity between the working people of different nations: the unity of purpose, the unity of direction, the unity of economic planning, the colossal increase of new, real relationships — economic and cultural ones. All of these lead to an extraordinary union of nations, developing their own (national in form) and common (socialist in content) culture' [20].

However, the prerevolutionary division of nations was problematic for the Soviet nation-building process. The Bolsheviks divided nations into industrialised and agrarian (according to socio-economic criteria) and more and less culturally developed (according to cultural conditions). This classification created a hierarchy of nations with Russia at the apex (a community that already had a well-shaped culture) together with Belarusians, Ukrainians, Georgians, Armenians, Jews and

'western national minorities' such as Poles, Germans and Finns). At the bottom of the hierarchy, nations at a lower level of cultural development included, those in Central Asia, Bashkirians, Buryats and Mongols, the Komi and Mari people, Kalmyks and the nations of the Caucasus and the North. Andrei Bubnov, the People's Commissar for Education, stated in 1935 that 'one of the major achievements of the October Revolution was the development of literature for the nations of the North'. It concerned at the time 12 nationalities of the area (the Sami people, the Nenets, the Khanty people, the Mansi people, the Evenks, the Chukchi people, Eskimos, Koryaks, the Evens, the Nanai people, the Nivkh people, the Udege people) [39]. Counteracting analphabetism, the development of educational and healthcare systems was part of a cultural revolution. Indeed, the main objective for some nations was to establish literary language and activity.

One of the crucial aims of Soviet nationality policy was to equalise the economic development of nations through industrialisation which in the 1930s began to be run on a large scale and aimed to end the division between industrialised and agricultural nations. The division of production across the USSR territory resulted from state-level priorities, however. In particular, the geographical locations of enterprises depended on centralised plans of development that took into account the natural and climatic conditions, availability of production factors (resources, qualified workers), local traditions, and military and strategic characteristics. As a result, each republic had its own specialisation.

Further, even though all Soviet nations were equal constitutionally, titular nations were privileged compared with those that did not have their own national territories (i.e., nations that had only individual nationality). The national elites in titular republics and other national USSR entities were especially afraid

that the new socialist nation would be formed from the de-ethnicisation of nations (e.g., by removing nationality data from passports, while establishing inter-republican organs of authority). For this reason, the official wording multinational Soviet nation (emphasised in the Central Committee report for the 13th Party Congress held in 1966) was welcomed with some relief.

In the 1970s, Leonid Brezhnev, the General Secretary of the CC CPSU spoke at the 24th and 25th Party Congresses about a would-be historical community in a rather vague manner. A precise explanation of what the new community was supposed to be was published by the Institute of Marxism-Leninism in 1972 and 1974: 'The Soviet nation is not some new nation but an historical community of people that is much more than a nation, as it covers all USSR nations. The 'Soviet nation' is a term that reflects a thorough change of the nature and character of Soviet nations. It expresses how close and international they have become. Still, all socialist nations form one soviet nation, being at the same time its national components [40].

CONCLUSION

Although the formation of the Soviet nation was incomplete, the marks of Soviet identity remained not only in Russia but also in Belarus, eastern Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan. According to Valery Tishkov, a Russian anthropologist, the Soviet nation was a civil and socio-cultural community. The mentality and everyday culture ('the USSR is my homeland') present throughout the USSR's existence prove this opinion [41]. The population of the USSR undoubtedly felt united in terms of culture and citizenship but not in regards to territory. Apart from Russians, all other titular nations identified primarily with their own republics rather than with the entire Soviet Union. Indeed, despite its efforts, the USSR never

became the national state of the Soviet nation nor even the Russian national state. The exact criteria of the way the union republics were established remain unknown. Andrei Sud'in suggested the rule was that the union republics were formed on the external borders of the USSR. This reasoning explains why the Tatars, for example, whose territory did not have such borders, were never given the status o f a union republic, even though they previously had their own state. The argument seems to be inadequate, however, since the Kazakhs and Kyrgyz, who had such borders, did not gain the status of a union republic until 1936 [42].

The key position of Russians was undeniable, and the use of the Russian language was common place in all the Soviet nations. However, the USSR did not have the features of a national state (federalism, personal identity, the development of non-Russian elites and national cadres, educational system, and culture), while the living standards and living conditions were higher in many union republics than in Russia or Russian SFSR. The only appropriate term for the USSR would be a multinational state or the term used by American authors, a state of nations [43]. It is also unquestionable that the reinforcement of the Russian ethnic element in the state-building process as well as the support of non-Russian development were both used as tool to create a synthesis of constructivism and ethnosymbolism. The basis of soviet constructivism was territorial-state centrism (union republics as "sovereign" political organisms), which gave the nations that had their own territories priority over self-development. Constructivism also derived from ethnosymbolism, because the nations-building process was an ethnic-based phenomenon.

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