

## THE FUTURE OF THE NATIONALITIES IN THE SOVIET UNION

### A Soviet View

### Editorial Introduction

The recently adopted Program of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union makes the following pronouncement on the national relations in the Soviet Union:

"Full-scale communist construction constitutes a new stage in the development of national relations in the U.S.S.R. in which the nations will draw still closer together until complete unity is achieved. The building of the material and technical basis of communism leads to still greater unity of the Soviet peoples. The exchange of material and spiritual values between nations becomes more and more intensive, and the contribution of each republic to the common cause of communist construction increases . . . With the victory of communism in the U.S.S.R. the nations will draw still closer together, their economic and ideological unity will increase, and the communist traits common to their spiritual make-up will develop. However, the obliteration of national distinctions, and especially of language distinctions, is a considerably longer process than the obliteration of class distinctions."

Unlike the previous Party programs, the latest contends that the merger of nations within the Soviet Union is an inevitable process, brought about by the workings of the socio-economic laws of the socialist society. Realizing the difficulty of obliterating national differences in a foreseeable future, the Soviet ideologues decided not to include in the Program a date for the accomplishment of such goal; instead, they spelled out short-range directions in hastening process of assimilation. The relevant passages in the Program are:

"The boundaries between the Union republics of the U.S.S.R. are increasingly losing their former significance, since all the nations are equal, their life is based on a common socialist foundation, the material and spiritual needs of every people are satisfied to the same extent, and they are all united in a single family by common vital interests and are advancing together to the common goal—communism. . . in the economic sphere, it is necessary to continue the line of comprehensive development of the economies of the Soviet republics, effect a rational geographic location of production and a planned working of natural wealth, and promote socialist division of labor among the republics, unifying and combining their economic efforts . . ."

In other words, the first step in the merging of nations would be economic integration and specialization, reorganization of the Soviet Union along economic and not along national - territorial lines. Thus, an implication of a beginning of an end for the remains of federalism in the Soviet Union is evident, and in fact economic regionalization and integration in the Soviet Union of today is proceeding at a fast pace. (For an excellent indication of this see Mr. Zunde's article "Soviet Industrial Policy in Lithuania", presented in this issue.)

In the area of cultural policy, the Program is not as explicit; nevertheless, an indication of the direction of cultural policy may be obtained from a few passages in the Program itself and from comments on the Program by various soviet ideologues. The Program has the following to say on this question:

"The big scale of communist construction and the new victories of communist ideology are enriching the cultures of the people of the U.S.S.R., which are socialist in content and national in form. There is a growing ideological unity among the nations and nationalities and a greater rapprochement of their cultures . . . An international culture common to all the Soviet nations is developing . . . The voluntary study of Russian in addition to the native language is of positive significance, since it facilitates reciprocal exchange of experience and access of every nation and nationality to the cultural gains of all the other peoples of the U.S.S.R., and to world culture. The Russian language has, in effect, become the common medium of intercourse and co-operation between all the peoples of the U.S.S.R."

Although the Program is silent on the role of the Russian culture in this process of assimilation, Soviet leaders have explicitly indicated that this "exchange of experience" is to be a one-sided process and that the new "international culture"

will be based on the Russian culture. There is, in fact, ample evidence in the application of cultural policy to support this contention. (See, for example, some of the conclusions in the article "A Note on Book Publishing Statistics as an Index to Soviet Cultural Policy" presented in this issue.) The First Secretary of the Lithuanian Communist Party, Antanas Sniečkus, echoing the new Program, had this to say to the Thirteenth Congress of the Lithuanian Communist Party in 1962:

"The republic party organization imbues the working people with love and respect for the fraternal nations of the Soviet Union, first of all for the great Russian nation, which shows the example of true internationalism toward all nations of the U.S.S.R. . . . We have to seek even wider study of the Russian language by the working people of Lithuania." (*Tiesa*, Sept. 30, 1961, p. 3)

To illustrate what he meant by "love and respect for the great Russian nation", Sniečkus attacked a textbook of Lithuanian history, which was hailed during the period of thaw: "The book is written without proper relation to the emancipatory struggle of other nations of the U.S.S.R. and of the Russian nation in the first place." It is an unmasked demand to russify Lithuanian history and to portray it as a mere continuation of Russian history.

In Lithuania, where nationalism remains strong to this day, such pronouncements and policies inevitably led to a discussion among the intelligentsia and the Party whose task is to implement the new nationality program. There appears to have been a need for an official clarification of the nationality question, A theoretic discussion of this question recently appeared in the December, 1962, issue of the theoretic journal of the Party, **Komunistas** (Communist). The author G. Zimanas is an old Lithuanian bolshevik, longtime editor of the Party and Soviet organ **Tiesa** (Pravda). Zimanas' article is significant not in that it rehashes the pronouncements of the Program, but in its indication of an existence of two conflicting tendencies in the area of national relations. On the one hand there are those who are taking the Program pronouncements on the national question categorically and are pushing for an intensified de-nationalization policy. On the other hand, the national intelligentsia, which to some extent has also penetrated into the Party, is well aware that the designated goal is national extinction and is looking for the ways to at least put the brakes on the communist zealots. Zimanas' article reaffirms the ultimate denationalization under Communism and summarizes the socio-economic laws that underlie this process. At the same time he emphasizes the long and hard road to a homogenous society. In effect, he is somewhat placating the nationally-minded intelligentsia and slowing down the seekers of a non-national communist society.

## The Soviet View

G. Zimanas, A NEW STAGE IN NATIONAL RELATIONS, **Komunistas** (Communist). Vilnius, December 1962. pp. 49-56. Slightly condensed text follows:

In his time, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin has written about two historical tendencies on the nationality question. One of them describes the rise of national states and the other signifies the destruction of national barriers.

In a capitalist society these two tendencies are antithetic, and both are used by the exploiters for their class interests. In one respect the exploiters attempt to obtain the support of the masses in order to strengthen their class rule within the country. In another respect, they strive to obtain the support of their people in order to strengthen their position abroad. In both cases they are trying to represent their class interests as national interests. In both instances, therefore, there can be no accord between these two historical tendencies, which degenerate into chauvinism on the one hand and cosmopolitanism on the other.

Accord between these two tendencies is possible only under conditions of socialism, where the development of every nation progresses as they draw closer together and increasingly enrich each other.

Full-scale communist construction means a new stage in the area of national relations; further association of nations and striving for complete unity is characteristic of this stage.

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The achievements of Soviet people in strengthening the friendship among the nations of our country are great. It is wrong, however, to explain the relations of socialist nations as completely established and as having reached the point of culmination. Such an image was created during the period of the cult of the individual, when national relations were pictured as having reached their final and highest point, while tasks still to be accomplished were described only in a general manner, as by stressing the need to strengthen friendship without discussing concrete ways and means of doing this. Since the 20th Party Congress, the Communist Party has been giving increasingly more attention to perfecting its national policies. It is stated in the Party Program that the period of full-scale communist construction is also the beginning of a new stage in national relations, i.e. the beginning of a greater drawing together of the nations of the Soviet Union.

What does this further drawing together mean? The socialist nations already live in friendly and fraternal association, there are no antagonistic classes, which would be interested in inciting one nation against another; the vanguard of these nations is the proletariat and its party which educates the working people in the spirit of proletarian internationalism and

socialistic patriotism. There is no exploitation in a socialist society. What are the tasks and their contents for further rapprochement of nations under these concrete conditions? Is this merely a quantitative process, or does it connote a new quality? What is the distinguishing feature of this further rapprochement of nations? Further rapprochement of nations is a process embracing all areas of a nation's existence: the economy, politics, government structure, and culture. Nevertheless, it has one most important distinguishing feature, that is the liquidation of the vestiges of nationalism. This does not mean that all the possibilities for great achievements in the area of national relations during the period of expansive communist construction will be exhausted by a liquidation of the remains of nationalism. This, nevertheless, is the most important feature which gives the new era its novel quality.

The socialist nation is not yet free from the vestiges of bourgeois-nationalism which manifest themselves in various traditions and customs. These customs have no independent basis; they have arisen from the superstructure of the old regime, or regimes, and still survive, acquiring new forms and adapting themselves to new conditions. Classes no longer exist which would uphold them, but there remain circumstances even in our society which revive them and give them a new lease on life.

They are supported first of all by the capitalist world, which strives to strengthen the vestiges of nationalism, quite rightly considering them its allies.

Consequently, the rapprochement of the socialist nations is in essence the destruction of the vestiges of nationalism.

On the other hand, the growing together of the socialist nations does not mean their fusion. This is repeatedly stressed in our Party Program. The Program points out that the national forms do not ossify during the period of communist construction, they change, come closer, shedding all that is out-dated and contradict the new living conditions, i.e., free themselves from obsolescence. However, the modification of national forms does not imply their disappearance. The process of the effacement and disappearance of national distinctions is a considerably longer process than the effacement of class distinctions. Leninism teaches us that nations will remain long after socialism will have triumphed in all countries. Even in our country when Communism is constructed, it will be too early to talk of the fusion of nations.

This warning of the Communist Party has profound significance, for next to the people who tend to grieve over every phase of the rapprochement of nations and regret the disappearance of every outdated tradition, there are those who tend to push ahead too fast. Such people confuse the rapprochement of nations with their complete fusion, picture it as an automatically occurring process and hasten to announce the disappearance of national forms. Sometimes one hears that, at present, national is only that which is common to all mankind, neglecting the fact that as long as nations survive, they retain their uniqueness and, therefore, one must not affirm that national is only that which is common to all mankind. Every nation has in its culture, in addition to elements common to all mankind, also some unique elements, which will persist as long as nations as such remain.

One must also remember, however, that the rapprochement of nations and their fusion are two closely related, reciprocal processes which are not separated by a brick wall.

Sometimes one hears that national is essentially that which is unique. This is only generally true, because even this statement ignores national individuality. Marxism naturally assumes that national characteristics are not biological, but social. However, one also cannot doubt the fact that once national characteristics have appeared on the basis of a particular set of economic and political conditions, they have certain, even if relative, independence and individuality, which should not be disregarded.

Consequently, the stage of further rapprochement of nations means their closer economical, political, and cultural cooperation for mutual enrichment while stepping up their struggle against obsolete customs and habits, but this does not mean their fusion. What are the laws governing this rapprochement?

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One of the laws which stands out when one observes national relations in our country is that these relations depend on the development of production facilities and on production relations. National relations are always in one way or another an expression of production relations, i.e. they are a function of production relations. Where economic relations are competitive, unfriendly, there the antagonism of production and the economy invariably take on a nationalistic character. Economic relations of a friendly and cooperative nature undermine nationalistic antagonisms, as was pointed out by C. Marx and F. Engels in "the Manifesto of The Communist Party."

The creation of a material-technical basis for Communism, which is the main economic task of the Party and of the Soviet people for the coming two decades, provides a basis for reorganizing socialistic social relations into communistic ones. On the other hand, the development of communistic social relations and the eradication of class barriers increases the social uniformity of nations. In a socialist society, the proletariat and the peasantry rely on property nationalized to a different degree, i.e. the peasant relies on property owned collectively by a group, while the worker relies on property owned by the socialist state. Under certain circumstances these two types of property ownership may conflict in some ways. These

conflicts cannot be hostile, because both types of property ownership are socialistic, but they may occur, and there can be instances where they may acquire a nationalistic character.

As a result of the disappearance of class distinctions, the increasing social uniformity of nations, the equalization of collectively and state-owned property, and the approach to a uniform state of communistic property ownership, the possibility for such conflicts decreases, and trust as well as friendship between peoples grows.

In a socialist society, the distribution of wealth still retains certain characteristics of a capitalist society; "moles", as C. Marx used to call them. These particular imperfections may, under certain circumstances, give rise to conflicts which, in a multi-national state, may take on a nationalistic character. The development of communistic social relations decreases such possibilities.

One cannot fail to see that under certain conditions, some conflicts in our society may arise as a result of various shortages, which still occur under socialism. This inadequate satisfaction of certain needs may, under appropriate conditions, revive or foster some obsolete customs and habits, which may also acquire a nationalistic character. As the standard of living of the working-class people rises, however, such possibilities decrease. A guaranteed high income and living standard for all, the improvement of material well-being will facilitate the struggle against all obsolete customs and habits, and especially against vestiges of nationalism.

Thus, the development of production facilities and the ensuing spread of communistic social relations, as well as the improvement of the living standard of the people are especially important means for bringing about a further rapprochement of socialist nations.

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Marxism attributes great importance to the conditions under which an economic group develops, but it does not consider this development as solely dependent on them. The conditions and prerequisites for further economic rapprochement between nations are important, but, on the other hand, political conditions also have a tremendous significance for further expansion of Soviet democracy.

Our Party's great experience in the area of socialist state building shows very clearly that an especially important condition for the strengthening of friendly and fraternal feelings between peoples is their total equality, the absence of privileges for any nation, and a strict adherence to laws in all instances. A socialist nation is one which is free from any exploitation.

An old Marxist maxim to the effect that no nation can be free which exploits other nations may be paraphrased to say that a socialist nation, by its very nature, can neither exploit other nations, nor be exploited by them.

Further rapprochement between nations is related to further development of socialist democracy. New institutions are being created in addition to equally-powerful Soviets—the Soviets of Republics and the Supreme Soviet—which are the highest institutions of our country's government and whose equality assures the equality of all republics. Such institutions are, for example, the economic councils recently established to coordinate industrial production in large economic regions of our country (Eastern region, Baltic region, etc.). The task of these institutions is to coordinate in a just manner the cooperation of the republics with one another as well as with other Soviet institutions. This development strengthens the national republics, assures a greater consideration of their individual rights, and, in fact, means an expansion of their rights. Inter-republic institutions that are now being created, such as between the republics of Middle Asia, also belong to this category.

Further development of socialist democracy, the extension of the role and functions of social institutions also play a tremendous role in the further rapprochement between socialist nations.

In the 22nd Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union the decision was made to further expand socialist democracy. In the instance when a working-class dictatorship state becomes a People's republic, the Party declares its determination to further perfect the principles of representation by the people and to develop a democratic system of Soviet elections. Particularly important in this connection are the tenets announced by the Party in its Program about the maintenance of continuity during the periodic turnover of Soviets and also the tenet that the Soviets should not only discuss, but also make final decision on questions within their authority.

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The ideology of socialist nations is based on Marxism-Leninism. This ideology develops during the formative period of a socialist nation in the struggle against a capitalist-nationalist ideology. In the period of full-scale communist construction, the ideological effort on the part of the Party increases. The task of this effort is to formulate a scientific ideology for the entire socialist world.

While educating the working classes, the Party is especially concerned during this period with the effectiveness of its ideological endeavors. This also involves the infusion of the international proletariat spirit to the working classes. The

friendship of nations is not a phrase to be used in speeches and declarations on important occasions, but is a real, functional policy, which determines the lives and work of the Soviet people. The question is not, can you make flowery speeches about the friendship of different people, but can you strengthen the friendship, not in words, but in deeds, between your nations and that which is next to you, between you and the person from a different nation who lives in your neighborhood? Do you know how to work and play with him in harmony, can you respect his language, his culture, and are you determined to cooperate with him?

Today, we connect national friendships more closely with our own industrial production. We ask ourselves more often whether we are fulfilling our obligations to other nations and view our production quotas not only as our economic task and necessity, but also as our international obligation. Today we remember more often that if we will not fulfill our obligations in our field of work, we will force others to fulfill them for us and, consequently, we shall hurt the friendship between us. We examine ourselves more often to see whether we act as internationalists.

Exchange of cultural values, which is already occurring in the socialist period, especially increases during the period of communist construction. In this cultural exchange among different nations, a special place belongs to Russian culture, for the Russian language, because of its historical import, has become the language of international relations in our country.

The dialectics of the rapprochement between nations described by Lenin are such that the fusion occurs through the flourishing of nations and national cultures. This is why the Party supports the national culture forms as long as they help the nation to move in the direction of a culture common to all mankind.

But the rapprochement of national cultures and the strengthening of cooperation between them is a creative process. It does not mean the denial of one national culture in favor of another, as it occurs in capitalist societies; rather it means the gathering of treasures from the various national cultures and their concentration into a single culture common to all mankind. This universal communist culture will not permit the loss of a single valuable cultural trait.

Since, as it has been stressed before, a particularly important feature of further rapprochement of socialist nations is their emancipation from the vestiges of nationalism, this rapprochement requires an increased struggle against such obsolete, customs and habits.

At present, these obsolete habits manifest themselves in numerous ways. There still remains some mistrust of brotherly nations, unwillingness to share experience, failure to appreciate their experience, and a belittling of their cultural values. These prejudices come to the surface in the preparation and apportionment of the working cadres, violating the agreed exchange of cadres between different nations, in an idealization of the past, in veiling the reactionary qualities of various personalities of the past, and in over-valuing and over-stressing the unique qualities of one's own nation, failing to appreciate the importance of the common class interests.

An extremely dangerous survival is localism, because it can hide behind the mask of patriotism. Vestiges of nationalism usually manifest themselves in two ways. There are still people who do not at all acknowledge the principles of internationalism. Such surviving attitudes in these people take the form of hidden bourgeois-nationalistic viewpoints. But it also happens that vestiges of nationalism reveal themselves indirectly, i.e. among people who espouse the Soviet internationalistic ideology, but err by giving in to nationalism because of tradition, habit, and a nondialectic way of thinking. Such people are sometimes unaware of the relation of one or another of their actions to the bourgeois-nationalistic ideology which they actually disclaim. Naturally, vestiges of nationalism and their manifestations are detrimental in all instances; for the sake of education, however, it is necessary to differentiate those who violate the laws of friendship between nations because of wrong ideologies from those who do it unconsciously. This is important, because in our society there are fewer and fewer people who espouse the bourgeois-nationalistic viewpoint, but there still are people who unconsciously and, thus, indirectly become the propagators of bourgeois-nationalism.

The Party demands a relentless struggle against the remains of bourgeois-nationalistic society. One cannot strive for the rapprochement between socialist nations while tempering this struggle or tolerating nationalistic survivals. Tolerance of the vestiges of nationalism is always dangerous in itself, for it is the main factor keeping these vestiges alive. In practice, the various surviving customs and habits are intimately related. Religious superstitions, for example, intertwine with nationalistic superstitions. This is why the struggle against the vestiges of nationalism demands an all-out fight against any manifestation of capitalism in the minds of the people.

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Both the formation of socialist nations and their rapprochement are objective processes based on the very nature of the Socialist economic system and on the development of communistic social relations. However, this does not mean that this process is ungovernable, tempestuous, and without need for guidance. One should not confuse the objectivity of this process with spontaneity. This is contrary to Marxism. Consequently, it is impossible to agree with expressed opinions that socialist nations will draw together spontaneously, because of their very nature. In the process of rapprochement between socialist nations a tremendous role will be played by the Party's national policies.

This has been clearly demonstrated in practice. During the periods of the cult of the individual in our country, socialism had already won, but serious mistakes were made in the area of national policy and this has considerably damaged the friendly feeling between nations.

Under socialist conditions, the interests of all nations are united. The Interests of any particular republic are like those of the whole Soviet Union, but this unity of interests does not at all mean that there is no need for coordination.

Coordination is a very important task of Party policy. During the last plenary session of the Central Committee of the C. P. S. U., Premier N. Khrushchev related how some of those drawing up the plans for various economic councils were against the construction of electrical power plants in Ukraine and Middle Asia and that these erroneous attitudes were remedied only by the Central Committee of the Party. Let us imagine that these mistakes had actually been made. Is it not clear that they would have repercussions in the friendship between Soviet people, that economic mistakes might have acquired nationalistic implications? This is why the Party tries to coordinate properly the interests of individual republics with those of the Soviet Union as a whole, and has inscribed this task into its Program.

Lenin had always asserted, that, in spite of its unanimity, the Party's national policies always have two sides. Local Party organizations are responsible for one of them; the central, for the other. If the central Party organization must see to it that the general interests be insured without neglecting national interests, then the first duty of the local Party organizations is to see to it that the general interest be given proper head, and to be constantly on guard against localism.

In certain local organizations and republics, Party policies are still sometimes distorted in education, preparation, and apportionment of the cadres. It also happens, however, that some institutions designed to serve the entire Soviet Union are not sufficiently informed about local interests, do not have good lines of communication, and therefore slide into the habit of neglecting local interests. Such accusations were made against certain planning committees during the last Plenary session of the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U. Such violations also occur in the matter of cadres. The Central Committee of the Party, for example, requires all central institutions to foster local cadres. But there still exist institutions designed for the entire Soviet Union and serving all the republics which do not foster local cadres.

Any of the errors in this policy may slow down the rapprochement of nations, whereas proper policies aid and promote such rapprochement. This is a most important law of the further rapprochement of socialist nations.