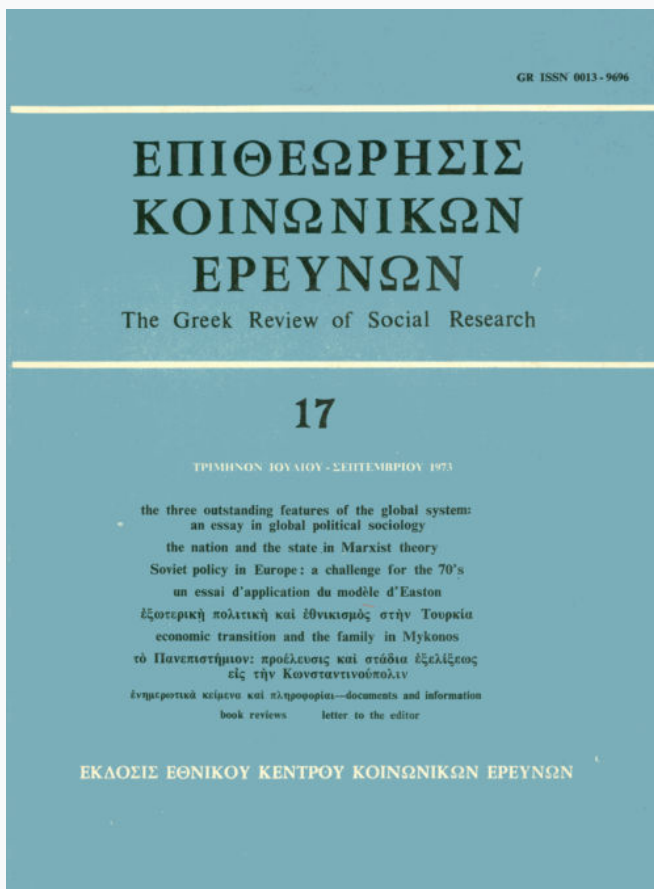


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## The nation and the state in Marxist theory

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# the nation and the state in Marxist theory\*

by  
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*Of course we also find people who complain [about the fact that ethnic differences are disappearing. To them we reply that Communists will not put in moth-balls and preserve unto eternity the differences among nations. We will give aid to the objective process of ever more intimate convergence of nations and nationalities occurring under the conditions of the building of Communism on a voluntary and democratic basis.*

N. S. KRHUSCHEV<sup>1</sup>

(22nd CPSU Congress, 1961)

## 1. introduction

This paper concerns itself with the concepts of the nation, the nationality and the state, and their relationship in Marxist ideology as well as their projection into the «communist future». It begins with an analysis of the Marxist view of the nation and nationality as stages in the development of «social formations»; proceeds with the themes of liberation movements and socialist revolutions and their interactions; centers on the examination of the relationship between the nation and the state; considers the issues of national self-determination and regional autonomy, federation and secession; and concludes with the anticipated assimilation of peoples and fusion of nations into a world communist society.

The dramatis personae include Friedrich Engels (1820-1895), Karl H. Marx (1818-1883), Vladimir I. Lenin (1870-1924) and Joseph V. Stalin (1879-1953).<sup>1</sup> The first two, Marx and Engels, born in Prussia, lived and acted entirely outside Russia; Lenin, born and raised in Russia, lived in various European countries during the period between the age of 30 and 47 (except for a very short interval when he returned home); and Stalin, born in Russia, experienced but a very short exposure to other cul-

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1. The original plans provided for the inclusion of Khrushchev's minor contribution—despite the fact that it relates more to practice than theory. The subsequent news (*The Times*, October 5, 1971) that, according to the fourth edition of the history of the CPSU just published in Moscow, Khrushchev was in fact dismissed in 1964 because of his «incompetence» (contrary to official statements at the time that he resigned on account of old age and ill health), has reinforced to some extent those strong initial reservations so that the relevant material is now omitted. It is the writer's contention that, Khrushchev, a man of talent and great ability in some spheres, has no hope of being taken seriously as one of the Marxist ideological leaders.

tures. Marx and Engels were close friends, Lenin and Stalin comrades and successive heads of the Soviet Government, but it is very unlikely that either of the Prussians ever came face to face with either of the Russians.

The temporal domain of this study covers a period of well over one hundred years, beginning shortly after the Congress of Vienna and terminating with Stalin's departure from the scene in 1953. It is thus obvious that it is entirely impossible to attempt even a sketchy outline of the socio-cultural environment to which the theoretical concepts in question referred, nor is it feasible to follow but the most basic features and principal trends of the ideas of each of the *dramatis personae*.

It is usually expected of a writer to furnish at the outset adequately convincing reasons for believing the undertaken study is, or should be, a significant contribution to knowledge. No such claims are being advanced in this case: no new discoveries, no new predictive models, no sensational answers to old, intriguing questions. Apart from a refreshing synthesis, this paper simply attempts to present the question of nationality in its proper Marxist perspective, the process of the conceived continuous evolution of «social formations». It is the view of the author that western writers on the whole have failed to grasp the essence of the communist strategy and the underlying theoretical premise of the process of building communism. For almost two generations a formidable array of books, articles and papers have concentrated on the issue of cruel oppression and intense Russification efforts of the Soviet leaders. Such practices as may have been utilized were never intended as the answer to the problem of building communism. The attainment of this goal, far from being sought through a speedy, absolute direct decrease of the original undesirable elements in the nationality cultures, is considered possible only through a gradual, relative, indirect enrichment of common interests, common experiences and shared beliefs.

It should be stressed that this study—which is part of a larger project, Building Communism in the Soviet Union—is limited to theories and policies and makes no attempt to deal with practices or the extent of step-by-step correlation between the former and the latter. It is of course known that such a relationship has traditionally been significantly low, independently of the form of the political system, time and geographical location.

That Marxist ideology has drawn from relevant contemporary and earlier western theories and experiences and is rooted in the European realities of the mid-nineteenth century is a very relevant and significant consideration, yet it lies beyond the scope of the present paper.

The data used is scattered throughout the numerous works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, none of whom has left any comprehensive account on the issues and concepts involved. All the original sources consulted are in English translation produced by official Moscow agencies.

## 2. nations and nationalities

The first attempt for a precise statement of the meaning of the nation in the Marxist-communist ideology was made by J. Stalin four years before the October Revolution: «A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture».<sup>1</sup> Stalin's definition, clearly deeply rooted in Marxist theory, so far stands unique, unchallenged and apparently «universally» accepted in the communist world.

A nation is primarily «a community, a definite community of people», Stalin begins his reply to the self-addressed question «What is a nation?». It is certainly not a racial community or a loosely connected, ephemeral conglomeration of groups, but a stable social formation, the product of historical circumstances, with a common spoken language—«a common language for every nation but not necessarily different languages for different nations!». Yet these characteristics are far from sufficient: «a nation is formed only as a result of lengthy and systematic intercourse, as a result of living together generation after generation». Since people cannot live together for long periods unless they share a common territory, it follows that a common territory is another necessary condition. But this is not all. An internal economic bond, a «common economic life», is required to weld the various parts into a single unit. («... The Americans themselves would not be called a nation were not the different parts of America bound together into an economic whole, as a result of division of labour between them, the development of means of communication, and so forth.»)<sup>2</sup> Finally, the existence of a common psychological make-up, which manifests itself in a common-culture completes the set of necessary and sufficient conditions that (taken together) completely define a nation.<sup>3</sup>

The nation in Marxist theory is a comparatively recent historical phenomenon,<sup>4</sup> the latest stage in

1. J. V. Stalin, *Marxism and the National Question* (Moscow, 1947), p. 15.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

4. Western non-Marxist writers place the emergence of the nation in the later Middle Ages. Although the Marxists

the long process of evolution of «social formations». If some of its best known forerunners are hidden in the fog of the past, its successor, the world communist society, is already clearly «visible» on the distant horizons.

Friedrich Engels made the greatest contribution to the Marxist theory of evolution of the human organization. At the beginning there were «swirling, glowing masses of vapour», which, with time, developed into solar systems—«suns as well as planets and satellites»—and on which gradually life appeared. To begin with, there were «chemical preconditions» that gave rise to «living protoplasm forms». <sup>1</sup> Then there were animals (and plants), which, by the Darwinian process of natural selection, evolved into apes and finally humans. <sup>2 3</sup> These ancestors, having found collective life indispensable for their survival, lived in small groups with no definite social organization, until in due time the clan and then the tribe (made up of a number of clans) developed successively.

These early forms of social formations, consisting of persons, related by ties of kinship, sometimes numbered up to several hundred members. At a later stage when domestication of animals became possible, pastoral tribes emerged, an event that was accompanied by the introduction of an elementary form of specialization of production («the first great social division of labour» <sup>4</sup>), for these pastoral tribes soon began exchanging their products—always through their chiefs. Scarcity of resources, apparently an old problem of mankind, occasionally resulted in clashes among various tribes which in turn gave rise to alliances among kindred units. Although most of these emergency association arrangements ceased to exist with the passing away of the immediate crisis, some of them developed into lasting confederacies of tribes. This new form of social formation, according to Engels, «came into existence from Caesar's time—some of them already had kings». <sup>5</sup> In the meantime, at certain places with severe winters pastoral life led to cultivation of grain for the cattle

and the beginning of agriculture. Next came the Heroic Age, the period of the iron sword, but also of the iron ploughshare and axe. Stone weapons disappeared but very slowly—stone axes were still used at the Battle of Hastings (1066). Iron «became the servant of man, the last and most important of all materials that played a revolutionary role in history, the last—if we except the potato». <sup>6</sup>

Progress was now irresistible and far more rapid than at any other time. The town, protected by stone walls, became the center of the tribe or confederacy of tribes, while the increased density of the population and the increasing outside threat necessitated closer internal union. Thus, «the military commander—rex, basileus, thuidans—became an indispensable and permanent official» and «the popular assembly was instituted where it did not yet exist». <sup>7</sup> War, which once was waged either to acquire additional territory or to avenge aggression, «was now waged for the sake of plunder alone», having become a regular profession. <sup>8</sup> The states, which, in this way came into being, witnessed the growth of a public power that was no longer to be related to the organization of the people as an armed force. Inside a given state the tribes intermingled freely and «everywhere slaves, dependents and foreigners lived among the citizens». <sup>9</sup>

It was out of this amalgamation of diverse clans and tribes that nationalities arose. What was the determining factor for membership in the community was not blood-relationship but common language and culture. <sup>10</sup> Engels, being concerned with the institution of the state rather than the nation, did not carry the argument further. It was left to Stalin to take it up and proceed by differentiating a nationality from a nation in that the former, unlike the latter, was not economically consolidated. <sup>11</sup> This condition would be met only after the collapse of feudalism and the advent of capitalism («The process of elimination of feudalism and development of capitalism was at the same time a process of amalgamation of people into nations»). <sup>12 13</sup> Yet to every rule there are except-

do not seem to have defined the era during which the nation was born, they are more specific with regard to the appearance of the state: it occurred in the Heroic Age (10th-8th century B. C.), more precisely in Athens, Greece. See F. Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Property and State* (Moscow, 1948), p. 154.

1. F. Engels, «Introduction to Dialectics of Nature» in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Selected Works in Two Volumes* (Moscow, 1955), Vol. 2, p. 72.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 73.

3. F. Engels, «The Part Played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man» in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Selected Works in Two Volumes*, *op. cit.*, pp. 80-92.

4. Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Property and State*, *op. cit.*, p. 226.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 204.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 231.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 233.

8. *Ibid.*

9. *Ibid.*, p. 239.

10. This cannot help but bring to mind Isocrates' thinking: «The people we call Greeks are those who have the same culture as ours, not the same blood». Isocrates, *Panathenaius*, 50.

11. Stalin, *Marxism and the National and Colonial Question* (New York, n.d.; based on 1934 Moscow edition), p.

12. Stalin, *Marxism and the National Question*, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

13. Generally, there is a close similarity between Stalin's and Lenin's views on this subject. Stalin's *Marxism and the National Question* was written while in Vienna in January 1913 and was published in three instalments between March

ions. In Russia, for instance, «the role of welder of nationalities was assumed», instead, «by the Great Russians who were headed by a powerful and well-organized... military bureaucracy».<sup>1</sup>

The main point of the preceding analysis is that Stalin has looked at the nation as an element in a sequence of evolving social formations, four of which are identified as the clan, the tribe, the nationality and the nation. Each of these formations is characterized not only with a language common to all the members of the community but also with an economic structure of its own. It should be pointed out that all his predecessors, Marx, Engels and Lenin, seem to have used the concepts of nation and nationality entirely indiscriminately.

### 3. national liberation movements and socialist revolutions

Given that the primary goal of the proletariat is the advancement of the socialist revolution, to what extent national liberation movements are considered by the Marxists as consonant with that goal, and what should be the attitude and precise role of the proletariat in matters pertaining to national struggles?

Marx and Engels, who never doubted that the foremost objective of the proletariat should be the world classless society, considered national emancipation as a necessary condition for the attainment of that ultimate goal. National enslavement was a great obstacle for the development of the international working class solidarity. Only after every nation acquired its independence could the attainment of such an objective be considered possible.<sup>2</sup> Despite this and the fact that both Marx and Engels were always very sympathetic to the cause of the oppressed

and May 1913. Lenin's *Critical Remarks on the National Question*, on the other hand, was written in the last three months of 1913 and was published in three instalments in the same period. According to Lenin: «Developing capitalism knows two historical tendencies in the national question. First: the awakening of the national life and national movements, struggle against all national oppression, creation of national states. Second: development and acceleration of all kinds of intercourse between nations, breakdown of national barriers...» (p. 23). (It should be remembered that Lenin did not differentiate between nation and nationality.) It is highly tempting to suggest that both Lenin and Stalin might have received their hints from the *Communist Manifesto* (Marx and Engels). Further on the main point of this note, together with what may appear as a note-worthy difference, see p. 89 of this paper.

1. Stalin, *Marxism and the National Question*, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

2. See: Engel's letter to Kautsky (February 7, 1882). Also: Dona Torr, *Marxism, Nationalism and War* (London, 1940), Vol. 2, pp. 31-32 and 76-77.

peoples, they, nevertheless, did not advocate a uniform policy on the national question: in so many cases had Britain, France, Russia and other European powers exploited national struggles to advance their own interests, that one should not support all national movements indiscriminately.<sup>3</sup>

They further advised the proletariat (in European countries) not to attempt to take the initiative for a national liberation movement in another country (colony), a task that should best be undertaken, instead, by the native people themselves.<sup>4</sup>

Finally, subjugation of one nation by another was unthinkable in terms of the consequences of such an action on the solidarity of the workers. In cases where such crimes had been committed in the past, the proletariat should dissociate themselves from the ruling class and recognize the right of self-determination to the oppressed people.<sup>5</sup> Engels, in particular, observed that «we could neither seize power nor retain it without making good the crimes committed by our predecessors towards other nationalities»....<sup>6</sup>

Lenin's views on the national question were almost identical to those of Marx and Engels. In 1896 he urged for recognition of «equal rights for all nationalities»—a principle that was later incorporated into the official program of the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party<sup>7</sup>—and subsequently advised the proletariat to work for the liberation of the oppressed peoples not merely with words but in terms of real action.<sup>8</sup> It was clear to him that the national liberation movements were directed against imperialism and, therefore, they advanced the interests of the proletariat.<sup>9</sup> The workers should actively support all oppressed peoples and in particular should help restore the rights of national minorities, which are entitled to the use of their own language and practice of their own religion. The Marxists, taking any given state as their primary basis, should «first recognize the right to self-determination of all [nationalities]» and «... second [form]... an inseparable alliance ... [among] the proletarians of all nationalities» within that state.<sup>10</sup> The recogni-

3. K. Marx, *The Eastern Question* (London, 1897), pp. 182-216.

4. K. Marx and F. Engels, *On Britain* (Moscow, 1953), pp. 514-515.

5. At least in the case of major European nations. See V. I. Lenin, *Marx-Engels-Marxism* (Moscow, 1947), p. 300.

6. K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Correspondence* (London, 1943), p. 491 (Engels to Bebel, October 24, 1891).

7. I. V. Lenin, *Selected Works in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 1 (London, 1944), p. 469; and Vol. 2 (London, 1944), p. 277.

8. I. V. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 19 (New York, 1942), p. 49.

9. I. V. Lenin, *Selected Works in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 10 (London, 1946), p. 233.

10. I. V. Lenin, *Selected Works*, Two-Volume Edition, Vol. 1 (Moscow, 1946), p. 578.

tion of the right of self-determination should help restore the confidence of the estranged nationalities and promote better understanding among the peoples.<sup>1</sup> Referring to the special case of Russia, he stressed that it was of utmost importance for Social Democracy to alleviate «the legacy of tremendous estrangement», that was inherited from the Tsarist regime, by working for complete equality among all nationalities and recognizing their right to «determine its own destiny».<sup>2</sup>

Yet, in step with Marx and Engels, Lenin warned against treating the national question «on abstract and formal principles». Each case should be considered individually in the light of its historical circumstances, the interests of the proletariat and the interests of the oppressed nationality.<sup>3</sup> In particular, the bourgeoisie, which often supports national movements for the sake of promoting its own goals, should be watched very carefully, for it does not find it difficult to betray the people by entering into secret agreements with the bourgeoisie of the oppressing nation.<sup>4</sup>

Just as Lenin accepted and expanded the views of Marx and Engels on the national question so Stalin faithfully paraphrased or quoted Lenin's ideas. He agreed that the national question was simply a part of the socialist revolution, since essentially the national liberation movements are revolutionary struggles of the masses against their economic exploitation and political and cultural oppression.<sup>5</sup> The national question was no longer confined to the problem of European nationalities, for the liberal struggles of the colonial peoples were essentially of the same nature.<sup>6</sup> He was strongly opposed to any external interference with the socio-cultural institutions of dependent peoples<sup>7</sup> and proclaimed (1904) that «we shall always and everywhere defend, against the autocracy's police violence, not only the useful but even the useless institutions of these nationalities, for the interests of the proletariat of all Russia suggest to us that only the nationalities themselves have the right to abolish or develop this or that aspect of their national culture».<sup>8</sup> At the same time, however, he maintained that the

Bolsheviks should «see to it that the wishes of these nationalities [Finns, Armenians, etc.]... spring from the class interests of the proletariat; and for this we must educate the proletarians of these nationalities in the Social-Democratic spirit, subject some of their reactionary 'national' habits, customs, and institutions to stern Social-Democratic criticism...».<sup>9</sup> He further warned the workers not to support, as a matter of principle, every national struggle, since «cases occur when national movements in certain oppressed countries come into conflict with the interests of the development of the proletariat movement—in such cases support is, of course, entirely out of question».<sup>10</sup> The «rights of nations» may turn out to promote the interests of the bourgeoisie, the aristocracy or the clergy «depending on the strength and influence of these classes».<sup>11</sup>

#### 4. the nation and the state

This section attempts an exposition of the Marxist theories on the relationship between the nation and the state—giving particular attention to the rights of nationalities in multinational and federal states—together with a brief statement of related nineteenth century non-Marxist views.

It has already been described how, according to Engels, the state «was invented» at a relatively early stage in man's history.<sup>12</sup> The invention took place in Athens at some time during the Heroic Age, namely, the period between the 10th and 8th century B.C.:

... A constitution, attributed to Theseus, was introduced. The main feature of this change was the institution of a central administration in Athens, that is to say, some of the affairs that hitherto had been conducted independently by the tribes were declared to be common affairs and transferred to a general council sitting in Athens. Thereby, the Athenians went a step further than any ever taken by any indigenous people in America: the simple federation of neighboring tribes was now supplanted by the coalescence of all the tribes into one single people. This gave rise to a general Athenian popular law, which stood above the legal usages of the tribes and the gentes.<sup>13</sup>

Engels, as stated earlier, perhaps because of the nature of his subject (origin of family, property and state), did not even attempt to account for the birth of the nation, a task that was to be undertaken by Stalin some thirty years later.<sup>14</sup> Nations «became a

1. I. V. Lenin, *Selected Works*, Two-Volume Edition, Vol. 2 (Moscow, 1947), p. 548.

2. I. V. Lenin, *Selected Works*, Two-Volume Edition, Vol. 1, *op. cit.*, p. 597.

3. I. V. Lenin, *Selected Works in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 2, *op. cit.*, pp. 325, 328-329.

4. I. V. Lenin, *Selected Works in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 5 (London, 1945), pp. 272, 329-330.

5. J. Stalin, *Marxism and the National and Colonial Question*, *op. cit.*, pp. 195-6.

6. J. Stalin, *Works*, Vol. 3 (Moscow, 1953), p. 49.

7. J. Stalin, *Marxism and the National Question*, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

8. J. Stalin, *Works*, Vol. 1 (Moscow, 1952), p. 45.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 51.

10. J. Stalin, *Works*, Vol. 6 (Moscow, 1953), p. 147.

11. J. Stalin, *Marxism and the National Question*, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

12. See p. 83.

13. F. Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, *op. cit.*, pp. 156-157.

14. See section 2, «Nations and Nationalities».

reality only in the period of rising capitalism»<sup>1</sup> during which «tribes and nationalities broke up and scattered, intermingled and crossed... and national languages [were formed] ...».<sup>2</sup> The time of occurrence of this important development, according to Stalin, varied from place to place depending on the prevailing conditions.<sup>3</sup>

On the subject of the temporal sequence between the nation and the state there seems to be no comprehensive statement generally accepted in Marxist ideology just as there is no agreement among western writers. Does the nation precede the state or the state, the nation?<sup>4</sup> In the case of France, England and the United States «the cultural nation was more the creation than the creator... and the same verdict would apply to a good many of the medieval nations».<sup>5</sup> On the other hand there are those who maintain that «it is the nationality which makes the state ... and not the state which makes the nationality...».<sup>6</sup> Indeed, upon reflection one could easily come up with some such instances—Modern Greece could be cited as one—just as one could easily prove the impossibility of the general case. Apparently it would seem more correct to propose that the answer, again, varies from case to case, depending on the historical antecedents and prevailing circumstances.

Another question which received particular attention by non-Marxists in the West, especially in Great Britain, during a period of three generations beginning with the mid-nineteenth century, namely that of national and multinational states, does not feature at all prominently in the writings of Marx and Engels. Their reference to that subject—not unexpectedly, given their views on the state<sup>7</sup> and their deep concern for the international socialist revolution—is very brief and indirect. There is very little indeed, if any, that could prove of direct, operational value to a multinational state on how to handle its national minorities' problems. Hence, all the Bolsheviks could draw from on that issue was

the work of such writers as John S. Mill, John Acton—not to mention Karl Renner and Otto Bauer, whose ideas they utterly rejected.

In the old European system state governments had no reasons to concern themselves with the rights of nationalities which the people did not even bother to raise. Administration was conducted on a non-national basis, while the state frontiers were the exclusive concern of the European royal families.<sup>9</sup> With the successive partitions of Poland, however, the problem of nationalities began to attract increasingly the attention of both statesmen and political thinkers, until the French Revolution replaced once and for all the Divine Right of the Kings with the Divine Right of the People.<sup>10</sup> As a result, a number of theories were formulated, ranging from the one extreme position of one state for each nation to the other extreme case of preserving the old system but with modifications allowing for a certain degree of autonomy for the national minorities.

Thus, John S. Mill (1806-1873) writing in 1861 proposed «the principle of nationality», which reflected the views of a number of liberal thinkers of his time. Wherever «the sentiment of nationality exists in any force, there is a *prima facie* case for uniting all the members of the nationality under the same government, and a government to themselves apart».<sup>11</sup> A second group, headed by Lord John E. Acton (1834-1902), strongly opposed the principle of nationality as a step backward in human history, as absurd and even criminal, on the grounds that it was bound to prove inimical to personal liberty and lead to national intolerance.<sup>12</sup> The multinational state, according to Acton, was on every count better than the nation-state and should be preferred. Finally, others advocated the solution of the problem of nationalities by granting some kind of autonomy (regional, linguistic or «national-cultural») within the context of the existing European system.<sup>13</sup>

Returning again to Marx and Engels, their specific contribution on the subject consists of their advice to the working class to strive for the establishment of a unified, indivisible and, if possible, non-federal republic;<sup>14</sup> organize themselves independently of na-

1. J. Stalin, *The National Question and Leninism* (Moscow, 1952), p. 12.

2. J. Stalin, *Marxism and Linguistics* (New York, 1951), p. 26.

3. See note 3, p. 82.

4. This brings to mind Arnold Toynbee's theory that «nationalism» is merely a phase in the long process of human organization the «limit» of which is the world government (through the intermediate stage of regionalism or supranationalism).

5. For a possible hint as to Lenin's answer see note 13, p. 83.

6. Alfred Cobban, *National Self-Determination* (Chicago, 1944), p. 51.

7. B. Auerback, *Les races et les nationalités en Autriche-Hongrie* (Paris, 1917), pp. xxii-xxiii.

8. See section 5, «The Future Communist Society».

9. John E. Acton, *The History of Freedom and Other Essays* (London, 1909), p. 273.

10. Alfred Cobban, *National Self-Determination, op. cit.*, p. 5.

11. John S. Mill, *Utilitarianism, Liberty and Representative Government* (London, 1931), pp. 360-361.

12. John E. Acton, *The History of Freedom and Other Essays, op. cit.*, p. 289-290. His essay on «Nationality» was written in 1862 and was first published in July of that year.

13. N.N. Agarwal, *Soviet Nationalities Policy* (Agra, India, 1969), pp. 132-143.

14. K. Marx, *Historical Writings*, Vol. 1 (Bombay, 1944), p. 154—as quoted by Agarwal, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

tionality and on as large a scale as possible;<sup>1</sup> and oppose national enslavement as inimical to the common aim of the socialist revolution.<sup>2</sup>

Lenin, by contrast, has left a comprehensive and systematic account of his views on the relationship between the state and the nation. He believed that every nation and nationality anywhere in the world should have the right of self-determination and considered refusal to grant this right as equivalent to betrayal of socialism.<sup>3</sup> He understood the right of self-determination to imply both the right of secession and the right of setting up an independent national state.<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand Lenin was not in favor of small states, both from the point of view of economic progress and the interests of the socialist revolution. Therefore he stressed that the recognition of the right to self-determination should not be taken to mean that hfe workers should necessarily support every demand for secession. The attitude of the proletariat should be dependent on the circumstances of each concrete case.<sup>5</sup> He saw great advantages in large centralized (multinational) states—organized voluntarily on the principles of national equality and «democratic centralism»—and although, in the light of the realities of the first few years after the October Revolution, he came to accept federalism as an answer to the national question, he considered it as merely a transitional arrangement. He hoped that the recognition of the right of secession would alleviate the estrangement caused by the tsarist oppression and «make it possible for nations to take a voluntary and free decision to live together peacefully and harmoniously—such a free union is possible only among equals, where the parties to the agreement have the same rights and privileges».<sup>6</sup>

Lenin, finally, stressed that self-determination should not be confused in any way with federation or autonomy. Federation, far from being a matter of right, involves a mutual agreement between two parties. Similarly, autonomy comes nowhere to being close to a substitute for self-determination, since it does not lead to complete national equality. A nation, however, that was «forcibly retained within the boundaries of a given state» could benefit from being granted autonomy by taking its time to organize itself and declare its independence in due time.<sup>7</sup>

Stalin's views on the relationship between nation and state varied considerably with time, a fact that he thought necessary to explain: «the national question is not something self-contained and fixed for all time. Being only part of the general question of the transformation of the existing order, the national question is wholly determined by the conditions of the social environment, the character of the power in the country and by the whole course of social development generally».<sup>8</sup>

Thus, in 1913 he believed that every nation (and nationality)<sup>9</sup>—«in all countries»—has the right of self-determination, which means that «a nation may arrange its life in the way it wishes. It has the right to enter into federal relations with other nations. It has the right to complete secession. Nations are sovereign, and all nations are equal».<sup>10</sup> It did not follow, however, that these rights should be exercised without due consideration. Besides, he emphasized, the local proletariat, far from being obliged to lend their support to any such decision taken without their consent, are entitled to actively oppose developments contrary to their interests.<sup>11</sup>

Four years later, in his «Report on the National Question» delivered at the Seventh All-Russian Conference of the RSDLP (April 29, 1917), he reiterated his earlier position—this time in connection with «the oppressed nations forming part of Russia». Referring specifically to the Finnish demand for secession, he warned that «if we, the Social-Democrats, were to deny the Finnish people the right to declare its will on the subject of secession and the right to give effect to its will, we would thereby put ourselves in the position of people who continue the policy of tsarism».<sup>12</sup> Significantly, the long paragraph immediately below began as follows:

The question of the right of nations freely to secede must not be confused with the question that a nation must necessarily secede at any given moment... When we recognize the right of the oppressed peoples to secede... we do not thereby settle the question of whether particular nations should secede from the Russian state at the given moment... A people has a right to secede, but it may or may not exercise that right according to circumstances.

8. J. Stalin, «The October Revolution and the National Question», *Pravda*, November 6, 1918; included in J. Stalin, *Marxism and the National and Colonial Question*, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

9. Actually «nationality» is not mentioned explicitly—it was some three dozen years later that he came to differentiate (for the first time in Marxist ideology) between nation and nationality.

10. J. Stalin, *Marxism and the National Question*, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

11. *Ibid.*

12. *Ibid.*, p. 64.

1. K. Marx and F. Engels, *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* (Moscow, 1948), p. 59.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 34.

3. I. V. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 19, *op. cit.*, p. 261.

4. I. V. Lenin, *Selected Works*, Two-Volume Edition, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 600.

5. I. V. Lenin, *Selected Works in Twelve Volumes*, *op. cit.*, Vol. 4 (1944), p. 264.

6. I. V. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 20, p. 27.

7. I. V. Lenin, *Marx-Engels-Marxism*, *op. cit.*, pp. 302-303.



Thus we are at liberty to agitate for or against secession, according to the interests of the proletariat, of the proletarian revolution...<sup>1</sup>

What Stalin offered in the left hand so as not to put himself in the same position as the tsars, he promptly took back with the right. On that same occasion he expressed the belief that «[since] any mistrust of Russia which existed among the peoples was fostered chiefly by the policy of tsarism..., now that tsarism no longer exists... nine tenths of the peoples will not desire secession». For all these people, he added, the Party proposed to grant regional autonomy.<sup>2</sup> He made it quite clear at the same time that he was strongly opposed to the «national cultural autonomy» plan suggested by Springer and Bauer.<sup>3</sup> He concluded by assuring all national minorities that their rights were to be specifically protected: «The Party demands complete equality of rights in educational, religious and other matters...».<sup>4</sup>

Eighteen months later in an article published in *Pravda* on November 6, 1918 (already referred to above), Stalin noted that

...in the period of foreign interference and the occupation of the border regions... the old bourgeois conception of the principle of self-determination, with its slogan «All power to the national bourgeoisie», was exposed and cast aside... and [replaced] by... the socialist conception of self-determination with its slogan «All power to the toiling masses of the oppressed nationalities».<sup>5</sup>

Stalin went on to eloquently underline the inseparable connection between the national question and the question of power—the second major point of that article:<sup>6</sup>

The obtuseness of the Austrian Social-Democrats of the type of Bauer and Renner consists in the fact that they have never understood the indissoluble bond that exists between the national question and the question of power, that they tried to separate the national question from politics and to confine it to cultural and educational questions, forgetting the existence of such «trifles» as imperialism and the enslavement of the colonies by imperialism.<sup>7</sup>

Less than two years afterwards *Pravda* (October 10, 1920) carried another article by Stalin, on «The Policy of the Soviet Government on the National Question in Russia». Three years of revolution and civil war, he began, «have shown that unless Central

Russia and her border regions mutually support each other, the success of the revolution and the liberation of Russia from the clutches of imperialism will be impossible...»<sup>8</sup> He concluded that «the interests of the masses ... render the demand for secession of the border regions at the present stage of the revolution a profoundly counter-revolutionary one». The only expedient «form of alliance» between the border regions and the center was regional autonomy.<sup>9</sup>

Finally, the «Theses on the Immediate Tasks of the Party in connection with the National Problem» presented to the Tenth Congress of the Russian Communist Party, held in February 1921, reflecting Stalin's thoughts and rationale, stated that «under conditions of encirclement» only a federation of Soviet republics based on common military and economic affairs would render survival possible—provided this form of political union was based on «mutual confidence» and «voluntary consent».<sup>10 11</sup>

## 5. the future communist society

This paper concludes with a brief reference to Marxist views on the anticipated «withering away» of the state and birth of the world communist society through «the fusion» of all nations.

Friedrich Engels believed (1884) that the state, which is simply a product of a society hopelessly divided against itself, has the single purpose of maintaining order by keeping the various classes apart so as not to annihilate each other.<sup>12</sup> He defined the state (1892) as

...an organization of the particular class which was *pro tempore* the exploiting class, an organization for the purpose of preventing any interference from without with the existing conditions of production, and, therefore, especially, for the purpose of forcibly keeping the exploited classes in the condition of oppression corresponding with the given mode of production (slavery, serfdom, wage-labor).<sup>13</sup>

Marx was in complete agreement—the state is «an organ of class domination, an organ of oppression of one class by another» of which the sole purpose is to legalize and perpetuate this oppression «by

8. *Ibid.*, p. 78.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 80.

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 92-93.

11. For the provisions of the «Declaration of the Constitution of a Union of Soviet Socialist Republics» (December 30, 1922) see J. Stalin, *Marxism and the National and Colonial Question*, *op. cit.*, pp. 120-136.

12. F. Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Property and the State*, *op. cit.*, p. 211.

13. F. Engels, «Socialism: Utopian and Scientific» in K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works* (Moscow, 1955), Vol. 2, p. 150.

1. J. Stalin, *Marxism and the National and Colonial Question*, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 65.

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Ibid.*, p. 66.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 73-74.

6. More precisely, the third (See p. 87).

7. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

moderating the collisions between the classes». <sup>1</sup> Lenin, apparently was so happy with the analysis of the state by Marx and Engels that in his *State and Revolution* he confined himself largely to a masterly synthesis and interpretation of their views. <sup>2</sup>

In general, in Marxist theory the purpose of the state is the protection of private property through the oppression of the unprivileged by the privileged. Consequently the state is a parasitic institution bound to vanish along with the abolition of private property and the disappearance of class distinctions. This, according to Marx and Engels, will be accomplished in three separate steps: the overthrow of the existing («bourgeois») state by means of a proletarian revolution; the establishment of a transitional state, the dictatorship of the proletariat; and, finally, «the withering away» of the latter. <sup>3</sup> (During the intermediate stage, the various proletarian states will join together to form the world proletarian dictatorship. <sup>4</sup>)

Although the Marxists have consistently refrained from stating when the abolition of the state is expected to take place (or even how long the dictatorship of the proletariat will last), nevertheless they consider it as absolutely inevitable. As for the nature of the stateless communist society, on the basis of widely scattered information, <sup>5</sup> one is able to piece together the following five characteristics:

1. In the absence of the state—there will be no need for it—people will be guided by internalized controls (by habit).
2. There will be no oppressing and oppressed classes; there will be simply «human beings, comrades».
3. The division of labor into manual and mental will disappear just as the differences between urban and rural life will come to an end.
4. Scarcity of resources will never be a problem in the communist society. The rule «from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs» will apply forever.
5. Society will be of the form of a vast production association free of bureaucratic structures. The workers will take their turn in managing any «counting houses» or «statistical bureaus» that may be needed.

Simultaneously with the above changes in connection with the state there will be important parallel developments affecting the nation. During the first

stage of the period of the world dictatorship of the proletariat, following the elimination of the national oppression, and the establishment of true equality among nations, the national languages and cultures will grow and fully blossom. Later, during the second stage of the period of the world proletarian dictatorship, «as a single socialist world economy is built up..., a common language [will] begin to take shape». This common international language will be used side by side with the national languages for a considerable length of time (undefined). <sup>6</sup> <sup>7</sup> <sup>8</sup> It is probable that prior to this development there might be a number of regional («zonal») economic centers, each with its own regional language. <sup>9</sup> Finally, in the third stage of the period of the world proletarian dictatorship, after the world socialist economic system becomes adequately consolidated and practice demonstrates the advantage of a common international language, the national differences and national languages will begin to disappear. <sup>10</sup> In the end all nations will merge (fuse) into one, with one common language and one common culture, <sup>11</sup> an event which, presumably, will take place long after the disappearance of the last traces of the transitional world proletarian state.

The above general outline of anticipated developments regarding the future of the nation and the emergence of one world community, with one common language and culture, was drawn on the basis of Stalin's writings—from which it becomes abundantly clear that he is anxious to establish the identity of his views with Lenin's ideas. A point by point comparison of the statements of the two leaders has indeed indicated general agreement, except for one question. Contrary to Lenin's assertion that all nations will continue to exist for a long time after the establishment of a world communist society, Stalin, differentiating between «bourgeois» nations (such as «the French, English, Italian, North-American and other similar nations») and the new Soviet (or socialist) nations («which took shape on the basis of the old, bourgeois nations after the overthrow of capitalism in Russia...»), maintains that the bourgeois nations will disappear much earlier: «Naturally the

6. J. Stalin, *The National Question and Leninism*, op. cit., p. 27.

7. «History shows that languages possess great stability and a tremendous power of resistance to forcible assimilation...» — J. Stalin, *Marxism and Linguistics*, op. cit., p. 25.

8. «To attempt to bring about the amalgamation of nations by decree from above, by compulsion, would be playing into the hands of the imperialists, it would spell disaster to the cause of liberation of nations...» — J. Stalin, *The National Question and Leninism*, op. cit., p. 26.

9. J. Stalin, *The National Question and Leninism*, op. cit., p. 28.

10. *Ibid.*

11. *Ibid.*

1. I. V. Lenin, *State and Revolution* (New York, 1932), p. 9.

2. Stalin, apparently, was silent on the subject of the state.

3. I. V. Lenin, *State and Revolution*, op. cit., pp. 15-31.

4. *The Program of the Communist International* (New York, 1929), p. 43.

5. For some of these sources see Sherman Chang, *The Marxian Theory of State* (Philadelphia, 1931), pp. 133-139.

fate of such nations is linked with the fate of capitalism; with the fall of capitalism such nations must depart from the scene.<sup>1 2</sup>

1. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

2. Marx and Engels, apparently, have not concerned themselves with the question of the future fusion of nations.

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