

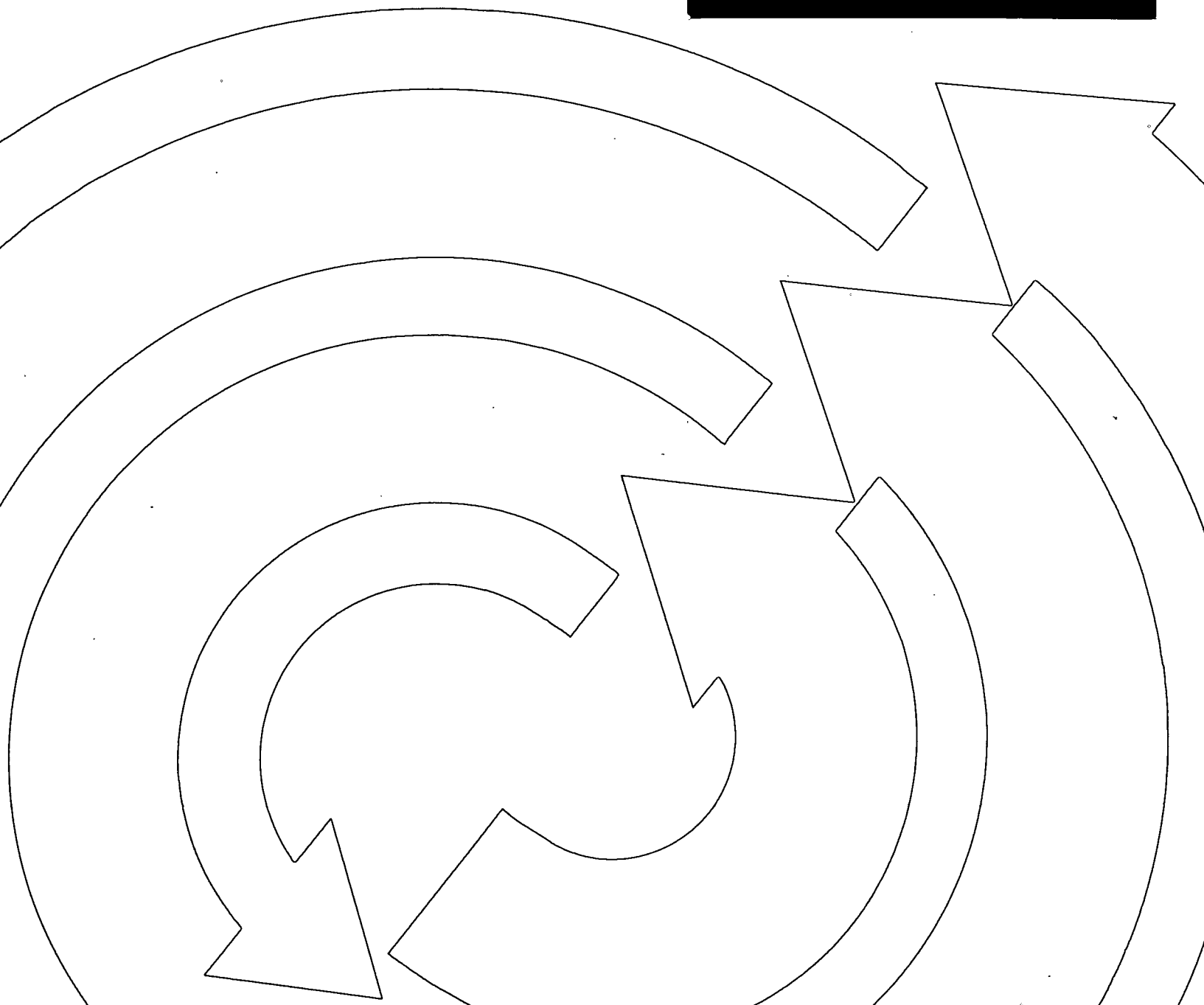


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NATIONALISM AND CLASS AS  
FACTORS IN THE  
REVOLUTION OF 1917

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## NATIONALISM AND CLASS AS FACTORS IN THE REVOLUTION OF 1917

### I. Some Preliminary Considerations

The concepts of class and nationality have been problematic ever since they entered the broad political discourse of European intellectuals in the mid-nineteenth century. Long before they were categories employed by social scientists, their use by political activists and publicists carried with it values, expectations, and political claims that compromised their analytical utility. While Mill regarded nationality as positively related to the contemporary democratic struggles, conservatives of his day, like Lord Acton, feared the implications of claims to political recognition based on ethnicity and culture. In the classical Marxist tradition class was considered to be a historically more durable formation than nationality, and certainly capable of exploding its pretension to greater weight in historical change. For socialists and nationalists the very existence of a conscious class or national constituency provided both legitimacy for their political projects and an instrument to achieve them.

Ever since Stalin's early pronouncements as Commissar of Nationalities the Soviet justifications for "gathering" the non-Russian peoples into a new federal state have been based on the priority of the claims of class (proletarian; here read Russia) over nationality (identified with the bourgeoisie, the peasantry or simply the ethnic; here read the peoples of the periphery). Separatism, it was said, at best reflected the interests of bourgeois parties, at worst the false consciousness of people misled by Western imperialists. In stark contrast Western analysts, by playing down social and class characteristics and emphasizing (or even exclusively focusing on) political and ideological aspects of nationalist

movements, have argued, sometimes explicitly, for the validity of the nationalist claim that only separation from Russia and the creation of independent nation-states could have satisfied their real aspirations. From these starkly contrasting perspectives the revolution of 1917 and the subsequent civil war have been interpreted by some as a national war of Russians against minorities, the center against the peripheries, and by others as a civil war of class against class, worker against peasant and bourgeois, city against country. A surprising number of the standard treatments, however, have noted the complex interplay of social and ethnic features. In his now-classic study of nationalism in the revolutionary years, a work sympathetic to the aspirations of the nationalists and repelled by the opportunism and centralism of the Bolsheviks, Richard Pipes repeatedly demonstrates that social environment -- the isolation of the nationalists from urban society and the working class, and their dependency on and difficulties in mobilizing the peasantry -- confounded the plans of the Ukrainian ethnic parties.<sup>1</sup>

In the revolution and civil war both Marxists and nationalists used their own rhetoric to define the context and the players, to win followers, and legitimize the use of violence. The languages in which their conflicting ideals were expressed had their origins in antagonistic movements in the past century, but in the first decade and a half of the twentieth century Marxist and nationalist concepts had become among the most potent means of expressing political meaning and understanding. Their respective utopias were quite different, even mutually exclusive, though the ultimate Bolshevik compromise would afford a reluctant recognition of ethnic political

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1. See particularly the conclusion in Richard Pipes, The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism, 1917-1918 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957), pp. 283-286.

units within a federal structure as necessary to hold the new state together. During the First World War a new awareness of the importance of nationality and the need to accommodate the nationalism of small peoples had taken hold both of the leaders of the Entente Powers, most particularly Woodrow Wilson, and of their opponents among the militant Left. Propaganda about peoples oppressed by the Central Powers -- Belgians, Alsatians, Poles, Eastern Slavs, Armenians, Kurds, and Arabs -- raised the question of national rights to a new level of popular consciousness. The Fourteen Points, as well as the socialist slogan, "The Right to Self-Determination of Nations," provided hope for Armenian victims of genocide, Polish, Czech, and Finnish aspirants to statehood, and dozens of other nationalities that stood to benefit from the breakup of the great empires of Central and Eastern Europe. At the same time the overthrow of tsarism and the consequent emergence of socialists at the head of the demokratia in Russia gave the language of Marxist class analysis a power and resonance that it had never before enjoyed. For non-Russians the conflicting loyalties to one's social peers and ethnic compatriots presented challenging and changing choices.

There are at least three ways in which the extreme dichotomy between the exclusive claims of nationality and the priority of class should be questioned. Firstly, as many writers have pointed out, in Eastern Europe and the Russian Empire class and nationality were complexly related. In my own work I have emphasized how ethnicity has both reinforced and undermined class. In central Transcaucasia Georgian nobles and peasants, sharing a common ethnic culture and values based on rural, pre-capitalist traditions, faced an entrepreneurial Armenian urban middle class that dominated their historic capital, Tiflis, and had developed a way of life alien

to the villagers. To the east, in and around Baku, the peasantry was almost entirely Azerbaijani, and urban society was stratified roughly along ethnic and religious lines, with Muslim workers at the bottom, Armenian and Russian workers in the more skilled positions, and Christian and European industrialists and capitalists dominating the oil industry.<sup>2</sup> At the same time the vertical ethnic ties that linked different social strata or classes together in a single community worked against the horizontal links between members of the same social class.

Nationality reinforced class, but at the same time national loyalties cut across class lines. A poor unskilled Moslem worker had little in common with a skilled Armenian worker apart from their memories of the massacres of 1905, whereas he had the bonds of religion and custom tying him to a Moslem peasant and, indeed, to a Moslem capitalist. Moslem workers occupied the bottom of the labor hierarchy while at the same time Moslem industrialists experienced condescension from Armenian, Russian, and foreign capitalists.<sup>3</sup>

A second reason for softening the distance between class and nationality is that the intensity with which commitment to either was felt was related to the nature, depth, and ferocity of the social and political conflicts of the time. In the context of the Russian Empire, at least, the sense of ethnic oppression or superiority, and aspirations to national recognition were reinforced by social status and the unequal relationship between the particular ethnicity and the dominant Russian nationality. The tsarist state promoted some peoples at some times (the Baltic Germans, the

2. "Nationalism and Social Class in the Russian Revolution: The Cases of Baku and Tiflis," in Ronald Grigor Suny (ed.), Transcaucasia, Nationalism and Social Change: Essays in the History of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia (Ann Arbor: Michigan Slavic Publications, 1983), pp. 239-258; "Tiflis, Crucible of Ethnic Politics, 1860-1905," in Michael F. Hamm (ed.), The City in Late Imperial Russia (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), pp. 249-281; The Making of the Georgian Nation (Bloomington and Stanford: Indiana University Press and Hoover Institution Press, FORTHCOMING); The Baku Commune, 1917-1918: Class and Nationality in the Russian Revolution (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972).

3. Suny, The Baku Commune, p. 14.

Armenian merchants until the 1880s) and discriminated against others (Jews, Ukrainians, Poles particularly after 1863, Armenians after 1885, Finns at the turn of the century). After 1881 the ruling nationality, the Russians, increasingly conceived of social problems in ethnic terms and saw Jewish conspiracies, Armenian separatists, and nationalists in general as sources of disruption and rebellion. Such enmity and discrimination directed against whole peoples, regardless of social status, helped develop support for the conceptions of the nationalists, but at the same time the economic developmental policies of tsarism attracted certain national bourgeoisies to try to work with the Russifying regime.

The development of ethnic cohesion and national awareness -- not to mention political nationalism -- occurred at different rates for different ethnicities, and this process was connected to the effects on various peoples of the great socio-economic transformation that took place in Russia in the decades preceding the revolution. Peasant peoples with little representation in towns (e.g., Lithuanians, Ukrainians, and Belorussians) experienced these changes differently from those ethnicities that had already developed a working class (Georgians, Latvians, Estonians, Jews, and to an extent, Armenians) and therefore participated more directly in the coming of capitalism. As the seigneurial economy gave way to market relations and new forms of the exploitation of labor replaced more tradition-sanctioned and paternalistic ones, it is not surprising that the mobilization of the latter peoples for socialist movements was much easier than of the former.

The third reason for questioning the class/nationality dicotomy follows from the second. Both formations are not only socially as well as intellectually determined but are products of real history, not simply dictated by disembodied social forces or eternal essences. Class can

"happen" or not happen, can be made and unmade, and the same is true for nationality. Similarly the particular conjunctures that create mobilized classes or nationalities, class consciousness or political nationalism, are often fleeting (one remembers Lenin's desperate plea to his comrades when they failed to appreciate the fragility of the workers' and soldiers' militance in October 1917 and take action: "History will not forgive us"). In 1917 hopes for a constitutional solution to the problem of multinationality moderated the demands of the nationalists, and social concerns were far more widely articulated than ethnic ones. But after the October Revolution, the domestic armed opposition to Bolshevism and the intervention of foreign armies abruptly launched a more vociferous nationalism among many non-Russian peoples. In part this was due to the spread of the revolution outside urban centers into the countryside where the non-Russian majorities lived. Lines of conflict were drawn up that emphasized ethnicity (Russian workers against Ukrainian peasants, Armenian bourgeois against Georgian workers and peasants). In part it was the product of the hostility felt by nationalist intellectuals to the ostensibly internationalist, but evidently Russocentric Bolsheviks; and in part it was a phenomenon encouraged and financed by the interventionists. In any case the rise of nationalism in the Russian Civil War was no more the natural outcome of an inevitable historical process, the inherent and organic working out of the "natural" aspirations of the minorities, than was the rise of articulate and conscious class formations during the first year of revolution. Both the development of class consciousness in the cities in 1917 and the subsequent spread of nationalism beyond the intelligentsia were phenomena to be explained both by long-term social, cultural, and intellectual processes that began in the past century and by more immediate experiences of the revolutionary years.



Though the historical and theoretical literature on nationality and class goes in many directions, a significant number of works suggest similar conclusions about the emergence of these formations. Marxist writers in particular, though hardly exclusively, make the point that neither class nor nationality are fixed categories inherent in social relations or certain periods of history. Rather, to paraphrase E. P. Thompson on class, they happen when people, "as a result of common experiences (inherited and shared), feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other[s]...whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs."<sup>4</sup> As part of that common experience people find themselves in historically-created productive relations or enter them voluntarily, and those relations make up the context and much of the content of their social experience that may create a sense of class loyalty. Thompson again: "Class-consciousness is the way in which these experiences are handled in cultural terms: embodied in traditions, value-systems, ideas, and institutional forms. If the experience appears as determined, class consciousness does not."<sup>5</sup>

Given the problem we are analyzing, it must already be apparent that Thompson's "ethnographic" and cultural notion of class fits neatly into a discussion of nationality. Like a Thompsonian class, a nationality has been seen to be the product of "common experiences," and the articulation of common, shared interests, on the one hand, and opposition to others who do not share them. For Karl W. Deutsch, one of the most influential theorists of nationality, the "making" of nationality is an historical process of political integration that increases communication among the members of

4. E. P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class (London: Victor Gollancz, 1963), pp. 9-10

5. Ibid.

an ethnic group or a "people." A people, "a group of persons linked...by complementary habits and facilities of communication," has the ability "to communicate more effectively, and over a wider range of subjects, with members of one large group than with outsiders."<sup>6</sup> Deutsch links the increase of social communication that is basic to the formation of nationality to other processes of social change -- urbanization, development of markets, railroads and other forms of communication. A progression is made from a "people" to a "nationality" ("a people pressing to acquire a measure of effective control over the behavior of its members...., striving to equip itself with power") and eventually (though not necessarily) to a "nation-state."

Theorists and historians of class, like Thompson, Eric J. Hobsbawm, Ira Katznelson, William H. Sewell, Jr., Gareth Stedman-Jones, and others, as well as those of nationality (Benedict Anderson, Ernst Gellner, Geoff Eley, and Hobsbawm again), have also stressed that these social and cultural processes cannot be conceived simply as objective forces existing outside the given class or nationality but rather are mediated and shaped by the social and cultural (even linguistic) experience of individuals and groups within the social group. Class and nationality make themselves as much as they are made; that is to say, the active work of individuals, parties, newspapers, and activist intellectuals are key to the creation of social and national consciousness. Class and national traditions are invented and reinvented, discarded and revived; their rhetoric, symbols, and rituals are borrowed, refined, and passed down by intellectuals and activists. Thus, not only nationalism but the formation of nationality has a history, one that can be empirically elaborated and placed in time. Like other social and cultural

6. Karl W. Deutsch, Nationalism and Social Communication. An Inquiry into the Foundations of Nationality (New York-Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1953), p. 70-71.

relationships, nationality has a reality in the social world and is not merely the liberation of an a priori volkgeist, the realization of a timeless essence.

It is here that the work of the Czech historian Miroslav Hroch is particularly revealing. Hroch argues that the nationalist movements he has studied, largely those of smaller East European peoples, grew through three stages: Phase A: when a small number of scholars first demonstrated "a passionate concern... for the study of the language, the culture, the history of the oppressed nationality;" Phase B: "the fermentation-process of national consciousness," during which a larger number of patriotic agitators diffused national ideas; and finally Phase C: the full national revival when the broad masses have been swept up into the nationalist movement.<sup>7</sup>

The social historical study of nationalist movements is in its infancy, and the bulk of the research on such movements in the Russian Empire has remained almost exclusively concentrated on the intellectual and political leaders and institutions of the non-Russian peoples. As a result there is little sense of the different stages of development of different national movements and a regrettable tendency to compress the experience of the whole nationality into that of the patriotic intelligentsia as if the two were identical. Like the ambitions and actions of workers, which have often been collapsed into those of trade unionists and socialists, so the actions of ethnic masses have been equated or confused with the activities of their leaders,

7. Miroslav Hroch, Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe: A Comparative Analysis of the Social Composition of Patriotic Groups among the Smaller European Nations (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 22-23. See also his earlier work, Die Vorkämpfer der nationalen Bewegung bei den kleinen Völkern Europas (Prague, 1968). As Eley points out in an important essay, Hroch "pioneers a social-historical approach to the study of nationalist movements and their uneven penetration. In some ways it amounts to a much-needed specification of Deutsch's theory of social communications through the kind of concrete historical investigation that Deutsch himself never really engaged in." [Geoff Eley, "Nationalism and Social History," Social History, VI 1 (January 1981), p.101.]

the writings of their intellectuals, or the votes of bodies that claim to represent them virtually. Not only must be the actual sociology of nationalism be more carefully examined, but in order to understand the varieties of national movements and the varying stages of development, the very concept nationality must be decomposed into its various meanings. In a thoughtful and lucid introduction to a collection of essays on working-class formation, political scientist Ira Katznelson has argued that "as a term 'class' has been used too often in a congested way, encompassing meanings and questions that badly need to be distinguished from each other," and he suggests "that class in capitalist societies be thought of as a concept with four connected layers of theory and history: those of structure, ways of life, dispositions, and collective action."<sup>8</sup> This useful decomposition of the term "class" is equally valuable for the discussion of nationality. In examining class structure Katznelson is careful to note that along with general characteristics of capitalism, the specific national history of capitalism must be considered, each with their distinct "family patterns, demography, cultural traditions, inherited practices, state organization and policies, geopolitics, and other factors [that] help determine the specific empirical contours of macroscopic economic development at this first level of class."<sup>9</sup> Ways of life and dispositions are, of course, culturally specific, and are central to the analysis of both class and nationality. And finally for some nationalities at some times, though not necessarily for all, a specific conjuncture of circumstances and attitudes will lead to collective action, to the mobilization of part or all of the nationality in the nationalist movement.

8. Ira Katznelson and Aristide R. Zolberg (eds.), Working-Class Formation: Nineteenth-Century Patterns in Western Europe and the United States (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp. 13-14.

9. *ibid.*, p. 15.

All of this is not meant to suggest that class and nationality are in all aspects the same kind of formation, only that in their generation and evolution there are striking similarities and useful comparative points. Class, at least in the Marxist tradition, is both the product of and an integral part of productive relations; nationality, it is usually argued, arises on the basis of common culture, language, geography, and historical experience. The weight given to these various inputs will probably differ in the history of these two formations. But even here it is striking how similar are the factors that strengthen the horizontal ties between class members and the vertical ties between ethnic compatriots. If one accepts the argument that many ethnicities share the boundaries of a social class, as in Eastern Europe and Russia, then productive relations also play a part in the making of nationality and nationalism. If one believes that class is made historically in a cultural process, then common or different languages, ethnic ties or divisions, and social geography will have profound effects on class cohesion or fragmentation, consciousness, and the ability (or inability) to act collectively.

When the formation of class and nationality is understood to be a contingent and historically-determined occurrence rather than an essential working out of a natural or historical logic, one must also discard the comfortable notion (for socialists) that a militant revolutionary class conscious working class was the natural outcome of labor's history, as well as the equally dearly held conviction (of nationalists and their supporters) that nationalism leading to the goal of an independent, sovereign nation-state was the natural and inevitable outcome of the national struggle.

## 2. The National Movements in the Russian Empire in 1917

Though most scholars of Russia and the Soviet Union write either exclusively about ethnic Russia or one of the non-Russian peoples, sharply separating the history of the two, the approach adopted here attempts to reintegrate the history of the non-Russian peoples into the history of the whole empire. The modest hope of the author is that in the future more of his colleagues will adopt such a perspective and understand Russia and the Soviet Union in its multi-national dimensions rather than as ethnic Russia writ large or a series of discrete ethnic histories.

Even the most cursory look at the revolution in the central Russian cities reveals the depth and intensity of the struggle between social classes.<sup>10</sup> Less apparent at first, but equally compelling after immersion in the monographic literature, is the revelation of social conflict of very great intensity in the national borderlands, obscured at times by the ethnic coloration but in fact made all the more ferocious by cultural as well as class cleavages. Here the social and the ethnic are so closely intertwined that separation of the two can be artificial and misleading. One gigantic social upheaval engulfed the whole of the Russian Empire in the third year of the World War, bringing down the unifying imperial authority and launching a prolonged crisis of authority that continued well into the Civil War years. For that whole period an ever-widening economic disintegration shredded the social fabric of the old order. Everyone everywhere was affected, and physical survival became the first requirement for millions of people. In this great turmoil various regions, some of them ethnically distinct, had their own particular experiences, but rather than dozens of separate

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10. For a review of Western writing on 1917 in Russia proper that emphasizes the importance of deep social polarization as an explanation for Bolshevik victory, see Ronald Grigor Suny, "Toward a Social History of the October Revolution," American Historical Review, LXXXVIII, 1 (February 1983), pp. 31-52.

national histories they were part of the general experience fatally linked to the whole history of Russia. The sundering of political and economic links opened the way for some parts of the empire, like Finland and Poland, to opt for a viable independence (though not without dissenters and, in the case of Finland, a bloody civil war); other parts were simply set adrift. Because fifty or sixty years later, after decades of Soviet or independent development, many of the incipient nations of 1917 had firmly established national-cultural identities, state structures, and even manifestations of political nationalism, in retrospective histories the revolutionary years are viewed as if that future had already existed in 1917. Much of the story of nationbuilding, and even nationality formation, for many peoples of the Russian empire belongs more appropriately in the post-revolutionary period than in the years before the Civil War.

The story of national formation and nationalism in the revolutionary years is seen here as part of the intricate mosaic of the Russian Civil War with social and ethnic conflicts inextricably mixed. The Civil War in the disintegrating Russian Empire was a civil war everywhere, right up to its pre-World War I borders, and though in the national peripheries it took on aspects of national wars, the social struggle between workers and peasants, tsentsovoe obshchestvo and demokratiia, city and countryside remained determinant. This perspective of a single, gigantic revolutionary process engulfing the whole of the now-defunct empire is close to the view of many Bolsheviks and other Russian socialist and non-socialist parties during the revolution and Civil War. On the other hand, nationalist parties, and most Western historians (E. H. Carr and Pipes most particularly), have viewed the experiences of the borderlands as unique events, in many ways fulfilling

a particularly national historical evolution. And their example is followed by most of the monographic studies of individual nationalities.

From the Civil War perspective Soviet power or Bolshevism never simply meant Russia, and the extension of its power was not simply a Russian conquest of other peoples. Bolshevism, for better or worst, was the actual achievement of the revolution of the demokratiia as it stood after October 1917, and Russian and Russified Ukrainian workers in Kiev and Kharkov, Russian and Armenians in Baku, and Russians and Latvians in Riga supported local soviet power (and even Bolshevism) as the preferred alternative to a national independence promoted by a small nationalist elite in the name of a peasant majority. The difficult choice placed before both the Russians and the non-Russian peoples was whether to support the central Soviet government and the revolution as now defined by it, or accept a precarious existence in alliance with undependable allies from abroad with their own self-aggrandizing agendas. In making that choice social structure, experience, and concerns were often much more determinate than ethnic considerations.

Almost everywhere the nationalist movements were either strengthened or fatally weakened by the nature of their class base. Because ethnic solidarity, activism, Russophilia or Russophobia were very often primed by social discontents, where nationalist leaderships were able to combine social reform with their program of self-definition, autonomy, or independence, their chances of success were increased. Where social, particularly agrarian reform, was delayed or neglected, ethnic political aspirations alone did not prove strong enough to sustain nationalist intellectuals in power. For those ethnic leaders facing a peasant majority indifferent to their claims to power and rivaled by the Bolsheviks an appeal



to the Great Powers of Central and Western Europe became the last resort. And the intervention of foreigners, particularly the Germans in the crucial first months after the October Revolution, radically distorted the developmental lines of the first revolutionary year. This point has been made by Geoff Eley:

By interposing itself between the peoples of the Russian Empire and their practical rights of self-determination at a crucial moment of revolutionary political rupture -- after the old order had collapsed, but while the new was still struggling to be born (to adapt a saying of Gramsci) -- the German military administration suspended the process of democratic experimentation before it had hardly begun. The Germans' essentially destructive impact explains some of the difficulty experienced by the competing political leaderships in the western borderlands of Russia during 1918-20 in creating a lasting relationship to a large enough coalition of social support. The various political forces -- Bolshevik, left-nationalist, autonomist, separatist, counter-revolutionary -- operated more or less in a political vacuum in a fragile and indeterminate relationship to the local population, not just because the Belorussian and Ukrainian societies were so 'backward' (the explanation normally given), but because the cumulative effects of war, Imperial collapse, and German occupation had radically dislocated existing social organization, strengthening old antagonisms between groups and inaugurating new ones.<sup>11</sup>

While most of the non-Russian peoples of the tsarist empire were overwhelmingly peasant, they differed radically one from another in the degree of national consciousness. At one extreme "the Belorussians were predominately a peasant people hardly touched by the consciousness of a unique national identity. The political cause of Belorussian nationalism commanded the barest following....Socialism and assimilation into the Russian nation vied with Belorussian nationalism for the loyalties of the

<sup>11</sup> Geoff Eley, "Remapping the Nation: War, Revolutionary Upheaval, and State Formation in Eastern Europe, 1914-1923," paper presented to the McMaster Conference on 'Jewish-Ukrainian Relations in Historical Perspective," October 19, 1983, p. 4.

Belorussian people."<sup>12</sup> The towns and cities of the region were dominated by Russians, Poles, and most importantly Jews. In 1897 Belorussian-speakers made up only 9% of the inhabitants of Minsk, the city that eventually would be selected as the capital of the Belorussian Soviet Republic. Over 51% were Yiddish-speakers, 25.5% Russian, and 11.4% Polish. With less than 2% of Belorussian speakers living in towns over 2,000 inhabitants and very low literacy rates, the Belorussians had only the smallest of nationalist elites to define and propogate their cause. National awareness came late and did not take hold among the peasants before the revolution. Socialism or assimilation were far more powerful contenders for Belorussian loyalties than nationalism, and the nationalist "movement," if it can be called that, was almost always "a pawn in the larger schemes of the German military, Polish nationalists, and Russian revolutionists."<sup>13</sup> Without a mass base, it remained locked into Hroch's Phase B until well after the establishment of Soviet Power.<sup>14</sup>

Like the Belorussians, their neighbors, the Lithuanians had come to nationalism late and had barely moved into Phase C. Without an urban presence to speak of, nationalist sentiments did not reach much beyond the intelligentsia and the large Lithuanian diaspora. The creation of a

12. Steven L. Guthier, "The Belorussians: National Identification and Assimilation, 1897-1970," Soviet Studies XXIX, 1 (January 1977), pp. 37, 39.

13. Ibid., pp. 49-50.

14. Nicholas Vakar in his study of Belorussian nationhood writes: "It has been said that nationhood came to the Belorussians as an almost unsolicited gift of the Russian Revolution. It was, in fact, received from the hands of the Austro-German Occupation Army authorities and depended on their good will. The Belorussian National Republic held no general election, and the self-appointed administration lacked the elements necessary for international recognition. It may have been well-meaning, but it had neither the power nor the time to make reforms effective. Furthermore, its subservience to the Central Powers alienated many loyal elements in the population." [Nicholas P. Vakar, Belorussia, The Making of a Nation: A Case Study (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1956), p. 105.]

Lithuanian National Council, the Taryba, in September 1917 and the declaration of independence in December were both carried out under German supervision. As in many other regions in the Western borderlands, rather than a broad-based and coherent nationalist movement realizing long-held aspirations to nationhood, the creation of independent Lithuania was the artificial result of German politics and the immediate weakness of the central Russian state. Here "nationality" was the instrument that a Great Power used for its own end of destroying the Russian empire and creating mini-states it could control, as elsewhere and at other times "class" would be the basis on which the Soviets would reconstruct a multinational state.

In Ukraine, scholars agree, "to an unusual degree, nationality coincided with economic class. Ukrainians were, with the exception of a small intelligentsia, almost entirely peasants; the landowners and officials were Poles or Russians, while the commercial bourgeoisie was largely Jewish."<sup>15</sup> "Class and ethnic cleavages were closely related....Russians manned the oppressive bureaucracy and were heavily represented among the principal landowners. Poles dominated the pomeshchiki class in the right bank provinces of Kiev, Podolia, and Volhynia. Petty trade, commerce, and much of industry on the right bank were controlled by Jews who were therefore the peasantry's most visible creditors. As a consequence, the ethnic and socioeconomic grievances of the Ukrainian peasant proved mutually reinforcing and provided the foundation for a

<sup>15</sup>. John Armstrong, Ukrainian Nationalism (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1963), p. 10.

political movement which combined nationalism with a populist social program."<sup>16</sup>

Ukrainian peasants were very active in 1905-1907, though the movement in the first revolution had only very superficially nationalistic characteristics. Largely a protest over land shortages, which were blamed on the large holdings by noble landlords (most of them Polish and Russian), social discontent led to violence, but with minimal ethnic expression. Even the supposedly traditional Ukrainian anti-Semitism was largely absent, and Jewish revolutionaries were welcomed as supporters of the peasant movement. Peasant grievances were sufficient to generate protests without consistent intervention from outsiders, though on the Right Bank Spilka (the Ukrainian Social Democratic Union) and on the Left Bank the SRs and the Peasants' Union were active.<sup>17</sup>

Historians differ in their evaluation of Ukrainian nationalism in 1917-1918. Without question an articulate and active nationalist elite, made up of middle-class professionals, was prepared to confront both the Provisional Government and the Sovnarkom with its demand for autonomy

16. Steven L. Guthier, "The Popular Base of Ukrainian Nationalism in 1917," Slavic Review, XXXVIII, 1 (March 1979), p. 32. In 1897 Ukrainians made up only 35% of the population in the 113 towns in Ukraine; the larger the town the smaller the Ukrainian proportion. In Kiev Ukrainians made up 22%, Russians 54%, Jews 12%, and Poles 7%; in Kharkiv Ukrainians were 26%, Russians 53%, Jews 6%, and Poles 0.3%. [Steven L. Guthier, "Ukrainian Cities during the Revolution and the Interwar Era," in Ivan L. Rudnytsky (ed.), Rethinking Ukrainian History (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta, 1981), p. 157; Patricia Herlihy, "Ukrainian Cities in the Nineteenth Century," *ibid.*, p. 151]

17. For a recent treatment of the peasant movement in Right Bank Ukraine (Kiev, Poldolia, and Volhynia provinces), see Robert Edelman, Proletarian Peasants: The Revolution of 1905 in Russia's Southwest (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987).

and self-rule.<sup>18</sup> John Reshetar, the author of the first major scholarly monograph on the Ukrainian Revolution, writes:

Immediately after the March Revolution, leadership in the Ukrainian national movement was assumed by the democratically inclined petite bourgeoisie, the intelligentsia with nationalist sympathies, and the middle strata of the peasantry which supported the cooperative movement. The peasant masses, the soliders, and the urban proletariat were not participants at this early period, and it cannot be said that the national movement permeated their ranks to any significant extent in the months that followed since it was competing with more urgent social and economic issues.<sup>19</sup>

The Rada was committed to a democratic solution to the political crisis, to remaining within a federated Russian state, and to a radical program of land reform. Its support in the cities was minimal -- in the elections in July to the municipal дума in Kiev Ukrainian parties won only 20% of the vote while Russian parties garnered 67% (Russian socialists, 37%; "Russian voters," 15%; Kadets, 9%; Bolsheviks, 6%) --but it was backed by Ukrainian soldiers, particularly interested in the formation of ethnic military units (see the resolutions of the First Ukrainian Military Congress in May 1917).<sup>20</sup>

Far more problematic, however, is the estimate of the level of national cohesion among Ukrainians and the degree of support for the national program among the peasants. For Reshetar nationalism is a

18. "Most of the men who undertook the propagation of the national idea in Ukraine were intellectuals with a middle-class background although many of them were of peasant stock. Hrushevsky was the son of an official in the Russian ministry of public instruction, and Dmitro Doroshenko was the son of a military veterinarian. Colonel Eugene Konovalets and Volodimir Naumenko were the sons of teachers. Nicholas Mikhnovsky, Volodimir Chekhovsky, Valentine Sadovsky, Serhi Efremov, and Colonel Peter Bolbochan were the sons of priests." [John Reshetar, The Ukrainian Revolution, 1917-1920: A Study in Nationalism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952), pp. 320-321]

19. *Ibid.*, p. 48.

20. Pipes, The Formation of the Soviet Union, p. 63; Reshetar, The Ukrainian Revolution, pp. 50-51, 102n-103n.

middle-class movement and the peasant "was enslaved by his locale and regarded the inhabitants of the neighboring villages as a species of foreigner." The absence of a Ukrainian bourgeoisie of any weight and the "essentially agrarian character of late nineteenth century Ukrainian society, with its emphasis on the locale, tended to retard the development of that sentiment of group cohesiveness which transcends localism and is termed national consciousness. The peasant, because of his conservatism, was able to retain his language, peculiarities of dress, and local customs despite foreign rule, but initially he resisted the notion that all Ukrainians, whether living in Kharkiv province, in Volynia, or in Carpatho-Ukraine, belonged to the same nation." Though this peasant parochialism was partially broken down by the spread of currency, the building of railroads, and the dissemination of newspapers and periodicals, the protracted process of nationality formation "had not been consummated as late as 1917."

Reshetar points out that even in 1917 peasants in Ukraine referred to themselves not as a single collective but with regional terms: Rusiny (sons of Rus), Galicians, Bukovinians, Uhro-rusins, Lenki, and Hutsuli.

Russophilia was still strong in many parts of the country, even among the peasantry, and much of the middle-class and working class was Russified.<sup>21</sup>

Richard Pipes agrees with Reshetar that "the weakest feature of the Ukrainian national movement was its dependence on the politically disorganized, ineffective, and unreliable village," but he emphasizes their "political immaturity, which made them easily swayed by propaganda, and...their strong inclinations toward anarchism." Nevertheless, nationalism was a reality in Ukraine, "a political expression of genuine interests and loyalties," which had its roots in "a specific Ukrainian culture,

<sup>21</sup> Reshetar, The Ukrainian Revolution, pp. 319-323.

resting on peculiarities of language and folklore; a historic tradition dating from the seventeenth-century Cossack communities; an identity of interests among the members of the large and powerful group of well-to-do peasants of the Dnieper region; and a numerically small but active group of nationally conscious intellectuals, with a century-old heritage of cultural nationalism behind them." But "the fate of the Ukraine, as of the remainder of the Empire, was decided in the towns, where the population was almost entirely Russian in its culture, and hostile to Ukrainian nationalism."<sup>22</sup> Contingent factors such as the inexperience of the national leaders and the shortage of administrative personnel are mentioned as part of the toxic mix that destroyed the Ukrainian experiment in independence.

While one might hesitate to accept Reshetar's firm requirement that a middle class must exist for a nationalist movement to succeed or Pipes' assumption that there was a conscious community of interests between intelligentsia and peasantry in 1917, the argument that the movement would stand or fall on the backs of the peasantry seems compelling. In a most intriguing article Steven L. Guthier argues, in contrast to Reshetar, that the Ukrainian peasantry was nationally conscious in 1917, as demonstrated in their choices in the November elections to the Constituent Assembly when they overwhelmingly supported Ukrainian parties. In the eight Ukrainian provinces (Kiev, Poltava, Podolia, Volhynia, Ekaterinoslav, Chernigov, Kherson, and Kharkov) "55 percent of all votes cast outside the Ukraine's ten largest cities went to lists dominated by the UPSR [Ukrainian Party of Socialist Revolutionaries] and Selians'ka Spilka [All-Ukrainian Peasants' Union]; another 16 percent went to Left PSR/UPSR slates."<sup>23</sup> The cities, on the other hand, went for Russian and Jewish parties, though

22. Pipes, The Formation of the Soviet Union, p. 149.

23. Guthier, "The Popular Base of Ukrainian Nationalism in 1917," p. 40.

heavy turnouts among Ukrainian soldiers gave substantial backing to Ukrainian parties.

Guthrie concludes that "Ukrainian nationalism as a substantial political force was a one-class movement," but one in which identification between peasant aspirations and the programs of the national parties was quite close.<sup>24</sup> He assumes that peasants voting for the Ukrainian peasant parties were aware of and accepted the national planks in their programs. "The peasants were committed to the creation of a Ukraine which was both autonomous and socialist. They wanted land rights to be reserved for those who farmed the land with their own hands."

A useful distinction, however, might be made between cultural or ethnic awareness and full-blown political nationalism, i.e., an active commitment to realizing a national agenda. While the election results show that peasants in Ukraine preferred parties and leaders of their own ethnicity, people who could speak to them in their own language and promised to secure their local interests, they do not provide sufficient evidence either that the peasantry conceived of itself as a single nationality or that it could be effectively mobilized to defend ideals of national autonomy or independence. Though more work is needed to determine the mentality of the Ukrainian peasants of 1917, an impression is left that they had some ethnic awareness, preferring their own kind to strangers, but were not yet moved by a passion for the nation and certainly not willing to sacrifice their lives for anything beyond the village. For defeated nationalists, as well as "class-conscious" Bolsheviks, the peasants of Ukraine were considered "backward," "unconscious," unable to be mobilized except for the most destructive, anarchistic ends. But more generously one might

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24. Ibid., p. 46.



argue that rather than backward, Ukrainian peasants had their own localistic agenda in the chaos of the Civil War, one that did not mesh neatly either with that of urban intellectuals, nationalist or Bolshevik, or with workers, many of whom despised those living in the village.

Guthier may be closer to the mark when he sees the momentary coincidence of peasant voters and Ukrainian populists as the specific conjuncture when "national autonomy was seen as the best guarantee that the socioeconomic reconstruction of the Ukraine would reflect local, not all-Russian conditions."<sup>25</sup> Here once again both the contingent and evolving character of nationalism (and class, for that matter) and the closeness of ethnic and social factors become clear. At least in 1917-1918 the Ukrainian peasants were most concerned about the agrarian question and their own suffering in the years of war and scarcity.<sup>26</sup> They thought of themselves as peasants, which for them was the same as being "Ukrainian" (or whatever they might have called themselves locally). Their principal hope was for agrarian reform and the end of the oppression identified with the state and the city. Russians, Jews, and Poles were the sources of that oppression, and it is conceivable that for many peasants the promise of autonomy was seen as the means to achieving the end to their condescension and arbitrary power. But ethnic claims had no priority over social ones in these early years of revolution, and alliances with nationalists (or more frequently,

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25. *Ibid.*, p. 41.

26. "The Central Rada and the Directory failed to solve the agricultural problem; the hetman government did worse. It was constantly a step behind the revolutionary spirit of the peasants. its policy was to carry out the land reform legally for approval by a future Constituent Assembly. For this reason it was not able to compete with the Bolsheviks, who were promising the land to the peasants immediately, or even with Makhno, who was giving the land to the peasants as soon as it was captured. For the peasants, the land was a primary question and those forces that would not interfere in the division of land would get their support." [Michael Palij, The Anarchism of Nestor Makhno, 1918-1920: An Aspect of the Ukrainian Revolution (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1976), pp. 54-55.]

ethnic populists) could easily be replaced by marriages of convenience with more radical elements.<sup>27</sup>

When the nationalist Rada was unable to resist effectively the Bolshevik advance in January 1918, it turned as a last resort to the Germans who requisitioned grain and terrorized peasants. When the nationalists failed to back up their own agrarian reform, support for the first generation of revolutionary nationalists among many peasants rapidly evaporated. As a consequence of the German occupation, the nationalist forces in Ukraine splintered into competing groups; the nationalist cause was identified by many as linked to foreign intervention; and to anti-nationalist elements, particularly in towns, the only viable alternative to social chaos, foreign dependence, and Ukrainian chauvinism appeared to be the Bolsheviks. A German report of March 1918 gives a sense of the fragmentation in Ukraine in early 1918, the uncertainty of nationalist influence, and the relative strength of the Bolsheviks:

It is not true that the Bolsheviks are supported only by the Russian soldiers who remained in the Ukraine....They have a large following in the country. All the industrial workers are with them, as is also a considerable part of the demobilized soldiers. The attitude of the peasants, however is very difficult to ascertain. The villages that have once been visited by

<sup>27</sup>. For another point of view on Ukrainian nationalism and the peasantry, see Andrew P. Lamis, "Some Observations on the Ukrainian National Movement and the Ukrainian Revolution, 1917-1921," Harvard Ukrainian Studies, II, 4 (December 1978), pp. 525-531. Lamis argues that Ukrainian nationalism from Taras Shevchenko on had a dual nature: glorification of the homeland and a demand for social reform. Often these two components remained separate and in a state of dialectical tension." (p. 528) He takes issue with Arthur Adams, who claimed that Ukrainian peasants revolted during the German occupation primarily because of the grain requisitions and fear for their land. Lamis contends that the jacquerie was nationalist, aimed at one and the same time toward national and social freedom, even though the peasants and the intelligentsia did not act in concert. (p. 530) For Adams argument, see his essay, "The Great Ukrainian Jacquerie," in Taras Hunczak (ed.), The Ukraine 1917-1921: A Study in Revolution (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 1977), pp. 247-270.

Bolshevik gangs...are, as a rule, anti-Bolshevik. In other places Bolshevik propaganda seems to be successful among the peasants.

The peasants are concerned chiefly with the dividing up of the land; they will follow the Rada if it allows them to take the estates of the landlords...as proclaimed in the the Third and Fourth Universals.... Otherwise they will go with the Bolsheviks. Although the Bolsheviks lost out in many places because of their system of terror, their slogan "Take everything, all is yours" is too attractive and tempting to the masses.

The Ukrainian separatist movement, on which the Rada is relying, has no true roots in the country and is supported only by a small group of political dreamers. The people as a whole show complete indifference to national self-determination.<sup>28</sup>

Sadly for the nationalists and happily for the Bolsheviks, the peasantry proved to be an unsteady social base for a political movement. When the Directory, which came to power in November 1918 and tried to place itself at the head of the peasant risings against the Hetmanate,

faltered in its implementation of new programs, turning cautious and conservative in order to preserve its very life, the forces of the Jacquerie swept past it to embrace another, more radical political group, which seemed to promise a program that would suit peasant tastes. Specifically, even before the year 1918 had run its course, many of the Directory's peasant-Cossack supporters were already going over to the Bolsheviks.... For a few months in early 1919 there was an illusion that the two forces had joined for a common cause.<sup>29</sup>

But the Bolsheviks effectively disenfranchised the middle and wealthier peasantry and instituted a new round of requisitioning. Formerly sympathetic villagers turned against the Soviets, and the final Bolshevik victory depended on support from the workers, Russian and Russified, of the

<sup>28</sup> The report authored by the German writer Collin Ross was first published in *Arkhiv russkoi revoliutsii*, I, pp. 288-292, and translated and reprinted in James Bunyan, *Intervention, Civil War, and Communism in Russia, April-December 1918: Documents and Materials* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1936), pp. 4-5.

<sup>29</sup> Adams, "The Great Ukrainian Jacquerie," pp. 259-260. See also his *Bolsheviks in the Ukraine: The Second Campaign, 1918-1919* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963).

cities and the Donbass and the Red Army. Here the Bolsheviks were stronger than any of their contenders.

While Belorussia had never been a historic nation and Ukraine had first been conceived independently of Russia only in the nineteenth century, Georgia and Armenia had existed historically long before the first Russian state had been formed. The sense of a continuous existence was fundamental to the national self-conceptions of the Armenian and Georgian intelligentsias of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as they revived the study of national history and literature. Their struggles for national emancipation began as liberal and democratic movements of writers, journalists, and teachers, but by the last decade of the nineteenth century the first generations of nationalist intellectuals had been shunted aside by younger, more radical, socialists.<sup>30</sup> For these peoples, as for other small nations in Hroch's analysis, the struggle for national emancipation was also a struggle against the non-national or denationalized bourgeoisie.

Though the similarities between the origins and initial stages of Armenian and Georgian nationalism are striking, the different social structures of the two nationalities and their different political imperatives led to quite different nationalist ideologies and political trajectories.

Armenians were a largely peasant people divided between three great

30. On the formation of the Armenian national intelligentsia, see the articles by George A. Bournoutian, Ronald G. Suny, Sarkis Shmavonian, Vahe Oshagan, and Gerard J. Libaridian in Armenian Review, XXXVI, 3-143 (Autumn 1983); Suny, "Populism, Nationalism, and Marxism: The Origins of Revolutionary Parties Among the Armenians of the Caucasus," ibid, XXXII, 2-126 (June 1979), pp. 134-151; and "Marxism, Nationalism, and the Armenian Labor Movement in Transcaucasia, 1890-1903," ibid, XXXIII, 1-129 (March 1980), pp. 30-47. On the Georgians, see Suny, "The Emergence of Political Society in Georgia," in R. G. Suny (ed.), Transcaucasia, Nationalism and Social Change (Ann Arbor: Michigan Slavic Publications, 1983), pp. 109-140.

empires, the Russian, the Persian, and the Ottoman Turkish, which at the same time had a centuries-old diaspora that connected the educated and business people of the homeland with Europe, the Middle East, and even India. Their ancient nobility had largely been eliminated by the time of the Mongol occupation and the fall of the last Armenian kingdom in the late fourteenth century. By the early nineteenth century the leading class among Armenians were the merchants and petty industrialists of Tiflis, Baku, Istanbul, and Smyrna. Among non-Armenians the most prevalent image of the Armenian was of the merchant, and both in Turkey and the Caucasus Armenians played a highly visible role in the development of industry and trade. Baku oil was pioneered by Armenians, and the economic growth of the ancient Georgian capital, Tiflis (Tbilisi), was largely an Armenian enterprise. Here was an historic nation, then, with an educated urban bourgeoisie, but one disconnected socially and by virtue of distance or international borders from the heartland of its own people.

Georgians were also a largely rural people, but without the significant urban presence of the Armenians. The Georgian nobility had survived the annexation of Georgia by the Russians and had, in fact, become part of the dvorianstvo. But the noble elite failed to make a successful adjustment to the post-Emancipation economy, and their ideal of national harmony cutting across classes failed to attract beyond the intelligentsia. In the 1890s younger Georgian intellectuals adopted a specifically Marxist world view that saw both the bourgeoisie (which in this case was largely Armenian) and the autocracy (which was Russian) as enemies of Georgian social and political freedom. Given the particular social composition of Georgia's society the social and national struggles were successfully merged under a Marxist leadership that claimed not to be nationalist and was willing to link

up with all-Russian Social Democracy. For the Georgians the natural constituency for Social Democrats, the workers, was supplemented by 1905 by broad support (almost unique in the Russian Empire) among the peasantry. By the years of the first revolution Georgian Marxist intellectuals found themselves at the head of a genuinely supra-class national liberation movement. The Mensheviks easily won the elections to the four state dumas, controlled soviets and councils in the towns and countryside in 1917, and were the overwhelmingly choice of Georgians in the elections to the Constituent Assembly. In Georgia Hroch's Phase C had been achieved in the first decade of the twentieth century, but instead of a vertically-integrating nationalism, Georgians adopted an expressly non-nationalist socialist movement as their preferred form of political expression.

Though the absolute number of Armenians continued to grow in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and they continued to dominate the largest cities of the Caucasus economically and politically, Armenians found themselves in a precarious demographic position. The relative position of Armenians in the Armenian plateau of eastern Anatolia worsened. The in-migration of Balkan Muslims, Circassians, and the rapid growth of the Kurdish population combined with the out-migration of Armenians, particularly after the massacres of 1894-1896, made the Armenians even more of a minority in a heavily Turkish and Kurdish population. Impressed by the urgency of a political solution, the nationalist intelligentsia disavowed joint solutions with other parties of the Russian Empire. The Armenian revolutionary parties took the battle to Turkey, and by means of "propaganda of the deed" and examples of militant sacrifice, attempted to mobilize a rather passive and demoralized peasantry. Though there were a number of spectacular examples of "resistance" by armed

Armenians (Zeitun, Sassun), the revolutionaries never achieved a high degree of mass mobilization. Their tactic was largely limited by virtue of their relative weakness before the Turks, first, to terrorist attacks and, later, to a dangerous policy of alliance with the Young Turks. The Armenian revolutionary nationalists, who in fact had come out of the middle and lower middle classes, turned their venom (and occasionally even their weapons) against Armenians of property who refused to contribute to the national cause. Wary of the revolutionaries, the Armenian bourgeoisie in Turkey stayed close to the national church which they largely controlled; in Russia they remained liberals tied to a more reformist evolution of the tsarist order. Because of the self-destruction of one major party, the Social Democratic Hnchaks, and the relative isolation of the liberals and "internationalist" Social Democrats in the cities, the more nationalist of the socialist parties, the Dashnaktsutiun, emerged by the early twentieth century as the only real contender for Armenian loyalties. In 1903 it gained wide support among city dwellers and even peasants in the Caucasus as the principal defender of the Church, whose properties had been requisitioned by the tsarist government. In Hrochian terms one might claim that in the years before World War I the patriots of Phase B were attempting, though not yet fully successfully, to enter Phase C.

The war, however, and the subsequent genocide of Armenians in eastern Anatolia created an entirely new situation. Thousands of refugees fled to the Caucasus with retreating Russian armies, and the cities of Baku and Tiflis filled with Turkish Armenians. Armenian volunteer military units fought on the Caucasian Front, and when Russian troops "voted with their feet" late in 1917 and abandoned the Caucasus, Armenians found that they possessed one of the most powerful military forces in the region. For

Armenians the principal source of danger came from their ethnic and religious enemies, the Ottoman Turks and the Azerbaijanis, and the very acuity of that danger completed what two decades of revolutionary propaganda had been working to accomplish -- the effective mobilization of the Caucasian Armenian population to vote for and fight for the national future as defined by the Dashnaktsutiun. Overwhelmingly Armenians voted for the Dashnaks in the elections to the Constituent Assembly.

Ethnic conflicts were largely subordinate to social conflicts throughout the first year of revolution in Transcaucasia, but Armenians, traumatized by the mass killings and deportations in Turkey, maintained their separate national position on all major political questions. Still economic pressures and the question of state power, along with the issue of the war, relegated ethnic matters to second place. Though ethnic tensions appeared in the newly-elected municipal дума in Tiflis, as Georgians replaced the formerly hegemonic Armenian middle class, they were contained within a political framework that promised democratic solutions to these perennial problems. But the Bolshevik victory in Petrograd, their relative strength in Baku and weakness in Tiflis, and the removal of Russian troops from the Caucasian front and urban garrisons created a new political environment, one in which the danger of Turkish invasion threatened some nationalities (the Armenians) and was seen as an opportunity by others (the Azerbaijanis). Choices had to be made between siding with Soviet Russia, the Entente or the Germans, and each national leadership chose a different path. The central political issue became self-defense, and in the context of Russian retreat and Turkish-German advance it quickly took on an ethnic dimension. A brief experiment in Transcaucasian autonomy was followed by an even briefer one in a independent federative republic. By late May



1918 the Georgians opted for the Germans rather than the Bolsheviks; the Azerbaijanis turned expectantly toward the Turks; the multinational city of Baku opted for Soviet power; and the Armenians were left to their fate.<sup>31</sup>

The only realistic hope for an ethnic Armenian homeland in the post-genocide period was the small enclave around Erevan, which in May 1918 became the center of a fragile independent republic. Armenian political leaders had not been anxious to attempt independence, but now they were forced to take control of their refugee population. They alone of the Transcaucasian peoples turned to the Entente for support. The ostensibly socialist ideology of the Dashnaktsutiun was largely neglected, and the party became the representative of all classes of Caucasian Armenians as they faced together the common threat from Ottoman and post-Ottoman Turks.

Azerbaijanis, who long had felt victims of the Christian overlords and bourgeoisie in Transcaucasia, welcomed the leverage and support offered by their Turkish brethren. The nationalist leaders, located in Ganja (Elisavetpol'), entered Baku with the Ottoman Army and took their revenge on the local Armenians (September 1918). But there they were faced by a mixed population of Russian, Armenian, and Muslim workers who had undergone a long socialist and trade unionist education. The nationalists were never fully secure in the city where Bolshevism had deep roots. Among the peasantry on whom they depended, national consciousness was still embryonic. In a recent study of Azerbaijani national identity, Tadeusz Swietochowski writes:

While the intelligentsia experienced an evolution that took it in quick succession from Pan-Islamism to

31. The best account of Transcaucasian politics during the revolution and Civil War remains Firuz Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia (1917-1921)* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1951).

Turkish to Azerbaijanism, the masses remained on the level of 'umma consciousness with its typical indifference to secular power, foreign or native. The idea of an Azerbaijani nation-state did not take root among the majority of the population; the very term nationalism was either not understood by them or, worse, it rang with the sound of a term of abuse, a fact the Communists exploited in their propaganda against the Azerbaijani Republic. This might help explain why the overthrow of the republic was amazingly easy. Even those who subsequently rebelled against Soviet rule did not fight for the restoration of the fallen regime.<sup>32</sup>

Certainly the most viable and stable state in Transcaucasia was Georgia. Here Social Democracy was well-grounded both in the working class and the peasantry. German intervention was needed, not to shore up the regime, but to prevent attack from outside. Ironically, the Georgian nation-state was formed and led by Marxists whose expectation had been of a democratic revolution in Russia that would have solved at one sweep the ethnic and social oppression experienced by their people. Instead they found themselves at the head of an independent "bourgeois" state, the managers of the "democratic revolution" in one small country, called upon to fulfill the national program of parties far to the right of them. Unquestionably they had excellent chances for success; the Mensheviks were supported by the great majority of the Georgian people; but the larger geopolitical and strategic imperatives of the central Soviet government did not permit them to demonstrate the potential for democratic socialism in a post-revolutionary state. By 1920 a powerful group within the Bolshevik party pushed for an uprising within Georgia to be followed by an invasion by the Red Army. Lenin was initially opposed to this cynical disregard for the evident influence of the Georgian Social Democrats, but he backed down before the fait accompli engineered by Orjonikidze and Stalin.

32. Tadeusz Swietochowski, Russian Azerbaijan, 1905-1920: The Shaping of National Identity in a Muslim Community (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 193.

The only states to remain independent after the Civil War were, of course, in the northwest of Russia, along the Baltic -- Poland, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Here as well complex ethnic-class relationships existed. In the Baltic littoral German nobles dominated rural life in areas of predominantly Estonian and Latvian peasantry. Polish and Jewish city dwellers almost exclusively ran Vilno, which was surrounded by Belorussian and Lithuanian villages.<sup>33</sup> The demographic situation in Tallinn (Reval) and Riga were more complex. The German bourgeoisie and nobles dominated local governing institutions, but the number of Estonians and Latvians in the towns grew rapidly until the local peoples became the largest nationality in their respective capitals.<sup>34</sup> A Latvian and an Estonian working class and a small bourgeoisie had developed by the early twentieth century. In terms of social structure -- the presence of an alien ruling elite, and a growing native working class -- as well as the difficulty of achieving political influence under tsarism, the Latvians and Estonians were in a political impasse with evident similarities to that of the Georgians.

Estonian nationalism had developed relatively late. Only in the 1860s did the first generation of Estonian patriots free themselves of their

33. In 1897 Vilno was 40.3% Jewish, 30.9% Polish, and only 7% Lithuanian; Vilno district, excluding the city, had 35% Lithuanian; the whole province was 56% Belorussian and 17.5% Lithuanian. [Alfred Erich Senn, The Emergence of Modern Lithuania (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), p. 42]

34. By 1913 Estonians made up 69.2% of the urban population of Estonia; Russians 11.9%; and Germans, 11.2%; in Tallinn Estonians were 72%, though that figure declined during the war because of the influx of Russian and other workers to 58% by 1917. [Toivo U. Raun, Estonia and the Estonians (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1987), p. 91] In Riga Latvians had become a plurality by 1881, and by 1913 they made up 38.8% of the city's population; Russians 22.4%; Germans, 16.4%. [Anders Henriksson, "Riga: Growth, Conflict, and the Limitations of Good Government, 1850-1914," in Michael F. Hamm (ed.), The City in Late Imperial Russia (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), p. 182.]

original German patrons who had initiated interest in Estonian folkways. Village schoolteachers and university-educated intellectuals joined with peasants in forming choruses and patriotic clubs and reading the national press. Yet the patriotic intelligentsia faced serious difficulties as it tried to penetrate the largely peasant population. Estonians had no political past with which to identify, no written language, no national literature. They were kept out of institutions of education, religion, and politics by the ruling Germans. Tallinn was a German town surrounded by relatively passive peasants. Yet these "disintegrating factors," writes Hroch, were offset by "the class antagonism between the feudal German landowners and their Estonian subjects" which was "the fundamental and probably most decisive factor which from a certain date onwards stimulated the spread of national consciousness among broad strata of the oppressed Estonian nationality." Popular nationalism was further promoted in the last decades of the nineteenth century when Estonians entered the towns, gained higher education, and, along with the Latvians, achieved the highest level of literacy in the Russian Empire. "The sphere of integrating factors," Hroch continues, "expanded to include the antagonism between the small-scale Estonian commodity-producers and the middle and upper German strata there."<sup>35</sup> The tsarist campaign of Russification in the Baltic helped to stimulate national awareness in the broad population, among Estonians, Latvians, and Finns.

The parallels between Latvia and Georgia are particularly striking. In both countries the older generation of national patriots (in Latvia "Young Latvia;" in Georgia the pirveli dasi and the meore dasi) were supplanted by Marxists (the Latvian "New Current" and the Georgian

35. Hroch, Social Preconditions of National Revival, p. 85.

mesame dasi). The brunt of national hostility was directed, not against the Russians, but against the locally dominant nationality (in Latvia, the Germans; in Georgia, the Armenians) and refracted through the class rhetoric of Social Democracy. From the first days of the revolution Menshevism in Georgia and Bolshevism in Latvia were the strongest local movements with little competition from the nationalists.

As Andrew Ezergailis has shown in two monographs, Bolshevism had exceptionally strong support among Latvian and other workers and among the famous Latvian riflemen. In the August elections to the municipal council of Riga Bolsheviks won 41% of the vote (60% among ethnic Latvians).<sup>36</sup> A week later Bolsheviks won 63.4% of the vote to the major rural institution, the Vidzeme Land Council, and in November they carried the elections to the Constituent Assembly in those parts of Latvia (Vidzeme) that were not yet occupied by the Germans, winning 71.85%. Among the strelki Bolsheviks won 95% of the votes.<sup>37</sup> This extraordinary showing stems from a number of factors: the general Latvian alienation from the Germans and the relatively less hostile attitude toward Russians; the high proportion of landless peasants (more than 1,000,000 in 1897) that favored Social Democracy and opposed the "grey barons" (Latvian smallholders) almost as much as they did the German nobles; the support of Social Democracy among a militant working class that had experienced a bloody baptism in 1905, as well as among intellectuals, school teachers, and students; the particularly devastating experience of the World War, which had brought the fighting deep into Latvia, dividing the country, causing

36. Andrew Ezergailis, The 1917 Revolution in Latvia (Boulder: East European Quarterly, 1974), p. 145; The Latvian Impact on the Bolshevik Revolution, The First Phase: September 1917 to April 1918 (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1983), p. 75.

37. Ezergailis, The Latvian Impact, pp. 79, 87, 89.

great hardship, and radicalizing the population; and finally the ability of the Bolsheviks to develop and propagate a program that at one and the same time attempted to deal with social and ethnic grievances.<sup>38</sup> The solution to their national future, it appeared to a great number of Latvians in 1917, was within a Russian federation but one which had moved beyond the bourgeois revolution. The brief experiment in Bolshevik rule after October, the Iskolat, fell before the Germans when they moved into unoccupied Latvia in February 1918. Bolshevism would have been the eventually victor in Latvia save for the German intervention which gave the nationalists an initial chance to create their own republic.

The Estonians were far less radical than the Latvians, but Bolshevik strength grew steadily through 1917. Elections to the Maapaev (the provincial assembly of Estonia) (May-November 1917) produced the following party alignment:

Agrarian League	13		
Labor Party	11		
Estonian SDs (Mensheviks)	9		
Estonian SRs		8	
Democrats (Estonian)	7		
Bolsheviks	5		
Radical Democrats	4		
German and Swedish minorities	2		
Non-party		3	39

By late July-early August, the Bolsheviks, whose greatest strength was in the larger industrial towns of Tallinn and Narva, polled 31% of the vote in municipal council elections (SRs, 22%; Estonian SD - Russian and Latvian Menshevik Bloc, 12%).<sup>40</sup> Here, as in the elections to the Tallinn soviet,

38. For an attempt to deal with the different choices of the Estonians and the Latvians in 1917, see Stanley W. Page, The Formation of the Baltic States: A Study of the Effects of Great Power Politics upon the Emergence of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959; reprint: New York: Howard Fertig, 1970), pp. 83-85.

39. Raun, Estonia and the Estonians, p. 100.

40. Ibid., p. 101.

large numbers of voters were soldiers (16% in Tallinn) and non-Estonians. Bolsheviks did less well in Tartu and the rural areas. Still, in the November elections to the Constituent Assembly, the Bolsheviks outpolled the other parties (40.2%; Labor Party, 21%), though socialists as a whole won just over 50% and the non-socialists nearly matched them. Bolsheviks won in Tallinn (47.6%), followed by the Labor Party, but the non-socialist Democratic Bloc won in Tartu (53.4%) and southern Estonia.<sup>41</sup>

After the October Revolution Bolshevikized soviets ran many of the towns in Estonia, but support for the soviets began to erode rapidly. The Bolsheviks were unenthusiastic about Estonian independence, failed to expropriate the estates of the Baltic barons, and tried to suppress oppositional parties. When elections were held for the Estonian Constituent Assembly in late January 1918, Bolsheviks polled only 37.1% while the Labor Party rose to 29.8% and the Democratic Bloc held steady at 23.2%. The elections were incomplete, for the Bolsheviks first postponed and later cancelled them, and it appears that sentiment in the area was moving in favor of independence. When the Germans advanced in late February, the nationalists used the opportunity to declare Estonia independent of Russia.

### 3. Some Preliminary Conclusions.

In his reflections on the factors that had led to Bolshevik victory Lenin at the end of 1919 listed three decisive conditions: an overwhelming majority among the proletariat; support among half of the armed forces; and overwhelming superiority of forces at the decisive moment at the decisive points, namely Petrograd, Moscow, and on the military fronts nearest the center. Revolutionary workers and soldiers at the right place at the right

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<sup>41</sup>. Ibid., p. 103.

time provided the necessary and powerful "striking force" (udarnyi kulak) to rout their opponents and secure the Bolsheviks in power. For Lenin revolution was fundamentally different from an election campaign in which a simple majority resolves the ultimate question of power; for him the more appropriate metaphor for revolution was a military campaign.

An overwhelming superiority of forces at the decisive point at the decisive moment -- this 'law' of military success is also the law of political success, especially in that fierce, seething class war which is called revolution.

Capitals, or, in general big commercial and industrial centers (here in Russia the two coincided, but they do not everywhere coincide), to a considerable degree decide the political fate of a nation, provided, of course, the centers are supported by sufficient local, rural forces, even if that support does not come immediately.<sup>42</sup>

After the initial winning of state power, Lenin emphasized, it was still essential for the Bolsheviks to win over the majority of the population. Holding state power was a precondition for that victory, which was achieved by smashing the old state apparatus, undermining the power and prestige of the bourgeoisie and its allies, and satisfying the economic needs of the exploited at the expense of the exploiters. The prolonged struggle of the Civil War was marked by vacillation on the part of the peasantry, first in favor of the Bolsheviks who granted them land and peace; then against the Bolsheviks who signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk and requisitioned their stocks of grain; and finally toward the Bolsheviks once the phony phrases about democracy and the Constituent Assembly were revealed to be "only a screen to conceal the dictatorship of the landowners and capitalists."<sup>43</sup>

42. V. I. Lenin, "Vyborny v Uchreditel'noe sobranie i diktatura proletariata," Polnoe sobranie sochinenii, 5th edition, (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1958-1966), XL, pp. 6-7; English translation in V. I. Lenin, Collected Works, 4th edition (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1964-1970), XXX, pp. 253-275.

43. Lenin, PSS, XL, p. 17; Collected Works, XXX, p. 268.



The relative strength or weakness of class and nationality in various areas of the empire were crucial in determining the lines of battle and the commitment of actors. In the great sweep of the Russian Revolution and Civil War nationalism was still largely a phenomenon centered in the ethnic intelligentsia, among students and the lower middle classes of the towns, with at best a fleeting following among broader strata. Among Belorussians, Lithuanians, and Azerbaijanis, rather than a sense of nationality, the paramount identification was with people nearby with whom one shared social and religious communality. For these peoples neither nationalism nor socialism was able to mobilize large numbers into the life and death struggle than being waged across the land.

For several other nationalities, among them the Latvians and Georgians, class-based socialist movements were far more potent than political nationalism. Socialism as presented by the dominant intellectual elite answered the grievances of both social and ethnic inferiority and promised a socio-political solution to the dual oppression determined by class and nationality. For still other nationalities, like the Ukrainians and the Estonians, nationality competed with a sense of class for primary loyalty of the workers and peasants. In the absence of detailed social historical studies of the national borderlands, it is still too early to achieve a full sense of the reasons why neither a political class consciousness nor a political nationalism dominated among these peoples. For the Armenians, a rather unique case of a people divided between two empires, without a secure area of concentration, and faced by the imminent danger of extermination, a non-class, vertically integrating nationalism overwhelmed all competitors.

Nationalism, like class consciousness, was a disturbingly ephemeral phenomenon among most non-Russians in these turbulent years, especially

once the revolution outgrew the cities. Whatever their cultural and ethnographic preferences, non-Russian peasants did not automatically opt for the national program of their urban ethnic leaders. Mobilized in the aftermath of the October Revolution, the peasantry was, in Eley's words,

a class restlessly in motion -- passing in and out of armies, regular and irregular; migrating for food and work, over short and long distances; experimenting with the full repertoire of violent, direct-action, and peaceful protests; meeting locally to discuss and formulate grievances; combining more ambitiously at the district and regional levels; issuing petitions; instructing deputies; and, of course, voting.<sup>44</sup>

The reasons for the relative weakness of nationalism in 1917-1918, and even further into the Civil War, require further attention by scholars, but tentatively one might suggest that the social distance between villagers and townspeople, between peasants and intellectuals, was great enough to make the supraclass appeal of nationalism difficult to buy. The most successful appeals were populist or even socialist, especially when they were enhanced by ethnic arguments. Furthermore, long-established trade patterns and complex economic relations tied most of the non-Russian peoples of the old empire to the center (Finns and Poles are perhaps an exception here). The way the empire had developed economically was a powerful force for integration with the rest of Russia rather than for separate nations. Separation from Russia was almost always a political decision based on need for support by an outside power, at first Germany, later the Entente powers, and had far less intrinsic appeal to the mass of the population than has been customarily accepted.

The ebb and flow of socialism or nationalism was tied to the ebb and flow of the war and revolution, to the relative fates of Great Powers, their ability to act within Russia. In the twentieth century intervention has

<sup>44</sup>. Eley, "Remapping the Nation," p. 42.

become an unwelcome but ubiquitous guest at the revolutionary table. When Bolsheviks were relatively weak and Germans strong, separatism and the fortunes of the nationalists rose; when the Germans were defeated and the Entente withdrew, the appeals of the Bolsheviks in favor of social revolution, land to the peasants, and even a kind of greater Russian "nationalism" found supporters. Neither nationalism nor a sense of class were ends in themselves for ordinary people, as they often were for intellectuals. They resonated within the demokratiia in so far as they were believed to be means to solving the aggravated social dislocation that had only gotten worse with war and revolution.

Turning to the Ukraine, Lenin writes that the importance of the national question was evident there, as demonstrated by the Constituent Assembly election results in which Ukrainian SRs and socialists outpolled the Russian. "The division between the Russian and Ukrainian Socialist Revolutionaries as early as 1917 could not have been accidental." But Lenin does not see the evident national sentiments -- which I have emphasized were extremely closely tied to the particular social and political conjuncture of these years -- as fixed or permanent. Indeed, his argument is that internationalists must be tolerant of the changing national consciousness of non-Russians, which, he was confident, was part of the petty bourgeois vacillation that had been characteristic of the peasantry throughout the Civil War.

The question whether the Ukraine will be a separate state is far less important [than the fundamental interests of the proletarian dictatorship, the unity of the Red Army, or the leading role of the proletariat in relation to the peasantry]. We must not be in the least surprised, or frightened, even by the prospect of the Ukrainian workers and peasants trying out different systems, and in the course of, say, several years, testing by practice union with the RSFSR, or

seceding from the latter and forming an independent Ukrainian SSR, or various forms of their close alliance....

...the vacillation of non-proletarian working people on such a question is quite natural, even inevitable, but not in the least frightful for the proletariat. It is the duty of the proletariat who is really capable of being an internationalist...to leave it to the non-proletarian masses themselves to get rid of this vacillation as a result of their own experience.<sup>45</sup>

Lenin's estimation that national separatism would be reduced by central Russian tolerance and a willingness to allow national self-determination to the point of independence has appeared, understandably, to be either a utopian fantasy or an example of political dissembling. But if in fact nationalism was far weaker than most nationalists have allowed; if in Russia it was almost invariably connected with real social and political discontents caused by years of discrimination and hardship under tsarism; and if, indeed, significant groups within the non-Russian peoples responded well to the socialist programs of social transformation and national self-determination, then perhaps Lenin's views on the near future of the nationalities was less a fantasy than another example of his political style, an uneasy combination of hard-nosed realism and the willingness to take extraordinary risks.

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45. Lenin, PSS, XL, p. 20; Collected Works, XXX, p. 271.

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