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GORBACHEV'S MOUNTING NATIONALITIES CRISIS

INTRODUCTION

The recent relaxation of police controls and restrictions on public discourse in the Soviet Union have coaxed into the open one of the most explosive problems facing Moscow: its fragile internal multinational empire. The volatility of the situation is underscored by numerous expressions of nationalist sentiment. These include: the December 1986 riots in Alma-Ata (Kazakhstan); the 1987 and 1988 demonstrations by tens of thousands in the Baltic republics of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania; the 1988 demonstrations of hundreds of thousands in the Armenian capital of Erevan; the February 1988 riots in Sumgait (Azerbaijan); the 1988 year-long strikes in the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan; the 1988 demonstrations in Georgia, and the 1988 declaration of Estonian "sovereignty" by its Supreme Soviet (legislature).

The Soviet nationality problem predates the Soviet Union itself. It is rooted in centuries of Russian colonial expansion. The more than 100 non-Russian nationalities of the USSR total nearly 150 million Soviet citizens and inhabit territories some of which are as large as France or Italy. They comprise half of the total population of the USSR and, according to even cautious demographic projections, will make the ethnic Russians a minority by the end of the century.

Articulating Nationalist Demands. Far from being "solved comprehensively and finally," as the late Soviet leader Leonid I. Brezhnev used to boast, the "national question" continues to be among the most intractable of the many deep problems facing the Kremlin. Five decades of Russification notwithstanding, at least 40 percent of the non-Russian population does not speak Russian at all. But even fluency in Russian is no guarantee of allegiance to Moscow; as other multinational empires before it, the Kremlin is discovering that it is precisely the best educated, the most Russified elites that articulate nationalist demands and promote national self-awareness.

Building on a "New Foundation." One of the most disturbing developments from Moscow's point of view has been the coalescence of the various national democratic movements. The fifth conference of the representatives of the national democratic movements from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belorussia, the Ukraine, Georgia, and Armenia convened in the Lithuanian capital of Vilnius this January. Their Freedom Charter, adopted at the meeting, declared that continued existence within the Soviet empire is "unacceptable for the peoples that we represent."¹ Another document issued by the conference states: "The fact is obvious — the system has collapsed. A new edifice must be built on a new foundation. We suggest that it be built on the foundation of democratic, non-violent principles."²

The Soviet system itself, rather than what Soviet leader Mikhail S. Gorbachev calls "deformations in the Party's nationality policy," is beginning to be perceived by the non-Russian nationalities as an obstacle to a radical political and economic overhaul. Thus, the struggle for ethnic rights inside the Soviet Union is turning into a struggle for greater autonomy from Moscow and eventual secession from the Union. Visible until a few years ago only in the Baltic republics and Western Ukraine — the areas with living memories of a noncommunist past — this tendency has recently become pronounced in Armenia, Georgia, and even Kazakhstan.

Pro-Western Movements. Struggles for national independence around the world always have enjoyed active support of Americans. The desire for national self-determination of the Soviet peoples must not be an exception. In fact, the national liberation movements of the peoples of the internal Soviet empire especially warrant United States support. Unlike many current "liberation" movements, the majority of national liberation movements in the USSR are distinctly pro-Western and openly and unequivocally committed to the principles of democratic capitalism: private property, a multi-party political system, respect for human rights and liberties. Proclaimed one of the placards carried by the Alma-Ata demonstrators in December 1986: "America, support us!"

Washington long has pressed the Kremlin on human rights of individuals. Washington now should do so on behalf of the collective rights of ethnic communities. The U.S. should:

- ◆◆ Reiterate that the right of nations to national self-determination is an integral part of the Western human rights agenda to which overall progress in U.S.-Soviet relations is linked;

- ◆◆ State that appropriate assistance to national liberation movements within the Soviet internal empire is consistent with the Reagan Doctrine of supporting anti-communist resistance around the world;

- ◆◆ Design and articulate long-term and short-term policy objectives toward the Soviet internal empire. The former may include, for example,

1 *Novoe Russkoe Slovo*, February 21, 1989.

2 *Ibid.*

eventual dissolution of the Soviet domestic empire and establishment of independent democratic nation-states; short-term goals could include helping spread nationalist democratic sentiment through both government and private means; pressing Moscow to allow greater autonomy to the national republics; and bypassing Moscow by establishing direct economic ties between the non-Russian republics and the West.

◆◆ Use the recent relaxation of Soviet customs controls to ship such equipment and supplies to the nationalist democratic activists in the USSR as personal computers, computer printers, ink, photocopying machines, and political and religious literature;

◆◆ Use the recent cessation of jamming of Radio Liberty to increase hours of broadcast in non-Russian languages.

THE SOVIET "NATIONAL QUESTION": AN OVERVIEW

The Soviet domestic empire is a product of two centuries of relentless Czarist conquest. This traditional policy of Russian imperialism has been continued by the Kremlin. Interestingly, Joseph Stalin's first post in the Soviet government was that of People's Commissar for Nationalities. During his quarter-century dictatorship the present Soviet nationality policy was institutionalized.

Stalin dispensed with the last vestiges of autonomy for Soviet nationalities. He designed and introduced the Soviet colonial practices. Among the most important and enduring of these is the obligatory presence in the leadership of national republics of a Russian "second" party Secretary who controls personnel and serves as a link to Moscow.

Another Stalin technique, the troubling consequences of which have surfaced recently, was the deliberate fragmentation of ethnic groups through artificial administrative divisions. This was done to create minority enclaves dependent on Moscow for protection. Typical is the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region, the overwhelmingly Christian Armenian enclave inside Muslim Turkish Azerbaijan.³ In addition to Nagorno-Karabakh, in over two dozen locations administrative borders do not reflect the ethnic composition of the neighboring populations.

Thwarting Nationalist Challenges. The late Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev allowed local communist elites to run the affairs of the their republics without much meddling from Moscow. This was in exchange for recognizing Moscow's supreme policy-making role and guarding against the emergence of a genuine nationalist challenge to Moscow.

At the same time, slow but steady Russification, officially labelled "internationalism," continued unabated under the personal guidance of Soviet

³ Another reason for giving Nagorno-Karabakh to the Muslim Azerbaijan was to carry favor with Turkey, which Moscow courted in the early 1920s.

chief ideologist Mikhail A. Suslov and was accelerated toward the end of the 1970s. In 1978, for example, a decree was passed requiring the study of the Russian language in elementary schools of all national republics.

NATIONALITY POLICY UNDER GORBACHEV

Until last year, Gorbachev demonstrated very little interest in what the official Soviet media call the “national question.” Clearly, a *perestroika* (restructuring) of this aspect of Soviet system was low on his list of priorities. After 35 years of Communist Party work and almost four years in power, Gorbachev has yet to make a single speech or write an article on the subject of nationalities. He is the only Soviet leader in history not to do so.

Gorbachev appears to lack sensitivity even to symbolic aspects of Moscow’s colonial rule. In his speech to the 27th Party Congress in February 1986, the only one over which he has presided as General Secretary, the nationalities issue was given short and routine treatment. In fact, Gorbachev assailed “national exclusiveness,” “parasitic attitudes,” and “nationalism” — all code words for non-Russian national sentiments.

Irritating the Non-Russians. A new Party Program, adopted at that Congress, is virtually void of laudatory rhetoric addressed to the non-Russian nationalities — in contrast to the previous 1961 Program. The document, moreover, is terse and reserved with regard to the use of non-Russian languages but effusive on the subject of the study of Russian by non-Russians.

Gorbachev’s policies in the national republics, in effect, have further irritated the nationalist feelings, particularly his anti-corruption drive and personnel cuts. The wholesale purge of party and government apparatus and its staffing with ethnic Russians threatens the limited “home-rule” to which national communist elites, as well as the population in general, have become accustomed during the past two decades.

The likely abolition by Gorbachev of “affirmative action” (the system of preferential treatment for some non-Russian nationalities in admittance to institutions of higher education and job allocation), is likely to create additional serious problems since it has been the children of the local Party and government elites who profit from the program the most.

Postponing the Question. Gorbachev’s inability to reconcile his political and economic agenda with the aspirations of the non-Russian population of the empire is highlighted by the repeated postponement of the Communist Party’s Central Committee meeting (Plenum) devoted to the “national question.” Scheduled first for 1987, the Plenum was moved to spring 1988 and now to summer 1989.

SOVIET MUSLIMS: ISLAM AND "NEW" NATIONALISM

Soviet Muslims are concentrated in the five Central Asian republics of Kazakhstan, Kirghizia, Tadzhikistan, Turkmenia, and Uzbekistan, and in Azerbaijan. The Central Asians are Sunni Muslims, while the Azeris, like the Iranians, are Shi'ites. Having doubled their number to 50 million in the past 25 years,⁴ the Soviet Muslim population now is the fifth largest in the world, after Indonesia, Pakistan, India and Bangladesh. The most numerous of the Central Asian peoples, the Uzbeks, are 15 million strong and are the third largest ethnic group in the Soviet Union after the Russians and the Ukrainians.

Conquered by Czarist armies in the 19th century,⁵ the peoples of the Central Asia never felt at home under Russian control. Soviet Central Asia exhibits typical characteristics of colonialism: the region exports raw materials and imports most of its industrial products from European Russia. Some 90 percent of all Soviet cotton is grown in Central Asia, while a mere 7 percent of Soviet textiles are produced there.

Green Flag of Islam. In recent years Moscow has had to contend with the intensification of Islamic sentiments as a result of the defeat of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the triumph of Islamic fundamentalism in Iran. The rising Islamic awareness is not limited to the Central Asian republics, but has spread to the only Soviet Muslim republic outside the region — Azerbaijan, located in the Eastern Caucasus on the Turkish border. *Izvestia*, the central Soviet government newspaper, reported the appearance of the traditional Islamic green flag and a portrait of Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini during the November 1988 mass demonstrations on the central square of Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan.⁶ Many participants of recent demonstrations in Baku wore red headbands, an Iranian symbol of the holy martyr, that were worn by young soldiers going off to Iran-Iraqi front.⁷ (Like Iranians, the majority of Azerbaijanis — 70 percent to 75 percent — are Shi'a Muslims.)

Aggravating Moscow's problems in Central Asia is a "new" nationalism. The decades of "affirmative action" and "home rule" by local communists in Central Asia have created new party and government elites. Assertive, well educated, urban, and ambitious they are increasingly taking issue with Moscow's rule. Though most of them observe Islamic rituals at births, wed-

4 According to the last Soviet census of 1979, the Central Asians' rate of natural increase averaged 3.29 percent annually — 5.4 times that of the ethnic Russians. While the Russians had 863 children per thousand women, the Turkmen had 1,809, the Kirghiz 1,885 and Kazakhs 1,896. Donald W. Treagold, "Nationalism in the USSR and Its Implications for the World," in Robert Conquest, ed., *The Last Empire* (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 1986), pp. 387-388.

5 A few areas were given nominally independent status of Russian protectorates, like Bukhara and Khiva, ruled by local khans. In the 1920s the Bolsheviks completed the conquest by fully incorporating these areas in the Union.

6 R. Lynev, A. Stepovoy, "Razgovor na plochshadi" ("A Conversation in the Square"), *Izvestia*, November 28, 1988.

7 Radio Liberty Research 535/88 (December 5, 1988).

dings, and burials, they are not necessarily devout Muslims and they speak fluent Russian. These educated, white-collar Central Asians are used to competing with ethnic Russians for jobs and promotions and want a bigger slice of the economic pie to be allocated to their republics.

Further exacerbating the situation in the region has been Gorbachev's "anti-corruption" drive aimed at the private entrepreneurs and the underground economy and black market. This illegal, but widespread, economic activity has been a kind of social safety valve, tempering the extraordinarily shabby living conditions. Indeed, the Central Asian republics suffer from the lowest standard of living in the Soviet Union, the lowest social expenditures, poverty (abject even by the meager Soviet standards), abysmal medical care, and vast unemployment and underemployment.

Coupled with the purge of national cadres from the positions of leadership, closing the underground economy safety valve, as Gorbachev seems to be determined to do, almost certainly will result in massive popular discontent.

THE BALTIC REPUBLICS: MOSCOW'S SUCCESS?

The three Baltic nations — Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania — have known little independence in modern times. Sweden ruled Estonia and northern Latvia until 1721 when armies of Peter the Great defeated the Swedes and took these lands as prizes. Lithuania and southern Latvia were taken by Catherine the Great in 1795 after Poland was partitioned. The Baltic nations enjoyed brief independence from 1918 to 1940, but then were forcibly incorporated in the Soviet Union as part of Moscow's booty under the 1939 Soviet-Nazi pact.

The Baltic peoples are distinctly Western in character and outlook. Estonians are ethnically and linguistically related to the Finns, the Latvian capital Riga was a major trading center of the Hanseatic League (a medieval economic and political union of free towns in Northern Germany), and the Catholic Lithuanians were once part of the Polish-Lithuanian kingdom. The Baltic peoples understandably always have measured their social and material progress by West European standards and not by those of the Russian heartland, which they consider backward and culturally inferior.

Proclaiming Sovereignty. Given free choice, the three Baltic republics almost certainly would secede from the Soviet Union. The "Popular Fronts" that have sprung up in all three republics in the past two years may call simply for national "sovereignty," but surely see this as the first step toward national liberation. The "sovereignty" being sought by the "Popular Fronts" includes: the right of the republics to veto Moscow-imposed laws; making the native tongue the official language of the republic; and giving the republics, rather than the USSR, ownership of the land, natural resources, industry, transportation, banks, farms and housing.

Last fall, the Supreme Soviet of Estonia proclaimed the republic's "sovereignty." On February 15, 1989 the Lithuanian Popular Front, called

Sajudis, adopted a political program calling for Lithuania's "traditional status of neutrality in a European demilitarized zone, universally accepted human and civil freedoms, from which flows the general right of Lithuania's citizens independently to choose and develop their own forms of state existence."⁸

The adoption of the program coincided with the peaceful demonstration in Vilnius by 200,000 Lithuanians on the day commemorating the country's achieving independence from Russia in 1918.

Making Concessions. Initially Gorbachev attempted to suppress the Baltic national democratic movements. Throughout 1987, demonstrations were broken up by force, organizers harassed and expelled from the Soviet Union. Beginning last year, however, Moscow has made significant concessions to the nationalist sentiment. Between June and November, First Secretaries in all three republics were removed and replaced with more pragmatic and reform-oriented party bosses. The authorities did not interfere with mass demonstrations commemorating 49th anniversary of the Secret Protocols to the 1939 Soviet-Nazi pact, which gave Moscow the green light to occupy the Baltic republics. All three republics declared their indigenous languages official in 1988 and pre-1940 national flags have replaced the Moscow-designed red ones as the republics' official banners. The Vilnius Cathedral, confiscated by the state in 1950, was returned to the worshippers and the first mass was televised. Native language media in the Baltic republics now are the freest in the Soviet Union. And Lithuania has decided to compensate those arrested and deported from 1940 to 1953, the first such action in Soviet history.

Several factors account for Moscow's change of policy. In the Baltic republics, the population is relatively small: there are 3 million Lithuanians, 1.5 million Latvians, and 1 million Estonians. The strong linguistic, social, and cultural differences with the Russians make it unlikely that the freer climate of the Baltic states will spill over to the bordering Russian regions. Following the Czarist tradition, Gorbachev seems inclined to make the Baltic territories a showcase of economic and social development and create a Soviet equivalent of the China's "special economic zones" there.

The next test of Gorbachev's Baltic strategy is likely to be this spring during elections to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. In all three republics, representatives of the "Popular Fronts" may outpoll the official candidates. If Moscow permits this, what in essence would be a political coup may be inevitable in the fall, when delegates to the local Soviets are to be elected. At that time, the "Popular Fronts" may win majorities in the Soviets and transform them from rubber-stamp assemblies into instruments of popular will.

ARMENIA: THE DEATH OF *GLASNOST*'

Incorporated into the Russian Empire in the first half of the 19th century, Armenia enjoyed a brief independence from Moscow between 1918 to 1920. Unlike the Ukrainians, the Soviet Muslims, or the Balts, the Armenians long

⁸ *The Washington Post*, February 17, 1989, p. A30.

were genuinely loyal to Moscow, which had protected them from Turkey. This Armenian loyalty, however, has largely unravelled.

Following mass demonstrations and strikes in the Armenian capital of Erevan early in the year, the local Soviet of the Nagorno-Karabakh region (the predominantly Christian Armenian enclave within Muslim Azerbaijan) last July 12 voted to join Armenia — the first legislative act of this kind in Soviet history. Moscow's inability or unwillingness to restrain its response to the non-violent and orderly Armenian protest has disillusioned the Armenians. Frustration and anti-Soviet sentiment have grown throughout the republic. Last September 4, before a crowd of 100,000 in the central Opera Square in Erevan, the Karabakh Committee members, who are now considered by most Armenians as their *de facto* leaders, proclaimed the creation of Armenian National Movement. Its central goal is a national referendum on secession from the Soviet Union.

Responding with Troops and Tanks. The Armenian events are perhaps the best illustration of how flimsy and easily reversible the policy of *glasnost* is. When on July 12, 1988, the Karabakh Soviet voted to secede from Azerbaijan, Moscow immediately declared the vote illegal. A leader of Armenian democratic nationalists, Paruir Hairikian, was seized and expelled from the Soviet Union without trial. Troops were deployed in Erevan, where there had been no acts of violence; all demonstration was prohibited. The members of the Karabakh Committee were arrested, transferred to Moscow, and remain jailed there.

From the very beginning Moscow's target was the suppression of the strictly non-violent mass democratic movement. Armenian activists point to the speed and efficiency with which tanks and paratroopers were deployed in Erevan, where no violence had occurred. By contrast, the authorities waited for two days before interfering with the bloody anti-Armenian rioting in the Azerbaijani city of Sumgait.⁹

Failing the Litmus Test. The military forces deployed in Erevan, said the leading Soviet dissident Sergei Grigoryants, were there not to protect Armenians but "for the defense of the interests of the empire."¹⁰ The opinion in Moscow dissident circles is that "Gorbachev has invaded Armenia the way Brezhnev did Czecho-slovakia." The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, said the Soviet human rights leader Andrei D. Sakharov, "has been a litmus test for Gorbachev's ethnic policy. Unfortunately, it has revealed the very worst feature of his approach to this matter, namely a fear of grass-roots movements."¹¹

9 The leader of Armenian national democratic movement Paruir Hairikian pointed to this contrast in his briefing of the Soviet Affairs Working Group at The Heritage Foundation on December 9, 1988.

10 David Remnick, "Armenian Activist Faults Gorbachev," *The Washington Post*, December 7, 1988.

11 *U.S. News & World Report*, January 30, 1989, p. 50.

THE UKRAINE: A COMING EXPLOSION

With a territory the size of France and a population of 50 million, the Ukraine — if independent — would be among Europe's largest nations. In 1654 the Ukrainian Cossacks pledged allegiance to Moscow in exchange for help in fighting the Polish kings. An autonomous Cossack state survived until the second half of the eighteenth century, when Catherine the Great completed incorporation of the Ukraine into the Russian empire by acquiring Eastern Poland.

Short-Lived Independence. Shortly after the 1917 Bolshevik revolution, the Ukrainian National Republic was declared and, in December 1917, Moscow recognized its independence. Almost immediately, however, Moscow reversed itself and dispatched troops to regain the Ukraine. Battles raged on and off for three years, and by the end of 1920 an independent Ukraine ceased to exist.

For nearly a decade, the Ukraine enjoyed the relatively broad cultural autonomy from Moscow. This came to an abrupt halt in the late 1920s, with a Moscow-directed unabashed Russification and an assault on the Ukrainian national identity. Shortly after that, an estimated six million Ukrainians died in the 1932-1933 forced collectivization of agriculture. Some experts see the special brutality of the collectivization campaign in the Ukraine as a deliberate measure to crush Ukrainian nationalism.

Moscow, indeed, systematically has tried to suppress Ukrainian national consciousness. Yet an active and popular underground nationalist movement sprang up in the early 1960s protesting Russification and demanding greater cultural and political autonomy from Moscow. To a certain extent, nationalist sentiment was cautiously encouraged by the then Ukrainian Communist leader Petr Shelest, who advocated preservation of the Ukrainian language and culture. Shelest's removal from the post of the First Secretary of the Ukrainian Communist Party by Brezhnev in 1972 as a "national deviationist" and his replacement by Vladimir Shcherbitsky, an orthodox and zealous promoter of Moscow's policies, marked the beginning of another frontal attack Ukrainian nationalism.

Shcherbitsky's Iron Fist. As a group, the Ukrainian nationalist dissidents have been repressed more brutally than any other "anti-Soviet elements." Their prison terms have been longer and prison conditions worse than for other nationalists.

The iron fist of Shcherbitsky, as well as the vastness of the Ukrainian territory and the size and ethnic heterogeneity of its population, have prevented nationalists from taking advantage of Gorbachev's policies of *glasnost'* and *perestroika* with the speed and effectiveness that characterized the national democratic movements in the Baltic republics and Armenia.

The size the Ukrainian territory and population as well as the vital role played by its agriculture and industry in the Soviet economy, moreover, set it apart from other Union republics. Like previous Soviet leaders, Gorbachev is

reluctant to ease the repression in the Ukraine. For this reason, apparently, he keeps his well-known opponent Shcherbitsky in power — the only remaining Brezhnev appointee still heading a republic. Gorbachev seems to have concluded that an Ukraine without *perestroika* is by far preferable to an Ukraine swept by nationalist turmoil. During a recent tour of the Ukraine, Gorbachev told a group of coal miners: “You can only imagine what would happen if there were disorder in the Ukraine. Fifty-one million people live here. The whole fabric of the Soviet Union would be amiss.”¹²

Promoting *Perestroika*. Nevertheless, the ferment of democratic nationalism clearly is spreading in the Ukraine. The popular *Hromada* society was formed last spring in the University of Kiev, the Ukrainian capital. Consisting of students, young workers and intellectuals, its goals are to “expand and realize the principles of democracy and *glasnost*”, preserve the national culture, spread and popularize the Ukrainian language, improve the ecological conditions in the Ukraine, [assist] the re-birth of Ukrainian national consciousness and preserve historical and cultural monuments.”¹³

Last June, a Democratic Front to Promote Perestroika, modelled on the Baltic Popular Fronts, was proclaimed in Lvov at a meeting of 10,000 to 20,000. A month later, a broad program of democratization and national autonomy was unveiled by the Executive Committee of the Ukrainian Helsinki Union — a human rights watchdog group. The Ukrainian nationalists want greater autonomy from Moscow; environmental protection measures like adequate cleanup of radioactive waste from the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear accident, as well as easing air and water pollution; legalization of the banned Ukrainian Catholic Church, and making Ukrainian the official language of the republic.

SOVIET NATIONALITIES AND U.S. FOREIGN POLICY

The development of U.S. policy toward the national democratic movements in the Soviet Union should be based on two premises. First, the mushrooming nationalities crisis in the USSR is unlikely to be resolved within the current Soviet political and economic system, and, therefore, long will be a feature of the Soviet domestic scene. Second, this crisis will be getting increasingly acute as the Soviet economy worsens and various destabilizing and half-hearted reforms are tried in the economic and political realms.

The mounting nationalities crisis in the USSR means that the U.S. immediately must design a coherent, long-term strategy for dealing with it. The issue of Soviet nationalities may soon become one of the most powerful factors in the overall U.S.-Soviet equation. This strategy is based on several existing principles. First, the moral foundation, objectives, and tactics of most of the Soviet national movements make them fully compatible with the Reagan Doctrine, which calls for world-wide U.S. efforts to promote democracy.

¹² *The Washington Post*, February 23, 1989.

¹³ *The Ukrainian Review*, 4, 1988, p.70.

Holding Moscow Accountable. Second, the U.S. and the West in general have solid legal ground for monitoring and criticizing Moscow's nationality policy in accordance with Article VIII of the "Declaration on Principles Guiding Relations between Participating States" of the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, which commits the signatories, including the Soviet Union, to "respect the equal rights of peoples and their right to self-determination" and declaring that "all peoples always have the right, in full freedom, to determine, when and as they wish, their internal and external political status. . . and to pursue as they wish their political, economic, social and cultural developments."

Guided by these two principles, the U.S. should:

1) Actively assist national democratic movements in the Soviet Union by providing information, facilitating communication, helping distribution of materials and easing financial difficulties.

The Voice of America (VOA), Radio Liberty (RL) and, in the case of the Baltic republics, Radio Free Europe (RFE) should increase sharply their broadcast time in the non-Russian languages of the Soviet Union. At present, the VOA broadcasts only two hours daily in Uzbek to the 50 million Soviet Muslims. Armenians, Latvians, Estonians, Lithuanians, and Azerbaijanis each get a mere 75 minutes. By comparison, there are 16 hours of daily broadcasts in Russian. Similarly, RL/RFE broadcasts only 70 minutes daily in Uzbek and Kazakh, an hour in Azerbaijani, Belorussian, and Lithuanian, and for less than an hour (from 55 to 35 minutes a day) in Armenian, Georgian, Estonian, Latvian, Tadzhik, and Kirghiz.

The magazine *Amerika*, distributed in the USSR by the United States Information Agency, is published only in Russian; it should be published also in at least Ukrainian and Uzbek. In the next round of cultural exchange negotiations with the Soviet Union, the U.S. should press Moscow to allow the distribution of Ukrainian and Uzbek versions of *Amerika*.

Using the experience with the Polish nationalist and free labor underground, the National Endowment for Democracy should request funds for purchasing such communication and printing equipment as word processors, printers, and modems for shipment to the national democratic groups in the Soviet Union that are prevented by the authorities from obtaining such equipment. Additional funding should be requested for direct financial support of the movements.

2) Make non-Russian nationalities a key component in the ongoing relations with Moscow.

National self-determination for the peoples of the USSR should be as important a part of the U.S. human rights agenda as individual human rights. Moscow's behavior in this area should be carefully monitored and linked to economic cooperation with the USSR. The U.S. should not repeat the mis-

take made by the State Department in adopting the position that Moscow's suppression of the legitimate aspirations of the Armenian people was "strictly internal Soviet affair in which the United States has no interest."¹⁴

To promote private enterprise in the national republics U.S. businesses should be encouraged to bypass Moscow-controlled state ministries and enterprises and to forge direct economic ties with private entrepreneurs in the republics.

In negotiating scientific and cultural exchanges with the Soviet Union, the U.S. should insist on the inclusion of significant numbers of non-Russian representatives in the Soviet exchange delegations. At the moment, the overwhelming majority of the Soviet participants in U.S.-Soviet exchanges are Russian.

CONCLUSION

All colonial empires eventually collapse. Their decline and fall usually begin at their peripheries. The Soviet internal empire exhibits all the signs of imminent collapse: worsening economic conditions, rapid diminution of allegiance to Moscow even in traditionally loyal areas, increasingly restive national populations disillusioned with the Soviet political and economic models, and a religious renaissance increasingly at odds with the Moscow-imposed state religion of Marxism and socialism.

Building A Record of Support. At no time in the 55 years of American official relations with the Soviet Union has Moscow faced such a mounting crisis from within. Washington must handle its response to the USSR's crisis with extraordinary care. It also must allow the issue of Soviet nationalities to play an increasingly prominent role in U.S. relations with Moscow.

Both moral imperatives and strategic interests require that when the Soviet internal empire begins dissolving, the U.S. have a long and solid record of being on the side of the oppressed peoples, not their colonial masters. The time to start building such a record is now.

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¹⁴ Stuart Goldman, "Soviet Nationalities Problems," Congressional Research Service, October 13, 1988, pp. 75, 76.

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