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The National Factor in the Political History of the Soviet Union

From Indigenization to Sovereignization: How the Disintegration of the Soviet Union Was Prepared

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Abstract—Having analyzed the unique statistical material of the 20th century, the author examines the national composition of the USSR institutions of governance: executive, legislative, and judicial authorities, the CPSU apparatus at the level of the highest authorities of the Soviet Union; and republican and local institutions, as well as in the army and law enforcement bodies. According to the author, since the 1930s, there has been a gradual displacement of Russians and their replacement with representatives of the "titular nations" in all the union republics, which turned the USSR federal structure into the "cradle" of new states that appeared on the ruins of the Soviet Union.

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For 30 years, scientists have been studying the disintegration of the Soviet Union with unflagging interest in search of answers to the questions: how and why did it happen, and what factors caused it? According to a rough estimate, as of August 1, 2020, more than 300 books, 3000 articles, and 20 dissertations have been written in Russia alone. Depending on the proposed interpretations, researchers of this process can be divided into three large groups. The first group includes those who consider disintegration to be natural, having deep historical, economic, political, cultural, and social prerequisites and causes, the second and third groups include those who consider it a random phenomenon generated mainly by the circumstances and events of 1985–1991. Accordingly, the first often call disintegration decay, and the second and third, collapse.[1] This article attempts to consider the disintegration of the Soviet Union from the perspective of overcoming ethnopolitical discrimination and the formation of political elites in the union republics.

The significance of these factors was noted by many Russian and foreign scientists.[2] "The presence of state institutions in the republics created political, legal, and organizational prerequisites for the implementation of centrifugal tendencies," one of the leading researchers of disintegration R.G. Pikhoya points out.[3] The famous Russian anthropologist V.A. Tishkov wrote a lot about the emergence of ambitious national elites as a factor in the growth of separatism and the crisis that ultimately led to the collapse of the

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[1] See B. N. Mironov, "Disintegration of the USSR in historiography: Collapse or disintegration," Vestn. SPb Univ. Ist. **66** (1), 132–147 (2021).

[2] A. Burovskii, *The Collapse of the Empire* (Krasnoyarsk, 2004), pp. 214, 215; Yu. Slezkine, "The USSR as a communal apartment, or How a socialist state promoted ethnic particularism," in *American Russian Studies: Milestones of Historiography in Recent Years: Soviet Period: Anthology,* Ed. by M. David-Fox (Samarsk. Univ, Samara, 2001), pp. 329–374 [in Russian]; S. V. Cheshko, "The role of ethno-nationalism in the collapse of the USSR," in *The Tragedy of a Great Power: The National Question and the Collapse of the Soviet Union,* Ed. by G. N. Sevost'yanov (Moscow, 2005), pp. 443–468 [in Russian]; R. Brubaker, "Nationhood and the national question in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Eurasia: An institutionalist account," Theory and Society, No. 23, 47–78 (1994); D. D. Latinin, *Identity in Formation: The Russian-Speaking Populations in the Near Abroad* (Ithaca, 1998); R. G. Roeder, *Red Sunset: The Failure of Soviet Politics* (Princeton, 1993).

[3] R. G. Pikhoya, *Moscow. Kremlin. Power. Two Stories of One Country: Russia at the Turn of the Millennium: 1985–2005* (Moscow, 2007), p. 379 [in Russian]; See also: R. G. Pikhoya, "Why did the Soviet Union collapse?," in *The Tragedy of a Great Power: The National Question and the Collapse of the Soviet Union,* Ed. by G. N. Sevost'yanov and S. M. Iskhakov (Moscow, 2005), pp. 404–422 [in Russian].

state.[4] However, until now, to prove such a fundamental thesis, mass statistical data have not been mobilized that would show how the indigenization of political elites in the republics took place, when it was completed and made them potentially capable of taking full power into their own hands. Moreover, it is often stated, especially in works carried out in modern autonomies and former Soviet republics, that indigenization, which was carried out in the Soviet Union in the 1920s–1930s, was curtailed, and its active participants were repressed.[5]

Meanwhile, to analyze the process of formation of the republican elites, there are adequate sources—the censuses of 1897,[6] 1926,[7] 1959,[8] 1970,[9] 1979,[10] and 1989[11]—containing information about the ethnic composition of managers of different spheres and levels. Demographers consider these data satisfactory.[12]

The 1897 census recorded all the officials who were in the service of the administration, the court, the police, in the court, diplomatic, and boundary departments, without dividing them according to areas of employment and ranks.[13] The Soviet censuses took into account separately those employed in the state and party apparatus (including legislative institutions), in the courts and law enforcement agencies (we will conditionally call all these areas management, and all those employed in them managers). Of the employees of the state and party apparatus, only the *leaders* were recorded. Ordinary officials were not singled out as a separate professional group, but were dissolved in the general mass of employees, and it is impossible to identify them in the census materials. Comparison of census data and departmental statistics shows that in 1926 and 1959 the leading personnel accounted for 31% of the total number of apparatchiks; in 1970, for 21%; and in 1979, for 26%; i.e., there were 3–4 ordinary employees per manager.

The participation of titular ethnic groups[14] in management will be assessed using two indicators: (1) by the percentage of the ethnic group in the total number of managers and (2) by the ratio of the share of the ethnic group employed in management to the share of this ethnic group in the entire employed population. The first indicator measures the degree of participation of ethnic groups in governance, and the second, ethnic representation in the formation of government bodies (let us call it the index of *ethnopolitical representation* (IEPR)).[15] Of course, the role of an ethnic group

[4] V. A. Tishkov, "The ethnic factor and the collapse of the USSR: Variants of explanatory models," in *The Tragedy of a Great Power: The National Question and the Collapse of the Soviet Union,* Ed. by G. N. Sevost'yanov and S. M. Iskhakov (Moscow, 2005), pp. 588–600 [in Russian]; V. A. Tishkov, *Requiem for an Ethnos: Studies in Sociocultural Anthropology* (Moscow, 2003), pp. 339–355 [in Russian].

[5] E. Yu. Borisenok, *The Phenomenon of Soviet Ukrainization* (Moscow, 2006), pp. 209–238 [in Russian]; R. G. Gizdatullin, Ideological and Political Struggle in Tatarstan for the Realization of the National Interests of the Tatar People: 1920s, *Cand. Sci. (Hist.) Dissertation* (Kazan, 2007), pp. 184–190 [in Russian]; D. Dzhunushaliev, Kyrgyzstan: Transformative Processes in the 1920s–1930s (Historical Analysis of the Problems of Creation and Tragedies), *Doctoral (Hist.) Dissertation* (Bishkek, 1993), pp. 95–116 [in Russian]; D. Kh. Yandurin, Nation-State Construction in the Autonomies of the Ural–Volga Region in the 1920s–1930s, *Doctoral (Hist.) Dissertation* (Ufa, 2003), pp. 222–318 [in Russian].

[6] *A General Compilation of the Results of the Development of Data of the First General Census in the Empire, Carried out on January 28, 1897,* in 2 vols., Ed. by N. Troinitskii (St. Petersburg, 1905) [in Russian]; *Distribution of the Population by Types of Main Occupations and Age Groups in Separate Territorial Regions,* in 4 vols., Ed. by N. Troinitskii (St. Petersburg, 1905) [in Russian]. On the basis of published materials, an electronic database was created: Professions and Occupations of the Population of the Russian Empire in the Late 19th–Early 20th Centuries: Data Analysis of the First All-Russian Population Census of 1897: Information System (http://stat1897.histcensus.asu.ru/about/).

[7] *All-Union Population Census 1926,* in 56 vols. (Moscow, 1928–1930) [in Russian].

[8] *All-Union Population Census 1959* (Russian State Archive of Economy (RGAE), fund 1562, inventory 336, files 2871–2875, Table 3d, Distribution of the population by occupation and nationality in the USSR in 1959; files 2876–2890, Table 3d, Distribution of the population by occupation and nationality by union republics in 1959; files 2893, 2898, 2890, 2904, 2924, 2928, 2938, 2839, 2939, 2949, Table 3d, Distribution of the population by occupation and nationality by autonomous republics in 1959).

[9] *Results of the All-Union Population Census of 1970,* in 10 vols. (Moscow, 1971–1973), Vol. 8: *Distribution of the Population of the USSR and Union Republics by Occupation,* Part 1 (Moscow, 1973), pp. 14, 24, 28.

[10] All-Union population census of 1979 (RSAE, fund 1562, inventory 336, file 7465, Distribution of the population of individual nationalities by occupation in the USSR in 1979; files 7466–7473, Distribution of the population of individual nationalities by occupation in the union republics in 1979; files 7490, 7500, 7501, 7503, 7505, 7508, 7510).

[11] All-Union population census 1989 (RSAE, fund 1562, inventory 69, files 2570–2578. Table 36v. Distribution of the population of individual nationalities by occupation in the USSR and the union republics).

[12] The 1920, 1937, and 1939 censuses contain no information on ethnic employment. For more details, see: B. N. Mironov, "Ethnic discrimination during the formation of USSR government bodies," Noveish. Ist. Ross., No. 1, 149–173 (2021).

[13] *A General Compilation of the Results of the Development of Data of the First General Census in the Empire, Carried out on January 28, 1897,* in 2 vols., Ed. by N. Troinitskii (St. Petersburg, 1905), Vol. 2, pp. 236, 237 [in Russian]; *Distribution of the Population by Types of Main Occupations and Age Groups in Separate Territorial Regions,* in 4 vols., Ed. by N. Troinitskii (St. Petersburg, 1905), Vols. 1–4 [in Russian].

[14] The titular people or ethnos will be called the people in whose honor the union republic was named; there have been 15 of them since 1956.

[15] If the index is equal to one, then the ethnos is represented in management in proportion to its size, and the rights of this ethnos in the recruitment of managerial personnel are observed. If more or less than one, then the interests of the ethnic group are reflected in the power structures inadequately—excessively or insufficiently. Full correspondence between the share of an ethnic group in the population and its share among managers will be considered a democratic norm of representativeness, or representation.

Table 1. The national composition of the USSR state apparatus and power structures in 1926, 1959, 1979, and 1989 (%)

Ethnic groups	1926*	1959	1979	1989
Heads of the state apparatus				
Russians	63.8	53.5	55.3	53.1
Non-Russians	36.2	46.5	44.7	46.9
15 titular ethnic groups	81.9	87.7	89.8	90.4
All population	100	100	100	100
Judicial system				
Russians	65.1	56.4	59.9	57.2
Non-Russians	34.9	43.6	40.1	42.8
15 titular ethnic groups	81.4	82.0	89.1	90.6
Total	100	100	100	100
Militia				
Russians	67.0	65.4	62.1	58.0
Non-Russians	33.0	34.6	37.9	42.0
15 titular ethnic groups	85.4	92.4	90.5	91.5
Total	100	100	100	100
Army**				
Russians	73.0	63.1	–	–
Non-Russians	27.0	36.9	–	–
15 titular ethnic groups	68.0	92.3	–	–
Total	100	100	–	–

Calculated using: *A General Compilation of the Results of the Development of Data of the First General Census in the Empire, Carried out on January 28, 1897*, in 2 vols., Ed. by N. Troinitskii (St. Petersburg, 1905), Vol. 2, pp. 226–255 [in Russian]; *Distribution of the Population by Types of Main Occupations and Age Groups in Separate Territorial Regions*, in 4 vols., Ed. by N. Troinitskii (St. Petersburg, 1905), Vols. 1–4 [in Russian]; *All-Union Population Census 1926,* Vols. 18–34; RGAE: Census 1959; RGAE: Census 1979; RGAE: Census 1989; *Labor in the USSR* (Moscow, 1988), pp. 16–25, 118, 125–127; A. P. Artem'ev, *Fraternal Fighting Union of the Peoples of the USSR in the Great Patriotic War* (Moscow, 1975), p. 58 (data on the composition of 200 rifle divisions numbering over a million military personnel in 1943).

* The state and party apparatus in 1926.

** In 1926 based on sample data. In the column for 1959, information on the composition of the army in 1943.

in governance depended not only on the number of its representatives in power structures, but also on what positions they held; how actively they used their powers; and what were their personal statuses, prestige, and influence. However, participation in management itself is of paramount importance.

In the Soviet Union, three branches of power were formally recognized: *legislative* (representative)—the Soviets of People's Deputies and their governing bodies; *executive* (administrative)—state governing bodies; and *supervisory* (the prosecutor's office, people's courts, the State Arbitration, the People's Control Committee, and similar national institutions). In reality, there was no strict division. Soviets (councils) of different levels had not only legislative but also administrative and supervisory functions, as well as the right to cancel acts of executive power. In fact, the main role was played by the fourth branch—the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, which, according to the 1977 Constitution, was "the leading and guiding force of Soviet society, the core of its political system, state and public organizations." The highest bodies were the Central Committee and the Politburo.[16] As recognized by N.I. Ryzhkov in the early 1990s, "the parliament had no influence. It was all nominal, decorative, and the real power was in the Council of Ministers."[17]

Let us evaluate the dynamics of ethnopolitical inequality in different areas of government in the country as a whole (the scope of the article determines the use of predominantly relative and summary data)[18] (Table 1).

As you can see, the indigenization of personnel was observed in all areas of management, although to varying degrees. Based on the total data for the Soviet Union, we can say that it affected the executive branch to the greatest extent and the judicial and law enforcement agencies to a lesser extent.

An increase in the role of the titular ethnic groups in governance occurred in all the union republics, except for the RSFSR, where the participation of the titular ethnic group—Russians—in power structures decreased (Table 2).

The above data allow us to conclude that the most significant in the policy of indigenization—the creation of national personnel in all spheres of public life, including management—continued until 1990. By 1979, the titular ethnic groups controlled the authorities in 13 of the 15 union republics. Only in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan they did not have a majority, because their share in the population remained insignificant

[16] R. G. Pikhoya, *Moscow. Kremlin. Power. Two Stories of One Country: Russia at the Turn of the Millennium: 1985–2005* (Moscow, 2007), pp. 387–389, 534 [in Russian].

[17] Recording of N.I. Ryzhkov's conversations with an employee of the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace, Moscow, 1992–1994 (Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RGASPI), fund 653, inventory 1, file 519, fols. 179–180).

[18] Statistical calculations of primary census data were carried out in Microsoft Excel; the resulting numbers were rounded to hundredths or thousandths. In subsequent, secondary calculations, rounded data were used, and in the final tables given in the article, the calculation results were again rounded to tenths or hundredths. As a result of this triple rounding, the final figures may differ slightly from those obtained if all calculations are carried out without intermediate rounding.

Table 2. Participation of 15 titular peoples in the management of the Russian Empire and the USSR in 1897–1989*

Republic	Ethnos	Ethnos's share in management, %					Representation index				
		1897**	1926	1959	1979	1989	1897**	1926	1959	1979	1989
RSFSR	Russians	89.3	81.8	82.5	82.4	81.6	1.11	1.10	1.00	1.00	1.01
	Non-Russians	10.7	18.2	17.5	17.6	18.4	0.55	0.70	1.06	1.00	0.97
Azerbaijan	Azerbaijanis	–	49.0	56.1	77.9	83.3	–	0.84	0.94	1.04	1.03
	Russians	84.3	17.5	17.2	8.4	5.3	3.35	1.43	1.18	0.86	0.79
Armenia	Armenians	39.3	94.5	92.4	94.4	97.0	0.83	1.14	1.06	1.05	1.03
	Russians	23.4	1.2	2.7	1.4	1.3	3.52	0.50	0.72	0.49	0.75
Belarus	Belarusians	30.7	57.5	69.5	72.5	–	0.70	0.69	0.85	0.93	–
	Russians	42.0	16.6	20.7	19.0	–	4.50	2.18	3.10	1.50	–
Georgia	Georgians	50.2	69.5	72.0	76.5	79.2	0.67	1.08	1.11	1.11	1.11
	Russians	32.5	8.0	7.5	5.2	4.3	5.24	1.91	0.70	0.66	0.66
Kazakhstan	Kazakhs	16.2	24.7	38.3	41.5	–	0.23	0.42	1.57	1.45	–
	Russians	77.8	51.2	43.6	40.7	–	3.46	2.74	0.96	0.90	–
Kyrgyzstan	Kyrgyz	11.7	24.1	38.5	47.4	51.0	0.15	0.35	1.00	1.17	–
	Russians	78.1	45.9	36.9	33.4	–	6.82	4.38	1.14	1.05	–
Latvia	Latvians	15.9	–	48.5	51.9	46.8	0.36	–	0.78	1.04	0.95
	Russians	29.6	–	37.9	34.6	36.5	4.17	–	1.48	1.00	1.06
Lithuania	Lithuanians	11.9	–	69.5	77.3	75.9	0.40	–	0.87	1.00	0.98
	Russians	48.4	–	19.9	13.0	13.3	5.09	–	2.53	1.28	1.33
Moldova	Moldovans	10.2	–	37.7	50.4	–	0.25	–	0.56	0.81	–
	Russians	76.0	–	30.9	22.5	–	2.33	–	3.60	1.71	–
Tajikistan	Tajiks	23.8	40.4	50.3	56.7	–	0.87	0.55	1.00	1.07	–
	Russians	49.7	35.0	23.3	18.3	–	11.83	13.00	1.48	1.25	–
Turkmenistan	Turkmens	10.6	25.7	47.9	62.8	–	0.20	0.36	0.85	1.01	–
	Russians	69.6	46.2	28.9	19.9	–	4.09	6.35	1.32	1.16	–
Uzbekistan	Uzbeks	15.8	40.6	49.5	61.1	64.6	0.28	0.60	0.83	0.96	0.96
	Russians	49.7	49.2	23.4	17.3	13.6	11.83	6.19	1.47	1.20	1.25
Ukraine	Ukrainians	53.3	55.0	68.1	70.0	–	0.73	0.66	0.87	0.97	–
	Russians	38.9	23.0	25.2	25.1	–	3.23	2.75	1.62	1.14	–
Estonia	Estonians	52.4	–	66.1	66.9	58.5	0.62	–	0.89	1.12	1.00
	Russians	28.3	–	26.4	25.1	31.2	3.72	–	1.37	0.81	0.98

Calculated using: see the notes to Table 1.

* In the state and party apparatus, in the courts, law enforcement, and legislative institutions.

** Here and in other tables, the territory and population of the future union republics are determined tentatively for 1897.

Table 3. De-Russification of Administration in the USSR and the RSFSR in 1926–1989*

Administrative unit		Ethnos's share in management, %					Representation index				
		1897	1926	1959	1979	1989	1897	1926	1959	1979	1989
USSR	Russians	67.8	64.8	61.2	59.1	53.1	1.43	1.22	1.14	1.07	1.06
	Non-Russians	32.2	35.2	38.8	40.9	46.9	0.61	0.76	0.84	0.91	0.93
USSR without RSFSR	Russians	40.5	27.9	25.0	23.7	20.5	2.89	1.67	1.65	1.11	1.02
	Non-Russians	59.5	72.1	75.0	76.3	79.5	0.69	0.87	0.88	0.97	0.99
RSFSR	Russians	89.3	81.8	82.5	82.4	81.6	1.11	1.10	1.00	1.00	1.00
	Non-Russians	10.7	18.2	17.5	17.6	18.4	0.55	0.70	1.06	1.00	0.97

Calculated using: see the notes to Table 1.

* In the state and party apparatus, in the courts, law enforcement, and legislative institutions.

(respectively 28.6% of Kazakhs and 40.5% of Kyrgyz). However, in these republics, Russians in all government bodies were still in the minority, and in terms of the share among managers they were inferior even to the titular ethnic groups, due to the overrepresentation of Kazakhs by 1.45 times and the Kyrgyz by 1.17 times. In Belarus, Moldova, and Uzbekistan, the titular ethnic groups were underrepresented, while Russians were overrepresented. In Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, and Estonia, the representation of Russians in power structures turned out to be below the democratic norm, and in the remaining nine republics it was higher, but despite this, Russians had a majority only in the RSFSR.

In the last years of Soviet power, the de-Russification of management was gaining momentum, which is clearly seen from Table 3.

Already in 1897, on the territory of the future Soviet Union without the RSFSR, the share of non-Russians among managers was more than half, 59.5%. By 1989, it increased to 79.5%, while the share in the population for 1897–1989 rose from 76.3 to 79.9%. Political discrimination was eliminated: the representation index of non-Russians increased by 1.5 times (from 0.69 to 0.99), while that of Russians fell by 2.8 times (from 2.89 to 1.02).

The composition of the legislature was seriously influenced by electoral laws, which repeatedly changed during the 20th century.[19] Citizens who worked in legislative bodies of power were not identified in the censuses as a separate professional group. However, there are sources that allow us to establish their ethnic composition. It should be noted that national, racial, and confessional qualifications were absent in all electoral laws. However, during the elections to the State Duma in 1907–1912, Orthodox and, therefore, Russian voters were placed in a more advantageous position than non-Orthodox ones (with the help of specially stipulated conditions and restrictions); peoples leading a nomadic lifestyle were deprived of voting rights on the basis of the residency requirement.[20] In 1918–1936 there was a class qualification that ensured the leadership of the Bolsheviks in representative institutions by constitutionally fixing the political inequality of various socio-professional groups. Normative acts on the basis of which the elections of 1936–1988 were held did not provide for the nomination of alternative candidates, nor for political competition, nor for mechanisms to ensure the free expression of the will of voters. As a result, universal suffrage had a declarative character. Only the 1989 elections to the Congress of People's Deputies were sufficiently democratic, thanks to the new electoral law of December 1, 1988.

Let us now evaluate the degree of ethnopolitical discrimination in the legislative bodies of 1906–1990 on the basis of a comparative analysis of the composition of deputies. Information about the deputies of the State Duma and the State Council in 1905–1917 are presented on the scientific and educational Internet portal "Parliamentary History of Late Imperial Russia"[21] and in L.G. Protasov's study.[22] The ethnic composi-

[19] *Institute of Elections in the History of Russia: Sources, Testimonies of Contemporaries: The Views of Researchers of the 19th–early 20th Centuries,* Ed. by A. A. Veshnyakov (Moscow, 2001) [in Russian]; M. S. Salamatova, *Elections in Soviet Russia: Legislation and Implementation Practice (1918–1936),* 2nd ed. (Novosibirsk, 2018) [in Russian]; *Elections around the World: Electoral Freedom and Social Progress: An Encyclopedic Dictionary,* Ed. by A. A. Tanin-L'vov (Moscow, 2001) [in Russian].

[20] Manifesto "On the Dissolution of the State Duma, on the Time of Convocation of a New Duma, and on Changing the Procedure for Elections to the State Duma" of June 3, 1907, *Complete Collection of Laws of the Russian Empire, Assembly 3* (St. Petersburg, 1910), Vol. 27, No. 29240, pp. 319, 320) [in Russian].

[21] Parliamentary History of Late Imperial Russia: Scientific and Educational Portal (http://parliament.psu.ru/pls/parlament/frames.html). The database presented on the portal contains biographies of all 2156 members of the first Russian parliament of four convocations in 1906–1917.

[22] L. G. Protasov, "Deputies of the All-Russia Constituent Assembly: Ethno-national aspect," Nauch. Ved. Belgorod. Univ. **5** (1), 88–94 (2008). The author, without explanation, presented data on 757 deputies, while 715 people were officially elected.

tion of the Congresses of Soviets and the USSR Supreme Soviets is recorded in the reports of the mandate commissions of the relevant legislative bodies, which were compiled on the basis of the questionnaires of the deputies. The statistics of mandate commissions cannot be considered absolutely accurate.[23] Differences in the testimony of different sources existed until the end of the 1930s, but they were not of a fundamental nature. For example, data on the national composition of the delegates to the 7th Congress of USSR Soviets, according to the summary of the mandate commission and the Institute of Soviet Construction and Law, which relied on the decisions and resolutions of the congresses and other sources, diverge to the greatest extent among Russians (0.74%) and Jews (0. 57%). Such differences can be considered acceptable. Approximately the same trend is observed in the data on other congresses. Comparison of the reports of mandate commissions and the results of processing individual questionnaires leads to a similar conclusion,[24] making it possible to use these sources in the study.

An analysis of the data on the ethnic composition of Russian legislators for ten reference points in the period from 1906 to 1989 and the indices of ethnopolitical representation calculated on their basis yield very interesting results (Table 4).

The highest percentage of Russian deputies was in the first Russian parliament—on average for four convocations, 69.3%. In the 1st and 2nd Dumas the share was slightly lower, and, in the 3rd and 4th Dumas, it was higher (due to changes in the electoral law). In the All-Russian Constituent Assembly, the Russians lost even a simple majority, receiving only 49.1% of the seats. At the All-Union Congresses of USSR Soviets in 1922–1935, they had a simple majority, but, already in the Supreme Soviet of the first convocation (1936), they lost it and did not return it in subsequent elections, having only 42–44% of the seats. In the last Supreme Soviet, elected in May 1989 by the Congress of People's Deputies, Russians received the smallest number of seats in the history of the Russian parliament, 38%. In the Council of Nationalities of the Supreme Council of all 12 convocations, they had about a quarter of the seats, which theoretically allowed non-Russian deputies to carry out any decisions.

Let us estimate the level of ethnopolitical inequality in the representative bodies of power (Table 5).

Deputies from 27 ethnic groups entered the first Russian parliament. Among them, four were represented above the democratic norm (in descending order of IEPR): Germans (3.23), Russians (1.46), Georgians (1.10), Poles (1.09). and Estonians (0.97) were close to the democratic norm; Mordovians (0.12), Udmurts (0.14), Chuvashs (0.21), and Jews (0.33) were significantly below it. The share of all non-Russian ethnic groups turned out to be almost two times lower than the share in the population (0.55), but still they participated in the work of the Duma.

In the Constituent Assembly, the representation of Russians in comparison with the State Duma decreased from 1.56 to 1.11 (1.4 times), while among non-Russians it increased from 0.55 to 0.91 (1.7 times), and among all without exception, only to varying degrees. It is indicative that among the most discriminated Jews in the Duma, the IEPR grew the most: from 0.33 to 2.66, or 8 times, and they were represented 2.4 times better than Russians. All this indicates that, first, the elections in 1918 were held democratically and, second, the discriminatory electoral law of 1907 contributed to a decrease in the representation of non-Russian peoples by 1.7 times.

After the establishment of Soviet power and until 1936, the index of non-Russian representation grew: in 1922–1925, 0.85; 1927, 0.93; 1935, 1.02; Russians, on the other hand, decreased (1.13, 1.07, and 0.99, respectively). Despite this, Russians retained a majority in parliament. However, in 1937 the situation changed radically. Until 1989, non-Russian peoples were represented in the Supreme Soviet 1.6 times better than Russians, who had become a discriminated minority, because their representation index turned out to be less than 1. In the Supreme Soviet of all 12 convocations, the average IEPR of Russians was only 0.80; for non-Russian ethnic groups, it was 1.24, or 1.6 times higher. Only in the Council of the Union were Russians represented in proportion to their numbers. This situation, abnormal from the point of view of democracy, developed as a result of the new electoral law of 1936, which gave a qualified majority in the Council of Nationalities to non-Russian deputies. In accordance with Art. 35 of the Constitution of 1936, a deputy was elected "by the citizens of the USSR in the union and autonomous republics, autonomous regions, and national districts according to the norm: 32 deputies from each union republic, 11 deputies from each autonomous republic, 5 deputies from each autonomous region, and one deputy for each national okrug." As a result, Russians were represented in the Supreme Soviet below the democratic norm and, therefore, lost their majority (Table 6).

Probably, the designers of the composition of the Supreme Council in the early 1960s realized that the representation of Russians was indecently below the

[23] *All-Russia and USSR Congresses of Soviets in Directives and Resolutions,* Ed. by A. Alymov, Kh. Libman, E. P. Pashukanis, and N. Chelyapov (Moscow, 1935), p. XIX [in Russian].

[24] L. I. Borodkin and A. K. Sokolov, "Experience in creating a database based on personal information about delegates to congresses of Soviets," Ist. SSSR, No. 2, 84–97 (1984); A. K. Sokolov, "Methodology for processing questionnaires of delegates to congresses of Soviets as a source for studying the composition of the highest representative bodies of power in the USSR," in *Auxiliary Sciences of History* (Leningrad, 1985), Vol. 16, pp. 265–294 [in Russian].

Table 4. National composition of the highest legislative bodies of the Russian Empire and the USSR in 1906–1989 (%)*

Ethnos	1906–1917	1918	1922–1925	1935	1937	1959	1962	1979	1989**	1989***
Russians	69.30	49.14	60.18	57.68	42.21	41.07	43.38	43.73	45.62	38.00
Azerbaijanis	–	1.45	0.82	1.06	3.50	3.11	3.12	3.27	2.67	3.70
Armenians	0.71	2.11	1.62	1.52	3.24	2.60	2.77	2.80	2.71	3.00
Belarusians	1.81	1.98	1.79	2.53	2.63	3.76	3.74	3.80	4.18	3.70
Georgians	1.19	1.59	1.16	2.07	4.03	3.25	3.19	3.20	3.16	3.70
Kazakhs	–	2.38	0.00	1.41	2.80	2.46	2.29	2.47	2.36	2.40
Kyrgyz	0.05	–	1.90	0.10	1.66	1.37	1.32	1.67	1.56	1.80
Latvians	0.76	1.98	2.89	1.72	0.53	1.88	1.46	2.13	1.96	2.00
Lithuanians	1.19	–	0.21	0.10	–	2.17	2.08	2.07	2.31	2.60
Moldovans	0.29	0.66	0.09	0.35	0.44	1.45	1.32	1.73	1.91	1.80
Tajiks	0.86	–	–	0.51	1.40	1.95	2.01	2.13	1.96	2.80
Turkmens	–	–	0.37	0.45	1.58	1.81	1.32	1.87	1.78	2.20
Uzbeks	–	1.06	1.29	2.58	3.33	3.54	2.98	3.53	3.87	3.30
Ukrainians	7.20	18.23	11.25	11.87	10.51	14.39	14.62	12.33	11.47	11.10
Estonians	0.76	1.19	0.15	0.35	0.09	1.88	1.80	1.87	1.82	2.00
15 ethnic groups	84.12	81.77	83.72	84.30	77.95	86.69	87.40	88.60	89.34	84.10
Other	15.88	18.23	16.28	15.70	22.05	13.31	12.60	11.40	10.66	15.90
Non-Russians	30.70	50.86	39.82	42.32	57.79	58.93	56.62	56.27	54.38	62.00
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Number of deputies, people	2156	757	5361	2007	1142	1383	1443	1500	2249	542
Number of ethnic groups, absolute	27	26	49	58	54	60	57	62	65	55

Calculated using: State Duma 1906–1917 (http://parliament.psu.ru/pls/parlament/frames.html); L. G. Protasov, "Deputies of the All-Russia Constituent Assembly: Ethno-national aspect," Nauch. Ved. Belgorod. Univ. **5** (1), 88–94 (2008); Verbatim report [Dec. 30, 1922], Appendix; "First session of the Central Executive Committee of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics," in *The First Congress of Soviets of the USSR* (Moscow, 1923), p. 19; Appendix 2, pp. 3–8; *Statistical Data on the Composition of the Congresses of Soviets: The 2nd Congress of Soviets of the USSR and the XI All-Russia Congress of Soviets* (Moscow, 1924), pp. 7, 15; *Composition of the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Congresses of Soviets of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics* (Moscow, 1925), p. 29, Table 10, Nationality; *7th Congress of Soviets: Verbatim Report* (Moscow, 1935), pp. 52, 53, Bull. 11; *Elections to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and to the Supreme Soviets of the Union and Autonomous Republics: 1937–1938: (Digital Collection),* Ed. by P. V. Tumanov (Moscow, 1939), pp. 12, 13; *Supreme Soviet of the USSR of the Sixth Convocation: Statistical Collection* (Moscow, 1962), pp. 24, 25; *Supreme Soviet of the USSR of the Tenth Convocation: Statistical Collection* (Moscow, 1979), pp. 32–34; *The Composition of the People's Deputies of the USSR, the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, the Standing Committees of the Chambers and Committees of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR: Statistical Collection* (Moscow, 1989), pp. 13–16.

* 1905–1917, State Duma and State Council; 1918, All-Russia Constituent Assembly; 1922–1925, 1935, Congresses of Soviets of the USSR; 1937, 1962, 1989, the Supreme Soviet of the USSR; 1989, I Congress of People's Deputies; May 1989, the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, elected by the I Congress of People's Deputies.

** I Congress of People's Deputies.

*** Supreme Soviet of the USSR.

Table 5. The index of ethnic representation in the highest legislative bodies of the Russian Empire and the USSR in 1906–1989

Ethnos	1906–1917	1918	1922–1925	1935	1937	1959	1962	1979	1989*	1989**
Russians	1.56	1.11	1.13	0.99	0.72	0.75	0.79	0.83	0.90	0.75
Azerbaijanis	–	3.30	0.71	0.79	2.63	2.21	2.22	1.56	1.13	1.56
Armenians	0.77	2.27	1.52	1.20	2.57	1.95	2.08	1.77	1.68	1.85
Belarusians	0.39	0.42	0.55	0.82	0.85	0.99	0.99	1.05	1.19	1.05
Georgians	1.11	1.47	5.17	1.57	3.05	2.52	2.47	2.35	2.27	2.66
Jews	0.33	2.66	4.14	4.45	2.31	1.42	0.37	0.60	1.40	1.15
Kazakhs	–	0.73	–	0.78	1.54	2.95	1.32	0.99	0.83	0.84
Kyrgyz	0.30	–	3.66	0.19	3.20	2.81	2.84	2.29	1.76	2.03
Latvians	0.67	1.74	29.92	24.53	7.51	1.95	2.17	3.89	3.83	3.92
Lithuanians	0.79	–	7.26	5.05	0.00	1.37	1.87	1.90	2.15	2.42
Moldovans	0.32	0.74	0.49	2.36	2.92	2.21	1.24	1.53	1.63	1.53
Tajiks	0.46	–	–	0.70	1.95	2.92	3.00	1.93	1.33	1.90
Turkmens	–	–	0.72	0.95	3.28	3.77	2.75	2.41	1.86	2.30
Uzbeks	–	0.78	0.48	0.91	1.17	1.23	1.03	0.74	0.66	0.56
Ukrainians	0.40	1.02	0.53	0.72	0.64	0.81	0.82	0.76	0.74	0.72
Estonians	0.96	1.50	1.41	4.42	1.09	3.97	3.81	4.80	5.07	5.57
15 ethnic groups	1.07	1.04	0.96	0.95	0.88	1.30	0.97	0.98	0.99	0.93
Other	0.72	0.86	1.29	1.38	1.93	1.31	1.24	1.17	1.10	1.64
Non-Russians	0.55	0.91	0.85	1.02	1.39	1.30	1.25	1.18	1.11	1.26

Calculated using: see the notes to Table 4.
* Congress of People's Deputies.
** Supreme Soviet of the USSR.

Table 6. National composition of the Council of Unions and the Council of Nationalities of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR in 1937–1989 (%)

Ethnos	1937	1946	1959	1962	1979	1989
Council of the Union						
Russians	59.4	58.0	56.8	56.6	58.4	55.0
Non-Russians	40.6	42.0	43.2	43.4	41.6	45.0
Council of Nationalities						
Russians	23.6	21.7	23.0	27.3	29.1	21.0
Non-Russians	76.4	78.3	77.0	72.7	70.9	79.0
Supreme Soviet						
Russians	41.4	40.4	41.1	43.4	43.7	38.0
Non-Russians	58.6	59.6	58.9	56.6	56.3	62.0

Calculated using: see the notes to Table 4.

democratic norm (IEPR in 1959, 0.72) and took measures to raise it to 0.9 in 1989. However, as part of the Supreme Council, elected in the same year by the Congress of People's Deputies, Russian representation fell again to 0.75, a third below the democratic norm.

The analysis of the ethnic composition of the executive, legislative, and law enforcement agencies leads to the conclusion that, during the Soviet period, the ethnopolitical inequality of non-Russian peoples in the formation of executive authorities was eliminated, and in the judicial sphere it was reduced to a minimum. In the legislature, Russians were a minority for 52 years, from 1937 to 1989. Meanwhile, according to the Constitutions of 1936 and 1977, the Supreme Soviet possessed not only legislative but also executive and supervisory power, being the source of law and the collective head of state. Thus, the Stalinist constitution of 1936, on the one hand, kept a time bomb under the unity of the country, as it gave the republics the right to secede from the Soviet Union. Another "mine" was to provide the non-Russian peoples with a qualified majority in the Council of Nationalities (Article 35) and to give them equal rights with the Council of the Union (Article 37). Both chambers equally owned the legislative initiative (Article 38); the law was considered approved if it was adopted by both chambers by a simple majority of votes in each (Article 39). In the absence of a "consensual decision of both chambers," the Supreme Soviet of the USSR is dissolved and new elections are called (Article 47). The Constitution of 1977 preserved all of these articles. With such rights, the Council of Nationalities could, in principle, block the work of the Supreme Soviet. Such a situation had never arisen and, it seemed, would not arise. However, the right of the union republics to secede from the USSR until the second half of the 1980s also seemed illusory. No one in the party and Soviet leadership could imagine that someone would actually try to take advantage of it. However, this happened.

It is often said that the Supreme Soviets of the USSR and the union republics were *decorative* bodies. This is hardly correct. Councils of all levels were for the time being *manual* but not decorative, as they performed the legislative and control-administrative functions prescribed in the constitutions. Majority in the union Supreme Soviets in 1938–1990 belonged to the titular peoples (Table 7).

In 1990–1991 the Supreme Soviets of the union republics turned from manual ones into really the highest organs of state power in the republics. In February 1990, regular elections were held in Lithuania, in which the sociopolitical organization Sąjūdis received two-thirds of the votes. At the very first meeting on March 11, the Supreme Soviet of the Lithuanian SSR adopted the Act on the Restoration of the Independent State of Lithuania. In May 1990, the Latvian and Estonian SSRs followed suit. The "parade of sovereignties" was preceded by a metamorphosis of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, which became an all-powerful body of state power in 1989 and operated in this status until the collapse of the Soviet Union.

It was possible to restrain centrifugal tendencies largely due to the fact that "the real power was not in the Soviets but in the CPSU apparatus,"[25] in which, during the entire Soviet period, the majority belonged to the Russians—the most consistent supporters of the country's unity. Data on the ethnic composition of the CPSU, which numbered 376 000 in 1922, 1 144 000 in 1927, 17 770 000 in 1982, and 19 488 000 as of January 1, 1989, shed light on this issue (Table 8).

In 1922–1925 Russians were represented in the CPSU by a third above the democratic norm, and

Table 7. National composition of the deputies of all the Supreme Soviets of the inion republics in 1938 and 1980 (%)

Ethnos	1938*	1980
Titular	64.2	95.8
Russians	33.2	28.0
Non-Russians	66.8	72.0
Total	100	100

Calculated using: *Elections to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and to the Supreme Soviets of the Union and Autonomous Republics: 1937–1938: (Digital Collection),* Ed. by P. V. Tumanov (Moscow, 1939), p. 14; *Election Results and the Composition of the Deputies of the Supreme Soviets of the Union and Autonomous Republics, 1980: Statistical Collection* (Moscow, 1980), pp. 18–21 [in Russian].

* In 1938, the share of the Kirghiz in the Supreme Soviet of Kyrgyzstan was 48.6%, and that of Russians was 25.7%.

non-Russians, respectively, below. In subsequent years, the representation of all ethnic groups leveled off. By 1990, the representation index for Russians dropped from 1.36 to 1.15, and for all non-Russian peoples it increased from 0.6 to 0.85. Thanks to their greater absolute numbers and advantage in representation, Russians retained a quantitative predominance in the party, although it fell from 72 to 58%. As in all power structures, the representation and participation of Russians in the CPSU was declining.

The Russians had an even greater numerical advantage in the Central Committee and the Politburo (in different years called the Presidium, Orgburo, and Secretariat) at party congresses. The role of the Central Committee of the CPSU, was not institutionalized, but, according to the charter and in fact from 1917 to 1991, it directed the work of central state institutions and public organizations through party groups in them.[26] I.V. Stalin called the Central Committee and the Control Committee the "general headquarters of the party"; M.S. Gorbachev called it the "brain of the party"; and his assistant and political scientist G.Kh. Shakhnazarov, "the brain and engine of the entire system of power and control."[27]

The ethnic composition of the Central Committee changed in waves: the trend towards Russification was replaced by a trend towards de-Russification. In the composition of the Central Committee in the early Soviet period, 1917–1922, the share of Russians did

[25] R. G. Pikhoya, *Moscow. Kremlin. Power. Two Stories of One Country: Russia at the Turn of the Millennium: 1985–2005* (Moscow, 2007), p. 374 [in Russian].

[26] *Communist Party of the Soviet Union in Resolutions and Decisions of Congresses, Conferences, and Plenums of the Central Committee (1898–1986),* in 15 vols. (Moscow, 1983), Vol. 1: *1898–1917,* pp. 589–591; Vol. 2: *1917–1922,* pp. 201–209 [in Russian].

[27] I. V. Stalin, *Works,* in 16 vols. (Moscow, 2007), Vol. 14, p. 220 [in Russian]; I. V. Vorotnikov, *But It Was Like This ... From the Diary of a Member of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the CPSU* (Moscow, 1995), p. 337 [in Russian]; G. Kh. Shakhnazarov, *Price of Freedom: Gorbachev's Reformation through the Eyes of His Assistant* (Moscow, 1994), p. 501 [in Russian].

Table 8. National composition of the CPSU in 1922–1990*

Indicators	1922	1925	1927	1939	1961	1976	1982	1990
Strength of the CPSU, thou. people	376	1088	1144	2478	9716	15694	17770	19228
Russian communists, %	71.9	72.2	65.0	65.8	65.8	60.6	59.8	58.2
Russians in the population, %	53.1	52.9	53.1	58.4	54.6	52.4	52.4	50.8
Russian representation index	1.35	1.36	1.22	1.13	1.21	1.16	1.14	1.15
Non-Russian communists, %	28.1	27.8	35.0	34.2	34.2	39.4	40.2	41.8
Non-Russians in the population, %	46.9	47.1	46.9	41.6	45.4	47.6	47.6	49.2
Non-Russian representation index	0.60	0.59	0.75	0.82	0.75	0.83	0.84	0.85

Calculated using: *All-Russia Population Census of RCP Members in 1922,* in 45-issues, Issue 5: *National Composition of Party Members* (Moscow, 1924), pp. 25–31 [in Russian]; *Party in Digital Lighting: Materials on Statistics of Party Personnel,* in 2 issues, Issue 1 (Moscow, 1925), pp. 5, 41, 86, 87, 99, 100, 106 (data as of January 1, 1925); *Social and National Composition of the CPSU(b): Results of the All-Union Party Census of 1927* (Moscow, 1928), pp. 115–117; "National economy of the USSR, 1922–1982: Party statistics: Statistical data for the CPSU as of January 1, 1976," Part. Zhizn', No. 10, 13–17 (1976); *National Economy of the USSR, 1922–1982: Anniversary Statistical Yearbook* (Moscow, 1982), p. 49; "Party statistics: Statistical data for the CPSU as of January 1, 1990," Izv. TsK KPSS, No. 4, 113–118 (1990); E. Mawdsley and S. White, *The Soviet Elite from Lenin to Gorbachev: The Central Committee and Its Members 1917–1991* (Oxford, 2000); T. H. Rigby, *Communist Party Membership in the USSR, 1917–1967* (Princeton, 1968), pp. 361, 356, 375, 401.

* Members and candidate members of the CPSU.

Table 9. National composition of the CPSU Central Committee in 1917–1990

Indicators	1917–1922	1925	1923–1937	1939	1952	1961	1971	1976	1986	1990
Strength of the CPSU Central Committee*	78	97	163	112	236	297	371	411	477	412
Russian communists, %	48.7	59.8	57.7	69.6	75.0	62.0	64.2	66.4	71.5	51.9
Russians in the population, %	53.1	52.9	55.4	58.4	54.6	54.6	53.4	52.4	51.5	50.8
Russian representation index	0.92	1.13	1.04	1.19	1.37	1.14	1.20	1.27	1.39	1.02
Non-Russian communists, %	51.3	40.2	42.3	30.4	25.0	38.0	35.8	33.6	28.5	48.1
Non-Russians in the population, %	46.9	47.1	44.6	41.6	45.4	45.4	46.6	47.6	48.5	49.2
Non-Russian representation index	1.09	0.85	0.95	0.73	0.55	0.84	0.77	0.71	0.59	0.98
Strength of the CPSU Central Committee **	78	106	187	139	236	330	396	426	477	412

Calculated using: E. Mawdsley and S. White, *The Soviet Elite from Lenin to Gorbachev: The Central Committee and Its Members 1917–1991* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 40, 141, 162, 206, 251, 339, 341, 345–348.

* The number of members of the Central Committee with information about nationality.

** Total number of members of the Central Committee.

not even reach half (48.7%). In subsequent years, Stalin carried out the Russification of the Central Committee, as a result of which the share of Russians in it reached a maximum of 75% by 1952, dropping to 62% under Khrushchev, increasing to 72% during the time of L.I. Brezhnev, and falling again to 52% under Gorbachev (Table 9).

The index of ethnic representation shows that the representation of Russians in the Central Committee only in 1917–1922 was slightly below the democratic norm (0.92), but in subsequent years it was always higher. For 1917–1952 the representation index of Russians rose to 1.37 and reached 1.39 by the beginning of perestroika, the highest point in all the years of Soviet power. By 1991, the representation of Russians had fallen almost to the democratic norm (IEPR = 1.02). The representation and participation of Russians declined under Khrushchev and Gorbachev—in 1953–1964 and 1985–1990. Nevertheless, excluding 1917–1922, Russians in the Central Committee had

Table 10. National composition of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the CPSU in 1917–1989

Indicators	1917–1919	1917–1929	1930–1939	1940–1949	1950–1959	1960–1969	1970–1979	1980–1989	1917–1989
Total members, people	18	63	30	7	36	20	12	23	191
including Russians	8	38	21	6	25	13	10	17	130
Russians in the Politburo, %	44.4	60.3	70.0	85.7	69.4	65.0	83.3	73.9	68.1
Russians in the population, %	53.0	53.0	56.0	58.0	56.0	54.0	53.0	52.0	54.0
Russian representation index	0.84	1.14	1.25	1.48	1.24	1.20	1.57	1.42	1.26
including non-Russians	10	25	9	1	11	7	2	6	61
Non-Russians in the Politburo, %	55.6	39.7	30.0	14.3	30.6	35.0	16.7	26.1	31.9
Non-Russians in the population, %	47.0	44.0	42.0	44.0	46.0	47.0	48.0	46.0	47.0
Non-Russian representation index	1.18	0.90	0.71	0.32	0.66	0.74	0.35	0.57	0.68
Ratio of representation of Russians to non-Russians	0.98	1.66	3.79	2.11	1.62	3.33	2.91	2.03	1.48

Calculated using: V. A. Tishkov, "Nationality communist? (Ethnopolitical analysis of the CPSU)," Polit. Issled., No. 2, 34 (1991); A. G. Vishnevskii, "The highest elite of the RCP(b)–VKP(b)–CPSU (1917–1989): Some statistics." Mir Rossii, No. 4, 42 (1997).

the highest IEPR, their representation was 1.05–2.49 times higher than that of non-Russians.

The ethnic composition of the Politburo changed in accordance with the change in the composition of the Central Committee. In 1917–1953 and 1965–1985 the representation and participation of Russians in the Politburo increased, while that of non-Russians decreased. On the contrary, in 1953–1964 and 1985–1990, the representation and participation of Russians decreased, while those of non-Russians grew. Excluding 1917–1919, Russians predominated numerically. Of the 193 members and candidate members of the Politburo, for the period 1919–1990, 131 (68%) were Russians.[28] Only in the first Politburo of 1917–1919, their share was 44%, and, in 1930–1989, it was in the range of 65–86%, significantly exceeding the share of Russians in the population. As a result, Russians had the highest IEPR, their representation being 1.48–3.33 times higher than that of non-Russians (Table 10).

"The 'nationality communist' principle, generated by Marx's thesis 'the proletariat has no fatherland' and the revolutionary slogan of proletarian class solidarity, was, in fact, never implemented in the political practice of the Bolsheviks," Tishkov noted in 1991.[29] Nevertheless, the communists, in essence, played a cementing role, restraining centrifugal forces and strengthening the role of Russians as a backbone nation. The Communists held an overwhelming majority at the eight congresses of the USSR Soviets in 1922–1936 (averaging 74%), in the Supreme Soviets of the USSR (75%), and union and autonomous republics. It was the communists who bore the burden of responsibility for the situation in the country, relying primarily on the power structures and the army, in which, throughout the entire Soviet period, Russians and representatives of other Slavic ethnic groups were in a significant majority and were overrepresented.

However, the situation in the union republics was different. The 1959, 1979, and 1989 censuses took into account the heads of party, Komsomol, trade union, and other public organizations and their structural divisions[30]—*first and all other secretaries, heads of departments and sectors of party and Komsomol bodies, as well as chairmen, deputy chairmen, and secretaries of trade union bodies.* The leading staff in relation to the number of ordinary members was small. As early as 1959, titular ethnic groups dominated in republican party organizations and leadership, excluding

[28]M.V. Frunze is not taken into account here; his nationality is not specified in the source (indicating: "mother is Russian, father is Moldavian").

[29]V. A. Tishkov, "Nationality communist? (Ethnopolitical analysis of the CPSU)," Polit. Issled., No. 2, 32 (1991).

[30]The Central Committee of the CPSU, the Central Committee of the Komsomol, the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions, the Central Committee of Trade Unions, and central public organizations—at the all-union level; the Central Committee of the Communist Parties of the union and autonomous republics, the Central Committee of the Komsomol, the Soviets and the Central Committee of trade unions—at the republican level; regional committees and district committees of the CPSU, Komsomol, and trade unions—on the scale of territories, regions, and national okrugs.

Table 11. National composition of the apparatus of party, public organizations, and the militia in the union republics in 1959 and 1979

Republic	Ethnic groups	Leaders of the apparatus of the party and public organizations				Militia			
		Share of ethnos, %		Representation index		Share of ethnos, %		Representation index	
		1959	1979	1959	1979	1959	1979	1959	1979
RSFSR	Russians	84.5	83.7	1.02	1.01	83.9	81.4	84.5	83.7
	Non-Russians	15.5	16.3	0.90	0.94	16.1	18.6	15.5	16.3
Azerbaijan	Azerbaijanis	65.1	73.4	1.09	0.98	48.6	77.9	65.1	73.4
	Russians	11.4	10.0	0.77	1.03	24.5	6.3	11.4	10.0
Armenia	Armenians	96.0	96.2	1.11	1.07	94.6	90.1	96.0	96.2
	Russians	1.1	0.8	0.28	0.29	2.1	1.1	1.1	0.8
Belarus	Belarusians	64.3	73.0	0.78	0.94	73.3	76.0	64.3	73.0
	Russians	27.2	19.5	4.10	1.54	19.2	15.6	27.2	19.5
Georgia	Georgians	77.6	80.3	1.19	1.16	63.1	61.0	77.6	80.3
	Russians	7.4	3.8	0.69	0.48	10.8	10.0	7.4	3.8
Kazakhstan	Kazakhs	36.9	44.4	1.50	1.55	33.5	36.8	36.9	44.4
	Russians	10.4	39.6	1.02	0.87	48.4	41.8	10.4	39.6
Kyrgyzstan	Kyrgyz	39.6	53.1	1.03	1.31	32.3	45.1	39.6	53.1
	Russians	39.7	29.1	1.22	0.91	41.1	34.2	39.7	29.1
Latvia	Latvians	53.6	55.0	0.86	1.10	32.8	36.4	53.6	55.0
	Russians	34.5	35.3	1.35	1.02	51.4	44.4	34.5	35.3
Lithuania	Lithuanians	73.0	78.7	0.92	1.02	58.8	67.6	73.0	78.7
	Russians	18.6	13.5	2.36	1.32	29.4	17.3	18.6	13.5
Moldova	Moldovans	29.0	53.0	0.43	0.85	40.2	43.1	29.0	53.0
	Russians	22.1	21.2	4.68	1.61	30.9	27.8	22.1	21.2
Tajikistan	Tajiks	47.7	57.6	0.95	1.09	53.5	57.0	47.7	57.6
	Russians	29.0	20.4	1.84	1.39	22.1	13.5	29.0	20.4
Turkmenistan	Turkmens	51.1	63.1	0.91	1.01	40.7	63.2	51.1	63.1
	Russians	29.5	21.0	1.34	1.22	33.1	20.9	29.5	21.0
Uzbekistan	Uzbeks	48.4	59.5	0.81	0.94	49.3	68.6	48.4	59.5
	Russians	23.5	18.2	1.47	1.26	26.4	12.7	23.5	18.2
Ukraine	Ukrainians	64.9	70.2	0.83	0.97	66.1	69.4	64.9	70.2
	Russians	29.9	26.0	1.93	1.18	28.7	26.3	29.9	26.0
Estonia	Estonians	73.6	71.6	0.99	1.20	49.4	44.5	73.6	71.6
	Russians	23.1	22.9	1.20	0.74	39.6	42.0	23.1	22.9

Calculated using: see the notes to Table 1.

Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. However, even in them, the numerical advantage was on the side of non-Russian ethnic groups. After 20 years, in 1979, only in Kazakhstan were the Kazakhs in the minority, surpassing, however, the Russians, and the non-Russian peoples together constituted the majority. Titular ethnic groups dominated in other republics (Table 11). By 1989, in the USSR as a whole, the displacement of Russians from all power structures of the union repub-

Table 12. National composition of the heads of the apparatus of party and public organizations of the USSR and the RSFSR in 1959, 1979, and 1989

Administrative unit		Share of ethnos in the apparatus, %			Representation index		
		1959	1979	1989	1959	1979	1989
USSR	Russians	63.4	59.0	55.4	1.18	1.07	1.05
	Non-Russians	36.6	41.0	46.6	0.79	0.91	0.94
RSFSR	Russians	84.5	83.7	82.4	1.02	1.01	1.01
	Non-Russians	15.5	16.3	17.6	0.90	0.94	0.96
USSR without RSFSR	Russians	28.1	24.2	19.5	1.86	1.14	0.97
	Non-Russians	71.9	75.8	80.5	0.85	0.96	1.01

Calculated using: see the notes to Table 1.

Table 13. National composition of law enforcement agencies in the USSR and the RSFSR in 1959, 1979, and 1989

Administrative unit		Share of ethnos, %			Representation index		
		1959	1979	1989	1959	1979	1989
USSR	Russians	64.50	62.10	57.80	1.22	1.13	1.09
	Non-Russians	35.50	37.90	42.20	0.74	0.84	0.90
RSFSR	Russians	83.90	81.40	81.00	1.01	0.99	1.00
	Non-Russians	16.10	18.60	19.00	0.94	1.07	1.00
USSR without RSFSR	Russians	29.40	24.80	20.80	1.94	1.17	1.04
	Non-Russians	70.60	75.20	79.20	0.83	0.96	0.99

Calculated using: see the notes to Table 1.

lics, including party structures, was completed (Table 12). Titular ethnic groups dominated (Table 11) in other republics.

In law enforcement agencies in 9 of the 14 republics (excluding the RSFSR), titular ethnic groups also numerically dominated, and in five—in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Moldova, and Estonia—along with other non-Russians. Russians were everywhere in the minority, except for the army (see Tables 11, 13).

Indigenization of administrative and power structures contributed to the formation of national elites, the development of which undermined the unity of the nomenklatura and led to a split in the ruling class along ethnic lines. By the beginning of the 1980s, the national elites in the union republics had a national identity, ambitions, and claims to power and property, which stimulated the development of centrifugal tendencies.[31] They began to be weary of dependence on Moscow,[32] not wanting, as the first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the KazSSR N.A. Nazarbayev put it in 1990, "to further remain the domain of the central authorities."[33] The famous Soviet and Uzbek statesman R.N. Nishanov complained in one of his interviews:

> Russia, like the rest of the republics, was in a rightless position in relation to the center. The eternal dictate of the Politburo, the apparatus of the Central Committee, and a lot of different union bodies equally humiliated the republics and irritated the local elite. In the late 1980s, I worked as the first secretary of the Central

[31]V. A. Zolotov, The Political Elite of the USSR: Social Composition, Educational and Cultural Level (1953–1991), *Doctoral (Hist.) Dissertation* (Moscow, 2006), pp. 208–214.

[32]V. A. Zolotov, The Political Elite of the USSR: Social Composition, Educational and Cultural Level (1953–1991), *Doctoral (Hist.) Dissertation* (Moscow, 2006), pp. 201–209; A. P. Myakshev, "National elites in the late USSR (1985–1991): From the crisis of interethnic trust to the collapse of a single state," Izv. Saratov. Univ., Nov. Ser., Ser. Istoriya. Mezhdunar. Otn., No. 3, 321–328 (2017).

[33]N. A. Nazarbaev, *Without Rightists and Leftists: Pages of an Autobiography, Reflections, Position ...: Answers to Questions from the Publisher* (Alma-Ata, 1991), p. 178.

> Committee of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan, and I remember that even an ordinary instructor of the CPSU Central Committee could call Tashkent and teach from above what to do and what not to do.[34]

Let me remind you that in 1984–1989, in Uzbekistan, during the "cotton case," 800 criminal cases were initiated on economic and corruption abuses. Almost the entire ruling elite of the Uzbek SSR was convicted: over 4000 people received real terms. However, Moscow's attempt to increase oversight met with strong resistance. The party workers sent to the republic faced an obstruction similar to the one that occurred in Kazakhstan in 1986, when, in violation of an unspoken agreement, the first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Kazakh SSR, Kazakh D.A. Kunaev was replaced by the Russian G.V. Kolbin.[35] As Nishanov recalls, "The Navoi Oblast Committee was headed by the leader of the Vyborg City Party Committee of Leningrad oblast E.A. Efimov. The man did not know the language; he only saw cotton in the *News of the Day* newsreel. Quietly left. Just like everyone else."[36]

In the 1920s and 1930s, when there were not enough local personnel, Russian personnel sent from the Center for strengthening were willingly used in the power structures of Uzbekistan, which accounted for up to half of all managers. By the 1980s the administrative apparatus was already 61% staffed by Uzbeks. On December 25, 1991, the day before the legal consolidation of the cessation of the existence of the USSR, President of Uzbekistan I. Karimov pardoned all those convicted in the "cotton case" who were serving sentences on the territory of the republic.[37] Modern Uzbek historiography accuses mainly the "union center" in the events of the 1980s.[38]

During perestroika, the de-Russification of the administrative apparatus in the republics took on an openly Russophobic coloration. Gorbachev's assistant A.S. Chernyaev noted:

> The Politburo stated (in 1989–1990—*B.M.*) that the main carrier of nationalism is the local apparatus of power itself. Dislike and even hatred for Russians grew out of the conviction (which was widely spread by the party apparatus itself on the ground) that it was bad because everything was clamped from above, and there, at the top, where Russians sit, they lead incompetently, illiterately, stupidly.[39]

It was the national elites who were at the forefront of the struggle for complete sovereignty, camouflaging the desire for secession with the slogan of developing cultural and national autonomy.[40] One of the reasons for this process was that in 1986–1990 there was a massive purge at all levels of government. The administrative apparatus was reduced by almost 51%, including the state apparatus, by 86%, and the party apparatus, by 18%. As a result, 799 000 managers, who were previously a reliable support of the regime, were left without work.[41] In 1989, during the reelection of party secretaries at the middle and lower levels, 89000 leaders were replaced. The Central Committee was updated by 85%.[42] There was a replacement of the first secretaries of oblast committees and secretaries of the union republics. On the part of the local nomenklatura, this caused acute discontent and fierce resistance, which manifested itself in the growth of national movements that aimed at national–cultural revival and political independence from Moscow.[43]

So, the disintegration of the Soviet Union had objective prerequisites, which were formed as a result of the national policy aimed at the accelerated modernization of the lagging union republics and at equalizing their levels of development with the most advanced ones. By supporting the process of indigenization of managerial personnel and law enforcement agencies, Moscow contributed to the development and in some cases the creation of a modern national elite in the republics, which was formed not only in public administration, but also in the production and nonproduction sectors of the national economy, in science, culture, art, and medicine.[44] The national state apparatus, the elite, and the ruling class are the most important attributes of a full-fledged state. Having other attributes (population and territory with offi-

[34] R. N. Nishanov, "Events small and large: Interview with Rafik Nishanovich Nishanov [former Chairman of the Council of Nationalities of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR]," Izvestiya, Mar. 22 (2011). https://iz.ru/news/372671.

[35] L. K. Polezhaev, *Perestroika, Years, Faces... Portraits and Reflections* (Omsk, 1996), p. 46 [in Russian].

[36] R. N. Nishanov, "Events small and large: Interview with Rafik Nishanovich Nishanov [former Chairman of the Council of Nationalities of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR]," Izvestiya, Mar. 22 (2011). https://iz.ru/news/372671.

[37] V. Zlotnitskaya, "Adylov released into the wild," Kommersant Vlast', Dec. 30 (1991). https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2181.

[38] Kh. E. Yunusova, Socioeconomic Processes and Spiritual Life in Uzbekistan in the 1980s, *Extended Abstract of the Doctoral (Hist.) Dissertation* (Tashkent, 2009), p. 37.

[39] A. S. Chernyaev, *My Life and My Time* (Moscow, 1995), pp. 331, 332 [in Russian]; V. A. Zolotov, The Political Elite of the USSR: Social Composition, Educational and Cultural Level (1953–1991), *Doctoral (Hist.) Dissertation* (Moscow, 2006), pp. 203, 204.

[40] V. A. Zolotov, The Political Elite of the USSR: Social Composition, Educational and Cultural Level (1953–1991), *Doctoral (Hist.) Dissertation* (Moscow, 2006), p. 201.

[41] *The USSR National Economy in 1989* (Moscow, 1990), p. 50 [in Russian].

[42] *XXVIII Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union: Verbatim Record* (Moscow, 1990), p. 117 [in Russian].

[43] V. A. Zolotov, The Political Elite of the USSR: Social Composition, Educational and Cultural Level (1953–1991), *Doctoral (Hist.) Dissertation* (Moscow, 2006), pp. 202–206.

[44] *Public Education and Culture in the USSR: Statistical Collection* (Moscow, 1989), pp. 16, 202, 237, 256 [in Russian].

cially fixed borders, state symbols, a constitution, and, since 1924, the right to complete secession), the union republics already by 1979 acquired sovereignty, and the titular peoples turned into real nations. In fact, the Soviet government imposed national statehood on the non-Russian peoples, thereby creating structural prerequisites for the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

Was the country's leadership aware of the danger of disintegration? As can be seen from the memorandum of V.I. Lenin on the issue of autonomization of September 22, 1922, I.V. Stalin was well aware of the danger of federalization:

> During the four years of the Civil War, when, due to intervention, we were forced to demonstrate the liberalism of Moscow in the national question, we managed to educate among the Communists, against their will, real and consistent social independents who demand real independence in every sense and regard the intervention of the Central Committee of the RCP as a deceit and hypocrisy on the part of Moscow. We are going through a period of development when the form, the law, the constitution cannot be ignored, when the young generation of communists in the outlying districts refuse to understand the game of independence as a game, stubbornly taking the words about independence at face value and just as stubbornly demanding that we put into practice the letter of constitutions of the independent republics... The "national" element does not work in the border regions for the benefit of the unity of the Soviet republics, while formal independence favors this work.[45]

At that moment, because of the fear of losing control over the outskirts, the Bolsheviks accepted the idea of national self-determination, which contributed to the preservation of the country's unity. Further developing the legal institutionalization of ethnicity as a political category, fixing territories for large ethnic groups and their elites, and supporting the development of national languages and cultures, Moscow hoped to disarm nationalist movements. It was assumed that native languages would make Soviet power understandable, and local personnel who knew the customs, habits, and way of life of their peoples would help ensure that Soviet power seemed to the population of the republics as "their own," not imposed by the Russians.[46]

The struggle against nationalism and the assertion of the priority of the class and the international over the national also served as a means of overcoming separatism. By the end of the 1920s, with the formal preservation of the signs of a federal structure, real centralization was achieved, complete control over the outskirts was established, and the national opposition began to be regarded as a state crime.[47] The danger of separatism began to be forgotten. After 1936, Stalin brought the national question out of the list of priorities. In 1938, while editing *The Short Course in the History of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks*, he sharply shortened and reemphasized the text on national policy, reducing the importance of this issue in party propaganda.[48]

The Soviet leadership believed that socioeconomic factors always surpass all others in their significance, including ethnic, cultural, personal, and psychological. It seemed that the all-Union division of labor, the economic and financial dependence of the republics on the Center guaranteed the unity of the country.[49] As an employee of the apparatus of the CPSU Central Committee L.A. Onikov recalled, "in 1989, absolutely unexpectedly for Gorbachev, national separatism powerfully spoke about itself."[50] When Lithuania announced its independence on March 11, 1990, USSR President and CPSU Secretary General Gorbachev believed that the republic's leaders were bluffing. According to Chernyaev,

> [Mikhail Sergeevich was] sincerely convinced that it is unprofitable for the Lithuanians to break up the Union. He did not understand that the Lithuanians were ready to tighten their belts, to sacrifice anything, but to defend their independence.... And he sincerely believed that if this happened, huge harm would be done, first of all, to the peoples of these republics themselves. Hence, he had the conviction that extremists and separatists had confused people there.... In public, he threw careless phrases like, "I will press them anyway," "I will not allow the collapse of the empire."[51]

There were other counterbalances to separatist sentiments: the building of the CPSU on the principle of democratic centralism and under the complete control of Moscow, a single multiethnic nomenklatura, the Russian majority in the Chamber of the Council of Unions of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, and law enforcement agencies. For many years, the center

[45] "From the history of the formation of the USSR," Izv. TsK KPSS, No. 9, 198–200 (1989).

[46] T. Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union 1923–1939* (New York, 2001).

[47] R. G. Pikhoya, *Moscow. Kremlin. Power. Two Stories of One Country: Russia at the Turn of the Millennium: 1985–2005* (Moscow, 2007), p. 376 [in Russian]; V. A. Tishkov, *Requiem for an Ethnos: Studies in Sociocultural Anthropology* (Moscow, 2003), p. 159 [in Russian].

[48] D. Brandenberger, "Stalin's Answer to the National Question: The Enigmatic Silence of *The Short Course in the History of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks* on National Policy after 1938," in *The Tragedy of a Great Power: The National Question and the Collapse of the Soviet Union,* Ed. by G. N. Sevost'yanov (Moscow, 2005), pp. 537–543 [in Russian].

[49] R. G. Pikhoya, *Moscow. Kremlin. Power. Two Stories of One Country: Russia at the Turn of the Millennium: 1985–2005* (Moscow, 2007), pp. 378, 379 [in Russian].

[50] L. A. Onikov, *CPSU: Anatomy of Decay: A Look inside the Apparatus of the Central Committee* (Moscow, 1996), p. 115 [in Russian].

[51] A. S. Chernyaev, *Six Years with Gorbachev* (Moscow, 1993), p. 339 [in Russian].

allowed part of the union budget to be illegally distributed among the national elites. "Moscow paid; local elites paid off with devotion and obedience," R.G. Pikhoya noted.[52] The party leadership also believed that the creation of a single civil nation (the Soviet people) would block or minimize interethnic conflicts.[53]

The Central Committee believed so much in the effectiveness of the created centripetal mechanisms that it ignored warnings about the first sprouts of national movements in the Soviet Union. In the 1960s–1970s this, in particular, was reported by the KGB Chairmen V.E. Semichastnyi and Yu.V. Andropov.[54] One of the authors of such notes, S.V. Cheshko testified,

> Scientists in their analytical notes repeatedly warned the Central Committee of the CPSU about the threat of nationalism and numerous potential centers of ethnic conflicts. Gorbachev and his entourage were captivated by traditional ideologemes about internationalism, friendship between peoples, and so on and simply did not believe in the possibility of something similar in the country of victorious socialism.[55]

Many years later, Gorbachev himself admitted,

> We were late in reacting to the problems associated with interethnic relations and the desire of the republics for greater independence. It must be said frankly: we underestimated the scale and depth of these problems. We were late with the program of reforming the Union on the principles of voluntary association of sovereign states. This made it possible for the separatists to take the initiative in their hands, to attract many people to their side.[56]

Can the Soviet national project be considered viable? Opinions were divided on this. It seems to me worthy of respect the point of view according to which *objectively* the Soviet Union was not a "prison of peoples" but a "cradle of nations," an "affirmative action empire," a nursery for growing and constructing nation states.[57]

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares that he has no conflicts of interest.

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[52] R. G. Pikhoya, *Soviet Union: The History of Power 1945–1991* (Moscow, 2019), pp. 409, 410 [in Russian].

[53] R. G. Pikhoya, *Moscow. Kremlin. Power. Two Stories of One Country: Russia at the Turn of the Millennium: 1985–2005* (Moscow, 2007), pp. 376, 377 [in Russian].

[54] O. N. Pivovarova, State Power and National Movements in the USSR in the 1960s–1970s, *Candidate's (Hist.) Dissertation* (Moscow, 2003), pp. 181–187.

[55] S. V. Cheshko, "The role of ethnonationalism in the collapse of the USSR," in *The Tragedy of a Great Power: The National Question and the Collapse of the Soviet Union,* Ed. by G. N. Sevost'yanov (Moscow, 2005), pp. 459–460.

[56] M. S. Gorbachev, *In a Changing World* (Moscow, 2018), p. 199 [in Russian].

[57] V. A. Tishkov, "Strategy of the state national policy: History of discourse," in *The Phenomenon of Ethnic Conflict: An Interdisciplinary Approach and Social Practices: Experience in Preventing and Resolving Conflicts,* Ed. by V. A. Tishkov and V. V. Stepanov (Moscow, 2018), p. 14 [in Russian]; J. Cadiot, *Le laboratoire impérial: Russie–URSS 1860–1940* (Paris, 2007); T. Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union 1923–1939* (New York, 2001), pp. 21–36; R. G. Suni, "Empire as it is: The imperial period in the history of Russia, 'national' identity, and theories of empire," in *Nationalism in World History,* Ed. by V. A. Tishkov and V. A. Shnirel'man (Moscow, 2007), pp. 4–24 [in Russian]; J. B. Dunlop, *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Empire* (Princeton, 1993); K. Garner, *The Baltic States and the End of the Soviet Empire* (London, 1993); F. Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca (N.Y.), 2005; D. Remnick, *Lenin's Tomb: The Last Days of the Soviet Empire* (New York, 1993).