

THE CHANGING CONCEPT OF FEDERALISM IN THE USSR (1977-1990)

**Dissertation Submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University
in Partial Fulfilment to the Requirements
for the Award of the Degree of
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

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MAY, 1992**



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CERTIFICATE

This dissertation entitled "THE CHANGING CONCEPT OF FEDERALISM IN THE USSR (1977-1990)" submitted by SANTOSH KUMAR, Centre for Soviet and East European Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi-110067, for the award of degree of MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY, is an original work and has not been submitted so far, in part or full, for any other degree or diploma of any University.

This may be placed before the examiners for evaluation for the award of the degree of MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY.

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MAY, 1992.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My debts are many and most of them are to my supervisor, PROF. DEVENDRA KAUSHIK. He has been an exemplary guide and teacher working under him has been thoroughly enlightening and rewarding experience. I owe him a lot, though my greatest debt to him is for introducing me to the pleasures study of federalism has to offer. I am too small a person to comment on his incisive criticism, indepth analysis and wider knowledge of the subject.

It will be embarrassing to PROF. R. R. SHARMA, PROF. ARVIND VYAS, DR. TULSI RAM, DR. DAWA NORBU and DR. O. N. MEHROTRA, if I give the name of gratitude for their moral and emotional support. In the course of my discussion with them, they have very patiently encouraged and helped me to clarify my ideas and provided suggestions which have been incorporated in this work. I am also indebted to shri L.C. KUMAR for the pains he took in suggesting and locating the study materials in the library.

On another level, my family especially, my parents, Uncle, and Aunt, and brother were an enduring source of comfort and inspiration (few research foundations can match their generous grants !).

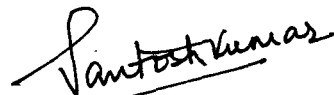
Archana was everything an ideal companion should be, and more. Her major contribution, though has been in being (primarily through the strength of sheer personal example) an infatigable source of motivation.

To Dandekar 'Bhaau' (Ajay), Ami and Srinivas a special word of thanks for they always encouraged me to face the hurdles of life with bold gestures. My gratitudes are due to Shahid Bhai also, who was generous enough to provide me his locker for keeping my research material.

I will be failing in my duty if I don't acknowledge the assistance extended by my friend Sandeep and his wife. They took on the unenviable task of seeing this work through a computer and accomplished it more than successfully. I must thank Shri Jagdeesh Chandra for typing the rough draft of the chapters of dissertation. Kennedy, Vivek and Virender, who have been more a brother and friend than just hostel-mates, took on the tiring job of Proof-reading and I am thankful to them from the core of my heart. I am thankful to Nabarun for drawing maps.

Closer home, I must express my heartfelt obligations and thanks to the Librarians and staff of the Jawaharlal Nehru University Library, Institute of Defence and Strategic Analysis National Nehru Museum and Library, and Law Faculty Library, Delhi University.

Finally, I with pleasure acknowledge the efforts of all my friends who contributed towards making me, what I am today, and take personal responsibilities for any flaws that remain.



(SANTOSH KUMAR)

INTRODUCTION

Federalism is a form of territorial-political organisation in which unity and regional diversity are accommodated within a single political system by distributing power among general and regional governments in a manner constitutionally safeguarding the existence and authority of each. It offers a way to approach political phenomenon in its own right and is not to be subsumed within other models of political enquiry. Its distinguishing features are the distribution of authority between at least two levels of government and the existence of unity and regional diversity. The basic aspect of federalism is pluralistic, its fundamental tendency is harmonization, and its regularity principle is solidarity. Carried to an extreme, federalism becomes pacifistic and approaches syndicalism and anarchism.

The study of federalism presents to its students a wide field which is complex and fascinating. Federalism is a modern device, although with ancient roots, inseparable for modern democratic republicanism. Any federal structure is plagued with the problems between the central and the regional governments over the scope of the federal compact, the boundaries of the shared governmental powers and the relationship of the governmental components to the citizenry. Existing federal systems vary greatly in their approaches to these problems resulting in different

patterns.

The Western and Soviet perceptions of federalism have wide divergent understandings. Federalism in the Western democracies have been comprehended as administrative considerations, which is not the case with the Soviet Union where the national-territorial principle has been the strategic factor in working out the form of state construction. In the Soviet Union the concept of federalism was carved out on the basis of right to self-determination of the various nations which provided for every nationality to determine its own political form and unite with other nationalities. It is a form of federalism which included voluntary union of the constituent members retaining sovereignty and enjoying the right to secession from the union, in order to enable diverse ethnic population to develop along common social-economic lines. The Socialist federation is the constitutional expression of the old-political formula- "national in form, socialist in content" - for integrating the nationalities. As per the assertion of the Soviet theory of federalism, it is a transitory phase which will ultimately lead to the fusion of all nationalities into a homogenous society.

The erstwhile USSR, a country of continental dimensions, at the time of its creation and commencement presented, what is called a large "ethnological museum - a marquee of a number of nationalities, having different levels of socio-economic and political developments. The most

important task after the socialist revolution was to evolve a state-political system which could voluntarily unite them by conceding them the right to self-determination. In this specific situation the avowed object of the constitution was to provide a federal structure for a multinational society.

But the problem started after the Union-leadership could not satisfy social-economic and other needs of the people of the republics giving rise to socio-economic and political conflicts. One can debate that these conflicts were already existing in the society but were not allowed to surface as the officially controlled powerful media had suppressed it since Stalin's days. Thus, one witnesses the sudden outburst of the pent-up feelings of resentment in their most volatile form. The present state of affairs, one may argue, is definitely not the result of some short-term factors but the outcome of a long historical development.

The researcher, in this project has undertaken to analyse and examine certain potent and pertinent questions relating to the federalizing process going on in the erstwhile USSR. It seeks to study issues on the basis of empirical evidences available, but by no means does it purport to be the final answer to the important questions relating to the nature of the specific features of the "socialist-federalism" and its distinguishing characteristics when compared to the Western concept of federalism; the

influence of the Marxist-Leninist ideology on the framework of the Soviet federal theory ; the methods of quantifying the elaborate mechanism of constitutions in the USSR in terms of either federal or unitary.

The present study also analyses the question of the constitutional measures and provision of federalism which satisfy the needs and demands of the multi-national state in the then present constitutional framework. Besides it has scrutinized the problems in the Union - Republics relations against the background of resurgent nationalism during the perestroika period beginning with 1985 and also examined the changes at the conceptual plane consequent to the emergence of these problems.

The work also seeks to explain why the Soviet federal structure, with its stress on the socialist content and democratic - centralism failed to provide ideal conditions for the economic and cultural development of the national and autonomous republics. Former Soviet Union has passed through the phase of federation building where the control and timing of these processes has been two important determinants. The researcher has tried to evaluate, whether the federalization of the Soviet Union could be managed and stabilized at a certain level or whether the concurrent processes of democratization and decentralization have been simply reinforcing the centrifugal tendencies.

In order to examine the pertinent issues raised, the work has been divided into five chapters. This introductory maiden part discusses the importance of the study, the aims and objectives of the work and a brief survey of existing literature.

The First chapter deals with the theoretical construct of the work. It compares the Western and Soviet notions of federalism and covers the place of federalism in Marxist-Leninist theory. It also traces the emergence this concept in concrete historical conditions of Russia before and after the October Revolution.

Chapter two discusses the perspectives on federalism in the Constitutions of 1924, 1936 and 1977, which forms an important part of the study. It deals with the origin and development of the Soviet federal state, how it emerged during the formation of the RSFSR and on what basis the USSR was established.

Chapter three emphasizes the growing realization of the need for change in the Soviet federation during the 1977-85 period. This was the phase when the attempts to decentralize the state machinery had started, though, there was no follow up and all the attempts limited themselves to the theoretical plane. But as this chapter brings out, these debates and discussions had bearings on the future of the Soviet federal structure.

Chapter four, has evaluated 'perestroika' and the 'new-

thinking' of the Soviet leadership on the question of recasting the federal structure on a new basis, beginning with the political reforms in early 1987. It has analysed the conceptual changes providing the motive force behind the 'Novo-Ogarevo' processes leading to the unsigned Union-Treaty aborted by the abortive coup. It has discussed the unsuccessful attempts to convert the federation into a confederation.

The study ends with a conclusion which deals with the overall assessment of the Soviet federal structure, its problems, the changes which have taken place and suggests some general guidelines about the federal structure.

By the time this work could be completed, a few developments of far reaching impact took place, albeit after the period undertaken for research, which could not be ignored. Hence, a post-script became necessary highlighting the events that led to the major changes in the political set up from Federation to the Commonwealth of Independent States.

An attempt has been made to assess a number of general studies done on Federalism by Soviet and Western scholars e.g. A.I.Vyshinsky (1948), M.G.Krichenko (1960), E.V.Tadevosyan (1964), V.M.Chikhikvadze (1969), M.I.Kulichenko (1972), V.S.Shevostov (1974), I.Zenushkina (1975), A.I.Lapeoshkin (1977), Boris Topornin (1978), J.N.Hazard, E.R.Goodman (1960), Alfred G. Mayer (1965);

Daniel Elazar (1980), N.G.S.Kini, C.J.Friedrich , Rufus Davis and others. However the literature dealing with changes in federalism in the USSR, at the conceptual level after 1977, is very scanty. The importance of the period beginning with 1977 in the history of Soviet federalism is self-evident. This period witnessed serious efforts to decentralize the overcentralized government machinery, thus, imparting a new dimension to the practice of Soviet federalism. For this important phase, the studies conducted so far are in the form of either articles published in various journals or research papers presented at various fora.

Sri Tejpal Singh's Soviet Federal State : Theory Formation and Development (1982), though an important work on the subject, fails to analyse the conceptual changes taking place in Soviet federalism. Also, the book covers the period till only 1977. The work by Devendra Kaushik, Soviet Political System : Perception and Perspectives (1983) deserves special attention in this regard. His observations on the incipient decentralization efforts in the late 1980's are noteworthy.

Although, scholars like Richard Sakwa, Seweryn Bialer, Martha Brill Olcott, F.Barghoorn, Michael Mandelbaum and others have widely discussed the various aspects of the politics of the Soviet Union in their works, most of them have devoted their studies mainly to the problems of

Nationality policy, or to aspects related to ethnic, cultural and religious variations etc. Most of these aspects have been comprehended and appreciated without knowing the various dimensions of the socio-economic formation at different stages that have the bearing on the development of federalism in the USSR. There are a few studies which merely touch upon one or two aspects of the problems.

The present work is based on both primary and secondary sources. The text of the various constitutions, treaties, government documents, speeches of the founders of the constitutions, decrees, reports, debates in the Party Congress and the Supreme Soviet relating to the change in the federal structure, the proposed draft of the new Union Treaty and the writings of the prominent Soviet statesmen are some of the important primary sources on which the work has drawn upon. However, the study has been mainly based on secondary sources comprising articles, books, newspapers etc.

The study has followed the historical-analytical method for analysing developments in the sphere of conceptual transformation of federalism in the erstwhile USSR.

CHAPTER - I

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL BASIS OF THE SOVIET

FEDERATION - ITS ORIGIN AND SALIENT FEATURES

In its broadest and most general sense, federalism is a principle that conceives of the 'federation' as the ideal form of social and political life. It is variously employed to indicate a relationship, the process of its establishment or the entirety of a complex organization that embodies it. The etymological kinship of the word, from Latin 'foedus', with ideas of treaty and of contract illuminates but no longer fixes the meaning of the protean and widely applicable principle.¹ In the political theory, the term 'Federation' has been widely discussed. It is characterized by a tendency to substitute for coordinating for subordinating relationships or at least to restrict the latter as much as possible, to replace compulsion from above with reciprocity, understanding and adjustment, command with persuasion and force with law. In its application to concrete political problems, federalism becomes a relative and dynamic principle.²

The study of federalism is central to political science because of its linking of theoretical and political wisdom.

1. Arthur W. Macmohan, "Federation" in Encyclopedia of Social Sciences (vol. 6, New York, Macmillan, 1931), pp. 839 - 845

2. Maz Hildbert Boehm, "Federalism" in Encyclopedia of Social Sciences (vol. 6, New York, Macmillan, 1931), pp. 846 - 856

In fact, human concern with politics focusses on three general themes :

1. the pursuit of political justice to achieve political order,
2. the search for understanding of the empirical reality of political power and its exercise and,
3. the creation of an appropriate civic environment through civil society and civil community capable of integrating the first two themes to produce good political life.

Political science as a discipline was founded and has developed in pursuit of these three themes. In this pursuit, political scientists have uncovered certain architectonic principles, seminal ideas and plain political truths. One of the major recurring principles of political importance which informs and encompasses all three themes is federalism - an idea that defines political justice, shapes political behavior, and directs humans towards an appropriately civic synthesis of the two.³

The essence of federalism is not to be found in a particular set of institutions but in the institutionalization of particular relationships among the

3. Daniel J. Elazar, Exploring Federalism, (Ruscaloosa, The University of Acabama Press, 1987), pp. 1-5.

participants in a political life. Consequently, federalism is a phenomenon that provide many options for the organization of political authority and power : as long as the proper relations are created, a wide variety of structures can be created and developed that are consistent with the federal principle.

The simplest possible definition of federalism is self-rule in addition to shared rule. Federalism thus defined involves some kind of contractual linkage of a presumable permanent character that (1) provides for power sharing, (2) cuts around the issues of sovereignty and (3) supplements but does not seek to replace or diminish prior organic ties where they exist.⁴ Federal principle means the method of dividing powers so that the general and regional government are each, within a sphere, coordinate and independent.⁵

Federalism has developed in response to two different situations . On the one hand , it has been used as a means to unite people already linked by bonds of perceived nationality or common law by constitutionally distributing units so as to secure

4. Ibid., p. 12.

5. K.C. Wheare, Federal Government . (Oxford, 1963), fourth Edn., p. 11.
Daniel J. Elazar, " Federalism " in David L. Sills (ed.) International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, (Vol.5, Macmillan, 1968).
Gordon Smith, " Federalism ", in M.A. Riff (ed.), Dictionary of Modern Political Ideologies (Manchester univ. Press, 1987).

greater local liberty or national unity. In such cases, the politics that constitute the federal system are unalterably parts of the national whole, and federalism invariably leads to the development of the strong national government operating in direct contact with the people it serves just as the constituent governments do.

On the other hand, federalism has been used as a means to unify separate peoples for important but limited purposes without disrupting their primary ties to the individual politics that constitute the basic units of federation. In such cases, the federal government is limited in its scope and powers, functioning through the constituent governments which retain their plenary autonomy and, to a substantial degree, is dependent on them. Federalism has to do with the need of people and politics to unite for common purposes yet remain separate to preserve their respective integrities.⁶

The modern federalism is the product of the historical development of the society and subject of politics, and also is the part of the classic terminology of the political science. The term emerged in theological and theopolitical usages in 16th century and was first used as

6. Daniel J. Elazar, "The End of Federalism" in Max Frankeel (ed.), Partnership in Federalism (Bern : Peterland, 1977), pp. 117-19.
Daniel J. Elazar, "Urbanism and Federalism : Twin Revolutions of the Modern Era" in Publius (5 NO.2, 1975), pp. 204-28.

a strictly political term in 18th century.⁷ In the 19th century, federalism was used to abet ethnic nationalism, with demands for the creation or maintenance of federal institutions coming from ethnic groups seeking national unity and political autonomy but not in a position to achieve either in any other way. On the 20th century it has been used as a means to unify multiethnic politics. Several of the ethnically heterogenous nations created or reconstructed after World War-I, including the Soviet Union, formally embraced federalism as a nominal solution to their nationality problems.⁸

Federalism is essentially a transitory phenomenon⁹ and describes a voluntary association of sovereign states for some common purpose with limited delegation of power to a central authority. Essentially, the main characteristics of a federal state are:

7. Rufus Davis, The Federal Principle : A Journey Through Time in Quest of a Meaning, (Berkley & Los Angeles, Univ. of California Press, 1978), pp.35-7.

8. R. Michael Stevens, "Asymmetrical Federalism : The Federal Principle and the Survival of the Small Republics" in Publius (7, NO. 4, 1977), pp.177-204.

9. Wheare, n.5, pp. 153-57.

- (1) the supremacy of the constitution defining rules of the federative relationship and providing legal guarantees for all parties involved ;
- (2) the clear demarcation of powers between the federal government and the member states guaranteeing a certain degree of sovereignty for the constituent states (principle of non-centralization);
- (3) bargaining and arbitration mechanism for resolving constitutional conflicts ;
- (4) a bicameral parliamentary system ensuring direct representation of the constituent states at the federal level; and
- (5) decentralised government, i.e., the regional governments' share of power in a federation is relatively large compared to that of regional governments in unitary states.¹⁰

Though , there is some consensus on its broad features

10. Klaus von Beyme, "Federalism" in C.D. Kernig "Marxism, Communism and the Western Society", A Comparative Encyclopaedia (New York, 1972), pp.314-8 R.R.Bowie & C.J. Friedrich, Studies in Federalism (Boston, 1954); C.J. Friedrich, Trends of Federalism in theory and Praticce (New York, 1968); Arend Lijphart, "Non-Majoritarian Democracy : A Comparison of Federal and Consociational Themes " in Publius (12, no.6, 1987).

among Soviet and Western scholars such as division of powers between the centre and the units. a written constitution and a supreme court to act as guardian, yet, at the same time, the class aims behind the concepts of federalism as perceived in the West and in the Soviet Union are widely divergent. The Soviet concept of federalism is carved out from the ideological basis of the right of nations to self-determination which provide for every nationality to determine its state political form and unite with other nations. Federalism in the Western democracy is based on largely administrative considerations, which is not the case with the Soviet Union where national-territorial principle and functional interdependence has been the strategic factor in working out the form of state construction.

Federalism in the West:

There was a consistent effort to evolve a suitable definition of federalism, and the classical writers on federalism particularly Dicey, Bryce, Robert Garran and K.C. Wheare were primarily seeking to give the concept a proper dimension and meaning. As Dicey explained the concept, " A federal state is a political contrivance intended to reconcile national unity and power with the maintenance of the state rights".¹¹ prof. Dicey further

11. A.V.Dicey, Introduction to the Study of the Law of the Constitution (London, 1959), 10th Edn., p.143.

explains that from the division of power under a common constitution between the federal and the constituent states there flow the three leading characteristics of federalism :

- 1) the supremacy of the constitution;
- 2) the distribution among bodies with limited and coordinate authority of the different powers of the government, and
- 3) the authority of the courts to act as interpreters of the constitution.¹²

At the end of the 19th century, Lord Bryce, in his book 'American Commonwealth' described the federal and state government as "distinct and separate in their action." As per Robert Garran, an eminent Australian scholar, federalism was :

" a form of government in which sovereignty or political power is divided between the central and local governments, so that each of them within its own sphere is independent of the other".¹³

12. Ibid., p. 144 .

13. Robert Garran, Report of the Royal Commission on Australian Constitution (1929), p. 230.

Whether a constitution is federal or not, Wheare applied the test as follows :

" The test which I apply for Federal Government is then simply this. Does a system of government embody predominantly a division of power between general and regional authorities, each of which in its own sphere, is coordinated with the other and independent of them ? If so, the government is federal".¹⁴

Many scholars have criticised this legal-institutional approach as suffering from " formalistic fallacy ." As per the observations of N.G.S.Kini :

" Formalistic fallacy consists in the belief that political behaviour and factual operations of groups and levels within a policy can be adequately understood and explained in terms of formal provisions of law and constitutions (political and legal myths) of a political organisation. The conventional model did not go beyond a bare legal description of the formal properties of a federation ".¹⁵

14. Wheare, n. 5, p. 33.

15. N.G.S. Kini, "Federalism : A Theoretical Critique of the Conventional Model", (Paper contributed to the seminar on Union-State Relations in India, Simla, 1968), cited in M. Venkatrangaiya, some Theories of Federalism (Lokmanya Tilak Memorial Lectures, Univ. of Poona, 1971), p. 6.

Riker is also critical of "the excessive legalism of conventional definitions" while not throwing away the juristic elements entirely. He rejects the traditional definitions which emphasized not only independence of constituent and central governments but more or less precise division of functions.¹⁶ This classical theory of federalism is also rejected by M.J.C. Vile, and D.J. Elazar.¹⁷

Vile argued that the interdependence, constitutional and political of the two levels was as important as their independence, and that more important than the coordinated states of the two levels was the requirement that neither level should be subordinated to the other - a rather different emphasis.¹⁸ Daniel J. Elazar has written that the traditional conception of federalism as evolving a sharp demarcation of responsibilities between two independent sets of sovereignties has never worked in practice in United States. According to him, "at any given time in American political theory and history the great majority of government activities was shared by all levels of

16. William H. Riker, "Federalism," in Fred I. Greenstein and Nelson W. Polsky, Handbook of Political Science, Vol.5 (Philippine, Addison Wesley Pub.Co.), p. 103.

17. M.J.C. Vile, The structure of American Federalism (Oxford, 1961), chapt.X & D.J. Elazar, The American partnership, (chicago, 1962), chapter 1.

18. Vile, n.17, pp. 198-99.

government, and that cooperative federalism was the rule in the 19th century as well as in the twentieth".¹⁹

The convention and usages of extraconstitutional character which shape and influence the governmental process in a federal system have not been taken into account by the classical approach as it is alleged to be too much juristic. As William S. Livingstone observes the essence of federalism lie not in the institutional structure but in the society itself Federal government is a device by which the federal qualities of the society are articulated and protected.²⁰ Extent theorizing on federalism has faced serious challenges in the present century. The dramatic transformation in the federal systems, which has tended towards centralisation of power and the variety of forms taken by these changes have complicated the study of federalism....Perhaps this is the indication that federal theorizing has become too static to predict direction of change.²¹

Federalism as Perceived in the Soviet Union :

Democratic institutions have sometimes been said to depend upon a federal system of government. The Soviet leaders

19. Elazař, n. 17, pp. 336-7.

20. W.S. Livingstone, "A Note on the Nature of Federalism" in Political Science Quarterly, (New York, 1952), Vol. 67, pp. 81-5.

21. Eghosa E. Osaghae, "A Reassessment of Federalism as a Degree of Decentralization", in Publius (20, no.1, Winter, 1990), pp. 83-98.

have made much of the fact that the USSR is also a federation . They have claimed that through the federal form the various peoples of the USSR have obtained control over their own affairs, and that they have more privileges than states in other federations.

The status of various Soviet republics that make up the USSR is said to be further proof of the democratic base upon which the Soviet system rests.

The Soviet political dictionary defines federalism as :

"A Union of states, forming a new union state with a single citizenship, entering into a federation the union states retain their legal and administrative organs, the activities of which are limited to specific groups of question. Side by side, with the organs of the power of the different states belonging to the federation, there are established union (federal) legal, administrative and judicial organs, the acts of which are operative throughout the entire territory of the federal states." ²²

Judged by this formalistic definition, the concept of federalism appears to be somewhat identical but in reality

22. Politichesky Slovar , 2nd Edition (Moscow,1958), p. 507.

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there exists sharp differences over the nature of these features and their inter-relationship among Western and Soviet scholars. To Western scholars the institutional aspect is more important. A.Y. Vyshinsky in his book "The Law of the Soviet State" has aptly differentiated the Western and Soviet concept of federalism. He wrote, "Its distinguishing feature is the elasticity of its form, as applied :

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(a) to concrete problems of the socialist state in raising the economic-cultural level of each person, and

(b) the conditions of class-struggle to each historical phase. The forms of federation bonds existing in bourgeois federation are alien to it. 23

To determine the nature of federation from whatever point, socialist or western, it is worthwhile to go through the background. Generally, two types of forces bring about a federation namely, centrifugal and centripetal. In the first case, unitary state is broken up into a number of units for a number of administrative purposes. In the second case, the hitherto independent and sovereign states

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23. A.Y. Vyshinski, The Law of Soviet States (New York, 1948), pp. 230-1.



which unite to protect their national, economic and other interests by delegating some of its powers to a Central government. Since the forces working behind the formation of a federation have decisive impact on the nature of federation, it is more appropriate to know the theoretical and practical roots from which sprang the Soviet Union, i.e., a federal, multinational state. A brief survey of the development of the concept of federalism in the writings of Marx, Engels and Lenin brings out the genesis and growth of Soviet thinking on state structure in its proper perspective.

Marx and Engels on the State Structure (Federation)

Marx and Engels closely studied the unitary and federal forms of state structure and described their positive features and inadequacies under different historical conditions. Discussing the question of forms and organisation of a democratic state, Marx and Engels favoured the centralized unitary form of state, because during their life time Europe had seen the completion of the transition from feudal disunity to centralism, i.e., creation of centralised bourgeois states. For that period it was a progressive phenomenon since the centralization of bourgeois state objectively helped to develop society's productive forces. They preferred the centralised unitary state against politically disunited states which did not accord with the interests of the

proletariat and its task to unite their struggle for socialism. A unitary centralised bourgeois state helped in the then existing conditions, the economic and political cohesion of the working class and the growth of its class-consciousness. Marx and Engles, in the Manifesto of the Communist Party, observed that, " the bourgeoisie keeps, more and more, doing away with the scattered state of the population of the means of production and property. It has agglomerated population, centralised means of production and has concentrated property in few hands. The necessary consequence of this was political centralisation. Independent or but loosely connected provinces with separate interests, laws, governments and systems of taxation became lumped together into one nation, with one government, one code of laws, one national class interests, one frontier and one customs tariff."²⁴

Engels orchestrated the same idea in " the Civil War in Switzerland ". He wrote, " Through the industry, commerce and political institutions, the bourgeoisie is already working everywhere to drag the small, self-contained localities which only live for themselves out of their isolation, to bring them into contact with one another, to merge their interests, to expand their local horizons, to

24. K. Marx and F. Engels, " Manifesto of the Communist Party Bourgeois and Proletarians in Karl Maex and Friedrich Engels, Selected Works, Vol. 1 (Moscow, 1950), p.37.

destroy their common habits, striving and ways of thinking, and to build up great nations with common interests, customs, and ideas out of many hitherto mutually independent localities and provinces. The bourgeoisie is already carrying out considerable centralisation. The proletariat, far from suffering any disadvantage from this, will as a result rather be in a position to unite, to feel itself a class to acquire a political point of view within the democracy and finally to conquer the bourgeoisie."²⁵ He considered the centralised unity of Germany as a progressive phenomenon which could help to sweep away "all the historically inherited small state junk", which was blocking the free development of trade and industry.²⁶

The views on nationalities conditioned the conceptions of federalism of Marx and Engels. Consideration of federation a survival of feudal particularism and a hindrance to economic and cultural development, they opposed it as a matter of general principle. "The proletariat", wrote Engels, "can use only the form of one indivisible republic". They did not, however, rule it out altogether, believing that in special

25. F. Engels, 'Civil War in Switzerland' in Marx and Engels, Collected Works, Vol. 6, (Moscow, 1984), p. 372

26. F. Engels, 'The Role of Force in History', in K. Marx and F. Engels, Selected Works, Vol. 3, (Moscow, 1970), p. 380.

sets of circumstances federation might be a "step forward", a "link toward a centralised, unitary state".²⁷

Marx and Engels lent their support to federal state structure in such countries where it could historically become the transitional political form, from scatteredness to unity of state power, uniting the small states into one centralised state. For example, Engels supported the struggle of progressive forces of Switzerland against the Sonderbund for the creation of a federation as a centralised, strong state. His support to the Swiss federation was aimed at liquidating the federal disunity through the creation of a centralised federal state.

At the same time, he expressed his strong opposition to the German federation. He remarked that in Germany "federalisation on the Swiss model would be an enormous step backward". In Germany, the Union state is the transition to the completely unified state, and the "revolution from above" of the 1866 and 1870 must not be reversed but supplemented by a "movement from below".²⁸

Thus, Engels tried to analyse the transitional forms with the utmost thoroughness, bearing in mind the concrete, historical, specific features of each separate state, "from

27. Engels cited in Lenin, State and Revolution, (Moscow, 1977), pp. 60-62.

28. Ibid, p. 122.

what and into what the given transitional form is passing."²⁹
Approaching the matter from the point of view of the proletariat and the proletarian revolution, Engels, like Marx, upheld democratic centralism, the republic - one and indivisible. He regarded the federal republic either as an exception and a hindrance to development, or a transition from a monarchy to a centralised republic, as a "step forward" under certain special conditions. And among these the national question comes to the front.³⁰

Marx and Engels formulated for the first time the important propositions that there exists a relationship between the federal form of the organisation of the state and the solution of the national question. This thesis was further developed by Lenin. Marx and Engels arrived at the conclusion that international alliance between the English and the Irish proletariat could lead to the victory of the working class under the specific conditions prevailing in Britain at that time. They suggested that the international alliance of the working class and their own social emancipation was impossible without abolishing the wall of enmity and isolation between nations which had been created by the bourgeoisie. "Any nation that oppressed

29. Ibid., p. 123.

30. Ibid., pp. 124-5.

another forges its own chains."³¹

Quoting Marx on the question of Ireland, Lenin in his work "The Right of the Nations to self-determination", wrote "Though in principle an enemy of federalism, Marx in this instance granted the possibility of federalism".³²

Marx and Engels held the view that bourgeois federations were nothing but forcible union of states. They found it a harmful form of state construction for the proletarian state. Marx in his work, Civil War in France, analysing the Paris Commune of 1872, hailed its centralism and remarked that being in essence the state of proletarian dictatorship, Paris Commune set itself the goal of creating a centralised unitary state and not of substituting it with federal union of small provincial communes.

He remarked that "the communal constitution has been mistaken for an attempt to break up into a federation of small states, as dreamt up by Montesquieu and the Girondins, that unity of great nations, which if originally brought about by the political force, has now become a powerful co-efficient of social production".³³

31. Karl Marx and F. Engels, Selected Works, Vol. II, (Moscow, 1969), p.176, cited in R. Tuzmuhamedov, How the National Question was solved in the Soviet Central Asia (Moscow, 1973), p. 47.

32. V. I. Lenin, "The Right of the Nations to Self-Determination" in Collected Works, Vol. 20, (Moscow, 1969), p. 441.

33. Karl Marx, "Civil War in France", in K. Marx and F. Engels, Selected Works, (Moscow, 1950), Vol. I, p. 59.

In 1901, Edward Bernstein asserted that Marx's views on federation were identical with those of Proudhon. Bernstein tried to represent Marx's criticism of the military, bureaucratic, bourgeois state machine as a departure from the principle of centralism in general, as giving preference to the federal organisation of the proletarian state.³⁴

In fact, Marx in his work especially on the commune, clearly opposed the "conscious, democratic, proletarian centralism to bourgeois, military bureaucratic centralism.

³⁵ In the same context, Lenin wrote in his work, "The State and revolution" - "There is no trace of federalism in Marx's above quoted observations on the experience of the commune. Marx agreed with Proudhon on the very point that opportunist Bernstein failed to see. Marx disagreed both with Proudhon on the very point on which Bernstein found a similarity between them".

Further, "Marx disagreed both with Proudhon and with Bakunin precisely on the question of federalism (not to mention the dictatorship of the proletariat). Federalism as a principle follows logically from the petty bourgeois view of anarchism. Marx was a centralist. There is no departure whatever from centralism in his observation just

34. Victor Shevstov, The State and Nations in the USSR, (Moscow, 1982), p. 40.

35. Lenin, State and Revolution, no. 27, p. 92.

quoted. Only those who are imbued with the Philistine "Superstitious belief" in the state can mistake the destruction of the bourgeois state machine for the destruction of centralism".³⁶

In retrospect, it is important to conclude that Marx and Engels favoured federalism either as an exception, or as a transitional form of state construction from feudal scatteredness to centralised strong union state under certain specific historical condition, and among such special conditions the national question was also included. They approached the national question as part of the general question of the triumph of the proletarian dictatorship. Marx and Engels considered federal form of state construction justified in cases where it helped the free development of the nations and improved the conditions of the oppressed nations in a system of multi-national bourgeois state.

Lenin's Views on Federalism :

Lenin's views on federalism were formed during the conditions of sharp struggle with views opposed to Marxism on the national question and on the state legal form of its solution and their role in the struggle for socialism and socialist revolution. It is well known that in the "epoch of imperialism" and "Proletarian revolution" the national

36. Ibid., pp. 90-91.

question became the inseparable part of the question of socialist revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat. Lenin carefully studied the ideas of Marx and Engels on the said question and stressed that this stand should become a model for proletarian policy fully retaining its enormous practical importance.³⁷ Hence, analysing the difference forms of political construction of socialist Russia, Lenin started from the need for a democratic solution of the national question of socialist revolution.

Developing this idea further Lenin advanced the idea of right of nations to self-determination, including secession and formation of an independent state. Since, then this programmatic point on the national question has been repeatedly included in all the important documents of the party congresses. Lenin, nevertheless, did not any time totally and unconditionally rejected federation. He took account of (a) the stage of social development the nation seeking political separation has reached, and (b) which of its various classes expresses its will. However, in principle Lenin opposed a federal state system. He opposed the idea of establishing a federation in Russia but supported the establishment of the federal Balkan republic

37. Lenin, n. 32, p. 442.

in 1912-1914, a situation which he had foreseen in 1903, and had considered it to be a step forward.³⁸

Lenin's later work written in 1916 "The Discussion of self-Determination Summed Up" paid special attention to the criticism of the "errors" of Rosa Luxemburg on the national question. Rosa had opposed the right to self-determination. The Polish Social Democrats went a step further, they did not recognise the right of the nations to self-determination even in socialist conditions. Lenin also favoured the "Great Centralised State" which was tremendous historical step forward from medieval disunity to the further socialist unity of the whole world". And he further noted that "Via such a state (inseparably connected with capitalism) can there be any road to socialism ".³⁹ This meant that, firstly, Marxists always admit situations in which it is possible and necessary to support federalism. Secondly, it is the presence or absence of nationalities problems which play an important role in determining the most progressive state structure.⁴⁰

38. V.I. Lenin, Collected Works, (Moscow, 1963), Vol.18, pp. 349-50, 353-54, 368-69.

39. V.I. Lenin, "Critical Remarks on National Question", Collected Works , (Moscow, 1964), Vol. 20, p. 46.

40. I. Zenushkina, Soviet Nationalities Policy and Bourgeois Historians, (Moscow, 1975), p. 196.

So far as Russia was concerned, Lenin and the Bolsheviks considered non-federal centralised state most expedient. Approaching the problems from the standpoint of concrete historical conditions then prevailing in the Russian empire, Lenin came out decisively against the substitution of the already emerging Russian centralised unitary state by a federation. The first opinion against the federal form of state construction in Russia was reflected in his work, On the Manifesto of the Armenian Social Democrats (1903). Here Lenin noted that federalism is a two-fold agreement. Hence, without the existence of political autonomy federalism would in fact be a fiction. He further wrote, " The League should delete the demand for a federative republic from its programme, conflicting itself to the demand for a democratic republic in general.⁴¹ The objection to constitutional federalism was most distinctly expressed in his work " Critical Remark on the National Question."

He wrote, " Marxists are of course opposed to federation and decentralization, for the simple reason that capitalism requires for its development the largest and most

41. V.I. Lenin, " On the Manifesto of Armenian Social Democrats ", in Collected Works, (Moscow, 1964), Vol. 6, p. 328.

centralised possible states ".⁴² How firmly he held this principle is evident from his letter to Shaumyan in 1913 :-

"We are opposed to federation in principle, it loosens economic ties, and is unsuitable for a single state. You want to secede ? All right, go to the devil, if you can break economic bonds, or rather, if the oppression and friction of "Co-existence " dispute and ruin economic bonds. You do not want to secede ? In that case, excuse me, but do not decide for me, do not think that you have " a right to federation".⁴³

It should be noted that in the resolution on the National Question adopted by the April Conference of the Party in 1917, the question of federal structure was not even mentioned and the resolution spoke of the nation's right to secession, of autonomy for national regions within the framework of the integral (unitary) state, and lastly of the enactment of a fundamental law prohibiting all national privileges whatsoever , but not a word was said about the permissibility of a federal structure of the

42. Lenin, n. 27, p. 45.

43. V.I. Lenin. " A Letter to S. G. Shaumyan", in Collected Works, (Moscow, 1968), Vol. 19, p. 500.

states.⁴⁴ Thus, Lenin and Engels supported the strong centralised, unitary democratic state and expressed opposition on principle to federal form of state construction and regarded federalism as a transitional form applicable in certain circumstances.

It is thus evident that Lenin did not put forth the task of formation of a federal state before the Party until the October Revolution. In his work, "National Question in our Programme" Lenin opposed the demand of social revolutionaries for creation of federation in Russia. Lenin also rejected federalism in Party construction, as suggested by the Bund and other parties. He gave importance to democratic organisation of a unitary state and advanced the plan for "National Territorial Autonomy" of those nations which by their own free will choose to remain in the system of a unitary democratic republic. He favoured wide autonomy inside the state and wrote, "We are in favour of autonomy for all parts ; we are in favour of the right to secession (and not in favour of everyone's seceding) . Autonomy is our plan for organising a democratic state."⁴⁵

44. J.V. Stalin, " Against Federalism ", Works , (Moscow, 1953), Vol. 3, p. 31.

45. V.I. Lenin, Collected Works (Moscow, 1963), Vol. 19, p. 501.

Lenin : Recognition of Federalism as a Form of Socialist Construction :

On the question as to when Lenin recognised federation as possible and subsequently a historically necessary form of state construction in Russia, there is no unanimity of views even among Soviet scholars. Some of them like, G.C.Gurvich and I.I. Kopylov consider that Lenin's general endorsement of the federal form of state as an exception in certain historical conditions in his work, "The National Question in our Programme" (1903) amounts to his support to the federal form of state construction in socialist Russia. A.E. Kailkhanidi, G.V. Aliksandrek and A. Spasov assert unconvincingly that Lenin always preferred the state federation as one of the means of a democratic solution to the nationality problem.⁴⁶ According to other view, Lenin began to accept the "Permissibility of federalism only in August 1917, and merely as a transitional form, S.B. Batyrov being the most outspoken defender of this view. Leposhkin agrees that Lenin was emphatically against a federal form of state system for Russia upto April 1917 but claims that, while Lenin in principle always favoured a unitary state even before April 1917, he was not against federation in all circumstances. After the February

46. Quoted Critically by Tadevosyan, V.I. Lenin (O Gosudarstvennoi Federatrii) Voprosii Istorii KPSS, 1961, no. 2, p. 49.

Revolution Lenin concluded that Soviet Russia needed federal form of state system and this was adopted in January 1918. S.S. Galalio, Yakubaskaya and others hold a different opinion that Lenin recognised federation as a desirable form of state construction only after the October Revolution. This they trace to the adoption by third All Russian Congress of Soviets in January 1918 of the Declaration of Rights of Working and Exploited Peoples.⁴⁷ In Lepeoshkin's view, the aim of determining the time of the recognition of federation by Lenin, two aspects deserve to be differentiated :-

(a) the possibility of allowing a federation as one of the possible forms of political construction of multinational socialist Russia.

(b) Recognition of federation by Lenin as a historically necessary form of state construction conducive to free union of different national states in a democratic single socialist multinational state.

As far as the question of the recognition of federation as a form of state construction is concerned Lenin arrived at

47. A. I. Lepeoshkin, Sovetskii Federalism (Moscow, 1977), p. 52.

this conclusion only in the process of accomplishing the October Socialist Revolution and particularly during the first months following it. Lenin raised the question of admissibility of federation in his article "Task of Proletariat in our Revolution", written a few days after the publication of April Thesis, Lenin pointed out, "As regard the national question, the proletariat party first of all, must advocate the proclamation and immediate realisation of complete freedom of secession from Russia for all the nation and people who were oppressed by Tsarism, or who were forcibly joined to, or kept forcibly within the boundaries of the state, i.e., annexed."⁴⁸

A little later, Lenin explained that he has given a "new formulation of the right of self-determination which had given rise to numerous misinterpretations and proposed the perfectly precise concept of "right to free secession".⁴⁹ This idea was further developed by him in the article "Finland and Russia" (May, 1917) where he developed the idea of voluntary union of "the Russian Proletarian and Peasant Republic and the Republics of all

48. V.I. Lenin, "The Task of the Proletariat in Our Revolution" in Collected Works, (Moscow, 1964), Vol. 24, p. 73.

49. V.I. Lenin, "Revision of the Party Programme", in Collected Works, (Moscow, 1964), Vol. 26, p. 175.

other Nations".⁵⁰ He stated that "without recognising the right of secession . all phrase-mongering about an "agreement" is self-deception and deception of the people".⁵¹

In his article, "Mandate and Deputies of the Soviets Elected at Factories and Regiments", (May, 1917) Lenin wrote that "The Great Russians offer a fraternal union to all nations and propose the formation of a common state by a common and voluntry consent....and all other nations without exception freely to decide whether they wish to live as a separate state, or in union with whomsoever they please."⁵² The appeal of Lenin contained in his speech at First All Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers ' and Soldiers ' Deputies in June 1917-"Let Russia be a union of free nations (republics)" confirmed Lenin's position on federalism as the possible form of State unity for future socialist Russia.⁵³

50. V.I.Lenin, "Finland and Russia ", in Collected Works , (Moscow, 1964), Vol. 24, p. 338.

51. Ibid ., p. 336.

52. V.I.Lenin, "Mandate to Deputies of the Soviet Elected at Factories and Regiments ",Collected Works (Moscow, 1974, Vol. 24, p. 355).

53. V.I.Lenin, "First All Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers 'and Soldiers ' Deputies ", June 3-24 (June 6- July 7, 1917), Collected Works , (Moscow, 1964), Vol. 25, p. 37.

In all the statements of Lenin there was a reference to the possibility of federation as a form of state unity. It is important to note that Lenin here for the first time used the term ' Union ' State. i.e., federation (Through he did not use this term exactly). Proceeding from the new historical conditions emerging in Russia in 1917, the Party reconsidered its position vis-a-vis federation as a possible form of state unity for ' socialist Russia '. Later Lenin in his book , ' The State and Revolution' (August, 1917) outlined a new approach to federation. In January 1918, the recognition of federal form of the state construction of the Soviet Republic was legally secured in the Declaration of Rights of the Working and Exploited Peoples, " The Russian Soviet Republic ", it declared, " is established on the principle of a free union of nations, as a federation of Soviet National Republics". The declaration, however, did not outline the nature of federal relations, "leaving it to the working class and peasants of each nation to decide independently at their administrative Congress of Soviets if they wish to participate in the federal government and in the other federal Soviet institutions, and on what terms".⁵⁴

Thus, it was not suddenly that Lenin and the Bolshevik Party recognised the need of a federal structure. It was a

54. Devendra Kaushik, Central Asia in Modern Times, (Moscow, 1970), pp. 132-33.

gradual development of the situations which made them conclude that only a federal form of state unite the entire masses of various nationalities.

Having discussed and analysed the background in which the concept of federation originated and developed in the Soviet Union, the discussion and examination of the key question, 'why did Lenin give up Marxist concept of centralised state in favour of federalism?', is of pertinent importance. And here a basic conflict of opinion can be discerned.

Some Soviet authors like M.I. Kulichenko and Semenov think that basically there was no change of views by Lenin on federalism. But the fact remains that Lenin had opposed the federal construction of Russia upto the October Revolution. Tadevosyan and others who disagreed with Kulichenko and Semenov do not base their explanation why Lenin wanted a federative state primarily on notions of self-determination and democracy. A number of more concrete arguments are advanced by them.

(a) Lenin regarded a federal state as a long-term commitment to rally the distrustful non-Russian masses to the Bolshevik side.

(a) Lenin believed that the revolutionary transformation of different nations at different stages of development inevitably required a diversity of state forms, i.e., federal state.

(c) Lenin saw the adoption and maintenance of a federal system as one of the means of containing and resolving the then existing and future political conflict between the Central leadership and the national elites.⁵⁵

For the first time, these conditions were outlined by J. Stalin in December 1924 in the note to his article "Against Federalism" published in Pravda on March 28, 1917. In Stalin's view this evolution on the question of federalism took place because at time of October revolution:

(a) a number of nationalities of Russia were actually in a state of complete isolation from one another, and in view of this, federation represented a step forward from the division of the working class of these nationalities to their closer union, their amalgamation.

(b) the fact that the very forms of federal union suggested themselves in the course of Soviet development proved by no means so contradicting to the aim of closer economic unity between the working masses on the

55. E.V. Tadevosyan, " V.I. enin Gosudarstvennikh Formakh Socialisticheskogo Razresheniya Natsionalnogo Voprosa", (V.I. Lenin, On State forms of Socialist Solutions of National Questions), Voprosii Filozofii, 1964, no. 44, pp. 3-35.

nationalities of Russia as might have appeared formerly, and even did not contradict this aim at all, as was substantially demonstrated in practices.

(c) The national movement proved to be far more weighty a factor, and the process of amalgamation of nations far more complicated a matter than might have appeared formerly, in the period to the war, or in the period prior to the October Revolution.⁵⁶

M. i. Kulichenko mentions following reasons which caused Lenin to revise his views on the following :-

(a) The country was on the eve of a socialist revolution, which should have seized the whole country - the centre and the periphery.

(b) The national liberation movement had reached a high level of maturity which had placed the creation of its own independent national statehood by every nation on the agenda of the day.⁵⁷

According to Semenov, this change was in terms of

56. J.V. Stalin, n. 44, pp. 32-3.

57. Kulichenko, Natsionalnye Oshosheniya VSSR i Tendentsiikh Raztiya, (Moscow, 1972), p. 173.

inequality of treatment, oppression, economic and cultural backwardness of the non-Russian nationalities.⁵⁸

Apart from the above factors there were other factors which provided the basis for re-examination of its stand towards federation by the Party. These factors have been summarised by Lepeoshkin as follows :⁵⁹

- (1) Recognition by Lenin that Soviet Republic was different from all forms of bourgeois state not only in its essence but also in the principle of its organisation. The federation based on Soviets was in no way contradictory to the creation of centralised strong democratic state. The Soviets which arose before the October Socialist Revolution and became after its victory, a political basis of the state cultivated the idea of uniting people by making provisions for their national sovereignty. This realisation by Lenin and the Bolshevik party made them re-examine their attitude towards a federation, which was deemed as a more progressive state form for ensuring unity for the Soviet multinational state.

58. Semenov cited in Grey Hodnett, " The Debate Over Soviet Federalism ", Soviet Studies , (Glasgow, 1967), Vol. 18, no. 4, pp. 471-2.

59. Lepeoshkin, n. 47, pp. 63-8.

(2) The other cause for this change that the relative strength of the national movement in Russia turned out to be more serious than it appeared before the October Socialist Revolution. More than 100 nations with different stages of socio-economic development burst into a big upsurge with the February bourgeois democratic revolution which was strengthened by the colonial policy of provisional government, particularly in the sphere of national question. In the period of the bourgeois democratic revolution three basic tendencies could be noticed in the national areas of the country :-

(a) urge for the formation of unitary national republics,

(b) national federated union, and

(c) revolutionary democratic movement for the creation of a single strong socialist multinational state.

In such a historical setting, the federal form of state construction was relevant from the standpoint of unity among nations and the cause of formation of a single union state. The federation under such conditions provided the state with legal instrument to forgo a structure based on unity and solidarity in a system of single federal

socialist state. Summing up the result of state construction during the first month of the existence of RSFSR, Lenin write that, " On the basis of its example it shows us particularly clearly that federation, which we are introducing and will introduce is now the surest step towards the most lasting union of the various nationalities of Russia into a single democratic centralised Soviet state."⁶⁰

(3) One of the basic causes for recognition of federation appeared in no way contradictory to the task of forging economic cooperation of the toiling masses of the various nationalities of Russia.

(4) The guarantee for external security of the Soviet Republic, in political, economic and military sphere became one of the main causes for change of stand on federation. In the period before the October Revolution, the Bolshevik party was of the view that federation would be less favourable for implementing the political task of the dictatorship of the proletariat. But during the first few months of the existence of the Soviet state, it was

6). V.I. Lenin, " The Immediate Task of the Soviet Government ", Collected Works, (Moscow, 1964), Vol. 2 p.207.

demonstrated that without strong military cooperation among the Soviet Republics, the civil war could not be won and the independence of every republic, " if attacked by the imperialist power " could not be defended. Federal form for the multinational Soviet state under certain historical conditions was confirmed by the Party programme adopted in March 1919 and in the "Thesis on the National Question " ratified by the second Comintern Congress in 1920. But the federation which was to be organised on the Soviet pattern was conceived as a transitional form towards " complete and full unity ". Thus it took quite a long time to create the parameters of a new type of federation which had an inbuilt mechanism to respond to the question of its applicability not only as a transitional but as a durable form. In the given circumstances, it was a logical result of the tremendous amount of political work that was under-taken to unite various nations in a single state on the principle of " internationalism ". The conception of the principle was almost flawless. However, the historical evolution of its functional parameters left much to be desired. The functional parameters will be put to analysis and examination in the next chapter.

CHAPTER - II

PERSPECTIVES ON FEDERALISM IN THE CONSTITUTIONS OF 1924,
1936 AND 1977

A constitution is the general plan for the organisation and the functioning of the State. It is the basis on which the territorial administrative division, the system of state agencies, etc. are established. Constitution provides a legal framework for the functioning of the political institutions and determines the political processes at all the levels. It is a device of measuring the extent of centralisation of a particular federal polity. In order to have a proper understanding of the concept, the analysis of the two varying concept of 'constitution', as has been conceived by the Western scholars and the Soviet scholars, is very important.

'Constitution' in the Western Perception :

From the time of Aristotle the term 'Constitution' was used to mean the 'way of Government'. For Aristotle, a constitution was "an arrangement or in regard to the offices of the state". Or "an origination of offices in a state, by which the method of their distribution is fixed, the sovereign authority is determined, and the nature of the end to be pursued by the association and all its member is prescribed".¹ This necessarily involved limiting

1. Earnest Barker, Tr., The Politics of Aristotle, (Oxford, 1972), pp. 110-12.

political power and subjecting to its laws. The Western perception of constitution stems from this idea.

In the Western eyes constitution has been viewed as a mechanism of imposing restraints on the arbitrary power of government in order to safeguard the freedom of citizens. "Constitution" as Wheare describes, 'springs from the belief that in a limited government, whatever the nature and extent of the restrictions, however, are based upon the common belief in a limited government and the use of constitution to impose these limitations'.² Same ideas were properly developed by C.H. Mcilwain in his work, "Constitutionalism and the changing world", where he maintained that, a constituted authority is one that is defined and there can be no definition which does not of necessity imply a limitation. Constitutional government is and must be 'limited government' if it is constitutional at all'.³

This approach to the Constitution reflects the continuation of Aristotalian understanding of constitutional rule consisting of three main elements. "First it is rule in the public or general interest...second, it is a lawful rule.... third, constitutional government means the government of willing subjects as distinct from a despotism that is supported merely by force".⁴

2. K.C. Wheare, Modern Constitutions, (London, 1963), p.7.

3. C. H. Mcilwain, Constitutionalism and the Changine World (Cambridge, 1969), p. 244.

4. G.H. Sabine, and Thomas Landon Thorson, A History of the Political theory, (New Delhi, 1975), p. 100.

The constitution is thus a mechanism through which the government is made to follow the rule of law, which according to Dicey has three meanings :

(1) It means...the absolute supremacy or predominance of regular law as opposed to the difference or arbitrary power and excludes the existence of arbitrariness of prerogative, or even of wide discretionary authority on the part of the government..."

(2) It means again, equality before law, or equal subjection of all classes of the ordinary law of the land administered by the ordinary law courts".

(3) The rule of law, lastly, may be used as a formula for expressing the fact that with us the law of the constitution...or not sources, but consequences of the rights of individuals, as defined and enforced by the courts..."⁵

The establishment of the rule of law is sought to be achieved through the means of the division of power. "Constitution", writes Friedrich, 'by dividing power provides a system of effective restraints upon governmental action'.⁶ This division of power carried out with the intention of setting power to check power. The system of

5. A.V. Dicey as cited in A.C. Kapoor, Principles of political Science (New Delhi, 1963), pp. 441-42.

6. Carl J. Friedrich, Constitutional Government and Democracy, (Oxford, 1968).

division of power is based on Montesquieu's theory of separation of powers.⁷ The functions of rule making, rule implementation and rule adjudication are treated as distinct and separate and are entrusted to legislative, executive and judicial branches of government in a prescribed manner. Each one of these organs is endowed with the fair amount of independence. A system of checks and balances is worked out so that each organ checks the other and preserves the observance and articulate their cases to secure cooperation of the other agencies of the government acts as a powerful stimulus to moderation and reasonableness of policy,⁸ which forms the basis of Western preception of the Constitution.

Western constitutions and other constitutions based on this approach thus contain :-

(a) Distribution of power functional as well as special to avoid the concentration of power.

(b) A system of checks and balances aiming not only at limiting power but also at the coordination of functions of the organs of political power with the purpose of ensuring smooth continuation of political process.

(c) Procedure to resolve a possible dead lock keeping supreme arbiter either the people at

7. S.A. De Smith, Constitutional and Administrative Law, (Penguin, 1971), p. 41.

8. C.D. Kernig, (ed.), Marxism, Communism and Western Society : A Comparative Encyclopaedia, Vol. II. (New York, 1972), p. 170.

large or an independent judiciary.

(d) Procedure for amendment of the constitution.

(e) A bill of rights and provisions for their realisation.

(f) In case of federal constitution, a scheme of distribution of powers between centre and constituent units.

A Society having such arrangements came to be described as an 'open society' and its government came to be recognised as an agency of reconciling the conflicting interests of different strata of society. This view of constitutionalism is known as the liberal pluralist view which admits :-

(a) plurality of interest in the society.

(b) capability of each section of society to identify and articulate its interest through its organisation, and

(c) availability of a mechanism through which the conflicting interests can be resolved into authoriatative policies and decisions.⁹

The modern view of cinstitutionalism assumed existence of conflict and consensus in a society at different levels. According to William G. Andrews, " The matter of consensus has an important bearing on the constitutionalism. Order may be imposed through force, voilence and arbitery action by a dictator or oligarch even if the extent and intensity

9. O.P. Gauba, Constitutionalism in a Changing Society (New Delhi, 1984), p. 6.

of consensus in a community are low".¹⁰

This liberal-pluralist view of constitutionalism is categorically rejected by the Marxist theory. According to them plurality of view in the society is not possible because, "the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle",¹¹ and society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two hostile camps, into great classes directly facing each other : bourgeoisie and proletariat.¹²

According to the Marxism, state is primarily as instrument of oppression. Its most important institution is ' public force ', comprised of armed men, prisons and the various appendages of oppression. Its function is to assure peace and public order so as to permit the continuation of production in a society divided by class antagonism, and project a wrong image of reconciliation of interest with the help of religion, morals and other implements of culture.¹³

A Western - Liberal writer equates democracy with constitutional / limited government. Logically, people's power is unlimited. A government responsible to the entire people cannot be limited. A limited government in pure

10. W.G. Andrews, Constitutions and Constitutionalism, (New Delhi, 1972), pp. 13-14.

11. K.Marx and F. Engles, Selected Works, Vol. 1, (Moscow, 1950), p. 330.

12. Ibid., pp. 33-4.

13. Kernig, no. 8, p. 99.

democracy is a logical "absurdity". In practical terms it can serve the interest of a particular class or section of the people who need protection from the control of the government by ' others '.¹⁴

"Seperation of powers" which was so cardinal to Western constitutionalism was perceived by Marx as a doctrine which is the product of an age in which " the royal power, the aristocracy and bourgeois are struggling for supremacy elevated into an "eternal law".¹⁵ On the basis of this understanding, Marx described Louis Bonaparte's Coup D'etat of 2nd December 1851 as a " victory of the executive over the legislative power " in the sense that it was the victory of ruling clique over the representative organs of the bourgeoisie as a whole.¹⁶

Further, " the traditional doctrine of the seperation of power lost its pratical significance in the age of the crisis of capitalism and of imperialism since all powers in the modern parliamentary bourgeois state is concentrated in the hands of the government. In the Soviet view, the facade of parliamentary government with seperation of powers, conceals the role of the upper bourgeoisie of finance capital and big business which exert their power

14. S. k. Chaube, The New Constitution of the USSR, (Calcutta, 1985), p. 5.

15. Cited in E.H. Carr, The Bolshevik Revolution, Vol. I, (Penguin, 1964), p. 154.

16. Ibid., pp. 156-7.

via an increasingly influential executive.¹⁷

Lenin regarded the separation of executive from legislative as a specific merit of the Soviet system.¹⁸ In Marxist-Leninist view, separation of power often leads to the degeneration of the political system which manifests itself in the form of irresponsibility of the heads of the state, and the absence of responsibility on the part of members of the parliament towards their electors.¹⁹

Similarly, the concept of independent judiciary was also outrightly rejected by Marxian theory. Marx clearly advocated that "the judicial functionaries were to be divested of their sham independence which had but served to mask their object subservience to all succeeding governments to which in turn, they had taken and broken, the oath of allegiance. Like the rest of the public servants, magistrates and judges were to be elective, responsible and revocable."²⁰

Thus, one finds a liberal constitution, whether its structure conforms to parliamentary model, presidential model or any combination of the two, only provides for a mechanism of management of this political process. It does not preclude social change but the pattern and degree of

17. Kernig, no. 8, p. 315.

18. Carr, no. 15, p. 154.

19. Kernig, no. 8, p. 315.

20. Karl Marx, "Civil War in France", Selected Works, Vol. II, (Moscow, 1973), pp. 220-25.

social change allowed by it is determined by the interplay of political forces. The sophisticated mechanism of liberal constitutionalism were representative institutions only to create the ideological misconception. Lenin held that the essence of liberalism was summed up in its assertions that bourgeois parliamentarism destroys classes and class divisions, since the right to vote and the right to participate in the government of the country are shared by all citizens without distinction.²¹

In opposition to this, Lenin set forth his own view that "parliamentarism does not eliminate, but lays bare the innate character even of the most democratic bourgeois republics as organs of class oppression. Lenin had always urged that the tactical opportunities afforded by the parliamentary system should be exploited fully.

Once again, in his polemic with Kautsky, Lenin expressed his views on parliamentary system, "Take the bourgeois parliament ; can it be that the learned Kautsky has never heard that more highly democracy is developed, the more bourgeois parliaments were subjected by the stock exchange and the bankers ? This does not mean that we must not make use of bourgeois parliament, but it does not mean that only a liberal can forget the historical limitations and conventions of the bourgeois parliamentary systems as Kautsky does " .²² This character of the modern

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21. V.I. Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. 15 (Moscow, 1963), p. 36; cited in J. Bunyan and H.H. Fisher, The Bolshevic Revolution, 1917-1918 (Stamped, 1934), p.578.
22. V.I. Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. 28 (Moscow, 1965), p.246.

constitutionalism according to the Marxist theory was nothing but a device for legitimization of an exploitative capitalist system. Thus, Marxist model of constitutionalism calls for a different mechanism.

'Constitution in the Soviet Perception :

Marxist-Leninist understanding of society, state and law as also the actual requirements of the socialist society determines the Soviet approach to the constitution. This approach conceives a contention as an outcome of the prevailing constellation of social forces.

On the basis of searching analysis of human history Marx and Engels demonstrated that political institutions as well as morals culture of society at any historical stage were determined by the character of the prevailing economic relationship emanating from the prevalent mode of production. In Marxian perception, the economic mode of production current in history determines the character of the entire social super structure and the first and most ideological element created by the mode of production in one social superstructure is the state. It further says that the entire structure of the state is based on the property relations. The private property creates class interest and finally class antagonism, class hatred and constant struggle in the womb of history. In the " Communist Manifesto " they observed that , " The executive of modern state is but a committee for managing the common

affairs of the whole bourgeoisie".²³ " State, writes Lenin, " is a product and manifestation of the irreconcilability of class antagonism. The state arises when, where and to the extent that class antagonism objectively cannot be reconciled. And, conversely, the existence of the state proves that the class antagonism are irreconcilable".²⁴

The communist programme consists in the realisation of complete stateless and classless society through revolutionary action of the working class. This proletarian revolution will destroy the old state machine and replace it by a new one.

Lenin dwelling on this theme at length in "State and Revolution" argued that, " the liberation of the oppressed class is impossible not only without a violent revolution but also without the destruction of the apparatus of state power which was created by the ruling class and which is the embodiment of this alienation ".²⁵ In his views only the Socialist Revolution brings about a state which exercise all its function in the struggle of the working people and society's progressive development .²⁶ Lenin emphasised the protracted nature of the transition period.

23. K. Marx & F. Engles, " The Communist Manifesto", in Marx & Engles, Selected Works, Vol. I, (Moscow, 1950), p. 35.

24. V.I. Lenin, The State and Revolution, (Moscow, 1977), p.12.

25. Ibid., pp. 14-15.

26. V.M. Chkhikvadze, (ed.), The Soviet State and Law, (Moscow, 1969), p.18.

According to him, the society must pass through various stages of growth and maturity. Starting with the initial dictatorship of the proletariat, a socialist society, next reaches the phase of "victorious socialism". This is followed by phase of building of material - technical base of a communist society.²⁷

The Soviet constitutional legislation has shown that it reflects distinct phases of the socio-economic transformation. It has been argued that Socialist Constitutions must transcend the frame for the operation of political process by government, parliament and political parties.²⁸ The Soviet Constitutional law accordingly embody :

- (a) principles underlying the Soviet social structure;
- (b) Organisation of State system and state power;
- (c) Legal status of persons; and
- (d) Foreign affairs.²⁹

Vyshinsky, the well known authority of law and constitutional matters, argued that, "the Soviet constitution represents the sum total historic path along which the Soviet state has travelled. At the same time, they are the legislative basis of the subsequent development of state life....changes in the socio-political

27. Ibid., pp. 38-40.

28. Kernig, n. 8, Vol. 2, p. 183.

29. Chkhikvadze, n. 26, pp. 240-42.

life of our country are reflected in the corresponding changes of Soviet constitutions accepted by the highest organs of the state authority.³⁰

In 1936, Stalin held somewhat different view. According to him, " A Constitution must speak of that which already exists, of that which has already been achieved and won now, at the present time. A programme deals mainly with the future, a constitution with the present ".³¹

While there may be a degree of difference of emphasis, all the Soviet constitutions take note of not only of the past and present but also contain provisions reflecting the future programme of the Socialist state. Constitution also seeks to create bodies and institutions union are essential to enforce the socialist programme. Stalin once observed that they are " the mirror of our success upto the day ". A socialist constitution is far static. It has been in perpetually progressive motion, moving towards the ideal socialist or communist society of the future in which the welfare of the working population is identical with the well-being of the entire society".³² The legislature, executive and largely the judiciary too work in harmony and cooperation as seperation of power, as prevalent in the

30. A.V. Vyshinsky, The Law of the Soviet State, (New York, 1948), p. 87.

31. J.V. Stalin, Problems of Leninism (Moscow, 1953), p. 688.

32. Kernig, n. 8, Vol. 2, p. 184.

West, is non-existent and there are no provisions for judicial review and the checks and balances. Constitutions play an important role as well. According to Hooker,³³ the major function of the Soviet legal system is to provide a means of transforming society towards the Communist ideal outside which no true liberty can exist. In terms of this function the main method employed is that of endowing society with the economic organisation that conforms to this ideal. The legal system is that dominated by an economic preoccupation.

As far as the form goes, Soviet constitution clearly identifies with the Western pattern of constitutions such as the legislature and the ambit of its powers, the courts and their judicial functions, the envisaged scheme and nature of federalism, the division of powers between the federating members as also the conflict of revolving mechanism.

It may be seen that the Soviet constitutional practice has followed the Marxian dialectic in the sense that the socio-economic advance of the Soviet society has made an avowed demand on the constitutions to conform to the dynamic rationale of social development. This is reflected in all the previous Soviet constitutions. Vyshinsky is not far removed from the actual socio-political reality in

33. M.B. Hooker, Legal Pluralism: An Introduction to Colonial and Neo-Colonial Law, (Oxford, 1975), p. 412.

asserting that " Soviet constitutions cannot be properly understood without proper analysis of the historic settings in which they were developed and adopted and of the conquests whose formal record and legal confirmation they were.³⁴

Thus, the perspective on the federalism in Soviet constitutions has to be understood in the totality of a country's socio-economic situation and only then can critically assess the relevant provisions of the all-union constitution in order to project an over all view of the place of union republics in Soviet federal system.

Federalism in the USSR Constitution of 1924 :

The idea of Setting up a Soviet state on a federal model was legally secured in the Declaration of rights of the Working and Exploited people. " The Russian Soviet Republic " it said, " is essentially established on the principle of a free union nations, as a federation of Soviet National Republics ".³⁵ This declaration was endorsed by the Third All Russian Congress of Soviets and made a component part of the constitution of the RSFSR.

The salient features of this declaration was its differences from any other declaration of rights since 1689. Rights in such declaration have meant the rights of the individual primarily against the state resulting in

34. Vyshinsky, n. 30, p. 87.

35. Carr, n. 15, p. 126.

from the philosophy of laissez faire. On the other hand, the Declaration of Rights of the Toiling and Exploited People was an enunciation of the state structure itself. It sprang from the Marxist theory that the rights of citizens are related to the specific socio-political structure. It is only when the authority of the working class is established. This declaration was endorsed by the Third All Russian Congress of the Soviets and made a component part of the constitution of the RSFSR adopted in 1918.³⁶

The civil war and the foreign intervention in Soviet Russia made it imperative for the government to unite and non-Russian regions under a single union in order to save its socialist existence. Although, the process began immediately after the revolution, the resolution of the Fourth Party Congress in 1921 specifically called for a "Union of the Several Socialist Republics as the only path of salvation from the imperialist yoke and national oppression".³⁷ Therefore, the subsequent Union of the republics³⁸ creating a new state, the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics on the 30th November 1922, necessitated the adoption of a new constitution. On January 10, 1923, the presidium of new VTsIR, elected by the First All

36. Chaube, n. 14, p. 16.

37. Merla Fainsod, How Russia is Ruled ? (Massachusetts, 1970), p. 365.

38. RSFSR, Ukraine, Belorussia and Transcaucasia.

Russian Congress of Soviets of the USSR, appointed a Commission to draft the new constitution.

Debate in the Constitution Commission :

The Debates that accompanied the drafting of the 1923 constitution of the USSR brought into focus divergent attitude concerning the question of federalism. At one extreme were the opponents of federalism, whose conception of the Union of Republics was not as a union of equal state entities with a mandate to guarantee the free development of national republics, but as a step towards the liquidation of the republics as the beginning of the organisation of the so-called "one and individual republics",³⁹ This group opposed the creation of a second chamber in which the nationalities would have separate representation but at the 12th Party Congress of the Communist Party decided to embody the recommendations of Lenin regarding the CEC. The decision provided for formation of two chambers Executive Committee of the USSR. One chamber was to reflect the class interest of the working people of all nationalities while the other was to represent the specific interests of the individual nations. The Fourth Conference of the Central Committee of the Party met in June 1923 and gave the names of the Two chambers and the group which opposed the creation of second chamber were denounced by Stalin, as "Great Power Chauvinists". Their views be referred "had no resemblance

39. Cited in E.R. Goodman, The Soviet Design for World State (New York, 1960), p. 243.

to communism or had nothing to do with internationalism".⁴⁰

Leaders from Ukraine, on the other extreme, insisted for a form of Union which would guarantee the non-russian republics a measure of real autonomy. This group favoured a second Chamber composed of representatives of the contracting states. To prevent the RSFSR from dominating this chamber, their spokesman, Raskovsky, proposed that no single state should have more than two fifths of the total seats. They also demanded that Soviet of Union and Soviet of Nationalities should each have its own Presidium. Finally, they proposed that, the Commissariats of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade should be made Union republican rather than all Union or unified commissariats.⁴¹ These demands were rebuffed because what Ukrainian leaders had in mind was a kind of confederation rather than a federation.

The final draft reflected these views. A special commission of the Central Committee of the Party, including representatives from party organs of the Union republic considered the draft constitution and approved it. The draft was then approved by the CEC of the Union republics on 6th July 1923, and subsequently ratified by the second All Russian Congress of the Soviets on 31st January 1924. The 1924 Constitution consisted of two sections, 11 articles and 72 clauses. First section dealt with the

40. Fainsod, n. 37, p. 365.

41. Ibid., p. 366.

background of the formation of the Union and second section with Union and Republics relations, bicameral CEC with a Presidium and the role of the Supreme Court.

Soviet Federalism :

In the 1924 Constitution the word ' Union ' was used in place of ' federation ' or ' Federal '. It declared the Union to be "voluntary Association of Sovereign nations on the basis of equality, reserving to itself the right of free withdrawal from the Union ". But this could not allow to be exercised to promote counter revolution. Stalin had already clarified his stand on October 10, 1920 in an article in Pravda :

" Of course, the border regions of Russians, the nations and tribes which inhabit these regions... possess the inalienable right to secede from Russia, but the demand for secession... at the present stage of the revolution (has become) counter revolution".⁴²

This was interpreted from a class point of view, that was considered legitimate only if exercised by the working class of the nationality, in question, or in constitutional terms, in favour of the ideal of national equality of peoples of the Union within a federative socialist system. It was further argued that the socialist system by doing away with social ethnic religion, cultural and economic

42. Carr, n. 15, pp. 382-83; Fainsod, n. 37, p. 367.

inequality would ipso-facto put an end to separatist trends for the obvious reasons that nationalism was largely a natural reflex to the stimulus of the " great power chauvinism " of the Russians.

Scope of the Authority of the Union :

The Constitution mentioned 24 items ⁴³ that came under the Union jurisdiction. The division of powers between the federal government and its constituent republics resembled in many respects the division of powers in the United States. Specified powers were given to the Centre While jurisdiction of the Union Republic was stated in residual form, the republics were authorized to exercise such powers as were not vested in the government of the USSR.

But all important powers of the budgetary Control and economic planning, and direction for the USSR as a whole were so broadly formed that they embraced the whole economic system of the USSR. In article 1 the powers of the Central Authorities and those of the member republics were delineated so as to give the federal authority obvious dominance over the economy. The federal authority received the right to centralised economic planning for the whole economic system of the Union.⁴⁴ Because of this the republics became agents of the federal authority when they participated in administration of the economy. They

43. Art. 1, Clause 1.

44. Article 1, Clause 1.

enjoyed no autonomy in the economic fields; no powers to tax unless authorised by the federal authority; no possibility of accumulating resources out of the profits to be gained by foreign trade, for that was a centralized state monopoly; and no authority to contract foreign loans unless sanctioned by the Centre.⁴⁵ In the sphere of special policy, the Soviet federation left to the various federating republics greater autonomy. The codes of law, which were the major determinants of the social relationship, were to remain within the authority of the republics but the federal legislatures was authorized to establish basic principles for structure and procedure of the courts and of the civil and criminal codes of the republics.⁴⁶

Even in the cultural matters the federal government left education wholly to the member states of a federation. But, the federal government was authorised to establish general principles for national education.⁴⁷

Sovereignty of the Constituent Republics :

Union is enjoined to safeguard the sovereignty of each and every constituent republic of the Union.⁴⁸ Each republic will have its own constitution. The republican

45. J.N. Hazard, "Fifty Years of Soviet Federation", Canadian Slavonic Papers, Vol. 4, (Toronto, 1972), p. 593.

46. Article 1, Clause 8.

47. Article 1, Clause 9.

48. Article 2, Clause 3.

constitutions are required to confirm with the federal constitution.⁴⁹ The territory of each republic shall not be altered without its consent.⁵⁰ A single citizenship is envisaged.⁵¹ In case of a conflict, the Union law will prevail.⁵² The power to amend the constitution was vested in All Russian Congress of Soviets.⁵³

Institutional Structure at the Union Level :

Except for one or two minor additions, no serious change in the organisation of the Soviet was sought to be effected through this constitution. In fact, according to Otto Bihari, this constitution of the Soviet Union settled matters only forthcoming from the federal character of the state.⁵⁴ The Central government organs defined by the constitution were as follows : the Congress of Soviets was established as the Supreme organs of the authority in the USSR and in between the sessions of the Congress, this authority was to be exercised by the VTsIK.⁵⁵

The 1924 constitution adopted a special feature by changing the structure of the VTsIK. It was now made bicameral organs

49. Article 2, Clause 5.

50. Article 2, Clause 6.

51. Article 2, Clause 7.

52. Article 8, Clause 59.

53. Article 1, Clause 2.

54. Otto Bihari, Socialist Representative Institution (Budapest, 1970), pp. 81-2.

55. Article 3, Clause 8.

consisting of a Union Council and a Council of Nationalities. The former consisted of 371 members, was elected by the Congress of Soviets on a proportional basis from representatives of the Union Republics,⁵⁶ and the Council of Nationalities was organised on the basis of five representatives from each union and Autonomous Republic and one representative from each Autonomous Region.⁵⁷ The composition of the Council of Nationalities as a whole was the "subject to the confirmation of the Soviet Congress of the Union".⁵⁸ Although the numerical strength of the two chambers of the VTsIK was quite unequal as to the exercise of power both enjoyed equal rights.

Hence, the decrees and regulations of the VTsIK could have the force of law only after the agreed decisions of the two.⁵⁹ In the event of disagreement the two chambers could set up a conciliation commission on parity basis to put forward the draft of agreed decisions. Graham glorified the Soviet federation based on nationalities and their representations in a separate chamber. It was "without question one of the most far reaching experiments.... a scientific approach to the problems of the cultural treatment of various nationalities "and a

56. Article 4, Clause 14.

57. Article 4, Clause 15.

58. Article 4, Clause 15.

59. Article 4, Clause 22.

daring innovation".⁶⁰

Another innovation introduced by the 1924 Constitution was the creation of the presidium at the Central level. Each chamber of the VTsIK elected its own presidium of seven members which was responsible for preparing the agenda for its sittings and dealing with current matters between sessions.⁶¹ Apart from this, there was the presidium of the VTsIK which was the highest legislative, executive and administrative organ of power in USSR.⁶² This presidium included the presidia of the two chambers,⁶³ plus seven members elected at the joint session of the two chambers.

The number of Chairmen of the VTsIK corresponded to the number of union republics and they also formed part of the Presidium.⁶⁴ The VTsIK was accountable to the Congress of Soviets for its activities.⁶⁵

The other organ of the Congress of Soviets was the Council of People's Commissars formed by the VTsIK which consisted of a Chairman, Deputy Chairman, Chairman of the Supreme Council of National Economy and other Peoples Commissar.

60. Malbone W. Graham Jr., New Governments of Eastern Europe (New York, 1969), p. 160.

61. Article 4, Clause 25.

62. Article 5, Clause 29.

63. Article 4, Clause 26.

64. Article 4, Clause 27.

65. Article 4, Clause 28.

The Council was responsible to the VTsIK and its Presidium,⁶⁶ and the latter had the authority to annul the decision of the former.⁶⁷ In this connection, it is important to note that the principle of separation of powers was totally rejected.

Constitution of the USSR of the 1924 made provisions for a Supreme Court and a Procurator attached to the CEC to maintain revolutionary law throughout the territory of the Union.⁶⁸

Institutional Structure at the Republic Level :

The Constitution also outlined the organs of state administration of the Union Republics on the pattern of Central organs of State Administration,⁶⁹ which is shown in the following diagram :-

CONGRESS OF THE REPUBLICS
CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
PRESIDIUM OF THE CEC
COUNCIL OF PEOPLE'S COMMISSARS

Kamanev considered the Soviet federal (Union) set up as sui-generis which he regarded as " more solid union than

66. Article 6; Clause 40.

67. Article 6, Clause 41.

68. Article 7; Clause 43.

69. Article 10, Clause 64, 65, 66, 76.

any existing unions.⁷⁰ It may be noted that in a period when total orientation of Soviet political system was directed towards centralisation and unitary statehood, the innovation in bicameralism testified to the federal character of the Soviet system. The fact that federal framework has been considerably extended since 1924 is evident from the persual of the amendments to the 1924 constitution.

In the period between 1924 and 1936, a number of amendments and addenda were introduced into the constitution of the USSR and the constitutions of the Union Republics. They reflected, firstly, the development of national and state organization of the USSR, delimitation of the jurisdiction of the USSR and that of the Union Republics, formation of Autonomous Republics, Regions and National Areas; secondly, the radical changes were carried out in the Administrative territorial division of the republics, thirdly the reorganization of the organs of the state administration (structural and functional changes were brought about).⁷¹

Federalism in the USSR Constitution of 1936 :

The 1936 constitution marked a notable break in the Soviet Constitutional law. It was adopted as a result of important changes in the economic structure and class composition of Soviet society. Alfred G. Mayer, has aptly concluded the experience of the Soviet constitutional

70. Kamanev, cited in Graham, n. 60, p. 257.

71. Denisov & M. Kirichenko, Soviet State Law , (Moscow, 1960), pp. 83-91.

development. He writes;

" Every Soviet political system destroyed itself by its success. Each rendered itself superfluous and jeopardised its own existence by solving some major problem or problems confronting it precisely for the solution of those problems it functioned and structured itself".⁷²

In fact, the previous constitutions contained nothing concerning the embodiment of socialist system. In his report to the Fifth All Russian Congress of Soviets Lenin said",....we do not yet know of socialism that can be put into paragraphs of law".⁷³ The new constitution was adopted on 5 December 1936. The main contents behind it, as it was then claimed, was to bring the fundamental law into conformity with socio-economic changes that had taken place during the preceding years. "The new constitution....." Stalin said," proceeds from the fact that there are no longer any antagonistic classes in society; that society consists of two friendly classes of workers and peasants; that it is these classes, the labouring classes that are in power".⁷⁴ The purpose of

72. Alfred G. Mayer. " The Soviet Political System" in Samuel Hensal & Randolph L. Braham (ed.), The USSR After Fifty Years : Promise and Reality (New York, 1967) p. 50.

73. Cited in A.C. Kapoor, Selected Constitutions (Delhi, 1971), p. 604.

74. J.V. Stalin, Problems of Leninism, (Moscow, 1953), p. 690.

this constitution was the "registration and legislative embodiment of what has already been achieved and won in fact". Hence, it was possible to introduce universal suffrage without any restriction and without any disfranchised classes and to abolish the inequality between workers and peasants. Thus, this constitution was directed towards :

- (a) Further democratization of the elective system - in the sense of substituting equal election for elections not fully equal ; direct elections for elections having multiple stages ; and secret elections which were open; and
- (b) Making more precise the social, economic basis of the constitution in the sense of bringing the constitution into conformity with the present correlation of class forces in the USSR (the creation of new socialist industry, the liquidation of the Kulaks, the confirmation of socialist property as the basis of Soviet society etc).⁷⁵

The constitution was arranged in 13 chapters covering 146 articles. The 1936 constitution was a lengthy document, as compared to the previous constitutions Chapter One entitled the organisation of society , proclaimed the USSR as a Socialist state of workers and peasants, attribution of all powers to the working people of town and country as represented by Soviets of working people's Deputies.

75. Ibid., p. 679.

Chapter two outlined the system of federalism. Chapter three Laid down the Supreme organs of state power in the Union, Chapter four - the Supreme organs in the Republics ; Chapter five and six dealt with the administrative machinery of the Union and constituent republics ; Chapter eight and nine with local government and judiciary respectively ; Chapter ten contained the basic rights and duties of the citizens ; Chapter eleven outlined the scheme of nomination and elections and Chapter twelve with armed forces, flag and capital. Finally, chapter thirteen specified the procedure for amending the constitution.

The Soviet Federation :

Article 13 declared USSR to be a "federal state", formed on the basis of the "voluntary association of equal Soviet socialist Republics". Prior to the drafting of the 1936 constitution the USSR consisted of seven union republics.⁷⁶

In 1936, the the number of union republics increased by the promotion of Tadjikistan which had previously been merely an autonomous republic within Uzbekistan, and by the promotion in the 1936 constitution of Kazakhstan and Kirghizia to the rank of direct members of the union. At the same time, the Transcaucasian Federation was dissolved and its three constituent republics, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, joined the Union directly. As a result the number of Union republics in the USSR rose to eleven. In 1940 five more union republics were added. In 1956, the Kerelo-

76. The Russian, Ukranian, Belorussian, Transcaucasian, Turkmen, Uzbek and Tadjik.

-Finish Union Republics reverted to the status of autonomous republic and was reabsorbed in the RSFSR. The number of union republics was thus brought down to fifteen and it remained unchanged. In his speech to the eight congress of Soviets, Stalin took the opportunity to lay three conditions which the territory of the national minority should satisfy to gain union republic status : First the republic concerned must be border republic in order to be in position to demand secession if and when the occasion arises. Second, the nationality which gives its name to a given Soviet Republic must constitute a more or less compact majority within that republic. Third, the republic must have a sufficiently large population.⁷⁷ This meant that the autonomous regions would be entitled to the right of secession only after their elevation to the status of the union republics.

Jurisdiction of the USSR :

There was a specified division of power and the subjects assigned to the Central Government were enunciated in Article 14. Residuary powers rested with the constituent republic. These powers described the jurisdiction of the federal union. In comparison to the 1924 constitution it was disclosed that tremendous growth in the scope of the jurisdiction had taken place. In the constitution of 1924, only " formulation of the basis and the general plan of the national economy of the Union, and identification of

77. J.V. Stalin, On Draft Constitution of the USSR
(Moscow, 1951), pp. 56-7. /

industrial sectors and individual industrial enterprises having all union significance⁷⁸ were kept under the authority of the Centre. But the constitution of 1936 already significantly widened the sphere of central authority which included "management of the banks, industrial and agricultural enterprises and establishments as well as trade organisations of all union subordinations; general guidance of industry and constitution of union republican subordination",⁷⁹ which meant that a major chunk of the national economy was handed over to the Centre. Thus, in the economic field, there had been no real diminution in the scope of federal government, the economic problems in general were classed as within "the joint sphere of competence" of the union and the constituent republics. Constitutional provisions declared that federal departments exercised direction in these fields through like named departments of the republics which were granted "a wide sphere of activity", but only "written the framework of the directives and assignments" given to them by the federal organs. Even in this category, enterprises deemed of "all union importance" - on the decision of the centre - were administered directly by the federal organs. Finally, where direction of local industry was designated

78. Article 1 of the 1924 Constitution.

79. Sovetskoe Gosudarstvennoe i Pravo, pp. 248- 50; cited in Julian Towster, "Recent Trends and Strategies in Soviet Federalism", Political Quarterly, Vol. 23, (London, 1952), p. 169.

as " the sphere of competence of the republics ", it was stated simultaneously that this meant that in this sphere the union "realised" only general direction in the measure that such was necessary by virtue of the interconnections between all the branches of the national economy and the single economic plan for the entire economic life of the Union.

The jurisdiction of the union government was specified in Article 14 and union republics exercised their authority outside the jurisdiction of the USSR. But in the event of the discrepancy between the law of the Union Republic and all union law, the all Union law prevailed.

Position of the Union Republics :

The union was enjoined to protect the sovereign rights of the Union Republics. Each Union republic had its own constitution which took into account the specific features of the Republic and was drawn up in full conformity in the Constitution of the USSR.⁸⁰

As before, the Union Republics were free to secede from the USSR.⁸¹ Technically, the integrity of the union republic was indestructable in the sense that the territory of a union republic could not be altered without its consent.⁸²

The constitution provided for a uniform union citizenship.⁸³

80. Article 16 (1936 Constitution)

81. Article 17.

82. Article 16.

83. Article 21.

Institutional Structure :

Considering the changed social situation and new tasks of the Soviet state, certain changes in the institutional structure had been made. Under the previous constitutions, All Russian Congress of Soviets was vested in the "Supreme Power" and its Central Executive Committee (converted into bicameral legislature under 1924 constitution) was declared as "Supreme, legislative executive and controlling organ". Under the 1936 constitution, however, the highest organ in the USSR was the "Supreme Soviet of USSR", although the Soviets of working people's Deputies were declared to be the "Political foundation of the USSR" and all power belonged to "Working People" as represented by the Soviets of working People's Deputies.

Under the 1936 constitution the highest organ of the state authority was declared to be the Supreme Soviet of USSR.⁸⁴ The Legislative power of the USSR was exercised exclusively by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR,⁸⁵ and exercised all the federal powers either alone or through the federal organs accountable to it, i.e., the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet, the Council of Ministers and the Ministries of the USSR.⁸⁶

The Supreme Soviet consisted of two chambers :- The Soviet

84. Article 30.

85. Article 32.

86. Article 31.

of Union and the Soviet nationalities :-⁸⁷ the Soviet of the union was directly elected by the citizens on the basis of one Deputy for every 30,000 of the population,⁸⁸ and the Soviet of Nationalities was also directly elected on the basis of twenty five deputies from each union republic, eleven deputies from each autonomous republic, five deputies from each autonomous region and one deputy from each national district.⁸⁹

Both the chambers served for a term of four years⁹⁰ and had equal rights in initiating and enacting legislation. In case they disagree and their disagreements could not be reconciled, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet had the authority to dissolve the Supreme Soviet and order new election within a period not exceeding two months.⁹¹ As per Chaube, "these amendments brought the USSR political system to some approximation of parliamentary form of liberal democratic government."⁹²

Amending Powers

Unlike the previous constitutions, the 1936 constitution could be amended "only" by the Supreme Soviets of the USSR, adopted by a majority of not less than two thirds of the

87. Article 33.

88. Article 34.

89. Article 35.

90. Articles 37 & 38.

91. Article 47.

92. S.K. Chaube, "The Democratization of Soviet Polity : Issues and Strategies", cited in the Second Revolution Democratisation in the USSR (New Delhi, 1989), p. 37.

votes cast in each of its chambers.⁹³

Council of Ministers :

The erstwhile Council of People's Commissars was renamed as Council of Ministers under 1936 constitution. Executive and administrative authority was vested in a Council of Ministers whose appointment required the confirmation of Supreme Soviet. The Council of Ministers of the USSR was responsible and accountable to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, in the intervals between sessions of the Supreme Soviet, to the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet.⁹⁴ It consisted of a Chairman, one first Vice-Chairman, the Ministers of the USSR and fifteen chairmen of various Departments and the Director of the Central Statistical Administration. The Council of Ministers of the USSR included the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Union Republics as ex-office members.⁹⁵

The Council's decisions had to conform with the laws in operation and it verified and execution of its decision.⁹⁶

The Council's decisions were binding throughout the territory of the USSR.

Union Republics and Autonomous Regions :

The highest organ of the state power in a Union Republic

93. Article 146.

94. Article 64-65.

95. Article 70.

96. Article 66.

was a Supreme Soviet of the Union Republic,⁹⁷ which was endowed with the power to both adopt and amend the constitution of the Republic in conformity with Article 16 (It required the republican constitution to be in conformity with the Constitution of the USSR). The Supreme Soviet of a Union Republic elected its own Presidium consisting of a President, Vice-President, Secretary and members of the Presidium of the Union Republic, the powers of which were defined by the constitution of the Union Republic.⁹⁸ The Supreme Soviet of a Union Republic also elected its own Chairman and Vice-Chairman to conduct its sittings.⁹⁹ It also appointed the Council of Ministers of the Union Republics. Each autonomous republic had its own constitution. Institutional pattern was more or less as the USSR pattern at the Central level.

Local Bodies of the State Authority :

At the level of territories, regions, autonomous regions, areas, districts, cities and rural localities, there were Soviets of Working People's Deputies¹⁰⁰ The Soviets were popularly elected, the basis of representation of which was determined by the institutions of the Union Republics.¹⁰¹ -

97. Article 57.

98. Article 61.

99. Article 61.

100. Article 94.

101. Article 96.

The Local Soviets of Working People's Deputies directed the activities of the organs of administration subordinated to them, ensured the maintenance of public order, the observance of the laws and protection of the rights of citizens, directed local economic and cultural development and determined the local budgets.¹⁰²

The Local Soviets elected their Executive Committees consisting of a Chairman, Vice-Chairman, a secretary, and member (numbers not specified). These executive organs were directly accountable both to the Soviets of Working People's Deputies which elected them and to the executive organ of the superior of working People's Deputies.

The changes in the division of powers between the Union and the Union Republics introduced by the 1936 constitution tended to favour the former. Commenting on the 1936 constitution, A. I. Lepeoshkin admitted that it reflected a significant increase in the power of the Central Government at the expense of the republics. In his opinion, such an increase was justified where rigid centralisation was required for the administration of key branches of the economy and the distribution of material resources in the interest of the country as a whole. However, in a number of cases, the increase in the authority of the all-union government and the restrictions regarding the powers of the republics reflected a "tendency to excessive centralisation which occurred in the period of the spread of the personality cult of Stalin, who tried to

102. Article 97.

collect in his own hands all branches of state administration.¹⁰³

The 1936 constitution was substituted to numerous amendments in succeeding years, but none significantly changed its basic character or altered the configuration of the regimes. Most alterations were minor in nature, registering the admission of new union republics, shifts in political submits and rearrangements in administrative structure. The most startling development took place in February 1944 when amendments were enacted which extended the powers of the Union republics by awarding them the right to enter into direct relations and conclude treaties with foreign states,¹⁰⁴ as well as to maintain their own military force.¹⁰⁵ However, the constitution reserved to the Union the right to establish 'the general procedure' governing the foreign relations of union republics¹⁰⁶ and also the 'guiding fundamentals of the organisation of union republics military formations.'¹⁰⁷ The rights granted to the Union Republics in foreign affairs and defence were radical deviations from the general centralist trend of the constitution.

103. A.I. Lepeoshkin, cited in Samuel Bloembergen, "The Union Republics : How Much Autonomy ", Problems of Communism, Vol. 16, no. 5, (Washington, Sept.-Oct., 1967), p. 33.

104. Article 18(a).

105. Article 18(b) and Article 60.

106. Article 14(a).

107. Article 14(g).

With the advent of Khrushchev era, a new period marking the process of decentralisation of state control and extension of the rights of the Union republics dawned upon the horizon of the Soviet federation. The administration of the national economy centralised into thirty all union people's commissariats was transformed into the union republican organ, with responsibilities for the factories invested in the individual republics. This process began in 1954 and by 1956 fifteen thousand factories had been placed under the control of republican ministries.¹⁰⁸ This process led to the reduction in the number of all union ministries and ultimately resulted in radical reorganisation of the whole system of industrial management, leading to the formation of Sovanarkhoz (Council of National Economy). This system of Sovnarkhoz replaced the all union and union republican ministries which were as many as one hundred and forty one in all.¹⁰⁹ The decentralization of the legal system also began in 1954 with the restriction of the powers of the USSR Supreme Court and the delegation of considerable number of its former functions to the newly formed Presidium of the Union Republican Supreme Courts. At the same time, similar presidium were formed in the Supreme Court of the Autonomous Republics and also in oblast and Krai Courts.

108. Cited in Tamurbek Davletshin, "The Federal Principle in the Soviet State", Studies on the Soviet Union, Vol. IV, no. 3, (Munich, 1967), p. 28.

109. Ibid., p. 28.

The legal organs of the individual union republics were made responsible for confirming sentences passed within their territory. The Supreme Court of the All Union was to intervene only if a particular case had already been before the Supreme Court of the given Union Republic and if the sentence passed by the latter was contrary to all union legislation or infringed upon the interests of another union republic.¹¹⁰

In the 1960's the process of decentralisation which began in 1954 came to a halt and sign of reverse tendency became apparent. At the end of 1962, the Central Asian Bureau of the Communist Party was formed. Directly subordinated to Moscow, it exercised control over the political, cultural economic life of these republics. Similar was the case within the other republics.

The process did not stop here. The traditionally republican level ministries as those of education, autonomous for over fifty years, were transferred into union republican bodies in 1965 and into all union organs in 1966 for the first time under the Soviet regime, a central ministry of education was established in Moscow. In 1966, the Ministries for the Defence of Public order, previously republican bodies were recognised into union republican ministries, and the USSR Supreme Court also began to broaden its supervisory functions which was later

110. Ibid., p. 31.

on followed by the appropriate legislation.¹¹¹ In the mid 1960s, it was urged that the new constitution should contain guarantees of the sovereignty of the union republics reflecting their rights in state's economic and cultural rights.

Federation in the USSR Constitution of 1977 :

The discussion on the need to change the constitution of 1936 was started by Khrushchev at the Twenty-first Congress of the CPSU. In January 1956, at the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU, Khrushchev revealed how Stalin, having accumulated immense power in the Party and the Government, oppressed his opponents. This revelation led to the re-examination of Stalin's personality and policies as well as the principles of managements of the party and government. The natural consequence of this revelation was a series of corrective measures introduced after the Twentieth Congress.¹¹²

Finally in 1961, the Communist Party of the Soviet union adopted a new programme in its Twenty second Congress. This programme set the following direction for the development of the Soviet state.

All- Round extension and perfection of socialist democracy, active participation of all citizens in the administration

111. Izvestia, November 20, 1962, cited in T.C. Tewatia, "Soviet Theory of Federalism ", in the Indian Journal of Political Science; Vol. xxxvi, no. 2; (Delhi, April- June, 1975), p. 186.

112. Chaube, n. 14, p. 29.

of the state, in the management of the economic and cultural development, improvement of the government apparatus, the increased control over its activity.¹¹³

It was a continuation of the spirit of the Twentieth Congress that made a further exposure of the evils of the personality cult at the Twenty Second Congress and assertion of faith, in the programme of the CPSU, as condition of transition to communism.¹¹⁴

Constitutional Commission :

In April 1962, a constitutional commission presided over by Khrushchev was established. Brezhnev succeeded Khrushchev after latter's overthrow in October 1964.¹¹⁵ The constitutional commission included, "experienced party and government workers, collective farmers, the intellegentsia, eminent scientists, and legal specialists."¹¹⁶ Commission reported that nation-wide discussion of the draft constitution was extensive and far-reaching. According to Brezhnev, the draft constitution was debated by "Over eighty per cent" of the adult population resulting in nearly 4,00,000 proposals for amendments intended to

113. Programme of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Road to Communism), (Moscow, 1962), p. 548.

114. N.S.Khrushchev, On the Programme of the CPSU, Ibid., p. 194.

115. Robert Conquest, The Soviet Political System (London, 1968), p. 13.

116. Brezhnev's Report to the "Seventh Extraordinary Session of the Supreme Soviet", in Soviet Review, Vol.14 nos. 47-48, (New Delhi, 1977), p. 3.

clarify, improve and supplement the draft proposals.¹¹⁷ In the light of these proposals Supreme Soviet introduced 150 amendments and specifications into the draft. Later on, the Supreme Soviet session made another 12 changes into the draft. Changes affected 188 of the 173 articles of the draft. Further more one new article was added,¹¹⁸ the special seventh session of the USSR Supreme Soviet approved this draft unanimously on October 7, 1977. Thus, the 1977 constitution of the USSR grew out of the fulfilment of the programme of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union that was adopted in 1961.

Brezhnev claimed that this constitution "epitomizes the whole sixty years development of the Soviet State". He called it, "The law of life of developed socialist society".¹¹⁹ The 1936 constitution had been drafted just after the establishment of socialism. Since then a great distance has been traversed by the Soviet state. Economic development had been accompanied by considerable levelling of the conditions of the people and the consolidation of the socialist consciousness creating an 'organic integrity and dynamic force of the social system, its political stability, its indestructible inner unity'. It reflected

117. Ibid., pp. 4-5.

118. Boris Toporin, The New Soviet Constitution of the USSR, (Moscow, 1980), p. 16.

119. L.I. Brezhnev, Report on the Draft Constitution (Fundamental Law) of the USSR & the results of the Nation wide discussion of the Draft, Soviet Review, Vol.14, Nos. 47-48 (1977); p.3.

the stage of mature socialism - an 'important step' towards the great goal of communism.¹²⁰ The 1977 constitution (with 174 articles) was as a result, lengthier and more elaborate in the principle than the 1936 constitution (with 146 articles).

The Constitution of 1977 preserved the structure of federal arrangement of union-republic relationships and division of state power. In fact, constitutional commission had received some proposal suggesting the eliminates of the union and autonomous republics and the incorporation of the 'concept of an integral Soviet Union' in the constitution. If accepted, this would have drastically curtailed the sovereignty of the union republics. Constitutional commissions rejected this suggestion for the dismantling of the federal structure and branded them 'grossly erroneous'. Brezhnev went on to state that "social and political unity does not at all imply the disappearance of national distinctions".¹²¹

Soviet Federalism :

The constitution contained a definition of the USSR as "an integral, federal, multi-national state formed on the principle of socialist federalism as a result of the free self-determination of nations and the voluntary association

120. Ibid., pp. 20-21.

121. Brezhnev's speech to the Extraordinary Session of the Supreme Soviet on 4th Oct., 1977, Soviet Review, n. 215, p. 7.

of equal Soviet Socialist Republics".¹²² The previous constitution simply proclaimed the voluntary union of equal Soviet Socialist Republics and no emphasis was made on the socialist character of the Soviet federation. The new constitution contained a direct reference to the sovereign character of a union republic.¹²³ In this connection, it is important to note that the conventional theory of sovereignty needed to be modified in the federal systems of the USSR. It was not a one sovereign state, but a union of sovereign states called union republics. In most federations, the conduct of foreign relations is the exclusive responsibility of the Central authorities. In theory a line is drawn between internal and external sovereignty. In this regard, USSR was a unique case. In 1944, a constitutional amendment gave the republics the power to enter into relations with other states, conclude treaties with them, exchange diplomatic and consular representatives and take part in the work of international organisations.¹²⁴ By virtue of this status the USSR enjoyed three votes in the United Nations (the extra votes being accounted for by Ukraine and Belorussia) and each republic had its own ministry of foreign affairs. However, the union republics had lost the power to maintain their

122. Article 70 (1977 Constitution).

123. Article 76 (1977 Constitution).

124. Article 80.

own military formations.¹²⁵ Instead Article 81 of the new constitution ordained the USSR to preserve the right of the union republics.

The concept of sovereignty in the context of the USSR cannot be properly understood in juridical sense which identified with exclusive powers. The allocation of power in the federal system was based on the functional interdependence and therefore, did not admit the concept of 'balance of power' or 'check and balance' as in the U.S. federation.

Jurisdiction of the USSR :

Matters falling within the jurisdiction of all union organs are specified in Article 73 that clearly shows that the powers of the Union government are quite comprehensive and fully, justified the concept of an 'integral federation'.

Sovereignty of the Constituent Republics :

There is an elaborate structure of 'highest bodies' of state authority and administration to exercise their powers, refuting any apprehensions that a union of sovereign states cannot be a federation. These union republics retained their sovereignty in the form of right to secede from voluntary union of the USSR exercise their authority over the jurisdiction of the USSR.¹²⁶ The sovereignty of a union republic was guaranteed by the provision of the constitution of the USSR under which the

125. Article 18A of the 1936 Constitution of the USSR.

126. Article 72.

territory of a union republic could not be altered without its consent while the boundaries between union republics might be altered by mutual agreement of the republics concerned subject to the ratification of the USSR.¹²⁷ Constitutional guarantee of the rights of a union were the right to have its own constitution confirming to the constitution of the USSR with the specific features of the republic being taken into account¹²⁸ to ensure comprehensive, economic and social development on its territory.¹²⁹ Union republics took part in decision making in the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, the Government of the USSR, and other bodies of the USSR in the matters that came within the jurisdiction of the USSR.¹³⁰ The USSR of course, maintained control over observance of the constitutions of the USSR and ensuring of conformity of the constitution of union republics to the constitution of the USSR.¹³¹ In the event of a disparity between the Union republic Law and an all-Union law, the law of the USSR prevailed.¹³²

A Union republic determined the division into territories, regions, area and districts and decided other matters

127. Article 78.

128. Paragraph 3, Article 76.

129. Article 77, Part 2.

130. Paragraph 1, Article 77.

131. Article 73.

132. Article 74.

relating to its internal administrative and territorial structure.¹³³ As regards the autonomous territorial entities within the union republics, they were allotted separate chapters. In the new constitution however, the names of the 20 autonomous republics and 8 autonomous regions were specified. New Autonomous republics and autonomous region could be created by the union republics, but such formation needed to be approved by the highest state bodies of the USSR. There were 10 such (National) autonomous areas within the USSR, which were less significant than other types of autonomy and were not specified in the constitution. An autonomous republic was a constituent part of union republic. In the spheres not within the jurisdiction of the USSR and the union republic, an autonomous republic dealt with matters within its jurisdiction independently. An autonomous republic had its own constitution, conforming to the constitution of the USSR and the union republic with the specific features of the autonomous republic being taken into account.¹³⁴ Their 'autonomy' was political. While the 1936 constitution authorised the union republics to define the boundaries of the territories of the autonomous republics in them,¹³⁵ the 1977 constitution provided that the territory of an autonomous republic would not be altered without its

133. Article 79.

134. Article 82.

135. Article 60, Paragraph(h) (1936 Constitution)

consent.¹³⁶

Below the level of political autonomy, there were two levels of administrative autonomy, the autonomous region and the national area. An autonomous region was a constituent part of a union republic or an administrative territory. The Soviet of the autonomous region drafted the law necessary for these territory and then submitted them to the Supreme Soviet of the Union Republic which adopted them.¹³⁷

It shows that the legislative initiatives for the autonomous Regions belonged to the Regional Soviets, but the ultimate authority to adopt a proposal belonged to the Regional Soviets, and the ultimate authority to adopt a proposal belonged to the union republics. The autonomous areas were a special type of administration meant for the northern thinly populated territories of the RSFSR.¹³⁸ These enjoyed all the rights of self-government in the solution of various question of local life especially national development. Each autonomous area had its own state organs : Area Soviets and its Executive Committee. The areas had special representation on the Soviets of Nationalities of the USSR Supreme Soviet to which they elected one deputy each. Above provisions indicated that the division of power among the three tiers was flexible and called for a great deal of collaboration.

136. Article 84 (1977 Constitution).

137. Article 86.

138. Under the 1936 Constitution they were called "National Areas".

Amending Powers :

The constitution could be amended by a decision of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR adopted by a majority of not less than two-third of the total number of Deputies of each of its chambers.¹³⁹

Institutional Structure :

Another important feature in safeguarding the interest and rights of union republics was the institutional system of the Soviet state bodies, viz., the two chamber structure of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR - the Soviet of the Union and the Soviet of Nationalities, and broad representation of union republics in these chambers. Each union republic elected thirty two deputies to the Soviet of Nationalities, regardless of the size of its territory or population. Besides deputies from union republics, elected to the Soviet of Nationalities were eleven deputies from each autonomous republic, five deputies from each autonomous region and one deputy from each autonomous area.¹⁴⁰ Each of the chambers had 750 member, and the ratio between the republics and the population diminished from election to election.

As both the chambers of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR had equal powers, the 1936 constitution provided that, in the event of their disagreement a conciliation commission would be set up to bring about an agreement, failing which both the chambers would be dissolved.¹⁴¹ The new

139. Article 174.

140. Article 11.

141. Article 47 (1936 Constitution)

constitution removed the provision for dissolution in such cases and provided that the matter shall be postponed for debate in the next session or submitted to referendum.¹⁴²

Institutional Structure at the Republic Level :

The highest organ of state power in a union republic was the Supreme Soviet of the Union Republic,¹⁴³ empowered to deal with all matters falling within its jurisdiction. Its exclusive prerogatives were the adoption and amendment of the constitution of the Union Republic; endorsement of the state plans for economic and social development of the Republics' Budget, and of reports of its fulfilment and formation of bodies accountable to it. The Supreme Soviet of a Union Republic elected a Presidium as a standing body accountable to it, and also formed "Council of Ministers of a Union Republic", i.e., the 'highest executive and administrative body of the state authority', in the Republic responsible and accountable to the Supreme Soviet of that Republic or between sessions of the Supreme Soviet to its Presidium.¹⁴⁴

The highest body of state authority in an autonomous republic was the Supreme Soviet of the Autonomous Republic with exclusive prerogatives over adoption and amendment of the constitution of the autonomous republic, endorsement of state plans for economic and social development and of

142. Article 115 (1977 Constitution)

143. Article 137.

144. Article 139.

republic's budget and the formation of bodies accountable to it.¹⁴⁵ It also elected a Presidium and forms a Council of Ministers of the autonomous republic. Laws of an autonomous republic were enacted by the Supreme Soviet of the autonomous republic.

Local Bodies of the State Authority :

At the level of Territories, Autonomous regions, Autonomous Areas, Districts, cities, City District Settlements, and Rural Communities there were Soviets of People's Deputies,¹⁴⁶ with their executive committees directly accountable to them.¹⁴⁷ Their status was equivalent to that of popular committees on local matters with the difference that such powers were mainly not divided from the higher bodies of state power through delegation but from the constitution itself, even though there was provision for delegation of functions to the lower Soviets by the higher Soviet.¹⁴⁸ Local Soviets of People's Deputies dealt with all matters of local significance in accordance with the interests of the whole state and of the citizens residing in the area under jurisdiction, implemented decisions of higher bodies of state authority, guided the work of lower Soviets of People's Deputies, took part in the discussion of matters of Republican and all union significance and submitted their proposal concerning them.

145. Article 143.

146. Article 145.

147. Article 150.

148. Article 148.

They directed state economic, social and cultural development within their territory, endorsed plans of economic and social development and the local budget, exercised general guidance over state bodies, enterprises, institutions and organisations subordinate to them, ensured observance of the laws, maintenance of law and order, and protection of citizens rights and helped to strengthen the country's defence capacity.¹⁴⁹

The local Soviets proved to be a means of coordinating state policy with local interests, they ensured within their powers, all round economic and social development of their areas, exercise control over the observance of legislation by enterprises institutions and organisations subordinate to higher authorities and located in their area, and coordinated and supervised their activity as regards land use nature conservation, building employment of man power, production of consumer goods, and social-cultural, communal and other services and amenities for the public.¹⁵⁰

Financial Powers :

The most striking feature of the Soviet fiscal federalism was the centralised pattern of budget allocation and budget revenues. The right to levy taxes and freely dispose of revenues is an important attribute of the sovereignty.

149. Article 146.

150. Article 147.

Independent control over some resources is the pre-condition for a community's freedom to set its own agenda. The Soviet Union's fiscal system had denied to its republics the right to tax and to dispose off revunes, except in accordance with the terms established by the central authorities. Article 73 of the constitution defining the area of competence of the centre talked of "management of the country's economy" (sub-article 5), "management of the sectors of national economy, and of amalgamation and enterprises" (sub-article 8). However, in all these areas, the authority of the centre was not the same. Thus, matters of Defence were conducted absolutely independently by the centre. It was beyond the competence of the republics. In relation to the union enterprises, the republican organ had some rights included in the constitution of the USSR.¹⁵¹ Finally, federative republic directly administered the sectors under republican competence and partially the union republican sectors. But these sectors and enterprises were also an integral part of the country's economy. In short the term 'management' has different connotations in different sub-articles of article 73 and is a violation of the need for a unified terminology i.e. one of the basic requirements.

Other shortcoming was that there was no clear segregation of authority between the centre and the republics according to the areas of activity (including the more significant

151. Article 77, part 3.

branches of the economy). Article 73 of the constitution talked of sectors of "national significance" in a most vague manner, which can be interpreted in as many ways as one wants, at the same time without clearly specifying the areas of authorities of the republics. This created the conditions for a high degree of centralisation in decision making and concedes a lot of freedom for the central organs in the interpretation of the concept of "National significance".

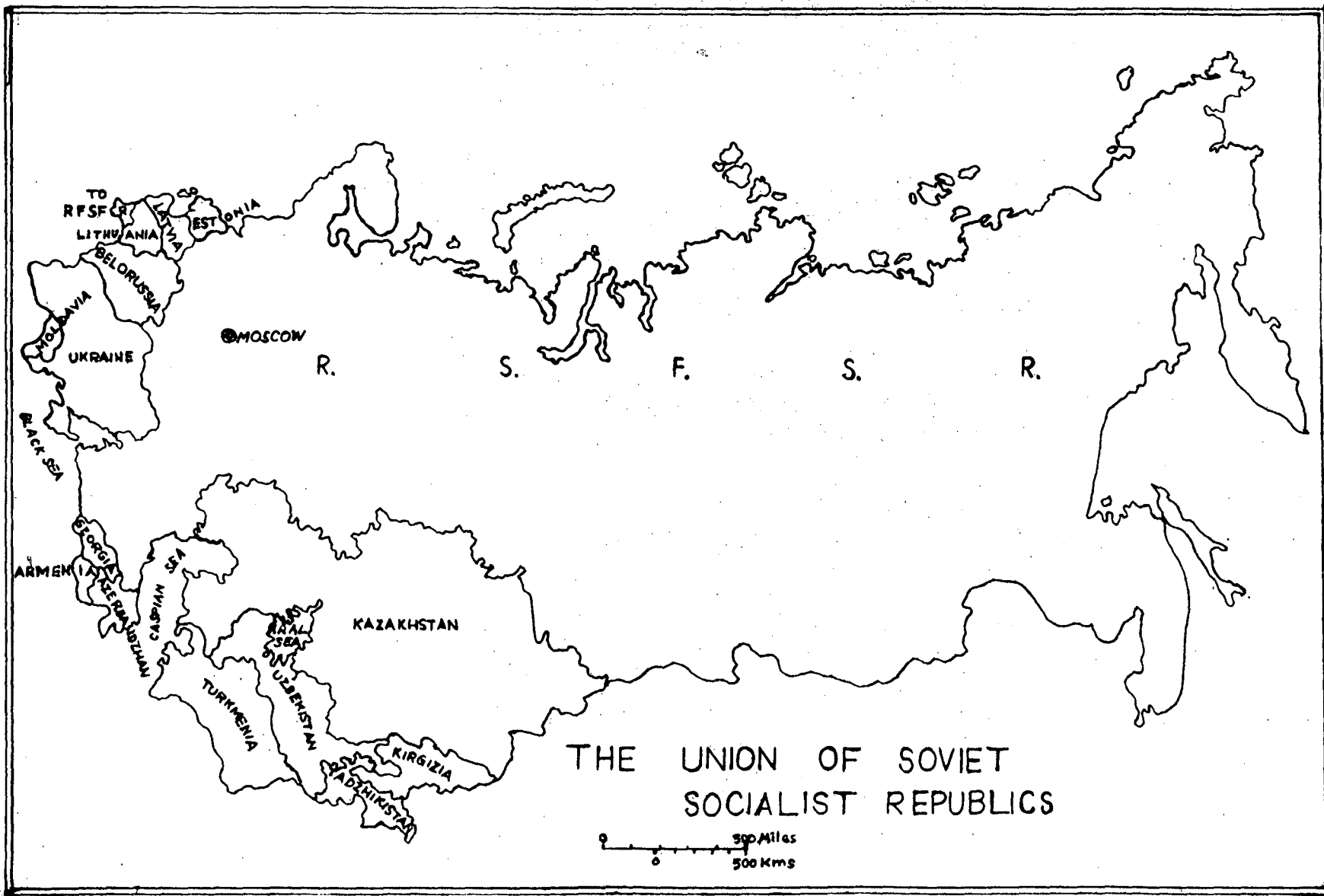
However, as a whole the contentions of some writers that behind the facade of federal constitution therein lies a unitary spirit, does not hold much truth. Though, economic centralism stood in the way of political autonomy which led to an inevitable tendency towards political centralisation, yet the functional interdependence of the federal system of the USSR had not diminished.

Federalism is a relationship between the various units to achieve their common end. The federal system of the USSR had achieved considerable success in promoting the status and conditions of the ethnic minorities. To say, there was no federation in the Soviet Union was to negate the meaning of the term 'federation'. Therein lied the validity of the USSR's claim to the status of a multinational state.'

CHAPTER - III

GROWING REALIZATION OF THE NEED FOR CHANGE IN THE SOVIET

FEDERALISM - (1977 - 1985)



On 7th October 1977 a new Soviet Constitution was adopted. It was the fourth in the Soviet regime and, like its predecessors, it was said to mark a specific stage along the road to socialism and communism. The RSFSR Constitution 1918 established the 'dictatorship of the proletariat', the USSR constitution of 1924 was the first of the multi-national Soviet state, the 1936 'Stalin Constitution' confirmed the 'liquidation of the exploiting classes', and 'the victory of the socialism'. The constitution of the 1977 was spoken of in the Soviet press as the constitution of the 'Developed Socialism'. This Constitution contained a precise characterization of the political system that embodied the Soviet people's power. Its basic institutions were : the socialist state of the entire people, the CPSU, mass social organizations, and labour collectives. The principles that predetermined the functions of the basic components of the political system and the character of political relations were : democratic centralism, the Control of Society by the Communist party, socialist legality, and socialist federalism.

The USSR Constitution of 1977 characterized the USSR as an "integral/unitary, federal, multi-national state formed on the principle of Socialist Federalism,¹ and thus introduced a new dimension of federalism. But this

1. Article 70, The USSR Constitution, 1977.

constitution, which in several aspects closed the gap between the highly democratic provisions of the 1936 Constitution, and the realities of the Soviet political system, deemphasized federalism and correspondingly increased the emphasis on the centralism. Retaining the contradictory provision that both the Union and its constituent members possessed sovereignty, the text clearly stressed that the powers of the Union were superior. Most important in this respect was the list of the powers of the union in Article 73, which concluded with a new provision granting the federal organs of government the open-ended power to decide "other questions of all-union importance".²

According to the Constitution of 1977, the USSR was a federal state made up of 15 national republics. The Constitution of 1936 had also enumerated fifteen Republics but later another Republic ceased to exist.³ In the USSR the national Republic was created in Kerelia and by the amendment of 1946 the Kerelo-Finish Republic was added as the sixteenth Republic. In the Constitution of 1977, the Kerelo-Finnish Republic ceased to exist.³ In the USSR the national Republic was the highest form of state organization accessible to Soviet nationality. In addition there were other territorial units, such as Autonomous Republics, Autonomous Areas, and National Districts.

2. Robert Sharlet(ed.), The New Soviet Constitution of 1977 : Analysis and Text (Brunswick, Ohio : Kings Court Communication, 1978), p. 99.
3. A.K. Banerjee, Soviet Democracy : As the Constitution Speaks, (A.K. Publications, Calcutta, 1984), p. 111.

Finally, there were national groups without their own territory, such as Germans, Jews⁴, Poles and Crimean Tatars.

The creation of the USSR as a federation of ethnoterritories had been viewed as a clever solution to the problem of centrifugation inherent in multi-ethnic states, in this case facilitating the perpetuation of the territorial integrity of the former Tsarist empire while allowing for the overt expression of ethnic political autonomy. The Brezhnev period as a whole saw the strengthening of ethno-federalism as a dominant of managing the national question. The centralizing ethos, however, ensured that republican powers were left vague while those of the union were consolidated especially in the economic affairs. The institutional groundwork was laid for the 'drawing together of nations' (sblizhenia) to be followed by 'merger of nations' (slianie). The federal structure was retained as a concession to national feelings and did not contradict to goal of integration.⁵

The situation during the Brezhnev era may be characterized as one of the "organised consensus".⁶ It meant a political

4. The Jewish Autonomous Province created in 1930's in the Far East on the Chinese Border was the 'Fictitious bureaucratic formation. Fewer than 0.5 percent of all Soviet Jews lived in its territory. See Victor Zaslavsky, The Neo-Stalinist State :Class, Ethnicity and Consensus in Soviet Society (M.E. Sharpe, Inc. The Harvester Press, 1980), p. 96.

5. Richard Sakwa, Soviet Politics : An Introduction, (Routledge, London & New York, 1989), p. 300.

6. Victor Zaslavsky, n.4, p. VIII. 'Introduction'.

compromise between the state and the state and the people in which basic social groups accepted the existing distribution of power and their estrangement from the decision making process in exchange for job security, some worker's rights, upward mobility, and a slow but steady rise in living standards.

The Brezhnev Constitution was not merely a legal-political instrumentality of organizing the state-structure and detailing power distribution; it was also an instrumentality for effective realizing the ideological base of the state. The principle of socialist federalism laid stress not so much upon how to safeguard a division of political power between the Centre and the States and how to keep organs of the Government within their respective limits or even how to ensure the political rights of the citizens as upon how to organise the state structure in such a way as to enable all "the nations and nationalities" to enjoy autonomy of the government; how to build up a system of participation of the people in the task of socio-economic development from grass-root level; how to bring about organic relation between Governments and the working people and between the Central and Republic Governments and the Soviets at every stage of the hierarchy; and how to ensure to individuals not only political and civil rights but also the basic economic rights which it was the objective of communism to realize. In short, Soviet Federalism was not merely a particular pattern of relations

between a few states inter se or between states and the Centre based upon a particular division of power and resources; it was a part of a larger concept of Soviet democracy itself and an instrumentality of socialism.

DECENTRALISATION AND AUTONOMY IN THE CONTEXT OF DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM

Decentralization and autonomy in the various sectors and organizations of the government machinery are important prerequisites and indispensable elements for the proper functioning of the state which is democratic. Though, under socialism there is real contradiction between the need for the development of democracy and the need for the development of centralism. The possibility of resolving this internal contradiction of democratic centralism is associated with the gradual decentralization of power functions, with bringing them ever closer to the masses. However as some scholars have expressed, 'within the framework of socialism, including developed socialism, every socialist country is confronted by the problem of determining the measure of optimal combination of the two contradictory trends at every stages, at every level.'⁷

7. Anatolii p. Butenko, "Contradictions in the Development of Socialism as a Social System" Soviet Law and Government (White Plains, New York) ; Vol xxiii , no. 1 , Summer 1984; pp. 22-46.

The need for the continuous development of democracy under socialism in any socialist country is determined primarily by two circumstances : first, under socialism all working people are co-owners of the means of production and of all social wealth, which not only requires their growing participation in the exercise of their functions as co-owners of socialist property but also determines the fact that their attitudes towards social production, their labour and social activism and thus the entire course of economic development of democracy in this regard, on the degree and form of their participation in the exercise of the given function. Second, socialist democracy is not only a means of economic management and development but also an independent value, in the sense that it is a form of expression of the will of the working people regarding all the issues that are vital to them. The social qualities of man in socialist society develop specifically because of and through socialist democracy. Therefore, "...the successful development of the socialist economy and the formation of the thoroughly developed person in the new society are impossible without a development of democracy that embraces ever larger masses of working people".⁸ "Just as true democracy is impossible without socialism", it was noted at the Twenty-fifth Congress of the CPSU, "so is socialism impossible without the

8. Ibid.

continuous development of the democracy".⁹

It is wrong to conceive of federalism as simply a degree of decentralization. It can only be applied meaningfully to federalism in matters that belong to the Central government. Even then, unlike unitary decentralization is entirely at the discretion of the Central Government, federal decentralization is both mandatory and guaranteed. Much more than this, however, the key to distinguishing federal system with non-federal systems which also have a "degree of decentralization", lies in the concept of non-centralization by which is meant that matters belonging to the states cannot ordinarily be centralized unitarily. It is this non-centralisation, which opposes decentralisation, that makes federalism a highly distinct from of "decentralization".¹⁰ By decentralisation one means a system of dispersal of power from a central government to other units or agencies of the government. These are two kinds of decentralization :

1) One is what may be called discretionary decentralization because decentralization is not constitutionally guaranteed. Rather it depends wholly on the grace or convenience of the central authority. This is prevalent kind

9. Documents of 25th Congress of the CPSU (Materialy XXVS"ezda KPSS) Moscow, 1976, p. 85.

10. Eghosa E. Osaghae, " A Reassessment of Federalism as a Degree of Decentralization ", Publius, (Winter, 1990; Vol 20, no. 1); pp.79-90.

of decentralization in the unitary system ;

II) others is constitutionally guaranteed decentralization in which dispersal of power to constituent units is obligatory. This kind of decentralization falls in the ambit of federalism, the implication being that " the regional governments' share of power in a federation is relatively large compared to that in unitary states".¹¹

Non-centralization is the antithesis of decentralization. In the words of Elazar, "non-centralization implies that no matter how certain powers may be shared by the general or constituent governments at any particular time, the authority to participate in exercising them cannot be taken away from either without their mutual consent".¹² In a noncentralized system, power sharing rather than the concentration is the major principle.

The most volatile issue of federalism has been the balance of power between centre and periphery, since at stake are the resources controlled by cadres and the mobility opportunities within their communities. Party leaders have used this issue to coopt primordial concerns for independence to instrumental demands for expanded republican autonomy within Soviet Federalism.¹³ Expanded

11. Ibid., p. 85.

12. Daniel J. Elazar, Exploring Federalism, (Tuscaloosa, The University of Alabama Press, 1987); p. 166.

13. New York times, September 24, 1989.

autonomy is one way for ethnic cadres to enlarge the resources within their control. Autonomy increases the resources within their control. Autonomy increases their discretion in the allocation of position of power within the republic and in the administration of educational and occupational policies. For cadres within the more developed republics that have felt most severely pinched by affirmative action, autonomy is away to retain resources at home.¹⁴

In Soviet Union the power relations between the Centre and the periphery were always unequal and uniting, but in seventy four years of Soviet power the subject nationalities gained their own subsidized intellegentsia, institutionalised in republican universities and academics of sciences, as well as a new presence in their own capital cities.

Scholars like Bialer feel that was a potentially dangerous dualism in a federalism which in practice denied any but the slimmest margins of autonomy to the constituent nationalities and yet provided them with the symbolic institutions and administrative framework of autonomy. Every Union-republic had the trappings of its own nationhood, which in the right circumstances formed the core

14. Philip G. Roeder, "Soviet Federalism and Ethnic Mobilization ", World Politics, Vol. 43, no. 2, January 1991; pp. 196-231.

of a revised independent national identity.¹⁵

Other Sovietologists like Sakwa feels that the Soviet constitution recognised a larger degree of local autonomy, and yet because of the superimposition of various overlappings in administrative structure between whom there was no clear demarcation, local autonomy was often weakened. The Ministerial system, for example, was highly centralized and allowed little scope for the republican or union-republican ministeries. The rights of the republics were always subordinate to the larger interests of the Soviet state. But in the other areas, the ethos of Soviet Federalism was democratic centralism.

THE CONCEPT OF DECENTRALIZATION AND AUTONOMY AT THE THEORETICAL PLANE (BREZHNEV PERIOD)

While drafting the constitution, the status of the Union-Republics, which together formed the USSR, became clearly one of the most contentious aspects of the draft. There seemed to have been a body of opinion that called for the abandonment of the federal state altogether and its replacement by a unitary state. There was plenty of doctrinal respectability in such a call, not least units reflections of one of the tenets of 'developed socialism,' the concept of the single 'soviet people'. It would have been most uncharacteristic of the present Soviet leadership to have courted the risks involved in a major

15. Severyn Bialer, Stalin's Successors : Leadership , Stability and Congress in the Soviet Union (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1982), p. 210.

structural change but, the language of The constitution clearly showed a bias towards the unitary concept. Along with the retention of almost all the formal attributes of the sovereignty of the Union Republics, there were a number of new provisions stressing the integral nature of the territory of the Soviet Union and the unified nature of the economic complex (e.g Articles 16 and 75). The resulting amalgam was frequently ambiguous and sometimes contradictory.¹⁶

The experiments with decentralisation and autonomy had started during Khrushchev's period. In the history of the development of the Soviet federalism there occurred such periods when unnecessary decentralization caused damage to the centralised leadership. For example, in 1957, the Economic Councils (Sovnarkhozy) were established on the territorial principle and given charge of administering the entire production on a particular territory from children's toys to supersonic aeroplanes. The establishment of the Economic Councils violated the principle of democratic centralism. Their establishments resulted in the development of "localist" tendencies. The CPSU corrected the situation by implementing the Leninist principles of territorial production and ensured a strict observance of the principle of democratic centralism. The economic

16. In an article in New Society , 21 July 1976, Prof. S.E. finer pointed out that the principle of democratic centralism, which was now written into the Constitution as applicable to the State as well as party affairs (art. 3) could be used to deny the Republics their constitutional rights of secession.

reforms of 1965 provided a balanced and rational relationship between centralism and democracy in the leadership of economic and socio-cultural construction in the Soviet federation. H.C.d'Encausse has elaborated the same view. According to her, "...when in 1957-58 Khrushchev tried to give some measure of rationality to the Soviet system by decentralising the economy, he realized that decentralization would about a vary rapid rebirth of national aspirations. Economic nationalism developed around the Sovnarkhozes and it was very quickly commended by Khrushchev in spite of its limited character. This explained both the failure of the decentralization and the rapid about turn of Khrushchev's nationality policy which moved from the rehabilitation of the nationalities in 1956 to a programme of unification of the USSR in 1961".¹⁷

Khrushchev in the 22nd Party Congress in 1961 had talked of the new Constitution. This was because the Congress was adopting a new party programme which was to mark a new stage in the building of communism-entering the home straight. The Constitution of a socialist state, as Khrushchev explained to a session of the Supreme Soviet in April 1962, could not but change along with the transition from one historical epoch to another. Thus, the new Constitution would reflect the complete victory of socialism and the start of the 'all-out' building of

17. Helence Carrere d'Encausse, "Party and Federation in the USSR: The Problem of the Nationalities and Power in the USSR", Government and Opposition (Vol. 13, no. 2, Spring 1978); pp. 133-50.

Communism, the change from Dictatorship of the Proletariat to the state of the whole people, and from proletarian democracy to the democracy of the whole people and the change in the international position of Soviet Union, which had broken out of capitalist encirclement and formed a socialist common wealth. The constitution had to be ' the constitution or the socialist state of the whole people, the constitution of communism which was being built'.¹⁸

But by mid-1970s, Brezhnev essentially dismissed Khrushchev's goal of constructing communism by 1980. Although in 1972, Brezhnev stated that communist construction could be undertaken as the nationalities had developed sufficiency for merger,¹⁹ he opposed to make a realistic reassessment in 1976. By now the Russian words 'sblizheniye' (drawing together) and 'sliyaniye' (fusion), had become the catch words of Brezhnev's nationality policy. They were used in the connection that the nationalities were still undergoing sblizheniye and sliyaniye had to be speeded up.²⁰ It is noteworthy that the growing rapprochement of the nations and nationalities of the Soviet Union naturally called for the strengthening of the Union basis of the state. The

18. M. Nicholson, "New Soviet Constitution : A Political Analysis", World Today, (Vol 34, no. 14, January 1978), pp. 14-20.

19. Current Digest of Soviet Press, (Vol. 24, no. 51) 1972.

20. Shazia Pirzada, "Federalism in the USSR : The Central Asian Context", Strategic Studies (Vol. 10, no.2, Winter 1987);

activities of the all-Union and Union-Republican ministries and departments were being expanded and improved.²¹

At the 25th Party Congress Brezhnev implied that Communist construction would be a protracted phenomena and socialism had to fully develop and mature. He did not specifically mention the issue the status of the nationalities, which was the essence of the federal question, but he did imply that it was most efficacious to retain the federal structure to promote economic development and improve policy planning.²²

The decentralization and autonomy discussions were taking place for both the Union Republic and Autonomous Republic, party apparatus as well as in the Government apparatus.

DECENTRALIZATION IN THE PARTY APPARATUS AT THE UNION LEVEL

As the epigraph for one of his works, Chernenko selected the following dictum by Lenin :

"If we study the apparatus well and work at it for years, it will be a major achievement the basis of our success".²³

21. Pavel Yulagin, "Union of the Free and Equal Republics", New Times, no. 14, April 1982; pp. 7-9.

22. John Armstrong, "Federalism in the USSR", Publics (The Centre for the Study of Federalism) (Vol.7, no.4, 1977); p. 90, Also see- CDSP, Vol. 28, no.8, 1976.

23. P. Zh, no.17(1982), p.10, as quoted by Guyala Jozsa "The Party Apparatus under Andropov and Chernenko" in the Soviet Union 1984/85: Events, Problems, Perspectives (ed.) Federal Institute for the East European and International Studies, (Westview, Boulder, London, 1986), p. 24.

Chernenko's failure right after Brezhnev's death as well as his "sucess" following Androkov's death confirmed this basic rule. The 1982 decision against Brezhnev's favourite, Chernenko, was reached without much attention paid to the regional Party apparatus, Faced with having to successor in 1984, though, the Politburo apparantly felt compelled to take into consideration the largest contingent in the Ec-the regional representation of the Party apparatus. This contingent had been stirred up by Andropov's disciplinary campaign.²⁴

The hierarchic steps of the central (Politburo Secretariat, CC departments) and the regional or local Party apparatus (in the Union, regions, territories, districts, cities, etc.) where some 5,00,000 professional Party functioaries worked, performed a dual function in the system. Relative to the hierarchically superior Party authorities, they were executive organs; relative to lower party authorities and parallel bureaucracy they were subordinated subjects. They performed their ruling function by controlling the whole party and state bureaucracy acting as channels of information inside the apparatus hierarchy, and by playing the most important role in the decision-making process. Even at the low level of the apparatus hierarchy, in the approximately 4000 to 5000 district committees, the Party apparatus had a firm grip on the parallel bureaucracies.

Thus, appointments to some 600 to 700 official positions in

24. Ibid.

a district fell within the jurisdiction of the district apparatus.²⁵

In the context of decentralization and disciplinary campaign, Andropov and his followers did all they could to gain control of the Party apparatus. During Andropov's term in the office, a certain trend towards "polycentrism of power at the expense of the partocracy" emerged when certain areas of administration moved notably to the fore: KGB, army, public prosecutor's office, etc., as well as Gromyko's Ministries of External Affairs.²⁶

THE PARTY APPARATUS AS CATALYST OF BUREAUCRATIC BLOATING

"The Party leads, the state administers" Since Lenin's time, this principle had implied not only increasing bureaucratization of the system but also a questioning of the relations between Party apparatus and Parallel bureaucracies.²⁷

Both Andropov and Chernenko were aware of the problem of bloating bureaucratic apparatuses. The difference between their concept was not in the goal of solving the problem somehow, but the methods and instruments of power to be applied. While Andropov made a bid for a certain rationalization within the framework of discipline from

25. Sovetskaya Rossiya; 7 September 1984.

26. Jozsa, no. 23, p. 25.

27. Eberhard Schneider, "The Government Apparatus Under Andropov and Chernenko", in The Soviet Union 1984/85: Events, Problems, Perspectives (ed.), Federal Institute for the East European and International Studies, (Westview, Boulder, London, 1986), p. 35.

above, Chernenko seemed to want an inner renewal of the party apparatus. That is, he wanted its voluntary return and self-restriction to the main function of cadre politics and ideology.

The claim to total control and the conception of a barter economy had resulted in a tendency to create for each task additional administrations and control agencies, even in the party. But this, in turn, seemed to have caused an almost incessant swelling of the Party bureaucracy. External symptoms of this process were the new departments created in the CC apparatus during the last years of Brezhnev's tenure and the creation of agricultural departments in the apparatuses of the Party's over 4,000 district committees. The latter were initiated in 1982 in connection with the food program. This meant tens to thousands of new Party functionaries flooding into the Party apparatus.

The Council of Ministers' 1981 decree on the reduction of administrative personnel was evidently unsuccessful. After Chernenko assumed office, remarkable data on Soviet bureaucracy appeared in the Soviet press. According to these reports, 18.6 million Soviet citizens worked in a state and economic administrations in 1984, 15.3 million of these in economic administration alone. That amounted to over 15 per cent of the working population. This army of bureaucrats was employed by the 36 councils of Ministers, the over 1000 ministers and state committees, the over

51,000 executive committees of the regional and local Soviets, the 44,600 production and scientific production associations, the 21,600 sovkhozes transportation, construction, trading and service enterprises, as well as health and educational institutions, etc.²⁸ In 1982, M.I. Piskotin deplored the unnecessary bloating of the administrations of state and social organs, stating that 21.6 per cent of all the gainfully employed worked in the non-productive sphere".²⁹

After Chernenko assumed office, noteworthy facts came to light about the growth of the bureaucracy. The number of the civil servants and public employees grew by three million between 1975 and 1980, with clerical and service staff accounting for a mere 3.8 per cent. The State Committee for Construction Materials alone employed 1,60,000 "administrators" in 1984.³⁰ Soviet scientists like B.P. Kurashvili - who expressly called for reforms did not propose indigenous economic indices, but instead a decentralization and rationalization of "production relations", i.e., of state and economic administrations.³¹

28. M.U. Klimko, VIKPSS, no. 11(1984); p.16.

29. Sovetskoe Gosudarstvo i Pravo ; no. 9 (1982), p. 47.

30. Izvestia, 13 May, 1984.

31. Hans-Hermann Hohmann, "Soviet Economic Reforms :Higher Achievement as a Result of a New Premises ?", in The Soviet Union 1984/85 : Events, problems, Perspectives, (Federal Institute for the East European and International Studies) ed., (Westview. Boulder, London, 1986) ; p. 219.

Decentralization of Party Apparatus under Andropov

Andropov put the encrusted bureaucratic apparatuses in order and after a lengthy period of stagnation introduced genuine reforms. By means of massive personnel reshuffles in the Party and government apparatus, he did his utmost to keep the "apparatus" from becoming his and his followers "undoing". Due to the brief period in the office and perhaps also because he went at it too ruthlessly, he could not leave his successors a fully "domesticated"³² Party apparatus.

During his tenure, seven of the 23 CC departments ("superministries of the CC apparatus") received new department heads.³³ Thirty-five of the 159 regional and district secretaries ("provincial princes" or "prefects" of the regional Party apparatus) or over 20 per cent were dismissed. The majority of them either demoted or retired. The cadre department of the CC (Department for Organizational and Party work) was all but fully reshuffled under Andropov and was particularly active in provincial purges.

During the decentralization efforts offices of many aids and experts of various institutions or ministries were

32. Jozsa; no. 23; pp. 27-28.

33. "Andropov consolidates His Hold on the Central Committee Apparatus", Ruskaya Literatura; 339/83; 9 September 1983.

either abolished or created. Three CC departments concerned with the economy were reorganized and renamed. The Department for planning and finances was newly designated "Department of Economy", the department for "consumables and consumer goods industries", and the agriculture department was renamed "Department for Agriculture and food industries".³⁴

N.N.Chetverikov's promotion to L.M. Zanuypatin's first deputy in the Department for International Information showed that Andropov had started to hoist his proven men from the KGB into ranking positions in the CC apparatus. This operation also showed which side regarded the department that Chernenko saved as a competing institution in need of control. As a KGB agent, N.N.Chetverikov had been expelled from France in 1983 together with forty-six other suspicious Soviet officials.³⁵ The extent of the turnover in the CC apparatus under Andropov is evidenced by the fact that aside from the seven new department heads, eight first deputies and eighteen new deputies were placed at the head of the CC department.³⁶

Decentralization of Party Apparatus under Chernenko

In his first statements following his election as secretary general Chernenko emphasized continuity in decentralization and discipline. During his brief tenure, the personal

34. Jozsa ; no. 23; pp. 28-29.

35. L'Express(Paris) ; 8 February 1985; p. 30.

36. Jozsa; no. 23, p. 29.

carousel revolved rather more slowly than under Andropov. Personnel reshuffles in the Party apparatus did not exceed what was termed "normal" in the event of a change at the top.

Under continuing reorganization and redistribution of responsibilities in the CC apparatus, the Department for Heavy Industry was renamed "Department for Heavy Industry and Energetics", and eight new deputy heads of departments were placed in the various departments.

Upon the death of the first secretary of Uzbekistan, S.R. Rasidov, it seemed that a variable purge was affected there in part to prove the continuation of the decentralization and disciplinary drive. Apart from the regional secretaries, some municipal secretaries, several ministers, and hundreds of top functionaries were said to have been dismissed in 1984.³⁷

At the turn of 1984/85, Kazakhstan was apparently swept by a similar wave of purges. D.A. Kunayev, Brezhnev's friend managed to exert his influence to the extent that his first secretaries overwhelmingly were not dismissed, but substituted for one another.³⁸

It is evident that between 1977 and 1980 there was substantial decentralization in the Party apparatus as a

37. Posev; no. 12(1984); p. 10.

38. Jozsa; no. 23; p. 30.

first step and this definitely had affected the functioning of the governmental apparatus as both the Party and government had overlappings in function.

DECENTRALIZATION IN MINISTERIES AT THE UNION REPUBLIC PLANE

The attempt to decentralize and provide autonomy to the various ministries was not a new experiment in the post-Brezhnev era. Rather it was witnessed in vague form in the mid 1950s. The CPSU-CC and the Council of Ministers, on 30 May 1956, adopted the resolution "Placing the Enterprises of several Economic Sectors under the jurisdiction of the Union Republics and Implementation of the Related Organisational Measures".

This resolution clearly expressed the Party policy of increasing the Union Republic's initiative in production and culture. According to the resolution, The council of Ministers and the Union republics were to submit proposals to the USSR Council of Ministers for extending the range of questions of economic and cultural development to be solved by the Council of Ministers to the Union Republics and accordingly greater rights to the ministries of these Republics. The Union Republics thus, initiated measures for extending their rights.

All these developments were codified in Article 77 of the 1977 Constitution which made it constitutional duty of the Union Republics to ensure comprehensive economic and social development on its territory, coordinate and control the activities of the enterprises, institutions and organisations subordinate to the Union. At the same time

the new Constitution reflected the strengthening of Union principles making it incumbent on the Union Republics to facilitate the exercise of Union power on its territory and to implement the decisions of the highest bodies of state authority and administration of the USSR.

On closer scrutiny of the 1977 constitution one could find the fusion of two seemingly contradictory positions- the extension of the sovereign rights of the union republics and their increased say in the All Union matters. The safeguarding of their sovereign rights had been made a constitutional obligation of the Union in the new Constitution.³⁹

The decentralizing and autonomy efforts gained momentum during the tenures of Andropov and Chernenko. During his 15 months in the office Andropov replaced one-fifth of all members of government, Chernenko only one-tenth in nearly the same length of time as Party leader. They continued with Brezhnev's efforts towards a clear separation of Party and State functions. This was also reflected in personnel terms by the lower percentage of Party functionaries appointed to the Council of Ministers. The necessity for a reform of the council of Ministers was discussed extensively under Brezhnev's successors.

The Government apparatus under Andropov

Under Andropov two first deputy Chairman as well as one

39. Article 81, USSR Constitution of 1977.

deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, ten out of total sixty-four ministers, and nine out of twenty-two state committee Chairmen were newly appointed. During his period the number of first deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR was raised from one to three : On 24th November 1982, G.A. Aliyev and on 24 March 1983, A.A. Gromyko, both Politburo members, were appointed to this position. The latter retained his function as foreign minister.⁴⁰

Aliyev's appointment to the government position twelve days after Andropov's selection as the new secretary general suggested that the former Azerbaijan party leader had already been earmarked for promotion to membership in the Politburo and the Presidium of the Council of Ministers under Brezhev.⁴¹ In addition, the new Politburo member Aliyev was appointed Chairman of the Politburo commission in charge of developing a complex program for the service sector.

Under Andropov two new state committees were created : one for foreign tourism in May 1983 by upgrading its INTOURIST central administration,⁴² and one in July 1983 to supervise safety in the nuclear power industry.⁴³ The proposition by

40. Schneider, no. 27; p. 33.

41. The Christian Science Monitor, 31 December 1982.

42. VVS SSR, no.22(1983), Pos, 343, in Schneider, no.27, p. 33.

43. VVS SSR, no.30(1983), Pos, 467, in Schneider, no.27, p.34

the Council of Ministers of the USSR to establish a state committee for the supervision of safety in the nuclear power industry had been approved by the Politburo a few days earlier. It was to increase "reliability and safety" of nuclear power plants. At the same Politburo session, the committee for Party control at the CC of the CPSU and the Committee for Popular Control of the USSR, reported on "gross breaches of state discipline by various ministries, offices and their subsidiary organizations in the planning, construction and operation of industrial projects, and of social and cultural institutions in Dolgodonsk". Those responsible for these breaches of discipline were severely punished.⁴⁴ Furthermore, three of fifteen Chairmen of Council of Ministers of the Union Republics, who ex-officio were also members of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, were newly appointed. All told, twenty five of the 115 members of the Council of Ministers were replaced under Brezhnev's successors.⁴⁵

The Government Apparatus under Chernenko

Chernenko appointed one deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers, eight ministers, two Chairmen of state committees, and two Chairmen of Union Republic Council of Ministers, overall thirteen new members of the council of ministers of the USSR.

Quite obviously Andropov replaced more members of the

44. Pravda, 16 July 1983.

45. Schneider, no.27, p. 34.

Council of Ministers than Chernenko. The more through personnel refurbishment of the council of Ministers of the USSR was part of the program with which Andropov had started out. At the first regular plenary session of the CC following his election as Party leader, he called for a more determined "struggle against any breach of the Party, state and work discipline".⁴⁶ Similarly, in his speech immediately upon his elections as Secretary general, Cherenko emphasized that his "attention" was focused on "improving order and discipline".⁴⁷

Discussion on reform of the Council of Ministers

The necessity of reforming the Council of Ministers had been recognised in the Soviet Union and it was discussed increasingly under Chernenko. Thus, in his address to CC plenary session of mid-February 1984, Chernenko went beyond his predecessor Andropov in stating that "the system of economic management" and the "entire economic mechanism" required a "through restructuring".⁴⁸ Even more specific was Minister of Electronic Industry, A.I. Shokin's lament that those ministers in charge of a branch of the economy were "too narrowly specialised".⁴⁹

In April 1984, I.O.Bisher continued a series of essays

46. Pravda, 23 November 1982.

47. Pravda, 14 February 1984.

48. Pravda, 14 February 1984.

49. Pravda, 27 May 1984.

pleading for the reorganization of the system of the system of ministeries.⁵⁰ The reason why Bisher pleaded for a reorganization of the Council of Ministers to be necessary is that the sectors that managed the ministeries were administrative sectors not corresponding to branches and sectors in the economy. Virtually no economic problem could be solved by a branch ministry if the ministry was too specialized. Consequently, these questions had to be decided at the government level.

According to Bisher, the main tasks of a Ministry also included safeguarding the interests of the state as a whole. To this end the ministry had to be free from functions of operative economic organization. Indeed, several ministeries were little more than business. In the course of a reorganization they could be transformed into industrial construction, transport and/or other associations.⁵¹

As far as autonomy in the area of rights was concerned, during the later period (1982-85) the rights of the Union Republics were further strengthened in the fields of state economics, social and cultural legislation within their jurisdiction. The Union republics had enacted during last decade several new civil, criminal, procedural, land and labour laws and also law of marriage, family and public

50. Sovetskoe Gosudarstvo i Pravo, no.4 (1984), pp. 27-34.

51. Schneider, no. 27; p. 40.

health on the basis of the fundamentals of the union and the Republican legislations. These republican laws not only displayed uniformity on fundamentals but also gave expression to the specific features on the republics. The extension of the rights of the Union Republics and the enhancement of their role in the Union together with the consolidation of the leading role of the USSR had been the key trends in the recent constitutional development of the USSR.

These debates and efforts for decentralization and autonomy were taking place though only at the theoretical plain not only at the Union Republics level also where it was to be more effective.

DECENTRALIZATION AT THE AUTONOMOUS REPUBLICS LEVEL

Constitutional Development of Principle of Autonomy in Autonomous Republics

Lenin in his works "Critical Comments on the Question of Nationalities", "Separatists in Russia and Separatists in Austria", "The Working Class and the Nationalities Questions", "On the Autonomy of 'National Cultures'", "Letter to S.G. Shaunian", "Is an Official state Language Really Necessary", and many others elaborated the theoretical bases of socialist autonomy. Lenin's notion of socialist autonomy were embodied in its principles of organisation and activity.

The Soviet autonomy was built on the principle of ethnic and territorial distinctness, which meant that territories

in the country which were distinguished by their ethnic composition and way of life, by their economic structure, and by a certain degree of social cohesiveness were recognised as autonomous. This approach ensured the comprehensive development of an ethnic group, including that in the political sphere. Lenin was firm in rejecting a program of so-called "autonomy of national culture" for Russia, which he felt would limit the question of nationalities or ethnic groups to the areas of culture and education and not link it to the political self-definition of such groups. In revealing the essence of the "autonomy of national cultures", he characterized it as the expression of the most refined and most absolute nationalism, carried to its logical conclusion.⁵²

The Soviet autonomous area was the offspring of the socialist system which was based on genuine power of the people, socialist ownership of the means of production, democratic centralism and proletarian internationalism. Because of these, ethnic groups and peoples had been able to depend not only on their own resources for economic and social development but also on the economic power of the entire Soviet State and had achieved actual equality within an historically very short period of time.⁵³

52. V.I. Lenin, "Critical Comments on the Question of Nationalities", in Complete Collected Works, Vol.24, p. 131.

53. L.I. Brezhnev, Following Lenin's Course-Speeches and Comments (Moscow, 1978), Vol. 6, p. 375.

Decentralization and Autonomy for Strengthening the Status of an Autonomous Republic

The new Soviet constitutions, reflecting the natural order of the development of the socialism had substantially broadened the rights of autonomous republics and their guarantees and had created new possibilities for taking into account their ethnic characteristics and other special features.

The USSR constitution and the constitutions of the union and autonomous republics created all bases for a deeper study of the nature of the statehood of an autonomous republic. In this regard, it is important to examine the dynamics of the constitutional development of the governmental legal characteristics of an autonomous republics as a socialist state. L.I. Brezhnev noted that the USSR Constitution, "as is also the case with the constitutions of the union and autonomous republics, reflects the most characteristic, most persistent features of the government and the whole system of social relations of developed socialism".⁵⁴

The position of the highest organs of state power in an autonomous republic- the supreme Soviet of the ASSR - had been substantially strengthened by the governmental mechanism of these autonomous republics , since it was

54. L.I. Brezhnev, Following Lenin's Course-Speeches, Interviews and Recollections (Moscow, 1979), Vol. 7, p. 616.

empowered to resolve all problems which under constitution adhered to the authority of an autonomous republic. The exceptional powers of the Supreme Soviet of an ASSR were confirmed not only by the constitution of the USSR and the union republics as a substantial governmental and legal guarantee of its status.⁵⁵

The sphere of subjects under the legislative initiative of the supreme soviet of an autonomous republic had been broadened. Among them the constitution named for the first time the Supreme Court and procurator of the autonomous republics and public organizations at the republic level and corresponding bodies. Draft laws and other major governmental matters in autonomous republics were referred for republic discussion at the instance of either the Supreme Soviet of the ASSR or its presidium. Now constitutional legislation had led to the broadening and clarification of the powers of the presidium of the Supreme Soviet. For the first time, the status of the standing commissions of the Sureme Soviet of an autonomous republic had been defined by the republics fundamental law.⁵⁶ The constitution entrusted the presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the ASSR with guiding the activity of the local Soviets.

55. S.G. Batyev, "Problems in the Development of the Legal Status of the Autonomous Republic", Soviet Law and Government, Vol. XXI, no.4, (Spring 1983), p. 54.

56. Articles 103, 104 and 107 of the 1977 constitution of the Tatar ASSR.

The executive and administrative bodies of the higher Soviets were prohibited from suspending the carrying out of decisions by lower Soviets.

Council of Ministers :-

The highest executive and administrative body of governmental authority of an autonomous republic was its Council of Ministers, the government of the ASSR, created by the Supreme Soviet of the ASSR and empowered to make decisions on all matters of state administration laid to the authority of the autonomous republic, unless under constitution they did not fall to the competency of the Supreme Soviet of the ASSR and its presidium. For the first time, the possibility was being considered of taking account of particular features of the autonomous republic in the organization and activity of its government at the constitutional level. For this purpose, in the view of the Chairmen of the Council of Ministers, the Supreme Soviet could include in the government of the ASSR not only the leaders of the bodies of state administration formed by it but also those of other organisations and bodies of the republic. The coordinating and administrative powers of the Council of Ministers of an ASSR with regard to enterprises, institutions and organizations under union and republic authority in matters relating to the competency of the autonomous republic were established under constitution.⁵⁷

57. Schneider, no. 27. p. 45.

Judiciary :- Under the new constitution an autonomous republic had its own system of judicial bodies. The organization of and regulations for judicial activity in an autonomous republic were specified by the constitutional legislation of the USSR, the union republic, and the autonomous republic, which confirmed and developed Leninist principles of socialist justice. In accordance with the constitution the highest supervisory powers over the precise and unified implementation of laws on the territory of an autonomous republic were entrusted to the Procurator General of the USSR and the Procurator of the Union Republic and the autonomous republic, and other lower procurator. A separate chapter was devoted to the procurator's office in the constitutions of the autonomous republics. The bodies of the procurator's office worked closely with the Soviets of people's deputies and other bodies and organizations of an autonomous republic, but they carried out their functions independently of any local bodies and were subject only to the Procurator General of the USSR.⁵⁸

Thus an autonomous republic had the governmental apparatus needed to carry out the affairs of the republic. Adoption of the new constitutions had meant an increase in the legislative activity of the Supreme Soviets of the autonomous republics. In keeping with the plans for the

58. Batyev, no. 55, p. 58.

organization of work on bringing legislations of the autonomous republics into accord with the constitution of the USSR, the constitutions of the Union and autonomous republics and the affirmations of the presidium of the Supreme Soviets of the autonomous republics, the autonomous republics had already adopted laws on elections to the supreme soviets of the ASSRs, regulations on the Supreme Soviets of the ASSRs, and laws on the Council of Ministers of the ASSRs and on the elections of the local soviets. Where no corresponding act existed, legislative acts were being elaborated on rules for the organization of work on electoral mandates, general principles on honorary titles in the autonomous republics, etc. Thus, in recent years limits on legislative regulations in the autonomous republics had broadened substantially. At the same time, amendments and supplements to legislative acts in effect in the autonomous republics were being introduced. In the Tatar ASSR, for example, there were at least thirty acts which required recasting.⁵⁹

Social and Economic Autonomy

An autonomous republic was entrusted with ensuring the comprehensive economic and social development of its territory. To this end, in matters under its authority it coordinated and supervised the activities and enterprises, institutions and organizations under union and union

59. Ibid., p. 62.

republic authority. Current and future state plans for an autonomous republic's economic and social development were an important tool for the implementation of such authority and included the basic indicators of plans of enterprises, institutions and organizations under higher authority located on the territory of the autonomous republic with a view to achieving the stated goals in keeping with the constitution of the autonomous republic in question. Fulfilment of the state plan of an autonomous republic was ensured by the republic's state budget, adopted as in the case with its plans, by its supreme soviet.⁶⁰

The main basis for ensuring comprehensive economic and social development on the territory of an ASSR were established in its constitution. It was emphasized that the constitutions, in speaking of the fact that economic leadership was carried out on the basis of state plans for economic and social development, referred to the importance of taking into consideration branch and territorial principles of administration combining centralized administration with economic independence and initiatives on the part of enterprises and other organizations. The supremacy of the Soviets was also being strengthened in the resolution of questions concerning comprehensive

60. Ronal Suny, "Incomplete Revolution : National Movements & the collapse of the Soviet Empire ", New Left review, no. 189, Sept./Oct. 1991, pp. 111-26.

development on the territory under their jurisdiction.⁶¹

However, the legal and, in particular, procedural regulations of the processes for reviewing and resolving such matters was still weak. The decree of the CPSU Central Committee, the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet, and the USSR Council of Ministers, "On the Further Increase in the Role of Soviets of People's Deputies in Economic Development", adopted on March 19, 1981, had made a substantial contribution to solving problems in this area.⁶²

It was provided in particular, with regard to the autonomous republics, that associations, enterprises, and organizations, under all union and union republic authority, prior to presenting draft five-year and annual plans and proposals for sending these plans to higher bodies, had to send for review those concerning questions of land use, preservation of nature, constitution, utilization of labour resources, production of consumer goods and socio-cultural, daily living, and other public services to the Council of Ministers of the autonomous republic in question. The government of the autonomous republic would advise these enterprises and, when necessary, the bodies responsible for them of the results -

61. S.A. Rajabov, "Geographical Factors and Certain Problems of federalism in the USSR", International Social Sciences Journal, vol. xxx, no.1, 1978, pp. 88-97.

62. Batyev; no. 55; p. 65.

of the review of such draft plans and proposals for amendments to plans already adopted. The ministries and departments of the USSR and the union republics would take these proposals into consideration.⁶³

Thus, it is clear that the new constitutions, and also the laws adopted to elaborate them, had improved the fundamental features of different forms of autonomy, and there was hope for the free development of the autonomous republics and other forms of autonomy. But emanated from these decentralization and autonomy efforts were enumerable problems in the various nationalities. The debates pertaining to these efforts even at the theoretical plane had some bearing on not only on the political life but also on the social-cultural and ethnic aspects of people.

The Soviet developmental strategy turned around a pattern familiar in the Western development experience. As Earnst Gellner noted, "The age of transition to industrialism was bound to be an age of nationalism."⁶⁴ But the Soviet strategy delayed the political reckoning with the 'age of nationalism' to a much later stage of industrialization. In the short term this was a prudent means to avoid the simultaneous crises that could overtax the capabilities of a new polity: the Soviet regime did not confront a crisis of identity as it sought to build the

64. Earnest Gellner, Nations and Nationalism, (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, New York; 1983); pp. 40-42.

foundations of Soviet power and initiate the economic transformation of the society.⁶⁵ This strategy nonetheless contained the roots of its longer-term dysfunction and in the past one and a half decades had given rise to a new ethnic assertiveness and protests.⁶⁶

The Western experience with peripheral nationalism had differed more significantly from the Soviet pattern in a second respect. In 19th century Western Europe, according to Joseph Rudolph and Robert Thompson, "the most casual element giving rise to the urge for autonomy" was the aggravation of a peripheral ethnic groups "marginality in, or exploitation by, the state system to which it belongs".⁶⁷

After 1980 in Soviet Union the rise of ethnopolitics had been most significant in the Caucasian and Baltic republics. It was there that the demonstrations and protests signifying the unrest of the people had started taking place quite frequently. The explosion of ethnic

65. Sidney Verba, "Sequence and Development" in Leonard Binder et.al, Crises and Sequences in political Development (Princeton, Princeton Univ. Press, 1971), pp. 283-316.

66. Philip G. Roeder, "Modernization and Participation in the Leninist Developmental Strategy", American Political Science Review, no. 83, Sept. 1989; pp. 859-84.

67. Rudolph and Thompson, "Ethnoterritorial Movement & the Policy Process : Accommodating nationalist Demands in the Developed World", Comparative Politics, no.17, April 1985; p. 292.

unrest and the escalation of centre-periphery conflicts testify to the inadequate performance of the federal institutions, the breakdown of traditional channels of communication, the failure of internal bargaining processes, and the lack of appropriate mechanisms for a peaceful resolution of domestic conflicts. In brief, they were the symptoms of a crisis of Soviet federalism.⁶⁸

68. A.J.Motyl, "The sobering of Gorbachev :Nationality Restructuring and the West ", in Inside Gorbachev's Russia (Boulder, Co., Westview, 1989), pp. 83-98.

CHAPTER -IV

PRESTROIKA AND THE EMERGING CONTOURS OF A NEW CONCEPT OF
SOVIET FEDERALISM. GORBACHEV'S PLAN FOR A NEW UNION
TREATY - 'NOVO - OGAREVO ' PROCESS AND TRANSITION FROM
FEDERATION TO CONFEDERATION

When Mikhail Gorbachev took over as General Secretary of the Communist party of the Soviet Union in 1985, he seemed confident that he had the vision and the talent to imbue the Soviet political system with the legitimacy needed to goad the population into accepting possibly disruptive but nonetheless necessary economic reforms. At that time, his assessment was partly correct - the Soviet Union's political survival depended on the regime's ability to reform the economic condition. But the Soviet leader woefully underestimated the complexity of his task. Political and economic reforms were not only intertwined with, but also complicated by the Soviet Union's "nationality problem".

During his first year in the office, Gorbachev was influenced by his late mentor, General Secretary Yuri Andropov.¹ Like Andropov, Gorbachev believed that economic reform could not succeed without the removal of corrupt Communist Party cadre who were preventing the Soviet economy's modernization. On coming to office in 1985, Gorbachev launched an anticorruption drive against the powerful political bosses, who ran the Soviet republics.

1. Martha Brill Olcott, "Yuri Andropov and the 'National Question'", Soviet Studies, Vol. 40, no.1;(January 1985) pp.105-117.

Coupled with this the campaign for giving a new dimension to the federal structure - a process which at the theoretical plane had started after the constitution of 1977 was adopted. For this purpose, perestroika and glasnost were launched as tools of decentralization, openness and restructuring of polity and economy apart from foreign policy.

But, Gorbachev saw his program of perestroika as seriously jeopardized by out breaks of popular unrest, ethnic clashes, and separatist movements that were occurring in every corner of the inner Soviet empire. The Lithuanian question had achieved as much importance on the East-West agenda as had German unification. Yet, the so-called nationalities conflicts could not be limited to particular issues or areas - or viewed as a function of local phenomena or minority problems. Nationalism, particularism, and separatism were manifestations of more complex problems besetting the USSR. Social, economic, environmental and political issues were "ethnicized" and vice-versa.

In regard to the aggravating and deepening crisis of the Soviet federalism, Gorbachev mentioned that,

"upto now our state existed as a centralized and unitary state and none of us have yet the experience of living in a federation. The political and economic realities in the USSR

violate the constitutional provisions of the Soviet federation both in letters and spirit. As a result the very idea of federation has been seriously compromised".²

The Gorbachevian reforms for pseudo-federal arrangement no longer satisfied the growing aspirations and expectations Gorbachev had aroused in the peripheries. The indecisiveness of the centre, the slow pace and the contradictory nature of political reform, and the deterioration of the economic condition accelerated the disintegration of this heterogenous, multiethnic empire. Soviet republics began to follow the examples of its satellites and questioned the economic and political bonds linking them to the centre.

GORBACHEV'S AGENDA FOR FEDERATION BUILDING

While the condition of the federation was viewed as one of the problems besetting the Soviet Union, its reform was also seen as part of the solution. The once despised notion of federalism was becoming increasingly popular among the Soviet leaders. As the CPSU nationalities platform stressed, the task of resolving ethnic and political conflicts within the USSR was inseparable from building a 'completely new federation', from constructing a

2. Mikhail Gorbachev, "The Fate of Perestroika Is in the Unity of Party", Report at the Central Committee Plenum on December 25, 1989, in Pravda, December 26, 1989; also see, V.D.Zotov, "The Nationalities Issues and Deformities of the Past", Kommunist, (Moscow), no.3, February 1989; pp. 79-89.

common home for all the Soviet peoples.³ Political debates, parliamentary hearings, scholarly literature, newspaper articles, and interviews in the mass-media exhaustively discussed the Union's shortcomings. The prospects of federalism and the specific approaches to reviving the Soviet federation and staving off its collapse.⁴ The problems thus defined, Gorbachev attempted to design his nationalities policy in the broader context of constitutional reforms, democratization, and devolution of political and economic powers to the republic and local levels. The very essence of Soviet federal system was under review, as the Soviet leadership constructed various blueprints for the creation of a "completely new federation".⁵

Gorbachev presented a package of measures specifically designed to consolidate the political and economic independence of the republics and thus to reinforce the the federation. In particular, he intended, (1) to extend the jurisdiction and autonomous powers of the union republics and to establish their full autonomy and responsibility in economic, social and cultural spheres,

3. "Draft Nationalities Policy of the Party under Present Conditions" adopted by the CPSU Central Committee Plenum, September 20, 1989; Pravda, September 24, 1989.
4. N. Mikhaleva and Sh. Panidze, "Federal Union", Pravda, July 19, 1989.
5. The Most important ones were the "Resolution on International Relations" passed by the 19th Party Conference on July 1, 1988, in Materials of the 19th All-Union Conference of the CPSU.

(2) to draw clearer lines between the jurisdictions of the central authorities and those of the republics, and (3) to improve the representation and participation of the republics in decision-making at all Union level.⁶ The Soviet President seemed intent on establishing a loose federation that would put the republics on an equal basis and give them more self-determination. Such a transition to a "true federation" would require a radical transformation of the Soviet Union, its ideology, constitution, and institutions. Gorbachev, the lawyer, stressed that this "restructuring should be achieved by legal means, within the existing constitutional framework".⁷

THE ROAD TO A NEW STATE STRUCTURE

The thorough analysis of the already enormous and still growing literature on the Gorbachev revolution reveals that at least three general views on the prospects of reforms in the USSR emerged. The most prominent in the West for much of the first five years of Gorbachev's rule was a conservative pessimistic view that real reform toward a modern democratic state was an impossibility within the USSR, that either the efforts of the General Secretary was unauthentic and not sincere or the built in resistance of Russia's political culture or the Soviet bureaucracy doomed

6. Ibid.

7. Speech by M.S. Gorbachev to the Congress of People's Deputies. Press Release, (Novosti Press), December 14, 1989.

his plans for the reforms to failure.⁸ Here, Gorbachev was seen as a kind of 'dynamic' Brezhnev, whose limited reforms were meant to integrate Western technology and productivity into an essentially post - Stalinist party/state.

Less often present in the Soviet discourse but available in media was a liberal optimistic view that Gorbachev intended a radical, indeed revolutionizing, reform that would bring the Soviet Union back to the tolerant pluralism of the NEP and possibly further into a democratic polity and market Socialism.

A third view, muted at first, but increasingly vocal after 1988 revolutions in Eastern and Central Europe, held that Gorbachev's reforms from above would necessarily have to be radicalized, move to marketization, and would likely to lead to the 'collapse of the Soviet Union'.⁹ All three views recognized that radicalization of the reforms presented enormous dangers, but none saw how the revolution from above would be highjacked by a nationalist revolution from below that could not be contained within Gorbachev's limited vision. "The development of civil society and

8. Views similar are also expressed by Richard Pipes, Marshall Goldman, Peter Reddaway and Alain Besancon.

9. Severyn Bialer, "Gorbachev's Move", in Ferenc Feher and Andrew Arato (ed.), Gorbachev-The Debate (Atlantic Highlands, N.Jersey, 1989); pp. 38-60 Also see, Castoriades Cornelius, "The Gorbachev Interlude", ibid., pp. 61-83.

coherent, conscious nations within the USSR inexorably transformed Gorbachev's efforts at state building into a liberalising process of state dismantling".¹⁰

Gorbachev's reforms, so tentatively began in the Andropov mode in 1985, rapidly evolved into revolution after the Karabakh event of February 1988. After failing to win agreements from his own ruling party to democratize the apparatus from within through multicandidate elections, the General Secretary proposed such elections to a new Congress of People's Deputies, at the 19th Party Conference in June 1988. These national and later local elections, spelled out the death for the Communist Party's monopoly on political power.

Mindful of the failures of the last major efforts at reforms by Khrushchev and Kosygin, Gorbachev and his small group of reform-minded politicians understood that successes or failures depended on the implementation of strategy that would accomplish three goals simultaneously - (a) democratization or at least neutralization of the conservative apparatus; (b) mobilization of the civil society - particularly the liberal intelligentsia, both to criticize the old system and its practitioners and to stimulate

10. Robert Suny, "Incomplete Revolution : National Movements and the Collapse of the Soviet Empire", in New Left Review; no. 189, September-October 1991; pp. 111-126.

popular participation in perestroika; and(c)the initiation of a series of political and economic reforms that would both erode the power of the conservatives, most centrally the old Communist Party and institutionalize democracy within society and party".¹¹ This strategy was fraught with dangers. For this, Gorbachev held together the broad coalition of party leaders from Yakovlev and Yetsin on his left to Egor Ligachev on his right, and gradually undermined the Centres of Communist powers.

What was not fully realized by Gorbachev himself that the extent to which the USSR remained was no longer a single society. A fiction of united Sovetskii Narod, proposed and defended by Soviet theorists of ethnicity, certainly reflected important shared characteristics of large numbers of educated urban Soviet citizens, but it was belied by the powerful identification with nationality, not only of those villagers untransformed by the Soviet experience, but also of many intellectuals. Within the federal structure of the Stalinist and post-Stalinist states, nations had grown up that were linked to the specific territories formally established and bound just before or during the Soviet period.

In the emerging reconstruction of their own history the

11. Philip G. Roeder, "Soviet Federalism and Ethnic Mobilization " in World Politics, 43(2); January 1991; pp. 81-105.

nationalists identified the Soviet experiment as the enemy of essential, authentic, natural national aspirations. No sense of the formative influence of the Soviet experience in the making of nations entered the new discourse of seperatism.

RADICALIZATION

"The party and the people have begun a duel with the time. It is no exaggeration to say that the whole world holding its breath, awaits the outcome of this duel".¹² With these words, the normally undramatic Andrei Gromyko, President of the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union, conveyed the sense of urgency behind the reform campaign of General secretary Mikhail Gorbachev. Grasping this feeling of urgency was essential to understanding one of the most remarkable years in the Soviet political history.

In 1931, Stalin justified the upheavals he had initiated in Soviet society by noting that "it is sometimes asked whether it is not possible to slow down the tempo a bit, to put a check on the movement. No, Comrades, it is not possible.... To slacken the tempo would mean falling behind. And those who fall behind get beaten".¹³ Gorbachev adopted a similar intonation in his speech to the

12. Pravda, July 1, 1987, p.5.

13. As quoted by Lars Lih, "Gorbachev and the Reform Movement", Current History, October 1987; Vol. 86, no. 522; pp. 309-338.

Central Committee in January 1987, "It is often asked aren't we taking too sharp a turn? No, we need genuinely revolutionary and all embracing transformations in society (because), there is simply no path for us. We cannot retreat - there is no where to retreat to".¹⁴ Although Gorbachev borrowed Stalin's tone of urgency, everything about his campaign was aimed at undoing the system Stalin helped to create in 1931.

Having exposed the evils of the Soviet society, the new leadership provided a possible solution. Gorbachev's own diagnosis began and ended with the economy. The first clue that something went wrong was the close-to-zero economic growth; and the final criterion of success was the "acceleration" of Soviet economic growth at world competitive standards. But Gorbachev found that the "retardation mechanism" that prevented acceleration was so deep-rooted that it could be combated only by a perestroika of all spheres of society.¹⁵ Perestroika - the totemic battlecry of the Gorbachev reform movement - is usually translated as "reconstruction" or "restructuring" but perhaps Robert Tucker's suggestion of "reforms" is the best.¹⁶ It started with the modest campaigns and struggle against the plague of alcoholism and a campaign for greater

14. Pravda, January 28, 1987, p. 9.

15. Lih, no. 13.

16. Robert C. Tucker, "Gorbachev and the Fight for Reform", World Policy Journal; Spring 1987; pp. 842-62.

labour discipline and productivity. Step by step progresses in the party improvised the dismantling of the "administrative command system", but without replacing it with a working economy or effective democratic policy. In order to demonstrate how systematic was the stagnation that afflicted the country and to gain allies within the intellegentsia, the reform leaders promoted even more open discussions of the ills of the Soviet society. Faith in the socialist project had long eroded among the educated people, but the subversive power of the new criticism undermined what was left of the authority and influence of the party apparatus. Glasnost eliminated the privileged position of the Marxism - Leninism within the few years and the rewriting the Soviet history moved back in time beyond the permitted critique of Stalinism into the fundamental readings of Lenin's revolution.¹⁷

Gorbachev's preferred solution for the national question was a return to Lenin's nationality policy, a genuine federalism to replace the Stalinistic emasculation of the federalism. He spoke of the violated rights of the Soviet Germans, Crimean Tatar, Meshkhatian-Turks, Kalmyks, Balkans, Karachai, Chechen, Ingush, Greeks, Koreans and Kurds, but consistently rejected the demands for redrawing the boundaries internally for administration in the USSR.¹⁸ "Perestroika is not perestroika", he was purported

17. Suny, no. 10, pp. 111-26.

18. Gorbachev, no. 2.

to have said.¹⁹ But, Lenin's policies towards a non-Russian had been combination of principle and pragmatism. Gorbachev repeatedly opted for more pragmatic solutions to the interethnic conflicts that threatened his programmes but was confronted by the radical implication of Lenin's principles. National self-determination to the point of separation had been enshrined in a constitutional guarantee of a right of secession from the union, a time bomb that lay dormant through the years of Stalinism only to explode with Gorbachev's process of reforms.

STAGES OF REFORM IN THE FEDERAL STRUCTURE

The agenda of the Congress of People's Deputies envisaged three stages of constitutional reform. The basic contents of the first stage of the reform was updating the structure of the Soviets, the procedure for the formation and activity of the supreme bodies of power, and the electoral system. The draft laws that had been submitted for discussion were aimed at this goal.

The next major stage of political transformation was linked to the harmonizing of relations between the Union and its constituent republics. Questions of the status of the Union republics, of expanding their rights and possibilities in political, social, economic and cultural life and of consolidating the federal socialist state on this basis had to be examined at this stage. The same

19. Gorbachev, no. 7.

applied to the autonomous formations - republics, provinces, and regions.

The final stage of the reform had to be the reorganization of power at the local level. It was necessary to see to it that material and legal preconditions were created for the Soviets in fact to resolve all questions of local life and to revive them as fully empowered bodies of the people's self-government. The ongoing constitutional reforms and the flood of new laws were supposed to lay the "legal base under the edifice of the federation."²⁰

First Stage:- The supremacy of the representative system, its coherence and unity was to be strengthened considerably by introduction of an important element - the Congress of People's Deputies, at all-Union and republic levels. This innovation was dictated primarily by the objective of ruling out the abuse of power on the upper stories of the edifice of the state.

The Congress as the supreme body of power, was to have the principal say in resolving the most important constitutional question, in addition it had the right to take under consideration any question of state life falling into USSR jurisdiction. But the Congress, which was to be composed of over 2500 Deputies and would meet once a year, as a rule, would not be able to deal with day to day

20. Gorbachev, no. 2.

legislative, administrative and central work. A permanently operating 'Supreme Soviet', elected by the Congress from among the People's Deputies, was called upon to perform these functions.²¹

As far as the powers of the Chambers of the USSR Supreme Soviet were concerned, while retaining their complete equality, including an identical size, each of them would take on specific functions appropriate to their names and intended purposes. This approach met with approval and support. If there was a subject of debate, it was primarily the procedure for forming the chambers from the standpoint of a principal requirement - ensuring the best representation for the Union republics in the Council of Nationalities. The number of their representatives could be increased somewhat over the figures stipulated in the draft- from 7 to 11 members of the Council of Nationalities from each Union Republic, while maintaining the proposed number of representatives from the autonomous formations. In this connection, the numerical composition of the Union could be increased accordingly.²²

In defining the new function of the Presidium of the USSR-Supreme Soviet and the duties of the Chairman of the USSR-

21. "Gorbachev Gets Political Reforms Adopted", (Communique on the Supreme Soviet Meetings) C DSP; Vol. XL; no. 48, December 28, 1988; pp. 4-5.

22. "Views on Supreme Soviet-1", in C DSP; Vol. XL, no. 49; January 4, 1989; p. 16.

Supreme Soviet, the draft law proposed the establishment of a procedure whereby the Chairman would have sufficient powers to organize the work of the Supreme Soviet and its Presidium, while at the same time the excessive concentration of power in one person's hand would be ruled out.²³

The Congress was the supreme arbiter in the event of disagreements between the chambers of Supreme Soviet. It was granted the right to abrogate legislative acts by the USSR Supreme Soviet. Control functions were fully inherent in the Supreme Soviet itself. These functions included budgetary control; checking up on the work of ministries and departments, especially in cases in which warning signals of trouble were received; and the right to make Deputy enquiries.²⁴

But the developments in the Baltic republics and in other regions in 1987 clearly demonstrated that Gorbachev's policy of federalization had run into a dead end when the periphery started setting - up the agenda on this question to which Moscow was just reacting or not acting at all. When Baltic politicians pressed for a renewal of the federation in 1988, Gorbachev gave vague promises of political decentralization and economic self-management. In fact, the first stage of constitutional reform resulted in the

23. Ibid., p. 18.

24. CDSP; no. 21; p. 6.

further strengthening of the central authorities, contrary to his original promises. He met the subsequent Baltic quest for a loose 'federation' or 'confederation' with promises to renew the federation. Yet the CPSU plenum on the nationalities questions planned for early 1989 was repeatedly postponed and the results of the September 1989 meeting were less than impressive. No time-table was set, no mandate given and few specific steps were taken to implement the plenum's agenda. The Central Committee Secretariat, the Supreme Soviet and a series of commissions and working groups were charged with studying the problems and working out a programme of concrete actions. A new Department of National Relations under A.N.Girenko was created in the Central Committee apparatus.²⁵

Second Stage :- The debate on the second stage of the constitutional reform - which was to lay the foundation for a new federative structure- scheduled for the December 1989 session of the Congress of People's Deputies was postponed. Instead, President Gorbachev, Prime Minister Nikolay Ryzhkov and others started to contradict or qualify earlier statements on the future shape of the Soviet state, thereby putting into question their commitment to a "true federation". In an appeal to the Soviet people, the CPSU Central Committee warned against too hasty steps of

25. Pravda; October 6, 1989; and November 30, 1989.

constitutional reforms. In Gorbachev's words, "limits beyond which one must not go should be clearly outlined, for going beyond them means a preprogrammed disruption of perestroika as a whole, there seems to be a clear yet constantly shifting line between orthodoxy and hereby on the issue of federalism".²⁶ Only in early 1990, after the dramatic developments in the Transcaucasus and after the Lithuanian and Estonian parliaments devised plans for achieving full independence did the Soviet leadership propose specific measures for reforming the nation-state structure.

Third Stage :- As far as the third stage was concerned, the elections of the local Soviets and thus major reorganization was dated for the later part of the 1990.

THE REACTIONS OF THE VARIOUS REPUBLICS AND POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS TO THE FEDERATION-BUILDING DEBATE.

The reactions of the various republics and various official and non-official political groups and organizations, which sprang up during and after the initiation of perestroika and glasnost, were a natural outcome of the haphazard and not well thought-out decision of the Soviet leadership. Kazimiera Prunskiene, the prime-minister of Lithuania told Gorbachev, "imagine how skeptical we are of a new Union whose plan we have never seen".²⁷ Vaino Valjas, leader of the Communist Party of Estonia, dismissed dismissed

26. Gorbachev, no. 2.

27. Quoted in The New York Times, January 14, 1990.

Gorbachev's federalizing program as a set of "half-hearted semi-structuring measures" too little, too late.²⁸

Meanwhile the pressure for a reform of the centre-periphery relationship was mounting in the Soviet republics outside the Baltic area. The boldness of the Baltic avant-garde, the events in the Eastern-Europe, Moscow's use of force in Tbilisi and Baku had a significant spillover effect on the other republics, where a myriad of grass-root organizations had emerged. These highly heterogenous movements incorporated a broad spectrum of political views and convictions.

In Ukraine, the Democratic Bloc, a broad coalition of forces including the Popular Movement for Restructuring (Rukh) demanded "genuine political and economic sovereignty". (Economic autonomy was particularly important for Ukraine, since 95 per cent of its industrial enterprises remained under Union control.)²⁹ Some members of the Democratic Bloc- including members of the Rukh, the Ukrainian Helsinki Union, the National Party, and the National Democratic League - openly advocated a separatist

28. Speech by Vaino Valjas; First Secretary of the Communist Party of Estonia, at the CPSU Central Committee Plenum; September 19, 1989.

29. David Marples, "The Ukrainian Election Campaign : The Opposition ", Radio Free Europe-Radio Liberty, Report on the USSR; March 9, 1990; pp. 17-18.

agenda.³⁰ In February, a group of USSR people's deputies from Ukraine submitted a memorandum to Gorbachev calling for the renewal of the Union treaty on the basis of confederative ties.³¹ Even Ukraine's Party First Secretary Volodymyr Ivashko had noticeably stepped up his calls for increased Ukrainian sovereignty within a renewed federation.³² The agendas of the Ukrainian party's reform wing and of the moderate forces of the Democratic Bloc had much in common and thus provided the possibility for an alliance between the Popular Front and reformist Communist as emerged in the Baltic republics.

In neighbouring Belorussia, the Popular Front Adradzhen'ne (Renewal) described the republics as a "semi-colony that supplies the centre", called for the rebirth of the Belorussian nation, and advocated complete independence.³³

In Georgia, the popular movement was divided among a dozen groups, including historical parties originating in the brief period of independence. The Republic Communist Party had elaborate plans for the restructuring of political and

30. "Problems of Ukrainian State Independence and Ways to Achieve It", Atmoda, February 12, 1990, p.7, as cited in Stephen Kux, "Soviet Federalism", Problems of Communism; March-April 1990; pp-1-20.

31. "NeueZurcher Zeitung", March 25-26, 1990 in ibid.

32. "Pravda Ukrainy" (Kiev); December 3, 1989 in ibid.

33. Jury Sienkowski and Kathleen Mihalisko, "Demonstrators Call for Free Belorussia", Radio Free Europe-Radio Liberty, Report on the USSR; March 9, 1990; pp. 18-19.

economic ties in a loose federation.³⁴ In Armenia and Azerbaijan the moderate wings of the popular movements called for more autonomy and self-determination, while radical groups advocated outright independence from Moscow. The military intervention in Baku in January 1990 strengthened secessionist and irredentist forces.

In Central Asia, a heterogeneous mixture of national groups and movements emerged and some political movements from the pre-Soviet era revived. Salient issues included economic problems arising from the single-crop cultivation, neglect of national languages and cultures, religion and environment. The degree of organization and mobilization was much lower than in the Western or Southern republics, the focus of the movement was limited mainly to local and regional levels. Yet the anti-establishment sentiments were strong and the potential for spontaneous social unrest was high.

In Kazakhstan, the nascent opposition group Adilet (Justice) called for more autonomy at the local or regional levels. The Kirghiz popular movement Ashar also advocated increased economic autonomy. In Uzbekistan, the main nationalist movement, Birlik (Unity) propagated national revival and independence. A moderate wing reportedly splittted away and formed a new group Erk (Will).

34. Pravda; February 1, 1990.

Its programme called for greater economic and political autonomy within the framework of a renewed federation.³⁵

The Tajik movement Rastakhiz (Renaissance) which played a prominent role as mediator in the Dushanbe disturbances, advocated more economic autonomy within a federation. In Turkmenistan, the newly formed Agzybirlik (Unity) seemed to pursue an agenda similar to that of its Uzbek namesake.³⁶

While the various regional movements shared common characteristics, namely, the demand for a multiparty system and increased autonomy, there was still little consultation and coordination on the specific demands.³⁷ So far local strength had not been translated into organized influence at the all-union level. The main advocates for a transformation of the USSR into a loose federation of equal, sovereign states were the reformist forces within the republic Communist parties, which seemed to have gained in strength in the parliamentary elections of 1989.

The decisive question was whether the Russian majority would accept the diminution of its role as primus inter pares in a renewed federation. In an obvious attempt not to stir - up Russian nationalist feelings in their own

35. TASS, February 27, 1990.

36. Annette Bohr, "Turkmenistan Under Perestroika : An Overview", Radio Free Europe-Radio Liberty, Report on the USSR; March 23, 1990; pp. 20-30.

37. Kux; no. 30; p.7.

ranks, even the Inter-regional Group of Deputies, Democratic Russia, and other liberal movements took relatively vague, neutral positions on the federation. The Democratic Platform Group within the CPSU, called in very general terms for "the transition from the principle of unitary state towards a voluntary union of the peoples."³⁸

Some Russians were publicly considering the prospects of a rapidly changed structure of the Soviet Union. Economist Vasily Selynin contemplated the dissolution of USSR in "its current composition" and the emergence of a "new, much looser confederation consisting of Russia, Ukraine, Belorussia, Georgia, Armenia and Moldavia."³⁹ Conservative Russians such as Eduard Volodin or Valentin Rasputin called for the secession of the RSFSR from, or the dissolution of the Union so that Russia could concentrate on putting its own house into order without the ballast of the other republics.⁴⁰

Most Russian nationalists, however, insisted on the preservation of the Soviet Union's territorial integrity. Organizations such as RSFSR Writer's Union, the Worker's councils, and conservative publications such as Nash

38. The New York Review of Books (New York); March 29, 1990; p.27.

39. The Boston Sunday Globe; January 28, 1990; p. 15.

40. John Dunlop, "Ethnic Russians or Possible Breakup of the USSR", Radio Free Europe : Radio Liberty, Report on the USSR ; March 2, 1990; pp. 16-17.

Sovermennikh, Molodaya Gvardiya, or Moskva suddenly turned into supporters of the "true-federalism". Non-indigenous Russians in the Baltic republics and elsewhere formed their own organizations to oppose local demands for secession and support a renewal of the federation.⁴¹

The steps towards democratization, decentralization, de-etatization and federation suggested would have resulted in a comparative decline of the economic and the political role of Russia proper and in the strengthening of the non-Russian republics.

THE NEW UNION TREATY

The Beginning :-

Confronted with the escalating demands, Gorbachev announced that his new office of the Presidency would be used to prepare a new treaty of the Union (soyuznyy dogovor), though he had previously rejected the idea of drawing of a new Union Treaty, since this would tantamount to acknowledging that the USSR was not a voluntary union of sovereign republics. At the February 1990 CPSU Central Committee Plenum various leaders of the republics, Communist party, Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze and his deputy A. Kovalev came out in support of the idea.⁴² But the form of the new federal contract which was to be announced remained

41. TASS; February 24, 1991.

42. Ann Sheehy, "Moscow Considering a New Treaty of Union?", Radio Free Europe-Radio Liberty -Report on the USSR; February 16, 1990; pp. 9-11.

unspecified. The CPSU Nationalities Platform had rejected the idea of a formal treaty comparable to the Treaty on the Formation of the USSR signed on December 30, 1922, which was an attempt to find a compromise between centrifugal and centripetal forces and to combine the blandishments of sovereign national republics with the virtues of a unitary state. Instead, the party suggested the elaboration of a "Declaration of the Union", which was to form an organic part of the constitution but would essentially be a political rather than a legal document. The revival of the idea of a Union Treaty occurred at a time when, toward the end of 1987, many politicians and, even earlier, industrial managers had begun to recognise that the main reason, virtually, for the economic and political retardation of the country's development was the hypercentralization of power and property at the union level. Given the States' suppression of the individual and any initiative, this was laid manifestly bare. The question of a redistribution of property and jurisdiction between the Centre, the republics and the local soviets, and of a different status of the individual was the order of the day.⁴³

The first to begin to talk about this were the Baltic

43. Sergey Baburin, "Starting from Scratch :Bypassing Legislature in Union Teaty Process Seen as Fatal, in JPRS, July 18, 1991, p. 21.

republics, which demanded economic independence and then a new Union Treaty. There was a possibility of the prevention of the disintegration of the country, if not in 1985, when much was recognised only intuitively, then in 1987 and even in 1989. But the Union leadership, primarily the leadership of the CPSU Central Committee, rejecting at that time the idea of a Union treaty and offering nothing in exchange, lost time. In 1990, the centre had lost control of events, and the initiative switched to the Union republics. With this an era of "total sovereignization"⁴⁴ set in.

Even in the 28th CPSU Congress held in June 1990, concerning the problems of the Union of Soviet Republics, Gorbachev clarified,

" What we have lived through and reflected upon in recent times, has caused us to realise that the updating of the union cannot be confined to the mere extension even if highly considerable of the rights of the republics and autonomies. What is needed is a real union of sovereign states. That means...a nationwide arrangement...which would enable us to untie the knots of conflict, to raise the cooperation between our peoples to a new level, and multiply the aggregate political

44. ibid., p. 25.

power of the Union and its economic and spiritual potential in the interests of all those who have joined hands in our great Union of States".⁴⁵

While the appeal in the report to all the peoples of the country to realise the folly of any further exacerbation of feelings in the inter-ethnic relations was urgent, one had to wait for the work of the commission on the New Union Treaty to be completed and announced, in order to draw final conclusions and meaning of 'national arrangement' and how far it succeeded in combining the aspirations of the national movements in the republics with the perspective of an all-union common market.⁴⁶

On June 12th 1990, a working group to draft the new treaty was set up by the Council of the Federation, an advisory body, consisting of the leaders of the 15 republics. On 20th July 1990, this group presented its ideas at a joint meeting of itself and the Presidential Council for which Gorbachev personally selected advisors.⁴⁷

45. "Gorbachev's Political Report", presented on the 28th CPSU Congress, Documents of the 28th CPSU Congress, (Novosti, Moscow 1990), pp. 16-19.

46. Raja Ali, "In Search of New Identity: Report of the 28th CPSU Congress", Economic and Political Weekly,; Vol. xxv, no. 39; Sept. 29, 1990; pp. 2190-4.

47. "Soviet Union : Belated New Deal ", The Economist, July 28, 1990.

The Novo-Origarevo Agreement :-

In the summer of 1990, the liberal left acquired the programme of reform - the famous Shatalin plan of radical economic reform within 500 days. Though more a sketch for change than a detailed plan, the 500 days programme became the basis for a brief political alliance in late July 1990 between Yeltsin and Gorbachev.⁴⁸

The restructuring of a central government and the increase of power in the hands of Gorbachev in late 1990 could not resolve the fundamental political problems in the USSR - the relationships between the centre and peripheries, most importantly the Union Republics. The problems was directly linked to the problems of the economy. Ukrainian deputy to the USSR Congress of People's Deputies V.P. Fokin, told Ryzhkov that his government had been unable to create an effective system for the state administration of the economy. Ryzhkov replied that,

"an undeclared war has been leashed against the government that aims to strike a blow at the state, at the socio-political system, and to crush it once and for all...the government is in favour of sovereignty for all the republics but also of the sovereignty of the Union as a whole."⁴⁹

48. Baburin, no. 43, p. 24.

49. Izvestia, 20 December 1990 in Current Digest of Soviet Press, Vol.XLIII, no. 52, 30 January 1991, pp. 3-4.

It was the government that began transferring prerogatives of the centre to the republics.

"... 'At the same time we have always favoured the preservation of the Soviet federation's territorial integrity, the preservation of its social choice and single economic space, and the observance of all rights of citizens and peoples through the Union'.⁵⁰

By March 1991, a stalemate had been reached between the radicals, the Conservatives and Gorbachev in the centre. In the newly elected Security Council conservatives like Vice-President Yanayev, Prime Minister Pavlov, KGB Chief Kryuchkov, M.V.D. head Boris Pugo and the Minister of Defence Yazov sat with advisors of Gorbachev, Yevgeny Primakov, Bakatin and the Foreign Minister Bessmertnykh. Two problems were paramount - the falling economy and the breakup of the union. Gorbachev had no real problem for the economy but hoped to be able to achieve consensus on the Union Treaty as a necessary first step towards economic revival.⁵¹

Despite the fact that Yeltsin had earned support and strength for himself in Russia, Gorbachev could be satisfied with the overwhelming vote for the union. His greatest support came from the countryside and more

50. Ibid.

51. Suny; no. 10; pp. 111-26.

conservative republics in Central Asia, and he did much less well in largest cities, Moscow, Leningrad and Kiev. But he could argue that he now had a mandate for the preservation of the Soviet Union as a free association of sovereign republics.⁵²

As Yeltsin won new powers in the Russian Republic, Gorbachev reconsidered his strategy. His turn to right had effectively restrained the Right for five months. Now to the Left, more popular than ever, Gorbachev shifted once more. On 23rd April 1991, he met at a dacha at Novo-Orarevo with Yeltsin and the leaders of eight other republics and worked out a constitution for the 'Union of Sovereign States' within six months after the signing of the treaty and carry out new elections for the union political bodies. The top leaders of the Union republics taking part in the meeting, while recognised the right of Latvia, Moldavia, Georgia, and Armenia to decide independently on the question of accession to the Union treaty, at the same time considered it necessary to establish the 'most favoured-nation' treatment for republics signing the union treaty within the framework of a single economic space formed by them. No overthrow of the leadership bodies were to be tolerated and the role of the republics were to be radically enhanced.⁵³

52. V. Vasilyev, V. Lafitskiy, A. Postnikov, "Towards the New Union: How should we Proceed?", JPRS; 5 August 1991; p. 17.

53. Suny, no. 10, p. 121.

The New Union Treaty was the sole legitimate means of making the transition from the old to a new principle of statehood without outbreaks of violence and this meant without the losses of human, material and moral -that inevitably would have followed if the various factions, in the absence of a constructive dialogue, should have gone their separate ways. Union participation in the negotiating process was necessitated by the very fact of its existence.

Various Provisions of the New Union Treaty :-

Under the basic principle it mentioned that each participant state was "sovereign state" and that each of them would retain the right to independently decide all questions relating to their development while guaranteeing political rights and opportunities for social, economic and cultural development to all peoples living on their territories. They would decisively oppose, "racism, chauvinism, nationalism" and attempts to limit the rights of the peoples and would uphold a combination of "human and national"⁵⁴ values. They would recognise the priority of human rights in accordance with the commonly accepted norms of the international law. Each citizen was to be guaranteed the right to learn and use his native language and the freedom of religion and other social, economic and personal rights and freedoms.

54. Draft of the New Union Treaty (Novosti Press, Moscow, March 1991), p.4.

As for the property relations, the draft did not speak of obligatory socialism, but said,

"The republics will try to meet the peoples, need on the basis of the free choice of forms, of property and methods of management and realisation of the principles of social justice and protection".⁵⁵

The independent republics, as independent members of the world community could establish direct diplomatic, consular, trade and other relations with foreign states and sign international treaties, could take part in the work of international organizations without prejudice to the interests of the other participants of the treaty and their common interests and without violating the international obligations of the Union.⁵⁶

As for the structure of the union, the Draft said that the membership of the Union was voluntary - the member republics having equal rights and bearing equal responsibilities. A citizen of the republic joining the Union would simultaneously be a citizen of the Union.⁵⁷

Republics, signatories to the Treaty, were to recognize the existing frontiers. The frontiers between the republics could be changed only on the basis of agreement between the

55. Ibid., Article 7.

56. Ibid., Basic Principle, no. 8.

57. Ibid., Article 2.

concerned republics. As for the distribution of power, the draft mentioned that member republics would delegate to the Union the following powers :defence of sovereignty and territorial integrity of the union and republics, state security of the Union, determination and safeguarding of the frontiers of the Union, changing of the frontiers of the republics (Union) in accordance with the agreements of the concerned republics, management of the defence industries, conducting of Union foreign policy, concluding international treaty/treaties by the Union, management of foreign economic deals within the powers delegated to the Union, management of the space research and the all-Union system of communications and information, geodesy, cartography, meteorology and standardization, coordination of activities to maintain public order and the curbing of crime, determination of the strategy of socio-economic development of the country and the creation of the conditions for common all-Union market, conducting joint finance, credit, money, taxation and price policies based on a common currency, drafting and execution of the Union budget and so on.⁵⁸

As for property forms, the Draft stated :

"The Union of Sovereign Soviet Republics and the republics guarantee the free development

58. The List of Powers compiled in an article by Ravi M. Bakaya, "USSR :Towards a renewed Federation" in Mainstream, (Vol.XXIX, no. 26), Saturday, April 20, 1991, p. 31. Also see Article 5 of the Draft.

and protection of all forms of property provided for by the laws of the Union and the republics and promote the functioning of a common Union market".⁵⁹

The land and natural resources located on the territory of a republic belonged to the republic "with the exception of that part which by agreement was attached to the union property to enable it to execute powers delegated to the Union".⁶⁰

The organs of the Union were to be a Union Parliament consisting of two chambers - the Soviet of the Republics (Upper House) and the Soviet of the Union (Lower House) consisting of members elected from the constituencies equal in population throughout the country.

The draft provided for an executive President elected by direct vote of all the electors for a period of five years. The President could not continue for more than two consecutive terms. A candidate required more than half the votes casted throughout the country and in a majority of the republics.⁶¹ The Vice-President was to be elected alongwith the President. The President was supposed to work in consultation with a Federal Council consisting of

59. Text of the Draft; no. 54; Article 7.

60. Ibid.

61. Ibid., Article, 13.

himself, the Vice-President and Presidents of all the republics to consider the basic problems of internal and foreign policies of the Union and for coordinating the work of the republics.⁶² The President would form the cabinet of ministers in agreement with the central parliament. The heads of the republics could participate in the cabinet with the right of a deciding vote. The Cabinet was to function under the President and was responsible to the parliament.⁶³

As far as the status of the republics which did not want to join the Union was concerned, their relationship with the Union was to be regulated on the basis of the laws of the Union, as it existed then, and settlement of the mutual obligations and agreements.⁶⁴

The Draft provided for the constitution of the Union to be based on the Union treaty and it was subject to amendment and improvement.⁶⁵ The Draft Union treaty provided for a delineation of the jurisdiction of the Union and Republic legislations.

Alternative Union Treaty :-

A month after the draft new Union treaty was published in the press presupposing the conversion of the USSR into a

62. Ibid., Article 14.

63. Ibid., Article 16.

64. Ibid., Article 23.

65. Ibid., Article 24.

"renewed federation", at the Third (Special) Congress of the RSFSR Peoples' Deputies, a joint faction of the Republican and Social Democratic Parties submitted, by way of legislative initiative an alternative draft treaty on the community of the sovereign states. This document was drawn up by experts of the "Democratic Congress" - a broad association of democratic parties and movements of ten Union Republics, among which were "Democratic Russia", "Rukh", "Sajudis", the Belorussian People's Front, "The Birlik", popular movements of Uzbekistan and others.⁶⁶

Implications and Criticism of the New Union Treaty :-

The idea that the USSR had to return to square one of the federation building raised some fundamental questions. Traditional theories have treated federalism within the context of nation or empire-building.⁶⁷ Yet, the Soviet Union was heading in the opposite direction, i.e. toward the disintegration of a multinational state structure, the dissolution of an empire. As Gorbachev conceded :-

"What we must do is win over the federation all over again, by restoring mutual trust and a realization of advantages of integration. Good relations cannot be established by command or force. What lies ahead is lengthy

66. Vladimir Lysenko. "Alternative Union Treaty Drafted", JPRS; 14 June 1991; p. 1.

67. W.H.Riker, Federalism : Origin, Operation, Significance, (Boston, Little Brown & Co, 1864), pp.5ff.

and painstaking work".⁶⁸

At this juncture when the benefits of the old system were disappearing and the advantages of the new system were not visible, Gorbachev was caught between the wreckage of a discredited past and the promise of an unknown future. Thus, he was facing the difficult task of dismantling the old federal system and giving new content to the notion of the Union without sacrificing the stability and territorial integrity of the country.

Furthermore, both the drafting of the Union treaty and the referendum indicated that the Soviet Union had fallen into two parts :the independence - minded republics (Baltics, Moldovia, Gerogia and Armenia) and the Muslim-slavic mass which had voted for the Union. The Novo-Ogarevo agreement meant that Gorbachev had essentially agreed to recognize the sovereignty of all Union republics, and the rights of those who wished to opt out of the union to do so. Though, there was opposition from conservatives, Gorbachev had managed to tame the resistance to the Treaty in the USSR.⁶⁹

A closer look at the successive stage in signing the Novo-Ogarevo agreements revealed aspects that could be contested. Who would sign the treaty in the name of the Soviet Union ? And should the signing of the treaty be

68. Gorbachev, no. 2,.

69. Suny, no. 10, p. 124.

subjected to the removal of the USSR Soviet of People's Deputies ? One presumed that the constitutional authority of the President of the USSR was sufficient for him to sign the Treaty. Since the Treaty's entry into force would entail changes in the USSR constitution, the actions of the USSR President would acquire subsequent approval by the USSR Congress of People's Deputies.⁷⁰

The Novo-Ogarevo agreements anticipated that the new USSR Constitution would be endorsed by the bodies representing the Union. But what about the republics ? Firstly, it was opined that they had already expressed their will with regard to the essentials of the Constitution in as much as, in accordance with the provisions of the Novo-Ogarevo agreements, the Union Treaty was intended to serve as the foundation for the Basic Law of the USSR. Secondly, the republics were represented in the Congress and they took part in the adoption of the constitution through their people's deputies.⁷¹

There were certain other doubts raised on the further discussion about the Draft new Union treaty. The first point to note that how slow Mr. Gorbachev had been to adopt this idea, which was excellent to certain radical quarters. The long delay casted some doubts on the motives for Gorbachev's pursuit of the Treaty. It suggested that the

70. Vasilyev, no. 52, p. 19.

71. Ibid., p. 24.

treaty was little more than a rather thin smokescreen to cover the withdrawal of the Baltic states from the Soviet Union. Even for that purpose, it was too late.

Criticism of the New Union Treaty :- a) The main shortcoming of the draft was that it hindered the advance of democratic forces towards assuming power in the Union and, therefore, towards the controlling block of power and real change.

b) Second, no procedure had been contemplated for the ratification of the treaty by the new Supreme Soviet.

c) Third, many of the powers granted to the Union and the republics called for a substantial role to be played by the state. This underscored the close ties between the socialism, "nationwide" ownership of the land, state price and insurance policies, and management of all-Union communications and information systems.

d) Fourth, the treaty contained vague formulations according to which double tax system were to be established.

e) The existence of special courts in the Armed Forces and the fact that the procedure for withdrawing from the treaty was not defined in the text itself raised some questions.⁷²

72. K. Ignatyev, "Staging...a Treaty", Union Treaty seen as Gorbachev Power Play, JRPS, 9 August 1991, p.5.

So one finds that, an entirely workable variant for the organs of the union had been strengthened and its fundamental principles were nice and consistent with such a document. Despite the word "federation", the document reflected the confederative form of state structure : the most important act of the state was the treaty and not the constitution; in the framework of the powers granted to the republics and their combined administration with the Union; the supremacy of republics had the right to invalidate on their territory the effect of union laws. However, in this area the treaty was not entirely consistent.⁷³ But despite the signs of a gradual disintegration of the internal empire, of a collapse of its socio-economic basis in short, of a systemic crisis in the USSR, Gorbachev expressed his "unbridled optimism regarding the future of the multi-ethnic federal state...the renewal of the federation and its replenishment with the new context".⁷⁴

FEDERATION TO CONFEDERATION

Given the heterogenous nature of the USSR, the centrifugal forces worked at different paces in the various regions. The Soviet leadership, thus faced the difficult task of seeking agreement on a status of the Union and its jurisdiction acceptable to all the Union republics and best suited to accommodate a variety of interests and

73. Vasilyev, no. 52, p. 23.

74. Gorbachev, no. 2.

expectations Gorbachev envisaged a "differentiation of federal ties".⁷⁵ Under common principles, the place of each republic in a renewed federation was to be "unique to itself", taking into account the specifics of the regions, each people, their culture and traditions. The Soviet President stressed that "it was better for the centre to overdo the concessions to national grouping than underdo them".⁷⁶

Federation, Loose Federation and Confederation were the three models most discussed, the first proposed by the Soviet leadership and the latter two by the Transcaucasus, Moldavia and Ukraine. In the Soviet discussions, federations and confederations were frequently described as opposites.⁷⁷ However, the line between a federation and a confederation was thin, the difference a matter of degree than of clearly discernible and mutually exclusive characteristics. In a federation, the member-state delegate relatively more powers to the central authorities than in a confederation. A confederation was not necessarily bound by a common constitution, the legislation of the member states retained their treaty making powers and they exercised exclusive or joint control over the

75. M.S.Gorbachev, Speech Delivered on CPSU ~~Central~~ Central Committee Special Plenary Session; December 26, 1989; Documents, (Novosti, Moscow); March 1, 1990; p. 17.

76. Gorbachev, no. 2.

77. Mentioned in The New York Times; July 2, 1989.

armed forces.⁷⁸

A flexible framework of federalization could allow Gorbachev to grant extensive autonomy to the independence-minded Baltic republics, in the form of confederation or federecy, while retaining closer ties with Ukraine, Siberia, and other parts of the Soviet heartland, and maintaining tight control over the restive Central Asian Republics.⁷⁹

But, such adhoc approach to federalization posed serious problems. First, a mixture of federative structures would have to be unified in a single constitutional framework. Hence, a selective approach to federalization required substantial constitutional reforms and adjustments in the state structure. Second, it was difficult to grant special status to some republics without sparking demands for similar treatment by other republics or nationalities. Federations are built on the assumption of equal rights and obligations of the constituent states. The Soviet heartland was likely to be sensitive about special favours extended to the periphery.

Some Soviet specialists suggested a refinement of the criteria for defining the basic entities constituting the federation. Yulian Bromlay suggested the breakup of the

78. Kux, no. 30, p. 8.

79. I. Duchacek, Comparative Federalism : The Territorial Dimension of Politics (Lanham, MD, University Press of America); 1987: pp. 18ff.

RSFSR into three or four republics.⁸⁰ The geographer Vladimir Sokolov proposed the creation of 50 Union Republics, representing the main economic and demographic centres, and most of the ethnic groups and nationalities, by upgrading the status of existing sub-republic units. The giant RSFSR would be split up into European Russia, the Urals, Western Siberia, Eastern Siberia, the Far East, Transbaikalia, and an array of ethnic homelands with Union Republic status.⁸¹ Another suggestion was to strengthen the status of Krays and Oblasts thereby creating a system of politically and economically autonomous "village-states" (Khutorgosudarstva) which would form the constituent units of the federation.⁸²

The dispute between the centre and the periphery was in essence a debate over the degree of sovereignty (polnovlastiye) and self-determination (Samoopredelenie) of the republics. Both in theory and in practice, the idea of Sovereign republics conflicted with the notion of a sovereign union. In Soviet discussions, this conflict was often covered up by slogans such as "combining national and international interests", "equality of all people, equality

80. Y. Bromley, "Not a Return to the Confederation, But Development of the Federation", Soviet Latvia; October 21, 1989; p. 5.

81. Vladimir Sokolov, "Democracy and Borders", Literaturnaya Gazeta (Moscow); August 2, 1989.

82. Ibid.

of all peoples", and "strong centre-strong republics".⁸³

The basic difficulty in reconciling traditional notions of sovereignty with federative structures was not unique to the Soviet Union. It also found expression in competing doctrines of sovereignty in Western literature on federalism.

The renewal of the Soviet federation implied a revolutionary institutional reform and most important - a radical departure from the then existing political practices in the USSR.

83. Y. Maslyukov, in no. 3.

CONCLUSION

The Marxist-Leninist principle of the nations right to self-determination shaped the Soviet concept of federalism, which provided for every nationality the right to determine its own State-political form and voluntarily unite with other nationalities. Though both Western and Soviet scholars share some common notions of the broad features of federalism, yet the class and political aims behind the concept of federalism perceived in the erstwhile Soviet Union and the West were widely divergent.

Federalism in the Western democracy is based on the administrative considerations, whereas for the former Soviet Union, national -territorial principles and functional interdependence has been strategic factors in the working out of the federal concept. The notion of autonomy for nationalities living compactly on a definite territory has been one of the underlying features of the Soviet federation. This concept of autonomy differs from the concept of cultural-national autonomy evolved by Austrian Social Democrats Bauer and Springer, and supported by the Bundists in Russia.

The nature of the cultural-national autonomy model was criticised by Lenin. This plan was viewed by him as something harmful for the international unity of the working-class and against the interests of the class-struggle. The period of civil-war and foreign intervention

witnessed the violation of the principle of national-territorial autonomy. But with the disappearance of the emergency situation of the Civil War once again the principle came to be recognized.

The Soviet federation as it is discussed in the First chapter developed through the important stage of the formation of autonomous republics (majority of which could not form nation-states because of concrete historical conditions. This stage lasted upto the first-half of 1918). Three factors played significant part in the development of Soviet federation :unstable international situation necessiating the setting up of a united front of the Soviet republics ; the urge to develop a common socialist economy ; and finally, the need to find a just and democratic solution of the vexed nationality question by forging close bonds between the hitherto oppressed and oppressing nations on the basis of right to self-determination.

The concept of federalism in the USSR developed and strengthened in course of time through various constitutions. Each constitution had its own peculiarity and marked a specific stage on the road to Socialism. The idea of setting up of a Soviet state on a federal model was largely secured in the 'Declaration of the Rights of the Working and Exploited Peoples', as mentioned in the second chapter. This declaration was endorsed by the 'Third All Russian Congress of Soviets'and formed an integral part of

the 1918 Constitution of the RSFSR.

In the 1924 Constitution, the term 'Union' was used in place of 'federation' or 'federal'. It declared the Union to be a 'voluntary association of sovereign nations' on the basis of equality reserving to itself the right of free-withdrawal from the union. The 1936 Constitution marked a notable break in the Soviet Constitutional law. Its Article 13 declared USSR to be a federal state formed on the basis of "voluntary association of equal Soviet Socialist Republics". The 1977 constitution preserved the structure of the federal arrangement. It defined the USSR as "integral, federal, multinational state formed on the principle of socialist federalism as a result of the free self-determination of nations and the voluntary association of equal Soviet Socialist Republics". Thus, one finds that the very concept of 'federation' has been defined and redefined with each new constitution. However, on the whole, the contention of some writers that behind the facade of federal constitution there lies a unitary spirit, does not hold good. Despite economic centralism which stood in the way of political autonomy and led to an inevitable tendency towards political centralization, the functional interdependence of the federal system of the USSR remained unaltered.

The next chapter deals with the 1977-85 period. During this period an attempt was made to impart a new direction

to Soviet federalism. The roots of new development can be traced to the Khrushchev era, which saw a new period of decentralization effort, resulting in the extension in the rights of the Union-Republics. The Sovnarkhoz system, introduced by Khrushchev provided the Soviet republics a real opportunity to control their own economics, and move ahead towards a genuine federal structure. But the process of decentralization which began in 1954 was stalled in the mid 1960's after the ouster of Khrushchev and a reverse tendency became apparent. This process was reinitiated after 1977 but more at the theoretical level although certain minor administrative changes were made.

The growing rapprochement of the nations and nationalities of the then Soviet-Union called for the strengthening of the union basis of the state. Consequently, the activities of the all-Union and Union - Republican ministries and departments were reorganised and improved. This trend continued during the subsequent periods of Andropov and Chernenko. However, this at times outstress on the rapprochement of nationalities resulted in simmering discontentment which under Gorbachev's glasnost exploded into inter-ethnic conflicts subjecting the Union-Republic relations to new stress and strains. Under the new political dispensation of perestroika more and more attention was drawn to the inadequate performance of the federal institution, the failure of internal bargaining processes and the lack of appropriate machinery for a

peaceful resolution of inter-ethnic conflicts. Already during the 1980's in the political debates in the media and the Supreme Soviet parliamentary hearings, scholarly literature, newspaper articles and interviews reflected the Union's shortcomings. These were the symptoms of the emerging crises of the Soviet federation.

During 1985-87, with the initiation of Gorbachev's programmes of perestroika and glasnost, basic changes in the political and social order of the Soviet Union commenced. It was projected as the mechanism for a major change in the political and economic independence of the republics. While the condition of the federation was viewed as one of the problems besetting the Soviet Union, its reform was also seen as part of the solution.

As the debates, discussions and development for reforms continued, it became increasingly clear that the situation was getting out of control of Gorbachev. The former idea of reform in the federal structure was now replaced by the idea of loose federation. For this the reform process suggested three stages :- the first stage was supposed to reform the apex level state structure and introduce electoral reforms; the second stage constituted the harmonization of relationship between Union and the Republics and among the republics. The third stage would deal with the reform at the local level. These suggestions met with the mixed reaction from the various republics and political organizations.

Confronted with the escalating demands, President Gorbachev declared that his new office (of Executive President) would be used for the creation of a new Union Treaty. The dissatisfaction of the Baltics and other republics, and their subsequent declaration of independence proved that the situation was rapidly becoming unmanageable. Subsequently Gorbachev was forced to call for the Novo-Ogarevo meet under the pressure of his arch-rival Yeltsin and other leaders from various republics. The agreement arrived, which was to be signed on 20th August, 1991, could not be executed due to the abortive coup on the 19th August, 1991.

The present work brings out the various dimensions of the Soviet federation. On the one hand, the Soviet federal system comes out as a device whose manipulations led to the continued injustice to minorities and erosion of the ethnic identity of the non-Russians. On the other hand, the USSR could be viewed as a country eventually fated to be torn apart by its multiethnicity and the tensions emanating from it. The ethnoterritorial nature of the Soviet federation also acted as stimulus for the urge to expand through reinterpretation of the constitutional prerogatives of the nationalities.

While it is difficult to exactly pinpoint specific deficiencies in the Soviet federal structure or to suggest optimal solutions for the relationship between the Centre

and the constituent units, the study of the Soviet problems from comparative perspective allows one to draw some general conclusions.

The transformation of the Soviet federal state structure into a "true federation" perhaps required just modest adjustments in the then existing constitutional framework. The need of the hour was to make suitable timely adjustments to ensure real devolution of power to the national republics rather than take a belated plunge into the unknown through dismantling of the system which, though bad, was nevertheless functioning. Gorbachev's plan for the creation of a new Union had a chance of success had he launched it when the Soviet economy had not slid into an abyss of decline due to his well meaning but impractical policies of perestroika.

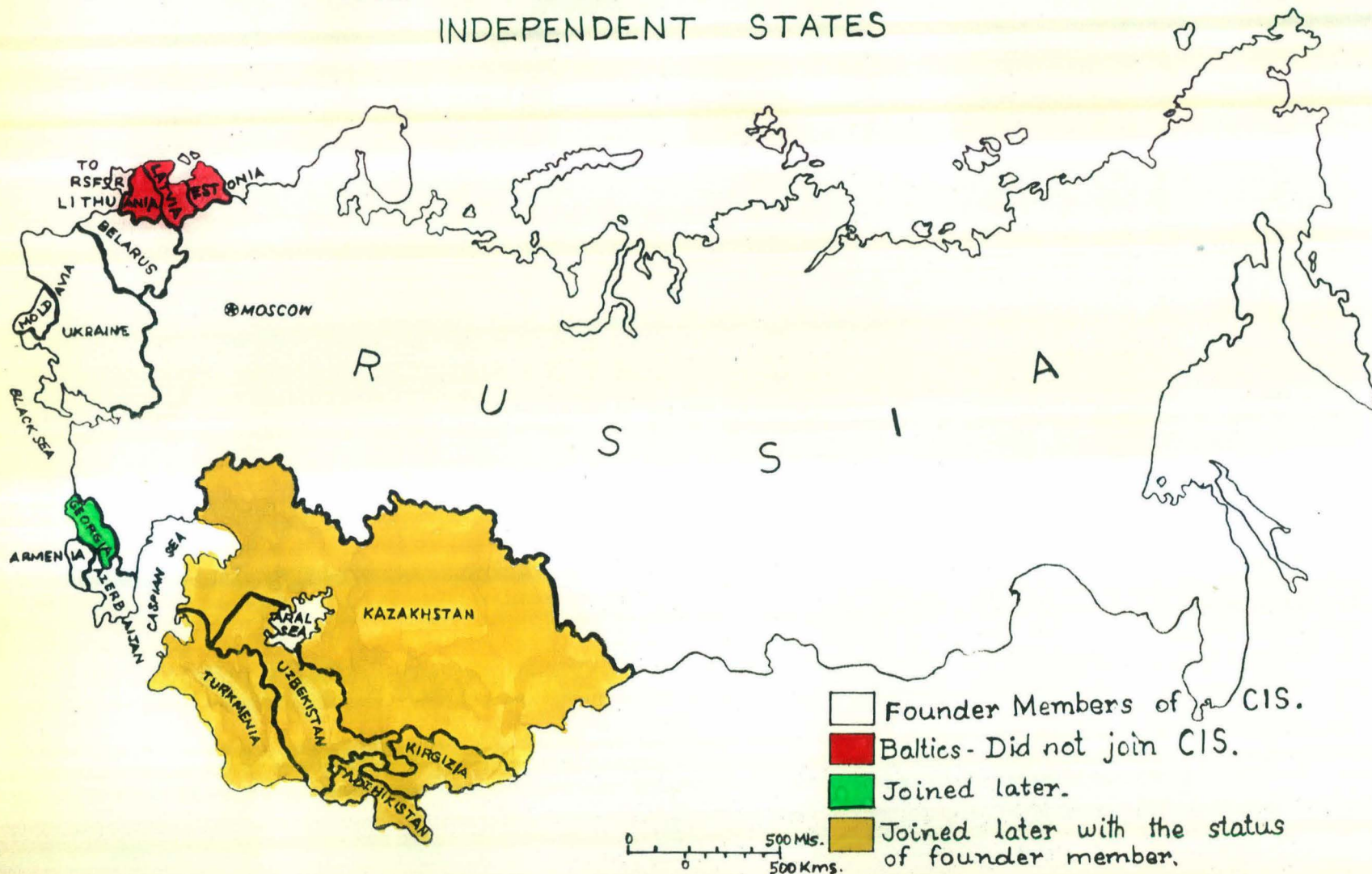
However the renewal of the Soviet federation implied that revolutionary institutional reforms and a radical departure from the existing political practices in the former USSR were needed. In the situation of acute power-rivalries and economic mess, the idea of reform of the Soviet federation simply aggravated the systemic crises it was intended to alleviate. The federal reform process could not be managed and stabilized at any level resulting in the fact that the very existence of the USSR was jeopardized.

POSTSCRIPT

▪ A SLIDE INTO COMMONWEALTH ▪

(A CHRONOLOGICAL ACCOUNT OF THE EVENTS
LEADING TO THE CREATION OF COMMONWEALTH)

THE COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES



Though , the period of the study of this work ends at 1990, but certain developments of far reaching impact took place in the USSR , the mention of which is very important. Hence, this Postscript is an attempt to briefly describe and analyse the events that took place after March 1991.

On March 17, 1991 the first ever all-Union referendum took place in the USSR. The referendum was on one simple question : "Do you consider it necessary to preserve the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics as a renewed federation of equal sovereign republics in which human rights and freedoms of all nationalities will be fully guaranteed ? The voters were to answer the query by a "Yes" or a "No". But inspite of the pessimistic predictions, more than 80 per cent of the 180 million (140,000,000) electorate in the USSR cast their votes, the voter turn out being 90 to 95 per cent in the Central Asian Republics. About 78 per cent (112,000,000) of those who voted throughout the country, recorded their reply in the affirmative although in a few large cities like Moscow and Leningrad just over half of those who voted came out with a resounding "Yes". Six republics (Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Baltic Republics) refused to participate in the referendum. Russia and others added further questions to the referendum.

The results of the referendum and the developments that subsequently took place proved that Gorbachev had lost the

battle to retain the Union on account of a variety of factors. His 'painstaking' "Novo-Ogarevo" process of extensive consultations with the republican leaders had helped him to hammer out a draft Union Treaty,¹ the process of signing of which was fixed for August 20, 1991. It was also fixed in the background of the process of transformation of social-political fabric and economic order of the state and thus deteriorating conditions. But the "adventurist" coup (19-21 August) of the 'conservative' right-wing forces put an end to that endeavour.

Thereafter it was left to Yeltsin- the Russian President, to torpedo the moves for a soft union undertaken by Gorbachev. The leaders of the other republics too eventually endorsed Yeltsin's idea of a Commonwealth of independent states rather than Gorbachev's plan for retaining the union in some form or other.

However, Gorbachev accepted the ground reality with a sense of objectivity. Hence, on learning of the growing support for the Commonwealth he had no hesitation in adopting a contradictory position. While holding the view that an "amorphous Commonwealth would not bring about the kind of cooperation needed" and describing the idea of the Commonwealth as a "mistaken concept", he did not fumble in recognising the actual state of affairs. In an interview -

1. For reference, please see Chapter-IV.

to ' The Times ' (December 23, 1991), he said that, "the ideas of the Union Treaty and Commonwealth agreement are coming together. Many parts of the Union Treaty will be used : the big difference is that this will be Commonwealth of the states and not the single state".

It was clear that while spelling out the essence of his differences with the Commonwealth idea, Gorbachev did not place himself on a collision course with the republican leaders on the subject. He had all along insisted that there had to be an orderly transition to the new set up.

But Yeltsin had other calculations. Not only did he oppose Gorbachev's plans and make arrangements to see that other republican leaders also took a similar stand, he issued decrees right and left to divest the Soviet President of all his powers. After announcing on December 17 that he and Gorbachev had agreed to abolish the central structure and thereby dismantle the USSR by the year-end, he issued a decree the following day disbanding the Foreign and Interior ministries of the Soviet Union, and taking over the Kremlin so as to establish the Russian Republic's authority over the properties of the Soviet state.

Yeltsin's these acts not only lacked grace, they reflected authoritarian trend which strongly resembled the proclivities of those Soviet leaders who had in past tried to bring about "socialism by decree sans democracy", having little time or interest to think of such bourgeois niceties

as a law governed state.

So, the USSR dissolved following a decision by leaders of eleven of the twelve constituent Union Republics of the multi-national state. Meeting at Alma Ata, the capital of the Central Asian Republic of the Kazakhstan, on December 21, 1991, these leaders, also became the founder-members of a new entry - a "Commonwealth of Independent States", emerging out of the debris of the Soviet Union.

Now CIS is passing through the difficult stage of transition and is facing turbulence also. Three CIS meetings have already taken place, the last one at Minsk, though it has not been easy task, one hopes that a common decision-making approach will emerge.

APPENDIX - TABLES

TABLE-1 ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF THE POPULATION

SL.N	Republics	Number '000		As % of Total Population	
		1959	1979	1959	1979
	Total population	2,00,827	2,62,085	100	100
1	Russians	114,114 (1)	1,37,397	54.6	52.5
2	Ukrainians	37,253 (2)	42,347	17.8	16.2
3	Uzoeks	6,015 (4)	12,456	2.9	4.8
4	Belorussians	7,913 (3)	9,463	3.8	3.6
5	Kazakhs	3,622 (6)	6,556	1.7	2.5
6	Tatars	4,968 (5)	6,317	2.4	2.4
7	Azerbaijanis	2,940 (7)	5,447	1.4	2.1
8	Armenians	2,787 (8)	4,151	1.3	1.6
9	Georgians	2,692 (9)	3,571	1.3	1.4
10	Moldavians	2,214 (12)	2,968	1.1	1.1
11	Tadzhiks	1,397 (16)	2,898	0.7	1.1
12	Lithuanians	2,326 (10)	2,851	1.1	1.1
13	Turkmenistan	1,002 (19)	2,028	0.5	0.8
14	Germans	1,620 (13)	1,936	0.7	0.7
15	Kirgiz	969 (22)	1,906	0.5	0.7
16	Jews	2,268 (11)	1,811	1.1	0.7
17	Chuvash	1,470 (14)	1,751	0.7	0.7
18	Latvians	1,400 (15)	1,439	0.7	0.5
19	Bashkirs	989 (20)	1,371	0.5	0.5
20	Mordvinians	1,285 (18)	1,192	0.6	0.5
21	Foles	1,380 (17)	1,151	0.7	0.4
22	Estonians	989 (21)	1,020	0.5	0.4

Notes :- Figures in the brackets refer to the ranking order in 1959. Figures for the 1979 refers the permanently resident population as distinct from the population resident on the day of the census, 17 January 1979. The table excludes the 1.66 million ethnically heterogeneous Dagestains].

Source :-

Norodnoe Khozyaistvo SSSR v 1959 godu (Moscow, 1960); ip.14;
SSSR v tsifrakh v 1986 godu (Moscow, 1987); p.32

Chislennost' i Sostav naseleniya SSSR (Moscow, 1985), p.71.

TABLE - 2 ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF THE SOVIET REPUBLICS (1990)

S.NO:	REPUBLIC	NATIONALITY	PERCENT	S.NO:	REPUBLIC	NATIONALITY	PERCENT
1	ARMENIA	Armenian	89.7	9	KIRGHIZIA	Kirghiz	40.7
		Azerbaijani	5.5			Russian	22
		Russian	2.3			Uzbek	10.3
		Kurd	1.7			Ukrainian	2.6
2	AZERBAIJAN	Azerbaijani	78.1	9	LATVIA	Tartar	1.7
		Russian	7.9			Latvian	53.7
		Armenian	7.9			Russian	32.8
3	BYELORUSSIA (BELARUS)	Byelorussian	79.4	10	LITHUANIA	Ukrainian	2.7
		Russian	11.9			Polish	2.5
		Polish	4.2			Lithuanian	90.1
		Ukrainian	2.4			Russian	8.6
		Jewish	1.4			Polish	7.7
4	ESTONIA	Estonian	64.7	11	MOLDAVIA	Byelorussian	1.5
		Russian	27.9			Moldavian	63.9
		Ukrainian	2.5			Ukrainian	14.2
		Byelorussian	1.6			Russian	12.8
		Finnish	1.2			Gaganzi	3.5
5	GEORGIA	Georgian	68.8	12	UKRAIN	Jewish	2
		Armenian	9			Bulgarian	2
		Russian	7.4			Ukrainian	73.6
		Azerbaijani	5.1			Russian	21.1
		Ossetian	3.3			Jewish	1.3
		Abkhazian	1.7			Byelorussian	0.8
					Moldavian	0.6	
					Polish	0.5	

S.NO:	REPUBLIC	NATIONALITY	PERCENT	S.NO:	REPUBLIC	NATIONALITY	PERCENT
6	KAZAKHSTAN	Russian	40.8	13	UZBEKISTAN	Uzbek	68.7
		Kazakh	36			Russian	10.8
		Ukrainian	5.1			Tatar	4.2
		Tatar	2.1			Tajik	3.9
7	TAJIKISTAN	Tajik	58.8	14	RUSSIA *	Karakalpak	1.7
		Uzbek	22.9			Russian	82.6
		Russian	10.4			Tatar	3.6
		Tatar	2.1			Ukrainian	2.7
				15	TURKMENISTAN	Turkmen	68.4
						Russian	12.6
						Uzbek	8.5
						Kazakh	2.9

* Plus more than 100 other

SOURCE :- Michael Mandelbaum, (ed.), The Rise of the Nations in the Soviet Union, (New York ; Council on Foreign Relations, 1991), p.103.

(Figures do not add up to 100 percent because of rounding and because some small ethnic population are not included)

Table-3 COMPARATIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE UNION REPUBLICS

	Per Capita	Per Capita	Growth of Industrial		Persons having higher or	Secondary education
	nominal income	fixed income	Production[1970=100]		(1984)	
	[[USSR=100]	[[USSR=100]	1980	1986	per 1000[aged 10 or over]	Per 1000 employed Population
USSR	100.00	100	178	224	688	868
RSFSR	100.90	115	174	216	691	853
Ukraine	95.90	90	172	212	653	839
Belorussia	97.90	80	232	323	620	811
Moldavia	89.90	69	205	276		
<u>Transcaucasia</u>						
Azerbaijan	63.60	64	220	300	723	886
Georgia	93.60	75	194	264	743	902
Armenia	86.70	73	212	298	749	915
<u>Central Asia</u>						
Uzbekistan	71.60	54	192	256	684	907
Kazakhstan	88.40	102	168	211	678	869
Tadzhikistan	59.50	51	180	224	632	843
Kirgizstan	69.70	60	192	255	665	869
Turkmenistan	75.10	73	173	208	669	889
<u>Baltics</u>						
Lithuania	115.10	101	187	246	526	806
Latvia	113.70	117	164	201	696	855
Estonia	126.90	137	174	207	630	857

SOURCE : First two columns from Paul R. Gregory and R.C. Stuart, Soviet Economic Structure and Performance, (3rd edn.); [Harper & Row, New York, 1986], p.7; SSSR v tsifrakh 1986 godu (Moscow, 1987), p.94; Last two columns from, M. Ryan and R. Prentice, Social Trends in the USSR From 1950, [Macmillan, London, 1987], p.74.

Table-4 MAJOR DEMONSTRATIONS

(SEPTEMBER 1, 1985 - AUGUST 31, 1989)

Ethnic Groups.	Estimated Number of Demonstrations	
	over '1,000,000 Participants	over '10,000 partic- -ipants
Armenians	25	30
Azeris	9	19
Lithuanians	4	9
Latvians	3	7
Georgians	2	4
Estonians	2	4
Moldavians	1	6
Uzbeks	1	1
'Exclave' Russians	0	3
Belorussians	0	1
Ukrainians	0	0
Kazakhs	0	0
Kirgizes	0	0
Tadjiks	0	0
Turkmen	0	0

- SOURCES :
- i) New York Times
 - ii) Philip G. Roeder, "Soviet Federalism and Ethnic Mobilization", World Politics, 43(2), January, 1991. p.200

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