Pan-Eurasian Nationalism

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If before the main factor consolidating the Russian Empire into a single whole was the belonging of the entire territory of this state to a single overlord, the Russian people headed by their Russian Tsar, then now this factor has been destroyed. The question arises: what other factor can now solder together all of the parts of this territory into a single, integral state?

The revolution put forth the realization of a famous social ideal as such a unifying factor. The USSR is not simply a group of separate republics, but a group of socialist republics striving to realize one and the same ideal of a social system. It is precisely this common ideal that unites all of the republics together.

The commonality of this social ideal, and therefore its trajectory along which strives the state will of all the individual parts of the contemporary USSR is, of course, a powerful unifying factor. Even if the character of this ideal will change with time, the same principle of binding participation in the common ideal of social justice and the common will to reach this ideal will continue to lie at the heart of the statehood of all the peoples and regions currently unified in the USSR. But the question is whether this one factor for unifying different peoples into one state is sufficient. In fact, that the Uzbek Republic and Belarusian Republic are both guided in their domestic politics by the desire to achieve one and the same social ideal by no means means that both these republics will necessarily unite under the canopy of one state. What’s more, it does not follow that these two republics will not quarrel or fight amongst themselves. It is clear that a single common social ideal is insufficient, and that nationalist-separatist aspirations in individual parts of the USSR must be opposed with something else.

In the contemporary USSR, the antidote against nationalism and separatism is class hatred and the consciousness of the proletariat’s solidarity in the face of constantly impending danger. In each of the peoples comprising the USSR, only proletarians are recognized as full citizens and the Soviet Union itself is essentially composed not so much of peoples as the proletarians of these peoples. By seizing power and exercising its dictatorship, the proletariat of the USSR’s different peoples feels itself simultaneously threatened by its internal enemies (insofar as socialism has not been established, the existence of capitalists and even a bourgeoisie within the USSR in the ‘transition’ period must be admitted) as well as foreign enemies (in the face of the rest of the world left at the mercy of the rule of international capitalism and imperialism). In order to successfully defend the power it has seized against the machinations of its enemies, the proletarians of all the peoples of the USSR must unite in a single state.

Thanks to this view of the meaning of the USSR’s existence, the Soviet government has turned out capable of fighting against separatism. In this view, separatists are striving to destroy the state unity of the USSR, but this unity is needed by the proletariat in order to defend its power and, as follows, separatists are the enemies of the proletariat. The fight against nationalism thus turns out possible and necessary for the same reason, as such can easily be interpreted to be covert separatism. In addition, according to Marxist doctrine, the proletariat is void of nationalist instincts, as such are attributes of the bourgeoisie and the fruit of the bourgeois system. The struggle against nationalism is realized by the very fact of shifting the center of the people’s attention from the sphere of national emotions to the sphere of social emotions. The consciousness of national unity, being the precondition of any form of nationalism, is undermined by the aggravation of class hatred, and the majority of national traditions are tarnished by their relationship to the bourgeois order, aristocratic culture, or “religious prejudices.” Moreover, the ambitions of each people are to a certain degree flattered within their own borders, as their languages are recognized, administrative and other positions are supposed to be filled with people of the given local environment, and the region itself is often named after the people inhabiting it.

Thus, it can be said that the factor linking all the parts of the contemporary USSR into a single integral state is the official recognition of a single overlord of the entire state territory. Only before, the Russian people, headed by its Tsar, was recognized as such an overlord, while now such is considered to be the proletariat of all the peoples of the USSR led by the Communist Party.

The disadvantages of the above-described contemporary resolution of the issue are obvious. Not to mention the fact that the division into proletariat and bourgeoisie is, in relation to many peoples of the USSR, either entirely impracticable or completely irrelevant and artificial. It is particularly worth emphasizing that the resolution of this question in itself bears an indication of its temporality. In fact, the state unity of the peoples and countries in which the proletariat has seized power is feasible only from the standpoint of the current stage of the proletariat’s struggle against its enemies. The proletariat itself as an oppressed class, according to Marxism, is a temporary phenomenon subject to be overcome. The same is said of the class struggle. Thus, state unity in the above-described solution does not rest on any fundamentally permanent basis, but on a fundamentally temporary, transitory foundation. This gives rise to an absurd situation and a whole number of entirely unhealthy phenomena. In order to justify its existence, the central government must then artificially inflate the danger threatening the proletariat, must itself create the objects of class hatred in the form of a new bourgeoisie against which the proletariat must be incited, etc. In a word, it comes to supporting the idea in the consciousness of the proletariat that its position as the unified overlord of the state is extremely fragile.

The purpose of this article is not to criticize the communist conception of the state as such. We are examining the idea of the dictatorship of the proletarian in only one aspect, namely, as the factor unifying all the peoples of the USSR into an integral state opposed to nationalist-separatist tendencies. It should be recognized that even though this aspect of the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat is still effective, it cannot become a lasting, enduring solution to the issue. The nationalism of the separate peoples of the USSR is evolving as these peoples increasingly come to grips with their new position! The development of education and literature in different national languages and the filling of administrative and other posts first and foremost by locals deepens the national differences between individual regions and creates among native intellectuals a jealous fear of competition with “alien elements” and a desire to more firmly strengthen their positions. At the same time, class partitions within each individual people of the USSR are fading just as class contradictions are gradually withering away. All of this creates the most favorable conditions for the development of nationalism with a separatist slant in each of the peoples of the USSR. The idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat turns out impotent against this. The proletariat, having come to power, turns out to wield sometimes even strong doses of nationalist instincts which, according to the doctrine of communism, should be absent among the real, contemporary proletariat. And such a proletariat ascending to power turns out to care far less for the interests of the global proletariat than the doctrine of communism suggests…

Thus, the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the consciousness of the proletariat’s solidarity, and the incitement of class hatred shall ultimately turn out to be ineffective means against the development of nationalist and separatist aspirations among the peoples of the USSR.

The current resolution of the state unification of parts of the former Russian Empire is a logical consequence of the Marxist teaching on the class nature of the state and Marxism’s typical neglect for the national substrate of statehood. It should be recognized that, for the supporters of this doctrine, there is no other way than replacing the idea of the rule of one people with the idea of the dictatorship of one class, i.e., substituting the class substrate for the national substrate of statehood. And this substitution itself implies everything that follows. In any case, communists are thus more right and consistent than those democrats who, rejecting the national substrate of Russian statehood, preach broad regional autonomy or a federation without class dictatorship, failing to understand that the existence of a unified state is impossible under such circumstances.

For the individual parts of the former Russian Empire to continue to exist as parts of a single state, the existence of a single substrate of statehood is necessary. This substrate can be national (ethnic) or class-based. The class substrate, as we’ve seen above, is capable of uniting individual parts of the former Russian Empire only temporarily. A durable and permanent union is therefore possible only in the presence of an ethnic (national) substrate. Such was the Russian people up until the revolution. But now, as indicated above, it is already impossible to return to the situation in which the Russian people was the sole owner of all the state territory. It is also clear that no other people living on this territory can fulfill the role of the sole proprietor of all of the state’s territory.

Consequently, the national substrate of the state which was before called the Russian Empire but now the USSR can only be the totality of peoples inhabiting the state, considered as a special, multinational nation and as such one wielding its own nationalism.

We call this nation Eurasian, its territory Eurasia, and its nationalism Eurasianism.

Applied to Eurasia, this means that the nationalism of each people of Eurasia (the modern USSR) must be combined with a pan-Eurasian nationalism, i.e., Eurasianism. Every citizen of the Eurasian state should be aware not only of the fact that he belongs to such a people (or such a variety of a people), but also that this people itself belongs to the Eurasian nation. The national pride of the citizen should find satisfaction in both the former and latter consciousness. Accordingly, a nationalism should be built out of every one of these peoples. A pan-Eurasian nationalism should present itself as an extension of the nationalism of each of the peoples of Eurasia, a kind of merging of all of these individual nationalisms together.

Between the peoples of Eurasia, some kind of fraternal relations have always existed and easily formed which suggest the existence of subconscious attractions and sympathies (the opposite cases, i.e., cases of subconscious repulsion and antipathy between two peoples in Eurasia are very rare). Of course, there is not enough of some of these subconscious feelings. What is necessary is making the brotherhood of the peoples of Eurasia a fact of consciousness and, moreover, a vital fact. What is necessary is for each people of Eurasia, by recognizing itself, to recognize itself above all as a member of this brotherhood and occupying a certain place in it. And what is needed is for the consciousness of belonging to the Eurasian brotherhood of peoples to become stronger and brighter for each of these peoples than the consciousness of belonging to any other group of peoples. After all, some individual features can include an individual people of Eurasia in another, not purely Eurasian group of peoples. For example, by virtue of language the Russians are included in the group of Slavic peoples, and the Tatars, Chuvash, Cheremis, and others can be included in the group of so-called “Turanian” peoples, just as the Tatars, Bashkirs, Sarts, and others are included in the group of Muslim peoples on religious grounds.

These ties must be less binding and vivid for all these peoples than those unifying these peoples in the Eurasian family. Neither Pan-Slavism for the Russians nor Pan-Turanism for the Eurasian Turanian peoples nor Pan-Islamism for Eurasian Muslims should be in the foreground, but Eurasianism. All these “pan-isms”, strengthening the centrifugal forces of these individual nations’ nationalisms, emphasize a one-way connection from one people with others only by virtue of one characteristic, and are therefore incapable of creating a real and lively multinational nation and character out of these peoples.

In the Eurasian brotherhood, peoples are connected with one another not by one or another unilateral number of characteristics, but by the community of their historical fates. Eurasia is a geographical, economic, and historical whole. The fates of the Eurasian peoples are intertwined, firmly tied into a massive knot that is impossible to untangle to the extent that one people can refuse this unity only by artificial violence against nature, which can only lead to suffering.

Nothing similar can be said of those groups of peoples that lie at the basis of the concepts of Pan-Slavism, Pan-Turanism, or Pan-Islamism. Not one of these groups’ peoples are united to such a degree by historical fate. None of these “pan-isms” are as pragmatically valuable as pan-Eurasian nationalism. This nationalism is not only pragmatically valuable, but even directly, vitally necessary. After all, we have already seen that only the awakening of the consciousness of the multinational Eurasian nation’s unity is capable of giving Russia-Eurasia that ethnic substrate of statehood without which it will sooner or later begin to disintegrate to the great misfortune and suffering of all its parts.

In order for a pan-Eurasian nationalism to successfully fulfill its role as a factor unifying the Eurasian state, it is therefore necessary to re-cultivate the consciousness of the peoples of Eurasia. Of course, it can be said that life itself is handling this re-cultivation. The very fact that all the Eurasian peoples (like no other people in the world) have for a few years already experienced and outgrown the communist regime – this fact alone creates a thousand new psychological and cultural-historical ties between these peoples and forces them to clearly and really feel the commonality of their historical destinies. But this, of course, is not enough. It is imperative that those individual people who have now clearly and vividly realized the unity of the multinational Eurasian nation preach this conviction in each of the Eurasian nations in which they work. Here awaits an uncharted land of work for philosophers, publicists, poets, writers, artists, musicians, and scholars of the most different specializations. It is necessary to reconsider a number of sciences from the standpoint of the unity of the multinational Eurasian nation and construct new scientific systems to replace the old, dilapidated ones. In particular, this necessitates constructing a new history of the peoples of Eurasia, including that of the Russian people…

In all of this work of re-cultivating the national self-consciousness from the standpoint of the symphonic (choral) unity of the multinational nation of Eurasia, it might be the Russian people that will have to strain its hand more than any other Eurasian people. Firstly, the Russian people need more than others to deal with the old attitudes and points of view that situate the Russian national identity outside of the real context of the Eurasian world and divorce the past of the Russian people from the common perspective of the history of Eurasia. Secondly, the Russian people, which until the revolution was the sole lord of all of the territory of Russia-Eurasia, and is now the first (in number and significance) among the Eurasian peoples, naturally needs to set an example for the others.

At the present moment, the Eurasianists’ work on re-educating this national self-consciousness is taking place in extremely difficult conditions. Such work, of course, cannot be openly carried out on the territory of the USSR. The emigration is predominated by people who are cognitively incapable of recognizing the objective shifts and results of the revolution. For such people, Russia continues to exist as a set of territorial units conquered by the Russian people and belonging to the Russian people alone by full and indivisible right. Therefore, these people cannot understand the issue of creating a pan-Eurasian nationalism and affirming the unity of the multinational Eurasian nation. For them, the Eurasianists are traitors because they replace the concept of “Russia” with that of “Eurasia.” They do not understand that it is not Eurasianism, but life itself that has produced this “replacement.” They do not understand that their Russian nationalism is in modern conditions simply Great Russian separatism, and that the purely Russian Russia which they want to “revive” is possible only given the separation of all the “outskirts” within the boundaries of ethnographical Great Russia. Other trends in the emigration attack Eurasianism from the opposite side, demanding that any kind of national identity be abandoned, and they suggest that Russia can be built only on the basis of European democracy without putting forth any unified national or unified class-based substrate for Russian statehood. Being representatives of the abstract Westernizing sentiments of the Russian intelligentsia’s old generations, these people do not want to understand that for a state to exist, what is needed first and foremost is this state’s citizens to be conscious of organically belonging to this whole, to this organic unity, be it either ethnic or class-based. In modern conditions, only two solutions are possible: either the dictatorship of the proletariat, or consciousness of the unity and originality of the multinational Eurasian nation and pan-Eurasian nationalism.

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