

**The Soviet Union
and the
U.N. Decolonization Program**

by
Dr. Walter Dushnyck

UKRAINIAN CONGRESS COMMITTEE OF AMERICA
NEW YORK, N.Y.

1980

Reprinted for
THE WORLD CONGRESS OF FREE UKRAINIANS
from
THE UKRAINIAN QUARTERLY, Vol. XXXVI No. 2, Summer, 1980
New York, N.Y.

THE SOVIET UNION AND THE U.N. DECOLONIZATION PROGRAM

Editorial

"...The strongest political force is the spread of decolonialism, not only in the traditional overseas empires like Britain's, France's and Portugal's but also in land-bound agglomerations of which the outstanding example is the Soviet Union and its bloc of East European neighbors...

"...The vague, romantic spirit of decolonialism could become terrifyingly explosive in the Soviet Union...

"...In the east, Moscow's great nightmare is that China, Japan and the United States or a combination among them might join in an anti-Soviet coalition. But a great chunk of Moscow's western and Slavic domain also privately worries the Kremlin. That is Ukraine.

"...The Russians calculate that because of the plain facts of power, they will never have to be concerned about unrestrained nationalism in little Baltic lands — Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania. *But Ukraine is something else — with its huge population, rich agricultural lands, iron, industry. Moscow has tried to gain favor among the Ukrainians but without overwhelming success...*" (Italics ours-Ed.).¹

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan is not only the largest manifestation of Moscow's expansionist aggression, but it also constitutes a challenge to the Muslim world at large. By invading and enslaving Afghanistan — the puppet regime of Babrak Karmal notwithstanding — Moscow has declared war against such Muslim countries as Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Kashmir, Nepal, Tibet, Sikkim, Bhutan, Assam, and Bangladesh, and eventually against India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Sri Lanka.²

The *Times of India* cried out that the Soviet action in Afghanistan "conforms to the Czarist-Stalinist tradition," adding that Stalin regarded the Red Army as "the principal instrument of Communist revolution and Soviet influence." The editorial inferred from "past experience" and from Afghanistan's "considerable strategic importance" that "the Kremlin may reduce the number if it succeeds in smashing the insurgents as it is trying to do. But it will not withdraw for a long, long time."

¹ "Decolonialism Amok?" by C.L. Sulzberger, *The New York Times*, January 22,

² "Anti-Islam Drive Hots Up," *The Guardian of Liberty* (Nemzetor), January-February, 1980, Munich, West Germany.

Also, an editorial in *The Hindu*, a leading south Indian newspaper, said that the "Soviet onslaught on Afghanistan was reprehensible on two counts: first, for its blatant violation of national sovereignty, supposedly guaranteed under international law and by the U.N. Charter; secondly, as a manifestation of super power bullying that threatens peace (in that it triggers new tensions and offers fresh precedents for violating the peace) as well as regional security..."

From Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka came unanimous condemnation of the Soviet Union and a swelling cry: "Bloody Russians, get out of Afghanistan!"

Similar cries of condemnation of and protest against the "bloody Russians" came from almost all the African nations — Zambia, Kenya, Liberia, Sudan, Zaire, Tunisia, Mauritania, Senegal, The Ivory Coast, Morocco, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Somalia, Cameroon, Gambia and Nigeria — all, but for a few African Soviet puppets in the North of Africa

Almost all the Latin American and Central American states — with the exception of Castro's Cuba — condemned Moscow for its crude, barbaric seizure of Afghanistan, as did all the European nations save for the Soviet satellites in Eastern Europe. The condemnation of the USSR was nigh universal.

RUSSIAN COLONIALISM: THE CZARIST AND SOVIET EMPIRES

Recently, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Russian Nobel Prize winner for literature, has taken to extolling "Holy Mother Russia," claiming that the calamities in the USSR are caused not by "good moral" Russians, but by "Soviets" and "Communists." These rubrics in his eyes embrace all the nationalities, including, presumably, some bad Russians,

But what are the facts of history?

The entire history of Russia from the expulsion of the Tartars circa 1480 to the outbreak of world war in 1914 is one of almost continuous expansion — by military conquest, by peaceful annexation, by pioneering, penetration and settlement.

In 1552, Muscovy (Russia, then a principedom) conquered the Moslem khanate of Kazan on the middle Volga, which was followed in 1556 by the Tartar khanate of Astrakhan on the lower Volga. These conquests meant not only the incorporation of non-Muscovite tartar territories into the Muscovite state; they also provided the Muscovites with a springboard for further expansion to the east and to the north.³

³ *Russian Colonialism: The Tsarist and Soviet Empires*. By Włodzimierz Baczkowski in *The Idea of Colonialism*, Robert Strausz-Hupe & Harry W. Hazard, eds.; Frederick A. Praeger, New York, 1958, p. 71 & ff.

Throughout the XVIIth century the Muscovite state extended and consolidated its holdings in Siberia by subjugating ill-armed tribes building fortresses and levying taxes. The Muscovite "settlers" were ruthless and corrupt in extortionate methods, harsh enough to cause many natives to flee to China.

In pursuing their colonial-imperial objectives, the Moscow dukes proved to be "robbers of the most unblushing type," according to the historian Kluchevskii.⁴

Still another prominent Russian historian, Miliukov, is even more condemnatory in describing the nature of the builders of the Russian Czarist empire:

If one had asked those Moscow dukes what they would do if they were freed (from the Mongols), they would surely have been unable to evolve any program other than the old traditional one, which had become instinctive: to crave still more, to hoard, deceive, and violate with the sole aim of securing as much power as possible and accumulating the largest amount of money...⁵

In the middle of the XVIIth century insatiable Muscovite expansion reached both the Arctic Ocean at Kolyma and the Chinese frontier on the Amur River, and in 1697 it reached Kamchatka.

Having reached the Pacific and Arctic Ocean, the Muscovite empire-builders turned to the south, to Ukraine and Byelorussia. Emerging from a series of wars with Poland, Ukraine under *Hetman* Bohdan Khmelnytsky concluded a protective agreement in Pereyaslav in March of 1654 with Muscovite Czar Alexis I. By its terms Ukraine still retained its autonomy, the right to conduct its own foreign affairs, maintain its own army and retain the office of an elective head of state known as the *hetman*. However, the vagueness of the text of the treaty afforded Russia a pretext to meddle in Ukrainian internal affairs, leading eventually to the abolition of the office of *hetman* and to the partition of Ukraine in 1667, through the treaty of Andrusovo, between Poland and Russia.⁶

Russian historians, Czarist and Soviet, who argue that Ukraine never really was a Russian colony, but always constituted an integral part of the Russian nation, ignore the revealing fact that, immediately after the incorporation of eastern Ukraine, the Czarist government commenced the systematic eradication of all manifestations of Ukrainian cultural, religious, linguistic and economic life.

⁴ *A History of Russia*, by Vasilii O. Kluchevskii, 5 vols., translated by C.J. Hogarth (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1911-1931), Vol. 1, p. 279.

⁵ *Ocherki po istorii Russkoi kultury* (Outline of Russian Cultural History). By Pavel N. Miliukov, jubilee edition, Paris, 1930-1937, 3 vols., Vol.3, p. 40.

⁶ *Entsyklopedia Ukrainoznavstva* (Ukrainian Encyclopedia), Munich-New York, Shevchenko Scientific Society, 1949, pp. 448, 459-460.

Under the reign of Peter the Great (1689-1725), the Russian empire was considerably strengthened and solidified.

Czar Peter I accelerated Russian exploitation of eastern Ukraine and broke the power of Sweden, Ukraine's ally under Hetman Ivan Mazepa, and occupied Karelia, Ingria, Estonia and northern Latvia (Livonia). During the second partition of Poland (1793) Moscow obtained all of Byelorussia, additional provinces of Ukraine (podolia and Volhynia), Lithuania and southern Latvia (Courland) plus Finland in 1809, which enjoyed a form of autonomy.

In 1783 the Crimea was annexed to the Russian empire by Empress Catherine the Great. Here the policies of Russification were applied with the same vigor as against the Moslems of Azerbaijan and Turkestan.⁷

A part of Poland was annexed at the end of the XVIIIth century, and the Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia) were conquered at the beginning of the XIXth. Parts of Turkestan (the Khanates of Khiva, Bukhara and Khokand were absorbed by the Russian imperial domain by 1878.

Frustrated in its efforts to penetrate the Balkans, Czarist Russia tried to establish control over Iran and Afghanistan, only to meet fierce opposition on the part of Great Britain. In 1907, an Anglo-Russian treaty provided for the partition of Iran, placing five northern Iranian provinces under Russian sovereignty. Only the outbreak of the Russian revolution prevented the takeover of Iran by Czarist Russia.

The Boxer Rebellion in China gave Czarist Russia an opportunity to seize Manchuria in 1901. Russia finally experienced a crushing defeat, by Japan, at Tsushima in 1905, putting a stop to Russian expansionism in Asia.⁸

Among the few unsuccessful efforts of Russian colonial attempts took place in Alaska, which ended with the sale of that territory to the United States in 1867.

In assessing Czarist Russian colonial policy it is clear that the same methods were applied both to colonial dependencies within the imperial frontiers and to other areas more closely integrated politically and ethnically. Forced "conversion" was applied to all "pagan" and Moslem peoples, though not with equal vigor and success, and occasionally also to Jews and non-Orthodox Christians. Where ethnic Russification succeeded, the colonial relationship dwindled; cultural Russification had no complete success in Czarist times, and resistance to it probably

⁷ Baczkowski, *op. cit.* pp. 73-81.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.80.

kept the national identity alive in the spirits of many oppressed non-Russian peoples, to burst into view the instant the fierce clutch of Czarist Russia was loosened by the revolution.⁹

THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE CZARIST EMPIRE

The strains of war and the effects of centuries of despotic misrule led to the complete collapse of the Russian Czarist empire in March, 1917, and to a vicious and confused struggle between the Bolsheviks and the corrupt and abusive Russian nobility that defended Czarism with its ugly features.

But what was historically very significant was the rise of the subjugated nations to proclaim their own independent states. Finland declared its independence on December 6, 1917, followed by Ukraine (January 22, 1918, although the Ukrainian National Republic was proclaimed on November 20, 1917); Lithuania (February 16, 1918); Poland (November 11, 1918); Estonia (February 24, 1918), and Latvia (November 11, 1918).

The Crimean Tartars organized their own congress, which on December 26, 1917, approved a constitution establishing a democratic Crimean republic.¹⁰ The Transcaucasus, threatened by anarchy from the north, on April 28, 1918, proclaimed a free democratic federated Transcaucasian Republic, to include Georgians, Armenians and Azerbaijanis. Because of foreign influences, however, the federation fell apart almost immediately, giving way to the proclamation of Georgia's independence on May 26, 1918, and on May 28, 1918, of those of Armenia and Azerbaijan.¹¹

The Volga Tartars convened on May 1, 1917, the First All-Russian Moslem Congress, which approved the establishment of an autonomous Idel-Ural state, which decision was ratified by a Tartar National Assembly, which met at Ufa on November 20, 1917.¹²

Likewise, in a series of actions Turkestan demonstrated its desire for national independence. On December 9, 1917, a Moslem congress was held at Kholand, at which the autonomy of southern Turkestan was proclaimed. In the same month the "Olash-Orda" Moslem party convened a congress of the Kazakhs at Orenburg, which proclaimed an

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 85

¹⁰ Krym (The Crimea), by Dzafar Seidamet (Warsaw, The Oriental Institute, 1930), pp. 97-98.

¹¹ *The Formation of the Soviet Union*, by Richard Pipes. (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1954), pp. 93-106, 193-214; *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, by Firuz Kazemzadeh (New York, Philosophical Library, 1951), pp. 105 ff., 121, 123-124.

¹² Pipes, *op. cit.*, pp. 77-78; also Ayas Iskhaky, *Idel-Ural* (Paris, 1933), pp. 39-43

autonomy on December 26, 1917. Both groups created executive organs in the form of several ministries and after the Bolshevik coup began to function as independent states.¹³

A separatist movement flared up also among the Cossacks of the Kuban and Terek Rivers in the northern Caucasus, the basins of the Don and Donets Rivers, and the steppes of the lower Volga. Between 1917 and 1919 several efforts of the Cossacks to establish their own separate states were crushed by Moscow, and it was only on January 5, 1920, that the Cossack congress at Ekaterinograd proclaimed the unification of all Cossack lands in an "independent federal Cossack republic."¹⁴

Even the Slavic settlers in the Far East were prompt in rejecting the imperial control from Petrograd or Moscow: on April 5, 1920, they proclaimed the Democratic Republic of the Far East (Siberia). This state was short-lived, however; the consolidated Soviet government crushed it in a matter of days.¹⁵

NEW RUSSIAN EMPIRE IN COMMUNIST GARB

It is important to recall that in almost all these cases the new Soviet government, still being consolidated, was quick to recognize the independence of the non-Russian nations. With the Wilsonian principles of national self-determination being applied by the states of the *Entente* to the nationalities of the Austro-Hungarian empire (with the exception of the Ukrainians), Lenin saw propaganda for self-determination as a tactical weapon to be used only with great caution. He contended that the recognition of the right to self-determination should not be interpreted as an encouragement of the peoples towards separation.

So, soon as the Soviet power consolidated with a powerful secret police and huge army, Moscow began fierce attempts to reconquer the separated parts of the former Russian empire. It succeeded in good part. Ukraine, Byelorussia, Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Turkestan were reconquered in 1920, while Finland, the three Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, and Poland managed to survive.

But, significantly, while destroying the independent governments of these reconquered nations, Moscow did not dare to destroy their state structures. It allowed them to enter the Union of Soviet Socialist

¹³ *The National Government of Khokand and the Olash-Orda*, by Baymirza Hayit (in German), Munich, 1950, pp. 59, 65-66, 93-94.

¹⁴ *Cossacks' Struggle for Freedom and Independence*, by Ignat A. Bily, (London, 1954), pp. 23, 25.

¹⁵ *The Captive Nations: Nationalism of the Non-Russian Nations in the Soviet Union*. By Roman Smal-Stocki, Bookman Associates, New York, 1960, p. 37.

Republics in 1922 and to maintain the *forms* of independent and sovereign governments. Ukraine and Byelorussia even became charter members of the United Nations in 1945.

The USSR is now one of the superpowers, yet its strength and power is dubious because it is relative: the USSR is strong in Europe and Asia because all other states are weak, intimidated and fearful of opposing Moscow's pressures and intrigues. The weakness of the USSR lies in its system of terror and persecution and in that over half of the Soviet population is non-Russian and anti-Russian because of Moscow's unrelenting endeavor to make janissaries of all the non-Russian peoples.

SOLZHENITSYN: NEWLY BORN APOLOGIST OF SOVIET RUSSIAN IMPERIALISM AND COLONIALISM

We have purposely made this somewhat extensive digression into history to demonstrate that Alexandr Solzhenitsyn, the revered author of *The Gulag Archipelago*, has for reasons of his own, shut out the odious record of both Czarist and Soviet Russia as it is known to the world.

In a series of books he revealed the inner workings of the Soviet system, and became widely acknowledged as a fearless fighter against Communism and all other tyrannies.

Of late, however, he seems to have switched from benign advocacy of a human philosophy to that of Russian nationalism, glorifying and extolling all those features, both ugly and good, which characterized Czarist Russia, "the prison of nations," as it was known at the time.

In the February 18, 1980 issues of *Time Magazine*, he charged that the West gave scant support to the "Russian national resistance" at the time of the birth of Bolshevism in Russia. As a historian Solzhenitsyn is wrong; his views run counter to the major facts and developments of the time. He solemnly states that Communism (Bolshevism) was imposed on the Russian people. But by whom? Was it not the great Russian thinker, Nikolai Berdyaev, who said that Bolshevism was a pure "Russian phenomenon?" Did not the Western allies in 1918-1919 heavily support the Russian generals and admirals (Denikin, Wrangel, Kolchak, and others), although that "Russian national resistance" was epitomized by the corrupt and decadent Russian nobility?

But perhaps the gravest signs of Solzhenitsyn's metamorphosis show up in his lengthy and highly emotional article in the Spring 1980 issue of *Foreign Affairs*.¹⁶

¹⁶ "Misconceptions about Russia Are a Threat to America," by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *Foreign Affairs*, Spring 1980, New York, N.Y.

■ Lumps together American scholars, historians, diplomats, journalists and Slavists and “recent emigres from the USSR” and attacks them for using the terms “Russia” and “Russian,” instead of the all-subsuming “Soviet”;

■ Assails such historians of repute as Prof. Richard Pipes and Prof. Robert C. Tucker, and such veteran U.S. diplomats as Averell Harriman and George Kennan for “misrepresentation” (!) of Russian or “Soviet” history;

■ Decries “the-notorious resolution” on ‘captive nations’ (Public Law 86-90), passed by the U.S. Congress on July 17, 1959, adding scathingly that the resolution included a nonexistent “Idel-Ural” and “Cossackia” (we made reference above to the two states established during the revolution, which could have become viable state entities if not for their destruction by Soviet troops);

■ Contends that there is no Russian “ruling nationality” in the USSR, because a combination of Russians, Ukrainians and Byelorussians actually are in charge of the USSR (if true, this would alarm the Kremlin);

■ Defends the ubiquity and enforced use of the Russian language throughout the USSR as an insignificant “mechanical device”;

■ Boast about “an 1100-year-long history” of Russia, and even claims that it was the Russians who came up with the first concept of justice in the “first Russian code, called *Russkaya Pravda*”;

(In actually, this famous code of laws, known as *Ruska Pravda*, was the product of *Kievan Rus*, the first state of the Ukrainian people in the IXth-XI centuries, a time when Russia as such did not exist; its predecessor, the Muscovite principality, began to bud only in the XIIth century. Solzhenitsyn here surpasses Soviet “historians,” who do not go so far as to appropriate *Ruska Pravda* as the creation of the Russian people. *The Ukrainian Soviet Encyclopedia*, Vol. 12, 1963, p. 448, states that *Ruska Pravda* served as a common basis for codification of “Russian, Ukrainian, Byelorussia and Lithuanian” jurisprudence.)

Solzhenitsyn not only tries to absolve the Russian of Communist crimes, but also claims that the Russians abhor a concept of empire.

The question arises whether Russian Communists are primarily Russian nationalists, or primarily internationalist Communist who happen to be Russians. The answer is that they are Russians, first, last, and always. Lenin knew that, before his death lashing out at his entourage: “The Great Russian chauvinist dwells in many of us and we must fight him...”¹⁷

¹⁷ Baczkowski, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

ACHESON ON SOVIET RUSSIAN IMPERIALISM

One of the best characterizations of Soviet Russian imperialism was expressed by the late U.S. Secretary of State, Dean Acheson.

Testifying before the House Foreign Relations Committee on June 28, 1951, some eight years before the enactment of the "Captive Nations Week Resolution," he stated:

...Historically, the Russian state has three drives — to the west into Europe, to the south into the Middle East, and to the east into Asia. Historically, also, the Russian state has displayed considerable caution in carrying out these drives... The Politburo has acted in the same way. It has carried on and built on the imperial tradition. What it has added consists mainly of new weapons and new tactics... The ruling power in Moscow has long been an imperial power and now rules a greatly extended empire. This is a challenge our foreign policy is required to meet. It is clear that this process of encroachment and consolidation by which Russia has grown in the last five hundred years from the Duchy of Muscovy to a vast empire has got to be stopped...¹⁸

Prominent Russian historian Vasil Kluchevsky expressed the opinion that the Russian state has never had any fixed boundaries: "At all times in its history the boundaries were extended by the successes of Russian arms and the ever progressing colonizing movement of the Great Russians..."¹⁹

FOR THE DECOLONIZATION OF THE USSR

The other side of the Soviet imperialistic coin shows the Soviet Union as a staunch advocate of the decolonization program of the United Nations. At the same time it helps promote the dismemberment of the Western European colonial empires, it fiercely resists any attempt to get it to admit, Solzhenitsyn notwithstanding, that the USSR is the last remaining colonial empire.

C.L. Sulzberg, noted foreign analyst of *The New York Times*, caught the very gist of the USSR: "a massive strange country; a superpower with its head in outer space, with its feet in the mud of poverty, with mighty muscles and fear in its heart..."

In describing Russian chauvinist persecution and genocide in Ukraine and other nation-victims, the Red Chinese do not mince words. They proclaim loudly and openly:

¹⁸ *The Captive Nations: Continuing Exploitable Weakness of the Soviet Russian Empire*. Ukrainian Congress Committee of America, New York, N.Y., 1979, pp. 2-3.

¹⁹ "Soviet Militarism," by R. Wraga, *The Eastern Quarterly*, Vol. II, No. 1, June, 1949, New York, N.Y.

The fanatic advocacy of Russian chauvinism by the Soviet renegade clique serves a double purpose: oppression of the non-Russian peoples in the USSR and the bid for world hegemony...²⁰

Also, in contrast to Solzhenitsyn's extraordinary dichotomizing attempt to separate the "good" Russian people from the "Soviets" and their crimes and bestiality, a Czech writer, Milan Kundera, now living in France, has this to say:

...In Czecho-Slovakia the term "Russians" has become the synonym of "Soviets." I am not talking about Communism. but, about totalitarianism. A component part of this totalitarianism is the aggressiveness in the field of culture... From the history of Czech culture has remained only that which was digested and adopted by Russian totalitarianism... Russian dissidents, just like Russian marshals, do not doubt for a minute the universal mission of their fatherland... In looking upon Moscow, the West can see the contours of an alien future. But in looking upon Prague, the West sees the image of its own loss.²¹

Another Czech writer, Frantisek Silnicki, author of a book on the nationalities policy of the USSR and who lives in the United States, is to the point in his assessment of Solzhenitsyn's admonitions and scoring of the West collectively. He writes:

Until the time when Russian nationalism does not address its own people, until it does not renounce imperialistic policies, to that time not only the Czechs, but numerous other nations will see the Russians as alien oppressors, as people who pose a threat to the world... In any case, now is not the time to point to a high morality of Russian national consciousness and patriotism but to pose a question, why the Russian people are identified with Russian Communism...and why other nations see in the Russian people the national and political support of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The position of the Russian people will not change from the fact that Solzhenitsyn calls them the victims of non-Russian Communism. It might change, however, if Solzhenitsyn will call on the Russian Communism. It might change, however, if Solzhenitsyn will call on the Russian nations to cease being the instrument of violence in the hands of the Communist government.²²

If Mr. Solzhenitsyn cannot grasp this fundamental verity, it means that mentally he never left the Gulag.

As to the decolonization program of the U.N., it is to be recalled that on December 14, 1960, the U.N. General Assembly issued a "Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples," in which it solemnly proclaimed "the necessity of bringing to a speedy and

²⁰ *The Soviet Union under the New Tsars*. By Wei Chi. Foreign Language Press, Peking, 1978, pp. 83-90.

²¹ "One-Sided Solzhenitsyn," by Frantisek Silnicki, *Suchasnist* May 1980, No. 5 (233), Munich, West Germany (Ukrainian).

²² *Ibid.*, p. 108.

unconditional end of colonialism in all its form and manifestations.” Subsequently, a U.N. Special Committee of 24 on Decolonization was established as an instrument for the the U.N. program.

Regrettably, neither timid Western Europe nor the United States is expected to raise the matter of Soviet Russian colonialism in Europe, Asia, and now also budding in Affrica.

The only hope rests with the countries of the Third World, the very beneficiaries of the U.N. decolonization program, that very soon will have a majority in the U.N. General Assembly and that could be instrumental in bringing the blight of Russian colonialism and imperialism before the U.N. forum. But so far, in general they are uninformed, with some naively believing in the goodwill and peaceful intentions of the USSR.

In the United States and Canada ethnic organizations of Byelorussians, Estonians, Latvians and Ukrainians have long raised their voices in protest of the enslavement of their home countries by Moscow, and have started a movement for the decolonization of the Soviet Russian colonial empire.

This movement, we hope, will grow, in view of Moscow’s invasion of Afghanistan and its encroachment — via Cuba mercenaries — in a number of African states.

