

CHAPTER 4



Nationalism and Revolution

The Russian Empire had formed over hundreds of years, with a largely Russian population at its core and dozens of other ethnicities on its peripheries. The largest contiguous land empire in the world, tsarist Russia was content for much of its history to rule its non-Russian peoples in a mixed, contradictory system. In some places direct military government was applied, in others local elites that had assimilated into the Russian administrative system held sway, and in still others people were granted various forms of constitutionalism, for example, in the Grand Duchy of Finland and the Kingdom of Poland. For the grand dukes of Muscovy and the early tsars, empire building was merely the extension of the tsar's sovereignty, through the institutions of his household and court, over the adjacent borderlands. The "gathering of Russian lands" meant at first absorbing territories populated by Great Russians, later incorporating the Volga regions held by the Kazan Tatars, and still later annexing the Baltic littoral settled by Finnic peoples, Germans, and others. The rulers of the empire understood that they governed a multinational state, and they referred to the empire as *rossiiskaia* (of Russia) rather than with the ethnic term *rusaskaia* (Russian). Russia's emperors saw themselves as foreigners who had come to this chaotic land to bring order. Separate from the people, they brought the benefits of civilization to ethnic Russians and non-Russians alike. Only in the nineteenth century, when challenged by the rising nationalism prevalent in Europe, did Russian tsars tentatively begin to identify themselves with their own people. That nationalizing of the monarchy, in turn, distanced the rulers from the non-Russians, who themselves were gaining a sense of their own cultural distinctiveness.

At times the regime was extraordinarily tolerant of differences; at others it was callously repressive. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries Russification was limited to the extension of bureaucratic absolutism and serfdom over selected non-Russian peoples. Besides this administrative Russification, non-Russians engaged in spontaneous self-Russification—learning Russian, dressing like Europeans, changing the endings of their names, even converting to Orthodoxy—to improve their chances for advancement in society. But after 1881 these relatively benign forms of acculturation were supplemented by an intermittent state policy of forced cultural homogenization. Tsarist officials considered the Slavic peoples,

the Belorussians and Ukrainians, to be part of a greater Russian nation and forcefully discouraged the use of their languages in the western provinces. Though confronted with a compact population of tens of millions of Poles in the formerly abolished Kingdom of Poland (1815–31), the government suppressed education in the Polish language, turned Warsaw University into an institution of Russification, restricted Polish ownership of land, and even forced shopkeepers to hang signs with Russian above or larger than the Polish. Driven from education and employment in the bureaucracy, Poles, like the Jews, faced lives of permanent disability. No matter how loyal they might in fact be, the regime regarded them—and after 1881 most other non-Russians—as alien and suspicious, inferior and unworthy of full inclusion in imperial society unless they fully assimilated by using Russian and converting to Orthodoxy. Meeting obstacles to advancement in a discriminatory society drove many of the frustrated non-Russians into active opposition.

Most of the non-Russian peoples of the tsarist empire were overwhelmingly peasant. Though they spoke different languages and often experienced discrimination from Russian officials or landlords of a different nationality, they did not automatically translate their social grievances into nationalism. The most powerful identification of the common people was with their religion, but also with their locality and their peasant status. Non-Russian peasants identified with their nearby ethnic compatriots but not with the abstract concept of nation. Like socialism, nationalism was an ideology brought in by intellectuals and activists, and those nationalities that were more directly affected by industrial capitalism and had a working class of their own, such as the Georgians, Latvians, Estonians, Jews, and, to an extent, the Armenians, came into more immediate contact with their own radical intelligentsia and developed political movements of great power. Peoples who had little presence in the towns, like Lithuanians, Ukrainians, and Belorussians, were slower to develop national consciousness than those more directly affected by urbanization, education, and their own intelligentsia. Furthest removed from the social revolution of industrialism were the Muslim peoples of the empire. Some Muslims, such as the Azerbaijanis and the Volga Tatars, had a significant if small urban presence, but the vast majority of Central Asians, many of whom were nomadic or seminomadic, had relatively little urban experience and almost no contact with the socialist or nationalist intelligentsia. Here conservative clerics dominated the public sphere, and Islamic reformism and an embryonic nationalism were found only among a small group of intellectuals and activists. The Russians, even the radical intellectuals among them, considered Muslims to be a dark, unenlightened mass, and in Baku and Tashkent they devoted most of their educational and organizational efforts to local Christians rather than to the Muslims, to whom they could not speak.

SOUTH CAUCASIA

To the south of Muscovy, across the Caucasus Mountains, between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, lay the mountainous isthmus that Russians called South Caucasia. In the medieval principalities, kingdoms, and emirates of the Georgians,

Armenians, and Islamic peoples, politics was a local affair, infused with dynastic and religious conflicts and absent a generalized, secular, ultimately territorial or ethnocultural sense of homeland or nation. For medieval Georgians and Armenians, the primary identity was with religion and the church, the primary loyalty to the local dynast. After the eleventh century, when the invasions of the Seljuk Turks pushed back the power of Byzantium and subdued the Armenians, the Georgians alone remained precariously independent. After almost two thousand years of political presence, no Armenian state existed between 1375 and 1918. Only with the coming of the Russians at the beginning of the nineteenth century did the last Georgian monarchs lose their thrones and the bulk of the Georgian lands come once again under a single political authority.

Georgians, who lived compactly in their historic territory, were largely a peasant people with a dominant noble elite that within a generation after the Russian conquest was successfully integrated into the tsarist civil and military service. Armenians, by the nineteenth century scattered and divided among three empires (Russian, Ottoman, and Persian), were almost nowhere a compact majority, except in Erevan province. Their dominant elite was the Armenian merchants and manufacturers, who developed industry and trade in both Turkey and Caucasia, pioneering the development of Baku oil and constituting the entrepreneurial middle class of Tiflis, the ancient Georgian capital.

In the course of the nineteenth century, three related processes initiated a long transformation of the ethnoreligious communities of South Caucasia into more politically conscious and mobilized nationalities. First, the imposition of tsarist rule eliminated barriers between Georgian principalities, brought Armenians of Russia and those who lived in formerly Persian provinces under a single legal order, and imposed uniform laws and taxation systems on the Muslims of South Caucasia. Second, tsarist imperial rule brought relative peace and security and fostered a rise in commerce and industry, the growth of towns, the building of railroads, and the slow end to the isolation of many villages. Third, the imposition of bureaucratic absolutism on the looser political structures of South Caucasia and the initial undermining of local elites gave rise to resistance by both the gentry and the peasants. A new educational system became the crucible of a secular intelligentsia inspired by Western humanism and science. Educated Caucasians were torn between the benefits and burdens of Russian autocratic rule. Some became loyal servants of the tsar, even members of the nobility; others turned toward the revolutionary movement.

The three major peoples of South Caucasia developed unevenly and at different rates. Armenians were the most urban, Azerbaijanis the least. Georgians and Azerbaijanis were the more compact populations, living in coherent territories, whereas Armenians were dispersed. Clerics dominated Azerbaijani society, the old national nobility held sway among Georgians, and a merchant middle class was the dominant social group among the Armenians. Intellectuals of all three peoples were deeply influenced by the debates in Russia and shared an appreciation for the insights of Western Marxists. But the nationalist movements among

the three peoples were distinct: among Armenians nationalism overwhelmed socialism as the leading ideology; for most politically active Georgians Marxism predominated over nationalism; and among Azerbaijanis the influence of either socialism or nationalism was quite limited and loyalty to Islam overwhelmed secular ideologies.

The demographically dominant people in eastern South Caucasia were known in the nineteenth century as Tatars, but by the late 1930s the term "Azerbaijani," favored by the national leaders, was universally adopted. Linguistically related to the Ottoman Turks, who came to dominate Anatolia, the Caucasian Muslims of Azerbaijan were for centuries under Persian social and cultural influence and became Shi'i, rather than Sunni Muslims. No specifically Azerbaijani state existed before 1918, and rather than imagining themselves as part of a continuous national tradition, like the Georgians and Armenians, the Muslims of South Caucasia saw themselves as part of the larger Muslim world. Annexation to the Russian Empire early in the nineteenth century separated the Azerbaijani Turks of Caucasia from the majority of Azerbaijanis, who remained in Iran.

On both sides of the border the Azerbaijanis were a largely rural population, though small merchant and working classes grew up in Russia and Iran. As the city of Baku on the Caspian became the major source of oil for Russia, tens of thousands of Iranian workers streamed across the border. But they were given the dirtiest jobs and the lowest pay of any workers. With Armenians and Russians in the middle of the social and economic hierarchy and local Christians and Europeans at the top, poor Muslim workers developed resentment against skilled workers and employers, most of whom were Christians. Russians and Armenians lived in the segregated central part of the town, and Muslims clustered in poorer outer districts. Ethnic and religious differences, enhanced by feelings of inferiority and superiority, defined the battlelines in bloody clashes between Azerbaijanis and local Armenians in 1905 and 1918. No single, coherent ideology or movement dominated Azerbaijani intellectuals, though by 1905 a growing number had adopted the program "Turkify, Islamicize, Europeanize." At the same time, however, anxiety about the perceived Armenian threat, distance from and hostility to this privileged element within their midst, and a feeling of connection to other Muslims, particularly Turks, became part of an Azerbaijani sense of self.

Though Azerbaijani political activists participated in the revival of Muslim organizations in the first year of the revolution, traveling to congresses and issuing manifestos, in Baku the political center was held by Russian Social Democrats and Armenian nationalists. The Azerbaijanis identified Soviet power in 1917-18 with the Christians, and in March 1918 the city soviet in Baku put down a revolt by Muslims with the help of Armenian nationalists. The Baku Commune, a Soviet government that ruled Baku from April to late July 1918, failed in its attempt to rally the peoples of South Caucasia around Soviet power. The Bolsheviks met indifference or active resistance when they attempted to extend their sway over the surrounding countryside and the Azerbaijani town of Gandja (Elisavetpol). Though the Azerbaijani nationalist leaders, located in Gandja, had been largely

pro-Russian in the prewar years, they welcomed the support offered by the advancing Ottoman Turkish army, and they entered Baku with those Ottoman troops. In September 1918 Azerbaijanis took their revenge for the "March Days," killing between nine and thirty thousand local Armenians.

Azerbaijani nationalists had declared Azerbaijan an independent state on May 28, 1918, but even after they secured control over Baku, they faced a mixed population of Russian, Armenian, and Muslim workers who had undergone a long socialist and trade unionist education. Never fully secure in their own capital, where Bolshevism had deep roots, the nationalists relied on foreigners, first the Turks and later the British, to back them against the Reds. Among the peasantry, whom they claimed to represent, national consciousness was still largely absent. Once the British left, independent Azerbaijan's days were numbered. When the Red Army marched into Baku in April 1920, there was little resistance.

For two millennia, if not longer, Armenians and Georgians have had recognizable identities, first mentioned in the inscriptions and manuscripts of their Iranian and Greek neighbors and later (from the fifth century A.D.) in texts in their own languages. Since the fourth century A.D. they have been Christian peoples, yet distinct from one another. The Georgians became part of the Orthodox church, to which the Greeks and Russians adhered, while the Armenians remained in a unique national church with its own Christology. Largely a rural people, Georgians were divided into a peasant majority and a declining nobility that failed to make a successful adjustment to the post-emancipation economy (after 1861). Through the nineteenth century the Georgian nobility steadily lost its dominant economic and political position to Armenian merchants and artisans, who had formed the Caucasian middle class since the Middle Ages. The Georgian intelligentsia, themselves the offspring of the *déclassé* nobility, turned to a radical analysis of Georgia's condition and in the 1890s adopted a specifically Marxist worldview that saw both the bourgeoisie (which in this case was largely Armenian) and the autocracy (which was Russian) as enemies of Georgian social and political freedom. Instead of uniting around a conservative nationalism, the social and national struggles were successfully merged under a Marxist leadership ready to link up with all-Russian Social Democracy.

The natural constituency for Georgian Social Democrats, the workers, was supplemented by 1905 by broad support (almost unique in the Russian empire) among the peasantry. Georgian Marxist intellectuals had joined the more moderate wing of the Russian Social Democratic Party, the Mensheviks, and in the first years of the twentieth century found themselves at the head of a genuinely supra-class national liberation movement. The Mensheviks easily won the elections to the four state dumas from 1906 to 1912, controlled soviets and councils in the towns and countryside in 1917, and were the overwhelming choice of Georgians in the elections to the Constituent Assembly. In Georgia a mass national movement had been achieved in the first decade of the twentieth century, but instead of adopting an ideology of exclusivist nationalism, Georgians adopted an expressly nonnationalist and democratic socialism.

With the October Revolution, the Georgian Mensheviks acted swiftly to disarm the Russian garrison in Tiflis and establish local soviet power. Refusing to recognize the Bolshevik government in Petrograd, the South Caucasian socialist parties (with the exception of the local Bolsheviks) gradually separated the region from the rest of Russia by first declaring autonomy and later independence for the whole of South Caucasia and finally establishing three separate independent republics. Certainly the most viable and stable state in South Caucasia was Georgia. Here social democracy was well grounded in both the working class and the peasantry. When the Georgian government invited the Germans to send troops to Georgia, it was not for the purpose of shoring up their regime internally but to discourage attack from outside by the Bolsheviks or the Turks.

Ironically, the Georgian nation-state was formed and led by Marxists who expected a democratic revolution in Russia that would solve in one sweep the people's ethnic and social oppression. Instead, the Marxists found themselves at the head of an independent "bourgeois" state, the managers of the "democratic revolution" in one small country. Unquestionably Georgia had an excellent chance for political survival. Not only did the Mensheviks have the support of the great majority of the Georgian people, but they managed to establish a stable multiparty democracy and begin a program of social and economic reform. The central Soviet government in Moscow, however, did not permit them to demonstrate the potential for democratic socialism in a postrevolutionary state. By 1920 a powerful group within the Bolshevik party pushed for an uprising within Georgia, to be followed by an invasion by the Red Army. Though Lenin initially opposed this cynical disregard for the evident influence of the Georgian Social Democrats, he backed down in face of the *fait accompli* engineered by Stalin and his close collaborator, Sergo Orjonikidze. In February 1921 the Red Army marched into Georgia and the Mensheviks fled to Europe. Three years later the Social Democrats organized an uprising, but the local Communist government brutally suppressed the rebels and executed many of their leaders. The national revolution led by democratic socialists was over.

Within the Russian empire, Armenians were scattered in urban centers, with a relatively compact peasantry in Erevan province. At the same time, an influential diaspora connected the educated and business people of Anatolia and South Caucasia with Europe, the Middle East, and even India. Despite the increase in the number of Armenians in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and their economic and political dominion over the largest cities of the Caucasus, Armenians increasingly perceived themselves to be in a vulnerable demographic and political position. The relative status of the largest Armenian community, on the Armenian plateau of eastern Anatolia (present-day Turkey), worsened with the rapid growth of the Kurdish population, the in-migration of Circassians and other Balkan and Caucasian Muslims, and the out-migration of Armenians, particularly after the massacres of 1894–96.

Within Russia Armenian clerics and intellectuals developed schools, published newspapers, and expanded popular literature and drama, all as part

of a "national revival." In contrast to the Georgians, the Armenian revolutionary parties, founded at the end of the 1880s and the beginning of the 1890s, chose not to work with other parties of the Russian Empire and sent their young militants to organize in Turkey. The leading Armenian political party by the early twentieth century was the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, or Dashnaktsutiun. When the tsarist government requisitioned Armenian church properties in 1903, the Dashnaks organized resistance and gained wide support among city dwellers and peasants in the Caucasus as the principal defender of the Armenian church.

In the spring of 1915, with Turkey at war with Russia and with Armenians living on both sides of the border, missionaries, diplomats, travelers, and victims reported that the Turkish military was systematically murdering adult male Armenians and forcibly deporting hundreds of thousands of others. Though the exact number of those killed or deported may never be known, estimates run from 600,000 to 2.5 million Armenian deaths in the years 1915–22. Tens of thousands of refugees fled to the Caucasus with the retreating Russian armies, and the cities of Baku and Tiflis filled with Armenians from Turkey. Driven from their historic homeland in Anatolia, the bulk of the Armenians were now confined to the small territory of Russian Armenia.

Each nationality in South Caucasia had to choose between Soviet Russia, the Entente, and the Germans, and each national leadership chose a different path. The central political issue became self-defense, and in the context of Russian retreat and Turkish-German advance it quickly took on an ethnic dimension. By late May 1918 the Georgians opted for the Germans rather than the Bolsheviks; the Azerbaijanis turned expectantly toward the Turks, the multinational city of Baku came under local soviet power; and the Armenians turned toward the Entente. The principal threats to the Armenians came from the Ottoman Turks and the Azerbaijanis, and Caucasian Armenians rallied around the Dashnaktsutiun, which became the de facto leader of the nation.

The only realistic hope for an ethnic Armenian homeland in the postgenocide period was the small enclave around Erevan, which in May 1918 became the center of a fragile independent republic. The first Republic of Armenia lasted only two and a half years, from May 28, 1918, until December 2, 1920. A land of sick and hungry refugees, threatened by Turkish invasion and armed clashes with both Georgia and Azerbaijan, tiny Armenia managed to maintain a relatively democratic government. American aid sustained the starving population, but the claims of the Armenian government to territory that the Turks refused to give up led to the final crisis of the fledgling state. As the armies of the Turkish nationalist Mustapha Kemal pushed into Armenia, the Dashnak government concluded an agreement with Soviet Russia to establish a Soviet government in Armenia. After a few months of Soviet power, Dashnak-led rebels overthrew the new government, but the Red Army returned from Georgia to reestablish Soviet authority, which would last for the next seventy years.

UKRAINIANS AND BELORUSSIANS

Except for a small intelligentsia, Ukrainians were almost entirely peasants. Unlike most Russian peasants, they were not organized into village communes but held individual farmsteads. Landowners and officials in the region were Poles or Russians, whereas the commercial bourgeoisie was largely Jewish. Ukraine had developed a distinct ethnic culture and language in the long period from the fall of Kiev to the Mongols (1240) through the Polish dominion (1569) to the union with Russia (1654). Early in the nineteenth century nationalist intellectuals promoted the notion of Ukrainian distinctiveness, and the romantics Taras Shevchenko and Panko Kulish formed a Ukrainian literary language from the vernacular of the southeast. The brief flourishing of Ukrainian intellectual culture in the tsarist empire in the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century was curtailed after the Polish insurrection of 1863, however, particularly in 1876, when the tsarist state prohibited public expression in Ukrainian. With the restrictions on Ukrainian culture in the Russian Empire, Galicia, the western Ukrainian regions under Austrian rule, became the center for literary expression and a popular nationalism. In contrast, the movement of Ukrainian peasants in the Russian Empire in 1905–7 had only superficial nationalistic characteristics. Russian Ukraine, a vast territory with non-Ukrainians dominating urban centers and state-imposed constraints on ethnic intellectual life, developed neither a coherent mass-based national movement nor even a widely shared sense of a Ukrainian nation in the decades before the twentieth-century revolutions.

With the outbreak of the February Revolution in 1917, an articulate and active nationalist elite in Ukraine, made up of middle-class professionals, confronted both the Provisional Government in Petrograd and later the Sovnarkom in Moscow with its demand for autonomy and self-rule. At first the local national council, or Rada, was committed to finding a democratic solution to the political crisis; its leaders wanted to remain within a federated Russian state and launch a radical program of land reform. Ukrainian politicians managed in June 1917 to extract from Petrograd some recognition of Ukrainian autonomy. As central control weakened over Ukraine, the idea of a unique Ukraine gained strength. In the November elections to the Constituent Assembly, the peasantry overwhelmingly supported Ukrainian parties, particularly Ukrainian peasant parties. The peasants in Ukraine preferred parties and leaders of their own ethnicity, people who spoke to them in their own language and promised to secure their local interests. They were ethnically aware, preferring their own kind to strangers, though not yet moved by a passion for an abstract nation, and certainly not willing to sacrifice their lives for anything beyond the village. Yet the revolution, which toppled old authorities and allegiances, mobilized and politicized formerly passive peasants and accelerated the protracted process of nationality formation.

Ukrainian peasants were most concerned about the agrarian question and their own suffering in the years of war and scarcity. They thought of themselves as peasants first, which for them was the same as being Ukrainian (or whatever they

might have called themselves locally). Their principal hope was for agrarian reform and the end of the oppression identified with the state and the city. Russians, Jews, and Poles were the sources of that oppression, and it is conceivable that for many peasants the promise of autonomy was seen as the means to ending the onerous and arbitrary power of these groups.

The years of civil war in Ukraine were volatile, with nationalists fighting Bolsheviks and Bolsheviks allying with and then breaking with anarchists and "Green" peasant movements. The bid by Ukrainian nationalists for autonomy and then for independence at the end of 1917 was unacceptable to most Bolsheviks, particularly those in Ukraine. Even when Lenin advocated a more conciliatory line toward Ukraine, his followers refused to concede to the nationalists. When the nationalist Rada was unable effectively to resist the Bolshevik advance in January 1918, it turned as a last resort to the Germans. But the Germans soon began requisitioning grain and terrorizing the peasants. When the nationalists failed to back up their own agrarian reform, support among the peasants rapidly evaporated. The nationalist cause was linked by many to foreign intervention. To antinationalist elements, particularly in towns, the only viable alternative to social chaos, foreign dependence, and Ukrainian chauvinism appeared to be the Bolsheviks. But like the German-backed nationalists, the Bolsheviks squandered their potential peasant support. Where and when they were in charge, they effectively disenfranchised the middle and wealthier peasantry and instituted a new round of requisitioning. Formerly sympathetic villagers turned against the Soviets, and the final Bolshevik victory depended on support from the workers, Russian and Russified, of the cities as well as the Donbass and the Red Army. Here the Bolsheviks were stronger than any of their rivals.

Among the most peasant of the peoples of the Russian Empire were the Belorussians, those eastern Slavs who had succumbed neither to Polish culture and language (as had much of the local nobility) nor to the Russian language and culture of the towns. Nearly three-quarters of the people of the Belorussian provinces were illiterate. They spoke up to twenty local dialects that fell between Russian, Polish, and Ukrainian. The towns and cities of the region were predominantly inhabited by Russians, Poles, and most numerous Jews. Belorussian nationalism was never very influential in the multiethnic towns or among the mass of peasants primarily concerned with local social problems. The peasants made little distinction between a generalized Russian culture and a specifically Belorussian nationality. The closeness of the Belorussian language to Russian and other Slavic languages of the area permitted easy access to related cultures and blurred ethnic boundaries. Only in the last decades of the nineteenth century did a Belorussian ethnic nationalism find its voice, and even then it was part of the broader discourse of the Russian revolutionary movement. In 1902 Belorussian students in the Russian capital, with the help of Polish socialists, founded the Belorussian Revolutionary Hramada (party or association), which proposed the formation of a Belorussian state as a first step toward the solution of social problems.

The progress of the revolution in Belorussia was fundamentally influenced by the Russo-German battlelines that ran through the region. Russian soldiers, increasingly influenced by Bolshevism, played a key role in the formation of the first soviets and the establishment of a Soviet government in Minsk just after the October Revolution. The peasants remained outside the political struggle in the towns and gave little encouragement to either the socialists or the nationalists. In the elections to the Constituent Assembly in November, the Bolsheviks secured over 60 percent of the vote (in large part thanks to soldiers), while the Hramada failed to elect a single delegate. As winter approached, the uneven struggle in the towns pitted the nationalists and moderate socialists against the Bolsheviks with their supporters in the Russian Army. In December the Hramada called a Belorussian National Congress, which refused to recognize the local Council of Peoples Commissars. When on December 17–18 the congress declared Belorussia independent, the Bolsheviks used their military muscle to disperse the delegates. Soviet power in Belorussia lasted only until the Brest-Litovsk Treaty forced the Russians to retreat, and the Germans backed the nationalists' declaration of independence (March 25, 1918). The peasants, who had been taking what land they could since late 1917, resisted the German occupation and gravitated toward the Communists. When the Germans retreated at the end of the war, the Russian Communists formed a Belorussian Communist party, which in turn established a Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republic (BSSR) and then a joint Lithuanian-Belorussian Soviet Republic (Litbel). But in the future both Belorussia and Ukraine would become pawns in the larger struggle between Soviet Russia and newly independent Poland.

POLAND AND THE RUSSO-POLISH WAR

One of the victors in World War I was a state that had not existed as an independent country at the outbreak of the war—Poland. A great east European power in the seventeenth century and the major rival of Muscovy, Poland disappeared as a state in the late eighteenth century when Russia, Prussia, and Austria partitioned Poland among them. After the Napoleonic wars of the early nineteenth century, Russia dominated most of Poland, first as an autonomous kingdom within the empire and later, after failed Polish rebellions, as a province. Polish nobles and intellectuals harbored the dream of restoring Polish independence for over a century, and European intellectuals, including Karl Marx, took up their cause. In June 1918 the Allies, led by President Wilson, decided that one of their war aims would be the creation of an independent Poland with access to the sea.

Polish nationalists were interested in re-creating a large state that included all the territory held by Poland in 1772, before the partitions. However, a disagreement in principle arose: should states be based on self-determination for the ethnic group(s) now living in a territory or on the historical claims of those who once occupied and held the territory? The principal problem was that large German, Ukrainian, and Belorussian populations were contained within regions claimed by

the Polish nationalists. The victorious Allies recognized a re-created, large Polish state, but the eastern border with the Soviet republics remained disputed. The leader of the newly independent Polish state, Jozef Pilsudski, had dreams of a grand eastern European federation that included Russian borderlands. To the Soviets Poland, which seized Vilna (*Wilno* in Polish; *Vilnius* in Lithuanian) in April 1919 from the Communist Litbel Soviet Republic, appeared to be an aggressive and expansionist state.

At first Poland remained neutral in the Russian civil war, afraid of a victory by the Whites, who might want to retake Poland for Russia. But Pilsudski was convinced that war with Russia was inevitable, and in April 1920 he issued orders to prepare for "a definitive settlement of the Russian question." He wanted an independent Ukraine as a buffer between Soviet Russia and Poland, but the Soviet government rejected the idea. Pilsudski then made a secret agreement with Simon Petliura, an anti-Soviet Ukrainian leader, pledging support for an independent Ukraine if Petliura recognized Polish claims to areas of eastern Galicia. On April 25, 1920, the Poles, allied with Petliura, began a "liberation drive" into Ukraine and took Kiev in early May. Though they met little resistance in their campaign, the Polish army was suspect in the eyes of the Ukrainian peasantry, which by this time was both anti-Bolshevik and anti-Polish. Petliura's alliance with Poland only served to compromise his movement among the peasants.

The Soviet government had no plans to conquer Poland, though some Bolsheviks had advocated a tactic of "revolution from without" in the Baltic and in Finland. But with the invasion of Ukraine, the Communists now saw "capitalist" Poland as a threat to Moscow, and mass rallies were held to protest the Polish advance. Polish Communists, like Dzerzhinski and Karl Radek, warned against trying to "liberate" Poland with the Red Army, for Russophobia was very strong in Poland. But Red Army leaders, like future Marshall Mikhail Tukhachevskii, wanted to launch an attack, and Lenin, Zinoviev, and Kamenev saw the war as an opportunity to turn the revolution westward. In June 1920 the Red Army counterattacked. The Poles retreated, and the retreat turned into a rout. Lord Curzon, the British foreign secretary, warned the Red Army not to cross the ethnic boundary (the Curzon Line) into Polish territory. Radek attempted to caution Lenin but failed, and on July 24 the Red Army crossed the Curzon Line and took Bialystok.

The Soviets set up a Polish Provisional Revolutionary Committee (Revkom), which was greeted enthusiastically in Bialystok, a city in which three-quarters of the population were Jews who were not happy about Polish independence. In August the Red Army neared Warsaw. But the Revkom and the Red Army found little support among the Polish population, which saw them (as Lenin was forced to concede) "not as brothers and liberators" but as enemies. The Poles counterattacked and routed the Reds. An armistice was signed in October, and in March 1921 the Treaty of Riga established a large Poland, with Ukrainian and Belorussian areas within the state. Those areas would remain in Poland until 1939, when another partition, between Nazi Germany and Stalin's USSR, eliminated the Polish state once more and annexed western Belorussia and western Ukraine to their

respective Soviet republics. The volatile border between Russia and Poland was contested not only in 1920 and 1939 but again in 1945 in the opening days of the Cold War.

Lenin apparently learned a bitter lesson from the Polish adventure, and it would be nearly twenty years before the Soviets would again send their armies abroad to "make revolution." From this point on, caution rather than heroic gestures characterized Lenin's foreign policy. But he remained keenly suspicious of the possibility of coexistence with the bourgeois world. "We live not only in a state," he wrote, "but in a system of states, and the existence of the Soviet Republic side by side with the imperialist states for a long time is unthinkable. In the end either one or the other will conquer. And until that end comes, a series of the most terrible collisions between the Soviet Republic and the bourgeois states is inevitable." Political pragmatism in the short run, however, forced his government to recognize the independence of several "bourgeois" states along the Soviet border, most notably those in the Baltic.

THE BALTIC PEOPLES

The only states to end up independent after the civil war were in the northwest of Russia along the Baltic: Poland, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. As in Georgia, Ukraine, and Belorussia, the numerically dominant peasant classes in the Baltic region were of one nationality while the middle and upper classes were of another. Along the eastern Baltic coast, German nobles dominated rural life in areas of predominantly Estonian and Latvian peasantry. Polish and Jewish city dwellers almost exclusively ran Vilnius, which was surrounded by Belorussian and Lithuanian villages. In Tallinn (Reval) and Riga the German bourgeoisie and nobles dominated local governing institutions, but the number of Estonians and Latvians in the towns grew rapidly until the local peoples became the most numerous nationalities in their respective capitals. Latvian and Estonian working classes and a small bourgeoisie had developed by the early twentieth century.

A small but distinct people speaking a language related to Finnish, the Estonians developed their nationalism relatively late. Influenced by the West and Central European Enlightenment, German pastors and writers first explored the culture of the Estonian peasantry. They were joined by native Estonian intellectuals in the 1820s. Four decades later village schoolteachers joined the university-trained intellectuals, and together they set up schools for peasants and organized choruses and patriotic clubs. In Estonia music and group singing was one of the most important vehicles for the spread of nationalist feeling. But most Estonian nationalists spoke of their people as a "cultural nation," not as a nation destined for modern statehood. Until the revolution, probably in a realistic appreciation of what was possible in Russia, they looked forward to autonomy within the empire rather than independence.

The patriotic intelligentsia faced serious difficulties as it tried to penetrate the largely peasant population. Estonians had no political past with which to identify, no written language, and no national literature. They were kept out of educational,

religious, and political institutions by the ruling Germans. Gradually the social hostility of Estonians toward the ruling Germans fed into a feeling of group solidarity among Estonian speakers and laid the basis for nationalism. National consciousness was further promoted in the last decades of the nineteenth century when Estonians entered the towns, gained more education, and, along with the Latvians, achieved the highest level of literacy in the Russian Empire. The tsarist campaign of Russification in the Baltic in the last decades of the nineteenth century further helped to stimulate national awareness among the broad population of Estonians, Latvians, and Finns.

Despite the stirring of cultural nationalism, Estonians nevertheless gravitated toward the Bolsheviks through much of 1917. In the summer the Bolsheviks, whose greatest strength was in the larger industrial towns of Tallinn and Narva, won almost a third of the vote in municipal council elections. They were backed by Russian soldiers in the towns and did less well in purely Estonian areas. Still, in the November elections to the Constituent Assembly, socialists as a whole won just over 50 percent, and the nonsocialists nearly matched them. The Bolsheviks won more votes than any other party. After the October Revolution, Bolshevized soviets ran many of the towns in Estonia, but support for the soviets began to erode rapidly. The Bolsheviks were unenthusiastic about Estonian independence, failed to expropriate the estates of the Baltic barons, and tried to suppress oppositional parties. When the Germans advanced in late February 1918, the nationalists used the opportunity to declare Estonia independent of Russia.

A small, compact ethnic community clearly demarcated from their German and Russian overlords and Latvian neighbors, the Estonians were nevertheless divided politically. Socialist sentiments were strong, and anti-Russian feeling was far less apparent than anti-German sentiment. Yet Bolshevik ineptitude eroded support for linking up with Soviet Russia and helped the nationalists achieve their new goal of national independence. The small nationalist elite was able to mobilize Estonians when the Bolsheviks overplayed their hand after October and the Germans provided the nationalists with an irresistible opportunity by backing them with force of arms.

To the south of the Estonians lived a people who spoke Latvian, a language that belongs to the Baltic branch of Indo-European languages (along with Lithuanian and Old Prussian). The ancestors of the Latvians inhabited the Baltic littoral in the ninth century. German merchants and missionaries arrived in the mid-twelfth century, and soon after, the "treacherous Livs" were converted to Christianity. The establishment of German rule obliterated the tribal structure of the indigenous peoples, and Latvians existed as a subject peasant population until the tsarist period. Here too, as with the Estonians, the German clergy dominated learning in the region and initiated scholarly interest in Latvian folk culture. A national awakening, that is, the development of significant secular writing by Latvians, dates from the mid-nineteenth century.

By the last decade of the nineteenth century young Latvians were joining the Russian revolutionary movement, first the populists and then after 1893, the

fledgling Marxist circles. With high levels of literacy and urbanization (in 1897, 79.4 percent of the people of what would become Latvia lived in cities) as well as growing labor discontent, the Social Democrats found a ready response among both radical intellectuals and workers. Latvian parishioners resented the protectorate of the German barons over local churches and allowed the churches to be used for political agitation. Social Democrats distributed socialist appeals in rural churches and developed strong ties with agricultural workers. By 1905 the Latvian Social Democratic Labor Party (LSDLP) boasted ten thousand members. The national struggle against the German lords combined with a broad political movement, led by Marxists, against autocracy.

Whereas Estonians and Ukrainians vacillated between nationalism and other social movements, Latvians, like Georgians, combined their ethnic and social grievances in a single, dominant socialist national movement. Social Democracy, particularly Bolshevism, had exceptionally strong support in 1917 among Latvian and other workers and among the famous Latvian riflemen. Many Latvians in 1917 saw the solution to their national future in a Russian federation, but one that had moved beyond the bourgeois revolution. The extraordinary success of Bolshevism among Latvians stemmed from a number of factors. Latvians hated the Germans much more than they did the Russians. They had a high proportion of landless peasants (more than 1 million in 1897) that favored social democracy and opposed the "gray barons" (Latvian smallholders) almost as much as they did the German nobles. Social Democracy had solid support among workers and among many intellectuals, schoolteachers, and students. Also important in shaping the pro-Bolshevik attitude of Latvians was the particularly devastating experience of the world war, which had brought the fighting deep into Latvia, dividing the country, causing great hardship, and radicalizing the population. Finally, the Latvian Bolsheviks were able to develop and propagate a program that attempted to deal with both social and ethnic grievances. Yet the brief experiment in Bolshevik rule after October, the *Iskolat*, collapsed when the Germans moved into unoccupied Latvia in February 1918. In all likelihood, Bolshevism would have been the eventual victor in Latvia, save for the German intervention, which gave the nationalists a chance to create their own independent republic.

The Lithuanians, like their neighbors, the Belorussians, had no urban presence to speak of, and nationalist sentiments did not reach much beyond the relatively insignificant intelligentsia because of the large Lithuanian diaspora. The upper class in the region was Polonized, and the Lithuanian peasantry was mixed with Belorussian speakers (who made up 56 percent of Vilna province). Towns were either Jewish or Polish in culture; Vilna was 40 percent Jewish, 31 percent Polish. Yet here the very differentness of the Lithuanian language from the neighboring Slavic tongues kept Lithuanian-speaking peasants separate from the other peoples around them.

Lithuanians speak an Indo-European language (classified along with Latvian as Eastern Baltic) and have been present in the Baltic region since classical times. Lithuanian tribes united briefly in the thirteenth century to resist German

incursions, but the great medieval state around Vilnius was a multiethnic commonwealth that used Belorussian and, later, Latin in its official communications. In the first half of the nineteenth century, some Polish and German intellectuals and clergy began collecting and publishing Lithuanian folk songs and popular art, but only in the 1870s did Lithuanian students begin to distance themselves from Polish culture. Yet nationalist agitation had almost no effect on the towns. Even the Catholic church did not support a separate Lithuanian identity, but encouraged ties to Poland and antagonism to Russia. Before 1905 the tsarist authorities allowed only one newspaper in Lithuanian, an official gazette, to be published; other periodicals had to be smuggled from abroad.

With Lithuania occupied by the Germans through much of the early revolutionary period, Lithuanian political activity began at a congress of Lithuanians held in the Russian capital in early June, 1917. Nationalists passed a resolution in favor of Lithuanian independence, but the center and left, unwilling to antagonize "democratic Russia," called instead for a recognition of Lithuania's right to self-determination. Later the creation of a Lithuanian National Council, the Taryba, in September 1917 and the declaration of independence in December were both carried out under German supervision. The nationalists antagonized local Poles by rejecting any form of union or federation with an independent Poland.

Through the years of the Russian civil war, Lithuanian lands were contested by the nationalists whom the Germans had patronized, the Communists backed by the Red Army, and the independent Poles under Pilsudski. When the Germans evacuated Vilnius at the end of World War I, a Communist government was installed by the Red Army. In April 1919 the Poles took Vilnius, and the nationalists, installed in their new capital of Kaunas, used the Soviet-Polish antagonism to secure Moscow's recognition of their independence. Only with the conclusion of the Russo-Polish War in 1920 and intricate negotiations through the League of Nations were firm borders established between a reduced Lithuania, a Soviet state pushed back eastward, and a bloated Poland that included Vilna as well as Ukrainian and Belorussian territories. Although it was unable to gain Vilna until the destruction of Poland in 1939, independent Lithuania seized the German town of Memel (Klaipeda) on the Baltic in 1923 in order to have a port on the Baltic.

The creation of the independent states of Belorussia, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania was not the result of broad-based and coherent nationalist movements that realized long-held aspirations to nationhood. Rather, it was initially the artificial result of German politics and the immediate weakness of the central Russian state. Here nationality was the instrument that a Great Power used to destroy the Russian Empire and create ministates it could control; as elsewhere and at other times class would be the basis on which the Soviets would reconstruct a multinational state. At the same time, the principle of national self-determination, promoted by both Lenin and Woodrow Wilson, had gained an enormous influence and legitimacy. As the twentieth century opened, leaders of almost every significant ethnic group not only aspired to statehood but had the backing of powerful leaders of powerful states. The anti-imperial age had dawned.

THE FINNS

Finland was under Russian control from 1809 until 1917. Finnish speakers were a subordinate people within a region in which they composed the majority. The dominant group within the country was the Swedish-speaking upper class, who made up the nobility, the bureaucracy, and much of the middle class. Their relationship to the Finnish peasants was reminiscent of that of the Baltic German nobles to Estonian and Latvian peasants and Polish landlords to Lithuanian and Belorussian peasants. From the moment Russia took Finland from Sweden and incorporated it into the Russian Empire, Finland, which had never been a historic state, achieved the status of an autonomous polity, with its own local Diet, or senate, at the apex of the bureaucracy, guarantees for the Lutheran religion, and the continuance of the Fundamental Laws of the Swedish period. The emperor Alexander I (1801–25) declared himself grand duke of Finland and was formally recognized by the Diet. He pledged to observe the constitution and laws of Finland. For the next eighty-odd years Finland existed as a constitutional anomaly within the empire, a distinct country with its own army, legal system, currency, and taxation, separated from the rest of the empire by tariffs and a frontier.

Thanks to tsarist policy, the Finns for the first time in their history enjoyed political autonomy and began the process of building a nation around an ethnic core. Though distinctions remained between the privileged Swedes and the Finns, the geographic and political unity of the country, the economic ties between Finnish towns and the countryside, the creation of a regional market in Finland, and the relative weakness of social and class conflicts in the nineteenth century fostered a sense of Finnish nationality that included both Swedish and Finnish speakers. The first generation to advocate Finnish culture and language came from the Swedish-speaking elite. In 1835 Finnish folk poems were compiled into the *Kalevala*, which was celebrated as the Finnish national epic and provided a heroic ingredient for a new Finnish identity. By the end of the century the upward mobility of Finnish speakers and the linguistic adaptation of the elites encouraged the peoples of Finland to share a single national conception. Socially, however, the country remained divided between the Swedish-speaking bureaucracy and bourgeoisie, on one side, and the bulk of the population, which was Finnish-speaking, on the other. Finnish workers gradually grew away from their former bourgeois and intellectual allies, and in the new century the majority of the workers identified with the Social Democratic intellectuals.

Because political nationalisms were increasingly perceived by tsarist officials as threats to the unity of the empire, the Russian autocracy, beginning in 1890, attempted to curtail the autonomy of the Grand Duchy of Finland. The Young Finns and the Swedish party resisted the Russian inroads, and after the general strike that swept Russia and Finland in October 1905, Nicholas II was forced to restore Finland's former rights. Most importantly for its future political development, Finland became the first country in Europe to be granted universal suffrage, in which women voted alongside men. In the elections to the Diet in 1907 the Social Democrats won over a third of the vote, achieving the largest representation

of any socialist party in Europe. In 1916 the Finnish Social Democrats became the first socialist party in the world to win an absolute majority in the legislature. But unlike the victorious Left in Georgia (or in Latvia in 1917), the Finnish Social Democrats were neither able nor particularly anxious to overwhelm their conservative opponents.

In the first year of revolution the Finnish socialists became the principal advocates of Finland's independence from Russia. In one of its first acts the Provisional Government restored the constitution of the Grand Duchy of Finland and recognized its full "internal independence." The Finnish Social Democrats pushed for a law that ascribed sovereignty to the Finnish Diet. But until the very last days of its existence, the Provisional Government refused to concede full independence to Finland and proved willing to use armed force to enforce its policy in Finland. The only major political party in Russia willing to grant Finland full independence was the Bolsheviks. The delays in establishing an authoritative government in Helsinki aided the process of deepening social division in Finland, which would eventually lead to a bloody civil war.

On December 6, 1917, Finland declared itself an independent state and was recognized by the new Soviet government in Petrograd. The newly formed Finnish Army, under General Karl Mannerheim, began to disarm Russian troops. Fearing the loss of the revolutionary gains of 1917, workers and socialists prepared to defend Helsinki against the Whites and their allies. Aligned with the German army, the Finnish Whites launched a brutal attack on the socialists and the Red Guard to eliminate their hold on the capital and on southern Finland. The Germans took the capital in April, and by early May the whole of Finland was in White or German hands. The upper and middle classes, most of the intellectuals, and the independent peasantry backed the Whites, whereas workers and landless peasants joined the Reds. Middle and poor peasants remained largely passive. In the fighting, 3,500 Reds were killed, 78 percent of them workers. In the subsequent White terror, 200 people a day were killed, and 12,500 Red prisoners died in prison camps. Though all social groups in Finland favored independence, the common national program could not overcome class and regional cleavages. The result was a bloody civil war; the defeat of the Social Democrats, who had led the struggle for democracy and independence; and the coming to power of a conservative, pro-German elite.

THE JEWS

Jews have lived in parts of what became the Soviet Union since at least the fourth century B.C., first settling along the Black Sea coast and in the Caucasus. In the eighth century A.D. the king of the Khazars, a Finno-Turkish tribe that migrated through southern Russia, adopted Judaism as the official religion of his empire. After the conversion of Russia to Orthodox Christianity in the tenth century, Russian rulers often persecuted Jews, who were considered, in the words of Ivan IV, to "have led our people astray from Christianity, [to] have brought poisonous

weeds into our land, and also wrought much wickedness among our people." Both the Orthodox Church in Russia and the Catholic Church in Poland propagated extremely negative images of the Jews that fed into popular stereotypes of these non-Christian people as deceitful and unclean. In the reign of Catherine the Great (1762–96) hundreds of thousands of Jews became Russian subjects with the partitions of Poland. Though herself an enlightened supporter of religious freedom and special privileges for Jews, the empress approved discriminatory legislation that restricted their political and economic rights, imposed higher taxes on them, and limited their habitation to specific areas in the western part of the empire, which became in 1835 the so-called Pale of Settlement. When Jewish merchants began to compete effectively with Russian merchants in Moscow, Catherine acceded to Russian demands that the Jews be expelled from the city.

Russia's Jews lived apart, spoke their own distinct language, Yiddish, and worshipped differently, and the more traditional wore distinctive clothing. The effect of state policy on the Jews was to reinforce differences between them and the Christian majority. Even in the mid-nineteenth century, when many educated Jews gravitated toward Russian and European culture, popular and state attitudes placed them in a double bind. Jews could assimilate into Russian life fully only by ceasing to be Jews, but continually met obstacles when they tried to live as Jews equal to Russians. Some Jews sought to reconceive their community less as one of common faith and more in the idiom of modern nationalism. The Haskala, or Jewish Enlightenment, involved secularizing Jewish life and creating a modern nonreligious literature in Hebrew and eventually also in Yiddish. But after 1881 restrictions on and persecution of Jews increased, and the Enlightenment idea of integration into Russian life through education lost much of its appeal. The government imposed quotas on the numbers of Jews admitted to schools of higher learning and barred them from practicing law. In the early 1880s hundreds of pogroms against Jews broke out. Russian and Ukrainian peasants and workers beat up and killed Jews in Kiev, Odessa, Warsaw, Nizhnyi Novgorod, Kishinev, and Ekaterinoslav, often with no interference from the authorities. As racist and anti-Semitic language and rhetoric became more prevalent, supported by the biological and anthropological "science" of the time, superstitions that claimed that Jews used the blood of Christians in their rituals (the "blood libel") or that they plotted to control the world (as claimed in the infamous forgery *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*) spread widely.

Those Russian Jews who were no longer willing to acquiesce to the rising waves of anti-Semitism and persecution either emigrated or turned to opposition politics. Many turned toward the new movement of Zionism, which promoted Jewish settlement in Palestine; others turned toward socialism, particularly Marxist Social Democracy, or liberalism; while still others turned inward toward orthodox Judaism. A second wave of pogroms broke out during the Russian Revolution of 1905–07. Radical reactionary movements, like the Black Hundreds, rallied their followers with cries of "Beat the Jews! Save Russia!" During World War I the tsarist government forcibly expelled Jews from western borderlands, though at the same

time it permitted Jews to settle outside the Pale. Jews grew steadily more alienated from the Russian *ancien régime* and progressively solidified their enthusiasm for a revolutionary alternative. For many conservatives and reactionaries revolution and the revolutionary movement was a disease that they identified with the Jews, even though the Jews who were most prominent in the dominant revolutionary parties had long abandoned their Jewish religion and identity.

The revolution of 1917 swept away the civil and economic restrictions on the more than 6 million Jews of the Russian Empire. Jewish political parties and newspapers flourished, but scattered and divided as the community was, no single movement or party represented the majority of Russian Jewry. Zionists and Bundists (Jewish socialists) debated each other at the All-Russian Jewish Conference in July 1917, though ultimately they agreed to work for "national self-rule for Jews in Russia." The October insurrection only further divided the Jewish community, with Zionists, Bundists, Mensheviks, and SRs opposing the Bolsheviks. In Ukraine Jewish voters overwhelmingly backed Zionists in the elections to the Constituent Assembly. When Jewish leaders opposed the Ukrainian Rada's move in early 1918 to separate from Russia, their decision created resentment among the Ukrainian nationalists. Jews were caught between antireligious and anticapitalist Bolsheviks on one side and anti-Semitic, anti-Bolshevik nationalists on the other. Tens of thousands of Jews perished at the hands of Ukrainian nationalists under Petliura, the troops of Denikin's Volunteer Army, and the Red cavalry commanded by Budennyi. Thousands of others migrated from the Pale to Petrograd and Moscow.

During the civil war the virulent attacks on Jews, particularly in Ukraine, and the high visibility of Jews among the Bolsheviks convinced many Jews to join the Soviet cause. In 1919–20 Jewish socialist parties split, with many members entering the Communist Party. Stalin's Commissariat of Nationalities formed a Commissariat of Jewish Affairs within it at the beginning of 1918, and the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) [RKP (b)] established a Jewish section within its ranks in October. From the other side Zionists and Bundists organized an All-Russian Congress of Jewish Communities in the summer of 1918 and elected a Community Center, but a year later the Commissariat of Jewish Affairs decreed that such organizations be disbanded. Jewish life in the Soviet republics would be determined by the programs and policies of the ruling Communist Party.

Bolshevik theorists were divided on the question of whether Jews constituted a nationality or a religious sect. Stalin's definition of nationality included possession of a specific territory, a criterion that appeared to exclude Jews, but Jewish Communists argued that Russian Jewry constituted a nationality with its own secular culture and Yiddish language if not a clearly defined territory. The Soviets rejected both Zionism and Judaism, repressed Hebrew and religious studies, and instead promoted a Soviet socialist Jewish nation based on agricultural settlements, Yiddish language and culture, state-sponsored schools, and subsidized cultural institutions. The Communists carried out periodic campaigns against popular anti-Semitism and set up dozens of Jewish soviets and national districts in

Ukraine, Belorussia, and Russia. The 1920s witnessed an efflorescence of Jewish theater and literature and the upward social mobility of ordinary Jews, as restrictions on their traditional occupations were lifted. Jews were prominent in the Soviet bureaucracy, in police agencies, and at the very top of the Communist party hierarchy.

In the early 1920s party activists discussed creating a Jewish republic along the Black Sea, stretching from Bessarabia through Crimea to Abkhazia, but local leaders opposed the idea. Eventually, as Jewish autonomous units were gradually dissolved in the former Pale of Settlement, a Jewish Autonomous District was formed in Birobidzhan in the Soviet Far East. This Soviet "Zion," however, never attracted the numbers of settlers that its sponsors hoped, and as official enthusiasm for the rights and culture of Soviet Jews waned in the 1930s, the ever-present anti-Semitism among Soviet peoples seeped back into daily life and bureaucratic practice. That anti-Semitism would burst out with a vicious power in the late 1940s, when Stalin himself encouraged a major repression of Soviet Jews.

ISLAM AND THE PEOPLES OF THE EAST

By the time of the Russian Revolution there were more than 15 million Muslims in the Russian Empire. The overwhelming majority spoke Turkic languages, including the nomads of Central Asia—the Kyrgyz, Kazakh, and Uzbek tribes—as well as the Tatars of the Volga region and Crimea, some of the peoples of the northern Caucasus, and the Azerbaijanis of Transcaucasia. The major Iranian-speaking people were the Tajiks of Central Asia, who tended to settle in the larger towns of the region, such as Samarkand and Bukhara. Among the Central Asians distinctions between peoples were ill-defined and fluid. Rather than identifying with a nation or a specific ethnic group, the Muslim peoples, particularly in Central Asia, felt loyalty primarily to their tribe or clan, to their dynastic leader, and in a general sense to Islam. The clearest sense of difference was between nomads and settled peoples, often referred to as Sarts. Because of their longer association with Russia and the effects of tsarist economic development, the most prosperous and best educated of the Muslim peoples were the Volga and Crimean Tatars, followed by the Azerbaijanis. In the Volga region the nomadic Bashkirs resented the more settled Tatars and resisted their cultural and economic dominance.

Earlier centuries of Eurasian history can be viewed as a perennial struggle between the nomads from the East and the settled peoples of the West. Across the great Russian plains the contact between Mongols and Muslims on one hand and Slavs and other Christians on the other was often violent and destructive, but over time the domination of the Muslims over the Christians receded until it was reversed in early modern times. When Ivan IV conquered Kazan in 1552, Russia established its hegemony over the non-Russian peoples of the Volga, and Muscovy became a multinational empire. With the decline of the major Mongol and Muslim states, Russia took over where the Golden Horde had once held sway, from the borders of China to the Crimean peninsula. Nowhere was the imperial nature of



Figure 4.1 Kyrgyz Red Army cavalrymen bringing Soviet power to Central Asia (Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz).

the Russian state more evident than in those borderlands where Russian rulers and settlers moved into Muslim-populated areas.

Tsarist policy toward Islam and the Muslim peoples was inconsistent. At times the state attacked Muslim religious institutions or abrogated the rights of Muslims, closing mosques, confiscating lands, removing their serfs, and restricting Muslim proselytizing. At other times, as under Catherine II, the government granted privileges to Muslims, freeing them from certain taxes, exempting them from military recruitment, occasionally allowing mosques to be built, and setting up official religious institutions for Muslims. Catherine encouraged the development of a Tatar commercial class that mediated for the Russians along the Volga and into Siberia and Central Asia. Repression of Islam and forced conversion proved to be wasteful and bred resistance and rebellion, while the more tolerant policies reaped a significant loyalty among many Muslims, particularly the elites.

Russian leaders, clergy, and thinkers believed that Russians were the most civilized people of the empire, with the possible exception of the Baltic Germans,

and they were convinced that smaller peoples of the realm would eventually assimilate into the Russian nation. Russians felt this sense of cultural superiority most acutely toward Muslims. Allied closely with the Russian state, the Russian Orthodox Church supported its imperial mission, shaped Russian attitudes toward the "heathen" Muslims, and worked to proselytize the Christian faith. To the Orthodox clergy Muslims were misguided and depraved, and the way for them to become full subjects of the Russian tsar was to be brought into his church. As Nicholas I pursued a foreign policy that liberated Greeks from the Ottomans and annexed Georgians and Armenians from Persia, he also revived efforts to Christianize Russia's Muslims.

Through the nineteenth century, scholarly interest in the languages of the non-Russians grew, and influential pedagogues advocated the teaching of Tatar and other local languages as a means to spread the Gospel and create loyal subjects. As one educator put it, "The native language speaks directly to the mind and the heart. As soon as Christian concepts and rules have taken root in the hearts of aliens, the love of the Russian people arises by itself." In 1870 the government adopted this idea and set up schools in Tatar and other languages. Though some Tatars opposed the program as an effort at Russification, and many Russians feared this concession to national culture, the effect of the new schools was both to create an educated stratum among non-Russians and a new sense of national distinction. Education opened the way for young Muslims to reconceive the traditional definitions of who they were, to borrow what was useful and progressive from Russian civilization, and to attempt to reform their own community.

Growing initially out of a "new method" (*usul-i jadid*) of teaching Arabic, an influential movement called Jadidism, dedicated to intellectual and social renewal, emerged among educated Muslims in the last decades of the nineteenth century. The leading figure in the movement was the Crimean Tatar Ismail-bey Gaspirali, publisher of an influential Turkic newspaper, but other popular writers, such as the Caucasian Muslim Mirza Fath Ali Akhundzada, a playwright and publicist who wrote in Azeri, helped spread a sense of Turkic pride and a commitment to modernization. Some Jadids, like Gaspirali, were critical of Russian policies, but in Central Asia Jadids avoided confrontation with the state and instead met resistance from more conservative Muslim religious leaders. Muslim reformers hoped to learn about the modern world from Russia and the West while at the same time they remained wary of Russian threats to their own cultural traditions. Their role was to bring enlightenment, knowledge, and the benefits of the West to the Islamic community. Their faith was in progress rather than religion, and for them Islam was less a sacred practice than a cultural identification and an aspect of self-definition. Not surprisingly, once alternative political movements were eliminated during the Russian civil war, many Jadidists eventually joined the Communists in trying to transform Muslim society.

During the revolution Muslim leaders attempted to forge institutions of Muslim unity, through congresses, conferences, and committees, but in each part of the disintegrating empire local movements pitted reformers against

traditionalists and Russian settlers against Muslim activists. In Central Asia ethnic nationalism and class conflict were muted, and Muslims contended with one another over who would lead the community and define their future. Religious conservatives won the July 1917 elections to the Tashkent *duma*, marginalizing the Jadid reformers. Local Bolsheviks and soviets, like the Tashkent soviet, tended to identify with the local Russians, which only antagonized and alienated the Muslims. After the October 1917 revolution the Tashkent soviet claimed power in the region and explicitly excluded Muslims, since the "natives" possessed "no proletarian class organizations." Early in 1918 soviet forces from Tashkent overthrew the reformist Muslim government in Kokand and laid siege to the walled city of Bukhara, driving out the reactionary emir. When faced with a choice between Russian Bolsheviks and ultratraditional Muslims, many of the Jadidist intellectuals sided with the Russians, who at least promised to modernize Muslim society along secular lines.

Soviet policy among Muslims had both domestic and international ambitions. Faced with trying to govern millions of Muslims with very few Muslim Communists and interested in winning over Muslim support and weakening the anti-Bolshevik forces among the Muslims, the Communists granted political and cultural autonomy to various Muslim peoples. But even when the Soviet leadership in Moscow tried to support the aspirations for autonomy of certain Muslim peoples, such as the Bashkirs in 1918–19, they encountered hostility from the local Bolsheviks. After failing to convince Volga Muslims to work within a joint Tatar-Bashkir republic, the Politburo created an autonomous Bashkir Soviet Republic in March 1919 and a separate Tatar Soviet Socialist Republic in January 1920.

Tensions between Muslims and Russians did not dissipate, however, and within the Communist ranks there were serious fractures. In January 1919 Tashkent's Commissar of War mutinied against the soviet government and executed most of its members. The rebellion was quickly suppressed by the Cheka, which brutally cut down thousands in retaliation. Soviet Russia faced not only local Muslim hostility but also nearby British troops allied with the Whites. Moscow sent a high-level commission to Turkestan to replace the Tashkent soviet, and Lenin personally intervened to shift Communist policy in Turkestan in favor of the non-Russians. But though the Central Committee in Moscow was prepared to encourage the recruitment of Muslims into the Communist party and grant a degree of autonomy to Muslims, it balked when Muslim activists began to agitate for a single, unified state of all Turkic peoples. Moscow opposed unification of all Muslims and grew suspicious of nationalist tendencies within Communist ranks.

Deep in Central Asia, in the Ferghana Valley, a popular anti-Soviet movement emerged from a small number of bandits until it became a powerful opposition to the Communists. Known as the Basmachi movement, it fought to eliminate Russian rule in Central Asia. To increase their local support, the local Communists reluctantly acceded to Moscow's demands that Turkestan be declared an autonomous republic. The last Basmachi rebels, under Enver Pasha, were defeated in 1922. As the civil war came to an end and the danger of foreign intervention



Figure 4.2 A classroom of Uzbek women, 1921 (RIA Novosti).

receded, the Soviets organized Central Asia around an autonomous Turkestan republic and two “people’s republics”—Bukhara and Khwarezm—loosely affiliated with Soviet Turkestan.

Lenin and Stalin were anxious to consolidate Soviet power in the Volga region and Central Asia as the first step toward launching a revolutionary assault on Asia and the Middle East. Their policy was directed against “the most rapacious imperialist government on Earth,” as Lenin referred to Great Britain in a telegram to Amir Amanullah of Afghanistan. Early in 1918 Soviet Russia renounced the 1907 Anglo-Russian Convention, which had given tsarist Russia a sphere of influence in northern Persia and Britain a sphere in the south. As Russian troops withdrew, the British moved in, but the Soviets could do little but support a number of local rebels. Direct links were made with the Persian revolutionary Mirza Kuchuk Khan and the Turkish nationalist forces under Mustapha Kemal. After the easy Sovietization of Azerbaijan in April 1920, Russia was once again a player in the northern Middle East. In September the Communists organized a Congress of the Peoples of the East in Baku, and Zinoviev proclaimed a revolutionary jihad against European imperialism. Soviet governments appeared in Enzeli and Gilan in northern Iran.

But the Kremlin reassessed its revolutionary strategy in 1921. When at the beginning of that year the British backed the takeover of Persia by the soldier Reza Shah, the Soviet government signed a treaty with Reza that permitted Russia to intervene in Persia if a third power attacked it. To solidify relations with its unstable neighbor to the south, Soviet Russia abandoned rebels like Kuchuk Khan and acted in Persia in ways not very different from its tsarist predecessor. Similarly in Turkey, the Soviet government supported the westernizing nationalist

Mustapha Kemal against the West and signed an agreement with him dividing Armenia, but it later turned a blind eye when Kemal imprisoned and executed local Communists. State interests took priority over the elusive quest for the international revolution.

NATIONALIST AND CLASS STRUGGLES

The revolution of 1917 and the subsequent civil war were interpreted by the Marxists as a civil war of class against class, worker against peasant and bourgeois, city against country. Nationalists, in contrast, interpreted the struggle as a national war of Russians against non-Russians, the center against the peripheries. But ethnic and class conflicts were complexly intertwined. Although in the national peripheries the conflict took on aspects of a national war, the social struggles between workers and industrialists, propertied society and the lower classes, city and countryside were present almost everywhere. Reformist or revolutionary intellectuals among non-Russians, like the Jadidists among the Muslims, were torn between their ethnic compatriots and the modernizing agenda of the Russian-led socialist revolution.

For most non-Russians in Russia and along its periphery a sense of nationhood that overrided and superseded local, religious, tribal, or class identities hardly existed before the revolution. Nationalism was still largely concentrated among the ethnic intelligentsia, the students, and the lower middle classes of the towns, with at best a fleeting following among broader strata. Nationalist leaderships were most successful where they were able to combine social reform with their programs of self-definition, autonomy, or independence. This occurred in Georgia, where the Mensheviks carried both the banner of the nation and the red flag of social revolution. But in Estonia the Bolsheviks lost out when they neglected national aspirations in favor of exclusive focus on social cleavages. Where social, particularly agrarian, reform was delayed or neglected, as in Ukraine under the Rada, ethnic political aspirations alone did not prove strong enough to sustain nationalist intellectuals in power. For ethnic leaders who faced a peasant majority indifferent to their claims to power and were caught up in an uneven struggle with the Bolsheviks, as in Belorussia, Lithuania, and Latvia, an appeal to the Great Powers of central and western Europe became the last resort. And the intervention of foreigners, particularly by the Germans in the crucial first months after the October Revolution and the Poles at the end of the civil war, radically altered the way the revolution turned out in the borderlands.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

For overviews of the nationalities of the Russian Empire and the early Soviet years from very different perspectives, see Richard Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism, 1917–1923* (Cambridge, MA 2nd ed., 1964); Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford, CA, 1993); Walker Connor, *The National Question in Marxist-Leninist Theory*

and Strategy (Princeton, NJ, 1984); H elene Carr ere d'Encausse, *The Great Challenge: Nationalities and the Bolshevik State, 1917-1930* (New York, 1991); Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca, NY, 2001); Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin (eds.), *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin* (Oxford, 2001); and Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca, NY, 2005).

On the nationalities of South Caucasia, see Firuz Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia (1917-1921)* (New York, 1951); Tadeusz Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan, 1905-1920: The Shaping of National Identity in a Muslim Community* (Cambridge, 1985); Audrey L. Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks: Power and Identity Under Russian Rule* (Stanford, CA, 1992); Richard G. Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road to Independence, 1918* (Berkeley, CA, 1967); and his *The Republic of Armenia*, 4 vols. (Berkeley, CA, 1971-96); Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation* (Bloomington, IN, 2nd ed., 1994); *Looking Toward Ararat: Armenia in Modern History* (Bloomington, IN, 1993); (ed.), *Transcaucasia, Nationalism and Social Change* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2nd ed., 1996).

On Central Asia, see Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone, *Russia and Nationalism in Central Asia: The Case of Tadjikistan* (Baltimore, 1970); Martha Brill Olcott, *The Kazakhs* (Stanford, CA 2nd ed., 1995); Edward A. Allworth (ed.), *Central Asia. A Century of Russian Rule* (New York, 1967) and his *The Modern Uzbeks, from the Fourteenth Century to the Present: A Cultural History* (Stanford, CA, 1990); Douglas Northrop, *Veiled Empire: Gender and Power in Stalinist Central Asia* (Ithaca, NY, 2004); Adrienne Edgar, *Tribal Nation: The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan* (Princeton, NJ, 2004); and Adeb Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia* (Berkeley, CA, 1999).

On the Baltic peoples, see Toivo U. Raun, *Estonia and the Estonians* (Stanford, CA, 1987); Andrejs Plakans, *The Latvians: A Short History* (Stanford, CA, 1995); Andrievs Ezerģailis, *The Latvian Impact on the Bolshevik Revolution* (Boulder, CO, 1983); Alfred Erich Senn, *The Emergence of Modern Lithuania* (New York, 1959); and Georg von Rauch, *The Baltic States: The Years of Independence, 1917-1940* (London, 1974).

The best book on the Jews in the early Soviet period is Zvi Y. Gitelman, *Jewish Nationality and Soviet Politics: The Jewish Sections of the CPSU, 1917-1930* (Princeton, NJ, 1972). A broader look is taken by Benjamin Pinkus, *The Jews of the Soviet Union: The History of a National Minority* (Cambridge, 1988); and in an extraordinary work by Yuri Slezkine, *The Jewish Century* (Princeton, NJ, 2004).

On Ukraine, the following books are indispensable: John Armstrong, *Ukrainian Nationalism* (New York, 1963); John Reshetar, *The Ukrainian Revolution, 1917-1920: A Study in Nationalism* (Princeton, NJ, 1952); Arthur E. Adams, *Bolsheviks in the Ukraine: The Second Campaign, 1918-1919* (New Haven, CT, 1963); and James E. Mace, *Communism and the Dilemmas of National Liberation: National Communism in Soviet Ukraine, 1918-1923* (Cambridge, MA, 1983). On Belorussia, see Nicholas P. Vakar, *Belorussia, The Making of a Nation: A Case Study* (Cambridge, MA, 1956). For Finland, see Anthony F. Upton, *The Finnish Revolution, 1917-1918* (Berkeley, CA, 1988); and Risto Alapuro, *State and Revolution in Finland* (Berkeley, CA, 1988).