

The Nature of Soviet Place-Names

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DURING THE LAST 50 YEARS, NO COUNTRY HAS changed and reorganized its internal territorial-administrative structure and boundaries with such frequency as has the U.S.S.R. In league with this has gone the alteration and replacement of the names of thousands of populated places of all sizes. Of the total of about 709,000 populated places in the U.S.S.R.², probably as many as half have had their names changed (altered, replaced, coined, or abolished) by official action since the 1917 revolution³. In fact, an entire new genre of place-names, clearly distinguishable from prerevolutionary names, has been created in the Soviet Union. It is with the nature of these new-style Soviet place-names that this survey is concerned.

Reasons For Name Changes

Russian place-names have been changed for a number of reasons. Many hamlets (*khutora*) and small villages (*derevni*) have been abandoned and razed in programs for rural village consolidation (see note 2), and their names have been abolished. Conversely, new names were coined for newly established settlements⁴. Secondly, the gender of a Russian (Ukrainian and Belorussian as well) proper place-name often corresponds with the gender of the generic name of the legal status of the place. For example, a small village or *derevnya*—a

¹ Abbreviations: f. = formerly, NT = new town, orig. = originally. The Board on Geographic Names transliteration system is used.

² USSR, Soviet Ministrov, Tsentral'noye statisticheskoye upravleniye, *Itogi Vsesoyuznoy perepisi naseleniya 1959 goda: SSSR: svodnyy tom* (Moscow, 1962), pp. 35 and 38. The 1959 census figure probably represents the number of populated places at about its greatest, because before World War II the U.S.S.R. had a smaller territory and because the major effects of the rural village consolidation program occurred after 1959. There was no published census between those of 1939 and 1959.

³ For example, the 1970 census reports a total of 475,000 populated places, down a hardly believable 33 percent from 1959 (see note 2). USSR, Soviet Ministrov, Tsentral'noye statisticheskoye upravleniye, *Itogi Vsesoyuznoy perepisi naseleniya 1970 goda* (Moscow, 1972), vol. I, pp. 76 and 146.

⁴ For maps showing the locations of Soviet new towns, see B. S. Khorev, *Gorodskiy poseleniya SSSR* (Moscow, 1968), figs. 6 and 7.

feminine noun—would have a feminine-gender name such as Dobraya or Leninovka. If this same settlement were later raised to the status of a *selo* (rural council seat, township center)—a neuter noun—the generic endings would normally be changed to the neuter and we would thus have Dobroye or Leninovo⁵.

The third reason for place-name modification is political. Because of the intolerant nature of Soviet Marxist-Leninist dogma and practice, with their wholesale rejection of complete segments of prerevolutionary Russian institutions, entire classes of prerevolutionary place-names became unacceptable. This was most true of names of a religious, political, monarchical, surnominal, or foreign linguistic origin⁶. Many of the name changes have been undertaken in broad renaming programs as various official policies and actions were put into force. This occurred not only during the immediate postrevolutionary period, but throughout the Soviet era to the present, e.g., (a) when national minorities were banished to eastern regions (the Volga Germans, southern Ukrainian Germans, Crimean Tatars, et al.), (b) after Stalin fell from official favor, and (c) most recently when Chinese-origin place-names and physical feature names in the Soviet Far East were replaced with Russian names as a means of weakening Chinese historical claims for return of the region to China (December 1972)⁷.

Place-Name Categories

More interesting than the categories of discarded names are the kinds of new Soviet-style names with which they were replaced. Ironically, the categories of the new names basically are reformations of the prerevolutionary categories: religious (Marxism-Leninism replacing Russian Orthodoxy), political, monarchical (the Soviet rulers replacing the tsars), and surnominal (surnames of officially revered persons replacing names of noble or land-owning families). Only names of foreign linguistic origin have not been reconstituted. For the present purposes of classification, however, the following six more precise categories are more suited to Soviet place-names: (a) personal (b) descriptive, (c) physical, (d) historical, (e) political, and (f) kolkhoz and sovkhoz.

⁵ Theodore Shabad, *Geography of the USSR* (New York City, 1951), p. 49. However, to the present observer this rule appears to be practiced as much in the breach as in the observance.

⁶ There are some notable and unexplainable exceptions which have persevered, e.g., Arkhangel'sk (archangel), Belaya Tserkov' (white church), Bogodukhov (spirit of God), Kronshtadt (German for crown city), and Voznesensk (ascension).

⁷ *New York Times*, January 28, 1973, March 8, 1973, and March 25, 1973; *Washington Post*, March 12, 1973. The text of the decree changing the place-names is in *Vedomosti Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR*, no. 1 (1659), January 1973, pp. 43-44; the decrees renaming the physical features (203 rivers, 21 mountains, 11 bays, seven mountain ranges, five passes, one lake) are in *Sobraniye postanovleniy pravitel'stva Rossiyskoy SFSR*, 1973. no. 2, art. 7, pp. 18-26. China reacted by calling the actions a provocation and an attempt to rewrite history: *New York Times*, March 8, 1973; *Washington Post*, March 12, 1973.

(a) Personal place-names are those derived from the surnames of persons, mainly from the surnames of the members of the Soviet pantheon—Marx, Engels, and above all Lenin⁸. Such names are usually formed by suffixing the surname, e.g., a list of Lenin-based place-names follows: Lenin, Lenino, (imeni) Lenina, Leninka, Leninovka, Leninovo, Leninskiy, Leninskoye, Leninskaya, Leninsk, Leningrad, Leningradskoye, Leninabad, Leninakan, et al. (not to mention Il'ichëvsk, from Lenin's patronym, and Ul'yanovsk, from his original surname)⁹. In like fashion settlements have been named after other Soviet political figures, e.g., Artëm (Sergeyev), Demidov, Dzerzhinskiy, Frunze, Kalinin, Kamo (Ter-Petrosyan), Khalturin, Kingisepp, Kirov, Konakov, Kuybyshev, Makhach, Makharadze, Nogin, Ordzhonikidze, Petrovskiy, Roshal', Stepan Shaumyan, Sverdlov, Tskhakaya, Tsulukidze, Tsyurupa, Voroshilov (now rehabilitated), Zagorskiy, and Zhdanov. A few towns have been renamed in honor of well-known deceased foreign communists—the towns of Dimitrov (Bulg., f. Novoekonomicheskoye), Georgiu-Dezh (Rom., f. Svoboda, later Liski), Karlo-Libknekhtovsk (Ger., after K. Liebknecht, NT 1965), Tol'yatti (Ital., Togliatti, f. Stavropol'-na-Volge), and Torez (Fr., Thorez, f. Chistyakovo).

Numerous other places have been renamed after Soviet and late prerevolutionary heroes and honorees, e.g., aviator Babushkin, general Budënnyy, Civil War hero Chapayev, physicist Chaplygin, W.W. II heroes Chekalin and Chernyakhov, aviator Chkalov, pedologist Dokuchayev, Civil War hero Furmanov, cosmonaut Gagarin, geologist Gubkin, W.W. II heroes Gur'yev and Gusev, geologist Karpinskiy, Civil War hero Kotov, geographer Kropotkin, W.W. II hero Ladushkin, Civil War hero Lazov, biologist Michurin, aviator Nesterov, explorer Nevel'skoy, aviator Osipenko, W.W. II hero Panfilov, geographer Przheval'skiy, Civil War hero Shchors, aviator Serov, Civil War heroes Tutayev and Vakrushev, W.W. II hero Vatutin, marshal Zhukov, and scientist Zhukovskiy.

⁸ The once-numerous Stalin-based names were all eliminated in 1961, in many cases being replaced with Lenin-based names. The fact that Stalin was the only member of the pantheon to have numerous places named after him during his lifetime is one manifestation of the "personality cult" centered on him. The original decree of September 11, 1957 banning the naming of settlements after living persons appeared in *Vedomosti Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR*, 1957, no. 19, art. 494, and *Izvestiya*, September 12, 1957. This eliminated all Voroshilov, Molotov, Malenkov, and Kaganovich place-names, yet the Stalin-based names were not immediately affected. Marx and Engels names have always been few, possibly because of anti-German nationalistic feelings.

⁹ U.S., Interior Department, Board on Geographic Names, *Official Standard Names Gazetteer no. 42: U.S.S.R.* (Washington, June, 1970), 2nd edn., vol. IV, pp. 54-61, lists approximately 280 Lenin-based populated place-names for the U.S.S.R.; also 30 Il'ich-based names (vol. II, pp. 665-666); and 123 Ul'yanov-based names (vol. VII, pp. 43-45). Two interesting articles which detail all kinds of other topo-features (powerplants, factories, canals, mountains, etc.) named after Lenin are I. Yerofeyev, "Imeni Lenina", *Zemlya i lyudi* (Moscow, 1970), pp. 99-101, with map; and L. R., "Imie Lenina na mapach", *Poznaj Swiat*, no. 2, February 1970, pp. 24-25, with map.

Other towns have been named after artists, writers, and composers—Kazakh poet Abay (Kunanbayev), poet Dem'yan Bednyy, writer/critic Belinskiy, composer Chaykovskiy (Tchaikovsky), dramatist Chekhov, poet Derzhavin, Kazakh poet Dzhabul (Dzhambayev), writer/revolutionary Gor'kiy (Peshkov), Ukrainian writer Ivan Franko, writers Lermontov and Pushkin, composer Rimskiy-Korsakov, writer Serafimovich (Popov), Ukrainian writer/artist Shevchenko, Ukrainian writer Lesya Ukrainka, et al.¹⁰ Some places have been renamed after officially approved historical figures—e.g., 19th-C. general Bagration, 17th-C. explorer Khabarov, 17th-C. Ukrainian statesman Khmel'nitskiy, 18th-C. scientist Lomonosov, 19th-C. admiral Makarov, 15th-C. Uzbek poet/philosopher Navoi, 18th-C. peasant revolutionaries Pugachëv and Salavat, 18th-C. foreign trader Shelikhov, 18th-C. general Suvorov, and 16th-C. conqueror of Siberia Yermak¹¹.

(b) The second major category of names, the descriptive, consists of names which describe economic activities carried on within the settlement. Numerous villages with politically unacceptable names were rechristened with innocuous names depicting pleasant conditions, e.g., Dobroye (good), Druzhba (amity), Mirnoye (peaceful), Schastlivoye (happy, fortunate), Vesëloye (cheerful), etc. A few towns have been given pleasant names like Divnogorsk (wondrous mountain, NT 1957), Svetlogorsk (bright mountain, f. Shatilki), and Svetlovodsk (clear water, f. Kremges, earlier Khrushchëv, NT 1954).

Other towns have been given functional names, such as those named after local industries: Elektrogorsk (electro-mountain, f. Elektroperedacha), Elektrostal' (electro-steel, f. Zatish'ye), Novokuznetsk (new forge, f. Kuznetsk, later Stalinsk), Novoshakhtinsk (new mine, orig. Novoshakhtinsk, later Komintern), Shakhtërsk (miner, f. Katyk), Shakhty (mines, f. Aleksandrovs-Grushevskiy), and Zugres (acronym from *Zuyevskaya gosudarstvennaya regional'naya elektricheskaya stantsiya*, Zuyevskaya State Regional Electric Station, NT 1930). Still others have been named after local mineral deposits: Antratsit (anthracite, f. Bokovo-Antratsit), Apatity (apatite, NT 1935), Asbest (asbestos, prerevo.), Boksitogorsk (bauxite mountain, NT 1935), Gidrotorf (hydraulic peat, NT 1925), Kentau (ore mountain [Kazakh], NT 1955), Magnitogorsk (magnetic mountain, NT 1929), Marganets (manganese, prerevo.), Mednogorsk (copper mountain, NT 1939), Neftechala (oil hole [Azer.], f. Khan-Kishlak, NT 1926), Neftekamsk (oil + Kama river, NT 1963), Nikel' (nickel, NT ca. 1950), Rudnyy (ore [adj.], f. Lifudzin), Slantsy (shale, NT early 1930's), Soligorsk (salt mountain, NT 1959), Uglegorsk (coal mountain, f. Khatsapetovka), Uglekamensk (coal stone, f. Severnyy Suchan), Zheleznogorsk (iron mountain, NT 1957), et al.¹²

¹⁰ For additional surnames included in this group see K. S. Gorbachevich, *Russkiye geograficheskiye nazvaniya* (Moscow and Leningrad, 1965), p. 57.

¹¹ I. M. Shutov, *Goroda v kotorykh my zhivem: tsify i fakty* (Moscow, 1967), p. 68.

¹² For a more complete list of these see Lev Uspenskiy, *Zagadki toponimiki* (Moscow, 1969), pp. 147-150.

(c) Places named after physico-geographical features or regions form the third major category: Angarsk (Angara [river], NT 1948), Balkhash (Lake Balkhash, NT 1937), Baltiysk (Baltic, f. Pillau), Belogorsk [in Amur province] white mountain, f. Aleksandrovsk, later Kuybyshevka-Vostochnaya), Belomorsk (White Sea, NT 1938), Biryusinsk (Biryus [river], f. Suyetikha), Chernomorskoye (Black Sea, f. Ak-Mechet'), Dal'negorsk (far mountain, f. Tetyukhe), Dal'nerechensk (far river, f. Iman), Desnogorsk (Desna [river] + mountain, NT 1974), Dneprodzerzhinsk (Dnepr [river] + Dzerzhinskiy [political figure], f. Kamenskoye), Dnepropetrovsk (Dnepr [river] + Petrovskiy political figure), f. Yekaterinoslav), Dnestrovsk (Dnestr [river], f. Kuchurgan), Donetsk (Donets [river], orig. Yuzovka, later Stalin, Stalino),¹³ Kaspiysk (Caspian, f. Dvigatel'stroy), Kaspiyskiy (Caspian, f. Lagan'), Krasnodon (red Don [river], f. Sorokino), Krasnokamsk (red Kama [river], NT 1929), Krasnoural'sk (red Ural [mountains], NT 1925), Nizhnegorskiy (lower mountain, f. Seytler), Primorskoye (maritime, f. Nogaysk), Razdol'noye (expansive, f. Ak-Sheikh), Severodonetsk (Severskiy Donets [river], f. Yama), Severodvinsk (Severnaya [northern] Dvina [river], f. Molotovsk), Tselinograd (virgin land city, f. Akmolinsk), Volgodonsk (Volga-Don [canal], NT 1948), Volgograd (Volga City, f. Tsaritsyn, later Stalingrad), Volgorechensk (Volga River, NT 1964), Volzhsk (Volga, f. Lopatino), Volzhskiy (Volga [adj.], NT 1951), Zapolyarnyy (trans-polar, NT 1955), Zaporozh'ye (after the Zaporozh'ye Cossacks, from *za porog* = across the rapids, f. Aleksandrovsk), et al.¹⁴

(d) The fourth category consists of towns which have had their indigenous or original names restored. Many of these restorations are non-Slavic names which were granted as a token concession to an ethnic group or national minority.¹⁵ The earlier official names usually were of Russian origin. Among these are Alma-Ata (Kazakh, f. Vernyy), Ashkhabad (Turkm., f. Poltoratsk), Berdyansk (Russ./Ukr., f. Osipenko¹⁶), Dushanbe (Tadzhik, f. Dyushambe, later Stalinabad), Klaypeda/Klaipeda (Lith., f. Memel), Kyzyl (Tuvinian, f. Belotsarsk), Kzyl-Orda (Kazakh, f. Ak-Mechet, later Perovsk), Mary (Turkm., f. Merv), Nar'yan-Mar (f. Imeni Dzerzhinskogo, renamed when made the capital of the Nenets National District [*okrug*]), Syktyvkar (Komi, f. Ust'-Sysol'sk), Tbilisi (Gruz., f. Tiflis), Tskhinvali (Gruz., orig. Tskhinvali, later Staliniri), Ulan-Ude (Buryat, f. Verkhneudinsk), Vil'nyus/Vilnius (Lith., f. Vilna), Yerevan (Arm., f.

¹³ For name changes of major towns in the Donbass region see *Kniga o Donbasse: priroda, lyudi, dela* (Donetsk, 1972), pp. 164-197.

¹⁴ Shutov, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

¹⁵ This is one of several actions which the Russians can use to counter accusations of Great-Russian chauvinism or Russification.

¹⁶ When the name Berdyansk was restored to the port city, the name Osipenko was retained by a smaller settlement to the north, which had concurrently been called Osipenko. *Bol'shaya Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya* [BSE], 2nd edn., vol. 16, map opp. p. 446; "Osipenko", *BSE*, 2nd edn. vol. 31, p. 282; "Berdyansk", *BSE*, 3rd edn., vol. 3, p. 211.

Erivan), and Yoshkar-Ola (Mari, f. Tsarevokokshaysk, later Krasnokokshaysk.¹⁷

(e) Places named after officially sanctioned political concepts or occupations comprise the fifth and largest category, common not only in town names, but also of rural villages. Some of the larger towns with political names are the following: Chervonograd (red city, f. Khristinopol'), Chervonopartizansk (red partisan, NT 1947), Druzhba (amity, f. Khutor Mikhaylovskiy), Kominternovskoye (Comintern, from *Communist International*, f. Antono-Kodintsevo), Kommunarsk (communard, f. Alchevsk, later Voroshilovsk), Komsomol'sk-na-Amure (Komsomol¹⁸, from *Kommunisticheskiy soyuz molodezhi* [Communist Union of Youth], + on the Amur [river], NT 1932), Krasnoarmeysk¹⁹ (Red Army, f. Grishino), Krasnodar (red-given, f. Yekaterinodar), Krasnograd (red city, f. Konstantinograd), Krasnogvardeysk (red guard, f. Gatchina), Krasnomayskiy (red May, f. Klyuchinskiy), Krasnoye (red, f. Glinnoye), Krasnyy Luch (red ray, f. Krindachevka), Mayskiy (May [adj.], NT 1965), Molodogvardeysk (youth guard, NT 1955), Oktyabr'skiy²⁰ (Octobrian, NT 1937), Partizansk (partisan, f. Suchan), Pershotravensk (May Day [Ukr.], f. Shakhtërskoye), Pervomaysk¹² (May Day, f. Ol'viopol'), Rodinskoye (motherland, NT 1952), Sovetsk²² (Soviet, f. Tilsit), Zhovten' (October [Ukr.], f. Yezupol'), Zhovtnevoye (Octobrian [Ukr.], f. Bogoyavlenskoye), and Imeni 26 Bakinskikh Komissarov (in the name of the 26 Baku commissars, NT ca. 1951).

(f) Kolkhoz (collective farm) and sovkhoz (state farm) names constitute the sixth and last category, even though such names consist essentially of forms assignable to the first five categories. Since the farms were newly organized entities and most of them were required to have politically significant names, we encounter in this category the most fervidly politically oriented, most characteristically "Soviet" body of place-names. About half of the sovkhozes are named directly after the town or village at which they are headquartered, whereas

¹⁷ Belgorod-Dnestrovskiy (Russian for white city of the Dnestr river, f. Akkerman) had its earlier Romanian name restored in Russian-language form, the original having been Cetatea Alba, i.e., white city. Other cities which have had their original *Russian* names restored are Nolinsk (temporarily Molotovsk), Orenburg (temp. Chkalov), Perm' (temp. Molotov), Ussuriysk (temp. Voroshilov), et al. Gorbachevich, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

¹⁸ In U.S., Interior Department, Board on Geographic Names, *Official Standard Names Gazetteer no. 42: U.S.S.R.* (Washington, June, 1970), 2nd edn., vol. III, pp. 510-512, there are 121 Komsomol-based names of populated places.

¹⁹ In *ibid.*, vol. III, pp. 630-678, there are approximately 1,920 *krasnyy*-based place-names as well as 119 *chervonnyy*-based names (vol. II, pp. 83-86). Thus, *krasnyy* (red) is the most common root-word in Soviet place-names.

²⁰ In *ibid.*, vol. V, pp. 31-37, there are 282 *oktyabr'*-based place-names as well as 31 *zhovten'*-based names (vol. VII, pp. 734-735).

²¹ In *ibid.*, vol. V, pp. 249-255 and 256-257, there are 351 *pervoye maya*-based place-names as well as 11 *pershe travnya*-based names (vol. V, pp. 244-245).

²² In *ibid.*, vol. VI, pp. 429-432, there are 103 *sovet*-based place-names as well as 4 *radyanskiy*-based names (vol. V, p. 555).

kolkhoz names, as well as the remaining sovkhoz names, generally bear no relation to the original local toponymy.²³ In some cases newly established farm settlements have been named after the name of the farm of which they are part, a practice which may become commoner in the future as economically inviable hamlets and small villages are razed and merged into new larger settlements in accord with Soviet programs for rural village consolidation.

The following are some of the standard Soviet kolkhoz and sovkhoz names²⁴ and their translations:

Aktivist (Activist)

Avangard (Vanguard—re communism as the vanguard of history)

Avrora (Aurora—name of the cruiser which fired on the Winter Palace during the October Revolution)

Bol'shevik (Bolshevik)

Borets (Fighter)

Burevestnik (Stormy Petrel—in the sense of a revolutionary)

Druzhiba (Amity, Friendship)

Gigant (Giant—re the size of the farm)

Imeni XXI s"yezda KPSS (In the Name of the Twenty-first CPSU Congress—or any other numbered CPSU congress)

Imeni Lenina (In Lenin's Name—or any other politically approved surname)

Imeni XVIII parts"yezda (In the Name of the Eighteenth Party Congress)

Iskra (The Spark—title of the first Bolshevik newspaper)

Komintern (Comintern—from *Communist International*)

Kommunist (Communist)

Kommunizm (Communism)

Komsomolets (a member of the Communist Youth League—Komsomol)

Krasnaya zvezda (Red Star—an official state symbol)

Krasnoye znamya (Red Banner—the banner of communism)

Krasnyy mayak (Red Beacon—the beacon symbolizes communism or the Party as the guiding light of history)

Krasnyy Oktyabr' (Red October—the October Revolution)

Krasnyy pakhar' (Red Plowman)

Krasnyy seyatel' (Red Sower)

Leninskiy luch (Lenin's Ray—a ray of light or sunbeam symbolizes the economic and philosophical discoveries of Lenin, i.e., Leninism)

Leninskiy put' (Lenin's Way—symbolizes the course of historical development as interpreted by Lenin)

Novaya zhizn' (New Life—re communism as a new way of life)

²³ On December 31, 1972 there were 15,747 sovkhozes and 32,100 kolkhozes in the U.S.S.R.: USSR, Soviet Ministrov, Tsentral'noye statisticheskoye upravleniye, *Narodnoye khozyaystvo SSSR v 1972 g.* (Moscow, 1973), p. 283.

²⁴ From *Administrativno-territorial'noye deleniye Leningradskoy oblasti* (Leningrad, 1973), pp. 285-302; *Voronezhskaya oblast': admin.-terr. deleniye* (Voronezh, 1972), appendix; and *Tatarskaya ASSR: admin.-terr. deleniye* (Kazan', 1966), pp. 332-357. In Russian these names are always written within quote marks after the word *Kolkhoz* or *Sovkhoz*.

Novoye vremya (New Time—re socialism/communism as a new historical stage)
 Novyy byt (New Way of Life)
 Novyy mir (New World—the kind of world resulting from communism)
 Pamyat' Il'icha (In Memory of Il'ich—Il'ich is Lenin's patronym)
 Pamyat' Lenina (In Memory of Lenin)
 Partizan (Partisan)
 Pervoye Maya (First of May, May Day—an official holiday)
 Pioner (Pioneer)
 Pobeda Oktyabrya (Victory of October—i.e., of the revolution)
 Pravda (The Truth—the name of the official newspaper)
 Progress (Progress)
 Put' Il'icha (Il'ich's Way—Il'ich is Lenin's patronym, cf. Leninskiy put')
 Put' k kommunizmu (Way to Communism)
 50 let Oktyabrya (50 Years of October—here October symbolizes socialism/communism; other numbers of years are used in other farm names; the use of 50 in this case indicates that the farm was founded in 1967, the fiftieth anniversary of the revolution, or was renamed then)
 Pyatiletka (Five-Year Plan)
 Rassvet (Dawn—re the establishment of communism as the dawn of a new order)
 Rodina (Homeland, Motherland)
 Serp i Molot (Hammer and Sickle—an official state symbol)
 Sotsializm (Socialism—the historical stage preceding communism)
 Triumf (Triumph—i.e., of communism)
 Trud (Labor)
 Udarnik (Shock-Worker)
 Urozhay (Harvest)
 Vernyy put' (True Way—i.e., socialism/communism)
 Volna revolyutsii (Wave of the Revolution—re the spread of communism throughout the world)
 Voskhod (Rise—i.e., of the new order or communism)
 Vostok (The East)
 Vpered (Forward—i.e., to communism)
 Zavety Lenina (Lenin's Legacy)
 Zarya (Dawn—cf. Rassvet)
 Zolotoy Kolos (Golden Ear of Grain)

Regional Renaming Programs

Special consideration must be given to several regions where sweeping name-change programs have been carried out. Kaliningrad province (oblast), on the Baltic Sea between Lithuania and Poland, was the northern half of East Prussia (Ostpreussen), a part of Germany, before World War II. As a result of the Potsdam Conference of 1945, the area was annexed by the U.S.S.R. and reorganized as Kaliningrad (f. Königsberg) province of the R.S.F.S.R.²⁵ All of

²⁵ Kaliningrad province is an exclave of the R.S.F.S.R., cut off from the main body of the republic by the Lithuanian and Belorussian S.S.R.'s.

the original inhabitants were relocated, and Russian settlers were brought in to take their places. Correspondingly, in July 1946 all of the German place-names were replaced with newly coined Russian-language names.²⁶ Thus, there was effected a total linguistic conversion of the local toponymy, a nationalistic political action scarcely paralleled in any country outside the Soviet bloc.²⁷ In all more than 1,554 names were changed.²⁸

A similar official renaming of some 1,050 non-Russian settlements took place in Crimea from 1945 on as a result of the Stalin regime's banishment of the Crimean Tatar nationality to Central Asia and Siberia and the abolition of the Crimean Tatar A.S.S.R. (decree of June 25, 1946), which was converted to a regular province.²⁹ Nearly all the Tatar names were changed to completely unrelated Russian ones. Only the most well-known of the Tatar names escaped abolition, viz., Bakhchisaray, the ancient Tatar capital, and a number of resorts along the south coast in the vicinity of Yalta. Though the Crimean Tatars have officially been "rehabilitated," few of them have been allowed to return to their

²⁶ The largest of these are Bagrationovsk (f. Preussisch Eylau), Baltiysk (f. Pillau), Chernyakhovsk (f. Insterburg), Dobrovol'sk (f. Schlossberg), Druzhba (f. Allenburg), Geroyskoye (f. Gertlauken), Gur'yevsk (f. Neuhausen), Gusev (f. Gumbinnen), Gvardeyskoye (f. Tapiau), Kaliningrad (f. Königsberg), Komsomol'sk (f. Löwenhagen), Krasnoles'ye (f. Hardteck), Krasnoznamensk (f. Haselberg), Ladushkin (f. Ludwigsort), Mamonovo (f. Heiligenbeil), Matrosovo (f. Uggehnen), Mayskoye (f. Mallwen), Neman (f. Ragnit), Nesterov (f. Ebenrode), Nivenskoye (f. Wittenberg), Novostroyevo (f. Trempen), Ozërki (f. Gross Lindenau), Ozërsk (f. Angerapp), Polesk (f. Labiau), Pravdinsk (f. Friedland), Primorsk (f. Fischhausen), Pushkino (f. Posmahlen), Rybachiy (f. Rossitten), Slvask (f. Heinrichswalde), Sovetsk (f. Tilsit), Svetlogorsk (f. Rauschen), Svoboda (f. Janichen), Ul'yanovo (f. Breitenstein), Vesnovo (f. Kussen), Yantarnyy (f. Palmnicken), Zelëno-gradsk (f. Cranz), Zheleznodorozhnyy (f. Gerdauen), and Znamensk (f. Wehlau).

²⁷ Comparable actions took place elsewhere within the U.S.S.R. when many former Japanese names were converted in southern Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands in the Soviet Far East. Also, Chinese names have been replaced in the Far East (see note 6). In the areas annexed from Finland in 1940 and 1944, Finnish place-names were changed to Russian ones, except within the Karelian A.S.S.R. (f. Karelo-Finnish S.S.R.). Conversely, western Ukraine and western Belorussia, annexed from Poland on December 4, 1939, cannot be included here, because most of the Polish names were simply converted to the corresponding Ukrainian or Belorussian (as well as Russian) spellings.

²⁸ According to USSR, Sovet Ministrov, Tsentral'noye statisticheskoye upravleniye, *Itogi Vsesoyuznoy perepisi naseleniya 1970 goda* (Moscow, 1972), vol. I, pp. 112 and 166, there were 1,554 populated places in the province in 1970; thus, on account of the gradual reduction of the number of such places because of amalgamation, there probably were considerably more than 1,554 named populated places at the time when the renaming took place (1946). Before 1946 under the German administration there were 1,659 populated places (*Gemeinden*): H. Hinkel, *Die Verwaltungsgliederung im sowjetisch besetzten nordlichen Ostpreussen: Stand vom 16 August 1967*, *Zeitschrift für Ostforschung*, vol. 18 (1969), no. 1, p. 59; also see the accompanying map.

²⁹ For a list of the renamed places in Crimea see Ukrainian SSR, Ispolkom Krymskogo oblastnogo soveta deputatov trud'yashchikhsya, *Spravochnik administrativno-territorial'nogo deleniya Krymskoy oblasti na 15 iyunya 1960 goda* (Simferopol', 1960), pp. 93-157.

homeland, and none of the abolished place-names has been restored.³⁰

All German place-names throughout the U.S.S.R. have been replaced with Russian names. These were most numerous in the former Volga German A.S.S.R., abolished on August 28, 1941 for alleged collaboration with the invading Germans, and in several smaller German settlement areas in southern Ukraine and Moldavia.³¹

Conclusion

There is abundant evidence that the Soviet government has had a long standing practice of changing the toponymic fabric of the U.S.S.R. to commemorate various ideological policies, official actions, and personal surnames. A Russian nationalistic bias has pervaded the entire process, since non-Russian-language names which have been changed have usually been replaced by Russian ones, except where original non-Russian historical names were restored as token concessions.

Even though new Russian-language place-names generally have not been introduced into the non-Slavic union republics on a large scale, new Soviet-style names nevertheless have been introduced in the indigenous languages of these republics to the same degree as elsewhere in the U.S.S.R. However, a more advanced stage of toponymic nationalism has been reached in certain regions of the three Slavic union republics, where broad programs of name-changing from non-Russian to Russian forms have been put through, as in Kaliningrad province, Crimea, and the former Volga German A.S.S.R.³² In effecting all of these official toponymic practices, the Soviet government has created an entire new genre of place-names, which are clearly distinct from their prerevolutionary precursors.

³⁰ For an account of the deportation and rehabilitation of the Crimean Tatars and the Soviet Germans, see Robert Conquest, *The Nation Killers: the Soviet Deportation of Nationalities* (New York City, 1970), passim.

³¹ For the former German names in the Volga German A.S.S.R. see USSR, Sovet narodnykh komissarov, *Bol'shoy Sovetskiy Atlas Mira* (Moscow, 1939), vol. II, plate 51. This can be compared to USSR, Glavnoye upravleniye geodezii i kartografii, *Atlas Mira* (Moscow, 1954), plate 35/36, which carries the new names. For German names in southern Ukraine and Moldavia see C. B. Peterson, *Geographical Aspects of Foreign Colonization in Prerevolutionary New Russia*, Ph.d. dissertation, University of Washington (Seattle, 1969), pp. 104-180.

³² Another indication of Russian nationalism is the fact that in the non-Russian Slavic union republics (Ukraine and Belorussia) there is an official Russian-language spelling for every Ukrainian and Belorussian place-name. The Ukrainian and Belorussian forms are rarely used in any Russian-language printed matter.