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**IMPERIALIZING THE SOVIET FEDERATION?
THE INSTITUTION OF THE SECOND SECRETARY
IN THE SOVIET REPUBLICS***

“This is not Arkhangelsk, but a republic with its own history, traditions and peculiarities, and we locals know better what to do and how to do it, without your preaching and sermons.” Thus, in the mid-1960s, Antanas Sniečkus, the enraged leader of Soviet Lithuania, shouted at Leonid Konratyev, an instructor from the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), who was overseeing the affairs of the republic from the center.¹ Sniečkus did not say “empire,” but his idea was clear: treating a Soviet republic as if it were an inner Russian province betrayed imperialist ignorance, and only a chauvinist could be insensitive to the matter of national specificity already acknowledged by Lenin.

Although empires are generally perceived negatively today, some scholars tend to normalize the Soviet empire as a federative state. One reason for equating the concepts of federation and empire is the opinion that no ideal federations exist without coercion from the center. Like empires, federa-

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¹ Vytautas Astrauskas. *Įrėminti laike: prisiminimai ir pamąstymai*. Vilnius, 2006. P. 64.

tions need to preserve their integrity. According to this point of view, the imperialism criticized by nationalists is often a figment, especially when applied to the Soviet Union, when the nationalists advocate the disruption of the state, rather than bringing it closer to a more perfect form of federation.² This article argues that rather than speaking in terms of some pure types (federations or empires), it is more productive to pay attention to political dynamics, when “imperializing” or “federalizing” trends come to dominate the initial political arrangement.

At the center of this article’s research are the cohort of second secretaries (hereafter, Seconds) of the Central Committee (CC) of the Communist Parties of the Soviet republics. Analyzing the Soviet nationality and cadres policy, Yaroslav Bilinsky in 1967 was the first to direct attention to the phenomenon of the appointment of Seconds from nonnative cadres.³ Ten years later, John H. Miller, writing on the topic of the republics’ first and second secretaries, described more broadly the role of the Second, institutionalized by the center, as the controller of the first secretary.⁴ The archival sources available today allow us not only to state that a distinctive institution of the second secretary existed but also to reveal its genesis and evolution, and the functions performed by the Second in the Soviet republics. Although the historiography of Soviet imperial policy includes a wide discussion encompassing issues of nationality policy in the USSR, education and social mobility, migration and colonization, and their influence on overlapping local and all-Union identities, in this article I concentrate only on one part of the high Soviet bureaucracy – the apparatus of the Central Committee and the institution of the Party second secretaries in the Soviet republics, without going deeper into the broader institutional strains of the Soviet system. I consider Kremlin interventions in republic matters by sending center representatives to occupy high-level positions as an imperial moment, as well as something providing career opportunities for functionaries in both republics and the all-Union arena. These opportunities were limited to particular social and ethnic groups, giving them privileged positions and conditions in the Soviet high-level bureaucratic job market. My main question here is whether or not it was possible for Soviet rule to escape an imperial character in spite

² See Tania Raffass. *The Soviet Union: Federation or Empire?* Abingdon and New York, 2012.

³ Yaroslav Bilinsky. *The Rulers and the Ruled // Problems of Communism*. 1967. Vol. 16. P. 21.

⁴ John H. Miller. *Cadres Policy in Nationality Areas // Soviet Studies*. 1977. Vol. 29. No 1. P. 8.

of certain “affirmative action” measures and the introduction of a federal contract between the center and periphery as a new type of relationship.

Speaking on the failure of the USSR as a multinational polity, Mark R. Beissinger expresses doubts as to whether it is useful to see the USSR tautologically as an empire instead of making efforts to reveal why “‘the world’s first post-imperial state’ was vulnerable to framing as empire, how and why these framings varied over time and across a diverse population, why opportunities for constructing an alternative multinational space to empire failed.”⁵ It seems that the “post-imperial” policy of Lenin and Stalin was not consistent enough to get away from the prerevolutionary imperial heritage,⁶ considering that in the 1930s, Stalin had already introduced Rus-socentrism as a populist policy.⁷ Going further ahead to Khrushchev’s times, Ronald Suny argues that during the Khrushchev and Brezhnev years the very institutions and practices of the “federal” state fostered greater identification on the part of many nationalities with their own nations.⁸

This article aims to reveal the place of the institution of second secretaries in the political structure of the nominally federal state. The emergence of the Seconds in the mid-1950s changed the institutional landscape and the political behavior of both Moscow functionaries and the titular *nomenklaturas*.⁹ Although the introduction of the Seconds was presented as a sign of the increased trust by the Kremlin in the republic’s titular *nomenklaturas* compared to previous forms of control (such as VKP(b) bureaus for a republic or group of republics), it demonstrates the inability of the centralized state to escape from imperial patterns. The institution of the second secretary was first tried out as an experiment in Soviet politics in the Baltic republics,

⁵ Mark. R. Beissinger. Soviet Empire as “Family Resemblance” // *Slavic Review*. 2006. Vol. 65. No. 2. P. 302.

⁶ On the persistence of empires, see, for example, Alexander Motyl. *Why Empires Reemerge: Imperial Collapse and Imperial Revival in Comparative Perspective* // *Comparative Politics*. 1999. Vol. 31. No. 2. P. 127.

⁷ On the discussion of Stalin’s turn to Russification, see David Brandenberger. *Stalin’s Populism and the Accidental Creation of Russian National Identity* // *Nationalities Papers*. 2010. Vol. 38. No. 5. P. 728.

⁸ Ronald Grigor Suny. *Studying Empires* // *Ab Imperio*. 2008. No. 1. P. 21. For more on Soviet nationalities policy during the Khrushchev era, see Jeremy Smith. *Leadership and Nationalism in the Soviet Republics, 1951–1959* // Jeremy Smith and Melanie Ilic (Ed.). *Khrushchev in the Kremlin. Policy and Government in the Soviet Union, 1953–1964*. Abingdon and New York, 2011.

⁹ Titular *nomenklatura* denotes *nomenklatura* members of the republic’s officially dominant nationality that gave the name to that national republic.

providing the model that was then applied elsewhere. It was a reasonable and even innovative political measure, yet it fell short of providing a truly federalist solution for the enhanced governability of the Soviet multinational polity. The ethnic and social composition of the second secretaries allows for comparison with practices in the Russian Empire where, as argued by Alexander Etkind and Jeremy Smith,¹⁰ privileged ethnic groups also prevailed in the bureaucracy. Being introduced by the apparatus of the Central Committee before Khrushchev announced de-Stalinization at the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU in 1956, the position of the second secretary could be seen as a lost opportunity for the Soviet regime to find a better federalist solution than this institutionalized intervention into the affairs of Soviet republics. The next chance came only during the Gorbachev era, but it came too late: the perception of the second secretary as a “governor general” sent to the Soviet republics from the capital encouraged titular *nomenklaturas* to join nationalist movements.

The most important characteristics of the second secretary as a political institution were: (1) the second secretary was a nonnative cadre (mostly Russian, only four were Ukrainians);¹¹ (2) the republic’s first party secretary had to be a member of the local nationality, while the function of the second secretary was to supervise his moves; and (3) the second secretary must not be a “homegrown” cadre in the same republic. Although both Bylinsky and Miller mostly consider the nationality of the Seconds and reveal that these positions were occupied predominantly by Russians, I found it important to add the aspect of bureaucratic mobility. Even if some cases of the appointment of local Russians to the position existed, the general trend dictated by the center was to have here a functionary sent from the apparatus of the Central Committee of the CPSU (henceforth, “the apparatus”), or other Soviet republic rather than a local one. In some instances, such as in Kyrgyzstan in 1961, the dismissal from the position of the local Russian V. Stepkin and the appointment of Mikhail Gavrilov, who was sent from the Department for Party Organizational Work (henceforth, “the

¹⁰ Alexander Etkind. *Internal Colonization. Russia’s Imperial Experience*. Cambridge, 2011; Jeremy Smith. *Red Nations: The Nationalities Experience in and after the USSR*. Cambridge, 2013.

¹¹ Although native Seconds were appointed in the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR), and very likely in the Ukrainian SSR, no Belarusians were appointed to other Soviet republics as Seconds. While it is reasonable to think that native functionaries were appointed as Seconds in Belarus because it was, like Ukraine, a Slavic republic, it is not yet clear why no one of Belarusian origin was appointed to another Soviet republic.

Department”),¹² heralded the introduction of the institution of the second secretary in this republic: starting from this point, positions of the second secretary were always occupied by functionaries sent from the center, the only exception being that of the local Russian Anatolii Chubarov from 1966 to 1971. As a rule, second secretaries were former functionaries of the apparatus, usually an inspector from the Department, the head of a section in the Department, or even the head of the Department.

Azerbaijan was the first republic where the institution of the second secretary was introduced in December 1955. Seeking to restrict the particularism of the titular *nomenklatura*, Moscow sent to Baku Dmitry Yakovlev who had previously worked in the Department. This practice was followed in other Soviet republics, even if not synchronously. For example, in Lithuania and Latvia, we can see outsiders, rather than locals in the position of Seconds from the beginning of 1956 – in contrast to neighboring Estonia, where an Estonian from Russia, Leonid Lentsman, and his successor in this post, Estonian Artur Vader, worked up to the beginning of the 1970s.¹³ In the opinion of authors who have studied Soviet Estonia, Moscow trusted Estonian functionaries so much that they even occupied second-secretary posts, essentially reserved for Russians.¹⁴ Only in 1971 did the Russian Konstantin Lebedev, sent from Moscow, become Second in this republic.

Armenia was the last republic where the institution of the second secretary was introduced. The Russian Gennady Andreev was appointed second secretary here in 1979.¹⁵ So, it is from 1979 that we can see the fully established

¹² On July 10, 1948, the Department of the Party, Trade Union, and Komsomol Organs of the Central Committee of the VKP(b) (from 1952, the CPSU) was established, which on May 28, 1954, was divided into two departments: the Department of Party Work for the RSFSR, and the Department of Party Work for the Union Republics. On June 6, 1965, the two departments were united into the Department for Organizational Party Work of the Central Committee of the CPSU. In this article, all mentioned forms of the departments are called “the Department.” See http://www.knowbysight.info/2_KPSS/04295.asp.

¹³ It is not known precisely why or how the Estonians from the Russian SFSR managed to keep the Second’s post for so long, because in the late fall of 1956, in the republics of the Baltic region after mass protests, the CPSU CC apparatus suggested to L. Lentsman to keep under his leadership only the secretary for ideological questions, and to “dispatch to the Communist Party of Estonia an experienced worker as the second secretary of the Central Committee” for the vacant positions. See the report by the CPSU CC Propaganda and Agitation Department for Union Republics Head V. Snastin and the Organizational Party Work in the Republics Sector Head M. Gavrilov of 26 November 1956 to the CPSU CC in Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (RGANI). F. 5. Op. 33. D. 3. L. 92.

¹⁴ Rein Taagepera. Estonia. Return to Independence. Boulder, 1993. P. 99.

¹⁵ <http://www.az-libr.ru/index.shtml?Persons&0D4/4b64e58f/index>.

formation of second secretaries: representatives from Moscow resided in all the Soviet republics, except for the three Slavic republics.

The rule that functionaries of the apparatus, usually of the Department, were appointed as Seconds, was not absolute. During the period from 1955 to 1967, fourteen people not from the apparatus began to work as Seconds. This group included people who had earlier acquired very different experiences: in both Armenia and Estonia, which at that time had not yet formally introduced the institution of the second secretary, locals occupied this position, as well as cadres from other republics; at the initiative of Latvia's national communists, Vilis Kruminš was appointed there, with prior experience in the regions of the Russian Federation (rather than in the central apparatus), as well as former functionaries from central bureaus in Moscow (but not the Department).

Some republics had no representatives from the Department for quite a long time. For example, in Georgia, from the very beginning (1956), Pavel Kovanov, who had been deputy head of the Ideology Department (but not the Department for Party Organizational Work), presided as Second. Later, he was replaced by Albert Churkin, the former second secretary of the Krasnodar Regional Party Committee (1971–1975), and after he incurred the disfavor of the authorities on charges of corruption, Churkin was replaced by Gennady Kolbin, the former second secretary of the Sverdlovsk *obkom*. Nevertheless, even in the case of Georgia, which seems to contradict our hypothesis of the appointment of predominantly Department workers as Seconds in the republics, it was the result of sheer coincidence as much as of conscious cadres policy. For instance, Nikolai Belucha, the deputy chair of the Department at the beginning of the 1960s, was offered an option of where to go to work: Latvia or Georgia.¹⁶ He chose Latvia, and became a record holder among the Seconds: he held the position for sixteen years (1963 to 1978).

Beginning in December 1955, when D. Yakovlev was sent to Baku as the Second, and until the collapse of the Soviet Union, a total of eighty-three people had been appointed as second secretaries (see the **table** below). Of these, fifty-eight or nearly three-fourths fit our definition of the institution. More than half of them (at least thirty-seven) were the Seconds who had previously worked in the Department. The latter number is very high if we consider that only the upper-middle rank of the department's functionaries could be appointed as a Second (such as inspectors, heads of sectors, and with a few exceptions – deputy heads and heads of the Department, but none

¹⁶ Nikolai Belucha's twin sons, Andrey and Sergey, told me this at a meeting in Riga in April 2012.

from the lower rank of functionaries called “instructors”). Bearing in mind that only four (starting from the 1970s – five) territorial sectors responsible for the Union republics existed in the Department, and up to four inspectors worked in one at a time, we could predict that up to eight or nine functionaries of the apparatus were simultaneously being prepared for their duties as Seconds in the Union republics. This number, of course, could not satisfy the need for cadres for the turnover of the Seconds in twelve non-Slavic Union republics, and we can consider that this was the reason why the apparatus sometimes broke the rule and appointed people recruited from the functional sectors of the Department, other departments of the apparatus, and different regions of Soviet Union as the Seconds, or even promoted local functionaries of Russian background to the position of second secretary. Thus, we could predict that the very structure of the apparatus, the patterns of bureaucratic practices and the number of the Soviet republics was possibly one of the reasons why the institution of the second secretary was not introduced synchronically in all the Union republics.

What was the Second like? What personal traits and work experience lay at the basis of the behavioral strategies of this representative from the Center in a Soviet republic? As can be seen from biographical data, memoirs, and interviews, a typical second secretary – more than half – had an industrial background.¹⁷ They had graduated from a university or other institution of higher education in technical or industrial field and took their first jobs in factories as technicians or engineers. As young experienced specialists they embarked on their careers in the Young Communist League (Komsomol) or the Communist Party. This dominating characteristic of Seconds allows one to discern a certain Soviet universalism in the mentality of the Seconds, which was based on the principle of the unification of industrial production, especially after the so-called Kosygin reform of 1965. Unlike industry, agriculture and ideology required a better understanding of local peculiarities, and this was a possible reason why many of the Seconds with industrial backgrounds, especially beginning in the late Khrushchev period, were appointed. Furthermore, an industrial experience was very useful for the Second in his activity in a Union republic. He saw and presented himself to the members of a republic’s *nomenklatura* as a progressive man capable of following many – if not all – matters in the factories and plants of a republic.

¹⁷ I found information on the education and professional careers of forty-three out of fifty-eight Seconds: twenty-five of them had backgrounds in industry, two were engineers in railways and construction, six had agricultural backgrounds, two had pedagogical education, and eight started as Komsomol or party functionaries and ideologists.

Table. The Institution of the Second Secretaries in Union Republics.

Soviet republic	Total number of Seconds appointed in 1955–1991	Period of the institution of second secretaries	Number of Seconds sent by Moscow	Of these: number of seconds recruited from the Department
Armenia	6	1979–1991	3	2
Azerbaijan	7	1955–1991	7	4
Estonia	5	1971–1990	3	3
Georgia	8	1956–1989	6	0
Kazakhstan	10	1960–1971	4	1
Kirghizia	9	1961–1991	5	4
Latvia	7	1956–1990	6	5
Lithuania	6	1956–1988	5	5
Moldova	7	1961–1988	4	2
Tajikistan	6	1975–1991	6	3*
Turkmenistan	5	1960–1991	4	4
Uzbekistan	7	1959–1991	5	4
Total	83	–	58	37

Sources: Tsentralnyi Komitet KPSS, VKP(b), RKP(b), RSDRP(b): Istoriko-biograficheskii spravocnik / Ed. Iu. V. Goriachev. Moscow, 2005 (<http://www.az-libr.ru/index.htm?Persons&000/Src/0004/index>); personal files of V. Kharazov, N. Dybenko, B. Popov, B. Sharkov, N. Mitkin in the Lithuanian Special Archive and N. Belukha, V. Dmitriev, M. Gribkov, I. Strelkov in the State Archive of Latvia.¹⁸

Looking at it from a different angle, more often than not a typical second secretary was rather a man from a province. More than half of them grew up, received education, started their professional and party careers, and reached the position of a *gorkom* (city party committee) secretary, head of a department, or a secretary of an *obkom* (regional party committee) within the boundaries of one *oblast* (region).¹⁹ Therefore, work in the apparatus in Moscow and later in a Union republic provided them with the crucial experience a Second needed as a future politician of the all-Union level.

* I did not succeed in finding information and personal data about two Seconds in Tajikistan: Iurii Belov and Gennadii Veselkov.

¹⁸ I am thankful to Oleg Khlevniuk for providing me with the list of CC CPSU resolutions (1953–1970) of appointments of the second secretaries made for Yoram Gorlizki and Oleg Khlevniuk project “Networks and Hierarchies in the Soviet Provinces, 1945–1970” (ESCR, RES-000-23-0880).

¹⁹ I found information on geographical mobility of forty-seven out of fifty-eight Seconds: Twenty-five of them started their careers and gained high-level positions within the same region, later being promoted to the apparatus and eventually becoming Seconds.

At the beginning of work in a Union republic the second secretary could expect to be rewarded with a relevant state decoration, even including the Order of Lenin. The age of appointment of a Second was on average a little under fifty – an anniversary when first high-ranking orders and medals would “land” on the chests of high-level functionaries. Even if the Second had just started his career in a republic (the term of the Second in a Soviet republic was about five years on average), the certificate of a state decoration would emphasize his substantial input into the development of the republic’s economy and culture.

The circumstances and reasons for establishing the institution of the Second

The most important problem is the political genesis of the institution of the Second, and its relationship to the course of Sovietization of the territories annexed in the course of World War II (first of all, the Baltics). First, why was the Sovietization of the Baltic republics important for the appearance of the political institution of the Second and its activities? The claim that the Soviet occupation of these republics in 1940 almost reconstituted the former Russian Empire by itself does not prove that the USSR was an empire. But it was the Baltic factor and the center’s experience of control in those republics that led to the “invention” of the political institution of the second secretary.

Second, features of the careers of second secretaries before their appointment to the post of Second testify to the political and social ties of these functionaries. Many of them were “birds of a feather,” a coordinated cohort coming from the Department for Organizational Party Work of the Central Committee of the CPSU. The importance of the Department in preparing second secretaries was observed by Miller. He contends there are reasonable indications that during their work in the apparatus, they were being prepared for appointment to the Soviet republics.²⁰ Archival documents available today allow us not only to confirm that this system of training Seconds existed but also to reveal more accurately who exactly was being prepared for the job. Unlike their colleagues in the Department, the “ugly ducklings” from the non-Slavic Soviet republics, future Seconds had the privilege of holding leading positions assigned only to them. Only Russian, Ukrainian, and Belarusian functionaries could be heads of sections in the Department and inspectors who, after attaining the position of Second in

²⁰ Miller. *Cadres Policy in Nationality Areas*. P. 26.

a Soviet republic, became “governors-general,” as they were informally called in the republics. Non-Slavic functionaries could only occupy the position of instructor in the Department, the lowest stage in the career of a “responsible worker” (*otvetstvennyi rabotnik*). That was too low to become a Second in a Soviet republic.

In particular, heads of the Department, later assigned to republics as Seconds, learned about governing the country through their work at the helm of Union republics. For example, before becoming chairman of the KGB USSR, Vladimir Semichastny was sent to Azerbaijan in 1959 as a Second. This was a certain downgrade from the influential position he previously occupied with the CPSU CC Department of Party Organs. In his memoirs, Semichastny recalled how Khrushchev reassured him: “Well, you understand, you should be secretary of the Central Committee in a republic, or work in an *obkom*. ... You know, we will still meet in the great work of state.”²¹ This case demonstrates that the rise of the Seconds was stimulated not only by considerations of nationality policy and the Kremlin’s desire to control the titular *nomenklatura* and nationalism in the republics but also by the need to streamline careers of the Moscow bureaucracy and the necessity of providing them with adequate “shop-floor training” for the upper-tier positions. Also, the story of Semichastny quite pertinently illustrates how the introduction of the institution of the Seconds in Soviet republics in the mid-1950s was linked with the consolidation of political authority by Khrushchev.

In this context, it is impossible to avoid the question of how the introduction of the Seconds was connected to de-Stalinization – Khrushchev’s main ideological contribution. Theoretically, after so many waves of repressions and under the tight control of Moscow, the republics’ *nomenklatura* could be expected to carry out any policy of the central authorities, including de-Stalinization. The problem was that unanimity within “the central authorities” was totally lacking. By 1955, Khrushchev had just won the deadly standoff with the infamous Lavrenty Beria, and it was only a matter of time when he would have to confront other former lieutenants of Stalin (such as Georgii Malenkov or Viacheslav Molotov) in the struggle for dominant positions (indeed, the next political crisis struck in 1957). Although after Stalin’s death and Beria’s removal, the leaders of the republics most closely affiliated with Beria, such as Mir Jafar Bagirov in Azerbaijan, were sacked and even prosecuted, other first secretaries, who could have been suspected

²¹ Vladimir Semichastnyi. *Bespokoinoe serdtse*. Moscow, 2002. Pp. 116, 117.

of being “too close” to Stalin and Beria, remained in the republics. Thus, Beria’s trial exposed the leader of Soviet Lithuania, Sniečkus, as sustaining informal contacts with him. Beria would summon Sniečkus to Moscow for talks, while having no right to do so based on his formal rank. In the opinion of the apparatus, Sniečkus, even after Beria’s execution, did not take the initiative “to correct the mistakes and damage done by Beria.”²² Ideologically, the fall of Beria, who advocated the promotion of regional cadres, compromised the policy of appointing national apparatchiks to key positions in their native republics. Publicly announcing his departure from the legacy of Beria (and later, of Stalin himself), Khrushchev took a more cautious stance toward consolidation of the authority within national republics in the hands of the natives. (Of course, he could not completely abandon the old Bolshevik policy of *korenizatsiia* in Soviet republics, not least for purely pragmatic reasons: his ambitious “Virgin Lands” campaign in Kazakhstan consumed almost all the available resources of ethnically Russian functionaries).

Thus sending a representative from the center to take up the post of second secretary was a form of securing the implementation of the future de-Stalinization resolutions of the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU: supporters of Khrushchev were appointed to important positions in the republics without upsetting the general balance of power by wholesale purges of republican leaders. As recent studies demonstrate, the public criticism of Stalin’s “cult of personality” at the Twentieth Congress was anything but an improvisation, and attempts had been made to prepare public opinion within the party apparatus for the radical ideological turn in advance.²³ Republican leadership was informed beforehand about the theme of the Congress, so the appointed Seconds loyally supported Khrushchev and were able to monitor the moods of the local *nomenklatura*. For example, Mikhail Gribkov, the Second in Latvia, as late as 1962, six years after that Congress, in speeches at meetings of the Bureau of the Central Committee of the Latvian Communist Party, routinely requested expressions of support for the resolutions of the Twentieth Congress and even earlier initiatives of Khrushchev, such as the Virgin Land campaign in Kazakhstan.

Another important characteristic of this period was the outburst of nationalist manifestations in the republics. The rise of nationalist demonstrations in

²² Delo Beriia, Prigovor obzhalovaniuu ne podlezhit. Moscow, 2012. Pp. 178-181.

²³ Polly Jones. From the Secret Speech to the Burial of Stalin. Real and Ideal Responses to De-Stalinization // Idem. The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization. Negotiating Cultural and Social Change in the Khrushchev Era. Abingdon, 2006. Pp. 42-43.

the republics is commonly associated with the effect of Khrushchev's "secret speech" at the CPSU's Twentieth Congress and the events in Hungary in the autumn of 1956. However, Seconds were dispatched from Moscow to Lithuania, Latvia, and Azerbaijan even before the Congress, that is, earlier than the open nationalist unrest began. This proves that the introduction of Seconds was not an ad hoc reaction by Moscow to the mass protests in the republics, but a measure planned ahead and directed against the communist *nomenklatura* of the republics and in early 1956 what came to be called "local interests" as opposed to and harmful of Union interests. Until then, the official usage of this term was rare: "departmentalism" was applied to both central agencies (such as ministries) and the governments of the republics. In Lithuania, it was probably used for the first time at the Lithuanian Communist Party's Ninth Congress in January 1956. It is interesting that "local interests" were defined in that case as the opposition of not just local (implying also "national") but also republican interests to the interests of the whole Soviet state.

In the mid-1950s, the *nomenklaturas* of the Baltic republics demonstrated strong autarchic tendencies. At a plenum of the Estonian Communist Party Central Committee in 1954, proposals were made to stop immigration to the republic, and to develop industry under republican rather than all-Union, ministries. This Estonian "separatism" also "infected" the Latvian *nomenklatura*. Vilis Krūmiņš, the second secretary of the Central Committee of the Latvian Communist Party,²⁴ attended that Estonian plenum as a guest. Five years later, he was accused of collaborating with the Latvian national communist leader E. Berklavs. In Moscow, he confessed that the discussions in Estonia had had a great influence on him.

Mass protests became the main reason for sending a Second to only one republic, Georgia, in 1956. Incidentally, despite the mass-scale manifestation of nationalist violence and high death toll, Vasily Mzhavanadze, the Georgian Communist Party first secretary, was not removed from power. Yaroslav Bilinsky correctly surmised as early as 1967 that sending a Russian second secretary to Georgia was a consequence of the unrest there in the spring of 1956.²⁵ From that moment, the institution of second secretary, which operated until the end of the Soviet system, was established in the republic. One can argue that the appointment of Pavel Kovanov as the Second was a certain condition for Mzhavanadze's survival. Not being able to

²⁴ Prezidium TsK KPSS 1954–1964. Vol. 1. Moscow, 2003. P. 375.

²⁵ Yaroslav Bilinsky. *The Rulers and the Ruled*. P. 21.

control the protests, he had to recognize the complexity of the situation, and accept this appointment by Moscow.

Nevertheless, in general, although violent at times, the unrest in the republics was not widespread and was not what brought about the institution of the second secretary. Rather, this was an integral part of the new contract between the center and the *nomenklaturas* of the republics. We can look at the “nationalism” issue from a broader perspective. Characteristically, the republican leadership was rarely if ever punished or even fired after mass disturbances. The nationality question was central to these “anti-Soviet” manifestations, so it was concluded that the local *nomenklatura* should be retained in place as a sign of recognition of the republic’s titular nationality by the Moscow authorities.²⁶ Incidentally, the *nomenklatura* of the national republic was most vulnerable not at the time of nationalist disturbances and mass protests, but when Moscow observed “local interests” (*mestnichestvo*), that is, the desire to prioritize the republic’s particularist interests over the common all-Union goals.

Besides the rise of nationalist sentiments, another important factor that led to the establishment of the institution of the second secretary was the commencement of Khrushchev’s most important campaign – the reclamation of the virgin land in Kazakhstan, and its effect on the *nomenklatura* job market. Starting in 1953, part of the growing all-Union *nomenklatura* was sent to Kazakhstan. Not all of them, such as Leonid Brezhnev and Mikhail Solomentsev (who later became chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Russian Federation), could occupy top positions within Kazakhstan. Lower-level party personnel – for example, district committee secretaries – were sent to head the party committees in the cities (*gorkoms*) and regions (*obkoms*) of the republic. For instance, Valery Kharazov, the party secretary of the Pervomaisk district committee (*raikom*) of Moscow, a future Second in Lithuania (1967–1978), was sent to Kazakhstan in 1954, initially to take up the position of secretary of the Almaty *gorkom*, and later secretary of the Guriev and Pavlodar *obkoms*.²⁷

Party archival sources tell the story of the rise of the *nomenklatura* job market in the Soviet Union in the early 1950s, which soon experienced a

²⁶ S. Grybkauskas. Antisovietiniai protestai ir nomenklatūros partikuliarizmas. Sąveikos poveikis lietuviško nacionalizmo kaitai // Č. Laurinavičius (Ed.). Epochas jungiantis nacionalizmas: tautos (de)konstravimas tarpukario, sovietmečio ir posovietmečio Lietuvoje. Vilnius, 2013. Pp. 263-265.

²⁷ Saulius Grybkauskas. The Role of the Second Party Secretary in the “Election“ of the First // Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History. 2013. Vol. 14. No 2. P. 348.

state of bureaucratic overproduction. The central apparatus in charge of the management of cadres faced the problem of how to ensure the regular rotation of functionaries and to satisfy the need for career growth of the *nomenklatura*. As long as the virgin lands in Kazakhstan were being developed, Khrushchev had to put up with the consolidation of national cadres in other national republics, being preoccupied with the Virgin Land campaign launched at his initiative. In a sense, this campaign benefited *nomenklatura* interests in the Soviet republics (except, of course, in Kazakhstan itself): they could carry out *korenizatsiia* more easily because nonnative apparatchiks recalled from the republics to Moscow were redirected to Kazakhstan. For instance, in Soviet Lithuania, this period witnessed an extensive expulsion of Russian-speaking cadres from the republic. The republic's party leader Sniečkus would receive letters from Kazakhstan from former party functionaries sent there from Lithuania condemning his supposed nationalism,²⁸ which confirms the prevailing "migration routes" of rotated cadres. The center could not effectively censor the republican authorities: the high demand for trained personnel in the virgin lands attracted all of the available cadres to Kazakhstan.

The mobilization of party cadres to Kazakhstan was somewhat similar to the annual call-up of army reservists for training. After being summoned to Kazakhstan, some functionaries stayed and were integrated into the political elite of the republic, to the dismay and dissatisfaction of the Kazakhs. For instance, in the first days of January 1956, the Central Committee of the CPSU received an extensive seven-page complaint from "a group of Communists" from Kazakhstan. The letter described the situation in the republic in detail, stressing the "Russian nationalism" of the functionaries sent there, and the neglect of local cadres who were allowed only in subordinate positions. In the letter, Brezhnev, Kazakhstan's Communist Party first secretary, was criticized for his patronage of associates, for the "transfer of his acquaintances to Kazakhstan." According to the authors of the complaint, a large flow of friends who were personally familiar with Comrade Brezhnev came to Kazakhstan from Dnepropetrovsk, Zaporozhye, and Moldova.²⁹ The apparatus received many letters of a similar nature; therefore, the Department had to respond to the allegations, and provide an explanation to the leadership. In a memorandum to the Central Committee on

²⁸ Letter from Nikolai Petrov on December 25, 1972, to A. Sniečkus // Lithuanian Special Archive (LYA). F. 16895. Op. 2. D. 17. L. 70, 71.

²⁹ The complaint of January 3, 1956, by a group of communists to the CPSU CC // RGANI. F. 5. Op. 31. D. 58. L. 13-19.

February 8, 1956, Evgenii Gromov, head of the Department, wrote that the Central Committee “in the past few days” had received a lot of complaints about the cadres policy in Kazakhstan. He affirmed that, in connection with the reclaiming virgin land during the past two years, 200 senior functionaries had been sent to the republic, and this had “allowed the strengthening of the cadres.” Although Gromov described these complaints as being of a “contrived nature,” Brezhnev was nevertheless informed about them.³⁰

Understandably, one could not have expected the Department to take a different position—not only because the letter “offended” Brezhnev, a rising political star. In the complaint from “a group of Communists,” high-level employees of the Department were also criticized. Its deputy head, Shykin, was accused of not understanding nationality policy, and of only searching for Kazakh nationalism and intimidating the local cadres.³¹ To prove the “contrived nature” of the complaints, the Department prepared statistical data on the composition of the party leadership in Kazakhstan, comparing its composition on January 1 of both 1954 and 1956. From this report, the dominance of the “dispatched comrades” was clearly visible. If the situation among the secretaries of the republic’s Central Committee remained stable and increased by even one Kazakh (in 1954, out of the four secretaries, two were Russians, and two were Kazakhs; and in 1956, two out of the five secretaries were Russian, and three were Kazakhs), the Russians obviously increased their presence at the lower levels. In 1954, of the eight department heads of the republican Central Committee, three were Russians, four Kazakhs, and one was “other nationality”; in 1956, of the twelve heads, six were Russians, four Kazakhs, and two “others.” The situation had changed radically in the ethnic composition of the first secretaries of the republic’s *obkoms*. On January 1, 1954, out of sixteen *obkom* leaders, only four were Russians, and twelve were Kazakhs. In 1956, there were more Russians in this position, nine, to seven Kazakhs.³²

Thus, although officially dismissing the problem of the ethnic composition of the party leaders in Kazakhstan, the central apparatus was aware of the problem of the extensive overproduction of cadres. The instructors, inspectors, and heads of Department sectors could hardly imagine a future career in Kazakhstan, already overfilled with apparatchiks sent by the center.

³⁰ The report by E. Gromov on February 8, 1956, to the CPSU CC // RGANI. F. 5. Op. 31. D. 58. L. 47.

³¹ The complaint of January 3, 1956, by a group of communists to the CPSU CC // RGANI. F. 5. Op. 31. D. 58. L. 18.

³² RGANI. F. 5. Op. 31. D. 58. L. 45.

The only way to satisfy the needs of the accruing *nomenklatura* was to turn to other republics.

The prewar heritage and the “Baltic factor”

The Second as an instrument of the central authorities for controlling the local *nomenklatura* did not come from nowhere. A precedent can already be found in the function (if not the status) of the governor-general of the imperial period. At least, such parallels were drawn in the historical memory of Lithuanians and the underground press of that time.³³ Speaking in an interview about the second secretaries in Georgia, Eduard Shevardnadze recalled the imperial viceroy in the Caucasus (1844–1853), Mikhail Vorontsov, who was known in Tbilisi not only as administrator and general but also as an educator.³⁴

More direct roots of the institution of the Second can be found in the Stalin period. Stalin was undoubtedly responsible for the “insidious” nature of the Second’s activity, about which Khrushchev writes openly in his memoirs. He mentions Stalin’s “secret” jobs for the second secretaries:³⁵ to monitor and track the activities of the first secretaries. No less important was Stalin’s attempt to implant the institution of the second secretary in the Baltic republics, and later in the Central Asian region. Nevertheless, the appointment of functionaries from the apparatus as Seconds in the Soviet republics did not become systematic during Stalin’s time: *nomenklatura* from other regions of the USSR, rather than from the Department, were usually appointed as Seconds. Moreover, the institution of the Second as a phenomenon in its own right implied that the first party secretary in a republic represented the local titular nationality. The practice of appointing locals as republic leaders in the whole of the USSR became established only at the end of Stalin’s rule. In the 1920s and 1930s, only leaders of the Transcaucasian republics were locals, but after the USSR occupied new territories at the beginning of World War II, the first secretaries of the Baltic republics were also locals. In the Central Asian republics, in Uzbekistan the local Usman Yusupov became first secretary as early as 1937; but in the neighboring republics, only sometime after the end of World War II were locals appointed as first

³³ Saulius Grybkauskas. The Second Party Secretary and His Personal Networks in Soviet Lithuania after 1964: Towards the Localisation of the “Second” // Lithuanian Historical Studies. 2010. Vol. 15. P. 31.

³⁴ Interview by S. Grybkauskas with E. Shevardnadze, September 1, 2011 // Personal archive.

³⁵ N. S. Khrushchev. *Vremia. Liudi. Vlast’* (Vospominaniia). Book 1. Moscow, 1999. P. 197.

secretaries. Babadzhan Gafurov in Tajikistan became the first secretary in 1946, and Shadzha Batyrov in Turkmenistan in 1947. In Kyrgyzstan, Ischak Razzakov occupied the position of first secretary only from 1950. Nevertheless, in 1953 Beria insisted on installing native first secretaries for Ukraine and Belarus, thus completing the formalization of this policy for the whole Soviet Union.³⁶

The second secretaries, in whose appointment we can already see a system, “accompanied” them: if earlier locals could become (albeit rarely) both the first secretary and the second secretary, at the end of Stalin’s rule, the Seconds were exclusively Russians. Nevertheless, the absolute majority of them were from the “locally grown” cadres. Besides, this practice did not yet include the Transcaucasian republics. Here, functionaries of the local nationality worked not only as first but also as second secretaries. Between 1953 and 1956, when, in the context of Beria’s local cadres policy, the Russian Seconds were recalled from the Baltic region to Moscow and local activists took over these posts, the institution of the Seconds in this region also had to be created anew. Therefore, the institution of the Seconds was just beginning to take shape during the late Stalin period, as it was established only in the Baltic Soviet republics.

Why did the Baltic republics become pioneers in this regard? Accusing the West of imperialism and colonialism, demonstrating the cultural flourish of the Central Asian republics within the USSR, the Achilles heel of Soviet international propaganda was the newly occupied Baltic republics, in which armed resistance had not ceased, and the large diasporas in the West pursued the goal of restoring lost statehood. In this context, it was hardly politically prescient to appoint someone who was not of the titular nation as the leader of a republic, and thus to compromise Lenin’s nationality policy. For the West, that would be one more proof of the occupation, demonstrating the lack of legitimacy of Soviet rule. In Latvia and Estonia, compatriots sent from inner Russian regions took the first positions, while in Lithuania, Sniečkus was a local Lithuanian with the background of underground activism.

Second, the geographical factor was important. The Baltic republics were the closest to the West. The occupation of the Baltic region and its annexation had a history. In the opinion of Elena Zubkova, up to 1939, Stalin had not decided in what form the then independent Baltic republics, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia should enter the Soviet sphere of influence. According

³⁶ I am thankful to Jeremy Smith for this insight. For more about the appointment of local functionaries into positions of the first secretaries in the Soviet republics, see Jeremy Smith. *Leadership and Nationalism in the Soviet Republics, 1951–1959*. P. 81.

to Zubkova, one option considered was to give them the status of independent socialist republics. The very possibility of such deliberations testifies to the specificity of the Baltic region, and to the fact that the Kremlin was prepared to allow for a special regime of their control. Even after choosing its direct incorporation into the USSR, the exclusivity of the Baltic region did not disappear.

A direct precedent for the institution of the second secretary was the plenipotentiary of the Central Committee Bureaus for the republics or groups of republics. The Baltic republics and Moldova were the only ones in which Central Committee Bureaus of the VKP(b) for individual republics were set up. For the Sovietization of the other national borders, there was the Central Committee Bureau of the VKP(b) for Central Asia,³⁷ and the Central Committee Bureau of the VKP(b) for the Caucasus. While they existed, the second secretary of a republic's Party Central Committee, understandably, was not the main agent of the center. He was included in this collective body with the rights of a regular member.

The institutionalization of Moscow's ongoing control over the republics had passed through several stages that reveal the growing confidence of the center in the local *nomenklatura* as a result of Sovietization. The strictest form of control was the initial institution of plenipotentiaries of the Central Committee of the VKP(b) for the republic, who essentially had unlimited power. In the Baltic republics, occupied in 1940, the representatives sent from Moscow, Vladimir Dereviansky (Latvia), Nikolai Pozdniakov (Lithuania), and Vladimir Bochkarev (Estonia), directed all political moves.³⁸ Although the process of Sovietization was brief before World War II, after the Soviet authorities returned, plenipotentiaries were not sent to the "liberated" republics. However, Moscow did not trust the local titular *nomenklatura*, even though most had been evacuated to the deep rear of the USSR during the war and had already experienced Sovietization.

The Bureau of the Central Committee of the VKP(b) for the republic, just like the plenipotentiary, was also directly accountable only to the Central Committee of the VKP(b), but it was also made up of local representatives. The Russian historian Zubkova describes in detail, as an example, the transformation of the institute of the Moscow plenipotentiary in Estonia into Central Committee Bureaus of the VKP(b) for Estonia. She notes that in preparing the first draft of the Bureaus' statute, the secretary of the Cen-

³⁷ The Bureau of the Central Committee of the VKP (b) for Central Asia was established on May 19, 1924, and operated until October 2, 1934.

³⁸ Elena Zubkova. *Pribaltika i Kreml'*. Moscow, 2008. P. 140.

tral Committee of the VKP(b) Georgy Malenkov followed the old practice of plenipotentiary, and not a single Estonian was included in the planned Bureau of the Central Committee of the VKP(b) for Estonia – only functionaries from the center. Only later two people from Soviet Estonia – the first secretary Nikolai Karotamm, and the head of the government Arnold Veimer – were included in the Central Committee Bureau of the VKP(b) for Estonia consisting of five officials. Later, this principle was applied to Soviet Latvia and Lithuania.³⁹

The fact that the Bureau of the Central Committee of the VKP(b) for the republic was a softer form of control than the plenipotentiary can be clearly seen in the case of Moldova. In 1949, in the opinion of the center, the Bureau of the Central Committee of the VKP(b) for Moldova had failed its task and was abolished, and the institution of the plenipotentiary was restored. On April 9, 1949, the Orgbureau of the Central Committee of the VKP(b) adopted a resolution charging V. A. Ivanov, chairman of the Bureau of the Central Committee of the VKP(b) of Moldova SSR with insufficient efforts in fighting the anti-Soviet underground. M. A. Turkin, formerly employed as an instructor in the Central Committee of the VKP(b), was appointed plenipotentiary for Moldova. In the provisions defined in the Orgbureau decision, it was noted that Turkin would act independently of local bodies and be directly subordinated to the Central Committee of the VKP(b). The representative, his deputy, five inspectors, and five support staff made up the apparatus.⁴⁰

Unlike the Bureaus of the Central Committee of the VKP(b) for the republics, the institution of the second secretary was not formally established, so its very existence as an institutional successor to the bureaus may raise doubts, despite the assertions of the staff of the former apparatus of the Central Committee of the CPSU that such an institution existed and that it was important for the center to control the republics.⁴¹ I did not succeed in locating any resolution document of the Central Committee of the CPSU testifying to the establishment of this institution, or one in which the need for the establishment of the institution is substantiated. The fact that the second secretaries were not changed in all the republics at the same time shows that

³⁹ Zubkova, *Pribaltika i kreml'*. Pp. 140, 141.

⁴⁰ Russian State Archive of Social and Political History (RGASPI). F. 17. Op. 116. D. 426. L. 2, 3.

⁴¹ In an interview with the author, Nikolai Leonov, the Central Committee instructor who supervised Lithuania in 1986–1990, specifically mentioned the institution of the second secretary.

there was no particular resolution, otherwise we would see changes in all of the Soviet republics at once.

The appointment of the center's functionaries as Seconds in the republics appeared to be a routine strengthening of the cadres, even if at the request of the leaders of the republics themselves. For example, the leaderships of all three Soviet Baltic republics appealed to Moscow to send functionaries into positions of second secretaries in order to help in coping with agricultural problems. Nevertheless, a more detailed analysis shows that these requests were made under strong Moscow pressure that used the difficult situation in agriculture to reintroduce the institution of the second secretary in the Baltic republics after a short break (1953–1956) during which the position of the second secretary was occupied by local *nomenklatura* members. Viewed as part of broader political processes, the introduction of the institution of the Seconds restricted the growing ambitions of the republican elites. Instead of demanding more autonomy from Moscow, they were forced to apologize for allowing the situation in agriculture to get out of control, and to request functionaries from the center to strengthen the cadres.

It is doubtful that the *nomenklaturas* of the republics really desired this “strengthening of the cadres,” especially in the form of receiving a Second from Moscow. They fully understood that newcomers would serve as stewards dispatched to control them. But their request for Moscow cadres could also send a sign, redeeming the central authorities of guilt: we asked them to strengthen the cadres, we are not interested only in “local matters,” we are “open.” At the same time, this was an element of protection from Moscow's ire through sharing responsibility, as the Second sent to a republic had to take responsibility for various “deviations” in the local Party leadership. Under the unspoken “contract,” the Second sent to the republic had to act as a mediator and guarantor that the government of the republic would “correctly understand” what Moscow was demanding, and would not allow the local *nomenklatura* to succumb to “local interests.” Given the constant oscillation in the Soviet political discourse on nationalities policy between “drawing together and merging” of nations (*sblizhenye i slianye*) through centripetal forces and “friendship of nations” (*druzhiba narodov*) that legitimized national distinctions, the establishment of the institution of the Second was a compromise that in the long run strengthened the positions of titular *nomenklaturas* of the republics. This was especially true since the Second sent by Moscow, as one of the most important republic Party organization leaders, had to share responsibility for mistakes and even manifestations of nationalism together with the republic's leadership.

Birds of a feather

The appointment of Boris Sharkov as second secretary in Lithuania is an excellent example showing how the overpopulation of the CPSU CC apparatus forced solutions to be sought through the “outsourcing” of personnel. Sharkov worked in the Department in the capacity of head of the Belarus and the Karelia section, which became superfluous in 1956 after the status of the Karelian-Finnish Soviet Republic as the sixteenth Union republic was abolished. Sharkov could have temporarily been given the duties of an inspector, which would be a good career choice for an instructor, but not head of a section. In addition, the post of inspector usually served as a temporary shelter for functionaries with careers troubled by external circumstances (such as structural reorganizations). For example, under Beria’s brief reign, former second secretaries recalled from the republics – Valentin Ershov (from Latvia), Vasilii Aronov (from Lithuania), and Vasilii Kosov (from Estonia) – were given these positions. Sooner or later, a decision had to be made about what Sharkov’s next permanent position should be.

Sharkov was not the only candidate for the post of Second in Lithuania. In the middle of 1955, the Department suggested two candidates for the post, but neither of them was an employee of the Department: the Ulyanovsk *obkom* first secretary, Igor Skulkov, and the Lipetsk *obkom* second secretary, Feodosii Zharich.⁴² A similar pattern characterized the cadres decision on Latvia: Fillip Kashnikov, who became the Second in Latvia in February 1956, was also not among the initial candidates. The Department nominated for this position the first secretary of the Odessa *obkom*, Aleksei Epishev, the first secretary of the Novosibirsk *obkom*, Ivan Yakovlev, and the first secretary of the Kiev [Kyiv] *obkom*, Grigory Grishko – again, none of them represented the Department itself.⁴³ These nominations for Seconds in Lithuania and Latvia were soon withdrawn, and people who were not even mentioned in the initial lists (Sharkov and the deputy head of the Department Kashnikov) were sent as Seconds to the Baltics. The reason for this change of heart could have been the emerging new rationale of the institution of the second secretary: people from the Department were closer to the decision makers in the apparatus. Besides, this decision corresponded to career ambitions of the functionaries themselves, for the people of the central apparatus were interested in being promoted to Second, while for

⁴² Letter from E. Gromov of July 1, 1955 // RGANI. F. 5. Op. 31. D. 26. L. 46.

⁴³ The report by E. Gromov and F. Krestianikov of July 1, 1955 to the Central Committee of the CPSU // RGANI. F. 5. Op. 31. D. 26. L. 41.

the first secretaries of *obkoms* as masters in their “domains” it was not so attractive. On the contrary, as careers of functionaries of that time testify, only after serving as Seconds in Union republics would functionaries be allowed to head an *obkom* in the Russian Federation. This episode was the turning point in decision making about cadres, inaugurating the new practice that would become a very important attribute of the institution of second secretary. From this point onward, we see the appointment of the Department’s own functionaries as the prevailing strategy.

Thus, the needs of functionaries in the central apparatus who sought high positions in the republics that matched their career ambitions coincided with the political move that reinstalled the institution of second secretary in the Baltic republics and the subsequent extension of the practice to other national republics. The number of vacancies was limited (there were only twelve positions of Seconds in the republics), as we should bear in mind these positions implied high *nomenklatura* status. As a rule, the second secretaries were functionaries with the status of candidates to membership in the Central Committee of the CPSU and deputies of the USSR Supreme Soviet. Their subsequent career step was to become first secretaries in Russian *obkoms*, or, if unsuccessful, to become Soviet ambassadors, or heads of central Soviet institutions, such as ministries or committees.⁴⁴

Some people at the Department were sent to fill a vacancy for second secretary within a few years of service, others had to wait decades. There were veterans who got stuck in their Department positions for an extremely long time, particularly by standards of the Khrushchev period with its haphazard mobility of cadres. For example, K. Lebedev started his work in the central apparatus in 1952 during the Stalin period.⁴⁵ Judging by his

⁴⁴ Interviews and memoirs clearly indicate that the post of Second was much desired by functionaries of the department mentioned. Vitaly Sobolev, a former Second in Latvia, related in an interview that, having learned through unofficial channels about his appointment, he was even afraid to share this information with anyone, in case spreading the message hindered him from getting the post (interview with Sobolev by S. Grybkauskas). After Valery Kharazov, the Second in Lithuania from 1967 to 1978, learned about his appointment, his friend Alexander Shelepin, a CPSU CC Politburo member, offered his help in withdrawing the appointment, but Kharazov began to convince him that he actually wanted the post. According to Antanas Barkauskas, Nikolai Dybenko, a former Lithuanian Communist Party CC secretary for ideology, head of the Department’s Belarus and Baltic region republic sector, and Lithuania’s head Petras Griškevičius, had entered into a sort of secret alliance against Kharazov, who was already the Second residing in the republic at the time, because Dybenko himself desired this post, which he finally received in 1978.

⁴⁵ <http://www.az-libr.ru/index.shtml?Persons&000/Src/0004/z139>.

signatures on documents, we can see that already by 1961 he was head of the section for Belarus and the Baltic republics.⁴⁶ Lebedev worked in the Department for nearly twenty years, until 1971, when he was appointed Second in Estonia. He was the first Russian to be appointed to this post in the republic since Stalin's death.

Becoming the Second in a republic was also very desirable because the Department staff realized the transience of their work: sooner or later, they would be sent to the *obkoms* or the Central Committee of the republics. Only a few managed to reach positions at the top of the Department, getting beyond the threshold of sector head or inspector, and becoming deputy head of the Department.

"Nationals," for whom, until the Gorbachev rose to power, only the duties of instructors were available in the Department, could not expect the position of Second. Perhaps the only exceptions were two Moldovans, at the very dawn of the institution of the Second and in its final days. In 1959, the Moldovan Ivan Bodiul became the first and only instructor in the Department who was appointed as Second. Moreover, he was appointed to his native republic, where in 1961, as a long-term associate of Brezhnev, he was promoted to first secretary. His younger compatriot Petr Luchinski became the first non-Slavic functionary to be sent as a Second to another republic. Of course, before then, Luchinski had worked not in the Department but as the deputy head of the Department for Propaganda and Agitation. In 1986, his appointment to Tajikistan was unusual only in that there had previously been no such practice.

Soviet Lithuania would play the decisive role in the fate of the institution of the Second one more time – now contributing to its demise. Well into perestroika, in June 1988, the need to end the practice of dispatching Seconds from Moscow was expressed for the first time in public – in the press and soon thereafter at a rally to see off delegates to the Nineteenth CPSU Conference. It is interesting that the author of the published article, along with the idea of recalling the Seconds, expressed the proposal that the leaders of every Soviet republic should be co-opted into the Politburo of the Central Committee of the CPSU.⁴⁷ Although the delegates from Lithuania to the Nineteenth Party Conference failed to include this issue on the agenda of the forum (the very mention of it by the editorial commission was

⁴⁶ See, for example, the letter signed by K. Lebedev on June 12, 1961 // RGANI. F. 5. Op. 31. D. 171. L. 12.

⁴⁷ Algimantas Liekis. Dar prisėskime ir pamąstykite // Komjaunimo tiesa. 1988. June 15. No. 114. P. 1.

met with “incomprehension” by delegates from other regions),⁴⁸ Nikolai Mitkin, the Second in Lithuania, was forced to resign at the first plenum of the Central Committee of the Lithuanian CP, after the election of Algirdas Brazauskas as the Party’s new leader at the end of 1988. The central apparatus did not accept the “arbitrary” appointment of the local Russian Vladimiras Beriozovas as the new Second in Lithuania, treating him as an “impostor.” Alienated by the central apparatus, Beriozovas was pushed to the camp of the supporters of the Sajūdis populist front, and eventually of the secession of the Lithuanian Communist Party from the CPSU. After the republic’s government defended the appointment of Beriozovas, against Moscow, and then later after the leadership of the CPSU co-opted the first secretaries of all the republics as Politburo members, the role of the Second, as the representative of the center, often called “the eyes and ears of the Kremlin” in the republics, was diminished,⁴⁹ and in fact lost significance.

Concluding remarks

In Lithuania, the story about the conversation between Juozas Urbšys, the last minister of foreign affairs in independent Lithuania, and Stalin is well-known. After the USSR and Lithuania signed a mutual assistance agreement on October 10, 1939, during a gala dinner in St. George Hall in the Kremlin, Urbšys asked Stalin about the rights of the Soviet republics; if they wished, could they actually secede from the USSR? Stalin’s response became a “classic”: “Yes, they may, but in each of them, for this, there is a Communist Party, so that they would never desire it.”⁵⁰ The second secretaries embodied this guarantee in flesh: they had to ensure that the Party organizations in the republics did not stray from carrying out Moscow’s orders.

The political institution of the Seconds emblemized the conflict between the formal statehood status of the republics and the reality of the unitary and centralized Soviet state. This inconsistency determined the nature of the activities of the Second as a “hidden imperialist.” Being es-

⁴⁸ S. Grybkauskas’ interview with the academician Juras Požėla in 2013 // Personal archive.

⁴⁹ Vitaly Sobolev, the former second secretary in Latvia, openly criticized the devaluation of the power of the Seconds during a meeting of the Soviet Latvian leadership with Gorbachev. S. Grybkauskas’ interview with Sobolev // Personal archive.

⁵⁰ J. Urbšys. *Lietuva ir Tarybų Sąjunga lemtingaisiais Lietuvai 1939–1940 metais*. Kaunas, 1987. P. 13.

essentially part of the imperial institutional framework, and imposed upon the republics' *nomenklatura*, at the same time, the Second declared that he had come to assist in solving agricultural, national, and other major problems. The main task of the second secretary was to help defusing the contradiction between the federal constitution of the Soviet state and its politics of imperial centralism.

There were also positive moments in the functioning of the institution of the Second from the vantage point of republican elites. The Second was a much more delicate instrument of control compared to its predecessors: the representative of the Central Committee of the VKP(b), and later the Bureau of the Central Committee of the VKP(b) for the republic or bureaus of the republics. As such, the institution of second secretaries testified to a certain growth of the center's trust in the titular elites of the republics, to a degree that questioned the very imperial character of their mission. Moreover, the Second who "begged to be invited" to the republic accepted the unofficial contract between the center and the republic, according to which the right of the republic's *nomenklatura* to a certain political autonomy was recognized, and the promise was made to avoid extreme measures by the center's interventions, including the cleansing of national cadres. Instances of occasional cadre cleansings in the republics were perceived as a breach of that contract by Moscow, while its violation by the republics could reveal itself, for example, in sending the Second back to Moscow, as the Latvian national communists did in 1958.

Thus, the question of whether the Soviet federal structure in general was workable without the institution of the second secretary is identical to the "question of questions"—whether it was possible to reform the Soviet Union by making another contract between the republics, perhaps similar to that proposed by Gorbachev at the end of the existence of the USSR. The economic and social aspirations of the republics' *nomenklaturas* with regard to the center hardly threatened the integrity of the USSR as a unitary state. On the contrary, greater confidence in the national *nomenklatura*, and its co-opting into the highest governing bodies (for example, the Politburo as Gorbachev did, but too late), could have served the Soviet system both by ensuring Moscow's ties with the republics and enhancing economic efficiency by opposing the interests of the republics toward the all-Union ministries that essentially had a monopoly in ruling the economy. The institution of the second secretary replaced all of these other possible solutions and forms of interaction between the center and the republics.

SUMMARY

This article focuses on the institution of second secretaries of republican party committees in the political structure of nominal Soviet federalism. Initially, this institution had been introduced in the Baltic republics during Stalin's tenure in power. In the course of the 1950s, the experiment became universal and included all of the Soviet republics. This led to important changes in the institutional landscape and political behavior of the nomenklatura in both Moscow and the regions. Compared to its predecessors – plenipotentiaries of the Central Committee of the VKP(b), and later of the Bureau of the Central Committee of the VKP(b) – the appointment of the second secretary seemed to be a more delicate instrument of control. Still, this institution was quite imperial: representatives of the center selected on the basis of their professional training, ethnicity, and social origin were sent to occupy high positions in the Soviet republics. Officially, this was presented as routine work aimed at strengthening local cadres. In reality, the institution reflected the existing contract between the Kremlin and the republics' titular nomenklaturas, which regulated the loyalty, nationalism, and economic interests of the elites.

РЕЗЮМЕ

В статье анализируется место института вторых секретарей республиканских партийных комитетов в политической структуре номинального советского федерализма. Впервые этот институт был апробирован в республиках Прибалтики во времена Сталина. Распространение этого эксперимента на весь СССР в начале 1950-х гг. привело к изменению институциональной среды и политического поведения высшей номенклатуры. По сравнению со своими предшественниками – представителями ЦК ВКП(б) и позднее Бюро Центрального Комитета ВКП(б) – институт вторых секретарей предстает как более деликатный инструмент партийного контроля. Тем не менее в нем наличествовали имперские черты: представители центра, отбравшиеся по профессиональной компетенции, этничности и социальному происхождению, направлялись в советские республики для занятия высоких должностей. Официально институт вторых секретарей осмысливался как рутинное усиление местных кадров. Однако за ним стоял контракт между Кремлем и республиканскими номенклатурами, в рамках которого могли проявляться и контролироваться лояльность, национализм и экономические интересы элит.