

OTHER NATIONS

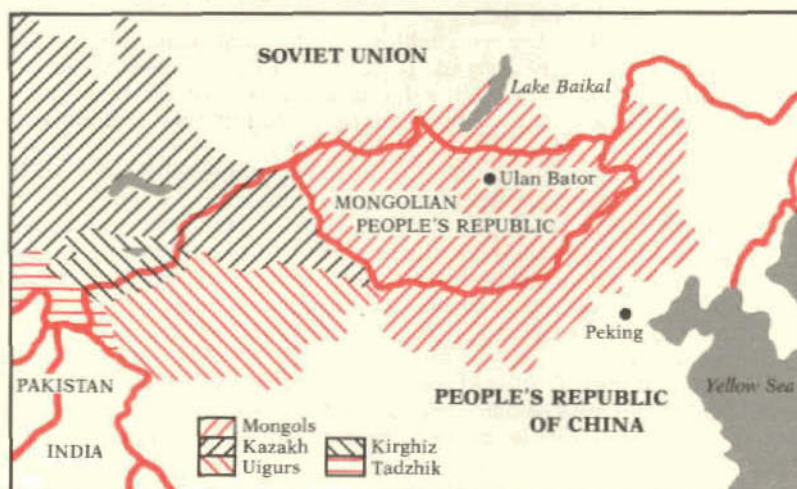
political autonomy that threatened the uneasy cohesion of the Soviet bloc. Czech intellectuals, bent on restoring civil liberties in the tradition of Slavic nationalist Tomáš Masaryk (1850–1937), called for democracy, not just democratization. The Soviets, misunderstanding the role of a free press, failed to distinguish individual opinions from government policy. Essentially, Kaplan contends, the tragic flaw of the Prague Spring lay in the naiveté of the new Czech leaders, who believed they could allow partial democratization without unleashing democratic sentiments deeply embedded in Czech society.

Ethnic Politics on the Eastern Front

"The National Minorities Factor in the Sino-Soviet Dispute" by Lowell Tillett, in *Orbis* (Summer 1977), 3508 Market St., Philadelphia, Pa. 19104.

Asian specialists studying the fiercely independent ethnic minorities in the U.S.S.R. and the People's Republic of China have paid little attention to the role these groups play in the Sino-Soviet dispute. According to Tillett, a Wake Forest University historian, ethnic and political boundaries seldom coincide along the contested Sino-Soviet border. This fact, he contends, could have a significant, if unpredictable effect on relations between the two communist giants.

No fewer than 10 ethnic minorities straddle the Sino-Soviet frontier—the longest (6,000 miles), most disputed, most heavily militarized border on earth. The Mongols (3 million) and the Uigurs and Kazakhs (between 4 and 5 million each) are most numerous, followed by the Tadzhik, Kirghiz, and others. Although these "unreliable" populations are relatively small, their strategic importance is not. (For example, minorities comprise only 6 percent of China's population but inhabit fully half of its territory.)



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Neither Moscow nor Peking has resolved the minority question, says Tillett, though they have employed similar tactics: development of minority cadres, periodic purges of local leaders, and forced assimilation through resettlement. (Russian Kazakhs now constitute only 43 percent of the population of the Kazakh Republic; Chinese Mongols, less than 10 percent of Inner Mongolia's inhabitants.)

Recurrent ethnic nationalism may encourage the two communist rivals to use the nationalities to provoke border clashes under the guise of "liberation" and "ethnic unity." Yet these ethnic groups could also have a "damping effect": In the event of war, Russia and China would have to divert troops to control independence-minded minorities. Neither side, Tillett adds, has forgotten ethnic collaboration (by Ukrainians and Mongols, among others) with German and Japanese invaders during World War II.

Beirut's Road to Recovery

"An Appraisal of Lebanon's Postwar Economic Development and a Look to the Future" by Samir A. Makdisi, in *The Middle East Journal* (vol. 31, no. 3, 1977), 1761 N St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

The long-range economic setback suffered by Lebanon during its 1975-76 civil war can only be estimated, but the magnitude of the devastation is clear. Damage to factories, businesses, and other physical assets totaled at least \$16 billion; national income dropped from \$18 billion in 1974 to \$7 billion in 1976; transportation, trade, and banking were severely disrupted. The challenge now facing Lebanese officials, writes Makdisi, an economist at the American University of Beirut, is to begin the social and economic reforms the country has needed since World War II.

From 1950 to 1974, Lebanon achieved remarkable economic expansion. Nonrestrictive foreign trade policies, a flexible exchange rate for the Lebanese pound, and political stability attracted foreign capital and fostered Beirut's role as an international commercial and banking center.

But little attention was paid to income redistribution. (Less than 18 percent of the Lebanese earned more than the national average in the 1960s, compared to 35-40 percent in the United States, Denmark, and even Italy.) Only 8 percent of public investment from 1964 to 1971 went for such needs as inexpensive health care, low-cost housing, and education. Although increased attention to these concerns was evident in the government's Six-Year Plan (1972-77), war broke out before its goals could be achieved.

A "special duality," says Makdisi, has long marred Lebanon's economic development: coexistence of a vigorous private sector and a lagging public sector. But he cautions that attempts to readjust the balance must preserve the "enterprising elements" on which Lebanon's prosperity depends.