

CONSTITUTION OF THE UNION OF SOCIALIST SOVIET REPUBLICS

January 1924

(abridged)

PART I DECLARATION

Since the foundation of the Soviet Republics, the states of the world have been divided into two camps: the camp of capitalism and the camp of socialism. There, in the camp of capitalism: national hate and inequality, colonial slavery and chauvinism, national oppression and massacres, brutalities and imperialistic wars. Here, in the camp of socialism: reciprocal confidence and peace, national liberty and equality, the pacific co-existence and fraternal collaboration of peoples. The attempts made by the capitalistic world during the past ten years to decide the question of nationalities by bringing together the principle of the free development of peoples with a system of exploitation of man by man have been fruitless. In addition, the number of national conflicts becomes more and more confusing, even menacing the capitalist regime. The bourgeoisie has proven itself incapable of realizing a harmonious collaboration of the peoples. It is only in the camp of the Soviets, only under the conditions of the dictatorship of the proletariat that has grouped around itself the majority of the people, that it has been possible to eliminate the oppression of nationalities, to create an atmosphere of mutual confidence and to establish the basis of a fraternal collaboration of peoples. It is only thanks to these circumstances that the Soviet Republics have succeeded in repulsing the imperialist attacks both internally and externally. It is only thanks to them that the Soviet Republics have succeeded in satisfactorily ending a civil war, in assuring their existence and in dedicating themselves to pacific economic reconstruction. But the years of the war have not passed without leaving their trace. The devastated fields, the closed factories, the forces of production destroyed and the economic resources exhausted, this heritage of the war renders insufficient the isolated economic efforts of the several Republics. National economic reestablishment is impossible as long as the Republics remain separated. On the other hand, the instability of the international situation and the danger of new attacks make inevitable the creation of a united front of the Soviet Republics in the presence of capitalist surroundings. Finally, the very structure of Soviet power, international by nature of class, pushes the masses of workers of the Soviet Republics to unite in one socialist family. All these considerations insistently demand the union of the Soviet Republics into one federated state capable of guaranteeing external security, economic prosperity internally, and the free national development of peoples. The will of the peoples of the Soviet Republics recently assembled in Congress, where they decided unanimously to form the "Union of Socialist Soviet Republics," is a sure guarantee that this Union is a free federation of peoples equal in rights, that the right to freely withdraw from the Union is assured to each Republic, that access to the Union is open to all Republics already existing as well as those that may be born in the future, that the new federal state will be the worthy crowning of the principles laid down as early as October 1917 of the pacific co-existence and fraternal collaboration of peoples, that it will serve as a bulwark against the capitalist world and mark a new decisive step towards the union of workers of all countries in one world-wide Socialist Soviet Republic.

PART II TREATY

The Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic, the Socialist Soviet Republic of Ukraine, the Socialist Soviet Republic of White Russia, and the Socialist Soviet Republic of Transcaucasia (including the Socialist Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan, the Socialist Soviet Republic of Georgia, and the Socialist Soviet Republic of Armenia) unite themselves in one federal state – "The Union of Socialist Soviet Republics."

Chapter I.

Attributions of the Supreme Organs of Power of the Union

ARTICLE 1. The Union of Socialist Soviet Republics through its supreme organs has the following powers: (a) To represent the Union in its international relations; to conclude all diplomatic relations; to conclude treaties, political and otherwise, with other States; (b) to modify the exterior frontiers of the Union, as well as to regulate questions concerning the modification of frontiers between the member Republics; (c) to conclude treaties concerning the reception of new Republics into the Union; (d) to declare war and to conclude peace; (e) to conclude internal and external loans of the Union and to authorize internal and external loans of the member Republics; (f) to ratify international treaties; (g) to direct commerce with foreign countries and to determine the system of internal commerce; (h) to establish the basic principles and the general plan of the national economy of the Union; to define the domains of industry and industrial enterprises that are of federal interest; to conclude treaties of concession both federal and in the name of the member Republics; (i) to direct transportation and the postal and telegraph services; (j) to organize and direct the armed forces of the Union; (k) to approve the budget of the federal state which includes the budgets of the member Republics; to establish duties and federal revenues, making additions and reductions in order to balance the member Republics' budgets; to authorize duties and supplementary taxes to meet the member Republics' budgets; (l) to establish a uniform system of money and credit; (m) to establish general principles of exploitation and use of the earth, as well as those of the sub-soil, the forests, and the waters of the territories of the Union; (n) to establish federal legislation on the emigration from the territory of one of the Republics to the territory of another and to set up a fund for such emigration; (o) to establish principles of the judicial organization and procedure, as well as civil and criminal legislation for the Union; (p) to establish the fundamental laws regarding work; (q) to establish the general principles regarding public instruction; (r) to establish the general measures regarding public hygiene; (s) to establish a standard system of weights and measures; (t) to organize federal statistics; (u) to fix the fundamental legislation regarding federal nationality, with reference to the rights of foreigners; (v) to exercise the right of amnesty in all territories of the Union; (w) to abrogate the acts of the Congresses of the Soviets and the Central Executive Committees of the member Republics contrary to the present Constitution; (x) to arbitrate litigious questions between the member Republics.

ARTICLE 2. The approval and modification of the fundamental principles of the present Constitution belong exclusively to the Congress of Soviets of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics.

CHAPTER II.

Sovereign Rights of the Member Republics

ARTICLE 3. The sovereignty of the member Republics is limited only in the matters indicated in the present Constitution, as coming within the competence of the Union. Outside of those limits, each member Republic exerts its public powers independently; the U.S.S.R. protects the rights of the member Republics.

ARTICLE 4. Each one of the member Republics retains the right to freely withdraw from the Union.

ARTICLE 5. The member Republics will make changes in their Constitutions to conform with the present Constitution.

ARTICLE 6. The territory of the member Republics cannot be modified without their consent; also, any limitation or modification or suppression of Article 4 must have the approval of all the member Republics of the Union.

ARTICLE 7. Just one federal nationality is established for the citizens of the member Republics.

CHAPTER III

Congress of Soviets of the Union

ARTICLE 8. The supreme organ of power of the U.S.S.R. is the Congress of Soviets, and, in the recesses of the Congress of Soviets – the Central Executive Committee of the U.S.S.R. which is composed of the Federal Soviet and the Soviet of Nationalities.

ARTICLE 9. The Congress of Soviets of the U.S.S.R. is composed of representatives of the city and town Soviets on the basis of one deputy per 25,000 electors, and of representatives of the provincial Congresses of Soviets on the basis of one deputy per 125,000 inhabitants.

CHAPTER IV

The Central Executive Committee of the Union

ARTICLE 13. The Central Executive Committee of the U.S.S.R. is composed of the Federal Soviet and the Soviet of Nationalities.

ARTICLE 14. The Congress of Soviets of the U.S.S.R. elects the Federal Soviet from among the representatives of the member Republics in proportion to the population of each one to make a grand total of 371 members.

ARTICLE 15. The Soviet of Nationalities is composed of representatives of the member Republics and associated autonomous Republics of the R.S.F.S.R. on the basis of five

representatives for each member Republic, and one representative for each associated autonomous Republic....

CHAPTER XI **The Unified Political Administration of State**

ARTICLE 61. With the goal of unifying the revolutionary efforts of the member Republics in their struggle against political and economic counter-revolution, spying and banditry, there shall be created under the jurisdiction of the C.P.C. of the U.S.S.R., a Unified State Political Administration (O.G.P.U.) of which the President shall be a consulting member of the C.P.C. of the U.S.S.R.

ARTICLE 62. The O.G.P.U. of the U.S.S.R. directs the activities of the local organs of O.G.P.U. through its delegates under the jurisdiction of the C.P.C. of the member Republics, acting in virtue of a special ruling sanctioned through legislative channels.

CHAPTER XI **Arms, Flag and Capital of the Union**

ARTICLE 70. The insignia of the State of the U.S.S.R. is composed of a sickle and a hammer on an earthly globe, surrounded by sun rays and framed with wheat stalks, with an inscription in the six languages mentioned in Article 34: "Proletarians of all countries, unite!" Above the insignia, there shall be a five pointed star.

ARTICLE 71. The flag of the State of the U.S.S.R. shall be in red or vermillion cloth with the arms of the Union.

ARTICLE 72. The Capital of the U.S.S.R. is Moscow.

Full versions of the constitution are at:

<http://users.cyberone.com.au/myers/ussr1924.html>

Rex A. Wade, *Documents of Soviet History, vol 3 Lenin's Heirs 1923-1925*, Academic International Press, Gulf Breeze, Fl., 1995.