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NATIONALITIES WITHIN THE SOVIET UNION

Under the Tsardom, as is well known, the central government made every effort to suppress the separate culture of the various nationalities which had been brought by force within the Tsarist Empire. From the first days of the Revolution in 1917 the principle of self-determination of all the former subject nationalities were laid down by the Soviet Government; in pursuance of this principle what are now known as the Border States (Finland, Esthonia, Latvia, Poland and Lithuania) separated themselves from Soviet Russia, while the other parts of the former Empire formed a number of separate republics which subsequently united to form the U.S.S.R.—the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics—each constituent republic retaining the right of withdrawal from the Union at any time.

At the present time there are six republics in the Soviet Union—the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic (R.S.F.S.R.), and the Socialist Soviet Republics of the Ukraine, White Russia, Transcaucasia, Uzbek, and Turcoman. Within some of these, in turn, there are 14 smaller republics and 17 autonomous regions, so that the various national groups are in a position to carry on their own government, protect their own interests, and develop their own language and culture.

But the central government of the Soviet Union does not merely allow these national groups to carry on their separate existence; it gives them every encouragement to develop both in the educational and in the economic sphere. In the first-grade schools throughout the Soviet Union instruction is now given in 62 separate languages; the reading rooms have books and papers in 52 languages. The social development of some of the most backward Eastern peoples can be illustrated by the fact that in the republic of Uzbekstan, where before the Revolution women were in a condition of semi-slavery, there are now 276 women's educational institutions with 13,200 students. The economic aid given to the separate republics can be illustrated by the continuous assistance in the introduction of new methods of agriculture, by the loans for this and other purposes, and by the steady building up of the scheme of electrification to cover the whole Union.

The Georgian Republic, in Transcaucasia, was visited by a large group of the British Delegation, and special steps were taken to investigate the position there in view of the interest