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**The “Peoples’ Congresses” in Russia:
Failure or Success?**

**Authenticity and Efficiency of
Minority Representation**

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The “Peoples’ Congresses” in Russia: Failure or Success? Authenticity and Efficiency of Minority Representation

This paper addresses the phenomenon of public fora which are designed to represent certain ethnic groups and are set up through popular vote. The academic and practical interest in such “congresses” results from the fact that over time it has been shown that these endeavors have: (1) proven to be viable and durable organization structures for about two decades; (2) secured flexibility in their establishment and functioning; (3) provided for mass participation in public discussions and voting; (4) avoided “identity trap” and most complexities related to setting qualifications and the selection of eligibility criteria for the participants; (5) been a bridge between minority activists and public authorities.

At the same time, the real practical outcomes, the ability to act independently and visibility of the “congresses” on the political landscape are far from being obvious, and this raises questions about the reasons for such doubtful achievements and the very meaning of “representation” in such a context.

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I. “CONGRESSES” IN THE FRAMEWORK OF NON- TERRITORIAL AUTONOMY

The idea of “congresses” of ethnically defined “peoples” or ethnicity-based representative assemblies emerged in the Russian Empire in the early 20th century and then became popular within the former USSR in the late 1980s - early 1990s. The most famous undertaking of this kind was the Kurultay (Congress) of Crimean Tatar people established in 1991 along with the Crimean Tatar Mejlis, the permanent representative and self-government body, as

well as the system of local Crimean Tatar Mejlises¹. At the present time in the post-Soviet states, elected bodies convened on behalf of certain ethnic groups are mostly to be found in Russia.

In Russia, “the congresses of peoples” in terms of their scale, symbolic status, and the amount of resources involved are in fact a much more significant endeavor than so-called national-cultural autonomy (NCA). While NCA in Russia is merely a deteriorated version of non-profit non-governmental organization (NGO) in the sense that their procedures of establishment are more complex and the rights



are limited vis-à-vis “ordinary” NGOs², “peoples’ congresses” are a flexible, durable and relatively efficient form of organization and participation in public life.

While publications dedicated to NCA in Russia are relatively numerous³, virtually no scholar has addressed the phenomenon of “congresses”. Although proceedings of the major “congresses” have been made public, the very theme has only been briefly mentioned in individual articles and monographs issued in Russia only⁴.

Moreover, it follows from the above that “peoples’ congresses” have not been well studied empirically. Thus, this paper should be viewed rather as an occasion to raise relevant questions than to provide all answers. This phenomenon invites to address the following two puzzles. First, “congresses” as a working scheme are promising in terms of minorities’ self-organization and representation while they are devoid of many of the drawbacks inherent in other models. The real “congresses” have as mentioned above been successful in the formal sense, yet they have not gained a significant public visibility and remain known only to a handful of academics and to the direct participants. Second, the gap between, on the one hand, the formal success in creating mechanisms of representation and participation, and, on the other hand, questionable substantive effectiveness shows the need to re-examine the nature and criteria of what might be termed “mobilization” and “representation” of ethnic groups.

In what way can the theme of “congresses” be associated with the issues of non-territorial autonomy? “Autonomy is a device to allow ethnic or other groups claiming a distinct identity to exercise direct control over affairs of special concern to them”⁵. In general, the concept of non-territorial autonomy

(hereinafter - NTA) is blurred, which is reflected in the fact that several different interpretations can be found in the academic literature on this topic.⁶ Two of them emerge most frequently.

According to the first one, NTA is understood as a general principle according to which people belonging to a particular ethnicity can carry out activities related to their interests as members of an ethnic group by using different forms of organization independently, and without any government intervention.

According to the other interpretation, NTA is to be regarded as a particular form of organization on ethnic grounds. This interpretation is often traced back to the Austro-Marxist theorists Karl Renner and Otto Bauer, who are often called the founders of the idea.⁷ Austro-Marxists offered to organize “nations” as vertically integrated corporations which are granted certain functions and public competences related to education, cultural affairs, linguistic regulations, and partly to social security. A corporation (or “national union”) was assumed to be based on individual membership of persons belonging to the respective ethnic groups, to operate through bodies elected by the respective group’s popular vote, and to have a guaranteed share in public resources for its activities, in particular, through imposing taxation on group members. The view that NTA requires the organization of the entire ethnic group as a single structure with an elected representative body is seen quite frequently in the literature, and may be viewed as a lasting effect of Austro-Marxism.

“Peoples’ congresses” in theory fit both of these major interpretations of NTA. On the one hand, they can be understood as a collective activity serving to express and promote interests based on ethnicity. On the other hand, each “congress” is designed as a single organizational framework for an ethnic group as a whole, and it



forms a representative structure based on general elections. In many cases, “congresses” receive certain amounts of public resources - they are given state funding and they participate in public decision-making. All these elements resemble Austro-Marxist NTA, at least in the formal sense.

II. “CONGRESSES” AND THE NOTIONS OF REPRESENTATION AND PARTICIPATION

All the initiatives described below combine the tacit assumption that ethnic groups are integral social entities which exist independently of territory as associations of individuals who are able in principle to organize, govern and represent themselves. Accordingly, the respective organizational forms are supposed to play two roles: to represent ethnic “interests” for the larger society and for the government and to undertake guidance of ethnic groups’ internal affairs.

This approach reflects a vision of ethnicity which Rogers Brubaker has termed “groupism”⁸. “Groupism” is not a theory and even not a coherent system of belief; it is not identical to essentialism, which strives to present ethnic groups as social entities, embodying a sort of biological, social-historical or cultural substance and existing independently of human consciousness and social interactions. “Groupism” is rather a stable discursive pattern – a way to describe social reality (in this case - phenomena associated with ethnicity) often based on an incoherent and uncritical acceptance of groups as structural units of society and self-evident social agents.⁹

Policy-makers, ethnic activists and even academics usually address the topic of NTA from a groupist perspective. In this context, the issues of “autonomy” as self-governance are

often discussed in combination with the issues of “participation” and “representation” of the group before the public authorities and the society at large.¹⁰

The meaning of representation poses an analytical problem and generates controversies in the social sciences as well as in policy-making.¹¹ The broad topic of representation is divisible into four smaller issues that are labeled as “symbolic”, “descriptive”, “formalistic” and “substantive” representation. In particular, descriptive representation means the extent to which the representative resembles (usually by belonging to the same social category) those being represented, but has nothing to do with how the representative actually behaves.¹² Formalistic representation¹³ relates to authorization and accountability in procedural terms. Substantive representation is about the degree to which the trustees’ activities adequately and completely represent their constituency’s interests.¹⁴

Ethnicity-based representation has emerged as an especially complex issue which posits a challenge both to theorists and to policy-makers alike. Broadly understood representation of groups defined in cultural, ethnic or racial terms has important implications for the stability and efficiency of governance.¹⁵ Definitions of ethnicity and the ways it is institutionalized vary from country to country, while individual group affiliation and involvement in group activities can often be questioned or contested. There may be several spokesmen on behalf of the same group; their stances and claims may differ, and policy-makers have to cope with this. Respectively, there is no single and uniform answer to the question of who may participate in the formation of representative bodies and what the eligibility criteria for such participation are. While “groupism” prompts to view an ethnic category as a single social entity ultimately



capable of elaborating a single standpoint; alongside this, bureaucratic logic urges the government to simplify the process of deliberation and to reduce the number of agents to be engaged therein.

More questions arise the further one delves into the subject on hand. Should the representative structures adequately reflect the variety of views existent within the group or try to formulate a single common position? Under what conditions can such a representative structure preserve its independence from any external pressure, particularly from the authorities and at the same time be effective and efficient?¹⁶

III. “PEOPLES’ CONGRESSES”: THE HISTORIC TRADITION

“Congresses of peoples” in Russia theoretically look like a simple, consistent and flexible organizational scheme friendly to grass-root minority members and instrumental for involving members of ethnic groups in public representation and self-government. The key issue is how this scheme is implemented in practice.

Historically, the idea is not new. “Congresses of peoples” in the ethnic sense took place as the supreme representative assemblies of ethnic groups were convened for the first time in 1917-18 within the borders of the former Russian Empire after the overthrow of the monarchy, and especially under Bolshevik rule. By the 20th century the Russian society had mastered the concept of “nation” or “nationality” as an aggregate of people united by culture or origin. This perception had a mixed origin – minority and majority nationalisms ultimately inspired by German romanticism, social engineering of imperial bureaucracy, and different currents of Marxism etc. In the given

case, the important thing is that Bolsheviks and their partners from ethnic minority activists operated on the basis of such attitudes.

The first congress of “small peoples of the Volga region” (S’yezd melkih narodnostei Povolzhya) took place in Kazan on 15-22 May 1917.¹⁷ One of the earliest examples of an ethnic representative assembly was the All-Chuvash Congress with about 800 delegates, convened on 20-28 June 1917 in Simbirsk.¹⁸ The first congress of Udmurts took place in Glazov on 14 July 1917.¹⁹ The first Congress of the Mari people was held later on in Birsk in 1917;²⁰ the modern conventions of Mari write their history beginning with that event.²¹ Starting in 1919, All-Bashkir Congresses were taking place alongside the conventions of Chuvashes and Udmurts in the Volga region. Since then “congresses of peoples”, “military conventions” (i.e., meeting of soldiers belonging to particular ethnic nationalities), congresses of the workers and communist activists of certain ethnicities had been taking place quite regularly and were playing a prominent role in the debates around the creation of ethnically defined autonomous republics. It is significant that at that time in doing this the new government was seeking a mandate from the respective ethnic groups or from their “vanguard” as it was understood by the Bolsheviks.²² In the late 1920s, ethnic representative assemblies ceased to be convened,²³ and the idea was revived just before the collapse of the Soviet Union.

IV. HOW THE MODEL FUNCTIONS

Dozens of ethnic congresses have been regularly convened in Russia after the Soviet Union’s breakdown, and differ from each other in many parameters. A separate and specific issue is the numerous fora or representative coalition-type



organizations each seeking to bring together several ethnic groups. Examples of this are the federal and regional Assemblies of Peoples, the Congress of Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East and the regional conferences of indigenous peoples, regional congresses of the peoples of Ingushetia, Chechnya and other republics. Multi-ethnic representative assemblies are specific in rationale, design and operational modes, therefore they deserve a separate examination. This is why they are not addressed further in this paper.

Monoethnic congresses represented and continue to represent different ethnic groups. If we proceed from their numbers, then at the one extreme is the Congress of Black Sea Shapsugs – a small, 3,200 strong Circassian indigenous ethnic group in Krasnodar Krai)²⁴ - and at the other extreme there is the World Russian People's Congress, summoned under the auspices of the Russian Orthodox Church, but also having features of an ethnic representative assembly. There have been congresses of dispersedly settled minorities (Germans and Ukrainians), of indigenous peoples (the Congress of Evenks), and congresses of ethnic groups which are titular in the republics within Russia. The latter category is the most numerous and stable, and the description below will focus on them.

Hereinafter the term “congresses” will bear two meanings: the first one pertains to mass meetings or conferences as one-off events, the second one relates to lasting social movements. The reason for this terminological confusion is that in reality the term is employed in the same way.

“Congresses” as used in both meanings vary in geographic coverage. The largest assemblies act as inter-regional and even international projects, attracting participants

from all territories where members of the respective group reside. Also, there are numerous regional congresses of certain minorities or indigenous peoples convened under the aegis of the regional authorities, for example, congresses of Ukrainians and Germans in the Komi Republic, the Congress of Evenks in Sakha-Yakutia, as well as congresses of Tatars, Chuvashs and Russians in Bashkortostan.²⁵ “Congresses” can be one-off events (like most of peoples’ congresses in the North Caucasus); or in contrast, can be lasting projects comprised of representative meetings, permanent decision-making and executive organs and a network of local offices. The latter category is mainly represented by titular ethnicities of the republics within the Russian Federation. One should note that “congresses” designed to embrace all people belonging to a certain group must really matter in practical terms because only a small part of the titular ethnicities reside inside the respective republics (Mordovia, Mari El, Tatarstan, Buryatia).

According to the strategies pursued, one may distinguish between two ideal models of the “congresses”: (1) a representative forum initiated or directly supported (financially as well) by governmental bodies; (2) an “alternative” movement that tries to act as a representative body and to fulfill political and administrative tasks independently of the official authorities. Most often, these two models do not exist in pure forms, and their features are combined in various proportions. Congresses which are stable and regularly summoned with few exceptions are loyal to the regional governments and strive to cooperate with them in some way rather than be in opposition. Another criterion is access to regular public resource support. Official authorities (precisely, regional governments) never cover all costs of congresses and their bodies, but often



governmental subsidies play a significant role. In the meantime, some congresses, while cooperating with the republican authorities, enjoy only irregular funding (such as the Congress of Karelian people in Karelia).²⁶ Most often, congresses are at least nominally formed through elections in which people belonging to a particular ethnicity and at times others who are sympathetic to the movement vote. Rarely, congresses mean meetings of delegates from civic associations (as the congresses of Ukrainians and Germans). A congress often creates a public movement and becomes its highest governing body. In some cases, a public movement emerges independently of the people's congress, but takes on the task of summoning the congresses regularly (like National Association of Buryat Culture which was in charge of organizing four Congresses of the Buryat people).²⁷ In retrospect, over the last 20 years one can list 13 stable and regularly functioning "peoples' congresses" acting on behalf of the following groups: Tatars, Bashkirs, Buryats, Chuvashs, Mordovians, Karelians, Khakas, Komi, Udmurts, Mari, Evenks, Ossetians, and Shapsugs, while the latter two have so far largely curtailed their activities in the recent years.

As a rule, stable and regularly convened "congresses" are created and operate throughout the country on the same scheme with some variations. The first convention is summoned as a one-off event by ethnic non-governmental organizations in cooperation with the regional authorities or vice versa – by a regional government assisted by ethnic associations (concrete roles may differ). Delegates to the particular congress are elected by persons basically belonging to the respective ethnicity and having attended public meetings and conferences. Electoral meetings are held not

only in the respective region, but throughout Russia and in other countries.

A congress as a public meeting provides for mass discussion on strategic issues, then makes general policy resolutions, forms a permanent coordinating structure such as an executive committee and establishes a kind of mass "nationwide" public movement, usually without a fixed individual membership. This organization can be named in different ways, and it is often called just "congress" of the respective "people". The permanent body of the "congress" in the second meaning is elected by the congress in the first sense and is considered accountable to it. The established movement operates on a regular basis, and in particular creates the infrastructure for convening the next congress. The movement forms the apparatus and sets up a network of regional organizations, which can serve as branches of the congress itself or operate as autonomous NGOs having also institutional members of the "congress". As a rule, a "congress" as organization is a public movement based on participation, rather than on a fixed membership. It acquires state registration as a "social movement", sometimes as a union or an association of civic organizations, and in rare cases as a "social organization" (where fixed individual membership is required). Subsequent congresses in the meaning of public event, usually meet once every few years on the initiative of the official authorities, or standing bodies of the movement. Delegates to the congress in the first sense are chosen by popular vote in one or (more often) two stages. The latter variant means that public meetings in settlements nominate and select electors who take part in district and regional conferences and elect delegates to the convention.

These schemes are in part doubtful in legal terms: the 1995 Federal Law "On Public



Associations” clearly stipulates that governmental bodies are not allowed to be founders of public associations or take part in the formation thereof in any way. In the meantime, the same law allows the creation of “state-social organizations”, which must have a special status. In any case, no regional government has opted for the establishment of those public-private associations, but has preferred to recognize conventions as public associations and to participate in their activities notwithstanding the legal confinements. In addition, selective governmental support of one single organization is also questionable in terms of equality before the law; however, there have been no attempts made by any individuals to contest the lawfulness of a congress because of its discriminatory character. Voters’ meetings and subsequent electors’ conferences are usually supposed to be open to the public: everyone (it is assumed that first and foremost these are the people belonging to the respective ethnicity) may come and partake in the discussion, nomination of candidates and in the elections. The leaders of the largest “congresses” repeatedly declared in public the absence of any ethnic qualifications. In their view and according to the formal regulations, the movements are open to all interested, regardless of ethnicity, and the sole criterion for admission is the interest in the development of the respective ethnic group and its culture. Besides, regional ministers and officials of local administrations engage in preparations to congresses ex officio, and among them are people of different ethnic origins.²⁸ The voting for electors and delegates is regulated by quotas set up by the congress’ organizing committee for administrative territorial units and regions on the basis of an estimated number of people belonging to the respective ethnicity; the estimates are derived

from either the latest census date or from other assessments. Often, the quotas may be different for the republic where the respective ethnicity is considered titular and for the other regions where there are often reduced.

Congresses in the meaning of conventions are supposed to arrange for a free and wide-ranging discussion, the formulation of demands and requests to the authorities, and elections of the standing governing body of the movement, which must have received thereby the popular acknowledgement “mandate”. Relations of the congresses with official authorities range from direct, more or less overt control by the state (World Congress of Tatars, World Kurultay of Bashkirs) to a relatively independent existence from the authorities (Congress of the Karelian people, Udmurt Kenesh, the Shapsug Parliament or Congress of the Germans).

Some congresses in both of the meanings receive public resources of two types: public funding (at least for the convention as a one-time event) and participation (at least nominally) in governmental decision-making. In any case, regional and even federal top officials often present at the “congresses” and report on the implementation of the decisions made by the previous convention. It’s unclear whether the authorities took the congresses position, but the demonstrative attention given to them is probably perceived as a useful propagandist tool. Congresses in the sense of public meetings in the name of titular nationalities (Tatars, Bashkirs, Mordvins, Komi) follow similar scenarios. The total number of participants includes several hundred elected delegates (mostly high-status academics, artists, government officials and managers of large enterprises), representatives of the republican government and guests from other regions and partner ethnic movements.



The conventions' transcripts are often reminiscent of the Soviet-time Communist Party conferences and sometimes leave the impression that they have been written as a blueprint. Official leaders of the respective republic report about the region's achievements and express their wishes and recommendations to the movement. If the convention was not the first one, the movement's chair reports on the work done. The delegates then discuss at the plenary sessions and in sections mainly on the issues of language, cultural development, social programs and inter-regional relations, at times governmental support to small businesses and charities. Typically, the major refrain in most speeches is the need to maintain the respective republic's "sovereignty", to articulate its "ethnic" character, to strengthen national identity and to demonstrate the unity of the people.

Debates on political issues in the sense of critical discussion concerning strategies for regional development and the authorities' competence are the exception rather than the rule. The II and III Congresses of the Mordvin people addressed recognition of Erzia and Moksha as independent ethnic entities - the proposal was not supported, but the names of these two subgroups of Mordva have since then appeared in the title of the Congress and of the movement.²⁹ In 2001-04, the Mari movement Mer Kanash and the All-Mari Congress protested against the attempts of the Marii El presidential administration to hijack the Mari convention and to orchestrate the elections.³⁰ In 1999, the movement Udmurt Kenesh summoned an extraordinary convention to the massive failure of the candidates of Udmurt ethnic origin in local and regional elections in the Udmurt Republic.³¹

As a rule, the congresses demonstrated conformism towards the republican authorities:

they shared the agenda and the vocabulary the latter offered and dared to question only the minutiae of the governmental policies, and never the fundamentals. Among the issues that can be deemed as having been most significant were the "sovereignty" of the republics vis-à-vis the federal centre, the need to allocate more funds for the development of language and culture, and the necessity to pay more attention to upbringing of the youth. Certainly, these agendas were not alien to the official authorities.

The standing central organs of the congresses and the regional branches have acted mainly as lobbyists, suggesting to the government specific actions (if they were not controlled directly by the authorities), or have acted as support groups or as additional propaganda tools of the official leadership. Permanent executive organs of the movements have often run cultural and educational projects. Other activities have been of an auxiliary character: "congresses" in the sense of social movements have assisted the republican authorities in establishing inter-regional relations, conducted various events like seminars or conferences, arranged for expert opinions, contributed to mass agitation campaigns and so forth.

1. World Congress of Tatars

The First World Congress of Tatars was convened in Kazan in June 1992 by a Decree of the Tatarstan's President. This year was a period of political confrontation between Moscow and Kazan, and the Tatarstan government strived to mobilize all political resources available. On the other hand, the government was under pressure from radical Tatar nationalists who in 1991 convened the oppositional Milli Majlis (national parliament) of the Tatar people; and the government wanted to seize the initiative. In



August 1997, the II Congress established a permanently functioning organization which was approved by the Charter of the International Union of Public Associations “World Congress of Tatars” (hereinafter – WCT).

The Charter³² describes WCT as an ethnicity-based organization and formulates its main goals as “consolidation of the Tatar people, promotion of its socio-economic, ethnic, cultural, political and spiritual development, participation in planning of the programs and in creation of the implementation mechanism for protecting cultural and national interests of the Tatar people in the regions of their residence” (item 2.1 of the Charter).

WTC is based on institutional membership and composed of legal entities – civic organizations; decisions on admission are made by the WCT Executive Committee (item 4.1). WCT’s supreme governing body is the Congress which must be convened at least once in every five years (item 6.1). In between conventions WCT is governed by the Executive Committee which is elected by the Congress for the term of five years and has to meet at least once a year. Between meetings of the Executive Committee, WCT activities are coordinated by the Bureau formed by the Executive Committee from its members for the same term of office. The Bureau shall meet at least once a month (item 6.5).

WCT members are available in most regions of Russia and in most former Soviet republics. As a rule, these civic organizations have been established independently of the Congress. The Federal NCA of Tatars is a WCT member.

The Congress is engaged in political lobbying to the regional and federal authorities, the establishment of interregional business and cultural cooperation, and projects for the development of Tatar language, culture and

education. The main working formats of WCT are arrangements for public events like conferences, seminars, round tables, or exhibitions - in different regions of Russia and in other countries.

WCT receives financial support from the Tatarstan government; however, the amount of this support has not been disclosed. Even the WCT Charter puts “state subsidies for the implementation of socially important programs in national and cultural development” at the top of the potential financial sources’ list (item 7.1). WCT conventions are generously sponsored by the authorities and turn out to be pompous events; the last one, the IV Congress, was held on 13-14 December 2007 in Kazan. The III Congress which took place on 28-29 August 2002 in Kazan included the President of Russia and other Russian top governmental officials.

2. World Kurultay of Bashkirs

The World Kurultay (Congress) of Bashkir (hereinafter WKB), like the WCT, is a blatant form of government-operated non-governmental organization (GONGO). Like the Tatarstan Presidency, the government of Bashkortostan in the 1990s strived to neutralize and put under control the Bashkir nationalist movement which was to some degree an oppositional movement. The First World Kurultay was convened by virtue of the Decrees of the President and of the Cabinet of Ministers of Bashkortostan. These acts set up the Organizing Committee, and approved the Regulation on the election of delegates and the action plan for preparing and holding the WKB. City and district administrations in Bashkortostan were ordered to establish and lead the city and district organizing committees and thus to arrange for the delegates’ elections. The head Organizing



Committee of WKB included many high-ranked officials of the republic, as well as heads of several administrative units and the chairs of the republican unions of writers and artists. The local organizing committees formed delegations to the convention; most were nominated and elected as “representatives of Bashkir nationality” for their public and professional status. Along with them, each district or city also sent one representative of the largest (except the Bashkirs) ethnicity of the respective area. Elections of delegates outside Bashkortostan were provided for by Bashkir civic associations in cooperation with local authorities. The representation quota in Bashkortostan proper was one delegate for every 2,000 people of Bashkir origin, one for every 3,000 in other regions of Russia and one for every 5,000 in other countries. The elections were held in two stages. An assembly of citizens in the localities and at large enterprises sent delegates to district and city conferences, and the latter selected and approved delegates to the Congress itself. Outside the Republic of Bashkortostan, only regional conferences summoned by Bashkir civic organizations took place. A nominee was considered elected if at least 2 / 3 of the participants of the respective conference had voted for him or her. Elected delegates enjoyed casting votes, and designated members of the official delegations had only deliberative vote.

The conferences were held in winter and spring of 1995, and the First World Kurultay was summoned on 1-2 June 1995 in Ufa. It was a grandiose event with 806 delegates and numerous official delegations from other regions of Russia and other countries. Most of the delegates were governmental officials, businesspeople, prominent academics and artists.³³ The congress was largely funded by the republican budget and by contributions from

large enterprises which were controlled by the Bashkortostan government.

Formally, the congress discussed a variety of issues related to the “development”, “revival” and “consolidation” of the Bashkir people and issued a number of respective resolutions. In particular, it commissioned the draft State Program “Revival and Development of the Bashkir people”.

Shortly after, the WKB was registered by the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Bashkortostan as an international civic organization, and in 1998 was re-registered as an interregional social movement. In December 2003, in addition to this status, the organization also obtained official registration as the International Union of Public Associations “World Kurultay (Congress) of Bashkirs”. The Charters of both the movement and the International Union refer to the goals of WKB as being the “promotion of the revival and development of the Bashkir people”.³⁴ The list of tasks encompasses a multiplicity of areas - from research to the elaboration of development programs, and from the promotion of the Bashkir culture to protection of the environment in the region.

The supreme governing body of WKB is the World Congress which must be summoned every five years. Between the congresses the standing governing body is the Executive Committee, which consists of 73 people (as of early 2011)³⁵ who work in the WKB on a voluntary basis. The Executive Committee forms the Bureau (15 persons) and thematic commissions whose members also work as volunteers. The thematic commissions address the issues of education, culture, the Bashkir language, ecology, social and political life, religion, historic studies and historic enlightenment, public health, and the protection of family and childhood. The Executive



Committee has a permanent secretariat with 14 full time employees (at the beginning of 2011).³⁶ The Secretariat occupies several rooms in the republican Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations, and the government also pays for the supplies. The organization's budget is mainly made up of sponsors' contributions. Similarly, municipal authorities and sponsors provide financial assistance to the local offices of the WKB.

Kurultay has set up local offices in over 80 districts, cities and other settlements throughout Bashkortostan. Regional kurultays of Bashkirs has also been created in neighboring Chelyabinsk, Kurgan, Sverdlovsk, Perm, Orenburg, Samara and other regions and republics; the WKB has branches in Moscow, St. Petersburg and other Russian regions;³⁷ such publicly funded institutions as “Bashkir cultural centers” in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and several other countries are officially considered to be part of the WKB.

The Second World Congress of Bashkirs was held on 14-15 June 2002 by the Bashkortostan authorities in the same manner as the first Kurultay; the Third Kurultay took place on 10-11 June 2010.

The WKB Executive Committee and the regional branches have been active mainly in three areas. First, they advise public authorities on all issues concerning the Bashkir population. Second, they arrange for a variety of cultural events like meetings, conferences, and symposia; often in collaboration with governmental bodies, academic institutions and universities. Third, the WKB encourages its local and regional organizations to become proactive and self-sufficient forms of Bashkir self-governance. The local and regional branches in fact vary greatly in their interests and activities. Among the major projects carried out in the 2000s was participation in an official

propaganda campaign aiming to persuade the Bashkir population of north-eastern districts who speak the Tatar language of their “real” Bashkir identity. An important project was also the publication of brochures about ethnic composition of Bashkortostan territories from 18th to 20th century according to the old censuses. This action took place before the 2002 census and fit into the general policy of articulating the Bashkir ethnic profile of the republic.

3. Congress of the Komi people

The Komi Republic has probably gone the furthest in the use of ethnic congresses, because the status of the Komi Congress was secured by a regional law. The First Congress of the Komi people was convened at the initiative of a non-governmental organization Komi Kotyr, but was hijacked by the republican Council of Ministers and the Regional Committee of the Communist Party, and most of the 481 delegates were governmental appointees.³⁸ The congress brought together the mostly active part of the Komi intelligentsia and officials, formed an executive body - the “Committee for the revival of Komi people” and came up with the slogan of the republic’s “national sovereignty”.³⁹ The Second congress made up of the same delegation met in November 1991, and adopted a series of strongly worded resolutions on the sovereignty of the republic and the status of the Komi people. The congress demanded not only recognition of the Komi as the fundament of the statehood, but also of their right as an indigenous people to self-determination, and of their ownership of the subsoil and natural resources of the Republic. Among the other demands was the adoption of the regional laws on citizenship, migration, languages and national



schools, as well as the establishment of the second chamber of parliament as being composed exclusively of Komi deputies. The congress has proclaimed itself “the supreme representative body of the Komi people” empowered to take part in the decision-making process of the republican government.⁴⁰ It is worth noting that the congress recognized the right of other ethnicities of the republic to establish their own “representative bodies” and called for convening the “Congress of Peoples of the Russian Federation”.⁴¹

The Republican government refrained from confrontation, rapidly established contact with the congress and accepted some of its demands. In particular, the Law on the Status of the Congress of Komi people was enacted on 26 May 1992.⁴² The law recognized the Komi as an indigenous ethnic group residing in its historic homeland; the Komi Congress was declared “the supreme representative assembly of the Komi ethnos” (Article 1), which “reflects and safeguards the vital interests of the Komi ethnos before the state power” (Article 2). The law also granted the Komi Congress and its executive body the right of legislative initiative (Article 2). The law did not establish any electoral procedures and just referred to some regulations to be adopted by the Congress itself. Article 5 stipulated that “the Congress of Komi people funded by the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Komi must convene every two years”, and that “the executive body of the Congress carries out its activities in accordance with the law on social associations”. The law was rescinded in 2003 after the protest of the republican public prosecutor, but in fact the Komi Congress functions in the same way as before.

Later, the right of legislative initiative for the Komi Congress was guaranteed by Article 76 of the 1994 Constitution of the Komi

Republic (currently it is Article 75, and it grants this right to the movement Komi Voityr). The Congress has repeatedly exercised this right: its draft Land Code and draft law on the Fund for future generations were declined, while on the other hand initiatives on decreasing the minimum age for the legal possession of firearms and on the setting up of the institution of regional human rights ombudsman were accepted.

Since 1992, the Congress was gradually integrated into the system of republican government, and as such abandoned its most radical claims and stances.⁴³ This happened in part due to the fact that the Congress and its executive body was and still is dominated by current and former governmental officials or high profile intelligentsia. The general trend in the organization’s development to date has been the gradual decline of its activities and influence.

Formally, the Komi Congress is the highest governing body of the interregional social movement Komi Voityr (Komi people)⁴⁴, which among other things has the right to represent “the interests of the Komi people in relationships with government bodies and local authorities”. The main tasks of the movement are to give “support to public policies beneficial to the development of the Komi people, preservation and development of the Komi language, customs, traditional culture and exploitation of natural resources” and to give “coordination of social movements and organizations that recognize the decisions of congresses of Komi people”. By its organizational form, Komi Voityr is a social movement since it has no fixed membership. The movement convenes its highest representative organ – the Congress - at least once every four years;⁴⁵ the most recent Ninth



Congress was held was held on 8-9 February 2008 in Syktyvkar.⁴⁶

The delegates to the congress are elected in two stages: the local meeting selects delegates to the district (city) conferences, and in the second phase the district conferences elect the convention delegates. The respective procedures are not defined in the Charter and are established by the Executive Committee. Since the early 1990s the flat quota for the Komi republic and other regions is one delegate per 1,500 people. The average number of delegates has been approximately 200.

Electoral meetings and conferences are summoned by regional and local authorities in cooperation with Komi Voityr. The movement's activists argue that the pre-electoral information campaign is given exposure to up to half of the Komi population. In theory, local meetings are to be summoned in each locality where more than 30 adult Komi reside. No ethnic qualification is established; all are invited to come and partake in the debates, but according to a commonly accepted informal rule only ethnic Komis vote. The average number of electors at a district or city conference is around 50; credentials of the elected delegates are checked and approved by the Mandate Committee of the Congress.⁴⁷

The congress elects the Executive Committee which then forms thematic commissions. The executive Committee drafts proposals for public authorities and lobbies before the republican government. From the Fourth Congress (November 1995) until at least the mid-2000s, the republican government issued a number of decrees on the implementation of the decisions of the Komi congresses. Since 1998, Komi Voityr summons regional and municipal conferences of the Komi population in which the local people can discuss

their concerns in dialog with local administrations.

The activities of Komi Voityr at the republican and local levels are in part funded by public budgets. By the mid-2000s, the annual budget of the Komi Voityr reached approximately 100,000 Euros, with most of the costs were being covered by private sponsors. The Executive Committee occupies an office in the Government House in Syktyvkar where up to six people work on a full time basis.⁴⁸

4. Congress of the Mordvin people

The First All-Union Congress of the Mordvin people was held on 14-15 March 1992 in Saransk on the initiative of two cultural societies; in the meantime, the republican government and the Supreme Soviet (the legislative assembly) of the Republic of Mordovia engaged in preparations for the congress, and the first Vice-Chairman of the republican legislature chaired the Organizing Committee. The congress of 649 delegates declared itself “the supreme representative assembly of the Mordva people” and formed the “Council of Revival” composed of 81 people as the standing executive body.⁴⁹ The resolutions of the First Congress stated that Mordvins were the indigenous ethnic group in the region, that they had the right to self-determination and must benefit from special public policies aimed at Mordvin “revival and development”. The Second, this time the All-Russian Congress held on 23-24 March 1995, gathered 290 delegates from more than 10 regions of Russia. This time, the focal topics for the discussions were cultural and language issues as well as the Mordovian unity given that the Mordva people



are composed of two sub-groups with different languages, namely Erzia and Moksha.⁵⁰

The Third congress took place on 7-10 October 1999 also in Saransk. 265 delegates were directly elected by Mordva population with the flat quota of one delegate for every 5,000 people. This time the regional government played an active role in the preparation and the sittings, and several republican ministers reported on their work before the congress. The resolutions demanded measures in the fields of education, socio-economic policies, and linguistic legislation. The Congress endorsed the earlier decision made by the Council of Revival to establish the “Interregional Public Movement of Mordva (Moksha and Erzia) of the Russian Federation” and approved the movement’s charter.⁵¹

The organization’s charter contains no ethnic qualifications for participation and defines the movement's goals as being the “promotion of ethnic harmony in the Russian Federation and Mordovia”, development of culture and education, satisfaction of Mordvins’ national-cultural needs, elaboration and implementation of development programs for the Mordvin population. The movement is structured in the same way as other “congresses of peoples”: its highest governing body is the Congress of the Mordva people which forms the Council and the Executive Committee. The Congress must be summoned at least once every five years according to the procedure established by the Council motion. The movement’s regional branches are represented by a variety of Mordovian NGOs.⁵²

The Fourth Congress was held on 24-25 November 2004, and the Fifth on 28-31 October 2009. The conventions are essentially funded by the Government of the Republic of Mordovia. The vast majority of the delegates of all congresses and activists of the movement are of

humanitarian professions, managers of state enterprises and businesspeople.

5. Adyghe Khasa (public parliament) of the Black Sea Shapsughs

According to the 2002 census, 3,200 Shapsugs⁵³ inhabit 24 villages located at the Black Sea coastal area of Krasnodar Krai - in the Lazarevski district of the city of Sochi and in the Tuapse district. From 1924 to 1945, this area was called the Shapsug Nationality District. The Shapsug movement emerged in the late 1980s and claimed restoration of territorial autonomy.⁵⁴ In December 1990, the newly established umbrella organization Adyghe Khasa (the Adyg Council) summoned the First Congress of Shapsugs. In May 1994, Adyghe Khasa and the Organizing Committee of the Congress established at the III Shapsug Congress a single body of self-government called “the Public Parliament Adyghe Khasa”. The parliament’s activities were guided by the national development program adopted at the same convention. The program envisaged gradual restoration of territorial autonomy, creation of conditions for studying the language, history and literature of Shapsugs, socio-economic development of Shapsugs’ habitat and environmental protection.⁵⁵ For achieving these goals and for lobbying Shapsugs’ interests to local and regional authorities, Adyghe Khasa established a system of elected representative councils in all villages where Shapsugs resided. In addition, the All-Shapsug Parliament (Khasa) is elected by direct popular vote independently of the local councils. After the Fourth Congress (May 1997), the movement started to collaborate with regional authorities and to get public



funding for its newspaper, and in response discarded its mostly radical slogans. Since the mid-2000 the organization has practically ceased its activities and has even shut down its website.

V. PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION: A FALSE AGENDA?

The assessment of “peoples’ congresses” is a complex task because individual contexts vary significantly and the empirical data available is not sufficient.

On the one hand, many “congresses” appear to have been successful projects if one defines “success” as meaning a viable organization that engages in lasting activities. These congresses have existed for 15-20 years, have regularly convened, have established standing governing bodies and networks of regional offices, have carried out activities aimed at the promotion of language and traditional culture, have interacted with official authorities and have even participated in administrative decision making. Even the movements that have ceased their activities to date (the Congress of the Ossetian people⁵⁶ or the Parliament of the Black Sea Shapsugs), functioned for 15 and 16 years respectively.

“Congresses” take the shape of a wide social movement without a fixed individual membership, and in theory, they offer a flexible working scheme with numerous opportunities and minimal bureaucratic burdens on the potential participants. This organizational format potentially allows for circumventing some of the obstacles and pitfalls the makers of similar representative structures have usually been faced with. First and foremost, formal qualifications in fact can discourage even welcomed participants. For example, the right to vote and be elected to the Sami parliament in Norway was initially

based on ethnic origin criteria. Not all persons of Sami ancestry were willing and able to prove their status, and finally the Norwegian government had to revise and ease the criteria for participation.⁵⁷ In contrast, the 1993 Hungarian Law on National Minorities allowed literally any voter at local elections to vote also for national minority self-government without any registration, restriction or qualification. As a result, some random people who had no relationship to minorities were nominated and elected, and this caused lasting controversies and criticism of the law.⁵⁸ Only in 2005, was a separate registration of minority voters introduced in Hungary.

The solution offered by the “congresses” looks simple and flexible: there are no formal qualifications or official registration procedures. People interested in the elections regardless of their ethnicity are expected only to attend the voters meetings, and this may serve a filter against come-and-go people.

“Congresses”, or rather their permanent working bodies, are able to initiate, carry out and coordinate different ethno-cultural projects and also involve all stakeholders therein. Such a broad forum as a “congress” can be a platform for public dialogue and advocacy, especially if it is not limited to a one-time event, but forms standing working groups and expert committees as well as provides for regular contacts and negotiations with the authorities.

In theory “congresses” can resolve other problems.⁵⁹ Legally, republics within the Russian Federation are not “ethnic” states since their constitutions and laws avoid direct references to a special privileged status of the titular ethnic groups, but rather offer ambiguities and trade offs. As Ravil Kuzeyev has noted, republican authorities for various political reasons have to maintain an ideological balance recognizing the special role of titular



nationalities and at the same time the multi-ethnic character of their regions. The institute of “congresses” can in part be a solution to the first part of the problem.

On the other hand, the success of the “congresses” can be questioned. Formally, the congresses are large-scale arrangements involving many thousands of people. However, according to the regional press and academic publications, the congresses and their activities (except the very conventions) have drawn very little public interest. One interesting obstacle is the negligence the leaders of ethnic movements demonstrate with regard to “congresses”. For example, one of the leaders of the Komi Congress and the Finno-Ugrian movement Valery Markov mentions the “congresses” only in one paragraph of his observing article⁶⁰, while in two and a half pages he informs the reader about the Association of Finno-Ugric Peoples⁶¹, which in fact is mainly engaged in symbolic actions. Public reaction thus appears disproportionate to the formal value and political weight of the “congresses”.

A more striking example is the outcome of a large scale survey conducted in 2006-08 jointly by the Association of Finno-Ugric peoples and the “Finland-Russia” Society in more than 30 regions of the country. The survey addressed Finno-Ugric and other populations separately, and the sample size for the Finno-Ugric population in individual regions ranged from 800 to 1600 people. It was found that while only 56.6% of Komi knew at least one Komi NGO, of them only 32.2% had heard about Komi Voityr. While 94.1% Mari knew something about Mari movements, of them only 38.5% could recall the Mer Kanash movement; 84.3% of Udmurts knew about Udmurt organizations, of them only 16.0% were familiar with Udmurt Kenesh.⁶²

On the one hand, according to what leaders of national movements have reported, nomination of candidates and elections are held in a fair and correct way without violations and cover most of the target audience. On the other hand, some experts are more than critical on this matter and assess all the procedures done before and at the Congresses as merely an imitation of a public vote and manipulation by ethnic leaders and local authorities. Yuri Shabaev in fact accused the organizers of the congresses of Finno-Ugric peoples that they were routinely falsifying the elections and giving no choice to the voters.⁶³ Likewise, Valery Tishkov commented on the World Congress of Tatars; in his view, the delegates were simply appointees of the Tatarstan government and were selected on formal criteria and on the basis of political loyalty.⁶⁴

The problem is such that both the justification and criticism are speculative and empirically ungrounded: no unbiased observer has watched the entire process from the inside. A crucial component is the lack of protests and criticism on the side of the congresses’ constituencies or the local media. The local meetings and conferences can be easily manipulated, but the opponents could at least challenge this outside the respective republics and beyond the administrative pressure of local authorities.⁶⁵

There is no evidence that such attempts have even taken place. In the meantime, the congresses are not necessarily puppets of the republican governments. In the early 2000s the Marii El Presidency attempted to place the Mari Congress under its control and to impose its own candidates to the delegation. This resulted in wide protests, a split in the Mari movement and a protracted crisis in relations between Mari organizations and the authorities.



There are two possible explanations of why people do not even know the names of the “supreme representative body” of their ethnic group which they supposedly voted for. First, there might be few people really take part in the electoral meetings, because most of the potential participants remain uninformed of these events. Second, people attending the meeting may view it as another harmless ritual. They might be interested in demonstrating their loyalty to the authorities and might pay no attention to the names, contents and rationales of their undertakings. In any case, the representation at the congresses is calculated according to demographic estimates or census data and not on the real number of people coming. It should be noted that the low number of minority members participating in activities of “their” ethnic NGOs is a widely spread phenomenon notwithstanding the political regimes. For example, according to various estimates, in Norway where the system of Sami self-governments is user-friendly and currently imposes no burdens on potential voters, not more than 15-20% of people considered to be Sami participate in the elections of the Sami Parliament.⁶⁶

The scenarios of the conventions and activities of the congresses’ standing bodies prompt to speak about “strategic conformism”. The congresses, however radical their rhetoric might be, follow the agenda imposed by the regional governments and demonstrate essentially paternalistic expectations. In fact, no “congress” has taken a clear stance as a point of departure for criticizing the official authorities or offered alternative strategies. Beyond general declarations the criticism addresses only minor secondary issues.

How can one explain the fact that there are virtually no competing views on strategic issues inside the “congresses” and no respective

discussions on the conventions? One could argue that people are afraid to voice alternative points of view under an authoritarian regime. However, the same pattern persisted in the 1990s in a much more liberal environment. It is important to note that in many cases supporters of radical movements and opponents of the acting regional governments are among the delegates, but they did not use the conventions as a tribune. What resembles a clash of views centers on symbolic issues such as the ways to articulate the republics’ “sovereignty”, declaration of support for diasporas, or discussions around recognition of sub-ethnic divisions (as in the case Mordvins). To conclude, the notion of symbolic representation works quite well in the case of “congresses”. The notion of “descriptive” representation also looks relevant because the conventions bring together elite members and activists of the respective ethnicities. In the meantime, formal representation in the sense of fair and correct authority delegation shall be put under a question mark because of low turnout and lack of transparency in electoral procedures. The theme of “substantive representation” or adequate translation of group interests and needs poses the most difficult problem.

If one discards the “groupist” perspective, the criteria for “authentic” representation turns out to be only a voluntaristic or “political” decision (in Weberian terms). The definition of formal and especially substantive representation on behalf of ethnic group has always been a problem without an acceptable theoretical solution. The problem is resolved if we consider ethnic group as a discursive frame, and regard the very issues of substantive and formal representation as irrelevant. Descriptive and symbolic representation can be also placed into a wider category of discursive representation. That would mean a broad



societal consensus on the recognition that the relationship between the substitute and the entity which it represents is real and valid. In the cases of “congresses” people acknowledge the established agenda and the descriptive frames. The “congresses” or other representative institutions can be criticized for procedural deficiencies or inefficiency, but all accept the very agenda of group representation. The discursive representation can be therefore described as a variant of disciplinary knowledge-power in Foucauldian terminology.

According to the Thomas-Znanietzki theorem⁶⁷, if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences.

Footnotes

¹ See Sasse, G. (2007) *The Crimea Question: Identity, Transition, and Conflict* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press).

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³ Bowring, B. (2002) “Austro-Marxism’s Last Laugh? The Struggle for Recognition of National-Cultural Autonomy for Rossians and Russians”, 54(2) *Europe-Asia Studies*, pp.229-250; *id.* (2007) “The Tatars of the Russian Federation and National-Cultural Autonomy: A Contradiction in Terms?”, 6(3) *Ethnopolitics*, pp.417-435; *id.* (2005) “Burial and Resurrection: Karl Renner's Controversial Influence on the ‘National Question’ in Russia”, in Nimni, E. (ed.) *National-Cultural Autonomy and its Contemporary Critics* (London, New York: Routledge), pp.162-175; Heinemann-Grüder, A. (2009) “Federal Discourses, Minority Rights, and Conflict Transformation”, in Cameron Ross, C. and A. Campbell (eds.) *Federalism and Local Politics in Russia* (New York: Routledge), pp. 54-81; Torode, N. (2008) “National Cultural Autonomy in the Russian Federation: Implementation and Impact”, 15 (2-3) *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights*, pp.179-193.

⁴ Abramov, V.K. (2004) *Mordovskii narod ot s'ezda k s'ezdu* (Saransk: no publisher); Sherbakova, T. (2003) “Assotsiatsiya finno-ugorskih narodov i perspektivy razvitiya etnoorientirovannyh organizatsii v XXI veke”, *Rubezh (al'manah social'nyh issledovani)* (2003) No.18, pp.111-126.

⁵ Yash Ghai, (2000) “Ethnicity and Autonomy: A Framework for Analysis”, in *id.* (ed.), *Autonomy and Ethnicity: Negotiating Competing Claims in Multi-ethnic States* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press), pp.1-25, at 8.

⁶ Brunner G. and H. Kupper (2002) “European Options of Autonomy: A Typology of Autonomy Models of Autonomy Self-Governance”, in Gal, K. (ed.) *Minority Governance in Europe* (Budapest: LGI), pp.9-36; Eide, A., Greni, V. and M. Lundberg (1998) “Cultural Autonomy: Concept, Content, History and Role in the World Order”, in Suksi, M. (ed.), *Autonomy: Applications and Implications* (The Hague, Boston: Kluwer Law International), pp. 251-276; Nimni, E. (2007) “National-Cultural Autonomy as an Alternative to Minority Territorial Nationalism”, 6(3) *Ethnopolitics*, pp. 345-364; Roach, S. (2004) “Minority rights and the Dialectics of the Nation: Otto Bauer’s Theory of the Nation and its Contributions to Multicultural Theory and Globalization”, 6(1) *Human Rights Review*, pp. 91-105.



⁷ See: Nimni, *op.cit.* note 3.

⁸ Brubaker, R., Loveman, M. and P. Stamatov (2004) "Ethnicity as Cognition", 33(1) *Theory and Society*, pp.31-64, at 45; Brubaker, R., "Ethnicity Without Groups", XLIII(2) *Archive Europeenne de Sociologie* (2002), pp.163-189, at 163.

⁹ Brubaker, R. et al. (2006) *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town*. (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press), pp.7-10.

¹⁰ Verstichel, A. (2009) Participation, Representation and Identity: The Right of Persons Belonging to Minorities to Effective Participation in Public Affairs: Content, Justification and Limits (Antwerp: Intersentia), pp.56-81; Henrard, K. (2005) "'Participation', 'Representation' and 'Autonomy' in the Lund Recommendations and their Reflections in the Supervision of the FCNM and Several Human Rights Conventions", 12(2-3) *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights*, pp. 133–168; Gould, C. (1996) "Diversity and Democracy: Representing Differences", in Benhabib, S. (ed.) *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), pp. 171-186.

¹¹ Phillips, A. (1995) *Politics of Presence* (New York: Clarendon).

¹² Dovi, S. (2007) *The Good Representative* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers).

¹³ Pitkin, H.F. (1967) *The Concept of Representation* (Berkeley, University of California Press), pp.38-59.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.112-167.

¹⁵ Reilly, B. (2002) "Electoral Systems for Divided Societies" , 13 (2) *Journal of Democracy*, pp. 156-170.

Lijphart, A. (2004) "Constitutional Choices for Divided Societies", 15(2) *Journal of Democracy*, pp. 96-109.

¹⁶ Wheatley, S. (2003) "Deliberative Democracy and Minorities", 14 (3) *European Journal of International Law*, pp. 507-527, at 526.

¹⁷ Ivanov, V. and V. Klementiev (2010) *Obrazovaniye Chuvashskoy avtonmii. Predposylki, proyekty, etapy* (Cheboksary: Chuvashskoye Knizhnoye Izdatelstvo), pp.22-27.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.28.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.28.

²⁰ Krainov, G. (2007) *Podgotovka i provedenie Pervogo Vserossiiskogo s'ezda Mari v g. Birske Ufimskoi gubernii, 15-25 iyulya 1917 g. : (90-letiyu s'ezda posvyashaetsya)* (Birk: no publisher).

²¹ *Udmurtskoe national'noe dvizhenie: svyaz' vremen. K 85-letiyu I Vserossiiskogo s'ezda udmurtov* (Izhevsk: vseudmurtuskaya asociaciya Udmurt Kenesh, 2003).

²² Mineeva, E. K. (2009) *Stanovlenie Mariiskoi, Mordovskoi i Chuvashskoi ASSR kak national'no-territorial'nyh avtonomii (1920-1930-e gody)* (Cheboksary: Izdatelstvo Chuvashskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta); Chebotareva, V.G. (2008) *Natsional'naya politika Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 1925-1938 gg.* (Moskva: Moskovskii Dom natsional'nostei).

²³ Ivanov, Klementiev, *op.cit.* note 17, pp.30-49, 160. Probably, the last one was the congress of Nentsy convened in 1929 in what later became the Nenets Autonomous Okrug in the European North of Russia.

²⁴ "Vserossiiskaya Perepis Naseleniya 2002 goda. Naselenie po natsional'nosti i vladeniyu russkim yazykom po sub'ektam Rossi'skoy Federatsii", at: <http://www.perepis2002.ru/ct/doc/TOM_04_03.xls>.

²⁵ For more about the regional minority congresses in Bashkortostan see Samorodov, V.N. (2003) "Sobor russkih Bashkortostana: opyt raboty, resheniya i sovremennye problemy", in *Russkie Bashkortostana. Istoriya i kul'tura*. (Ufa: no publisher), pp.372-384.

²⁶ For more information about the Congresses of the Karelian People (not to be confused with Karelian Congress – a radical nationalist organization) see Klement'ev, E.I and A.A. Kozhanov (eds.) (2009) *Karel'skoe natsional'noe dvizhenie: sbornik materialov i dokumentov*, (Petrozavodsk : Institut yazyka, literatury i istorii Karelskogo Nauchnogo Tsentra RAN).



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- ²⁸ Mazhitov, N.A. (2002) *Vsemirnyi kurultai bashkir mezhdur I i II s'ezdami (Doklady, vystupleniya, dokumenty)* (Ufa: Gilem), p.231.
- ²⁹ Abramov, V. (2007) *Mordovskoe natsional'noe dvizhenie* (Saransk: no publisher), pp.141-145.
- ³⁰ *S'ezdy naroda mari. 1917-2004 gg.* (Yoshkar-Ola: Tsentr-muzei imeni Valentina Kolumba, 2008)
- ³¹ *Udmurtskoe natsional'noe dvizhenie, op.cit.* note 21, pp.20-21.
- ³² According to the copy at the author's disposal.
- ³³ *I Vsemirnyi Kurultai Bashkir. 1-2 iyunya 1995 g.: Stenograficheskii otchet* (Ufa: Kitap, 1998).
- ³⁴ According to the copies at the author's disposal.
- ³⁵ As on the WKB website - <http://msoowkb.ru/node/5675>.
- ³⁶ <http://msoowkb.ru/node/7>.
- ³⁷ *Vtoroi Vsemirnyi Kurultai bashkir. 14-15 iyunya 2002 goda. Dokumental'nye materialy. Stenograficheskii otchet.* (Ufa: Kitap, 2002), p.106.
- ³⁸ *Pervyi s'ezd komi naroda: Dokumenty i rezolyutsii* (Syktyvkar : Komi kn. izd-vo, 1991); Shabaev, Yu.P. (1998) *Etnokul'turnoe i etnopoliticheskoe razvitie narodov Komi v XX veke* (Moskva: Tsentr po izucheniyu mezhnatsional'nykh otnosheniy), pp.130-132.
- ³⁹ Markov, V. (2011) *Vozrozhdeniye v epokhu peremen. S'ezdy Komi naroda: dokumenty i kommentarii* (Syktyvkar: no publisher), pp.11-45.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.47-67.
- ⁴¹ *Pervyi s'ezd komi naroda, op.cit.* note 38, pp.134-135.
- ⁴² Quoted below according to the copy at the author's disposal.
- ⁴³ Markov, *op.cit.*, note 39, pp.69-129.
- ⁴⁴ Quoted below according to the copy at the author's disposal.
- ⁴⁵ Shabaev, *op.cit.* note 38, pp. 292-362; see also: Popov, A.A. and N.A. Nesterova (2000) *Natsional'nyi vopros v Respublike Komi v kontse XX veka* (Syktyvkar: Komi nauchnyi centr Ural'skogo otdeleniya RAN), pp.56-93.
- ⁴⁶ Markov, *op.cit.* note 39, pp. 183-231.
- ⁴⁷ Osipov, *op.cit.* note 27.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁹ Abramov, *op.cit.* note 29, pp.134-139.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.141-142.
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp.142-145.
- ⁵² Abramov, *op.cit.* note 4, pp.31-38.
- ⁵³ *Vserossiiskaya Perepis Naseleniya, op.cit.*, note 24.
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