

EDITORIAL NOTE

With this issue, focusing on the implications of the accelerating activities of Soviet national minorities, *Nationalities Papers* proudly embarks on a collaborative venture with Columbia University's Nationality and Siberian Studies Program of the W. Averell Harriman Institute for Advanced Study of the Soviet Union. The issue's title, "The Soviet Nationalities and Gorbachev," underscores the main thrust of its contents, namely, the fundamental changes of power relationships between the center and the periphery that are taking place within the multinational Soviet state and society.

For the most part, till the onset of *perestroika* and the call for *glasnost*, policy initiatives with respect to the national minorities and their territories lay essentially with the central government. From Lenin through Chernenko, it had been Moscow that set the parameters of the federal republics and of the ethnic autonomous regions. Since 1985, however, this relationship has been dramatically shifting due to a rising chorus of national minority pressure groups, particularly in the Baltic region, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. Persistently they have been calling on the central government to relinquish some of its powers over them, and minorities within individual republics have also begun asking local capitals to heed their wishes. By 1989, Soviet nationalities policy, if such it can be called, no longer originates exclusively from the capital. The leadership, Gorbachev and republican authorities, have been placed on the defensive, forced more and more to respond to events not of their making: hence the placement of Gorbachev's name in the title *after* the nationalities in order to highlight the emerging new relationships between them.

In this issue of *Nationalities Papers* appear the fruits of the first of three annual one-day conferences to be sponsored by the Nationality and Siberian Studies Program on the state of the Soviet nationalities question. Each issue of the journal devoted to this topic will be co-edited by Professor Alexander J. Motyl, a long-time associate editor of *Nationalities Papers* and now also director of the Nationality and Siberian Studies Program. The journal is deeply grateful to him for having proposed this collaborative venture which we hope will provide our readers with an informative and insightful up-to-date reference to an increasingly complex contemporary phenomenon: the reawakening of the Soviet nationalities and the political responses of their rulers.

H. R. H.