

First government of the Belarusian SSR and its manifesto

On January 1st, 1919, the manifesto on the declaration of the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic was published.

On January 5th, 1919, Minsk became the capital of the BSSR, where the provisional government moved. The leadership of the Republic began preparations for the first all-Belarusian Congress of Soviets, during which it was planned to adopt the Constitution of the Republic, finalize the state emblem and flag, and elect the Central Election Committee.

However, immediately after the 1st Congress of the CP(b)B ended, numerous guberniyas wrote letters to the Central Committee of the All-Russian Communist Party, in which they protested against the creation of the BSSR and their inclusion into the Republic. On January 9th, 1919, the party committee of the Vitebsk guberniya sent a representative to Moscow in order to request their expulsion from the BSSR and inclusion into the RSFSR. The Mogilev and Smolensk guberniyas made similar inquiries. The position of the guberniyas against inclusion into the Belarusian SSR coincided with, or perhaps influenced the new position of the Central Committee of the RCP(b) regarding the Belarusian SSR. On January 16th, 1919, the highest body of the RCP(b), without consulting with the government of the BSSR and the Central Bureau of the CP(b)B, ruled on the exclusion of the Vitebsk, Mogilev, and Smolensk guberniyas from the Republic. A bit later, Moscow informed the leadership of the Republic of one more decision: that the Belarusian and Lithuanian Soviet Republics will be united into one government. The adverse foreign policy situation once again became the main reason behind all these changes.

On January 1st, 1919, the manifesto of the provisional revolutionary worker-peasant soviet government, which declared the formation of the BSSR and outlined the basic provisions of its state status, was published in Smolensk. All power was given to the

deputies of the workers', peasants', labor, and Red Army soviets; all land, water, subsoil, and industries became the property of the people. All laws, agreements, ordinances, and orders were to serve the people, and also the German, Polish, and Ukrainian occupational governments were deemed illegitimate. **[[TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: I ASSUME THE MANIFESTO DISCUSSED IN THIS PARAGRAPH IS THE SAME AS THE ONE MENTIONED IN THE FIRST PARAGRAPH. THIS ARTICLE IS NOT VERY WELL-WRITTEN IMO]]**

From a legal standpoint, the creation of a government and the formation of its powers by a party body can be considered illegitimate. However, at this point the RCP(b) already performed all governmental functions through soviets, thus such declarations not only had legal force, but also became the norm.

The most characteristic points of the manifesto are thus: 1) the declaration of the principle of socialist construction in the interests of the plurality of the population, that is the workers; 2) a marked nationalistic orientation, connected to the previous point; 3) the principle of proletarian internationalism.

The principle of socialist construction is seen in point 7, on redistribution of land: «7. All land belonging to landlords and rich landowners, monasteries, churches, temples, and clergy, with all living and inanimate inventory, as well as all forests, waters, and soil now belongs to the working people of Belarus».

The theme of proletarian internationalism is recurring in the text of the manifesto. The sovereignty of Soviet Belarus, as declared in the manifesto, did not signify the weakening of ties and end of obedience to the RSFSR. The manifesto confirmed the two-sided character of the relations between the BSSR and the RSFSR. The Belarusian SSR likewise recognized the ruling body of the RSFSR as legitimate.