

Federative Republic of Sibir

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Divergence

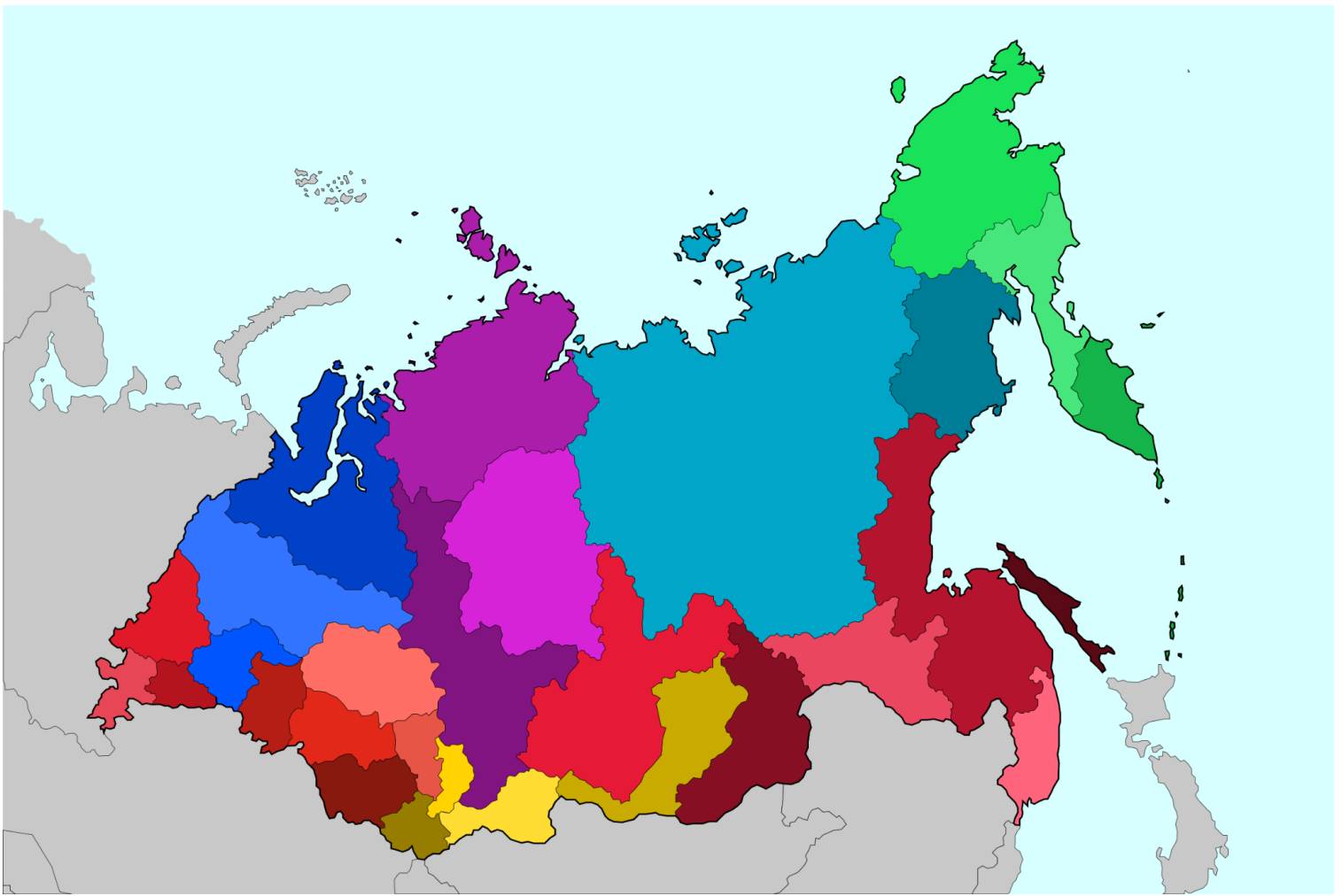
It is November 17th 1918, and Russia is in chaos. The fledgling Russian Soviet Republic was proclaimed by the victorious Bolshevik revolution scarcely more than a year ago, and it has been embroiled in a spider's web of a civil war since day one. The Omsk Directory is an unstable coalition of anti-Bolsheviks ranging from revolutionary socialists to monarchists, and only the shaky common ground of opposing the rising Soviet state binds them together.

A banquet in Omsk is being held in honour of the French General Maurice Janin, commander of the Entente's military forces supporting the Directory. Three Cossack officers call for the national anthem of the deposed monarchy, God Save the Tsar, and members of the Socialist Revolutionary party call for their arrest. In our timeline, these Cossacks do not wait to be arrested and have their own troops arrest the SR members instead. Admiral Kolchak would be instated as Supreme Ruler until he was handed over to the Bolsheviks by Janin himself two years later. Perhaps those Cossack officers drank a little more or a little less that night, and their coup is snuffed out before it ever happens. The Omsk directory, now far less ideologically opposed to the Bolsheviks, negotiates a peace in which a Siberian Soviet Socialist Republic would later join the Soviet Union upon its formation in 1922.

The Journey to Today

Little changes between this timeline and ours from the perspective of someone outside the USSR. From Stalinist rule to the Cold War to Perestroika to the eventual collapse of the Union, the Russian SFSR remains the dominant force within the USSR and it is only when Sibir emerges from the rubble on 26th August 1990 that the world at large will see it as its own independent state.

To those inside, though, the Siberian SSR means a whole new path through a century. With less Russian influence throughout the 1900s and fewer mass deportations in to Siberia, Sibir has remained a patchwork of cultures and languages. In an effort to maintain the fragile unity of the SSR, the policy of korenizatsiya, "indigenisation", was not ended as it was in the Russian SFSR. Russian functions as a lingua franca and ethnic Russians make up a plurality of the population and a majority in the south, but the north is divided between a tapestry of largely autonomous krais in which the language of a given indigenous people is predominant. Within these krais, even the cities have started to speak the indigenous languages once overridden by Russian. Sibir has come to the brink of fracturing along these lines on many occasions, only barely settling in to its current stability by the granting of more and more power to the krais.



Uralic Krai of the Northwest

In the northwest, in the shade of the Ural Mountains, the peoples named for that imposing western limit of Asia have grown rich from the massive natural gas supplies below the surface - or some have, at least. The Khanty and Nenets kraia are by far the largest and most economically powerful among this group, and the Tyumen crown of antlers has never shone so brightly as it does over Surgut

Tungusic Krai of the North

Eastward, the north-central Evenki region covers a swathe of wilderness spotted with lakes and heavy industry. The powerhouse of Siberia's manufacturing and engineering, enormous hydroelectric dams power the extraction of equally enormous veins of metal ores. It is said that the kumalan, the Evenki depiction of the sun, has become as much a symbol of the heat of a forge. Outside of these industrial hives, though, the reindeer riders living the herding lifestyle of their ancestors have become the romantic face of Siberia.

Turkic Krai of the Northeast

Before the eastern coast, there is the truly vast Sakha Krai. An area that long chafed against Russian rule, Sakha Krai is sometimes seen as the spiritual home of Siberian independence. Sakha people were by far one of the largest non-Russian populations in Sibir upon its statehood, and it was frequently Sakhas leading the way to maintain and extend korenizatsiya. The seemingly endless diamonds underneath the snow and taiga are as glittering and hard as this indomitable Sakha spirit

The Pacific Coast

The Pacific coast of Sibir has seen enormous movement in the thirty years since the fall of the Soviet Union and the beginning of freer trade with the wider world. Sibir's only warm water ports are here in the east, many thousands of miles from Moscow. It has experienced an incredible renaissance since the collapse of the Soviet Union as Sibir rushes to join the trade networks of the world's largest ocean and profit from the vast economies of America, China, and Japan. Vladivostok, Petropavlosk, and Nakhodka have become thriving hubs of activity in the race to get goods to and from the new superpowers of the world.

Russian Krai of the South

Connected to it all, the Russian south maintains many of Sibir's largest cities and a massive majority of its arable land; for all the development of the north, the south simply has the climate on its side. Distrust ran deep across this divide for many years, but as a more distinct Siberian Russian culture and dialect emerged the old fears were assuaged; no longer the bear, now another reindeer making the herd stronger. The capital city, Novosibirsk, was younger than most of the people living in it when the February Revolution broke out in 1917. It now stands as the metropolitan home of Siberian Russians and the crown jewel of a proud Sibir.

From the Ural mountains to the Bering Strait, from the very east of Asia to the very west, Sibir spans a continent. Its hard winters contrast its earthen wealth, and its many peoples contrast its few people. It has emerged from the Soviet era as a young, unsteady, hopeful democracy still learning to welcome the world. Where once the bear may have claimed dominion, the reindeer runs free instead.