

An oil painting of a man from the chest up. He is wearing a dark, possibly black, V-neck shirt. His right arm is raised, with his hand resting on his forehead. The background is a textured, light-colored wash. The overall style is expressive and painterly.

**ROBERT SERVICE**

**A HISTORY OF  
TWENTIETH-CENTURY  
RUSSIA**

ROBERT SERVICE

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A History of  
Twentieth-Century  
Russia

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*To Adele, with love*

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## *Acknowledgements*

These are unusual times to be studying Russia even by Russian standards. Archives have been opened and contacts with Russian writers are no longer difficult. Important documentary collections have been published. The need exists for the newer items of information to be incorporated in a general description and analysis.

In picking up this task, I have been very fortunate to have assistance from the following scholars who read preliminary drafts: Francesco Benvenuti, Archie Brown, Bob Davies, Peter Duncan, Israel Getzler, Geoffrey Hosking, László Péter, Silvio Pons, Martyn Rady, Arfon Rees and Karen Schönwälder. Their comments have led to a very large number of improvements, and each of them kindly helped further by replying to my follow-up queries. Also to be thanked are members of the press study group at SSEES and others in London who have alerted me to interesting materials in Russian newspapers and journals: John Channon, Norman Davies, Peter Duncan, Julian Graffy, Jane Henderson, Geoffrey Hosking, Lindsey Hughes, John Klier, John Morrison, Rudolf Muhs, Judith Schapiro and Faith Wigzell, Maria Lenn.

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History (RTsKhIDNI), to the State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF) and to the Special Archive (OA). In the first two of these three archives I found useful materials in conditions that reflected the recent political changes which have occurred in Russia, and I shall always remember the occasion in September 1991 when Bob Davies and I walked into the Russian Centre for the Conservation and Study of Documents of Recent History as it was being ‘unsealed’ after the abortive August 1991 coup. Equally, I shall not quickly forget the experience shared two years later with Rudolf Muhs in the Special Archive, an institution which gave us material to read in the morning whose existence it denied in the afternoon. But in general the libraries and archives in Moscow have been as helpful as the SSEES Library in London – and this is saying a lot because John Screen, Lesley Pitman and Ursula Phillips could not have done more to facilitate the research on the book.

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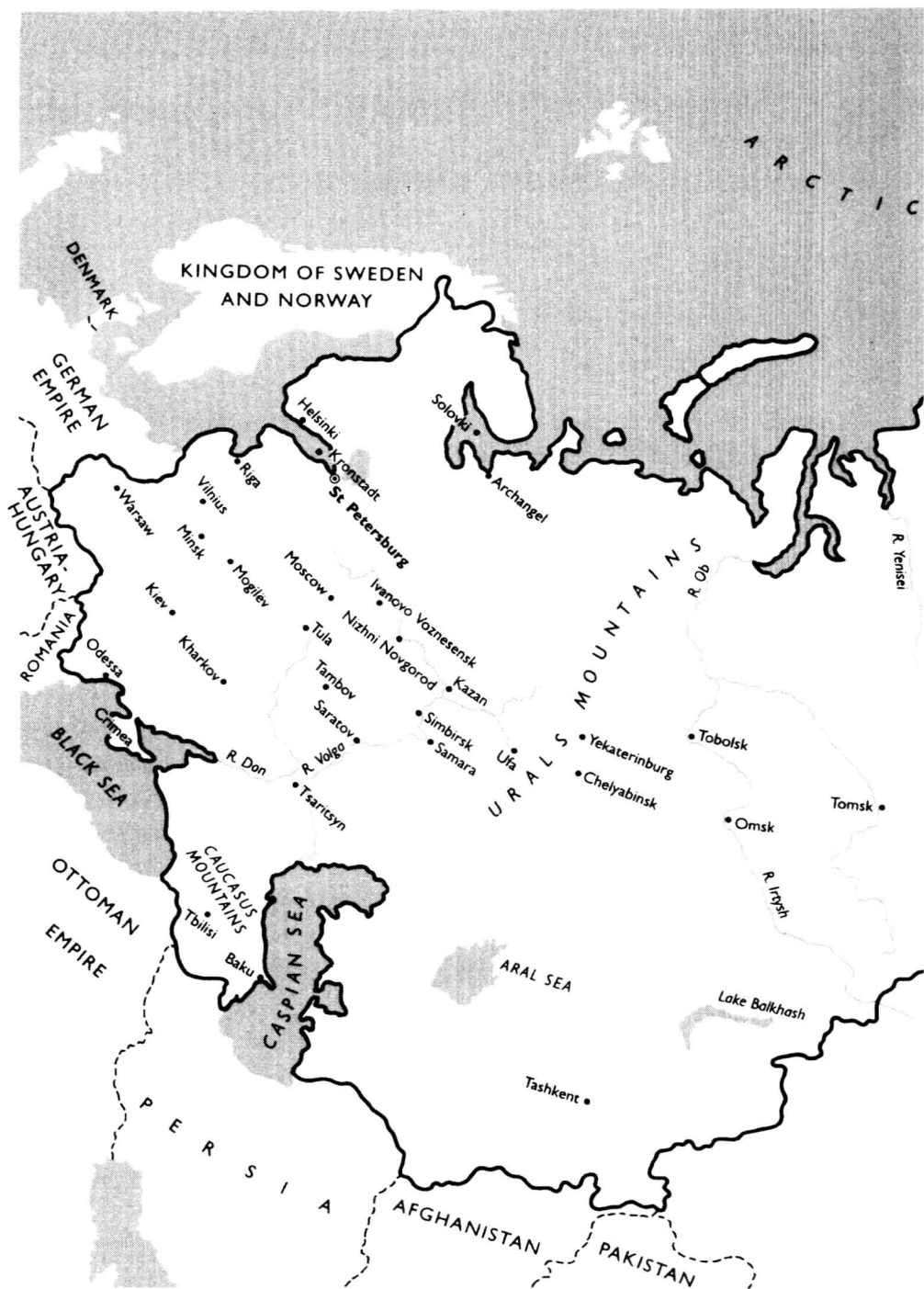
Robert Service

January 1997

## *A Note on Transliteration*

The transliterations in this book are a simplified version of the system used by the US Library of Congress. The first difference consists in the dropping of both the diacritical mark and the so-called soft *i*. Thus whereas the Library of Congress system has *Sokol'nikov* and *Krestinskii*, this book has *Sokolnikov* and *Krestinski*. Secondly, the *yo* sound which appears in words such as *Gorbachyov* is given as an *ě*, as in *Gorbachěv*. Thirdly, the *yeh* sound is rendered as *ye* when it occurs at the beginning of proper nouns such as *Yeltsin*.

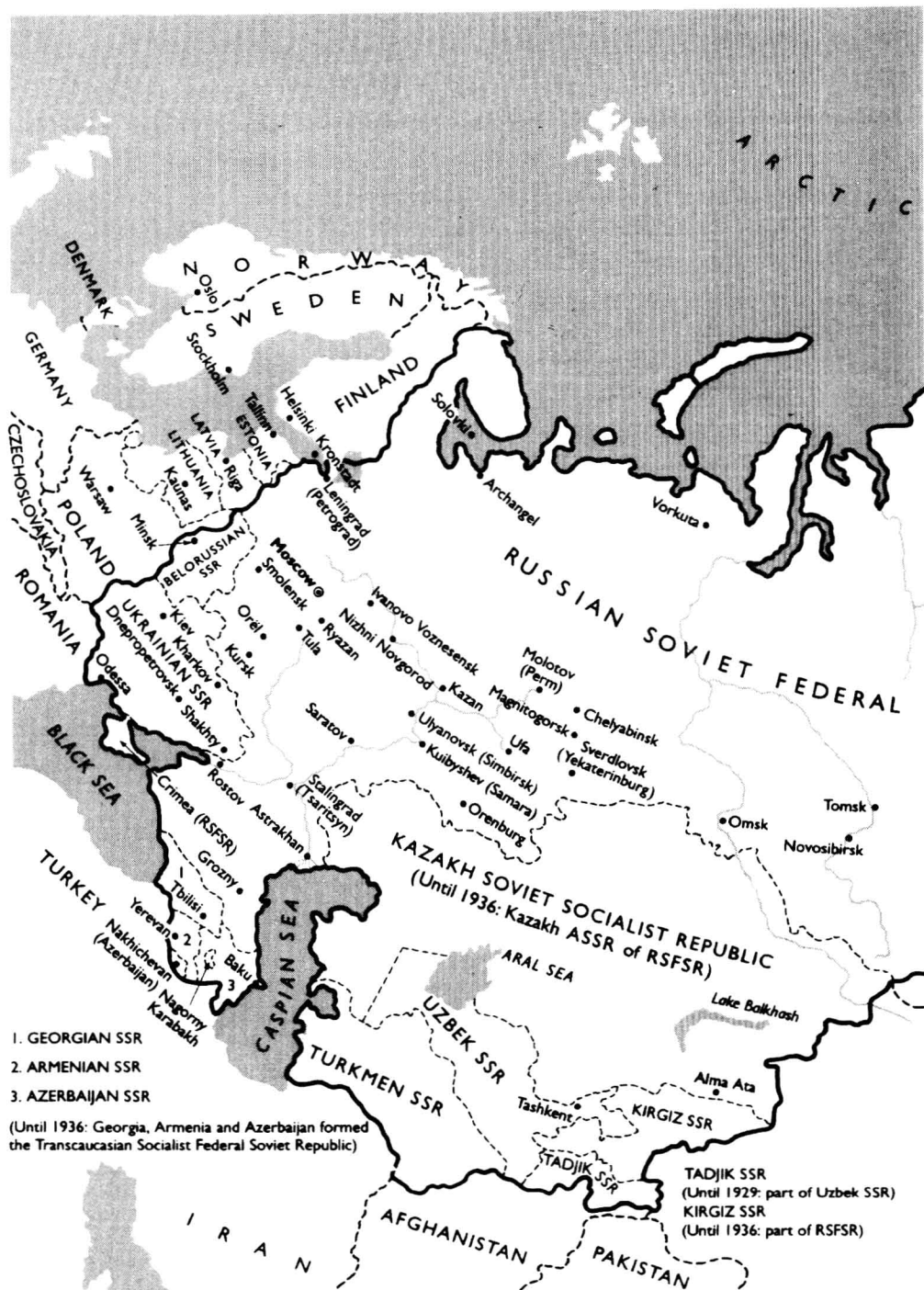
These differences are intended to make the text less exotic in appearance. By and large, I have kept to the Russian version of proper names. But some look so odd in English that I have Anglicized them: thus *Alexander* rather than *Aleksandr*. Finally there are several non-Russian names in the text. In the case of Polish, Hungarian and Czech leaders, for example, their names are given in their native version; and the names of Ukrainian leaders are transliterated without the simplification used for Russians. This is inconsistent, but it helps to give a sense of the variety of countries involved in Russian history. A further inconsistency lies in my use of Russian-language names for most places in the USSR: thus Kharkov, not Kharkiv. Until all of us become more accustomed to place-names according to their post-Soviet official nomenclature this seems a decent workable compromise.





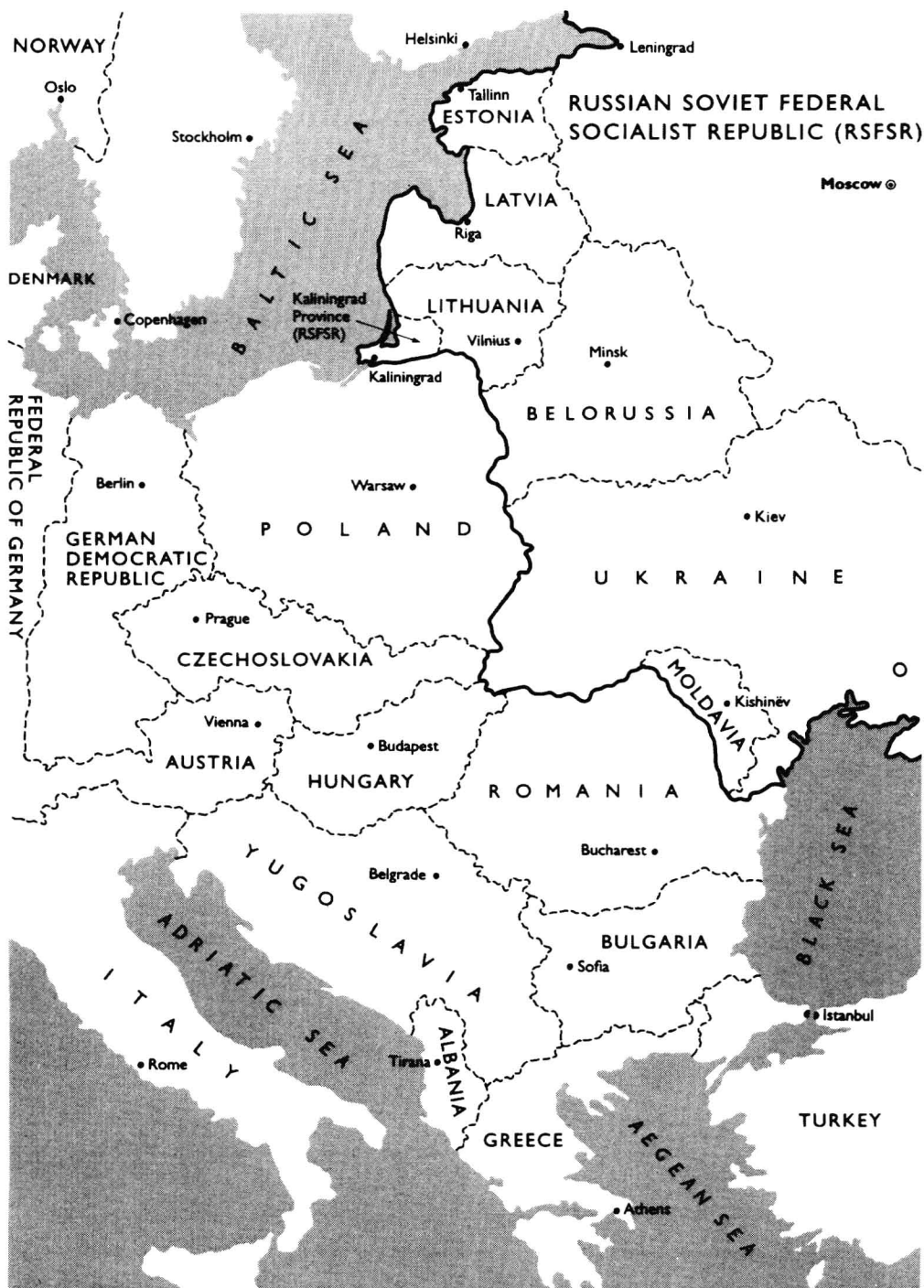


1 *The Russian Empire in 1910*



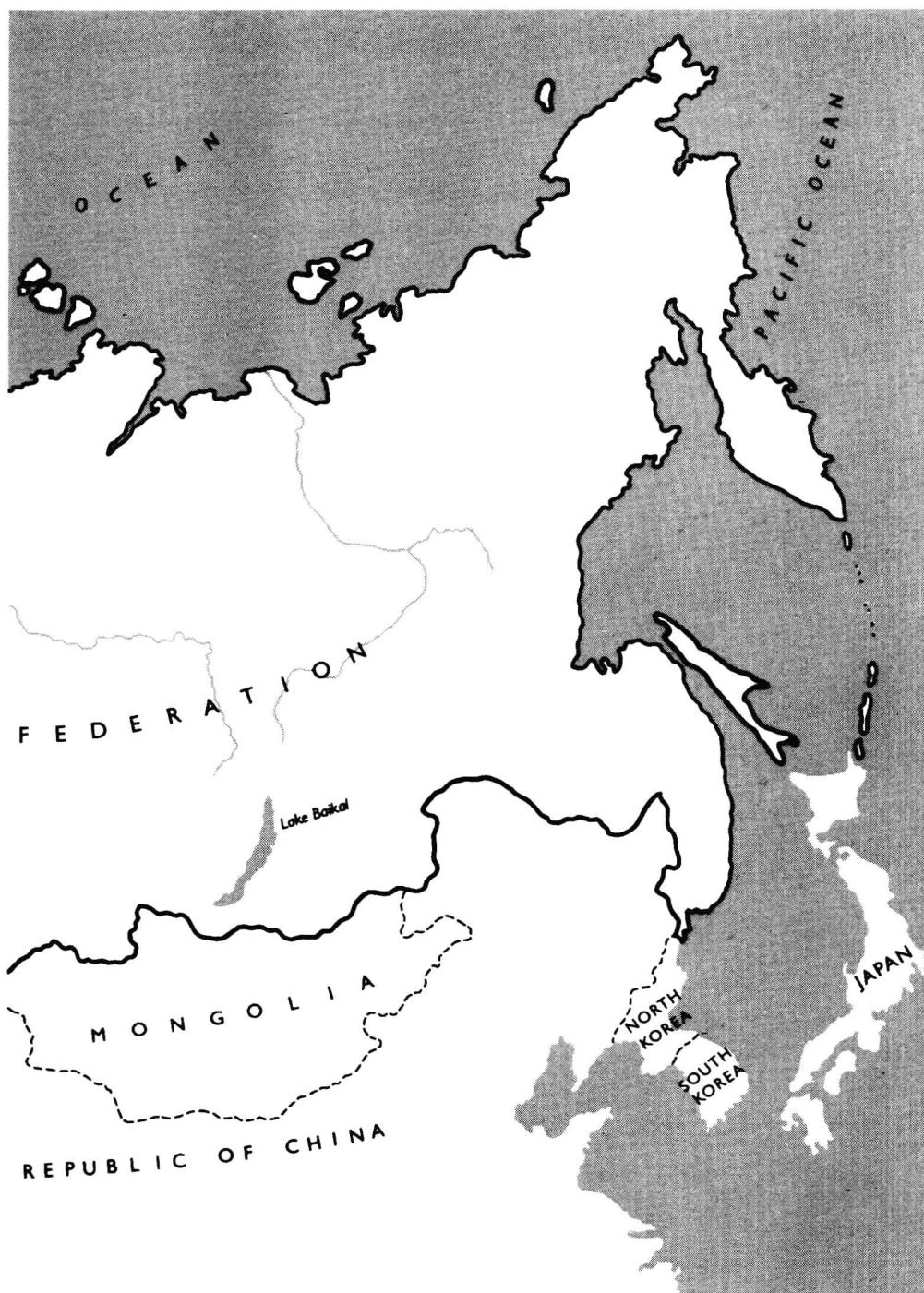


2 The Soviet Union, 1924-1936

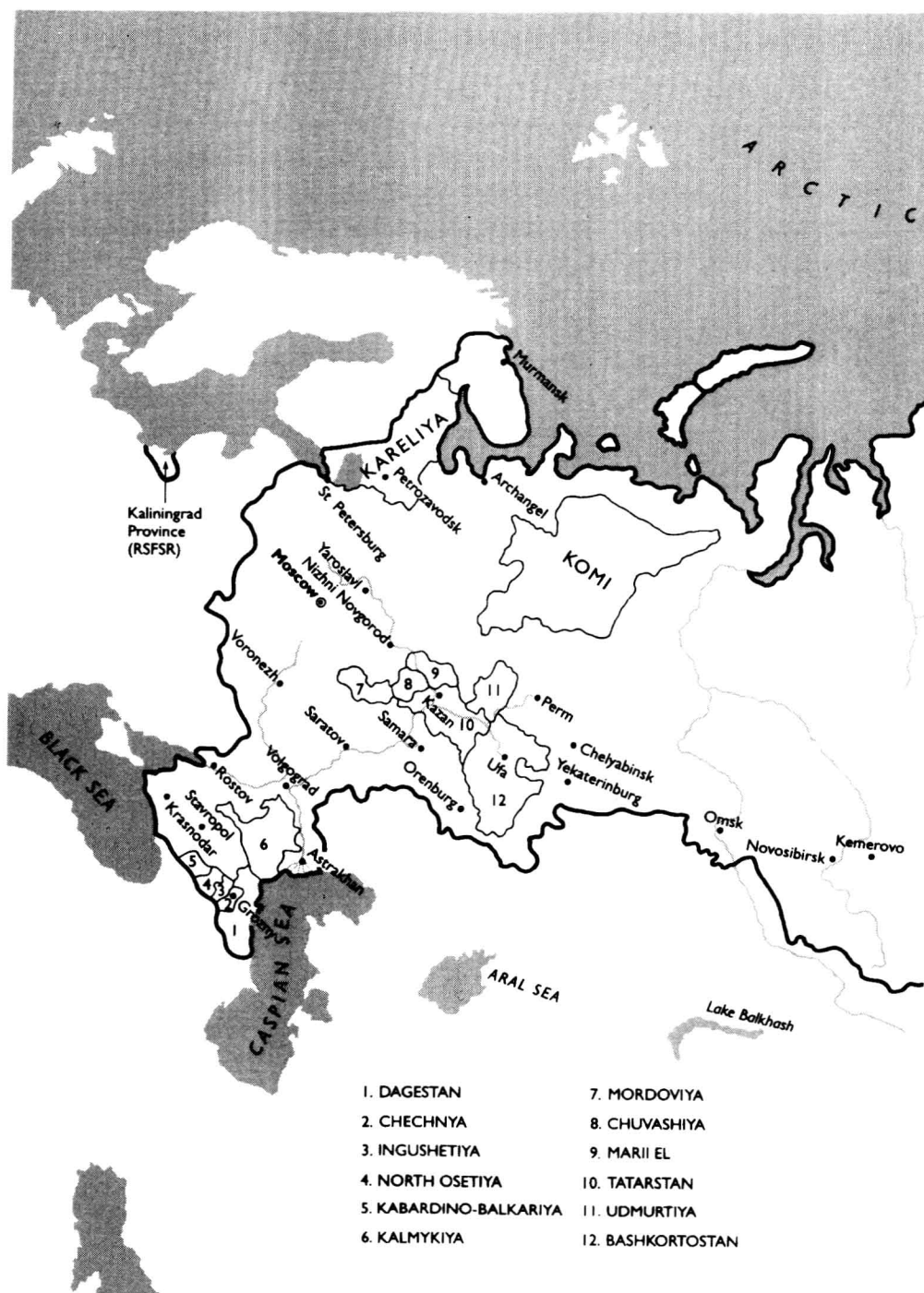


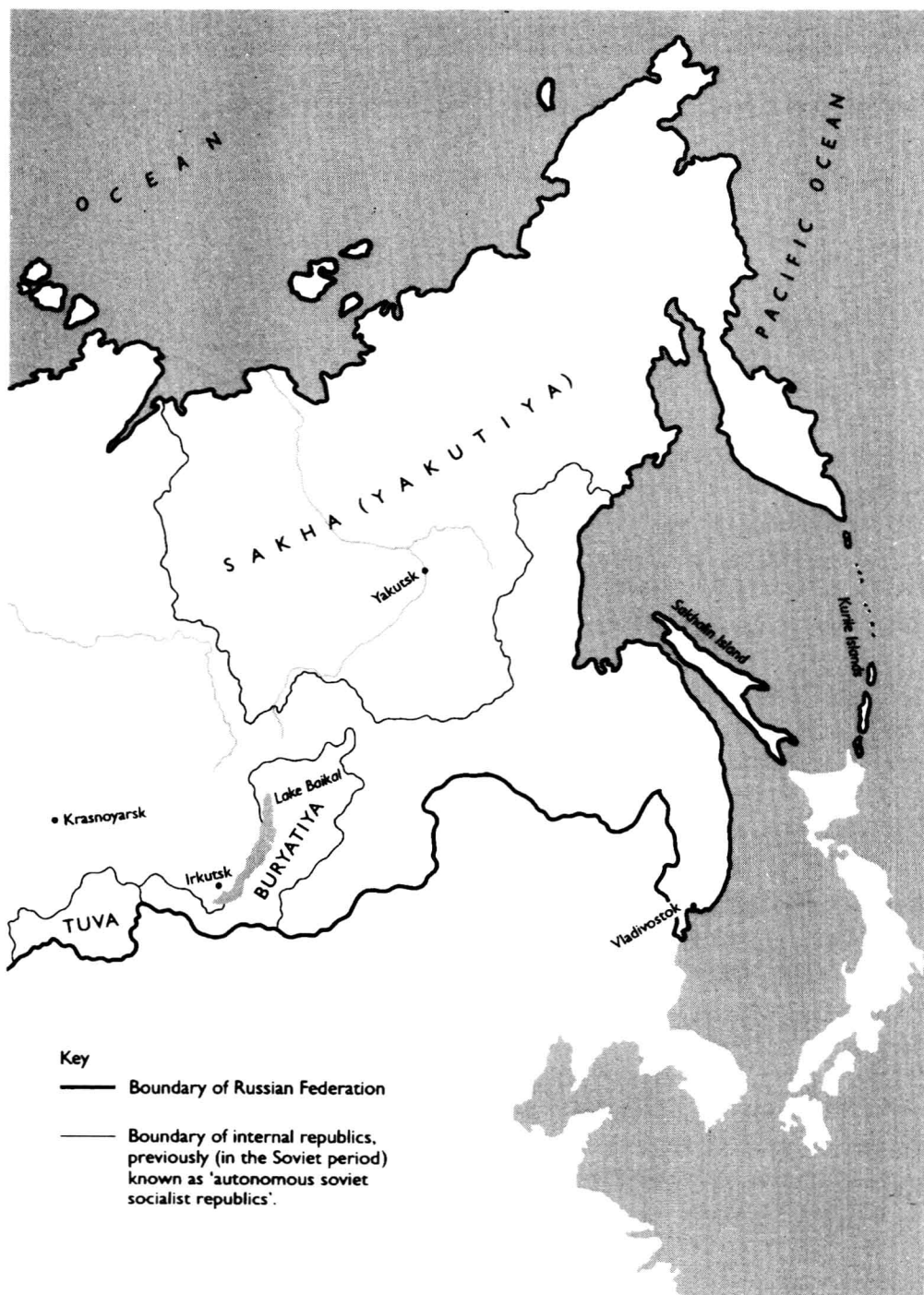
3 *The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe after 1945*













## *Introduction*

The centrepiece of this history of twentieth-century Russia is the period of communist government. Before 1917 Russia and her empire were ruled by the tsars of the Romanov dynasty. Nicholas II was overthrown in the February Revolution, and the ensuing Provisional Government of liberals and socialists lasted merely a few months. Vladimir Lenin and his communist party organized the October Revolution in 1917 and established the world's first communist state, which survived until the USSR's abolition in 1991. A new compound of politics, society, economics and culture prevailed in the intervening years. The USSR was a highly centralized, one-party dictatorship. It enforced a single official ideology; it imposed severe restrictions on national, religious and cultural self-expression. Its economy was predominantly state-owned. This Soviet compound served as model for the many communist states created elsewhere.

The phases of the recent Russian past have passed with breathtaking rapidity. After the October Revolution a Civil War broke out across Russia and her former empire. Having won the military struggle, the communists themselves came close to being overthrown by popular rebellions. Lenin introduced a New Economic Policy in 1921 which made temporary concessions especially to the peasantry; but at the end of the same decade Iosif Stalin, who was emerging as the leading party figure after Lenin's death in 1924, hurled the country into a campaign for forced-rate industrialization and forcible agricultural collectivization. The Great Terror followed in the late 1930s. Then came the Second World War. After Germany's defeat in 1945, Stalin brought Eastern Europe under Soviet dominion and