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KYRGYZSTAN:

THE POLITICS OF ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC FRUSTRATION

Eugene Huskey

This paper offers an interpretation of political development in Kyrgyzstan in the transition from communism. After brief introductions to the history and demography of the country, the paper examines contemporary land and language policy as a means of illustrating the nexus between ethnicity and economic development in Kyrgyzstan. This analysis reveals that intra-ethnic conflict (between Kyrgyz) is in many respects as important as inter-ethnic conflict (among Kyrgyz, Russians, and Uzbeks) for understanding politics in Kyrgyzstan. The paper concludes with an assessment of President Akaev's shift to the right in the summer of 1994, the elections of February 1995, and the inherently unstable alliance that has followed between Akaev and regional governors.

Introduction

In May 1991, the first competitively-elected parliament in Kyrgyz history adopted a new land law, an unremarkable document save article two, which described the land and natural resources of Kyrgyzstan as the wealth (*dostoianie*) of the ethnic Kyrgyz. The declaration by itself had no legal force, and detailed provisions of the law made clear that all ethnic groups in the republic, from Russians to Uzbeks to Dungans, enjoyed equal rights in the use, possession, and alienation of land. Yet the political and psychological fallout from article two was immediate. The non-titular nationalities of the republic vigorously protested this special claim of the ethnic Kyrgyz. To prevent a worsening of the already tense ethnic relations in the republic, the new president of Kyrgyzstan, the reform-minded scholar, Askar Akaev, vetoed article two as contrary to the constitution.¹ Ethnically neutral language was later substituted for the offending article.

In Kyrgyzstan and the other former Soviet republics, episodes such as this pose the most fundamental questions about the use of state power to establish, or reassert, the identity and pre-eminence of the titular nationality. If an ethnic group gives its name to a territory, is it entitled to craft policy on language, land, citizenship, and political representation that assures it a leading role among the ethnic groups of the republic? This question assumes special urgency in republics such as Kazakhstan, Latvia, and Kyrgyzstan, where the titular nationality represents a minority or bare majority of the territory's population. Whereas in the Russian Federation or Georgia the assertiveness of the titular group in the transition from Communist rule smacks of superiority complex nationalism,² in Kazakhstan, Latvia, and Kyrgyzstan it may be viewed as an effort to sustain a fledgling, or threatened, nation. To understand the

relationship between the contemporary Kyrgyz state and nation, let us begin with a brief review of the political, cultural, and demographic heritage of the Kyrgyz.

The Prehistory of Kyrgyz Nationalism

The modern Kyrgyz formed as a people in the mountain ranges and foothills of inner Asia. Their ancestors were the Turkic tribes of the Altai and Irtysh, the Mongols, and the ancient peoples of the Tian-Shan, the mountain range that has been home to the Kyrgyz for at least five centuries.³ By the end of the 18th century--late in comparison to the peoples of Europe and the Caucasus--the Kyrgyz had developed an ethnic consciousness, which was linked to a common territory around the Tian-Shan, to a nomadic, or semi-nomadic economy, and to a legend, *Manas*, that told of the group's glorious past.⁴ One must not confuse, however, the rise of an ethnic consciousness with the rise of nationalism, if by nationalism one means the desire "of a community to assert its unity and independence vis-a-vis other communities and groups."⁵ The loyalties of the Kyrgyz, like those of other Central Asians, most notably the Kazakhs, lay first with family, clan, and tribe. It was only their subordination to Russian rule, beginning in the mid-19th century, that planted the seeds of nationalism among the Kyrgyz. As Donald Carlisle argues, "the history of Soviet Central Asia should be read as an attempt to create modern nations...where previously there were only ethnic groups."⁶

Lacking a national ideal as well as modern arms and organization, the Kyrgyz offered little resistance to the expansion of the Russian Empire into Kyrgyz lands in the 1860s and 1870s. In effect, the encroachment of the Russians presented the Kyrgyz with a Hobson's choice: remain loyal to the rulers of the Kokand kingdom, the Central Asian khanate that had been governing the Kyrgyz and neighboring groups with increasing brutality, or submit to the domination of the technologically and culturally advanced Russians.⁷ While Soviet historiography clearly overstated the welcome extended to tsarist rule in Kyrgyzstan (with such titles as *The Voluntary Entry of Kyrgyzstan into Russia and its Progressive Consequences*⁸), post-Soviet historiography must be careful not to exaggerate the scale of opposition to Russian suzerainty over the region.

Relations between the Kyrgyz and Russians deteriorated rapidly, however, after the turn of the century, in part due to the encroachment of Russian settlers into traditional Kyrgyz grazing lands. In northern Kyrgyzstan, then a part of the Semirech'e district of the Russian Empire, the indigenous population declined by almost nine percent from 1902 to 1913 while that of Russian settlers increased by ten percent.⁹ Predominantly Russian cities sprung up where Kokand forts had once stood. Among these was Pishpek (later Frunze, most recently Bishkek), the future capital, which had 14,000 residents by 1916, 8,000 of them Russian.¹⁰

Mounting resentment against Russian expansionism exploded in the summer and fall of 1916, following the tsar's infamous decree of 25 June. To fill labor divisions for the war in Europe, the decree ordered the mobilization of all Central Asian men aged 19 to 43. The Central Asians responded to this "requisition of aliens" (*rekvizitsiia inorodtsev*) for a distant war by attacking the symbols and representatives of Russian authority. Fierce, if lopsided, battles occurred throughout Kyrgyzstan between the local Kyrgyz and the tsar's punitive brigades. None was more alarming for the authorities than the siege of Tokmak in northern Kyrgyzstan, where 5000 crudely-armed Kyrgyz repeatedly attacked a small garrison of Russian troops. The siege of Tokmak, beaten back with the loss of 300 Kyrgyz and two Russians, was followed by massacres of the civilian Kyrgyz population, carried out by armed Russian settlers as well as by tsarist reinforcements.¹¹ The result was what one contemporary Kyrgyz writer called "the unknown genocide". Out of an estimated population of 780,000 in 1916, 100-120,000 Kyrgyz are believed to have been killed in the uprisings.¹² An equal number sought refuge in China through the treacherous, icy passes of the Tian-Shan.¹³ Many refugees perished en route; others died in the first winter, having lost their herds. The survivors would return to their former grazing lands in Soviet Kyrgyzstan by the mid-1920s to rejoin a people who now had a rallying point for national unity.¹⁴

The uprisings of 1916 were followed only a year later by the Bolshevik Revolution, whose legacy for the Kyrgyz nation will remain a subject of dispute well beyond the collapse of the Soviet Union.¹⁵ At least through the prism of Western historiography, with its emphases on nation building and state formation, the creation of the Soviet state was in some respects a godsend for the Kyrgyz. Once the resistance to the Bolsheviks had been defeated in the region, the Kyrgyz acquired for the first time their own political community. Formed originally on October 14, 1924 as the Kara-Kirgiz autonomous region within the Turkestan republic of the USSR, Kyrgyzstan underwent several name changes and administration redesignations before emerging in 1936 as the Kirgiz Soviet Socialist Republic. Formal constitutional provisions notwithstanding, the Kirgiz Republic was not an autonomous political community. Yet the very linkage of the Kyrgyz to a proto-state, and the development of at least the symbols of Kyrgyz cultural and political identity, created important pre-conditions for the rise of a Kyrgyz national consciousness.

In the formative years of Soviet Kyrgyzstan, the central authorities in Moscow seemed intent on creating the foundations for indigenous rule in the region, within of course the parameters of Soviet power.¹⁶ A law of 1924 mandated the translation of all government documents in the region into Kyrgyz and other major Central Asian languages. Furthermore, 10 of the 13 members of the Communist Party's first Orgburo in the Kara-Kirgiz region were

ethnic Kyrgyz, as were 13 of the 17 members of the highest state body in the region, the oblast revolutionary committee (*oblvrevkom*).¹⁷ But the demographic features of the region insured that the ethnic Kyrgyz would at first play only a limited role in the formation of a modern state bureaucracy. In the early 1920s, there was not a single ethnic Kyrgyz with a higher education; at best 20,000 (less than five percent) were literate, and many of these were from so-called hostile classes.¹⁸ Thus, the administration of the territory fell largely to the Slavs and Tatars. In May 1925, ethnic Kyrgyz accounted for only 319, or 10.8 percent, of the 2950 regional and local administrative personnel in the region.¹⁹

A gradual indigenization of political life in Kyrgyzstan continued, however, until the mid-1930s. To prepare the rising generation of Kyrgyz for leadership positions in Soviet Kyrgyzstan, the new regime offered short courses and, in a few cases, more extensive training in educational institutions of European Russia. These freshly-trained "Soviet" Kyrgyz cadres were then enlisted in large numbers during the *vydvizhenstvo* campaign of the late 1920s to manage the local economy and society. An edict of December 1932 envisioned a full indigenization of the republican apparatus by June 1934. But in 1933, the first wave of stalinist repression intervened to halt the indigenization drive, and by 1938 the first generation of the Soviet Kyrgyz elite had been swept away in the purges.²⁰ Many of the purged had combined a commitment to Bolshevism with a desire to nourish their Kyrgyz and Turkic heritage.

While maintaining the symbols of Kyrgyz national autonomy, stalinism launched policies that deepened Slavic domination of the region. Perhaps the most important of these was a cadres policy that placed in leading party and government posts Kyrgyz who were obsequious toward Russian culture and central political authority. It also placed in oversight positions in Kyrgyzstan Slavic personnel, usually seconded from posts in Russia, to serve as the republic's second party secretary, its KGB head, and its procurator. Few republics could match Kyrgyzstan for the malleability and sycophancy of its leaders. Especially notable in this regard were the illiterate miner, Turabai Kulatov, who was a prime minister and supreme soviet chairman of the republic under late stalinism, and Turdakun Usubaliev, the Communist Party first secretary from 1961 to 1986. On the eve of the Gorbachev era--and his own removal from office--Usubaliev noted that:

Sixty years is just a brief moment in the history of Kirgizstan...but it was indeed during this period that its age-old dream of happiness became a reality.²¹

The rhetoric of subservience masked, of course, the inexorable conflicts between center and republic over investment and resource allocation. In a planned economy, Usubaliev and other Kyrgyz leaders believed that political fealty and reliable deliveries of output to the center strengthened their claims to new projects and scarce supplies. To remind the center of its

obligation to its faithful vassal, Usubaliev deluged Moscow ministries with claims for resources.²² Obsequiousness had its limits, which were quickly crossed when economic development of the region was at stake.

In general, the terms of exchange between center and periphery were highly unfavorable for the Kyrgyz, at least in terms of linguistic and demographic developments in the republic. Russification of the Kyrgyz language began in earnest immediately after Stalin's first wave of terror against the Kyrgyz elite. A party directive of June 1934 ordered the further enrichment of the Kyrgyz language "by the maximum use of sovietisms and international, multinational terminology through the Russian language...."²³ This policy was facilitated by the adoption in 1940 of the Cyrillic alphabet for written Kyrgyz (its script had been Arabic until 1926, Latin thereafter). Increasingly in the postwar era, Russian began to displace Kyrgyz as the language of politics and commerce in the republic. A new generation of Kyrgyz urban residents was brought up on Russian and was often unable to converse with rural Kyrgyz. Many older Kyrgyz in the cities reserved their native language for private discourse. In short, Kyrgyz was rapidly marginalized in its homeland. Not a single new Kyrgyz-language school was opened in the capital of Frunze (Bishkek) after the 1930s.²⁴ By the 1980s, only three of Frunze's 69 schools used Kyrgyz as the primary language of instruction.²⁵ At the end of Soviet rule in Kyrgyzstan, only four percent of the 5.6 million books in Frunze's Lenin Library were in Kyrgyz, and of books requested by readers, only two percent were in Kyrgyz.²⁶

The russification of the Kyrgyz language had its parallels in economic development in the republic. In the postwar era, Soviet power brought modern industry and transportation to a traditional society that lacked the most rudimentary physical infrastructure. Yet economic modernization of the region largely bypassed the ethnic Kyrgyz. The most advanced enterprises were built in the cities, staffed largely by Slavs, and managed by all-union ministries in Moscow. At the end of the 1980s, enterprises of all-union subordination accounted for 38 percent of the republic's economy and offered employees access to the best housing and social services.²⁷ Relatively few employees of such enterprises were ethnic Kyrgyz. The Kyrgyz made up only 6.3 percent of employees in the electric energy sector and 11 percent of personnel in machine construction and metalworking.²⁸ In all, only 13 percent of the republic's engineers and technicians were Kyrgyz.²⁹ Of particular concern to many Kyrgyz was the reluctance of the central ministries to train an indigenous working class, preferring instead to import Slavic workers en masse.³⁰

The influx of Slavic workers into Kyrgyzstan in mid-century created one of the conditions for the rise of Kyrgyz nationalism at the end of the century.³¹ The demographic challenge to the Kyrgyz had several dimensions. First, it rendered the titular nationality, the

Kyrgyz, a minority within its own republic. If the Kyrgyz accounted for two-thirds of the territory's population in 1926, their share of the population had dropped to 40.5 percent by the end of the 1950s (see Table 1, page 17). At this time the Kyrgyz outnumbered the Russians by a margin of only four to three. Although the in-migration of Slavs continued after the end of the 1950s, by 1989 the higher birth rate among the Kyrgyz and other indigenous Central Asian peoples in the republic allowed the Kyrgyz to claim a bare majority of the republic's population (52.4 percent).

The uneven distribution of ethnic groups across the republic exacerbated the effects of Slavic migration. Certain areas were largely unaffected by the influx, notably the Naryn oblast, a mountainous region where the Kyrgyz still make up over 97 percent of the population.³² By contrast, Frunze developed in effect as a Russian city. In 1959, less than 10 percent of Frunze's population was ethnic Kyrgyz, and even as late as 1989 the Kyrgyz represented less than 23 percent of the capital's population.³³ With Russians and Ukrainians comprising 45 percent of the urban population outside of Bishkek, and the Uzbeks accounting for a majority of the population in Osh, the Kyrgyz cannot even claim a plurality of the urban population of the republic. While it is an exaggeration to assert, as one Kyrgyz did recently, that the Slavs created in the cities of Kyrgyzstan an "impenetrable national boundary",³⁴ they have certainly dominated urban life in the republic. For the majority of the Kyrgyz, who live in the countryside, the cities have been, if not quite impenetrable, at least alien and inhospitable.

The Emergence of Kyrgyz Nationalism

Because the first stirrings of Kyrgyz nationalism appeared in the second half of the 1980s, it is tempting to view them as outgrowths of Gorbachev's policies of glasnost and democratization. That conclusion would be a mistake. The policies of the center did on occasion arouse national indignation, as in the appointment of the Russian Gennadii Kolbin in December 1986 to head the Communist Party in neighboring Kazakhstan, whence discontent spread briefly to Kyrgyzstan. The policies associated with Gorbachev also facilitated the expression of national interests and the organization of groups to press national claims, both within and outside the state apparatus. But the origins of the national explosion in Kyrgyzstan at the end of the 1980s lie in a volatile mixture of economic and demographic frustration.

Even before Gorbachev assumed power in 1985, rural areas in Kyrgyzstan were in crisis. Coupled with a stagnant economy, the high birth rate of preceding decades had produced a generation of rural youth without jobs in the village or the skills and desire to find work in the cities. Whereas the rural population of the USSR from 1959 to 1989 declined by 18 percent, it doubled in the same period in Kyrgyzstan.³⁵ By the end of the 1980s, at least 110,000

persons were unemployed in the republic, with the highest concentration among village youth.³⁶ Many more rural folk were underemployed. In the Osh oblast, the largest and most agriculturally-oriented region in Kyrgyzstan, 45 percent of the employed earned 125 rubles a month or less at a time when the average monthly salary was 180 rubles.³⁷ The collapse of the economy in the early 1990s only deepened the crisis in the countryside. According to President Akaev, by 1991, 140,000 persons were unemployed--three-quarters of them under 30 years of age--and 500,000 had a monthly income of less than 75 rubles.³⁸

In a pattern long familiar in the developing world, the excess population of the Kyrgyz countryside reluctantly sought work and shelter in the cities.³⁹ But the cities had neither space nor services for them. Most of the new Kyrgyz settlers in the cities lived not in carefully-rationed apartments but in overcrowded dormitories or the "corners" of private homes. Some set up shanties in open land on the outskirts of the cities only to have them torn down by the authorities. Conscious of the relatively well-housed Russians in the cities, one Kyrgyz complained that he felt "a guest in his own home".⁴⁰

In the summer of 1989, frustrated Kyrgyz settlers in Frunze formed Ashar, the first major independent association in the republic. Ashar soon counted among its members 5000 of the 20,000 families waiting for suitable housing in the city.⁴¹ Exploiting rumors of the resettling in Frunze of Armenian refugees from the crisis in the Caucasus, Ashar seized land on the outskirts of the city for the construction of a shantytown (*samostoi*), an action that threw the party and government leadership in Kyrgyzstan into a panic. After succeeding Usabaliev in 1986, the first secretary of the Communist Party of Kyrgyzstan, Absamat Masaliev, prided himself on the maintenance of traditional politics and a quiescent society in the republic. As late as the spring of 1989, Masaliev had suppressed attempts to form a Kyrgyz national front akin to those already in place in other Soviet republics. But proscribing Ashar threatened to alienate a desperate and growing segment of Kyrgyz society and set it against the ruling Kyrgyz and Russian elites. After lengthy discussions with the authorities in Moscow, Masaliev acquiesced in the recognition of Ashar, though he was soon frustrated by the inability of the local authorities to limit its activities to housing matters.⁴²

The recognition of Ashar in the summer of 1989 represented the takeoff point for social movements in Kyrgyzstan. By the beginning of 1990 there were 13 independent associations in the republic; a year later the number exceeded 36. Many of these groups were explicitly nationalist in orientation. In terms of membership, they were generally segregated along ethnic lines, although a few Russians joined predominantly Kyrgyz groups.⁴³ A defining moment in the development of the Kyrgyz national movement came in late May 1990, when 24 informal groups favoring democratic reform and Kyrgyz national revival formed the Democratic

Movement "Kyrgyzstan" (DDK). Over 300 delegates from throughout the republic met in Frunze to advance a program that called for, *inter alia*, a sovereign republic, a civil society and market economy, and a reassessment of Kyrgyz history, especially the uprisings of 1916.⁴⁴ Within three months, membership of the movement was estimated at 100,000, with half of that number drawn from Frunze.⁴⁵

In the summer of 1990, competing claims advanced by new ethnically-based associations in the Osh region led to inter-ethnic violence that fundamentally transformed the political landscape in Kyrgyzstan. In contrast to Frunze, land claims by the ethnic Kyrgyz were handled with less success in Osh, where unemployment and land hunger were more acute and local politicians were more willing to support openly Kyrgyz nationalism. The ethnic Kyrgyz in Osh resented the relative wealth and prominence of the local Uzbeks, who controlled, according to one estimate, 80 percent of the city's trade. The Uzbeks, for their part, claimed that their economic and demographic presence in the region was not translated into political power.⁴⁶ Only one of the 25 party first secretaries of local districts and cities was an Uzbek and only 4.7 percent of leading department posts in soviets in the region were held by Uzbeks (85 percent were occupied by Kyrgyz).⁴⁷ This perception of political disenfranchisement fed Uzbek irredentism, which had deep historical roots in the region.

In May 1990, Ashar's counterpart in Osh, Osh Aimagy, demanded land on which to settle ethnic Kyrgyz families who were unable to find housing. The regional party first secretary, Usen Sydykov, agreed to allot Osh aimagy 32 hectares of a predominantly Uzbek collective farm on the outskirts of Osh. The reaction of local Uzbeks was swift and dramatic. They seized the occasion to advance a range of political claims, including home rule for an Uzbek region in southern Kyrgyzstan and the recognition of Uzbek as the official language of the territory. There were even calls for the incorporation of parts of Kyrgyzstan into Uzbekistan.⁴⁸

The refusal of the Kyrgyz political leadership to satisfy the Uzbek demands or to reverse its land grant ignited widespread violence between the Kyrgyz and Uzbek communities in the Osh region, the latter supported by compatriots from Uzbekistan who crossed the republican border in the early stages of the fighting. Facing what one observer called "10 Sumgait",⁴⁹ the republic called in the Soviet Army and MVD to restore order. During a week of rioting in early June, thousands of homes and buildings were destroyed and 230 persons were killed, 161 in the Uzgen district alone. The Osh events exposed and deepened divisions in the republic's political leadership and hastened the downfall of first secretary Masaliev, who had been one of the most vocal opponents of perestroika in the USSR.

Disputes over land and water resources were the most violent interethnic encounters in the first years of national strife in Kyrgyzstan,⁵⁰ but no question excited more debate than the revival of the Kyrgyz language. Following the lead of other republics, Kyrgyzstan began to draft a new law on language in the summer of 1989.⁵¹ The debate surrounding the language law, adopted by the republic's supreme soviet in September 1989, brought into the open long-suppressed ethnic tensions. Whereas the Kyrgyz welcomed the elevation of their language to a pre-eminent position in the republic, Slavic residents viewed with alarm the recognition of Kyrgyz as the state language, despite the simultaneous recognition of Russian as the language of interethnic communication.⁵² One of the most controversial elements of the law was article eight, which required management and professional personnel--a stratum that the Slavs dominated--to have the ability to speak Kyrgyz to their workers or clients. Unlike most provisions of the law, which were originally to be phased in by 1997, article eight was to take effect immediately.⁵³ Responding to the draft law, Russian managers of all-union enterprises in the republic organized letter-writing campaigns that criticized the law as divisive.⁵⁴

The language debate destroyed the official discourse on ethnic relations in Kyrgyzstan, a discourse that had for decades denied tensions or conflicts of interests among ethnic groups in the republic. For the first time, recriminations against Russians became commonplace in the press. In an intemperate article in *Literaturnyi Kirgizstan* at the beginning of 1990, a Kyrgyz writer complained that the Russians despoiled the rural landscape with their trash-strewn picnic sites and the urban landscape with their queues. It was the Russians' hoarding genes (*geny zapasaniia*), she insisted, that kept them in lines.⁵⁵ The local Russian response to such criticism ranged from chauvinist to internationalist.⁵⁶

Even if the language law increased the use and visibility of Kyrgyz only modestly in the first years after its adoption--due both to the reluctance of non-Kyrgyz to study the language and the absence of instructional materials and qualified teachers⁵⁷--it spawned symbolic changes that served a rising Kyrgyz nationalism. Shops, squares, and cities gave up their Russian and Soviet labels to assume Kyrgyz names. The republic itself acquired a spelling in Russian that more closely approximated its pronunciation in Kyrgyz.⁵⁸ At the end of 1991, a new tote board, in Kyrgyz only, was installed in the parliament. And the number and edition size of Kyrgyz-language periodicals rose in comparison with those in Russian. Such reforms inspired among the ethnic Kyrgyz a new sense of ownership of the republic.⁵⁹

While the deepening bond between nation and state in Kyrgyzstan represented a renaissance for the Kyrgyz, it alienated many other ethnic groups in the republic, in the first instance the Slavs. The Russians and Ukrainians began to form their own national organizations, such as the Fund for Slavic Literacy and Culture (*Fond slavianskoi pis'mennosti*

i kul'tury) and later *Soglasie*. Both organizations, designed to promote Slavic languages and culture in the republic, received assistance directly from the government of the Russian Federation.⁶⁰

Reacting to the indigenization of cultural policy, the violence in Osh, and the weakening industrial sector, Slavs began to leave Kyrgyzstan in significant numbers in the early 1990s. For the first time in the contemporary history of Kyrgyzstan, the exodus of Slavs from the republic exceeded the in-migration. From 1989 to 1993, more than 100,000 Slavs abandoned Kyrgyzstan. In the same period, 50,000 of the country's 125,000 Germans departed.⁶¹ Alarmed by the loss of its European settlers, who were a valuable economic and political resource for the Russified Kyrgyz elite, Akaev introduced numerous measures to stem the tide of emigration. Among the most important of these were the establishment of the Slavonic University in Bishkek in 1993 and a May 1994 decree postponing the implementation of the language law.⁶²

Democratization, Marketization, and Nationalism in Kyrgyzstan

The discussion to this point has emphasized the cleavages between the Kyrgyz and other ethnic groups, cleavages deepened by the rise of electoral politics, the more liberal rules concerning political expression and association, and the breakup of the Soviet Union. But as national agendas are formed and acted on, other forces are at work that restrain the development of a pure politics of cultural pluralism. The sources of these restraints lie in social attitudes as well as state policy. Kyrgyz attitudes toward the Russians, for example, are by no means unswervingly hostile. To the contrary, the Kyrgyz have generally exhibited respect toward Russians and Russian culture, sometimes to the point of deference. In a letter to ethnic Kyrgyz living in Moscow, a Kyrgyz woman invoked the folk wisdom: "where there are Russians there is truth" (*tam, gde russkie, est' i pravda*).⁶³ In his own way, a reformist member of the republic's parliament, also an ethnic Kyrgyz, expressed a similar sentiment in regard to Russian language.

I would not have the right to call myself a son of my people without knowing the Kyrgyz language. But without a deep knowledge of Russian, I would not consider myself a complete man (*polnotsennym chelovekom*).⁶⁴

For a century, Russia has been the touchstone for the development of Kyrgyz language, culture, and politics. While that psychological dependency is in part a source of Kyrgyz nationalism, it also binds Russians and Kyrgyz to an extent that is unparalleled in relations between Russians and titular nationals in other successor states.

Kyrgyz attitudes toward the Uzbeks, the other major national minority in the republic, are more ambivalent. While sharing a Turkic and Islamic heritage⁶⁵ with the Uzbeks, the Kyrgyz have been suspicious of calls for pan-Turkic or pan-Islamic unity, fearing that such movements could lead to the hegemony in Central Asia of the larger and historically more prominent Uzbek nation.⁶⁶ The Kyrgyz fear of uzbekization was evident in a 1991 article that pointed to the decline of persons claiming Kyrgyz ethnicity in the Andizhan district of Uzbekistan, from 107,000 in 1906 to only 72,900 in 1989.⁶⁷ For the Kyrgyz, uzbekization appears more insidious than russification. The latter affects language and culture, the former ethnic identity itself.

Relations within as well as between ethnic groups have shaped the course of Kyrgyz nationalism. If Kyrgyz national claims have been more modest than those of most titular nationalities of the former USSR, it is in part because of the lack of unity among the Kyrgyz, and especially their elite. Clan and tribal loyalties continue to temper Kyrgyz nationalism.⁶⁸ Equally important barriers to Kyrgyz solidarity may be found in regional and urban/rural distinctions.⁶⁹ Party and government elites in Kyrgyzstan have long been divided into northern and southern "families", a division that colored the purges of the 1930s and facilitated central control of the republic thereafter.⁷⁰ Long-simmering tensions between the northern and southern Kyrgyz elites boiled to the surface at the end of 1990 following the ouster of the southerner Masaliev as republican leader. Distressed by the erosion of their traditional dominance of key republican posts, some southern Kyrgyz began to agitate for structural changes that would insure greater autonomy for their region. These proposals ranged from dividing the republic into two regions, with equal representation from each in republican bodies, to the formation of a Kyrgyz federation, with northern and southern republics.⁷¹ Pushing the case for political devolution even further, one Kyrgyz writer favored the creation of five autonomous regions in the republic, one for each oblast. Such a confederation would have been coordinated by a rotating collective presidency.⁷² The advocates of devolution and power sharing are motivated less by a desire to promote regional social and economic development than to protect local political networks.

Potentially the most serious division among the Kyrgyz runs along urban-rural lines. The urbanized quarter of the ethnic Kyrgyz population has appropriated the language and at least some of the cultural values of the Russians, who dominate the cities of Kyrgyzstan, especially its northern tier. As suggested earlier, Kyrgyz urban youth raised in the postwar era resemble in many respects second generation immigrants. They know smatterings of the language and traditions of their elders but feel more at home in their Russified surroundings. In short, they have assimilated. The rise of a Kyrgyz national consciousness stranded many of these

urbanized Kyrgyz between two cultures. The predicament has been especially acute for the rising generation of Kyrgyz politicians, typified by an incident in 1991 involving Ulukbek Chinaliev, the first secretary of the Frunze city Communist Party committee. Not knowing Kyrgyz, Chinaliev could only address his Kyrgyz audience in Russian, while immediately after his speech, an ethnic German, raised in the countryside, spoke to the audience in Kyrgyz.⁷³

Whether the tensions between urbanized and rural (or recently urban) Kyrgyz can be contained is as yet unclear. At the beginning of 1992, the urbanized Kyrgyz elite appeared to be in firm control of the state apparatus and leading nationalist organizations. As one might expect, they showed considerable sensitivity to the economic and cultural claims of non-urbanized Kyrgyz. But a russified--some would prefer the term sovietized--elite must remain vulnerable to a new and more atavistic wave of Kyrgyz nationalism that could be unleashed by populist politicians or movements.

Maintaining a multi-ethnic ruling coalition grows ever more difficult amid the proliferation of political parties,⁷⁴ the indigenization of language policy, and a market reform that is increasing economic hardships and social stratification. The ethnic Kyrgyz are especially vulnerable in the transition to a market-oriented economy. As a group, they have neither the education and skills of the Slavs nor the commercial traditions of the Uzbeks or Koreans living in Kyrgyzstan. Ethnic Kyrgyz account for 75 percent of agricultural labor in Kyrgyzstan and only a quarter of the industrial workforce, where the jobs and conditions have traditionally been more desirable.⁷⁵ Perhaps more disturbing, Kyrgyz youth have been reluctant to pursue careers in industry and construction.⁷⁶ In a more competitive and open economy, then, ethnic Kyrgyz as a group may fall further behind the Uzbeks, the Koreans, and the Russians in terms of economic well-being. This has created strong pressures on a Kyrgyz-dominated state to adopt measures to "defend" the titular nationality. Among the many concessions to Kyrgyz nationalist sentiment was the formation in 1992 of a national land trust, which reserved half of newly-privatized land for ethnic Kyrgyz.⁷⁷

If the Kyrgyz have thus far held their own in an economy in transition, it is due in large measure to their domination of bureaucratic posts that grant access to foreign funds and that facilitate insider trading in the denationalization of state property and resources. At a meeting of the Security Council in the summer of 1994, Akaev lamented the high level of corruption in ruling circles. He estimated that only half of the people in government were working; the rest occupied themselves with private business or building dachas.⁷⁸

Askar Akaev and the Political Economy of Kyrgyzstan

Rising economic deprivation in Kyrgyzstan has complicated efforts to sustain ethnic harmony and open, competitive politics.⁷⁹ The industrial economy of Kyrgyzstan all but collapsed after the breakup of the Soviet Union. By 1994, more than 50 factories were idle. Industrial production had fallen by a third in one year.⁸⁰ To be sure, the rupture of inter-republican purchase and supply links and the loss of labor discipline undermined the economies of all the newly independent states. But Kyrgyzstan faces special problems with its small market, its relative paucity of mineral wealth, its distance from developed economies, and its poor transportation links, both domestically and internationally.⁸¹ Moreover, the peculiar geography of the Soviet economy left Kyrgyzstan with a host of unsustainable enterprises, among which were a torpedo plant--in a country without a navy--and a sugar refinery designed to process tropical cane from Cuba rather than native beetroot. Further impeding efforts to stabilize the Kyrgyz economy were several natural disasters in the early 1990s, including earthquakes and landslides, which required state funding for humanitarian assistance and reconstruction efforts.

As the Russian Federation curtailed its deliveries of subsidized fuel to Kyrgyzstan in 1992, mounting social pressures and budget deficits encouraged President Akaev to seek assistance abroad. In an extraordinary display of the politics of international grantsmanship, the leadership of Kyrgyzstan had attracted well over half a billion dollars in foreign aid by the end of 1994.⁸² The largest share of the funding came from international and regional organizations, such as the IMF and the Islamic Bank, though individual countries also contributed generously to Kyrgyzstan. The United States, for example, had committed over \$100 million in grants and loans to Kyrgyzstan by the end of 1994.⁸³

What explains the success of Akaev's fund-raising campaign? Put simply, Kyrgyzstan captured the imagination of the West. The idea of Kyrgyzstan as "an island of democracy" and "the Switzerland of Asia" appealed to international donors, who were anxious to assist a progressive regime in Central Asia.⁸⁴ The inflated rhetoric aside, there was much to recommend Kyrgyzstan to the West. At its inception, independent Kyrgyzstan had a free and vigorous press, an openness to fundamental economic reform, and a popular president with liberal political instincts. Politics in Kyrgyzstan stood in sharp contrast to the authoritarianism, whether veiled or open, of its neighbors.

Akaev and the Kyrgyzstan leadership became hostages, however, to their own success. The immediate issue was not debt service--the repayment terms were generous--but satisfying the political and economic expectations of their donors. In some cases, the cost of foreign largesse was clear and politically affordable. An initial infusion of 64 million dollars from the

IMF was tied explicitly to the introduction of a national currency, the som, in May 1993.⁸⁵ But the leadership of Kyrgyzstan found it increasingly difficult, and unpalatable, to meet escalating foreign demands on the country's monetary, fiscal, and privatization policies.⁸⁶ Set against the marketizing demands of the West was rising popular pressure for paternalistic policies by the state.

By the mid-1990s, contradictions abounded in Kyrgyz economic policy, as Akaev sought to satisfy both foreign and domestic constituencies. On the one hand, he introduced by decree a liberal foreign investment policy and an innovative program to develop small business. But to shore up declining support at home, Akaev also increased social welfare payments and recruited traditional elites to key positions in regional and national government, measures that retarded the liberalization of the economy and alarmed Western financial institutions. The new deputy premier for agrarian policy was the former Communist Party General Secretary, Zhumgalbek Amanbaev, whose ideas on land reform differed markedly from those espoused earlier by Akaev. "Private property in land," Amanbaev argued, "is not a dogma.... Today it is premature. But within a decade--we'll see."⁸⁷

Akaev's concessions to domestic economic critics formed part of a broader turn to the right in the politics of Kyrgyzstan. Through the summer and fall of 1994 the president employed methods of rule normally associated with authoritarian leaders. He closed two leading opposition newspapers, including *Svobodnye gory*, the official parliamentary organ.⁸⁸ He cooperated in a successful plot--launched ostensibly by a group of deputies--to prorogue parliament several months before the end of its mandate.⁸⁹ And in anticipation of new parliamentary elections, he put before the nation a plebiscite designed to replace the constitutionally-mandated unicameral assembly of 105 members with a bicameral parliament with 35 members in a permanent working chamber, the Legislative Assembly, and 70 members in the People's Assembly. As expected, the nation followed the script of plebiscitarian democracy and approved the creation of a bicameral assembly, thereby violating the May 1993 Constitution, which had provided for amendments through parliamentary action alone.⁹⁰ In a further violation of the Constitution, Akaev insisted on the eligibility of regional executive officials for seats in one of the chambers (the People's Assembly) of the new parliament.⁹¹ Much like the Federation Council in Russia, this chamber in Kyrgyzstan was designed to be an infrequently-convened assembly of regional leaders, who were tied to the presidency through patronage.⁹² According to the widely-respected speaker of the parliament, Medetkan Sherimkulov, such a chamber in Kyrgyzstan will lead to "the institutionalization of the policy of regionalism in the worst sense of the term."⁹³

Kyrgyzstan's shift to the right has endangered its political and economic ties to the West. In a harsh speech in September 1994, Strobe Talbott, the American official charged with relations with the former USSR, made clear the linkage of economic assistance to Western-imposed standards of democratic development.

The stakes are very high. The reputation of Kyrgyzstan as a democratic country is one of its most valuable resources for the international community. The absence of this resource will place in doubt the entire political basis for large-scale aid from the United States.⁹⁴

This speech, and a similar message conveyed to Akaev in person by James Collins, a State Department emissary, reminded Kyrgyzstan of the limits of national sovereignty in the new world order.⁹⁵ In language full of ambiguity and contradiction, Talbott warned that the West would be viewing parliamentary elections in February 1995 as "a decisive test of democracy in Kyrgyzstan."

At the time of this writing (Mid-March 1995) all of the results of those elections are not yet in. Owing to irregularities or inadequate voter turnout, new elections had to be scheduled in 16 of the 105 precincts.⁹⁶ But the contours of the electoral outcome are already clear.

Political parties in Kyrgyzstan have not yet succeeded in making the transition from groups of notable to mass-based organizations capable of generating electoral support. Despite nominating candidates to stand for office in many of the country's precincts, the eleven parties contesting the election have won a total of only 31 of the 89 seats so far decided. Even the Communist Party has claimed only three seats, with two of those attributable to victories by former republic first secretaries, Absamat Masaliev and Turdakun Usubaliev⁹⁷.

The most formidable blocs in the new parliament will include central and local executive officials as well as directors of factories and business organizations. The electoral success of Kyrgyzstan's new plutocrats was stunning: they won a third of the first 89 parliamentary seats, in part by emphasising their ability to enhance the economic security of their constituents. Such a rapid rise of a new economic class to political power would be remarkable were it not for the heritage of the business elite. They are drawn largely from the ranks of the old *nomenklatura*.

The results of the 1995 parliamentary elections are almost certain to deepen social divisions in the country, less along the lines of class than ethnicity. The initial returns suggest that the membership of the new parliament will be heavily overweighted in favour of ethnic Kyrgyz. The Russian and the Uzbek minorities, which together account for well over 30% of the population of Kyrgyzstan, hold only 15% of the first 89 parliamentary seats.⁹⁸ Such an outcome was predictable once President Akaev and the ruling elite opted for a small parliament and single-member districts.

Despite the hopes of President Akaev and his backers at home and abroad, the recent parliamentary elections are unlikely to defuse the political crisis that has seized Kyrgyzstan since the summer of 1994. The reasons for the turn to the Right in Kyrgyz politics remain a subject of debate. Some view Akaev's new tactics as temporary measures designed to overcome opposition to economic reform and to guarantee a measure of social and political stability at a particularly turbulent moment in Kyrgyz history. Others regard Akaev's more authoritarian policies as politically necessary concessions to powerful and insistent conservative forces in the central and local bureaucracies. Still others believe that Akaev has become disillusioned with the classical democratic road to development and is abandoning it for an alternative path tailored to the conditions and culture of Kyrgyzstan. In 1994-5, as it did five years earlier, Kyrgyzstan faces the most fundamental choices about its political future.

The defining moment for democratic development in Kyrgyzstan may in fact have come earlier, at the end of the 1993, when an increasingly isolated president forged an informal ruling alliance with conservative regional executives, the *akimy*.⁹⁹ Surrounded by a corrupt national bureaucracy and a moribund parliament, Akaev turned to the governors of Kyrgyzstan's six regions to provide efficient administration of the country. He gambled that the popularity and patronage powers of the presidency would enable him to control a group of shrewd and experienced local politicians.¹⁰⁰ But it is as yet unclear whether the president or the *akimy* have the upper hand in this relationship. As the results of the October 1994 local elections make clear, politics in the regions is far from open and contested. In the Issyk-Kul' region, for example, of the 888 seats in the local assemblies (*zhogorku kenesh*), only 169 were contested.¹⁰¹ The *akimy* are able to govern much as Communist Party first secretaries did under the old regime.¹⁰²

An equilibrium between presidential and akimiat power seems in place at the moment, based on mutual dependency. Whereas Akaev relies on the *akimy* to implement policies on the ground, the *akimy* need the cover of Akaev's national and international legitimacy. The relationship is, however, inherently unstable, as the liberalizing and centralizing instincts of the president compete with the traditionalist and devolutionary aims of local elites. For the duration of this unlikely alliance, politics in Kyrgyzstan will bear the marks of a struggle between two distinct visions of the future.

TABLE ONE
Population of Kyrgyzstan

	1926	1939	1959	1970	1980	1989
Total population	1,001,700	1,458,200	2,066,100	2,993,200	3,588,500	4,257,755
Kyrgyz	668,700 66.8%	754,300 51.7%	836,800 40.5%	1,248,800 42.6%	1,687,400 47.0%	2,229,663 52.4%
Russians	116,800 11.7%	302,900 20.8%	623,600 30.2%	855,900 29.2%	911,700 25.4%	916,558 21.5%
Uzbeks	106,300 10.6%	151,600 10.4%	218,900 10.6%	333,000 11.4%	426,200 11.9%	550,096 12.9%
Ukrainians	64,200 6.4%	137,300 9.4%	137,000 6.6%	120,000 4.1%	109,300 3.0%	108,027 2.5%
Germans	4,300 0.4%	11,800 0.8%	39,900 1.9%	89,800 3.1%	101,100 2.8%	101,309 2.4%
Tatars	4,900 0.5%	20,000 1.4%	56,300 2.7%	69,400 2.4%	72,000 2.0%	70,068 1.6%
Uighurs	8,200 0.8%	9,400 0.6%	13,800 0.7%	24,900 0.8%	29,800 0.8%	37,318 0.9%
Kazakhs	1,700 0.2%	23,900 1.6%	20,100 1.0%	22,000 0.8%	27,400 0.8%	36,928 0.9%
Dungans	6,000 0.6%	5,900 0.4%	11,100 0.5%	19,800 0.7%	26,700 0.7%	36,779 0.9%
Tajiks	7,000 0.7%	10,700 0.7%	15,200 0.7%	21,900 0.7%	23,200 0.6%	33,518 0.8%
Others	13,600 1.4%	30,400 2.1%	93,400 4.5%	91,600 3.1%	108,000 3.0%	137,491 3.2%

Source: *Narodnoe Khozyaistvo Kirgizskoi SSR* (Frunze, 1982), pg. 16, *Vestnik Statistiki*, 1991, 4, pp. 76-78;

ENDNOTES

1. "Zemel'nyi kodeks respubliki Kyrgyzstan," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 11 June 1991, p. 3; "Veto Prezidenta otvechaet chaianiiam vsekh liudei dobroj voli," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 28 June 1991, p. 3. President Akaev was one of the few leaders of Soviet republics to publicly condemn the August 1991 coup in its initial stages. For portraits of Akaev, see "Portrety bez ramok (Prezident Kirgizstana Askar Akaev)," *Literaturnyi Kyrgyzstan*, (January 1991), pp. 116-120; N. Andreev, "Askar Akaev: svobodnyi Kyrgyzstan dolzhen byt' sil'nym," *Izvestiia*, October 10, 1991, p. 2; and E. Huskey, "Askar Akaev," in Joseph Wieczynski, *The Gorbachev Encyclopedia* (Place, Charles Schlacks Publisher, 1994), pp. .
2. No one better exemplifies the ugly face of Russian nationalism than Vladimir Zhirinovskii. In an interview with an American correspondent in January 1992, Zhirinovskii claimed that, once in power, he would "immediately change the foreign policy radically. In two days, I would do away with such countries as Kazakhstan and Kirghizia, because...there is not a single scholar in the USA or elsewhere in the world who would be able to locate such political entities as Kazakhstan and Kirghizia on the map of the world." *MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour*, 13 January 1992.
3. "The question of the origins of the Kyrgyz nation is among the most complex and controversial aspects of the ethnic history of Central Asia." With these words S.M. Abramzon opens his seminal work on the Kyrgyz. *Kirgizy i ikh etnogeneticheskie i istoriko-kul'turnyi sviazi* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1971), p. 10. As this and other works illustrate, the question of the ethnogenesis of the Kyrgyz is by no means closed. See *Istoriia Kirgizskoi SSR*, vol. 1, ed. V.M. Ploskikh et al. (Frunze: "Kyrgyzstan", 1984), and Esen Uluu Kylych, "K dinastii karakhanidov - Kirgizov?," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 7 September 1991, p. 10. Among non-specialists the identity of the modern Kyrgyz is confused by the use of the name to describe an older tribe along the Enisei River in southern Siberia and by the Russians' use of the term well into this century to describe the Kazakhs. The Kyrgyz were often referred to as the Kara-Kirgiz to distinguish them from the Kazakhs.
4. S.M. Abramzon, *Kirgizy i ikh etnogeneticheskie i istoriko-kul'turnye sviazi*, pp. 22-23.
5. D. Thomson, *Europe since Napoleon* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1966), p. 119.
6. Donald S. Carlisle, "Uzbekistan and the Uzbeks," *Problems of Communism* (September-October 1991), p. 24.
7. A. Arzymatov, "V sostav Rossii: Vkhozhdenie? Prisoedinenie? Zavoevanie?," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 1 June 1991, p. 10; Helene Carrere d'Encausse, "Systematic Conquest, 1665 to 1884," in *Central Asia: 120 Years of Russian Rule*, ed. E. Allworth (Durham: Duke University Press, 1989), p. 134. It should be noted that the southern Kyrgyz were more hostile to the encroachment of the Russians than the northern Kyrgyz.
8. This is the subtitle of the second volume of the authoritative Soviet history of the republic. *Istoriia Kirgizskoi SSR*, vol. 2, ed. S.I. Il'iasov et al. (Frunze: "Kyrgyzstan", 1986). For an argument that Russians were the lesser evil in Kyrgyz national development, see I. Boldzhurova, "Ne zabludit'sia v istorii," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, September 17, 1994, p. 7. The greater evil in her view: the Chinese.
9. Osmon Ibraimov, "Neizvestnyi genotsid," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 20 April 1991, p. 10.
10. Ian Murray Matley, "Population and Land," in *Central Asia: 120 Years of Russian Rule*, ed. E. Allworth (Durham: Duke University Press, 1989), p. 105.
11. Osmon Ibraimov, "Neizvestnyi genotsid," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 20 April 1991, p. 10.
12. "Znaia pravdu istorii, ne pred'iavliat' drug drugu schet za svoikh predkov," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 6 April 1991, p. 3; G. Krongard, "Spravedlivost' trebuet pravdu," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 13 July 1991, p. 3.
13. Osmon Ibraimov, "Neizvestnyi genotsid," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 20 April 1991, p. 10.
14. An authoritative Soviet account of the 1916 uprisings in Kyrgyzstan may be found in *Istoriia Kirgizskoi SSR*, vol. 2, ed. S.I. Il'iasov et al. (Frunze: "Kyrgyzstan", 1986), pp. 337-345.

15. For a Soviet account of the revolution itself in Kyrgyzstan, see A.G. Zima, *Velikii Oktiabr' v Kirgizii* (Frunze: "Ilim", 1987).
16. *Istoriia Kirgizskoi SSR*, vol. 3, ed. K.K. Karakeev et al. (Frunze: "Kyrgyzstan", 1986), pp. 319-337.
17. Dzh. Dzhunushaliev, "Politika korenizatsii: opyt i problemy," *Kommunist Kirgizstana*, no. 1 (1990), pp. 69-70.
18. *Ibid.*
19. *Ibid.* On the background of members of "elected" bodies in early Soviet Kyrgyzstan, see Z. Kurmanov, "Tochka zreniia," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 13 July 1991, p. 6.
20. One member of this elite was Torekul Aitmatov, the father of the internationally-known novelist, Chingiz Aitmatov. For a discussion of Torekul Aitmatov's life and its influence on his son's work, see Joseph P. Mozur, *Doffing "Mankurt's Cap": Chingiz Aitmatov's "The Day Lasts More than a Hundred Years" and the Turkic National Heritage* (Pittsburgh: The Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies [no. 605], 1987).
21. "Vorotnikov Speaks at Frunze," *Foreign Broadcast Information Service (Soviet Union)*, 15 October 1984, R9, citing Moscow Domestic Service in Russian, 1600 GMT, 13 October 1984.
22. See "Kirgiz Party Chief Usubaliev Retires," *Radio Liberty Research Bulletin*, 7 November 1985, p. 3.
23. Dzh. Dzhunushaliev, "Istoki 'belykh piaten' istorii," *Kommunist Kirgizstana*, no. 5 (1990), p. 65.
24. Ch. Aitmatov, "Voronii grai nad opolznem. Oshskie razdum'ia, god spustia," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 2 August 1991, p. 2.
25. Even in the approximately 1000 schools in the republic where Kyrgyz was the language of instruction, the teachers trained in Russian in their substantive fields. "...chtoby v kazhdoi dushe byl pokoi," *Sovetskaia Kirgiziia*, 13 September 1989, p. 3.
26. "Na osnove svobodnogo razvitiia i ravnopraviia iazykov," *Sovetskaia Kirgiziia*, 28 September 1989, p. 3. In general, Kirgiz-language works were poorly represented in every cultural field. Of the 50 works in the repertory of the Kirgiz Theater of Opera and Ballet in 1989, only four were in Kyrgyz; and of the 5577 films in the inventory of Kirgizkiiprokat, only 9 percent were dubbed into Kyrgyz. *Ibid.*
27. R. Osmonalieva, "Ob'ektivn li voliuntarizm?," *Kommunist Kirgizstana*, no. 10 (1990), p. 81. Only in light industry, where the Kyrgyz comprise 35 percent of the workforce, does the titular nationality make up at least a third of an industrial sector. *Ibid.*
28. *Ibid.*
29. Dzh. Dzhunushaliev, "Politika korenizatsii: opyt i problemy," *Kommunist Kirgizstana*, no. 1 (1990), p. 75.
30. On the correlation between ethnicity and employment in Central Asia, see Nancy Lubin, *Labor and Nationality in Soviet Asia: An Uneasy Compromise* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).
31. For an excellent overview of demographic trends in Central Asia, see M. Rywkin, *Moscow's Muslim Challenge: Soviet Central Asia*, revised edition (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1990), chapter 5.
32. A. Zhakypov, "Komuz ne dlia frantsuvoz," *Sovetskaia Kirgiziia*, 10 September 1989, p. 2.
33. M. Guboglo, "Demography and Language in the Capitals of the Union Republics," *Journal of Soviet Nationalities*, no. 4 (1990), p. 7.
34. "O prioritetakh," *Murok*, no. 1 (November 1990), p. 2. *Murok* was an irregularly issued newsletter published in Moscow by ethnic Kyrgyz who sought more rapid reform of the republic's political and economic system. For insightful articles on the Kyrgyz communities in Moscow and St. Petersburg, numbering about 3000 in each city, see A. Gorodzeiskii, "Moskovskie kirgizy," *Literaturnyi Kirgizstan*, no. 11 (1990), p. 82.

- and N. Ablova, "Belyi parokhod v ust'e Nevy, ili kirgizy goroda Pitera," *Literaturnyi Kirgizstan*, nos. 7-8 (1990), pp. 112-117.
35. E. Abildaev, "Rabochii klass Kirgizii: osobennosti razvitiia," *Kommunist Kirgizstana*, nos. 8-9 (1990), p. 135.
36. V. Rumiantsev, "Sluzhba zaniatosti i rynochnaia ekonomika," *Kommunist Kirgizstana*, no. 11 (1990), pp. 42-48.
37. "Ozdorovit' i stabilizirovat' obstanovku (s plenuma oshkogo obkoma Kompartii Kirgizii)," *Sovetskaia Kirgiziia*, 15 August 1990, p. 2.
38. "Deistvovat' vzheshenno, obstoiatel'no, soobshcha," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 15 January 1991, p. 2.
39. On the problem of overpopulation of the Central Asian countryside, see Boris Z. Rumer, *Soviet Central Asia: "A Tragic Experiment"* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), chapter 6.
40. S. Usenov, "Vozvrat k srednevekov'iu?!", *Murok*, no. 1 (1990), pp. 2-3.
41. V. Ponomarev, *Samodeiatel'nye obshchestvennyi organizatsii Kazakhstana i Kirgizii, 1987-1991 (opyt spravochnika)* (Moscow: Informatsionnoe agentstvo 'Aziia', 1991), p. 84.
42. "Na osnove svobodnogo razvitiia i ravnopraviia iazykov," *Sovetskaia Kirgiziia*, 28 September 1989, p. 5; S. Usenov, "Vozvrat k srednevekov'iu?!", *Murok*, no. 1 (1990), pp. 2-3. By the beginning of 1991, a corporatist-style relationship existed between Ashar and the local authorities in Frunze (Bishkek). E. Denisenko, "Ashar deistvyet, i on prav," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 8 May 1991, p. 7.
43. Russian reformers began to leave these groups, however, after the Osh events and after the rise of Eltsin in the Russian Federation, which attracted many of them to Russia. A. Kniازهev, "Russkii vopros," *Literaturnyi Kyrgyzstan*, no. 1 (1991), pp. 109-115. An exception was G. Kaliuzhnaia, a Russian elected chairman of the Sokuluk branch of the DDK. "Lider DDK v raione - russkaia," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 6 September 1991, p. 1.
44. "Programma Demokraticheskogo dvizheniia 'Kyrgyzstan'" [document in possession of the author]. The rules of the organization may be found in *Frunze shamy*, 28 August 1990.
45. V. Ponomarev, *Samodeiatel'nye obshchestvennye organizatsii Kazakhstana i Kirgizii, 1987-1991*, pp. 96-97. For biographies of the co-chairmen of the Democratic Movement "Kyrgyzstan", Topchubek Turganaliyev and Zhypar Zheksheev, see "Portrety bez ramok," *Literaturnyi Kirgizstan*, no. 12 (1990), pp. 89-94. Turganaliyev was among a number of members of the DDK who went on a hunger strike outside the parliament building in Frunze to demand reform of what until that time had been an unreconstructed political system. The defeat of Masaliyev and the election of Akaev coincided with this hunger strike.
46. For the result of opinion polls among local residents on the origins of the Osh disturbances, see A. Elebaeva, "Mezhnatsional'nye otnosheniia: mif i real'nost'," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 3 August 1991, p. 4.
47. "Ozdorovit' i stabilizirovat' obstanovku (s plenuma oshkogo obkoma Kompartii Kirgizii)," *Sovetskaia Kirgiziia*, 15 August 1990, p. 2.
48. Since the 1920s, when Turkestan was divided, the boundaries between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan have been disputed. See T. Ozhukeeva, "...i rezali derzhevu, kak tort (istoki territorial'nykh konfliktov v SSSR)," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 2 November 1991, p. 10.
49. Dzhamin Akimaliyev, "Igra bez pravil," *Literaturnyi Kirgizstan*, no. 11 (1990), p. 88.
50. Disturbances on a smaller scale broke out on the Kyrgyz-Tadzhik border concerning water rights. This dispute, whose roots go back to the drawing of territorial boundaries in the 1920s, soured relations between the Kyrgyz and Tadzhik leaders in the late 1980s and early 1990s. For a brief review of the dispute, see A. Kniازهev, "Zalozhniki zakhlostiia," *Literaturnyi Kirgizstan*, no. 5 (1990), pp. 98-104. At stake is 24,000 hectares of Kyrgyz territory claimed by Tajikistan. "Zachem vvodit' liudei v zabluzhdenie?," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 24 May 1991, p. 1.

51. See A.S. Pigolkin and M.S. Studenkina, "Republic Language Laws in the USSR: A Comparative Analysis," *Journal of Soviet Nationalities* (forthcoming). Reform of language policy had begun in Kyrgyzstan in October 1988 with the adoption of a party directive "O national'no-russkom dvuiazychii, uluchshenii prepodavaniia i izuchenii kirgizskogo, russkogo i drugikh iazykov narodov SSSR v respublike". "O proekte Zakona o gosudarstvennom iazyke Kirgizskoi SSR (Doklad sekretaria TsK Kompartii Kirgizii, predsedatelia Komissii zakonodatel'nykh predpolozhenii Verkhovnogo Soveta Kirgizskoi SSR deputata M.Sh. Sherimkulova)," *Sovetskaia Kirgiziia*, 28 September 1989, pp. 2-3.
52. See, for example, the comments of the ethnic Russian procurator of Kyrgyzstan, G.I. Ivantsov. "Na osnove svobodnogo razvitiia i ravnopraviia iazykov," *Sovetskaia Kirgiziia*, 28 September 1989, p.4.
53. "O gosudarstvennom iazyke Kirgizskoi SSR," *Sovetskaia Kirgiziia*, 29 September 1989, pp. 1-2.
54. One collective letter, signed at 10 am on 16 September 1989, bore 1623 signatures. "Obsuzhdaetsia proekt Zakona o iazyke," *Sovetskaia Kirgiziia*, 12 September 1991, p. 1.
55. U. Midinova and E. Turaliev, "O 'piknikakh', dlinnykh ocherediakh...i drugikh malopriiatnykh veshchakh," *Literaturnyi Kirgizstan*, no. 1 (1990), pp. 123-126.
56. A Russian from the Alamedinsk district wrote that he did not feel guilty before the Kyrgyz people because his ancestors brought with them to Turkestan agriculture, infrastructure, and civilization. V. Ermakov, "Ostat'sia, chtoby vozrodit'sia," *Literaturnyi Kirgizstana*, no. 5 (1991), pp. 104-105. See also E. Chernova, "Trudoresursnyi faktor i mezhnatsional'nye otnosheniia," *Kommunist Kirgizstana*, no. 6 (1990), p. 61. The reaction of the Central Asian minorities to the law was less immediate and less alarmist. The law did provoke resentment, however, among the Uzbeks in southern Kyrgyzstan. Uzbeks objected that they already knew a second language, Russian, and Kyrgyz would be a third. In their compact ethnic community in the Fergana valley, many argued, Uzbek and not Kyrgyz should be the official language.
57. "Nuzhen dialog, a ne protivosostoianie," *Sovetskaia Kirgiziia*, 16 December 1989, p. 3.
58. "Respublika ishchet imia," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 13 December 1990, p. 1. Changing the spelling of the republic in Russian from Kirgizstan to Kyrgyzstan caused considerable resentment among the Russians, who claimed their language was being interfered with by forcing it to deny Russian rules of pronunciation. "I dukh, i bukva," *Sovetskaia Kirgiziia*, 9 December 1990, p. 3. By the end of 1993, Russian-language publications in Kyrgyzstan began to return to the original spelling of the republic--Kirgizstan.
59. On the implementation of the language law, see E. Huskey, "The Politics of Language Law in Kyrgyzstan," *Nationalities Papers* (forthcoming).
60. V. Alekseev, "'Slavianskie vesti'," *Sovetskaia Kirgiziia*, 19 December 1990, p. 1. *Soglasie*, formed in July 1994, has considerable support in the Russian business community. It has ties to the Congress of Russian Communities, an organization uniting Russians throughout the near abroad. Aleksandr Brasov, "Soglasie: drugogo puti prosto net," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, October 8, 1994, p. 6.
61. "Iurgen Sheller: Moi deviz - Sapere aude!" *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, February 26, 1994, p. 3.
62. In September 1994, the Government published a *postanovlenie* setting out specific steps designed to implement the May decree of the president. In all organizations with a majority of non-Kyrgyz, internal communications may be conducted in Russian as well as Kyrgyz until the final expiration date for introducing the state language. The new date is to be January 1, 2005, according to a bill to be drafted for parliament by the Ministry of Justice. "Kak umen'shit' migratsiiu," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, September 14, 1994, p. 3. As the *akim* of Bishkek, Zhumabek Ibrahimov, points out, however, the exodus of Russians will only stop if industry in Kyrgyzstan can be revived. In 1993, 30,000 Russians left Bishkek alone. "Khochu, chtoby Bishkek stal stolitse edinomyshlennikov," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, June 28, 1994, p. 2.
63. A. Gorodzeiskii, "Moskovskie kirgizy," *Literaturnyi Kirgizstan*, no. 11 (1990), p. 82.
64. Dzhamin Akimaliev, "Igra bez pravil," *Literaturnyi Kirgizstan*, no. 11 (1990), p. 92.

65. The roots of Islam are less deep in Kyrgyzstan than among the more sedentary peoples of Central Asia. As Abramzon points out, although Islam came to Kyrgyzstan in the 16th and 17th centuries, it had hardly taken hold even by the 19th century. S.M. Abramzon, *Kirgizy i ikh etnogeneticheskie i istoriko-kul'turnye sviazi*, pp. 255-275. For a sophisticated analysis of the role of Islam in the rise of a Kyrgyz ethnic consciousness, see Guy Imart, "The Islamic Impact on Traditional Kirghiz Ethnicity," *Nationality Papers*, nos. 1-2 (1986), pp. 65-88. It is still unclear to what extent Islam will serve as a catalyst in the formation of contemporary Kyrgyz nationalism.
66. Recent meetings of independent democratic associations and parties in Central Asia have called for retaining the territorial status quo. The leaders of these organizations specifically rejected the idea of a pan-turkic state, Turan. E. Denisenko, "Slozhenie sil na ostrove demokratii," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 31 May 1991, p. 2. The permanent headquarters of this federation of Central Asian democratic organizations is to be in Frunze (Bishkek), remarkable testimony to the pace of reform in Kyrgyzstan, which as late as the fall of 1989 was seen by many to be the most backward republic politically in Central Asia.
67. K. Bobulov, "Pravda i lozh'," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 1 March 1991, p. 3.
68. For a discussion of Kyrgyz tribes and clans, see S.M. Abramzon, *Kirgizy i ikh etnogeneticheskie i istoriko-kul'turnye sviazi*, pp. 24-34, 189, and *passim*.
69. The head of the presidential department for interethnic relations, A. Dzhusupbekov, argued in early 1993 that "intraethnic disagreements and inter-regional tensions are particularly worrying for me and my associates. It is problem number one, and must not be underestimated. Tajikistan will serve as an example." "Igra na grani fola, no bez udaleniia s polia," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, January 23, 1993, p. 6.
70. Azamat Altay, "Kirgiziya During the Great Purge," *Central Asian Review*, no. 2 (1964), p. 102. I am grateful to Joseph Mozur for bringing this source to my attention. A. Dzhusupbekov, "Net proroka v svoem otechestve," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, August 17, 1994, p. 2. One southern commentator noted in 1992 that the theory of "checks and balances" required a firm division of Government portfolios between northerners and southerners. Only in this way, he argued, could southerners insure adequate representation in governing institutions in Bishkek. Mamat Karataev, "Produkt 30-minutnoi deiatel'nosti nekrupnogo mozga, ili Razgovor s samim soboi po povodu stat'i K. Mambetalieva," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, October 22, 1992, p. 7.
71. "Deistvovat' vzveshenno, obstoiatel'no, soobshcha," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 15 January 1991, p. 2.
72. A. Biialinov, "Kirgizskaia Federativnaia Respublika: byt' ili ne byt'?", *Sovetskaia Kirgiziia*, 24 November 1990, p. 2.
73. K. Mambetaliev, "Uvazhitel'noe gostepriimstvo - ili bratskoe sokhoziaistvovanie?," *Literaturnyi Kirgizstan*, no. 8 (1990), p. 87.
74. As of the fall of 1994, the most influential parties in Kyrgyzstan were the Communist Party and Ata-Meken, the latter a recently-formed party generally supportive of the president. Among the other major parties were Erkin Kyrgyzstan, DDK, Asaba, the Social-Democratic Party, the Agrarian Party, and the Republican Popular Party. For the level of popular support enjoyed by these parties, see Kusein Isaev, Emil' Niiazov, and Karybek Zhigitkov, "Komu otdat' svoi golos i nadezhdu," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, September 24, 1994, p. 5.
75. E. Abildaev, "Rabochii klass Kirgizii: osobennosti razvitiia," *Kommunist Kirgizstana*, nos. 8-9 (1990), p. 134. On the educational "lag" of indigenous Central Asian nationalities, see Martha Brill Olcott, "Central Asia: The Reformists Challenge a Traditional Society," in *The Nationalities Factor in Soviet Politics and Society*, ed. L. Hajda and M. Beissinger, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, pp. 266-267.
76. Even in the urban vocational training schools, only 15% of ethnic Kyrgyz opt for industrial courses, with most preferring trade-related subjects. *Ibid.*, pp. 135-138.
77. By the middle of 1994, one-third of the state farms--those considered unprofitable--had closed and more than 20,000 private farmers were tilling the land. Nur Dolay, "Le Kirghizstan cherche sa voie," *Le monde diplomatique* (December 1994), p. 5. According to the Prime Minister, Adas Dzhumagulov, the remaining state and collective farms were to close by the end of 1994 unless they raised grain or were tribal (*plemennnye*) in membership. "Proshchal'noe slovo kolkhozam i sovkhozam," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, November 25, 1994, p. 2.

78. A. Barshai, "Dve opasnosti groziat gosudarstvu - odna izvne, drugaia izvnutri," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, August 26, 1994, p. 1. For a detailed account of how officials acquired state property for a song, see the procurator-general's report in A. Sharshenaliev, "Da, znakomye vse familii!" *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, August 17, 1994, p. 2. See also V. Niksdorf, "Deputyaty reshili borot'sia za chistotu svoikh riadov," *SK*, 31 May 1994, p. 1.
79. For popular reactions to the economic crisis, see Richard B. Dobson, *Kyrgyzstan in a Time of Change: A Report on Ten Focus Groups in 1994* (Office of Research, USIA, October 1994).
80. "Apas Dzhumagulov: U nas slishkom malo vremeni chtoby tratit' ego na politicheskie batalii....," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, May 20, 1994, pp. 2-3.
81. Due to a lack of reliable supplies of jet fuel, Kyrgyzstan has been unable to open a direct air route to any foreign capital save Moscow, and even service to Moscow has been interrupted for long stretches. In 1992, the Kyrgyz writer and diplomat, Chingiz Aitmatov, failed in his effort to open an air route, Luxemburg-Bishkek-Hong Kong.
82. Along with Askar Akaev, the foreign minister, Roza Otunbaeva, has been instrumental in enhancing Kyrgyzstan's image in the world community. Until early 1994, she was the Kyrgyz ambassador in Washington. See "Roza Otunbaeva: Vlast' dolzhna byt' sil'na, no nado li ee protivopostavliat' demokratii?" *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, September 3, 1994, p. 6, where Otunbaeva emphasizes the importance of Kyrgyzstan's image for its geopolitical position.
83. For a list of aid commitments as of the middle of 1993, see L. Lozovskaia, "Den'gi perechisliat MVF, vsemirnyi Bank, Iaponia....," *Biznesmen K* [Bishkek], no. 15 (June 1993), p. 3, and N. Aiyp, "Obzor nedeli," *Res Publica* [Bishkek], June 5, 1993, p. 1.
84. According to a former colleague, Akaev had the following to say about aid negotiations with the West.
When I became a politician, I understood that it is an art to call various things by the same name. And I, and Nazarbaev [the president of Kazakhstan], and Karimov [the president of Uzbekistan], are of course building different things, but we call it democracy, because that pleases you in the West....
"Kogda politik Askar Akaev okazyvaetsia v patovoi situatsii, uchenyi Askar Akaev govorit: 'ia chto-nibud' pridumai....," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, October 1, 1994, p. 6.
85. E. Huskey, "Kyrgyzstan Leaves the Ruble Zone," *RFL/RL Research Report*, September 3, 1994, pp. 38-43.
86. It is instructive that the Government commission drafting the new tax code of Kyrgyzstan is headed by the 31 year-old representative of the IMF in Bishkek, David Robinson. "Devid Robinson: Kyrgyzstan? O'kei! MVF i vpred' budet podderzivat' vas," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, October 22, 1994, p. 3.
87. "Voizrashchenie," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, April 8, 1994, p. 2.
88. Accused publicly of inciting anti-semitic and anti-Chinese feelings, these papers had most likely run afoul of the authorities by investigating charges of corruption in the president's entourage. Earlier in the year, a scandal surrounding the letting of a gold mining contract had forced out the Prime Minister, Tursunbek Chyngyshev. "...na menia zh parusami makhnuli," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, November 12, 1994, p. 5.
89. In July 1994, 105 deputies signed an open letter calling for the "self-closure" (*samorospusk*) of parliament. "Narod dolzhen znat' pravdu!" *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, July 22, 1994, p. 1. At the next session of the parliament in September, a majority of the deputies boycotted the assembly, which led to the resignation of the Government and the formal closing of the parliament by the president. The president's decision was later upheld by a local court.
90. Eighty-five percent of those voting supported the proposed changes to the constitution on an 86 percent turnout. The only areas that supported the amendments less enthusiastically were the Bazar-Korgon district of Jalal-Abad oblast and the Bakai-Atin district of Talas oblast, by 51.69 percent and 72.13 percent, respectively. "Rezultaty itogov golosovaniia na referendume Kyrgyzskoi Respubliki 22 oktiabria 1994 goda - po pervomu voprosu," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, October 28, 1994, p. 6.

91. "Pis'mo Prezidenta," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, October 28, 1994, p. 2; "Sprosit' i vyslushat' narod - ne v etom li segodnia real'naia demokratiia v Kyrgyzstane?" *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, September 27, 1994, p. 1.
92. Again as in Russia, the president laid down the new electoral rules himself. Zakon Kyrgyzskoi Respubliki o vyborakh deputatov Zhogorku Kenesha Kyrgyzskoi Respubliki, *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, October 28, 1994, pp. 3-5.
93. One should note, of course, that a bicameral assembly would also reduce Sherimkulov's power in any future parliament. "U zakona net privilegii," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, October 5, 1994, p. 2. Earlier a reform-oriented secretary of the Central Committee of Kyrgyzstan, Sherimkulov had used the office of speaker to further the politics of consensus advanced by Akaev. Sherimkulov was in many respects the guarantor of stability during the first years of independent Kyrgyzstan. Personal interview with Medetkan Sherimkulov, Bishkek, June 9, 1993.
94. "'Stavki ochen' vysoki'," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, September 24, 1994, p. 4.
95. Kusein Isaev, Emil' Niiazov, and Karybek Dzhigitekov, "Esli ne k khramu doroga, to zachem ona?" *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, November 19, 1994, p. 8.
96. This analysis is based on a precinct-by-precinct list of electoral results distributed on 15 March 1995 by the Embassy of the Kyrgyz Republic in Washington, DC. My thanks to Asyl Imanalieva of the Kyrgyz Embassy for her generous assistance. Voter turnout was 78.87% for the first round of the election, held on 5 February 1995, and 61.59% for the second round, held on 19 February.
97. Formed in the summer of 1994 as a party of local governors, the *akiny*, the Social-Democratic Party is likely to have the largest fraction in the new parliament, with nine seats won so far. This party is not to be confused with the Kyrgyzstan Social Democratic Party, which had 3 seats after the second round. The initial totals for the remaining parties are as follows: Agrarian-1; Agrarian-Rural Labour-1; Asaba-1; Ata-Meken-2; Concord (Association of Ethnic Russians)-1; Democratic Party-1; Edinstvo-4; Erkin Kyrgyzstan-1; People's Party-3; Union of Germans-1.
98. Women will also be less well represented in the new parliament. They won only four of the first 89 seats.
99. It was at this point that Akaev's popularity rating was at its lowest. See Kusein Isaev, Emil' Niiazov, and Karybek Dzhigitekov, "Esli ne k khramu doroga, to zachem ona?" *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, November 19, 1994, p. 8. In a perceptive critique of Akaev's alliance with the *akimy*, Zhapar Zheksheev, one of the founders of the DDK, notes that the local executives will hardly be in his pocket (*karmannye*), as he believes. The liberal, national press is poorly distributed in the provinces and the *akimy* have their own allies in the White House in Bishkek. "Dlia demokratii u nas slishkom tverdaia zemlia," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, October 22, 1994, p. 5. The *akimy* also appear to have veto power over the appointment of local representatives of the central ministries. Personal interview with Tologon Rakhmanovich Rakhmanov, Head of Administration, Kalinin district. Kara-Balta, Kyrgyzstan, June 11, 1993.
100. Several regional *akimy* have been personally close to Akaev, perhaps most notably Abdygany Erkebaev, the head of the Osh oblast. For a revealing portrait of this politician, see "Abdygany Erkebaev: Nastupit vremia, kogda intellektualy ustupiat mesto professionaliam," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, September 24, 1994, p. 3.
101. "Vybory i referendum sostoialis'!" *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, October 25, 1994, p. 1. In the Naryn oblast, 105 of the 692 electoral districts were contested. In Talas oblast, half of the 464 seats were contested. *Ibid.* Precise figures were not available for the remaining regions.
102. Indeed, many of the *akimy* had served as party secretaries before 1991. One of the more progressive of these is Gennadii Valerivich Davidenko, the former *akim* of the Panfilov district. Davidenko noted that in comparison with the party secretaries, the *akimy* enjoy more independence and are less bound by directives from above. Personal interview, Kaindy, Kyrgyzstan, June 11, 1993.
- The *akimy* recently sponsored the formation of a new party, the Social Democrats, which appears set to compete against the still powerful Communist Party for the rural and traditional vote in Kyrgyzstan. One plank of the party's platform is direct election of *akimy*. "Rezoliutsiia II s'ezda SKPK," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, October 4, 1994, p. 3.