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## THE POLITICS OF LANGUAGE IN KYRGYZSTAN<sup>a</sup>

Eugene Huskey

*Official policy toward language is one of the most divisive issues in new states. Kyrgyzstan is no exception to this rule. Paradoxically, the impetus for a change in the policy of linguistic Russification originated in Moscow in 1988. Following directives from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the conservative leadership of the Communist Party of Kyrgyzstan adopted a policy designed to equalize Russian and Kyrgyz and to encourage bilingualism. But the rising nationalist movements throughout the Soviet Union created pressures for a further indigenization of language policy over the ensuing months. In September 1989, the legislature of Kyrgyzstan adopted a Law on the State Language that elevated Kyrgyz to the status of state language while relegating Russian to a language of "interethnic communication."*

*The politics of making and implementing the 1989 language law are the subject of this paper. The major focus is on the struggle among ethnic and linguistic groups to facilitate or retard the ambitious language change envisioned by the law. At stake for the participants were not just symbolic changes, such as the renaming of streets and cities, but the reshaping of educational, economic, and political opportunities in the country. Few issues divide populations so neatly into winners and losers. The language law, for example, has served as a catalyst for the massive exodus of the Slavic population from Kyrgyzstan.*

*After tracing the course of language reform in the first two years of the post-Soviet era, the paper concludes with an analysis of the correlation of political forces in language policy. These forces tend to divide into three main groups: internationalists (largely Slavic and other non-Kyrgyz), the nationalists (largely Kyrgyz with limited knowledge of Russian or from a less Russified region) and the pivotal ruling group of moderate reformers, who are drawn primarily from the Russified Kyrgyz population. The challenge for this last group is to employ tactics of rule that keep the Russians in the country without angering ethnic Kyrgyz who believe that political independence should improve their life chances.*

### Introduction

Nineteen eighty-nine appeared to be an annus mirabilis in Soviet language policy. During that year, 9 of 15 Soviet republics adopted laws that championed the language of the titular nationality.<sup>1</sup> Among these was Kyrgyzstan, a small Central Asian republic where Russian had increasingly marginalized the language of the Kyrgyz.

It is tempting to regard the introduction of the language laws of 1989 as a watershed between the diktat of linguistic russification and an enlightened policy of linguistic revival. But the politics of language reform in Kyrgyzstan, as elsewhere, defies such simple categorization.

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<sup>a</sup>(National Council Note) This paper was completed early in 1994. Dated in that sense, its value lies in description and analysis of language politics in Kyrgyzstan since the 19th century, which have not changed significantly since the paper was written, and are likely to be a constant, powerful factor for years to come.

To juxtapose pre- and post-1989 approaches to language ignores the tensions between competing policies of multilingualism and Russian hegemony in Soviet language development.<sup>2</sup> It also obscures the immense difficulties faced by the successor states in defining and implementing national language policies of their own. Two years into the post-Communist era, the enormity of the challenge posed by language reform is becoming clear, as is the weight of the historical and demographic legacy of the Soviet Union on language development. We begin with that legacy in Kyrgyzstan.

### **The Historical and Demographic Legacy**

Kyrgyz was one of the least robust titular languages in the USSR. Among the reasons for its extensive displacement, and infiltration, by Russian was the number and distribution of Kyrgyz speakers in the republic. In the 20th century, the ethnic Kyrgyz have comprised at best a bare majority of the country's population, and at mid-century they accounted for only 40 percent. Competing with the Kyrgyz for linguistic space have been Russians, Uzbeks, Uighurs, Germans and other European and Asian peoples. (See Table 1, page 18) In sheer numbers, then, Kyrgyzstan lacked a dominant titular language group such as one finds in Armenia and Georgia. Moreover, Kyrgyz speakers have been concentrated in the mountains and the rural areas of the valleys, away from the cities and commercial centers that traditionally shape language use.

Further impeding the spread of Kyrgyz was its late emergence as a written language. Again unlike Armenian and Georgian, with their rich literary histories, Kyrgyz acquired an alphabet only at the very end of the 19th century.<sup>3</sup> In addition, the conditions of its early development as a written language were far from fortuitous. In the space of 14 years, Kyrgyz had its alphabet changed three times - from Arabic to Latin to Cyrillic. It was also forced to compete with a new colonial language, Russian, which offered its speakers obvious political, economic, and cultural advantages. It is little wonder that to many indigenous Central Asians, as well as to immigrant Slavs, Russian appeared the language of progress and the future.

The relative ease with which Russian overtook Kyrgyz cannot, however, be attributed solely to demographic and linguistic factors, or to the heavy hand of Moscow. The sycophantism of the Kyrgyzstani<sup>4</sup> leadership also played a decisive role, especially in the third quarter of this century. Whereas party officials in some republics defended the titular language against extreme forms of linguistic russification, recent Communist leaders in Kyrgyzstan at times embraced them. The rulers of this remote republic, so dependent on the center for its economic development, seemed intent on proving their political loyalty through a fierce devotion to Russian cultural hegemony.<sup>5</sup>

It was not always so. In the 1920s, Moscow encouraged what might be termed the indigenization of cadres and language policy in Central Asian territories. In 1924, when less than five percent of the local population was literate, a new law required the translation of all official documents [*deloproizvodstvo*] into Kyrgyz and other major Central Asian languages. By nurturing the fledgling written languages of the region, the Bolsheviks hoped to enhance the legitimacy of the new regime, especially among local elites, and to deepen the cultural divisions between the Turkic peoples of Central Asia. Language emerged, then, as an important instrument in a strategy of divide and rule.

The center's commitment to the indigenization of language policy faded, however, in the 1930s. A new approach to language was evident in Kyrgyzstan, then the Kyrgyz autonomous oblast, by June 1934, when the local Communist Party ordered that the further development of Kyrgyz proceed "by the maximum use of sovietisms and international, multinational terminology through the Russian language...." The russification of Kyrgyz continued in 1940 with the replacement of the Latin alphabet with Cyrillic script, a move designed in part to facilitate the teaching of Russian in the region. According to the Kyrgyz writer Chingiz Aitmatov, no Kyrgyz-language schools were opened in Bishkek after the 1930s.<sup>6</sup>

While the full history of Kyrgyz language development has yet to be written, it is clear that the post-Stalin era witnessed an even sharper decline in the position of Kyrgyz.<sup>7</sup> Three factors contributed to this decline. First, for all the brutality of the Stalin years, there was a sober recognition of the deep, almost primordial, roots of nationalism. Not so under Khrushchev, whose "naive belief in a future 'fusion' of nationalities"<sup>8</sup> encouraged the development of Russian at the direct expense of local languages. In 1954, in a reversal of existing policy, Russians in the republic were no longer required to study Kyrgyz in school, a policy which ensured that Russian would quickly monopolize elite communication.

Accompanying the hardening of language policy in the postwar era was a mass migration of workers from Russia and the Ukraine into non-Slavic regions, most notably Central Asia and the Baltic. Hired primarily by Moscow-based enterprises, these workers became the labor aristocracy in Kyrgyzstan's Chu Valley and its newly industrializing cities.<sup>9</sup> As Table 2 (page 19) indicates, the share of Slavs in the republic rose from 30 in 1939 to 37 percent in 1959, this at a time when the birth rate of indigenous Central Asia far outpaced that of the Slavs.<sup>10</sup> This large, compact, and monolingual population of Slavs was an additional encouragement for ambitious Kyrgyz in the Chu Valley to neglect their native tongue in favor of Russian and for all but the most isolated shepherds to acquire a basic understanding of Russian.

Where in all this were the defenders of national language and culture, that class of intellectuals which students of language find in all societies, whether in mosques, universities,

or country houses? The simple answer is that most of them were killed. The terror of the 1930s eliminated the small but impressive first generation of Kyrgyz intellectuals who were part of a national revival as well as a political revolution in the interwar period.<sup>11</sup> Their places were taken by a new generation of Kyrgyz, far less learned and self-confident, who had little sense of the place of the Kyrgyz in the larger world. Theirs was the mentality of the village, the clan, the region - not yet the nation. It was from this replacement generation that the Communist Party recruited Turdakun Usubaliev, the party leader from 1961 to 1986, and Absamat Masaliev, his successor.

In a telling passage from his memoirs, Masaliev describes his first encounter with the world beyond his collective farm in the southern region of Osh. Then in his early teens, he seized the opportunity to enter a mining technical school where he could learn Russian.

To learn to speak, write, and read Russian was at that time a dream for many of us rural youth. A knowledge of Russian gave us a real chance to continue further study in institutes...or to work as a mining foreman....<sup>12</sup>

This sense of indebtedness to Russia also filled the writings and speeches of Usubaliev.

When we say the Russian language is the second native language of the Kyrgyz, we refer above all to its sociopolitical function, while at the same time we express our boundless gratitude and love to the language of the great Lenin, which played an invaluable role in creating and developing the socialist culture of the Kyrgyz people.<sup>13</sup>

For Soviet Central Asian elites such as Usubaliev and Masaliev, the Russian language and the Communist Party were the twin sources of their power and legitimacy.

By the Gorbachev era, decades of glorification of Russian in Kyrgyzstan had taken their toll on the vitality of the Kyrgyz language. Not only had Russian displaced Kyrgyz as the language of interethnic communication in the republic, it had also assumed the role of a first language among ethnic Kyrgyz living in areas of substantial Russian settlement.<sup>14</sup> Second-generation urban Kyrgyz, in particular, had effectively lost facility in their parents' tongue.<sup>15</sup>

By the end of the 1980s, the language behavior of the Kyrgyz elite was characterized at best by "diglossia...the asymmetric bilingual condition where matters of importance are the reserve of a 'high language', while matters of affection or private affairs are discussed in a 'low language'."<sup>16</sup> Only three of Frunze's 69 schools used Kyrgyz as the primary language of instruction. Once in higher educational institutions, all but 17 percent of the ethnic Kyrgyz studied in Russian.<sup>17</sup> And in the dissemination of culture more broadly, Russian dominated. The national library had only four percent of its books in Kyrgyz, the national opera company had only four of its 50 works in Kyrgyz, and the state film agency had only nine percent of its film inventory dubbed or subtitled in Kyrgyz.<sup>18</sup> To be sure, a majority of the country's

provincial schools continued to employ Kyrgyz as the first language. But the quality of Kyrgyz instruction in the upper grades was inferior because teachers received their training in virtually all subjects in Russian. The linguistic trajectory of successful Kyrgyz was therefore away from their ancestral tongue and toward Russian.

The running down of Kyrgyz might have continued unabated but for the confluence of several social and political changes in the second half of the 1980s. Higher birth rates and underemployment in the countryside brought large numbers of ethnic Kyrgyz migrants into the cities and towns. These settlers, steeped in Kyrgyz language and culture, found the russified life of the urban areas alien and inhospitable. Often without work, housing, or a firm command of Russian, they formed a disaffected class, resentful of the local Russians and - to a lesser extent - the russified Kyrgyz.

Meanwhile, in the cities a new Kyrgyz intelligentsia had arisen that could give voice to this resentment. Loyal Communist fathers, the *vydvizhentsy* of earlier decades, had raised sons and daughters who, as the spiritual successors to the interwar generation of intellectuals, began to question the dominance of Russian language and culture in the republic. In the city of Przheval'sk (now Karakol), for example, Kyrgyz students at the pedagogical institute founded an informal organization that sought to return original names to villages, revive old rituals (*obriady*), and use study circles to teach Kyrgyz students the language of their ancestors.<sup>19</sup> As the agents of a national revival, Kyrgyz intellectuals were challenging the Russian cultural currency that guaranteed their own status and livelihood.

Alongside these social transformations came the political reforms of Gorbachev, which at first discreetly, then more openly encouraged the thinking classes to reassess the role of Russian language and culture in the national republics. In Kyrgyzstan, the most conservative republic in the early Gorbachev years, the political leadership sought initially to prevent this reassessment, holding firm to the myth of complete ethnic harmony. But the December 1986 nationalist riots among the neighboring Kazakhs, the cultural kin of the Kyrgyz, exploded this myth and brought the ethnic question to the center of political debate in Kyrgyzstan. While the Communist Party in Kyrgyzstan launched a public campaign against purported nationalists in the republics, it sanctioned a private debate that led to a major revision, and in some respects a reversal, of existing language policy.<sup>20</sup>

An October 1988 decree of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kyrgyzstan labelled the new language policy "National [Kyrgyz] and Russian bilingualism."<sup>21</sup> The policy of bilingualism suggested in fact three separate initiatives, which continued to inform official language policy well into the independence period.<sup>22</sup> First, the quality of Russian language instruction was to be enhanced in Kyrgyz schools, especially those in

outlying regions. Soviet military commanders had long complained that many Kyrgyz recruits from rural areas had little or no knowledge of Russian.<sup>23</sup> Second, the languages of the national minorities, some of which were on the verge of extinction in the republic, were to be preserved through an expansion of language instruction and cultural opportunities. A majority of Dungan adults, for example, were not able to communicate in their own language; to reverse this trend, Kyrgyz State University opened a Department of Dungan in 1988.<sup>24</sup> Finally, bilingualism envisioned the establishment of parity in the use and status of Kyrgyz and Russian. It was this last plank of language reform that stirred excitement and controversy among all ethnic groups in Kyrgyzstan and served as a springboard for the indigenization of language policy at the end of the Communist era and beyond.

### **The 1989 Language Law**

As part of a union-wide campaign to reform legislation on language, a committee of the Kyrgyzstan parliament began to draft a new language law in May 1989. The draft that emerged from the legislative committee on 18 August 1989 in Kyrgyzstan proposed a fundamental shift in policy, away from bilingualism and toward the pre-eminence of Kyrgyz in public discourse. The very title of the bill, "The Law on State Language," suggested a privileged position for the Kyrgyz language, as did several of its specific provisions, most notably - and controversially - Article 8, which required Russian managers and professionals to learn enough Kyrgyz to communicate with their employees and clients in the state language.

The draft provoked a passionate response among all segments of the population. During the month allocated by the Supreme Soviet Presidium for public discussion of the bill, thousands of citizens held meetings to protest or support the legislation. 3000 sent individual letters to the Presidium, and 450,000 signed petitions concerning the draft.<sup>25</sup> The fiercest resistance to changes in language policy came from the large Russian-dominated factories, whose directors formed a bulwark of political orthodoxy throughout the Soviet Union. Through carefully orchestrated mass meetings and collective petitions, factory managers mobilized an already anxious Slavic workforce against the reforms. At a 10 am rally in one factory in mid-September, 1623 workers signed a petition critical of the draft.<sup>26</sup> Other Russian officials challenging the draft included the republican procurator, G.I. Ivantsov. Were procurators really expected, he asked, to punish a Russian surgeon for not speaking Kyrgyz, especially in the capital, where only 20 percent of the residents are Kyrgyz?<sup>27</sup> According to a Kyrgyz peasant on the drafting commission, "many respected members from other nationalities did everything possible to prevent adoption of the language law."<sup>28</sup>

To the arguments of the Slavs that the law would be divisive, costly, and antithetical to economic and scientific progress, the Kyrgyz proponents of language reform countered that it was a necessary corrective to decades of neglect of Kyrgyz linguistic and cultural development. A collective farm mechanic speaking in parliament admitted that in the past he had not been able to participate fully in plenums and other political meetings because of his limited knowledge of Russian. "This session is different," he noted. "For the first time I can speak in my native tongue."<sup>29</sup> For some Kyrgyz the draft law did not go far enough in indigenizing language policy. Such sentiments were found even in the party apparatus itself. The first secretary of a party committee in a heavily Kyrgyz district complained that article 21 allowed students to choose their language of instruction in universities. He called for the mandatory study of Kyrgyz language and history as well as the restoration of pre-revolutionary place names.<sup>30</sup>

This vigorous - and at times rancorous - language debate represented Kyrgyzstan's first experiment with democratizing politics. But while ideas were contested, the sovereignty of the single party in decisionmaking remained sacrosanct. It was not yet democratic politics. At a plenum three days before the parliamentary vote on the law, the Central Committee of the Kyrgyzstan Communist Party ruled that "it would be inappropriate to postpone adoption of this law as some have suggested....It is expedient to make the state language the language of the titular nationality."<sup>31</sup> Language reform was therefore part of a revolution from above, a revolution that had its origins as much in Moscow as Bishkek. To insure the loyalty of Slavic critics of language indigenization in Kyrgyzstan, the official rapporteur at the parliamentary session, the party ideology secretary Sherimkulov, reminded the deputies that the draft law on language had been praised by none other than Egor Ligachev, the second secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. With most of its critics bending to party discipline, the Law on State Language was adopted "singlemindedly" [*edinodushno*] by the parliament of Kyrgyzstan on 23 September 1989.

According to the new law, unchanged in its essentials from the August draft, Kyrgyz became the state language and Russian the language of interethnic communication.<sup>32</sup> The ambiguity of these labels seemed designed to reassure the Kyrgyz and Slavic communities, respectively, of the symbolic and functional importance of their language. In many areas of language use, the law in fact sanctioned bilingualism, or perhaps more accurately, linguistic choice. Citizens had the right to address--and be addressed by--state institutions and enterprises in Kyrgyz or another language of the republic (Articles 7 and 14). Enterprises and other organizations could use either Kyrgyz or Russian for their internal operations (Articles 17-19). Education, science, and culture could be pursued in Kyrgyz or Russian (Articles 21, 23-25).

And in the legal sphere, the state registry offices were to employ Kyrgyz and Russian. *arbitrazh* courts Kyrgyz or Russian, and the regular courts Kyrgyz or the language of the majority of the local population (Articles 26-28). In most instances where Kyrgyz was either the required language, such as at congresses and other socio-political meetings (Article 9), or the language of choice, such as in court hearings in Kyrgyz districts, provisions were to be made for translations into Russian.

Designating Kyrgyz the state language was more, however, than a symbolic victory for Kyrgyz indigenizers. Article 8 required all officials who had dealings with the public "to employ the state language to the extent necessary to carry out their professional obligations." This provision affected officials working in "organs of state power and administration, social and cooperative organizations, legal institutions, education, health care, culture, communications, transport, trade, service [*bytovoe obsluzhivanie*], and housing [*kommunal'noe khoziaitvo*]." <sup>33</sup> Of greater importance, the coexistence of Kyrgyz and Russian in several areas of language use was temporary. The enabling act that accompanied the law on state language established an almost decade-long grace period for the use of Russian in official documentation. From 1 January 1997, all documentation in state institutions, economic enterprises and social organizations was to be in the state language. Although the legislature was unwilling to abandon Cyrillic immediately as the written script for Kyrgyz, it did authorize "the creation of conditions for the study of a Kyrgyz alphabet based on the Arabic and Latin scripts" in all Kyrgyz-language schools (Article 22).

Even before its implementation, the conflict surrounding the drafting, discussion, and adoption of the law on state language had altered the political landscape of Kyrgyzstan. In the words of one commentator, "The discussion of the bill on state language was the first stage in the supercharging (*nagnetanie*) of tension on the national question." <sup>34</sup> Russian cultural hegemony was now in retreat and Kyrgyz nationalism was on the march. The realignment of cultural power envisioned by the language law portended a corresponding shift in economic and political power, much to the chagrin of Kyrgyzstan's Slavic population. Where the debate on the language law had moved Slavs from loyalty to voice, to use Hirschman's terms, the law's implementation pushed many of them from voice to exit. <sup>35</sup>

### **Implementing the Language Law**

Passing a law on language did not of course guarantee its implementation. Soviet legislative history was strewn with enactments ignored or distorted by the ministries and executive agencies whose substatutory acts actually governed bureaucratic behavior. Laws

remained mere declarations--and decorations--until they were "concretized" by the rulemaking of the executive.<sup>36</sup>

There was every reason to believe in the fall of 1989 that the Kyrgyzstan political leadership would implement the law on language slowly and selectively, if at all. First Secretary Masaliev and his supporters had acceded to the changes in language policy only reluctantly, pressured from above by Muscovite reformers, acting in concert with prominent Kyrgyz allies, such as Chingiz Aitmatov, and from below by fledgling informal groups drawn from the nationalist-minded wing of the Kyrgyz intelligentsia. With the move from politics to administration, the matter was now in Masaliev's court. A bureaucracy subordinate to Masaliev could not have been expected to implement faithfully provisions of the language law that rewarded the first secretary's enemies, the Muscovites and informals, and punished his friends, many of whom favored a traditional policy of proletarian internationalism.

The dramatic events of the next two years ensured, however, that the language law did not remain buried in the bureaucracy. Parliamentary elections in the republic in February 1990, though far from democratic, rekindled the public debate on indigenization. They also exposed and deepened the fissures within the political leadership, as did the ethnic violence in June 1990 between Kyrgyz and Uzbek in the Osh oblast, which left more than 230 persons dead. By the fall of 1990, when Kyrgyzstan--following Moscow's lead--began the shift to a presidential form of rule, Masaliev was unable to marshal sufficient support to claim the presidency. It fell instead to a Gorbachev protege, the scientist Askar Akaev, who was committed to a measured implementation of the new language policy.

The collapse of the USSR at the end of 1991 gave an additional fillip to language indigenization. No longer part of a Russian-dominated state or controlled by a conservative Communist oligarchy, Kyrgyzstan began to erect the symbols of independence and statehood, one of which was a national language. The revival of the Kyrgyz language assumed, therefore, a greater legitimacy and, for many, a greater urgency in the wake of the Soviet Union's demise. On the basis of enabling acts adopted by executive and legislative institutions, the Cabinet of Ministers issued a detailed directive entitled "Measures for Guaranteeing the Functioning of the State Language on the Territory of Kyrgyzstan."<sup>37</sup>

Yet the times were not unreservedly friendly to language reform. Besides the institutions and groups who remained hostile to an indigenization of language policy, there were developments that raised the political and economic costs of language change. The first were the events in Osh in the summer of 1990. Sparked by land claims, the violence between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks spread so quickly and hideously in the Ferghana Valley that it sent a sobering message to politicians: acceding to the demands of a resurgent Kyrgyz nationalism

threatened the two primary attributes of a state, order and territorial integrity.<sup>38</sup> The Osh events also reminded the political leadership that the more militant Uzbeks had their own language demands, including the recognition of Uzbek as a state language.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, Germans and Russians in the republic responded to the Osh violence, to affirmative action policies generally, and to deteriorating economic conditions by abandoning, or threatening to abandon, the country. From 1989 through 1992, approximately one-half of the Germans and ten percent of the Russians had left Kyrgyzstan.<sup>40</sup> While this exodus pleased the most fervent Kyrgyz nationalists, it alarmed the Akaev leadership and moderate Kyrgyz, who viewed the European populations as a valuable resource in political and economic modernization. This resistance of the country's minorities to the politics of indigenization encouraged caution in the implementation of the language law.

As a practical rather than a symbolic matter, the collapse of the USSR also complicated the implementation of the law by overwhelming the bureaucracy with other tasks, by eroding the levers of central control over the provinces, and by devastating the country's economy. The economic freefall that accompanied the first years of independence in Kyrgyzstan left only the scarcest funds available for implementing the language law. The massive expenditures required to retrain teachers, publish new textbooks, and enhance the presence of Kyrgyz in the media and culture could not be included in a budget whose deficit exceeded 40% by 1992.<sup>41</sup>

It was against this backdrop of a new state in crisis that the implementation of the language law began in independent Kyrgyzstan. For President Akaev, who sought to rule the country through a grand coalition of ethnic and regional forces, the task was herculean: to implement language reform in a way that satisfied the Kyrgyz desires for national revival while reassuring other nationalities that their dignity, security, and educational, cultural, and career opportunities would be maintained. On the substantive provisions of the language law, viewed by many Kyrgyz as a cultural bill of rights, there seemed to be little room for political maneuver. The central issue for Akaev and for the politics of implementation was therefore timing. Would the political leadership and bureaucracy of Kyrgyzstan adhere to the timetable for implementation set in the enabling legislation? Any delay would raise the hopes of the internationalists and the ire of the indigenizers.

As early as the summer of 1991, the Supreme Soviet recognized that serious delays were occurring in the implementation of the language law,<sup>42</sup> and by early 1992 it was clear that the pace of implementation had fallen well behind schedule.<sup>43</sup> That the original timetable would not be met was confirmed in April of that year by the issuance of a decree that "prolonged" the implementation of the language law through the year 2000. When asked whether the delay in implementation was due to the country's economic crisis, President Akaev responded that

the cause was in fact political. "We must be concerned," he said, "about the reaction of non-Kyrgyz to the new language policy."<sup>44</sup> For the maintenance of his grand coalition as well as close ties to the Russian Federation, on which Kyrgyzstan depended for economic assistance, limited concessions seemed in order to his internationalist flank.

Though delayed, the implementation of the language law had already begun to alter language use by the issuance of the April 1993 decree. The most immediate and visible changes were in the country's linguistic face. Kirgizia became Kyrgyzstan, the cities of Przheval'sk and Rybach'e became Karakol and Issyk-Kul', and untold numbers of city parks and streets received old--often pre-revolutionary--names. Shops were not immune from this process. Thus, in Osh, the department store Liudmilla was renamed Aisula.<sup>45</sup> According to a 1992 directive, all establishments were to carry a maximum of two names, with at least one in Kyrgyz.<sup>46</sup>

In this and other areas of language reform, the pace of change varied according to the percentage of Kyrgyz living in the locality. In the Naryn oblast, for example, where 97% of the population was Kyrgyz, many provisions of the language law had been in force for decades. In the cities of the Chu Valley, however, Russian had to be displaced. In Bishkek, the local soviet's Department for the Realization of the Law on State Language was charged, inter alia, with renaming the city's streets. This department, found in all local soviets, had renamed only ten percent of the city's streets by June 1993. According to an official in the department in Bishkek, a determination of whether or how quickly to change the names of the remaining streets was made on the basis of the political and cultural acceptability of the existing designations. Some would not be changed at all (among this group were streets named after individuals, with exceptions made for persons convicted of a crime); mildly offensive names would be changed only gradually; others would be changed immediately. Among this last group were streets with such Russian names as Happy Street (*Vseselaia*), Swamp Street (*Bolotnaia*), and Great Russian Street (*Velikorusskaia*).<sup>47</sup>

The staggered pace of language reform was perhaps most evident in the implementation of the law's provisions on official documentation (*deloproizvodstvo*). A government decree of January 1993 set out a detailed timetable for the transfer to Kyrgyz in official communications within and between government institutions and state-owned economic enterprises.<sup>48</sup> The deadline for the transfer ranged from 15 April 1992 [sic] in rural Kyrgyz districts and in institutions where Kyrgyz accounted for 70-80 percent of the population to 1 January 1997 in cities such as Osh, Talas, Jalal-Abad, and Issyk-Kul'.<sup>49</sup> A plan for the transition to Kyrgyz in Bishkek revealed that most of the institutions and enterprises were to have switched to Kyrgyz

only in 1996 and 1997. Of the more than 300 affected organizations in the capital, three were to have transferred by 1992, 14 by 1993, 21 by 1994, 46 by 1995, 284 by 1996, and the remainder by the following year.<sup>50</sup> These deadlines were of course suspended by the April 1993 decision to prolong implementation through the year 2000. As of the summer of 1993, no new deadlines had been established. Even the Department for the Realization of the Law on State Language did not adhere to the letter of the law in its own internal operations. While the office was staffed by ethnic Kyrgyz fluent in the titular language, it had only acquired something as basic as a bilingual stamp for its paperwork in the summer of 1993. According to the law's original timetable, this provision was to have been implemented by 1990.<sup>51</sup>

By 1993, few organizational meetings on the national level or in areas of substantial non-Kyrgyz settlement had introduced Kyrgyz as the language of the proceedings, in spite of the law's insistence on a 1990-1995 period for implementation. While parliamentary sessions were conducted in both Russian and Kyrgyz, Kyrgyz-speaking deputies with any facility in Russian tended to use the latter for serious debates, behavior that prompted catcalls from the more nationalist-minded Kyrgyz in the assembly.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, sessions of the President's own cabinet continued to be conducted in Russian, a concession to Kyrgyz as well as Russian members of the cabinet. In the Academy of Sciences of Kyrgyzstan, meetings were also held in Russian, though at a session in early 1993 there was a call by some Kyrgyz scientists to employ the state language in subsequent meetings.<sup>53</sup> Kyrgyz was rarely used in meetings of local organizations in non-Kyrgyz districts. In Bishkek, for example, only some veterans' and women's groups as well as the new settlers' group, Ashar, conducted their meetings in Kyrgyz.<sup>54</sup>

Given the crises of state formation, the political opposition to language reforms, and the normal human resistance to change in linguistic habits, the slow pace of implementation was hardly surprising. But while the new language regulations were neither sufficiently pervasive nor long-lived to bring dramatic changes in language behavior, they had begun to change attitudes, especially among the Russified Kyrgyz. As David Laitin has noted, "[i]t is a safer investment, most of the time, to educate children in the language of opportunity rather than in the language of folklore...."<sup>55</sup> By the second year of Kyrgyz statehood, Kyrgyz parents began to view their ancestral language as a language of opportunity as well as a language of folklore. Evidence of this view may be found in the opening of new Kyrgyz-language day care centers--at the insistence of parents--and of a greater emphasis on spoken Kyrgyz in the home.<sup>56</sup>

Whereas the Kyrgyz had begun to cross this important psychological threshold, Slavs and other non-Kyrgyz in the country remained skeptical of the idea of Kyrgyz as a language of opportunity for their children. In part, the attitude of the Russians reflected Great Nation

contempt for the language and culture of a small people, in part an uncertainty about whether their futures would be made in Europe or Asia. But among Russians and other non-Kyrgyz there was also a recognition that knowledge of the titular language alone could not guarantee success of their children's careers. In a society where traditional regional and class ties were assuming ever greater significance in the allocation of posts and collective goods, persons outside of Kyrgyz "family circles" were destined to enjoy limited career opportunities.

Language socialization, of course, is dependent on the structure of education established by the state as well as on the individual educational choices made by parents for their children. The available evidence suggests that modest progress had been made in the indigenization of the educational system by the beginning of the 1993-1994 academic year. Table 3, (page 20) illustrates that the number of Kyrgyz-language schools increased by approximately ten percent from 1989 to 1992 while the number of Russian schools decreased over that period by about 30%. Most of this decline is explained, however, by the transformation of previously all-Russian schools into mixed schools, with both Russian and Kyrgyz tracks.<sup>57</sup> There appears to have been little improvement in the number and quality of Kyrgyz-language teachers and materials, a problem that resists a rapid solution, especially in times of economic austerity.<sup>58</sup>

In higher educational institutions, it was possible for the first time in the early 1990s to take entrance exams in Kyrgyz, a policy that clearly benefitted rural Kyrgyz youth.<sup>59</sup> Because university entrance, and not a civil service examination, served as the primary formal qualification for work in the upper reaches of the state bureaucracy, Kyrgyz youth were presented with a less obstructed path to a career in government, which seems destined to be the country's primary employer for some time. Furthermore, previously all-Russian faculties began in the 1992/1993 academic year to open Kyrgyz-language sections (*otdeleniia*) when a critical mass of Kyrgyz-speaking students, usually about 15, could be assembled. But again, because the best-trained faculty of whatever nationality were Russian-speakers, the quality of instruction in these new sections was suspect. In the natural sciences, it was unclear that such sections would be created at all.<sup>60</sup> Moreover, budgetary restrictions in 1993 promised to reduce the number of available seats in higher education by a quarter, a policy that will affect most directly Kyrgyz-speaking applicants from the provinces.<sup>61</sup>

There remained in Kyrgyzstan several prominent institutions of higher education where Russian was the only language of instruction. In this group was the Medical School and the Bishkek International School of Management and Business. Founded in 1992 through the patronage of President Akaev, the School of Management and Business was designed to train a new generation of business and political leaders in Kyrgyzstan. To further allay the fears of the Russian-speaking population, the political leadership of Kyrgyzstan authorized the opening in

September 1993 of a new Slavonic University, a Russian-language institution that sought to attract students of European and Asian background from Central Asia and beyond.<sup>62</sup> Kyrgyz nationalist organizations, including Asaba, vigorously protested the establishment of the new Russian-language university, partially funded by the Russian Government, calling it a continuation of 70 years of Russian "bloodsucking".<sup>63</sup> Akaev was not deterred, however. At the opening ceremonies on 9 September 1993, the President stood side by side with the Russian Foreign Minister, Andrei Kozyrev, whose remarks for the occasion likened the local attacks on the Russian language to the persecution of Slavonic languages in Europe in the Middle Ages.<sup>64</sup>

A few well-publicized attempts to teach Kyrgyz to adults had been made by 1993. They included a regular column "Let's Learn Kyrgyz" in the country's leading Russian-language newspaper and several adult-education centers, including those operated by the Kyrgyz-Til Society, with branches throughout the country, and, in Bishkek, by the State Cultural-Aesthetic Learning Center "Ene-til ordosu" and the Center for the Study of the Kyrgyz Language.<sup>65</sup> Funded in April 1992 by a generous grant from parliament and headed by the Kyrgyz deputy and writer, Mar Baidzhiev, the Center for the Study of the Kyrgyz Language appeared to have more success in attracting urban Kyrgyz than Russian students. Among the Center's first 200 graduates were prominent Kyrgyz politicians and bureaucrats who hoped to acquire fluency in their ancestral language.<sup>66</sup>

The Kyrgyz-language share of the country's press grew significantly in the first years of independence. Although the size of both Russian and Kyrgyz-language newspaper editions fell precipitously in the early 1990s, owing to the economic crisis and the reduction or elimination of Government and Communist Party subsidies, the number of Kyrgyz-language publications rose faster than that of their Russian-language counterparts.<sup>67</sup> Furthermore, most Moscow-based publications in Russian no longer reached Kyrgyzstan in significant quantities. Those available by subscription or in retail outlets were priced beyond the reach of ordinary citizens, whose income had fallen far behind that of workers in Russia.

The proportion of Kyrgyz-language television broadcasts did not increase noticeably in the first years of independence. If Kyrgyz-language programming accounted for about four hours a day in 1989, that figure had risen only slightly by 1993. The Kyrgyz network, which broadcast during evening hours only, competed for viewers with two Russian-language networks from Moscow, which had a full day's programming, and a new fourth channel, which aired several hours of Turkish and Uzbek television each evening.<sup>68</sup> One suspects little change in the viewing habits of Kyrgyzstan's citizens. The poor technical quality and culturally didactic programming of Kyrgyz-language television makes competition with the more

contemporary and sophisticated Russian-language channels difficult. The large doses of national music and dance offered up by the Kyrgyz-language channel will almost certainly lose audience share to "Simply Maria" and international football matches. The failure of Kyrgyz-language television to contribute to language indigenization is perhaps most evident in children's programming. In contrast to hours of programming for youngsters on Russian channels, Kyrgyz-language broadcasting has only one full-length weekly children's show.<sup>69</sup> In all spheres of culture, high and low, Russian continues to enjoy an enormous residual advantage.

### **Elite Politics and Language Policy in Kyrgyzstan**

The future course of language politics and language policy in Kyrgyzstan depends on a host of contextual uncertainties. Will the retraction of Russia's political and economic influence in Central Asia continue unabated? Will Kyrgyzstan's neighbors, especially Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, press irrendentist claims? How quickly will Kyrgyzstan develop ties with the Turkic-speaking, English-speaking, and Chinese-speaking worlds?<sup>70</sup> How much further will Kyrgyzstan's economy contract? What reactions will be provoked by other ethnically sensitive policies, such as those on land, regional development, and cadre selection?

Shifting historical circumstances will shape--and be shaped by--the strategies of Kyrgyzstan's political elites. Indeed, how these elites perceive and pursue their own interests in language policy is perhaps the central question for students of language politics. Cultural policy has tended to divide Kyrgyzstan's elites into three competing groups, and language policy is no exception. First are the internationalists, whose core consists of the leaders of the European communities and the orthodox wing (largely ethnically Kyrgyz) of the Communist Party. The strategy of the internationalists has been to minimize language indigenization, first by attempts to block or dilute the language law and then by proposals to elevate Russian to a state language in the 1990 Declaration of Sovereignty.<sup>71</sup> When the latter effort failed, they sought finally to delay the language law's implementation.<sup>72</sup> The internationalists have championed what might be termed the politics of alarmism, warning of the dire consequences--including ethnic violence and a massive exodus of Europeans--that will result from the abandonment of Russian as the country's *lingua franca*.

The second group, the indigenizers, includes the leaders of Kyrgyz nationalist parties and movements, such as Asaba, some Kyrgyz intellectuals and elders (*aksakaly*), and the occasional local official from predominantly Kyrgyz areas, especially in the South. At their most extreme, the indigenizers blame the Russians for all of the country's economic and political ills and seek to eliminate Russian cultural influence. In 1990, a Kyrgyz writer, trying to explain the long lines for basic goods, attributed them to the "hoarding genes" of the Russians. Environmental

problems, too, she argued, derived from Russian cultural characteristics.

Among Russians it's popular to go on outings "for picnics", "for nature", when they for some reason destroy everything growing and blooming and leave behind trash, only to seek out the next time another unspoiled corner.<sup>73</sup>

The goal of the indigenizers is the early and faithful implementation of the language law, with minimal concessions to non-Kyrgyz speakers. To achieve this goal, the indigenizers have also relied on the politics of alarm, though in their case using inflammatory language to hasten the departure of Europeans from the country.<sup>74</sup> In discussions on the new constitution in early 1993, the leader of Asaba, Ch. Bazarbaev, warned that the country would be "destabilized" if the constitution included a provision recognizing Russian as the language of interethnic communication.<sup>75</sup> The indigenizers have also used the politics of embarrassment, seeking to mobilize Kyrgyz public opinion against decisions of the political leadership that represent concessions to the language demands of the non-Kyrgyz. A vivid example was the protest launched against the founding of the Slavonic University, a protest organized to coincide with the visit of Boris Yeltsin to the country in 1993.

The indigenizers are likely to find potent allies among workers in the language law implementation departments, which are being established in all major state institutions. Although these departments lack formal enforcement powers, they have the potential to develop into Soviet-style ideological offices that prod and shame enterprise managers and executive agency heads into action. One detects among these workers, who are hired in part because of their knowledge of Kyrgyz language and culture, a sense of mission that will make them hostile to half-measures.

Lying between the indigenizers and the internationalists are the moderates, who have controlled the reins of state power since the collapse of Communism in 1991. The moderates unite the vast majority of the Russified Kyrgyz elite and a smattering of European fellow travellers.<sup>76</sup> Led by President Akaev, the moderates have been rather more tacticians than strategists, granting concessions to both sides in order to avoid deepening existing social or economic crises.<sup>77</sup> In the words of Akaev:

...[O]ur most important task, our top priority, is to consolidate civil peace and interethnic harmony. Without this we cannot carry out any reform, not economic, spiritual or any other kind.<sup>78</sup>

Although rhetorically committed to the faithful implementation of the language law, the moderates appear to favor a very gradual transition to Kyrgyz cultural and linguistic autonomy. Where the indigenizers think in terms of years, the moderates appear to recognize that the transition will last for a generation or more. By advancing the politics of gradualism, the

moderates are attempting to protect not only the fragility of the new state and society but their own political careers. Most Russified Kyrgyz would be unable to compete politically in a country without a large Slavic population and a major role for the Russian language in political discourse. When asked how long he expected to encounter Russians in the cities of Kyrgyzstan, Akaev's former advisor for interethnic relations, S. Dzhigitov, remarked, "about 25 years....And then you'll see me coming back to Russia myself."<sup>79</sup>

How many Russians stay in the country, and for how long, may depend as much on relations between the Kyrgyz as on relations between the Kyrgyz and the ethnic minorities. Intra-Kyrgyz politics has traditionally been driven by North-South, valley, and clan rivalries. Although the subtleties of contemporary intra-Kyrgyz politics remain shrouded in rumors and conjecture, it is clear that the regional base of the moderates is in the North, among the Kyrgyz of the Issyk-Kul', Kemin, Chu, and Talas valleys, who have had greater contact with the Slavs. It is also clear that Kyrgyz in the South have been dissatisfied with their political influence since the departure from office of Masaliev, a fellow southerner. The moderates are especially vulnerable, therefore, to a nativist attack by the less Russified Kyrgyz elites in the South. The question for the future is whether, or perhaps how long, the center can hold. As politics in Malaysia and other plural societies illustrates, multiethnic centrist coalitions find themselves under constant attack from their nationalist and internationalist flanks. As the economic crisis deepens in Kyrgyzstan, and as the country prepares for parliamentary and presidential elections in 1995 and 1996, respectively, the politics of gradualism will become increasingly difficult to sustain. In an open and democratizing Kyrgyzstan, the future of language policy depends not just on historical circumstances and elite strategies but on the popular will, and of course on the elites' abilities to mobilize that will behind their programs and their vision of Kyrgyzstan.

TABLE ONE

POPULATION AND RUSSIAN LANGUAGE FLUENCY BY REGION AND ETHNICITY  
IN KYRGYZSTAN

<u>Region</u>	<u>Population</u>			<u>Russian Fluency</u>		
	Kyrgyz	Russian	Uzbek	Kyrgyz	Russian	Uzbek
Bishkek City (610,360)	138,491 (23%)	340,799 (56%)	10,311 (2%)	115,433 (83%)	-- (100%)	7743 (75%)
Republican Districts (982,983)	375,592 (38%)	349,447 (36%)	14,078 (1%)	213,548 (57%)	-- (100%)	10,598 (75%)
Issyk-Kul' Oblast (658,066)	520,097 (79%)	95,613 (15%)	5,102 (1%)	191,750 (37%)	-- (100%)	3,506 (69%)
Osh Oblast (1,996,803)	1,192,133 (60%)	126,111 (6%)	520,526 (26%)	300,094 (25%)	-- (100%)	187,076 (36%)

Note: The administrative-territorial divisions of Kyrgyzstan have changed since the 1989 census. Districts of republican subordination were amalgamated into two regions: Chu and Talas. Issyk-Kul' oblast was divided to create two oblasts: Issyk-Kul' and Naryn. Osh oblast was also divided to form two oblasts: Osh and Jalal-Abad.

Source: Compiled from *Itoги Vsesoiuznoi perepisi naseleniia 1989 goda. Tom VII. Natsional'nyi sostav naseleeniia SSSR. Chast' 2* (Minneapolis: East View Publications, 1993), pp. 548-583.

TABLE TWO  
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;

TABLE THREE<sup>80</sup>

## SCHOOLS IN KYRGYZSTAN BY LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

	Total Schools	Kyrgyz	Russian	Uzbek	Tajik	Mixed
1989	1702	1018	234	116	2	332
1992	1796	1122	142	120	2	409

## ENDNOTES

1. Language laws were passed in two more republics in early 1990. See Albert S. Pigolkin and Marina S. Studenikina, "Republican Language Laws in the USSR: A Comparative Analysis," *Journal of Soviet Nationalities*, no. 1 (1991), pp. 38-76.
  2. See Jonathan Pool, "Soviet Language Planning: Goals, Results, Options," in Rachel Denber (ed.), *The Soviet Nationality Reader: The Disintegration in Context* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992), pp. 333-339.
  3. This is not to deny the richness of the Kyrgyz oral tradition, exemplified by the thousand year old epic, *Manas*, or the existence of a runic alphabet in an earlier Kyrgyz civilization. But Kyrgyz had not been a written language in modern times. Exactly when Kyrgyz emerged as a written language remains a subject of debate. At the end of the 19th century there was a form of written Kyrgyz but it was distant from the vernacular, with massive borrowings from Arabic, Persian, and Turkish. Soviet historians maintained, therefore, that the fusion of the written and spoken languages occurred only after the Bolshevik Revolution. See T.U. Usubaliev, "On Some Questions of the Development of National Scripts and Languages and of Public Education," *Soviet Sociology* (Spring 1979), pp. 31-50.
  4. The term Kyrgyzstani will be used to refer to a citizen of Kyrgyzstan, whatever their nationality. "Kyrgyz" will be reserved for the ethnic Kyrgyz, whatever their place of residence.
  5. In part because of this policy, by 1989 only one percent of Russians in Kyrgyzstan claimed knowledge of the titular language, whereas the figures were five percent in Uzbekistan and three percent in Turkmenistan and Tajikistan. Chauncy Harris, "The New Russian Minorities: A Statistical Overview," *Post-Soviet Geography*, no. 1 (1993), p. 22.
  6. Chingiz Aitmatov, "Voronii grai nad opolznem. Oshskie razdum'ia, god spustia," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 8 February 1991, p. 2.
  7. One of the most extensive analyses of the language question to appear in the Soviet era was written - officially at least - by T. Usubaliev, the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Kyrgyzstan. T.U. Usubaliev, "O nekotorykh voprosakh razvitiia natsional'noi pis'mennosti, iazykovogo stroitel'stva i narodnogo prosveshcheniia," *Druzhba narodov - nashe bestsennoe zavoevanie* (Moscow, 1977), pp. 169-213, translated in *Soviet Sociology* (Spring 1979), pp. 31-78. That the article should have appeared under the name of the First Secretary was an indication of the political gravity of the issue.
  8. John Dunlop, "Language, Culture, Religion, and Cultural Awareness," in Denber (ed.), *The Soviet Nationality Reader*, p. 324.
  9. By the end of the 1980s, 38% of the republic's enterprises--and 44% of its workforce--were directly subordinate to Moscow ministries. Zh. Togoibaev, "Na osnove pliuralizma," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 17 September 1989, p. 2.
  10. The Russification of Frunze had in fact occurred well-before the post-Stalin era. As the following table indicates, the proportion of Russians in the city increased from 38 to 69 percent during the three decades that separated the 1897 and 1927 censuses.
- |           | 1897 | 1926 | 1959 | 1970 | 1979 | 1989 |
|-----------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| %         |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Russians  | 38   | 69   | 69   | 66   | 62   | 56   |
| Ukrainian | 5    | 5    | 8    | 6    | 6    | 5    |
| Kyrgyz    | 10   | 5    | 9    | 12   | 17   | 23   |
- Arranged from census data in Chauncy Harris, "The New Russian Minorities: A Statistical Overview," *Post-Soviet Geography*, no. 1 (1993), p. 19. See also M. Guboglo, "Demography and Language in the Capitals of the Union Republics," *Journal of Soviet Nationalities*, no. 4 (1990).
11. On the terror in Kyrgyzstan, see Azamat Altay, "Kirgiziya During the Great Purge," *Central Asian Review*, no. 2, vol. XII, pp. 97-107. Altay reports that the purge so devastated the Kyrgyz elite that central authorities were

unable to find sufficient numbers of ethnic Kyrgyz to send to Moscow as deputies when the Supreme Soviet of the USSR first opened in 1937 (p. 106).

12. Absamat Masaliev, *Stranitsy zhizni i denoe nashe otechestvo* (Bishkek, 1993), p. 11.

13. T.U. Usubaliev, "On Some Questions of the Development of National Scripts and Languages and of Public Education," *Soviet Sociology* (Spring 1979), p. 68.

14. By 1989, slightly more than half of the Kyrgyz claimed to speak Russian fluently; the figure was 84 percent for Kyrgyz living in Bishkek. E. Chernova, "Istoki...", *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 3 October 1990, p. 2.

15. Russian also altered the traditional system of Kyrgyz personal names, which dropped descriptive familial endwords in favor of the Russian first name/patronymic/last name.

16. David Laitin, *Language Repertoires and State Construction in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 16. "...in conversations on political topics among friends I invariably run to Russian for help, leaving my native language for the purely everyday [*sugubo bytovye*] subjects." So spoke a Kyrgyz engineer during the September 1989 debate on the language law. T. Egemberdiev, "Trebovanie nravstvennosti," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 10 September 1989, p. 3.

17. "Na osnove svobodnogo razvitiia i ravnopraviia iazykov," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 28 August 1989, p. 3. The Minister of Education reported that of 230 specialties taught in professional technical schools, only 72 could be taken in Kyrgyz; in general secondary schools 25 of 117 specialties were offered in Kyrgyz. *Ibid.*

18. "Na osnove svobodnogo razvitiia i ravnopraviia iazykov," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 28 August 1989, p. 3.

19. K. Mambetaliev, "Uvazhitel'noe gostepriimstvo - ili bratskoe sokhoziaistvovanie?" *Literaturnyi Kirgizstan*, no. 8 (1990), p. 85. It should be remembered that there were also Slavic supporters of a Kyrgyz national revival. On earlier attempts to encourage Russians in Kyrgyzstan to learn the titular language, see Bess Brown, "Russian Journalist Calls for Russian-Speakers in Kirgizia to Learn Kirgiz," *Radio Liberty Research*, 13 May 1987, pp. 1-3 (RL 183/87).

20. Masaliev was particularly scorching in his attacks on nationalist-minded historians and social scientists in Kyrgyzstan, a profession that was disproportionately Kyrgyz by nationality. "'Nationalist Prejudices' Cultivated by Kirghiz Social Scientists," *Central Asian Newsletter*, no. 3 (July 1987), p. 13, citing an article from the 27 January 1987 issue of *Soverskaia Kirgizia*.

21. A draft of this decree had been discussed in party organizations, cultural societies, and educational collectives in the months that followed the February 1988 CPSU Central Committee plenum. "O zadachakh respublikanskoi partiinoi organizatsii po osushchestvleniiu reform srednei i vysshei shkoly i ideologicheskomu obespecheniiu perestroiki v sveta reshenii fevral'skogo (1988g) Plenuma TsK KPSS, доклад sekretaria TS Kompartii Kirgizii, I.M. Sherimkulova," *Kommunist Kirgizstana*, no. 7 (1988), p. 19.

22. An advisor to the drafting commission that produced the 1989 language law characterized Kyrgyzstan's language policy in 1993 in terms drawn directly from this 1988 party directive, with its concern for a three-pronged approach to language development. Personal interview with Gul'nara Kyrskaraeva, Expert, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek, 7 June 1993.

23. V. Karasev, "V ravnykh usloviakh," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 9 June 1991, p. 1. Census figures illustrate that the percentage of rural Kyrgyz speaking Russian fluently increased from 14.1% in 1970 to 21.6% in 1979. The corresponding figures for urban Kyrgyz were 53% and 59.4%. A.A. Asankanov, *Sotsial'no-kul'turnoe razvitie sovremennogo kirgizskogo sel'skogo naseleniia* (Frunze, 1989), p. (?). In a survey of three representative villages conducted in the mid-1980s, a Kyrgyz scholar reports that knowledge of Russian was poorest among teenagers and persons over 50. Women in rural areas were also far more likely than men to claim no knowledge of Russian. 25.8% to 7.2% in his survey. As to where Kyrgyz learned to speak Russian, well under ten percent of those surveyed reported that they learned Kyrgyz at school. More than half learned it in the army or in universities and other institutions of higher education. *Ibid.*, pp. 174-175.

24. R. Iusupov, "Ne byvaet maloi kul'tury," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 27 December 1990, p. 2. Unfortunately, census figures do not provide a reliable measure of language knowledge. When asked by census enumerators what language is their mother tongue (*rodnoi iazyk*), virtually all ethnic Kyrgyz, like Dungans, choose the language of their ethnoses. See *Vestnik statistiki*, no. 4 (1991), p. 76. If nothing else, the figures do indicate the continuing strength of cultural identity.
25. "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)," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 28 September 1989, pp. 2-3.
26. "Mnenie, predlozheniia," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 16 September, p. 3.
27. "Na osnove svobodnogo razvitiia i ravnopraviia iazykov," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 28 September 1989, p. 4.
28. *Ibid.*
29. A Kyrgyz shepherd complained that it was virtually impossible to order a long distance telephone call in Kyrgyz. A. Zhakypov, "Komuz ne dlia frantsuzov," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 9 June 1991, p. 2.
30. "Na osnove svobodnogo razvitiia i ravnopraviia iazykov," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 28 August 1989, p. 3.
31. "Na osnove svobodnogo razvitiia i ravnopraviia iazykov," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 28 September 1989, p. 5.
32. The text of the language law may be found in "O gosudarstvennom iazyke Kirgizskoi SSR," *Vedomosti Verkhovnogo Soveta Kirgizskoi SSR*, no. 17 (1989), st. 141, and in *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 29 September 1989, pp. 1-2.
33. Similar provisions were included in the language laws of Estonia, Latvia, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan. Albert S. Pigolkin and Marina S. Studenikina, "Republican Language Laws in the USSR: A Comparative Analysis," *Journal of Soviet Nationalities*, no. 1 (1991), pp. 58.
34. "Viktor Zapol'skii: portrety bez ramok," *Literaturnyi Kirgizstan*, no. 3 (1991), p. 90.
35. Albert Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970). On the beginnings of the exodus of Slavs from Kyrgyzstan, see E. Chernova, "Istoki...", *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 3 October 1990, p. 2.
36. See E. Huskey, "Government Rulemaking as a Brake on Perestroika," *Law and Social Inquiry*, no. (199?), pp. . That the yawning gap between legislative enactments and executive regulations had not been closed in the post-Communist was confirmed by leading Kyrgyzstan parliamentarian in 1993. He reported that there was still "complete chaos" in the making of legal norms (*normotvorchestvo*). Personal interview with Alikbek Djekshenkulov, People's Deputy of Kyrgyzstan and Chair of the Standing Commission for Inter-Parliamentary Relations, 10 June 1993.
37. Gul'nara Kyskaraeva, unpublished manuscript on Kyrgyz language reform (June 1992).
38. Territorial integrity because nationalist Uzbeks on both sides of the Uzbekistan/Kyrgyzstan border had designs on the Kyrgyz portion of the Ferghana Valley. A primary demand of local Uzbeks during the violence was the creation of Uzbek political and cultural autonomy in parts of the Osh region.
39. "Kambaraly Bektemirov: 'Eto byla nechestnaia igra...'," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 5 December 1990, p. 2.
40. In 1992, approximately five percent of the Kyrgyzstani Russians left the country. This rate of out-migration was comparable to that in neighboring Uzbekistan and only slightly above the rate in Turkmenistan. I. Rotar', "Slaviane v Srednei Azii: adaptatsiia ili begstvo?" *Res Publica*, 15 May 1993, p. 3, reprinted from *Nezavisimaa gazeta*, 29 April 1993. In the first nine months of 1992, 77,700 persons emigrated from Kyrgyzstan, a figure 43% higher than that for the same period of 1991. A. Sopiiev, "Migratsiia i my," *Svobodnye gory*, 9 February 1993. The number of Jews in Kyrgyzstan declined from 8300 in 1959 to 6300 in 1979, 5600 in 1989, to approximately 3000 in 1993. "Byl ia russkim pisatelem - vernulsia by obratno," *Vechernyi Bishkek*, 9 June 1993, p. 2.
41. Postanovlenie Kabinet Ministerov Respubliki Kyrgyzstan, no. 18, "O respublikanskom biudzhete Respubliki Kyrgyzstan na 1992 god," Bishkek, 17 January 1992.

42. A commission of the parliament was working at that time on a study of the law's implementation by region and on packet of measures to facilitate its implementation. "Zakon o gosiazyke: ot slov - k delu," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 12 July 1991, p. 1.
43. Zh. Imanalieva, "Zakon budet rabotat'," *Vechernyi Bishkek*, 27 May 1992.
44. Personal interview with Askar Akaev, Bishkek, 12 June 1993.
45. A measure that upset local Uzbeks and Russians, who said that Liudmilla was an important city landmark, known to all, and that anyway there were several stores that carried typical Kyrgyz female names. See "Rodnaia rech' - dusha naroda," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 9 June 1991, p. 1.
46. The other need not be Russian. In Bishkek, a Chinese restaurant opened in early 1993 had its name in Kyrgyz and Chinese. Cite.
47. Personal interview with Akil' Adamaliev, Consultant, Department for the Realization of the Law on State Language, Bishkek City Soviet, 9 June 1993.
48. The text of the decree, "Tipovaia instruksiiia po vedeniiu d:loproizvodstva v mestnykh Sovetakh narodnykh deputatov, mestnykh gosudarstvennykh administratsiiah, ministerstvakh, gosudarstvennykh komitetakh, administrativnykh vedomstvakh, gosudarstvennykh, kooperativnykh i obshchestvennykh organizatsiiah, uchrezhdeniiah i na predpriatiiakh Respubliki Kyrgyzstan," was printed in *Vechernyi Bishkek*, 14 January 1993, p. 3.
49. *Ibid.* Although issued at the beginning of 1993, the timetable (*primernyi grafik*) notes that in heavily Kyrgyz areas the implementation was to have begun by 15 April 1992. The timetable rather cryptically notes that many more regions, though not all of them, were to begin implementing the law's provisions on official documentation before (*do*) 1 January 1997.
50. Personal interview with Akil' Adamaliev, Consultant, Department for the Realization of the Law on State Language, Bishkek City Soviet, 9 June 1993.
51. *Ibid.*
52. Personal interview with Suiunduk Olzhobaev, Head of the Department on State Language, Ministry of Education of Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek, 10 June 1993.
53. Personal interview with Aron Brudnyi, Corresponding Member, Kyrgyzstan Academy of Sciences, 7 June 1993.
54. Personal interview with Akil' Adamaliev, Consultant, Department for the Realization of the Law on State Language, Bishkek City Soviet, 9 June 1993. Ashar is a settlers' group formed originally to assist Kyrgyz moving into the capital from the provinces. It has become of late a proto-party, moving beyond its concerns with building homes and the physical infrastructure in "squatters' settlements" to broader political questions.
55. David Laitin, *Language Repertoires and State Construction in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 17.
56. In a survey of Kyrgyz parents conducted in three villages of Kyrgyzstan in the mid-1980s, 38.2% wanted to educate their children in Russian, 18.2% in both Russian and Kyrgyz, and 43.6% in Kyrgyz only. A.A. Asankanov, *Sotsial'no-kul'turnoe razvitie sovremennogo kirgizskogo sel'skogo naseleniia* (Frunze, 1989), p.181. Unfortunately, a comparable survey is not available for urban Kyrgyz parents in this period.
57. These mixed schools, known traditionally as schools of international friendship, first emerged in Kyrgyzstan in the 1940s. A.A. Asankanov, *Sotsial'no-kul'turnoe razvitie sovremennogo kirgizskogo sel'skogo naseleniia* (Frunze, 1989), p. 176. Of the 72 schools in the capital in 1993, 46 were Russian-language, 7 were Kyrgyz-language, and 19 were mixed. Personal interview with Makil' Imankulova, Deputy Minister of Education of Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek, 8 June 1993.
58. According to the Head of the Department of State Language in the Ministry of Education, almost all textbooks were still in Russian at the beginning of the 1993-1994 academic year. Kyrgyz materials were limited to pamphlets. Personal interview with Suiunduk Olzhobaev, Head of Department of State Language, Ministry of Education of

Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek, 10 June 1993. According to the plan of the Ministry of Education, 1050 new Kyrgyz-language titles were to have been published in the period from 1991-1995, many of those translations of Russian textbooks. Gul'nara Kyskaraeva, unpublished manuscript on Kyrgyz language reform (June 1992).

59. Personal interview with Gul'nara Kyskaraeva, Expert, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek, 7 June 1993.

60. Personal interview with Ainura Elebaeva, Pro-Rector for Scientific Work, Kyrgyz State University, Bishkek, 8 June 1993. The universities in Kazakhstan were also having difficult finding qualified specialists to teach many subjects, including even law, in the titular language. Personal interview with Didenko, Professor of Civil Law, Kazakh State University, Almaty, 4 June 1993.

61. Ch. Nusupov, "Uroki istorii," *Res Publica*, 16 March 1993, p. 3 [this is part two of a series]. In the 1989/1990 academic year, among a total of 59,264 students, 38,635 were Kyrgyz, 12,580 were Russian, 1971 were Uzbek, 998 were Ukrainian, 1114 were Tatar, 339 were Tajik, 678 were German, 448 were Korean, 242 were Uighur, 218 were Turks, 770 were Kazakhs, 176 were Jews, and 82 were Belorussians. Kyrgyzstan Ministry of Education statistics.

62. The University was founded on the basis of a friendship, collaboration and mutual assistance agreement between the governments of Russia and Kyrgyzstan. "President Decrees Founding of Slavonic University," *Interfax in English*, 1734 GMT, 26 September 1992, translated in *FBIS [Soviet Union]*, 30 September 1992, p. 40. FBIS-SOV-92-190. Officially, one-half of the seats in the Slavonic University were to be reserved for Kyrgyz students, a policy designed to blunt criticism of the institution by Kyrgyz nationalists. Ch. Nusupov, "Uroki istorii," *Res Publica*, 6 March 1993, p. 3.

63. Aleksandr Alianchikov, "Povroz' druzhnee?" *Literaturnyi Kirgizstan*, nos. 11-12 (1992), p. 138, citing *Vechernyi Bishkek*, 6 October 1992.

64. ITAR-TASS, 9 September 1993.

65. Gul'nara Kyskaraeva reported in May 1992 that two texts to support such adult and self-education had been issued: "Let's learn the Kyrgyz language" in an edition of 80,000, and "Intensive Course in the Study of the Kyrgyz Language" in an edition of 10,000. Zh. Imanalieva, "Zakon budet rabotat'," *Vechernyi Bishkek*, 27 May 1992.

66. S. Lagosha, "Zagovorim po-kyrgyzski? Zaprosto!" *Svobodnye gory*, no. 38 (June 1993), p. 1. By 1992, specialists from relevant ministries and the Academy of Sciences had also begun work on Kyrgyz-Russian language manuals for officials obligated by Article 8 to acquire a basic knowledge of the state language. Gul'nara Kyskaraeva, unpublished manuscript in possession of the author on the implementation of the 1989 language law in Kyrgyzstan (June 1992). There is no evidence, however, that department heads or enterprise managers, especially those in previously all-union factories, were actively encouraging their employees to study the state language. Indeed, Kyskaraeva noted in May 1992, in seemingly understated language, that "not all heads of enterprises, organizations, and institutions had realized the seriousness and significance of the Law. Some may assume that this is just another campaign [*ocherednaia kampaniia*]." Zh. Imanalieva, "Zakon budet rabotat'," *Vechernyi Bishkek*, 27 May 1992.

67. The following figures illustrate the decline of newspaper circulation in independent Kyrgyzstan. From January 1992 to June 1993, the circulation of Bishkek Shamy fell from 16,800 to 10,000, Kyrgyz Maganiiaty from 68,399 to 15,940, Kyrgyz Tuusu from 120,900 to 24,125, and Asaba from 70,000 to 20,670. Among Russian-language papers, the decline over this period was from 107,500 to 47,500 for *Vechernii Bishkek* and from 61,600 to 25,600 for *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*.

68. Political programming is still frequently broadcast in Russian on the Kyrgyz channel. Recent examples of such programming included a discussion of the draft constitution in late January and a meeting of the Prime Minister with regional leaders in mid-June.

69. Ch. Nusupov, "Uroki istorii," *Res Publica*, 6 May 1993, p. 3.

70. Turkey has already established impressive economic and cultural ties with Kyrgyzstan and most of Central Asia. Large numbers of Kyrgyz students are now enrolled in Turkish universities while Kyrgyz diplomats hold internships in the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Turkish Ministry of Education has formed an Undersecretariat for Education in Bishkek, responsible for the recent opening of Turkish-Kyrgyz technical and high schools. "Turkey's Toptan Inaugurates Secretariat, Schools," Ankara TRT Television Network in Turkish, 1800 GMT, 30 September 1992, translated in *FBIS* [Soviet Union], 2 October 1992, pp. 32-33. FBIS-SOV-92-192. Turkey has also promised generous assistance to facilitate the transition from a Cyrillic to a Latin alphabet in Kyrgyzstan. Although publicly committed to such a transition, the political leadership in Kyrgyzstan seems intent on weathering the current political and economic crises before embarking on such a bold cultural transformation.

71. "Respublika ishchet imia," *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 13 December 1990, p. 1.

72. The adoption of the May 1993 Constitution also exercised the Slavic population. While it included a reference to Kyrgyz as the state language, it failed to mention that Russian was the language of interethnic communication. Despite a reported 100,000 calls and letters to the Constitutional Commission, the Constitution omitted all reference to the Russian language. "Slavianskaia diaspora, Assotsiatsiia natsional'nykh men'shinstv, ili Kongress russkikh kyrgyzstantsev," *Res Publica*, 15 May 1993, p. 3.

73. Umutai Midinova, "O 'piknikakh', dlinnykh ocherediakh...", *Literaturnyi Kirgizstan*, no. 1 (1990), pp. 125-126.

74. Apparently, they have also engaged in disinformation campaigns to frighten Russians into emigration. These efforts are at times abetted by the media in Russia, which broadcast the most alarmist rumors back into the country. See, for example, "Reports on Expulsion of Russians Denied," *FBIS* [Soviet Union], 25 March 1992, p. 68. FBIS-SOV-92-058. A respected member of the European community commented to me only half in jest that the indigenization movement was driven by the desire to free up apartment space in the capital. For a recent poll of the population on the reasons for emigration, see A. Sopiev, "Migratsiia i my," *Svobodnye gory*, 9 February 1993.

75. G. Deviatov, "...I razoshlis', kak v more korabli," *Vechernyi Bishkek*, 2 March 1993.

76. Attempts to maintain a truly multiethnic moderate coalition were dealt a serious blow in July 1993 when the highest-ranking Russian in Akaev's cabinet, the first deputy premier, Kuznetsov, abandoned his post and the country. This occurred while Akaev's presidential apparatus was attempting to unite moderate Slavic forces into a national organization to support his policies. On the formation of such an organization at the local level, in the southern city of Jalal-Abad, see "Slavianskaia diaspora, Assotsiatsiia natsional'nykh men'shinstv, ili Kongress russkikh kyrgyzstantsev," *Res Publica*, 15 May 1993, p. 3.

77. As one commentator pointed out, Akaev did stand up to the nationalists by vetoing a provision of the land law that would have recognized land as the wealth [*dostoiianie*] of the Kyrgyz people alone. But such measures are offset by corresponding concessions to the indigenizers, such as the creation of national funds for land, culture, and entrepreneurship that are earmarked for ethnic Kyrgyz. "Akayev Policies, Personality Assessed," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, no. 21, 20 May 1992, p. 11, translated in *FBIS*, 29 May 1992, p. 84. FBIS-USR-92-063.

78. "President Akayev Interviewed on 'Live Dialogue'," Ostankino Television First Program in Russian, 1125 GMT, 24 May 1992, translated in *FBIS* [Soviet Union], 29 May 1992, p. 60. FBIS-SOV-92-104. Working from the internationalist orientation he developed during his many years in Russia and as a member of the Communist Party, Akaev has sought to develop a new Kyrgyzstan multinationalism, what he calls the "special mentality" of the residents of Kyrgyzstan. "History has arranged for us," he argues, "to be an amazing amalgam of the Asian and the European: in our thinking, in our emotional makeup, in our behavior." "President Akayev Criticizes Russocentric Press," *Izvestiia*, 23 March 1992, p. 3, translated in *FBIS* [Soviet Union], 25 March 1992, p. 69. FBIS-SOV-92-058.

79. *FBIS* [Soviet Union], 29 May 1992, p. 84. FBIS-USR-92-063.

80. Figures provided by Suiunduk Olzhobaev, *ibid.*