

CENTRAL ASIA AND THE CAUCASUS

Journal of Social and Political Studies

3 (27)
2004

CENTRAL ASIA AND THE CAUCASUS
CENTER FOR SOCIAL AND POLITICAL STUDIES
SWEDEN

FOUNDED AND PUBLISHED BY

CENTRAL ASIA AND THE CAUCASUS CENTER FOR SOCIAL AND POLITICAL STUDIES

Center registration number: 620720 - 0459
Journal registration number: 23 614
State Administration for Patents and Registration of Sweden

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SWEDEN

WEB ADDRESS:

<http://www.ca-c.org>

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CENTRAL ASIA AND THE CAUCASUS
Journal of Social and Political Studies
No. 3(27), 2004

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Central Asia and the Caucasus

- World and Regional Centers of Power and their Impact on the Regional Situation
- Energy Policy and Energy Projects
- Political Development Trends in the Context of International Antiterrorist Campaign

LABOR MIGRATION IN KYRGYZSTAN

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General Description

Due to various social-economic factors typical of the transition period that followed the Soviet Union's disintegration legal and illegal labor migration is one of the main methods of job-hunting in the republic.

The demographic situation is another factor especially obvious in the south—the most populated and demographically overburdened area in the post-Soviet expanse. In this area, children and teenagers under 16 account for about 40 percent of population; young people between 16 and 29 constitute 50 percent of the workforce; and people over 60 make up 7-8 percent of the total population. Every year large numbers of young people flock to the labor market in search of a job, thus adding to its already considerable demographic pressure.

Obviously, employment problems are hard to resolve, especially at the transition stage when economic development slows down. In the 1990s industrial production in the republic dropped by nearly half. According to the First National Population Census of 1999 in 10 years the employment level in cities fell from 66.5 to 42.2 percent; the figures for the country being 67.3 and 64 percent; and the share of dependents increased from 12 to 24.8 percent.¹

Unemployment forces people to leave their country in search of work; in transitional economies migration somewhat alleviates the pressure on the labor market and inflation and compensates for the lowered incomes; it makes it possible to avoid a dramatic drop in the living standards of a large number of people.

Like many of its CIS neighbors, the Republic of Kyrgyzstan (RK) is a host country to the migrant workers and is itself a source of labor migrants. It exports more workers than it imports. The titular population predominates in the workforce outflow, especially to CIS countries. On the whole, labor outflow from our country is large-scale and mainly haphazard. Its main flows are temporary—migrants prefer to

¹ See: *Osnovnye itogi Pervoy natsional'noy perepisi naselenia Kyrgyzskoy Respubliki 1999 g.*, Bishkek, 2000, pp. 48-49.

come back. There are no reliable statistics of the process in the republic—official figures have little in common with reality.

Art 16 of the RK Constitution envisages the right to labor; this right is specified in the Labor Code, which enumerates the rules and conditions of labor and the guarantees of labor-related rights. The Law on Licensing Certain Types of Activity and governmental decisions in this field regulate the labor market together with the Code and the main legal acts related to foreign labor migration. The rights of our citizens working abroad are protected by the recently signed intergovernmental documents. There are regional agreements among the Central Asian countries and agreements with other CIS states.

The largest number of such documents was signed with Russia; they are On Protecting the Rights of Working Migrants, On Mutual Recognition of Diplomas and Academic Degrees, etc. Similar documents were signed with Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Azerbaijan. There are cooperation programs with the WTO and the International Migration Organization.

Foreign Labor Migration

At the institutional level the Migration Department of the Foreign Ministry and the Employment Department of the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection are concerned with labor migration in the republic.

To obtain permits valid for up to twelve months, an employer should present a packet of documents to the Migration Department; such permits may be extended on a yearly basis for no more than five years if necessary (with justification of this request from the employer). There are quotas for foreign citizens and stateless persons on the whole, as well as by profession. One enterprise may not employ more than five persons under the quota established by the government and endorsed by the Legislative Assembly of the RK Zhogorku kenesh (parliament). The Migration Department of the Foreign Ministry may increase or reduce the quota according to the situation on the domestic labor market and depending on the sphere in which the potential employer is operating. If the rules are violated or totally ignored the Department may suspend its permits (until the violations are remedied) or withdraw them altogether.

Foreign citizens and stateless persons employed according to the rules are supplied with documents that confirm their right to work in Kyrgyzstan; this document is invalid in the absence of a permit to employ foreign workers. The packet of documents presented to the Foreign Ministry should contain a copy of the labor contract with each of the potential workers, an international medical certificate of AIDS tests, etc. Foreign workers are entitled to the labor conditions, payments and labor safety regulations, social security and insurance (including medical insurance) envisaged by the legal norms of our republic and the international agreements signed by Kyrgyzstan.

The Department keeps a register of all labor contracts with foreign workers; it sends relevant information to the Consulate Service of the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of the Interior. The consulates of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan abroad rely on this information when issuing visas and granting labor permits; in special cases envisaged by the republic's international agreements this information serves as the basis for visa-free entry into the republic's territory if no other procedure is envisaged.

The Employment Department of the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection is entrusted with the task of drawing up annual agreements with the regional administrations and the mayor's office of Bishkek with the aim of keeping the regional labor markets under control and optimizing domestic migration.

Art 28 of the Law on External Migration and cabinet decision No. 566 of 17 September, 2002 established a quota on the foreign workforce (4,425 people in all economic branches and regions in 2003) distributed according to the number of employers at joint ventures.

Pursuant to this document, in November 2001, the Employment Department began issuing relevant documents to foreign companies and enterprises. During the first quarter of 2003, 226 foreign specialists

were invited under 77 such documents. Foreign companies employ 1,923 Kyrgyz citizens.² Along with representatives of the Foreign Ministry Migration Department specialists from this department are members of a commission of experts engaged in controlling enterprises that employ foreign specialists and regulating employment of citizens of the Kyrgyz republic at joint ventures.

To somehow improve the situation on the domestic labor market a system of licenses for organizations engaged in employing foreigners was introduced. Citizens of Kyrgyzstan should be employed on a priority basis, while the inflow of unskilled workforce into the republic should be stemmed. However, foreign companies tend to ignore the laws, disregard the social benefits existing in the republic, and pay different wages to foreign and local workers with identical educational and professional levels. In so doing, they violate the international legal acts relating to payment of labor and are, in fact, guilty of discrimination. However, if we take into account that, according to official sources, the share of foreign workforce in the total number of the employed is 0.1 percent, these violations can hardly be described as destabilizing.

In 2002, foreign labor migration sector of the Migration Department issued 319 permits (one of them being a duplicate) and 297 confirmations of labor permits. The percentages of those who applied for such documents (by country of origin) are the following: Turkey, 32 percent; China, 14 percent; local (Kyrgyz) structures, 20 percent; the percentages of other countries are negligible. The percentages of branches of the economy are as follows: trade and public catering, 46 percent; industry, construction and transport, 29 percent; public health, education, science, 17 percent; agriculture and forestry, 7 percent; crediting, insurance, etc., 2 percent.³

It is commercial and purchasing firms that employ foreign workers; they do nothing to promote production, and export hard currency from the country. The share of European and American companies (mainly mining firms) is less than 15 percent.

It should be said that the republic's mass media report more and more frequently that in the southern border areas the number of illegal immigrants is increasing. There is the opinion in the expert community and among bureaucrats that these people are having a negative effect on the social-economic situation and are responsible, in a way, for the reduced wages. This may destabilize the situation in these areas. There are over 10 illegal labor markets along the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border trading in cheap Uzbek workforce; at the sight of officials the markets promptly dissolve.

According to the local Kyrgyz authorities, between four and five thousand Uzbek citizens work on the Kyrgyz side of the border, their daily wages being less than \$1 (25 to 30 soms). There are about two thousand seasonal workers; some of them are cotton gatherers in the Dzhahalal-Abad Region. The majority work illegally and have no labor contracts; they are not covered by social and other benefits and are mortally afraid of the police and racketeers. In many cases they are not paid at all and are treated abominably. Experts believe that Kyrgyz farmers profit from the low wages they pay to illegal Uzbek immigrants. The state gets nothing because of tax evasion.

In an interview the head of the foreign migration sector, the Migration Department of the RK Foreign Ministry, said: "We would like to settle the problem of transborder workforce migration with Uzbekistan, but for reasons beyond our control we cannot do this." For its part, Tashkent is trying to settle the problem by tightening border control, which does not help.

According to the same department, by 14 April, 2003 only ten companies were licensed as employment agencies providing employment abroad. They mostly offer jobs in the "far abroad."

According to a sociological poll-interview,⁴ they carefully explain to their clients their rights and contract provisions with respect to living and working conditions. Those who employ these people refund the Kyrgyz agencies.

All the agencies agreed that South Korea has the best control system over labor migrants: all of them have to carry identity cards valid for the term of their contract. In conflict situations caused by violation

² Materials of the Employment Department of the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection.

³ Materials of the Migration Department of the KR Foreign Ministry.

⁴ The present author conducted this sociological poll in February-March 2003.

of the migrant's rights, he or she can contact the local office; the conflict is then settled by a representative of the corresponding Kyrgyz firm. These firms, however, do not guarantee complete protection of the rights of their former clients: they draw up contracts and provide tickets. The newly employed worker has to sort out his own problems upon arrival. The heads of these agencies agreed that so far there have been no serious conflicts; the police deal with personal quarrels and everyday squabbles. All labor migrants can count on medical assistance in case of need.

Though this group highly assessed what they were doing, we failed to find out how the rights of Kyrgyz migrants were protected: none of the agencies could procure either an original or a copy of a labor contract. At the same time, all the polled labor migrants complained of the lack of necessary information and of free ongoing consultations either in Kyrgyzstan or in the places of their employment. Meanwhile, the Migration Department has created a packet of information documents including instructions for those who leave for the Russian Federation, questionnaires for seasonal workers who travel regularly to Kazakhstan, a sample of a migration card to be handed in upon arrival in Russia, etc.

Nobody doubts that our compatriots are willing to work abroad because the wages there are good by Kyrgyz standards. According to the Employment Department, a "shuttle" trader selling Chinese goods in Russian flea markets can earn on average about \$700-1,000 a month (with initial capital of no less than \$2,500-3,000). Hired sellers earn about \$200-250, of which \$80-100 are spent on food and lodgings. Construction jobs fetch the following wages: unskilled workers, \$180-200 a month; skilled workers (electricians, painters, etc.), \$300-400 with 12-hour long working day and two days-off a month. Compare these figures with average wages in the construction sector paid to legally employed workers: unskilled workers, no less than \$350-500, skilled workers, from \$700 up with an 8-hour day, one or two days-off a week and paid annual holidays. In Almaty "shuttle" traders can earn from \$100 to \$300 a month; seasonal workers at tobacco plantations earn from \$200 to \$500 per family; girls employed in show business in Korea earn \$350-400 a month. All migrants have to accept appalling living conditions.

Labor migration is gradually extending its borders. People from Kyrgyzstan have already reached the labor markets of Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, Korea, Syria, Lebanon, Kuwait (there are official contracts with some of these states), as well as West, East and Central European countries. Kyrgyz work in such far-away states as America, Canada, and Australia. Great Britain is their favorite; according to expert assessments, there are 5,000 to 8,000 young people from Kyrgyzstan working in the British capital.

The spheres of employment in the "far abroad" are varied: people from Kyrgyzstan work in show business (dancers); services (waiters, au pair, domestic help and gardeners); agriculture and construction (unskilled and skilled workers).

Even though labor migrants travel far and wide, people mainly head for Russia and Kazakhstan in search of employment. According to the Kyrgyz embassies in these countries over 300,000 of our compatriots are working in Russia and about 50,000-100,000 in Kazakhstan.

Russia attracts workforce by its capacious labor market and the worsening demographic situation; its political situation is fairly stable and economic growth is sustainable, which makes the Russian ruble stronger than the Kyrgyz currency.

According to the Passport and Visa Department at the RF Ministry of the Interior, by early 2002 there were over 25,000 Kyrgyz citizens permanently living in the Russian Federation; over 41,000 had temporary registration.⁵ Our compatriots are mostly attracted to the Urals and Siberian federal okrugs (the Krasnoyarsk Territory, Sverdlovsk and Kemerovo regions, republic of Sakha-Iakutia, etc.), the Central Federal Okrug (Moscow and the Moscow Region, Orel Region, etc.), as well as St. Petersburg.

Official figures have little to do with reality: after arriving in Russia a large part of Kyrgyz citizens obtain short-term or fake registrations; many do not bother about registration at all. For example, 3,313 Kyrgyz citizens are temporarily registered in Moscow and the Moscow Region, while in reality

⁵ Materials supplied by the Embassy of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan in the Russian Federation.

there are at least 10,000; in the summer their ranks swell to 15,000. Those who have no registration live and work illegally.

The contracts in the sphere of labor migration between the Russian Federation and Kyrgyzstan and between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are based on the intergovernmental agreements on cooperation and mutual assistance signed within the CIS in 1992-1994. There is an agreement On Labor Activity and Social Protection of Labor Migrants between the RF and RK; on 22 September, 2003, the sides signed a protocol On Amendments and Changes in the 1996 Bilateral Agreement on Labor Migration that envisaged certain privileges for Kyrgyz citizens temporarily working in Russia. There are special agreements with the Urals and the Siberian federal okrugs and a Memorandum on Cooperation between the government of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan and the government of Moscow and the Russian Federation in the field of mutual employment of the citizens of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan in Moscow and citizens of the Russian Federation from Moscow in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan.

Labor migration to Russia goes through three main channels: special state structures; employment agencies that offer contracts; and individual efforts (preferred by the majority). All those who come to Russia fall into three main categories: private entrepreneurs ("shuttle" traders); hired sellers at flea markets, and construction workers. They stay in Russia for different periods ranging from several weeks to twelve months.

I should say that our country has accumulated considerable experience in organized temporary employment of its citizens in Russia (about 200 people a year). These people are usually employed in the Sverdlovsk and Novosibirsk regions, and in Orenburg and Tynda. Since 2000, the Urals Machine-Building Plant in Ekaterinburg has been engaged in organized employment of skilled workers in the "near abroad." In 2000-2002, 161 people went there from Kyrgyzstan. The directions of unorganized flows depend on the transportation network, wholesale prices, customs fees, etc.

The agreement On Labor Activity and Social Protection of Migrants Employed in Agriculture in the Border Areas signed by the governments of Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan came into force on 9 July, 2002, under which Kazakhstan's quota amounted to 7,500 people. Four private employment agencies appeared as soon as the document had been signed. Three of them are operating in the south (Osh, Dzhalaal-Abad, Batken), from which people mainly migrate to Kazakhstan; one is found in Bishkek. In an interview, its head told me that his firm mainly hired Kyrgyz tobacco-growers for work in the Almaty Region. On the whole, he approved of the agreement initiated by the Kyrgyz side; he was quite satisfied with the registration rules, the contract system with a Kazakh private employment agency, and the contract conditions. He had no objections to specific legal points, yet he disagreed with the Kyrgyz term of labor permit issued annually for one specific activity type. He pointed out that in Kazakhstan labor permits were issued for indefinite terms and could be discontinued if violated. He is convinced that a system of labor permits valid for two years and covering all sorts of activities would have been more reasonable.

So far, officially registered employment agencies have been unable to use the quota of 7,500 in full: in 2003 people preferred to migrate illegally; the firms stopped thinking about their clients as soon as they crossed the border; the registered firms have not yet created a well-oiled system of moving people to the place of their employment and back: not all employed reach their destination in Kazakhstan, some of them prefer to go where they used to work in the past. The Kyrgyz firms are losing money paid for travel documents and food, while the Kazakh side is expected to cover these expenses upon the newly hired workers' arrival. So far, there is no clear-cut system of payment for the services of the Kyrgyz employment agencies.

Today, although intergovernmental agreements are in place, there is still no mechanism for putting them into practice, carrying out state marketing, information provision, and consultations. The firms that have already acquired licenses have to advertise in the media themselves; they distribute leaflets to convince people to switch to legal employment, familiarize them with official documents, etc. They do all this themselves even though the Information and Consultative Center at the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection has a data base about vacancies and training courses in the republic; it runs an Internet site about vacancies in the "near and far abroad" and a data bank containing text methodologies and their

computer versions. There are plans to open a sector for gathering and processing information about vacancies abroad and possible candidates from Kyrgyzstan.

The employment agencies say that the Migration Department of the Foreign Ministry has limited itself to issuing labor permits, supplying firms with relevant legal information, and receiving lists from them of those who found employment abroad. In March 2003, it organized a meeting with the legal entities engaged in finding employment for the republic's citizens abroad to hear their reports.

It should be said that the country's leaders are doing their best to control labor migration to the "near abroad." In 2002, the government set up workgroups composed of specialists from the Foreign Ministry, the Ministry of the Interior, and the Ministry of Labor. They visited the Urals and the Volga federal okrugs in December 2002 and the Siberian Federal Okrug in February 2003 to meet the local leaders, officials of the RF Ministry of Labor and Social Security, and employers and discuss labor conditions, social security, and the safety of Kyrgyz migrants with them. For the same purpose deputies of the Zhogorku kenesh visited the Sverdlovsk and Novosibirsk regions. These delegations tried to prevent possible deportations of Kyrgyz migrants under the newly adopted Law on the Legal Status of Foreign Citizens in the RF. It was suggested that RK consulates be opened in Samara and Novosibirsk to protect the rights of Kyrgyz migrants. (According to the Embassy of Kyrgyzstan in the Russian Federation, as of 1 January, 2003, there were 100,000 Kyrgyz migrants in these two cities.) Today, our republic only has a consulate in Ekaterinburg.

Security Problems

Essentially no movement from one state to another can be considered absolutely safe. And although the risks involved in this movement are not the same as threats to personal security, a migrant nevertheless weakens, and sometimes entirely breaks, his social ties when he leaves home, only to meet unexpected and not always legal pressure on these ties in his new place of residence.

The local people are loath to welcome newcomers because of the pressure they put on the local employment and housing markets, the possible conflicts caused by ethnic and sub-ethnic behavior stereotypes, the social and cultural exclusion of some of the migrants, etc. In other words, compact groups of migrants cause great social tension among the local people.

Russia is suffering from the negative consequences of the large number of labor migrants: wages are reduced, something which Russians are not pleased with, and there is the threat of epidemics, a higher crime rate, and unemployment. The regions do not have enough housing to accommodate migrants.⁶ This explains why the obviously economically advantageous phenomenon of labor migration to Russia is negatively perceived at the administrative level; there are cases of bureaucratic abuses in relation to migrants.

Researchers have already pointed out that the labor markets in certain Russian regions are being deformed due to pressure from migrants.⁷ On top of this, migrants are not looking for any work: they need employment not controlled by the state in order to evade taxes. Employers profit from this by hiring migrants under oral agreements and paying them much lower wages than Russians.

The migrants not only need protection—they themselves are a source of economic and criminal threat. This happens if the local population is not adequately protected in the social and legal spheres.

The security aspects can be analyzed on the basis of a sociological poll the author of this article conducted in Ekaterinburg and Novosibirsk in 2002. Only 10 percent of the polled gave positive answers to the question: "Do you regret that you chose to work abroad?" Nearly 20 percent failed to give a clear answer to this and another question: "To what extent are you satisfied with your life as a migrant?" They were obviously aware that they earned more than they could have done at home and had reconciled them-

⁶ See: *Migratsia v Rossii: problemy pravovogo obespechenia*, ed. by M.V. Nemytina, Saratov, 2001, p. 107.

⁷ See: *Migratsia i bezopasnost v Rossii*, Moscow, 2000, pp. 104-105.

selves to the fact that psychological discomfort is the price they have had to pay for a “good life.” This is especially true of those who work in trade: stress is an inevitable companion of any “shuttle” trader while he travels to Russia with his cargo, at the market where he is open to pressure from the stall owners, and in the streets where his documents are frequently checked. He also comes in contact with the militia and the Federal Security Service throughout the day.

The sociological poll in Ekaterinburg included a poll of experts who officially had to deal with labor migrants from Kyrgyzstan. The majority pointed out that the migrants find it culturally and psychologically hard to adjust, which makes it hard to achieve normal relations with the local people. A large number of the polled experts pointed out that migrants create many new problems: they are prone to excessive drinking and fighting; they commit offences and worsen the crime situation. At the same time, some the respondents said that not infrequently the law enforcement and other official structures infringe on the migrants’ rights and freedoms, which provokes the newcomers to engage in asocial conduct and causes tension in the places of their temporary residence.

According to the polls, many of the migrants have to bribe the militiamen who check their registration documents. One of our respondents, head of the Migration Department of the State Administration of the Interior of the Sverdlovsk Region, said that temporary registration of labor migrants from Kyrgyzstan was the worst problem. The local law enforcement bodies raise all sort of bureaucratic barriers: the cost of registration is low, yet the process is torturous. People prefer to pay rather than waste time standing in line in all kinds of offices. The majority of the migrants pay intermediaries. This explains why a considerable number of the newcomers do not have registration. One of the sides profits from document checking; the other is living in fear, humiliation, and the need to stay away from the authorities, so as not to be caught without documents. When answering the question “To what extent are you satisfied with being a migrant?” only 4.4 percent said that they were absolutely comfortable. This small percentage seems to be completely justified.

The respondents agreed that racket in Russia was a common phenomenon, as well as monthly payments to local criminal structures; that hatred of Islam is rising, and that part of Russian society is intolerant toward Muslims. The majority of the migrants knows next to nothing about the local Kyrgyz consulates and does not respect them. They look at the Uzbeks who, they argue, “are absolutely safe—no Kazakhs bothering them. Everything is well organized—there are structures that stand up for them.” The polled were convinced that much depended “on the strength of the state as a whole and of the president” and that “our government is powerless and cannot defend its citizens.”

My poll conducted in 2002 in Kazakhstan revealed that Kyrgyz tobacco growers were living and working in appalling conditions; they normally worked from dawn to dusk; they had no elementary conveniences; as illegal migrants they had no protection from the tyranny of those who buy cheap workforce; people were forced to work despite health problems; there were cases of people trying to escape, being caught and beaten, etc.

Our sociological poll revealed that those who work at the Almaty markets also had problems with getting temporary residence and work permits. Both are expensive: registration is given for twelve months, so those who come to stay for a couple of months have to apply to agents. Most of them have none of the required documents at all. There are plans to introduce a pension tax to be paid by everyone, even non-citizens of other states.

Migrants are ignorant about their rights and obligations; there were several cases in Almaty when children were separated from their Kyrgyz families and put into orphanages under the pretext that child labor was banned in Kazakhstan, or that these children lacked the necessary documents. In actual fact, these children were helping their parents. This is another method of extortion: the children were not returned until the militiamen were paid a ransom.

The railways connecting Kyrgyzstan with Kazakhstan and Russia are the scene of cruelty and terror. Even the names of certain railway stations cause panic among migrants: customs officials, border guards, and the militia all demand their share of payment. They take away passports for real or faked reasons, throw away luggage, insult people and beat them up.

These factors have already affected the intentions of labor migrants: 7.4 percent of the respondents in Ekaterinburg have decided to stop their “shuttle” trading; 11.8 percent are inclined to do this; 35.3 percent will stay in the business, while 41.2 percent are undecided. The respondents complained that they are not employed in their field of specialization, and that they have to do hard unskilled work which none of the Russians want. There is another negative factor: half of the polled live in Russia without families because they cannot enroll their children in schools or kindergartens; as a result, family relations suffer. Forty percent of the respondents said that the family climate had worsened, while mutual understanding between spouses and with their children was lost.

Russian researchers have repeatedly drawn attention to the fact that labor migrants are robbed of their rights in Russia: their status has not been identified (even though they are described as labor migrants), the law enforcement bodies regard them as illegal migrants; they humiliate them and extort money from them. Russia treats honest people who come to earn money as drug dealers or bootleggers. This must change before the situation cripples Russia’s economic interests. The country needs acts to legalize labor migration and the status of those who come to work for the benefit of Moscow or Samara.⁸

Employers fix wages they are prepared to pay to illegal migrants. Our studies have shown that people become illegal migrants under the pressure of local circumstances, in particular, because the employer wants to avoid paying taxes and social assignments for them. Most of these people live in atrocious conditions, share one room with several people or rent a bed; they are not covered by medical insurance.

It is up to the state to resolve these problems by regulating the migration processes both at their source and destination.

Illegal labor migration is fraught with social tension both at its places of origin and places of destination. In the latter case, it may distort the labor market, worsen the crime situation, and cause problems in inter-state relations. In the places of origin labor migration weakens the professional-and-skill potential. There are well-educated and skilled people among labor migrants prepared to undertake any job, the least prestigious and the hardest, which have nothing to do with their qualifications.

Kyrgyzstan, in turn, attracts illegal labor migrants from Afghanistan, China, Turkey, and CIS countries: it is a link with the southeast of Asia. Recently small groups of petty traders from CIS countries and China have appeared, which is explained by the presence of fairly large Kyrgyz diasporas there. Transit migrants can also be counted as illegal migrants—they use our republic as one of the stages on their journey to the West. Some of them, however, remain. Experts believe that the flow of illegal migrants (mainly from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Tajikistan and China) will increase because of the continued military-political and socioeconomic instability there.

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The official figures and sociological data quoted above testify that the socioeconomic repercussions of labor migration from Kyrgyzstan are far from clear cut. Labor migration is a positive phenomenon because it helps avoid the socioeconomic instability of the transition period. Economists have calculated that the export of workforce is five times more effective than the export of finished goods. In some of the Arab countries, 20 to 30 percent of hard currency income is produced in this sphere. Migrants send money directly to their families; they bring back hard currency, securities, and consumer goods. Return migration cuts down expenses on training and retraining and upgrading skills.

There are negative aspects, too: it is mainly mobile, enterprising, and skilled urban residents who go abroad, thus the quality of the domestic workforce is reduced, and specialists become rare, which is extremely detrimental to industrial enterprises, organizations, and services. This may slow down economic development and cause a serious shortage of skilled workers. We are also witnessing large-scale

⁸ See: *Migratsia i informatsia*, ed. by Zh.A. Zayonchkovskaia, Center for the Studies of Forced Migration in the CIS. Independent Research Council for Migration in the CIS and Baltic Countries, Moscow, 2000, pp. 50-51.

shifts in the size and structure of the able-bodied population, which prefers to work abroad where labor migrants have to take the least desirable and the lowest-paid jobs and put up with inadequate social protection.

Mass labor migration in Central Asia is changing the family and gender-and-age structure of the local population; recently a lower birth rate has been observed. The local communities are already encountering the deformation of their demographic, territorial, and social-professional structure due to the outflow of young and relatively young groups of the population. This is leading to a certain breakdown in social ties, an increase in alienation and emigration sentiments in society, and a reduction in patriotism.