LANGUAGE AS A NATION-BUILDING FACTOR IN KYRGYZSTAN

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In 1991, Kyrgyzstan, like all other Soviet republics, declared itself an independent state and embarked on the road of independence, democratization and radical economic reforms.

Its advance along this road was, to a great extent, complicated by its linguistic variety. In 1989, the ethnic minorities negatively responded to the declaration, which made the Kyrgyz language the only state tongue: they interpreted this as an infringement on their linguistic and human rights. Any language is more than a means of communication—it is a linchpin of ethnic identity while the individual's ability to realize his cultural and linguistic requirements is one of the basic human rights. This makes linguistic policy that takes account of the rights and interests of all ethnic groups a major part of nation-building.

State Policy in the Linguistic Sphere

In the latter half of the 1980s, the local intelligentsia rebelled against the traditional Soviet policy of Russification; it was on its insistence that the Law on the State Language of the Kirghiz S.S.R. was adopted in 1989; it declared the Kyrgyz language the republic's only state tongue. This was done to put an end to linguistic inequality in the republic and to ensure "all-round and complete functioning of the Kyrgyz language is all spheres of state and social life." The new law was expected to raise the status of the Kyrgyz language by lowering that of the Russian language that under the Soviet rule enjoyed the highest social status in the republic. It should be said that neither the Soviet Union nor its constituent republics had similar laws while their constitutions included language-related clauses.[1]

The law pursued certain political aims as well: the Kyrgyz authorities preferred to move somewhat away from Moscow. The raised status of the autochthonous population's native tongue encouraged ethnic and cultural resurrection of Kyrgyzes and became one of the key factors of the national state development.

The republic's Supreme Soviet developed the law with its resolution On the Enactment Procedure of the Law of the Kirghiz S.S.R. "On the State Language" under which all official and business correspondence and documents should be compiled in the Kyrgyz language as of 1 January, 1999. The law created certain privileges for Kyrgyzes as carriers of the republic's native tongue and infringed on the rights of other ethnoses. This caused ethnic tension and started mass emigration of Slavic population. Between 1989 and 1991, 145 thousands of Russian speakers, mainly Slavs, left the republic that was thus deprived of tens of thousands of skilled

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[1] See: Jacob M. Landau, Barbara Kellner-Heinkel, *Politics of Language in the Ex-Soviet Muslim States,* Hurst and Company, London, 2001, p. 109.

specialists formerly working in all economic spheres, at industrial enterprises in the first place, in construction, power production and other vitally important spheres. In other words, mass migration dealt a heavy blow at the republic's economy. This and certain other factors forced the country's leaders to readjust its foreign policy to keep the Russian speakers in the republic. In 1992, the state linguistic policy was somewhat corrected: the settlements, enterprises and organizations with no less than 70 percent of the Russian speakers were allowed to use Russian in their business correspondence and other documents. In 1993, the Kyrgyz-Russian (Slavic) University was set up; the Criminal Code received an article about the punishment for national discrimination. B. Silaev, a Russian, won the 1995 mayor elections in Bishkek, the country's capital. Another Russian, A. Moiseev, was appointed vice-premier. The parliament and other power structures discussed the status of the Russian language as a language of communication among ethnic groups.

In 1994, to stem the outflow of skilled workers President Akaev issued a decree On Measures Designed to Regulate Migration Processes in the Kyrgyz Republic that said, in part: "The Russian language should be regarded as an official one, together with the Kyrgyz language, in those territorial and production collectives where Russian speakers are in the majority as well as in those spheres where the use of Russian promotes progress." The government was instructed to revise the schedule of switching correspondence to the state tongue: the final date was 1 January, 2005. Later events testified that the 1989 law ignored the real linguistic situation in the republic: it was a product of political expediency and the political context of the late 1980s when the ideas of preservation of cultural heritage, wider functioning of native tongues and their higher prestige dominated in all Union republics, Kirghizia included, amid national and ideological mobilization that took place in the last years of the Soviet Union's existence. It should be said that by that time the Kyrgyz language could not become the state tongue: it was not developed enough to function in business correspondence and science and lacked an adequate ideological and conceptual base.

The academic community and the public raised the question of the status of the Russian language during the discussions of the 1993 constitution of independent Kyrgyzstan. Some of them insisted on the status of an official tongue for it or the status of the language of interethnic communication; others wanted to see Russian as the state tongue so as to stem an outflow of Russian speakers. The 1993 Constitution registered the state status of the Kyrgyz language and refused to recognize Russian as the official tongue. It recognized, however, that "the Russian and all other languages could develop and function equally and freely" and banned "infringement on the rights and freedoms of citizens on the grounds that they did not know or could not use the state tongue" (Art. 5).

In 1998, the presidential decree On the Further Development of the State Tongue of the Kyrgyz Republic approved the Conception of the Further Development of the State Tongue and set up a National Commission on the State Tongue. The conception admitted that many of the propositions of the 1989 law could not be fulfilled, outlined a new strategy of the further development of the state (Kyrgyz) language and described its main goal as "the creation of conditions conducive to its development into a language able to serve the state as a multifunctional tongue."

The National Commission was set up as a collegial body designed to coordinate activities of all state structures and organizations engaged in developing and using the Kyrgyz language. It was also charged with the task of drafting programs of the development of the state language and a new law on the state language.

Meanwhile the public was actively discussing in the media the issue of the status of the Russian language. In response in 2000 the president issued a decree On Additional Measures to Regulate the Migration Processes designed to stabilize emigration. The decree pointed to the need "to carry out measures to create favorable conditions for the study and development of the Russian language in Kyrgyzstan and its historiography and to perpetuate the names of outstanding Russian-speaking scientists, cultural figures and people engaged in production and arts who have made considerable contributions to the development of the Kyrgyz Republic."

The changed state policy in relation to the Russian language was finally registered in the Law on the Official Language of the Kyrgyz Republic adopted on 29 May, 2000 that described Russian as the republic's official tongue and guaranteed its protection at the state level. Art 11 of the Law allowed the state structures, local administrations and self-administrations to conduct statistical, financial and technical documentation in two languages: the state and the official ones. In December 2001, the president signed the Law on Introducing Amendments into Art 5 of the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic (adopted by the republic's parliament at the second reading) that granted the official status to the Russian language

and made it equal to the Kyrgyz language. This was not the first attempt at granting the official status to Russian: aborted attempts at amending the constitution were made in 1996 and 1997. This time it was President Akaev, rather than the Assembly of People's Representatives, who initiated the Law on the Official Language of the Kyrgyz Republic.

Its adoption stressed once more the failure of the 1989 law and confirmed the Russian language's earlier status. Foreign analysts believe that the 2000 law was designed not only to stabilize emigration—it pursued two other political aims, namely, the votes of the Russian speakers in the coming presidential elections and Moscow's support.

Meanwhile, on 20 September, 2000 the presidential decree introduced the Program of Development of the State Language of the Kyrgyz Republic for 2000-2010 elaborated by the National Commission on the State Tongue. The document laid the foundation for the stage-by-stage development of the Kyrgyz language and for widening the sphere of its application. It clearly stated its aim "to raise the state tongue to the level ensuring the performance of its functions." The program described, in particular, "ten basic trends of the state tongue's development grouped into two stages." During the first stage (2000-2005) it was planned "to strengthen the base of the state language's development and use" by "stimulating its national basic elements," "creating a new generation of textbooks and teaching methods," "unifying terms and business correspondences in the Kyrgyz language, improving the quality of translations, extending the sphere of functioning of the state tongue in scientific research." It was at this stage that it was planned "to switch correspondence and documents in all regions and in Bishkek to the state language."

It is expected that the second stage (2005-2010) will realize the measures "of further promoting the priority trends of the first stage—adequate technologies of teaching the state language, better textbooks, registering scientific terms, improved official translation quality, unification of business correspondence and official forms, intensified teaching of the Kyrgyz language to people of other ethnic groups."

To a great extent the program was drawn up for the same reason as the Law on the State Language. The measures designed to support the Russian tongue and to impart an official status to it somewhat weakened the positions of Kyrgyz and its role in the country's social and political life. A certain upsurge in the study and wider use of the Kyrgyz tongue that took place in the early 1990s gradually declined. The program increased social and ethnic tension in the country.

Significantly, the program presupposed that "teaching the Latin script as applied to the Kyrgyz language" should be introduced in schools, specialized secondary and higher educational establishments. In fact, these plans had been first made public in 1993 and had been postponed for economic and psychological reasons. On the one hand, introduction of the new script is a costly project, and on the other, adults do not want to learn the new script.[2] The Cyrillic script is abandoned mainly for political reasons: it is associated with Soviet times that the republic wants to leave behind; the Latin script is seen as a sign of independence from Russia and the republic's emergence onto the world scene. An example of Turkey[3] was important yet over time its influence in Central Asia weakened.

The discussion of the program revealed an important issue: one tongue or bilingualism and balancing two tongues in one republic. This problem was formulated late in November 2003 at the sitting of the Legislative Assembly that discussed the draft Law on the State Language the president presented to the parliament in 2002. At the same time, the parliament received an alternative draft authored by a group of deputies under B. Asanov. The president draft was a vast one (it included 38 articles), the deputies' draft with 28 articles was shorter. They differed in content as well: the media described the presidential variant as a harsh one while the variant of the deputies was a more liberal one. They had one thing in common: the state language should be the main one in all spheres of social and public life. As a result of the parliamentary discussions the authors of the deputies' variant recalled it while the Legislative Assembly accepted the presidential variant. While agreeing that the law was a timely one the deputies differed on individual articles especially Art 11 that said that knowledge of the state tongue was indispensable for all civil servants. The Legislative Assembly sent the presidential variant to the Committee for Education, Science and Culture for further adjustment in conformity with some of the articles of the alternative variant and deputies' suggestions. The work should be completed before mid-December 2004.

[2] See: V.M. Alpatov, *150 iazykov i politika: 1917-2000,* Moscow, 2000, pp. 62-63.
[3] See: Ibid., pp. 190-191.

Some of the draft articles reflect the state policy in the language sphere: Art 13 presupposes that during receptions and meetings with foreign representatives and in elaboration and ratification of the documents the Kyrgyz Republic should use the state tongue while the official tongue can be used when dealing with the countries of the Russian-speaking area. According to Art 15, documentation in all bodies of state power, local self-administration and in other structures should be carried out in the state tongue, the official tongue should be used when necessary. Art 17 says that all documents of business and financial nature should be in the state language while the use of the official tongue is allowed as a temporary measure. According to Art 20, the state language is the main language of education from the pre-school establishments up to higher educational establishments and in the courses of upgrading qualification. The citizens are guaranteed a "free choice of the language of teaching." At the same time, there will be written exams in the Kyrgyz language in all schools and entrance and graduation exams in Kyrgyz in specialized secondary and higher educational establishments. According to the draft law the state tongue should be used in courts, inquiry, preliminary investigation in criminal cases, notarial acts and acts of a civil status, in posts and telegraph, in labels and instructions. The official tongue can be used "if needed." Finally, "two tongues—the state and the official ones" can be used in the army and paramilitary structures. This law is binding on heads of all organizations, including those that do not belong to the state.[4]

This shows that the language policy in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan is a contradictory one. On the one hand, it was called to life by the processes of nation-building that presuppose one state tongue while, on the other, there is a desire to recognize and ensure the linguistic rights of ethnic minorities.

It should be added that these problems are not limited to the Russian language: there is a problem of the Uzbek language, the tongue of the third largest ethnic community in the republic. The Uzbeks mainly live in the south of Kyrgyzstan where Uzbek is used by other ethnic groups living in the three southern regions of our republic yet it was denied an official status.

The experience of multilingual countries has shown that the official status of any regional language is not limited to purely linguistic problems. The official status of regional languages is followed by the recognition of the groups that use them as nations that is accompanied by claims to territorial autonomy up to and including secession.[5]

Linguistic contradictions are not limited to the developing countries living through the stage of nation-building and emergence of civil society. The discussions in this sphere are always present in the political life of Belgium, Spain, Switzerland, and Canada. In the United States where English is commonly accepted as the tongue of public and state life there are bitter disputes over the language rights of the Hispanics.

The Language Situation Today

Kyrgyzstan is a polyethnic republic and home to over 90 ethnoses: according to the 1999 population census, 65% of the population are Kyrgyzes, 14%, Uzbeks; 13%, Russians; and about 8%, members of other ethnic groups.[6]

This explains linguistic variety yet the following languages can be singled out according to the number of users and the language's functions: Kyrgyz, Russian, Uzbek, German, Ukrainian, Tartar, Uighur, Kazakh, Dungan, and Tajik.[7] Functionally, the languages are far from equal: Kyrgyz, Russian and Uzbek are widely used while the others are used in families and inside ethnic groups.

In spring-summer 2003 the Center for Social Studies at the Academy of Sciences of the Kyrgyz Republic carried out an ethnosociological poll in the form of questionnaires to identify the place of Kyrgyz and other languages in the society's socio-communicative system, the degree to which the country's population know the Kyrgyz, Russian and Uzbek tongues as well as preferences in the use of specific

[4] See: "Chego zhdat ot zakona 'O gosiazyke' (Nyneshniy variant zakonoproekta)," *Delo No.,* 26 November, 2003.

[5] See: *Language Rights and Political Theory,* ed. by Will Kymlicka and Alan Patten, Oxford University Press, New York, 2003, pp. 5-6.

[6] See: *Osnovnye itogi pervoy natsional'noy perepisi naselenia Kyrgyzskoy Respubliki 1999 goda,* Bishkek, 2000, p. 26.

[7] See: A. Orusbaev, *Iazykovaia zhizn Kirgizii,* Ilim Publishers, Frunze, 1990, p. 56.

tongues in various spheres. The poll involved 1,000 people: 200 in each of the regions covered by it (the Chu, Issyk-Kul, Osh, Dzhalal-Abad regions and the city of Bishkek) were selected according to the republic's age-gender-nationality structure. These territories were chosen because of their more varied ethnic composition as compared with other regions (the Batken, Naryn, and Talas regions).

The Area of the Kyrgyz, Russian and Uzbek Tongues and the Degree of Command of These Languages

The degree of command of a language is one of the main indices that describe the linguistic situation in any country. The poll revealed that 70.2% of the respondents had a good command of the spoken Kyrgyz language: by territory the lowest figures were found in Bishkek (11.3%) and the Chu Region (10.4%); the figures for the Issyk-Kul, Dzhalal-Abad and Osh regions are 16.6%, 16.3% and 15.6%, respectively.

Nearly all ethnic Kyrgyzes among the polled (97.6%) declared that they had perfect command of the spoken language of their ancestors. The figures for other nationalities[8] are: good command of the spoken Kyrgyz—49.2%; 23.1% have problems with the spoken tongue while 27.7% cannot speak Kyrgyz at all. The figures for Uzbeks are different: 44.4% among the Uzbek respondents had a good command of the spoken Kyrgyz tongue; 46.2% had problems while 9.4% could not speak Kyrgyz at all. The smallest group of those with good command of the spoken Kyrgyz language was found among the Russian respondents: 1.6%; 22.9% had problems with the spoken tongue while the majority (75.5%) could not speak Kyrgyz at all.

The situation was different with respect to the Russian language: 65.4% of the respondents spoke Russian freely (Bishkek and the Chu Region demonstrated the highest figures). This group is made of Russians and people of other nationalities—the absolute majority of the latter (86.1%) had perfect command of the spoken Russian; 10.8% had problems and only 3.1% could not speak Russian at all. The figures for the Kyrgyz respondents are 56.5%, 35.7% and 7.8%, respectively. The share of Uzbeks with a good command of the spoken Russian is somewhat lower (47%), 41.9% had problems with the spoken tongue while 11.1% could not speak Russian at all.

The total share of the respondents who used the Uzbek language was 20.5%. The figures for Uzbek speakers in the southern regions (9.5% in the Dzhalal-Abad and 8.1% in the Osh regions) were much higher than in the north (1.1% in Bishkek; 1% in the Issyk-Kul, and 0.8% in the Chu regions). This is explained by the high concentration of ethnic Uzbeks living in the southern Uzbek-speaking regions.

All Uzbek respondents had good command of their native spoken tongue; 98.9% of the polled Russians could not speak Uzbek at all; only 1.1% could speak it with difficulty. Among the polled Kyrgyzes 12.7% had a good command of the spoken Uzbek; 25.6% had problems while 61.7% could not speak Uzbek at all. Nearly the same figures applied to the members of other nationalities: 12.3% had a good command of the spoken Uzbek; 18.5% had problems while 72.3% could not speak Uzbek at all.

The above shows that the command of the three main tongues varied by territory and ethnic group. The Kyrgyz language is the most widely used one (with the exception of the Chu Region and Bishkek, which is explained by the relatively low share of Kyrgyzes there and a large share of Russians and Ukrainians). In 1999, Kyrgyzes comprised 43.8% of the total population in the Chu Region; Russians, 31.9%; Ukrainians, 3.3%; the figures for Bishkek are 52.2, 33.2 and 2.1%, respectively. The share of Kyrgyzes in other territories is larger: in the Issyk-Kul Region they comprise 79.4%; Russians, 13.2%; in the Osh Region, Kyrgyzes comprise 63.8%; Uzbeks, 31.1%; Russians, 1.3%; in the Dzhalal-Abad Region, Kyrgyzes, 69.8%; Uzbeks, 24.4%; Russians, 2.1%.[9] It should be said that members of other Turkic ethnoses kindred to Kyrgyzes (Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Tartars, Uighurs, Turks, and Kalmyks) are counted as a Kyrgyz-speaking group.

The Uzbek-speaking group includes Tajiks who normally have a good command of the spoken Uzbek as well as Kyrgyzes and other ethnic groups living in the southern regions.

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[8] As distinct from Kyrgyzes, Russians and Uzbeks the respondents of other nationalities were grouped under the blanket term "others."

[9] See: *Naselenie Kyrgyzstana. Itogi pervoi natsional'noy perepisi naselenia Kyrgyzskoy Respubliki 1999 goda v tablitsakh,* Book 2, Bishkek, 2000, pp. 73-78.

At the same time, the results demonstrated that the Russian language was widely used by all ethnic groups. For historical reasons it was the language of administration, science and higher education. Ukrainians, Germans, Belorussians, Koreans, Jews and members of other non-autochthonous ethnic groups use it for communication.

The Language of Education

The level of command of any language depends, to a great degree, on the language of family upbringing and education, therefore the family, school, specialized secondary and higher educational establishments are very important in this respect.

The sociological poll demonstrated that 57.3% of the respondents grew in families that used Kyrgyz; 28% used Russian at home; 11.8%, Uzbek, and less than 3%, other tongues. The largest share of those who used Kyrgyz is found in the Issyk-Kul Region (14.9%), the smallest, in Bishkek (8.8%). The largest share of the Russian-speaking families was found in the capital (10.3%), the lowest, in the south: the Osh (1.3%) and Dzhalal-Abad (1.6%) regions where the share of families using Uzbek in daily life was the greatest (5.2% and 5.3%, respectively.)

Here are the figures by ethnic group: 96.6% of Russians grew in families that used the Russian language; 90.6% of Uzbeks came from the Uzbek-speaking families; 87.9% of Kyrgyzes, from the Kyrgyz-speaking families; 40% of members of other ethnic groups lived in families using their native tongues. At the same time, 52.3% of the respondents of other nationalities grew in Russian-speaking families: 9.5% of them are Kyrgyzes (in the capital and the Chu Region where Russian has preserved its high prestige as the language of interethnic communication that is used in families and even among members of other ethnic groups than Russian).

The language of teaching is selected according to the language used at home; in Soviet times parents preferred Russian as the language of teaching because of its higher social status and higher teaching quality in the Russian schools. The poll revealed the following: 53.7% of those polled attended Kyrgyz schools; 35.4%, Russian schools; 11.4%, Uzbek schools; only 1.5% were taught in other languages. At the same time, 83% of Kyrgyzes, 3.4% of Uzbeks, 2.1% of Russians and 9.2% of respondents of other ethnic affiliations attended Kyrgyz schools. Nearly all Russian respondents (96.3%) attended Russian schools; 17.8% of Kyrgyzes; 13.7% of Uzbeks and 69.2% of members of other nationalities were also educated in Russian schools. The Uzbek schools educated 82.9% of Uzbeks; 2.7% of Russians; 1.3% of Kyrgyzes and 6.1% of members of other nationalities. Schools, which taught in other languages, were attended by 6.1% of respondents of other nationalities.

I have already written above that the status of the Kyrgyz language and its role in the sphere of education increased when the republic became independent. As a result the number of parents of other nationalities than Kyrgyz who wanted to teach their children in the Kyrgyz language increased to a certain extent: they naturally wanted to give their children a good start in the country in which Kyrgyz was the state tongue. Among those polled 64.6% of Kyrgyzes; 20.5% of Uzbeks; 15.4% of Russians; 24.6% of members of other ethnic groups wanted to educate their children in Kyrgyz.

The Russian language has retained its positions in the sphere of higher and specialized secondary education; this is explained, to a great extent, by the inadequately developed conceptual and terminological basis of the Kyrgyz language, its limited application in natural and technical sciences.

Among the respondents with higher and specialized secondary education 33.1% studied in Russian.[10] The highest share of such former students was found in Bishkek (11.2%), the lowest, in the Osh Region (3.1%). The largest share of those who studied in the Kyrgyz language (17.7%) was found in Bishkek (18%), the lowest, in the Chu Region (1.5%); the share of those who studied in the Uzbek language is small—2.9%; the largest share is found in the Dzhalal-Abad Region (1.7%), the lowest, in the Issyk-Kul

[10] The share of the respondents with higher and specialized secondary education is related to the number of all those polled. The total share of the respondents with higher and specialized secondary education was 55.9%; the figure included those with incomplete higher education (5.7%).

Region (0.1%). It should be said that the republic's higher educational establishments are concentrated in Bishkek and that they teach local young men and those who come from other regions.

Among the Kyrgyz respondents with higher and specialized secondary education 27.8% studied in educational institutions that taught in Russian; 26.5% were taught in Kyrgyz.[11] The figures for the Uzbek respondents are: 18.8% studied in Uzbek; 18.8%, in Russian; 7.7% studied in Kyrgyz. Nearly all Russian respondents and 58.5% of members of other ethnic groups studied in Russian.

The results have confirmed once more that the language used in the family is mainly determined by the family's ethnic affiliation; the members of other nationalities and the Kyrgyzes of Bishkek and the Chu Region were the only exception. It was revealed that parents of other nationalities than Russian and Kyrgyzes living in cities still prefer Russian schools. A large share of the respondents who studied in Kyrgyz schools can be explained by the fact that 82.5% of secondary schools[12] are found in the countryside with the predominant Kyrgyz population that prefers the language of its ancestors.

The Russian language still remains the language of higher and specialized secondary education.

The Language of Communication

The language of communication means the language used in the family and at work.

The poll has confirmed that the national tongues are most consistently used in the family: nearly all polled Kyrgyzes (95.1%), Uzbeks (98.3%), and Russians (95.7%) talk to their parents in their native tongues; among the members of other nationalities 56.9% use their native tongues when talking to parents; 46.1% use Russian while 18.5%, the Kyrgyz language. There are other examples: 8.4% of the polled Kyrgyzes prefer to talk in Russian to their parents; the share among Uzbeks is 7% while 6% prefer the Kyrgyz language.

Among the spouses 71.9% of Kyrgyzes, 69.2% of Uzbeks, 69% of Russians and 34.4% of other nationalities use their native tongue.[13] At the same time, 11.3% of Kyrgyzes; 6% of Uzbeks; and 40% of members of other nationalities prefer to use Russian when talking to their spouses while 10.8% use the Kyrgyz language.

The use of language in communication with children is very similar: 70.7% of Russians; 69.7% of Kyrgyzes; 68.4% of Uzbeks, and 27.7% of respondents of other nationalities prefer their native tongues.[14] At the same time, 44.6% of respondents of other nationalities chose Russian while 7.7%, the Kyrgyz language.

Significantly, the absolute majority of the polled use their native tongue when talking to friends: the share among Russians is 98.9%; among Uzbeks, 87.2%; Kyrgyzes, 87%; other ethnoses, 35.4%. This is explained by the fact that the closest friends of the majority of Kyrgyzes (88.7%), Uzbeks (79.5%), Russians (62.9%) and other nationalities (21.5%) belong to the same nationality.

At the same time, 30.8% of Kyrgyzes, 24.8% of Uzbeks, and 73,8% of respondents of other nationalities use Russian when talking to their friends. The figures for the Kyrgyz language are: 21.4% of Uzbeks and 35.4% of members of other nationalities. It should be said that members of kindred Turkic peoples living in the republic (for example, Kazakhs and Kyrgyzes) use the Kyrgyz language for communication. At the same time, 60% of those polled pointed out that they chose the Kyrgyz tongue when talking to friends; 45% opted for Russian and 13%, for Uzbek.

The picture is different in offices and enterprises where 37.2% of the respondents use Russian; 45.4% use Kyrgyz, and 9.2%, Uzbek. When talking to colleagues 65.6% of Kyrgyzes, 16.2% of Uzbeks and 27.7% of members of other ethnic groups prefer the Kyrgyz language; Russian is used by 78.7% of Russians; 25.6% of Kyrgyzes; 19.7% of Uzbeks; and 61.5% of members of other nationalities; the Uzbek language is favored by 60.7% of Uzbeks; 2.4% of Kyrgyzes and 9.2% of members of other ethnic groups.

The results suggest that in families and inside ethnic groups the majority prefers its native tongue. At work, a considerable number of polled uses Russian; the labor collectives have still preserved the Soviet

[11] The share of respondents with higher and specialized secondary education is related to the number of those polled.
[12] See: *Osnovnye itogi pervoy natsional'noy perepisi naselenia Kyrgyzskoy Respubliki 1999 goda,* p. 43.
[13] The share of the spouses is related to the total number of those polled.
[14] The share of the respondents with children is related to the total number of those polled.

traditions when Russian was used in correspondence and documents, it was used when dealing with state structures and organizations, and at enterprises. The majority of work collectives are polyethnic as distinct from families and friendly circles that are normally monoethnic.

The Language of the Media and Non-periodical Publications

The poll has revealed that the respondents could understand information both in Russian and in their native tongues; 90.6% of Uzbeks, 84.6% of Russians, 79.4% of Kyrgyzes and 23.1% of members of other ethnic groups preferred to read fiction in their native tongues. At the same time, 84.6% of members of other nationalities; 42.4% of Kyrgyzes; 26.5% of Uzbeks prefer Russian while 11.1% of Uzbeks and 12.3% of respondents from other ethnic groups prefer Kyrgyz. The figures for the media are the following: 98.9% of Russians; 80.3% of Uzbeks; 78.4% of Kyrgyzes and 10.8% of members of other ethnic groups mainly read periodicals in their native languages; 55.6% of Kyrgyzes; 41.9% of Uzbeks, and 87.6% of members of other nationalities prefer Russian periodicals while 16.2% of Uzbeks and 16.9% of members of other ethnic groups prefer Kyrgyz.

The preferences for the language of radio and TV programs are very interesting: 89.1% of the respondents prefer TV programs in Russian; 63.3%, in Kyrgyz; 18.7%, in Uzbek. Among Kyrgyzes, 88.4% prefer TV programs in Russian; 85.6% in Kyrgyz; 11.9%, in Uzbek; among Russians 98.4% prefer TV programs in Russian, 7% in Kyrgyz. The figures for Uzbeks are: 91.5% prefer Uzbek; 72.5%, Russian; 48.7%, Kyrgyz. Among the members of other nationalities 93.8% prefer Russian; 36.9%, Kyrgyz; 7.7%, Uzbek, and 13.8%, other tongues.

A fewer share of the respondents (79.2%) prefers radio programs in Russian; 60.2% in Kyrgyz; 16.9% in Uzbek. Among the polled Kyrgyzes, 84.4% preferred radio programs in Kyrgyz; 76.7%, in Russian; 9.2%, in Uzbek. The figures for Uzbeks are: 89.7% preferred programs in Uzbek; 55.6%, in Russian; 34.2%, in Kyrgyz; 93.8% of members of other nationalities preferred Russian-language programs; 33.8%, Kyrgyz programs; 9.2% listened radio in Uzbek, and 15.4% in other tongues.

The figures speak of the still lingering Soviet habit when information was mainly in Russian. It should be added that the TV and radio programs in the Kyrgyz and Uzbek languages are of low quality, and there are almost no programs in other languages. This forces a considerable number of the respondents to turn to Russian-language programs.

The share of those who prefer Russian periodicals is much greater than the share of those who prefer newspapers and magazines in the Kyrgyz, Uzbek and other languages.

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By way of a summary I can say that the language policy in Kyrgyzstan designed to make the state language the main and, in future, the only language used in the republic's social-political and intellectual spheres fails to take into account the real situation in the country. Even though the Kyrgyz language is fairly widely used, Russian still dominates many spheres due to the fact that it is not merely the tongue of the local ethnic Russians but also one of the channels that helps the republic join the world information process; this is one of the languages of international communication. Similar situations were observed in many countries where more prestigious tongues of ethnic minorities pushed aside the state languages (this happened with English in India and French in North Africa, etc.).