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ЯЗЫК И ПОЛИТИКА В БЫВШЕМ СОВЕТСКОМ СОЮЗЕ

Всем известен тот факт, что Советский Союз был многонациональным государством с 1917 года до его распада в декабре 1991. В этом контексте многонациональное означало, что все советские граждане имели свою национальность, которая не только определялась по месту рождения, но и имела свои решающие факторы, такие как региональные границы, культурные традиции и родной язык. Таким образом, решающие факторы многонационального построения Советского Союза - это важная тема для обсуждения. Поэтому целью данной статьи является изучение основного взаимодействия языковой политики и языковой стратегии в бывшем Советском Союзе как средства продвижения гомогенности россиян. Предлагаются решения данной проблемы в других сообществах.

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It is a known fact that the Soviet Union was a multinational state from the Socialist Revolution of 1917 till its disintegration in December, 1991. In this context “multinationa”l meant that all Soviet citizens were defined by their nationalities which was an issue associated not only with birth, but with other critical factors such as regional boundaries, cultural traditions and native languages. Critical conditions of the multinational composition of the former Soviet Union language became a topical issue. This paper therefore seeks to examine the central interplay of language politics and policy in the former Soviet Union as a means of advancing the homogeneity of the Russians. It concludes by proffering solutions for other plural societies.

Key words and phrases: multinational; nationality; language; culture; politics; Soviet Union.

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LANGUAGE AND POLITICS IN THE FORMER SOVIET UNION[©]

Introduction

Though this work essentially deals with the politics of language in the defunct Soviet Union, the attempt will be made to examine briefly the theoretical basis of Bolshevism that may help give direction to this paper. The chemist and thinker D. I. Mendeleev had praised the organizers of the census in 1897 in the Russian empire for classifying the peoples of the country according to their mother tongue. Mendeleev had argued that anybody whose mother tongue was Russian became a true Russian, which is obvious from the fact that among the Slavophiles one finds such (German) names as *Hilferding* and *Mueller*.

In this connection therefore Mendeleev believed that as long as one's mother tongue was Russian, regardless of ethnic kinship, he/she becomes a true Russian by virtue of linguistic affiliation.

To buttress the above language argument, it is pertinent to take on board the other valid definitions of language. “Language is a nation's most obvious and important attribute. There is no such thing as a nation without a common linguistic basis” [11, p. 192]. Providing a more profound insight, Joireman also rightly observed that “in countries that experience similar linguistic divides like Belgium, language becomes the key identifying characteristics of distinct ethnic groups” [12, p. 5]. The Soviet Union best portrays this example of language bilingualism. The USSR had supported unidirectional bilingualism: non-Russians learned Russian, but Russians remained monolingual.

Relatively while commenting on the importance of language in any society Keep argues that, “...since the most important ‘marker’ of an individual's ethnicity was the language he spoke, they naturally gave such matters a great deal of attention”. “They” in Keep's submission refers to the owners' of the target language. One should note that Keep's assertion is a sharp contrast to that postulated by Mendeleev above [14, p. 151-152].

Meanwhile, on the politics of the Russian Empire, he (Keep) argues that “...every empire needs a lingua franca, and no one doubted that in the USSR, this language should be Russian”. The central authorities no longer so brazenly exalted its merits, but made no secret of their desire to maximise its role. In practice, this meant encouraging minority peoples to become bilingual, as the necessary preliminary to any “language shift”, which clearly would require several generations...”. Official statements invariably endorsed the principle of linguistic equality. The principle of linguistic equality implied an acceptance of reciprocity, yet no one spoke of the enrichment of Russian by external influences, only of the reverse. Works by minority writers might be translated into Russian, but not into other minority languages. In areas which were not Russian, there were usually two types of general school distinguished by the language in which instruction was given. Balts, Armenians and Georgians put up stout resistance to the penetration of Russian as the medium of tuition to counter the resulting physical segregation of Russian and native peoples, bilingual schools with parallel classes were set up in some places, but this did not prosper. Nationalists had contended that Russian-language schools were favoured in the provision of funds and so were larger and better equipped. There was valid argument to complaints that no native language schooling was provided for minority nationals who lived in Russian (or other) cities that had large concentration of non-Russians. The reason for this was not just a practical one, but reflected the central authorities' view that children of such migrants were prime candidates for assimilation into the multi-ethnic soviet culture and so did not need separate schools.

Ayo Bamgbose in his inaugural lecture “Linguistics in a Developing Country” asserts that: “Whether or not a local language is eventually agreed upon as the lingua franca for the country, it is important to be clear about the role of a lingua franca *vis-a-vis* the other languages in the country. There can be no question of any group being compelled to give up their own language. Rather, the use of each mother tongue should be encouraged, unless the native speakers willingly decide to give up their language in favour of another. The different languages may have different roles even in the educational system.

In this connection, it is interesting to note that even in a technologically highly developed country such as the U.S.S.R., there is a deliberate policy of utilising the languages of the different nationalities in addition to Russian" [3, p. 10]. Some languages such as Ukrainian, Armenian, Azerbaijani and Uzbek are used up to secondary school only, and some are used only for the eradication of illiteracy and in primary education. This sort of policy should serve as an eye-opener to those who may not appear to see the value in retaining and encouraging our indigenous languages".

In tandem with Bamgbose's submission, the fact remained that other national languages were given the status of second fiddle mainly as a means of eradicating illiteracy in the Soviet Union, this was a clear case of robbing Peter to pay Paul. In the Declaration of the Rights of the Peoples of Russia (November 1917), the Bolsheviks had granted minorities the right which had been repressed during Tsarist times, to practice their beliefs and customs (but not the right to use their national language outside their borders).

On a more specific level in "Bilingualism and Bilingual Education" Glyn Lewis provides us with an intellectual circumstance that may help give direction on the language issue in the former Soviet Union, he maintains that another important point of difference is that the national minorities in the Soviet Union have a very strong territorial bases for their language - they are in fact conquered people who have been drawn into an empire, but not removed from their ancestral homes. Several smaller linguistic groups within the small state of early Russia had to be forged into a single nation before the state could begin its imperial progress [9].

Meanwhile Russification policy which was also used as a political tool, according to Tolz, continued in the Soviet Union with non-Russians whose first language was Russian (especially Ukrainians and Byelorussians), often identifying themselves as Russians in internal passports and censuses [26, p. 1000]. Moreover millions of Russians had been encouraged to settle outside the borders of the Russian Federation. The implication of this was that when the Soviet Union eventually collapsed, approximately 25 million of Russians and another 5 million of Russian speakers found themselves outside the borders of the Russian Federation, they were proclaimed by some intellectuals to be the part of the now divided (*razdelenaya*) Russian nation. For instance, Russian journalist, V. Galenko suggested in *Nezavisimaya gazeta* (1994, p. 25) that "the Russian government should immediately issue a declaration on the Russian speaking Diaspora as an inseparable part of the Russian nation".

Literacy Campaign in the Former Soviet Union

Before examining the language policy of the Soviets as it unfolded in the aftermath of the Bolshevik Revolution, it will be helpful to review their efforts at promoting literacy through the Russian language among the Soviet citizens. Towards achieving a literate Soviet Society, Josef Stalin had applied the theory of Ivan Pavlov about conditioned reflexes. According to Dziwanoski the Pavlovian theory fitted well Stalin's mentality and his conviction that human beings are kin on signal-receiving robots [7, p. 287]. So he decided that the Pavlovian theory should have been applied not only in physiology and medicine, but also in education. Here was a formula that would mold human beings in accordance with a set of well coordinated verbal commands to create a new person – a Soviet man. This was connected with Stalin's attitude toward linguistics.

As Dziwanoski summarises: "The ringing of a bell was sufficient in the case of Pavlov's dogs to make their saliva flow in anticipation of being fed. Human beings however needed a more complex set of signals to follow their master's will, concluded Stalin; so he began to study ways to use language as a vital instrument of political indoctrination" [Ibidem].

The victorious revolutionaries (Bolsheviks) inherited from the Tsarist regime a politically, culturally, economically, socially and linguistically complex situation, with over 100 million citizens speaking no less than 150 different languages. The possibility that some of these groups might take the advantage of the opportunity to assert their independence during the time of national, intranational and international upheaval presented the new Soviet rulers with serious challenges. Preventing the Russian Empire from disintegrating into the host of smaller entities (Balkanization) as so many other empires had done in the past was a high priority on the agenda of the new government. Beyond this, however, the primary concern of the new Soviet regime was to spread the doctrine of Communism among the different peoples within the borders of the now-defunct Russian Empire with the ultimate goal of establishing the egalitarian communist society in which differences were minimized as much as possible. Various strategies were subsequently employed to consolidate Bolshevik power in the fledgling Soviet Union and to build the foundations of a communist society. One of the most important of these was the language policy that the Soviets adopted in dealing with the non-Russian nationalities.

Recognizing the crucial role that language plays in every society and nationality affairs, especially in a complex one such as the Soviet Union which was multinational in structure, the new regime instituted a number of significant steps to guide the development of the non-Russian languages in conformity with the overall goals of the Communist Party.

On the eve of the October revolution, Tsarist Russia was still a largely illiterate society. The census in 1897 which was the last one taken before the revolution had revealed that the literacy rate for the Russian population stood at 28.4% which was the lowest for any European nation at that time. "The literacy rate for women", according to Kazakova [13, p. 53], "was even lower - 16.6%." This literacy porous state of affairs was unacceptable to the Bolsheviks for several valid reasons, apart from the sentimental attachment towards the well-being of the Russian people; the main attraction for the eradication of illiteracy was avowedly political: "Mass illiteracy hindered the building of socialism. It was of vital importance for the success of the cultural revolution that illiteracy be eradicated" [25, p. 26].

In furtherance to this earlier assertion no less an authority than Lenin himself had stated unequivocally that: “It is impossible to build a Socialist society in a country where people are illiterate” [Cited from: 18, p. 310]. Against this background of Bolshevik victory, the campaign of literacy was the first active step they, the Revolutionaries, took towards altering the linguistic landscape of *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, that is the Soviet Union and also to sway *obshchestvennoye mneniye* (public opinion) and in many more ways made possible the radical changes especially that manifested in the later years of the Bolshevik victory.

Ironically the foreseen collapse of the huge Russian Empire in 1917 had raised the hopes of many of its disparate subject peoples; the prayer was that their national rights would be respected. Many non-Russian activists realised that their national movements were weak and unprepared as a result of the repressive policies and enforced Russification that had been pursued by St. Petersburg. They limited their aspiration, therefore, to the hope that the destruction of tsarist autocracy would pave the way for some sort of federal arrangement in a democratised multinational state [21].

Oduvuga in his work “Language, Politics and Religion” maintains that language is the means through which a man becomes conscious of his personality and with which he identifies with a particular group which has a common history, shares the same cultural experience and observe the same traditions within a defined territory. Such common identities have made nations of mankind and the language has been the external expression of the differences that distinguish one nation from the other [22].

It has therefore become noticeable that issues involving language and culture serve as a barometer for measuring a people’s identity and that has formed part of the foundation and collapse of the Soviet Union. As correctly noted by Corsey in the post-Soviet world the culture of the people became garbled. The Soviets conducted an experiment: they took hundreds of millions of people, with histories and traditions and roots and values and tried to make them over into one mold: that of “homo sovietii”: literally, “council man”. It didn’t work - not quite. However, an enormous amount of damage was done to the cultural identities of the most of the people who were the part of the experiment.

It has also been argued that Mikhail Gorbachev was bequeathed a nation that was not only ailing economically, but one that was fragmented with embittered peoples seething with national tensions especially along linguistic lines. For a long time one of the major conceits of Communist propaganda was the indissoluble unity of more than a hundred different Soviet nationalities. Lenin had asserted that under the unifying bonds of Communism nationalism would wither away as a force, to this end, he sought cultural assimilation, but allowed cultural pluralism. This was aptly demonstrated in issues involving the Soviet Union collapse. Over time intellectuals in various republics found meaning in their own national cultures and traditions; the Soviet Union was not a melting pot [23].

Due to Gorbachev’s policies of Glasnost and Perestroika, there arose in the mid-1980’s a complex social function of languages and culture in the Soviet nationalities, the Russian language became more visible as the language of work, services, media, education and governance throughout the Soviet Union. Simply put, Russian was the language of upward mobility both culturally and politically. Meanwhile, various scholars including ethnologists and sociolinguists have undertaken many detailed investigations of the language politics in the USSR.

As Lapidus summarily puts it, the status and recognition accorded various nationalities whether in the treatment of their languages, history, and cultural monuments, or customs and traditions, are a further source of policy problems for the...Soviet leadership. Language policy has become especially sensitive in recent years, basic instruction in the non-Russian republics were guaranteed in the local languages, Russian, as the official language and its study in as a second language was compulsory in native schools. Upward mobility – especially in scientific and political arenas depended on the local elites’ mastery of the Russian language and cultural norms. The issue behind this policy was that it gave Russians little or no pressure to learn the languages of the republics in which they lived or worked in. The shift in language policy which *ab initio* was intended to promote national integration was seen as the efforts at further Russification and thus generated severe resistance and massive demonstrations [16].

As earlier postulated, language is the integral aspect of culture and the two are interrelated. In sum language and culture are inseparable. Through the Russian language, the achievements of Soviet and World cultures were acquired on the principles of a single Soviet socialist culture. One must be reminded that the Russian language was used as the *lingua franca* of Soviet economy, further than that, it was also used widely as the cultural instrument for the dissemination of the works of Soviet and World culture, i.e. the novels of Alexei Tolstoy, Pushkin, Lermontov, Lomonosov, etc.

From our analysis one can deduce that Soviet authorities had imbued the different nations under them with an artificial or surrogate feeling of Soviet patriotism thereby creating the impression of a togetherness and camaraderie of all Soviet things especially language. Thus the false identification of concepts such as “Russian” and “Soviet,” “Russia” and the “Soviet Union” produced complex among members of all non-Russian nations as it was and this ultimately led to civil unrest and inescapable disintegration.

The Language Problem

The language problem or politics in the former Soviet Union was that the Communist government had given absolute priority to the study of the Russian language in all the republics regardless of their own national languages. The argument here was not to delimit Russian language, because Russians constituted the majority part of the population of the Soviet Union, but an argument can be proposed that this should not have been done at the expense of reasonably viable and modern non-Russian languages that were the native languages of millions of people that inhabited the Soviet Union. One must add here that in the multinational structure of the former Soviet Empire, the Russians were, of course, *primus inter pares*.

At the risk of a little digression which is pertinent to our study, on the language issue, we take on board the argument of Mohandas Gandhi given on the 4th of February in 1916 at Benares Hindu University. The speech aptly illustrated Gandhi's thoughts on India's need to gain independence from British rule. Initially Gandhi had believed that the British were a force for good, but however, according to him, "vague promises for self-government given during World War 1 were not kept." To this end Gandhi organised resistance against unpopular British measures. A central argument of Gandhi's resistance was the language issue, which was the domination of the English language in India. In the Soviet Union, Russian also dominated political affairs.

In one of his famous speeches, Gandhi had concluded that: "It is a matter of deep humiliation and shame for us that I am compelled this evening under the shadow of this great college, in this sacred city, to address my countrymen in a language that is foreign to me... I am hoping that this University will see to it that the youths who come to it will receive their instruction through the medium of their vernaculars" [19, p. 60].

Still advocating for the use of native national languages in India, Gandhi adumbrated that: "Our languages are the reflection of ourselves, and if you tell me that our languages are too poor to express the best thought, then say that the sooner we are wiped out of existence the better for us. Is there a man who dreams that English can ever become the national language of India? Why this handicap on the nation? Just consider for one moment what an equal race our lads have to run with every English lad ... the charge against us is that we have no initiative. How can we have any, if we are to devote the precious years of our life to the mastery of a foreign tongue?" [Ibid., p. 60].

Gandhi's postulation was quite pertinent to the Soviet language problem: "Our languages are the reflection of ourselves ... how can we devote the precious years of our life to the mastery of a foreign tongue"? This re-echoed statement encapsulates the agitations of non-Russians and minority groups in the former Soviet Union and modern Russia. Adding to the robust debate on language V. I. Lenin submits: "Language is the heritage of every nation, which class holds power, decides everything". With Lenin's caveat in mind it was obvious that the Russians decided everything by virtue of language, power and politics.

Language and Russification Policies in the Former Soviet Union

In furtherance to the in-depth study of Russia's language policy it is worthy to note that Russification policies were widespread and this also played an important role in the ethnic and language politics in Russia. All official business in the Soviet Union was conducted in Russian; technical secondary education as well as higher education in technical, and often other, subjects were switched to Russian; the percentage of primary and general secondary schools with Russian as the language of instruction was growing albeit slowly but steadily. While in schools with an indigenous language of instruction Russian language subsequently became an obligatory subject. The Red Army became more than ever a tool of Russification, the few separate national units having all been abolished in further pursuit of the language policy. The number of books published in non-Russian languages dropped to the fraction of their figures for 1931-2 and their equality was for the most abysmal; the cultural renaissance of the 1920s had to give way to virulent attacks on bourgeois nationalism and expressions of servile gratitude for the happiness it was bestowing on the Soviet peoples.

In furtherance to the Soviets Russification policies the Russian language was logically used to 'russify' native languages by imposing Russian orthography, lexicon and grammatical patterns. Increasingly the study of Russian was being advocated to enable Soviet citizens of non-Russian extraction to read political literature such as the works of Lenin, Brezhnev and others in the original. On the 18th of January in 1914 Lenin published in *Proletarskaia Pravda* the article titled "Should There Be a State Language?" in which he took issue with Russian liberals who asserted that Russian was great and mighty and that everybody should have studied Russian therefore.

Lenin said: "All this is true, Messieurs liberals," we reply. We know better than you that the language of Turgenev, Tolstoi, Dobrolyubov, Chernshevskii is great and powerful. Even more than you, we want if possible, the closer cooperation and fraternal unity to emerge among the oppressed classes of all nations living in Russia, and we advocate, of course, that every inhabitant of Russia should have the opportunity to learn the Great Russian language. There is only one thing that we do not want: the element of compulsion. We do not want to drive people into Paradise with a stick. We think that no one needs study the great and powerful Russian language under the threat of a cudgel".

This quote above exhibits the assimilationist character of Soviet leaders towards making Russian the language of the Soviet Union. The imposition of Russian on other national territories was done in a less physical manner as Lenin had argued. From the Soviet standpoint, it had been argued according to Roman Solchanyk in "Russian Language and Soviet Politics" (1982) that Soviet experts on nationality relations often maintained that Russian had become the accepted "language of inter-nationality discourse" in the USSR because it was the native language of the Soviet Union's major nationality. From this standpoint, it was said that the Russian language served "to cement the unity of Soviet culture' and acted as the effective accelerator of the drawing together of nations'. It therefore became worrisome when it was posited that all languages in the USSR were equal, but with a stringent proviso that their equality was guaranteed by law. This supposed equality was reduced to mere tokenism and politics during Soviet rule.

At the same time some schools of language policy in the Soviet Union averred that equality in the use of languages had not to be identified with equality of their social functions. This was politics in its setting. It is thus obvious that the Russian language as the central language of the Soviet Union was favoured over those of the periphery. Thus Lenin's linguistic policy formed part of his nationality policy and set the basic parameters for future Soviet policy right up through Mikhail Gorbachev's tenure.

A case in point is one that concerns the Baltic region in the Baltic region according to Keep [14]; the indigenous nations had a harder struggle to preserve their languages - the basis of their identity - and cultures from Sovietisation. They laboured under the disadvantage that their populations were small but this was offset by their greater cohesiveness. Local elites and peoples were at one in having a well-developed national consciousness fortified by the memories of independence and the aggression by which it had been so cruelly ended.

The ultimate goal of the Communist party in launching a massive education campaign was to create Russia's "civil society of the educated" (*obshchestvo*) encompassing all Russian citizens. It was this idea of "nation building" (*national'noe stroitel'stvo*) that was stated polemically in Lenin's NEP policy. The parallel with the pluralistic theme in Soviet language policy is the view expressed by Lenin, the architect of the USSR, that "nations are an inevitable product, an inevitable form in the bourgeois epoch of social development" [Cited from: 11, p. 188]. As such they are only a temporary stage in the evolution of a truly Communist society which will erase all such national and class distinctions, resulting in "the fusion of nations, languages and cultures". This merger of all languages and cultures into one is known as *sliyaniye* [1, p. 10]. This theme was clearly enunciated by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in October of 1961 when a programme was adopted which stated, among other things: "...the erasing of national differences, especially language differences, is a considerably lengthier process than the erasing of class differences [Cited from: 4, p. 231].

Singling out the language issue Lenin had authorized: "The strictest rules must be introduced on the use of the national language in the non-Russian republics of our union, and these rules must be checked with special care... A detailed code will be required, and only the nationals living in the republic in question can draw it up at all successfully [21, p. 54].

From the foregoing it was deducible that the CPSU viewed "the erasing of language differences" as an essential ingredient in the building of the Communist society and also as a catalyst for the homogeneity of other linguistically plural societies.

Federalism also continued to ensure demand for a large native intelligentsia able to read and speak the native language. This community of native speakers continued to grow throughout that period and showed no signs of foregoing their native tongue for Russian in spite of the social pressures to communicate in the lingua franca of the state ... this enabled ethnic divisions to remain an integral part and reference point of native public life and an organizational basis for reinforcing ethno regional identities. Consequently the perennial language problem had been exacerbated by the Kremlin's intention to make Russian the official language of the Soviet Union.

Within this context Nahaylo and Swoboda observed that many of the non-Russians were already disappointed by the formula that Moscow had devised to 'regulate the social functions' of the languages of the people of the USSR, whereby the native language in the Union republics was recognized as the official language of the given republic but the privileged status of Russian was protected by ascribing to it the role of 'the language of interethnic communication' [Ibid.].

At the first reading in the USSR Supreme Soviet on the bill of the new language law the Baltic and Georgian deputies strongly opposed its provisions. "No state other than a colonial one has the right to regulate language", Latvian Janis Peters protested.

Adding to the literature of the language policy in the former Soviet Union, Gail W. Lapidus argues and summarises that: "The status and recognition given to various nationalities in the former Soviet Union especially in the treatment of their languages, history, cultural monuments or customs and traditions became a further source of policy problems for the Soviet leadership". Language policy "has become especially sensitive in recent years" [16, p. 103].

From Tishkovs point of view, however, the Soviet State pursued: "A semi-official Russian language policy through its 'international' Communist ideology, suppressing attempts to establish political cultural autonomy for ethnic minorities unless these attempts were sanctioned by central or peripheral elites" [24, p. 24].

From the foregoing one notices that the Russian and Soviet language policy had always contained elements of the 'Potemkin village syndrome'. One might wish to ask, what is the 'Potemkin village syndrome'? This was the policy 'developed' to deal with the desire of the Empress Catherine the Great during the tsarist era, in the 18th century, to see her loyal subjects at work and to be sure they were happy and content. Since Catherine would have been appalled at the conditions that the peasants actually lived under, Prince Grigori Aleksandrovich Potemkin, one of her closest advisers, built sanitized fake villages where cleaned-up peasants lived and worked in peace and harmony, singing folk songs and smiling as Catherine passed by. The Empress Catherine saw that things were good and returned to St. Petersburg satisfied that her reign was benign, and that her people were happy.

Hedrick Smith adds flesh to the Potemkin syndrome. In his book "The New Russians" he submits that: "Ever since Count Potemkin built fake villages in the eighteenth century to impress Empress Catherine the Great on her visit to the Crimea, Potemkinising has become a Russian national pastime" [23].

As mentioned above the etymological origin of Potemkinizing notwithstanding the real significance of the concept lies in the more concrete picture painted by Smith [Ibid., p. 188] when he concluded that: "Gogol's famous Inspector General faced the same shenanigans from the locals. Upon visiting Soviet farms, factories, schools, and institutes I have often been shown freshly painted buildings, phony statistics, new equipment borrowed for display; I have encountered not typical citizens, but model ones. The modern expression is pokazhuha-show - that is putting on show, a bogus veneer to impress outsiders who are not in the know".

Soviet policies, language in particular have Potemkin aspects to them; the foreign visitor who wished to see how beautifully the Soviet language policy worked could see wondrous things, but they did not see the failures, the difficulties and the resentments. Soviet language and ethnicity policy were supposed to eliminate ethnic tensions but ethnic tensions instead festered and simmered under the surface.

An enormous amount of damage was done to the cultural identities and psychic of the most of the many peoples who were a part either by force or coercion of the Soviet experiment. Beyond human damage it led to the splinter of the once homogenous Soviet society and set the world on a pedestal of yet another academic debate.

In "Bitter Lands: Displaced Peoples of the Former Soviet Union; the Last of the Tofalar; a People's Identity Lost to Soviet Rule" by Michael Slackman (2000) Luba, a Tofalar woman from southern Siberia, says: "We are Russified, we do not even know our own language... We want to sing traditional songs, but we don't even know how" (The Tofalar was a nomadic people of Siberia said to have fought in the armies of Genghis Khan).

Linguistic domination and discrimination had been a tender issue in Soviet discourse. We therefore take Uzbekistan as our focal point. Uzbekistan is the region larger than unified Germany with the population of twenty million people. Uzbeks rank is the third one behind Russians and Ukrainians among the more than one hundred recognised nationalities of the Soviet Union. Birlik's appearance in the front of burner of linguistic policies in the Soviet Union thus led to a language protest in November of 1988 held by six hundred students from Tashkent University that had been encouraged by Gorbachev's Glasnost of new thinking, freedom and acceleration: "Uzbekistan: our language is our heart and our soul. This is our rage, our protest... We want to arouse our authorities and our people ... to make them rise up and say: we can't live like this anymore!" Shukhrat Makhmudav, filmmaker, October, 1989 [Ibid., p. 297].

In Tashkent, Uzbekistan, Soviet Central Asia, Birlik, the nationalist popular front planned an unauthorised rally in Lenin square. At the core of Birlik's protest that day, the second one in a fortnight and the hearth of its effort to rouse the Uzbek people was a very simple but significant demand: Restore Uzbek as the official state language. Thus after seven decades of Soviet rule and domination of Czarist Russia the Uzbek rebelled against Russification and language domination.

Russian language was the language on the television screens, in schools, in the media, in government and in commerce, on the street signs, even in the small villages where many people speak only Uzbek – Russian was ironically the language of science or necessary in career advancement and the teaching of great Russian writers of the nineteenth century at the expense of writers from Uzbeks' own past.

The issues of Uzbek language problems are legion [Ibid.]:

(a) A writer Nuruly Kabul argues that "Uzbekistan has far fewer children's books in its native language than do others major Soviet nationalities."

(b) Shukhat Makhmudov, an Uzbek camera man, revealed film scripts for Uzbek movies must be submitted in Russian in part to accommodate Russian censors.

(c) Uzbek medical students complained that their studies were all in Russian, even though many go work in villages where the peasants speak only Uzbek.

(d) Advanced education in Uzbekistan was taught in Russian making its rural students handicapped in the competition for admission because training in Russian is weaker in the country side than in the cities.

(e) Mohammed Salikh, an Uzbek poet, claimed that Uzbek graduate students doing their doctoral work on Uzbek language and culture must submit their theses in Russian and defend their theses before a panel of Uzbek scholars in Russian.

Uzbek demonstrators had carried banners such as "ATTENTION TO OUR STATE AND OUR LANGUAGE IS OUR SOUL."

On a Communist Party boilerplate slogan that says, "THE PLANS OF THE PARTY ARE THE PLANS OF THE PEOPLE" was substituted with "NO THE DEMANDS OF THE PEOPLE MUST BE THE PLANS OF THE PARTY".

The banners were all written in the Arabic script. Uzbeks are a Turkic people, whose religion over the centuries was Islam and whose written script was Arabic. Fifty years ago under Stalin the Uzbek language was Russified, literally transcribed into the Russian Cyrillic alphabet which was used in so-called Uzbek language newspapers. The demands of Birlik from the Government of the USSR were twofold: restore the primacy of Uzbek over Russian and return Uzbek to its original, pre-Stalin form. As a result Birlik had set its first priority to rouse Uzbeks from political passivity into a new, self-conscious nationalism, to educate the Uzbek people, to raise their social consciousness and their political activism. In the words of Abdur Rahim Pulatov a scholar at the Institute of Cybernetics in Tashkent: "Only the people themselves can stand up for their own rights... Our movement will be virtually powerless if the people keep on hibernating politically. So our main goal is to awaken the people, to turn our people into a politically active society".

The problems created by the demonstrations in Uzbekistan had sent a signal to Moscow, Uzbekistan had a population of fifty million Muslim people waking up to nationalism and repressing the linguistic chauvinism of the empire. Thus Moscow feared the population growth in Central Asia and the influence of Islam. Uzbekistan and the rest of Central Asia is a world apart from the European regions of the former USSR. The peoples are of Turkic origins who find their roots in Islamic culture with an immense territory that is more than one sixth of the Soviet landmass, an entire subcontinent as large as all of Western Europe and comprised of five from the fifteen Soviet republics: Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kirghizia, Tadzhikistan, and Turkmenistan.

With the rate at which these Central Asian republics had multiplied, it led some people to call them a demographic time bomb. The anxiety of the Russians had been that they were becoming a minority in their own country (145 million out of a total population of 285 million).

One of the multiple language intolerance is examined by Corsey (2002). The Ukrainian language banned by the Russian tsars and later banned by the Soviets is now the official language of Ukraine, but most people there as is the case in many of the post-Soviet nations still speak Russian. They were forced to learn Russian in school, they had to speak Russian to work, and they still speak Russian at home. This situation continues today; despite the fact that only "around 20% of Ukrainians are ethnic Russians. ...more than 60% of the Ukrainian population of 51 million speak Russian".

One continuing reason for this is that books in Ukraine are published in Russian; in the article in "The Guardian" (UK) titled "Ukraine Wages War on Russian Language", a book shop assistant stated: "We specialize in philosophy and those books haven't been translated into Ukrainian". In the same article: "Another bookseller says: the local authority is trying either to ban Russian publications or to slap on punitive taxes", but goes on to say that "the reason for the domination of Russian is simple. Nobody will put any money into publishing books in Ukrainian".

It was the death of a folk singer that brought the situation reported in "The Guardian" to its current boiling point. Igor Bilozir, a popular Ukrainian folk-singer, was sitting at a cafe last spring playing Ukrainian songs. At the next table the group of young Russians was singing songs in Russian. A fight in the street followed the Russians' demand that Bilozir stop singing in Ukrainian and his refusal to do so. Bilozir died three weeks later as a result of injuries sustained in the fight. According to "The Guardian" "more than 100 000 people in Lviv [Lvov to the Russians] turned out for Bilozir's funeral" and "the next day the Patriots of Ukraine went on the rampage. Two ethnic Russian youths were arrested on the suspicion of murder. One was released ... on bail and left the country [and] the other is the son of the local deputy police chief. Expectations of a fair trial are low. A black cross, flowers and a picture of the songwriter mark the spot where he died. 'Igor Bilozir. Murdered Here by Russian-speaking Thugs', reads the inscription". Ormrod Jane in "The North Caucasus: Confederation in Conflict" (New states, new politics: building the post-soviet nations / ed. by I. Bremmer, R. Taras. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. P. 96-139) aptly argues that: "Potential for ethnic conflicts also exists in other Russian republics such as Bashkortostan, Buryatia, Sakha-Yakutia, Tyva. In January of 1999 when the Bashkortostani legislature began to consider a draft bill which granted the status of an official language only to Bashkir and Russian, many Tatar public organisations advocated secession of the republics' northwestern dominated by the ethnic Tatars. Bitter antagonism between Bashkirs and Tatars arose back in 1919 when areas populated mostly by ethnic Tatars were included into the territory of the newly founded Bashkir autonomy".

This created a serious territorial dispute between Bashkirs and Tatars. Since then interethnic tensions between these two ethnic groups never really ceased to exist, surfacing with much regularity in occasional disputes over their representation in the institutions of power or the status of their respective languages and cultures. Interethnic tensions existed under for many years in Buryatia surfacing in the ethnic Buryats' demands for a wider introduction of their native language in the public life. Moreover ethnic Buriats insisted that their culture, especially the Buddhist religion, must have been more actively revived. On the other hand ethnic Russians resented the increasing representation of ethnic Buyriats in local government. The activists of the Buryat-Mongol People's party even demanded the reunification of all Buryat-Mongol lands and the establishment of Buryatia without Russians [17].

With increased economic and ideological freedom many of Russia's ethnic republics adopted legal acts to terminate the discrimination of indigenous languages and to protect the respective cultures. Such policies unavoidably led to confrontation with the ethnic Russians and other sizeable ethnic groups, which interpreted these measures as a discriminatory step encroaching on their linguistic rights.

Due to the political changes, economic disaster and the consequent redivision of the status of languages, there will be tensions and conflicts in the territories of the former USSR.

The nations that have emerged since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 are trying to promote their own spirits of nationalism and of national identity, and the language forms the integral part of individual country identity, as well as of the patriotism. Such emerging countries that had hitherto existed under Soviet tutelage hope to foster among their people.

A major issue which becomes clarified here is the consequence of the overthrow of decades of Russification in these countries, is the persistent increase in ethnic intolerance.

Conclusion

Upon the whole, we can claim that language is an important factor in national development and simultaneously a catalyst for disintegration. First, the peoples of the ex-Soviet republics whose cultures were eradicated by the policies of the Soviet Union must relearn and retrace their own cultures, so that they know who they were and where they are from; then they can find their own identities and forge ahead. Commenting on cultural identities in Russia culture, especially diverse cultures, had cemented the ex-Soviet republics together, but at the same time brought it to its demise because over a hundred nationalities and cultures inhabited the Soviet Union and at some point in time all fought for supremacy and relevance which ultimately led to ethnic unrests.

Indeed a whole set of international human rights standards have emerged that can be used for assessing linguistic rights of ethnic groups especially in plural societies. However, numerous linguistic disputes in the former Soviet republics have revealed insufficient political culture, legal nihilism, subjectivity, and, ultimately, unwillingness to utilize the linguistic experiences of long-established democracies codified in international law.

In such circumstances the most important task is to formulate standard rules of the game that will be accepted both by Moscow and by all ethnic groups of the Russian Federation. Ethnic peace and stability will be difficult to attain if there is a failure to abide by such rules or if the game is run by ad hoc principles.

No less important is the analysis of the principle of self-determination and its relationship to the linguistic human rights, since the denial of that principle is one of the main reasons for violence in post-Soviet transitional societies, such as the conflicts in Chechnya, South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Nagorniy-Karabakh. Moreover, serious concerns emerged about the political and territorial integrity of Russia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Georgia. Accordingly the most challenging problem for political and ethnic elites in the centre as well as the regions is to find a viable form of federation that would enable ethnic minorities to pursue their goal of self-determination within the framework of a single multinational state.

The author is of the belief that avoidance of either unitary-centrist or extreme separatist solutions are the necessary conditions for stability and democratic consolidation in Russia. In order to create a viable federative structure it is necessary to decentralize state power through ethno-territorial federalism. The system of asymmetrical federalism that de-facto exists in Russia can serve as the basis for Russia's future political organisation. This specific political structure will help to incorporate various ethnic groups into a single state by granting them broad autonomy and guaranteeing their full participation in decision-making on the local and federative levels through the adoption of legislation affirming their group rights [10].

According to the former Russian Minister of Nationalities Prof. Valeriy Tishkov: "An important step towards a renewed formula of the post-Soviet federalism would be to grant special status to ethno-territorial autonomies (republics) among other 'non-ethnic' members of federation. This kind of asymmetric federalism assigns higher state symbolism, economic and political authority to the republics. At this moment in history the problem of asymmetry and even of a special (associated) status features on the agenda of Russia [sic] and, perhaps, of Georgia. In the future it may prove relevant for Ukraine where the western and eastern parts of the country may initiate federalization and for the existing Crimean autonomy, which may come to demand such status. Being territorial units, republics and other possible forms of ethno-territorial autonomy cannot be treated solely as administrative provinces. They need to retain their ethno-linguistic and specific cultural profiles, as partly reflected in territorial configurations and in state and public institutions" [24, p. 277].

Although certain politicians and scholars still believe that the actions of regional sovereignty movements in ethnic republics will facilitate instability and violence ultimately leading to Russia's disintegration in reality. As Patricia Carley rightly observes: "Peoples who are denied basic cultural, linguistic, and political rights by their rulers are more likely to resort to violence than those who have been given a large measure of local autonomy" [5, p. 1-2].

Rejecting demands for autonomy in the name of ill-defined common citizenship will simply promote alienation and secessionist movements.

Under these circumstances, it is in the strategic interests of the world community to support the autonomy of Russia's ethnic republics since autonomy is the only way to reconcile the two conflicting tendencies - centripetal and centrifugal, thereby preserving Russia's unity. This fits neatly with West's ultimate goal of safeguarding the federal government's control over the nuclear arsenals and reducing the chances of extreme nationalists coming to power in Russia. Furthermore, through the examination of the character and scope of linguistic rights of ethnic groups (above all titular peoples) in the context of international law, some fairly objective criteria for choosing state (official) languages in a multinational state can be developed. Another important aspect of a democratic language policy is establishing special ethnolinguistic group rights (especially for indigenous peoples) that cannot be observed within the limits of regular individual rights. There are no easy answers or quick fix solutions to the problems raised in this study. But one sincerely hopes that it will lead to a further discussion of language policies or facilitate the awareness regarding the issue of language rights and ethnic politics in the present Russian Federation. In the last few years dramatic changes have occurred in many ethno-linguistic communities world-wide. But the most striking embodiment of these changes is the republics of the former Soviet Union where the numerous difficulties of post-Communist modernisation complicate the processes of democratic reform. Difficulties of state-building may in some cases potentially lead to the revival of the old methods of social organisation which makes the linguistic situation in these countries unique. Consequently this may have serious implications for international peace and stability. Not surprisingly, many scholars are especially interested in analyzing ethno-linguistic processes in the former Soviet Union. However, a complete understanding of the mechanisms and factors that influence the formation of the linguistic policies in the post-Soviet states is possible only in the context of global socio-linguistic experience. Therefore, it is imperative to analyse modern approaches to the problem of language in other regions of the world, where the dynamics of language policies is beginning to be determined more than ever by the universally recognized norms of international law that set new criteria for the rights of individuals and peoples. These norms create the basis for objective and civilized evaluation of the legitimacy of linguistic claims and responsibilities of individuals as well as of various ethnic groups. In my opinion, linguistic issues deserve a more detailed examination as political scientists do not usually discuss them as a separate subject, but rather view them within a broader theme of minority rights [15, p. 76].

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ЯЗЫК И ПОЛИТИКА В БЫВШЕМ СОВЕТСКОМ СОЮЗЕ

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Всем известен тот факт, что Советский Союз был многонациональным государством с 1917 года до его распада в декабре 1991. В этом контексте многонациональное означало, что все советские граждане имели свою национальность, которая не только определялась по месту рождения, но и имела свои решающие факторы, такие как региональные границы, культурные традиции и родной язык. Таким образом, решающие факторы многонационального построения Советского Союза – это важная тема для обсуждения. Поэтому целью данной статьи является изучение основного взаимодействия языковой политики и языковой стратегии в бывшем Советском Союзе как средства продвижения гомогенности россиян. Предлагаются решения данной проблемы в других сообществах.

Ключевые слова и фразы: многонациональный; национальность; язык; культура; политика; Советский Союз.