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# THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE IN THE DISSOLUTION OF THE SOVIET UNION

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## 1 The area of study

The problem of unrest among the ethnic nationalities plagued the USSR since its inception in December 1922 (for a synopsis, see Suny 1990:243-249, Nahaylo and Swoboda 1990: 228-350, Alexeyeva 1985, Solchanyk 1990, Misiunas 1990, Olcott 1989, 1990. One crucial element in this problem had been Soviet language-planning practices.

This problem of nationalities resulted from the Revolution and its aftermath, the manner in which the USSR was organized, and the means whereby the Communists co-opted

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the nationalities to counter the Whites and other nations' invading armies (Pipes 1968, Seton-Watson 1986, Szporluk 1990). These nascent republics utilized language as a means of ethnic demarcation, for:

Early Soviet nationality policy spawned a generation of cultural entrepreneurs, who enthusiastically attended to the unification of their languages...Encouragement was given to purely cultural expression in non-Russian languages, which gave some leeway for the development of literatures. The intent of the policy for the managers of the Soviet state was, by giving nonpolitical ventilation of cultural expression, to remove insecurities and fears of forcible assimilation and thereby to promote integration...The Soviets have nurtured into life and provided cultural equipment for what has become, in Fishman's definition [Fishman 1989:97-175, 269-367], nationalities where only ethnicity was visible previously. Their high resistance to Russification and integration was visible previously [and]...constitutes a major long-run problem for the Soviet Union (Young 1976:47).

The USSR Yearbook '90 (155) candidly admitted a necessity "to secure for all citizens the right to be taught in their native languages..., to use their native languages in public life, and to preserve and develop their ethnic traditions..." This statement implied that the USSR's language policy had not been successful either in adequately providing nationalities their language rights or in fulfilling the Communist Party of the Soviet Union's (CPSU) goal of creating a non-ethnic "Soviet people" (for USSR language policies, see Lewis 1972:49-89, Comrie 1981:21-29, Bruchis 1982:3-41, Kozlov 1988:159-188, Anderson and Silver 1990; for the concept of "the Soviet people", see Pipes 1968:296-7, Fedyshyn 1980, Rasiak 1980, Rothschild 1980, Szporluk 1990:7-8).

This study examines how language functioned with various dynamics of cultural pluralism in the enhanced ethnic mobilization and resultant dissolution of the USSR.

## **2 The Soviet Union's multilingualism**

The USSR was "one of the world's most ethnically heterogeneous states, in terms of both the number of ethnic groups...and the diversity among them" (Clem 1988:3). The USSR contained over 100 ethnic groups (Clem 1988:4), of which 22 nationalities had populations of one million or more according to the 1989 census. There were 15 union republics named for nationalities, and these 15 titular nationalities comprised 90.3% of USSR population (Anderson and Silver

1989:610). Because of this concentration, this study focuses on these 15 nationalities, but the dynamics which operated to separate union republics from the union also operates now with smaller ethnic political divisions.

Helene Carrere d'Encausse noted that "political linguistics represent Moscow's most successful accomplishment" (1979:165). In the early 1930s there were approximately 130 languages in the USSR, many the product of official encouragement of "small dialects, the creation of new written languages, and the incorporation of new tongues into the educational system" (Treadgold 1986:391; see also Comrie 1981:1). The number of ethnic groups is not equal to the number of languages. For one thing, some groups switch languages. The Soviet Jews, for example, switched from several languages, primarily Yiddish, to Russian. In 1929, 71.9% claimed Yiddish as their native language; in 1970, only 17.7% did (Lewis 1972:139, Treadgold 1986:392). Also, an ethnic group may have more than one native language.

Bilingualism made major advances, for in 1989, 84% of the non-Russians claimed their nationality language as native; 9.9% of the non-Russians claimed Russian as native and failed to claim their nationality language as second (Anderson and Silver 1990:96). However, in claiming second languages, 5.4% of non-Russians claimed their nationality language, 48.1% claimed Russian, 2.2% claimed that of another nationality, and 44.3% claimed no second language. 55.7% of non-Russians were bilingual, almost a majority of them in Russian (Anderson and Silver 1990:97 and 612-613:Table 1 (reproduced below)). Seven nationalities with over one million population did not have a Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR):

- Tatars: 6,915,000 with 25.5% living in their Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR). Two large Tatar groups, the Volga Tatars and the Crimean Tatars, are combined for this total.
- Germans: 2,036,000 (Stalin having dissolved their ASSR during World War II).
- Jews: 1,451,000, only 0.6% in their Autonomous Oblast (province), including the Georgian Jews, Central Asian Jews, Jewish Tats, and Crimean Jews (Krymchaki).
- Bashkirs: 1,449,000 with 59.6% living in their ASSR.
- Mordvinians: 1,154,000, 27.1% living in their ASSR.
- Poles: 1,126,000, also without a nationality area (Anderson and Silver 1989:612-613).

Table 1 shows the nationalities' populations by SSRs, the third column giving the percentage of the nationality population living in the titular republic. The percentage of the republic's population which is the nationality is given in Table 2, with notes on larger concentrations of other ethnic populations. Table 2 also shows the amount of Russian immigration into the union republics, an immigration which constituted a major component of the sociolinguistic dynamics, for many of these Russians might have opposed an official language were it not Russian.

**Table 1. Soviet Union Republic Nationalities - 1989 census:**

<u>Nationality:</u>	<u>population:</u> (thousands)	<u>pop. in SSR:</u> (thousands)	<u>percentage of</u> <u>nationality:</u>
Russians	145,072	119,807	82.6
Ukrainians	44,137	37,370	84.7
Uzbeks	16,686	14,124	84.6
Belorussians	10,030	7,898	78.7
Kazakhs	8,138	6,532	80.3
Azerbaizhanis	6,791	5,801	85.4
Armenians	4,627	3,082	66.6
Tadzhiks	4,217	3,168	75.1
Georgians	3,983	3,789	95.1
Moldavians	3,355	2,791	83.2
Lithuanians	3,068	2,924	95.3
Turkmenians	2,718	2,524	92.9
Kirgiz	2,531	2,228	88.0
Latvians	1,459	1,388	95.1
Estonians	1,027	963	93.8

(From Anderson and Silver 1989:612-3)

The cultural pluralism which affected language policy can be grouped into two major forces—the centripetal, which moved persons towards adopting the Russian language and assimilating into Russian culture, and the centrifugal, which preserved native language and culture, representing mobilization towards secession. Both forces are composed of various cultural dynamics; for example, interactions surrounding religion, race, caste, region, cultural identity, economic status, educational opportunity, living conditions, environmental issues, modernization, political opportunity and other issues (for dynamics affecting ethnic identification, see Young 1976 and Horowitz 1985; recent studies of such dynamics within Soviet nationalities are Allworth 1980, Rockett 1981, Bruchis 1982, Connor 1984, Alexeyeva 1985, Kreindler 1985, Conquest 1986, Motyl 1987, Friedberg and Isham 1987, Sacks and Pankhurst 1988, Kozlov 1988, Ramet

1989, Hajda and Beissinger 1990, Hosking 1990, Nahaylo and Swoboda 1990, and Starr 1990).

**Table 2. Percentages of SSR Ethnic Populations:**

<u>Nationality:</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>% Other major ethnic groups</u>
Russians	83	numerous other groups in ASSRs and autonomous oblasts and areas
Ukrainians	74	21 Russian; 1 Jews; 1 Belorussian
Uzbeks	69	11 Russian; 4 Tatar; 4 Kazakh; 4 Tadjik; 2 Kara-Kalpak; 1 Korean
Belorussians	79	12 Russian; 4 Pole; 2 Ukrainian; 1 Jews
Kazakhs	39	38 Russian; 6 Ukrainian
Azerbaizhanis	78	8 Russian; 8 Armenian
Armenians	88	5 Azerbaizhan; 2 Russian; 2 Kurd
Tadjiks	59	23 Uzbek; 10 Russian
Georgians	69	9 Armenian; 7 Russian; 5 Azerbaizhan; 2 Ossetian
Moldavians	64	14 Ukrainian; 13 Russian; 4 Gagauz; 2 Jews
Lithuanians	80	9 Russian; 7 Poles; 2 Belorussian
Turkmenians	68	13 Russian; 9 Uzbek
Kirgiz	48	26 Russian; 12 Uzbek
Latvians	54	33 Russian; 5 Belorussian; 3 Ukrainian; 3 Poles
Estonians	65	28 Russian; 3 Ukrainian; 2 Belorussian

Compiled from USSR Yearbook 1990:90-149, and corrected from Anderson and Silver (1989) whenever possible; percentages have been rounded to the next highest whole number; balances less than 100% are other groups.)

### 3 Centripetal and centrifugal forces

The centripetal force moving a non-Russian toward assimilation can be termed Russification in contrast to forces which move a non-Russian towards support of the Soviet government, which has been termed Rossification. Szporluk explains the difference; the Russian Empire

never became a Russian nation-state. Instead, in the words of Ladis K. D. Kristof, it promoted 'Rossification', which meant 'the development of an unswerving loyalty and direct attachment to the person of the tsar, by God's will the sole power-holder (samoderzhets) and head of the church.' The essence of 'Rossification' lay in Orthodoxy, not in Russianism. 'The Orthodox idea, not the Russian tongue or civilization, was the spiritus movens of the Tsardom. Russia was first of all Holy, not Russian.'...In this respect, 'Rossification' resembles the post-revolutionary policy of Sovietization, with its principle of 'national in form, socialist in content.' [Stalin's phrase]

'Russification,' on the other hand, aimed at making the non-Russian subjects of the state Russian in language and identity (Szporluk 1990:2).

Thus, the Tsarist Empire was not officially Russian (*Russkaia Imperiia*); used instead was the official *Rossiiskaia Imperiia* (Szporluk 1990:2). Some Russian nationalists attempted to Russify the ethnic groups but were unsuccessful (Szporluk 1990:3). During the Revolution, those nationalities which had nationhood ambitions attempted to fulfill them. Finland and Poland were successful, and Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania remained independent for about 20 years. Other attempts in the Ukraine, Transcaucasia, and the Far East were overcome by the Red Army. The Revolution nearly restored the Russian Imperium.

"Russification" and "assimilation" in Russian are synonymous; "Rossification", however, represents the appreciation of nationality and language rights, combined with political loyalty to a supranational union (USSR) of equal nationality republics. In the spectrum ranging from total assimilation to secession, Rossification stands midway. A speaker of language X could thus choose to be Russified and possibly assimilate, be Rossified and be bilingual in language X and Russian (the so-called "internationalist language" of the USSR), or be monolingual, bilingual or multilingual, the latter choice representing a person's probable opting out of union (then interrepublic and now commonwealth) participation.

Given this spectrum, it is easy to see the political motivation behind the USSR's push to make its citizens bilingual in their language and Russian. However, this push for bilingualism mostly had a Russification, not a Rossification, goal. (See Nahaylo and Swoboda 1990:44-80 for a discussion of "the national contracts" and their subsequent cancellation leading to Russification.) With these distinctions in mind, we can now examine a sampling of dynamics which contributed to the centripetal and centrifugal forces which were active in the USSR and which led to its demise.

### 3.1 The CPSU and the national populist fronts

The USSR was not, in the usual sense, a Russian empire; it was Communist—"the first empire in history to be ruled by a political party." And "from that fact flow the anomalies and contradictions of this unprecedented multi-national union" (Hosking 1990:77). As such, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) constituted a major centripetal dynamic; until five years ago, if one wanted to do politics, the CPSU was "the only game in town."

Lenin recognized the contributions that the separate nationalities could make to the revolution, and "won a civil war that made him and his party the heirs to the tsars" (Seton-Watson 1986:23). Lenin rejected Russification, "recognizing the potential revolutionary force underlying the national discontents of non-Russians"; the Red slogan of national self-determination contrasted with the White's "one indivisible Russia" (Seton-Watson 1986:24). "In Lenin's lifetime, the conventional wisdom had been that Communists must avoid two deviations, 'Great Russian great-power chauvinism' and 'local bourgeois nationalism'," but these two polarities dominated in turn as long-range results of fluctuations in the economy (Seton-Watson 1986:24-25). There was a relationship between the economic success of the CPSU and its nationalities policy: bad times, bad feelings and nationality unrest; good times, and national antagonisms are somewhat placated, much less obvious.

At the present time, the USSR has been dissolved and the residues of its economy portends disaster, while the CPSU solely shoulders the responsibility for what is perceived as the failure of Communism. Three years ago, when Gorbachev said that the USSR had not found a way to overcome backwardness, even then, in the process they [were] acknowledging that in relation to the West they continue to remain 'backward' in science, technology, standard of living, and so forth. The most fundamental claim of the Revolution's historical legitimacy—the transformation of the Soviet



Union into a modern society and the creation of a civilization that was to be an alternative to the West and free of its drawbacks—[was] thus denied. The Soviets now admit that they have not found a socialist way out of backwardness and toward modernity...Indeed, the recently launched revolution [*glasnost* and *perestroika*] is necessary to stop the USSR from falling further behind 'the West' (Szporluk 1990:9-10).

Schroeder noted that "except for Azerbaizhan, all republics experienced the marked slowdown of national income and industrial production characteristic of the Soviet economy during the past fifteen years" (Schroeder 1990:47). Azerbaizhan, previously aided by an oil economy, where fields are now almost depleted, is rapidly becoming more typical (Table 6 in Schroeder 1990:55).

Although the CPSU constituted a dynamic, major centripetal force, and had vast resources, it was undergoing challenge (Keller 1990, Beissinger and Hajda 1990:318-320). Most opinion concurred with Gobel, however, that "the central leadership has at its disposal a variety of levers to effect its will" (Goble 1989:12, 1985:83). Motyl agreed when answering the question, *Will the Non-Russians Rebel?*, and argued that CPSU control allowed no access to the public sphere for those elites capable of mobilizing the masses, that the power resident in the KGB and the military mitigated against the possibility of open rebellion by non-Russians (Motyl 1987:168-170). The embargo against Lithuania in 1990 and the military "crackdown" in the Baltics in 1991 only reinforced his arguments, until the complete dissolution of the USSR in December 1991 proved them obsolete.

Goble recalled that "forty years ago, a senior party official in Moscow reputedly told a Baltic Communist that Soviet nationality policy consists of having enough boxcars ready" (Goble 1985:83). Later, Goble noted that "Moscow would clearly sacrifice almost all its other policy goals in order to maintain the integrity of the Soviet Union. And the...apocalypse—a return to significantly greater repression—needs to be rethought" (Goble 1989:12). The CPSU was unwilling to incur the costs of such a policy, costs "far beyond the ability of the authorities to pay" (Goble 1989:12), but events demonstrated that the conservatives (such as the radically communistic secret society, Soyuz) had to try, and when the attempted coup in 1991 failed, the CPSU was shown to be politically bankrupt, unable to summon the citizens to its cause.

Gorbachev probably hoped that his restructuring could best thrive in an atmosphere where open and candid debate

could aid his cause against the conservatives. Openness, however, allowed simmering tensions to boil over. "As the conditions of *glasnost*' broadened the perceived right of public debate, the various national minority communities organized to protest publicly the continuing impact of Stalinist nationality policies" (Olcott 1989:407).

The Estonian Front for *Glasnost*', organized in May 1988, was "the first independent mass organization formed in the USSR", a model for similar popular fronts in other republics (Olcott 1989:412). Two demands that each had were that the SSR language become the official language, and that Russian immigration be sharply curtailed or completely halted. These demands arose because "Moscow failed not only to delineate systematically the limits of their cultural autonomy, but also to protect the cultural rights of minority nationalities in union republics" (Olcott 1989:415). The result was that Moscow had "shown itself unwilling to allow the basic relationship between the center and the union republics to be redefined" (Olcott 1989:419), even though Gorbachev had instigated a new Treaty of Union, a supposed redefinition, due for ratification in 1991. Instead of a new union treaty, the USSR was dissolved and a commonwealth of 11 independent nations emerged. (At this time, Georgia has not signed the treaty of commonwealth, but may do so when its civil unrest ceases; the Baltic nations did not join the commonwealth.)

Creation of the popular fronts had allowed political participation outside the CPSU. "Under Gorbachev, the rate of political participation, particularly on a national basis, considerably outstripped the pace at which that participation was institutionalized. The result was that the Soviet political system destabilized along ethnic lines" (Beissinger and Hajda 1990:316). With the political system no longer able to handle such massive participation, the authority of the CPSU came under attack, primarily by the nationality popular fronts (Beissinger and Hajda 1990:317, Schmemmann 1990). When national popular fronts gained power, Russian nationals reacted to their loss of control by also organizing. The rise of the conservative Russians (such as Soyuz) in early 1991 is such a reaction to ethnic political polarization.

In 1990, Boris N. Yeltsin, president of the Russian SFSR, largest and most dominant republic, resigned from the CPSU with a score of other deputies, demanding that there be more speed in *perestroika*; for them, "the party was not all that relevant any more, and it seemed only a question of time before the notion would spread" (Schmemmann 1990).

Yeltsin was elected president of the RSFSR in June 1991, by a large margin of votes. With the CPSU under attack, the popular fronts, which captured many of the SSR communist parties (Beissinger and Hajda 1990:318-319) served as alternatives to the CPSU. Soon, "measures to reduce autonomy... led to demonstrations and even outbreaks of rioting, arson, and assaults on Russians" (Spechler 1990:292). As relations between the center and the periphery deteriorated, the centrifugal force increased and created opportunities for nationality language demands to serve as symbols for dissent. Politics no longer was done solely in Russian, but also in the nationality language through the nationality popular fronts; in time, the fronts demanded independence and won it with the collapse of the CPSU.

### 3.2 The imperial legacy vs. national identity

There was a concept in the USSR, articulated primarily by the Democratic Union, the non-nationality popular front, that the USSR was Eurasian, not a Russian state, "but one both Slavic and Turkic, European and Asian, Christian and Muslim" (Lev Gumilev quoted in Szporluk 1990:18). This concept sought to redefine the USSR, following the imperial legacy of the current borders, but in a new mode. These were leaders termed "empire savers," seeking either to preserve the empire through renewed Russian dominance or the establishment of an "all-Union" popular front that would preserve the empire as liberal, pro-Western and democratic (Szporluk 1989:26). Vladimir Balakhonov saw the most urgent task as restructuring the Russian people's consciousness, because they remained under the influence of an imperial mentality, and said, "The imperial instinct of the Russians is exceptionally strong, and as yet, we simply do not imagine a form of existence other than the framework of the present empire from Brest to Vladivostok" (quoted in Szporluk 1989:26).

Continued Russian nationalism fostered this imperial legacy, but it was interpreted several ways, a few benign, but many not. Spechler, in surveying Russian nationalism, noted that

there is an inescapable contradiction between Russian (indeed, any) nationalism and some basic tenets of Marxist-Leninism. The essence of nationalism—concern for the preservation and well-being of a single nation—places it in opposition to the internationalist or supranationalist orientation of Marxism-Leninism. Whatever their private sentiments, Soviet leaders have repeatedly affirmed their commitment to internationalism—i.e., to the well-being of all working people on an equal basis, regardless of nationality,

and to the eradication of national differences. This commitment and progress toward its attainment provide one of the most important legitimations for the existence of the Soviet system and, even more, for Russian rule over non-Russians (Spechler 1990:287).

That legitimation had been undercut by Gorbachev's programs, as Goble noted:

While Gorbachev is clearly a committed Marxist-Leninist, his attacks on Marxist-Leninist theory and on much of Soviet history as well as his generally technocratic approach have called into question the legitimating principle of the multinational Soviet state and opened the door to various choices and activism that ideology heretofore had proscribed. Besides legitimating the USSR, Marxist-Leninism served to curb non-Russian nationalism and many forms of Russian assertiveness. To the extent that the constraints inherent in Marxism-Leninism are lowered or removed, both Russians and non-Russians are likely to become more active, to explore their unique pasts, and to engage in activities that will exacerbate interethnic tensions (Goble 1989:4).

Motyl noticed that "no Soviet leader has ever turned his back on Russian hegemony, and in this sense, the Soviet Russian state is not unlike its nationally minded cousin" (Motyl 1987:42). Spechler detailed this concept:

A strong tendency within the Russian nationalist movement favors a more repressive approach to non-Russian peoples. Adherents of this view desire a more powerful, centralized state to facilitate greater Russian control over non-Russian areas. They admire the expansionist, imperialist policy of the Tsarist state and urge its Soviet successor to impose similarly 'undiluted' Russian rule. Some are even critical of Soviet federalism, which they would replace with a unitary state dominated by Russians...At the very least, these Russian nationalist are determined to preserve the Russian empire and would firmly repress what one of them calls the 'zoological nationalisms of the borderlands' that endanger the unity of the country. (Spechler 1990:291-292)

The imperial legacy still persists; many Soviet citizens now view the breakup of the USSR as little less than apocalyptic; however, there are still persons who think of themselves as *rossiianin* (without being ethnic Russian, *russkii*), who feel they are part of the 'Soviet people,' *sovetskii narod* (Szporluk 1989, 1990, Spechler 1990; see also Barghoorn 1986:32-33, for an interpretation of *sovetskii narod*). These persons, now assimilating, have their aspirations threatened by language policies and

cultural legacies now enforced by the newly independent ethnic nations.

A dynamic countering the imperial legacy was the basic composition of the nationality SSRs, republics in which most titular nationalities enjoyed a majority with their own language, culture, customs, and national consciousness. Organized so that the titular nationalities dominate, the SSRs became part of the centrifugal force, and the "very survival of the Soviet Union as a political entity" depended upon successfully finding "a non-imperial legitimating principle" (Beissinger and Hajda 1990:318). No such principle was found; with the collapse of the CPSU, its empire shattered.

As continued advocacy of the imperial legacy intensified reactions from nationalities other than the Russians, these reactions grew: "in both local and national arenas of conflict, Russians and non-Russians...continue[d] to find themselves at odds...[T]he violence between Azerbaizhanis and Armenians was similarly unimaginable. *Glasnost*' and *perestroika* [had] opened a Pandora's box of discontents and hopes, rendering all predictions of behavior impossible" (Olcott 1989:420-421).

Those groups favoring survival of the imperial legacy favored Russification and the continued forced learning of Russian, while those not supporting that legacy favored Rossification or secession and making only the nationality language official.

### 3.3 Soviet language policy vs. language preservation

Another centripetal force was the USSR's language policy. As Lewis has noticed:

The difficulty of studying language policy in the Soviet Union during the last fifty years is to identify at any time the exact target of a policy statement or expression of attitude, whether it is directed to language as ethnic symbol, to be favored in periods of stability and attacked during times of external threat; or language as the instrument of proletarian advancement and so to be distinguished at all times from its traditional 'nationalist' cultural associations. Language policy in the USSR is apt to oscillate because of the attraction of these two poles of influence. Writers seldom make any clear distinction between them and more often than not, confuse them. (Lewis 1972:51)

Whatever the policy statement, one policy goal had been to create a high rate of Russian use among non-Russians.

Lewis found that bilingualism in the nationality language and Russian depended upon many social variants: urbanization, contact with Russian speakers, religion, intermarriage, fertility rates, size of minority, social class, educational opportunity, presence of a nationality homeland, language family, and other demographic and political factors, including ethnic consciousness and cultural distinction (Lewis 1972). Anderson and Silver (1990: 96-98) found that the factors which best explain adoption of Russian nationality are urbanization, interethnic group contact, and traditional religion, and they show that in intermarriage the child of a Russian and non-Russian couple will choose Russian nationality outside the nationality's state, but within it, will probably choose non-Russian nationality (Anderson and Silver 1989:626 and 653:note 26).

Using the 1989 preliminary census figures, Anderson and Silver report the following percentages (judged to be accurate to within 2%) of ethnic people who claim Russian as either their mother tongue or their second language: Estonians 35%, Latvians 69%, Lithuanians 38%, Ukrainians 73%, Belorussians 81%, Moldavians 58%, Armenians 47%, Georgians 3%, Azerbaizhanis 32%, Uzbeks 22%, Tadjiks 30%, Kirgiz 36%, Turkmenians 28%, Kazakhs 75% (Anderson and Silver 1989:646:Fig. 18). More importantly, Soviet language policy had been perceived by the nationalities as resulting in increased bilingualism in Russian, thus forming a potential threat to the survival of the nationality language.

Comrie, writing in 1980, noted:

Current trends suggest that all but the largest, most consolidated speech-communities will probably eventually go over to Russian (or one of the other large speech-communities); with some other small speech-communities this process is almost complete, but in many other instances it seems that we are in the middle of a very long process of gradual linguistic assimilation. It is unlikely that this trend will be reversed by discouraging the transference of linguistic allegiance from local languages to Russian where this is already taking place as a natural process (Comrie 1981:37).

Writing two years earlier, Pool reached a somewhat similar conclusion:

The...effort...to universalize competence in Russian...is moving quickly toward success among citizens who do not speak one of the 15 favored languages, and also among those whose native languages are closely related to Russian, or who are displaced from the home republic of their mother

tongue. But gross gaps exist in the remaining republics between plans and performance—gaps that will not necessarily become easier to close as the republic languages expand their utility at the expense of Russian. If the observed trends and policies continue, the USSR will move in the direction of being a quindecanational and quindecalingual state. Russian will be the national language and—for those who need it—the Soviet link language, but not the universal, unique language of the union. Fourteen other languages will thrive under conscientious cultivation; but a hundred tongues will slowly shrivel, officially unlamented, into extinction (Pool 1978:240).

Russian continued as the *lingua franca* or “internationalist” tongue, affecting and in turn being affected by the other languages. (For an example of influences of Russian on Belorussian and vice versa, see Wexler 1985; for the more political attack on Moldavian, see Bruchis 1982:45-69). In this capacity, the creation of bilinguals speaking the nationalist languages and Russian as a result of Soviet language policy represented a centripetal force, and whether or not it led to assimilation, “from the regime’s point of view, it is obviously a necessary first step in a desirable process, a step the leadership has been anxious to promote” (Dunlop 1986:270). But the increase in bilingualism and the resultant switching to Russian bred its own resistance.

“Efforts by the regime to expand Russian language instruction and somewhat curtail the use of local languages... caused thousands to sign petitions and take to the streets in angry protest” (Spechler 1990:292). In republic after republic, the concern that the nationality language was endangered by Russian mobilized nationality united fronts to push for making their language official. (For examples, see Nahaylo and Swoboda 1990:290-300.) Not surprisingly, the Belorussians, the most bilingual SSR (Anderson and Silver 1989:646:Fig. 18), were the first to form a coalition for the preservation of their language (Nahaylo and Swoboda 1990:281).

Previous powerful arguments against Russification had begun to change the thinking of intellectuals in the SSRs; Ivan Dzyuba’s *Internationalism or Russification? A Study in the Soviet Nationalities Problem* (1968) portrayed these problems in the Ukraine (Nahaylo and Swoboda 1990:150-151), and an anonymous *Letter to a Russian Friend* (1979) made a defense for the Belorussian language, becoming one of the classic *samizdat*’ to receive wide distribution. Lewis rather

early noted that Soviet policy created resistance on the part of ethnic nationality languages:

In spite of the extraordinary care and drive of the USSR in pursuing its language planning processes by whatever strategies and techniques, what most strikes the observer in the end is the resilience of the large number of 'national languages', several of them quite small, and the tenacity with which they are maintained. The well-documented but almost mystical unwillingness of languages to submit to their own demise accounts in large part for this.

But part of the explanation so far as concerns the USSR,...is the undoubted fact that however the language complex is managed the vernaculars have to be used, and for that reason they have to be safeguarded... (Lewis 1972:293).

Even by 1990, "linguistic and ethnic affiliations of non-Russians [had] not changed mechanically as a result of policies introduced by the central Soviet authorities" (Anderson and Silver 1990:122). Soviet language policy caused the nationalities to begin safeguarding their languages, creating domains (such as the home and religious institutions) in which they were protected. "For many groups...ethnic attachment, as measured by self-reported nationality, remain[ed] quite stable, surprisingly so for some (Ukrainians, Belorussians)" (Anderson and Silver 1990:123). As Anderson and Silver further observed:

Gorbachev's policies of *perestroika*, *glasnost'*, and democratization helped to stimulate ethnic consciousness as well as the formation of organized popular fronts and other groups that openly sought greater cultural, economic, and political autonomy for the non-Russian peoples. We would expect this growing national self-awareness to retard and, in some cases, to reverse processes of linguistic and ethnic assimilation. Preliminary data from the 1989 Soviet census, we believe, provide some evidence of such change in the pace of assimilation. (Anderson and Silver 1990:123)

The increased bilingualism of Soviet language policy thoroughly undermined its own goals, making it become centrifugal; nationalities perceived their languages under attack and threatened, and this threat became one more element in their dissatisfaction with USSR policy and sovereignty.

### 3.4 Soviet education vs. nationality language preservation

The 1989 CPSU platform on nationalities reiterated that parents have the right to choose the language in which their



children will be educated (USSR Yearbook 1990:155). Although on the surface this policy seemed to be democratic and supportive of nationality languages, the reality of its practice made it quite something else, particularly when viewed historically.

Immediately after the Revolution, there was an effort to create educational opportunities in as many different languages as possible, thus co-opting the nationalities to the new Soviet state (Pool 1978:226; Kreindler 1985:349-353). However, after the twenties, there was a change and many efforts for education in languages with small populations were dropped with a concomitant turning to Russian (Kreindler 1985:353-357; Anderson and Silver 1990:108). In 1938, a decree made Russian a mandatory subject for study in every school, even in nationality language schools, (Anderson and Silver 1990:108), leading to a "differentiated bilingual" education. The model schools for the nationalities remained ones in which the primary language of instruction was the nationality's, but "it became acceptable for non-Russians to attend Russian-language schools"; however, "if they were to complete their secondary education, most children belonging to non-SSR nationalities had to attend schools with Russian as the language of instruction" (Anderson and Silver 1990:108-9).

A 1959 law (which became Article 45 in the 1977 Constitution) led to a "highly differentiated bilingual education," for it "gave parents the right to choose the language of instruction for their children." This change was soon followed by a "decrease in the 1960s and 1970s in the number of languages used as the primary medium of instruction, as well as in the highest grade level at which the non-Russian languages might serve in that capacity" (Anderson and Silver 1990:109). Parental choice led to several types of schools: type one, where Russian was the medium of instruction and the local language was not studied; type two, where Russian was the medium but the local language was studied as a subject; and type three, where a non-Russian language was the medium for most subjects except Russian language and literature, studied as subjects. "Type 2...may not actually be available even as an option in some areas, particularly above a certain grade level" (Anderson and Silver 1990:101). It was not uncommon for educators to present the choice of schools to parents incorrectly, usually by not acknowledging the possibility of a choice between Russian immersion and the type 3 national school; commonly, the educators asked if the parents wanted their children to know Russian, and with a positive reply, placed the child in a type 1 Russian only school (Anderson and Silver

1990:101). The result was that, in the USSR, "parents [did] not 'choose'—their children simply [studied] Russian" (Kreindler 1985:355).

The further in the curriculum non-Russians could study their national language, the less likely they were to abandon it; if Russian was the primary medium of instruction, then students would tend to claim Russian as, at least, their second language (Anderson and Silver 1990:109). "In the post-war years, provision (reduction) of native-language schooling for a given nationality [had] reportedly been based in part on the prevailing degree of bilingualism among children" (Anderson and Silver 1990:112). In these ways, educational institutions provided a part of the centripetal force by promoting either adoption of Russian as the native language or at least as a second language.

The nationality popular fronts called not only for official languages but also for schooling to be in those languages and not in Russian (Nahaylo and Swoboda 1990:261-262). Some popular fronts called for the setting aside of Article 45 of the 1977 Constitution. For example, in the Ukraine grew the idea that the "Ministry of Education and not parents determine the language of instruction in schools in accordance with the national composition of the children" with the guarantee that the nationality "language, literature and history be made compulsory subjects where teaching was in Russian" (Nahaylo and Swoboda 1990:272); then Russification through language in education would be halted and the nationality language's maintenance reinforced. These demands by nationality popular fronts represented a growing reaction to Soviet education practices; passage of such measures in the SSRs created a strong dynamic of the centrifugal force and mitigated against further Russification. These demands also moved the nationalities toward Rossification and, in a very short time, to secession.

### 3.5 Nationality cadres vs. mass politicization

It was common practice for nationality CPSU members to receive their career boosts from Moscow, which had a vested interest in seeing that leaders in the SSRs were sympathetic with them. As long as the CPSU controlled political patronage, the loyalty of the nationality cadre was to the party and constituted a centripetal dynamic; however, "in an ethnically pluralistic society, the same political decisions that have a unifying effect under conditions of low political participation can have a disintegrating effect when there is large-scale political participation" (Beissinger and Hajda 1990:313). With the destabilization of "the Soviet

political system...along ethnic lines" (Beissinger and Hajda 1990:316), politics become affected by mass action, thereby placing the nationality cadres in an unenviable position—between centralized authorities and the mobilizing people demanding more autonomy along with preservation of their nationality languages and cultures.

Following a suggestion of Andropov, Gorbachev attempted an "inter-republic exchange of cadre," which reversed Brezhnev's policy of nationality cadre longevity in office (Olcott 1989:403-404), thus making nationality cadres serving in SSRs other than their own extremely dependent upon Moscow. Simultaneously, Gorbachev allowed the top of the CPSU to have a lower representation of nationalities, making "no effort to bring non-Russian elites into the central political leadership" (Burg 1990, 31; see also Spechler 1990:296), and a "number of loyal non-Russian elites... expressed their impatience with the lack of representation of their nationalities within the Kremlin" (Beissinger and Hajda 1990:319). "Republic elites...had to seek a rapprochement with the dominant nationality in their charge and to represent its concerns precisely because in most cases they [could] not apply the kind of coercion they regularly had applied in the past" (Goble 1989:6).

Gorbachev's "promotion of efficiency" was "essentially anti-ideological" and "necessarily work[ed] against some, if not all, demands of non-Russians. For example, he...undercut the affirmative-action programs in the republics, on the grounds that they [were] inefficient and a form of 'reverse discrimination'" (Goble 1989:4), causing the nationality cadres to have to represent highly unpopular centrist decisions to a newly mass-politicized constituency. Language laws protecting Russian language minorities' use of Russian in the 14 non-Russian SSRs were a major component of those unpopular centrist demands; viewed from a game-theory perspective:

If the Soviet state accedes to language demands, the political focus of these demands will shift from Moscow to the nationalist elites ruling in the regions. These elites will face a dual pressure: from minority populations, who will seek language rights, and ask for tolerance; from regional nationalists (those who move first...toward full use of the regional language in all social, political and economic domains) who will seek faster movement towards regional rationalization. Balancing those two pressures will be a full-time effort for the titular-national elites...(a ms. draft of Laitin, Petersen and Slocum in Motyl 1991).

When added to other policies, these demands undercut the nationality cadres' position as spokespersons, forcing a choice between loyalty to Moscow or the nationality, countering their centripetal dynamic and directing the cadres' efforts toward the centrifugal (see Burg 1990:36-37). The nationality cadres became a centrifugal dynamic, adding their weight to nationality language maintenance and spread, on the one hand, and against the protection of the use of Russian by Russian minorities in the nationality SSRs. As with language, so with politics, and the SSRs became politically as well as linguistically independent, led by cadres who wanted to keep their jobs when possible.

### 3.6 Religion (or the lack thereof) vs. nationality religious traditions

While the USSR had "encouraged ethnic identification based on language," it had "systematically combated ethnic identification based on religion" (Ramet 1989:33), primarily because religion was a reinforcing element of ethnicity (Ramet 1989:5, Bociurkiw 1990:148-149, Young 1976:51-60). The CPSU had relentlessly attacked religious belief because, in some cases (Roman Catholicism or Islam), it led to the support of an external political authority (Ramet 1989:40). "As far as successful communist parties are concerned, they can tolerate no organization or institution that might possibly offer an alternative focus of loyalty...in the countries in which they govern" (Sugar 1989:45). "Moscow has sharply criticized religion when it serves to inflame anti-Soviet nationalist sentiment" (Olcott 1989:418).

The inverse of this concept was that the absence of religion, or more accurately, the espousal of atheism, was part of the centripetal force moving a person closer to the party and state. By replacing religious affiliation with atheism, the state enhanced its chances to gain the person's ultimate loyalty in the absence of other loyalties to the ultimate.

When the religious institution was finally seen as a means of building "internationalist" or Soviet-centered loyalties, it was co-opted by the state. Religious policy re-oriented toward the end of the Brezhnev era so that the Russian Orthodox Church was under less attack and soon became co-opted as a part of the centripetal force (Bociurkiw 1990:160-165). In a 1981 study of atheist indoctrination in the Western Ukraine, what was found was "a striking partisanship in the party's antireligious propaganda underlining once more the appreciation by the Soviet authorities of the integrating, 'patriotic' role performed by the imperial

[Russian Orthodox] Church in the non-Russian parts of the USSR..." (Bociurkiw 1990:159-160).

Anderson and Silver found that religious affiliation was important in the assimilation of non-Russians: "in the recent past, the groups that were changing most rapidly to Russians were non-Russians who were of Orthodox traditional religion and whose titular areas in the Soviet federation were at a lower status than that of union republic" (Anderson and Silver 1989:626). Thus religious tradition could also be a salient factor in assimilation, a part of the centripetal force. We need to remember the intrinsic tie of language to religion; the nationality religion institutionalizes a domain for the nationality language and reinforces ethnic identity, becoming a centrifugal dynamic. Conversely, the Russian Orthodox Church or the advocacy of atheism operated as a centripetal dynamic.

With the co-opting of "The Imperial Church" by the CPSU (Bociurkiw 1990:162-165), a tension was set up opposing the centrist (non-) religious body (the CPSU for atheism; the Russian Orthodox Church for its believers) to the nationalities' religious institutions. For example, "Soviet Moslems contrasted Moscow's benign attitude towards the Russian Orthodox Church with its treatment of Islam" (Nahaylo and Swoboda 1990:302). The Ukrainian Uniate Catholic Church, the Georgian Orthodox Church, the Armenian Orthodox Church, the Roman Catholic Church of Lithuania, the Lutheran Churches of Latvia and Estonia, the traditional native sects such as the Khlysty (Flagellants), Dukhobors (Spirit-Wrestlers), and the Molokans (Milk-Drinkers), the transnational religions such as Islam and the Jews (Sunni and Shiite) (for a catalogue, see Bociurkiw 1990:150-159), Ramet 1989)—all provided a language domain for their nationalities and thus countered either the centrist official policy of atheism or centrist-co-opted Russian Orthodoxy. Moreover, "during the 1960s and 1970s, a religious revival occurred among the intelligentsia and student youth, associated in many cases with the rise of ethnonationalism" (Bociurkiw 1990:152). As an example, the Lithuanians experienced a merging of religion (Roman Catholicism) and the nationality popular front (Sajudis) that is reminiscent of Poland's blend of Solidarity and Catholicism (Girnius 1989:129-137). There, the role of religion became clear and stringent: "Catholic belief is Lithuanian. Atheism is Russian. To become an atheist is to draw closer to Russian/Soviet culture and to lose a vital part of the Lithuanian Volksgeist" (quoted in Ramet 1989:30).

While atheism or the imperial church added to the centripetal force, the other religions in the USSR added to the centrifugal force, aiding persons to identify with the nationality on the periphery against the center's Soviet-approved beliefs. Furthermore, the ritualistic tie between religion and language placed the nationality religious institution in strong support of the nationality language.

### 3.7 The military vs. itself

As early as 1923, the Ukrainians accused the Red Army of being an instrument of Russification; that it was can be seen in the fact that the language of the Red Army was exclusively Russian, ethnic Russians predominated in the professional cadre, and recruits' postings seemed to follow unofficial rules that favored Russians or Russified elements for special or elite combat services (Rakowska-Harmstone 1990:73). Two further rules aided in this judgment: "each military unit and subunit must be ethnically mixed," and "no soldier should be stationed in his home area" (Rakowska-Harmstone 1990:83). For the centripetal force, there was also the institution of military training and indoctrination, as Rakowska-Harmstone reported:

Military socialization in the Soviet Armed Forces aims to achieve two levels of integration of servicemen. The first level is the essential minimum of functional integration in terms of linguistic and behavioral conformity—or, in short, obedience to orders. The second and optimal level is an attitudinal (cognitive) integration, which implies the internalization of the regime's personal weltanschauung, including their enthusiastic acceptance of the notion of self-sacrifice for the Socialist Motherland....The political education must prevail over ethno-cultural and political perceptions of the serviceman's original social milieu and the attitudes held there, if these are in conflict with the official message. (Rakowska-Harmstone 1990:74-75)

The military trainers, professional military cadres, were "very much the bearer of the 'Russian message', in composition as well as in attitudes....Officer's attitudes in general, especially in the senior ranks, [were] openly centralist and Russian nationalist, which [meant] that there [was] little sympathy for autonomist demands..." (Rakowska-Harmstone 1990:90).

"With the USSR's universal military training program, most young men were exposed to such indoctrination. Draftees were forced to learn a minimum of Russian so they [could] understand orders, and even if they [had] very poor Russian

or none, they [would] still be exposed to constant Russian linguistic influence" (Rakowska-Harmstone 1990:81).

In the military, Russification arrived at the point of a bayonet; a recruit in the Red Army who was Muslim and did not speak Russian would very likely think so, from the day he was drafted. A Muslim recruit would face functional integration, for "total ignorance of the dominant language... indicate[d] non-integration in terms both of alienation and inability to function" and he would be classified not in group A (integrated attitudinally and functionally, i.e., Russian or Russified) or group B (integrated only functionally, i.e., non-Russian but bilingual), but group C (non-integrated, i.e., rural non-Russian); because of his nationality, he might be classified in group D (dissident elements, i.e., nationalists who seemed politically unreliable such as Western Ukrainians and Belorussians, Balts, Jews, and Crimean Tatars) (Rakowska-Harmstone 1990:77-78). Because of such military practices, Muslims would be

as uninterested in military service as they have been in joining the mainstream of Soviet urban and industrial life or in learning the Russian language, especially because the treatment of Muslim soldiers in the Soviet forces has done little to make the prospects of a life-long military career attractive... (Rakowska-Harmstone 1990:80-81).

Ethnic prejudice in the ranks, along with the isolation, close proximity, and enforced confinement that characterize military life tended "to sharpen perceptions and intensify antagonisms" (Rakowska-Harmstone 1990:87), making military life for many non-Russians miserable:

By all accounts, induction [was] a traumatic experience for a Soviet conscript, especially a unilingual non-Russian who [was] thus immersed into a Russian-speaking environment. The conscripts [underwent] an initial four to six weeks of orientation, drill, and training which, on the evidence of former Soviet officers, [was] a 'very hard month in a soldier's life'...[T]he first year of the service anywhere [was] very difficult because of the informal system of merciless hazing of 'younger' (first-year) draftees by 'older' (second-year) men. This...customarily [led] to excesses of brutality, sometimes even the loss of life...Ethnic antagonisms... further exacerbate[d] the hazing. (Rakowska-Harmstone 1990:82)

Even being assigned with other non-Russians presented problems:

Antagonism between Muslims and Europeans [was] one of the two basic ethnic cleavages in the ranks; the other [was] between Russians and non-Russians. The non-Russians [were] also divided by conflicts of their own, such as the one between Armenians and Azerbaizhanis, and some intra-Central Asian feuds. Even groups with limited national consciousness '[woke] up' to their national identity under the impact of the service, and the greater functional integration that [was] undoubtedly achieved in the service [was] often accompanied by an enhanced ethnic militancy after the soldier return[ed] to civilian life (Rakowska-Harmstone 1990:89).

In the 1980s, ethnic conflict in the USSR's armed forces became visibly intensified, and it was noted then that:

The Afghan conflict [had] done much to exacerbate and expose ethnic antagonisms within the ranks. The gap between Muslim soldiers—seen as unreliable and used primarily for non-combat tasks—and the Europeans grew even wider, and ethnic violence became commonplace (Rakowska-Harmstone 1990:91).

A program started at the end of the Brezhnev era included inducements for non-Russians to enter the professional military service and even the officer corps, combined with intensified programs of Russian language instruction and political education, but it brought disappointing results because of strong resistance by the targeted nationalities (Rakowska-Harmstone 1990:91). Nationality popular fronts (such as those in Lithuania and Latvia) often hid their members who had been drafted.

In the USSR, the military was its own worse enemy, and the experience of military life for most non-Russians resulted in a heightened primordial identity, the centripetal dynamics of military education being outweighed by the hazing, harassment, and general antagonism faced by non-Russian draftees within a milieu permeated by the Russian language, and the psychological association between that milieu and its language enhanced the linguistic centrifugal dynamics.

### **3.8 Centralized economic planning vs. nationality environmentalism**

A major dilemma for the USSR was "how to decentralize decision making without losing economic and/or political control" (Schroeder 1990:44). The economy of the Soviet Union had always been directed from the center, and "Gorbachev...continued to insist on the primacy of state interests in the management of the periphery" (Schroeder



1990:63). Speaking to the 19th Party Conference, he warned that "those who believe that decentralization is opening up the floodgates for parochialism or national egoism will be making a grave mistake" and that "any obsession with national isolation can only lead to economic and cultural impoverishment" (Schroeder 1990:63). Moscow utilized economic control in the boycott of Lithuania after its declaration of independence in 1990, thus fulfilling Gorbachev's prediction of "economic...impoverishment." "A principle theme of recent policy statements [was] the need to deepen interrepublican—and thus internationality—interdependence. The leadership, no doubt, regard[ed] the success achieved thus far as a great political benefit" (Schroeder 1990:65). The nationality SSRs had to look to Moscow for their continued economic development, and they had very little to say about what was developed and what was not. The vast GOSPLAN apparatus that directed centralized economic planning, combined with policies that sought to deepen SSR interdependence, constituted a dynamic of the centripetal force, but it, too, was being countered in the SSRs.

"In many of the national republics, nationalists want[ed] to use increased local control to protect the local environment and, where necessary, to curb all-union development schemes" (Olcott 1989:400). Examples of protests about environmental issues were numerous and provided insights into how this increased concern had fostered the perception by the nationalities of a centralized, blind, uncaring economic-development planning process in Moscow.

In November and December of 1986, the Latvians and Lithuanians marched against two economic development schemes—the Latvians demanded that Moscow reconsider constructing a hydroelectric power project on the Daugava River and were successful in arousing enough public support to have the project indefinitely delayed; Lithuanian environmentalists protested the drilling for oil off the coast, also succeeding. In Estonia, students mounted a campaign to halt large-scale phosphore and oil shale mining, claiming the environment was being damaged and that the project would create heightened immigration of workers from outside of the republic; although "the authorities appeared to yield,... work on the scheme had in fact continued" (Nahaylo and Swoboda 1990:267-268).

In March of 1983, the Tatars demonstrated against construction of a nuclear power station on the Kama River. In March of 1986, Armenian intellectuals wrote Gorbachev "protesting against the alarming level of industrial pollution in their republic and revealing...widespread concern

about plans to construct a second nuclear reactor at Metsamor..." In Ukraine, a center for nuclear power generation, the literary weekly *Literaturna Ukraina* "published an article criticizing the poor safety standards and numerous problems at the giant plant near Kiev," and on April 26, 1986, less than three weeks later, that plant, at Chernobyl', exploded in the worst nuclear accident in history. A week before the disaster, the president of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, Boris Paton, had proposed that scientists restudy the "safety procedures at nuclear power plants and review how sites [were determined]". Chernobyl' radiation was "blown in a north-west direction...from northern Ukraine, through Belorussia and across the Baltic into Scandinavia" (Nahaylo and Swoboda 1990:243).

Soviet citizens reacted to the government delayed news of the disaster with the same shock as the rest of the world:

Inevitably, the Chernobyl' nuclear disaster raised awareness and concern about environmental issues among the Soviet population. In the non-Russian republics it also appears to have sharpened sensitivities about the extent of Moscow's control over them and the power of the central ministries. This was particularly evident in the Ukraine where the accident traumatized the population and goaded the nation's writers, and eventually also scientists, into action. (Nahaylo and Swoboda 1990:244)

By summer, still chafing from Chernobyl', where scientists had, in March, discouraged the central economic development planners (GOSPLAN) from building a fifth and sixth reactor at the site, the Ukrainian writers began organizing protests against "building 'another Chernobyl' at Chigirin, in the middle of an area with special historical significance for Ukrainians" (Nahaylo and Swoboda 1990:268).

In Armenia, concern about "ecology, nature conservation and the environment" caused, in March 1987, measures to counter pollution and generally clean up the mess created by Moscow-planned development projects. However, air pollution remains a constant problem. In Georgia, opposition to a scheme to build a new railroad line through the Caucasus intensified; the project threatened to damage the environment and some historical monuments as well as "bring a flood of workers from outside the republic" (Nahaylo and Swoboda 1990:268).

In Central Asia, use of toxic agricultural chemicals has raised infant mortality rates to two to three times the

national average, and protests resulted in the ban of a particularly toxic defoliant—Butifos, used since the mid-1960s (Nahaylo and Swoboda 1990:268). There also, the problem of water scarcity is acute and a looming ecological disaster seems imminent—"the desiccation of the Aral Sea and the resulting alteration of the region's climate and reduction of the growing season" (Nahaylo and Swoboda 1990:268). The seriousness of the Aral Sea disaster grows; the sea is rapidly dying, having lost "a third of its water since the 1960s, and the dispersion from its dry sea bed is poisoning surrounding crops and sources of drinking water" (Olcott 1990:268). Siberal, a scheme to divert Siberian rivers to help solve Central Asia's water shortage, after intense debate was shelved by GOSPLAN, the USSR national planning secretariat; many Central Asians saw the project's termination as a result of Moscow's unconcern for their water shortage (Nahaylo and Swoboda 1990:216, 235, 241-242). Experts in Uzbekistan argue that the water shortage is severe and that current sources will meet needs only through the early 1990s; "many Central Asians have come to question Moscow's right to determine the economic priorities for their region" (Olcott 1990:268). Ecological concern was supported not just by non-Russians; in Kazakhstan, a bi-national group of Kazakhs and Russians protested nuclear testing and other ecological issues (Olcott 1990:275).

From an ecological perspective, it is logical to analogize cultures and languages as an important component of the physical and cultural environment (Marshall and Gonzalez 1990b). "The recent emergence of the concept of 'ecology of culture'...includes elements such as awareness of one's historical past and purity of language" (Solchanyk 1990:186). When these concepts of preservation of what is threatened, whether natural or cultural, became articulated, they aroused opposition against "blind economic planning," whether industrial or linguistic, particularly when done faraway in Moscow; such concerns became major dynamics of the centrifugal force.

These selected dynamics of the centripetal force were being countered and often overwhelmed by those of the centrifugal force. The arising of nationality popular fronts through mass political participation had caused the CPSU to become inadequate, resulting in the cleavage of political action in the USSR along ethnic lines, thus prioritizing ethnic identity and its concomitant language. The imperial legacy that allowed the Russian nationalists to rule as the dominant majority had been challenged by renewed nationality identities, and the rising population of the nationalities, particularly the Muslims, could have made the Russians only

a minority by as early as 1994 (Anderson and Silver 1989:624). Realizing this probability, the Russians reacted politically, some forming groups that exacerbated ethnic goodwill (see Szporluk 1989 for a catalogue of such groups and their beliefs). Reaction by non-Russians had been a major part of the surge of ethnic identification and mobilization.

Soviet language policy and its goals of Russification and assimilation had created a fair rate of bilingualism among non-Russian nationalities (48.1% in 1989 according to Anderson and Silver 1990:96), but the cost of becoming bilingual was not shared. Russians had a bilingual rate of only 3.5% for all languages (in the 1979 census: Kozlov 1988:168:Table 37; for the 1989 census, see Anderson and Silver 1989:647:Table 19). When one considers that "one Soviet citizen out of five—some 55 million people—lives outside his or her respective nationality's home territory—a large percentage who are Slavs" (Goble 1985:81) and most of whom are Russians, then the fact that the non-Russians (and not the Russians) were supporting bilingualism becomes evident.

When added to former Russian immigration into the non-Russian SSRs (see Table 2; see also Nahaylo and Swoboda 1990:254-350), the perceived burden of Russification for the minorities became critical. A growing sense of unfairness, added to the perceived threat of Russian to the nationality language, resulted in all of the non-Russian SSRs creating legislation making their titular languages official and their use mandatory for all citizens, actions contested by Moscow and most Russians resident in nationality SSRs (Nahaylo and Swoboda 1990:254-350). There had also been increasing political pressure for more non-Russian language education (Nahaylo and Swoboda 1990:254-350) and for curtailing Russian as the sole language of higher instruction, thus reversing the centripetal forces in education.

These activities and legislation countered the Soviet language policy and stabilized the republic nationality languages, resulting in a potential for decrease in the rates of bilingualism (see Anderson and Silver 1989:646:Fig. 18), and Anderson and Silver 1990:122-123). The parts of the centripetal force contributed by Soviet language policy and Russification became counterproductive, resulting in increased nationality language preservation efforts.

The creation of a politics of mass participation along with Gorbachev's policies placed the nationality cadres in a position where they dared not contribute forcefully as part

of the centripetal force. The effect of mass politicization and the loss of the legitimating principle found in Marxism-Leninism was either to neutralize the nationality cadres as contributors to centripetal force or to tip them over to become a contribution to the centrifugal force.

The official program for Soviet atheism was unsuccessful in preventing a revival of religious affiliation during the 1960s and 1970s, forcing the government to reach some type of rapprochement with organized religion. The rise of Russian nationalism aided the favoritism shown the Imperial (Russian Orthodox) Church, while the reaction in those not Russian Orthodox was one of having the religious institutions aid in the renewal of national identity and mobilization. The cleavage between Christian and Muslim and Jew further increased religious antagonisms, while the persecution of the Jews led to their seeking emigration to Israel or agitating for increased religious freedom along with others who had been denied their right to religious practice (Gitelman 1989, Bociurkiw 1990:158). The part of the centripetal force contributed by the state-sanctioned atheism, or the Imperial Church after it was co-opted, was countered by the alliances of other religious institutions with the newly forming national popular fronts, alliances aiding the centrifugal force as a new dynamic, since these institutions were so closely tied to ethnic language and identity.

The potential contribution to the centripetal force of the Soviet military was vitiated by practices of discrimination against non-Russians, hazing, internationality feuds, and the general problems of military discipline gone amuck. Segregation of Muslim and "dissident" nationalities, when added to the heavy-handed military indoctrination and language instruction, impaired the potential contribution of the military to the centripetal force. The protracted war in Afghanistan created animosity for the largest manpower pool available now or in coming decades to the Soviet military, the Muslims. Military traditions arose which exacerbated ethnic rivalries, making military experience for non-Russians one radicalizing ethnic identity, contributing to the centrifugal force.

Centralized economic planning through GOSPLAN, part of the centripetal force, sharply increased environmental concerns—aided by the world's worst nuclear accident at Chernobyl' and other ecological disasters and threats, and abetted by what those on the periphery thought was Moscow's unconcern—resulted in an increase of nationality mobilization for local economic sovereignty and environmental protection. When blended with concerns about Russian immigra-

tion, which produced competition for jobs, these concerns became extended into a concept of 'ecology of culture', increasing the desire for protection of nationality languages and other symbols of nationality identity. These increased concerns—natural, instrumental, cultural and linguistic—became part of the dynamics contributing to the centrifugal force.

The advent of *glasnost*' and *perestroika* had the effect of decreasing centripetal force and increasing centrifugal force, with the concomitant effects of undermining Russian-centered Soviet language policy as well as the prioritizing of the use of languages of the titular non-Russian SSRs.

#### 4 Sociolinguistic dynamics in USSR nationality mobilization

The fourteen titular languages of the non-Russian SSRs (see Table 2) were from various language families and had their own histories of development, standardization and codification (see Comrie 1981 for a cataloging of these features). Estonian is Uralic; Lithuanian and Latvian are Indo-European Baltic; Ukrainian, Belorussian and Russian belong to East Slavic Indo-European; Moldavian is a dialect of Romanian, despite efforts by the Soviets to argue it is a separate language (see Bruchis 1982 for an extended discussion of this attempt); Armenian is Indo-European; Georgian is Caucasian (often a geographical rather than a relational designation); Azerbaizhani is Turkic as are Kazakh, Uzbek, Turkmani and Kirghiz; Tadzhik is of the Iranian branch of Indo-Iranian Indo-European (Comrie 1981). Each nationality was the largest group in its SSR, only Kazakh and Kirghiz not having an absolute majority (USSR Yearbook 1990:90-149).

The sociolinguistic dynamics of Soviet dissolution become strikingly simple when examined carefully. The effect of Soviet language policy was to increase bilingualism among those persons who needed it for instrumental reasons, such as gaining employment, participating in the benefits of modernization, and, possibly, facilitating political action in the CPSU. The bilingualism in the SSRs yielded some switching to Russian, but maintenance of the titular languages was stable and the languages were not threatened, for as the titular nationalities became bilingual, they preserved specific domains for the nationality language with stable diglossia (for use of this term, see Fishman 1989:389-402).

The effect of the destabilization of the political system along ethnic lines (Beissinger and Hajda 1990:316) shifted politics out of the CPSU infrastructure into a politics of mass participation, the popular fronts being orga-

tics of mass participation, the popular fronts being organized at SSR level around nationality identity. The linguistic complaints of the nationalities became sentimental symbols, inciting new dynamics for ethnic unity and increasing complaints resulting from the superstate status of the Russian majority, the domination, to use Stalin's terms, of the "big brother" over the "little brothers" (see Armstrong 1968 and 1990).

Pool provided this prediction of the process in 1978:

The...force against Russianization is the attitudes of the non-Russian elites. This force is likely to grow, rather than shrink, as industrial development and urbanization proceed. The perceived importance of its language among the elite of a subordinate group tends to be low when initial contact with a more advantaged language group is made. Once those who wish to learn the latter group's language have done so and some permanent assimilation to that language has begun, it begins to be perceived as a threat to the survival of the native language. It is difficult to predict how far a movement of native-language consciousness would go in a particular Soviet nationality, but the movement probably would become strong as soon as virtually all of the group's population had a moderate command of Russian and a substantial trend toward the selection of Russian-medium education by parents had set in. (Pool 1978:241).

What Pool predicted in 1978 happened, but there were other important considerations. *Glasnost*' allowed complaints to be heard, the Russians noting that they had sacrificed for the periphery without receiving their fair share of the benefits of modernization. With the withering of the legitimacy of the Marxist-Leninist 'mythomateur' (a myth that motivates loyalty of the citizen to the state or monarch: Armstrong 1982:129-131) and the government's admission of the failure of Communism, Russians and non-Russians found themselves making similar demands without having anything left to provide legitimacy except the recidivist nationality identities. The clash of nationality identities heightened the symbolic forms which that identity took, the major one being language.

The concerns of the non-Russian nationalities—intensive Russification, continuing immigration by Russians, a language policy requiring the expense of bilingualism to be paid by non-Russians and not by Russians, preferential treatment for Russians when jobs were in competition, the deterioration of the environment, lack of equal treatment in the military and in educational opportunities—all these

concerns and more (including many regionally or locally specific) created a situation where language could be used symbolically to represent nationality grievances. Although the 15 SSR titular languages were not really threatened, other smaller languages were, and titular language use symbolically provided a means whereby the nationality could represent its feeling of solidarity and perceived inequality.

Pool also astutely predicted this process in 1978: "The unique role of Russian as the language of intergroup contact and individual mobility may some day be seen as an unfair and un-Leninist privilege granted to one nationality. The 'voluntary' acceptance of assigning that role to Russian may deteriorate" (Pool 1978:241). Pool was correct, and that deterioration took place.

A rush of legislation made the nationality languages official in the SSRs and began to counter Russian dominance in education. When asked for, many of these demands (although not all) were granted, for "linguistic and cultural demands are relatively easy to satisfy, since they do not entail the diversion of large amounts of resources" (Beissinger and Hajda 1990:319). Satisfying these symbolic demands were cost effective and inexpensive, but not without a greater hidden cost. Russians living in the nationality SSRs found themselves in situations no longer stratified in their favor, "fanning nationalism among Russians residing in the non-Russian republics. The rise of the so-called internationalist movements...and the disruptive strikes...by Russian workers...were responses...to the threat that their favored status within the system was being undermined" (Spechler 1990:292). In response to demands made to satisfy non-Russian symbolic needs, the Russians found themselves facing instrumental demands of the SSR language laws and the new restrictions proposed for SSR citizenship. The cost of bilingualism was now to be paid by them; "little brother" had grown up and was considering himself "big brother's" equal, and "big brother" was being called accountable for his years of linguistic bullying.

The disruptions of the nationalities' economies by Russian agitation converted the symbolic linguistic demands of the SSR nationalities into instrumental demands, and a cycle was started which could only be broken by secession of the SSR. All 15 SSRs passed laws creating their individual sovereignty, and many began working on separate trade delegations and differently marked money.

The dissolution of the USSR then took on faster and faster speed.



The situation where one ethnic group views the society as stratified while the other views all members of the society as equal and the society therefore not stratified (or no longer in need of being so), is a dynamic which leads to ethnic conflict. (See Horowitz 1985 for a detailed account of how this dynamic functions in ethnic conflict). As long as the Soviet Union was preserved, the Russians faced a choice of two linguistic policies: 1) to continue to encourage bilingualism for all except Russians, the present policy, or 2) to create a universal bilingualism among the Russian population as well as among the non-Russians. Only the latter alternative offered a chance to defuse the linguistic politics of the situation, but whether such a policy would ever have been attempted is highly doubtful. Again, Pool supplied the reasons:

One can safely assume that the utility of a knowledge of Russian under all foreseeable conditions within a continued Soviet political order will remain much higher than the utility of a knowledge of any other Soviet language. Thus the serious question is whether any policy could succeed in making all Russians, or even all Russians outside their own republic, bilingual. There are hardly any cases of widespread reciprocal bilingualism in the world. Spanish-Guarani bilingualism in Paraguay and English-Afrikaans bilingualism among the white population of South Africa are both high, but neither is the result of a deliberate government policy imposed in a situation where such bilingualism was previously absent... No major language in the USSR besides Russian has international status, and...many are linguistically very distant from Russian...To the extent that prevailing patterns of natality, migration, and manpower demands drove Russians from other republics back to the RSFSR, this migration would endanger [a universal bilingualism] plan by depriving both Russians and non-Russians of the most crucial precondition for effective language learning: an environment in which the other language is common and useful. (Pool 1978:242)

Even if a policy of universal bilingualism had been attempted and had been successful, there still remained the other concerns which provided a centrifugal force and which mitigated against the centripetal force, and therefore, language still provided a symbol for ethnic identity and conflict. Any plan of universal bilingualism would have required too great an investment of resources, given the Soviet Union's desperate economic needs.

## 5 Conclusion

Did the USSR's policy of officially sanctioned multilingualism serve as a cause of increased ethnic and nationality tensions? The answer is a qualified no. Neither multilingualism nor official policy caused ethnic tensions; rather, it was the insistence by members of the Russian nationality on viewing themselves as superior to the non-Russians, an insistence bequeathed as a legacy of the Tsarist Empire (Szporluk 1990:2). Szporluk explains:

Historical evidence suggests that the unity of multiethnic polities depends largely on the willingness of the dominant element not to think of itself as an ethnic category. It is not enough for the state to seek to assimilate its diverse groups; the dominant element in the state has to dissolve itself within and identify itself with a broader territorial, political, and/or ideological concept as well. And so we have Americans, not 'WASPS'; Ottomans, not Turks; British, not English; Spaniards, not Castilians. The likelihood of the rise of a new, more authentically common Soviet political identity, therefore, will largely depend upon on the willingness of the Russians to submerge or dissolve themselves in a broader entity encompassing all the peoples of the state (Szporluk 1990:17).

It was highly doubtful that the Russians, given their own intensified nationality identity, would have been willing to "submerge or dissolve themselves in a broader entity encompassing all the peoples of the" USSR. The dynamics of language politics continued to add to the centrifugal force, a force that constantly pressed the nationalities towards eventual secession, a force requiring more and more costly suppression by the center of the periphery to contain it, a force sending the USSR spiraling down to dissolution, leaving the field free for intensified ethnic conflict.

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