

**FROM PERSIAN TO TAJIK TO PERSIAN:
CULTURE, POLITICS AND LAW RESHAPE
A CENTRAL ASIAN LANGUAGE***

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I

The nature and history of the Soviet Union's nationalities policy is perhaps nowhere more clearly revealed than in a sudden spate of laws, issued by a majority of the republics on the eve of the Union's demise, which sought to secure national status for the language of their predominant ethnicity. Tajikistan's language law was the first to be passed in Central Asia, on 22 July 1989. By reason of the peculiar position of the Tajiks in the region, it was the result of an extraordinarily enthusiastic and emotional popular movement which, though temporarily in abeyance under pressure of political and economic problems, will surely once more dominate the course of independence. Apart from the political and social insights to be gained, the process furnishes a case study of language pathology: the metaphor, invoked independently by several Tajik observers, maintains that a hitherto self-confident and fully functional language, with a thousand year history of literary and vernacular use, can within two generations so succumb to unaccustomed competition and abuse as to become severely dysfunctional or atrophied over a large area of its former domain.¹

The language law deals explicitly with questions of the status, rather than the corpus, of Tajik. Nevertheless, the wideranging debate in the press that has followed the course of this legislative experiment broached many problems of the phonology, orthography, lexicon and syntax of Tajik that are intimately tied to matters of ethnic *amour propre*, and which had previously been ignored or glossed over in the interests of Soviet linguistic politics. The present sketch will therefore illustrate the history and sociolinguistics of the

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¹Muhammad Shukurov, *TS* 25 Nov. 1988; T. Berdieva, *JT* 20 July 1991.

Sovietization and de-Sovietization of Central Asian Persian with representative linguistic examples.

In pre-Soviet Central Asia (Turkistan), the term ‘Tajik’ (*tojik* in current orthography, in Russian *tadžik*) was an ethnonym—by this time, an accepted self-designation—denoting the indigenous Iranians of many of the cities (notably Bukhara and Samarkand) and rural areas of the Oxus basin and the foothills of the Pamir and Hindu Kush ranges. Tajiks were distinguished from the Uzbek Turks, who comprised both the ruling elite of the emirate of Bukhara and a large proportion of the rural population over much the same area, by language and its associated culture. The Tajiks’ vernacular was a variety of Persian, closely related to the literary language of the Iranian plateau as also used widely in courtly poetry, diplomatics and administration in northern India and the Uzbek emirate. What defined Tajik identity was primarily a communal consciousness of belonging to a historically important and imperial civilization with a world literature, encapsulated in a corpus of classical Persian poetry widely known by even the illiterate; this was complemented in the Uzbeks by a similar sense of mythopoeic and historical rivalry with the Iranian world, of the Turco-Mongol nomadic steppe tradition as preserved in Turkic oral epics. Synchronically speaking, the Uzbeks were politically dominant and the Tajiks subordinate, but the two communities were barely distinguishable to the outsider: both were primarily Sunni Muslims, both the ‘urban’ Iranians and the ‘nomadic’ Turks increasingly occupied adjacent farmlands, costume and domestic customs were virtually identical, and bilingualism was widespread. The Persian-speaking Jews of Bukhara were included among the Tajiks. Iranians from the plateau, and the Shi’i (as distinct from Sunni Muslim) Iranians of some Central Asian cities, were generally known as *fors*, ‘Persian(s)’. The vernacular of Tajiks was *forsī*, ‘Persian’, the same word as was used for the classical or literary language; there was no term for a separate ‘Tajik’ language.

When in 1924 Soviet Turkistan was partitioned into ethnic republics, carved out along the lines of the designated ‘national’ Turkic languages—Kazakh, Kirghiz, Turkmen and Uzbek—the Tajiks were initially assigned an exiguous stretch of the mountainous southeast as the Tajik Autonomous SSR, within the Union Republic of Uzbekistan. Not until 1929 was Tajikistan raised to union republic status, with its capital at Dushanbe, a city virtually created by Russian and other European immigrants. Khujand region (Leninabad) was added to its territory in the same year, but the main urban

centers of Tajik population and culture—Bukhara and Samarkand—remained in Uzbekistan. For a crucial half decade, during which Uzbekistan was hammering out its language and literature policies in concert (and competition) with the other Turkic communities of the USSR, Tajikistan was a gerrymandered constituency of cotton farmers and mountain pastoralists, doubly subordinate to Tashkent and Moscow, and separated from its traditional intelligentsia in the cities of the Oxus basin.

It is therefore hardly surprising that the most far-reaching innovation in the languages of the region—the change from an Arabic to (initially) a Latin alphabet—was accomplished in Tajikistan almost as an afterthought to its adoption by Uzbekistan in 1928. Latinization was not imposed from Moscow, but rather was a cultural manifestation of pan-Turkism with the aim of facilitating literacy and modern education; it began in Azerbaijan in 1922, was copied enthusiastically in Turkey in 1928, and was adopted into Bolshevik ideology as one of the progressive trends of the age. Although Iran was also caught up in language reform frenzy during the thirties and forties, Latinization of Persian was never seriously considered: the accumulated store of valued Classical literature in Arabic script militated against it, and the Arabic writing system was much better adapted to Persian than to Turkish.² These considerations were not allowed to weigh in Central Asia, and a series of three conferences in Tashkent (1928, 1929) and Dushanbe (1930) established a Latin orthography for Tajik on the basis of a system devised by a Russian scholar, O. A. Sukharev. The last conference, as also two Communist Party conferences in 1938, also defined morphological and syntactic features deemed acceptable in ‘literary Tajik’.³

Then in 1939, with pan-Turkism seen as a threat to Stalin’s consolidation of a new imperial power, a second change of alphabet, to Cyrillic, was decreed for the Turkic languages and Tajik. It was argued that the Latin alphabet was an obstacle to learning Russian and to the incorporation of Russian vocabulary. This time, in order to isolate the Central Asian Turks from each other as well as from Turkish literature outside the union, some thought went into devising a leakproof system for each language: the supplementary letters representing non-Russian phonemes (six in the case of Tajik) were assigned different symbols for the same sound and were even

²See, e.g., Perry 1985, 306.

³Kalontarov 1974, 3-4. For the processes of Latinization and Cyrillicization in Uzbekistan, see Fierman 1991, 97-147.

arranged in different alphabetic sequences. According to conventional wisdom drafted in Moscow and still current in the 1970s, this change proved to be ‘a great event in the development of a culture national in form and socialist in content for the Tajik people; the new alphabet and its graphic possibilities helped accurately to reflect the grammatical norms and basic character of modern literary Tajik.’⁴ It was not to be acknowledged even by Tajik writers, until the late 1980s, that the initial definition of the Tajik language—its name and its successive writing systems—was actually a byproduct of the power struggle between Pan-Turkism and Stalinism, with little or no input from Tajiks.

What was meant by ‘(modern) literary Tajik’ (*zaboni [hozirai] adabii tojik*)? The term most frequently used by Tajik writers of the Revolutionary and early Soviet period (e.g., the Bukharan Sadriddin Aini, 1878-1954) for the language in which they wrote was *zaboni tojiku fors*, ‘the language of the Tajiks and Persians.’ With the creation of Tajikistan this was reduced to *zaboni tojik*, and the ethnonymic adjective *tojikī* also came to be used (on the analogy of *zaboni forsī* ‘[the] Persian [language]’) in linguistic, literary and cultural contexts: both terms are exemplified in the title of Aini’s pioneering dictionary of 1938, *Luḡati nimtafsilii tojikī baroi zaboni adabii tojik* ‘Semi-explicatory Tajik dictionary for the Tajik literary language’. As a written language (in Arabic script), this was identical orthographically and in almost every other way with literary Persian. However, ‘Tajik Persian’ had a repertory of morphs, lexical items and syntagms in the spoken language that differed noticeably from those of either spoken or literary Persian of Iran. These were available *ad libitum* in the written language. Depending on the topic and the literary register chosen, it might take a reader no more than a few lines, or several pages, before he could characterize a writer as Tajik (or, indeed, Indian or Afghan) rather than Iranian; but sooner or later, in all but the most stylized genres, it could be done—much as the style of a British, American, or Indian writer of English may be distinguished.

The morphological, lexical and syntactic shibboleths of written Tajik are well known.⁵ They are not common to all spoken varieties of the language, nor are they exclusive to a particular dialect, dialect group, or sociolinguistic register. In drafting guidelines for a literary language suitable for Soviet Tajik writers, the Dushanbe meeting of 1930 did not deliberately choose any

⁴Ibid., 4.

⁵See Lazard 1956, 136ff; Perry 1979.

one regional dialect as a base. It did, however, in accordance with proletarian ideology, castigate certain grammatical features as ‘archaizing’ (such as the verbal prefix *bi-* in some subjunctives, and impersonal modal constructions) and approve others that would be considered colloquial rather than literary (e.g., the variants *-a* and *-ya* of literary *-ro*, the object marker). These specific strictures have generally been ignored by later writers. The progressive tenses formed with the auxiliary *istodan* that are characteristic of many northern and northwestern dialects have been accepted as standard Tajik, in the explicit literary form (e.g., *rafta istoda-am* ‘I am going’) rather than any of the dialectal contractions (*rafsodem*, *raftesam*, *rafsem*, etc.).⁶ Moreover, certain verbal compounds and subordinating constructions that have characterized literary Tajik from the onset of the modern period (they occur in Aini’s early works) are typical especially of the northern dialects, and are arguably influenced by similar structures in Uzbek. Such are the converb construction or gerundive compound, where a verb is subordinated in quasi-past participial form to a modal or *Aktionsart* auxiliary, as *rafta nametavoned* ‘you can’t go’ or *rafta baromad* ‘he up and left’;⁷ and the attributive use of the participle *-agī* as the equivalent of a relative clause, in *anguri man ovardagī* ‘the grapes I brought’, or *kitobi xondagiam* ‘the book that I read’.⁸ The sound system represented in Soviet Tajik orthography, too, is that of the northern and central dialects rather than of the south.

In short, a collection of features that would be stigmatized by most educated Tajiks (educated, that is, in Classical or literary Persian) as Uzbekisms was officially promoted as the model for the orthography, pronunciation, grammar and style of the new literary language of the newly mapped country. These features came to be systematically canonized in the Russian dictionaries and grammars of Tajik produced in the 1950s and 1960s, duly followed by the works of a generation of Russian-trained Tajik linguists and educators in the seventies.⁹

Few languages will support a completely consistent phonologically-based writing system for everyday purposes. Tajik, together with the usual morphophonemic baggage, faced the additional complications of ideology in choosing to accommodate or reject problematic features. The result in

⁶See *Omūzgor* 18 Aug. 1993, 7; Rastorgueva 1954, 63, 67-8, 84.

⁷See Rastorgueva 1954, 84-87; Lazard 1956, 175-76; Perry 1979, 452-3, 458-9.

⁸See Rastorgueva 1954, 80-81; Lazard 1956, 170-71.

⁹Cf. H. Sabohī in *Darsi xeštanšinosī* II, 265-66.

devising a Latin orthography—followed essentially in the later change to Cyrillic—was a mixed system, basically phonological but with nods to both Arabic orthography and, later, Russian usage. Thus the Russian hard sign replaced Arabic *‘ayn* and *hamza* (ideally realized as a glottal stop), even word-finally where they are rarely articulated, though not intervocalically; the soft sign was used redundantly in Tajik words to buffer palatalized vowels; palatalized vowels represented their complex Russian sounds, except postconsonantal *e*, which stood for simplex Tajik /e/.

One unforeseen result of this change was the literal destruction of Tajik poetry. According to Russian (and other) linguists’ analysis of the Tajik vowel system, the quantitative opposition of Classical Persian /i:/ vs. /i/, and /u:/ vs. /u/, which is recapitulated qualitatively in contemporary Persian of Iran as /i/ vs. /e/ and /u/ vs. /o/, has been neutralized in Tajik. The resulting vowels /i/ and /u/ are characterized as ‘unstable’, since the same vowel quality may exhibit differences in stress or duration in different environments.¹⁰ This necessitates a third Cyrillic *ī* (with macron) to distinguish morphological final /i/ (stressed) from final /i/ of *ezāfe* (unstressed); however, no graphic distinction is made between stressed and unstressed variants of ‘unstable’ /i/ or /u/ in initial or medial position. In theory, pronunciation is the same, but in practice, pairs such as *irod*, *imod*, (Persian *īrād*, *imād*) and *šutur*, *futur* (Persian *šotor*, *fotūr*) are not prosodically identical. The distinction had been maintained in the Perso-Arabic writing system by use of *y* and *w* as *matres lectionis* for the long vowels, but by virtue of the new vowel orthography the quantitative metres of Classical Persian poetry (*aruz*) are opaque in Latin or Cyrillic script. As many correspondents pointed out in the debate over the language law, poetry cannot be appreciated, taught or learned in the orthography of ‘literary Tajik’; and there is no shortage of young Tajik McGonagalls who inadvertently prove them right with ‘verses’ that fail to scan.¹¹

With these changes of alphabet, subsequent generations of Tajiks were deprived not only of the orthographic keys to etymology and prosody, but of access to the entire corpus of Persian literature, including such classics as the national epic, Firdawsi’s *Shāhnāma* and the poetry of Sa’di and Hafiz,

¹⁰Rastorgueva 1954, 3-5; Lazard, 1956, 126-31; A. Mirzoev, *AS* 23 Aug. 1990.

¹¹See T. Abdujabbor in *Darsi xeštanšinosī* II, 214-15; A. Mirzoev in *AS* 23 Aug. 1990. In *AS* 19 July 1991, 4, the headline quotation *Guftori nakū nagardad kuhan* is spelled in a form that does not scan (as against the prosodically correct version, *guftori nekū . . .*, found in the text of the article).

which is collectively the chief repository of Iranian national identity and ethnic pride—unless and until, that is, selectively edited Cyrillic transcriptions of selected works could be published. An alternative corpus, together with the supplementary vocabulary and idioms to serve it, was not long in materializing, beginning with translations of the classics of Marxism-Leninism. It was soon followed by socialist didactic and eulogistic prose and verse by native writers such as Mirzo Tursunzoda (1911-1977). In 1981 a selection of Tursunzoda's poetry was published in Moscow in Perso-Arabic script, described as 'in the Dari language' (the designation for Persian in Afghanistan), and thus destined for export only.

Successive waves of Russian and other European immigrants concentrated in Dushanbe: during 1925-26, seventy-six percent of bureaucrats and technicians in the capital were non-Tajiks, and at the radio station the count was one hundred percent.¹² There was thus no incentive for the development of native vocabulary in the administrative and technical domains. The earliest layer of borrowings from Russian were at least phonologically, hence orthographically, assimilated into Tajik (of necessity during 1929-39, when they were in effect transcribed into the Latin alphabet); but in 1952 it was decreed that Russian and international vocabulary (i.e., foreign loanwords in Russian forms) were to be written as in Russian. A spelling reform the following year introduced the peculiarly Russian graphemes *šč* and *ery*, which had been modestly omitted in 1939, and enforced conformity.¹³

The steady infiltration of Russian vocabulary and calques into every sphere of activity was typical of the process in most new Soviet republics, and need not be exemplified in detail. Ironically, Persian had in its day been a colonial, imperial and ideological language in this part of the world, and was well enough endowed with abstract, administrative, agronomic and other specialized terminology to have staved off the flood. Indeed, specialized Russian-Tajik dictionaries of 1940-1941 show a preponderance of native terminology in the fields of mathematics (55.2 percent Tajik, 24.3 percent a combination of Russian and Tajik) and biology (61 percent Tajik), reflecting the Hellenistic-Islamic scientific tradition of Ibn Sina and al-Khwarizmi, a rich pharmacopeia and long experience of pastoral, hydraulic

¹²Vahhob 1991, 22.

¹³A. Mirzoev, AS 23 Aug. 1990.

and other agricultural technology. In physics and chemistry, the proportions were of course reversed.

By 1957 the psychological advantage of a politically and ideologically dominant language was asserting itself: there had been a steady increase in Russian vocabulary in such dictionaries, including replacement of Persian terms by Russian ones.¹⁴ Native terms at first served by analogy to translate Russian and Soviet concepts in various fields: the Arabic loan *jamoa*, ‘congregation, conclave’, which had successively designated a study group in the Bukhara madrasa and the emir’s consultative assembly, briefly did duty for *sel’sovet* (‘village soviet’) and, by synecdoche, for the president of the same.¹⁵ The routinization of Marxist-Leninist systems, however, and pressure to conform with an overwhelmingly non-Tajik managerial class, ensured the triumph of direct borrowings and forced calques, even when patently redundant. Such were *remont kardan* ‘to repair’ (cf. Persian *dorost kardan* or *ta’mir kardan*) and *xoǰagii qišloq* ‘agriculture’ (cf. Persian *zerā‘at* or *kešāvarzī*). This last phrase, though composed of native vocabulary, is a literal translation of the Russian collocation *sel’skoe xoǰajstvo* ‘village husbandry, rural economy’, i.e., agriculture; Tajik *xoǰagī* ‘status of master, nobility (of descent)’ did not in itself carry the connotations of ‘thrift, management’ that enabled its Russian cognate *xoǰajstvo* to acquire the modern sense of ‘economy’. On the other hand, attempts at straightforward loan-translation such as *anǰuman* ‘assembly’ for Russian *s"ezd* and *radif* ‘fellow-traveller’ for *sputnik* were frowned upon as manifestations of bourgeois nationalism.¹⁶

With the establishment of Russian schools and higher education in Moscow for elite cadres, a generation of Tajiks grew up whose primary points of reference were Soviet ideology, administration, and technology as expressed in Russian. Children were sent to Russian-language schools from kindergarten on, to secure status and professional advancement. Khrushchev endorsed the process, declaring that the sooner everyone learned Russian the sooner they would build communism.¹⁷ Bilingualism became heavily one-sided: in 1989, whereas 60 percent of Tajiks in Dushanbe also spoke

¹⁴Bacon 1966, 196-97.

¹⁵Rahimī and Uspenskaja 1954.

¹⁶A. Tursunov, *JT* 12 April 1989; *Darsi xeštanšinosī* II, 114.

¹⁷See M. Vsevolodova in *Darsi xeštanšinosī* I, 256; N. Qosim, *AS* 18 May 1989.

Russian, only 2.3 percent of Russians knew Tajik.¹⁸ News, information and instruction in the press and other media originated overwhelmingly from Russian-language sources in Moscow, and was translated rapidly and literally by Tajik-speaking journalists and publicists who increasingly thought in Russian to begin with.¹⁹ The same Tajiks used Russian in formal and public forums, readily switched codes in private life, and contributed to a virtual diglossia between journalese Tajik and literary Tajik as interpreted and practised by those who considered themselves to be serious scholars, poets and imaginative writers.²⁰ One writer accompanying an economic delegation to Afghanistan recalls sweating with embarrassment as the leader of his group, presenting a plan for a housing project, began: *‘In—proekti mikrorajoni nav. Ana, inaš binoi nuhetaža. Žiløj. Tagašanda, etaža jakumanda magazinhoi avqot. In ja sportploščadka, inaš sadik. . .’*²¹ Even if preaching to the converted, he would have been virtually incomprehensible to his audience: these four Russian-style equational and locational phrases (without any verbs), including two Uzbek-style postpositional phrases, comprise only four lexical elements that are common to Persian, compared with seven from colloquial or regional dialects of Tajik, eight Russian, and one Uzbek.

II

These processes—deemed manifestations of *sbliženie* and ultimate *slijanie*, the assimilation of Soviet nationalities into one people—continued even under the less dynamic leadership of Brezhnev and his immediate successors. The growing diglossia was evidently accompanied by a covert cultural and political polarization, which erupted with surprising vigor and, ultimately, violence, once Gorbachev’s policies of reorganization and openness allowed the Tajiks, among others, freely to criticize Moscow’s stultifying nationalities policy. Several factors contributed to the realization by Tajik intellectuals that their language qualified as an endangered species. One was the war in Afghanistan, whence some Tajik propagandists who had been sent to reeducate their fellow Persian-speakers returned with an

¹⁸Guboglo 1990-91, 4-7.

¹⁹T. Abdujabbor in *Darsi xeštanšinosī* II, esp. 216-18. This process is discussed in detail for Kirghiz and exemplified with a text in Imart 1989.

²⁰M. Zikrijev *et al.*, *AS* 18 July 1991.

²¹H. Sabohī in *Darsi xeštanšinosī* II, 262-63.

enhanced appreciation of the broader horizons of Persian language and culture and their own poverty in this respect. The 1980 novel by the internationally known Kirghiz writer Chingiz Aitmatov, *The Day is Longer than A Hundred Years*, struck a chord in the Tajik subconscious as well as in that of the other Central Asian nationalities: Aitmatov's character the *mankurt*, a cultural zombie who has been enslaved and systematically brainwashed of his native language and traditions, has attained wide currency as an emblem of the Russianized native without proper knowledge of, or feeling for, his own language and culture.

In 1986 Aitmatov wrote an article in *Literaturnaja gazeta* deploring the widespread Russianization of the literary lexicon of national languages and calling on Kirghiz and other writers to protect their languages as a filial duty.²² Two years later at a Writers' Union meeting in Moscow, Aitmatov was joined by Academician Muhammad Shukurov, Tajikistan's leading lexicographer, in a declaration that the national languages of Central Asia—in particular, Kirghiz and Tajik—were threatened with extinction, and should be declared state languages.²³ By this time the winds of devolution were already stirring all over the Soviet Union, and people consulting their republic's constitution for perhaps other reasons were surprised to find that hardly any of the national languages was constitutionally protected. Only Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkmenistan had clauses in their constitutions dating from the 1920s that declared the titular language to be the state language or the language of general use. The constitution of the USSR merely mentioned 'the possibility to use their native languages and the languages of other peoples of the USSR' as being among the rights of all citizens of whatever nationality (Article 36). On 17 August 1989 the Communist Party gave its belated blessing to individual republics to declare a state language.²⁴ An All-Union law on language status was adopted on 24 April 1990, but by that time ten republics had already passed their own constitutional amendments declaring their titular tongue to be the state language and enunciating a program of affirmative action to enhance its status.²⁵

²²Imart 1989, 123-24.

²³*JT* 17 Feb. 1989.

²⁴*Pravda* 17 Aug. 1989; Lenker 1991, 267-68.

²⁵Pigolkin and Studenikina 1991, 39.

The first three to do so, and thus to serve to a surprising extent as models for the language and style of all other language laws, were the three Baltic republics (Estonia and Lithuania in January, Latvia in May 1989). In Tajikistan, First Secretary Mahkamov's government reluctantly saw the writing on the wall and as early as May 1988 passed a law proposing improvements in the teaching of Tajik and the expansion of Tajik as a medium of instruction, as 'the first fruits of perestroika'.²⁶ That November, the Supreme Soviet of the republic was urged by the Academy of Sciences to declare Tajik the state language; in February 1989 a presidential commission was appointed to draft a language law (*qonuni zabon*), the text of which was thrown open to public discussion through the press only six weeks later. (Deliberations had begun behind closed doors, but a demonstration by young supporters of the bill secured full press and even television coverage of the commission's progress.)²⁷

The draft law as published in the Tajik press in April 1989 comprised a preamble and thirty-five articles.²⁸ Owing to the repetitious nature of several articles, and the rearrangement of some material in the definitive version as adopted on July 22, it is best summarized succinctly as follows. (Serial numbers in parenthesis refer to the definitive numbering of articles, insofar as content is identical).

Preamble and Articles 1-3 (1-2). The state language of the SSR of Tajikistan is declared to be Tajik (*zaboni tojikī*), without prejudice to the free use and guaranteed legal rights of the languages of other nationalities. Russian may be freely used in Tajikistan as the language of interethnic communication. The Republic affirms the principle of Tajik-Russian and Russian-Tajik bilingualism.

Article 4 (3). The Republic assures the protection and use of the Pamir languages and Yaghnobi.

Article 5 (4). The Law recognizes the use of Tajik, Russian, Uzbek, Kirghiz, Turkmen and other languages in official and public life, and a person's right to choose a language. It does not regulate use of languages in day-to-day life, the workplace, the armed forces, or religious ceremonies.

²⁶Pallaev, AS 27 July 1989.

²⁷AS 2 March 1989.

²⁸See, e.g., AS 20 April 1989; an edited English version is in Furtado and Chandler 1992, 546-51.

Articles 6-8 (5 & 6). Citizens may choose the language of communication when dealing with government agencies; such bodies are to provide information or instructions in Tajik, Russian or another acceptable language; state employees dealing with the public must have a sufficient command of Tajik and Russian.

Articles 9-10 (7-8). Government and state agencies shall conduct business in Tajik. Public and official meetings, including sessions of the Soviet of Deputies, are to be conducted in Tajik, or a language chosen by the participants; speakers may, however, use any language they wish, and be provided with appropriate translation. Local government agencies shall use the language of the local majority. Documents of government and state agencies are to be recorded in Tajik, and published in Tajik, Russian and Uzbek.

Article 11 (9). Dealings between government and state agencies of Tajikistan and those of the USSR or its republics are to be in Russian. In dealing with foreign states, a mutually acceptable language is to be used.

Article 12 (10). Personnel of government or state agencies in dealings with citizens shall use Tajik or Russian, or avail themselves of translation. Officials shall respond to requests or complaints by citizens in Tajik, Russian, or another appropriate language.

Articles 13-17 (11-14). Communication, correspondence, documentation, etc., in the workplace and social organizations shall be in Tajik, or, where most of the personnel do not know Tajik, in Russian or the language of the majority. Such works and institutions are, however, to provide facilities for personnel to learn Tajik.

Articles 18-19 (16-17). Judicial proceedings shall be conducted in Tajik or the local language. Plaintiffs and witnesses not cognizant with the language being used may use their own language and be entitled to translation.

Articles 20-25 (21-26). Citizens are entitled to education in Tajik, Russian, Uzbek, Kirghiz or other languages. Tajik will be taught in all secondary and higher schools where another language is the medium of instruction. Graduates of such institutions must have learned Tajik sufficiently to exercise their employment, and will be examined in it. In academic and scientific fields, Tajik, Russian and Uzbek will be used freely.

Article 26 (27). The Republic will assist in the teaching of the Arabic writing system and the publication of material in it.

Article 27 (28). The Republic will sponsor films, videos, etc., in Tajik, and translation of films, etc., from other languages into Tajik.

Article 28. Questions of orthography and terminology will be regulated by a commission to be appointed.

Articles 29, 30, 32 (30, 32, 33). Names of ministries, state committees and other public institutions, public signs and announcements, are to be written in Tajik, and translated into Russian and, if necessary, into another language; the texts of forms, stamps, stickers, etc., are to be in Tajik and Russian and, if necessary, another language.

Article 31. The Republic will protect [the Tajik form of] personal names and historic place names. Citizens are entitled to names spelled in accordance with their national traditions.

Article 34 (35). The status of Tajik as State Language will in no way restrict the rights of non-Tajik-speaking citizens' access to state facilities (enumerated). Violations of equal language rights will be prosecuted.

Articles 33, 35, 36 (34, 36, 37) specify the responsibilities of different government bodies for supervision, drawing up a timetable for progressive implementation, and eventual implementation of the law.

The immediate impression this document makes on the reader—and that includes most of its Tajik readers—is that, with the exception of a cursory nod to the Arabic script and native onomastics, and some cavalier promises to handle education and communication in an impossible variety of languages, it simply preserves the status quo. The editorial and letters pages of the Tajik press fairly bristled with indignation. In the course of the next three months more than 15,000 suggestions were communicated directly to the commission, and over a thousand letters, signed by some 5,000 persons, were published in the newspapers.²⁹ The overwhelming majority, while affirming their support in principle for a language status law, voiced objections to the wording or intent of a range of specific articles. Over and over, the general points were made that the repeated concessions to the use of Russian and other languages voided the intent of the law and offered no incentive to non-speakers of Tajik to use or learn the 'state language'. Some correspondents (chiefly in the Russian-language press) asked for Russian, or Russian and Uzbek, to be declared co-state languages with Tajik;³⁰ many

²⁹Pallaev, AS 27 July 1989.

³⁰AS 18 June 1992, 2.

more protested that in effect they had been. Lenin himself was constantly cited as having advocated maximal use of national languages and deplored Russian linguistic chauvinism—and the obvious retort was made, that his advice had been ignored by his successors.³¹ A selection of the specific objections follows (again, numbers in parenthesis refer to the definitive sequence of articles that remained essentially unchanged).³²

Preamble and Articles 1-3 (1-2). The name of the state language should be *forsī* ‘Persian’ instead of *tojīkī*. The language of interethnic communication within Tajikistan should be Tajik; it is already Russian. Some 400,000 Russians in a total population of five million or more should not dictate the country’s language. It should be asserted that representatives of non-Tajik nationalities in Tajikistan have a duty to know Tajik, out of respect for the national language. The reference to bilingualism should be deleted, or retained only for all-Union and inter-republican communication; or bilingual usage should be phased out over four years. Similar protests were raised in reference to Articles 5-17 and 29-32.

Though no correspondents appear to have made the point, Article 7 (8), stipulating that official meetings of all kinds (*‘s"ezdho, konferencijaho, plenumho, majlisho, mitingho’*) are to be held in Tajik (so far as possible), is an unconsciously self-referential indictment of the extent to which Tajik has forfeited its native vocabulary: of the five terms enumerated, only *majlis*—of Arabic origin—is not a loanword from, or via, Russian. A point that was made, by several writers, is that the syntax of the original Article 8 is so garbled in Tajik that it makes no sense—they had to consult the Russian version to learn what it was supposed to mean. Was the language law drafted originally in Russian and translated into the ‘state language’?!³³

Some wondered sarcastically whether government personnel, to satisfy Article 12 (10), were really expected to respond to clients in Armenian, Georgian, Korean, and the scores of other recognized Soviet languages spoken natively by citizens of Tajikistan. (No one seems to have linked this problem with another that came to prominence during the throes of implementation—that there were hardly any Tajik-keyboard typewriters in

³¹E.g., *JT* 17 Feb. 1989; P. Ghafforov in *AS* 27 April 1989; *AS* 25 May 1989. References given to Lenin’s collected works are Vol. XXV, 136, and Vol. XXX, 162-63.

³²A summary and statistical survey of some of this correspondence can be found in *AS* 15 June 1989.

³³*JT* 21 April 1989.

the republic, and the factory in the Ukraine from which Tajik typewriters had been ordered—or at the least, sets of six modified keys, in order to convert Russian typewriters—was slow in responding).³⁴

For Article 11 (10), several asked that Persian be specified as the ‘mutually acceptable language’ of communication with Iran and Afghanistan. Others thought it important to include a declaration somewhere of the historical unity and continuing cultural ties between Persian speakers of every country; and an intention to support the linguistic and cultural development of Tajiks outside the republic (especially in Uzbekistan). The crux of the matter for pan-Iranian sentiments was Article 26 (27), which was widely condemned as saying nothing; Perso-Arabic script and Classical texts had been part of the curriculum for ‘philology’ students at university level for some time, and selected Persian texts were periodically published for scholarly purposes. What was needed was a decision to revert formally to use of the Perso-Arabic writing system, together with the administrative, educational and financial commitment that this required over a period of years—together with the expansion of Tajik as a medium of instruction that had already been promised in last year’s law.

It is instructive to note not only how closely the language law of Uzbekistan (passed 21 October 1989) follows the wording of the Tajik law (after all, the Uzbek legislators already had before them the drafts of the laws from the Baltic republics and Tajikistan), but how similar much of the public criticism of the draft (published 18 June) was to that voiced in the Tajik press. One objection voiced by Russian and other European critics (who, as in Tajikistan, clamored for the establishment of Russian as co-state language) was that the law seemed more a thoughtless imitation of the Baltic models than a careful analysis of the situation in their republic.³⁵ Nevertheless, the complaints by Uzbek correspondents of the insufficient class hours, inadequate textbooks and generally poor standard of teaching in Uzbek point to a Union-wide crisis in language instruction that was only now beginning to be addressed.³⁶

The debate on the passage of the bill by the Soviet of People’s Deputies of Tajikistan repeated many of the points made in the press, albeit in generally

³⁴*Omūzgor* 17 July 1991.

³⁵Lenker 1991, 273-74.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 268-69.

more muted terms.³⁷ Speeches ranged from the expected loyalist platitudes ('The Language Law stresses our sincere regard for the language of Lenin and Pushkin, which has helped us so much. . .') to hints of a more thoroughgoing revisionism yet to come: the poetess Gulrukhsor Safieva, later to be head of the International Cultural Foundation of Tajikistan, while admitting that the October Revolution did bring Tajiks freedom to choose their destiny, said that she pitied those students who had learned lies in lieu of national history, and even more their teachers, who knew they were lies and continued to perjure themselves; as for Article 27, over a thousand people had already taken courses in Arabic script without waiting for state implementation. The poet Bozor Sobir affirmed that Tajik could have no future without Persian; neologisms would henceforth be adopted from Persian, and the languages would never again be separated.

How closely did the people's representatives heed the numerous objections to the content of the language law? In his speech introducing the definitive version, Pallaev, the chairman of the drafting commission, claimed that they had drafted a new preamble, deleted three articles, added five, divided No.10 into two, changed three articles substantively and carefully rephrased several others in response to criticism.

The preamble, though certainly rephrased, retained the guarantee of free use of Russian, as did the new Article 2. Article 1 compromised on the name of the state language to the extent of calling it *zaboni tojikī (forsī)* 'Tajik (Persian)'. This odd paratactic phrasing was widely protested, though the alternatives offered were sometimes as aberrant. Some wanted simply to remove the parentheses, to give the still asyntactic [*zaboni*] *tojikī forsī*, or to convert this to the corresponding *ezāfe* phrase, [*zaboni*] *tojikii forsī*. This, however, would mean 'Persian Tajik', presumably in contrast with a putative 'Russian Tajik' or 'Uzbek Tajik', which is hardly what these correspondents had in mind. The only meaningful formulation in line with the prevailing pan-Iranian trend is to reverse headnoun and modifier, producing *forsii tojikī* 'Tajik Persian', i.e., the variety of universal Persian known geographically, or stylistically, or *pro tempore* from its writing system, as 'Tajik'. This form appears to be prevailing in most recent literature.

New or newly separate articles comprised no.15, which stipulated that postal and telegraphic correspondence could be handled in Tajik or Russian

³⁷AS 27 July 1989, 6-12.

according to the client's preference; Article 18, providing for industrial arbitration in Tajik or Russian; 19, that notarized documents be in Tajik or Russian or the local majority language; and 20, that civil documents be registered in Tajik or Russian. The theme 'Tajik or Russian (or. . .)' continues throughout the document, as before. Article 29 responded to the suggestion to include a modest statement of concern for the development of the language, education and culture of Tajiks outside the republic. Article 27 declined to promise more than to promote the teaching of Arabic script and the publication of works in it. The former Article 28, on the establishment of a terminology and orthography commission, was transferred from the Language Law to a Language Law Implementation Act that was passed on July 30. The major popular objections, it appears, were not taken seriously; apart from cosmetic changes, the law as adopted on 22 July was in essence the same as the draft of April 14.

III

It would be tedious to detail the official implementation program and premature, not to say unfair, to catalog its many conspicuous failures as both Tajik intellectuals and ordinary citizens have done in the press over the first four years of its life. For Tajikistan's continuing trauma has since taken more dramatic political and economic turns—nominal independence, financial instability, coup and counter-coup, civil war and tensions with neighbor states—which of necessity relegate language policy to a subordinate role while the physical continuity of the state is under threat. Yet it is easy to understand why, when glasnost' first loosened the shackles, and all the more when in September 1991 the Soviet rug—still so stable and comforting for many—was rudely whipped from under the feet of the loyal Central Asian republics, the first and virtually only recourse of the Tajiks in attempting to redefine their national identity was to their language.

The changes of alphabet in 1929 and 1939 and the concomitant redefinition of ethnolinguistic orientation and literary corpus arguably had a more profound effect on the Tajiks than on their Turkic neighbors. The memory that even under Uzbek domination Persian had been the superordinate literary language for both communities, coupled with the loss of access to a written literature of greater antiquity and volume than that of the Turks, undermined the sense of cultural superiority that the Tajiks had nurtured in order to compensate for political subordination. Moreover, the

change to the Latin alphabet was perceived as having been imposed on them by the Turks as a by-product of their own unified Latinization, and in Tajik eyes had nothing to recommend it in terms of orthographic advantage or Tajik-Persian cultural solidarity. Thus while most of the Turkic-speaking successor states have by now declared their intention to revert from Cyrillic to Latin, in line with the Turkish Republic, this can never be an option for the nationalists among the Tajiks.³⁸ They must return to the Perso-Arabic script of their fellow Iranians across the frontier of Afghanistan and, more especially, in the Iranian political and cultural center of gravity with which they do not have a common frontier, the Islamic Republic.

The debate between the pan-Iranists and their opponents, whether unionist or autonomist in sentiment, was encapsulated in the question whether Persian is to be considered one language or three (Farsi of Iran, Dari of Afghanistan and Tajik). This was (and is) regularly aired in the press and administered to Persian-speaking foreign visitors, the pan-Iranistically correct answer being 'one'.³⁹ Another arena of politically-tinged popular scholarship is the question of relexification. While some coinages (such as *jahonnumo* 'television' or *suroġa* 'address') are morphologically Persian but not used in Iran, many other recent neologisms (e.g., *doniřgoh* 'university', *havopajmo* 'airplane') correspond to usage of Iran, especially as established by the Iranian Academy (Farhangestān) during Iran's language reform movement of the 1930s-1950s. Here two concerns are voiced: the wisdom of replacing established Russian or 'international' loans such as *universitet* and *samolēt* with incomprehensible neologisms, and whether Tajik is to favor autonomous Persian coinages or to accept Iranian models wholesale. Shukurov, as chairman of the Terminology Committee, takes a moderate position. In defense of the observed trend he points out that Iran has made considerable progress in coining native scientific-technical vocabulary, so why reinvent the wheel? His twelve-member committee, nevertheless, is to consider each case on its merits and act as a counter to thoughtless imitation.⁴⁰

Undisciplined re-Persianization flourished in the popular press at least into 1992, faster than the Committee could regulate it. Problematical areas

³⁸Cf. *TŠ* 9 Jan. 1991; *Somon* 19 July 1991, 4-5.

³⁹E.g., *AS* 18 Jan. 1990, 2; O. Khudomurodov in *AS* 20 Sep. 1990; D. Khujaev in *AS* 29 Nov. 1990.

⁴⁰*AS* 28 Dec. 1989; and interview with author, July 1991.

are not so much outright replacement of words on etymological grounds (e.g., *respublika* > *jumhurī*), but discarding of Russianate loans for Gallo-Persianate cognates (*familija* ‘surname’ > *fomil*) and vacillation between Arabicate and Gallo-Persianate forms (*fransuzī* ‘French’ > *fransavī* or *faronsavī*). Inevitable, too (since many journalists have access to Iranian publications or have worked in Afghanistan) is the rise not only of lexical, but of syntactic, calques on Persian usage of Iran and Afghanistan, which are less amenable to legislation. Thus the characteristic Tajik modal construction exemplified in *rafta nametavonam* ‘I can’t go’, which is still favored by moderate writers such as Shukurov, frequently appears in its standard Persian form *nametavonam (bi)ravam*. Closely connected with the relexification spree is an exuberant spelling reform that has likewise refused to wait for official sanction. The soft sign has been dropped from use, and other exclusively Russian graphemes have been replaced by their closest Tajik equivalents, both in everyday Russian loans such as *sosialistī* and in *Fremdwörter* such as Yeltsin (*El’cin*, rewritten *Elsin*).

Implementation of the law has inevitably fallen short of expectations. The two root causes are (1) shortage of funds, trained personnel, materials and technology, notably in the sphere of education, where textbooks have to be written or translated, teachers trained or retrained, audio-visual equipment acquired, etc., and (2) wilful obstruction or foot-dragging by an entrenched Russianized bureaucracy fearful (or simply incredulous) of change and jealous of its privileges. The first is often used as a trans-parent pretext for the second. A round-table conference one year after passage of the original law noted the scant progress that had been made in Tajikization of the administration of official bodies; speakers in *plenumho* and other public meetings had not switched significantly more often to Tajik, ostensibly because of the lack of facilities for simultaneous translation.⁴¹ Almost a year later, an antagonistic interview by a correspondent of *Somon*, the organ of the Tajik Persian Language Foundation, with the official of the Supreme Soviet (*Soveti olī*; also known since independence as the *Suroi olī*, or Supreme Council) charged with supervising implementation of the language law revealed that ninety percent of state-run works, schools, offices, etc. in the capital—and many committees of the Supreme Soviet—still ran their administration and kept records in Russian; and that nameplates, notices, etc.

⁴¹TS 22 July 1990.

in government buildings were still in Russian only.⁴² Nor has much progress been recorded in making Tajik the medium of instruction or publication in higher education. A student of the Ibni Sino Medical College who submitted an article in Tajik for publication in the college journal *Tabibi sovetī* ‘Soviet doctor’ (which despite its Tajik title was always in Russian) was told to have it translated into Russian first.⁴³ On the other hand, a third-year law student at Tajikistan State University wrote that all his classes had been conducted in Tajik, and that one of his professors even told the Russian students who enrolled in his course to go and learn Tajik.⁴⁴

Several correspondents reported being denied the option of sending a telegram in Tajik instead of Russian. One blatant case of official obstruction was recounted by a woman in the northern town of Isfara who, since she was literate in Perso-Arabic script, volunteered her services to teach it. After attending a course on methodology in Leninabad and being supplied with a textbook, she applied to the Party secretary in Isfara for a class. Although more than a hundred students were waiting for a teacher, her application was stalled under one pretext after another (she had no proper diploma, there were no classrooms available, no-one was authorized to appoint her, etc.), and appeals from professors in Leninabad were met with blank refusals; she was finally allowed to teach twenty or thirty students in the municipal park.⁴⁵ One final example will suffice to illustrate the principal obstacle to change, which, rather than anti-nationalist malice, is simply a well-meaning, indignant loyalty to established routines. Sitting in the reception room at the ‘Pobeda’ kolkhoz in Lenin Raion (only forty of Tajikistan’s two hundred collective farms had Tajik names), the writer of the column was asked by the father of four of his students to fill out some forms for them. This he did, and left. Some time later the father caught up with him and angrily complained that he had filled out the forms all wrong—the kolkhoz secretary insisted that the answers to the questions (which were, at least partly, in Tajik) had to be in Russian, not Tajik; e.g., not *šuroi jamoai Uspečak* ‘Uspechak village council’ but *kišlačnyj sovet Uspečak*, and not *Nohijai Lenin* ‘Lenin District’ but *rajoni leninskij*. The latter phrase is not even Russian, merely Russian vocabulary in a Persian *ezāfe* noun phrase construction! The author went

⁴²*Somon* 3 April, 10 April 1992.

⁴³AS 18 Oct. 1990, 4-5.

⁴⁴*Paēmi Duanbe* 7 April 1992, 3.

⁴⁵AS 24 Aug. 1989, 2.

back and remonstrated with the secretary, but none of his arguments, whether legal, nationalist, or grammatical, had any effect; the secretary, a young Tajik, was respectfully insistent on his way of doing things. He had even fired people for filling out forms in Tajik.⁴⁶ This failure of the educational system to produce enough competent users of either Tajik or Russian, but hybrids unable to distinguish not only the appropriate domains but even the grammar of the two languages, was widely criticized as one good reason for having a language status law. Inadequate command of Russian, it was also pointed out, was one reason why Tajik conscripts in the Red Army were relegated to the despised labor battalions instead of serving in combat units.⁴⁷

Most instances of conspicuous success have been achieved by the people, largely independently of, and in some cases in spite of, government efforts. Even so, these gains are so far largely symbolic and psychological in nature. Funding for the nuts and bolts of implementation (books, courses, audio-visual equipment, etc.) has been augmented by voluntary donations, often in the form of a day's pay from workers' collectives or publication fees from authors, deposited to accounts administered by newspapers or various language and culture foundations. Article 31, enabling the re-Tajikization of Sovietized toponyms and personal names, was almost universally popular and has been enthusiastically implemented from the outset. Thanks to earlier political vicissitudes, the name of the capital had already been changed from Stalinabad (Tajik *Stalinobod*—which violates Tajik phonotactics in its initial consonant cluster) back to Dushanbe. Other provinces and cities have now reverted to their pre-revolutionary names (notably Leninobod to Khujand) and most Dushanbe street names have been Persianized (Lenin and Pravda have given way to two Persian poets, Rudaki and Sa'di). Persian has replaced Russian in the names of newspapers (*Tojikistoni soveti* became *Tojikistoni šuravi*, then *Jumhuriyat* after independence).

Despite foot-dragging by the registry of births and marriages, so that in some places even two years after the announced date of implementation one still could not formally modify one's Russianate surname or that of one's children,⁴⁸ people have been shrugging off *-ov*, *-ova*, etc. in favor of *-zod*, *-zoda*, *-i* and other Persian formatives. Thus Shodmon Yusupov, one of the

⁴⁶ Q. Abdullo, 'Haj-haj' (Tsk, tsk!), *TŠ* 5 April 1991.

⁴⁷ AS 27 July 1989, 9.

⁴⁸ S. Mahdiev *et al.*, AS 30 April 1992.

leaders of the Democratic Party, could be observed even in the Western press in the course of transformation from ‘Yusupov’ (Uzbek form with Russian ending) to ‘Yusuf’ (Tajik base form).⁴⁹ The rate of change from Russianate to Persianate personal names would be a reliable index of fluctuations in the political climate of post-Soviet Tajikistan.

IV

With independence (declared on 9 September 1991) came the need to redraft the language law as part of the constitution of a sovereign state, not a Soviet republic. The document published for debate in April 1992, and subsequently adopted, was much closer to what Aitmatov, Shukurov and most of the younger generation of intellectuals and journalists had in mind. It has been accused by the non-Tajik population of discrimination against them, and of precipitating the flight of Russians and other Europeans from Tajikistan (though this began before passage of the first language law, and has other root causes). Consequently, it even figures (together with the language laws of the other Central Asian successor republics) in a list of potential human rights abuses recently presented to a Senate commission.⁵⁰ It is hard to see how an attempt to ensure that Russian speakers will no longer automatically enjoy a privileged position in the queue for high-paying jobs can be stigmatized as discriminatory, especially when reality dictates that Russian will, in practice, be greatly in demand for some time yet. Article 1, however, does hint at using the language as a test for citizenship (a step inconceivable in any of the Soviet-era language laws). The salient points of the draft of April 1992, comprising a preamble and forty articles, are as follows (again, numbers in parenthesis refer to the corresponding articles in the law of July 1989).

Article 1 designates the state language of the Republic of Tajikistan as Persian (Tajik); a knowledge of it is obligatory for all citizens. The formulation *forsī (tojikī)*—used also in the preamble—is the reverse of that used in the law of 1989, though syntactically just as unsatisfactory; the many objections made to the unpronounceable use of parentheses remain unanswered. (The printed introduction to this draft is in fact attributed to the well-formed *Bunëdi zaboni forsii tojikī* ‘Tajik Persian Language Found-

⁴⁹*New York Times* 4 May, 11 May 1992.

⁵⁰*Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe* 1993, 37.

ation'.) In most of the articles, as previously, the language in question is referred to simply as 'the state language', but in five cases (Articles 3, 8, 21, 22 and 25) it is forthrightly called 'Persian' (*forstī*).

Articles 2 (=3, on the Pamir languages), 3 (=4), 15-16 (=18-19, the judiciary), 27 (=28, films and videos), 28 (=29, support for Tajik outside the Republic) and 36-40 (34-37, on implementation) remain in essence the same.

Reference to the parallel or auxiliary use of Russian and other languages is significantly curtailed, though not entirely eliminated. Translation into Russian is to be provided where necessary in public meetings (Article 7) and for defendants in criminal proceedings (Article 16); it may be the medium of instruction (as may Uzbek) in specialized courses (Article 22). The language of the local majority may be used in addition to the state language for local government documentation and criminal investigations, and central government documents are to be translated from Tajik into Uzbek (Article 8). English is specified additionally to Tajik and Russian as a language of interaction with foreign states, telegraphic communication, and academic and scientific publication. The state undertakes to assist local nationalities with education in their own tongue (Article 20), and in general to meet citizens' needs to use their mother tongues so far as possible.

Article 26 (27) now commits the state to providing conditions for the revival and teaching of (Arabic) Persian script in all educational institutions, and to an official reversion to use of this in the near future. Article 29 restores and expands Article 28 of the 1989 draft (dropped from the law as passed in July) designating the Rudaki Research Institute and the Terminology Committee of the Academy of Sciences as responsible for the supervision of neologisms and usage. Every level of officialdom is obliged to implement the Terminology Committee's regulations on neologisms, phraseology and nomenclature.

Legislation of place and personal names is spelled out in greater detail (Article 32); the state undertakes additionally to 'correct' (i.e., Tajikize?) names of citizens that have been erroneously recorded (i.e., in other than the characteristic form of their mother tongue) on their identity papers. A new Article 35 stipulates use of the Iranian calendar (i.e., the Iranian names of the twelve months of the solar year beginning on the vernal equinox, ca. 21 March).

On paper, the latest version of the language law looks like a workmanlike compromise between the extremes of pandering to Russian and 'mankurt'

inertia and being swept into an ultranationalistic program of Persianization. As of this writing, however, the political counterparts of these cultural poles have yet to reach a resolution.

I have adopted for purposes of this survey a Tajik nationalist view of the Sovietization and de-Sovietization of Tajik Persian, as being the perceived *terminus a quo* and *terminus ad quem* of the problem for most native speakers; I am aware that this has necessarily slighted another perspective, which must in practice be taken into account when the future of Tajik is discussed. As in all colonial-imperial processes, a broad constituency of Tajiks has arisen who have a sincere appreciation of the material progress brought by, and a genuine commitment to some of the ideals and intellectual habits of, the imperial Big Brother, including aspects of Russian and European language and literature that have been transplanted into Tajik culture. These people are not necessarily ‘mankurts’ who have rejected their own traditions outright in order to secure wealth and status as second-class Russians; nor are they necessarily atheists, Marxist-Leninists, or other kinds of ideologues. They have accepted their place in the Soviet Union as an accident of history, recognize the advantage of their links through Russian to world culture and science, and refuse to romanticize a pre-Soviet past which was undeniably a material and cultural nadir for most Tajiks. Some of them can appreciate both Tolstoy and Sa’di in the original, others are more oriented toward a future in which English is the universal lingua franca and wars of ethnolinguistic identity may no longer be fashionable or necessary. Whatever their position, these are the same interstitial types who remained to navigate the waves of ultranationalism and religious revivalism when the British left India and the French left Algeria.

From an objective linguistic standpoint, it is just as easy to write a secular, a Marxist, or a neo-capitalistic Tajik tract in Arabic script as in Cyrillic, and no harder to compose Islamic traditionalist or Iranizing nationalistic works in Cyrillic than in Arabic characters. In practice, we know from the experience of Hindi-Urdu or Serbo-Croatian that a script is always to some extent the sacralized vehicle of a scripture and, willy nilly, imposes its own powerful symbolism on a text. From 1989 to 1992, both the quasi-official newspapers and journals and a burgeoning array of independent publications in Dushanbe and the provinces (most of them since shut down) took to printing some articles in Perso-Arabic script as well as Cyrillic. Not surprisingly, the topics of many such articles (tales from the Koran and

Hadith, Muslim hagiography, Islamic history, biography, philosophy, etc.) reflected the traditionalist, Islamizing trends that are widely being grafted onto the nationalistic, Iranizing attitudes already familiar (and increasingly tolerated) in Cyrillic-script writings of the later Soviet era. Though most Tajiks, even Muslim believers, are not sympathetic to Iran's brand of militant Shi'ism, there is an indigenous constituency for politicized Sunni Islam; the rival writing systems cannot help but reflect the political polarization, and consequently even moderate Russianized intellectuals are bound to be suspicious of Islamizing trends among the nationalists and to react in turn by adhering all the more strongly to Soviet and Russian norms, as symbolized by the continuing use of Cyrillic.

Can these differences be reconciled? In the long run, the outcome of language planning in Tajikistan depends on the nature and degree of the country's independence, which will turn on political and economic developments in the next few years. At present we may cautiously predicate several possible sociolinguistic consequences on observable current trends.

Russian will continue in use, whatever the wording of the language law, in two distinct ways. The bureaucrats who have resisted the legislative threat to their paralinguistic powers will seek to perpetuate their function and status by continuing to employ a Russian or Russianate jargon; cut off from its source, this will remain idiomatically inert, frozen in the 1980s, much as the Anglo-Indian jargon of local officials in South Asia reproduces the idiom of 1940s British English (spiced with earlier Portuguese and Persian terms). Similarly, it will be subject increasingly to phonological and syntactic interference from native languages (spoken Tajik and Uzbek), and will wax or wane in its own circumscribed domain quite independently of Russian as used either in Russia or by the Tajik intelligentsia. The latter form of Russian, used by Tajiks still in touch with oral and literary Russian of Russia and other parts of the former USSR, is analogous to the international English of globe-trotting South Asian intellectuals and business people; it is likely eventually to be superseded by English or another international contact language of choice as the political, economic and cultural nexus of the former Soviet Union weakens.

Provided that Russia continues to respect the autonomy of the 'near abroad' and that Tajikistan attains a workable degree of political and economic stability, pressure for the Tajikization of public and cultural life may be expected to resume. Then, if restrictions on the press are relaxed and

the Persianizing tendency continues in nationalistic journalism (perhaps influencing serious literature, among younger writers who have no other model)—and if the Arabic script is successfully restored to general use—literary Tajik will in effect cease to exist. Central Asian Persian as it has been maintained lexically and stylistically distinct from Persian of Iran by writers from Aini to Shukurov, and kept graphically distinct as ‘Tajik’ in Cyrillic script, will become to all intents and purposes identical with Persian of Iran. Even unconscious stylistic calques on Russian, such as the rhetorical appeal ‘life itself testifies/demonstrates...’⁵¹ will be replaced by appropriate Persian idioms. Spoken Tajik, on the other hand, remaining a conglomeration of regional dialects, will automatically move farther away from the literary language, at least in the short term.

Predictions are made to be proved wrong. What is certain is that Tajik and the other non-Slavic languages of the former USSR will continue to furnish a valuable sociolinguistic laboratory for generations to come.

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