

Language Policy and Language Behavior in Soviet Central Asia

Language is a fundament of ethnicity, and it may even be the single most important one in the USSR. No outside observer of Soviet affairs can doubt that problems of ethnicity and nationality are of profound concern in the Soviet Union today. Judging by experience elsewhere, there is good reason to believe that in the future these issues will loom ever larger on the Soviet domestic scene. The three essays gathered in the symposium that follows are directed to several aspects of language and ethnicity in the USSR.

Brian Silver examines bilingualism in Central Asia as revealed by the 1970 Soviet census, and he suggests that bilingualism in Russian and in the mother tongue may be a stable compromise rather than a transitory state. Jonathan Pool describes the language of the politics of language. He discovers a plurality of principles and a spectrum of reactions to Soviet language policy. The third essay, by M. Mobin Shorish, describes and evaluates the teaching of Russian as a second language in Soviet Central Asia. The obstacles are legion, and the best method for teaching Russian as a second language, according to Shorish, remains unresolved.

JRM