

**PROFILE SERIES**

**KAZAKHSTAN**

**POLITICAL CONDITIONS  
IN THE POST-SOVIET ERA**

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NOTE: This paper has been particularly written to address the information needs and issues of concern to U.S. Asylum Officers and other Immigration Officers. As such, it may not be exhaustive in its coverage of human rights issues within the country. To facilitate timely access, certain information may be repeated in several sections of this paper.

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## SUMMARY

On March 7, 1994, 75 percent of Kazakhstan's registered voters turned out to elect a new legislature, or Supreme Soviet. Voter participation in the northern, primarily Russian-speaking, part of the country was over 80%.<sup>1</sup> The new Supreme Soviet includes 105 Kazakhs, 49 Russians, ten Ukrainians, three Germans, three Jews, one Uzbek, one Tatar, one Korean, one Ingush, one Pole, and one Uigur. In other words, ethnic Kazakhs, who at present comprise only 42% of the population of Kazakhstan, occupy 60% of the seats in parliament, while Russians, about 38% of the population, constitute 28% of the new legislature.<sup>2</sup> Sources report that "at least 60% of the newly-elected parliamentarians are reliable supporters of [President] Nursultan Nazarbayev, and...will therefore be able to control the majority in line with Nazarbayev's wishes."<sup>3</sup>

Observers from the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) have sharply criticized the Kazakh elections, citing irregularities such as the arbitrary exclusion of independent candidates from registration, fraudulent ballots, simultaneous casting of votes for several candidates, inhibited media access to elections information, and insufficient preparation time for political parties, movements, and candidates. Many more Kazakhs than Russians succeeded in registering as candidates, contributing to the disproportionate representation of Kazakhs in the new legislature.<sup>4</sup> The CSCE "drew a categorical conclusion that...[the] elections...were accompanied with an array of most flagrant violations in the procedure for a free expression of people's will and...should be recognized as invalid."<sup>5</sup>

The "President's party"-- the **People's Unity Union of Kazakhstan (SNEK or PUUK)** benefitted most from the elections, reinforcing the status quo. The elections were a disappointment, however, to opposition parties, who had little time to organize, thus missing what they considered to be their first real opportunity for inclusion in the political system.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, *Report on the March 7, 1994 Parliamentary Election in Kazakhstan* (Washington, D.C.: Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, March 1994), p. 7.

<sup>2</sup>Brown, Bess, "Kazakhstan Election Results," *RFE/RL News Briefs* (Munich: Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Inc., Vol. 3, No. 12, 18 March 1994), p. 8.

<sup>3</sup>"Final Results of Parliamentary Elections Issued," *ITAR-TASS* (Moscow: 17 March 1994), as reported in the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *Daily Report: Central Eurasia* 18 March 1994, p. 43.

<sup>4</sup>Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, *Report on the March 7, 1994 Parliamentary Election in Kazakhstan* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, March 1994), p. 1.

<sup>5</sup>Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, *Report on the March 7, 1994 Parliamentary Election in Kazakhstan* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, March 1994), p. 1.

<sup>6</sup>"Further Election Criticism," *ITAR-TASS* (Moscow: 9 March 1994), as reported in the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *Daily Report: Central Eurasia*, 9 March 1994, p. 34.

Nevertheless, challenges by opposition leaders to the conduct -- and results -- of the election died down within a month, as preoccupation with Kazakhstan's economic crisis intensified.<sup>7</sup>

The post-independence Kazakh government has taken a number of steps to shift political and economic power from ethnic Russians and other native Russian speakers -- who had benefitted disproportionately from the Soviet system -- to ethnic Kazakhs and other Kazakh speakers. As one commenter stressed, "while many government policies, such as establishing Kazakh as the state language, outlawing dual citizenship, and hiring Kazakhs in 'affirmative action' type policies may seem to the Russian population as discriminatory, such policies do not *necessarily* constitute human rights violations. Under the Soviet regime, Russians became accustomed to a position of privilege in the non-Russian republics such as Kazakhstan, for example, in the exclusive use of the Russian language for all politics and administration as well as higher education, a position which is now being adjusted as the former republics have achieved independence. Radical changes are occurring, which affect the Russian population greatly, but they have to be viewed against this background. This is not, however, to justify what may be specific cases of discrimination."<sup>8</sup> Russian speakers have also experienced some discrimination because of informal and even illegal policies carried out by Kazakh officials, such as the firing of ethnic Russians in the bureaucracy and hiring of ethnic Kazakhs.

There is apparent discrimination against and harassment of primarily ethnic Russian parties, movements, and unions in Kazakhstan, but ethnic Kazakh groups opposed to the current government also face such harassment. Kazakhstan is far from being an institutionalized democracy -- freedom of the press, assembly, and political expression are often violated by government attempts to undermine political opposition. Tensions between Russian speakers<sup>9</sup> and ethnic Kazakhs are quite high. The country has become more polarized as many of the ethnic Russians and Russian speakers living in the Kazakh-majority southern region of the country are either relocating to the north (dominated by ethnic Russians), or are leaving Kazakhstan altogether. At present, however, tensions, discrimination, and political manipulations have not escalated into outright repression or violence against Russian speakers as a group. The government seems to discourage ethnic-based supremacist groups -- both Russian and Kazakh -- from both legitimate and illegitimate or violent activities. However, the situation is too volatile to predict with any certainty whether the government will maintain a mildly repressive but relatively peaceful status quo, or will either increase its level of repression or lose its ability to dampen potential opposition. It should also be noted that one exception to the generalization that ethnic tensions have not resulted in societal violence is the status of Russian-speaking Jews. From the

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<sup>7</sup>Telephone interview, Eric Rudenshiold, Director of In-Country Programs, International Republican Institute (Almaty, Kazakhstan: 15 July 1994).

<sup>8</sup>Letter from Patricia Carley, United States Institute of Peace, to John Evans, Resource Information Center, Washington, D.C., 10 November 1994, p. 5. (Organization listed for identification purposes only.)

<sup>9</sup>Russian speakers include ethnic Russians and others who are fluent in Russian and traditionally have not learned Kazakh, including ethnic Ukrainians, European Jews, ethnic Armenians, and ethnic Germans. Sephardic Jews, who have lived in Central Asia for centuries and who speak fluent Kazakh, apparently do not usually face hostility stemming from their ethnic or religious identity from ethnic Kazakhs and other Turkic ethnic groups in the country.

late 1980s to the present, there have been credible reports of sporadic violent attacks by societal groups or individuals on Russian-speaking Jews.

This report will focus almost entirely on the status of Russian speakers in Kazakhstan. This focus was not chosen because Russian speakers necessarily are (or are not) at greater risk of discrimination or harassment in Kazakhstan, but because they represent the overwhelming majority of applicants for asylum from Kazakhstan in the United States. The focus on Russian speakers should not be construed as a judgement of the relative merits of the cases of Russian speakers or other potential applicants for asylum.

## HISTORY

Modern Kazakhstan stretches from the Chinese border in the east to the Caspian Sea in the west, and shares its southern boundary with Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan, while bordering Russia to the north and west. The present population of Kazakhstan reflects the Turkic penetration of Central Asia as well as the Russian expansionism of the 19th and 20th centuries. Many of the problems facing the newly independent, ethnically divided Kazakhstan result from the collision between the nomadic and Muslim culture of ethnic Kazakhs, and the urbanized, westernized culture of the ethnic Russians and other "Russian speakers."<sup>10</sup>

The origin of the Kazakh people is traced to the 15th century, when a large number of Turkic tribes broke away from Uzbek rule. Other groups followed and a number of Mongolian groups merged with them, bringing the Kazakh population to some one million. An identifiable ethnic Kazakh territory existed by the end of the 16th century, occupying all of modern Kazakhstan, parts of Western Siberia, and some northern parts of modern Uzbekistan.<sup>11</sup>

By 1718, the Russian Empire had established a number of strongholds in Kazakh territories. In 1731, a Kazakh khan (leader) swore fealty to the Russians, and by 1740, unbeknownst to the average Kazakh, all of the Kazakh khans had pledged fealty to Russia.<sup>12</sup> Soviet historians therefore claim 1731 as marking the beginning of a "voluntary unification" of the

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<sup>10</sup>Conway, Patrick, "Kazakhstan: Land of Opportunity," *Current History* (Philadelphia: Vol. 93, No. 582, April 1994), p. 164.

<sup>11</sup>Arat, Resid Rahmati, "Kazakistan," *Islam Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: Maarif Basimevi, Vol. 6, 1955), p. 498-499.

<sup>12</sup>Arat, Resit Rahmati, "Kazakistan," *Islam Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: Maarif Basimevi, Vol. 6, 1955), p. 500.

Kazakh and Russian peoples, while modern nationalist Kazakh historians argue that this series of alliances was intended only as a temporary, strategic response.<sup>13</sup>

By the late 18th century, Russia had begun to impose a more direct administration over Kazakh territories, despite Kazakh resistance and periodic uprisings. As Russia became more involved in the region, a flood of Russian and ethnic German colonists settled in the region, rendering the Kazakhs a minority in their own land.<sup>14</sup> In 1916, the tsarist government attempted to conscript some 300,000 Kazakh youths into the Russian army to replace Russians lost in the high-casualty battles of World War I. When Kazakhs refused to be conscripted, the uprising was violently suppressed, and nationalist and anti-Russian sentiments intensified throughout the Kazakh population.<sup>15</sup>

During the civil war which followed the Bolshevik capture of Russia's major cities in 1917, Kazakh nationalists therefore demanded full autonomy from Russia and established a Kazakh national government, the **Alash Orda**. Many non-Kazakhs in Kazakhstan -- particularly Russians -- supported the Soviet revolution, but the **Ordas** (Alash Orda supporters) and anti-Bolshevik forces (Whites) temporarily retained control in Kazakhstan. As the civil war continued, however, alliances shifted along ethnic lines, with Russians and other Slavs fighting the Turkic peoples (Kazakhs and Kyrgyz), until the mid-1920s, when all of Kazakhstan had been forcibly

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<sup>13</sup>Olcott, Martha Brill, "Kazakhstan: A Republic of Minorities," *Nations & Politics in the Soviet Successor States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 315.

<sup>14</sup>Katz, Zev, "Kazakhstan and the Kazakhs," *Handbook of Major Soviet Nationalities* (New York: The Free Press, 1975), p. 216. *See also*: Conway, Patrick, "Kazakhstan: Land of Opportunity," *Current History* (Philadelphia: Vol. 93, No. 582, April 1994), p. 164.

<sup>15</sup>Olcott, Martha Brill, "Kazakhstan," *Collier's Encyclopedia* (New York: Macmillan, Vol. 14, 1993), p. 6.

subordinated to Soviet rule. Many Kazakhs emigrated to China and elsewhere during and after the revolution, and about one million died of starvation during the famine of 1920-21.<sup>16</sup>

### SOVIET RULE

In the 1920s, Soviet authorities abolished large estates, instituted forced collectivization, and dismantled the sources of traditional authority in Kazakhstan.<sup>17</sup> According to Kazakh specialist Martha Brill Olcott:

The result was disaster, almost genocide. Best estimates are that 4 million Kazakhs died in 1929-33, and that four-fifths of Kazakh livestock was slaughtered or starved. Grain yields also dropped, to about one half their pre-collectivization level, ensuring continuing famine throughout the 1930's. In this period the last of the nomads either starved to death or fled to China.<sup>18</sup>

At the same time, "kulaks" (Russian and Ukrainian peasants who had owned small farms and who were forcibly displaced by collectivization, and who were therefore strongly opposed to Soviet rule) were deported to Kazakhstan. Soon after Stalin gained control of the Soviet state in the late 1920s, he executed many Kazakh leaders and intellectuals who had supported Lenin, widening the gap between the Slavic leadership and the local Turkic population.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Katz, Zev, "Kazakhstan and the Kazakhs," *Handbook of Major Soviet Nationalities* (New York: The Free Press, 1975), p. 216-217. Olcott, Martha Brill, "Kazakhstan," *Collier's Encyclopedia* (New York: Macmillan, Vol. 14, 1993), p. 6. Nissman, David, "Kyrgyzstan," *Collier's Encyclopedia* (New York: Macmillan, Vol. 14, 1993), p. 212-216.

<sup>17</sup>Katz, Zev, "Kazakhstan and the Kazakhs," *Handbook of Major Soviet Nationalities* (New York: The Free Press, 1975), p. 217.

<sup>18</sup>Olcott, Martha Brill, "Kazakhstan," *Collier's Encyclopedia* (New York: Macmillan, Vol. 14, 1993), p. 7.

<sup>19</sup>Katz, Zev, "Kazakhstan and the Kazakhs," *Handbook of Major Soviet Nationalities* (New York: The Free Press, 1975), p. 217.

During World War II, Stalin attempted to shift Russia's industrial centers further from the battle front, and therefore accelerated industrialization and Russian migration to the Central Asian Republics. In 1944, a variety of non-Kazakh deportees were resettled on Kazakh territory, and in the 1950s another wave of ethnic Russians and Ukrainians was resettled in the six northern oblasts (provinces) of Kazakhstan.

Dinmukhamed Kunayev, a Kazakh, was first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party in Kazakhstan during most of the period spanning Stalin's death in 1953 to Brezhnev's death in the early 1980s. Under Dinmukhamed Kunayev's administration, Kazakhs slowly gained control of almost two-thirds of all responsible government and party positions in Kazakhstan.<sup>20</sup> However, in mid-December 1986, Soviet President Gorbachev replaced Kunayev with a Russian, Gennadiy Kolbin. In reaction to what Kazakhs perceived as Moscow's pursuit of an increasingly Russocentric leadership policy -- and particularly to Kunayev's displacement by a Russian -- bloody riots erupted in Alma-Ata (now Almaty) on December 17, 1986. The origin of these riots is controversial -- official accounts called them the work of rowdy, nationalistic youths, while Kazakh nationalists claim they were the result of official provocation which rendered violent a peaceful public demonstration.<sup>21</sup>

## INDEPENDENCE

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<sup>20</sup>Olcott, Martha Brill, "Kazakhstan," *Collier's Encyclopedia* (New York: Macmillan, Vol. 14, 1993), p. 7.

<sup>21</sup>Olcott, Martha Brill, "Kazakhstan: A Republic of Minorities," *Nations & Politics in the Soviet Successor States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 317.

Following further inter-ethnic riots in western Kazakhstan in 1989, Kolbin was replaced by Nursultan Nazarbayev, a Kazakh.<sup>22</sup> Although Nazarbayev encouraged cooperation between Kazakhs and ethnic Russians, his administration -- like those in other peripheral republics which had been forcibly incorporated into the tsarist and Soviet territories -- increasingly tried to advance national sovereignty. After the September 1991 coup in Moscow, Nazarbayev banned the Communist Party in Kazakhstan and further consolidated his own position. In December 1991, he was elected President by popular vote and, on December 16, 1991, Kazakhstan declared its independence.<sup>23</sup>

### The Presidency

The next presidential election is scheduled for December 1995; meanwhile, Nazarbayev has remained the dominant political figure in Kazakhstan. He has fostered "much goodwill" throughout the ethnic Russian population, but he continues to walk a political "tightrope" -- especially in northern Kazakhstan where ethnic Russians and opposition groups are concentrated.<sup>24</sup> Nazarbayev has stated that he encourages friendly ties with Russia, yet opposes any moves which would pit ethnic groups in Kazakhstan against each other. Nevertheless, in a time of growing economic crisis and ethnic instability, Nazarbayev is faced with the need to appease burgeoning Kazakh nationalism on the one hand, and cope with Russian concerns about

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<sup>22</sup>Olcott, Martha Brill, "Kazakhstan: A Republic of Minorities," *Nations & Politics in the Soviet Successor States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 316.

<sup>23</sup>Olcott, Martha Brill, "Kazakhstan," *Collier's Encyclopedia* (New York: Macmillan, Vol. 14, 1993), p. 7.

<sup>24</sup>U.S. Department of State, "Kazakhstan," *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1993* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, February 1994), p. 938.

their economic and political future in a predominantly ethnic and linguistic Turkic republic on the other.<sup>25</sup>

### The Legislature

The Supreme Soviet, Kazakhstan's legislative branch of government, survived independence and voluntarily supported many of Nazarbayev's initiatives. Parliamentary elections were scheduled for December 1994, but in December 1993, Supreme Soviet deputies voted to hold elections on March 7, 1994.<sup>26</sup> In its report on the elections, the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) notes continuing speculation as to why parliamentary elections were rescheduled. Although the former legislature had been generally compliant with Nazarbayev's wishes, he fully supported early elections, leading some analysts to surmise that he wanted a parliament with more "apparent legitimacy" and a "broader ethnic representation."<sup>27</sup> Because many electoral candidates were included in the much criticized "state list" (i.e., were hand-picked by Nazarbayev), some experts suspect that the early elections were Nazarbayev's attempt to further consolidate his own power.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Conway, Patrick, "Kazakhstan: Land of Opportunity," *Current History* (Philadelphia: Vol. 93, No. 582, April 1994), p. 164, 167.

<sup>26</sup>U.S. Department of State, "Kazakhstan," *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1993* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, February 1994), p. 937. See also: U.S. Department of State, "Kazakhstan," *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1992* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, February 1993), p. 814.

<sup>27</sup>Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, *Report on the March 7, 1994 Parliamentary Election in Kazakhstan* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, March 1994), p. 1-4.

<sup>28</sup>Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, *Report on the March 7, 1994 Parliamentary Election in Kazakhstan* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, March 1994), p. 1-4.

The new Supreme Soviet is composed of 105 Kazakhs, 49 Russians, ten Ukrainians, three Germans, three Jews, one Uzbek, one Tatar, one Korean, one Pole, and one Uigur. Of the registered electorate, 75 percent voted. Voter turn-out in the northern regions of the country, where there is a high concentration of Russian speakers and opposition groups, was over 80 percent. Sources report that "at least 60 percent of the newly-elected parliamentarians are reliable supporters of Nursultan Nazarbayev, and ... will therefore be able to control the majority in line with Nazarbayev's wishes."<sup>29</sup>

The CSCE report on the elections states that many more Kazakhs than Russians succeeded in registering as candidates, contributing to the disproportionate representation of Kazakhs in the new legislature. The report also notes that Russians may point to this under-representation as evidence that the Kazakh government cannot guarantee their rights. According to the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe:

Inter-ethnic tension, and concern about the implications of such tension, informed every aspect of the March 7 [1994] election...Russians pointed out that only 128 Russian candidates had been registered, compared to 566 Kazakhs. Many people assumed that most Kazakhs would vote for Kazakhs, [and] Russians would vote for Russians...<sup>30</sup>

The CSCE criticized other irregularities, such as fraudulent ballots; simultaneous voting for several candidates; restriction of the opposition's access to media; and insufficient preparation time for political parties, movements, and candidates, drawing "a categorical conclusion that ...

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<sup>29</sup>"Final Results of Parliamentary Elections Issued," *ITAR-TASS* (Moscow: 17 March 1994) as reported in the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *Daily Report: Central Eurasia*, 18 March 1994, p. 43.

<sup>30</sup>Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, *Report on the March 7, 1994 Parliamentary Election in Kazakhstan* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, March 1994), p. 1.

[the] elections ... were accompanied with an array of most flagrant violations in the procedure for a free expression of people's will and ... should be recognized as invalid.<sup>161</sup>

Chairman of Kazakhstan's Electoral Commission, Karatai Turysov, stated that although the elections may not have conformed well to Western standards, they were in line with current legislation in Kazakhstan. He emphasized that Kazakhstan is a young democracy, and cited praise of the elections by non-governmental observers from France, Russia, and Turkey.<sup>32</sup>

### Political Parties and Movements

Reporting available on the status of political parties and movements in Kazakhstan is murky at best. There is confusion over party/movement names, political agendas, and founding dates, and reports differ as to which parties are legally registered, and which have merged to form new parties. The most recent reports may be only partly accurate, or even invalid, as reliable information is often difficult to obtain.<sup>33</sup> According to one source, political parties in Kazakhstan are "changing, dissolving, splitting and forming on a regular basis."<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>"Further Election Criticism," *ITAR-TASS* (Moscow: 9 March 1994), as reported in the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *Daily Report: Central Eurasia*, 9 March 1994, p. 34. *See also*: "CSCE Official Criticizes Election Anomalies," *INTERFAX* (Moscow: 8 March 1994), as reported in the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *Daily Report: Central Eurasia*, 9 March 1994, p. 34.

<sup>32</sup>"Further Election Criticism," *ITAR-TASS* (Moscow: 9 March 1994), as reported in the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *Daily Report: Central Eurasia*, 9 March 1994, p. 34-35.

<sup>33</sup>Telephone interview, Michael Ochs, Staff Professional, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 11 May 1994. Telephone interview, Patricia Carley, Program Officer, U.S. Institute of Peace, 14 July 1994. (Organization listed for identification purposes only.)

<sup>34</sup>Rudenshiold, Eric, "Endangered Species: Political Parties in Kazakhstan," *Surviving Together* (Washington, D.C.: Vol. 11, No. 2, Summer 1993), p. 39.

Kazakhs have tended to avoid association with political parties, due to the negative legacy of the Soviet era and the Communist Party. The recent parliamentary elections sparked a debate as to whether formal party structures should be the foundation of political participation in Kazakhstan, since Kazakh law prohibits a candidate from running for office unless the government has registered that candidate's party, and many opposition forces considered registration unnecessarily difficult, even obstructive. Even among opposition leaders, however, the debate on the fairness of the 1994 elections has waned as economic concerns become more critical.<sup>36</sup>

The following discussion and list (not exhaustive) of political parties and movements in Kazakhstan is compiled from various reputable (although frequently conflicting) sources. In essence, as stated above, it is essential to emphasize that alliances among, and tensions between, political parties and movements in Kazakhstan are still shifting and uncertain. Regional experts agree that the situation is likely to remain fluid for the near future.

**Independent Trade Union Association**

**People's Congress or National Congress of Kazakhstan (PCK)**

**People's Unity Union of Kazakhstan (SNEK or PUUK)**

**Social-Democrat Party**

**Socialist Party of Kazakhstan (SPK), former Communist Party of Kazakhstan (CPK)**

**Tabigat (Green) Party**

**The Union of Entrepreneurs**

**Kazakh or Primarily Kazakh Groups:**

**Alash**

**Kazakh Tili**

**National Democratic Party** <sup>(a)</sup>

The following discussion and list (not exhaustive) of political parties and movements in Kazakhstan is compiled from various reputable (although frequently conflicting) sources. In

**Social Democratic Party**

**Zheltoksan**

**Russian or Primarily Russian Groups:**

**"LAD" Republican Public Slavonic Movement**

**Democratic Progress Party, Democratic Progressive Party,**

**Party of Democratic Progress** <sup>(c)</sup>

**Yedintsvo or Edintsvo (Unity) Movement** <sup>(d)</sup>

- (a) Several Kazakh nationalist groups merged to form the **National Democratic Party** .
- (b) In October 1992, the **Azat** movement, the **Azat Republican Party** , and the **Zheltoksan** party united to form the **Republican Party** , also referred to as **Azat**.
- (c) The **Democratic Progress Party** has also reportedly joined LAD.
- (d) **Yedintsvo** has also reportedly joined LAD.

<sup>35</sup>Telephone interview, Patricia Carley, 15 June 1994.

<sup>36</sup>Telephone interview, Eric Rudenshiold, Director of In-Country Programs, International Republican Institute (Almaty, Kazakhstan: 15 July 1994).

<sup>37</sup>Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, "Kazakhstan," *Implementation of the Helsinki Accords: Human Rights and Democratization in the Newly Independent States of the Former Soviet Union* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, January 1993), p. 190-191. Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, *Report on the March 7, 1994 Parliamentary Election in Kazakhstan* (Washington, D.C.: Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, March 1994), p. 7-9. National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, *NDI Pre-Election Report: The March 1994 Elections in Kazakhstan* (Washington, D.C.: National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, 22 February 1994), p. 8-13. Rudenshiold, Eric, "Endangered Species: Political Parties in Kazakhstan," *Surviving Together* (Washington, D.C.: Vol. 11, No. 2, Summer 1993), p. 39-42. Telephone interview, Khadisha Dairova, Third Secretary, Embassy of Kazakhstan, 11 May 1994. U.S. Department of State, "Kazakhstan," *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1993* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, February 1994), p. 937.

## Registration

Political parties, public organizations, and "movements" must register with the government, with a required minimum of ten members to register on the local level, and a required minimum of ten members in at least 11 oblasts (provinces) to register on the republic level. To participate in elections, a political party must submit a list of at least 3,000 members from a minimum of 11 (out of 19) oblasts. The list must provide personal data such as date and place of birth, address, and place of employment of party members. The necessity for the disclosure of personal information to the government, reminiscent of control tactics used in the Soviet era, discourages many citizens from joining parties, although members of unregistered groups may only run for political office as independent candidates, and not as party members.<sup>38</sup>

General consensus is that the following parties are registered: the **People's Unity Union of Kazakhstan (SNEK or PUUK)**, of which President Nazarbayev is a member; the **People's Congress or National Congress of Kazakhstan (PCK)** ; and the **Socialist Party of Kazakhstan (SPK)**, and **Azat**.<sup>39</sup> These parties have either received considerable presidential support or have been created at Nazarbayev's command, while other parties or movements have been denied executive endorsement.<sup>40</sup> Opposition parties are generally not registered, either because they refuse, on principle, to go through the process; because they have experienced difficulties in

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<sup>38</sup>U.S. Department of State, "Kazakhstan," *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1993* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, February 1994), p. 937.

<sup>39</sup>Telephone interview, Khadisha Dairova, Third Secretary, Embassy of Kazakhstan, 14 July 1994. *See also*: Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, *Report on the March 7, 1994 Parliamentary Election in Kazakhstan* (Washington, D.C.: Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, March 1994), p. 7.

<sup>40</sup>International Republican Institute, "An Update on an Endangered Species: Political Parties in Kazakhstan 1993," *Central Asia Briefing Book* (Washington, D.C.: unpublished, in-house training materials, October 1993), p. 26.

registration; or because the government has denied them official status when they attempted to register.<sup>41</sup>

According to Eric Rudenshiold, In-Country Program Director for the International Republican Institute, who was in Kazakhstan during the March 1994 parliamentary elections, SNEK was largely a presidential "tool" for the elections, and has not been active since then. The Socialist Party (SPK), on the other hand, anticipated more favoritism from Nazarbayev than they received.<sup>42</sup> Since the elections, the SPK has taken a stance in opposition to the SNEK and the president, and other groups have joined the SPK to form a relatively well-organized minority opposition faction in parliament.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>Rudenshiold, Eric, "Endangered Species: Political Parties in Kazakhstan," *Surviving Together* (Washington, D.C.: Vol. 11, No. 2, Summer 1993), p. 39.

<sup>42</sup>Telephone interview, Eric Rudenshiold, Director of In-Country Programs, International Republican Institute (Almaty, Kazakhstan: 15 July 1994).

Prior to the establishment of SNEK, the SPK, which replaced the Communist Party in October 1991, was the most powerful party in Kazakhstan. Nazarbayev, former leader of the SPK, continued to direct party activities, although the Kazakh Constitution precluded his membership in any political party. After the arrival of SNEK, the SPK shifted to the role of "loyal opposition." See: Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, "Kazakhstan," *Implementation of the Helsinki Accords: Human Rights and Democratization in the Newly Independent States of the Former Soviet Union* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, January 1993), p. 190. See also: National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, *NDI Pre-election Report: The March 1994 Elections in Kazakhstan* (Washington, D.C.: National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, 22 February 1994), p. 9-10.

<sup>43</sup>Telephone interview, Eric Rudenshiold, Director of In-Country Programs, International Republican Institute (Almaty, Kazakhstan: 15 July 1994).

### Political Organizations

Several political groups or movements have organized around Russian or Kazakh nationalism in response to ethnic tension in the republic.<sup>44</sup> Article 55 of the Kazakh Constitution, however, prohibits public associations, including political parties, that proclaim or practice "racial, ethnic, social or religious intolerance, or class exclusivity, or which call for the violent overthrow of the constitutional system," while Article 58 prohibits both the creation of religious-based political parties and the pursuit of political goals by religious associations.<sup>45</sup> According to the U.S. Department of State, the Kazakh government invokes these Articles to deny registration to all ethnic and religious-based parties.<sup>46</sup>

Russian nationalist organizations, none of which are registered, typically advocate defense of Slavic interests. Their agendas range from cooperation with President Nazarbayev to secession of the northern, mostly Russian-populated oblasts (provinces).<sup>47</sup> The strongest of these groups, "LAD" (the Republican Public Slavonic Movement) is especially powerful in the north, and has been joined by Yedintsvo and the Democratic Progress Party.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, "Kazakhstan," *Implementation of the Helsinki Accords: Human Rights and Democratization in the Newly Independent States of the Former Soviet Union* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, January 1993), p. 190.

<sup>45</sup>"Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan," *Vechernaya Alma-Ata* (Almaty: 2 February 1993) as reported in the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *Daily Report: Central Eurasia*, 19 April 1993, p. 72.

<sup>46</sup>U.S. Department of State, "Kazakhstan," *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1993* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, February 1994), p. 937.

<sup>47</sup>Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, *Report on the March 7, 1994 Parliamentary Election in Kazakhstan* (Washington, D.C.: Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, March 1994), p. 6, 8.

<sup>48</sup>Telephone interview, Eric Rudenshiold, Director of In-Country Programs, International Republican Institute (Almaty, Kazakhstan: 15 July 1994).

Kazakh nationalist organizations, also unregistered, have been politically active since 1989. They generally advocate the "decolonization" or "de-Russification" of Kazakhstan, and a renaissance of Kazakh language and traditions. Some promote the dismissal of non-Kazakhs (especially Russians) from government and other leadership positions. Nazarbayev reportedly opposes the nationalists, who denounce him as a "puppet of the Russian government."<sup>49</sup> Some monitoring sources report that Nazarbayev is especially harsh in his treatment of the nationalist party **Alash**, accusing Alash of Islamic radicalism although Alash party leaders assert that this is a common label used to inhibit the activities of nationalist parties.<sup>50</sup>

## The Constitution of Kazakhstan

### **The Language Law**

The 1989 Kazakh Language Law, which makes Kazakh the sole state language (relegating Russian to the "language of interethnic communication"), is one source of tension and uncertainty among non-Kazakh speakers, and one of the primary reasons for the emigration of Russian speakers. Under Soviet rule, the government neglected the Kazakh language; "[it] declined from being the vehicle for all kinds of relationships of a people unified since early times into being a

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<sup>49</sup>National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, *NDI Pre-Election Report: The March 1994 Elections in Kazakhstan* (Washington, D.C.: National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, 22 February 1994), p. 11-12. *See also:* Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, *Report on the March 7, 1994 Parliamentary Election in Kazakhstan* (Washington, D.C.: Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, March 1994), p. 8.

<sup>50</sup>Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, *Report on the March 7, 1994 Parliamentary Election in Kazakhstan* (Washington, D.C.: Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, March 1994), p. 8. *See also:* Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, "Kazakhstan," *Implementation of the Helsinki Accords: Human Rights and Democratization in the Newly Independent States of the Former Soviet Union* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, January 1993), p. 199. U.S. Department of State, "Kazakhstan," *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1992* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, February 1993), p. 814-816.

family language, a secondary household language.<sup>51</sup> Currently, the Kazakh language and traditions prevail in rural areas, while most urban Kazakhs speak Russian. According to the State Department, less than 40 percent of Kazakhs are able to communicate in their native tongue. How the law will be implemented and enforced in Kazakhstan is therefore less certain than in the other newly independent republics.<sup>52</sup> Article 65 of Kazakhstan's new constitution emphasizes the precedence of Kazakh over other languages, stating that "the chairman of the Supreme Soviet is elected by ... deputies of the Supreme Soviet who have mastered the state language."<sup>53</sup> However, the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe maintains that as long as Russian speakers have been given the opportunity to learn the local language during the transition from Russian to Kazakh, and are not prevented from speaking their own language, "the language laws passed in all of the former Soviet republics are not in and of themselves violations of anyone's human rights."<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>Kekilbayev, Abish, "That The Smoke Of Our Common House Rises Up Straight," *Qazaq Adebijeti* (Almaty: 5 June 1992) as reported in the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *Daily Report: Central Eurasia*, 8 September 1992, p. 95-98.

<sup>52</sup>U.S. Department of State, "Kazakhstan," *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1993* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, February 1994), p. 939. Conway, Patrick, "Kazakhstan: Land of Opportunity," *Current History* (Philadelphia: Vol. 93, No. 582, April 1994), p. 165. Kekilbayev, Abish, "That the Smoke of Our Common House Rises Up Straight," *Qazaq Adebijeti* (Almaty: 5 June 1992), as reported in the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *Daily Report: Central Eurasia*, 10 March 1993, p. 97.

<sup>53</sup>"Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan," *Vechernaya Alma-Ata* (Almaty: 2 February 1993) as reported in the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *Daily Report: Central Eurasia*, 19 April 1993, p. 68-79.

<sup>54</sup>"Draft Copy Of Paper On Tajikistan," letter from Patricia Carley, Helsinki Commission (Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe), to John Evans, Resource Information Center, 28 June 1993.

### **The Citizenship Law**

The 1993 constitution forbids dual citizenship "with the exception of cases stipulated by the present Constitution and interstate agreements of the Republic of Kazakhstan."<sup>55</sup> According to the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe:

This clause [prohibiting dual citizenship] tacitly refers to the Russians in Kazakhstan ... who may desire to have Russian citizenship in addition to the citizenship of the country in which they reside. An exception is made in the case of Kazakhs forced out of the republic for political reasons ... That in some cases Kazakhs are allowed dual citizenship, but not Russians, has become a source of contention.<sup>56</sup>

By the end of 1995, every non-Kazakh residing in Kazakhstan must declare intent to obtain permanent Kazakh citizenship -- those who do not will be without citizenship in Kazakhstan. Many who do not elect Kazakh citizenship have no citizenship rights elsewhere, and will become stateless.<sup>57</sup>

In April 1994, presidents Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan and Yeltsin of Russia signed a memorandum which "should ensure that citizens of one country who are permanently residing on the territory of [the] other state...enjoy equal rights and obligations."<sup>58</sup> According to Khadisha Dairova, of the Embassy of Kazakhstan, this agreement in no way confers dual citizenship upon ethnic Russians in Kazakhstan. She states that the Kazakh government remains opposed to dual

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<sup>55</sup>"Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan," *Vechernaya Alma-Ata* (Almaty: 2 February 1993) as reported in the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *Daily Report: Central Eurasia*, 19 April 1993, p. 68-79.

<sup>56</sup>Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, "Kazakhstan," *Implementation of the Helsinki Accords: Human Rights and Democratization in the Newly Independent States of the Former Soviet Union* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, January 1993), p. 196.

<sup>57</sup>"Siberian Cossacks in Kazakhstan Protest to Nazarbayev," *INTERFAX* (Moscow: 13 April 1994), as reported in the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *Daily Report: Central Eurasia*, 14 April 1994, p. 51.

<sup>58</sup>"Yeltsin, Nazarbayev Sign Dual Citizenship Memorandum," *KAZTAG* (Almaty: 19 April 1994) as reported in the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *Daily Report: Central Eurasia*, 20 April 1994, p. 67.

citizenship for ethnic Russians, citing possible difficulties in applying Kazakh law to those who may manipulate their dual citizenship.<sup>59</sup> As one commenter stressed, the decision of the Kazakh government to limit dual citizenship is not, in itself, a violation of the human or civil rights of any residents of Kazakhstan.<sup>60</sup>

### **The Law on Public Organizations**

Article 55 of the Kazakh Constitution prohibits public associations, including political parties, that proclaim or practice "racial, ethnic, social or religious intolerance, or class exclusivity, or which call for the violent overthrow of the constitutional system," while Article 58 prohibits the creation of religious-based political parties as well as the pursuit of political goals by religious associations.<sup>61</sup> The U.S. Department of State reports that the Kazakh government often cites Article 55 in refusing to register religious or ethnic-based parties and movements.<sup>62</sup>

Human rights monitors and Kazakh opposition groups are most critical of provisions in the constitution which seem to allow arbitrary action by the government. "[P]ractically all of the republic's political parties, organizations and movements ... advocated against the adoption of th[e] document." According to a member of the working group for the development of the

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<sup>59</sup>Telephone interview, Khadisha Dairova, Third Secretary, Embassy of Kazakhstan, 11 May 1994.

<sup>60</sup>Letter from Patricia Carley, United States Institute of Peace, to John Evans, Resource Information Center, Washington, D.C., 22 August 1994, p. 1. (Organization listed for identification purposes only.)

<sup>61</sup>"Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan," *Vechernaya Alma-Ata* (Almaty: 2 February 1993) as reported in the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *Daily Report: Central Eurasia*, 19 April 1993, p. 72.

<sup>62</sup>U.S. Department of State, "Kazakhstan," *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1993* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, February 1994), p. 937.

constitution, "[w]e were aware of the opinion of the parties but neither the working group nor the Constitutional Commission had any hard reason to accept it."<sup>63</sup>

### **The Law on Freedom of Religion**

The Constitution guarantees freedom of religious belief, provided that it is not -- in the perception of the government -- manifested in political action. More specifically, Article 12 asserts the right of the citizen "to independently determine his attitude towards religion, to profess any of them or not to profess any, to proclaim convictions related to [his] attitude toward religion, and to act in accordance with them." However, Article 58 states that, "the creation of political parties based on religion is not allowed. Religious associations may not pursue political goals or tasks."<sup>64</sup>

The U.S. Department of State reports that the Kazakh government generally respects freedom of religion, and Christians, Muslims and Jews in Kazakhstan have reported no government interference in their religious activities.<sup>65</sup> However, it must be emphasized that the government can abuse the religious "neutrality" clause of its new constitution to achieve political goals. In August, 1992, the Almaty city procuracy initiated a suit against *Birlesu* (the Russian-

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<sup>63</sup>Kozlov, Sergey, "When the Time for a Constitution Came, It Was Adopted: The Basic Law Remains the Center of Attention," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (Moscow: 5 February 1993) as reported in the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *Daily Report: Central Eurasia*, 27 February 1993, p. 83.

<sup>64</sup>"Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan," *Vechernaya Alma-Ata* (Almaty: 2 February 1993) as reported in the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *Daily Report: Central Eurasia*, 19 April 1993, p. 72.

<sup>65</sup>U.S. Department of State, "Kazakhstan," *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1993* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, February 1994), p. 937.

language newspaper by the trade union organization of the same name) for printing "anti-semitic jokes," and asked that publication of the newspaper be suspended for six months. At the end of December 1992, the court decided to suspend *Birlesu* for one month. The jokes, however, were reprints from Israeli newspapers: given other incidents of harassment against *Birlesu*, the state's action could be seen as punishment of a popular Russian opposition group, rather than a genuine commitment to ensuring religious freedom.<sup>66</sup>

According to the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), the Law on Freedom of Religion also implies limitations on manifestations of religious belief by stating that religious freedom can be restricted "to preserve public order and safety or the life, health, morals, or rights and freedoms of other citizens." The CSCE points out that the catch-all phrase "public order" could potentially be used to prohibit any religious activities directed (or perceived to be directed) against the government.<sup>67</sup>

### Freedom of the Press

The Constitution guarantees freedom of speech and press, and the government generally does not interfere in the activities of the opposition press. There are, however, limitations on press freedom -- many media agencies are government-owned, and laws against criticizing the President and Supreme Soviet deputies encourage self-censorship. The U.S. Department of State

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<sup>66</sup>Ilyin, Yevgeniy, "By Decision of the Court We Will Not Read BIRLESU for a Month," *Kazakhstanskaya Pravda* (Almaty: 23 December 1992) as reported in the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *Daily Report: Central Eurasia*, 18 March 1993, p. 90.

<sup>67</sup>Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, "Kazakhstan," *Implementation of the Helsinki Accords: Human Rights and Democratization in the Newly Independent States of the Former Soviet Union* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, January 1993), p. 196-197.

does cite government harassment (through denying supplies) in the case of *Birlesu*, published by the independent trade union of the same name. There are also reports of Russian journalists having difficulty transmitting information on ethnic Russians in Kazakhstan to Moscow.<sup>68</sup>

### Ethnicity

One legacy of Soviet (and tsarist) rule in Kazakhstan has been ethnic tensions wrought by the immigration (voluntary and involuntary) of non-Kazakhs into Kazakh territory. Coupled with Soviet policies which caused mass starvation among Kazakhs, the immigration of Russian speakers to Kazakhstan caused the proportion of ethnic Kazakhs in the population to plummet, making them a minority in their own country. In the post World War II years, Russians became the ethnic majority in Kazakhstan. Under Kazakh presidents Kunayev and later Nazarbayev, however, Kazakhstan eventually reached "ethnic equilibrium," both through the gradual emigration and low birth rates of "Russian speakers" and higher birth rates among ethnic Kazakhs.<sup>69</sup> By 1989, 40 percent of Kazakhstan's 16,463,115 inhabitants were Kazakh, while 38 percent were ethnic Russians. Other large ethnic groups were the Germans and Ukrainians, each comprising just over 5 percent of the population, while Armenians and Jews respectively had a population of between 10,000, and 20,000, a minute percentage of the population.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup>U.S. Department of State, "Kazakhstan," *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1993* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, February 1994), p. 936.

<sup>69</sup>Conway, Patrick, "Kazakhstan: Land of Opportunity," *Current History* (Philadelphia: Vol. 93, No. 582, April 1994), p. 164.

<sup>70</sup>Gosudarstvennyy Komitet SSSR po Statistike, *Natsional'nyy Sostav Naseleniya. Chast' II* (Moscow: Informatsionno-izdatel'skiy tsentr, 1989), p. 68-69.

Substantial changes in Kazakhstan's ethnic composition after independence have changed these proportions, although accurate statistics on the current population of Kazakhstan are not yet available. Approximately 77,000 Russians and 20,000 Ukrainians left Kazakhstan by January 1, 1992, while the core Kazakh population increased by some 258,000 due to the immigration of ethnic Kazakhs from other regions of the former Soviet Union.<sup>71</sup> By 1993, 45,000 more Russians had left, and 300,000 ethnic Germans (categorized as "Russian speakers") emigrated in 1993, leaving 700,000 ethnic Germans in Kazakhstan.<sup>72</sup>

### **Kazakh "Hordeism"**

Since the end of Soviet rule, the traditional divisions among ethnic Kazakhs referred to as "hordeism" have added another dimension to Kazakh politics.<sup>73</sup> With the influx of ethnic Kazakhs into Kazakhstan, and the freedom of movement Kazakhs now enjoy within their own country, many people have been migrating to the region of their ancestral or hordeal roots. The Great Horde, whose domain includes Almaty, was favored by the Soviet system, and has come to overshadow the others in Kazakh politics. President Nazarbayev is a member of the Great Horde, and there are reports of favoritism towards "Great Horders" in employment and granting of political favors. According to *The Economist*, however:

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<sup>71</sup>Ghaliyev, Azimbay, "A Time Rich In Hope And Full Of Doubt," *Ana Tili* (Almaty: 7 January 1993) as reported in the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *Daily Report: Central Eurasia*, 24 April 1993, p. 81.

<sup>72</sup>"Exodus of Non-Kazakhs Seen as a 'Serious Blow,'" *Izvestiya* (Moscow: 12 April 1994), as reported in the Foreign Broadcast Information Service *Daily Report: Central Eurasia*, 13 April 1994, p. 59.

<sup>73</sup>Kazakh legend refers to the three sons of Alash, father of all Kazakhs. From these sons came the Great Horde (in south-east Kazakhstan, including the capital Alma-Ata), the Middle Horde (in northern and central Kazakhstan), and the Little Horde (in Western Kazakhstan). See: "Kazakhs by the Horde," *The Economist* (London: Vol. 331, No. 7866, 4 June 1994), p. 41.

[W]orries about the power of the Great [Horde] are not about to generate a bout of vicious horde-war. There are still many ethnic Russians in the country and the ethnic factor will for a long time be more important than the horde factor. Hordeism is merely another odd feature of the peculiar political landscape in Central Asia that is emerging as the cloud of Soviet influence dissipates.<sup>74</sup>

Since independence, many Kazakhs have advocated "Kazakhstan for the Kazakhs," generating complaints from the non-Kazakh population that there is a Kazakh nationalization of administrative structures taking place.<sup>75</sup> In a recent interview, a (non-Kazakh) parliamentary deputy pointed out that between 1985 and 1992 the number of Kazakh officials increased by 420, whereas the number of non-Kazakh officials remained constant, slightly less than 300.<sup>76</sup> The U.S. Department of State acknowledges that ethnic Kazakhs, prevalent in government positions, do periodically discriminate against non-Kazakhs, but points out that such policies exist "in part out of a sense of a need for affirmative action to reverse decades of second-class status under the tsarist and Soviet empires."<sup>77</sup>

### **"Russian-Speaking" Populations of Kazakhstan: Ethnic Russians, Ukrainians, Germans, Armenians, etc.** <sup>78</sup>

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<sup>74</sup>"Kazakhs by the Horde," *The Economist* (London: Vol. 331, No. 7866, 4 June 1994), p. 41.

<sup>75</sup>Conway, Patrick, "Kazakhstan: Land of Opportunity," *Current History* (Philadelphia: Vol. 93, No. 582, April 1994), p. 160.

<sup>76</sup>Skorokhodov, Sergey, "Russians, Cossacks, Kazakhs," *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* (Moscow: 20 February 1993) as reported in the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *Daily Report: Central Eurasia*, 10 March 1993, p. 97.

<sup>77</sup>U.S. Department of State, "Kazakhstan," *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1993* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, February 1994), p. 935.

<sup>78</sup>While, as stated on page 1, there are Turkic minorities -- such as Uzbeks -- in Kazakhstan, this paper's primary audience is United States Asylum Officers, and concentrates on those ethnic groups which comprise the vast majority of asylum claimants in the United States. At present, such applicants are overwhelmingly from "Russian-speaking" groups.

The number of Russians, close to 38 percent of Kazakhstan's population in 1989, and Russian speakers, close to 60 percent of the population, has been dropping in both percentage and absolute terms since Kazakh independence, due to mass emigration and a decline in the birth rate among ethnic Russians, Byelorussians, Ukrainians, Germans and Armenians (all of whom are seen by Kazakhs as "Russian speakers"). While there has been a drastic decrease in the overall number of Russians and Ukrainians in Kazakhstan, their number has grown by 56,000 in some of the western oblasts (provinces) of the country, due to the internal migration of ethnic Russians and Ukrainians into these areas from other parts of Kazakhstan.<sup>79</sup>

The relegation of Russian to a "language of interethnic communication" has generated the most tension between Russian speakers and Kazakhs. According to Aleksandra Dokuchayeva, leader of the Democratic Progress Party of Kazakhstan, the language issue has caused a split in Kazakhstan's society:

Today, it is understood by everyone that language became a political instrument of personnel selection, [and] the elimination from managerial and government organizations of people from an 'unentitled [i.e. Russian] nation.'<sup>80</sup>

The Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, in its report on human rights and democratization in Kazakhstan, concludes that "the issue of Russian-Kazakh relations will perhaps

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<sup>79</sup>Ghaliyev, Azimbay, "A Time Rich in Hope and Full of Doubt," *Ana Tili* (Almaty: 7 January 1993) as reported in the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *Daily Report: Central Eurasia*, 24 April 1993, p. 81.

<sup>80</sup>Skorokhodov, Sergey and Tyurkin, Vladimir, "The Future is Murky," *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* (Moscow: 5 June 1993) as reported in the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *Daily Report: Central Eurasia*, 6 July 1993, p. 95.

be the most critical one facing the new country," and that this problem "will affect ... whether Kazakhstan will be able to hold together in its present borders."<sup>81</sup>

Ethnic Russians and other Russian speakers have increased demands for dual citizenship but Kazakh officials state that this is "out of the question": President Nazarbayev has publicly rejected any possibility of dual citizenship for ethnic Russians.<sup>82</sup> According to one Western diplomat:

The Kazakh government regards the granting of dual citizenship as being comparable to committing suicide -- particularly after the emergence of nationalists in the Russian elections who are seeking to recreate another Soviet empire.<sup>83</sup>

Human rights monitoring sources have emphasized, however, that Kazakhstan's laws on language and citizenship do not, in and of themselves, constitute human rights violations. According to one expert commenter, "International human rights documents provide for the right to citizenship, which is not being denied to any resident of Kazakhstan, but do not guarantee the right to dual citizenship -- that is a matter left for an individual country to decide. Similarly, establishing a state language is not in and of itself a human rights violation, as long as no one suffers, legally or physically, from using his or her language. (Many democratic countries have official languages and require knowledge of that language for citizenship and certain jobs.)"<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>81</sup>Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, "Kazakhstan," *Implementation of the Helsinki Accords: Human Rights and Democratization in the Newly Independent States of the Former Soviet Union* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, January 1993), p. 204.

<sup>82</sup>Artykova, Nadira, "Central Asian Republics: Dual Citizenship Offer to Keep Russians," *InterPress Service* (London: 3 February 1994) as reported on NEXIS database.

<sup>83</sup>Artykova, Nadira, "Central Asian Republics: Dual Citizenship Offer to Keep Russians," *InterPress Service* (London: 3 February 1994) as reported on NEXIS database.

<sup>84</sup>Letter from Patricia Carley, United States Institute of Peace, to John Evans, Resource Information Center, Washington, D.C., 10 November 1994, p. 5. (Organization listed for identification purposes only.)

### **"Russian-Speaking" Populations of Kazakhstan: Jews**

The Jewish population, mostly European Jews who arrived during the Soviet period, fell from 22,762 in 1979 to 18,379 in 1989, largely due to emigration. Since Kazakhstan's independence, the pattern of Jewish emigration has continued, unimpeded by the government.<sup>85</sup> The Documentation, Information and Research Branch of the Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board, assessed the situation of the remaining Jews in Kazakhstan in March 1994:

The National Conference on Soviet Jewry reports that about 18,000 Jews live in Kazakhstan, thus comprising 0.1 per cent of the total population. The same source reports a number of isolated anti-semitic incidents in 1992. The Union of Councils for Soviet Jews in Washington also reports a number of anti-semitic incidents which took place in 1991, 1992 and 1993. A representative of the Caucasus Network in New York indicated that generally nationalities, including Jews, are polarized in Kazakhstan. She reported the following: preference is accorded to ethnic Kazakhs in employment as a result the declaration of Kazakhs as the official state language, discrimination in favour of ethnic Kazakhs in education, where children are asked to state their ethnicity, demands by "Kazakh nationalists" for rejection of Jewish representation during cultural conferences, and incidents of Jews being stoned during gatherings. The representative could not provide information as to whether these incidents were sanctioned by the government.<sup>86</sup>

More recent reports from the Union of Councils' *Monitor* document continued government harassment of the press and other curbs on political expression, as well as problems for Russian speakers related to the language laws, the ban on dual citizenship with Russia, and

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<sup>85</sup>Gosudarstvennyy Komitet SSSR po Statistike, *Natsional'nyy Sostav Naseleniya, II* (Moscow: Informatsionno-izdatel'skiy tsentr, 1989), p. 69. *See also*: Ghaliyev, Azimbay, "A Time Rich in Hope and Full of Doubt," *Ana Tili* (Almaty: 7 January 1993) as reported in the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *Daily Report: Central Asia*, 24 April 1993, p. 81.

<sup>86</sup>"Kazakhstan: Information on the Situation of Jews," *Documentation, Information and Research Branch, Immigration and Refugee Board* (Ottawa: 3 March 1994), KKT16692.E.

tensions between Russian speakers and ethnic Kazakhs, but mention no specific incidents of harassment of or violence against Jews.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>87</sup>"Kazakhstan," *Monitor* (Washington, D.C.: Union of Councils, 18 February 1994, Vol. V, No. 4 - 8 July 1994, Vol. V, No. 14).

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