

## **Reasons behind kazakhization and the interested parties**

The following factors facilitate the process of kazakhization of the country's institutions of power. First, of course, the large outflow of Russian-speaking citizens from the republic. This is connected with the worsening socio-economic situation in the country as a whole and with this part of the population in particular. The Russian-speaking population is losing or has already practically lost those positions it occupied during the Soviet period. It is no secret that in those years it occupied a rather privileged position, even in comparison with the native ethnic group. After Kazakhstan achieved independence, the opposite process began. The nonnative population began to experience psychological discomfort, which was augmented by economic difficulties. Members of the Russian-speaking population see their main way out in returning to their historical homeland, primarily Russia. There have been practically no active efforts to change their situation. The level of resistance to the negative processes of kazakhization is gradually declining.

Another factor has been the increasing number of the indigenous nationality among those arriving from other states and becoming permanent residents. This process, however, has not always proceeded successfully, and the number of *oralmans* has gradually declined. This state of affairs is connected, most basically, with the inability of local authorities to provide normal living and work conditions for those who have been newly repatriated. It should be noted, however, that Kazakhs who have arrived from other [non CIS] countries naturally do not speak Russian. Their primary language of communication, therefore, is Kazakh. This fact is reflected in the role they play in society.

The passivity and the lack of participation by most of the Russian-speaking population in political processes have had a largely negative impact on their situation. Among this section of society, there has not yet appeared a strong and influential political force that is capable of concentrating the people around itself and having an effect on political decisions. Groupings that speak for the Russian-speaking citizens have taken practically no measures to occupy any niche in the institutions of power, even though there is a social basis for this. Their basic activity is directed toward contact with Russia, and their intention of occupying a place within the structure of Kazakhstan's government is not very noticeable.

Of course, this is partly because of some of the actions of the authorities themselves. For example, the national idea that has been offered by state organs, the essence of which is to unite around the titular nation all of the nonnative nationalities. That is, the leading role of the Kazakhs is emphasized along with its irrevocable right to a privileged position. This fact, of course, can be explained by the prevention of Kazakhs from ruling their own state during Soviet times. In their efforts to change this situation, however, the authorities have gotten somewhat carried away and have made a

number of mistakes. For example, within this national idea, there are practically no well-considered mechanisms for psychological adaptation of the speakers of other languages to formation of the Kazakh language infrastructure. Moreover, it is emphasized that the Kazakh people possess all rights and, most importantly, the moral right to a central place in their state, even if this is by artificial means. There is a constant emphasis on the presence in the upper tiers of government of Russians. They include such persons as S. Tereshchenko, the leader of the Otan Party; Vice Premier A. Pavlov; General Prosecutor Iu. Khitrin; and G. Marchenko, chairman of the National Bank. Russian-speakers as a percentage of the population, however, are not proportionately represented in the government.

The strongest instrument of kazakhization among state institutions is language. According to Kazakhstan's constitution, Kazakh is the only state language. That is, many representatives of nonnative nationalities in the country, as well as their supporters in Russia, view this as the humiliation of the significance of the Russian language. A new round in the polemic on this question has been started by the example of neighboring Kyrgyzstan, where Russian was recently granted official status. In other words, there is now a precedent, in Central Asia and the entire Commonwealth of Independent States, that will be used by interested sides.

It is possible to note several factors that facilitate the declining significance of the Russian language in Kazakhstan. First, against the background of constantly opening Kazakh-language schools, the total number of Russian-language schools has been reduced. The same process occurs in relation to high schools and institutions of higher education. In other words, in one of the country's most strategic areas of civic life — education — the significance of the Kazakh language is constantly being elevated. This process is facilitated by a whole package of legislative acts and enabling documents on education, including the State Conception of Education in Kazakhstan.

Second, implementation of the state language occurs in the mass media. A temporary quota for Kazakh-language broadcasts has been established. "In order to create the necessary language conditions and proper functioning of the state language, regardless of their form, broadcasts on TV and radio channels in the state language should be not less than the total amount of broadcast time in other languages (Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan, July 11, 1997, No. 151-1, On Languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan, Chapter III, Article 18). At the same time, the authorities could not interest the mass media in producing quality Kazakh-language productions.

Third, a knowledge of the Kazakh language is becoming necessary for certain types of professional activity. An official list of positions and professions has been worked up for which a knowledge of the state language is necessary (Law on Languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan, Article 23). On the basis of this list, a competition has been announced in the press for filling official positions. One of the basic demands for

applicants is a command of the Kazakh language. In other words, the great majority of the nonnative population has no chance at any position.

In addition, all paperwork in Kazakhstan is undergoing a shift to the Kazakh language (Presidential Decree, Republic of Kazakhstan, October 5, 1998, No. 4106, On the State Program for the Functioning and Development of Languages). The deadline, however, has been extended several times. Originally, the authorities intended to implement this immediately after adoption of the Constitution, in which Kazakh is designated the state language. Because of the lack of professional staff and the lack of means for mass instruction of the population, the deadline was moved up. Early this year, however, the process commenced and, it seems, it cannot be stopped. But it must be noted that there has been no high-quality effort to popularize the Kazakh language. Because of their low quality, the new Kazakh language textbooks cannot withstand criticism. In addition, there has been no training of professional pedagogues. In other words, most of the nonnative population and a portion of Kazakhs themselves remain at the same level of language ability. One could say that the government let this process follow its own course rather than taking control of it.

In this connection, it is worth remembering the experience of Uzbekistan, where authorities forcibly introduced Uzbek on the mass of the nonnative population. This example, however, is absolutely impossible for Kazakhstan for several reasons. Uzbeks have historically maintained their numerical preponderance in Uzbekistan; moreover, they never lost their position within the Soviet Union. In addition, a rather large part of the country's nonnative population, even in Soviet times had a command of the Uzbek language. This significantly facilitated the process of its implementation in all spheres of the country's life.

The precisely opposite situation occurred in Kazakhstan, where Kazakhs did not enjoy the same authority in their own country as their neighbors. Moreover, the percentage of the native population was less than half. This was connected to the enormous scale of the country and with the policy of central authorities with respect to resettling a large mass of population from other regions of the country to the republic's uninhabited regions (the Virgin Lands Campaign of the 1950s and '60s). At the same time, there has been a decline in the birth rate among Kazakhs. All of these factors have been complicated by such phenomena as clan, *zhuz*, and tribe, which did not lose their meaning in Soviet times.

The political situation in both states is also quite different. In contrast to Uzbekistan, where it is practically silent, in Kazakhstan the Russian-language population has much greater influence on the country's situation. Thus, the Uzbek method of forcibly imposing language is unacceptable for Kazakhstan.

With respect to low level of activity among the Kazakhstan's Russian-speakers, this is facilitated by the whole package of legal acts adopted by the republic. Included in this package are the citizenship law; the mass media laws; and legal acts on meetings

and demonstrations, on political parties, and on civic organizations. For Russian and other ethnic organizations, the legal field of activity is so narrowed that it is impossible to state one's own programmatic goals. At the same time, a stagnation is taking place in the state bureaucracy, which is gradually turning into an ethnocracy.

Without a doubt, this process of kazakhization does not occur spontaneously. There are definite positions in the state that have interests in one way or another in furthering kazakhization. A number of government circles belong to these positions, as do a distinct part of the Kazakh intellectual elite, some Kazakh nationalists, and non-Kazakh national radicals.

Why is the government interested in developing kazakhization? First of all, it allows for maintenance of its base for further recruitment, mainly among the Kazakh-speaking population. In addition, it allows for reestablishing the status of the Kazakh language. The experience of Kyrgyzstan will not be undertaken in Kazakhstan. The reasons compelling Askar Akaev [president of Kyrgyzstan] along this path are not so real in Kazakhstan. The authorities here enjoy a firmer position, and they will not make an effort at a rapprochement toward the republic's Russian-speaking population.

The desire to maintain the territorial integrity of Kazakhstan plays a certain role. It is widely known that in the republic's northern regions, there is significant imbalance between the native population and other ethnic groups, primarily Russians. This could facilitate efforts toward closer relations with Russia, which would be terribly inconvenient for Kazakhstan's leadership. This may be one of the reasons for moving the state capital to the center of the country, closer to the Russian border.

Another interested party in this issue is the Kazakh nationalistic circles, although it is impossible to speak about their great influence on the masses. This is due to the great tolerance of most of the Kazakh people toward representatives of other ethnic groups. Nevertheless, the nationalists occupy a definite niche: what interests do they uphold? One of the main interests is the defense of the special role of Kazakhs in the country. In other words, in their view, only Kazakhs have the right to rule, and this is appropriate.

Another factor is the effort to raise the percentage of the Kazakh-speaking population. As Kazakhs themselves experience a great problem with respect to birth-rate, the main solution is seen in lowering the size of the nonnative population, first through emigration. The desire to popularize the national traditions and customs is not unimportant: their widescale implementation into everyday life. A rising significance in Islam, and a strengthening of its role in society, is a part of this.

A certain portion of the Kazakh intellectual elite is also taking steps in this connection. This is related to the fact that during the existence of the Soviet Union, this elite played a second-class role and did not occupy a significant place in the republic's social life. Thus, among the main reasons for the intellectual elite's interest in kazakhization is a desire at revenge for infringement of their rights and interests during

the Soviet period. One can also note the intelligentsia's attempts, successful or not, to raise the national self-consciousness of the Kazakh people. The problem is that these goals, though noble in principle, have their negative aspects.

Besides Kazakhs, the national radicals of the non-Kazakh population significantly influences the process of kazakhization. Their principle tactic is to inflame problems to a tremendous level with the aim of achieving authority and gaining points through anti-Kazakh and antigovernment propaganda. It should be noted that they obtain a good deal of support from abroad, in particular Russia. This is related to Putin's policy of uniting compatriots [sootechestvenniki]<sup>41</sup> in the former Soviet Union. In particular, during his last visit to Astana, he met with Russian civic organizations and listened to their statements and opinions regarding the position of the Russian-speakers in Kazakhstan.

### **Consequences of kazakhization**

Clearly, the process of kazakhization has led to positive and negative consequences in the development of Kazakhstan's society.

#### ***Positive consequences***

The positive consequences touch upon processes relating to the activities of Kazakhstan's native population: the Kazakhs. The following can be mentioned:

— A rise in national and patriotic consciousness among the Kazakh people, their transformation into and identification as a nation having its own state.

— A renewal and intensification of the development of the culture, traditions, and customs of the Kazakhs.

— An increase in the level of study and use of the Kazakh language, which has constitutional status as the state language. In the Soviet period, the recognition of Kazakh as the state language was purely nominal. Especially in official communications and in education, Russian was the predominant language.

— Restoring the historical memory of the Kazakh people.

— Increasing the proportion of Kazakhs in all spheres of social life.

— Stimulating the return of ethnic Kazakhs from other countries to the historical homeland.

---

<sup>41</sup> Compatriots usually refer to ethnic Russians outside of Russia. Official definition, however, is broader than this. According to the Law on Compatriots of the Russian Federation adopted in 1999, compatriots are defined as Russian citizens abroad, citizens of the former USSR, and their descendants except those of titular nations. – N. O.

## *Negative consequences*

The policy of kazakhization has led to a number of negative consequences, which can be classified according to three groups:

### *Consequences due to ill-considered and inconsistent state policy*

In the worsening socio-economic crisis and budget deficit, the state has proved incapable of providing the necessary financial and material support for the revival and development of such forms of national culture of the Kazakh people as visual and theater arts, cinema, music, sports, etc. Basic expenditures from the budget go toward the functioning of the state apparatus and power structures, while culture receives insignificant sums.

Instead of the actual study and implementation of the Kazakh language in all spheres of civic life, the authorities have been preoccupied by excessive concern for laws and normative acts concerning language policy. Thus, between the years 1996 and 1998, the following measures were adopted: Law on Languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan; the Conception of Language Policy; and the State Program for the Functioning and Development of Languages. The promulgation of such a number of normative-legal acts with respect to language policy has led to a situation where the legislative basis presents not a unified system but a group of diverse and sometimes unrelated acts.

In practice, there occurs a poorly conceived introduction of the Kazakh language in bureaucratic communications in a number of state institutions, which does not correspond to level of language mastery by the majority of employees, who frequently include representatives of the indigenous nationality. Meaningless actions and the blatant imitation of the language policy are found. For example, in government, instead of an intensive study of the Kazakh language, they are preoccupied with changing the signs of various organizations, institutions, and streets from Russian into Kazakh. The demand for 50 percent broadcasting in Kazakh language on radio and television is not supported by state, even with respect to state electronic media.

For the following reasons, there is no intensive instruction in Kazakh:

- The small number of specialists in this field;
- The low salary level for Kazakh language teachers at various levels of educational institutions. This prevents them from performing their work at the required level;
- The lack of the necessary material and technical basis and instructional materials for studying Kazakh;
- Reduction, for various personal and socio-economic reasons, of the number of citizens receiving compulsory and higher education;

— The preference of Kazakhstan's citizens for studying foreign languages over the state language.

The declared policy of drawing ethnic Kazakhs from foreign countries to the historical homeland is not backed up by real measures. Kazakh repatriates, or *oralmans*, who arrive in Kazakhstan, do not immediately receive republic citizenship and so their rights are for quite some time restricted. In addition, the government practically provides nothing for their residence, job placement, social security, education of their children, etc. The indigenous population of the republic regards the *oralmans* as foreigners, outsiders; and, in light of the difficult socio-economic situation in the country, their arrival is met in a negative way. Many *oralmans*, therefore, cannot adapt properly to contemporary circumstances in Kazakhstan. As a result, there have already been cases of repatriates returning to those countries from which they arrived.

#### *Tension in interethnic relations among Kazakhstan's citizens*

The peak of such tension occurred between 1991 and 1994, that is in the period of the collapse of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan's attainment of independence, and its becoming a sovereign state. At present, the nationalities question in the republic is not quite so sharp, since most of the population finds itself in the same socio-economic position: for the most part at a level on the verge of poverty, socially apathetic, and preoccupied with day-to-day problems. At the same time, however, there do exist interethnic contradictions, including the following:

— The negative side of the rise in national consciousness by the Kazakh nation as expressed in the striving by Kazakhs for dominance in all spheres of civic life over other inhabitants of the republic, and frequently the driving of such inhabitants from the country.

— Granting of priority to representatives of the Kazakh nationality in admission to higher education and employment in state bodies, together with a corresponding reduction in the representation of nonnative population, especially Russians, in such organizations and institutions.

— Limitations on distribution in the republic of Russian papers, which previously enjoyed a printing base in Kazakhstan; reduction in broadcasts by Russian television and radio stations.

— Distortion and negative presentations of the role of Russians in the history of Kazakhstan.

— Russophobic propaganda by political organizations representing the interests of the republic's native population (the national party Alash, the Azat civic movement of Kazakhstan, among others); by certain publications, such as *Kazakhskaiia pravda*, and by certain individuals.

— Growth in radical-opposition and separatist attitudes among the nonnative population. Such attitudes are found especially among Russians, in particular in radical and semiradical civic organizations such as Russian Community, Lad, etc., as well as among Cossacks. The expression of such attitudes can be found in all sorts of activities by these organizations: in declarations and appeals; in the course of meetings, pickets, and other acts of protest; in the constant whipping up of concern about the violation in Kazakhstan of Russians' rights and interests; in the urging of Russians to leave the republic; in demands to grant Russian the status of a state language, to introduce dual citizenship, to establish a closer union with Russia, to create national-cultural autonomy, etc.

— Emigration by nonnative nationalities from the republic to the near and far abroad. Obviously, among those leaving Kazakhstan, Russians occupy the first place. According to various data, since 1992, 1,340,000 Russians have left Kazakhstan. Second place is occupied by Germans. Thus, in the first quarter of 1998 alone, according to official data, of the 44,200 people leaving Kazakhstan, 7.4 percent were Germans. Emigration negatively affects both demographic and economic indicators, insofar as a significant portion of those leaving are of working age and specialists in various fields.

#### *Negative consequences in international relations*

Here, first of all, it is necessary to note that the infringement of the rights and interests of the nonnative nationalities can be used by their ethnic kin state or historical homeland to exert pressure on Kazakhstan to realize its interests.

This is typical of the relations between Kazakhstan and Russia, in which Kazakhstan's second-largest ethnic group, the Russians, occupies an important place. The accession of the new president, Vladimir Putin, who is distinguished by pragmatism and a certain severity in realizing the national interests of his country, has entailed a substantive change in questions of state policy with respect to Russian compatriots in the near abroad. On more than one occasion, Putin has publicly expressed the intention of improving the situation of compatriots in other post-Soviet states.

A sign of this policy with respect to Kazakhstan is the increased attention to problems of compatriots by Russia's ambassador to Kazakhstan, Iurii Merzliakov, and by other diplomats. In particular, the level of mutual activity has increased among Russian diplomats and Russian, Slavic, and Cossack civic organizations in Kazakhstan.

There has also been increased interest in Russia about the status of Russians in Kazakhstan. Thus, at the beginning of June 2000, a delegation of leaders of Russian and Cossack groups from Kazakhstan went to Moscow, where they met with high-level

representatives of the president, the State Duma [the Lower Chamber of Parliament], the Federation Council, and the Ministry of Interior.

It should be said that such interest is not always to Kazakhstan's advantage. For example, in April of this year [2000], Boris Nemtsov, the vice speaker of the Russian State Duma, announced that economic and political sanctions by Russia against states in which Russian compatriots face discrimination might be imposed on Kazakhstan. In Nemtsov's opinion, Russian-speaking citizens here are subject to persecution and discrimination; in particular, they have been denied access to state service. In light of the fact that Nemtsov is a representative of the Union of Right Forces [Soiuz pravyykh sil] of Russia, which has a rather influential representation in the State Duma and in the state apparatus as a whole, sanctions by the Duma of one kind or another cannot be ruled out.

The most unpleasant moment for Kazakhstan's authorities, however, was the meeting of Russian Federation President Vladimir Putin with the Russian community in the course of his official visit to Astana on October 10 of this year. Most of these representatives are opponents of the state's policy. It is noteworthy that Putin became the first official representative of the Russian Federation who made such contact with Kazakhstan compatriots. In particular, he spoke out for giving them possibility to cultivate their language and culture and to have a future for their children. Apparently, the position of Russians in Kazakhstan was subject of discussion between Putin and Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbaev.

As a whole, then, the Russian leadership clearly used this issue to push Kazakhstan's authorities to make a number of concessions, mainly with respect to economic cooperation; the delimitation and protection of borders; lease of the Baikonur cosmodrome; and support for a number of Russian positions in the Commonwealth of Independent States (the Treaty on Collective Security, transformation of the Customs Union into the Eurasian Economic Community), and the Shanghai-5 [reorganized into "Shanghai Organization for Cooperation" in June 2001]).

Especially problematic in relations between Russia and Kazakhstan is the question of openly anti-Kazakh actions from proimperial and national-radical quarters in Russia. These groups constantly whip up concern over the infringement of rights and interests of Russians in Kazakhstan; they call for the "return" to Russia of Kazakhstan's northern oblasts; and they demand that Kazakhstan's authorities "turn over" Chechen separatists. They call for harsh measures against the Republic of Kazakhstan and frequently carry out pickets at Kazakhstan's embassy in Russia. In the interests of objectivity, it should be noted that many of them are motivated by defects in Kazakhstan's language and national policy.

At the same time, these forces inflame pro-Russian national-separatist sentiment in Kazakhstan, creating thereby a threat to public and national security. Certain extremist groups attempt to play on these attitudes. Thus, in November 1999,

Kazakhstan's Committee for National Security arrested twenty-two Russian and Kazakhstani citizens in Ust'-Kamenogorsk on charges of attempting to stage a coup d'etat. Fourteen of them were sentenced by Kazakhstan's court to various prison sentences. Nevertheless, there is reason to believe that this group, at the time of its detention, presented no serious danger to the republic. Be that as it may, the incident in Ust'-Kamenogorsk serves today as one of the difficult issues in relations between the two countries.

The state's excesses in its nationalities policy might be also used by certain circles in the West and international rights organization for presenting Kazakhstan to the world community as a state where democracy and human rights are oppressed.