

# IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HELSINKI ACCORDS

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HEARING  
BEFORE THE  
COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND  
COOPERATION IN EUROPE  
ONE HUNDRED THIRD CONGRESS  
FIRST SESSION

THE COUNTRIES OF CENTRAL ASIA: PROBLEMS IN THE TRANSITION TO  
INDEPENDENCE AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE UNITED STATES

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**THE COUNTRIES OF CENTRAL ASIA: PROBLEMS  
IN THE TRANSITION TO INDEPENDENCE AND  
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE UNITED STATES**

THURSDAY, MARCH 25, 1993

COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE  
*Washington, DC.*

The Commission met, pursuant to call, at 2:32 p.m., in room 2253, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Dennis DeConcini, Chairman, presiding.

Present: Senator Dennis DeConcini, Chairman, Commissioners Senator Harry Reid, and Representative Christopher H. Smith.

Chairman DeConcini. The Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, known as the Congressional Helsinki Commission, will come to order.

Co-Chairman Congressman Hoyer is not going to be able to be with us due to leadership duties in the House of Representatives. I want to thank the Congressman for making arrangements for these rooms today.

This is the first hearing the Helsinki Commission has had dealing exclusively with the situation in Central Asia. Central Asia comprises five former Soviet republics that gained their independence in January 1992 upon the collapse of the Soviet Union. Over 100 nationalities can be found among the peoples of Central Asia, the majority of whom are Asians in ethnicity and Muslims in religion or custom.

I myself have been fortunate to have visited three Central Asian countries in April 1992. Ambassador Wise and others on the Commission have been able to visit all those countries.

Central Asians are not independent for the first time in their history. Before being colonized by Russia, they lived for centuries under their own rulers. Now, in addition to the problems facing all the former republics during this transition period, including economic disintegration and political chaos, the Central Asian countries face the difficult process of decolonization.

Unfortunately, the transition to independence in some of the new countries in Central Asia is compounded by the presence of repressive regimes that insist on maintaining the old Soviet style order. With the exception of one, all the current presidents of the new Central Asian countries are former first secretaries of the Communist Party. Though the party has been officially disbanded throughout the region, its activities continue under a new name. The situation has become particularly worrisome in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan where all opposition is severely repressed.

in Kazakhstan, the near-equal split of the population between Kazakhs and Russians poses a difficult problem for that country. Democracy seems to have taken the strongest hold in Kyrgyzstan, but as elsewhere the institutions that could guarantee the changes have yet to be truly established. Sadly, Tajikistan has become one of the bloodiest tragedies in the former Soviet Union as a civil war between supporters and opponents of the Communist former president has resulted in thousands of deaths and hundreds of thousands of refugees.

We are here today to learn from our expert witnesses more about these events in the Central Asian countries. Before I introduce them, we will expect some other members, I think, and of course I want them to have an opportunity to make an opening statement.

Our witnesses today are an outstanding group of people. Doctor Martha Olcott, a professor at Colgate University in New York, is currently a scholar at Philadelphia's Foreign Policy Research Institute, and is an author of numerous books and articles on Central Asia, including the forthcoming work, "Religion and Tradition in Islamic Central Asia."

Then we have Doctor Kazemzadeh, who is Professor Emeritus at Yale University, where from 1956 to 1992 he taught history of Central Asia and the Caucasus. Dr. Kazemzadeh is also the author of numerous works on this area, particularly on the subject of Iran's relation with the Soviet Union.

Doctor Micah Naftalin is the National Director of the Union of Council for Soviet Jews, an advocate group that has been working for many, many years on behalf of repressed groups in the former Soviet Union. UCSJ has recently established human rights bureaus in Moscow, Kiev and is planning also to set one up in Kyrgyzstan.

Our other witness is Mr. Pulatov. He is the Chairman of the Uzbekistan Society for Human Rights, a physicist by profession. He has been active in the democratic opposition movement in Uzbekistan for many years. We had an opportunity to meet him when we were in Uzbekistan and we are pleased to see him here with us. We hope things will soon be better in his country.

We'll start with Doctor Brill Olcott.

#### TESTIMONY OF DR. MARTHA BRILL OLCOTT, PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, COLGATE UNIVERSITY

Doctor Olcott. Thank you very much. It's an honor to be here. With your permission, I have submitted written testimony and I would like to add to it an appendix, a paper which I completed last week which deals with the question of the Islamic threat in Central Asia.

I'd like to make some general remarks to supplement and try to provide a conceptual framework to look at the situation currently in Central Asia, the situation throughout the region: I'll try to be relatively brief and touch on the situation in the five republics, going from good to bad to worse in terms of human rights issues.

The situation throughout Central Asia is one of growing economic and political stress. With economic productivity declining and foreign investment occurring at a much slower rate than had been expected and with far less immediate returns than anyone antici-

pated, the economic conditions are going to continue to deteriorate throughout the region and that is likely, as I argue throughout the written testimony, to increase political pressure to preserve stability at all costs, which is bad news for the concerns of this Committee.

Many of the conditions of crisis that we have been preoccupied with and sensitized to in Russia over the past week exist throughout Central Asia and that's really what I'd like to use as a focus for my remarks.

In this region, we have the same kind of struggles between parliaments and presidents. We have the same sort of separatist pressures. We have the same sort of economic stagnation which is provoking what some would call extremist ideologies in Central Asia, nationalism and Islam.

First I'd like to talk about the republics in which it's best, where we find struggles potentially between legislatures and presidents. Certainly not as acute as in Russia, but in Kyrgyzstan a situation of which potential tension between the legislature and the presidency focused on the question of the constitution. This has taken the form of pressure from former Communist leaders as well as the democrats. Due to the economic situation, the long-term political impact of that struggle is not clear. Civil liberties in Kyrgyzstan are unparalleled in Central Asia and Kyrgyzstan does very well by comparison to the other republics of the former Soviet Union.

There is, of course, the perception on the part of the Russians that they are being locked out. As a result of the new language law, and they perceive themselves as a political community which will be under greater and greater stress. I talked about this more in my written testimony.

I would say the most serious problem in Kyrgyzstan is what's going to happen as the economy continues to deteriorate and whether the Akaev regime will be able to continue to pursue their commitment to provide democratic liberties to the population as this economic pressure increases. There are claims of corruption throughout the Central Asia area. Kyrgyzstan is one of those republics in which, since it is more democratic, charges of corruption on the part of anybody tied to the president can have implications for the whole administration there. Whether the Akaev administration will remain committed to defending press rights and freedom of speech in the wake of what could be increasingly more uncomfortable criticism of him and some of his colleagues remains to be seen. But we have no evidence that they are cracking down.

There are also border problems and the fear of fighters coming in from the south through Tajikistan and unrest coming in through Uzbekistan. Again, I make more reference in the written testimony to these problems.

Kazakhstan, there is a fight brewing between the parliament and the presidency and this fight has real implications for the concerns of this Committee. To date, this fight has been largely backstage with signs of it surfacing at the time of the constitution's adoption. The whole position of an independent press is far less secure in Kazakhstan than in Kyrgyzstan. I'm not fully convinced that any of the independent presses there are what we'd call independent, for the power of the press in Kazakhstan is used to persuade without

identifying in whose interests is you're trying to persuade. Certainly the press law is not as generous there and the government is stricter about enforcing it.

The biggest human rights issue you hear about is the language law and unlike everywhere else in Central Asia I think that this is a tremendously sensitive issue. The Russians in the republic feel victimized by the current conditions. They feel that there is no historic reason why Russian should not have the same legal status as the Kazakh language in every way, shape or form. Russians also cite the excessive underrepresentation of Russians in the government, both in the elected bodies and in the appointed bodies, as proof that there is that to be distrustful about the government.

Another issue that is coming up, again still largely back stage, is the question of federalism versus a unitary state of Kazakhstan. Just like in Russia when one talks about the third force, those not included in the fight between legislature and presidency, in Kazakhstan that third force also exists and that would be the separatists, of whom we don't know very much about, including how potent they are.

New elections will be the key in Kazakhstan. The elections are now, by Nazarbaev's choice, scheduled for the end of 1994, although there's talk that they may be the beginning of 1994. If Russia holds elections in 1993. They could even be the end of this year. This will really be the choice, the test for Nazarbaev. Is he leaning towards democracy or leaning towards dictatorship? How will he draw up election districts? He would have to practice a form of gerrymandering that would even make old time politicians from Chicago embarrassed in order to preserve a Kazakh majority. And how will he allow the elections to go forward? What rights will there be of campaigning? There's already mixed evidence about the question of parties, whether he will allow parties to be freely organized by constituencies. Political groups are permitted to legally organize, but he is exerting a lot of pressure on the existing political parties to not become the major force in life, in political life. Nazarbaev argues that they distort politics because they're organized on ethnic lines or funded by outside activists. In many cases he's referring to groups in Russia. I think it's just too early to tell which way Nazarbaev going to go. I think here the United States can exert, if not up front then at least behind the scenes, real pressure to make it clear that we expect these things to be done in a democratic fashion if Nazarbaev would like to continue to be treated better than Karimov in Uzbekistan.

Certainly Nazarbaev is looking for a way to tow the line between the need to use formal powers of repression and the desire to use informal pressure to get his way. Here too corruption could be a very serious and embarrassing problem. Here too the question of clan ties and family networks play a major role. Nazarbaev does have a fixation on religious parties. He has not allowed the Islamic Renaissance Party to register, not even a party like Alash, which he accuses of having strong religious coloration. In this regard Kazakh youth will be a greater problem for him than the Russian working class.

Uzbekistan. I know that Mr. Pulatov will talk at much greater length about it and I'm trying to keep my remarks brief. But I

think that Uzbekistan is a real test or a real challenge to you as policymakers. How do we evaluate arguments in favor of stability and can we define and hold Karimov to strict definitions of how we define human rights? Here I think the Clinton administration's statements about Yeltsin will provide us a great deal of room for maneuvering, as we are talking about our commitment to Yeltsin being based on his willingness to preserve individual liberties.

Certainly, I think, if we applied that criteria, we would have real trouble saying anything positive about what the Karimov regime has done on these questions.

For a more practical reason, I myself am very hesitant about the stability argument. It's very unclear to me whether Islam Karimov can deliver the stability that he claims we should keep him in power to protect. His definition of the Islamic threat that he's done so much in the name of preventing it penetrating his society seems to be both self-serving and inconsistent. For example, he spent months and months talking about the role that Iran was playing in the region and citing proof of it, the situation in Tajikistan, but then he greets the Iranian leadership warmly and signs protocols of agreements with them. So, I think that he has had a very fluid definition of threat, and the most consistent thing for him is to define all who oppose as enemies.

I for one support the notion that the politics of suppression created the conditions in Tajikistan rather than the Islamic activists. For this reason I'm very pessimistic about the capacity of Karimov to retain control indefinitely using politics of force. The members of his entourage and his defenders would argue that this is a cultural need, that the Uzbeks only respect power, that they're not like us. But we don't have to compare Uzbekistan to America, we can compare it to some of its other South Asian and Middle Eastern neighbors to know what happens in situations in which one group enriches themselves, even if it's a fairly large elite group, and shuts everybody else out of politics. It tends to have bad results, vis-a-vis long-term stability.

Certainly in Uzbekistan the fight between parliament and the presidency doesn't exist because parliament is simply a rubber stamp. So, in that sense the Russian situation is very different from Uzbekistan.

To move to Turkmenistan quickly, many of the same political conditions exists as in Uzbekistan, but I would argue that these conditions are not as problematic for the region as the whole, although it may be pretty bad for the Turkmen. Turkmenistan is smaller and not at the center of politics in Central Asia and far more passive than Uzbekistan in evoking memories of its border claims. It's important to remember that Uzbekistan would like to play a leadership role within the region itself and that Uzbekistan has populations on both sides of the border of Turkmenistan, and in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, where the inter-republic borders are very arbitrary and the leaders of these neighboring states would be nervous about Uzbekistan asserting their claims. This is especially true in Kyrgyzstan.

Moreover, the economic situation in Turkmenistan is not as bad. Given the small size of the population, I don't think the economic situation is going to catch up with President Masov as quickly.

Nonetheless, it is difficult to predict the continued stability of an exclusionary regime that is based in part on family and clan ties. But I think that the challenges in Turkmenistan are going to come more from within traditional society and here traditional Islam is likely to play a larger role than the small and, in my opinion, fairly isolated democratic opposition. I think the democratic group in Uzbekistan has greater possibility of penetrating into the society as a whole than its Turkmen counterpart does.

Tajikistan obviously has no presidential or parliamentary struggle because it has eliminated the presidency and it's not even clear how lawful the sitting legislature is perceived to be. Certainly this head of the government was chosen by an elected legislature or part of that legislature, but for myself I have trouble seeing that this regime will be able to translate its claim to legitimacy to a popular basis. It is secured by force. It is committing human rights atrocities most days, and is trying to eliminate both real and potential enemies.

I have real trouble envisioning a strategy in which they're going to legitimate their support through any sort of elections, yet if they don't at some point, how can you continue to have a legislature rule the country? I really believe it impossible to imagine a situation in which anything but the greatest travesty of popular elections would be held if this is how the regime is going to sustain its rule over two or three years.

I think in Tajikistan, the support for Islam will grow as long as they are the only possible organized force to oppose the regime and they will be the hardest force to eliminate.

I want to conclude. After the picture I've painted, it's probably a good thing that Central Asia is not an area of primary concern to U.S. policymakers because it's not clear that we're going to make huge in-roads here in building democratic societies for this region in the next couple years. I think that we should try to do it, and we should continue to link our commitments towards democracy to U.S. aid to the area, democracy as well as market.

I think we have to be very careful about, as I mentioned before, about accepting the argument for stability at all costs. We really can get pushed into forging a whole host of uncomfortable alliances if we do so and be left in a position where we are being asked to condone crackdowns on opponents or face embarrassment.

I think that the leaders in the region will seek to stay in power at most any cost and I think that we should be aware of this, which means that they will, in most cases, crack down on their population in any way it takes to do it. I would say that they would also, and I talk about this at greater length at the conclusion of my written testimony, they would also consider some sort of formal or informal reunion with Russia, presumably non-violent, non-incorporative, and be eager to preserve de facto, but not actual independence if this is what it takes to retain power.

From Russia's point, there's no evidence to see them as pursuing this actively now, although it's not impossible that a more stable Russian regime would pursue this more directly and another entirely different Russian regime would even pursue the territorial reincorporation of the area. I think that for you as policymakers this is the greatest potential threat that the region could pose be-

cause if we allowed a voluntary—it's not clear we could stop it—reincorporation of part of this territory, if independence becomes symbolic here, even though they maintain an international diplomatic representation, then we have allowed a model which might be used to reincorporate more independent minded but increasingly more weary successor states in the European part or the Southern part of the former USSR. In this case I think we'd be in a position where direct U.S. strategic interests were being compromised.

Thank you.

Chairman DeCONCINI. Thank you very much, Doctor Olcott.

Before we go to the next witness, I'm pleased to welcome our colleague from the Senate, and ask him if he has any opening statements he cares to make. Senator Reid?

Senator REID. Mr. Chairman, I do not. I wanted to be able to come. I have a meeting downtown with someone in the Administration at 3:30, but I wanted to come by because I feel this hearing is so important. Fifty million people are involved in this hearing, in this region of Central Asia and we tend not to pay any attention to it. I wanted you to know that I appreciate your holding the hearing and the witnesses know that I understand the importance of your testimony. And even though I won't be able to personally be present here, I'm going to pour through every word of testimony. I'm very interested in this. I've had an extreme interest for a number of years in the Aral Sea situation.

Again, I apologize for having to come late and leave early, but I appreciate you holding the hearing.

Chairman DeCONCINI. Thank you, Senator Reid.

We have the Ambassador from Kyrgyzstan with us today.

Would you please stand up and be recognized, Ambassador? Welcome.

Now, we'll hear from Doctor Kazemzadeh. Thank you, Doctor. You may proceed.

**TESTIMONY OF FIRUZ KAZEMZADEH, PROFESSOR EMERITUS,  
YALE UNIVERSITY**

Doctor KAZEMZADEH. I intend to make some remarks on the background of—

Chairman DeCONCINI. Pull the microphone a little closer to you, Doctor.

Doctor KAZEMZADEH. Yes.

Chairman DeCONCINI. Thank you.

Doctor KAZEMZADEH [continuing]. On the background of the role of Islam in Central Asian society and some remarks about the role of Turkey and Iran in Central Asia, because these problems agitate the interest of everyone these days. But perhaps to begin I should say that the first rule in approaching the subject is caution. Central Asian society is not homogeneous and many, many of the generalizations that we make do not hold in one or two or more of the republics of that area.

Islam, of course, is common to all the local populations of Central Asia. Perhaps in Kazakhstan, it sits more lightly than elsewhere because, first of all, Kazakhstan was converted to Islam only relatively recently, in the 17th and 18th centuries, and the Ka-

zaks never created a class of learned mullahs who would know Arabic or Persian. Therefore, Islam got mixed with some of the shamanistic elements of the earlier religion and never had a really deep hold on the masses of Kazakhstan. The long duration of Russian rule, the primitive state of the nomadic society and the relatively weak impact of Islam upon them, made them fall more easily under the influence of Russian culture than did the other peoples of Central Asia. Also, sovietization of Kazakhstan was more thorough than the sovietization of the rest of Central Asia. Islam was easily driven underground and the intelligentsia of Kazakhstan was already to a considerable degree Russified or purged and Kazakhstan also probably sustained larger losses of population in the process of collectivization than the other nations of Central Asia.

Thus in Kazakhstan today only a minority is Muslim way and the society is only partly a Muslim society. I do not see even a remote possibility of Islamic Fundamentalism taking over or being a serious threat to the established order in there.

When we come to relations with Iran and Turkey, one must remember that Kazakhstan has no borders with either, no historical ties, and no need to seek close relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran or with Turkey. The Kazakhs certainly cannot draw inspiration from Shiite Iran. They are Sunni Muslims and, as I said, the influence of Islam upon them was never strong. So, it seems to me that Iran does not have much to offer to them ideologically.

Iran, moreover, has very little to offer Kazakhstan economically. Kazakhstan potentially is an enormously rich area, but in order to exploit its riches it needs investments and technology that Iran is unlikely to provide. I also believe that Turkey's capacity to influence the course of events in Kazakhstan is limited. Although the Turks, like Kazakhs are Sunni Muslims, the claim to kinship by virtue of origins and linguistic affinity, the Pan-Turkic sentiments, the ethnic kinship itself is almost mythological. It doesn't have much reality to it.

However, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan are in a very different situation. The Uzbeks and the Tajiks were for centuries an integral part of the Iranian cultural realm. Here great cities existed since ancient times, mosques, libraries, institutions of Islamic learning, even under various Turkic dynasties. Here Islam sank deep roots and a powerful clergy exercised enormous influence over the masses and the rulers of the various states that arose in succession in this area.

After the conquest by Imperial Russia, Russian authorities left Islam more or less alone and the Russian culture influenced only a small segment of the population. The Soviets waged a veritable war on Islam, but in the long run they also did not win. While the new Uzbek and Tajik elites assumed the outward trappings of Russian behavior, most remained culturally Muslim.

The weakening and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Empire led to re-emergence of Islam. However, power, as my colleague, Professor Olcott, has stated, power has remained in the hands of the old elites raised and educated by Moscow. The ruling groups in all Central Asian republics have not appreciably changed. They

were threatened only in Tajikistan, but they still retain power there with the help of the Uzbeks and the Russians.

Now, Iran has a certain cultural attraction for the Uzbeks. But paradoxically, it is the more secular elements, proud of the cultural past of Central Asia, that are more interested in relations with Iran than are the Muslim clergy whose Sunnism constitutes a sectarian barrier to Iranian influence.

It should be also kept in mind that for centuries Iran was the enemy of the various dynasties that governed Central Asian states. The rulers of Khiva and of Bukhara used nomadic Turkmen tribes to raid the eastern provinces of Iran for slaves. Iranian attempts at retaliation always had meager results but created a great deal of antagonism between and among these peoples.

Moreover, the ruling elite of Uzbekistan is intellectually modern. I don't want to say democratic or totalitarian, but modern in the sense that its members place great value on technology, economic development, material wellbeing, material strength and also the trappings of Western civilizations. Iran's clerical regime is not something that they want to emulate.

Turkey fascinates the Uzbek ruling classes. Turkey is a secular state. It is stable and relatively powerful. In Central Asia the Ottoman Empire was held in high esteem before it collapsed in World War I. The sultan was also the caliph or the spiritual leader of all the Sunni Muslims which assured Turkey of the sympathy of the local clergy. Yet today Turkish influence is probably smaller than it was in 1914. A secular Turkey is attractive to the westernized ruling class, but with the abolition of the caliphate and the secularization of Turkey, she is no longer as attractive to the Muslim majority.

Moreover, Uzbekness, the consciousness of which hardly existed 70 years ago, is today a national reality that works against Pan-Turkism.

Tajikistan, with its Persian speaking population and the Iranian culture, is part of the Iranian civilization, a fact of which its intellectuals are proudly aware. But the masses are not ethnically self-conscious. They are deeply Muslim. Tajiks are Sunnis and Sunni Islam is stronger there than anywhere else in Central Asia. Tajikistan is the only republic of the former Soviet Empire where an Islamic party made a bid for power and probably would have succeeded had it not been for the intervention from Uzbekistan and Russia. Political and religious threads connect the Tajiks with their Sunni compatriots in Afghanistan rather than with the Shiite heretics in Mashhad or Qom.

Turkey exercises no attraction for educated Tajiks. In fact, educated Tajiks are afraid of the Turks of all descriptions, particularly the Uzbeks, and are afraid of Uzbekization or Turkification.

In conclusion, a few words about the influence of Russia. As I have repeatedly claimed, Kazakhstan is just as Russian as it is Kazakh. Under any and all circumstances the future of Kazakhstan will not be divorced from Russia's future. That to a lesser extent holds for other republics of Central Asia as well. A century of Russian colonial rule left a profound imprint on the cultures, political behavior, and economic life of all its peoples.

Russian presence is palpable everywhere today. Currency is still Russian, the banking system is Russian; the universities would not survive without the Russian professors; most of the books in the libraries are Russian; the railways and the airline are run by the Russians; and technology would collapse without Russian engineers who live and work in Central Asia.

So, in my opinion, the most important and perhaps the determining influence in Central Asia is today and will continue to be not Iran, not Turkey, not even Fundamentalist Islam, but the state of Russia, domestic state of Russia and the projection of Russian power into that area.

Thank you.

Chairman DeCONCINI. Thank you, Doctor.

Mr. Naftalin?

Mr. NAFTALIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'm accompanied today by Gideon Aronoff, our Assistant Director for Government Affairs.

I've got a very long statement and I'm going to summarize it.

Chairman DeCONCINI. We'll put the full statement in the record.

**TESTIMONY OF MICAH H. NAFTALIN, NATIONAL DIRECTOR,  
UNION COUNCIL FOR SOVIET JEWS**

Mr. NAFTALIN. Thank you.

These hearings once again confirm UCSJ's judgment that no institution of government can match the exemplary commitment and effectiveness of the Helsinki Commission, its fine staff, its outstanding chairman and co-chairman. We want to congratulate you for the crucial work that you have always done and continue to do, Mr. Chairman.

The guiding principle of UCSJ's work for nearly a quarter century has always been to form person to person partnerships with Refuseniks, with grassroots human rights activists and NGOs in the former Soviet Union and to develop our monitoring and citizen advocacy agenda together.

Our December Central Asian conference on human rights and the principles of grassroots advocacy held in Bishkek was organized over a 6 month period in partnership with the Uzbek and Kyrgyz human rights organizations. The principal planners were UCSJ's Leonid Stonov and my colleague at the table Abdumannob Pulatov. The conference carried our commitment to establishing a permanent Central Asian human rights information center to be located in Bishkek to continue the work begun and formulated by the conferees and we expect Mr. Pulatov to lead that effort.

Mr. Chairman, I offer for the record the first product of that information center, even in Mr. Pulatov's absence, a report prepared by a member of his staff there on the status of Jews, the situation for Jews in Kyrgyzstan. I'll send that up to you.

In the days immediately prior to the conference, the governments of other Central Asian states attempted, to no avail thankfully, to urge President Akaev to cancel the meeting. They also took steps with some success to prevent their citizens from attending.

But the conference nonetheless was attended by nearly 300 human rights activists and democratic governmental and parliamentary officials from the five Central Asian states and also a few from Russia and the United States. May I say that we're especially indebted to Patricia Carley of the Commission staff for her participation in that conference and for her superb report of the activity that appears both in the CSCE Digest and in an amplified version in the Central Asian Monitor.

Let me summarize quickly some of the highlights that—and it's interesting that the order in which I've chosen these republics are the same as Doctor Olcott, I think for obvious reasons.

The human rights situation in Kyrgyzstan is certainly the best of these Central Asian states. Human rights organizations have created a constructive opposition. President Akaev regularly communicated with them. But it must be noted that everything is relative in this area. And Tursenbek Akhunov, the Chairman when we speak of this area. And Tursenbek Akhunov, the Chairman of the Human Rights Movement of Kyrgyzstan, one of the sponsors of our conference, declared at the conference that the system is still severely flawed, largely because, as he put it, the Parliament, which he says meets infrequently and quite unprofessionally, has created more undemocratic laws than democratic ones.

But in a two hour private meeting with conference organizers, President Akaev really spoke eloquently about his concerns and his problems and he spoke about, at one point, the importance of Roosevelt's four freedoms and he went through them all in some detail. And then ended by saying, "Of course, it's extremely difficult to counteract the fear," the fear being the last of the four freedoms, the fear that has been imposed on his citizens by decades of totalitarianism. He did tell us that he believed our proposed information center would help, in his words, "to predict and prevent conflicts." He also told us of the difficulties he's having in the nationalistic response, negative response to his establishing a Slavic—or trying to establish a Slavic studies university in Bishkek.

Although the human rights situation in Kazakhstan is better than the remaining three Central Asian states, several trials have been carried out against the opposition and the press for insulting the honor of the president, one of the standard ways of ensuring or coercing stability throughout the region. The publishing of the only independent newspaper, Birlesu, has been suspended.

Nina Fokina of the Alma Ata Helsinki Committee, and Bolenkhan of the Independent Trade Union of Kazakhstan both argued during the conference that the president has concentrated power in his hands which they feel can certainly lead to dictatorship and that his obsession with stability, which is a theme that runs throughout these republics, is his justification for the absence of reform. Many believe the situation there could explode.

On December 7, the Supreme Soviet of Uzbekistan approved a new constitution, but the next day they sent a security brigade from Tashkent into Bishkek and in an act of international terrorism kidnapped Mr. Pulatov. And may I say, Mr. Chairman, that we profoundly thank you and your staff and the whole Commission for your special role in accomplishing Abdumannob's release. But since



he's here, I will skip over our special interest and conclusions about Uzbekistan.

In Turkmenistan, the government refuses to allow opposition movements and parties to organize. Twice in the last five months, the local KGB has confiscated all copies of the independent opposition magazine, *Dayanch*, and opened a criminal case against its editor-in-chief, Mr. Salamatov.

I think you would be interested to know the day after Senator Cranston left Ashgabat last September, all of the opposition leaders with whom he met were invited to the KGB, threatened and warned not to meet with foreign officials. In December, six activists, including Mr. Salamatov, were stopped on the way to our Bishkek conference and put under house arrest. Many Turkmen activists who did attend asserted that Turkmenistan is far more totalitarian today even than under the Soviet regime.

In Tajikistan, of course, opposition leaders claim that during 1992 nearly 60,000 people were killed as a result of the civil war. Certainly no human rights legislation has been passed there.

Shadmon Yusupov, leader of the Tajikistan Democratic Party, told us that in the final analysis he bases the tragedies of the country on a militaristic parliament. He gave many examples.

As we all know, human rights cannot be achieved in the presence of anti-Semitism. Increasingly, particularly in Russia, anti-Semitism is one of the principal languages of the extremist opposition to democratic reform, while Zionism is an accepted code word throughout the area for America and for democracy.

In 1992, a Jewish family in Kyrgyzstan was arrested on a blood libel charge, accused of murdering a Kyrgyz child to use her blood for baking matzah on Passover. While the charge was later dropped, it is an example of the import of an essentially European anti-Semitic approach into Central Asia. There are many other examples of anti-Semitism in my statement.

But in Samarkand, Jews who attempted to attend our Bishkek conference were threatened by the local security service and told bluntly that they could go to the synagogues freely, they could emigrate freely, but they shouldn't be participating in the political life of the country.

The Union of Councils itself has been attacked for holding the conference, both by the official Uzbek press and by Central Asian government demarches to the Israeli Embassy complaining about our involvement in organizing the conference. These are examples of state sponsored anti-Semitism, in our view.

In general, we're horrified by the absence in Central Asia of a commitment often even of lip service to human rights, rule of law, or what we in the West understand to be a civil society.

One resolution presented to the conference was an appeal on behalf of the Ingush people by their representatives in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. I ask that their appeal be made part of the record, Mr. Chairman.

Let me repeat finally that the Union of Councils applauds the Helsinki Commission for holding these hearings and we urge you to continue and to intensify your monitoring of the area. I think it may be worth just noting that I think it's a measure of the problem of the inattention to this region that outside of this room probably

no one in the West has heard the name of one of the most courageous dissidents and political prisoners of this era and that's Mr. Pulatov sitting to my left. His name just doesn't resonate and the problems there do not resonate in the way that we have seen in other parts of that area.

We hope you will articulate to your colleagues the need for those policies and programs that will encourage human rights progress and that will condition, where feasible, U.S. assistance to such progress.

For instance, we hope that the continued linkage of emigration rights to MFN, through the mechanism of Jackson-Vanik, should be pressed; support and encouragement to the human rights grassroots NGOs in the region and the advocacy of human rights principles should be a high priority for U.S. aid programs. These are inexpensive, yet dramatic ways of carrying the message of the United States' commitment to the progress of human rights.

We believe that no region in the former Soviet Union offers a better case for the need to maintain a strong Radio Liberty broadcasting presence. There simply is no free or independent local press in Central Asia.

Language and citizenship laws, of course, as has been discussed elsewhere, offer serious opportunities for discrimination and pressure against Russian speaking minorities and that, of course, includes most Jews who are thus in double jeopardy on those grounds.

As always, Mr. Chairman, we urge you to continue to seek means for expanded formal involvement of the NGOs in all aspects of the CSCE activity.

Finally, may I say it's clear that the newly independent states comprising Central Asia require our most concerted attention to finding means of educating them about their human rights responsibilities as signatory members of the CSCE.

Thank you.

Chairman DECONCINI. Thank you, Mr. Naftalin, for the good overview. I agree with your comments about our next witness, Mr. Pulatov. Indeed, he is a human rights example and we're very pleased to welcome him here today.

Mr. Pulatov?

**TESTIMONY OF ABDUMANNOB PULATOV, CHAIRMAN,  
UZBEKISTAN SOCIETY FOR HUMAN RIGHTS**

Mr. PULATOV. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, members of the Commission, at first I beg your pardon for my English. I would like to express my thanks to the Helsinki Commission of the United States Congress. Without your support, I think that it would be impossible to speak about my release. I would like to express my thanks to all of those who supported me, who supported dissidents and human rights activists in Uzbekistan, especially the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews, Helsinki Watch, the State Department and Amnesty International and many, many activists of human rights organizations, my colleagues and friends.

In Uzbekistan, which signed the documents of the Helsinki process and the United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights, to my great sorrow, violations of human rights are continuing. There is no freedom of speech, freedom of expression, nor freedom of activity for independent public organizations. I mean the activity of peaceful organizations. It's natural that all civilized countries should stop the activities of non-peaceful organizations. It's clear that in Uzbekistan, however, we see the stopping of the activities of peaceful organizations.

There are no independent newspapers, nor mass media. The opposition, popular front movement, Birluk, has no possibility to publish its newspapers. The Democratic Party, Erk, the opposition group, last year had the possibility to issue its newspaper, but under very strict censorship. But from the first days of this year, this newspaper was stopped, too. The activity of the opposition movement Birluk is stopped now. The Democratic Party Erk practically has no possibility to work now.

Not only is there repression of the freedoms and rights of people, there are political prisoners and people who are under very great pressure from the authorities. I can speak with all responsibility that five people in Uzbekistan now are political prisoners. They are imprisoned now in Uzbekistan for their peaceful, public activity. The former deputy of the Soviet parliament and a member of its investigation commission, Pulat Akhunov, was sentenced to 1½ years, charged with hooliganism, as you know, Mr. Chairman. And now he is in a very difficult situation. He is charged with new crimes, possessing narcotics, which is threatening to land him about 10 years in prison.

I'm sure that all these charges are fabricated. He is in prison because of his opposition activity, because of his membership on the investigation commission of the 1991 coup. He knew that there was the political support of our president, Karimov, for these coup events.

I know that President Islam Karimov was in New Delhi in the early morning of August 19, 1991. He was heading a delegation from Uzbekistan in India, and early in the morning, he sent a telegram to Mr. Yanaev. And Pulat Akhunov, I think, knew some other facts. Because of this, he is in prison now. He didn't publish that information. Speaking to me, he told about it, because that information is not for publication, is not open. There's no Soviet Union now, no established commission of parliament, but the leadership of Uzbekistan doesn't want see in freedom an opposition leader who knows so much information.

The former deputy of the Uzbek parliament, Inamjan Tursunov, one of the leaders of Democratic Party Erk, is in prison for hooliganism too. I know that he was beaten when he was a member of parliament. He was beaten by Uzbek police in his hotel when he was at a session of parliament in Tashkent. He is an independent politician and belongs to the opposition. His position is not very radical, more constructive, I think, in opposition to the government.

But his demands for an investigation of this hooliganism against him by the police at that time didn't get any results. After his dismissal from membership of parliament last December, this investi-

gation was renewed and the authorities declared that Inamjan Tursunov was a hooligan and he was sentenced to 2 years. I think that this charge is fabricated, too.

In April of last year, in Tashkent there was attempt to build a new public organization, Milli Majlis, or National Council, a round table for democratic national organizations. The leader of this activity was a former dissident who was sentenced in 1970 to 10 years in Soviet gulag, Babur Shakirov. He lived in the United States about 2 years as political refugee and returned to Uzbekistan in December 1991. For his activity to form this new organization, he and some of his colleagues are charged with anti-state activity. He's been in prison since August of last year.

With him, also arrested, was one of the participants of our human rights conference in Bishkek, Khazratkul Khudajberdee. He was the chairman of the organizing committee of this Milli Majlis. Babur Shakirov was chairman, Khazratkul Khudajberdee was secretary of this organizing committee. Those two are in prison.

I am very glad to announce here that two other people who were arrested in connection with this issue of the Milli Majlis, Professor Olim Karimov and Professor Otanazar Oripov, leaders of Birluk and Democratic Party Erk, have been released now because of their illness. I think they are free now because of the pressure of public opinion and from the American Congress. Thank you very much. But I think that we should continue this pressure.

The religious activist, Chairman of Uzbekistan Islamic Renaissance Party, Abdulla Utaev, in prison now. It's very difficult to get information about him. About the release of Professor Otanazar Oripov I found out only this morning when I called the co-chair of Birluk, Shukhrat Ismatullaev. You know him, I think that you remember him after our meeting in Tashkent last April. He asked me to give you, excuse me my English, his greetings and asks for support for all opposition organizations in Uzbekistan and thanks for all your support up to now.

Mukhammad Solikh, Shukhrat Ismatullaev, you know the leaders of Erk and Birluk, and some other leaders of opposition organizations, Otanazar Oripov, Professor Olim Karimov, Doctors Madamin Narzikulov and Tolib Yakubov, are in great danger of persecution and arrest now. All of them are charged in connection with the issue of the forming Milli Majlis. I think that the tactics of Uzbek authorities in their struggle against the peaceful opposition is the following. They are arresting anybody who they don't like. Only in the case of wide publicity of these sentences, these charges, they amnesty people and release them. In the case when we have no great publicity as well as in the case of Pulat Akhunov and Inamjan Tursunov, we have very small results in our human rights defense work.

I want to mention that repression against the peaceful opposition in Uzbekistan was sharply increased after June of last year. In the first days of July of last year, Mr. Karimov was in Helsinki at the summit of leaders of the Helsinki countries and chaired one of the meetings. I think that that was political and moral support for his policy. In Uzbekistan, much propaganda showed this chairing as support from the West.

You know that this past winter, a mission of Helsinki members from the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights was not allowed to come to Uzbekistan.

I want to add an opinion about not only human rights but about some other problems the Uzbek government is making. About the civil war in Tajikistan. The Democratic and Islamic organizations in Tajikistan published much information about armed support from Uzbekistan and Russia for the pro-Communist forces in Tajikistan. I think this support in the time of civil war is a violation of Helsinki norms. There is a myth about the danger of Islamic Fundamentalism in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, as was said by my colleagues here, which is used against the democratic movement in Central Asia. To our great sorrow, it's a very great problem and we should understand that the dangers of Islamic fundamentalism in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are not as great as is said by some politicians, journalists and some other people in the West, in Russia, and in Uzbekistan. It's immoral to support one fundamentalism, in our case a real Communist totalitarian fundamentalism, in order to avoid another fundamentalism, maybe not so real, Islamic Fundamentalism in our country.

I think that in Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan it's not serious to speak about any kind of Islamic fundamentalism.

About Radio Liberty broadcasting programs: we ask that you don't close Radio Liberty. We know about the plans of the new American administration to close this radio. We think that Radio Liberty is very necessary for us who live in the former Soviet Union now. Recent events in Russia show that in that country the democratic process is in great danger, too, and we in Central Asia, we need Radio Liberty as well as Voice of America more widely than in other parts of former Soviet Union.

In this situation, there is total control by the government of mass media and total absence of information from freedom and independent mass media from Russia, also: Moscow News, and other Moscow magazines are now stopped in Uzbekistan, though they are necessary.

About the Uzbek service of Radio Liberty, it's very strange what we can hear on the Uzbek service of Radio Liberty and sometimes from the Voice of America. Radio Liberty has two official correspondents in Tashkent, but there is practically no information from Radio Liberty about violations on human rights in Uzbekistan, or about political situation, about the life of the opposition. I think that all governmental information, official information, our people can hear from the official mass media. Radio Liberty should give an opportunity to those people who want freedom. We cannot understand why money from American taxpayers is being used for official propaganda of the Uzbek government.

I think that it's necessary to change the Uzbek service of Radio Liberty and Voice of America and replace their leadership.

In finishing my statement, I ask you to save a group of intellectuals in Uzbekistan who are trying to lead their people to freedom. I think that the United States shouldn't give any kind of aid to our government while the peaceful opposition in our country is persecuted. Until the end of this persecution, there should be sanctions.

I call upon the members of the United States Congress to address the President of Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov, with requests to stop the repressions. Additionally, I urge Congress to maintain the quota for refugees from the territory of the former Soviet Union and urge the Administration to authorize the entry of at least 50,000 refugees from this region for the next year.

I hope that you will ask President Clinton and Secretary of State Christopher and the governments and parliaments of all the countries of the Helsinki process to act in this direction. I mean requesting pressure on our government.

Excuse me for my English. Excuse me for this very long speech. Uzbekistan opposition organizations, I think for the first time in their history, have the opportunity to address the U.S. Congress directly.

Thank you very much.

Chairman DECONCINI. Mr. Pulatov, thank you very much. That's very helpful. Let me just ask a question of you while you're there on the subject.

You mentioned the five political prisoners. Is that the extent of the number of political prisoners, the five names that you have given us?

Mr. PULATOV. I am speaking about a political prisoner only in the case when I know, I'm sure that he's in prison now, first. And second, for his political peaceful activity. So, I am sure about these five people. About the others, I haven't full information.

Chairman DECONCINI. Now, the Birlik movement, is that a political organization, a religious organization or is it both?

Mr. PULATOV. Birlik is political organization.

Chairman DECONCINI. And those leaders of the Birlik movement, are they all of the five that are in jail now for political activities?

Mr. PULATOV. Yes. Pulat Akhunov is one of leaders of Birlik. Shukhrat Ismatullaev is in danger of arrest. Khazratkul Khudajberdee is one of the leaders of Birlik.

Chairman DECONCINI. Mr. Akhunov is the leader of the Birlik movement?

Mr. PULATOV. Excuse me?

Chairman DECONCINI. Mr. Akhunov.

Mr. PULATOV. Pulat Akhunov, he is one of leaders of Birlik.

Chairman DECONCINI. One of the leaders?

Mr. PULATOV. Yes.

Chairman DECONCINI. Now, he was arrested for hooliganism.

Mr. PULATOV. Yes.

Chairman DECONCINI. Was he convicted in a court or just jailed?

Mr. PULATOV. Yes, he was sentenced by the decision of the court. He was arrested at the end of June, last June, but the trial was in December.

Chairman DECONCINI. Then further charges were lodged against him, additional charges?

Mr. PULATOV. We are awaiting new trials. They are being prepared.

Chairman DECONCINI. Was he also charged later with narcotic charges, possession of narcotics?

Mr. PULATOV. Yes, while he was in prison.

Chairman DECONCINI. And was that a false charge or do you know? Was that a set-up by the government? Was that—

Mr. PULATOV. I'm sure that the first charge and the second charge are false. But in prison, I know, I was a political prisoner, it's very easy to charge someone with narcotics. In every room of our prisons, there are many narcotics and I think that I am here and I am free and I leave only because of pressure from the United States.

Chairman DECONCINI. What influence do the current events in Moscow have on Uzbekistan?

Mr. PULATOV. In the case of victory of the conservative reactionary forces, I think that there would be no hope for democratization in Uzbekistan.

Chairman DECONCINI. No?

Mr. PULATOV. No. Only in the case of the continuing of the democratization process in Russia can we hope for something.

Chairman DECONCINI. Thank you. Doctor Olcott, I'd like to ask you the same question. Also you, Doctor Kazemzadeh. If you could give us your opinion as to the influence that Moscow has and, in addition to that, the current events—are they having or do you think they'll have some impact or significance in any of these republics?

Doctor OLCOTT. I think that from the point of view of these republics, the continuation of the Yeltsin leadership is ideal, even in the cases of the non-democratic of the Central Asian republics because Yeltsin has respected their independence publicly in all respects and privately, it appears, in most respects.

What Khasbulatov's policies towards the republics are would be unclear and those that could come instead of Khasbulatov are seen to be representatives of the reassertion of Russian imperialism. As to the questions most closely tied to this Committee, the question of democratization, I think that the defeat for Yeltsin would make it easy for everyone in that area to move away from real democratization of their society and the case where they're not doing this show they would move away from even giving lip service towards these goals.

Obviously a highly destabilized situation in Russia creates problems for Kazakhstan.

Chairman DECONCINI. Is Russia doing anything now economically for any of those republics other than just what trade goes on by itself?

Doctor OLCOTT. Why that's worth a couple of hearings on it's own. This is a question that interests me a great deal and I think Russia has played a very convoluted role in these areas. I think that Moscow, including the Yeltsin leadership that we are rightfully working so hard to try to promote, I think even the Yeltsin leadership is much less benevolent towards these republics than they would like us to believe, that the terms of trade generally proposed are much more to Russia's benefit. The pricing system that they're engaging in, pushing things to world prices, is being defined in a way that's much more erratic than consistent.

Russia is as much the cause of the economic decay in the republics as the collapse of the union itself was. I think there are forces in Russia, and it's not always clear who they are tied to, that see

the economic decay of the Republics as working in Russia's long-term interest.

But it really is a question that would take hours to explore in the detail that it's worth.

Chairman DECONCINI. Doctor Kazemzadeh, do you have a comment?

Doctor KAZEMZADEH. I tend to agree with Doctor Olcott. I am in general perhaps more pessimistic about Russia not only as a political entity but as a civilization. I think that the imperial element in Russian history is extremely strong and even the liberal minded Russians are liberal only up to a certain point. The loss of empire rankles, it makes the Russians feel defeated and I'm not prepared to speak of Yeltsin, but any government to the right of him I'm afraid would move toward a revival of the empire.

Chairman DECONCINI. You answered my next question. It's your best estimation that if this government should fall and the new government proved to be more to the right, what would you anticipate seeing? Would you see the territorial expansion of Russia, military aggression or would you just see more recalcitrant or more hard line trading positions and what have you? Do you have any speculation?

Doctor KAZEMZADEH. For the time being, I think it will be a harder line. I don't think that Russia domestically now is in a position to engage in, what shall we call it?, a reconquest of Central Asia. But the military forces of Russia are already there. They don't have to conduct a conquest.

Chairman DECONCINI. Well, as you said, they have the natural influence there because of so many Russians running so many of the institutions.

Doctor KAZEMZADEH. That is also true, yes.

Chairman DECONCINI. That's going to continue no matter what happens in Russia.

Doctor KAZEMZADEH. But eventually I think that will be a threat. Russia has undergone many periods of destabilization in its history and has returned to the position of great power. The human resources are there and Russia is not going to disappear.

Chairman DECONCINI. Can you give an opinion on the situation of the Russians that live in these republics, those that have been there running these institutions and in business and whatever else? Are they—

Doctor KAZEMZADEH. A majority of them are terribly distressed.

Chairman DECONCINI. Well, do they identify with these republics as their country?

Doctor KAZEMZADEH. No.

Chairman DECONCINI. They don't?

Doctor KAZEMZADEH. No.

Chairman DECONCINI. They consider Russia their country.

Doctor KAZEMZADEH. They are Russian.

Chairman DECONCINI. And they're there because of the economic situation or because of the power they have or because they can't go someplace else or—

Doctor KAZEMZADEH. They were there in the first place as the dominant group, as the ruling group. They are the British in India. There were too many of them to leave.

Chairman DECONCINI. Yes. Doctor Olcott, do you have any observations on the economic viability of these republics from the standpoint of the West, particularly the United States? Is there real opportunity here in your judgment? I'm sure we could have a whole hearing on that too.

Doctor OLCOTT. And have.

Chairman DECONCINI. Maybe you have. Maybe you have some information you could give us, a thumbnail sketch.

Doctor OLCOTT. Are you arguing with are themselves viable in and of themselves or what financial interest that would pose for us?

Chairman DECONCINI. Yes. What attraction is there, if any, to the U.S. business community to invest or to participate or to attempt to be more influential there?

Doctor OLCOTT. Three republics, I think, have clear economic interest for the United States and are potentially viable. That's Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. I can see developmental scenarios in which they make the transition to fully independent states, with positive trade balances. Uzbekistan has the trickiest situation because it has severe poverty pockets, a very high rural unemployment rate, severe ecological crisis, but there are a lot of states out there that have huge gaps between rich and poor and are basically economically stable, although they have are often politically unstable.

Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are just much less viable and investment will have to be—Kyrgyzstan does have gold, but generally investment will have to be in secondary service sector. I think Akaev appreciates this, that Kyrgyzstan has to develop for itself some sort of role in serving the broader region of Central Asia, being a center for Central Asia, mostly from its being more democratic because it's hard to argue that it's physically central. But Kyrgyzstan doesn't have the same resource base as other republics.

Tajikistan has very little of anything, which is one reason I think that people fought so hard to get control of what there was. But there is much less prospect here for investment. Again, there's some mineral resource wealth. But three are very attractive for U.S. investment.

Chairman DECONCINI. What is the general attitude? Maybe, Dr. Kazemzadeh, you could tell us about the United States image there. Was it a factor or is it a factor that we so quickly recognized these republics, established diplomatic relationships and opened up offices there? When I was there at least, that seemed to leave a big positive impression. Was that over emphasized or has it dwindled or what is the U.S. status, in your judgment, in most of those republics?

Doctor KAZEMZADEH. It's really difficult to judge. I think that there would be a tendency to attribute extraordinary virtue to those who have been the opponents of Russia or of Communism. I don't think that the masses in those republics really know much or care much about the United States. It seems to me that in this instance popular sentiment will be much less important than the decisions made by those who are in power in those republics and they will be guided only by their self-interest.

Chairman DECONCINI. Do you care to comment on the United States presence there?

Doctor OLCOTT. I feel that we have a stronger presence there potentially than my colleague does. I think that it's one that can falter over the next several years. We can tarnish our images, but I do think Americans, even when you go far away from the centers of power, I think we have a sort of magic. But there is the other side. For years and years these people were educated in a school system, the Communist school system, that presented a very evil and negative image of us, of capitalism as avaricious, and the Americans as uncaring. So, there is this residual distrust. If we go in and are seen as too closely allied to dictators in these areas, I think that we can activate this residual of distrust. Thus we have to think very carefully about our long-term image in these places and not risk the kind of disenchantment that there has sometimes historically been for Americans in other newly independent states.

So, I feel we have a moral responsibility in these areas to protect the sort of idealism with which some of these people view us.

Chairman DECONCINI. Mr. Naftalin, let me ask you—do you think that the Muslim, Christians and Jews in these republics, now that there isn't the authoritarian rule—can they work together here under this emerging change in government? I gather that there is a great deal of loosening of freedom of religion. Correct me if I'm incorrect.

Mr. NAFTALIN. Well, I think there's been a history that would suggest that the religious issues per se are not automatically so divisive. The issues have more to do with nationalism and clans and Russians versus indigenous populations. Russians have been the colonial powers. Jews get caught kind of in the bind there because they're both Jews, which is a problem, and then they're Russians and Russian speakers.

Chairman DECONCINI. That's where they catch it more than perhaps even being Jewish.

Mr. NAFTALIN. Then the Jews are divided up because there is a history of the Bukharan Jews who in parts of these regions have been there for a thousand years or longer. Of course, these are no more primitive kinds of people than we're used to and they've learned how to get along with whoever is in charge.

Chairman DECONCINI. Is there a record of anti-Semitism in any of these republics?

Mr. NAFTALIN. Directed?

Chairman DECONCINI. Yes, by the government leaders today?

Mr. NAFTALIN. Yes, there is some. It's a combination of things. Some of the things that I mentioned about their reflex to Jewish involvement in human rights. You can see how you get a flash quickly. But there's been a low but continuous drumbeat of pressure on the Jews to leave, a lot of violence—

Chairman DECONCINI. Towards the Jews?

Mr. NAFTALIN. Toward Jews, particularly those who are leaving.

Chairman DECONCINI. What about Christians and other minority groups?

Mr. NAFTALIN. My instinct is that there is no serious Christian, Muslim issue, but maybe that's my ignorance. I don't—there is certainly—

Chairman DeCONCINI. But there is a Jewish one?

Mr. NAFTALIN. Yes, there certainly is a Muslim Russia and in that respect I suppose Christian would be included in that.

And could I say, Mr. Chairman, that throughout this area, I think, and it's true elsewhere as well, the Ukraine would be maybe another example, there's a terrific ambivalent relationship about the Russians because they all really believe—they all want an out. They're all very angry. They all see the Russian population as being a colonial power and all that, and yet they all also know that the stability of their environment depends on the stability of Russia. So, I suppose they're kind of cheering for Yeltsin on the one hand and yet you listen to the activists say from Tajikistan, they say that next to the parliament which is militaristic, the worst thing that is going on is the Russian military.

Chairman DeCONCINI. That are still there, you mean?

Mr. NAFTALIN. That are still there. Then the question becomes is the Russian military local or is it controlled in Moscow?

Chairman DeCONCINI. Well, what is the answer to that question? Is every republic different?

Mr. NAFTALIN. Well, I think there's certainly far more of a crisis in Tajikistan because of the war—

Chairman DeCONCINI. Yes. And where is the military there, the Russian military?

Mr. NAFTALIN. Well, there are units there. It's hard to tell who's in charge of them, but the human rights people think that they are extremely provocative and are killing a lot of people. I would hardly be an expert on how to sort all that out, but even those who say that would put the major blame on the parliament, which is just—

Chairman DeCONCINI. Do any other witnesses have any observations on the Russian military units within any of these republics?

Doctor OLCOTT. The situation varies from republic to republic. In three of the republics, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, they are legally under local control. In Tajikistan, there's still Russian control, although it's not clear how much control. Big decisions appear to be made in Moscow, but there's a lot of discretion for the Russian commanders on the ground.

Chairman DeCONCINI. Now, are those units primarily Russian?

Doctor OLCOTT. They are primarily ethnic Russian in Tajikistan, if that's what we're talking about.

Chairman DeCONCINI. Yes.

Doctor OLCOTT. But the question of command and control is a really important one and there seems to be a lot of command and control activity that's decided by local Russian commanders who answer to Moscow as opposed to in the other republics where you may have a local Russian commander who's—a local commander who is Russian but he answers to the republic. In Turkmenistan, it's a joint force.

Chairman DeCONCINI. Do they get their military supplies from Russia?

Doctor OLCOTT. In the other republics?

Chairman DeCONCINI. Yes. Any of them?

Doctor OLCOTT. Well, it's not clear that Russia should bring in new supplies to anybody. All the republics have agreements about

unified training and unified command and control systems. In the case of Tajikistan, yes, they are getting their supply from Russian but they are a Russian army. There was talking of transferring it immediately to Tajikistan after the new Rakhmonov regime came in and then after Russian commanders came to the area they decided this was too dangerous.

Chairman DeCONCINI. Are most of the line soldiers ethnic Russians?

Doctor OLCOTT. Yes, but the ones who are—

Chairman DeCONCINI. And the commanders, are they from Russia?

Doctor OLCOTT. In Tajikistan, they are mostly Russian and the commanders are Russians. There are also non-Russians in the Russian army in Tajikistan. But there is also a second army in Tajikistan which is the army of this government. It's an irregular army. They are the ones who are being accused of doing most of the killing.

Chairman DeCONCINI. I see.

Doctor OLCOTT. At least in most of the central press accounts of it. So, you have at least two armies, this pro-government argue that's irregular army and the government army which is a Russian army, the 201st Division. Then you have peacekeepers that are coming from other republics to help protect the borders.

Chairman DeCONCINI. Well, take just one republic and then I'll cease my questioning. In Uzbekistan, the army there, is it loyal to Karimov?

Doctor OLCOTT. That's really critical question. That army is Russian commanded. It's an Uzbekistani army. It's largely Russian commanded and it's largely Uzbek in terms of the fighting force. It is an allied army with Russia's army. It's a separate national army. But if they were asked to fire on something that was perceived of as Russia's interest, no one knows what would happen. But one of the things that Karimov has done is enter into a whole slew of security arrangements with Russia to gain the opposite control, to gain a commitment from Russia to provide him the kind of protection that was sent into Tajikistan. There, in a sense, the shoe is on the other foot. He has commitments from Russia that Russia will back him up and back up his army and the fear that he has is not that the Army will fail to respond to him.

Chairman DeCONCINI. And every republic is a little bit different then.

Doctor OLCOTT. Every republic, these are mostly bilateral agreements. These are bilateral agreements in every case. Some of them are more closely tied than others.

Mr. NAFTALIN. But then you've got the Russian issue beyond the army.

Chairman DeCONCINI. Yes.

Mr. NAFTALIN. As you know, it's a gigantic population. In some cases upwards of 40 or close to 50 percent Russian population. These people create—largely have historically created the whole infrastructure of the country. The language of the country—it's simple to say change the language because there aren't any languages. Most of the people that aren't Russian speaking hardly speak the language in some of these countries. The language isn't

useful for government. So, there's an enormous problem here. And yet these people are getting pushed out and say, "Well, you can't teach school if you don't teach in the local language. You can't keep your job." So then the question is do they want to leave. Of course a lot of them do want to leave, but then there are already millions of refugees in Russia.

Chairman DeCONCINI. With no place to go and no jobs or housing or anything else.

Mr. NAFTALIN. There's also the problem with the military.

Chairman DeCONCINI. Doctor Olcott?

Doctor OLCOTT. I'm not sure if I understood what you said correctly and I have enormous respect for what you said and what your organization has done, but I think the languages in these republics—I think Kazakhstan is really a special case where you have over 40 percent of the population are Russian speakers as their first language and are from European stock. But these other languages are certainly capable of making the transition to governing languages.

Mr. NAFTALIN. Over time.

Doctor OLCOTT. No, even immediately if they had to. In other parts of the world you've had equally rapid switches. Tajikistan certainly could make the switch to a governing language immediately. The others are fully developed modern languages. It's one thing to say it will take several years to make the shift to science education in some of these cases.

Doctor KAZEMZADEH. Not in Persian.

Doctor OLCOTT. Not in Persian. It could be done immediately.

Mr. NAFTALIN. I mean more that although even President Akaev feels desperate about this problem—

Doctor OLCOTT. Well, I argue in my written testimony that even there it's more complicated. He's very concerned with the constituency. But I think we have to be careful with these kind of statements, as we are all Russian speaking and we tend to have an implicit sympathy with a population that we identify with more easily.

Chairman DeCONCINI. Thank you.

I'm pleased that we're joined today by the Ranking House member, Mr. Smith.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman DeCONCINI. Mr. Smith, I have to go tend to an Intelligence Committee matter that has just come up. Would you mind finishing these hearings? I have finished with my questioning.

Mr. SMITH. Is there an additional panel waiting?

Chairman DeCONCINI. No.

Mr. SMITH. Gladly.

Chairman DeCONCINI. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. I'll just be very brief, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman DeCONCINI. I want to thank the witnesses for their testimony. It's been very helpful. We need more of it, that's the trouble.

Mr. SMITH. I want to apologize for not being here earlier. Some very important legislation that I was involved with was up on the floor and it took the better part of yesterday and today. So, I just physically could not be here during this hearing, but it is an impor-

tant hearing and I can assure you I, like the other Commissioners who perhaps had other business that kept them from being here, will look very carefully at the testimonies. I think too little attention is being directed at the respective countries that are under consideration here today.

I have one question with regards to the CSCE process. In your collective views, and if you all want to take a shot at this, has there been a sense that where as before there was a much greater focus in CSCE on human rights and the standard was promoted very aggressively, that now with all of the diversions, whether it be Bosnia or some of the other problems we have in Europe and the ongoing drama in Moscow itself, that somehow the human rights questions are not as center stage as they ought to be?

Mr. Pulatov, you might want to lead off on that. Are we doing enough in the process to in a very aggressive way keep those cases of political prisoners, those who might have been beaten and other kinds of repression, freedom of speech and press, at the forefront?

Mr. PULATOV. You are right. When the countries participating in Helsinki process, there were no wars, it was easier to defend human rights using the Helsinki process. The Helsinki process was built for human rights, one of its great purposes is this. So, to our great sorrow, now when there is a war in Yugoslavia, in Tajikistan, it's very difficult to pay attention and to focus on violations of human rights, where there are no wars, no blood.

But I think that even in this complicated situation, it's possible to do more. Democratization, liberalization, and the way toward democratization are more effective ways to avoid civil war and confrontation. For example, I don't want the development of events in Tajikistan in my country of Uzbekistan. But it's possible to avoid civil war not only by totalitarian means, but it's possible to avoid civil war by peaceful democratic ways.

I think that it's very necessary to work on human rights and show them that the United States really supports Kyrgyzstan for its way to freedom for pluralism and to show other countries, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, that for violations of human rights, they should answer.

Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Pulatov, before we pass the microphone, are you at any risk when you return to Uzbekistan? Might there be some repercussions taken against you or some retaliations for speaking out here?

Mr. PULATOV. I think that—I'm sure that I have no possibility to work, to continue my human rights activity in Uzbekistan. I think that my work in Moscow too, is very dangerous.

Mr. SMITH. I thank you and I applaud your courage in speaking out and for what you've suffered already on behalf of human rights.

Mr. Naftalin?

Mr. NAFTALIN. Congressman Smith, I think it's a great question because it's of great concern to us, for instance, that if you think about it, when the Secretary of State met two weeks ago to arrange the agenda for the summit, human rights wasn't on the list. When Mr. Bakhtin was here last week, the Director of Human Rights for the Moscow Foreign Ministry, I asked him if he was going to

the summit. He said, "I don't think so. I haven't been invited. I don't think they even have the money to send me." I said, "Well, isn't that interesting that Mr. Reshitov never missed one, but all of a sudden they don't even have a budget to send you to the meeting."

You can get a general—as we discussed this with the top people in the State Department, and of course they would say and do say human rights is central to the administration's whole policy. But I think we have to remember that the words and the symbols are also important. People look to real activity and real connections and real human rights subject matter to know whether anybody is paying attention. As you know more than almost anybody, the spotlighting of human rights is vital.

But beyond that, it seems to us that there really needs—if we're talking about democracy in these countries, we have to have a focused strategy of foreign policy that includes human rights as part of the bargaining leverage and not just the words in the press releases. You have to kind of bargain for human rights just like whatever else the international monetary fund bargains for, what they want to see in the way of interest rates. They ought to be wanting to see something about human rights too.

I don't think we have those kinds of policies and I don't think we—I think we've drifted somewhat even in terms of what we expect of CSCE and the involvement of the NGOs. I think you would have trouble finding out at the State Department today—I don't mean to hit on them. They're brand new, but I'm just saying I doubt if there is anybody thinking up what is our policy for CSCE, except maybe some of the hard workers in Vienna. I recognize there are very tough problems facing our country right now, but human rights, I think, always sounds better than it really is in terms of direct linkage of policy. I hope we can get it back up to par.

Mr. SMITH. I appreciate not only your comments, but I had one conversation recently at a foreign affairs hearing with Mr. Christopher and was pressing him on human rights in Islamic countries. He had just returned from his trip to the Middle East and while he did say that he raised human rights, when I tried to have that delineated, he said no. I asked: "Did you talk about religious freedom and the use of the religious police to incarcerate Saudis and others who convert? Did you know that there have been executions?" The Secretary said no.

I reiterated to him that walking in the door and saying, "We're going to talk about human rights," and then ignoring the specifics doesn't accomplish much. I think your point is very well taken. I appreciate that.

Mr. NAFTALIN. Now, in all fairness, the government isn't fully formed. We got a wonderful letter the other day from Mr. Shattuck who will soon be confirmed and then we'll have a full-time human rights assistant secretary and so forth. I don't mean it as a criticism except in general there always is a tendency to let that issue drift and only through the pressure of the Helsinki Commission. Really, it's the only focused place in the Congress to keep everybody's feet to the fire, including ours.

Mr. SMITH. I'm taking it from you as a very constructive suggestion because I think we often—and Congress is just as guilty of this—pay lip service and then do not make the hard decisions. We've done it in years past on MFN. We've done it in a lot of issues. Human rights has to be more seriously taken and I think with the very real possibility—hopefully not probability—of a more hard line regime reemerging in Moscow. We have to stay committed to real human rights progress. Human rights must be the center stage as it relates to other republics, including Ukraine and Russia itself.

So, again, I thank you for your comments, unless you want to respond further.

Mr. NAFTALIN. No. Thank you, Congressman. It's certainly true that we can see today, this week, how fragile it has always been over there.

By the way, I'd just like to add that by our government pressing Mr. Yeltsin on human rights, it strengthens his ability to withstand pressures from the right rather than weakens him. This was to us a fatal flaw that Mr. Gorbachev made and we're concerned that it not be repeated.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you.

Would anyone else—either of you like to comment?

Doctor OLCOTT. I think that the human rights issue for the CIS is in danger of being eclipsed by our own realization of how complex the process of transition is going to be. And I think in what you just said in your remarks to the last speaker, I think you made a really important point and I'd like to switch to the obverse of it. You talked about how if Yeltsin is pushed out, we will probably by necessity have to pay more attention to human rights. But I think that we should be careful that we don't let this issue slide if Yeltsin stays in. I think this is as grave a danger to human rights if Yeltsin stays in power, in some ways—I wouldn't say even a grave, but from our policy viewpoint, a more tangled situation comes in because we are so committed to try to aid him to stay in power that there may be this tendency to overlook—to not raise more problems for him. I think this is really the villain in all our policies towards the CIS. Our fear of doing things that may destabilize the situation, may cause us to compromise our ideals at a point in time where I would say it's very much against our long-term interest to identify ourselves publicly with compromised ideals.

Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you.

Mr. NAFTALIN. I want to just applaud that point and just add that not only do these governments do things in the name of stability, but all diplomats do things in the name of stability. All diplomats. It's a terrible trap in the human rights field.

Doctor KAZEMZADEH. When a school board is out of money, the first thing they cut out of the curriculum of local schools is art and music. In the field of international diplomacy, the first thing that goes is human rights. So, I feel very strongly that human rights should not be neglected, even if in the short-run they produce effects that may be from the purely diplomatic point of view undesirable. In the long run it pays to invest in human rights.



Mr. SMITH. I thank you for that comment and without any further adieu, this Commission hearing is adjourned.  
[Whereupon, at 4:18 p.m., the hearing was concluded.]

A P P E N D I X

STATEMENT BY SENATOR DENNIS DeCONCINI  
CHAIRMAN, HELSINKI COMMISSION  
HEARING ON CENTRAL ASIA  
MARCH 25, 1993

WELCOME TO THE HELSINKI COMMISSION'S FIRST HEARING DEALING EXCLUSIVELY WITH THE SITUATION IN CENTRAL ASIA. CENTRAL ASIA COMPRISES FIVE FORMER SOVIET REPUBLICS THAT GAINED THEIR INDEPENDENCE IN JANUARY 1992 UPON THE COLLAPSE OF THE SOVIET UNION. OVER 100 NATIONALITIES CAN BE FOUND AMONG THE PEOPLES OF CENTRAL ASIA, THE MAJORITY OF WHOM ARE ASIAN IN ETHNICITY AND MUSLIM IN RELIGION OR CUSTOM. I MYSELF WAS FORTUNATE TO HAVE VISITED THREE CENTRAL ASIAN COUNTRIES LAST APRIL.

CENTRAL ASIANS ARE NOT INDEPENDENT FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THEIR HISTORY. BEFORE BEING COLONIZED BY RUSSIA, THEY LIVED FOR CENTURIES UNDER THEIR OWN RULERS. NOW, IN ADDITION TO THE PROBLEMS FACING ALL THE FORMER REPUBLICS DURING THIS TRANSITION PERIOD, INCLUDING ECONOMIC DISINTEGRATION AND POLITICAL CHAOS, THE CENTRAL ASIAN COUNTRIES FACE THE DIFFICULT PROCESS OF DECOLONIZATION.

UNFORTUNATELY, THE TRANSITION TO INDEPENDENCE IN SOME OF THE NEW COUNTRIES IN CENTRAL ASIA IS COMPOUNDED BY THE PRESENCE OF REPRESSIVE REGIMES THAT INSIST ON MAINTAINING THE OLD SOVIET-STYLE ORDER. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF ONE, ALL THE CURRENT PRESIDENTS OF THE NEW CENTRAL ASIAN COUNTRIES ARE FORMER FIRST SECRETARIES OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY. AND THOUGH THE PARTY HAS BEEN OFFICIALLY DISBANDED THROUGHOUT THE REGION, ITS ACTIVITY CONTINUES UNDER A NEW NAME. THE SITUATION HAS BECOME PARTICULARLY WORRISOME IN UZBEKISTAN AND TURKMENISTAN, WHERE ALL OPPOSITION IS SEVERELY REPRESSED.

IN KAZAKHSTAN, THE NEAR-EQUAL SPLIT OF THE POPULATION BETWEEN KAZAKHS AND RUSSIANS POSES A DIFFICULT PROBLEM FOR THAT COUNTRY. DEMOCRACY SEEMS TO HAVE TAKEN THE STRONGEST HOLD IN KYRGYZSTAN, BUT AS ELSEWHERE, THE INSTITUTIONS THAT COULD GUARANTEE THE CHANGES HAVE YET TO BE ESTABLISHED. SADLY, TAJIKISTAN HAS BECOME ONE OF THE BLOODIEST TRAGEDIES IN THE FORMER SOVIET UNION, AS A CIVIL WAR BETWEEN SUPPORTERS AND OPONENTS OF THE COMMUNIST FORMER PRESIDENT HAS RESULTED IN THOUSANDS OF DEATHS AND HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF REFUGEES.

WE ARE HERE TODAY TO LEARN FROM OUR EXPERT WITNESSES MORE ABOUT THESE EVENTS IN THE CENTRAL ASIAN COUNTRIES. BEFORE I INTRODUCE THEM, I WOULD LIKE TO ASK CO-CHAIRMAN HOYER TO MAKE HIS OPENING STATEMENT.

STATEMENT BY STENY H. HOYER  
CO-CHAIRMAN, HELSINKI COMMISSION  
HEARING ON CENTRAL ASIA  
MARCH 25, 1993

THE BREAKUP OF THE USSR AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE FIVE NEW COUNTRIES OF CENTRAL ASIA HAVE FORCED US TO RE-EVALUATE THE WAY WE LOOK AT THE FORMER SOVIET UNION. NO LONGER CAN OUR FOCUS BE ON MOSCOW ALONE. URGENTLY NEEDED POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC REFORM, AND THE PROMOTION OF DEMOCRATIZATION AND RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS COMPEL US TO TURN OUR ATTENTION TO NEW COUNTRIES ABOUT WHICH, UP UNTIL NOW, WE KNEW VERY LITTLE. WE IN THE WEST HAVE MUCH CATCHING UP TO DO IN OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THIS HERETOFORE HIDDEN REGION OF THE WORLD.

IT IS NOT ONLY OUR VIEW OF THE FORMER USSR THAT HAS CHANGED. THE EXISTENCE OF FIVE, INDEPENDENT ASIAN STATES, WITH A POPULATION TOTALLING 50 MILLION, IN A REGION THAT BORDERS IRAN, AFGHANISTAN AND CHINA, HAS ALTERED THE WAY WE LOOK AT THE WORLD. FIVE NEW PLAYERS IN A REGION ALREADY BESET WITH INSTABILITY COULD HAVE SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES BOTH FOR REGIONAL AND WESTERN INTERESTS.

WITHOUT A DOUBT, CENTRAL ASIA IS A REGION EXPERIENCING RADICAL CHANGE AND TRANSITION. UNFORTUNATELY, THAT CHANGE HAS THE POTENTIAL OF UNLEASHING NOT MERELY POLITICAL INSTABILITY, BUT ALSO OPEN CONFLICT, OF THE KIND THAT WE HAVE SEEN IN TAJIKISTAN. THAT TRAGIC CONFLICT HAS SPILLED OVER ACROSS ITS BORDERS INTO AFGHANISTAN, FROM WHERE ARMS AND SUPPORT FOR VARYING FACTIONS HAVE MATERIALIZED. MILLIONS OF ETHNIC TAJIKS LIVE IN AFGHANISTAN, AND THOUSANDS OF TAJIKS FROM TAJIKISTAN HAVE FLED TO AFGHANISTAN. THE POROUS BORDER HAS RAISED ALARMS IN RUSSIA, AND RUSSIAN TROOPS ARE NOW DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN THE CONFLICT.

MOREOVER, SEVERAL HARDLINE GOVERNMENTS IN NEIGHBORING CENTRAL ASIAN STATES SEE THE WAR IN TAJIKISTAN AS PROOF OF WHAT HAPPENS WHEN POLITICAL LIBERALIZATION IS INSTITUTED. FEARFUL OF LOSING POWER, THEY HAVE JUSTIFIED THEIR REPRESSIVE ACTIONS AGAINST THE POLITICAL OPPOSITION IN THEIR COUNTRIES BY POINTING TO THE DESPERATE SITUATION IN TAJIKISTAN.

THESE DEVELOPMENTS RAISE THE QUESTION OF WHETHER DEMOCRATIZATION AND POLITICAL INSTABILITY MUST NECESSARILY GO HAND-IN-HAND. ANOTHER CONSIDERATION IS THE EXTENT TO WHICH NEIGHBORING POWERS SUCH AS IRAN, TURKEY OR FACTIONS FROM AFGHANISTAN HAVE GAINED INFLUENCE IN THE CENTRAL ASIAN COUNTRIES, OR WHETHER THE POTENTIAL FOR OUTSIDE INFLUENCE IN CENTRAL ASIA IS TOO OFTEN OVER-STATED. THESE ISSUES, IN THAT THEY PRESENT THE UNITED STATES WITH MANY DIFFICULT POLICY-MAKING DILEMMAS, ARE JUST SOME OF THE ISSUES WE HOPE TO BE DISCUSSING THIS AFTERNOON.

IT IS HOPED THAT THROUGH THIS TIMELY HEARING WE WILL GAIN A GREATER UNDERSTANDING OF THE TURMOIL IN CENTRAL ASIA, AND A WIDER PERSPECTIVE FROM WHICH TO EVALUATE AND RESPOND TO DEVELOPMENTS THERE.

STATEMENT OF NICAH H. NAFTALIN  
 NATIONAL DIRECTOR, UNION OF COUNCILS (UCSJ)  
 BEFORE THE  
 COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE'S  
 HEARING ON THE SITUATION IN CENTRAL ASIA  
 MARCH 25, 1993

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STATEMENT OF MICAH H. NAFTALIN  
NATIONAL DIRECTOR, UNION OF COUNCILS (UCSJ)  
BEFORE THE  
COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE  
HEARING ON THE SITUATION IN CENTRAL ASIA  
MARCH 25, 1993

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Commission:

The Union of Councils welcomes the opportunity to address the Helsinki Commission on the unfolding situation in the Central Asian region of the New Independent States (NIS) of the former Soviet Union. The Commission's hearings demonstrate the important commitment of the United States Congress to assisting the NIS with the difficult process of democratization and reform. Our National President, Pamela B. Cohen, and our Board of Directors join me in expressing the judgment that no institution of government can match the exemplary commitment and effectiveness of the Helsinki Commission, its fine staff, and its outstanding Chairman and Co-Chairman. You are to be congratulated for this crucial work.

I am here representing the 100,000 members, 34 Member Councils, and three Human Rights Bureaus in the NIS that make up the Union of Councils, the largest grass roots organization dedicated to protecting Jews and promoting human rights for all peoples in the NIS. The Union of Councils has, for the past 23 years, struggled for freedom of emigration, release of prisoners of conscience, defense of the Jewish community, and promotion of human rights and democracy across the region. The guiding principle of our work has always been to form person to person partnerships with grass roots activists and NGOs on the ground and to develop our monitoring and citizen advocacy agenda together.

**Background**

During the past two decades the Union of Councils has worked for Refuseniks and prisoners of conscience in Central Asia. Several of our Member Councils, particularly Boulder and Seattle, have also developed strong relationships with the Jewish and human rights communities in this area through efforts to encourage the Sister Cities movement to work for human rights. Today, in addition to our human rights bureaus, the Union of Councils' member councils maintain person-to-person relationships with Jewish communities across the NIS, including the Central Asian cities of Alma-Ata, Bishkek, Dushanbe, Bukhara, Samarkand, and Tashkent. These Councils both support the cultural and security needs of the communities, and regularly receive information about their conditions for publication in the West.

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Historically, despite the above, the Soviet Jewish movement, like much of US-Soviet relations, focused most of its attention on the central government in Moscow. Centralized Communist Party and KGB control of the USSR largely governed the treatment of political prisoners and Refuseniks. While the UCSJ worked on the individualized issues of the various regions of the USSR, the command/response system required most effort to be directed to the central government.

The projected demise of the Soviet Union caused the UCSJ to embark on new programs to address the problems of human rights and rule of law in the various states of the NIS. No longer could one decision guarantee freedom for people across the region. Now both legislation of the 15 states, and local implementation have become the avenues for human rights progress and abuse, and for the problematic advance toward democracy.

In 1989 the UCSJ conducted the first human rights conference to be held in public in the Soviet Union. This meeting challenged the boundaries of Glasnost and brought together 75 activists from the United States, Canada and the UK, and more than 100 from the USSR to work together to strengthen the future of the Soviet Jewish and human rights movements.

In October 1990 the UCSJ opened its Moscow Bureau on Human Rights (then Soviet-American Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law). This office, the first human rights joint venture between US and Soviet human rights activists addresses emigration and law reform questions, monitors the Soviet government, and facilitates collegial work with other human rights NGOs.

Building on the work of the Moscow Bureau the Union of Councils decided to address the needs of the democracy movement in the NIS. While some positive signals emanate from many governments of the NIS, none is fully democratic, and they are not yet accountable to the citizens of the states. Both the governments and the citizens of the NIS need to alter their understanding of the relationship between governed and governing.

In April 1992 the Union of Councils sponsored workshops in Kiev and Moscow on the techniques of public citizen advocacy and the process of democratization and rule of law. The primary purpose of these meetings was to train activists in the technical processes of monitoring and advocacy as utilized by Western organizations like the Union of Councils. Additionally, just as the Western Soviet Jewish movement is a coalition of local organizations, these conferences were held to promote united advocacy among the human rights agencies in these states.

The conferences in Moscow and Kiev brought together the leaders of various human rights and democracy NGOs in Russia and Ukraine. Among the participants at the Moscow meeting were the Sakharov

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Committee, the Moscow Public Committee for Russian Reforms, the Anti-Fascist Committee, Memorial, the Helsinki Monitoring Committee, and pro-democracy parliamentarians and government officials. In Kiev the seminar's participants included the Rukh movement, Helsinki 90, Children of Chernobyl, and Ukrainian government officials.

The Kiev meeting had particular significance since it culminated in the establishment of the Ukrainian-American Bureau on Human Rights and Rule of Law. This bureau is directed by Dr. Semyon Gluzman, the Ukrainian Jewish psychiatrist who spent years in the labor camps for disclosing the truth about Soviet Psychiatric abuse. The Ukrainian-American Bureau monitors human rights legislation in the Ukrainian Parliament, violations of human rights in the country, and anti-Semitism and ultra-nationalist political activity. The bureau also advises victims of human rights abuse and emigration activists, and serves as a meeting ground to unite the human rights NGO movement of the Ukraine.

In 1992 the Bay Area Council For Soviet Jews, along with Union of Councils dedicated the Harold Light Repatriation and Emigration Center/St. Petersburg Bureau on Human Rights and Rule of Law that reinforced human rights efforts already underway in that city. The bureau, in addition to monitoring and advocacy activity is a central institution in the Jewish and human rights movement's efforts to end the institution of Refuseniks and combat the new anti-Semitic movements in St. Petersburg.

#### Bishkek Conference

In 1991 the leadership of the Union of Councils and many of our partners in Russia and Ukraine concluded that the severe human rights violations in Central Asia demanded attention from the organization. Before initiating planning of a human rights conference we needed to survey the region to identify the types of human rights problems that demanded attention.

Based on a fact-finding visit, in April 1991, to five cities in the Central Asian republics, and continued monitoring thereafter, we concluded that the states of Central Asia are at very different levels of human rights practice. Kyrgyzstan, compared to the other Central Asian states, shows a commitment to democratization and human rights. Kazakhstan, while continuing many of the human rights abuses of the past regime, allows a certain amount of independent activity by human rights activists. Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan have made almost no progress on human rights and democratization since the fall of the Soviet Union. Tajikistan has been in a state of civil war that has led to tens of thousands of deaths, and included massive human rights abuse and a total inhibition on the development of human rights and democratic institutions.



While not all of the following problems exist in each country, they are the types of issues that the Union of Councils received reports on prior to our Central Asia conference on "Human Rights and the Fate of Nations," held in early December 1992, in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

- Independent activists are arrested for insulting the honor of the president.
- Clans battle for control of the country killing thousands.
- Independent parties and movements are prevented from registering.
- Journalists are arrested, and newspapers are confiscated.
- Jews who are emigrating are targeted by criminal gangs and do not receive protection from the state.
- Human rights are not protected through legislation.
- Language laws are implemented that discriminate against citizens who do not speak the native language.
- Communist apparatchiks maintain varying degrees of control of the governments.
- Opposition and human rights leaders are arrested, persecuted, and beaten.
- Russian-speakers, including most Jews, feel threatened and, at least in two states, emigrate in large numbers.

These violations of human rights are of great concern to the Union of Councils. We felt that by bringing together human rights NGO activists and democrats in the governments and parliaments from across the region we might be able to assist in finding solutions to these problems. The sharing of strategies of monitoring and advocacy by the activists on the ground in Central Asia, through sessions open to government officials, the public and press, represented the best chance of shoring up reform where it had begun, and pressing for progress in states that had thus far blocked all attempts at democratization.

Initially we planned to hold the conference in Dushanbe. Tajikistan seemed like the best place for the meeting because we had good contacts in the Jewish community and the obvious need for this type of work was evident in Dushanbe. As planning continued, and the civil war intensified, leading to the withdrawal of the United States Embassy, we were prevented from pursuing these plans and did not feel we could expose ourselves or our partners in the



NIS to this level of danger. For similar reasons we did not consider Uzbekistan or Turkmenistan.

We then investigated other locations for the conference. Alma-Ata, Kazakhstan, with its relatively more stable political atmosphere seemed like a good possibility. However in April 1992, during our Kiev conference, representatives of Kyrgyz president, Iskar Akayev, and the Human Rights Movement of Kyrgyzstan invited the Union of Councils to organize a conference in Bishkek. After consultation with Abdumannob Pulatov, leader of the Uzbek Human Rights Society, we accepted the invitation, seeing Kyrgyzstan as the most democratic state in the region. We hoped that the conference could serve the added purpose of drawing some positive public attention to the human rights accomplishments of the Akayev administration. We also felt that Kyrgyzstan needed the special recognition because it possesses so few of the economic or strategic assets that normally motivate Western attention or support.

The Bishkek conference was organized over a six month period in partnership with Uzbek and Kyrgyz human rights organizations. The principal planners, on the ground were Abdumannob Pulatov and the Union of Councils' Leonid Stourov. The activities were designed in the Union of Councils' partnership style, and with a commitment to exploring establishing a permanent human rights information center to continue the work begun and formulated by the conferees. In the days immediately prior to the conference, the governments of other Central Asian states attempted, to no avail, to urge President Akayev to cancel the meeting. They also took steps, with some success, to prevent their citizens from attending.

The Central Asia International Conference (December 6 & 7, 1992) was attended by nearly 300 human rights activists and democratic governmental and parliamentary officials from the five Central Asian states. Human rights activists from Russia and the West also attended and entered the discussions. While the Union of Councils could not endorse every position taken at the conference, the broad spectrum of views was an encouraging sign of the beginnings of human rights awareness and democracy in the region. We are indebted to Patricia Carley of the Commission staff for her participation in the conference and for her fine report in the *CSCF Digest* and, in an expanded form, in the *Central Asia Monitor*. I would now like to summarize some of our conclusions, and the presentations given at the conference.

The conference opened with greetings and introductory remarks given by Kasat Akhmatov, a Deputy of the Supreme Soviet and Chairman of the Democratic Movement of Kyrgyzstan; Turumbek Akhunov, Chairman of the Local Organising Committee and the Kyrgyzstan Human Rights Society; Mr. Erkebayev, Vice Prime Minister of Kyrgyzstan; Pamela Cohen, UCSJ National President; and Ed Burvits, United States Ambassador to Bishkek. Mr. Erkebayev declared, "The subject of this conference is extremely important for the former Soviet republics

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of Central Asia at this crucial moment in history...Just as the [Kyrgyz] Constitution will observe these [human] rights, it is my opinion that this conference is the first proof of our commitment."

#### **KYRGYZSTAN**

The human rights situation in Kyrgyzstan is the best of the Central Asian states. Human rights organizations have created a constructive opposition, and President Akayev regularly communicates with opposition and national movements. The language policies, however, are not democratic in any Central Asian state, including Kyrgyzstan, and are generally draconian.

Several speakers addressed the questions of Kyrgyz democratization and the Kyrgyz language law. Chinara Dyakbulova, Kyrgyz Minister of Education, argued that Kyrgyzstan is the only place in the former Soviet Union where there is no anti-Semitism, and that the problems of language are created by the press. Mr. Bokashov, Vice Rector of the Pedagogical Institute of Kyrgyzstan, countered that the questions of language have created the possibility of delegitimizing Russian and causing an intellectual catastrophe. He stressed that the pressure to institute the Kyrgyz language in the schools and at teacher meetings is forcing out Russian language teachers and materials at a time when there are few books, magazines, and newspapers written in Kyrgyz, or intellectuals and teachers who speak Kyrgyz.

Two speakers, Yurasov and Masarkulov of the Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan, presented a report on the June 1990 Osh tragedy. They argued that the conflict was a result of the attempt of the authorities to crush the developing democratic movement. Young homeless people were whipped up and turned into a political movement called ASAM. They began to organize strikes and became the core of the opposition. Finally, the young people held a well-organized public meeting in Bishkek. The young people, many of them students, and all Kyrgyz, went to the district where mostly Tajik people are living. People tried to tell them that they had been infiltrated, that they were weapons in the hand of the Soviets. There was violence, people were killed, and many arrested. They reported that women attended the conference who had sons in prison for unknown reasons, with no official investigation. These speakers rejected the notion that Kyrgyzstan was different from the other nations of the former Soviet Union or Central Asia.

Turumbek Akhunov, Chairman of the Human Rights Movement of Kyrgyzstan, presented a thorough overview of the situation in Kyrgyzstan. Akhunov declared that the central goal of the state should be that all people must be equal before the law. However the system in Kyrgyzstan is severely flawed because the parliament, which meets infrequently and acts unprofessionally has created a lot of laws, but many laws are undemocratic, the educational system is working poorly because no law on education has been passed,

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criminals kill people and the state offers no protection and capital punishment continues, both in opposition to the right to life; and the Osh tragedy resulted in the victimization of 349 people who were convicted after the event.

Akhunov called for several reforms. He raised the issue of the imprisonment of the former head of militia, who was accused and imprisoned for beating a girl, although the court could not prove his guilt. Kyrgyzstan needs laws governing trade unions, minimum wage and salaries, educational reform, and capital punishment must be abolished, and an amnesty passed for those facing it.

On the evening of the second day of the conference a delegation consisting of approximately 10 conference leaders met with President Askar Akaev in the Presidential Mansion. Pamela Cohen, Union of Councils President thanked the President for his role in bringing the first human rights conference to Central Asia, credited Kasat Akhmatov, Abdumannob Pulatov, and Tursunbek Akhunov for their crucial work organizing the meeting, and stressed that the fact that delegates were prevented from attending reveals how important the subject is. She said that the West is watching the events in Kyrgyzstan, where the strong determination of the President toward human rights and democracy is seen as a very bright spark in a dark part of the human rights world.

President Akaev declared that after becoming independent, Kyrgyzstan wanted to democratize all sides of life. There is an old tradition of democracy among the Kyrgyz people who have many grass roots leaders. As a result of the 1990 elections, the democratic opposition won, showing the large role of the democratic movement, led by their famous writer, Kasat Akhmatov. Today there are more than 10 political parties and movements that play an important role. The administration created conditions so the opposition could expand their role in political life.

The president said Kyrgyzstan was the first to ratify the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The central point of their constitution draft is human rights and freedom and the parliament supports the draft. They prepared a civil code, perhaps the first in the former Soviet Union to protect civil rights. Their commitment, he said, was more than just words.

President Akaev accepted that the problems of minorities are real because Kyrgyzstan has more than 80 different minority groups. The Kyrgyz people are worried about the potential of a Tajik-style tragedy. He spoke about the importance of Roosevelt's four freedoms; freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom from poverty, and freedom from fear. It is extremely difficult, he noted, to counteract the fear imposed by decades of totalitarianism.



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Toward the end of a nearly two hour meeting, the president offered the following summary: "Last year the psychology of people changed. They now want to develop private business and property. They want to bring human rights to light, to wake people from 70 years of slumber. I believe in the necessity of supporting a healthy opposition. Parliament is a source of opposition, and I suppose I should be grateful for that. I support enthusiastically the proposed UCSJ Central Asian Human Rights Information Center in Bishkek. I believe it will help to predict and prevent conflicts."

#### KAZAKHSTAN

Although the human rights situation in Kazakhstan is better than the remaining three Central Asian states, several trials have been carried out against the opposition and the press. For example, Professor Asanov, Mufti Nysanbayev and others were accused of insulting the honor of the President. The publishing of the only independent newspaper "Birlesu" has been suspended. "Glasnost" (voice) founded by a regional branch of Memorial was closed down by the courts in May 1992. Additionally, Kazakh legislation creates many obstacles to registration of new parties, independent movements, independent trade-unions and the mass-media.

Mina Fokina, of the Alma Ata Helsinki Committee from Kazakhstan, argued that a critical human rights problem is that there is a concentration of power in the executive branch which is controlled by the communist elite. Vitaly Voronov, a Deputy in the Supreme Soviet of Kazakhstan, added that while the Supreme Soviet approved the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it also passed a law that made defaming the honor of the president a crime. Because human rights problems continue to exist, he saw the establishment of the Human Rights Information Center for Central Asia as an important result of the conference.

Akhmet Bolenkhan, of the Independent Trade Union of Kazakhstan, argued that Kazakhstan has no program for reconstruction. The President has concentrated power in his hands which can lead to dictatorship. His obsession with stability is his justification for absence of reform. Bolenkhan added that there is no market economy or legalized right of private property, or an independent judiciary or free press.

Hossen Kosha-Akmet, Chairman of the Committee of Human Rights "Sholtokhsan" of Kazakhstan, reported that in Kazakhstan there is no freedom of association. Four people were arrested and held for 12 days after the monument to Dzerzhinsky was damaged. Kosha-Akmet claimed that none of the authorities who directly were involved with the violent events in 1986 has been punished. Furthermore, state newspapers are funded by the government, but independent movements have no money to publish. Kosha-Akmet concluded that the situation appears calm because the public is passive and tired. He believes that the situation is likely to explode.



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**UZBEKISTAN**

The Uzbek government has imprisoned 8 leaders and activists of the peaceful opposition (Pulat Akhunov, Inamjon Turayunov, Babur Shakirov, Khasratkul Khudajberdiyev, Otanasar Oripov, Abdulla Utasov, Timur Salimov and Salavat Demuratov). On December 7th, 1992, the Supreme Soviet of Uzbekistan approved a new constitution. The next day, a special security brigade from Tashkent arrived in Bishkek Kyrgyzstan, and kidnapped Abdumannob Pulatov, the Chairman of the Uzbekistan Human Rights Society and co-organizer of the International Conference on Human Rights sponsored by the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews. He was charged with insulting the President of Uzbekistan and, after being incarcerated for two months, was tried and sentenced in Tashkent to deprivation of his freedom for 3 years. He was released under an amnesty. We thank the Commission for its special role in accomplishing his release.

The leaders of the opposition movement "Birlik" and the democratic party "Erk" (including Shukhrat Ismatullaev and Muhammad Solikh) are in danger of being arrested. The secretary of "Birlik", Vasilija Inoyatova, like Pulatov, was charged with insulting President Karimov and sentenced to deprivation of her freedom for two years but the charge was also deferred by the amnesty.

At present there is no freedom of speech or press in Uzbekistan. The Uzbek "Erk" Party newspaper has been strongly censored throughout 1992, and was closed on January 1, 1993. "Birlik" was forbidden from publishing a newspaper. Democratic periodicals from Moscow ("Izvestiya", "Moscow News", "New Times", "Mustakil Khafalik-Independent Weekly", and some others) were outlawed in Uzbekistan. The official mass media carries on a vicious campaign against the peaceful opposition of the Democrats, their movements and parties.

The main report on human rights in Uzbekistan presented at the conference was by Pulatov. Pulatov told the conference, "The situation for human rights is terrible in Uzbekistan, similar to that of the 1970s, with only Tajikistan worse. The old political structures still exist, with only the names changed. Political terror is being used. There is no freedom of speech or conscience. Meetings and demonstrations are prohibited."

Since he is here to testify today I will not go into detail about the conditions in Uzbekistan, but will only confirm his conclusion that the human rights situation in Uzbekistan is extremely critical, and that little has changed since the Soviet period.

**TURKMENISTAN**

In Turkmenistan, the government refuses to allow opposition movements and parties, such as "Akrybirlig," Party of Democratic Development, Movement of Democratic Reforms, to organize meetings and, at the same time, refuses to register them because of a lack

of signatures of members. Twice in the last five months, local KGB agents confiscated all copies of the independent opposition magazine, "Dayanch" (Support) and opened a criminal case against the editor-in-chief, M. Salamov. The next day, after Senator Alan Cranston left Ashgabat (September 1992), all the opposition leaders with whom he met were invited to the KGB, threatened, and warned not to meet with foreign officials. Representatives of "Akrybirlig" -- A. Velaspar, H. Ballyev, A. Goshayev, and M. Goshudova; the leader of Party of Democratic Development, A. Goshudova; and M. Salamov were stopped on the way to the UCSJ's Bishkek Human Rights Conference in December and put under house arrest.

Karadja Karadjaev, a businessman and sponsor of "Dayanch" magazine (the only independent publication for Turkmenistan), reported the arrest of Salamov, and that copies of the paper are confiscated by the KGB upon arrival in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan from Moscow where the paper is produced. Karadjaev believes that there is absolutely no freedom in the country and that the authorities use everything from threats to physical destruction to prevent opposition. The goal of Dayanch is to show how freedom and human rights can be protected by the rule of law.

Dursumurat Hodja Muhammed, of the Democratic Development Party of Turkmenistan, concluded that Turkmenistan is far more totalitarian today than under the Soviet regime.

**TAJIKISTAN**

In Tajikistan during the civil war that was provoked by former communists after President Nabiev's forced resignation (September 1992 - January 1993), 20,000 people were killed. The war between the opposition and the former communists became a war between clans. Opposition leaders claim that during 1992, nearly 60,000 people were killed. About 300,000 people, mostly Russian speakers, left Tajikistan and about 30,000 Tajiks crossed the border to Afghanistan. No human rights legislation has been passed. There is no protection for people from violence. Several Jews, (including the head of Ashkenazi Community in Dushanbe) were murdered in recent months. Many Jews have been robbed prior to their departure for the U.S. and Israel. Trains with Jews travelling to Tashkent for departure for Israel were fired upon last fall. Currently, the former communist Tajik government has issued orders to arrest opposition leaders.

Shadmon Yusupov, leader of the Tajikistan Democratic Party, argued that Moscow's mass-media accused him of publicly favoring expelling the Russian-speaking population of Tajikistan. He said that he never issued such statements and that he struggled for democratic situation for all nationalities in Tajikistan. Yusupov sees Tajikistan as a secular state so he is absolutely against Islamization. He characterized the situation in Tajikistan where



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85% of the Tajik Parliamentarians do not represent anyone. Half a million people in Tajikistan are refugees, 6.2 million have settled in Dushanbe. 60,000 people were killed through the involvement of Russian troops in the last six months, without knowledge of the Russian government. In Dushanbe alone there are 20,000 army units. The city of Kurgan-Tube is absolutely destroyed with a population of 3,000-5,000, down from 50,000 before the fighting.

Yusupov also claimed that the government and the party are opposed to freedom of speech and conscience and so arrested the mayor of Dushanbe because he tried to encourage freedom of the press. He asserted that on May 3, 1992, after 28 days and nights of pacifist demonstrations, with no violations of rights or laws, the government sent three criminals from the square to attack people. A Supreme Soviet deputy was shot. There were no protests, although Russian military troops were in Dushanbe. He concluded that there can be no peace in Tajikistan as long as Russian military troops remain, however he also blamed the militaristic parliament that does not represent anyone. He concluded, "In the final analysis, the basis for all our tragedies is the militaristic parliament. Its members represent no one. For example, the former speaker of the parliament participated in the attack of his own village -- how could he do this if he represented them?" The Russian ambassador to Kyrgyzstan rejected Yusupov's claims.

#### OTHER PRESENTATIONS

Sanchar Sheratova, a reporter for Moscow News, presented her views of the general human rights problems in Central Asia. She claimed that she did not believe that communism would be replaced by Islamic fundamentalism. Instead she believes that a more logical view may be that parliaments will have a transition from totalitarian to authoritarian. These republics, after all these years, have weak systems of independent executive and legislative branches, and weak opposition movement. In Tajikistan, the old nomenclature is quite without power, and thus the start of the civil war. In the absence of sound economic and political systems, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan will continue to be influenced by Russia.

Regarding the power of Islam, Sheratova reported that the populations remain close to Islamic ways of thinking and thus Islam is not distinct from politics. Without democracy, Islamic radicals will be allowed to develop strength. Sheratova concluded that the primacy of human rights is even more important in Central Asia because it's the only real basis the West can use to influence the political processes.

Ashkhan Oskan, a representative of the Ingush people of Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, argued that the Ossetians are supported by the Russians and fascists against the Ingush people. More than 4,000 people were killed in Ossetia and more than 15,000 wounded. 20,000-25,000 people disappeared. Women were taken to South

Ossetia in concentration camps. Whole villages were destroyed. Oskan claimed that Russian General Filatov gave press conference and said that Ossetians are his friends because they always supported Russia, and they were going to clear out the Ingush. The conditions in the concentration camps are hideous and the Russians do nothing. Thousands of Ingush were killed in Prigorodny region of North Ossetia with the help of the Russian Army.

#### The Plight of Jews in Central Asia

Mr. Chairman, before concluding I would like to briefly summarize the conditions of Jews in the Central Asian states. The Union of Councils has always been greatly concerned with the plight of Jews in all regions of the CIS. With the demise of the Soviet Union the situation for Jews has, in some cases, improved, but is generally much more complex and in many cases more dangerous. (See the attached report on the "Jewish Situation in Kirgistan," prepared by the UCSJ Central Asian Human Rights Information Center.)

As we all know, human rights cannot be achieved in the presence of anti-Semitism. Increasingly, particularly in Russia, anti-Semitism is one of the principal languages of the extremist opposition to democratic reform, while  *Zionism*  is an accepted code word for America and democracy.

Jews in this region can be divided into two categories. Sephardic, or Bukharan, Jews have lived in the region for hundreds of years, while Ashkenazi Jews settled in Central Asia from other parts of the Soviet Union.

Ashkenazi Jews not only suffer as Jews, but also incur the wrath of nationalists as Russian speakers. These Jews are hurt by discriminatory language laws that are being implemented in every Central Asian state. In the absence of sensitivity for the rights of Russian speakers in general, Jews, along with others, are fleeing several of these new states.

All Jews in the region continue to be harassed and persecuted in relation to their position as Jews in the nationalistic, and sometimes radically Islamic, climate of Central Asia. In addition to the examples provided above in relation to general human rights, Jews have suffered many other forms of persecution in this region.

In 1992:

- A Jewish family in Kyrgyzstan was arrested on a blood libel charge and was accused of murdering a Kyrgyz child to use her blood for baking Matsah on Passover. While the charge was later dropped, this example represents the import of a traditional form of European anti-Semitism to Central Asia.



- Two Jewish families from Uzbekistan reported that they were beaten by Uzbeks, the daughters were threatened with rape, and the families endured anti-Semitic insults and threats. The militia refused to assist the families.
- The Kazakh newspaper *Saschinsk* quoted Metropolitan Anatoly of St. Petersburg that it "would be nice to kill Jews."
- A 15 year old Uzbek Jewish boy was beaten by a militia examiner in Tajikistan who told him "you are a Jew and if we were allowed, we would kill you all."
- The Dushanbe Synagogue was attacked by a gang of Tajiks.
- Tajiks are encouraged not to purchase homes from Jews in leaflets posted in mosques.
- Jewish children are reportedly beaten in Tajik schools.
- Jews in Tajikistan are identified by criminals for robbery, beatings and torture based on an assumption that Jews are all emigrating and so have lots of money.
- The home of a Jewish woman burned in a fire. Her neighbors refused to assist her, but told her that her house, one of the few still owned by Jews, should be sold to them.

Today, throughout the NIS, Jewish fear of persecution is based on the fact that, despite many remarkable changes in many of the new nations, much of the repressive power structure remains. Most of the top leadership of the new states are former Communist Party leaders, causing many to suspect that the undemocratic and anti-Semitic policies of their communist past are lurking just below the rhetoric of democratic change. Furthermore, the nomenclature (bureaucracy) and the KGB remain fundamentally unchanged in the NIS.

Reports of persistent monitoring and wiretapping of political activists continue to be received from the NIS. When Pamela Cohen and I called Jane Fisher of your staff from Alma-Ata the night that Pulatov was kidnapped in Bishkek, our line was cut in mid-call and we were unable to get a line for nearly 24 hours.

Not only do Jews suffer employment discrimination, but they are threatened with losing their elementary religious and emigration freedoms if they participate in general democratic political activities. In Samarkand, Uzbekistan, Jews who attempted to attend our Bishkek conference, a basic civil right, were threatened by the local National Security Service and other authorities and told to go to synagogue or emigrate, but not participate in the political life of the country.



The Union of Councils ourselves have been attacked for holding the conference in Central Asia. The Uzbek newspaper *Khalk Sasi* editorialized, "We know perfectly well the source of all these thrill groans about the persecution of so-called human rights activists in Uzbekistan. It is not to be found in Uzbekistan, but in Washington, DC, and it is called the Union of Jewish Council in the USA for the defense of Soviet Jewry. Probably, if the have joined forces, they are both in a bad way. But what they can do to attract attention to themselves? They are ready to change the crescent moon to the Star of David." Additionally, we have received two separate reports of Central Asian government despatches to - can you believe it - the Israeli Embassy in Moscow complaining about the Union of Councils' organization of the Bishkek conference. These are clear examples of state sponsored anti-Semitism.

#### Conclusions

In general, Mr. Chairman, we are horrified by the absence in Central Asia of a commitment, often even lip service, to human rights, rule of law, or what we in the West understand to be a civil society. Each of the five states has become a member of the CSCS and, by so doing, has accepted the central premises of the Helsinki process. And yet, in practice, all equate human rights organizations with the "opposition." Independent newspapers and journalists are perceived as dissidents and often prosecuted as such. Prosecution for defaming the ruler, which can carry up to a six year prison sentence, is in most of these countries treated as a routine method of enforcing stability. In several of these, three or four individuals gathered together to discuss politics can be prosecuted as an unlawful demonstration, and house arrests and threats of reprisal greet those who plan to attend the kind of "unlawful meeting" that the CSCS nations are expected to encourage.

Under these conditions, President Akaev of Kyrgyzstan is to be congratulated for hosting our Bishkek conference last December. And we are now concluding plans, with the help of my colleague, Abdumannob Pulatov, to respond to the clear consensus of that conference: that DCSJ establish, in Bishkek, a center for collecting and disseminating human rights information in Central Asia. And, of course, like all of our human rights monitoring activities and bureaus, the center will be used by, and a common meeting ground for, all human rights NGOs who wish to share information and work together, and learn the techniques of democracy together.

We are also beginning to plan a full-service human rights bureau to be located in Alma Ata, whose activities, while focused on Kazakhstan, will be coordinated with our other bureaus and, of course, the information center in nearby Bishkek. We are planning a second conference for Bishkek, this time focusing on one of the principal human rights issues identified in our conference and by



President Aksev himself -- the issue of how to plan for an orderly transition to the native language without driving out all Russian speakers, including most of the Jews, discriminating against the non-native population, and ruining the educational system for all citizens. We see this issue as offering an opportunity to develop an appreciation for grassroots involvement in democratic decision making. And we will be discussing with Ambassador Escodera appropriate ways to initiate a public dialogue in Dushanbe for Tajik human rights leaders, now that the embassy has been reestablished.

Mr Chairman, let me repeat that the Union of Councils applauds the Helsinki Commission for holding these hearings that focus on the distinctive human rights situation in Central Asia, and the distinctions that must be appreciated in assessing each of the respective states in the region. We urge you to continue and to intensify your monitoring of the area. We stand ready, as always, to offer whatever assistance we can in support of your requirements both for information and for developing relationships with the human rights leaders when you visit there.

We hope that you will articulate to your colleagues in the Congress, and to the Administration, and to your peers in the other CSCE nations those policies and programs that will encourage human rights progress and that will condition, where feasible, U.S. assistance to such progress. For instance --

- \* The continued linkage of emigration rights to MFN, through the mechanism of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, should be pressed. The granting of MFN to Kyrgyzstan, for instance, as opposed to Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, would send a clear message to the respective states that, ultimately, America insists upon the granting, under enacted law, of the right of emigration consistent with international standards of movement.

- \* Support and encouragement to the human rights grassroots NGOs in the region, and the advocacy of human rights principles, as distinguished from oppositional politics, should be a high priority for CSCE, for Congressional visits and fact finding missions, for our embassies and consulates, and for US Aid under the Freedom Support Act, National Endowment for Democracy, and other related programs and funding sources. These are inexpensive yet dramatic ways of carrying the message of the United States' commitment to the progress of human rights and the legal infrastructure for a civil and democratic society. No one knows better than you the genius of assuring that human rights and its grassroots activists receive policy attention and priority along side the goals of military security and economic cooperation. In this connection, we must all be ever alert to repudiate the claims of totalitarian leaders that stability is a blessing to be vouchsafed at the expense of human rights.

- \* We believe that no region of the former Soviet Union offers a better case for the need to maintain a strong Radio Liberty broadcasting presence. There simply is no free or independent local press in Central Asia. Most of its citizens, outside

Bishkek, learned of our conference, and of the Pulatov kidnaping, from Radio Liberty.

- \* Language and citizenship laws offer serious opportunities for discrimination and pressure against Russian speaking minorities, including most Jews who are thus in double jeopardy. This issue is not limited to Central Asia, but it is an acute problem affecting the fate of the many nationalities in the region. We would hope that the conference on the language issue that UCSJ is planning for Bishkek could be a model for broader attention to the problem as a conflict resolution opportunity for the CSCE at large.

- \* As always, we urge you to continue to seek means for expanded involvement of the NGOs in all aspects of CSCE activity. We are concerned that there is no legitimate infrastructure for NGOs to participate directly in decision making, policy review, monitoring, and advocacy for human rights, including the development in our State Department of a focused approach to utilizing the CSCE as an instrument of American foreign policy for the CIS. And, it is clear, that the newly independent states comprising Central Asia require our most concerted attention to finding means of educating them about their responsibilities as signatory members.

Thank you very much.



JEWISH SITUATION IN KYRGYZSTAN<sup>1</sup>  
(short summary)

UCSJ's Central Asian Human Rights Information Center

Many processes in the former Soviet Union had similar character. In spite of this fact anti-Semitism in Kyrgyzstan was never wide spread.

Jewish population in the Republic increased significantly during World War II, when many Jewish refugees came from Belarus and Ukraine. Many of them remained in Kyrgyzstan, continued to work there and became to feel part of Kyrgyz society. Kyrgyzstan was one of a few republics in the former Soviet Union (FSU), where Jews held (and still hold) important positions in the governmental structures. Jewish intellectuals were always a bright and visible part of the Russian speaking community in Kyrgyzstan. Names such as philosopher A. Brudny, actors L. Yasinovsky and E. Prag, producer V. Pasi, movie producer I. Gerastein, poet L. Aksehrud are well known to every intellectual in Republic.

Of course, it is impossible to speak about problems and cloudless Jewish existence in Kyrgyzstan. Before 1985, as well as now, they experience significant difficulties connecting with open so-called grassroots (or street) anti-Semitism and with more refined and secret forms of discrimination from officials and bureaucrats. Jews hardly were accepted by intellectual creative unions during so-called stagnation time (everybody remembers the shameful story of poet Lev Aksehrud); Jews were not permitted to travel abroad, including

<sup>1</sup>This report was written by Natalia Ahlova of the UCSJ Central Asian Human Rights Information Center. Ms. Ahlova is a journalist living in Kyrgyzstan who helped to organize the Central Asian Conference on Human Rights and the Fate of Nations, held on December 6 and 7, 1992, in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

This document is the first official report of the Central Asian Information Center, and was translated by Dr. Leonid Stonov, Highland Park, Illinois.



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business trips. Now Jews experience the same discomfort as all non-Kyrgyz population. Now the representatives of the slavic diaspora have the opportunity to feel all facets of oppression which Kyrgyz Jews experienced all the time in different forms.

Emigration wave in 70s changed the demographic picture only by a little. Even the diaspora considered emigration as the last response to oppression. Because of the severe anti-Semitic situation in other parts of the FSU many well known specialists came to Kyrgyzstan at that time to live and work (surgeon Chervinsky from Novokuznetsk, stage manager Pasi from Leningrad, artist Krugman and others).

Emigration in the end of 80s and beginning of 90s had an absolutely different character. Before only few families left (mostly for the USA); now Jews leave mainly for Israel and less for Germany. Losses for the economy, public health and culture are tremendously big. The Government understands the seriousness of this problem and tries to influence the situation to some extent, but still it is being done on the declarations and promises level.

True, it is the first time Jews can freely learn Hebrew and study Jewish culture. The Jewish Cultural Society "Menora" is working in Bishkek, the chairman of this Society Alexander Kasev (teacher of Pedagogical Institute) is the member of Coordination Presidential Committee (all chairmen of national cultural centers are members of this Committee). Kyrgyz Jews named the following reasons when they explained their desire to emigrate from Kyrgyzstan:

- economic difficulties;
- disbelief in governmental ability to control the situation;
- abusive public anti-Jewish attacks from some Kyrgyz national radicals.

Here are some details about these public abuses: In April 1992 the Russian newspaper "Respublika" in Bishkek published a small article, signed by one of the members of



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Democratic Movement of Kyrgyzstan (DMK), this person used a pseudonym. This article was openly anti-Semitic, it repeated well known abuses against Jews and also contained a threat to the editor of "Republica" Zamira Sadykova. An author of the article had an opinion that Zamira put too many Jews on the Newspaper Board and published too many articles written by Jews. It was a scandal. The Executive Secretary of DMK T. Egenberdiyev published a refute in the next issue of the newspaper, Mrs. Z. Sadykova published her explanation of the reasons why she had published this controversial article. These publications should have smoothed over bad impressions. But the President A. Akaev office received the statement from American Embassy, and the authorities officially warned Mrs. Z. Sadykova.

There was a fierce discussion on the pages of this newspaper in May-June, 1992 about the question: who must prepare the legislation for Parliament. The Director of the Institute for State and Law of Academy of Science Esengul Beishembiev accused Akaev's adviser Mr. Leonid Levitin (who is Jewish) that he supposedly usurped all the rights to prepare the drafts of new laws. This article had not direct anti-Semitic attacks, but clearly described that mainly non-Kyrgyz people worked in the Supreme Soviet and Presidential staffs. The article raised the question: if these people could create high quality laws that took into account Kyrgyzstan interest. President Askar Akaev publicly defended his assistants. In his strong speech he suggested to all "beggard" people to prove competitiveness of their drafts not by words but by deeds and did not bother people whom the President trusted. In order "not to tease the geese" Mr. L. Levitin stinted himself from great positions, but he continues to consult the President in legal and political questions.

The last splash of anti-Semitic attitude was a scandal about A. Akaev's lame statements during his official visit to Israel in January 1993. And although Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kyrgyzstan Ednan Karabayev officially stated, that a sentence about the opening Kyrgyzstan Embassy in Jerusalem was invented by journalists, and the President meant something else, it was too late. The Party of National Renewal "Asaba" published in

Republic's mass media a very strong statement in the spirit of muslim solidarity and blaming Israel policy. Again Levitin's figure appeared, because he prepared this visit. The softest accusation in newspapers was about his incompetence. As a result of this campaign, the visit to Israel justified expectations that Israel-Kyrgyzstan bilateral relationships became as tense as never before. And this scandal has definitely influenced the emigration mood of the Jewish community.

In common the Jewish exodus (and German and Russian, as well) has been already predetermined. The question is only if it is possible to prolong this process for several years (or decades) and to do it more gradually and painlessly. But it depends not only on economic and political situation inside Kyrgyzstan, but also on the situation in neighboring Central Asian countries.

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## APPEAL TO INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

On behalf of a long-suffering Ingush people we ask all the peoples of integrity to raise their voices in defence of justice. More than 48 years Ossets-occupiers have been taking up the homes and the lands of Ingush people. Ossets misappropriated all the riches which belonged to Ingushs in Prigorodny district which is now been under the jurisdiction of the North Ossetia.

The representatives of all other peoples gave back to Ingushs their homes and villages when they returned from the long lasting exile. The only Ossets fabricating all possible slanders, try to misappropriate by all means and forever everything that Ingushs had before.

They used the refined methods of persecution and the prohibition for Ingushs to settle in the villages of the Prigorodny district, the pursuit for the passport regime violation, artificially creating such precedents as a discrimination in work hiring, the refusal from the allotment of a job.

Ossets are still not allowed to sell homes and lands to Ingushs because they are afraid of Ossetic and Russian authorities. The Russian government did not still abolish its resolution about the prohibition of Ingushs to be registered in the Prigorodny district, although it had abolished the juridical documents establishing and consolidating the repressions against Ingushs.

So, having in the Prigorodny district their private homes, working at some of the factories of that district many of Ingushs formally have to be registered in the town of Nazran and Nazran district of Ingushetia.

Up to November of this year there lived in the city of Vladikavkas and the Prigorodny district more than 64 000 Ingushs.

And today there is not any of them in that district because with silent consent of Russia Ingushs are partly massacred, partly annihilated by chemical weapons, pieces of ordnance, died under the caterpillar tracks of tanks and the wheels of the armoured troop-carriers.

The houses of Ingushes in many villages and in Vladikavkas are blown up or burnt down. The purposeful extermination of Ingush people in the Prigorodny district is been carrying out. It has been making by Russian troops together with Ossetic military gangs.

The Ossetic leadership worked out a monstrous plan to expatriate Ingush people from their lands in the Prigorodny district and to exterminate them.

There had been used an advantageous concurrence of circumstances:

a) The war between South Ossetia and Georgia was over and the military battle-hardened units, which had taken part in that war were free;

b) A great number of military equipment and ammunition infantry weapons and chemical weapons was given Ossetia by Russian official aide during the war against Georgia and

when the war was over all the weapons and military equipment were transported to the Prigorodny district and distributed to all Ossets who lived there among Ingushs. Each Osset was provided with all kinds of weapons.

In such circumstances it was necessary and very important to provoke Ingushs.

The Ossets made several attempts for that purpose. However, when the armoured troop-carrier which was moving along the street in the settlement of "Jugeny" 30.10.1992 started shooting at peaceful unarmed Ingush people it provoked a burst of anger and indignation from the side of Ingushs of course. And they began to build barricades.

There are a lot of facts which give evidence that the armed conflict had been prepared a long time before by Ossetic side. Firstly, the highly explosive and arguable territory of the Prigorodny district in the direct nearness the village of "Karza" the military exercises were held in the course of which a student-Ingush was killed.

Secondly, the same day the well organised half-armed nonofficial groups in Vladikavkas and in the Prigorodny district carried out a mass verification of Ingush flats and houses. As a result, all Ingushs, who did not go to the barricades were taken to the basements of the Medical Institute which were flooded with the water. The people was also taken to the stadium and other enclosed places.

The people from the villages of Karza, Basorkino, Maikoje, Oktiabrskoje, Redant, Jugeny and others who went

out to barricades, took under their control these villages. The armed attacks of Ossetic special militia units, home guard and military gangs were successfully repulsing by Ingushs, until the Russian troops were delivered there supposedly to separate the belligerent.

In the same evening 02.11.1992 instead of separating of the belligerents, the subdivisions of the regiments rushed to the attack Ingush barricades and began to dislodge Ingushs. The artillery machine "Grad", chemical missiles, tanks were used for an extermination of Ingushs. The war actions are been held by the regular Russian air-landing forces, paratroopers, tank-borne infantry.

The Ossetic armed gangs which come after Russian troops, blow up Ingush houses, shoot the wounded people and kill the prisoners.

There are many events when these gangs killed the hostages and the inhabitants and who did not want to leave their homes were blown up together with their houses.

Fearing their tears about alleged aggression the occupiers waged war against twelve years old boys in Karza entirely blockaded. These boys went out to barricades because of the lack of the older men.

The Crocodile tears do not impede Ossetic leadership to order opening the fire at the hospitals in Nazran and many villages which are far away from the battles places and execution of prisoners and hostages.

The operation "Genocide" is been held in the atmosphere

of the whole informational blockade of Ingush side.

Russian president Eltsin can receive the chairman of the Supreme Soviet (comrade Galasov) of the North Ossetia, but at the same time Ingushs are not allowed mostly even to say a word to Russian President. Galasov can use, if he wants, TV, Radio, press-conference halls. However, Ingushs have only a chance to raise their voices in the streets.

Galasov can any time meet a representative of Russian leadership while Ingush representatives can not do the same, or it is extremely difficult.

It is necessary to add that Ingushs have been showing more than 48 years superhuman tolerance, waiting for the law about the rehabilitated peoples and the resolution of the Prigorodny district return. And at the time when it became juridically possible (in November 11.1992 it was expected that the commission on the Prigorodny district would be held). But the carefully thought over provocation of Ossets wrecked the step towards to the district return.

The monstrous inventions of the occupiers should not be carried out.

We ask all the peoples in the world,

we ask everyone who appreciates justice and who knows co-suffering to raise their voices for a long-suffering Ingush people, the best representatives of which are been annihilated up to this day by Russian regular army troops and tanks together with the Ossetic occupiers.

• Contemporary public committee of Ingush people  
representatives in Moscow &

HUMAN RIGHTS AND POLITICAL CONFLICTS IN CENTRAL ASI.

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION  
IN EUROPE

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With the collapse of the USSR, US policy makers suddenly found themselves dealing with the leaders of twelve different states, rather than just with one. The US is committed to promoting democratic reform and the transition to a market in all of the CIS successor states, and this committee in particular has been scrupulous about monitoring conditions in each of the newly independent states.

This stated, it must also be said that certain republics are proving to be of greater interest to the American policy community than are others. Understandably, our foreign policy community has decided that US strategic interests are more affected by events in Moscow and Russia than they are by those in any of the other new states. Next in rank, the three new "accidental" nuclear powers--Ukraine, Belorussia and Kazakhstan--have each gotten a greater share of attention than might have otherwise been expected had they not chanced to have nuclear materials on their soil on 8 December 1991, when the USSR was dissolved. Also commanding attention are those successor states whose citizens, or ex-citizens, have mastered the art of lobbying in the American political arena.

Beyond that, the other new nations have not drawn much attention. In truth, this lack of world attention is not entirely undeserved. It would be hard to argue that--the nuclear question aside--events in Central Asia are of direct strategic interest to the US, or that they are as important to us as are events in

Europe or the Middle East. Over the past two years, though, each of five Central Asian republics have been of occasional concern to US political leaders--Kyrgyzstan for its "democratic revolution", Tajikistan for its civil war, Uzbekistan for its abuses of human rights, Turkmenistan for its wealth-based "go-it-alone" strategy, and, of course, Kazakhstan for its "nuclear arsenal".

In the months or year to come our attention is likely to be drawn to this region again and again. These five republics are subject to all the same stresses which we are currently watching in Russia; Central Asia too is enduring battles between presidents and parliaments, struggles for local autonomy, separatist movements, inter-ethnic conflicts, and the jostling between advocates of democracy and defenders of national or religious privilege. None of the republics have all of these problems, but each has some of them, although the risks of instability are greater in some regions than in others.

Kazakhstan is still a "nuclear" republic, although public discussions of current supervision over the strategic nuclear forces of the former USSR throw serious doubt on the ability of President Nursultan Nazarbaev or Kazakhstan's leadership to control or deploy the weapon systems on Kazakhstan's soil.

By general agreement and by most criteria, Kazakhstan is also potentially Central Asia's wealthiest republic. It is natural therefore that Kazakhstan has gotten the greatest attention from US political officials, as well as from our

businessmen. This latter group is further encouraged by Nazarbaev's public stance, which is as supportive of capitalism and private investment as is that of the Yeltsin economic reform team. In fact, although Kazakhstan has been slow to legislate many of the foreign investment guarantees which Western businessmen require, the outlook for short-run stability in Kazakhstan seems far better than it does in Russia, because there is no government-crippling rancor between Kazakhstan's president and his legislature. The long-term political viability of the republic, though, is much more uncertain.

Unlike Boris Yeltsin, President Nazarbaev has not cultivated an image of himself as a democratic figure. Elected by a Soviet-style 99% majority in a one-man election, Nazarbaev has chosen instead to foster the image that he is a world-class and reform-minded leader, the one man who can keep an ethnically bifurcated republic from splitting.

Although Nazarbaev remains his country's most popular politician, his popularity is eroding among Russians and Kazakhs alike. While the legislature does not pose an open challenge to Nazarbaev's authority, periodic sniping from that body, elected undemocratically for the most part, has become common place.

That is not surprising, because even in Kazakhstan, foreign investment has not been rapid enough or large enough to prevent the economic decline which all former Soviet republics have experienced. According to *Kommersant*, no. 8, 1993, during 1992 the wholesale price index in Kazakhstan increased by 2400

percent, while production fell more than 15 percent. The economic situation has of course fueled criticism of Nazarbaev's leadership and his economic policies. Kazakh nationalists complain that the Kazakhs have suffered worse than the Russians from inflation and that they lack the capital to take advantage of the new economic opportunities. The Russians in their turn complain that the Kazakhs are serving as a brake on reforms, and that the reforms will bring suffering disproportionately to a displaced Russian industrial workforce.

As the two national communities draw further apart, the Nazarbaev government fears that political parties will form to mirror the major ethnic faultlines running through in society. To Nazarbaev, political parties mean political opposition, so he is likely to continue to make it difficult for non-governmental groups, and even more so, anti-government groups, to grow from being political movements to become republic-wide political parties.

For all his growth and maturation as a political figure in recent years, Nazarbaev remains fearful of any political movement which he or people loyal to him do not control. Kazakh and Russian nationalist groups have been able to organize in political parties, but Nazarbaev has so tightly defined political "acceptability" that the loose pan-Turkic *Alash* group, the Islamic Renaissance Party, and the Russian group *Yedinstvo* have all been denied registration. The common thread in each case is Nazarbaev's fear of his nation being infiltrated by "outside

agents", a criterion which makes it likely that Nazarbaev will also prevent independent trade union leader Leonid Solomin from turning his union into a political party--though the abundant rumors about who Solomin really is and what he is about, and for whom, may prevent that transition as well.

What is clear is that Nazarbaev is determined to control the "transition to democracy" in his republic directly and by himself. He meets periodically with Kazakhstan's various "opposition" leaders, in an effort to give them a sense of personal involvement and to insure that they know what behavior is expected of them. It is also his hope that the newly organized "Unity and Progress" political movement which he heads will obviate the need for strong political parties altogether, and so allow safe stage-management of Kazakhstan's first free elections for national and local parliaments, which are currently scheduled for late 1994.

It is far from clear what Nazarbaev will do if he perceives impending defeat. The political climate in Russia will obviously be of great influence here. Kazakhstan's press and media are far more open than they were in the late 1980s, but they remain far less democratic than either the central Russian press or that in neighboring Kyrgyzstan. Reporters and television personalities are expected to "demonstrate respect" for their nation's leader--although Nazarbaev's needs for public praise are satisfied far more easily than are those of Uzbekistan's Karimov or of Turkmenistan's Niazov. Constantly reminded of the Kolbin

government's bloody overreaction to anti-government demonstrations in December 1986; Nazarbaev has been extremely reluctant to engage in public displays of force. His record of peaceful toleration of public protest is unsurpassed in the region, because while Akaev has been as tolerant, the Kyrgyzstani president has not had to endure attacks as frequent or as fundamental as those made upon Nazarbaev.

In the months to come, the Nazarbaev regime may find its tolerance increasingly tested, particularly in provincial cities, if unemployment increases tenfold, as some predict it will. Somewhere down the line too the regime will have to begin to respond to the grievances of the Russian population, who though they are nearly forty percent of the nation, account for only about twenty percent of appointed senior government officials. The language issue is also lurking about, building toward a confrontation. More than they do anywhere else in Central Asia, the Russians of Kazakhstan believe that the need to learn the local language is an abuse of their civil rights.

Kyrgyzstan is the other Central Asian republic in which Russians make up a major political constituency, of just under a quarter of the population, and where they fear the potential abuse of their civil rights. Here as in Kazakhstan Russians define their rights as abused, if they are denied the ability to use Russian on an equal basis with Kirghiz in all spheres of political life. Under current laws Russian loses legal status by 1997.

However, Kyrgyzstan's president Askar Akaev has been far more solicitous of his Russian minority than has been his neighbor to the north, to so great a degree that Kyrgyz nationalists have sometimes been highly critical of their president, such as when he opened a Slavic University in Bishkek to serve Central Asia's Russian population, or when he declared Orthodox Christmas to be a state holiday.

The Kirghiz nationalists lambasted Akaev for this decision in the republic's two major independent newspapers, *Asaba* and *Respublika*. However, that such a forum exists for that lambasting is the best evidence of how much more democratic Kyrgyzstan is than are the other Central Asian republics, which largely (Kazakhstan) or entirely (everywhere else) lack a nationally-distributed independent press.

Any long-time reader of Central Asia's press will find Kyrgyzstan's newspapers extraordinary. The people running the independent newspapers feel free to express their opinions on all issues, and do so with a vehemence which would give most Western journalists pause. The government newspapers are also the most independent of any in the region. In Kyrgyzstan, virtually all forms of political opposition have been tolerated, although in deference to Uzbek and Chinese sensibilities respectively, registration has been denied to an Uzbek language Islamic journal and to a Uighur separatist political movement.

For all that, it is difficult to predict whether the beleaguered Akaev will be able to preserve his commitment to

democratic institution building in his republic indefinitely. Only war-torn Tajikistan had a more dismal record of economic performance in 1992 than did Kyrgyzstan, and that not in every category. In Kyrgyzstan production dropped by more than 25 percent and the wholesale price index increased by over 1800 percent.

Virtually without any form of energy save hydroelectric power, Kyrgyzstan is vulnerable to pressure from its wealthier but less democratic neighbors. Though Akaev protested this action after the fact, Kyrgyzstan's sovereignty was flagrantly violated by KGB "kidnappers" from Uzbekistan who snatched three Uzbek dissidents from a main street of Bishkek.

The republic's democratic leanings notwithstanding, the members of Akaev's regime are rumored to have been far from immune to corruption, post-communism's most widespread political ailment. Though this disease is rampant everywhere in the CIS, its effects are potentially most deadly in a poor nation such as Kyrgyzstan. It is hard to predict how strong Akaev's inclinations to democracy will remain if members of his political entourage, or even more so his own family, are implicated in scandals involving foreign development of Kyrgyzstan's mineral wealth.

Though not on quite the dramatic scale of the struggle in Russia, Kyrgyzstan's president and legislature are also engaged in battle over how to define their respective authority in the republic's new constitution. Akaev is said to be the least

in Central Asia. However, in the wake of the bloody struggle for control in the period of the interim government (September-December 1992) in Tajikistan, Karimov's arguments seem to have become more persuasive to his fellow Central Asian leaders, and his personal stature is said to have risen at regional summits.

All reared in the autocratic school of the communist period, Central Asia's leaders have to some extent been swayed by Karimov's logic. In some cases they seem to have needed little or no convincing.

This is certainly true of Imomali Rahmonov, whose new government in Tajikistan is said to depend in part on Uzbekistani (as well as Russian) security guarantees. Karimov could with some justice depict himself a democrat, at least by comparison to the way the Rahmonov government has treated both the pro-secular and pro-Islamic "collaborators" of the interim government. While Karimov has always publicly disassociated himself from beatings or the accidental deaths of Uzbekistan's opposition figures, Rahmonov defends the need to "cleanse" Tajikistan of armed enemies of the state, as well as his right to define the criteria by which the term "enemy" will be applied.

Karimov's style is also not alien to Turkmenistan's President Saparmurad Niazov, although Niazov might be likely to argue that the popularity of his presidential rule and his personification of Turkmen independence make "real" opposition in his republic impossible. Niazov seems as comfortable with his cult of personality as Stalin was; his recent order to replace

the full-length Lenin in downtown Ashgabat with a full-length commemoration of Niazov on pilgrimage to Mecca is the latest and most dramatic in a long series of vivid examples. Niazov too is intolerant of critics, showing them his displeasure so vigorously that it is clear that the risks of political opposition are real.

President of Central Asia's most traditional society, or Turkmenbashi (the head of the Turkmen), as he is now routinely described in the Turkmen press, Niazov is also more confident than Karimov of his ability to coopt Islam. Thus, Niazov has adorned his leadership with religious images as well as secular ones. He is also demonstratively "sharing" Turkmenistan's wealth with the people, by supplying electricity, gas and water without charge to the republic's households as of January 1, 1993. However, there is no clear proof that a dictatorially imposed order will provide more than very short-term stability, even in resource-rich Turkmenistan.

What Central Asia needs are long-term sources of stability, but there is no agreement whatsoever on what these are likely to be. The region's leaders all hope that economic recovery will bail them out of their real or potential political difficulties. However 1993 estimates of how quickly foreign investment and technical assistance will make even the wealthiest of these republics fully solvent are sure to be less optimistic than those made the year before. Central Asian leaders now know that foreign investors must first be found, and their interest sustained through the long process of contract negotiation, and that only

then will the long process of project infrastructure, road or pipeline development begin. All of this, they now understand, means that it will be years before the vast flows of investment income they had envisioned may begin to come in on a regular basis.

Moreover, throughout those years, the leaders must keep graft and corruption among members of their official and unofficial (familial) entourages down to manageable levels. Pay-offs may help build temporary alliances, but in the long run, even though corruption is more culturally-sanctioned in this part of the CIS than it is elsewhere in the former Soviet Union, corruption will eventually begin to bring governments down. Particularly in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, former communist officials who once had been purchased themselves could well destroy the reputations of ruling democrats or crypto-democrats.

Nationalism is another potential source of political stability, but nowhere will it be an effective tool. All of Central Asia's republics are more or less artificial creations, and none of the region's major nationalities has a history of statehood in the modern period. All are also multi-national, but some are more multi-national than others.

Half Slavic and half Turkic, Kazakhstan is in the most precarious position in this regard. Olzhas Suleimenov, the noted Kazak poet, argues that the two cultures have always coexisted for a thousand years of shared Russian-Turkic history. What he glosses over is that in those thousand years the Russian

half never submitted peacefully to being ruled by the Turkic half, as the Russians are now effectively being ruled in Kazakhstan. If "nationalism" is to become the basis of political stability in the republic then "Kazakhstan-ness" must become more than a vague reference to a piece of geography and a handy phrase to use in speeches; it must become a form of loyalty which transcends "Russian-ness" and "Kazakh-ness".

In Kyrgyzstan, the demographic situation is not quite as acute. The Kirghiz make up 53% of the population, and the Akayev government hopes that the historically "free" nature of the nomads will let modern Kirghiz nationalism take a tolerant form. The inter-ethnic problems in Kyrgyzstan are of two sorts: Russians predominate in the capital and in the factories, while Uzbeks constitute nearly a third of the population in the southern part of the republic, which is physically remote from the north. While Uzbekistan has a treaty commitment to respect Kyrgyzstan's borders, they are unlikely to renounce cultural or commercial claims to the southern region.

While the Tajiks claim to be Central Asia's oldest nationality, the Uzbeks are certainly the most assimilationist, with historically-based potential territorial claims on all four of its Central Asian neighbors. Though not immune to regional secession movements themselves, the Uzbeks have Central Asia's most populous republic, one which has both severe economic problems and considerable natural wealth.

As a former communist apparatchik, Karimov has been

reluctant to play the "nationalist" card. He knows that it might produce far more opposition to his rule---from more genuine nationalist figures---than it would popular support. For that reason he has preferred to rule with the more classic philosophy that "might makes right". Many of Central Asia's leaders are said to fear Uzbek expansionism far more than they do Russian neocolonialism.

In part this is a result of the leaders' fear of the "Islamic threat", the unifying role of Islam, and the potential threat that it poses to their personal political survival. I deal with this theme in greater detail in the paper which is attached as an appendix to this testimony.

Central Asia's leaders were all raised in a secular society ---Niazov and Karimov even grew up in Soviet orphanages. All viewed Islam with suspicion, even before the rapid deterioration of political conditions in Tajikistan demonstrated how social conflict can grow more volatile when Islam is added to the mix. Now Islam has been added to the list of "real" rather than "potential" threats which each man faces.

Central Asia's leaders are more nervous now than they were a year previously. As a result, each man's commitment to democratic values---for most of them already tenuous---has become weaker still. The struggle to protect human rights in Central Asia is sure to become more difficult, though not in a uniform way throughout the region. Still, the work load of this committee in particular is certain to increase.

Central Asia's political and economic difficulties may also pose more general problems for US policy-makers. Never enthusiastic about independence for their republics, Central Asia's leaders may choose to trade full sovereignty for economic and security guarantees from Russia. There are many indications that this is already occurring.

Should political conditions in Russia stabilize, this trend is likely to intensify, and would likely be ratified by treaty. Such events may cause US policy-makers to breathe a sigh of relief, for a potential "hot spot" would seem to have cooled. However, such relief could prove short-lived.

Now reawakened, Central Asian nationalism is unlikely to accept Russian neocolonialism---particularly if it is accompanied by the personal enrichment of the children and members of the old party nomenklatura. This however is the long-term threat.

The short term risk that this possibility presents is that if Russia finds a successful model of neocolonialism in Central Asia, it could use that model to reassert political and economic control over other, more independence-minded former Soviet republics. In such a reintegration formal sovereignty would be likely to be preserved, as it was with the old Warsaw bloc nations, since that would work to Moscow's international advantage. However, in such a system real independence for the new nations would prove as much an illusion as was the independence they once had as Soviet republics. If that is the case, then the lives of the new republics may prove to be as

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short as those of the nations which emerged, briefly, after the  
Russian Revolution.

ISLAM, FUNDAMENTALISM AND PUBLIC POLICY IN CENTRAL ASIA

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University of Chicago, March 14-16, 1993.



## Five Newly Independent Muslim States?

Less than two years ago, Central Asia was a collective term for a geographic region of the Soviet Union. Technically, five separate republics, for most questions of policy, they functioned as one, fulfilling Moscow's directives. This was particularly true with regards to ideological questions---which included public policies toward religion.

Now of course, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are all independent, and technically free to pursue their own individual policy lines---towards religion as well as anything else. Though the rights and responsibilities of policy-makers have changed, the policy-makers have not. With the exception of civil-war-torn Tajikistan, each of the Central Asian states is still headed by its Soviet-era president.

Moreover these men had little time to prepare for the tasks that they face. The USSR's transformation from a single state to twelve republics occurred with no forewarning and in the span of a week. By comparison, England's pull-out from India and Pakistan is one of gradual withdrawal. While there were lots of signs to indicate that the USSR was on the verge of collapse, Central Asia's leaders ignored these forewarnings, supported the failing union to the end, making no contingency plans for its possible demise.

In the process of this transition Islam has gone from being

a minority faith, a largely suppressed religion of the colonized, to being the majority faith of newly independent populations. While once the Central Asians had to hide their practice of Islam, now they are not only free to follow the dictates of their conscience, but laws have been changed to make it easier for them to do so.

However, the question of the relationship of Islam to the state remains as contentious as ever. In certain situations each of the region's presidents has boasted of leading a Muslim nation, while in other circumstances they have denied that their countries are Islamic ones.

All five countries are secular states, though constitutions or fundamental state laws in all but Kazakhstan proclaim that Islam has a special status. However, none of these societies have fully worked out what this special status should be, or to what degree the new state's social legislation should overlap the principles of Shar'ia law.

This is an ongoing dilemma in all Muslim societies, and in a broader sense the relationship between religion and state rule is a problem which all modern civil societies grapple with continuously. But the question takes on a special timeliness in Central Asia, where inflation is rampant and economic productivity is dropping rapidly, making the region's leaders feel that they are in a battle to forestall disaster in which every day counts.

In such an environment leaders are particularly sensitive to neutralize all potential threats. They not only want to stay in

power but are concerned that even signs of instability will scare off potential investors. The search for investors however is itself a problem. On the one hand Western investors are strongly partial to secular societies. On the other hand, Muslim societies are themselves good sources of potential investment, but they often link foreign aid programs to projects designed to further propagate the faith.

Obviously, it should not be assumed that each of the region's leaders will make the same accommodations with Islam. Historically, Islam has not played an identical role in each of these societies, and is unlikely to in the future as well. Even today, the leaders of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and initially Tajikistan, have made closer alliance with religious leaders than have those of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

One reason for this is that the first three countries are more mono-religious. Equally important though is the fact that the sedentary Uzbeks and Tajiks, and even the nomadic Turkmens, were always "better" Muslims than the Kazakh and Kirghiz nomads. The whole region is experiencing a religious revival; new mosques and religious schools open weekly, and the general popular observance of religious traditions is increasing. The effect of this revival is most apparent in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, where religious parties have formed and can fairly make claim to mass membership in selected parts of their respective countries.

The pattern this revival is likely to take, and whether it will "jump" republic boundaries to "infect" neighboring Kazakhstan and Kirghizstan are both unclear. Numerous factors

will affect the relations that develop between Islam and the state in each of Central Asia's new nations.

One factor is sure to be the speed or existence of an economic recovery. The current secular elite may discredit a secular model of development as well as their own leadership if current economic strategies fail. Another factor will be the laws enacted which regulate religious life. Currently, Islamic parties are banned in each republic.

Foreign policy, and the influence of foreign actors will also affect developments, as will the developments within the region itself. Central Asia does not yet have international borders in place between the states of the region; unarmed religious activists are free to move throughout the region and even armed "insurgents" are generally able to dodge road-blocks such as those now on the mountain passes between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

One thing is clear. Each of Central Asia's current leaders views a further "tilt" to Islam as antithetical to the strengthening of their personal political fortunes. Each of these leaders has advanced a secular model of leadership to help strengthen his authority and increase his popularity. Kazakhstan's Nursultan Nazarbaev sees himself as the leader of Asia's new economic "dragon", Kyrgyzstan's Askar Akaev styles himself the head of an Asiatic Switzerland, Turkmenistan's Saparmurat Niyozov has had himself proclaimed "Father" of the Turkmen people, while Uzbekistan's Islam Karimov sees himself as a just ruler turned dictator by the force of circumstance, and

Tajikistan's Imomali Rahmonov is the liberator of his people from the tyranny of Islamic democracy.

Each of these leaders has already faced a considerable challenge in playing the role of national leader. In doing this, all have made important accommodations to religion. Whereas less than a half decade ago both Islam and nationalism were condemned as deviations, social and political respectively, now both are seen as both good and interconnected, in moderation. Central Asia's leaders all now credit Islam with playing a positive role in their nations' past. However, if any of these men were to now actively advance Islam's cause in his society, they would strain popular credulity to the breaking point. Yet to pursue policies which deny Islam a privileged position would also call into question their reputations as national leaders.

#### Islam as Enemy of Progress

Official attitudes toward religion have changed dramatically in Central Asia since the late 1980s. Glasnost, Gorbachev's policy of "openness," which promoted first a social and then a political thaw in the USSR, was a policy that was intended to serve mainstream Soviet---substitute for this Russian---society.

Gorbachev, encouraged by his wife Raisa and her circle of Russian nationalist friends, was concerned to help Russian society fill its spiritual void. One important feature of this policy was the rapprochement that the Soviet state sought with the Russian Orthodox Church. However, there was no similar

sensitivity shown toward Islam. Rather, the opposite was true. Islam was seen as a detriment to both the economic and the political reforms that the Gorbachev leadership sought.

One of the things that glasnost did bring was better reporting about social and political conditions of the Soviet Union. The 1989 census offered a more honest statistical portrait of the nation than the survey of a decade earlier, including the revelation that the majority of Central Asians and Azerbaijanis claimed to not know Russian fluently.<sup>1</sup>

Soviet sociologists sought explanations for this, and concluded that Islam, whose practices their studies now revealed to be more pervasive than was previously thought to be the case, was the cause.<sup>2</sup> Islam was said to breed a form of mental parochialism, which led those under its "influence" to not learn Russia, to serve poorly in the military, and to be potentially disloyal to the Soviet state, generally speaking.<sup>3</sup>

In these early Gorbachev years, Islam was defined as synonymous with backwardness. The relative industrial underdevelopment of Azerbaijan and the Central Asian republics as compared to the Slavic and other European republics was considered to be the direct result of the pervasiveness of traditional "Islamic" practices---marrying young, having large families, and not wanting to move from the Central Asia, where there were few jobs, to the European regions, which were labor deficient.<sup>4</sup>

The political corruption which Gorbachev and, especially, Communist Party Second Secretary Yegor Ligachev saw as rife

throughout the region was also blamed on Islamic practices.<sup>5</sup> In their minds such "Islamic" practices ranged from extorting state and party funds to pay for religious weddings and funerals to the favoring of family, clan members or co-nationals in making official appointments.

The Gorbachev regime thus declared an unofficial war on "Islam" in general, and corrupt Central Asian party officials in particular. The features of the campaign were generally left to local political officials to decide. In Uzbekistan, whose party organization had come under special scrutiny because of the abuses in the cotton industry under Uzbek party boss Sharif Rashidov (died 1983), the anti-religious campaign was carried out with particular vengeance.

Anxious to escape dismissal, or worse yet jail, party leaders demonstrated their vigilance by turning on each other. One leader from Samarkand was dismissed for attending his own mother's funeral. If he was a good communist, it was claimed, he would have kept his family from observing such archaic anti-social rituals.<sup>6</sup> This campaign did not distinguish fundamentalists from conservatives, or "extreme" forms of observance from normal customary practices.

#### Islam and State Building--Pre-Independence

Moscow began to back away from this policy in 1988 and 1989. Ideological vigilance had been the domain of the Communist Party, but by the late 1980s the party was in visible retreat, under

attack by both the reformist wing of the Politburo leadership (led by Aleksandr Yakovlev) and by "nationalists" in the Baltic republic communist parties. In 1989 Lithuania's communist party even went so far as to formally sever ties with the CPSU in Moscow.

To try to salvage the situation---and to appease the demands of growing nationalist movements in other republics---the party began to grant republic leaders greater control over "the ideological sphere", which included policies covering religion. When Moscow's policies shifted, so too did those of Central Asia's leaders.

Two of Central Asia's leaders participated directly in the campaign, but they were able to reverse their policies on questions of religion and culture without political consequences. The first secretary of the Turkmenistan's communist party Niazov took direct responsibility for this campaign in his republic. As chairman of the Council of Ministers, Nazarbaev played a more indirect role, but his public statements of those years left no doubt that he was a staunch opponent of Kazakhstan's traditional ways.<sup>7</sup>

Islam Karimov's connection with the campaign was somewhat more indirect, as for most of the period his position, though a senior one, was exclusively connected with economics. When he took over as first secretary of Uzbekistan's communist party in 1989, he quickly disassociated himself with the "excesses" of this campaign and the attack on Uzbekistan's communist party more generally.

Only Kakhar Makhkamov, first secretary of Tajikistan's communist party, was politically damaged by his role in the anti-Islamic campaign. Though he shifted from attacking widespread popular observance of Islamic customs and arresting "illegal" clerics to becoming a practitioner himself---he even participated in a public service to mark the departure of Tajikistan's pilgrims to Mecca---public disapproval, especially that of believers, remained high. In February 1990 a protest partly inspired by religion failed to dislodge Makhkamov, who successfully retained power until September 1991, only to fall just after the failed Communist Party putsch.

Absamat Masaliev, the Kirghiz party boss who had presided over that republic's anti-religious campaign, was also pushed from office, in October 1990 when the supreme soviet of the republic failed to elect him to the post of president. His political defeat was linked to the unpopularity of his policies generally, and especially to the critical evaluation of his performance at the time of the June-July 1990 uprising in Osh oblast, when local Kirghiz and Uzbeks turned on each other near Kyrgyzstan's border with Uzbekistan. Like the interethnic fighting (between Uzbeks and Meshket Turks) in Uzbekistan's Fergana Valley the year before, these disturbances were along ethnic and not religious lines.

Obviously, this ceding of power to the republics was intended to make it easier for the local leaders to deal with problems like those encountered in Fergana and Osh. Soviet leaders were confused over the causes of such disturbances.

partly they thought they were witnessing an imitation effect. Courtesy of glasnost's events--including disturbances--that occurred at the local level were being covered by the national press, and many felt that national groups in relatively quiescent regions were following the lead of those from other parts of the country that had already been politicized.

However, after watching nationalist protests spread from the Baltic republics to the Nagorno-Karabakh, then to Armenia and then in the Caucasus, the leadership did finally accept that the "sensibilities" of the USSR's various national minorities had been violated, and that "nationality policy"---as they termed the whole collection of policies which dealt with history, culture and religion, as well as discriminatory practices in employment--had to be modified.<sup>9</sup> They never fully resolved how they would do this, save devolve even more policy to the republics, and let them cope with the situation as best they could, and use special troops of the MVD (Ministry of Internal Affairs) if that failed.

Moreover, the whole nature of governing was changing in the USSR, which was conducive to the decentralization of nationality policy as well. In spring 1989 an all-union Congress of People's Deputies was chosen on a quasi-democratic basis in places (not though in Central Asia), and elections were planned for late 1989 for republic legislative bodies which were also intended to partly usurp the functions of republic communist organizations. These elections were intended to turn the supreme soviets from rubber stamps of local communist parties into semi-sovereign legislatures.

As part of this shift to popular empowerment, laws governing public organizations were changed as well. Now, depending upon the republic, private individuals were more or less free to form voluntary associations and interest groups which could participate in the public life of their republic, through organizing public lectures, petitioning for legislation, and even backing candidates for election.

Most public organizations in Central Asia developed to support changes in policy which were acceptable to the local party leadership. In each of the five republics, there were groups formed to press for an increased role of the local language---newly declared state languages in each of the republics---in public life. Groups were also formed to support the rehabilitation of "repressed" historical figures both pre and post-revolutionary, and to rewrite history.

Societies were formed to support the restoration of historical monuments, including well-known pilgrimage sites like the mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasevi in Turkestan, Kazakhstan, which was already officially a state historic site and as such under state administration. The Kazakhstan government though did not promote the restoration of the buildings in Otrar, just up the road, because these shrines were run directly by unsanctioned religious groups.

Central Asia's leaders still displayed a real nervousness about their dealings with Islam, which was a marked contrast from the policies that were being pursued in those republics in which Christianity was the majority faith. Even in the Muslim

republics Christian groups were seen as more harmless than Muslim groups; Christian groups, even evangelical Christian groups, were not seen as having an extreme side.

Obviously, groups formed that were not to the liking of Central Asia's leaders, and many of these even get officially registered, like the nationalist-democratic movements *Azat* in Kazakhstan, *Erk* in Uzbekistan, and the Democratic Movement of Kyrgyzstan. Groups with explicitly religious agendas were not, like the pro-Islamic *Alash* in Kazakhstan, which asked little more than that Islam be recognized as a state religion in Kazakhstan, or the Islamic Renaissance Party in Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.

Nonetheless, the changes in this period helped further stimulate the religious revival that was already proceeding, and provided new legal channels to help stimulate its development. Laws were passed in each of the republics which provided for freedom of religion---the right of religious believers to practice their faith without government interference.<sup>10</sup>

This de facto ended the existing practice of restricting the number of religious establishments through official licensing. Since 1943, only the Religious Board of Central Asia and Kazakhstan (SADUM) had had the right to open mosques and religious schools, and to appoint the mullahs and teachers who served in them. In 1985 there were fewer than 100 registered mosques throughout the former Soviet Union, and two medresseh to serve all of Central Asia.

By 1989, the number of actual mosques was probably 100 times greater than the official figure. But those running these

mosques had no legal standing, and almost always lacked formal religious training---although the quality of the informal training varied enormously.

Virtually all of those considered to be "fundamentalists" in Central Asia came from this latter group. Most of these individuals received their religious training in study groups in the Fergana Valley, in Namangan, Andizhan and Margilan in Uzbekistan,<sup>11</sup> and then either stayed attached to the "seminaries" of their training or fanned out to form mosques and small religious schools of their own in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, southern Kyrgyzstan or southern Kazakhstan.

When official attitudes toward Islam changed, most of the illegally formed mosques were able to come under the supervision of the Religious Board---and receive some funding and official support for local building drives that in community after community replaced small semi-hidden structures with large "cathedral-style" mosques. However, there is no religious "census" that gives the name and formal training of local mullahe and Islamic leaders.

Given the fact that religious activists are still considered to be politically suspect, such a document, which would require the cooperation of the local clerics themselves, is unlikely to be produced in the foreseeable future. Clerics that do not seek direct affiliation with SADUM are free to run their mosques if they can find the necessary financial resources to do so ---but then they and their followers could not participate in official delegations to Mecca or as part of SADUM sponsored trips.

SADUM was able to show this generosity, because of their own changed official role. SADUM was an organization that had traditionally been viewed with suspicion by many believers, because, like all other officially-sponsored Soviet religious bodies it was assumed to be riddled with KGB spies and staffed with clerics chosen for their political reliability more than their religious piety.

SADUM underwent a coup of its own in 1989, when Mufti Shamsuddin Babikhanov, himself the son and grandson of SADUM leaders, was ousted by supporters of the current Mufti, Muhammad Yusuf (known initially as Muhammad Yusuf Mamaiusupov). Babikhanov was ousted for drinking and womanizing.<sup>12</sup>

A trained Orientalist (and he is currently employed as a Professor in Uzbekistan's Academy of Sciences), Babikhanov has qualifications which are more formal and familial than spiritual. Muhammad Yusuf, who had received his religious training in Central Asia and in the Middle East, brought another religious (and economic) dynasty to power, this time from the Fergana Valley rather than Tashkent.

The change in state policy toward religion made the post of head of SADUM a very powerful one, and the post of mufti was worth the fight. The revenues collected by SADUM increased dramatically as the number of mosques and schools under its jurisdiction increased.

Moreover, by 1989 it was already clear that there was a new foreign policy dimension to the post as well. Soviet republics were now expected to pursue more active foreign ties, and

encourage foreign investment in their republic. The senior Islamic leader of Central Asia was now an honored figure, and was encouraged to accept official invitations to travel in the Middle East in general and to the oil-rich states in particular.

Though a creation of the Soviet state (or more technically the revival of a structure that had been created by Russian authorities after the colonization of the area), there was no serious proposal to replace this institution designed by secular authorities with a power structure designed by the Muslim community itself.

However there was an attack on SADUM by the secular authorities themselves. Each of Central Asia's leaders understood that religion had to play a role in the particular national revival that was going on in his own republic, and he wanted to make sure that this revival was at least partly under his control. In Tajikistan, Makhkamov failed at this.

In Kyrgyzstan, Masaliev achieved a temporary victory; he successfully pressured SADUM to remove Satimzhan Kamalov, a dynamic cleric who headed Bishkek's mosque. But Imam Kamalov outsmarted Masaliev, and with the help of Kyrgyzstan's democrats who he was actively supporting, he created his own Islamic Center in Bishkek. After Akaev became president the rift between SADUM and the Islamic Center was healed, and Kyrgyzstan's mosques remain titularly under SADUM, but effectively under local control.

In 1989 Nursultan Nazarbaev formally removed Kazakhstan from the jurisdiction of SADUM, although, it is not clear that as a

republic leader he then had the authority to effectively annul a provision of Soviet law. No one in Moscow objected, and Nazarbaev named Ratbek Nysanbaev, a local official of SADUM, to be Mufti of Kazakhstan.

The Mufti of SADUM did not accept the division of his empire, claiming that his power over Central Asia was recognized by all the region's believers, and that Islam does not know state boundaries. He still dispenses favors throughout the region--- most significantly the privilege of making a sponsored pilgrimage. But with the dissolution of the USSR, there are other ways to get plane tickets. More importantly he lacks the juridical authority to collect fees from the mosques that are formally under his jurisdiction and lie outside of Uzbekistan.

Nysanbaev's authority in Kazakhstan is directly linked to Nazarbaev's support, and it is not clear how deep the mufti's support runs among Kazakhstan's believers. A December 1991 effort by *Alash* to organize his removal, ended with Nysanbaev getting his leg broken and three members of *Alash* being jailed.<sup>13</sup> Nor does Nazarbaev's support come cheaply. The "muftiate" is under the direct supervision of the department of religious affairs, which is headed by former ideologist from the communist party who leaves no doubt that he holds professional clerics in contempt. But Nysanbaev and those running Kazakhstan's largest mosques all perform dutifully, offering interviews and deliver speeches that are strongly reminiscent of the Soviet period--- praising the beneficence of the secular leaders who have empowered them.<sup>14</sup>



Though SADUM in Uzbekistan generally functioned as a freer actor than did the Mufti in Kazakhstan prior to the dissolution of the USSR in December 1991, religious authorities still saw themselves as serving at the behest of secular authorities. When attempts were made in 1990 and 1991 to oust Muhammad Yusuf, he turned each time to Uzbekistan's president Islam Karimov for protection.

However, as these societies became more "democratic"---less under Moscow's direct control---subtle differences began to emerge. They were most obvious in Tajikistan, where in September 1991 Islamic activists, led by a charismatic Kazi of Dushanbe's main mosque, Akbar Turadjonsade, joined forces with Tajikistan's secular democrats to push for the removal of President Kakhkar Makhkamov.

Secular politicians, who had entered into an alliance with a previously (1985) ousted party chief Rahmon Nablev, dominated behind the scenes. On the streets though the event had a decidedly Islamic flavor. Prayer sessions were held in the main Freedom Square, banners with quotations from the Quran were visible throughout the crowd, and the dias from which Makhkamov's resignation was announced to the crowd included a group of prominent religious leaders. Anti-Makhkamov activists had seized the republic's television facilities and broadcast the proceedings live through the republic--- and by coincidence in Uzbekistan, which had already been scheduled to broadcast Dushanbe's evening programs.<sup>15</sup> However, when Islam Karimov chanced to discover this the program suddenly went off the air.

Even in Uzbekistan, where Karimov's nervousness about Islamic "excesses" was already evident, an effort was made by the president to court support of SADUM at the time of the December 1991 presidential election. The election, held just days after the creation of the CIS, had of course been scheduled over two months previously. By that time Muhammad Yusuf's support of Karimov was considered to be a real political plus, and Karimov had to make political concessions to the Mufti in order to get it.

#### Islam and State Building Post-Independence

The overnight transformation of Central Asia from five republics into five independent states created a subtle and almost immediate change in the balance between secular and religious authorities. Now, for the first time it was possible for religious authorities to aspire for power. Save in Tajikistan, activists throughout the region did not see the development of Islamic democracies as probable or even desirable in the short run, but for the first time they believed that Islamic activists had a right to demand major political concessions from their governments.

This is especially true in three republics---Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. To a lesser extent an Islamic agenda has developed in Kyrgyzstan---albeit a less extensive one than in the other two republics. It seems to be only a matter of time before a similar agenda develops in Kazakhstan.

Religious authorities could now claim greater rights than ever before. The role of SADUM though has changed since the collapse of central authority. The Spiritual Directorate no longer enjoys a monopoly on the religious life of the Central Asians, even in Uzbekistan. The local communities themselves now play a much greater role in regulating and funding local religious life.

However, the role religion plays in society has significantly expanded, which gives the formal religious establishment a whole range of new responsibilities which previously they did not have. In addition to being responsible for distributing "haj" pilgrimage trips to Mecca, SADUM can now receive large sums of money from foreign governments to send students abroad for religious education and for the construction, renovation, and repair of mosques.

Islamic clerics have also begun to play a certain role in government. In Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan there is formal, if limited, clerical participation in the government; Islamic clerics---rather than party ideologists---now head departments of religious affairs, where part of their task is to introduce limited formal religious (Islamic) instruction in state schools.<sup>16</sup> Both Kirghizstan and Kazakhstan are determinedly secular in their government philosophy, but the Akiev government's draft constitution specifically recognizes the Islamic heritage and nature of Kyrgyzstan.<sup>17</sup>

In all the republics the growth of religion has increased the role of the formerly non-SADUM clerics even more than it has

that of the SADUM clerics. Local clerics now derive real power from their communities, both in the cities and, even more so, in the countryside. The religious authority of most of the formerly "unofficial" mullahs, most of whom are conservative traditionalists, has been formally recognized by SADUM. These clerics often lack the formal religious education which the "fundamentalists" enjoy, and so they have fewer hesitations over seeking support from SADUM. In some cases fundamentalists have joined SADUM, but generally the graduates of the underground seminaries of the Fergana Valley are reluctant to receive direct support from the Islamic organization which so long opposed their very existence. However, the vision of society that many of the SADUM clerics are promoting is no more modern than that of the fundamentalists. This is particularly true in Uzbekistan.

Distinct from the newly recognized "unofficial" mullahs, but often working parallel, are the medresseh-trained 'fundamentalists', who are opening religious schools and trying to increase public observance of Islamic tenets. They often deal easily with and make common purpose with SADUM-recognized officials. In rural areas local political authorities tolerate their activities as well.

However, it is the local clerics who are actively involved in trying to bring Islam into village schools who are in closest contact with the populace. This group is influenced by the fundamentalists, with whom they share the goal of returning their people to Islam. The influence of both the fundamentalists and the village clerics is expanding locally as the two groups

develop economic bases, build mosques and other structures through contributions and businesses.

It is hard to know how to label these people. Given how cut off the region was from direct contacts with the rest of the Islamic world, it is difficult to know how to define a fundamentalist in the Central Asian context. Is it just a member of an illegal anti-government organization, seeking to overthrow the existing order in favor of a vaguely worded call for an Islamic democracy? Or is it anyone who subscribes to a radical Islamic agenda?

Few of the graduates of the formerly underground and now openly operating fundamentalist seminaries would claim to be in the former category. Like Said Qutb or Maulana Sayyid Abdul Aya Mauludi, both of whom Central Asia's fundamentalists frequently cite, they would claim to be doing little more than seeking to introduce Islamic values in everyday life. Moreover, many other mullahs proselytizing Islam throughout the countryside of these five new states would share this goal---even though they might not ever have heard of either Qutb or Mauludi.

One thing that seems clear---the Islamic revival that began in the late 1970s and early 1980s throughout most of Central Asia now seems to be irreversible. Religious training for children has gone from being the exception to being the rule. In Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan every community of size has its own mosque, and religious burials and weddings are now the norms, as are big celebrations to mark circumcisions. Even Kazakhstan's newspapers constantly report the opening of new

mosques, wherever in the republic that Kazakhs live. The same is true in Kyrgyzstan, particularly in the south where the size of the Kirghiz population is only slightly higher than that of the Uzbek. Nonetheless it is by no means clear that this revival will push the population towards "fundamentalism," a threat that has been much bandied about in the Central Asian and central Russian press since the outbreak of the civil war in Tajikistan.

#### Tajikistan, and the Problem of Islamic Opposition

Tajikistan and Turkmenistan are the most traditional of the Central Asian countries. The population of both countries is overwhelmingly rural, and are observant Muslims, if one defines this to mean practicing Islamic rituals as a part of daily life rather than having knowledge about why these rituals are practiced. The traditions of religious education are stronger among the Tajiks, a sedentary population, and in recent years increasing numbers of young Tajiks came to the Fergana Valley to study in the underground "fundamentalist" seminaries--- only a drive of a several hours for most.

Obviously, in Tajikistan, radical Islamic elements can claim to have had the greatest role in politics, and even briefly attained control of the government. However, the struggle of fundamentalist Islamic elements for control is only one dimension of Tajikistan's political struggle. Many studying the situation in situ see the civil war in Tajikistan as far more an inter-clan struggle than it is a struggle between secular and religious

elements.

For most of the Soviet period, politics in Tajikistan's were dominated by three large clans---from Khojent (Leninabad), Kurgan Tiube, and Kuliab, with the Pamiri Tajiks barred even from competing. The current crisis has been slow to build, and certainly has been exacerbated by the presence of a large Islamic opposition.

The crisis began in February 1990 with small demonstrations occasioned by rumors that thousands of Armenians would be settled in Dushanbe, in February 1990; then with mass demonstrations that brought down the Makhkamov government in the September 1991 coup; then with three months of nation-wide disturbances in spring 1992 that were prompted by Nabiev's refusal to grant political concessions to the secular and religious opposition groups which had helped him come to power the preceding autumn; then with three months of even greater mass disorder after the May 1992 accord between Nabiev and the opposition, which made Nabiev into a virtual puppet; then with an all-out civil war after Nabiev's ouster in September 1992; and since late November with the conquest of Dushanbe by pro-Nabiev forces from Kuliab which brought Imomali Rahkmonov to power and sent the Islamic forces, including Kazi Turadjonzade, into hiding.

Throughout the whole drama clan/regional ties have played a critical role. Nabiev himself is from Khojent, the province (adjoining Uzbekistan) from which the republic of Tajikistan has long been ruled. This is the most developed of the provinces---it is the center of what industry exists in Tajikistan (most of

which was run by various branches of the USSR defense ministries). These are the enterprises that the Russian army was sent in to protect. Obviously, it is the wealthiest of Tajikistan's oblasts. The poorest was Kuliab, whose party organization had been the major rival of the Khojent group. It is their forces who retook Dushanbe and are now in control.

The center of the opposition was Kurgan Tiube, a region of disparate Tajik and Uzbek family groups. For most of the Soviet period, it was the part of Tajikistan in which forceably resettled peoples were placed. In fact, the general weak nature of family ties is often offered as an explanation as to why this area has developed into a fundamentalist Islamic center. There has also been a loose alliance between those in Kurgan Tiube and those from the Pamirs.

Central Asia's leaders all fear the contagion effect of Tajikistan, and in the elaboration of their fears they concentrate on the threat that the spread of fundamentalism poses to political instability in the region. It is clear that political stability is fragile in each of the successor states of the former Soviet Union. But political stability is no less tenuous in the non-Muslim states than in the Muslim ones. Boris Yeltsin after all does not head a Muslim state, and the Russian nationalists and former communists who oppose him are criticized for being autocrats, not "religious zealots", as the Islamic activists of Central Asia are termed.

Certainly Central Asia's political leaders are at risk politically. But the "Islamic fundamentalist threat" has become a

slogan around which to rally the population---and more importantly, to use in the crack down against potential political rivals, secular and religious, rather than as an expression of genuinely conceived political threat. Islam itself has not become a target, and in each of the republics, the state recognized Islamic institutions have continued to enjoy official favor.

#### Islam and Foreign Policy

One possible reason for this is the foreign policy advantage that each Central Asia's leaders hope to get from being seen as the leader of a Muslim state. This is a role that all but Nazarbaev play with great frequency---including Askar Akaev, who has become less "Eurocentered" with each passing day of his worsening economic crisis.

Islamic societies represent a real hope for foreign investment, and foreign investment is something that everyone needs. There is no foreign state that is considered too dangerous to associate with. For all his anti-Islamic rattlings, Tajikistan's Makhkamov courted uranium-seeking Libyans prior to his ouster (they are reported to have gone home disappointed). While Islam Karimov spent all fall 1992 railing against "foreign" actors intervening in Tajikistan, and dropped enough hints in his speeches to make it clear that it was Iran he was referring to, when the prospect of improved economic cooperation between Iran and Uzbekistan appeared, Karimov warmly welcomed Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Veliyati to his republic in January 1993 and was quick

to sign the necessary paperwork.

Much of the anti-Iranian rhetoric in Central Asia seems targeted at a Western audience, to encourage them to invest in autocratic but secular Central Asia. Central Asia's own leaders know that Iran is not playing a great role in the Islamic revival of Central Asia, which is to be expected in a Sunni region. Saudi Arabia is---directly funding SADUM and other official Muslim groups, and quite possibly indirectly funding missionary work by Islamic activists from Bangladesh and the Gulf States. Saudi Arabia is also the source of a scholarship program for the religious education of Central Asians in their own country, and is said to be the source of funding for scholarships offered by fundamentalist groups in Turkey as well.

Yet there is little public criticism of Saudi Arabia's role. In fact, in preparation for his October 1992 visit to Saudi Arabia, Kyrgyzstan's Akaev said that if the price was right he would become a pilgrim himself.<sup>16</sup> Nonetheless, saving the souls of the Central Asian leaders does not seem a priority of Saudi or other Middle Eastern leaders, and their financial involvement in these republics has not been appreciably more forthcoming than that of Western investors. Moreover, like the Western governments they are concerned to shape their Central Asia policies keeping a close watch on Russia's response. Russia is still a far more valuable potential ally---a major market, a key future player in the international oil market, and, particularly in the case of Iran, of great importance as a potential arms merchant.

None of Central Asia's Muslim partners will put the advancement of the cause of Islam above that of securing their own national interests. However, while these states are not leaping to the aid of the new Muslim Soviet successor states, Central Asia's leaders are not apt to risk alienating them through ill-conceived anti-Islamic drives.

#### Looking Toward the Future: The Contradictions of the Situation

However, the major reason why Central Asia's leaders are reluctant to turn on Islam has little to do with foreign policy. Most of the dilemmas that these men face are not unique ones, and some have little to do with Islam. Post-communist societies are facing a difficult challenge, having to create a new political order at a time of economic crisis.

They must do this by revitalizing nationalism and religion. Modern societies may have a shared notion of nationalism---though of course not all do; Basque nationalists would reject the nationalism of most Spaniards, African-Americans complain of "white history" and of the racism that they see as implicit in most of formal American patriotism. However, modern societies are even more divided over the question of what role to accord religion in public life.

The post-communist societies are strange places, and this is particularly true of the five new Central Asian states. For these republics, the break-up of the Soviet Union has meant the

beginning of decolonization. The old pro-colonial administration is still largely in place, but their political agenda has changed. A large number of "colonizers" still live in the region, but their social and political status is now sharply diminished.

However, unlike many of the newly decolonized states of the 1950s and 1960s, these societies are as modern as they are underdeveloped. Part of the society---and all of the elite---were raised in a secular society and lived in the modern world. They are not a small group---they would be ten to twenty percent of the non-European population; close to forty percent of Central Asia's fifty million people probably fit into this category.

The rural population of Central Asia, over fifty percent of the non-European population in each of the republics---and more than two thirds of the non-European population in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan---lives in a traditional agrarian society.

This society has been modified by the more than seven decades of Soviet rule; the entire region is electrified and over ninety percent of the homes have televisions; the entire population is literate---in the local language but not in Russian; the traditional village and clan leadership structure was partly destroyed and partly usurped through Soviet rule. Nonetheless life in the countryside remains very different than that in the city, and it would be impossible to call it representative of a modern, secular world.

For all the current political instability in these post-

communist societies, the fall of communism has meant an increased perception of popular empowerment, and this empowerment has brought to light the fracture between the secularized and non-secularized parts of society.

There is a contradiction between the goals of society at large and that of the ruling elite. The ruling elite more generally are themselves, without exception, fully secularized. As such, they feel a particular target of the fundamentalists, and also indignant at the possible change to their life styles that a tilt toward empowered religious activists would produce in their societies.

This is not a problem which is exclusive to the Islamic societies. The Catholic Church is already playing a far greater political role in Catholic-dominated post-communist societies than Islamic "fundamentalists" are in Muslim ones. Moreover, though granted this authority by the state, the Church's exercise of power is meeting with strong opposition from the secularized part of the population.

The Catholic Church believes it has a moral right to insure that civil society helps uphold religious law, hence it has successfully lobbied for a new highly restrictive abortion law in Poland. It is also lobbying for similar legislation in Hungary. In Poland and in Lithuania state schools already teach religion as part of the curriculum, oftentimes filling precisely those slots in which "scientific atheism" was taught. Polish, Lithuanian and Hungarian intellectuals---very few of whom are devout and some of whom are even avowed atheists--- are very

uncomfortable with the situation.

No elite group likes to be pushed from power. All of Central Asia's rulers will sacrifice their new-found democratic values in an effort to defeat a popularly-led movement to defeat them. Blaming their instability on Islamic "extremists" may make their "strong-man" tactics more palatable to foreign leaders, leaving aid-flows intact and buying them some additional time in power.

In the long run, though, particularly given the dismal economic picture throughout the region, the reversion to politics of repression is likely to increase the popularity of Islamic activists, and make them join up with the secret fundamentalist organizations that are forming throughout the area. As the long campaign against the Muslim Brethren in Egypt, or the clerical movement in Iran has shown, Islamic opposition groups can survive long periods of government persecution. The Central Asian states gained their independence without a revolutionary struggle, and may only now, post-independence, produce their revolutionary heroes.

#### Footnotes

1. Soyuz no. 36, 1990.

2. A good example is Islam in Everyday Life: Religion in Rural Central Asia, by S.P. Pollakov edited with an introduction by M. B. Olcott (M.E. Sharpe: Armonk 1993).

3. This was of particular concern to Soviet authorities in the wake of the lingering Afghanistan War. See Martha Brill Olcott and William Fierman, "The Challenge of Integration: The Political Socialization of the Muslim Conscript", Soviet Union, January 1988, Vol. 14 no. 1 (1987) pp. 65-102.

4. Igor Belaev, *Literaturnaja gazeta*, May 13 and May 20, 1987.
5. XXVII S'ezd Kommunisticheskoj Partii Sovetskogo Sojuza. *Stenograficheski otchet* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1986).
6. For details see Martha Brill Olcott, "Gorbachev, The National Problem and Party Politics in Central Asia" in Dan Nelson and Raj Menon, eds., *Assessing Soviet Power*, Lexington Books, 1988, pp. 69-93.
7. See his speeches at the fifteenth party congress of Kazakhstan's communist party (*Kazakhtanskaja pravda*, February 1-10, 1986) or that at the all-union twenty-seventh party congress of the CPSU.
8. Makhkamov's address which appeared in *Kommunist Tadzhikistana*, August 6, 1986, was probably the most detailed condemnation of Islam of any party leader.
9. This was the theme of a September, 1989 plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU. See *Pravda* September 19-21, 1989.
10. For a survey of these bills see *FBI's Daily Report, Soviet Union*. FBIS-SOV-89-029.
11. For a detailed discussion of the birth of Islamic fundamentalism in Uzbekistan see Abdurjabber Abduvahitov's article in Dale Eickelman's *Muslim Societies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993 forthcoming).
12. For a lengthier discussion of Babikhanov's removal see James Critchlow, *Nationalism in Uzbekistan* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), chapter ten.
13. *Kazakhtanskaja pravda*, 11 December 1991.
14. For an example see the interview with Zulqarnay qazi Muratuli, imam of the Meerk mosque that was published in *Zhas Alash* on 16 May 1992, and translated in English in *FBI's Central Eurasian Affairs*, FBIS-USR-92-084, 4 July 1992, p. 63
15. The author watched the events live on Uzbekistan's television until their interruption.
16. *Pravda vostoka*, 12 May 1992.
17. *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 28 December 1992.
18. *Komsomol'skaja pravda*, 14 October 1993.

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TESTIMONY OF DR. FIRUZ KAZEMZADEH

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I am Firuz Kazemzadeh, Professor Emeritus of History at Yale University and author of a number of works dealing with the history of the Russian Empire and relations between Russia, her subject peoples, and foreign countries.

With the collapse of the Soviet Empire the peoples of Central Asia confront a number of major problems. Nation building is a difficult task, especially for those whose sense of ethnic identity is of recent origin and whose past experience has not prepared them for effective self-government in the modern world. Rapid, albeit bloodless, transition from colonial status to independence has raised issues that until a few years ago either did not exist or were in the province of distant authorities in Moscow and did not call for local solutions.

Among such issues the role of Islam in Central Asian society and politics and relations between the newly independent states of Central Asia and other Muslim countries, particularly Turkey and Iran, have attracted such attention from foreign observers. Given the existence of a clerically dominated Islamic Republic in Iran, a radical Islamic regime in Sudan, the strength of Islamic parties in Afghanistan, and the growth of radical fundamentalism in Egypt and Algeria, it is not surprising that there is lively interest in the role Islam might play in the newly independent states of Central Asia.

Perhaps the first rule in approaching this subject is caution. Central Asia is not homogeneous and neither is Islam. Since the geographic, demographic, cultural, and historical diversity makes most generalizations questionable, lumping together Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, can only increase confusion.

Kazakhstan is separated from the rest of Central Asia by deserts and geographically belongs with Western Siberia. Its population is about 40% Russian, 5% Ukrainian, and at least 5% more are of European stock. It should be noted that vis-a-vis the Muslim Kazakhs most Slavs tend to feel Russian. One is reminded of the British in colonial India where there were no distinctions between the English, the Welsh, the Scots, and the Irish. Thus it may be said with assurance that no matter how active and strong Muslim elements might become in Kazakhstan, they would never achieve full political or cultural dominance.

Moreover, Islam's roots in Kazakhstan are relatively shallow. Until recently the Kazakhs have been a tribal nomadic people. In the vast and sparsely inhabited territories where the Kazakhs moved, there were no cities and no civilization. When they were converted to Islam in the 17th and 18th centuries, the Kazakhs did



not raise a strong class of ulama, learned interpreters of religion. Their society was illiterate and their mullahs seldom acquired either Arabic or Persian, the two classical languages of Islamic civilization. Their knowledge of the Sharia, religious law, was primitive. In fact, customary tribal law continued to govern most aspects of Kazakh life until the establishment of Soviet rule.

Since there had never existed a Kazakh state, there was no center from which secular authority could support, promote, or control the clerical establishment which depended heavily on the patronage of the tribal chieftains. It is ironic that among the Kazakhs Muslim institutions found a more reliable patron in Russian colonial authorities as Russian power gradually spread over the Kazakh steppes.

The long duration of Russian rule, the primitive state of nomadic Kazakhs and the relatively weak impact of Islam upon them, made them fall more easily under the influence of Russian culture than did other peoples of Central Asia. In the 19th and 20th century Northern Kazakhstan was overrun by Russian settlers who began to dominate not only the cities that they build but the countryside as well.

The Sovietization of Kazakhstan was more thorough than the Sovietization of the rest of Central Asia. Once the nomads were settled, they had no defense against Soviet political and cultural intrusion. Islam went underground, but the network of Sufi orders was weak and ineffective. The intelligentsia was largely Russified or purged. The Kazakhs also sustained enormous human losses during collectivization which may have cost them a quarter to a third of the entire population. These were proportionately much higher losses than those sustained by other nationalities of the U.S.S.R.

Thus in Kazakhstan today Muslims are a minority and the society is only partly a Muslim society. I do not see even a remote possibility of fundamentalists becoming a threat to the established order. Certainly the European majority of Kazakhstan will not let itself be dominated by an Islamic regime that would not represent even the majority of Kazakhstan's Muslims.

Kazakhstan has no border with Iran, no historical ties, and no need to seek close relations with the Islamic Republic. The Kazakhs cannot draw inspiration from Shiite Iran. They are Sunni Muslims, and their clergy are not likely to surrender to a foreign heretical influence. Moreover, since the Islamic regime in Iran is strongly anti-Sufi, the Sufi orders, weak though they may be, would not welcome Iranian interference in the religious or cultural life of Kazakhstan.

Last but not least, Iran has very little to offer Kazakhstan.

That country's wealth is enormous. Western business has already made large commitments there. Given political stability and the presence of a fairly large technically competent Russian population, Kazakhstan could become richer than Iran.

Turkey's capacity to influence the course of events in Kazakhstan is no less limited. Although the Turks, like the Kazakhs, are Sunni Muslims, and claim kinship by virtue of ethnic origins and linguistic affinity, Pan-Turkic sentiments do not run deep. The ethnic kinship is largely a myth, Anatolian Turks being genetically closer to the other Mediterranean peoples than to the Kazakhs, and while Kazakh and Turkish do belong to the same linguistic group, a Kazakh can understand a Turk no more easily than a German can understand a Swede. Turkey has few economic inducements to offer Kazakhstan and no means of projecting military power. As in the case of fundamentalist Islam, the European majority of Kazakhstan's population guarantees that Turkish influence will remain insignificant.

Kyrgyzstan shows many similarities with Kazakhstan: a large Russian population (about 30%), weak hold of Islam on the Kyrgyz people, who are closely related to the Kazakhs, absence of an entrenched Muslim clergy, and distance from Iran and Turkey.

Turkmenistan with its considerable natural resources has a relatively recently settled tribal population which is Sunni, traditionally anti-Iranian, and strongly xenophobic. The clergy are not well organized and the likelihood of a radical Muslim challenge is small.

Uzbekistan and Tajikistan are quite different from Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Before the Russian conquest in the second half of the 19th century, the Uzbeks and Tajiks were part of the khanates of Khiva and Kokand and the emirate of Bukhara, states that were heirs to medieval Turkic empires with mixed populations which spoke various Turkic dialects or Persian, the language of high culture.

The Uzbeks and the Tajiks were for centuries an integral part of the Iranian cultural realm. Here great cities existed since ancient times and mosques, libraries, and institutions of Islamic learning flourished even under Turkic dynasties. Here Islam sank deep roots and a powerful clergy exercised an enormous influence on both the rulers and the masses.

After the conquest Imperial Russian authorities left Islam alone, Russian culture influenced only a very small segment of the population mostly in Tashkent, the center of Russian colonial administration. The hold of Islamic tradition on the educated classes among Uzbeks and Tajiks was never broken.

The Soviets waged on Islam a veritable war that took thousands of lives. European Bolsheviks derived perverse pleasure from

ridiculing everything the Muslims held holy, forcing Muslims to violate Islamic traditions, and to repudiate the Prophet and his Book. In the long run the Russians did not win. While the new Uzbek and Tajik elites assumed the outward trappings of Russian behavior, most remained culturally Muslim. The rural masses have largely preserved intact their ancient beliefs and traditions. Among them Islam is still a force as it is among the masses in most Muslim countries.

The weakening and subsequent collapse of the of Soviet Empire led to a reemergence of Islam. Thousands of mosques have been either repaired or built anew, enrollments in religious schools has increased, Muslim festivals are once again openly celebrated. However, power has remained in the hands of the elites raised and educated by Moscow. The ruling groups in all Central Asian republics have not changed. They were threatened only in Tajikistan but have retained their power with the help of Russians and Uzbeks.

Uzbekistan's Muslim establishment is weak. The Sunni clergy has no tradition of independent action or opposition to government. The subordination of the clergy to secular authority under the Soviet regime was total and it is unlikely that the mullahs would be able within the foreseeable future to challenge the partly Russified, de-Muslimized political elite.

Iran has a certain cultural attraction for the Uzbeks; but, paradoxically, it is the secular elements, proud of the cultural past of Central Asia, that are more interested in relations with Iran than are the Muslim clergy whose Sunnism constitutes a sectarian barrier to Iranian influence. After 1500, when Iran adopted Shiism as its official religion, Iran severed Central Asia from the heart of Sunni Islam in the Arab Middle East. This was undoubtedly one of the causes of stagnation and gradual decline of the entire area.

It should also be kept in mind that for centuries Iran was the enemy of the various dynasties that governed Central Asian states. The rulers of Khiva and Bukhara used nomadic Turkmen tribesmen to raid the eastern provinces of Iran for slaves. Iranian attempts at retaliation and occasional invasions of the khanates achieved meager results and did not succeed in preventing the abduction of thousands of Iranians by the Turkmen. It was only the Russian conquest that stopped this practice and freed tens of thousands of Iranians from slavery.

Moreover, the ruling elite of Uzbekistan is intellectually modern. Its members place great value on technology, economic development, material well-being, military strength, and the trappings of western civilization. Iran's clerical regime is not a model they would follow. Contemporary Egypt, or even Saddam Husayn's Iraq are much closer to their conception of what a modern state should be

like.

Turkey is bound to fascinate the Uzbek ruling classes. Turkey is a secular state. It is stable and relatively powerful. In Central Asia the Ottoman Empire was held in high esteem before its collapse in the wake of WW I. The Sultan was also the Caliph of all Sunni Muslims, which assured Turkey the of the sympathy of the clergy. The Young Turks who came to power in 1908 dreamed of gathering all Turkic peoples in one state based on mythical unity of blood and language. Even after the Ottoman defeat Young Turks' leaders pursued the dream. Enver Pasha, son in law of the Sultan, and former commander of Turkish armies on the Caucasian front, put himself at the head of the *basmachi*, guerrillas who resisted the imposition of Soviet authority in Central Asia, and was defeated and killed by agents of the OGPU, the Soviet secret police.

Yet today Turkish influence is probably less than it was in 1914 or 1920. Secular Turkey is attractive to the westernized ruling class, but with the abolition of the Caliphate and secularization she is no longer as attractive to the Muslim majority. Moreover, "Uzbekness," the consciousness of which hardly existed 70 years ago, is today a reality that works against Pan-Turkism.

Although Turkey has made efforts at economic penetration of Uzbekistan, such efforts have not had a major effect. Turkey does not have the capacity to become a principal contender in the economic development of Central Asia, nor can she, being geographically remote, project military power there. One must come to the conclusion that while Turkey and Iran may play a role in the affairs of Uzbekistan, that role will be relatively minor and, in all likelihood, mutually neutralizing.

Tajikistan with its Persian speaking population and Iranian culture is part of the Iranian civilization, a fact of which its intellectuals are proudly aware. They are attached to classical Persian literature, and to the Persian language which the Soviets forced them to call Tajik and which they now call Tajik-Parsi. Yet none of this brings Tajikistan within the sphere of Iranian political-religious influence. The masses are not ethnically self-conscious but deeply Muslim. Tajiks are Sunnis, and Sunni Islam is stronger in Tajikistan than anywhere else in Central Asia. Tajikistan is the only republic of the former Soviet Empire where an Islamic party made a bid for power and would have succeeded had it not been for intervention from Uzbekistan and Russia. Political and religious threads connect the Tajiks with their Sunni compatriots in Afghanistan rather than with the Shiite heretics in Mashhad or Qom.

Traditionalist Muslim sentiments in Tajikistan manifested themselves openly as soon as *glasnost* brought a modicum of freedom. At once there arose a conflict between the revived conservative Islamic groups and the westernized, Russian educated, formerly

communist elite that refused to cede power to a makeshift alliance of Muslim and democratic groups. In Tajikistan Islamic revival at times took ugly forms. Tajik women who appeared in the streets dressed not in accordance with traditional notions of propriety were loudly cursed or even stoned. There were instances of physical attacks on Russian women as well.

Turkey exercises no attraction for educated Tajiks and her secularism is not pleasing to the Muslim clergy. In fact Pan-Turkism is a nightmare of the intelligentsia which has struggled for decades against the threat of Uzbekisation and Turkification. Turkey has not the means of providing economic aid to and no political standing in Tajikistan.

In conclusion, a word about the influence of Russia. As I mentioned earlier, Kazakhstan is as Russian as it is Kazakh. Under any and all circumstances the future of Kazakhstan will not be divorced from Russia's future. That, to a lesser extent holds for the other republics of Central Asia as well. A century of Russian colonial rule left a profound imprint on the cultures, political behavior, and economic life of all its peoples. Today when Tajiks, Turkmens, Uzbeks, Kazakhs, and Kyrgyzes meet, the only language they can converse in is Russian.

Russian presence is palpable everywhere, even in republics with relatively small Russian population. Currency is still Russian. The banking system is Russian. The universities would not survive without their Russian professors. Most of the books in libraries are Russian. The railways and the airline are run by Russians. Technology would collapse without Russian engineers.

Considering Russia's domestic turmoil it is easy to dismiss her and to discount her role in Central Asia. That would be a grievous error. Given Russia's human and economic potential, she is bound to recover from her current low state and while she may not again embark on a policy of imperialism, she certainly would not abandon her interests in Central Asia. Russia's position there is much stronger, Russia's influence more pervasive than is French influence in France's former African colonies; and just as France has retained much influence in those colonies, Russia will retain even greater influence in Central Asia.

To conclude: The five Muslim republics of Central Asia are not uniform or homogeneous, although they share religion and many elements of culture. Islam is influential in all of them but not to the same extent and not in the same radical politicized form. It is most powerful in Tajikistan and least powerful in Kazakhstan. None of the Central Asian republics, Tajikistan with its close ties to the large Tajik population across the Afghan border excepted, has a Muslim clergy strong and influential enough to establish an Islamic state on the Iranian model.

While Iran, Turkey, and to some extent Pakistan have interests in Central Asia, these are not sufficient to make them take serious political or economic risks there. Iranian and Turkish influences tend to neutralize one another but neither presents a real threat. Both the secularized ex-communist elite and the Sunni clergy would strongly resist any Iranian attempts to achieve a politically dominant position, while Turkey is geographically too remote to play a decisive role in Central Asia.

For the foreseeable future the strongest influence on the life of the five Central Asia republics will come from Russia. Russians are the predominant element in Kazakhstan, and a decisive element in Kyrgyzstan. Even in a time of domestic crisis Russian economic power and the presence of the Russian army in every one of the republics are irreducible facts that cannot be disregarded.