

# Russian party's Kazakhstan coup heralds imperial reorganization

by Konstantin George

On Dec. 17 and 18, thousands of Kazakh students rioted in Alma Ata, the capital of the Soviet Republic of Kazakhstan. According to unofficial reports, the riots, which included attacks on police stations in the city of over 1 million population near the Soviet-Chinese border, cost the lives of 7 policemen and at least 15 Kazakh students, with hundreds of Kazakhs arrested. The Alma Ata riots occurred a few days after the conclusion of a Central Committee Plenum of the Kazakhstan Party which removed the Kazakhstan first secretary, or party boss, Dinmukhamed Kunaev—who, excepting one short interruption, had ruled Kazakhstan since 1961—replacing him with Gennadi Kolbin, a Russian.

Every indication shows the riots to have been deliberately provoked, beginning with the immediate Soviet TV and newspaper publicity accorded to them. There have been many riots in the Soviet Union during the past 60 years, but this was the first to be reported by the Soviet media. The media emphasized that the riots were anti-Russian, by underscoring the role of Kazakh “nationalist elements.”

The leaders of the “Russian party” in the Soviet leadership—Raisa Gorbachova's Soviet Culture Fund group; the Politburo's chief ideologue Yegor Ligachov; and the group around Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov in the military leadership—have long been demanding both Russification for Kazakhstan, and a thorough reorganization of the industrial, mining, and energy sectors of the Kazakhstan economy, placing affairs under Moscow-run military-industrial direction. The Russian party, as we shall see, has been able to use the riots to push for enforced Russification and administrative and economic reorganization in the Central Asian region.

What happened in Kazakhstan after the riots has been a leadership reshuffle going far beyond Kunaev's replacement. The reader must bear in mind that in Kazakhstan, in contrast to the other central Asian republics, Russians form the majority of the population, together with Ukrainians and Germans, members and descendants of the Volga Germans, deported to Kazakhstan in 1941 by Stalin. Kazakhstan has a population nearly two-thirds Slavic and European. The Kazakhs comprise about one-third of the population, a minority in their “own” republic.

As *Pravda* announced after Christmas, Kazakhstan is now being run by a “special committee” investigating the disturbances, and “special committees” will soon be formed at regional and local levels throughout the republic. Besides

naming Kazakhstan's new Russian boss, Gennadi Kolbin, *Pravda* lists no other members of these special committees. That “normal” government operations are a thing of the past is further underscored by *Pravda* and *Izvestia* coverage of the first post-riot session of the Kazakhstan government, on the weekend of Dec. 20 and 21 in Alma Ata, presided over by Mikhail Solomentsev, Soviet Politburo member and head of the Party Control Commission, dispatched as a troubleshooter from Moscow. Solomentsev, who was Central Committee Secretary for Heavy Industry from 1966-71, and prime minister of the Russian Republic from 1971-83, is a core member of the Russian party in the Soviet leadership, as well as one of the leaders of the military-industrial grouping. *Pravda* and *Izvestia* gave extensive coverage to the government session, as well as to Solomentsev's and Kolbin's tour of Alma Ata, including the university, factories, and offices. Curiously, none of the coverage mentioned Nazarbayev, the Kazakh prime minister, nor any other member of the government. Also absent was the Kazakh first secretary of the Alma Ata City Party Committee.

## One indivisible Russian empire

The most recent Soviet articles show that the reorganization of Kazakhstan is only the beginning of far-reaching changes planned in the colonial “republics” of the Russian empire. The Dec. 28 *Pravda* contained a landmark editorial denouncing “localism” and elaborating the theme that the empire recognizes only empire interests: “One must decisively oppose any attempts that place local interests above state interests, whether it concerns competition in the allocation of state funds, or false reporting of plan fulfillment. Forgetting these interests and orienting to local patronage and ethnic viewpoints contain the danger of sliding into nepotism. Practice shows it is urgently necessary to place representatives of all nationalities and groupings in leading positions [since Russians are the only “nationality” that resides in large numbers in every Soviet republic, the meaning of this phrase is transparent—ed.] and to have a regular inter-regional exchange of cadres, exchanging experienced cadres between the republics and the center.”

As we shall see, the policy line declared by the phrases of the paragraph we have just quoted is not a *new* policy, but a clear intent to dramatically escalate an existing policy—initiated under Yuri Andropov and radically escalated under

Mikhail Gorbachov.

To concretize the point: Regarding exchanging cadres "between the republics and the center," since the death of Brezhnev, there have been about 90 new first secretaries—or bosses—of *oblast* party committees (each republic is divided into a number of *oblasts*, or provinces). In an unprecedented pattern, at least half of these individuals were dispatched from the Moscow Central Committee apparatus. No fewer than 17 of them served as Central Committee inspectors. These Central Committee "apparatchniks" were themselves first carefully selected by the Andropov and later Gorbachov-Ligachov forces for transfer from regions to do a stint in the Central Committee apparatus, before being dispatched as regional overlords.

The significance of the *Pravda* editorial is that this pattern of Moscow training and then shipment to the regions to oversee the Gorbachovian "restructuring" of Soviet society will be starkly increased in the future.

### The Russian party coup in Kazakhstan

The Russification coup in Kazakhstan did not materialize overnight. Kunaev's removal had been planned for at least a year. As this author wrote for *EIR* following the Soviet 27th Party Congress in March 1986, the "handwriting on the wall" for Kunaev was clear. Kunaev had for the time being survived, but most of his Kazakhstan mafia machine was swept away under the Gorbachovian purges. Eleven Kazakhstan members of the Soviet Central Committee (including full and alternate members) elected to the CC in 1981, were not re-elected in 1986. One of the 11 was Kunaev's brother, president of the Kazakhstan Academy of Sciences. In April, Kunaev's brother lost that post as well.

At this point—and for months afterward—many Kremlinologists were so mesmerized by the "fact" that Kunaev was still in power, following two Kazakhstan CC plenums (one in April and one in July) that they missed the *real* unfolding story—Russification combined with skillful ethnographic manipulation by the Kremlin, and economic restructuring.

In June, 3 regional (*oblast*) bosses were dumped. For the first time in memory, a Russian, V.G. Anufriyev, replaced a Kazakh as first secretary of Taldy-Kurgan Oblast, while in the Tselinograd Oblast, one of the main concentrations of ethnic Germans, Andrei Braun, a German became the first secretary. This is another "first" in postwar Kazakhstan. *EIR* sources who have personally debriefed recently arrived ethnic German emigrés from Kazakhstan, report that the Slavic-German majority openly expressed that they were "fed up" with the Kazakhs, "who think they own the place." These profiled sentiments are being skillfully exploited by the Soviet leadership and media.

In July, an even more important change took place. The Kazakh Central Committee secretary in charge of industry and mining, Karatai Turysev, was removed and replaced by a Russian, Lyudmila Davletova, who had been head of the

Soviet Central Committee Department for Light and Consumer Industry.

### The trend in Soviet Central Asia

The shifts under way in Kazakhstan are not unique to that republic. Under Gorbachov, equally sweeping leadership changes have occurred throughout the Central Asian Muslim republics, which unlike Kazakhstan with its Slavic majority, have overwhelmingly Muslim populations. By January 1986, Gorbachov had thoroughly reorganized the leadership of all these republics, and especially in Uzbekistan (the most populous Muslim republic with its capital in Tashkent) and Turkmenistan (bordering Iran, east of the Caspian Sea).

In Uzbekistan, the Uzbeks suddenly became a minority on their "own" Politburo, having only 6 of the 13 members (the others being 6 Slavs and 1 Kazakh). In Turkmenistan, the massacre was even more pronounced, where a new 12-man Politburo was erected with eight Russians on it.

In the second half of 1986, Gorbachov ordered a merciless campaign against Islam in these republics. In early October, at the Uzbekistan CC plenum, this theme was dutifully taken up, and the plenum abounded with strident denunciations of Islam. Ironically, the plenum—held in the first week of October—was occurring at the very moment at which Moscow was staging its "Islamic Card" showpiece international conference in Baku. While over 700 Muslim religious leaders and representatives of Politburo member Geidar Aliyev's "Muslim Card International" were faithfully gathered in Baku, Azerbaijan, in Tashkent, Islam *inside* the Soviet Union was being denounced as never before.

For Gorbachov and the Russian party however, the Tashkent proceedings were mere lip service to the anti-domestic-Islam cause. As one source told *EIR*: "How else could you explain why a month ago [Nov. 24], Gorbachov himself had to stop in Tashkent on his way to India, and make his big speech demanding action against Islam in Uzbekistan?"

Will other Muslim party bosses in Soviet Central Asia follow Kunaev? Experts note a pattern of recent sharp attacks and criticisms in the Soviet media in that region against Niyazov, the first secretary of Turkmenistan, and Usmanhodzhaev, the first secretary of Uzbekistan. The attacks focus on denouncing "shortcomings and inefficiency" in the economy, massive "corruption," and also, especially strident, the failure to undertake effective campaigns against religion—i.e., Islam.

The attacks can not be placed in the "against old Brezhnevites" category. Niyazov was brought to power only one year ago, replacing Gapurov, the Brezhnevite who ran Turkmenistan since 1969, while Usmanhodzhaev replaced deceased Brezhnevite Rashidov in 1983. Regarding Niyazov, eyebrows were raised among Soviet Central Asia watchers when he was shipped off on short notice to Guinea-Bissau and missed the Nov. 7 festivities in Turkmenistan, over which he should have presided.