

N.A. NAZARBAYEV



THE HEART  
OF EURASIA





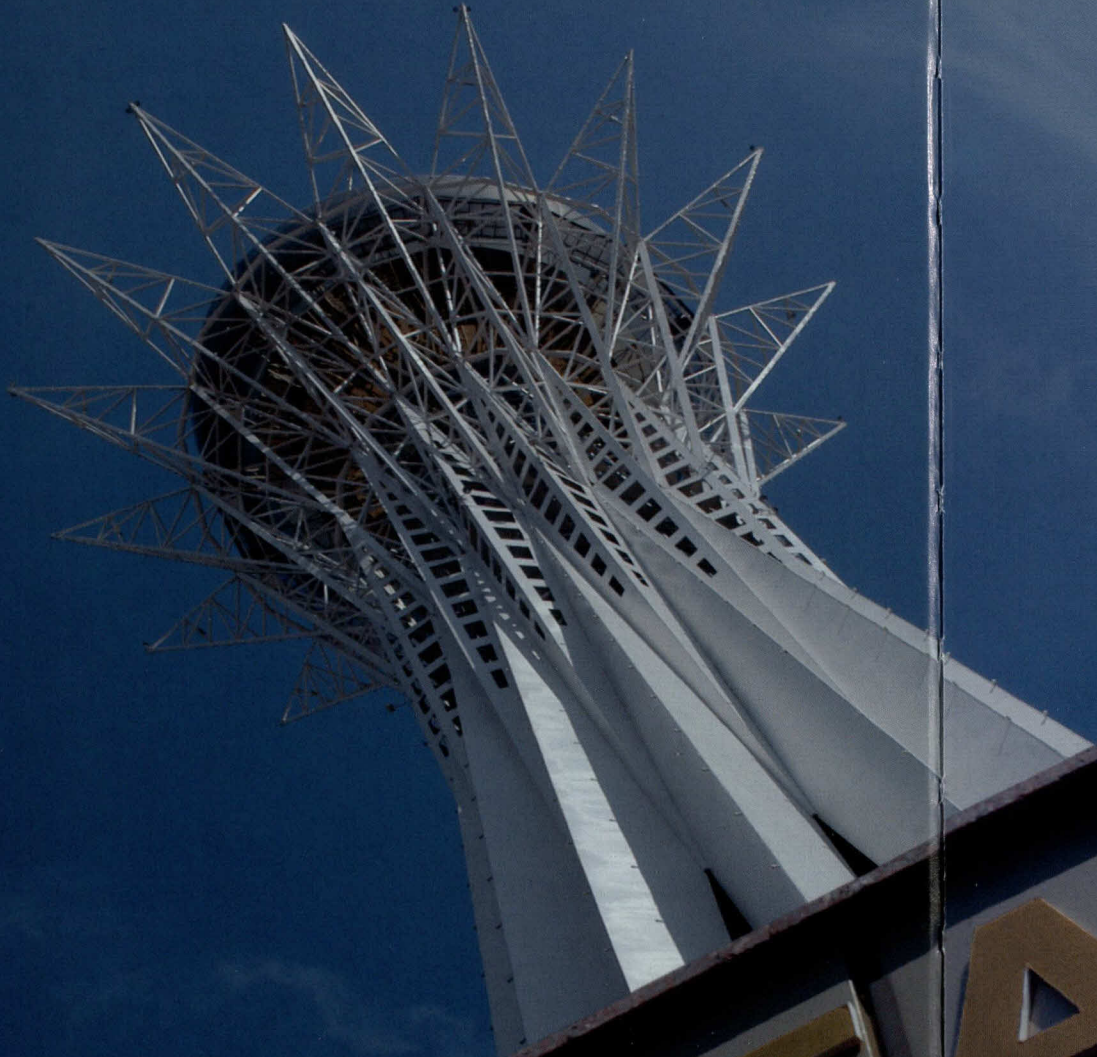
Nursultan  
NAZARBAYEV

THE HEART OF

# EURASIA

ALMATY  
"BASPALAR UYI"  
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АСТАНА



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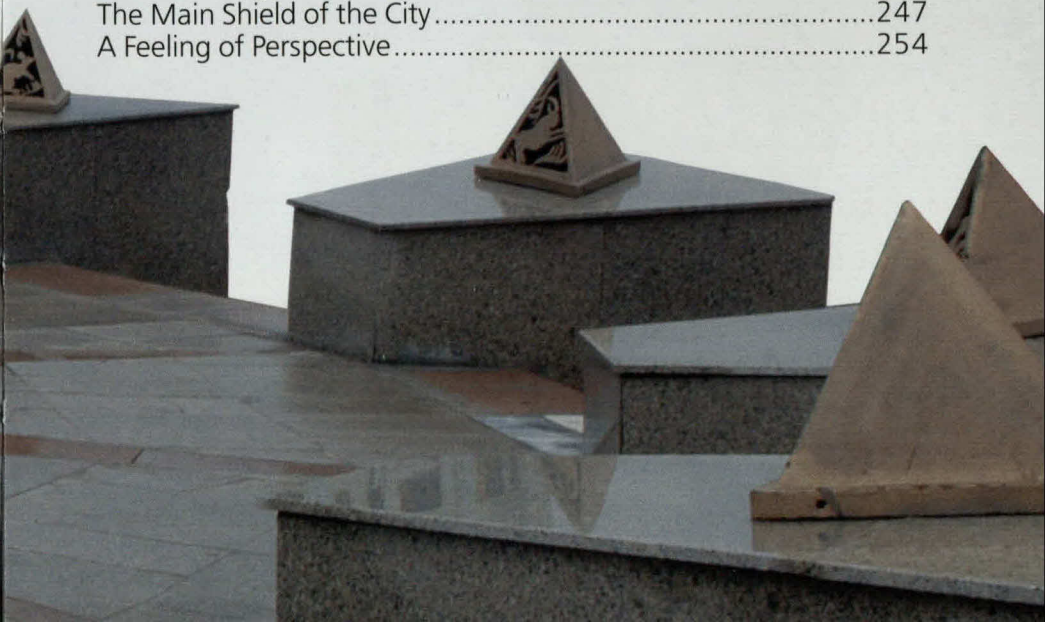
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*A city where people unite to help one another  
in the quest for true happiness is a virtuous city;  
a society in which people help one another to attain  
happiness is a virtuous society.*

**Abu Nasr al-Farabi**

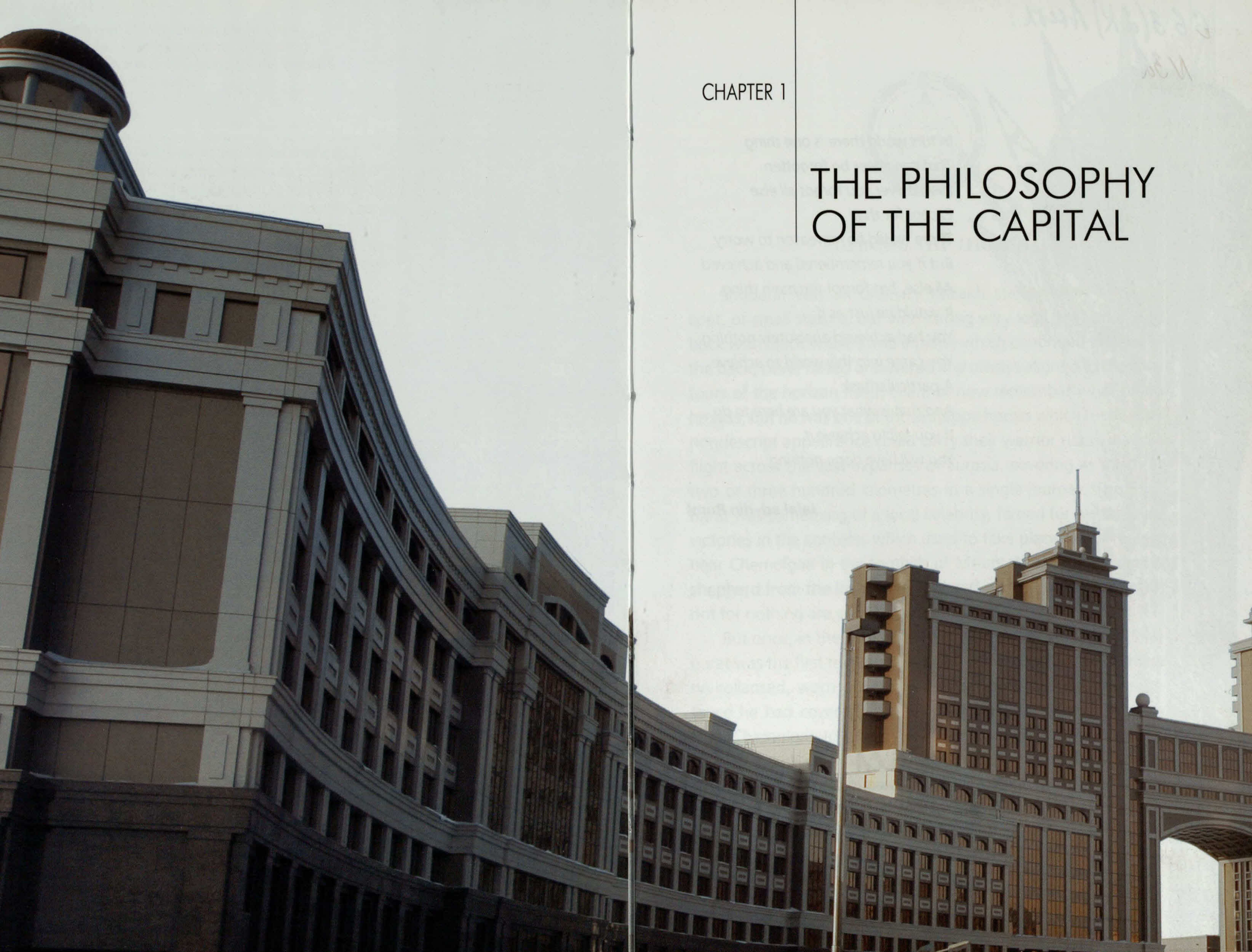
Historians have long argued over when and where the world's first city came into existence. The question is actually not all that important. The main consideration is that cities have been, and will continue to be, the places which have seen the most dramatic, the most joyful and the bitterest episodes played out in the history of mankind, of peoples and of civilizations. But amongst these "nodes" where the past, the present and the future intertwine, a particular place is occupied by capital cities. It is to them that the honour is assigned of representing all the best which each people has achieved on its journey through space and time.

The style and flavour of each age are created by two or three particular landmarks, like the Eiffel Tower, the Palace of Westminster, or the Palace of the Kremlin. These buildings have proved to be the best guides we have as we travel across the map of the world. Nowadays they are generally perceived as if they have always been there, though in fact they were created by the talent and hard work of completely individual people. The establishment of a capital city involves the creation of a new text in the history of the nation, and not every generation can be expected to contribute to it.

On the threshold of the third millennium we took the decision to create a new capital in the very heart of Eurasia, and we succeeded in doing so. That was almost eight years ago, years which seem to have flown by in scarcely the blink of an eye. Standing back from the turbulence of everyday events I decided to bring together the scattered pages of jottings in my journals and collect them in this book. These are the records of complicated decisions, advice from my associates, architectural researches, thoughts on a city in the making, legends and stories of place-names, the minutiae of everyday living, historical analogies and accounts of Astana's landscape and aesthetic: taken together, the thoughts and actions which I myself devoted to the new capital. You will find it all here.

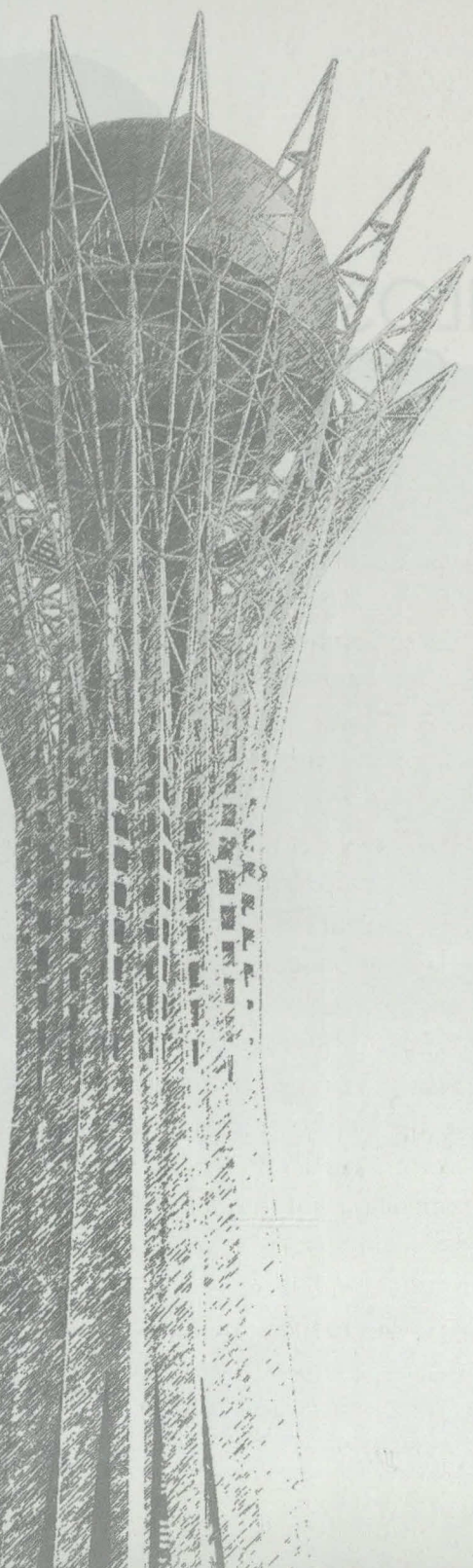
*P. Hazraty*





CHAPTER 1

# THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE CAPITAL



*In this world there is one thing  
That can never be forgotten.  
Even if ever you forgot all else  
Except for that  
There would be no reason to worry.  
But if you remembered and achieved  
All else, but forgot the main thing,  
It would be just as if  
You had achieved absolutely nothing.  
You came into this world to achieve  
A particular task  
And that is what you are here to do.  
If you fail to achieve it  
You will have done nothing.*

***Jalal ad-din Rumi***



## DEFINING THE TERRAIN

Shubarat was an ordinary Kazakh stallion with a mousy coat, of small stature, but with strong wiry legs. He had a long back with black withers and a mane which continued the line of the back, never raised or lowered and always aligned to the contours of the horizon itself. I cannot now remember what breed he was, but he was one of those steppe horses which for all their nondescript appearance could carry their warrior riders in rapid flight across the vast expanses of Eurasia, covering as much as two or three hundred kilometres in a single journey. This Shubarat was something of a local celebrity, famed for his frequent victories in the contests which used to take place in our region, near Chemolgan in the foothills of Mount Alatau. His owner, a shepherd from the local district, doted on his unbeatable racer; not for nothing are such horses known as a Kazakh's wings.

But once, in the course of an extra long distance race, Shubarat was the first to gallop up to the way into a ravine and there he collapsed, worn out by the furious pace and excessive distance he had covered. The ravine, which extends all the way from Chemolgan to where it cuts an opening right through the nearest mountain side, has ever since then been called "Shubarat". That is how the mountain stands today, with its ravine as if cloven by an enormous sword into two halves to the right and to the left. The Aksakal tribesmen say that at one time a stone-built stele was erected on the top of the higher of the two; it bore the

standard of the legendary Bekbolat, who led the national uprising in 1916, but was taken prisoner and shot when it ended in failure.

The appropriately named Undermount Street, where our house was, was the road closest to the mountains; every morning when I woke up my eyes would invariably first rest on the foothills and then rise above them to the snow-covered heights of the ancient and magnificent Alatau. The snowy peaks seemed to be the dwelling place of heavenly spirits, unreachable and unbelievably far away, even though physically they were quite close to us. In the summer the boys from our street would get up at first light to gather berries from the mountainside and take them to the local winery; there they would be given some money and take it home proudly in the evening. Most of it they would give to their mothers, and anything left over would be spent on tickets for a film show. Myself, I would secretly dream of only one thing, to scale the heights of the nearest mountain. I can't now remember exactly when this exalted dream first came to me: it might have been when I was five or perhaps seven years old. But I do recall that I did finally conquer that heavenly fastness when I had almost reached my fourteenth year.

Nowadays a good third of my life is spent in constant official journeys, or more precisely in flying throughout our republic or to different countries round the world; but I realise that my first true experience of flight was not in an aeroplane; it was when I stood on the summit of Mount Alatau and gazed down on to the plain below, rolled out like a gigantic map beneath me. To the north, the plain stretches all the way to the horizon from the steep side of the mountain. It looks and feels as if you are peering out through an enormous porthole. From the top I could see everything, the crags and ravines like huge veins furrowing the earth's flesh, toy houses in my own and neighbouring villages, winding threads of bright yellow roads, green fields with

scattered outcrops of crimson poppies, yellow rectangles planted with maize, like patches sown on to the body of the brown earth. And beyond that in the distance the line of the horizon was covered in a faint haze. The Aksakal people used to say that on a clear sunny day you could glimpse from the mountain tops the sacred waters of Lake Balkhash. I had no idea where Balkhash might be; but with their words in my mind I would try to catch a flicker of sunlight on a great body of water beyond the horizon. However nothing came into view, either because the day was not clear enough or because there was simply nothing to be seen...

I could not take in the whole immensity of the steppe, as described by our herdsmen with such vividness and excitement after their cattle drives far to the north. Every summer they would drive their herds from our village towards the Ili all the way to Balkhash and on their return recount their tales – or fables – of life on the steppe. For our part we would put out our cattle to graze on the high mountain pastures, and I would think how fine it was for the herdsmen to go so far out into the true unending steppe country that they could no longer even see the contours of the mountains in the distance. That truly was marvellous and unbelievable.

You could understand how it was for those men, able to see the beauty and enchantment of the steppe's immensity only on the move, while from the heights of even the greatest of mountains you could never fully grasp its vast extent. From the time I fulfilled my dream of scaling the high peak I was possessed by another one, of knowing the true nature and essence of the steppe. For as I stood on that mountain, constrained by its sheer dimensions and the limits it imposed on my freedom of movement, I began to understand that it was only the steppe that could give one the truest kind of freedom and a sense of the fullness of space, with its completely unbounded immensi-

ties and unlimited horizons. It was only later, when for the first time I encountered the true steppe of the Great Saryarka, that I was overwhelmed by my awareness of the magnificent expanse which only the steppe can provide.

It was there that for the first time in my life I saw a sky that was completely clean and clear. This was not the sky I had known before, half filled with mountains, when as you gazed at the heavens your eyes came to rest on mountain walls which closed off half the sky from view. It was not even the sky to be seen from the mountain top, which in turn is blocked by more distant peaks that lie beyond it. What I am speaking of is the kind of sky which like a huge and shining bell-glass encloses the flat plain from one horizon to another.

I had come to know the beauty of the mountains: now I needed to learn the beauty of the steppe. "It is only mountains that can be better than the mountains you already know"; and you cannot say better than that. It was in 1995, after my ascent of Mount Abay, that I once again felt with full immediacy the beauty of the mountains. I stood up there for a long time, deeply moved by the unending sky above me and nature's majestic presence. But at times I still feel after my encounter with the sky above the steppe, the living strength of the feather-grass that covers it and the simple wisdom of the herdsmen, that for all my love and appreciation of the mountain heights and depths I must still insist that "the only thing better than the steppe is more of the steppe itself". It is said that much of what emerges in the depths of a child's awareness evolves with the passage of time into well-springs of action in the grown man. That is not to say that a child's impressions define everything about his adult consciousness. But it can often happen that present reality has been moulded by some childhood dream, and such dreams are the prerogative of the child's emotions, unfettered by the cares of

everyday life and the disquiet inseparable from life in the grown-up world.

There is always a place for decisions and actions which at first sight seem unexpected, but which actually stem from a lengthy evolution of approaches and choices made after careful consideration of the best options available. This happens often, even when other courses of action seem more pressing, and the actions taken independently of them seem amazing or in some cases worthy of censure. There are many things that come about all by themselves, or as we might say in the course of ordinary business. But since they seem ordinary enough at the time we attach little importance to them; we do not attempt to evaluate them, to discover their causes or still less to consider their consequences. If on the other hand such events are truly out of the ordinary, or even completely exceptional, they can attract such a degree of attention that without adequate explanation they can provoke amazement or indeed a sense of shock.

The way we behave when dealing with circumstances as complicated and unpredictable as those connected with state politics cannot of course be motivated by arbitrary impulses, or still less by childish imaginings; but in the present case what I am considering is the coincidence of involuntary foresight and something that has somehow been historically preordained, such as moving the capital city of the country from one place to another. It is certainly the case that such a major transfer is an event quite out of the ordinary, especially when it has emerged from a conception in the mind of one individual. In the scale of state events, it is not at all routine, though not absolutely unprecedented. For an individual person, moving his home from one place of residence to another one is not an everyday occurrence: some people never experience the need to move house, while others are obliged to do so quite frequently. Nation states also move their principal cities, usually in circumstances which

are justified and sufficiently well motivated. And it may also be the case that the demand for such a move because the state requires it may arise much more often than the inhabitants themselves would wish. But this is where we come to the nub of the question. This is to understand and appreciate the at times impalpable and undefined causes which can make the transfer of a capital city essential.

There can be unsettled periods in the history of a state, just as in one individual's biography, which require a society to change its perceptions of the geopolitical role of that state, and accordingly of its capital city as well. At such times chaotic events outside normal control can result in frequent moves of the capital city; though these can prove in due time to have been essential for the long-term stability of the country in question.

A characteristic example can be found in the case of the Russian state. Its history has been marked down the centuries by frequent moves of the capital from Novgorod to Kiev, from Kiev to Vladimir, from Vladimir to Moscow, from Moscow to St Petersburg and then back again. This is how the renowned Russian historian, Sergey Soloviov described this process, particularly as it affected ancient Rus': *"...the government of an extremely extensive country is obliged to transfer its seat from one part of it to another in accordance with the needs of the period, as national forces ebb and flow from one region to another, and as national interests and national awareness coalesce here or there; such historical changes in the seat of government are consequently not to be seen as arbitrary developments."* (from *Petrine Readings*)

To my mind the particular nature of Kazakhstan's national interests and national awareness in such a vast territory dictates the necessity, historically speaking, for its capital city to be moved as required from one part of the country to another. I am thinking here of what seemed at the time a completely unex-



pected and what many people found an arbitrary move of our capital from Almaty to Akmola, which caused widespread consternation. The move of a capital city is indeed an epochal event which calls for particular attention and justification. Natural scientists have drawn on their search for scientific truth to establish a kind of pioneers' algorithm, by which an unexpected discovery passes through three stages of development: first, "This cannot be!", then, "There's something in this", and finally, "But everyone knows this!". Of course we do not pretend to be pioneers in the matter of capital relocation: it has behind it a lengthy history, not all of which can even be recounted.

However there are many similarities between moving a capital city and the processes of scientific discovery. The proof of this is in the sequence of events, from when the decision on a move had only just been reached, right up to the present day, when the not completely provincial but still somewhat peripheral town of Tselinograd has been transformed into the handsome modern capital of Kazakhstan, the city of Astana, which has adorned the banks of the Ishim with fine buildings and architectural complexes. One prominent physicist remarked of it: "So young and already so unknown!" This paradoxical phrase reflects a message for our times: it is youth that must create our history. Thus it is that the history of our state is being created in its youngest city. And though only seven years old, it has come to be well known to everyone. It is now acknowledged not just as the administrative centre of the country but also as the place where the central organs of power are to be found, where decisions are taken that affect the destinies of the whole republic. And in this brief span the city has come to represent the true heart of our fatherland for millions of our fellow citizens. Like a heart also, the new capital has breathed new life into all regions of Kazakhstan, lifting our national spirits and our self-awareness.



Rapid changes in the appearance of our city seem to be taking place before our very eyes, with its new constructions, expanding street layouts, parks and squares, to the delight of visitors who knew the previous towns of Tselinograd and Akmola or are with us for the first time. Astana is a symbol of Kazakhstan's renewal and of the inexhaustible creative energies displayed by our multinational society. It symbolises the faith and self reliance of our people who have set about the construction of our new capital in far from easy times. It also displays their hopes and the belief of our liberated nation in a flourishing future for themselves and their descendants. Kazakhstan's acquisition of a new capital city contains within itself a particular multifaceted history that has developed over time, providing food for reflection and material for further discoveries. And perhaps it will take more than mere words to tell it: emotions certainly cannot be dispensed with...

As the city continues to develop, an enormous archive of information and data about all aspects of its establishment and daily life is increasingly being expanded and enriched with new details and accessions. A complete history cannot of course be written or even imagined. Once something has been written down it is already out of date. For all the dynamism and eventfulness of Kazakh life it is hard to emulate the incredible meticulousness of the Chinese chronicles: *"A leaf fell on to the surface of the water, torn off by the cold wind of autumn..."* Even so, it is always possible to pick out the most important features which are not subject, or at least less subject, to considerations of time and the unavoidable interpretations that must be placed on them.

Given the difficulty of arriving at ideal solutions, I can at least venture the following: I am no mathematician, but I am aware that in that exact science there are certain problems which de-

mand solutions which are, however, impossible to state even in principle. It is therefore necessary to tackle such problems with so many parameters only to a first approximation. This is then considered to be the closest one can get to a precise solution. In dealing with the transfer of a capital city the situation is much the same.

In our case there were a number of factors which made the arguments for a move more pressing. It often seems that the justification for a particular decision is not expected and commonplace but rather involves a paradox. What was needed was a good reason for shifting the capital of Kazakhstan from Almaty to another region, and the choice of Akmola turned out to be the most correct answer to the question of which that region should be. Actually Almaty, spread as it is for tens of kilometres along the snowy ridge of Mount Alatau, seemed naturally suited to be the capital of the country, with its gentle mountain climate, its convenient infrastructure and well developed services. Furthermore Almaty had grown up in a location otherwise unoccupied, and had both a pre-history and a more recent record which were at variance with established ideas about the "colonial" origins of the southern capital. So even before the arrival in the mid-nineteenth century of troops led by the semi-mythical Major Peremyshl'ski, Almaty was a settled community of Kazakhs in the fruitful Seven Rivers, or "Semirechye" oasis, encircled by the mountainous heights of the Alatau. Babur, the mighty founder of Greater Mogolistan refers in his memoirs to the beautiful city of Almaty, at that time Almalyk, which was destroyed by the Mongols. His contemporary, the outstanding scholar Muhammad Khaidar Dulati also referred in his famous work the *Tarikh-i-Rashidi* to the city of Almalyk in the foothills of Mount Alatau. After lengthy researches the Kazakh archaeologist K M Baizhanov has established that the foundation of Almaty goes back to the tenth to eleventh centuries and that the city shows all the

signs of having been a powerful political, economic and cultural centre in mediaeval Kazakhstan.

After becoming capital of the republic in 1929, following on from Orenburg and Kyzyl-Orda, Almaty expanded rapidly, and many generations of its citizens put great efforts into making their city one of the most remarkable and individual of capital cities. Its picturesque parks and squares, its avenues and open spaces, have always inspired poets and writers, architects and painters, scientists and artists to create great works of every kind; and all who have had occasion to visit the city even once come away with the warmest impressions and recollections of what they have found.

As the main centre of Kazakh culture, science and political life, Almaty has always been notable for its creative and independent-minded atmosphere. It is no accident that one of the first open demonstrations against totalitarianism, at the time of the events of December 1986, took place in the city. For democrats not just in our republic but in the rest of the then Soviet Union Almaty became a symbol of popular resistance to the forces of totalitarianism and at the same time a symbol for the people of Kazakhstan of renascent national awareness. It was in this city that Kazakhstan declared its sovereignty and independence, and here also that the magnificent Independence Monument was erected in Republic Square to commemorate that day. Many of my own most memorable years are also connected with the city: my first grandchildren were born there and the city has become close and precious to my family and to me.

However the realities of the times we were living through and a whole range of geo-strategic factors made it essential for us to take a fresh look at the management of the geopolitical position we occupy in the Eurasian landmass. After reviewing all the criteria for a new capital we came to the conclusion that the best site for the administrative and political centre of indepen-

dent Kazakhstan should be the city of Akmola, and in July 1994 the decision was taken to shift the capital more than 1,000 kilometres north to the steppe country where it is now situated. Akmola lies almost in the geographical centre of Kazakhstan, close to important economic regions where the principal centres of intensive growth are located. The city stands at the intersection of major transport routes and is thus connected with all the country's regions, as well as with nearby routes to trans-Eurasian highways which facilitate Kazakhstan's access to many international destinations.

At the time the decision was reached to shift the capital from Almaty to the centre of the country, Akmola's population amounted to around 290,000 persons. However it also possessed great scope for population increase. Leading architects agreed that there were some 30 hectares of unoccupied land in the centre of the city region which would be suitable for new buildings and micro regions and there were no serious limitations on the amount of city development that could be carried out. The same was true for life-support systems, and the existing transport infrastructure could be modernised at reasonable cost. Furthermore Akmola's existing ecological situation presented no problems and could be maintained well into the future.

I was personally convinced that the move to a new capital would play a big role in confirming Kazakhstan's role as an independent state. In the first place, it would strengthen our geopolitical standing, by reaffirming the comprehensiveness of our peace-loving policy towards the rest of the world. It would underline our receptiveness to cooperation on a basis of equality with north and south, east and west. It would provide a unique opportunity to develop more fully the advantages we derived from our country's central position between Europe and Asia.

Secondly, security was a crucial factor. The capital of an independent country should so far as possible be centrally located

and well removed from external frontiers. Another factor to consider was the prospect, foreseen by a number of specialists at the time, of heightened tensions in the central Asian region. This made it a priority to ensure the security of the state's higher administrative structures, so that they could operate effectively in the event of regional unrest. Subsequent developments showed to what extent these apprehensions were justified.

Thirdly, we considered that the move to Akmola would facilitate economic development, by overcoming in stages uneven distribution of the population and the country's productive resources in the territory of the republic, of intensive development of innovatory and science-led production in the northern and central regions, and of advanced agricultural machine-building and extensive networks of agricultural processing industry. This in turn would raise levels of industrial development in Kazakhstan and bring about more effective and intensive use of labour resources.

Fourthly, the move had undoubted advantages for the consolidation of stability and national cohesion across the country. By transferring the capital to a region which was already multinational in its make-up we would underscore our commitment to the creation of a multi-ethnic state by preserving and enhancing friendship and harmony between all groups of peoples living in Kazakhstan. Addressing these issues in Parliament, I convinced our deputies that with the passage of time Kazakhstan would acquire through its new capital a new centre of social and political life, with the scientific, cultural and business advantages that would go with it.

Almaty would also benefit, since the transfer to the new capital would stimulate new approaches to the development of the southern city, and present it with the challenges of a second renaissance. The buildings and spaces freed up by the move

could now be put to profitable use for industrial development, tourism, leisure and sport, to the benefit of the city's economy. Almaty will remain the most substantial business, financial, scientific and cultural centre in Kazakhstan and in central Asia as a whole, and will still exert its influence on the economic, social and political life of the country and the whole region. It also retains its position as a hub of communications in the country and internationally.

The debate in Parliament on my address was heated and lasted all day. In the end a majority in the Supreme Council, against vigorous protests from my opponents, did however adopt the decision to move the capital to Akmolá. That marked the starting point of a process which then lasted more than three years.

The fact that for the first time in our history, at the close of the twentieth century, we should base a decision on the location of a new capital for independent Kazakhstan on our national interests has huge political and moral force behind it. It reflects the will of the people in a sovereign country which has become independent and free. Astana truly has a real opportunity to employ its extensive spaces in the creation of a city culture which can contribute to world civilisation itself.

The main, indeed essential condition for Astana to serve as an international crossroads for humanitarian and cultural exchanges will be that its well developed up-to-date infrastructure will help to consolidate its role as a natural centre for the promotion of freedom and inspiration in the realm of ideas. Like people, cities have destinies, and each has a name and an individual biography of its own, a character which cannot be confused with that of any other place on earth. How many have been known to history or are still to come, whether countries or structures, from the encampments of priest-kings in ancient times, to powerful city-states and markets and mediaeval courts, to the conglomerations and ultramodern megalopolises of industrial and



post-industrial societies, and finally the future conurbations of the space-age. Again, like people, their fates are different, as when one city can achieve permanence and come to lead the world, while another falls by the wayside and simply vegetates, or is wiped from the face of the earth. Like books, cities can have their fate decided by the way people react to them. But it is only to the sons of man that power is given to be masters of their own destiny, to use their reason, their will and devoted labour to create much more than is decreed for them in the tablets of heaven. This is the essence of Astana, the fruit of our long days and sleepless nights, of our evening reflections and waking dreams. The Astana of today and of tomorrow: that is the quintessence of our strategic designs and aspirations.

It will strike anyone who looks at Astana's coat of arms that all its elements reflect the spirit and mentality of the whole state of Kazakhstan, which having secured its independence has fully identified itself with world standards of political, social and economic wisdom. Careful examination will show the Shanyrak, the embodiment of the community and unity of our peoples and cultures under the unending skies of the Kazakh steppe; it will show golden wheat-spears, representing the richness and generosity of the soil of our country, which gives life to all those who live and labour on it. It will also show "Bars", the leopard which has become the symbol of Kazakhstan on its path of industrial and technological development, of social progress and democratic aspiration. The other symbol is the Stone Wall, which represents our efforts to protect the world's atmosphere and security which prevail on the territory of Kazakhstan, and the defence of our rights and the right to life of all nations, religions and cultures in our multinational motherland. Thus you can see in Astana's coat of arms the spirit and sentiments of all the citizens of Kazakhstan, the feelings of all the inhabitants of this ancient and hallowed land...



## THE FLIGHT OF THE STARS

It gave me enormous satisfaction to see the young faces of the students and of their teachers just after they had moved into the new laboratory block of the Lev Gumilyov Eurasian National University. This handsome modern building with its spacious lecture halls and laboratories has embellished both the university complex and the region it occupies in the rapidly developing capital. Beginning from April 2003, when the new buildings of the new university were inaugurated, the next important step was taken to introduce new standards of teaching and preparation for the next student generation in Astana's system of higher education. Everyone can appreciate that in today's world societies can flourish, and do so triumphantly, only when they possess the essential knowledge base: knowledge is the power which can move a whole world.

We see this world around us with every passing day. There are those who do no more than look at it; others take care of it. It is educated people who oblige us to perceive the world not just as it is, but as we would like it to be. Such educated and knowledgeable people make it possible for us to see movement and life where it might have seemed that they could not even exist. An apparently immobile vault of stars extends over us in the darkness of the sky at night. Nowadays astronomers know that the immobility is an illusion: they can establish the speeds at which the stars move in relation to the centre of our galaxy. Furthermore the boundless distances which divide one star from another make us regard them from our everyday perspective as unmoving on an unchanging sky. Much the same thing is true in our lives. Before we embarked on the transfer of our capital it used to seem to me that capital cities remained fixed like stars amongst a multiplicity of countries and cities; but now we know that if we look at things from even quite a short historical per-

spective, cities are more like bright planets, which if not obeying quite such strict laws of motion, at least steadily change their positions on the political map of the world.

How the stars move and planets revolve in the firmament is known to every schoolboy, or at least to every professor of astrophysics. It is easy enough to see on a star chart how the planets of our solar system move against the background of the stars. What are the political and geopolitical changes that accompany the move of a country's capital city? What happens on the internal political map when in one place the capital stag-nates and in other flares up like a new star? Such questions are inherently extremely complicated, just as unambiguous answers are. If only I had the time I could write whole tomes listing why the capital of a particular state can disappear in one place or emerge in another. The reasons can sometimes be obvious; at other times they can be completely elusive and speculative.

The question is where to begin. What is the first brick in the building, how do we form the view that a capital move is both necessary and well-founded? It is as difficult as it is necessary to make a choice. It may seem rather paradoxical, but in looking at the causes of our own move I shall begin with the relationship to a group which has been given the name of official administrators, or "the bureaucracy". Yes, it is bureaucrats who provide the motive force to convert cities into capitals and to move capitals in the name of the state and its future. That is precisely why one of the first steps we took to create a new administrative character for a new capital for Kazakhstan was to concentrate on training skilled managers and administrators, by setting up a Government Service Academy. Indeed I am not saying anything original when I state that our capital was the first ever to take on that role only after we had created a bureaucracy to make it function.

The historical record seems to indicate that the first ever bureaucrats were to be found in ancient China. If that is the case, the first true capital city must have been in China, which was always renowned for its technological innovations which enriched the lives of mankind as a whole, and for the highly developed administrative structures which enabled the Chinese to preserve and promote their statehood through turbulent centuries of warfare and deprivation. The bureaucracy in the capital city provides individuals who lay down the whole style of political governance. The experience I have myself had in government with managing construction projects has convinced me that the way the capital is administered has a great effect on the destiny of the state as a whole. Experience in many other cases has shown that the transfer of the capital has often been the only way to overcome a tendency towards bureaucratic conservatism, while opening the door to further transformations with the help of a new class of administrators. Such people can then bring about and personify a more progressive mindset in the new capital.

The new administration in such instances may preserve the sense and spirit of the former bureaucracy, but will still be less burdened by an inheritance of conventional attitudes and past experience. The locomotive of change in such cases leaves from another station, and its crew can bring about new directions in society without excessive ballast or traditional brakes on its progress. A ruling elite of this kind, which feels itself to be not just part of the "nomenklatura" but an administrative class in the full sense of that word, is also the foundation of the state apparatus in the new capital, receptive to the requirements of the time and the pressures for progress. It will be the new capital which will shape this bureaucracy, since the weight of the past can be so heavy that it may leave no space not just for the demands of the present, but for dealing with the future of the state

itself; that is, not without a fundamental convulsion at its heart, that is the capital itself and its location within the country.

If it should happen, deliberately or otherwise, that the timing of the capital's move coincides with political changes, these two factors reinforce one another. They should also, given decisive political direction, lead to the formation of an effective bureaucracy which takes on full responsibility for the management of public affairs and exercises a positive influence on its development. This was the scenario we have been able to bring about in our own independent Kazakhstan with a strong Presidential power, combining a period of political changes with the "Odyssey" of transferring the capital to the geopolitical centre of the Republic.

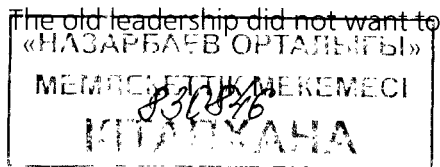
It follows that the new capital can and should play a role in mobilising an administrative class, a bureaucracy, to further the objectives of the government. In promoting the continued existence of the state, or rather its successful development, significant factors are bound to be both the role the capital has to perform within the state and its physical location.

In the specific case of Kazakhstan, the move to the new capital can be traced back in chronological terms to the events of the year 1985. That was when Mikhail Gorbachev launched the programme which had the most far reaching effects on the fate of what had seemed to be the might and longevity of the then Soviet Union. I myself had been fully convinced of the huge potential of the Soviet Union and wholeheartedly welcomed the April Plenum of the USSR Central Committee, when Gorbachev first set out his ideas on the indispensable need for a comprehensive transformation of Soviet society: what came to be known by the simple and clear name of "Perestroika". At the time I was Chairman of the government of the Kazakh SSR, and was aware that Gorbachev was quite loyal to me personally and understood my feelings extremely well. His own feelings, which

he shared with many others, were much the same: the system had to be changed.

To this very day I can remember the grinding apathy and hopelessness we felt at the feebleness of the old Soviet elite, as one by one they saw off their representatives at the funerals of Brezhnev, of Andropov, and of Chernenko. It was an unforgettable spectacle, watching how unwillingly and laboriously the old generation departed, how reluctantly they gave up their right to control the destiny of an enormous state, how stubbornly they held on to their power. All this made a disastrous impression not just on foreigners but also on us, the young leaders of a multinational state. Decisive steps had to be taken to shake up our entire society and force our citizens out of their apathy and lack of conviction. Gorbachev's first pronouncements and actions had such profound and uncontrollable consequences that a struggle, and a cruel one at that, is the only way to describe them. In my own case, fate decreed that I should find myself in the thick of these cruel and in some cases bloody confrontations.

It may not be putting it too strongly to say that the period of perestroika was from start to finish a real civil war. In 1988 armed conflict broke out in Nagorny Karabakh and then, in 1989, in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. At other times armed clashes and civil confrontations shook what had previously been relatively peaceful regions of the former Soviet Union. The sort of bloodshed that usually occurs in large-scale conflicts did not of course materialise; or at least it was not wide-spread. At all events relationships at local level were more civilised – not that when clashes did break out they were any less extreme. The struggles which did occur within Kazakhstan were particularly acute. The old management methods had fallen into disuse. They had been giving results up to a point, but because they were stuck in the past we found ourselves increasingly falling behind the rest of the world. The old leadership did not want to



recognise this. Why, they thought, did we have to worry what the rest of the world thinks, so long as we go on over-fulfilling the five year plans and meeting other such planning targets?

In this respect they were simply sticking their heads in the sand: they did not understand what this Gorbachev was up to and were confident that he was a passing phenomenon, after which things would settle back into their old grooves. Sooner or later he would come to his senses; if he failed to do so, someone would do it for him. Then the "battle" would resume, the targets would be manipulated, with effectively illegal methods for fulfilling or over-fulfilling the five year plans, and the usual fiddling of the figures relating to gross national product. Once again we would have the familiar indicators, orders, flying pennants and red banners. My own attitude to the ideas of perestroika was actually quite simple. Everything to do with the "Soviet" approach to economic management and accounting bored me stiff. I was bored with the lies about over-fulfilling the plan, exaggerating economic budgets and creative accounting. The fact that everybody was doing it was no comfort. Going on like that was to me not just objectionable, it was unbearable, and I hungered for change. I have to admit, however, that at the time it did not occur to me that the end result would be the emergence of the market economy and democratic rule.

The need for changes was something I saw, rather, as a demand for reforms which while not altering the essence of economic relationships would give them greater objectivity, truthfulness and honesty. In its early stages perestroika actually related to what nowadays we could call a "cosmetic" overhaul of the system. All the same I started to read western economists and political commentators, gradually got into the principles of the market economy and studied the basic systems used in the advanced countries of the contemporary world. This period of reflection and study of basic systems in the world economy took



up the years 1985 and 1986, when Kazakhstan was ruled by the completely retrograde regime of Gennady Kolbin. It looked as if the hopes of the old elite, the Soviet nomenklatura that sooner or later we would return to the old ways were beginning to be realised. We would be back once again to the old prescriptions and lies. The period from 1985 to 1989 saw an extremely stubborn, bitter but I would say subdued struggle between the old and the new.

Then in June 1989 I was appointed First Secretary of the Central Committee. We got rid of the old methods and the leadership which went with them, but we did not get rid of all the problems. In 1989 the economy of the Soviet Union completely and irreversibly went to hell. Butter, sausages, sugar, tobacco and much else vanished from the shelves, and at times there was even not enough bread to eat. The Soviet Union was not so much living as surviving. A little time went by, and then in December 1991 a general election took place in Kazakhstan at which I was elected President of the new state with the full and unconditional support of the people. It was then that I visited all parts of our enormous republic. I could see the bewilderment in our people's eyes, and feel how shattered they were at the course of events which had practically overnight transformed their lives and thrown into doubt the values by which they had previously been guided. Everyone without exception had only one question: "What's going to happen, how can we live like this?"

People were asking complicated but unequivocal questions to which they demanded simple, clear answers. This was a huge responsibility which I fully acknowledged. I had to take decisive action, and the times made it essential to respond on the greatest and most significant possible scale. The question was how to do this with the burdens of the old mentality which was alien to concepts such as private property, the market, pluralism and freedom of speech and conscience. New times had come, but



old habits of thought could not be got rid of so easily. The whole of our leading party elite had kept their old ways of thinking: "Well, we'll introduce the market, but then how do we control it?" How could you expect people like that to introduce us into the global economic system and refashion our own economy on market principles? A significant number of our intellectuals were just the same; they were used to the established value system and could not challenge the priorities of Soviet science and the fundamental views which underlay it. You can't shake up people who have no desire to be shaken up, or clean out brains stuffed with an unending input of congress documents and quotations from the great and not so great classics of Marxism-Leninism. How can you mobilise the ruling elite of the old regime who are still stuck in the old ways and could barely cope with the demands of their life in Alma Ata?

I well remember the upheavals when the changes began, the "parliamentary" years of 1991 and 1992. Heaven knows, I have nothing against parliamentarians. It is just that I am in favour of a constructive approach, and am aware that nature abhors a vacuum. At that time there was all too much of that in our politics and our striving for reform. Parliamentary discussions on the reform programme would simply get bogged down and drown in a distracted flood of philosophical arguments. I got tired, I got very tired. This was not because of constructive activity or having to deal with mountains of legislation, but because absolutely nothing was happening. When it happened that the next law had to be adopted today because by tomorrow it could do no good, and was met by streams of useless comment and rivers of verbiage, I felt like throwing myself into a sea of clean water, to emerge with fresh thoughts and with my spirits enlivened. More and more I was overwhelmed by the pressure to bring about cardinal change in everything, absolutely everything. I had to find a way out of this situation, this completely blind alley.

It might have been possible to overpower everyone, move the country and get rid of the ulcers of the past. It might have been possible to buckle down and make huge efforts to get rid of the conservatism and ossification of those who in principle should have moved you themselves. It might have been possible to continue like that for some time, but not indefinitely. What was needed was some extraordinary decision which would help to shake up people and literally "ventilate" their brains. In this way I came gradually to the conclusion that the only thing to do was to transfer the capital. It seemed that the vitally important role of the capital at such an epoch-making time had never been given any thought: what about the capital and moving its location?

It might look from the outside as if this idea was completely ridiculous; but I became more and more convinced that the only way to start and then continue with the reform programme was to put the question about a new capital at the heart of the questions relating to building up a new state. We had to look not just to the future, but also to the physical space we occupied. To achieve our reforms it was not only a matter of how we created our Kazakh society from within; it also depended on how we adapted to our place in the surrounding world. Our political life would develop successfully only if we also got our geopolitics right, taking our geographical situation into full account.

A country's capital city is after all not only at the centre of the nation state. It is not only the place where central power is concentrated, with a well-developed infrastructure for more or less productive activity by state employees and a hierarchy of bureaucrats. It is, in the first place, a geopolitical structure which determines how the state should develop; it makes it possible to shape society in accordance with the trends it shares with the rest of the world. For all the rationality and pragmatism which guides its activities it also has an important sacred and even mystical di-

mension. Its location, therefore, must fit in with the geopolitical balance of the state itself. In doing so, it should not be expected that this location will move about from one place to another for more or less superficial reasons. Nor does it mean, however, that this consideration should be overlooked at the most important turning points in the history of the country and its people, when moving the capital to a new location might be beneficial.

People often fail to understand, or to grasp fully, the significance of having the capital in one particular place or region: can it really matter if it is to the north or south, to the east or west? What difference can the location of the capital make, and how, they wonder, can it make such a vital difference to the fate and future of the state? In fact the location acquires particular importance just at those moments in the history of the state when a break with the old ways becomes essential; when they must give way to new types of social and political relationships, including the lifestyles of its citizens. I think we need to keep in mind how capitals become the focus of the state's traditions and lifestyle over the previous decades and centuries. From this perspective the capital city is more than the brains of the state; it is the central nervous system. As such it defines both the way its inhabitants think and the behaviour of all sections of the population, even of individual citizens. The capital is also the place where the way people behave in society takes shape.

There is a view, which I personally would reject, that the capital is the source of progress: often it is more notable for its conservatism. Revolutions and social upheavals which threaten the foundations of society usually begin in the provinces, on the periphery, and their success largely depends on whether or not they find support in the capital. The basic characteristic of the capital is that it does not create the social or political drama but rather puts the finishing touches to it, assimilating the traditions, structure and foundations which then take a long and difficult

time to get rid of. There is nothing very surprising in this. The country's problems, which in the end may prove to be fateful, tend to be smoothed out and become hazy because of the capital's special status. Putting it another way, culture is made in the capital, while politics is made in the provinces. They each have their own point of departure.

Thus it happens that at such fateful times in the history of a country, when its destiny, and that of its reform programme is being decided, the capital's location often comes into question: whether this is the time to transfer it from a conservative and traditional megalopolis to a provincial site where it will be open to the winds of change, or at least a place where new political and social ideas will not be actively resisted. We must be careful not to get this wrong: the provinces are open to change not because they are progressive – though this may be the case – but because they are more remote from the political life of the country and hence more philosophically disposed towards the process of reform. In this respect the capital's position is different, in that the most progressive and useful ideas can encounter such a negative reception that changes may be put off into the distant future. Very often, also, the strongest political factor in a shift of capital has been a drive to centralise power and unite a dispersed country in a single unitary state. This has been the case throughout the history of mankind.

If we look back four thousand years we see the great, ancient and enigmatic land of Egypt, which had managed to construct its extraordinary buildings before the period of constant invasions and raids. Although the country had only just been united under the overwhelming control of the Pharaoh it was still unstable to the point where at any time it might split up again into separate territories under the rule of local monarchs. Amenemkhet, who had only just become Pharaoh, understood all too well that the

then capital of Egypt was too decadent to withstand the centrifugal tendencies which threatened his whole kingdom with collapse. The Pharaoh therefore decided to transfer his capital to the northern city of Ittawi which was to become not just a strong well defended centre but a powerful bulwark and symbol of national unity. His concept was not put fully into effect, but the precedent had been established. Similarly, the Assyrian King Sennacherib decided that his capital city should be moved to Nineveh to centralise his control and unite the whole country, further away from the conservative and rebellious city of Ashur. Despite the premature decease of the King the new city became the capital of a single centralised state. A cuneiform inscription records Sennacherib as declaring: *"I rebuilt the ancient streets, I widened those that were too narrow and made the city as resplendent as the sun."*

The requirement that a capital city should be located at the physical centre of the state does not need to be taken too literally. It should be central not so much in the geographical sense as in the political, while being as close to the actual centre as possible. In short it should possess maximum geopolitical weight. I recall one critic in search of a scoop who calculated that if you measured the distances on a map of Kazakhstan you would find that Astana was far from being in the geographical centre, as indeed President Nazarbayev had himself pointed out on a number of occasions! This conscientious journalist had worked out that the distance to Astana from the southern border was almost three times greater than the distance from Astana to the northern one. One couldn't help wanting to ask the geometrician to point out the centre of an ellipse. The centre is about two or three times further from the opposite border than from the nearest one. That might look like a "flagrant eccentricity": but then you still have two centres, a northern and a southern capital...

Geopolitics is a different thing from geometry and the geographical centre of a state is even less like the geographical centre of a circumference. So the geopolitical centre of Kazakhstan is not just the result of linear measurements but in many respects is defined by non-linear considerations and perspectives. The issue was of putting the new capital where it would become the centre of Kazakhstan from many points of view. These would not only be geographical, but also geopolitical, social, economic, political and cultural, taking into account our links and relationships both within the country and beyond its borders. This is just what Astana became, as a new capital, close to the geographical centre, which could integrate and pull together the nation as a whole.

The displacement of the capital entails another continuing danger which must also be taken into account. It is not a simple matter to deprive a city of its status as a capital, any more than one can convert a provincial town into a new capital city in the full sense of the word. This means that tensions between the old and the new capital are bound to persist. They can even become more acute, to the point where rivalry between them reaches abnormal and undesirable proportions or even leads to considerably graver consequences such as an actual split. For the newly fledged capital itself, a particular danger is that its very newness will cause it to suffer from historical amnesia. Unlike an old capital with a culture formed over the centuries and in tune with the history of the state, a new one represents a blank sheet which needs to acquire a past and a future; this calls for the careful and well thought through creation of a historical record. A capital city has always been the symbol of the state and the custodian of its cultural and social traditions; but the time comes when everything about it changes: its culture, economic life and existence as a social entity. Such changes do not demand its physical displacement to another location; even political upheaval in



a society is neither a necessary or sufficient reason to move the capital to a more stable part of the country.

It may also happen that processes of transformation in a country's political life, culture and society may be accompanied by changes in the geopolitical background against which the capital operates and its actual physical surroundings. And if one such major change does affect the normal development of the state this may indeed also make a change of location essential. Not that it is always necessary to follow the demands of the geopolitical situation to the point where everything should be changed to accommodate them. At all events one should avoid too close a connection between geopolitical changes and the physical location of the capital city; otherwise the situation could get absurdly out of hand. I recall that during the period of perestroika undertaken by Mikhail Gorbachev there was a vogue in political circles for the concept of a "wandering capital". This led gradually to a climate in which people favoured the idea of self-determination for the Union republics and decentralisation of power from what was held to be the over-concentrated power in Moscow: not that anyone was in favour of breaking up the Soviet Union itself.

The idea was that the role of capital city could be rotated in sequence from Moscow to the capitals of the other Union republics. Then once the republics' ambitions had been satisfied and they had got over their centrifugal leanings, power would return to Moscow. In other words: *"the wolves' appetites are sated and the sheep are untouched"*. Personally I found the rotation idea at first sight quite absurd. The main point was that its originators made centralisation as an inherent characteristic of a capital city into a "categorical imperative". To be practical about it, though, a capital has quite a number of functions which are no less important than the functions it performs as a symbol of national unity. It seems clear that the "wandering capital" con-



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МУЗЕЙ

cept might achieve the basic unifying role; but it would entail so many side effects that the very idea would not only have prolonged the USSR's agony but could have proved to be its principal catalyst. Thus Alexander of Macedon, the arch-strategist of the Corinthian Union, having brought about his grandiose project of Hellenising the accessible regions of the Oikoumene, then decided to transfer the capital of the new Empire further east to the city of Babylon. Alexander's idea was that from then on eastern Babylon would become the guiding force and centre of Hellenistic civilisation.

There is one important consideration here that must not be overlooked. It is not just heads of states that create new capitals, but capitals which shape the leadership of their countries. The eastern influences of the new capital and the lands he had newly occupied did after all give Alexander the Great a new perception of the world itself, and this came to be reflected in an understanding of how the cultures of the east and the west could achieve a synthesis. At the start the Macedonians and Greeks at Alexander's court were uneasy at the introduction of eastern influences into their midst, while his Persian subjects were also unhappy with what they saw as excessive Hellenisation of their ancient Persian culture. But it was the transfer of the capital which in various ways enabled Alexander to exert his influence on the mentality and inter-relationships of his subjects, by bringing permanence and stability to the multifarious populations of an empire which stretched from Greece itself to the Indian sub-continent. Babylon itself survived for thousands of years under a succession of new names until it eventually, as the beautiful and ancient city of Baghdad, became capital of the modern state of Iraq.

It can also be quite usual for one particularly significant historical development in the life of a country's capital, such as the move from ancient Moscow to the new city of St Petersburg, to

be widely seen as the solution to the problem posed by Peter the First of "opening a window into Europe". The swampy lowlands at the mouth of the river Neva as it flowed into the Baltic Sea became the place in the year 1711 from which the colossal landmass of the Russian Empire was to embark on the process of becoming European. Peter's triumph at Poltava over the Swedish King Karl persuaded him that his country could become fully European not just through force of arms but by possessing a dazzling new capital which would stand on the banks of that immemorial European sea, the Baltic. But sober reflection might also have led to the conclusion that Russia could have successfully achieved its European destiny by something other than a mechanical shift of its capital closer to the hallowed heartlands of Europe. After all Moscow was already situated in the European part of the Eurasian super-continent and it should have been perfectly possible to launch its Europeanisation from the white walls of the existing capital. Nowadays many people still remember the entertaining and at times frankly trivial anecdotes about Peter's I efforts to inculcate European habits into the Boyar nobility: the rooting out of their beards, removal of their traditional kaftans in favour of European linen, the despatch of their offspring to the Netherlands and other European countries to be educated.

But more seriously, the conservative instincts of such a powerful elite as those of the Boyars were so powerful that even the autocrat himself had to take due account of them. Their discreet resistance to the new ways of thinking represented by the introduction of European lifestyles was strong enough to enforce limitations such as those connected with fashions in beards, while Peter the Great's determination to refashion Russian life to conform with western European manners was also great enough to bring about some compromises with his nobles' resistance.

The transfer from the ancient capital to the remote and flood-prone site occupied by St Petersburg was Peter's personal

compromise between the old and the new. The hereditary nobility who remained in Moscow basically held on to their privileges and the lifestyles they had been brought up with down the centuries. The Empire's administrative functions were transferred to St Petersburg and staffed for the most part by representatives of the state bureaucracy, made up of the business class in the Russian population, such as merchants and craftspeople, and even in certain cases by individuals drawn from what might be called the "lower orders". It goes without saying that the commanding positions in the state administration were occupied by Boyars and representatives of the old nobility.

The combination of the new conditions in which the state administration had to be conducted and the demands imposed on it by proximity to European institutions nonetheless obliged the Russian ruling class to start thinking more like Europeans themselves. Furthermore the St Petersburg nobility had to take decisions in which they could no longer rely on guidance from the Patriarchate in Moscow or the weight of decisions taken over the centuries by the Boyars. The Russian economy had been enfeebled by the arbitrary practices of feudal times and needed an infusion of fresh blood which Peter considered could only come from the adoption of the market principles employed in Europe. The transfer of the capital to St Petersburg was the only way to overcome the stubborn resistance of the nobility and to impose capitalist methods by forcing them on the empire through the window to Europe which Peter had personally flung open.

The authority of Moscow, incidentally, remained high throughout and practically unshakable, even when times were difficult. Indeed even after the official move to St Petersburg, Moscow retained many authoritative functions and a number of governmental institutions were left in place in the old capital. Indeed it regained its official position as capital of the Russian Empire for a period of four years, from 1728 to 1732. From a

historical perspective other such examples of capital cities being moved to further the development of the state as a whole are a well-nigh traditional practice.

Thus in the 1950s the Brazilian President Juscelino Kubitschek de Oliveira decided to transfer the capital of the country to a new city, to be constructed in the thinly populated uplands of the interior and given the same name, Brasilia, as the country as a whole. In my view the Brazilian experience deserves particular attention; not because there is any close analogy with our experience in Kazakhstan, nor because there are conflicting opinions on the justification or correctness of the decision to shift the capital from Rio de Janeiro to the depths of the interior. It is rather that the experience with Brasilia illustrates all the typical causes and consequences of transferring the capital from a sufficiently well-developed city to a remote and backward region of the country, with all the mistakes and problems which the process clearly entails, along with the successes and prospects for the future which also emerge from it.

I find it interesting that the idea of transferring the state capital from the first such city, San Salvador, and the second, Rio de Janeiro, had been in the air practically from the first beginnings of the new country. It had taken hold to such an extent that when Brazil was declared a republic in 1889 its constitution contained a specific reference to the transfer of the capital. When Brazil was first colonised only the coastal regions of the country were taken over, and it was on the Atlantic Ocean that the first towns appeared, and in due course grew to become huge cities. For a long time the regions of the interior, and in particular the savannas of the Brazilian uplands remained almost untouched and unpopulated. However for the time being the provision in the state constitution about transfer of the capital was left unfulfilled, from an absence of political will and for the lack of any objective reason to do anything about it. But as time

went on social, political and economic developments in Brazil prompted increasing attention to be paid to it.

Keeping pace with the growth of economic activity in the large industrial cities of the Atlantic seaboard was the rise of what was popularly known as "coffee and milk". This vivid expression was very much to the point: it described the local oligarchy who earned their living from the sale of the renowned Brazilian coffee and the scarcely less well known Brazilian meat and milk products. At the same time the overpopulated city of Rio de Janeiro began to experience the full range of social problems which huge cities are heir to, particularly when they have never benefited from urban planning or programmes designed to provide any form of developed infrastructure. Eventually in the mid-1940s the Brazilian government ordered searches to be carried out across the vast extent of the country to identify a "promised land" in which a new capital could be constructed. After lengthy investigations such a location was identified. The expert view was that the best place for it would be at the intersection of three Brazilian state borders: those of Minas Gerais, Goiás and Mato Grosso, as the most suitable site for a new city destined to become the capital of the renewed Brazilian republic.

The proposed site consisted of an area of low hills about 1,170 metres above sea level; it was surrounded by savannah with outcrops of woodland, and close to a huge reservoir to ensure the capital was well supplied with water. Altogether the natural setting was as untouched as possible. The decision to go ahead with construction was eventually taken in 1956 and was almost immediately followed by a great flurry of activity. Within four years, on 21 April 1960, the new capital was formally inaugurated. As in the case of Washington, which occupies its own District of Columbia, Brasilia was also given its own capital territory, known as the Federal Capital District to mark its

special status and extraterritorial character. It is worth pointing out that there is a great deal of sense in locating the capital in a special area of its own. It ensures that as the country's principal administrative centre the capital is a particular and unique creation which belongs to the whole country and to each of its citizens, regardless of where they live. This extraterritorial status also serves to emphasise that the capital does not belong to any particular state or region, but rather belongs to the state as a whole, with national rather than regional associations. This is quite usual, in that by occupying a neutral location the capital avoids entanglement with particular social or political groups and is distanced from the problems of individual geographical regions of the country.

As I have already indicated, the city of Washington, which was founded in 1791 and became the capital in the year 1800, was allocated its own special zone, the Federal District of Columbia, which was carved out of the territory of two adjacent States, those of Virginia and Maryland. This precedent was also adopted in the case of Australia. Two powerful ports, the cities of Melbourne and Sydney, had competed for the right to become capital of the Australian union, and in order not to exacerbate the rivalry between them the government adopted a judgement worthy of King Solomon that a separate extraterritorial entity should be formed – in the year 1913 – and given the name of the Australian Capital Territory. A new capital was then constructed and given the name of Canberra.

Another reason for a capital city to be moved to a new site has been the existence of a threatened attack from hostile forces. For instance one of the leaders of the anti-Mongolian rising by the Red Turbans in China, Zhu Yuanzhang, after seizing Peking from the pro-Mongol Yuan Dynasty in 1367 was proclaimed Emperor and founded the new Ming Dynasty. The capital was then transferred for safety to the southern city of Nan-



king, away from the Mongol conquerors, with the result that Peking became Northern Capital while Nanking became capital of the South. A similar situation arose in Russia in recent times. After the October Revolution in 1917 and the proclamation of the Soviet Republic the new rulers and their institutions could not remain in close proximity to their potential enemies. The civil war and military intervention made it necessary to transfer the capital of the RSFSR to the safety of Moscow, and this took place on 12 March 1918.

This all goes to show how many different reasons there have been in the course of human history for capital cities to move from one geographical location to another, and how many facts have emerged from the history of the world community to illustrate the processes involved in such movements at different periods and within a variety of human populations. The examples I have given here, furthermore, are little more than drops in the ocean of facts relating to the life and death of capital cities, of which the historical record could tell us so much more. The Chinese Empire, for instance, has seen its capital move more than six times in the course of its hundreds and thousands of years of continuous history. The present capital of the Chinese state first came into existence on an existing site from the earliest period of human settlement which was known as Yuzhou. Peking was the political centre of China over a period of many centuries and often changed its name, taking its present designation in 1403, not long before it became the official capital of the Celestial Empire in the year 1420.

In the course of the centuries which followed, Peking fulfilled its historic mission of consolidating the Chinese state and spreading its influence throughout eastern Asia. After a brief period of eclipse Peking regained its position as capital of China in 1912, though during a period of upheaval Chiang Kai Shek then moved the seat of government to Nanking in 1928. Only



twenty years later Mao Zedong, having driven the nationalists out of continental China, restored Peking's position as capital of the country in 1949. There can be little doubt that Peking is a successful example of a capital which has shifted its location over the years and converted itself in recent times into a city of vast extent and authority amongst the nations on this planet.

The Japanese Emperor Meiji changed the name of his capital, Edo, which means "Water Gates", to Tokyo, or "Eastern Capital" in the year 1868. At the time Edo was the greatest city in Japan, with a population of over one million; it had taken on this role from the ancient city of Kyoto, preceded at various previous periods by such cities as Nara, Nagaoku and Heian. In moving the capital a decisive factor had been the determination of the Shogun Ieyasu Tokugawa to unite a fragmented country and ensure that it would be stable enough to ensure continuing development. In this he was not mistaken: the Japanese capital is now an example of outstanding technological dynamism and one of the most powerful financial centres in the world.

Another case is the removal of the capital of the United States from Philadelphia to Washington in the year 1800. George Washington was fully aware that consolidation of the independence that had been won from the British monarch demanded the establishment of a political centre for the young American federation. This move was crowned with indisputable success: Washington is today the capital of the world's strongest power, whose economic and political influence extends to all continents on our planet. The Spanish King Philip II moved his capital to Madrid in the geographic centre of the Pyrenean peninsula. The capital of Finland shifted to Helsinki at the beginning of the nineteenth century; the capital of Norway to Oslo, and of India to New Delhi. In 1971 Islamabad replaced Karachi as capital of Pakistan, and Abidjan has been replaced as capital of Cote d'Ivoire by Yamoussoukro.

The general commanding the Turkish army, Mustafa Atatürk, moved the capital of the Ottoman Empire from Istanbul to Ankara, which became the centre of the national liberation movement against the Entente powers and in due course the capital of the fast-growing and dynamic republic of Turkey. The huge conurbation of Lagos, formerly capital of Nigeria, with a population of six million, made over its administrative functions to the small city of Abuja, with a population of no more than 230,000. It is apparent from this that the "star map" of world capitals is immobile only on superficial examination. But a more attentive glance will show that from the historical perspective the stars do not in fact stay still, but are quite frequently in motion.

The conclusion one can draw from all this is, I think, that a sufficiently clear and transparent transfer of the national capital at various times and in various countries has usually not been at the whim or diktat of just one individual. It has almost always come about in response to the requirements of the state, whatever these may have been. But such moves have been positive in their effects only when they have been accompanied by the most careful consideration and driven by a resolute political will.

## THE CARAVAN OF NAMES

We have already seen how the history of mankind abounds in instances of capital cities being renamed or moved elsewhere. The reasons have been extremely various, from the mercantile to the universal. But there is one rule which can be observed easily enough: scarcely any major or medium sized power in the world has managed to avoid a move at some stage or another. Our own country, Kazakhstan, has been no exception. I am not sure if we hold the record, but it is a fact that no fewer than five cities have been declared our capital in the course of the twentieth

eth century. It is of course the case that throughout that period Kazakhstan was not an independent state; whatever logic lay behind the decisions involved, it did not spring from any independent decision by the Kazakhs themselves. I am personally in no position to judge if our capital changes are likely to get us into the *Guinness Book of Records*. That is not what we are about in the present case; at all events our history is not confined to the last century and it was not then that changes in the location of our capital began.

What really struck me as I studied the historical background is that throughout the various periods in the history of the Great Steppe the principal settlements and cities of all the Turkic tribes were located on what is now the territory of Kazakhstan: these ancient towns tell the story, whether it is Suyab, Kulan, Taraz, Balasagun, Sygnak or Turkestan. More to the point, these were not simply obscure urban settlements but ancient towns whose cultures reached their highest points in the Middle Ages or extended back into still earlier times, when they were renowned not only in the Asian regions of Eurasia but were scarcely less well known in Europe as well. They are still recognised there as vital transport links in the trade that went on between Europe and Asia. It is very appropriate here to quote from the speech which His Holiness Pope John Paul II gave during his official friendly visit to Kazakhstan in 2001, recalling the historic connections between the West and the East: "I am delighted to see cities like Balasagun, Merke, Kupan, Taraz, Otrar, Turkestan and other important trade and cultural centres. They were home to outstanding figures in the sciences, the arts and history, such as Abu Nasr al-Farabi, who reintroduced Aristotle to Europe."

There is clear evidence from the historical chronicles that the city of Suyab in the region of the Seven Rivers and the Chu River valley was one of the principal cities of the Turkic Khanate, and capital of the Western Turkic Khanate which was formed some-

what later. The Turkic Khanate itself was the most extensive unified state in the Great Steppe, with a sphere of influence which spread across the vast expanses of Eurasia from the banks of the Danube as far as Korea, and from the Gobi Desert to the waters of Lake Baikal. The founder of the Turkic states is regarded as Bumyn, who was given the title of "Turkic Khan" in the year 551 of the present era. Internecine strife between Bumyn's successors led in 603 to the collapse of the Turkic Khanate, after which the Western Turkic Khanate was formed and made its capital in the city of Suyab. From 704 to 756 Suyab, jointly with Kyungut on the river Ili was also capital of Tyurgesh Khanate which replaced the Western Turkic Khanate when the latter succumbed to tribal and internecine conflict and to incursions into the Seven Rivers region by Chinese detachments from the Tang Empire.

It is also well established that the towns of Kupan (now the Pugovaya railway station) and Taraz (known in Soviet times as Dzhambul) at one time served as capitals and military headquarters under the Karluk Khanate. One of the biggest trading and artisan centres of the Seven Rivers region, the town of Balasagun, was together with Bukhara in the period 940 to 1210 one of the capital cities of the powerful Karakhanid state, which brought under its unified control a number of the Turkic tribes. Sygnak was capital of the Kipchak Khanate which was active from the tenth century to the year 1219.

The mediaeval Arab chronicler Ruzbekhani reported that Sygnak in those days was a flourishing, well-fortified city with extensive buildings, surrounded by vast cultivated fields. To the north-west in the direction of Syrdarya was a region of sand-dunes, of which Ruzbekhani recounted, "It is said that the sand-dunes are the place where Turkestan ends and Uzbekistan begins". When the Russian Empire first developed its colonial policies in the region with the incorporation of the Kazakh tribal clans they made Orenburg the capital of their Steppe domains,

and installed there what would now be called the Office of the Governor-General of the Turkestan and Steppe territories. This did not however signify the complete loss by the Aga-sultans of their right to conduct their own policies; they established their own headquarters alongside Orenburg in what amounted to capitals for their tribes and clans people.

After the Great October Revolution from 5 to 13 December 1917 the second All Kazakh congress took place; it was quite a representative gathering, with delegates from the Bukeyev Horde, the Ural, Turgai, Akmola, Semipalatinsk, Semirechye (Seven Rivers) and Samarkand Oblasts and the Altai Province. Its organisers were representatives of the Kazakh intelligentsia and the most outstanding leaders of the Kazakh people, A Bukeykhanov, A Baitursinov, E Omarov, S Doshchanov and M Dulatov; the central topic they addressed was the creation of Kazakh autonomy.

Eventually a unanimous decision was taken to declare the autonomy of the Kazakh oblasts. The first alternative elections to be held in Kazakhstan, a fact which also needs emphasising, also led to the appointment of Alikhan Bukeykhanov as first head of government of "independent" Kazakhstan and Chairman of the All-Kazakh National Council. The capital of the autonomous Kazakhstan was declared to be the part of the city of Semipalatinsk which stands on the left bank of the river Irtysh; it was given the name of Alash for that purpose. Unfortunately Semipalatinsk lasted as capital of autonomous Kazakhstan for a very brief period: only up to 1919, when the "white" nationalist movement was unleashed in Turkestan and Siberia. With the establishment of Soviet power the capital of the "Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR)" once again – in the year 1920 – became the city of Orenburg, thus recovering the powers it had possessed during the period of the Autocracy. It should be recognised, however, that Orenburg was generally regarded as a

temporary capital of the autonomous Soviet republic, given that it had unfortunate associations with the previous regime under the Tsarist Governor-General.

As the local situation stabilised after the end of the Civil War and more careful thought could be given to handling relations with the administrative structures of the new ASSR, the Soviet authorities began to look at the possibilities for relocating the capital to somewhere pleasanter and more convenient. An important factor in this respect was the physical remoteness of Orenburg from the major concentrations of Kazakh population in the southern oblasts of the Kazakh Autonomous Republic. As alternatives, attention focussed on the following towns and cities: Aktoba, Semipalatinsk, Ural'sk, Akmola, Shimkent, Auliye-Ata and Ak-Mechet'. Of these, Semipalatinsk inevitably fell by the wayside straight away. At one time it had been capital of the Alash Autonomous Territory, which had tried to assert its independence from Soviet power. Ural'sk was ideologically unsuitable: during the grim days of the civil war it had been the stronghold and virtual capital of the "White" Kazakhs. Great hopes had earlier been reposed in Tashkent, but territorial and national considerations had led to its being assigned to Uzbekistan, which of course ruled it out as a possible capital for Kazakhstan. Eventually the choice fell on Ak-Mechet' (today known as Kyzyl-Orda), which at one time had been a steppe outpost of the Kokand Khanate. The Fifth Congress of Kazakh soviets was held there from 15 to 19 April. It changed the name of the Republic from the "Kirghiz" ASSR, by which it had been briefly known after the Revolution, to the "Kazakh Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (KASSR)". The delegates also decided to change the old tsarist name of the capital, Ak-Mechet'-meaning the White Mosque, to the completely Soviet one of Kyzyl-Orda, or Red Horde. In the middle of that year the most important official institutions of the young Kazakh Republic transferred to Kyzyl-Orda, but it soon



became clear that the city enjoyed the status of official capital only in name. Administering the vast autonomous territory of Kazakhstan from this territorially closed off place proved to be simply impossible, in the first place because it had no communications networks which would allow it to function in this way.

Then in 1927 construction of a new trans-Siberian highway began, with a route which took it through one of the most heavily populated parts of Kazakhstan, the city of Alma-Ata. Up to the year 1921 Alma-Ata had been known as Verny and in earlier times it had been an important outpost of tsarist power in Semirechye and the Turkestan region. Its convenient geographical location on the intersection of the main transport route across the Great Steppe then led to its designation as capital of the KASSR. Thus for the first time, on 3 April 1927, the map of Kazakhstan displayed the name, now so well known to us, of Alma-Ata as the new capital of the country; though the physical transfer of the government did not come about until two years later, in 1929. The move from Kyzyl-Orda was marked for me by one particular episode. I had managed to find some free time to explore on horseback the lower reaches of the river Ili in the country north of Almaty. I can still recall coming across some enormous ruins in the middle of the unending steppe country. There on the plain were half-ruined buildings and complete ruins which had once had brick walls and wooden roofs. On one of these, intriguingly, I could even make out the word "Kazakhstan!" almost obliterated by the action of the elements. It turned out that back in 1929, when the problem of moving the capital from Kyzyl-Orda was being decided, the idea had emerged of building a new capital "from scratch". Furthermore the proposal was that this new capital should be erected 120 kilometres north of Almaty on the banks of the river Ili. This was more than a mere proposal, since the initial stages of the plan were already being put into practical effect. A new railway station had been built, along with a num-



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## THE HORIZONS OF ALMATY

During a visit to New York the well-known Russian journalist Dmitri Savitski once asked Yosif Brodski the familiar question: "Do you like New York?" Brodski's reply, though seemingly ambiguous, was straightforward enough, if unexpected: "Paris didn't work out, at first I saw Rome". One can be quite sure that foreign or Kazakh citizens who in the past have visited our country or two of its capitals on more than one occasion might well respond, on being asked how they liked Astana, in the same spirit as Brodski: "Astana didn't work out, at first I saw Almaty". It may well be that we shall also hear such replies some years from now. But perhaps also we might hear, "Almaty didn't work out, at first I saw Astana".

Almaty, then Alma-Ata, is the city of my youth, of my childish impressions and memories. In the old Alma-Ata I knew every street and alley-way. I remember that in the place where the Mayor's office now stands there was once an enormous – to my childish eyes at least – field planted with maize. There was also a huge field which extended out from Satpayev Street and in the place where the School Palace is now there was once a bazaar. It was not large, and the ground was very boggy. Old-timers may well remember the times when one could expect to see round there the mountainous figure – some two metres tall – of a Chechen named Akhtay. I can certainly remember seeing him often and would stare at him, open-mouthed. The impression he made was almost too much for everyone, especially for younger folk.

One thing I am in no doubt about, and that is that everyone who lived in Alma-Ata regarded it as the most beautiful city in the world. I am saying nothing new here: I myself love Almaty, the hanging gardens of its squares and parks, the Tien Shan

pyramids, the Kok Tyube Beacon and the other wonders of the world, and also think it the world's loveliest city.

Loveliest alas does not mean the best. Sooner or later one comes to the realisation that a capital city should stand where it will best serve the state and society. So my critics should note that I removed the capital from Almaty out of love...for Almaty itself. It reflects no discredit on the new capital to say that there is a measure of truth in that. When we speak of the technical problems Almaty faced as a capital city, we have in mind that the purpose of resolving them was to ensure that Almaty would always remain the most beautiful of cities. By the early 1990s, in the run up to our attainment of independence, Almaty was already starting to experience extreme demographic pressures. It had already exceeded one million inhabitants and was approaching the 1,200,000 mark.

The original city plan had been designed to cater for no more than 400,000 inhabitants, and given that the city was located in a natural and by no means extensive basin in the foothills of the Alatau range that meant that the pressures were indeed enormous. To the south Almaty was squeezed by the mountains, to the north was agricultural land, and to the east and west the pressure came from the towns of Talgar and Kaskelen. As a result Almaty began to experience the virtual collapse of its existing living space. Accommodating new inhabitants, who were migrating to the southern capital in increasing numbers, could be achieved not by creating more space for them within the city but only by increasing the density of the population. Doing this led inevitably to reduction of open spaces and forested parkland within the city limits, with damaging consequences for its already none too favourable ecological circumstances. The natural "unexpandability" of the natural basin in which the city stood, the sharp increase in traffic density and with it the growth in

population were gradually bringing the ecological situation in Almaty close to crisis point.

Approximate estimates of the fixed population of Almaty in the year 2005 indicate a figure of 1.2 million, with those in employment numbering around 550,000. On this basis the demographic pressures will steadily increase both in the short and the longer term. The attractions of Almaty to migrants have thus led to it becoming the most heavily populated city in Kazakhstan, as well as the most polluted. The over-concentration of the urban population, proliferation of problem areas, and deterioration of the infrastructure for lack of adequate recreational space have obliged policy makers to focus primarily on tackling internal issues. In consequence, as the biggest city in the country as well as its capital, Almaty found itself increasingly looking only inwards, isolated from the populations occupying the rest of the country. This in turn led to the loss of its geopolitical role in coordinating and mobilising the resources of the state as a whole. This meant, in effect, that Almaty could no longer actively promote development in nearby urban centres, let alone across the whole of the country, nor generate the national progress that would accompany it.

We should compare this situation with what is happening now. Astana has used its new geopolitical role to ensure that development has simultaneously spread to other towns and cities. Astana has generated waves of activity which have pumped life blood through the country's arteries and in turn revitalised other towns and regions. Thus the inhabitants of towns physically closest to Astana, such as Kokshetau or Karaganda, Kostanay or Pavlodar, have been actively infected with a new spirit of development and progress. The administrative centres of the other oblasts have had the same experience of Astana's energy and spirit of renewal in all areas, including infrastructural development. Almaty was never able to stimulate this kind of reac-

tion because it was too self-absorbed: a capital city must be able not just to achieve a leading status but also, objectively, to make itself felt. Thus the particular combination of economic, social, ecological, geopolitical and geophysical factors at work in the city eventually exceeded the limits beyond which the territory and its population could grow. The city's growing prosperity was largely due to the influx of population and the parallel growth of industry needed to satisfy the working needs of the new inhabitants. The increased streams of goods, the lowering of costs per unit of production, the growth of productive power, and the increase in the taxes received were all factors which made Almaty the largest donor to the republic's budget. The purely economic consequences of this had beneficial effects both for the Soviet and for the post-Soviet periods in Almaty's development. As was only to be expected, however, the effect of this was to saturate the economy to the point where it could expand no further.

Gradually the costs of urban production began to exceed income from the overloaded combination of industry, the transport system and the population itself. And costs began to bear most heavily not even so much on the economy as on the even more important ecological problems that were being generated. What usually happens when cities are under great strain because of pressures on the available space for expansion is that there will be a significant outflow of the working population to the suburbs. But the problem Almaty faced was that "de-urbanisation" had negative rather than positive effects. Any outflow of the population was impossible, since as I have already noted, there was practically nowhere for them to disperse to. Increased productive capacity therefore could not lead to any such relocation to suburban areas but to increased population density within the existing urban boundaries. The social and ecological situation in Almaty became extremely tense and a way of resolving it had to be found.

It was all too apparent that if the city continued to attract inward migration in a manner which was very difficult to control the negative consequences could only increase; eventually they would lead to social and ecological catastrophe. We could all see Almaty being stifled by its excessive traffic and by the jams which formed at the rush hours. And what would happen if all government institutions, the entire city bureaucracy and all organisations required to keep the city's infrastructure functioning were to remain there? These, broadly speaking, were the problems which were inflicting great damage on the infrastructure and environment of the whole city. They had to be tackled, and tackled quickly. The move of the capital to Akmola had of course its own objectives, and was not simply a way of resolving the challenges facing Almaty. The move nevertheless did a great deal to lighten the load of the accumulated problems and to reinvigorate the southern capital.

The migration of civilian populations to Kazakhstan's northern regions, including the new capital, led to a significant alleviation of the demographic and other problems faced by the two biggest cities in the country. The resultant loss of population from Almaty was all to the good, and benefited the development of the new city on the river Ishima. Astana continues to experience an increase in its population largely as a result of migration from the northern agricultural regions and from Almaty itself. Intensive construction programmes and infrastructure development demands more and more urban services and the training of professional and technical personnel. Astana is now the most rapidly developing city in Kazakhstan, both in terms of population and overall facilities. Towns on the transportation routes, like Balkhash, Chu, Karaganda and other residential areas are flourishing right before our eyes, and all the signs of urban development are visible in regional and oblast centres such as Karaganda, Kokshetau, Taldykorgan, Petropavlovsk, Semipal-

atinsk and Ust'-Kamenogorsk. People are now beginning to understand that status as a capital, oblast or regional centre means more for a populated area than mere words or some passing fashion. It was intended to be, and in practice has proved to be, a real and powerful spur to development and progress. I recall that in the heat of the move to Astana and afterwards there was ironic speculation about moving the capital round from one depressed town or region to another until all of them had been given a boost. There is no need to exaggerate. The important thing to realise is that there is an optimal placing of the capital on the territory of the state, like the King on a chess board, so that the former can control and influence everything that arises on the latter. We have now come to a clear understanding that the best location for the capital of our country is where it now stands, in Astana, from which we can exercise balanced and effective influence aimed at the rapid social and economic progress of all the country's regions. Without any exceptions.

We had already observed how Kazakh society at the beginning of the 1990s was – for objective reasons – in an unhealthy and vulnerable state. The structure of the capital and the pace of urbanisation could not exert enough of a positive influence on the social make-up of the state, its psychology or its general well-being. The only way to remedy our ailing economic and state structures was to bring about a fundamental break with our old and well-worn conceptions of the role of the state and the way we organised ourselves. The question did not revolve round the issue of whether Almaty could or could not be the capital because of its own objective circumstances. It went much wider than that. It came down to the question of rethinking the political geography of our country. It was a matter of finding the best possible conditions in which the country could not just exist, but develop further in building a democratic society and a national market economy with the maximum degree of regional



and global integration. Examination of the global issue had to begin with the local aspects: was Almaty capable of becoming a centre for progress and development to the extent that it could exercise a positive and dynamic influence over all regions of Kazakhstan?

A little reflection will reveal that the question of moving the capital involves something of a dilemma, in the sense that one must decide whether the move was dictated by the assumption that Almaty could no longer fulfil that role, or that it had to be moved anyway for a number of other reasons. I think there is only one possible reply to this question; whether the move came about because Almaty was no longer capable of meeting the demands with which the capital had to deal, or whether the shift northwards was to by far the best location, given that it had to be in the centre of the country to satisfy the new criteria which Kazakhstan's capital had to meet. In the days when the state enjoyed stability both internally and in relation to its political and social resources Almaty was fully capable of exercising its capital functions efficiently. Then, however, the Soviet Union collapsed, accompanied by a cardinal change in the entire system of international relations. The early years of independence and sovereignty in the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) brought into play a geopolitical factor which, once dormant, now became very important for the individual states.

The political, social and economic crisis which the CIS countries experienced after attaining their independence developed as strongly as it did because the geopolitical factors provoked such destructive tendencies within them. In Soviet times resettlement was enforced on many different peoples on a huge scale, borders were arbitrarily drawn up within the new USSR, a single economic system suited to the needs of a great power was imposed without regard to national economic structures, and traditional cultures and life-styles were completely disregarded. All

of this created a mass of geopolitical factors which defined the relationships between the new sovereign states and affected their individual well-being. I am quite sure that if Almaty had coped with its responsibilities as the state capital only from a technical point of view that would have been only half the battle. After all, many capitals across the globe are constantly besieged by problems, ranging from the social, economic, ecological to many other areas of their activity. That was not the point. Almaty was not burdened with geopolitical problems so overwhelming that they needed to be dealt with in the first and most important phases of Kazakhstan's sovereign independence. To put it rather plainly, when the independent state and transitional economy were first being created Almaty could not rule in the new style, while the country's regions did not want to go on living in the old one. Time is precious, and Almaty could not feel itself to be the capital of a sovereign and independent republic while in its heart it still remained capital of a Soviet Socialist Republic. What the country needed as its animating force was not an institutionalised and static city, still with its eyes philosophically fixed on the grandiose eminences of the Alatau range, but a dynamic, accessible capital which ordinary people could understand would be open to all the winds that blow; and which was not afraid to face up to the challenges posed by the political and social upheavals which were reaching it across the Great Steppe.

Another consideration is the fact that Almaty could not remain capital of Kazakhstan just for political and geopolitical reasons, but also for technical ones. In that respect one can say that the local and global, or technical and geopolitical reasons for the move intersected in the same place and at the same time. It should be added that Almaty's change of status did not mean that it ceased to be the most beautiful and powerful city in the country. Even if one did not like it as a capital, one could not fail to love it as a city. The decision to withdraw its position as capital

was motivated by the desire to revitalise the ecological, social and indeed geophysical infrastructure of the city. It was a matter of self-preservation, and painful as it may have been, awareness of the truth behind it will have made it possible, with time, for Almaty to be reconciled to the change.

There is no question but that Almaty will develop further, though it should be in the sense of greater quality, rather than quantity. It should not be a source of pride that the city occupies first place in the country in terms of the size of its population or the number of cars per head. But if Almaty becomes the biggest financial centre in Central Asia, the finest looking city in the CIS or the environmentally cleanest city in Kazakhstan that would, I think, be a greater cause for pride.... In this respect I have the fewest worries about Almaty. I am absolutely convinced that Almaty has too much strength and vitality not to promote itself on its own. I always felt that for such a city capital status was not so very significant: Almaty would not fall into decline just because of it. Indeed the city will gradually and determinedly win through and become a completely contemporary megalopolis.

So far as Astana is concerned, in its role as a driving force in Kazakhstan's renaissance the city has already by its very existence and innovating power stimulated progress and development in the various regions of the country. The strength of the new capital has been to mobilise, not destroy, in awakening the potential of all the regions of Kazakhstan and raising waves of progress in cities both nearby and in the remotest areas of the country. The Kazakhstan of today is no longer the republic of the early 1990s which was more or less written off by friends and opponents alike as a territorial basket-case, riven by ethnic conflict, social and economic collapse and shoot-outs in the streets. There have been all sorts of forecasts, some of which have been justified, others not. That particular view of our country has not

prevailed. Today's Kazakhstan is a stable and solidly grounded state, firmly and uncompromisingly committed to the path of social and economic development and to the fundamental reform of our social and political system. As to the pace of our development, Kazakhstan is ahead, in some cases to a significant extent, of many CIS countries which embarked on their development of market economies at the same time as we did. I am not thinking here so much of the natural resources and riches of our country. There are, after all, countries and territories which are richer and considerably more advantageously situated than we are. What matters is the huge responsibility of the Kazakh people in dealing with our historic legacy, our present situation and the future of the country. One can look for "manna from heaven" to arrive imminently, when the wait may last for centuries. I have never promised our people quick solutions to all the problems we face. If the people of Kazakhstan had not shown their understanding of our historic situation, their appreciation of the burdens of the past and the potential our country possesses, then I doubt if everything we have today would have ever materialised.

The solidarity our people have shown in striving to deal with everyday life and their understanding of the need for change is a rarity in the past and current history of human societies. Their ability to bring together their striving for progress and a certain attachment to tradition is evidence of particular gifts within all the nationalities which make up our multi-national community in Kazakhstan. All the best qualities to be found amongst the Kazakhs, Russians, German, Koreans and other nations and ethnic groups in our country are united in our Kazakh nation as a whole, and it has been put into effect in what has been a complicated time for all of us. And the results speak for themselves...

## PORTRAIT OF A CAPITAL

It was an eminent French natural scientist, Claude Bernard, who introduced the fundamental concept, which he named homeostasis, which underpins present day understanding of the way living organisms function. The best way to appreciate the nature of homeostasis is to think of a piece of apparatus which is built into the organism and sustains all its vital functions at a level which enables one to define it as healthy. On a day to day basis we are not aware of this remarkable characteristic of living organisms, nor do we even think about it. A normal heart-beat of 60 to 70 per minute is something that we simply take note of: we do not make the heart beat, since it functions independently, whether we are thinking about it or not. Similarly, we do not control our normal breathing, since the lungs function is on their own. We do not have to think every time we breathe out or in. The most remarkable thing about homeostasis is that all our vital organs work as they should, independently of our will or even awareness, so that we do not experience discomfort in our heart, breathlessness, or similar afflictions. That is to say our organs work not as we would require them to, but in accordance with secret instructions which have been implanted in them by nature itself. They in turn fulfil their necessary roles practically without the exercise of the individual's will or reason. However if homeostatic processes encounter serious problems, the individual also suffers. At such a time disagreeable sensations, pain or fatigue do oblige us to remember our bodies, which are warning us, unsubtly but unmistakably, that our homeostasis is not working properly.

I have no doubts myself that cities, like people, are complex "living" organisms. And just like any complicated living system, a city also has its own form of homeostasis at work in it, a mechanism which keeps all its functions working normally. If there are

no problems with it the inhabitants do not usually even notice that their needs are being taken care of. They do not, for example, investigate the supply of drinking water to their flats or the collection of rubbish from the city streets. All these things are taken for granted, and are not worthy of attention unless someone really wants to take an interest in them. All the time, however, there are huge, even titanic efforts going into the provision of services which keep the city's "homeostasis" functioning as it should. The ideal mayor, prefect or *akim* of a Kazakh town should be the kind of state official that the citizens hear least about and have least to do with in the course of their everyday lives. In other words, if the homeostasis is in order, so are the citizens themselves.

When we were working on the plans for Astana, the new capital on the blessed banks of the Ishim, our first thought was the city could not be just a collection of buildings, however carefully conceived. What was beyond doubt was that the capital ought to provide the best possible environment for the inhabitants themselves. We could not just put up a certain number of dwellings in accordance with a master plan and then breathe life into them. We had to create the conditions in which the city dweller could work and play in civilised surroundings. There can be little doubt, either, that the urban life-style should involve comfortable surroundings. The towns, capital cities and urban construction of today should reflect a philosophy devoted to the quality of life, and I think this is true of our new capital on the banks of the Ishim.

While I would not want to go too deeply into this, I do believe that there are two basic concepts relating to promoting a certain quality of life which are fairly simple, but rooted in principle. The first is that each town or capital city should have a unique and unrepeatable character of its own. The second is that this quality of uniqueness should make it possible to create the maximum

sense of amenity for individuals and the new buildings they live in, and the citizens of the city as a whole.

Nowadays we have the freedom to choose architectural conceptions and the forms they take at our own discretion. The essence of this is that it is we, in Kazakhstan, who are making these choices. The important thing is then that the choices we make correspond to the greatest possible extent to our own Kazakh needs and requirements, and our views on how our towns should look and how best they should suit our citizens. Our new capital of Astana has embraced a very varied approach to construction and the forms of its architecture. But it did not become the capital thanks to this so much as to the innate feelings of human potential, that of the citizens of Kazakhstan, who are at one in their aspiration to adorn their country in the most fitting way and make it an oasis of peace, harmony and prosperity. Astana today has its own unique character and its own spiritual aura which combines the expression of our rich culture and the spirit of tolerance which animates all our peoples and national groups.

So what is Astana like today?

It is the administrative centre of the Republic of Kazakhstan, a city with a population of 517,000 (as of 1 June 2004) and a rapidly developing infrastructure to satisfy the needs of its inhabitants and visitors. It has beautiful residential complexes, grandiose administrative buildings, gardens and fountains, monuments and memorials, and more impressive features with each passing day. With its beauty and imposing architecture it will soon vie with many other global capitals. I hope very much that its architectural graciousness and agreeable life-style will then give it a worthy position as a fully-fledged capital and well-appointed city. Like a flowering and leafy tree in full bud, Astana is in the process of becoming a very special oasis amongst the unending expanses of the Saryarka steppe country.

The magnificent shore-line of the river Ishim curving past the capital makes it appear to be floating on the smooth surface of the artificially extended mouth of the river. When you look across from the right bank of the Ishim to the opposite side you see the futuristic contours of the evolving capital which are created by the lofty buildings and variegated patterning on the walls of cultural and religious institutions. This is where you can see the stone flower of the Baiterek Tower, which opens its leaves to hold the huge shining globe at the top: a symbol of life and goodness which lights up the surrounding area with the reflected rays of the sun. The enormous trunk of the modernistic Transport Tower is surmounted by a needle point which brings to mind a rocket-launching complex aimed at the limitless expanses of the universe. The particular resemblance of this skyscraper to a space ship is enhanced by the rounded and oval outline of the building. The imposing outlines of the new Kazmunaigaz Building suggest a section of a huge pyramid which might some day be erected on the Saryarka Steppe.

Then there is the huge yurt-shaped dome on the Presidential Residence. The national flag flutters above it to serve as a continuing reminder of our country's priorities: the love of peace, and the traditional ties which unite us against the passions, storms of incomprehension and typhoons of hatred which surround us. There are two tall arrow-shaped administrative buildings at the side of the light grey bulk of the Residence which suggest lighthouses which can illumine the way for travellers across the steppe and guide them directly to the administrative heart of the Saryarka. Here and there beautiful buildings are going up: offices, single houses, residential complexes, which put one in mind of wanderers who have found a refuge on the blessed slopes of the Ishim shore and can flourish there after many years of drought. A wide two-spanned bridge across the river brings the spaces at each end of it into a single ensemble. If you drive



on to the bridge from the right bank, you notice the disproportion of shapes and scales. From the right hand side, the heights of the yellow Astana Tower abut on to the bridge.

On the left, there is a grassy square with ultramodern buildings on a small scale and regular paths across it. These are like calling cards of the Left Bank: they carry the message that this is the area of Astana which is being created with parks and lawns harmoniously integrated into it, in combination with tall buildings, some with spires and some with cupolas, to promote an atmosphere of spirituality, cultural aspiration and human reason. On the other side are two winged leopards which evoke poetic images of the Kazakhs' heroic past and their aspirations for a better future; this is a vision of a strong and developed state worthy of great deeds and a life of happiness.

When you look to the right bank of the Ishim you will see a chain of modern buildings, residential complexes like the crowns of willows leaning over the smooth waters of the broad river beneath them. Like the walls of a fortress, they tower over faceted tiles and the shore-line framed by a fretted metallic grid, forming a practically unified ensemble in an unobtrusive but harmonious style not carried to the extremes of a "machine for living". The inspiring contours of the huge hood surmounting the "Arman" residential complex add powerful proportions to the overall impressiveness of the embankment zone of residential Astana.

The bustling stretch of the main Avenue of the Republic is the principal transportation route through the capital. The former Tselinnikov Avenue of the provincial town was rapidly transformed into the main artery through the present-day city, with all the attributes appropriate to the functioning of a modern capital. The central square of the administrative centre of Astana can be seen as a complete sculptural portrait, framed by the handsome buildings of the business and administrative district of the city. The three-tiered fountain which crowns the square is beloved of

photographers and a magnet for admirers of Astana. The square itself is framed by the renovated building of the former Universal Store, the monumental and severe outlines of the government building, the lofty stories of the gleaming façade of Parliament, the ornamented portals of the restored Hotel Ishim, traditional and ultramodern administrative buildings, and the asymmetrical contours of the Congress Hall. These edifices surround and seem to protect the perimeter of this idyllic space with its air of peace and harmony symbolised by the whole sculptural and architectural design.

The ultramodern building which houses the Ministry of Finance, like a banner floating in the wind, is a reminder to Astanans that their capital keeps pace with the times. This can be seen in its receptiveness to experimental architecture and openness to ideas promoting the most unusual forms. There are other buildings and features which bring to the city new colours and sources of inspiration for more than one generation of local and visiting poets: the fine architectural ensemble of Youth Square, the new buildings of the Lev Gumilyov Eurasian National University, the Monument to the Mother of Nations, the ultramodern sports complex in its aquatic setting, the lofty building of the Ministry of the Interior and the series of new buildings with their fountains and flowering walk-ways. Effigies of Abay, Pushkin, Kenersary and many other poets and thinkers, in marble and bronze, are displayed all over Astana like gems adorning the pearls of the Saryarka and the precipitous banks of the ancient Ishim.

Everywhere you look, where there was formerly little to be heard of the sounds of the city, there is now life, movement, the problems, joys, achievement and pride of a modern capital, with little trace left of the backward and muted ways of the typical provincial town once known only as principal city of the Tselinny District. Getting an impression of Astana from the air, in a helicopter, is of course one possibility. But if you want to appreciate its inner beauties, its essence and true strength, to understand

what has been achieved and what is still to be done, the answer is to live in Astana full of hope, with an open heart and a loving spirit. During my time in the leadership of the Kazakh SSR and later of independent Kazakhstan I have found that a good deal of government time has to be spent on problems of city management; they sometimes demand as much attention as issues of state policy. This relates not only to the constant pressure of issues connected with the construction and development of Astana. Even in Almaty, which had been the capital for decades, problems tended to become greater and indeed to reflect those of Soviet and post-Soviet society as a whole. From their local dimension, they could take on an importance which affected the state and nation as a whole.

When I have meetings with the akims, or local mayors, I always emphasise the fundamental principles which should be understood as "categorical imperatives" for the municipal authorities. Construction, development and progress are both good and extremely important, but I never fail to remind them that the basic objective of the city management in our new capital, as its comprehensive programme of infrastructure development proceeds, is to focus on the practical and consistent achievement of three vitally important initiatives. They are actually quite simple and obvious: to provide economic support to entrepreneurs throughout the city; to provide social support to its inhabitants; and to create a good environment for them to live in. Particular attention is being given to the greening of the city and the planting of woods around it. So, three new parks have been created, and dozens of new squares. 25,000 hectares of woodland have been planted out around Astana and there are plans to double this area to 50,000 hectares.

I am quite sure that such initiatives will promote a favourable climate for investment from within and from outside the city and that this will benefit the potential of Astana both as our capital

and as a city in its own right. In this respect, I think what has already been done is quite significant. We have a considerable way to go, but what has been achieved so far inspires a good deal of optimism. At all events the measures that have already been taken have already resulted in quite favourable macroeconomic indicators for Astana as a city in its own right and as capital of the country. The investment the city has received does not relate only to construction and other aspects of capitalisation for the urban economy. It has also gone to transport communications which have to correspond to the needs of the incoming population. So when we plan the construction of 22 new bridges across the Ishim this is not a question of fashion or architectural extravagance. It seems fairly clear that basically the administrative, commercial and service facilities will be concentrated largely on the Left Bank, while the human and professional resources will as before be housed on the right bank of the Ishim.

Daily flows from the right bank to the left and back again will demand the provision of means to ensure that the two sides of the river are adequately connected; it is to be expected that the movements of passengers and goods within the city will substantially increase. It is not surprising that, as in any city, Astana's population density does not coincide with the density of working spaces per unit of space. In large cities and capitals one can clearly see the division into two separate areas: the administrative and business centre and the so-called dormitory districts. In this respect Astana is a typical example of such differentiation: the administrative Left Bank and the dormitory Right Bank is simply a scheme which differs from the actuality. But we shall see...

Experience worldwide shows that in administrative and business centres the density ratio for working premises and living space can reach 10 to 1, as in the case of Tokyo, where the ratio is 8.4 to 1. For this reason what usually happens is that trans-

port and other communications are organised so as to radiate outwards from the centre to the periphery and back again. This allows the disproportion I have noted to be significantly levelled out. So far as Astana's ratio is concerned, I think it is also quite high. In the city centre the population density is a little less than the density of working places. So far as the administrative district of Astana is concerned, the overwhelming majority of staff working in administration, the parliament and ministries lives on the periphery, in such areas as the district which is known from the fact that the buildings are constructed from red brick as the "Red Village". Such movements give rise to an all too clear disproportion between the densities of working and residential population in the city's central districts. A characteristic example is that of Wall Street, which is practically moribund at the end of the working day and completely empty at the weekend.

A capital city's level of business activity is usually indicated by the existence of dedicated business centres. It goes without saying that as a large centre of entrepreneurial activities Astana cannot now or in the future manage without such areas. They are clearly needed as places where the business elite of the city and the republic can operate and set up their headquarters to pursue their financial and entrepreneurial activities – in Astana and Kazakhstan more widely – in association with local and foreign businessmen. In our case such initiatives can only be welcomed. There are precedents: in June 2004 I took part with the mayor of Moscow, Yuri Luzhkov, in a ceremony to lay the foundation stone of the Moscow Business Centre, in what Luzhkov described as "one of the most beautiful places in the capital of Kazakhstan".

The construction of this 22-storey business centre, with 70,000 square metres of floor space, scheduled for completion in the year 2006. Astana has of course already acquired a num-

ber of business centres to coordinate and support enterprises active in the capital. One example is the “Astana Tower” in the Samal micro region. The headlong growth of business activities in Astana, in part with the help of such centres, has resulted today in rapid turnover: industrial, administrative or corporate enterprises as well as small and medium sized businesses have become sources of income for the city coffers.

It is not surprising that the role of such small and medium sized businesses has proved to be so vitally important, as well as substantial, in helping to develop the infrastructure of our towns and of the capital itself. These small and medium sized businesses have come to occupy a very particular niche in the urban economy with their provision of services. These derive from individual initiatives in such branches of the city infrastructure as social and domestic services, technical services, advertising and related activities, retail trades, insurance, property and financial services for private citizens and so forth. When we say that in order to bring about harmonious development of the capital’s infrastructure we need to develop the districts in the city’s left bank area, the point is that we, the government of Kazakhstan, are stating that there is a task to be addressed. No more than that. To carry it out, what will be needed, basically, are private investors and entrepreneurs.

For that reason, when we announce as a basic objective the development of the left bank area we create a series of stimuli and preferential arrangements which allow us to ensure that the people concerned will respond to the initiatives we have created. An example of this is the creation on the left bank of a Special Economic Zone, which should act as a powerful catalyst for the development of this promising region by investors and businesses from within and outside the country. Similar measures should act as a powerful stimulus to business transactions within the

city and increase significantly the volume of external economic activity. As the city expands the quality of services rises with it, along with the demand by the urban population for high quality production; and all this assists and stimulates the growth of exchanges with foreign trading partners in the new capital.

In fulfilling the functions of a “general manager” of the state, the capital has to take on a whole complex of activities which reflect on a smaller scale the economic structures of the whole state. So far as management is concerned, the big companies and international corporations, as a rule, operating in one region of the country or another, try to establish offices and representations in the Centre on the understanding that their capital status and the resultant possibilities this opens up are worth much more to them than if they are operating directly alongside the projects they are engaged in. Apart from that, the capital has concentrated within it practically all the social, financial and economic life of the state, attracting to itself the large international social and economic structures, those connected with consultancies, the stock exchange, insurance and other services, whose basic aim is business itself or the provision of support and organisational services.

The entrepreneurial waves which these structures give rise to then stimulate, directly or indirectly, financial, economic and social activity in regional cities. This effect can readily be observed in the case of Astana. The tempestuous growth of industrial activity, particularly in the construction business, has led in the new capital to no less tempestuous growth in nearby cities and beyond them to others which are still more peripheral. This “knock-on” effect of initiatives in the capital on regional or adjoining towns also affects cultural activities in the capital or another major city.

## WAVES OF REGIONAL PROGRESS

I am standing in the very centre of Astana, looking at the endless expanses of Kazakhstan, fitted into two hectares of land. On this warm Saturday in September 2001 I am visiting once again one of the greatest sights in the capital, the ethno park "Atameken" which is laid out as a schematic map of the whole of Kazakhstan. Together with a delegation and the designer of the project, Timur Suleymanov, I enter the park from the Caspian side and am immediately confronted by cultural and economic treasures of western Kazakhstan, the Mausoleum of Beket-Ata, the architectural complex of the central square of Atyrau and the enormous oil rigs.

We then turn right to the southern regions of Kazakhstan. I recognise the well-known outlines of the holy mausoleum of Khoji Akhmed Yassauï, the Mausoleum of Aysha-Bibi and the ancient ruins of the city of Otrar, the powerful trade and artisan centre in Semirechye on the Great Silk Route. After some dozens of steps beyond Turkestan and Shymkent, I find myself at the snowy spurs of the Tien-Shan Mountains. And yes, here is Astana: the outlines in miniature of Republic Square with the Independence Monument and the lofty building of the Kazakhstan Hotel. I proceed onwards to the Power Station of Ekibastuz, which is symbolised by the tallest industrial chimney in the world, that of Ekibastuz GRES-2, which is to be found even in the *Guinness Book of Records*. Further on I see a small model of the Kostanay Mosque, the Borovski Lakes and the magnificent bridge of Semipalatinsk, stretched over the watery surface of the Irtysh. Then finally, we come to Astana, the new capital of Kazakhstan. We see the Parliament and government building, the Congress Hall and other features of the city, and all of this is fitted into several square metres on the miniature map of Kazakhstan.



I first saw such a miniature reproduction of a whole country on a visit to Indonesia. On my return I asked our city leadership to make something similar for us, and I thanked the designers and construction team for the brilliant way in which they had achieved it. To be able to see the whole of Kazakhstan from the centre of the capital is really quite impressive. It is all the more so, since the designers and city authorities assured me that they would continue to perfect it. I think they will really have to concentrate on the way the city develops: as I write in 2005 it is very different in form and content from what it was in 2001. The symbols and sights of today are to be found in completely new architectural complexes and constructions. And as they say, "There is something still to come". It was not for nothing that I saw here a kind of allegory: Astana accommodating within itself the whole of Kazakhstan. We must never forget that the transfer of the capital was carried out not for the sake of the transfer itself, but for the sake of our country's future.

The fire which we had lit in our capital on the banks of the Ishim River was intended to light all the torches in our regions, and illuminate every corner of our vast motherland. And that is what came about. Now, in the year 2005, just eight years or so since the official move and twelve years since it was first conceived, we can declare with confidence that our calculations were not misplaced. Cities and capitals in other countries which have changed the structure of their economies have, from my observation of them, also profoundly influenced the economies of their satellite and other neighbouring towns. Our experience has been similar. It has been striking that direct influence from Astana has caused other oblast centres to become invigorated and develop the sectors which satisfy the needs of the capital, while at the same time stimulating their own economies.

For example, if the waves of progress flooding into industrial Karaganda from a rapidly developing Astana stimulate new

manufacturing and reanimate old installations, recreational facilities and tourism expand just as quickly in Kokshetau as well. This “knock on” effect has become one of many factors which were to be taken into account with the transfer of the capital to central Kazakhstan, since after the crisis in the early 1990s the central and northern regions of the republic found themselves in a state of chronic stagnation.

It should be emphasised that in taking decisions of this sort one should be realistic about one’s capacities. Grandiose plans and aspirations are all very well, but if it does come about that the transfer of the capital proves to be a practical and effective way of revitalising the economy in other regions, then one should certainly not overlook it. For us it was not of course the reason for making the transfer, but if we do take on such a complicated task we need to approach it with a great sense of responsibility and try to kill with one stone as many birds as possible. Not just in the present, but in the future as well. What is also true is that transferring the capital city is an enterprise on a national scale, and developing the city and capital of Astana is also not a regional matter but a task to be undertaken on the same national scale.

I adopted a personal formula which can be encapsulated in the simple phrase: “Developing the state by developing the capital”. The motorway from Astana to Almaty, from Astana to Kokshetau, and the express train from Astana to Almaty are provided by the Spanish company Talgo, as well as the motor roads to all oblast centres, have all come about thanks to the creation of the new capital. I think that this simple and clear principle can be rightly and correctly applied to all countries at a transitional state of development which are making the transition from totalitarian management to the market economy. For this reason, when one is developing large towns and the capital city through a process of administrative policies which demand careful coor-

dination, the starting point should always be an understanding of all the tasks which the development entails.

One of these involves the establishment of closer and more integrated relationships between the capital and regional cities. By developing an integrated network of information exchange and communication through the relationships established between municipal organisations one should be able to define the needs of the capital in conjunction with a better appreciation of what each regional town can provide. Each provincial town should thus seek to optimise its own development, while finding the right niche in the economy not just of the republic but of the capital, wherever this may be located.

At the same time the capital should, in devising its own development plan, as a minimum take account of the character and prospects of nearby towns with a view to gaining their co-operation in the economic structures of the capital itself. Social and economic relations of this kind, with the appropriate positive feedback benefit both the capital, and as a consequence of this, the regions as well. Astana, for example, is beginning to feel the lack of recreational areas, but does not need to create its own special facilities for this purpose. The best solution would be for the capital to work out the best possible road connections and service structures which would facilitate access to the reservation areas of Borovoye. These are no more than two hours by road from Astana and would provide a wonderful recreational area for the inhabitants and guests of the capital. A similar mechanism for interaction between the capital and regional towns should be possible in the area of economic cooperation between them, and in addition in other fields of activity, whether cultural, social or technical.

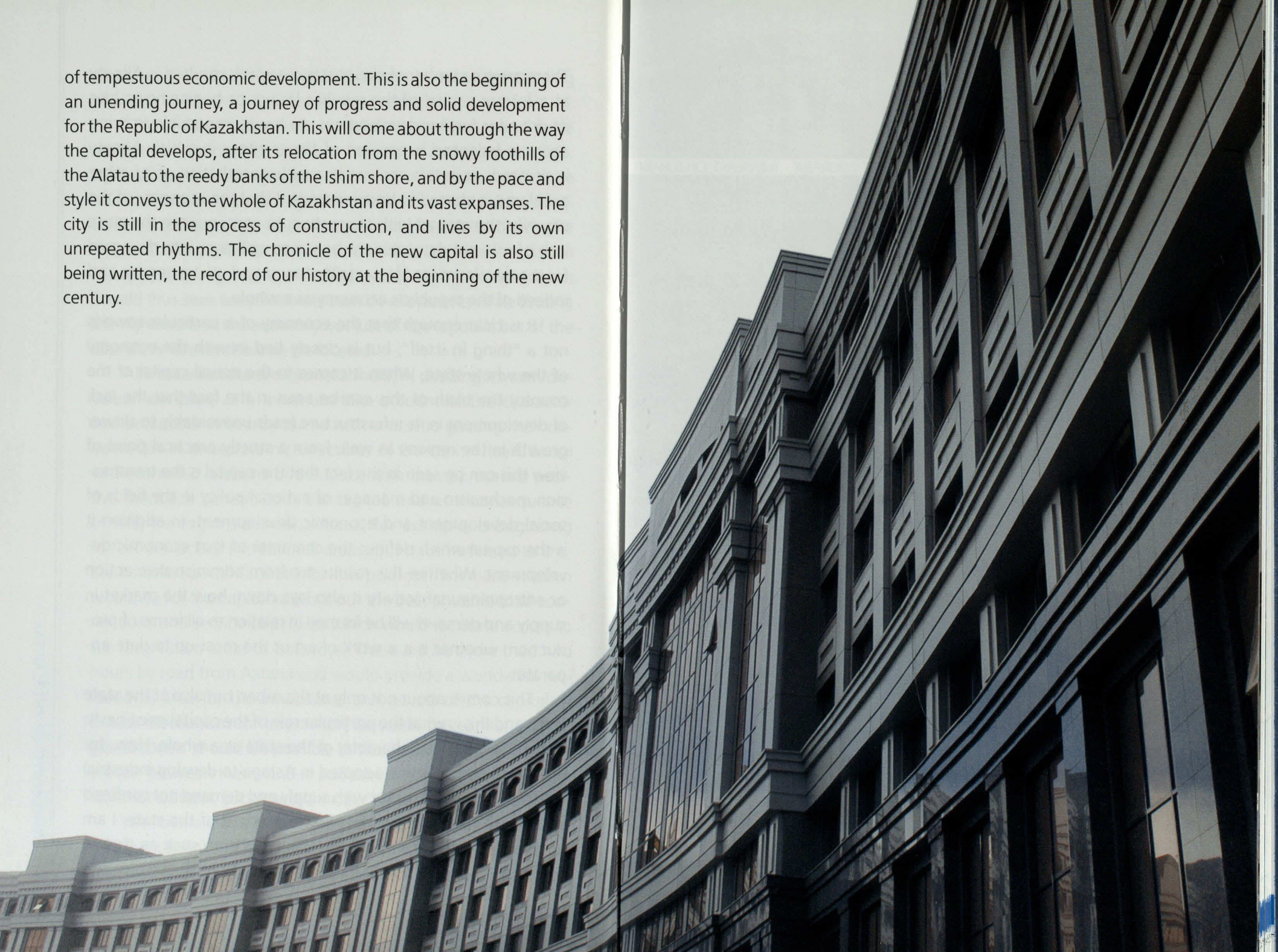
We have already referred to the circumstances of transferring our capital to another location, but I have not mentioned one particular aspect of it which is perhaps the most important.

There were a number of circumstances which resulted in Almaty as a former capital of the republic losing, or beginning to lose its drive for further development. As it was impossible to bring about a balanced expansion of the territory in which Almaty is situated, or in this context to avoid exacerbation of its other problems, it started to become evident that the economy of the city was threatened with stagnation. In consequence the city's lack of internal development began to spill over into disregard for the development of its satellite towns and others nearby, and indeed of the republic's economy as a whole.

It is clear enough that the economy of a particular town is not a "thing in itself", but is closely tied in with the economy of the whole state. When it comes to the actual capital of the country the truth of this can be seen in the fact that the lack of development in its infrastructure leads unavoidably to slower growth in the regions as well. From a strictly practical point of view this can be seen in the fact that the capital is the transmission mechanism and manager of national policy in the fields of social development and economic development. In addition it is the capital which defines the character of that economic development. Whether this results are from administrative action or entrepreneurial activity it also lays down how the market in supply and demand will be formed in relation to all forms of production, whether it is a work of art or the most up to date apparatus.

This comes about not only at the urban but also at the state level, and this is what the particular role of the capital must be: to define the pace and character of the state as a whole. How, for example, a programme adopted in Astana to develop industrial research calls for a market with supply and demand not confined to the city itself but across the whole extent of the state. I am absolutely certain that an exceptional decision such as that to move the capital to a new location has brought about a period

of tempestuous economic development. This is also the beginning of an unending journey, a journey of progress and solid development for the Republic of Kazakhstan. This will come about through the way the capital develops, after its relocation from the snowy foothills of the Alatau to the reedy banks of the Ishim shore, and by the pace and style it conveys to the whole of Kazakhstan and its vast expanses. The city is still in the process of construction, and lives by its own unrepeated rhythms. The chronicle of the new capital is also still being written, the record of our history at the beginning of the new century.





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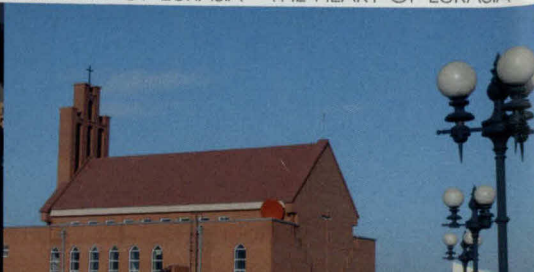
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КАЗАХСТАНДЫҚТАРДАН-  
САНКТ-ПЕТЕРБУРГШЫЛАРҒА  
ЖАЛЫНДЫ СӘЛЕМ!  
КАЗАХСТАН И РОССИЯ-  
ВЕЧНАЯ ДРУЖБА!





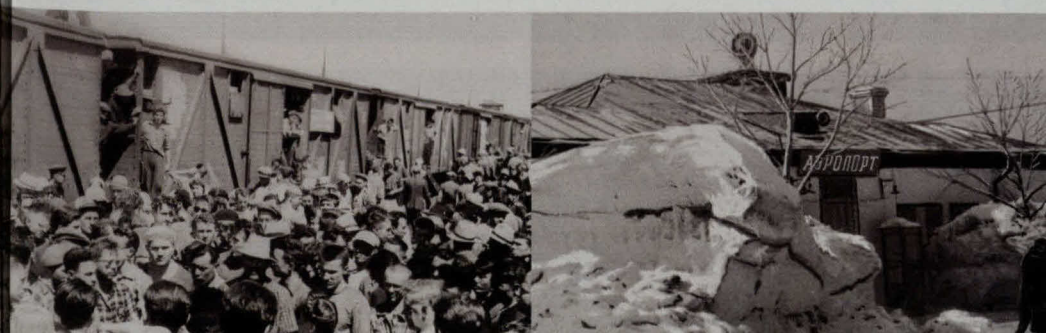
CHAPTER 2

# THE CHRONICLE OF THE CITY



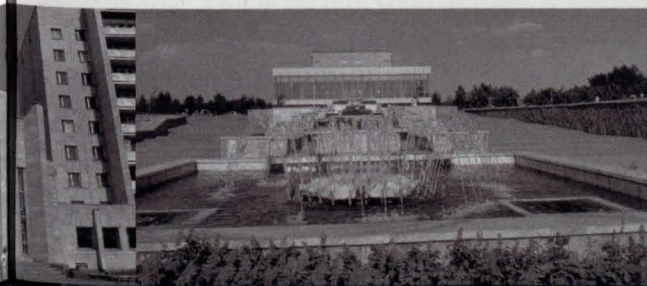


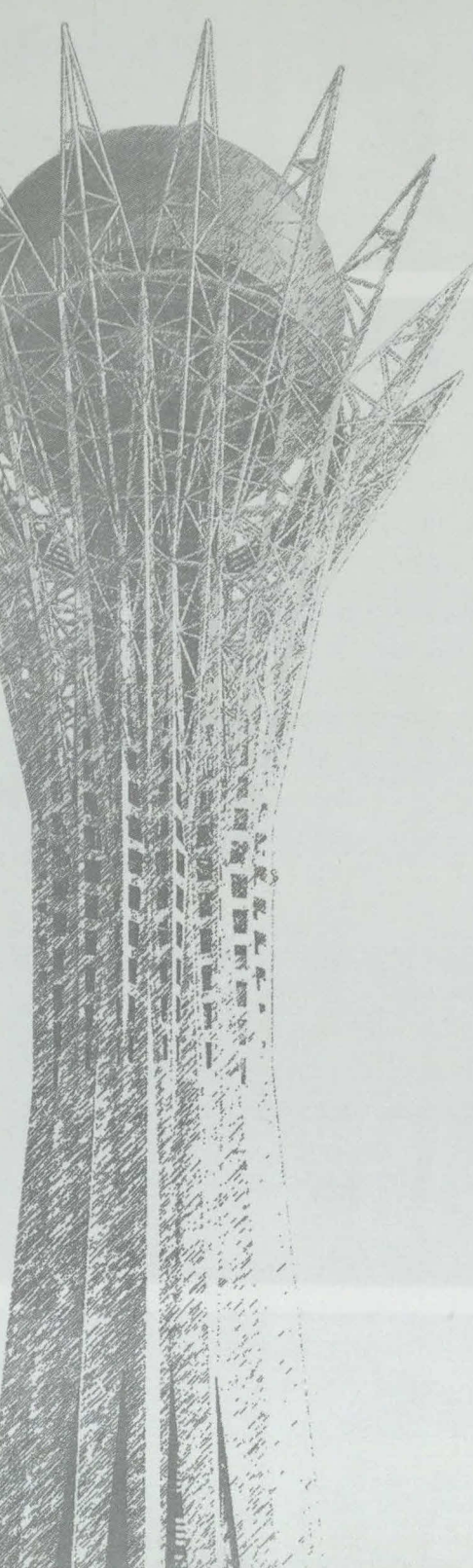
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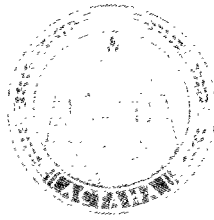
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*Few will have the greatness to bend  
history itself;  
but each of us can work to change a  
small portion of events,  
and in the total of all those acts will be  
written the history of this generation*

**Robert Kennedy**



## THE ANCIENT ROAD

Many of us have a propensity towards some degree of mystical awareness; we can often become aware, below the surface of our ordinary consciousness, of a sensation which might be called an "expectation of wonder". We do not know much about antiquity, compared to what we know of the present day world. For that reason the remote past is often felt to be mysterious or enigmatic. And our ancestors, who were not burdened with detailed knowledge about the natural world, would confide their problems and musings to higher beings or secret deities. Beliefs and knowledge of a mysterious nature are transmitted to us as a historical legacy which in our own times can take on realistic features.

In ancient times certain localities or regions were believed to possess exceptional qualities or attributes. The Romans called this the "*genius loci*". Such places or territories were thought to be imbued with some hallowed quality which gave the place a distinctive spirit and a form of spirituality to accompany it. But I feel certain that there are also places which do not have their own unique "*genius loci*", nor does every territory have an aura which gives it a certain atmosphere; nor does it necessarily possess special qualities which can be generally felt. Neither can one say that a local quality such as *genius loci* is static; it forms in the course of centuries and millennia. And everything that happened in that place over the centuries has not come about by accident, and helps to create the growth of its particular aura.

My studies of Kazakhstan's history from ancient times up to the present have increased my conviction that the whole of our Great Steppe has an aura of its own. Its central regions, which take in the borders of the present-day Akmola Oblast, certainly possess a particular gift, their own inherent quality which may be called their *genius loci*. Archaeologists have established that the regions watered by the river Ishim were taken over by peoples who arrived in the so-called Ashley-Mousterian period. Interesting finds of stone weapons in the upper reaches of the Ishim can be dated to that time. The evidence they provide is that the ancient settlers engaged in hunting, fishing and foraging for edible plants. Then by the Neolithic Age in what today is the Akmola Oblast we begin to see evidence of animal husbandry and agriculture. Somewhat later, in the Bronze Age from the middle of the second millennium BC to the beginning of the first millennium, we see the development in central Kazakhstan of the so-called Andronov culture. The evidence here points to a largely tribal culture practised on the Akmola Steppe which finally took shape at around the same time, and the end of the second millennium and beginning of the first millennium BC. At all events the archaeological finds relate to this period, including the bones of domestic livestock, working tools for processing animal hides, and various bone implements.

Later on the Saxon tribes who settled in Central Kazakhstan in the early Iron Age from the eighth to fifth centuries BC also apparently engaged in agriculture. Excavations have revealed mute evidence of hoes, sickles, knives and other agricultural implements, which had not been imported, but made for use on the spot. However from the second millennium BC up to the present the climate in the region of the Great Steppe became increasingly dry. In these conditions the practice of agriculture became not just difficult but practically impossible. For the Saxon tribes in the ancient territories of central Kazakhstan the basic form of hus-

bandry thus became cattle breeding and grazing. Subsequently the sixth to seventh centuries saw the formation on the territories of the Great Steppe of powerful tribal alliances, the Turks and Western Turkish khanates made up for the most part by Turkish tribal groups such as the Karluks, Kipchaks and Kimaks. Like Steppe hurricanes they swept through the Great Steppe and settled areas on their stocky horses, armed with bows, curved sabres and leather-covered wooden shields. By the eleventh century the broad expanses of Kazakhstan from the Volga to the banks of the Irtysh were taken over by a more powerful and organised union of tribes, the Kipchaks, Kangly, Kimaks, Toksoba and many others. Then the large and powerful Kipchak Khanate took over with all the attributes of a state, including capital cities and long established settled communities, towns and fortresses. It is to this period that archaeological discoveries relate, found in the ruins of ancient townships which prove that Kipchak territories in the steppe boasted towns and permanent populations. In the year 1820 the Russian imperial periodical *Siberian Bulletin* published the diary of the Russian mining engineer Ivan Shangin, in which he recorded that while investigating the channels of the Ishim and Nura rivers in 1816 on the orders of the General Staff he had come across the ruins of an ancient city.

With this in mind I commissioned a complete archaeological map of Astana and its surroundings. We had to go back into history to establish if there had ever been any towns on the banks of the Ishim River and more widely in the areas of steppe civilisation. Proposals and hypotheses are one thing, but as Wolfgang Goethe observed, "Theory without practice is alas empty and the tree of life remains forever green". So, after an interval of 180 years, an archaeological expedition under the enthusiastic leadership of Academician Kemal Akishev began excavations 15 kilometres from present-day Astana at the site given the working name of "Ak Zhol". As it emerged later, the real name of the town

was Bozok, which flourished in the tenth and eleventh centuries AD. Most remarkably, it emerged that no ruins of towns in central Kazakhstan had previously come to light. This was the first such example, and it provided clear evidence that in the Middle Ages and earlier the Steppe lands were a true source and repository of nomad culture, their towns and communities.

Numerous historical chronicles record that it was through the steppe of Central Kazakhstan in the middle of the first millennium that the great route passed to link the west and eastern Eurasia. As trading ties developed and strengthened between states in Europe and Asia, one of the most significant phenomena in the history of mankind gradually came into being, the Great Silk Route. And it was on the highway formed by traffic along the Great Silk Route that the unique and individual steppe civilisation evolved, to bring together all the elements of the nomad and settled cultures along it.

This goes to show how the traditional legends of Olzhay-Khan (a prototype of the biblical Noah) and Ogus-Khan are connected to places in central Kazakhstan. Places like Ortau, Ulytau, Kishitau, Ordatau and Asker-Kuduk were at various times connected with the great legendary steppe leaders such as Dzhuchi, Baty, Orda-Yezhen, Taybugi, Kuchum, Urus and Abulkhair Shaybani. This area, which spans two continents, was not only a field for battle and raiders' skirmishes, but a centre which brought together religions, cultures, nations and ethnic groups. Long before the Silk Route was established it provided a route through the steppe to bring together the peoples and lands of ancient Hellas and the Far East. The Arabs called the Kazakh Steppe Desht-i-Kipchak, and as the historical record shows, in the early middle ages Desht-i-Kipchak was home to the powerful Kipchak Khanate. The archaeologists now think that the recently uncovered city of Bozok was also used by the Kipchak khans as something like a military headquarters or even an official residence. Aerial surveys



have shown that Bozok consisted of three parts, a central one and two others on the periphery, each of which was equipped with protective ditches and embankments. The central part was elevated, with a number of cultural buildings such as an Islamic minaret and a mausoleum. Excavations have revealed that they were typical examples of central Asian architecture, the minaret having three belts of carved decoration which symbolised heaven, the Earth and the netherworld. In the other two sections of the city there were living quarters, workshops and other facilities. All buildings in the town were constructed of baked brick, the most widely used building material at that time in Central Asia. The ancient town was, as earlier noted, 15 kilometres from the territory of contemporary Astana.

Scholars consider that Bozok had at one time been a big religious and cultural centre in eastern Eurasia and a point of reference for caravans on the steppe section of the Great Silk Route. Most significantly, the existence of the town demonstrates that the Kipchaks of the steppe lands did not engage exclusively in cattle-breeding; the practice of agriculture is demonstrated by the ancient irrigation works in the vicinity of Bozok. I learnt of these developments and the many other results of scientific researches from the distinguished archaeologist Professor Kemal Akishev of the Eurasian National University, in the course of a meeting with him on 28 February 2003.

Thus the four year field expedition of Professor Akishev was fully justified, and I was glad to agree with him that a permanent archaeological team should be established to operate under the auspices of the university. Their work must go on: research into the historical origins of the capital of our state is essential not just for study of the past but for our futures as well. One can see from this that the mediaeval town of Bozok can be regarded as a direct predecessor of Akmolinsk, while its latest descendant is Astana, capital of present day Kazakhstan. There is additional

historical evidence that there was a Caravanserai in this region, a transit centre for the barter trade on the left bank of the river Yesil', (renamed Ishim by the Russians after the times of the Khan Esim the Brave), which was well known under the name of Karatkel, which means "Reliable Ford" (the Turkish word *kara* as well as "black" means "powerful, massive, impressive"). Still earlier, as historical research has revealed, the inhabited area bore the name of the legendary Batagay Tsardom ("The Blessed").

All this allows me to draw the clear conclusion that the territory of the present day Akmolinsk Oblast is heir to a rich history of nomadic and settled steppe life, in which at various periods tribal alliances and whole states rose and fell, leaving behind them ancient populations, cultural monuments, memorable burying places and the remains of once flourishing townships...

## OAK LEAVES AND A GOLDEN CRESCENT

It is a well known phenomenon that historic events are often given a romantic colouration when described by chroniclers. When recounting some event they have been researching, historians quite often proceed as did Isaac Newton, who commented on a fact which contradicted his theory with the words "All the worse for reality!" But whether we like it or not, reality is all too severe, and certainly correct. And romantic as historicism may be, hidden as it is behind the mists of time, closer examination tends to turn the heroic exploits of individuals which seemed worthy of admiration into the Realpolitik of great powers and the tragedy of entire peoples.

In the sixteenth century the northern part of what is now the Akmolinsk Oblast was incorporated into the enormous Siberian Khanate. After the defeat in 1598 of the Siberian Khan Kuchum by Yermak's Kazakh troops, Russian colonisation of the steppe proceeded practically unhindered, including the Ishim Steppe.

This was noted by historians as follows: "In the 1720s the Kazakh troops seized the best, mountainous, part of the contemporary Kokshetau District and appeared at what are now the fortifications of Akmolinsk, Bayanaul, Kokshetau and Karkaralinsk". The northern territories of Kazakhstan immediately began to organise themselves as outposts for the advance of the Russian Empire deep into the Asian subcontinent. Within a short time a huge number of military fortifications had been built, with the task of controlling the steppe regions which had been brought under Russian control. With further expansion to the south the line of military fortifications and fortresses gradually moved into the depths of Kazakh territory...

In 1832 the settlement which was established in a picturesque part of Karaotkel was transformed into the fortified town of Akmola. This was described in the following terms in the pages of the *Geographic and Statistical Dictionary of the Russian Empire*, published in St Petersburg in 1863: "*Akmola is the principal town of the Akmola country in the Oblast settled by the Siberian Kirghiz on the river Ishim. The central point in the Oblast is connected by picketed roads and lines in the east to the town of Kargaly, in the south to the Aktau fortress, to the west to the Atbasar Station and through it to Kokshetau*". Comparing this with the corresponding passage in the *Kazakh Soviet Encyclopaedia* one finds the following: "*Akmola is a building constructed in white stone, over whose rectangular walls a cupola has been put up which recalls the upper part of a yurt or a dome. The dome glistened in the sunlight and was visible from afar, an adornment to the banks of the Yesil' River. The name of Akmola was therefore given to the whole region.*" It is difficult to know how correct this is; there are certainly various versions of the background to the name. It seems doubtful that any of them will be decided on for certain. By the nineteenth century Akmola had been converted from a militarised fortress into the most substantial trading and



industrial centre in the Steppe region and remained significant in this role throughout the rest of the century. The Soviet period in the history of the future Astana is well known, but some details will be touched on in other parts of this book.

## THE FORCE OF NATURE

What can be more beautiful than one's native country – particularly if it is truly beautiful! The magnificent spurs and Alpine meadows in the uplands of Alatau and the Tien-Shan mountains; the enchanting canyons and waterfalls of the Charynsk Ravine; the enigmatic expanses of the Ustyurt plateau; the smooth blue waters of the vast Balkhash; the unforgettable spectacle of the feather-grass on the steppe rippling under the gusting wind; the heavenly island of blessed peaks and lakes of the Burabay, with its thick cover of dancing birches and tall pines; and the unending expanses of the green-blue Caspian. And of course the great treasure of the republic has been and still is the vast steppe of the Saryarka in the centre of the country and of the whole Eurasian super continent. We cannot give an adequate description of our towns and cities unless we take full account of their surroundings, since it is their natural setting which gives them the sources of strength and beauty from which each one of them draws nourishment.

The territory of the Akmola Oblast in the northern regions of the steppe country of central Kazakhstan occupies 96.8 thousand square kilometres; in this expanse there is a huge number of different kinds of landscape: the hilly countryside of the Saryarka in the south; the level country and river valleys of the centre and the less precipitous spurs of the Kokshetau heights. Of the largest rivers of the oblast the most notable are the Ishim and the Nura. The oblast is also famous for its greatest lake, the Tengiz, the feeding ground of the most beautiful and majestic

birds of central Asia, the roseate flamingos. There are other lakes also, including ones of major size, such as the Karasor, Korgalzhin, Balyktikol' and the Kypchak.

The land is rich in useful minerals, with deposits of gold, uranium, bauxite, antimony, copper, brown coal, China clay, quartz sand and other useful substances. The territories of the Akmola and adjacent northern oblasts hold all Kazakhstan's deposits of industrial diamonds, two thirds of the tin, more than 30% of the zirconium, 25% of the uranium, and 15% of the gold, providing a basis for rapid expansion of the country's extractive industry. The climate of the region, as in the whole of central Kazakhstan, is strictly continental and dry. Depending on the time of the year, the temperature experiences very sharp variations from -30 Celsius in the winter to +30 in the summer. The winter can bring snow storms and sharp drops in temperature, particularly in February; summer brings dust storms, hot dry winds and very hot days, particularly in August. Here, though, there is a qualification to be made. It is all too obvious nowadays that the climate is experiencing sharp variations from year to year. Old-timers can recall the days when Akmola and other towns in central Kazakhstan could be covered in such a thick blanket of snow that it reached the roof of single storey houses. Now, however, winters have become relatively snow-free and even quite warm. From year to year it seems to be getting less and less cold, and the winter later to arrive. As it happens, these climatic changes came about around the time that the capital moved to Astana from Almaty. That is why we often nowadays hear Astanans joking that the people from Almaty have arrived and brought warm weather with them. Nonetheless they must have found the climate unusual after their experience of the warm south, and taken time to adapt to the frosts in winter and the heat of the Akmola summer.

As an example of this I remember Adilbek Dzhaksybekov telling me about the trouble one official, who had moved from

Almaty to Astana, encountered with the severe climate. This man, whose name I will obviously not mention here, was brought into an Astana clinic one freezing February day; a solid state employee with a responsible job, and completely unconscious. As it turned out he was suffering from heat stroke. The doctors took his clothes off, like leaves from a cabbage, and found he was wearing layer upon layer, each warmer than the last. The temperature in his office had been as high as 30 degrees, and he had simply greatly overheated. At the time a lot of attention was being paid to adjusting the heating and energy supply levels: in this case rather too much. On the other hand it became quite normal for people who moved to Astana to find a great improvement in their blood pressure and reduction in levels of hypertension. It seemed that the move from high altitudes improved feelings of well-being, and people who were new to the region were delighted by the clear blue skies, the spaciousness, and the clear air of the unending steppe country.

It so happened that I spent nineteen years studying and working in this territory, and by coincidence I was nineteen years old when I arrived there. On the variegated vegetation of the steppe in summer there is a particular kind of ancient silence which extends for hundred of kilometres. And the storms in winter seemed to symbolise the overcoming of hardships: it usually warms up at the time of storms, and it was almost agreeable to overcome the resistance of the wind as you pushed against it. It is quite possible that my personal experience and knowledge of these places had a role to play in the decision to move the capital.

Kazakhstan is our motherland, and to me it seems that each fragment of this country with its weather and natural surroundings is our destiny, bestowed on us by God. The motherland has neither bad nor even good places in it: we love it exactly as it is, and that is how our ancestors bequeathed it to us. In our days Astanans and our guests are enthralled by the beauties of our

new architecture and the natural riches of our steppe country. And indeed the flora and fauna of the Akmola Oblast is very varied and diverse. On the plains, in the mountains and in our lakes and rivers there are about 55 different species of mammals, 180 species of birds, and 30 kinds of fish, and these include many rare species recorded in the Red Book. Argali wild sheep, saker falcons, golden eagles, great and little bustards, demoiselle cranes, steppe eagles, curly pelicans and the roseate flamingos, already referred to, are all to be found in central Kazakhstan; to protect such rare and vanishing species we have created the Korgalzhin Reservation and a number of other specialised reserves. Also to be mentioned are the 66 types of plants preserved in plantations covering an area of 4,391.6 hectares.

The natural potential of the Akmola Oblast, as home to the new capital, is a powerful guarantee that Astana will be at the centre of an ecologically optimum area, and a potent force for restoring the potential of the surrounding environment. Forming as they do a component part of the Akmola Oblast, Astana and its surrounding areas represent a powerful field of attraction for the biological resources concentrated in the recreational areas adjacent to them which are ecologically pristine. This has much to do with the fact that the natural systems which surround Astana on almost every side can absorb some of the ecological burdens and rehabilitate the ecosphere within and outside the city, to the extent of becoming what one might call "ecological custodians": these are well known as the Borovoye and the lovely Korgalzhin Reserve.

The fantastic natural wonders found in Burabay, the green and hilly island reserve in the very centre of the vast steppe country, has through its shapes and formations given rise to a host of myths and legends. Indeed, have not its acclaimed dancing birches inspired the tales of the way this natural wonder came into existence? The same must be true with the freakish rock for-



mations and the gaudy plant life which seem to tell of fairytale origins; and the scattering of large and small lakes in this land of little water which provide poetic images of its mythical well-springs.

While Almaty is incontestably the most beautiful of Kazakhstan's cities, the Borovoye area is the finest nature reservation in central Asia and well deserves the titles of "Pearl of the Steppe" and "The Kazakh Switzerland".

The blue waters of the Borovoye, the Small and Great Chebach, Shchuch and other lakes are interspersed with clearings of aspen, birches and bushes which seem to spread from the lake side up the slopes of the mountains until they lean against the bases of the clouds themselves. This is truly a legendary, mythic and fairy-tale land which always served the wandering horsemen of the steppe as a sacred dwelling and place of veneration. This wonderful land with its abundant economic resources and great potential for visitors will, I am sure, make Burabay the most popular and – if it is properly managed – the most civilised place for recreation and entertainment for local inhabitants and visitors to the burgeoning capital on the river Ishim. I have decreed that all the lands of Burabay and the Zelenda woods and lakes should be a national park under the protection of the state.

The famous mountain range of the Yerementau, celebrated in our national history, extends to the east beyond Astana, and further to the Bayan-Aul Mountains. These form part of the huge territory of the Kazakh hillock country, which is not very elevated but takes in such peaks as Akdym which rises to a height of 1,100 metres. The names of mountains in Kazakh folklore are surprisingly precise. The crags of Koitas do look like grazing rams, and the heights of Kunshalgan are bathed in sunlight. There is also a truly lovely hill called Aigyrzhal or the "Foal's Mane". But it is not only frozen stones which distinguish this country. It too has rich fauna, with Argali wild sheep, wolves, foxes, hares of different

kinds, badgers, weasels, stoats and muskrats, as well as swans, cranes, steppe eagles and many other species.

Bayan-Aul can without any exaggeration be called one of the most beautiful places on earth, admired since the age of Palaeolithic man. One of the most ancient Kazakh epics *Kozy Korpesh – Bayan Sulu* is inseparably associated with these places. The pines which cover the slopes of the Bayan-Aul are cut through by numerous ravines and clear rivers, and the area is inhabited by more than 40 different species of mammals and 70 different breeds of bird. Then to the west of Astana, where there is a chain of lakes, there is yet another wonder of the steppe's natural treasures, the Korgalzhin Nature Reserve. This natural complex is situated in the south of the so-called Tengiz Depression which extends further to the south towards the Kazakh hillock country. At the heart of the reserve is a system formed by two huge interconnected lakes, the Tengiz and the Korgalzhin, which are what is left of a sea that existed in Eocene times, and then covered the whole of what is now central Kazakhstan. The lakes of the Korgalzhin Reserve have an important role to play in the biosphere of the planet. Every year they provide a transit for millions of migratory birds on their way to Africa and Southern Asia, and then back to Siberia and the European part of Eurasia.

In the Kazakh language *Tengiz* means "sea". Its surface area of 159,000 hectares is twice that of Lake Geneva and the mineral content of the water is 5-6 times higher than that of the world's oceans. The lake has around 70 islands, large and small, on which birds can nest. Lake Korgalzhin is a complete contrast to Tengiz. Its extensive water area is interspersed with equally large beds of reedy vegetation. The rich flora of this extraordinary reserve numbers 350 different species, 90% of which are types of grasses. The reserve is known beyond the confines of Kazakhstan for its massive concentration of birds, which pass through on their

migrations, stop to moult, or nest there. Both in the autumn and in the spring more than a million aquatic species visit it. It should be noted that on the Korgalzhin reservoirs it is possible to spot up to 300 species of birds, including 32 which are in the Red Book. And in 1971, in accordance with the Convention on the Protection of Aquatic Birds the Korgalzhin complex was placed in Category A of the list of water and marshland areas of international significance.

However, as is often the case, there is a fly in the ointment. Nature is always nature, and often cannot tolerate the presence of man, to the point of squeezing him out, marshalling its forces against him, and using every means possible to make his communing with nature as uncomfortable as possible. I am talking here of the famous curse of Astana: the mosquitoes.

Anything that happens in the capital grows to global dimensions; and if it is something to do with discomforts such as this it reaches universal proportions. So in Astana mosquitoes become elephants, though there are actually no more of them than in other towns situated on the banks of a river. It is worth remembering that Washington is built on a swamp. In earlier times, apart from mosquitoes, one used to see numerous reptiles there alongside peoples' houses. The literal meaning of Kuala Lumpur is "swampy place". There are countless similar examples, and by comparison Astana was a paradise. Nonetheless the mosquito problem held such a sway over the lives of Astanans that it was even brought up at one of my conferences. But public opinion had to be taken account of, and in no time an anti-mosquito plan was worked out. The main thing was to remove the reed-beds in the city and in areas mostly along the banks of the Ishim River. It was decided that all open spaces should be planted with lawns and that a greening programme should be carried out elsewhere on a massive scale. The banks of the Ishim were asphalted and



reed growth in the approaches to the city cut down. In this way we obliged the press, public opinion and most Astanans to forget our "problem with wings".

Another biogenic problem to be dealt with was that of sewage in a rapidly growing Astana. The demand was worked out in relation to the corresponding needs of Tselinograd. But that was a provincial town with a population of 200,000 which was converted into a city of over half a million. Not surprisingly the purification equipment simply got choked up and the basic storage facilities at Taldykol, which were designed in 1964 and commissioned in 1970, simply could not cope with such a load from the city and overflowed. More than that, the expanding city needed to have the storage facilities completely liquidated with corresponding drying out of the residues from Taldykol. The only way to resolve the matter was to reconstruct the existing tanks and upgrade them to function round the clock at a rate of 136,000 cubic metres per 24 hours. Eventually it was proposed that to deal with the problem we should use simultaneously reconstructed engineering equipment and the use of a "Karabidaik" seasonally regulated storage system.

As a result the discharge of sewage into the Taldykol storage facility will stop altogether and the degree of sewage purification from Astana will be brought up to the standard concentration required for fish farming, and the residue will be reprocessed in the storage facility.

As to the future of Taldykol itself, after the whole programme has been carried out, industrial plantations of poplar will be grown on the site, since the land on which Taldykol stands should be more than suitable for putting this kind of project into effect. The problem of the sewage from Astana will be resolved in a similarly original manner, together with the creation of yet another recreational zone on the Left Bank of Astana on the site of the former Taldykol storage facility.

A roughly similar outcome should be achieved for the capital's water supply. Here we shall get help from the Japanese. In the year 2002 we signed an agreement between our two countries for "Water supply and water removal in the city of Astana". In accordance with the conditions laid down in the agreement the Japanese side will carry out the project for 21,361 billion yen (161.7 million USD). The plan within the framework of the project is to build a new water intake filter pump, the reconstruction of the present station and improvements to the system of distribution pipes in the capital, with the inauguration of a new water aqueduct, the replacement of worn out tubes and the introduction of new collecting mechanisms.

At the moment water is supplied from the Astana (formerly Vyacheslavsk), Sergeyeysk and Petropavlovsk reservoirs. There is no doubt that the construction of a new water intake system will resolve the problem of water supply for all regions of the capital. These three reservoirs will also contribute to the recreational potential of Astana and its surroundings by providing fish farming facilities. One way or another significant recreational potential of the Akmolinsk Oblast became one of the important factors which worked in favour of Akmola as the site of the new capital. Indeed it would have been difficult to imagine the completion of the infrastructure for Astana as the heart of Kazakhstan without the powerful support given by the natural environment, without the riches of its flora and fauna, and without such green emeralds of the steppe country such as Korgalzhin, Burabay and Yerementau. The capital is not just what it contains, but what surrounds it.

## THE STEPPE CITY

After the Second World War the Soviet Union took steps to restore the national economy, which it was decided should involve bringing into use new territories which could be used for

farming and agricultural development. A natural area for this purpose was the plains country of central Kazakhstan, which was seen as an ideal location, with its untouched or long unused land. At the very start of the programme, the city of Akmolinsk, being at the centre of the future "Virgin Lands" project became almost overnight a place of importance for the whole Soviet Union, as a transfer point for the thousands of Soviet citizens who came to work there. Akmolinsk, as the largest city in the area with 100,000 inhabitants, was designated by the Central Committee of the Communist Party as the centre of a specially constituted area, the huge Tselinny District, which took in all of Kazakhstan's central and northern territories deemed suitable for agricultural development, particularly the cultivation of grain. The following year Akmolinsk's unofficial status as capital of the Virgin Lands capital was confirmed officially, and in 1961 it was renamed Tselinograd and made administrative centre of the Akmolinsk Oblast.

We must of course always keep in mind the negative consequences which flowed from the attempts to exploit the virgin lands, which were ruined by wind-borne erosion and the destruction of the traditional Kazakh economy, cattle-breeding. I hope I will be understood, however, if I recall above all the people who sincerely wished to benefit Kazakhstan, and made a contribution to the development of our economy with their labours. After all, over a period of 24 years in which the virgin and fallow lands were brought under cultivation Kazakhstan managed to produce 250 million tons of grain and earned 27.2 billion Soviet roubles. From this genuinely golden grain harvest Kazakhstan's budget benefited to the tune of 6.1 billion roubles. As for urban infrastructure, Akmolinsk was transformed into Tselinograd and became quite a large city with a population of 200,000 or more, and dozens of new settlements appeared on the map of the republic.

After independence the city recovered its historical name, Akmola. Five years later, on 10 December 1997 Akmola, former capital of the Virgin Lands was officially declared capital of the whole of Kazakhstan. The name of Akmola did not last long: it was rechristened Astana and entered the twenty-first century as capital of Kazakhstan. Today the capital is the second city of Kazakhstan in terms of population and the first in terms of dynamic development. In practical terms Astana is the administrative centre of the republic today and the cultural, scientific and industrial centre of tomorrow. Astana is moving in that direction inexorably and systematically. The city's infrastructure is gradually taking shape and will eventually convert Astana into what will become one of the most beautiful and up-to-date capitals in central Asia.

If we are to achieve this truly ambitious objective a systematic approach will be essential, as we give form and content to our capital and with it to the other cities in the republic. Harmonious development of the capital and urban infrastructure must always take into account all aspects of the lives of the people who live in them. Cities are such complex entities that they call for a scientific approach to the management of all the systems that make them up. In Kazakhstan we have been discussing for some time the issue of whether to create some kind of specialised structure which could address these problems, and have given it the name of "Institute for City Development". It should have two main areas of activity: to do research into the material and technical aspects of city life, including management of the urban economy, construction, infrastructure and communications, and into the "humanitarian" aspects, including education, the sciences, culture, and sport and so on. The Institute will have more than enough work to do, as its functions will include monitoring all aspects of city life, providing expertise, forecasting, analysis and assessment. Most important will be modelling and testing of urban and



particularly metropolitan development. I do believe that an Institute of this kind will be set up and that it will constitute a very important element in the harmonious and effective development of the capital.

## THE ISHIM RUBICON

Let us take a look back at the year 1994. Only three years previously a once powerful state had disintegrated, and the whole country was suffering from extreme instability. This extraordinary state of affairs could not be resolved in any conventional fashion. Efforts at reform were under threat, with delays and exacerbation of political, economic, social and geopolitical problems. Some quite exceptional initiative was called for, one which would generate new possibilities for decision and action, by taking a sufficiently firm grip on the predicament in which the country found itself. In earlier and more settled times, when I was first secretary of the Kazakh Communist Party's Central Committee, I came across a memorandum by Academician Kanysh Satpayev, who in so many words proposed transferring the capital of the Kazakh SSR to the geographical centre of the country, either to Karaganda or Tselinograd. One of the arguments put forward by this distinguished scholar and public figure was that the capital of such a vast republic should not be located right on its border. It should not, furthermore, be right up against the border with the Chinese People's Republic, with which our relations at the time were far from straightforward. So far as I can recall this notable recommendation was sent on to Moscow, without which nothing further could have been done. The reply when it came was, as I remember, brutally to the point: "*There is nothing further for you to do on this.*"

That was the end of the matter, and those were days before Khrushchev came to power. Round about that time I happened

to see a book written by a veteran of the Virgin Lands scheme who actually did report a statement made by Khrushchev that he would have liked to transfer the capital of Kazakhstan to Tselinograd. I have little doubt now that had Khrushchev not been dismissed in 1964 he would have put his idea into effect. Of course I do not know how serious the most powerful person in the country at the time may have been about this, but for all his appearance of simplicity and his garrulity, Khrushchev did not play with words. He was persistent by temperament and did not put off important decisions.

Even so some of the preliminary steps needed at the practical and organisational level to move the capital were already being taken. To the best of my knowledge senior officials from the Tselinny District did visit Moscow for consultations, and achieved some practical results. They persuaded those concerned that the future capital of Kazakhstan would need a large Palace of Culture, to resemble the Congress Hall. Moscow duly supplied the finance. Further representations led to the provision of funds for a Youth Palace, a District Committee building, a hotel and living quarters in the micro regions. Satisfactory arrangements were made for energy and water supplies, and for a railway. All the things that sooner or later would be needed for a capital city were discreetly put in place right up to the time of Khrushchev's removal from power. Tselinograd was prepared for a role as capital not just of Tselinny District but of Kazakhstan as a whole.

The details of these plans were not of course news to me, and I had also heard previously about what Khrushchev had in mind. Even so, at this time when the first steps towards the independence of Kazakhstan were being taken these developments acted on me as a kind of stimulus. The idea of moving the capital took hold of me gradually, and I thought more and more about it as I grappled with both the current and future problems of our state. Factors at work here were the conservatism that I have al-

ready noted in our ruling elite and intelligentsia, the authoritative views of Kanysh Satpayev, the ideas Khrushchev had entertained, the geopolitical pressures and many other considerations. They combined to turn my thoughts about transferring the capital into a kind of "categorical imperative" which I started to be guided by from early in 1991. It was around this time that I also started to travel much more extensively in all our oblasts to see for myself the life of the various regions of our country.

Very often, and as if on the spur of the moment, I would ask people, in the local leadership and business management, how far they felt isolated and cut off from the capital, at that time Alma-Ata, rather than from the state government as such. And so on in a similar spirit.

Then I would also ask them if they could put together documents for me with analyses or overviews which would provide some precise reflections on the role of the capital in the life of the state, about the significance of its location and observations on the criteria by which one could arrive at the choice of an optimal situation for it. I did my best to provoke their interest in various ideas about relocations of capital cities and the sort of reasons one might have for bringing them about. One more relevant issue proved to be the nervous atmosphere which developed between what at one time had been brotherly republics. It was certainly the case that many borders within the erstwhile Soviet Union had been drawn quite arbitrarily. After the assertion of sovereignty in the various republics a number of insufficiently wise and responsible people began to advocate the redrawing of existing borders, obviously to their own particular advantage. I was particularly alarmed by a widely-publicised article by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn entitled, *"How are we to rebuild Russia?"*

One could easily understand that the writer's concern here was genuine. But if this extended to Kazakhstan, what was that supposed to mean? Solzhenitsyn seemed to have formed the view



that the ancestral lands of the Kazakhs extended from the south to the central steppes and formed a kind of arc which included the southern oblasts of present day Kazakhstan. On this mythological premise Solzhenitsyn proposed that the northern territories of Kazakhstan should be turned over to Russia. It looked as if his proposal was to unite Russia, Ukraine and Belarus on the basis of Slav unity, including a truly Russian Crimea, and so on. It did not seem to worry him that this was in effect an incitement to war between newly independent republics over their territorial integrity, with all the consequences that would flow from that. We should also recall the statements of Zhirinovskiy about washing his boots in the Indian Ocean after passing through "Russian Kazakhstan". This provoked a harsh reaction in Kazakhstan: it was clear enough what these provocations were directed at.

Indeed the Soviet Union was no more. And the bulk of the non-Kazakh population in our country began to get worried. If they had to leave Alma-Ata, where were they supposed to go: to Russia, Moscow, or where? Why not start to play on the feelings and uncertainties of the Russian speaking population of all the former Union republics? There was great uncertainty about the future. The bloody interethnic clashes that had broken out in other republics were a reminder that statements such as Zhirinovskiy's were not an abstract exercise in geopolitics, but were genuinely menacing.

Solzhenitsyn's artless idea was that the northern oblasts of Kazakhstan should play an active part in the rebuilding of Russia; however it remains a mystery to me how northern Kazakhstan could be the salvation of Russia. I am not sure whether one could explain to the venerable writer that the difference between politics and geography is like that between bread and butter. You can of course put them together to make a sandwich, but by themselves they are completely independent and self-sufficient. You have to be extraordinarily naïve to confuse geographical concepts

with the connection that exists between a state and this or that territory and location. You can note that the River Danube flows through many different states. But it would be very strange if one of them laid claim to the whole river because part of it flowed through its territory. Siberia is also a concept which is exclusively geographical, and not political or indeed philosophical.

Yermak did not conquer Siberia, but an individual Siberian khanate which bore the same relation to Siberia as Kazakhstan does to Eurasia: a purely territorial connection. But of course such feelings cannot be dismissed out of hand and laughed at; they are serious and frightening enough as it is. We had to take into account the historic disproportion in the economic relationships which effectively divide Kazakhstan into two parts, the industrial North and agrarian South. The principal industrial strength of the country was situated in its central and northern oblasts. However after the events of 1991 the Russian-speaking population, which had been employed principally in the industrial sector, began to migrate to their ancestral homelands, to Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. This process began to affect ethnic Germans as well, for whom the Federal Government drew up special programmes allowing them to settle in what had also been their original homelands. What followed was a demographic crisis in the central and northern regions of Kazakhstan, leading to industrial stagnation and exacerbation of social problems. At the same time the southern oblasts began to suffer from increased unemployment which was the highest in the republic as a whole. These processes were felt most acutely because of the economic crisis provoked by the collapse of the unified national and economic entity represented by the former Soviet Union.

Relocation of the capital cannot by definition be the only reasonable way of resolving this problem. But taken together with all the other important factors such a transfer might be able to help. More specifically, by restoring the demographic imbalance,

stimulating migration of labour to the industrial regions of the centre and northern regions, reestablishment of normal activity in failing manufacturing and industrial enterprises, the redirection of agrarian Kazakhstan into the industrial sector by bringing the Kazakh population of the south into the industrial development of the northern regions. An important role was of course played in this process by the overpopulation of Almaty and the ecological problems of the city, of which I spoke earlier.

To put it as simply as possible, the perceived need to transfer the capital from Almaty to the central oblasts of Kazakhstan took quite some time to take shape. But in practice every large-scale serious problem which the country faced came down to this one solution. But I think it can be said without exaggeration that the move could become the "thread of Ariadne" to lead us out of the labyrinth of political, social and geopolitical problems and help us to escape from the Minotaur and the unpredictability created by our Soviet legacy. My thoughts kept returning to this solution and I became increasingly convinced that it was the right one. Once I had become certain about the move I also realised that I was staking literally everything on it, including my political career and possibly even my own life. Of course what I have in mind here is not so much a fatal tragedy for myself, but more philosophically the prospect of losing the opportunity of carrying out my life's responsibility to our society and as president of the country. These thoughts came to me very frequently. In any case everything had to be thoroughly weighed and considered. Reckoned up, in the sense that one had to know how much it would cost. Where would the money come from? To aim to do everything at once or drag the process out over decades? What should the starting point be, to ensure final success? And most to the point, what would the destination be: Akmola, Karaganda, Kokshetau, Aktoba, or some other place? But as they say, we propose, but circumstances dispose. It is one thing to resolve technical prob-

lems, by for example laying down dozens of parameters by which a choice of the new capital could be made. Another thing is the whole question of principle, to move or not to move?

Everything boiled down to the principle. The government, parliament, advisers and counsellors learnt about the plans for a move and literally reared up on their hind legs. What move? Here, they said, we are drowning in a maelstrom of problems and difficulties with the reform programme, administrative reconstruction and the delights of the transitional period. And here we are talking about a move. And of course the most important argument of all, the lack of financial resources, or to be more precise their presence in miserable quantities which in any case were needed to tackle our social problems and the holes in the budget. The financial argument was of course a quite serious reason not to proceed; but not the most decisive one. I felt that if we did not find the means to make this great leap forward we would always be going round in search of money which would never be sufficient. So having weighed up all the arguments "for" and "against", I finally took the decision that we would go for it.

When I spoke about the first "nervous" reaction by members of Parliament I was not quite correct. To be more explicit, the reaction in my presence to what I said about the need for a move was amusement: smiles in my presence and laughter behind my back. More interestingly, the members knew that I did not throw words around at random and regarded what I said about a capital move as a not very successful and unfortunate joke.

At the end of 1993 I put up a trial balloon in one of my speeches: I spoke about the need to move the capital out of Alma-Ata to another city. At that time many people thought I had either misspoken or was a little over-tired. This makes me think of Charles de Gaulle, who said that supreme power condemns a man to loneliness and grief. One can have many advisers, counsellors and others, but it is true that taking a big decision and



answering for the consequences is something that must be done on one's own. I also recall coming across an aphorism of Napoleon's: *"I made mistakes only when I listened to my advisers, and I did not when I made the decisions myself."* But that was in another age and with a different style of leadership. These days, taking such decisions is a complicated business. At the beginning of 1994 I brought up the question of a move again; once again it was dismissed as a joke. Everyone laughed, and as before put this embarrassing misunderstanding out of their minds. By July 1994 I had finally "wised up" enough to wait for the ninth and highest wave to arrive, with all the political, social and geopolitical arguments ready and waiting. I put forward the proposal for a capital move quite officially, as a concrete submission to the parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

To this day I have a clear recollection of my speech at the plenary session in Parliament on 6 June 1994. It was devoted to the logical and circumstantial arguments for the move from Almaty to Akmola in the central regions of the country. I can still see the tense expressions on the faces of my audience. This was quite understandable, since each day brought a multitude of urgent problems for our leadership to resolve, with no solutions in sight. They had plenty to worry about. When I got up to speak I felt considerable anxiety. I explained that the higher interests of an independent state such as ours demanded a move, and that our new system of management depended on it. Ideally, a capital city should be located in the middle of the national territory, at a roughly equal distance from all the regions. For a country with the enormous expanses of Kazakhstan this factor took on particular importance. I explained in detail that the choice of capital depended on thirty-two criteria. These included social and economic indicators, climate, countryside, seismological considerations, the environment, the presence and potential of engineering and transport infrastructure, communications, construction

facilities, labour resources and much else besides. I addressed the strategic interests of the country, extending into the more distant future.

I did my best to demonstrate systematically that though the proposal was truly out of the ordinary, it had also been prepared with great care, and that there was nothing short-term or spontaneous about it. I showed that all the criteria brought one to the conclusion that by far the best option was to put the administrative and political centre of independent Kazakhstan in the city of Akmola. I then drew particular attention to the potential advantages Akmola would have as the most worthy candidate for the position of capital. In the first place, the existing town was located practically in the geographical centre of Kazakhstan, equidistant from the regions, which would be advantageous from an overall management point of view and for development of marketing infrastructures. In the second place, the state of the town and its surrounding territory would allow for flexible handling of the architectural and construction problems; the economic cost of completing projects would, as we had been able to establish, be more economic than in other regions of the country. Thirdly, it should not be excessively costly or complicated to reconstruct the existing life-support systems. Fourthly, the existing transport and communications infrastructure had good prospects for further development. And finally, the ecological framework was in good order and could be preserved if we all put our efforts into doing so.

So it was in an unusually quiet atmosphere and indeed tomb-like silence that the amphitheatre of the Supreme Council Hall resounded to these unaccustomed words: *"Almaty can no longer meet the requirements of an independent state. With its population approaching the one and a half million mark it has few prospects for accommodating it, with a high building density and very little free space left available. The expansion it needs*

*urgently is impossible.... A detailed study of the whole territory of the republic has been carried out, to find the best possible location for a new capital. The analysis that has been made according to 32 separate parameters has shown that out of all the possibilities the best one is Akmola."*

It is notoriously very rare, given our collective mentality, for an address by the head of state in our country, which would normally be expected to receive unanimous and noisy approval, to be greeted with feeble applause from one part of the hall and deathly silence from the other. There are times when truly exceptional developments call for equally exceptional reactions. I am not sure how appropriate the analogy is, but the reaction in the hall on this occasion recalled the "dumb scene" at the end of Gogol's *Government Inspector*. Alarm, astonishment and actual shock were registered not in words, but on the faces of those present. It was not however the case that it was completely unexpected. By the time I got up to speak word had got out to the deputies and the matter was being discussed by government officials. But rumours are one thing and a statement by the President himself is another: the message that people will have to abandon their accustomed surroundings, move house and transfer to an unknown city suddenly changes from a hypothetical situation to an absolute necessity.

To put it briefly, there was no ovation. I had hoped that by making my announcement on my birthday I might have been able to count on a more loyal reaction to these unexpected developments. But as one ought perhaps to have expected, no reference was made to my birthday at all or to the rightness of my approach, or otherwise. Of course I understood that Almaty would not want to lose its accustomed status as capital of the country. I could also appreciate that state officials would not want to abandon the accustomed atmosphere of the beautiful and good-humoured city of Almaty for the unknown remote-



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ness of the steppe country, open to all the winds that blow, with snowstorms in winter and sandstorms in the summer. But after a great deal of upheaval the deputies acted like statesmen and confirmed that in state business there is no place for populism or personal prejudices when deciding about the move to a distant provincial town. The agreed formulation was announced in the Supreme Council Hall: *"To agree with the proposal put forward by the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan N A Nazarbayev for the transfer of the state capital to the city of Akmola..."* This was followed by a notable event, the adoption on 6 July 1996 by the government of the Republic of Kazakhstan of the historic resolution, *"On the transfer of the capital of the Republic of Kazakhstan"*, and a year later, on 20 October 1997 of the equally significant and important directive by the President, *"On the declaration of the city of Akmola as capital of the Republic of Kazakhstan"*, which provided the driving force for the development of the whole of our state.

I honestly did not expect the decision on the move to go through our Parliament so smoothly. My impression is that many deputies were favourably inclined to it only because they imagined that the process of realising the transfer would take quite a long time. It looks as if they secretly hoped that it would take the capital around 25 years, and perhaps 30, to move from the foothills of the Alatau to its eventual destination in Akmola. We now know that time frustrated these expectations, and that reversing the decision was simply out of the question. What is particularly interesting is the speed with which the transfer actually took place.

To begin with I thought that the most important thing would be to transfer the President's office, the Parliament and the government; when it came to the ministries, agencies, legal bodies and other government and state structures I thought that their time could come later and perhaps not all that quickly, say around

the year 2000. A bit later I was surprised to see the officials concerned displaying unexpected initiative and enthusiasm for the move to the new capital. They began to find buildings in Akmola, repairing them and then moving in. This process acquired such a basic momentum that I myself could not even halt it, though indeed I did not object. It was at such times that the organisational potential of many the leaders concerned became apparent. Once the parliament had decided, the decision had to be put into effect. I spent practically the whole of 1994 in a search for the funds to move the capital as soon as possible, and through that to mobilise the country as a whole. I then addressed myself to the distinguished parliamentarians and got 50 million USD for the development of living accommodation. To anticipate a little, I can say that with these funds we were able to put up the whole of the ninth micro region in the new capital.

In 1995 we created a special fund named "New Capital", to look after the building of Akmola, financial guarantees for the construction of the new administrative buildings and living quarters for government employees. This was supplemented by some funds realised from the sale of government property. As well as this it was proposed that finance for city development might be attracted by creating a special economic zone (SEZ) in the city. I remember Amanzhol Bulekpayev, at that time a former "akim" or mayor of Akmola putting this idea forward at a meeting he had with me. His conclusion was indeed quite convincing evidence that without an initiative of this kind it would be very difficult and perhaps impossible to resolve all the financial and economic problems of the new capital.

What is said can be done: following a personal directive from me a special zone was created in 1996, and in November of that year I appointed A Bulekpayev to be chairman of it. I made a special trip to Akmola for this purpose and conducted an expanded conference at which the decision to create the Akmola SEZ was

adopted. This also allowed enough funds to be accumulated to begin construction of new residential micro regions, since 60% of all resources collected within the framework of the SEZ remained in the city budget, while 40% went straight into the Oblast budget. I should add that Amanzhol Bulekpayev had been mulling over this idea almost from the moment he first learnt of the transfer of the capital to Akmola.

The frequent approaches the akim of the city made to the government about the creation of the SEZ, nonetheless, produced no action and obtained no response. But he decided not to be discouraged and came directly to me. That was in the middle of 1996. When he told me about his ordeals over the SEZ proposal I was rather embarrassed by the hopeless inactivity of the government, though I also understood that it was drowning in a sea of other problems; but the situation that had arisen amounted to nothing less than quiet sabotage. In itself the idea was correct and right for the times: I concluded that it had to be supported and put into effect. There were in any case precedents from our practice elsewhere, since there were SEZs already in Kyzyl-Orda and Lisakovsk. It made sense that in a city which was to be an adornment to the whole country there should be facilities of entrepreneurship and a means of easing problems connected with the creation of the capital's infrastructure.

I decided to replace the then akim of the Oblast, AG Braun, who was at best lukewarm about the capital transfer. As his replacement Zhanybek Karibzhanov was appointed, a man well acquainted with both the city and the region. To add to his management burdens he was given the task of renaming all streets and regions to bring them into line with the times. Here he had to deal with a rather strange collection of names connected with "October", Red Flags, Soviet and Leninist periods, and he coped well with many different assignments, including this one. From 1994 onwards I used to come to Akmola on a regular basis, every

week or so, to carry out my own reconnaissance of the capital site. During a routine visit to the capital in 1996 while it was under construction I held a special conference devoted to the creation of a SEZ within the administrative borders of the city and signed a decree to that effect on 6 October of that year; at the same time I appointed Amanzhol Bulekpayev as its first chairman. This made for a decisive break with the "quiet sabotage" the government had been engaged in against the new capital, and the SEZ gave them the power to correct and revitalise the city budget. The result of the successful activity carried out by the Akmola SEZ was to make 60% of its budget available to the SEZ, while the oblast budget benefited from 40% of it. In this way, after all the previous delays and manoeuvres the SEZ project was able to provide a powerful impulse to the creation of the capital's infrastructure and to the building of the city's regions.

The building of Astana involved not just the problems of construction which had to be dealt with, but others which were no less important, such as social conditions. Infrastructure for a city and even more for the capital is not only a matter of beautiful facades and lofty buildings. It also involves dealing successfully with social problems in order to improve the local surroundings for all the residents. The funds for social infrastructure in Astana had to be obtained in the most varied ways and in some cases by drawing on so called administrative resources. At the height of the social problems the country had had to face, in 1994 a meeting took place in Akmola which was attended by several thousand pensioners. The only member of the whole leadership of the city who attended was Amanzhol Bulekpayev. For fifteen minutes he was obliged to listen with clenched teeth to dissatisfied citizens complaining about the chronic failure of the city authorities to pay their pensions.

One very well known pensioner whom he knew came up to him. He had recently moved to Akmola and wrote to everyone in



the administration about the apartment he wanted, demanding that he be given priority. Bulekpayev repeatedly told him that he did not have the authority to grant this request. When he saw Amanzhol at the meeting the pensioner came up to him and addressed him in extremely colourful terms, demanding to know why he was there. Bulekpayev responded in kind. Everyone asked what was going on. He explained that this man kept demanding an apartment out of turn, was writing to everyone to complain, and that I had told him that so long as I was chairman of the executive committee no one was going to get an apartment illegally out of turn. The tension was immediately diffused, and people began to laugh and make jokes. Bulekpayev asked everyone, *“Do you believe me or not?”*. *“Yes we do!”* was the reply. *“Then give me three or four months and I will deal with this problem with the pensions.”* Everyone agreed, and it must be said that Bulekpayev was as good as his word.

I owe him particular gratitude for the enormous amount of work he has done and his belief in the building of the city, his initiative and steadfastness, which also came out in the creation of the SEZ which made possible a solution to the problems connected with the financing of the city's construction. It must be said that without the SEZ it would have been impossible to carry out the huge volume of construction which from 1997 onwards was actually completed. We accumulated almost 70 million USD in the fund. From there we moved on to the material reserves which had been passed on to Kazakhstan from the former Soviet Union. These had been accumulated against the possibility of armed conflict and consisted of metals including rare ones, ferroalloys and building materials. Holding back an essential proportion as state reserves for what by now was independent Kazakhstan we sold the balance and deposited the funds in the new capital's "money box". This earned us about 20 million USD.

In addition I managed to get 10 year interest-free credits from foreign investors.

Another source of finance has come from direct foreign investment in Astana's building programmes. Every time I have travelled abroad the question of Astana's development has come up, often in connection with construction projects and associated investment. I have succeeded in accumulating some 200 million USD against non-repayable investments in construction projects, with which many architectural buildings and complexes have been built, including the Astana Baiterek, the new Akimat building and a new Residence. A particular contribution to the construction of Astana has come from non-repayable direct investment from a number of countries, above all from Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Union of Arab Emirates, the United States and Kuwait. One example I recall is that when I visited the United States for a meeting with representatives of petroleum companies I was able to put together the greater part of the 11 million USD used for the construction of the Kazakhstan Sporting Complex.

A list of the buildings which have been financed by grants and non-repayable investments is impressive. For example the Presidential Residence was erected with a 72 million USD grant from the Abu Dhabi development fund. The Senate of our Parliament is being built with a grant of 12 million USD from Saudi Arabia. The National Library is being financed with investments from Adzhil and Karachaganak Petroleum amounting to 11 million USD. Adzhil has furthermore financed the construction of Government House with nearly 9 million USD and the reconstruction of the Okzhetspes Sanatorium with more than 11 million USD. Financing of the Stadium is being financed by Ispat-Karmet to the tune of 38 million USD. The Nur-Astana Mosque has received a grant from Qatar for 15 million USD. The Akimat (Mayor's Office) in Astana has received a grant of 10 million USD from the Kuwait Fund. The Business Centre "Astana Tower" was financed with around

30 million USD from the ABS Centre in Turkey. The Cardiological Centre was built with 5 million USD received from Saudi Arabia. Kazakhmys is financing the construction of the Diplomatic Town with 7 million USD.

Altogether we are speaking here of attracting hundreds of millions of dollars, which amounts to very substantial support: we could not divert funds from our core budget to construct such buildings. At the same time, a good part of the funds involved was actually a kind of gift to the new Kazakhstan and to me as the President. Looking ahead, I can say that against this background the financing of construction for Astana is now not really an issue. The volume of investment we have received for that purpose amounts to almost 2 billion USD, and what is significant is that of this some 70% is from our own resources. Since we began with practically no starting capital to build our new capital on the banks of the Ishim River I could finally allow myself a little self-congratulation. That is not to say that all the financial problems connected with the early stages of construction were resolved. They did arise, and some of them on a permanent basis. In the first days and months of the project we had to have planning meetings every day, or rather every night – at 3 or 4 o'clock.

At one of them it emerged that the construction teams were refusing to work because there was no money to pay them with. This was the second month in which they had received no wages. To resolve this question Vladimir Vasilievich Ni, who was in charge of the building works, came specially to see me in Almaty. So on one November day in 1995 at 9 in the evening he came round to my residence, and I asked him why he was looking so grim. He replied that he had no funds to pay the work force, and that everything might stop. He told me that without money the situation in Astana was extremely complicated. Food was basic, with only half a glass of sour cream, sardines and eggs for meals.

I told him that money would be found: how much was needed? Ni summoned up his courage and blurted out that it had to be fifteen or twenty million dollars. I told him that the money would be forthcoming and that he was not to worry. The next day I instructed the government to get the money from the Akmola construction reserve fund, and they came up with 17 million USD. I then told Ni to return to Akmola and get on with the work: if there were any problems he was to let me know immediately. Ni laughed when I added that I would help him with anything he wanted. Work then resumed.

I flew to Akmola on 20 February 1996 to see what progress was being made with the reconstruction of government and state buildings, including the ministries and other works. After visiting the various sites I got everyone together in the street and told them as follows: *"The Government of Kazakhstan will be transferred to Akmola in 1997: no deviation from this plan will be possible. So you have another year to go, and you must be ready for it."* Then at the end of March 1996 Ni came back to see me again, and in answer to my question told me that the money had run out. The government had stopped providing the necessary finance and the work was seriously falling behind. He wondered if this was some kind of government boycott. The time was half past eleven at night. I got on to the phone to Akezhan Kazhegel'din, the then premier of Kazakhstan and his deputy Aleksandr Pavlov, and told them that the funds earmarked for residential accommodation should be immediately reallocated to Akmola. That did it: Ni was given 50 million USD and went off to get on with the building works.

All this time the State Commission in charge of the move to Akmola was continuing its work, under the leadership of "God's own" builder NM Makievski. Here was a man whose confidence and enthusiasm infected not only all his colleagues but even me, full as I was of exactly these qualities. I had known him for years,

and always admired him for his professionalism, his ability to bring together huge groups of construction workers and always to reach the objectives set. I am grateful to him for the way he made the construction of the new capital his own personal responsibility. Preparing buildings for the transfer from Almaty of the Parliament and the government and creating the main working spaces of the new capital were all very much his work. It is sad that this remarkable man left us so soon. But his memory will be cherished by very many people.

I have already described how Vladimir Vasilievich Ni, the President's general manager, has always been on hand in Akmola to deal with the operational questions needed in connection with the preparation of the new capital; before that he had for many years from 1984 onwards worked as my own assistant. As what I might call the "steel executive" of my aims and objectives he supervised the laying of literally every brick to ensure that it would find its rightful place in the building of the new capital. The mayor of Akmola, A Bulekpayev, with his knowledge of all the local details, did everything in his power to draw on the local resources available to him and to promote the construction and preparation of Akmola for its future role. After the decision on the transfer had been taken I got hold of V V Ni – on 14 July 1995. I wanted to make use of his best qualities: his strong sense of principle, his exceptional punctiliousness, his tenacity and his ability to take tough decisions without the use of foul language. It was a serious conversation, with lasting implications. I began by saying to him: *"I'd like you to put a group together and go to Tselinograd. Have a good look round and decide where we should put the government and state institutions. Then decide where we should start, what we should then do, and how. Where should we put the ministries, which buildings should we be able to reconstruct and which should be done from scratch? Overall, I'd like you to do your own reconnaissance and study of the whole area. Take with*

*you the people you'll need in the early stages. The main thing is to get on with it, and to be quick and practical."* After more in this vein, I asked him his own personal opinion, and whether we were right to move the capital. He replied like a good soldier: *"Mr President, there is no argument. On your initiative the Supreme Council has made its decision and it must be carried out."*

I must say that I felt a great sense of relief. Ni always expressed himself frankly, and if he had felt the transfer was a mistake, he would simply have said so, without trying to flatter me and make me feel good. Giving an assignment like this to someone who deep down does not believe in the success of the whole enterprise would have doomed it to failure from the start. Straight after our talk Ni got together the people he trusted, people on whom he could rely, who would tackle the job with a deep sense of responsibility and knowledge of their own business. These were: Vyacheslav Pavlovich Ivanov, Bulat Gazizovich Nurpeisov (now a deputy manager in the President's office), the then deputy manager, Oleg Anatolyevich Peskov, Ausadik Aubekov, and others.

On arrival in Akmola they installed themselves in the Ishim, the only "decent" hotel at that time. They found on visiting the toilets that there was no water. It may seem amusing now, but at that time the water supply was turned on for only three or four hours a day. It was so cold that they had to sleep in their day clothes. Of course they coped with this manfully, but their optimism about the move must have been badly hit. What they really felt, I did not know. This visit by the "Magnificent Seven" took place on 16 July, and they stayed in Akmola for ten days. On their return to Almaty, Ni delivered his report. They already had a building for the Mayor's office, he explained. If it was repaired, the government could be moved in and the Design Institute building could accommodate Houses of Parliament, the Senate and the Majlis. Then he went on to say that we would need to put up another building for my residence next to the future Government

house. I wondered why: there was a Government house already. Ni was very insistent that the Residence was always in a separate building: that was the only way to do it. All right, I replied, we would look at it. But what about living accommodation? Ni replied: *"There is practically no such accommodation in Akmola. It will have to be built. And we are going to need a lot of it."* I replied, *"Well than, let us deal with the accommodation problem. What needs to be done first? Perhaps we can buy what we need. Or maybe we could redo some hostels. Or there may be some unfinished houses."* We went on in this vein for quite some time. The whole discussion was very protracted and went into a lot of detail. Eventually I suggested that the two of us go to Akmola together in a week's time, and we concluded on that basis.

Some weeks later I went to Akmola with Vladimir Ni. I stayed in the Mayor's residence, which formerly belonged to the oblast committee. We made a tour of the city, and Ni showed me the building intended for the government. I told him I agreed with that, though it would have to be repaired and overhauled. Decisions would be needed on offices for the head of government and others. It was the same with the future parliament building. All the buildings were rather dilapidated, but eventually all of them would need to be redone.

We got together the city planners together with the then Oblast mayor, Braun. It was decided how the move to Akmola would be carried out, including the buildings that would still have to be built, and infrastructure problems. At that time Akmola, like many other towns in the republic, were having problems with hot and cold water supply, heating and with other problems. Ni told me in detail about the "horrors" of Akmola. The mosquitoes the size of your finger, the timetables for water supply, sleeping in padded jackets on the cold winter nights. Even the mayor had to sit in his office in an overcoat, with a heater beside him. Other places were overheated, and I wondered what sort of mayor this

was, if he had been in his job for so many years and had not even sorted out the heating. I told them all: *"My friends, we have nowhere else to go; let's get everything done, and no more horrors. We have to get down to work."*

That is how it all got started. Gradually things began to move. Work began on the reconstruction of the existing buildings in Akmola and the construction of living accommodation. More and more people joined in the Herculean tasks ahead of us and became as time went on quite literally irreplaceable. A huge contribution to the city's development was made by Adilbek Dzhaksybekov, former mayor of the new capital. It was largely thanks to him that all the city services on which the functioning of the infrastructure depended were brought up to the necessary standard. It was he who day by day and hour by hour coordinated the communal economy, the health service, water supply, education, financial management and energy supplies. It was he who succeeded in putting into operation the elements of the city's "homeostasis" to the point where it could function fully as a capital.

The particular merit of the people with whom I worked on this enterprise was, it seemed to me, that they made much greater, and harsher demands on themselves than I, as their leader, made on them myself. I remember them today, and many others like them, with particular gratitude; they were aware of its inner logic. This is what gave them the confidence to carry it out, and did so much to underpin my own feeling that what we were doing was right.

Here it is worth remembering the words of Norbert Wiener, who pointed out so precisely how successful human endeavour must have its roots in the individual's confidence and sense that his course of action is the right one: *"A man who becomes an army officer must be brave, but a man who asks during each engagement whether he is brave is unlikely to be a good army officer."*



That small group of people who worked to fulfil my intentions in creating the new capital was sure they were right and therefore rarely asked themselves whether Nazarbayev was also right. It is in this, in the sense of conviction possessed by the people who put into effect the transfer of the capital to the banks of the River Ishim, that I see the impressive success which we achieved when we did the practically impossible, and managed in the shortest possible time to bring the functions from the Alatau to the Sar'yarka. So, the work proceeded apace, by night and day. The air rang with the rumble of the machines, the thump of the pile-drivers, and the hubbub of the building sites with their building crews, lifting cranes and construction materials. Streams of supplies came together into a torrent which converted the central region of Akmola into one vast building site.

We devoted particular attention to the construction of the micro region in which the state employees and their families were to live. There was a great deal of argument about the best location for this first residential district. The one with the best prospects for building development was a place now occupied by the "Samal" micro region. There were people who opposed building work there, and more than enough of them. They complained that it was nothing but swamp and reed-beds, and that any buildings would sink into the river. But the mayor and his architects held their own, with my support, and they got the building successfully under way. It now appears on the map of Astana as one of the most attractive micro regions. Later on Adilbek Dzhakysbekov told me that the real reason for the objections was that it was a convenient place for officials of all ranks working in Akmola to exercise their dogs. They were worried about losing such a handy area. Dogs may be man's best friends, but people's needs are much more important even than they are.

So after the beginning of the active building boom the task of moving the higher and medium level state organisations to the

new capital started to take concrete form. In the summer and early autumn of 1997 I started making increasingly frequent visits to Akmola, to check on progress with the construction of the runways at the new airport and the reconstruction and building of the administrative buildings for the office of the President and the Parliament. Particular attention was given to the runways, which needed 3,000 tons of asphalt per hour during the first two months of construction. As a consequence in the course of only one summer, and in record time, a 3,000-metre runway was constructed and equipped with an up-to-date lighting system. In addition a complete system of access roads was completed. In this way access by air to Astana was inaugurated and the capital's airport could receive large airliners. A VIP terminal was completed equally quickly.

Today Astana Airport is no longer a provincial airport with facilities only for light aircraft. It now possesses completely modern infrastructure, passenger and goods terminals, with facilities for large-capacity and wide-bodied passenger aircraft, with air-navigation and airfield services, good road communications and parking facilities. Airport services are provided with powerful technical facilities and equipment for handling all types of aircraft. We can state with confidence that the capital airport on the banks of the Ishim River has become the principal flight centre for the whole country, built to world standards of quality and equipment.

During each of my visits to Astana I had meetings with the leadership of ministries, agencies and construction organisations. It was at one of these that we decided to fix a firm timetable for the transfer, to a period no later than November/December 1997. On 20 October 1997 the Decree "*On declaring Akmola the capital of Kazakhstan*" was issued, in accordance with which Akmola acquired the status of capital of Kazakhstan with effect from 10 December 1997, while the official presentation of the new capital

was fixed for 10 July 1998. On the same day I signed the Decree on the status of Almaty and addressed the leadership on plans for development of the city. In this speech I again expressed my confidence that in future the country would continue to rely on the powerful potential of the city and the wonderful people who worked in it. Almaty would continue to operate with the same stability as before and develop steadily as an industrial, scientific, financial, historical and cultural centre for the whole country. It was also proposed to put aside resources from the State Employment Fund to create, as a matter of priority, new working places and opportunities for social development. I thanked the people of Almaty for assuring me that they were not down-hearted and would roll up their sleeves to tackle the rebuilding of their native city.

In the time that has elapsed since the capital moved north experience has shown that the prophecies of the home-grown Cassandras about the decline of Almaty have not materialised. As before, Almaty has been a standard-bearer for science and culture. It remains, as in earlier times, a place for impressive and large-scale events in the social, political and cultural life of our country. The government is also working on a programme to make Almaty the financial centre of the whole country. A great deal is being done to develop Almaty's infrastructure, with the renewal of the metro, construction of new motorways, the creation of new parks and squares, and a rapid expansion of living accommodation. During these years Almaty did not lose, but has even increased its population. I feel confident that these trends will continue.

In the meantime Akmola was actively preparing for the arrival of the first group of government officials. A solemn ceremony was held in the centre of Akmola on 8 November 1997 to welcome the arrival in the new capital of the main state insignia. At around this time the capital also received the first group from

the Presidential administration, the government and leading ministries and other bodies. I made a personal speech of farewell before the departure to Akmola of staff from the Presidential administration, drawing attention to one particular aspect of the move. The beginning of the transfer was the effective beginning of a new stage in the reshaping of state power itself. In the new capital we would be creating a new generation of state employees, and these would be people from the central organs of the state. I told them that I could not guarantee the absence of difficulties in these early days. But we had been doing everything we could to ensure that the new arrivals would be given good accommodation and could bring their families to be with them in Akmola as soon as possible. Particular hopes and huge responsibilities were being entrusted to those who were going to the new capital in the first contingent. It would be their task to prepare the ground for the reception of the main body of state employees. I wished them a good journey when they left and expressed my conviction that they would successfully discharge the mission they had been given.

The first impression the new arrivals from Almaty received when they reached Akmola was undoubtedly an icy shock. I do not know quite how devastating it was when they experienced the full strength of the blizzards and frosts coming in from the steppe, though throughout the first few years after the capital move practically all the complaints of the incomers from Almaty were laid at the door of the notorious General Frost. I remember arriving in Astana one wintry day in 1998, by train from Kokshtau because of the hurricane. I got out of the train to be greeted by a bitter frost and a blizzard strong enough to blow one over. Going up to the greeting party I asked, *"It's cold, is it windy?"* They all replied in one voice, *"Yes, it's cold and windy!"* I decided not to commiserate, rather the opposite, and came back with, *"Well, if it's windy at least that's good for the health!"* And they

all responded, *"Yes of course, very good!"* There are many ways of interpreting this episode. One is that it is a good example of traditional bureaucratic obsequiousness. But that is not really the point. The devil is not as bad as he is painted. Yes, it was cold, and yes, there are blizzards. But the move from Almaty did not just get us used to the cold; it also mobilised most of the state employees into becoming more responsible and stimulated them into approaching their work more precisely and punctiliously. Whether that was caused by the refreshing frosty air or a general spirit promoted by the great migration is not the main point. An instruction had been given to all ministries and state bodies to send their strongest and most capable people to Akmola. Others could be left where they were. Paradoxically there proved to be great competition to go to Akmola, in spite of all the harsh conditions.

The relocation of officials from the central administration from Almaty to Akmola was carried out in several stages. By the beginning of December 1997 the Presidential Administration and the main bodies of the Government and Parliament had transferred smoothly and with no serious interruptions. On 10 December the leaders of the Government, Parliament and I signed and published an Appeal to the people of Kazakhstan to declare that from that date, and into perpetuity, decisions would be taken in the very centre of our huge country which would define the destiny of our people. This would be the beating heart of our motherland, and it was from there that Kazakhstan would define its own historical fate on the threshold of the third millennium. That same day the first joint session of the Parliament and Government also took place. It was marked by the entry into force of the Decree on the status and functions of Akmola.

The first decrees to be signed in Akmola were also promulgated. Individuals who had made the most outstanding contributions to the transfer of the capital were also presented with

awards from the Government. The day was also marked by my appointment as Mayor of the city of Adilbek Dzhaksybekov who had already worked in that capacity for almost six years. A native of Akmola, there was nothing he did not know about the city, from its surroundings to its history, from its cultural personalities to its businessmen. By this time he had gained a great deal of business experience, had worked as deputy to the akim of the Oblast and was a deputy in the Parliament. I had not been wrong to put my confidence in him: he had done a colossal job in the new capital. He was extremely hard-working and knew how to lead a team of like-minded people; he had rapidly resolved the most awkward problems that the city had faced. The present day appearance of the old part of the city and the beginning of the transfer to its new site had all happened under his control.

Then on 12 December we held our first international meeting in the city at the highest level. Our joy in the new capital was shared with us by the Heads of State of fraternal countries: C Demirel from Turkey, A Akayev from Kyrgyzstan, E Rakhmonov from Tajikistan and I Karimov from Uzbekistan. We took part in a conference during which we discussed questions of further economic cooperation and the creation of a single market space in the central Asian region. The Presidents took part in a solemn meeting to inaugurate a Memorial to the memory of victims of political repression, and then to another solemn meeting devoted to Independence Day and the Inauguration of Akmola as capital of the Republic of Kazakhstan. That they were able to join us in Akmola to share with us this most important day in the history of our nation is something for which I am sincerely grateful. It was a clear demonstration of the friendship and brotherhood of the Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Uzbek peoples and their shared roots and destiny. These are very dear to the citizens of our country, and they will always sustain and foster them.

Kazakhstan is a Eurasian country, and its new capital is one of the geographic centres of the enormous Eurasian landmass. An important factor in the choice of Akmola as the capital of independent Kazakhstan was its future as one of the most powerful centres of communication in Eurasia. In the new century it will be a channel for economic, technological and information flows across the developing expanses of Eurasia. In the course of the first half of 1998 preparations were made for the presentation to the world of the new capital, and by the beginning of the year practically all ministries and official bodies had been transferred to it.

I will repeat that the new capital encountered unaccustomed frosts and at times powerful blizzards. But the severity of the first months following the transfer to the new capital was mitigated for thousands of officials in the state apparatus by the comfort and warmth of new high quality apartments. Then from the spring onwards convoys of trucks began to arrive with household possessions, as did families and children. Thousands of people settled in those days into the new micro regions in the capital, and life began to get easier. As well as its new inhabited districts the capital acquired a new name. There had previously been a great deal of discussion about what it should be called and various suggestions were put forward, such as using the name of the country and other proposals such as "Nursultan". There was general agreement that Akmola had to be given a different name. There had already been too much comment which was either fanciful or frankly unsuitable. A favourite line in the press was to point out that the current name meant "White Grave". Personally I was not disturbed by this: many capitals and cities across the world have names which do not sound all that appealing, either because of their meaning or the sound of the word. I have already mentioned, for example, the capital of Malaysia, which translates as "swamp". I doubt very much, though, that the inhabitants of

Kuala-Lumpur are much troubled by that. But I was too proud of our city to allow its name to be dismissed in this way.

The question was what to call it, or rather how to rename it. The name had to be something that would appeal to us, the Kazakhs and all our nations and ethnic groups, but also to carping outsiders. "Karaotkel" was one possibility. Almaty's name came from its surroundings. "Yesil" or "Ishim", or perhaps "Saryarka"? I did not feel that any of these were right. Perhaps the same was true for our traditional and favourite names, but also rather old-fashioned, which did not satisfy the general mood generated by the move of the capital and by other momentous changes in Kazakhstan. I must say that I devoted a great deal of thought to this matter; and then it came to me... One night at two o'clock I was suddenly struck by the answer: Astana. A capital is a capital! It sounds beautiful in the Kazakh language: striking, bright and melodious. It also sounds good in Russian and English. The name carries a flavour of decisiveness, firmness and precision: Astana! It sounds like a bright and succinct slogan, to reflect our general mood and expectations of the new capital. It is true that there are some problems connected with the use of this beautiful name in our own Kazakh language. If you ask: "*Astana kandai kala?*", which means, "What sort of town is the capital?" the answer you get is "The capital". But there are already plenty of precedents and misunderstandings elsewhere in the world. Take for example "Brasilia: what state is it capital of?" Answer: "Brasilia". And so it goes. That at all events was the outcome of the revelation in the night which gave us a new name for the new capital of Kazakhstan.

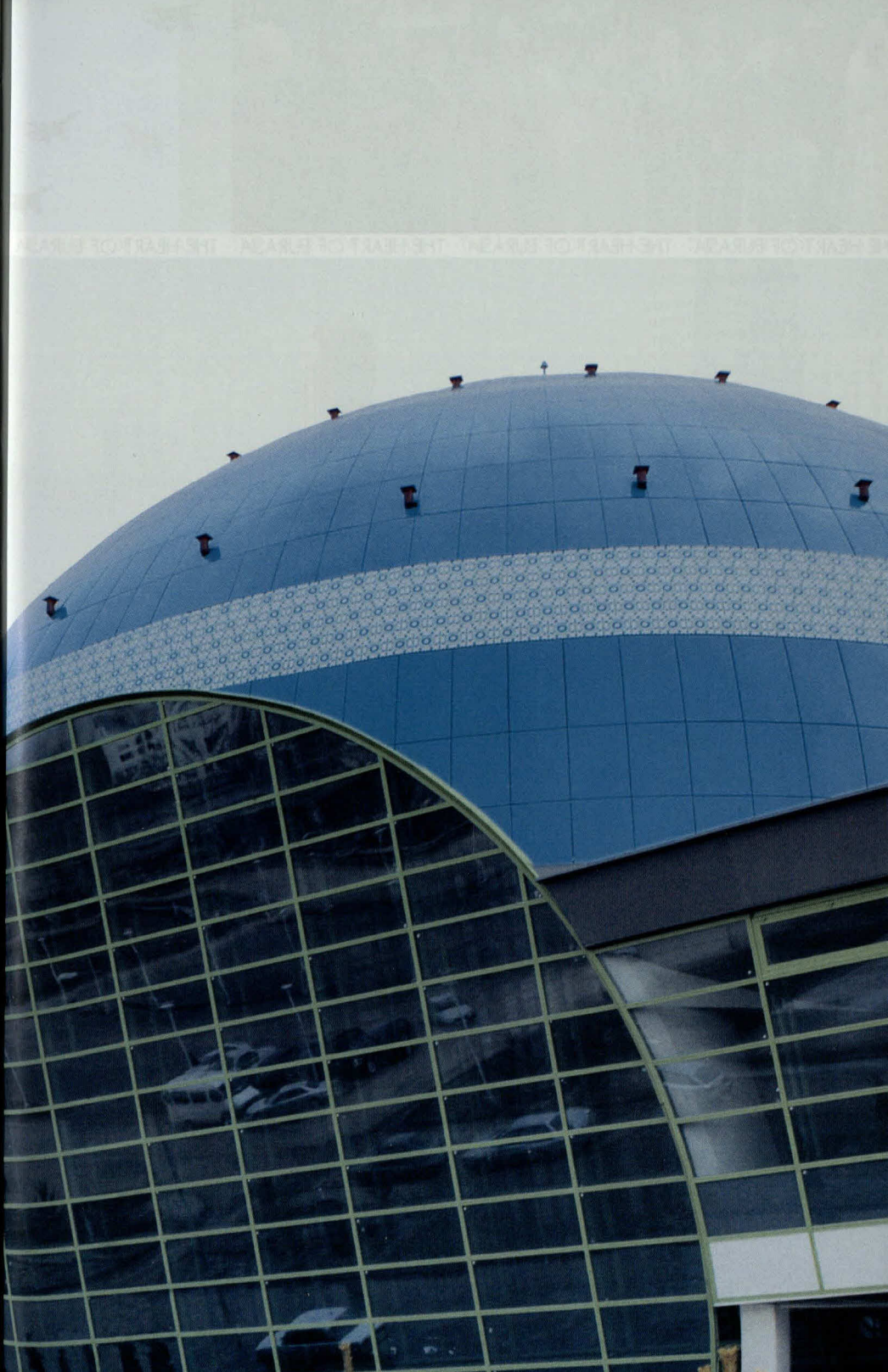
The choice of the new name was supported by local organisations, the State Onomastic Commission and, most important, the inhabitants of the new capital who quickly adopted it. In one of my interviews I remarked that Astana sounded good in any language, whether Kazakh, Russian or English. There was,



I said, no ambiguity about it: it means "Capital", and it is short and clear. On 6 May 1998 the corresponding Presidential Decree was issued, *"On the renaming of the city of Akmola, capital of the Republic of Kazakhstan, to Astana, capital of the Republic of Kazakhstan"*. And so it was that the new capital moved into the third millennium with its bright, beautiful and poetic name. And Astana in the literal sense of its name became the capital of a new independent state. Another thing to note is that the same day saw the adoption of the Decree to form the Saryarka and Almaty regions in the capital: in this way the map of Astana first showed two regions which, rather than divide, united two halves of the city into a single whole...

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The choice of the name...





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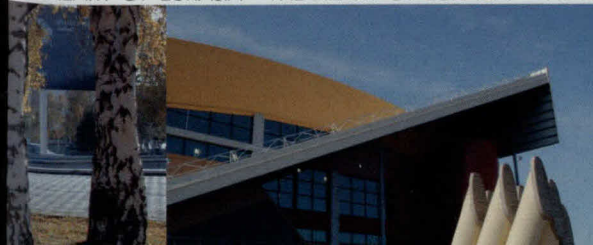


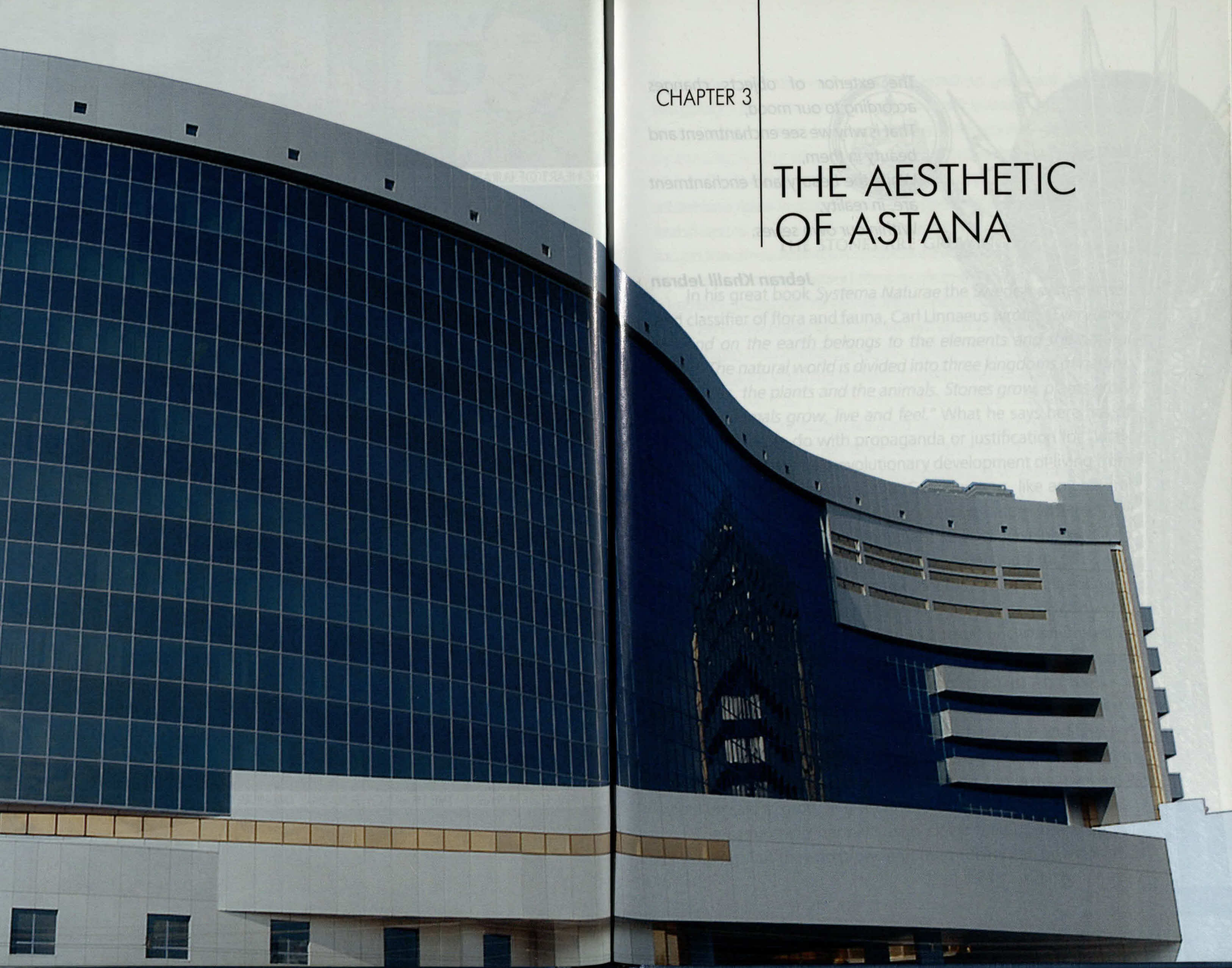


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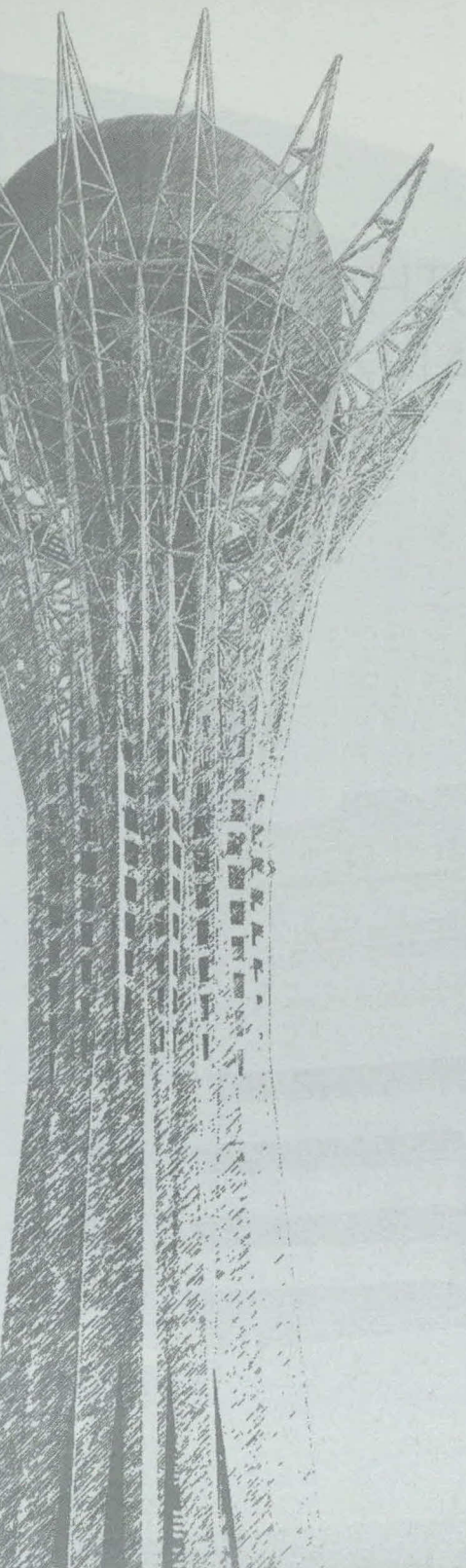
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CHAPTER 3

THE AESTHETIC  
OF ASTANA



*The exterior of objects changes  
according to our mood,  
That is why we see enchantment and  
beauty in them,  
While the beauty and enchantment  
are, in reality,  
Within our own selves.*

**Jebran Khalil Jebran**



## THE STONES ARE GROWING

In his great book *Systema Naturae* the Swedish systematiser and classifier of flora and fauna, Carl Linnaeus wrote, *"Everything we find on the earth belongs to the elements and the natural world. The natural world is divided into three kingdoms of nature: the stones, the plants and the animals. Stones grow, plants grow and live, animals grow, live and feel."* What he says here has of course nothing to do with propaganda or justification for "vitalism" as a science of non-evolutionary development of living from the non-living. It was rather that Carl Linnaeus, like any natural scientist, understood that all phenomena in nature whether "living" or "non-living" are in a constant state of development and growth. For that reason if growth is understood to be simple matter of growing dimensions, it is not only living bodies and objects which increase in size. Non-living objects can do the same. After all those same stones arose as a result of certain processes and that did not come about quickly. The process itself occurs naturally, somewhat like the growing of crystals. And these, as Linnaeus understood it, are also related to stones. Stones cannot do what plants and animals can, which is to live and feel, but they can increase in size. To sum up, one might say without going too deeply into philosophy that everything can grow; even time could be said to grow as it widens space.

The same thing happens with cities: they do not arise out of nothing. But they do grow, and this process can be measured



in years, decades, centuries and even millennia. And years and decades are needed for an ugly duckling made of bricks and concrete to turn into the beautiful swan of modern architectural grace with the capacity for flight...

Our city is also growing, Astana, the capital of the Republic of Kazakhstan. It is growing as a capital, as a present and future political, economic and cultural centre of our new independent and sovereign state at the heart of the mightiest continent on our planet: Eurasia. To witness its growth I would like to evoke one of the brightest episodes in the brief history of the capital, the day it was officially presented to the world on 10 June 1999. This great event demonstrated for all to see how stones could grow in the expanses of the Kazakh steppe country, forming a capital out of the labour and designs of men.

It seems only yesterday that we discussed even the basic question, whether we could or should transfer the capital of our country. And now our energies have led to our plans being converted into real actions. A provincial town, Tselinograd, in the middle of Kazakhstan has grown into the state capital of the state, Astana, which by the time of writing had expanded to the point where we could officially celebrate it and present it to the world.

The work that had to be done was on a titanic scale. I remember our sleepless nights and days, which we filled with our worries about the tasks to be resolved in creating our new capital. For everyone who took part and was responsible the working days were so overloaded that our planning meetings had to be held at night time; almost at two in the morning. It was just at that time when the rest of the country was asleep that the creators of the new capital were fervently discussing the results achieved the previous day and deciding their plans for the next. On one occasion I asked Vladimir Ni to see me: *“Well, Volodya, official presentation of Astana is due to take place in two months’*

*time. Heads of state and ambassadors will be arriving. Where are we going to put them? Will the Congress Hall be ready, or not?" Ni replied, "The tender for the reconstruction of the Hall was won by the Czechs. But they have got behind in their work. They won't be able to do it. But I can promise you that it will be ready if you allow me to get rid of the Czechs. They are working to a contract, but if we do not scrap it immediately, the presentation will have to go ahead without the Congress Hall. In the street... They are also supposed to be doing the square outside. But at the speed things are going even that will not be ready."*

We had no alternative, and I gave him the go-ahead. Ni called in the Czech contractors, and told them they were not fulfilling the work plan. We would have to scrap our contract with you. The Czechs were very upset and said they would take us to court. Ni told them they would just have to do that. Eventually, however they did not do so, since they realised that they had indeed not fulfilled the agreed plan. So a new agreement was made with Imstal'kom and Turkish firms who promised that the Congress Hall and square would be ready in time for the presentation. To do this they got together 2,000 workers. Even this was too few. Ni came to me and said that the National Guard would have to help. I was astounded, but Ni insisted: they were needed to clear the square and do much else besides. It might have seemed strange, but as it turned out it was the only solution. By the time of the presentation everything had been done, as was apparent both to the population of Astana and to the visitors.

So the Congress Hall and square would be ready: but where would we accommodate the distinguished guests who were coming to the presentation? Ni once again assured me that a hotel would also be ready for use. I could not believe him: how could a hotel be made ready at such short notice? What would be needed to do this? Vladimir Ni once again suggested a solution. He pointed out that there was a limit on the number of for-

eign workers who could be brought in to the country. Only about 500 were permitted at any one time. The only thing to do was to cancel the limit or get around it. I was not very happy, but he insisted and would not budge. He said that if the limitation were not removed nothing would get done. He had asked the Turkish contractors if they could complete the construction of the hotel in fifteen days. They said they could, provided there were no limits on their workforce.

So I gave in. I approved a temporary relaxation of the rules governing the limits on bringing in foreign workers. The Turks brought in 3,000 workers by air and managed to complete construction of the Hotel Intercontinental for the official guests by the time the presentation took place. While it was under construction I visited the site more than once in the company of Ni. I looked at the lifts and told him we would go up in those. He objected that they were goods lifts, but I insisted. My bodyguards were horrified. Ni, together with Farid Galimov and others went in one lift, and I went with two workers in another. Lifts being what they are, mine got stuck half way up. The electricity was cut off. On the other lift a cable broke. Nonetheless, and not without such adventures we managed to get up to the topmost stories. But having had a good inspection I felt convinced that it would be possible to make the hotel ready in time for the presentation, and so it turned out. It did not all go smoothly.

The same was true with the Presidential Residence. Every time I was given a report on progress with the construction of the annexe to the Government building which was to become the Presidential Residence. But as they say, trust, but verify. After I had had a routine meeting with an encouraging report on the timing of the construction, round about 2 or 3 in the morning I decided to make a visit in the company of my bodyguards to the Residence building site. Nothing that had been stated at my meeting to be happening could be seen. There were no excava-

tions for the foundations going on at all. The next morning I called in those responsible for the building works and told them exactly what I thought about what I had found. From that time on no one resorted to “window dressing” in the course of building works or delivery of new buildings. Or at least not so obviously and crudely. It seemed to me at least that these building works were going rather slowly, and I pointed this out on more than one occasion to my colleagues and those responsible for one construction sector or another. I tried to get them committed to rapid timetables in their management of projects and to checking their progress.

The long-awaited presentation of the new capital was a very responsible and serious undertaking. But we were prepared: it gave me particular pleasure to award specially struck commemorative medals, “The Astana”, to the group of people who had done so much for the capital and for Kazakhstan. They naturally included my “man of steel” Vladimir Ni, the “persistent” Amanzhol Bulekbayev, the “tireless” Adilbek Dzhaksybekov and many many others. Presenting the medals gave me special satisfaction, since I can say without excessive modesty that I was directly involved in the design and external appearance of the medal itself. The idea of having such a medal came to me quite some time ago, when we first began to think about a presentation ceremony for the new capital itself. I gave a lot of thought to possible designs for the reverse and obverse faces of the Astana medal, until my ideas coalesced into sketches which then formed the basis for the medal itself. At the time I found that visions of the future architecture kept constantly floating before my eyes.

It was also at this time that I outlined preliminary sketches of many buildings and structures in Astana, including some for the National Museum, a Receptions Hall, fountains, residences and many other facilities. They were then of course worked over by architectural and construction experts. The stories about the head of state doing designs on table napkins which were then

converted into structures of stone, concrete or metal were just silly: I have too much respect for professional opinions to insist on subjective ideas of my own, however attractive they might seem at first glance. Some of my ideas were indeed incorporated into aspects of the city's design, but only after the experts had carefully assessed them. A special short term programme was carefully prepared for the presentation with the participation of 217 Kazakh and foreign companies. We wanted it to be on a large scale and attended by high level guests. We sent off invitations to many heads of state and of international governmental and non-governmental organisations, and I was extremely gratified that the overwhelming majority of them accepted. They were to be put up in the only just completed Intercontinental Hotel, a tall five-star hotel built by the Turkish firm Okan.

First to arrive at the presentation ceremony was that great friend of our country and distinguished statesman Suleiman Demirel, the President of Turkey. He attended the opening of the Intercontinental and of many other new landmarks that had been built by his fellow-countrymen, the Turkish construction firms. The day before the presentation itself saw the arrival in Astana of the Presidents of Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Ukraine. Many official guests came from Russia, as well as guests from the Commonwealth of Independent States and representatives and delegations from other foreign countries. Everyone knows that we always welcome our guests, as the saying has it: *"Good fortune arrives in the house with the good guest"*.

One of the largest-scale events, attended by a huge number of our fellow-citizens from the capital, took place on the evening of 9 June and was given the poetic title: *"Astana – the capital of our country now and for ever."* This was a theatrical and sporting occasion, designed above all to entertain the inhabitants and guests of our city, bringing sporting prowess and joyous smiles

that would demonstrate the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. Finally on 10 June we had the main event of the whole year, the official presentation of the new capital. It began with a solemn session at which the capital was the focus of attention. Those present made speeches and I am truly grateful for the good will they expressed towards the new-born, the new capital of Kazakhstan. All of them concluded with sincere wishes for the capital to flourish and for the happiness of its builders, the multi-national peoples of Kazakhstan.

It was with sincere emotion that I expressed my profound gratitude to the states, organisations and distinguished guests for the true feelings of respect they had shown us, their esteem, solidarity and friendship, on behalf of the people of Kazakhstan and in my own name also. This was followed by a series of events, including the high point of a concert by Kazakh artists in the enormous auditorium of the capital's Congress Hall, and finally a gala concert held on the main square of Astana. For this the weather was unfortunately not everything it might have been, though I do not think this mattered much: when you have a celebration in your heart "nature has no bad weather, only good..." Those attending on that evening were also deeply affected by the words, transmitted by powerful loudspeakers, coming to them direct from outer space from the Kazakh cosmonaut Talgat Musabayev. At that time he was working in the "Mir" space station, and sent best wishes for success and happiness to the capital and his people. I am grateful to the Flight Control Centre, who made it possible for me to talk to our Kazakh cosmonaut, the commander of the crew of the Russian orbital complex, and his Russian partner, Engineer Nikolai Budarin. I sent them sincere good wishes for a happy return to earth, "The Earth awaits you!" And on that life-enhancing note we concluded the presentation of the new capital.



These events were not simply part of the presentation I have been describing. They gave us a unique opportunity to demonstrate to the whole world that a new independent and sovereign state had appeared on the scene, and only thanks to the successful endeavours of thousands and tens of thousands of Kazakhs. 10 June is now our Capital Day, and unlike those of some other capitals it will never vary, and will always be a true national holiday, a reminder of that particular day on 10 June 1998. Astana does not always greet its guests with good clear weather on the actual day of the festivities, but there is something mystical about it, since most times it actually does. A lot of this depends on us...

I remember that on 9 June, before the actual day of the celebrations, I took part in a drive round the building sites. Everyone was wrapped up in overcoats against the penetrating winds. It was cold and gloomy, and this was reflected in the faces and spirits of my companions. When we stopped in the park to look at the famous "Map of Kazakhstan", which displays in miniature all the notable sights of our huge country I looked round and said with a smile to A Dzhakysbekov, *"Don't worry, tomorrow will be a warm sunny day"*. Some of the answering smiles were a bit forced: they did not believe me. But on the following morning of the tenth we were all greeted with warmth and bright sunlight. The sky was clear of all the leaden clouds of the previous day, every single one: the mood was of course wonderful... The celebrations that day ended on an excellent note with a display of coloured lasers over the River Ishim and splendid fireworks.

Astana has without doubt been, and will continue to be, a testing ground for new ideas to be introduced to our Kazakh homeland. Here I see a progressive role for our new capital as a forerunner of technological progress into the world that surrounds us. This is not of course an end in itself, but as we try to become a worthy part of world society we really should take as a guide all the achievements in which it is already so rich. When it



comes to introducing new urban construction and building technology I see a powerful basis for developing not only the Kazakh building industry but also other branches of the national economy which are directly or indirectly associated with it. So when our architectural and construction organisations design and put up buildings in which they employ the most up to date technologies it seems to me that this is already a vital contribution to the city's infrastructure and to the industrial and productive culture of the whole of Kazakhstan.

Construction skills as a branch of the economy have always given a particular tone to the development of the state in which they are employed. I am absolutely confident that the rapid construction of Astana as capital of the state lifted the whole economy before our very eyes, since in one way or another it was connected with our general ability to build up and create a functioning urban infrastructure.

There are about 300 building and fitting enterprises at present working on construction work in Astana, with almost 20,000 employees. Urban infrastructure employs a further 240 small business enterprises, and there are almost 30 design and architectural organisations which have been and are working on city planning as a whole. All these firms are creating a kind of chain reaction which brings in its wake business for hundreds and thousands of other firms which are engaged in infrastructure, not just in the capital but in other towns and cities in the republic as well.

Learning to take account of many parameters and the use of a broad range of ideas and equipment in construction work creates the conditions for the emergence of a completely new work culture, what we might call a civilised attitude to labour. This manifests itself in the most varied ways, even in relation to trivial details. "Every brick wants to become something" was a phrase used in a film, and indeed a brick, that old friend of the builder,

is the basic material of all old buildings and structures. However Astana cannot be built with bricks alone. As one of the builders commented, if we use only solid bricks and the old fashioned technology which goes with it we shall never be able to fulfil the requirement for cost effective and quickly completed living accommodation. So, for example, we have to take into account that Astana is being constructed in quite severe climatic conditions, characteristic of the extreme continental climate of Eurasia. For that reason the construction of new administrative and residential buildings must in many cases involve new technologies based on the use of so-called honeycomb blocks. A further factor is the boggy ground on which Akmola is being built. This has necessitated the extensive use in laying the foundations of drill lifting equipment. Another factor was the concentrated time scales for the construction of Astana's buildings. We tried to gain in terms of space what we were losing in terms of the time available. The fact that the new capital was relatively free of already existing construction and had ample space for manoeuvre and architectural fantasy, and the pressure for speed in building the capital all allowed for economies of time scale in the new spaces available.

To speed up building work in the new capital without compromising building quality the technology employed was that of frame construction with steel and pre-stressed concrete. That, I recall was the technique employed to erect that symbol of the city, the Baiterek complex, in the shortest possible time. Overall our construction companies and their foreign counterparts made extensive use of exotic technologies, from our perspective at least, the names of which I heard for the first time on the building sites of Astana.

The use of advanced technologies affects not only buildings, but other infrastructure installations in the capital, such as the road network on the left bank. Or the storm drains which were not planned for the right bank of Astana right back to the

Tselinograd period. As a consequence of this streams of mud and huge pools would form in the streets after showers of rain. Nowadays roads on the left bank have multiple-layered construction with concrete foundations and special protection against the effects of ground water, together with storm drains. None of this is as trivial as it might appear. It is enough to say that in Soviet times, when production techniques were not highly developed, such technologies were practically unknown even in such conditions as those which obtained in central Kazakhstan.

I have an unbounded admiration for all the building workers, and indeed all the inhabitants of the city of Astana, for the extraordinary efforts they put into the preparations for the launch and for the gift they have left for the present generation and its successors. The city is changing before our eyes, and its transformation year by year is making it difficult for visitors who were last here two or three years ago even to recognise it. The former mayor of the city, Temirkhan Dosmukhambetov, now manager of the Presidential office, told me he had met a German visitor on the plane who had once been in Akmola, but now said it was as if he had arrived in another city: he could scarcely recognise the place! He was not reciting poetry, but expressing sincere astonishment at the bright vision of the burgeoning new capital.

### THE STONE GARDEN

Who and what is it that gives a city its overall design, or even more that of a capital? The answer is, I think, fairly simple. It is the individuality of a city which gives it its design, which is not perceived only in its architecture, but in its social and political life. And the creation of that individuality lies more, in my view, with the nature of the central power than of the municipality. Here one does not need to go far in search of examples. In France it turns out that many new features of the capital which are impres-

sive from the architectural point of view are primarily presidential projects. It is not, of course, that I would want to downplay the role and significance of the city authorities in giving their city a worthy aspect, but when it comes to the design and overall appearance of our capital, Astana, I believe that this should emanate, in the first instance, from the central organs of power. The originality of a city's architecture does not exclude some degree of borrowing of different styles and concepts. In this respect it is quite justified to regard architecture as something different from absolute immersion in a particular style. What architects are striving for in our times is not denial of the past but a harmonious blending of cultural memory and contemporaneity. It is this principle, of establishing a parallel and harmonious unification of accustomed forms and archetypes with an up to date ultra modernist style, which forms the basis of the architectural aesthetic and individuality of our new capital.

In the run up to the official launch of Astana many buildings were put in order, others were still under construction and being finished off. An army of qualified builders and workers – almost 13,800 of them – was engaged in the construction and fitting out, or repair of existing buildings. It was not just buildings but also the whole external appearance of Astana, which at that time occupied an area of 248 square kilometres, which was given a complete make-over to meet the decline. We did our best to take in all aspects of the city's life, and I hope succeeded, from the technical work needed to put everything in order, to adding the cultural elements and fostering a civic spirit that would enhance the overall impression. In that connection we planted nearly 100,000 trees and bushes, which made a big difference to the attractiveness of the capital. I think we managed to achieve much of what we set out to do. Not everything, but enough to make a worthy impression on the guests of the city – and on our own people.

The infrastructure of the city was also put in good order – the streets, avenues, open spaces and public squares, on which work had started in 1994. It was at that time that the main thoroughfare in Astana, Republic Avenue, the former Tselinnikov Avenue, was modernised and its asphalted surface was prepared to deal with all the traffic flows. This road is a main and one might say major strategic feature of the city's infrastructure and from the very beginning was a particular concern of Amanzhol Bulekpayev. As manager of the infrastructure, every morning he would cover virtually the whole length of the Avenue on foot, from the Youth Palace to the bridge, carefully checking each section of the building works to ensure that the main city artery was fully fit for use.

This modernised highway was really Bulekpayev's favourite child: he put everything he had into ensuring that it was economically, meticulously and efficiently put in order and given an up-to-date appearance. It is worth recalling his highly principled approach to this issue. The highway had to be asphalted, as did the new road to the airport, and in 1994 the government decided to employ an expensive Japanese road-building technology for that purpose. But Bulekpayev refused to go along with this because he considered that the \$4 million demanded was too much, not to say an inflated price to pay for a straightforward coating of asphalt. What was more, the technology, even if Japanese, was sourced from Poland, which did not guarantee that its quality would be up to Japanese standards. A similar technology was available at a much lower price and of the same quality and durability from Germany. Bulekpayev got a dressing down from the government and decided he had no alternative but to approach me direct. He explained the situation to me, including his disagreement on principle with the government's position; and I told him to go to Germany if he was ready to accept full personal responsibility. He did not hesitate, and went off to Germany in

January to buy their asphalt technology. This he did, not for the four million the government was ready to pay, but at a "state to state" price of \$800,000. By April it had arrived and did the complete job as stipulated.

The asphalt notwithstanding, Republic Avenue became muddy after the rains, and when it dried out, raised mounds of dust. Various reasons were advanced for this, and the "experts" put the problem down to the inherent nature of towns in the steppe country. But it was obvious that many of the parallel streets were like dirt roads in a village and that the traffic from them was carrying mud on to the Avenue. To demonstrate this, I chose one rainy day with slush and puddle everywhere; we had had a meeting about building and development problems in Astana, and after it was over I surprised the city authorities by putting them in a bus to go and see the dirtiest places not far from the city centre. We went round without boots on, which made them all think that we were to have a discussion on the subject, "Where to clear up, how and how much". However that was not the purpose: I wanted to approach the whole issue more comprehensively.

This was actually at a time when we were setting up programmes for clearing away dilapidated housing, building essential infrastructure and of course tidying up and planting urban spaces. That was the start of a serious programme for regenerating all the streets in the city. The transformation did materialise, and Astana did take on the appearance of a place which was really ready to become capital city of Kazakhstan. This was thanks to the constant and intensive work carried out by everyone involved in this grandiose project: the organisers of the launch programme, the construction services and companies, the municipal bodies and hundreds of other people who ensured that the city would be ready in time to emerge "into the light of day". The most important factor in this respect was that the construction and commissioning of new facilities was achieved. Our plan from



the start was to have no fewer than 57 such buildings ready and our construction teams can be proud that they succeeded magnificently, and on time.

The embankment area was given a solid and dignified appearance. The slopes down to the river were faced with patterned tiles, and the embankment decorated with colonnaded pergolas topped with cupolas; an asphalted road was laid along the shore line, with an ornamental metal fence between it and the water. In the middle of the Ishim a huge bud shaped fountain appeared, with a jet which created a small rainbow round it as it shimmered in the rays of the sun. A recreational and cultural centre called the "Aiya" World of Fantasies was set up beside the river, with a display of contemporary attractions in all the colours of the rainbow. The central stadium named after the famous national clan leader Khadjimukan Munaitpasov on Kenesary Street was completely reconstructed and modernised: it is now a facility truly worthy of the capital for large scale events and celebrations. A ceremony was also organised for the unveiling of a monument to the great Kazakh sages Tole, Kazybek and Aiteke. By now the reconstruction of infrastructure for the whole city was really gathering speed; the micro regions and streets were being put into good order and decorated, and the roads were being repaired and reconstructed. Seven years have now passed since the city was officially launched but so much has been achieved in that time.

The railway station has been rebuilt and its appearance brought right up to date, with a whole complex of new facilities within and without to provide comfortable conditions for arriving and departing passengers. Astana has finally acquired a station fit for a capital city. The capital reconstruction that has been carried out has made it unrecognisable both within and without. The engineering communications system has been fully renewed, new terminal equipment installed, and the waiting rooms extended and modernised. The station can now handle up to 5,800 pas-



sengers an hour. The reception area has an information display and a video observation system; and for passengers' convenience there are bars and a café, a video hall, rest rooms and even a mini-market. On the platforms there are special screens to protect the passengers from wind, rain and snow. Facilities for local inhabitants and guests are supplemented by a glassed-in transit overpass with special lifts and escalators. The approaches to the city by rail now undoubtedly add to its overall attractions.

The city now has new cultural and recreational facilities which notably include the classical building named after K Bay-sentova which houses the Opera and Ballet theatre, the modernist Cinema City and the huge cupola of the Presidential Cultural Centre which contains an exhibition hall, a library and a conference hall. When the then Russian president Vladimir Putin made an official visit to Kazakhstan in January 2004 the programme included the Cultural Centre during which I was pleased to note Mr Putin's interest in the furnishings of the Kazakh yurt and objects associated with the nomad way of life, as well as the shining reflections on the figure of the "Golden Man". A building whose flowing contours make a particular impression is the Ministry of Finance, which resembles a huge wave, though sharp eyed observers in the capital have detected a likeness to the shape of the American dollar sign, which has given it its nickname. The principal architect involved, Vladimir Laptev, who is also the director of the Architecture and Town Planning Department, has however explained that the building was conceived primarily as a representation in stone of a state symbol, the national flag of Kazakhstan. The concept was that the sun's rays, reflected on the bluish façade, would give an impression of the building as a stretch of fabric on which the play of light created by passing clouds would suggest movement in the wind. Perhaps because the colour of the blue surface is not intense enough the flag-like effect has not proved to be sufficiently obvious. Personally I do not take tragi-

cally Astanans' perception of the outline as dollar-shaped: a dollar is a dollar, and in any case the building has turned out to be beautiful as well as impressive to look at.

Where the Ministry now stands there were at one time so-called houses belonging to the Oblast Committee, once up-to-date structures which look archaic today. When we were surveying the territory before the move I expressed my concern about having old buildings in the centre of the city with outside closets in full view. It would surely be best to remove them and replace them with something ultramodern, suitable for the needs of the capital and the Republic. The city mayor, A Dzhaksybekov, an old-timer, was difficult to persuade that this should be done. He had been happily used to them being there since his childhood. For him they had certain nobility as relics of the old Akmola. What emerged was however in effect a completely new region of the city, with the Ministry itself, a park with fountains and other modern buildings. Nowadays many people forget that the new "Alatau" Sports Palace started off as the uncompleted building of the Ministry of Heavy Special Construction in the former USSR. All round it there were primitive garages made of concrete panels stuck on to each other, of a type to be found everywhere at that time. I know how much it must have pained A Dzhaksybekov to see the ruthless removal of these garage eyesores...

The Finance Ministry building, incidentally, like many other beautiful constructions in Astana, was done by one of the biggest building companies in Kazakhstan, the "Basis-A" corporation. They established themselves in the field as a solid and reliable organisation which was not afraid of large scale projects, and could meet global standards in the quality and professionalism of their staff and working force. They also distinguished themselves with their tall and impressive Ministry of Energy, Kazmunaigaz Transport Tower, on the left bank of the Ishim which is already in operation. Several domestic and foreign companies competed

for the contract to design and build it, but Basis-A turned out to be well ahead of the other talented architects and designers; apart from the beauty of their design they were also the most economic, which allowed savings of almost \$10 million on the cost of the project.

Sports facilities for the city were also not forgotten. The "Alatau" Sports Centre with its reflecting exterior and the "Kazakhstan" Sports Centre, which suggests a huge ocean-going vessel cutting its way with sharp facets, were brought rapidly into use. So was a new Hippodrome, a rowing canal, a tennis centre with eight open air courts, a lofty business centre and much else. I recall that the "Kazakhstan" centre was built entirely with the support of benefactors and it cost over \$11 million. The contributors were well-known companies such as Chevron, Exxon-Mobil, Ispat-Karmet Steel works, Kazakhstan Aluminium, Access Industries, Philip Morris, Eke, Enka, Parker Drilling, the Donsk and Sokolovsk-Sarbayk Mining Combine, Kazkhrom and Aksusk Ferro-Alloy Combine Factory, and I am grateful to them for their response to my appeals.

It should be noted that the sports complex was completely constructed with material from indigenous Kazakh resources. This included the largest ice-rink with space for 5,000 spectators, an Olympic sized swimming pool for 1,200 spectators and much else. Altogether the sporting facilities in the new capital were ample enough and at the present time have proved to be the most popular and sought after places for both residents and guests to make use of. A particularly important facility is of course the recreational complex "Duman". Separated from the oceans of the world by a distance of several thousand kilometres residents of Astana and guests can literally immerse themselves in the mysterious life of denizens of the seas and oceanic depths in thirteen enormous salt water aquariums. They can then feel all the fascination and significance of this fascinating project

which will bring considerable variety and stimulation to the life of the capital in the steppe. As one passes along the glass corridor, looking up or to either side one can see like Captain Nemo the exotic inhabitants of the ocean deeps now accessible in the capital of Kazakhstan. I am no ichthyologist and do not know the names of all the sea creatures one can encounter in the oceanarium, but that is hardly the point. What does matter is that from now on the citizens and guests of the capital can feel like true residents of cities by the sea: it will be enough to visit this remarkable complex, in which there is also a modern cinema and even a plant which produces real sea water.

Another great sight in the capital is the ethnographic park I have mentioned, which follows the map of Kazakhstan in showing all the architectural jewels of the country from the various regions, from the magnificent new mosque and the Resurrection Cathedral with its gleaming golden cupolas in the southern capital, to the heritage left us by our ancestors in the stone towers of Otrar, and the lost pearls of the Seven Rivers region, the timbered farmsteads from the foothills of the ancient and mysterious Altai.

We have also not of course forgotten the social and medical facilities, without which no worthwhile city and capital infrastructure can exist. The improvement of our health service by providing new medical institutions with up to date equipment is the best gift we can make to the inhabitants of the new capital. And concern for the health of our children is not just our duty but the debt we owe to the rising generation through our care for them and their happy and healthy future. One example is the cardiac and surgical centre on the Left Bank which was opened in 2003 at a ceremony which I myself attended. This facility was a personal gift from Prince Sultan of Saudi Arabia. The thirty bed centre is designed to provide specialist surgical care for patients with ischemic heart disease, acquired and hereditary heart complaints

and other diseases and is the only such institution in Central Asia. The centre has all the necessary modern equipment including an angiographic installation from Philips of the Netherlands, two operating theatres with up-to-date anaesthetic and monitoring apparatus from the German firm Dreher, apparatus for artificial blood circulation from the US firm Stock, and a resuscitation unit with eight beds and two installations for haemodialysis from the German firm B Braun.

Something which gave me particular pleasure was the transformation of the city Children's Hospital No 2. When I visited Tokyo in 1999 I signed an agreement with the Japanese Government for a project to improve medical services in Kazakhstan. I was delighted that this was put into practical effect with the presentation in 2001 of \$10 million of precious medical equipment to three children's hospitals in Astana. Hospital No 2 was equipped with a tomography, a variety of diagnostic and laboratory equipment, and equipment for operating theatres; these simple measures to benefit our children will give now and in the future huge benefits for their lives and general health. This now ultramodern hospital can treat seven to eight thousand young patients in our capital: and not only in Astana, but across the whole of the country...

Another exceptional institution equipped with the most up-to-date technology has been the Republic's Clinical Hospital, whose opening ceremony I attended in September 2001. Nothing equivalent to this medical complex exists elsewhere in the Commonwealth of Independent States; it was built with resources provided by the British Government, which made available a soft credit for \$88 million over a ten year period. The facility can simultaneously take 240 adult patients who will be treated free of charge, thanks to financing provided by the clinic from the local and republican budgets.

Another important area of concern has been the psychological health of our young people. There are of course unfortunate families and children who for various reasons have lost their parents and been deprived of the affection and attention that only mother and father can provide. For them life can be particularly difficult, in that psychological trauma can have far more serious consequences than physical hurt. The latter can be alleviated, but what can be done to cure spiritual damage in a child whose only need is for love and attention? It was because of this that I was especially glad to attend a celebration specially intended for children, at the opening in June 2001 of an international children's village "SOS Kinderdorf-Astana". Not everyone may know of this non-governmental benevolent organisation, the "International Fund SOS Kinderdorf" which was founded almost half a century ago in post-war Austria by Herman Gmaier, who was its first president. It undertook to guarantee a settled home to all children, irrespective of their race or religion, who had lost their parents, to prepare them for a decent life as adults who could then become fully integrated members of society.

Kazakhstan signed the Convention of the Rights of the Child, and in December 2000 we adopted a law on children's villages and homes for young people. In August 1994 my wife Sara Nazarbayeva had created a fund known as SOS – Children's Villages of Kazakhstan, and today such villages exist both in Almaty and Astana. Another is being set up in Temirtau. The creation of the fund was the first step leading to the adoption in 2000 of our law on children's villages in Kazakhstan. The one in Astana is not simply a home. It is a complete township for children, with all the necessary infrastructure to provide a comfortable and well appointed life for its small inhabitants. It has warm cosy rooms, a kindergarten, medical station, guest house, sports facilities and service buildings, making it a complete town within our capital city. It has 108 small citizens, each a unique and talented indi-



vidual who has all possible chances of becoming a worthy adult citizen of Kazakhstan.

One of the main adornments to the capital is the Lev Gumilyov Eurasian University, whose new blocks have beautifully fitted into the city landscape. Whenever I welcome overseas guests to the University I am invariably impressed by its severe but harmonious construction. The reaction of our visitors is very much the same, and I think that the concept of a cultural capital within our capital city takes on a highly visible form when they first see the whole complex of university buildings.

In January 2001 I attended the opening of the beautiful new building of the Kazakh-Turkish Lyceum in Astana, originally founded in 1994. With its fully qualified and experienced staff it conducts its courses in the four languages of Eurasia, Kazakh, Turkish, Russian and English, to such a standard that nearly 98% of its graduates transfer successfully to higher institutions in Kazakhstan and abroad. The existence of such institutions is also very significant from a political point of view, in that it symbolises the friendship between Kazakhstan and Turkey, Russia and Great Britain, and indeed between our country and the whole of the world community.

The Treaty on cooperation in the field of education which was signed by Kazakhstan and Russia in 1998 contains a reference to the creation of a Kazakh-Russian University, and in 2003 this was given practical effect; I took part on 10 June in the opening of a new building for the University on the Left Bank of the new capital. One of the co-founders and partners was the leading educational institution in Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States, the contemporary Humanitarian University with its headquarters in Moscow. Another new building is that of the Kazakh State Juridical Academy, set up at my behest in 1994, now installed in handsome premises in a severe style with new architectural materials. The Juridical Academy is vital to the



growth of the capital, since a very large number of trained administrators is needed: Kazakhstan's Supreme Court is located in the capital, along with the office of the Public Prosecutor and all ministries and other government offices. I told the students when I addressed them in June 2001 how important I felt it to be to tackle our main objective of integrating into global society, for which education, and particularly juridical expertise was so vital. The successful fulfilment of these tasks, difficult but crucially important for the wellbeing of our citizens, would fall to them, as jurists and legal experts.

I was also much impressed by the Centre for Innovative Programmes, which bring together four educational organisations attached to the Republic's Ministry for Science and Education: the "Daryn" Centre, the "Bilim" International Centre, the Ibray Altynsarin Kazakh Education Academy and the National Centre for State Standards in Education and Testing. I was surprised to learn that the computers of the "Daryn" Centre house a unique data bank for all the gifted children in our country, more than six thousand students and pupils in Kazakhstan's schools and higher educational institutions. I had believed that we must have many more talented and gifted youngsters than this and expressed the hope that those in charge of the data base would have the enthusiasm and drive to amplify and constantly work to improve the figures. Or else to plan the construction of a very large computer information network which the "Bilim" international centre believed should embrace all the urban and rural schools in our republic. With such a network the pupils should be able to find all the information they might need from the electronic books contained in it. Finally there was the superb and impressive building of the National Academic Library which Yuri Luzhkov joined me in opening on Capital Day, 10 June 2004. Luzhkov, incidentally, made a truly "capital" presentation to the Library, some three thousand volumes of Russian literary classics.

The requirement is, of course, for more than just a network of educational institutions. There must be an infrastructure to go with it, including comfortable conditions for the students to live in. A striking example of this was the House of Students, a nine-storied hostel with 500 places at the Gumilyov National University. It was good to see pleasant and comfortable flat-like rooms for them, nearly all with telephones, and with other facilities to hand such as a library, reading room, dining room, buffets, a laundry, dance hall and even a hotel for visiting families. I remember all too well that in my own time as a student none of us would have thought of enjoying such facilities....

As to Astana as an educational centre I would like to say more separately, in view of the enormous importance of this topic. Important, that is to say, for its relevance to the further development of the capital and Kazakhstan as a whole. The issue of how to develop the country's intellectual resources is a "categorical imperative" within our whole system of education, and it is one to which I have tried to devote as much attention as possible because of its strategic importance. I am glad to say that the ideas for which I tried to provide structured and systematic arguments when I addressed the second congress of educational and scientific workers were incorporated into the Government's *"Regional programme for urban development of primary and intermediate professional education, and regulation of training for cadres and unemployed population in Astana for the period 2003 to 2006"*. The Regional Programme incorporated as a basis many official documents which related to the reformation and modernisation of the education system. The main ones were the Resolution of the Government of Kazakhstan of 15 May 2000, *"On measures relating to the further development of primary and intermediate professional education"*, the Programme for social and economic development of the city of Astana up to the year 2005, *"The*

*dawn of Astana – the dawn of Kazakhstan*", and the Programme "Education for the Capital" up to 2005.

I am glad that Astana, as a rapidly developing city, and especially as capital of Kazakhstan, has particular priorities in its drive to develop and perfect its education system. This is all the more important at a time when we suffer from a serious lack of trained cadres and prominent specialists. This problem is so acute that it demands a solution immediately. The first steps in that direction have been taken. There are now some 26 organisations in Astana which are training professional cadres, and they currently have more than 11,000 people on courses. The network of such institutions is now turning out experts with twenty working profiles and 25 different types of specialty. The programmes are fortunately taking in people from the private sector as well as government trainees.

When it comes down to it, what should we be getting when we complete our educational programmes, and which are the problems connected with the provision of professional cadres to the city infrastructure that we shall need to decide? First of all, we should have a more flexible and complete system for training professional cadres in high profile training institutions. That should facilitate significant improvement in the capital's labour market: it should then be possible for the supply of workers to satisfy the demand for professional resources in all the specialisations and professions needed. It should follow that we would have a system in operation which could forecast and analyse the labour market. It should also then be possible to analyse the development of the labour market in the short to medium terms in such a way as to avoid such distortions as shortage or oversupply of working resources in the various specialities and professions.

There should also be substantial strengthening and modernisation of the material and technical bases for educational systems of professional training. The system of professional ed-

ucation will have to be brought up to a much improved level if we are to achieve these and many other results to resolve problems with the employment market. Developing Astana itself requires an uninterrupted process of improvement in the capital's infrastructure. With such improvements and greater capacity it should then become more complex and driven by higher technology. What this means is that the new capital will need to solve the problems of training its staff so that they possess the most up to date specialisations, and most important of all are highly professional workers and administrators. It should then be possible to maintain the capital's services at the right level, and to develop them further.

### STYLE GUARANTEE

I can say with confidence that any city, and particularly if it is the capital of the country, gains the reputation it enjoys not only from its buildings and other facilities. Cities can also be majestic and grandiose. They can be original, or not particularly so. But what gives a particular city an unforgettable character is not those things so much as symbolic elements in its make-up which have in them something of the national spirit and the culture that goes with it. What I am thinking of here are the monuments of architecture and history which are to be found in the most varied places in a new capital, without which Astana, as in the present case, would look like no more than a simple accumulation of reinforced concrete structures. There are many ways in which monuments can define and shape the aesthetic contours of a city of a capital. Their function is not limited by this. Their architecture and its expressions should educate the taste of the inhabitants, in such a way as to allow them to feel and respond to the aesthetic qualities of their own city. I cannot pretend that we have all that many monuments which are models of artistic style. But what we

are speaking of here is their quality rather than their quantity. If even one architectural form provokes emotion and elicits images, sensations and reflections which it symbolises this is always to be preferred to an accumulation of pedestals which simply imitate one another and leave behind no emotions or strong impressions. If only one such form leaves the viewer with a sense of completion, of summing up the character of the city and a feeling that the city has its own aesthetic, and a kind of stylistic completion, then that is quite enough to define what the priorities for further stylistic and aesthetic development should be.

Situations frequently arise when the old is forced to give way to the new. Such was the case with the statue of Lenin which until fairly recently stood in the central square of Tselinograd right in front of the present parliament building. The city's old timers and the war veterans were categorically opposed to its removal, and it was not difficult to understand their reasons. Even I could to some extent share their point of view. But whatever way one looked at it, this particular monument completely conflicted with the new architectural face of the city's administrative centre. The problem was resolved by Amanzhol Bulekpayev. He assembled the veterans and the old timers in the square and spent an hour and a half explaining why the statue had to be removed before the legislative meeting of the new independent and sovereign state of Kazakhstan could take place. And after an hour and a half of arguments and shouting until people were hoarse with it, during which the people understood and eventually accepted the mayor's position in the matter, they gave the go-ahead.

There was another instance connected with a former tourist attraction in Tselinograd. At one time a K-700 tractor stood at the point going in to the city where the Cupola of the Presidential Cultural Centre now stands, a true symbol of the old capital of Tselina. It was not in anybody's way, but it quite clearly did not fit in with the architecture of the new capital. After a little reflection

Amanzhol Bulekpayev presented the tractor to a collective farm with the very characteristic name of Tselina. He gave it to them and that was it. The farmers were grateful and came to collect it themselves. I am told that the tractor is still in business and even has its own personal name "Amanzhol" inscribed on the side... I should now take advantage of this opportunity to take a tour with my readers round some of the other sights of our new capital...

As you approach the city from the airport you see, standing by the road on the river Ishim, what looks at first sight to be rather an unusual structure: a tall stele on a 27 metre high hill. Looking at it from a distance it is difficult to work out what it is really for. It is only when you have gone up 55 steps towards it that you realise it is a memorial to the victims of the political repressions, to all the innocent people who perished in the camps of the huge Gulag Archipelago. The monument was put in place on the day the Fourth Session of the Assembly of Kazakh Peoples opened. Bas-reliefs at the top of the hill bear mute witness to the tragedy of individuals and whole peoples who had that most sacred thing taken away from them: life itself. And only because they loved their own motherland more than their executioners.

I started to think that there was something symbolic in the fact that the full purpose of the monument became apparent only when you were in direct contact with it. The truth is not always visible at a distance. You could not share in the people's tragedy unless you were standing close to it, when its reality was brought home to you. Only citizens of Kazakhstan who make their way to the top of the monument can sense to the full the whole tragedy of the Stalinist period, next to the bas-reliefs which tell the story of its victims. It is precisely in the seamless transition from aesthetic to emotional images that I myself can best appreciate the architectural and conceptual values which have been brought together in this memorial complex.



When you enter the city by the old bridge from the airport side and the rapidly developing Left Bank you cannot fail to be struck by the openwork winged figure in the shape of a three-tiered arch which towers over you, its top decorated with a disk which sometimes appears to be revolving in the rays of the sun. The arch is a symbol of the ancient Kazakh farewell blessing: "Bata". This word can be translated as "farewell words, valedictory blessing". It is always used when there is a journey, or some major task to be undertaken. That is why the symbolic "Bata" is displayed over the bridge, as if to wish every traveller into or out of the city a happy journey and success in a good enterprise. On the balustrade of the old bridge there are stone leopards which represent the symbolic development of the whole country in that they act as protectors of the capital. The leopards symbolise our onward development, based on our new global values; everyone entering the city sees them and they serve as a constant reminder of our fundamental priorities. We should not forget how important it is in such situations to have the right ideological (and this is a word I do not shrink from) perception of such images. The strength and aspiration of the Leopard should not provoke aggressive associations, since the strength and power of such symbols represents the firm and irreversible strivings of our state on the road to progress and development.

Once you have proceeded along Republic Avenue and turned to where the government and parliament buildings stand you find yourself in the capital's central square. One half of this square, with the Government and Parliament surrounding it, is completely open; the other half, adjoining Kenesary Street, has a number of fountains and sculptures on it. The largest of the fountains, in the form of a three tiered bowl, stands almost in the exact centre of the square and has a particular symbolic character. The water falls from the topmost bowl into the next one down, and from there, as it overflows, into the lowest and wid-



est. This symbolises a tree of life and is a representation of three aspects of our world in one: at the bottom is our past; the bowl at the centre is our present; and crowning it all is our common future. Surrounding the fountains are representations of animals: the dragon, the camel, the ox and the ram, which correspond to four elements: wisdom, earth, water and fire. Water gushes from the mouths of each of them, to symbolise the endless movement of the life which is generated by all four elements.

On the Ishim Embankment near the square, where the Avenue meets Abay Street there are monuments to those outstanding representatives of the Kazakh people, the Great Khan Kenesary Kasymov and the great Thinker Abay Kunanbayev. Khan Kenesary, the grandson of Abilay-Khan, is shown on horse-back with one arm outstretched as if summoning up great exploits. Khan Kenesary entered the history-books as the last of the Kazakh khans who tried to defend his country's independence through armed struggle, leading an anti-colonial uprising to restore that independence. The uprising, on the banks of the River Yesil' became so widely known that he figured as the hero in a romance by the French novelist Jules Verne. His statue and its pedestal stand thirteen metres in height, a work by the sculptor Nurlan Dalbayev and the architect Shota Valikhanov. It towers over the embankment and serves as a reminder that independence never comes on its own, and must always be fought for and defended with determination. As I stood before this superb monument to Kenesary Khan when it was unveiled in May 2001, and laid flowers at its foot, in my heart I thanked the people of Kazakhstan for their devotion to the legacy of this leader with his unflinching assertion of their freedom and independence. There were those who tried to obliterate him from the national memory, but now his bronze figure stands proudly over the smooth waters of the River Ishim as a symbol of our ten years of Kazakh independence.

The great thinker and teacher Abay is shown with a book in his hand, gazing thoughtfully into the distance. It looks as if during his reflections on the fate of his people the bronze Abay has paused in his quest for the truth before – after some seconds – continuing on his journey. This fine figure, some 3.5 metres in height, stands in the central square, and is a favourite visiting place for the people of the capital. Alongside the Supreme Court is a monument dedicated to three great tribal leaders who in the grimmest and cruellest years united the Kazakhs under their Khans and led them in the struggle against the Dzhungar invaders. For the Kazakhs these three, Tole, Kazybek and Aiteke, became everlasting symbols of justice, wisdom and national unity. Their impressive figures in stone must always remind us that the existence of a nation is impossible without unity, and its development without wisdom.

An important meeting took place in the year 1726 on the southern slopes of the legendary Mount Karatau, on the heights of Ordabasy, when representatives of all the Kazakhs' three tribal unions, the hordes, met for a great national assembly, the *Kurultai*: the Khans; the *Beys*, or Sages; the *Beks*, or tribesmen; the *Batyr*s, or Knights, and the most respected village elders, the *Aqsaqal*s. Three of the great sages looked into the eyes of the Khans and knights, and spoke feelingly about the woes of the Kazakh people. They said that if all Kazakhs did not stand together as brothers in this terrible time of invasion by armies of the great Oirat warrior Galdan Tseren, their people would have no tomorrow, or ever again. The authority of the sages, Tole, Kazybek and Aiteke, was so great and undisputed that those gathered there swore forthwith to put their internal squabbles to one side and to unite for the salvation of the Kazakh people.

In the very centre of the main city Square, next to the Juridical Academy, there is a monument to the great Kazakh poet and writer Saken Seyfullin, the founder of modern Kazakh literature,

the establishment of which was timed to coincide with the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the poet's birth. The statue shows a seated figure, with tranquil, even and thoughtful features which reflect his poetic meditations. It looks as if a sudden moment of illumination may inspire him to take up his pen and continue to commit his great creations to paper. Astana is a city of poets. This is not so much a reflection of the inherently poetic nature of the city as of the state in which the city is to be found. Grigori Potanin, a researcher into the Steppe district, once wrote: *"I believe that the whole of the Kazakh steppe has its own power of song."* Echoing Potanin, I want to say: *"I believe that the whole of Astana has its own power of song."* Also that it sings in the languages of the peoples of Kazakhstan. And part of these spiritual songs and poetic images are reflected in the forms of its architecture.

In the centre of one of the beautiful flowering squares of Astana there is a memorial to the great Russian poet Alexander Pushkin. It gives one the impression that the sculptor quickly made a model of him at the very moment that Pushkin was seized by sudden inspiration and was writing down the greatest of his verses. It is as if he is caught in the act of running, so as to fix the images in his head while repeating them to himself, so that he does not forget these moments of enlightenment and creative achievement. For me, it is one of the most successful monuments to Pushkin and one of the most dynamic of Astana's. It is a harmonious embodiment of creative principle and of the poet's love of life. The statue of Pushkin in Moscow reflects above all his greatness and poetic genius, as well as his profound and powerful spirit, founded in human reason. The Astana statue, by contrast, most vividly conveys the well-springs of his poetic and creative nature, the "divine spark" which animates him.

Astana has an extensive open space which today is one of the most visited recreational destinations for the inhabitants and guests of the city. This huge area is laid out as a park along the

so-called rowing canal. The square is surrounded by buildings of the National University, the Ministry of the Interior, a Catholic Church, a synagogue and residential and recreational complexes. The most prominent sight is however the monument known as “Defenders of the Fatherland”, which was presented to the new capital by the people of Karaganda in memory of the million Kazakhs who fought at the front in the Great Patriotic war, only one half of whom returned to their native land. On the occasion of one of the May Day holidays, dedicated to the Day of the Defenders of the Fatherland, I had the idea of putting up an imposing structure which would bring together the majestic spirits of our ancestors as a symbol of the continuity of the generations and the connectedness of time.

My vision then took shape thanks to the collaboration between the sculptor Yuri Baymukayev, the architect Baktybay Taitaliyev, the painter Makash Aliakparov and Aleksandr Kuritsyn, the Director of the Karaganda Art Fund. The bronze wheat sheaf pointing into the sky is impressively large and shapely. The metal stele is 37.5 metres in height and the sheaf has 101 ears. Grandiose as it is, the symbolism is simple and easy to grasp: it represents the unity and noble aspirations of all Kazakhs. The huge outline of the globe with its elaborate belt amplifies the symbolic construction of the stele, its suggestion of our nation’s spiritual inheritance and the nurture of its richness and strength. The body of the bronze column is incised with a figure which represents the Mother of the People smiling as she greets her sons, the inhabitants of our multinational Kazakhstan. Her open expression, as she holds out a goblet of love and blessing to her household, is surely the best possible symbol of peace, tranquillity and stability on the holy and ancient soil of Kazakhstan. At the base of the complex “Defenders of the Fatherland” is a bas-relief which recalls that peace and harmony in our country were won in bloodshed and grievous struggle. Here one can see

a group of Soviet warriors who plunged into combat with the fascist German invaders as they inflicted death and destruction across the land. Another bas-relief depicts the battle between the Kazakh knights and soldiers and the Dzhungar invaders who threatened the very existence of the Kazakh people. The complex is completed with an Eternal Flame which burns at the foot of the bronze monument. The Flame was brought from Almaty and is taken from the fire which burns at the memorial to the 28 heroes of the Panfilov rifle division. It was transferred to its present site in Astana on 9 May 2001 on the occasion of the solemn opening ceremony of the Memorial. On that day I of course paid tribute to the memory of our heroic fellow countrymen.

The complex is also remarkable for the fact that it was there, in September 2001, that a Mass was celebrated by his Holiness Pope John Paul II, on the occasion of his visit to Astana, at the place where the Monument stands to represent the unity and pacifism of the peoples of Kazakhstan, irrespective of their individual faith and culture. The Holy Pontiff spoke of the mutual love between peoples and the need to strengthen their peace loving aspirations, pronouncing these valedictory words to the inhabitants of Kazakhstan: *"As I look at the colours of your national flag, dear Kazakhs, I ask for you from the Most High those gifts which they symbolise: the constancy and openness, symbolised in the blue colour; the prosperity and peace in the gold. May the Lord bless you, Kazakhstan, and all your people, and bestow on you a future of concord and peace!"*

The capital of Kazakhstan is not renowned only for its monuments and architectural complexes. Also to be noted is the new bridge across the River Yesil', which has been given the name "Saryarka", the first transport link between the developing quarter on the Left Bank and the still more rapidly expanding Right Bank quarter of the new capital. The new bridge is 214 metres in length and 33 metres in width. Like the old one before it leads

straight to the airport and on to Korgalzhin Highway and serves as a gateway to the capital. The three arches are of metal construction, each with a weight of approximately 3,000 tons and capable of load bearing up to 15 tons. This remarkable structure is also capable of traffic flows of up to 25,000 vehicles per hour.

In speaking of the attractions offered by the city, one should certainly also note the official coat of arms of Astana. A coat of arms is not an architectural monument, but one should point out that almost all the central streets and facades of buildings are decorated with beautiful coloured flags with representations on them of this heraldic emblem. As they wave in the wind they undoubtedly make a striking impression and help to establish a unique architectural character for the city. I remember that a new version of the Astana coat of arms was approved in June 1999, a year after its first official presentation. The designers of the new version were the talented artists and designers Dembay Salawat and Amanzhol Chekanayev. The basic design is a round eastern shield. On a blue circular field against the background of a purple fortress wall there appears a white winged Saxon leopard. The leopard is depicted in Scythian style with a gold crown like the head gear of the Kazakh khans, to reflect the sacred history of the city, the valour and self-sacrifice of the last of the Kazakh khans, Kenesary, and, as they explained, as a symbol of the wisdom and courage of the first President of the Republic who took the decision to transfer the capital of the newly reborn state. The purple fortress wall recalls the history of the city's emergence as a city and fortress on the banks of the Ishim; and the white colour represents the purity of thought and the nobility of the Kazakh people. The heraldic shield is surrounded by a band with gold edgings on each side, and at the top of the band a circular *Shanyrak*, part of the upper dome of a Kazakh yurt, and a symbol of the hearth. On the right and left sides of the shield golden wheat sheaves appear as symbols of Tselinny District. The bottom of the



golden band displays the word "Astana". In this way the Astana coat of arms is a symbol and representation of the history and noble strivings of the state and peoples of the country; it also corresponds fully with the strictest canons of international heraldic symbolism.

## THE GENERAL STRUGGLE FOR THE BEAUTIFUL

The future is complete only when it has been planned. This may seem too categorical a statement, though one can hardly doubt that planning is the most effective instrument for avoiding many possible problems and mistakes when one is trying to correct or improve on the present reality. I hope the reader will not form the impression that the large scale construction of Astana led into a state of "if only...", if only to build still more, and more quickly. Of course that is not so. Building a city, and more especially a capital city, is impossible without a precisely weighed and thought through plan which takes a balanced account of all its particularities in the course of its development, and helps to avoid the "Ninth Wave" of problems and negative consequences which can flow from chaotic management of the building programme. I have heard that the US city of Detroit displays the base of a monument inscribed "In memory of the development programme". Admirable. It was thanks to such a programme adopted about thirty years ago that Detroit avoided many of the fatal problems of hyper-urbanisation and became a normally functioning and developing city.

The first overall plan for the construction of Astana, then Ak-molinsk, was drawn up in 1840, some ten years after the fortress town was founded. It was not until more than one hundred years later, in 1957, that the Soviet authorities adopted a new overall plan drawn up by the design institute "Kazgorselstroiprojekt". The basis of this was a whole series of plans for basic infrastruc-



ture development, including a precisely elaborated urban centre, enlargement of city blocks and an expanded road network, including rebuilding of inner city highways and the addition of new ones. One new highway actually was built at the time: Peace Street now called Beybitshilik Street, to connect the city centre directly to the Railway Square. A special decree by the Soviet Council of Ministers in 1961, adopted within the framework of the overall plan in Akmolinsk (known as Tselinograd from 11 March 1961) led to major construction of large-panel residential units, the so-called "Khrushchovki".

As the capital of the Tselinny District expanded, so did rapid development of the urban infrastructure. This however could barely cope with the increase in population resulting from internal migration connected with the exploitation of the Virgin Lands. A more careful and regulated approach was needed to plan further development of the city as a major centre, not just of Kazakhstan but of the whole Soviet Union. In the year 1962 a plan for Tselinograd was developed by a group of Leningrad architects from the "Gorstroiprojekt" Institute led by G Ya Gladshtein; for its time it was one of the most forward-looking and well realised of such projects. The guiding principle of this general plan was a structured approach to the urban landscape, by setting out functional areas to include residential, administrative, social and industrial elements.

A view of this is provided in the book entitled: *Astana, a Leap into the twenty-first Century* by Nurbek Auzhanov, deputy director for science in the Capital Institute "Astanagorproyekt": *"The city's population over the project timeframe (1980) was estimated at 350,000 persons. The city's central area was to be located in the Solyonaya Balka (Salt-water Gulley) region, given the proposed development of mass residential construction to the south-east on the boundary of the existing and new sections of the city. Siting the resulting centre on the periphery in relation to*

*densely populated zones should create more ample possibilities for construction on undeveloped land of new administrative and social institutions in the centre of Tselinny District. A substantial area to the south of the residential construction was put aside for the use of scientific and planning organisations. A parking zone along the River Ishim's right bank would complete the sequence of functional areas. The project envisaged the creation of five urban areas with a population of 5 to 100,000 residents..."*

In earlier times the basic development plan involved the principle of concentric functional zones. This included a central ring with the administrative centre of the city (capital or otherwise) and a group of concentric districts round the centre with a variety of functional characteristics. The second ring, moving outwards, consisted of the residential or dormitory regions. The third and final ring on the periphery took in the productive and industrial enterprises and complexes. Parking zones and recreational areas, according to this basic structure, were located in all the functional zones. In the case of Tselinograd, as we can see, the guiding principle was not of a spherical arrangement, but of functional zones laid out on a linear and parallel plan. The zones recalled broad bands stretched out in a straight line which closely adjoined one another and could extend outwards practically indefinitely. N Milyutin, the originator of this scheme, saw it as creating the maximum interaction between all the functional zones in the city, including the industrial, residential and parking areas. This scheme included parking facilities on the bank of the River Ishim.

A glance at a map of Astana in the earliest days of its existence will clearly show how Milyutin's ideas for a city made up of separate belts of development were to be put into effect. The city has an elongated form and has something of the qualities of a sandwich put together from three clearly demarcated areas of territory. An area of parkland clearly extends along the shoreline of the River Ishim, while the central urban park is situated on the

left bank of the river. There is then a belt of residential quarters which consist basically of large-panel buildings intended as family dwellings. Then beyond the "living" belt comes the industrial zone which is devoted to manufacturing facilities and Astana's industrial enterprises. In the year 1967 a new general building plan for Tselinograd was officially adopted, the work of the state projects Institute "Kazgiprograd". The basic approach incorporated the concepts laid down in the general plan of 1962. This was, in essence, a modernised variant of the plan for Tselinny District which had existed earlier and had been successfully put into effect. The new plan specified that further expansion of the city's territory would in principle be pushed eastwards.

The proposal was also made that the extensive areas bordering on the River Ishim should be devoted to individual buildings, a number of health improvement and recreational facilities and parkland which could be put at the disposal of the city's inhabitants. Once Kazakhstan had won its independence and it had been decided to transfer the capital to Akmola it became clear that the prevailing ideas about its development were no longer realistic. The system of functional zones in what was to be the capital city had to be supplemented by an administrative zone which had to be creatively and rationally conceived and incorporated. It was this new zone that had to be given functions relating to the recasting of the city's structures, which needed to develop in accordance with its status within the republic and in the wider international context. It was all too clear that a new and completely original overall plan was essential, and that it had to be drawn up as quickly as possible.

Sadly this rushed approach proved to have severe drawbacks. In November 1995 it was announced that a competition would be held for a new plan. Exactly one month was allocated for its preparation, and as might have been expected, when the jury came to examine seventeen projects on the unfortunate date of

13 December the results proved to be practically useless. The way things had developed made it essential to adopt a more coherent and methodical approach to such a responsible undertaking, and we decided to hold an open international competition for outline proposals on a general plan for the centre of the new capital. The announcement aroused serious interest in the leading regional and international architectural practices and construction enterprises. More than 50 design proposals were than put forward by all the leading architectural powers and others less distinguished, such as Japan, the United States, Australia, Italy, France, Germany, Russia, Finland, Korea, Bulgaria, Pakistan, Poland, Czech Republic, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Latvia. The designs were exhibited in the Congress Hall where all interested parties could examine them.

Out of all the submissions, 27 satisfied the conditions and requirements of the international competition, and these were referred to the authority of the jury. The one chosen was that of one of the most distinguished contemporary architects, the Japanese "conceptualist" Kisho Kurakawa, whose original given name was quite different: Noriaki. The name of Kisho Kurokawa is spoken with reverence by architects the world over; the number of architectural awards he has received is more than impressive. He is an honorary member of the American Institute of US Architects, an honorary member of the British Royal Academy of Arts, an academician of the Japanese Academy of Arts, President of the Japanese Society for Organisation of the Landscape, a cavalier of many professional awards, a prize-winner of international competitions and ... adviser to the Prime Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

The service record of the distinguished architect is replete with masterworks both in architecture and town planning: the National Ethnographic Museum in Osaka, the Sony Corporation Tower, the Japanese-German Centre in the capital of the then

Federal Republic of Germany, the Vitosh Hotel in Bulgaria, the Japanese National Puppet Theatre "Bunraku", the museums of Science, Contemporary Art and ethnography in Hiroshima, Wakayama and Nagoya, and much else besides which have become part of the architectural patrimony of mankind. The great architect Kurokawa is the leading light of the new direction in architecture first put forward by Kenzo Tange, the name of which provokes reflections on the nature of being: "metabolism". It was under this expression of "metabolism" that the new direction was announced by Kisho Kurokawa in Tokyo in 1960 in the course of an international conference on design organised by the Japanese Chamber of Commerce.

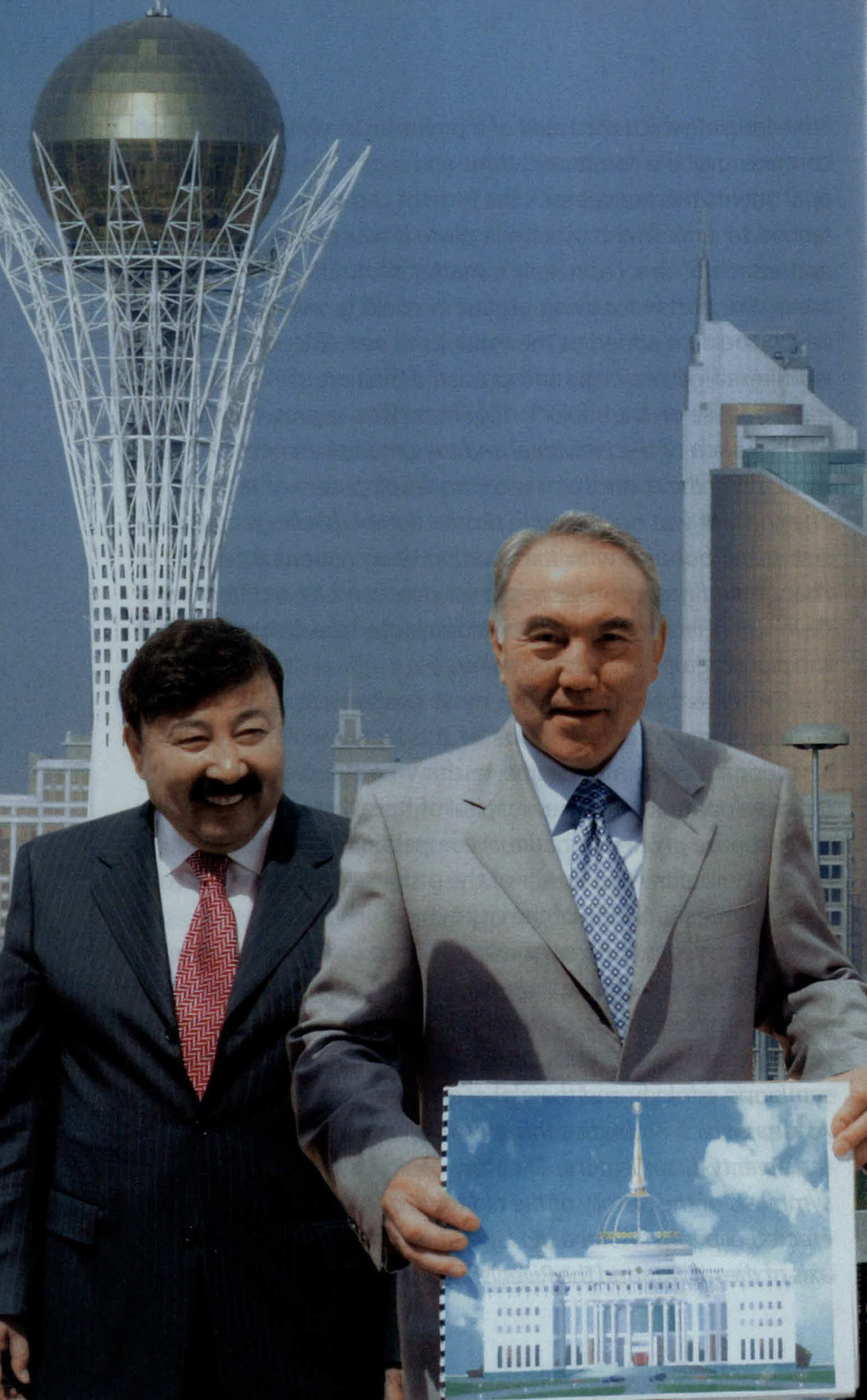
I would like to consider this concept in rather more detail, since many of its elements were incorporated into the proposals Kurokawa made and developed for his general plan for the development of Astana. The essence of "metabolism" is a symbiosis of two structures, one with a static foundation and the other a dynamic ensemble of architectural components. The "metabolists" quite correctly considered urban architecture to be a medium in a state of uneven development, with the constituent elements fluctuating in different time-frames and at varying speeds. Each part of the city landscape has an inherent metabolism which is analogous to that in a living organism; and if it is not taken into account the landscape itself will age much more quickly, since all static constructions have their own minimum life-span. Thus Tange and Kurokawa see each architectural form as possessing a fixed long-term shape, which retains its vitality over the ages regardless of fashion and changing trends, and at the same time elements which are mobile and easily replaced. The latter quickly "die" but can be readily renewed so that they respond conceptually to the spirit of the times.

That principle was adopted in 1971 for an apartment building put up in Tokyo known as "Nagaki". This took the form of a

“tree house” which consisted of a powerful trunk-like foundation containing all the communications and supply systems, while the apartments themselves took the form of capsules which were attached to it. With this system in place it was possible to change and attach a new capsule in a matter of hours. The residential areas, like parts of a living organism could grow, with capsules which could be added as the trunk itself was extended. Kurokawa himself gave a clear and precise definition of “metabolism” in his treatise on the subject: *“My hope was to preserve the self-identification of the individual and to humanise architecture itself by unifying the control of it with the development of technology. The concern was not just with production of dwellings on a massive scale, but also with the creation of architecture capable of change and growth. This might be described as architecture of ‘self-organisation’, where the residents can take an active part in the planning of their own dwellings.”*

This was how one of the most progressive contemporary architects and a representative of the Japanese Agency for International Cooperation came to draw up the General Plan for the development of the new capital of Kazakhstan after winning the first prize in our international competition. To avoid repeating myself I will allow the author of the proposal to express his concepts for the rebuilding of the city in his own words:

*“The twentieth century was a period in which mechanical principles were supreme, whereas the twenty-first century will see a transition to the principle of Life. The supremacy of this principle can be expressed in key words: metabolism, renewal, symbiosis, ecology and the global environment. The new capital, Astana, which embodies this principle, will become a symbol of the Twenty-first Century. The new capital will be born out of a symbiosis of the history of the old town of Akmola and the newly erected capital of Astana. Its lay-out is dictated by the east-west axis of the railway and the River Ishim which flows from the south-*



east to the north-west. The new capital will develop on the banks of the river which flows through it like the Seine, the Thames, or the Moscow River. The aesthetic value of the city centre depends on the artistic qualities and positioning of the architectural forms as perceived from a human perspective.

*“Pivotal elements in this perception will be the four predominant structures of the Presidential Residence, the Administration building and the Parliament (from the eastern side, incorporating the “gates” of the Centre), Independence Square in the complex with the Monument, and the cultural and recreational square including the circus building. These groups will be interrelated with the rhythm provided by the alternation of tall buildings, which will supply a dynamic expressiveness to the spatial elements of the composition. The city centre is designed on the principle of a distinctive rhythmical composition in a ‘concert’ performance with changing tempi, and musical variations to create the special atmosphere of an urban milieu. The so-called background of the horizon, the height of the sky above, the animation of the city and the peace and elegance of the park with spacious architectural elements dominating it, this is the region of the circus in the western sector, the Monument in the Park of State Independence, the building of the Presidential Administration and the Parliament (the visual effect of the entrance gates) and the President’s Residence. In the city’s Central Park, situated along the east-west axis of the Government Centre there are plans for various water features such as fountains and waterfalls, which will bring variety to the architectural background, improve the micro-climate and enliven the parks and squares.”*

This quotation is rather lengthy but I think worth reproducing in full: there is no one more qualified than the author to give a detailed account of his ideas on the building of our capital, and they should be brought to much wider attention, given that most people are not familiar with Kurokawa’s work in theory and prac-



tice. Notwithstanding its length, incidentally, there is still a need for a fuller exposition of all aspects of his work in relation to the development of the city's architecture and infrastructure. At all events, we may have approached Kurokawa's project more creatively than we should, but I do not think that has done any harm to our enterprise in general, but rather to the benefit of further harmonious development of our city.

On 15 June 2001 the government adopted a resolution, "*On a general plan for the city of Astana*". This included the following: "*In order to bring about the comprehensive development of the State Capital the Government decides: 1. To confirm the draft presented by the representatives of the city of Astana of a general plan for the city prepared by the study group of the Japanese Agency for International Development with the basic technical and economic indicators...*"

Kurokawa's plan promotes the radial and concentric layout of the city, and on a personal note I would add that the dynamics of its form impresses me particularly for the way it takes into account the national dynamism we have inherited from our ancestors, and the special landscape of the city's central area which is reminiscent of the nomads' stopping places. The concentric layout of the functional zones in the new city centre is also an ideal arrangement; it brings to mind the disciplined landscapes of some contemporary capitals elsewhere, and gives our city's architecture a progressive and forward-looking feel. Strategically, the Kurokawa plan is absolutely suited to our needs, though – without challenging this in any way – we have made some tactical adjustments to strengthen the national flavour of the city landscape. One way of doing this has been to add domes to residential and administrative buildings, a feature which is very prominent on many structures and complexes in Astana. Examples of this can be seen on the President's Residence, the Presidential Cultural Centre, high rise buildings on the Ishim embankment,

and residential blocks on the Left Bank and so on. The cupola is a very characteristic feature of our national architectural style. It must be a matter of pride that Al-Farabi was the first architect to establish from careful experiment that it incorporated the most durable and stable form of the arch. Al-Farabi found out how to calculate the seismically most resistant shape in the form of an arrow-shaped abbreviated arch, which unlike all other designs which had centrifugal stresses coped with the stresses through downward pressure. It is arches with the construction devised by Al-Farabi which have proved to be the most successful designs and have been used in palaces and mosques throughout Central Asia, Iran and Pakistan.

When it comes to analogies with present-day cupolas in Astana which have been created in the spirit of traditional culture, the first and most conspicuous examples in line with national traditions are to be seen in the Kazakh yurt. The orientalist S Rudenko has commented that in terms of its construction the yurt *"is unsurpassed by any of the nomadic peoples and is the most perfect of all portable dwellings"*. It sustains both an architectural tradition and a symbolic inheritance. Its structure and shape embody a form of structuralism which from ancient times was celebrated in nomadic mythology as the so-called Tree of Life.

Domed architecture found a practical application in all the wonderfully beautiful and imposing eastern palaces, mausoleums and other structures, such as those of Sairam, Taraz, Meke, Otrar, Aisha-Bibi, Turkestan and many others. Indeed it would be surprising if we did not apply the cupola style in buildings for the new capital in the Great Steppe. So the government did indeed approve the new General Plan for the construction of the capital. It also supplemented it with a state plan for the social and economic development of Astana for the period up to 2005, under the title of *"The Dawn of Astana – the Dawn of Kazakhstan"*. I

should recall, in conclusion, that the General Plan took account of all the finest achievements in world architecture and design; as well as complying with the spirit and the letter of global standards, it also had at its disposal the ideas, the resources and the investment needed for its fulfilment.

The main thing is to dispense with fixed ideas about its future development and viability. According to the folk saying: "*The eyes are afraid, the hands do the work*". As we create the true face of our new capital we do not feel that kind of fear. To rephrase the folk saying to reflect our Astanan mentality we should rather say: "*The eyes are not afraid, and the hands do the work*". Progress in architecture does not of course stay in the same place. Today other avant-garde ideas are fashionable and they tend to take over and begin to dominate what the designers are doing. The designers themselves also become fashionable and there are several names that can be mentioned, such as Rem Koolhaas, Massimiliano Fuksas, Erik van Egeraat, Zaha Hadid, Pierre de Meuron, Norman Foster, Jean Nouvel, Richard Meyer and many others.

The ideas which are regarded as most fashionable are no longer the symbiotic fusions of nature and place of residence but rather ideas which synthesise technique and art, known as "Hi-tech Architecture". Industrial progress has now reached a point which makes it possible to give practical effect to the most fantastical architectural forms which present day architects can dream up. What might be called the basic *leitmotiv* in contemporary architecture is more or less that if art speaks, the architecture must do likewise. There are more and more examples now of such "speaking" projects, such as Renzo Piano's airport terminal in Kansai, Japan, or the Cultural Complex in Tokyo by the Uruguayan Rafael Vinoly. Contemporary architecture, in other words, is dominated by advanced technology based on computer graphics and lively imagination.

I would not say, however, that the name of Kisho Kurokawa has become obsolete. Perhaps not fashionable, but far from obsolete. All the same his ideas accord not just with ours in Kazakhstan, but with people all the world over. That is why it is true to say that the new twenty-first Century will see Nature returning to our cities. And the school of Kurokawa more than any other corresponds to such trends. Like those of no one else, Kurokawa's ideas seek to establish an urban environment in which people can not only live in greater comfort, but also learn how to adapt architecture to their own individual requirements. This is particularly true in that Kurokawa's art as an architect is close to calligraphy, and indeed that his creativity is actually a kind of architectural calligraphy. So it is not the case that we did not select the most fashionable architects of our time. We were not pursuing fashion for its own sake, but rather were in search of an architect who would have the best feel for our national and cultural individuality, the best expressed aspiration to fuse and unite with nature and the natural environment.

Kisho Kurokawa with his concept of metabolism in architecture was what we were looking for. But it cannot be said that we blindly followed the general plan according to Kurokawa: of course there were times when we made our own adjustments to it. An example of this was the proposal Kurokawa made that we should put up administrative buildings on the Left Bank of the river at different heights. From the side this would have looked like a very distinctive symphony of different buildings. The Government Building was to have had 27 storeys, another administrative building 28, and so forth. On one of our tours round the Left Bank I suggested that the buildings need not be so tall. For example, 21 and 22 storeys respectively. It was not as if Kazakhstan was short of space. So it was done. And now these more "everyday" buildings look better proportioned, more beautiful, comfortable and appropriate than what was originally suggested.

## IN THE ZONE OF PARTICULAR ATTENTION

Everything that we try to do perfectly we inevitably seek to confine within certain limits and boundaries. That has happened in the case of our dreams for a better future for our cities and for the capital itself. We do not try only to create all the conditions which will give our architectural dreams the best chances of coming to fruition. We also try to bring our future as close as possible to our present, so as to see those fruits of our dreams and creative searches. That is how our free and special economic zones have emerged, a sort of hothouse for our still fragile architectural ideas, town building projects and economic plans.

On 29 June 2001 I signed a Decree *"On the establishment of a special economic zone 'Astana – New City'"*. This was a new landmark in the annals of Astana, the incorporation of the Left Bank and the creation of a completely new area of the city, literally out of nothing. The decree became the logical continuation of our long-term plans to develop Astana and its main administrative area on the left bank of the river Ishim. What we did was to provide an ideological foundation in the General Plan for the development of Astana, and made an economic and financial basis for that by creating a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) to stimulate investment for the realisation of our architectural plans. The SEZ, with the name "Astana – New City" began its operations from 1 January 2002. So far as I can judge, the special zone became the most effective possible model for social and economic development in the new capital. It provided an optimal combination of investors' market interests with state priorities, as laid down by the Government itself.

The first director of the SEZ was the experienced administrator and professional constructor Nikolai Petrovich Tikhonok. It fell to him to put into effect all the potential advantages of the SEZ over a seven year period for effective construction and the stimu-

lation of investment in the local economic space. I considered that his management experience, high degree of professional competence and knowledge of Astana, in which he had been born, would enable him to exert his organisational capabilities in running the SEZ. He deserves to be given his full due: from the very beginning an enormous volume of work was completed, which demonstrated that the initiative was justified. The SEZ received a stream of investment in the form of financial inputs, building technology and construction materials. This was the immediate result of the preferences and the regime of preferential taxation which was made available by the SEZ. There was a good deal of this!

What does the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) offer the potential investor? Firstly, it provides exemption from Value Added Tax (VAT) on turnover related to the sale of goods (work and services); secondly, application of a zero rate of tax on value added when goods and equipment are sold; thirdly exemption from land tax on land plots; and fourthly, the remaining value of buildings and equipment belonging to legal and physical persons does not become liable to taxes.

At present there are 358 building and fitting contract organisations working on the territory of the special zone. Twelve of these are from abroad, and the remainder Kazakh. Turnover, when exempted from VAT is almost 47.907 billion tenge. Independent tax and customs committees have been set up within the zone. The territory of the SEZ is divided into six plots and covers a total area of 1,052.6 hectares. The perimeter of the SEZ "Astana – New City", which is 1,500 metres wide and 2,500 long has eight entry points, for which passes are required, controlled by the customs service. The zone also has special areas for temporary storage of building materials.

In the early days we preferred to draw on the experience and knowledge of foreign companies when the first building works

were being carried out in the new capital; but as time has gone on we have acquired our own Kazakh expertise, and the construction market has naturally been increasingly taken over by indigenous organisations. The right which Kazakh companies have acquired to undertake construction in Astana shows that they have to a considerable extent brought themselves up to western standards, and that their work is now not inferior to that of foreign specialists. It has to be admitted, however, that a comprehensive failure to understand the importance of mastering technologies to meet global standards often led in the early years to complaints that western companies were being given preference over indigenous ones in the awarding of building contracts. I used to wonder at their unwillingness to comprehend the simple truth that ability to put up Khrushchev-era dwellings (where our experience was more than ample) was totally different from what was needed to erect huge residential blocks to accepted international standards.

After all wasn't this something that you could learn on the job: a normal person would be hardly likely to live in some sort of experimental house? When you want to do something better than other people you learn how to do what they are doing already. Now the situation has already changed. Our specialists have learnt to build to the same exacting standards as are employed in architectural practice world wide. It did not take long to teach Kazakhs how to do it: they grasped the foreign technologies involved as they went along. Our construction companies are certainly catching up. Going along Republic Avenue I saw a handsome apartment block opposite the "Imperial" recreation complex; I assumed straight away that it was the work of a foreign firm. But it turned out that one of our Kazakh companies was responsible, and there was not a single foreign specialist employed there. We can do it if we want to...

The volume of work being done in the SEZ is, fortunately, increasing day by day, and is obvious to the naked eye. There are dozens of projects in the pipeline. To the best of my knowledge there are currently 82 on the go on the territory of the SEZ in 21 construction sectors; these include sixteen administrative buildings including the Residence of the President of Kazakhstan, the Parliament buildings and so forth. In addition there are seventeen residential complexes, eighteen social facilities, along with roads and engineering infrastructure projects numbering 31 in all. The work force involved consists of almost 20,000 persons. The pace of construction is unremitting: by 2007 the companies concerned are engaged in works to a value of 238.6 billion tenge which have been invested in the development of the SEZ. Suffice it to say that in that year I gave the go-ahead to almost 230 projects on the left bank of the Ishim. Of those one can point to a Mosque, a residential complex which includes the "Otrar" and the "Almaty", a diplomatic quarter, the circus building, the northern centre for government bodies, a hall for joint sessions of the houses of the Kazakh Parliament, the Main and Circular Squares, engineering networks and communications. And finally the main highway "Left Bank Shore, Abylay Khan Avenue".

I have little doubt that the new golden-topped "Nur-Astana" Mosque deserves a special mention: it will be one of the particular attractions of the capital, and the left bank area in particular. It looks wonderful, with its gleaming cupolas and four 63-metre high snow-white minarets, and the main building flanked by the Imam's residence, an educational centre, a square and a park planted with flowers. The whole cultural complex was a gift from the Emir of Qatar, who met the construction costs, amounting to \$6.840 million.

The remaining building was to have been completed by the year 2005, after the installation of all engineering and technical infrastructure, with 180 kilometres of electrical wiring, 62 kilo-





АКИМ  
ГОРОДА АСТАНЫ

metres of water piping and drainage systems, and 50 kilometres of electrical wiring. By the time of writing much of what had been laid down in the General Plan had already been brought into use, including the "Duman" cultural and recreational centre, the "Astana Baiterek" Monument, a school for 1200 pupils, the Defence Ministry, the Transport Tower, the "Kazmunaigas" National Company building, National Library and several others. The "Astana Baiterek" Monument is a special topic of its own: a symbol of the new capital, which from its very inception burst on to the scene as a "best seller" amongst all the other publicity that Astana generated.

## THE TREE OF LIFE

One of the main and best loved characters in Kazakh folklore has been and will remain the knight Er-Tostik, who overcame every kind of imaginable and unimaginable obstacle, found himself in an underground kingdom, and there encountered an enormous tree which symbolised the origins of life. The Turki legend recounts how the Samruk, the mythical blue bird, brought to the topmost branches of the tree a single golden egg which gave life to everything living and was the symbol of life itself. But like the seasons, the life born from the Great Bird would die every time it appeared, as a huge snake-dragon climbed up the trunk of the great tree and devoured the defenceless fledgling. Er-Tostik shot an arrow straight into the dragon's heart and slew it, and in gratitude the Great Bird helped him to escape from the underworld to the world above.

Folk legends do not deal in precise measurements of such objects or provide recognisable shapes and forms, but when fantasies do become a reality such shapes do demand precise dimensions which can be measured. The idea that the new capital would require an identifying symbol to distinguish Astana from

all other such cities more or less coincided with the decision to transfer the administrative centre to the left bank of the river Ishim. Quite a large number of proposals were put forward in that regard, including an interesting one from Zurab Tsereteli. His thought was that the symbol of Astana would be in the form of an enormous arch 200 metres high with the figure of a golden warrior at the very top. The concept was quite alluring, but had to take account of the fact that there was already something quite similar in Republic Square in Almaty; I was personally not taken with the idea of repeating that symbolism somewhere else. Arab specialists proposed a spire around 200 metres in height at the foot of which an enormous building in the form of a yurt might be placed; and so on. Every time I looked at a new drawing and tried to imagine how it would work out in practice I would eventually conclude, "No, not that..."

What I wanted was something original but at the same time fairly simple in conception. What should the symbol of a new capital actually be? What would possess the unique qualities which would emphasise our national essence and be meaningful to anyone who looked at it? I created many forms in my imagination, basically drawing on my own experience and all I had read about the culture, history and mythology of the Great Steppe. Very gradually, after reviewing hundreds of mental images I came to focus on the symbol of the Baiterek. The story I had read about Er-Tostik worked its magic on me and I quickly sketched out an outline of the Baiterek. After that I managed to turn my idea into a drawing which I submitted for an opinion to the Architects' Union. With them it went down well, and a group of architects were fired up enough to start work on it. Eventually they came up with a professional version, and I was shown a design with such clearly delineated contours of the Baiterek that it looked like a photograph of the completed project.

It must be accepted, of course, that there must be a good economic justification for accepting one architectural construction rather than another. Practically all the foreign designs cost in the tens of millions of dollars, and Tsereteli's came in at £60 million. Our own "Baiterek" project, however, would work out at "no more" than 5 million USD, and that would be a gift from the CCC Investment Company. It would, furthermore, be much closer to us in spirit and concept. In this way it became clear what to build and what the symbol of the new capital would be. It was a symbol which appealed to everyone involved: the Baiterek was the most in keeping with the artistic traditions of the Steppe, the culture of ancient Kazakhstan and the philosophical conceptions inherent in the idea of the tree whose fruits are life itself. The time had now come to work on the complete project, to which we gave the working name of "Astana-Baiterek". This is how the skies of the future administrative centre of Astana on the left bank of the river came to incorporate a once fantastic but now real "Baiterek". And what is most remarkable about this new construction is that everything in it, from its silhouette to its geometrical dimensions, is extremely symbolic.

To begin with, its height is exactly 97 metres. This figure is that of the last numbers of the year in which the capital was transferred from Almaty to Astana, that is to say the year 1997. The Kazakh "Baiterek" is of course a unique object with no analogues elsewhere in the world. There are a few cities which have had the experience of installing similar architectural spheres at the tops of buildings, like the glass globe at a height of 56 metres in the Emirates, or one of 20 metres in Italy; but this should be compared with 97 metres in the present case.... When we inaugurated the Baiterek Tower I recall how thousands of many coloured balloons swirled up into the sky to symbolise its striving towards ideals of beauty and exaltation. That day of the opening was one of the most memorable in the inauguration of new

structures in the capital. The unusual and exceptional qualities of this immense object, like the branches opening out at the crown of a tree with a golden sphere in their midst, demonstrated how the Baiterek would not be only an adornment to the city, but a symbol and indeed a talisman. Indeed even before it blossomed the Baiterek had become a true symbol of the new capital. Its appearance on our television screens, on the pages of our newspapers and magazines, on placards and billboards made it a familiar silhouette and one of the most popular sights of the city.

In one of my interviews about it I remarked, *"As a symbol of the new capital, a symbol of our happy future, I hope the Baiterek will become a favourite place for our citizens, and a visiting card for the new capital."* I have little doubt that that will be the case. The Baiterek tower does indeed attract the eye with its refined beauty and architectural grace. The lattice-work stele, almost 100 metres in height, is bathed in light of almost 500 different shades. The golden sphere, formed with triple-layered panels, presents an extraordinary spectacle, with its glazed surface of almost 1.5 thousand square meters. On the day before the official opening it was polished to a blinding brilliance by a team of steeple-jacks, so high above the earth.

So the Baiterek, woven together with metal, glass and reinforced concrete came into existence to delight the eyes of all residents of Astana, which is reached in almost every part by the sunlight it reflects. As I have previously mentioned, the height of this remarkable construction is exactly 97 metres, and the main entrance, approached by a reinforced lattice-work staircase, is placed 4.8 metres above the ground. To protect it from damp the "trunk" is protected by laminated material weighing 85 tons. Inside the base of the tower there is a spacious hall which houses two express lifts and the engineering systems, the transformer sub-station, ventilation chamber, electrical distribution box,

pumping sub-station and other technical installations which ensure the uninterrupted functioning of the whole complex.

The 22-metre golden sphere is fixed at a height of 76.9 metres. From an architectural point of view the sphere is a revolving envelope shaped as a Fuller geodesic, which, interestingly, was discovered quite recently to be a new state of matter in which the atoms are distributed in this particular manner. The scientists who discovered it, and were rewarded with the Nobel Prize, decided to name these forms "fullerene" in honour of the distinguished architect Buckminster Fuller. The weight of the cupola, which is glazed with special glass panels, is almost 70 tons, and the surface area amounts to 1,553 square metres. Inside the huge space within is a panoramic hall from which there are fabulous views of the old and new landscapes of the city. The golden globe and the main entrance to the building are connected by the so-called "trunk", a metallic construction which weighs some 695 tons. It should be added that in addition to all of this, the Baiterek complex contains a café and buffet, in which visitors can relax and enjoy the wonders that surround them.

Here I must take the opportunity to express my heartfelt gratitude to all those who created this artistic wonder and symbol of our new capital. The first amongst them is the gifted architect Akmurzu Rustembekov, the President of the Kazakh Architects' Union, who led the design group. Others were remarkable specialists such as the architects S Bazarbayev and Zh Aitbalayev, engineering designer M Vanshteyn and interior designer A Ospanov. The tower itself, which took only half a year to construct, was erected by the building company OAO Imstalkon led by its General Director VT Kananykhin, an experienced and meticulous building expert. Contributions to the project were also made by specialists from the leading Kazakh firms OAO Aeroprojekt, TOO EMK, ZAO Arkhfond of the Union of Architects and TOO Aula. For the interiors we are indebted for their artistic beauty and stylish



restraint to the specialist designers and architects of the Capital Firm Astana-Zharnama. I can only say that without such people the full force of Astana's architectural achievement would never have been so striking and the practical results so impressive.

There is just one more fact to add which is a subject of pride for all those who took part in this project: as a result of the work of the tenth Competition in Astana, which was carried out by the International Association of Architects' Unions, the authoritative international jury awarded the Astana-Baiterek Monument the highest mark of distinction, the Grand Prix for the best project and construction in the year 2002 out of all the countries of the CIS.

## LEFT BANK, RIGHT BANK

So, Astana keeps on growing. From a town with one main Avenue it is gradually being transformed into a spacious and multi-textured megalopolis whose new and purely Astanan contours have long since covered over those of Tselinograd. It is by now clear that Astana will rapidly develop and practically without limit, so far as its territory and population are concerned. We are of course making plans to exert control over growth in these areas. For example, we are aiming for a population by the year 2030 in the range of 850,000 persons. Life and reality, however, take their own course. We had been planning for a population of 500,000 up to 2020, while today, fifteen years before that, it has already reached the half million mark!

Plans are plans, but it may well be that we exceed the level of around 800,000 persons considerably earlier. For that reason it would be useful to go a bit more deeply into the issue of unrestricted urban growth. I do not know and can only speculate what the future holds for urbanisation and the social structures of human societies. Global experience with city building and



theories of urban development suggest that there is a trend towards practically unlimited growth, together with an increase in the phenomenon of the megalopolis and huge agglomerations in countries with high population densities or high standards of living. Let us look at the past and then come back to the present. The historical record shows that the very first towns appeared in Asia in three areas where the first great civilisations developed. As I understand it, one of the most ancient cities that still exist on earth was Jericho. It is about 10,000 years old. Most however appeared in the period three to four thousand years BC, when they appeared at very much the same time in northern China, in the valley of the Yellow River, in the Indus valley of western India, in the Nile river valley, and between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers in Mesopotamia.

The inhabitants of these towns grew in proportion to the size of population in the whole state. The towns gradually increased in size, as did their numbers. In the Middle Ages the biggest city on the planet in terms of its population was believed to be Nanking, which for those times had an unprecedented 470,000 inhabitants. Only slightly smaller were Cairo in Egypt, with 450,000 inhabitants, followed by Vijayanagar in Karnataka, India, with 350,000. In Europe at the same time the biggest city was Paris, with a population of around 275,000. Although Europe significantly lagged behind other regions of the world in terms of population it was there, as we have already noted, that the phenomenon of urbanization was first recognised as a process involving the intensive development of infrastructure, numbers of city dwellers and the number of actual cities.

As what might be called a territorial formation a city is no more or less than the result of a process of urbanisation. What also needs to be acknowledged is that up to now there have been no very precise or concrete criteria for judging what a town or city actually is. More specifically there seem to be no globally ac-

cepted standards which can provide an unambiguous answer to the question: what is a city? Is the regional centre of Kaskelen a town, or a settlement which resembles one? When it comes to the actual size of its population, Kaskelen is in no way inferior to other small towns. In chilly Iceland, inhabited places with populations of no more than 200 are regarded as towns, while in the United States the criterion for status as a town requires a population of no fewer than 2,500 inhabitants. So at the present time it is difficult to specify where qualification as a town begins or ends.

The way urban infrastructure develops nowadays has reached the point where there is no limit to the land area a town occupies or the number of inhabitants it contains. In that respect it is quite difficult to describe Kaskelen as a town because its infrastructure is scarcely developed enough; and it is that which tends to distinguish a large village from a small town. Towns sometimes expand to the point where their boundaries merge and they come to form a single space to which we give the name of a "megalopolis". In the year 370 BC a town was called "Megalopolis" which was a fusion of 35 Greek settlements. Such interpenetration of towns is characteristic of countries which are very densely populated, a typical example being Japan, an island state with over 100 million inhabitants. Japan's rapid growth in the twentieth century, with an unbelievably short interval in its transition from a mediaeval to post-industrial society, led to the borders between several adjacent cities, Tokyo, Nagoya, Osaka, Kobe and Kyoto practically disappearing until there was a single gigantic urban landscape. This resulted in the emergence of the so-called Megalopolis of Tokaido, with a population of several tens of millions of inhabitants.

A similar phenomenon can be observed in a number of countries in the world community: the United States, the (then) Federal Republic of Germany, Great Britain, Mexico, China, India

and so on. Perhaps some day we shall see the emergence of a megalopolis in the Saryarka steppe, resulting from a merger of Astana, Kokshetau and Karaganda. The unlimited growth of the world's urban population is obviously leading to the appearance of new cities, the expansion of the old ones and appearance of new urban systems, which might be called agglomerations or megalopolises. The population of the world's cities has already reached two billion, which means almost one third of the people on the planet. In many countries the urban population long ago exceeded that in the countryside. This is particularly the case in technologically advanced countries or in those which are experiencing particularly rapid economic progress.

The number of capital cities is of course much smaller than of towns. What is very apparent, however, is that the innumerable problems which towns have to manage crop up with particular force in capital cities. The fact is that normal urban processes experience what might be called catalytic reactions when they occur in capital cities, and then with a speed and vigour which makes them much more extreme and awkward to deal with. Just as megalopolises have appeared in the past, so they will always appear. The unrestrained trend towards growth in present day large cities is a more painful and pressing issue in town building than in any earlier period. I can only think in this context of the extremely distinctive approach of the Greek town planner K Doxiadis. He was a great advocate of what he called the "Dynapolis – City", that is a city which tends inexorably to grow in strictly confined directions, along the lines of its own communications.

But of course in our own case, in Kazakhstan, the idea of creating examples of such a "dynapolis" could only be hypothetical. In our own case we had a city which was growing rapidly but had a relatively small population, though that did not mean that we should not take account of global trends affecting the planning and growth of cities elsewhere. Furthermore even the small scale

structure of a capital is always likely to affect the broader development of the state as a whole. For that reason I always assumed that the way the capital evolved would influence resettlement in the areas to the north of it, including the central and northern districts of the country as a whole.

In such cases we should certainly not dismiss the possibility of different approaches to the development of Astana, which might arise spontaneously as much as from deliberate planning. While we may be able to forecast with reasonable precision the way the new administrative centre of Astana will probably develop, the likely growth of other parts of the city is less predictable, even if not completely uncertain. Even here the spontaneous elements in the growth of the new capital, or rather its outer limits, are likely to fit in with global trends, which is to say that the peripheral and outlying regions will expand along the lines of the transportation system. At all events I have myself observed a certain tendency towards spontaneous growth along two of the city's lines of communication, that is to say the highways between Astana and Karaganda, and between Astana and Kokshetau. The presumption one can make about the territorial expansion of Astana is that it will probably form a kind of triangle. One corner will be formed by the western vector from the administrative centre in the direction of the airport. The second will be the southern vector where the local population and quarters develop along the Astana-Karaganda axis. The third or northern vector will be formed by the development of the quarters on the axis from Astana to Borovoye.

The trend towards urban growth is an objective fact that we need to take full account of, but the pace of that process is as important as the direction it takes. The rate at which the city's infrastructure can be developed will after all greatly affect such growth in all the regions of the republic. That is why I have always stressed the importance of the energetic approach: there is noth-

ing to fear if we rather overdo it! And that is because that is what the strategic interests of our country call for, and after all we have as much of the resources as we need for that purpose.

In the first place, the Kazakh economy has embarked on a process of economic growth which is creating great financial and material possibilities: favourable conditions for the wide scale use of our own raw and other materials. Kazakhstan's rate of investment is currently the highest in the CIS, and it is widely recognised that in its level and pace of economic reform we also occupy the leading place within the CIS. In the second place, we have a highly educated and professionally trained young workforce, who has qualified in leading academic institutions of the world's most developed countries. They have benefited from the reform of the Kazakh education system on the basis of the world standards laid down in the framework of the Lisbon system. We have also created the conditions for our own academic institutions, above all in Astana, modelled on the most advanced universities worldwide.

In the third place the status of the city and promotion of its development with state support will do much to attract large numbers of young educated and highly professional people. All this necessitates a favourable climate for the labour market in Kazakhstan, from which all countries of the CIS can benefit. In the fourth place the World Wide Web, based on new computer technology and programming material, makes new ideas, scientific discoveries and innovatory projects and products accessible to individuals and institutions in the capital.

In this respect I am quite sure that Astana's place amongst the world's most advanced capitals will depend on it developing its economy as a leader, not by catching up with others, and by building up its infrastructure at a pace which outstrips its rivals. We must make Astana competitive with the most exacting demands of the times. The days should not be far off when an

independent and sovereign Kazakhstan can join the global and regional economy as a fully equal member of the world community. We are moving towards membership of the World Trade Organisation, and Astana, from its position as capital of our state must be ready, and ready in good time, to cope with the powerful political and economic demands which that will impose on us. We have to be open to all the winds of Eurasia. Our natural path is one which is fully open in terms of our economy and in our ability to cope with all the pressures of globalisation. It is because of this that I have always insisted on our capital acquiring an effectively functioning infrastructure on the fastest possible timescale.

For Astana to deal on terms of equality with the representatives of global society the conditions are as important as they are essential: effective activity by the SEZ, successful development of outstanding tasks with capital infrastructure, and unrelenting pursuit of the other objectives of the General Plan. The outlines of what the geopolitical centre of Kazakhstan will turn into are already becoming clear; it should not be long before Astana will truly display its grandeur as a powerful and modern city, incorporating the newest architectural trends, with its own national flavour and individuality, and a Eurasian mentality and culture. It will be a very beautiful and compact city, extending along both banks of the River Ishim. Its new administrative and business centre will be particularly impressive, and will undoubtedly be regarded as outstanding in the annals of Kazakh architecture, for the achievement of its designers and builders.

The likely future population of Astana is a topic which is interestingly explored in a paper by the well-known architect and director of the "Astana General Plan", Bair Dosmagambetov: *"As far back as 1996 our specialists calculated that by the year 2030 the population of Astana should reach 1.5 million. Work on the general plan had not by that time been completed. The Arab specialists who then looked at the figures were more famil-*



САН-СУЙК  
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*iar with the general plan drawn up by European consultants, and their view was that the number of inhabitants was likely to reach 650,000 by the year 2030. The Japanese who came later were in a position to see how rapidly the city was developing, and concluded that the number would be 800,000. That is the number on which the current general plan is based."*

Any increase in the population of the capital must of course be accompanied by a corresponding increase in the housing stock. In that respect the city authorities have been acting with speed and decisiveness. Under the regional development plan for housing construction in Astana for the years 2005-2007 almost 1,750 million square metres of accommodation were to be brought into use at a cost of almost 21.4 billion tenge over the three year period. This would provide for some 26,000 families, together with all the necessary infrastructure to support them. The social and living requirements of all current and future residents were to be met in full with the earlier adoption of the indicative plan for social and economic development in Astana for the period 2003 to 2005. This document lays down the outlines and time scales in the economic sectors, the character and main features of the policies of the municipal authorities for a favourable business climate and the necessary conditions to be met in improving the well-being of the city's residents.

At the present time our economic objectives concentrate primarily on import substitution and the export capabilities of many productive industries. Here a priority must be science-orientated production and innovative advanced technology in important sectors of the urban economy, such as transportation and communications, engineering and technical communications, and construction and services. Another area of concentration will of course be the social sphere. This will include an increase in entrepreneurial activities and business which can maximise income flows into the city budget, and allow particular attention to be



paid to this important sector. Systems of public health provision, to cover all groups within the city population, will undergo fundamental reconstruction and expansion to the greatest possible extent. An increase in the minimum wage for city residents is in the planning stage, along with minimum allowances and pensions. A range of social measures should permit levels of poverty to be reduced to 2% of the total population of the city. The coming years should also see the development of a network of cultural, sporting and health promotion, social and medical institutions and organisations. In addition, there are plans for more kindergartens, professional schools and cottages on the Left Bank and in the micro regions.

Equal emphasis will be given to the cultural sector, for which a programme was adopted in the year 2002 under the title of *"Culture in the City"*, with a development strategy designed to implement it. Work has already begun on the construction of the State Philharmonic, whose main auditorium will seat 700 persons; reference has already been made to the state circus with 2,000 seats, a modern riding school, a zoological garden, an aqua park on the Ishim river bank and an exhibition centre. The cultural scene is already acquiring a high profile in the new capital. The National Theatre of Opera and Ballet is already in existence and performing successfully, and we have the "Astana" Symphony Orchestra, other orchestras and choruses, dramatic theatres and museums operating in the Presidential Cultural Centre, the "Zhastar" Palace and the Congress Hall. We have plans for the establishment of a Botanical Garden and an Arboretum, further development of an ethno-memorial park, the construction of a new "Zheruik" Park, reconstruction of the Zhastar Palace and of the central park of culture and recreation. Healthy and active life-styles are to be promoted with the construction of a football complex in the city park, a hippodrome, cycling track,

equestrian sports complex, tennis courts, training halls, rowing canal and a skiing centre.

The river Ishim has a valuable role in giving structure and architectural definition to the cityscape; with that in mind a project is being planned to build up and develop the river banks within the city limits. The whole of the embankment area on both sides of the river will be designed as an unbroken park with amenity areas, beaches, squares, sporting and trading facilities, leisure and entertainment spaces. The installation of landscaped and green areas around the river should bring ecological and climatic benefits and spacious recreational areas for the city population.

By putting into effect the State Plan "*Dawn of Astana – Dawn of Kazakhstan*" we shall lay the foundations for the rapid social and economic development of the capital of independent Kazakhstan. We now have in the city a harmoniously developed environment which has facilitated the administrative and business functions which the capital has to perform, while achieving a good quality of life and well-being for its inhabitants. It will extend beyond that to benefit all regions of the country. Now that the new centre on the left bank is in full operation this environment is reaching new heights in terms of its quality and extent. The fact that Astana has become established as the capital of independent and sovereign Kazakhstan on the threshold of the third millennium is in no way a source of self-satisfaction, but rather only a basis for development of the city, its infrastructure and geopolitical status. In the first place the city will have to complete that infrastructure if it is to acquire full status as capital of the country. I do not for the time being see particular obstacles or problems in that regard.

The general construction plan is complete, the scale and pace of the construction work are sufficiently high, and the same goes for the development of the city infrastructure. Looking further ahead, we must lay down rules for tackling the further de-

velopment of the city's infrastructure. This will provide an answer to the question of how we see the future administrative centre of the city which must be, and will be, as varied as possible in the functions it can satisfy. What we have to ensure is that the administrative centre, whose outlines we can already see at the present time, will incorporate the most modern achievements in terms of its architecture, its infrastructure, its aesthetic value, its social effectiveness, and finally in the quality of its economic top management and political style of leadership.

What then is the new administrative Centre on the left bank of the river Ishim? In the first place, the Centre occupies a site of almost 67 hectares, an area which includes three specific areas which have functional as well as territorial divisions. These include state administration, business enterprises and trade, social and life-style structures, and cultural and recreational diversions for the inhabitants and visitors to the city. The Centre will house, apart from the administrative and other public buildings, the offices of companies, financial institutions, trading centres, hotels, exhibition and trade fair facilities and other such facilities as the capital needs. The social and cultural centre will incorporate a complex of theatres, museums, and zones for recreation and sporting and entertainment facilities. The scientific and educational centre will provide space for universities, institutes, colleges, specialist lyceums and professional schools. In the business centre there will be small and medium enterprise centres with services and exhibition trade fair and similar halls.

The industrial belt is situated on the outskirts of the city and, for the most part, in the suburbs. The food supplies sector will include agricultural regions and food processing enterprises within the city limit. Industry will be represented largely by small and medium sized enterprises, including science-based and technologically advanced subsidiaries. The development of industry on this scale will not, however, outweigh the importance of the

city's administrative and business operations. As is appropriate in such cases, the main square of the administrative centre will be located in close proximity to the Residence of the President of Kazakhstan, currently under construction on the banks of the river Ishim. The dimensions of this area seem to me to harmonise very well with the dimensions and outline of the residence, with a length of 600 metres and a width of 120 metres. The square will be covered with a layer ten centimetres thick of granite paving stones which will allow for military parades using heavy vehicles.

The Residence will not of course be the only key building framing the principal square on the left bank. As the official centre of the republic and focal point of the central power, the main square will include a complex of buildings for the executive, legal and other branches: the Senate, the Majlis, the Government and the Supreme Court. To add variety to this concentration of official power within the framework of the General Plan we intend to include on the central square the National Theatre of Opera and Ballet, so that in addition to being the official centre of the republic it will also be a focus for the multinational culture of Kazakhstan. Alongside the central square will be another one which is intended to incorporate the symbols of Kazakhstan and Astana itself. That is the central and universally recognised "Astana-Baiterek" monument. This "Tree of Life" with its crown reaching for the sky, as if aware of its own symbolic representation, will act as a centre of attraction for many administrative, cultural and residential complexes, some now completed, in the process of construction, or already on the drawing-board. Thus the new Ministry of Defence has already been built and on the opposite side, to the north of the Tree of Life, stands the tall building of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The ensemble of modern buildings will be completed by a covered boulevard on two levels, extending from the "Astana-Baiterek" to the Ministry of Transport and Communications. The

idea of having the boulevard enclosed was imposed on us by the fact that the extreme continental climate of central Kazakhstan makes the summers quite hot, and the winters excessively cold. These sharp fluctuations made it necessary to help out visitors and guests who wished to walk in the administrative centre of the new capital by making the process as comfortable for them as possible. More than that, the architects and designers decided that the upper covered section of the walkway should be decorated with bright and varied colours, which certainly make the view from inside or outside much livelier. Then there is a square which is third in terms of size, though not importance. This will actually be circular in shape and will be surrounded by the tallest and most modern buildings in Astana, or will be at least for the time being. On one side of it there will be the solid and severe building of the Ministry of Energy and the national company Kazmunaigaz. On the other side the perimeter of the square will be occupied by the first Kazakh skyscraper, the very tall building of the Ministry of Transport and Communications. Its smooth lines are topped off by a sharp spire so high up that it looks as if it may pierce any clouds above it. This is the tallest construction in Kazakhstan, with altogether thirty-six storeys, which house many ministries and government agencies; as well as the Ministry of Transport there are the Ministry of Culture, Information and Sport and the Information Technology and Communications Agency.

Finally, close to the circular space, there is an administrative and residential complex which rounds off the ensemble of buildings in this important component of the new capital's layout. Another significant and quite original element in this composition is a viaduct suspended over the whole space which passes between the Kazmunaigaz Building and the Ministry of Transport and Communications. My first idea had been to put an underground tunnel below the square, but the architects convinced me that an overpass would look better. As they went over the bridge,

people would have a view of the whole three kilometre boulevard with the water and planted areas up to the Baiterek and beyond. I agreed, and think it came out well. The centre of the space is free of buildings, and is completely made over to fountains, small architectural features, groups of sculpture and a large number of pergolas and benches for visitors to enjoy. The most important features are the flower beds, whose varied colours and vegetation are designed to fill the square with their luxuriance, making it the most beautiful and popular destination on the whole of the left bank. The varied shapes, lofty buildings and the variety of green spaces and flowers, the fountains and sculptures should combine to promote a microclimate within its own confines and an atmosphere of amenity and comfort. The three open spaces I have been describing will be combined into a single ensemble connected by the covered boulevard; and this, along a route some three kilometres in extent will in turn benefit from numerous office and residential complexes with garages, cultural and recreational buildings and a whole range of consumer and service amenities.

The city area on the right bank of the river should not be too cut off from the new administrative complex on the left bank. The intention therefore is to put no fewer than 22 bridges at various points across the river Ishim. This number should ensure that there is no lack of contact between the right and left banks of the river. The new "Saryarka" bridge across the river has already significantly reduced the traffic in the city centre and has led to a rationalisation of traffic flows. Like any city located on the banks of a river Astana must also have river transport. We are not of course speaking here of heavy goods consignments going by water: the Ishim is no Volga... At the same time it should be possible to arrange regular tourist excursions along the borders of the Astana, or else some other mass tourism services making use of river transport. I am sure that river cruises would be very popu-



lar with city residents and visitors and would give a great deal of pleasure. The intention is to provide the Presidential Park, which is to be laid out on the river bank not far from the Residence, with a river station which can be used for recreational boating and flat-bottomed barges which the public can enjoy. Areas of parkland and woods must also be a particular feature of the new capital. We must put all possible efforts into ensuring that the territory of Astana, like that of Borovoye, will be another flourishing oasis in the steppe lands of central Kazakhstan. We are speaking here of extensive planting both within the city and outside its borders. This will involve devoting special attention to the creation of a green protective belt around the city, which should mitigate the unfavourable effects of severe winter winds and the dust storms of the summer season....

## THE MAIN SHIELD OF THE CITY

There are living gardens and lifeless ones also. Gardens can be made of plants, but also of rocks and stones. Which is to be preferred? The best combination is likely to include elements of both natural and artificial. We always admire the enigmatic gardens created by the Japanese philosophical imagination, though we tend not to notice that the stones they are made of are only episodes in a landscape of flourishing growth, where most of the squares and gardens are alive with their flowering cherry trees and summer blossom. The artificial environment of our towns and cities helps to create structures which enable the population to live with a sense of comfort and amenity. But if in these stone jungles the bird song dies out and the green fires of the living greenery are gradually extinguished, the souls of the city dwellers will also die. Men can acquire too great a feeling of comfort from artificial conveniences, to the point where they lose their



true awareness of life and sense of closeness to nature. In the end this leads to spiritual as well as physical alienation/ disharmony.

It is possible to pay great attention to a city's architecture, to the construction of beautiful and functional buildings and complexes which reflect man's unbounded imagination and freedom of thought. Up close on the pavement and intersections the outlines of the city must please the eye with the splendour of their tones and colours. Walls made of metal and glass point to the future and convey a feeling of identification with the most up to date achievements of civilisation in the field of architecture and city construction. Multicoloured neon displays and coloured billboards give a city a particular aura, inspired by the lives of those who work there. Grey and white buildings which have survived from earlier times and epochs make us reflect on the inheritance of generations and traditions, restraining the hastiness of our daily lives and obliging us to wonder about the interconnections of time. Variegated monuments and architectural forms which set off the cityscape of streets and squares encourage and enrich our thoughts and aspirations, obliging us to seek new solutions to the city's amenities and giving it a unique appearance.

But it must be the case that all these riotous colours make the city dead and soulless if when you take a bird's eye view of it the city landscape does not please you with the bright colours of living vegetation. If a city has no flowers or flower beds, if there are no trees or grass, it cannot possess a soul or any feeling of being at one with nature which every city dweller so greatly needs. One can go on as much as one wants about the need for total urbanisation and the domination of stone jungles, but there is one thing one can say with complete precision, that a city without green growth is no more than a desert.

These days excessively urbanised towns and urban states of mind have come to include the phenomenon which has received a very precise and exact name: "the grief of new towns". It was

in good old England that the following observation was made: people who moved to comfortable and well appointed houses in towns began to fall ill much more frequently and felt much less at ease than elsewhere. Despite the greater density of the population and having a greater number of neighbours, many people noticeably feel more lost and are lonelier. In Astana, things are different. It is open to all the winds from the steppe, the air in the city is clean and full of invigorating gusts blown in from the life-giving expanses of the open country. The freshness and transparency of the air in Astana is strikingly different from the atmosphere in many capitals across the globe. Nonetheless the pace of urbanisation is increasingly making itself felt. The ecological problems which are appearing in the new capital are connected to a significant extent with the use of equipment which is becoming obsolete and does not conform to present-day ecological standards.

The development of an industrial sector in the capital is of course beneficial. Sooner or later, however, having it alongside the living quarters of the population is bound to affect the environment. It is a well known fact that the average temperature in a city is always somewhat higher than that of its surroundings. And it is precisely there that industrial expansion is, and will continue to be, usually concentrated. The temperature of the air in the city is, consequently, continuing to rise, and air contaminated by industrial effluent is flowing in to replace it. I am not sure that the "grief of new towns" has yet taken hold in Astana, but we must take measures now to prevent it, or at least put them into place as part of our general planning for construction in the residential and administrative sectors of the city.

The recipe for this is simple enough. The removal of the "grief" depends on getting the right balance between green and concrete within the city. Green cover in the city neighbourhoods has to do two things: generate oxygen and at the same time

act as a regulator of the temperature to strike the right balance between the air in the city and in the surrounding suburbs. For Astana to become a true capital and a worthy Eurasian city we have to find the right balance between artificial comfort and a natural style of living. At the end of the nineteenth century and in the 1930s Ebenezer Howard and Le Corbusier proposed the building not of towns but of garden-towns, in which the residential buildings would be islands in a sea of green. Fortunately the general plan for Astana, as proposed by Kisho Kurokawa, takes very good account of these principles, so important for the urban life style, of Howard and Le Corbusier.

Making Astana a green city, protecting it from the elements with a green shield, and covering it with a dense layer of healthy fresh air is one of the most important aims we have in creating a city infrastructure which will save Astana from any urban "grief"... After the abundant greenery of Almaty, which on ordinary days provides feelings of spiritual tranquillity and harmony, and on sultry days invigorating coolness, the relative sparseness of green places in the new capital could and still can provoke feelings of discomfort and unease unlike the amenity provided by green areas of Almaty. One way or another the greening of Astana had to be done not so much speedily as in a systematic fashion, by identifying the nature of the problem and taking clear measures to resolve it. As soon as we could, therefore, when we had made the necessary preparations and had the resources needed, we did our utmost to create not just a city but a garden-city in the Saryarka steppe country. I had to take part in a large number of consultations with the city authorities and builders on the huge number of new constructions that was going up in the capital. But what we devoted particular attention to was the greening of the city and its surroundings. We took the advice of scientists and local horticulturalists, and consulted specialists from abroad.

The first step was to turf over all the bare spaces in the city. The clouds of dust which hung over old Ak-mola were no adornment to the new city. Experiments showed that the best solution in our conditions was the use of Canadian varieties of ground cover. I then instructed our Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection to prepare a comprehensive plan for the greening of the capital. The first stage was to create a complete complex of tree plantations around the perimeter of Astana. This green belt was designed to fulfil two purposes: to help overcome the existing lack of vegetation and to tackle a range of issues which had to be addressed to improve the life style of the inhabitants of the new capital. First of all the green belt would form a protective shield against the penetrating gusts of wind and blizzards which made atmospheric conditions uncomfortable for Astanans, and it would relieve them of the sand storms in summer and snow storms in winter whose paths would be blocked for good by the green shield standing in their way. And that would not be the whole story. The inhabitants would want to relieve the cares of everyday life in the city by enjoying walking in the countryside in shady groves and wooded meadows; in this way they would be able to identify themselves fully with a city concerned not just with external appearances, but with a harmonious life for all of its inhabitants.

To fulfil this task it will also be necessary to carry out a tree planting programme round the capital once all the construction work is complete. The greening programme was approved by the government on 10 January 2002, with the title: "*Sectoral programme for creation of a green zone, Astana 2002-2010*". Any such greening programme, particularly on this scale, needs a lot of sources and of course a good deal of time. This called for a realistic time frame, which entailed afforestation of 25,000 hectares by the year 2005 and completion of a green shield round the whole of the capital by the year 2010. The afforestation pro-

cess was carried out under the constant control and participation of scientists who established which species of trees and bushes were most likely to flourish. Special plant nurseries were established to test the trees and grasses required.

Astana is now surrounded by woodland which has reached heights of 7-8 metres, but covering more than 20,000 hectares. Trees are to be planted along railway tracks and highways connecting Astana and Kokshetau. I make a tour of these woods every summer. It gives me great pleasure to see that the trees first planted in 1997-98 have already reached 10 metres or so. In order to see the whole planting I also survey it by helicopter, and do believe that it will extend round the whole of the capital. Afforestation on this scale and time frame has never previously been carried out in Kazakhstan. So it may be that the energy of our times and our actions will one day be remembered also in the sound of wind in the crowns of the beautiful pine trees which started life in this exciting decade...

The greening of the city itself is the most important link in the chain which will make for a successful environmental future. In Astana there are now about 1.2 million square metres of lawns, of which 500,000 are to be found in the city centre. Not all of them are in equally good condition. But the gradual process of improving them with the help of new technologies and the introduction of fixed irrigation systems will be a continuing responsibility of the city authorities. Only when this has been done will the lawns become a true and flourishing adornment to the new capital. This new planting must not only be well planned, but also in good taste and indeed beautiful to look at. It is the sight of beautifully set up green squares and parks which give cities, and the capital itself, an established and finished look. That is something we did not of course forget, and it is precisely for that reason that a beautiful green square called the "Four Seasons"

has been cultivated in the very centre of the city, near the big residential blocks of the "Samal" and "Molodyozhny".

On this spot there are more than 1,500 carefully grouped plantings of apple trees, pine, birch, pyramidal poplar, elm, and rare species of yellow willow and palm trees. They are laid out in such a way there will be green in this square of 6.5 hectares at any time of the year. Just as its name implies!

It was in this square that I saw an interesting juxtaposition of avant-garde architecture and a town-greening concept. In the very middle there is a sculpture in the form of a double Mobius strip. It seems to be saying that life is a phenomenon without end, and all our life is an unending chain of lives which we live with each passing moment. I do not think it will be long before the approach to Astana, from which ever part of the world they come, will take visitors through a series of green plantations and clumps of woodland before they see the shapes of the sharp-tipped cupolas and skyscrapers of the new capital shining in the sun. In the capital everything should remind you of the preciousness of life, from the metallic crowns of the Baiterek tree to the small flowerbeds scattered across the parkland expanses of growing Astana, the capital of the flourishing state with the proud name of Kazakhstan...

We have devoted attention to ensuring that the city looks attractive also in the winter, when a snowy blanket covers all green spaces. These are not only the islands of evergreen pines which vary with their green branches the uniformity of the winter whiteness. The very colours of the Astanan structures will speak of much to the attentive eye. The buildings of Astana are decorated with bright warm colours. In the winter this warm range of colours greatly enlivens the spaces of the city. Such is the capital on the river Ishim: a beautiful and peaceful city with an original architectural landscape, unique symbolic sculpture with its aspirations for a high technology future with a multinational and

multi-confessional population who have towards one another exceptional feelings of mutual respect, a feeling of national worth and unending pride in their capital and in their country. That is the answer to the question about the nature and special qualities of the aesthetic in the new capital of Kazakhstan...

## A FEELING OF PERSPECTIVE

Experience suggests that situations where the likely outcome is very uncertain can provoke a completely natural reaction, which is one of irrational anxiety. What we also know is that passes, once the results are known. I am no prophet, and when I embarked on the transfer of the capital I could not be absolutely certain of a successful result. Today I can confidently say that the transfer has taken place, and done so successfully. Astana is acquiring the outlines of a real new capital city. The tensions of recent years are gradually subsiding, and I have the impression that many of our fellow citizens have come to feel that they and the whole country can gain from the move, and that they now see it as an accomplished fact.

I am not of course saying that the development of Astana does not still face many problems. The uneven development of Tselinograd in Soviet times was such that the outlines of the future capital, even when based on the designs contained in the general plan, still look disjointed. The favourite theme we hear is that the central streets and squares of Astana tell the everyday story of a new Eurasian capital, and that one has to leave behind the paved surfaces and asphalt of the main road and go somewhere into an inner courtyard, where you can see wonderful views of Khrushchev-era housing and the dirt roads of old Tselinograd while they still exist. This remains possible, though thousands of metres of old decrepit buildings have been removed and replaced by much more comfortable modern housing. Thousands of families in

Astana have moved into new accommodation which meets all modern standards, to an extent that would have been unthinkable only a few years ago.

It is worth remembering that in the period 1997 to 2004 1.6 million square metres of residential housing was opened for use, with a further 400,000 square metres on stream for the year 2005; the building boom is continuing. In the period from 2005 to 2007 an additional 1,590 million square metres will have been built. This means that over a period of ten years three million square metres of new accommodation will be provided for a city with half a million inhabitants, an unprecedented speed of development. The relatively unending expanses of the lightly inhabited areas on the Left Bank still contrast sharply with the density of old and new houses and the streams of cars and people on the Right Bank. But the outlines of the Left Bank somehow give a certain tone to the whole city and oblige structures on the Right Bank which are behind in this respect to be pulled up to new standards, with the encouragement of the Japanese and Kazakh architects.

The river Ishim acts as a frontier between two separate manifestations of the city's architecture, the eclectic mixture of old style Khrushchevite buildings and subsequent additions on the Right Bank, and the stylistic unity of the high-rise symbolic constructions on the Left Bank. Our city is so far only half way towards the status of a city with a million inhabitants, but it is already beginning to acquire the features of a future megalopolis. As I dreamt of structures in the capital growing like mushrooms after the rain I often forgot not just about the seasons but also about the hour of the day. I can remember that in the first days and months of the city's construction I often did not sleep at night and would disturb many people by getting them up out of bed and disturbing their sleep in turn. Nowadays I sometimes have to work late into the night, reviewing or discussing some architectural project or another, or a new idea relating to city construction



which has a bearing on Astana's appearance. In the 1970s I had some experience with the construction of the Karmetkombinat and the new town of Temirtau. This was a huge project involving people from all over the former USSR.

One of my first professions was in the building sector as a concrete-layer. And when I was in charge of construction in a new industrial city I had to make myself an expert in the details of the building trade. This of course came in useful with the construction of Astana. But that was another story, another time, and on a different scale. Building a capital in the twenty-first century is a truly historic undertaking. I am not, of course, a professional architect, nor a construction worker; but I have been reassured by the fact that many prominent town builders did not receive a professional education either. On the other hand, my experience of dealing with professional architects did make a lot of the detail connected with town building easy to understand and deal with. This is all the more the case in that town building, when it comes down to it, involves architecture, economics, the environment and politics as well. In this case my experience in politics was generally helpful in dealing with the builders and the architects.

What we were doing was more than planning, designing or building a city. We were putting up the capital city of a whole state and creating a new geopolitical landscape in Kazakhstan. The capital city is not just the most advanced and progressive city in the country: it is the place where ideas, aspirations and the problems of the state as a whole all come together. The capital also represents a synthesis of the social relationships which resonate in all parts of the country and are echoed in the working capacities of the whole state. Social problems storm about in the regions but sooner or later, like water into a funnel, they swirl down into the same place, the capital of the country. And of course Astana as the capital of the whole of our country must

be the focal point of technological progress and of our national culture, not just of our political life but of all the other values; and as yet we cannot really claim that it has become the centre of our state's civilisation. Nonetheless a great deal has already been done so far as our technical progress is concerned; this is particularly so when it comes to the achievement of a strategy for industrial and innovatory technology for the country as a whole.

The network of scientific institutions and structures to promote advanced technology is increasing. Examples are the Centre for research in nuclear physics and cosmic monitoring at the Eurasian National University or the Centre for Biotechnology near Astana. There is a great deal more to do in this direction. Astana will certainly also be the capital of the information community. More than this, I would like to see Astana as leader of Kazakhstan in overcoming the notorious "digital barrier".

On a trip I once made round the countries in South-East Asia I was accompanied by a special correspondent who was loaded down with every conceivable kind of digital equipment and apparatus, a notebook, a digital camera, digital dictaphone, and a cell phone with all the plug-in connections. Despite all that he could not transmit the latest information home as he could not make use of all the ingenious technology in his possession. He had particular problems when he tried to transfer information from his notebook to a cell phone which used an infrared communications channel which would have enabled him to send his messages rapidly to his central office in Astana. He could not do this, because he did not know that infrared radiation is not the same as radio waves. In the latter case reception and transmission in that range works only when the infrared receptors of the computer and the telephone are adjacent. This is a situation in which there is a digital barrier, where if you cannot overcome it you cannot make use of all the advantages made available by

information technology. On the contrary for such people it only complicates their life and work.

Overcoming this notorious barrier does not of course lead to a marked improvement in the standard of living of the population as a whole or bring instant benefits. But overcoming the barrier will provide an impulse to development without which technological progress is impossible from either a theoretical or practical point of view, or consequently any increase in the well-being of the state and our fellow citizens. What is true for Kazakhstan is true for our young capital, Astana. For this reason, in developing Astana as an information-based city and accepting national informatics programmes for Kazakh society I am fulfilling a programme with a specific objective. This is to bring about, in the not too distant future, an information-based society on the Ishim, and make the Republic of Kazakhstan such a society with its capital in Astana.

When we make arrangements for our future we should ensure that we take full account of the past as much as of our current circumstances. Even if we cannot see it, the past is a kind of building block; and in building the future it stands as a basis for the culture and civilisation of our land and its people. When we now try to find traces of Saryarka's past to recall and prefigure what we are now doing to build a new capital in Kazakhstan's steppe country, we are doing more than seeking reassurance that we were right to transfer it from the feet of the Tien Shan Mountains to the grassy plains of the Great Steppe. These traces of the past have as much progressive and constructive influence on each community of people as, for example, when some noble aristocrat obliges them to seek a reasonable justification for their activity, or even spurs them on to heroic exploits and noble strivings. For this reason human progress is moved not only by dreams of a better future; it also bears witness to the distant

past, proving that society deserves a better destiny because of true memories of what their predecessors had achieved.

When we find proof that where Astana now stands there was once a settlement of the ancient Kazakhs called Bozok, we are not simply trying to find a more ancient basis for the new capital; we are trying to restore in the awareness of the Kazakh people their "social memory". We are doing this above all because people as bearers of their ancestral culture are moved not only by a sense of responsibility towards their successors, but also their feelings for their ancestors as well. I have the same feelings when I see a photograph of the ruins of the ancient town on the banks of the river Ishim as I do when I look at the latest meticulous layout of the new capital. Those are the times when I feel most keenly that this grandiose layout is not there only to meet the needs of the present and the future, but that it allows me to carry out the wishes and hopes of our distant nomadic ancestors who created great steppe civilisations where we are standing now.

There is another aspect to all this that I would like to draw attention to, also closely connected to the past – the unity of mankind and the natural world, or what we might nowadays call ecology. This has come to be seen as a rather remote concept, which the concerns of everyday life and other distractions often cause us to lose sight of. It is also a long time since we forgot that our ancestors had no such concerns; not because they lacked education but because of their wisdom: they would have thought it stupid to imagine that nature could be subordinated to the needs of men. Nature is a greater thing than a device like a robot which is supposed to carry out faithfully and unconditionally whatever men order it to do. There is no need for mankind to be somehow subordinated to Nature, and any such hierarchical ideas would have been completely alien to our ancestors. We ourselves should not forget this either. To live in harmony with nature, matching our own comforts to the possibilities that nature can satisfy, is all

that is needed in the relationship between man and his environment. Forcing nature into submission for its own sake is only for those who are prepared, for the sake of their own personal good today, to suffer in the future the consequences of moral decay and spiritual emptiness.

That is why the rules and nuances involved in creating a new city will be impossible to grasp unless we take full account of the interaction between man and all the biological, moral and intellectual factors which make him what he is. We also have to understand that the consequences which flow from this are not always beneficial for the world around us. In transforming this world both within and outside the city we have to act carefully and intelligently; we have to balance the professional demands of the architects against the need for coexistence between man and the natural world which we all inhabit.

Several attempts to achieve this balance have already been made. Kenzo Tange formulated his city-building concepts to take account of architectural fashions but also of the world's need for ecological balance. He incorporated this approach into his plans for the reconstruction of one of the greatest of all global megalopolises. Here he argued for administrative and residential complexes to be sited along the lines of the transport communications which were extended in a giant artificial "trunk" which extended into the waters of the Tokyo bay. Not all of Kenzo Tange's ideas have yet been literally put into practice there, but some artificial islands have already been created with numerous parkland zones, and some architectural work has been done. It is not we humans who have arbitrarily acquired awareness of our natural surroundings, but nature which has come to us to demand that its rights be restored to it. We have already been obliged to take account of ecological factors in the further development of our towns and cities.

For us the most striking example of the problem has been the impossibility of extending Almaty to any extent because of the threat to the local environment. The ecology of the city became such a concern that we were obliged to review all our ideas not just about developing an existing megalopolis but about the republic as a whole. I am no longer keen on further ultramodern development of the city. The outline for the future of the city which we drew up for Astana in the General Plan is not just for the short or medium term; I would like to think that it represents the final stage in the overall vision we have for the capital. It always makes sense in such situations to stop in good time and not to rush headlong on a track laid down for architectural borrowing and new visions which future town planners will also want to visit.

Architecture for its own sake is a recipe for extensive rather than intensive development of a town or a capital city. The city of our future is not a development of architectural principles but primarily a way of resolving real problems which affect local or global issues. The future must lie with perfecting what we already have rather than building new things just for the sake of it. This does not mean that architecture as such has to die off: what it means is that it must make way for the environment, for progress in the handling of our communications, the modernisation of our living conditions and improvement in our awareness of what a city should be, and our place in it. Given our rather limited potential, absorbing and taking over these "packets" of social and civic amenity is possible only where architecture itself is confined within defined limits.

At all events a time will come when the architecture of Astana will require a period of reflection, when all the remaining areas of the inhabitants' lives and well-being and the qualitative level of the city infrastructure can be brought into line with the original architectural designs. If we do not do this we shall be

constantly digging up and laying down the road surfaces, trying to finish off unfinished communication networks above and below the ground, bumping into ruts and potholes just next to shining glazed high rise buildings reaching into the skies. It is not the equivalent of architectural sprinting, but improvements to living conditions for the urban population which provide our way forward as we develop our capital city into the immediate future.

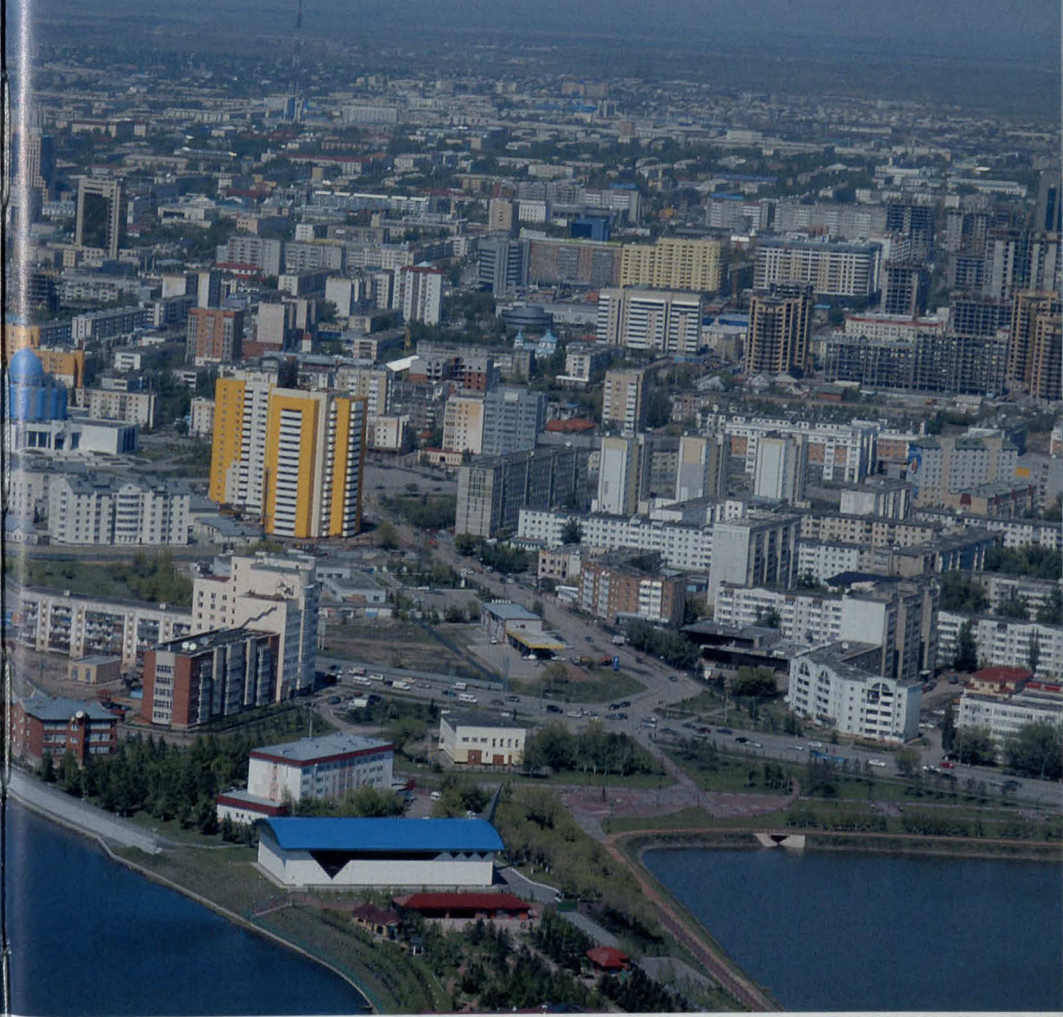
We judge the past from the fragments which have survived down to the present time; by using our imagination we can picture what these fragments represented when they were part of a whole. Can

we make judgements about a future which has not left us any basis for creative exercise of our imaginations? Of course we can: the future leaves traces through our ... dreams! At present, as Astana continues before my very eyes to transform itself, I begin to dream about the day when it will stand before us in all its greatness and magnificence. About the day when Astana will be, not only a city of unique architectural forms and full of original monuments, but also a city of the highest culture: one which has incorporated into itself the great spiritual values of the East and the West.





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НАЗАРБАЙЕВ  
THE HEART OF EURASIA

...Such is the capital on the River Ishim: a beautiful and peaceful city with an architectural landscape like none other, remarkable for its symbolic sculptures and its aspirations for a technologically advanced future; a place with a population of diverse faiths and nationalities, endowed with feelings of mutual regard and of national worth, and with boundless pride in their capital and their native land.

N. Nazarbayev



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