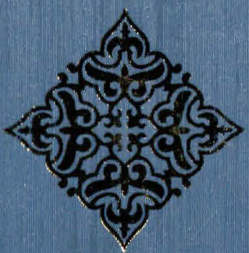
N.A. NAZARBAYEV

ON THE THRESHOLD OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY



NURSULTAN NAZARBAYEV

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Preface

Take the aphorism – every generation rewrites history. There is a considerable amount of truth in it, and yet I would not wish to yield to the temptation of recounting events in our recent history from some timeless perspective. Nowadays the political memoir genre is exceedingly popular. This can easily be explained: we are living in a fast-paced time, with some years as full of events as other decades of non-eventful history. However, an aspiration to rewrite history is frequently apparent in memoir literature. As a rule, to rewrite it, what's more, with the sole purpose of placing the author with a flawless smile and shiny halo over his head at the very centre of the political landscape. Let me point out straightaway that this book does not belong to the political memoir genre, although it does include personal appraisals, descriptions of meetings and brief assessments of various personalities. The genre of this book I would define as a "memoir of the future", yet denoting something entirely different from what is usually meant by this paradoxical phrase. For many, the past has meaning only when viewed through the prism of the future. Here the reader is being invited to assess the state of things somewhat differently since they have been happening in real time, while this author has been in political office. This seems

to me a more honest position than trying to whitewash oneself in retrospect. Unlike many "ephemeral" politicians with their astoundingly peremptory judgements, I have been in various circles of authority for quite some time and consider some diplomacy in my assessments will be quite understandable. The object of this book is not to give an insightful portrayal of my political partners, although the subjects themselves are highly compelling. My aim is to introduce the reader to a range of extremely complex problems in post-Soviet life.

Nursultan Nazarbayev,
Almaty, 15 January 1996

CHAPTER 1

RECALLING THE RECENT PAST...

... Human time
Is always going to resist being strictly regulated,
And divided into rigid segments,
Such as hours. It requires units of measurement conforming
With its own rhythm, units that are defined by boundaries,
That are often, as reality demands of them, like border zones...

Mark Bloch

The night sky in the foothills of Alatau is never black in August. It grows steadily denser, eventually turning deep sea-blue, and then suddenly explodes into myriad stars. Nowhere have I ever seen another sky like it. The city becomes almost totally silent, save now and then for the rumble of a vehicle in far-off Republic Square. At that late hour I had been sitting alone in my office for quite some time. The immense tension of the past months was beginning to take its toll. A couple of hours earlier I had received the preliminary results of the recently held referendum and knew that Kazakhstan was going to have a new Constitution.

But for some reason my memory was drawn back to the past. I leafed through various old written records, summaries, notes. In my mind's eye I gradually saw details of recent events, people's faces, tense days and nights. I returned in my thoughts to the events of 1991, when we first got under way. So much had happened between August 1991 and August 1995 – more than had happened over decades of non-eventful history. That still night I realised it would not be a bad idea to pause briefly along the way and take stock of the turbulent times we had experienced in the course of our dramatic recent history.

A SCREENPLAY WITHOUT DIRECTORS OR DIRECTORS WITHOUT A SCREENPLAY?

With the passing of time you become increasingly aware that discussions regarding the reasons for the break-up of the USSR are not purely of a theoretical and academic character. In another 50 or so years' time it will be possible, no doubt, to debate these events with the cool detachment of a researcher, but right now any analysis and assessment of the reasons for the vast state's break-up are fraught with immense political significance, at times highly prejudiced. A politician's particular response to the issue of the reasons for the collapse of the USSR in many ways predetermines his vision of the future development of post-Soviet space.

After the huge number of memoirs on what happened to us and the reasons for what happened, it would seem hard to come up with some new explanation for these events. However, I still consider these issues quite topical for a whole range of reasons.

Recent publications on the reasons for the break-up of the USSR, ranging from anecdotes to academic opuses, contain an element of conjecture, particularly regarding certain key issues. I myself participated in real events that testify quite specifically to the true reasons underlying these processes. Even more importantly, however, certain specific facts enable one to correctly assess the various explanations for that dramatic phenomenon of undoubted global significance at the end of the century – the break-up of the USSR.

Over the past few years I have well and truly got to grips with the old truth that "there is nothing more practical than a good theory". As a politician and practical sort of person, I have sought for myself an accurate explanation of what exactly did happen at the time. And I have come to the conclusion that there actually is no clear and conclusive explanation. Too many things have

got mixed up: the real crisis confronting the system, exhausting geopolitical competition, the subjective mistakes of the country's leadership, to name but a few. There are entirely explainable factors. It is difficult, virtually impossible, to understand everything. However, unless this immense break-up is properly understood, it is impossible to find one's bearings in the world today and, more importantly, set one's course for the future.

The various interpretations of the reasons for the break-up of the USSR adhere, to some degree or other, to two polar positions. The first is basically that this break-up constituted the deliberate removal of an ideological and geopolitical competitor by foreign and internal forces. The second regards it as a mathematically ineluctable process which was bound to take place precisely at that time, irrespective of all subjective and objective reasons. Of course, these are extreme points of view, but they perfectly demonstrate the two currents of political thought colouring the range of views of post-Soviet space today.

In my young days, someone once wisely advised me to read original texts. With this in mind, I am consciously eschewing an assessment of the primitive and nostalgic assertions that as far back as 20 years ago some mythical enemies drew up a detailed plan for the dismantling of the USSR. One has only to refer to the memoirs of the people who played no small part in the events of the late 80s and early 90s and have no reason to indulge in political mimicry, and, say, read Ronald Reagan or Strobe Talbott to realise such views are oversimplified.

Better elaborated and substantiated seems the point of view of authors who regard the break-up of the USSR as a gradual process, during which the positions of the Soviet Union were eroded in the course, first and foremost, of an information war and war of ideas, although I will say outright that there is nothing new about this. In the late 60s, and particularly in the 70s, ideas of so-called "information imperialism" were popular among left-wing

western philosophers and political historians. After the break-up of the USSR these ideas underwent reinterpretation – in a post-Soviet world. And so, when I read S Kurginyan's or A Zinoviev's assessments and evaluate their views, while acknowledging their brilliant intellects, I am still mindful of a certain archaic element to their approaches.

Strangely enough, it is easier at times to understand politics in complex ideas of such a kind, especially as in the daily flow of communications sent to me as president, it is essential for me to grasp the gist of the original information very quickly. An analysis of the reasons for the break-up of the USSR from this highly pessimistic stance is uniformly sombre in tone. The adherents of this stance hold that a powerful game all about information and ideas has been played out over recent decades, particularly during *perestroika*. To put it another way, it has been a case of manipulating the consciousness and values of various social, national and age groups of the population in the socialist part of the world. Moreover, numerous authors refer to the theory of a global or "universal" government. Of course, these are rather bizarre notions, but some political historians seriously regard international financial information structures as analogues or prototypes of a "universal government". I have difficulty agreeing with this as I know from practical experience that the influence of the latter on ordinary consciousness has been grossly exaggerated. However, when unravelling the logic of this radically pessimistic approach to the break-up of the USSR, I shall note one key moment. The collapse of the socialist countries, and first and foremost the USSR, came about supposedly as a result of the deliberate destruction of national cultural systems in the non-liberal part of the world with the help of the ideology of liberalism. And this destruction, according to the pessimists, was achieved by multiple means. At least three methods were used. First, the Soviet elite was basically "won over" with various kinds of "enticements". Second,

new information technologies were used through mass culture, through covert psychological pressure, first and foremost, on people's national consciousness. And, finally, financial systems were put in direct conflict.

A fundamental reappraisal of values took place as a result of such an orchestrated war of ideas. Society began perceiving traditional values in a negative manner, became culturally disoriented and, as a result of all this, supposedly turned into an information-driven mass. And then it was just a matter of course – you can wreck any country, and then nobody is going to shed blood for the regime.

What can I say here? Of course, there is a grain of truth in these arguments, especially when they are eloquently argued in a brilliant treatise, substantiated with references to numerous authorities and peppered with obscure terminology that is unintelligible to the average reader.

The politician's aim is not to argue with the theoretician but to understand the logic of these debates for the long term.

And this logic is not at all simple. If the break-up of the USSR is alleged to have been caused by an orchestrated information war between geopolitical competitors, it means that none of the members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) has any prospects of developing independently. In other words, these states are sort of mangled detritus of a global information war, and will continue as such for some time to come. Following this logic, they will surely either disintegrate or join together again in a rigid unified state.

I have deliberately cited these extensive arguments to show how these theorists' ingenuous games turn into models for coercive restoration, no matter what terminological artifices the authors hide behind. The pessimists simply cannot reconcile themselves to the simple fact that the independent states in post-Sovi-

et territories are an objective reality and any coercive restoration will lead to a bloodbath.

All this does not mean I totally discount the foreign influence factor in the process of the USSR's break-up. Examples of this are readily available. Ronald Reagan, who popularised the term "Evil Empire", wrote quite emphatically in his memoir: "If they didn't make some changes, it seemed clear to me that in time communism would collapse of its own weight, and I wondered how we as a nation could use these cracks in the Soviet system to accelerate the process of collapse."

One only has to recall keynote articles by Zbigniew Brzezinski, Henry Kissinger, Strobe Talbott and others to understand that, of course, there was geopolitical pressure, in the information domain as well. US Vice President Al Gore wrote in his book *Earth in the Balance*: "Most recently, a coalition of free nations committed to democracy and free markets demonstrated a remarkable capacity to persevere for nearly half a century in their effort to prevent the spread of communism by military, political or economic means. To the surprise of many, this coalition secured a resounding victory for the idea of freedom in the philosophical war that lasted from the time of the Russian revolution." The question is: why has the pressure exerted by information proved so successful? Advocates of this theory do not have a ready explanation for this.

However, the extremely liberal view of the USSR's break-up as a purely internal process is also, to my mind, somewhat naive. It would, on the other hand, be wrong to assert that the process launched in the CIS is not reform at all but deliberate destruction. Destruction of what? That's what begs the question. While certainly not claiming to present a theory as such, I shall try to formulate my view on the most serious factors leading to the vast state's break-up and lessons to be learned. These events cannot be explained with the aid of a trite set of terms such as "infor-

mation war", "elite's betrayal", "psychological destruction". Our social scientists' apparent erudition frequently disguises a total lack of substance.

How underdeveloped the social sciences were in the former USSR! After all, it is several years since the state collapsed and yet the explanations for what happened are still just as deficient and clichéd. It is this appalling detachment from the real economy, inadequate knowledge of the details of the nomenclature personnel policy, a kind of artificial atmosphere in the "global" debates that is probably resulting in the system being belatedly idealised. I like the eminent Soviet physicist Lev Landau's classification: he jokingly divided the sciences into natural, unnatural and counter natural, assigning a significant part of our social sciences to the last category. What I am alluding to here are not the lightweight opuses earnestly arguing that the catastrophe happened as a result of Mikhail Gorbachev's coming to power. I remember the unpleasant impression Boris Oleinik's very bizarre political work *Prince of Darkness* had on me. Some sort of obscure mysticism involving the Maltese Cross.

I shall be focusing on serious politicians and analysts. As I said before, there are quite a few valuable and perceptive observations in the pessimistic argument which are rejected by its opponents in a quite unwarranted manner. In my opinion, the value of such an analysis is not so much as a retrospective but as an interpretation of the effects of the break-up. In actual fact, of course, everything was much simpler and much more complex at one and the same time.

The pessimists' viewpoint was represented by a group of analysts who set out their arguments in an interesting work entitled rather pretentiously *The Field of Reciprocal Action* (Moscow, 1993).

There it states that "as a result of the irresponsible policy-making of the heads of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union

and deliberate manipulations of a number of its leaders, the contradictions accumulated by our society over several decades led to the state's break-up and 'fragmentation' of society. The main unifying factors – common aims and values – have been discredited and removed. In place of these social bonds, semantic chaos is now being instilled in social consciousness, obscured by high-flown rhetoric about modernisation, reforms, and human rights, spectres of the former USSR and the tragic mistake of the past 70 years. Such a process that has resulted in the collapse of all social links, economic and cultural degradation, and creative work for the common good being replaced by vile, egoistic self-enrichment, causing not only social degeneration but also threatening the very physical existence of most of the peoples of the former USSR."

What's more, these authors assert that "moral and then state betrayal in the ruling hierarchy along with the confusion and demoralisation gripping the entire pro-state-oriented sections of our society ultimately predetermined the state's break-up".

If things had been so simple, changing the country's top leadership would have been enough to radically alter the situation. That was not the case, however. And it is clear enough that there was, in fact, a whole range of reasons that finally led to the Soviet Union's collapse.

A TIME OF STRATEGIC BACKWARDNESS

In ongoing discussions about the reasons for the USSR's break-up less attention is for some reason being focused on the opposition between the two systems in the military-technical and strategic spheres. It is also quite clear that in terms of economic potential based on such reliable indices as GDP, national income and labour productivity, ours is approximately one and a half to two times lower than that of the USA. As for the correlation be-

tween the countries of NATO and the Warsaw Pact when taken as a whole, this disparity is even greater. Yet decades were spent trying to maintain a military-strategic balance. It is quite obvious that given the incomparability of the different economic complexes, one of the sides found this increasingly difficult. It was a heavy burden for the Soviet Union to provide various forms of military, military-technical and economic aid to satellite countries as well as to so-called socialist-oriented states and various kinds of national liberation and communist movements. It is obvious even today that billions of dollars will never be returned to Russia or the other CIS countries, and have been irretrievably lost.

The arms race was one of the principal reasons for the Soviet Union's break-up. According to experts' estimates, military spending worldwide for the 40 years between 1950 and 1990 – a period of active hostility between the two blocs – amounted to over 20 trillion dollars. In the late 80s, between 60 and 80 million people across the world were engaged in military production and other forms of production closely linked to the military-industrial complex (MIC). As many as 20 per cent of all scientists and engineers in the world were involved in military research and development. Experts' estimates show that up to 5 per cent of the main types of raw materials were used for military purposes.

Such colossal spending was, of course, bound to have very grave effects on the economy. The former Soviet Union's economic structure which, incidentally, we, too, in Kazakhstan received as a legacy, was highly deformed and oriented toward meeting the demands of the mining industries and the MIC. It goes without saying that in no way could it help increase the economy's competitive level. What's more, our seemingly quite competitive economic system came off worse compared to the West in the arms production field when technologies were upgraded in the late 70s and early 80s. The military technologies on which vast amounts of funds were spent were developed at

top secret institutions and not transferred to the civilian branches of the economy. And the overall backwardness of the economy sharply reduced defence institutions' scientific and technological potential.

There were nine ministries in the USSR directly engaged in the MIC, and their top priority was to provide it with limitless supplies of everything it required. The Ministries of Machinery, Medium-Weight Machinery, Heavy Machinery, Atomic Industry, Aviation Industry, Electrical Industry and Communications and various others made up a huge percentage of the GNP which was regarded as economic output in statistical indices but actually put a huge strain on the economy. The very best output of the Ministries of Ferrous Metallurgy and Metallurgy and other departments also went to produce military technology, and was treated as defence expenditure, and not included in official statistical data.

All in all, there is no doubt about it – with the exception of a few areas of military space technology and elements of the strategic nuclear triad – our MIC that constituted a separate economy of sorts within the economy definitely did lose the technological war with the West. The given situation in the field of military technology will be quite clear to any unbiased observer because Soviet weaponry was defeated on more than one occasion – in the Middle East, Afghanistan and a number of African countries. The MIC, which devoured vast amounts of state funds and human resources and continuously demonstrated its backwardness and our military failures in the international arena, made it necessary for "labour feats" to be achieved in peacetime. During the Six Days War between Israel and Syria in which our military technology was employed, the Soviet tanks in the Syrians' armoury did not have anti-aircraft guns and, as it became clear, proved defenceless against Israeli helicopters. To come to the friendly Syrian nation's aid and salvage the prestige of Soviet weaponry,

an urgent order was issued to our factories in the town of Uralsk to develop and manufacture anti-aircraft defence systems for the tanks. And at the time I thought ruefully about what a shame it was that not as much concern was shown for civilian economic programmes which took decades to get funding for.

And it was not just the technology side of things. There was also quite a serious problem concerning military psychology. The defeat in the Afghan campaign that cost the country billions of dollars, killed and maimed tens of thousands and ultimately ended with the withdrawal of Soviet troops, had a deeply traumatic psychological effect on the country. This defeat also had an impact on the thinking of some of the military high command who at last started genuinely taking stock of the real situation.

I recall what a blow it was for us when we were informed that a German amateur pilot had landed his light aircraft in Red Square. You see, we all had confidence in the reliability of the anti-aircraft defence system, not just of Moscow but of the whole country. And I also recall an episode I was told about by DA Kunayev. At a plenum of the USSR Communist Party's Central Committee in Leonid Brezhnev's time the Moscow City Committee secretary raised the issue of the need to improve the capital's anti-aircraft defence system. He cited data highlighting Moscow's vulnerability to potential enemy threats. He was made a laughing stock at the time and then not long afterwards removed from his post.

The way the light aircraft flew unhindered across the country's territory with the amateur pilot cocking a snook at the entire anti-aircraft defence system, of course, showed up a number of different things. I recall the military arguing about the causes of disasters on board atomic submarines. It is, however, indisputably clear today that even if the MIC had produced super technology, given the dismal standards of personnel training, it could not possibly have been serviced. Not so long ago some military men

told me about how in the late 80s the modern missile systems on naval ships frequently failed only months after the ships had been launched. And engineers from the manufacturers would go on board a month before a test firing to repair and re-commission them. In most cases, especially with the latest systems, it was they who also conducted the test firing.

Let's be frank: it was these ships and tanks with defective weaponry that had virtually no regular servicing or technical support that often maintained a Soviet military presence.

I have focused on military problems for a reason. It is precisely in the military technological and military strategic fields that the state of society, the state and economy becomes patently evident and, of late, the social and political system as well.

At the start of the Second World War people in England used to joke about the war ministry always making preparations for the kind of war that had already been waged. I reckon this joke could apply to our country as well.

The reader should not assume I am casting aspersions at people in military office. I was personally acquainted with many senior officials at the USSR Ministry of Defence, generals and officers. Attempts have been made to put all the blame on them for the dismal military policy. They loyally served their country. What I am discussing here does not concern them.

For a long time a myth prevailed in the West that the Soviet Union had a meticulously elaborated offensive military doctrine. Military experts will possibly contradict me, but I am deeply convinced that given the increasingly glaring deficit of material and technological resources, our country's military political doctrine could not possibly have been of a clearly defined overall offensive character. Soviet military defence doctrine and recruitment, personnel training and armament systems based on it won a brilliant victory in Vietnam but suffered a disastrous defeat in the very first offensive operation in Afghanistan.

This purely military issue leads to another more fundamental one. Now that several years have elapsed, it is becoming increasingly clear that the strategy of expanding socialism adopted in the first decades after the formation of the USSR was effective in the period leading up to the start of the scientific and technical revolution when two predominantly extensive systems began to compete. The type of scientific and technological progress which commenced in the late 60s, when science and technology truly combined forces, in my opinion, advanced at qualitatively different speeds in the USSR and the countries that were its main geopolitical competitors. That's why, when discussing the reasons for the break-up of the Soviet Union as a state and a particular socio-political regime, I think it would be incorrect to date it to 1991, and blame it entirely on the leadership's subjective errors. It was also a strategic, scientific and technological failure which did not occur at one particular time but went on throughout the 70s and 80s.

Nor is it fortuitous that from the late 60s onwards our scientists virtually ceased to rank among the most eminent in the world. After the war there was a sharp decline in the number of Nobel Prize winners from our country, and those who were awarded this prize were quite elderly. NN Semenov, NG Basov and PL Kapitsa made their principal discoveries back in the first half of the century. Second, that unusual concentration of intellect in the field of science and technology was achieved during the Stalin years because outstanding scientists were employed in secret scientific research collectives. After all, in those days it was still possible to rely on the fundamental scientific school that had been set up in Russia in pre-revolutionary times or the first decades of the Soviet Union. In the 80s and early 90s, however, our bureaucratized scientific structures were no longer able to compete with the scientific collectives working in the most advanced Western countries. Of course, one of the predominant features

of our time in the field of science and technology is the need to work in open scientific and information systems.

Doubtless, a vast number of different reasons can be found, but the fundamental one really must not be forgotten, namely, the increasing technological backwardness of our economy and society as a whole and the immense burden the arms race placed on our country's development.

By the 80s, there were increasingly manifest signs of the economy becoming overstrained from having to maintain military and military-economic parity. Let us recall the Second World War. The scale of the Soviet and German economic systems were comparable because of the colossal work carried out before the war and during military actions, and the economic potential of the anti-Hitler coalition as a whole was several times greater than Germany's. During the period between 1950 and 1990, the aspiration to maintain parity with an enemy whose economy was approximately double the size became untenable. The economy was overstrained because of its military orientation, and this simultaneously resulted in a crisis in the entire economic system, I argue that this patently obvious and quite indisputable factor is, of course, more significant than reasons of a subjective kind.

For some reason or other, all of us have quite forgotten the 1973 energy and oil crises when OPEC countries well and truly displayed their potential for conducting coordinated policies, and oil prices rose dramatically almost on a weekly basis. Given the situation, in the mid-70s or so, all the leading countries in the technology field proactively switched to developing energy- and resource-saving technologies. This was certainly no altruistic desire to help scientists implement their innovations but a stringent demand of the unfolding global economic situation.

This period in the Soviet Union marked the start of the intensive development of new oilfields, particularly in Siberia. The economic situation, it would seem, could not have been more fa-

vourable for our development. Billions of oil dollars were earned in those days thanks to the development of immense deposits of oil, and stable and favourable prices in the world energy market. The living standard achieved in the late 70s was, in many ways, a result of the specifics of the world energy market and the economic structure being set up at the time. Undoubtedly, both military political and military technological competition with the West was likewise defined by the USSR's colossal energy potential at the time. Yet they were not utilised either strategically or for establishing a resources reserve base for the long term that would also include gold and foreign currency reserves. Nor were they spent on technological advances but on the needs of the military-industrial complex again and providing subsidies to unprofitable branches of the economy such as coal mining, metallurgy and agriculture. It would be easier to list the branches apart from the oil industry that were actually profitable. What's more, being oil rich significantly reduced the need to develop new energy-saving technologies. There was no sign inside the country of any incentives to advance technological progress, at least, in the civilian branches of the economy. In those days I was the secretary of the Central Committee of the Kazakhstan Communist Party responsible for economic issues, and Chairman of the Council of Ministers of one of the largest republics of the Soviet Union, and, with a sense of regret, I have to say I can speak with full competence about these matters. I would like to recall some telling figures.

First and foremost, I shall focus on the data given in 1988 in the report of Nikolai Ryzhkov, the then Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers, on issues relating to the country's economic growth. Forty per cent of the country's main reserves were made up of assets, and 60 per cent, of liabilities. In developed countries it is the reverse. The country's budget in the 70s and 80s ran a continuous deficit. Unbalanced and unsatisfied, consumer

demand for goods constituted 70 billion roubles, but this comprised one fifth of annual commodity turnover. Enterprise losses amounted to 12 billion roubles, comprising one third of the state budget deficit or one third of the cost of the country's housing construction. Since 1965, around one trillion roubles had been invested in agriculture. These resources had been used in a highly ineffectual manner.

The average per capita income was 75 roubles, yet it was the actual income of around 40 million of the population; for 10 million, this figure was under 50 roubles. Fifteen per cent of the population had an even lower average per capita income and, according to all the statistics recognised worldwide, were living below the poverty level.

Once *perestroika* got under way, materials were published that gave an unbiased analysis of the USSR's economic situation. I remember the findings of N Shmelev and V Popov published in the journal *Znamya* for May 1988. According to them, enterprises were built in the Soviet Union when there was nobody to work in them, and enterprises already in operation were either not used to their full capacity or manufactured unwanted goods. What's more, totally unnecessary machinery was purchased. Over 25 years, output in the USSR nearly halved, down by 35 per cent in industry, and 70 per cent in agriculture. Stocks of idle agricultural machinery exceeded all rational bounds. Over 30 years, the useful life of a combine fell by 50 percent. The working life of combines in the USSR was 35 per cent shorter than those in America. While there was a need for 650,000 combines, we had a total of one million. What's more, servicing and maintaining them cost five to six times more than their original purchase price. A vast army of repair services with an excessive growth rate was required for such machinery. In the USA at the time, 1.8-2.9 million were engaged in servicing agricultural machinery in January-February, and up to 4 million in July-August. In our country,

some 30 million specialists were employed all year round in this sector. An American worker produced as much in one shift as two of ours; an American farmer produced as much as five of our collective farm workers.

In the early 80s, approximately 40 million people in the USSR were employed in manual labour; in the latter half of the 80s, that figure was already around 50 million, with over 80 per cent in agriculture. The exceedingly favourable situation that had developed in the 70s drastically changed in the 80s. By the mid-80s, output in the main industry raising foreign revenue – oil extraction – had virtually flattened out, yet four out of five of our exports were energy sources, which yet again confirm the level of our technological and strategic backwardness.

I think the facts speak for themselves. These figures, I repeat, were produced in 1988. And we are still suffering the consequences of those wrong decisions.

Closely studying steel production technologies ever since my period of employment at the Karaganda Metallurgy Works, I made a comparison of the technological innovations in this field in our country and abroad. In particular, steel processing: in open-hearth production it took between 8-12 hours. Yet in oxygen-conversion production, which had been invented in our country, it could be completed within less than one hour. However, during my visits to metallurgy works in the United States and Japan I became aware of how far behind modern practices we were, even, say, with our then most advanced Karaganda convertor which had been constructed without continuous steel-processing machinery. This method has vast qualitative and energy-saving advantages. For instance, by the late 70s, the Americans had virtually decommissioned about 90 per cent of all their open-hearth capacities, and around the same time Japan completely halted open-hearth steel casting. By the early 80s, we had increased our open-hearth steel production by another 38 million tons

and reported on yet more successes in our gross production. All the figures and arguments I have cited here give only a partial account of the extent to which our economy has fallen behind Western countries.

I also recall another figure that had a depressing effect on me. Academician R Sagdeyev produced data showing that every employee in our country had about one per cent of the computer equipment of an employee in the most technologically advanced countries. These virtually incontestable facts need to be properly explained without any subjective bias.

Why didn't a new Babylon emerge?

Another fundamental reason for the country's break-up, along with the factor of its technological strategic backwardness and reduced competitiveness, was the nationalities question. According to numerous politicians, this was actually the most important defining factor. In the USSR's latter years the situation was aggravated by the fact that the government when faced with a crisis not only faltered but actually revealed its inability to control the situation. Unrest then broke out in the country, the like of which had not been known for decades. What made it particularly dangerous was the ethnic element it acquired. Events in Sumgait, Nagorny Karabakh, Vilnius and Fergana highlighted the lack of any programme to resolve the nationalities question, and, in general, it was the strategy of *perestroika* in respect of this very important aspect, that caused severe criticism of the authorities. This failure to resolve inter-ethnic conflicts was what first made it clear that the authorities were already paralysed and therefore doomed.

I would single out two aspects of the problem of inter-ethnic relations in the former Soviet Union. Paradoxical as this may be, one of the principal reasons for the crisis in ethnic relations was

the leadership's poor grasp of theory. Virtually none of the most senior statesmen and academics, even in the latter years of the USSR, sought to seriously tackle the nationalities question. Explanations for inter-ethnic disputes and at times direct conflicts were based on two premises. The first had to do with errors in carrying through Marxist-Leninist nationalities policy in Stalin's time. The second involved pinning the blame on foreign forces, criminal groups and the self-serving ethnic intelligentsia. It gradually became clear that such explanations were unsatisfactory not only as an effective response to the inter-ethnic conflicts but because the nationalities policy simply could not be built on such premises.

Nowadays it has been widely forgotten that the platform of the Central Committee of the Communist Party on the nationalities policy published in the Soviet Union's latter days was yet another banal and entirely superficial declaration. I did not make a close study of the nationalities question until the mid-80s as I had been busy sorting out economic problems and resolving issues that had nothing to do with ideology as such. However, for the past ten years I have been closely studying these issues and the new literature that has recently emerged, and carefully scrutinising practical experience. I recall a plethora of articles and monographs accusing Joseph Stalin of aggravating the nationalities question. Stalin had allegedly distorted the nationalities policy that had begun to take shape in the first years of Soviet power, and so was apparently to blame for everything. Yes, of course, Stalin's deportations had repercussions. But you simply cannot blame someone who has been dead for nearly half a century for all of today's troubles. The reasons for this tragic situation are, of course, more profound, and a study of numerous multi-ethnic states has enabled me to understand the simple fact that a nationalities policy cannot be elaborated without a well-founded

theoretical platform and thorough theoretical understanding of the situation.

What strikes you is the parochialism, naivety and outdated attitudes in the assessments of ethnic relations that were made in 1991, and continue to be made at times by various historians and politicians still adhering to the first Marxists' theories. The diverse ethnic disputes and conflicts in the Soviet Union cannot be examined separately from the situation worldwide. After all, the emergence of ethnicity in the late twentieth century occurred in certainly no random manner on a global scale, not just within the USSR. National, ethnic inter-relations and internal ethnic processes certainly became a real challenge of the second half of the twentieth century. The ethnic factor has played its part not only in the destruction of colonial empires and the formation of new states. It was manifest in phenomena with major repercussions such as the post-war recovery of Germany and Japan, the economic upsurge of countries of the Asia-Pacific region and the unification of Europe. Essentially, all the processes taking place in the most diverse spheres – the economy, politics and ideology – are bound up with the ethnic factor.

Of course, our country has its own special features, but I am sure that one of the most fundamental reasons for the profoundly tragic history of the nationalities question in the Soviet Union is a whole complex of phenomena of a global order.

Our century has emphatically shown up the erroneous nature of one of the basic postulates of Marxism on the precedence of class over national issues. It is to be remembered that in Marxism as a whole, national movements were regarded as phenomena linked to the formation of a capital means of production. The formation of capitalism, in turn, engendered various classes and a new system of relations between them. Where there is a developed market and a free workforce and the institutions of a civic society are being formed, control, including that of a class char-

acter, of the political institutions depends substantially more on popular support or, as we say today, on the legitimacy of a given decision. Marxism, as is well known, proceeded from the premise that the state expressed the interests of the entire population, and not just those of a certain class.

How effectively the state could be controlled in many ways depended on the creation of ideologies capable of elevating, mobilising and inspiring the entire population. And national trends and doctrines are ideologies of this kind. And so, according to Marxists, several types of mutual relations between national and class ideologies are possible.

National ideology may be regarded, first and foremost, as the specific ideological and political doctrine of a particular class which foists this doctrine on other social groups in society. Alternatively, a national ideology may be the result of an agreement between several political elites of a given society who subsequently force all the other groups to adopt the ideology in question. It should be said that the most common explanations for the nationalities question and inter-ethnic problems in the former USSR generally proceed from the same theoretical premise – in particular, when it comes to national bureaucracies who directed society's development to serve their own interests by adopting a policy of establishing their own state control inside their republics that led to the break-up of the Soviet Union.

It is obvious that such a view, developed within a framework of highly traditional ideas, regardless of the newfangled terminology, is erroneous if only because national bureaucracies were involved to a significant extent in the process of state regulation within the integrated state that was the Soviet Union. And these bureaucratic structures and groups of managers best understand the pressing need for integration processes. To regard these groups as a force or instrument in the break-up of the USSR, not

least its fundamental cause, is incorrect not only factually but in theory as well.

Analysing national processes and relations from the standpoint of class relations, Marxists both early on and at later times took virtually no account of the exceptional effectiveness and vitality of the processes of national mobilisation. Yet the course of history has shown that the role of the national, ethnic factor not only did not diminish as society continued to develop – capitalism included – but greatly increased. It is, first and foremost, factors of a cultural rather than a social nature that explain this.

What's more, one of the theoretical weaknesses of Marxism is that it failed to develop theories for the nationalities question in Third World countries. In effect, the nationalities question was interpreted within the framework of the theory of liberation nationalism of poorly developed regions, and an anti-colonial movement was considered part of the struggle for socialism. It is now clear that the decolonisation process was of an entirely different nature and led to other results than those deduced theoretically within the framework of Marxist doctrine.

Finally, one should note the inherent Eurocentric character of Marxism, despite attempts to explain processes beyond the borders of a small group of developed capitalist countries. This Euro-centricity was primarily evident in the lack of understanding in both theoretical and practical terms of the subtle mechanisms and institutions involved in strictly social processes.

I would even say that the ethno-cultural problems of the Central Asian countries were barely understood within the framework of the traditional Soviet doctrine of the nationalities question. In particular, there was no understanding of the influence of the family institution, religious and denominational institutions or the traditional power structures on the development of both national and social processes in this vast area of the former Soviet Union. We were privy to the most diverse types of national rela-

tions in the former Soviet Union. The method and basic tools employed to resolve the situations in the Baltic states, Central Asia and the Caucasus should have been entirely different in view of the processes' diverse orientations.

Nowadays many consider the USSR's break-up to be due to the activity of a radical sector of the national intelligentsia. In some sense this is true in so far as the intelligentsia is the group that expresses the national interest most distinctly. However, I consider one of the most stereotypical errors in the assessment and method of resolving national problems in the former Soviet Union was to confuse the different types of national movements. In my opinion, national movements could be entirely different.

One of the most vivid examples of an effective national movement in twentieth-century history was provided by the activities, both theoretical and practical, of Kemal Ataturk, who successfully founded the modern Turkish state and nation. His approach was essentially to modernise the Turkish nation's mind-set within the framework of a single national movement, transforming it from the anachronistic imperial consciousness dating back to the days of the Ottoman Empire.

However, movements of a somewhat different type can also develop. Take, for instance, the type of national movement that is resistant to change, both intrinsically and through its course of actions, and predicated on conserving certain traditional forms of both cultural and social life. Hence I suggest that stereotyped assessment and analysis of national movements only from the perspective of their opposition to the centre were inherently flawed.

As the brief development of the post-Soviet republics has shown, the different orientation of the national movements is still making itself felt to this day. Incidentally, an error of this kind is made by numerous foreign analysts who consider national actions in the various regions of the USSR as a kind of intrinsically

integral series of phenomena; even though in some cases these phenomena have had a religious dimension, while in others have simply been manifestations of a criminal order. There were also entirely well-grounded national movements with progressive potential.

Nowadays many people argue that the ethnic levelling processes various peoples underwent during the Soviet era became one of the main causes of national unrest. I, however, think otherwise. The totalitarian regime had to eradicate the national diversity of peoples and cultures. Such a policy was intended to surmount the insurmountable – the civilisational differences between the country's peoples. The Soviet Union was a conglomerate of nations of different types, both in terms of their civilisational belonging and cultural reference points.

It is not a question of nations being more or less developed. Simply, it is now clear that the myth regarding the formation within the territory of the USSR of a nation called the "Soviet people" did, in fact, remain a myth that only the theoreticians from the propaganda and ideology departments of the Central Committee of the CPSU enjoyed spreading. Essentially, the former USSR was a territory with deep rifts between civilisations. For example, the ethnic, cultural and civilisational closeness of the Baltic countries to Northern Europe that always latently existed but was suppressed by the former regime is now clearly manifest; the historical and cultural mutual links between the Turkic states, and highly complex ethno-cultural nature of the Caucasian states certainly make it impossible to consider them as a single civilisational formation. In the past only a few people took it upon themselves to study the territories' centuries-old, and in a number of cases, millennia-old heterogeneity.

It is not only in countries that have collapsed, such as the Soviet Union or Yugoslavia that the nationalities issue has become exacerbated. Advanced Western countries are also facing equally

complex ethnic issues. It is quite obvious that Quebec separatism in Canada involves factors of a more ethnic than social character. The historically diverse cultural roots of the various population groups in the country which developed successfully and peacefully over many years are now gradually heading toward a split. The Kurd issue also belongs to the same category of problems. There have been virtually no radical breakthroughs in resolving a whole raft of controversial issues in Northern Ireland. One of the most critical problems facing Spain is that of the Basque country. In other words, it is impossible to resolve the nationalities question once and for all. Even the world's most democratic countries have failed to do so. It is imperative we try and desist from our efforts to resolve the nationalities question in a comprehensive manner and adopt instead another, principally different strategy. There is no need to try and resolve naturally occurring disagreements. Our strategy should be to conduct a policy that prevents these rifts from escalating into bloody conflicts.

Unfortunately, despite all the statements, platforms and programmes, at no time in Soviet history was a serious analysis made of inter-ethnic relations and resolution options. When the inter-ethnic disagreements developed into rifts, and then the rifts into bloody conflicts, the country's leaders, lacking the essential background knowledge to understand the situation, resorted to force in the late 80s to resolve ethnic problems and led the country into a total impasse. It was then that troops were sent into Baku, and the tragic events in Vilnius and Tbilisi took place. It should be remembered that elements of just such a coercive approach were manifest in Almaty in December 1986 when a democratic protest by young people against a dictate from Moscow was brutally crushed. The whole country then understood the deceitfulness of the top leadership's statements asserting that they were unaware of the situation and that the decisions to use force had been taken without their knowledge. In such a

situation the nationalities question became one of the main factors determining the USSR's break-up.

So much has been going on we have yet to fully assess the historic importance of the events of December 1986. It was the first action by people who sincerely believed in the democratic changes, and took Mikhail Gorbachev at his word. They all wanted an answer to the same question: "Why, without even any public consultation, has someone been sent to govern the republic who has no idea of Kazakhstan or the people living here or of its traditions and culture?"

And in response to this simple and reasonable question a demonstration was brutally put down, blood was shed, and a number of young girls and boys were severely beaten up...

This marked the beginning of the end for the system. Vilnius, Tbilisi, Baku all came afterwards.

The events of December 1986 showed how much Kazakh young people's awareness had developed. They were the first to overcome their fear of the totalitarian system which had forced peoples to live in an ultra-regimented regime for virtually the entire century. On behalf of their people, these young people openly declared that they were no longer going to allow the national pride that any people felt to be trampled underfoot.

In Kazakh history there have been quite a few dramatic high points, lasting minutes, hours and days. One such high point in our recent national history occurred on three consecutive days in December 1986. And this first shoot of new democratic consciousness was portrayed by the system as a display of rampant nationalism. Later on, on more than one occasion I had to convince many people, including Mikhail Gorbachev, to withdraw this charge of nationalism from the entire Kazakh people. The Politburo of the Central Committee of the CPSU was forced to revoke its earlier decision.

Without a normal sense of nationhood of such a kind, devoid of any ideologized or politicized overtones, one cannot respect another national culture. It was with this issue in mind that one perceptive intellectual in the nineteenth century noted, "Before becoming an internationalist, you first need to have a sense of nationhood."

I am deeply convinced that for civil peace really to exist there has to be a decent relationship with other ethnic cultures. Kazakhs have in-depth knowledge of Russian culture, and profoundly rich Kazakh culture should not remain a closely guarded secret for all the nationalities living in Kazakhstan. Kazakh literature, language, folklore and music all have an immensely enhancing effect on the potential of everyone who gets to know them. Certainly, acquainting oneself with Kazakh culture, one of the most original and richest in Eurasia, is a sign of respect for a nation which in the most troubled times offered a refuge for others in their land. Such a respectful, evolutionary movement towards one another is the way to achieve harmony in inter-ethnic relations. The alternative is chaos and mutual hatred.

I shall highlight one other very important and rarely examined factor that contributed to the collapse of the Soviet state. When I was occupied with economic issues, I was acutely aware of one of the fundamental problems that was not so much of a national issue as one relating to mutual relations between our country's central and peripheral regions.

Over a considerable period of time Moscow used three different methods for controlling the territories. Let me repeat: this control in many ways was not of a national character but related to the mutual relations between different ranks in the administrative hierarchy. Moscow exercised its control over the peripheral regions, first and foremost, through the country's complex administration system. There was a clear logic to the way the USSR's administrative and territorial structure had been set up,

whether the country's former political leaders realised this or not. The fact was that the system, despite its complex, multi-stage structure, enabled rapid and effective decision-making. This control encompassed the armed forces, administration, judiciary, and, most importantly, the party. The administrative system set up in Stalin's time was one of the fundamental mainstays that kept the country's different parts together. And it is not fortuitous that in the period of democratisation heralded by Mikhail Gorbachev one of the main issues was that of redistributing power between the different administrative bodies within the country's territorial system.

Moscow's second method for controlling the regions was through its economic policy, which was based on a single form of ownership, a single financial system, a single transport and economic structure and a single economic mechanism. And the centralised planning system allotted a particular specialisation to each of the regions. This economic specialisation, which meant that a region simply could not survive independently, also had the effect of making the entire system even stronger. Although from an economic viewpoint this integration was in many ways nonsensical, it had profound political significance. It was all about maintaining the system's stability, not about economic efficacy. That's why even today we are still struggling to get over the economic crisis caused by the severing of links, and it is patently obvious how dependent we are on an economic system that was formed over nearly a century.

Finally, Moscow's third control method over the peripheral regions was cultural integration implemented by means of two powerful tools: first, the manipulation of consciousness, and, second, the language policy. I would like to stress that this is not intended as a positive or negative assessment of the Russian language as such or its role, nor is it even about the Russian language's dominance over the national languages of the USSR

peoples. I am certain about the positive advantages of knowing the Russian language, particularly for the Kazakhs. The fact is, though, that the given language policy was also a way of further strengthening the state system as a whole.

What happened during the *perestroika* years? First and foremost, the administrative territorial hierarchy began to change. You may recall that during this period a search began for new systems of administrative territorial division for the country. A totally logical question was raised by the autonomous republics of Tatarstan and Bashkortostan regarding their status within the framework of the union state. Another question arose in the same period, one of the most complex in Russia, regarding Chechnya's independence. All this relates back to the period when the process began to change the administrative and, correspondingly, political status of various territorial units.

Discussions in 1990 and 1991 were devoted to the levels of administrative hierarchy there should be in the various territorial entities. These conversations then developed into a discussion on concluding a new union treaty with the participation of all the national formations, in which the idea of a confederative union of independent states was implicitly couched.

Arguments about the political hierarchy were closely bound up with issues concerning regional economic independence. There began an active discussion of inter-regional economic relations, the problems involved in setting up regional markets and developing international economic links. There were some fairly significant shifts in terms of reorienting the republics' economies towards internal demands, and a noticeable liberalisation in the internal trade system. All this laid the foundations of a significant change in relations between Moscow and the regions, and a departure from the rigid hierarchical dictate which had been the order of the day for many decades. It is even hard to imagine that in the 60s and 70s, issues such as independently choosing

inter-regional and foreign economic partners could have been allowed within the system's framework. That is why we are dealing not only with an administrative transformation but also the economic one that accompanied it and significantly changed the system of relations between the central and peripheral regions.

Whenever I hear calls nowadays for the reinstatement of a centralised planning system on a CIS-wide scale or right across the territories of the former USSR, I believe the people proposing such "projects" could not possibly have had actual experience of working in the real economy during the last years of the USSR. No ideal planned economy ever existed, and especially not between 1989 and 1991. Plans were not fulfilled 13 times during the USSR's last 18 years. Though I feel sympathy for them, I cannot understand people who dream of a past that never existed.

At last issues concerning the cultural interaction between Moscow and the regions are mostly of a national character. And in this respect the late 80s and early 90s clearly demonstrated the search conducted by different peoples for alternative models of developing new interpretations of their own history. This period saw a growth in national movements in all the republics of the former USSR. And, of course, there was no coincidence in it being concerned with issues of a cultural, ideological and linguistic nature. It should be said that in the late 80s and early 90s there was certainly no ideological uniformity and unity of the kind spoken about today by those in favour of restoring the USSR at any price. By that time the social and political climate and public attitudes in many of the now independent CIS countries were already entirely different.

I shall note another very important circumstance: the system of relations between Moscow and the regions within the framework of the former USSR underwent radical changes even before the actual juridical break-up of the USSR. And, despite all the

drama of those events, it would be exceedingly naive to consider that it was all quite unexpected.

So was there any stable, integral organisational structure at the time that remained intact, despite all the transformations, purges, economic experiments, ideological upheavals, discrediting of precursors, questionable and undignified mausoleum reburials, brilliant victories and dismal failures, gradual degradation of aging leaders, bland propaganda? Only the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSS). The crisis in the Communist Party also reflected the crisis being experienced in a society and country covering one sixth of the Earth's surface.

No matter how much some politicians may refute it today, some five or six years later, it was they who inflicted the most serious psychological, organisational and, primarily, political blow to the system by forming the Russian Communist Party. Of course, the abolition of Article Six of the USSR Constitution affirming a one-party monopoly also played a part in it. Judge for yourself. Six years have gone by. After the turbulent 90s, we all now understand that no party in any of the countries of the former Soviet Union can rival the former Communist Party of the Soviet Union. And no matter how strong the critics may be with hindsight, it is impossible to refute the simple and empirically confirmable fact that none of the parties in even the largest CIS countries comes anywhere close in terms both of overall membership, trained personnel or real organisational potential to the CPSS, even in its weakened state after 1989.

So the destruction of the CPSS was primarily an internal process. After all, nobody can seriously suppose that Ivan Polozkov and his colleagues hit upon the idea of setting up the Russian Communist Party from some scheming foreigners or other. The break-up of the USSR became irreversible after the first of the union republics of the Russian Federation declared its sovereignty. Everyone wondered at the time what or whom Russia was

sovereign from. It was the USSR's nucleus, after all. It is patently obvious that it was not Russia's declaration of sovereignty that served as the initial and principal factor in the USSR's collapse. As we can see, the causes were of a more serious character. Formally, however, Russia's declaration of sovereignty on 12 June 1990 did render it impossible for the USSR to continue in its former state.

When in the heat of the moment someone nowadays calls for their former colleagues to be judged by history, there is something about such behaviour, it seems to me that can be understood in human terms but certainly not justified. The finger of blame can also be pointed at orthodox communists and democrats. However, I am against making subjective judgements. Of relevance here, surely, is Engels' old analogy that we know well from studying Marxist original texts, in which he compared history to a parallelogram of individual wills and forces. In the end everything often turns out contrary to the will of those playing an active part in the political process.

Having observed the dramatic events of 1991 from the inside, I can definitely say that most of the protagonists in the drama had not consciously intended causing such a radical and rapid severing of links within the Soviet state. Until the events in Vilnius, Baku, Tbilisi and the August 1991 coup attempt, we were moving towards the formation of a civilised confederation of states that would eventually evolve into independent states. Of course, after August 1991 this became virtually impossible.

Personalities of the times

As I have already said, I do not intend to engage in political memoirs in this book. And that's why no rigid chronological sequence has been adhered to. However, I would like logical consistency to be observed.

I recall the people I have had occasion to meet. Some of these contacts were quite formal, while others involved prolonged periods of working together. The latter years of the USSR have strong connotations of a gerontocracy for me. This made itself felt even in the language of the late Brezhnev era. Middle-aged and older readers will most likely remember the interesting neologisms of the time when a writer over forty was considered a budding man of letters, and a sixty-year-old Politburo member, a capable, promising politician of the younger generation. In those days only time and stereotyped behaviour guaranteed advancement. Nowadays you can smile, but it was in that soporific era that the ticking time bomb was set that a decade later would blast the vast country apart. The fabled stability in personnel policy, which the collectively aging bureaucracy probably most enjoyed implementing, gradually led to the degradation of personnel.

Many of the young politicians of the time, myself included, probably pondered the same question. You see, Kosygin, Suslov, Ustinov, Gromyko, Baibakov, the top leaders in those days, and Brezhnev himself along with many dozens of others rose to prominent positions when they were between 30 and 35 years old. It was a paradoxical situation: these young people had risen to positions of power thanks to their undoubtedly outstanding talents, yet 25-30 years on they had completely forgotten about the need to replace the elite, and how young they had been when they came to power.

I am totally against portraying the ruling elite in those days as befuddled old men, as is sometimes the inclination these days. It is absolutely untrue: their managerial skills were of a high calibre. But they reached their peak back in the early 70s and failed to give the upcoming generations a chance to prove themselves. And it was then that these, I repeat, by no means mediocre people started holding on to their offices for dear life. As far as I know, only Kosygin and Brezhnev, who was quite unwell by

then, asked their colleagues if they could step down. That is why I consider that one should not forget there was no tradition, for instance, of changing political elites. The calibre of political candidates had been ruined by years of selection processes when it was extremely risky to show political independence.

By the turn of the 70s-80s, a pressing need had developed for a cardinal change in the top ruling elite, and for a perceptive observer it then became clear that the system was unable to respond to this typically intrinsic demand of the times. What's more, the formal leader's purely decorative role became yet another sign of the system's internal weakness. For 18 years a man ruled the country that was no tyrant or evil-doer, and yet nobody in the country apart from a narrow group of close family and friends mourned his passing or even simply felt sad for the deceased. That is terrible.

During this period I frequently travelled abroad in state delegations, and the most offensive part of it was that the mockery of Leonid Brezhnev turned into mockery of the country and its people whose image became associated with its leader's outward appearance. I remember Leonid Brezhnev's last visit to Kazakhstan in 1980. Nearly all the members of the Politburo came to mark the republic's 60th anniversary. The General Secretary's state of health gave cause for alarm. I myself saw his security personnel helping him move around because he could no longer walk unaided. During the interval of the ceremonial meeting in the Lenin Palace when we were resting in the reception room, I put several questions to Leonid Brezhnev. I still remember his eyes – they were those of a terminally sick man.

And they were troubled times. On several occasions Leonid Brezhnev had to speak to the Polish leadership on a hotline. The situation was extremely complex there. It was in Poland in those days that the collapse of the socialist system first started. And now, post factum, you cannot help wondering how it had been

possible for someone in such poor health to manage this highly complex and totally unusual situation that was unfolding not just in the USSR but also in the Eastern bloc countries as a whole.

On 22 March 1984, I was appointed Chairman of the Kazakhstan Council of Ministers and became the youngest prime minister in the USSR. Being in close proximity to the political leaders in those days gave rise to ambiguous feelings. On the one hand, one sought to draw on practical experience, and my previous experience stood me in quite good stead for improving the economic situation in Kazakhstan. On the other, I have to admit, it was then I discovered new aspects of managerial life, and the life of the ruling elites.

As de La Bruyere once quipped: "Through the eyes of a provincial onlooker, the royal court is a wondrous spectacle indeed. But it loses its charm once one gets to know it better, similar to a painting when examined close-up. The court resembles a marble edifice: it consists of people – not soft but brilliantly polished."

I have to say that it was psychologically quite tough for me to adapt to the ways of the "court". And, strictly speaking, there really is little to distinguish the court of the French kings from the "court" of the general secretaries or republics' party leaders in terms of certain specific features of any ruling elite. My personal experience of industry was somewhat different. Working alongside teams of metallurgists, and acquiring first-hand knowledge of mining practices had given me different aims in life. The democratic ways and down-to-earth views of a working collective will not tolerate any doctrinaire attitude. And, generally, I had no problem choosing between matters of real importance and adapting to the ways of the "court". I chose the former and, as I was to discover later, this resulted in some very tough conflicts.

There is no need, in my opinion, to recall all the details of those days. We had quite a few serious and often hotly debated

affairs in the Council of Ministers. However, these had several unexpected and unpredictable consequences.

Dinmukhamed Akhmedovich Kunayev... I always had sincere respect for him, even at the most difficult times in our relations. The maximalist approach I sought to adopt to improve the situation in the economy, personnel and politics was not understood. In those days I sincerely believed I was proceeding along the same lines as Dinmukhamed Kunayev by severely criticising and putting a stop to the outrages perpetrated by some of the first secretaries of the party's district committees and senior ministry officials. I sincerely hoped that the First Secretary, convinced that I was right, would dismiss all these villains, and we really would be able to implement serious reforms in Kazakhstan. This, after all, was prescribed by the resolutions of the recent April (1985) Plenum of the Central Committee of CPSS. What's more, one also has to bear in mind the fuel and energy situation Yuri Andropov had left behind. But what I had failed to take into account was that Dinmukhamed Akhmedovich Kunayev, who really was a leading politician of his time, having been in various senior state offices in Kazakhstan for nearly a third of a century, was not capable either psychologically or, probably, physically (by then he was already over 70), of adapting to a new situation. What's more, Konstantin Chernyenko had just come to power in Moscow.

In my opinion, D Kunayev's position could be attributed not so much to sloppy thinking, or a wish to preserve so-called stability, as simply the fatigue of someone who has been through a lot in life. After all, D Kunayev had endured some very complex and tense years of work in the system. I used to hear him say: "I'm tired, fed up of it all, I'll work until I'm 75 and then step down."

Any manager will agree with me that it was virtually impossible for anyone to be in the highest offices of state in those days without adequate administrative and managerial skills and expertise. Practical experience has shown that these qualities are

also essential today for governing the country. To my mind, it was also in a sense a personal drama when the leaders in advanced old age remained in their posts for decades, yet well aware of being no longer capable of carrying out their responsibilities. I remember this very interesting detail as well. After assuming the reins of power, Konstantin Chernyenko had a resolution passed that stated Politburo members over 70 years of age could work for five days a week, and, what's more, from ten to five o'clock. I repeatedly heard people say, "We don't have to work, the Party will do everything." So there it was.

A mismatch of mindsets at the time and, most likely, the considerable age difference also played a role in these difficult relations. I alluded to the ways of the "court" and recalled La Bruyere's view for a reason. Some part in the deterioration of my relations with D Kunayev was also played at the time by certain district committee first secretaries and party functionaries who were close to and well in with D Kunayev. A lot of time has passed since then. And all the rumours about me in those days and quite incredible stories about my ideas and projects are of no relevance any more. I do not harbour any resentment towards these people who set D Kunayev against me. What's more, I later helped many of them.

After I became the republic's leader, we met more than once. I called by when his wife died. He also came to see me about various everyday matters and never received a negative response. Unlike other former politicians, D Kunayev left politics totally behind, conducting himself in a honourable and dignified manner, supporting the complex work being carried out in the republic and sharing his views about various leaders. I recall one such incident in the early 80s. We were flying in his aircraft from Alma-Ata in the south of the republic to Petropavlovsk in the north. Unexpectedly, he called me over and said in a whisper, "What a republic we live in! If only we could become an independent

state." And he pressed his finger to his lips. He always said such things in a whisper, even in an aircraft. I think he knew that Politburo members were also "kept an eye on". In the May of the year of his death I telephoned his home and invited him to fly with me to the festivities in Ordabasy. "Why," he retorted, "do you want to drag an old man like me out into the heat? I'll die before we even get there!" We both had a good laugh.

A lot of water has passed under the bridge since then. About a month before D Kunayev's passing, he and I had a heart-to-heart talk. We really did have a lot of problems in our relationship: we differed in our views of ongoing events and various people. However, I still recall snatches of our last conversation: for instance, when he said, "What you have said and done, Nursultan, has proved to be right. I support the way you have chosen." And I feel sad that in those days, ten years ago, we did not set out on it together.

Recent former leaders in many of the CIS republics are still being stigmatised to this day, with proceedings instigated against them and resolutions passed denouncing many former top statesmen. I cannot understand certain politicians and journalists who delight in condemning our very recent past. Fortunately, we have avoided such things in Kazakhstan. I remember how the entire capital accompanied him on his final journey. There is now a "D Kunayev Street" in Almaty. By a presidential decree the enterprise and institute he worked in have been named after him. There is now a D Kunayev Foundation, and several published editions of his memoirs. His statue is still standing in the city centre.

Incidentally, not many people realise how much effort this took me, especially when the statues of former leaders were removed in other republics. For the reader to understand what I mean, he only has to recall the late 80s in Kazakhstan and particularly the period between 1986 and 1989.

Any attempt to forget one's past, no many how complex and troublesome, and constantly blame one's precursors for everything is unworthy of anyone with self-esteem, and particularly so for any politician with self-esteem. This is not about being nostalgic for the old days; this is respect for one's own history, no matter how complex it has proved. D Kunayev will undoubtedly remain a major political figure in the history of Kazakhstan. I rest my case.

I would not limit the causes of the USSR's break-up merely to factors involving personalities. The fact is, in my opinion, and my personal experience is testament to it, there were quite a few highly committed people in the former system's top ranks. However, despite all their ideological commitment, individuals were unable to save the day. What's more, the older generation gradually disappeared from the scene, and then there were other people at the top who were already completely used to playing political games with a sense of total impunity. These people were clearly not ascetics. Brezhnev's generation reduced the country to a state of stagnation. I was shocked by the cynical directness with which Ronald Reagan wrote in his memoirs after Konstantin Chernyenko's death, "So, once again, there was a new man in the Kremlin. 'How am I supposed to get anyplace with the Russians,' I asked Nancy, 'if they keep dying on me?'"

Sad as the admission may be, we all understood that the system was dying along with its leaders whose days of leading were long gone.

Mikhail Gorbachev...That name is linked with the events of those six years when the most radical attempt in the USSR's history was made to reform the Soviet system. How it all ended, you know. Of course, it was bound to happen – changes were well and truly due by then. But as for the personalities involved, a lot of people were mystified how Mikhail Gorbachev, who by character was made like an autocrat, and whose entire life had been

spent within the Young Communist League and Party system, came to be the initiator of *perestroika* which was to prove fatal for this system.

It seems to me that as a politician and communist, Mikhail Gorbachev had not planned such profound changes. Many consider that he intended only to partially rectify the internal political system, ease off the "cold war" and fulfil his ambition of becoming an "historic personality". If he had indeed intended to implement such a minimum programme, Mikhail Gorbachev overrated the sincerity of Western politicians and, primarily, his state leader colleagues. This casts new light on the numerous foreign contacts of Mikhail Gorbachev and his entourage, the incredible speed with which he became on friendly terms with Margaret Thatcher, Ronald Reagan, George Bush Senior and other Western politicians. Gorbachev's character, to my mind, also had a part to play in it: he wanted to go down in history not only as a reformer but also as a global politician. And this was manifest even in petty details. I was present several times during his telephone conversations with Western leaders. He enjoyed showing his entourage that he was on first-name terms with Margaret Thatcher and a good chum of George Bush. I was in his office once when he was speaking on the telephone: "You'll see now, I'm going to call Bush 'George', and he'll call me 'Mikhail'." He liked this very much, and, frankly, we just could not understand why. Curiously, after Gorbachev had to relinquish his post as president as a result of the Belovezhskaya Accord, George Bush, whom Gorbachev had regarded as his friend, did not even ring him. Instead, he had a lengthy conversation with Boris Yeltsin, proving yet again that a state does not have friends forever, only long-term political interests.

From 1979 onwards, Mikhail Gorbachev and I met at various conferences but never had close contact. He was not particularly well known in those days. Our first lengthy conversation

took place in 1984 by which time I was Chairman of the Kazakhstan Council of Ministers. I met with him when I was trying to get permission in Moscow to purchase Czech industrial sewing machines for a sheepskin coat manufacturer in Semipalatinsk.

During his six years in the post of General Secretary this man had changed beyond recognition. The Gorbachev of the early days and Gorbachev in the final period were poles apart. Once he became General Secretary, it was impossible to get near him, or book an appointment with him. He had already completely "cottoned on" to what being the General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee meant. He was constantly busy, only mixed with a narrow circle of close associates and simply ignored everyone else.

I clearly recall one episode in my dealings with Mikhail Gorbachev in the early days. I travelled to Moscow three times to talk over the issue of my appointment as Chairman of the Kazakhstan Council of Ministers – Chernyenko was too ill to see me. Mikhail Gorbachev was second in command at the time. We spoke at length during each of my three visits. He, as it were, apologised for Chernyenko. We spoke about Kazakhstan, the country as a whole and need for changes in the economy and politics. We established mutual work relations in those days.

Konstantin Chernyenko died a year later. After his death many in the apparatus of the CPSU Central Committee, especially its lower ranks, wanted Mikhail Gorbachev to take over as General Secretary because by that time he had already won people over, become easier-going, more informal and energetic, and clearly stood out among the inert old "guard" who had grown used to subordination.

It was during that period that my disagreements with Kazakhstan's leadership came to a head, and eventually caused a fierce confrontation. New problems compounded old ones as *perestroika* got under way. Mikhail Gorbachev supported me at

the time. He realised he had to have allies to fight the older generation of Politburo members. Among others, Shcherbitsky, Tikhonov, Grishin and Gromyko were still in their posts in those days. This old pleiad was getting in the young General Secretary's way. Dinmukhamed Kunayev was also among those who supported "stability". How did they envisage it? As Roosevelt eloquently put it: "The country was dying inch by inch." It was precisely this slow dying process that formed the basis of this stability. And it was precisely this reluctance on the part of the country's leadership, this Areopagus of elders, to change anything at all that formed the basis of this misunderstood stability.

Mikhail Gorbachev was greatly influenced by his entourage. He was forever dashing from one extreme to the other. He got one piece of advice in the West and then another back at home. He had a lot of advisors because it is much easier to appear wise where other people's affairs are concerned and not one's own. However, even the new batch of politicians Gorbachev had promoted to the top Soviet offices of power failed to herald a new era: some of them have vanished today, while others, as it well known, went as far as organising a coup.

There is a difference between the resolve shown in a struggle for power and the resolve shown in implementing it. Gorbachev lacked the latter. He had several possible options open to him. The first was to maintain the status quo he had inherited. The second was to restore the harsh totalitarian system, and continue Andropov's course. The third was to reform the country on the basis of the social democratic model. Let us remember the popular conversations in those days about the Swedish model of socialism and so on. Another option appeared as events developed – a total rejection of the political and economic socialist system. Of course, he could have retained the CPSU which was totally in command of the apparatus in those days, and introduced incisive economic reforms along Chinese lines. The obedient party would

have done everything, especially as in those days Gorbachev enjoyed immense popular support. However, he did not choose this final option.

I recall how at the nineteenth All-Union Party Conference in 1988, Academician LI Abalkin, the director of the USSR Academy of Sciences Institute of Economics, put forward what seemed like incontrovertible evidence of the economy's collapse. It was a bold speech. Abalkin reported that over the past two years total national revenues had declined in comparison with the eleventh five-year plan, and the consumer market had sharply deteriorated. The head of government must know the basics of economics. The cause of the burgeoning crisis lay not with the bureaucracy, whom Gorbachev blamed for everything that had gone wrong, but went far deeper. It was a case of choosing between quality and quantity; a one-party socialist system or reforms. Despite the numerous directives issued, there was no sign of change. Economists presented their vision for the reforms, but nobody wanted to take account of their unbiased views. Eventually, it became necessary to decide whether it was socialism we were building or not because it was impossible to contemplate further reforms without first resolving this basic issue. In his concluding remarks Mikhail Gorbachev found fault with LI Abalkin's argument without producing a single satisfactory response to the issues raised. The state's leadership did not have a clear aim, strategy or real understanding of the situation.

It seems to me that the "socialism with a human face" Gorbachev advocated, remained just as it was – a slogan with no real substance, and so, it follows, no development strategy. Let me give a telling example. At a sitting of the Congress of People's Deputies in July 1990, he was supposed to be outlining his plan to get the country out of the ongoing crisis. He was having to make a great many speeches at the time and had evidently run out of steam. After getting well and truly muddled and failing to

come to a final decision, he was at a loss as to what to say. I was also due to speak at this Congress. I jotted down some brief key ideas. During an interval Gorbachev invited us to the presidium's room and began seeking our advice on what to say. Nobody could come up with anything satisfactory. I expressed the ideas I had jotted down. They won plaudits, and Gorbachev took my notes away with him. At the Congress the next morning I listened to him expound my ideas in his speech. The most curious thing of all was that nobody had reworked or developed these notes or drawn any conclusions from them. For me this was one more sign of the crisis Gorbachev was in: he was unable to get his numerous aides to work on the concepts underlying the issue of paramount importance for the country. He darted between different camps, attempting to reconcile the irreconcilable, and lure even diehard enemies over to his side. Eventually, he ended up without any support from the right or the left and being betrayed by his inner circle. It was a classic example of a split personality. A leader of any sort must be independent and decisive, and for the head of a superpower these qualities are as essential as the air we breathe. Napoleon considered his advantage over the rest of humanity was that he never doubted his actions. That is the other extreme. The fact is, though, that over time Gorbachev began vacillating like a pendulum.. He would listen to someone and then say one thing, then accept what someone else said, and say the reverse. The crisis was getting ever worse, but the person on whom it all depended kept dithering on the options open to him. What's more, he sincerely believed that he was implementing grandiose reforms. He was forever inviting people to dialogues but always spoke himself. At conferences we had to listen to his lengthy monologues. Eventually, he came to regard himself as an enlightened truth-bearer when he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Could a leader who respected himself and his country really say: "I shall not be the President if the Soviet Union col-

lapses"? And everyone at the time silently retorted, "If you're the President, don't let the country collapse! Or step down if you feel you're not coping!" Such indecisiveness was in many ways the underlying cause of the authorities' impotence and criminal irresponsibility. I had occasion more than once to talk to Mikhail Gorbachev on these subjects in private and criticised him from a public platform. He used to take umbrage.

But something else must not be forgotten. Despite all the errors and faults that were committed, Mikhail Gorbachev got the country going, and started the process of reforming society. He enabled millions to discover life without a one-party monopoly. He brought people to their senses and got out of all the Brezhnev-Chernenko "muddle". Yes, there was a lot of brouhaha in those days. But it was also a time when people saw the light and got involved in politics, and the days of blanket acceptance came to an end. You had to be quite an intelligent person to realise the current system was not functioning and have the courage to fight against the majority of the CPSU Central Committee for change. He chose change over the immense power concentrated in his hands. This was his service to politics and history. Unlike in early classical works and *prolet-cult* – proletarian writing – there are no "perfectly" positive or negative characters in history. And while greatly appreciating this man's exceptional contribution to democratising our society, developing new relations in the economy, politics and on the international stage, I am also deeply convinced that Gorbachev's indecisiveness is partly responsible for the chaos, international clashes and serious bloodshed in the last months of *perestroika*.

During that period the country began to flounder in all the unbelievable mess and confusion caused by its leaders' contradictory and fallacious statements and promises. And none of them could promise anything for certain any more. Wide sections of the public were gripped by an overwhelming sense of

despair. The universal apathy became increasingly dangerous. In the initial phase of *perestroika* groups of reformers in the top echelons of power were its main instigators. At the forefront of those in favour of democratisation were undoubtedly numerous people from the mass media, dissidents, broad swathes of the intelligentsia and the democratic section of national movements. There were not enough of them. Conservative forces were also consolidating their positions at the time. However, while the old system of government was being rapidly destroyed, new political and economic structures were not being created to take their place. The reforms, like a revolution "from above", continued for a while until finally running out of steam. When a wave of strikes swept across the country, the national movements started coming to power, and there were clear signs of a number of countries' inclination to secede from the USSR, I first sensed the real imminence of the Soviet Union's collapse. The danger was not that the said forces were becoming stronger but that the authorities were not reacting to them or were opting for a time-tested set of tools, and, primarily, coercion and a peremptory response. It was a disgrace for authorities who had declared themselves democrats to send troops into Baku, Tbilisi and Vilnius. I became personally convinced of this when I was selected as a member of the Congress of People's Deputies Commission of Enquiry into the Tbilisi events. The total inertia, with rare exceptions, of the entire administrative hierarchy, whose chief concern was self-preservation, presented me with the difficult choice of either keeping within a system that was becoming a relic of history or starting to develop my own "zone of responsibility" for Kazakhstan. *Perestroika* had transmuted into a mediocre war of words and ensuing anecdotes, and the end result was that nobody was thinking about combined efforts to save the situation. After the attempted coup of 1991 it was just as though someone had shouted out "run for your lives!" Yet Gorbachev failed to realise

that those August days had changed the situation so much that he was now in another country. And at that moment in time it was incumbent on me to act in the interests of those whom I was accountable to – the people of Kazakhstan who had elected me as their President.

From a bloc mindset to mutual trust

When discussing the global consequences of the Soviet Union's break-up, one must not forget that the entire socialist system disintegrated along with it. No sooner had the USSR rejected the Brezhnev Doctrine – the so-called "umbrella" policy, the coercive restoration of Communist regimes, as had once occurred in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, than these regimes came toppling down, one after the other.

And so it is at the least naive to consider that only some "scriptwriters" were to blame. What's more, I am deeply convinced that the West was quite taken aback by the speed of socialism's rapid collapse. Having spent a long time working out scenarios for the Soviet Union's demise and now faced with the real disintegration of the socialist system, Western theorists were well and truly flummoxed. There was no sign of a new system of international relations to replace the antagonism between the two systems which had given rise not only to confrontations but also to the titanic growth of the arms race while also acting to some extent as a deterrent in festering conflicts. It seems to me that we still have not understood that with the Soviet Union's collapse the world became not only more predictable but also more susceptible to conflict. This period also witnessed simultaneously the historic bloody events in Romania, wars in Yugoslavia and Tadzhikistan, the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict and tragedies in the Dnestr region, Abkhazia, the North Caucasus, bloody regime changes and repeated state coup attempts in Georgia, Azerbai-

jan, Haiti and Afghanistan. And let me also mention the conflicts in Sri Lanka, the Punjab and Kashmir, Ulster, Algeria, Turkish Kurdistan, the Arab-Israeli conflict, ethnic wars in countries of tropical Africa, the Sudan and Ethiopia. Old wounds in Latin America were reopened, as manifest in the armed movement of Mexican Indians, the civil wars in Guatamala, Nicaragua, El Salvador and the Ecuador-Peru conflict. Brutal intervention, at times even involving the military, was required to prevent wars from breaking out in potential hotspots all over the world. The hostility between two opposing systems was now superseded by a number of internal regional, inter-regional and bilateral economic, political, ethnic and civil conflicts growing in individual spots into open armed clashes. I partially agree with political scientist D Sims's viewpoint that "several evils emerged such as inter-ethnic hatred, and various political elites' conflicting ambitions. Millions of people were suddenly deprived of their communities and consequently encountered intolerance and extremism. Bloody wars causing thousands of casualties are raging in various parts of the former Soviet Union".

But is the destruction of a deterrence system based on the world being kept on the brink of nuclear war really a step backwards? I must say with immense confidence that it is not. The conflicts nowadays have been caused by a whole range of disputes with various deep roots, including those underlying the hostility between the two systems. What's more, one can forecast that the said conflicts will be resolved as a new world order is consolidated and a new security system developed. And here a considerable role will belong to all states, and regional and global inter-state organisations. With all due respect for the leading global power, I must say that it is a big mistake to rely on its omnipotence in the peacemaking process. It is combined searches for solutions to critical situations that are going to take on more importance in future. One only has to recall the past. In the pe-

riod between the two wars the League of Nations had only just been set up when it was dealt a fatal blow. Who supposed when the Versailles security system was established that the most appalling bloody war in history would take place only a couple of decades later, a war that would cause the first global collaboration project to collapse.

And nowadays we can see UN peacemaking operations becoming less effective with every passing year. For several years now the world has seen nothing but dramatic turns of events in UN operations in former Yugoslavia and Africa.

In no way do I intend to cast doubt on the major role of international bodies, but, to my mind, the main way of strengthening international security in today's climate is to develop regional and inter-regional links. A danger-free world with its multiplicity of economic, political, psychological and cultural facets calls to mind a multi-coloured mosaic. The diversity and unity of this world have to be developed through close links between its different parts, and not through nuclear deterrence. That is why all states, irrespective of size and prosperity levels, must do their bit to strengthen this security and development.

In this context, Kazakhstan's example may prove significant. The nuclear legacy issue arose immediately after the Soviet Union's collapse, and it included the 104 land-based SS-18 missiles with 1,400 nuclear warheads deployed in Kazakhstan. Along with these, there were also 40 TU-95MS strategic bombers with 240 nuclear cruise missiles deployed in Kazakhstan. A similar situation was facing Belorus and Ukraine. It was then up to these states to decide whether to keep control of the nuclear weapons and scupper previous agreements.

Various options were proposed at the time, including maintaining the said missiles in Kazakhstan territory as a security guarantee. However, such a course of action might have wrecked the entire system of international nuclear non-proliferation agree-

ments and tipped the so-called "threshold" states towards nuclear arms. A short-term gain would have turned into a strategic loss not only for us but for the whole international community. I will not hide the fact that we were put under considerable pressure at the time to withdraw the nuclear weapons.

The "critical commentary" began when the Soviet Union was still in existence. On 16 March 1991, Secretary of State James Baker invited me to the US Embassy in Moscow. It was long past midnight when our meeting took place. James Baker was interested in the general situation in the country, but it seems to me now that options were already being sought in the West in those days to address the nuclear arms problems. This question was posed directly during our meeting in Alma-Ata on 16 September 1991.

James Baker said that he had come to see me as one of the progressive leaders, that he valued my competence and realised that the future of the Soviet Union depended in many ways on Kazakhstan's position. However, at the time he linked the West's support for resolving the nuclear arms issue with our observation of the five principles of the Helsinki Agreement.

There was already an understanding in the West at the time that the Soviet Union might split into a number of independent states. James Baker stated outright that if this were to happen, the US would work with each state individually. For this to happen, however, there was a need for guarantees of stability in these countries. James made it perfectly clear that the US would prefer to work with a strong leadership effectively controlling the situation and implementing a specific plan for economic reform and developing a market economy.

However, as a politician he also took account of another option – that the Soviet Union might keep going. At the time he said to me: "I have always valued you, Mr President, as a most progressive leader. And once again you have demonstrated this

by adopting a constructive position in the political and economic transformations taking place in your country... However, before discussing the implementation of your programmes in Kazakhstan, we would first like to have some clarity on certain issues. We want to know in whose hands economic power is now concentrated in the country and how it is distributed among the republics. This is precisely why we are in favour of the economic agreement you are proposing. If it ends up with the 15 republics deciding to go their own way and not signing up to an economic agreement, it will be a great shame. It will bring about political disintegration and have terrible consequences".

He let it be known that it was very important for the West to have relations with an integral state that would be making the transition to a market economy. To this end, the West would provide economic, technological and humanitarian aid.

For my part, I described the ongoing change in the country. I had to explain that there would be no return to the former Soviet Union. I let it be known that our country could no longer be associated with particular individuals as it was no longer the state that had been led by Stalin, Khrushchev, Brezhnev and, finally, Gorbachev... That country no longer existed. However, our unity could be saved only by true democracy, by recognising the equality of all the republics and all nations. Only then would there be an economic union and voluntary unification.

I presented Kazakhstan to him not only as a promising state with exceedingly rich natural resources and human potential but also spoke candidly about specific serious problems. Our republic and our people had had a difficult and tragic history. In Stalin's days Kazakhstan had concentration camps set up across its territory, entire nations were exiled there, and it was used as an atomic test site. It also had various firing ranges and rocket launch sites. Our state is multi-ethnic also because two million

people were deported to Kazakhstan and nearly as many came to assimilate the virgin lands. It was a demographic shock.

And in the days following the attempted coup when territorial changes were being talked about, the threat of inter-ethnic conflict loomed ever nearer. I told James Baker outright that democracy should not start with threats. The situation in the former Soviet Union was now quite complex, and I was concentrating all my efforts on preventing the complicated modernising processes from escalating into bloody conflicts. This might happen if the destructive tendencies prevailed. But this land of our ancestors we would not give away to anyone. I could not help but express criticism of some Russian colleagues. Yes, democracy had triumphed over the attempted coup. So, why were censorious newspapers being closed down, then? And political parities being banned? Why was the process of nationalising the Soviet Union's property being carrying out by only one state?

To conclude, I told James Baker that on account of the situation, the strategic missiles would be staying put in Kazakhstan. I simply had no right to give them up without receiving firm guarantees for my state's security.

My aim was to convince James Baker that we were keeping the nuclear arms because we needed to for our defence and security. We had no other option at the time. We would resolve the nuclear issue when we knew we were safe, when we knew we had firm guarantees. That was what mattered most to me.

Incidentally, regarding James Baker, my enduring impression from those days is of a major statesman who always put the national interests of his state first. Well, that is what makes a politician: state priorities are also his own personal priorities. Recalling those tense days, James Baker wrote in his memoir *The Politics of Diplomacy* of our meeting in December 1991: "When I got to my room that night at 3 am, I felt my three hours with Nazarbayev were among the best meetings I had had so far. He

was an impressive leader, one of those who cannot be overrated... Nazarbayev also has a vision of what it is essential, and a precise understanding of how to put things on a firm basis." Evidently, our admiration was mutual.

As for Kazakhstan's aspirations for non-nuclear status, we did more than simply express them. Kazakhstan became the only state in the world to close down a nuclear site.

When I met with the Secretary of State in December 1991, he presented me with an official invitation from George Bush to conduct an official visit to the US.

By then the Alma-Ata meeting had taken place at which the Commonwealth of Independent States was established. A Strategic Arms Agreement had been signed in Alma-Ata. Kazakhstan had agreed to support the 1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START-1), and several other treaties but without declaring itself a non-nuclear state.

We began making preparations for the visit, realising that the number-one issue on the agenda for George Bush would be our nuclear arms.

I flew to Moscow for a meeting with Boris Yeltsin. We had an important conversation. According to the estimates of numerous military experts of Russian armed forces headquarters and the CIS united armed forces whom I had consulted, the SS-18 missiles deployed in Kazakhstan presented a very grave danger to the West not only in terms of their extreme precision and unique technical parameters and ammunition stockpiles but also their deployment location.

I informed Yeltsin that Washington would be seeking for Kazakhstan to agree to the withdrawal of the missiles from its territory. So, what concerned me were the conditions Kazakhstan should lay down. But before conclusively deciding this, Kazakhstan wanted to find out the opinion of its strategic partner, Russia.

And so I left for my first official visit to the United States in May 1992. As I had supposed, achieving a successful outcome was not easy. The initial documents we were invited to sign had been greatly altered. I queried every issue, every point. It was tough-going. I think the Americans must have also spent quite a few testing hours over it. One morning James Baker met with me no less than four times, and went off each time, perplexed-looking, to consult his president.

Eventually, they turned on the pressure and announced that if we did not sign the nuclear arms document that same day, none of the other inter-state documents would be signed the following day. And they included highly important issues involving economic cooperation but no guarantees whatsoever of Kazakhstan's security.

I decided to stand my ground and announced that in that case we would start getting ready for home. And then the Americans were forced to back down, and we signed a document in which the US gave us the guarantees we were seeking.

In 1992, the United States again wanted us to agree to non-nuclear status but my position was unequivocal – first the great powers had to give us security guarantees and only then would we give up all the nuclear arms within the republic's territory. In this context, the *Washington Post* alleged that I had "expressed irritation at the US's final attempts to force Kazakhstan to give firm guarantees that it would become a non-nuclear state". The US officials wanted Kazakhstan to sign the Nuclear Arms Non-Proliferation Treaty (NNPT) as a non-nuclear country. We refused, however, to adopt such a status at the time.

I was aware that our state had no other option open to it except non-nuclear status. But the task facing me was to maintain Kazakhstan's security in what were very difficult conditions, given the systemic instability gripping the entire world. In view of this, I had to make several forthright statements which, I con-

sidered – rightly, as it later turned out – were to tip the nuclear states toward presenting guarantees of Kazakhstan's territorial integrity and sovereignty. In an interview to an American television station in 1991, I explained the situation thus: "Kazakhstan obtained nuclear arms as a legacy and will have to keep them in the future as well. We cannot allow other republics, even the strongest of them, to take control of the nuclear arms deployed in our territory". In another interview with the *Washington Post*, my position was more qualified: "We do not know what is going to happen to the Commonwealth of Independent States, or what is going to happen to the Russian leadership. Why isn't the US requiring the same of India and Pakistan as it is of us (unconditionally to join up to the NNPT)? Why has neither England nor France participated in the non-proliferation regime for the last 30 years? Why are you putting such pressure on Kazakhstan? It is not right..." And then a whole series of false reports came in the media concerning Kazakhstan's nuclear arms sales to Islamic states. This, too, was a means of exerting pressure on us. But we stuck it out.

My position deeply troubled the West. There was an influx of foreign visitors to Kazakhstan. I shall cite an excerpt from the verbatim report of my talks in Alma-Ata on 22 January 1992 with the French Foreign Secretary Roland Dumas.

"*N Nazarbayev*:... When the question arose of Kazakhstan joining the UN, various false reports appeared in the media.

"And so let me put it on the record now: Kazakhstan *is* in favour of there being a united army with a single command in the CIS states. As for strategic arms, the four republics with strategic missiles deployed in their territories have all signed a treaty in Alma-Ata and Minsk. We, the said states, in whose territories strategic nuclear arms are deployed, have given an undertaking not to proliferate them by any means, transfer nuclear technologies, or components to other party. Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan,

and Belorus will jointly be responsible for the management of the nuclear arms from a single centre. A special communications link has been set up between the presidents of the four states: as for the use of the arms, this will be decided only by way of an agreement between all four of us. We shall totally destroy all the tactical nuclear arms that came under the medium-range missile reduction treaty...

"As for the insinuations regarding Kazakhstan's violation of the NNPT, secret operations to sell nuclear components to Iran and other threshold states, I categorically state that this is a blatant provocation...

"Fifty percent of the missiles over seven years old have been destroyed. One hundred percent will be destroyed if France joins this process.

"*R Dumas*: We haven't got to this point yet.

"*N Nazarbayev*: "Does France, though, support this or not?

"*R Dumas*: France will join up to the non-proliferation treaty. And are you going to join up to the non-proliferation treaty as a nuclear or non-nuclear state?

"*N Nazarbayev*: As a nuclear one, of course. The first nuclear arms test took place in Kazakhstan in 1949. And there have been nuclear arms here ever since.

"*R Dumas*: And, most likely, there are going to be other tests here?

"*N Nazarbayev*: No, I have banned them... For the time being...

"*R Dumas*: No, I don't mean tests. I mean having the arms... In this regard, Kazakhstan is going to remain a nuclear power?

"*N Nazarbayev*: But how else? Ukraine has announced that it will transfer all the missiles to Russia by 1994. I cannot imagine how this can be done in practical terms. How much will it cost? Can it be done in two years? Besides, we have an entirely different type of nuclear arms. They cannot be redeployed in a

The beginning of career biography

Presentation of the Presidential award of the peace and spiritual harmony of 1993 to Ch. Aytmatov. Almaty. December, 1993

«The Person of year» rank awarding by International Association of Assistance to renaissance of spirituality «Ruhaniyat».
Bishkek. December 3, 1993

Again, the beginning of career biography.
Meeting with metallurgists of Temirtau

Before the start of the international crew "Union TM-13".
Baikonur. October, 1991

The first summit of the heads of the CIS countries in Kazakhstan.
Almaty. December, 1991

The captain of the ship A. A. Volkov, cosmonauts-researchers
T.O. Aubakirov and Frants Fibek

In a spaceship cabin.
Star town, 1991

N. Nazarbayev and the Most Holy Patriarch of Moscow and the Whole Russia Alexius II.
Almaty. June, 1995

With heads of confessions - the head of spiritual management of Moslems of Kazakhstan Ratbek-kazhy Nysanbaiuly and the Almaty Archbishop and Semipalatinsk Alexius

With the president of Russia B. Yeltsin at Kremlin

With the president of Ukraine L. Kuchma

With the president of Azerbaijan G. Aliyev

At the University of Moscow.
March, 1994

The Conference of the heads of the states of central Asian region.
Nukus. January, 1994

short time, and they will be deployed in our territory for at least another ten years. We do not want to be a nuclear state although we have these arms. But can the nuclear arms really be deployed in the territory of one state with the button controlling them in another? That's nonsense.

"*R. Dumas*: Yes, of course, throughout this period, even if we were to achieve a one hundred percent reduction, you will still remain a nuclear state. That's just the way things are.

"*N. Nazarbayev*: Kazakhstan is a nuclear state, but reluctantly so.

"*R. Dumas*: I understand you."

However, the story did not end with James Baker's missions and our talks with George Bush. Shortly after Bill Clinton became the US president in 1993, Deputy Secretary of State Warren Christopher paid a visit to Alma-Ata. To start with, the new Administration didn't want to be held responsible for the previous one's actions, and Warren Christopher made a futile attempt to persuade us to sign up to the NNPT without getting anything in return. I informed him that we would not be joining up to the treaty, and we would not be destroying the nuclear arms either. In accordance with the START-1 Treaty we would be reducing missiles gradually and in line with the other countries involved.

Warren Christopher expressed great surprise and even irritation. But I consider that good personal relations should never get in the way of business. I became acutely aware of a game being played out during the talks on the future of nuclear arms on Kazakhstan's territory and on issues concerning their dismantling. An attempt was being made to dazzle the team of an "inexperienced" politician with a brilliant array of devices and gimmicks to distract them from making a careful study of the documents due to be signed. However, the powers that be in Washington underestimated our competence and confidence in a favourable

outcome to the matter that was based upon the strategic interest of the Americans themselves.

In the light of such "discrepancies" the *New York Times* of 24 October 1993 published Elaine Sciolino's extensive material under the eye-catching heading "Kazakh uses America to boost his reputation". Here is an excerpt from it: "The President played politics today with the United States and won. The plan was that President Nazarbayev and State Secretary Warren Christopher would sign and celebrate a technical agreement detailing how Kazakhstan will spend US$85million of American aid on dismantling its nuclear weapons.

"But when Mr Christopher arrived at Mr Nazarbayev's office this morning, the Kazakh leader proposed that they deferred the signing. 'Of course, Kazakhstan wants to sign the agreement,' he said, 'but only... face to face with Mr Clinton.'"

US Vice President Al Gore came to Almaty in December 1993. During a lengthy confidential conversation I explained to him why I had taken up such a position on nuclear arms.

Ultimately, during my next visit to the US and meeting with Bill Clinton all our conditions were met.

Only after this agonisingly long marathon did real talks start on genuine guarantees from the international community. And then we came to the decision to adopt the status of a non-nuclear-weapon state, and on the gradual phasing out and destruction of these terrible weapons. Such a reasonable policy allowed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to progress to a new development stage. At the time of the USSR's break-up in December 1991, Kazakhstan signed an agreement with the Russian, Ukrainian and Belorus leaders on joint measures in relation to nuclear arms in which it confirmed its commitment to non-proliferation. May 1992 saw the signing of the Lisbon Protocol on non-proliferation and the step-by-step dismantling and withdrawal of nuclear missiles to Russia, with compensation to Kazakhstan for

the cost of the uranium in the nuclear warheads. The Atomic Energy Agency of the Republic of Kazakhstan was established by my decree to regulate the said process and control the activity of enterprises engaged in uranium extraction and treatment, and implement state policy in the field of atomic energy use. And so a whole range of documents were drawn up in the process of ratifying the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. What's more, Kazakhstan was the first in the CIS to ratify the Strategic Offensive Weapons Limitation Treaty. A legal basis was established for the safe transportation, storage and destruction of nuclear weapons. Our republic was allocated US$84million for this purpose. Our aspiration to non-nuclear status was supported by many countries of the world. Japan committed itself to contributing to finding a solution to this problem. A joint Committee was set up to coordinate the destruction of nuclear weapons on Kazakhstan's territory.

There was an interesting episode involving the sale of uranium to the United States. For nearly 20 years some 600 kilograms of high-enriched uranium were stored in the Ulbinsk metallurgical factory's warehouses. Since we had joined up to the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty and it did not make economic sense for us to pay for its storage, and, what's more, this was becoming dangerous both for Kazakhstan and the rest of the world, the decision was taken to sell this uranium. Several countries showed an interest in it and offered to buy the raw material. For understandable reasons we turned them down. Talks began with the United States who assured us that the uranium would be in safe hands and not used for military aims. Operation Sapphire was conducted to transport the deadly cargo to the US. President Clinton assessed the successful operation thus: "The world has been rid of yet another threat of nuclear terrorism and nuclear weapons proliferation. I appreciate the leadership role of President Nazarbayev in this." US Defense Secretary William Perry comment-

ed, "We have made these nuclear materials inaccessible to potential blackmailers, terrorists and new nuclear regimes...they are safe now." According to Pentagon estimates, this uranium was enough to produce 20 nuclear bombs. A mini-laboratory was set up in the grounds of the Ulbinsk factory to prepare the materials for transportation. Over the course of a month some 30 American experts poured the enriched uranium from 7,000 containers into 1,400 stainless steel canisters. Three S-5 aircraft were used to transport the raw material from Ust-Kamenogorsk to the Dover US Air Force Base (Delaware). From there the uranium was transported under armed escort to the Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Tennessee. Operation Sapphire was supervised on the American side by Vice President Al Gore. The *New York Times* was the first to break the story. The information leak did not come from our side.

A line was drawn under the problem of nuclear weapons on Kazakhstan's territory on 26 May 1995. That day I addressed the nation and made it publicly known that the last deadly warheads had been removed from the republic's territory. We destroyed the last nuclear charge that had been left underground at the Semipalatinsk test site as it had proved impossible to remove with an ordinary explosive device in full compliance with all safety regulations.

An event of truly historic significance took place on 5 December 1994, during the Budapest Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) Conference: the signing of the Memorandum on the Provision of Security Guarantees to Kazakhstan on the part of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty depositaries – the Russian Federation, the USA and Great Britain who in accordance with the principles of the CSCE affirmed their respect for the independence, sovereignty, and inviolability of the existing borders of Kazakhstan. The Memorandum contains important commitments on the non-use of force against the ter-

ritorial integrity and political independence of Kazakhstan, and on the rejection of coercive economic measures. We regard these guarantees as an adequate response to Kazakhstan's responsible policy in the field of disarmament. We subsequently also received similar guarantees from the governments of the People's Republic of China and France.

We know from our own experience what nuclear weapons are really like and what impact they have on everything living, and the problem of the Semipalatinsk test site and widespread anti-nuclear attitudes, of course, inclined us toward such a course of action. I think we did the right thing by declaring Kazakhstan's non-nuclear status. And it was not a question of not having the necessary vast resources and extremely highly qualified experts to maintain nuclear weapons. The fact is that possessing nuclear weapons was like sitting astride two gunpowder kegs. First, in view of the instability of post-Soviet space, these means of mass destruction presented a real threat to our security. Second, the nuclear states had Kazakhstan constantly in their sights because of the missiles deployed on our territory. And I was incensed when some people waged a campaign to retain these deadly weapons on Kazakhstan's soil. These intriguing politicians had never even seen the devastated land around Semei (formerly Semipalatinsk), and knew nothing about the numerous people who had been disabled or died prematurely from various forms of cancer. Some are still casting doubt on our decision to this day, and mostly for cheap political gains.

Our land is gradually recovering from the acts of violence perpetrated against it. At one time, 18,000 square kilometres of fertile land were given over to the nuclear test site. Today, 88 per cent of this area is known to have dangerously high radiation levels. Special research is required for 8 per cent of the area and 720 square kilometres are so heavily polluted that they are considered unsuitable for agriculture. Of particular concern is the

area known as the "atomic lake" where radiation on the surface of some sections of land reaches 3,000-5,000 micro-roentgens per hour. Four hundred and fifty nine nuclear explosions, including 113 in the atmosphere were carried out at the Semipalatinsk test site. There will never be any more.

* * *

Another aspect of our work involves maintaining regional security. At the 47th Session of the UN General Assembly in October 1992, I put forward an initiative to organise a Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICMA). In my UN speech I expressed concern for the fact that the "fragile construct of our Commonwealth... has yet to fully consider the age-old traditions of interaction between the countries and peoples of this part of Eurasia. As a result, the transfer processes to a free-market economy and democracy in the CIS are being accompanied by increasing socio-economic and political instability, and an escalation in existing conflicts and the emergence of new disputes."

Once initial preparations had been made, working groups comprising representatives from 14 Asiatic states met in Almaty in 1995. Our aim is to set up a system of Asiatic security similar to the CSCE. Even though peace and stability have been achieved in the region through our efforts and those of our neighbours, Central Asia is potentially still a conflict-prone region. It is enough to consider our territorial neighbours: the wars in Tajikistan and Afghanistan, and the serious long-term disputes in the Caucasus. Conflicts in the future may erupt within the region and its surrounding area over, among other things, territories, water and the rich natural resources. Kazakhstan's initiative in establishing interaction and trust-building measures in Asia was based on the workings of the European security process and also has quite a lot in common with those of the CSCE on cooperation with non-

member Mediterranean states. Obviously, where increasing stability in the Eurasian continent is concerned, a vital role is played by the situation, not only in Central Asia but in the neighbouring states of China, Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan and India which do not play a part in the activities of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe either.

Along with others, this foreign policy initiative of ours was precipitated not only by the pressing need to increase security but also by an awareness of another no less important long-term issue: namely, the problem of forming a new world order and new type of state relations after the end of the Cold War and destruction of a bipolar world. The previous system enabled the superpowers to dominate within their own camps. The bipolar world's collapse has seen a sharp increase in individual countries' autonomy. Those who hoped that the disintegration of the USSR would automatically result in a new democratic world order proved very wide of the mark. The previous system of international relations took decades to develop, and endured a series of local conflicts, the Second World War, and the Berlin and Cuban crises which presented humanity with the real danger of self-annihilation. In the light of such experience, the United States and the Soviet Union strictly controlled the confines of their strategic allies' conflicts and activities. Yet, even so, they did not always succeed. Let us recall the Falklands crisis when two strategic partners of the United States – Argentina and Britain – fought over the islands. An obvious crack appeared back then in the habitual interpretation of the world as a struggle between two systems. It will hardly be stretching the point if one adds the conflict between Vietnam and China, the disputes between Arab states, armed border clashes in South America and the Iran-Iraq conflict. Outside this usual framework, too, were the events surrounding the annexation of Kuwait when the Arab states almost unanimously censured Iraq and planned combined interventions, while at the

same time they were all prepared to close ranks and defend this aggressor against Israel. Their opinions were also divided at the time over the American operation "Desert Storm".

Left without their protector, the Soviet Union, and with no reason to submit to the United States in the absence of a strategic enemy, "vassal" states and regimes acquired an extraordinary degree of freedom which had to be skilfully managed. In a number of instances, however, it was not. What's more, Afghanistan showed that deliverance from a Soviet military presence and political pressure were no guarantee that the internal war would cease. And also worth recalling here are the outbreaks of conflicts and disputes that took decades of strict regulation to bring under control and stifle, and have become fertile soil for general instability and drawn-out wars.

If we turn to peaceful and prosperous Europe which for several years now has been unable to sort out the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, we will see increasing tensions here, too. The allies' discipline that had been maintained through a perception of common danger has lost its incentive. Nowadays European states are conducting policies that are more independent of the United States. That is why what it is happening today comes as no surprise. So far bilateral relations have been sorted out here and there at a diplomatic level, although the rhetoric in Turkish-Greek relations has far exceeded that of diplomacy.

During its years of confrontation with the USSR, the United States of America was able to spread its system of values across the rest of the world. And the world was faced with the choice of either joining the Pax America system or entering the sphere of Soviet influence. Since the bipolar system's collapse, the capacity of American values to harness support has been severely curtailed. Differentiating their interests from those of the US has proved fundamental for the European community's regeneration. There has been a surge in the role and significance of non-

European types of civilisation and non-European values, and in Europe itself, a return to national values, traditions and interests, and a rejection of American culture.

Since the collapse of one of the poles – the Soviet Union – there has been a fairly prolonged period of history in which the superpower balance as a means of settling international relations has been replaced by a diverse array of institutions for maintaining stability. And this yet again proves the substantial increase in the role of regional security systems. This, of course, will require changes to the type of activity conducted by the UN with a view to adapting it to the new realities and distribution of power among different countries of the world. Such an idea was first expressed by UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali at the UN's 50th anniversary celebrations. Other catalysts for change in this direction have included the increasing role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in international relations, the systematic flaws in the Security Council's interaction with the UN General Assembly and the different character of conflicts.

In my speech at the UN General Assembly's 50th Session on 22 October 1995, I presented the world community with concrete proposals for improving the interaction of global and regional security systems. In Central Asia we are aware of the pressing need to strengthen regional capacity, hence Kazakhstan's initiative to call a conference on interaction and trust-building measures in Asia, and in respect of the Eurasian Union. In my opinion, in the future the UN is going to enact two roles as it develops its interaction with regional and security systems. One of its roles will be that of an integral centre of world security whose resolutions will be binding for all regional systems. The drawback of such a centre is that it might unknowingly side with one of the opposing parties and slow down the natural development of the other growing world centres of power. The other role of the UN will be that of a world coordinating body which will adopt a supreme

independent arbiter role in the solution of disputes and rifts between regional structures. Here the drawback is that such a body might not be able to take effective decisions in time to stop a conflict. Similar problems will arise not only in the military-strategic field but in all areas of human activity: cultural, informational, scientific and technological, financial and economic. I proposed the establishment of a peacemaking foundation that every country would fund by means of an annual 1 per cent reduction in its defence spending.

We used to be in thrall to a formulaic class-based approach in our assessment of world processes, especially, the struggle between socialism and capitalism as the driving force in human progress. Such an approach eventually resulted in the USSR's isolation on the world stage. Andrei Gromyko – "Mr Nyet" as he was known as in the West – became the face of Soviet diplomacy. A mirror image of this doctrine was the Western policy of "restraint and rejecting" socialism. The attempt today to create a single-dimensional world after the American fashion is also proving unsuccessful. The world has entered a complex phase of forming new relations. It is time, it seems to me, to stop looking at the world in terms of opposites: the West versus the East, the North versus the South, the superpowers versus the Third World, the nuclear club versus the rest of the world. Such a perspective has been generated throughout the history of diplomacy, and the struggle between the great powers to reshape the world and spheres of influence, the clashes of blocs and social systems. All this is gradually becoming part of history. All ideas of collisions must be superseded by initiatives for world peace, and cooperation between nations, civilisations, countries and regions.

"Polycentricity" is becoming firmly established in the world for the long term. A great many development centres have already appeared. A gradual awareness of the problems involved has illuminated the pressing need for Kazakhstan to develop a

principally new foreign policy. Naturally, this has primarily been about preventing post-Soviet space from going the same way as Yugoslavia, and the new states' economies eventually collapsing as a consequence of the severed economic ties. To tackle this problem, I have set up numerous contacts not only with the CIS leaders but also further afield. In the early 90s some sections of the media criticised me for my numerous engagements abroad. But how could I avoid such work when Kazakhstan was gaining its independence at a dramatic period that marked the end of an entire era – the Cold War and opposition of two systems. It is virtually impossible nowadays to understand the scale and consequences of such a global phenomenon. The world has changed. A principally different system of international relations is now being formed, bringing with it a new range of threats and new opportunities. Kazakhstan finds itself surrounded by a whole range of regional conflicts – in Afghanistan, Tadjikstan and the Caucasus. The situation in other hotspots of the CIS is bound to have an impact on us. And this is making our reforms considerably more complex.

This being the case, our primary task has been to secure the republic's territorial integrity and independence and give its sovereignty real substance. If anyone imagines the recent phase we have been through has all been plain sailing, I can say that the recognition the republic now has on the world stage and the fact that it is now a member of leading international organisations are both the result of a considerable amount of painstaking work.

Let me cite some figures. We are now recognised by over 120 states of the world, and have established diplomatic relations with 92 of them. Our country has joined the Helsinki Process, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty; we have signed a Democratic Partnership Charter with the US, and been granted most-favoured-nation status in trading relations. All the nuclear states have provided guarantees of Kazakhstan's territorial integrity.

In five turbulent years we have gone from being an unknown republic to gaining the status of a fully-fledged member of the international community.

When the process came to an end

The consequences of the astonishingly rapid break-up of the Soviet Union await a clinical as well as a political analysis, for the spectrum of political pathologies here in this country at the time was comparable in scope to the vast number of philosophers who all appeared in the ancient city of Athens in the fifth century BC, as many as those in other civilisations over thousands of years.

While it is undoubtedly possible to explain and categorise the various objective and subjective factors, there still remains a sense of mystery about this period of history. Evidently, the facts have become somewhat obscured and given rise to some bizarre aberrations that are frequently uncontrollable and deliberately not queried by the political protagonists.

To my mind, politicians are prone to one weakness in particular. Because of their extremely busy schedules 24/7, most of them simply cannot take in everything that is going on. It is a professional ailment of sorts. Indeed, participating in a seemingly endless round of lavish ceremonies, and a whole range of occasions, some entertaining, others sad, it is sometimes difficult to rise above it all. It is hard to stop and go against the flow. Unfortunately, post-Soviet space has produced no small number of examples of scheming decadents whose main task has been to search for a suitable wave or niche in mass consciousness and then wallow in this quickly evaporating puddle. How many such figures have come to grief before my very eyes over the past five years – from presidents to their avid opponents.

So many accounts and outlandish interpretations of the August 1991attempted coup have been bandied about that it

does not seem right to simply add a few new details to this highly unique canvas. That is why I wish to look at the events of those years from a present-day perspective and in view of the cardinal changes that have taken place in the short space of time since.

In early 1990, I started seriously thinking about the need for Kazakhstan to independently extricate itself from the crisis and late *perestroika* impasse. Nobody believed any more in the centre's power. It seems to me that virtually all the first leaders of the republics realised this. By this time there was no integral economic system within the country. This situation has had particularly dramatic repercussions for Kazakhstan. According to my estimates, over 95 per cent of our enterprises were managed from the centre. What's more, given the centre's lack of power, all this was having a most direct impact on the state of the republic's economy. I realised at the time that sooner or later and, most likely fairly soon, we would have to chart our own independent economic course.

To avoid a total collapse, mitigate the consequences of the break-up, and start making preparations for an entirely different economic and state situation, I took the decision to set up the Supreme Economic Council. It was headed by the experienced state plan executive D Sembayev who knew the republic's economy and was in favour of the reforms. He gathered together a group of young intellectuals – economists, financiers, and lawyers aged between 25 and 30. The American economist Dr C Beng, G Yavlinsky, and the Egyptian lawyer Dr Hasan agreed to become my aides. We took our first steps to work out Kazakhstan's market economic policy. Many of the incumbent heads of ministries and banks emerged from this Council.

It was, of course, not easy for me to adopt entirely new economic approaches. However, as I knew quite well what was going on in the economies of the USSR and Kazakhstan, I started thoroughly studying other countries' methods of transferring to

a market economy. I realised we had already paid a huge price by attempting to reform the economy within the framework of the scheme proposed by Gorbachev – that of "democratic socialism". Not only had we actually made little progress, we had nearly wrecked the potential we had. Whether the regime kept going in political terms or not, it was still imperative to change economic policy.

I do not want to make myself out to be some oracle. The same doubts, contradictions and errors faced by all the other CIS countries today were also experienced in Kazakhstan. One thing was clear to me: it was crucial to actually make the transition to a market economy rather than indulge in endless declarations and appeals. It was getting dangerous to deliberate not just for political reasons but for economic ones as well.

There was serious talk at the time of some alternative to the Marshall Plan for the former Soviet republics. Many were naively convinced that one of us was going to implement the reforms, fill the market and organise a modern management structure. References were also endlessly made to the methods of post-war Japan and Germany where the old structures had been virtually destroyed. Some hotheads advised me to follow suit. However, practical experience of the managerial system made me more cautious. I realised that it was like quickly scrapping machinery that had been running for decades: this might have the most unexpected consequences. The experiences of many of the states of the former Soviet Union also highlighted this. Totally replacing the state machinery and employing personnel with no experience of state administration had caused total chaos in a number of CIS states, dealing a final blow to the economy and precipitating political destabilisation.

Early conceptions of the young CIS states' independent economic flourishing were, by and large, based on two premises. First, they all exaggerated the West's interest in integrating their

particular republic into world economic frameworks through an economic *perestroika* implemented with promised Western credits. Second, literally every republic regarded itself as "a bridge between Europe and Asia, between the West and the East", "a unique state in geographical terms", and, all in all, the only interesting place to invest in on the planet. I studied the materials being published in all the republics on their future development. They were all as alike as two peas in a pod. And there is no denying that we were no exception here. These publications were mostly written by advocates of the same idea. Each tried to prove that his republic presented the most interest to the Western countries, compared to the others, and that his republic, unlike the others, was going to do well. Many cited the example of such states as Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. The authors, however, forgot several quite important things that rendered our rapid integration into the global economy impossible.

First, even when they were still part of the socialist camp, the countries of Eastern Europe's political and, more importantly, economic structures were different from ours. There was still a fairly large sector of private owners in Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, and the rudiments of a market psychology and behaviour had also been preserved there. The transition to market relations had already begun in these states when they were under communist regimes, with Tito's reforms in Yugoslavia, Jaruzelski's in Poland and Kalara's in Hungary.

What's more, these states had multi-party systems. Naturally, the communist party dominated, but there was still a higher degree of political liberalisation in the Eastern European countries, and in recent years, especially in the 80s, the opposition forces, with substantial Western support, had become more active and widespread.

Second, thanks to these factors, the West was able to carry out more intensive work in respect of the states of the Eastern

bloc, and the reformers who came to power had a solid social and economic base on which to conduct change within the country as well as relying on support from outside. What's more, they already had practical experience of introducing economic change.

Third, an alternative of the Marshall Plan could have worked in these countries. Subsequent history has shown, however, that it was not implemented even there. Even East Germany was faced with huge problems. The GDR's industrial output, as is well known, ranked highest in quality terms within the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA), found demand lacking in the new market conditions, and this gave rise to a wave of social unrest. These countries' transition took place at different times, and, what's more, against the backdrop of the still functioning USSR. And then when the latter disintegrated, 15 states emerged at once, all expecting support from the West.

And, finally, of no small importance also is the psychological, even mind-set factor. It was only after the Second World War that the Eastern European countries actually moved away from market economies. For nearly 40 years in all, these countries underwent a crisis caused by their peoples' hostility to the authoritarian regimes. Suffice it to recall the events of 1956 in Hungary, 1968 in Czechoslovakia and the 80s in Poland.

Mention should also be made of the other factors that made the economies of the CIS states different from those of Eastern Europe. They have to do with the legacy of a single economic structure, and, primarily, the horrendous lack of balance between the mining, manufacturing, heavy and light industries. The Soviet Union also had a so-called sixth output that was possible only in a strictly planned economy. There is no demand for this output in market conditions, but it is produced for the sake of gross output and is bought as a way of fulfilling the plan on orders from the centre. In Eastern Europe these problems were resolved in the very first stages of the reforms.

It was then that it became clear our countries had no chance of integrating quickly into the world economic system where all the places had already been taken and the roles defined.

The last act of the drama

When I think back over all the details of the August coup, there are several facts I cannot pass by. They are key to an understanding of the situation that unfolded directly before and after the coup. Not long before those tumultuous August days Boris Yeltsin paid a visit to the capital of Kazakhstan, and we worked on joint approaches to the formation of a revised union. Our meeting culminated in the signing on 17 August 1991 of joint declarations "On guarantees to the stability of the Union of Sovereign States" and "On an integral economic space". At the same time, we also launched an initiative which can be summarised as follows:

"1. To present a proposal to the leaders of all the republics to agree a time and place for convening a collaborative meeting of the heads of the 15 Sovereign States for the purpose of discussing a whole range of economic and social problems involved in setting up an integral market space.

2. To propose the following agenda for the meeting:

- working out the outline for an economic agreement between all the republics;

- agreeing the stages, the timeframe for preparations, and the conditions for the economic agreement's signing;

- discussing the principles of setting up an inter-republic economic council and its activity directly after the signing of the Agreement on the Union of Sovereign States."

On the 17 August we took an Appeal to USSR President Gorbachev which read as follows:

"The fierce conflict raging between Azerbaijan and Armenia is now in its fourth year. Assessments of its causes and the responsibility of the sides may differ, as may the model for its final solution. Yet, undoubtedly, an end has to be reached to this bloody reprisal that is a disgrace to a community of civilised peoples. Otherwise we will be facing a new escalation of the conflict which threatens to spread to other regions of the country.

These issues cannot be resolved by means of force. Attempts of such a kind always result only in stronger resistance on a wider scale, and in new victims and mass-scale human right violations. Blatant political errors have been committed as a result of a lack of consistency on the Union's leadership's part. Chances to resolve the conflict at certain times have been missed. Genuine peacemaking measures are now of the uttermost importance. The leaders of the sovereign republics must also accept their share of responsibility.

Our proposal is as follows:

1. It is imperative for the USSR President to take all measures necessary to set up forthwith direct negotiations between the leaders of the opposing sides, including the authoritative leaders of the Armenian population of Azerbaijan and the Azerbaijani population living in Armenia, all forces that have a real influence on the situation in the region. In so doing, no preconditions should be proposed. The given course of action is committed to avoiding an escalation of the fratricidal war. The USSR President should personally take part in the talks, using all his authority and influence to ensure their unmitigated success.

2. If this is acceptable to the opposing sides, we are ready to act as intermediaries in setting up and conducting the talks, and act together with yourself as guarantors of compliance with the agreed decisions. The number of intermediaries may, of course, be increased.

3. The talks must include the full range of contentious issues, such as those concerning a ceasefire, the isolation of the warring sides and security provisions for the civilian population. An immediate solution must be found to the problem of refugees from Armenia and Azerbaijan, and to defining the status of the regions they have fled from. Constructive proposals for the initial stages of a solution were recently sent to the leaders of both republics.

4. We are relying on the fact that you, as the USSR President, will approve the drawing up of legal documents which will be agreed upon in the course of the talks and also repeal the decree halting the activity of the constitutional bodies of the ICAO authorities. A special resolution is required to put an immediate halt to any functions being carried out by the Soviet Army except for a temporary separation of the sides in the conflict zone. It is inadmissible to use the USSR Armed Forces for carrying out passport checks, confiscating weapons, establishing the control of one or other of the sides over populated areas. The transfer of army weaponry (particularly heavy arms) by Ministry of Internal Affairs forces of both republics must be totally prohibited.

Such are our proposals. Other ideas may, of course, be put forward. The most pressing matter is to bring an immediate halt to this undeclared war in which not only the republics but also the Union's army is involved. Otherwise, the Agreement on the Union of Sovereign States, which we are ready to sign, will be rendered meaningless."

These documents were also made public at a press conference. Let me remind you that we were all of the opinion that preserving the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan was the most important provision for preventing the catastrophic disintegration of the country and the states in the process of taking shape.

At the time, everyone was taken up with various plans to "update" Russia. Dangerous calls for redrawing the borders were openly voiced. We made it perfectly clear that any transfer of territory from one country to another was absolutely out of the question.

It has to be said that 17-18 August were very tense days. My personal feeling at the time was that despite the deterioration in the political situation among the top leadership, nobody was expecting a dramatic denouement.

The signing of the Union agreement was planned for 20 August. In my speech at the ceremony of the signing of the protocol between Kazakhstan and Russia on 16-17 August 1991, I told journalists: "Literally tomorrow Boris Nikolayevich [Yeltsin] and I will be flying to Moscow to put our signatures to the Agreement on behalf of our republics' parliaments on 20 August." Destiny, however, decreed otherwise.

Boris Yeltsin wrote in his memoir that he found the warm meeting in Kazakhstan and the way his aircraft was delayed at the airport disconcerting. He certainly was given a warm reception in Kazakhstan. As his host, I considered it my duty to do everything in my power to ensure he felt perfectly at home with us. Hospitality is a centuries-old tradition for Kazakhs. It is astonishing that it seemed odd and "excessive and overdone" to him, and even gave rise to "a vague, unaccountable sense of unease". Let me say yet again: I had no inkling of the dramatic turn in events right until the morning of 19 August. I am sure Boris Yeltsin felt likewise at that moment in time.

The atmosphere in those days was extremely tense, but there was no information about what was really happening. Our memories are highly selective. And I recall one very typical episode. On the morning of 19 August I came out of my house and could not see my car. To tell the truth, I was prepared for anything at the time, including even arrest. However, it turned out that the

driver had simply parked the car in the shade and had failed to notice me coming out of the building.

I tried to telephone Gorbachev but could not get through. I summoned the republic's local government leaders. During our meeting, however, I noticed they seemed distracted. Most of them later deemed it necessary to express their support for the State of Emergency State Committee. The secretaries of the Central Committee of the Kazakhstan Communist Party and district committees, and several parliamentary leaders tried to persuade me not to speak out against the State of Emergency State Committee. Individual officials started to carry Mikhail Gorbachev's portrait out of their offices. No matter how much some people wish to deny it now, this is how things really were.

The situation was a very complex. I was sure that what we were dealing with here were some illegal acts, and then there were a great many questions concerning Mikhail Gorbachev and his behaviour in this situation. Let me remind you also that literally the day before, Boris Yeltsin and I had been discussing a whole range of issues about the future of the Union and our approaches were quite compatible.

We refused point blank to introduce a state of emergency in Kazakhstan and criticised the State of Emergency State Committee in an agreed statement which read as follows: "The committee that has been established by three persons without the approval of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and republics is drawing up knowingly illegal documents which, apart from anything else, are contravening the republics' declarations of sovereignty..."

It was clear to me that an anti-constitutional state coup was taking place in Moscow. It is one thing, however, to assess a situation, and another to select the right way of addressing the problem. My primary task then was to maintain stability in the republic and prevent possible conflicts. Fortunately, this I managed to do. As a proper analysis was made of the unfolding situation, it

became evident that the instigators of the coup were going to suffer a defeat. Frankly, since I was personally acquainted with the members of the State of Emergency State Committee, I had been sure of this right from the very start but what I still feared was the ends they might go to in their desperate attempts to stay in power.

These were troubled times and a serious test of a person's strength of character. No political trials and court cases in connection with the August events were to take place in Kazakhstan – this was a principle-based decision on our part. One hardly has the right to pass judgement on, and assess people who have lived under a harsh regime and, after getting themselves into such a dilemma, have proved incapable of overcoming psychological, moral and ethical barriers.

Whenever I am questioned these days about these particular events – possibly the most enigmatic in the USSR's entire 74-year-long history – and evidence of scheming foreign enemies keep being alluded to, I base my response on my practical experience and knowledge of the actual situation and explain that owing to the confusion that prevailed in the country in recent times, Mikhail Gorbachev and his closest associates simply lost control of the reins of government. And the authorities in Moscow, figuratively speaking, simply threw their hands up, and Boris Yeltsin had the political will to take charge of the situation. Of course, it would be oversimplifying matters not to see the deep-rooted original causes that led to such a situation, but just then that was exactly how the situation panned out.

And so, turning to subsequent events, and particularly those linked with nuclear weapons, and recalling the immense anxiety in the world, particularly among the leaders of the major Western powers, I can safely say that it was the factor I called the "collapse of authority" that proved crucial in August 1991. Even the coup itself, if it can be called that, was organised in keeping with all the

rules of a bad screenplay. To this day, for instance, I find it baffling how a system with such powerful coercive resources proved incapable of using them. Pointing to any sort of foreign factors to explain this would be to distort the real historic picture.

After August 1991 "the process got under way" and gathered momentum. Preparations began for an extraordinary Congress of People's Deputies. I had to do some substantial work at the time. I did all I could to find common approaches that would be acceptable to all the leaders who were all pulling in different directions. A statement by the USSR President Gorbachev and the top leaders of the union republics was prepared. I was given the task of reading it aloud at the Congress. With the support of the republics' leaders, insertions were made in the statement regarding the pressing need to arrange the signing of the agreement on the Union of Sovereign States and conclusion of an economic union.

Given these circumstances, Kazakhstan did everything to avoid chaos. I proposed concluding a voluntary economic union, and Gorbachev supported the idea. Representatives from each republic set to preparing the documents. The work was headed by Vice Chairman of the Inter-State Economic Commission Grigory Yavlinsky. He pointed out the disastrous consequences of an abrupt severing of the integral mutually interdependent economy, and advanced indisputable evidence in favour of concluding an economic union. I supported him. In early October all the heads of government assembled in Alma-Ata to initial the economic agreement. Once again Yavlinsky had to go through every article of the agreement.

It was already impossible to stop the break-up. Destroying the Communist party's organisational structure and dismantling this most powerful instrument of the rigidly centralised political system made the process of the USSR's break-up irreversible.

The year 1991 really was one of resounding, epoch-making events. Numerous assessments have been made of the Belovezhskaya Declaration of the leaders of Russia, Ukraine and Belorus. I have already said that the events of 1991 cannot be examined separately from previous history. From a purely strategic perspective, the Belovezhskaya Declaration was not entirely unexpected. Everyone understood that the break-up of the USSR was becoming increasingly inevitable; however, this break-up could have taken an unpredictable course and turned into a sharp confrontation of political forces.

On 8 December 1991, when I flew into Moscow's Vnukovo airport, I received an unexpected invitation from Boris Yeltsin's representative to fly straight on to Belorus to sign the documents. Naturally, I did not agree to this impromptu meeting.

The next day a meeting was held between Mikhail Gorbachev, Boris Yeltsin and myself at which Yeltsin reported in detail on the decisions that had been taken at Belovezhskaya. For over two hours Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin had a fairly tense and ill-tempered exchange about the fundamental issues involved in the Belovezhskaya Accords. I sat between them and listened. It was a disappointing outcome for the country and both leaders, who could have reached an agreement. However, no dialogue was forthcoming.

In these circumstances I had to think about the interests of my country, in so far as the situation that developed after the Belovezhskaya Accords was principally different in both legal and political terms. I flew home at once.

One of the main problems of that period was that there was already an urgent need to reassess the borders and set up a Slavic federation.

On 9 December, the heads of four republics (Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Belorus) were due to meet with Mikhail Gorbachev to finalise the dates for signing what was virtually a con-

federative union. All the heads of the Central Asian republics were waiting for information from me. President Islam Karimov of Uzbekistan asked me to: "Speak on my behalf. Persuade them to decide something before the New Year. We have all heard that on 16 December Russia is going to free all its prices. Do they realise what the consequences are going to be?"

On my return, I telephoned Islam Karimov straightaway, and then all the other heads of the Central Asian republics. We decided to meet at once to agree upon a united approach. Islam Karimov suggested I took it upon myself to arrange everything. I telephoned S Niyazov and he invited all the leaders of the Central Asian republics to Ashgabad.

Nowadays many have forgot what the situation was like in those days, but we really were on the verge of forming two unions – a Slavic and a Turkic one with Tajikistan attached.

I did my uttermost to prevent this option being taken to form Turkic and Slavic unions in the territory of the former USSR. How things would have turned out today, several years on, had such unions gone ahead is simply hard to imagine.

So it was that on 13 December that the leaders of the Central Asian republics – S Niyazov, Islam Karimov, A Akayev, R. Nabiyev and I – gathered in the capital of Turkmenistan. No sooner had we sat down to talks than the Turkmen side suggested we examined the prepared project to set up a confederation of Central Asian states in response to the decisions at Belovezhskaya. A proposal was also put forward to condemn the actions of the Slavic leaders because it was already five days since 8 December, and yet neither Mikhail Gorbachev nor the Supreme Soviet had taken any action. This was being perceived as tacit support for what had happened. You can imagine what the atmosphere was like at the Ashgabad meeting. However, the "Slavs" were agitated, too. Every hour I received calls in Ashgabad from Boris Yeltsin, L Kravchuk and Mikhail Gorbachev's representatives. They realised

that our refusal to support the CIS project would lead to a difficult turn of events. A legal team worked with us until five o'clock in the morning, preparing one draft after another of our decisions.

What proved decisive in the course of the lengthy talks was the support given to my position by Islam Karimov, who had also made a very sober assessment of the situation. We insisted on starting a dialogue with the Slavic republics to avoid the USSR's break-up along the Europe- Asia axis, and laid down conditions that we would join the CIS only as constituent, and not joining members. We were then invited individually to go to Minsk and sign the Belovezhskay Accords. To avoid increasing disintegration and total legal chaos in relations between the republics and settle the future of the would-be organisation, I insisted on the next meeting between all the participating states being held in Kazakhstan. This was also our condition. We heaved a sigh of relief when the Alma-Ata Declaration was signed by the nine republics on 21 December. Subsequently, other states were also to join.

So, the Central Asian republics did everything at the time to protect our peoples from a Turko-Slavic political confrontation.

Eurasia: integration and disintegration

In the spring of 1994 the countries of the former Soviet Union were gripped by a deep social and economic crisis. As the situation developed, I became increasingly aware that the Commonwealth of Independent States was turning into a body providing for a "civilised divorce" between the member states. All attempts to turn the process towards integration were proving futile. And there were numerous reasons for this, including a morbid attitude to the very concept of integration where any integration initiative was regarded as a threat to sovereignty. Meanwhile, the political dynamic began to develop along destructive lines, not

only in respect of outdated and economically useless structures but also totally rational and mutually useful links.

What's more, political rifts in some of the Commonwealth states, an aspiration to rapid integration with the West or the East and the hope of foreign aid sidelined the pressing need to maintain the combined potential that had taken decades to develop.

Such was the situation when work began on developing the concept behind a Eurasian Union. It proved quite a difficult challenge, however, for politicians, state leaders and nations to grasp the idea. We all had to overcome a one-dimensional, black and white view of the world. What struck me about the discussions in those days was precisely such a perspective. Two concepts found themselves at odds, both predicated on the false premise of it being a case of choosing between "either integration or sovereignty". Yet they were, in fact, mutually linked and complementary rather than exclusive.

The CIS and its bodies that had been set up by 1994 were clearly not coping with the problems that had arisen and not allowing the integration potential to be fully realized. Of course, the Commonwealth was going through a development phase. But this was dragging on despite the fact that we enjoyed substantive advantages over other integration zones: a high level of integration in our economies, similar social and political structures and public attitudes, as well as multi-ethnic diversity in most of the countries involved and common age-old traditions.

All this highlighted how essential it was to proceed with the process of developing national statehood while at the same time maintaining and developing inter-state integration processes on this basis. History has shown that optimal entry into the world community can be achieved only through the combined efforts of all the Commonwealth countries using the powerful integration base that had developed all through the twentieth century.

In the course of a lengthy study of the workings of international organisations, an analysis of the situation in the CIS countries and consultations with experts, I realised the need to activate these integration processes. However, any initiative has to be prepared for a public airing and feedback.

The idea regarding the need to form a new integration organisation was first announced during my visit to Great Britain in the early spring of 1994. In my address at the Royal Institute of International Affairs, I noted that "the development of post-Soviet space is currently being determined by two trends: the formation of national statehood, on the one hand, and the CIS countries' aspiration to integration, on the other. There is now an urgent need for the actual Commonwealth of Independent States to be reformed, thereby enabling a stable and secure zone to be set up in this region, and increasing the degree of predictability in political evolution."

I explained the idea of forming a Eurasian Union in greater detail at the Lomonosov Moscow State University in March 1994. I was hoping for a positive reaction from the academic elite of Russia's oldest university, and I was not disappointed. From the very start, most of the academics supported the given initiative. And it was these academics who began broad-based discussions of the idea in the media. Naturally, comments, new suggestions and criticisms were also raised regarding the project. But I was pleased with the results because the project was now up and running.

In September 1994, a practical-scientific conference "Eurasian space: integration potential and its realization" was held in Almaty and attended by statesmen, politicians, academics and representatives of the media and general public from nearly all the Commonwealth countries. In their summary document, conference members proposed "taking steps to strengthen the CIS

integration potential, using the idea of a Eurasian state and other integration projects".

The International Movement for Democratic Reforms addressed an appeal to the Moscow conference of heads of Commonwealth member states "In favour of a Eurasian Union" which on behalf of over 60 collective participants from the independent states highlighted the need to support the initiative of President Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan: "It is already evident today that the in its current form the CIS is not fit for purpose. There is a need for new forms of consolidation, for economic, defence, diplomatic and ecological agreements to be concluded. There is a pressing need to set up combined structures enabling their activity. This is necessary for peoples who have lived side by side for centuries, supporting one another."

The Forum "Towards New Concord" organised on the initiative of the International Movement for Democratic Reforms fully supported the initiative to set up a Eurasian Union. On 18 June 1994, the Forum held the conference "A Eurasian Community: United in Diversity" which was attended by representatives of 30 parties and 60 social movements in the post-Soviet states. The conference members made the following appeal to the peoples, parliaments and heads of state: "We support the Eurasian Union project elaborated by President Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan and call up heads of states to adopt an approach to it that focuses on their own peoples' interests." Intensive work was being carried out simultaneously on the actual project "On forming a Eurasian union of states", and it was published in June 1994.

It would be no exaggeration to assert that this project occupied a central position in the discussions conducted in the CIS media throughout 1994. Most observers hailed it as "sensational", "provoking a strong resonance". One can truly say that the idea fell on fertile ground and received strong support in the most diverse circles. Subsequently, after an analysis of the initial feed-

back, a final version of the Eurasian union development project was prepared and sent to the leaders of the CIS states, delivered to the UN and included in the agenda of the October (1994) Summit of heads of CIS states in Moscow.

What proposals did I put forward at the time? The Eurasian Union (EAU) project envisaged that in the context of the improving integration of CIS countries, the project should not be viewed as the only form of unification possible. As practice has shown, the further development of the CIS countries has been delayed by their own individual inadequate internal potential which can be achieved only through the economic integration of the countries of post-Soviet space on a new market basis.

The integral economic structures we received as a legacy are continuing to deteriorate. Outdated forms of economic links are disappearing for objective reasons. At the same time, well-developed technological links that are in line with our countries' interests in the short and longer term are also being destroyed.

As all the CIS countries had announced their transition to a market economy, I considered it essential to combine efforts to reform these countries' economies. An important element in ensuring success in conducting the market reforms was to improve the CIS countries' national legislations. In this context I put forward a proposal to align the legal foundations of economic activity since the existing differences between them were becoming a serious obstacle to the integration processes in the economy.

Naturally, considerable attention in the project was devoted to security problems in the CIS. Taking account of the overall situation in the Commonwealth states and along the perimeter of our external borders at the time, I considered it necessary to make it known that post-Soviet space was an unstable zone prone to conflicts of various types as well as being susceptible to the impact of hotbeds of tension outside the CIS. Maintaining external border security and stabilising the situation in conflict regions are

reliant on the joint efforts of all interested states. The participants must have an agreed approach to the range of issues concerning defence.

Ecological security also was, and continues to be, among a number of unresolved problems of particular concern in the CIS countries. It cannot be solved in isolation either. New and, in my opinion, effective means of humanitarian cooperation were proposed at the time.

Though not rejected outright, the Eurasian union project was not properly understood at the time. So it was for two years after its publication. In general, many politicians' standpoint reminded me at the time of the old bureaucratic axiom: "On the one hand, it's no bad thing, but then nothing good may come of it..."

I continue, just as before, to be in favour of the integration of post-Soviet space. When I formulated my vision of integration nearly two years ago, I certainly did not envisage all the provisions of the project being carried through as I was well aware of all the political implications at the time. My intentions were twofold. First, to collate the most realistic proposals on the future development of integration which had to be raised at the same time in the countries of post-Soviet space. Second, to put an end to the already inexcusably protracted hiatus in the workings of CIS institutions.

In recent years the Commonwealth countries started tackling a number of problems, setting up the Inter-State Economic Committee and Customs Union. A number of trends, both negative and constructive, noted in the project have proved to be correct.

For instance, the project pointed out that the CIS could not be the only form of integration and indicated the need to establish regional and trade associations. Time has confirmed the correctness of such an approach, and we are becoming witnesses of the implementation of such forms of integration. Suffice it to mention the Customs Union of three states, and the Central

Asian Union. In my opinion, other forms are bound to appear over the coming years.

The EAU project was put together with due consideration for the fact that in the immediate future the CIS countries would not be joining developed economic blocs as equal partners. This is indeed what has happened. The hyperbole of incredible breakthroughs into economic zones with other technologies and infrastructures is perfectly obvious today. Nevertheless, our states are collaborating more and more with major international organisations in the West and the East. For instance, Kazakhstan is taking part in the work of the OSCE, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation, and others as well.

However, this does not prevent us from being in favour of the integration of post-Soviet space and viewing it as a priority aim. I still consider any constructive integration, not of the declarative kind, would be predicated on the platform whose design is set out in the EAU project.

Why am I sure of this? The impetus given to it is already bearing fruit today. Three other countries will shortly be joining the Customs Union. At the start of 1996, Russia removed all customs barriers on its border with Kazakhstan. We, incidentally, had done the same six months earlier. I must note the increase in commodity circulation for this period between Kazakhstan and Russia, and also between Kazakhstan and Belorus. The Inter-State Economic Committee is making its presence felt more. Also ongoing is the process of setting up integration "hubs" on a regional basis, in particularly, in Central Asia. The significance of nine countries signing the Agreement on collective security and a raft of bilateral agreements cannot be overstated. For example, the Russia-Kazakhstan agreement on a simplified approach to citizenship also has practical potential similar to that of the Eurasian project.

However, the inexorable passing of time is bringing new political and economic challenges with it.

These include a reduction in the mutual dependence of structures within national economics, the emergence of autonomous and often diametrically opposed economic interests, various types of economic realignments significantly altering the political landscape, a growing dichotomy in assessments of cultural values and, in broader terms, along civilisation lines.

Let us recall the events of the early 90s. The CIS republics kept hoping until the very last moment they could retain the rouble zone. We had got into a very complex economic situation just then, what with the spiralling inflation of the new national currencies, insufficient knowledge of macroeconomic stabilisation methods, a crippled industry, a lack of clarity in privatisation programmes, unprecedented social tension and severed links. Similar problems were facing all the Commonwealth states at the time.

But in those days we preferred to go our own ways. Despite immense added complications, a succession of trials and errors, and frequent isolation, most of the CIS countries got through the lowest point of the economic recession and mastered the tools of financial stabilisation. Industrial policy was developed and the standard of commodities in the market improved. In such a complex process new partners and economic interests were bound to emerge. These days the economic structure of post-Soviet space is significantly less integrated.

The specific nature of the reform in various countries had a far-reaching impact on the legislation in many areas, particularly in the economic sphere. Legal integration became substantively more complex. Political dynamics in the CIS countries are also developing in diverse directions.

Not to notice these processes is once again to bury one's head in the sand. It would be even greater political insanity to

attempt to "overcome" these objective trends through sheer will power. But are present-day conditions making a new incentive toward integration impossible? No, I am sure they are not.

However, before outlining a new integration strategy, I would first like to discuss several integration myths that have recently been bandied about. Despite certain dramatic changes that have occurred in social awareness, often due to objective reasons, the political elites' stereotypes of integration are just as narrow as before. They can be divided more or less into three categories: national-traditionalist, pro-restoration and liberal. As for the romantic, liberal rose-tinted notion of an accelerated entry into mainstream Europe or Asia, the answer is simply an unequivocal "we're not wanted there". It will be a lengthy process and not one without prospects, but there is no point in forcing matters or idealising partners in the developed world. Unfortunately, these naive approaches have played their own negative role by frequently setting inappropriate priorities.

National traditionalist ways of solving problems are emerging from emotionally understandable but politically weak, erroneous ideas. What is a source of inspiration, paradoxical as it may seem, for some of the intelligentsia, on the one hand, and the most marginal sector of society, on the other, is predicated on two false premises.

First, there is the postulate of the strategic balance that was destroyed back in the late 80s. Any thoughts regarding the use of force are five years too late.

Second, real national interest, including political interest, must be based on a sober assessment of the geopolitical reality of the new hierarchy of forces in the world, and it is time this was understood. In my opinion, it is more important for us all to sort out the strategic problems of national security than seek out petty potential conflicts in relations between countries that are

friendly with us. Emotions, national ones included, are not that helpful where integration is concerned.

For all its apparent effectiveness, the social restoration model of integration is based on substituting one thesis for another. A certain penchant for "socialising economic policy" is inevitable. But it should not be confused with re-establishing the former statehood. Incidentally, the "Left Renaissance" in Eastern Europe is quite relaxed about maintaining the foreign policy of more liberal precursors. So, it is imperative to analyse the situation and not substitute a socio-economic model for a geopolitical one. The most reputable politicians left of centre in the CIS countries are aware of this.

In my opinion, both the political and intellectual elites have an insufficiently realistic understanding of the prospects for integration and the complexities involved. What's more, a realistic assessment of what is happening enables one to make a number of fundamental conclusions.

First, Integration of all the post-Soviet space into a more constructive formation than the CIS in the near future is problematic. The idea of two-speed and multi-tiered integration set out in the EAU project and formation of original "integration centres" are both clearly of relevance today. It is a question of adopting another strategy – instead of going for integration that is full-on, standardised and therefore doomed to failure, taking a more logical course in geographic terms and placing more emphasis on the choice of spheres for coordinating policy. Take, for instance, recent *perestroika* which was conducted by the central government in a "one-fits-all" manner with no account taken of the republics' regional, national, economic, social and political special features – it showed up the lack of prospects of a unified approach.

A unified approach does not allow for the interests of our states to be accounted for, especially as we have already passed a

certain stage in the development of our own statehood and formation of new economic relations and vectors of foreign policy. What's more, in recent years the countries of the former Soviet Union have grown even further apart where the main indices of economic growth are concerned. And to speak of any kind of universal templates for unification in these conditions means to objectively undermine what we have achieved in our economic reforms. There is no need to fear the emergence of a group of states that will overtake other countries in development terms. World history has, on the contrary, demonstrated that in any integration association there are always leaders pointing the way to the other countries following on behind.

Consequently, the idea of two-speed, multi-tiered integration allows for more adequate account to be taken of national interests and Commonwealth interests as a whole.

What is essential to define clearly is that the integration centre must be made up of countries with quite similar types of economic reforms and living standards. Nobody these days is prepared to allocate considerable resources to bridge the social and economic gap. There are a whole plethora of internal problems and simply no substantial funding available to help the stragglers. But it is imperative we find ways of addressing this predicament as well.

An integration centre may start developing today through the three-member customs union. Painstaking work is required here, in particular, in terms of aligning taxation laws. It is high time we moved from politicised to pragmatic priorities. The Customs Union which may form the basis of a new approach to integration cannot be expanded on the basis of political priorities. It has to be built on the economic interests of all its members.

My second conclusion is the gravest dangers to real integration are the calls for, and, especially, the attempts at coercive reintegration. It is impossible to imagine what we call "post-Soviet

space" as some kind of phoenix that is going to rise again from the ashes. Let me give an ecological example. The destruction of the Aral Sea could be ascribed not only to anthropogenic causes but also to the fact that the hub of the industrial activity there was located at the low point of the sea-level's natural oscillation. At any rate, this was one of the hypotheses.

What happened in the territory of the former USSR was the superimposition of two linked but simultaneously autonomous processes – the internal crisis of the social system and fundamental geo-economic, geo-cultural, geo-technological and, finally, geopolitical advances. If the problem had consisted, for example, solely of an internal crisis of the system, it would have been correct to view post-Soviet space as a colossus conserved in time. But it isn't like that: this space is already too deeply fragmented.

That's why notions of reintegration through the use of force make for a nostalgic model that would result in considerable bloodshed to set up a temporary utopia but certainly no stable construct.

Effective integration on the threshold of the twenty-first century has to do, first and foremost, with means of economic and cultural influence. It is extremely risky to substitute them for superficially effective but outmoded means.

A third conclusion is that a clear strategy and real aims are essential. Maximum aims must be seen extremely clearly and if they diverge for fundamental reasons, there is no need for empty slogans about integration. I regard a real integration association as a definite aim at present – in the form of an integral market, integral in the sense of there being no technical or taxation borders posing a barrier to the free movement of commodities, capital and workforces. Are we ready or not for such an extremely clear aim? We need to decide this right now instead of bandying eloquent slogans about our glorious past. How ready are individual

states for a common market? How will it impact on competitive national economies, on living standards and will it be compatible with state security? These are the questions that answers need to be found for.

Another essential condition for real integration is to recognise the interaction of the Commonwealth states as a priority direction in foreign policy. This priority has to be demonstrated in practical measures to develop systems unifying economic, cultural and political structures rather than in political campaigns benefiting individual states.

This gives rise to a fundamental question regarding the choice of criteria or groups of criteria determining the features and direction of post-Soviet integration in the immediate future. So far there has been no consensus regarding ways of interpreting this issue.

With such a situation in the background, slogans to restore the USSR that present a threat to national sovereignty are driving our countries even further apart. Whether the conservative forces like it or not, sovereignty is a reality, and none of the states is going to give it up. Coercive integration may drastically change our states' foreign policy reference points and direct the vector of integration efforts outside CIS space. The genuine supporters of integration who are not using this idea as a means of political advertising are aware today that the process of civilised, progressive integration must develop in parallel and facilitate the consolidation of states' sovereignty. Such integration is synonymous with stability and security. This can be seen in the past experiences of Europe, North America and South-East Asia.

A key condition to achieving integration is acknowledging the political institutions that have been formed in the various states. It goes without saying, there are certain demands of the late twentieth century, common to all civilisations that are to be applied even to the most heinous political regimes. However,

it is fundamentally important to acknowledge the specific features of the political system in every country potentially forming an association of integrated states. After all, it is regarded as no obstacle by anyone in the European Union that the countries integrating are as diverse as archetypal presidential republics and classic parliamentary republics. Yet there are claims that some political regimes are too diverse to join together. This is fundamentally wrong. What's more, it is impossible not to notice the clearly defined general trend in the territory of the former USSR over recent years to form strong presidential republics. One can argue at length about whether this is a good or a bad thing, but the processes' evident synchronicity point to common ground in a political context despite all national and regional variations.

Another constructive precondition of integration is unequivocal recognition of the territorial integrity of established borders. This has been prey to various political speculations, historical myths and projects often of an offensive nature for various nations. At the same time, those in favour of redrawing the borders simply cannot understand the simple maxim: when you start a fire at your neighbour's, check in which way the wind is blowing. Internal territorial integrity is substantially more important for post-Soviet countries today than blustering calls to seize other countries' territories. Obviously, a stable, neighbourly situation on external borders chimes in with the internal situation. To assume the contrary is to see things upside down. Territorial integrity is not a symbolic issue in historic terms: it is a question of the states' survival, even when it comes to the smallest in post-Soviet space. And making quips about this even when it is quite apparent pre-election rhetoric is like planting a bomb with a long-delay fuse under one's own statehood.

I favour a realistic approach to integration. However, being realistic is not the same as being pessimistic. Yes, one must not idealise the situation and forcibly change the new realities. On

the other hand, neither must one sit on the sidelines, passively watching time go by. Without the political will there can be no integration.

The most powerful integrated union in Europe has also encountered difficulties in the course of its development. At Schuman Day celebrations one year, I remember one of the European ambassadors working in Kazakhstan at the time coming up with some interesting figures. There was a gap of eight years between French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman's declaration on 9 May 1950, proposing the establishment of a Franco-German association and the Treaty of Rome signed by six states establishing the European Economic Union on 25 March 1957. And the Maastricht Treaty on the establishment of the European Union was signed 25 years later, on 7 February 1992. However, there was one pivotal moment in the long and carefully planned history of this integration. On 4 April 1951, one of the theorists of the European Community, Jean Monnet, met with Conrad Adenauder and succeeded in convincing him of how essential the principle of equality was in the community.

One learns not only from the mistakes of others but also from their successes. Integration that is not based on the principle of equality has no future. Integration based on equality, free will and pragmatic interest will give Eurasia the future it deserves, and only then will it be able to become a global player in the world economy and politics of the twenty-first century.

CHAPTER 2

DEFINING THE WAY

...We regard a period of time primarily as a hidden promise of what the future will bring...
And, indeed, new signs of life have started emerging all over the place in eras once notorious for being stagnant and dead, and everything, it would seem, was aspiring toward perfection in the future. However, in our search for burgeoning new life we slightly forget that in history, just as in nature, dying and regeneration have followed one another since the beginnings of time. Old forms of culture die at the same time and on the same soil as new shoots find food for growth.

Johan Huizinga

In search of universal remedies

Travelling back in time, we can clearly see there has always been some group of states facing an important, testing time during which the very foundations of their lives have undergone change. An actual awareness of the need for change and the posing of such a problem had global consequences not only for them but for the whole of humanity as well. The world has been faced with this problem more than once during the course of the twentieth century.

The twentieth century has been about accepting responsibility for choices. More than once, Europe has had to choose between different options: keeping colonial possessions, the legacies of the Victorian age, or transferring to new types of relations with the rest of the world; fascism or liberal democracy; keeping industrial civilisation or transferring to a qualitatively new state.

For post-colonial countries, this range of choices has been even wider. They have had to choose between socialism and capitalism, authoritarianism and democracy, a secular or religious statehood, traditionalism or modernisation. I shall not go into all the versions of these models and full range of them these states presented to the world.

Of all the processes in this range, the concept of "modernisation" seems to me to most faithfully reflect those occurring in the most diverse states of the world. However, there is a definite flaw to this concept – it is applied indiscriminately to all glaringly dissimilar societies and groups.

The term "modernisation" became widespread because of the post-colonial countries' need in the 1960s to choose a development model. Some hundred young states appeared simultaneously in the world after liberating themselves from colonial dependence. Two modernisation scenarios were available at the time – the Soviet and Western, by and large, the result of the

competitive conditions that existed between the two systems. At a time of fierce hostility these two types of development were virtually foisted on the liberated states by various means.

However, both of these types of modernisation are exceedingly ill-defined. Let us take a look at the Western type that is so popular nowadays. The idea consisted, first and foremost, of recognising universal models. In other words, global development was regarded as a kind of ladder with a group of countries on each rung – first the poorly developed, and then the medium-developed, and then the highly developed. And the third- and second-ranked countries were made to develop along the same lines as the highly developed ones had followed previously. Modernisation can literally be understood as making modern in appearance or behaviour, implementing any measures in keeping with modern norms and standards.

From the perspective of this type of modernisation, the only countries that can be considered as modern are those in the Western European or North American zones, and also a small group of countries in South-East Asia, Latin America and individual Central European states that have undergone rapid reforms. It is not difficult to see that this approach rises above civilisation differences and makes a universal principle of the "normative catalyst", first and foremost in the religious consciousness that emerged in the Protestant countries of Europe back in the days of the Lutheran Reformation. This huge advance had fundamental significance for all the history that came after, but its role should not be exaggerated.

The theory of modernisation is deeply linked with the understanding of development, progress and rationality that was evolved over two centuries by the part of the planet which underwent the most substantial capitalisation – the north and west of the European continent. What's more, historians often overlook an obvious but important fact. During the very first years

after the collapse of the colonial empires the media magnates, the powers that be, the human resources executives of these countries simply refused to brook another interpretation or development model for any of the new independent states. This development model – this sketchily understood modernisation – began to be hailed as the only means of salvation for states, many of which were still at a tribal mind-set level. We should also take account of the existence of an alternative socialist model advocated in those days by the other half of humanity. Modernisation should not be viewed as it sometimes is by mindless liberals. It is not a divine revelation but a historically, culturally and geographically conditioned working model that can have serious practical flaws.

So what does the "pure theory of modernisation" really mean? The purity of the theory here has nothing to do with its definition in physical, natural sciences but rather in practical policy terms. Such naivety may be acceptable for some inexperienced youngster but certainly not for the seasoned academics claiming to explain centuries-long transformations and at times social changes as well.

Essentially, modernisation aims can be summed up in a series of key propositions.

In economic terms, these primarily consist of forming a diversified market system, radically altering the correlation of those employed in the agricultural and industrial sectors, mass urbanisation, the functioning of a financial and monetary environment independent of direct government regulation, a principal change to the manufacturing technology base and the broad development of the mechanised forms of labour and development of the economy's tertiary sector – the service industry.

In the political domain, modernisation presupposes, first and foremost, realizing two objectives: forming a civil society and real national institutions of state independence.

It is evident, however, that there are, first, some contradictions between them, and, second, there is certainly no universal formula for achieving either the first or second objective. This fundamentally undermines one of the main theses of the "pure theory of modernisation" – its claim to be universally applicable.

Finally, the social and cultural aspects of modernisation in its classic form were of a clearly anti-traditionalist character, though, undoubtedly, there are clearly defined positive directions to cultural modernisation. These include universal literacy, secular-based values, diversity of ideas and freedom of speech, and a significant broadening of individual liberties and personal freedoms. Yet pure cultural modernisation also turned out to be a "Trojan horse" for bringing many traditional civilisations up to date.

So what does this mean for countries like Kazakhstan, making their first steps after gaining state independence?

All presidents of the Commonwealth's independent states speak extensively about the logic of the reforms, consciously or unconsciously implying one or other version of modernisation. To start with, at the turn of the 90s, the period of learning and euphoria made us, undoubtedly, listen to the advice of numerous foreign experts. Nowadays this advice is often also very practical, especially in the economic sphere. And so in no way do I wish to denigrate the role of foreign experts, including those who worked in Kazakhstan in the first years of independence and made a truly invaluable contribution to the establishment of a market infrastructure.

However, it has become clear over time that a development strategy has to be developed through one's own efforts, taking account only of national state specifics, special features of political history, culture and post-Soviet stereotypes, ethnic traditions and much else that I would call – for the sake of brevity rather than clarity – civilisation and cultural background.

It has been very typical of numerous foreign experts to underestimate these cultural and civilisation factors in their analysis of developments in Kazakhstan and most of the events in the post-Soviet states as well. I am deeply convinced that in its pure form, modernisation, that is to say the ideal economic, political and cultural model, will not come about in the CIS countries. And the reasons for this are numerous. The sooner we understand this, the clearer our future prospects will be.

Instead of a global modernising project that is considerably outdated and elaborated certainly not with the post-Soviet countries in view, I would suggest the term "adapted modernisation". And by this I mean adapted to traditional institutions, ethno-cultural special features, the region's political history, the state's real position in geo-political, geo-economic and geo-cultural structures.

It is clear that without modernisation in all spheres of life, we are doomed to be eternally lagging behind in historical terms. That is why modernisation is needed but must be adapted to our needs.

Why is adaptation needed? First and foremost, because a series of modernising reforms were already carried through in our country some time ago. Kazakhstan is primarily an urbanised society with a quite highly developed industrial complex, mass-scale mechanised forms of labour, a 100 per cent literate population, and education, science, culture and healthcare systems that are more modern than in most developing countries. There is no doubt that the secular character of the state established over recent years, the freedom of the press, the formation of a multi-party system and elements of a civil society whose emergence is linked with modern history – all this makes us radically different from classic post-colonial countries.

As far as terms are concerned, I am convinced that the concept of "colonialism" when applied to the Soviet context does

not reflect the nature of the relations of those years, although the regions were strictly subordinated to Moscow. An original type of modernising project was carried through in the territory of the former USSR. And so many elements of pure modernisation were already achieved long ago.

What makes such a type of modernisation qualitatively distinct is the lack of any market infrastructure, institutional advances in terms of the economic behaviour of millions of people, intensive development of the financial sphere and a favourable investment climate. Today, however, Kazakhstan is doing its utmost to lay the foundations of a market economy.

I am deeply aware of the social cost of these modernising changes. Quite a lot has already been said about the social consequences of the Stalinist type of modernisation in Kazakhstan, along with the other republics of the former USSR. The settling of the nomadic tribes of Kazakhs in the 30s alone resulted in millions of casualties and refugees abroad. However, as well as searching for mistakes in the past, one should also find the right way out of the situation caused by past policies.

And the fate of modernisation today in all post-Soviet space is being determined not so much by political will and economic solutions as by an ability to socially adapt to it. Kazakhstan has a demanding social structure in population terms. For instance, there are nearly three million pensioners living in the republic. The need to rationalise the substantial social system catered for in state and local budgets, which has become an inherent feature of social consciousness and an attribute of our life and which we will be dealing with for some time to come, is drastically reducing people's ability to adapt.

On the other hand, economically justified public spending cuts are drastically limiting the country's strategic potential. Investment cuts in society's cultural capital are inexorably resulting in a decline in the country's intellectual and cultural potential,

The unity of three nations.
Ordabasy. May, 1993

The native steppe

Visit to Samarkand.
January, 1994

Celebration of Nauryz

With miners from Zhezkazgan

Awarding B. Momyshuly's family with the Gold Star
of the Hero of Soviet Union.
December 30, 1990

Arrival of L. Brezhnev to the 60th anniversary
of the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic's formation.
Almaty. August, 1980

At the native aul

With M. Gorbachev in Kokshetau.
May, 1991

At the First Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR

With N. Ryzhkov in Karachaganak.
December, 1986

and thus its modernising abilities. This once again proves that the formulas of classic modernisation cannot be followed literally.

In my opinion, in its ideal form modernisation should rely on the principle of effectiveness. But there are different types of effectiveness. The effectiveness of investing in a speculative deal, the construction of a house or in creating new technology – these are all fundamentally different if only in recoupment terms. However, it is not just about different types of effectiveness. It also concerns the fact that some effective solutions are fundamentally unacceptable because they can brutally breach traditional and deep-rooted national ideals. Nor can one view the situation purely in economic terms. Let us recall the sad results of the shah's modernisation in Iran which came up against powerful resistance from the fundamental values of a traditional society.

I suggest that in the first four years or so of independence many of the CIS countries' leaders realised that the challenge lies not only in the social cost of the reforms. Probably, most of my colleagues will agree that their peoples had a really bumpy ride during the attempt to carry through purely political modernisation. Tanks had to be called out in some places and hundreds of thousands were killed, injured or left homeless in others. Nobody will ever persuade me that at the end of the twentieth century the stomachs of pregnant women have to be slit open in the name of any idea. There is no such idea! Nobody will persuade me of the need to wreck millions of people's lives just to safeguard the fundamental principles of an experiment. And when I read the lofty arguments of some esteemed politician at "a safe distance" and I know that just one ill-considered decision may cause bloodshed, I definitely prefer commonsense to any wonderful-sounding theory.

A FALSE START IN LIBERAL DEMOCRACY

The end of the twentieth century will go down in history not only for the break-up of the Soviet Union or destruction of the old system. A global upheaval is under way for an entire group of new states towards a modern model of a socio-political and economic order. Notwithstanding all the difficulties, errors and miscalculations that have been very serious on occasion, the formation of new independent states has been a catalyst for extensive constructive work.

I do not agree with those "revolutionary romantics" who interpret the process of implementing innovations in an oversimplified manner. Nothing bears fruit at once. They attribute many of the disappointments regarding the slowness of change to people's passivity. They have even gone as far as to assert that our people do not deserve democracy or understand it. But what I want to ask these pessimists is who are we conducting these reforms for? Who should be implementing them? And why are people not becoming proactive in seeing the reforms carried through?

Why, because ordinary people regard them merely as an instrument of change and not as an active constructive force. If by no means everyone is enjoying a better living standard, if progress has not been made in giant leaps, as the populists promised, then the blame for all these unfulfilled promises is apportioned even ahead of time to the people. And in this contradiction lies the explanation for the unpopularity of many of the "guardians" of democracy. In my opinion, the masses today are not in the least passive. They are simply critical of the politicians who mostly fossilised back in August 1991. And that, as is well known, was a period which saw the destruction of the old system, a period of confrontation and the demarcation of political forces. However, we are now in a time of consolidation and construction, a time of

concrete action when even a slight improvement in people's lives is much more important than loads of slogans.

* * *

Populist ideology acquired a broad support base in a number of CIS states. In actual fact, though, populist regimes, with rare and very short-lived exceptions, are a product of third world countries. The term "populism" was originally coined in the USA in the late nineteenth century. It apparently referred to the movements of farmers, small entrepreneurs, the urban and rural proletariat's opposition to major capital, especially in the American Mid West. After the Second World War, however, this term began to refer to regimes and leaders of new independent third world countries that were trying to modernise their traditional societies by, for instance, reducing the influence of clan and tribal structures while not adopting socialist ideologies at the same time.

The formation of new states required the broad masses to be involved in political activity. It is the scale of the masses' political participation that requires a certain amount of pluralism. Populist regimes are in many ways associated with an opposition to the traditionalist attitudes that emphasise loyalty to the existing political structures.

No region of the former USSR avoided the impact of such attitudes. The total collapse of union structures became possible as a result of a most powerful wave of populism which was widely used by national politicians in the Baltic republics, the Caucasus, Central Asia and Moldova, and later on by politicians in the other republics. However, another nuance of populism must not be overlooked either – its anti-traditionalist direction. The flurries of political activity in traditionally tranquil regions, along with objective reasons, are due to the efficacy of populist movements.

Another specific feature of populist regimes is instability. By raising people's high expectations with initial successes, popu-

lism encounters the problem of differentiating the interests of the groups supporting it at later stages. In principle, populism may develop into a liberal democratic regime, but this is possible when there are strong democratic traditions and no powerful ethnic, cultural and religious tensions. A number of CIS regions taken over by populist movements are, indeed, facing extremely grave cultural and regional, national and social tensions and have no deep-rooted democratic traditions. This is actually leading to an increase in authoritarianism as a viable means of resolving these differences.

Virtually all populist movements are based on a special type of leadership. Standing at the head of these movements is a charismatic leader. Eventually this type of leadership develops into a formal legitimized leadership linked with an official post. Another outcome is the leader's political or even physical demise which spells the end for the movement. To avoid this happening, populist leaders are changing this type of leadership. This is dictated by the need to stabilise the political regime and increased opposition. However, the actual change in the type of political leadership is not as important as the evolution of the political regime as a whole linked with it. A populist ideology cannot last for long in such a trouble-ridden society.

Our people used to always look forward to a bright future. The Bolsheviks used to assert that the surplus-appropriation system and collectivisation were the ways to build socialism within about a decade. Nikita Khrushchev used to assert that in 1980 we would be living under communism. Leonid Brezhnev then claimed that we were already living in a period of developed socialism. Mikhail Gorbachev used to assert that by the year 2000 every family would be living in a separate apartment and by the early 90s Soviet machine-building would be on a par with its American, Japanese and German counterparts. The democrats of the first wave tried to prove that if the Soviet Union were to

adopt a radical economic programme, by the year 2000 it would rank among the world's top economic leaders. What came of all these promises, we know only too well.

If one is to conduct economic reforms that will inevitably entail a decline in a country's social living standards, one has to assume responsibility for this deterioration in the social situation. But Moscow did not wish to. I recall the headache Moscow caused us with its idea for a nationwide discussion of the "pricing reforms" (in other words, price increases). Naturally, only someone with a screw loose would vote for a price increase. But Moscow was insisting on "nationwide" support. In view of the complete absurdity of the situation, I proposed either not discussing this issue at all or turning it into a nationwide referendum on pricing reform. But Moscow insisted on a discussion in work collectives and regional and district soviets. It goes without saying, the result of this "nationwide discussion" had been decided in advance. So much for all the discussions about democracy.

I am convinced that the populism of those in power is just as dangerous as the populism of those in opposition. Nobody believes in wonderful-sounding and easy-to-implement programmes any more. But there are still those who turn politics into a game by undermining its true aims – concern for people, society and the country.

Ultimately, the era of radical change yet again highlighted the short lifespan of political utopias, whatever form they took – socialist, liberal, or national. For instance, many of the then USSR leaders simply could not comprehend that in order for machine-building to develop at least as fast as its Western counterparts, machinery manufacturing for the machine-building industry had to develop twice as fast.

The concept "shock therapy" was based on the rapid introduction of a free market relations and pricing regime. Suffice it to say that when it came to freeing prices, the plan was to approxi-

mately triple them. In actual fact, they immediately increased 10-12 times over. And despite the fact that it was clear right from the start that economists had underestimated them by 400 per cent, the given model continued to be implemented. I consider it was then that the seeds of the present-day mistrust for changes were sown.

In no way am I casting doubt on the correctness of the chosen course to liberalise the economy. But every reform must be carefully worked out and thought through. The reforms will only be beneficial when there is an elaborated strategy, rather than just passing fads for fashionable theories.

In Kazakhstan we now have the opportunity to direct the course of the reforms ourselves. This is all because we have started designing our own economic system. We are in charge of our own natural resources and finances. We used not to be able to do so. In the past we were forced to repeat other people's mistakes. I have spoken only about this in my public addresses.

Society has to pay a high price because of those in power who value only its superficial attributes. A real politician has to have a combination of at least three qualities: an academic education, practical experience of working in the economy, a sense of responsibility for his decisions. It is not enough these days merely to have a knowledge of people and industrial experience. A politician has to be well versed in modern social theory, understand all the finer points of the intended reforms and not just blindly follow his advisors. The politicians of the new wave who cannot be bothered to do their own research are making a big mistake. Time is rushing by at such a rate nowadays that knowledge acquired sometime in the past is no longer sufficient. In my opinion, the CIS states that opted for the simplest type of reforms are the ones now experiencing the most economic difficulties.

The state is us

My main ideas regarding Kazakhstan's future statehood were formed even earlier than 1991. I thought about Kazakhstan's place within the federation of sovereign states. All my endeavours were focused on it, especially as considerable work was being carried out on signing the new union treaty. After August 1991, however, history took yet another sweeping turn. It was imperative then to update the plans with due regard for the change in circumstances.

Contemporary observers are inclined to judge political regimes by the challenges they have to address. And the challenges facing Kazakhstan were massive. They included developing its statehood, and transferring from one economic system to another, developing the democratisation process, maintaining and strengthening social and inter-ethnic stability, working out a foreign policy course and developing integration processes and stabilisation in the CIS space.

The process of building real statehood pursued by the former republics of the USSR was not started from scratch. It remained a popular aspiration even in Soviet times. A great many examples can be cited from the history of the Soviet peoples seeking to re-establish their statehood, despite the repressions meted out to them.

In the Soviet period we saw yet again that the setting up of real national statehood depended on national interests taking priority over class ones. The administration's attempts to permeate all spheres of life with the moral code of "a new historic community – the Soviet people" failed to supplant people's national feelings, or destroy their sense of ethnic identity. Quite simply, a person as soon as he is born and hears his first lullaby, no matter where he comes from, starts feeling he's Kazakh, Russian, Ukrainian, Georgian, Uzbek... And it is impossible to erase this feeling,

no matter how much brainwashing you subject a person to. It is unlikely anyone can disagree with this. Yes, we all felt we were citizens of a great power, but everyone felt differently. Everyone understood perfectly well that the Soviet nations were divided into "elder" and "younger" brothers, and the republics were at different levels of social and economic development, and there was mistrust of the republics' bodies, and a second secretary was ever present as the CPSU Central Committee's "watchful eye".

The system's ideological collapse that coincided with Gorbachev's *perestroika* resulted in an upsurge of national ideas. At the same time, nations began to idealise their pre-revolutionary past.

When Mikhail Gorbachev relaxed the totalitarian regime's grip, ethnic interests began to emerge with unprecedented force. Numerous national movements cropped up. Nations started intensively rebuilding their self-awareness, their distinctness from other members of the community of the "Soviet people". Attributes of statehood that had almost perished were revived and acquired real substance as the power and authority of Moscow diminished.

Having failed in their attempts to ignite world revolution, the Bolsheviks then realised the need to build socialism with a national state framework. The original idea of setting up a world republic of Soviets, having come up against the nationalities issue, made such a switch necessary. It is not fortuitous that during the civil war the decision was taken to form and restore national statehood in the form of Soviet republics. And such a trend was supported by the nations and in no small degree enabled a base to be formed to support the Communist regime. Even the gradual formalising of the USSR's federal system and transition to a real unitary system failed to crush the idea of national statehood. All attempts to undermine the national state structure were met with considerable resistance. So it was when German autonomy in the

Volga Region was abolished. So it was, too, in Kazakhstan when Nikita Khrushchev tried to set up a virgin land region, and Leonid Brezhnev – a German autonomy. The abolition of even formal statehood was impossible in those conditions as it resulted in a serious escalation in tensions. And this was well understood by the ruling regime. Neither is it fortuitous that during *perestroika* the distribution of power between Moscow and the republics became a key issue. Even in a socially homogeneous society the national idea proved much stronger than the class one. The abolition of the Soviet Union naturally resulted in borders being established along those already existing.

Inevitably, the republics have certain claims on each another caused by a series of problems that have been left us as a legacy. But one has to see the main issue here – the concept of "a new historic community of people, the Soviet people" that was propagandised over a long period of time concealed a deeper, historically determined, growing idea of restoring national statehood. A national state sense of identity, a linguistic, cultural and territorial community, which, what's more, had retained at least formal signs of statehood, lived on in mass consciousness. The idea of reviving statehood underwent a series of substantial changes – from economic sovereignty within the union framework to the need for changes in the principles governing relations between Moscow and the republics, and then to the idea of real federalism, and later, confederation. Naturally, the break-up of the Soviet Union was the logical continuation of this process against the backdrop of a sharp decline in Moscow's authority and the abolition of the Communist Party, the former USSR's natural mainstay.

Unlike other regions of the globe, the break-up of the USSR resulted in the formation of states that were neither principally new nor lacking foundations, and in the revival of their historically deep-rooted statehood that they had previously lost. What

we can say is that a complex, all-embracing process took place, comprising not only the break-up of the USSR but also the restoration of statehood and its legitimisation.

I have already mentioned that the national idea in the twentieth century proved stronger than the class one. There are numerous examples of this. There were particularly strong upsurges of national feeling during times of tribulation and triumph. In his essay "The English" George Orwell wrote: "The difficult days of 1940 clearly showed that the sense of national solidarity in Britain was stronger than class antagonisms. As for the truth in the claim 'the proletariat does not have a homeland', 1940 would have been a good time to prove it. Yet then class feelings were put on a back-burner, to reappear only when the imminent threat was over."

As well as having positive connotations, this notion, on the contrary, also implies a rejection of other ethnic groups within the population. The transformation of the national idea into one of national exclusivity is detrimental for the original ethnic group. The restoration of national state identity in the CIS countries has not always been a peaceful process. Numerous re-divisions of the former USSR's territory have made it more difficult to maintain territorial integrity and national statehood to suit each ethnic group. The loss of even a small part of national territory is not only a geographical consequence of political events, it entails even deeper repercussions such as the denigration of a national sense of identity. It is not only about the inviolability of territory as such but to a greater, and even defining, extent, its preservation as a symbol of national cohesion.

The national revival accompanying the restoration of statehood does not always go smoothly. What's more, it is precisely at this stage that many states that have failed to identify in time the positive and negative sources responsible for the surge in ethnicity in the consciousness and have become the arena of long and

drawn-out wars. Take, for example, the former Yugoslavia, Algeria, modern-day Afghanistan and many of the African states.

We are encountering a new phenomenon – ethno-populism. Academics studying ethnic problems today consider it to be a specific result of the past two centuries. But, in my opinion, ethno-populism is as old as the world itself. And its manifestations are particularly characteristic of periods witnessing declining empires, changes in political regimes and political stagnation.

As Vaclav Havel observed quite shrewdly in this context: "For many decades the world will be moving towards a state of balance. The explosion of nationalism, populism, terrorism and constitutional crises and so on – all this has to do with the general shock experienced by society – the shock of liberty".

The populists are trying to destroy the political dividends by whatever means available, including speculating on what people hold dearest. They use people's receptiveness to generous pledges and catchy slogans, and promise the people easy solutions to society's most complex problems. And they often resort to the same means: stirring up antagonisms against other nations and proving their own exclusivity. However, ethno-populism is not only a pustule on the body of democratic society, it is more like a virus that has to be constantly fought. Depending on the circumstances, it changes its form and will stick with us as we go about democratising society and further improving our statehood. The most effective way of fighting this evil is not even to increase administrative and ideological intervention but to constantly work on the quality of human resources. The nearer we come to a rule of law state, the more Kazakhstanis will feel like fully-fledged, public-spirited citizens of our country, and less like a feeding ground for the ethno-populism virus.

Essentially, the republics of the former USSR have already resolved the issue involving the legitimacy of setting up independent states. The world community has no problem regarding

this either. The first problems we all encountered had to do with giving real substance to sovereignty and solving national security problems. In the first instance, it was a question not of defending any development model or socio-political system but of statehood in general.

In the initial period, all Kazakhstan's state administration bodies were engaged in achieving this objective. But there was another question – which power institutions were to be relied on?

In those days the command administrative system was rightly facing fierce criticism. Though it does, of course, restrict economic and other freedoms, and resists innovations, it is very effective in extreme situations. There was no revolutionary overthrow of the power structure in Kazakhstan. The system of government gradually altered in keeping with the progress and character of the reforms.

I want to hail the evolutionary manner in which statehood was acquired as a great achievement. As de Tocqueville once commented in his work *The Old Regime and the Revolution*: "Revolution, after destroying political institutions, sets about destroying civil order, and after it has finished with the laws, its revises rights, customs and even language... After destroying the government, it shakes the very foundations of society and, evidently, is then finally ready to take on God Himself."

We avoided radically rejecting and destroying the administrative system of governing the economy and society until some kind of replacement was found for it. This, arguably, is one of the main reasons for Kazakhstan's economic and political stability.

Efforts to maintain the state machinery are being co-ordinated with others to lay the foundations of democratic development. After all, democracy is not only about having the right to engage in opposition activity but also the form of the state, and the climate of social and political life. One can cite instances

when the destruction of old regimes and paralysis of the state machinery created favourable conditions for increased separatism, regionalism, religious and national intolerance and crime. The state apparatus in these conditions remains the only guarantee of stability.

As our sovereignty was consolidated, we found ourselves facing another issue, that of defining the character of our statehood. It was clear that the existing system was not going to continue for long. In 1990-91, a symbiosis came about as a result of the transition from one system to another: presidential power was exercised in tandem with that of the Communist Party and soviets. There was a similar set-up in the country's economy.

Let me cite a clear example of how we had to address key issues literally *ad hoc*. When the national currency was introduced, things turned out quite differently from what we had planned for, basing our calculations on inter-state agreements.

I tried to retain the rouble zone. I had two reasons for doing so. First, doing away with the rouble zone would mean accelerating the delimitation process with the CIS countries. Back in 1990, Mikhail Gorbachev had refused to sign a presidential decree halting the resolution of the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation on the establishment of a separate monetary and financial system. However, putting an end to the monetary and financial system had signified the regime's demise. Second, frankly speaking, we were not ready.

As we had to anticipate any outcome, we started making preparations for the introduction of our own national currency. In 1992, all prices were freed in Russia, and it was then we made our first move. I signed a totally secret decree to start the preparations for our national currency. Everyone involved had to sign confidentiality agreements. The currency's design was entrusted to a group of artists headed by Timur Suleimenov.

Work on introducing the national currency entailed not only a fair amount of tension but also quite a few hilarious moments. The first curious incident was when I was shown a draft note with my portrait on it. Naturally, I turned down this option. It was decided the obverse of notes would feature portraits of our great ancestors, and the reverse – monuments and places of natural beauty: we had been informed by Western experts that such designs were difficult to forge. We placed our order with an English firm. I sanctioned the design on which the templates stored in a safe in England were to be based. The keys to this safe and the first specimens of the currency were brought to me. We had got everything arranged, and nobody knew about it.

Then people in Moscow started saying that the rouble zone could not be retained, that the republics were at different stages of development... I already realised this spelt the end for the rouble zone.

In 1992, we had 20 per cent of our exchangeable currency printed, just to be on the safe side. Nobody found out about it. We and the English firm we had commissioned saw to it that a very high degree of secrecy was kept throughout the operation. But it was not only about printing money: we had to do some quite complicated sums to work out the number and size of denominations we needed. We had to determine how to carry out the exchange and what course to set and how to build relations with foreign partners when the currency was introduced. It was a highly complex financial, economic and political issue.

A group of young economists was set up to make all these estimates. They are now employed at the National Bank and Ministry of Finance. International financial organisations (IMF, International Bank, and Eurobank, to name but a few) provided us with assistance by way of their specialists. This group worked at a house outside the capital that I used to visit every evening.

We had a big argument over the currency's name. The names *som* and *aksha* were suggested. I preferred the name *altyn*. All the peoples of the CIS could understand it. The word exists in both the Turkic and Slavonic languages. I am currently suggesting, on the example of the ECU in the West that we introduce an exchange currency of the CIS with such a name. We decided to call our currency *tenge*.

At the end of 1992, Viktor Chernomyrdin took over as Russia's head of government. I began to feel more hopeful about retaining the rouble zone. When Viktor Chernomyrdin came to Kazakhstan, I asked him outright: "Viktor Stepanovich, you and I are old friends. You are the head of government. Tell me honestly... I know you are intending to change your currency. In view of our relations and our sincere wish to be together with Russia, can Kazakhstan count on staying in the rouble zone? If not, tell me openly so we can make the necessary preparations". Viktor Chernomyrdin gave me assurances that, come what may, Kazakhstan would definitely remain in the rouble zone.

Another conversation took place at the Davos Economic Forum at the start of 1993. I was seated next to Viktor Chernomyrdin, and at one point we went outside to get some fresh air and he started up the conversation himself:

"Nursultan Abishevich. Most likely, on 1 April we will be introducing different money. I want you to know. An essential quantity of money is being especially printed for Kazakhstan. At least it will feature the special Kazakhstan symbol."

"Is this definitely going to happen?"

"Yes."

However, Duma Deputy Speaker Alexander Shokhin proved to be "more powerful" than Viktor Chernomyrdin. On 26 July 1993, Russia suddenly introduced a new currency. The same day I issued instructions to the National Bank of Kazakhstan to speed up the printing of all our national currency as much as possible.

I made a telephone call to Viktor Chernomyrdin in Moscow and asked him when we would be receiving our currency. He assured me it would arrive soon. The National Bank chairman Viktor Gerashchenko informed me that everything was ready and he was awaiting instructions from the leadership.

I want to specially note that Viktor Gerashchenko was openly against Kazakhstan being forced out of the rouble zone. He helped us right to the end, even when our *tenge* was being introduced.

But there was still no sign of the money... It now seemed essential to align our legislations. On 20 August, I went to Moscow again, and Boris Yeltsin and I signed a second declaration about remaining in the single rouble zone. By this time we had changed our customs laws and brought our financial legislation in line with Russia's and changed the law on the National Bank.

What happened next was that the republic began to be flooded with massive quantities of old roubles. It arrived in wagon loads... Brigades of militiamen had to be posted at all the airports and railway stations to seize these cargos. There is still a vast storehouse of confiscated old money in Petropavlovsk. We asked the Russians to remove it, but for some reason they refused to do so.

I arrived in Moscow in September to discuss the rouble zone. We signed what seemed to be the final agreements. They simply had to be ratified. I immediately returned to Almaty, engaged in a polemic with our Supreme Soviet, and succeeded in winning them over. On 12 October, Kazakhstan's Supreme Soviet ratified all our rouble zone agreements. I sent Prime Minister Sergei Tereshchenko to Viktor Chernomyrdin who was visiting Astrakhan at the time. They met and came to an agreement once again. We waited another week.

And then something baffling happened. On 26 October, Aleksander Shokhin arrived in Almaty, and we sat down togeth-

er, and he said quietly, "But why, Nursultan Abishevich, should you jump into the last carriage of the Russian train pulling out [meaning the rouble zone]?"

Whereupon I exclaimed, "Who on earth do you think you are? Have you received an instruction from Chernomyrdin?"

"You are a strong leader. Kazakhstan has great potential..."

"I don't need your assessments. I know better if we should collaborate with Russia or not. Tell me straight – are we going to be in the rouble zone?"

"That's impossible..."

Who knows, perhaps it is not worth getting upset with Alexander Shokhin. Maybe he was right at the time. And, anyway, every cloud has a silver lining. When you are building your statehood, you cannot do without your own currency. Sooner or later, we would have had to introduce it. But I had hoped that Russia really did not want to sever our economic ties all at once. Currency is the lifeblood of the whole economy. I had hoped that at the end of the day consideration would have been given to the fact that there were quite a few Russians living in Kazakhstan who would find it harder to see their families and friends in Russian without a single currency. I had believed that we could transfer to a different currency in a coordinated manner. I had believed so because I was convinced that our friend, economically powerful Russia needed Kazakhstan as a strategic partner. However, an economically developed, strong and democratic Kazakhstan is just as essential to Russia.

I did not start ringing anyone. We found US$ 7 million and paid what owed for the remaining amount of *tenge*. We hired four IL-76 aircraft and brought back 60 per cent of the currency. It was a secret operation. It was documented as equipment for the head of state's residence currently under construction.

By this time we had underground storage facilities ready in regional locations. Over the course of a week the four aircraft

made 18 return flights between London and Uralsk and then on to the outlying areas of Kazakhstan. I announced the currency would be introduced on 12 November. That was less than 20 days away. All the executives of the Kazakhstan National Bank were mobilised to conduct the operation. The toughest challenge was getting the currency transported all over the country and to all the banks. In the end, it took eight days. Quite likely, nowhere else in the world had an operation to introduce a new currency ever been carried out so swiftly and without a hitch.

I had forewarned the leaders of the neighbouring countries – Islam Karimov, A Akayev and S Niyazov – of the introduction of the *tenge*. On the evening of 11 October, I appeared on national television to announce the transfer to the new currency. By mutual agreement, Islam Karimov made a similar announcement at the very same time regarding the introduction of *sum-kupon* in Uzbekistan.

* * *

Today we can already say that the critical point in the formation of Kazakhstan's statehood is over. What is such a conclusion based on? We have gained international recognition and guarantees of our state's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Kazakhstan is a member of a number of international organisations.

Kazakhstan's Constitution has legalised the formation of a strong presidential republic and the distribution of authority between the branches of power. The institutions of a civil society have been established, human rights guarantees are observed and the media are able to work freely.

Even more importantly, in recent years there has been a psychological breakthrough in public awareness. Nostalgia for the former USSR has given way to a new public identification with Kazakhstan statehood. The population did not find it easy adapting to Kazakhstan's sovereignty. According to opinion polls, al-

most immediately after the signing of the Belovezhskaya Accords an overwhelming majority of the republic's population accepted the transfer of the political centre from Moscow to the capital of Kazakhstan. Nowadays our people directly link their expectations with Kazakhstan's leadership. And this is an immense achievement. In the twentieth century, many countries of the Asia, and then the Latin American and African continents, after announcing political changes, faltered in the process of adapting their populations socially and psychologically to the reforms. And as a result, these societies were split apart by rifts and regressed.

The economy has changed, too. With every passing year, the national market is becoming increasingly successful, an internal state economic system is developing and a structural reshaping of the economy is also taking place. Kazakhstan is entering the international market on an ever broader footing.

The Constitution that was passed by an absolute majority in a popular vote provides a strong and solid resource for our statehood. We can now concentrate on developing our economic reforms and democracy. The revived statehood of Kazakhstan is the foundation on which democracy and the market economy are currently being built.

Authoritarianism or democracy?

Transitional societies experience massive pressure from authoritarian trends. That is why I can say there are definitely grounds for the natural fears of authoritarian, totalitarian regimes possibly developing in new states. They are concealed in the legacy we inherited. But most states of the post-socialist world, Kazakhstan included, have steered towards building a democratic rule of law society.

The options – democracy or totalitarianism – no longer exist for us today. Our choice has already been made, and the

goal identified. However, we are now faced with the challenge of choosing our model of democratic development. History has shown yet again that reaching a goal is never straightforward. Every country, every people builds democracy in its own way. Hence the myriad models of democracy and ways towards it.

And this way is not easy either. Those accusing us of undemocratic ways and undeveloped democracy have, it seems to me, forgotten the basics of history. Humanity's path to democracy has been long and bloody. The US, which has achieved notable success in guaranteeing human rights, went through protracted wars with the Native Americans, the Civil War between the North and the South, racial segregation and slavery, the African-Americans' revolts and the shootings of students at anti-war demonstrations. Even after the passing of the most progressive constitution of the age, only white men had the right to vote and to be elected. The property qualification for voting was only removed in the early nineteenth century, and women won the vote in 1920. It took the United States one and half centuries to get there! In some southern US states African-Americans did not have full voting rights until the 1960s. The age qualification for voting in the US was lowered from 21 to 18 years of age only in 1971. And haven't we studied a whole series of French revolutions from the Revolution of 1789 to the Paris Commune? The fall and restoration of monarchies, republics, empires in that country, the first to proclaim slogans of liberty, equality and fraternity, went on for several decades.

The experiences of Kazakhstan and other countries convinced me that it was time to relinquish attempts to find a universal key that would open all doors on the way to a new social state. Democratisation is a lengthy process; it is about continuously addressing a range of challenges in all fields of the life of society and the individual. Democracy is not established by decrees – it has to be achieved through sheer force of persistence.

One of the reasons for the collapse of *perestroika* was that Mikhail Gorbachev and his entourage tried to find that universal key and went from one extreme to another. For instance, in the initial period of *perestroika* there was an idea being floated that it was enough to remove all the restrictions of a closed country for democracy to be established. However, this isolation had solid foundations. The boundary between the systems was not only geographical. It was in the way of life and in people's way of thinking. You can tear down the Berlin Wall, but it is not easily removed from people's minds.

It had taken more than just one decade to build such a boundary. The height of the isolation was reached in Stalin's time. Even the short periods of "thaw" could change nothing.

During the *perestroika* years the state's isolation was considerably eased, but even today this does not mean that the consequences of society's profound isolation for many years have been eradicated. Along with other CIS states, Kazakhstan has become an open state. There is a negative side to this, too, as our country has since been flooded with low-grade goods of all kinds and mass-produced stuff masquerading as culture. So, for many years to come we will continue to face the very complex challenge of emancipating people's minds.

Experience is all about not repeating past mistakes. But a person is made in such a way that he learns best from his own misfortunes. Many CIS states repeated the typical errors of post-colonial countries that remained in a state of civil war for a protracted period of time. An attempt was made to destroy the old world and immediately build an ideal new society on its ruins. When the stage of state-building gets under way, especially when accompanied by economic and political modernisation, the destruction of the state machine can result in a loss of final control over the situation. You cannot release a genie of destruc-

tion if you do not know how to stop him, and you are not strong enough to control the situation.

The new CIS states now faced the fundamental issue of organising state structures in such a way that they intervened in the course of the reforms only when necessary. But what I know for sure is that in transitional societies with economic systems that are still thoroughly state-oriented, there are no developed institutions of private ownership or their political representatives in the shape of parties, and the state's role is highly important.

Totalitarianism was one of the most dangerous threats to political modernisation in the twentieth century. A product of industrial civilisation, it is completely new in terms of its technological and information potential for controlling entire social groups.

I must say once again that the problem of choosing between authoritarianism and democracy does not exist for Kazakhstan. All discussions and fears regarding the possibility of an authoritarian regime have been caused by a lack of understanding of the state's role in conducting the transition from one social and economic system to a principally different one. In my opinion, there are sound reasons for the state's leading role in this process: the weakness of civil society institutions, overcoming the stereotypes of a totalitarian past in people's consciousness, the problems of setting up new economic and social structures, and various others. We have selected a strategy of strengthening and modernising the state apparatus while simultaneously assisting the formation of civil society institutions and strengthening human rights. For the time being, however, conditions are such that it is the state that is shouldering the main burden of reforming society. For those who understand this problem, the discussions about the growth of authoritarianism are nothing but idle talk.

One opinion adhered to in political theory is that the complexity of a transitional period and acuteness of social contradic-

tions, on the one hand, and society's weak social control of the authorities and parliamentary institutions, on the other, objectively facilitate an increase in presidential power. The president becomes the nation's symbol and the political system's most important element, its centre. As such, the president stands above society, above parties, parliament and all the institutions of power, coordinating and directing their activity. That is why in an extreme situation (a conflict between the parties or branches of power) he proves to be the sole guarantor of the Constitution and virtually the incarnation of state sovereignty.

And, by the way, Kazakhstan has also had its fair share of crises. And as president, I have had to assume total responsibility for maintaining stability in the situation and looking for legitimate, constitutional ways of getting out of the crisis.

The main aim, after all, has been to boost the economic and political reforms. At a press conference I was once asked if Kazakhstan was sliding toward a dictatorship. I replied that I was already in the process of implementing a dictatorship – a dictatorship against slovenliness, embezzlement and criminality. In all other respects, we are engaged in the normal process of liberalisation – both in the economy and politics. Democracy is not eluding us: it is clamouring at our door.

An age-old argument particularly topical in transitional societies is the correlation between the law and political expediency, procedure and content. A vast number of examples may be cited in favour of one or the other option. If an electoral struggle is the only condition of democracy, then those who win a victory must be considered democrats. In actual fact, this is certainly not the case. In my opinion, elections should not be presented as the only criterion of democracy, nor should this particular criterion be made an absolute. As the renowned political scientist Raymond Aron pointed out in his book *Democracy and Totalitarianism*: "Is the selection of those in power in a one-party regime

subject to any rules or is it arbitrary? In most instances, the one party takes over the state by force rather than by abiding by rules. Even when it maintains a semblance of respect for constitutional rules (which can be said more or less of Hitler's party in 1933), it immediately flouts them by excluding the possibility of a return to genuine elections... Moreover, national socialism or fascism was established as authoritarian regimes in the name of a certain principle of power: while reserving the right to a monopoly in the political arena, they alleged the legality of this monopoly."

Let us also recall Kazakhstan's own history. Can one really consider as a sign of democracy a "sea of raised hands", the universal approval of the masses, that the diabolical state machinery has used as a cover to destroy the nation's best people?

It seems to me that the brief history of the post-Soviet states has graphically shown that elections are, without doubt, a most important element of democracy but by no means the only one. Let us recall the bitter experience of introducing democratic elements to a socialist environment. The 27th Congress of the CPSU approved the entirely utopian idea of giving work collectives the right to elect people as their managers and fix the prices of goods so as to sharply increase "socialist mutual assistance and discipline", and "responsibility for fulfilling their duties to society". What happened as a result, you know. Self-serving interests, a desire to produce less and earn more – that is what the work collectives were beset by. Everyone in the country was worse off because of it. The people elected were, by and large, "ordinary people just like us" - populists and demagogues incapable of managing even themselves.

The recurrences of sections of the population being prevented from taking part in elections were – and I hope, they are now a thing of the past – characteristic of countries with strong democratic systems. The correlation between the form of democracy and its real content is an even more complex dilemma for coun-

tries of the transitional type. It is considerably aggravated by the lack not only of truly functioning institutions of democracy but also, to a large extent, by the unpreparedness of society to accept them.

And this gives rise to the following issue: that it is also in keeping with democracy to reject the principle of appointment by election or annulment of election results by way of retaining democratic gains. After the Islamic Salvation Front won the elections in Algeria in 1992, the military authorities annulled the election results to prevent the fundamentalists' rise to power. You don't have to be a supporter of coups to easily imagine that had the ISF taken over, it is unlikely it would have adhered to democratic principles. An election, while facilitating the rise to power of those who deserve it, does not, however, protect society from those who should be kept furthest away from it.

Thus, separating democracy from the traditional sphere of defending individual liberties only gives rise to uncertainty. This uncertainty results in the fact that democracy defined only in terms of an electoral struggle does not allow us to distinguish more democratic systems from less democratic ones, while commonsense tells us that in the real world such distinctions do exist.

The great Mahatma Ghandi once said that in order to change the world, we first have to change ourselves. Building a democratic façade is easy but overcoming an authoritarian political culture, much harder: the masses' nostalgia for an "iron hand", order, public passivity, and the political elites' penchant for coercive methods, voluntarism, and frequently irrational decisions.

This has also been highlighted in the numerous sociological research studies carried out in Kazakhstan. Most of the population's discontent with the decline in living standards coinciding with a sharp polarisation of society has resulted in nearly half of all Kazakhstanis becoming convinced that democracy is only just

getting off the ground in our country. The development of democratic processes in Kazakhstan was viewed as a main priority in the first half and mid-90s by only 4-5 per cent of the republic's population. At the same time, over 60 per cent expressed their preference for such priorities as a stable, normal standard of living, peace and calm in society, family wellbeing, their own good health and personal security.

Many people are still prone to hero-worshipping their leader: considering that nothing depends on them, they passively wait, just as before, for decisions to be taken on the political Olympus. The public is still hanging its hopes on an improvement in the situation on the work of the state organs of government and, primarily, the executive authorities. There is virtually no political elite. And this in many ways explains the low rating of political associations in Kazakhstan. Between a quarter and a third of Kazakhstanis in various regions know nothing about the workings of the political parties and social movements. This data has been produced by the president's team of analysts.

I shall also cite an independent opinion. According to Russian Institute of Strategic Research data, "Kazakhstani parties and movements have yet to assume suitable positions in the republic's political life; they are still weak in terms of institutions and have very modest potential to mobilise the electorate. President N Nazarbayev is able to go above the heads of these organisations' leaders and address the electorate, and draw a sizeable section of it over to his side. At the same time, the electorate of Kazakhstan is itself highly indifferent in its preferences to political parties. A significant section of the population considers that there are no substantial differences between the political parties. It is worth noting that even in Kazakhstan's capital – the most politicised city, as sociological research has shown, three days before the 1994 election, only 13 percent of the city's residents knew the details of the socio-political organisations' pre-electoral pro-

grammes." (*Kazakhstan: realities and prospects of independent development*, Moscow, 1995. P.221).

In such circumstances it is impossible to speak of elections and democracy as identical concepts. The notions of authority prevailing in society, the cult of the omnipotent state and corresponding social and political norms, the absence of a social and economic base for democracy and traditions of a rule of law state – all these easily lead to democracy degenerating into something entirely different.

That is why I am sure that given the circumstances today, only a strong executive power aimed at democratic reforms is capable of preventing the restoration of the old regime. And it is also capable of stopping another trend – "democratic" intolerance. Some of the democratic camps do not understand that there are no prerequisites whatsoever for forcibly accelerating the reforms, especially as attempts to change society in a revolutionary manner and force reforms through have the reverse effects. What I am in favour of is evolutionary development, and the gradual, properly prepared reforming of society.

There is democracy, and then there is pseudo-democracy. When people start associating chaos and anarchy with democratic reform, they are in danger of justifying various forms of authoritarianism – such as the mild, enlightened kind and so on. Suffice to say, when the CIS countries encountered these problems, a number of influential sociologists proved the need for a mild form of authoritarianism in the transitional period. However, the model of enlightened authoritarianism is possible only in cases where the leader of the given country is a reformer whose conscious, strong aspiration to positive change is supported by most of the population.

The term "authoritarianism", widely used nowadays, is traditionally employed to describe the political systems of many countries of the former socialist camp and third world. Accord-

ing to political scientist Leonardo Morlino's estimates, in the early 90s, of some 175 independent states, 130 can hardly be called democratic, though not all of them can be considered as having authoritarian regimes, but most of them do.

By and large, we can define modern authoritarianism as an agreement of the elites controlling the economy and power structures to curtail political freedoms as a means of suppressing the legal channels of expressing social discontent and specific strata of the population for whom legitimate regulation is more important than economic freedom or efficacy. According to one of the most famous assessments of authoritarianism, which has been used in political science for over three decades now, it can best be described thus:

- a political system with limited pluralism due to the truncated structure of the political parties and groups playing a decisive role in national politics;
- a specific political consciousness, political mentality which provide an ideological base for the existing regime;
- a system with a low level of popular political participation, political mobilisation, political engagement in major politics;
- a system with a leader of a small group that has executive power concentrated in their hands;
- a system with vaguely specified, quite arbitrarily defined rules of governance allowing the political elite to interpret their rights quite freely.

If certain features of the authoritarian regime are examined in greater detail, it is easy to see some excruciatingly familiar features of our recent political past.

The level of political mobilisation has to do with the number of people engaged in the political process and the quality of this participation. Ideally, authoritarian regimes cut the masses off completely from participating in politics. In reality, however, an authoritarian regime, say, of the Stalinist type may, on the

contrary, engage the masses in the political arena. However, two conditions then have to be met. First, there has to be an effective repressive apparatus that can always reduce political activeness. Second, there have to be no structures of political mobilisation, or only underdeveloped ones: for instance, there is one powerful party controlling the state organs. In an analysis of authoritarianism, particular attention is usually paid to the repressive apparatus, but no less important in this definition is the lack of structures for political mobilisation.

In Kazakhstan the state is regulating the modernising processes for the economy because not enough broad social strata of private entrepreneurs have emerged to self-regulate market relations.

At present, we cannot describe Kazakhstan as either a democratic or authoritarian state by Western standards. It does not have enough social, political, institutional or other foundations to be considered either of the two. However, nobody can dispute the democratic direction of our reforms. A firm democracy requires developed private ownership, a civil society combined with stable traditions of parliamentarianism. We can state that all the latter are currently in the process of being established in Kazakhstan. What's more, the state has adopted the function of developing them.

Critics do not understand this unique situation. The lack of dialogue with the executive power implementing the reforms is today essentially anti-democratic. For transitional countries such opposition is a highly dangerous phenomenon, fundamentally different in character from that in countries with a stable democratic system.

The point is that someone has to take complete responsibility for the reforms. In his book *The Earth in the Balance*, US Vice President Al Gore expressed it wonderfully well: "The time has long since come to take more political risks – and endure much

more political criticism – by proposing tougher, more effective solutions and fighting hard for their enactment."

It is not by chance that I am highlighting the need for all political forces to collaborate in transitional states. In my opinion, political stability is the basis for democracy in them. And the main challenge is safeguarding it. All world history shows that, as a rule, chaos, revolution and war are the eternal companions of a nascent dictatorship. In all my speeches I discuss this need to maintain political stability. To some it sounds like the conventional utterances of a conservative. They do not want to understand the intrinsic nature of the stability forming the basis of the democratic reforms.

It is crucial for us all to avoid destabilising the situation both within Kazakhstan and beyond its borders. This would disarm the forces that, while not having a clear programme of their own for the country's development, are relying on chaos being created so that they can use populist measures and declarations to try and take power into their own hands. What needed are caution, and an ability to identify such destructive forces in the political spectrum of Kazakhstan and the rest of CIS space.

It is not an accident that, particularly in times of crisis, no state gives its citizens and their associations absolute political freedom, and the right to sovereignty as the supreme power in a particular territory. There are quite a few examples illustrating the contrary. For instance, at one time democratic America imprisoned people who spoke out in favour of state separatism. France set a term of 15 years to settle the issue of New Caledonia's sovereignty.

I understand that in a society where there has never been a legal culture, preference is given to the leader rather than the law within the framework of which the leader is obliged to act. In view of this, I consider my main task is to change the situation. There must be no marginalised people, or silent majority indif-

ferently watching things happening and impassively waiting for events to unfold.

At present, we are doing everything possible in Kazakhstan to prevent the dictatorship of an individual or group. Our Constitution prohibits the interference of "public associations in the affairs of state, imposing on the functions of state institutions on public associations, and financing of public associations by the state"; "the formation of political party organisations in state bodies"; prohibits the activity of public associations pursuing goals or actions directed towards a violent change of the constitutional system, the undermining of the security of the state and its territorial integrity, inciting social, racial, national, religious, class, tribal enmity, as well as the formation of illegal paramilitary units" (Art. 5). The Constitution also states that the military, employees of national security, law-enforcement bodies and judges must abstain from membership in political parties, trade unions and actions in support of any political party. (Art.23).

However, the main guarantor of the Constitution and democratic choice is the people of Kazakhstan who will not allow the establishment of a dictatorship of any kind. I am firmly convinced of this. Basing my decision on these positions, and supporting the formation of a multi-party system in the republic, I have considered it my duty not to join any of the parties. Given the transitional period we are currently in, there are two negative consequences to the president joining a political organisation. First, the party then gains additional potential to grow that is not objectively substantiated but rather influenced by the president's personality. Second, as the leader of this party, the president has to implement its policy. And both of these are incompatible with the challenges facing the head of state as the symbol and guarantor of the unity of the people and the state power, inviolability of the Constitution and the rights and freedoms of an individual and citizen (Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Art. 40).

Modernising the political system: theory and practice

There are various ways of classifying political systems. One of the oldest and most popular is classifying them by political norms. This classification of democracies or monarchies has been used at least since the times of the Ancient Greek politicians, and the greatest political scientists of modern history – Locke, Madison and Hobbes and right up to the present day.

However, these approaches are obviously too simple to be used to define the sort of political society we are living in on the threshold of the twenty-first century. In recent times world political thinking has substantially advanced in its understanding of these phenomena. The unique situation in Kazakhstan has in no small degree been caused by our traditional theoretical isolationism. The incredible political forecasts and sensational predictions concerning the political situation in Central Asia are frequently predicated on their authors' remarkable naivety and lack of experience with political theory.

Three different aspects have to be considered in an analysis of political systems. First, the classification is linked with the question: who really makes the political decisions? Ideally, democracy presupposes the participation of all members of society in this process. However, it is obvious that not a single political system has reached or, indeed, can reach this level. Second, the actual process and ways of decision-making can also serve as a basis for the analysis. This also gives an idea of the system's authoritarian or liberal nature. An authoritarian manner of decision-making that has to do with power being exclusively concentrated in the hands of an individual or small group stands out as one of the real options for our immediate political future. Finally, the third aspect has to do with the content of the political decisions being made. Incidentally, engrossed in an analysis of the workings of power,

many politicians frequently fail to notice this third dimension. Its social content is directed towards either achieving equality or, on the contrary, increasing social inequality.

I would like to elaborate on this further. It is primarily a question of prevailing political ideals. The fact that there are pro-fascist parties in democratic countries does not signify a lapse in democratic norms. A sheer propaganda stunt capitalising on a fascination for exotic small-scale movements has nothing to do with political life.

In political discussions these days the words "democracy, liberalism, equality, freedom" are repeated like incantations. But what is really meant by these concepts? The degree of social equality or inequality is measured by a great many indices – from per capita income to life expectancy. Let us note that these parameters have been worked out by specific people – researchers and state officials. Thus, the social orientation of politics is itself subject to serious modifications and manipulations on the part of groups.

Democratic political systems are usually described as liberal democratic regimes. As a rule, such descriptions are applied to the countries of North America, Western Europe, Japan, Israel, a number of Latin American countries and some countries of the Commonwealth – former British colonies.

One of the key characteristics of democratic countries is their strict adherence to constitutional requirements in the application of political norms. The activity of parliament, the judiciary, the government and executive power at all levels is under strict constitutional control. A characteristic of these systems of no less importance is the presence of a variety of political structures. Yet the intrinsic differences between democracies are very great and subject to considerable scrutiny by numerous experts. This position can be summarised as follows.

First, there are two options: executive power can either be concentrated or distributed. For instance, the one-party cabinet in Great Britain and party coalition in Switzerland operate within the framework of democratic systems. That is why, in my opinion, the non-party government cabinet in Kazakhstan cannot testify to there being a democracy or not. I would like to highlight this circumstance as the extent of multi-party representation in the executive bodies of power is frequently flagged up as a sign of democracy.

Second, there are the differences in political parties' programmes. While in the US and Great Britain the main differences between the leading parties all have to do with social and economic issues, in Switzerland, for instance, these differences are along cultural, religious, national and geographical lines; the latter type is more in line with our future prospects. The substantive differentiation of national, religious and geographical groups in Kazakhstan undoubtedly calls for a highly diversified political machine.

Despite the fact that there were well-formed political groups in mediaeval societies and even in the Ancient World, political parties in the narrow sense of the word are a product of the latter half of the nineteenth century. Evidently, different politicians will always stick to their own particular ideas of how parties came into being. Yet despite all the diversity of views it is still possible to select several common features. The sharp deterioration in the social structure of a number of European countries and the emergence of a certain degree of pluralism made the powers that be rethink ways of resolving social conflicts. While some were discussing an "iron hand" and others got ready a proletarian revolution in a land of peasants, party structures were also being developed and oriented toward a parliamentary solution to social conflicts. The fall of a whole series of monarchies or demotion of monarchical rule to the level of the ruling and yet not governing

British Queen led to a search for new sources of support for the authorities.

As they develop, Kazakhstan's political parties will follow the same logic as many other parties in various parts of the world. The central problem for any of them is this same problem of support.

Eastern party systems have several specific features that differ from Western European ones. For instance, there is a high level of ethnic and professional corporatism, personalisation in politics and patron-client relationships in third world countries, and traditional values play a major role in their political culture. Thus, it is hardly advisable to assess third-world democracy only by Western standards or by narrow institutional criteria. I would like to single out two more important aspects of building democratic structures in the non-Western world.

First, there is the prevalence of various forms supported by stable corporative collectivist traditions: family, community, caste, ethnos, religion and institutions of elders. They hamper the formation of Western-type democracy in traditional societies. Yet, at the same time, archaic institutions may, surprisingly, help strengthen democracy.

Eastern political leaders aspiring to modernise their society frequently use the resource of the traditional groups' support. Initially, most of the new political formations in Kazakhstan were primarily of a mono-national character. Of course, there were many reasons for this, but consciously or unconsciously politicians made use of the support of national groups who really had nothing to do with all the aims of the particular political movement. Using the resources of the national groups' support represents an attempt to transfer legitimacy onto an innately different group.

Second, the comparatively few precedents of democracy in non-Western countries are, as a rule, based on the dominant

party there, that is, the party invariably in power thanks to its constant superiority at elections. This applies, first and foremost, to the countries of the East. It is evidently no accidental trend: in transitional societies a system with a dominant party ensures more political stability than a two- or multi-party system. The dominant party there has a set of functions distinguishing this institution in no small degree from the political parties in Western societies.

A political system with a dominant party also shows some signs of democracy in so far as it guarantees the rights of the opposition, the mechanism of consultations and independence of the press. It goes without saying that this system is not without serious shortcomings: one party's extended stay in power may gradually corrupt its officials. Recurrent scandals involving corruption and "black money" in the Indian National Congress or in the Japanese and South Korean liberal democratic parties are graphic examples of this.

An important original feature of party system formation in Kazakhstan has been its development from "the top downwards". The first broad-based popular movement of Nevada-Semipalatinsk emerged as a result of my support for the call for a nuclear test ban. Given central government's still relatively strong grip on power, the anti-nuclear movement would have inevitably encountered fierce repression without the support of the republic's leadership, especially as the option of forcibly repressing a popular movement had been approved by the USSR leadership back in December 1986. A national consensus enabled me on 29 August 1991 to sign a decree on closing the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site.

The break-up of the USSR and of its "binding" element – the CPSU – was a fundamental, pivotal event opening the way to developing a multi-party system. In September 1991, the members of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan took the decision them-

selves to transform it into the Socialist Party. This was a logical choice. And this was not simply about a name change. It was to radically change its function. Having lost its functions as a ruling state party, from then on the Socialist Party had to gain widespread authority through its own endeavours.

People who did not agree with the congress's ruling and who continued to believe in communist ideals were given the possibility of forming and officially registering their own party. The Communist Party of the Republic of Kazakhstan was registered by the Ministry of Justice in March 1994. I consider this a convincing testament to the democratic character of our political course.

The People's Congress Party of Kazakhstan was formed in June 1992, and the new union of the People's Unity of Kazakhstan, later to become a party, was formed in February 1993. I supported both parties, and took part in the constitutive arrangements. I was drawn in by these parties' claim to political centrism that was so essential for us. The Democratic Party of Kazakhstan was founded in 1995. I regard its formation as an attempt to rationally interpret and resolve the challenges of the transitional period facing our society. I think this party has a future.

But, unfortunately, the political parties have still not proved capable of overcoming the maladies relating to growth. Democracy cannot be adopted or imported. It has to take root, become a way of life, a way of political thinking for leaders and the masses, a means of unifying, organising society and governing it. As yet, democracy in the CIS countries is regarded, by and large, as a way and means of fighting for power. The multi-party system is being carried to an absurdity. Dozens and scores of parties, often headed by sheer opportunists, are coming into being. Coupled with grave social, political, ethnic, religious and clan conflicts, this is turning pluralism and political freedoms into empty slogans and a means of destabilising society.

History has given us quite a few examples of parties turning to extremism after suffering a defeat at the ballot box. It is question of the political fight intensifying just when it is on the brink of adopting an extreme form because of the absence of conditions for democratic institutions to function in normally. Western democratic criteria are not applicable here because such a situation is unthinkable in the West nowadays: a party refusing to take account of the popular will or, upon coming to power, taking advantage of it to review democratic norms.

If the intellectual elite is not prepared for some reason to come up with an effective concept for the reforms, they will proceed on a trial and error basis. And the way things are going is also fairly dangerous. In view of this we have had to work out our own concept of reforming Kazakhstan. Unfortunately, all the projects proposed by the opposition forces were knowingly unachievable and unfeasible. It seems to me, that the opposition parties have repeated old mistakes. During the changeover period to a new political system they had quite a number of programmes, and well-known leaders, and yet failed to prepare themselves adequately for constructive activity. The fact is, there are not enough competent politicians for this purpose. There is a shortage of economists, analysts and people with practical skills. The parties realise this nowadays. And my hope is that in the foreseeable future the opposition will succeed in fulfilling the role it does in countries with developed democracies.

Political democracy presupposes a number of conditions. Among them is not only a consensus in society and particularly in its elite strata but also a fairly broad-based middle class that is economically not very dependent on the state, a legal culture beginning to take root and the habit of engaging in dialogue and making compromises. If all this is missing or insufficiently developed, the social and institutional bases for democracy will not be stable.

Humanity's experience through the ages is testament to the fact that the processes governing the development of civilisation are irreversible. No matter how much certain individuals, even the most pre-eminent, and separate social groups may want to, it is no longer possible to return to a previous or traditional model of society. The modernising process can only be artificially slowed down. But this inevitably aggravates internal social conflicts. At the same time, attempts can and should be made to iron out all the inevitable contradictions of modernisation by finding reasonable compromises.

I would particularly like to draw attention to the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan. There is no organisation like it in the other CIS countries. At the most trying times it has been a body that has truly represented the people. How this body representing multi-ethnic Kazakhstan came to be set up is in itself quite intriguing. The decision to set up the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan as a public body bringing together citizens of all ethnic origins in the course of modernising the republic's political, economic and social spheres was taken at the Forum of the Peoples of Kazakhstan in December 1992. Frankly speaking, the representatives of the major ethnic groups had more of an opportunity to get the most out of the representative bodies and the executive, while others failed to get their voices heard. It was essential for such a body to be set up in multi-ethnic Kazakhstan. We required quite some time to work out an optimal form of functioning and authority for the Assembly. It was not intended as a substitute for a parliament or executive body, nor was it to turn into a mere talking shop representing different interests. After lengthy research involving a study of the various opinions of representatives of ethnic and cultural centres, ethnographers, lawyers and experts in other fields, the decision was taken to confer upon the Assembly the status of a consultative body attached to the head of state. Its endeavours are already producing

real results today. These take the form not only of numerous initiatives in the field of ethnic policy but also in daily practical work with people. Since 1995, representatives of nations with small populations have been able to study at the country's higher education establishments by enrolling through the Assembly quota system. At the suggestion of Archbishop Alexy of Almaty and Semipalatinsk, the 1,100th anniversary of the Slavic written language was celebrated under the Assembly's aegis. Ethnic cultural centres put on a number of interesting and informative events to mark to the 150th anniversary of the poet Abai's birth. It stands to reason that such beneficial ventures, and the solution of specific problems encountered by the peoples of Kazakhstan is helping to raise the authority of this truly popular, democratic organisation.

* * *

There is another very complex issue concerning the role and place of religion in transitional societies. In my opinion, there is no simple answer to it, if only because different politicians approach religion from entirely diametrical perspectives.

Apparently, before the Second World War French Prime Minister Pierre Laval paid a visit to Moscow, and during lengthy talks Stalin and Molotov endeavoured, first and foremost, to establish the exact numbers of the French Army on the Western Front, division sizes and length of service. Then Laval asked, "Couldn't you do something to promote religion and Catholicism in Russia? It would help me so much in my dealings with the Pope." "Really!" exclaimed Stalin. "The Pope! So how many divisions does he have?"

Stalin had had a religious education but was remarkably reticent about undertaking joint enterprises with the church before the war. However, even he appreciated the role of religion as a unifying factor during the Second World War.

State policy in relation to the activity of religious organisations in the territory of Kazakhstan has an integral base and treats them all on an equal footing. Kazakhstan is now a multi-faith society. The two main ethnic groups – Kazakhs and Russians – jointly comprise 80 percent of the population and belong to the most numerous communities in the Republic – Muslim (Sunni) and Christian (Orthodox). The Muslim community is represented by Kazakhs and 17 other Turkic-language ethnic groups, including Uzbeks, Tartars, Uigurs, Azerbaijanis, Chechens and various others. What's more, the Muslim community is also made up of Indo-Iranian language groups such as Tajiks, Kurds and Dungans.

As of 1 January 1995, there were 1,180 religious communities of nearly 30 faiths in the Republic. They are represented by both traditional and non-traditional associations. There are more than 1,200 clergy working in Kazakhstan, and their training is undertaken at 25 religious education establishments. These include the Islamic Institute, the Almaty Eparchy Ecclesiastical School, the Presbyterian Ecclesiastical Academy, to name but a few. Studies are also conducted abroad. There has been a particularly rapid increase in the number of Muslim associations. There are currently 483 in the Republic. For Kazakh people who found themselves in danger of having their identity eroded as a result of having their traditions forcibly severed, and a cultural schism appearing inside the ethnic group primarily along Kazakh language lines, Islam has begun to acquire importance as one of the ways of expressing ethnicity. This function of Islam is in many ways determining the increasing importance of one of the great world religions. Islam's immense potential in terms of its contribution to civilisation is universally recognised today. Incidentally, Kazakhstan is one of the north-east frontiers of the world dissemination of Islam. Millions of practising Muslims in Kazakh-

stan now have the opportunity of returning to their faith without facing totalitarian repression.

I had occasion to discuss Islam's peaceful role with the Custodian of the two Holy Mosques – King Fahd bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud, a devout, sagacious man. During a visit to Mecca and Medina, and Jerusalem I yet again gained a sense of Islam's force and potential for instilling spirituality and humanity in people.

The Russian Orthodox Church has the second largest religious community, with 165 parishes and its own publication, *The Light of Orthodoxy*. Orthodox churches and monasteries are currently undergoing restoration in Kazakhstan. At the same time, religion *per se* is playing no substantially significant part in the political processes. Moreover, in view of the sensitivity of inter-ethnic relations in the republic, church leaders are seeking to disassociate themselves from any manifestations of ethnocentrism in society.

Three independent eparchies were established in Almaty, Shymkent and Uralsk by a ruling of the Holy Synod of 31 January 1991. The Cathedral of the Holy Ascension, a unique architectural monument in the centre of Almaty, has been given over to the Orthodox Church. His Holiness Patriarch Alexy II of Moscow and All Russia was given a warm welcome when he visited Kazakhstan at my invitation in 1995. His visit was an important event – not only for Kazakhstan's Orthodox community.

I have been meeting with Patriarch Alexy II for some time now. He is a very generous-spirited and highly educated man, and true devotee of Orthodoxy. During our lengthy conversations we have come to the joint conclusion that we should work together to bring peoples closer through religion.

It is with a sense of satisfaction that I can say the religious leaders in Kazakhstan are certainly making a valuable contribution to the constructive process and strengthening our society's cohesion.

* * *

What is democracy? This question has consumed humanity all through history. And it has always been interpreted differently. Democracy defies stark assessments. Some states, hailed as the "most" democratic in post-Soviet space have, as is well known, introduced a series of discriminatory restrictions on the basis of citizenship. And what I say today is that we used to obey someone else's will, so let's not now be swayed by someone else's ideas.

People may criticise and disagree with me, but the Kazakhstan way that is supported by the overwhelming majority of the population constitutes not some blindly copied template but our very own original attempts to find our own way. In so doing, the main principle we are basing everything on is that we certainly do not need democracy at any price if it brings bloodshed and chaos with it. Our democracy is founded on political, social and international stability. We are not going to experiment on our own people simply for the sake of being patted on the back by other countries for achieving democracy fast. The idea of democracy remains firm but the democratic reforms are in danger of being stifled by the anarchy and permissiveness caused by chaos-induced war.

The first shoots of real democracy have already appeared in the CIS countries, yet its progress is extremely slow. This is primarily due to the particular features of their political culture which has key differences from Western and Central European ones.

I would also like to mention a phenomenon that has played an important role in recent years. For quite some time people used to equate anti-communism with democracy. I have never approved of such an oversimplification, and life today proves that anti-communism and democracy are certainly not synonymous, and, indeed, sometimes complete opposites. The collapse of the

communist regime resulted in a great many anti-communists, and primarily the most orthodox, assuming anti-democratic positions. So, a rampant reactionary may also be disguised as an anti-communist.

Being liberated from totalitarianism or authoritarianism does not automatically mean acquiring freedom. It merely makes it possible then to choose from a great variety of models, from authoritarian through to liberal, to base one's subsequent development on.

Our generation was brought up in such a way that we naturally spurned alternative theories to Marxism. If you like, this even became a character trait of Soviet people. And so it is no wonder that immediately after the collapse of communist ideology a tendency appeared to whitewash everything that it had painted black. Remember some politicians and media tarring American democracy and the Chile junta with the same brush? And the sole reason for this was that CPSU ideology had branded them as "enemies". Without possibly even noticing, they continued using the old methods of the previous regime, oversimplifying the way they analysed a situation: if it was not white, it had to be black and vice versa. Things got so out of hand that the system's most vehement and outspoken critics equated national socialism with the regime we had lived under. Doubts began to be cast on the great achievement of the Soviet people – the victory over fascism. It, they said, was a victory for totalitarianism. Without wishing in any way to whitewash the Stalinist regime, I can no more accept rampant nihilism than I can submissive silence.

I am a committed opponent of tyranny and authoritarian regimes. But at the same time I consider it dangerous to regard democracy as a thing in itself. I am concerned that people can be convinced of the legitimacy and infallibility of a majority decision. This is particularly dangerous in our countries where traditions of respect for individual freedom are limited.

Analysing social and political processes in the republics of the former USSR has convinced me time and time again that radicalism in the transformation of the institutions of power destabilises society and statehood and is just the type of political development that leads to civil war. Democratisation must be interpreted today not in some abstract, academic manner but by practically defining ways of safeguarding stability and the future of the state.

Preplanning democracy is made difficult by the fact that there is little or no civil society, and its interests are inherently unstructured. Hence, its predisposition to fragmentation into a multitude of small party political factions which are inclined to extremism, and an understanding of democracy in terms of a constant confrontation rather than a constructive process. Such an approach, when increasingly broad swathes of the population, parties and movements, and then various branches of the state power are drawn into the opposition, has already resulted in dramatic repercussions in a number of CIS states, in civil wars and casualties.

It goes without saying that this is a fairly harsh assessment, but it reflects what is actually happening today in countries such as Kazakhstan. It is more evidence of the fact that in difficult economic times when there is a sharp decline in living standards and conflict between different groupings, the destruction of state rule results in destabilisation and renders it impossible to implement any economic or political reforms whatsoever. In such a volatile situation there can only be an escalation of conflicts leading to a civil war and the destruction of statehood. Is it anti-democratic to ban the activity of ultranationalist groups, self-importantly calling themselves parties, who organised an outrage in the Almaty mosque and assault on a cleric; and the people who are calling for the deportation of various nationals from the republic; or those responsible for setting up paramilitary units, ostensibly

to restore cultural traditions but actually with the intention of seceding from Kazakhstan? I consider the people of Kazakhstan expressed their attitude to such "parties" when they voted for the Constitution banning their activity.

From parliamentary crises to the new Constitution

Parliamentarianism is a constituent part of democracy. However, establishing parliamentarianism in the CIS countries is no easy process. In the early 90s, many of the Commonwealth states had to contend with the fierce hostility between the parliamentary and presidential branches of power. In some instances this escalated into open rifts and at others, into the blocking of each other's rulings. Though infrequent occurrences, these were nevertheless a general tendency in our states. It was therefore crucial not only to make constitutional provisions to resolve these crises but also comprehend the sources of these conflicts.

A lengthy study of the situation enabled me to reach a number of conclusions. They, of course, reflect the stance of a politician in office, a head of state who has taken all the necessary steps to avert a political crisis. In my opinion, most of the problems in the CIS countries' parliamentary activity arose initially because of an erroneous perception of its character. Nowadays some parliamentarians still hold the opinion that in parliament, just as in the old Supreme Soviets, it is incumbent upon them to uphold primarily the specific interests of their electors, constituencies, various enterprises or industries.

Most of the deputies simply failed to understand that in the new conditions parliament had to fulfil a different function, whose role had developed in the transitional period when statehood was being established. It was to settle social and national queries, articulate them as general national interests and state

interests and, consequently, an expression of the whole people's will. Many deputies continued to consider themselves bound by an imperative mandate. If one takes a closer look, one realises it concerns preserving an old Soviet tradition whereby a deputy used local authorities to get additional investments for his or her constituency. Other countries put a stop quite a long time ago to deputies taking such courses of action. Let me recall that in France back in 1789, the National Assembly declared its deputies exponents of the will of the entire nation and not bound by any imperative mandate.

During the *perestroika* years deputies assumed the additional function of criticising the administrative command system until the representatives of this system had resolved the problems they had identified. The principal criticism in the Supreme Soviets was levelled at the distribution departments for failing to deliver sufficient supplies to a region or other department.

I want to make it clear that this is not about specific individuals but the struggle for distribution opportunities. It took place in the executive bodies. But the media providing detailed nationwide coverage of the debates in the Supreme Soviets and Congresses of People's Deputies portrayed them as clashes between the branches of power. Even the deputies representing regions that really were in dire straits, without realising it caused damage to these same regions. The economic decisions taken as a result of populist pressure began to wreck the entire system of economic planning. This tendency is, unfortunately, still prevalent in the new states, too.

However, what was actually happening was that the parliaments were functioning when there was absolutely no developed market economy or fully-fledged civil society. We still do not have a clearly differentiated structure of economic and political interests and organisations conforming to them.

In these conditions the parliaments turned into clubs of consumers struggling for the redistribution of revenues for their own benefit. Unfortunately, most of the deputies of the first post-Soviet parliaments failed to understand that their main objective should have been to create conditions for the growth of market relations rather than focusing on distribution issues.

Attempting to take on the function of distribution and transferring responsibility for the course of the reforms to the executive – this was the general tendency. So it was that parliament took populist rulings on wage increases that the social programmes had not budgeted for, and the executive bodies were responsible for implementing them despite a budget deficit. Thus, the executive bodies found themselves in the firing line and exposed to criticism by the press, deputies and society. As the distribution battle gathered momentum, parliaments found themselves at variance with the reforms. As a result, they slowed the pace of modernisation and conserved the economy's outdated structure. As events unfolded, a real rift opened up between the executive and parliament regarding the future direction of policies.

While giving the Soviets their due for contributing to the dismantling of the Communist Party system, I have to say that after the party dictate had been removed, they adopted a policy that sought to take total control of power. The way they were structured did not allow for the authorities to be divided up with clearly defined individual spheres of responsibility. There is also a real premise for contradictions in the actual Soviets' functions.

I watched in alarm as another dangerous tendency emerged in a number of parliaments of the CIS countries. Parliament as a state institution has to stand guard over its interests. But some of the delegates in a number of CIS countries were now acting in opposition to statehood itself, to the existing constitutional system. There were even calls to overthrow the state system and

repudiate statehood itself that also served as grounds for a dangerous rift between the branches of power.

And at this juncture I would like to pause for a moment and examine the role of the political elite. Its formation involved a process of being released from egocentric class and party interests and focusing on state and national ones instead, while being acutely aware that only the safe and free development of the people as a whole, and not separate privileged groups, can be defined as state interests.

The elite should be distinguished not only by its ability to express all-embracing national interest, and to formulate national goals, thereby elevating the people's self-appraisal but also showing the way to achieve these goals. An even more complex challenge facing the elite is to mobilise society to address these challenges and how to go about achieving this on a daily basis.

A true leader differs from a time-serving politician in that he is capable of identifying and embodying the optimal national and state interest of a given moment in time. Such an interest cannot be formulated *a priori,* once and for all. It takes shape only at a certain stage of statehood development when a state power is strong enough for development to be carried through both inside the country and beyond its borders. Wishful thinking should not be confused with reality. Confusing the ideal and political reality is to threaten the state with too many disasters and disintegration, especially if its construction is far from complete.

Unfortunately, Kazakhstan has still a lot to do to establish a political Pleiad who can meet the demands of the present day. But I am heartened by the fact that a new generation is currently becoming involved in the running of the state and national politics. We have taken a number of special steps to enable young Kazakhstanis to gain a higher education at the world's top universities and then gain work experience in the East and the West.

I am confident that before too long new names will start grabbing the headlines on Kazakhstan's political scene.

When work began on the first Constitution, the Supreme Soviet included all the Presidium members and all the committee chairmen in the Constitutional Council. Most of them were "unassailable", and not ready to engage in dialogue and discussions of alternative proposals. The deputies were, by and large, in various provincial leadership posts. At Supreme Soviet sittings they would speak about problems in their areas of which, I admit, there were quite a few. But these deputies proved incapable able of looking at the bigger picture, at state and national interests, and realising that the time for representing the provinces was coming to an end. And the sessions turned into a tug of war with each seeking to grab funds from the state budget for his particular area. So, serving all the people and the state as a whole was simply out of the question.

I debated with them for long periods of time but still failed to ensure the Constitution precisely met society's most pressing issues. I tried even then to champion the idea of a bicameral parliament, the development of all forms of ownership, including in the Basic Law the elementary norms of a democratic rule of law state – the right to dissolve parliament and impeach the president. The deputies were, of course, particularly alarmed by the former. Understandably so – they enjoyed a great many privileges, and could easily put pressure on a minister in the interests of "their own business". Only a few remembered who had elected them. In an unprecedented step in the world history of parliaments, our Supreme Soviet established impunity for deputies not only for the duration of a deputy's term in office but for two years after the electoral period. All in all, it was an ideal climate for individual creative wizardry in the field of "business".

I took part in virtually all the sittings during the enactment of the economic reform laws which many failed to understand or

accept. I had to speak out in support of every article in the draft Constitution of Kazakhstan, laws encompassing the interests of the republic's nations and peoples, so as not to allow a dangerous list in either direction.

It was in a polemic with such prevailing attitudes that the first Constitution began to take shape. And, of course, it was of quite considerable concern to me how to resolve in it issues regarding land ownership, languages and the specific nature of our statehood.

Nonetheless, I consider that both sittings of the parliament in the post-Soviet period were a substantial learning curve for us all in the incipient democratisation of society. Resolutions and laws, possibly flawed, were nevertheless passed that laid the foundations of Kazakhstan's statehood. It was a lesson in political compromise.

I could not enter into a fierce confrontation with the Supreme Soviet. The situation was too complex in Kazakhstan and beyond its borders. At that time, the pressing need to maintain internal political stability in society and the state took precedence over the challenge to find fundamental and irrevocable solutions to problems of key importance for the country. I did not succeed in getting the views of the progressive sections of society accepted. Most of the Presidium and leadership of the Supreme Soviet were vehemently opposed to my proposals. There were fierce debates. In many ways all this was conditioned by what was actually going on in politics at the time – our country had only just become an independent sovereign state. But I clearly understood that future progress would become more complex.

As soon as the country's first Constitution came into force in January 1993, its shortcomings and failure to address the real socio-economic and political process became patently obvious. The euphoria soon evaporated, and it became clear the 1993

Constitution was inadequate as a legal basis for the hard work involved on a daily basis in building a sovereign Kazakhstan.

In December 1993 we found ourselves on the brink of a crisis. Despite the fact that we had done an excellent job of urgently introducing the *tenge*, the situation required swift and crucial decisions. A single day's delay in enacting urgent acts in the economic sphere could do severe long-term damage. But the government's ability to get things done was being continuously hampered by parliament. There was now a real threat of the economy becoming destabilised. Very lengthy and unproductive discussions took place at Supreme Soviet sessions. There were considerable gaps between sessions. It appeared that parliament was simply blocking the establishment of a legal basis for economic reform. The executive was unable to conduct the reforms. This was precisely one of the reasons for the sharp fall in the value of the *tenge* at the start of 1994. Under pressure from strong industrial and regional body lobbies, the government set to organising an ill-considered mutual payment system between enterprises. But the fact was that the Supreme Soviet proved incapable of passing laws now that the country's financial and economic policy was totally independent.

By this time it became no longer possible to maintain the status quo. The issue of the absolute power of the Soviets which was preventing the president and government from implementing the reforms had to be addressed without delay. I was prepared to take this issue to a referendum.

Events, however, then took a different turn. On 16 November 1993, the Alataus municipal council of peoples' deputies of the city of Almaty passed a resolution without precedent in state social and political life – to dissolve itself. The following appeal to the people's deputies of the republic and local councils was published: "The Soviets in many ways remain synonymous with the previous regime and old ideology. The narrow frameworks of

hopelessly outdated laws regulating the work of the representative system, and the decline in the actual deputy body's interest in its work are augmenting the Soviets' estrangement from real life. Their failure to implement the electorate's will is becoming increasingly obvious. And this is no fault of the deputy body. The reason lies elsewhere – in the fundamentally defective model of the Soviets' absolute power and its total failure to meet present-day realities."

On 17 November the deputies of the capital's Lenin and Oktyabr municipal councils also decided to relinquish their plenary powers before the expiration of their term of office. The Auezov and Frunze Soviets followed suit, and then so did all the others across the republic.

Commonsense prevailed and rank-and-file deputies took the lead in having the Supreme Soviet's plenary powers curtailed ahead of schedule. Of the 360 deputies, over 200 tendered their resignations. It was as a result of this total collapse of the Soviet system that the Supreme Soviet passed a motion on self-dissolution.

Notwithstanding all its defects, this parliament played a major role in the history of independent Kazakhstan. Most importantly of all, it passed the sovereign state's first Constitution which was undoubtedly a political and legislative achievement in the first stage of independence.

I placed great hopes in the new parliament that was elected in March 1994. It has to be said that after a fairly protracted period of highs and lows, this parliament gradually embarked on a constructive course. It was more professional and started up discussions concerning numerous urgently needed laws. Yes, there were complexities in its work, and its relations with the government were sometimes tense, but this was to be expected, especially in view of how complex the economic situation was at the time.

Despite the fact that in December 1994, the parliament declined a rating ballot on the status of languages, the character of statehood and private ownership of land, I continued to work with the deputy body. There was an obvious need to set up a better defined and more consistent power structure, and, on a constitutional level, resolve issues of a fundamental economic nature and considerable social and political significance.

And so, at the end of December 1994, I invited the Minister of Justice for a discussion. We talked for over two hours. I outlined the basic ways of approaching possible constitutional reform which I planned to submit to the Supreme Soviet for their consideration. However, this was only the preparatory stage. During the course of the work, new amendments, additions and proposals kept appearing. I recently counted that we apparently drew up 18 drafts of the Constitution.

I was confident that, despite possible objections, the new Constitution would be passed by parliament. The parliament's positive steps in discussions of the economic problems of incoming 1994, and contacts with a number of influential deputy factions were testament to this. It is certainly worth mentioning that this parliament's highly professional level was also confirmed by the fact that many of these parliamentarians became senior officials in the executive. I remember that period well, and I was confident a compromise would be found, and constitutional reform successfully introduced. Then, however, something unforeseen happened.

Time and again in history, a small incident has set in motion a chain of events that have gathered momentum like an avalanche and led to unforeseen consequences. Just such an incident for the whole of Kazakhstan was a ruling passed by the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Kazakhstan on 6 March 1995. A journalist by the name of Tatiana Grigoriyevna Kvyatkovskaya took the Central Election Commission to task, alleging a breach

of the election code in the Abylaikhanov electoral district. The investigation went on a very long time. Eventually, the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Kazakhstan passed a ruling stating that "the method of counting votes introduced by the Central Election Commission not only entailed a breach on a mass scale of the constitutional principle of 'one man, one vote', but might also distort election results and essentially change the electoral system established by the election code. In so doing, the Central Election Commission had violated Article 60 of the Constitution by exceeding its jurisdiction." Consequently, doubt was cast on the results of the previous election and legitimacy of the authority of all Supreme Soviet deputies.

In view of the situation's complexity, and in an attempt to avert the looming crisis, I made the following public statement on 8 March: "The Court's ruling has come as a total surprise to us all. Nothing like this has ever happened before in the history of the state. I was, and still am, an advocate of stable state authority. After all, the future of our intended reforms in many ways depends on this. The role reserved here for the parliament the country elected a year ago is not insubstantial. I have great hopes pinned on the Supreme Soviet. Of course, sometimes arguments do occur and emotions run high. Yet from the very start we have succeeded in establishing a constructive dialogue.

"The signed agreement on maintaining co-ordinated action between the legislative and executive branches of power is testament to this. And then, like a bolt from the blue, came the Constitutional Court's ruling. Only commonsense, perseverance, and strict adherence to the laws can lead us to the one and only correct solution and avert a parliamentary crisis.

"At the same time, a respectful attitude should be adopted to the Constitutional Court's rulings, regardless of whose interests they affect. Only then is it possible to speak of Kazakhstan's

genuine move toward a rule of law state and the triumph of the law'.

That same day, in keeping with Article 131 of the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan, I raised an objection to the Constitutional Court's ruling. The following day, 9 March, an objection to it was also raised by Chairman of the Supreme Soviet Abish Kekilbayev.

In keeping with Article 131 of the Constitution which states that "if the Constitutional Court by a majority of not less than two thirds of the votes of the total number of judges approves a previously adopted ruling, it shall pass into effect from the moment of its adoption", the Constitutional Court overrode the objections we raised. This found expression in the ruling of 10 March, 1995: "In accordance with Article 131 of the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Articles 14, 25, 26 of the Law *On constitutional judicial procedure in the Republic of Kazakhstan*, the Constitutional Court has decided to decline the objections of the President and Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the Republic of Kazakhstan and reaffirm the ruling of the Constitutional Court of 6 March 1995. The decision is not subject to appeal."

On 11 March, the Supreme Soviet passed the Constitutional Law *On the implementation of amendments and additions to the Constitution* and the resolution *On suspending the activity of the Constitutional Court.* However, from a legal viewpoint and sheer commonsense, these documents no longer had any bearing on the Constitutional Court's ruling.

In view of the ruling, as guarantor of the observation of the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan, I made an inquiry to the court on the legal implications of the resolution of 6 March. My inquiry read as follows: "In view of the coming into force of the resolution of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Kazakhstan of 6 March, 1995, adopted in accordance with the action brought by TG Kvyatkovskaya, I hereby request an explanation for the following questions: does this ruling of the Constitu-

tional Court signify the unconstitutionality of the Supreme Soviet of the Republic of Kazakhstan that took place on 7 March 1994, and also the unconstitutionality of the authority of the deputies of the Supreme Soviet? If the authority of the deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the Republic of Kazakhstan is unconstitutional, who is entitled to make decisions of a legislative character? Does the ruling of the Constitutional Court signify that the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan *On the temporary delegation of additional powers to the President of the Republic* adopted on 10 December, 1993, continues in force?"

On 11 March, in its additional definition the Constitutional Court gave explanations of the issues I had raised. The fact that the country's parliament was unconstitutional or, to put it another way, its activity was illegitimate, was recognised. What's more, the Law of 10 December, 1993, *On the temporary delegation of additional powers to the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan and heads of the local administrations* granting the President the right to make decisions of a legislative character, came into force again.

Guided by the Constitutional Court's ruling, that same day I signed the Decree *On measures issuing from the ruling of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Kazakhstan of 6 March, 1995.* A state commission headed by Vice President Erik Asanbayev was set up in accordance with this decree to offer deputies assistance with finding employment, providing security for Supreme Soviet property and resolving other issues relating to the cessation of the Supreme Soviet's term of office.

If the parliament's plenary powers were unconstitutional, so, too, were those of the government, as the illegitimate Supreme Soviet had participated in its formation. So, on 11 March, the government also offered its resignation, which I accepted. In accordance with the Constitution and the Law *On the temporary delegation of additional plenary powers to the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan and heads of the local administrations,*

I appointed Akejan Kazhegeldin to the post of Prime Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan and instructed him to implement proposals on the new membership of the government as a matter of urgency. The resignation of the Central Election Commission was accepted at the same time.

Events in Kazakhstan yet again showed our aspiration to stability and rigorous adherence to the legal principles of resolving conflicts. This was highlighted repeatedly by representatives of the international community. In an interview US Ambassador to the Republic of Kazakhstan William Courtney commented: "It's a triumph for democracy. There has been no crisis because all the branches of power have carried out their functions. The Constitutional Court has worked in a quite cautious and considered manner to reach the conclusion that the election was not legitimate...

"We respect the ruling of your Constitutional Court. The whole world understands today that democracy has been significantly strengthened in Kazakhstan. You have passed through all this calmly and very swiftly, and that's why there has been no crisis... This is a good model not just for the CIS states but also other countries who consider themselves democracies, including the US. Kazakhstan is no longer a student of democracy but a teacher. All Kazakhstanis may take pride in this, and the US has reason to be proud of Kazakhstan... The latest events... have consolidated the political rating of your leadership which has shown respect for the Constitution."

The March events once again highlighted the urgent need for the adoption of a new Constitution. We had found the legal basis for a solution to this most complex situation. However, it was impossible to keep responding like this each time. Well-defined safeguards were needed to prevent similar events from being repeated.

After the dissolution of the Supreme Soviet, I started working intensively on the draft Constitution. I must pay tribute to the

people who helped me accomplish this crucial mission: Professor Nagashbai Shaikenov, Doctor of Juridical Science, and Bauyrjhan Mukhamedjhanov and Konstantin Kolpakov, Candidates of Juridical Science. They are all specialists in various branches of juridical science, and each of them worked assiduously on their sections.

I appointed 11 experts to discuss the draft. Sometimes we worked for 13-14 hours at a stretch on the articles of the Constitution. The most important thing above everything else was to have a sense of responsibility for the matter at hand. I encouraged them to criticise the project and engage in debates.

During this work I thought about how the life of a society undergoing the transition to a qualitatively new state is so multifaceted that any state decisions and documents are bound to become outdated sooner or later. The same was happening with the Constitution, which had to adequately reflect the real processes taking place in the life of society and the state. The constitutional process in any country does not stop when the Constitution has been passed: the juridical framing of socio-economic and political processes has not only to conform with the dynamic of what is happening in society but forestall it as well.

I had to study vast amounts of literature on the constitutional systems of other countries and interaction of the branches of power, activity of political parties, trade unions, human rights, property and so on. All this was included in the draft with due regard for our republic's specific features. For instance, while I was "on holiday" in the summer of 1995, a few weeks prior to the referendum on a new draft Constitution, I had to study the constitutions of another 12 states.

So, the decree on the discussion of the draft Constitution was signed. Next began the final stage – completing work on the draft with due regard for all the comments and suggestions. Every day we had a summary of the suggestions for the draft compiled for us. I have to say that several folders with sorted cor-

respondence arrived every single day. And then all the press reports also had to be read!

Some 33,000 group discussions of the project took place with over three million citizens taking part. Nearly 30,000 suggestions and comments were contributed by citizens, collectives, residents' groups, *maslikhat* (mayors) and public associations. A total of 1,110 amendments and additions were inserted in 55 of the articles.

Practice in other countries demonstrates that Constitutions are written by a small group of people, legal experts. We were working in an extremely tight time frame, and the pressure was immense. I have had a lot of different experiences in my life, and am able to cope with endless amounts of stressful work. My experts, on the other hand, sometimes looked as though they were ready to drop. I would say to them: "You can't work on the Constitution looking like that – go and rest," and then I would go on working.

Another debate started during the three days after I had decided to sign the final draft. The French experts who had been helping us with the work suggested introducing an article regarding the president's right to dissolve parliament at any time. However, we are not the French – we have different conditions. I proposed a milder version. Some raised objections, arguing in favour of the first version. But it was important to bear the future in mind. What mattered most to me was setting up a system of checks and balances between the branches of power that safeguarded their joint activity.

The referendum on extending the plenary powers of the head of state and the adoption of the new Constitution were directly linked. Given the crisis caused by that particular ruling of the Constitutional Court, it became clear that the reforms had to be implemented without further delay.

But constitutional reform could only get under way once the people's support had been obtained. This is what prompted the

decision to speed up the work on the text of the new Constitution. While I was being bombarded with criticism, I received the backing of the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan who suggested that I directly addressed the people without waiting for the reconvening of parliament. I think this was the right decision.

I have to admit, I had my doubts. On the one hand, it was an objective, valid way of addressing the issue. Given the political crisis caused by the resignations of parliament and the government, it was essential to prevent society from becoming excessively politicised and for the purpose of maintaining stability, strengthen presidential power. On the other hand, the president is a person just like anyone else, and I felt uneasy about the personal implications of addressing the issue in this manner. I knew there was bound to be a lot of criticism and unpleasant things said. There were claims that I was scared of elections. But as the sociological research data convincingly proved, if it had merely been a question of me retaining my personal power, it would have actually been worth my while to go to the polls. The gulf between Nazarbayev and the other potential candidates for the post of president was virtually unassailable. An election, moreover, offered a choice between two or three candidates whereas the question put to a referendum was: "Nursultan Nazarbayev – yes or no?" I would be standing openly for election with all the odds stacked against me: the hardships of the transitional period, decline in living standards, resentments that had mounted over all these years, purposeful criticism and downright incitement.

We had got through the difficult phase of forming Kazakhstan statehood but now once again had to choose how to live from here on. This was a question of economics and politics and many other areas of social life. I had studied the numerous proposals of politicians and public figures, theoreticians and practitioners but now decided to turn to the people for support.

In view of the historical context, the question put to a referendum was essentially about maintaining stability both for the state and society as a whole. Basically, a referendum was to answer questions of key importance for the whole country – whether the policy we had been conducting all these years was the right one. Would the people of Kazakhstan give a vote of confidence to the president to continue with it? And so that is what sealed it.

The Kazakhstanis supported me. The Central Commission of the referendum on extending the plenary powers of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan worked out the referendum's results. On 29 April 1995, 8,309,637 people, or 91.21 per cent, took part in the referendum out of a total of 9,110,156 citizens of the republic who were eligible to do so. Of the citizens who took part in the referendum, 7,932,834, that is, 95.46 per cent, were in favour of extending the president's plenary powers. A total of 90.51 per cent of the voting public took part in the referendum, of which 89 percent voted for the adoption of the new Constitution. The high level of voting was an indication of our citizens' support for the course we had chosen.

I felt an immense sense of gratitude. Every politician has his hour of glory when he gets his people's full support and gains tremendous satisfaction from the fact that he has done his duty. Many years of doubts and anxieties, and sometimes emptiness all around, when the circle of like-minded colleagues seemed infinitesimally small compared to the huge mass of problems and endless pile of tasks, great and small you were landed with – all these now proved not to have been in vain.

The vicious circle had been broken. Now I was confident of the people's full support, an endless amount of work could be done.

CHAPTER 3

BETWEEN THE EAST AND THE WEST

We look upon the wisdom
of the East and the West,
not as confrontational forces
but poles the world oscillates between.

Hermann Hesse

In Kazakh family.
XUAR, People's Republic of China. July, 1991

Signing of the memorandum of creation of joint venture "Tengizchevroil" with the chairman of the board, the managing director of "Chevron" corporation Kenneth T. Der.
Almaty. April, 1993

With the prime minister of India P.V. Narasimha-Rao.
Delhi. February, 1992

Signing of the kazahstan-Israeli agreements
with the prime minister of Israel Sh. Peres.
December, 1995

On a grand meeting at the mayoralty for handing over
«the gold Keys» of Madrid.
March 24, 1994

The Conference on safety and cooperation in Europe.
Helsinki. July, 1992

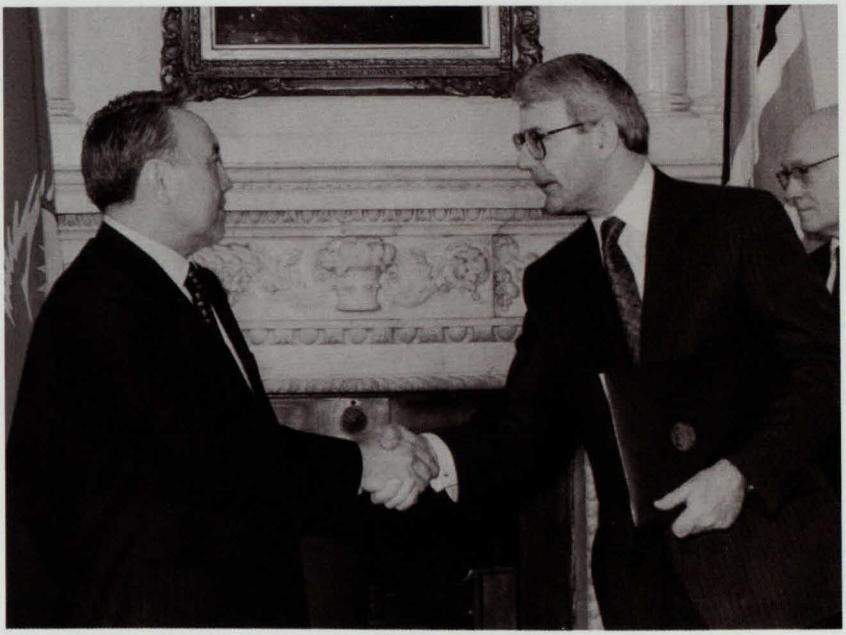
At the meeting with the German chancellor G. Kohl.
Bonn. September, 1992

Presentation of the Presidential award of the peace and spiritual harmony to the General Director of the UNESCO F. Mayor.
Paris. November, 1995

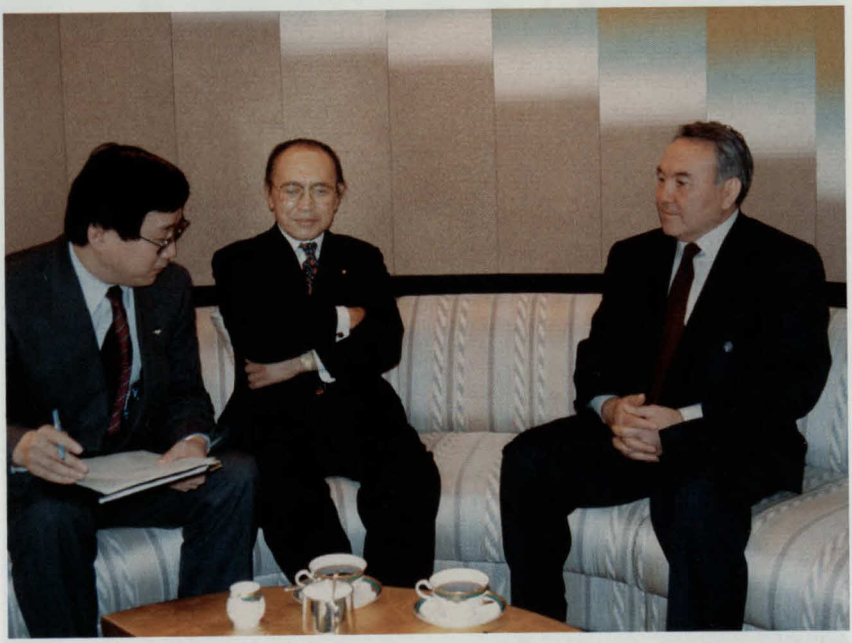
Conversation with the General Secretary of UN B. Gal.
New-York. October, 1992

With the prime minister of Pakistan B. Bhutto.
Almaty. August, 1995

The president of Iran A. A. Hashemi-Rafsandzhani in Kazakhstan.
Almaty. October, 1993



10 Dawning street. With the prime minister of the Great Britain J. Major.
March, 1994



With businessmen of Japan.
Tokyo. May, 1994

In the month of cherry blossom-Sakura Conversation with emperor Akihito.
Tokyo. April, 1994

The President of Turkey T. Ozal at the construction of "Ankara" hotel. Almaty. April, 1993

Conversation with the chairman of the
Peoples Republic of China Tszyan Zemin.
Beijing. September, 1995

With the President of France Zh. Shirak.
Paris. October, 1995

Official ceremony in Westminster.
London. March, 1994

The meeting with W. Perry at Pentagon.
Washington. February, 1994

With US President G. Bush.
May, 1992

At the meeting with prime-minister M. Thatcher.
Almaty. August,1991

Signing of bilateral documents with US president W. Clinton.
Washington. February, 1994

Meeting with the patriarch of the European policy,
the president of France F. Mitterand.
Paris. February, 1994

With the prime minister of the State Council
of the People's Republic of China Li Pan.
Almaty. April, 1994

It just so happened that as the bipolar world was collapsing, Kazakhstan found itself at the very epicentre of world politics. New states emerged in place of the superpower, and it was our country that attracted particular attention among them. By a whim of fate, this attention was due not only to our vast territory with its vast natural riches or to our diverse, multi-ethnic population but primarily to the fact that it was here that quite a large percentage of the former USSR's nuclear potential had ended up. This is why our republic's name kept cropping up in the world's media.

Since little was known about our country at the time, Kazakhstan initially acquired a negative image as an Islamic state with a nuclear arsenal, and a threat to the entire world community. This negative image had an impact, and made things difficult for us and our future partners as well. The 90s saw a radical change in previous relations in international affairs, extreme instability and the emergence of new "evils" – regional and internal wars, and terrorism on a much greater scale.

We were confronted not only with the challenge of establishing international relations but also overcoming the considerable negative barrier erected by certain politicians and the media. We had to address several challenges: first, to demonstrate what our state was really like; second, to guarantee not only international recognition for Kazakhstan but also its security and territorial integrity; third, to get involved in world economic relations. It was then that our foreign policy began to take shape.

In those days, only personal contacts and talks with the most prominent heads of state and leaders of economic powers and international organisations could turn the situation round. That is precisely why I chose to make a whole series of foreign trips in particularly quick succession. Not only diplomatic problems were dealt with in the course of these visits. All the agreements that formed the basis of our interstate relations had to be set

up again. And this, too, involved a colossal amount of intensive work. Friendship and cooperation agreements and treaties on the establishment of mutual relations had to be signed before business contacts could be arranged. We saw to it that upon gaining our independence numerous developed countries immediately concluded full-scale economic agreements with us. We also set up a favourable trade regime.

What's more, for many people Kazakhstan was a *terra incognita.* We had to show them what it had to offer – its potential and its people, and so our state delegations always included deputies and members of the intelligentsia, scientists, and journalists. They were all witness to the intricate work that went on during official visits. We did not give ourselves an easy time when we were abroad and often worked nearly round the clock.

We also took a close look at various economic and political development models. It was essential for us to understand the pros and cons of the various modernisation models *in situ*, and work out ways of getting a given foreign model to suit Kazakhstan. Looking back at those years, you can clearly trace the manner in which the secrecy of the Soviet period was superseded by a torrent of information, at times of a biased nature, embellishing the positive experiences of various models with calls to introduce them to our country.

Today the substantial achievements of our diplomacy are plain to see. Kazakhstan is recognised by nearly all the countries in the world as an independent state; its sovereignty is becoming stronger and there is no real threat of armed intervention in its internal affairs. The nuclear club has given us guarantees regarding the security and inviolability of our state borders. An agreement has been signed and the state border legally registered between the People's Republic of China and Kazakhstan – for the first time in our history. Today Kazakhstan is well known in the world. We are trusted, listened to and invited to act as interme-

diaries in resolving conflicts. We have enjoyed a massive influx of global business. The world's top companies are investing in our country's future.

The republic has successfully avoided being drawn into international conflicts. We have bid farewell forever to nuclear weapons – the first in the world to close down a test site – and we are seeking peace and neighbourly relations with all states. And we are as good as our word. That's why we are believed.

In my address to members of our diplomatic corps on 15 February 1995, I once again reiterated the main directions of our foreign policy, namely, strengthening Kazakhstan's statehood; following the adopted policy to modernise politics; setting up a market economy; safeguarding social and political stability without which there can be no growth; maintaining civil peace, international concord; aspiring to integration with the CIS countries and the world community.

Frankly speaking, when I think about what has been achieved in what is, in historical terms, just a few years, I, as a human being and son of my people, take pride in the fact that Kazakhstan has really become a fully-fledged partner of the states of the world community. I am grateful to destiny for being fortunate enough to represent our country in these unforgettable, historic times.

However, only a few years ago things were quite different.

First steps

There was a kind of euphoria in our republic during our first years of independence, also regarding the prospects for developing our foreign policy. It was commonly thought that we only had to proclaim our sovereignty and the world would throw open its doors to us. But today I can say for sure that nothing was either that simple or that easy. There were highly complex geo-political processes going on, and they affected our opportunities as well.

At the start of the 90s, the southern borders of the former USSR were what could be described as a zone of instability and, what's more, a zone of military conflicts. The war in Afghanistan had moved across the border and proved to be closely tied up with the civil conflict in Tajikistan. And that was no distance at all from Kazakhstan. Let me remind you of the events in the Kyrgyz town of Osh. Irresponsible politicians caused a confrontation between two nations – the Uzbeks and Kyrgyz. There were several skirmishes over water and mineral resources on the Kyrgyz-Tajik border which caused the deaths of dozens of completely innocent people. We were seriously affected by events in the South Caucasus where undeclared war between Azerbaijan and Armenia kept flaring up. A war had broken out in Georgia and there was also increasing tension in the rest of the Caucasus.

Border problems with China became an irksome legacy for us. And we are talking about some 1,700 kilometres where vast military contingents used to be amassed. There had been heightened tension along the Sino-Soviet border for years. Take, for instance, events in the Semipalatinsk region when Chinese troops crossed into our territory. And this was only the first circle of potential and real conflicts around our borders.

If one was to include the nuclear dimension in Kazakhstan's security problems, then let me remind you that the second circle of instability did not encompass only the above-mentioned conflicts. No matter how our relations developed with threshold nuclear powers – Pakistan, India, Iran, Iraq, Israel, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the Republic of South Africa – their capacity for producing nuclear weapons is dangerous not only for these countries' closest neighbours and potential enemies. Nuclear weapons are the scourge of our age and not only those armed with them may end up suffering because of them. After the break-up of the USSR control could have been lost over these terrible weapons' proliferation.

Finding a total solution to these problems was crucial. Yet we had no actual experience in conducting foreign policy. Kazakhstan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs performed functions far removed from diplomacy. Imagine a country faced with all these highly complex challenges but without any diplomatic representatives abroad, and not even the most elementary experience of foreign policy issues, not to mention foreign policy traditions, or qualified personnel.

The situation we found ourselves in was not so much absurd as deeply regrettable. Kazakhstan – a state with quite highly developed potential, qualified labour resources, vast mineral reserves and nuclear weapons in its territory – did not have a single international treaty. Of course, initially Russia represented all the CIS countries' interests, not only in international organisations but in all the countries of the world through its diplomatic representatives.

It was clear that we had urgently to start formulating our own foreign policy, if our interests were not to suffer colossal damage. It was essential to establish a legal basis for relations with our foreign partners. For instance, to attract investments into Kazakhstan, elementary bilateral diplomatic relations first had to be established, and then the principles of inter-state relations established which included a treaty signed by the heads of state, intergovernmental agreements defining investment protection procedures, the elimination of double taxation and the setting up of a favourable trade regime and so on. This involved dozens of documents.

The Turkish meridian

My first visit took place in 1990, at the invitation of President Turgut Ozal. Our delegation was greeted in accordance with official protocol, even though the Soviet Union still existed at the

time. You see, on 25 October 1990, we passed the Declaration on the State Sovereignty of the Kazakh SSR. Central government had been refusing to relinquish any of its plenary powers. And so, against the wishes of the USSR leadership, in this document we set out the inviolability of our republic's borders, the supremacy of the Constitution and laws of Kazakhstan, the right in our territory to suspend laws and other acts passed by the highest bodies of the Soviet Union that breached our sovereign rights and the republic's Constitution. The Declaration stated that Kazakhstan was an independent subject of international relations, independently defining foreign policy in its own interests, exchanging diplomatic and consular representatives, participating in the activity of international organisations. Preparations for, and the adoption of, the Declaration took place in difficult circumstances. There were sufficient numbers of opponents of sovereignty both in Moscow and Kazakhstan, including deputies of the Supreme Soviet. The discussion went on for several days. I took part in all the sessions. Kazakhstanis rightly celebrate Independence Day as the country's main national holiday.

It was a bold step at the time. In my opinion, it was the adoption of this document that made a difference to the kind of reception our delegation was given in Turkey.

We were accommodated in a special residence where Turkey's founder Kemal Ataturk had once resided. It was the first time I had conducted talks as the head of a sovereign state. It was then that we laid the foundations of our future mutual relations with Turkey.

Of course, I was struck at the time by what life was really like in Turkey – by its progressive economic and social development that was so very different from the official information about it released in the USSR. What made the greatest impression on me, however, was becoming acquainted and then eventually friends

with two outstanding people in that country – Turgut Ozal and Suleyman Demirel.

I knew a considerable amount about Turgut Ozal's endeavours as a reformer and progressive leader who had rebuilt the country's ruined economy. But this personal meeting and our subsequent friendship cast light on exactly how extraordinary this man really was. Every new conversation with him opened up new features of his personality.

He was exceedingly charming and knowledgeable. After completing his studies at the Istanbul University of Technology, he had done some work experience in the US and received a master's degree in electro-technology. Then he joined the International Bank of Reconstruction and Development where he specialised in managing developing countries' issues. He had experience of virtually all types of state service and private business.

It is generally recognised that while Mustaf Kemal Ataturk created Turkey as a modern state, Turgut Ozal led it out of poverty and transformed it into a modern economy. Turgut Ozal's rise to power was preceded by a military regime. Different interpretations can be given to the coup that took place. The situation in the country had certainly deteriorated to the point of open clashes. There was total anarchy and dozens of people being killed in the streets. Parliament was made up of representatives from 250 parties. Heated discussions took place at first, and then gradually began to escalate into scuffles. The heightened tension inside parliament spilled out into the streets. The country was on the verge of collapse. And then the military took over the reins of power and started gradually reforming the country's economy.

On 7 December 1983, Turgut Ozal took over as the head of government. It was a difficult legacy he inherited. In January 1984, he made a proclamation to the Turkish people in which he made no promises of an easy life but, on the contrary, warned that Turkey was facing the most difficult period in its history. He

gained the people's confidence to conduct reforms. The country made a decisive shift towards building a free market economy through privatisation, openness and the state regulation of economy. Turgut Ozal immediately set about privatising small and medium-sized state enterprises. All these became profitable concerns; there was a sharp increase in labour productivity and an improvement in employees' living conditions. Radical changes in agriculture turned the country into a top exporter of agricultural produce. The Turkish lira was placed under a floating exchange rate system. Turgut Ozal then led an assault against the black market. As a result, billions of liras were spent on Western technologies. Since 1988, the lira has been a convertible currency. Turgut Ozal's government conducted a policy of attracting foreign capital, establishing the first free economic zones. During his leadership of the country, Turkey paid off its foreign debt for the first time. Turkish entrepreneurs and employees began to have confidence in their strengths and abilities to compete with the West. In one of his addresses in the autumn of 1989, Turgut Ozal claimed that nowhere else in the world had such immense changes taken place over such a short space of time.

The eighth president of Turkey spoke fluent English, was an honorary professor of the University of Texas and the author of a number of seminal works on economics and foreign policy. He was a man of tremendous personal courage. His reforms were by no means popular, and people who had earned vast fortunes through dishonest means were the first to object to them. He was repeatedly threatened with physical reprisals, and an unsuccessful attempt was made on his life in the spring of 1988.

Turgut Ozal made several visits to Kazakhstan. In my opinion, he made these visits to the Central Asian states not only because he needed to establish neighbourly relations with the new states but also, to a certain extent, because he sought to make Kemal Ataturk's dream come true – a dream he had inherited from him

– to form a powerful association of Turkic states. He did not conceal this dream. He was an advocate of patriotism, of the idea of a Great Turkey that would unify the entire Turkic world from Lake Baikal to the Mediterranean and the Danube.

I have to say that we also had similar ideas. To many it seemed that Turkey could solve all our problems. Of course, if one had not known what our life was like under the previous regime, one might have got swept away by such euphoria. But what would this really mean? It would mean giving up recently gained independence, breaking off traditional relations with neighbours and having got rid of one "elder brother" landing ourselves with another.

This issue was discussed very thoroughly at the first Istanbul summit of the heads of Turkic states. The statement written by Turkish colleagues spoke of the common course toward integration with Turkey being pursued on account of our common historical roots, language and culture and mind-sets. I had to greatly disappoint Turgut Ozal by saying that we could not sign this statement. I told him we were in favour of economic, humanitarian and political cooperation. Yes, we had common roots, the same ancestors and a lot in common in our cultures, but we had been kept apart from each other for a long time. I suggested restoring these lost bonds in a civilised manner while respecting the recently gained independence and the sovereignty of each state. But we could not contemplate breaking off relations with other nations and states and re-establishing relations with anyone on an unequal footing.

Of course, Turgut Ozal had not been expecting such a reaction from the President of Kazakhstan. The President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov also supported my position. There was a lot of talk in the press about Nursultan Nazarbayev sharply rebuffing pan-Turkic aspirations. Turgut Ozal should be given his due. A wise politician, he understood and accepted my decision, and

we remained on friendly terms. Turkey and Kazakhstan began cooperating as equal partners. Turgut Ozal realised that such relations were precisely what we needed – equality, friendship and mutual advantageous economic relations.

Turgut Ozal was a deeply religious man. He frequently repeated the postulate of the Koran: "The Almighty created people in His own image and likeness but in Islam it is man who matters most." During one of his visits to Kazakhstan he laid the first stone in the building of the Kazakh-Turkish Akhmed Yassaui University in Turkestan. With his support, restoration work was carried out on Yassaui's tomb – a Moslem shrine and pilgrimage destination for believers, and a unique architectural and cultural monument of Central Asia. When he was in Kazakhstan for the last time, we both laid the foundation stone of the five-star Ankara Hotel, which was being built with Turkish investments.

For all his flintiness, he was actually quite sentimental. I recall the following incident. Turgut Ozal was at a meeting with students of the Kazakh-Turkish University in Turkestan. In keeping with Kazakh tradition, one of the women students sang a song to Turgut Ozal and his family, recalling all the kindly deeds he had done in the name of the friendship between our peoples and states. And his eyes welled up with tears.

He once came to my house for a family dinner with his wife and son. We started recalling our young days. His wife, Semra, was from a well-to-do family. Ozal had lost his father at a young age. His mother, Hafiza Ozal, managed to give him and his two brothers a higher education. He also had a state grant that helped. Turgut Ozal was a considered a poor fiancé by his future wife's family, but he loved Semra very much and did his utmost to win her love. And in the end he succeeded. Because I knew him well, I can say that he was a charismatic man who was capable of creating an atmosphere of trust. He was also a profoundly knowledgeable politician, and very wise and decent man.

A few years later, on 17 April 1993, this outstanding politician and statesman passed away. At his funeral, when not only the whole Turkish nation but all those who respected this leader of global stature were in deep mourning, I thought about how a person's achievements were appreciated often after his death.

Turgut Ozal's passing signified not only the death of Turkey's eighth president but also the end of an important stage in the country's history. The architect of the "Turkish miracle", consistent supporter of economic free growth, committed, intrepid reformer, Turgut Ozal rightfully commanded global authority. He is also remembered as a major foreign policymaker. After the thaw in Turkey's political relations with the countries of the Near and Middle East, the former Eastern bloc countries and then the new independent states, measures were taken to set up a base for economic cooperation. I highly value the great support given to Kazakhstan by Turkey and Turgut Ozal personally. We shall never forget that country was the first to recognise our independence.

I also met with Suleyman Demirel during my first visit to Turkey in October 1990, when he was the leader of the main opposition party. In May 1993, he was elected the ninth president of the Turkish Republic. It was the culmination of the 69-year-old politician's long and distinguished career. For many years, from 1965 onwards, he repeatedly headed the government and the Justice Party (now the Party of the Correct Way) – a major political force in Turkey along with the Party of the Fatherland which Turgut Ozal headed.

Apparently, at one time Suleyman Demirel was Ozal's mentor, but then their paths diverged. Yet it seems to me that despite the substantial differences of opinion between these leading Turkish politicians, no harm was done to the common cause. Each of them made an invaluable contribution to the development of the Turkish state.

Suleyman Demirel and I struck up a friendly relationship. We often met at an official level and during various international summits of heads of state, and, probably, there are few examples in the world of such a consistent and productive relationship between state leaders.

Kazakhstan-Turkish relations are developing at a dynamic rate. These days it is hard to name a field of the economy, culture and education where joint projects are not ongoing. Our nations are becoming not simply equal partners with common outlooks and ethnic identities. We also have a great friendship – and that is something Kazakhstanis deeply value and take pride in.

A GREAT NEIGHBOUR

Relations with the Celestial Empire have been top of the agenda all through our history. In my opinion, twenty-first-century history is going to be defined in numerous ways by China. Many countries regard relations with China as a fundamental part of their foreign policy. And it is particularly important for Kazakhstan to organise cooperation with this major power that has such a rapidly developing economy.

Our histories have been closely interwoven. Now that we are searching for our origins and answers to many of the questions lost in the mists of time, endeavouring to make sense of our past and present, we are discovering a wealth of resources in Chinese literary sources.

Over the past 40 years of Soviet-Sino relations, we have gone through periods of intense mutual admiration and total "divorce". Situated in between two vast states, Kazakhstan has found itself at the very centre of these opposing sides. Were both of them really preparing for a future war? Yes, I think they were. A massive number of troops were deployed along both sides of the border. The Central Asian Military District was established

in Kazakhstan's territory with its own personnel and weapons to match the Chinese forces in the border zone. From today's perspective, I am now certain this show of strength was offensive rather than defensive. Several of the passes in the Tian Shan Mountains between Kazakhstan and China contained masses of military equipment, fortified installations, nuclear warhead storage facilities, aerodromes and weapon stores.

Each side regarded the other as the enemy, and military doctrines identified each other as a likely hostile force. In short, a common policy and common propaganda made us all think of China as enemy number one. But if all nations recalled only the bad things, it would be simply impossible to live in the world. Times are changing, and every generation has views of its own, and interprets state interests anew. After gaining independence, Kazakhstan was obliged to redefine its relations with the People's Republic. We had to cast off the legacy we had inherited from party ideologists.

My first visit to the PRC took place back in 1991. I met with President Jiang Zemin, Vice President Lee Piang, the mayors of Beijing and Shanghai. We visited the free economic zones in the east of China. The visit radically changed my views of this country. Gone were the "paper tigers", the stereotypes from the days of Sino-Soviet opposition. The entire country was undergoing reforms. During our meetings all the leaders and ordinary people spoke of their aspirations for stability and peace, both inside the country and beyond its borders. And this coincided with our view of the situation.

Normal, friendly relations with China are for us yet another means of safeguarding peace. In those days, the only way Kazakhstan had of achieving this was through Russia. That is what suited central government. In view of the ongoing situation, we were then seeking alternative ways into the foreign market. In 1990, we had already completed a rail link between Kazakhstan

and China. There then appeared hope of establishing a rail link to the Pacific coast by the shortest route.

Kazakhstan-Sino relations have been developing very dynamically. After my first visit we succeeded in opening all the available trade routes, and within eighteen months, commodity circulation between us had increased dozens of times over.

What's more, we also started talks almost at once with our southern neighbours. My talks with Iranian President Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani concluded with us agreeing to rail links between Kazakhstan and Iran via Turkmenistan. By extending them through Turkey we have also been able to establish a link with Europe. The Great Silk Route may become a railway.

We are planning to increase the carrying capacity of our railways. At present, the capacity of the railway to the centre of China is already nearly 30 million tons. Goods have started arriving in Kazakhstan from China. Initially, the Chinese side came under a lot of criticism for delivering low-quality goods. Of course, this was not an ideal situation, but given the shortage of goods, inexpensive Chinese wares certainly filled the gap. During my second visit and talks on a different level we succeeded in reducing the low-quality imports and putting trade on a normal, civilised footing.

Frankly, I was quite cautious about the possibility of quickly resolving all the problems that existed at the time. Prolonged anti-China propaganda with its negative portrayal of this country's leadership had also taken its toll. But I was proved wrong, and it was a useful lesson for me. I was once again convinced of the wisdom of the popular saying – it is better to see something once than hear about it a hundred times. My meeting with President Jiang Zemin changed a lot of my views. He had led a very interesting life. After graduating from the Moscow Institute for Energy Studies, he worked as the director of a number of electric power stations, held senior posts in government and the ministry

of energy and was promoted to party work in Shanghai. Now PRC President and General Secretary of the CPC, Jiang Zemin has an in-depth knowledge of national traditions and culture as well of the achievements of Western civilisation. This has doubtlessly been enhanced by his studies in Japan and work experience in the US. He has a fine command of Russian, English and Japanese. The psychological barrier was broken when we were able to conduct face-to-face talks without interpreters. During our relaxed conversations I came to appreciate his very insightful understanding of geo-political situations. Jiang Zemin spoke also about reforming the Communist Party of China. Modernisation is taking place in an atmosphere of party discipline, under centralised guidance, and in an orderly manner.

The members of the various delegations also took part in the next talks. Conversations continued at the dinner arranged in our honour by President Jiang Zemin. I asked for a meeting to be arranged with the All-China State Commission of Reform. Everywhere we went, we were greeted with tremendous interest and sincere respect. During our visits and talks with the PRC leaders I repeatedly found myself wondering whether it would be possible to reform the Soviet Union along "Chinese model" lines. But just wishing for something never makes it come true.

The Chinese reforms were taking place in an atmosphere of continuing party discipline and fairly strict regulation of state structures' procedures. In just seven or eight years they were able to place nearly 35 per cent of the economy in private hands. At the same time, China is a multi-ethnic country with a different standard of social and economic growth in the provinces. With this in mind, development zones have been set up on the coast with the aim of attracting foreign capital and technologies. They are now being set up in the centre and west of China.

Our relations began to entail increasingly more business. Visits were made to Kazakhstan by the PRC foreign minister and

his aides, and the ministers of finance, transport and industry. And our senior officials also made frequent visits to China. All this paid dividends. The talks between our foreign policy departments progressed so rapidly that during Prime Minister Li Peng's visit to Kazakhstan in 1994 we signed and ratified agreements on border delimitation between Kazakhstan and China. And we are talking here of 1,700 kilometres that in Soviet times were the border between two potential enemies. We are now ready to sign an agreement with China on measures of trust on both sides of the border and redeploying troops 100 kilometres further inside our territory.

I believe the solution of this first main issue concerning the border formed the basis of our subsequent friendly relations. It became possible following my confidential talks with President Jiang Zemin. Once the PRC had provided Kazakhstan with security guarantees in February 1995, the foundations of Kazakhstan-Sino relations were to grow even stronger.

Of course, I was bound to express our concern regarding the fact that China was continuing to conduct nuclear tests that were impacting on the environment. In response, Jiang Zemin said that he was deeply aware of the concern with which Kazakhstan regarded Lob Nor. Moreover, China was ready to take part in a general nuclear test ban.

Specific matters and the course of our relations allow me to say that President Jiang Zemin is notable for his sincere aspiration for peace, realism and pragmatism.

Our final meeting that took place during my three-day visit to that great country in September 1995 was the most remarkable of all. As a result of talks, we signed a Joint Declaration on the future development and extension of friendly mutual relations between Kazakhstan and the PRC. The signing took place of the Memorandum on cooperation between the defence ministries, the Agreement on scientific and technological cooperation in the

field of meteorology, the Protocol to exchange the instruments of ratification pertaining to the Agreement between Kazakhstan and the PRC on the Kazakhstan-Sino border.

Another massive historic event also took place at the time: the signing of the Agreement between our governments on the use of China's seaport Lianyungang for the processing and transportation of Kazakhstani transit cargoes en route to and from the South-East Asian countries, and North and South America.

Why is this so important for us? What does this Agreement give Kazakhstan? The railrway has a carrying capacity of 30 million tons, including our oil tanks. It is 3,500 kilometres to the port of Lianyungang by this rail link, compared to 8,500 kilometres through Siberia to the Far East and Russia's eastern ports. The advantage is obvious. What's more, account also has to be taken of the huge demands for our goods in China itself.

Energy resources today are one of the most crucial problems for China's growing economy. According to even the most modest forecasts, in the period to 2000, the country's average annual economic growth rates will be at least 9 per cent. This means, in standard coal equivalent terms, the energy resource demands of the PRC will rise to 2.3-2.5 billion tons. However, by the turn of the century China will not be able to produce more than 1.5 billion tons. It would be a big mistake to assert that China possesses rich resources and has no need to economise energy. The PRC is the world's top coal producer (1.1 billion tons), the fourth largest energy producer (742.7 billion kWh), and the fifth largest oil producer (142 million tons). However, despite this, per capita energy consumption in China is only 40 per cent of the world average, and 1 per cent of the industrialised countries' average. Nevertheless, their potential is great and hydroelectric power requires substantial lump-sum capital investments to modernise the older electric power stations. The percentage of electrical energy produced overall by these has declined over the past 10

years from 22.4 to 17.5 per cent. To maintain its annual economic growth of 9 percent, the PRC will have to build the annual equivalent of 5-10 electric power stations. Now, we can play a role in addressing this challenge.

Another way for China to resolve its energy problems is to cooperate with the oil-producing countries. China is likely to become a major oil importer. Demand for oil grew by 10 per cent in 1994. Today China produces around 3 million barrels a day. As a result of the agreements signed between us, Kazakhstan and the other Central Asian states can help to a certain extent in alleviating this problem. This is precisely what I focused on during my last visit. A discussion got under way at the time regarding the construction of the West-East pipeline with an outlet to the Pacific, a project of vital importance not only for China but also Japan and the countries of South-East Asia.

In 1993, as a result of Kazakhstani employers and entrepreneurs' increasing business ventures abroad and the customs duties for barter transactions in the convertible currency that had been introduced in Kazakhstan, commodity circulation with China saw a drastic decline, and in the eight months of 1993, amounted to only US$147.7 million (export US$105.8, import – US$41.9). This made the Chinese side take stringent measures to ensure its exporters took more responsibility for the quality of their goods.

In my opinion, China is bound to acquire a foremost position in the twenty-first century. China's leaders are openly stating that they are striving to reach a new qualitative level within 15-20 years in the country's manufacturing, scientific and technological growth rates, and so any state may consider it a privilege to have good relations with this country. And the fact that Kazakhstan is building such relations now, I regard as a matter of strategic importance.

This is also well understood by the world's most advanced countries. For instance, economic relations between China and Japan are also seeing rapid growth. According to the Hong Kong journal *Far Eastern*: "The Chinese and Japanese economies complement one another... The Japanese market is slowly opening up to long-term consumer goods and agricultural produce from China, and Japan's exports of high-tech equipment to China are on the increase... The collapse of Communism in Europe has convinced Tokyo of the need to help China develop its economy. For us China is what Russia is for Europe: if China descends into economic chaos, we shall see a great many refugees... Japan is obviously interested in a stable, flourishing China... This year China is expected to overtake South Korea and become Japan's second largest trade partner after the US".

During my visits to different countries I try to gather as much information as I can about their cultures, customs, history, religion and everyday life. Thinking about the phenomenon of China and other states of South-East Asia, I find myself agreeing more and more with the significant role Confucianism is alleged to have in their modernisation. The special feature of Confucian philosophy is that it is oriented toward to the real world and not the world before and after a person's death. It is a religion of self-perfection of the human "I". Confucianism has totally modern value priorities. Modern technologies have allowed this religious principle to be translated into reality. An original type of business ethics has developed in this part of the world with a deeply rooted potential, many centuries old.

A window onto Europe

As soon as Kazakhstan gained its independence, we became aware of Western leaders' immense, let's say, heightened interest in us. But it gave me no sense of euphoria because I knew full

well that it had to do in no small degree with the fate of the nuclear weapons in our territory. People in the West reckoned that Kazakhstan was going to move closer to the Islamic world and attempts would be made to use our nuclear weapons by the likes of Iraq, Iran and Pakistan who were on the verge of acquiring the deadly weapons themselves.

I was informed that the British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher was actively seeking an opportunity to meet with me and even calling upon a number of intermediaries to set up such a meeting. The "Iron Lady" organised one of her official visits in a way that enabled her to make a short stopover in Almaty on the way. And that is how our first conversation came about. As well as being her usual energetic and forceful self, she was also businesslike and even amiable. We began by exchanging compliments, while quickly sensing the moment when we needed to move on to business. And Margaret Thatcher was a businesswoman in every sense of the word. Each of us had questions, and sought honest answers that were not to be put in the public domain. Subsequently, I became convinced that Mrs Thatcher had faithfully kept to this gentleman's agreement.

She was primarily concerned about what was going to happen to the missiles, but by then I had already gauged the West's reaction to Kazakhstan's independence and was preparing the ground to receive security and border inviolability guarantees. I assuaged her fears regarding the missiles by reassuring her that they were not dangerous, as they were being securely guarded at an inaccessible site. I informed her in no uncertain terms that we were not intending to sell the nuclear weapons as the united strategic forces of the republics of the former USSR were in the process of being established. And they were to be put in charge of the security and maintenance of this technology. For my part, I received her total support for Kazakhstan's independence. Mrs Thatcher said quite unequivocally that if Kazakhstan were to

declare statehood, the UK government would support us and, what's more, she would undertake to persuade other Western leaders also to declare their support for Kazakhstan's independence and territorial integrity.

This conversation took place in early September 1991, very soon after the August coup attempt in Moscow. The Soviet Union was still in existence, but nationalist slogans about "great Russia" were being chanted in Moscow's squares. Other states of the USSR were being either passed over by the new propaganda or dubbed hangers-on of Russia rather than heirs of the USSR. Not only new-wave extremists but even statesmen went as far as saying that the Crimea was really part of Russia and had been thoughtlessly handed over to Ukraine by Nikita Khrushchev. From what they said it emerged that the North Caucasus was also Russia's lawful territory. Nobody, however, recalled that Port Arthur and Dalny had been "gifted" to China in just the same way. But then nobody plucked up the courage to demand the return of these territories. And meanwhile Ukraine and Kazakhstan became sovereign states just like the People's Republic of China.

I informed Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin of Kazakhstan's concerns and the undesirable implications all this might have for us all. A large group of Russian Federation politicians led by Alexander Rutskoy arrived in Kazakhstan. The Russian delegation signed a bilateral agreement with us and issued a statement confirming that Russia neither laid claim, nor ever would lay claim to our territories. The extremely tense situation began to improve.

These events prompted me to speak at the next session of the USSR Supreme Soviet, and let it be known in no uncertain terms that Kazakhstan no longer acknowledged either "elder" or "younger" brothers and was heading toward building its own statehood. In any case, even though we had managed to quell a possible conflict at the time, we still had to think about the fu-

ture and devote all our energy to safeguarding ourselves from any politicians' propagandist actions of all kinds. That could be achieved only by receiving multilateral security and territorial integrity guarantees. That is why my meeting with Margaret Thatcher was important for me. And she supported the ideas I cherished most. Later Margaret Thatcher and I were to have conversations in Moscow and twice in London.

The West German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher also paid a visit to Kazakhstan at the time. He was one of the most experienced politicians of post-war Western Europe. Under various chancellors he had headed West Germany's foreign ministry for 17 years. West Germany's increasing authority after the war and its recognition as a democratic state was undoubtedly Genscher's doing.

I remember him as a tactful and very modest man. I spoke with him also about the potential threat to our state's territorial integrity. He promised to support me personally and provide Chancellor Kohl with detailed information about the situation. Subsequently, in a conversation with Chancellor Kohl during my official visit to Germany, I realised just how thoroughly he had prepared his report, with not even the most minor detail missing.

During our meeting on 17 October 1991, Hans-Dietrich Genscher informed me that the Germans were seriously interested in developing relations with Kazakhstan. We discussed the principles of border inviolability. Genscher said: "A knowledge of European history is very important. Mr President, you have spoken of the principle of border inviolability. By and large, wars in Europe were only waged over borders that the warring countries wanted to transfer to one side or other. It was always about expanding one's sphere of influence over the others. It was a fateful turn of events. And now on the experience of two world wars, everyone must know that this must not be repeated. Of course,

a lot of mistakes were made in Yugoslavia that have become the cause of the war there today. If there are a lot of nationalities in a state, and one of them is demanding hegemony, this leads to some dangerous consequences."

I shall never forget the exceedingly interesting idea Hans-Dietrich Genscher expressed at our press conference. We had touched upon the subject of the perennialism of various territories, and he commented, "Take any point on the map of Europe. In the seventeenth, fifth, seventh, or any other century this territory belonged to various states, some of which have already ceased to exist. But we are living in 1991. And if we are to follow the lessons of history – any disputes over borders are absurd. Both sides in dispute can find quite a few arguments in the part in their favour. As rational people, we must not argue over borders. We must set our sights on the future and aspire to cooperation. And this, indeed, is history's main lesson."

After the official part of my visit I asked if Herr Genscher would spare me some time for an informal conversation. He readily agreed. And during our many hours of conversation I have to say I really did learn quite a lot from this authoritative politician.

I found several of his ideas astounding. When the conversation turned to democracy, I realised how little we knew and understood about it. Reflecting on the authority of a democratic state, he pointed out that the world had recognised Germany as a democratic country and its policy and its nation as being democratic once Germany had publicly apologised to the whole world for all the damage caused by fascism. And this was no easy thing to do. There were still plenty of people in post-war Germany who had willingly served, or been forced to serve, in Hitler's armed forces.

When I am in Germany, I always met with Herr Genscher, even though he is no longer foreign minister. I have learnt a con-

siderable amount from him. And, most importantly, I have been given a genuine, disinterested lesson in democracy.

Our relations with Germany are progressing at quite a pace. The President of the Federal Republic of Germany Roman Herzog paid an official visit to Kazakhstan in April 1995. Regular meetings with that country's leaders are laying the solid foundations of mutually beneficial relations in diverse fields. Between 1994 and 1995 alone, around 170 Kazakhstan-German joint ventures were established, and representatives of 57 leading German companies are now working in the republic.

During the Second World War there were prisoner-of-war camps right across the territory of Kazakhstan. I gave President Herzog a list of 7,500 German prisoners-of-war buried in Kazakhstan. Our state is doing everything possible to continue work in putting their graves in order and identifying them. Their relatives frequently visit Kazakhstan to pay their respects to the deceased.

For a head of state – especially of a state emerging like ours from a totalitarian system – democracy is primarily about having to radically alter his views, style and methods of leadership, and actual way of thinking. It is an act of self-sacrifice for the sake of his people. It is about being able to listen to other people's opinions, making them really free and able to express all their innermost thoughts, and recognising the equality of all people from birth. Sometimes this proves difficult for a leader, and sometimes he gets a lot of flak.

Following talks at the White House in February 1994, I recall walking out with Bill Clinton to the waiting press. After their questions on Kazakhstan-American relations they started asking Clinton why he was not planning to carry out reprisals against the Japanese for their unfair trade practices. Then, turning to me, he said in an undertone: "They (meaning the journalists, of course) kill me every day."

Freedom and democracy – they are the greatest of blessings. And if you are a true son of your people, you have to go against the grain, and not just be content with the democratic norms that have already been established but keep strengthening them and gradually developing and establishing newer ones.

Hans-Dietrich Genscher kept in good physical shape and always looked younger than his years: he was fit, exceptionally hard-working and great company.

I once asked him if he was a keen sportsman.

"No," he replied, "I live in my own house and every morning spent 30-40 minutes in the sauna. Then I go to work. That's the only sport I ever do."

"But I've heard it's unhealthy to have a sauna every day."

"The truth speaks for itself – saunas obviously do me good."

During our conversations Hans-Dietrich Genscher spoke in a quiet, unassuming way, sharing his experience and knowledge as an older man. And listening to what he was saying and his intonation, I could not help feeling I was listening to an *aksakal* – a wise elder. That is how I still remember Hans-Dietrich Genscher – as a political patriarch sharing his experience.

As Konrad Adenauer once said towards the end of his life, "Sometime in the future when people are able to see through the mists and dust of time, I want people to say of me that I did my duty." And I think that Hans-Dietrich Genscher had every right to claim he had done his duty to the German people.

* * *

I regard François Mitterand as a politician of global stature. We first met in 1991, during Mikhail Gorbachev's official visit to France. Talks were held at the Rambouillet Palace. Mitterand

proved a reflective and interesting person to speak with. I was one of the first republican leaders to be invited on an official visit.

Interestingly, it was in France that I first saw a vast number of our state flags fluttering along Paris's main thoroughfare – the Champs Elysees. Our motorcade was escorted by 360 mounted national guardsmen in dashing uniforms, certainly an impressive sight.

François Mitterand invited me to sign a Treaty of Friendship between our countries. This laid firm foundations for relations between Kazakhstan and France.

I conducted very promising talks at the council of entrepreneurs and industrialists headed by Giscard D'Estaing, the brother of the country's former president. Among other things, we discussed the company Elf Aquitaine's operations at the oil and gas fields in the Aktiubinsk district.

François Mitterand made a reciprocal visit to Kazakhstan in 1993. He was very interested in the situation in the Commonwealth countries and continuously stressed that the break-up of the USSR would have unpredictable consequences for Western Europe. He and I were thinking very much along the same lines. He considered it crucial for the economic union between the CIS countries to be maintained. And normal integration and stability would emerge from the economy. Europe was directly interested in this.

He shared his thoughts on the development of European integration, claiming that a confederative union of Western European states was a guarantee against possible conflicts and that the basis of this association lay in economic union. Naturally, the sovereignty of states would continue to be preserved.

François Mitterand was a Frenchman through and through. Gallant and full of *joie de vivre*, he always retained his sense of humour, even when faced with grave illness and considerable political ordeals. I regard this as a distinctive feature of French

politicians. Apparently, de Gaulle was once informed of a plan to discredit his rival François Mitterand. "You cannot thwart the ambition of a man who may one day become the Republic's president," retorted the General.

Mitterand is a courageous person. I agree with this appraisal by the French newspaper *L'Express:* "Hardly anyone has ever endured such a difficult end to their presidency as Mitterand. The illness he is courageously fighting is prostate cancer (two operations and chemotherapy). March 1993 saw the most serious defeat in the history of parliamentary elections in France and the collapse of the left-wing camp, which Mitterand is being personally blamed for... His talent, his enormous talent is that he is always able to define his aims and the form his actions will take".

François Mitterand gave powerful impetus to French business circles' links with Kazakhstan. Companies such as Elf Aquitaine, Totale and Gaz de France, Cogeme and various others are now doing business in our country. When I was preparing for my visit to the US in 1994, I received an invitation from him to make a stopover in Paris. He always greeted me at the airport, even in the heaviest rainstorms. Only this time he was unable to on account of his deteriorating health.

After Jacques Chirac took over the French presidency, I met with François Mitterand at the 50th anniversary celebrations of Victory in the Second World War. We had a chance to talk for a while during the allied forces' parade. "Now you have more free time," I said to him, "We will always be pleased to see you in Kazakhstan. Do come."

On 15 November, 1995, after my meeting with Jacques Chirac, I asked some French Interior Ministry officials to help me meet François Mitterand. We were, however, unable to meet on account of his grave illness. He passed away on 8 January, 1996. This outstanding man was mourned by people the world over.

Acknowledging this exceptional politician's immense influence on the affairs of France and the rest of the world, the only French president to lead the country for 14 years, many politicians consider François Mitterand will go down in twentieth-century French history second only to General de Gaulle.

And the funeral of this great Frenchman was yet again testament to the humanity and modesty characteristic of only the very best of people. In keeping with his wishes, it took place in simple surroundings in his home town of Jarnac and was attended only by family members and a few close friends. There was no pomp and ceremony because François Mitterand himself had wanted none.

The custodian of the Two Holy Mosques

On the eve of the month of *Zul Hijja* in the Islamic lunar calendar, Muslims all over the world set off on a pilgrimage to Mecca. For me, this visit to Saudi Arabia was not just yet another business trip to establish relations with yet another country. It was also a pilgrimage (*Hajj*) into another world culture and way of life.

The *Hajj* is affirmation of the unity of all Muslims, regardless of nationality or race. During the *Hajj* Moslems repeat the same phrase over and over again: "Here I am before you, o Allah! You know no equal, glory and mercy be to You!" All the rituals have been preserved just as they were established by the Prophet Muhammad. The pilgrims also adhere to the Prophet's behests in their manner of dress. For men, it means wrapping themselves in two unstitched lengths of cloth. For women, it means covering up completely, except for their hands and faces.

Long gone are the days of the caliphs' great conquests. Subsequently, Arabia sank into stagnation and became isolated from the rest of the world. And then Saudi Arabia made its presence felt once again by astounding the Western world in October

1973. It was at that time that the concepts oil, politics and Islam became inextricably interlinked. The Arab countries first started talking about an oil embargo during the Arab-Israeli war. After US President Nixon authorised military aid to Israel amounting to US$2.2 billion, King Faisal, uncle to the present monarch, took a historic decision. On 20 October 1973, newspapers all around the world published his declaration on the imposition of an oil embargo. Western civilisation found itself on the brink of a catastrophe. The number of air flights was drastically reduced, vehicle journeys were banned, and lifts and heating systems switched off. It was then that energy-saving technology was given a boost. And then, too, that the Arab countries joined the arena of global politics on an equal footing. The views of the West regarding the establishment of a Palestinian autonomy began to undergo a change. Money began to flood into Saudi Arabia which formed the basis for the country's modernisation.

In March 1992, three decrees were issued in Saudi Arabia – "The main statutes of government in the country", "The statutes of the Shura Council" and "The statues of the provincial authorities". The establishment of the Shura Council – the Consultative Assembly – attracted the most attention. It had 60 members, all well-known nationwide and over the age of 30. They were appointed by King Fahd, who has the right to reorganise and dissolve the Shura. The Council may express an opinion on state policy issues, social and economic development plans, draft laws and international agreements. The new body is defined as an organisational authority in the decree. It is not a parliament, however, as it does not have legislative functions and is subordinate to the king, but its consultative prerogatives presuppose that it may evolve into a parliamentary structure. The appointment system of Council members is not regarded as a problem by local commentators who argue that in countries where there are no political parties and the population has no political experience,

the ruling circles have a better idea of who may be of greater use to the state and society. In their opinion, if elections were to be conducted in Saudi Arabia, there might be parliamentary clashes similar to those in Algeria, which would certainly not promote stability.

At present, Saudi Arabia is one of the oil-extracting Arab countries' military and political leaders. There is close cooperation between Saudi Arabia and the West. The latter will be dependent on oil imports for the long term, while also having to ensure its transportation security. For a certain period of time, Western countries' military presence kept the countries of the region from increasing their own defence potential. However, the Iran-Iraq conflict and aggression on Kuwait made the Arab oil-extracting countries seek ways of establishing their own mobile security system.

This became particularly pressing after peace in the region came under the threat of Iraqi aggression. In January 1992, the monarchs of Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait and Oman held three days of behind closed doors discussions on security issues, mutual relations with Iraq, openings for economic integration and aid to the rest of the Arab world. King Fahd Bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia holds the opinion that the Council's present-day military forces, and, indeed, those of all its members individually, will not be able to defend them from a new aggression. The 10,000-strong Peninsula Shield combined force proved powerless against the Iraqi army. Oman put forward a proposal to form a 100,000-strong army with anti-tank forces and aviation. Kuwait expressed doubts that such an army would be able to defend the Council-member countries from a foreign threat: only powerful foreign armies would be able to do so. Saudi Arabia expressed its preference for a defence agreement relying on its own forces rather than foreign ones. At present, the states' combined armed forces comprise a total of 160,000

men, and so there is little likelihood of a contingent of 100, 000 being mustered. The Six have approved the principle of setting up combined deterrent forces. However, before this plan can be implemented, such issues as the aims of the combined army, and its strength and structure will first have to be worked out. The Kuwait foreign minister noted that should the situation arise, the Council could call upon Egyptian and Syrian troop contingents for help.

Saudi Arabia's ruling dynasty consists of over 5,000 princes, and along with the clans of kinsmen, includes around 20,000 people. The dynasty's elite is made up of several dozen princes who are direct descendants of the kingdom's founder Abdul Aziz. They hold key positions in the army, National Guard and security services and have close links with the clan hierarchy.

A lavish reception was organised for us in Jeddah where the Kazakhstan delegation's aircraft landed. Jeddah is the modern gateway to the country. We were accommodated in the King's 12-storey private residence which had been put at our 14-member delegation's disposal. The city's sumptuous luxury is extremely impressive. Opposite my window, for instance, there was an illuminated fountain, over one hundred metres high. And we were in the middle of the Arabian desert!

Our meeting with King Fahd began at 11 o'clock in the evening. We had been told in advance that the King was unwell, and we were asked to limit our conversation to 30-40 minutes. However, the conversation continued until two in the morning. I was struck by King Fahd's sincere and profound faith in Allah, a faith founded not on his role as monarch or political or other grounds but on his world outlook as an individual and king. In my opinion, King Fahd deservedly holds the other title of Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques. The first these holy shrines is Kaaba, the only house of Allah in the land built on His personal

command by the Prophet Ibrahim in Mecca. The second is the tomb of Muhammad in Medina.

I briefly acquainted the King with our state's history, and the origins and process of reviving Islamic traditions in Kazakhstan. King Fahd proved to be well informed. I was pleasantly surprised that the Saudi monarch had a thorough knowledge of our problems and knew much more about Kazakhstan than other politicians.

King Fahd has the most profound knowledge, and not only of the canons of Islam: he is also well versed in global political and economic issues.

We discussed the role of religion in the twenty-first century. If the two most practised religions in the world – Christianity and Islam – fail to find a common language and found themselves in confrontation, there is no hope for a peaceful future for all of humanity. I asked the King if he considered that global extremism was testing the stable relations between Islam and Christianity in Yugoslavia. How could this be prevented? Not long before our conversation, Pope John Paul II had complained to me that the Islamic clergy were not engaging in dialogue, and Christians in Islamic states were not being allowed to engage in missionary work. At the same time, there has been an obvious growth in Islam in the West, and yet the Vatican is not seeking to introduce any restrictions.

As a leader in the Islamic world, King Fahd has a firm standpoint on this issue. The fact is that Islam has three main holy shrines, two of which are located in Saudi Arabia itself. King Fahd's response to my question was as follows: "We still have not got our third holy shrine back. There's the Jerusalem Al Aqsa mosque which the Prophet used to frequent. It is the third shrine we are fighting for. When the Muslim world gets this shrine, the Muslim world will proper and multiply. A new era will dawn for Muslims. Allah is waiting for this from us. And we're doing it.

While Christianity opposes the return of this shrine to us, we cannot increase our contacts."

After Israel's Knesset provided a legal basis for the annexation of East Jerusalem, an Emergency Conference of foreign ministers of the Organisation's member states passed a motion on the establishment of an Islamic Bureau to boycott Israel. In view of the *Hijra* dating back to the fifteenth century, a meeting at the highest level in At Taif (January 1981) passed the "Mecca Proclamation". It was also then that Prince Fahd declared: "The Islamic world must be the master of its own destiny, protected from the pressure of the superpowers that are pursuing their own interests that frequently do not coincide with our own, as is clear from the example of Afghanistan and Israel." As for the issue of Jerusalem and Palestine, the conference members resolutely demanded the complete and unequivocal withdrawal of Israeli troops from all the occupied territories, including the Arab part of Jerusalem. During the conference Prince Fahd condemned Jerusalem's transformation into an international city, condoned by the Vatican, and appealed to all Christians to support the Muslim initiative. Recent events yet again show that the Islamic world will never accept the loss of this Holy Mosque.

During our conversation the King expressed an interesting idea. The Arabian Peninsula is one of the greatest deserts in the world. The poor Bedouin nomads living in these sands never thought that Allah would give them such fabulous wealth as oil. The Saudis think that the Almighty hid this treasure until they were liberated from British dominion.

This seemed like mysticism to me, but when I left the King's apartments, Prince Sultan informed me that he had been given information on the vast reserves of oil to the north of the Aral Sea. We had no such information at the time. And only recently has this indeed been confirmed. Of course, the Saudis have access to the most recent data from satellite photography and the

latest oil-deposit detection technology. But just then, it seems to me, the Saudis gave me this "useful" information after my conversation with the King.

Once the colonisers had left, Allah bestowed wealth upon the Arabs as a reward for all their loyalty and suffering over so many years of oppression. That's why the Saudi dynasty today spares no cost to show their gratitude to the Almighty. According to some estimates, the construction of the main mosque in Mecca cost tens of billions of dollars. About half of them went on purchasing the land from Arab tribes. And certainly this building is a new manmade wonder of the world.

Several hundred acres of ground are laid with white marble. There is enough space here for two and a half million people to pray at the same time. The two-storey mosque is open on all sides. It is simply impossible to list all the technological innovations that have been used here for worshippers' comfort and wellbeing. Take, for instance, the air conditioners that are there for everyone praying outside in the blazing hot desert. Hundreds of millions of dollars are spent annually on welcoming pilgrims and providing them with food and accommodation.

The King provides the Mecca and Medina holy shrines with permanent financial assistance. The reconstruction of the Masjid al-Haram Mosque in Mecca and Al-Nabil al Sharif has cost Saudi Arabia over US$4 billion. Over US$1 billion has been spent on improving the holy sites' infrastructure, services and amenities.

I told the King about my wish to perform *Hajj*. True, it was not the time of the year for one, but I wanted to perform the *Umrah* instead. And then something incredible happened. Hearing that I would be performing the pilgrimage for the first time, the King issued instructions for me to be allowed inside Kaaba. The Minister of Religious Affairs Vakuf even sprang to his feet, objecting, "But your Majesty, Kaaba is undergoing repairs at the moment!"

The King said nothing.

"But we couldn't even let the heads of Islam states inside."

"You heard me" the King replied curtly.

The minister bowed.

King Fahd accompanied me to my car and saying goodbye, invited me to perform the full *Hajj* during the month of Muslim pilgrimages.

Then my wife, Sara Alpysovna, our younger daughter, Aliya, and I were told in detail how to perform the ritual. Equipped with these instructions, we set off on our journey at 9 o'clock in the evening. The journey from Jeddah to Mecca took about one and a half hours. Standing at the entrance to Mecca is a vast archway – a checkpoint where visitors' documents are looked at.

Only the most state of the art features from all over the world were used in the Mosque's construction. That is, indeed, what the King decreed – only the very best in the world was to be used in this construction. It is impossible to estimate exactly how much the underground terrace, 7 kilometres long, in Medina cost. Under Muhammad's Mosque in Medina there is a 2,500-space underground car park. Five thousand people can perform ablutions at the same time.

Back in the hotel before we left, we put on *ihram* –the special clothing worn on the pilgrimage. We arrived by car just before midnight when there were not many pilgrims about. The Mosque was opened especially for us. I was gripped by the most intense emotion.

Taraf is one of the first rituals of *Hajj*, when you walk around Kaaba seven times. Kaaba is located in the middle of Masjid al-Haram, the main Mosque of the Muslim world. Gazing at its white-marble minarets soaring straight up to the stars and flooded with green light in the darkness, you can't help thinking that this could not possibly have been made by human hands, only Allah could have created such beauty. Masjid al-Haram can ac-

commodate around one million worshippers at the same time. There is a constant flow of people moving round the Sacred Stone, day and night. On his way up to it, a pilgrim must toss a stone at the pillars symbolising the devil. But he first has to pass between two green pillars seven times, and drink water from the Zamzam sacred spring.

The ritual bowing to the corners of Kaaba symbolises the fact that Muslims living in different parts of the world say prayers and offer sacrifices facing Kaaba. And when a Muslim dies, he is buried with his head facing Mecca.

The celestial Black Stone is shiny from being touched by the millions of pilgrims who have performed *Hajj* over the centuries. As custom decreed, I walked around Kaaba seven times and kissed the Black Stone twice.

Hajj culminates in the act of *vukuf* – standing by Arafat mountain. At midday, the chief imam of Mecca reads the sermon. During *namaz* – the five daily prayers – the streets empty, and the shops and cafes close, and the police made sure this happens.

Repairs were being carried out at Kaaba, both inside and out. The King's special permission meant that we could go inside. I felt as though I was caught somewhere between the heavens and the Earth. And there sometimes even seemed to be stars flickering in what seemed like an infinite canopy overhead. A white-bearded mullah was standing to the right of the entrance, reading the Koran. It was one of the sacred books that, according to legend, fell from the sky, its pages made of gold. There was a black stone pillar in the middle. I do not remember anything else, so deeply was I entranced by it all.

I was allowed to remain there as long as I wished. King Fahd had explained that one could make requests to Allah which he would definitely fulfil, if not immediately, then sometime later on. I am often asked about the request I made. God be my witness, first and foremost I asked for prosperity for my country and

Kazakh people. I have no idea how long we stayed there – I did not keep a record of the amount of time we spent at the sacred shrine. It was fairly late by then, but on the way out we kept coming across groups of pilgrims, lying prone.

Then there was the journey to Medina, the other town Muslims hold sacred. We again stayed in King Fahd's residence. The mosque where the Prophet Muhammad is buried is located in Medina. There, too, are the first caliphs' tombs. The mosque itself is vast and can accommodate up to one million people. The roof overhead can be opened, so, people can pray in the open air if they so wish. It is then closed in the rain. West German specialists designed the domes to open like petals. While we were performing the prayer rituals, King Fahd rang and gave me permission to go inside the vault. Muhammad's tomb is surrounded by gold railings. However, we were only able to go inside at one o'clock in the morning. The King visits here once a year, sometimes accompanied by a highly eminent academic theologian, to say prayers.

Several mullahs arrived, and each opened a bolt with his own key. The doors were shut again as soon as I had gone inside. I was accompanied by a special cleric. Rising high above the Prophet's tomb is a vast green dome. Nearby are the tombs of his nephews Abu Bakr, Omar and Osman. And then you begin saying: "Assalam aleikum, Muhammad", and turn to each of them in turn.

There was a clear sky that day. It was the dry season when there is never any rain. However, an hour after we had left the Prophet's resting place, there was such a violent rainstorm that water came streaming down the Mosque's marble walls in torrents. All the Arab pilgrims were awestruck and fell to their knees in prayer. The custodian mullah who had accompanied me to the Prophet's tomb told us it was a good sign. "Muhammad must

have heard your prayer because in these parts the rain usually only starts falling in two months' time."

King Fahd gave me several gifts including a platinum and gold miniature of Muhammad's Mosque. I wanted to hand it over to our museum but, unfortunately, nobody could vouch for the safety of such a valuable item. It is now in the official residence of the President of Kazakhstan. But he also gave me the even more valuable gift of a piece of Kaaba's Cover with a gold inscription, packed in a special small case. It was the highest award a Muslim could receive.

Of course, we also had meetings with business people, and concluded new economic agreements and treaties. I was astonished by the standard of the latest technology they had, their high culture and expertise. They were all graduates of the most prestigious educational establishments in the West.

The visit to the Islamic shrines made me re-examine the role and place of religion in contemporary processes. The Middle East is, undoubtedly, special in this respect. Three world religions – Christianity, Islam and Judaism – all originate from here. They all have common roots and a common history. It is not an accident that the Koran makes no distinctions between the Prophets Muhammad, Moses and Jesus. The Koran calls upon people to believe all revelations. Muhammad himself considered that he had placed the last stone in a wall laid by others. Essentially, Islam has always been a unifying character. According to Muhammad, all regions reflect a single faith. In none of his statements did he ever reject the revelations of others. Islam has always a tolerant religion. People of different faiths have always lived cheek by jowl in Islamic countries. And it seems to me that it is now time for people to treat religion as a unifying element rather than a means to oppose one another. After all, all the religions of the world are based on single principles that are simple for people to un-

derstand the world over. It is the politicians, not God, who have turned religion into a tool to preach violence and persecution.

The main aim of my visit was to attract Saudi investments and know-how into Kazakhstan's economy. And our economic relations certainly did get underway.

I met with Prince Sultan, the King's brother and head of government, at the 50th Anniversary of the United Nations in New York in October 1995. It was a meeting between two good acquaintances. He told me that the Saudi side had thoroughly studied my proposals and on King Fahd's instructions, a large group of business people headed by the foreign minister would be arriving shortly to draw up contracts.

At the 50th anniversary of UNESCO that November I was approached by a tall, well-built Arab who then proceeded to talk at length in a very animated manner. The interpreter told me it was Prince Talal. He told me how delighted he was with the policy currently pursued by Kazkhstan and had long been seeking to make my acquaintance. He was sorry he had not been there when I visited his country. Most importantly, he said that the King and his entourage kept recalling me and saying how important it was to establish close contacts between us. We still have to strengthen mutually beneficial relations with the Arab countries, and then flourishing Arabia will become even closer to us.

Our Caspian Neighbour

As we establish our international relations, we are learning to put our national interests first and define the best ways of interacting with all the various countries and international organisations. Sometimes bilateral relations with countries of equal importance to Kazakhstan run into difficulties as they develop. There are quite a few ways of forcing us to pursue a certain policy, even measures involving direct pressure are applied. But Ka-

zakhstan as a peace-loving country aspiring to cooperation with all the states of the world – and that is our only possible way out of the crisis – cannot restrict its foreign policy only to one group of states.

Our southern neighbour is the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Western world and the Soviet Union have experienced difficulties in their relations with this country ever since the Islamic revolution. Iran is always going to be a strategically important foreign policy partner for us. First, it is a Caspian state without which a solution cannot be found to the issue of exploiting the sea and its natural resources. Second, establishing relations with Iran is a promising way to get our goods into global markets. It is another window into the world. Third, this state was, and still is, a most authoritative key player in the economic and political processes in the region and the Islamic world.

Iran had its own modernisation model, which produced an unexpected result. The shah's regime which had attempted to modernise the country by directly copying other countries' models and implementing them on its home soil, encountered unpredictable social, political and economic repercussions.

Conducting accelerated modernisation at a time when most of the population was living in dire poverty resulted in the country developing at a very uneven rate. In the mid-70s, there was a sharp rise in the balance of payments deficit and inflation that caused most of the population to see deterioration in their living standards.

The modernisation policy was supposed to facilitate the emergence of new social and economic structures to replace the traditional ones. However, no such gradual change took place. Indeed, this policy resulted in the emergence of state monopolistic social and economic structures around which a small group of corrupted officials and their business associates were concentrated. Instead of traditional structures being replaced by mod-

ern ones as a result of the reforms, they were destroyed without any alternative being created, and so millions of Iranians ended up losing their jobs and property. The social modernisation programme turned into a crisis that shook the foundations of Iranian society and left millions of people without any prospects or hope. No wonder the prevailing atmosphere in society at the time was one of disillusionment.

The agrarian policy of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlevi – initially to grant plots of arable land to the peasants – ended up having them expropriated by large agricultural companies. This sparked active migration to the towns and the formation of lumpenised strata of the urban population.

The shah's "White Revolution" undermined the clerics' absolute power. Ayatollah Khomeini started an uprising at the Kuma Azam mosque which was quashed. The organisers of the uprising were deported from the country and the future President Rafsanjani was thrown in prison along with other followers of the ayatollah. Total disillusion, having other peoples' world views and attitudes foisted up them that also included moral dissolution, drug addiction and prostitution, alienated Iranians from the ruling regime. They then sought to actively oppose modernisation of such a kind and looked for other leaders. And so it was that Shiite clerics succeeded in taking command of the anti-shah and anti-imperialist movements and take power. The armed uprising of February 1979 put an end to the shah's rule.

Iran set about building the Islamic Republic...

The Iranian President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani sent several invitations to visit this amazing country. Foreign Minister Velayati came to visit us on more than one occasion.

My first official visit to Iran took place on 31 October 1992. I have to honestly say that the world press for quite some time had been depicting this state as a reactionary mediaeval fortress striving to revive the traditions of aggressive mediaeval theocratic

states. We had been frightened numerous times by the threat of an Iranian nuclear bomb and growth in Islamic fundamentalism. This, incidentally, had impacted on the West's policy in relation to the CIS states. Initially, they had also swiftly been divided into Islamic and Christian states. Such stereotypes were highly tenacious in social consciousness, and some of those who invented them are, it seems to me, beginning to believe in them themselves. I will not disguise the fact that these stereotypes played their part in forming my attitude to that country. But reality proved quite different.

Talks were held with Iran's leader Ayatollah Khomeini and President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani. We signed a Declaration on mutual understanding between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Islamic Republic of Iran, and a trade and economic cooperation agreement between our countries' governments. We set up a joint intergovernmental commission on economic trade, industrial and scientific and technological cooperation.

The Iranian President Hashemi Rafsanjani hosted a convivial reception. A study of the preliminary materials prepared for me in advance of this visit and, to a great extent, personal impressions gave me to understand that this statesman was striving for a positive change in the world's view of Iran.

We worked, first and foremost, on developing economic cooperation. We agreed to the transportation across the Caspian of up to five million tons of Kazakhstan oil to Northern Iran in exchange for Iranian oil being sold through the southern ports. We agreed to the construction and linking of railroads across Turkmenistan and an outlet to the Persian Gulf. This railway was scheduled to open in 1996. A branch may then be put through to the Bosphorus and Southern Europe.

During my visit I saw both sides of Iran – the ancient and the modern. I visited a rapidly developing free trade zone on Kesh

Island in the Persian Gulf. This island is awash with shops and storehouses goods that are brought from all over the world.

Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khomeini and numerous mullahs have kept the Islamic Revolution's traditions alive. I was struck by these people's modesty and sincere faith in the Islamic Revolution's ideals. We visited Mashhad, where the eighth caliph is buried. I was profoundly impressed by the mosque's vast proportions, lavish decoration and domes covered in sheets of gold leaf. By Imam Reza's grave I saw people in a state of religious ecstasy, moving on their knees towards the saint's grave enclosed by a gold railing. And then, with tears in their blazing eyes, they started kissing this railing all over. All around there were muffled cries and snatches of prayers, as people ardently worshipped.

False ideas abound about this country. I thought about the tough mission President Hashemi Rafsanjani has, trying to keep the balance between reform and the need to take account of traditions. As a pragmatist, he wants to find a common language with the West and the East and break through the country's economic isolation. Rafsanjani belongs to the section of the Iranian leadership whose views are based not only on the dictates of the Koran and behests of Khomeini but also on pragmatism. So, for instance, during his visit to Kazakhstan in October 1993, he announced that Iran had no intention of foisting Islamic ideology on the new independent states of Central Asia. Iran could review this issue only if it received an official request for help in religious affairs.

The Iranian President's world outlook has changed in the time since the Islamic Revolution. It was he who initiated a crucial solution for the region's future – the cessation of the Iran-Iraq war. On 15 June 1988, Rafsanjani put his political career in the spotlight when, over the course of several hours, he persuaded Ayatollah Khomeini to put an end to that absurd war. That, undoubtedly, was a great risk for the politician in so far as the leadership

and some sections of the population were convinced the war had to be waged until its victorious outcome, and for Khomeini the decision to halt the war was akin to "swallowing poison".

In 1989, presidential elections and a referendum on constitutional amendments were held at the same time. Rafsanjani received 94.5 per cent of the electorate's votes. The amendments to the Constitution consisted primarily of doing away with the post of prime minister, and entrusting the president to form a government and supervise its work. Thus, Rafsanjani was granted almost unlimited power. He appointed only 12 members of the old government to the (22-member) cabinet of ministers.

During his term in office Rafsanjani set about privatising a number of enterprises, abolished price and capital export controls, restored the free market and established economic and free trade zones. The measures to liberalise the economy that coincided with a rise in oil prices enabled the country within two years to overcome the crisis that had been brought about by the slump in manufacturing.

Our relations with Iran were, naturally, built on other grounds than religion. We have a number of joint challenges such as addressing the issue of the Caspian's status, reciprocal trade, transport and communication development. On the other hand, we sensed our Iranian partners' interest in expanding contacts with the outside world, and that included Kazakhstan. This is how they hope to get out of their economic crisis and totally restore their war-torn economy.

The war had disastrous consequences for Iran's economy. It has taken between US$300-500 billion dollars to restore. Annual oil and oil export revenues are put at US$16-17 billion, of which US$10-11 goes on defence, maintaining existing industry and the import of food and consumer goods. It will thus take them between 50 and 100 years to restore the economy through their own efforts. That's why it is so crucial for them to attract

major foreign capital, purchase foreign technology and invite specialists from overseas. In the past, the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran either prohibited or restricted foreign debts and capital investments in the economy. In 1990, at Rafsanjani's insistence, the Majlis – the Islamic Consultative Assembly of Iran – agreed to insert in Article 29 of the Law on the five-year plan a provision on the use of US$27 billion dollars from abroad. Thus, to all extents and purposes, the constitutional ban on the use of foreign capital was lifted.

With a view to developing mutual beneficial trade, we decided to increase the volume of maritime transport through our port Aktau. Several Iran trade and industry fairs have been held in Kazakhstan...

An analysis of Iran and other states that have undergone "premature modernisation" (my apologies to academics for introducing such a concept) highlights the fact that the accelerated reforming of a traditional society can actually hold back its progress. What's more, it has the effect of undermining the existing civilisation and destroying its roots. And with no roots, the crown cannot support branches that have been artificially developed.

Modernisation has to be based on a given country's own foundations and the initiatives of at least sections of the leading strata of society to expand its social base. Otherwise, a sharp polarisation takes place in the economy and, eventually, in politics as well. "Premature modernisation" can also undermine a society's intrinsic impetus to reform and hold back its development for many years.

In the month of cherry blossom – Sakura

The East is a whole world of civilisations in itself. And a special place there belongs to Japan as the leader of Asian modernisation, and the country that has shown the way to the rest of

the countries of the Asian region of the Pacific Ocean. Nowadays everyone is well aware of the fact that this part of the world is set on significantly expanding its exports to leading developed countries. And these are the so-called new major markets in Asia that include China, Indonesia, South Korea, India and Turkey. These new major markets are going to become an arena for competitive rivalry. Already 60 per cent of American exports today, amounting to around US$270 billion dollars are bound for the countries of this region. Within the next 50 years the Asian continent's economy may well outstrip those of Europe and the USA, taken as a whole. What's more, forecasts predicted that by 2000 75 million Asian families would have the same annual income as an average American one.

My official visit to the Country of the Rising Sun took place in April 1994. I had set myself several challenges. An agreement had to be reached on the establishment in Kazakhstan of a production and economic platform to facilitate Japanese trade flows across all Asia. Kazakhstan was to become a support country to channel Japanese capital into Central Asia, especially seeing that by then we had all the criteria necessary to claim such a role for ourselves. Our raw materials meet legal requirements, and we have a population with a high standard of education. Now that issues concerning land ownership and additional guarantees to foreign companies' business activities have been resolved, Kazakhstan can become a platform for Japan's entry into the markets of the CIS countries, Western China, Iran and Turkey. I proposed the setting up of a joint commission to work through all these issues. Other items raised during the talks was the construction of the West Kazakhstan-Kumkol oil pipeline and planned Central Asia-Kazakhstan-PRC- Japan gas pipeline.

I also had to sound out Japan's attitude to the idea of an Asian common market and Conference on Interaction and Trust Building in Asia. I endeavoured to convey to the Japanese leader-

ship that the challenge of resolving conflicts in Asia could only be tackled together, by all the interested parties joining forces. The key to addressing this issue was through Asian integration.

These challenges were discussed with the Japanese government's leaders and also Emperor Akihito. The residence of the Japanese emperors is located in the vast city of Tokyo. Descended from the sun goddess Amaterasu and reputed to be the world's oldest dynasty, its head, the Japanese Emperor is the symbol of the state and popular unity. Until defeat in the Second World War the concept of the dynasty's divine origin was a state postulate.

Emperor Akihito's residence is in a very peaceful, green location. After all the city's concrete and stone, it feels like a true paradise. The Japanese, though proud of their country's development, always complain about losing touch with nature and living amidst concrete and glass. It was *Sakura*, the month of cherry blossom – yet another of Japan's symbols. We were told it was a lucky sign. We were greeted at the palace gates by Emperor Akihito himself accompanied by his wife and then shown to a reception room where we began a leisurely conversation. The palace was absolutely silent.

I raised the issue of Asian integration, particularly seeing that Japan could take a leading role in this association. The Emperor replied by saying: "I do understand you – it really is a universal dream for everyone in Asia to live peaceful lives." Then he went on to describe the original features of the Japanese way. He noted how diverse the people of Asia were, in terms of mind-set, attitude to nature and the world. Could we really contemplate bringing together such different nations and states?

Then I began speaking about the things that united people. After all, the Japanese and Kazakhs have a great deal in common. We love our traditions, revere our parents and ancestors, and have similar mountains and respect fire and nature in gen-

eral. It is this reverence of traditions and striving for development that make us similar.

We also have similar challenges. Japan suffered the consequences of the atomic bombs being dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Kazakhstan became a victim of nuclear tests. Regeneration and the mobilising the national spirit – these were Japan's main aims during the gruelling post-war years. And similar challenges are also facing Kazakhstan now. The Emperor agreed that it was crucial for all the states of Asia to join forces. But this should be done gradually.

* * *

South Korea is an Asian country that has undergone another kind of accelerated modernisation. It has shown exactly how a state creates the conditions for developing the foundations of a market economy, free enterprise and fair competition. It was in Korea that the state became the main nerve centre regulating the formation of a market environment and provided the dynamism and stability for economic growth.

The state in South Korea continues, just as before, to play a fundamental role in the formation of a dynamic and stable market model economy. This leading role is reflected in the Constitution which stipulates: "The state regulates and coordinates economic life", which actually consolidated state intervention in literally all the spheres of the economy.

Before my visit to South Korea I invited Singapore's President Lee Kuan Yew to Kazakhstan. It was an immensely important meeting for me. As Singapore's leader of 40 years, he had turned it into a flourishing state with a high standard of living, a clean environment, a stable political situation and harmonious inter-ethnic relations.

Using Singapore's geographical position to the best advantage, Lee Kuan Yew played a prominent role in constructing the

ports, terminals and a state of the art airport. Initially, however, they had to start virtually from scratch, and from a state of chaos and muddle. Such experience is important for us.

Lee Kuan Yew spent a week in Kazakhstan, giving numerous lectures, including a series to the President's Apparatus, the Cabinet of Ministers, Supreme Soviet and Kazakh University. I vividly remember how important he said it was to establish a free and competitive economic system, and develop emulation not only between firms but also within them. Lee Kuan Yew who was Singapore's leader when it joined the Malay Federation stressed how essential it was to maintain the union of republics. He understood that the break-up would be very complex.

He gave considerable practical advice on resolving the economic situation, and suggested ways of making effective use of former relations and establishing new ones. He noted that, given Kazakhstan's central position in the continent, it was essential to develop an air freight transport system, open our airports to foreign companies and purchase aircraft from Western firms. This coincided with my plans to develop an air freight system. We had already acquired some IL-76 and Boeing aircraft for this purpose.

It is never too late to learn, and especially from people like Lee Kuan Yew.

Over the Atlantic

In his three-volume work *America* Daniel Burstein wrote: "Rapid growth has given people and communities, cities and governments features that were not known in the Old World. A rapidly developed city founded and built by the generation living in it did not have monuments of the past. It was consumed by the illusory grandeur of the present and a sense of duty to the future. The very existence of the city-upstart – the city of a new type de-

pended on its ability to attract free spirits to it. The strength of the old metropolises came from the population's inability or unwillingness to leave them. The cities of the New World depended on the rekindling of the sentiments of loyalty and enthusiasm that were superficial and transferred easily to a new soil".

The distinctive feature of this civilisation, according to Daniel Burstein, and which is hard to argue with, consisted of the fact that "America grew in search of a community. In the period between the Revolution and the Civil War the young country thrived in searching rather than finding. And it did so not because it had chosen the right ways to go in but because they were flexible. It lived in the constant hope of the new day bringing something new, something perhaps better than today. A by-product of this quest for ways to a universal human community was a new civilization whose strength lay not so much in idealism as in a readiness to settle for something more modest than the sought-after ideal. Americans were totally satisfied with everything growing and developing. Did man at any time before have so many hopes in the unknown?"

I first visited the US in July 1990 – a business visit by the President of the Kazakh SSR. Our delegation visited New York, Washington, San Francisco, Los Angeles and New Orleans.

I met with the president's national security advisor Brent Scowcroft, his deputy Robert M Gates, Deputy US Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger, the US Secretary of State's advisor Robert Zoellick, Senators Dole and Bradley and Lugar and Congressmen Downey and Espin. Contacts with the Chevron Corporation were also established during this visit.

Our programme also included a meeting with the US leadership. I particularly remember one of America's top politicians and the US Senate's Republican leader – Senator Robert Dole. He was very interested in the development of a multi-party system and sounded out my attitude to the republic's independence, asking

me at length how popular Mikhail Gorbachev was in Kazakhstan. Senator Dole conveyed George Bush's apology for not being able to meet me and expressed the hope that we would see each other in Moscow at the beginning of September.

And that is how things turned out. I became acquainted with President George Bush in Moscow during his visit to the USSR when I was a member of the Soviet Union's delegation. President Bush showed great interest in the course of talks with the Chevron Corporation concerning the Tengiz Oilfield. He made it clear that a president should not be involved in business issues but, given the fact that Nursultan Nazarbayev was present, it made sense to hear about the situation. I gave him a detailed outline of our plans to develop this top oilfield with the American corporation's assistance. He was very surprised by the fact that I was so well informed about the issue. But how else when this was of such vital interest to Kazakhstan? We were arguing over the quota distribution at the time. Chevron was insisting on 35 per cent of the profits, but I eventually had them agree to reduce this to 19 per cent.

I shall digress briefly. On 30 June 1993, the US Ambassador to Kazakhstan William Courtney gave me a specially made copy of the text of US Senator Richard Lugar's speech in which he gave a highly favourable assessment of Kazakhstan's development: "Kazakhstan is yet another country whose development inspires optimism.

Kazakhstanis are well-known for their pragmatism and good inter-ethnic relations. Significant progress has been made on their way to democracy and a market economy ... "What are Kazakhstan's achievements? Kazakhstan was the first state to ratify last summer the exceedingly important Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START-1). As for the economy, several weeks ago Kazakhstan signed an agreement to set up a joint venture with Chevron Oil, one of America's major oil companies. The joint

venture promises to be the largest in the territory of the former Soviet Union and Chevron's biggest foreign capital investment".

The evening reception at the American Embassy was attended by the participants in the talks along with a number of democratic leaders. Presidents Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin were also among those present. I was completely baffled why, after everyone present raised their glasses to toast the US President and American democracy, nobody did the same for the USSR President and our country. When I was offered the floor, I considered it my duty to raise a toast to everyone present. And it is not that I am a jingoist. Everywhere I go, I have always considered it my duty to retain a sense of dignity and bear in mind the prestige of the country I represent.

On 27 December 1992, I received the following message from US President George Bush: "Dear Mr President, In view of the historic changes taking place in your country and the cessation of the functioning of the Union which joined the republics of the former Soviet Union, I am pleased to inform you that the United States Government recognizes Kazakhstan as an independent state.

"Over the past few months we have engaged in a far-reaching, constructive dialogue on the most important issues involving the interests of both, the USA and Kazakhstan, as well as the entire world. We have come to an agreement that during and after the transitional period, Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Belarus are to keep secure, responsible and reliable control of the nuclear weapons under integral management. We have commended your commitment to guaranteeing the security, safety and accelerated destruction of the nuclear weapons in your territory and offered our assistance in the said process. We have agreed with you that Kazakhstan is to introduce a legislative and institutional framework to prevent the proliferation and export of weapons of mass destruction and other destabilising military

technologies, and also the know-how for their production. We have commended Kazakhstan's willingness to completely satisfy the conditions of the treaties on strategic offensive weapons and standard weapons in Europe, and join up to the non-proliferation treaty as a non-nuclear state and agree to the IAEA's comprehensive safeguards.

"You have also expressed Kazakhstan's firm commitment to the democratic values and particular obligations enshrined in all the agreements of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), including the Helsinki Accords and Paris Charter. We have commended your resolve to rapidly progress towards the establishment of a market economy in Kazakhstan. You have, furthermore, assured us of your intention to meet the treaty and other commitments of the former USSR.

"Following confirmation by you of all these commitments to State Secretary Baker, I am pleased to invite you to establish full diplomatic relations between our two countries with an exchange of permanent missions. I intend in the near future to appoint an Ambassador to Kazakhstan and invite you to indicate your plans in relation to an Ambassador to the United States of America. I look forward to receiving your agreement to the said proposals and to the future development of cordial and productive relations between Kazakhstan and the United States of America.

"To conclude my letter, I would like to invite you to visit Washington in the first half of 1992, so that we can take a look together at the many important issues facing us. Sincerely yours, George Bush."

So, I made my first visit to the United States of America as the head of sovereign Kazakhstan. From Andrews Air Force Base where our aircraft had landed, we were flown by helicopter to the White House.

A military parade in honour of Kazakhstan was held at Arlington Cemetery.

The talks with President Bush took place in the famous Oval Office. We spoke about the future of the former Soviet Republics, the prospects for democracy in post-Soviet space and, of course, the nuclear weapons issue.

During our talks President Bush invited us to go through into a reception room where he proudly showed us some of the work he was able to do on a computer. There were a lot of children's toys in the room, and he explained that his grandchildren often came to visit him. As soon as he heard that I had grandchildren, too, he picked up one of the toys and gave it to me as a gift for them.

Then we went out into the garden where there was a 20-metre swimming pool encircled by a bed of roses. Nearby was an area set aside for his favourite game that consisted of throwing horseshoes onto a post. The one who got the most horseshoes on the post was the winner. We started a game and I ended up winning. President Bush asked me if I often played, too, and so I told him it was my first go.

We agreed in principle to setting up a direct telephone line. President Bush promised to support Kazakhstan's independence in every possible way. We walked across the White House lawn accompanied by James Baker. The President said to Baker, "James, looks like we're going to win..." To which Baker replied, "Yes, of course." George Bush was sure of victory and he had every reason to be. Operation Desert Storm had just finished, and the Americans were on the crest of a wave of euphoric patriotism. President Bush had shown yet again that the United States was not simply a great country but following the break-up of the USSR, the only superpower as well.

The US president has immense power and is responsible for the security of his country and its citizens. I was once told a story about a schoolboy who remarked that the difference between the US president and a monarch was that he was not his father's

son – not in the physical sense but in the sense of inheriting the post, of course. Certainly, that country's president has vast plenary powers. But, I suppose, America's greatness lies in the fact that every four years during a long election campaign Americans get to see the presidential candidates in action, gain more insight into their views and convictions, and size up their moral and practical qualities. Then the electors vote for the better candidate and entrust him with their future.

George Bush must have felt sad about leaving the White House. As former US President Ronald Reagan commented in his memoir: "The smooth and straightforward procedure of transferring presidential power is one of America's greatest achievements but, having lived at the White House and now left it, I can understand how sad that day was for Jimmy and Rosalie Carter."

However, a change of president does not bring with it a radical change of policy. The same policy remains in place. And friendly relations have already been established between me and the new administration.

The new US Vice President Al Gore visited Kazakhstan in December 1993. He is a charming man. We had lengthy face to face conversations, and I invited him to a family dinner party where everyone in the family was present. It was a really informal do. My wife, Sara Alpysovna, and my two daughters, Dariga and Aliya, sang Kazakh, Russian and English songs. Then we had our final talk. He realised that as the head of state and first president of Kazakhstan, I could not simply give up the nuclear weapons when there was so much instability all around until I had received firm guarantees regarding my country's independence and integrity. He realised that it had to do with the future of the people who had entrusted me with power, not my own personal ambitions.

On his next visit Al Gore brought me an official invitation from President Bill Clinton.

This official visit to the US took place between 14 and 18 February 1994. The talks went off well. We signed all the planned documents and, most importantly, the Charter on a democratic partnership. Suffice it to say, no other state in Eastern Europe or the CIS has such an agreement with the US. It was an outstanding achievement of diplomacy for the young state.

And this visit was not without its surprises either. One evening a dinner was organised in our delegation's honour, attended by around one thousand guests, including some of the most eminent members of the US business community and politicians.

There was a military band and several officers sang folk songs. Al Gore invited us to sing as well. I agreed to but only if he did, too, but then he tried to get out of it by saying, "But you know I can't sing!" So Sara Alpysovna, our elder daughter, Dariga, and I went onto the stage and my wife and I sang Kazakh songs, and Dariga sang some in English.

Our brilliant Kazakh national poet Abai's wonderful words certainly sounded extra special in that formal State Department reception hall, especially as the 150th anniversary of his birth was nearly upon us.

It was only later I discovered that nothing like this had ever happened before. Wherever we went afterwards, people had heard about it and commented on it. Openness and self-confidence are qualities Americans greatly admire.

A CONFLUENCE OF CIVILISATIONS

There has been much talk in recent years of the vacuum of ideas, and complexity and uncertainty in international relations, and indeterminate prospects in this area. After the massive political advances in the 80s and 90s, the world has, without doubt, become much more unpredictable. And, I suppose, it is impossible nowadays to paint the simple picture of international rela-

tions we used to paint over the past 50 post-war years when the whole world was divided into two vast spheres of influence and it was easy to predict exactly how Washington, Moscow or Beijing would respond to events, say, in Kabul or on the island of Diego Garcia.

At the same time, it is important in politics today, especially for countries going through a complex transitional period, to have not only tactical aims and objectives but also a comprehensive strategic perspective. Otherwise, for any politician the world becomes an incomprehensible system of Cabalistic signs which everyone is free to interpret in his or her own way. And so, to avoid soon ending up standing over the smouldering ruins of one's country or leading one's people with optimistic slogans straight toward the nearest precipice, it is exceedingly important to have a general idea of global dynamics.

No practical-minded politician today is likely any more to risk writing deep philosophical works on restructuring for the whole world. That seems simply ludicrous now, especially for countries that have their own problems to sort out first. The only useful thing would be to highlight a few general points that would enable various countries to correctly find their bearings in the post-confrontational world.

There is probably no need for a politician to re-invent the wheel – come up with original theories as Stalin once did in the field of linguistics. But a politician today definitely has to have his own view and practical vision of the problems raised by theoreticians.

In the final years of the outgoing century no work in the field of politics and international relations gave rise to as much stormy and animated discussion as two short essays by Fukuyama and Huntington. I have to say that reading with a pencil in one hand is no way for a politician to spend his leisure time. I detected an attempt in these essays to make sense of the actions motivating

many political leaders, although I have to make clear straightaway that many of their assertions provoked nothing but mild mirth.

In his essay "The End of History?" that appeared in a journal in 1989, the celebrated American philosopher Francis Fukuyama confidently argued that the victory of liberalism as an ideology had brought about the end of history: that is, the world would gradually be moving towards the integral principles of a political and economic system formed along the lines of liberal ideology. Overall, the twentieth century, right up to the 90s, according to him, had been a conflict zone between liberalism, communism and fascism.

After the victory over fascism in the Second World War and its utter discrediting, the entire post-war history of international relations was an arena of hostility between two ideological doctrines that ended with the break-up of the socialist camp and victory of liberalism. Of course, Fukuyama understands perfectly well that this victory of liberalism is not universal, that many regions and even whole continents are building their lives on anything but liberal principles, but one of the main arguments of his essay is that in the main countries dominating the world stage, liberal ideology is becoming the leading force determining the actions of increasingly broad strata of the population in both the economic and politic spheres.

This essay provoked a raucous reaction not only in academic circles but also among politicians who, while aware of the limited and flawed nature of such an approach, were unable to provide a clear and specific response to the question as to whether history really had ended. What's more, many people actually agreed with such views. It is quite difficult for a politician to use the Hegelian categories Fukuyama frequently references. As it is said, render unto Caesar what is Caesar's and unto God what is God's. The response, as was to be expected, came from the heights of aca-

demia: in 1993, one of the most authoritative international publications, the journal *Foreign Affairs,* published the essay "The Clash of Civilizations" by leading international relations expert Professor Samuel Huntington.

Huntington argued that in the new world taking shape today the main source of international conflicts was not going to be either economics or ideology. The main boundaries dividing humanity in the twenty-first century were cultural, and it was this schism between civilisations that was going to be the focal point of large-scale international conflicts and contradictions in the future. Instead of traditionally dividing the world into capitalist, socialist and developing; North and South; developed and backward; rich and poor; post-industrial, industrial and pre-industrial, he divided it into durable civilisations with age-old histories. These were the worlds of the Western, Islamic, Confucian, Hindu, Slavonic Orthodox, Japanese, Latin American and African civilisations. Huntington noted with wit that all the previous ideological, class and bloc conflicts in the international arena had had to do with an individual or country being asked the question, "Whose side are you on?", whereas nowadays the main question being asked individuals, politicians, nations and states was, "Who are you?"

This question has colossal political substance. Whereas in ideological or class conflicts an individual, group or country used to be able to choose his or its position in a complex international political configuration, it is a thousand years of past history that entitles a person to belong to a civilisation and there is no choice in the matter. You either belong to one civilisation or other, or lose your cultural identity.

What seemed to me to be the key in the sweeping panorama of international relations Huntington described was as follows. After the collapse of the two-bloc system all the world's politicians realised with varying degrees of clarity that the contradic-

tions between civilisations really were considerable and impacting on real politics. What's more, international relations, which for at least the last one and a half centuries had been a complex game of interests played by the major European powers, including Russia, and also the USA, are now turning into an even more complex game in which the major states of other regions of the world are performing as different partners. This is having an impact on the choice of politics of many new states of the world today, including those of a transitional type. It is hard not to agree with this. The political leaderships of young states in the process of establishing their system of international relations are also in a fairly complex situation.

I have highlighted these extensive arguments specifically because they represent an attempt on their authors' part to re-examine the entire system of international relations. Of course, there are a huge number of military, economic, political and cultural aspects to contemporary international relations that are of a more complex nature than this academic overview. However, such a simplified perspective is quite useful for understanding the process as a whole.

In the course of this book I have already discussed the specific features of modernisation in various countries. Fukuyama's reflections on a kind of uniform liberal civilisation in most of the world's leading countries do not resonate at all with the impressions of a practical-minded politician. I have had occasion to make dozens of foreign visits over the past five years and the astonishing diversity of ethnic groups, histories, cultures, traditions, models of social systems and values – all this colourful kaleidoscope of countries and continents has enabled me to come to one prosaic conclusion – the "onslaught of contemporary life" is not synonymous with "Westernisation" or, indeed, the global victory of liberalisation.

What makes this model of global liberalisation inadequate is that the unique and intrinsically invaluable experience of Western European and then North American civilisation is perceived not as entirely historic, specific experience with all its numerous coincidences, deviations and outstanding personalities but as a kind of timeless model.

There are, however, completely real reasons and conditions that made Europe what it is. It is hard for me to go into the initial causes in detail, but one factor is indisputable. There is a strange, in my opinion, yet inherently deep-rooted link between contemporary Western cities, true gems of civilisation, and those small settlements of the Ancient Mediterranean World that were proudly called "polis". No less paradoxical, at first glance again, are the links in history embedded in the life of the small mediaeval towns of Europe that contain so many memories, both material and spiritual.

During my visits to England, France, Germany and Spain, the modern business areas of cities and concentrated and dense atmosphere of the old quarters have always had an ambiguous impression on me, with every inch or centimetre of space conjuring images of the past, from devious Henry IV to the Sun King, from the times of the rebel Cromwell to the golden Victorian age so brilliantly preserved in London's magnificent stone monuments.

Europe has retained the traditions, some two thousand years old, of the "polis" – of course in ways that have changed over time. And much can be understood about Western civilisation from the special role of its cities in its history and the inner workings and norms of European urban life.

What is it in the most ancient layers of consciousness that imperceptibly propels a thousand years of history? A few simple but fundamental norms. Any historian with a modicum of education knows about such a phenomenon as the equality of townspeople – from the days of the ancient "polis" to mediaeval towns

– before the law, perhaps not total but equality on a mass scale for free townspeople. A great ancient philosopher may have defined a slave as a "talking animal", but free citizens appeared in European towns long before the American founding fathers, or the Bill of Human Rights.

On the other hand, the fact that there was a free man, be he an ancient vintner or mediaeval artisan, gave rise to a ramified system of property relations. And the elementary civil society that existed in urban communities always exerted a certain amount of control over political institutions.

Finally, these objective reasons were bound to impact on people's mind sets. Concepts such as individualism and competition between individuals came about over a long period of time and not at one and the same time. Incidentally, the roots of individual appraisals of everything also come from here, as does the idea of man being "the measure of all things", which could have appeared only within the framework of European civilisation.

Another, less significant but equally obvious reason for the specific characteristics of Western civilisation is its ecclesiastical history. And I do not mean the particular features of its dogma here. You see, Confucianism in the last quarter of the twentieth century has also proved capable of adapting to new forms of corporate life, just as seventeenth-century Protestantism once did to the early forms of capitalism. I am referring to something else here. The fact is, except for in a few exceedingly rare cases, the powerful European church never became totally subordinate to political authority.

This resulted in the most highly complex and bloody intrigues in European history, but it is this historical pluralism of secular and religious power, irrespective of the immense influence exercised by the Church, that has to a certain extent determined the level of the Western world's development today. On the other hand, thinking about the refined canonical observances of the West-

ern religious ritual, the regulation inherent in church life, even in its secular duties (I remember, for instance, my meeting with Pope John Paul II at the Vatican), one cannot help recalling European history with its papacies, monasteries scattered across the continent and culturally integrating it for centuries. On meeting Western European politicians, I have repeatedly had a sense of a certain cultural similarity between them, irrespective of all their individual differences. Along with all the commonsense and pragmatism in the reasons for it, Western Europe's aspiration toward integration has also to do with the latent unifying role of Western Christianity that only an incredibly steadfast church could have.

Of course, one could discuss at length the different reasons for the emergence of various values in Western civilisation, but this is a subject for the historians. I only wanted to highlight the most important points.

This unique model with its very own inimitable, ongoing history cannot be dished out as some condensed version of universal human experience. This is insulting not only for other cultures but also for Europeans themselves, for instead of being a phenomenon of intrinsic value and worth for the national spirit, their history turns into a school textbook on building social institutions. Unfortunately, many political experts who express incredulity when a real situation fails to fall in with their stereotypes also suffer from similar puerile notions of history. So, in practical terms, as far as the global victory of liberalism goes, there is still a very long way to go. For the time being it is just a mirage in the desert sands and – let's put it this way – a mirage that is certainly not problem-free.

As for the conflicts between civilisations in the world today, it brings to mind a certain thinker's logic exercise. I think he used to cite four logically irrefutable pieces of evidence for the existence of God and then cite four equally logical ones to disprove it. Theoretical arguments, especially where such complex categories as

international relations are concerned, often recall the disputes of Byzantine theologians on the gender of angels. That's why I shall cite more down-to-earth arguments. When civilisations are under discussion, it seemed to me politicians involved in the real political process are bound to disagree with the thesis on civilisations' rigid division, on the one hand, and the unity that exists within them, on the other. The experience of practical meetings with the political leaders of various countries is testament to this. Despite all the cultural and religious closeness of Turkey and Saudi Arabia, there are more differences between them than countries belonging to different cultures and civilisations. There are considerable differences between Scandinavia and the Latin Mediterranean countries, even though they belong to the same civilisation. Nor should we ignore the fact that the twentieth century has been one of ideologies. This lesson has been particularly important for the CIS countries. We have become considerably estranged from our traditional cultural roots and adopted a lot from other civilisations' sources. It is hard to judge whether this is a good or bad thing, but either way, it is essential to keep focused on reality.

What's more, civilisations are one issue, but meanwhile the social and economic gap between the poor and rich countries is not just staying the same but actually increasing. At a global meeting at the highest level to discuss social development the UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali cited some appalling figures in this context that confirm the irrational but, unfortunately, fundamental differences in life of various members of the human race.

We live in a world where one billion, three hundred million people exist in abject poverty, where every day eight hundred million people do not get enough food to eat, where one third of a billion children do not attend school at all and where over a billion people have no access to safe drinking water.

But no matter how striking these "traditional" disparities may be, something else matters even more. Sometimes it suddenly occurs to politicians, especially when engaged in a rigorous and intensive round of international meetings, that cultures may be different but that there is something bringing people increasingly closer together with every passing year. There is often no time to reflect upon this fact, but going over my notes on the outcome of international meetings, I realise how weak this notorious argument about the clash of civilisations is in this context.

The mechanisms functioning in the world today are increasingly between civilisations or, I would say, along other lines, not involving civilisations as such. Here I mean, first and foremost, global trade. Yes, the world has always traded, and we, Kazakhs, living on one of the important sections of the Great Silk Road, have known this since ancient times. Never before, however, has the world traded so intensively and on such a big scale as in the last 50 years. I have had to study international trade data quite a lot. In the last 50 years, internal trade has increased in volume dozens of times over. Never has there been such a huge increase! Neither in times of great exploration and discoveries, nor in the era of mighty empires. It is hard to overestimate the cultural significance of global trade "hotspots".

The global expansion of technologies is destroying the traditional means of organising labour from the inside, and what I mean here are not only purely technological innovations but new managerial technologies as well. A young state cannot possibly survive in an increasingly competitive world unless its elite, managerial elite included, receives adequate training. If one did not move with the times, one would have to totally ignore all innovations. But my own experience of working with the financial, managerial and political leaders of many countries inspired me back in our first year of independence to start personal training on a major scale. With sponsorship from the Bolashak Presiden-

tial Programme, hundreds of young Kazakhstanis have already graduated from the most prestigious universities of the USA, Great Britain, France, Germany, South Korea and various other countries. It would be tough today without such a large number of specialists with the right top-calibre technology skills, especially in manufacturing process management, finance and banking. The features of any given civilisation, of course, leave their mark on contemporary managerial technologies, and this is particularly notable where Japan is concerned. However, there is no need to exaggerate the role of the schism between civilisations in this respect either.

And, finally, one cannot fail to mention the information technology boom. Back in the late 60s, there was talk of the planet becoming a global information village. At the time, though, this was somewhat exaggerated. Now that a billion people are receiving the same information more or less simultaneously, the number of group and individual users of the internet alone is over 10 million, and from any point on the globe one can gain access to the US Library of Congress or the British Museum without leaving one's work station; this has indeed become a reality. And this information reality is making its presence powerfully felt in our lives. Incidentally, the sad fate of authoritarian and totalitarian regimes over the past decade is a consequence of this new information reality which is by nature against "iron curtains". Information flows are tearing down the barriers between civilisations. And so it is hard to predict how different the world views of tomorrow's young people in Almaty, Paris and Seoul will be.

So what conclusion can be drawn from these fragmentary observations? That there is essentially a single civilisation based on an integral model? No, if one is not to simplify things and come up with yet another "one fits all" template for the world today. Cultural originality is simply unassailable, and civilisations cannot be regarded as simple carbon copies of each other. Every na-

tional culture, and particularly regional civilisation, has immense reserves of endurance – not accidentally but through having a multi-layered structure. I recall once flying in a helicopter over Toledo, one of the oldest towns in Spain, and seeing a bullfight in a stadium. I asked for us to be shown a fight. The impression it left was immense – both brutal and exciting at one and the same time. While not a very pleasant spectacle for the uninitiated, it is for fans a wonderful illustration of spiritual fortitude and national history. For, you see, it, too, is an element of culture, albeit a superficial one. Yet culture is made up of very subtle things without which life would simply be impossible.

There can be no universal civilisation, but separate elements of it are plain to see. This paradox is fairly easy to comprehend if one discards certain enduring stereotypes from the past. Yes, certain political, legal and economic institutions and the technological base of industry and everyday life today are becoming increasingly standardised but the very core of culture and civilisation still remains. It is this core element that enables any individual belonging to any culture to sense and appreciate life itself, and informs his attitudes to the material and spiritual world – in other words, the world of values.

One thing is clear to me as a politician and individual – though democratic and free-market institutions are very important, ultimately, they are still instruments, and not the purpose of life in society. And this in no way diminishes the role of democracy and the market. It is impossible to become a modern society without them. After all, the world offers an astonishing array of fundamental principles of democracy and the market and very steadfast national traditions. The main thing is to correctly identify the golden mean between the demands of the day and what makes you who you are.

* * *

During the twentieth century my nation has endured things that many more fortunate nations could not imagine even in their worst nightmares. An astounding quality of my people has always been their ability to survive even the most traumatic times when they might easily have been swept away by the tide of inexorable and sometimes brutal Eternity. So it was during the popular war against the Jungars in the eighteenth century; so, too, when Kazakhs were defending their independence under the leadership of Kenesary Kasymov, the last independent Kazakh khan in the nineteenth century. We are currently discovering new chapters of our history: far from dying miserably of starvation and as a result of the repressions in the 1930s, Kazakhs, in fact, put up an armed struggle against the system. There were hundreds of uprisings all over Kazakhstan against Stalinist oppression, but the odds were stacked too heavily against them. And once exhausted, people were forced either to submit, or, in some cases, abandon their homes and flee abroad. Now the descendents of these refugees are returning home.

The Kazakh nation has been on the verge of annihilation many a time. Over and over again, however, its people's determination to survive and be free has made them stand tall again.

I love my people and am proud they have taught me to set wisdom and tranquillity as my ultimate goals, and give preference to peaceful means over the blind laws of war.

How can one fail to be proud of a nation which has succeeded against all the odds to retain its nobility and tolerance and respect for other nations? A nation I have felt part of all through the complex twists and turns of recent years. A nation which has determined its future on the threshold of the twenty-first century.

CONTENTS

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ON THE THRESHOLD OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

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