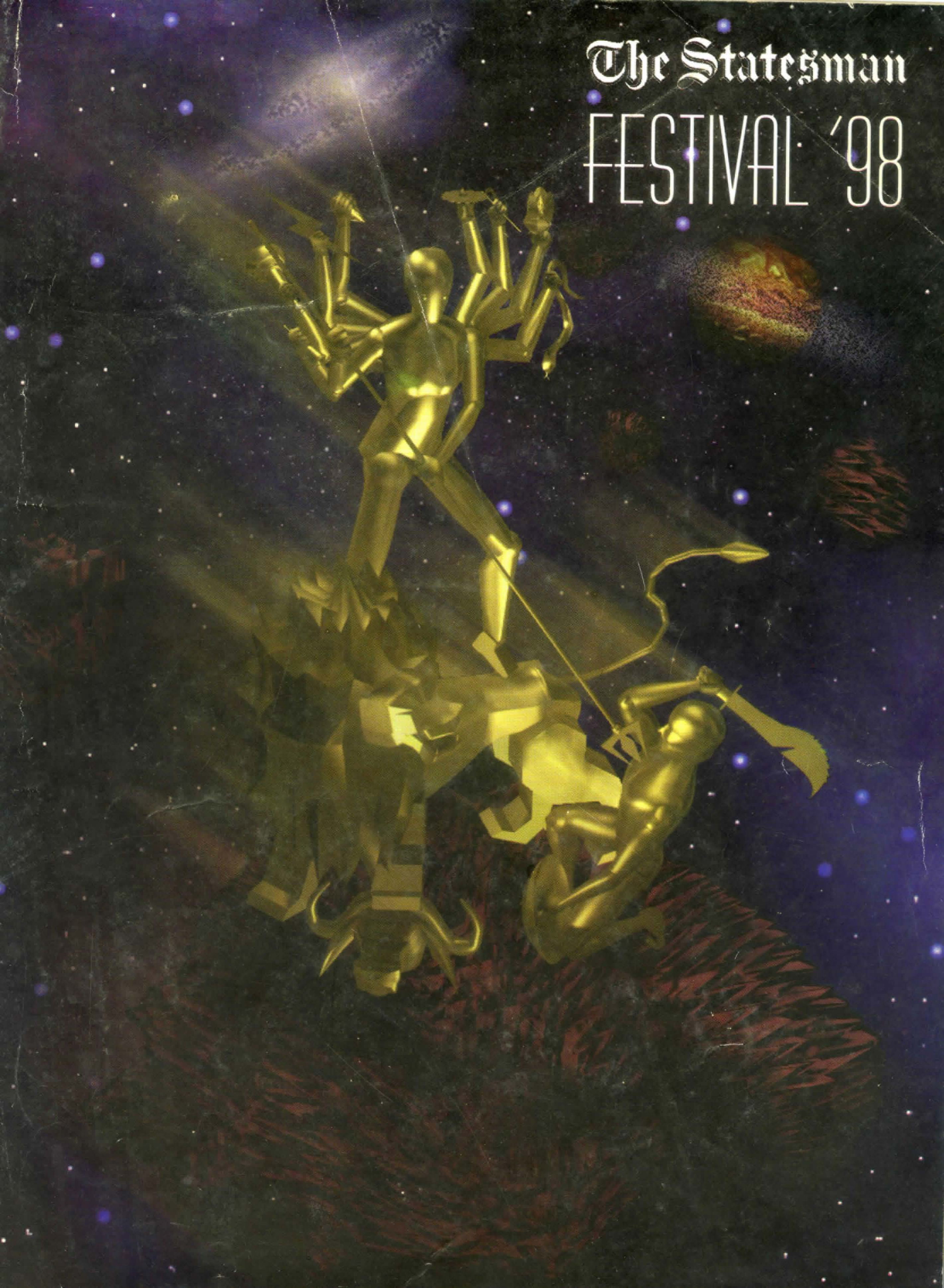
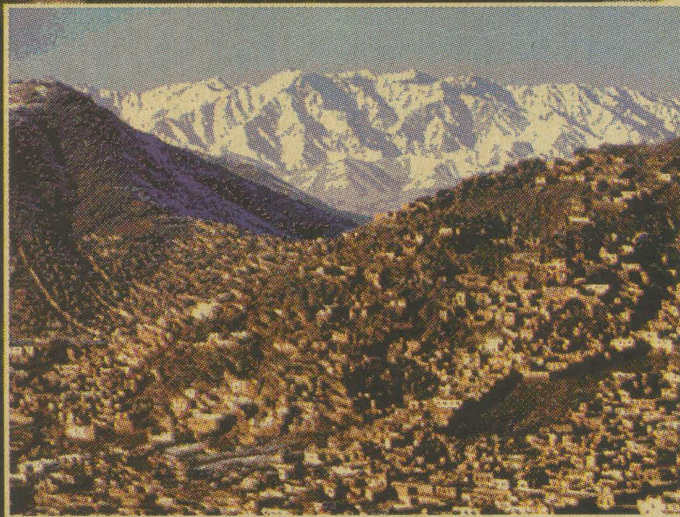

The Statesman
FESTIVAL '98

THE STARS OVER



THE STEPPE

By Hari Vasudevan

IN 1991, WITH THE DISINTEGRATION of the USSR, in an area stretching from Astrakhan on the Caspian, to Almaty below the Tienshan mountains and the Pamirs in the south, five states emerged in world politics with a pitiful modicum of authority and leverage. These ramshackle nations of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tadjikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan constituted an area larger than Western Europe. Their sovereignty was a reversal of a century and a half of history: the undoing of Russian occupation of the land of the three (Kazakh) hordes and the incorporation of Turan into the Romanov Empire by the mid-19th century. After 1917, although nominally independent, these territories were firmly under the control of Moscow, and had negligible say internationally over their own destiny. For the powers interested in the region, the changes of 1991 were especially momentous since the developments coincided with strong autonomy movements in Siberia, the Urals and the old Soviet far east. Vocal demands were heard on the middle Volga for the formation of a large Tartar state; Muslim communities in Chinese Xinjiang were restive and a state of chaos prevailed in Afghan affairs. It appeared that there was a likelihood of an impending restructuring not only of Central Asia, but of the whole of Inner Asia.

The turn of affairs roused hope and fear both in the East and the West: sentiments which were partly guided by historical prejudice, partly by a contemporary sense of geopolitics. True, there was no foreboding concerning the rise of a Genghis Khan or Tamerlane from the expanse now in a melting pot. Images of the wild horsemen or cruel amirs of the region might still have been the stock in trade of the European literary imagination: images immortalised in Jules Verne's *Michel Strogoff*, (standard reading once in Calcutta) and Rene Grousset's *History of the Steppes*. Edgar Jacobs successfully purveyed a modern version of this some decades ago, in his Mortimer and Blake stories, in his depiction of a menacing 20th century Central Asian dictator, intent on world conquest — a mix of kommissar and Khan. But almost all of this was regarded as fanciful by the crystal gazer of the '90s. On the other hand, Inner Asia was associated with fabulous resources of oil, natural gas and minerals, as well as foodstuffs, and the destruction of Soviet monopoly opened up great possibilities for profit — both for Western multinationals and smaller businesses in Iran, Turkey, Pakistan, India and South East Asia. Nineteenth century images of oases, deserts and the broad, unending steppe had long given way to a picture of a region of vast industrial sites (such as Karaganda), nuclear testing grounds at Semipalatinsk, Soviet-style cities with

Genghis Khan

enormous concrete blocks, oil rigs on the Caspian and the Mubarek gas fields of Uzbekistan. Here, Kazakhstan alone produced 25 per cent of the USSR's coal in 1989, 50 per cent of its silver, 26 per cent of its agricultural products, and large amounts of ferrous metals, gold, uranium, copper etc. The Fergana Valley produced one third of the Union's cotton, and the Kyzlkum Desert was an important source of gold.

These very resources, though, were now in the hands of powers (especially in Kazakhstan) who had never kowtowed to traditional Islam, in a region where Russian influence was substantial, and where every sense of the world was formed by the Soviet prism, and where each country's economic base was closely tied in with Russian manufacturing and trading arrangements. The possibility of resurgent Communism, with its source in the Russian Federation, could not be ruled out: nor could the likelihood of some unanticipated turn of affairs that would throw the international system out of gear. The largescale prevalence in Kazakhstan, of both space technology and nuclear weapons, was a source of concern. This was especially so since the Kazakh leadership had shown its reluctance to surrender nuclear weapons without some quid pro quo from the Russian Federation.

In the course of the eight years that have followed, little of the fate of Inner Asia has become more clear; but of all the possibilities which were evident in 1991, two "futures" appear more likely. One is the possibility of the emergence of a strong central authority in the region. This will be focused on the territory of Kazakhstan, which may emerge as the investment and technological centre of the region — drawing on interests in the West and in Russia, forming close relations with the Kyrghiz, and trading links connections with China, while maintaining a toe-hold in Uzbekistan, which will finally act as its satrap. Such a development will receive sustenance from the close relations between Moscow and Almaty within the CIS. The language of state building will be thoroughly dominated by nationalism and ethnic self-assertion of all hues — a situation where the standoff will provide substantial opportunities for political brokerage by a limited presidential coterie. Environmental issues promise to be a concern — a factor which derives its significance from strong cultural and social movements which make conservation their major platform. The upshot would be a state formation or alliance of considerable authority — capable of impressing its opinions on China by way of its influence in Xinjiang, and Russia by way of its influence in Siberia. It would be independent of Turkey and Iran, since its commitment to Islam is quite different, and features Shamanist accretions. At a time of uncertainty in the area between the Syr Dar'ia and the Amu Dar'ia, it could well provide the source of stability for the region. The emergence of such a power would figure the return to world politics of the Mongol confederations which once played such a crucial role in the politics of Inner Asia.

Colin Thubron, visiting the region in the aftermath of disintegration, repeatedly posed two questions. Would the area turn fundamentalist? What was the response of Central Asians to the old order ?

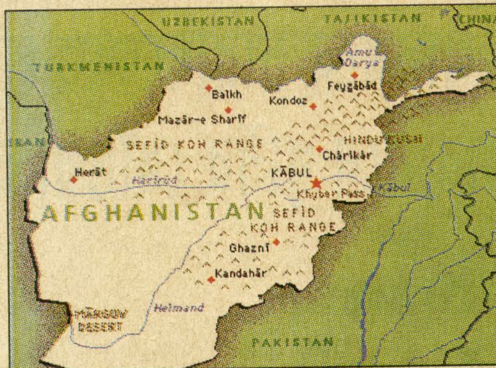
The second possibility is the unabated and unrestrained growth of internecine strife in the region, on the model of what occurred in Osh, Tashkent and Almaty in the late '80s and early '90s, and which persists in Tadjikistan today: i.e. the flaring of communal and clan rivalries, exacerbated by unemployment, poor housing and living facilities. This, if it is permitted to weaken the authority of powerful presidential institutions, and remains uncontrolled by local military forces, would become the playground of druglords, arms' speculators and international entrepreneurs of the petroleum industry. Such a scenario would involve the creation of a Black Hole in Asia: an extension of the Afghan chaos further north, and a low-level militarisation of civil society well into the Steppe. It has some advantages for Russia — which is unable to control the region otherwise — a point that has been stressed last year by an advisor to the Russian President who counselled Russian encouragement to forces of disarray as a counterweight to US authority in the area. It will be a major disaster for the stability of political regimes of the neighbourhood, involving resources far exceeding other such "ulcers" such as Lebanon.

A reduction of options to such alternatives was hardly anticipated in 1991. Contemporary historians of Central Asia such as Helene Carrere d'Encausse, Shirin Akiner, Olivier Roi and others looked to the region's Muslim past, and the "modernising" strains of its reformers of the end of the 19th century to enable its inhabitants to haltingly discover their future. The only alternative they allowed for was a return to Soviet Communism as a consequence of general desperation and the intrigue of ex-Party members. Guided by such assumptions, Colin Thubron, visiting the region in the aftermath of disintegration, repeatedly posed two questions. Would the area turn fundamentalist, on the Iran model, whether Shiite or not? And what was the response of Central

Asians to the old order (i.e. Russian and Communist dominance)? In seeking his answers, he meticulously noted public disenchantment with Communism — mainly in the dismantling of the statues and hoardings of the past. He also avidly followed the fascination with Islam and the ignorance of its devotees.

The goad to such a perspective was that rash of Western scholarly publications which had for years relentlessly pointed to Soviet suppression of Islam in the region, and dwelt on the tensions between Moscow and the Ferghana Valley over cotton cultivation in the Turan area. Leaching of the soil between the Syr Dar'ia and the Amu Dar'ia not only destroyed the fertility of the region but also led to the fading of the Aral Sea. Further north, nuclear tests reduced areas of the Steppe to desolation; and poor environmental sense in the exploitation of the mineral wealth of the area aroused a strong Green movement in Kazakhstan. Such dimensions of local politics, it appeared, and the persistence of clan loyalties in Central Asia and Kazakhstan, must lead to a proper break with Russia and an interest in a broader Islamic identity. To deal with the mixture of Communism and clandestine Islam that was conventional in modern Turan, a renaissance of the Jadidism of the turn of the 19th century, it was argued, was possible. This referred to the movement centred on the Tartars of Kazan and the Crimea, and the work of Ismail Bey Gasprinskii, Ahmad Makhdum Danish (1827-1897); and Jamal Din Afghani (1837-1897); a movement for the modernisation of Islam and the linking of all Central Asian peoples into a Turkish union. The remnants of this tradition, together with outright fundamentalism, according to Western scholarship, would be the social cement of the future. Iran and Turkey, meanwhile, must become the hegemons of the region, and the only alternative was a resurgence of Communism.

Inspired by such ideas (as well as by US and NATO encouragement), the major powers of the neighbouring region set their agenda, along with Euro-American statesmen and directors of major multinational companies. Turkish President Turgut Ozal organised a conference of Central Asian leaders in Ankara in 1991 and spoke of pan-Turkism. Grants-in-aid, scholarships to Turkish universities and repeated visits followed the visit of Prime Minister Demirel to Central Asia in 1992. Money was lavished on madrasah building, the study of Central Asian Islam and the dispatch of Islamic councillors to the region. Turkey's influence in the Caucasus region, adjacent to the Caspian, was enhanced by the formation of the Black Sea Economic Organisation (June 1992). Not to be outdone, the Iranian Foreign Minister (Akbar Ali Velayati) travelled to Central Asia (in November 1991) — paying considerable attention to neighbouring Turkmenistan and Persian-speaking Tadjikistan. The Association of Persian Languages was set up in February 1992, and followed by a Caspian Sea Organisation (where the members were Iran, Russia, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan). Links with the Islamic community of the region were strengthened by aid from Pakistan also — which offered to lay Karachi at the disposal of the Central Asian states which were badly in need of decent port facilities.



These initiatives occurred alongside pan-Turk and Islamic movements in the Central Asian states themselves. True, the old Communist Parties continued to be the ruling parties of the region in one form or another; President Nabiyev revived the Communist Party of Tadjikistan after a brief break; President Karimov renamed the Communist Party of Uzbekistan the National Democratic Party of Uzbekistan in September 1991; and the Socialist Party (Kazakhstan) was merely the Communist Party by a different name. Powerful rivals however gained ground, which worked with pro-Turk and pro-Muslim slogans. In a number of states, Wahabi movements (for a purified and resurgent Islam) gathered support; the Islamic Renaissance Party has been a force of importance in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tadjikistan; and in addition, parties such as Birlik and Erk (Uzbekistan) have not concealed their concern with Islam.

A number of major international companies moved into the region, against this broad "opening up". They were encouraged by the display of economic independence among the republics, who evolved their own currencies during 1992-93: the *som* (Uzbekistan), the *tenge* (Kazakhstan), the *manat* (Turkmenistan), etc. They set out to negotiate deals which would make use of the reconstruction of the area by its neighbours. The entrepreneurial adventurers include major-leaguers of the oil and natural gas industry: Chevron, British Gas and Agip, British Petroleum, Mobil, Shell, Statoil and the 4 Ms (Mitsui, Mitsubishi, Marathon and McDermott). Smaller ventures also took on projects: JKX Oil and Gas, a UK engineering company, Dana Exploration; and Ramco Energy of Scotland. Competition for the resources of the area was complicated by the interest evinced by China, which was evident in the conclusion of a trading agreement between Kazakhstan and China in 1992, the development of joint ventures between them, and the construction of a rail-line between Almaty and Xinjiang. The Chinese interest in the region was also to be seen in the friendly discussions between Kyrghiz leaders and the Chinese. The emerging states encouraged everyone. Kyrgyzstan, for instance became the focus of the broadest spectrum of donors: the omnipresent

USA, China, Turkey, South Korea, Spain and Italy.

Such tidy competition among the Islamic states for the old Soviet South, and the steady use of changing circumstances by multinationals, was considered a desirable, logical and necessary development by Western scholars and diplomats. A resurgence in Central Asia — i.e. an assertion of local authority, with global consequences — was ruled out. Historical studies of the nomads of the Steppe consigned their greatness and military genius to a distant past. Recent work on the innovative character of nomadic culture was hardly applied to the modern circumstances of the Steppe — although such arguments undermined notions of the "barbaric" quality of the predecessors of the Mongols in the area — the Scythians especially. The more recent story of the Steppe nomads was set out as a tale of division and internecine warfare. As a consequence of disunity, it was argued, they had lost their hold in northern Siberia and were absorbed within the Romanov Empire. The seeds of social disarray in the proliferation of tribal and clan loyalties from the 15th century, within the framework of the Greater, Middle and Small Horde or *zhuz* (tribal federative union), was painstakingly outlined by Soviet scholars such as Vostrov and Mukanov, who set the pattern for Euro-American research.

In such an overall picture, the Kazakh reformers, led in the 19th century by the scholar Chokan Valikhanov, and later in the 1900s by the Alash movement, were represented as doomed, owing to the social limitations of their own people. The attempts of "renaissance heroes" to piece together a "modern" future for their nations was acknowledged; but they were depicted as falling victim to social ignorance in their own birthplace. Valikhanov, for instance, who passed through Russian schools at Tomsk (where rules forbade his using the library meant for Russians), established his own credentials as a leading geographer and ethnographer by the late 1850s, and sought to introduce local reforms in his own district; but he is said to have come to an unfortunate end, probably murdered by local khans who resented his ideas. In the case of Central Asia, a similar degeneracy was held to be true. Here it was associated with the mindlessness of cruel rulers, who failed to respond to Jadidism, and an ignorant peasantry quickly led by local Muslim *ulema*. In the histories of d'Encausse, Benningsen and Quelquejay (whose work is the core of the Euro-American tradition) the ultimate villain in the tragedy was Bolshevism, and its unparalleled ferocity in handling local reformers. Local ethnic communities were regarded as putty in the hands of these vicious Red lords, who hashed together the Central Asian states with no serious regard to ethnicity or nationality. From the communities that survived such horrors, clearly, little could be expected except their exuberant nationalism and their persevering yet ignorant faith in the religion to which they had tenaciously clung.

That almost all this amounted to bad reading of Central Asia among commentators became self-evident by the winter of 1993. The Turks were making poor headway in the area, the Iranians remained outsiders, and the Chinese merely stuck to minor improvements in Kazakh-Kyrgyz relations. In all the states, in varying degrees, Russian migration into the Russian Federation led to a fall in the maintenance of local manufactures, since Russians were often the skilled personnel in these units. The anarchy of the Russian reforms, skyrocketing prices in the Federation and the fall in production reinforced economic stagnation in Central Asia.

In all this, Islam, whether reformed or unreformed, was still only a force "in opposition" in almost all states. Chaos was mounting. The Tadjik civil war was in full spate. A CIS summit requested Russian soldiers to provide a special security force on the Tadjik-Afghan border. But this did not come down to a "return" of Russia to the former Soviet south, although Washington, and its expert on the area, Strobe Talbott, did some sabre-rattling against Moscow on this count at that time. Starovoytova, Boris Yeltsin's advisor on nationalities' affairs, made it clear in the summer of 1992, in New York, at a press conference at the Peace Centre, that the Caucasus and Central Asia were not worth the candle; and the prevalence of this opinion in Russia was amply demonstrated when public outrage met reports of the deaths of Russians from the border patrol on the Tadjik border. On the ground, in Inner Asia, meanwhile, there was no wave of pan-Turkism, no grand Islamic resurgence, and no return to Communism.

Ethnic self-assertion on a grand scale, with no reference to "leadership" by any nationality, was the order of the day; and this was followed by great disagreement on political arrangements, versions of history, and religious conventions and codes. Within a single republic, a range of voices debated the future, in circumstances where the terms of agreement and compromise were seldom worked out. In Kazakhstan, a number of ethnic groups politicised every issue: Russians and Kazakhs, who were the majority ethnic groups, and Uighurs, Meskhetian Turks and others among the minorities. In Kyrgyzstan, there were standard clashes between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks, and still other tensions involving Russians, Poles, Germans, Tartars, Uighurs, Chechens and others. Close relations with China were prevented by the migration of Chinese Uighurs into the region, following tensions between the community and Beijing in Xinjiang. Basic rivalry between Uzbeks and Tadjiks rocked Uzbekistan and Tadjikistan. Each ethnic group, moreover, had its own divisions, according to the tribe and clan. Kazakhs counted their ancestry to the Greater, Middle and Lesser Hordes, and their tribes within them. The Kyrghyz counted on such divisions as well as their district affiliations (Naryn, Osh or Talas). Uzbeks dealt in clans; Tadjiks in clans and districts (of which the Kuliab was the most militant region).

As "national" politics was constitut-

ed, and "national" histories were written, groups vied over the origins of heroes: each claiming a rehabilitated figure (such as Tamerlane) for their own. There was no certainty about which Islam could act as the social cement among ethnic groups and sub-groups: Kazakh Islam, which was rude, unformed, with a small smattering of madrasah sophistication; Wahabism, or Saudi-sponsored fundamentalism; Turk or Iran inspired Islam from new madrasahs in Tashkent and Bukhara; or the official Islam which was promulgated by the "Soviet" *mullahs* of the past. The ethnic riots that had preceded Soviet disintegration, it seemed, would repeat themselves over and over again. There appeared to be no future respite from the disasters of Osh (whose ethnic riots had led to injury to over 1,000 in various cities) and Tashkent (where Uzbeks and Meskhetian Turks had butchered each other with singular viciousness). The harmony that Euro-Americans had anticipated from the disintegration did not come, as ethnic and religious disagreement intensified. Drug mafias, with little interest in a different scenario, moved north into this region from Afghanistan, extending poppy production in the whole region.

Politics appeared incapable of dealing with flourishing religious and ethnic turbulence, which mirrored the nightmare of Bosnia and Lebanon. The autocratic Presidents of the region did not seem to possess the equipment with which to handle this disaster area. In Tadjikistan, Nabiyev, and later Rashidov were hard pressed by rival clans and fundamentalist organisations, which had close links with groups across the border in Afghanistan. In Uzbekistan, which was the most populous state of the region (22 million as opposed to Kazakhstan's 17 million) President Karimov had similar difficulties, although he exhibited supreme confidence in his ability to make the country the lead power of the area. In Turkmenistan, President Niyazov fought a difficult battle against fundamentalist groups encouraged by Iran. In Kyrgyzstan, President Akaev was pinned down by tensions between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz; while, in Kazakhstan, President Nazarbaev had to deal with delicate relations between Kazakhs and the great minority of the country — the Russians, who constituted over 30 per cent of the population, properly concentrated in the northern districts.

The consequences presaged an unhappy 21st century for the region — a miserable mess where fast money can be made as long as a degree of ruthlessness is displayed. As at the time of the Romanov conquest, there seemed to be only markers of division everywhere, except that the currency of conflict was more destructive, running from nuclear weapons to heroine. The only temptation, it appeared, that outsiders (including Moscow) might find in the region, to encourage them to set matters right, was the oil and natural gas which, since 1995, drew Russia, and its homegrown multinational agent, the private oil company Lukoil, into the politics of the Caspian shelf. But it seemed unlikely that even this lure of great profit would make the burden of Central Asia's ethnic conflicts acceptable to a potential regional referee.

After 1991, as during the three years before, of course, all shades of nationalist and Islamic enthusiast found an adequate scapegoat for this state of affairs: a scapegoat whose behaviour is deplored throughout Central Eurasia, and whose shadow is excellent grounds for avoiding self-examination and introspection. As in all cases, with every problem, it is the Soviet experiment, it appears, which must carry the blame for a possibly dismal future. In the case of Central Asia, the arch-villain is said to be Soviet nationalities' policy.

·Local scholars and latter day Cold Warriors argue that the shaping of nation states by the Soviet Commissions of 1922-24 (out of Russian Turkestan) failed to take into consideration criteria of actual nationalities' composition or the comparative strength of ethnic sentiment in the formation of the Central Asian republics. Consequently, artificially exaggerated identities had been created in artificial national republics, which were then associated with artificial "majority" and "minority" communities with wholly artificial rights. Pan-Turks (the votaries of an undoubtedly "artificial" identity) especially were unhappy with the division of the area into five national republics, and the dignity conferred on "Uzbeks", "Tadjiks" and others as titular nationalities. Ethnic tensions, it is argued, were born from such conditions, in competition for education and jobs, where the prime nationality of an area was given preference. The whole system, the contention ran, was doubly unjust since it was shot through with Russian racism; and Stalin made the situation worse by moving large populations into the region (such as the Crimean Tartars and the Meskhetian Turks), complicating the ethnic composition. Meanwhile, ignoring the mission of making "Soviet man", Central Asian communities had preserved their marriage conventions (often including polygamy and bride price). They also preferred their own methods of settlement — courtyard-centred clusters of family houses, or *yurts* (the felt-tents of the Steppe nomads) rather than concrete flats. Socialisation focused around the *pilaf* tray, rather than the get together (in Russian style) over *zakuski* (hors d'oeuvres) and an array of set courses. Not only did identities of "Russian", "Uzbek", "Kazakh" survive intact over the history of the Soviet state, hence, but ethnic conflict had only been prevented by Communist autocracy.

It has been possible to pursue such an argument, without fear of contradiction, since votaries of Communism themselves are not certain what the complexities of Soviet nationalities' policy entailed; and Soviet propaganda, which was always preoccupied with slogans and self-righteousness, seldom explained the ramifications of the Soviet experiment. Hence, any apparatchik will speak of the old Communist desire to see the efflorescence (*rastsvet*) of nationalities, their rapprochement (*sblizhenie*) and their convergence

(*slianie*). But few would explain that Soviet Communism, at its best, never disavowed the claims of ethnic identity, and sought to limit them only in so far as they hindered the growth of social awareness of the broader community to which all ethnic groups belonged. The consequence of the Civil War, the World War II, and the Cold War was an obsessive concern with loyalty to the overarching Soviet community (to "the Union"). But other dimensions to policy, and the recognition of ethnicity was clear from the setting up of universities which specialised in republican and regional languages and the prevalence of special quotas for titular nationalities in the Communist Parties, Komsomol and trade union movements in Soviet Republics. The uniform spread of industrialisation, and the steady migration throughout the Union of various ethnic groups (not only Russians), in fact, ultimately achieved the "convergence" that the Soviet state sought without dealing a death blow to ethnicity. Clashes occurred between ethnic "communities" on occasion when other factors were involved (including Russian racism) — indicating that "convergence" was from perfect and required introspection. Strictly speaking, though, such clashes were few, after the Civil War period and the "troubles" of the 1920s, when the anti-Bolshevik Basmachi movement was found in pockets throughout the region.

Ultimately, it is in latter-day exacerbation of tension and the construction of nation states from the Soviet melange, that the anarchy of contemporary Central Asia substantially lies: i.e. the problem lie as much in the economic, social and political context of Gorbachov's perestroika and the decisions of 1991 as in what went before.

It is noteworthy, in this regard, that in recent years, the political and social experiment which offers a different future for Inner Asia has been offered by the one Central Asian leader who has recognised the compulsions of the Soviet past and has avoided a wholesale policy of "national reconstruction". Nursultan Nazarbaev of Kazakhstan, contrary to received wisdom, was consulted by Yeltsin and Kravchuk at the time of the disintegration of the Soviet state, but chose to avoid a leading role in the process. And it is in his politics and Kazakhstan's "Eurasian" preoccupations that an alternative future for the Central Asian region lies.

Nazarbaev has always chosen to stress the virtues of thinking of the single military and economic space of the former Union, even while he has underscored the problems which democratic politics and economic reform have thrown up for nationalities' policy in the region. Well aware that nationalist chauvinism is dangerous for the ex-Soviet states, Nazarbaev has written and spoken of the necessity for a "Eurasian" vision at a number of summits and meetings. Such a vision looks towards intensive cooperation in future with the CIS and serious acknowledgement of past links. Although such views have been challenged by Kazakh nationalists, they have had the singular advantage that they have ensured the commitment to Kazakhstan of Russian technical experts, and the involvement of Russian entrepreneurs in Kazakh reforms. Nazarbaev is supported by a powerful environmentalist movement — the political offspring of the Navada-Semipalatinsk Association which struggled for "cleaning up" Kazakhstan during the last years of Soviet power. Steering clear of Islamic fundamentalism, and drawing on local cults of nature, Nazarbaev is as acceptable to Russians as to Kazakhs. Working with an authoritarian presidency, he has constituted a "no go" zone for militant movements in the state.

In a highly volatile region, though, Nazarbaev's ambitions and his example are constantly subject to challenge, especially among the more chauvinist among his own people. Flanked by Tartar extremism within Russia itself, and autonomy movements in Siberia, his ideas seldom find echo. They are quickly rejected in Uzbekistan, for instance. However, in a part of the world where words are many and achievements are few, Nazarbaev's reforms and strategies signify a major alternative path for the region. In this respect, in an area of internecine conflict, this latter day Valikhanov, who is committed to privatisation, in the most bountiful of the states of Central Asia points to a possible future which is probably the most hopeful in recent times.

To say this, of course, attracts carping from Euro-American commentators. For there is too much of the past that marks Kazakhstan's President. Hardly intellectual, derived from peasant stock, a heavy industry man with a solid Communist background, Nazarbaev is hardly a figure who represents a brave new world for Inner Asia. His "Eurasia" ideas smack too much of compromise with Tsarist imperialism and Soviet nationalities' policy. He has established a reputation as an apostle of compromise and amity with the Russian Federation — much to the distaste of Euro-American statesmen, who would rather hear the rhetoric of nationalism and independence, pronounced firmly, with a tug of the forelock at the Council for Security and Cooperation in Europe. The result is disparaging comment and general depreciation (except among London and Wall Street investors.) Whatever the case, solid and stodgy, Nazarbaev must be recognised for what he is. In a turbulent landscape, he is a hero of our times, and a symbol of something better than unending turbulence in the days to come.