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Editorial Office:

CENTRAL ASIA AND THE CAUCASUS

Rödhakegränd 21. 97454 Luleå

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#### **Central Asia and the Caucasus**

- World and Regional Centers of Power and their Impact on the Regional Situation
- Energy Policy and Energy Projects
- Political Development Trends in the Context of International Antiterrorist Campaign

**ETHNIC RELATIONS AND  
POPULATION MIGRATION****RURAL-TO-URBAN AND  
CITY-TO-CITY MIGRATIONS  
IN KAZAKHSTAN:  
MOTIVES AND RESULTS**

Aygul ZABIROVA

*Ph.D. (Sociology),  
senior research associate,  
The Lev Gumilev Eurasian National University  
(Astana, Kazakhstan)*

*Introduction*

The problem of migration is one of those that make it possible to better understand the trends and repercussions of what has been going on in post-Soviet Kazakhstan. The following aspects of migration are most important: emigration of the Russian speakers; repatriation of ethnic Kazakhs, and movement of rural Kazakh population to cities.

So far, academic writings have failed to provide an adequate interpretation of the theoretical side of the migration problem. At the empirical level, however, several research projects have been realized or are being carried out. As a rule, all of them analyze outside migrations caused by the Soviet Union's disintegration. Working in our republic our own and foreign academics concentrated on the outflow of Russian speakers, while com-

pletely neglecting the movement of the Kazakh population inside their republic. Meanwhile, internal migration (its scope, directions, economic and sociopolitical prerequisites and results) is as important as ever and has even acquired new significance because new causes of migration appeared side by side with the traditional ones. Economic reforms (including the transfer to market economy, private property and entrepreneurship) as well as a wider range of human rights served as an important impetus of rural-to-urban migration and provided legal support for the freedom of movement. Rural-to-urban migration is going along with accelerating city-to-city migration, mainly from the regional centers to the new and old capitals of Kazakhstan (Astana and Almaty).

Societal changes transformed many of the social institutions and the republic's social structure. The social structural changes, in turn, have influenced to a great extent (and are influencing) human behavior, people's lives and resources. A new national identity, for example, has opened new possibilities for the Kazakhs' ethnocultural and ethno-social makeup and social statuses. It means that rural-to-urban migration of Kazakhs strictly limited in Soviet times is being replaced by the ever-increasing rural-to-urban and city-to-city migrations. These processes differ greatly from what was going on under Soviet power. In the Soviet Union migration was state-controlled by the means of the passport and registration system. The unfolding migration of Kazakhs inside their own country, the figures of which are registered by state statistics, conform to the economic law that says that population mobility increases together with the development of market economy.

Migration to cities has become especially important: it is transforming the sociocultural and ethnocultural makeup of the country's largest cities. So far, the rural-to-urban and city-to-city migrations have not yet been studied in depth; we know next to nothing about the motives behind such movements and the role of its traditional and recent (cultural-psychological and political) causes.

In the theoretical-methodological sense this work uses the paradigmatic approach that makes an in-depth and adequate analysis of the migration processes possible. I rely on the activity paradigm (A. Giddens, A. Touraine, P. Stompka, V. Iadov, T. Zaslavskaja) and take into account the thesis formulated by Anthony Giddens about the influence exerted by socioeconomic and political transition

on the migration processes<sup>1</sup> as well as Rogers Brubaker's conclusion concerning the influence of ethno-political transformations on the migration processes in post-Soviet Eurasia.<sup>2</sup>

Here are several key propositions: proceeding from the definitions of migration offered by contemporary science I suggest that we should look at rural-to-urban migration as a relatively permanent process of movement of an individual or groups of people from one geographic locality to another based on their decision to move. I identify this migration type with the term "movement," since it imposes on man new forms of behavior and the need to adapt to new relationships and a new lifestyle. I mean that a rural dweller has to adapt itself to the lifestyle of an urban community—to do so he has to abandon the axiological-normative system of his old place of residence and to accept different social regulators (applied in the place of his new residence) and to adjust to them.

Here I offer the following definition of the "migrant" concept based on my analysis of academic writings: a migrant is a person who exchanges his habitual physical, social, economic, political and cultural environment for a different one, who crosses borders (even if within one state) moving from one regional subculture and from certain regional specifics to others. A migrant is a person who leaves behind the supporting system and tries to acquire social and psychological assistance in a new place. He is not afraid of ailments and is prepared to starve; at the same time, he is free from certain obligations imposed on him by his immediate social environment: the family, clan or work collective.

<sup>1</sup> See: A. Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1984.

<sup>2</sup> See: R. Brubaker, "Nationhood and the National Question in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Eurasia: An Institutional Account," *Theory and Society*, No. 23, 1994, pp. 47-78.

## Motives and Social Resources of Internal Migrants

The article is based on the results of a sociological poll of Kazakh migrants who moved from rural areas to cities or from other cities to Astana and Almaty. Empirical information was collected in February-May 2002; the standardized interviews in both cities involved 589 people.

The data obtained in the territories of arrival (I have in mind representation in the samples of dwellers of specific regions and cities) correspond to the migration statistics for both capitals. For example, the group of rural and urban migrants to Astana is dominated by those who arrived from



the neighboring regions and towns, while a group of migrants from the south is also numerous. The composition of Almaty population has changed considerably in the last 10 years: in the early 1990s its population size had dropped, starting with 1997 it resumed its growth mainly at the expense of inter-regional migration.

As distinct from Astana, Almaty attracts people from neighboring districts, cities and regions. The share of city-to-city migrants was the largest among our respondents: there were 33.3 percent of the former dwellers of Taldy-Kurgan; 24.7 percent of people from Taraz and Shymkent each; 17.3 percent from Kzyl-Orda. It turned out that people from other cities were not covered by our sample. The same poll discovered that the largest share of rural dwellers came to Almaty from the Almaty Region (51.7 percent); 19.0 percent arrived from the South Kazakhstan Region; 16.1 percent from the Kzyl-Orda Region; 12.1 percent from the Zhambyl Region. People from other regions were not represented in our sample. Our results correspond to statistical data.

The contemporary migration theory has established that socioeconomic situation affects the nature of movements—either permanent or temporal. At the initial stage we had expected that city-to-city migration would turn out to be permanent which was later confirmed. The poll demonstrated that the city-to-city migrants (as compared to rural-to-urban migrants) normally move for permanent residence. The share of respondents who described themselves as temporal urban dwellers is much higher among those who came from the countryside (about 25 percent in Astana). Few of the city-to-city migrants turned out to be seasonal workers. While the 2001 polls had revealed a large group of those who planned to stay in Astana from 1 to 3 months, the 2002 and 2003 polls demonstrated that the number of those who planned to stay for 6 months was fairly large. Temporal migrants from the republic's southern areas do not go home frequently, except those who work in shifts and travel home every two to four weeks. They work as builders, chefs at Uighur, Korean and Chinese takeaways and restaurants or managers of specialized shops owned by Almaty people.

There are certain distinctions between the rural migrations to Astana and Almaty: while seasonal workers come to the former for a period of one to six months, in the latter they remain for a year (this has been demonstrated by our in-depths interviews). They come to Astana to stay for one or two seasons (spring and summer or fall and winter); in Almaty they stay for the four seasons. This is mainly explained by the local climates: in the southern capital people can live in summer houses or in dwellings unsuitable for habitation; the distance between their permanent and temporal homes is normally short. Our interviews showed that seasonal workers in Almaty travel back to their villages about once a month to bring their families money, foodstuffs, and clothes. As distinct from rural migrants in Astana, those who come to Almaty from the countryside tend to look at their new place of residence as a permanent one: this was confirmed by 84.5 percent of village migrants and 96.0 percent of migrants from other cities.

From the point of view of their resource (property, education and skills) status the migrants arriving in the new capital can be divided into four groups. The first consists of people arriving from Almaty and regional centers: a share of well-off, educated and skilled people among them is high. We have found out that they came to the capital because they looked at it as a political, economic and financial center. In other words, they came to Astana not so much because they had found no place for themselves at home but because the capital offered numerous career and professional possibilities for them and their children. We have observed that city-to-city migrants are mostly well-educated and well-off people, therefore they find it easy to adapt (socio-economically and socio-culturally) to the new city.

On the labor market they prefer (and have good chances to be employed at) civil service; they become doctors in new clinics, hospitals and other medical establishments; lecturers with numerous educational institutions, and journalists with the republican media. There is another difference: those coming from Almaty (as distinct, for example, from people from Karaganda or Arkalyk) want (and can) find employment with the most prestigious organizations. The majority of the qualified staff of the Republican Clinic in Astana came from Almaty. Many of the professors employed by the Eurasian National University were also invited from Almaty. A certain part of the city-to-city migrants (those who have private capitals) became part of the Astana business community, the so-called "sector of firms."

We have discovered that in this sector, too, there is stratification according to the place of origin: people from Almaty become owners of the most prestigious and expensive restaurants and cafés, fewer own shops.

The same group has successfully resolved the problem of dwelling: a sociological poll testified that part of the city-to-city migrants can either buy flats or rent them in the best parts of the city. The majority of civil servants, especially those invited from Almaty, were given flats that they could privatize later. A special group consists of employees of large companies (oil-and-gas firms, in the first place). They have good chances to get flats (that according to CIS standards, can be described as elite) either free or at much lower prices. Only a small part of the city-to-city migrants to Astana (as distinct from migrants in Almaty) buy or build highly comfortable homes or even cottages. On the whole, members of the first group can buy newly built housing in Astana (mainly of higher quality).

The second group consists of people with lower social-economic status; they have no considerable economic or financial capital, yet they have professional skills, higher or secondary education and corresponding qualification. This allows them to adjust to new life even if less successfully than the first group. The second group is made up of former dwellers of average and smaller towns and, partly, of regional centers; well-off villagers also belong to the same group. Having moved, this group is obviously confronted with social and economic difficulties but, on the whole, they can adjust themselves to the new lifestyle.

Our empirical studies have shown that members of this group have a chance to join the ranks of civil servants even if at lower levels (referents, rank-and-file bureaucrats, etc.). This affects their possibility to buy dwellings, the income level and, on the whole, migration results. Some of the members of the same group find their way to large organizations and departments, yet their posts are not important ones, therefore they have no chance of getting housing either free or at lower prices. Some of them work in hospitals as nurses, rather than doctors, and at schools: there is a growing shortage of such specialists in Astana. According to field studies, up to a third of this group finds employment in the tertiary sector of the city's economy. Having analyzed the "trading sphere" of tertiary economy, we identified several groups: owners of small shops and kiosks and people who rent cargo containers. Some of them work in the services: they drive private taxis, renovate flats and offices, work as hair stylists, etc.

This group mainly buys old dwellings with all modern conveniences—their housing is much less comfortable and cannot be described as elite; they live mainly in small flats found in houses built during Soviet times when the virgin lands were developed. Some members of this group, especially those who come from small towns, build their houses themselves—obviously, they are not comfortable at all.

The third group consists mainly of people coming from the countryside: it is far from homogeneous in the sociopolitical aspect. The social-economic status of its members is low: they had to leave homes not because they were attracted by the capital but because they could not support themselves in the native villages. Its members have nowhere to live; they mainly rent housing, which is often not comfortable or even ramshackle. Some of them live in the capital's fringes in the houses they built themselves. Employment and stable incomes are another important description of any group. Our field studies have shown that the majority of the third group is self-employed—they trade in the market. A small part works in the budget sphere and other organizations filling the lowest posts of charwomen, hospital attendants, doormen, etc. In other words, in the process of adaptation members of this group have been confronted with (and still have to overcome) great difficulties. They feel that the city has rejected them: they have neither decent housing nor decent jobs. They are aware, however, of their socioeconomic and sociocultural failings (no education and no special skills). In search of employment they start selling things at markets (though incomes and productivity are low) in the hope of building up better future for their children.

The fourth group consists of people with no housing rented for one family (they obviously cannot afford housing of their own). Likewise, they have no permanent employment and a stable source of income. These people mainly come from the countryside (villages and district centers) either with families or alone (seasonal workers). They have neither solid capitals nor even savings; they cannot find good jobs

because they have no education, skills, connections or means to buy, rent or build housing. In other words, members of this group have no means to adapt to the urban conditions. They can be described as socially excluded. Even outside observers can see that this group is the worst adjusted one both socially and economically among all other migrant groups in Astana; these people see no future either for themselves or their children. An analysis of works related to rural-to-urban migration in the Muslim East has revealed that it is children of these migrants, rather than they themselves, who start unrests and urban troubles. Professor Farhad Kazemi of Columbia University has formulated a theory of exaggerated and unrealized expectations of the second generation of rural-to-urban migrants according to which the second generation became the main force of the urban revolution in Iran.<sup>3</sup>

Let us turn to the internal migrants in Almaty among which we discovered two groups: rural-to-urban and city-to-city migrants. According to our observations, as distinct from Astana, the city-to-city migrants in Almaty form a more or less homogeneous sociocultural and socioeconomic group. They all came from the cities of Shymkent, Zhambyl, Kzyl-Orda and Taraz; nearly all of them were attracted by the prospects offered by a big city. Our field studies have demonstrated that they were more prosperous socially and economically than their former neighbors and that they moved in the hope of further improving their social and economic positions.

The increased scope of city-to-city migration to Almaty from neighboring towns was, to a great extent, caused by the fact that many of the former Almaty dwellers had moved to Astana. This created vacancies and a wider housing market in the old capital. This group finds it easy to adjust: their financial and material resources allow them to buy housing.

According to our polls, as distinct from a similar group in Astana, a considerable part of this group prefers to build or buy houses of the highest quality (cottages); other members of the same group buy elite housing in apartment blocks; still others (a half of the total number of members) buy flats in old houses. We have discovered that, as distinct from the situation in Astana, practically none of them "put off till later" buying or building housing.

The rural-to-urban migrants make up the second group heterogeneous in its social-economic makeup. At the same time, our findings allow us to presuppose that more of its members are financially and materially well off as compared to a similar group in Astana. (This is graphically shown by the housing conditions.) At the same time, the number of seasonal workers in Almaty is greater, which means that socially crippled groups (with no skills or education) are often on the move: migration involves not only people who have certain means to fit into new environment but also those with no future at home (in the countryside) and, very likely, no future in any other place.

From this it follows that the newcomers were driven to both cities by social-economic considerations, therefore both rural-to-urban and city-to-city migration was caused by social-economic reasons. This is typical of many developing countries (especially in the East). We have in mind the vector of modernization of the developing countries that creates enclaves and concentrates all types of resources (human and financial, in the first place) in one or two large cities. Russia, Turkey, Brazil and Mexico can serve as examples.

## Comparative Analysis of the Migrants' Adaptation Strategies

I have undertaken to analyze the answers to several questions: Which are the variants of job-hunting among the rural and urban migrants? How is the workforce distributed? Does the process involve state employment structures, private agencies or personal contacts? How do the informal employment chan-

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<sup>3</sup> See: F. Kazemi, *Poverty and Revolution in Iran: The Migrant Poor, Urban Marginality, and Politics*, New York University Press, 1980.

nels affect the process? Is it possible to find work independently? It was very important to find out who or what supported (and continues to support) people at their new jobs; which behavior strategies they selected; which of them proved successful and which had to be discarded.

It should be said that the majority found life in new places hard; the strategies of job-hunting were highly varied. Our first question was “Do you work?” A positive answer invited another question: “How did you find this job?” A negative answer to the first question was followed by another one: “How are you looking for work?” We analyzed the answers to obtain an idea about the methods of job-hunting and their efficiency. For example, only 0.8 percent of the urban and 0.6 percent of the rural migrants in Astana applied to job centers.

The theories of rural-to-urban migration in the East have discovered a phenomenon of the “well-trodden path,” which means, first, that man moved to a city where his relatives or neighbors had been living for some time; second, that he relied on their help while looking for work and place to live in. The results of our field studies have shown that the phenomenon exists also among the rural migrants in Almaty. Indeed, rural migrants (29.9 percent) turned for help to their relatives and former neighbors more often than urban migrants (24.7 percent). This explains why the number of those who found work through the relatives is the largest: the share of urban migrants in Almaty who used this method is 22 percent; the share of rural migrants, 19 percent.

When interpreting the empirical data we never forget that mobility and behavior on the labor market are very complicated social processes in which the informal element has acquired a much greater role thanks to capitalization of economy. Those looking for work need information; it can be obtained through purposeful efforts (for instance, a trip to the place of potential residence) or can be learned by chance. In this situation assistance of friends and relatives is very important (initially something or somebody should supply relevant information). Our interviews and sociological studies testify that personal contacts are the most efficient mechanism.

There is information that individual efforts in the form of direct contacts with potential employers are also very important. A person can create a job for himself—this is one of the possible variants. The largest share of rural migrants who found work independently lives in Astana (38.4 percent); this method works among the urban migrants in Astana as well (26.0 percent). In the new capital 16.0 percent of the urban migrants found work through adverts of organizations and departments.

The first conclusion follows from the above: informal contacts (independent successful job-hunting and personal contacts) predominate. More active network relationships in this sphere are a sort of a response to the highly contracted labor market. Personal contacts are important not only when looking for jobs in the new (private) sector that has become much more important in the last few years but even when looking for vacancies in budget organizations and civil service.

With the aim of studying the informal employment channels and checking the hypothesis about ethnic solidarity as an adaptation resource we asked: What is important when looking for a prestigious work in Kazakhstan? The respondents were offered the following variants: higher education; diligence; ethnic affiliation with the Kazakhs; ethnic affiliation with the Russians; active involvement in political activities; active involvement in market economy; good command of the Kazakh language; good command of the Russian language; contacts with the right people; relatives; natural talents.

The results showed that in Astana the migrants pointed to higher education as the most important element followed by contacts with the right people. From this it follows that on the whole people think high of informal contacts in the process of job-hunting. In Almaty the migrants pointed to contacts with the right people as the most important instruments (67.3 percent among the urban migrants and 62.1 percent among the rural migrants). They all agreed that contacts among relatives were very important, which means that they value highly not only ethnic affiliation but also sub-ethnic solidarity and belonging to smaller groups of friends, acquaintances, and former colleagues. When looking for jobs, 56.4 percent of the rural and 53.4 percent of the urban migrants used personal contacts.

If we lump together the channels of (1) relatives, (2) friends and acquaintances and (3) former colleagues, we shall be able to identify regional differences: the share of migrants in Almaty (56.4 percent of rural and 53.4 percent of urban) who used personal contacts is higher than in Astana (45.5 and

45.9 percent, respectively). The following variants ranked lowest among the answers: active involvement in political activities; good command of the Russian language, and at the same time, ethnic affiliation with the Kazakhs.

When analyzing the results of rural-to-urban and city-to-city migrants one should find out what changed (and continues changing) in the life of each person and his family as a result of his movement to the capital. Employment was the most frequent result of migration. Our studies have testified that the majority of urban migrants found work in Astana. There is the opinion (46.6 percent) that Astana promises more than Almaty where careers and personal development are concerned. Migration also allowed many people to earn money to support their families and to help relatives who stayed back at home. In Almaty 56.0 percent of urban migrants found employment; 38.7 percent of the same group believes that promotion at work is the most important result of migration; for 31.3 percent their ability to support their families is most important achievement. Another important achievement is an ability to help relatives who stayed back in the villages. The rural migrants in both cities agree that the main factor is employment that gives money to support the family; the second important factor is an ability to help relatives who remained in the countryside.

Transfers are another important question to be clarified when analyzing rural-to-urban migrations. They are important to those who get them; they are especially important to the poorest families who stay behind. Our analysis has testified, however, that the fact of transfer and its amount do not depend on the sender's income. We have to study the scope and role of transfers in greater detail, yet we have already established that rural migrants, that is, those with lower incomes and no dwellings of their own, help their relatives more often than others. Among the polled migrants it was the groups with the lowest incomes (1,000-3,000 and 3,000-5,000 tenge) who sent money more often than the groups with much higher incomes (15,000-25,000 and over 25,000 tenge). This completely supported our hypothesis that, as distinct from urban migrants, the rural migrants badly hit by social-economic difficulties would help their relatives much more often. The share of such people among the rural migrants in Astana was 60.7 percent. During our in-depth interviews we wanted to know what form this help took. As a rule, it was money, foodstuffs and clothes, all intended for the closest relatives.

Among the polled rural migrants in Astana with an income of 1,000-3,000 tenge two-thirds regularly send money, foodstuffs or clothing; over 50 percent of those earning between 3,000-5,000 tenge and many of those with incomes from 5,000 to 10,000 tenge help their relatives regularly. In other words, the lower the income level the more eager is the rural migrant to transfer money.

As we expected, urban migrants have fewer relatives in villages than rural migrants, which explains why the former less often send money to the countryside. This has also been confirmed by the following: over half of urban migrants in both capitals send no money to the countryside while 33 percent of them do help their village relatives.

## *C o n c l u s i o n*

Thus, the migration profile is determined, to a great extent, by the resource status of migrants in Almaty and Astana: education, qualifications, good command of the Kazakh and Russian tongues, and material and symbolic capital (by the latter we mean contacts with the right people). Field research has revealed that city-to-city migrants were attracted by the big cities; they wanted to (and could) improve their status and achieve higher social position for themselves and their children and to earn more. Because of their advantages the urban migrants want (and can) find employment in the budget sphere and civil service; part of the group goes into business. They want better housing than rural migrants and can obtain it.

The rural-to-urban migration is caused by the fact that many of such migrants can find no employment at home. Our field studies showed that, having moved to a city, they improve, to an extent, their social and economic situation and that of the families they left behind at home. In a social-economic as-

pect (their resource status) the rural migrants are a heterogeneous group, but their achievements are very different ranging from good jobs and housing of their own to lack of housing and unemployment. On the whole the rural migrants are quite content to build their own houses themselves or buy flats in old apartment blocks. The city authorities should pay special attention to the members of this group, in particular, by building affordable dwellings and supporting those who went into small business.