

leader.²⁸ Because of Sultanov's prior career, and the unofficial patronage of Nazarbaev and the state apparatus, this party too enjoys substantial coverage of the country and significant organizational capability. Also lacking a detailed program, its principal focus appears to be the maintenance of interethnic peace and political stability.²⁸

Significant representation of all three of these parties in the new parliament to be elected in the spring of 1994 was expected. None of the three constitutes a significant threat to Nazarbaev's program of interethnic peace and moderate economic reform, and its subtext of patronage politics. As a result, the state did not obviously impede the operations of any of them in the lead-up to elections.

There are also a number of significant opposition movements that attempted to present candidates either nationally or in specific regions of the country. These are smaller, underfunded, with few organizational resources and limited access to channels of mass information. Although some (e.g. the Social Democratic Party of Kazakhstan, with a membership of under 1000) attempt to transcend ethnic lines, most are exclusive. Among the most important on the Kazakh side are:

1. Azat, formed in 1990 as a coalition of informal groups and parties, is wedded to the awakening of national consciousness among the Kazakh people. Azat is among the more moderate of the ethnic Kazakh organizations. Although committed to the defence of Kazakhstan's territorial integrity and to the equalization of rights among ethnic groups in a society that, they believe, has long suppressed the aspirations of ethnic Kazakhs, they advocate mutual understanding among ethnic groups and accept the permanence of the Russian (and other non-Kazakh) communities. Azat is more of a civil movement than a party in its own right with the requisite difficulties in sustaining discipline within its ranks and developing a concrete political program attractive to the electorate. As such, its prospects were poor.
2. The Republican Party of Kazakhstan, led by Sobetkazy Akataev, is an offshoot of Azat, but takes a harder line on the issue of ties to Russia. While not contesting the right of Russians to remain, the principal objective of the movement is a complete break (politically, economically,

²⁸ Nazarbaev is identified as the party's leader in "Prezidentskaya Komanda nachinaet predvybornuyu bor'bu" *Segodnya* (January 11, 1994), p.5.

²⁸ Ibid.