

PN-ABN-005  
80338

**Development of a Shelter Strategy**  
**in**  
**The Newly Independent States**

First Report

Prepared by Frederick C. Cuny, Pat Reed and Mark Frohardt

INTERTECT Relief and Reconstruction Corporation

for

The Office of Housing and Urban Programs  
U.S. Agency for International Development

and

The Newly Independent States Task Force

December 1992

Contract Number: CCS-0000-C-00-2064  
Project Numbers: 2641096 & 2681622

## INTRODUCTION

The republics of the Newly Independent States have long experienced a range of disasters, both natural and man made. In this century alone, the various republics have had to deal with civil war, invasion from outside forces, famine, earthquakes, floods, mud slides, nuclear disasters and industrial accidents, among others.

Based on past experience -- as well as the prospects for the future -- there are three categories of disasters that could create emergency shelter needs in the former Soviet Union:

### 1. Earthquakes:

Earthquakes are perhaps the most devastating category of natural disaster to strike the former Soviet Union. An earthquake zone extends from the northern part of Crimea through the Caucasus and across the Caspian Sea into Central Asia. The Northern Caucasus on Russia's southern border, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan have all experienced severe earthquakes in the last half century. (Another seismic zone can be found in Russia's Kamchatka Peninsula, but the area is not densely populated.)

One of the most serious earthquakes in the Soviet Union struck northern Armenia in 1988, killing 25,000 people, leaving another 500,000 homeless and causing an estimated \$15 billion in damages. Two decades earlier, a major earthquake in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, leveled most of the city's mud-walled buildings. In the spring of 1991, three earthquakes hit the north-central part of Georgia, destroying numerous homes in small villages in the South Ossetian autonomous *oblast*. In 1992, two earthquakes (along with a flood and landslides) damaged or destroyed almost 44,000 houses in Kyrgystan, leaving an estimated 60,000 people homeless. Another earthquake in October 1992 rocked southern Russia, Georgia and Armenia, killing one person in the Georgian village of Barisakho, 90 kilometers northeast of Tbilisi. A number of people were injured and several dozen homes destroyed in the sparsely populated Caucasus.

It is impossible to predict where the next large earthquakes will occur in the former Soviet Union. Although seismologists sometimes correctly predict when and where an earthquake will strike, they are also often wrong. Earthquake prediction, experts say, is a controversial field and an inexact science at best. In the 1970s, scientists were able to accurately predict an earthquake in China. But later, using the same characteristics, scientists missed another earthquake; this one killed several hundred thousand people. Recent predictions of a major earthquake in California also proved wrong. In the past, some seismologists have thought that the absence of earthquakes in an earthquake-prone area meant the area was overdue. Under that theory, an earthquake would be a distinct possibility for Alma-Ata, the capital of Kazakhstan. A major earthquake has not hit the area since the early part of the 20th century, when 60 percent of the city was destroyed. But some seismologists now discount that belief.

## 2. Nuclear or Industrial Accidents:

There is a high potential for nuclear accidents throughout the former Soviet Union. More than 300 nuclear power plants, research laboratories and weapons-processing facilities were constructed in the republics before the dissolution of the union.

Since 1948, four nuclear disasters, including Chernobyl, have been reported. (The Soviets waited almost 30 years to admit that an explosion had occurred in 1957 at a nuclear storage site near Chelyabinsk in Russia; more than 10,000 people were evacuated after the explosion sent 80 tons of radioactive material into the atmosphere.) And in 1991 alone, Soviet nuclear facilities recorded 270 malfunctions. In March 1992, the Sosnovy Bor plant near St. Petersburg, which has Chernobyl-style reactors, leaked radioactive gases into the atmosphere. The Ignalina plant in Lithuania, the largest of all the Chernobyl-style plants, has had a series of minor accidents. In October, for example, it was shut down for a weekend following the rupture of a tube in the main circuit. "The reactor is not in the best of shape," an International Atomic Energy Agency official has been quoted as saying.

At this point, the nuclear power plants may be of greatest concern. Of the Soviet-designed reactors now operating in the former Soviet republics and Eastern Europe, most are pressurized-water reactors similar to those used in America. Sixteen, however, are Chernobyl-style nuclear reactors. Eleven of those reactors are in Russia: the Sosnovy Bor plant near St. Petersburg (formerly Leningrad) has four, three are at the Smolensk facility at Desnogorsk, and four are at the Kursk plant near Kurchatov. Ukraine's Chernobyl plant contains three of them. And two are at the Ignalina plant in Lithuania. There are also plans to extend the life of some of the old reactors and to lift a post-Chernobyl moratorium on completing others.

The United States has strongly opposed the continued operation of these RBMK (an acronym in Russian for Reactor, Big Power, Channel Type), as the Chernobyl reactors are called. Some scientists have said every reactor in the former Soviet Union is in need of expensive repairs or should be shut down completely. But the Russians refuse to close them. Senior Russian nuclear officials have said that the RBMKs are essential to the economies of Ukraine, Russia and Lithuania. If the West wants to make them safer, Russian officials have said, it can help pay for improvements.

Since Chernobyl, Russian scientists have made several improvements to the RBMK reactor. Western experts who have viewed data on these improvements were impressed, news stories say. But most Western scientists think the design of the reactor is flawed. Western scientists fault the complicated steam piping system inside the RBMK, which is buried in inaccessible channels within the core. They also fear the pipes can break; if several high-pressure pipes broke at the same time, their combined steam pressure could blow the top off the reactor and expose the core. (Scientists believe this is probably what happened at Chernobyl.) Western scientists are also worried that the RBMK and older versions of the Soviet pressurized-water reactors are not housed in reinforced concrete units designed to contain radioactive debris if an explosion occurs. Some Soviet reactors have bubbler towers that remove radioactive material from escaping gases, but the RBMKs and the old pressurized-water reactors can release dangerous material into the atmosphere.

Sweden, where much of Chernobyl's fallout landed in 1986, is conducting its own investigation of the reactors. It is expected to issue a detailed report next spring.

But power plants are not the only area of nuclear apprehension. According to a *U.S. News and World Report* article, a radiation map of the former Soviet Union pinpoints more than 130 nuclear explosions, most of them in European Russia. "They were conducted for geophysical investigations, to create underground pressure in oil and gas fields or simply to move earth for building dams," the article reports. "No one knows how much they have contaminated the land, water, people and wildlife, but the damage is almost certainly enormous."

Other nuclear trouble spots abound. Four Soviet submarines, with reactors full of nuclear fuel, have sunk accidentally. In addition, the Soviets intentionally dumped tremendous amounts of radioactive waste in the environment. The worst of the sites is Novaya Zemlya, two Arctic islands, turned into a nuclear waste site after being contaminated by bomb fallout. As many as 17,000 barrels of radioactive waste — some of them shot full of holes to make them sink — were dropped into the surrounding seas. In addition, at least eight marine reactors were scuttled there.

One of the more serious nuclear problems facing the former Soviet Union may be the spread of dust from nuclear-contaminated areas. Beginning in 1951, a bomb-building plant in Kazakhstan dumped its nuclear waste into the 100-acre Lake Karachay. Ten years or so later, the lake held 24 times the radioactive content of the debris from the explosion at Chernobyl. In 1967, during a hot, dry summer, some of the waters of Lake Karachay evaporated. Radioactive dust from the exposed bed blew onto lands and buildings, exposing 41,000 people, as far as 50 miles away.

The list goes on. *Time* magazine quotes Murray Feshback, co-author of *Ecocide in the USSR*, as saying, "The new evidence of widespread nuclear pollution is so incredible, it's hard to believe."

Industrial accidents also threaten the republics of the Newly Independent States. Soviet communism, with its obsession for industrial growth, national security and secrecy, produced an environmental catastrophe heretofore unknown. "No other great industrial civilization so systematically and so long poisoned its air, land, water and people," states *Ecocide in the USSR*. "... And no advanced society faced such a bleak political and economic reckoning with so few resources to invest toward recovery."

According to a *U.S. News and World Report* article, a report prepared for the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in the summer of 1992 blamed the ecological disaster on a policy of forced industrialization dating back to the 1920s. During World War II, plants and equipment were relocated to the Urals and Siberia as German troops invaded the country; after the war, many of them were quickly returned to European Russia. This, the report said, created a "growth-at-any-cost mentality." In addition, the huge military-industrial complex operated without environmental controls or concern for the safety of the people nearby. And the country's secret police force made sure few people found out about the disasters that occurred.

Not long ago, according to *Environmental Management in the Soviet Union*, the residents of Chernovtsy, a Ukrainian town near the Romanian border, were exposed to high doses of thallium. At least 127 children lost their hair, and eventually, nearly 90 percent of the town's

preschool-age children had to be evacuated. The first reports suggested that the thallium had originated outside the Soviet Union and was deposited in Chernobyl during a rain storm. Later reports indicated the thallium had come from industrial wastes buried within the city limits.

Of particular concern, of course, are the chemical and petrochemical facilities. After World War II, the Soviets moved a number of chemical plants, along with other industries, into warmer areas like Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Ukraine; a number of those plants are located in areas that are prone to earthquakes. Even if an earthquake doesn't destroy a plant it could topple vats containing potentially deadly chemicals.

Today, many of the industrial plants in the former Soviet Union are aging facilities without environmental controls. And reports indicate that those facilities that do have safety controls often don't use them. Individual plants located throughout the republics of the former Soviet Union as well as huge industrial complexes in places like the Urals and along the Volga River are catastrophes waiting to happen. However, the number of plants that could experience industrial accidents serious enough to require evacuations of people is too large to list here. So too, are other environmental problems that could lead to the evacuation of people.

### 3. Displacement and Migration:

In the years just before its dissolution, the Soviet Union had to deal with its first major ethnic conflict — the attempt by Christian Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh, an enclave within Azerbaijan, to break away from the predominantly Moslem republic. The battle, which is still ongoing, has had repercussions in both Azerbaijan and Armenia, leading to the movement of some 500,000 people and incalculable impact on the economies of both countries.

But Nagorno-Karabakh was just the beginning. Long-suppressed ethnic hostilities began to surface throughout much of the country, revealed in part by the wave of nationalism that would ultimately lead to the break up of the Soviet Union. In June 1989, the Russian military airlifted some 30,000 Meskhetian Turks — a group of people Joseph Stalin deported from Georgia to Central Asia during World War II — from the Fergana Valley following a violent confrontation with native Uzbeks. A few months later, Tajiks in Dushanbe rioted when they heard rumors that Armenian refugees who had left Azerbaijan because of the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh would be moved to Tajikistan, displacing local residents at the head of the waiting list for housing. And a few months after Dushanbe, a dispute over land allocations under a privatization scheme in Osh *oblast* in Kyrgyzstan's part of the Fergana Valley led to armed conflict between Kyrgyz and ethnic Uzbeks. A number of people died.

In 1990 — after Georgia's newly elected nationalist government suggested non-Georgians were unwelcome in the country — the South Ossetia autonomous *oblast* declared its independence. Civil war ensued, culminating in the summer of 1992 with a three-month-long Georgian attack on South Ossetia's capital, Tskhinvali. By the time the fighting stopped in August, much of the housing in the area had been destroyed and nearly 140,000 refugees and displaced persons had been created on both sides. Since then, the autonomous republic of Abkhazia has declared its independence from Georgia; at this writing, the fighting continues.

Civil war has also erupted in Moldova. After the Soviets annexed Romania in 1940, Stalin carved out of Ukraine a sliver of land, now called Trans-Dniester, and added it to

Moldova. The Russians and Ukrainians who now inhabit the area fear Moldova will once again become part of Romania. So in December 1991, Russian and/or communist elements seized various government buildings in Trans-Dniester. Several months of war followed — with a renegade Russian general entering the fray to defend Russian-speakers. Thousands of people had been displaced by the time a cease-fire was signed in the summer of 1992.

The next hot spot in the former Soviet Union was Tajikistan. The conflict began in the spring of 1992 with demonstrations in Dushanbe between people who wanted to oust the president, a holdover from communist days, and those who supported him. The ensuing civil war is pitting geographical areas, political and religious philosophies and clans against each other. By mid-November, the war had produced an estimated 400,000 internally displaced persons.

The latest conflict, as of December 1992, involves North Ossetia and Ingushia, two neighboring autonomous republics in the Northern Caucasus; it is the first ethnic battle on Russian soil since the end of the Soviet Union. The Ingush, who were among the peoples deported by Stalin during World War II, returned home in the 1950s to discover that one of their *rayons* had been given to North Ossetia. As a result, many Ingush found themselves living outside their national territory. Now they are fighting for the return of that land.

In addition to these refugees and/or displaced persons, there is another category of migrants in the former Soviet Union. An estimated 65 million to 72 million people were living outside their republics of origin when the Soviet Union dissolved.

The largest number of them — 25 million — are Russians. Almost overnight, many of these people became aliens in the lands in which their families had been living for several generations. At this point, little ethnic violence has been directed against them. But this could change if anti-Russian sentiment intensifies, as it well could. But more importantly, the Russians see dwindling economic and career opportunities for themselves in the outlying republics; they fear they will soon lose the power they had held in these areas, if they haven't already done so. They are particularly disturbed about new language laws that require residents to speak the indigenous language to hold certain jobs and/or obtain citizenship. And those living in Central Asia are worried about the increase in Islamic traditions.

As of December, Russia's Federal Migration Committee (FMS) had registered 470,000 refugees, people fleeing hostilities in places like Azerbaijan, Moldova, North and South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Tajikistan. The service had also registered 800,000 displaced persons, i.e., Russians who had left the outlying republics for reasons other than direct conflict. The service expects the number to reach two million by the end of 1993. FMS officials say additional migrants have arrived in Russia without registering, but they decline to estimate their numbers.

### **Current Housing Situation**

Vast housing shortages exist in the newly independent republics of the former Soviet Union — a legacy from the days of the Soviets' relentless pursuit of heavy industry at the cost of all else, including housing. The need could easily exceed 10 million units.

According to one authority, the shortage in Russia alone is nine million dwellings. At least two large migrations are exacerbating that shortage: the return of ethnic Russians from the outlying republics of the former Soviet Union and the repatriation of Russian soldiers,

particularly from Germany and Eastern Europe. Most enlisted men will be absorbed back into their families, but according to a military advisor to President Boris Yeltsin, there are already nearly 200,000 Russian officers in Russia without adequate housing. They are living with friends or relatives or in makeshift shelters. Some Soviet troops who left Hungary and Czechoslovakia, for example, are currently living with their families in tents. At this time, Germany has 72,000 housing units under way in Russia or in the planning stages to house the troops returning from Germany.

In addition, the recent influxes of refugees and displaced persons in some of the republics are exacerbating the long-standing shortages. In Azerbaijan, for example, refugees from Armenia, Uzbekistan and Georgia and displaced persons from Nagorno-Karabakh have tripled the housing shortage.

### **Emergency Shelter**

In the past, when disasters occurred in the Soviet Union, the government had a relatively workable system for sheltering the displaced in permanent structures — a virtual necessity in cold-weather areas. The government usually relied on families and friends to absorb the majority of the displaced. Most of the rest were placed in Pioneer camps, sanitoriums or other resort facilities, often those that had dormitory-style accommodations, cafeterias and adequate sanitary arrangements. Many of these facilities were located in the warmer, southern parts of the country, particularly near the Black and Caspian seas. Refugees were also placed in public buildings such as schools when other facilities were not available.

In acute emergencies, such as earthquakes, the government also used a variety of temporary shelters. Following the 1988 Armenian earthquake, for example, thousands of portable shelters arrived in Armenia by railroad from Siberia to house earthquake victims and workers rebuilding the cities. While waiting for the portable shelters to arrive, the government used several hundred railway cars for immediate shelter. Those cars were meant to house people for only a month, but a number of earthquake victims are still using them. Most of the republics of the former Soviet Union, however, have had little experience in using tents during disasters.

The exact number of resort facilities in the former Soviet Union available for refugees/displaced persons is difficult to ascertain, but the figure is large, at least for the former Soviet Union as a whole. If figures from the USSR State Statistics Committee are correct, the former Soviet Union has 30,630 sanitoriums and other "institutions of rest" holding more than 5.1 million people. Pioneer camps apparently aren't included in the figures.

A breakdown of the numbers of such institutions in the republics of the former Soviet Union in 1990 are as follows:

<b>Republic</b>	<b>Total Number Rest Institutions</b>	<b>Total Number Beds</b>
Russia	14,862	2,597,600
Ukraine	7,558	1,450,800
Belarus	772	109,800
Uzbekistan	698	111,800
Kazakhstan	882	127,600
Georgia	704	186,800
Azerbaijan	240	58,000
Moldova	238	53,600
Kyrgystan	270	71,000
Tajikistan	192	32,600
Armenia	112	29,400
Turkmenistan	82	16,000

Officials in Georgia insist the government has enough hotels, Pioneer camps and other resort facilities to house every person displaced by the fighting in the breakaway areas of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. And — according to the State Committee to the President of the Russian Federation for Civil Defense Affairs, Emergencies and Elimination of the Consequences of Natural Disasters — Russia also has enough emergency shelter possibilities to meet almost any disaster situation. For example, Krasnodar *kray*, a territory in southern Russia that includes the Black Sea coast, has the ability to house some 500,000 refugees and displaced persons in the summer months; because many of those facilities are not winterized, the number that can be accommodated in the colder months drops to 250,000. Government officials in the Black Sea coast town of Sochi — 27 kilometers from the fighting in Abkhazia — have volunteered to house 90,000 refugees and displaced persons.

At this point, the major drawback to using such facilities is money. Many of the facilities throughout the former Soviet Union now belong to enterprises, trade unions and ministries. Although most of the republic governments still have the authority to take over the facilities in case of disasters, their owners would expect compensation. In October 1992, for example, Sochi officials were asking \$3 a day per person to provide room, board and medical attention for refugees.

Some of the resort hotels might not be available for refugees in the future. In the current tight economic situation, some owners are closing a few of their facilities. However, as foreign tourism grows in the republics of the former Soviet Union, resort facilities could become major sources of income for their owners. At the moment, however, tourism is not booming in all areas of the republics. The downturn in the economy is keeping many former Soviets at home. In addition, ethnic conflict is discouraging tourism — both domestic and foreign — in some

places. In Sochi, for example, hotel occupancy in the fall of 1992 was running at 30 percent of its usual rate for that time of the year, a discouraging figure for a community with 65 percent of its work force employed in the tourism sector. In addition, some owners are choosing to put their resort facilities on the market at this time. One hotel near Sochi was for sale in the fall of 1992 for the equivalent of about \$15,000; it reportedly could house up to 250 people and had a canteen that could feed 150.

The housing systems in the former Soviet Union have demonstrated surprising flexibility in absorbing migrants to date. However, emergency shelter systems in several areas of the former Soviet Union are already saturated. According to the figures above, republics such as Tajikistan, Azerbaijan and Armenia appear to lack sufficient resort space to house their current refugees/displaced persons. Armenia — which has experienced both a devastating earthquake and a refugee influx from Azerbaijan — has little space left in resort facilities; currently, several thousand refugees are being housed in schools and other institutions, to the consternation of those who would like to see such facilities returned to their original educational purposes. Azerbaijan's ability to absorb refugees or displaced persons is also being seriously strained. Tajikistan, which never had a significant number of year-round resort facilities, is also running out of permanent structures in which to house its displaced. According to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), Tajikistan "lacks adequate shelter for the increasing number of displaced people." Between five and 10 percent of the more than 400,000 displaced are living in schools, tents, railway cars and unfinished buildings or do not have shelter.

Although several governments — among them Armenia, Azerbaijan and Tajikistan — have requested winterized tents to meet housing shortages, most of the republics have other resources that might be exploited before refugees/displaced persons are forced into tents. Among them are prefabricated housing and unfinished buildings.

However, in many republics of the former Soviet Union, permanent housing rather than emergency shelter is the ongoing need.

### **Institutional and Managerial Capacity**

The Civil Defense (CD) units in the republics of the former Soviet Union have a significant amount of experience dealing with disasters.

In Russia, Russian Civil Defense has been merged into an agency with a long name — the State Committee to the President of the Russian Federation for Civil Defense Affairs, Emergencies and Elimination of the Consequences of Natural Disasters — and is the committee's operational branch. CD is now a uniformed civilian agency; under the Soviet system, it was a branch of the Soviet army.

Civil Defense underwent many changes in the last years of the Soviet Union. It received a lot of criticism in the aftermath of Chernobyl and the Armenian earthquake. This led to a national debate on the role of the agency; even before the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) was formed, decisions had been made to take CD out of the army and reform it as a civilian agency. The decision to devolve more authority to the republics had also been made at an earlier date, and that, coupled with the fact that CD staff served their careers in their home

republics,<sup>1</sup> led the way for the rapid establishment of national CD agencies in the Newly Independent States (NIS).

Another product of the debate about the role of CD during the waning days of the USSR was its shift from focusing on nuclear conflict preparedness to more emphasis on natural, industrial and civil nuclear disasters. Armenia had pointed out the weaknesses of using the military in a civil emergency. They were not prepared for mass casualties or for taking the lead in managing the operation. Civil authorities pushed Civil Defense aside and ignored their plans; they used the organization and its capabilities to assist the civilian managers.

At the same time, while still a part of the Soviet army, CD had begun to prepare to handle mass movements of people associated with ethnic conflict in the republics. (This did not please the republics. Civilian leaders who wanted a weakened central government were not anxious to see any more power concentrated in the hands of the military, where it could be easily abused by hardliners. There was also concern about the organization's role in the various ethnic crises in the republics from both inside and outside the organization. When the central government intervened in Kyrgyzstan in 1990 and Armenia in 1988, CD was mobilized to assist the Soviet army's security operations. Local people resented this development.

As a result of these debates, the new Russian agency that emerged saw its role as: (1) providing logistical, managerial and technical support to local governments in the aftermath of natural or industrial disasters, (2) handling mass evacuations related to nuclear accidents or industrial disasters, (3) assisting local governments in disaster preparedness and mitigation through technical assistance or funding and (4) providing training to local disaster management authorities. There is also some element of civil defense preparedness (i.e., military-related CD), but that is downplayed at present.

Because of the CD's interest in mass evacuation for nuclear/industrial disasters, the agency has been called on to help develop plans for evacuating victims of civil disturbances. In Russia, most of the planning has been focused on helping ethnic Russians evacuate to Russia and on helping local governments in the areas north of Georgia deal with displaced persons.<sup>2</sup> This has led to some problems for the agency: in cases where Civil Defense has tried to develop contingency plans for possible ethnic violence, local authorities have pressured the central

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<sup>1</sup> This feature of CD was unique in the Soviet army. It was permitted because the Soviets believed the CD system would be more responsive to the needs of the people if the personnel was from the host society. They also recognized that local staff would have more interest in protecting their own people and would know the community better than outsiders.

<sup>2</sup> The Russian military has had extensive experience in evacuating large numbers of people in the last 10 years, including Chernobyl, Armenia and the Meskhetian Turks. All of these occurred during the period when Civil Defense was still a part of the Soviet army. Presumably, if mass evacuations are required in the future, CD and the military will link up to carry them out.

The effectiveness of evacuations is due in large part to the emphasis the Soviet government gave to nuclear war planning. The government once boasted that it could put the entire population of the principal target cities underground in shelters in 15 minutes; they claimed they could evacuate Moscow and all other large cities in 24 hours. While this may have been an exaggeration, the fact is, Civil Defense preparations, based largely on evacuation scenarios, were impressive. The Soviets, inspired by memories of the German invasion during World War II, gave defense of the civil population high priority. With the end of the Cold War, one might expect the emphasis on evacuation would decline. However, the Chernobyl experience left an indelible mark. Many Russian leaders are convinced other accidents are likely, so evacuation planning is still a high priority.

government to stop the exercise for fear that it might provoke the very trouble that CD is trying to prepare for. Thus, for the foreseeable future, Civil Defense is not likely to be an effective intervenor in assisting victims of civil conflict at the sites where incidents occur. This is one reason so many state committees for refugees have sprung up.

In many of the republics, the state committees for refugees began as part of the social protection agencies within labor ministries. Some of them have since evolved into more independent outfits. The Russian Federation's Federal Migration Service, for example, has expanded its operation to include visa and passport activities.

## FIFTEEN HIGH-PRIORITY DISASTER SCENARIOS

The 15 high-priority disaster scenarios have been selected from countries visited during 1992. They, along with other problems in the republics they are occurring in, are discussed in Part I. The high-priority scenarios are:

### **Armenia:**

1. Armenians living in Azerbaijan were forced to leave that country, beginning in 1988, because of the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, an area in Azerbaijan primarily populated by Armenians. Since the conflict began, an estimated 280,000 Armenian refugees have arrived from Azerbaijan, and additional refugees are still coming from Nagorno-Karabakh, as Azeri troops capture territory there.
2. A few months after the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict began, a massive earthquake struck northern Armenia, demolishing the city of Spitak and sections of Kirovakan and Leninakan. More than 500,000 people were left homeless. Today, some 400,000 of the earthquake victims are still without permanent shelter.

### **Azerbaijan:**

3. An estimated 190,000 Azeris left Armenia after the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh escalated into violence. In addition, 150,000 Azeris living in Nagorno-Karabakh, in nearby areas or near the Armenian border have also been displaced by the fighting. The housing situation has been exacerbated by two other groups of refugees: Meskhetian Turks who were evacuated from Uzbekistan following ethnic conflict and ethnic Azeris who returned home from other parts of the former Soviet Union, particularly Georgia.

### **Kyrgyzstan:**

4. Kyrgyzstan falls within the earthquake zone that includes the territory beginning in Crimea and extending through Central Asia. Two earthquakes in 1992, plus a flood and landslide, have left 60,000 people homeless.
5. Kyrgyz are essentially an underclass in their own country, faring less well than ethnic Uzbeks, who primarily farm the fertile areas of Kyrgyzstan's Fergana Valley, or the ethnic Russians, who are employed in technical jobs. Ethnic Kyrgyz are showing signs of resentment that they cannot compete on an equal footing with other ethnic groups in the society. The souring economy will only exacerbate those differences.

### **Russia:**

6. Before the dissolution of the Soviet Union, 25 million Russians were living outside Russia. Many of these ethnic Russians want to return to their homeland. They are concerned about the passage of discriminatory laws, the loss of economic and political power and the rise of Islamic traditions. Some are fleeing ethnic conflicts in such places as Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia, Moldova, Abkhazia and Tajikistan.

7. Like czarist Russia before them, the communists had a difficult time exerting control over the people of the Northern Caucasus. In fact, some of them weren't subdued until Stalin deported them to Central Asia during World War II for allegedly collaborating with the Germans. Today, parts of the Northern Caucasus are again talking about breaking away from Russia. One of them, Chechnya, has already declared its independence. Meanwhile two of the groups within the Northern Caucasus, Ingushia and North Ossetia, are at war. To complicate matters, the Cossacks, who had a historical role in the region protecting Russia's borders, have re-emerged. A variety of experts tag this as one the next major problems facing Russia.
8. Although they reside in the Russian Federation, more than 10 million Russians live in the 20 or so autonomous republics within Russia that constitute the homelands of other indigenous peoples. Two of them, Chechnya and Tatarstan, refused last spring to initial a treaty establishing relationships between the republics and the federal government. Some experts believe that other autonomous republics could also opt for independence — a move that could create problems for the integrity of the Russian Federation and lead to Russians leaving those areas. Tatarstan has been targeted as a potential hot spot.
9. Eleven of the 16 remaining Chernobyl-style nuclear reactors are in Russia. The Russian government refuses to shut them down, saying they are necessary to its economy. In addition, a significant number of factories and plants in Russia, many of them out-dated, could have industrial accidents.

**Tajikistan:**

10. Warring factions currently have the country embroiled in a civil war that has produced a significant number of displaced persons. The war could ultimately lead to the dissolution of the country — at least one region recently declared its independence from Tajikistan.
11. Severe earthquakes are common throughout the entire country. In fact, Tajikistan's earthquake potential is possibly the highest in former Soviet Union.

**Ukraine:**

12. In 1986, one of the reactors at the Chernobyl nuclear plant exploded, dumping nine tons of radioactive material into the atmosphere. Thousands of residents left the area, but more than 12,000 still need to move from a mandatory zone. Some 2.6 million people still live on contaminated soil. The reactor has been entombed in a steel-and-concrete shell, but news reports indicate the sarcophagus is cracked and crumbling and could collapse. The plant reopened this fall to provide heat for the winter; however, Western scientists consider it unsafe.

13. In 1944, Joseph Stalin deported an estimated 200,000 Crimean Tatars to Central Asia, claiming they had collaborated with German troops in the area. The Soviet government eventually gave the Crimean Tatars permission to return home. Today, approximately 200,000 have done so; an estimated 600,000 more would like to. Lack of housing is the main problem.

**Uzbekistan:**

14. Uzbekistan has significant potential for ethnic conflict:
  - Uzbekistan has suggested it has claims to the city of Osh in the Kyrgyz part of the Fergana Valley.
  - Tajikistan has said the Uzbek cities of Samarkand and Bukhara were historically Tajik and perhaps should be again.
  - The spread of Islamic fundamentalism could lead to civil war.
15. Uzbekistan lies in the earthquake zone that stretches from Crimea through Central Asia. A major earthquake hit Tashkent in 1966, leveling a significant portion of the city.

In addition, four other republics — Belarus (nuclear problems), Georgia (ethnic conflict), Kazakhstan (earthquake potential) and Moldova (ethnic conflict) — have scenarios worth watching. Because these countries were not visited, they are discussed in lesser detail in Part II. The Baltic states and Turkmenistan are not included in this project. However, USAID/Housing should be aware that Turkmenistan falls within an earthquake zone and Lithuania contains a nuclear power plant that is considered one of the most dangerous in the former Soviet Union.

## Part I<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> These countries were visited during 1992.

## Armenia

### In Brief

Armenia is the smallest republic in the former Soviet Union, but it faces one of the most serious emergency housing problems in the area:

- Armenians living in Azerbaijan were forced to leave that country, beginning in 1988, because of the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, an area in Azerbaijan primarily populated by Armenians. Since the conflict began, an estimated 280,000 Armenian refugees have arrived from Azerbaijan, and additional refugees are still coming from Nagorno-Karabakh, as Azeri troops capture territory there.

Armenia's current predicament is complicated by an earlier issue.

- A few months after the conflict began, a massive earthquake struck northern Armenia, demolishing the city of Spitak and sections of Kirovakan and Leninakan. More than 500,000 people were left homeless. Today, some 400,000 of the earthquake victims are still without permanent shelter.

Because of the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, Armenia is plagued by a number of problems. Before the conflict began, the vast majority of Armenia's supplies were imported through Azerbaijan. However, Azerbaijan has instituted an almost total blockade of the country. In addition, fighting in the Abkhazia area in Georgia, north of Armenia, has effectively cut supplies from that direction. Furthermore, the dissolution of the Soviet Union has exacerbated the situation by creating economic and political turmoil throughout the entire union.

Today, one in every 13 Armenians is a refugee, and one in every seven Armenians is inadequately sheltered because of the earthquake or the refugee situation. Adequate accommodation for a significant portion of people living in the country remains one of its major problem. But housing construction has virtually been halted by a lack of both money and building materials.

On the plus side, however, *Time* magazine gave the country an "A" in the success of its reforms and a "B" in political stability.

# Armenia

## INTRODUCTION

### Topography and Climate

Armenia is a land-locked mountainous country comprising 29,800 square kilometers, the smallest republic in the former Soviet Union. The Lesser Caucasus, a forested mountain chain, spans from south Georgia across the northern part of Armenia into western Azerbaijan. Other arid highlands spread south over Armenia into Turkey and Iran. The capital, Yerevan, is 14 miles from the Turkish border and is ringed by extinct volcanic peaks. Only 10 percent of Armenia lies below 1,000 meters; the tallest point in the republic is 4,090-high Mount Aragats. The country has one central valley.

Armenia is in the earthquake zone that stretches from the Caucasus to Central Asia. A major earthquake struck the northern part of the country on December 7, 1988, killing at least 25,000 people and leaving more than 500,000 homeless.

Armenia has a continental climate, ranging from 25 to 40 degrees Celsius. Temperatures can drop considerably lower in the mountains during the winter.

### Demographics

Armenia has a population of nearly 3.6 million people, an estimated two-thirds of them urban dwellers. The capital, Yerevan, has an estimated 1.5 million residents. The population grew by a half million people from 1980 to 1992. Much of the growth can be attributed to refugees from the earthquake and to three separate movements of Armenian refugees out of Azerbaijan over the last four years. The next largest city is Khumairy (formerly Leninakan) with 200,000 people. In the 1980s, Armenia was the second most dense republic in the Soviet Union, with 106.4 residents per square kilometer.

Armenians make up 96.1 percent of the republic's population. Prior to the outbreak of the hostilities over Nagorno-Karabakh, only the Azeris formed a substantial minority in Armenia, but most of them have returned to Azerbaijan. Other ethnic groups in Armenia include Kurds (63,100), Russians (49,000), Ukrainians (8,200), Assyrians (7,100) and Greeks (5,100).

Since the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh began, an estimated 280,000 Armenian refugees have fled Azerbaijan, including Nagorno-Karabakh, for Armenia.

### Current Housing Situation

Like the rest of the former Soviet Union, Armenia has long had a housing shortage. According to a Padco report for USAID in the spring of 1992, an estimated 42,000 families in Yerevan are living in structures that provide less than five square meters of housing per person. The city has 4,600 households on the waiting list for municipal housing.

The 1988 earthquake that struck the northern part of the country severely damaged buildings and infrastructure — and exacerbated Armenia's existing housing shortage. The oldest and best-constructed buildings withstood the earthquake, but many structures, mostly

prefabricated ones, built in the 1970s were hit hard. (Earthquake-resistant construction standards were apparently lowered in the 1970s, along with construction quality in general.) The earthquake damaged between 25 and 100 percent of the housing in northern urban centers. Much rubble has been cleared away, but numerous damaged buildings still stand.

A massive construction effort began after the earthquake. Construction crews came in from all over the Soviet Union; each area took on a part of the plan and began to build turnkey operations. However, most of these buildings were not completed, in large part because of the dissolution of the Soviet Union. In Leninakan alone, more than 40,000 units were left unfinished. Hundreds of small, poorly constructed shelters — made out of shipping crates, petroleum storage tanks, railroad cars, etc. — occupy parks and creek areas. Many people have added small, stone extensions or other innovations.

As elsewhere in the Soviet Union, housing construction in Armenia was centrally planned and controlled by the USSR. Soviet agencies in Moscow set industry standards and requirements. Moscow also was the primary source of financing and procurement. Since independence, the Armenian Ministry of Construction has assumed the responsibility for these functions, but it is out of money. In the spring of 1992, according to the Padco report, the ministry estimated that it needed 300 billion rubles to meet the country's housing and infrastructure needs; since then, inflation has significantly increased that number. Even if money weren't a problem, building supplies are also difficult to obtain. Before the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict began, Armenia had imported most of its building materials through Azerbaijan from other CIS republics.

Most housing projects in Armenia have halted. However, the government would still like to provide six square meters of housing free of charge to those on the waiting list. In addition, it has plans for providing permanent housing for a number of refugees from Azerbaijan.

The construction season in Armenia runs year round in the lower elevations; in the mountains, it generally begins in April and ends in October.

## DISASTER SCENARIOS

Armenia is currently dealing with two disasters — one man-made and the other natural — that have caused serious shelter problems in the republic. They are:

- Armenians living in Azerbaijan were forced to leave that country after fighting began in 1988 over Nagorno-Karabakh, an area in Azerbaijan primarily populated by Armenians. Since the conflict began, an estimated 280,000 Armenian refugees have arrived from Azerbaijan. Additional refugees are still coming from Nagorno-Karabakh, as Azeri troops capture territory there.
- A few months after the fighting began over Nagorno-Karabakh, a massive earthquake struck northern Armenia, demolishing the city of Spitak and sections of Kirovakan and Leninakan.

The combined effect of those two events is a displaced population of more than 750,000 people.

In addition, the republic faces the prospect of several other man-made disasters:

- After the explosion at the Chernobyl nuclear plant in Ukraine, Armenia's nuclear plant at Medzamour, near the Turkish border, was shut down. However, a French company is looking into the possibility of reopening the plant for the Armenian government. In addition, Armenia has several chemical plants that could cause industrial accidents.

### **The Conflict Over Nagorno-Karabakh**

Nagorno-Karabakh, an autonomous region within the republic of Azerbaijan, was the site of the first major ethnic conflict in the Soviet Union. When the conflict began in 1988, four-fifths of the region's population were Armenian Christians and one-fifth were Azeri Muslims. The conflict has produced a large number of refugees on both sides.

The roots of the present-day conflict go back many generations and derive from ethnic, religious and linguistic differences between Azeris and Armenians. The two ethnic groups fought twice in the early part of the 20th century — in 1905 and 1918 — over Nagorno-Karabakh and other contested regions. In 1921, when Stalin gave the region to Azerbaijan, its population was 95 percent Armenian; the region is separated from Armenia by a four kilometer-wide strip. But Azerbaijan claims Azeris dominated the area through the 18th century; Armenians arrived, as refugees from Persia, only in the 19th century.

Tensions were largely kept in check during the Soviet period, but with the dismantling of power in the USSR, nationalist revivals emerged and contributed in large part to the current conflict. (The communist governments in Moscow and Baku had prohibited Armenians in

Nagorno-Karabakh from building their churches and educating their children in the Armenian language. This led to resentment against Moscow and the government of Azerbaijan and, by extension, the Azeris living in the enclave.)

Over the years, the Armenians never gave up hope of joining the enclave to Armenia. In 1965, 100,000 people demonstrated in Yerevan for annexation of the territory, and 45,000 Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh petitioned the Soviet Council of Ministers in Moscow seeking unification. In 1986, under Mikhail Gorbachev's anti-alcohol campaign, vineyards in Karabakh were plowed under and thousands of Armenians were thrown out of work. Yerevan then became more active in the region.

In December 1987, a Gorbachev advisor hinted that Moscow was prepared to give control of the enclave to Armenia. The Azerbaijani leadership warned that doing so would ignite Central Asia. Soviet officials, fearful that changing the status of one province would reopen territorial disputes across the USSR and begin unraveling the union, convinced Gorbachev to shelve further discussions on the matter.

The Armenians felt betrayed. In early 1988, there were massive demonstrations in Yerevan and Stepanakert, the capital of Nagorno-Karabakh, in favor of annexing the territory to Armenia, but Azeris alleged they were being pushed out of Stepanakert and other Armenian-dominated towns in the *oblast*. The conflict turned ugly when two Azeri youths were killed during a protest march leaving Agdam, a town just outside Nagorno-Karabakh. Most people in Azerbaijan believe the two were killed by Armenians, although the Armenians claim it was the Soviet militia. The reaction to the shooting was swift, and pressure on Azeris to leave Armenia and on Armenians to leave Azerbaijan increased significantly.

On February 20, the Nagorno-Karabakh parliament, which had an Armenian majority, passed a resolution attaching the region to Armenia. The Azeris regarded the vote as a challenge to their territorial integrity and as a threat to the Azeri population in the enclave. Within days, ethnic tensions developed into mob violence. In Sumgait, a town 30 kilometers north of Baku, a mob killed approximately 50 Armenians. The militia and security forces stood by, failing to intervene to protect the victims. At that point, a mass exodus of Armenians began from Azerbaijan.

The arrival of refugees in Yerevan escalated tension in Armenia. Discrimination increased, and the Azeris began to evacuate women, children, and old people to Azerbaijan in growing numbers. By the end of the year, almost all Azeris had left Armenia. People were killed during the evacuation, but the number is in dispute.

While this population exchange was taking place, violence escalated along the border. Mobs killed dozens of Armenians in the town of Ganga, and in August 1989, a bus carrying Azeris near Tbilisi was destroyed by a bomb placed on the bus by Armenian militants.

Fighting escalated in the enclave and occasionally spread to the cities. The most serious violence took place in Baku. In January 1990, mobs killed between 60 and 100 Armenians. Again, the militia and Soviet forces in the area remained in their barracks until the violence was over and only then offered to assist the remaining Armenians to leave.

In April and May 1991, the Soviet Army, with help from security units of the Azerbaijan Ministry of the Interior, began deporting Armenians from some of the predominately Azeri

villages in Nagorno-Karabakh. When the Armenians resisted, the Soviet military opened fire. Some Armenians were killed and their houses and possessions destroyed.

Following the abortive August 1991 *putsch* in Moscow, the Soviet Army was ordered to remain neutral. It was soon apparent that the Soviet Union was falling apart, and that the newly emerging Commonwealth of Independent States would not have sufficient clout to resolve the problems between the two countries. The Armenian community in Nagorno-Karabakh and in the adjacent Shahumian *rayon* in Azerbaijan declared their independence and announced the establishment of the independent republic of Nagorno-Karabakh. In response, the national assembly of Azerbaijan adopted a resolution canceling the autonomy of the region and placing it under direct rule.

Fighting again escalated within the enclave, and in February 1992, Armenian militants massacred at least 100 Azeris at the village of Khojaly and captured a large number of villagers to hold as hostage. This in turn escalated hostage-taking by the Azeris to use in prisoner exchanges and led to another wave of violence against the remaining Armenians in Baku.

The political turmoil in Azerbaijan in May 1992 affected the Nagorno-Karabakh situation. Azerbaijan's former president, Ayaz N. Mutalibov, who had been toppled in March by demonstrations of angry nationalists and anti-communists, was restored to power by the Azerbaijan Parliament, then toppled again. Armenian forces took advantage of the political chaos, launching an assault that succeeded in driving the last Azeris out of Nagorno-Karabakh and establishing the Lachin Corridor, a land bridge to the enclave. Azerbaijan mounted a major counteroffensive, and by summer, it had gained control of much of the northern part of the enclave. In June, Azeri troops forced Armenians to leave Shahumian — the *rayon* that had joined Nagorno-Karabakh to form the breakaway republic — after the troops took the area. Since July, 40,000 Armenians from Mardakert region were displaced, with the majority going to Stepanakert, the capital of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Reports in the fall indicated the war was intensifying in the border areas between Armenia and Azerbaijan and civilian casualties were mounting. This could increase the number of Armenian displaced persons.

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has resulted in more than 500,000 people being displaced on both sides; the death toll stands at over 2,000.

### **The 1988 Earthquake**

Armenia is located within an earthquake zone that extends from the northern part of the Crimea over the Caucasus region to the Caspian Sea.

The earthquake that struck the northern part of Armenia on December 7, 1988, registered 6.9 on the Richter scale. (Its epicenter was near the Armenian-Georgian border.) It was the strongest earthquake to hit the Caucasus in more than 80 years and one of the worst in Soviet history.

The earthquake killed more than 25,000 people; 12,000 people were hospitalized; almost 15,000 people were pulled alive from the rubble of collapsed structures; and more than 500,000 were left homeless. It destroyed more than 50 towns and villages and damaged 100 more. The cost was estimated at \$15 billion.

The likelihood of another severe earthquake striking Armenia is difficult to determine.

So far, only about 20 percent of the destroyed or damaged housing has been rebuilt or repaired, and some 400,000 people remain homeless. After the earthquake, construction crews came from all over the Soviet Union to build turnkey operations. However, most of these buildings were not completed, in large part because of the dissolution of the Soviet Union. International charitable organizations also began construction projects. Estimates of the number of uncompleted structures are inconsistent, but one report said more than 40,000 units were left unfinished in Leninakan alone. Another indicated only 10,000 uncompleted structures in Armenia. Hundreds of small, poorly constructed shelters — made from shipping crates, petroleum storage tanks, railroad cars, etcetera — occupy parks and creek areas in Leninakan.

The housing problem has been complicated by the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Azerbaijan's nearly total blockade of the country and the de facto blockade caused by the fighting in the Abkhazian area of Georgia. This had led to shortages of money and building materials, the high price of available materials and the cost of re-establishing public utilities.

### **Nuclear and Industrial Accidents**

After the explosion at the Chernobyl nuclear plant in Ukraine in 1986, Armenia's nuclear plant at Medzamour, near the Turkish border, was shut down. However, a French company is looking into the possibility of reopening the plant for the Armenian government, which is looking for ways to solve its massive energy shortages. (Some reports indicate the Medzamour plant has Chernobyl-style reactors.)

In addition, Armenia has several chemical plants that could result in industrial accidents. After World War II, the Soviet Union dispersed some of its industrial plants into the southern part of the union, including Armenia. Yerevan, for example, now has an ecologically harmful aluminum plant in its Arabgir region and a number of chemical plants in its Shengavit area.

Earthquakes pose a serious threat to the country's chemical plants. Even if an earthquake didn't destroy the plant, it could topple vats, creating a dangerous situation. During the 1988 earthquake in the northern part of the country, a chlorine plant in Kirovakan caused some concern for relief workers.

### **Current Refugee Situation**

An estimated 280,000 refugees (72,000 families) have arrived in Armenia from Azerbaijan, including people from Nagorno-Karabakh. Fifty-five percent of them are women; 40 percent are children; and 25 percent are elderly or handicapped. According to a report published in December 1991, 73 percent of the refugees arrived without any belongings. The latest influx of refugees into Armenia began in the summer of 1992, when 12,800 Armenians were forced to leave the Shahumian region in the north of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Armenia's Council of Ministers determines a refugee's "right of residence" in Armenia. It has established three classes of residence:

- Refugees from areas of Azerbaijan, other than Nagorno-Karabakh or adjacent areas. They have the right to resettle in Armenia.

- Refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh. They have been granted temporary asylum, under the assumption that they will voluntarily return to Nagorno-Karabakh after the hostilities have subsided.
- Refugees from areas adjacent to Nagorno-Karabakh. They, too, have only temporary asylum.

### **Emergency Shelter**

According to an ICVA report, an estimated 115,000 refugees from Azerbaijan have been able to find permanent housing in Armenia, filling 21,700 apartments and houses. Some of them were able to move into shelter abandoned by Azeris who were forced to return to Azerbaijan. (The Armenians reportedly either exchanged houses with the Azeris or purchased them from their owners. One report says the Armenian government paid 70 million rubles for houses to Azeris who left Armenia.) Others received permanent housing from the government.

Some 165,000 refugees (42,000 families) live in temporary housing. Many occupy schools, child-care facilities, hostels, pensions, tourist resorts and other structures; according to the International Committee of the Red Cross, sub-human conditions exist in many of the refugee areas. Other refugees have found shelter with relatives, friends and sympathetic strangers.

About 70,000 to 75,000 of the refugees sought shelter in Yerevan; the remainder are spread across much of the rest of Armenia.

Of the 12,000 refugees from Shahumian in Nagorno-Karabakh, 3,245 people are staying with relatives and 4,770 are in kindergartens and schools; 2,938 have been disbursed among 13 administrative districts in Armenia. According to American Red Cross reports, 1,200 people in Yerevan are without shelter; the rest of the influx left for Russia and Ukraine in search of jobs and housing. (Since July, 40,000 Armenians from Mardakert region were displaced, with the majority of them going to Stepanakert.)

Because of the problems in finding food and housing, about the same number of refugees were returning to Nagorno-Karabakh in the fall of 1992 as were coming out. Government buses shuttle refugees back and forth between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia on a regular basis.

According to the ICVA report, the Armenian government was able to absorb the 100,000 refugees who arrived from Azerbaijan before the earthquake struck on December 7, 1988. After that, the government's ability to respond to the refugees was severely reduced. Today, according to ICVA, the temporary shelter needs of the refugees is the most difficult problem for the Armenian government to solve. (However, several NGOs in the fall of 1992 said that emergency shelter was not yet a critical problem but food was.)

In the summer of 1992, the State Administration for Refugee Affairs (SARA) made an emergency appeal for 1,000 winterized tents to house 4,500 refugees, most of them from the Shahumian region, who were living in kindergartens and schools. The government wanted to return those institutions to their original purpose.

In addition, SARA says it lacks the money to provide any more refugees with permanent housing. The agency wants to rehabilitate houses in villages abandoned in border regions near Azerbaijan, but lacks the money to do so. (However, some of those areas could prove

dangerous. Azeris are attacking border regions inside Armenia with aerial bombardments, artillery and surface-to-surface missiles, as well as with armor and infantry forces. In July, for example, the Azeris conquered the village of Artsvashen, leaving 2,600 homeless.)

In addition, regional councils have allocated plots of land on which to build houses to some 6,000 families; 6,000 families have also registered with cooperative building companies to have homes built. However, these plans are on hold since housing construction has practically stopped in Armenia.

According to the ICVA report, SARA also wishes to establish reception centers in 15 of its 37 regions to receive refugees. Under the government's plans, each reception area would be able to shelter 300 refugees (75 families).

One of the biggest problems facing refugees in Armenia, as well as the rest of the population, is lack of heat this winter. Armenia is dependent upon Georgia for maintaining its only functioning gas pipeline; the line, which runs through the breakaway oblast of South Ossetia, was blown up in October, shutting the line down for at least a week. Lack of heat could be life threatening; however, there were no reports of deaths from the cold in the winter of 1991-1992.

## **Government's Ability to Respond<sup>4</sup>**

### *Physical Resources*

No list of Pioneer camps, sanitoriums, resort hotels and other institutions was obtained for Armenia. However, the USSR State Statistics Committee has indicated Armenia had 192 sanitoriums and other rest facilities, capable of housing 29,400 people in 1990. The list didn't include Pioneer camps. Most NGOS who have looked at the housing situation in Armenia say that most, if not all, of that shelter is now occupied by refugees. According to ICVA, SARA has indicated "all available and all possible temporary housing facilities" are in use.

### *Institutional and Managerial Capacity*

The State Administration for Refugees Affairs has the overall, day-to-day responsibility for refugees in Armenia. SARA cooperates with relevant ministries, their departments and regional city councils, which also have some responsibility for refugees. The Council of Ministers determines whether refugee will have access to the SARA's services and to the health, educational and social services available at the regional and local level.

Civil Defense undoubtedly has had some experience in meeting emergency shelter needs, particularly during the 1988 earthquake.

Several observers commented that most government officials were intelligent and well-intentioned but lacked administrative experience. (Officials from the Soviet period in Armenia have been replaced.)

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<sup>4</sup> Some information was difficult to obtain because the USAID mission in Yerevan denied access to Armenian government officials.

### **Assistance From Other Donors**

The U.S. State Department's Bureau of Refugee Programs has given the American Red Cross, in conjunction with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, a \$2 million grant to provide supplementary food and emergency shelter to approximately 15,000 Armenian refugee families. The initial proposal called for 1,194 five-person tents to be distributed to families without shelter, at a cost of \$265 a tent, or \$316,410 total. Also budgeted was \$30,000 for shipping tents from storage in Rotterdam, if necessary. However, since then, the Red Cross has amended its shelter proposal. Instead of providing tents, the Red Cross plans to winterize some of the uncompleted buildings in Armenia. Money will be used to provide plastic sheeting and other materials to make building habitable. In addition, some money may be used on small stoves for heating. No exact figures were available for that project.

The Red Cross was also looking into the cost of finishing some of the uncompleted structures for refugees to live in, but money from the Bureau of Refugee Programs apparently cannot be spent that way. The Red Cross had identified 67,468 square meters of unfinished housing in five areas of Armenia that could be completed at a cost of \$7,008,719. Of that price, \$630,785 would go to salaries; \$5,817,237 to materials; and \$560,698 to other expenses. The structures ranged from two percent completed to 35 percent. When completed, the structures could house 4,503 people.

Representatives from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees had initially requested funds for emergency shelter in Armenia, but because of financial limitations, only \$70,000 has been allocated for winterizing unfinished structures.

In addition, several other organizations, including the Armenian Relief Society and the Armenian Assembly of American, have been involved in providing permanent housing in the earthquake area.

Several other organizations are operating out of Armenia, primarily providing food and medicine. They include the Armenian Red Cross, Gutium Benevolent Union, Medicins Sans Frontiers/Belgium, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Federation of the Red Cross, CARE, Joint (Jewish Distribution Committee) and the Armenian Assembly of America, among others.

## Azerbaijan

### In Brief

Azerbaijan is one of the Transcaucasian republics, but it seems like an extension of Central Asia, which it faces across the Caspian Sea. Azeris, like most of the residents of Central Asia, are a Turkic people who speak a Turkic dialect.

However, an enclave of Armenians exists within Azerbaijan. That enclave is the autonomous republic of Nagorno-Karabakh, and since 1988, the republic has been trying to break away from Azerbaijan. The ensuing battle became the first major ethnic conflict in the Soviet Union.

The conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh — with its large-scale movement of people — has had a major impact on Azerbaijan. Unemployment is at an all time high, housing is scarce, the social welfare system is strained and the government is encountering many budget problems in dealing with refugees. In addition, the climate of violence has discouraged foreign investment in a country that is potentially one of the richest in the former Soviet Union.

Azerbaijan has several existing or potential scenarios that could exacerbate existing housing problems. But Nagorno-Karabakh is far and away the most serious:

- An estimated 190,000 Azeris left Armenia after the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh escalated into violence. In addition, 150,000 Azeris living in Nagorno-Karabakh, in nearby areas or near the Armenian border have also been displaced by the fighting.

This problem is, however, complicated by two other refugee situations. Nearly 50,000 Meskhetian Turks have arrived in Azerbaijan after having been involved in ethnic conflict in Uzbekistan's Fergana Valley. In addition, some 7,000 to 8,000 Azeri refugees have returned to Azerbaijan from other parts of the Soviet Union, most of them fleeing the fighting in Georgia.

# Azerbaijan

## INTRODUCTION

### Topography and Climate

Azerbaijan comprises 86,600 square kilometers — about the size of Austria. Although it is one of the Transcaucasian republics, it seems like an extension of Central Asia, which it faces across the Caspian Sea. On its other borders are Russia to the north, Georgia and Armenia to the west and Iran to the south.

Joseph Stalin drew the boundary lines of Azerbaijan in such a way that a small portion of it — the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic — is separated from the rest of the country. (The high, semi-desert area is sandwiched between Armenia and Iran, less than 40 kilometers from Azerbaijan; Nakhichevan also touches a small part of Turkey. The republic's population is primarily Azeri with a small Kurdish minority.) Stalin also gave Azerbaijan the autonomous *oblast* of Nagorno-Karabakh, a mountainous enclave just inside Azerbaijan's borders primarily populated by Armenians. Currently, Azerbaijan is fighting a war with the residents of Nagorno-Karabakh, who want independence.

Azerbaijan is divided into six *oblasts* (regions), 117 *rayons* (boroughs) and 96 cities.

The topography of Azerbaijan is a mixture of highlands and lowlands. The Caucasus stretch from the Black Sea coast across much of Azerbaijan, stopping just short of the capital, Baku, on the Caspian Sea. The Lesser Caucasus spread from Georgia and Armenia into western Azerbaijan. However, steppe covers more than half the republic. Sixteen percent of the land is arable.

The country also lies within an earthquake zone that extends from the Crimea to the Caspian Sea.

Temperatures in winter range between 10 degrees Fahrenheit and 25 degrees Fahrenheit. The summertime averages are higher, but the republic's mountainous regions remain fairly cool year-round. Baku has mostly sunny and arid weather, though gale-force coastal winds called *khazri* occasionally strike the coast.

### Demographics

Azerbaijan's estimated population in 1990 was just over 7.1 million people. The bulk of the population — 83 percent — is Azeri. Russians make up six percent. The rest is a combination of Meskhetian Turks, Jews, Ukrainians and Tatars, among others. Most of the population is Shiia Moslem.

Azerbaijan is the sixth most populated republic of the former Soviet Union. The country, which is 54 percent urban, has a density of 214 inhabitants per square mile. A quarter of Azerbaijan's population lives in the capital, Baku, which has 1.8 million residents.

### **Current Housing Situation**

Azerbaijan has long had a housing shortage, but until the recent influx of refugees and displaced persons, its problem was not as bad as that in the rest of the Soviet Union. Because Azerbaijan was an oil-producing republic, a significant amount of housing was built during the oil boom. When oil exploration moved offshore, the rate of exploration slowed, and the housing supply began to catch up with demand.

The building season in Azerbaijan lasts year round in most areas: however, in mountainous regions, such as Nagorno-Karabakh, the season is much shorter.

## DISASTER SCENARIOS

Azerbaijan has several existing or potential scenarios that could lead — or have led — to serious housing problems:

- An estimated 190,000 Azeris living in Armenia have left that country since 1988, after the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh escalated into violence. Also displaced by the fighting were 150,000 Azeris living in Nagorno-Karabakh and in other areas just outside the enclave or near the Armenian border — particularly in the strip of land called the Lachin Corridor.
- In 1989, fighting broke out in Uzbekistan's Fergana Valley between Uzbeks and Meskhetian Turks, a group of people Stalin deported from Georgia during World War II. Tens of thousands of Meskhetians were evacuated from Uzbekistan following the riots. Approximately 25,000 were taken directly to Azerbaijan. The rest were initially distributed among various communities in Russia, but many have since chosen to move to Azerbaijan.
- Since 1991, 7,000 to 8,000 Azeri refugees have returned to Azerbaijan from other parts of the Soviet Union, most of them fleeing the fighting in Georgia. While the number is currently small, the government is worried that ethnic conflict in other parts of the former Soviet Union will send large numbers of Azeri expatriates home.
- Azerbaijan lies in the earthquake zone that stretches from the Crimea to the Caspian Sea. Additionally, the oil drilling in the country has increased the seismicity. On the other hand, earthquake destruction in Azerbaijan might be minimized by the fact that many of the buildings in Baku, Azerbaijan's most densely populated area, are only a few stories high and solidly built.

In addition, like other republics in the southern part of the former Soviet Union, Azerbaijan received some industrial facilities, particularly petrochemical facilities, in a decentralization effort after World War II. Industrial accidents are a possibility, especially in earthquake areas.

### **Conflict Over Nagorno-Karabakh**

Nagorno-Karabakh, an autonomous region within the republic of Azerbaijan, was the site of the first major ethnic conflict in the Soviet Union. When the conflict began in 1988, four-fifths of the region's population were Armenian Christians; the rest were Azeri Muslims. The conflict has produced a large number of refugees and displaced persons on both sides.

The roots of the present-day conflict go back many generations and derive from ethnic, religious and linguistic differences between Azeris and Armenians. The two ethnic groups fought twice in the early part of the 20th century — in 1905 and 1918 — over Nagorno-

Karabakh and other contested regions. Although Nagorno-Karabakh is an enclave within Azerbaijan, it is separated from Armenia only by a four kilometer-wide strip. In 1921, when Stalin gave the region to Azerbaijan, its population was 95 percent Armenian. But Azerbaijan claims Azeris dominated the area through the 18th century; Armenians arrived, as refugees from Persia, only in the 19th century.

Tensions were largely kept in check during the Soviet period, but with the dismantling of power in the USSR, nationalist revivals emerged and contributed in large part to the current conflict. (The communist governments in Moscow and Baku had prohibited Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh from building their churches and educating their children in the Armenian language. Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh resented Moscow, the government of Azerbaijan and, by extension, the Azeris living in the enclave.)

Over the years, the Armenians never gave up hope of joining the enclave to Armenia. In 1965, 100,000 people demonstrated in Yerevan for annexation of the territory, and 45,000 Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh petitioned the Soviet Council of Ministers in Moscow, seeking unification. Yerevan became more active in Nagorno-Karabakh in 1986 after a number of its vineyards were plowed under and thousands of residents became unemployed during Mikhail Gorbachev's anti-alcohol campaign.

In December 1987, a Gorbachev advisor hinted that Moscow was prepared to give control of the enclave to Armenia, but the Azerbaijani leadership warned that doing so would ignite Central Asia. Soviet officials, fearful that changing the status of one province would reopen other territorial disputes and begin unraveling the union, convinced Gorbachev to shelve further discussions of the matter.

The Armenians felt betrayed. In early 1988, massive demonstrations were staged in Yerevan and Stepanakert, the capital of Nagorno-Karabakh, in favor of annexing the territory to Armenia. Azeris alleged at that time that they were being pushed out of Stepanakert and other Armenian-dominated towns in the *oblast*. The conflict turned violent when two Azeri youths were killed during a protest march leaving Agdam, a town just outside Nagorno-Karabakh. Most people in Azerbaijan believe the two were killed by Armenians, although the Armenians claim it was the Soviet militia. The reaction to the shooting was swift, and pressure on Azeris to leave Armenia and on Armenians to leave Azerbaijan increased significantly.

On February 20, the Nagorno-Karabakh parliament, which had an Armenian majority, passed a resolution attaching the region to Armenia. The Azeris regarded the vote as a challenge to their territorial integrity and a threat to the Azeri population in the enclave. Within days, ethnic tensions developed into mob violence. In Sumgait, a town 30 kilometers north of Baku, a mob killed approximately 50 Armenians. The militia and security forces stood by, failing to intervene to protect the victims. At that point, Armenians began to exit Azerbaijan en masse.

The arrival of refugees in Yerevan escalated tension in Armenia. Discrimination increased, and the Azeris began to evacuate their women, children and old people to Azerbaijan in growing numbers. By the end of the year, almost all Azeris had left Armenia. People were killed during the evacuation, but the number is in dispute.

While this population exchange was taking place, violence escalated along the border. Mobs killed dozens of Armenians in the town of Ganga, and in August 1989, a bus carrying Azeris near Tbilisi was destroyed by a bomb placed on the bus by Armenian militants.

Fighting escalated in the enclave and occasionally spread to the cities outside. In January 1990, mobs killed between 60 and 100 Armenians in Baku. Again, the militia and Soviet forces in the area remained in their barracks until the violence was over and only then offered to assist the remaining Armenians in leaving.

In April and May 1991, the Soviet Army, with help from security units of the Azerbaijan Ministry of the Interior, began deporting Armenians from some of the predominately Azeri villages in Nagorno-Karabakh. When the Armenians resisted, the Soviet military opened fire. Some Armenians were killed and their houses and possessions destroyed.

Following the abortive August 1991 *putsch* in Moscow, the Soviet Army was ordered to remain neutral. It was soon apparent that the Soviet Union was falling apart, and that the newly emerging Commonwealth of Independent States would not have sufficient clout to solve the problems between the two countries. The Armenian community in Nagorno-Karabakh and in the adjacent Shahumian *rayon* in Azerbaijan declared their independence and announced the establishment of the independent republic of Nagorno-Karabakh. In response, the national assembly of Azerbaijan adopted a resolution canceling the autonomy of the region and placing it under direct rule.

Fighting again escalated within the enclave, and in February 1992, Armenian militants massacred at least 100 Azeris at the village of Khojaly and captured a large number of villagers to hold as hostage. This in turn escalated hostage-taking by the Azeris to use in prisoner exchanges and led to another wave of violence against the remaining Armenians in Baku.

The political turmoil in Azerbaijan in May 1992 affected the Nagorno-Karabakh situation. Azerbaijan's former president, Ayaz N. Mutalibov, who had been toppled two months earlier by demonstrations of angry nationalists and anti-communists, was restored to power by the Azerbaijan Parliament and then toppled again. Armenian forces took advantage of the political chaos, launching an assault that succeeded in driving the last Azeris out of Nagorno-Karabakh and establishing the Lachin Corridor, a land bridge to the enclave. An estimated 30,000 Azeris were displaced as a result.

Azerbaijan mounted a major counteroffensive, and by summer, it had gained control of much of the northern part of the enclave. In June, after Azeri troops took Shahumian, Armenians were forced to leave. Since July 1992, 40,000 Armenians from Martakert region were displaced, with the majority of them going to Stepanakert.

Reports in the fall of 1992 indicated the war was intensifying in the border areas between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and civilian casualties were mounting — a development that could increase the number of Armenian displaced persons.

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has resulted in more than 500,000 people being displaced on both sides; the death toll stands at over 2,000.

## **Meskhetian Turks**

In 1944, more than 100,000 Meskhetians from Georgia were herded into livestock wagons and exiled to Central Asia during a 24-hour period; some 17,000 of them died during the next four months. In 1989, the Soviet government lifted the restrictions keeping them from going home, but Georgian officials objected to their return. The following year, Zviad Gamsakhurdia's Round Table won election on a platform that included the declaration: "There is no room for Turks in Georgia."

In June 1989, rioting broke out in the market in Fergana, a town in the Uzbek part of the Fergana Valley, between Uzbeks and Meskhetian Turks. Five people were killed in the Uzbekistan rioting. As a result of the disturbances, the Russian army evacuated 30,000 Meskhetian Turks from Uzbekistan and another 15,000 or so quickly moved out of other parts of the country. Approximately 25,000 were evacuated directly to Azerbaijan. The rest were initially distributed among various communities in Russia, but most of them have since chosen to move to Azerbaijan. They have largely settled in the rural areas in the south and central part of Azerbaijan, with large concentrations in Saavili and Sabirabat; between 7,000 and 8,000 people live in each community.

A number of Meskhetian Turks have found employment on the collective farms. Since they are being paid wages, the only assistance they receive from the government is free shelter until their housing is completed. But by mid-April 1992, less than half had been permanently housed in new buildings. Many are still living in schools and other public buildings.

Most Meskhetian Turks are Sunnis while the majority of Azeris are Shia; nevertheless, the Turks were quickly absorbed into their new communities.

## **Azeri From Other Areas**

Since 1991, 7,000 to 8,000 Azeri refugees have returned to the country from other parts of the Soviet Union. Most of them fled the fighting in the South Ossetian area of Georgia. While the number is relatively small, the government is worried that it could receive large numbers of refugees in the future. For example, there are 300,000 Azeris still living in Georgia and one million in Russia, many of them in troubled areas.

In the current atmosphere of rising nationalism, some Azeri leaders have called for expatriates to return, but most who have come back so far have been fleeing trouble in the areas where they were living. Those advocating voluntary returns clearly hope people will bring resources with them rather than arrive as penniless refugees.

Refugees from Georgia have been dispersed on collective farms in the north, though up to 40 percent have moved to Baku. Many are still living in schools and public buildings in the rural towns and collective farms.

## **Earthquakes**

Azerbaijan lies in the earthquake zone that stretches from Crimea across the Caucasus to the Caspian Sea and on into Central Asia. Oil drilling in fault zones can increase the area's seismicity because it changes the subterranean structure, at least in the short term. However, most of the buildings in Azerbaijan are solidly constructed, with many of them having been

erected in the late Victorian or early Edwardian periods. There are a few high-rise structures in Baku, but even there, the majority of the structures are only a few stories high. In case an earthquake strikes the country, the building of most concern will be those the Soviets built from the 1960s on.

### **Current Refugee Situation**

In the aftermath of the February 1988 disturbances, more than 190,000 refugees left Armenia and returned to Azerbaijan. (Prior to 1988, approximately 100,000 people had left Armenia for Azerbaijan because of Armenian restrictions on the use of the Azeri language, difficulties in finding appropriate schools and constraints on their religion. The people who entered the country before 1988 are not considered refugees, but their presence created a large housing shortage that was exacerbated by the arrival of the refugees from 1988 on.)

Most of the refugees from Armenia settled in the Baku area. The majority of those people found places to live, some of them taking housing abandoned by Armenian families fleeing Azerbaijan. (The government has officially discouraged that practice, saying it wanted to hold the homes for people in case they returned.) Within Baku there is substantial resentment against the Azeris from Armenia, who are blamed for the rising crime rate as well as the housing crisis.

In addition, approximately 50,000 people have been displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh; an additional 100,000 have fled the territory adjoining Armenia and the strip of land between Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, including the 30,000 displaced from the Lachin Corridor. Most, but not all, displaced persons were evacuated to villages in what the Azeris call the Karabakh Valley, an area that stretches roughly 50 kilometers from the borders of Nagorno-Karabakh. The center for coordination of political, military and relief activities is the city of Agdam, which lies at the base of the mountains surrounded by a crescent of hills occupied by Armenian insurgents.

In the spring of 1992, 65 percent of those displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh or nearby were living with family and friends in 35 villages around the base of the mountain range and within 50 kilometers of the enclave. Approximately 40,000 displaced persons were living in sanitoriums and pioneer camps. Women, children and old men occupy most of the refugee centers in Baku and areas distant from the affected area — the dependents of many militiamen have been evacuated to those centers for safekeeping. In a few cases, schools and other public buildings have been turned into refugee holding centers. About 6,000 people live in government facilities funded by the government's reserve fund — money raised from oil revenues that can be used for disasters and other contingencies. The maximum number of people in one facility is 1,500. One special site for the displaced has been established in the town of Naftalan. (Most of the refugees from Khojaly are there.) In the refugee center at Naftalan, most families have remained intact. The government has created a special district comprising most of the affected area impacted by the movement of refugees. It encompasses 40 *rayons*.

The people in the most difficult straits are 20,000 people displaced when the Armenians established the Lachin Corridor. They are living on 35,000 hectares just below the corridor; they also lack easy access to water. Many are shepherders who had wintered their herds in the

area before the conflict began. (Another 10,000 from the Lachin Corridor have found housing.) The Azerbaijan government had initially been reluctant to provide better housing for the people living in the fields, arguing that they would soon return to their villages. However, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has agreed to provide Azerbaijan with approximately 300 housing units, each holding two families. Most of the units will go to the people displaced from the Lachin Corridor. Cost of the housing is budgeted at \$285,000; an additional \$130,000 will go to plastic sheeting to winterize other structures.

Overall, the program of assistance for the Nagorno-Karabakh refugees and displaced persons is rational and well organized. Some families, however, are concerned that they are being encouraged to stay in the area, especially those that are still within artillery and rocket range of the Armenian positions.<sup>5</sup>

### **Emergency Shelter**

The housing and shelter situation is clearly critical.

Until the summer of 1992, when the Armenians established the Lachin Corridor, all refugees and displaced persons were living in permanent buildings. No one was living in makeshift shelters or in tents, although many people have been living in schools and other buildings for up to three years. That is no longer the case.

In the spring of 1992, most officials indicated that sanitoriums in Azerbaijan were filled to capacity with refugees and displaced persons. However, several of the facilities visited by a U.S. assessment team at that time had additional space, and other facilities may have been available. It was estimated then that another 15,000 to 20,000 families might be accommodated in such structures. However, after the Lachin displacements, Azerbaijan may have run out of permanent housing space and need to establish temporary facilities. In preparation for this, the government in April 1992 requested 1,500 family-size tents as a contingency reserve. (The government can probably acquire tents more cheaply from the CIS military than the U.S. government can provide them.) Because some refugees are currently housed in schools, those institutions cannot fulfill their original functions.

Although Azerbaijan is not likely to see many more displaced persons from or near Nagorno-Karabakh, temporary shelter will remain a problem: refugees and displaced persons are not vacating temporary shelters since permanent housing is not being built for them. In addition, some people displaced from the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic could arrive in Azerbaijan if the situation there heats up.

Today, permanent housing is clearly a major need. The government estimates that 122,000 refugee families need housing. Priority is being given to the 11,000 families from Armenia and Central Asia who are still living in sanitoriums or other public facilities. The State Refugee Commission has a small budget and is currently building houses with its own construction organization. The budget for 1992 is 583 million rubles, enough for homes for 1,200 families. (Provision of housing and shelter is the largest single budget item at the Refugee

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<sup>5</sup> According to press reports, when people tried to leave the area in the aftermath of the attack on Hajali, the police established barricades on the roads and prevented them from leaving the zone.

Commission, and the chairman of the commission estimates that 80 percent of the work of the group is focused on housing issues.)

But the provision of housing has been complicated by shortages of building materials, lack of skilled labor and confusion about government policy in the housing sector, especially in light of plans to privatize much of the country's housing production. The Refugee Commission has asked for technical assistance to help formulate housing policy and to develop ways of involving the private sector, for financial support for housing construction and for material aid to lower the cost of construction and permit construction activity to resume.

Other than the rate of influx and the number of new refugees, the factors that influence the spaces available in sanitoriums and other government facilities are:

- The number of families willing to provide shelter to the new refugees.
- The rate that new housing can be provided.

## **Government's Ability to Respond**

### *Physical Resources*

According to the USSR State Statistics Committee, Azerbaijan had 240 sanitoriums and other rest facilities, capable of housing some 58,000 people. The committee's list doesn't include Pioneer camps. The government of Azerbaijan, however, has few, if any, Pioneer camps, sanitoriums or other resort facilities remaining in which to house refugees and displaced persons. Although the shelter market is saturated, the need may not grow substantially larger. The refugee flow from Armenia is over; almost all Azeris have been displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh. Fighting in the regions near Nagorno-Karabakh may displace additional groups of people, but their numbers will not be large.

However, Azerbaijan has the financial resources from its large oil reserves to be able to eventually resolve the housing shortage.

### *Institutional and Managerial Capacity*

The government agency in charge of the refugee problem is the State Commission for Refugees. The commission coordinates assistance, formulates policy, provides humanitarian aid that falls outside the purview of the normal line ministries and resettles refugees. However, its biggest job is finding housing for refugees and displaced persons. Every district has a representative on the state commission; and in the districts with large populations of refugees, the commission has established offices with a fairly large staff. Approximately 20 people, for example, work in the Agdam office.

The commission in Azerbaijan is one of the better refugee assistance groups in the former Soviet Union.

Civil Defense also plays a major role in forward staging areas.

In addition, several local non-governmental organizations are emerging in Azerbaijan, and the Azerbaijan Red Crescent is working closely with the International Committee of the Red

Cross (ICRC), attempting to create a broader role for itself rather than acting as an extension of the social protection system.

#### **Assistance From Other Donors**

The U.S. government, the European Community, the government of Turkey, the government of Iran and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies have provided assistance to Azerbaijan, primarily food and medical supplies. Only a small number of international NGOs — including the International Committee of the Red Cross, Medecins Sans Frontieres of Belgium, Medecins du Monde and World Serv — have been working in Azerbaijan. The services provided are predominantly in the medical and health sector.

Only UNHCR appears to be providing emergency shelter assistance.

## Kyrgyzstan

### In Brief

Kyrgyzstan is a mountainous republic populated by formerly nomadic people. Approximately 60 percent of the country's 2.4 million ethnic Kyrgyz reside in rural areas, principally in the mountains, and raise livestock. The remaining 40 percent live in urban industrial areas, where they are generally employed in low-paying jobs.

One current disaster has already created a need for emergency shelter; a potential one could exacerbate the situation:

- The country falls within the earthquake zone that includes the territory that begins in Crimea and extends through Central Asia. Two earthquakes in 1992, plus a flood and landslide, have left 60,000 people homeless.
- Kyrgyz are essentially an underclass in their own country, faring less well than ethnic Uzbeks, who primarily farm the fertile areas Kyrgyzstan's Fergana Valley, or the ethnic Russians, who are employed in technical jobs. Ethnic Kyrgyz are showing signs of resentment that they cannot compete on an equal footing with other ethnic groups in the society. The souring economy will only exacerbate those differences.

On a positive note, Kyrgyzstan elected a pro-democracy candidate, the physicist Askar Akayev, as president in 1990, the only country in Central Asia to have done so. *Time* magazine gives the country a "C" in success at achieving reform and a "C" in political stability. That places it in the middle of the Central Asian countries in terms of stability and reform.

# Kyrgyzstan

## INTRODUCTION

### Topography and Climate

Kyrgyzstan is a largely mountainous republic in Central Asia, comprising 198,500 square kilometers, or one percent of the former Soviet Union. Kazakhstan borders it on the north and northeast, Uzbekistan on the northwest, Tajikistan on the southwest and China on the south and southeast. Bishkek, formerly called Frunze, is Kyrgyzstan's capital.

Only seven percent of the territory is arable, and 72 percent of the arable land is irrigated. However, it is possible that substantial amounts of oil may be found in Kyrgyzstan since the country borders huge identified oil reserves in China and Kazakhstan.

The country is divided into six *oblasts* — Osh, Jallalabad, Narin, Tallas, Ishikur and Chuskh.

Temperatures in Kyrgyzstan's low desert range from an average of 0.5 degrees Fahrenheit in the winter to 82 degrees Fahrenheit in the summer; the high deserts and mountains can be considerably cooler. Light snows begin to fall in some mountainous areas in August, and roads are closed much of the winter because of the snow. In December and January temperatures can drop as low as minus 40 degrees Fahrenheit in mountain areas.

Rainfall averages range from 7.1 inches in the east to 30 to 40 inches in the Fergana and Kyrgyz mountains and 4 to 20 inches in the valleys.

### Demographics

The population of Kyrgyzstan totals 4.6 million people — divided into more than 80 ethnic groups. Some 52 percent of the population is ethnic Kyrgyz, 21 percent is Russian, and 13 percent is Uzbek; the rest are Germans, Ukrainians, Tatars and other ethnic groups. Kazakhs, Tajiks, Azeris, Belarussians, Koreans, Turks, Jews, and others comprise less than one percent each. Ethnic Russians and ethnic Germans are leaving the republic, in part due to the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Approximately 60 percent of the 2.4 million ethnic Kyrgyz in Kyrgyzstan reside in rural areas, principally in the mountains, and raise livestock. The remaining 40 percent live in urban industrial areas, where they are generally employed as low-skilled labor in construction and manufacturing and in low-paying jobs in education and the arts. Kyrgyz urbanization is a relatively recent phenomenon. Kyrgyz moved into the cities in the 1970s after Moscow dictated a rapid increase in the size of sheep herds, which resulted in the equally rapid depletion of pasture lands. This forced many younger Kyrgyz to abandon their homelands and, disdaining cultivation in the lowlands, to seek their livelihoods in the cities.

The population density is 22 people per square kilometer, with 1.7 million people living in urban areas. The largest city is Bishkek, with more than 600,000 people.

Most of the population is Moslem, although they are recent converts to the faith.

### **Current Housing Situation**

Kyrgyzstan has suffered the usual Soviet housing shortage. In fact, the only houses currently being built are by people who can afford to build their own. The Construction Ministry is apparently out of funds, and building materials can be costly and scarce. Some people, fed up with the government's inability to make land available for housing, began to build on the outskirts of Bishkek. This led to a conflict with the government, but officials finally gave in.

The building season in the lower elevations of Kyrgyzstan lasts all year. In the mountainous areas, the season is restricted to a period lasting from May to September.

## DISASTER SCENARIOS

Kyrgyzstan has two potential disaster scenarios that could lead to the need for emergency shelter assistance:

- The country falls within the earthquake zone that includes the territory beginning in Crimea and extending through Central Asia. Two earthquakes in 1992, plus a flood and landslide, have left 60,000 people homeless.
- Kyrgyz are essentially an underclass in their own country, faring less well than ethnic Uzbeks, who farm the fertile areas of the Fergana Valley, or the ethnic Russians, who are employed in technical jobs. Ethnic Kyrgyz are showing signs of resentment that they cannot compete on an equal footing with other ethnic groups in the society. The souring economy will only exacerbate those differences and could lead to ethnic conflict.

### Earthquakes

Kyrgyzstan is an earthquake-prone republic. It lies in a seismic zone that stretches from Crimea through Central Asia.

On August 19, 1992, an earthquake measuring 7.5 on the Richter scale occurred in eastern and central Kyrgyzstan. Although the epicenter was in a fairly remote and mountainous region 120 kilometers southwest of Bishkek, the earthquake caused extensive damage to agriculture, livestock and infrastructure. The areas most heavily affected were the Toktogul *rayon* of Djalal-Abad *oblast*, the Suusamyr Valley and some areas of Naryn *oblast*. By August 23, the extent of the destruction was estimated at 10.8 billion rubles, of which 3.1 billion rubles was for reconstruction. Sections of the Bishkek-Osh highway were severely damaged, both power and communication lines were destroyed and houses, schools, hospitals and community medical clinics were damaged, some beyond repair.

The August earthquake was not the first one to hit Kyrgyzstan in 1992. Between May and July of 1992 the regions of Djalal-Abad and Osh were hit by an earthquake as well as a flood and landslides. The government of Kyrgyzstan has estimated the damages of these earlier disasters at 7 billion rubles, of which 4.5 billion is for reconstruction of housing.

The government reported damages in the May to July disasters at 17,665 houses, 5,961 of them destroyed; 500 shepherd's houses and livestock facilities; 48 schools; 22 kindergartens; 20 hospitals; 51,440 hectares of crops; 493 kilometers of power lines; and 1,370 kilometers of communication lines. The August earthquake damaged an additional 16,020 houses and destroyed another 10,846.

### Ethnic Conflict

Although some Kyrgyz insist the country has little potential for displaced persons or refugees due to ethnic or civil conflict, other observers think Kyrgyzstan could see major problems in the not-too-distant future.

A report in the spring of 1992 from the U.S. government's Newly Independent States Task Force indicated there is significant tension among the main ethnic groups. Ethnic Uzbeks, who number about 580,000, live almost entirely in the two southeastern *oblasts* of Osh and Jallalabad, where they make up between 40 and 50 percent of the population. The Uzbeks are primarily engaged in agriculture but, unlike the Kyrgyz, are generally cultivators rather than pastoralists and live in the fertile valleys. Many left Uzbekistan after Moscow dictated increasing cultivation of cotton in Osh and Jallalabad, which occurred about the same time the Kyrgyz were moving from the mountainous areas of those *oblasts* to the cities.

Kyrgyz are essentially an underclass in their own country, faring less well than ethnic Uzbeks or the ethnic Russians, who are employed in technical jobs. Ethnic Kyrgyz are showing signs of resentment that they cannot compete on an equal footing with other ethnic groups in the society. The souring economy will only exacerbate those differences.

In fact, it already had. Privatization of one state farm in Osh *oblast* led to armed ethnic conflict in June 1990. Ethnic Kyrgyz protested that land distributions in the area had favored ethnic Uzbeks. In response, party leaders too hastily overruled the existing allocations, thereby enraging the Uzbek community. Open conflict between the two communities raged for five days, resulting in as many as 1,000 deaths.

### **Emergency Shelter**

By August 27, the government estimated the number of people without shelter at 60,000.

The shelter needs for populations affected by the August 19 earthquake will become increasingly urgent as winter approaches. In the hardest hit area, the Toktogul region, snows typically begin no later than mid-October and last until March. For much of the winter roads are closed as snows reach depths of two meters. As of late August, temperatures were already cooling at higher altitudes such as Toktogul, and light snows were reported at some shepherd houses. In December and January temperatures can drop as low as minus 40 degrees Fahrenheit. By October, the government was expressing some concern about shelter for the winter.

The destruction of roads into the affected areas and the continued inflation of the price of fuel, as it becomes increasingly scarce, will make transportation costs for goods into the region high, once roads reopen. The few weeks between the repair of roads and the arrival of heavy snows will permit the transport of only the most needed materials, at possibly prohibitive prices.

### **Government's Ability to Respond**

#### *Physical Resources*

According to the USSR State Statistics Committee, Kyrgyzstan has 270 resort facilities with beds for 71,000 people, not including Pioneer camps. (Figures from the government of Kyrgyzstan break down somewhat differently, providing a total of 47,114 rest spaces.) In addition, figures from the government indicate the republic has 73 recreational camps for children, sleeping 14,800 people.

The CES typically responds to emergencies, such as the August earthquake, with tents, yurts (the traditional nomad shelter consisting of a wooden frame covered with heavy felt) or shepherd houses (a modern version of the yurt that uses a denim cover over a metal frame) to provide immediate shelter for those most in need. The CES also provides building materials as quickly as possible to begin reconstruction.

Except in severe winter conditions, the CES prefers to forego tents and yurts and provide building materials instead. (It sees every destroyed building as an opportunity to rebuild an earthquake-resistant structure.) The CES considers non-winterized tents to be virtually worthless; it sees winterized tents and yurts as necessary evils to be used in the absence of building materials or transportation. Although CES staff members believe the distribution of emergency shelter slows the reconstruction process, they often find they have little choice other than to deliver the tents and yurts donated by neighboring countries, such as Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Russia.

The CES's shelter-to-home strategy is hampered by the shortage of materials, especially bricks and timber; the high price of available materials, such as cement and iron reinforcement bars; and rapidly increasing transportation costs. Older adobe homes are repaired with adobe blocks, but those that have been completely destroyed are replaced with kiln-fired bricks whenever possible.

The CES's current strategy for improving reconstruction efforts is twofold. First, it hopes to use stabilized-brick technology on a large scale. Second, until that can happen, it plans to buy as many prefabricated houses as possible from Russia. The prefabs alleviate some of the demand on building materials, they withstand earthquakes better than the current adobe houses and they can be erected quickly. Additionally, the Russian government is willing to give the Kyrgyz government favorable loans for buying the houses.

The average prefab is 60 square meters and can house a family of five to eight people. In August 1992, just after an earthquake hit Kyrgyzstan, a prefab home cost between 200,000 and 300,000 rubles. At that time, there were large stocks of prefabs to be bought. The Kyrgyz government sells the prefabs to individual families, providing them with an interest-free loan. As the family pays off its house loan, the Kyrgyz government repays the loans from the Russian government.

The CES wants to change the type of construction used to build houses and community buildings. CES staff members think that stabilized-block machines may be the answer to their housing shortages since the cost of cement is high, as is the cost of transporting the materials to remote regions. The CES would like the United States to give Kyrgyzstan stabilized-block equipment that uses local materials. It hopes to place several block-making machines around the country to provide material for earthquake-resistant housing and community buildings. The Institute of Seismology and the Institute of Seismic Engineering have developed five experimental brick-making machines which use little cement. However, the machine's production capacity is reported to be limited by its speed and the quality of the bricks. (The CES was particularly interested in a Belgian brick machine that it hoped to use as a model for the Kyrgyzstan machines. A similar machine in Kazakhstan produces three million blocks a year, enough for 240 houses, and costs approximately US\$300,000.)

A number of people believe the block-making machines are as yet unproven. Additionally, the best construction material — hollow concrete blocks — is inappropriate in Kyrgyzstan because of the high cost of cement.

### *Institutional and Managerial Capacity*

All emergency and reconstruction efforts in the country are coordinated by the Committee for Emergency Situations (CES). The committee appears adequately staffed and efficiently managed. Many people in Kyrgyzstan consider it the most effective and responsive government agency involved in emergency or humanitarian aid. The consensus in Bishkek is that aid channeled through the CES is less subject to the bureaucratic roadblocks and lack of cooperation that seems to characterize the Commission on Humanitarian Assistance.

The CES is a permanent office; it works year round on disaster preparedness and has been involved in the ongoing response to emergency situations. Although Kyrgyzstan's prime minister heads the commission during the height of emergencies, it has a full-time director. The director focuses preparedness activities on the development of earthquake-resistant construction, including improved designs and materials for reconstruction of both housing and public buildings.

The CES does a good job in coordinating with both the military and police for emergency response and with other government agencies involved in the construction of earthquake-resistant housing. Discussions with the Institute of Seismology and the Institute of Seismic Engineering indicated that the CES is an office that gets things done and that serves as the focal point, if not always the coordinator, for the various offices that are involved in planning and responding to earthquakes.

### **Assistance From Other Donors**

As of August 27, Kyrgyzstan had received some assistance for the victims of its summer disasters: 600 tents from the Russian government, 500 tents and 100 yurts from the Kazakhstan government, 3,500 cubic meters of timber, 1,200 MT of diesel and 1,200 MT of gasoline. The Russian government had also said it was willing to lend Kyrgyzstan 1.5 billion rubles on favorable terms of credit to purchase 1,500 prefab homes from Russian enterprises. None of the donated tents were winterized.

The U.S. government also provided approximately \$100,000 to purchase approximately 300 yurts. In October 1992, the IFRC was also ordering \$100,000 worth of yurts, to be paid for with donations from the Canadian Red Cross.

# Russia

## In Brief

Russia is the largest republic in the former Soviet Union, in terms of both size and population. Its vastness contains a variety of landscapes and people. It also has a multiplicity of problems that could require emergency shelter response:

- Before the dissolution of the Soviet Union, 25 million Russians were living outside Russia. Many of these ethnic Russians want to return to their homeland. They are concerned about the passage of discriminatory laws, the loss of economic and political power and the rise of Islamic traditions. Some are fleeing ethnic conflicts in such places as Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia, Moldova, Abkhazia and Tajikistan.
- Like czarist Russia before them, the communists had a difficult time exerting control over the people of the Northern Caucasus. In fact, some of them weren't subdued until Stalin deported them to Central Asia during World War II for allegedly collaborating with the Germans. Today, parts of the Northern Caucasus are again talking about breaking away from Russia. One of them, Chechnya, has already declared its independence. Meanwhile two of the groups within the Northern Caucasus, Ingushia and North Ossetia, are at war. To complicate matters, the Cossacks, who had a historical role in the region protecting Russia's borders, have re-emerged.
- Although they reside in the Russian Federation, more than 10 million Russians live in the 20 or so autonomous republics within Russia that constitute the homelands of other indigenous peoples. Two of them, Chechnya and Tatarstan, refused last spring to initial a treaty establishing relationships between the republics and the federal government. Some experts believe that other autonomous republics could also opt for independence — a move that could create problems for the integrity of the Russian Federation and lead to Russians leaving those areas. Tatarstan has been targeted as a potential hot spot.
- Eleven of the 16 remaining Chernobyl-style nuclear reactors are in Russia. The Russian government refuses to shut them down, saying they are necessary to its economy. In addition, a significant number of factories and plants in Russia, many of them out-dated, could have industrial accidents.

# Russia

## INTRODUCTION

### Topography and Climate

The Russian Federation consists of slightly more than 17 million square kilometers — about 77 percent of the total land mass of the former Soviet Union. The country stretches east — from a border with Ukraine, Belarus, Latvia, Estonia, Finland and Norway — to the Pacific Ocean; from the Arctic Ocean in the north, the country drops south to Georgia, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan. Within that vast area is a diverse terrain — tundra, taiga, steppes and mountains. It also includes Europe's longest river (the Volga), the world's deepest lake (Baikal) and the world's largest plain (the West Siberian).

Much of Russia is tundra, a treeless, marshy plain of snow and ice, extending from the Finnish border to the Bering Strait, where it turns south, running along the Pacific coast to the earthquake and volcanic region of northern Kamchatka Peninsula. The taiga — a northern forest expanse of spruce, fir, cedar and larch — covers an area from the Finnish border to the Verkhoyansk Range in northeastern Siberia; it extends south to the southern shores of Lake Baikal. The steppes — treeless, grassy plains — begin at the Carpathian Mountains in western Ukraine and spread across Russia to the northern part of Kazakhstan. The mountainous regions include the Urals, which continue for more than 2,200 kilometers, forming the northern and central boundary between Europe and Asia; the mountains of eastern Siberia and the Far East, especially the volcanic peaks of the Kamchatka Peninsula; and the Northern Caucasus.

Much of Russia's climate resembles that of the most northern parts of North America. Its winters are notoriously long and cold: millions of square kilometers of the country have subfreezing temperatures for half the year, and the northeastern portions of taiga zone routinely register the world's coldest temperatures for inhabited areas. Although temperatures are considerably warmer in the southern parts of Russia in Krasnodar *kray* and along the Black Sea Coast, no part of country has a year-round growing season.

### Demographics

According to the 1989 census, Russia had more than 145 million people, approximately 51 percent of the population of the former Soviet Union. Moscow, its capital, contained almost nine million residents, the largest city in the former Soviet Union. Another 6.7 million people were counted in the region surrounding Moscow. A number of other cities had populations over one million, including St. Petersburg, Nizhny Novgorod, Novosibirsk, Ekaterinburg, Omsk, Chelyabinsk, Perm, Ufa and Rostov-on-Don. Nevertheless, because of the vast stretch of Siberia, Russia has one of the lowest population densities in the former Soviet Union, 8.2 people per square kilometer in the 1980s.

According to the 1989 census, there were just under 120 million Russians in Russia. However, other ethnic groups also inhabited Russia, totaling at least 25 million people. Tatars accounted for more than 5.5 million residents; Ukrainians, almost 4.4 million; Chuvash, 1.8 million; Bashkirs, 1.3 million; Belarussians, 1.2 million; Mordvins, 1.1 million; Germans,

841,000; Kazakhs, 636,000; Jews, 536,000; Armenians, 532,000; Azeris, 337,000; and Moldovans, 172,000. There were also other ethnic groups with smaller numbers of people living in Russia.

### **Current Housing Situation**

Russia's housing situation runs the gamut. In many of the rural areas of Russia, houses lie abandoned. The cities, however, have long waiting lists for housing.

For a number of years, significant numbers of people living in rural areas left their villages for urban areas. Between 1959 and 1979, for example, the agricultural work force in the non-black earth areas of Russia declined by 40 percent because of the migration to cities. As a result, a number of rural areas are virtually empty, while the cities are full. In the rural areas, services tend to be poor and infrastructure needs improvement. However, unlike people in major urban areas, a significant number of rural residents live in private homes. For example, in the town of Gagarin, 180 kilometers from Moscow in Smolenskaya *oblast*, 50 percent of the population lives in private homes.

In Moscow, 360,000 families are on the waiting list to receive housing, a number equal to about 12 percent of the housing units in the city. By the end of 1990, there were 2.9 million housing units in Moscow. More than 90 percent of them were state-owned, with the largest amount — 72 percent — controlled by the municipality. Ministries and enterprises had around 18 percent, while various cooperatives held less than nine percent. Public organizations and private persons owned less than a half percent. Moscow housing provides an average of 17.7 square meters per person — a family of four, on average, lives in a 720-square foot apartment.

Russia's building season is as varied as its climate. Areas near the Black Sea coast have relatively long seasons; Siberia has a short one. However, the Soviet system of prefabricated buildings allows construction to go on all year long in most areas of the country.

## DISASTER SCENARIOS

A number of events are occurring — or could occur — in Russia that could require an emergency housing response:

- Before the dissolution of the Soviet Union, some 25 million Russians were living outside Russia. Many of them — particularly in the Baltic states and Central Asia — want to return to their homeland. They are concerned about the passage of discriminatory laws, the loss of economic and political power and the rise of Islamic traditions. Some of them are fleeing ethnic conflicts in places such as Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia, Moldova, Abkhazia and Tajikistan.
- Like the Russian Empire before them, the communists had a difficult time bringing the Northern Caucasus under their control. In fact, some of the peoples of the Northern Caucasus weren't subdued until Stalin deported them to Siberia and Central Asia during World War II, claiming they had collaborated with the Germans. Today, parts of the Northern Caucasus are again talking about breaking away from Russia. One of them, Chechnya, has already declared independence. Meanwhile two of the groups within the Northern Caucasus, Ingushia and North Ossetia, are warring over land both claim. To complicate matters, the Cossacks, who had a historical role in the region protecting and expanding the Russian borders, have re-emerged.
- Although they reside in the Russian Federation, more than 10 million Russians live in the 20 or so autonomous republics within Russia that constitute the homelands of other indigenous peoples. Two of them, Chechnya and Tatarstan, refused last spring to initial a treaty aimed at establishing relationships between the republics and the federal government. Some experts believe that other autonomous republics could also opt for independence — a move that could create major problems for the integrity of the Russian Federation and lead to Russians leaving those areas. Tatarstan has been targeted as a potential hot spot.
- Eleven of the 16 remaining Chernobyl-style nuclear reactors are in Russia. The Russian government refuses to shut them down, saying they are necessary to its economy at this time. In addition, a significant number of factories and plants in Russia, many of them out-dated, could have industrial accidents.

In addition, Russia faces a full range of natural disasters, including earthquakes in the less-populated areas of the Far East as well as the Northern Caucasus, hurricanes, floods and tornadoes.

## Russian Migrants From the Outlying Republics

Russians make up the largest group of former Soviets living outside their national boundaries. Approximately 25 million Russians — 17.4 percent of the Russian population of the former Soviet Union — live in republics outside Russia. According to 1989 census figures, Ukraine had drawn the greatest number — 11.3 million; Kazakhstan, with 6.2 million, had the second highest figure; Uzbekistan has just under 1.7 million; Belarus had slightly over 1.3 million; and Latvia and Kyrgyzstan each had almost 1 million. Smaller numbers are in each of the other republics.

Almost overnight, many of these people became aliens in the lands in which their families had been living for several generations. Others, however, were relative newcomers. Some of the Russians had migrated to the outlying republics after World War II to take managerial positions or jobs as skilled laborers as the Soviet Union decentralized its industry. But the central government also encouraged the migration of Russians because it believed that ethnic Russians were more likely to follow Moscow's directives. Deteriorating relations between the USSR and China in the 1960s may have accelerated the process, particularly in the east, where Soviet officials feared the local population might support the Chinese. Residents of the Baltic states believe, perhaps correctly, that the Soviets sent Russians to their republics to water down the percentages of local residents in their own countries.

Although many of the Russians living outside Russia migrated to those areas, others inadvertently found themselves living outside their homeland. Some regions formerly in Russia — such as Crimea and northern Kazakhstan — had been heavily populated by Russians since the 19th century, but they were given to non-Russian republics for political or economic reasons.

The Russians often saw themselves as a civilizing force in the outlying republics; they were proud of the modernization they had brought to some of these republics. But they could appear arrogant and privileged. They tended to live apart from the titular residents, frequently had the best-paying jobs in government and industry and rarely learned the local language. (More than ninety percent of the Russians in the five Central Asian republics, for example, cannot speak the local language, but Asians had to speak Russian to function in Soviet society.)

The titular residents in some republics, particularly in Central Asia and the Baltics, resented the people who moved there as a part of the central government's resettlement programs. The titular residents were unhappy with the years of domination by the Soviet government, the colonization of the outlying areas, the exploitation of their raw products and the attempts to Russify the non-Russian republics.

So far, little ethnic violence has been directed against Russians and other Slavs living in the outlying republics.<sup>6</sup> But this could change if anti-Russian sentiment intensifies, as it well

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<sup>6</sup> Uzbekistan is one of the republics, however, where Russians have been involved in ethnic conflict. In 1989, after the Tashkent football team failed to show up for a game in Andijan, fans burned down the homes of 20 or so of the richest people in town, mostly Russians and Armenians. Allegedly, young men in the crowd were carrying in their pockets a list of the town's wealthiest residents. Demographers estimate some 35,000 to 40,000 of Uzbekistan's 1.6 million Russians left the country each year after the Andijan clash, and the number departing has increased since the breakup of the Soviet Union.

In addition, people in Dushanbe say Russians there were attacked during the 1990 Armenian housing riots.

could. (Indigenous residents of the outlying republics often blame the Russians for the sins of the Soviet Union, seeing the two as synonymous; in addition, a number of indigenous residents resent the economic and political power the Russians wielded in their republics.) Russian-speakers, particularly in countries like Tajikistan, are nervous about the possibility of violence being inflicted on them as civil war rages.

The Russians also see dwindling economic and career opportunities for themselves in the outlying republics and fear they will soon lose the power they had held in these areas, if they haven't already done so. They are particularly disturbed about new language laws that require residents to speak the indigenous language to hold certain jobs and/or obtain citizenship. Eleven of the fifteen republics in the former Soviet Union have passed such laws. Russians living in the outlying republics believe that these laws were enacted to take away much of the power they had previously held and to encourage them to leave. (In fact, Russian-speakers living in non-Russian republics consistently report that local residents approach them on the street to ask: "When are you going home?") The two million Russians living in the Baltic states are particularly concerned about language requirements. In Latvia and Estonia, for example, nationalists have limited citizenship to the people and their descendants who lived there before 1940, when Soviet occupation began. Under these plans, Russians could become naturalized citizens, but the process would take several years and require them to speak the local language.

The rise of Islamic traditions in Central Asia also concerns them. Although religious practices were discouraged under the Soviet system, pockets of Muslim resistance remained in Central Asia. Today some 50 to 60 million people in the former Soviet Union are at least nominally Muslim, the fifth largest such population in the world. Some observers think the resurgence of Islamic traditions in Central Asia is the most serious problem facing Russians living outside their homeland. In the Baltics, they say, Russians fear they could lose their jobs. In the republics of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, 3.4 million Russians are afraid they could lose their lives.

In December 1992, the Federal Migration Service was also beginning to be concerned that the six million Russians currently living in Kazakhstan would return. Nothing particularly alarming had occurred to justify that fear, although language issues remain a matter of contention between Kazakhs and Russians. President Nursultan Nazerbaev, who is trying to hold the country together, has proposed upgrading Russian from the language of "inter-ethnic communication" to an "official" language, though inferior to Kazakh. However, according to an article in *The Economist*, the mayor of a provincial town had to resign after she demanded that Russian be made equal to Kazakh; she has since moved to Russia. Russia's Federal Migration Service is worried that it will not be able to handle large numbers of Russians if they decide to follow the mayor's example.

In the fall of 1992, FMS and the State Committee to the President of the Russian Federation for Civil Defense Affairs, Emergencies and Elimination of the Consequences of Natural Disasters (hereafter called the President's Committee for Civil Defense and Emergencies) were putting together plans to evacuate Russians from emergency situations. As of December, however, none of the plans had been activated.

Two major obstacles face Russians wishing to return to their homeland: a scarcity of jobs and homes. Although Russia could experience massive unemployment in the near future, most experts consider lack of housing the most significant barrier facing those wishing to settle in Russia. Russia had a chronic housing shortage long before the dissolution of the Soviet Union. And even without migrants from the outlying republics, Russia lacks adequate housing for some nine million families, officials say. That long-time problem is now being aggravated by the return of significant numbers of Russian troops from Germany and Eastern Europe, who lack places to live. Already nearly 200,000 Russian officers in Russia lack adequate housing. They are living with friends or relatives or in makeshift shelters. Some Soviet troops who left Hungary and Czechoslovakia, for example, are currently living with their families in tents.

However, as an International Office for Migration report points out, both the housing and labor systems have shown a surprising flexibility in absorbing migrants to date.

### **The Northern Caucasus**

Russia and the Northern Caucasus have long been at odds. Russia's first serious effort to control the mountainous area was launched in the 18th century; from the beginning, the Caucasian tribes put up a stubborn resistance, until the last of them were finally conquered and the area annexed in the 1860s.

As historian Robert Conquest has put it: "The conquest of the Caucasus has always been for Russian nationalism most significant and symbolic in the imagination, more so than the annexations of Central Asia and in the Far East. Raising the symbols of Russian imperial power on the great mountains has been highly regarded as a demonstration of might, and exalted as such by those Russians who admire such a thing. Of course, a large country's manifest destiny to rule other areas may thrill its own nationals, but it is less likely to appeal to the local inhabitants."

Russia's conquest of the Northern Caucasus began in 1771, when Catherine the Great decided to create a Caucasian Line, a series of military forts and Cossack settlements stretching from the valley of the Terek to the Sea of Azov. Two years later, the Kabarda area of the Northern Caucasus surrendered. After the Russians annexed Georgia in 1801, responding to Christian Georgians and Ossetians who sought support against the Turks and Persians, Russia's advance along the Caspian Sea was relatively simple. The Russians also set up a second front, crossing the Ossetian territories to Tbilisi. By 1828, most of the present-day Transcaucasus were under Russian control. But there were two large, independent territories in the rear: on the eastern flank were the lands occupied by the Chechens, Ingush and Daghestani; on the western side was the great stretch of Circassian Abkhazia.

The two areas had different characters. The Circassians had a nobility and were in constant contact with Turkey. The Chechens and Ingush had a more democratic life in the mountains and were proponents of the puritan and egalitarian Muridist movement. In 1830, under the Murid, Imam Kazi Mullah, the Chechens attacked several Russian detachments, destroying them, and pierced the Caucasian Line at several points. The ensuing campaign went on for three years, stopping only when the Russians captured the Murid capital and killed the imam.

The next imam, Shamil, revived the guerrilla war. In 1837, the Russians launched a two-pronged effort to destroy both the Circassian and Murid resistances. By 1840, the Russians had nearly defeated the Circassians but suspended those operations to concentrate their forces against Shamil. Over the next three years, Shamil won a series of campaigns, inflicting heavy losses on the Russians and attracting thousands of new recruits. The Russians responded, concentrating 30,000 men and a large artillery force — the largest army they could maintain in the area — against Shamil. Their attack, launched in 1845, was a disaster.

By the time the Crimea War started in 1853, both Shamil and the Circassians were unsubdued. Shamil immediately raided Georgia, forcing the Russians to shift large forces from the Turkish front. In 1854, after the Turks landed troops in Abkhazia, the people there rose up against the Russians. Later that year, Shamil attacked Georgia again but was defeated. Two years later, when the Crimean War was over, Russia returned its forces to fight the Chechens and Daghestani. By this time, the war had been going on for more than a quarter of a century, and the Chechens were at the end of their resources. Shamil surrendered.

But the fight was not yet over. Some Circassians were still living in complete independence — they had set up a new national government at Sochi on the Black Sea coast. But Russians attacked in 1862, and fighting continued for two years before the Russians won. Some 600,000 Circassians were expelled from their country, and Russians moved in.

And still the fight went on. When Russia and Turkey went to war again in 1877, the people of the Northern Caucasus revolted. Russian divisions were sent to the area. The Turks returned to Abkhazia, and the people again rose in support of the invaders. The Chechens proclaimed a new imam, but the uprising was temporarily suppressed, largely because the Russians had a superior new rifle. However, the conflict flared again, only to be put down only after much fighting. There was another outburst among the Chechens in 1905. And in 1917, after the collapse of the tsarist regime, another imam was named.

The communists didn't crush Caucasian resistance until 1920. Even after the revolution, the residents of the Northern Caucasus continued to fight such Soviet innovations as collectivization. (According to one Soviet account, the mountain peoples of North Caucasia, met — with their daggers drawn — the first copies of the new alphabet to arrive in their villages after the country temporarily switched to Latin letters.) Few other peoples resisted Sovietization as consistently as the Chechens.

During World War II, German troops occupied the Northern Caucasus from two to five months. The Germans won over some of the mountain people, in part by promising to do away with the collective farms. After the Germans withdrew, Stalin deported whole peoples to Siberia and Central Asia, taking away those who had collaborated as well as those who hadn't. Among them were five nationalities from the Northern Caucasus — the Karachai, the Kalmyks, the Chechens, the Ingush and the Balkars. The exact number of deportees is unknown, but in the 1939 census, Chechens numbered 408,000; Kalmyks, 134,000; Ingush, 92,000; Karachai, 75,000; and Balkars, 43,000.

According to scholars, the Chechens and Ingush were a different category from the other deported peoples: the Germans had occupied only a small part of their republic; their deportation was not to avenge collaboration, but to break the region's long-time anti-Soviet resistance. In

early 1940, a "war of liberation" for the Caucasus had been proclaimed and "a temporary revolutionary people's government" of Chechnya and Ingushia set up. The rebels controlled several *rayons* in the mountains until 1942. When the German forces were approaching, the rebels' leader, Khasan Israilov, proclaimed his willingness to collaborate. Soldiers in the Chechen and Ingush units of the Soviet army deserted, and in March 1942, the Soviets temporarily stopped drafting Chechens and Ingush, fearing they were arming anti-Soviet rebels. Later that year, the Soviet air force helped subdue the rebellion.

In 1954 — two years before Khrushchev gave his famous "secret speech," condemning, among other things, the deportation of the Caucasian peoples — thousands of deported families, particularly Chechens and Ingush, set out on their own to return to their homelands. Many were arrested and sent back to Central Asia. But by late 1956, 25,000 to 30,000 Chechens and Ingush had reached the Caucasus. The authorities soon reinstated — with some changes — the national territories of the Kalmyks, Karachai, Balkars, Chechens and Ingush.

Among the changes were the boundaries of the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Republic. In one adjustment, the authorities gave one of the republic's western *rayons* to North Ossetia. The *rayon* bordered Ordzhonikidze (now Vladikavkaz), the capital of North Ossetia, but before the deportations, Ingush had been concentrated there. As a result, many Ingush returned to find themselves living outside their national territory and thus not entitled to schools, media and other cultural facilities in their native language.

The authorities had promised the returning peoples credit, housing and work, but those promises weren't always kept. The repatriation of 500,000 Chechens and Ingush was the most problematic. The Soviets had systematically resettled the republic after the war ended. The first year of the repatriation, housing and jobs were in short supply, in large part because significantly more people had returned than the plan had envisioned. In August 1958, ethnic tensions boiled over. The funeral of a Russian sailor killed in a brawl with Ingush ended with the Russian population demonstrating in the streets. The protest evolved into fist fights and looting. People handed out pamphlets asking Chechens and Ingush to leave the country. After four days, Soviet troops arrived to re-establish order.

In 1973, 16 years after the Ingush had returned from Kazakhstan, they demonstrated in Grozny, the capital of Chechen-Ingush, for several days to protest discrimination against Ingush in North Ossetia.

Given this history, then, it is not surprising that Chechnya was the first autonomous republic to attempt to break away from the Russian Federation after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. (Chechnya and Ingushia have separated, with the Ingush wishing to remain in Russia.) The republic refused in the spring of 1992 to initial a treaty aimed at establishing relationships between the republics and the federal government.

According to a report from the International Organization for Migration in early 1992, Chechen-Ingush was the most frequently mentioned area for ethnic conflicts that could lead to migrations. (A survey conducted in 1991 by the Institute of Ethnography and Anthropology indicated that 37 percent of the Russians living in Chechen-Ingush were planning to leave.) In early February, the president declared a state of emergency following clashes between local militia and garrisoned former Soviet troops stationed in the republic. In late March 1992, there

was an attempted coup against the government of President Jokhar Dudayev. Dudayev blamed Russian leaders, especially the speaker of parliament, Ruslan Khasbulatov, a native Chechen who had allegedly called Dudayev "a scoundrel and a terrorist." Others suggest that a more likely explanation is clan warfare over who will control the tiny republic.

Ingushia is currently involved in its own conflict — another chapter in its efforts to get its land back from North Ossetia. In October 1992, an Ossetian tank accidentally ran over and killed an Ingush boy. Ingush civilians retaliated, sparking the first ethnic violence in Russia since the end of the Soviet Union. Russian President Boris Yeltsin declared a state of emergency in the area and sent 3,000 troops to try to restore peace — and to deflect the criticism of ultranationalists in Russia. By early December, nearly 300 were dead and 600 wounded. Some 33,000 Ingush had fled their homes.

Newly displaced persons from the North Ossetia/Ingush fighting only exacerbate an already serious refugee situation in the area. Since fighting began in South Ossetia in 1991, more than 120,000 refugees have arrived in Vladikavkaz, straining the city's ability to absorb additional people. In the summer of 1992, at the height of the Georgian attack on Tskhinvali, South Ossetia's capital, Russian officials started a tent encampment in the area. That has since been closed. South Ossetians began returning home after fighting ceased in August.

However, there is a complicating factor, not only to the Ossetian-Ingush conflict but to the prospects of the Northern Caucasus as a whole. The Russian Cossacks have joined the fray on the side of the Ossetians. (The North Ossetians have said the disputed land belonged historically to the Cossacks.) Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, these long-time defenders of Russia's borders have been working to resurrect that role for themselves. Cossack soldiers were in Moldova to fight alongside the Russian-speakers there. Cossacks can also be found in Nagorno-Karabakh, on the side of the Armenians, and in Abkhazia, fighting against the Georgians. A Cossack who had made a fact-finding tour of the Northern Caucasus in the fall of 1992 predicted trouble for most of the region in the near future.

Some observers predict that the rest of the Northern Caucasus will attempt to break away from Russia as has Chechnya. Northern Caucasians have formed a Caucasian Confederation, with its capital in Sukhumi, now the capital of Abkhazia, that would encompass some four million people. Already, two areas of Georgia that border the Russian Caucasus have attempted to break away from that country. Abkhazia is currently fighting the Georgians, although peace more or less reigns in South Ossetia at the moment. (South Ossetians wanted to ask Russia's Congress of People's Deputies in December 1992 to annex their area, but the request didn't come up on the agenda during the congressional session.)

It is not clear how Russia will handle an independence movement in the Northern Caucasus. Although some experts contend that the loss of such border republics would not significantly harm Russia, ultranationalist forces are likely to demand a strong and unified country. If the Northern Caucasus are allowed to go their own way, they argue, other areas would also attempt to break away.

Although some observers see a Christian/Moslem aspect to the fighting in the area, religion seems to have played little, if any, part in the conflicts to date. That could, of course,

change. Ossetians are Orthodox Christians who have longed allied themselves with the Russians; most of the rest of the Caucasian peoples are Moslem.

### **The Other Autonomous Republics**

Although technically they reside in the Russian Federation, more than 10 million Russians live in 20 or so autonomous republics within Russia that constitute the homelands of other indigenous peoples: Adygeya, Altai, Bashkiria, Buryatia, Chechnya, Chuvashia, Daghestan, Ingushia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachevo-Cherkessia,<sup>7</sup> Kalmykia, Karelia, Khakasia, Komi, Marii-El, Mordvia, North Ossetia, Tatarstan, Tuva, Udmurtia and Yakukia.

Several of the autonomous republics have indicated they would like independence from the Russian Federation. Chechnya and Tatarstan — two relatively oil-rich regions that think they would be economically better off without Russia — refused in the spring of 1992 to initial a treaty aimed at establishing relationships between these republics and the federal government. Several others, including Bashkiria, Yakutia, Komi and Karelia, raised strong objections to the treaty. Some experts believe that other autonomous republics, particularly those in the Northern Caucasus, could also opt for independence — a move that could create major problems for the Russian Federation. Some critics of the current Russian government, among them Vice President Alexander Rutskoi, have called for a crackdown on the republics before the independence movement becomes unstoppable.

By December 1992, Russia had done nothing about Chechnya's claim to independence. Now several observers in Russia think Tatarstan may create migration problems not far down the road. Tatars comprise 1.7 million of the 4 million residents of Tatarstan, a plurality of the population; Russians and other non-Tatars make up 51 percent of the republic. (According to 1989 census figures, 6.6 million Tatars comprised the sixth largest ethnic in the Soviet Union. About 1 million Tatars live in the Bashkir Autonomous Republic, ranking second behind Russians and ahead of Bashkirs, a Turkic people closely related to the Tatars. Another 2.6 million Tatars are scattered throughout the rest of the Russian republic.)

Tatarstan's leadership was once staunchly communist and supported the August 1991 coup attempt, but it turned nationalist, apparently to stay in power. Some Tatars think independence will allow them to redress the injustices of Russian domination, but the independence movement is primarily aimed at economic freedom. In the spring of 1992, for example, officers of the republic's state oil company, complained that the company could sell only about one-sixth of its annual 30 million tons of oil for the benefit of Tatarstan. The rest is handed over to Russia. Tatar leaders have said that economic independence, which Russia has promised, is not enough to assuage more radical elements within Tatarstan.

Some observers question whether the Russian Federation is on the verge of disintegration. Civic Union — a powerful group opposing Boris Yeltsin and including industrial managers of state-owned companies and directors of state and collective farms — says it is.

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<sup>7</sup> Kabardino-Balkaria would like to break into separate republics, but the two factions have not agreed upon the details. So would Karachevo-Cherkessia.

Others, however, disagree with that line of thinking. A recent issue of *The Economist*, divides the autonomous republics into three groups. The magazine places in the first group the republics that border other countries, such as those in the Northern Caucasus; this group has a joint population of 6.5 million people. Their departure, *The Economist* argues, would not seriously affect Russia. The second group includes the Moslem republics on the Volga, such as Tatarstan. All of these republics are surrounded by Russia; if they became independent, all would still have to depend on Russia for trade, communications and defense. "They can no more go it alone than Monaco can," *The Economist* points out. The third group includes all the other republics. And Russians account for a significant percentage of their populations. In fact, considering all the autonomous republics, Russians make up half or more of the populations in nine of them and 30 percent or more in another eight.

### **Nuclear and Industrial Accidents**

Of the Soviet-designed reactors now operating in the former Soviet republics and Eastern Europe, 47 are pressurized-water reactors similar to those used in America. The remaining 16 are Chernobyl-style nuclear reactors, and 11 of them are in Russia. There are also plans to extend the life of some of the old reactors and to lift a post-Chernobyl moratorium on completing others. In Russia, the Chernobyl-style reactors are located at the Sosnovy Bor plant near St. Petersburg (formerly Leningrad), which has four; the Smolensk facility at Desnogorsk, which has three; and the Kursk plant near Kurchatov, which also has four.

The United States has strongly opposed the continued operation of these RBMKs (an acronym in Russian for Reactor, Big Power, Channel Type), as the Chernobyl reactors are called. Senior Russian nuclear officials have said that the RBMK are essential to the economies of Ukraine, Russia and Lithuania. If the West wants to make them safer, Russian officials have said, it can help pay for improvements.

Since Chernobyl, Russian scientists have made several improvements to the RBMK reactor. Western experts who have viewed data on these improvements were impressed, news stories say. But most Western scientists think the design of the reactor is flawed. Western scientists fault the complicated steam piping system inside the RBMK, which is buried in inaccessible channels within the core. They also fear the pipes can break; if several high-pressure pipes broke at the same time, their combined steam pressure could blow the top off the reactor and expose the core. (Scientists believe this is probably what happened at Chernobyl.) Western scientists are also worried that the RBMK and older versions of the Soviet pressurized-water reactors are not housed in reinforced concrete units designed to contain radioactive debris if an explosion occurs. Some Soviet reactors have bubbler towers that remove radioactive material from escaping gases, but the RBMKs and the old pressurized-water reactors can release dangerous material into the atmosphere.

Since 1948, four nuclear disasters, including Chernobyl, have been reported. (The Soviets waited almost 30 years to admit that an explosion had occurred in 1957 at a nuclear storage site near Chelyabinsk in Russia; more than 10,000 people were evacuated after the explosion sent 80 tons of radioactive material into the atmosphere.) Soviet nuclear facilities

recorded 270 malfunctions last year. This past March, for example, the Sosnovy Bor plant near St. Petersburg leaked radioactive gases into the atmosphere.

It is impossible, of course, to predict whether nuclear reactors in Russia will have serious problems, and, if they do, at which reactors the problems will occur. There are many other Russian nuclear problems, too many to enumerate, abound in Russia.

The same is true with industrial problems. Today, many of the industrial plants in the former Soviet Union, including Russia, are aging facilities without environmental controls. And reports indicate that those facilities that do have safety controls often don't use them. Individual plants located throughout Russia as well as huge industrial complexes in places like the Urals and along the Volga River are catastrophes waiting to happen. However, the number of plants that could experience industrial accidents serious enough to require evacuations of people is too large to list here. So, too, are other environmental problems that could lead to the evacuation of people.

### **Emergency Shelter**

As of December, the Federal Migration Service had registered 470,000 refugees, people fleeing hostilities in places like Azerbaijan, Moldova, North and South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Tajikistan. In addition, the service had registered 800,000 displaced persons, i.e., Russians leaving the outlying republics for reasons other than conflict. The service expects the number to reach two million by the end of 1993.

Currently, the Federal Migration Service is operating six reception centers — in Volgograd, Kurgan, Omsk, Bernaul, Orenburg and Astrakhan — for refugees and displaced persons.

Refugees and displaced persons can move anywhere they can find jobs or have relatives to live with. However, the migration service has identified 17 additional sites around the country for the resettlement of refugees and displaced persons. Those areas are: *Boronenskaya oblast*, *Kaluzhskaya oblast*, *Nenzenskaya oblast*, *Camarskaya oblast*, *Saratovaya oblast*, *Ul'Yanovskaya oblast*, *Irkutskaya oblast*, *Kemerovnaya oblast*, *Novosibirskaya oblast*, *Permskaya oblast*, *Sverdlovskaya oblast*, *Tomskaya oblast*, *Tyurnenskaya oblast*, *Chelyabinskaya oblast*, *Kirovskaya oblast*, *Nizhegrodsкая oblast* and *Krasnodar kray*.

Some of the areas designated to receive migrants are underpopulated regions and are glad to get them. However, many of the available jobs in these areas are on farms, while most of the migrants come from cities and have little agricultural experience. And some areas that had a number of job vacancies three or four years ago have fewer openings now because of the economic changes in Russia.

Many migrants are looking to the government to solve their problems — as 70 years of communism conditioned them to do. But others have come to the conclusion that the Russian government has too many other problems to deal with to be able to give migrants much assistance. If they are going to have jobs and places to live, these migrants reason, they will have to solve their own problems.

Groups of migrants, often from the same outlying republic, have negotiated with local authorities for land for houses and/or farms and borrowed money from banks to finance the

projects. Most of the projects plan to add businesses and/or industries to provide jobs for residents and help pay off loans.

In the Tula region, for example, a group of displaced persons, primarily from Central Asia, has organized a labor cooperative that has a contract with MosEnergostroy to complete renovation of a hydro-electric station. In return, they received temporary lodging in abandoned housing near the site and a right to build permanent housing in town. The area, according to observers, is an industrial wasteland, but the 100 to 150 families currently there say they are thankful to have a place to live.

However, most of the communities face many obstacles. Foremost among them is lack of building materials and money. For example, the Ferikovo district in the Kaluga region gave land two years ago to a group of migrants from Tajikistan who wanted to build a new community. The project was initially funded by the migrants from the sale of property in Dushanbe and other income. But the project has run out of money and is looking to the Federal Migration Service (FMS) for help. In the summer of 1992, FMS gave the Kaluga migrants 20 million rubles for their project, but inflation has seriously reduced the value of the grant.

In the Derzhinskiy district of the Kaluga region, migrants had entered into agreements to complete unfinished houses in exchange for 50 percent of the units, but funding there has become a problem. Lack of money is also plaguing efforts to settle migrants in the sparsely inhabited Pskov region — 840,000 people occupy 55,000 square meters. In 1992, 22,000 migrants had been accepted there, and the area hopes to receive 44,000 families over the next seven years. The region is interested in communal migration — entire collectives from the Baltics. But it, too, is running out of funds.

According to the Social Committee to Aid Refugees and Involuntary Migrants, a Russian organization, Russian authorities are unprepared for migration in substantial proportions. Faced with numerous other financial and political problems, particularly at a time of economic chaos, Russia cannot allocate the necessary resources — monetary, material, or human — for forced and voluntary migrants. In 1992, the Russian government allocated the migration service some 3 billion rubles to help displaced persons and to construct evacuation points, a fraction of what is necessary.

## **Government's Ability to Respond**

### *Physical Resources*

It is unclear whether there is a comprehensive list of the Pioneer camps, sanitoriums, hostels, and other public resources in Russia that could be used for emergency shelter. (Civil Defense says Federal Migration Service has one; FMS says it doesn't.) However, the USSR Committee on State Statistics has counted 14,862 sanitoriums and other resort houses in Russia; their total capacity is just under 2.6 million residents. The list does not include Pioneer camps. Krasnodar *kray* (which includes the Black Sea coast resorts) alone has 500,000 spaces that could be used in summer to house refugees and displaced persons; half that number are winterized. The mayor of Sochi, a resort area on the Black Sea coast, offered 90,000 such spaces in his city.

An official with the republic's Civil Defense said Russia has enough emergency shelter possibilities to physically meet all anticipated needs.

### *Institutional and Managerial Capacity*

Russia has a three-pronged organization to respond to ethnic conflict and migration within the republic: the Federal Migration Service; the State Committee to the President of the Russian Federation for Civil Defense Affairs, Emergencies and Elimination of the Consequences of Natural Disasters; and the Committee on Nationalities.

Russian Federation President Boris Yeltsin created the Committee on Migration as a division within the Ministry of Labor in December 1991 to coordinate activities for refugees and displaced persons. Since then, the committee has been elevated to the Federal Migration Service and now incorporates other activities, such as visas and passports. The Russian government allocated the service some three billion rubles in 1992 to provide benefits for migrants, to construct evacuation points, and to help with housing. The service additionally plans to oversee the interests of Russian nationals outside Russia and will place its representatives in Russian embassies in other former Soviet republics.

The committee will also coordinate the activities of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other international groups working with migrants. At this time, only a few such organizations are active in Russia or elsewhere in the former Soviet Union. (Medicins Sans Frontiers/Belgium and Caritas, for example, have been the major international organizations assisting refugees in Moscow.)

Most of the service's employees are relatively new to refugee work and lack significant operational experience. The International Office for Migration (IOM) is providing Russia with technical assistance on migration issues; the \$1 million program is funded primarily by the U.S. State Department's Bureau for Refugee Programs. The Federal Migration Service is the chief beneficiary of the program. (The Supreme Soviet's Subcommittee on Refugees and the Presidential Commission on Citizenship Matters are also receiving assistance.)

The President's Committee for Civil Defense and Emergencies was established in August 1991. It is an interdepartmental agency designed to organize and coordinate the Russian government's activities in forecasting, preventing and responding to emergencies, both man-made and natural. The committee is also responsible for the reception and settlement of refugees. Its officials in Moscow indicated it was the most appropriate agency to deal with on emergency housing issues. (It may also take an active role in providing permanent housing to refugees and displaced persons.) The Civil Defense wing of the President's Committee has had significant experience responding to disasters. Its officials in Moscow appeared knowledgeable, efficient and willing to cooperate.

Both the Migration Service and the President's Committee for Civil Defense and Emergencies have regional offices through Russia.

The Committee on Nationalities is not involved in operational issues. Instead, it provides insight into the various nationalities and the issues that lead to conflict.

### *Assistance From Other Donors*

Although several international non-government organizations are working with migrants in the former Soviet Union, the Federal Migration Committee said it has received no assistance from other international donors for emergency shelter projects.

However, the International Office for Migration has a \$1,063,104 grant, primarily funded by the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Refugee Programs, to provide technical assistance on migration issues to the Russian Federation. Under the program, IOM is to provide FMS with two Russian-speaking consultants for one year to work on institution building and policy planning and one short-term expert for project design and drafting. In addition, IOM will provide one migration expert to advise the Subcommittee on Refugees of the Supreme Soviet and one legislative expert to advise the Presidential Commission on Citizenship Matters. IOM will also organize two ten-day workshops in Moscow on immigration/emigration policies and practices and one five-day workshop in Geneva for 30 people, primarily from the FMS. In addition, orientation visits to Western countries, particularly the USA, Canada, and Australia, will be provided to key Russian government officials in charge of migration activities.

# Tajikistan

## In Brief

Tajikistan is the poorest of the 15 republics in the former Soviet Union. It is also one of the most troubled. (A recent issue of *Time* magazine gave Tajikistan an "F" in political stability and an "F" in its efforts to achieve political and economic reform; only Moldova did as badly.) Unfortunately, nature and human nature have conspired to present the country with an almost crushing set of problems.

First, 97 percent of the country is mountainous terrain, which means that living space and agricultural land are at a premium. Additionally, the country is subject to many natural disasters.

Second, the Bolsheviks created Tajikistan in 1924 from an assortment of warring tribes who spoke a Farsi dialect. The heavy hand of communism was able to suppress the ancient tribal hatreds, but once the Soviet Union dissolved, the old hostilities surfaced with a vengeance. And today they are complicated by religious and political overtones. One group of clans comprises people who were allied with the old communist government; opposing clans offer a loose coalition of Islamic and democratic forces.

Although Tajikistan faces several dilemmas that could require an emergency housing response, two of its problems are so serious, they outweigh the others:

- Warring factions currently have the country embroiled in a civil war that has produced a significant number of displaced persons. The war could ultimately lead to the dissolution of the country — at least one region recently declared its independence from Tajikistan.
- Severe earthquakes are common throughout the entire country. In fact, Tajikistan's earthquake potential is possibly the highest in former Soviet Union.

# Tajikistan

## INTRODUCTION

### Topography and Climate

Tajikistan comprises 143,100 square kilometers of land in Central Asia lying immediately north of Afghanistan. Its other neighbors are China, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. (Pakistan is 20 miles away; a narrow Afghan corridor separates it from Tajikistan.) Most of Tajikistan is mountainous terrain; in fact, more than 50 percent of the country is above 10,000 feet. The Pamir Mountains — an offshoot of the Himalayas — extend from the southeastern portion of Tajikistan into China and Afghanistan. The Tajik Pamirs also contain the two highest peaks in the former Soviet Union, one measuring 7,495 meters and the other 7,134 meters.

Tajikistan has four main valleys that contain most of its residents: the Hissar, which stretches from Dushanbe westward; the Kulyab, which is to the southeast of Dushanbe; the Kurgan- Tyube, which is the largest and continues south of Dushanbe; and the Khojand (formerly the Leninabad Valley), which reaches north to Uzbekistan and contains the most developed part of the country.

Temperatures vary widely — from a high of 87 degrees Fahrenheit in subtropical valleys in the summer to a low of minus 50 degrees Fahrenheit in the mountains in winter. The winters in the mountainous areas can be long and severe, with accessibility limited to three or four months of the year. For example, the Khojand Valley is isolated from the rest of Tajikistan by a high mountain range; heavy snowfalls render it unreachable by road from October to May. During the winter, all travel to Khojand is by air or a long loop by road or train around the mountains to the west through Uzbekistan. In Tajikistan's capital, Dushanbe, February temperatures are around 32 degrees Fahrenheit.

### Demographics

The population of Tajikistan totals some 5.5 million people. Fifty-eight percent are Tajiks, 23 percent are Uzbeks and 9 percent are Russians or Ukrainians; among the rest are Tatars, Turkmens and Germans. (During World War II, Germans and Baltic nationals were deported to Tajikistan. However, all the Baltic nationals returned to their home countries when those areas became a part of the Soviet Union.) Due to the recent fighting in Afghanistan, there has also been an influx of Afghan refugees into Tajikistan.

The average size of the Tajik family reportedly is nine members. Women account for 2.3 million of the Tajik population, and children under the age of 14 make up 1.2 million; together, they comprise 66 percent of the population. The Tajik birth rate — 43 births per 1,000 women — is the highest in the former Soviet Union.

Sixty to 70 percent of Tajikistan's population lives in rural areas. Most live in the agricultural zones of the valleys, since the rest of Tajikistan is virtually uninhabitable during the winter. In the 1989 census, Tajikistan had only two large cities — Dushanbe with just under 600,000 residents and Leninabad with 165,000 people.

The Tajiks speak a Farsi-based language, which ties them to Afghanistan and Iran. Unlike the Iranians, however, most Tajiks are Sunni Moslems, not Shiites. Some four million Tajiks live in Afghanistan; at least one million more live in Uzbekistan.

### **Current Housing Situation**

Housing shortages in Tajikistan have been so severe that they have led to ethnic conflict. In February 1990, people in Dushanbe rioted after they heard rumors that indicated Armenians being evacuated from Azerbaijan in the wake of the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh would move to the head of the housing list. An estimated 100 people were killed.

Tajikistan has suffered the same serious housing shortage that plagued the rest of the former Soviet Union: people waited 10 to 15 years to obtain an apartment from the state. Forty thousand families are currently on the waiting list in Dushanbe, a city of 570,000 people and perhaps 80,000 housing units. Under such conditions, rumors abound: some indicate that southerners in Dushanbe are running northerners out of their apartments; others say that Russians arriving home after vacations have found southerners living in their homes.

Since the breakup of the former Soviet Union, the housing situation in Tajikistan has only gotten worse. According to officials at the Ministry of Construction, building construction in Tajikistan began to slow down two and a half years ago, primarily because the ministry was short of funds. In 1990, for example, the ministry built schools for 1,200 children; it isn't building any this year, and schools are operating on double shifts. Dushanbe provides another example: 120,000 square meters of housing were built in 1991; 1/10 that amount will be completed this year. (According to housing laws, the government should build nine square meters of housing per person, but with the construction cutbacks, the government has begun providing only 50 square meters of housing for families of eight people.) In fact, only 25 of the ministry's 400 construction sites are now operating. And because of the slowdown in construction, the country's only cement factory is working at about half its production capacity. But money isn't the only problem. Materials can also be difficult to obtain, particularly bricks.

The housing situation is somewhat different in rural areas. There Tajiks tend to live in *qishlags* of 200 to 700 homes. In mountainous areas, the *qishlags* usually have only 15 or 20 homes. Because of space limitations, the flat roof of one home often serves as the yard of the house above.

Because of the country's growing population (53 percent of population is under age 16) and its space limitations, the Supreme Soviet apparently passed an economic reform plan in principle during its August session that discusses the need for 200 new villages. Tajikistan is in the process of privatizing its housing units. Some 13,000 units were privatized during the first six months of the program, the Dushanbe mayor said. However, the country appears to be reluctant to privatize its land. Currently, there are between 700,000 and 800,000 hectares of farmable land in the republic, and if all of were privatized, there would not be enough land for everyone. If the land on collective farms was parceled out to everyone on collective, infants would receive approximately .168 hectare.

The construction season is year-round in Dushanbe, but is considerably shorter in mountainous areas.

## DISASTER SCENARIOS

Tajikistan has several potential disaster scenarios that could lead to a need for emergency shelter assistance:

- The country is engaged in a civil war that is pitting geographical areas, political and religious philosophies and clans against each other. By mid-November, the war had produced an estimated 400,000 internally displaced persons.
- Severe earthquakes are common in the country; so, too, are floods and mud slides.
- Industrial accidents could occur in Tajikistan's chemical plants; more likely at the moment, they could become a pawn in the country's current civil war.
- Recent fighting in Afghanistan, particularly around Kabul, has sent Afghans fleeing to Tajikistan.

### Civil War

The civil war in Tajikistan is a somewhat complicated affair, having geographic and clan overtones as well as political and religious ones. Western news reports tend to oversimplify the situation, often referring to one side as "the supporters of ousted President Rakhmon Nabiyev, an old-style Communist" and the other as "a coalition of Moslem and democratic forces." But the conflict is based in tribal and geographic differences as well.

The Bolsheviks created Tajikistan in 1924 from an assortment of warring tribes — mostly Garmis, Kulyabs and Pamirs — who spoke the only non-Turkic language in Central Asia. The Communists more or less suppressed the ancient tribal hatreds that had periodically incited the region to war in the past.

Nabiyev's supporters include much of the former power elite, remnants of the ousted Communist Party, who, like Nabiyev, come from the Khojand region of the north. Khojand is an economically developed area where Islamic influence is relatively weak. Nabiyev's supporters also include people from the Kulyab region in the south, an area that has long had close ties to the communists, and by the sizeable Uzbek population in Tajikistan. The Islamic party's support is based in the west and south, particularly in the Kurgan-Tyube region. Nabiyev's main opponents are the Garmis, named after their homeland in central Tajikistan, and the Pamirs, who live in the mountainous region in the southeastern corner of the country. The Islamic hierarchy is led by the 40-year-old Akbarhodja Turajandozeh — the Quazi Qualam of Tajikistan — who is supported by the Islamic Revival Party and said to receive material and financial support from Iran. Undoubtedly, the hostility between the groups also reflects the fact that the Nabiyev forces have long held political and economic power in the country.

The current conflict began in the spring of 1992 when a loose alliance of Islamic and democratic forces demonstrated against Nabiyev's government for seven weeks. (Nabiyev

became president during the Brezhnev years, but Mikhail Gorbachev removed him from office. Nabiyeu returned to the presidency in September 1991 and was confirmed in the post in November, winning 58 percent of the vote. But he lost support after he filled government positions with cronies.) The demonstrators demanded that senior officials who were once Communist Party members be removed from office, that multi-party elections be held and that more religious freedoms be enacted. Supporters of the government held counter-demonstrations nearby. In mid-May, opposition leaders and Nabiyeu agreed to a coalition government and an interim legislature until new elections could be held in December.

In late June, the conflict moved to Kurgan-Tyube, a rich agricultural area in the southwestern part of the country, 80 kilometers south of Dushanbe. In the early 1930s, people from Garm and Kulyab were forced into the Vakhsh River basin to begin cultivating cotton for export to Russia. Sixty years later, the two groups — who are longtime enemies — retain much of their regional identity and animosity. The new conflict pitted the Garm people and other Islamics against the Kulyabs living in Kurgan-Tyube. The Islamics had weapons, so Kulyabs from Kulyab region crossed the mountains to defend their kin. By the time fighting stopped at the end of July, some 130,000 displaced persons had fled Kurgan-Tyube for Kulyab. All but about 30,000 of the displaced returned to their homes in Kurgan-Tyube following the cease-fire.

In late summer, opponents again took over the presidential palace in Dushanbe, calling for Nabiyeu's ouster. On September 7, he was forced to resign, apparently at gunpoint. Fighting erupted again in Kurgan-Tyube, resulting in tens of thousands of displaced persons. In late October, pro-Nabiyeu forces stormed into Dushanbe, seizing government buildings, but gave up the next day. Sporadic shooting occurred for several days, as government forces retook neighborhoods. The country's caretaker government resigned on November 11.

Russia — responding to a request from the Tajik government, which had no army of its own — sent additional soldiers to Tajikistan, raising its troop strength there to as much as 10,000. The Russian troops were asked to take control of key installations across the republic, to protect Dushanbe from further attack and to create a security belt around the capital. Many of the Islamic/democratic forces are opposed to the presence of the Russian troops in Tajikistan. The United Nations also agreed to send a fact-finding mission to the republic. However, as of late November, fighting continued in Tajikistan, particularly in Kurgan-Tyube and Kulyab. Reuters reported on November 22 that about 3,000 men supporting the current government were holding Dushanbe despite gains made across the republic by the pro-Nabiyeu forces. In December, fighting reportedly was going on in Dushanbe.

The easy availability of guns is making the situation worse. Both sides in the conflict are buying weapons from soldiers at Russian military bases in the region or stealing them. In addition, gunrunners from Afghanistan are smuggling in everything from machine guns to recoilless rifles — a helicopter hijacked to Afghanistan in October returned later in the day loaded with arms and ammunition. In addition, Islamic fundamentalist fighters are allegedly being trained at camps in northern Afghanistan run by the forces of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar.

The situation of the 1.2 million ethnic Uzbeks in Tajikistan is particularly difficult, reports say. State television broadcast a statement by Prime Minister Abdumalek Abdulajanov, indicating that ethnic Uzbeks from villages 18 kilometers south of Dushanbe had been among

the fighters who attacked the capital in late October. "They have now gone back to their villages or maybe to Uzbekistan," Abdulajanov said. However, rumors indicate that Tajiks are attacking ethnic Uzbeks. According to *Time* magazine, some 15,000 Uzbeks arrived in Kalininabad from Garm-controlled regions, where Uzbek villages have been burned and looted. A story in the London *Guardian* indicated that Uzbek border guards had been seen cooperating with pro-Nabiyev forces. But Abdulajanov said no direct evidence had been found indicating Tashkent was arming factions opposed to the Tajik government.

In the summer, thousands of ethnic Uzbeks and Tajiks attempted to flee the fighting in Tajikistan by crossing the border into Uzbekistan. Although reports on their numbers vary, an estimated 20,000 to 30,000 Uzbeks left Leninabad oblast in northern Tajikistan for the Uzbekistan portion of the Fergana Valley. In a second incident, at least 10,000 Uzbeks and Tajiks fled the fighting around Kurgan-Tyube, crossing into the Termez area of Uzbekistan. The Uzbekistan government apparently "encouraged" the refugees to return to Tajikistan. However, according to Tajikistan's Committee on Refugees, 10,000 to 15,000 of the refugees are still in Uzbekistan, but the government is not happy to have them there. The Uzbek government's unofficial policy refuses admission to refugees even ethnic Uzbeks, attempting to cross its borders.

Russian-speakers could be the next target of the Tajiks. According to the 1989 census, 387,000 ethnic Russians were living in Tajikistan, along with 41,000 Ukrainians and 7,000 Belorussians. However, an estimated 100,000 to 120,000 ethnic Russians had already left Tajikistan before the latest round of fighting began, many of them from Dushanbe. The deputy chairman of Migration, an organization assisting Russians who want to leave the republic, said the percentage of Russian-speakers in the city had dropped from 70 percent to 30. (Most Germans in Tajikistan have also left. The latest count estimated 15,000 Germans remaining, primarily in Dushanbe.) Many more would like to leave, but lack of jobs and housing in Russia — as well as difficulties in selling their apartments in Tajikistan — have slowed their departure. The Russian government had been making plans to evacuate up to 200,000 ethnic Russians from Tajikistan to the Russian city of Omsk if the situation in Tajikistan warranted it. But civil defense officials in Moscow in late September indicated that plans had not been finalized; such a massive evacuation would take a significant amount of time, they said. Particularly difficult to arrange is containers to move the Russians' belongings.

At least two scenarios have been predicted for the future of Tajikistan.

Under the first scenario, Tajikistan would split into several parts — some people predict as many as three or four. In fact, the breakup has already begun. The Kulyab region recently announced its independence from Tajikistan; it also has its own pro-Nabiyev militia. There is also speculation that the northern, economically developed part of the country will separate from the south. (The regional administration of Leninabad oblast had said earlier this year it would leave Tajikistan if Nabiyev was overthrown.) Khojand has taken control of central government offices in the north and set up its own 2,000-man army.

The second scenario — significantly less likely, at least in the near future — envisions a "greater Tajikistan." Under this plan, Tajiks in Afghanistan (3.5 million to 4 million), Uzbekistan (at least 1 million) and Tajikistan (3.2 million) would be united under the command

of Ahmed Shah Massoud, a powerful warlord and leader of the Tajik minority in Afghanistan. Such a unification plan would, of course, create immense problems and destabilize the region. It could lead to the partitioning of Afghanistan, which would in turn mobilize the Pashtuns, its major ethnic group. The ripples from that could reach into Pakistan, whose Pashtun population has demanded its own Pashtun state. However, Uzbekistan could be the most vulnerable to Tajik revisionist demands. Tajikistan did not sign an agreement between the governments of the Commonwealth of Independent States agreeing to adhere to existing borders, apparently because it has historical claims to the Uzbek cities of Bukhara and Samarkand. Instead, the government demanded that Uzbekistan agree to joint administration of the two areas.

### **Natural Disasters**

Severe earthquakes are common in Tajikistan along with floods and mud slides. Tajikistan lies in an earthquake zone that extends across much of Central Asia. The earthquake potential is possibly the highest in the former Soviet Union, with the entire republic subject to severe quakes. Each year, there are an estimated 100 earthquakes where people can feel the ground moving. The last major earthquake occurred in 1990. In 1988, an avalanche caused by an earthquake buried an entire village.

In the spring of 1992, houses in several villages along riverbanks in the Kulyab and Kurgan-Tyube regions washed away. One village was entirely destroyed. But by September, those problems had largely been overcome. Although some tents were provided, most people solved their own problems, moving in with their relatives or rebuilding their homes.

Because land in the valleys is at a premium (and will continue to be so, given the high Tajik birth rate), more people are now building on the hillsides, which is conducive to mud slides. This past June, floods and mud slides hit an area of Dushanbe, demolishing about 200 houses and damaging another 300. But by September, people were rebuilding their houses.

The Ministry of Construction said it had no figures on the amount of housing destroyed by the spring floods/mud slides or in need of serious repair.

### **Industrial Accidents**

Tajikistan has several plants where industrial accidents could occur. For example, there is a chlorine chemical plant in the cotton-producing district of Yevan whose 4,000 employees manufacture chlorine powder, chlorine liquid, soda, freon and calcium chlorate (detergent). A second facility for producing chlorine gas from liquid chlorine is only partially constructed and awaiting further funding. There is some concern about what the civil war could do to these plants. In September, for example, a group of Kulyabs threatened to burn down a chemical plant in Kurgan-Tyube if they were not given flour, sugar and other food.

### **Afghan Refugees**

According to the U.S. Committee for Refugees (USCR), as many as 30,000 Afghan refugees are living in Dushanbe. A number of them apparently arrived this summer after the fighting in Kabul intensified. Refugees told USCR that the local people are hostile toward them, even though many of the refugees are ethnic Tajiks. Refugees reported being robbed on the

street or in their homes; in addition, several said, some attacks apparently occurred just because the victims were Afghans.

However, the number of Afghan refugees in Tajikistan is not expected to increase significantly at this time.

### **Current Refugee Situation**

According to a report, produced in November, by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the fighting in Tajikistan has produced 20,000 deaths and 408,000 displaced persons, mainly from two southern regions. The largest number of displaced reportedly is in Kulyab, Kurgan-Tyube and Dushanbe. The number of displaced persons in Dushanbe is reported at 85,000. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees says approximately 145,000 people have fled to areas near the Tajik-Afghan border.

(In late September, the newly created Committee on Refugees reported 126,000 displaced persons. An estimated 100,000 were believed to be in Kulyab; the rest were divided among Dushanbe, Khojand, Garm and Kurgan-Tyube oblast. Some international refugee experts then in Tajikistan thought the figures might be inflated. But it was impossible at the time to get to Kulyab: all flights to the city had been canceled, and fighting along the road between Dushanbe and Kulyab made driving risky. The mayor of Dushanbe said 6,000 refugees had arrived in his city, 1,000 from Kulyab and 5,000 from Kurgan-Tyube.)

### **Emergency Shelter**

According to the IFRC report, Tajikistan "lacks adequate shelter for the increasing number of displaced people." Between 5 and 10 percent of the 408,000 displaced persons are living in schools, tents, railway cars and unfinished buildings or do not have shelter.

The majority of the refugees who are not living with families are ethnic Uzbeks, Jews, Koreans and Germans, among others. Most of these refugees are women and children; the men have returned to their homes to fight or protect their property. Most of them had been involved in cotton farming in well-established cooperatives. According to the IFRC report, the number of these people in the following regions is Herjant, 5,000; Kulyab, 30,000; Kurgan-Tyube, 8,000 and Dushanbe, 52,000.

In addition, the IFRC says, evidence indicate that perhaps 50,000 additional people living with families are housed in poor circumstance and may need help.

In September, the director of Tajikistan's Committee on Refugees, the deputy director of Civil Defense and the mayor of Dushanbe all said there was only one solution to the country's emergency shelter needs: peace. As the mayor put it, "We need to stabilize situation so people can go home." Unfortunately, peace does not seem a viable solution in the near future.

In the meantime, the refugee director said, his agency could use help. Although the committee was only one week old in mid-September, it was already running out of money. Emergency shelter was one of the committee's most serious immediate needs (but not its only problem). In addition, some displaced persons won't have housing left to go back to, if and when the fighting ends.

In September, 80,000 of the displaced in Kulyab were reportedly living with relatives and 20,000 were in schools and other institutions. Some houses, officials said, had as many as 50 people in them, and some places were so crowded that children were living inside while the adults had set up camp outdoors. A few people reportedly were living under plastic sheeting tied to bushes. In Dushanbe, the city had put about 1,000 people in hostels and other kinds of group accommodations; the rest were living with friends and relatives.

The Committee on Refugees estimated in September it needed emergency shelter assistance for some 3,500 people who would otherwise be in dire straits. Undoubtedly, the number has risen since then. The committee suggested prefabs or winterized tents.

## **Government's Ability to Respond<sup>8</sup>**

### *Physical Resources*

According to the official USSR statistics, Tajikistan has 192 sanitoriums and other rest institutions that might be used for emergency shelter response. Those institutions can hold 32,600 people. An additional number of Pioneer camps might also be available. In some cases, refugees are already squatting at enterprise-owned resort houses. However, a number of the existing facilities are open-air, unheated summer camps located in mountainous areas that are inaccessible in winter. Temperatures can fall as low as minus 30 degrees Celsius, and snowfalls can be heavy, rendering the buildings useless as year-round shelters. Refugee committee members thought 20 camps might be available, each housing an estimated 250 people. But the camps, which have been furnished for children, would need additional equipment to accommodate adults.

In addition, some 80 technical schools could be used to house refugees, the committee said. In Kurgan-Tyube, for example, six technical schools were already filled with refugees in September 1992 and unable to start classes. The mayor of Dushanbe said his city would have to close schools, and offices, to shelter additional influxes of displaced people. Pioneer camps, sanitoriums and hostels, he said, were currently full.

After the spring floods, the Construction Ministry provided displaced persons with three unfinished apartment buildings in Dushanbe and one in Kulyab. Some residents of the apartment buildings also worked with the ministry to finish the units.

Currently, the ministry said, it has approximately 100,000 square meters of unfinished housing in Tajikistan, including 40,000 to 45,000 square meters in Dushanbe. The mayor said Dushanbe has 20 unfinished buildings that could house as many as 6,000 people. He estimated it would cost an average of 30 million rubles, at September prices, to complete each unit. However, the mayor cautioned agencies to remember the Armenian housing riots; giving

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<sup>8</sup> Some information was difficult to obtain during a brief visit to Tajikistan in September. Although Dushanbe was relatively calm during that period, the fighting in the south was moving closer to the capital; in addition, some government offices, which had experienced turmoil earlier in the month when Nabiyeu was forced to resign, were just beginning to operate again. And not all government officials were available for interviews. Some who had been held hostage earlier in the month were still recuperating from that ordeal. And one official's home had burned down a few days earlier, possibly in a deliberately set fire.

unfinished units to displaced persons could create new problems with the 40,000 families on the waiting list.

Several donors gave Tajikistan non-winterized tents last summer to house people who lost their homes in the floods or mud slides. One thousand tents were distributed at the time; none are left.

### *Institutional and Managerial Capacity*

The two governmental agencies most likely to be involved in emergency shelter response are Civil Defense and the Committee on Refugees. Also, each municipal area has its own committee to deal with displaced persons. In addition, Tajikistan's Construction Ministry has some responsibility, perhaps limited, in meeting emergency housing needs. A private agency attempting to respond to the needs of the displaced is the Red Crescent.

The Committee on Migration is a new governmental organization within the Department of Labor; it was formed in September, was understaffed and had little funding. It had only four employees, but the director and deputy director had previous experience dealing with displaced persons in Tajikistan. Both seemed informed and dedicated. The director had spent a significant amount of time in the conflict zone and was actively involved in attempting to bring about a peaceful resolution to the fighting.

An executive committee within city government in Dushanbe was also formed in mid-September to deal with displaced persons. The city group will try to find food, accommodations and employment for the displaced, provide them with money and clothing and send children to school. (Housing for the displaced is the responsibility of local authorities in Tajikistan.) The group had received some money from the government to implement its projects and was supposed to find additional funds. "In reality," the mayor of Dushanbe said, "It's a miserable amount of aid."

Like most such organizations in the former Soviet Union, Tajikistan's Civil Defense unit has had considerable experience responding to disaster situations. Its personnel seem knowledgeable, competent and hard working. However, Civil Defense may be out of the governmental loop at this time. (Part of Civil Defense's training facility had been turned over to an Islamic militia.)

Since the breakup of the former Soviet Union and the move to a free-market economy, the Ministry of Construction has become something of a "holding company" — at least that was the way ministry officials explained it. The ministry's holdings include subsidiaries in each of the regions, a concrete-block factory and a logistics component. For example, a subsidiary enterprise in Kulyab, employing 1,200 people, is involved in reconstruction. Forty-seven people work in the ministry's management; the entire system has 22,500 workers. After the spring floods, the ministry received funds to reconstruct kindergartens, schools, hospitals and other buildings. But it, too, is short of funds.

The major private agency dealing with humanitarian assistance to displaced persons is the Tajikistan Red Crescent. International agencies that have dealt with the organization and its director gave both high marks. According to the IFRC, "The Tajik Red Crescent Society is well

structured and has branches in 37 locations, which are said to be all operational. A very active role was taken by branches in Herjant in support of IDPs. For a major, externally supported, relief operation, staff and members of TRCS will have to be trained in many aspects of Red Cross Relief procedures. Leading members of TRCS are very influential with various government institutions and are able to facilitate necessary arrangements including transportation, visa acquisition and storage facilities."

Tajikistan also has a fledgling Humanitarian Commission that handles assistance donated by governments outside Tajikistan. However, the commission had not been involved in emergency shelter needs in any major way in the past. Apparently, the organization's primary responsibility is receiving and warehousing donated goods until recipients can send trucks to pick them up.

The point of entry for any U.S. humanitarian assistance to Tajikistan would be the prime minister or the Foreign Ministry.

### **Assistance From Other Donors**

Committee of Migration officials said in September that no organization or country had offered emergency shelter to assist persons displaced by the civil war. (Some assistance, primarily tents, had been provided last summer after the floods and mud slides.)

However, in recent weeks the IFRC has indicated it will offer some assistance to Tajikistan. Its preliminary plans target 145,000 people for "an exploratory relief operation in support of the Tajikistan Red Crescent." Initial plans call for the airlifting of a limited supply of emergency drugs, surgical equipment, infant formula and blankets to Khojand for distribution through the Tajikistan Red Crescent. An experienced logistician will also be sent to explore the possibilities of a larger relief operation. It is not clear from the IFRC proposal whether emergency shelter needs will be addressed.

The International Committee of the Red Cross may also have provided some tents in Tajikistan.

Although the Germans had provided some assistance to Tajikistan, the German Embassy in Moscow indicated in the fall that Germany had no plans at that time to assist any of the republics of the former Soviet Union with emergency shelter.

There appears to be a significant Iranian presence in Tajikistan at this time, but most of it seems aimed at providing political and military advice and/or assistance to the Islamic/democratic forces. Humanitarian assistance, one Tajik government official said, had been well publicized but limited to a series of free meals.

Other countries, including Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan have shown an interest in Tajikistan.

# Ukraine

## In Brief

Some 73 percent of Ukraine's more than 50 million people are ethnic Ukrainians; 21 percent are ethnic Russians. Although there is currently much animosity between the countries of Ukraine and Russia over such issues as the Black Sea Fleet and Crimea, the people say they can get along, in part, because both nationalities are Slavs. But equally important, Ukraine has chosen to define its citizens not by their ethnic origin but by their support of the Ukrainian state. Under such a definition, all peoples living in Ukraine are included among its citizenry. Such a move goes a long way toward reducing ethnic conflict.

There is, however, at least one potential flaw in the scenario. Russian nationalists, humiliated by the reduction in Russia's size, power and wealth, talk of regaining their past glory — a scenario that often includes Ukraine or at least a part of it. Last spring, the Russian parliament made a lot of noise about retaking Crimea, which Nikita Khrushchev had given to Ukraine in 1954. And the Crimean parliament talked momentarily of establishing its independence — from both republics. But tempers have cooled considerably since then. Whether they say that way depends in large part on Russia.

Although its ethnic situation may be more or less under control, Ukraine faces another problem that could have emergency shelter implications:

- In 1986, one of the reactors at the Chernobyl nuclear plant exploded, dumping nine tons of radioactive material into the atmosphere. Thousands of residents left the area, but more than 12,000 still need to move from a mandatory zone. Some 2.6 million people still live on contaminated soil. The reactor has been entombed in a steel-and-concrete shell, but news reports indicate the sarcophagus is cracked and crumbling and could collapse. The plant reopened this fall to provide heat for the winter; however, Western scientists consider it unsafe.

# Ukraine

## INTRODUCTION

### Topography and Climate

Ukraine encompasses 603,700 square kilometers, which makes it the third biggest Soviet republic in size. (It is, by way of comparison, slightly bigger than France.) Most of its terrain is the gently rolling plains of the steppe; its biggest hills are a short stretch of the Carpathians in the far west and the Crimean Mountains, which begin south of Simferopol, the capital of the Crimea. Four major rivers, all flowing to the southeast, cross the Ukraine: the Dniester, the Yuzhnyy (Southern) Bug, the Dnieper and the Donets. Crimea is a craggy peninsula — and a major resort area — on the Black Sea coast, linked to the Ukraine mainland only by the narrow Perekop Isthmus in the northwest. In 1954, Nikita Khrushchev gave Crimea, which had long been a part of Russia, to Ukraine.

Ukraine has a relatively moderate climate by continental standards. (Moscow, for example, is frozen five months of the year; Kiev is usually frozen only from December to February.) Temperatures rise above 15 degrees Celsius most days from May to September and above 20 degrees from June to August. The Black Sea coast cities of Yalta and Odessa are a little warmer year round; they are much milder in winter, with temperatures rarely dropping below freezing in the daytime. July and August are the wettest months inland; in Yalta, the heaviest rain falls in December and January.

### Demographics

Ukraine has a population estimated at between 52 million and 54 million people, more than any former Soviet republic except Russia. The republic has a population density of 84 people per square kilometer. Seventeen million of Ukraine's residents are urban dwellers; five of its cities — Kiev, Kharkov, Dnepropetrovsk, Odessa and Donetsk — have more than a million residents.

Some 73 percent of Ukraine's population, or 35 million people, are Ukrainian; 21 percent, or 11 million people, are Russian. Many of the Russians are concentrated in the east, which is the more industrialized region of the country. The rest of the population include Jews, Belarussians and Moldovans, among others. More than 2.5 million people live in Crimea, an autonomous republic within Ukraine. Approximately 60 percent of Crimea's residents are ethnic Russians, most of the rest are Ukrainians and perhaps 200,000 are Crimean Tatars. The Tatars — who were deported during World War II by Stalin — have recently begun returning to Crimea; several hundred thousand more are living in Central Asia and reportedly wish to return to their homeland. In addition, the first of several hundred thousand ethnic Germans have begun moving to Ukraine at the invitation of President Leonid Krupchuk. Estimates of the number of Germans eventually expected varies from 300,000 to one million.

## **Current Housing Situation**

Like most of the republics of the former Soviet Union, Ukraine suffers from a serious housing shortage.

According to the head of the executive committee of the City Building Coordination Department in Kiev, the city is short 280,000 apartments. (In 1989, Kiev had a population just under 2.6 million people.) The figure is based on a compulsory requirement of 18 to 20 square meters of housing per person. However, if a more generous standard is used — the head of the executive committee thinks 18 to 20 square feet is too small — the shortage increases to 900,000 units, most of the housing in the city. Most people have to wait 15 to 22 years to obtain a better place to live.

Several categories of people require improved housing: First, many Kiev natives are crowded into apartments with only four to six square meters of space per person. Many of these people are living semi-communally; that is, several families share a kitchen and bath. Second, a number of people live in very old houses. Third, a number of buildings were hastily erected for young people who had been hired by various enterprises, for example. These units, which were meant to be temporary quarters, were small and not built to meet modern standards. However, people have been living in them for 10 or 15 years, waiting to move to larger apartments. And, fourth, a number of people, including families, divorced men and single mothers with children live in cramped spaces in hostels. The single men, for example, live two or three to a room.

Kiev has also absorbed 10,000 families from the Chernobyl area. In 1987-1988, the government moved the Chernobyl victims to the head of the waiting list, telling those already in line they would have to wait another few years.

According to the city housing official, the city is still building housing units for its residents. He claimed the city would complete one million square meters of living area per year. Thirty percent of that amount will be cooperatives. Big enterprises will build 40 to 50 percent. (If an enterprise wants to hire someone, it has to pay the city to build the new employee an apartment.) And 25 percent will come from city and state budgets.

The official said obtaining most building materials is not a problem. What is available, however, is often of inferior quality, and because lumber is in short supply, plastic is being used in its place. (However, a former construction worker disagreed: he said building materials were notoriously hard to come by.) Construction projects have also been hampered by a shortage of funds: many enterprises are bankrupt and the price of building materials has gone up 60 to 80 percent in the last two or three years.

In September, Ukraine had not passed a law on privatization. But, in theory, people were able to buy apartments. The price of a new flat was considered high: two rooms, \$8,000; three rooms in the central part of the city, \$30,000 to \$50,000; five rooms in the central area, \$80,000 to \$150,000.

The traditional building season lasts from May to September; however, the Soviet prefabricated buildings make it possible for construction to go on year round.

## DISASTER SCENARIOS

Ukraine has several potential disaster scenarios that could lead to a need for an emergency shelter response:

- In 1986, one of the reactors at the Chernobyl nuclear plant exploded, dumping nine tons of radioactive material into the atmosphere. Thousands of residents left the area, but more than 12,000 still need to be moved from a mandatory zone. Another 2.6 million still live on contaminated soil. The reactor has been entombed in a steel-and-concrete shell, but news reports indicate the sarcophagus is cracked and crumbling and could collapse. The plant reopened this fall; Western scientists consider it unsafe.

In addition, Ukraine's industrial sections, to the south and east of Kiev, contain chemical and petroleum plants, where industrial accidents could occur.

- In 1954, Khrushchev gave Crimea to Ukraine. Several high-ranking Russian officials have suggested that the peninsula should be returned to Russia, and last spring the Russian parliament declared the transfer void. Meanwhile, the Crimean parliament adopted — and then withdrew — an ambiguous declaration of independence.
- In 1944, Joseph Stalin deported an estimated 200,000 Crimean Tatars to Central Asia, claiming they had collaborated with German troops in the area. The Soviet government eventually gave the Crimean Tatars permission to return home. Today, approximately 200,000 have done so; an estimated 600,000 more would like to.
- President Leonid Kravchuk has invited several hundred thousand ethnic Germans to settle in Ukraine. The current plan calls for up to 300,000 of them to move there; news reports, however, say as many as a million may eventually could show up.
- According to the 1989 census, nearly 6.8 million ethnic Ukrainians were living outside the republic. The vast majority lived in Russia; most of the rest were in Central Asia, Moldova or Belarus. Unrest in Moldova, Tajikistan and Abkhazia has sent some Ukrainians back to their homeland. In addition, a number of Ukrainians who worked in Siberia — including 600,000 sent to Tyumen to work in the oil industry — are expected to return.

## **Nuclear and Industrial Accidents<sup>9</sup>**

The Number 4 reactor at the V.I. Lenin Chernobyl nuclear power plant — located 72 miles north of Kiev and only a short distance from the Belarus border — blew up while a generator was being tested on April 26, 1986. Almost nine tons of radioactive material — 90 times more than the bomb dropped on Hiroshima — escaped into the atmosphere. Over the next few days, winds blew the fallout into Belarus, Russia and the Baltic region (and ultimately as far north as Sweden; west to Germany, Poland and Austria; and south to Greece and Yugoslavia). In Ukraine alone, the Chernobyl disaster affected some five million hectares of land. The reactor was eventually contained in a concrete-and-steel sarcophagus.

In the weeks following the disaster, more than 100,000 people were evacuated from a 20-mile oval zone surrounding the plant. Ninety thousand other residents were forced to move from areas farther away over the next four years, and in April 1990, 14,000 more people were ordered to leave their homes. (Those figures include both Belarussians and Ukrainians; it is sometimes difficult to separate Ukrainian figures from those for Belarus during the Soviet period.) However, officials say, the exact number of people who have moved is not known, since many moved on their own accord. Additionally, millions of people in Ukraine, Belarus and Russia continue to live on radioactive soil and raise and consume contaminated food. Some 2.6 million in Ukraine alone live in contaminated areas. Although that contamination is not high enough to be immediately threatening, it will have lifetime consequences for these people. According to officials with the Ministry of Ukraine on Affairs of Protection of the Population from the Consequences of the Accident at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant — the Chernobyl Ministry, for short — another 12,000 people in Ukraine still need to be moved from the mandatory evacuation zone.

Although evacuees were initially housed in pioneer camps, sanatoria, etcetera, none continue to live in such shelters today.

The ministry has divided the contaminated area into two zones — mandatory and optional evacuation. People with children are the first to be moved. Those moving from the mandatory zones receive new cottages or flats in their relocation areas. In towns or cities with waiting lists for new housing, the mandatory evacuees move to the front of the line for new flats. Employers can immediately provide a mandatory evacuated employee with a flat, and, in theory, be reimbursed by the ministry. The government is supposed to compensate those leaving the optional evacuation zones for their move. People who are evacuated retain all the privileges they had in their old areas — health protection, rights to vacation in resorts, etcetera. The ministry has representatives in every region where evacuees are moving.

Although people can choose where they want to live, the ministry said, a number of the evacuees are relocating to new communities being built in 10 regions of the republic. Some villages, for example, are being moved en masse from radioactive areas to new locations so that

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<sup>9</sup> Any evaluation of the Chernobyl accident and its aftermath is incomplete without a survey of the situation in Belarus. The neighboring republic suffered significantly more contamination than Ukraine (see report on Belarus in Group II Countries). And if another accident were to occur at the nuclear plant, Belarus would likely receive a disproportionate share of the radioactive fallout again. Efforts to meet shelter needs for past or future Chernobyl accidents need to take Belarus's situation into consideration.

they can keep their traditions intact. However, even though the Chernobyl disaster occurred more than six years ago, not all the housing has been completed, in large part because of economic difficulties that have now been exacerbated by the end of the Soviet Union. Representatives of the Chernobyl Ministry said they did not know how many dwelling units were needed to house Chernobyl victims.

Some limited assistance has been forthcoming from other governments. For example, the government of Czechoslovakia took ethnic Czechs living in the evacuation zones back to that country after the explosion.

Although the Ukrainian government signed a contract with an American firm, Los Alamos Technical Associates, to clean up the contaminated area, the republic lacks the money to move ahead with the project at this time.

According to a recent *Time* magazine article:

Little progress has been made on cleaning up the surrounding region. There is no equipment to decontaminate topsoil, and contaminated groundwater is backing up behind a concrete barrier near the reservoir that supplies water to the 2.6 million residents of Kiev. More than 700 peasants evacuated in 1986 have quietly moved back to their farm plots, where they consume contaminated animals and produce. "They would rather die here than live somewhere else," says Alexander Borovoi, a Russian nuclear physicist in charge of the sarcophagus.

In September, the Ukrainian government announced that Chernobyl would partially reopen in October to provide energy for the republic during the winter. (The station's operative reactors, which were being repaired at the time of the announcement, were fitted last summer with new pressure tube valves like the ones that caused a radioactive leak at the Chernobyl-style nuclear power station in Saint Petersburg in March.)

Ukraine's parliament has demanded the station be closed permanently at the end of 1993, but some observers think it will remain open five or six more years, possibly longer. However, the chairman of Ukraine's nuclear power utility said the organization hoped to complete three nuclear plants of a different design elsewhere in the Ukraine to replace Chernobyl. Work on those stations was halted after the Chernobyl accident.

The *Time* magazine story expressed some concern about reactivating Chernobyl:

There is ever-present danger in the operation of reactor No. 3 too. ... Like its ruined twin, No. 3 is considered fundamentally unsafe by the International Atomic Energy Agency. It may be even more so now: many Russian operators have returned home, leaving a reactor run by Ukrainians who are ill-trained, badly paid and demoralized.

Nobody, of course, can predict whether another accident will occur at Chernobyl. However, another serious accident would in all likelihood necessitate the evacuation of additional people, says a representative from Los Alamos Technical Associates.

But even without restarting the plant, Chernobyl may present another nuclear disaster. The *Time* story is particularly concerned about the sarcophagus:

When workers finished the huge steel-and-concrete shell that entombs the intensely radioactive mass of the shattered No. 4 reactor in late 1986, Soviet officials declared the

site safe for at least 30 years. Yet today the sarcophagus is cracked, crumbling and in peril of a disastrous collapse. The melted-down fuel is turning to unstable dust. ... Birds fly into the sarcophagus through holes as big as a garage door; rats breed in the ruin. The structure is so unsteady that a strong windstorm could smash it, sending a plume of radioactive dust into the atmosphere. "Nothing is being done to clean it up," says Alex Sich, an American engineer who has studied the Chernobyl site.

Even without nuclear power plant problems, Ukraine could find itself having to evacuate people from other regions of the republic. There are a number of chemical plants and petroleum refineries as well as toxic waste in the industrial districts to the south and east of Kiev.

As mentioned earlier, the residents of Chernovtsy, a town in western Ukrainian, were exposed to high doses of thallium a few years ago. (Thallium is a soft, white crystalline metallic element used in rat poison, insecticides and the process for making optical glass, among other things.) The thallium caused some 127 children to lose their hair; eventually, nearly 90 percent of the town's preschool-age children were evacuated. The first reports suggested the thallium had originated outside the Soviet Union; supposedly a rain storm had deposited the metallic element on Chernovtsy. Later reports, however, indicated the thallium had come from industrial wastes buried within the city limits.

## Crimea

In 1783, the Russians, under Catherine the Great, managed to wrest the Crimean peninsula from the Crimean Tatars, and in the ensuing years, Russians became the majority population in the area. In 1921, the Soviets created the Crimean Autonomous Republic as a part of the Russian Federation, but the republic was abolished in 1945 and replaced by a non-ethnic *oblast*. Then, in 1954, Nikita Khrushchev gave Crimea to Ukraine. The Ukrainian government established a new Crimean Autonomous Republic after a referendum in 1991, but the Crimean Tatars did not participate in the vote and do not recognize the governmental unit. Instead, they held their own conference and established a parliament for what they called the Crimean Tatar Nation, which the Ukrainian government has not recognized.

Last winter, several high-ranking Russian officials suggested the current border with Ukraine might be revised so that the Crimea would be returned to Russia. And on May 21, the Russian parliament declared void the 1954 transfer. Earlier in the spring, the Crimean parliament adopted an ambiguous declaration of independence and scheduled a confirming referendum for August 2. But the Crimean parliament, under pressure from the Ukrainian government, withdrew the declaration and canceled the referendum. Meanwhile, the Crimean Tatars insist they, rather than the Russians, should decide Crimea's affiliation. A poll conducted in early 1992 showed opinion divided on the issue: 42 percent wanted to remain an autonomous republic linked to Ukraine; 15 percent wanted to return to Russia; 22 percent wanted a sovereign Crimean republic within the Commonwealth of Independent States; and 8 percent favored complete independence.

Approximately 60 percent of the 2.5 million people in Crimea are ethnic Russians.

In the spring, while the various maneuverings were going on, *The New York Times* called Crimea "the most dangerous of potential hot spots" in the former Soviet Union. But tempers

have cooled considerably since then. Additionally, analysts say, the Western media, most of them operating from Moscow, blew the Crimea situation out of proportion. According to current thinking, the independence movement was an effort to get Kiev's attention. Crimean officials, who have an eye on the region's potentially lucrative tourist industry, want economic autonomy, not political separation from Ukraine. The region also makes money from wine and fruit. (Previously, 80 percent of the area's earnings went to Moscow; today, the same percentage goes to Kiev. Crimea wants to keep more of its money, particularly its hard currency.)

Ukraine and Russia seriously disagree on a number of issues, and Ukrainians remain suspicious of Russia's imperial ambitions, not only for Crimea but Ukraine itself. But these disputes are not currently expected to escalate into armed conflict or large exchanges of population, at least in the foreseeable future. Nor is Ukraine likely to be involved in any major conflict with its other neighbors. The Romanian parliament, for example, has also made territorial claims on Ukraine, suggesting that parts of Bessarabia and northern Bukovina awarded to Ukraine by Stalin be returned. Ukraine has tried to win Romania's goodwill by staying out of the conflict in Moldova over the Trans-Dniester region. (Moldova is expected to eventually merge with Romania.)

There is little likelihood at this point that Ukraine will experience major conflicts within its borders. Ukrainians and Russians make up the overwhelming majority (94 percent) of the country's population. Although Ukrainians and Russians represent different nationalities, they share common Slavic roots. While there is currently significant hostility between the *countries* of Ukraine and Russia over a number of issues, most Ukrainians interviewed insisted that the *people* of those countries get along peaceably. In addition, all Ukraine's *oblasts*, except Crimea, have Ukrainian majorities.

However, there is another factor that could promote ethnic peace in Ukraine. The republic has not defined its citizen on the basis of Ukrainian nationality. Instead, the country has chosen an inclusive, non-ethnic conception of Ukrainian citizenship — i.e., all of those people who live within the country and support the state. Because such a definition includes Russians, Tatars, Germans, Jews and others ethnic groups as well as Ukrainians, it may help the country avoid the divisive ethnic politics that have plagued other non-Russian republics.

### **The Crimean Tatars**

The current Crimean Tatar problem dates back to 1944, when Stalin claimed the Crimean Tatars had collaborated with German troops that had briefly occupied the area; he deported an estimated 200,000 — most of the Tatar population — to Central Asia. The Soviet government gave the Crimean Tatars permission to return home in 1967, but administrative obstacles kept the vast majority of them in Central Asia. By 1985, only about 10 percent had managed to get back to Crimea. The number returning increased significantly beginning in 1987. Today, approximately 200,000 Crimean Tatars have returned to Crimea. As many as 600,000 of them are expected to eventually return.

Many of those returning face hard times. And housing is their Number 1 problem, according to the Ukrainian Commission on the Relations Between Republics and Nationalities.

Commission spokesmen said the returning Tatars had initially asked only for land to live on, offering to build houses at their own expense. However, the commission explained, the Tatar leadership later demanded the government provide the Tatars with housing. Many people are now living in caves or small huts, waiting for housing to be completed. But a shortage of money and building materials is slowing down construction. The commission said it had no statistics on housing for the Crimean Tatars.

Crimea apparently received some money before the dissolution of the Soviet Union to help resettle the Tatars, but the Tatars complain it was used for schools, roads and other indirect benefits rather than on houses. However, since the population of Crimea totals an estimated 2.5 million people, integrating hundreds of thousands of additional people into the area has presented some problems. Obviously, infrastructure would need to be expanded, particularly since the government has tried to settle them in sparsely inhabited areas.

Commission employees said they felt Ukraine was not responsible for the Tatars plight. "You've got to keep in mind that Ukraine had nothing to do with sending the Crimean Tatars to Central Asia," one of them said. "That was a Soviet Union action by Stalin. But now Ukraine has to pay a very high price for that action." (On the other hand, Ukraine got Crimea because of the actions of another Soviet leader.) Before the dissolution of Soviet Union, Uzbekistan said it would to pay to resettle its Crimean Tatars in Ukraine, but agreements negotiated since the republics became independent don't include such assistance.

Unless future ethnic conflict in Central Asia leads to a mass movement of the remaining Crimean Tatars, housing them is primarily a permanent problem, not an emergency one. However, as embassy officials explained, their presence is putting a lot of pressure on the Ukrainian government, which could use help in getting them settled more quickly.

### **Ethnic Germans**

Before World War II, an estimated 500,000 ethnic Germans lived in Ukraine. However, during the war, the Soviet government deported hundreds of thousands of them from Ukraine and Russia to Siberia and Central Asia, primarily Kazakhstan. (The government deported the Volga Germans from their autonomous republic in Russia in August 1941, after the Soviet-German pact disintegrated. Germans were deported from Crimea that same month, first to the Caucasus and then, in October, to Kazakhstan. The rest of the ethnic Germans in the North Caucasus were also deported in October. In March 1944, the ethnic Germans who had been in Leningrad during the siege, were sent to Siberia. However, German troops evacuated the ethnic Germans who had been living between the Dnieper and the Dniester rivers to Germany during the German retreat; after the war, about a quarter million ethnic Germans were sent back to the Soviet Union, mostly to camps in Siberia and the Komi area in the north of Russia.)

*Perestroika* provided the ethnic groups uprooted by Stalin the opportunity to leave the areas they had been deported to, and the breakup of the Soviet Union has accelerated the return. Russian President Boris Yeltsin has suggested resettling ethnic Germans in the Volga region, on an abandoned missile-testing site at Kapustin Yar, but German spokesmen have said the site is too small and the land poisoned. Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk then invited several hundred thousand ethnic Germans to settle in his country. The republic's Ukraine-German Fund

is planning for up to 300,000 ethnic Germans to settle in Ukraine. However, news reports say as many as a million may eventually move to the republic. Already, a small group of ethnic Germans has begun settling on farmland in the southern part of the republic.

The movement of ethnic Germans to Ukraine is a primarily a permanent housing problem, not an emergency shelter issue, although ethnic conflict in Central Asia could change that. However, the German government is providing some assistance in this area and is likely to continue to do so to discourage ethnic Germans from migrating to Germany.

### **Ukrainian Migrants From the Outlying Republics**

According to the Commission on the Relationship Between Republics and Nationalities, an estimated four million ethnic Ukrainians were living outside Ukraine at the time of the dissolution of the Soviet Union. (The 1989 Soviet census, however, puts the number at nearly 6.8 million. The vast majority, almost 4.4 million people, lived in Russia. Of the rest, almost 900,000 lived in Kazakhstan; 600,000 in Moldova; 300,000 in Belarus; 150,000 in Uzbekistan; and 100,000 in Kyrgyzstan. Smaller numbers could be found in the rest of the republics.)

The fighting in Moldova, which borders southern Ukraine, and unrest in Tajikistan and the Abkhazia area of Georgia have sent some ethnic Ukrainians back to their homeland. (Most apparently move in with friends or relatives.) Ukrainians officials say they do not know the number who have returned.

However, experts seem to believe that few ethnic Ukrainians living in Central Asia and the Baltics will attempt to return — in large part because they know there is little likelihood they could find suitable housing. One exception, according to representatives of the Commission on Relations Between Republics and Nationalities, is the 600,000 Ukrainians sent to Tyumen, Siberia, to work in the petroleum industry. The commission thinks Siberia should provide housing in Ukraine for these returnees. Commission members said they wanted to solve the Tyumen-Ukrainians's citizenship problem without provoking large-scale movements of people from one republic to another. The Russian Federation's Federal Migration Commission said in November 1992 that Ukrainians were beginning to move from Siberia back to their homeland.

In addition, the Ukrainian government — beset by a host of economic and political problems — apparently has little interest in the plight of most ethnic Ukrainians outside Ukraine, in part a result of Ukraine's defining itself in terms of statehood rather than nationality. A law giving ethnic Ukrainians one year to apply for citizenship received little publicity in the outlying areas. In September, ethnic Ukrainians outside the republic had one and a half months left to apply, but there was some possibility, reportedly, that the application period would be extended for six another months.

## **Government's Ability to Respond<sup>10</sup>**

### *Physical Resources*

It was not possible to obtain a list of Pioneer camps, sanitoriums, resort houses and other institutions in Ukraine. However, the USSR State Statistics Committee counted 7,558 sanitoriums and other rest institutions in the republic. The list does not include Pioneer camps.

In the past, Ukraine used Pioneer camps, sanitoriums, rest houses, schools and other educational institutions to house displaced people in Ukraine. However, the Soviets often sent displaced persons to resorts in Moldova, saving the best Black Sea resorts for ranking party members and others regarded as deserving good vacations. The Ukrainians have nationalized as many of the resorts as they can, but a number of them belong to enterprises, trade unions, ministries, etcetera. Some enterprises such as Aeroflot and the ministries such as the one overseeing railroads also have camps for children. Many of the current camps cannot currently be used during cold weather.

For example, the Ministry of Youth and Sports Affairs owns two Pioneer camps: one called Molodiya Govardia is in Odessa which can house 1,500 people; a second, called Artech, is in Yalta and has room for 6,000. In winter, each can house about one-third that number; only part of each camp has central heating. The camps have bungalows or cottages as well as dormitory-style accommodations; they also have central kitchens. Currently, groups such as the Boy Scouts use the facilities since the Pioneer groups no longer exist. Financing for the camps comes from the state budget.

However, in case of a major disaster, such as another Chernobyl, no one will ask a trade union or an enterprise whether it wants to let displaced persons use the camp, one ministry official said. "We will be told, ordered, to do it, by government decree," he said.

Kiev building officials said people displaced by another nuclear problem or major industrial accident will probably be treated much as the Chernobyl evacuees were: they will be put at the top of the waiting list for permanent housing.

Kiev has several other options for housing displaced persons. First, it has 3,500 apartments reserved for local housing emergencies (i.e., a building needs to be repaired or remodeled or a fire occurs in an apartment). Fifteen percent of the 3,500 are vacant at any one time. These apartments could also be used for people displaced by major disasters, city officials said. Second, the city has a number of vacant hostels — with 20,000 rooms — that it plans to remodel into 10,000 flats over the next five to 10 years. Finally, the city also owns a significant number of old, gutted buildings, but it has run out of money to complete the remodeling.

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<sup>10</sup> Some important information was impossible to obtain in Ukraine, in large part because of the difficulty in setting up appointments to see government officials. It is not clear why. Possibly government workers in Ukraine are more hesitant to meet with foreigners that are people in, say, Moscow. In addition, the government was in some turmoil. Prime Minister Vitold Fokin resigned under pressure and parliament voted a no confidence in the government. Eventually a number of members of the government were replaced.

### *Institutional and Managerial Capacity*

Because of Chernobyl, Ukraine has had considerable experience dealing with disaster. Its Civil Defense unit should be a seasoned organization. And the Chernobyl Ministry (the Ministry of Ukraine on Affairs of Protection of the Population from the Consequences of the Accident at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant) continues to deal with disaster issues. Other ministries were also involved in Chernobyl response.

One official involved in the Chernobyl evacuations said they went off with few big problems. Civil Defense and regional headquarters had everything prepared for people to move from contaminated areas to uncontaminated ones. "The accident occurred on April 26," he said. "Fifty thousand people were moved on the 27th."

The Commission on the Relations between Republics and Nationalities is an agency set up to resolve conflicts and build relations between republics and nationalities, as its name implies. It negotiates agreements with other republics. It does not appear to be actively involved in emergency shelter issues.

# Uzbekistan

## In Brief

Uzbekistan is the fifth-largest republic in the former Soviet Union in land mass and the third-largest in population.

The northeastern corner of the country takes in a part of the Fergana Valley, the most densely populated and richest agricultural region in Central Asia. The Soviets drew republic boundaries in such a way that Uzbekistan shares the valley with Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Unfortunately, in the recent past the valley was the scene of some significant ethnic conflict that resulted in a number of deaths and mass evacuations.

Several scenarios exist in Uzbekistan that could lead to the need for emergency shelter:

- Uzbekistan has significant potential for additional ethnic conflict:
  - Uzbekistan has suggested it has claims to the city of Osh in the Kyrgyz part of the Fergana Valley.
  - Tajikistan has said the Uzbek cities of Samarkand and Bukhara were historically Tajik and perhaps should be again.
  - The spread of Islamic fundamentalism could lead to civil war.
- Uzbekistan lies in the earthquake zone that stretches from Crimea through Central Asia. A major earthquake hit Tashkent in 1966, leveling a significant portion of the city.

# Uzbekistan

## INTRODUCTION

### Topography and Climate

Uzbekistan is a Central Asian country comprising 447,400 square meters, the fifth largest republic in the former Soviet Union. It borders Turkmenistan to the west, Kazakhstan to the north, Kyrgystan and Tajikistan to the east, and Afghanistan to the south. Nine percent of the land is arable.

Most of the country is desert or semi-desert, but it rises in the east into the Alay Range and the Tian Shan. The republic is prone to earthquakes. It also faces severe ecological problems: the removal of excessive amounts of water from the Amu-Darya for irrigation has significantly dried up the Aral Sea, which has led to saline contamination of the soil in some of the surrounding area.

The northeastern corner of the country takes in a part of the Fergana Valley, the most densely populated and richest agricultural region in Central Asia. The Soviets drew republic boundaries in such a way that Uzbekistan shares the valley with Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

Uzbekistan has one autonomous republic, Karakalpakia, with 350,000 people. The country is divided into 12 *oblasts* (provinces), 156 *rayons* (districts) and 109 cities.

In the summer, temperatures average 90 degrees Fahrenheit in the south. Temperatures during the short winter average about 10 degrees Fahrenheit but can fall as low as minus 36 degrees. Temperatures in Tashkent can average over 100 degrees Fahrenheit. The hottest city in the former Soviet Union is said to be Termez in southern Uzbekistan with temperatures over 120 degrees. The average annual rainfall is about eight inches, falling mostly in winter and spring.

### Demographics

According to 1990 estimates, Uzbekistan's population totals more than 20.3 million people, making it the third most populated country in the former Soviet Union. It has a population density of 118 inhabitants per square mile. Forty-one percent of the population is urban. Tashkent, Uzbekistan's capital, has 2.1 million residents. Other major cities include the historic cities of Bukhara and Samarkand as well as Andijan, Fergana and Namangan in the Fergana Valley.

More than two-thirds of the people in Uzbekistan are registered as Uzbeks, and between four and five percent are registered as Tajiks. These percentages, however, may significantly overstate the Uzbek population and understate the number of Tajiks — many Tajiks were erroneously identified as Uzbeks when Uzbekistan became a Soviet Socialist Republic in 1924. Tajiks make up more than 50 percent of some parts of Uzbekistan, particularly Samarkand and Bukhara. Eight to 10 percent of the country's population is Russian. The rest is Tatar, Kazakh, Karakalpak, Korean, Kyrgyz, Ukrainian, Jewish and Turkmen. Most of the people are Moslem.

The average family size is 6.2, and demographers calculate that the population growth rate of 3.7 percent will yield a population of 25 million to 26 million by the year 2000.

### **Current Housing Situation**

Like most countries in Central Asia, Uzbekistan has experienced a chronic and severe housing shortage, particularly in the Fergana Valley. Currently, the people moving to the Uzbek part of the Fergana Valley, most of them from countries in Central Asia, are making the situation worse — housing is reaching the critical point. Many towns and villages in the Fergana region have virtually no more room to absorb new arrivals.

The refugees need to be relocated away from the valley, but often it is the only place in Uzbekistan where the newcomers have relatives; the valley's fertile lands also offer the best chances for employment.

The building season in most of Uzbekistan is year-round.

## DISASTER SCENARIOS

Several potential disaster scenarios exist in Uzbekistan that could lead to the need for emergency shelter:

- Uzbekistan has significant potential for ethnic conflict:
  - Uzbekistan has suggested it has claims to the city of Osh in the Kyrgyz part of the Fergana Valley.
  - Tajikistan has said the Uzbek cities of Samarkand and Bukhara were historically Tajik and perhaps should be again.
  - The spread of Islamic fundamentalism could lead to civil war.
- Uzbekistan lies in the earthquake zone that stretches from Crimea through Central Asia. A major earthquake hit Tashkent in 1966, leveling a significant portion of the city.
- Intensive irrigation has reduced river flow to the Aral Sea and led to the drying of the large, shallow saline lake. The ecological, economical and social consequences of the desiccation of the sea have caused some 20,000 residents per year to leave the area.

### **Ethnic and Political/Religious Conflict**

Uzbekistan's president, Islam Karimov, has proclaimed a national policy that opens the country to all nationalities; nevertheless, there is significant potential for ethnic conflict. A strong and growing sense of Uzbek nationalism, combined with economic problems, lies at the heart of Uzbekistan's ethnic tension. Uzbek nationalism has led to several clashes with non-Uzbek nationalities and has contributed to non-Uzbek's leaving the republic.

One of the areas within Uzbekistan with the highest potential for ethnic conflict is the Fergana valley. The Fergana Valley is a 300-kilometer-long agricultural area that the communists arbitrarily divided among Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. The most fertile area in Central Asia, it provided about a quarter of the cotton raised in the former Soviet Union; other than fruit and silkworms, little else is grown there. Most of the best agricultural lands are in the Uzbek and Tajik parts of the valley; the mountains on three sides belong to the Kyrgyz. The region is also the most densely populated in the former Soviet Union. Andijan *oblast*, for example, reportedly has 435 people per square kilometer.

In May 1989, the opposing team failed to show up for a football game in Andijan, so disgruntled fans stormed out of the football stadium and burned down 20 houses belonging to some of the wealthiest people in town, primarily Russians and Armenians. Young men in the crowd reportedly carried a list containing names of the people whose homes they sought to destroy. After the incident, half the Russian population in the oblast reportedly left the country.

The next month, violence erupted in the city of Fergana after Uzbeks and Meskhetian Turks got into an argument at the market. Five people were killed. The riots ended only when the Russian military airlifted 30,000 Meskhetian Turks out of the area into Russia and Azerbaijan. The conflict apparently was the culmination of ethnic tension that had been growing for some time. The total number of Meskhetian Turks who left Uzbekistan after the riots has been estimated at between 50,000 and 100,000; 50,000 is probably the more accurate figure.

Some ethnographers think the situation in the Fergana Valley has the potential for additional explosive conflicts. They point to the chronic, but low-level, displacement of populations in the region. Since 1990, ethnic Uzbeks have been moving from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan back to Uzbekistan. Similarly, Kyrgyz have been leaving Fergana and Tashkent *oblasts* to return to Kyrgyzstan. This migration was not constant enough to be called a flow, the experts said, but it is an indication of the insecurity minorities feel in several regions of Central Asia.

Uzbekistan has mentioned claims to the Kyrgyz city of Osh, which is reportedly 60 percent Uzbek. In the 1970s, ethnic Uzbeks — prompted, in part, by Moscow's command to increase cotton production — began immigrating from Uzbekistan to farm the fertile valleys of Kyrgyzstan's two southeastern *oblasts*, Osh and Jalalabad. Several years ago, Kyrgyz claimed the distribution of land under a privatization program involving a state farm in Osh favored ethnic Uzbeks. Party leaders hastily overruled the allocations, which enraged the Uzbek community. A violent conflict developed between the two communities in June 1990 and went on for five days, resulting in a number of deaths.

Another potential conflict could develop between Tajiks and Uzbeks, in either Uzbekistan or Tajikistan. Uzbeks have suggested that portions of Tajik territory, particularly Leninabad *oblast*, including the cities of Khojand and Ura-Tyube, belong to Uzbekistan. If war broke out between the two countries, a fairly significant exchange of populations could take place. At least half the 1.2 million Uzbeks living in Tajikistan might flee to Uzbekistan. It is harder to determine the number of Tajiks who would leave Uzbekistan, since their numbers in the country are in dispute.

A major, rapid migration between the two countries could lead to conflict over the Uzbek cities of Bukhara and Samarkand, which have Tajik populations of possibly 50 percent. Tajikistan has historical claims to the two cities. Tajiks trace their origins to Persians who settled in the area in the sixth century BC. In the 16th century, the area was conquered by the nomadic Uzbeks and Kazakhs, descendants of Genghis Khan. The area was eventually divided into three khanates, or territories: Khiva, which ran from northern Uzbekistan out to the Aral Sea north of Turkmenistan; Kokand, which is now the Fergana Valley; and the Bukhara area. By the 18th century, almost all the territory inhabited by Tajiks was under the khanate of Bukhara. By the end of the 19th century, Russia had succeeded in conquering the area and established a governorate. Abolishing the three territories, they named the entire region Turkestan. The area came under Soviet dominion soon after the October Revolution. In 1921, the Red Army invaded the Bukhara khanate and met a fierce fight from the Basmachis. Partly in retaliation, the Bolsheviks gave that part of the Tajik territory to the Uzbek republic.

Although experts don't currently think any major conflicts would start within the cities, it is possible that serious armed battles over the borderlands could easily spread to Bukhara and Samarkand. The conflict would likely be a bloody one, and large numbers of ethnic Tajiks would have to cross hostile areas before reaching Tajikistan.

To prevent cross-border migrations from escalating into conflict, the Uzbek government maintains a strict but unofficial policy of not accepting displaced persons leaving Tajikistan, even ethnic Uzbeks. In at least two cases in the summer of 1992, the Uzbek government "encouraged" Tajiks and ethnic Uzbeks, who were fleeing the civil war in Tajikistan, to return to that country. In one case, an estimated 20,000 to 30,000 Uzbeks fled from the Leninabad *oblast* into Uzbek Fergana. In the second incident, at least 10,000 people, both Tajiks and ethnic Uzbek who had left homes in the rural areas around Kurgan-Tyube, were allowed to stay in the Termez area for only a few days before the Uzbek government "helped" them to return. People who are knowledgeable of the government's action disagree on the amount of force used. According to some people, a number of refugees returned to Tajikistan on their own when the Uzbek government offered them no assistance.

Although many observers think a resurgent fundamentalist Islamic movement could lead to civil war in the country, no one knows what numbers of displaced persons would be generated from such an event. In any case, the current fundamentalist movement is based in the Uzbek city of Namangan in the Fergana Valley.

### Earthquakes

Uzbekistan lies in the seismic zone that stretches from the Crimean peninsula through Central Asia. Almost all of Tashkent's mud-walled buildings were destroyed in a major earthquake that hit the city in 1966.

### Aral Sea

A few years ago, the Soviet press proclaimed the desiccation of the Aral Sea — a large, shallow saline lake straddling the border between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in the western part of Central Asia — as "one of the very greatest ecological problems of our century." Newspaper reports compared the magnitude of its consequences to the nuclear accident at Chernobyl and the earthquake in Armenia.

In 1960, the Aral Sea ranked fourth among the world's largest lakes in area. The sea's level was at 53.4 meters; its area measured 68,000 square kilometers and its depth was 16 meters, giving it a volume of 1,090 cubic kilometers; its salinity averaged nearly 10 grams per liter. By 1987, the Aral Sea had dropped to sixth place among the world's largest lakes. Its other dimensions had also diminished correspondingly: sea level had fallen 13 meters; the area had been reduced by 40 percent and the average depth by five meters; the volume had decreased by 66 percent; and the salinity had risen to 27 grams per liter.

The Aral Sea's sole sources of surface inflow are the Syr- and Amu-Darya, the two largest rivers in Central Asia. A series of dry years occurred in the 1970s and 1980s, naturally reducing the flow of water from the rivers to the sea. But the major reason the sea is drying up is the increase in the amount of water being diverted from the rivers to irrigate agricultural

lands, particularly new areas such as the Golodnaya steppe along the Syr-Darya. However, the Kara-kum Canal — the largest and longest irrigation canal in the former Soviet Union — is the single most important factor reducing the flow of water into the Aral Sea. The canal stretches westward along the Kara-kum Desert, getting its water from a point near where the Amu-Darya emerges from the mountains. Therefore, all the water pouring into the canal is lost to the sea.

As the sea has shrunk, a large amount of salt has accumulated, making it difficult for vegetation to grow on the former sea bottom. Major dust/salt storms have resulted, usually blowing southwestward over an ecologically and agriculturally important delta of the Amu-Darya. In addition, the frequency and size of the storms increases as the sea shrinks. As the sea has gotten smaller and more saline, all of its 24 local fish species have disappeared; 12 of them were commercially important. Employment directly and indirectly related to the fishing industry has disappeared, and residents have had to abandon fishing villages. Drinking water has also become a problem in the areas that remain inhabited. Contamination of drinking water is believed to have caused intestinal problems, hepatitis, kidney failure, throat cancer and birth defects, among others illnesses.

The Uzbek part of the Aral Sea is in the Karakalpak Autonomous Republic, which has 350,000 residents, more or less equally divided among Uzbeks, Karakalpaks and Kazakhs. The region's population has been decreasing recently at the rate of about 20,000 people per year because of the problems associated with the Aral Sea. Demographers worry that if the Amu-Darya's irrigation problems are not resolved, the remaining Karakalpak population will have to be moved to the east. However, this migration is not likely to require emergency shelter since the movement should be fairly slow and somewhat dispersed.

## **Government's Ability to Respond**

### *Physical Resources*

According to the Federation for Trade Unions of Uzbekistan, the republic has used sanitoriums and Pioneer camps in the past to house displaced persons. After flooding in the Namangan area in May 1991, for example, displaced persons stayed in sanitoriums for two months. In another instance, Meskhetian Turks stayed in Pioneer camps for a short time after the 1989 riots in Fergana.

However, the rapidly changing economic situation in the country and the instability of formerly powerful institutions has forced a number of the camps and sanitoriums to close. In August 1992, the federation was in the process of updating its figures but did not expect to have reliable numbers until late fall. For example, the federation officially controlled 936 Pioneer camps but thought in August 1992 that no more than 522 were still open. According to federation estimates, the number of out-of-town camps had dropped from 486 to 367, sanitoriums from 122 to 93, sports camps from 74 to 10 and labor camps for children from 254 to 52. Officials did not know in which *oblasts* camps had been closed. However, they applauded the closing of the labor camps, which were described as thinly disguised fronts for organized child labor: children were pulled out of school each year to pick cotton or harvest other crops.

According to federation officials, no more than 20 of the camps are winterized. However, Uzbekistan enjoys eight months of good weather each year. If people were still in the camps when winter came, officials said, heating would be a problem in many of the facilities; some even lacked windows. The lack of winterized facilities also extends to sanitoriums and holiday centers. No sanitoriums are open in the winter months, and the holiday centers have a total winter capacity of only 329 people.

Civil Defense had stocked some of the sanitoriums with medical supplies and food to be used in case of nuclear war. No information was available as to which sanitoriums were stocked except that they were regular, not weekend, facilities. There are 84 such facilities in Uzbekistan. Some federation officials thought much of the food and medical supplies would be outdated or missing.

Most Uzbek officials think it important to keep the camps open for the children in the summer. They also agreed that most of the facilities (1) were not adequate for housing families, (2) would need some minor repairs before receiving families, maintenance during their stay and major repairs after their departure and (3) should be kept open for their intended purpose. The exception was holiday centers.

The federation seemed to have some enthusiasm for the possibility of housing displaced families in camps, but it appeared to stem, in part, from a hope that foreign assistance would be available to repair the facilities. In addition, owners of the facilities would expect to be compensated for refugees and/or displaced persons using them. The fee for one person to stay in a holiday center for 24 days was 1,395 rubles in August 1992.

According to Uzbekistan Red Crescent officials, the organization has used tents in the past and will continue to do so since they are easily stocked and can be quickly transported to the site of an emergency. The organization would rather use tents than Pioneer camps to house people during emergencies, at least in part because it has no authority to use the camps. The 10-person tent is the preferred size. Red Crescent believes that people should not be moved from the site of a natural disaster, that emergency shelter should be taken to the victims of the disaster. There is some concern that camps and centers close to the site of a disaster would not be safe. In August, the Red Crescent's stock of tents was exhausted.

Various ministries have tents and wagons (small mobile living units for road workers, etcetera), but the Red Crescent has no say in their use or any idea of their numbers.

### *Institutional and Managerial Capacity*

The lead relief agency in Uzbekistan is the Commission for Humanitarian Assistance. The commission comprises high-ranking officials who delegate most, if not all, responsibilities to subordinates, who appear to be overworked.

The Uzbekistan Red Crescent is the most active organization providing humanitarian assistance. One Red Crescent official indicated the organization's ability to respond to emergencies was diminishing. Before the breakup of the Soviet Union, Red Cross/Red Crescent in Moscow had provided the Uzbekistan organization with relief supplies. But with Uzbekistan's independence, the local Red Crescent's formal relationship with Moscow ended. Currently, the organization is receiving no government funding, although the Uzbek government recently gave

the organization a building; it is also having trouble collecting dues and private donations. The number of Red Crescent nurses in the country has dropped from 2,200 last year to 1,600 by August 1992. The only bright spot was a recent promise by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to help fund staff salaries.

The lion's share of the operational responsibility for displaced persons goes to local officials, such as mayors and heads of local health departments. For example, local government officials took care of the ethnic Uzbeks who fled Kurgan-Tyube in Tajikistan last summer; those officials also sent the refugees back to Tajikistan.

The Center for Emergency Preparedness, another agency involved with displaced populations, was set up three years ago and is apparently more involved in response than preparedness. In emergencies, the center coordinates the work of specialists in the Red Crescent, the Ministry of Housing and local government officials.

A potential major player in emergency shelter is the Federation for Trade Unions of Uzbekistan, which manages the majority of the Pioneer camps and sanitoriums in the country. The federation as well as individual trade unions often provide money for food and tents in emergencies. In addition, the federation hopes to develop new enterprises that would manufacture tents to meet future needs. The federation is looking for opportunities to develop joint ventures with U.S. companies. Federation officials were helpful — going out of their way to provide a list of Pioneer camps, sanitoriums and holiday centers — knowledgeable about the practical applications of using such facilities for refugees/displaced persons and open to the idea.

The agencies and organizations responsible for emergency relief focus on natural disasters and tend to avoid the issue of refugees and persons displaced by civil conflict. Their approach to providing emergency shelter does not include rebuilding lost homes after a disaster such as an earthquake.

### **Assistance From Other Donors**

At this point, Uzbekistan has received little assistance in emergency shelter from other donors, in part because it has had no pressing emergencies to respond to, particularly since it sent many of the refugees from Tajikistan back to that country. A few NGOs, such as CARE, are operating in Uzbekistan, and the Uzbekistan Red Crescent has an ongoing dialogue with the IFRC.

## Part II <sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> These countries were not visited in 1992, but significant amounts of information were available from secondary sources.

## Belarus

### In Brief

Belarus is a flat, dull republic whose western borders were once the boundaries of the former Soviet Union. A border region, it has been fought over for centuries by Russians, Poles, Germans and others.

Belarus contains 207,600 square kilometers, which makes it the sixth largest republic of the former Soviet Union. About a third of the area is still forested, but in the south are swampy expanses. The center has good, productive agricultural land.

Belarus contains just over 10 million people. Nearly 80 percent are Belarussians, 12 percent are Russians and 4 percent are Poles. Minsk, the capital and largest city, has 1.6 million inhabitants.

Although a few ethnic Belarussians are returning from outlying republics, particularly from the fighting in Moldova, migration is not a major problem for the republic. However, there is one existing disaster scenario that is worth mentioning:

- Belarus, not Ukraine, was the republic most seriously affected by the explosion at Chernobyl<sup>12</sup>. Perhaps 70 percent of all the radioactive fallout from Chernobyl landed on Belarus. Some 7,000 square kilometers of land within the republic currently exceed the maximum permissible norms for radiation contamination. And people still live on 1,160 square kilometers with the highest measured levels of Cesium 137.

Prior to 1989, surprisingly little was reported on the effects of the explosion on Belarus. (It is also difficult to separate figures for Belarus from those for the total disaster.) In early 1989, almost three years after the accident, authorities decided to evacuate 20 additional villages from the regions of Gomel and Mogilev. Persistently high levels of cesium 137 had been found in the area.

In Belarus, as in Ukraine and Russia, contaminated dust is a major problem. Dirt has been sprinkled, asphalted and sprayed with thick plastic films. Contaminated crops also had to be disposed of.

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<sup>12</sup> Additional information on the Chernobyl disaster is available in the Ukraine part of this paper.

## Georgia

### **In Brief**

As the Soviet Union was beginning to break apart, nationalist politics gained a strong hold in Georgia. Zviad Gamsukhurdia and his Round Table ran for — and won national office — on a platform essentially espousing ethnic intolerance in the republic. (Seventy percent of Georgia's 5.3 million people are Georgian.) Georgian officials would not allow Meskhetian Turks, who had been deported by Stalin from Georgia during World War II, to return to their homes. Gamsukhurdia suggested that all South Ossetians should leave the republic and join other Ossetians in what he said was their homeland in North Ossetia. Efforts were also made to curtail Abkhazian culture in that autonomous republic. The result has been warfare on two fronts. Gamsukhurdia was deposed in January 1992, but ethnic conflicts continue.

Although Georgia also experiences frequent earthquakes, its most serious housing problem at this time stems from its ethnic problems:

- Tens of thousands of displaced persons have fled fighting in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, two regions that would like their independence from Georgia.

# Georgia

## INTRODUCTION

### Topography and Climate

Georgia is a Transcaucasian republic of 69,700 square kilometers. Mount Elbrus, one of the peaks in the Georgian Caucasus, is the highest point in Europe at 5,642 meters. Part of the country's western boundary is the Black Sea. (Russia borders it to the north and east while Armenia and Azerbaijan are to the south; Turkey is also a neighbor to the west.)

Two autonomous republics exist within Georgia's boundaries, Abkhazia and Adzhar. One of them, Abkhazia, is attempting to break away from Georgia. An autonomous *oblast*, South Ossetia, has been attempting to achieve independence since 1990.

### Demographics

According to the 1989 census, Georgia had a population of nearly 5.3 million people. Seventy percent are Georgians, eight percent are Armenians, six percent are Russians and six percent are Azeris. The country has a population density of 75.6 people per square kilometer, and 55 percent of the population is urban. Georgia's capital, Tbilisi, had almost 1.2 million residents.

### Current Housing Situation

Georgia, like the other republics of the former Soviet Union, has suffered a chronic housing shortage. But the situation has been exacerbated by three conflicts in the republic since 1990. A number of buildings in Tbilisi were destroyed in the winter of 1991-1992 by efforts to overthrow the country's president, Zviad Gamsukhurdia. In South Ossetia, dozens of villages have been destroyed as well as 80 percent of the housing in the capital, Tskhinvali. The current fighting in Abkhazia is also destroying homes.

The building season in Georgia is similar to that in Armenia. At lower elevations, the building season lasts all year; in the mountains, it runs from April to October.

## DISASTER SCENARIOS

- Georgia faces several potential disaster scenarios. They include:
  - Tens of thousands of displaced persons have fled fighting in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, two regions that would like their independence from Georgia.
  - Georgia falls within the earthquake zone that encompasses the Caucasus, running from the Black Sea to the Caspian Sea.

### South Ossetia and Abkhazia

The fighting in South Ossetia and Abkhazia has produced tens of thousands of internally displaced persons. Some Georgian refugees from South Ossetia have been living in hotels for more than two years, but they refuse to be resettled elsewhere, waiting to return to their villages. More than 40,000 people have also fled the conflict in Abkhazia, some going north to Sochi while others head south to Tbilisi. Refugee officials are processing as many as 500 displaced people a day.

In 1988, Abkhazian intellectuals and Communist Party leaders formed *Aiushvira*, or National Forum, and called for Abkhazian secession. (There are some 70,000 Abkhazians, and they have no homeland outside Georgia. However, only about 18 percent of the population of Abkhazia is Abkhazian.) Violence erupted when Abkhazians protested the Georgian government's creation of a Georgian division at the Abkhazian university in Sukhumi in July 1989. Fourteen people were killed and more than 500 wounded. A year later, the Abkhazian Supreme Soviet declared the area's sovereignty and passed a number of laws asserting its authority over the Georgian parliament. Georgia declared those laws unconstitutional. Abkhazians also support a proposed Caucasian Confederation that would have its capital in Sukhumi, now the capital of Abkhazia.

Serious armed conflict broke out in Abkhazia in mid-August 1992, when Georgian troops marched into Sukhumi, allegedly attempting to prevent terrorist attacks by the supporters of the deposed Gamsukhurdia. Gamsukhurdia's men had been blowing up rail lines. Abkhazians claim the invasion was a pretext to clamp down on the region. Volunteers from the Northern Caucasus in southern Russia have joined the fray, exacerbating the situation.

Georgia, which lacks a unified military, announced in October it was mobilizing 40,000 reservists. The Confederation of Mountain Peoples, which is supporting Abkhazia, retaliated by announcing it would send up to 40,000 troops to the area if necessary.

Since the war started, Georgia has accused Moscow of provoking the confrontation and providing men and arms to destabilize the region. In early October, Georgia gave Russia 10 days to get its troops out of the Caucasus, a near-impossible demand. A few hours after the ultimatum was delivered, two Russian-piloted fighters shot down a Georgian helicopter over the strategic city of Gagra in Abkhazia.

At that time, Abkhazian forces controlled a broad swatch of the Black Sea coast from Sukhumi to Gagra, allowing them to obtain supplies and reinforcements. Georgian helicopters

bombed Gagra on October 5, leaving many buildings in flames. Apparently Russian commanders had banned Georgian aircraft from flying over the region and had threatened to use their aircraft to stop Georgian bombing raids. In retaliation, Georgia announced it would seize all Soviet military weapons and hardware in Georgia.

During the first days of the fighting, between 40,000 and 50,000 refugees reportedly arrived in Russia from Abkhazia. By mid-October, after Abkhazian troops had won control over the northern part of the republic, a number of refugees had begun to return home. Refugee officials at that time said the number of refugees returning was beginning to balance out those arriving.

In the case of South Ossetia, the Georgian government claimed the Ossetians were "settlers" who had arrived in Georgia during the 19th century. Ossetians, however, dispute that, saying their ancestors have lived in the region for hundreds of years. (According to 1989 census figures, Ossetians composed 66 percent of the population of South Ossetia, Georgians accounted for 29 percent, while Russians and other ethnic groups made up the remainder. Additional numbers of Ossetians also lived elsewhere in Georgia.) The Georgian government claimed the Bolsheviks had illegally granted the Ossetians autonomy in 1922 as a reward for anti-Georgian activity — Ossetians tended to be Bolsheviks while Georgians were Mensheviks — during the civil war following the October Revolution.

In 1990, Gamsukhurdia suggested South Ossetians should return to what he claimed was their homeland in neighboring North Ossetia, an autonomous republic in Russia. The sequence of events that followed is not totally clear. However, at some point the Georgian government abolished the South Ossetian autonomous region, and South Ossetians asked Russia to join them to North Ossetia. However, Russia refused, so South Ossetia declared itself independent.

Georgian troops, reportedly equipped with dogs, entered Tskhinvali, the capital of South Ossetia in early January 1991, and arrested Ossetian officials, including the head of its parliament. Civil war ensued. More than 100,000 Ossetian refugees fled Georgia and South Ossetia for North Ossetia, and some 12,000 Georgians from South Ossetia sought refuge in Georgia. After six or so weeks, Georgian troops withdrew from Tskhinvali but continued their attacks on Ossetian villages in the region. A few weeks later, the then-Soviet Union sent its interior troops to South Ossetia to maintain order. The Soviet troops remained until April 26, 1992, when they were withdrawn by the Russian government.

A couple of weeks later, Georgian troops stepped up their attack on Tskhinvali and the surrounding Ossetian villages, destroying numerous buildings and creating thousands of new refugees. On June 11, the Russian Parliament declared a state of emergency in North Ossetia, and Russian troops were airlifted to the area. Eduard Shevardnadze, the Georgian leader, accused Russian helicopter troops, who remained in Tskhinvali after the interior troops withdrew, of supporting the separatists with helicopter fire. But by mid-June, Georgian troops had taken most of Tskhinvali and ordered remaining residents to leave. Fighting continued until August 1992. By that time, more than 80 percent of the housing in Tskhinvali reportedly was in ruins and much of the population had fled. An estimated 120,000 refugees fled South Ossetia and Georgia for North Ossetia during the duration of the war. In late 1992, South Ossetian had

planned to ask Russia's Congress of Peoples Deputies to annex the area, but the item did not come up on the congress' agenda in December.

More than 600 people had been killed since the conflict began, more than 1,000 people are missing and presumed dead, and more than 125 Ossetian villages destroyed. The number of Georgian villages destroyed was not available.

### **Earthquakes**

Georgia lies within the seismic zone that begins at the Crimean peninsula and extends across the Caucasus. Earthquakes seem to strike the republic with some regularity. In the spring of 1991, for example, three earthquakes occurred in the north-central part of Georgia, destroying numerous homes in small villages in the South Ossetian autonomous *oblast*. Another earthquake in October 1992 rocked southern Russia, Georgia and Armenia, killing one person in the Georgian village of Barisakho, 90 kilometers northeast of Tbilisi. A number of people were injured and several dozen homes destroyed in the sparsely populated Caucasus.

### **Current Refugee Situation**

The exact number of displaced persons currently in Georgia is not clear. Many of them are living with friends and relatives; others, however, are occupying Pioneer camps, sanitoriums and hotels. Heating could be a major problem in the winter in some of the facilities. However, refugee officials in Georgia insist the republic has enough permanent facilities to house whatever number of people are displaced by the fighting.

## Kazakhstan

### In Brief

Kazakhstan, the second largest of the former Soviet republics, is home to 16.5 million people. Some 1.2 million of its residents live in the capital, Alma-Ata. Like most of the other parts of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan had a housing shortage, particularly in Alma-Ata. Some 56,000 people are on the waiting list for housing in the capital — the usual waiting period is 10 to 15 years. The high cost of construction has dramatically slowed municipal building. In 1990, the city built 600,000 square meters of housing; one year later, the annual total had dropped to 254,000 square meters.

Kazakhstan obviously has a housing problem. Several possible disaster scenarios could make things worse, but one stands out:

- The country is located in an earthquake zone that runs through Central Asia. A major earthquake hit Alma-Ata (then called Verny) in 1887, destroying the city. Another earthquake rocked Alma-Ata in the early part of the 20th century, leveling 60 percent of the area. No major earthquake has struck since. One seismic theory holds that Alma-Ata is overdue for an earthquake. But some seismologists now discount that theory.

# **Kazakhstan**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Topography and Climate**

Kazakhstan, the second largest of the former Soviet republics in size, contains 2.7 million square kilometers. Located in Central Asia, it is bordered by China to the southeast; Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan to the south; the Caspian Sea to the southwest; and Russia to the north and northwest.

Kazakhstan's terrain is full of contrasts. The steppes extend across much of the northern part of the country. Below the steppes, sometimes merging with them, are semi-deserts and deserts. The Urals drop into the northwestern portion of the republic; the Tian Shan extend the country around Alma-Ata. In addition, Kazakhstan has 7,000 rivers, 1,500 glaciers and 48,000 small lakes. It also has a 1,450-mile coastline on the Caspian Sea.

Kazakhstan is located in a seismic zone that stretches from the Crimean peninsula through the Caucasus to Central Asia. The country is also home to the northern part of the Aral Sea.

The climate is dry; cooler temperatures occur in the northern mountainous region.

### **Demographics**

According to the 1989 census, Kazakhstan had a population of 16.5 million; since then, it has grown by an estimated 500,000 people. That gives it a population density of something like 16 people per square mile. Some 39.7 percent of the population is Kazakh, while Russians make up 39.8 percent; Germans, 5.8 percent; and Ukrainians, 5.4 percent.

The country's three largest cities are Alma-Ata with 1.2 million residents, Karaganda with 650,000 people and Shimkent with 400,000.

### **Current Housing Situation**

Like all the other republics in the former Soviet Union, Kazakhstan had a housing shortage, particularly in Alma-Ata. Some 56,000 people are on the waiting list for housing in the capital. The usual waiting period is 10 to 15 years.

The high costs of construction have dramatically slowed municipal housing construction in Kazakhstan. In 1990, the city built 600,000 square meters of housing; one year later, the annual total had dropped to 254,000 square meters. The city also has 7,000 plots available for individual dwellings. Under the program, families would lease the land and construct their own homes. However, with the high cost of construction, this project, too, had slowed. In March 1992, the average cost of an individual house was the ruble equivalent of about \$5,000, too expensive for the majority of families.

The building season in Kazakhstan lasts all year in most areas.

## DISASTER SCENARIOS

Kazakhstan has several potential disaster scenarios. Among them are:

- The country is located in an earthquake zone that runs through Central Asia. A major earthquake hit Alma-Ata (then called Verny) in 1887, destroying the city. Another earthquake rocked Alma-Ata in the early part of the 20th century, leveling 60 percent of the area. No major earthquake has struck since. One seismic theory holds that Alma-Ata is overdue for an earthquake. But some seismologists now discount that theory.
- Some Russian-speakers are moving to Kazakhstan from other Central Asian republics rather than going on to Russia. The U.S. Embassy in Alma-Ata has also begun to receive reports of ethnic Kazakhs moving into the northern and eastern parts of the country from Mongolia and China.
- Many of the Russians who live in Kazakhstan inhabit the northwestern part of the republic. That region, which has been heavily populated by Russians since the 19th century, was given to Kazakhstan. If the situation between ethnic Russians and Kazakhs deteriorates, some observers predict the Russian area will attempt to break away from Kazakhstan, a move that could lead to civil war.

But the more likely scenario is a mass migration of ethnic Russians from Kazakhstan. In December 1992, Russia's Federal Migration Service (FMS) was beginning to worry about the possibility of six million people returning to Russia from Kazakhstan. Nothing particularly alarming had occurred to justify that fear, although language issues remain a matter of contention between Kazakhs and Russians. President Nursultan Nazarbaev, who is trying to hold the country together, has proposed upgrading Russian from the language of "inter-ethnic communication" to an "official" language, though inferior to Kazakh. However, according to news reports, the mayor of a provincial town had to resign after she demanded that Russian be made equal to Kazakh; she has since moved to Russia. FMS was worried it will not be able to handle large numbers of Russians if they decide to follow the mayor's example.

However, a bumper grain crop was harvested this year in Kazakhstan, keeping prices down. Additionally, Chevron is about to sign a contract with Kazakhstan to exploit the country's oil. Optimists hope that a flow of dollars will up the country's standard of living to a point where ethnic differences matter less.

## Moldova

### In Brief

For more than a year now, Moldova — one of the smallest and most densely populated of the republics of the former Soviet Union — has dealt with one major problem:

- After the breakup of the Soviet Union, ethnic Russians in Moldova feared the republic would fairly quickly become a part of neighboring Romania. After the Soviet Union had annexed the country in 1940, Stalin carved a sliver of land, now called the Trans-Dniester, out of the Ukraine, and added it to Moldova. Russians and Ukrainians were moved into Moldova after annexation because the Soviets didn't trust the Moldovans' loyalty. Although the Russian-speakers were a minority in the country, they controlled its political life. They also controlled the Trans-Dniester, where much of the country's industry was located. The region is also home to the Russian 14th Army. In December 1991, the "Dniester SSR" forces of the hard-line Communist leaders — allegedly armed and trained by elements of the Soviet military in the area — seized police and administrative buildings in several Trans-Dniester towns and in the important right-bank city of Bendery. The area erupted in civil war, creating tens of thousands of displaced persons and refugees.

Since a cease-fire was signed in July 1992, the area has calmed down considerably. Only 3,000 refugees remained, as of October.

# **Moldova**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Topography and Climate**

Moldova, the second smallest of the former Soviet republics, comprises 33,700 square kilometers. Romania borders it on the west and Ukraine on the other three sides. Soviet Moldavia is essentially the land historically known as Bessarabia. (In 1858, Romania was founded when Moldavia and Wallachia united; the area gained its independence from Turkey in 1878. In 1918, Bessarabia became a part of Romania after local nationalists and Romanian troops beat the Bolsheviks. However, the Soviet Union retook Bessarabia in 1940.) The republic could join Romania in the future.

Moldova's climate is similar to that of Ukraine.

### **Demographics**

Moldova is the most densely populated republic in the former Soviet Union with 145 persons per square kilometer. Its population, according to the 1989 Soviet census, was nearly 4.2 million people. Between 60 and 65 percent of the people are ethnic Moldovans. Most of the remainder are Russians and Ukrainians.

### **Current Housing Situation**

The building season in Moldova is similar to that in Ukraine or Belarus. The traditional season in most areas lasts from April to October, but the Soviet system of prefabricated construction has extended the building season for the entire year.

## DISASTER SCENARIO

Moldova has faced one major disaster situation: a conflict over the Trans-Dniester region.

Control of much of the land that makes up present-day Moldova, an area once called Bessarabia, has long rotated among the forces powerful in that part of Europe. Jurisdiction over Bessarabia alternated between the Russians and the Ottomans after 1812. It then fell under Romanian rule and stayed there until June 1940, when the provisions of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact between Germany and the Soviet Union allowed the Soviets to annex the area. After that annexation, Stalin carved a sliver of land, now called the Trans-Dniester, out of the Ukraine and added it to Moldova. Russians and Ukrainians were moved into Moldova after annexation because the Soviets didn't trust the Moldovans' loyalty. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, many Russians and Ukrainians fear that Moldova will once again become a part of Romania.

Although ethnic Moldovans make up 60 to 65 percent of Moldova's population, ethnic Russians (and to a lesser extent Ukrainians) controlled the urban, industrial, and political life of the country before the breakup of the Soviet Union. Russian-speakers dominated the Communist Party, which in turn controlled political life in the republic. They also dominated Moldovan industry — much of which was located in the Trans-Dniester. The Trans-Dniester region, which is bordered by the Dniester River and Ukraine, accounts for about one-tenth of Moldova's land area but more than one-fifth of its industrial production. The region is also home to the Russian 14th Army. About 60 percent of the inhabitants of the area are Russian and Ukrainian; most of the rest are ethnic Romanian.

As Moldova began to dismantle the political and military mechanisms that had tied it to the USSR, nationalism emerged as the over-riding political issue: Moldovan (i.e., Romanian) became the official language of the republic, and Latin script replaced Cyrillic, while the Popular Front — a parliamentary opposition group — called for political unification with Romania. The Moldovan Communist Party was voted out of office in 1990, and a rapid exodus of Moldovans reinforced the traditional preponderance of Russians and Russified elements within the party. Further isolated from the native population, the party was defeated on a national scale and in ethnically Moldovan areas in 1991. However, the communists held on in the Russified cities of the Trans-Dniester — and to some extent in the ethnic Gagauz areas of southern Moldova — by playing on fears of cultural disenfranchisement and by identifying Soviet power with the defense of ethnic minority interests.

The communist leadership openly welcomed the attempted coup d'état in Moscow in August 1991. After the coup failed, several local Communist leaders were arrested, the activities of the party were banned and party property was nationalized by the Moldovan Parliament after evidence showed it had supported the coup attempt. Communist supporters subsequently mounted a month-long blockade of Moldova's railroads, forcing a release of those held in custody. Also, party supporters picketed and occasionally attacked Moldovan police stations, seeking to force the police to change sides or to leave the Trans-Dniester area. Then, in December 1991, the "Dniester SSR" forces of the hard-line Communist leaders — allegedly

armed and trained by elements of the Soviet military in the area — seized police and administrative buildings in several Trans-Dniester towns and in the important right-bank city of Bendery. A major clash at Dubassar on December 13 killed six Moldovan policemen and three "Dniester SSR" fighters.

While major confrontations were largely avoided during the next two months, the situation again intensified in early March 1992, when nine persons were killed in clashes in the space of a week and a tenuous cease-fire failed to hold. During the interim, both sides had increased their military forces and the "Dniester SSR" had augmented its side with several hundred Cossack mercenaries returning to their traditional role as defenders of Russia's borders. Between March and mid-May, more than 100 people were killed in the conflict.

In June, a week of fighting between separatists and Moldovan loyalists in Bendery left more than 400 people dead and created an estimated 7,000 additional displaced persons. Two-thirds of the displaced headed for Tiraspol, the capital of the Trans-Dniester region; the remainder were going farther into Moldova. Several cease-fires were agreed to in June but violated by continuing fighting.

The role of the Russian 14th Army in the conflict has been questioned. In the spring, Moscow said the army was seeking to insert itself as a "buffer" between the two opposing sides, while Moldovan authorities suggested the army was actively supporting, training and arming the "Dniester SSR" forces. Since then, Russian army commanders have said some of their men have joined the separatists. In June, the U.S. government called upon Russia to negotiate a withdrawal of the army from Moldova. However, the conflict became something of a nationalist cause in Russia. Russian President Boris Yeltsin and Vice President Aleksandr Rutskoi have both warned that Russia could intervene in the conflict, and the Ukrainian military commander has said his troops "would do their duty" if the conflict intensified, news reports said. Moldovan President Mircea Snegur has said Russia is waging an undeclared war against Moldova.

Although the conflict in the Trans-Dniester is often depicted in ethnic terms, Russians represented only 20 percent of the 600,000 to 700,000 people in that region; according to the 1989 census, more Russians lived in the capital, Kishinev, than in all of the Trans-Dniester. However, according to the 1989 census, 28 percent of the Trans-Dniester population is Ukrainian and 12 percent others, mainly Gagauz and Bulgars; only 40 percent of the region's people are Moldovan. Apparently, a clear majority of Russians in Moldova continue to reside in areas outside the Trans-Dniester, as do most Ukrainians in the republic, and are not involved in the conflict.

### **Current Refugee Situation**

In the months after the fighting began, some 60,000 to 70,000 people fled their homes. The vast majority of the displaced persons were ethnic Moldovans, but some Russians and Ukrainians were also among them. In mid-April approximately 8,500 of the registered individuals were lodging with relatives and receiving only modest assistance from the state, but some 2,200 were living in hotels, hostels, school dormitories and Pioneer camps entirely at government expense. Officials estimated government expenditures for food, lodging, transport,

etcetera at two million rubles per day — and rising. The government was receiving donations from local enterprises and private individuals and had obtained some assistance from the Romanian Red Cross.

However, since a cease-fire went into effect in late July 1992, most of the displaced have returned to their homes. In October 1992, only about 3,000 of them remained, including an estimated 1,500 political refugees who cannot return home.