

Global influence

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PATRICK CORMACK was educated at the Havelock School and the University of Hull. He was elected as Member of Parliament in 1970 and initially served as Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Department of Health and Social Security. Having served continuously in all parliaments since 1970, he was knighted in 1995 and during the 2005-10 parliament was Chairman of the Northern Ireland Select Committee. He is recognised as one of the leading parliamentary historians and has written a number of books on parliamentary history. He was raised to the peerage as Baron Cormack of Enville in 2010.

A show during the opening of a monument to the Kazakh people in Almaty

It seems difficult to realise that it is only twenty years since Kazakhstan emerged from its troubled past and gained its rightful place as an independent nation, following the break-up of the Soviet Union. It is now a respected member of the international community and recognised by all as a crucial and active member of the United Nations.

Kazakhstan may not yet be a fully-fledged Western-style democracy but had its leaders driven too fast and furiously in that direction, against a background of Soviet repression and exploitation, and without any democratic infrastructure on which to build, they would have been embarking on a very hazardous course and that could well have resulted in conflict and confusion, and ultimate failure. Like many who have admired the real progress that has been made in the last twenty years, it is my fervent hope that, as succeeding anniversaries of nationhood are celebrated, so are further steps on the road to full democracy – a democracy that will be both stable and permanent.

For the moment, any fair-minded observer must recognise that what we have seen emerge in the last two decades is a strong and stable nation state, one with a vibrant economy and great potential; and one that is respected for its individuality: a nation moreover whose strategic importance in Central Asia is increasingly

widely recognised. That Kazakhstan should remain a strong, viable state in one of the most turbulent areas of the world is vital for world peace and security.

Jonathan Aitken's perceptive article in this special issue of FIRST outlines the uncontestable achievements of Kazakhstan's President and political leaders over the last twenty years. Lord Fraser of Carmyllie, in his article, rightly underlines Kazakhstan's key role as a leader among the nations of Central Asia.

Against this promising background, it is encouraging to observe the developing friendship, and increasing commercial and cultural bonds, between the United Kingdom and Kazakhstan. In his encouraging article, Foreign Office Minister, David Lidington, stresses that Kazakhstan is indeed a natural partner for the United Kingdom. Rich in resources, both human and material, Kazakhstan has a dynamic population, with the determination to consolidate its position of regional leadership and global influence in a part of the world where ancient civilizations and trade routes have moulded human development over the centuries. I am confident that Kazakhstan will, in the most constructive and positive way, exploit the opportunities it has to wield a steady and benign influence as it moves towards its twenty-fifth anniversary of nationhood, and beyond. **E**

