

First Missions – Kazakhstan

First Missions – Pioneering Workers – Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan

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Kazakhstan, Asia
Formerly a part of the U.S.S.R.

Location: An independent State not far north of Pakistan, formerly a part of the U.S.S.R. Almaty is the capital.

When did the workers first arrive? 1990

Who were the first brother workers? Dale Benjamin

By 1994, in four years there were 6 workers: Dale Benjamin and Chansun Pahk; Anna Marla Grassi and Jahyun Jo; and Harriet Saman and Soonhyun Jo.

Who were the first sister workers? Where were they from?

Who was the first to profess, what year and where?

Who were the first native workers to go in the work and When?

First Native Brother Worker:

First Native Sister Worker:

When & Where was the first Gospel Meeting?

When & Where was the first Sunday fellowship meeting?

When & Where was the first baptism?

When & Where was the first convention? August, 1994 in a little country town about 70 KM from Almaty.

Where have subsequent conventions been held?

Where is the convention now held? List shows Kazakhstan #1 and #2, both held in July

Who have the Overseers been?

Native Language?

September, 1994 Letter by Sister Worker Heather Mowat

In August we had the wonderful privilege of being at the first little convention in Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan is part of what was once the U.S.S.R. It is now an independent state not so far to the north of Pakistan. But going from Pakistan is like stepping from east to west. Almaty is the present capital – they're thinking of moving it to a more central place. Almaty is a lovely city with a backdrop of beautiful mountains. There are big old trees lining every street around the central city and lots of little parks. We saw some fine buildings in the city area and enjoyed visiting the city market – a row of ladies selling honey, another where they were selling milk products, then Korean foods, then spice, then dried fruit and nuts – just a treat to see. There was a meat market too – selling beef, mutton, pork, chicken, horse! But you have to remember there are many poor people too – some haven't had their pension for the last three months and are living on bread and what they can grow in their garden, if they have one. Actually in the city most people live in apartments. There are huge blocks of them.

Almaty has a population of about million; the whole country has about 16 million but many Russians are leaving as the Kazakh people are now promoting their national identity and language. Free enterprise is everywhere. We noticed it particularly in the transport system. For a taxi you just hail any car that has just a driver. He's usually glad to take you. Outside the shops are rows of older ladies standing with a few tomatoes or two or three garments, or a few bottles of something they have made – just patiently standing waiting for someone to buy their few things. Coming from Pakistan it strikes you as a very literate society. The folk were happy to show us their public library – people seem to have lots of books in their homes – people sitting in the park are reading too. The Kazakhstan University in Almaty has 10,000 students. It's the first time I've been in a place where they travel on the right side of the road so we were always looking the wrong way and then stepping out in front of a car!

Convention was held in a little town in the country, about 70 kilometers out of Almaty. On the way we passed many "dachas", a kind of country house, sometimes just a one-roomed place, but sometimes quite big, where town folk come for their "holidays" and where they have their vegetable garden. There they pickle and bottle and dry their vegetables for the winter. There are many Korean people in Kazakhstan. They come from the part north of Korea and were forcibly evacuated to these parts in the 1930s. Many died on the way and others faced great hardships.

But it seems that it was the thought of these Koreans that brought the workers to these parts. Dale Benjamin came here four years ago with one or two Korean contacts, and now there are six workers in Kazakhstan – Dale Benjamin and Chansun Pahk, Anna Marla

Grassi and Jahyun Jo – all in Almaty area at present – and Harriet Saman and Soonhyun Jo up at Balhash, about 10 hours away.

The lady on the con grounds has a professing daughter. This lady gave us a nice welcome and left her home free for all the ladies to sleep there. Part of the backyard was just right to spread a canvas for the meeting tent roof. The weather was very pleasant and no need for sides to the tent. They say it gets quite warm – and then down to minus 20° in winter. About 43 gathered at the con, counting seven Kazakhstan workers (Virginia Jones has been labouring there this past year but will be in St. Petersburg this year with Kathy Hoare) – and we four visitors Don Garland (Korea), Colin Seymour (China) and Ruth Callaway and myself (Heather Mowat) from Pakistan. There were seven visiting friends also. It was indeed a unique convention. Just a few have made a start so it was really a gospel convention – gospel meetings three times a day! Those who attended have been following up the mission for several months or more. It was remarkable to see how they adopted the con spirit of helpfulness and the con attitude of quietness – and there was no doubt they were there for their soul's need. Before the convention finished about ten of those who had been previously listening had given a clear testimony of valuing the meetings and seeing this is the way, and of having a desire. It will take time and labour to help these folk further but the prospects are good!

Maybe I can tell you a little of some of the folk there that have been contacted since the workers came. As you know there was no freedom of religion under the 70 years of the Communist regime. However, there were "believers" like the granma on the con ground. Her mother told her that there was a God and that tho she couldn't speak about it she should keep it in her heart.

But many others have been like Olga, with no belief in God at all. Olga worked for a company there and when Dale and a business friend of his visited there, the manager pointed out Olga as an unbeliever but a good woman that could be helped. And indeed it proved to be so. At first she said, "I'm only coming for the English, I can't believe. It's only like a fairy story – how can I believe?" but slowly she has received faith by hearing, and now she is so happy in what she has found.

A young man Amin was an atheist. When Communism fell he was heartbroken because he had trusted in it. So then he read a "holy book", found nothing, so read the philosophers – but still found nothing for the soul – so he started reading the Bible, but he did not understand it. Just then he saw a poster advertising the brothers' meetings. At the first meeting he told them, "Yes I am interested in learning English but I am also interested in the Bible." He had a real hunger and it's lovely to see his heart for the truth now. He was one of the interpreters at convention

One young Korean woman who gave her testimony at convention was Jayhun's Russian teacher in Korea. She became Interested in what Jahyun believed. It was strange that they both came to Almaty, and Jahyun followed up the contact there. She went to the Christian churches there but was disappointed in finding them just a business. At last she said, "There Is no peace anywhere in the world – only in these little meetings."

One old gentleman that came to a few meetings at the convention is a retired professor philosophy and has spent his life teaching Marxism. His grandson's wife Natasha has decided. She can tell of the days when she and other young Communists would surround a church and catch the young folk as they left and report them to the authorities. So you realize it's a time of great changes when you see her sitting in the little fellowship meeting!

A few folk from the little town came to the convention. The granma next door liked to come. She knows little but would like to learn, so now they will have gospel meetings there. We were at the first one before we left and it was nice to see six ladies come along. We were also at a study meeting in Almaty before we left. Wonderful to hear them speak of the power of God and the faith that has come into their hearts. Nick was saying that praying in the morning and in the evening is not enough. We need to be near to God all through the day because there are many choices to make and we want to do the things that will please God.

We heard stories from other parts of the former U.S.S.R. too. I like the one about Boris. When Boris was young he was taught that there was no God. But that made him think that maybe there was a God! So he asked Granma. She said, "Yes there is a God and he has a book and it's called the Bible." So Boris was always looking for this book but he couldn't find it in the libraries he went to. Then he got a new job in another city. The lady who showed him round was a professing lady. Later he got to meet her and her mother and her sister in their home. He said, "You people are different to other people. You are happy. Why is it?" The grama told him, "It's because we believe in God and we live by His word in the Bible." Boris was so happy. He said, "I have not only found the people who believe in God but also the book I was looking for!" After that he returned to his own city Ekaterinburg. There's just he and another lady in that city but others are interested too.

We heard about Dena in the Ukraine. Her parents were professing many years ago. But when the Communist came some religious people who were opposed blacklisted them and they were taken away and shot. Dena was 12 and came home from school and remembers that these men were there that had come to get her parents. She said to her mother, "What do you want me to do?" Her mother said, "You go to bed." So she did and soon the men left with her parents. She never saw them again as they were shot that night.

She and her younger brother were taken to live with relatives but were not accepted there so were not happy. So at 15 Dena started work and tried to earn her living. She was 18 or so when she felt her great need of guidance in her life. She thought maybe if she married she would have someone to protect her. Later she did marry but her husband was no good – a drunkard. She was so desperate that one day she went to the river with her little boy to commit suicide but the little boy cried and called her away.

So then she used to pray that God would send the workers to help her. One day Carl Leonhard, one of the workers, knocked on her door. When she saw him there she felt he was an angel from God! Her two sons married and she lived with a son Eugene and daughter in law Svellana. Syellana noticed that tho her mother in law had to go out early to work in the fields, at 10. o'clock each morning she went into her bedroom and closed the door and came out an hour later at 11 o'clock. Svellana used to wonder whatever

she did. Then one day the door was slightly ajar and Svellana looked in. She saw her mother-in-law kneeling by a chair and reading her Bible. So she asked, "What do you do this for?" Dena answered, "This is what gives the strength for the day." So Svellana decided too – and then her husband – and the other son and his wife and now their children, so Dena is very happy. She goes to Latvia for convention.

Maybe the thing that impressed us most was seeing our fellow workers there. As we hear each one's story, it is wonderful how God put it into so many hearts to think of Russia even before Communism fell. They are so full of zeal for the great need of that land, and for that people who have not had the privilege of hearing the gospel. They are not taking it for granted that the door will always be open either – who can tell what the future holds? But we feel grateful for those who have been willing to go there, and those behind them who are praying – and most of all we are glad that God who knows all hearts is directing His servants to the need and helping them to help others.

And it's good to get back to our own little corner that God has given us, but we're so glad to have had this privilege and want to do our part in praying more earnestly for the great need and the great work there. Now I've tried to be accurate but only being there for two weeks, you'll understand that these are just impressions.

By Heather Mowat

TTT Editor's Note: In the absence of a written account, the above information has been compiled by the TTT Editor from various sources. Corrections or additions are most welcome; as well as other historical accounts for this country [Email TTT](#)