

bolic change—getting rid of ubiquitous Francoist monuments and renaming streets called “Avenida del Generalísimo,” which can be found in nearly every city.

Although there is consensus among Spaniards that the record needs to be corrected and history recovered, there is less agreement on what should be remembered, according to Encarnación.

By 2000, nearly half of the Spanish population was too young to recall either the civil war or the dictatorship, writes Carolyn P. Boyd, a historian at the University of California, Irvine. And though more than 15,000 books have been written about the period, there is still no agreement on the causes of the war and who was at fault. The Right continues to think Franco saved the country by eliminating Marxist atheists, and the Left believes itself victimized in the “Spanish Holocaust.” Boyd notes that most history textbooks simply describe the civil war as a “fratricidal tragedy.”

OTHER NATIONS

Cultural Learnings of Kazakhstan

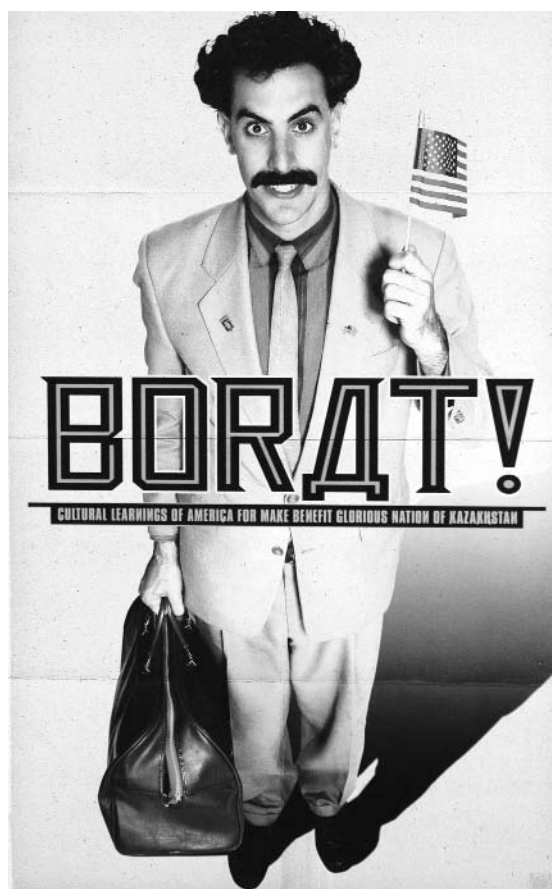
THE SOURCE: “Buying into Brand Borat: Kazakhstan’s Cautious Embrace of Its Unwanted ‘Son’” by Robert A. Saunders, in *Slavic Review*, Spring 2008.

IMAGINE THAT YOURS IS A newly independent nation the size of Western Europe. Your country straddles the world’s sixth-largest oilfield. It befriends the United States. It lays out millions to brand itself as one of the most stable, diverse, and rapidly

modernizing states on the planet.

Then enters a fictitious reporter, star of the \$250 million-grossing film *Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan*. Suddenly, your unknown country is famous. But it’s been rendered as a medieval backwater populated by rapists and anti-Semites. It’s become notorious for an imaginary festival called “The Running of the Jew.” It’s portrayed as a world center of wife beating. It’s depicted as hiring one-eyed drunkards to pilot the planes of its national airline.

And how has the actual nation of Kazakhstan handled this all-too-extensive exposure? It has vacillated, writes Robert A. Saunders, a historian at the State University of New York at Farmingdale. In responding to Sacha Baron Cohen, a Cambridge University-educated comedian who has promoted Borat into a lucrative specialty, Kazakhstan has tried being tough, branding Cohen’s humor as racism. It’s issued threats and demanded that the character be banned. It’s been nonchalant, saying it can take a



The fictitious movie journalist Borat put oil-rich Kazakhstan on the map—as uncouth and anti-Semitic. Tourism has blossomed.

joke. And it’s been cynical, touting Kazakhstan as the “perfect home for this autumn’s hottest comedian—Borat.”

The more Kazakhstan fussed, the more people wanted to see the film. And the more people who flocked to the film, the more tourists wanted to go to Kazakhstan. Visa applications in Cohen’s native Britain spiked as Borat became better known.

So in the end, Kazakhstan adopted the attitude of P. T. Barnum—any publicity is good publicity—and proved that not only circuses but even sovereign nations with oil wealth can make money off slander.