

The Chechen Revolution(s) and the Future of Instability in the North Caucasus

by

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Dzhokhar Dudayev's Chechen Revolution in 1991 unleashed a series of cascading social and political effects both in the North Caucasus and Russia as a whole. The revolution eventually led to two brutal wars and an escalating terrorism campaign by various insurgent groups. While some analysts over-generalize and attempt to place all the militant groups into a universal construct, the reality is that the Chechen national revolution is one of two revolutions. Both Yeltsin's and Putin's Russian states have intervened militarily to put down Chechen separatism but ignored the rebirth of the Islamic Revolution occurring across the entire North Caucasus. Ironically, these wars led the two revolutions to converge under a unified front led by Shamil Basayev. The successful assassination of Basayev in the summer of 2006 metastasized the front and reduced the large-scale operational capability of the militants. Much to the chagrin of Putin, this success has reduced the ability of the state to penetrate and destroy the remaining networks. Additionally, the Chechen Revolution is subsiding and entering a Thermidor stage, while the pan-Caucasian Islamic Revolutionary vanguard now dominates the insurgency; it is this second group that will continue to create political instability in the region for the near future. Moreover, demographic and economic trends threaten to fuel the growing insurgency, making prospects for long-term stability bleak at best. Russia will be involved militarily in the North Caucasus for a long time to come.

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PREFACE

This thesis is the product of four years of fascination with Russia's most rebellious republic. This fascination is perhaps in part due to Chechnya's geographic and cultural aspects. Chechnya is a locus, a point of interaction between America's Cold War rival and its post-Cold War struggles in the Middle East and Central Asia.

When I was an intern serving in the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), I took the opportunity to have discussions with various people on the situation in the North Caucasus—what is now Russia's Southern Federal District. To be sure, I found some OSD staffers who appreciated that Russia's Chechen problem was worthy of diligent study, but these people did not come out of the elite, politically-appointed class of the building. One conversation in particular with an aide to a very high level OSD appointee (who will remain nameless) was extremely disillusioning. I was astounded by the level of sheer indifference to the Southern Federal District and Chechnya in particular. "It's great that you are interested in this, but frankly I don't care," he said to me as I sat there stunned.

Chechnya and the North Caucasus are important. There are countless lessons that can be drawn from their rigorous analysis. Those functional experts interested in counterinsurgency (COIN) operations and low-intensity conflict (LIC) will find a treasure trove of information awaiting them. Moreover, regional experts on Russia cannot understand many recent political developments absent of Chechnya and the North Caucasus. Additionally, there are lessons for

those riding the recent wave of terrorism studies. On paper, the Russian Federation is an ally in the Long War. Exactly what this means, other than both states engaging adversaries who espouse the use of terror, I do not know with any level of certainty. States have and act upon their interests. Russia's quagmire in the Southern Federal Zone is a function of the state's desire to maintain the territorial integrity of its borders, secure the control of Caspian Sea hydrocarbon deposits and their transit routes (especially to Europe), the relative economic deprivation of the region despite the hydrocarbon deposits, and the legacy of mountaineer resistance to outside control.

On the surface, the story of Chechnya is an almost-bizarre confluence of a Western and a horror movie. That being said, there are some romantic qualities surrounding the North Caucasus that need to be admitted. Historically, the Chechens as a people were noble, egalitarian (with each other at any rate), and fierce warriors. There is also a David and Goliath element to the Chechen struggle. The Russian military and security services have fought two major wars in the republic and twice reduced the Chechen capital to rubble in the process.

Presently, the situation in Chechnya is relatively calm. But in this sense we are distinguishing between *degrees* of instability. President Ramzan Kadyrov, President Putin's personal choice, is firmly in power. The Chechen Revolution is not over; it is ongoing and the catalyst of chronic instability in the entire Southern Federal Zone. [The Preface is optional.]

1.0

A THEORY OF REVOLUTION

“Insurrection is a phenomenon, revolution a process”

- Robert Taber, *War of the Flea*

There exist rare moments in history that prompt mankind to believe that the world will never be the same. Some are marvelous, others malevolent; but the underlying belief is consistent. Such is the case with all revolutions; but this study focuses solely upon the Chechen Revolution.

In order to understand the nature and process of the Chechen Revolution, theory must be considered. As it pertains to this study, a revolution is “a rapid, fundamental, and violent domestic change in the dominant values and myths of a society, its political institutions, social structure, leadership, and government activity and leadership.”¹ Defined as such, these events are monumental upheavals in the history of man and cause cascading effects in regional and international politics. According to Stephen Walt, revolutions “cause sudden shifts in the balance of power, alter the patterns of international alignments, cast doubt on existing diplomatic

¹ Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1968), p. 264.

agreements and diplomatic norms, and provide inviting opportunities for other states to improve their positions.”²

Politics in revolutionary situations becomes the prerogative and enabler of out-groups in the old regime. As Huntington notes, “The political essence of revolution is the rapid expansion of political consciousness and the rapid mobilization of new groups into politics at a speed which makes it impossible for the existing institutions to assimilate them.”³ While rare in occurrence, they are also difficult to divine. Indeed, “evolutions may be as ‘inevitable’ as thunderstorms—and often as useful as a storm in a parched countryside.”⁴ They are rare because revolutions are the result of the collapse of the old regime.⁵ Moreover, they are rare because revolutions require a crisis in order to be unleashed.⁶ This stimulus can be any number of things (a disastrous war, a financial crisis, a religious conflict, etc.); what is important is that, for whatever reason, the old regime becomes discredited, stripped of legitimacy in the eyes of the polity.

Regardless of their causes, once underway revolutions follow similar paths. The destruction of the old regime empowers a new class of political elites into power, more or less confirming the writings of Vilfredo Pareto.⁷ Once in power, the unity of revolutionary elite often becomes bifurcated between revolutionary moderates and revolutionary radicals.⁸ For a variety of reasons, the moderates prove incapable of consolidating a new political order that can fulfill the various promises made their supporters. The more radical members of the

² Stephen M. Walt, *Revolution and War* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1996), 1.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 266.

⁴ Crane Brinton, *The Anatomy of Revolution* revised ed (NY: Vintage, 1965), p. 6.

⁵ Anthony James Joes, *From the Barrel of a Gun: Armies and Revolutions* (Washington D.C: Pergamon-Brassey’s, 1986), p. xii, 206; Hannah Ardernt, *On Revolution* (NY: Viking, 1965), p. 112; V. I. Lenin, *Selected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers), p. 343; and Huntington, 268.

⁶ Jack Goldstone, *Revolution and Rebellion in the Early Modern World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), p. 9.

⁷ Vilfredo Pareto, *Sociological Writings* (NY: Praeger, 1966), p. 134.

⁸ Huntington, p. 268-270 and Brinton, p. 122-123.

revolutionary party then make their move for power. Eventually, the political tug-of-war between the groups leads to a period of dual sovereignty, known by the Russian term *dvoevlastie*⁹, in which it is not clear which group truly rules. Following this period of dual sovereignty, the radicals often emerge victorious, the true vanguard of the revolution. Upon their ascendancy, they unleash terror and hunt down the enemies (whether real, perceived, or made up) of the revolution.¹⁰ Finally, the terror subsides and politics shifts back to a relatively conservative form on the Thermidor period; which is not to say that the mark of the revolution is gone.¹¹

Another important question that needs to be addressed is under what conditions do revolutions lead to intervention and war? Walt argues that because revolutions often bring to power those who fundamentally oppose the policies of the old regime, the likelihood of war is subsequently increased.¹² Additionally, Walt argues that the threat of the revolution spreading beyond its original geographic borders is especially destabilizing.¹³ Moreover, the easier the revolutionary regime believes it can spread the revolution and the easier opposing regimes believe that they can put an end to the revolution, the greater the likelihood of war.¹⁴

Using the theoretical frameworks of Brinton and Walt, we will try to determine the underlying and immediate causes of the Chechen Revolution, discover the nature of the revolution, track its course, explain why it led to two Russian interventions, and consider the future of the revolution and its effects on the North Caucasus.

⁹ Huntington, p. 271 and Brinton, p. 132-136.

¹⁰ Brinton, 176-204.

¹¹ Brinton, 205-236.

¹² Walt, p. 5.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

2.0

SUMMARY AND RESEARCH ROADMAP

The pervasive political instability and religious radicalism in the North Caucasus is a product of two revolutions: the November 1991 Chechen Revolution and the advent of a Pan-Caucasian Islamic fundamentalism. The Chechen Revolution was led by core of national radicals whose political grievances were forged in the fires of exile during Stalin's reign. Despite its direct challenge to Russian sovereignty, Chechnya's search for self-determination was parochial in scope and far less radical than the radical Sunni Islamic revolution that began to transpire across the entire North Caucasus. To explain the causes and events of these revolutions, this paper will describe the North Caucasus as strategic region with a long history of attempted foreign domination and fierce indigenous resistance to outside control. Unified Caucasian resistance, until Basayev's leadership in the late 1990s, was almost always led not by Chechens but rather by Dagestani Avars.

Second, the paper discusses the impact of Soviet policies upon the region. Despite promises of autonomy and cultural respect the Stalinist Russia pursued the wholesale deportation of the entire Chechen population to Kazakhstan, providing the crises for the 1991 Chechen Revolution. Additionally, Soviet attempts to root out—and in some cases control—the teachings of Islam contributed to the Islamic reawakening of the early 1990s and the formation of a radical Islamic revolutionary elite. This core became the leaders and acolytes of a much more radical vanguard than any of the Chechen national radicals.

Third, the paper then goes on to explain how the aborted putsch by Soviet hardliners provided the opportunity for General Dzhokhar Dudayev and the Chechen national radicals, all of which were representatives of the exile generation, to seize power and announce independence. Next, the paper discusses how the complete success in seizing power by the national radicals was only matched by their inability to govern the revolutionary state, resulting in the criminalization of Chechnya. The radicals' failure to build and consolidate a functioning state and Moscow's unwillingness to allow Chechen self-determination resulted in a disastrous war from 1994-1996—a war which introduced Islamic foreign fighters to the North Caucasus and allowed many young Chechen guerrillas receptive to radical Islamic proselytizers.

Fourth, while the revolutionary state managed to survive the war, its leader did not. Dudayev was killed by a targeted assassination and his military Chief of Staff, Aslan Maskhadov, was elected president in 1997. Maskhadov's regime was more of a fiasco than that of Dudayev. Admittedly, this was not for the same reasons. Maskhadov inherited a bombed-out shell of a country. Additionally, Chechnya was awash with weapons and groups of fighters whose loyalty only extended as far as their field commander, facilitating the criminalization of the resistance movement. The resulting political conflict between Maskhadov and many of his former subordinates paralyzed his government, rendering it impotent. Maskhadov's attempts to co-opt the field commanders and the Islamic radicals in a desperate attempt to maintain his state robbed him of legitimacy from both his lingering supporters and the Russian government.

Fifth, two internal crises in Dagestan led to a convergence between the radicals of both revolutions. This revolutionary synthesis doomed Chechnya's hopes of self-determination and forever intertwined the two revolutions. Paradoxically, this alliance was between two movements whose intended end-states were fundamentally at odds with each other. That being said, the

alliance began as a relationship of convenience following the exile of Dagestani religious radicals into Chechnya in 1998. The relationships forged in this alliance eventually led to the invasion of Dagestan by a multinational army of Islamic radicals, provoking the Second Chechen War. It was this war that created the unification of the revolutionary movements.

Finally, the paper will discuss the aftermath of the revolutions and how Shamil Basayev, a guerrilla leader who later became castigated as “Russia’s Osama bin Laden”, became the first Chechen to lead a pan-Caucasian insurrection against Russia. Basayev’s death in the summer of 2006 bifurcated the unified structure of the two revolutions, resulting in a situation akin to the interwar period. Presently, the core of the radical national elite is either dead or has been co-opted Moscow, leading to the Chechen Revolution’s thermidor; however, the radical religious revolution continues. Demographic and economic trends suggest that high Caucasian birth rates and lack of economic opportunity—viewed in the context of the unfolding radical Islamic revolution—will combine with shattering effects for the Russian state. Put simply, the future of political stability in the North Caucasus is a future of increasing instability

3.0 THE MOUNTAIN GATE BETWEEN EUROPE AND ASIA



source: <http://www.unlv.edu/Faculty/pwerth/caucasus-map.jpg>

The present-day Russian Federation (RF) is linked to Central Asia by the North Caucasus, part of the Southern Federal District. In reality a mountain-covered isthmus, “the seven republics of the North Caucasus region constitute a fragment of the Russian Federation’s territory (0.66%) and population (4.6%). Yet these statistics mask the asymmetry between the

size and the political significance of the North Caucasus.”¹⁵ When viewed as a whole, the peoples inhabiting the North Caucasus constitute approximately 6.6 million people spread over roughly 43,243 square miles (112,000 km²), just under the size of Greece.¹⁶

The North Caucasus is a land of glaring diversities.¹⁷ It is the northern expanse of the Transcaucasia mountain chain, a topographical spine running 1,100 miles¹⁸ The chain has an average width of 100 miles, with the Daryal Pass serving as the easiest navigable route by which to travel through from the Terek plains to the South Caucasus.¹⁹ Additionally, the Argun Pass in southern Chechnya leads to the Pankisi Gorge in neighboring Georgia.



Source: http://www.livelaughlovelearn.com/Playwrighting/Pankisi_Gorge_location_on_map.jpg

¹⁵ John B. Dunlop and Rajan Menon, “Chaos in the North Caucasus and Russia’s Future,” *Survival*, Volume 48, Number 2 (Summer 2006), p. 97.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

¹⁷ C W Blandy, “Chechnya: Two Federal Interventions: An Interim Comparison and Assessment,” Conflict Studies Research Centre, Caucasus Series P29 (January 2000), p. 3.

¹⁸ Sebastian Smith, *Allah’s Mountains: The Battle for Chechnya* (New York: TTP, 2006), p. 2.

¹⁹ John B. Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 1.

The tallest of the mountains, Mount Elbrus, reaches a peak of 5,642 meters, significantly higher than the legendary Alps.²⁰ The jagged southern mountains are contrasted by the grass-filled foothills and plains to the north. Indeed,

there are few regions in the world with such extremes and diversity of nature, including the numerous microclimates of the mountains and foothills. The cycles of flooding and drought in the valleys, and the contrast of the mountains with the steppe—near desert along the Caspian sea—and the swampy Terek lowlands. Here the camel butts head with the ox, the buffalo with the mountain goat.²¹

The North Caucasus is also a great geo-strategic asset to the Russian Federation (RF). Traditionally, the North Caucasus was the geographic point of contact between the Russian, Ottoman, and Persian Empires.²² In many ways, this struggle continues today. Post-Soviet Russia still retains sovereignty in the North Caucasus and political influence in the South Caucasus and Central Asia; Iran seeks regional hegemony in both Central Asia and the Middle East; and Turkey appeals to many Turkic-speaking Central Asians through a strategy of pan-Turkism. The Caspian Sea region is also known to have plentiful hydrocarbon deposits. Sebastian Smith adds that the Caspian deposits are “one of the world’s last untapped sources, a possible Persian Gulf of the 21st century.”²³

Aside from the oil that passes through the Chechen Capital of Grozny, there are many benefits to presiding over the North Caucasus:

It provides Russia’s entrée to the South Caucasus area, which contains Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan; Dagestan abuts Azerbaijan, the arch foe of Armenia, Arguably Russia’s closest ally in the Region, and overlooks 400km of the Caspian Sea’s littoral; the Georgian Military Highway

²⁰ Smith, p. 8-9.

²¹ Thomas M. Barrett, “Lines of Uncertainty: The Frontiers of the North Caucasus,” *Slavic Review*, Volume 54, Number 3 (Fall 1995), p. 583.

²² Svante E. Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers: A Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus* (UK: Curzon Press, 2001), p. 18, 24.

²³ Smith, p. 3.

run through Ossetia to the breakaway, Russia-backed Georgian republic of South Ossetia and points south. Most importantly, the Kremlin likens the North Caucasus as the first domino, which if allowed to fall, would spawn revolts in Russia's other ethnic republics.²⁴

As two analysts quite correctly put it, "This southern Russia borderland could prove to be the tail that wags the Russian dog."²⁵

There exists a myriad of myths deeply held by Transcaucasia's inhabitants. The mythology of the region's importance is not a unique aspect of Caucasian culture; most, if not all, peoples develop deeply-entrenched creation stories and legends. Nevertheless, in this region it is particularly colorful. According to Nicholas Griffin:

In Armenia, Noah's Ark lies on the borders. In Azerbaijan, the Garden of Eden is said to lurk somewhere in the south. Georgia is not to be outdone. If her neighbors boast of the genesis of man, Georgia claims to have been the one of the gods. Prometheus was bound to be one of her great peaks, his liver torn daily by the circling birds of prey.²⁶

²⁴ Barrett, p. 101-102.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 97.

²⁶ Nicholas Griffin, *Caucasus: Journey to the Land Between Christianity and Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 2





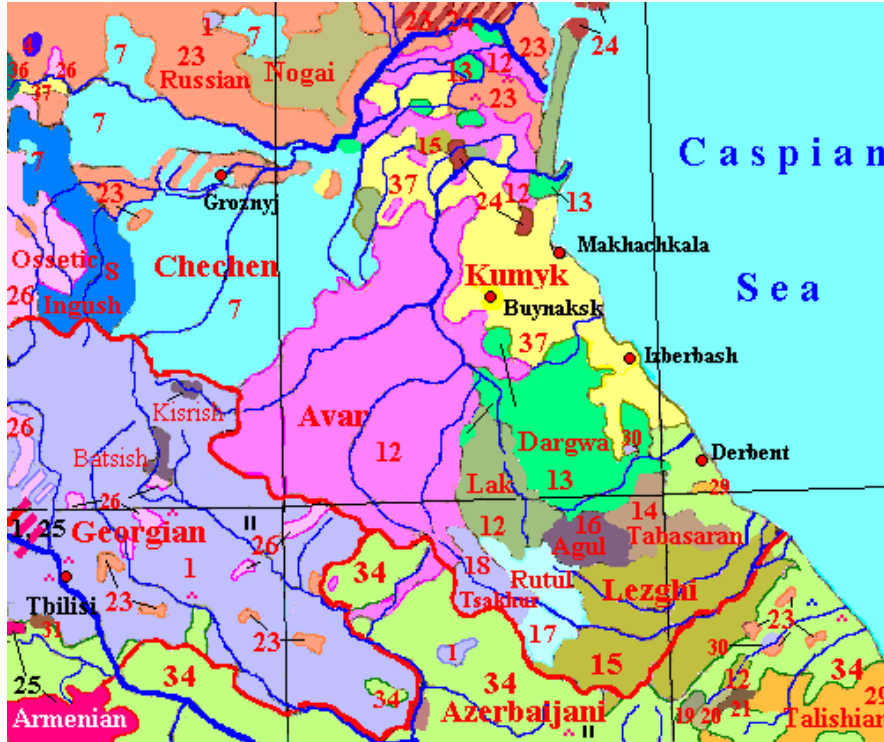
The North Caucasus is a place of extreme ethnic and linguistic diversity. More often than not, maps of these factors simply resemble a “psychedelic quilt”.²⁷ “Imagine walking around the Eiffel Tower on a busy summer’s day and hearing the sounds of a dozen nationalities. Now imagine that no one has traveled more than fifty miles to get there.”²⁸ According to one legend as retold by Sebastian Smith, God “clumsily dropped his shaker” in the Caucasus when distributing the people and nations of the world, providing an explanation for the extremely high concentration of ethno-national groups in the North Caucasus.²⁹ The abnormally high level of ethno-national stratification in the region, especially given their close geographic proximity, imparts a distinctively-ethnic characterization to North Caucasian politics. In fact, the North Caucasus rivals even former Yugoslavia in ethno-political complexity.³⁰

²⁷ Smith, p. 7.

²⁸ Griffin, p. 2.

²⁹ Smith, p. 7.

³⁰ Cornell, p. 17.



Source: www.geocities.com/valentyn_ua/DagestanMovyG.gif

Despite the obvious benefits of controlling the North Caucasus, it is a region of economic deprivation. The standards of living of all North Caucasian regions rank the lowest among the 88 RF regions; per capita output is “barely 50% of the Russian average, wages are a third below the Russian mean, and enrollments in education per 10,000 remain substantially below the Russian average.”³¹

³¹ Even President Putin intervened at one point to publicly to chide “the abominable economic state of the North Caucasus.” See Dunlop and Menon, p. 105, 107.

4.0 THE NORTH CAUCASUS: A CONTESTED REGION

In an effort to make sense of the present we must first look to the past. The ‘mountaineers’ who inhabit the North Caucasus are an extremely interesting breed. One of the most oft-repeated characteristics is that, they are a very difficult people to subdue.

The first serious efforts to capture the region came a decade after the death of the prophet Muhammad under the leadership of Suraqa bin Amr.³² Suraqa’s army “had conquered the whole of Persia in a mere ten years, and they now stood ready to burst north into the Eurasian interior,”³³ along the Caspian coast of present-day Dagestan. Intense tribal resistance to the Arabs led them to abandon their northern advances, only to resume it again years later under the orders of Caliph Omar.³⁴ By 652, the recalcitrant mountaineers again rose to the task, this time executing the Arab commander.³⁵ Although they failed militarily, the Arabs did manage to plant the seeds of Islam, albeit among a minority of those who resided around the Arab seat of power in Derbent, Dagestan.³⁶

³² Reynolds, “Myths and Mysticism: A Longitudinal Perspective on Islam and Conflict in the North Caucasus,” p. 32. Describing its strategic importance, Reynolds describes that the Arabs came to call the area “*Bab al-Abwab*”: The Gate of Gates. Ibid., p. 32.

³³ Ibid., p. 32.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 33.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 33.

³⁶ Interestingly enough, Reynolds describes that those who embraced the Arab religion came under attack by mountaineers with the same ferocity endured by the Arabs. Moreover, the group who is believed to be responsible for these punitive actions is possibly the ancestors of the ethnic group who will have the highest percentage of Salifite Islamists before the 1999 incursions,

The second group of would-be conquerors unlucky enough to enter the region was the Mongols. By 1233 the Mongol armies invaded and occupied the same territory along the Caspian coasts of Dagestan as that of the Arabs, only to share the same fate. As Reynolds describes it:

*the mountaineers did not merely resist the Mongols but also eventually turned to raiding them, and succeeded in compelling the scourges of Eurasia to send gifts and delegations in exchange for halting their attacks.*³⁷

Not to be deterred, from 1395-1396 the Timurid “Crusher of Kings” Timurlenk tried where all others had failed and drove his forces into the territory of modern-day Dagestan—and later Georgia (1386-1387, 1403-1404)—with the same degree of ineptness.³⁸ Somewhere around the early 1600s, the Persians attempted the first in a series of attempts to seize and occupy the Caspian coast of Dagestan. It was during this time of Shiite invasion that Hadji-Daud, bolstered by Kazi-Kumukh’s ruler Surhai-Khan and Kaitag’s Akhmed-Khan, rallied his Sunni mountaineer kin to armed rebellion.³⁹

Having secured their southern flank, the North Caucasian mountaineers turned their attention to the northern encroachments of a growing Tsarist Russian empire. The Russian road to Baku in 1722 brought them through the northern plains and southern mountains of Chechnya.⁴⁰ In a fascinating comparative work on potentially secessionist regions in post-Soviet Russia, Cornell professor Matthew Evangelista recalled one instance when a Russian cavalry

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 34. Emphasis added.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

³⁹ Enver F. Kisriev & Robert Bruce Ware, “Russian Hegemony and Islamic Resistance: Ideology and Political Organization in Dagestan 1800-1930,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (May 2006), p. 493-94. Kisriev and Ware also add that this inter-communal war managed to expel the Shiite Persians from both Dagestan and the northern parts of present-day Azerbaijan by 1721. This is not to say that sectarian differences were the primary catalyst of the conflict. While the Sunni/Shiite chasm surely existed, it is more likely that the true concern of Hadji-Daud’s coalition was resistance to foreign occupation, rather than charges of apostasy.

⁴⁰ James Hughes, “Chechnya: The Causes of a Protracted Post-Soviet Conflict,” *Civil Wars* Volume 4, Number 4 (Winter 2001), p. 18 and Kisriev & Ware, “Russian Hegemony and Islamic Resistance: Ideology and Political Organization in Dagestan 1800-1930,” p. 494.

unit was cut to pieces by the Chechen guerrillas.⁴¹ Peter the Great's forces did manage to take the Dagestani towns of Derbent, Tarku, and Kuba before withdrawing in a strategic retrenchment designed to defend other areas of the Tsarist Empire, ceding all territorial claims to Nadir Shah's Persia⁴² —*prima facie* a Persian stroke of luck that would soon turn out to be a curse.

Peter the Great's escapade through Caucasian isthmus was the first time the Russian Army truly attempted to pacify the mountaineers. At the time, the mountaineers' lands were less the objective than a speed bump along the way. Truth be told, the men who swelled the ranks of the Imperial army would most likely have *preferred* to battle the regulars of the Persian Empire than to be picked apart by 'bandits' along the way. Truly, as the defenders of Grozny more than two centuries later would claim, the Russians were entering Hell; if this is true, the Russians paradoxically became accustomed to the inhospitable environment—in Hell they remained. Catherine the Great made the move to expand Russian influence in their southern flank. One scholar elaborated that:

The growth of Russian power and the advance of the Russian state under Catherine the Great, however, ensured a clash. In 1763, the Russians built the fort of Mozdok, and thereby initiated a 14-year war with the Kabardians. In 1783, the famous General Suvorov expelled the [Nogais] from the region to the north of the Kuban. Two years later, Saint Petersburg established the post of governor-general of the Caucasus.⁴³

The forcible expulsion of the Nogai was but one consequence of the Russian annexation of the Crimea; the second was the Mansur Rebellion.

⁴¹ Matthew Evangelista, *The Chechen Wars: Will Russia Go the Way of the Soviet Union?* (Washington D.C.: Brookings University Press, 2002), p. 12.

⁴² Reynolds, p. 34-35. Reynolds adds while Nadir Shah's exploits "earned him the titles of 'Second Alexander' and 'Napoleon of Persia,'" the mountaineers would drive out his forces in just two years and, like the Mongols, be subjected to subsequent raids. Kisriev & Ware add that Hadji-Daud was captured by the Ottoman Turks and exiled to Cyprus. Kisriev & Ware, "Russian Hegemony and Islamic Resistance: Ideology and Political Organization in Dagestan 1800-1930," p. 494.

⁴³ Reynolds, p. 36.

THE MANSUR REBELLION

Sheikh Mansur was a Chechen-born religious leader whose *gazawat* (Holy War) was not so much a war against the Russian Infidel—Infidel though they may be—but rather a war of liberation. Mansur appealed to the anti-Russian sentiments and grievances of North Caucasians.⁴⁴ These common grievances led to the regionalization of the resistance movement consolidated under Mansur’s leadership.⁴⁵ Indeed, “Mansur attracted a circle of political and religious leaders throughout the region as far as Shirvan.”⁴⁶



⁴⁴ Mansur did not enjoy the universal support of the North Caucasian peoples. Particularly, the majority of Dagestani peoples, especially the Avars, did not unite under Mansur’s banner. What was particularly important regarding Mansur’s rebellion was that it was the first in a line of rebellions led by sheiks belonging to the Naqshbani Sufi brotherhood. *Ibid.*, p. 36-37.

⁴⁵ Cornell, p. 27.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 36. Shirvan is a region in present-day Azerbaijan located between the Caspian coast and the Kura River which bisects Azerbaijan.

The Ottomans were more than happy to offer their aid to Mansur's forces, in many ways embodying Machiavelli's dictum that, "Once the people have taken up arms against you, there will never be lacking foreigners to aid them."⁴⁷ Even so, despite dealing several defeats to Russian forces, Mansur was captured following a 1791 raid upon the Ottoman fort at Anapa located in Krasnodar Krai.⁴⁸

The Russian Strategy in the North Caucasus was three-fold: First, the Russians weakened their Imperial peer competitors. Second, they engaged in expeditionary thrusts south, securing their presence with settlements and forts commonly referred to as "the line."⁴⁹ Third, short-term governance problems were addressed by local pacification campaigns and ethnic deportation. Thus, it was the committed strategy of the Tsarist regime to expand both Russia's influence and its state into the Caucasian isthmus.

CHARGING OF BEARS; VENDETTA OF WOLVES

Russia's handover of the North Caucasus to the Persians was nothing more than temporarily convenient; the bear was just waiting to again try going south. Perhaps most responsible for the Russian return to the North Caucasus was the annexation of Georgia in 1802.⁵⁰ Additionally, by 1813 the Russians also managed to annex Azerbaijan. Ironically, it seems "rollback" was unofficially the strategy of pre-Soviet Russia toward the Persians. This

⁴⁷ Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Chapter XX.

⁴⁸ Reynolds, p. 36.

⁴⁹ Specifically, "the line" first appeared as the Kizliar-Mozdok line (1769). Further drives into the southern mountains became known as the Caucasus line. Later, the Black Sea line was erected to prevent contact with the Ottomans. Barrett, p. 578 and Hughs, p. 18.

⁵⁰ Matthew Evangelista, *The Chechen Wars: Will Russia Go the Way of the Soviet Union?* (Washington D.C.: Brookings University Press, 2002), p. 65 and P. Tolmachev, "Russia's Annexation of the Caucasus," *Russian Studies in History* vol. 42 no. 2 (Fall 2002), p. 16.

would produce increased strategic depth, access to warm water ports, and increased influence in the South Caucasus and Central Asia.

The combination of pacification and divide-and-rule strategies usually produced politically acceptable outcomes in most imperial holdings, but the demographic and social realities of the North Caucasus produced a much more complicated dilemma for Tsarist Russia. Much like the tale of the Soviet-Afghan War, rebellions in the North Caucasus rarely produced unified movements. Very often, the mountaineer (*gortsy*) federations (*tukhums*) and clans (*teips*) that comprised the federations were far too busy fighting themselves to be concerned with the Russians—or at least to be concerned with them for very long. That being said, there are examples to the contrary. The most glaring of these are the wars of Imams Ghazi, Hamza Bek, and Shamil.

THE WARS OF THE THREE IMAMS AND RUSSIAN ANNEXATION

In 1828 the Russian Empire and the Ottoman Empire were at war. Russia quickly won the war by 1829; however, Russia's distraction with her peer competitor provided an opportunity for the mountaineers to strike. Equally important—if not *more* important—quick and decisive action by a large Caucasian coalition served to preempt any attempts made by Dagestan's pro-St. Petersburg ethnic Avars from negotiating a deal with the Tsarist administration.⁵¹ These conditions produced a series of 19th century Russian wars in the North Caucasus. It was these wars—referred to by some as the Murid (“one who wants or seeks”⁵²) Wars—during which:

⁵¹ Reynolds, p. 39

⁵² According to Reynolds, “The mountaineer metamorphoses into a murid. He ceases to be a native fighting for his land and way of life and becomes a militant monk, striving in the way of God.” Ibid., p. 39.

Russian writers such as Pushkin, Lermontov, and Tolstoy had made the North Caucasus a vivid and lasting fixture of the imaginations [of the Russian people]...rendering the mountaineers bigger than life and romanticizing their love of freedom, seeming lawlessness, and passion.⁵³

By once again taking advantage of inter-imperial rivalry, the North Caucasian peoples proved that they could be much more than a nuisance.

The *gorsty* resistance that began in 1829 was led by Imam Ghazi Muhammad. Lasting until 1932, the first of the Murid Wars claimed the life of its largely-abandoned leader on the field of battle. Aside from the factional nature of the North Caucasian peoples, the most compelling of reasons leading to the abandonment of Imam Ghazi was of his own doing. Ghazi apparently tried to fight two battles at once:

Among his first acts was to declare a comprehensive holy war, that is, a struggle against not only the infidel Russians but also against the un-Islamic practices and customs of the mountaineers...[First and foremost, Ghazi believed that Sufi] mysticism is to be pursued only in addition to the sharia, not as a substitute or alternative to the holy law and its strictures.⁵⁴

Some might think that mountaineers' common faith (Islam) might have served to unite the poly-ethnic North Caucasians. Ghazi, while being actively against the infidel Russians, undermined his legitimacy by attacking the relatively-liberal degree of Islamic orthodoxy the North Caucasians displayed. In Orwellian terms, being a pig was better than a human, but some pigs are more equal than others. Thus, the puritanical, narrowly-defined theological views of Ghazi alienated many of the mountaineers and ultimately led to his capture.

Ghazi's capture opened the opportunity for more enlightened leadership to develop among the mountaineers. Great times may call for great leaders; but as with most great leaders, the human condition of mortality has a uniquely abrupt nature. Such was the case with

⁵³ Ibid., p. 31.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 38.

Hamza Bek. After only two years of agitation and anti-Russian—which in Hamza Bekian terms meant anti-Christian—maneuvers, the elites from within Dagestan’s ethnic Avar group conspired to have him assassinated.⁵⁵ Bek’s pan-mountaineer Islamist program threatened to undermine the St. Petersburg-backed Avar domination of Dagestani society. Internally, it threatened to form an ad-hoc anti-Russian coalition amongst Dagestan’s many other ethnic groups, upsetting a fragile political balance. More importantly, mountaineer militancy threatened to provoke large-scale Russian intervention. Such intervention might lead the Tsarist administration to search for new allies among Dagestan’s “ethnic kaleidoscope.”⁵⁶ It was not until the third Murid War that the North Caucasians would experience both compelling and competent leadership.

Imam Shamil’s quarter-century-long war with Tsarist Russia is perhaps the most well-known of the Murid Wars and, in comparison with his predecessors, the most successful. Shamil, a native of Dagestan, was a personal friend of Ghazi Muhammad and the two shared a common Islamic teacher, Ghazi Ghumuqi.⁵⁷ There are many reasons why Shamil’s quarter-century war with Tsarist Russia is overly-romanticized; by the third of the Murid Wars, Shamil’s forces were pitted against what was perhaps the most powerful empire in the world.⁵⁸ That being said, it was hardly the 19th century “clash of civilizations” that so many cite it to be.⁵⁹ Such an explanation seems to suggest that, had the mountaineers not been followers of Islam, the

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 39.

⁵⁶ This phrase is attributed to John B. Dunlop and Rajan Menon. See Dunlop and Menon, p. 105.

⁵⁷ A bit of history is instructive: Ghumuqi, the theological tutor of Ghazi Muhammad and Shamil, was a disciple of Sheikh Muhammad al-Yaraghi. Al-Yaraghi in turn received his doctrinal views from an Ottoman sheikh, Mawlana Khalid. Khalid’s teachings were largely drawn from those of Indian the sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi (1564-1624). Reynolds explains that “the things that concerned Sirhindi seem to have been similar to those that worried Mawlana Khalid. Theologically lax syncretism, the arrival of Christian colonial powers, and a rebounding Hinduism—all in the context of weakening Mughal political power—threatened the position of Islam...Sirhindi saw the answer to this crisis in the combination of a sober mysticism with an *unbending* insistence on the importance of sharia and Sunni orthodoxy. Unlike the Sufis who counselled [sic.] detachment from the affairs of this world, Sirhindi believed in the efficacy and need for *political power*, and he urged others to do the same.” Thus, Sirhindi can be called the father of the Sufi Islamism. See Reynolds, p. 38-40.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 39.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 39.

mountaineers might have instead welcomed involuntary incorporation into the Russian Empire. The mountaineers did not *need* to be Islamic to know that the Russian Empire was determined to annex the North Caucasus. In this sense, the religious differences between the Russians and the North Caucasians may have been largely irrelevant.

Also, key to understanding the rise of Muridism, and contrary to the primacy attributed to inter-religious causes, was the manner of Russian rule. In order to entice would-be elites to acquiesce to Tsarist rule, Russia created a “pseudo-aristocracy of local elites” in the North Caucasus by seizing large tracts of land and parceling them up to ambitious locals.⁶⁰ Thus, the desired political end of the Murid *gazavat* (war of liberation) was not religious *per se*, but rather one of anti-imperial national liberation.⁶¹

The specifics of the third Murid War are not the subject of this work; of interest are the effects that Shamil’s actions had upon the region. Two things in particular are of interest. First, Shamil’s appeal to the *primacy of Islam* as a means of mobilization allowed the North Caucasians to transcend their traditional inter-ethnic rivalries. Second, Shamil’s Islamist political program is largely responsible for offering the only alternative to overcoming the orthodoxy of clan and ethnic politics in the North Caucasus: the state.⁶²

Like Mansur and Imam Ghazi before him, Shamil implemented a comprehensive political and social transformation of the North Caucasus. Shamil insisted upon the primacy of sharia

⁶⁰ Kisriev & Ware, “Russian Hegemony and Islamic Resistance: Ideology and Political Organization in Dagestan 1800-1930,” p. 494.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 494.

⁶² Reynolds quite brilliantly analyzes that by “drawing upon the Quran and the *hadiths* (compellations of the sayings and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad), as its sources, the sharia provides an extensive, codified body of law to regulate human social relationships. Moreover, inherent in the sharia is the concept of *dawlah*, the state, as the enforcer of law.” The sharia law was viewed in contrast from the *adat* (customary law) of mountaineer society. Contrary to the sharia notion of individual responsibility, the *adat* stressed the idea of collective responsibility, itself a product of tribal society. Reynolds, p. 36 Shamil’s Imamate was a fairly successful political enterprise. Despite the high degree of ethno-national stratification of its inhabitants, the Imamate lasted nearly three decades. See Cornell, p. 27.

over the *adat* and declared blood feuds illegal on both moral and political grounds.⁶³ To counter local resistance to his Islamist program, Shamil governed his unified state (comprising much of the present-day Ingush, Chechen, and Dagestani RF Republics) though pre-existing clan structures. In essence, Shamil's Emirate could be classified as a highly-centralized Theocratic Republic. Specifically:

Shamil used the *tariqat* to serve as a backbone for a quasi-state. As Imam, Shamil stood at the top of the state structure, and he was the supreme authority on matters military, political, and spiritual. Shamil's civil administration was geographically organized, with a *naib*, or deputy, in charge of each district. Each *naib* in turn was responsible for guarding the borders of the state that lay in his district. To protect the integrity of the central structure, Shamil preferred to appoint outsiders to a given district, rather than rely on local figures. In addition to a voluntary militia, Shamil maintained a rudimentary regular army...Shamil's state also possessed a social welfare system to look after widows and orphans.⁶⁴

In so doing, Shamil managed to band together multiple ethno-national and clan-structured groups of peoples into a unified Islamic Emirate, grounded in the sharia. Indeed, the mountaineers themselves "referred to Shamil's era not as 'the time of the Great War against the Russians' or as the 'time of Shamil' but rather as 'the time of the sharia.'"⁶⁵ Thus, while Sufi Islam's relative social liberalism (explained later) made the mountaineers receptive to its teachings, Shamil managed to achieve the opposite: rather than having Islam conform to mountaineer culture, he envisioned and implemented a political program that sought to conform mountaineer culture to Islam. More accurately, "the time of the sharia" was really the time of the Naqshbandi. As Miriam Lanskoj has observed, "the Naqshbandi order became the ideology of resistance and the founding principle of the Imamate."⁶⁶

⁶³ James Hughs also points out such vendettas often took the form of kidnappings. Hughs, p. 19 and Reynolds, p. 40. In a rather brilliant understanding of mountaineer social customs, St. Petersburg's search for regional allies carried with it the promise to incorporate the *adat* into the Imperial administration.

⁶⁴ Reynolds, p. 41.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁶⁶ Miriam Lanskoj, "Daghestan and Chechnya: The Wahhabi Challenge to the State," *SAIS Review*, Volume XXII, Number 2 (Summer –Fall 2002), p. 169.

Despite all this, Shamil's Imamate was short-lived for two reasons. First, nearly a century of intermittent conflict persuaded the mountaineers to seek political accommodation with the Russians. Secondly, Shamil's message of armed rebellion was met by Chechen Kunta Hajji's program of non-resistance, himself a member of the Qadiriya *tariqat* (as opposed to the three Imams' Naqshbani-Khalidiya *tariqat*). This defection was a primary catalyst which led to Shamil's 1859 surrender to Russian authorities.⁶⁷

Time and again, the inhabitants of the Caucasus proved ready and able to set aside tribal differences and form tactical alliances in the face of encroachments to their south. Despite a complete lack of any political institutions resembling that of a state⁶⁸, the mountaineers defended their territory and their way of life.⁶⁹ First the Muslim Arabs, then the Mongols, and later the Persians, all brought their armies to the foothills and peaks of the Caucasus mountains—all returned home thanking whatever supernatural being they knew to have been able to live long enough to make the homecoming. The martial nature of the mountaineers should not be overplayed; however, there is little doubt that even Aires would be proud to know them as his own.

While by no means "successful" prior to the Murid Wars, Imperial Russia exposed the merit of diligence. Attrition finally exacted a price too great upon the mountaineer population—admittedly only after three rebellions and 77,000 Russian casualties⁷⁰. Not only that, inter-ethnic

⁶⁷ Stephan R. Bowers, Yavus Akhmadov, and Ashley Ann Derrick, "Islam in Ingushetia and Chechnya," *The Journal of Social, Political and Economic Studies*, Volume 29, Number 4 (Winter 2004), p. 405 and Reynolds, p. 41.

⁶⁸ Reynolds puts it much more bluntly, quoting Chantal Lermercier-Quellejey's assertion that the North Caucasus "remained 'in a climate of permanent anarchy.'" Reynolds, p. 34.

⁶⁹ The principal strategy for this preservation centered on the various Dagestani princes "playing the Ottomans against the Safavids, who represented a more proximate threat to the mountaineers." Ibid. p. 34.

⁷⁰ Tolmachev, p. 16. Taken as a whole, the Murid Wars (1817-1864) exacted an annual attrition rate of approximately 1,638 Russian casualties. Though by no means uniform, this number better reflects the intensity of the conflict than the astounding total figure.

and religious rivalries would lead some groups to view Russian domination as a lesser evil when compared to other local groups (traditionally the Dagestani Avar position for instance). Thus, Elise Giuliano correctly debunks the myth of mountaineer unity by summarizing that the *gorsty* “were incorporated into the Russian Empire between the 15th and 19th centuries, via both military annexation and *voluntary* transfer.”⁷¹ The communists later saw to it that only the voluntary became part of the Soviet history books. It would take the First World War and resulting Bolshevik *coup d'état* in Petrograd to change the political balance in the region.

⁷¹ Elise Giuliani, “Islamic Identity and Political Mobilization in Russia: Chechnya and Dagestan Compared,” *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, Volume 11 (2005), p. 199.

5.0 NATION-BUILDING AND OFFICAL ISLAM: ACQUIRING SOVIETR SCARS

The Soviet experience of the North Caucasian peoples is of paramount interest to those who wish to truly appreciate the underlying causes of the Chechen Revolution. First, Soviet rule fashioned many, if not all, of the present territorial boundaries of the RF Southern Federal District. Second, and related, these boundaries are largely responsible for a great deal of the current inter-ethnic tensions in the region. Third, local resistance to Soviet rule resulted in harsh pacification measures whose effects are still felt today. Fourth, Soviet attempts to root out, and later control, Islam legitimized the wedding of church and state—something that will be particularly acute in Dagestan.

The Bolsheviks sought to piece together a heterogeneous political entity whose roots were built upon common ideological persuasions. Being good Marxists, they were convinced that ethno-national loyalties could be overcome, provided proper indoctrination, and given sufficient motivation. Political issues relating to the governance of a multinational state led Soviet nationalities policy to recognize autonomous zones within the empire. Equally important, these territorial-political zones were tailored to mitigate the conditions through which resistance to Soviet rule could be effectively constructed. These attempts to reconcile ethno-national realities with acceptable political limitations incubated the later post-Soviet eruptions of self-determination and created national grievances vis-à-vis both the Russians and other ethno-national groups. The second of the two grievances was particularly acute in the North Caucasus.

THE COLLAPSE OF TSARIST RUSSIA AND THE RISE OF THE MOUNTAINEER REPUBLIC

The Tsarist military governor's administration did not end with the advent of Kerensky's provisional government; in fact, military rule in the North Caucasus persisted until at least April 1917.⁷² It was during this time that tribal and clan-centric social patterns particular to the North Caucasus gradually took over to fill the gap of collapsing central authority. Two scholars of the region explain that, "Life in the *djamaats* gradually began to return to traditional forms of self-governance. The process was not without serious intra-*djamaat* conflicts, though these remained localized."⁷³

Local *djammat* and clan governance carried with it an intrinsic weakness. While providing for a governing apparatus that secured resources for one's clan or ethnic group, the mutual inter- and intra-group distrust reduced the ability of the *gortsy* to resist future Russian attempts to reinstate foreign rule. Thus, the Union of Allied Mountainers of the North Caucasus (*Soiuz ob'edinennykh gortsev severnogo kavkaza* or UAM) was formed. The UAM "sought to unify the mountaineers, but not on the basis of ethnicity or language...or even on the basis of religion. Rather, it sought to build on a *shared mountaineer culture* that included all the indigenous peoples of the North Caucasus."⁷⁴ On top of creating a local system of alliances, the consensus of the UAM was that Kerensky's provisional government was sufficiently different

⁷² Kisriev & Ware, "Russian Hegemony and Islamic Resistance: Ideology and Political Organization in Dagestan 1800-1930," p. 498.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 499.

⁷⁴ Reynolds, p. 43. Emphasis added.

from its Tsarist predecessor to seek the inclusion of the North Caucasus into a new Russia as an autonomous zone.⁷⁵

The Bolshevik seizure of Petrograd changed the political calculus of the UAM members. Having thrown their lot in with Kerensky, they now were forced to seek additional allies in the North Caucasus region. Precisely because of the Provisional government's early demise, the North Caucasus Federation, or Mountaineer Republic, was formed in May of 1918.⁷⁶ Led by an ethnic Chechen, Tapa Cermoev⁷⁷, the Mountaineer Republic arose from the political unification of the Transcaucasian Federation and the UAM in order to counter the growing power of Trotsky's Red Army.⁷⁸ Regional consolidation was not enough, but the geographic proximity of the Mountaineer Republic to Russia's traditional rival in the region, the Ottoman Empire, allowed the *gorsty* to find a major power which was more than willing to take advantage of the Russian Civil War to gain influence in the region. Thus, on 11 May 1918, the Ottoman Empire officially recognized the independence of the Mountaineer Republic and dispatched a contingent of volunteer soldiers to the Caspian coast of present-day Dagestan.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 43.

⁷⁶ Mark Galeotti, "'Brotherhoods' and 'Associates': Chechen Networks and Organized Crime," *Low-Intensity Conflict & Law Enforcement*, Volume 11, Number 2/3 (Winter 2002), p. 340 and Dunlop & Menon, p. 104.

⁷⁷ Nicholas Werth, "The Chechen Problem.: Handling an Awkward Legacy, 1918-1958," *Contemporary European History*, Volume 15, Number 3 (2006), p. 350.

⁷⁸ Reynolds, p. 43.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 44. The Ottoman volunteers also free Azerbaijan as they made their way to Derbent and Petrovsk (Makhachkala). Additionally, the Mountaineer Republic also received recognition from Germany and the newly-independent Azerbaijan. See Werth, p. 351.

RUSSIA'S CIVIL WAR AND THE LESSER OF TWO EVILS

The civil war in Russia was an unavoidable distraction for the *gorsty*. Not only could, and very much likely *would*, the victor consolidate central authority, but the winning side would possess a veteran, professional military force that would likely wander south in the future. Thus, the *gorsty* were compelled to pick a side. General Deniken and his White Army made this choice very easy for the mountaineers. Deniken arrived in the North Caucasus in August of 1919. Fully aware of the region's complex ethnography, Deniken apparently characterized the region as a "volcano."⁸⁰ Deniken's proclamations to the *gorsty* breathed promises of future autonomy in return for service rendered to the counter-revolutionary cause, but very quickly became perceived as "attempting to restore the power of the Tsar."⁸¹ This perception of Deniken and the counter-revolutionary forces as the heirs of Russian nationalism and imperial policy forever alienated the White armies from the local population and solidified their resistance to his presence⁸², perhaps costing him the war. Naturally, mountaineer opposition to Deniken found favor among the Bolsheviks and played into the hands of the Red Army. One student of the period notes:

The Bolsheviks, playing to the mountaineer opposition to Deniken's programme [sic.] of restoring tight central control in a unitary Russian state, wooed several influential *skeikhs* with promises of full autonomy under Bolshevik rule...The anti-Deniken mountaineers...contributed greatly to the defeat of the counter-revolutionary Volunteer Army by mounting repeated attacks on its rear, denying it any security or sanctuary.⁸³

⁸⁰ Werth, p. 350.

⁸¹ Kisriev & Ware, "Russian Hegemony and Islamic Resistance: Ideology and Political Organization in Dagestan 1800-1930," p. 499

⁸² Cornell, p. 29.

⁸³ Reynolds, p. 45.

In this manner, local insurgents symbiotically nipped at the counter-revolutionary forces, pushing them toward the northern plains, Nikolaï Gikalo's 5th Red Army⁸⁴, and certain destruction.⁸⁵

SOVIET VICTORY AND CONSOLIDATION

Having sided against the devil that they *did* know (Deniken), the *gorsty* settled for the devil that they did not (the Bolsheviks); but the honeymoon would not last long. Despite the litany of Soviet promises for North Caucasian autonomy, along with the Bolsheviks came all-too-familiar centralization.⁸⁶

Perhaps the most famous Bolshevik commitment to *gorsty* autonomy was made by the Soviet Commissar for Nationalities, Joseph Stalin. These promises of *de facto* independence specifically addressed both the sharia and *adat*. Making a personal appearance at the 1920 Emergency Convention of the Peoples of Dagestan, Stalin assured:

We have been informed that sharia has a very serious meaning among the peoples of Dagestan. We also learned that the enemies of Soviet power are spreading rumor that the Soviets will ban sharia. I am here to assure you, on the authority of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, these rumors are false. The government of Russia allows every nation to govern based upon the local laws and traditions. The Soviet government recognizes sharia as legitimate, customary law, practiced among other nations of Russia. If the Dagestani people preserve their law and tradition, then they should be sustained.⁸⁷

The Bolsheviks adhered to a gradualist strategy, rather than to implement a regional crash-course in administrative centralization. It was the cumulative nature of Soviet policies

⁸⁴ Werth, p. 351.

⁸⁵ Kisriev & Ware, "Russian Hegemony and Islamic Resistance: Ideology and Political Organization in Dagestan 1800-1930," p. 500.

⁸⁶ Reynolds, p. 46.

⁸⁷ Joseph Stalin quoted in Kisriev & Ware, "Russian Hegemony and Islamic Resistance: Ideology and Political Organization in Dagestan 1800-1930," p. 500-501.

which caused the *gorsty* to rethink their choice of friends.⁸⁸ For instance, the application of sharia began to acquire Soviet scrutiny in 1921 and officially took the form of the District Sharia Legislative Department. This was subsumed a year later to the authority of the Sharia Department of the Ministry (*Narcomat*) of Justice of the Dagestani Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (DASSR). Parallel with this judicial bureaucracy, the Soviets created investigative committees to oversee the judicial process. Additionally, eleven district-level “sharia” courts were designed as an official check to local sharia court rulings, enhancing central control. Following all these attempts to establish a judicial hierarchy, on 18 April 1927 the Dagestani Central Committee announced a decree that “abolished the *djamaat* and district sharia courts, and criminalized the practice of sharia.”⁸⁹ The subsequent year witnessed the closing of religious schools and brought the local Islam clergy under the watchful eyes of the Soviet security services. Indeed, “According to some sources, 38 Naqshbandi and Kadiri shaykhs were executed,”⁹⁰ and “over 800 of the most respected *gorsty* elders were sent into exile in Archangelsk, near the Arctic Circle.”⁹¹ If all this was not enough to antagonize the *gorsty*, the Tenth Article of the Criminal Code, titled ‘On Crimes Related to the Relic Tribal Way of Life’, surely exposed the hollowness of Commissar Stalin’s prior assurances.⁹²

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 501.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 501.

⁹⁰ Galina M. Yemelianova, “Sufism and Politics in the North Caucasus,” *Nationalities Papers*, Volume 29, Number 4 (2001), p. 665.

⁹¹ Kisriev & Ware, “Russian Hegemony and Islamic Resistance: Ideology and Political Organization in Dagestan 1800-1930,” p. 501.

⁹² Ibid., p. 501.

GORSTY RESISTANCE AND THE SOVIET RESPONSE

Disenchantment with Soviet life was primarily to blame for the decade-long series of insurrections following the Bolshevik victory in the Russian Civil War.⁹³ Parallel to what the PDPA would do in Afghanistan decades later, the Soviet government sought to undermine the very structures upon which the fabric of North Caucasian society were built; Consequently, it became a predatory force.

Mountaineer resistance mainly erupted in the more geographically-inaccessible (that is to say southern and mountainous) areas of the North Caucasus, leading the movement to be dominated by ethnic Chechens and Dagestani Avars.⁹⁴ One such example was the 1920-1921 rebellion led by Imam Nijmutdin Gotsinskii. Gotsinskii was supported by Saïd Bek, the grandson of the legendary Shamil. “At its height,” wrote one scholar, “the ‘Sharia Army of the Gorsty People’ numbered over 10,000 horsemen and controlled large towns such as Derbent and Makahchkala. [sic]”⁹⁵ Even with this initial success, Imam Gotsinskii and Saïd Bek’s Sharia Army was subject to the reprisals of the 9th Red Army, commanded by M. K. Levandovskii and under the political control of Sergo Ordjonikidze.⁹⁶ According to after-action and field reporting from both the Red Army and the Checka, the mountaineer resistance was never unified.⁹⁷ Though it never posed a permanent threat to Soviet control, not least because of the harsh reprisals upon the populace using artillery and air power, the resistance did lead the Soviets to formulate a political solution. “The Bolsheviks created local organs of power that were popularly

⁹³ Goleotti, p. 42.

⁹⁴ Reynolds, p. 45.

⁹⁵ Werth, p. 352.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 352.

⁹⁷ Apparently, Red Army intelligence “distinguished between that small number committed to reviving the Mountaineer Republic, those seeking an Islamic state, those engaged in ordinary banditry (*abrechestvo*), and those groups acting out of a mix of ideological and pragmatic motives.” See Reynolds, p. 45.

elected. Revolutionary committees were replaced by ‘village soviets’ (councils)...[under] the Bolshevik slogan of ‘Power to the Soviets.’”⁹⁸ The ‘victory’ came at the cost of “at least 5,000”⁹⁹ Red army soldiers; it would not be the last time significant amounts of Russian blood was spilled in order to keep the region forcibly under Russian control. Moreover, the recurring rebellions in the North Caucasus required the Bolsheviks to divert Red Army forces from the South Caucasus north in order to maintain sufficient military presence for pacification operations, which essentially “diverted Soviet attention and made it impossible for Moscow to effectively project its influence southward.”¹⁰⁰

SOVIET NATION-BUILDING: A PARADOX

For such a relatively small geographic area, the ethno-national diversity of the North Caucasus posed special challenges to Soviet nationalities policy. The typical solution, naming the territory after the majority group and offering incentives to minority groups, worked against Soviet interests in two ways. First, if Soviet grand strategy was intended to detach peoples from the illusion of nationality, exposing the true class struggle, then creating what one scholar characterized as “nation-states in embryo” was surely counterproductive.¹⁰¹ The creation of ASSRs along national lines, whether real or imagined, ensured that “each of these developed along separate lines, cultivating its own group identity and nationalism.”¹⁰² The only attempt to counterbalance these national designations was the import of significant numbers of ethnic

⁹⁸ Kisriev & Ware, “Russian Hegemony and Islamic Resistance: Ideology and Political Organization in Dagestan 1800-1930,” p. 500.

⁹⁹ Cornell, p. 30.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 30.

¹⁰¹ Hughes, p. 15.

¹⁰² Moshe Gammer, “Between Mecca and Moscow: Islam, Politics, and Political Islam in Chechnya and Dagestan,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, Volume. 41, Number 6 (November 2005), p. 834.

Russians. Moreover, the unique level of diversity found in Dagestan, complicated by the mere existence of an Avar ethnic plurality, required much more tactful governance.

Second, because the national ASSRs served to foster national identity, thus promoting group solidarity and resistance to Soviet rule, Stalinist Russia implemented the controversial policy of population resettlement, redrawing the national borders only after the troublesome groups were forcibly removed—thereby creating deep national grievances toward Moscow and exacerbating inter-group rivalries. In this sense, the resettlement of ethno-national groups diluted the homogeneity of the ‘autonomous’ republics, creating a litany of territorial and national grievances. Essentially, “Soviet-era map-making and state-creation [provided] the backdrop for the region’s current ethnic tensions.”¹⁰³

Dagestan’s ethno-national diversity was simply too much for the Soviets to bear. After all, it is always easier to work with smaller numbers. In this spirit, the Soviet government divided peoples speaking a minimum of 32 tongues into 11 official nationalities.¹⁰⁴ Despite the Soviet’s best top-down efforts to create political unities (or units?) in the North Caucasus, resistance forced them adopt more coercive measures. One of the most controversial, population resettlement, was primarily responsible for the deep antagonism that developed between the ethnic Russians and the Chechens. Not only that, because the ethnic realities were reflected in the map-making process, the Chechen and Ingush deportations exacerbated group resentments within Dagestan’s heterogeneous society.

¹⁰³ Dunlop and Menon, p. 104.

¹⁰⁴ Gammer, “Walking the Tightrope Between Nationalism(s) and Islam(s): The Case of Daghestan,” p. 134.

THE CHECHEN AND INGUSH DEPORTATIONS

Failed attempts to pacify the highlander groups led the Soviets to harsher measures. In some ways, the later approach resembled an attempt to exterminate the recalcitrant groups, but it never approached anything near the brutality of the Nazis. As Operation Barbarossa drove deeper into Russian territory, the Soviets feared, perhaps legitimately, that the Chechens and other nationalities would rebel. This situation would call for the Soviets to re-pacify the population while defending against the Germans who were driving toward the Baku oilfields in 1942.¹⁰⁵

With this strategic dilemma in mind, Stalin's government chose to remove the problem, almost as if they were surgeons removing a cancerous tumor. Code-named Operation Lentil, 119,000 Red Army soldiers and NKVD personnel forcibly deported approximately 600,000 people (Chechens constituted roughly 400,000 of the total) by train to Kazakhstan and Kirghizia¹⁰⁶ during February 1944.¹⁰⁷ The undertaking was *massive*, requiring 12,525 railcars¹⁰⁸ in a series of 194 convoys.¹⁰⁹ The Soviets then proceeded to replace the exiles from Dagestan's Akki district with more tolerable nationalities, resettling ethnic Laks in the territory once populated by ethnic Chechens.¹¹⁰ Additionally, the Soviets artificially diluted the concentration of ethnic Chechens in the Checheno-Ingush ASSR by transferring ethnic Russians from Stravropol Krai.¹¹¹ Moreover, the brutal conduct of the operation claimed the lives of thousands

¹⁰⁵ Dmitri Trenin and Aleksei V. Malashenko with Antol Lieven, *Russia's Restless Frontier: The Chechnya Factor in Post-Soviet Russia*, (Washington D.C.:Carnegie, 2004), p. 15.

¹⁰⁶ Werth, p. 347, 356. and Hughs, p. 20.

¹⁰⁷ James Hughes, "Chechnya: The Causes of a Protracted Post-Soviet Conflict," *Civil Wars*, Volume 4, Number 4 (Winter 2001), p. 20.

¹⁰⁸ Matthew Evangelista, *The Chechen Wars: Will Russia Go the Way of the Soviet Union?*, (Washington D.C.: Brookings University Press, 2002), p. 14.

¹⁰⁹ Wert, p. 356.

¹¹⁰ The Soviet authorities prevented the Laks from returning by destroying their ancestral homes. Emil Souleimanov, "Chechnya, Wahhabism and the Invasion of Dagestan," *The Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Volume 9, Number 4 (December 2005) p. 12.

¹¹¹ Hughs, p. 20.

of Chechens crammed into the endless convoys of trains due to disease, lack of water, lack of food, and exposure. In the minds of the Chechens, this was an attempt at ethnic extermination no different than that of Hitler.

It was not until Khrushchev's thaw in 1957 that they could return home from exile¹¹², "often bringing the bones of their relatives for burial."¹¹³ What is most important about the exile is that it provided the necessary crisis, laying the road to the November 1991 Chechen Revolution. It created a political grievance amongst the exiled generation that could only be resolved with the creation of an independent Chechen state, assuring that such treatment could never again befall the nation.

A DISASTROUS RECORD

The Soviets failed to take into account the ethnic complexity of the North Caucasus. This failure exposed complicated governance problems, which caused the Soviets to pursue extreme solutions. Additionally, Soviet nationalities policy failed to help the Caucasians transcend group loyalties—and likely served to reinforce and exacerbate them. In effect, "each of these [territorial-political units] developed along separate lines, cultivating its own group identity and nationalism."¹¹⁴ Moshe Gammer claims that "the policy of 'institutionalized multinationality' created nation-states in embryo; for although most had no historical provenance as independent

¹¹² Galeotti, p. 340.

¹¹³ Reynolds, p. 46.

¹¹⁴ Gammer, "Between Mecca and Moscow: Islam, Politics, and Political Islam in Chechnya and Daghestan," p. 834.

and consolidated entities, they became the default political-administrative template for the post-Soviet space. [sic].”¹¹⁵

Failure to assimilate the North Caucasian ethno-national groups was particularly acute in Dagestan. The ethno-national diversity of the ASSR produced an impasse in Soviet assimilation programs. “The ‘new Soviet man’,” write Oversloot and Van Den Burg, “in which all nationalities of the Soviet Union would finally become indistinguishable and to which all nationalities would be ‘elevated’, in fact made very little headway in Dagestan.”¹¹⁶ Regarding the reality of Soviet governance, Dagestan’s ethnic complexity forced Moscow to rule through ethnic elites, operating in the clan-based spoils system—much like Shamil had to do at the end of the three Imam wars. Essentially, “The power of the communist party’s first secretary was both based upon and limited by the fact that he was expected to promote members of his own clan and nationality.”¹¹⁷ In this manner, Soviet policies only served to reinforce deeply-entrenched ethno-national loyalties, setting the stage for the events to come.

¹¹⁵ Hughes, p. 15.

¹¹⁶ Oversloot and Van Den Burg, p. 315. Ironically, this may have been of the Soviet’s own doing. Giuliani analyzed that Soviet affirmative action programs, aimed at ethnic minorities in the ASSRs, only served to “reinforce” the idea of group separateness. See Giuliani, p. 200.

¹¹⁷ Oversloot and Van Den Burg, p. 315.

6.0 ORIGINS OF A REVOLUTION



The Chechen Revolution, like so many others in the 1990s, was a product of the collapse of the Soviet Union. Also like so many others, the revolution was influenced by the power struggle between Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin. Unlike many of its neighbors in the North Caucasus, Chechnya became radicalized by a small, yet captivating, revolutionary elite. The revolution was both anti-communist and nationalist, yet unlike other anti-communist or nationalist revolutions, it provoked Moscow to use military force to put it down—and on more than one occasion. Indeed, the Revolution changed the entire political landscape of the North Caucasus.

A 2-TIER SOCIETY

Even though it was named the Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR), the Chechen and the Ingush nations were second-class citizens in a ranked society. Any position of worth or status was essentially reserved for ethnic Russians. Every day existence in the Checheno-Ingush ASSR was a sad reminder of their status as a conquered people. While Mel Brooks reminds us that “It’s good to be the King,” Anatol Lieven reminds us that “it is hard to be a Chechen”¹¹⁸.

The twin pillars of power in the republic were the First Secretary of the Communist Party and the Chairman of the republican Supreme Soviet, both, of course, operating under the control of Moscow.¹¹⁹ Kremlin-directed policy also “required that the First Party Secretary, the local head of the KGB, the local police chief and all top administrators in the oil industry should be ethnic Russians.”¹²⁰ Apparently, the highest echelons of power in the Checheno-Ingush ASSR were not the only reserved positions of employment. One Chechen informed reporters that it was extremely difficult for Chechens to even find employment as bus drivers, “especially on important routes.”¹²¹

Comparative statistics are even more revealing. Hoover Institution Senior Fellow John Dunlop provides the following statistics from Alexander Nekrich’s book, *The Punished Peoples*: “Of 8,997 specialists with a higher education listed as living in [the Checheno-Ingush ASSR] in 1959, only 177 were Chechens and 124 Ingush. Similarly, of 8,000 teachers employed in the republic after its restoration, only 1,440 were Chechens and Ingush, and, of these, only 190 had

¹¹⁸ Anatol Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999) 2nd edition, p. 324

¹¹⁹ Valery Tishkov, *Chechnya: Life in a War-Torn Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), p. 37.

¹²⁰ Carlotta Gall and Thomas de Waal, *Chechnya: Calamity in the Caucasus* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1998), p. 79.

¹²¹ Hussein Khamidov quoted in Gall in de Waal, p. 79.

educational degrees.”¹²² Russian Academy of Sciences Professor Valery Tishkov provides statistics of his own which, he claims, show that the local inhabitants were “represented in the power structures at all levels.”¹²³ Such claims, however, are not persuasive.

The domination of ethnic Russians in positions of power and the civil service had its roots in the 1944 deportations. The expulsion of the Chechens and Ingush to Kazakhstan and other areas along the Soviet periphery necessarily created a plethora of employment vacancies—not that the former local inhabitants possessed influential positions to begin with. When the deportees and their families were pardoned under Khrushchev’s administration, they returned to find Russians and Cossacks dwelling in their ancestral homes—except for the highlanders whose villages were razed to the ground and were forced to live in the northern lowlands.

It is tempting to assume that elements of the newly-rehabilitated peoples would eventually rise up from low social status by way of their own merit. Indeed, education and enterprise tend to facilitate upward mobility and become great enablers in the long run if the playing field is leveled—especially if you become a member of the Party. The playing field was not level however. The authorities made symbolic gestures such as affirmative action policies reserving slots in institutions of higher education for those of Caucasian descent; but in practice, the policies rarely served the interests of the local inhabitants. Dzhabrail Gakayev’s offers the following account:

Schools [in the rural areas] had a shortage of financing, teachers, infrastructure, and books. Many children didn’t attend school because of their families’ poverty and the seasonal migratory work their parents asked them to do. At college entrance exams, those from village schools, mostly of Chechen and Ingush nationality, could not compete with the Russian-speaking city youth. In consequence, local colleges failed to train Chechen and Ingush specialists. The percentage of Vainakh students (particularly at the Petroleum Industry College) was low. Since Vainakh college

¹²² Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya*, p. 81.

¹²³ Tishkov, p. 34. According to Tishkov, Vainakh peoples held 55.3 percent of deputy positions to Union and Federation-level soviets, 19.7 percent of the republican and local soviets, comprised 12.3 percent of local Party secretariat positions, and that 47,000 retained membership in the Youth Communist League.

applicants were at a disadvantage, they often had to pay bribes to gain admission. Russia's colleges had a system of reserving quotas for applicants from the ethnic autonomous region, but the republic's Communist Party committee began admitting Russian-speaking applicants among the indigenous candidates in these reserved quotas. Those from the city schools—Russians, Armenians, Jews—received more opportunities.¹²⁴

Access to living accommodations in the apartment buildings in the center of Grozny, in close proximity to the government buildings, were “reserved for ethnic Russians—something which later ensured that thousands of Russians died in the bombing of the city at the beginning of the [1994-1996] war.”¹²⁵ Healthcare was also notoriously substandard (relative to other Soviet regions) in the Checheno-Ingush ASSR. When compared to ethnically-Russian regions of Stavropol krai, Krasnodar krai, and the Rostov oblast, the differences become glaring¹²⁶:

	Stavropol krai	Krasnodar krai	Rostov oblast	Checheno- Ingush ASSR
Number of Hospital Beds per 10,000 People - 1991	87.5	94.1	94.8	76
Number of Doctors per 10,000 People - 1991	112.6	98.2	81.5	58.9

¹²⁴ Quoted in Tishkov, p. 45.

¹²⁵ Gall and de Waal, p. 79-80.

¹²⁶ See Dunlop, p. 87.

High levels of unemployment (estimated at 40 percent)¹²⁷ for the Chechens and the Ingush people were also a constant reminder of their status under Soviet rule. In fact, “up to 200,000 people, mainly rural-dwelling young men were out of work and thousands of Chechen men were forced to work as seasonal cheap labour [sic] in different parts of Russia.”¹²⁸ Moreover, much to the chagrin of the Chechens (and other non-Russian nationalities), Brezhnev’s Party Secretary for Ideology, Mikhail Suslov, set in motion a program that mandated the observance of their “voluntary union” with Russia; indeed, in 1982 Chechnya went through the “charade of official celebrations of the 200th anniversary of the ‘voluntary union’.”¹²⁹ The notion of voluntary union was drawn from the analytical interpretation found in the works of a Chechen historian and archaeologist, Vitaly B. Vinogradov—authored with the support of the Checheno-Ingush Regional Communist Party of course.¹³⁰

Ethnic Chechens and Ingush living under the heel of communist rule were unable to achieve upward mobility. Somewhere, there was always a roadblock waiting to trip them up. They lived in a republic named after them, only to be governed by ethnic Russians who—upon their deportation in 1944 - had gobbled up their land like a swarm of hungry locusts.

Whatever the relative plights of the Chechens, the Chechen Revolution was the combination of historical opportunity and the resurgence of Chechen nationalism. It was the realization and affirmation that the “essence of the nation is psychological, a vivid sense of

¹²⁷ Evangelista, *The Chechen Wars*, p. 16.

¹²⁸ Gall and de Waal, p. 80.

¹²⁹ Gall and de Waal, p. 79. Local historians such Magomed Muzayev and Abdula Vatsuev who protested this revisionist view of Russo-Chechen relations were censored by the authorities and removed from their places of employment. See Dunlop, p. 82.

¹³⁰ Tishkov, p. 48; Gall and de Waal, p. 79.

sameness or oneness of kind, which, from the perspective of the group, sets itself off from all others in a most vital way.”¹³¹ This being so, it fell upon the shoulders of the enlightened few to lead the national movement, to educate the inert and unenlightened masses as to their plight and their opportunity. The ultimate end of their struggle could be no less than a Chechen nation-state. Adolf Hitler, despite his diabolical legacy, offered the following insight in *Mein Kampf*: “We...are only able to imagine a State only to be the living organism of a nationality which not only safeguards the preservation of the nationality, [but]...leads to its highest freedom.”¹³² The radical nationalists understanding of national affiliation carried with it the corresponding duty to achieve independence from the Russian state in an altruistic fashion, to achieve self-determination for the betterment of the nation as a whole. Thus, to settle for less than statehood was to betray the nation and commit an act of treason against one’s own people, to be no better (and possibly even more morally compromised) than Judas.

In many ways, the radical nationalists in the Chechen revolutionary leadership were grounded in the centrality of the national idea that Hitler was describing. Any conception of true legitimacy with regard to ‘the state’ carried with it the necessary assumption that the state be *purely* Chechen. Indeed, any set of governing institutions that were not grounded in the national image were those imposed upon the nation by foreign interference. Such colonial governance could do nothing but trample upon the rights and inherent fundamental worth of the uniqueness of Chechen identity.

The Chechen nation, as shown throughout the beginning of this study, proves to be a deadly adversary when its ranks swell with militant fervor. Even so, history also teaches us that

¹³¹ Walker Connor, “Eco- of Ethno-nationalism?” in Walker Connor , *Ethnonationalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 145.

¹³² Quoted in Walker Connor, “A Nation is a Nation, Is a State, Is an Ethic Group, Is a...” in Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 99.

the Russian state eventually overwhelms and temporarily pacifies Chechen resistance through a two-pronged strategy: co-option of the lowlander *teips* south of the Terek River and intense search-and-destroy operations for the remaining insurgent networks.

DOKU ZAVGAYEV: THE FIRST AND FINAL CHECHEN FIRST SECRETARY



Three particularly astute scholars on the leadership of post-Soviet governance observed, “To the surprise of most observers, the collapse of communist rule involved no comprehensive turnover of communist elites. The founding of democratic regimes has instead been accompanied by a marked continuity in elite composition...”¹³³ Chechnya’s Communist Party First Secretary Doku Zavgayev seemed to be another of these holdover communists clothed in the uncomfortable robes of reform. To be fair, Zavgayev held the distinction of being the first ethnic Chechen to rise to the office of the First Secretary.

Zavgayev was new to his office. As described above, Kremlin policy desired to ensure that an ethnic Russian held the position of the republic’s Party First Secretary. According to this method of ethnic reservation, Vladimir Fortayev had assumed the office in 1989. When the time to fill the outgoing Fortayev’s vacancy came, the Moscow Politburo desired the appointment of

¹³³ John Higley, Judith Kullberg, and Jan Pakulski, “The Persistence of Postcommunist Elites,” in Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner, eds. *Democracy after Communism* (Baltimore and London: John’s Hopkins University Press, 2002), p. 35.

Nikolai Semyonov, then the Grozny Party Committee Secretary and most importantly an ethnic Russian. Ethnic Chechen party officials, KGB, and MVD officers protested Semyonov's upcoming ascendancy, believing that the time had come for a Chechen to hold the office.¹³⁴ Allegedly, Chechen Party official Lechi Magomadov politely suggested that Moscow consider Zavgayev for the vacancy, and by the spring of 1989 Zavgayev was appointed to the position.¹³⁵ With the end of the ethnic Russian monopoly on Party power in the republic, "the frozen political landscape in Chechnya began to thaw."¹³⁶

Zavgayev was born in the northwestern village of Beno-Yurt, located in the Nadterechnyi district in 1940.¹³⁷ Admittedly, there is some confusion as to exactly what *teip* he belonged to. Stasys Knezys and Romanas Sedlickas claim that Zavgayev belonged to the *Nizaloi teip*¹³⁸, while Carlotta Gall and Thomas de Waal claim that his parents belonged to different *teips*: the *gendargeno* and the *beno*.¹³⁹ That being said, Doku Zavgayev was a modernized lowlander and a typical member of the Sovietized ruling elite. Zavgayev worked his way to the top of the local Party from modest beginnings. His path to power began in unlikely professions as a teacher and mechanic; he then became a collective farm engineer, manager, and eventually rose to become the republic's minister of agriculture.¹⁴⁰ A relatively educated man, he attended the Mountain Agricultural Institute, the Moscow-based Academy of Social Sciences, and obtained a doctoral

¹³⁴ Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*, p. 56-57; Gammer, *The Lone Wolf and the Bear*, p. 200; and Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya*, p. 89.

¹³⁵ Gall and de Waal, p. 80.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

¹³⁷ Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya*, p. 89.

¹³⁸ Stasys Knezys and Romanas Sedlickas, *The War in Chechnya* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1999), p. 19.

¹³⁹ Gall and de Waal, p. 80-81.

¹⁴⁰ Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya*, p. 89; Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*, p. 57; Valentin Mikhailov, "Chechnya and Tatarstan: Differences in Search of an Explanation," in *Chechnya: From Past to Future* Richard Sakwa, ed. (London: Anthem Press, 2005), p. 55.

candidate degree in agricultural sciences.¹⁴¹ By 1983, he rose to the rank of the second Party Secretary.¹⁴²

Zavgayev is described as “a sleek man with probing, hooded eyes” and “a born back-room manipulator, not a politician with the popular touch.”¹⁴³ The single atypical characteristic of Zavgayev was that he was an ethnic Chechen. In fact, since the 1957 return from exile in Kazakhstan, no Chechen spent a single day as First Secretary¹⁴⁴; it was simply a position reserved for trustworthy ethnic Russians. In other words, in most respects Zavgayev was more of the same, a slightly more liberal-yet-loyal member of the *partokratiia*—the emperor had acquired new clothes. Following his appointment in 1989, however, Zavgayev reversed the conservative policies of Fortayev and facilitated the loosening of restrictions on freedoms of the press and apolitical associations.¹⁴⁵ To his credit—and perhaps his political survival—he also began replacing other outgoing ethnic Russian vacancies with indigenous peoples. Yet, despite his relatively-liberal stance, especially when compared to the conservative Fortayev, Zavgayev was more cautious than his Caucasian counterparts in the other autonomous republics: Vladislav Ardzinbain Abkhazia, Mintimer Shaimiev in Tatarstan, and Murtaza Rakhimov in Bashkiria.¹⁴⁶ After all, it was by no means clear at this point what the power situation in Moscow would look like in the wake of the Gorbachev and Yeltsin’s political tug-of-war. The best policy was to genuflect to both his puppeteers and wait to see which one would be holding the strings in the aftermath. Given the circumstances, it was an understandable decision.

¹⁴¹ Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya*, p. 89.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 89.

¹⁴³ Gall and de Waal, p. 80.

¹⁴⁴ Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*, p. 57.

¹⁴⁵ Cornell, p. 205.

¹⁴⁶ Tishkov, *Chechnya: Life in a War-Torn Society*, p. 58.

ZAVGAYEV ATTEMPTS TO CO-OPT THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT

“The most perilous moment for a bad government is when it seeks to mend its ways.”

-Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*

Corresponding simultaneously with the back-and-forth between Moscow and Grozny over who would replace Fortayev, local inhabitants in the Checheno-Ingush ASSR began to ask more of Moscow. By no means representative of those to come, either in ideology or ethnic composition, they represented the liberal wave sweeping over the Soviet Union as a whole. One such group was the Chechen-Ingush Popular Front in Support of Perestroika (*Checheno-Ingushskii Narodnyi Front Sodeistviia Perestroike*), or ChINFSP.

ChINFSP’s membership was a mix of mainly urban, indigenous ethnicities and Russians whose aims were simultaneously general and specific. They requested the explicit freedom of religious persuasion, recognition of local languages and culture, observance of and reparations for the 1944 deportations, admission of forced annexation into Russia, while they also opposed a measure to construct a Biochemical plant in the city of Gudermes.¹⁴⁷ Thus, Zavgayev was forced to genuflect to the liberal spirits of the reformist republic elites; he found himself walking a very thin tightrope.

In order to add additional nationalist credentials for his domestic audience, Zavgayev undertook a mission to promote the professional careers of ethnic Chechens, especially those in positions outside the republic whose ascent would not threaten his own position. Specifically,

¹⁴⁷ Anatol Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999) 2nd edition, p. 56; Moshe Gammer, *The Lone Wolf and the Bear: Three Centuries of Chechen Defiance of Russian Rule* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006), p.200.

Zavgayev pleaded that, for the first time in the history of the Soviet Union, there be a Chechen general. In October 1989 Zavgayev's pleas bore fruit: Soviet Air Force Colonel Dzhokhar Musayevich Dudayev was promoted to Major General—a move Zavgayev would later deeply regret.¹⁴⁸

Thus, in order to avoid being replaced by new political elites, Zavgayev attempted to co-opt the national movement. As Huntington observed, “Historically strong party organizations have been built either by revolution from below or by patronage above.”¹⁴⁹ In Chechnya the efforts of the patronage system to maintain the dominance of Party control eventually backfired, suggesting that Huntington's first source of organizational strength was more accurate in this case.

DZHOKHAR DUDAYEV: CREATING A REVOLUTIONARY

“With a few exceptions, those who become revolutionaries are politically skilled individuals whose talents are potentially available to the incumbent government.”

- John T. McAlister, *Viet Nam: The Origins of a Revolution*



¹⁴⁸ Tishkov, *Chechnya: Life in a War-Torn Society*, p. 59.

¹⁴⁹ Huntington, p. 70.

The story of Major General Dudayev is compelling. He is a man who lived in two worlds. As a Soviet officer he was an example of patriotism, and professionalism—the model officer in many ways. On the other hand, his *Weltanschauung* was hopelessly romantic. Ironically, his idealist passions (complimented with his keen understanding of Soviet politics) may have been the exact trait that allowed him to rise above his ethnic peers in a system dominated by Russians. The military’s unique appreciation for merit became his vehicle to upward mobility. In this institution, he developed the self-confidence, ambition, and discipline to become the leader of the radical wing of the Chechen Revolutionary movement.

Dudayev was born on 15 April 1944 in the western village of Yalkhori, the youngest of fourteen children.¹⁵⁰ Dzhokhar’s father, himself a former Bolshevik, did reasonably well for himself as a veterinary surgeon.¹⁵¹ Perhaps it was destiny that Dzhokhar entered the world just before the NKVD would carry out Stalin’s orders and deport the Vainakh nation to a harsh exile in Kazakhstan. It was this experience that formed the future general and future revolutionary president. “Dudayev’s almost satanic pride in later years,” offer two journalists, “emerged from a childhood of great hardship and humiliation.”¹⁵² For all his father’s skill and education, the family only managed to survive by working as potato pickers on the Proletarsky Collective Farm.¹⁵³ Despite the brief smell of the Chechen mountain air, young Dzhokhar suffered thirteen years in Kazakh exile, seven of which were in the city of Pavlodar.¹⁵⁴

The redemption of the exiles under Khrushchev’s leadership allowed Dzhokhar to make the long journey home. He was a far too ambitious young man to remain in a backwater of

¹⁵⁰ Cornell, p. 206; Gall and de Waal, p. 83. Valery Tishkov disputes the number of children, claiming that Dudayev was one of only ten children. See Tishkov, *Chechnya: Life in a War-Torn Society*, p. 77.

¹⁵¹ Gall and de Waal, p. 83-84.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 84,

¹⁵³ *Ibid.* p. 84.

¹⁵⁴ Cornell, p. 206 ; Gall and de Waal, p. 83; and Tishkov, *Chechnya: Life in a War-Torn Society*, p. 59.

Soviet neglect. Instead, Dudayev went to the Tambov military high school in 1965 and eventually to the Yuri Gagarin Air Force Academy.¹⁵⁵ Dzhokhar's fateful choice to enter military service likely set in motion many of the events to come. It was his time in the Air Force that gave the former-exile a chance to shine and overcome his past, and perhaps the past of his people as well.

During Dudayev's twenty-four years in military service, he served as a fighter pilot in both Siberia and Afghanistan.¹⁵⁶ For his valor during the Soviet-Afghan war, Dzhokhar earned two very high Soviet military distinctions: the Order of the Red Star and the Order of the Red Banner.¹⁵⁷ Upon reaching the rank of colonel, he was stationed at a strategic bomber base targeting Great Britain located in Tartu, Estonia.¹⁵⁸ It was here that he became friends with the ethnic Estonian Colonel Ants Laaneots, of the local military district in Tartu.¹⁵⁹ Thanks to the efforts of his "soon-to-be nemesis", Dudayev rose to the rank of Major General in 1988.¹⁶⁰



¹⁵⁵ Cornell, p. 206.l; Tishkov, *Chechnya: Life in a War-Torn Society*, p. 59.

¹⁵⁶ Gammer, *The Lone Wolf and the Bear*, p.201; Tishkov, *Chechnya: Life in a War-Torn Society*, p. 59.

¹⁵⁷ Gall and de Waal, p. 86.

¹⁵⁸ Gammer, *The Lone Wolf and the Bear*, p. 201.

¹⁵⁹ Gall and de Waal, p. 87.

¹⁶⁰ Evangelista, *The Chechen Wars*, p. 16

Dudayev had charismatic smile, but also a penchant for the dramatic. When not in military uniform, his pictures typically show him in a dark three-piece suit and Italian fedora hat. On one occasion, Dzhokhar reportedly responded to a question regarding the state of his health by performing a standing backwards summersault—in his office no less.¹⁶¹ Anatol Lieven came to similar conclusions. Describing his mannerisms like those of a “play-actor”, adding that, “What part exactly he thought he thought he was playing I’ve never been able to work out...”¹⁶² Lieven recalls: “His speech was exaggeratedly clipped, emphatic, martial and authoritarian. When speaking in public, he combined this with a heavy stress of the last syllables of words.”¹⁶³

At astonishing moments, Dzhokhar was eccentric to a fault. Neither did his sometimes-absurd statements limit themselves to politics. Much to the confusion of a Chechen mufti, Dudayev once came to the conclusion that, “The great religion of Islam must have emerged, not from the lifeless desert of Arabia among nomadic tribes, but in the earthly paradise among peoples of high culture and mutual respect. That garden [sic.] of Eden was Chechnya, and it’s people, the Vainakhs, must have been the founders of the Islamic faith.”¹⁶⁴ According to Valery Tishkov, the mufti did not know how to respond to Dzhokhar’s ability to debunk centuries of inaccurate history which was clearly aimed at keeping the Chechens down. Dudayev even took the occasion during a visit to France, aimed at gaining support for his revolutionary regime, to instruct his astounded audience on some missing details surrounded the story of Noah and his ark. According to Dzhokhar’s unique knowledge of ancient history, “the Ark landed in the mountains of Chechnya and Noah and his family were [sic.] the direct ancestors of the Vainakhs.

¹⁶¹ Tishkov, *Chechnya: Life in a War-Torn Society*, p. 77.

¹⁶² Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*, p. 66.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

¹⁶⁴ Tishkov, *Chechnya: Life in a War-Torn Society*, p. 51.

Mankind, therefore, owed its salvation from the Flood to the Chechens.”¹⁶⁵ On a third occasion, he marveled at an ancient stone structure in Baalbek, Lebanon, coming to the not-so-private conclusion that it was of *such* exquisite design that it had to be crafted by the Vainakh people in ages past.¹⁶⁶

Dudayev’s domestic proclamations were even more fantastic. Lieven recounts that Dzhokhar used the occasion during a speech shortly after being elected president to inform the Chechen people on television of a covert plot by the FSK to “attack Chechnya with an artificial earthquake,” musing that “when I visited Chechnya in February 1992 people were still talking about this supposed threat.”¹⁶⁷ In another public display of brashness, Dudayev held a press conference during which Lieven reported: “He three times quoted Harry Truman’s alleged words that ‘there is no language in which you can talk with Russians,’ and four times called Russia a ‘satanic power.’”¹⁶⁸ The most extreme example of Dudayev’s propensity to be abrasive was when his acting-Vice President Yandarbiyev was attempting to signal to the Russian government that the Chechen government was prepared to negotiate a non-military solution to the crisis in December 1994. According to Lieven, “Dudayev was raving that ‘Russism [sic.] is worse than Nazism,’ and that ‘Boris Yeltsin is the leader of a gang of murderers’ and his regime the ‘diabolical heir of the totalitarian monster.’”¹⁶⁹ If this was not enough to insult the Russian government, Dzhokhar allegedly met with emissaries from Moscow before the invasion and

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 52.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 51.

¹⁶⁷ Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*, p. 67.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 69.

¹⁶⁹ Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*, p. 69.

proceeded to harangue the captive audience for at no less than thirty minutes before hearing anything they had to say.¹⁷⁰

The confluence of Dzhokhar's unique personality and the historical context of his time come together to mold a revolutionary leader, a model Soviet military officer who became swept up in the tide of Chechen nationalism and became its symbolic figurehead. It is difficult to flippantly assume that Dudayev's character flaws—his quick temper and slight arrogance—set the events to come in motion. The sheer complexity of the revolution he came to lead was influenced by many actors and intervening events. Indeed, Dudayev's revolutionary movement was more than a coup led by a Latin American-style dictator; it was an eruption of national grievance and part of a wider phenomenon sweeping across the disintegrating Soviet Union as a whole.

RUSLAN KHASBULATOV



The other Chechen whose career was intentionally advanced by Zavgayev was Ruslan Khasbulatov. Like Dudayev, Khasbulatov was born in Chechnya and became a child of the

¹⁷⁰ Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*, p. 69

deportations. While in exile, Khasbulatov lived in Petropavlosk region, located in the northern expanses of Kazakhstan.¹⁷¹ After his return, Khasbulatov went on to higher education and eventually became an economics professor at the Plekhanov Institute in Moscow.¹⁷² Yeltsin's democratic movement allowed him an opportunity to become involved with politics and he was elected to the Congress of People's Deputies (CPD) in 1990 from a Grozny electoral district. According to one account, Khasbulatov was a "born political manipulator, who took swimmingly to Moscow's political intrigues."¹⁷³ Zavgayev intervened and saw to it that Khasbulatov was made one of Yeltsin's deputies in the CPD.

ANATOMY OF THE NATIONAL AWAKENING

The radicalized strain of Chechen nationalism which peaked in the early to mid 1990s was a work in progress. Beginning in July 1989 the Chechen Bart (Unity) Party, "the first overtly political organization" in Checheno-Ingush ASSR, emerged as a byproduct of frustration with Zavgayev's half-hearted genuflecting to liberal-spirited "reforms".¹⁷⁴ The leaders of Bart attended the August 1989 First Congress of the Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus in Sukhumi, Abkhaziya. It was at this meeting that the Bart leaders first advocated creating—or perhaps more accurately *resurrecting*—a federated North Caucasus state.¹⁷⁵

The indigenous ethnic groups succeeded in forcing the resignation of seven Russian regional first secretaries by way of sustained rallies and hunger strikes in the republic.¹⁷⁶ Additionally, the aftermath of the March 1990 elections to the Congress of People's Deputies

¹⁷¹ Gall and de Waal, p. 81.

¹⁷² Ibid., p. 81.

¹⁷³ Ibid., p. 81.

¹⁷⁴ Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya*, p. 89-90.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 90.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 90..

(CPD) in the ASSR revealed the strong level of support for the emerging radical democrats in Moscow.¹⁷⁷ Zavgayev was not unaware of the ebb and flow of the political tides around him.

In order to solidify his position he had himself elected Chairman of the republican Supreme Soviet, believing that the combined powers of Party leader and head of government would allow him to retain tight political control over the republic and also give him considerable spoils to buy off emerging would-be elites in the future.¹⁷⁸ Even the expansion of his influence in the ASSR was not enough to satiate Zavgayev's need for security. He was subsequently elected as a deputy to the CPD and admitted to full status as a USSR Communist Party Central Committee member.¹⁷⁹ Always hedging his bets, Doku Zavgayev was grasping at straws.

To be fair, he found himself in an awkward situation. Hints that Chechen nationalism was beginning to build into a popular political movement presented difficult complications for Zavgayev. Choosing to neither whole-heartedly endorse nor make the fatal mistake of attempting to suppress the movement, Zavgayev made public genuflections to the emerging nationalists. What harm could come of a simple town hall meeting? The answer to that question would be a painful lesson in ethnocratic politics; it would cost him his job.

THE CHECHEN NATIONAL CONGRESS

Along with the parade of sovereignties, came the gathering of national congresses. Leaders gathered and expressed their groups' respective rights and privileges, a great show indeed. The gathering about to take place in the Checheno-Ingush ASSR was in no way without precedent. One student of these affairs explains:

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 90.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 90.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 90.

National groups held their own congresses in 1990-1992, creating leadership bodies for each nation, including its diasporas. The bodies established included the Tatar World Congress, the Mary-El Council, the World Chuvash Council, and the All-National Congress of the Chechen People.¹⁸⁰

While not without precedent, the Chechen case would be unique. In Chechnya, much more radical, nationalist Chechens formed the organizing elite of the All-National Congress of the Chechen People on 27 November 1990 (*Obshchenatsional'nyi Kongress Chechnskogo Naroda*; OKChN).¹⁸¹ Like many of the other national congresses, the Chechen's was "convened to put political pressure of the local authorities to speed up political change and to celebrate Chechen history and culture in a way that had never been possible before."¹⁸² Unlike many of the other congresses, OKChN represented the political aspirations of a generation of Chechen nationals who went unrepresented in the Soviet republic power structures and civil service. Among other things, the OKChN proclaimed an end to the revisionist view of Chechnya's voluntary integration with Russia, publicly calling for the "nationwide censure of any Chechen who supported the 'propaganda of Vionogrdov's pseudo-scientific conceptions.'"¹⁸³

Despite its nationalist composition, the Congress enjoyed the official sanction of the republic's power structures. Zavgayev, always the opportunist, attempted to garner the support of the Chechen nationalists by using his Party and Supreme Soviet positions to fully endorse the Congress. It appears that his hope was to further build his national credentials; after all, he was the first ethnic Chechen to assume the office of the First Secretariat and was personally responsible for advancing the professional careers of Chechen military officers and politicians. To be safe, Zavgayev placed the Congress and its leadership under the vigilant surveillance of

¹⁸⁰ Petrov, p. 218.

¹⁸¹ Gammer, *The Lone Wolf and the Bear*, p.201; Tishkov, *Chechnya: Life in a War-Torn Society*, p. 58; and Evangelista, *The Chechen Wars*, p. 16.

¹⁸² Gall and de Waal, p. 76.

¹⁸³ Tishkov, *Chechnya: Life in a War-Torn Society*, p. 59.

the republic's KGB chief, Igor Kochubei.¹⁸⁴ What Zavgayev did not foresee was that he had foolishly opened the floodgate to radical nationalism and that he was standing in the path of rushing current. Perhaps it would be a fitting end.

The bulk of the OKChN membership included various clan elders and rural groupings; after all, the bulk of the urban population usually fell along two complimentary lines: ethnic Russians and Communist Party-member Chechens.¹⁸⁵ As the name suggests, the OKChN excluded the Ingush people.¹⁸⁶ The leadership of the OKChN was comprised of a small clique including Lechi Umkhayev, Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev, Yaragi Mamodayev, Beslan Gantemirov, and Yusup Soslambekov. Umkhayev was the man directly responsible for organizing the Congress, intending on it acting as an umbrella institution for the disparate Chechen nationalist organizations.¹⁸⁷ Yandarbiyev brought the table his well-networked Vainakh Party, having "branches in almost every village."¹⁸⁸ Mamodayev was a shady and overweight, but extremely affluent, petroleum industry businessman from the *Chinkho teip* who "bankrolled the new movement."¹⁸⁹ Naturally, Mamodayev later became the economic policy leader of the national movement.¹⁹⁰ Gantemirov, also from the *Chinkho teip*, was a policeman-turned-criminal who formed the paramilitary Islamic Path Party, many members of which formed the core of the Chechen National Guard.¹⁹¹ Later, Gantemirov was given the operational command of the Guard.¹⁹² Soslambekov, convicted of rape during his university studies in Moscow, performed

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 60.

¹⁸⁵ Smith, p. 127.

¹⁸⁶ Gall and de Waal, p. 82.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 81-82.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 91.

¹⁸⁹ Not without a sense of irony, in spring of 1991 Mamodayev rented out the former Party headquarters in Grozny for the Congress to use as its own. See Gall and de Waal, p. 91.

¹⁹⁰ Cornell, p. 207.

¹⁹¹ Gall and de Waal, p. 91-92.

¹⁹² Cornell, p. 207.

much of the grass-roots work of the Congress. Despite his less than virtuous character, Soslambekov's oratory genius elevated him to the unofficial position of what Carlotta Gall and Thomas de Waal dubbed "the people's tribune"¹⁹³ and what another writer referred to as the "demagogue of the revolution"¹⁹⁴. It was this revolutionary core, with the approval of the majority of the Congress, which selected Major General Dzhokhar Dudayev Chairman of the Executive Committee (*ispolkom*) on 1 December 1990 and Commander in Chief of the Chechen National Guard.¹⁹⁵

WHY DZHOKHAR DUDAYEV?

There are three reasons why Dzhokhar, a Chechen who spent an overwhelming majority of his life outside of the republic and in the service of the Soviet armed forces, was elected to chair the *ispolkom*. First, Dudayev was able to explain the national cause in a simplistic-yet-compelling manner. Indeed, Yandarbiyev described Dzhokhar's speech to the Congress as "short but very striking."¹⁹⁶ Reportedly, Major General Dudayev weaved the militant imagery of Chechnya's past with the contemporary national cause saying, "Do not draw your *kinzhal* from its case, do not draw it without cause, but if you do draw it, do not put it back without doing battle."¹⁹⁷ In this manner, Dudayev the outsider managed to display his time away from his homeland did not diminish his knowledge of Chechen culture and history. Whether it was a show or it was a genuine outburst of national euphoria, his words found a very receptive audience.

¹⁹³ Gall and de Waal, p. 92.

¹⁹⁴ Cornell, p. 207.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 206-207; Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya*, p. 93; Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*, p. 58.

¹⁹⁶ Yandarbiyev quoted in Gall and de Waal, p. 76.

¹⁹⁷ Dudayev quoted in Gall and de Waal, p. 76. A *kinzhal* is a Caucasian dagger of varying length. In some accounts it resembles a long knife. Other accounts describe it as a type of short sword.

Secondly, a Dudayev Chairmanship filled the practical role of settling the political jockeying among the various *teips*.¹⁹⁸ For all intensive purposes, Dzhokhar was an outsider who could be trusted to be above clan loyalties, but possessed the added benefit of belonging to the small and rather insignificant *Ertskhoi teip*.¹⁹⁹ “With Dudayev in the lead,” one scholar assessed, “no major clan or *teip* would *a priori* be in a position to control the movement, thereby contributing to its pan-national character and hence possibility to represent the entire Chechen people.”²⁰⁰ Even amongst the more radical nationalist groups, clan politics needed to be taken into account.²⁰¹

Finally, there was the role of the “Wedding General”.²⁰² Chairmanship was intended to be a ceremonial position and who better to give the position to than the first Chechen General wearing his magnificent dress uniform? Moreover, the original intent of the *ispolkom* itself was to oversee the implementation of the Congress’s decisions, not to make policy itself.²⁰³ Therefore, elevating the outsider Dudayev to the Chairmanship was largely a decorative trapping to a rubber-stamping body. As two reporters put it, Dudayev “lent grandeur but no substance to the proceedings.”²⁰⁴ Dudayev was certainly not unaware of his role. Dzhokhar was likely indifferent to his ceremonial role, despite his notorious ego. After all, Dudayev still retained his responsibilities as the commander of his bomber base in Tartu. As such, he enjoyed all the respect and deference the position there entailed. Major General Dudayev thus returned to

¹⁹⁸ Gall and de Waal, p. 82.

¹⁹⁹ Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*, p. 337.

²⁰⁰ Cornell, p. 206-207.

²⁰¹ *Teip* politics in Chechnya is a subject worthy of its own study. That aside, Dzhokhar’s ability to transcend this competition in some ways and simply not threaten to upset the balance in others is of vital importance. It is no accident that Chechnya’s legendary leader during the Caucasian Wars in the 19th century, Imam Shamil, was not a Chechen but an ethnic Avar from neighboring Dagestan.

²⁰² Gall and de Waal, p. 83.

²⁰³ Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya*, p. 93.

²⁰⁴ Gall and de Waal, p. 83.

Estonia and Umkhayev carried out the responsibilities in his absence until Dudayev resigned his command in March 1991, following his refusal to allow landing rights to the intervention forces intended to put down the Estonian national uprising.²⁰⁵ It seemed at this point that there would be no revolution. The nationalists were allowed to conduct their Congress, its so-called Chairman returned to his base, and Zavgayev found himself with no real political challenge. His gamble seemed to bear fruit.

THE AFTERMATH

The close of the OKChN brought with it the linking of the radical nationalists into a single national front. With it, the *ispolkom* became the single voice of the Chechen national idea; for all intensive purposes, it became the revolutionary elite. Additionally, the OKChN gave Major General Dudayev a forum in which he could evaluate the mood of Chechen politics. Dudayev could prod the crowds to see what worked and what did not. He arrived in Chechnya and found an embryonic form of national sentiment waiting to be reborn. Moreover, in his function as the Tartu base commander, Dzhokhar saw similar events unfolding while deployed in Estonia.

Finally, the OKChN demanded the declaration of Chechen sovereignty. While the republic's Supreme Soviet complied with this demand, it was just another example of Zavgayev attempting to muddle though and remain in power—all he managed to do was to add last-minute desperation to his political obituary. Declaring sovereignty was strictly a ceremonial nod to the

²⁰⁵ Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya*, p. 94; Cornell, p. 207; and Gall and de Waal, p. 88-89. Gall and de Waal add the interesting detail that when Yeltsin was dispatched to negotiate with the Estonians, a threat against his plane flight back to the Moscow led Dudayev to allow him the use of a black Volga to dive back into Russia in. It must have been quite a scene.

nationalists, and by no means unique; it was just another front in the political battle unfolding in Moscow. As Nikolai Petrov explains:

The cascade of declarations of sovereignty among Russia's autonomous regions can be seen as a legacy of the late Soviet era's period of state disintegration and a continuation of what happened with the republics of the Soviet Union...The parade resulted from the epic power struggle between Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin. Gorbachev attempted to bypass Russia's leadership and invited the leaders of some of the Russian autonomous republics to sign the new Union Treaty with the leaders of the Union republics. Yeltsin, in turn, appealed to the autonomous republics to seize as much sovereignty as they could handle.²⁰⁶

Indeed, Gorbachev invited Zavgayev and Tatar Party boss Mintimer Shaimiyev to the 1991 Union Treaty conference in Novo-Ogarevo, giving them special attention, subsequently convincing Yeltsin that Zavgayev was not a political ally in his efforts to create a new political order.²⁰⁷

Despite the mutual antagonism between Zavgayev the *partokrat* and Yeltsin the 'democrat', Doku was a screwed pragmatist. Entertaining the idea that he could negotiate a favorable status for the Checheno-Ingush ASSR within a new framework, he gave Yeltsin a red-carpet reception during his March 1991 trip to the North Caucasus which was intended to drum up support for the upcoming Russian presidential elections.²⁰⁸ During a 1996 interview, Yeltsin Nationalities advisor Galina Starovoitova recalled:

Zavgayev behaved exactly...like an Oriental party [sic.] boss. They were all playing a double game...They put us up in the best places outside of town, there was a huge guard, plentiful food, a lot to drink, they tried to stop us from encouraging ordinary people and speaking at rallies. They were like normal Soviet functionaries.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁶ Petrov, p. 91.

²⁰⁷ Gall and de Waal, p. 90.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 90. Yeltsin's trip bore considerable fruit. Gall and de Waal point out that 80 per cent of Chechen and 99.7 per cent of Ingush voters threw their lot in with Yeltsin during the June 1991 elections—perhaps tragically, given the events to come.

²⁰⁹ Quoted in Gall and de Waal, p. 90.

It began to appear that he might survive no matter what the fallout was in either Moscow or the republic.²¹⁰ What Zavgayev did not foresee was that he was standing in the path of a rushing current of radical nationalism. “The attempts of [Zavgayev]...to place himself at the head of the national movement misfired spectacularly,” wrote Richard Sakwa, “as outsider groups ousted the newly empowered Chechen communist elite.”²¹¹ Zavgayev seemed to be doing everything half-way. He wanted to survive in office, but he did not sufficiently appreciate the degree of nationalism sweeping across the Chechen political landscape. It was at this point that the pendulum of Chechen political power began to swing back to the highlanders. As the highlanders were the least represented group in politics, it is not surprising that they formed the bulk of the revolutionary movement.

THE RETURN OF DUDAYEV

The OKChN was undoubtedly a tipping point in the course of Chechen politics, but the little political change it affected was by no means truly revolutionary. Indeed, the OKChN simply created a well-organized nationalist constituency. Moreover, as acting *ispolkom* Chairman, Umkhayev managed to tip-toe around contentious issues and avoided provocative radicalism. Dzhokhar’s return, following his defiant stance to the attempted intervention in Estonia, forever changed the balance-of-power in the nationalist movement.

A whirlwind of political events erupted upon his return. On 17 March 1991, Gorbachev’s “All-Union” referendum was held. When compared to other ASSRs, the 58.8 percent turnout of

²¹⁰ Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya*, p. 92.

²¹¹ Richard Sakwa, “Introduction: Why Chechnya?” in *Chechnya: From Past to Future*, ed. Richard Sakwa (London: Anthem Press, 2005), p. 3.

eligible voters was low, with 75.9 percent (44.6 percent of eligible voters) voting in favor.²¹² Second, the RSFSR passed the “On Rehabilitation of Repressed Peoples” legislation the following month which “immediately became a banner for all aggrieved groups within the Russian federation; in Chechnya it was seen as affirming a right to restore a lost independence and to create their own statehood.”²¹³ Thus, Dudayev returned home in the middle of the attempts by both Gorbachev’s USSR and Yeltsin’s Russia to co-opt the peoples of the ASSRs for support, each offering his own political carrots. The important point is that both placated the ASSRs’ self images of national uniqueness. In the Checheno-Ingush ASSR, the mutual admissions made by the USSR and the Russian government regarding national rights made Chechen nationalism a *cause célèbre* and legitimized the aspirations of the revolutionary elite.

Dzhokhar may not have had policy-making authority as *ispolkom* Chairman, but he soon learned that he did possess Richard Neustadt’s power of persuasion.²¹⁴ Indeed, in the coming months Dudayev learned to use the bully-pulpit well. In his capacity as Chairman, Dudayev—supported by members of the Vainakh Democratic Party, Islamic Path, and the Green Movement—declared in May that the republic’s Supreme Soviet was powerless, using the November 1990 declaration of sovereignty as a legal justification for his assertion.²¹⁵ While it would be expected that Zavgayev, himself the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet and the Party First Secretary, would have either denounced the recalcitrant General or had him arrested, he simply ignored the direct challenge to his authority.²¹⁶ It is plausible that Zavgayev did not know how to respond at all; it is also possible that he did not take General Dudayev seriously.

²¹² Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya*, p, 94.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

²¹⁴ See Richard Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents* (NY: Free Press, 1991) revised ed..

²¹⁵ Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya*, p. 95.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

Whatever the cause of his pause, the primary effect of Zavgayev's inaction was to make him appear weak.

Next, Dzhokhar displayed a true military officer's keen appreciation for procedures when he decided that his largely-ceremonial status of Chairman implied his corresponding ability to call another Congress together. Drawing upon the perceived legitimacy of the first Congress, and restricting the pool of delegates to those who shared an acceptable level of support for the nationalist cause, the Congress convened 8-9 November 1991 and declared the creation of an entirely new "Nockhi-Chu" Chechen state. Dudayev proudly announced:

There is a single and indivisible Vainakh people with a place of honor for each of its five member nationalities: Chechen, Ingush, Orstkhoj, Malkhistin, and Akkin. Today history gives us a unique chance to establish that fact by creating a single Vainakh statehood.²¹⁷

Despite his rhetorical commitment to the common Vainakh identity of the Chechen and Ingush people, the Congress was composed *entirely* of radical Chechen nationalists. Eventually, it would call for the bifurcation of the Checheno-Ingush ASSR into ethnically-homogenous entities. The implication of the Nockhi-Chu state was a political entity independent of Russia—and possibly no longer part of the Soviet Union either.²¹⁸ To be fair, the true intent of the declaration of sovereignty was not to go it alone, but rather to work within the framework of the new Union Treaty on the condition of receiving the status of a full-fledged union republic in the new USSR.²¹⁹ Moreover, and perhaps unsurprisingly, the *ispolkom* conferred upon itself the sole right to executive power in the republic. When Dudayev subsequently announced the appointment of his deputies, the names of moderate leaders were noticeably absent, especially

²¹⁷ Tishkov, *Chechnya: Life in a War-Torn Society*, p. 50.

²¹⁸ Gall and de Waal, p. 92; Dunlop, p. 91.

²¹⁹ Dunlop, p. 91.

that of Lechi Umkhayev.²²⁰ At last, the radical nationalists had successfully hijacked the national movement in a marvelous coup.²²¹

It was in this manner that Dudayev returned home to his native soil and began to push the limits of his authority as *ispolkom* Chairman. In fact, whatever authority he managed to wield, it was conferred upon him by those who viewed him as a symbol of the national idea. He didn't need to have authority on paper; his authority rested in those who heard his calling and were inspired to act. In many ways, Dzhokhar was a man destined for such a calling. But the call to greatness was not enough; he needed an opportunity to catapult the revolution to power—it turns out he didn't need to wait very long.

²²⁰ Gall and de Waal, p. 92.

²²¹ Evangelista, *The Chechen Wars*, p. 16-17.

7.0 THE AUGUST PUTCH AND THE CHECHEN REVOLUTION



Revolutions always appear to succeed with amazing ease in their initial stage, and the reason is that the men who make them first only pick up the power of a regime in plain disintegration; they are the consequences but never the causes of the downfall of political authority.

- Hannah Ardent, *On Revolution*

A central theme of the Chechen Revolution is that, while being outwardly anti-Russian, it is, like so many other now-independent members of the former Soviet Union, intrinsically tied to the democratic Russian Revolution. Indeed, Matthew Evangelista posited the claim that a “key factor in the political mobilization within Chechnya, as in much of the rest of the Soviet Union, was not only or primarily nationalism, but *anti-communism*.”²²² Gorbachev’s twin pillars of reform, *Glasnost* and *Perestroika*, unwittingly unleashed political and social forces that could not be tamed. Every concession made toward democratic reform emboldened, rather than assuaged, the aspirations of would-be elites and nationalist movements.

²²² Evangelista, *The Chechen War*, p.15.

The August Putsch provided the opportunity that was absolutely *essential* to their success. When the State Committee for the State of Emergency (GKChP) placed Gorbachev under house arrest, the local Party First Secretaries were faced with a dilemma: to side with the GKChP hardliners or support the brazen Boris Yeltsin in protest. Oddly enough, Yeltsin's anti-coup standoff enjoyed the support of a student in Moscow he would come to revile: Shamil Basayev. Balancing the associated costs and benefits, the great majority said '*niet*' to both and became fence-sitters. Not to stand out in a crowd, Zavgayev did nothing. For all intents and purposes, it was a rational decision and nothing less than typical. His band-wagoning of indifference became self-inflicted political suicide. "Instead of going unnoticed," mused Sebastian Smith, "he became conspicuous by his silence and in stepped Dudayev."²²³ Because of his silence to the actions of the GKChP, Zavgayev became an unacceptable choice to both the anticommunists and the nationalists.²²⁴ Needless to say, there was not much of a constituency left to court.

Dzhokhar protested the GKChP's seizure of power from the first day.²²⁵ It is certainly possible that Dudayev saw his defiance of the putsch as a potential springboard that would allow himself and the Congress to assume power. Despite this cynical view, it is also very likely that Dzhokhar the idealist was enraged by the GKChP's attempt to forcibly roll back Gorbachev's political and social reforms. Let us not forget that this was the same man who refused to allow Soviet intervention forces landing rights on his base in Estonia and directly told his staff not to interfere with the nationalist meetings and rallies.

²²³ Smith, p. 126; See also, Gammer, *The Lone Wolf and the Bear*, p. 201-202

²²⁴ Evangelista, *The Chechen Wars*, p. 17.

²²⁵ Lapidus, p. 12; Gall and de Waal, p. 93; and Gammer, *The Lone Wolf and the Bear*, p. 202.

The OKChN responded to the putsch by declaring a general strike and calling for mass demonstration in Grozny's Sheikh Mansur Square.²²⁶ Matthew Evangelista alleges that the demonstrators were given 100 rubles and day and fed large quantities of meat for their efforts.²²⁷ Zavgayev, outmaneuvered and desperate, declared a republic-wide state of emergency which was never really enforced.²²⁸ The problem was that any state of emergency necessarily had to enjoy the approval of the Russian government; after all, Zavgayev ultimately answered to Moscow. Much to the dismay of Zavgayev, such approval did not exist; both Yeltsin and Khasbulatov were against him.²²⁹ Moreover, Police Major-General Aslanbek Aslakhonov, an ethnic Chechen serving in the CPD, made a personal visit to convey a "strong warning" to Zavgayev not to use force in an effort to preserve his regime.²³⁰ Dudayev and his OKChN were seen as allies in the struggle to root out the Soviet holdovers. Thus, the republic's communist government was powerless to stop the resulting seizure of the state television station on 22 August and *ispolkom* Chairman Dzhokhar's official announcement of "the Chechen Revolution."²³¹

Support for the Revolution was not unanimous. As in all revolutions, there are always those with something to lose when the current political order is turned upside down; the Chechen case was no different. "Some opposed the revolution because of its strident nationalism; ...others because the downfall of the old regime meant the end of their status as a pampered

²²⁶ Gammer, *The Lone Wolf and the Bear*, p. 202; Evangelista, *The Chechen Wars*, p. 17.

²²⁷ Evangelista, *The Chechen Wars*, p. 17.

²²⁸ Gammer, *The Lone Wolf and the Bear*, p. 202; Evangelista, *The Chechen Wars*, p. 16.

²²⁹ Gammer, *The Lone Wolf and the Bear*, p. 202.

²³⁰ Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*, p. 60; Gammer, *The Lone Wolf and the Bear*, p. 202; Evangelista, *The Chechen Wars*, p. 17; and Gall and de Waal, p. 94.

²³¹ Gammer, *The Lone Wolf and the Bear*, p. 202; Gall and de Waal, p. 93; and Evangelista, *The Chechen Wars*, p. 18.

Soviet elite.”²³² In fact, much of Dudayev’s power base relied upon the rural populace, who were both relatively poor and of highland descent.²³³

According to Magomed Zaugayev, then chief of the KGB Department on Organized Crime, Chairman Dudayev telephoned Khasbulatov on 26 August and inquired if Moscow would mobilize the Grozny garrison if the OKChN choose to dissolve the republic’s Supreme Soviet and that Khasbulatov make it clear to Dudayev that it would not.²³⁴ Additionally, KGB chief Igor Kochubei testified to the Russian Security Council that,

Moscow demanded [on 26 August] that the guard be removed from Zavgayev and support for the local supreme soviet [sic.] by MVD and KGB structures in this republic be stopped...People carrying weapons then appeared among the demonstrators for the first time.²³⁵

OUT WITH THE OLD...

Confident that they enjoyed the silent approval of Moscow, the Chechen National Guard stormed the Supreme Soviet on 6 September 1991.²³⁶ Sebastian Smith noted that the “Chechen nationalists could taste victory over the entrenched communists and Dudayev was their prophet. ‘A slave who does not try to free himself is twice a slave,’ he said, words that became part of his personality cult, the Dzhokhar cannon.”²³⁷ During the Guard’s raid of the parliament building, the Russian Chairman of Grozny’s Supreme Soviet, Vitali (Victor) Kutsenko, was either pushed out a window or voluntarily jumped out of it²³⁸—perhaps viewing suicide as preferable to whatever the National Guardsmen would do to him. Either way, the capital city’s local communist leader quite literally fell from power.

²³² Smith, p. 127.

²³³ Ibid., p. 125-126.

²³⁴ Gall and de Waal, p. 94.

²³⁵ Quoted in Tishkov, *Chechnya: Life in a War-Torn Society*, p. 61.

²³⁶ Gammer, *The Lone Wolf and the Bear*, p. 202.

²³⁷ Smith, p. 126.

²³⁸ Gammer, *The Lone Wolf and the Bear*, p. 202; Tishkov, *Chechnya: Life in a War-Torn Society*, p. 61; Gall and de Waal, p. 96; and Evangelista, *The Chechen Wars*, p. 18.

Zavgayev himself was “physically dragged out of the building” and subsequently managed to escape north to his ancestral village.²³⁹ Khasbulatov made a trip to Grozny on 14 September and allegedly announced that he would “bring Zavgayev to Moscow in an iron cage.”²⁴⁰ Not to be outdone by Khasbulatov (especially when speaking on the same stage), Dudayev rebuked the visitors from Moscow: “No one is going to determine how Chechnya is ruled anymore.”²⁴¹

The following day, the republic’s Supreme Soviet, chaired by Khasbulatov and surrounded by the National Guard, held its last meeting and voted officially to dissolve itself.²⁴² Quite unsurprisingly, the vote was unanimous. Executive power was officially transferred to the Provisional Supreme Council, headed by Professor Huseyn Ahmadov. The Council was to remain in power until 17 November, when elections were scheduled to take place.²⁴³ The reality, however, was quite different. Indeed, Ahmadov never really held any true power, except on paper; whatever authority he possessed, it was short-lived. Thus, the period of dual sovereignty in the initial stages of the Chechen Revolution never truly happened. Ahmadov had all the trappings of authority, but no real power. Dudayev’s *ispolkom* lacked legal authority, but it possessed great influence. That the *ispolkom* lacked legal authorization was irrelevant; it had all the moral authority it needed and it alone represented the true vision of the revolution. Dudayev’s conviction in the infallibility of the radical national cause was an existential truth that neither Lechi Umkhayev nor Ahmadov could fully understand. More importantly, he did not

²³⁹ Gall and de Waal, p. 96-97.

²⁴⁰ Evangelista, *The Chechen Wars*, p. 18; Gall and de Waal, p. 97.

²⁴¹ Tishkov, *Chechnya: Life in a War-Torn Society*, p. 62. It is around this time that Khasbulatov began discussions with Yeltsin entertaining the possibility of offering Major General Dudayev a second star on his shoulder in return for his return to military service, something Dudayev apparently had no interest in.

²⁴² Gammer, *The Lone Wolf and the Bear*, p. 203.

²⁴³ Gall and de Waal, p. 96.

blame them for their ideological ineptitude. Instead, he would reveal to them the true face of the Chechen Revolution

...*IN WITH THE NEW*

The OKChN *ispolkom* succeeded in removing Zavgayev and the rest of the communist leaders from power, and did so with the support of Moscow. More importantly, they had managed to marginalize the moderate elements within the revolutionary movement. What the Russians did not realize, or at least did not care to realize, was that Dudayev was determined to press on with an even more radical agenda—anti-communism was necessary, but not sufficient. The real Revolution would not be complete until the sons and daughters of Chechnya breathed independent air. With this goal in mind, the National Guard—the true vanguard of the Chechen Revolution²⁴⁴—removed the final two symbolic obstructions: The Provisional Council and the Grozny KGB.

The Provisional Council was the first go. On 5 October, the OKChN's National Guard stormed the building, ending the façade of Ahmadov's authority. The *ispolkom*, and ultimately its Chairman, Dzhokhar Dudayev, became "the revolutionary committee for the transitional period with all powers."²⁴⁵ For all intensive purposes, the Council had operated with the approval of the OKChN anyway; however, Ahmadov's position apparently posed an unacceptable threat to the *ispolkom* in the upcoming scheduled elections. After all, it was they who had done all the hard work in removing Zavgayev in the first place. This self-image entitled

²⁴⁴ Gall and de Waal, p. 93.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 96; Gammer, *The Lone Wolf and the Bear*, p. 203.

them to act in the best interests of the Chechen people; for in seizing power, it was the entire Chechen people, not just the OKChN's leadership, that was the true beneficiary.

The remaining presence of the KGB was the other major obstacle. The Revolution could never be consolidated so long as the symbolic institution of Russian power remained. Granted, Moscow gave strict orders to the KGB and MVD not to interfere; thus it was perhaps more out of principle than any direct threat to the revolutionary leadership that Gantemirov's National Guard stormed the Grozny KGB building. In any event, their raid procured the weapons necessary to defend the Revolution in the short-term.²⁴⁶

The raid on the KGB headquarters was an extremely provocative move; it was an act that Moscow could not ignore. In an effort properly to gauge the appropriate response, KGB chief Ivanenko and Vice-President Alexander Rutskoi made an official visit to Grozny. According to Ivanenko,

"I said I would try to free the building peacefully, meet with the elders, I explained the complexity of the situation in the North Caucasus. Rutskoi in reply told me how he solved problems in Afghanistan [as a former fighter pilot]. 'A *kishlak* (village) fires at us and kills someone. I send up a couple of planes and nothing is left of the *kishlak*. After I've burned a couple of *kishlaks* they stop shooting.' That is more or less, he says, what we need to do here."²⁴⁷

Despite his official position, Ivanenko's personal account suggests that Rutskoi may not have been the appropriate person to send on a sensitive diplomatic mission. His pride and ability to quickly lose his temper mirrored that of Dudayev. Upon returning to Moscow, Rutskoi became convinced that, like any other malignant blood clot, Dudayev needed to be removed.

The storming of the KGB headquarters in Grozny began a series of escalatory moves and countermoves between Moscow and Dudayev's revolutionary movement. Immediately following his trip to Grozny, an appalled Rutskoi appealed to the Russian Supreme Soviet on 8 October to

²⁴⁶ Evangelista, *The Chechen Wars*, p. 18; Gall and de Waal, p. 96.97.

²⁴⁷ Quoted in Gall and de Waal, p. 97.

act, claiming that Dudayev's grip on power rested upon the shoulders of approximately 250 men.²⁴⁸ A stern official statement demanded the self-disarmament of what they called 'illegal armed formations'. "As no one has succeeding in disarming the Chechens in 200 years," cleverly described two observers, "it was a clear threat to use force."²⁴⁹ Dudayev responded by calling for a full mobilization of the Chechen male population.²⁵⁰ Gall and de Wall's account of the Russian reaction is telling:

On 19 October Yeltsin spoke for the first time on Russian television about Chechnya. He said the situation has become intolerable and condemned the 'openly anti-constitutional and provocative actions of the Executive Committee of the All-National Congress of the Chechen People and its leader, who are striving to destabilize the situation in the republic and to seize power through the organized armed detachments of the so-called "National Guard"...If the Congress did not go along...he would be forced to 'restore constitutional order.'...It was much too late...One of Dudayevs' deputies, Hussein Akhmadov, called Yeltsin's speech 'the last belch of the Russian Empire'.²⁵¹

With the Provisional Council gone and the headquarters of the KGB occupied by the National Guard, the revolutionary leadership felt secure enough to make one more change: the date of the upcoming elections. Winning the election would finally confer upon them the popular legitimacy they already knew to possess in the first place. Electoral victory would bring about the revolutionary regime and a new Chechnya.

THE QUESTION OF ELECTIONS

According to the agreement following the transfer of power to the Provisional Council, elections were scheduled to take place on 17 November. The problem was that the Gantemirov's National Guard had already disposed of the Council and the *ispolkom* was now in power. Eventually,

²⁴⁸ Smith, p. 127; Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*, p. 67.

²⁴⁹ Gall and de Waal, p. 97.

²⁵⁰ Smith, p. 127

²⁵¹ Gall and de Waal, p. 98. Anatol Lieven describes Akhmadov not as one of Dudayev's deputies, but rather as a "neutral establishment academic". See Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*, p. 61.

Dudayev came to the conclusion that the prior agreement was now null and void: no Provisional Council, no 17 November elections. The question of elections in Chechnya was not a matter of *if* elections would be held but rather *when* they would take place; and the perspective of the revolutionary leadership was that sooner was better than later. Thus, it was announced that presidential and parliamentary elections would be held early on 27 November 1991. Needless to say, Moscow became furious.

Despite threats from the Russian leadership, the elections were conducted and Dudayev emerged victorious, earning 90.1 percent of the vote.²⁵² The conduct of early elections was characterized as “chaotic”.²⁵³ The official turnout of eligible voters was declared to be 72 percent, while the opposition suggested it was actually 15 percent.²⁵⁴ The complicated logistics of conducting the elections earlier than originally planned undoubtedly resulted in a lower turnout; however, “whole villages in the mountains turned out enthusiastically.”²⁵⁵ Moreover, Estonian Prince Peter Volkonsky, who observed the elections, was amazed at the response of the Chechen people: “After the election I was at a meeting of old men. I did a V for victory sign and shouted ‘Marsho’ (‘Freedom’ in Chechen). These old men stood up, like at a rock concert, and shouted ‘Marsho’. I am an old hippie but I have never experienced such a response.”²⁵⁶

²⁵² Gall and de Waal, p. 99. Similarly, some sources simplify Dudayev’s electoral victory to 90 percent. See Smith, p. 127 and Gammer, *The Lone Wolf and the Bear*, p. 203; and Paul Murphy, *The Wolves of Islam: Russia and the Faces of Chechen Terror* (Washington D.C.: Potomac Books, 2004), p. 12. For what it’s worth, Valery Tishkov simply remarks that Dudayev “received more votes than any of the other three candidates.” See Tishkov, *Chechnya: A War-Torn Society*, p. 62.

²⁵³ Gall and de Waal, p. 99.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 99. Valery Tishkov claims that the voter turnout was 10-12 percent, even less than the 15 percent claimed by the Dudayev opposition. See Tishkov, *Chechnya: A War-Torn Society*, p. 62.

²⁵⁵ Gall and de Waal, p. 99.

²⁵⁶ Quoted in Gall and de Waal, p. 99.

Fulfilling the promise he made prior to being elected, President Dudayev declared Chechen independence on 1 November 1991.²⁵⁷ An essential component of Dudayev's proclamation of independence from Moscow was the Chechen-centric focus of the decree. Dudayev explained that, "The Ingush must travel their own path of hardships in the struggle for statehood."²⁵⁸ The following day, the newly-elected Chechen parliament voted to ratify Dzhokhar's declaration of independence for the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria (*Chechenskaia Republia Ichkeriia*).²⁵⁹ At long last, the Revolution became a tangible thing: the Chechens had a nation-state of their own.

THE ABORTED INTERVENTION AND THE REVOLUTIONARY REGIME

It is only when the lower classes do want to carry on in the old way and when the upper classes cannot carry on in the old way that the revolution can triumph.

- V. Lenin, *Selected Works*

The day after President Dudayev's declaration of Chechen independence, Khasbulatov was officially confirmed as the speaker of the Congress of People's Deputies and promptly characterized the results of the Chechen presidential election as invalid. Despite Khasbulatov's desire to attack the legitimacy of Dudayev's rule, Rutskoi became determined to shoot Dudayev

²⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 99. Similarly, some sources simplify Dudayev's electoral victory to 90 percent. See Smith, p. 127 and Gammer, *The Lone Wolf and the Bear*, p. 203; and Paul Murphy, *The Wolves of Islam: Russia and the Faces of Chechen Terror* (Washington D.C.: Potomac Books, 2004), p. 12. For what it's worth, Valery Tishkov simply remarks that Dudayev "received more votes than any of the other three candidates." See Tishkov, *Chechnya: A War-Torn Society*, p. 62.

²⁵⁸ Quoted in Tishkov, *Chechnya: A War-Torn Society*, p. 62. Sebastian Smith's account of the Ingush-Chechen split places more emphasis on the reluctance of the Ingush to pursue full independence, rather than Chechen chauvinism. See Smith, p. 109.

²⁵⁹ Gammer, *The Lone Wolf and the Bear*, p. 203. Gammer also provides the Chechen translation for the Republic of Ichkeria: *Noxciyin Respublika Noxciyico*.

out of office. Again, it appears that Rutskoi was convinced that his methods of problem-solving during the Soviet-Afghan War would yield the best results.

Taking advantage of the October Revolution holiday on 7 November, and in the absence of President Yeltsin and the majority of his policy-making staff, Rutskoi saw to it that a state of emergency was signed. He later met with KGB-chief Ivanenko, MVD Minister Andrei Dunayev, and Prosecutor General Valentin Stepankov, threatening them with criminal charges should they undermine his actions.²⁶⁰ Additionally, General Dudayev was to be arrested for anti-constitutional actions.²⁶¹

Rutskoi's central obstacle to carrying out his grand coup was that the Yeltsin-led Russian state had yet to formally create its own Ministry of Defense forces. True coercive power still resided in the institutions of the USSR. Therefore, Gorbachev's exclusive approval as CPSU First Secretary was necessary for the use of Soviet Union armed forces to reinforce Russian MVD troops. Gorbachev later recalled:

Everyone was playing some kind of game. Rutskoi, brandishing his sword, said, 'give me several divisions and I'll put it down and crush the separatists and Dudayev' and so on. Suddenly Shaposhnikov, the Defense Minister, and the Interior Minister Barannikov ring me up and say, 'Mikhail Sergeevich, Rutskoi is asking us for troops.' I say, 'No decisions without my agreement, absolutely none.' I ring up Khasbulatov and say, 'Have you gone mad?' Khasbulatov was against [sending in troops], I have to say objectively. So I say, 'Why are you dragging me into this? Where is your President?' Khasbulatov said, 'I'd also like to know where he is.'²⁶²

In typical fashion, President Dudayev scoffed at the threat of Russian intervention. As before, he called for the mobilization of Chechen fighters. Soslambekov was

²⁶⁰ Gall and de Waal, p. 100.

²⁶¹ Knezys and Sedlickas, 21; Murphy, p.13.

²⁶² Interview with Gorbachev by Thomas de Waal (25 September 1996) quoted in Gall and de Waal, p. 100. Valery Tishkov and John Dunlop offer a similar analyses. See Tishkov, *Chechnya: A War-Torn Society*, p. 63 and Dunlop, p. 118-119. Dunlop adds that former MVD Major General and ethnic Chechen Aslambek Aslankhanov flew to meet with USSR MVD Minister Barannikov to protest the coup, fearing that it would drive the populace into Dudayev's waiting hands. Moreover, Dunlop quotes Gorbachev's press secretary Andrei Grachev's statement that the situation in Chechnya was "threatening to turn into another bloody and unresolvable [sic.] Afghan war." See Dunlop, p. 119.

appointed Minister of War and they awaited the Russian response.²⁶³ The response came when 600 Russian MVD troops were landed at the Khankala military airbase on 8 November, just outside of Grozny.²⁶⁴ Despite Gorbachev's direct order that Soviet forces could not participate, it appears that Chief of the General Staff Vladimir Lobov "willingly passed around the order [to intervene]."²⁶⁵ For some odd reason, the logistics behind the attempted coup "went comically wrong": weapons supplies were sent to a second base, while reinforcements were sent a third.²⁶⁶ By the next morning, Dudayev's forces has completely surrounded the base and a mass-protest involving "hundreds of thousands" of people erupted in Grozny.²⁶⁷

As Russian MVD *spetsnaz* forces found themselves hopelessly surrounded, the Kremlin faced a second crisis. Shamil Basayev and two other Chechen associates managed to hijack a 178-passenger Aeroflot TU-154 the same day and reroute it to Turkey, where he demanded the withdrawal of Russian forces.²⁶⁸ According to former U.S. counterterrorism official Dr. Paul Murphy, Basayev was rewarded by President Dudayev for his efforts by being commissioned as a colonel and being assigned to a command within the Presidential Guard.²⁶⁹

After taking his oath of office a few hours after the debacle at Khankala, Dudayev made time to meet deputy Interior Minister Vyacheslav Komissarov and negotiate the withdrawal of the besieged MVD force. They were promptly allowed to leave the Chechen state in a long caravan

²⁶³ Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya*, p. 121; Gall and de Waal, p. 101.

²⁶⁴ Knezys and Sedlickas, 21; Gall and de Waal, p. 101; Smith, p. 127; and Murphy, p. 13. Moshe Gammer describes the event as taking place on 10 November, but agrees with the force strength of 600 MVD troops. See Gammer, *The Lone Wolf and the Bear*, p. 203.

²⁶⁵ Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya*, p. 120.

²⁶⁶ Gall and de Waal, p. 101.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

²⁶⁸ Smith, p. 127; Murphy, p. 13; and Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya*, p. 121. Dunlop's account states that there were 171, not 178 passengers; however, the actual number is trivial. The plane was subsequently flown to Grozny where all of the hijacked passengers were safely sent back to Moscow. Paul Murphy adds that a Chechen hijacked a second airliner nine months after Basayev's incident but was shot to death by Russian security forces while refueling in Moscow. See Murphy, p. 13.

²⁶⁹ Murphy, p. 13.

of buses.²⁷⁰ If all this was not enough to embarrass Moscow, the Caucasus-wide ‘Confederation of Mountain Peoples’ (KNK) announced that they were mobilizing partisan volunteers to repel the Russian intervention the following day.²⁷¹ Not surprisingly, the state of emergency was revoked by the Khasbulatov-led Russian Supreme Soviet on 11 November.²⁷²

President Dudayev had defiantly stood up to the Russian state and won. The intervention produced the exact opposite effect of its intent, Dzhokhar was now a hero.²⁷³ Journalist and author Sebastian Smith offered his own analysis of the events: “On one hand, Moscow proved incapable of taking decisive action and negotiating in good faith. On the other hand, Dudayev discovered that setting his countrymen against the Russian bogeyman was the key to his popularity...the die was cast.”²⁷⁴

There is no doubt that the personal battle between Gorbachev’s struggle to preserve the Soviet Union and Yeltsin’s desire to usurp Gorbachev’s authority was central to the inability of the latter to put an end to Dudayev’s intransigence. That being said, the Gorbachev-Yeltsin rancor was not enough to make for the debacle that transpired during the fall of 1991. Dudayev’s rhetorical outpourings reflected the grievances and aspirations of an entire generation.

The revolution no doubt possessed a vanguard, a core leadership that constantly reminded a people dissatisfied with their lot in life and status in society that they possessed the ability and the right to recreate that society, to create a new political order. But it was the people, consumed by the sense of a proud nation scorned, who picked up weapons and were willing to sacrifice themselves to the cause. The Chechen case is not unique in this sense—the altar of

²⁷⁰ Knezys and Sedlickas, 21; Gall and de Waal, p. 101; and Lapidus, p. 16.

²⁷¹ Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya*, p. 122; Lapidus, p. 12.

²⁷² Gammer, *The Lone Wolf and the Bear*, p. 204; Tishkov, *Chechnya: A War-Torn Society*, p. 62-63; Lapidus, p. 16; Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya*, p. 120; and Evangelista, *The Chechen Wars*, p. 20.

²⁷³ Lapidus, p. 16.

²⁷⁴ Smith, p. 128.

independence is often stained red with the blood. Almost a year after the aborted (or botched) coup attempt, Dudayev explained Russia's reluctance to roll the iron dice of war in simple terms: "We...[had] shown that we were ready to die. That is the only language the Russians understand."²⁷⁵ Regarding this, it is tempting to criticize him as an opportunist megalomaniac, a third-world despot willing to risk the lives of his people for only ambition's sake; but to do is to miss the true man behind the Soviet general's uniform.

From Dudayev's perspective, no doubt colored by his career as a dashing Soviet military officer with combat experience, politics necessarily involved overt attempts to coerce whomever he was dealing with; in other words, politics was war. It is not clear if Dudayev read Clausewitz and simply misunderstood the text, or if his propensity to provoke his adversaries reflected a keen understanding of their actual willingness to carry out the threats made against him. Whether he was mad or just exceptionally shrewd, after being elected president and having thwarted the attempted coup against him in 1991, Dudayev managed to checkmate Yeltsin's Russia.

This chapter has discussed how Dudayev and the nationalist revolutionary elite exploited the mass opposition to the August Putsch and toppled Zavgayev's communist regime in a marvelous coup. In this manner, the generation of exiled Chechens rose to prominence and was able to guide the destiny of their people, for better or for worse. While successful in ousting the communist elite, the Chechen people were heading for disaster.

²⁷⁵ Quoted in Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*, p. 67.

8.0 DZHOKHAR DUDAYEV'S CHECHNYA: LIFE UNDER THE REVOLUTIONARY REGIME

We know to our sorrow that freedom has been better preserved in countries where no revolution ever broke out, no matter how outrageous the circumstances of the powers that be, and there exist more civil liberties even in countries where the revolution was defeated than in those where revolutions have been victorious.

-Hannah Ardent, *On Revolution*

Revolutions in general no more give rise to democracy than capitalism gives rise to revolutions.

-Jack Goldstone, *Revolution and Rebellion in the Early Modern World*

There was a minister of economics, but no economy, a foreign minister but no diplomatic recognition, mountains of presidential decrees on law and order, but only the rule of the gun.

-Sebastian Smith, *Allah's Mountains*

As with most revolutions, Dzhokhar's revolutionary regime filled the vacuum of crumbling Soviet authority. More than this, the Chechen Revolution symbolized the political separation from Russian hegemony. Also like many other revolutions, the Chechen revolutionary regime became extremely aware that replacing a regime was relatively simple; creating a new political order and governing was a much more daunting challenge. Even so, the revolutionary regime survived longer than most observers thought possible. In fact, the survival of the regime had less to do with the efficacy of governance than in the resiliency of the Chechen people. That being said, it is a story that ended in tragedy for both the revolutionaries and those consumed by it.

The State of the Revolutionary State

Life under the revolutionary regime provoked one of two reactions: some were euphoric about their long lost independence; others became quickly disillusioned. On one hand there was the

façade of political and social transformation, the veneer of true revolution. On the other hand, “President Dudayev seemed much more interested in the idea of calling Chechnya independent than in the practicality of making it work.”²⁷⁶

Dzhokhar’s national revolution brought with it the ceremonial trappings of a great revolution. Lenin’s statue in Grozny’s central square (formerly known as Lenin Square and now renamed Sheikh Mansur square) was toppled and replaced with the symbolic statue of a wolf howling in either defiance or reverence to the moon. The sculpture also shared the hallowed ground with the new Chechen flag; it was a solid green rectangle bifurcated by white and red stripes. More than simple visual aides, Dzhokhar’s regime marked the advent of Revolutionary time. Quite literally, Chechnya ceased to be on Moscow time and jumped an hour ahead. After all, if the Revolution freed the Chechens from the bondage of their servitude, should it not be fitting that the sunrise touch the Chechen mountain peaks *at least* an hour before the towers of the Kremlin? The Revolution was a justification in itself for anything.

Independence and self-determination are wonderful concepts, but they presuppose a myriad of social and political institutions that govern the activities of everyday existence. These institutions come together in some way to form the state. The state then carries out a predetermined set of functions under an agreed-to set of rules. The revolutionary regime in Chechnya had extreme difficulty not with the conceptual but with the logistical aspects of independence and self-determination. Viewed in a negative legal sense, sovereignty was freedom from communism and freedom from Russian domination. Constructing a new political order from that conceptual framework was another matter entirely.

²⁷⁶ Gall and de Waal, p. 107.

The greatest shortcoming in the revolutionary state unsurprisingly had to do with the most basic of functions: lack of adequate government services.²⁷⁷ Healthcare was a disaster under Dzhokhar. There were repeated cholera scares and a chronic shortage of the most basic hospital supplies such as penicillin.²⁷⁸ Even when they had basic medical supplies, many hospitals and clinics were forced to close for lack of clean running water, electricity, and heating—completely discounting the fact that the staffs were not being paid their salaries.²⁷⁹ The revolutionary school system, if one can label it as such, was no better than revolutionary healthcare. Aside from the same problems regarding withheld wages and little or no heating, the few schools that operated beyond the urban areas were predicated upon the self-help system; the teachers agreed to work for free and the villagers found ways to get them to school.

Even in a major city like Grozny, the trash began to slowly accumulate on the streets and streetlights were more often than not unlit adornments.²⁸⁰ Additionally, telephones rarely offered any predictable service.²⁸¹ Despite the plethora of high-end European cars zipping about the cities in an unruly fashion, roads were in disrepair to the extent that automobile body shops became one of the few very profitable licit businesses under the revolutionary regime.²⁸² The Revolution promised not only to set the Chechens free, but also made quite a few mechanics relatively wealthy in the process.

A report by International Alert declared that the revolutionary state had “made impressive beginnings” and that “Chechen society is characterized by a remarkable degree of political

²⁷⁷ Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*, p. 40, 75.

²⁷⁸ Smith, p. 124.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 124; Gall and de Waal, p. 102.

²⁸⁰ Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*, p. 40.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

²⁸² Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*, p. 40.

openness and freedom of expression.”²⁸³ Anatol Lieven came to a different conclusion about Dzhokhar’s Chechnya. Lieven believed that it was all a façade:

The picture of state collapse in Chechnya is by no means contradicted either by the mushrooming of Chechen ministries and bureaucrats or by the increase in the secret police [(DGB)]. The first was simply a reflection of the privatization [sic.] of the state, as in Russia, and the buying off of individuals and groups by giving them non-working state jobs; the second was to defend Dudayev.”²⁸⁴

Whatever is to be said of Dzhokhar’s revolutionary state, he was “committed” to it being a secular one.²⁸⁵ He was not interested in creating a republic governed by religious rule; after all, religious rule was what happened only when fanatical Dagestani Avars took over, not Chechens.

President Dudayev modeled the revolutionary constitution upon that of Estonia.²⁸⁶ The Chechen parliament, elected along with Dudayev, quickly became a “lively debating chamber.”²⁸⁷ The Revolution also promised, and by all accounts upheld, the freedom of the press in the republic.²⁸⁸ Nor did the state suffer from the laziness of the chief executive. President Dudayev worked long hours, beginning his working days in the afternoon and not going to bed until around dawn.²⁸⁹ Perhaps this too was another example of Revolutionary time.

Reserving the office of Prime Minister for himself, President Dudayev offered the position of first Deputy Prime Minister, effectively head of government, to Salambek Khajiev, a former Soviet Minister of the Chemical Industry. Khajiev declined the appointment because

²⁸³ Gall and de Waal, p. 106.

²⁸⁴ Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*, p. 77.

²⁸⁵ Lieven, “Nightmare in the Caucasus,” p. 155.

²⁸⁶ Tom de Waal, “Chechnya: At the Breaking Point,” in Richard Sakwa ed. *Chechnya: From Past to Future* (London: Anthem Press, 2005), p.184.

²⁸⁷ Gall and de Waal, p. 106.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

Dudayev was unwilling to give him sufficient authority to enact economic policy decisions. In an interview, Khajiev recalled:

I told him I wouldn't take part in this because he had a typically stateist conception of things. He was a typical military man: force, order, and submission!...I said we should reassure the people that we were heading for independence and that he had in the first place to deal step by step with the economy but not in the way he wanted, keeping everything in the state sector...but he had a typical old way of thinking, that everything should be firmly in the hands of the commander of the division. I said that was not realistic.²⁹⁰

Shamil Beno, a Jordanian-born member of the Chechen diaspora, became the first Foreign Minister. Beno strongly disagreed with President Dudayev over policy toward Moscow and joined Khajiev's Daimokkh opposition party in July 1992.²⁹¹ His departure was primarily over the growing influence of Mamodayev (an *abrek* recently elevated to Minister of Finance) and Gantemirov (appointed Mayor of Grozny and head of the police), both of whom had been essential in the overthrow of Zavgayev's government.²⁹² Moreover, Foreign Minister Beno became extremely annoyed when Dudayev adopted the annoying habit of publicly announcing personal agreements and pledges made to his regime by foreign governments—which only served to incur the wrath of Moscow on those who reportedly made them.²⁹³ In another instance, Dudayev told a Palestinian journalist that he developed “a plan to destroy the Israeli state,” to which Beno replied that the president must have been mistranslated.²⁹⁴ Dudayev was a fiasco when he traveled abroad in his capacity as head of state. It was just too much for Beno to handle.

²⁹⁰ Quoted in Gall and de Waal, p. 107.

²⁹¹ Ibid., p. 107-108.

²⁹² Ibid., p. 108.

²⁹³ Ibid., p. 109.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 110.

The Revolutionary Economy

Prior to the revolution, Chechens lived under a system that effectively relegated them to second-class citizens. There were artificial barriers at every turn to prevent upward mobility, especially amongst those of highlander blood. The Revolution, which was really a counter-revolution seven decades in the making, sought to place the Chechens once again as masters of their land. Despite all this good will, Dzhokhar's Chechnya soon faced an economy which plummeted into "terminal decline"²⁹⁵, rather than becoming the "second Kuwait"²⁹⁶ Dzhokhar had promised to his people.

To be fair, the disaster that became of the Chechen economy was partly a result of the Russian blockade.²⁹⁷ That said, Dzhokhar personally insisted on freezing the price of bread in revolutionary Chechnya at one ruble, a symbolic policy based less upon practicality and more upon principle—all the while exacting a toll on the state budget, which contained specific subsidies designed to make this artificial price possible.²⁹⁸ Yeltsin's government realized that a possible strategy for eliminating its Dzhokhar problem was to undermine the revolutionary regime's ability to provide an acceptable standard of living for its people; however, the blockade was full of holes—especially along the Chechen-Dagestani border. Additionally, all that was necessary to pass through the inconvenient Russian checkpoints one actually encountered was sufficient reserves of bribe money to cause the border guards to look the other way.²⁹⁹ Despite its inability to prevent the flow of goods and people between Russia and revolutionary

²⁹⁵ Smith, p. 129.

²⁹⁶ Dunlop, *Russia confronts Chechnya*, p. 125.

²⁹⁷ Smith, p. 129; Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*, p. 74-75.

²⁹⁸ Gall and de Waal, p. 126. Gall and de Waal add that the price was not allowed to rise until 1993 when his government covertly allowed it to rise when he was on one of his foreign trips.

²⁹⁹ Smith, p. 129.

Chechnya, the blockade did manage to curtail the flow of vital resources from abroad: foreign aid, loans, and foreign-direct investment (FDI).³⁰⁰ Even so, revolutionary Chechnya was a safe haven. The construction of a new international boundary—even if unrecognized by the powers that be in the Kremlin—prevented Russian authorities from pursuing any criminals who fled onto “sovereign” Chechen territory.³⁰¹

Even so, some elements in Moscow were also complicit in keeping Dudayev’s regime afloat. Federal pension payments from the Russian central government, estimated by one source at 2.5 billion rubles³⁰², came into Chechnya until March 1993.³⁰³ Additionally, Dudayev pulled off a “financial coup” in 1992 when Estonia issued its own domestic currency and delivered all of its ruble reserves to Dzhokhar’s struggling regime.³⁰⁴ Perhaps it was an unofficial ‘thank you’ for not allowing the intervention troops to land while he was still in command of the Tartu base.

Chechnya also benefited from petroleum-related business—at least initially. Oil extraction steadily declined in Chechnya. According to one source, the revolutionary state extracted 2.6 million tons in 1992, and only 1.2 million tons in 1993; by 1994 only one in every fifteen Chechen oil wells still yielded any black gold.³⁰⁵ Nevertheless, Chechnya did possess

³⁰⁰ Georgi Derluguian, “The Structures of Chechnya’s Quagmire,” PONARS Policy Memo 309 (November 2003), p. 2.

³⁰¹ Smith, p. 132.

³⁰² See Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*, p. 74. Valery Tishkov claims that the total amount of Federal transfer payments was 4 billion rubles, a much higher amount. See Tishkov, *Chechnya: Life in a War-Torn Society*, p. 66.

³⁰³ Gall and de Waal, p. 125.

³⁰⁴ Smith, p. 132.

³⁰⁵ Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya*, p. 126.

what Yegor Gaidar once called “the largest oil-refining enterprise in Russia.”³⁰⁶ Thus, refining Russian crude became the revolutionary regime’s “real cash cow”.³⁰⁷

From 1991 to-1994 elements within the Russian government facilitated the flow of an estimated 23 million tons (with an estimated worth of \$300-400 million in 1993 alone) of Siberian Russian crude to revolutionary Chechnya through the Black Sea corridor.³⁰⁸ What these numbers do not show is that, according to Yegor Gaidar, Russia reduced the flow of crude to the revolutionary regime every year (approximately one-third of the 1991 total shipment in 1992, 5 million tons less in 1993, etc.).³⁰⁹ Yusup Soslambekov claimed that the revolutionary state’s refineries produced 4 million tons of diesel, 1.6 million tons of petrol, 125,500 tons of kerosene, and 36,600 tons of industrial lubricants during 1992, in total an estimated \$130 million in profits.³¹⁰ Refining Russian crude though was not enough to feed the state budget. The ordinary person survived in an economic self-help system. In this manner the Revolution was kept afloat by a vibrant shadow economy. On the subject of pipelines, Dzhokhar’s revolutionary regime allegedly came up with the absurd idea of constructing a pipeline to the Middle East in order to sell them Chechen drinking water.³¹¹

GETTING BY AND GETTING RICH

The Chechen Revolution unleashed social forces that consumed the foundations of the old regime. The Soviet Policy of preferential treatment for ethnic Russian and Party-member

³⁰⁶ Quoted in Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*, p. 74.

³⁰⁷ Smith, p. 131.

³⁰⁸ Gall and de Waal, p. 127-128; Smith, p. 131; Anatol Lieven reports the total shipment of crude to be \$300 million, but admits that some Russian sources believe the figure to be as high as \$1 billion. See Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*, p. 74-75.

³⁰⁹ Tishkov, *Chechnya: Life in a War-Torn Society*, p. 188

³¹⁰ Smith, p. 131.

³¹¹ Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya*, p. 125.

Chechens deprived the revolutionary regime the human capital it needed to reconstitute the economy, provide regulatory oversight, and encourage licit entrepreneurship. Instead, the population was schooled in creating its own opportunity and it did so in a spectacular fashion. According to two observers, “Dudayev’s Chechnya was a mafioso’s dream.”³¹² “In general,” writes Anatol Lieven, “Grozny’s emergence as a centre [sic.] of smuggling, money-laundering and fraud gained the Chechens many allies, as well as many enemies, throughout the world of Russian business.”³¹³ In agreement with this analysis, Sebastian Smith referred to the free economic zone in Chechnya as “just another shady joint-venture”, quite simply an example of collusion between Muscovite and Chechen businessmen.³¹⁴ Mark Galeotti blames the illicit boom squarely upon Dzhokhar himself, castigating him as a “self-aggrandizing opportunist”.³¹⁵ Valery Tishkov provides an interesting analogy from Moscow’s point of view:

The description of Chechnya as a ‘free criminal zone’, provided by Sergai Sakhray, a Russian deputy prime minister, is well known. Emil Pain and Arkady Popov, from the president’s Analytical Centre, compared Chechnya and Dudayev’s regime to the Medellin cartel in Colombia and to [G]eneral Manuel Noriega’s regime in Panama.³¹⁶

To be fair, this section should include the caveat that “to a large extent the Chechen criminals simply mirrored what was happening around them [in Russia].”³¹⁷ The new political environment and economic opportunities, combined with a lack of oversight, favored the bold; boldness just happened to be a quality that the Chechens possessed a great deal of. John Dunlop even suggested that Russian charges of a ‘criminal revolution’ in Chechnya were tantamount to

³¹² Gall and de Waal, p. 129.

³¹³ Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*, p. 74.

³¹⁴ Smith, p. 129.

³¹⁵ Mark Galeotti, “‘Brotherhoods’ and ‘Associates’: Chechen Networks of Crime and Resistance,” *Low-Intensity Conflict and Law Enforcement* Volume 11, Number 2/3 (Winter 2002), p. 342.

³¹⁶ V A Tishkov, “Dynamics of a Society at War: Ethnographical Aspects,” in Richard Sakwa ed. *Chechnya: From Past to Future* (London: Anthem, 2005), p. 167

³¹⁷ Smith, p. 133.

“the pot calling the kettle black.”³¹⁸ Journalist Tom de Waal similarly wrote, “None of the criminal problems associated with Chechnya were unique to Russia, only the blatant way in which the criminality was flaunted.”³¹⁹ Also like in the rest of the Russia, an elite class empowered by hordes of new money rose up, almost overnight.³²⁰

The new rich drove 7 Series BMWs, AMG Mercedes, and Porches—apparently even a Rolls-Royce or two. They were clothed in designer Italian suits, wore Rolex watches, and walked in custom-made boots. Even Dzhokhar’s secret service (DGB) employees got in on the action. Anatol Lieven recalled run-ins in which he found himself talking to what appeared to him as:

...a Las Vegas cowboy all of five foot four inches tall, in a leather jacket and sharply-pointed cowboy boots set with silver stars, wearing a thick gold chain around his neck, another round his wrist, a gold watch and a huge gold ring with a silver medallion...they were the very image of Latin American political thugs, and, I thought probably with about the same degree of real patriotism and stomach for a real fight. In this of course I was quite wrong. Thuggish they were; cowards they most decidedly were not.³²¹

The Grozny bazaar was at the center of the Chechen illicit economy.³²² It was a place where “literally anything could be bought.”³²³ Even Wal-Mart would have been envious of both its basement-level prices and extreme product diversification. While shortages and inflationary spikes were ripping through Russia, Grozny was a place where people could find foreign luxury items, electronic devices, exotic fruits, Turkish rugs, Kalashnikovs, grenades, and even rocket-

³¹⁸ Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya*, p. 129. Raymond Finch also notes that a second popular Russian description of Chechnya was that it was a “gangster state”. See Raymond Finch, “Why the Russian Military Failed in Chechnya,” Foreign Military Studies Office Special Study No. 98-16 (August 1998), p. 2.

³¹⁹ Tom de Waal, “Chechnya: The Breaking Point,” in Richard Sakwa ed. *Chechnya: From Past to Future* (London: Anthem, 2005), p. 98-101.

³²⁰ Smith, p. 124; Gall and de Waal, p. 102.

³²¹ Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*, p. 81-82.

³²² Smith, p. 124; Gall and de Waal, p. 102.

³²³ Gall and de Waal, p. 124.

propelled grenade launchers. Moreover, it seemed to be in operation at all hours of the day and night.

The foreign goods were mainly acquired by unrestricted flights in and out of the Grozny airport, renamed Sheikh Mansur Airport by decree of the revolutionary regime. The sheer volume of the flights was impressive, with an estimated 100-150 flights per month outgoing and incoming.³²⁴ Curiously, Moscow did nothing to prevent the airport from functioning in this manner, despite the relative ease of using Russian military air assets to do so.³²⁵ Gall and de Waal describe the so-called ‘shuttle-tours’ as follows:

A group of individuals formed a ‘tour company’ and leased an aeroplane [sic.], often from Ukraine or Azerbaijan; they then advertised [sic] for customers and flew them to Turkey, the Middle East, even as far as China. The ‘shuttles’, as the traders were known, would buy up consumer goods, bring them back to Grozny, and resell them in the Grozny market, undercutting average Russian prices by about a third. The tour company paid dues to Grozny airport of about \$20,000 a month and cleared the way with Russian air traffic control, presumably for bribes.³²⁶

It was a remarkable case of market adaptation. The shuttle-tour companies provided a service to aspiring entrepreneurs who otherwise had to deal with the somewhat constricting effects of the Russian blockade. Allegedly, by 1994 approximately one in every two Chechen adults was connected in some way to the shuttle-tour companies.³²⁷

With regard to the weapons trade, Chechnya was both a transshipment state and a buyer of light arms.³²⁸ At one point Chechnya achieved the dubious distinction of being “the largest black market clearing-house for weapons in the CIS,” with one observer noting that arms could be “purchased at the open-air market like apples and cabbage.”³²⁹ The narcotics trade was different. For all intents and purposes, the lack of controls in the republic provided a perfect

³²⁴ Tishkov, *Chechnya: Life in a War-Torn Society*, p. 67.

³²⁵ Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*, p. 41.

³²⁶ Gall and de Waal, p. 131.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

³²⁸ Lapidus, p. 16.

³²⁹ Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya*, p. 127.

place for transshipment.³³⁰ The Institute of Strategic Research, associated with the Russian Foreign Ministry, claimed in 1996 that President Dudayev negotiated a *laissez-faire* policy with Moscow-based organized crime groups allowing the passage of Tajik and Afghan narcotics in and out of the republic. Reportedly, Dzhokhar apparently demanded a greater share in the profits in November 1994; thus the resulting war in December was sometimes interpreted as just another “drug deal gone bad”.³³¹ Whatever the circumstances of the Chechen drug connection, it is clear that the revolutionary regime did not actively prevent Chechen territory from being used as a logistical hub in the narcotics trade.³³²

Independent Chechnya also became a center for moonshine petroleum. Essentially, oil transit pipelines were tapped (47,000 tons in 1993 alone³³³) and refined into usable but low-quality product in the basements of ordinary houses, at one point in 1998 reaching an estimated “200 clandestine oil refineries.”³³⁴ In fact, one source claims that the pipelines were “riddled with holes” and that Moscow estimated that it would require at least \$55 million dollars to repair them.³³⁵ In support of this narrow view of privatization, Chechen Ballaudi Movsaev happily explained, “If something is on your territory that means it’s yours, even if it’s a pipeline.”³³⁶ The logic isn’t extremely difficult to follow. Whatever passed through Chechen territory was the property of its sovereign people. The Revolution finally made the Chechens masters of their house.

³³⁰ Lapidus, p. 16-17.

³³¹ Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya*, p. 132.

³³² According to one source, Dzhokhar granted different Chechen *abreks* monopolized control over the smuggling of the various illicit markets. Later attempts to reign in these groups to fill the failing state’s coffers in 1994 provoked serious resistance. See Derluguian, p. 3.

³³³ Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya*, p. 126.

³³⁴ Tishkov, *Chechnya: Life in a War-Torn Society*, p. 188.

³³⁵ Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*, p. 85.

³³⁶ Quoted in Tishkov, *Chechnya: Life in a War-Torn Society*, p. 69.

The Revolution also produced a generation which became extremely adept at financial crimes. They became referred to as *vosdushniky* (air-men), a term referred to those who “could create wealth out of nothing.”³³⁷ According to Russian sources, approximately 36 percent of seized counterfeit currency was allegedly of Chechen origin.³³⁸ Another prominent financial crime was the 1992 *aviso* scandal, whereby one Chechen group managed to net an estimated 60 billion rubles (\$700 million in 1992 dollars).³³⁹ Essentially, wire transfers were made from fake accounts in Chechen banks to Russian banks, where the money was promptly extracted before the Russian banks could catch the error. The practice was not stopped until July 1992. On top of all this, revolutionary Chechnya became a giant money laundering machine, especially for Russian criminal groups.³⁴⁰

The Russian Farmer Jones

Do you know what would happen if we pigs failed in our duty? Jones would come back! Yes, Jones would come back! Surely comrades...surely, there is no one amongst you who wants to see Jones come back.”

-George Orwell, *Animal Farm*

...the leaders of the revolutionary movement begin to warn against...intervention long before it actually starts...it serves to explain the inability of the dictatorship to fulfill its promises...

- T. S. Hamerow, *From the Finland Station*

It is natural to wonder why Dzhokhar’s fiasco of a state managed to hold together. “Dissent was widespread,” described two observers “although you had to seek it out because people were reluctant to speak out against President Dudayev.”³⁴¹ Said-Khmazat Nunuyev, a Chechen

³³⁷ Smith, p. 132.

³³⁸ Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya*, p. 127.

³³⁹ Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*, p. 74; Smith, p. 133; Gall and de Waal, p. 131.

³⁴⁰ Lapidus, p. 17.

³⁴¹ Gall and de Waal, p. 102.

elected to the CPD with Khasbulatov, offers the following assessment: “After suffering Tsarism and Communism the people haven’t breathed the air of freedom enough.”³⁴² This was likely the best explanation of the unfolding events. The spectacular fiasco that was the revolutionary regime required explanation and Dzhokhar’s boogeyman was an easy choice: Russia. “The general who wore pin-stripe suits rather than uniform so that people would not mistake him for a dictator became just that—a banana republic strongman. Unable to manage his own tiny country, he turned his attention to baiting Russia.”³⁴³ Gall and de Waal agree with this assessment: “The Russian threat was still [in 1994] the Chechen leadership’s trump card and it was a message that had a sympathetic audience. The nearer you got to the mountains, the more you found people willing to defend Chechen independence.”³⁴⁴ To be sure, Moscow played the part of villain extremely well, ensuring President Dudayev’s allegations fell upon sympathetic ears.

The first manifestation of an impending Russian intervention aimed at putting down the Revolution occurred in October/November 1992. Essentially, a wave of violence erupted between the Ingush and the North Ossetians over what the Ingush believed (with good reason) to be a territorial irredenta. Federal MVD forces swept in to force a cessation of violence and worked their way east to the Chechen border, likely an attempt to coerce Dudayev into settling for less than independence by the implicit threat of military intervention.³⁴⁵ Dzhokhar called Yeltsin’s bluff for the second time and mobilized for war; the Russian MVD troops were quickly recalled.

³⁴² Quoted in Gall and de Waal, p. 106.

³⁴³ Smith, p. 134.

³⁴⁴ Gall and de Waal, p. 105.

³⁴⁵ Knezys and Sedlickas, p. 21; Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya*, p. 149.

The second challenge to the Revolution came from the Chechen opposition. A group calling itself the “Coordinating Committee for the Reestablishment of a Constitutional System” attempted to seize Grozny with 150 armed fighters on 31 March 1993. They succeeded in capturing the television and radio stations until they were expelled from these positions by Dudayev’s National Guardsmen.³⁴⁶ The incident led President Dudayev to grant himself emergency powers to deal with the traitorous opposition, the self-appointed enemy of the people.

Chechnya’s parliament disagreed with Dzhokhar and passed legislation that gave Mamodayev legal authority to form a “Government of Popular Trust”.³⁴⁷ President Dudayev subsequently dissolved the parliament by decree and appointed Yandarbiyev acting Vice-President; the parliament refused to recognize Dzhokhar’s authority to disband the body and elected Soslambekov Chairman.³⁴⁸ In response, President Dudayev exercised a state coup; Dzhokhar declared a state of emergency, enacted a curfew in the capital, and once again relied up his National Guard, ordering them to forcibly disband the brazen republican parliament, the Grozny assembly, and constitutional court.³⁴⁹ To maintain the illusion of constitutional restraint, Dudayev installed a new parliament that was led by a relative from his *teip*, Isa Idigov.³⁵⁰ Secondly, a “constitutional collegium” court, consisting of seven personally-appointed judges, replaced the Constitutional Court that sided with the former parliament.³⁵¹

Following his self-coup, Dudayev was almost assassinated in a brazen attack conducted by Gantemirov’s Urus-Martan-based opposition forces and *Chonchoi teip* members.³⁵²

³⁴⁶ Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya*, p. 149; Smith, p. 133.

³⁴⁷ Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya*, p. 149

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 149-150.

³⁴⁹ Knezys and Sedlickas, p. 21; Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya*, p. 149; Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*, p. 150-151; and Smith, p. 133.

³⁵⁰ Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya*, p. 151.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

³⁵² Knezys and Sedlickas, p. 22; Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*, p. 150-151.

Amazingly, Gantemirov's men entered the capital and approached the Presidential Palace, to unleash a hail of automatic gunfire and rocket-propelled grenades at President Dudayev's office window, wounding two of his bodyguards.³⁵³ Four months after surviving this attack by opposition forces, the Presidential Palace was surrounded by Dzhokhar's own forces; the putsch was a conglomerate of Chechen *spetsnaz*, OMON (paramilitary police commandos), Colonel Shamil Basayev's recently-returned 'Abkhaz battalion', and the Shali tank regiment.³⁵⁴ Against all odds, Dzhokhar managed to engage in bilateral talks with each of the respective unit leaders and remain in power. President Dudayev managed to remain at the helm of the Revolution despite two coups, one from the opposition and the other by his own elite forces, and a brazen Wild West-style assassination attempt.

The second opposition coup attempt came on January 1994. Announced by the shadowy "Committee for National Salvation", Ibragin Suleimenov led a poorly-trained force of men into Grozny; he was arrested by the DGB the following month.³⁵⁵ It is not clear who the leaders or membership of the Committee was. It is possible that Gantemirov tried using a larger force to accomplish what his assassins were previously unable to.

Most likely, the Committee was just the Coordinating Committee under a new name, given the much larger scale of the operation relative to Gantemirov's assassination plot. By all accounts, the Coordinating Committee was the name of the opposition group headed by the primary anti-Dudayev protagonist and *Nizaloi teip* member, Nadterechnyi district Mayor Umar

³⁵³ Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya*, p. 152.

³⁵⁴ Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya*, p. 152. Shamil's forces has recently returned from fighting Georgian military forces attempting to suppress Abkhaz separatism. It was here that Shamil and his Chechen forces received a crash-course in guerrilla operations. As Mao put it: "Guerrilla hostilities are the university of war..." See Mao Tse-Tung, *On Guerrilla Warfare* translated by Samuel B. Griffith II (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1961), p. 73.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

Auturkhanov.³⁵⁶ In any event, by May 1994 the opposition also came to include President Dudayev's former personal bodyguard, Ruslan Labazanov—the only one of Dzhokhar's bodyguards not a member of his *teip*.³⁵⁷ With his stronghold in Argun, Labazanov formed the Niiso (Justice) Party after his falling-out with Dudayev over allegations of Labazanov's involvement in a Moscow-based back fraud scheme.³⁵⁸ Labazanov incited a 12 June 1994 militant rally in Grozny's Sheikh Mansur Square during which Basayev's Abkhaz battalion responded and effectively disarmed the protestors.³⁵⁹ One again, Colonel Shamil Basayev was instrumental in preserving the revolutionary regime; dissent to Dzhokhar abounded but the Revolution survived, and preserving it became an end in itself.

The second direct attempt on President Dudayev's life transpired on 27 May 1994. A remote-controlled explosive erupted amidst a Presidential motorcade, detonated underneath the second of three cars—the usual vehicle President Dudayev traveled in.³⁶⁰ For whatever reason, Dudayev and his family were riding in the third car on this occasion and the blast killed Chechen MVD minister Magomed El'diev and his deputy instead of Dudayev. The Chechen government blamed Russia's secret services for the blast due to the device's level of sophistication, but the likely culprit was Labazanov. Money can buy plenty of sophisticated weaponry—especially in revolutionary Chechnya—and he had plenty of it to go around and a publicly-professed *vendetta* against Dzhokhar.

³⁵⁶ Gall and de Waal, p. 139-140; Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya*, p. 154; Smith, p. 135; and Knezys and Sedlickas, p. 22.

³⁵⁷ Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russia Power*, p. 30.

³⁵⁸ Knezys and Sedlickas, p. 22; Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya*, p. 154.

³⁵⁹ Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya*, p. 154 In response to this provocation, Dzhokhar unleashed his forces upon Labanzov's Argun stronghold and during one of the ensuing clashes, killed a number of the latter's inner circle; after one of the raids the heads of three such inner circle members (one of which was Labanzov's cousin, Abri) were put on display in Grozny, resulting in Labanzov to invoke the *vendetta* against Dudayev. See Gall and de Waal, p. 142.

³⁶⁰ Knezys and Sedlickas, p. 25; Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya*, p. 154-155; Lapidus, p. 18; and Gall and de Waal, p. 146.

AN INTER-TEIP WAR... WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM THE KREMLIN

The spring and summer of 1994 brought the internal conflict in revolutionary Chechnya to a head as the Russian secret services began bankrolling the opposition's counter-revolutionary war against President Dudayev. The opposition was composed of Zavgayev's powerful *Nizaloi teip* (led by Umar Arturkhanov) and Gantemirov's *Chonchoi teip*, supported actively and passively by members from Labaznov's and Khasbulatov's respective *teips*. In the course of events leading up to Russia's direct military intervention in December 1994, the opposition gained control of 50 percent of Chechen territory (7 of 14 regions).³⁶¹ Khasbulatov also operated, but along the periphery. After all, he was a member of the opposition but he wanted to be the one leading it. With these hopes in mind, he undertook a "peacekeeping" mission in March 1994, reportedly drawing crowds as large as 100,000.³⁶²

Borrowing a tactic from President Dudayev's playbook, Arturkhanov's Provisional Council held the "Congress of the Peoples of Chechnya" from 3-4 July 1994.³⁶³ It was an attempt to elevate the questionable legitimacy surrounding the Provisional Council, hoping to present itself as a national unity government and not just a lowlander institution. Despite its attempt to garner republic-wide legitimacy, the Congress' attendees were mostly those who previously supported Arturkhanov and the Council; that is to say, they attendees were drawn from a narrow group of those who dwelled closer to the Terek River than the southern mountains. Following this, the Kremlin officially recognized the Council as the sole legitimate

³⁶¹ Blandy, "Two Federal Interventions," p. 11.

³⁶² Gall and de Waal, p 146, 151; Smith, p. 136; Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya*, p. 158-159.

³⁶³ Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya*, p. 155; Lieven, p. 80.

authority in the republic.³⁶⁴ It was around this time that the Council began to receive covert financial and military aid from the Russian Counter-Intelligence Agency (FSK), under the leadership of Sergei Stepashin.³⁶⁵ Dzhokhar's DGB chief, Sultan Geliskhanov, estimated that the FSK was providing at least 100 billion rubles to the Council.³⁶⁶

During this period of political jockeying, President Dudayev held his own "People's Congress" on 10 August 1994. The composition of the People's Congress was the exact opposite of Arturkhanov's Congress of the Peoples of Chechnya, mainly the clan leaders of the southern mountain regions. Unsurprisingly, both Zavgayev and Khasbulatov were dubbed "enemies of the nation" and Arturkhanov was given a death sentence in absentia.³⁶⁷ It was in this process of political escalation that the stage was being set for a final battle between Dudayev and his Moscow-supported opposition. "Chechnya," wrote two Russian military experts "began to smell like gunpowder."³⁶⁸

At long last, the final battle between the two Chechen forces seemed to transpire during September when the Provisional Council's forces launched a serious coup attempt. The opposition forces attacking Grozny were supported by Russian helicopters (Mi-8 "Hip" transport and Mi-24 "Hind" attack) and armored assets, including 70 tanks.³⁶⁹ For a variety of reasons, including the poor quality of the Council's army, the coup was repelled. Every time the opposition launched an operation to take the capital and oust Dudayev, there were requests to receive reinforcement from federal troops; these requests were seen as a non-option from the

³⁶⁴ Knezys and Sedlickas, p. 31; Lapidus, p. 18.

³⁶⁵ Smith, p. 135; Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya*, p. 156. The FSK was the heir to many of the domestic intelligence functions of the KGB. Today, the FSK is now known as the Federal Security Service (FSB).

³⁶⁶ Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya*, p. 156. The highest estimate of covert funding to the Chechen opposition to Dudayev was 400 b rubles. See Blank and Tilford, p. 90.

³⁶⁷ Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya*, p. 156; Smith, p. 135

³⁶⁸ Knezys and Sedlickas, p. 31.

³⁶⁹ Lapidus, p. 18; Gall and de Waal, p. 151; Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya*, p. 157-158; and Smith, p. 135.

perspective of Moscow, who learned that the induction of federal forces only bolstered Dudayev's position in revolutionary Chechnya.³⁷⁰ Yeltsin's government was willing to allow the civil war between the highlander and lowlander *teips* to continue, while continuing to arm and fund the lowlanders. This reluctance to intervene directly was most evident on 15 October when opposition gunmen entered Grozny and effectively took the city. After requesting reinforcements from Moscow, they withdrew from the city at 4pm the following day because Yeltsin's administration was unwilling to reenter a federal presence.³⁷¹ They wanted to give their proxy war against President Dudayev one more chance to succeed. That chance manifested itself on 26 November.

The final coup launched against Dzhokhar Dudayev's revolutionary government was an extremely large undertaking. It involved 170 tanks, a 5,000-man invasion force—including 85 Russian soldiers covertly recruited by the FSK from the Kantemir and Taman divisions that were promised thousands of dollars for their participation in the coup.³⁷² The invasion force was supplied with communications equipment that did not operate on the same channels, effectively dooming any chances of proper command and control of the forces;³⁷³ the operation was doomed from the start. The resulting confusion of the combined FSK-recruited Russian troops and the various counter-revolutionary groups allowed Dudayev's National Guard to mount a highly effective positional defense in Grozny's urban jungle. In the end, the operation was a fiasco and 20 captured Russian soldiers were shown on television when Moscow denied federal

³⁷⁰ Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya*, p. 161-162; and Smith, p. 136.

³⁷¹ Knezys and Sedlickas, p. 31; Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya*, p. 161-162; and Smith, p. 136.

³⁷² Lester W. Grau, "Changing Russian Urban Tactics: The Aftermath of the Battle for Grozny," Foreign Military Studies Office. See also Smith, p. 137; Gall and de Waal, p. 155, 157; Lieven, *Chechnya: tombstone of Russian Power*, p. 92; and Lapidus, p. 19.

³⁷³ Gall and de Waal, p. 155; Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*, p. 92; Lapidus, p. 19; Smith, p. 137. Lieven adds that the Kantemir division commander, a Major General, reigned in protest over the botched coup attempt on 4 December 1994.

involvement; later the revolutionary regime even threatened to execute them if Moscow maintained such denials.³⁷⁴ As one journalist mused, “Such is the price of secret wars; when they go wrong; they become horribly public...”³⁷⁵ It is amazing that Yeltsin survived the catastrophe. His “democratic” administration had covertly funded and armed a proxy war in what the administration professed to be an internal matter. In the end, Russian Ministry of Defense (MOD)—not Ministry of Interior (MVD) internal troops³⁷⁶—were paraded on television by the recalcitrant revolutionary Chechen President Dzhokhar Dudayev.

By the beginning of December 1994, Dzhokhar’s revolutionary regime was again solidly in power, with the opposition forces reeling from multiple failures to force Dudayev out of office in successive botched coup attempts. Between the attritional effects of the battles and the efforts of Dzhokhar’s DGB, the opposition was systematically being hunted down “with the bitter contempt reserved for brothers who betray a cause.”³⁷⁷ This contempt for those who refused the call of the Revolution-- whether the opposition or disbanded parliament and constitutional court—is neither surprising nor unique. Brinton explained the terror of the radicals as follows:

Liberty for everyone, liberty, full, free, and fair, is of course the ultimate goal. But such liberty at present would mean that men corrupted by the bad old ways would be able to realize their wicked plans, restore the bad old institutions, and frustrate the good men. On reflection, the extremist continues, it is clear that we must distinguish between liberty for those who deserve it, and liberty for those who don’t, which latter is of course, false liberty, pseudo-liberty, license or anarchy. God had given liberty to the Saints—true liberty, which is obedience to Him—but he clearly did not give liberty to the sinners. You repress papists as you would repress devils. To argue that such sinners ought to be left alone would have been seen to seventeenth-century English Puritans as absurd as it would to us to suggest that yellow-fever-bearing mosquitoes be left alone. Robespierre himself phrased it with classic neatness: the revolutionary government, he said, was the despotism of liberty against tyranny. For Marx, the dictatorship of the proletariat is a

³⁷⁴ Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*, p. 92.

³⁷⁵ Smith, p. 137.

³⁷⁶ Russian MVD internal troops (VVMVD) are similar to American National Guardsmen. The primary expectation to this analogy is that the VVMVD are under federal, not regional (state) command and the VVMVD contain special operations units (*spetsnaz*).

³⁷⁷ Michael Hudson quoted in Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 53-54.

necessary transitional stage, in which the last vestiges of the capitalistic mentality are wiped out.³⁷⁸

The significance of the Revolution was that “Chechen Independence became the exception rather than the rule—a major eyesore for a Russian government seeking to consolidate state power.”³⁷⁹ As Yeltsin attempted to build a new political order, Dzhokhar Dudayev was constructing his own; and it would be separate from that of Russia. If Dzhokhar’s insults weren’t sufficient to embarrass Yeltsin, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy presented another “growing challenge to his authority [and] President Yeltsin began to look for an opportunity to reassert his control.”³⁸⁰ In this manner, war became a means to outmaneuver Zhirinovskiy and an end to his efforts to reconstitute a new Russia.

It appears that the highlanders, perhaps the least affected by the gross inadequacies of the revolutionary government, found the idea of mountaineer nationalism professed by the revolutionary leader a sufficient reason to allow him to remain in power. Of course, their support was also a function of the poor military performance of the pro-Moscow opposition. The Revolution was again safe and Dzhokhar was its hero, its stalwart champion.

MAKING SENSE OF THE REVOLUTION

Dzhokhar Dudayev led the Chechen Revolution against Doku Zavgayev's decadent and hollow communist regime; however, Dudayev’s regime quickly failed to live up to the people’s expectations. Far from elevating the downtrodden and abused Chechen nation from its collective misery, the Revolution unleashed its own form of desperation. Additionally, Dudayev and his

³⁷⁸ Brinton, p. 166-167.

³⁷⁹ Michael McFaul, *Russia’s Unfinished Revolution: Political Change From Gorbachev to Putin* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001), p. 239.

³⁸⁰ Major Raymond C. Finch III, “Why the Russian Military Failed in Chechnya,” FMSO Special Study No. 98-16 (August 1998), p. 3.

followers represented the radical wing of the OKChN. Dudayev's decisive action during the August Putsch allowed him to checkmate not only Zavgayev, but also the moderate revolutionary Lechi Umkhayev. Umkhayev maneuvered cautiously and made every effort not to widen the revolutionary agenda. It is precisely for this reason that Dudayev was able to completely eclipse him.

The rise of the radical revolutionaries in Chechnya is not unique. Fitting with Brinton's explanation of how the radicals come to power, Dudayev's position in the OKChN and his monopoly of control over the National Guard were critical. As Brinton explained, "The key to the success of the extremists lies in their monopoly of control over these organizations—the New Model Army and Independent Churches, Jacobin clubs, and soviets."³⁸¹ Also fitting into Briton's model, Dzhokhar's radicals came to power upon the wings of a coup.³⁸² Moreover, as in other revolutions, General Dudayev's radical clique represented a small niche of Chechen society. To be sure, there was a mass reaction in support of the Revolution; but it was an effect, not a cause of it. Indeed, "The masses do not make revolutions. [however,] they may be enlisted for some impressive pageantry once the active few have won the revolution."³⁸³

The Revolutionary elite succeeded in overthrowing the vacuum of authority, but failed in replacing that vacuum with a consolidated and effective state; perhaps, that was the intent from the beginning. That is to say, the Revolution was not only about anti-communism and national self-determination. As Lieven suggested, the Revolution was a traditionalizing counter-revolution: a "revolt...against the modern state..."³⁸⁴ Richard Sakwa generally agrees with Lieven's counter-state thesis, noting that the "anarchic egalitarianism of a people unused to state

³⁸¹ Brinton, p. 149.

³⁸² Ibid., p. 149.

³⁸³ Ibid. p. 154.

³⁸⁴ Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*, p. 302. See also Lieven, "Nightmare in the Caucasus," p 150.

authority refuses to subordinate itself even to its own legitimate authorities.”³⁸⁵ The state, or more accurately what the Chechens perceived the state to be, was artificially and brutally imposed upon a people whose organic clan and federation system of governance never required its nullification to begin with. Thus, the future vision of the Revolution was to turn back the clock prior to Russian annexation, and all that was brought with it.

Freedom was what the revolutionary regime promised, but in reality it only managed to bring about something between “a loose tribal democracy and a personal autocracy” and ultimately what Robert Montagne dubbed “‘ordered anarchy’ in which a society appears to an outside observer to be utterly chaotic and riven by internal feuds but in fact obeys extremely strict rules and restraints in its behavior...”³⁸⁶ Further, Northwestern University professor Georgi Derluguian explains that “neither totalitarianism nor democracy could emerge in the unruly and collapsing Chechnya [because] dictatorship and democracy, in their own ways, are difficult to build and maintain...[absent of] functioning bureaucratic institutions.”³⁸⁷

WHY THE 1994-1996 WAR?

The explanations of the Russian invasion focus upon a variety of reasons. Most claim that the domino-theory threat, that Chechnya would be only the first of many republics to secede, was an unacceptable risk for a myriad of reasons. Usually involved in this explanation is the significance of the hydrocarbon deposits in the Caspian basin and the growing importance of these deposits to the Russian government. Some see it as a giant debt-collection operation for nonpayment of weapons and illegal narcotics transshipment shops. Another explanation for the

³⁸⁵ Sakwa, “Why Chechnya?” p. 9.

³⁸⁶ See Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*, p. 302

³⁸⁷ Derluguian, p. 2.

war is the personal enmity between Yeltsin and Dudayev. All these are true to some degree. The problem is the more simplistic of these miss the forest for the trees. Precisely as Stephan Walt predicted, balance of threat theory explains why the Chechen Revolution, from Moscow's point of view, needed to be put down like any other "mad dog".

The fear that the Chechen Revolution would spread threatened Moscow's interests on a number of levels. First, an independent Chechnya was different than an independent Estonia—or Afghanistan for that matter. For centuries, the North Caucasus has been at the center of Russian strategic interests. Secondly, amidst all the other newly-independent countries, the threat (whether real or perceived) of a second round of disintegration was simply unacceptable to the Russian leadership. Third, the oil refineries and pipelines that were located on Chechen territory made a viable, independent Chechnya a very real possibility. Thus, the Russian leadership first tasked the secret services to remove the revolutionary cancer in Chechnya using the indigenous opposition. When this strategy failed, the Russian military was sent to succeed where the opposition had failed in December of 1994. To Yeltsin's chagrin, by August of 1996 the Chechen revolutionary forces were mounting highly-successful counter-attacks and retaking Chechen territory, forcing him to accept a cease-fire with Chechnya half in and half out of the Russian Federation.

The Chechen Revolution and the rise of the radical forces under Dudayev had provoked a war and remained, albeit at the cost of Dudayev's life. Amazingly, President Dudayev managed to escape countless special operations aimed at eliminating his charismatic hold over the Chechen people. Assassinating him, the theory went, the Chechen guerrillas would lose morale and eventually sue for peace. The theory was wrong.

Dudayev was an elusive target because of the civilian population's willingness to shelter him from the Russian forces. Dzhokhar's weakness was never his inability to secure aid, it was his method of communication. While making one of several calls on his satellite telephone, some of which aimed at negotiating an end to the war, Dudayev was assassinated by a missile that locked onto his phone's signal on 21 April 1996.³⁸⁸ Even after the confirmation by his security service and wife of his death, articles were printed and rumors abounded about how Dzhokhar would soon return in glory to once again lead his nation.³⁸⁹

This chapter discussed the nature and failure of the revolutionary regime to function as a responsible and effective state. The inability of the revolutionary regime to properly function allowed the rapid criminalization of the state. Additionally, the period of independence from 1991-1994 gradually built up to a military crisis with Russia. This crisis was only exacerbated by the inflammatory rhetoric and pride of Dudayev—a satanic pride only matched by Russian President Yeltsin. The resulting Russian invasion was a fiasco for the Russian military and a tragedy for the Chechen people. Eventually, the Frankenstein that was the Chechen Revolution claimed the life of its creator. Even so, the idea of Dudayev and his irrevocable commitment to the national idea lived on and the Chechens won their freedom—for a time at least.

³⁸⁸ Gall and de Waal, p. 318-320; Smith, 230-236; and

³⁸⁹ Tishkov, *Chechnya: Life in a War-Torn Society*, p. 86-87 and Murphy, p. 54.

9.0 THE INTERWAR PERIOD AND THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION

Dzhokhar Dudayev's Chechen Revolution managed to survive the First Chechen War. It seemed that even the federal armed forces could not put it down. After Dudayev's assassination, the much more moderate Aslan Maskhadov assumed the Chechen Presidency; thus began the Second Chechen Revolution. The interwar period between the signing of the Khasavyurt Peace Accords in Dagestan and the incursion of illegal Salafist formations into Dagestan in 1999 marked the second great battle between the moderates and the extremists. The difference between the extremists of late 1990s, when compare to the OKChN radicals of the early 1990s, was both ideological and geographic. While the OKChN radicals were ardent nationalists and demanded Chechen independence, the Salafist radicals believed the true Revolution would revive Imam Shamil's Islamic Republic—extending from the Black to the Caspian Sea. The *true* revolution, in the minds of the new radicals, would transcend clan and ethnic loyalties under the common banner of the Islamic revolution.

MASKHADOV'S REGIME

Dudayev's Chief of Staff and former Soviet artillery Colonel, Aslan Maskhadov, was elected President of Chechnya on 27 January 1997 during which "Chechen voters turned out in high

numbers.”³⁹⁰ He received 65 percent of the vote³⁹¹. The elections were declared to have been legitimate by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).³⁹² Maskhadov defeated the current revolutionary leader and radical member of Dudayev’s clique, President Yandarbiyev.³⁹³ Yandarbiyev disagreed with Dzhokhar’s secularist state and instead wanted to return Chechnya into an Islamic state³⁹⁴—to the days of Sheikh Mansur and Imam Shamil. To this end, Yandarbiyev introduced a constitution similar to Sudan and invited paramilitary fighters into a “Shari’a Guards” unit in order to enforce the rulings of the Shari’a courts.³⁹⁵ Shamil Basayev, the leader of the so-call Sabotage Battalion of Chechen Martyrs, also ran in the election and received 22 percent of the vote.³⁹⁶ Victory in the 1997 Presidential elections proved to be a hollow victory for President Maskhadov.

Maskhadov was the brilliant field commander who led the amazing assault on and recapture of Grozny on 6 August 1996.³⁹⁷ Subsequently, Maskhadov personally negotiated the Khasavyurt Peace Accords with Russian Security Council chairman General Alexander Lebed.³⁹⁸ Moreover, it was Maskhadov who represented the victorious Chechens in economic negotiations with Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin.³⁹⁹ Truly, President Maskhadov

³⁹⁰ De Waal, “Chechnya: The Breaking Point,” p. 194.

³⁹¹ Lieven, “Nightmare in the Caucasus,” p 147 and Mark Kramer, “The Perils of Counterinsurgency: Russia’s War in Chechnya,” *International Security* Volume 29, Number 3 (Winter 2004/05), p. 7.

³⁹² Miriam Lansky, “Chechnya’s Internal Fragmentation,” *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs* Volume 27, Number 2 (Summer/Fall 2003), p. 188.

³⁹³ Murphy, p. 56. Yandarbiyev receives even less votes than Basayev did, a meager 10 percent. See Lieven, “Nightmare in the Caucasus,” p 147.

³⁹⁴ Elise Giuliano, “Islamic Identity and Political Mobilization in Russia: Chechnya and Dagestan Compared,” *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* Volume 11 (2005), p. 210

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 211. One of Maskhadov’s first priorities was outlawing Yandarbiyev’s shari’a courts. This commitment to traditional Sufi Islam gained him the allegiance of Mufti Akhmad-Khaji Kadyrov, a figure that will later become a client of Russian President Putin and become President of Chechnya.

³⁹⁶ Peter Sherman and Matthew Sussex, “Globalization, ‘New Wars’ and the War in Chechnya,” in Richard Sakwa ed. *Chechnya: From Past to Future* (London: Anthem, 2005), p. 205.

³⁹⁷ Lansky, “Chechnya’s Internal Fragmentation,” p. 188.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

was a legitimate heir; he became the new embodiment of the Revolution. Unlike Dudayev, Maskhadov was a moderate.⁴⁰⁰ Also unlike Dzhokhar, Aslan possessed a “sober, modest character.”⁴⁰¹ Upon election, Maskhadov advocated creating “a ‘common sphere’ with Russia in economic, military, and educational matters...”⁴⁰² Moreover, unlike the radical revolutionary field commanders, Maskhadov did not believe that the Chechen revolution needed to be exported to other areas of the North Caucasus to keep it safe at home.⁴⁰³

Precisely because he was a moderate, Maskhadov desired a secular state but was challenged by political rivals, themselves former field commanders, who mobilized support from the wave of Islamic fundamentalism sweeping across the North Caucasus.⁴⁰⁴ Elise Giuliano believes that the shift from national to religious rhetoric was a strategic maneuver to compensate for the lack of Western support for Chechen independence.⁴⁰⁵ There were also many very practical obstacles to Maskhadov’s government.

President Maskhadov inherited a debacle of a country. The First Chechen War (1994-1996) had shattered the state’s infrastructure. The capital city of Grozny and many other urban areas were essentially reduced to rubble by Russian air-to-ground attacks and artillery fire missions.⁴⁰⁶ The Chechen republic was shattered by combat operations during the 1994-1996 war. If the Chechens can be socially described as a pre-modern society (not that such a claim is

⁴⁰⁰ Not all analysts believe that Maskhadov was a moderate. The evidence that is offered to debunk the idea of Maskhadov’s moderation will be addressed later in this paper; however, for an account contrary to the view that Maskhadov was a moderate see Emil Pain, “The Chechen War in the Context of Contemporary Russian Politics,” in Richard Sakwa ed. *Chechnya: From Past to Future* (London: Anthem, 2005), p. 98-101.

⁴⁰¹ Lieven, “Nightmare in the Caucasus,” p 150.

⁴⁰² Murphy, p. 56.

⁴⁰³ Giuliano, p. 211.

⁴⁰⁴ Giuliano, p. 210.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 210.

⁴⁰⁶ Tishkov, “Dynamics of a Society at War,” p. 157.

entirely accurate), then the Russian military forces saw to it that they also had a pre-modern economy. British military analyst C W Blandy described:

The position of President Maskhadov in trying to restore a physically scarred, economically ruined and psychologically damaged country to a semblance of normal life, was describes at that time as being 'along a bridge that is finer than a hair and sharper than a knife.'⁴⁰⁷

Moreover, the Kremlin made every effort to undermine Maskhadov's battle to build a state. According to the 1996 Khasavyurt Peace Accords, Moscow assumed some responsibility for providing reconstruction money to the Chechen government.⁴⁰⁸ While the initial flow of money was to reach 62 billion rubles, Maskhadov's government only received 16 billion.⁴⁰⁹ Additionally, the Russian Duma attached requirements for reconstruction funding in the 1997-1998 budget, requiring that the Chechen government publicly rescind demands for independence. This precondition assured that Chechnya would never see the money. Maskhadov may have been a moderate, but he was still a revolutionary. As a matter of principle, he would not betray the spirit of Dzhokhar's Revolution. Perhaps it was out of spite or the result of an intentional strategy, that Moscow left Chechnya largely to fend for itself; it was also a strategy that was self-defeating. "By not taking any action in the period of reconstruction in Chechnya from 1997 to 1999," wrote Jeronim Perovic, "Moscow clearly missed an opportunity to develop a relationship of trust with Maskhadov and other moderate forces that would have created the basis for constructive dialogue about the future of the republic."⁴¹⁰ That being said, Lieven qualifies the criticism of Moscow's denial of funding with the argument that "most of the

⁴⁰⁷ C W Blandy, "Moscow's Failure to Comprehend," in Mrs A C Aldis ed., *The Second Chechen War Conflict Studies Research Centre P31*, p. 5.

⁴⁰⁸ See Gammer, *The Lone Wolf of the Bear* Appendix A and Richard Sakwa ed. *Chechnya: From Past to Future* Appendix 1.

⁴⁰⁹ Lansky, "Daghestan and Chechnya," p. 186.

⁴¹⁰ Jeronim Perovic, "The North Caucasus on the Brink," International Relations and Security Network, Center for Security Studies, ETH Zurich (2006), p. 14.

aid would most probably not have been used for reconstruction. The corruption and criminality of senior Chechen officials, like Vice President Vakha Arsanov, is all too well known...”⁴¹¹ Either way, no one will ever know what effect the reconstruction money would have had upon the Chechen polity. Perhaps Maskhadov could have used the money to undermine the radical revolutionaries; perhaps the 2002 Dubrovka Theatre siege and the Beslan hostage-taking tragedy might not have unfolded; no one will ever know. What can be said is that President Maskhadov was placed in an impossible situation in a devastated country—devastation enacted upon that country by the Russian military.

Tragically, at the very time the Revolution had managed to survive and a member of the moderate wing of the revolutionary elite had taken power, the war-time solidarity began to crumble; the honeymoon was soon to be over. In what Tishkov calls “internal social chaos” various bands of armed formations (most led by former field commanders of the First Chechen War) began to pursue their own visions of the Revolution.⁴¹²

THE RETURN OF THE RADICAL REVOLUTIONARIES

Aslan Maskhadov led the forces that preserved the Chechen Revolution in 1996, negotiated the cease-fire that ended the First Chechen War, and decisively won the Presidential election, but was confronted from the beginning by the radical wing of the revolutionary party. If that was not enough of a precarious position, he had no “army” to speak of; the fragmented and autonomous armed formations of the First Chechen War were largely unwilling to be reconstituted under centralized command and control mechanisms.⁴¹³ The autonomous, cell-like composition of the

⁴¹¹ Lieven, “Nightmare in the Caucasus,” p 149.

⁴¹² Tishkov, “Dynamics of a Society at War,” p. 158.

⁴¹³ Lieven, “Nightmare in the Caucasus,” p 150.

Chechen formations that helped them excel at tactical swarming operations turned out to be the greatest weakness of President Maskhadov.

A core of radical field commanders began to challenge the authority of Maskhadov's secular state. Their ranks included such notables as Shamil Basayev (bolstered by his close relationship with the foreign fighter Khattab), Salaman Raduyev, Abi Barayev, and Abdul Melikh Mezhidov. Basayev's radicalization was partly the psychological consequence of his experience in the First Chechen War and his grandiose vision of the *true* Revolution. Anatol Lieven's encounter with Basayev in 1995 was telling: "His eyes had sunk deeper into his head, and over the next years were to sink further and further; meanwhile his beard, which had been short and piratical, grew longer and bushier, until by the end of the year he really did resemble a Mujahid of old."⁴¹⁴ One of the most irritating things to Basayev was that his fellow Chechens were unable to remain loyal to the Revolution, that they betrayed it for a paycheck. In one instance Basayev chastised a fellow Chechen who cooperated with the pro-Moscow "collaborators" as a police major to the point that the man was reduced to tears:

Aren't you ashamed to sit here before us while the Russians whom you serve are committing such crimes? Are you a Chechen? Are you a man? You were born a Muslim, but tell me, can you say 'La illaha il'Allah', when you serve the Russian murderers? What would it cost you just to leave here and go back to your family? Would they shoot you for it? We could get the Russian army out of here peacefully if it were not for people like you helping them. We are not asking you to fight, just to stand aside and not harm your own nation.⁴¹⁵

To Basayev, the national idea fell tragically short in mobilizing sufficient amounts of committed supporters for the Revolution. The nationalist model of the former-Soviet Central European countries was not successful in Chechnya. What Basayev needed was a local paradigm. Thus, like Sheikh Mansur and Imam Shamil, his approach would revive the idea of

⁴¹⁴ Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*, p. 36.

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

the Caliphate; the love of Islam could transcend the ethnic fault lines that abound in the North Caucasus and usher in the true Revolution—the Revolution Dzhokhar could only have dreamed possible. To the commander that the Georgian military forces so feared in the early 1990s, Maskhadov’s state was a betrayal of the revolutionary cause. What’s more, these events mirror Brinton’s analysis regarding how moderates in the revolutionary movement are overcome:

[The moderates were] confronted very soon with armed enemies...They found against them an increasingly strong and intransigent group of radicals and extremists who insisted that the moderates were trying to stop the revolution, that they had betrayed it, they were as bad as the old regime—indeed, much worse, since they were traitors as well as fools and scoundrels.⁴¹⁶

Salaman Raduyev, a relative of Dudayev, managed to share the same gene that inspired Dzhokhar to blurt out the outlandish provocations he was so well known for. Reportedly, Raduyev declared, “Only Allah and General Dudayev alone can order me to stop fighting.”⁴¹⁷ As Dudayev was dead and the Archangel Gabriel was not appearing before him, there was little chance he could be persuaded to transition to a constructive civilian life. Indeed, he was a wild card from the start. Abi Barayev and his Islamic Special Forces Division (IPON) was simply too involved in the kidnapping industry to submit himself to constitutional rule.⁴¹⁸ Despite the presence of significant amounts of armed and combat-seasoned radicals, Maskhadov remained in power because they were too disorganized and politically divided to mass their forces and forcibly remove Maskhadov⁴¹⁹; perhaps they thought they could simply embarrass him out of office by publicly disregarding his demands to disarm and demobilize.

⁴¹⁶ Brinton, p. 122.

⁴¹⁷ Murphy, p. 56.

⁴¹⁸ Lanskoj, “Daghestan and Chechnya,” p. 191.

⁴¹⁹ To his credit, Maskhadov did try to use the forces at his disposal to attack the radicals. One of the main deputies in this fight was Khankar-Pasha Israpilov, the commander of an anti-terrorism unit. Additionally, Maskhadov’s republican forces engaged the radical militias in a series of battles from March to July 1998 in the cities of Urus-Martan, Grozny, and Gurdemes. *Ibid.*, p. 190-191, 193.

By the close of 1998, President Maskhadov's government was in dire straits. He presided over a broken country and was lacking promised federal aid from Moscow. What little true authority he had, more a result of his renown as Dudayev's Chief of Staff than his governmental position, was quickly challenged by the radical wing of the revolutionary elite. The radicals became determined to carry out what Maskhadov was too practical, and perhaps too squeamish, to do himself. Shamil Basayev represented the psychological profile Brinton included in his analysis so many years ago:

In all our societies these radicals were very conscious, and usually very proud, of their small numbers. They felt definitely set off from their countrymen, consecrated to a cause which their countrymen were certainly not consciously and actively equal to. Some of the radicals may have satisfied themselves that they really represented the better selves of their fellow countrymen, they were the reality of which the others were the potentiality. But here and now they were very sure that they were superior to the inert and flabby many.⁴²⁰

What's more, Chechnya's eastern neighbor, Dagestan, was immersed in political crisis. In order to understand how the Chechen radicals came to the forefront of the revolutionary movement, we must understand the Dagestani connection, for it is this connection that led to *dvoevlastie* and the Second Chechen War.

⁴²⁰ Brinton, p. 152.

10.0 CHECHNYA'S SECOND REVOLUTIONARY REGIME AND THE RISE OF THE RELIGIOUS RADICALS



Source: <http://www.tribalchase.com/images/map/mS1064581380.jpg>

Maskhadov's regime was in trouble from the beginning of its inception; however, Chechnya's hard-fought *de facto* independence became further undermined by the effects of powerful political forces developing in Dagestan. It was these ethnic and religious battles in the neighboring republic which created opportunities for Chechen field commander to interfere in Dagestani internal politics; exported religious radicals to Chechnya, allowing cohabitation

between Chechen and Dagestani groups; and facilitated the incursion of a combined force of religious radicals into Dagestani territory across Chechnya's eastern border. This operation represented the rumble of a much larger earthquake: the advent of a militant pan-Caucasian Islamic revolutionary vanguard, much more radical in political belief than Chechen national radicals of the early 1990s.

Political Developments in Dagestan

Though most groups within Dagestan agreed that integration in a post-Soviet Russia was the best thing for their country, the extreme ethnic diversity of the republic required special attention to the political institutions that would be needed to ensure stability. In theory, democracy empowered the individual. The danger of democracy in Dagestan was that the republic had no common polity. Rather, it was a territorial space composed of many mutually-distrusting ethnic groups; none of which enjoy a majority of the population. Still, the idea of presidentialism was entertained – but not for long.

Dagestan needed to find a way to construct a state whose institutions would be mutually acceptable, or at the very least *tolerable*, to all involved. Federalism was considered, but the existence of ethnic enclaves threatened to flirt with state disintegration. Proportional Representation was a second option, but it too carried with it drawbacks—particularly for the smaller ethnic groups. A grand consensus was achieved and Russia's first consociational republic was ratified by the Dagestani people on 26 July 1994.

Consociational democracy facilitates the interaction among political elites drawn from ethnic and social cleavages within a given society.⁴²¹ Truly, the adoption of a consociational system is but an indicator of a state that has inter-ethnic mutual distrust as a founding *premise*. Majoritarian systems, while providing minimum protections for minority groups, are expressly structured to produce policies that create political winners and losers. What's more, the losers theoretically chose to view the negative outcome as *legitimate*. Thus, devoid of a uniform majority group, majoritarian systems carry the assumption that coalition politics and centrist platforms are the norm rather than the exception. Such systems seek to alleviate ethnic competition by institutionalized power-sharing. Following this system, Movladi Magomedov was appointed Chairman of the Supreme Council, the executive arm of the government intended to rotate among the ethnic elites.

The Battle for True Islam: The DUMD and its Discontents

Islam in Dagestan—and in the North Caucasus as a whole—had the unique ability to transcend many divisive ethnic cleavages. In the absence of higher authority, Dagestani Islamic leaders “proved the essential arbiters among groups belonging to rival nationalities and helped to keep the peace and prevent armed clashes.”⁴²² That being said, the leadership of the state-sponsored religious board (DUMD), which was a badge of honor and source of ethnic competition in Dagestan, became dominated by the Avar ethnic group. Upon confirmation, the Avars began to attack the teaching of rivals who became smeared as *mutashayhks* (spurious shaykhs) under the cloak of official state authority.⁴²³

⁴²¹ Kisriev and Ware, “Russian Hegemony in Dagestan,” p. 27 and Horowitz, p. 575.

⁴²² Moshe Gammer, “Walking the Tightrope Between Nationalism(s) and Islam(s): The Case of Daghestan,” p. 137.

⁴²³ *Ibid.*, p. 669.

This “Avarization” of the DUMD was endorsed by the executive body of the Dagestani republic, the Supreme Scouncil (SC).⁴²⁴ In a *quid pro quo* relationship, the Avar-dominated DUMD tacitly agreed to restrain its Islamic program to social issues, rather than pursue a politically-oriented Islamist program. This mutual agreement between the “Darghized” state apparatus⁴²⁵ and Avar-led DUMD limited the agenda of political Islam to a program of social Islamism.⁴²⁶ In effect, the bifurcation of political power and religious authority created a “symbiotic relationship” between the DUMD and political power structures; the former legitimized the latter and the latter guaranteed the control of the former.⁴²⁷ In this manner it became difficult to avoid charges that the Dargin and Avar elites (and by association the Avars and Dargins as a whole) were securing the domination of republic vis-à-vis Dagestan’s smaller ethno-national groups. Whatever the merit of such accusations, the DUMD’s unequivocal support of the Dagestani government came at the cost of public support.⁴²⁸ Moreover, as faith in the stewards of official Islam began to wane, a new wave of religious discourse began to challenge the very *legitimacy* of Sufi Islam. At this point it is worth detailing the arrival and impact of what became known as ‘Wahhabi’ Islam. More accurately, Russian Wahhabis can be termed “neofundamentalists”⁴²⁹, a much more inclusive term for such views.

⁴²⁴ Lanskoj, “Daghestan and Chechnya,” p. 171 and Blandy, “Dagestan: The Gathering Strom,” p. 24 and

⁴²⁵ Blandy, “Dagestan: The Gathering Strom,” p. 24 and Lanskoj, “Daghestan and Chechnya,” p. 171

⁴²⁶ Lanskoj, “Daghestan and Chechnya,” p. 169-171.

⁴²⁷ Giuliani, p. 204-205. Especially important to the endemic corruption in Dagestani politics, Deputies serving in the People’s Assembly are immune from prosecution, undermining the rule of law. See Blandy, “Dagestan: The Gathering Strom,” p. 12.

⁴²⁸ Yemeljanova, 671.

⁴²⁹ See Oliver Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for the New Ummah* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), p. 233-235. Roy calls these fundamentalists “neo” because “the call for a return to the true tenets of Islam is not new. Rejection of sectarian affiliations, of the different schools of law, theology and philosophy, in favor of a strict return to the Koran and the Sunnah is a perennial feature of Islamic fundamentalism.”

The proliferation of neofundamentalist views in Dagestan, particularly amongst Dagestanis who were disillusioned by the 1990s economic crisis and the rampant political corruption,⁴³⁰ quickly became a source of instability. In this manner,

The [Salafi] *dzhamaat* offered a solution to the prevailing social chaos, criminality, and economic deprivation of post-Soviet life. Indeed, the *dzhamaat* had its own militias and effectively resisted organized crime. Visiting journalists described the Wahhabi villages as safe, orderly, clean, and prosperous.⁴³¹

The Wahhabis came into conflict with the authorities due to both theological and socio-political reasons. Particularly, the Wahhabis frowned upon the Sufis lack of orthodoxy. Local customs mixed with local ancient pagan beliefs insulted the Salafists. “For fundamentalists,” explains Olivier Roy, “there is nothing in these cultures to be proud of, because they have altered the pristine image of Islam.”⁴³² Moreover, the political alliances that were fashioned between the Islamic scholars and Dagestan’s political elite instilled a sense of “disillusionment with the former [that] has increased with the corruption of the latter.”⁴³³

Theological differences aside, “the ‘Wahhabis’ public call for the establishment of an Islamic order—social as well as political—was a direct challenge to the *partokratiia* and all it represented,”⁴³⁴ and thus a threat to the state itself. In this manner, the Russian Wahhabis deviate from neofundamentalist orthodoxy and enter into the realm of the Islamists⁴³⁵: they create Islamist parties and seek to reinstitute an Islamic Imamate. Thus, Russian Wahhabi groups represent a somewhat bizarre, contradictory nexus between the larger Islamist and neofundamentalist movements in the world. Because the Wahhabis presented a threat to the

⁴³⁰ Ware and Kisriev, “The Islamic Factor in Dagestan,” p. 238.

⁴³¹ Lansky, “Daghestan and Chechnya,” p. 171.

⁴³² Roy, 25.

⁴³³ Sivertseva, p. 365 and Ware & Kisriev, “The Islamic Factor in Dagestan,” p. 238.

⁴³⁴ Gammer, “Walking the Tightrope Between Nationalism(s) and Islam(s): The Case of Daghestan,” p. 137.

⁴³⁵ See Roy, p. 58.

authority of both the *partokratiia* and the stewards of “official Islam”, the government began to use its resources to place pressure upon the ‘Wahhabis.’ As the level of state scrutiny increased, the movement began to become more radicalized. This radicalization sparked sporadic armed conflicts around Dagestan. In one such instance, disagreements over whether to face Mecca or the casket during a funeral in Chabanmakhi erupted into a firefight involving 450 men armed with automatic weapons.⁴³⁶

In was in the midst of all these developments, political and spiritual, that the Dagestani state was subject to a series of crises that threatened to unravel the entire fabric of the ethno-national consensus—the final of which would have disastrous consequences for Maskhadov’s *de facto* independent Chechen state. Indeed, as Dagestan threatened to unravel, the Chechen revolutionary radicals began to see their moment of opportunity. The next revolution was drawing near

A LITANY OF CRISES

The confluence of reoccurring crises inspired by the rising power of power SC chairmanship and Movladi Magomedov’s—that is the say the Dargin’s—firm hold of the position (contrary to the principle of executive rotation), parallel with the creation and support of an “official” state authority on Islamic matters, provides a useful context to view the series of shocks that the Dagestani political and social systems underwent in the second half of the 1990s. In fact, they are *central* to understanding them. Without these conditions, it is possible—and indeed more

⁴³⁶ The incident only came to a stalemate when a rumor circulated that approximately 1000 ‘Wahhabis’, believed to be veterans of the First Chechen War, threatened to intervene. See Ware and Kisriev, “The Islamic Factor in Dagestan,” p. 241.

than likely—that the rise of the radical, the August-September 1999 events—and thus the Second Chechen War, would not have transpired.

THE 1996 CRISIS

The first of the crises was solved with relatively little effort, but it set the stage for the many of the future events. Magomedov was nearing the end of his term in 1996 and would be replaced, according to the constitution, by another SC member of a different ethno-national group. Magomedov had led the Dagestani government since the end of the Soviet times and was not eager to allow his position, and the political spoils associated with his position, to rotate. In an effort to avoid the inconvenience of constitutional authority, Magomedov appealed to the Constitutional Court for a legal waiver that would allow him to remain in office. In effect the ruling of the Court was that

the constitutional provision on the State Council was of a provisional nature, since the fathers of the Constitution had merely wanted to ‘try out’ the new institution. The Constitution established a ‘transitional’ term for the first chairman, with future terms stretching four years, and therefore this special provision for the transition period could be modified in light of the situation.⁴³⁷

It was in this manner that Magomedov, a member of the Soviet-era *partokratiia*, changed the constitutional rules of the game and extended the term of the SC Chairman to four years. With the official nod of Dagestan’s Constitutional Court, Magomedov would remain in office until new elections were held in 1998. Unfortunately for Dagestan, but perhaps fortunately for Magodemov, the 1997 Gerlakh raid would preempt the upcoming 1998 decision.

⁴³⁷ Oversloot and Van Den Burg, p. 317.

THE GERLAKH RAID

While the proximate cause of the first crisis was purely internal, the second seems to be attributed to a mix of Dagestani and Chechen problems. The battle for the souls of the Dagestani peoples periodically erupted in localized armed conflict, such as the Chabanmakhi funeral standoff. Additionally, weak central authority and state-building in Maskhadov's Chechnya permitted, or at the very least could not prevent, field commanders from maintaining their own autonomous armed formations. Naturally, as Dagestan placed increasing pressure upon its own Salafists, well-armed and well-organized Chechen Salafists threatened to link the two groups. Field commander Khattab's 1997 raid on a RF base in Dagestan's Buynaksk region only seemed to confirm these fears.

The pre-dawn raid consisted of three platoons (approximately 115 gunmen)⁴³⁸ with the stated objective of acquiring several Russian-built T-72 tanks.⁴³⁹ The Gerlakh base was home to the 136th Mechanized Infantry Brigade of the 5th Russian Army in and located near the larger area of Buinaksk.⁴⁴⁰ Hours later, the dismayed attackers were forced to retreat back into Chechen territory as they fled the local and Federal security forces.⁴⁴¹ The Central Front for the Liberation of the Caucasus and Dagestan claimed responsibility for the incursion.⁴⁴²

⁴³⁸ Adam Geibel, "Khattab's Audacious Raid (22 December 1997): Prelude to the Second Chechen War," *Central Asian Survey*, Volume 19, Numbers 3/4 (2000), p. 341

⁴³⁹ Robert Bruce Ware and Enver Kisriev, "The Islamic Factor in Dagestan," *Central Asian Survey*, Volume 19, Number 2 (2000), p. 242. The objective did not come to fruition because the Russians had a policy of removing the batteries from stored tanks, thus rendering them inoperable. See Geibel, p. 342.

⁴⁴⁰ Geibel, p. 341; Ware & Kisriev, "The Islamic Factor in Dagestan," p. 242; and Ware, "A Multitude of Evils," p. 83.

⁴⁴¹ Some of the attackers made their way back into Chechen territory by hijacking a bus. The insurgents forcibly ejected the male passengers, keeping the women and children as hostages to secure safe passage. See Geibel, p. 343.

⁴⁴² Ware and Kisriev, "The Islamic Factor in Dagestan," p. 242.

The storming of the Federal base in Gerlakh was not a joint effort by the various Chechen field commanders; instead, it was the primarily the enterprise of local Dagestanis.⁴⁴³ Leading these fighters was the foreign-born mujahad best known by his *nome de guerre*, Khattab.⁴⁴⁴ Born Saleh Abdullah Al-Sewailem, Khattab allegedly came from a prominent Saudi family.⁴⁴⁵ According to one source, he was offered a chance to study in the United States and instead traveled to Afghanistan in 1987 to battle the Soviets.⁴⁴⁶ Khattab apparently remained in Afghanistan until 1991, before leaving for Tajikistan, later Azerbaijan, and finally to Chechnya.⁴⁴⁷

Though the raid was unsuccessful in its stated aims, the raid had many consequences. First, the growing presence of home-grown ‘Wahhabis’ led local and Federal observers to link them with neighboring Chechnya’s spill-over effects. In effect, the ‘Wahhabis’ were now officially a “fifth column” in Dagestani society.⁴⁴⁸ Second, the raid exposed the relative weakness of the area to rebel incursions.⁴⁴⁹ Third, the timing of Khattab’s attack might have been the most important factor. The People’s Assembly of Dagestan was scheduled to vote on a local version of a July 1997 RF law that, among other things, placed limitations upon foreign missionaries.⁴⁵⁰ Thus, it seems that the attack was meant to derail an upcoming vote that would be detrimental to Dagestan’s local ‘Wahhabis’. Khattab had a special connection to the area. He

⁴⁴³ One estimate of the forces composition claims that only 40 of the armed fighters were Chechens. See Lansky, “Daghestan and Chechnya,” p. 177.

⁴⁴⁴ Other prominent Chechen field commanders such as Shamil Basayev, Movladi Ugudov, and Salman Raduyev all denied both official and unofficial Chechen involvement in the raid. See Geibel, p. 345.

⁴⁴⁵ Lansky, “Daghestan and Chechnya,” p. 177. Admittedly, some confusion surrounds Khattab’s place of origin. Some scholars claim that Khattab is in fact a Jordanian.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 178.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 178.

⁴⁴⁸ Gammer, “Walking the Tightrope Between Nationalism(s) and Islam(s): The Case of Daghestan,” p. 138.

⁴⁴⁹ Precisely because of this recognition, Russian Air Force commander Colonel General Antoly Kornukov made the decision to relocate Russia’s stockpiled nuclear arsenal from the Mozdok storage facility, located just 10km from Ossetia’s common border with Chechnya. See Geibel, p. 341

⁴⁵⁰ The intent of the legislation was to separate local Salafists from links with foreign contacts and to prevent further proselytizing. See Lansky, “Daghestan and Chechnya,” p. 177.

had taken a previous opportunity to set up a local training camp and married a girl from a ‘Wahhabi’ village.⁴⁵¹ Be that as it may, the Assembly passed of the law on the ‘Freedom of Confession and Religious Organizations’ on 22 December 1997.⁴⁵²

The law restricts publication, acquisition of publications, construction of mosques, use of buildings, the forming of (and membership in) associations suspected to be ‘Wahhabi’.⁴⁵³ In effect, “It empowered the DUMD to supervise all religious associations established less than fifteen years before its adoption and authorizes it to grant or deny them the right to communal practice of their religion.”⁴⁵⁴ The resulting crackdown, facilitated through the DUMD’s expanded powers, resulted in the emigration of approximately 300 Dagestani ‘Wahhabi’ families to Chechnya.⁴⁵⁵ This fact is crucial to understanding the August-September 1999 events.

With the religious exiles came the “septuagenarian spiritual leader of the Dagestani Salafis, Bagaudin Kebedov.”⁴⁵⁶ Additionally, “the newly arrived Dagestani religious dissidents conveyed the false impression that Dagestani society was ready to wage a war against Russia”⁴⁵⁷ This point should not be lost upon the observer. Exiles agitate, awaiting the day they may triumphantly return to their ancestral homes; they are in fact hopeful elites. In this context, the combined ‘Wahhabis’ formed the Congress of the Peoples of Ichkeria Chechnya and Dagestan (KNID) and a “Peacekeeping Brigade.”⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵¹ Ware and Kisriev, “The Islamic Factor in Dagestan,” p. 242, Lanskoy, “Daghestan and Chechnya,” p. 177, and Giuliani, p. 211.

⁴⁵² Lanskoy, “Daghestan and Chechnya,” p. 177.

⁴⁵³ Ware and Kisriev, “The Islamic Factor in Dagestan,” p. 243.

⁴⁵⁴ Gammer, “Walking the Tightrope Between Nationalism(s) and Islam(s): The Case of Daghestan,” p. 138.

⁴⁵⁵ Lanskoy, “Daghestan and Chechnya,” p. 178.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 178 and Dmitri V. Trenin and Aleksei V. Malashenko with Antol Lieven, *Russia’s Relentless Frontier: The Chechnya Factor in Post-Soviet Russia*, (Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment, 2004), p. 34. Bagaudin Kebedov is also known as Magomedov and Kozleyurtsky. See Lanskoy, “Chechnya’s Internal Fragmentation,” p. 193.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 175.

⁴⁵⁸ Gammer, “The Road Not Taken: Daghestan and Chechen Independence,” p. 103.

In the wake of intra-Dagestani sectarian strife, an unsuccessful raid by Magomedov's forces facilitated the evacuation of religious dissidents into a Chechen state plagued by a vacuum of central authority. In these conditions, Salafist exiles and Chechen *bandformirovaniya* (bandit formations) formed networks that would prove crucial to the August-September 1999 events. The KNID "united malcontents"⁴⁵⁹ in both republics and caused a seismic shift in the balance of power in Chechnya between the moderates and the radicals. For the first time since the death of Dzhokhar Dudayev, the radical revolutionaries were united in a common front. Even with all this, a final crisis would rock the Dagestani republic, creating the conditions in Dagestan for the August-September incursion.

THE MARCH 1998 CRISIS

Magomedov managed to avoid the first hurdle to the consolidation of his power over the SC in 1996 with the Constitutional Court's waiver. The extra two years of executive power did nothing to reduce his ambitions. The central problem was that consociational requirements mandated that he allow his executive authority to rotate in 1998. This inconvenient problem led Magomedov to instigate a constitutional crisis that opened the floodgates of ethnic and religious tensions in the republic.

The aftermath of Magomedov's gamble threatened to undermine the very basis of the 1994 grand consensus, effectively ending the mechanism through which Dagestan's ethno-national antagonisms were managed, provoking a poorly-planned ethnic coup attempt. Additionally, the corruption and relative weakness of the system, supported by Dagestan's official Islamic authorities, led three local 'Wahhabi' villages to directly challenge the sovereignty of the central government. Taken into context with the Dagestani émigrés in

⁴⁵⁹ Lanskoj, "Chechnya's Internal Fragmentation," p. 193.

Chechnya who formed links with various *bandformirovaniya* field commanders, these events contained all these evidence necessary for those looking to confirm the statements of the Dagestani exiles regarding the revolutionary potential of the republic.

Magemodov set the future events in motion on March 1998 when he appealed to the People's Assembly to repeal the rotation and term-limit principles (Article 93) of the Dagestani Constitution.⁴⁶⁰ Curiously, the SC, representing the elites of Dagestan's respective ethnic groups, also supported the maneuver; but there were irregularities all around. 70 of the 111 Deputies in the Assembly who voted in favor of the constitutional change "were—and in fact at the moment still are—people whose jobs, material prosperity and career perspectives were entirely dependent upon the executive branch."⁴⁶¹

The new constitutional arrangement "set off a chain of events."⁴⁶² Makachkala was rocked by mass protest. It was during this time that the Khachiliev Affair transpired.

Amidst public outcry in the capital, mainly by ethnic Laks, Nadirshakh and Magomed Khachiliev stormed the buildings of SC and Assembly with approximately 200 armed men.⁴⁶³ One student of Dagestani politics analyzed that "deep down the problem was rooted in the question of power and influence between the Darghins of the one hand and the Avars and the Laks on the other."⁴⁶⁴

Due to their symbiotic relationship, the Avar-dominated DUMD originally supported the government. By August 1998 the situation had changed; both the DUMD and the Avar National

⁴⁶⁰ Lanskoj, "Daghestan and Chechnya," p. 183.

⁴⁶¹ Oversloot and Van Den Burg, p. 318

⁴⁶² Lanskoj, "Daghestan and Chechnya," p. 175.

⁴⁶³ Ibid, p. 175 and Ware & Kisriev, "The Islamic Factor in Dagestan," p. 243. A former U.S counterterrorism official alleges that the Khachiliev brothers received "unsolicited" support from Dagestani 'Wahhabis'. See Paul Murphy, *The Wolves of Islam: Russia and the Faces of Chechen Terror*, (Washington D.C.: Potomac books, 2004), p. 91-92.

⁴⁶⁴ Blandy, "Dagestan: The Gathering Storm," p. 22.

Front called for Magomedov's resignation.⁴⁶⁵ More than just opening the Pandora's Box of ethnic competition, Magomedov's unique capacity to avoid constitutional obligations convinced three villages in the Buynaksk region that it would be necessary to take governance into their own hands.

The declaration of a "sharia zone" by the villages of Karamakhi, Chabanmakhi, and Kadar challenged both the territorial integrity and political sovereignty of the Dagestani state.⁴⁶⁶ In the ensuing republic-wide chaos local insurgents stormed the local police station, only to later engage in a firefight with the entire police force (150 officers) of the Buynaksky region, the later of which was forced to leave in "total defeat."⁴⁶⁷ In effect, the local 'Wahhabis' had taken advantage of the Makhachkala riots to carve out a "little Chechnya" on Dagestani territory. In this manner, Magomedov's political victory exacted a terrible cost. By July 1998, 1000 men armed with automatic rifles in Karamakhi were demanding the resignation of the entire Dagestani government, advocating unification with the *de facto* independent Chechen republic, and calling for the evacuation of all Federal forces from the republic.⁴⁶⁸

Magomedov's government addressed the more immediate of the two problems first and chose to concentrate of the instability in the capital of Makhachkala. The greatest source of instability surrounded the assassination of Dagestan's Chief *Mufti* Saidmagomed Nadir Abubakarov, whose car exploded while leaving the vicinity of a Makhachkala's Central Mosque.⁴⁶⁹ Many observers blamed the 'Wahhabis' but Gadji Mahachev, the leader of the Avar

⁴⁶⁵ Lanskoj, "Daghestan and Chechnya," p. 175.

⁴⁶⁶ C W Blandy, "Dagestan: The Storm Part 2 – The Federal Assault on the 'Kadar Complex,'" CSRC P32 (June 2000), p. 20, Gammer, "Walking the Tightrope Between Nationalism(s) and Islam(s): The Case of Daghestan," p. 138, and Lanskoj, "Daghestan and Chechnya," p. 175.

⁴⁶⁷ Ware and Kisriev, "The Islamic Factor in Dagestan," p. 243.

⁴⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 243.

⁴⁶⁹ Gammer, "Walking the Tightrope Between Nationalism(s) and Islam(s): The Case of Daghestan," p. 138 and Ware & Kisriev, "The Islamic Factor in Dagestan," p. 242

national movement and deputy in the People's Assembly, blamed the Dargins.⁴⁷⁰ Thus, the threat of civil war took precedence over formulating a response to the Kadar Zone's declaration of self-rule, leading to the political compromise that followed.⁴⁷¹ This decision led them to extend special rights to the "Kadar Zone."⁴⁷²

Mounting instability in the republic forced the hand of the Federal Centre. The Kremlin dispatched MVD RF Minister Sergei Stepashin. The stated official explanation of his visit was to coordinate the investigation of Abubakarov's assassination.⁴⁷³ The Federal Centre, much like Magomedov, saw the pressing need to resolve the threat of civil war in the republic. The Federal Centre could not ignore the precedent being set by the Kadar Zone; but again, the Centre agreed with Magomedov's reasoning and Stepashin negotiated a political compromise in September 1998. In so doing, "Moscow had intervened in favor of the Wahhabis, and in effect set the precedent of establishing an autonomous zone within Daghestan."⁴⁷⁴ According to the terms of the 'protocol of agreement'⁴⁷⁵:

[The Kadar Zone] agreed to allow the police into the villages, but refused to permit the re-establishment of the police station in Karamakhi. They also retained the right to organize armed patrols to keep law and order in the villages, while the disarming of the population was agreed to in principle but postponed indefinitely.⁴⁷⁶

These events have shown that Magomedov consolidated his hold over the SC Chairmanship, effectively ending the grand bargain that was struck in 1994 and provoking the second constitutional crisis in two year. Rejecting the existing consociational political order, Magomedov created a *de facto* Presidential system in a country that had twice rejected the idea

⁴⁷⁰ Ware and Kisriev, "The Islamic Factor in Dagestan," p. 244.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid., p. 245.

⁴⁷² Lanskoj, "Daghestan and Chechnya," p. 175.

⁴⁷³ Gammer, "Walking the Tightrope Between Nationalism(s) and Islam(s): The Case of Daghestan," p. 138.

⁴⁷⁴ Lanskoj, "Daghestan and Chechnya," p. 176.

⁴⁷⁵ Ware and Kisriev, "The Islamic Factor in Dagestan," p. 245-246.

⁴⁷⁶ Gammer, "Walking the Tightrope Between Nationalism(s) and Islam(s): The Case of Daghestan," p. 139.

overwhelmingly. Additionally, Magomedov's consolidation of power frustrated the ambitions of would-be elites among Dagestan's other ethno-national groups, especially the Avars and the Laks, threatening the Lebanonization of the Dagestani republic. Moreover, the struggle to control the Dagestani state—perceived by many moderate 'Wahhabis' as inherently corrupt—led to the carving out of an autonomous "sharia zone" along Dagestan's common border with Chechnya. This turn of events created an aura of legitimacy around Dagestan's exiled Salafists in Chechnya, many of whom who had networked with Chechen *bandformirovaniya* field commanders. What's more, one of these field commanders (Khattab) was married to a Dagestani woman living in Dagestan's now-autonomous Kadar Zone. It was this complex web of internal developments in Dagestan, combined with the inability of Maskhadov's Chechen state to curtail the independent activities of *bandformirovaniya* field commanders, which opened the opportunity for the August-September 1999 incursion into Dagestani territory.

CHECHEN DEVELOPMENTS

The cohabitation of Chechen field commanders and Dagestani émigrés created a dangerous situation. The 1998 Crises destabilized Dagestani society and culminated in a cross-border incursion into Dagestan from Chechnya by a combined group of Dagestanis, Chechen radicals, and foreign fighters loyal to the Chechen cause—the result of which would doom any dream of Chechen independence and force Maskhadov to either join the radicals or risk being hunted by both the federal authorities and the Chechen radicals.

Initially, Maskhadov tried to co-opt the radical revolutionaries; later he tried to coerce them. Unlike Dudayev who surrounded himself with loyal members of his extended family, Maskhadov staffed his regime with those who possessed similar ideological persuasions; that is

to say, his government was made of revolutionary moderates, not members of his *teip*.⁴⁷⁷ As Maskhadov became aware of the growing power of the new radicals, he attempted to cloak himself in the façade of radicalism in hopes of gaining support. Thus, President Maskhadov starting walking down the slippery slope that led to his eventual death in 2005. First, Maskhadov began to adopt the rhetoric and look of the new radicals, occasionally blurting out anti-Semitic diatribes and allowing his beard to grow longer.⁴⁷⁸ Second, he invited Basayev into his government, giving him the position of prime minister in February 1998. Third, Maskhadov disbanded the parliament, instituted Shari'a law, and replaced the constitutional government with an Islamic-style *Shura*.⁴⁷⁹ Basayev subsequently left the government and growing Chechen internal instability forced Maskhadov to declare a June 1998 State of Emergency, culminating in Basayev and Raduyev's demands for Maskhadov to resign.

Together with the other KNID members, Basayev formed the *mekhkan shura* on 9 February 1999, effectively creating *dvoevlastie* in the republic for the first time since the dual sovereignty of the OKChN and the Provisional Supreme Council following the collapse of Zavgayev's regime. Moreover, the *mekhkan shura* proved Maskhadov was no longer effectively in control when MVD RF Major General Gennadi Shipgun was kidnapped on Chechen soil.⁴⁸⁰ It was a clear provocation to the Russians and a manifestation of Maskhadov's weakness—the new revolutionary radicals were testing the waters and finding them favorable.

⁴⁷⁷ Ekaterina Sokirianskaia, "Families and Clans in Ingushetia and Chechnya: A Field Report," *Central Asian Survey* Volume 24, Number 4 (December 2005), p. 464.

⁴⁷⁸ Lanskoj, "Chechnya's Internal Fragmentation," p. 192 and Derluguian, p. 5.

⁴⁷⁹ Mark Kramer, "Guerrilla Warfare, Counterinsurgency and Terrorism in the North Caucasus: The Military Dimension of the Russian-Chechen Conflict," *Europe-Asia Studies* Volume 57, Number 2 (March 2005), p. 212; Ware, "A Multitude of Evils," p. 79; Lanskoj, "Daghestan and Chechnya," p. 186; Lanskoj, "Chechnya's Internal Fragmentation," p. 201; and Giuliano, p. 213.

⁴⁸⁰ Blandy, "Moscow's Failure to Comprehend," p. 3; Ware, "A Multitude of Evils," p. 86; and Stephen J. Blank, "An Ambivalent War: Russia's War on Terrorism," in Thomas R. Mockaitis and Paul B. Rich eds. *Grand Strategy in the War Against Terrorism* (NY: Frank Cass, 2004), p.134.

The August-September 1999 invasion into Dagestan should not have been, and perhaps was not, a surprise. Khattab's 1997 raid was a brazen example of a Chechen field commander acting independent of Chechen central authority in order to interfere in the internal politics of the Dagestani republic. Additionally, Chechen law enforcement arrested at least 24 ethnic Nogai, allegedly on their way to one of Khattab's camps in May 1998.⁴⁸¹ Moreover, "in 1998 no less than 157 organizations were registered in Chechnya with the declared aim of unifying the Caucasus or parts of it."⁴⁸² The new radical revolutionaries were training and mobilizing an army.

The danger of the 'Wahhabi' émigrés was not ignored by Maskhadov. Using the power structures still loyal to him, he cracked down on them and they were allegedly responsible for the assassination attempts against him.⁴⁸³ In one such instance, a car bomb narrowly killed him. In desperation, Maskhadov asked Moscow for help in October 1998⁴⁸⁴; the help never came. Thus, the Dagestani and Chechen radicals went into Dagestan in August 1999 to spread the flames of the true Revolution. The cross-border incursion signaled the triumph of the radicals in Chechnya and the beginning of the Second Chechen War. This geographic widening of Revolution, made possible by the convergence of the two revolutions, caused the Russian government to believe that stability in the North Caucasus and the integrity of the Russian Federation could only be preserved absent a revolutionary Chechnya. This time, there would be no cease-fire.

This chapter described how Maskhadov's weak government became embattled by a powerful armed element of former resistance fighters. The conduct of the First Chechen War transitioned the primary loyalties of the fighters from Chechen national radicals to Sunni Islamic

⁴⁸¹ Lansky, "Daghestan and Chechnya," p. 183.

⁴⁸² Gammer, "The Road not Taken," p. 103.

⁴⁸³ Ibid., p. 168.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 182.

radicals. During this struggle in Chechnya, internal struggle in Dagestan resulted in the exile of Islamic radicals to Chechnya and began the process of revolutionary convergence. This alliance between the Chechen and pan-Caucasian Islamic revolutionary movements eventually led to the Second Chechen War and ultimately the synthesis of the revolutions.

11.0 THE CHILDREN OF THE REVOLUTION

Periods of great stress, of mass psychosis and intense struggle call forth marginal qualities with otherwise may have remained dormant, and bring to the top men of a peculiar neurotic mentality.

- J. L. Talmon, *Origins of Totalitarian Democracy*

The Revolution schooled the country in violence. The populace received its political education in a period of forcible permanent changes. From it the nation acquired an enduring tolerance of illegality, disputes about rules, and the practice of revolt.

-Jacques Solé, *Question of the French Revolution*

It is a central thesis of this study that the Russian Federation is currently in campaign against the children of the Chechen Revolution. In some ways, the children have sought to export the Revolution to the surrounding republics to protect it at home; in others, they sought to export the Revolution under the auspices of a pan-gorsty agenda—regional liberation through the geographic expansion of the Revolution’s reach. Unlike after the First Chechen War, Moscow was more or less able to maintain a friendly government in Chechnya after major operations concluded in the Second Chechen war. That being said, there were also limits.

While enlisting the support of Mufti and later President Akhmad Kadyrov, Basayev’s forces were able to assassinate him on 9 May 2004 when an improvised explosive device (IED) composed of two 145mm artillery shells exploded underneath his observation deck in Dynamo

Stadium in Grozny.⁴⁸⁵ The killing of the former Chechen Mufti was a major blow to both President Putin's "Chechenization" policy and to the Chechen people:

Throughout Chechnya they remembered Kadyrov on 10 May—customs permit this. People expressed commemorations: "Allah forgive him["]—and added: ["if he wishes". Earlier they wished Kadyrov would be president for life—and it came true. Chechens in general love to give advice to the Almighty.⁴⁸⁶

After his untimely death, Kadyrov's son Ramzan was elevated to the post of Chechen Prime Minister. In this manner, the former insurgent confirmed his willingness to carry on his father's politically moderate stance on Chechen political status. Despite this, the radicals still operate and have succeeded in destabilizing the entire North Caucasus.

CAUCASIAN AFTERSHOCKS

The rise of Dzhokhar's regime was like an earthquake and its aftershocks are manifesting themselves across the North Caucasus.⁴⁸⁷ Yeltsin and Putin both have warned that separatism in Chechnya would destabilize the entire North Caucasus. They were correct in this assertion, but incorrect in their analyses of the chain of causation. Separatism, ethnic conflict, and Islamic extremism are mutations of the same infection in the North Caucasus: the Chechen Revolution. "The Chechen Republic," echoes a report from the Zurich-based International Relations and Security Network, "now forms the center of a larger crisis zone."⁴⁸⁸ Anatol Lieven put forth an even more provocative simile: "It is as if Moscow had a mixture of Afghanistan and Sierra

⁴⁸⁵ Kramer, "The Perils of Counterinsurgency," p. 45 and C W Blandy, "Chechnya: Centre of Unabated Instability and Conflict," Conflict Studies Research Centre, Caucasus Series (May 2004), p. 1.

⁴⁸⁶ C W Blandy, "Chechnya: The Search for a Strong Successor," Conflict Studies Research Centre, Caucasus Series (July 2004), p. 1.

⁴⁸⁷ Blandy, "Two Federal Interventions," p. 9;

⁴⁸⁸ Perovic, p. 6.

Leone for a neighbor.”⁴⁸⁹ While most of these analyses are recent conclusions, a 1995 U.S. Army War College study prophetically states that the instability in Chechnya “is only the most recent manifestation of the *acute disorder that pervades the entire Caucasus and Transcaucasia as well.*”⁴⁹⁰

Despite these analyses, some Russians still retain a Chechen-centric focus. Former Yeltsin aide Emil Pain, while admitting the transference of the Chechen struggle to other areas of Russia, suggests that, “There are today two counter-terrorist operations [in Russia]: one is in Chechnya and the other is in the rest of Russia...However, neither campaign has been crowned with success.”⁴⁹¹ Make no mistake about it; the North Caucasus is now part of a unified theater of war. Basayev’s amazing ability to subsume Caucasian militant groups under his command finalized their process of regionalization. His demise—whether from personal incompetence or brilliant special operation by the Russian special services—leaves leadership vacancy that threatens to split the hydra of unified Caucasian militancy back into disparate and unorganized parochial struggles. That being said, it is entirely too early to be confident that no one exists to assume the helm of the Caucasian Front. Not all Russian observers suffer from tunnel vision. Dagestani Avar Ramzan Abdulatipov, Chairman of the People’s Assembly of Russian and Federation Council member, is quoted as saying:

I have been repeating for a decade: we are not in control of the situation in Chechnya which is explainable, but we claim to be in control of the situation surrounding Chechnya! In fact, the situation around Chechnya is no better than inside the republic. In some directions, including the [Dagestani] problem, the authorities are unaware of the actual situation.⁴⁹²

⁴⁸⁹ Lieven, “Nightmare in the Caucasus,” p. 145.

⁴⁹⁰ Blank and Tilford, p. 1. emphasis added.

⁴⁹¹ Emil Pain, “The Chechen War in the Context of Contemporary Russian Politics,” in Richard Sakwa ed. *Chechnya: From Past to Future* (London: Anthem Press, 2005), p. 77.

⁴⁹² C W Blandy, “Chechnya: Center of Unabated Instability & Conflict,” Conflict Studied Research Centre, Caucasus Series 04/11 (May 2004), p. 8.

Abdulatipov's analysis is a heartening and necessary admission. To pretend that the North Caucasus is just another part of Russia is a fallacy of gross proportions. "Whichever autonomous republic you are in—from Dagestan, to Karbardino-Balkaria or Adygea—the scene is the same," writes Sebastian Smith, "The map says that you are on the southern border of the Russian Federation, but this is in theory. In fact, you have left Russia long ago..."⁴⁹³ Transcaucasia, of which the North Caucasus is only a part, is the geographic crossroads of two major civilizations and contains a plethora of tribal and ethnic relationships that create a level of complexity that no other region in the world of comparable size can rival.

VIOLENCE BOTH WITH AND WITHOUT THE KREMLIN'S SUPPORT

The sheer complexity of the struggle that began with Chechnya and now manifests itself in the orgy of insurrection in the North Caucasus as a whole is astounding. A self-sustaining cycle of violence, sometimes targeted at civilians, is the only manner of existence that many in the region know to be reality. "These events," describe Vladimir Degoyev and Rustam Ibragimov, "seem to have formed a systematic process with deep-lying sources of reproduction."⁴⁹⁴ In just the Chechen republic alone, "violence long ago replaced politics as the main arbiter of disputes."⁴⁹⁵

The penchant to habitually use violence is the scarlet letter of radicalized politics, the mark of the revolution. Simon Schama's description of the French Revolution offers an insight: "From the first year it was apparent that violence was not just an unfortunate side effect from which enlightened Patriots could selectively avert their eyes. It was the Revolution's source of

⁴⁹³ Smith, p. 4.

⁴⁹⁴ Vladimir Degoyev and Rustam Ibragimov, "The North Caucasus and the Future of Russian Statehood," *Russia in Global Affairs* Volume 4, Number 1 (January-March 2006), p. 80.

⁴⁹⁵ Tom de Waal, "Chechnya: The Breaking Point," in Richard Sakwa ed. *Chechnya: From Past to Future* (London: Anthem Press, 2005), p. 190.

collective energy...it was its heart and soul.”⁴⁹⁶ It is very much the same with the Chechen Revolution. Valery Tishkov provides an interesting perspective from a Chechen named Musa: “This war brought all sorts of scum and vermin out of the mire, and it will take a huge effort to put them back in the pit. Evil lurks in all men...The Result is a fiendish maelstrom that’s hard to control.”⁴⁹⁷ What makes human disasters like Dubrovka and Beslan possible is the dedication of the extremists to what they are convinced is a holy cause. As Brinton described:

In general, only a sincere extremist in a revolution can kill men because he loves man, attain peace through violence, and free men by enslaving them. Such contrasts in action would paralyze a conventionally practical leader, but the extremist is quite undisturbed by it.⁴⁹⁸

Nor is the extra-legal use of violence limited to the *boyeviki*. Indeed, the Federal and republican forces of order can be just as dangerous—if not more dangerous—than the separatists and the Islamic radicals. Harvard University’s Mark Kramer explains that, “Russian troops have engaged in widespread torture, rape, forced disappearances, mass arrest operations, kidnapping, and summary executions.”⁴⁹⁹ On the other hand, many suspect that the wave of disappearances during Akhmad Kadyrov’s federally-sanctioned administration was the work of his “private army-turned-police” under the command of his son Ramzan.⁵⁰⁰ Additionally, the republican prisons in Tsentotoi run by Kadyrov’s forces “is still considered the bleakest place in Chechnya, even more so than the widely known wartime concentration camp Chernokozovo.”⁵⁰¹ Such is the reality of modern Chechnya.

⁴⁹⁶ Simon Schama, *Citizens* (NY: Knopf, 1989) p. 777, 858.

⁴⁹⁷ Tishkov, *Chechnya: Life in a War-Torn Society*, p. 127.

⁴⁹⁸ Brinton, p. 159-160.

⁴⁹⁹ Kramer, “The Perils of Counterinsurgency,” p. 9.

⁵⁰⁰ Derluguian, p. 3. See also Blandy, “Chechnya: Centre of Unabated Instability & Conflict,” p. 3.

⁵⁰¹ Mairbek Vachagaev, “The Chechen Resistance: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow,” The Jamestown Foundation

INSURGENT METASTASIS

The insurgent *boyeviki* groups are presently undergoing a transformation. Shamil Basayev managed to consolidate many North Caucasian groups under an umbrella, bringing the other *gorsty* into his fold. His recent death metastasized the Front; what was once unified is now threatening to become diffuse and disparate. From one point of view, it seems like a victory for the federal and pro-Moscow republican forces if Doku Umarov is unable to keep the Front stitched together or if the Russians are able to assassinate him. That said, Alexander Golts offers a cautionary note to the benefits of the Front's demise:

When the actions of the enemy are controlled from a single centre, it is always possible to infiltrate it and to learn of his plans. There is always the possibility, with help and technology and good intelligence, of learning where the enemy is concentrated in order to prepare for his blows. When the resistance is decentralized...the problems are only increased, because it is impossible to track the activity of 10 or 20 or 50 field commanders who don't take orders from anyone and who prepared their own operations based only on their own ideas.⁵⁰²

FOR NATION? FOR GOD? FOR REVENGE?

"If religion takes precedence over the secular constitutional order, the Spanish Inquisition and Islamic Fundamentalism in a strongly expressed form will appear."

- President Dzhokhar Dudayev, 12 August 1992 Interview with *Literaturnaya gazeta*

Many authors have taken the position that the hold of Islamic radicalism now overshadows—and in many ways replaces—the cause of the national idea for many insurgent groups. This increasing trend of politicized Islam supports the thesis that the second group of radicals represents the vanguard on their own revolution, independent of the OKChN *ispolkom*'s revolution in the early 1990s. The reason for this was that Dudayev's revolution rested upon the politicization of Chechen ethno-national identity. The second revolution, which began to

⁵⁰² Blandy, "Chechnya: Continued Violence," p. 3.

materialize in the inter-war period and became radicalized in the late 1990s, appealed not to parochial, exclusive national groups, but to those whose primary loyalty was transnational. Admittedly, some of the prominent Chechen leaders in the Wahhabi movement simply use Islam as a means to mobilize resistance to Russian authority. Even so, their pan-Islamic trappings and rhetoric find receptive ears and willing recruits.

One of the reasons why the so-called Wahhabi message has such a captivating appeal is the simplicity of both its message and prescriptive political program.⁵⁰³ It is perhaps an irony that a people who were never prone to such beliefs and are known for their uncommon levels of hospitality, especially directed to strangers, are now commonly referred to as terrorists and pictured as fanatical, indiscriminate killers; however, it is a characterization earned by events such as Dubrovka and Beslan. In point of fact, Islam had little to do with the First Chechen Revolution.⁵⁰⁴ Unlike Kadyrov's endorsement of Maskhadov in 1997, the Chechen Mufti refused to endorse the candidacy of Dzhokhar Dudayev.⁵⁰⁵ Specifically, it was the First Chechen War that was responsible for sowing the seeds of a generation of radical jihadis.⁵⁰⁶ As one analyst put it, the conduct of the first war aimed at restoring constitutional order in the republic "spawned new elements that were to shape the second conflict."⁵⁰⁷ Indeed, "Radical Islam in Chechnya," explains Elise Giuliano, "is a product of the war rather than a cause of it."⁵⁰⁸

⁵⁰³ Degoyev and Ibragimov, p. 92.

⁵⁰⁴ Tishkov, *Chechnya: Life in a War-Torn Society*, p. 53.

⁵⁰⁵ Galina M. Yemelianova, "Sufism and Politics in the North Caucasus," *Nationalities Papers* Volume 29, Number 4 (2001), p. 671.

⁵⁰⁶ Yemelianova, p. 679-680..

⁵⁰⁷ John Russell, "A War by Any Other Name: Chechnya, 11 September and the War Against Terrorism," in Richard Sakwa ed. *Chechnya: From Past to Future* (London: Anthem Press, 2005), p. 241.

⁵⁰⁸ Elise Giuliano, "Islamic and Political Mobilization in Russia: Chechnya and Dagestan Compared," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* Volume 11 (2005), p. 210.

Islamic fundamentalism has not eclipsed the national struggle yet. The two sometimes run parallel, sometimes interesting, and other times exist in two different planes simultaneously. Until his untimely death President Maskhadov “continued to define Chechen separatism as a nationalist rather than religious mission.”⁵⁰⁹ His assassination did not end the national focus of the separatist struggle. The current separatist leader and Ichkerian President, Doku Umarov, inherited both the political role of assassinated separatist President Saydulayev and the operational command of Basayev’s militant umbrella network: the Caucasus Front.⁵¹⁰

“President” Umarov was born in 1964 in a village called Kharsenoy, which means he is not a product of the Kazakh exile. He also served in the Borz special division, commanded by Ruslan Galayev and closely linked to Shamil Basayev.⁵¹¹ Umarov is committed to the idea of Chechen independence and views Islamic rhetoric simply as a convenient means to this end⁵¹²; these views are most likely why he supported Maskhadov’s campaign for the Chechen presidency in 1997 after he was promoted to the rank of general.⁵¹³ To this end, Peter Shearman and Matthew Sussex have written: “Russian authorities are not fighting an international war in Chechnya; rather they are struggling to prevent the Russian state from fragmenting...”⁵¹⁴ Most of the militants in the North Caucasus are Muslims; most of the militants use bombings as one of many tactics; but the majority of the causes for such violence are ethnic and tribal, not Islamic. Simply put, the American and Russian ‘wars’ on terrorism are not symmetric in their respective

⁵⁰⁹ Giuliano, p. 214.

⁵¹⁰ C W Blandy, “Chechnya: Continued Violence,” Conflict Studies Research Centre, Caucasus Series 06/54 (December 2006), p. 2.

⁵¹¹ Blandy, “Chechnya: Continued Violence,” p. 2.

⁵¹² Vachagaev, p. 3.

⁵¹³ Blandy, “Chechnya: Continued Violence,” p. 2.

⁵¹⁴ Peter Shearman and Matthew Sussex, “Globalization, ‘New Wars’, and the War in Chechnya,” Richard Sakwa ed. *Chechnya: From Past to Future* (London: Anthem Press, 2005), p. 210.

definitions of the enemy, not symmetric in their area of operations, and not symmetric in their causes.

The Kremlin is striving to maintain the territorial integrity of its borders in a region annexed by both the Tsarist and Soviet administrations. The White House is responding to attacks initiated and funded by groups operating in another hemisphere. One of the few similarities between them is their likely duration, what the Pentagon calls the ‘Long War’. The Russian government’s war is exponentially longer. Moshe Gammer has pointed out that Chechen resistance fighters often refer to the struggle as the “Three Hundred Years War”.

Aside from the most obvious causes of the widespread use of violence is one of the oldest of Chechen tradition—the *vendetta*. Anna Politkovskaya calls this eye-for-an-eye approach, directed at both the federal, republican forces, and separatist forces as a “non-political ‘third force.’”⁵¹⁵ Indeed, Simon Roughneen notes a poll conducted in 2003 that claimed revenge (inspired from brutal federal tactics) accounted for 69 percent of Chechen suicide attacks, while a mere 8 percent suggested that they were religiously inspired.⁵¹⁶ While years ago, Chechens were reluctant to insult or harm another for fear of *vendetta*, violence in Chechnya is now a part of the political system.

⁵¹⁵ Quoted in Derluguian, p. 3.

⁵¹⁶ Simon Roughneen, “Blowback – Russia Needs to Rethink North Caucasus: Recommendations to the Russian Government,” The Oxford Council on Good Governance, Security Section (October 2004), p. 2.

12.0 EPILOGUE: CHECHEN THERIMDOR AND CONTINUED INSTABILITY IN THE NORTH CAUCASUS

As time goes on...pressures are relaxed: the special tribunals give place to more regular ones, the revolutionary police are absorbed into the regular police—which are not necessarily the equivalent of the London bobbies; they may be agents of the NKVD—and the block, guillotine or firing squad are reserved for the more dramatic criminals. It is not, of course, that that political life shortly assumes the idyllic stability some of our own contemporaries like to describe as the Rule of Law...Along with amnesty to former moderates, there goes on a reverse process of repression and persecution of unrepentant revolutionists of all sorts.

- Crane Brinton, *The Anatomy of Revolution*

In this study, I have presented the description of two Revolutions. The first Revolution led by Major General Dzhokhar Dudayev replaced the communist old regime of Doku Zavgayev. The Second revolution represented the advent of a Sunni Islamic revolution with pan-Caucasian appeal.

Dudayev and his followers were the radical members of the OKChN and would settle for nothing less than the creation of an independent Chechen nation-state, provoking the First Chechen War. After the war, the revolutionary moderates, embodied by Aslan Maskhadov, rose to power and were quickly challenged by a new breed of revolutionary acolytes whose gospel was that of Puritanical Islam. Additionally, these new radicals believed that true Revolution espoused this gospel as a universal doctrine, thus requiring them to spread the Revolution to other areas in the North Caucasus. Thus, unlike the First Chechen War, the Second Chechen War somewhat validates Stephen Walt's thesis. What explains this?

Chechnya was a part of Russian territory, and because Chechnya was one of many Muslim republics in a small geographic region, Yeltsin's government went to war with

revolutionary Chechnya not because they feared Dzhokhar's regime would entice other's to secede, but because the example of Chechen independence might cause other republics to rethink their status and possibly demand more autonomy from Moscow. Paradoxically, the cause of the First Chechen War was the *reverse* of Walt's thesis. The parochial nature of Chechen nationalism inherently precluded the universality of the OKChN revolutionary ideology. Thus, it would have been insulting for Dudayev's Chechnya to proselytize Chechen nationalism to the Avars or the Kumyks. If anything, such actions would have been met with complete failure. What was dangerous about Chechen independence was not the fear of other North Caucasian republics succumbing to the Chechen Revolution, but to their own revolutions based upon ethnic ascription. They would not be bandwagoning with Chechnya; rather, they would be creating their own destinies outside the political framework of the Russian Federation. Moscow's fears of regional destabilization resulting from the Chechen Revolution became a self-fulfilling prophecy. Ironically, it was not the radical Chechen nationalists who created this instability, but the children of the Chechen Revolution, the new Islamic radicals who are a product of the First Chechen War that was designed to prevent such a threat.

Taking into consideration that both the nationalist radicals and new Islamic radicals were removed from power by two Russian interventions, the question remains: is it possible that the Chechen Revolution has entered the Thermidor stage? From all accounts, the answer to this question seems to be yes. As of February 2007, former nationalist radical Ramzan Kadyrov is now the President of a pro-Moscow Chechen government. Kadyrov has also managed to successfully reduce the pool of revolutionaries by the combination of punitive actions and amnesties. In fact, many of the amnestied *boyeviki* are now part of the approximately 14,000-

man Chechen police force.⁵¹⁷ Moreover, the Chechen people are growing painfully tired of being caught between the radicals and the federal forces.⁵¹⁸ In this environment, Chechen radicals still operate, but they are being systematically hunted down and exterminated by both Ramzan and the Russians. At long last, the Chechen Revolution seems to be entering Thermidor. That said, contrary to Marxist theory, history seldom travels along a linear path. Any number of events can radically alter the current devolution of the Chechen Revolution. For the sake of the Chechen people, let us hope Marx was right this one time. Even if this proves to be true, there is a much darker fate in store for the North Caucasus as a whole. The aftershocks of the Chechen Revolution will echo here for years to come. Quite possibly, the *true* revolution is still to come...

Close examination reveals that Chechnya experienced two simultaneously-occurring revolutions, one national and one religious. In both cases, the revolutions became dominated by the radical wings of the revolutionary elite. The national radicals were the first to dominate the political balance of power. For a variety of reasons, the national radicals were unable to consolidate and effectively govern the revolutionary state.

Like many others, General Dzhokhar Dudayev's Chechen Revolution was the result of the unraveling of the Soviet superpower. His was a revolution that drew its collective power from generation of Chechens who were forcibly driven from their homes to Kazakhstan adopting the same methods Nazi Germany used on European Jews. This shared misery solidified into a maelstrom of ultra-nationalist fervor, embodied in the marshal image of Chechnya's first general. The First Chechen War was the crisis which propelled transformed the primary loyalties of many

⁵¹⁷ Kramer, "Military Dimensions of the Russian-Chechen Conflict," p. 214; Kramer, "The Perils of Counterinsurgency," p. 10; Perovic, p. 24; and Vachagaev, p. 18.

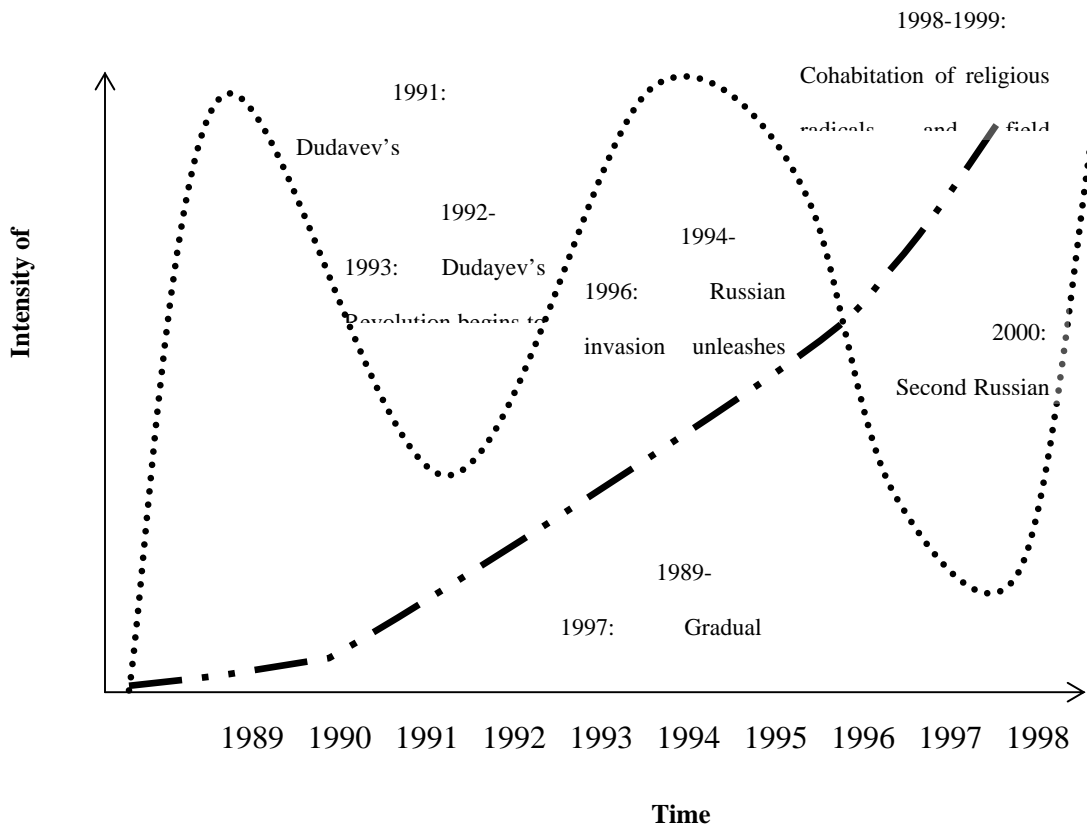
⁵¹⁸ Blandy, "Chechnya: Continued Violence," p. 9.

nationalists in the mid 1990s. That is not to say that those affected no longer held national sentiments. Rather, the brutal conduct of the war intensified their religious beliefs. This cause-and-effect relationship is unsurprising and not in the least unique. If it was, “there are no atheists in foxholes,” would not be a common phrase.

At the height of national fever, following the Khasavyurt Peace Accords in 1996 and the election of President Aslan Maskhadov, the national radical’s inability to provide order added to the growing influence of the religious radicals. Eventually, Chechnya experienced a second period of dual sovereignty, this time between competing revolutionary groups. The Russian military drive south of the Terek River in January 2000 resulted in a renewal national loyalty. That being said, the Second Chechen War empowered both the radical nationalist and the religious radicals. This is because the war resulted in a strategic alliance between the two groups of radical revolutionaries. In sense, this is similar to the experience of revolutionary China during the Japanese invasion when ideologically-incompatible adversaries temporarily put their differences aside in order to expel foreign invasion. Had the Chechens emerged victorious in the second war, it is likely that the alliance would have broken down and resulted in renewed confrontation. Instead, the Russian initial victory and subsequent harsh counterinsurgency policies prolonged the alliance between the Chechen radical-nationals and the pan-Caucasian religious radicals, allowing the formation of Basayev’s Caucasian Front.

Let us remember that Brinton’s theoretical framework explains that the moderates are the first to rule when the revolutionary party seizes power. In the Chechen case, the moderates were those of the exile generation who did *not* push for self-determination, or at least were unwilling to seek independence as early as their radical counterparts. Rather, the moderates of the OKChN (the national moderates) were fairly satisfied with political reality following the First Congress—

the time of dual sovereignty in the Checheno-Ingush ASSR. The brazen, militant wing of the OKChN (the national radicals) dramatically expanded the scope of the Revolution, directly challenging the sovereignty of the Russian state. Instead of the moderates failing to live up to their promises, it was Dzhokhar's national-radical government that was the fiasco. Indeed, in the period of dual sovereignty, the moderates of the OKChN *ispolkom* monopolized the bully pulpit of the Chechen national movement, gradually influencing policy decisions adopted by Doku Zavgayev's functioning state infrastructure. Following this line of argument, it was the radicals who failed to bring utopia to the Chechen people, not the moderates. The failure of the national radicals to retain the loyalty of the revolutionary core allowed them to be co-opted by the religious radicals, the vanguard of a separate, pan-Caucasian revolution. The First Chechen War was the crisis which propelled transformed the primary loyalties of many nationalists in the mid 1990s. That is not to say that those affected no longer held national sentiments. The following diagram represents this argument:



Thus, while Brinton distinguishes between intra-revolutionary moderates and radicals, the theory does not anticipate that a society can find itself pinned between the confluence of two unique revolutions. Shamil Basayev's domination of this movement was a testament of his remarkable ability to transcend his ultra-nationalist image and assimilate into the Caucasian-wide radical religious movement. This revolutionary convergence lasted until his death in the summer of 2006, resulting into the bifurcation of the revolutionaries. Though each group continues to co-opt each other for strategic reasons, true unity no longer exists; instead, these relationships reflect the mutual acceptance that an alliance similar to the First and Second Chechen wars offers the most utility. Paradoxically, Moscow's successful decapitation strategy against Basayev

bifurcated the Front, reducing its ability to conduct large-scale combined operations; however, this insurgent metastasis correspondingly reduced Moscow's ability to penetrate and combat the insurgent groups.

Though Russian President Vladimir Putin was successful killing Basayev and atomizing the revolutionary alliance, the Russian state still faces a resilient insurgency from the Islamic revolutionary elite and a lingering insurgency from those Chechen radical nationals who still carry on the struggle for national independence. The two revolutions still attempt to co-opt each other for tactical purposes; however their incompatible strategic visions preclude their reunification, undermined further by Umarov's deep and narrowly-defined Chechen nationalism. Whatever his convictions, the Chechen resistance has been relegated to a mere annoyance for the Kremlin. The Islamic Revolution still unfolds. More importantly, it is this revolution that is far more dangerous for Russian than the Chechen national cause due to broader appeal, current demographic trends, and lack of legal social mobility in the region. The future of political stability in the North Caucasus is a future of instability.

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