

# DAGESTAN: THE GATHERING STORM

by Charles Blandy

*“He who rules Dagestan, rules the North Caucasus as well”<sup>1</sup>*

## **The Deteriorating Situation in North East Caucasus**

The situation throughout the whole of the North Caucasus has continued to deteriorate, not only where Ingushetia and North Osetia are concerned<sup>2</sup>, but also with a particular impact on Dagestan, where the political, social and economic situation, marked by an ever-increasing spiral of organised crime and terrorism, is only marginally better than that found in Chechnya.

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<sup>1</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 191 (1516) 10 October 1997 page 3 “*Dagestan nuzhdayetsya v pomoshchi tsentra - Abdulatipov vyrazil nedovol'stvo Makhachkaloy*” by Vadim Il'in.

<sup>2</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 68 (1639) 17 April 1998 page 1 “*Na Severnom Kavkaze gibnut Rossiyskiye Generaly - Ocherednoye obostreniye situatsii v regione nevygodno ni Moskve, ni Groznomu, ni Nazrani, ni Vladikavkazu*” by Nataliya Pulina and Aleksandr Shaburkin. This article refers to the ambush of Russian officers in North Osetia. “Yesterday [16 April 1998] in the area of the North Osetian populated point of Khurikau, where mainly Ingush are living, a column of three vehicles of Federal troops going from Beslan in the direction of Kabardino-Balkar was fired on. As a result, the chief of the directorate of the main operational directorate (nachal'nik upravleniya glavnogo operativnovo upravleniya (GOU)) of the General Staff of the Russian Federation Armed Forces, Major General Viktor Prokopenko, Colonel of the main directorate of educational work Sergey Grechin and a divisional deputy commander of educational work and one soldier were killed...” In an article by Aleksandr Shvarev on page 2 of the same newspaper “... this tragedy happened in 58 Army's zone of responsibility. Professionally prepared two sided accurate fire from automatic weapons on the vehicles - two UAZ and one GAZ-66 resulted in the death of General Prokopenko, severely wounded General Mukhin - in all according to preliminary information, five officers killed, two generals, two colonels and one sergeant”.

As General Kulikov noted in an address in Pyatigorsk of September 1997<sup>3</sup>, there has been an upsurge in lawlessness along the Checheno-Dagestan border. Since then, more flamboyant, criminal terrorist acts have been perpetrated, such as the raid, supposedly emanating from Chechnya on the Russian military unit stationed at Buynaksk in central Dagestan on the night of 21/22 December 1997 and the Khachilayev Affair on 20/21 May 1998, which resulted in the occupation, looting and vandalism of the government buildings in Makhachkala. Even though the Kremlin has taken some form of action against recalcitrant elements in Chechnya, albeit limited to a policy of containment by mounting a de facto blockade and check on cross-border traffic and movement with the aim of reducing criminal and terrorist acts, including the disruption and damage to communication, power and pipeline links, to date no fundamental improvement to the security and cross border situation has been achieved. A negative policy confined solely to containment and blockade is no substitute for a positive economic policy, secured, welcomed and supported by the peoples of the North Caucasus.

Given the evident deterioration in political stability, erosion of law and order and in particular, the lack of security for “local inhabitants” in the northeast Caucasus, the purpose of this paper is to examine the situation in Dagestan with a view to identifying possible future trends in the republic and their consequences for Dagestan, the North Caucasus and Transcaucasus, having first noted: the recent changes to the Constitution of Dagestan, together with the the possible impact of these changes on the internal political situation in the republic; the unsettling ambivalence of Chechnya’s unresolved political status, including the unhindered incursion of organised terrorism from Chechnya into Dagestan; the divisive and unsettling spread of Wahhabism; and finally the accumulation of negative consequences stemming from the absence of a positive policy from the Kremlin for the North Caucasus and Dagestan in particular.

In examining the deteriorating situation in Dagestan, the fact cannot be ignored that on a wider scale the dangers of collision and miscalculation in the Caucasus have increased as the region looks set to undergo considerable turmoil over the next 5-15 years, for working at mutually inter-related levels are six factors: declining Russian power; ambiguity over the status of the Caspian Sea; traditional regional power rivalries with the potential of proxy manipulation by minor players on account of the potential to attract major power interest, either through their hydrocarbon and mineral deposits or due to the location and suitability of their territory for the transportation of oil; extension of Western influence through the presence of North American power, investment and global corporate experience together with the return of European commercial interest, acumen and technical expertise; and relations between Russia and the Islamic world, noting the increasing influence of the latter and the possible future constraints of environmental and ecological issues in and around the Caspian Basin.

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<sup>3</sup> *Shchit i Mech* No 101 (513) 5 September 1997 page 2 “*Mirolubiye - ne priznak slabosti*”.

## BACKGROUND

### **Box 1 - Dagestan - General Details about Area and Population**

**Formed:** 20 January 1921.

**Capital:** Makhachkala (320,000 people (1989))<sup>4</sup>.

**Area of Republic:** 50,300 sq km.

**Population:** 1,768,000 (1989) but now in region of 2,100,000 (1998)<sup>5</sup>.

**Constitutional protection is given to 14 titular nationalities:** See Table 1 below.

#### **Administrative-Territorial Units**<sup>6</sup>

**Rayony:** 39; **Major towns:** 8 (Makhachkala, Buynaksk, Derbent, Izberbash, Kaspiysk, Kizilyurt, Kizlyar and Khasavyurt); **Town districts:** 3; **Urban townships:** 15; **Rural settlements:** 609.

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<sup>4</sup> USSR Administrativno-Territorial'noye Deleniye Soyuznik Respublik 1987, izdatel'stvo *Izvestiya*, Moskva 1987, page 32.

<sup>5</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 176 (1501) 19 September 1997 page 3 "Problemy Dagestana pazreshimi - V respublike, odnako, obostrilas' bor'ba za vlast'" by Il'ya Maksakov.

<sup>6</sup> USSR Administrativno-Territorial'noye Deleniye Soyuznik Respublik 1987.

**Traditional Islam in the North East Caucasus<sup>7</sup>**

“More than 85% of believers are Sunni-Muslim, in which the Avars, the Chechens and a portion of the representatives of the other nationalities all adhere to the Shafii school and the remainder to the Hanafi school. Many of them traditionally hold to Sufism of the Nakshbandskiyskiy Tarik and Qadiriyskiy Tarik. More recently the Shaziliyskiy Tarik is also attaining a strong influence, in which not a few followers occupy a leading position in the Spiritual Directorate of the Muslims of Dagestan”.

**Table 1 - Population and Distribution of Posts in Government, Organs and Enterprises<sup>8</sup>**

Titular Nation	Pop % Share	Pop. Size	Dagestan Govt. (23 people)	Govt members, Heads of Cttees & Other Organs. (34 people)	Heads of State Enterprises, Regional and Federal Depts. (50 people)
Avar	30%	630,000	5	9	12
Darghin	17%	357,000	4	9	13
Kumyk	13%	273,000	3	4	12
Lezghin	12%	252,000	3	3	6
Lak	5%	105,000	2	3	5
Russian	7.5%	157,500	2	2	Nil
Agul			1	1	Nil
Nogai	2%	42,000	1	1	Nil
Tabasaran	5%	105,000	1	1	Nil
Chechen	3.5%	73,500	1	1	Nil
<i>Agul, Rutuls, Tats, Tsakhurs</i>	3.0% between them	63,000 between them	Nil	Nil	2 Tats

<sup>7</sup> Maksakov, op cit.

<sup>8</sup> Maksakov op cit; *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 72 (1643) 23 April 1998 page 5 “*Dagestan stal politicheskim poligonom Rossii Unikal’noye sbalansirovaniye zakondatei’stvo respubliki ne mozhet’ ternet’ chastichnykh izmeneniy v intereskh vlasti*” by Magomed-Zarid Varisov - Director of the Information-Analytical Department of the Peoples Assembly of Dagestan.





**Map 2 - Outline of Dagestan showing Borders and Population Centres**<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *Atlas Zheleznykh Dorog USSR - Passazhirskiye Soobshcheniye* Glavnoye Upravleniye Geodezii i Kartografii pri Sovetye Ministrov USSR Moskva 1988 page 86/87.

## Dagestan's Political System

Under the Constitution of the Republic of Dagestan which was adopted on 26 July 1994, there are three bodies, the State Council (Gossovet), the Constitutional Assembly (Konstitutsionnoye sobraniye) and the Peoples Assembly (Narodnoye sobraniye). An outline of the system of government is shown below.

### **Box 2 - Dagestan's System of Government**<sup>10</sup>

#### **The State Council**

The State Council is the supreme constitutional authority in the political structure of the republic. The State Council consists of 14 people made up of one representative from each of the 14 titular ethnic groups. The 14 representatives, chairmen or leaders of the titular ethnic groups are elected to the State Council by the Constitutional Assembly for a four year term.<sup>11</sup> Heading the State Council is the Chairman, an appointment filled by one of the 14 ethnic group representatives, which can be occupied by that representative for no more than four years. At the end of the four year term the chairmanship has to be relinquished in favour of another ethnic group. The Chairman of the State Council is in effect the President of the Republic, in other words the "*formal head of state is a 'collegiate president'*"<sup>12</sup> and is responsible for exercising supervision over external relations and the activities of the republic's security structures. A Security Council was introduced in August 1996 as a result of the instabilities emanating from Chechnya to "combat organised crime and promote national security"<sup>13</sup>. The Prime Minister is a member of the State Council, but cannot belong to the same ethnic group as the chairman, and is responsible for economic and social issues.

#### **The Constitutional Assembly**

The Constitutional Assembly consists of all the Peoples Assembly deputies plus a number of members elected by the representatives of local self-governing organs.

#### **The Peoples Assembly**

The Peoples Assembly, consisting of 121 deputies elected in March 1995 with a term of 4 years on a majority system from mandated neighbourhoods, performs the functions of a representative and legislative body, and also oversees budget allocations. The

<sup>10</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 176 (1501) 19 September 1997 page 3 "*Problemy Dagestana pazpeshimi - v respublike, odnako, obostrilas' bor'ba za vlast'*" by Il'ya Maksakov.

<sup>11</sup> This was originally two years. See below.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> RIIA Russia and Eurasia Programme, FSS Briefing No 13 May 1997 *Dagestan* page 1 by Anna Matveeva.

electoral system is designed to encourage voting across ethnic lines and to ensure that the balance between ethnic groups in the Assembly mirrors that in the population. 65 constituencies are classified as multi-ethnic and each ethnic group living in the constituency is accorded one candidate. The constituencies regarded as mono-ethnic have an ordinary open-candidate system.

### **Controversial Changes to the Constitution**

A point which needs to be acknowledged and emphasised is the fact that the drafters of the Constitution and parliamentary system went to extraordinary lengths to maintain ethnic balance, the preservation of ethnic equality and the guarantee of inter-ethnic peace.

*“Taking account of all the sides’ interests and with the aim of preserving peace and stability both in the region and the republic at that time and in the future, a triune position was envisaged in the Constitution of Dagestan”<sup>14</sup>.*

The Constitution of Dagestan does not conform completely to the Constitution of the Russian Federation. Some deviations are shown below.

#### **Box 3 - Differences between Dagestan’s and Russian Federation’s Constitution<sup>15</sup>**

1. Article 72.2 guarantees proportional representation of all the peoples of the republic in the Peoples Assembly - the Parliament of the republic.
2. Articles 7, 87 and 88 are where the institution of a “Collegiate President” is introduced.
3. Article 93.2 avoids the danger of a concentration of power in the hands of a representative of one people or clan; a person of the same nationality cannot be elected head of the republic for two terms in succession.

With these safeguards in place it was believed that:

*“Dagestan until recent times was considered a unique state system, where the inter-ethnic balance was observed through proportional representation of the number of nations in the different branches of the government. At the time that many of the republics of the North Caucasus acquired their own presidents, who concentrated in their hands considerable levers of power, in Dagestan to do this was practically impossible”<sup>16</sup>.*

<sup>14</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 72 (1643) 23 April 1998 page 5.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Literaturnaya Gazeta* No 35 (5667) 27 August 1997 page 1 “Dagestan mozhet tozhe ‘rvanut’” by Vyacheslav Nikolayev.

The requirement for such a concept was reinforced by two fundamental points, doubtless experienced personally by the drafters of the Dagestani Constitution. First, the North Caucasus, as well as the Transcaucasus, is confused and still suffering from the adoption by Soviet Communist power of flawed administrative structures and a nationalities' policy in the furtherance of 'divide and rule'. Secondly, the drafters were obviously fully aware of the potential pitfalls arising from the complexities, contradictions and interconnections found in the diversity of peoples, nations and language in the North Caucasus as a whole, for:

*"Where hotbeds of around 30 potential inter-ethnic conflicts smoulder, any infringement of the complicated inter-ethnic balance in any point of this region can lead to a 'domino effect'."*<sup>17</sup>

Over recent years it has become apparent that there are a number of shortcomings in the Constitution, areas which need further definition, clarification and reinforcement in the light of:

*"Successful 'cavalier' swoops on the Constitution and the more established traditions through adjustment of the Basic Law of the republic to the interests of a single official or their groups . . ."*<sup>18</sup>

Areas of particular concern for a democracy in the first place must be the separation of the executive, the legislature and the judiciary. No less important are definitive restrictions on the interests of parliamentary deputies and ministers, the combination of government posts, or a government post with a post outside parliament or government, such as a directorship of an open-stock company, the method of selection and appointment to posts in government. Box 4 below points out some weaknesses in the present Constitution and system of government which are currently open to abuses.

**Box 4 - Weaknesses and Violations of Constitution of Dagestan**<sup>19</sup>

1. The supremacy of higher executive power and its independence from the legislature and judiciary in regard to Article 6 of the Constitution on the subjects of separateness and independence of all three branches of power in the government of the republic.
2. The absence in the Basic Law and other laws of the republic of restrictions on the combination of deputies' powers with obligations and responsibilities in the different structures of executive power, organs of local self-government . . . where both the judicial position and the material well-being of these official functions depend directly on the higher executive power.
3. The absence of deputies' groups formed along party lines.
4. The need to abolish Article 75 of the Constitution concerning deputies' inviolability from prosecution.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 72 (1643) 23 April 1998 page 5.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

5. The absence of a procedure for the amendment of the Constitution, other than the fact that “the laws and order of adoption of amendments to the Constitution of republics is a joint process of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Dagestan and must not go outside the limits of norms (Article 76.2 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation) defined by the Federal Law “Concerning the order of adoption and the coming into effect of amendments to the Constitution of the Russian Federation” signed by the President of the Russian Federation Boris Yel'tsin on 4 March 1998.

### **Attempts to Retain Power by Present Chairman of State Council**

Over the past few months the question of a conventional form of presidency has again become a subject of intense debate throughout the political strata of Dagestani public life. Even before the Constitution of Dagestan was promulgated on 26 July 1994, referenda were held in 1992 and 1993 on the attempt to establish the post of President of Dagestan. The population of the republic on both these occasions declined the introduction of such a post, having made their preferences clear in wishing to retain the existing collegiate power structures and a parliamentary system of government. But this refusal did not prevent the present leadership of the republic changing the Constitution in 1996 to obtain an extension of its term of executive power for a further two years, thus making the term in office a four year term (1994-1998). This meant that the Chairman of the State Council would therefore enjoy a further two year term of executive power. At the present time, the Chairman of the State Council is the 68 year-old Darghin<sup>20</sup>, Magomed Ali Magomedov.

#### **Box 5 - Pen Picture of Career of Magomed Ali Magomedov<sup>21</sup>**

<sup>20</sup> The Darghin nationality is not completely consolidated. The Darghins proper are divided into several groups possessing different dialects, living in the rayony of Sergo-Kala, Dakhadayev (centre in Urkarakh), Levashi and Akusha. Isolated Darghin villages are scattered in: the Kumyk area of Buynaksk in the villages of Kadar, Karamakh and Jankurbi; the Avar area of Gunib in the village of Megab; the Agul area in the villages of Amukh and Chirakh. Traditional and contemporary occupations of the Darghin are animal husbandry, sheep breeding, small scale farming and gold workers. As with the Avars, the village community is the basis of Darghin society, an active social body covering one or two villages, numbering between 200 and 1000 members, administered by a jema'at and council of elders, divided into tukhums (large extended families of 60 to 80 members) and jins (smaller extended families). (Extracted from Shirin Akiner's “*Islamic Peoples of the Soviet Union*” 2nd Edition 1986 KPI London.)

<sup>21</sup> Maksakov, op cit.

1. In the middle of the 1980s Magomedov headed the government of the then autonomous republic. In 1987 he switched to being Chairman of the Praesidium of the republic's Supreme Soviet. The reforms of Mikhail Gorbachev and the strengthening of the role of the Soviet assisted him to consolidate his position in the power structures of Dagestan. In the opinion of a considerable number of the local politicians it seemed that he had a talent for securing his own armchair, like many leaders of the former USSR.
2. In 1990 Magomedov was elected Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the republic; since then the reins of government have not left his hands. He regularised the Avar-Kumyk confrontation, representing a "neutral nation".
3. One way or another he tied all political and financial elitist groupings, including semi-criminal ones, to himself, having handed out to their leaders profitable and influential positions.

It is important to emphasise this last point, because apart from his retaining political power, it raises other aspects relating to questions of organised crime, law and order, and security of the individual, some of the major causes of instability in the republic. The present immunity of Deputies of the Peoples Assembly from prosecution aids and abets corruption and improper behaviour by those at the highest levels in the structures of executive power in Makhachkala and elsewhere in Dagestan.

Magomedov has been in power for many years. In the opinion of a series of local observers, recently he has acquired a much more authoritative outline. It has again become obvious that he is actively pursuing further changes to the Constitution in order to stay in power for a longer period. There is clear evidence of another attempt to introduce the post of President, where it was envisaged that the appointment would be through an election by the Constitutional Assembly or by way of a national ballot involving the whole republic.

*"In Dagestan once again the beginning of another constitutional crisis dawns. Not so long ago in Makhachkala the possibility of a change to the Basic Law of the republic with the aim of introducing a presidency was actively considered. (Let us remember that in the working of the Constitution the "Collegiate President" - the State Council - is the highest organ of executive power). The majority of the deputies and leaders of national movements of the Peoples Assembly spoke out against such a prospect. It was hardly expected that next day a similar amendment to the Constitution would be sent to the republic's parliament".<sup>22</sup>*

The new amendment was connected with the forthcoming 26 June 1998 State Council elections and Magomedov's intention to stay in power. Having analysed the situation, the circle of advisers around the present Dagestani leader had come to the conclusion that the introduction of a presidency would be detrimental for Magomedov on two counts. The first count stemmed from likely public reaction to a referendum on the question of introducing the post of president. The second count was that should the idea of a referendum secure approval, then the actual elections for the presidency would be unfavourable for Magomedov: *"the example of Akhsarbek Galazov turned out*

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<sup>22</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 43 (1614) 13 March 1998 page 5. "Bez vybora - Konstitutsionnyy krizis v Daghestane ugrozhayet vsey federativnoy sisteme" by Il'ya Maksakov.

*to be instructive for the present Chairman of the State Council*<sup>23</sup>.

The 68 year old Darghin Magomed Ali Magomedov, who had already governed the republic up to the summer of 1994 in the capacity of Chairman of the Supreme Soviet and since then as Chairman of the State Council, decided not to risk pursuing the course of introducing a head of state universally elected by the whole electorate of the republic, but to leave it to the Peoples Assembly for, as already mentioned above, the election of the State Council is limited to the Constitutional Assembly consisting of the 121 Parliamentary Deputies of the Peoples Assembly and representatives from local self-governing organs, all people within the sphere of Magomedov's influence and power.

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<sup>23</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 43 (1614) 13 March 1998 page 5. Akhsarbek Galazov was President of North Osetia until the January 1998 elections.

There was another problem facing Magomedov under Article 93 of the Constitution, namely that a “*representative of the same nationality cannot be elected Chairman of the State Council for two terms in succession*”<sup>24</sup>. Unlike a series of other policies which can be changed by the Constitutional Assembly or by a referendum, this position could only be amended in the Peoples Assembly by obtaining 81 out of 121 votes, approximately two thirds of the votes cast. Nevertheless, the “*Peoples Assembly took the unprecedented step [on 19 March 1998] of effecting a change to Article 93 of the Constitution*”<sup>25</sup> enabling Magomedov to run for election for a second term as Chairman of the State Council, should he decide to follow this course. It is interesting that the motion for introducing the amendment was passed by a “*minimal majority of two votes and the executive power is trying to silence this fact*”<sup>26</sup>, in other words 83 deputies out of 121 voted for the amendment.

In an interview in April 1998, Magomedov stated that the Deputies of the Peoples Assembly when introducing the amendment to the Constitution came to the conclusion that Article 19 of the Constitution of the Republic of Dagestan guaranteed to all citizens equality before the Law and Justice, irrespective of nationality, and furthermore that “*Article 93 in its old wording contradicted this basic position*”<sup>27</sup>. In the new wording of Article 93, reference to nationality was omitted. A comparison of the two different wordings of Article 93 is shown in Box 6 below.

**Box 6 - Wording of Article 93**

1994: A representative of the same nationality cannot be elected Chairman of the State Council for two terms in succession.

1998: The same person cannot be elected to the post of Chairman of the State Council for more than two terms in succession.

As far as the circle of supporters surrounding Magomedov were concerned, the amendment removed the contradiction and brought the Constitution of the Dagestan Republic into conformity with the norms of International Law with a four year term of office. The amendment now allows all potential candidates irrespective of their ethnic origins to claim the right to stand for election as the Chairman of the State Council, whether or not they have already completed one term (four years) as Chairman. As yet, Magomedov has not decided whether to stand for the Chairmanship of the State Council. Observers in Makhachkala consider the chances of Magomedov retaining power are extremely high, on account of the fact that his circle has “*strong influence on deputies at republic and local levels*”<sup>28</sup> and furthermore:

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 48 (1619) of 20 March 1998 page 2 “*Izmeneniya konstitutsiya Dagestana - Sdelan pervyy shag po prodleniye polnomochiy predsedatelya Gossoveta*” by Il’ya Maksakov.

<sup>26</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 72 (1643) 23 April 1998 page 5.

<sup>27</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 65 (1636) 14 April 1998 page 5 “*Severnyy Kavkaz vsled oshchushchal podderzhku Moskvyy - Predsdatel’ Gossoveta Dagestana Magomedali Magomedov stoit na pozitsiyakh federalizma*” by Il’ya Maksakov.

<sup>28</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 48 (1619) 20 March 1998 page 2.

*“To the man who is more or less experienced in the political kitchen of Dagestan, it is clear that the present head of the republic Magomed Ali Magomedov has a sufficiently good chance of being elected to this appointment for a further four years at the forthcoming Constitutional Assembly on 26 June 1998, where victory is guaranteed by a simple majority from the overall number of members, ie 122 votes out of 242”<sup>29</sup>.*

The number of deputies who without any shadow of doubt, would vote for Magomedov in the Peoples Assembly under any circumstances, in the opinion of several political observers varies between 30 and 75. Bearing in mind the level of support from the Peoples Assembly for the amendment to the Constitution of 83 out of 121, the number of votes for Magomedov is more likely to be nearer 75 than 30.

Out of the seats from the Constitutional Assembly, Magomedov would need to ‘reserve’ the support of some 50 or more places. Elections to the Constitutional Assembly are due to take place on 7 June 1998 from an electorate of representatives of local self-government organisations, rayon and urban assemblies. The election by the Constitutional Assembly for the State Council of Dagestan took place on 25 June 1998 and resulted in the re-election of Magomed Ali Magomedov (Dargin) as Chairman of the State Council with Khizri Shikhsaidov (Kumyk) as Prime Minister, together with the appointment of the other 12 members who form the Council.

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<sup>29</sup> Varisov, op cit.

The methods of attracting and holding supporters are indeed instructive. Even yesterday's former fierce opponents have long been put to the test in Dagestan. Besides the usual threats and blackmail, the tactics of being nominated for an appointment are promises of benefits and wealth. Thus, in the preliminaries of developing the present campaign for an amendment to the Constitution, Gadzhi Makhachev, a Deputy of the Peoples Assembly, the leader of the Avar "Peoples Front imeni Imam Shamil" was nominated for the appointment of Deputy Prime Minister of Dagestan and a candidate for a Deputy of the State Duma of the Russian Federation. He had previously spoken out actively against the introduction in Dagestan of the post of President<sup>30</sup>. In a similar manner, leaders of other national movements will doubtless

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<sup>30</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 225 (1550) 28 November 1997 page 3 "V Dagestane nevozmozhno prezidentskoye pravleniye - Tak schitayet prezident "Dargnefti" Gadzhi Makhachev" by Igor Rotar'. Makhachev replied to the following questions: **Question 1:** Many people are afraid that the transportation of oil across Khasavyurt rayon of Dagestan, where Chechen-Akhin live cheek by jowl, could lead to a sudden destabilisation of the situation in the whole republic. **Answer 1:** No destabilisation of the situation will take place, if certain people from Moscow do not interfere with us. **Question 2:** Who do you have in mind? **Answer 2:** For example, Abdulatipov. In Russia there is the appointment of Deputy Prime Minister for nationality questions, but not nationality policy. By way of peoples diplomacy we are trying to come to an agreement with the Chechens. However, sudden announcements by individual politicians and conducive to the destabilisation of the situation in the republic. I am also very concerned about the statement of Ramazan Abdulatipov on the necessity to introduce of presidential rule in Dagestan. You see the people of Dagehstan have expressed twice in a referendum that such a form of government is unacceptable for our multi-national republic. We have the optimum model created for us: at the head of Dagestan is a collegiate organ - the State Council.

Under the title of "Dossier NG" the paper wrote: Gadzhi Makhachev is one of the leaders of the Avar Peoples Movement. Occupation in political activity began with the start of *perestroyka*. Makhachev leads the largest informal organisation in the republic, the Avar Social-Political Movement "The Peoples Front imeni Imam Shamil". According to the evaluation of experts it is able in time of necessity to field several hundred well armed fighters. Main activity of

be pulled into the camp of Magomedov, which has a majority of deputies in the Peoples Assembly.

However, the opposition in Dagestan has already spoken out strongly against this change to the Constitution, as witnessed recently by massive acts of protest. The night before the session of the Peoples Assembly a meeting took place in which over 1,000 people participated, protesting against the introduction of the amendment to the Basic Law. They thought that:

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Makhachev is head of the republic's "Dagneft" [Dagestan oil] concern, of which he is the Director-General.

*“...re carving the Constitution in the interests of power-loving leaders carried the threat of the consolidation of an authoritarian regime in the republic and was dangerous for the integrity and independence of Dagestan”*<sup>31</sup>.

In their opinion, the amendments to the Constitution have created opportunities for usurping power by a person or by one nationality which would destroy the national-state foundations of Dagestan which had been formed over centuries. Lacking the restraining cement of Communist authority, power and dogma together with the absence of any form of Dagestani identity, *“as no single people living in Dagestan can claim to be the indigenous nation or herald of Dagestani statehood by itself”*<sup>32</sup>, there is the grave danger, that *“...ethnic identity has become predominant, with potentially divisive consequences”*<sup>33</sup>.

Whilst the exact wording of the new Article 93 is not known, the concept does have some implications for a multi-national society. Two questions immediately spring to mind.

**Box 7 - Questions Raised by Amendment to Article 93 to the Constitution**

**Query 1:** After a person has completed two terms in the appointment of Chairman of the State Council, can another representative from the same ethnic group be elected to that appointment?

**Query 2:** At present, the Prime Minister who is also an elected member of the State Council cannot belong to the same nationality or ethnic group as the Chairman. Under the new amendment, how does this work, because there are no safeguards in spite of Article 9?

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<sup>31</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 48 (1619) 20 March 1998 page 2.

<sup>32</sup> Blandy *“The Significance of Pervomayskoye”* P19 April 1996 CSRC, page 65. This paper also contains detailed information on the Dagestani ethnic groupings.

<sup>33</sup> Anna Matveeva, FSS Briefing No 13 May 1997 *“Dagestan”* page 2.

It is important to mention the three significant political parties in the “*embryonic party system*”<sup>34</sup> which are “*relatively influential in the republic: Dagestanskaya Narodnaya Partiya Reforma [Dagestani Peoples Party of Reform (DPPR)] led by the Deputy Prime Minister Said Amirov; Soyuz Musul'man Rossii [Union of Muslims of Russia (UMR)] led by a Deputy of the Russian Federation State Duma, Nadirshakh Khachilayev ...*”<sup>35</sup> and the Communist Party of Dagestan (CPD) which “*as elsewhere in the Russian Federation, has organisational unity and is active at the grass roots level, but it does not have influential leaders with any credible chance of being voted into senior office*”<sup>36</sup>.

Opposition movements are forced to seek alliance with each other, although often their interests are diametrically opposed. This in turn facilitates manipulation by the people in power, through ‘divide and rule’, coercion, favours and benefits. On the other hand it will be remembered that in the debate on the most recent changes to the Constitution “*the majority of the deputies and leaders of national movements of the Peoples Assembly spoke out against such a prospect*”<sup>37</sup>.

### Political Groupings

On the issue of Dagestan’s state system, two blocs have formed in the Peoples Assembly. One of these two groups comprises the supporters of a federal Dagestan: the Turkic Kumyk *Tenglik* movement, the Turkic Nogai *Birlik* movement and the Lezghin *Sadval* movement. The main concern of the *Tenglik* movement is centred around the reduction of the proportion of Kumyks in the plains areas. This reduced proportion is a direct consequence of the resettlement programme of mountain peoples, such as the Avars and Darghins, into the plains areas<sup>38</sup>. Their main objective is to create an autonomous Kumyk state in the future. The Kumyks and the Nogai have the support of the Turkic world through a large Nogai diaspora in Turkey. Turkey is paying increasing attention to Dagestan, with the construction of a tourist complex on the Caspian and a large mosque in Makhachkala, together with other media enterprises. Although the Lezghins are themselves wary of the penetration of Turkish influence into Dagestan, from their own interests they favour a federal state, in which there will be an autonomous Lezghin Republic.

The second bloc in the Peoples Assembly consists of those parties which are in favour of continuing with a unitary Dagestan. The main peoples involved include the Avars, “Avar Peoples Front imeni Imam Shamil” and the *Dzhamaat* movement; the Darghin *Tsadesh* and the Lak *Tsu Barz* movements. Avars and Darghins are the most numerous in Dagestan’s present administrative structures. The leaders of these

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 176 (1501) 19 September 1997 page 3 “*Problemy Dagestana pazpeshimi - v respublike, odnakao, obostrilas’ bor’ba za vlast’*” by Il’ya Maksakov.

<sup>36</sup> Matveeva op cit.

<sup>37</sup> Op cit *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 43 (1614) 13 March 1998 page 5.

<sup>38</sup> *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye* No 46 (73) 19-25 December 1997 page 2 “*Nasledniki Shamil’ya - Ekspansiya voinstvennoy natsionalizma ugrozhayet miru i stabil’nosti na Kavkaze*” by Yevgeniy Yunusov. “This summer (1997) the Kumyks, the Nogai and the Lezghins held a conference of indigenous peoples who appear to be in the minority on their own land. The conference demanded the creation of national autonomies on the territory of Dagestan. However, this demand was not acceptable to the the republic authorities”.

movements believe that the collapse of Dagestan would follow any division of the Dagestan Republic into smaller autonomous entities, giving rise to bloody inter-ethnic strife and facilitating penetrative influence from the south.

The disagreements between the supporters and opponents of federalism are becoming increasingly marked, intensified by recent changes and amendments to the Constitution threatening to alter the balance of ethnic power in the republic. Table 1 above shows the allocation of posts by titular nationality. Table 2 below consolidates the listing of prominent ethnic movements.

**Table 2 - Prominent Ethnic Movements in Dagestan**

People	Movement's Title	Leader
Avars	Avarskoye Narodnoye Dvizheniye (AND) Front imeni Imam Shamil'	Gadzhi Makhachev Parliamentary Deputy, Dir Gen Dagneft
	Soyuz Avarskykh Dzhamatov (SAD)	Zagalav Abdulbekov
Darghin	Tsadesh	Said Amirov
Kumyk	Kumykskoye Natsional'noye Dvizheniye "Tenglik"	Salav Aliyev
	Kumyskiy Natsional'nyy Sovet (KNS)	Basir Alzhanbekov (recently murdered)
Lezghin	Lezghinskoye Narodnoye Dvizheniye "Sadval"	Ruslan Ashuraliyev Parliamentary Deputy
	Lezghinskiy Natsional'nyy Sovet (LNS)	Gen Mugudin Kakhrimanov
Lak	Lakskoye Narodnoye Dvizheniye "Kazi-Kumukh"	Magomed Khachilayev Parliamentary Deputy, Chair Fishing Industry Cttee
	"Tsu Barz"	
Nogai	"Birlik"	
Chechen- Akhin	National Front of the Chechen-Akhin Committee for Restoration of Aukhovskiy	Alemur Khamzatov (Rep) Movladi Soipov (Rep)

### **The Khachilayev Affair**

This affair, which burst into the public domain on 20/21 May 1998 only some two months after the amendment to Article 93 of the Constitution was agreed by the Peoples Assembly, demonstrated all too clearly not only the fragility of the outward facade of law and order in Dagestan but also the presence of premeditated organised violence in the internal political situation and inter-ethnic tension in Dagestan. There are a number of strands to this incident, which led to the occupation of the main government building in Makhachkala on 21 May 1998.

#### **Box 8 - The Extraordinary Events of 20/21 May 1998 in Makhachkala<sup>39</sup>**

<sup>39</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 90 (1661) 22 May 1998 page 1 "Gosudarstvennyy perevorot v Dagestane mozhet stat' realnostyu - deystviya vlastyey i storonikov deputata Gosdumy Hadirshakha Khachilayeva i eyo brat' ochen' pokhozhi na zaraneye splanirovanniyu provokatsiyu" by Il'ya Maksakov.

1. The tragic events in Makhachkala began from an incident on Wednesday night (20 May) when the militsiya in the centre of the town stopped a vehicle with Chechen number plates for a check. The passengers opened fire from automatics and pistols on the militiamen.

2. The result, according to different witnesses, was one militiaman killed and one wounded (other reports give two killed and five wounded). Exactly who was in the car has not been established, but the attackers concealed themselves in the private house of the Chairman of the UMR<sup>40</sup>, Russian Federation Gosduma Deputy Nadirshakh Khachilayev<sup>41</sup>. The militsiya surrounded the house and a pitched gun battle ensued.

The brother of Nadirshakh Khachilayev, Magomed Khachilayev was “unable to stay out of the events”<sup>42</sup>, went to the central square in Makhachkala, where, according to different estimates, in front of the Government building “from around several hundreds up to 3,000 people”<sup>43</sup> had assembled. As a result of cumulative agitation, the armed followers of Khachilayev stormed, occupied, looted and vandalised the buildings of the State Council, the Government and the Peoples Assembly on 21 May 1998, the brothers Kachilayev having lost control of the situation. As Box 9 below illustrates, part of this affair was a matter of local government and regulation, but deep down the problem was rooted in the question of power and influence between the Darghins on the one hand and the Avars and Laks on the other.

#### **Box 9 - The Darghin Mayor and the Avar Unlicensed Retailers of**

<sup>40</sup> The leaders of each nationality have their own armed groups of fighters. Whilst the leaders of each nationality are members of the political establishment of the republic, with a seat in the State Council, they in fact wield tremendous de facto power on account of their clan status, administering justice with the ability to overturn action by the official law enforcement agencies.

<sup>41</sup> The Brothers Khachilayev are Laks and therefore people of great influence in Dagestan: the elder, Magomed Khachilayev, is the leader of the Laks, head of the Lak Peoples “Kazi-Kumyk” movement. The younger, Nadirshakh, is the chairman of the Union of Muslims of Russia and also a Deputy of the Russian Federation State Duma.

<sup>42</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 90 (1661) 22 May 1998 page 1.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

**Makhachkala**<sup>44</sup>

The new mayor of Makhachkala, Said Amirov, is a Darghin and leader of the Darghins' most influential group [*Tsadesh*]. He had been waging a battle against unlicensed street traders in the city. They resisted his attempts to move over 2,000 kiosks from the city centre to the periphery. The retailers held rallies, blocked traffic and violently resisted policemen who tried to enforce the city policy.

The unlicensed retailers also happen to belong to the Avar ethnic group, which allies itself with the Laks, for both suffered equally in the confrontation with the Akhin Chechens. Of course [being a Lak] Magomed took the retailers' side in the conflict with the city.

Following an extraordinary meeting of supporters of the UMR, the UMR committee demanded a session of the Peoples Assembly to carry out careful research into what had occurred. The committee stated that what had taken place was a result of the anti-nationality and anti-constitutional policy of the government headed by Magomed Ali Magomedov.

### **Summary of Consequences of Constitutional Change**

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<sup>44</sup> An account from *Novoye Delo*, undated, *Patterns of Regional Development - Dagestan's Ethnic Elites* by Nabi Abdullayev.

All these political battles would not be so dangerous if Dagestan were not a multi-national republic, situated in such a turbulent region as the North Caucasus. The fact of the matter is that at this very moment when one representative of the Darghin ethnic group, second only in numerical size to the Avar ethnic group, is striving to remain in power as Chairman of the State Council, another representative of the Darghin people, Said Amirov, has been elected mayor of Makhachkala, the capital of Dagestan. Whilst Amirov recently stated that he was categorically against any change to the existing legislation<sup>45</sup>, there is serious talk about the “Darghinisation” of Dagestan. A serious situation could arise as a result of a potentially dangerous amalgamation of all opposition forces against the clutch of politicians in power. These forces could consist of unpredictable extremist elements. Groupings of the Chechen-Akhin with the Kumyks and Avars in the north of the republic could join corresponding forces in neighbouring Ichkeria; in the south of the republic Lezghins and Dagestani Azerbaijanis could unite with their kinsmen in the north of Azerbaijan. An indicator of just how serious the scale of intensity of political rivalry and inter-ethnic divisiveness could become in Dagestan in 1999 can be gauged from the previous election in March 1995 for the 121 seats in the peoples Assembly, when there were several fatalities. Thus, the recent removal of the safeguard in Article 93 of the Constitution following earlier ‘amendments’ could well be the harbinger of increasing inter-ethnic discord in a republic, where “*organised criminal groups are trying to take the economy by the throat*”<sup>46</sup>, “*60% of the population live on the poverty line, 30% are without work, [and] the average wage is 2.7 times below that in the whole country*”<sup>47</sup>. It would not only bring divisive consequences to the social fabric of Dagestan but could be instrumental in dismantling the republic by accelerating the creation of separate autonomies. The position of the Lezghins straddling Dagestan's vulnerable southern border between Russia and Azerbaijan will also cause concern.

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<sup>45</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 48 (1619) 20 March 1998 page 2.

<sup>46</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 124 (1449) 9 July 1997 page 3 “*My nuzhdayemsya v pomoshchi tsentra - Predsedatel' pravitel'stva Dagestana Abdurazak Mirzabekov - za ravnyy podkhod ko vsem sub'yektam federatsii*” by Boris Kaufman.

<sup>47</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 141 (1466) 1 August 1997 page 2 “*Dagestan prosit pomoshchi - natsional'naya politika po-prezhnemu upirayetsya v den'g*” by Denis Babich.

## MAJOR ETHNIC AND TERRITORIAL PROBLEMS

### Background to Seed-Beds of Inter-Ethnic Strife

It cannot but be remarked that the situation in the republic is being exacerbated not only by the problems prevalent throughout the whole of the North Caucasus region but also by:

*“the internal situation which is linked with the notable intensification of a struggle for power with moves made by the higher leadership of Dagestan in initiating and introducing changes to the constitutional structure of the republic”<sup>48</sup>.*

There are already a number of inter-ethnic tensions, disputes and minor conflicts which continue to remain as active ‘volcanoes’ in the republic, where their origins are mostly derived from competition over the availability of meagre resources, but a number have their roots in the Stalinist deportations of February 1944 during the Great Patriotic War. Disputes of significance in the recent past have been between the Chechen-Akhin and the Avar<sup>49</sup>, the Chechen-Akhin and the Kumyks<sup>50</sup>, the Chechen-Akhin, the Laks and the Kumyks<sup>51</sup>, the question of a Nogai homeland<sup>52</sup> and the vexed question of the Lezghins, divided by an international frontier. This has the potential not only to escalate externally but also to have an impetus of its own in the internal politics of Dagestan and Azerbaijan.

Magomed Gusayev, Minister for Nationality Affairs and External Relations, has stated that: *“In general the uniqueness of Dagestan lies in the fact that for the people who populate it the fate of their neighbouring region is no less important than that of their own*

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<sup>48</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 176 (1501) 19 September 1997 page 3 *“Problemy Dagestana raspeshimi - v respublike, odnako, obostrilas’ bor’ba za vlast”* by Il’ya Maksakov.

<sup>49</sup> There has been a degree of friction along the Checheno-Dagestan border between the Chechen-Akhin and the Avar. These disputes have centred around the actual boundaries and achieved some prominence in September 1991. The disputes have their roots in the 1944 deportation of the Chechens, which also included the Chechen-Akhin. See below.

<sup>50</sup> A series of territorial disputes between the Chechen-Akhin and the Kumyks occurred in April 1992 in Novalakskiy rayon, which is situated in another Checheno-Dagestan border area. The Chechen again placed barriers on Kumyk ethnic territory.

<sup>51</sup> The problem between the Chechen-Akhin and the Laks has its roots in the return of the Chechen-Akhin to their settlements in the border areas of Dagestan from deportation and exile in Kazakhstan in 1957. On their return, the Chechens found the Laks occupying their villages, the Laks having been forcibly removed from their high mountain auls in 1944 and transplanted to former Chechen territory. The situation extended to include the Kumyks, as the Dagestani government in efforts to alleviate the Chechen-Lak problem started to provide new areas for the establishment of a Lak housing estate close to Makhachkala, in the traditional Kumyk area of Kara-Tuybe.

<sup>52</sup> Nogai territory in 1957 was re-allocated as follows: Karanogaitskiy, Kizlyarskiy and Krainovskiy rayony to Dagestan ASSR; Kayasulinskiy and Achikulakskiy rayony to Stavropol’ Kray; Shelkovskiy rayon to Checheno-Ingushetia ASSR.

homeland".<sup>53</sup> Box 10 provides some further insights by Gusayev into the external concerns of the peoples of Dagestan and their connections with the rest of the Caucasus region.

#### **Box 10 - Attitudes of Dagestani Peoples**

1. In the north there are Nogai and Russians. For example the Russians of Kizlyar are no less concerned about the state of affairs in Stavropol' Kray than in Dagestan. The position in Chechnya and Stavropol' worries the Nogai no less. Furthermore the Dagestani Chechens worry about the problems of Chechnya, and the war showed this. Due to these specifics it is impossible to isolate Dagestan from the outside world. This why our ministry is called "The Ministry for Nationality Affairs and External Relations". External factors influence the state of inter-nationality relations no less than internal ones.

2. We are not tired of repeating, but they do not wish to understand us, that if for example in Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Osetia, Chechnya, people who decide their fate, are the people who have given the republic a name, then 'Dagestani' is not a nationality but the name of a locality, "a country of mountains".

### **Problems concerning the Lezghins**

#### ***A Nation divided between Two Sovereign States***

After the fall of the Soviet Union and the establishment of inter-state borders between the Russian Federation (Republic of Dagestan) and the Republic of Azerbaijan along the line of the Samur River, the Lezghin people abruptly found themselves divided and cut off from one another. In time this could lead to the loss for Dagestan of the Rutul', Akhty and Dokusparin rayony.

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<sup>53</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 82 (1653) 12 May 1998 page 5 "Dagestan ostanetsya yedinoy nedelimoy respublikoy v sostave RF - ministr po delam natsional'nostyey i vneshnim svyazyam Magomedsalikh Gusayev uveren, chto v Makhachkale nikogda ne ustanovitsya antirossiyskaya vlast'" by Il'ya Maksakov.

There are some “470,000 Lezghins on the territory of Dagestan and in Azerbaijan there are some 1,200,000 Lezghins”<sup>54</sup>. Even between two groups of a close knit people who have lived in close proximity over centuries, the comparatively recent establishment of a “Lezghino-Lezghin” border-fence, equipped with such offensive characteristics as barbed wire entanglements, manned by the inquisitive and rummaging activities of border troops and customs officials, together with the slow and insensitive procedures of bureaucracy, tends to interfere with the maintenance of personal contact between people of the same nationality. It leads to the loss of family links and domestic cohesion. The imposition of a new border regime, in particular, has interfered with the arrangements for the cross-border passage of coffins containing the remains of Lezghins for burial in their traditional cemetery sites north or south of the Samur River. It is not by accident that the road bridge over the River Samur is known by local people as the “Golden Bridge”<sup>55</sup>.

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<sup>54</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 100 (1425) 3 June 1997 page 3 “*Lezginskiy narod ischet zashchity - aktivisti “Sadval” podvergayutsya repressiyami so storony Azerbajjanskykh vlastey*” by Viktoriya Grankina. It is appreciated that these figures are somewhat high, unless other ethnic groups under the influence of Lezghins have been included. Including the Tabasaran - 5% of population - 105,000; Aguls, Rutuls, Tats and Tsakhurs - 3% of the population - 63,000 people would give an additional 168,000 people which could be considered to be under the overall Lezghin umbrella.

<sup>55</sup> *NG - Stsenarii* No 5 (27) 13 May 1998 page 14 “*Vzorvetsya li yug Rossii letom 1998 goda*” by Mukhammed-Arif Sadyki. The Samur bridge acquired this name on account of the ‘fees’ that are required to ‘please’ border guards and customs in order to cross over the ‘international’ river border.

*“The questions connected with the south of Dagestan are a completely new problem. Earlier, Lezghins, Avars, Laks, Tsakhurs, Rutuls knew nothing about the existence of borders, when in order to bury a close relative it was necessary to obtain a decision in Moscow. (You see, according to our customs it is necessary to bury a person immediately that very same day)”<sup>56</sup>.*

### **Low Standard of Living and Unemployment**

Interference with family life is but one side of the story for those living in northern Azerbaijan with close relatives in southern Dagestan. The luckless Lezghins on both sides of the border also have to cope with a low standard of living, unemployment and political repression.

Box 11 below gives an insight into the dire circumstances of life experienced by people living in the northern border areas of Azerbaijan.

#### **Box 11 - The Joyless Life of the Azerbaijan Depths<sup>57</sup>**

The outward beauty of the capital is deceptive. The wide gap between the levels of life in the province and the capital are characteristic of a Third World country... Azerbaijan is no exception here. The absence of electric power, gas and the tyranny of state officials turns life in the province into hell. Having visited Sheki, Zakataly and Belokany, the ‘NG’ reviewer witnessed this.

Sheki, famed for its silk in the past, is now situated on the edge of extinction. Before the demise of the Soviet Union in this town more than 19% of all the silk of the USSR was produced and silk fabrics won international prizes. Sheki was also famed for being a town of laughter and fun. And now for the Shekhintsi there is no laughter or fun. For the townspeople only memories remain of all that is good in life.

<sup>56</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 82 (1653) 12 May 1998 page 5 “*Dagestan ostanetsya yedinoy nedelimoy respublikoy v sostave RF - Ministr po delam natsional’nostyey i vneshnim svyazyam Magomedsalikh Gusayev uveren, chto v Makhachkale nikogda ne ustanovitsya antirossiyskaya vlast*” by Il’ya Maksakov. In passing it is difficult not to make an observation about the fact that during the Soviet Communist period the central role of Moscow dominated every single aspect of life, even to the extent of the transfer of a corpse from one union republic to another. A further observation is that the administrative communication system or that of the Communist party with Moscow must have worked extremely well.

<sup>57</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 36 (1607) 3 March 1998 page 5 “*Bezradostnaya zhizn’ Azerbajanskoy glubinki - v provintsii promyshlenoye proizvodstvo polnost’yu ostanavleno*” by Mekhman Gafarly.

Today the main pain is unemployment. Earlier, the Sheki silk combine guaranteed work for more than 6,000 townsfolk. Production has already stopped in around 10 factories and mills connected with the combine. The largest tobacco factory in Azerbaijan has stopped work. The local electric sub-station has also stopped. Out of 50 industrial enterprises in the rayon not one is working at full bore. It is the fifth year in Sheki rayon that more than 140,000 people have no natural gas; electric power is restricted to 40-50 minutes per day.

It is remarkable that in the rayon centre of Sheki, with a population of 80,000, there is not one working traffic light. In order to cross the main street of the town, it is necessary to wait until the flow of traffic stops. But luckily for the townsfolk over the last few years the number of vehicles has fallen 10 fold. A litre of fuel costs 1800 manat, with an average salary of 40-50 thousand manat per month (1 US\$ is the equivalent of 3915 manat).

In the villages it is worse. In many collective farms on the orders of the rayon chief, Nazir Akhmedov, two years ago goats, sheep and cattle were sold for next to nothing; despite their potential for profit. They were handed over to local people with the aim of creating an agricultural economy. However, due to the absence of farm equipment, Sheki farmers and families have abandoned the land, as a result of which a large part of the arable land is deserted.

Another problem facing the villagers is the absence of any communication means. Without electricity the rayon radio station is silent and television sets do not function.

Newspapers are beyond the financial means of the majority of people. The Sheki printing house is not working. The local semi-official organ is the daily paper "Sheki" and only one number has been issued this year. When the next is due to be published, the editorial board do not even care to forecast. This year's one and only edition was even printed outside the bounds of the rayon in the town of Mingechaur. This is the reason for people *"in many of the villages not even knowing what is happening in Baku, let alone in their own rayon centre"*<sup>58</sup>.

As a result of the beggarly existence of the population, medical establishments have started to charge and now for many of the population have become inaccessible. In hospitals, as in the town itself, there is no heating and therefore *"the sick, besides paying for the service of the doctors, must also bring firewood to his house for heating the stove: for one week "of medicine" - one cubic metre of firewood"*<sup>59</sup>.

*"Economic relations formed over centuries have been destroyed. In truth, the border rayony of Dagestan built their own economies based on the demands of the Azerbaijan market and vice versa"*<sup>60</sup>.

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 82 (1653) 12 May 1998 page 5.

Gusayev also stated that the authorities were trying to correct the errors of the past, in that a proposal had now been signed, in which a mission, for the Russian Federation Interior Ministry and the Ministry of Collaboration with CIS Countries, would study jointly with Azerbaijan the possibility of creating a free economic zone. However, it was difficult to state when it was going to be possible to solve the problem of the Lezghins, on account of the fact that there was an absence of normal relations between Russia and Azerbaijan at the present time. He also hoped that some day they would come to a more universal form of relations, including dual citizenship, but at the moment that was not possible.

### ***Political Repression of Azerbaijani Lezghins***

About a year ago, in June 1997, the Chairman of the Union of Muslims of Southern Dagestan, Shamil' Murtuzaliyev, stated that:

*"The leadership of Azerbaijan is attempting to ensure the security of the northern rayony of the republic, where the close-knit Lezghin population lives, which demands the raising of questions related to disputed territories, carrying out acts of massed repression not only against the Lezghins but moreover against the Talysh, Tats, Kurds and Avar peoples, the numbers of which amount to 70% of the overall population of Azerbaijan"*<sup>61</sup>.

More recently, in hearings of the Council of the Russian State Duma on Nationalities Affairs, Doctor of Historical Science Gadzhiyev noted that at the present time:

*"In the Azerbaijan Republic, there is in essence an undeclared war against the Lezghins in connection with which there is a massive exodus of refugees from Azerbaijan which is taking on a catastrophic nature. Besides, the reasons for their departure from their ethnic homeland are the low level of life, unemployment and political repression"*<sup>62</sup>.

The Azerbaijan authorities have forbidden any activity of the Lezghin national movement *Sadval* on the territory of the republic, having accused its members of terrorism. At the present time 125 activists of *Sadval* have been arrested and put into prison, where they, according to Gadzhiyev, are subjected to refined methods of torture. Significant numbers of *Sadval* have received long terms of imprisonment, with several awaiting the death penalty. The republic's special forces allegedly carry out covert searches for activists of national movements on the territory of the Russian Federation. According to Gadzhiyev, Russia is violating international law, in particular the Convention on Refugees, by continuing the practice of apprehending and transferring Lezghin activists to the care of Azerbaijani special forces. Despite wide-ranging persecution and repression from the side of the Azerbaijan authorities, the Lezghins have demanded from the leadership of the Azerbaijan Republic and the Russian Federation an inquiry and examination through the 'parliamentary path' on the transfer of 'disputed' territory in which the Lezghins live in a tight knit community, to the Russian Federation. In looking back to the early years of the 19th Century, Mukhammed-Arif Sadyki recently stated that Russia had a historical responsibility for the integrity of the Lezghin territories. He referred to the Peace Treaties of Gulistan (1813) and Turkestan (1828) which were instrumental in agreeing and establishing an Imperial Russian presence, where:

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<sup>61</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 100 (1425) 3 June 1997 page 3.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

*"All the lands lying north of River Araks including the present day territory of northern Azerbaijan and southern Dagestan, populated by Lezghins, were transferred to the Russian Empire, I emphasise, the Russian Empire and no other state. According to the logic of things, Russia itself must bear the historical responsibility for the preservation of the unity and integrity of Lezghin territory"<sup>63</sup>.*

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<sup>63</sup> NG - Stsenarii No 5 (27) 13 May 1998 page 14.

For the normalisation of the situation *Sadval* has produced a whole series of demands and proposals to be addressed by Makhachkala and Moscow. First of all is the urgent start to political negotiations with Azerbaijan. A few years ago the then Deputy Premier of the Russian Federation Sergei Shakhrai and a representative of the Dagestan government, Abdurazak Mirzabekov, signed documents in Baku in which it was clearly said that the border would be 'transparent'. The Lezghin leaders insist that the agreement is carried out. They are not against a delimitation of the border, but it is necessary to take account of the opinions of the local population. It is a case of "*Let the border be on the map, but the people who have lived there for centuries must not sense this.*"<sup>64</sup> A real customs union with Azerbaijan must be the point of future talks, the activation of commercial-economic links and measures.

### **Political Provocations**

For the Lezghins repression is not only connected with Azerbaijan, for on a recent "*occasion the latest events are connected not only with political problems but criminal ones*"<sup>65</sup>. The President of the National Council of the Lezghin People, Mugydin Kakhrimanov, was arrested in Makhachkala on grounds of murdering his wife. Criminal proceedings were instituted against him by the Procurator of Lenin rayon of the Dagestani capital. The 59 year-old Aminat Kakhrimanova was murdered on 18 September in her own home, when Kakhrimanov himself, in his own words, "was away". It had been planned to hold a meeting of the Lezghin people, but it was cancelled as a result of this crime. Among points due to be discussed was the possibility of uniting the National Lezghin Council with the other Lezghin organisation *Sadval*. The leader of the National Council linked the death of the wife with attempts to upset the Lezghin Peoples Forum and stated that the criminals had destroyed all the documents concerned with the holding of the meeting<sup>66</sup>. There may well be considerable grounds for believing that other nationalities or the present people exercising power in Dagestan have no wish to see a united Lezghin movement, on account of the differences between those backing a unitary state and the others who wish to opt for a federal Dagestan, to which the Lezhins belong.

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<sup>64</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 82 (1653) 12 May 1998 page 5.

<sup>65</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 187 (1512) 4 October 1997 page 3 "*Na yuge Dagestana rotovyatsya provokatsii - Chislo zhertv terroristicheskikh aktov ne umenshayetsya*" by Vadim Il'in.

<sup>66</sup> According to the version of the law enforcement organs, Kakhrimanov killed his wife because she had found out about his link with a young woman. Besides, Animat Kakhrimanova had ostensibly expressed unhappiness with the political activity of her husband. However, the arrested man's defence maintained that witnesses saw two men running from his house at the moment of the murder and speedily escaping in a vehicle.

### **Problems concerning the Chechen-Akhin in Dagestan**

The Chechen-Akhin are resident in Stavropol' Kray, the Checheno-Dagestan border areas, the Nogai Steppe, the rural rayon centre of Khazavyurt, where they are in the majority, and in other areas of northern Dagestan, along the Caspian littoral, including Makhachkala. They probably amount to around 70,000, excluding the swarms of refugees that arrived from Chechnya before, during and after the conflict with Russia. The most tense and troubled areas following the official end of the Russo-Chechen conflict are along the Checheno-Dagestan administrative border, in and around Khasavyurt itself and in the former Aukhovskiy rayon. According to Dagestani Minister for Nationality Affairs and External Relations Magomed Gusayev<sup>67</sup>:

*“Inter-nationality relations in post-Soviet Dagestan have always been close to strain. There is the problem of the 40 year-old repression of Chechens and the necessity of the restoration of Aukhovskiy rayon without infringement on other peoples - Laks and Avars who are now residing in villages of [former] repressed Chechens. Such questions can only be resolved by means of agreement, but not by confrontation and a one sided approach ...”*

#### **The Problem of Former Aukhovskiy Rayon (now Novolakskiy rayon)**

On their return from mass deportation and exile in 1957, the Chechens demanded the restoration of the Aukhovskiy rayon to its pre-1944 boundaries. Even a cursory examination of the boundaries prior to 1944, the alterations in 1944 and the subsequent amendment to the boundaries in 1957 reveals dramatic differences. Tension again flared up in February 1992, when the Chechens placed a series of posts on the former border between Chechnya and Dagestan. There is renewed speculation as to whether the Chechens will take Aukhovskiy rayon by force and incorporate it into Ichkeria following their progress on de facto independence, the imposition of an economic blockade by Moscow and the impact of possible Wahhabi intentions concerning the creation of a single Muslim imamate.

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<sup>67</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 82 (1653) 12 May 1998.

**Chechen-Akhin Views** Recently a representative of the National Front of the Chechen-Akhin of Dagestan, Alemur Khamzatov, and a representative of the organising committee for the restoration of Aukhovskiy rayon, Movladi Soipov in Khasavyurt, expressed some of their thoughts concerning the reasons for the deteriorating situation in the north of Dagestan. In their view following the end of the war in Chechnya, “*people had nothing*”<sup>68</sup>, therefore, different provocations happened which tended to use the unsettled and ambivalent situation of the Dagestani Chechens. According to Soipov, both before the war in Chechnya and now, Chechens were blamed without any foundation at all for all terrorist acts and misfortunes, depicting them in the very image of the enemy. As a consequence, the Chechens are subjected to persecution by the Dagestani law enforcement organs. In the view of Alemur Khamzatov and Movladi Soipov all this creates a situation of nervous tension in the region with an atmosphere of “*impending war*” reigning as a result of certain forces in Moscow being interested in provoking tension between Dagestan and Chechnya in the search for reasons for the development of a new war. However, the leaders of the local Chechens were not inclined to consider that war is inevitable. In their opinion, the majority of people simply do not want this. A war is favourable for a trade in weapons and organisation of disorder. Naturally, there are those will not actually take part in combat operations but “*remain in the shadows, attracting a profit from their activities*”<sup>69</sup>. Khamzatov remarked that the Dagestani Chechens would do everything possible to avoid or prevent a clash. For them it was no secret “*that abroad, for example in Turkey and Iran, there were forces craving to unleash a war in the region and with that to weaken Russia*”<sup>70</sup>.

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<sup>68</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 207 (1532) 1 November 1997 page 3 “*Stabil’nost v regione zavisit ot Moskvyy - Dagestanskiye Chechentsy terpelivo zhдут mirnogo resheniya svoikh problem*” by Il’ya Maksakov.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

Replying to a question concerning the necessary measures for solving the problem, Soipov emphasised that these steps have been under consideration for a long time, but as usual, “*We destroy with the right hand what has been done by the left*”<sup>71</sup>. Decisions are made, but when their implementation is started there are people who hinder progress. Thus in 1991 at the Third Session of National Deputies of Dagestan a decision was agreed concerning the restoration of Aukhovskiy rayon and the rehabilitation of the Chechens of Dagestan with the initiation of a parallel government resolution for financing the resettlement of the Laks occupying Chechen homes and land. Later, however, due to lack of money and the war in Chechnya, this solution was put into abeyance.

The Dagestani Chechens have demanded equal rights with the other peoples or nations in the republic. According to Soipov, the principle of ‘divide and rule’ had been preserved and maintained: “*peoples are more easily controlled when they are at odds*”<sup>72</sup>. In order to resolve the Aukhovskiy question, the resettlement of the Laks would require 2 trillion Roubles (R 2,000,000,000,000)<sup>73</sup>. More than that, the Laks had already given their agreement in principle, and selected a building site, but this work now had practically no financial backing. On this question a solution between the Chechens and the Laks was not a problem, but then Moscow “*is playing a big game, in which the Chechens of Dagestan are the trump card*”<sup>74</sup>.

Soipov considers that Aukhovskiy rayon ought to remain as part of the structure of Dagestan, but the borders with Chechnya, where the republic is separated only by a river, must be open and unrestricted. In his words, take advantage of the situation in the past when the Chechen-Akhintsy had always been the connecting link between two republics, so that the whole country could come to the aid of people who had survived the war.

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

Further confirmation of the Chechen-Akhin view, despite the Chechen historiographer's possible view that this rayon was "*age-old Vaynakh land*", was the opinion of another leader of the Chechen-Akhin, Basyr Dadayev: "*the unification of this territory to Chechnya is not a vital question*". But Dadayev did consider that "*Dagestan and Chechnya ought to become a single Islamic state*"<sup>75</sup>. Soipov also felt that in Aukhovskiy rayon people should have their own organs of power, their own cadres, the revival of their own national cultures and traditions. Over 100,000 Chechens reside in Dagestan, but they do not have their own administrative unit, they are scattered over five rayony, and the Laks who also run to approximately as many people have three rayony. Now in the border villages of Novolakskiy rayon (formerly Aukhovskiy rayon), the territory of which consists of almost 20,000 hectares, the ground is occupied by military units, all the arable areas have been ploughed up by the movement of military vehicles, and become intersected by trenches and minefields. The Chairman of the State Council, Magomed Ali Magomedov, according to Khamzatov, was endeavouring to unravel the Aukhovskiy knot, but "*Makhachkala remains a hostage to the dictates of Moscow*"<sup>76</sup> and Russia was in no hurry. Meanwhile, the Dagestani Chechens wait with patience, hoping that the question will be solved peacefully, mindful that the Chechen leadership does not want war. According to Khamzatov, the Chechen Republic was only interested in normal relations with Dagestan and its neighbouring states, but it was important<sup>77</sup>:

*"To conclude a bilateral treaty between Groznyy and Makhachkala which would allow the erasing of many problems, including unhindered passage across the borders. In his opinion this would significantly improve the situation. But the indeterminate state of Russo-Chechen relations hindered considerably any sort of agreement. The problem lies in the absence of a treaty between Moscow and Groznyy, because Dagestan does not know in what way to build relations with Chechnya"*.

## **POST-CONFLICT IMPACT OF CHECHNYA ON DAGESTAN**

The knot of factors impacting on the Republic and Peoples of Dagestan from Chechnya following the recent conflict between Chechen and Russian are complex and in scope embrace a wide range of problematical issues. The subject of the former Aukhovskiy rayon has already been covered in some depth because the situation with regard to this rayon stemmed from the Chechen deportations of February 1944 and the return and partial rehabilitation of the Chechens in 1957. The Aukhovskiy problem was already in existence before the recent Russo-Chechen conflict. The aftermath of that conflict may well inflame the Aukhovskiy problem.

Whilst undoubtedly the lack of a solution to the question of Chechen status has contributed significantly to instability in the region, as has the lack of a policy from the centre for the North Caucasus, other factors stemming directly from these two issues include, first, some of the consequences of the status of Chechnya which impinge on the workings of the Checheno-Dagestan administrative border, resulting in an

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<sup>75</sup> *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye* No 46 (73) 19-25 December 1997 page 2.

<sup>76</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 207 (1532) 1 November 1997 page 3.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

invidious position for the Dagestani authorities, a bewildering position for the Russian serviceman and inconvenience to the ordinary Chechen. Second, seen from a Russian perception, there is the question of Chechen political and military planning for the destabilisation of the North Caucasus as a whole, including the operations of illegal Chechen bandit formations<sup>78</sup>, where the impact of Chechnya on Dagestan cannot be taken in isolation from the rest of the Caucasus. Within the framework of this purported Chechen plan for destabilisation in the North Caucasus, there is a need to differentiate between the plans of the official leadership of Chechnya and the activities of extreme elements. The third point is concerned with the extremist Wahhabi movement, its long term political, religious and military aims including its participation in acts of terrorism in the North Caucasus. The actions of Wahhabis emanating from Chechnya into Dagestan are directed primarily against Russian military units. The fourth and last point is the potential divisiveness of the Wahhabi movement in working against the established tradition of Sufism in the North Caucasus. This could cause further instability in Chechnya with an increased overflow into Dagestan.

### **Consequences of Unresolved Chechen Status**

In practice, whilst it is true that repercussions as a result of Chechnya's continuing unsettled status have their consequences and effects throughout the North Caucasus, none are felt so sharply as in Dagestan, bordering Chechnya to the east, and still providing shelter and rudimentary comfort to Chechen refugees following the conflict. The situation in and around the Khasavyurt rayon of Dagestan in many ways has deteriorated since the war, for whilst:

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<sup>78</sup> *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye* No 7 1998 page 2. In much the same manner Russians allege that operations and activities are being planned and directed by Groznyy in support of the Ingush on North Osetian territory.

*“The call to arms during the period of combat operations in Chechnya was unsuccessful, it began to come true in the post-war period. It is paradoxical that the situation in Dagestan has sharply deteriorated since the withdrawal of Russian troops from the rebellious republic. Today, reports from the Khasavyurt rayon of Dagestan, where the Chechen-Akhin live in a compact environment recall reports from a combat operations zone. Armed attacks, abduction of people, the blowing up of Russian armoured vehicles occur here weekly”<sup>79</sup>.*

One of the most difficult questions for the Dagestani authorities is to correctly interpret the status of the border between Dagestan and the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria, which has now become a de facto international state border separating the Russian Federation from Chechnya in the pursuit by Moscow of a policy of containment and virtual blockade. An additional complication is the fact that there is a natural link and close relationship between the peoples of Dagestan and Chechnya on grounds of kinship, religious belief, tradition and social custom. This has tended to place the Dagestan authorities in an unenviable position, where they have been forced into the first ring of a blockade against Chechen activities.

It must also be a bewildering position for the ordinary Russian serviceman in a unit belonging to the Ministry of Defence or Ministry of Internal Affairs forming the second ring of containment covering the Chechen border.

**Box 12 - Conditions on Checheno-Dagestan Border 1<sup>80</sup>**

... The majority of them do not understand why they have been sent here. The status of the Chechen border has not been defined either. In answer to the question, “How do they occupy their time in frontier posts and what must be done in the instance of a breakthrough of armed groups of fighters”, many soldiers reply: “Protect ourselves”. Even greater uncertainties abound with the fact that those with whom they fought

<sup>79</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 174 (1499) 17 September 1997 page 3 “*Moskva i Groznyy boryutsya za vliyane v respublike - mestnikh zhiteley podtalkivayut k provoprolitiyu*” by Igor’ Rotar’.

<sup>80</sup> *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye* No 7 1998 page 2 “*Chechenskiye ekstremisty aktiviruyutsya - ozhidaniye novoy voyny vitayet nad Severnom Kavkaze*” by Aleksandr Kuz’minov.

some time not so long ago, today pass peacefully from the territory of Chechnya to Dagestan. Chechen fighters cross the administrative border, aware of their immunity in heavily laden vehicles, smiling happily at the soldiers in the frontier posts. Yesterday's enemies have now become Russian citizens and therefore they use the right to travel not only on the territory of the North Caucasus, but over all the other parts of the Russian Federation.

Despite all the assurances of the Secretary of the Security Council concerning 'the continuation of the normalisation process in Chechnya' peace has certainly not come to the region. The whole establishment of the representation of Russia in Chechnya is stationed at the base in Mozdok (but this is in North Osetia) and is only occupied in conducting telephone calls with the leadership in Moscow".

Not only do they know the declaration of the Moscow that leadership "*Every Russian serviceman protecting the Constitutional integrity of Russia would be encircled by the unweakening attention of the Motherland*" was at best a myth, but moreover "*cursing their fate and the Russian leadership, [they] do not know what to do here*"<sup>81</sup>.

It is conceivable that military duty might assume a lighter mantle, even on the bare, grey undulating landscape of the sometimes cold and draughty Nogai Steppe, if the Russian servicemen were to receive additional privileges or pay which to some extent acknowledged the onerous conditions of service experienced on the border, clothed in armoured vest, posted to either foxhole or vehicle check point. Life for the Russian serviceman would be improved if he felt welcomed by local communities and was accorded some recognition of his difficult task by Russian Federation officials. The situation on pay, privileges, allowances and relations with the local population is entirely negative.

### **Box 13 - Conditions on Checheno-Dagestan Border 2**<sup>82</sup>

#### **Service Pay**

The financial rates for servicemen serving in this region have been cut to the minimum. This means that no differences exist between those serving in Novosibirsk, near Moscow or in the North Caucasus, where each day brings its "surprises". In the period when active combat operations were conducted there was some sort of sense in being here. Now they have simply submerged them in echelon and transported them to Dagestan, deploying them in open fields.

#### **Relations with Local Communities**

Officers and soldiers feel an animosity towards them from a series of Caucasian nationalities, and if the slapdash attitude of officials of the Russian Federation is added to this, then the general picture of troop morale is not improved.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

“Our presence here irritates the locals. Emissaries of different Muslim religious organisations carry out ideological work amongst the population, in order to create negative relations for Russian servicemen. All this is done with the aim of removing us from the Caucasus ...”

In the “*Hot triangle of Sovetskoye - Terechnoye - Pervomayskoye*”<sup>83</sup>, names of Dagestani villages reminiscent of Salman Raduyev’s raid in January 1996, whilst it may not be the hottest area on the Checheno-Dagestan border now, the Pervomayskoye frontier post still has its very own share of Chechen-initiated excitement.

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<sup>83</sup> *Krasnaya Zvezda* No 26 (22515) 5 February 1998 page 1 “*Goryachi’ treugol’nik - Perednyy Kray*” by Vitaliy Strogovets.

**Box 14 - Life at Pervomayskoye Frontier Post**<sup>84</sup>

... they [the Chechens] check the frontier post regularly from any side. They try to smuggle loaded vehicles without [customs] control. Then they drive cattle to the front line in order to determine the limits of the minefields. And literally within two or three days of our visit the post was fired on. Soldiers and officers at Pervomayskoye serve under practically front line conditions: full-depth trenches and always loaded weapons with them and armoured vests.

On a simple Orthodox cross, to which the commander of the "Pervomayskoye" frontier post, Lieutenant Colonel Mikhail Chuprynin brought us, were Army symbols - singlets and a beret. And there was also a notice:

Konovalov A. N.	03. 05. 1978.
Zhuralev S.N.	21. 06. 1978.
Kulakov E. P.	24. 12. 1977.
Mel'nikov V.V.	15. 01. 1974.

Two spaces from the cross, a stone with Muslim symbols:

Muftakhetdinov Shamil'	26. 01. 1978.
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These were their dates of birth. The kids perished in repulsing just another raid of fighters, Lt Col Chuprynin related, from that time botheration, botheration, botheration, there were no retrievable casualties here.

The situation along the border for the Chechen can be further exacerbated, such as at the end of October 1997, when the Commander in Chief of the Russian Internal troops, responsible for the administrative regime on the border between Chechnya and Dagestan, strictly enforced border controls in connection with:

*"... the blowing up of a vehicle carrying Russian servicemen, the murder of a Dagestani militiaman, and the hostage taking of eight of his colleagues, the murder of the head of the administration of Akushinskiy rayon Khisbulla Abdullayev and his son"*<sup>85</sup>.

However, the point of the matter is that a more strictly enforced regime could hardly stabilise the situation along the border, as Box 15 below seeks to explain:

**Box 15 - Impossibility of Ensuring Border Security**

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 204 (1529) 29 October 1997 page 3.

Additional measures had been adopted earlier, but they have not brought any tangible results. It is not possible to block and control all the roads connecting Chechnya with Dagestan, it's simply unrealistic, and consequently the Chechen fighters are able to penetrate into Dagestan unhindered, avoiding or bypassing the checkpoints. Without depending on border control regimes at checkpoints, the Internal Ministry are forced to check all transport which crosses the border. However, this does not prevent the armed Chechen fighters from appearing on the territory of Dagestan and returning with hostages.<sup>86</sup>

The administrative border between Chechnya and Dagestan is ephemeral. Fighters have crossed and cross this “imaginary line” unhindered. Caravans with weapons from Azerbaijan move through Dagestan to Chechnya. A large number of the marked roads are ‘half-complete’, suitable only for KamAz, ‘jeeps’ and horses (hitherto cart transport has been intensively used in this region) allowing easy by-passing of sparsely situated posts<sup>87</sup>.

Whilst the more stringent controls do not restrict movement across the border along unmarked routes, they certainly cause inconvenience to Chechens travelling along main routes, such as at Gerzel Bridge on the Makhachkala-Gudermes-Groznyy main highway.

**Box 16 - Inconveniences suffered by Chechens on Checheno-Dagestan Border<sup>88</sup>**

Alemur Khamzatov spoke about the problems that officials and employees of the official structures of Ichkeria encounter when crossing the borders of the republic and although their weapons are officially registered with the Groznyy authorities they are delayed by law enforcement organs.

As a result of the Dagestanis paying no attention to their documents, the Chechens find themselves arrested and imprisoned. Such occasions are well known, when ammunition is put stealthily into Chechen vehicles with the aim of detaining them during a vehicle search. To obtain their release at times is possible only through bribery. On the other hand, armed Dagestanis freely cross the border and proceed into Chechnya.

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> *Zavtra* No 4 (112) January 1996 (date printed as 1995), page 4.

<sup>88</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 207 (1532) 1 November 1997 page 3 “*Stabil’nost v regione zavisit ot Moskvyy - Dagestanskiye Chechentsy terpelivo zhдут mirnogo resheniya svoikh problem*” by Il’ya Maksakov.

## Destabilisation of Dagestan

### **A Russian Perception**

Any further tightening of border controls or armed conflict on the territory of Dagestan, especially with army interference provides Chechnya with the possibility to act, not in the role of an aggressor, but as one coming to the aid of the Dagestanis in a holy war against Russia.

Dagestan, as a territory lying toward the Caspian Sea, the use of which, according to the President of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria, Aslan Maskhadov “*is of vital importance to Ichkeria*”<sup>89</sup>. In its Dagestan policy, the Chechen leadership is oriented on the three most influential forces in the republic. The first force to be considered is the combination of the powerful religious factor, military and combat experience together with the potential of the Wahhabi movement in both Chechnya and Dagestan. The second are the national movements both in the republic and throughout the whole region: one such example would be the proposal by Groznyy to the Nogai that they would be given autonomy if they agreed to come under Chechen jurisdiction<sup>90</sup>. Special hopes are focussed on the leaders of those national movements which supported direct contact with the Chechen military leadership during the period of combat operations, and at the present time have their own armed groups<sup>91</sup>. Finally, according to the Russians, the Chechens consider people of influence in the present Dagestan government as the third force which possesses sufficient potential to change the situation in the republic in Chechen favour. Here they have in mind ambitious politicians, who are not concerned with the interests of security of the republic and Russia as a whole. The proposed amendments to the Dagestan Constitution in their turn will accentuate political ambition, erode respect for high office and further destabilise the political system.

<b>Box 17 - Russian Perception of Forces in Dagestan</b>
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<sup>89</sup> *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye* No 47 (74) 26 December 1997 page 3 “*Voyennaya eskalatsiya dzhikhada - separisty pytayutsya vtyanut’ v konflikt vse Kavkazskiy respublik*” by Aleksandr Shaburkin.

<sup>90</sup> *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye* No 46 (73) 19-25 December 1997 page 2 “*Nasledniki Shamil’ya - Ekspansiya voinstvennogo natsializma ugrozhayet miru i stabil’nosti na Kavkaze*” by Yevgeniy Yunusov.

<sup>91</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 174 (1499) 17 September 1997 page 3 “*Moskva i Groznyy boryutsya za vliyane v respublike - mestnykh zhiteley podtalkivayut k provoprolitiyu*” by Igor’ Rotar’. “The Chechen unionists in the first place calculate on the mountain peoples of Dagestan who under the leadership of the Avar Imam Shamil’ offered fierce resistance to Russian troops during the time of the Long Caucasian War in the XIX Century. So on the celebration of 200 years of Imam Shamil’ held in the Chechen village of Vedeno (in the past the capital of the Chechen and Dagestani Imamate), well known Dagestani politicians the leader of the Avar National Front imeni Imam Shamil’ Gadzhi Makhachev and the Chairman of the Lak movement “Kazi-Kumukh” Magomed Khachilayev came. Elegant and expressive slogans dominated the festival: “Chechnya and Dagestan - for ever together and free”, “Freedom is not taken for granted - it is earned”. *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 90 (1661) 22 May 1998 page 5 on the Brothers Khachilayev: “... [they] supported close relations with their neighbours. Their continual contacts with Chechen leaders and field commanders included the not unknown Salman Raduyev ...”

1. Combination of the powerful religious factor, military and combat experience together with the potential of the Wahhabi movement both in Chechnya and Dagestan.
2. National movements both in the republic and throughout the whole region.
3. People of influence in the present Dagestan government who possesses sufficient potential to change the situation in the republic.

All these groups and forces over a long period of time have become enfolded in a “strategic partnership” with the Chechen politico-military elite, and especially “*tightly with the irreconcilable and implacable opposition under Chechen field commanders such as Salman Raduyev and Khattab*”<sup>92</sup>.

There is much here that would appear to be plausible concerning possible Chechen intentions with regard to Dagestan, bearing in mind their common historical background and connections. A further consideration, and one which appears to be widely accepted, is the perception that an ‘independent’ Chechnya needs to become a Greater Chechnya in order to become a viable economic unit with the ability to break out of her landlocked imprisonment, to establish her own direct trade links with the Transcaucasus Republics, not only by the construction of a southern highway through the Chanti Argun gorge through the main Caucasus Range to Georgia, but also with direct routes to Azerbaijan. Unhindered access to the Caspian would obviously be attractive for Grozny. Should Dagestan cease to be a unitary state, then it is conceivable that the former Chechen Aukhovskiy rayon might well find itself absorbed into Chechnya<sup>93</sup>.

Whilst the actions of extreme Chechen elements and *bandformirovaniya* (bandit groups), including the Wahhabis, are headline news in Dagestan, it must be remembered that these elements do not represent official Chechen policy. The priorities of the legally elected Chechen leadership must be the restoration of the economy, reconstruction of the infrastructure and rehabilitation of the Chechen people, together with the overriding desire to run their own Chechen affairs without interference from Moscow. At the moment, despite alarmist cries, it does not necessarily include the creation of a North Caucasus Islamic Republic stretching from Makhachkala to the Kuban’, but eventual union, close association or annexation of part of Dagestan as a result of default by Russia may well be a possibility.

### ***Terrorist Acts emanating from Chechnya***

Especially perturbing for the Dagestani authorities is the fact that the Khasavyurt rayon of Dagestan is the traditional zone of influence of the most radical supporter of

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<sup>92</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 25 (1596) 14 February 1998 page 5 “*Novaya ugroza dlya Kavkaza - kriminal'nyy faktor v Dagestanskoy I regional'noy politike*” by Gur'ya Murklinskaya, correspondent of the newspaper “North Caucasus” for Dagestan.

<sup>93</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 174 (1499) 17 September 1997 page 3. “At the end of August in Grozny under the chairmanship of the first deputy premier Movladi Udugov 35 parties and movements of Islamic orientation from Chechnya and Dagestan founded a new movement the “Islamic Nation”. The aim of the new association is the creation of an Imamate corresponding to the Imamate of Shamil’. The new movement has elected its parliament (Madzhlis). According to the statement of Movladi Udugov the new movement intends orientate itself on the rebirth of Dagestan in its historic borders”, that is its unification with Chechnya.

the “Liberation of of the North Caucasus” Salman Raduyev<sup>94</sup>. This terrorist developed close links in Khasavyurt during the ‘stagnant’ years before the Chechen conflict when he was running the Gudermes ‘Raykom’ (rayon Communist youth organisation). During the period of combat operations in Chechnya it was part of Raduyev’s duty to go into Dagestan. His interest in Dagestan has not disappeared and armed formations of Raduyev’s “Army of General Dudayev” traverse the territory of the rayon without hindrance.

***Range of Activities***

The activities of the *bandformy* in Dagestan over the period 17 June 1995 to 14 October 1997 are shown in Table 3.

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<sup>94</sup> For further details on Raduyev see Blandy “*The Significance of Pervomayskoye*” CSRC P19 April 1996 pages 46-47; “*Chechen Connections: An End to Conflict in Chechnya?*” page 8.

**Table 3 - Chronicle of Terror in Dagestan**<sup>95</sup>

Date	Event	Remarks
17 Jun 95	Attempted breakthrough of Checheno-Dagestan border in area of Botlikh.	Battle lasted two days. Border troops losses: 4 killed, 6 wounded.
24 Jun 95	Explosion on Makhachkala-Gudermes railway line at Dagestan border with Chechnya.	8 passenger carriages belonging Makhachkala-Astrakhan train derailed. No deaths.
9-18 Jan 96	Salman Raduyev's raid on Kizlyar and later Pervomayskoye action.	65 people perished.
20 Aug 96	Terrorist act in Makhachkala <sup>96</sup> .	Dagestan Minister of Finance Gamud Gamidov killed with 2 others, 4 wounded.
8 Oct 96	At the <i>rayontsent</i> r of Khasavyurt, MVD Zil-130 vehicle blown up.	1 serviceman killed, 4 wounded.
16 Nov 96	In Kaspisk blowing up of 9 storey accommodation of border troop detachment.	67 dead, including 54 servicemen and members of their families.
24 Jan 97	Explosion between Khasavyurt and Kadi-Yurt.	5 people killed, 2 wounded.
28 May 97	In Makhachkala attempt on life of Dagestani deputy prime minister S Amirov.	As result of explosion, 4 people killed. Amirov unhurt.
8 Jul 97	At Khasavyurt radio-controlled mine blew up Ural vehicle carrying servicemen from Moscow and St Petersburg.	11 servicemen killed.

<sup>95</sup> *Moskovskiye Novosti* No 9 8-15 March 1998 page 6 "Said sbrvayet borody - ostanetsya li Dagestan v sostave Rossii ili povtorit put' Chechni"? by Sanobar Shermatova. "During these last three years of general complexity around 40 terrorist acts have taken place with Dagestan occupying second place behind Moscow for the whole of the Russian Federation".

<sup>96</sup> This was more likely to have been an internal politically motivated crime rather than one committed by Chechen *bandformy*.

14 Oct 97	Vehicle ambushed carrying 15 soldiers from Tula OMON.	1 serviceman killed.
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### ***Intimidation at Pervomayskoye***

Pervomayskoye lies approximately 1.5 kilometres from the frontier post. It was in fact completely destroyed in the course of the January battles of 1996, but today it “sparkles with new houses and well worn streets”<sup>97</sup>.

### **Box 18 - The Regenerated Settlement of Pervomayskoye**

Today you would not know it. Two storey cottages in red brick are little like the small structures before the raid. By order of the President of Russia every family was allotted 200,000,000 roubles for restoration and for a new vehicle UAZ-2106<sup>98</sup>.

The only reminder of two years ago is one derelict house: where the owner, an old-stager, died as they began to pay out compensation. On the Chechen side not a few talk about peace today. And meanwhile they say all the new houses of Pervomayskoye are already shared amongst themselves and the inhabitants of the nearest Chechen villages”<sup>99</sup>.

“It is true, the joy did not last for long”<sup>100</sup> in Pervomayskoye. Salman Raduyev imposed tribute on those who were joyful recipients of the presidential gifts. From each homestead he demanded payment of R 50,000 and from the whole village nine ‘Zhiguli’ cars donated by President Yel’tsin. He acted on the principles of a lottery: it was necessary to share; it was all carried out quickly; no one was left with nothing. Raduyev’s fighters now drive around in the President’s presents.

The inhabitants of neighbouring villages were disappointed that Salman Raduyev had chosen Pervomayskoye in January 1996. In their complaints they used the argument that the “brigadier general” must make a raid on their village as: “We have houses in

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<sup>97</sup> *Krasnaya Zvezda* No 26 (22515) 5 February 1998 page 1. For a detailed analysis of the Pervomayskoye crisis of 1996, see C W Blandy, *The Significance of Pervomayskoye*, CSRC, p19, April 1996.

<sup>98</sup> *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye* No 7 1998 page 2.

<sup>99</sup> *Krasnaya Zvezda* No 26 (22515) 5 February 1998 page 1.

<sup>100</sup> *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye* No 7 1998 page 2.

*somewhat worse condition than those in Pervomayskoye*<sup>101</sup>.

Joys certainly do not come often and they are never spread in a uniform manner. One of the effects of the violence has been to drive Russians from their homes in Chechnya or Dagestan and force them to seek a new life elsewhere.

**Box 19 - Plight of Russians driven from Their Homes**<sup>102</sup>

The exodus of the Russian population is happening throughout the whole of the North Caucasus.

Selling houses for next to nothing, Russian families are striving to go into the depths of Russia. They are not needed here and they are not needed in Russia.

However, somewhere in Ivanoskaya Oblast' or Lipetskaya Oblast' the refugees can breathe freely and peacefully again and sometimes tell people that they moved from the Caucasus. It is true to consider that the President's presents to them do not even fit.

In addition to the actions of Salman Raduyev in late 1996 and early 1997 against Dagestani militia manning border check points, a new phase has developed with the Chechen raid on the military unit at Buynaksk in central Dagestan.

**Box 20 - Raid on Buynaksk 20/21 December 1997**

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

RF MOD press service reported that bandits had assaulted a military cantonment of a motor rifle brigade belonging to the North Caucasus Military District<sup>103</sup>. They had blown up the transformer station beforehand. The fighters operated in groups of 8-10 men, each one having a grenade launcher, a light machine gun and an automatic weapon. The strength of the assault was estimated at around 50 men, however, as later events showed the number was much more, around 120 men. One assault detachment operated in the neighbourhoods of Buynaksk, the other secured the withdrawal of fighters in the direction of Chechnya. The assault group were Chechens, closely related to the *teip* of Salaman Raduyev. From the form the raid took and its sheer audacity, it was clear that the bandits knew the ground and the locations of the military objects well. Despite thick fog and night they were able to knock out two tanks, three vehicles and blow up several fuel storage tanks.<sup>104</sup>

According to ITAR-TASS, 30 men were in the attack. However, as the operational duty officer, Lieutenant Colonel Magomedov of Dagestan Internal Troops reported to us the band numbered around 80 people. It was suggested that this band was the “wild

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<sup>103</sup> This refers to 136 Separate Motor Rifle Brigade, which would probably be equipped with T-72 x 40, ICVs x 240 and D-30 x 24. The Brigade is subordinated to HQ 58 Army in Vladikavkaz, North Osetia.

<sup>104</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 240 (1565) 23 December 1997 page 1 “*Na Severnom Kavkaze vnov’ idut boi - lyubiye popytki priyti k soglasiyu soprovozhdayutsya provokatsiyami*” by Il’ya Maksakov.

geese” of the Jordanian field commander Khattab<sup>105</sup> deployed in the Nozhay-Yurt rayon of Chechnya. On this occasion, the fighters made use of the bad weather, penetrated the territory of the republic in KamAZ, Volga and Zhiguli vehicles, occupied suitable positions in the hills around the tank battalion and at point blank range from a distance of 100m fired on the tanks from several grenade launchers.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Khattab, an adherent of Wahhabism, is a Jordanian born Chechen who fought in the Russo-Chechen conflict alongside the Chechens, where he ably demonstrated his competence as a daring and successful military commander.

<sup>106</sup> *Izvestiya* No 241 23 December 1997 page 1 “*Obostreniye situatsii na yuge Rossii - Khattab prodolzhaet voynu*” by Vladimir Zaynetdinov and Viktor Litovkin.

The return route is now known. According to witnesses, the operation which captured two Kamaz trucks was well and carefully planned and local Chechen-Akhin who knew the terrain well participated in it, since the fighters returned not through the main checkpoints but by a shorter route passing through practically unarmed checkpoints or where none existed at all. The fighters' route was Buynaksk-Khalim-bek aul-Cherkey-Staroye Miatli-Inchkha-Dylym-Burtunay-Almak. Resistance to them was only offered in Kazbek rayon, and the first battle took place in the village of Inchkha.<sup>107</sup>

The outgoing year is remembered in Dagestan for the daring terrorist act in Buynaksk, where a group of fighters fell on the Russian military unit and destroyed several tanks. Besides, according to our information, in the attack on the military unit in Buynaksk the legendary field commander Khattab took part and received heavy wounds in the course of the clash with the Federal and Dagestani forces. This is all the more likely on account of the fact that one of the wives of Khattab lives in the settlement of Kara-Makhi<sup>108</sup>.

## RELATIONS BETWEEN MAKHACHKALA AND MOSCOW

### The Aftermath of Kizlyar and Pervomayskoye

A convenient place to start in conducting a brief review of relations between Dagestan and Moscow is the raid by Salman Raduyev on Kizlyar in January 1996, followed by the untidy aftermath at Pervomayskoye which marked an additional milestone in the spiral of escalation and expansion in the Chechen conflict.

#### **Box 21 - Consequences of Russian Actions<sup>109</sup>**

The operation by the Russian Federal Armed Forces against the Chechen raiding group of Salman Raduyev will have far reaching negative consequences for the internal stability of Dagestan, the North Caucasus and in the final analysis relations between Moscow and Makhachkala. Moscow has clearly shown that it is still capable of acting in a rough, coarse and insensitive manner which totally ignores the interests of the

<sup>107</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 241 (1566) 24 December 1997 "Vylazka boyevikov v Dagestanye v ocherednoy raz pokazala slabost' federal'nykh silovykh struktur" by Alena Chebanova.

<sup>108</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 246 (1571) 31 December 1997 "Novyye podrobnosti terakta v Buynakske - Sobytiya v Dagestane svudetel'stvuyut ob otsutsvii produmannoy politiki Moskvyy" by Il'ya Maksakov.

<sup>109</sup> C W Blandy "The Significance of Pervomayskoye" P19 April 1996 CSRC page 58.

regional political elites.

Initially, anger was strong against the Chechens, but then there followed a mood-swing from being anti-Chechen to being anti-Russian, when the Russian authorities violated the agreement struck between the Dagestanis and the Chechen raiders.

**Box 22 - Wrath of Dagestanis Redirected from Chechens to the Centre<sup>110</sup>**

“What the Russian government did here, leaves no room for normal logic. An impression is being created that Moscow has simply plotted to try and turn the people of Dagestan against themselves. In fact, in the first days after the capture of the hostages by the Chechen fighters in Kizlyar, an anti-Chechen movement was sharply activated which was extremely unfavourable to Dudayev ... However, Moscow has done everything possible to help the shaken authority of the supporters of Chechen independence and to direct the wrath of the Dagestanis not against the followers of Dudayev, but against the Centre”.

However, it is possible that the continuing Chechen raids on Dagestan by *bandformirovaniya* in close association with the Wahhabis will cause a reversal in support for the Chechen cause, inflaming public opinion to the extent that strong ‘home guard’ formations will be created. The patience of the local inhabitants around Khasavyurt had reached breaking point as far back as November of last year. “*The last drop which overfilled their cup of patience’ was the kidnapping on 3 November of three Avars, inhabitants of Dagestan, by Chechen fighters.*”<sup>111</sup>

**Disillusionment with Moscow**

At the beginning of July 1997 a former Dagestani Prime Minister, a Kumyk, Abdulrazak Mardanovich Mirzabekov, stated his dissatisfaction with the Centre at the lack of a strategic policy in the North Caucasus and voiced his exasperation over the

<sup>110</sup> Ibid, Box 51 (*Izvestiya* 20 January 1996). Pages 58 to 62 provide further evidence not only of anger against the Chechens but also comments and negative reaction to the “two-faced” words, approaches and actions by the Russian Federal authorities.

<sup>111</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 211 (1536) 10 November 1997 page 1 “*Chechenskiy krizis vyshel za predely Ichkerii - otstavnyye Berezovskiy i Lebed’ namereny uchastvovat’ v uregulirovaniy kak chastnyye litsa*” by Il’ya Maksakov.

lack of interest shown by the leadership of the Russian Federation toward Dagestan and its problems.<sup>112</sup> Mirzabekov, of course, has not been alone in voicing concerns over the lack of strategic policy from Moscow in the North Caucasus, for in the words of Akhsarbek Galazov, former President of North Osetia, “*the mutual interests of Russia and the Caucasus demand the working out of a long term state programme for the composite development of the whole region*”<sup>113</sup>.

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<sup>112</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 124 (1449) 9 July 1997 page 3 “*My nuzhdayemsya v pomoshchi tsentra - predsedatel’ pravitel’sтва Dagestana Abdurazak Mirzabekov - za ravnyy podkhod ko vsem sub’yektam federatsii*” by Boris Kaufman.

<sup>113</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 189 (1514) 8 October 1997 page 5 “*Segodnya u Moskvy net nikakoy Kavkavskoy politiki*” by Akhsarbek Galazov.

**Box 23 - Mirzabekov on the Situation in Dagestan**<sup>114</sup>

I am dissatisfied with the fact that no strategic state policy on the North Caucasus, which is Russian territory, has been worked out or developed.

I am also unhappy that in the central press there are whispers that following the Chechen Republic, Dagestan is seceding from the Russian Federation. Why is no one talking about this in Dagestan? What is the aim and who is gaining from this campaign? If it is so, then why are the federal authorities not taking the appropriate measures?

Incidentally, in a particular part of society, it can engender doubt as to whether Moscow needs Dagestan. Besides, I believe that the economic position of Dagestan could be considerably improved if the Centre listened to our council. Why, when each time we disturb the President or the Prime Minister because the position is becoming complicated in Dagestan, no one finds time to hold a meeting and listen to us.

Mirzabekov also described the economic position of Dagestan as very complicated, for “*Dagestan is predominantly of an agricultural direction, but as a result of some well-known reasons after 1992 the agricultural sector deteriorated sharply*”<sup>115</sup>. Additional problems were that vehicle construction in the republic was in the main devoted to the defence enterprises of the military industrial complex, but “*in an hour these factories were without work*”<sup>116</sup>, and Dagestan also found itself within a ring of military operations, as did Georgia, Azerbaijan and Chechnya.

**Box 24 - Other Problems in Dagestan resulting from Moscow's Actions**<sup>117</sup>

For four years the railway link with the central oblasts of Russia through the territory of the Chechen Republic was paralysed.

Economic problems doubled by the changes connected with the upsurge of the Caspian Sea and by the questions connected to the political decision on the Law on the Rehabilitation of Repressed Peoples involving the Chechen-Akhin after 40 years of repression. This [planned] resettlement collided with the conduct of experiments in

<sup>114</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 124 (1449) 9 July 1997 page 3 “*My nuzhdayemsya v pomoshchi tsentra - predsedatel' pravitel'stva Dagestana Abdurazak Mirzabekov - za ravnyy podkhod ko vsem sub'yektam federatsii*” by Boris Kaufman.

<sup>115</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 124 (1449) 9 July 1997 page 3.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

the Russian Ministry of Finance, as a result of which the republic found itself with a severe budget deficiency.

In Dagestan there are no prosperous regions in the full sense of the word. Unsteady and shaky, middling and 'bumping along the bottom', most of the regions are trying to improve the critical economic situation. Where is the assistance from federal resources? Mirzabekov stated during a meeting of the Praesidium of the Dagestan government on 31 July 1997 that:

*"the patience of the population is at its limit and the failure to take urgent measures on solving the most severe problems could inevitably lead to a social-political explosion"*<sup>118</sup>.

During this session, as head of the government Mirzabekov produced data which testified to the fact that after Chechnya, Dagestan was one of the poorest regions in the whole country. A particular point of criticism of Moscow was that:

*"For five years, three government decisions were taken, which were regularly ignored. The ability of the federal authorities to solve the multitude of problems of the republic was graphically demonstrated in the construction of the railway bypass. As a result the railway was constructed in eight months and began to function within two weeks, but again there were no means of paying the constructors"*<sup>119</sup>.

**Box 25 - Abdurazak Mirzabekov on the Economic Plight of Dagestan**<sup>120</sup>

60% of the population live on the poverty line, 30% are without work and the average wage is 2.7 times below that in the whole country [Russian Federation].

Many troubles which have fallen on the republic without doubt are connected with the conflict in Chechnya, where Dagestani border areas are affected by economic blockade, disrupted railway communication, electric power lines and oil pipelines. Huge problems for the republic's leadership are connected with the status of Chechnya.

Over the last five years investment per head of population in the economy of Dagestan has dropped more than 10% compared with the average taken over Russia.

However, whilst there has been substantial criticism of Moscow's lack of policy for the North Caucasus, it should not be forgotten that:

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<sup>118</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 141 (1466) 1 August 1997 page 2 "Dagestan prosit pomoshchi - natsional'naya politika po-prezhnemu upirayetsya v den'gi" by Denis Babich.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

*“Within the time of [Magomedov’s] real control from March 1990, Dagestan from being a donor-republic has turned into a subsidised region in whose budget the share of transfers from the federal budget is around 90%”.<sup>121</sup>*

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<sup>121</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 72 (1643) 23 April 1998 page 5.

On the possible repercussions of changes to the Constitution of Dagestan, the question arises “*Are the Federal authorities prepared for such an event?*” “*It is unlikely*”<sup>122</sup>, is the response. After all, many leaders of the North Caucasus republics have repeatedly turned to Moscow with proposals to work out general principles for normalisation and settlement. The Russian Federation Security Council has not responded to the peoples of the Caucasus:

*“It is redeemed, yes, only by the solution of the Chechen problem, but unsuccessfully. Therefore, in the absence of serious conceptual work on the mutual implementation of relations between the republics of the North Caucasus and Moscow it is difficult to speak about the ability of the Federal Centre to react adequately to the currently developing critical situation in Dagestan”*<sup>123</sup>.

There is the view too, that:

*“Unfortunately the Kremlin turns its attention to the situation in Dagestan only when in this North Caucasus republic provocations and terrorist acts take place. Recently here nearly every day there are explosions, murders and kidnappings of people, and no one pays attention to cattle rustling or the theft of cars... Naturally the situation in Dagestan is determined in the main by the post-war situation in neighbouring Chechnya”*<sup>124</sup>.

### **Separation from the Russian Federation?**

A solution to the problem of Chechen status, the honouring and implementation by the Kremlin of agreements negotiated with the Chechens earlier would do much to reduce the problems of the Dagestani government in Makhachkala. Criticism of Moscow by Makhachkala does not necessarily mean that Dagestan has the desire to break away from the Russian Federation. With the exception of people living in close proximity to the Chechen-Dagestan border, the majority of people, and particularly those in the government, do not wish to break away. Magomedsalikh Gusayev acknowledged recently that many were talking about the danger of the separation of Dagestan from Russia<sup>125</sup>:

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<sup>122</sup> *Literaturnaya Gazeta* No 35 (5667) 27 August 1997 page 1 “*Dagestan mozhet tozhe ‘rvanut’*” by Vyacheslav Nikolayev.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 207 (1532) 1 November 1997 page 3 “*Stabil’nost v regione zavisit ot Moskvy - Dagestanskiye Chechentsy terpelivo zhдут mirnogo resheniya svoikh problem*” by Il’ya Maksakov.

<sup>125</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 82 (1653) 12 May 1998 page 5.

*“Actually, the question is very actively exaggerated, linked to possible separatist influences in Dagestan, religious pressure, influence of neighbours, foreigners, ostensibly to hustle Dagestan away from the structure of the Russian Federation”.*

**Box 26 - View of Magomedsalikh Gusayev on  
The Issue of Dagestan leaving Russian Federation**<sup>126</sup>

These people do not understand the real position in Dagestan.

I am the chairman of the small (in numbers) Agul people, living in Agul rayon at a height of around 2,000 metres above sea level in the south east of the republic. If tomorrow someone announces a departure from Russia, this rayon, with a population of less than 10,000 people, would state that it remains within the Russian Federation.

In Dagestan out of 14 nationalities ... there are 5% in the population who actively believe in clinging to the illusion that Islam is the saviour for all misfortunes. We are well acquainted with the frame of mind of our neighbours, and not only the Chechens. They see in Russia an imperial direction. But we do not see this.

In the Caucasus war is happening - in South Osetia, Abkhazia, Nagornyy Karabakh, Chechnya, in the zone of the Osetino-Ingush conflict. Even those who have a fire blazing begin to lecture us: “A severe situation in this Dagestan”, “The military phase has finished, Dagestan is the next in line”, “If we do not find a common language in Dagestan, then to the Musul’man it is necessary to offer help to his brothers”.

Dagestan is a tasty morsel; not for nothing they say “He who rules Dagestan rules the Caucasus”. The sea is also understood in our republic as a transport highway, a way out to the Near East. Several people say “Dagestan can only hold on for a maximum of two years”. Nothing could be further from the truth. Dagestan remains a single indivisible republic in the structure of the Russian Federation.

## WAHHABISM

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

Dagestan is a key region in the Caucasus for Islam, first because of the historical importance of Dagestan in Arabic scholarship and Islam and secondly because the present day town of Buynaksk, formerly Temirkhan Shura, was the proposed capital of the Mountain Republic in the 1920s.<sup>127</sup>

Much of the Wahhabi-driven action on Dagestani territory would appear to emanate from Chechnya as a result of the Russo-Chechen war when many fighters came from Arab countries of the Middle East, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Afghanistan to help the Chechens in their fight against Federal Armed Forces<sup>128</sup>. Wahhabism is most

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<sup>127</sup> *NG - Religii May 98* No 5 (16) 20 May 1998 page 12. "Dagestan over the extent of a long history has occupied a weighty position in the world of Islam, it was, as it were, the northern bastion of the Caliphate and in general its influence was felt in the Near East as much as in the North Caucasus, including the Volga region. Although Islam did not become fully established in Dagestan and Chechnya until the 16 and 17th Centuries, thanks to the activities of the Sufi orders and local traditions it existed here within the teaching of Imam Shafii. From about the 18th Century Dagestan was the centre of religious theology in the North Caucasus, and from the beginning of the 19th Century all movements connected with the opposition to the expansion of Tsarist Russia were led in Dagestan. All five Imams, leaders of the anti-Tsarist campaigns in the North Caucasus, came from the people of Dagestan. The proposed capital for the North Caucasus Confederation or the Mountain Republic in the 1920s was Temirkhan Shura, the present day town of Buynaksk."

<sup>128</sup> For further details on North Caucasus peoples' diaspora see Blandy "*The Significance of Pervomayskoye*" P19 CSRC April 1996, Annex A.

active in the North Caucasus in the Republics of Chechnya and Dagestan. According to several sources a considerable amount of financial support and manpower has been allotted from Saudi Arabia and Pakistan to strengthening the position of Wahhabism in the North Caucasus. Russian views of the ultimate goal of Wahhabism in the Caucasus are found in Box 27 below:

**Box 27 - Ultimate Goal of Wahhabism in the North Caucasus**

1. The creation of a 'Corridor' on the territory of Dagestan which links Chechnya with the Caspian and Azerbaijan, the separation of Dagestan from Russia, Dagestan's reunification with Chechnya and the proclamation of an 'imamate'<sup>129</sup>.
2. In an earlier announcement of Salman Raduyev and the Wahhabis, their aim is somewhat more extensive. "This is the beginning of the unification of the peoples of the Caucasus. Soon in this agreement will be included other nations of the Caucasus. We have one aim - the creation in the Caucasus of an Islamic Republic which will include Ichkeria, Dagestan, Kabarda, Balkariya, Ingushetiya, Karachayevo-Cherkessia and Azerbaijan"<sup>130</sup>.
3. The latest tendency is attempts at spreading the idea of Wahhabism to "Ingushetia, Kabardino-Bakariya, Karachayevo-Cherkessia and Adygeya"<sup>131</sup>, almost to the Black Sea littoral.

The intermediate objective of Wahhabism, again from Russian sources, is to strengthen their foothold and presence in the North Caucasus.

*"Consolidating their position amongst the multi-nation peoples of the North Caucasus, the Wahhabis have the objective of penetrating the power structures. This work is not wasted. Wahhabi sympathisers have appeared amongst deputies of legislative assemblies of republics, government, and state organs. In the Russian press the spread of the influence of the Wahhabis has been noticed in the Chechen government: Udugov, Yandarbiyev and others"*<sup>132</sup>.

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<sup>129</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 80 (1651) 7 May 1998 page 5 "Severo-Kavkazskiy uzel - problemy regiona slishkom serezny, chtoby mozhno bylo ogranichivatsya polumerami" by Aleksey Nikulin.

<sup>130</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 16 (1587) 3 February 1998 "Raduyev otmetilsya v Buynakske? - izvestnyy terrorist zaklyuchil soyuz s Wahhabitami" by Igor' Rotar'.

<sup>131</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 80 (1651) 7 May 1998 page 5.

<sup>132</sup> *Shchit i Mech* No 10 (570) 29 January 1998 page 2.

From a Russian perspective, the growth of the popular idea of Wahhabism in the North Caucasus Republics of the Russian Federation provokes social-economic instability which leads to impoverishment of the population. Young people, lower levels of society, ethnic groups and clans pushed aside from power or ignored by the bureaucratic structures as a whole, not only become fertile ground and material for recruitment, moulding and development into potential future extremists, but whilst recently the activity of political extremists, followers and adherents of the Wahhabi movement have grown sharply, there is a very real danger that *“religious discord is driving toward inter-ethnic strife in the North Caucasus republics”*<sup>133</sup>. Whilst Wahhabism may project itself as the advocate of social harmony, brotherhood and unity amongst all Muslims, it is hostile to Sufi mysticism which has hitherto been the traditional path of Islam, followed by an overwhelming proportion of Muslim mountain peoples in the North Caucasus, and in particular the indigenous Muslim population of the north east Caucasus found in Chechnya and Dagestan.

**Box 28 - Wahhabism in the North East Caucasus**<sup>134</sup>

In the socio-political sphere Wahhabi advocate social harmony, brotherhood and unity of all Muslims independent of nationality. They speak out for the strict observance of Islam’s moral principles, condemning luxury, money-grubbing, debauchery, the use of alcohol, drugs, tobacco, enthusiasm of fortune-telling etc.

The Wahhabi have gained support themselves amongst the people for their uncompromising battle against drugs and alcohol (the destruction of crops, the closure of alcohol shops) ...”

Approximately 1,500 young Dagestanis are studying Arabic and Islam in Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey and Pakistan: “14,000 pilgrims went from Dagestan to Saudi Arabia”<sup>135</sup>.

**“The Preachers of Islam”**

In recent times, the words “Wahhabism” and “Islamic Fundamentalism” are beginning to appear with increasing regularity in the Russian media in connection with the situation in Dagestan and Chechnya, for *“the Islamic factor has become a serious aspect*

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 82 (1653) 12 May 1998 page 5.

*of the social-political situation in Dagestan and the region as a whole*<sup>136</sup>.

Groups of missionaries, calling themselves “Preachers of Islam”, appear regularly, changing over with each other every three to six months, continually widening their field of activity. Groups of six to ten men fly to Moscow from Syria, Jordan and Saudi Arabia. The start point of their journey in the North Caucasus is “*the airport of Mineral’nyye Vody; from there as a rule they go to Dagestan, Karachayevo-Cherkessia, Adygeya, Kabardino-Balkariya, then they travel through Stavropol’ Kray*”<sup>137</sup> and further afield to territories of the Russian Federation that interest them.

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<sup>136</sup> NG - *Religii* No 5 (16) 20 May 1998 page 12 “*Vakhabizm kak tyaga k sotsializmu*” by Marat Razhbandinov.

<sup>137</sup> NG - *Stsenarii* No 5 (27) 13 May 1998 page 15 “*Vakhabizm v importnoy upakovke - Religioznyye ekstremisty aktivizuryut svoyu deyatel'nost na Svernom Kavkaze*” by Alevtina Polyakova.

At the beginning of the 1990s Magomed Bidzhiyev, whose parents came from Karachayevo-Cherkessia, went from Moscow to Stavropol' Kray, calling himself a representative of the "Islamic Party of Revival"<sup>138</sup>. Immediately after his appearance and under his direction strong reactionary movements began to be formed in Karachayevo-Cherkessia<sup>139</sup>. In 1992 at the Second Conference of Muslims of Karachayevo-Cherkessia and Stavropol' Kray at Karachayevsk, a group of 20 men, at the head of which was Bidzhiyev, under the green banner of Islam demanded the separation of the Karachayevo-Cherkess Republic from Russia accompanied by a programme of concrete actions. The tactics of conducting "the struggle against the

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<sup>138</sup> Russian word "vozhzhdeniye" - Revival, Rebirth, Renaissance.

<sup>139</sup> Karachayevo-Cherkessia would have been fertile ground to launch any anti-Russian movement. The creation of Karachayevo-Cherkessia and Kabardino-Balkar, some 75 years ago, are good examples of Bol'shevik nationalities policy. Undoubtedly a better solution for these four ethnic North Caucasian peoples would have been the creation of Karachayevo-Balkaria and Kabardino-Cherkessia. The Karachai and the Balkar are linguistically related Turkic Sunni Muslim peoples. The Cherkess and the Kabardins are Sunni Muslims and part of the Adygei people. There are other possible permutations: independent, separate Karachai and Balkar republics and a Kabardino-Cherkess Republic. According to Fiona Hill in her *"Russia's Tinderbox"* (Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass., September 1995, page 3). As well as friction between the Karachai and the Cherkess, there is also resentment directed at Russians by both these peoples, not only because of the Long Caucasian War, but since 1921 many Russian specialists and workers have moved in, displacing the local indigenous population, where, *"Russians have tended to dominate in all the state institutions, in particular amongst the committees of the Council of Ministers. The Karachai, on the other hand, tend to be amongst the directors of kolkhozy (collective farms), industrial enterprises, city and local authority administrators. The Cherkess are also to be found amongst kolkhoz directors and administrative workers"*

unbeliever” had already been thought out, it only remained to reinforce their influence on the territory of the North Caucasus. During this period in Karachayevo-Cherkessia a wave of mass meetings and protest actions rumbled around with the aim of overthrowing the spiritual directorate of this republic and adopting a new political course. There were already several hundreds of people who openly called themselves Wahhabis and summoned their compatriots to unite in a *Jihad*, a holy Muslim war. Bidzhiyev and his associates, not finding support from amongst the leadership of the spiritual directorate, began to organise their own schools and to build mosques. Money for these projects came from Saudi Arabia, often designated for “*reports concerning work completed*”<sup>140</sup>, the photographing of mosques in disrepair. Next the Wahhabis began to follow the practice of sending people abroad to study, with groups of between 15 to 30 young men going to Turkey, UAE and Jordan. Having returned, the students would drive from one aul to another and occupy themselves in teaching other young people. On the territory of Karachayevo-Cherkessia and neighbouring republics, according to Russian analysis, “*secret preparation is going on for the creation of an Islamic Republic very much on the lines of the Chechen variant*”<sup>141</sup>. The scheme is outlined below.

**Box 29 - Wahhabi Instruction and Recruitment**<sup>142</sup>

From the beginning the ideological processing goes on. Missionaries from the Far Abroad serve as bearers and teachers of the required ideas, distributing the appropriate literature and coordinating the work of associates “on the spot”. During visits to houses and meetings with Muslims they call “to fight for the purification of Islam, evict the unbelievers from the villages”, announcing that “the murder of a Russian is not considered a great sin”. More than once the question is raised about the reinforcement of Islamic influence in local government organs.

Today in many villages of Karachayevo-Cherkessia there are supporters of Wahhabism and their influence spreads to the eastern territories of Stavropol’ Kray. Amongst them and their associates there are already mullahs who have organised close links with Islamists in Chechnya and Dagestan. For the recruitment of like-minded people the Wahhabis use a material incentive which is categorically condemned in traditional Islam. For example, to the Mullahs who have agreed to become a supporter of Wahhabism they make a once-only benefit payment of US\$ 1,000-1,500, and then

<sup>140</sup> NG - *Stsenarii* No 5 (27) 13 May 1998 page 15.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

they pay out US\$ 100-150 every month - by no means a bad sum for the North Caucasus region.

Within the 'commune' relations are built on the principle of the infamous financial pyramid. For each new recruit brought in the person who brought him receives US\$ 50-100 and then they give a percentage to him from each one under his care who takes part in agitation. Mullahs receive currency transfers through bank branches and have corresponding sums from different international organisations.

At meetings in mosques preachers persuade young men to refuse to undertake military service in the Russian Army. For this they have 'alternative' service in their own army. According to Polyakova<sup>143</sup>, experts on eastern unarmed combat carry out instruction and training in camps belonging to Chechen field commanders. The plan of further education and teaching for the "reinforcement of ideological conviction" is developed in the manner illustrated below.

**Box 30 - Wahhabism in the "Reinforcement of Ideological Conviction"<sup>144</sup>**

From the beginning the 'Truth' is reinforced by ideological preparation and work in the spirit of Islamic extremism. Then a selection round takes place, and some of the most fervent adherents are sent for training and preparation in one of the camps belonging to one of the Chechen field commanders - Khattab. There are four such camps on the territory of Chechnya. According to information available to us in May last year these children had their final examination in the Dagestani village of Karamakhi.

The largest concentration of Wahhabis on the territory of Dagestan is situated in several rayony: Buynaksk, Kazbek, Khasavyurt and Botlikh. It is here the extremist religious figures work most actively, arranging mass meetings and protest actions disguised "by being held under the banner of Islam". Extremely diverse methods of conviction are used.

For example not so long ago on the territory of Dagestan, Mineral'nyye Vody and the eastern rayony of Stavropol' Kray a recurrent leaflet was being circulated, where in the capacity of authors "the Mudzhakhedy of Dagestan and the whole of the Caucasus, the Headquarters of the Central Front for the Liberation of Dagestan" indicated: "We wish to liberate Dagestan from the Russian Kafirs (Unbelievers) ... We have created our own army. The Army of the Liberation of Dagestan. We arrive and demolish all Russian laws and set our own laws of Allah ... The Mudzhakhedy make the Muslims of the Caucasus happy, having liberated part of the Caucasus soil - Chechnya. But Russia does not wish to give them full independence, gives them neither air space, nor a way out to other

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

*countries. But a liberation of Dagestan from Kafirs - there is another way out to other states. We have witnessed what the Mudzhakhedy with 50 men have done with the division in Buynaksk, captured the whole division within 5 minutes.*

Islamic fundamentalists, besides possessing the theory, have their own unique examination for confirming knowledge taught. Armed conflicts are provoked from time to time in villages. One of the most serious incidents took place in May of 1997 in Buynaksk rayon when in the settlement of Karamakhi a large detachment of fighters carrying out their training launched an attack on the local inhabitants. They shot up the militia post with automatic weapons, sniper rifles and grenades. The situation was only settled with the arrival of Dagestan Internal Ministry troops with armoured vehicles.

There can be no doubt that the advent of Wahhabism poses an increasingly serious threat to law and order in Dagestan through banditry and through the effect that it would appear to be having on traditional religious and social cohesion. The growing problems faced by the Dagestani Directorate against Organised Crime, not only from Wahhabi actions but from the criminal world within Dagestan, the political establishment and the exploitation of criminal inviolability by deputies are noted below.

**Box 31 - Remarks made on 22 November 1997 by Ruslan Gitinov  
Head of the Directorate against Organised Crime of Dagestan**<sup>145</sup>

According to information accumulated by the department in recent years, subversive, commando-sabotage terrorist activity of Chechen special forces and those of Turkey and other Muslim states has become very active on the territory of Dagestan.

They find active assistance and support in their own destructive activity in the centre of the politicised and Islamicised Dagestani criminality. Specifically, thanks to this support by all, the large-scale leaders of Chechen criminal groups are shielded on the territory of Dagestan until they can successfully escape justice.

However, criminal authorities, who have successfully broken through to power and obtained a deputy's inviolability and gone beyond the powers of justice, do not remain outside the attention of the Directorate against Organised Crime.

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<sup>145</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* No 25 (1596) 14 February 1998 page 5 "Novaya ugroza dlya Kavkaza - kriminal'nyy faktor v Dagestanskoy i regional'noy politike" by Gur'ya Murklinskaya.

## CONCLUSIONS

In looking at Dagestan or any other part of the North Caucasus, and to a somewhat lesser extent the Transcaucasus, no one part can be examined without reference to other parts of the region. There are two overriding themes which are repeated over and over again throughout the North Caucasus Republics and in Dagestan, namely: first, the lack of a proper policy and adequate attention for the North Caucasus from the Centre and second, the absence of a solution to the untidy question of Chechen status.

It is impossible to escape the conclusion that without the fulfilment of these two vital requirements by Moscow, the situation in the North Caucasus will continue to drift to a point, if it has not been reached already, where Moscow has lost the chance to regain lost ground. The trend will be the continued deterioration of the situation with the substance of any form of control eventually slipping untidily from Moscow's grasp. This is particularly true in the north east where effects of the Chechen conflict have been the most pronounced.

### **Constitution of Dagestan**

Amendments to the Constitution of Dagestan which would prolong the tenure of executive power in the hands of one person or within the continued grasp of a particular nationality will without doubt cause growing inter-ethnic problems in Dagestan which could lead to the disintegration of the republic. The Khachilayev affair is but one example of a 'manufactured reaction'. A serious situation could arise as a result of an amalgamation of opposition forces against the clutch of politicians in power. These could consist of unpredictable extremist elements, as well as groupings composed of the Chechen-Akhin, with the Kumyks and Avars in the north of the republic joining forces in neighbouring Ichkeria; in the south of the republic Lezghins and Dagestani Azerbaijanis could unite with their kinsmen in the north of Azerbaijan. The removal of the safeguard in Article 93 of the Constitution following earlier 'amendments' could well be the harbinger of increasing inter-ethnic discord in a republic. It would not only bring divisive consequences to the social fabric of Dagestan but could be instrumental in accelerating the dismantling of the republic.

- \* A looser combination or federalisation of minute autonomous republics might emerge, consisting of autonomous Kumyk, Lezghin and Nogai entities. In the case of the Lezghins, this might well lead to complications along the present Russian Federation (Dagestan)-Azerbaijan border.
- \* There is a strong possibility that Aukhovskiy rayon would revert to Chechnya.
- \* The position of the Lezghins straddling the border between Russia and Azerbaijan are of great pertinence to Dagestan's vulnerable southern border.
- \* From the point of view of Moscow a fractured Dagestan Republic would not be conducive to preventing the spread of influence from one or other of the two regional powers to

the south.

### **Post-Conflict Impact of Chechnya**

A decision by Moscow clarifying the question of Chechen status, including the honouring of agreements signed previously, would do much to alleviate tension, by removing much of the *raison d'être* of the illegal Chechen *bandformirovaniye*.

Whilst the priorities of the legally elected Chechen leadership must be the restoration of the economy, reconstruction of the infrastructure and rehabilitation of the Chechen people, together with the fulfilment of the desire to run their own affairs without interference from Moscow. They may not necessarily include the creation of a North Caucasus Islamic Republic stretching from Makhachkala to the Kuban'. Yet there could be benefits for the Chechens:

- \* With a Dagestan oriented to a union with Chechnya.
- \* In the re-acquisition of Aukhovskiy rayon. This would not only rectify a long-standing loss of territory, but it would provide an access to the Caspian, in addition to the proposed outlet up the Chanti-Argun into Georgia.

In view of the putative benefits to Chechnya, it is difficult to come to any firm conclusions over the existence of covert connections between the Chechen government and the Wahhabis, and with Salman Raduyev and the *badformirovaniya*. Whilst Raduyev is regarded as being something more than a nuisance, sometimes nuisances have their uses.

### **Relations between Makhachkala and Moscow**

There is an urgent need for some form of economic package not only for Dagestan but for the North Caucasus as a whole. Failure to implement some form of effective economic plan will lead to a deterioration of the situation. Economic assistance "in the agricultural direction" should be in the form of aid at the grass-roots level, in the villages; schemes which are effective through their simplicity and low cost applied directly to the people eking out a living on the land.

Efforts could be made toward liaising with Western companies, for example, for the production of vehicles for oil and gas exploration. Whilst this would not erase immediately the effects of "*in an hour these factories were without work*", it might provide hope for the future, reducing the 60% of the population on the poverty line and the 30% without work.

### **Wahhabism**

Lack of economic policy or assistance for the North Caucasus from Moscow will engender further deterioration of the situation. This in turn will provide nourishment for Islamic Fundamentalism and will produce a trend towards greater expansion of Wahhabism. Wahhabism would appear to be a growing major threat to stability throughout the region, not only against Russia but also amongst the peoples of the North Caucasus. There is also the danger that Wahhabism could spread to Azerbaijan, particularly in view of the dire conditions of life there.