

Ingushetia's Opposition Set to Hold "Decisive" Protest

Ingushetia's opposition is set to hold what Newsru.com described as a "final and decisive" republic-wide protest in Nazran and other cities on May 6. The website reported on May 5 that the main demands of the protest are the freeing of political prisoners, the resignation of Murat Zyazikov as Ingushetia's president and the return of Ruslan Aushev to that post. The opposition has already gathered more than 50,000 signatures on a petition calling for Aushev's return as president.



Citing Novaya Gazeta, Newsru.com reported that representatives of 16 of Ingushetia's teips, or clans, will take part in the protest. The decision to hold the republic-wide protest was taken at a meeting of six teips, to which six residents of the republic who were arrested for participation in the abortive January 26 protest in Nazran belong (Chechnya Weekly, January 31). On May 5, the republic's Supreme Court handed down decisions freeing five of the demonstrators from pre-trial detention. The court had earlier handed down a decision freeing another of the January 26 demonstrators from pre-trial detention. All six had been placed in a remand prison in Nalchik, Kabardino-Balkaria, where they held a hunger strike lasting 12 days.

The teips have been joined in the protest by representatives of those families seeking to revive the ancient Ingush supreme deliberative body, Mekhk-Kkhel (Chechnya Weekly, March 6). The acting Mekhk-Kkhel chairman, Akhmed Kotiev, told Novaya Gazeta that protests will take place in Ingushetia's capital Magas, Nazran, Malgobek, Karabulak and Ordzhonikidzevskaya.

Protest organizers say that authorities have begun putting obstacles in their way. Magomed Khazbiev, the head of the national protest's organizing committee and the brother of one of the six arrested for the January 26 demonstration, said that dozens of state and municipal workers who signed the petition calling for the return of Ruslan Aushev as Ingushetia's president have been fired from their jobs and that police have towed cars displaying stickers bearing Aushev's portrait and torn off the stickers. As a result of such pressure tactics, some of the protest's organizers have urged dropping the demand for Aushev's return to the presidency, at least until all of the signatures on the petition have been gathered, Newsru.com reported.

According to the website, Ingushetia's government has not yet responded to five notifications about the planned June 6 protest submitted by its organizers. Meanwhile, the republic's chief prosecutor has already declared the protest illegal.

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<http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2374219>

Influential NGO Issues Report on Dagestan

On June 3, the International Crisis Group (ICG) released a report on the situation in Dagestan, which concludes that an unstable economic situation and corruption are the main reasons for the upsurge in terrorism in the republic.

The report's executive summary states that while Dagestan "has avoided large-scale violence despite its proximity to Chechnya," the republic is now "suffering from escalating street warfare." The ICG estimates that several hundred local and federal security forces, administrators, politicians, ministers and journalists have been killed in Dagestan since 2003, with the militant Islamist group Sharia Jamaat responsible for much of the violence. "Some of its leaders fought in Chechnya, but its extremist propaganda is also attracting unemployed Dagestani youth," the ICG says of the Sharia Jamaat. "This home-grown extremism, espousing jihadi theology and employing terrorist methods, is a new phenomenon. Police efforts to end the street war have been ineffective and in some instances counter-productive. While supporting loyal local elites, Moscow can help halt the increase in violence if it implements an efficient anti-corruption policy and reintegrates youth into the economic and political system."



According to the ICG report, "street warfare" has increased in Dagestan since 2003 and "by far surpassed" inter-ethnic conflict over land, resources and employment as the main source of violence in the republic. "In response, the republic's security forces, often with federal reinforcements, are conducting special operations against Islamic militants which result in yet more bloodshed," the report states. "The cycle of attacks and reprisals has created a spiral of violence, which has grown distinctively worse in the past year." As a result, the Sharia Jamaat "has little difficulty recruiting young Dagestanis who are unemployed, traumatized by cruelty endured in jail and motivated by propaganda promoting jihad and armed resistance," the ICG report states. "Corruption and nepotism exclude many from the economy, feed their grievances and drive them into radical Islamist movements. Corruption is widespread in many regions of the former Soviet Union, but in Dagestan the problem is more severe and coupled with a flourishing black market and clan-based economic system."

The ICG report emphasizes that violence in Dagestan today is caused mainly by "jihadi fighters," not inter-ethnic tensions. "Although competition for land and political appointments often follows ethnic lines, the republic's ethnic complexity has neutralized tensions by encouraging allegiances between groups and has prevented the emergence of a dominant one." The report warns that conflict between Avars and Dargins remains a possibility, especially after Mukhu Aliev, an Avar, became president, but also notes that electoral reforms in 2006 sought to "de-ethnicize" politics by ending ethnic electoral districts and introducing a general voting list. These reforms were put to the test in the republic's parliamentary elections in March 2007 and apparently succeeded, given that the elections were less an "inter-ethnic competition" than a "personal duel" for political and economic power between Aliev and Said Amirov, a Dargin.

The ICG's full report on Dagestan can be found at: http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/europe/caucasus/192_russia_s_dagestan_conflict_causes.pdf.

The ICG's report on Dagestan was presented at the Regnum news agency's press center in Moscow on June 3. The news agency quoted Alain Déléroz, ICG vice president (Europe), as saying that large-scale warfare is unlikely to break out in Dagestan. "Nevertheless, the federal authorities need to undertake a serious anti-corruption effort and engage with youth to break the cycle of attacks and reprisals between security forces and militants, which has grown distinctly worse in the past year," Déléroz said.

Kavkazky Uzel on May 27 quoted Moscow Helsinki Group chairwoman Lyudmila Alekseyeva as saying: "What went on in Chechnya during the war is what is actually going on in Ingushetia and Dagestan now in relation to innocent civilians. There is no war, but innocent civilians are being kidnapped, murdered [and] robbed." The website quoted Novaya Gazeta military correspondent Vyacheslav Izmailov as saying that Dagestan is the most dangerous place in Russia for ordinary citizens and journalists alike. Those fighting for power in Dagestan, he said, are creating a tense situation in the republic. "Because in practically whatever district you take, officials are ordering killers against each other," Kavkazky Uzel quoted Izmailov as saying. "And it is very dangerous for journalists in those conditions to speak

the truth.”

Meanwhile, Kavkazky Uzel reported on June 4 that Ilyas Sharipov, a 29-year-old inhabitant of the village of Balakhani in Dagestan's Untsukul'sky district who was detained in the city of Khasavyurt on May 1 and whose relatives and lawyer were unable to determine his whereabouts, is in fact incarcerated in Khasavyurt's remand prison. A source in Dagestan's Interior Ministry said Sharipov is suspected of membership in “underground groups” operating on the outskirts of Balakhani and in crimes committed in the district, including a May 8 attack on police personnel in which no one was hurt. According to Sharipov's lawyer, Nutsalai Magomadov, after Sharipov was detained in Khasavyurt on May 1, he was sent to the city of Buinaksk, where he was declared a suspect in kidnapping, illegal weapons possession and banditry, and was then sent to the republic's capital, Makhachkala, where members of the republic's anti-organized crime directorate (UBOP) alleged that his car had been used in the murder of police officers. The lawyer said that Sharipov was beaten and tortured while in custody and told he would be taken to Khankala, the Russian military base outside the Chechen capital Grozny, if he did not confess to the crimes.

According to Kavkazky Uzel, another suspected member of the underground group that Ilyas Sharipov allegedly belonged to was seized by people in masks on May 1 and found in a Makhachkala jail only on May 9. The website quoted the head of the press service of Dagestan's Interior Ministry, Mark Tolchinsky, as saying that the six men who made up the group were jailed on suspicion of preparing a series of terrorist acts timed to coincide with Russia's May holidays.

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Voice of Beslan Asks Prosecutor General's Office to Probe Putin

Members of the Voice of Beslan human rights group, which represents victims of the September 2004 terrorist act, issued a statement on June 4 demanding that the Prosecutor General's Office question and launch a criminal case against Prime Minister Vladimir Putin in connection with his handling of the terrorist hostage-taking in Beslan and bloody denouement. "In our statement to the Prosecutor General we are asking to investigate the actions of former President Vladimir Putin and question him for an explanation of the circumstances surrounding the rejection of negotiations [with the Beslan hostage takers] and the use of tanks, flamethrowers, grenade launchers on the school building [in which the hostages were held]," the Sobkor website quoted Voice of Beslan co-chair Ella Kesaeva as saying. "We are also asking for the filing of criminal charges with respect to former President Vladimir Putin in accordance with a number of articles of the Russian Federation Criminal Code."



The Voice of Beslan said the reason they asked the Prosecutor General's Office to question Putin and investigate him for criminal wrongdoing was his interview with the French newspaper *Le Monde*, published on May 31, in which he defended the actions of the security forces during the Beslan incident. Specifically, Putin was asked whether he could have acted differently in both the Beslan hostage crisis and the Moscow theater siege of October 2002—whether it would have been possible, as the interviewer put it, "to resolve this problem in a different way." Putin responded: "No. I am certain that if we had tried to resolve it differently, it would all still be continuing. One might have counted on more effective activity, maybe, by our special units, special services, but that we had to stop ... these attempts to destabilize the situation in Russia is completely obvious. And any country in the world ... the moment it makes concessions to terrorists, in the end it will suffer greater losses than those that occur while carrying out a special operation. In the final analysis, this tears down the state and increases the number of victims."

According to the Voice of Beslan, Putin, in his comments to *Le Monde*, essentially took full responsibility for the actions of the special forces during the Beslan crisis and made it clear that he was personally in charge of the entire security operation. "It means that he in fact gave the command to use tanks and flamethrowers," said Ella Kesaev, who added that the legality of the actions of the security forces during the Beslan crisis has still not been assessed and "that is why no one among those responsible for the deaths of more than 300 innocent civilians has yet been punished."

The Voice of Beslan charges that in refusing to negotiate with the Beslan hostage takers, the operational headquarters set up by the federal authorities during the crisis violated the articles of the Russian constitution stating that an individual's rights and freedoms are the highest value and guaranteeing all Russian citizens the right to life. The group also charges that Putin, as commander in chief of the armed forces, allowed indiscriminate weaponry (tanks, flamethrowers and grenade launchers) to be used against Beslan's School No. 1, where the hostages were held, and also allowed the army to be used in a counter-terrorist operation, which is illegal. The group also claims that Putin's actions at Beslan amounted to organizing a criminal group for committing crimes, given that the power structures accountable to the president committed crimes by refusing to negotiate with the hostage takers and by using the army unlawfully.

The Voice of Beslan also accuses Putin of using his official position to interfere with the work of investigators. In this they were supported by Tatyana Karpova, head of the group of victims of the Moscow theater siege, Newsru.com reported on June 4. "Beslan completely repeated 'Nord-Ost', except that three times more hostages at [the theater on] Dubrovka were killed than terrorists as a

result of the special operation there, while in Beslan six times more innocent civilians died than terrorists," Karpova said. In the Dubrovka siege, 130 hostages died when security forces stormed the theater, most of them from the incapacitating gas employed by the security forces. Forty terrorists were also killed, while nearly 800 hostages were freed. In the Beslan incident, 1,100 people were taken hostage, 331 were killed, more than half of them children, and 172 were wounded.

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Putin Emphasizes Progress in Chechnya

In his May 31 interview with *Le Monde*, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin not only expressed no regrets about the way the Moscow theater siege and Beslan hostage crisis were handled, but spoke about the situation in Chechnya and the North Caucasus more generally. Here, too, he accentuated the positive.



"The situation in the Chechen Republic has improved, and it improved because of several circumstances, the main one being the fact that the Chechen people have made a certain choice for themselves towards the development of their republic within the Russian Federation," the RussiaToday website quoted Putin as telling the French newspaper. "We saw the reaction of the Chechen people to attempts to penetrate the consciousness of the local population with forms of Islam that are not traditional for them. This is what it all started with. Wahhabism in its primordial form is a normal current of Islam, there is nothing terrible in it. But there are extremist trends within the framework of Wahhabism itself. It was precisely these currents that attempted to penetrate the consciousness of the Chechen people. And the people realized that someone from outside was fighting not for their interests, but trying to use people as a tool to loosen the Russian Federation as a major and significant player on the international arena, and that would bring only suffering to the people. The awareness of this factor was the main thing, in terms of stabilization. This was what it started with."

Putin said that once it was clear that the attitude of the Chechen people had changed, he and his administration handed over the bulk of responsibilities, both in law-enforcement and the economy, to the Chechen authorities. "It seemed impossible that a defense minister in the government led by [Aslan] Maskhadov could become a member of today's Chechen parliament," Putin said, referring to Magomed Khanbiev, the former Chechen Republic of Ichkeria (ChRI) Defense Minister and general of the ChRI armed forces who is now a deputy in Chechnya's parliament (Chechnya Weekly, May 29). "Now it's a fact. And it has created the necessary political conditions for the reconstruction of Grozny and for immediate steps in the economy."

Putin did address the issue of human rights in Chechnya, insisting that rule of law is operating in the republic. "I can tell you that courts and the prosecutor's office is actively working in the Chechen Republic, and investigations are carried out," he said. "Suspects are made accountable for any crimes committed, disregarding their motives or previous posts or jobs. Even concerning former rebels and Russian servicemen. Criminal prosecution is possible not only in the future but now. We have completed trials against a number of people who are convicted while serving as Russian officers, they are now in prison. I should say it was a hard decision for our courts, because despite their apparent crimes, a court jury acquitted them on more than one occasion. It shows trends in Russian society. Especially after the atrocities done to our citizens by terrorists. I'm personally certain that if we want to bring order and peace, we mustn't let anyone contravene the law." It is worth noting that in his interview with *Le Monde*, Putin did not mention Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov.

Putin also played down the upsurge in violence in Ingushetia and Dagestan. "As far as Dagestan and Ingushetia are concerned, we see and are well aware of what is going on there—there are indeed disputes and conflicts of interest, but it is not about political interests, but first and foremost, economic, as well as some political conflicts, but not related to any separatist movements—it is about an internal political struggle within the republics themselves," RussiaToday quoted him as telling *Le Monde*.

Putin told the French newspaper that the main priority for the North Caucasus is rebuilding the social and economic sectors. "Many people live below the poverty line there, most suffering from unemployment, which is particularly bad among young people," he said. "So we have adopted a Program of Development for Southern Russia, which above all concerns the North Caucasus republics. This program envisages huge investments into the economy and the social sector as a priority. I count on it to be fulfilled successfully."

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Further Violence between Chechen Police and Vostok Battalion Reported

During a May 31 meeting with members of Chechnya's government and the heads of the republic's district administrations, Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov announced that criminal cases have been launched not only against Badrudi Yamadaev, the member of the Vostok battalion of the Russian Defense Ministry's Main Intelligence Directorate (GRU) accused of kidnapping and murder, but also against Sulim Yamadaev, who is the battalion's commander and Badrudi's older brother. Kadyrov said that bodies are being exhumed in Vedeno district and other areas of Chechnya in connection with murders that the Yamadaev brothers are accused of complicity in.

Gazeta on June 2 quoted another Yamadaev brother, Isa, who commands the Vostok battalion's 5th Company, as saying in response to Kadyrov's accusations: "He spoke about all five brothers, including Ruslan, an ex-State Duma Deputy, and Dzhabrail, who is no longer alive, as criminals. We have received no notification from the prosecutor's office about the launching of criminal cases, because there is no basis for it. It is impossible to understand where the president of the republic is getting such rumors from. He is inciting public opinion against us."

Meanwhile, Gazeta reported that the 250 Vostok fighters who remain loyal to Sulim Yamadaev are living on their base in Gudermes without electricity, water or gas. One of them, an officer, told Gazeta that the utility companies gave no reason for cutting off their services. "We don't have enough water for performing ablutions before prayer; we cannot go to Friday prayers in the mosque because it is guarded by Kadyrovite siloviki," the Vostok officer said. "Every trip to the city ends up in a skirmish with them, so far only with fists." Several Chechen policemen were reportedly beaten up and hospitalized after getting into a confrontation with Vostok battalion members on the Gudermes-Shuani highway late last month (Chechnya Weekly, May 29). Gazeta reported on June 2 that two Vostok battalion members had been beaten up over the previous 10 days, while a third was hit 50 times with sticks on the orders of the Sharia court in the village of Dzhalka. According to the newspaper, all three were subsequently hospitalized at the Russian military base in Khankala outside Grozny. Gazeta reported that Chechen police fired at a fourth Vostok battalion member but that he managed to escape unharmed.

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Briefs

Kadyrov's Order to Move Memorial Sparks Controversy

Chechens have criticized the decision of their president, Ramzan Kadyrov, to dismantle a memorial in Grozny to the victims of Soviet repression. Agence France-Presse reported on June 4 that Kadyrov ordered the memorial, which consists of hundreds of tombstones and a huge dagger in a clenched fist, relocated from the center of the Chechen capital to its outskirts, within sight of the main Russian military base. The memorial, which recalls Soviet dictator Josef Stalin's deportation of the Chechen and Ingush people in 1944 and features the message "We will not break, we will not weep, we will never forget" emblazoned on a brick backdrop, was erected by Dzhokhar Dudaev in the early 1990s. Reuters on June 3 quoted Kadyrov as saying he wants to build a new monument. "The original place for the memorial was not very convenient," Kadyrov said in comments distributed by his press service. "The new location will include a place for ceremonies, a mosque and a composite history of the subject. An obelisk will be built with all the names of the people who died in the relocation of the Chechens." Reuters quoted Grozny resident Zaur Timerbaev as saying: "I'm outraged. To move such a monument you should ask the people. There should be a referendum. This is a catastrophe." AFP quoted Natalya Estemirova, who works with the Memorial human rights group in Grozny, as saying: "It's really the only true monument to the people. When it went up, Chechens could finally talk about the deportations. People wanted so much to commemorate all those that never came back. For years that had been forbidden and the pain was suppressed." She added that relocating the monument near the Russian military headquarters of Khankala, which is linked to torture allegations, is an insult. "Everyone here knows very well what Khankala stands for," she said.

Politicians Shot in Ingushetia and Karachaevo-Cherkessia

Unknown gunmen fired on a police checkpoint in Ingushetia's Malgobeksky district on June 2, wounding a sergeant in the republic's road patrol service, Aslan Kartuev, Interfax reported. The attackers, thought to number four or five, fired small arms and grenade-launchers at the police post from a distance of 400-500 meters for three to five minutes. The republican Interior Ministry denied initial reports that Kartuev was killed in the attack. On May 30, Vakha Yevloev, a former deputy in Ingushetia's parliament and a cousin of the republic's ex-president Ruslan Aushev, was shot and wounded in Nazran by unidentified attackers. According to Newsru.com, Yevloev was a world champion free-style wrestler and member of the Union of Rightist Forces (SPS) who supported Ingushetia's current president, Murat Zyazikov, the republic's controversial presidential election in 2002, in which Zyazikov defeated Ruslan Aushev amid widespread charges of fraud. Meanwhile, a deputy in the parliament of Karachaevo-Cherkessia, Murat Akbaev, was shot and killed by unknown assailants in the republic's capital, Cherkessk, on June 1, Interfax reported.

Relatives of 1999 Apartment Building Bombing Victim Call for a New Probe

Two sisters who lost their mother in one of the three September 1999 bombings of apartment buildings in Moscow and Volgograd, which together killed 292 people and were blamed on Chechen separatists, have written an open letter to President Dmitry Medvedev urging him to launch a fully open, independent investigation of the bombings. In the letter, which was published in the Wall Street Journal on May 30, Tatyana and Alyona Morozov, who now live in the United States, wrote that while the bombings "were blamed on Chechen terrorists and used to justify the resumption of a full-scale war against Chechnya later that month, there are numerous indications that Russian security services may have been involved," as well as "clear evidence of a cover-up by the authorities." They noted, among other things, that on September 23, 1999, police arrested three Federal Security Service (FSB) agents who had planted a detonator and RDX – the same explosive used in the earlier bombings – in the basement of a residential building in the city of Ryazan, and that the FSB explained the agents' activities as a "training exercise," claiming the sacks of explosives actually contained only sugar. They also wrote that Mark Blumenfeld, the property manager of their building on Guryanova Street in Moscow that was blown up, said that FSB agents had pressured him into "identifying" Achemez Gochiyayev, a Chechen he had never seen before, as the man who had rented storage space in the building's basement. The sisters also noted that four people investigating the FSB's possible involvement in the bombings – Duma deputies Sergei Yushenkov and Yuri Schekochihin, journalist Anna Politkovskaya and former FSB officer Aleksandr Litvinenko – were murdered.

Another Suspect in Politkovskaya Murder Released

Russian investigators on June 3 cleared Shamil Buraev, a former head of Chechnya's Achkhoy-Martan district, in the October 2006 murder of Anna Politkovskaya. Reuters reported that Buraev was released on bail under a signed bond not to leave his registered address after prosecutors said he posed no obstacle to further investigations. Buraev is the fourth suspect recently released out of nine people linked to Politkovskaya's murder. Investigators said four men remain in custody.

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Medvedev Confirms, Ustinov Accepts, Kozak and the Military Speak the Sobering Truth

By Mairbek Vatchagaev

Three notable events last week became a final brushstroke in the picture of Chechnya's immediate future envisaged by those directing the actions of the Chechen government by proxy from Moscow.

The old question of what will become of Chechnya after the end of former President Vladimir Putin's term is becoming a lot clearer as the policies of Russia's new leadership on Chechnya are beginning to take shape. The carrot-and-stick principle remains the centerpiece of Russia's approach to Chechnya and her leader.

To cite an example, much ado about nothing came after Ramzan Kadyrov was appointed as a member of the Presidium of the Russian Federation State Council (a presidential advisory body that never passed a decision of any importance to the Russian state), which admits two leaders of the federal autonomous republics as new members every six months. Upon his appointment to the State Council, Kadyrov lost no time in declaring that this decision by President Dmitry Medvedev was a sign that the degree of Medvedev's attention to Chechnya and that the president's position toward

Kadyrov personally will remain unchanged (<http://www.chechnyatoday.com/texts/t629.htm>). That, however, does not explain why Kadyrov was passed up for Council membership in the past in favor of North Ossetian President Taimuraz Mamsurov and Tuva President Sholban Karaool. What is clear is that this second-rate appointment should not be given much importance within Russia's uber-bureaucratic administrative apparatus.

Most intriguingly, Ramzan Kadyrov's initial interpretation of his new post alluded to those who predicted his fall after Dmitry Medvedev's election: Kadyrov said that his new appointment should be a lesson for the naysayers. Paradoxically, this only served to confirm the reality of the risk that the new Russian president may adopt a different view toward someone who has always claimed that his loyalty was reserved exclusively for Putin. Perhaps very soon we should expect Kadyrov to profess his loyalty to the current Russian president as well—all the more so because at the height of Kadyrov's clashes with the Yamadaev brothers, some of Kadyrov's adversaries invited both brothers to attend Medvedev's inauguration as president (www.regnum.ru/news/1001590.html), which caused some concern in Kadyrov's camp. That someone managed to extend invitations to both Yamadaev brothers, Sulim and Ruslan, when the total invitee count was only 2,500, is a clear indication that some Kremlin officials are not too fond of Vladimir Putin's protégé.

As for the appointment of Vladimir Ustinov, the former Prosecutor General (who suggested that terrorists' family members should be taken hostage) and Justice Minister, to the post of presidential envoy to the Southern Federal District, it should be noted that he is a member of Vladimir Putin's team and will not create trouble for those favored by his patron. Unlike Dmitry Kozak, who as presidential envoy to the Southern Federal District quietly attempted to bring the state of affairs in his region to Vladimir Putin's attention and thus put a damper on Ramzan Kadyrov's demands and methods of governance (see Aleksandr Khinshtein, "Caucasus for Sale. Price Negotiable," *Moskovsky Komsomolets*, June 16, 2005), Ustinov has no such ambitions. He is a team player and will remain on Putin's team. It is therefore unsurprising that his first official visit took him to the place that needs the federal center's support the most, i.e. Chechnya (*Chechnya Weekly*, May 29).

Ustinov's visit lasted for three days, during which he met with Chechens across the republic and tried his best to pretend that he can do something for them. In truth, the position of federal district presidential envoy was created solely to provide a future alternative to the current version of federalism (the multi-faceted form of federalism with autonomous republics, autonomous ethnic entities, oblasts, krais, etc.) and today serves as a duplicate layer of Kremlin control but without any real points of leverage over local leaders other than forcing them to look constantly over their shoulder at Moscow. Ustinov's declarations that those searching for relatives listed as missing need help (<http://www.rosbalt.ru/2008/05/30/489521.html>) baffled the Chechens, who fail to see why the Russian army, police and FSB cannot simply release the identities of those who were executed or are still imprisoned in Russia's secret jails, given that these thousands of Chechens were abducted by the Russians, not the Chechen rebels.

In the meantime, Regional Development Minister Dmitry Kozak said something that everyone had previously suspected but could not attribute to a high-level Moscow official. While discussing regional subsidies, he noted that the other Russian Federation jurisdictions cannot even dream of the amount of funds earmarked for Chechnya: according to Kozak, investment in Chechnya's development will reach over a billion dollars a year through 2012, or a total of \$4.7 billion (110 billion rubles) (www.rosbalt.ru/2008/05/23/487102.html). In his moment of candor, Kozak noted that the funds are directed not merely for Chechnya's rebuilding, but rather to "implement the commitments to improve social and economic conditions in the region and ensure improved economic growth indicators." That is, the money is being spent to pacify Chechnya, as a price for ostensible "stability" propagated forcibly by proclaiming "popular" affection for the "great son of the Chechen people," Ramzan Kadyrov.

At the very same time—and with timing most unfortunate for the Chechen leadership—the commander of the Unified Group of Forces in the North Caucasus, Nikolai Sivak, stated specifically, and in contradiction to Ramzan Kadyrov's statement, that young men are continuing to leave for the mountains to join the rebels (Chechnya Weekly, May 22), and that a significant number of the people his troops are arresting today are under the age of twenty. The general lamented that the local populace is providing the rebels with all kinds of support and that the reality of the situation still presents a significant risk of attacks on Russian interests (Kommersant, May 27).

Assuming this is true, it appears that someone is trying to mislead the public, because while the military claims that the rebel fighters are a continuing threat, the regional leaders, to a man, are trying to paint the region as the best spot in all of Russia. According to Lyoma Gudaev, the head of information and analysis of President Kadyrov's administration, the military is deliberately exaggerating the dangers. "The military is manufacturing information about the mass rebel armies and the popular support they enjoy because the army has to justify their presence in Chechnya and extract new ranks and awards," he said. That is, the Chechen leadership is trying to discredit the too-truthful and unwelcome candor of the Russian army officials. A lack of coordination between the military and the Chechens has been a permanent fixture of the entire military campaign in the region and therefore Sivak's comments were probably not a deliberate attempt to pressure Kadyrov. The more likely explanation is the lack of coordination between branches of government commonly encountered in Chechnya campaign and across Russia more generally.

Therefore, it can be concluded that Ramzan Kadyrov's self-actualization period is not yet over: he is waiting for tangible support from the new president, who needs to ensure peace and stability in Chechnya, even if it is achieved by means of terror and pressure on its people. Neither Moscow nor Rostov nor Grozny wants to destabilize the ostensibly safe Chechnya. A real war may be brought about only by the armed resistance forces, which at present are spending more time on political gamesmanship with the Europe-based opponents of their recently announced Emirate.

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Teofil Lapinski: Hero and Leader of the Circassian War for Independence (Part One)

By Aliy Berzegov

***Note to Readers:** In response to readers' requests, Chechnya Weekly will occasionally feature articles related to the history of the North Caucasus.

Russian expansion on the territory of the Caucasus region, which resulted in a full-scale Russian-Chechen war, continued for more than a century (1763-1864). The first territorial unit to fall under the relentless assault of the Russian imperial machine was the Cherkess town of Mozdok in 1763. This was followed by the annexation of the territories of Eastern Cherkessia–Kabarda, which were populated by highlanders since antiquity.

By the 1830s Russia began to annex the territories of Western Cherkessia by crisscrossing them with various cordon sanitaire lines that it forcibly populated with a militarized semi-Slavic but also exclusively Orthodox Christian population—the Cossacks. This is how the so-called Kuban Line was created. The Kuban Line was intended to cut off communication between Eastern and Western Cherkess. It also represented the rear base for the further relocation of the line into the heartland of the independent Cherkessia.

A new spiral in military hostilities between Cherkessia and aggressor Russian Empire happened at the beginning of 1840. After repeated and persistent demands by the leadership of the irregular Cherkess detachments to leave the territory of sovereign Cherkessia, which was illegally occupied by Russian troops, last-resort decisive measures were undertaken. A mass counteroffensive on enemy positions led to the fall of several forts of the illegal Black Sea Cordon Line. The garrisons were either completely eliminated or taken captive, and the fortifications were damaged or left in ruins. This last circumstance was actually a tactical mistake by the Cherkess leadership because it was necessary to leave a limited contingent of troops to control these strategic positions since the rest of the coastline was unsuited for establishing bases for further incursions and interventions. These mistakes were exploited by the Russians, who several years later reoccupied these strategically important bays and rebuilt their forts.

The Crimean War of 1853-1856, which followed the aforementioned events, served as another pretext for cleansing Cherkessia of occupiers. At the time Russia was no longer able to hold back the permanent Cherkess siege of its fortifications and decided to reallocate all resources to the Crimean War against the allied troops. It should be noted here that for a number of reasons the Cherkess army did not take part in the Crimean War.

Parallel to the developments in the south, the Russian Empire simultaneously wanted to strengthen its positions in the west. This was particularly true of Poland and Finland. Thus, November 1830 marked the famous Polish uprising against the colonial yoke of Tsarist Russian imperialism. After brutally suppressing the uprising, the Russian Tsar revoked the Constitution that had been given to the Polish Kingdom in 1815. This was followed by the uprisings of 1846 and 1848, which were also suppressed and their participants either killed or sent to Siberia for penal servitude. Some were forced to emigrate to the West and from there they continued the struggle for the independence of their occupied Motherland. The constant toughening of the colonial regime invariably resulted in the exponential rise of the Polish independence movement. One of the brightest representatives of this movement was Teofil Lapinski, who also participated in the independence war of the Cherkess state.

Teofil Lapinski was born in 1826 in Galicia, one of the historical regions of Poland. His childhood and adolescence were spent in the midst of active political events: the rise of the Polish national liberation movement. This had a formative impact on his character and political beliefs. Starting in his youth he actively participated in the struggle for Poland's independence. The suppression of the uprisings of 1846 and 1848 forced him to emigrate. Similar to many other members of the Polish emigration, he took part in the Hungarian Revolution of 1848-1849. During the Crimean War he participated in combat as an artillery colonel on the side of the European powers in the contingent of the Polish Division of General Zamoiski.

It was then that representatives of the Polish national liberation movement began to pay increasing attention to the Caucasus, where for almost a century highlanders provided a clear example of resistance to Russian military might.

Poles, Hungarians, Ukrainians and other peoples, who experienced the colonial yoke from major powers, were—in the words of Lapinski—were powerfully impressed at the romantic descriptions of heroic deeds by the courageous Cherkess that were frequently printed in the European press at the time. At the same time they saw that Europe verbally supported the righteous struggle of the Cherkess state for its sovereignty, but in practice undertook no serious efforts to offer real assistance.

In this context Lapinski planned to render practical military assistance to the poorly equipped Cherkess army. He considered everyone who resisted the Russian Empire to be natural allies of Poland. According to Lapinski's plan, a Polish expeditionary corps numbering between six and fifteen thousand officers and soldiers and augmented by powerful artillery was to be formed in Turkey. Lapinski, who operated in Turkey under his nom de guerre Teffik Bey, knew that the Cherkess army was in need of artillery reinforcement. The Russian government, however, found out about these preparations and immediately sent a protest to the Sublime Port. The Ottoman government did not want to complicate further the already strained relations with Russia and was forced to disband the Polish corps. Yet this misfortune did not compel Lapinski to abandon his plans. After overcoming many difficulties and obstacles, in November 1857 the Polish detachment led by colonel Lapinski disembarked on the shores of Cherkessia. The Polish volunteers made a significant contribution to the history of resistance in Cherkessia. They demonstrated genuine courage and self-sacrifice in the struggle for freedom and ideals of justice, which are held so dearly by all free peoples.

For three long years (1857-1859), Lapinski and his soldiers fought shoulder to shoulder with highlanders as part of Cherkess detachments. The Cherkess forces were primarily comprised of two centers, which were in constant interaction with each other—the Northern center under the leadership of Muhammad-Amin and Southern center led by the respected representatives of Ubykh clans (Berzeg, Dechen, Aulbaa, Zeishu and others). Thus, Muhammad-Amin was responsible for recruiting conscripts from the northern slopes of the mountains of Cherkessia, while the southern Cherkess, who were initially led by Haji Degumko Berzeg, and later by Geranduk Berzeg, united under the green Cherkess banner conscripts from Anapa to the Bzyp River, and further along the mountains to Tsebelda, which is in present-day Abkhazia.

The main specialization of Lapinski was artillery support of blitzkrieg attacks by highland cavalry units. He also took part in the formation and training of new Slavic detachments that were formed from soldiers of Polish, Ukrainian and sometimes Russian descent, who had deserted the Russian troops. The leadership of the Cherkess resistance agreed not to exchange the defecting soldiers or return them for payment. Several centers for production of military equipment necessary for mountain warfare were set up high in the mountains. These centers employed qualified specialists who were former Russian artillery experts. One of the settlements was comprised of several hundred soldiers, who were almost exclusively Slavs (mainly Poles).

During his stay in Cherkessia, Teofil Lapinski, as any multidimensional and naturally inquisitive personality, kept a diary in which he noted the most meticulous details of events surrounding him. His keen mind kept notice of anything that was even of slight importance. For he was not only a witness but also a participant in the events he described. Indeed, he was one of the main characters of the drama that unfolded in 1857-1859 in the four western historical provinces of Cherkessia: Natukhay, Shapsugiy, Abadzekhia and Ubykhia. Subsequently his field notes were systematized and published in German in Hamburg in 1863. The value of his work for our time is difficult to overestimate! The Russian translation and publication of this document under the title "Highlanders of the Caucasus and their independence struggle against Russians" occurred only 132 years later—in 1995—at the publishing house "El-Fa" in the city of Nalchik, Kabardino-Balkaria.

Comprehensive examination of contemporary developments, which Lapinski often carried out with more pedantry than was required, gives us a lot of interesting information. For instance, his quantitative assessment of the population of Cherkessia, in our opinion, is understated. First of all, it is necessary to take into account the fact that there was a full-scale war to repel the attacks of the aggressor's troops. Secondly, under such dire circumstances it was impossible to carry out a proper census. According to Lapinski, the Cherkess population was estimated at 1.5 million, although he did concede that there were very likely mistakes in this estimate.

Here it should also be noted that the process of the genocide of Cherkess people—the systematic extermination of people locale by locale, their relocation from ancestral lands—was carried out with varying intensity long before Lapinski prepared his approximate demographic estimates based on military calculations. This is corroborated by Turkish sources, who claim that the number of Cherkess who fled the Caucasus was estimated at more than two million people. That is, Lapinski's estimate includes the part of the population that could have been used in military operations or able-bodied males subject to draft.

The book includes Lapinski's original vision of the territorial differences of the Cherkess nation—which, similar to the population estimate discussed above, can be understood as a point of view. He refers to the western Cherkess as Abaz, thereby uniting them with the Abaz and Abaz-speaking population. At the same time, he separates them from the population of the eastern territories of Cherkessia—Kabarda, whom he calls the Cherkess. In some passages he even claims that the eastern Cherkess have origins different from those of the western Cherkess, or Abaz. Lapinski was probably affected by the fact that by the time he arrived to render assistance to Cherkessia, the eastern provinces had been occupied by the enemy for more than thirty years and the active part of the population capable of resistance had moved to the west en masse because it was still independent.

The second reason for Lapinski's original division of Cherkess is his adherence to the "new theory of Slavic ethnography" of F. Dukhinski, a Pole who emigrated to the West after the Russians' suppression of the Polish rebellion of 1831. In Paris Dukhinski became a professor at a Polish school, where he developed a classification of Slavic peoples. Dukhinski did not classify Russians as having Slavic ancestry. Instead he categorized them as descendants of the "Turan-Mongol nomad tribes," who were predisposed toward authoritarian rule, "communism," rejection of private property, nomadic lifestyle, weak development of urban civilization and other characteristics. Another tenet of this theory claims that the very self-identification "Russian" can only be applied to Ukrainians and Belorussians, whose cultures and ancestry are closer to Poles and other Western Slavs.

Lapinski was trying to implement something similar to this theory with regard to the Cherkess. In his book he claims that the eastern Adygs, who populate Kabarda, belong to the Cherkess while western Adygs, including those residing in Abkhazia, are Abaz. At the same time, Lapinski repeatedly classified Georgians together with Armenians by emphasizing their cultural and mental commonalities and calling them one people—Georgian-Armenians. Scientific progress and the historical development of mankind, however, demonstrated that such differentiations are very superficial and should not be considered seriously.

The citizens of Cherkessia in the 19th century included the entire population of western Cherkessia, its eastern part—Kabarda, and Abkhazia. As a matter of fact, the people's representatives from Abkhazia participated in all proceedings of the national parliament during the existence of Cherkessia. A significant portion of Lapinski's book is devoted to a description of the peaceful productive activities of the broad peasant stratum of the country's population. Lapinski notes many similarities between the Cherkess horticultural traditions and agricultural activities of the residents of rural areas in Europe, including comparisons with populations in Silesia, Hungary and Poland. Lapinski's witness account is particularly valuable considering that the Cherkess people went through the hellfire of genocide and were deprived of everything, starting with basic national statehood and ending with the most banal right to exist, to live on the ancient land of their ancestors. Those who miraculously survived were divided and artificially separated into several adjacent administrative districts. The Ossetian researcher V.K. Gardanov wrote that the representatives of Russian historiography, who served the interests of Russian Empire, aimed to portray Cherkess as "wild," "poor," "lazy," and "underdeveloped." In that narrative, the Cherkess were presented as having nothing—no crafts and no cattle-breeding. All their thoughts were about pillage and profit. Needless to say, there is no mention of the statehood of Cherkessia, while the Cherkess independence war against Russia is portrayed as the war between Russia and Turkey for the trivial possession of territory.

T. Lapinski was simply amazed by the fact that after such a long resistance against the numerically superior enemy forces, the social-political order of Adygs was functioning well. He cannot hide his surprise and admiration with the strong and strict social organization of society that he encountered in Cherkessia. "When you step on the land of free Cherkessia," wrote T. Lapinski, "initially it is difficult to understand how it is that the people, almost every child of whose bears arms, and who do not have written laws or executive power, can not only exist but also stand against such a colossus as Russia for many years and preserve their independence. The main reason—the strong social organization of this people, that relies on national traditions and customs and that not only preserves the individuality and property of each member, but also makes all physical and moral attempts at conquering the country difficult and almost impossible."

From this excerpt it is clear that at the time, the written and legislatively adopted tenets of Cherkessian statehood were followed by each conscientious Cherkess citizen with exceptional zeal. The explanation for what Lapinski describes as the absence of written laws can once again be found in the fact, by the time of his arrival in Cherkessia, the long and exhausting war of attrition had practically eliminated any opportunity for conducting active civil record-keeping. Nevertheless, civic institutions did not suffer as a result of this, nor was the functioning of enacted law infringed upon.

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