



CANADA'S PERIODICAL ON REFUGEES

# REFUGEE

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## SPECIAL ISSUE ON CHECHNYA

### Chechnya: The Russian Policymakers Tragedy

Tanya Basok

When the Soviet Union fell apart in 1991, many analysts applauded the peaceful way in which it happened. And in fact, it was peaceful. In contrast to Yugoslavia, there were no popular leaders committed to holding the Soviet Union together. Gorbachev's popularity at the time was very low and the populist leader Yeltsin, similar to other republican leaders, was only too anxious to dissolve the Soviet Union and assume presidency over the new political entity. Thus, in contrast to Milosevic of Yugoslavia, who was prepared to wage a genocidal war to prevent secession of Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and to a much lesser degree, Slovenia (for an update on the Yugoslavian crisis see Barutciski in this issue), Russian leaders who enjoyed popular support at the time were willing to let the republics become formally independent states. They did so always keeping in mind that it would be possible to establish economic, political, and military control over them at a later stage. So the partition was indeed smooth, although consequent

struggles for autonomy in Abkhazia and Transdnier, and the Armenian claim to Nagorno-Karabakh did provoke wars.

While most nationalist aspirations in the former Soviet republics were thus peacefully satisfied, this was not the case of nationalist movements within the Russian Federation. Once formed, the integrity of the Russian

sovereign state was not to be undermined by separatism in some of its semi-autonomous regions. Even mild claims for decentralization of federal power are perceived by Moscow as a threat.

Thus the multi-ethnic Russian state was to become a federation with a strong central government that would grant no right to any of its semi-

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# REFUGE

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autonomous regions to self-determination. And those who dare challenge this arrangement should be prepared to have their territories invaded, their population killed and their leadership deposed. The tragedy that has engulfed Chechnya is the focus of study of this issue of *Refuge*.

As Benifand analysed, this was, in fact, the fate of the Chechen republic. As Basok argues, this current conflict in Chechnya has long roots and can be explained by a chain of events that intensified the already problematic ethnic relations between the Russians and the Chechens. But analysis of the violent reaction to Chechen claims to independence should also be placed, as Plekhanov rationalizes, within the current context of developing authoritarian rule in Russia. This factor has become even stronger as a result of the military operations in Chechnya (see Benifand). And, the ambivalence of the international response (see Benifand and Plekhanov) has allowed Yeltsin to pursue this policy with impunity. Even the tremendous human cost of this war (see the discussion of the violations of human rights and the refugee movement in Basok, Benifand, and Kritski in this issue) did not seem to alert the Western political leaders sufficiently for them to impose sanctions against Russia.

The question that needs to be addressed is: how durable is a federation ruled hegemonic ally from the centre? This would depend on a number of factors, including: the nature and extent of political control, economic disadvantages and/or social neglect experienced by the population in the regions; presence of leaders who can translate grievances related to disadvantages into nationalist aspirations and formulate the ideological platform for their struggle; and the degree to which those with nationalist claims believe that the centre is likely to accept them as legitimate and negotiate a solution acceptable to all parties.

With respect to the last point, Yeltsin's military action in Chechnya was a clear message to other nationalists within Russia that Moscow does not accept any challenges to the state's integrity. Thus, even in the presence of the first two factors, fear of retribution may dissuade some leaders of the Russian republics. If however, nationalist leaders in the republics perceive that the central power weakens (and this perception does not have to be realistic), we are likely to witness an explosion of pent-up nationalist aspirations. How much military power will Moscow use then? How many civilians will be killed? And how many people will become homeless? m

Tanya Basok, *Guest Editor*

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# The War in Chechnya and the New Russian State

Sergei Plekhanov<sup>1</sup>

The West's reactions to the Russian military campaign to restore Moscow's control over the breakaway Chechen Republic have been ambivalent and confused. On the one hand, Western governments emphasized that Chechnya was an internal Russian affair and that the Russian government had a right to defend its territorial integrity. On the other hand, the methods used by the Russian government shocked international public opinion. Concern mounted over massive human rights violations and excessive use of force. On top of that, having moved tens of thousands of troops into Chechnya, without prior notification to member states of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Moscow was found in violation of OSCE rules which it had pledged to observe.

Part of this confusion reflected an inherent conflict between two principles of modern international law: defense of national sovereignty and protection of human rights. But the Chechen war also highlighted the dangerous and unstable condition in which Russia found itself after three years of post-communist reforms.

Since 1991, the Yeltsin government had been widely seen in the West as the best possible vehicle for democratic and market reforms in Russia, as well as for establishing a friendly or allied relationship with the USA and other Western countries. Yet, this very government was now waging a brutal war in the Caucasus and had failed to provide a serious legal case for it. In addition, the government was increasingly resorting to authoritarian methods in its domestic policy and developing an assertive foreign policy which was at

odds with Western goals and preferences.

There is a contradiction here. Are we observing a reversal of the democratic reform process in Russia? Or, are the war in Chechnya and other disturbing Russian developments temporary aberrations from, or perhaps a pause in, the continuing movement toward markets and democracy? Some observers prefer to look beyond Chechnya: after all, similar events have taken place in Western democracies, and are perhaps not unexpected in a new and unstable democracy like Russia, with its ingrained authoritarian and imperial traditions.

Whatever the causes, new authoritarianism is a very serious threat to Russia's democratic gains. But it is worthwhile to look for the sources of this ominous trend, not just in the stubbornness of old Soviet ways and the activities of anti-reform forces, as is the prevalent mode, but, more importantly, in the reform project itself, its premises and its social base.

Transition from communism in Russia, as well as in other former Soviet and satellite countries, has been shaped by a combination of factors. To name just a few, there are the following: the widely perceived need of societies to develop market and democratic institutions; pressures of the world economy in its current pro-market and anti-statist phase; the rising tide of nationalism; and the processes of transformation of communist-era elites and their methods of rule.

In its earlier stages, the transition could be easily characterized as "democratic," since the combined impact of these factors seemed to push Eastern European countries towards Western-style democracy. Democracy was seen as a necessary condition for effecting a shift toward markets, for being accepted into the Western club, for replacement of the empire with

new nation-states, and even for effecting a regrouping and a rationalization among elites. After a few years, however, the danger became clear that democracy may be sacrificed as an obstacle to the realization of other goals. "Shock therapy" and the concomitant push to integrate Russia into the world economy seem to have taken precedence.

Simultaneous pursuit of both political and economic liberalization has been a hallmark of Russian reforms since Gorbachev's perestroika. Russia, striving to emerge from the Soviet crisis, needed both, just as it needed an end to the Cold War and a drastic demilitarization of economy and society. It seemed clear that to weaken the bureaucracy's stranglehold on society, to pull the economy from stagnation, and to narrow the gap between the state and the people, it was necessary to move toward both political and economic freedom at the same time.

However, contradictions between political and economic components of the reform project soon became apparent. When the economy ground to a halt in 1989, the Soviet government turned to its habitual method: it looked for solutions at the people's expense. "We live as well as we work," declared Gorbachev's economic adviser Leonid Abalkin with a remarkable insensitivity to the plight of tens of millions of hard-working but underpaid Soviets. The new message from the government was that the economy was in crisis because people demanded too much and worked too little, and that even the modest Soviet living standards were largely undeserved.

The first version of "shock therapy" was launched not by Yeltsin's reform cabinet, but by Gorbachev's Prime Minister Valentin Pavlov in the spring of 1991, as part of the general shift to the right in Soviet politics. The government's assault on people's incomes

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and savings went hand in hand with the escalation of repressive measures against democratic activists, nationalists in the Baltic republics, businessmen and others. When Pavlov and other key figures in the Soviet government staged their coup against Gorbachev and Yeltsin in August, their crackdown on political liberties was combined with a promise to continue market reforms. They were not trying to save socialism—they were looking for an authoritarian road to capitalism. The dominant Soviet elites saw nothing wrong with the institutions of private ownership and market exchange, so long as the development of those institutions helped them keep and increase their power.

The narrow power interests of the top Soviet oligarchy were so naked in that coup that the plotters were betrayed even by the army and the KGB.

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***The abolition of the USSR, and the formation of new independent states in its wake, drastically changed the situation.***

***The underdogs were now at the top, busily organizing new institutions of power—building new states, privatizing state assets, and establishing new rules of the game.***

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But what confronted and defeated the coup was not just a critical mass of citizens who had lost their fear of the state and were determined to see freedom prevail, but, just as importantly, a critical mass of second-rank Soviet elites who were interested in reforms to the extent that reforms opened paths to the top for them. For these elites, the coup meant a rebuff to their climb and a reimposition of the old pecking order. As underdogs to those in the Kremlin, however, they were able to make common cause with the broader array of social forces pressing for radical reforms. Boris Yeltsin, with his nomenclatura background, his sudden conversion to the cause of radical reforms, and his image as a populist rebel fighting to free Russia from the yoke of the Soviet state, symbolized the crucial elite component of the new Russian revolution.

The abolition of the USSR, and the formation of new independent states

in its wake, drastically changed the situation. The underdogs were now at the top, busily organizing new institutions of power—building new states, privatizing state assets, and establishing new rules of the game. The rebels' transition from outside to inside the Kremlin walls profoundly changed their attitudes to democracy and bureaucracy in Russia. There were also increasing pressures from the world economy on developments in Russia. These stemmed in part from the growing dependence between the old Soviet Union and the rest of the world. The great reforms reflect Russia's re-entry into the world economy and its attempts to find a better position within that economy.

There are many aspects regarding the liberation of Russian society from the chains of the post-totalitarian State which are important, but I would like

to focus on the issue of post-Soviet bureaucrats; various bureaucratic elites who inherited power from the old Soviet State. The new liberal project of Soviet reforms had the appearance of a utopia, until enough important bureaucratic elites in the Soviet Union discovered that this project fit their group interests very well.

It must be emphasized that this project does not involve just bureaucrats. The new rising elites, owing their new-found prosperity to the growing market economy, were just as important. But for every private entrepreneur making money in the new market gains, there were at least ten people who were former first-secretaries on numerous party committees, managers of State enterprises, KGB officers, or former generals. The Russian political scene was teeming with people who had power in the old system and were now attempting to recast that

power in new terms. There was a new bourgeoisie, a new private sector, and new entrepreneurs with mixed origins, but origin in Russia gives one a leg up in comparison to newcomers.

To become a full-fledged new entrepreneur in Russia today is much more difficult than it was five years ago. While it was necessary for the most part to be somebody in the old system in order to be somebody in the new market game, a new bourgeoisie was able to develop and is exploiting the opportunities of the growing private economy. As well, managers of transforming State enterprises formed a very important part of the post-Soviet elite. Some of these enterprises were still State-owned and others were technically private, but in reality a strange combination of mixed private-ownership, employee-owned, and State-owned prevailed.

In terms of administrative structure, the executive apparatus of the state had also been recast. Instead of one state organization, there now are some 15 states with Russia being the largest. There has been a tremendous expansion of state executive machinery and the number of people in the executive bureaucracy today is much larger. Reliable counts are not available, but it is at least 50 or 60 percent larger than it was at the time of the Soviet Union, when governmental operations were centralized. There are new elective members in the 15 parliaments in place over the old Soviet Union. Groups of people are preparing for elections and thereby competing for the political limelight.

Finally, military elites are still dominant, with Russian military elites being much more numerous and more influential than their contemporaries in other former Soviet Republics. Altogether, considering changes in Russia from the populist point of view (e.g. people getting the right to vote, the development of the free press, citizen involvement in politics, the formation of associations, and the growth of civil society) in isolation from other factors, creates an inaccurate picture of democracy.

If we attempt to measure the amount of power that the rank and file citizen in Russia has today, we come to the conclusion that he or she has much less power than before the great reform or before the great democratic revolution. Elites certainly have much more power than they ever had when they were part of a single hierarchical structure, run from the centre by the communist party, and supervised by the politburo and the KGB. What is evident is that a complex of different power centres are emerging, and they are all competing for and utilizing the free press. There is a proliferation of new coalitions and parties. The President of Russia is trying to emerge as all-powerful, or as he says, "number one." In some respects he is number one, but only in some. The limits of his power are all too clear. It is accurate to say that the great reforms have resulted in the empowerment of important elites and of new elites in the former Soviet society, at the expense of the vast majority of citizens, and at the expense of the civil society.

In a great debate among Sovietologists on whether civil society existed in the Soviet Union, some argued that so much power was concentrated in the hands of the party and the State that there was no autonomy to speak of. Civil society could therefore not even begin to develop. Other specialists cited developments such as increasing pluralisation of power in the Soviet Union, the growth of education, educational standards, the emergence of intellectuals, and the existence of informal groups of all kinds. They likewise focused on the Gorbachev era when civil society took a great leap forward. In that optic, the Gorbachev reforms increasingly imposed the notion of civil society on the State while relaxing State controls.

More recently, civil society has become a very conservative concept. It takes a long time for citizens to develop more or less stable structures of interaction and create tools to defend and increase their autonomy. Civil societies do not come into existence over night. And if there was a civil society in

the Soviet Union, it owed its existence to decades of shared experiences and years of slow and painful liberalization. After the Soviet Union collapsed, a series of massive blows damaged the structures of that inherited civil society. These were economic blows through "shock therapy" which diminished the purchasing power of the population. They were political blows in the sense that having elected the first head of State in a thousand years, the Russians immediately saw power being re-concentrated in the hands of the executive, at the expense of the parliament, and at the expense of lower levels of State structure. There is a very real sense among many Russians that they now have less political power than they had before radical reforms.

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***Nationalism enters the picture at a very propitious moment, because nationalism is used to justify or legitimize the positions of elites in the new regime. Building a proper new Russian State becomes a sacred mission which deflects questions of democracy, elitism, and power.***

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In fact, the war in Chechnya demonstrates that powerlessness more than anything else. It is a war that has been waged by the executive branch against almost total opposition of Russian public opinion, against the expressed opposition of the parliament, and against the expressed opposition of most of the media, and there is nothing that Russian society can do about it. If there was an unpopular, unsupported war ... a thankless war, this is it.

In this interesting test case, it becomes clear that Russians had few tools to stop war. They demonstrated, yet they were ignored. The newspapers published scandalous accounts, yet the executive branch did not alter its policy. When parliament threatened that it would limit the power of the President, the President responded "I can disband you by constitution." So from the point of view of society, there is less societal power vis-a-vis the new Russian State.

Let us return to the point of view of the new elites who are really in power. They possess new power which they

did not previously enjoy. Among other things, there is a growing sense among the bureaucrats, especially those involved in management of enterprises, that there is a real possibility to become owners of the means of production. They certainly have something like a propriety in relationship to the new State which is emerging in Russia. Likewise, new elites in the other former Soviet Republics have developed increasingly proprietary attitudes to their new States.

Simultaneously, there is growing social discontent among the population, not only over the loss of power, but also over the growing chaos, the rising wave of crime and lawlessness, the loss of social prospects, the prospects of downward social mobility, the

threat of high unemployment, and the prospect of losing jobs. On the one hand, new elites have assumed power; on the other hand, discontented populations have been increasingly disillusioned. A gap is growing between the government and the people, and between the new States and the shattered and fragmented new societies.

Nationalism enters the picture at a very propitious moment, because nationalism is used to justify or legitimize the positions of elites in the new regime. Building a proper new Russian State becomes a sacred mission which deflects questions of democracy, elitism, and power. In a recent debate on whether Russia should have a professional army, the Minister of Defence said something very interesting: "I don't think that Russia really needs professional armies. I hate to see Russian soldiers go to battle for money." Chechnya is the first war of the Russian State in which the battle cross of the old Russian Imperial Army has been revived, so that the heroes receive crosses instead of stars. This is not a

## Books

- Asylum-A Moral Dilemma, by W. Gunther Plaut (co-published with Greenwood Publications 1995); \$19.90
- Refugee Rights: Report of a Comparative Survey, by James C. Hathaway and John A. Dent (1995); \$11.95
- Legitimate and Dilegitimate Discrimination: New Issues in Migration, Ed. by Howard Adelman (1995); \$22.95
- African Refugees: Development Aid and Repatriation, Edited by Howard Adelman and John Sorenson (1994) \$39.90
- Immigration and Refugee Policy: Australia and Canada Compared, Edited by Howard Adelman, Lois Foster, Allan Borowski and Meyer Burstein (1994)
- Volume One: Context, Policy and Implementation; \$24.95
- Volume Two: Settlement and Impact; \$24.95
- Breaking Ground: The 1956 Hungarian Immigration to Canada, Edited by Robert H. Keyserlingk (1993); \$12.95
- Taking Refuge: Lao Buddhists in North America, by Penny Van Esterik (1992); \$12.95
- Refuge or Asylum: A Choice for Canada, Edited by Howard Adelman and C. Michael Lanphier (1991); \$18.95
- Refugee Policy: Canada and the United States, Edited by Howard Adelman (1991); \$20.95
- Soviet-Jewish Emigration and Resettlement in the 1990s, Edited by Tanya Basok and Robert I. Brym (1991); \$15.95

*Occasional Papers and Reports*

- Cambodian Refugees in Ontario: An Evaluation of Resettlement and Adaptation, by Janet McLellan (1995); \$12.95
- Somali Refugees in Toronto: A Profile, by Edward Opoku-Dapaah (1995); \$12.95
- The Genesis of a Domestic Refugee Regime: The Case of Hungary, Edited by Howard Adelman, Endre Sik and Geza Tessenyi (1994); \$14.95

*A available from: York Lanes Press*

professional soldiers' war but a war for national territory. Nationalism is a very important symbol for the masses; to these millions of people who have been battered, whose illusions have been shattered, and who are profoundly in the dark as to what awaits them tomorrow.

The famous work by Hannah Arendt on totalitarianism emphasizes the notion of superfluous people. Arendt explains the process of the transformation of Western nation States into nationalist States, and then into imperialist States, as creating superfluous people. They are growing numbers of people who lose social orientation and ties with other human beings. They become anxious to join with somebody, and join new entities or new communities.

We recall the serious effects of these processes in Western Europe. I'm afraid that there is a danger of similar processes developing in Russia. The vast majority of Russian citizens have opposed the war in Chechnya, and that opposition presents an interesting test. It is not easy to educate people in the politics of new imperialism. Yet, this situation represents only the start of the process. Russian society still has reasonably free information media.

The television is not fully controlled. A fight has been pitched between the government and the media, and it is not clear who will win. If the government wins, and it succeeds in taming the media and turning it into propaganda tools to educate Russians in the ideology of new nationalism, then we may see a decline in opposition to wars like Chechnya.

Russians clamoured for law and order when they voted for Yeltsin, and that is what they are getting from the Yeltsin government. The processes which have been generated by the deepening social and economic crisis in the new independent States are very dangerous. Nationalism is dangerous when it acquires extreme features in any place, but in Russia it is doubly dangerous because we are dealing with a State which has a dual imperial tradition. The re-centralization of

power in the hands of new Russian elites can be seen as synonymous with the restoration of the Soviet Empire. Even "shock therapy," which was supposedly enacted within Russia for good reasons was imposed on the other former Soviet Republics in a very authoritarian manner. Russia being the largest, and inheriting most of the Soviet assets, initiated the process of "shock therapy," leaving the others to follow or be damned. There was no consultation. And that happened at the start, when the idea of democracy was still shining brightly. Now that this idea has lost most of its lustre and many Russians are talking about law and order and restoration of a strong State, there is a greater danger that an assertion of power in the centre may result in drastic repercussions for neighbouring states. Many of the neighbours are scared by what they see in Chechnya. Certainly, Chechnya is within Russia; but there is no guarantee that similar methods will not be used outside of Russia.

It has been my intention in this brief presentation to emphasize the linkages between radical economic reforms and the imperialist trends which are emerging in the Russian States. I would like to emphasize that the linkage is to be sought in the self-interest of bureaucratic elites. Ultimately, it appears that those who are winning the battle for power which is raging in the former Soviet Union, are those who had power before. The old Soviet elites have not been dislodged. They have been rearranged and are using new tools to perpetuate and augment their power. So the real democratic struggles lie ahead and it is very important that the nature of those struggles are seen properly by Western observers. m

## Notes

1. This paper is an edited version of a presentation at the Centre for Refugee Studies, York University, January 1995. Editorial assistant: Rachel Collins. Ed.
2. Hannah Arendt. 1973. *Origins of Totalitarianism*. New York: Harcourt Brace and Jovanovich. (j)



# Chechnya: The War Without An End

Alexander Benifand

Right after the decision (March 20, 1995) of U.S. President Bill Clinton to go to Moscow on May ninth, to attend a Russian commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the allied victory in Europe and to hold talks with Russian president Boris Yeltsin, Moscow has escalated the bloody operation in Chechnya in the area of Argun and against towns and villages which are in the southwest area of Grozny. Russian troops have been conducting a reign of terror in the parts of Chechnya brought under their control, routinely engaging in gross violations of basic rights. Ironically, just a few weeks before the decision of the American President, the Secretary of State, Christopher, said it would be unlikely for President Clinton to go to Moscow so long as Russian troops were still on the offensive in Chechnya.

Why did this war begin? Some analysts believe that there are several reasons for the war in Chechnya: political, economic, Mafia type division of territory and others. But for many analysts it seems that after the bloody October 1993, when most of the Western Governments and internal Russian political forces applauded the dispersal of Parliament, Yeltsin thought that a successful operation in the Chechen Republic might upgrade his own political standing in Russia. He had to demonstrate to Russians that he is a strong President and very concerned with the territorial integrity of Russia. He tried to play the Chechen card because he knew that Chechens and other people from the North Caucasus are not so popular in Russia. There is a very strong racist mentality, among some groups of people, that Caucasians are 'blacks' in Russia.

## Human Rights Violations

A report by the Russian president's commission on human rights suggested that as many as 24,400 civilians have died since the war in the separatist republic began on December 11, 1994. But the figure—so high that the researcher who came up with it likened the Chechen conflict to the slaughter of Polish civilians during World War I—was questioned even by the head of the human rights commission, Sergei A. Kovalyov. He said in an interview that although the exact number of dead is not known, it could be as high as 30,000. "All I can say for now," he added, "is that the number is in the tens of thousands."<sup>1</sup> The official count had previously been under 500, though many officials have openly said that as many as 4,000 Russian soldiers have already died. By way of contrast, fewer than 13,000 Russian soldiers were killed in a decade of fighting in Afghanistan.

There is a serious violation of human rights there. The local director of an American human rights group, says the bulk of the abuse has been committed by Russian forces, but both sides are guilty of violations. The human rights investigator showed that the Chechen violations appear to have come about recently, during the rebels' retreat from the capital Grozny. Jonas Bernstein, the Moscow director of the U.S. based Freedom House, reported that the Russian Prisoners of war were apparently severely beaten as they were moved out of the capital. Russian P.O.W. mothers, who were able to see their sons in towns like Shali, reported signs of abuse. Mr. Bernstein met with a group of Russian prisoners of war in Shali who appeared healthy and unharmed. But he says he was not given access to all the men held there.

Mr. Bernstein says the abuse of Chechen prisoners by Russian forces

has been much more systematic, but appears to be lessening. In addition to the beatings, the choice of men Russian soldiers have detained appears highly arbitrary. Few, if any of the fighters on the Chechen side are ethnic Russians, but the mission reports one third of the 350 people detained in Mozdok were ethnic Russians.

According to Mr. Bernstein, the worst aspect of the war is what he calls the blatant disregard by Moscow for the lives of civilians. He notes Chechen fighters, or potential fighters, are in villages and towns across Southern and Western Chechnya and Russian forces appear determined to bomb and shell them out of their positions. This means, the human rights investigator says, innocent men, women and children will continue to be killed in staggering disproportion to Chechen fighters.

In Petropavlovskaya, prisoners were hustled off to a small rise overlooking the nearby Soonja River, and one managed to escape. The others were beaten with rifle butts and forced to their knees. In less than a minute they were dead. "The soldier shot them, pushed their bodies down the hill, and sprayed them again with bullets as they were rolling," reported Shamsuddin Baisugurov, a retired police officer who said he witnessed the slaughter from his house nearby. Adding to the horror, Baisugurov said, one soldier video-taped the killings.

Ms. E. Bonner, the widow of famed Soviet dissident Andrei Sakharov, is introducing a resolution at the Geneva meeting on behalf of the New York-based International League for Human Rights. She was scathingly critical of Russia's conduct in the war, and she said Moscow must be forced to seek peace in Chechnya.

Mr. Kovalyov showed no hesitation in repeating his criticism of Russian actions in the breakaway region. The

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Russian army and interior ministry forces, he said, are guilty of massive human rights violations, including attacks against civilians, torture, and extrajudicial killings. He said Russian forces have mistreated anyone even suspected of sympathizing with the Chechen separatists.

Antiwar activist Maria Kirbasova told Interfax on February 14, that the Soldiers' Mothers Committee<sup>2</sup> intended to sue the organizers of the Chechen operation in the International Court of Justice in The Hague. Also, some top Russian legal professionals have reportedly agreed to cooperate with the public tribunal set up in Moscow earlier this year to put the initiators of the war on trial.

Russia's chief prosecutor has said he will file criminal charges against all deserters, with punishment of five to ten years in jail or death by firing squad. But the group's lawyers say they believe the war violates the Russian constitution, which forbids using the armed forces to put down internal rebellions unless the president declares a formal state of emergency.

Even the leaders of the Government of National Revival, the puppet Chechen regime installed by Moscow, blame the Russians for not acting fast enough or firmly enough to stop the abuses. They say their fragile credibility with the Chechen people is further undermined by the crimes of Russian soldiers. The Chechen opposition Provisional Council issued a statement condemning "barbaric, senseless, and cruel" bombardments of civilian areas.

## Refugees

Amnesty International has reported that people detained by the Russians have been mistreated. It says Russian forces have also shot civilians trying to flee Chechnya. Amnesty says it is concerned that Russian officials do not appear interested in investigating the abuses or in punishing those responsible for them. Since the war in Chechnya erupted last December, UN and Red Cross officials estimate that more than 300,000 civilians have fled to neighbouring regions and 250,000

others have been displaced inside the country.

Only neighbouring Dagestan took 100,000 Chechen refugees. There is a lack of housing and outbreaks of disease due to poor sanitation and overcrowding are common. The Dagestani Government, faced with a critical shortage of housing for the refugees, has decided to set up tent camps for the latest arrivals near the border. If the exodus from Chechnya continues, it will become increasingly difficult for the UN and other agencies to cope with the situation.

Returning to the possibility of disintegration of Russia, U.S. Defence Secretary William Perry said, "I think, there is a danger that the actions that the government has taken there could destabilise, could cause instabilities within Russia." Istvan Gyarmati, the O.S.C.E. diplomat, told reporters in Moscow at the end of March 1995 that: "It seems the danger of the war spreading to the neighbouring republics is much greater than at the time of my last visit one and half months ago." Gyarmati warned that, as Chechen fighters retreated towards the borders of Ingushetia and Dagestan, the chances increased that the fighting would spill over into those areas as well.

In Ufa, Bashkortostan, an autonomous Muslim republic in central Russia, the regional President says Mr. Yeltsin refused his offer on three occasions to mediate talks between Russia and Chechnya. He warns that the most dangerous problem facing the country is relations between the centre and the republics, but that Moscow fails to understand this key point. The centre continues to dictate in the Soviet fashion and even Bashkortostan's special status is seen by many in Moscow as extremism—this despite its stated desire to stay in the federation. Russia may be using the Chechen war to intimidate other republics in the Russian Federation.

## The Future of Chechnya

Chechens have always been a proud, fervently independent people. They

fought a 30-year war against Czarist armies in the last century before being forced into Russia's orbit. Soviet dictator Josef Stalin deported all 800,000 of them to Kazakhstan in 1944 for alleged Nazi collaboration. The controversial Dudayev declared independence in 1991, after being elected Chechnya's first president. Russia says the elections were illegal. It's not so, said the President of Bashkortostan, M. Rachimov, the largest Russian semi-autonomous republic.

M. Shamiev, the President of the semi-autonomous republic of Tatarstan, predicted that Russia will forcibly integrate Chechnya into its federation after a military defeat of the rebel region's forces and it will take an enormous amount of time for the Russians to win back the confidence of the Chechen people. Shaimiev said Russia might not maintain a military occupation, but it would impose a political power structure and use internal police and intelligence services to keep control. President of Chechnya, D. Dudaev, predicted that the war could be longer than the war in Afghanistan and Russia could not win its campaign militarily and should start immediate negotiations.

## Political Turmoil in Russia

The war in Chechnya has created a very dark political turmoil in the country. "Russia is now governed by a military-civilian junta disguised as the National Security Council," said Alexei Manannikov, deputy chairman of the upper house of Parliament's international affairs committee. "The Security Council has no right running this country. If it continues, Russia will be ripe for an authoritarian dictatorship."

A few years ago, when Yeltsin came to power, he used democratic slogans because it was so important for the mentality of the liberal intelligentsia who helped him in his conflict with Gorbachev. And after 1991, he has moved step by step towards the right wing camp. Yeltsin, being a populist, always moved together with the opinion of masses. S. Kovalyov said that



Russia cannot continue along the path of democratic reform if it pursues what he called this dirty war in Chechnya.

"This has not been like Afghanistan," said Major General Serge Zdorikov, a Defense Ministry political officer "It is far more horrible and debilitating than that." Gorbachev said the war in Chechnya will cost Russia dearly. Not just in economic terms, but especially politically and morally. Those in power have put themselves in a corner. Yadviga Yuferova, the political editor of *Izvestia*, said in an interview: "The government is closing in again. They won't speak the truth. It's all become lies again. We know they can't censor us now—our society has come too far for that. But they can do other things that will close us down." She also said, Mr. Yeltsin could in a stroke of his pen, raise the cost of newsprint to a level nobody could afford. "It's different than the old methods," she said sadly. "But the results might be the same."

### Western Response

Mrs. Bonner was critical of the international response to the Chechen war. She said that the world reaction in the first few weeks of the war was absolutely inadequate, adding that many Western leaders seemed to share what she termed the short-sighted view that the fighting would be over quickly. She was also passionately dismissive of those who contend it is an internal conflict.

The 33-Nation Council of Europe has suspended membership talks with Russia until Moscow stops attacking its breakaway republic of Chechnya. Since December 11, Russian troops have killed thousands of Chechens, despite obvious internal conflict over the matter in Moscow. A Belgian newspaper stated that NATO cannot now accept that Russia sees the Chechnya crisis purely as an internal matter, and warned that Russia could isolate itself if it maintains its hard-liner stance in Chechnya.

Chancellor Helmut Kohl of Germany (who is usually a firm supporter of Mr. Yeltsin), after the pressure from

opposition parties, said that "breaches of human rights are not an internal matter." George Soros, an investor who has funnelled billions of dollars into the economies of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union since Communism collapsed, said that today Russia's politics and economy are far too fragile to withstand much more of this war. "I am very disturbed by the prospects in Russia," Mr. Soros said at a news conference. "I do see Chechnya as a part of a campaign to disrupt relations with the West and re-establish a closed society."

### The Lessons of Chechnya

What kind of lessons follow from the war in Chechnya?

1. The first and main lesson after the war in Chechnya is that the world community cannot do much to protect people around the world.
2. After the war the World community remained selfish and primarily concern with self interest, not the interest of other populations.
3. The same psychology exists today as before and after the Second World War: indifference to the violations of human rights and abuses of the people if it is in the global interest (like safety of nuclear weapons). Unfortunately people will never learn from the lessons of the past if they do little to prevent such violations (it will give more validation and incentive for further human rights abuses and even new wars. For example, last fall the majority of Western officials applauded Mr. Yeltsin when he crushed down the Russian Parliament and received almost dictatorial power.)
4. When the Soviet Union was collapsing and nations that had never even dreamed about independence, like Kirgistan for example, in one day became an independent countries the Western nations did not respond with any significant support to that. All of these new countries are attempting to build democracy but have very little experience with it and in order to succeed, they need assistance. ■

### Notes

- 1 Kovalyov, a well-known anti-Soviet dissident, has been a passionately outspoken critic of the invasion of Chechnya, and spent several weeks in Grozny trying to bring attention to the death and suffering there. He has been accused by government officials of inflating civilian casualty figures and ignoring Chechen war crimes.
- 2 The Russian Committee of Soldiers' Mothers, who have achieved international recognition for their opposition to the brutal war in Chechnya, have been awarded the 1995 Sean MacBride Peace Prize by the International Peace Bureau in Geneva. The soldiers' mothers have been active, assisting family members to recover the bodies of those killed in Grozny and establishing the whereabouts of those held as prisoners of war. They have also engaged in direct contacts with Chechen mothers. Since its foundation in 1989, the group has devoted itself with energy to the cause of human rights in the Russian armed forces.

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# The Chechen-Russian Conflict: The Spiral of Hostilities

Tanya Basok

The present military intervention in Chechnya has been explained by some analysts by the economic competition over the control of oil, while other analysts have drawn attention to the religious nature of the conflict. While bearing a kernel of truth, both approaches are reductionist. In this article I will attempt to explain the present eruption of hostilities as the result of both past and present failures to address the conflict that has its roots in the military conquest of the Caucasus.

In ethnic conflict studies there is an on-going debate between those who argue that in any poly-ethnic society conflict between groups or repression of one or several ethnic groups is inevitable and those who suggest that it is possible to find a formula that would allow various ethnic groups to coexist peacefully, sharing access to power and economic resources, in spite of their cultural differences. The former, known as the 'plural society theorists' (Furnival 1967, Smith 1971), affirm that stable democratic societies are impossible in poly-ethnic states and that unity in such societies can be sustained only by force. Others, like Ryan (1990), for instance, criticize this approach for several reasons: it ignores the possible existence of crosscutting cleavages between ethnic group; it ignores the fluid and changing nature of ethnic identification; and it leaves out the possibility of the creation of formal rules of mutual accommodation (Ryan 1990, 12-13). Instead, a number of authors have attempted to suggest a model for conflict regulation between ethnic groups living in the same society (Ryan 1990, McGarry and O'Leary 1993).

With respect to the Chechen-Russian conflict, it would be easy to

argue that the Chechen 'national character' and aspirations are incompatible with the Russian ones. Indeed, this argument is exploited by leaders on both sides of the conflict. Yet, the present conflict is a direct result of the failure to find accommodation acceptable for both parties, and unless the current government reverses the policy trend it inherited from both the pre-Revolutionary and the Soviet government, Chechnya will always remain an explosive area. More specifically, I suggest in this article that the present conflict is a cumulative result of hostile policies pursued by the Russian government vis-à-vis the Chechens for over a century. Among these are the following: first, ruthless suppression of every uprising with no attempt to negotiate a settlement; second, decades of political repression; third, forced relocation and poor record of reintegration; fourth, forced assimilation; fifth, failure to recognize demands formulated by Chechen separatists and negotiate a settlement with them; and sixth, escalation of hostilities due to war-related cruelty

## The Conquest and Resistance

Since the 16th century Russian Czars undertook several attempts to incorporate the North Caucasus into Russia, at times through peaceful means (such as intermarriage) but mostly by means of military campaigns. North Caucasian peoples resisted these attempts fiercely (Avtorkhanov 1992; 149-50). In 1859, after twenty-five years of guerrilla warfare, led by Imam Shamil in the Chechen mountains, the Russian rule was nevertheless established (Akiner 1983, 176). Yet, the Caucasians made every attempt to overthrow this foreign rule. In 1864, fearing new revolts in the Caucasus, the Russian government exiled masses of Chechens (as well as other Caucasian peoples) to Turkey. But this measure did not prove

sufficient and in 1877 a popular uprising flared up in Chechnya and Dagestan. The revolt was ruthlessly suppressed (Avtorkhanov 1992, 150-51). Thus started the upward spiral of uprisings, followed by retaliation by the Russian and then the Soviet governments.

## Uprisings and Suppression

The Soviets assumed control in the Chechen territory at the end of 1917. Then the territory was occupied by the White Army and in 1920 the Soviets reoccupied it once again. In August 1920, an anti-Soviet uprising flared up in the mountains of Chechnya, Ingushetia and Dagestan, and lasted for one year. This uprising was crushed and the Chechen Soviet autonomous region was created on November 20, 1922 (Avtorkhanov 1992, 153-56). General disarmament followed.

Yet, it did not prevent another uprising in the Fall of 1929, when the insurgents occupied all the rural and regional institutions, burned official archives, and arrested the staff of the regional government, demanding autonomy (Avtorkhanov 1992, 156-58). In the middle of December 1929, regular detachments of the Red Army began to arrive and after several months of fierce fighting with heavy losses, the uprising was once again suppressed. Yet peasant revolts continued with regularity throughout the 1930s (Avtorkhanov 1992, 165). Some 'mullahs' and 'nationalists,' who had been excluded from the village by the Soviets in 1937, went into the mountains and in early 1940, Khasan Israilov proclaimed the 'war of liberation' and appointed a 'temporary revolutionary people's government of Chechnya and Ingushetia.' They fought for a 'free Caucasus' and they managed to control several regions in the mountains until 1942 (Simon 1991, 202-3).

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## Political Repression

Political repression was also used by Soviet authorities against Chechen leaders as a preventative measure to intimidate and control them (Avtorkhanov 1992, 165–71). It culminated on July 28, 1937, when Stalin's Security Police representative in the Caucasus gave instructions to the assembled Party leaders to start a 'super-purge.' As a result, 14,000 people (or one in thirty) in the Chechen-Ingush republic were either arrested and executed or deported (Simon 1991, 202–3). Arrests continued until November 1938 (Avtorkhanov 1992, 176).

## Deportation

Even though the majority of Chechens opposed the Germans (Akiner 1983, 176), collaboration with the Nazi occu-

defeat (Avtorkhanov 192, 180). Furthermore, the Soviet government accused the Chechens (as well as other Caucasian peoples) of collaboration with the Germans, even though the Chechen territory was never under Wehrmacht occupation (Simon 1991, 202). In February 1944, the Red Army arrested masses of Chechens, many of whom were executed without trial (Avtorkhanov 1992, 185). The alleged collaboration was used by the Soviet government to deport some 408,000 Chechens to compulsory settlements in Central Asia and Siberia in March 1944 (Simon 1991, 201). Chechens were the most numerous of the deported Caucasian peoples. Simon (1991, 202) observes that deportation was a policy aimed at breaking this region's long-lasting anti-Soviet and national resistance, which had triggered several armed rebellions. After the depor-

Socialist Republic was re-established, and between 1957 and 1960 they were allowed to return (Simon 1991, 241–43).

Although the authorities promised the returning people credit, housing and work, the re-integration of repatriated people proceeded at a very slow pace. The return of the Chechens and Ingush caused the gravest and most lasting tensions. Housing and employment were insufficient, partly because many more families returned to the homelands than the plan had anticipated. Tensions grew between the returning Chechens and the Russians who had settled in their villages and cities. From August 24 to 28, 1958, Grozny witnessed great disturbances between the Chechen, Ingush and Russian populations. Troops were brought in to re-establish order and peace. The government did not try any Russian instigators for the disturbances but placed the blame entirely on Chechen and Ingush 'bourgeois nationalism' (Simon 1991, 243–44).

## Forced Assimilation Policies and Resistance

The Soviet government adopted policies of forced assimilation of the Caucasian people, but in spite of their attempts, both the clan system and militant Sufi brotherhood survived well into the Soviet rule. Many clans kept land in their possession, although the Soviets labelled it as *kolkhoz* (Simon 1991, 202; Akiner 1983, 176). The deportation of Chechens to Central Asia reinforced both the Sufism and the clan system (Simon 1991, 348). Religion and kinship were employed to sustain solidarity of the deported people (Bennigsen Broxup 1992a, 7–8). After the repatriation, the Soviet authorities once again tried to suppress the Chechen culture: Chechens were not allowed to teach their languages at school, to have mass-media in their language or to engage in any ethnic cultural activities (Simon 1991, 243). All mosques were closed until 1978 (Bennigsen Broxup 1992a, 7). Still, their religion proved to be resilient and today about 150,000 to 200,000 people are

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piers was used as an excuse to deport over four hundred thousand Chechens to Kazakhstan and Central Asia. During the Second World War Chechen soldiers experienced tremendous difficulties in the Russian Army both because they often did not understand Russian and because their dietary prohibitions were not respected. Mass desertions by the Chechens from the Red Army can be attributed to these difficulties. Eventually, neither Chechens nor the Ingush were accepted into the Red Army and those already serving were dismissed. However, two divisions of volunteers from the Chechen-Ingush Republic were formed, but these were not officially recognized nor supplied with tanks and artillery. Being poorly equipped, the divisions found it difficult to resist the Germans advancing towards Stalingrad. Even though the entire southern front collapsed, the Chechen-Ingush population was blamed for the

tation of the Chechen and Ingush, the names of towns, villages and regions changed and Russians and members of other ethnic groups were allowed to settle there (Simon 1991, 203).

In the 1950s, Caucasian people started returning to their villages, and the Khrushchev government that was in power did not place any explicit obstruction. By the Summer of 1954, many Caucasian people perceived that the government was relaxing its control, and thousands of families, mostly Chechen and Ingush, began their move home. Even though some arrests and compulsory transport back to Central Asia followed, the number of Chechens and Ingush returning to the Caucasus continued increasing, reaching a total of 25,000 to 30,000 by 1956. On November 24, 1956, the Central Committee issued a decree reinstating the right of the deported peoples to return. In January 1957, the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet

members in the Sufi brotherhood in Chechno-Ingushetia. The Sufi brotherhood enjoys as much prestige as it did before the Revolution (Bennigsen Broxup 1992a, 7-8).

### **Stereotyping**

As far back as 1834, a Russian civil servant described the Chechens as a nation 'remarkable for her love of plunder, robbery and murder, for her spirit of deceit, her courage, reckless-

of the Chechen Congress included free elections, and a new constitution and citizenship law. It insisted on the need for a peace treaty between Russia and Chechnya preceded by an unconditional recognition of the right of the Chechen people to sovereignty, trial of those guilty of genocide against the Chechen nation, payment of compensation for crimes against the nation and the return of national patrimony. After the failure of the coup, on August 22,

diers have been accused of routine violations of basic rights, including beating, torturing and killing civilians, looting and vandalizing their property, and setting the reign of terror in parts of Chechnya brought under their control. On the other hand, Russian soldiers justify the mistreatment of Chechens as retaliation for the atrocious way in which Russian prisoners were treated by the Chechens in the first days of this year. Dozens of captured Russian soldiers were tortured, mutilated and publicly executed. Local Russians were not allowed to bury the bodies abandoned in the streets (Gallagher 1995). These atrocities only reinforce attitudes of hostility, suspicion and even hatred, that had existed on both sides before the armed conflict started. The escalation of violence makes it even more difficult for the two sides to find common grounds. In the atmosphere of heightened negative emotions, it would be nearly impossible to adopt measures needed for the process of peace building to begin.

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ness, resolution, cruelty, fearlessness, her uncontrollable insolence and unlimited arrogance.' And he proposed that "they only way to deal with this ill-intentioned people is to destroy it to the last' (cited in Bennigsen Broxup 1992a, 10). Similarly today, Chechens are frequently portrayed as 'criminals,' 'Mafia,' 'drug traffickers' and 'armed bandits' (York 1995a) and certain measures have been taken by Russian authorities to harass and deport Chechens living in Moscow (Gáry 1993, Caplin 1993, York 1995b).

### **Failure to Recognize Chechen's Political Aspirations**

The National Chechen Congress held an inaugural meeting on 23-25 November 1990, in Groznyi. On November 27, under pressure from the Congress, the Chechen-Ingush Supreme Soviet proclaimed the Republic's sovereignty. At that time, the ambitions of the movement were moderate; namely to raise the state of their region from autonomous to federal republic which would enable them to sign a union treaty with the USSR. By June 1991, their position became more radical. General Dzhokhar Dudaev, the chairman of the National Congress, expressed full support for the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Demands

1991, the Chechen opposition demanded the resignation of the local government and new elections (Bennigsen Broxup 1992b, 85-87). None of these demands were accepted by Russia. Since August 1991, Moscow tried persistently to vilify the Chechen opposition and to distract attention from the main issue expressed by Dudaev. Moscow responded by organizing counter-rallies, letters to Moscow newspapers complaining about the 'undemocratic' and 'unconstitutional' behaviour of the national Chechen Congress, encouraging the warlike ambitions of the Cossack colonies, painting the opposition as 'bandits' and 'criminals' and by military threats.

Nevertheless, on October 27, 1991, Dudaev was elected president of Chechnya by an overwhelming majority (Bennigsen Broxup 1992b, 231-35). Since then, Moscow's attempt to discredit Dudaev and his supporters grew only stronger. Unsuccessful in their efforts to depose Dudaev from his post and to quench separatist aspirations, the Russian Army invaded Chechnya on December 11, 1995.

### **Escalation of Violence**

Once the war started, atrocities were committed by both sides. Russian sol-

In sum, the eruption of violence that we witness today in Chechnya has its roots in the conquest of the Caucasus by Russia in the mid-nineteenth century. Since then, relations between Chechnya and Russia have been characterized by a never-ending spiral of hostilities which the Russian government had tried to regulate only by hegemonic means, such as suppression, political repression, and deportation. In addition, the Soviet authorities have tried to destroy Chechen culture, religion and traditions. In response, the Chechens have continued their resistance, both at the cultural and at the political level, never having submitted themselves to the Russian rule.

Once again, they tried to free themselves of Russian control and once again, Moscow cracked down by using excessive violence. Once it started, it led to escalation on both sides of the conflict. Until Moscow recognizes the legitimacy of some of the concerns raised by Chechen people and attempts to negotiate their demands, more blood will be shed on the Chechen land. ■

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# Chechnya's Refugees Within North Caucasus: Reality and Problems

Eugene V. Kritski

In the last few years, the North Caucasus has become an area in which significant migratory activity has taken place. Its numerous regions, which vary with respect to demographic, economic and political characteristics, have been either sources or destinations of migratory flows, or in some cases, both. Since 1990, migration has played an important role in the region, sometimes merely reflecting certain ethnopolitical conflicts within the region and sometimes contributing to them. In fact, migration provides a link between those regions where ethnic conflicts have fully developed and those where such conflicts are still dormant but have a potential for flaring. Steady outmigration has occurred in those regions which have experienced tense interethnic relations and ethnic violence, such as Abkhazia, Ingushetia, North Ossetia and Chechnya. The migratory flow caused by the recent war in the Chechen Republic is now considered to be of most influence upon social and political stability within the region and its parts.

Two approaches can be used to describe the current phenomenon of mass-scale refugee flow from Chechnya. The first is a macro-approach, based on a statistical description of the number of migrants, directions of their flows, and on an analysis of humanitarian activity by governmental and nongovernmental organizations. The second involves a micro-level reconstruction of social-psychological aspects of migration, including subjective factors (exterior and interior) of social adaptation of

refugees, their expectations, orientations, and the extant psychological climate. Since the author has not had an opportunity to pursue a micro-level field research among Chechen migrants, this article will be based on the first approach.

Certain difficulties were encountered in gathering and interpreting the collected data. To begin with, there is much confusion over the terms used in different sources of information to refer to people who were forced to leave their homes. Most call these persons "refugees" although from the point of view of international law, they should be called "forced migrants." The Federal Migratory Service (FMS) uses the designation of "forced migrants," although in its public statements and interviews its employees use the term "refugee" as a synonym of "forced migrant." Yet the two are not the same. If refugees agree to settle in areas designated for them, such as mid-Russia, Siberia and the Urals, they receive the legal status automatically. But to obtain a status of a "forced migrant" in areas not designated for refugee settlement one needs to obtain domicile registration ("propiska"). Yet, the only legal grounds for getting "propiska" are having close relatives or owning a house or a flat. Since most refugees do not meet these requirements, they were not able to obtain a legal status. Consequently, official figures of "forced migrants" are considerably lower than those with which non-official institutions operate. Thus there is a gap between the numbers of refugees who exist *de facto* and *de jure*. We should also note that a data base on forced migration from the Chechen Republic is still incomplete. This creates special obstacles, such as difficulties in getting and verifying information. In this case, a researcher

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risks basing an analysis upon false figures and pretentious opinions. Chronological coincidence of the phenomenon in question and its analysis produces the so-called "aberration of closeness." Moreover, the data under consideration are often inconsistent and rely on different categories, depending on the source.

This article is based on the information taken from documents published by governmental and non-governmental organizations and by mass media. We also interviewed FMS officials. These interviews were conducted by telephone.

Since the beginning of the crisis, approximately 140,000 of Chechnya's inhabitants were forced to leave their homes for North Caucasian districts and republics, and about 70,000 for other regions of Russia. These refugees could be placed in one of three categories. Those in the first and smallest category, consisting of some 40,000 people, have been displaced internally within the territory of Chechnya. The majority of refugees can be found in the second category of those who found shelter in Daghestan and Ingushetia. The third category, is composed of those who have moved to the Krasnodar and Stavropol districts.

Migration from the Chechnya region had preceded the current crisis. According to an estimate by FMS's Director, at least 400,000 people have migrated from Chechnya since 1991, with only half of them having received the official status of a 'forced migrant.' FMS, placed in charge of forced migrants, has created a system of regional operative groups which are to be coordinated centrally. These groups are responsible for the registration and voluntary repatriation of refugees to those areas in which the political situation has normalized. FMS allocated 17 billion roubles to regional branches to cover food, clothing and transportation costs of refugees. Additionally, about 3.5 trillion roubles were dispatched for house-building.

In 1994, the Stavropol district (krai) received 7,703 persons from Chechnya—58 percent of all forced migrants reg-

istered by the local branch of FMS. Since the beginning of the war until February 1, 1995, 3,000 more persons have been registered. According to FMS officials, only one-fourth of the refugees applied for official status. Many chose not to register because there is no advantage in doing so. The one-time emergency aid they receive is extremely low, equal to a minimum monthly earning (25,000 roubles or \$6). Almost all applicants were granted the status.

In 1994, the Krasnodar district (krai) branch of FMS registered 929 people from Chechnya as "forced migrants," constituting 98% of all those who applied for the status. There was a significant upsurge of migratory activity in January 1995 (see Table 1).

**Table 1:  
Number of Forced Migrants  
Registered in the  
Krasnodar District**

Period	# of Registrants
1994 January	149
February	181
March	108
April	-
May	73
June	50
July	85
August	98
September	47
October	24
November	50
December	64
1994 January	2,280

According to FMS officials, the real number of refugees who arrived in January of 1995 is five times higher. Percentage ethnic composition of the refugees are as follows: Russians 94; Armenian 2; Chechens 1; Ingushetians 2; Other 1. The ethnic composition of the region is therefore not affected and does not pose a threat to interethnic relations there.

As mentioned above, most forced migrants escaped to neighbouring republics of Ingushetia and Daghestan. To understand the situation in which migrants find themselves in Ingush-

etia, we should take into account the specificity of the Ingushetians' ethnic and political history.

Ingushetia is the most recently established republic in North Caucasus. Its territory covers about 2,000 square km., with the population of about 215,000 people. Ethnic Ingushetians constitute the majority of the population in this republic.

Since the eruption of a violent conflict between Ingushetians and Ossetians over the Prigorodny district of Vladikavkaz, Ingushetia received 60,000 migrants, 50,000 of whom are still living in the republic. Both Ingushetians and Chechens belong to the "vainach" ethnolinguistic community and their languages are mutually comprehensible. Both Chechens and Ingushes identify themselves as "vainach-speakers." They are also linked by ties of kinship. In both Chechnya and Ingushetia the clan (*taip*) system is still alive. And it is important to point out that some clans consist of both Ingush and Chechen families. Furthermore, the border between Chechnya and Ingushetia is still not fully drawn. In 1934, the Chechen and the Ingush autonomous districts were amalgamated, and in 1936, the new district's status was changed to the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Republic. In February 1944, thousands of Chechens and Ingushes were deported to Central Asia and Siberia, but after the official rehabilitation in 1957, the Republic of Checheno-Ingushetia was re-established. It was only in 1992 that Chechnya separated from the Republic and declared its independence. Following the declaration, the Ingush Republic was established.

Since the eruption of the war, the migratory flow has been increasing from 500 to 2,000 per day. By January 24, 1995, 55,509 Chechens had been registered as forced migrants. Most of them are in Nazran. Fifteen train cars have been used as shelter for refugees but these have proven insufficient. Many refugees have found shelter among their relatives. Some families host up to fifty migrants. In an interview, given to Severny Kavkaz on



January 28, 1995, the Head of the Migratory Service of the Republic of Ingushetia complained that the republic can no longer stretch its hospitality and that the agency is considering stopping the registration of refugees. Yet, resettlement of these refugees (who are predominantly Ingushes and Chechens) to mid-Russia, Siberia and Ural are not viable options either, since in the minds of the refugees they would be associated with the forced deportations they suffered under Stalin. Only 2,838 refugees have accepted resettlement to these regions.

The migratory situation is also complicated by the presence of the so-called "shuttle" refugees in Ingushetia. These are Dudaev's combat men. Some of them have been detained by the federal forces and have been charged by the Ingush Republic's Prosecutor's office. Approximately 5,000 forced migrants were registered in North Ossetia by February 1. Since the Republic has already accepted a great number of refugees from Central Asia and Georgia, it has imposed restrictions on Chechen refugees, allowing only those with close relatives in North Ossetia to stay there. The rest are allowed to sleep in train cars at the Vladikavkaz railway station. They have been offered permanent settlement in such cities as Smolensk, Saratov, Tambov, and Novgorod. Refugees receive assistance for three months and then they have to make a decision either to resettle or to stay in the area unassisted.

Daghestan has received approximately the same number of forced migrants as Ingushetia. Strict quantitative characteristics of the migratory flows from Chechnya are difficult to calculate. Figures partly depend on methods of registration of refugees by different institutions. There are three sources of data in Daghestan: the Daghestanian branch of FMS, offices of ethnopolitical communities that register migrants of their ethnic background, and the Territorial Medical Association of the district of Khasavjurt (See Table 2 below for the first two sources).

**Table 2:  
Number and Dynamics of the  
Forced Migratory Flow  
in Daghestan**

	FMS	Ethnic Registry
January 17, '95	38,225	34,200
January 23, '95	44,194	43,194
Growth per week	5,964	8,994
Growth per day	853	1,285

Figures given by the offices of ethnopolitical communities seem to reflect the migratory situation more adequately, because they count all persons who have arrived in Daghestan, whether officially registered or not. The Territorial Medical Association of the district of Khasavjurt reported an even higher number of refugees. At least 51,200 had arrived by January 20. The numbers offered by the Ministry of Labour are lower for a number of reasons. First, some refugees chose not to register as forced migrants since the assistance they expected to receive from FMS was so insignificant. Second, it is possible that others did not register because they would not meet the eligibility requirements.

Finally, it is possible that some of these refugees were the so-called 'shuttle' migrants, or Dudaev's combat men who came to Daghestan to procure medical assistance and temporary shelter. The Medical Association reported about 373 refugees being wounded (January 29), and 80% of them were men. As military activities intensify in the Western part of the Chechen republic, the number of this type of migrants may increase. Refugees residing in Daghestan have the potential for contributing to the regions' own ethnopolitical and demographic problems. It is important to consider the ethnic composition of the refugee flow and that of the districts in which these refugees settle. Ethnic composition of forced migrants in Daghestan are Chechens 64%; Peoples of Daghestan 22%; Russians 13%; Other 1%.

Since the predominant majority of the refugees are non-Russians, they are more likely to choose to stay in the area, with only very few opting to resettle in the regions of Russia mentioned above. By January 17, only 500 refugees have chosen to resettle there. Most of the reception centres are located in the regions contiguous with the Chechen Republic. In order to prevent the spread of the conflict, the Daghestan authorities have prohibited the organization of such centres inside Daghestan. Most refugees have settled in the district of Khasavjurt. The district has been inhabited by Kumyks, Chechens (approximately 60,000 Chechen live there under the name of Akki), and Avars. For the last four years this area of Daghestan has witnessed increasing inter-ethnic competition. Ethnic organizations have emerged to promote and defend the rights of their respective communities. The objective of the Kumyk movement, "Tenglik," is to create a democratic Autonomous Kumyk Republic. Chechens-Akki in their turn have put forward a demand to transfer this territory (which in fact was part of Chechnya prior to the deportation of Chechens in 1944) to the Chechen Republic. The growth of the Chechen population in this district as a consequence of forced migration may provoke the escalation of ethnic violence. And some have already called for the extension of military action into Daghestan at political rallies held in Khasavjurt. ■

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# Second World War, Refugee Flow and Forced Migrants in Russia

Boris Kovalev

The Twentieth Century can be characterized for Russia as a period of mass migration of its citizens. This process is connected with economic and political factors. A search for a better life took place at the beginning of the century because the national and religious feelings of some nationalities had been abused (namely Jews and Duhobortsi), and also because of economic factors. The western regions of the country were overpopulated and this situation also encouraged Russian migration.

After the revolution of 1917 and the Civil war, millions of participants and representatives of the White movement had to leave their homes because they were defeated. But the events of World War II were far more serious in the sense of testing the nation's ability to survive. The Soviet Union lost 28 million people, a large part of them were civilians. The theory of the race superiority that dominated in fascist Germany encouraged the physical elimination or reduction of the population of the captured countries. The situation was tragic in Russia because Stalin's leadership was mostly concerned with how to save the material wealth, and human lives meant nothing to them.

The priority in the evacuation was given to the equipment of the plants rather than to refugees. The military doctrine of the Soviet Union suggested that the war actions would take place on the enemy's territory only, and this made it impossible even at the beginning of the war to create plans for the mass evacuation of the population of the country. German troops were decisively attacking and moving into the depth of the country in the Summer and Autumn of 1941. The people were

caught in a total panic. The civil population suffered most of all and this situation created flows of refugees in the country.

The Soviet mass media had created a particular image of a German soldier, and pictured him as a machine-like killer. The flyers and the newspapers were full of descriptions of how children had been killed for entertainment by the German soldiers, how old women had been raped by them, and how historical sites of Russia had been destroyed. As soon as the front line approached, the citizens started to move east on their own. The population in the rural areas created so-called forest settlements. As a rule, they moved into difficult to reach places in the woods, five to seven kilometers away from their homes. In the depths of the woods they built earth shelters and settled there. They hid in the woods until the circumstances regarding German order in the occupied territories was clarified.

The only category of the population of Russia that remained under the control of the Soviet state was Communist and government servants. Those who were considered valuable were evacuated, even by plane, and the rest were devolved to guerilla detachments. According to the survey of the People's Commissariat of Home affairs, Communist Party members and those who sympathized with them feared German punishment and that was why they hid in the forest. They were provided with food and weapons, but many did not how to fight. Very often such detachments stopped to exist. For example, one document reads: "our relatives came into the wood and told us to leave the woods and to return home, because the Germans did not practice repression as described in the Soviet mass media."

The losses of the Soviet Army during the first months of the war were

explained to the population of the country by the fact that the traitors in the Army had not been completely eliminated during the mass repression of the Thirties. The leadership of the country feared the creation of a "fifth column" and they undertook certain measures—mass shootings in the prisons and arrests and deportation of undesirable citizens, including Russian Germans who had lived in Russia since the 18th century.

The situation was extremely difficult for the population of the occupied districts. In August and September of 1941, all supervisors of the occupied areas received the order to notify the authorities whether there were refugees, Jews, suspicious people, and foreigners in the areas supervised by them. The order to eliminate all undesirable elements had been given to the punitive detachments. Jews were killed either on the spot or gathered in ghettos. All refugees were considered suspicious and they were arrested. If a refugee managed to prove that he or she had suffered from Bolsheviks or had been related to a German nationality then the Germans used such people and treated them favourably. They sent them back to their native places and provided them with work. Thus all Finns, Estonians, wealthy Russian peasants, and those who had been forcefully moved from their homes and settled on Sinjavino Swamps in the vicinity of Leningrad in the early Thirties, were granted the opportunity to return to their native places.

The relations between the German occupation administration and the local people were of a mixed character. During the first days of the occupation, in order to avoid spreading panic among the population and refugee streams, the Germans abolished taxes, dissolved collective farms, and offered free distribution of goods from the stores. By such measures they tried to

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stabilize the situation. But some weeks later, they restored the taxes and told the citizens that the taxes would be temporary until the end of the war. In their mass media, the Germans put all the responsibility and shame on the Soviet communists. For example, one flyer read: "It is a pity to look at the refugees who have left their homes. The Jewish Bolshevik propaganda has made a nationwide brainwashing. Thousands of women, old people, and children are leaving their native places; they fear German soldiers who have brought them freedom from Stalin's slavery." The name of this flyer was "The happy and the unhappy."

The freedom of the population to move in Russia was very limited late in 1941 and early 1942 after the front line had become more or less steady. The situation was similar on the both sides; occupied and free. In the Soviet zone, the existence of people depended completely on the food ration. The refugees were mainly used in the sphere of production. They were not allowed to leave a factory or a plant where they worked. The punishment was severe imprisonment. Charges were laid for being late for work or for missing a day. The people who had been deported (like Russian-Germans) were used for the most difficult work. This category of people were regularly checked by the People's Commissariat of Home Affairs. In cases where they left a place where they had been settled without permission, they were punished by 10 years of imprisonment in the concentration camp.

On the German side, the so called active population, both those who worked for Germans and those who fought against them, were exposed to maximum danger. The guerillas were hunting policemen, supervisors, trans

lators, and clerks who worked for the pro-German mass-media. If caught they were hanged on the road-crossings, and their bodies were mined. The Germans tried to save their associates

and they moved them to big cities that were reliably protected. From 1943, the Germans started sending them to the Baltic and to Germany. II

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# Safe Areas in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Some Reflections and Tentative Conclusions

Michael Barutciski

The UN operation in former Yugoslavia has been the object of much criticism. Some of the criticism has focused on the alleged ineffectiveness of the new concept of Safe Areas that has been applied in Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH).

Any analysis of the contribution of the 6 Safe Areas in BiH (Srebrenica, Zepa, Gorazde, Sarajevo, Tuzla and Bihac) should take into account two inescapable facts relating to physical safety: BiH's Muslim refugees and displaced persons are returning or going to some of the Safe Areas in BiH; and UNHCR + UNPROFOR field personnel constantly assert that Safe Areas have saved lives.

It should be remembered that the Safe Areas were declared in a highly charged political context where there was considerable international pressure on the UN Security Council to intervene in favour of one of the parties in the armed conflict in BiH. By declaring that certain localities that were controlled by the Muslims were to "be treated as Safe Areas by all parties concerned," the UNSC hoped to achieve at least three objectives:

- offer protection for threatened civilian populations;
- relieve pressure on it to intervene more forcefully and directly in favour of the Muslims by appearing to take a position against the Serbs;
- assist the Muslims by attributing to them a minimal amount of territory in anticipation of the inevitable partition of BiH.

There were other towns and cities that were threatened by the Muslim forces (Doboj, Brcko) or being slowly destroyed by both the Croat and Muslim

forces (Mostar), yet these did not warrant the attention of the international news media or the UNSC. Safe Areas were therefore declared to directly help certain threatened populations and one party (Muslim forces loyal to BiH President Izetbegovic) in an internal armed conflict that involved at least two other parties.

It should be kept in mind that the initial UNSC resolutions (819 & 824) declaring the Safe Areas did not commit the UN to militarily defend those areas. It was only later that the UNSC decided to allow a dramatic extension of UNPROFOR's mandate (resolution 836) by enabling it "to deter attacks against the Safe Areas," thereby allowing for the possibility of UNPROFOR to become a belligerent force in the BiH conflict and consequently losing its impartiality. Without total impartiality, UNPROFOR places its other missions (monitoring, delivering humanitarian relief, etc.) in jeopardy. UN member states did not, however, proceed in equipping UNPROFOR so that it could "deter attacks" against the Safe Areas. In addition, UNPROFOR Commanders have constantly made it clear that they are not particularly inclined to enter the war on the side of the Muslims, given their experience and assessment of the armed conflict in BiH. The NATO military exclusion zones that were later created around two of the Safe Areas permitted the international community to get around this obstacle and back up the Safe Area declarations with military force while keeping UNPROFOR's impartiality relatively intact.

One of the consequences of the decision to declare Safe Areas that could not have been ignored by members of the UNSC was the manner in which these areas have reinforced and encouraged population shifts. Since the

beginning of the armed conflict, BiH has been violently transformed and divided by the three warring nationalities (Muslim, Serb and Croat) into ethnically homogeneous territories. With the declaration that certain Muslim-controlled areas are to be considered "Safe Areas," displaced Muslim civilians have either been drawn to these Safe Areas or literally trapped in them by their own forces (escape would weaken Muslim territorial claims) while the Serb civilians that once inhabited them (15-30% of the total prewar population depending on which Safe Area) have no illusions that they will be returning to them. Given that BiH could not be kept together as a unitary state following the break-up of the former Yugoslavia, this is not a negative development in that it encourages the division of BiH's territory among the three nationalities and thus brings the parties closer to a solution.

There will be a tendency for some to see Safe Areas as the latest example of western containment of refugee flows. This view should be nuanced, for it is unlikely that containment was a primary consideration for the UNSC. As mentioned above, Safe Areas in the case of BiH (to be distinguished from the situation in Iraq or Rwanda) should be understood primarily as a political tool meant to show support for one of the parties in the conflict. That the creation of Safe Areas had consequences on the displacement of civilian populations and refugee flows is evident. However, several factors suggest that containment of refugee flows could not have been a principal objective of powerful and affluent states. Firstly, contrary to the situation in Iraq and Rwanda, Safe Areas were not created in border regions with thousands of uprooted civilians intent on crossing into neighbouring coun-

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tries. Secondly, Safe Areas were created some 15 months after hostilities began and much of the displacement had already occurred. Thirdly, by the time Safe Areas were declared, Serbia and Croatia had already closed their borders to Muslims fleeing BiH, thereby greatly reducing the threat that Europe would be confronted with a large influx of BiH's Muslims. Fourthly, contrary to the logic of containment, several northwestern European states continued not to require visas from BiH passport holders months after Safe Areas were declared.

A closer examination of the situation in each particular Safe Area also

gives some insight on the possible contribution and weaknesses of this new concept. By declaring the town of Srebrenica to be a Safe Area, the UNSC prevented the Serbs from taking it and forcing the Muslim civilians to flee to the nearby cliffs around the village of Zepa. The arrival of several tens of thousands of displaced persons into the sparsely inhabited and resourceless Zepa area would have created a humanitarian crisis much worse than the one presently experienced by UNHCR in Srebrenica. Most importantly, the Muslim leadership will now be able to negotiate a territorial exchange agreement whereby they can abandon the isolated enclaves of Srebrenica and Zepa in exchange for Sarajevo.

Consequently, the concerned civilian populations will be transported and exchanged in a more secure and orderly fashion. This potential long-term solution for the displaced persons and local inhabitants of Srebrenica and Zepa also highlights the temporary nature of the response provided by the declaration of Safe Areas. The strong Muslim military presence in the



Gorazde pocket suggests that the Muslims may not be willing to include Gorazde in a territorial exchange agreement, but rather, may try to link this enclave with the Sarajevo region, as was originally proposed in the latest Peace Plan by the Contact Group (USA, UK, France, Germany and Russia).

The highly mediatized Sarajevo area will most likely be included in a territorial exchange agreement as it is becoming more ethnically homogeneous: the Serbs and Croats who have fled have been replaced by Muslims who have come to seek refuge in the city and its suburbs.

The Bihac Safe Area illustrates one important problem if Safe Areas are to work in the future. The Bihac pocket had been relatively safe until August 1994, when the BiH Fifth Corps (Muslims loyal to President Izetbegovic) launched an offensive from the Safe Area and took over the whole Bihac pocket by defeating a rebel Muslim army, loyal to local businessman Fikret Abdic, and forcing 30,000 Muslim refugees to flee to the neighbouring UN Protected Area in Croatia. In Octo-

ber, the 5th Corps launched a new offensive from the Safe Area and managed to seize territory from the Serb forces to the south and to the east of the Safe Area (displacing 15,000 Serbs). In the middle of November, Serbs from BiH and Croatia together with Abdic's rebel Muslims launched a counter-offensive, regained most of the lost territory, and began threatening to take over the Safe Area. The international news media then proceeded to criticize UNPROFOR and NATO for not defending a UN-designated Safe Area while seemingly ignoring a fundamental problem:

it is difficult for the international community to deter attacks against Safe Areas if they are being used by a belligerent in order to launch offensives.

The same problem exists regarding the Tuzla Safe Area with the exception that the Muslim forces continue to be firmly in control of the surrounding territory. Military activity around/within Safe Areas (including the frequent Serb harassment of the populations within these areas) must be addressed in order to increase the usefulness of Safe Areas as a form of protection for civilian populations threatened by displacement. Demilitarization appears to be one essential condition to make Safe Areas serve their temporary role. Otherwise, Safe Areas are likely to mirror armed conflicts in that they will be full of violations, abuse, and manipulation.

There are many lessons to be learned from the UN's experience with the Safe Area concept. Despite the many problems associated with this concept, the case of BiH suggests that it may have a positive role to play and can contribute toward solutions to problems that cause refugee flows. ■

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By W. Gunther Plaut

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