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WORD

DOSH

DIGEST



STRENGTHENED
IN SPIRIT



ISSUE #12



A. Shamilov. It's a Long Way

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Grozny received me with smooth roads and rebuilt high-rise buildings. As if the war years and total destruction had never happened. Calm pedestrians scurried along the streets, a flow of automobiles hurried to some destination. That initial suspicion: "it's dangerous there!" seemingly gave way, no longer made sense.

However, the feeling of tenderness upon seeing the transformed city began to dissipate as soon as working meetings with the people I surveyed began. It was clear that too many of them were fearful of talking candidly about their situations; some of them, with a kind of pathos, began to thank the government as if they were speaking at a public meeting. Suddenly it dawned on me where that sense of nebulous alarm came from which I felt as soon as I arrived on the territory of the Republic.



TAUS SERGANOVA WAR – DIVIDING LIFE IN TWO

December, 2011, was a month of year-end review in Russian politics. The elections to the State Duma on December 4th, which dominated the whole year, finally took place, and all the public battles of the party leaders were in the past. The pre-election fuss, observed for the most part in a realm parallel to and differing from the daily life of the average person, overshadowed other dates.

One of these dates was December 11th, the day of the official start of the war in Russia which has been customarily called "The Chechen War".

Many residents of the Republic of Chechnya remember the endless columns of military equipment, moving from all directions into its territory. This picture created a strange sense of an unreality of what was happening. So, a long terrible snake of war slithered onto the Chechen land. And in those days, no one could imagine what awaited everybody; how many victims, what grief and suffering were ahead for Chechnya and Russia.

They say that a war ends only when the last soldier to perish has been

buried. Seventeen years have passed since that day; the guns of the Russian-Chechen War have gone silent. The Republic has arisen out of the ashes; much has been done and is being done so that people do not see the physical evidence of the war in the villages and cities. It is possible to erase the signs of those terrible events in a short time. But how does one deal with the several thousand who disappeared without a trace, taken away into the unknown, and with their loved ones, for whom life has been divided in two - before and after?!

MARET ELDIEVA THE BLOODY DAWN OF THIS LONG WAR

The winter turned out to be very warm. Whether it was that nature was spoiling those suffering from the war with almost spring-like weather, or that the weak winds could not stand up to the force of the war and blow in cold clouds because of the eternally exploding salvos of the heavy artillery, the airplanes bombing, the noise of the armored vehicles mercilessly plying the streets, the lines of machine guns encroaching on the lives of peaceful people. It was January, 2001 and the apple trees were in bloom, as if protecting the fragile souls of people with this unseasonable, unnatural flowering, attempting to instill hope in a peaceful life.

The villages and cities of Chechnya lived among tight rings of checkpoints, from dawn to dusk absorbed in everyday cares, but at night they lived in trepidation that this night might be someone's last. Those who survived today might vanish tomorrow during the next mopping up operation or perish as the result of shelling. People survived however they could, however they managed, however possible in that cruel, long war. Everyone had an objective: civilians - to preserve their lives and the lives of their loved ones for as long as possible; the Federal forces - to earn not just ribbons and

medals, but as much money as possible, for the sake of which they were prepared to go to great lengths. Everyone who could, stood out in this war, beginning with the rank-and-file private of the Army of the Russian Federation, ending with the generals.

A war is on, mercilessly pounding and trampling all human understanding and essence. The regiment commanded by General Shamanov stands out in its unbelievable cruelty. The sinister renown of the "Shamanovsky" regiment made its way not only to the villages located on both sides of the Samashkin ridge but throughout all Chechnya. Many military men were surprised at the scale and the sophistication of the methods of depredation created by the underlings of Shamanov. Shamanov's men were also known for the fact that on holidays they liked to stand out. In the village of Pobedinskoe, in the countryside outside of Grozny, on January 13th, no one slept the whole night because of continuous shelling. People remained in anxious expectation, understanding that Shamanov's men were celebrating the Old New Year.

The residents of Pobeda Street were particularly distressed, since the street was located near a highway, and any-

thing could happen, including "unexpected guests" wandering in. But they were OK that night. On January 14th, it was warm again. That morning, neighbors on Pobeda Street shared the joy that everyone remained alive the past night, lamented the long war and set about their business. But woe was already very near. Near the outskirts of the village there was an oil pipeline. During the bombardment, there was an accident and oil gushed out onto the fields. No one was making repairs (that was the last thing on people's minds, a war was on) and the Federal forces hit upon the idea to organize a so-called defense of the local population, they told them that they can start a cottage industry of refining oil, to create a small business. A way of surviving. How to put it: on the one hand, it is theft. On the other, if one weighs all considerations pro et contra: oil was pouring out into a dirty pool, which nobody was in a position to fix, and this way there is at least some benefit. As far as health is concerned, who can say which is worse, the huge puddle which had already become almost a lake, or the effects of the so-called "boiling". Yes, it was something no one could think about: war, one had to try to survive. For the residents, the business brought them a pittance, if you count the money they had to spend,

but if the children were fed, that was OK. It never occurred to them, the poor residents that one of the reasons for the war was - oil.

Hospitable, good people lived on Pobeda Street. From a purely psychological point of view, people with secretive ways could not live near an open road. All the families tried to protect their children, especially the males, from everything, even from the above-mentioned business. They tried to protect Valid more than any other child. He was the only son of five Hasanov children, and his parents couldn't so much as breathe on him. Their whole life was dedicated to him, a modest handsome fellow.

Valid was friends with Rustam Yusupov and Beslan Ibragimov. From the time they started school they went everywhere together. At this difficult time they became even closer friends. The parents sheltered them, did not let them out of the house. They could get water only during the day, for all three families at the same time (there were problems with water, you had to go get it yourself) in an old mobile canteen belonging to Valid's father, although they weren't always able to get it. Today they planned to go out in the morning, laughing at the fears expressed at home during the nighttime shelling and agreed that they would go to get water at lunchtime. The day was not festive, just another wartime January day. After mid-day prayer that is what they did - they went out for water. With reluctance, their parents gave them water bottles and asked them to get back as soon as possible. After a while, after about an hour and a half, just out of town, at that very oil field something unthinkable began to happen: screams and explosions were heard. Residents began to worry, started to

try to find out if any of the "Grief Businessmen" had been at the field. When it turned out that they did not head out at all to produce that day, people calmed down.

Movldi Hasanov returned home long before dusk and asked right away: "Where is Valid?" When he discovered that the truck was not in the courtyard, he thought: "He went for water. Well, why is he not home yet?" The next minute, Movldi ran out of the gate, met a neighbor, and perplexedly mumbled "Valid is not at home. Did you see him?" He did not hear his neighbor's answer. Running from one neighbor to the next, he just audibly mumbled the one and only word "Valid, Valid". It seemed to him that his legs were leaden, that his legs were not obedient, that he should be running even faster, and why would soldiers come for water, and how could anything bad happen. But his son was not there either. He ran again, forgetting himself, rushing. He discovered that his son was not alone, that others were with him, and with difficulty realized that neither Rustam nor Beslan was home either. Running, he said aloud to himself, "I must hurry, before it gets dark".

He ran to the commandant's headquarters. When the battle-seasoned commandant said that they had not detained anyone that day, Movldi lost his grip: "Don't lie. Take anything you want, commander. I'll give my life, let Valid go". The colonel quizzically lifted his hands in dismay. Movldi did not want to believe his ears. He ran along all the lanes and alleys, hearing, as if in his sleep, about the chaos at the field, what happened there during the day, and headed there. He was detained. The commandant said that he should not go there, that rather he and his soldiers would continue the search. Movldi did not sleep at all that night,

paced up and down, nerves on end; he couldn't wait for the dawn. That night of waiting and foreboding dragged on too long.

Finally dawn came. Movldi went outside. For some reason streets were deserted and unusually quiet. Movldi headed quickly towards the field. From afar, he sighted a group of people coming towards him, he recognized the commandant and Hamzat, and he ran towards them. Everyone hid his eyes, and Hamzat completely dropped out of view. He tried to gauge expressions, to understand what happened. The commandant said quietly, "There's no one there, brother". When they returned to the village, they saw that there were many people outside. In the yard, his wife was sniveling, and an elderly man, holding back tears said: "Valid is no more". And continuing, as if from far away, a voice pierced every living thing: "...both Rustam, Beslan and the truck they blew up too". It was like he became numb. He felt like screaming, howling. He threw himself toward some soldier. Then he saw something crimson inexorably moving towards him. And once again dawn, then something crimson, offending the eye, bloody... He cried hoarsely, then that was it... He no longer felt the pain, did not see the doctors come, or that none of the men of that block found words of comfort. The doctors put it on the record as a stroke. Long months in the hospital dragged on, at first the 3rd City Hospital in Grozny, then Volgograd, Alma-Ata, and it went on for a year.

His fellow villagers sent Movldi home on purpose, understanding how hard it would be to comprehend what had happened. His relatives and friends together with the commandant decided to search at the field even though it was dangerous at night.

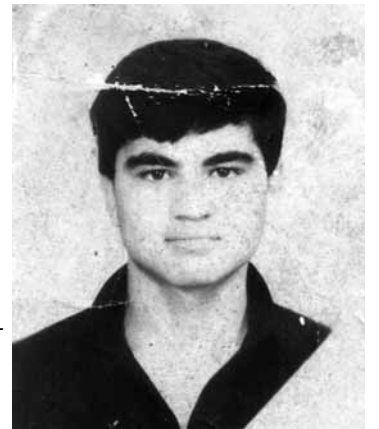
Beslan Ibragimov



Valid Hasanov



Rustam Yusupov



They discovered a blown-up truck, but the boys were not there. They decided to continue the search in the morning. Hamzat did not sleep the whole night. The spectacle of the blown-up truck shook his nerves. He did not want to leave the field. Rustam was his younger brother. Barely waiting for the dawn, he was out of the gate. They walked, carefully looking over the field step by step, visiting the sappers, the villagers, and the commandant. Hamzat saw legs protruding from some bushes, recognized them immediately and ran over, and then with a moan fell to the ground. The commandant, an experienced army officer, cried. Tears flowed down his face, and embarrassedly he wiped them, pronouncing: "The monsters, they're not human; they are not from here, Shamanov's men, only those bastards could do this". People approached and shuddered from what they saw. It was a frightening spectacle: a bloody mess, wrists tied with barbed wire, instead

of clothing, just tatters, a huge number of wounds. They later learned that they had been tortured first then tied to a tank and dragged around the field. But to the thoughtless monsters this was not enough, they blew up the bodies with an explosive cartridge, imitating the explosion of a landmine. The daylight never came, as if that bloody dawn hour decided to remain forever in their lives. January 15, 2001 became one of the most mournful days for residents of that village. The three graves in the village cemetery, as sad testimony to human cruelty and grief, do not give rest to their memory.

Even now, after so many years have passed, people find it very painful to recall this. Some could not speak at all. Beslan's mother told how she submitted a constituent's request to Ahmad-Haji Kadyrov to find the murderer of her son, and how a standard form answer came back. She thinks that if Ahmad-Haji were alive, he

would have found the murderer without fail. But the Head of the Chechen Republic, Ramzan Kadyrov, in Tamara's opinion, does not know about this crime. Ukhman told how she married Hamzat off after the murder of Rustam. Then four years after Rustam, Hamzat died of high blood pressure (on the day of his death, it rose to 240-280), and soon after that Hamzat's wife departed, leaving two children. Ukhman lives for the grandchildren's sake. Movldi, according to his passport Stambul, to this day still does not know the entire cruel truth of how the three children perished. He no longer lives on the same street. He couldn't. They say, the mullah who prepared the three for burial, was asked what condition the bodies were in; he didn't answer, he just started to cry.

Valid Hasanov, born 1975, Beslan Ibragimov, born 1975, Rustam Yusupov, born 1975 - all three were brutally killed on January 14, 2001.

The magazine "Dosh" presents the next two tragic stories in its regular rubric "Looking for Them and Waiting for Them" - about people who have disappeared without a trace during the two wars in Chechnya.

Beginning in "Dosh" - Volume 4 (30) 2010, continuing in all subsequent issues.



Aiznat Salmurzaeva

Aiznat looks at me with dulled eyes. She tries to smile, but can't manage it. In her hands she has a thick folder with documents, each of which to some degree confirms that her son was illegally kidnapped. This folder and his memory have been the only things she has had to live for these past nine years. She leafs through the documents, reading one aloud: "Height 170 cm, uniform size 48/3, shoes 42". That is an entry from the military service record card of Olkhazura Salmurzaev, born 1973. In a hushed tone, Aiznat tells how not long ago her family received a notice that the European Court of Justice for Human Rights in Strasbourg received the complaint # 7409/11 about the illegal kidnapping of Olkhazura Salmurzaev, born 1973, service man of the Russian Army, resident of the Chechen Republic, and it will be reviewed. This is very dear to her, because it symbolizes the hope that those who were the cause of her family's suffering to this day will be given a fair punishment.

Since her son went missing, Aiznat has gone to level after level of authority, beginning with the administration of the village. With each visit, the folder grew by one or more sheets of cold,

There Were No More Bright Nights

formal written replies, and nothing more came of it. Now, she is placing all her hope in the European Court for Human Rights. According to his mother, the son was not a participant in any illegal groups, and did not do anything illegal.

She will never forget that night, the night of July 20/21, 2002. The entire family was sleeping in their own, half-destroyed house on Tsentral'naya Street, in the village of Komsomolskoe, district of Urus-Martanovsky. "The night was very bright - remembers Aiznat - you know, our village had been very beautiful before the war, and that evening I was recalling the time of peace, how my spouse Vakha and I used to live, and I was crying. I had thought that my fate was not an easy one: my husband was an invalid because of childhood polio, we had five children, I had already begun to really value life, and just then the war began. That evening, memories flooded back, at first peaceful, then the war, frightening for the villagers in 2000, how the peaceful civilians tried to get out of the village, but a tight ring of lead encircled it, literally a ring of death, pressed in on the village more and more powerfully...I looked at the ruined village, painfully dear to me, dear to the point of tears; I recalled my whole life with its happiest moments...but, with my eyes moist, I shed a tear...the night was unusually bright and beautiful".

Not suspecting anything about the coming woes, the whole family was

sleeping peacefully when armed men in camouflage broke into the house. Hereafter, it went according to the standard script: "Everyone lie down! Men up against the wall! Don't move!" Aiznat saw that they put Vakha up against the wall, and her younger son Kyuri; she saw how around 10 men were playing the master in the house (one of them was masked), and she became terribly frightened. She saw right away how they began to hit Olkhazura with gun butts and push him towards the door. The mother threw herself towards her son, began to implore them not to take him, but no entreaties or tears helped. Just as suddenly as they had appeared, they left, taking with them Olkhazura.

"Since then there have been no more bright nights" - she whispers. Two years ago, Vakha died, not having come to terms with that grief.

"He is a good son, a helper. His father did not wait for him. But I'm hoping that something - her voice once again trembled from the tears - what for? Why?" The questions sounded like she was asking the whole world, as if she were trying to convey her maternal pain to all and everyone individually with these questions. "Here is a letter - the notice from the European Court of Human Rights". Aiznat holds the envelope, as if gripping it, the last hope to achieve justice in this world, already foreign to her, which took her son from her.

The Twelfth Story



Nura Dudarkaeva

Nura Dudarkaeva lived in the village of Goiskoe, district of Urus-Martanovsky, bringing up two children, and she could not be bothered with politics. She labored from morning to night, dreaming of marrying off her only son Gelani, then grandchildren and she would be happy. The war spoiled all of her plans. She of course did not stop dreaming, but her whole life was dedicated to the one and only goal of protecting the children from misfortune. She did not conceive of herself without her son. It was exceedingly hard to survive; Nura tried as best as she could, as long as her son would be near, and there could be no question of her son going to work or traveling.

Chechnya was throttled by cruel punitive operations, which came to be called "cleanups", as a result of which hundreds of peaceful civilians were kidnapped. Subsequently an absolute majority of these people vanished without a trace. Nura never let her son out alone. She produced handmade mattresses and blankets filled with lamb's wool, and with the proceeds fed her family. Gelani helped her to clean the wool and do the wash. Her son saw how his mother was trying to protect him, and respected her maternal feelings, not contradicting her in anything, helping with everything his mother did. Everyone with whom I spoke about this story noted that he had a very mild, guileless character. That is how they lived until June, 2002 came.

Afraid To Harm Her Son

On the morning of June 6, 2002, Nura got up earlier in order to wash the wool. The day before she and Gelani had bought shoes for him at the market in Grozny, but at home he decided to exchange them. He asked his mother permission to go back to the market. For a long time the woman did not want to let her son go, but gave in, and Gelani went himself. That day, Gelani did not return. He did not return the day after either. And then, the days dragged on in an endless cavalcade of waiting and obscurity. Eye witnesses say that Gelani was taken during a cleanup operation at the Central Market in Grozny. They demanded his papers, saw that he did not have a residence permit for the city, and immediately a group of soldiers surrounded him and took him away. At that time, many were taken away because of residence permits.

Aiznat Salmurzaev and her son Olkhazura were also eye witnesses. Olkhazura made a dash towards Gelani, but his mother begged him and held him back. "How was I to know that soon, that would be it?" - wept Aiznat. (In July they took Olkhazura too, about whom the previous story was written). The families knew each other, after all Goiskoe and Komsomolskoe were very close to each other. "Very many were taken on that day", recalls Aiznat through her tears. Nura looked everywhere, but did not write a statement for the Prosecutor General, and did not make any official requests to search for him, fearing to harm her son. "People said that it is better not to write, that they may beat him to death, and otherwise will let him out. I believed that. He was all I had, he was not married, had

no children. Now I have written statements. I am waiting. Probably they'll look for him". She asked me, "What do you think - they won't beat him now, will they?" This painfully naive question knocked me down with a feather.

P.S. While I was working on this story, I got a phone call. At first I did not recognize the worried voice of Nura. It turned out that she went to the police station of the Zavodskoi District to find out how things were going with the search for her son, and there they told her a whole lot, up to and including that she wanted money, and had no time for her son. This is roughly what I was able to understand from her sobbing. "They said that I wanted Euros", wept Nura. Choosing my words, ineptly trying to comfort the poor woman, I thought about those people who dealt with her, shutting out all human feeling and the fear of God. We so love to exhibit haughtily that which we do not possess. In the end, she did not make up anything: the son had disappeared. In the words of Nura, they later apologized. For me personally this episode looks like this: at first they tried to scare the poor woman, they insulted her as much as they could, so that she would call off the search for her son, but they later apologized. Among the insults there was a phrase like this: "How much money did they ask for in exchange for helping?" "They", I understand, is all of us who are not indifferent to Nura's grief. For the information of those who ask similar questions: I and my colleagues work without compensation. If this statement is not enough, there are legal norms which do not permit slander.

SVETLANA ALIEVA

68 YEARS HAVE PASSED – THE TRAGEDY CONTINUES

In order to begin carrying out an ideological program of denationalizing the whole country, at the initiative of the Communist Party and its general secretary, the Soviet government could not have found a better time than the war with Hitler which began in 1941. The war helped to invent the reasons for repressing peoples who needed to be gotten rid of. It was premature to touch the other Republics of the Soviet Union. The so-called Autonomous Republics and Oblasts in the RSFSR – that was another story. Those numerically insignificant peoples possessed the best territory in terms of climate and natural resources. It needed to be liberated from the aborigines in order to provide favorable conditions for the further transformation of the country into a unified mono-national world. Having declared holy war against the fascists, the Soviet government surreptitiously organized the liquidation of these "superfluous" ethnic groups and the appropriation of their lands, not understanding (or, nevertheless, understanding?) that the cynicism of this design conforms to the principles of Nazism, in other words, that very same fascism.

The war began on June 22nd and in August the Republic of Volga Germans was liquidated – they had settled in Russia at the beginning of the XVII century and had made significant contributions to the cultural-economic development of the empire. The excuse was the war with Hitler: the Russian Germans would surely begin to betray Russia, hence they ought to be pre-emptively sentenced to die out. But this is another story, not yet known to the Russian people. It ought to be told separately.

Having split up the Russian Germans, they turned to the purging of the

Northern Caucasus. The reason given for all was the same – they are renegades, traitors, and bandits. It was decided to give no advance notice – to remove them unexpectedly, in obscurity, catch them unawares, give them an hour to pack. What a great idea, to call them to assemble on the occasion of a holiday! The Karachays were removed the day before November 7, 1943, from the announced festivities of the Great October Revolution. The Kalmyks – in 1943, the day before New Year's, 1944. The Chechens' and the Ingush's turn to celebrate came on February 23, 1944. Stalin tasked Beria personally with the job of getting them out in 24 hours and reporting back to him. In order to carry out the order without lapses, it was decided to liquidate on the spot the mountain village of Khaibakh, inaccessible by road. They gathered everyone to celebrate the Day of the Soviet Red Army in a simple village stable. Women – mothers, wives, sisters of fighting men – with children and the elderly came all dressed up. Only the sick and infirm remained at home. They locked up the stable, poured out fuel and lit it. More than 700 were burned alive, and those who remained at home were shot. And only in August, 1990 did the Cheka (translator's note: the KGB) gather the evidence and facts and draw up a document about this atrocity.

Having carried out his task of purging Chechnya-Ingushetia of Chechens and Ingush, Beria arrived in the Kabardino-Balkarian ASSR to finish what began under his direction in November, 1942. On the night of November 27-28th, a brigade of Captain Nakin from the 11th Division of Internal Security Troops of the NKVD, made up of 152 men, entered the Cherek Gorge to conduct a punitive operation. On

the night of December 4-5th, he left burning the Upper Balkarian villages of Sautu, Glashevo, and Upper Cheget – and sent a report that they killed 1500 people and burned five villages. A week later, Hitler's forces arrived; they left on December 31st. On January 6, 1943 the Republic was liberated from the onslaught. But in 1944, on the next Soviet holiday, March 8th, all Balkarian people were deported. With the same accusation.

In 1957-58, the Kalmyks, Karachays, Chechens, Ingush and Balkarians were permitted to return to their homeland, their citizenship was restored, although with some changes to territorial borders. The Russian Germans did not get their Republic on the Volga back, though; they were for all practical purposes driven out, back to their historic homeland.

For all, the return home dragged out and was complicated by new accusations. The attempts of the authorities by hook or by crook to make a unified mono-national country out of a multi-ethnic empire continue, in defiance of reality. And the tired myth of bandits from the Caucasus prompts the Kremlin leaders in self-defense (?) to order special forces troops to the resort towns of the Northern Caucasus.

One can't help but wonder, are they governed by inherent stupidity, ignorance or malicious intent? After all, it would be very simple to achieve a peaceful equilibrium – carry out at last the still empty declarations of the law on the rehabilitation of repressed peoples, return the territory taken from all of them and even if it is a half century later, ask forgiveness of those peoples. Otherwise, isn't it in vain to think about mending interethnic relations?

ISMAIL KURBAKHAZHIEV

A CHRONICLE OF THE DEPORTATIONS OF 1944 IN FACES AND FATES

For a long time I thought about what and how to write about the terrible tragedy that befell my freedom-loving people, about that horrible meat grinder of human fates which can't be described. Where can one find the words which could convey our pain?

However, having seen the faces of my elderly heroes, with whom I met in 2005 (some of them have already departed this world), I decided to let them themselves speak and turned on the tape recorder. Silently, keeping back tears, I listened to each of them, as they recalled those years, their childhood and their youth. In this national tragedy, every person has his own bitter story. Lev Tolstoy hit the nail on the head: "All happy families are happy in the same way, but each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way". As many as there are stories – as many are there unmatched misfortunes, which became the reflection of the fate of this generation passing from us.

For us, the present and up-and-coming generations, it is important, it is necessary to know this...

Zalpato Akueva, born in 1939, banished to the city of Leninogorsk, Kazakhstan

THREE SISTERS



We lived in the hamlet of Dachu-Barzoy. I was only five years old, and I hazily remember how this all happened. There were three of us sisters, I was the middle one. I remember how soldiers came to our house and spoke to my father about something. As my father told us later, the ones who came to see us were "kind", if one were to compare them with the ones who broke into the houses of our neighbors. They, it turned out, told our father that we should only take food and warm clothing, since we are going to be banished to a very cold place. Our father packed up some small bundles very quickly, and we were taken outside where they gathered all the villagers. Mama was not with us – she was visiting relatives in Samashki. She was taken away from there by another echelon. Everyone was crying, and we were too. Although we did not know

what was happening, we understood that something terrible was going on.

I remember how we rode in a cold railway car, for a very long time. At the beginning the car was so overfilled that there was no place to put your leg. But in about two weeks so many people died from the cold, disease and hunger that we were able to run around the car.

We ended up in northern Kazakhstan, in Leninogorsk - the coldest spot. We three young sisters and our father were assigned to one of the barracks. It was something like a huge calf shed where each of the exiled families which survived the journey occupied its little patch. There were many sick people: every day they carried out the newly deceased.

Our father was a man of great physical strength; he could do any difficult job. Without our mother he fed us by going to work. In the spring he cleared a small plot of land himself and planted potatoes. This small garden saved

many people from starvation. Bit by bit it seemed that things were looking up, and then in an instant everything changed again: father was imprisoned on a false accusation. Someone tossed a portion of a cow carcass into our garden; the cow it turned out was stolen. Our father was taken in, and we were sent to the Poperechensky Children's Home. The drabest memories of my childhood were of this institution. There were many Chechen children there, but even more homeless children. There we were called Zoya, Zina and Anya instead of Zalpa, Zalpato and Aina. Who knows, maybe we would have grown up that way, but fortunately in 1947 we were found by our mother and grandmother. That was the brightest and happiest moment of my childhood. They took us to be with them, in Taldy-Kurgan. But two years later, Mama was no more...

In 1952, our father returned. In the same year, our uncle on our father's side tracked us down, and took us to be with him in Kirgizia, where we lived

for four years, and then we again returned with our father to Kazakhstan, hoping to find our relatives in Taldy-Kurgan. There we nestled until 1961, when we returned to our homeland.

Regardless of all the bad there was, I remember the faces of those local residents who saw in us not enemies, but people just the same as they were, only we had been slandered by the authorities, and we were barefoot, half naked, hungry and only half alive because of the cold. What danger could we have posed for Soviet power? Many of the locals I remember as very kind and decent people. There were of course, occasionally exceptions, but there were more of the former who helped us however they could - one with clothing, another with food. We did not encounter open animosity towards us, despite the huge Soviet propaganda machine. After all, simple people have nothing to share, not then, not now. Our childhood lot included grown-up trials. But we survived. That means it was the will of the Almighty.

Aset Khadzhieva, born 1930, banished to Taldy-Kurgan Oblast, Kazakhstan. Died March 22, 2008.

A SHROUD FOR FATHER



We lived with our large family in the high mountain village of Ati-Pkhovda, hamlet of Khachirov, Itum-Kalininsky district. I was the only girl in the family. I had six brothers, but one of them died young, before the deportation. I remember those days very well. The whole house, so to speak, depended on me, because Mama was visiting her sister in Zakan-Yurt. I both cleaned and cooked, and looked after my younger brothers. The youngest was only 1 year old.

They sent us away without our mother. It is painful to recall how frighten-

ing it was en route without Mama, with the younger children, without food and without warm clothing. After a long journey our echelon arrived in northern Kazakhstan. It was terribly cold. We were brought to a village. There they gave us a decent welcome; they fed us, clothed and shod us. Gradually we began to settle down, hoping that we would find a real Nana. But in three months, we were taken from there to a factory producing lime. We were quartered in an earthen barracks. It was like a bunker silo but covered. The roof did not extend above the level of ground, and

all winter sleighs, harnessed horses and other forms of transport rode over it. There was no question of heat or light - everyone improvised whatever he could. What is more, a typhus epidemic began. One by one, we buried my three younger brothers. Then my father fell ill. He passed also. He died towards evening, but my

younger brother Mohamed and I sat at his bedside until morning. All of this time, I and our neighbor Zariat were making a shroud out of scraps of cloth (the times were tough, every piece of material was worth its weight in gold) for father. The next day, we buried him, as is fitting, wrapped in the shroud made by me... So we were left

alone: all four of my father's brothers and their numerous children also died. Out of our family of 31, which moved into the barracks of the lime factory, only a few were left alive. I had no childhood as such: as far as I can remember, I have always been an adult. That is, I was compelled to be an adult.

Zalpa Imadaeva, born in 1939, banished from the hamlet of Dachu-Barzoy to Leninogorsk, Kazakhstan

THE SNOWY CEMETERY

Everyone can tell the same story about how we were banished. I can't add anything in particular. It was difficult, cold, hungry, but in the middle of all of this my memory holds on to an episode that one can never forget...

I was the eldest in the family. There was much we had to live through, but the worst was that Mama was not with us - we were separated during the deportation. If during the loading of a truck or railway car there was no room for half of a family, then they might be taken just like that and sent by another train to another district or oblast. That is what happened to our mother. And the authorities did not allow us to search for lost relatives ourselves...

The day was bitterly cold, and at that time in northern Kazakhstan the temperatures were getting down to -40 Celsius. Daddy decided to go to the neighboring village to look for our mother, and took me with him. Without permission, and after all, in order to go from one village to another, you needed a special pass, which was not given to just anyone.

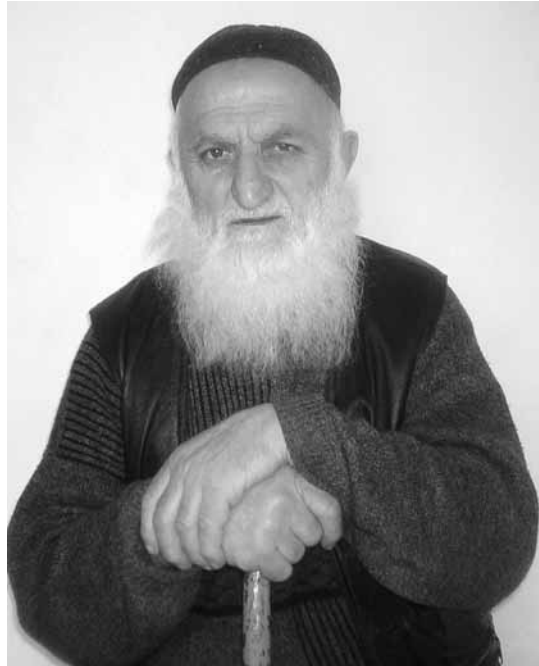
We were walking along a narrow path, trodden down by others before us among the "enemies of the people"

looking for their relatives. A path had been made in 4 feet of snow. Here we were overtaken by Chechens with a sled. They were carrying something wrapped in a blanket cover. I wanted father to ask them to put me on the sled instead of carrying me on his back. But father was surprised: "Would you really want to get on a sled with a dead body? They are hauling a corpse". I almost died of fright. I no longer looked at them. But further along, we met another group of people who were digging someone's body right into the snow. The ground was frozen, and nobody had the strength to clear 4 feet of snow practically with bare hands, and then still dig a hole in the earth. It turned out that people were burying their relatives along this road. It was already called the road of the dead. Still further on, we chanced upon a pack of wild dogs, or maybe they became wild. They were devouring something - I did not immediately understand what. Father authoritatively commanded me not to look in their direction, and he himself hastily broke off a sizeable branch from the nearest tree. We were passing right by them. I will never forget their ferocious eyes and bloody mouths. They were ripping apart the dug-up body of a baby. Father explained: "So you see, people



bury bodies in the snow, and they dig them out and eat them". I became terrified; I was afraid that they would attack us and would eat us alive. I began to beg Daddy to go back... Yes, say what, but there were plenty of chances to die in those endless circles of hell.

Now they tell us that they'll give us ten thousand rubles (translator's note: just over \$300) - compensation for those 13 years of suffering. Can they really recompense even a half hour of life taken away, mine or someone else's? If only they would have scruples about calling it compensation!



**Akhmad Magomadov, born in 1931,
banished to the city of Pavlodar, Kazakhstan**

TORN AWAY FROM HIS FAMILY

I was with my uncle on my mother's side during those days, at the foot of the Tersk Ridge. We would usually drive the herd to winter there. It is warmer than in the mountains, and the sheep have a place to graze right up until spring. It was from here that they expelled us. First, soldiers, from God knows where, had us immediately drive our herd to Zakan-Yurt. There we were forced to leave our sheep - more than 300 head, and they took us to Achkhoy-Martan to the railroad station. There we were kept by armed soldiers around three weeks until our turn came. They fed us once a day - a piece of bread and some kind of gruel. Why, for what reason we were being kept there - no one explained a thing. Finally, at the end of March, we were transferred to Samashki and from there, loading us in railroad cars, we were sent into the unknown. Where we were being taken and why, likewise, of course, no one said. My mother was deceased, but what had become of my father and the other members of the family, I did not know. In 18 days, we arrived in Kazakhstan, in the city of

Pavlodar. It was 40 below. They put us in barracks. The locals at first did not talk to us; they looked at us as if we were wild men. It figures: long before we arrived, they hammered it into them that they ought to avoid all contact with us, both from the point of view of the law, and in terms of their own safety. Later, when we did begin to have dealings with them and gradually because close, they themselves told us how they were told by the authorities that we were cannibals, murderers and cutthroats.

Grandfather died of illness in the spring. At age 13, I was completely alone among total strangers. In the spring and summer I mucked around, doing work in the fields of a collective farm, doing what I had to in order to survive. But that winter the head of the collective farm brought me and a few other waifs to Pavlodar and put us in an orphanage there, since we had no relatives with us. Several times we were relocated to other orphanages, until we were taken far from the city to some kind of children's camp. It was

impossible to live there, and I and a friend I made there, Kuddus from Achkhoy-Martan, ran away back to Pavlodar. We had to sleep in the snow many times. But we were caught, and sent back to the children's colony, from which we escaped again. I needed to find my relatives. After that, I did not see Kuddus again. I returned to the State farm, and its factory school, where I completed a six-month course on automobile repair, and I worked doing that. Later I moved to Karaganda, and got a job in the mines, where I worked for 14 years. Only in 1953 did I learn the fate of my relatives. By that time my father had not been among the living for a long time. I returned to my homeland in 1968...

So now, they have set supposed compensation for the deportation at 10 thousand, and they will never actually give it to us. What can this sum actually recompense? Materially we lost many times that much, and no amount of money can compensate for pain and suffering. Ten thousand as compensation? It's ridiculous. Mockery.

Akhmad Kurbanov, born in 1928, banished from the hamlet of Khachiroy to Kazakhstan

A MOTHER'S EMBRACE



I was in my seventeenth year. My parents were looking for a bride for me. I was the eldest child in the family - of five brothers and one sister. My youngest brother Isak was not yet one year old. Our Mama's name was Markhadai. During those days, Daddy took her in a farm wagon to her sister in Zakan-Yurt. From there she planned to travel to Grozny to the market, in order to buy her children warm winter clothing. Daddy was supposed to come get her a week later. Times were difficult, and in daily life people did not aspire to anything except absolute necessities. You could buy things only in Grozny. Once a week a large market was held, to which people brought groceries: potatoes, butter, meat, etc. and traded these things for clothing.

At that time, Grozny was literally flooded with Ukrainians fleeing the famine plaguing their homeland. For the most part they traded clothing for food. The Chechens at that time adopted many of their children, and helped them as much as they could. A relative on our father's side also

adopted a boy. In a year, he was already speaking Chechen. He was also exiled together with us.

When soldiers came to the village at the beginning of February, our mother had not been home for a week. Our father suspected something was wrong and tried to go get her three times. But each time, the soldiers would not let him farther than Itum-Kale. Three weeks passed like that.

One cold morning the soldiers came to our house and gave us a half hour to get ready. Father, I and sister hurriedly got our younger brothers dressed. We gathered what we could in bundles. And so, carrying the children, under the muzzle of machine guns we were herded on foot to the district capital.

Young Magomet was 6, Yusup was 4; these young ones were forced to walk barefooted and half-dressed in wet snow to Itum-Kale. There we were forced to stay the night outside, regardless of the bitter cold. The next morning, we were taken from there to Alkhan-Kala, and in the evening, loaded onto a train without mother, and sent to Kazakhstan. We did not see mother again. As we later learned, years later, she had been expelled from Zakan-Yurt together with the family of her sister to the Karaganda Oblast. She died soon after, only three months after the expulsion. They say that she suffered greatly from the separation from us - her children, and in the final analysis her heart could not take it. I would give everything in the world only to embrace her once...

Ashkho Magomadova, born 1938, banished from the hamlet of Kolkhadoy to Turkestan, city of Kentau. Died on January 1, 2012.



It is tough to recall such things... I was little, but distinctly remember the day of the expulsion. They herded us into the courtyard of the village council building. It was a horrible sight... Your ears rang from the crying of the women and children. I remember how father asked the soldiers to allow him to go and get his prayer beads - he never parted with them and here in the commotion he had left them on the prayer rug. They didn't permit it. Then father sent me: he said that no one would miss such a small girl. I made it to the house myself, I don't

MAMA'S DRESS

know how, and with difficulty found my father's holy relic. Father kept bees, and in the winter the hive was inside the house. The soldiers had broken it in order to treat themselves to honey. The bees, which Daddy had raised so carefully, were now lying dead everywhere: they perished from the cold...

I almost don't remember the journey. But I do remember that we arrived in the warm Turkestanskaya Oblast. In the summer the heat was so unbearable that many of the exiled Chechens died because of the unfamiliar climate. And the hunger was unbearable... I remember how Mama and I would go to the market, in order to sell her only nice dress. To this day, I cannot forget it - it was velour, green and looked

very good on her. Mama sold it, and also her large kerchief. With all the money we got, then 120 rubles, we were only able to buy one, granted, large, loaf of bread and we happily returned home. Mama equally divided the loaf among the members of our family and our numerous relatives - each got a piece not larger than a matchbox.

In Achisay, where we were first assigned, there was a mine. Father got a job there. Every day, for lunch, he, like all the miners, got 400 grams of bread. And during the lunch break he literally raced home, left all of this for us and departed. It was only thanks to him, for sure, that we returned home alive.

Malekhat Bukulieva, born in 1933, banished to southern Kazakhstan and from there, to Uzbekistan

SEARCHING FOR HER SISTER IN THE "BREADBASKET" OF TASHKENT

There were five in our family. I am the eldest. We were banished from the high mountain village of Veduchi. That night lots of soldiers appeared in our

village. We were scared and puzzled by what was going on. Before morning absolutely no one told us anything. That night father was staying with rel-

atives in Zakan-Yurt. As we later learned, he was banished from there to Karaganda. We were not fated to see each other again: that is where he died.

And we had staying with us two female cousins, who were banished together with us, separated from their family. In the morning we were ordered to gather immediately at the village administration building. The other children were younger than I, and our family took with it only what I could take with me on my back. My mother carried my infant sister in her arms. So, walking, we made our way to the district capital of Itum-Kale. From there, were we put in trucks and sent to Alkhan-Kala.

Mama and four children died in Kazakhstan - there was an epidemic of typhus there and other diseases as well. Only I and my six-year-old sister were left. We were sent to a Tashkent orphanage. But there, in Uzbekistan, we were separated - my sister, as an underage child, was sent to a pre-school orphanage, and I was sent to



the Fergana Oblast. Later, our aunt, sister of our mother, found me there. She took me to her relatives in Turkestan. But before that, the two of us returned to Tashkent in the hope of finding our only living sister. In Tashkent's orphanage #5, where we had been separated, in the guest book a record was found

of her really having been there. She was entered as Valya instead of Malika. One of the teachers and I went around to all the rooms, but were not able to find her anywhere. Later, they remembered the journal in which information about children who died is entered. There I found my sister - a note about her death was entered into the journal. According to this note, 25 children among whom had been my Malika, died of measles. I cried hard. Then, an elderly Uzbek, who brought bread in a wagon, approached me and said that he had buried her, as was fitting...

There was a great, great deal that we had to endure in those years. Can you really tell it all? Now they are offering a pitiful sum in the form of compensation for the deportation. They don't even understand that this handout is an insult to our memory.

Aina Magomadova, born in 1941, banished from Grozny to Kazakhstan

THE TASTE OF POTATOES

Of course I do not remember the deportation itself, or the first few years of exile, after all I was only around four years old. But there are several episodes from my might-have-been childhood which I will never forget...

I was the youngest of three sisters. Later, in Kazakhstan, our father was arrested. That I remember clearly, although I was only six. He was put into a truck and taken away along a dusty road, leaving us - the three young daughters - all alone, without a provider or support. I remember how the three of us, crying, ran for a long time in the clouds of road dust after that truck... I still remember how at our parting, my father put me on his knee,

and saying goodbye, slipped three rubles into my pocket - that was big money in those days. With that money, I and my sisters bought many pine nuts, candy and some other treats...

How we ended up in an orphanage I have forgotten, but I remember clearly a cold winter which we had to spend in that grey, inhospitable institution. The children there were always half-starved, but it was nevertheless impossible to eat the yellow-tinted kasha which they fed us there. I don't know what they made it out of, but the bad taste and the bitterness in your mouth which it left could hardly be forgotten by anyone who was served up that concoction...



I remember how on one miserable fall day children came running to me and suddenly started to exclaim: "You have visitors, you have visitors!" This

turned out to be both of my older sisters Zalpa and Zalpato. I didn't even know that they were in another wing of the same orphanage - after all we were never allowed to go out anywhere. They brought me two huge potatoes, cooked on an open fire and still so hot that they rather burned your hands. I don't understand how my sisters got them in in their bosoms! They sat next to me while I ate one of the potatoes. The second they gave me to keep for later - it was not

in my power to eat both right away. To this day I remember the taste of that not-fully-cooked potato. And also the day when Mama found us and came for us - that, I cannot ever forget.

We had no childhood; I thought, well, at least there will be old age. But it did not bring us solace - you see yourself, the war. Now they are "magnanimously" promising to give us 10 thousand for all of these deprivations,

well, there's no way they'll give us the whole amount, they'll probably decide: maybe we can cut this amount by 50%? This is just a brazen insult, to our face, for innocent people who suffered, for the whole nation. May God grant that a person who considers this amount of money adequate compensation for our deprivations live through all of what we lived through, and then get that compensation...

Samart Dudaeva, born in 1937, banished to the city of Frunze, Kirgizia

"I REMEMBER HOW THEY HID THE CORPSES"

Before the deportation we lived in Ulus-Kert. Our father worked there as a factory foreman. There were seven of us children. I remember clear as a bell how we, together with our hastily gathered things, were loaded into "Studebakers" and taken to the railroad station. It was very cold in the boxcars. Many died en route from hypothermia and hunger. I remember how people hid the corpses of their loved ones, hoping to bury them in a fitting manner when we would arrive. But at every station the soldiers would conduct a search and would throw discovered corpses out of the cars by their feet. No relatives were allowed to get out and bury them, even in the snow.

When we were let out at the station in the Osh Oblast of Kirgizia, I remember that even the people who were supposed to take us in farm wagons to our assigned place were afraid to approach us. At first, the local population had a wary attitude towards us: they kept clear of us; they forbade their children to play with ours. As they themselves

told us later, they were assured that all Chechens were cannibals.

We were lodged in former stables and on farms. It was cold there and drafty everywhere. Instead of a bed of boards - half-frozen straw. Five of us, three of my brothers and two sisters, did not make it. Only I and my brother were left. Later we moved to the city of Frunze (now Bishkek, capital of Kirgizia).

I saw with my own eyes how people picked out kernels from manure in order to not die of starvation. A half-liter jar of flour cost 40 rubles in those days, but it took a month to earn that much money...

We had to live through a great deal in the years of exile; can you really tell it all? But to see how our suffering and loss have decreased in value over time in the eyes of the government, that someone there on high has decided that 10 thousands rubles is enough to pay all the bills...



Zaikhara Pasanova, born in 1912, deported from the hamlet of Gendergeev to the Osh Oblast, Kirgizia, Died February 2005

PRISON FOR EARS OF WHEAT FROM THE STUBBLE FIELDS

In January, 1944, soldiers came to our village. They were quartered with families, and they told us that they would be building roads to help the local population in its work. They put five in our house too. We fed them and took care of them. Rather cordial relations developed between us. Occasionally our guests would considerately ask us why we don't buy the children warm clothing and shoes...

At dawn on February 23rd frightening screams of women and children were heard in the village. At that time I was making breakfast for the children. Suddenly our neighbor burst into the house and, barely able to get the words out, she babbled: "They say they are deporting us to Siberia!" I did not believe it, but for some reason became flustered and ran outside. Unfortunately, my neighbor was right: by midday, all of us - women, children, the elderly, those without hats, those without warm clothing, some barefoot, under the muzzles of rifles and machine guns - were herded to the village mosque. After lunch, all the residents of a neighboring village, Zandak-Ara were brought there, too, and all of us together were herded down, in wet

snow, sometimes changing to a driving rain, through slush and mud, with howling children, crying women and whimpering sick people, to the hamlet of Khochi-Ara. I was with three children: my eldest son, 6 years old, my daughter, a year and nine months, and the youngest, one year.

We spent the first night outside. The second day we continued on the path down along the Yamans River, stopping at night in the village of Rogun-Kazha. They allowed us to make campfires, since the cold was unbearable. We slept near them. The next morning, they brought around American trucks ("Studebakers"), pushed us into them wholesale and took us to Khasav-Yurt. In the rush and the chaos of loading many got lost. In the evening of the same day at the Khasav-Yurt station we were loaded into dirty boxcars and sent on a long journey. Many died along the way; the sentries simply threw the corpses out along the railway, sometimes when the train was in motion.

After twenty-two days of that endless road we were unloaded right into the snow, outside - as we learned some



time later, in the Osh Oblast of Kirgizia. There was no place to live, and nothing to eat, for that matter. Around half of the deportees died of hunger, illness and cold in the first years. Orphans were given to orphanages. The father of my children also died in the first year of exile. Later I buried my mother. In order to not die of starvation, and to feed our children something, we had to collect ears of wheat in the stubble fields, which we then boiled and ate. But even that business was fraught with danger, for the guard or commandant on duty would arrest those caught doing that, and they were sentenced to prison, given a sentence from five to fifteen years...

Mady Bakhmadov, born in 1931 - banished from the hamlet of Kolkhadoy to Kazakhstan

"WE WERE NAIVE THEN"



A week before the deportation soldiers came to our village. Many soldiers. They said that they were going to be catching abreks (translator's note: members of mountain bands who fought the Russians in the 19th century) in the surrounding mountains. Several days before the expulsion the soldiers forbade residents to leave or enter Kolkhadoy - it was permitted only with a special pass. They took all

horses away from the villagers, so that nobody could slip away. I will never be able to forget the cold morning of February 23, 1944 - the howling of the dogs was never so pitiful, the mooing of the hungry cattle - so acutely felt, and the weeping of the women and children so helpless. The soldiers gave us a half hour to get ready. We had to walk to the district capital - that was no less than 12 kilometers and in addition my father was gravely ill.

Under the muzzles of machine guns and in wet snow we had to haul a heavy bag with provisions, and mother carried the two youngest children in her arms the whole way. "How strange this is, we thought. At the same time our men in the Red Army are fighting

the fascists at the front, here, deep in the rear, another part of the very same army is evicting us. Why?"

Nobody explained anything. The next day we were loaded into freight cars, and for the next twenty days we sat in this "prison on wheels" without being able to get out, and without food, not counting what we had time to bring with us. It is true that several times at stations they threw a few rolls of frozen bread into the car and a couple times they gave us some kind of gruel in buckets.

People were upset, they said that Stalin does not know the truth; if he knew, he would not permit such a thing. We were naive then - we believed anything...

My tape recorder has already finished rewinding and stopped - it does not understand, after all it is just a machine, but my heart is heavy. These kinds of stories force one to relive everyone's personal tragedy with him, and, at that, to be conscious of one's helplessness; that is so painful!

These people had no childhood, their youth was taken away, and their lives were turned into one big struggle to survive. They truly hoped that at least in old age they would know a calm, dignified life. But old age also did not bring them a reprieve. All because of the war - the war of the State against its own citizens. Have our elderly again turned out to be guilty without guilt? I asked each of them when it was harder: during the deportation, which one might have thought would be forever, or during the years of the last two Chechen wars? And here they all answered as with one voice, that here there is no comparison - each of these tragedies is terrible in its own way. Their old age is bitter; like their youth, it has been mangled, like the Chechen land - by war. The wounds of the land will heal; for nature, many springs lie ahead. But each of us has only one life.



"FATE UNKNOWN"

Human rights activists presented this book in Grozny about the missing residents of Chechnya

On February 15th, the presentation of a book by a Board member of the human rights organization Memorial, Alexander Cherkasov, took place in the Grozny office of the interregional non-profit organization The Center for Caucasus Initiative. In the first part of the book, under the heading "Fate Unknown", information is set forth about people who disappeared on the territory of the Chechen Republic from the very beginning of the so-called counterterrorist

operation at the end of 1999 and beginning of 2000.

Fate Unknown is the searing truth about the punitive "clean-up operations" which were conducted on the territory of the Republic during the "Second Chechen War" by personnel of various power ministry groups, about the kidnappings and disappearance of civilians, about torture and inhumane treatment of detainees.

There are around 500 pages. 384 people disappeared after being detained or kidnapped by federal security forces. And there are another 187 names of people who are missing under unclear circumstances.

Representatives of human rights and non-profit organizations came to the presentation, including directors of NGOs like the Human Rights Center of the Chechen Republic (Minkail Ezhev),

Female Dignity (Lipkan Bazaeva), Niiso (Zargan Makhadzhieva), Sintem (Inna Airapetyan), representatives of the Nazran office of the human rights center Memorial headed by Timur Akiev, relatives of kidnapped and missing of the Republic and several local journalists. Representatives of the government and law enforcement ignored the event.

The book Fate Unknown is dedicated to the well-known Chechen human rights activist and representative of the human rights center Memorial, Natalia Estemirova, who herself was a victim of kidnapping and subsequent execution in the summer of 2009. The author of the work, Alexander Cherkasov, spoke to the gathering, and noted in particular that this book is the result of the labor of all of his colleagues at Memorial, and that he had planned to publish it in the summer of 2011, to coincide with the date of the death of Estemirova, but for a number

of reasons it was only possible to publish it now. "Nevertheless, the book has been published to coincide with the birthday of Natasha, which is February 28th" the human rights activist underscored.

Those present from the human rights and non-profit communities expressed the unanimous opinion that the subject of the kidnapping of people in the Republic during military operations is still topical, and that the publishing of a book about the disappearance of residents of the Chechen Republic is a very significant and important event, first and foremost for those who have been trying to learn the fate of their missing relatives for the past 10 - 12 years.

Aidini Idalova spoke on behalf of the mothers of kidnapped and missing residents of Chechnya. This is a woman whose three sons were kidnapped by security forces. One of her sons was found killed, and two others disappeared after being detained by soldiers. Her fate is a striking example of what people who are trying to get to the truth must endure.

On June 16, 2000, the Russian military killed her son Vakhit while he was returning home after haymaking. The murder was committed by servicemen of the 15th regiment, which was deployed on the outskirts of the village Akhkinchu-Borzoy. On November 22, 2002, another of Aidini's sons, - Marvan Idalov, a pupil in the 11th grade, was kidnapped from his mother's house by soldiers. Her third son, Alikhan, a policeman, was kidnapped in the Daghestani city of Khasavyurt on May 31, 2003. Also by military men.

Aidini Idalova filed a complaint with the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, after which the security forces went after her. At first, they intimidated her, threatened her,

demanding that she take back her complaint, and then they kidnapped her and held her incarcerated for a month, demanding that she "admit" that her sons were insurgents. Achieving nothing with her, they were forced to release her. But the "fighters against terrorism" and the "guardians of law and order" found a way to "avenge" the intractable mother of one murdered and two kidnapped sons.

On March 17, 2008, in the village of Akhkinchu-Borzoy, Gudermes District, the security forces committed a true act of vandalism. Representatives of Russian and local security forces opened up the grave of Vakhit Idalov, murdered back in 2002, and stole his remains. To this day it is not clear who did this. All of these years, Aidini Idalova has been trying to get answers to two questions from the authorities: what were her sons guilty of, and what happened to them? But the answers have not been forthcoming. Moreover, the Strasbourg court recently declined to hear her complaint.

"After all that I have been through, I have trouble moving about, I have been diagnosed with cancer, and nobody has time for me, just like for all the other mothers of the missing", says Aidini. "I am no longer afraid of anybody, because I have nothing left to lose".

The crimes described in Cherkasov's book Fate Unknown do not have a statute of limitations, since they are essentially war crimes and crimes against humanity, the responsibility for which lies with the highest political and military leadership of the country. Whether the guilty in uniform will ever be punished for kidnapping and murder of civilians in Chechnya, time will tell. In any case, all the necessary documentary evidence for this can be found in the book Fate Unknown.

ALINA IZMAILOVA MY HOMELAND – NOT MY HOMELAND

Photo:
Denis MUKIMOV

The day before my departure I was very worried, I even started to unpack and put back things I had packed up for the journey. Later I changed my mind and threw them in the suitcase again, sat down, head in my hands, and sat there, swaying from side to side, as if I were trying to drive away compulsive thoughts. Is there any use in going? Why? After so many years... how will my homeland receive me, after having suffered so much misfortune? The ringing phone, jarring and even unpleasant, returned me to reality. Mama was calling. Perfunctorily glancing at the clock hanging on the wall, I was surprised to notice that there were only two hours left before the train's departure.

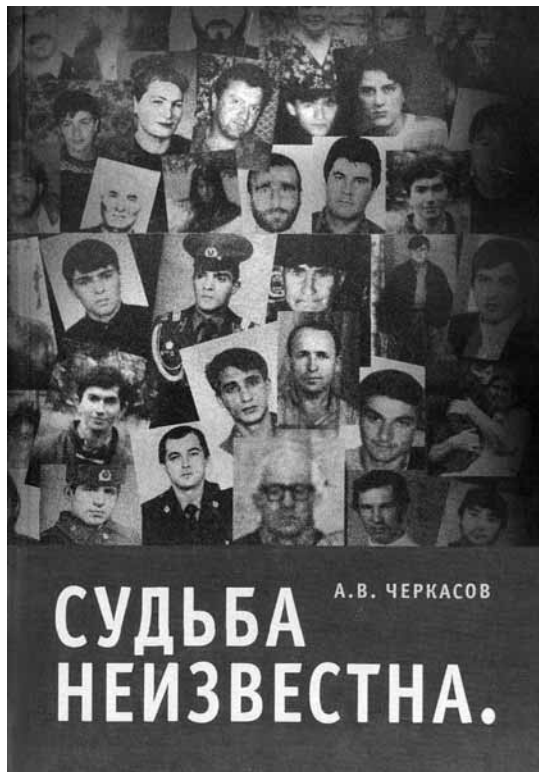
Mama talked for a long time, emotionally, almost screaming, beseeching me to be prudent. Trying to dissuade me from the coming trip, she even promised (which was not characteristic of her) to ask a friend to hire me in the newsroom and was much aggrieved, hearing the answer that this no longer means anything. Changing the scream to an indignant muttering, she somehow imperceptibly ended the conversation.

Grozny received me with smooth roads and rebuilt high-rise buildings. As if the war years and total destruction had never happened. Calm pedestrians scurried along the streets, a flow of automobiles hurried to some destination. That initial suspicion: "it's dan-

gerous there!" seemingly gave way, no longer made sense.

However, the feeling of tenderness upon seeing the transformed city began to dissipate as soon as working meetings with the people I surveyed began. It was clear that too many of them were fearful of talking candidly about their situations; some of them, with a kind of pathos, began to thank the government as if they were speaking at a public meeting. Suddenly it dawned on me where that sense of nebulous alarm came from which I felt as soon as I arrived on the territory of the Republic. The portraits! (Must I specify whose?). The abundance of portraits, hung on practically every building, unavoidable, as it were, icons in the hut of a devout peasant.

Teachers in institutions of higher learning would, sometimes humorously, but most often taking offense, talk about the new developments in the educational system, about the new uniforms for students, about the requirements for women's appearance. They maintained that the rector even published a special new directive requiring "bringing the clothing of employees into line with the norms of Waynahi and workplace etiquette", namely: for men - a tie is mandatory, and then for women (as they say, "feel the difference!") - a large headscarf, completely covering all hair, sleeves three-quarter?



length, a skirt 20 centimeters below the knee. The State University has moved along quite far in this regard. If at the other two higher education institutions the administration nevertheless pays some attention to the quality of the educational process, at the Chechen State University the main emphasis is on whether all of the students are wearing jackets with the emblem of the university, whether all of the female students are wearing large enough scarves and whether any hair is protruding from under the scarves of female teachers. This is how one of my respondents described a spot check:

- During one class, the door burst open unexpectedly abruptly, and muscular men barged into the auditorium. They were dressed differently: some in athletic suits, some in office clothing; some in special uniforms of private security guards. Not saying a word, not even "excuse us" or "hello", they fanned out across the room in a military fashion. "Hey, you, your name!" one of them asked, pointing his finger to a girl sitting near a window.

"M-----va", she answered in bewilderment, and the whole cheeky group left not saying goodbye.

As we later learned, the girl was not dressed correctly; the emblem of the university was missing from her suit. For that, she lost her scholarship, and the teacher received a reprimand.

These kinds of inspections take place all but regularly. This is in case anyone dressed not according to the regulations accidentally gets by the guard desk, equipped with turnstiles, and guarded vigilantly by tough guys whose faces are not marked by the stamp of intellect, strange-looking within the walls of a temple of learning.

Lo and behold I am standing to the side pretending to wait, looking at the telephone. I observe a fascinating picture. Approaching the guard desk, girls open their coats, showing the emblem on their jackets to the guards, listen to rather feeble jokes and with disgruntled expressions pass through. Having waited for the flow of students to ebb significantly, I put on a large scarf, whereas I had taken care of the long skirt earlier, I make an impenetrable face and confidently approach the guard desk.

- Hey! Where are you going? - the crude bark of the guard, an 18-20 year - old husky fellow, directed obviously at me. I stop, sigh deeply, seeking to hide my indignation, I try on a smile and only then do I turn around.
- Are you an employee? - just as crudely the fellow asks. I nod my head yes and go on.

But the most "successful" invention of the local authorities is the voluntary work Saturday: that is the year-round, uncompensated, separate from classes, cleanup of grounds, but not your own, that is, where you work or live. Educational workers, doctors (!) over the course of several months, were forced to collect trash from the streets, paint the doors to stairwells, paint curbs white. The idea itself is good, if the time of valuable specialists were not spent on unskilled jobs, but the main thing is - if it were not for the cadish attitude towards them of the people who live where they are cleaning up.

While picking up trash in someone else's building, people were subjected to insults from those who did the littering. "You are swine - so you clean it up!" - laughed some of the residents, throwing down literally in front of them ice cream wrappers, empty bottles, candy wrappers, banana peels. But

the most horrible thing was that this seemingly good cause of cleaning up building grounds cost some people their lives. Not everyone is capable of (because of habit or the state of his or her health) spending a whole day under the blazing sun without enough water, with a paint brush in hand, inhaling the sharp, toxic smell of paint.

Hearing similar stories, and there turned out to be quite a number of them, I continually asked myself the question: "How can this be? How can they allow such a thing in federal institutions of higher learning, which are the pillars of scholarship, the repository of longstanding cultural traditions, and the forge of 'highly educated' professional personnel?"

Why should a doctor, bending over a government functionary, brought to his hospital with an acute attack, and not noticing that his hat is not centered on his head, be fired for not observing the dress code?

Why should young people who have decided to start a family, have to get permission from the Spiritual Directorate of Muslims of the Republic, where, among other things, one must present two documents: one, that the groom does not have HIV, and the other, that the bride is a virgin? And so that there would be no temptation to avoid this procedure, weddings which went on without the appropriate permit were vigilantly monitored, and all those present at them were cruelly beaten up!

When I arrived in Chechnya for the first time, I couldn't find an answer to these and many other critical questions. Yes, and incidentally, I still do not have answers, several years later, and after many trips to this beautiful, rich, manicured but somehow cold and now foreign Republic.

TAUS SERGANOVA STRENGTHENED IN SPIRIT

Journalists know: there are subjects which you choose, and everything you write is somehow or other related to that subject. But it also happens that the problem itself chooses you, although you did not plan to deal with it. "Women's Issues" for me is an example of the second instance. At one time in the 1990's in the ascendant sociopolitical movement, I was part of a group of people who founded the first Chechen women's magazine *Malkba-Azni*, and later there was another - *Malika* (only one or two issues of each came out). At the offices of the newspaper Daimokhk in the pre-war year of 1994, on March 1st, the editorial board held a roundtable on the subject "Woman, Family, State".

This first attempt of journalists to put out for public discussion the problems of the defense of women's rights, and protecting the family and children turned out to be the last - soon the newspaper was shut down. The main reason for the reprisal was the appearance, against a background of general demagoguery and open disdain for the needs of citizens, of intelligent, educated women, representing different areas of life, who were successful both personally and professionally. Their voices sounded a harsh dissonance in the general choir praising the latter-day Herostratuses. In the prewar years, one often heard aggressive speeches from the official tribune; pocket Alims pronounced women something akin

to a caste of untouchables. At the same time the women's magazines came out, a club, "Family", opened, part of the Educational-Methodological Center of the Ministry of Culture. This was a desperate attempt of the intelligentsia, especially its women, to stand up to the general "mobilization" being conducted in those years with something inherently peaceful and human. Only a magazine, a newspaper and a television program gave our women food for thought and for the soul, if only occasionally, in fits and starts, in between their endless tasks and concerns.

Why was it necessary to conduct this excursion into the past? Well, because the beginning of many misfortunes can be traced to that period.

After the two wars, the problems enumerated above disappeared from the field of view of most people in our society. All of these terrible years there was one question at the forefront: do citizens of the Chechen Republic - men, women and children, the elderly, have the right to live? In between the military campaigns, well-known and lesser-known figures, one after the other (depending on who was in power at court) talked about their love for the people and proposed programs for how to develop the Republic, promising manna from heaven for its residents. At the first shots, they fled back to Moscow, or abroad.

In the Caucasus, women are highly respected, and in Chechnya, especially: the word of a woman had power, for her honor and dignity one might have killed; she was always free to choose. In spite of all that, in the last several decades Chechen women were pushed to the sidelines in social and political life. As if it were not she who bore the brunt of the blows of all the cataclysms and wars, as though it were not she who took care (and takes care) of the family and children, as if it were not she who all of these years fed, clothed, took care of her relatives, prepared to continue to bear this heavy cross, if only to protect them: as if it were not from her they took away the children, husband, brother, father, and it was not possible to knock on the door of a single high office-holder...

Today much has changed in our life. We are transforming the space around us so that it would not remind us of the war and our losses. This is correct: it is impossible to always live in the past. But one must know about it, remember it, who and what we lost, and do everything possible so that future generations would not see a repeat of the tragedy suffered at the turn of the millennium. After all, according to unofficial statistics, the number of missing persons during the two military campaigns is around eighteen thousand residents of the Chechen Republic.

Today the Chechen woman is different than she was 15 - 20 years ago. She learned the art of survival, and no one will take away her powerful spirit and courage. But she has not learned to defend herself - from labels, from the image imposed upon her of the "silent shadow", from the arbitrary actions of government officials of all ranks and stripes. The Republic authorities have taken certain steps to pay attention to her - they created Mother's Day. A great deal of attention (in my opinion, more than justified) is paid to her outward appearance. But there are issues of another order: who is she - today's Chechen woman? What is the state of her psychological well-being? What place has been allotted to her in society? How does she and do others see her future, how does one evaluate the changes in her life, her safety, her own and her family's? If we proceed from the fact that

women make up almost 52% of the general population of the Chechen Republic, the answers to these questions must have important significance for our society. This is all the more important, given that in certain fields, women make up almost 90% of the work force - in education, health care, social work and the service sector. For example, the reforms in education were born by women - school and higher education teachers. Their knowledge, selfless labor, conscientiousness and responsibility guaranteed that education in our Republic made such strides and is today on a par with Russia. In science it is the same: for the past 6-7 years, we have seen the appearance of women PhDs and post-doctoral candidates in different scientific fields.

Well, now let us turn our attention to the results of the poll done by the

interregional non-profit organization The Center for the Caucasus Initiative.

1510 people were polled. They represented different age groups, levels of education, and social status (students, teachers, housewives, unemployed, government officials, non-profit sector employees). Of them, 830 were women - and 680 men.

To be sure, some of men's answers were predictable; that can be explained by government policies vis a vis women in Chechen society which are not quite intelligible. However, women, not waiting for help which is late in coming, are themselves trying to bring their role and status into synch with the various challenges of contemporary society. Chechen women have found their bearings in today's complicated world, and they understand that their children need a quality education and quality health care, knowledge of the laws of behavior not only in Chechen society, but outside of it too. They try (and for the most part, successfully) to fit into today's contemporary, high-technology world. In the Republic's institutions of higher learning, the majority of the students are girls. And this is a very positive factor, because even if female graduates of higher education institutions cannot find work, they will possess the necessary knowledge to bring up their own children.

Quite mistaken are those people who think that Chechen women will give up their right to choose. I repeat: having gone through terrible trials, they have become stronger in spirit, they have preserved their willingness to sacrifice in the name of their children and their family; however, they treasure like no one else, not only family values, but the feeling of self-worth.

To the question "How has the life of women in the Chechen Republic changed over the last 3-5 years?":

- 31.3%** - 260 women (ages 25-50) answered that their life in the Chechen Republic has not changed over the last 3 - 5 years;
- 24.1%** - 200 (ages 30-55) - it has changed for the worse;
- 44.6%** - 370 (ages 17-25) - it has changed for the better.

Men's answers were divided as follows:

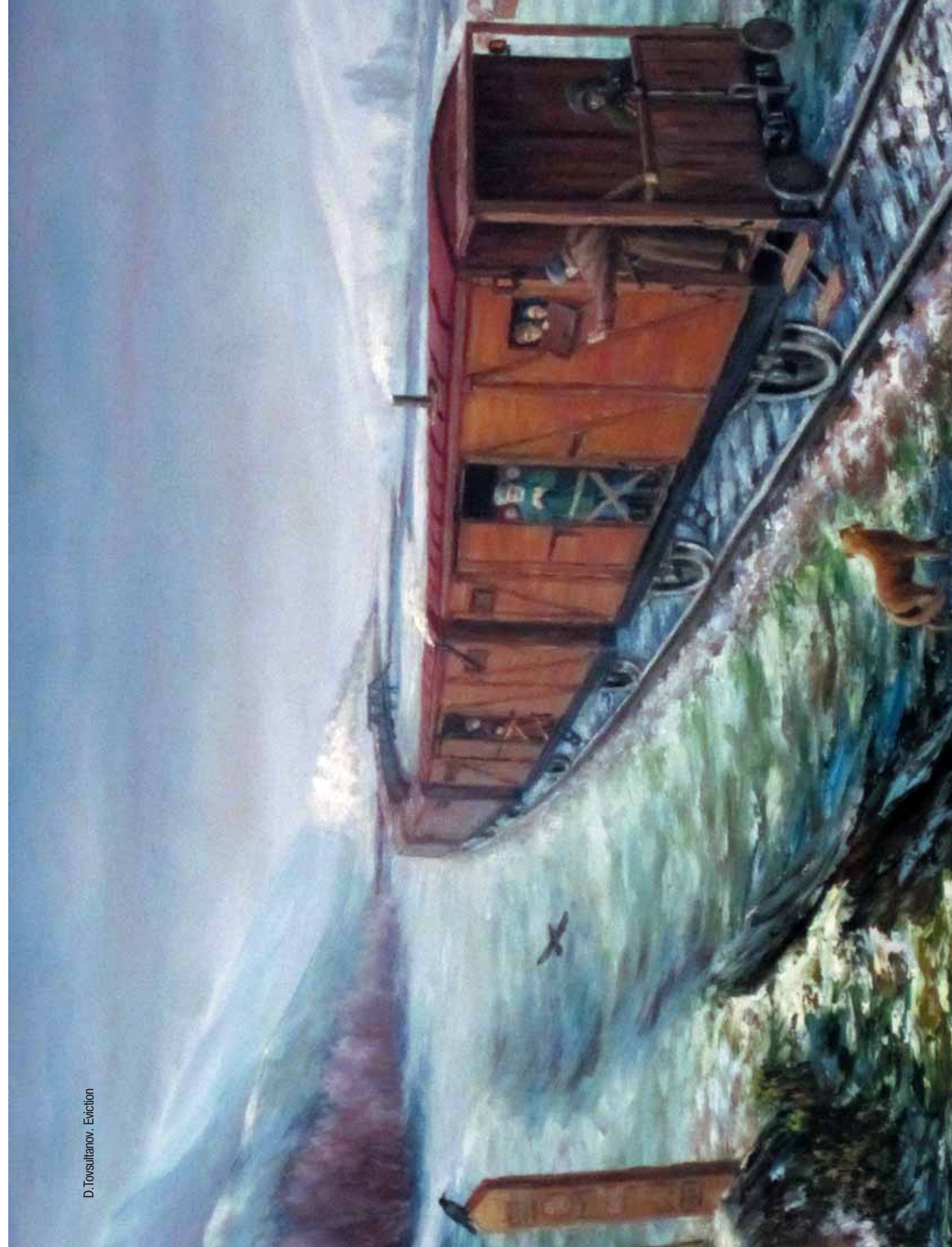
- 17.6%** - 120 men (ages 25-60) answered that the life of women in the Chechen Republic has not changed;
- 29.5%** - 200 (ages 30-55) - it has changed for the worse;
- 52.9%** - 360 (ages 18-25) - it has changed for the better.

To the question "Where do you see the place of women in Chechen society?":

- 99.4%** of women chose the answer "in the home and in professional life";
- 98.2%** of men, from the several different answers, chose the answer: "only in the home".

To the question "What worries and fears does a woman experience in contemporary Chechen society?" the following answers were received:

- 99%** of women fear for their loved ones;
- 60%** of men also think that women fear for their loved ones;
- 29%** of men think that women are worried about the future of the Chechen Republic;
- 11%** of men think that women are afraid for themselves.



D. Tsvetanov. Eviction



Grozny: before and after the war
(but Before they erased the memory of its destruction).

